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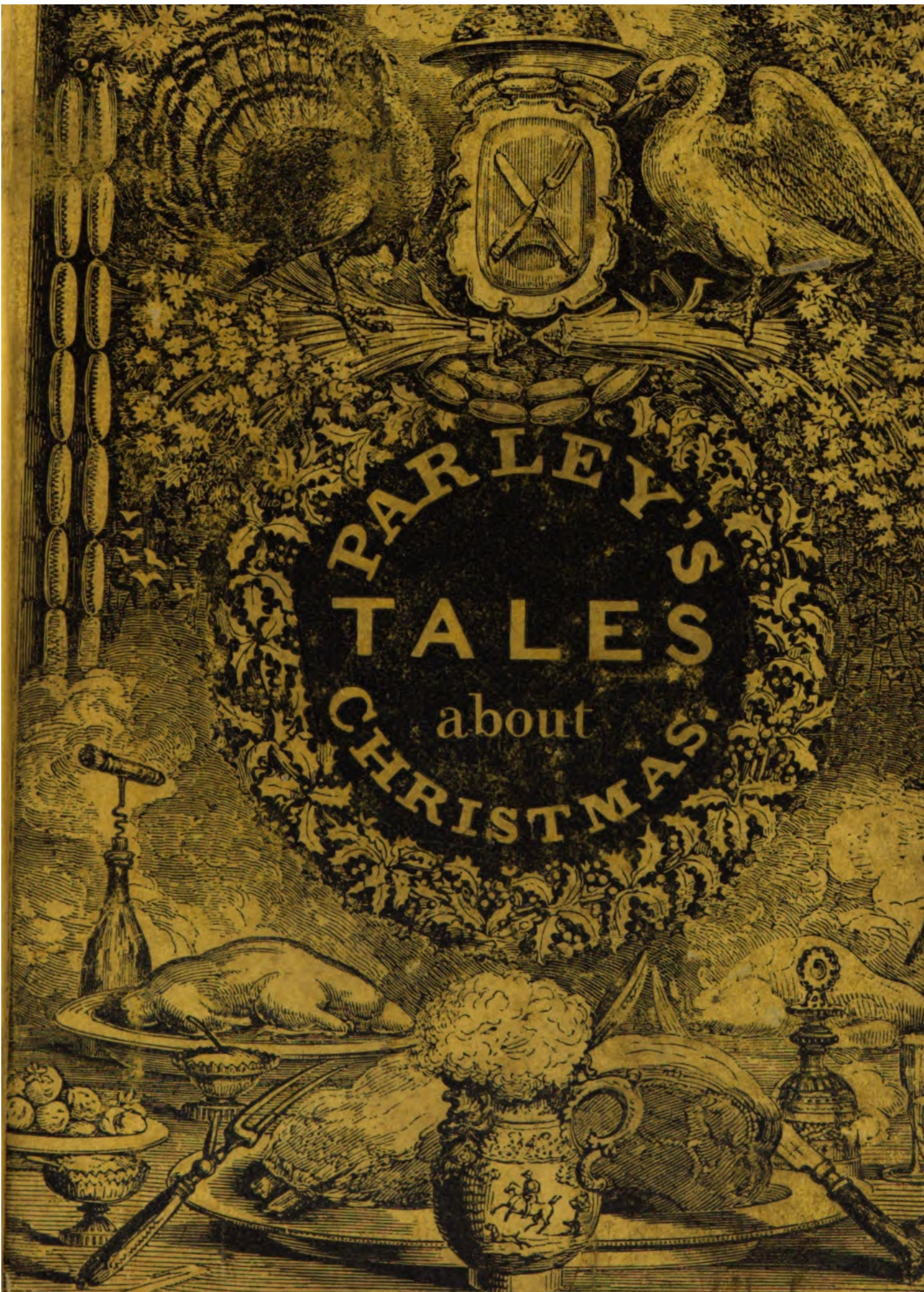
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PARLEY'S
TALES
about
CHRISTMAS.



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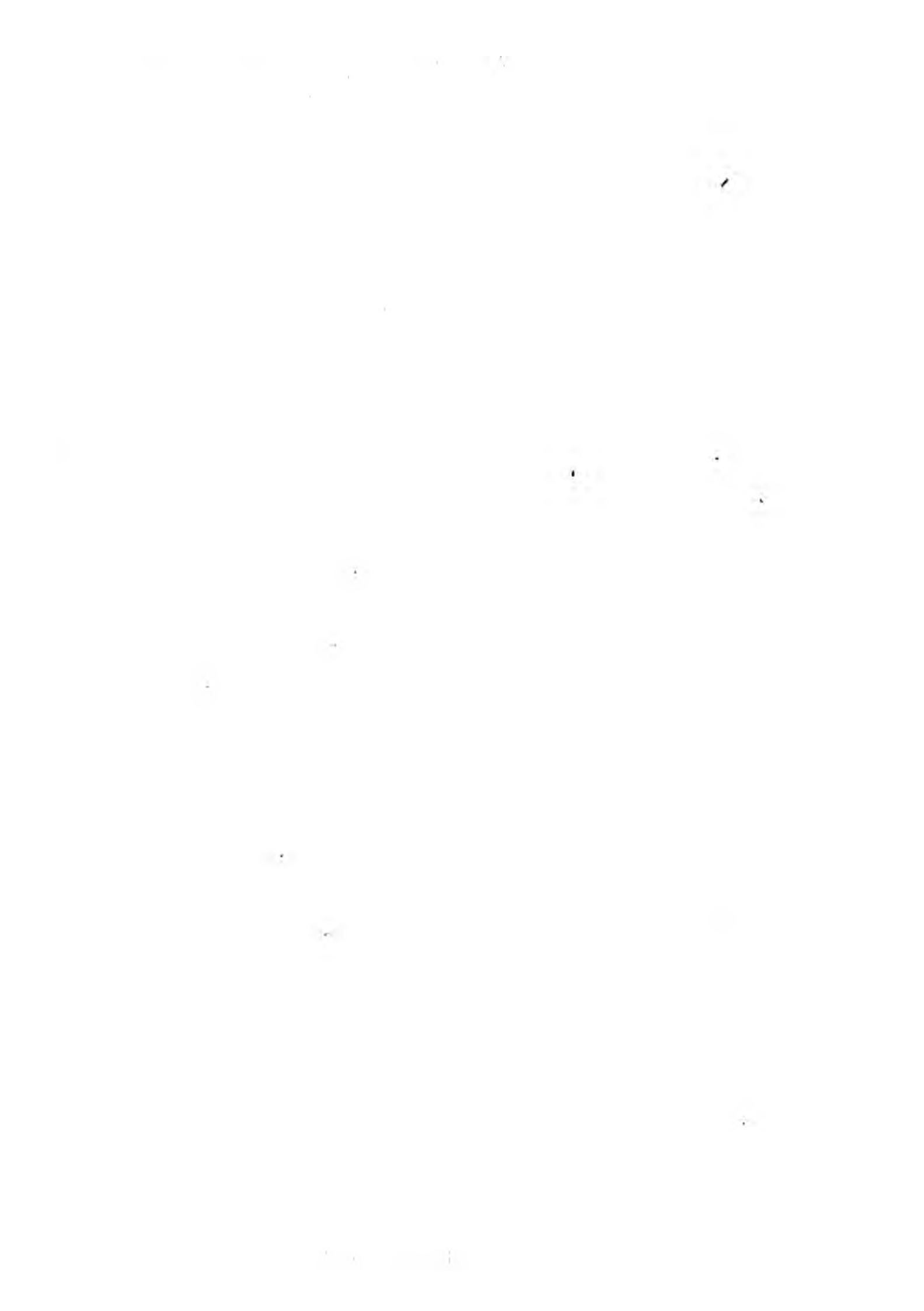
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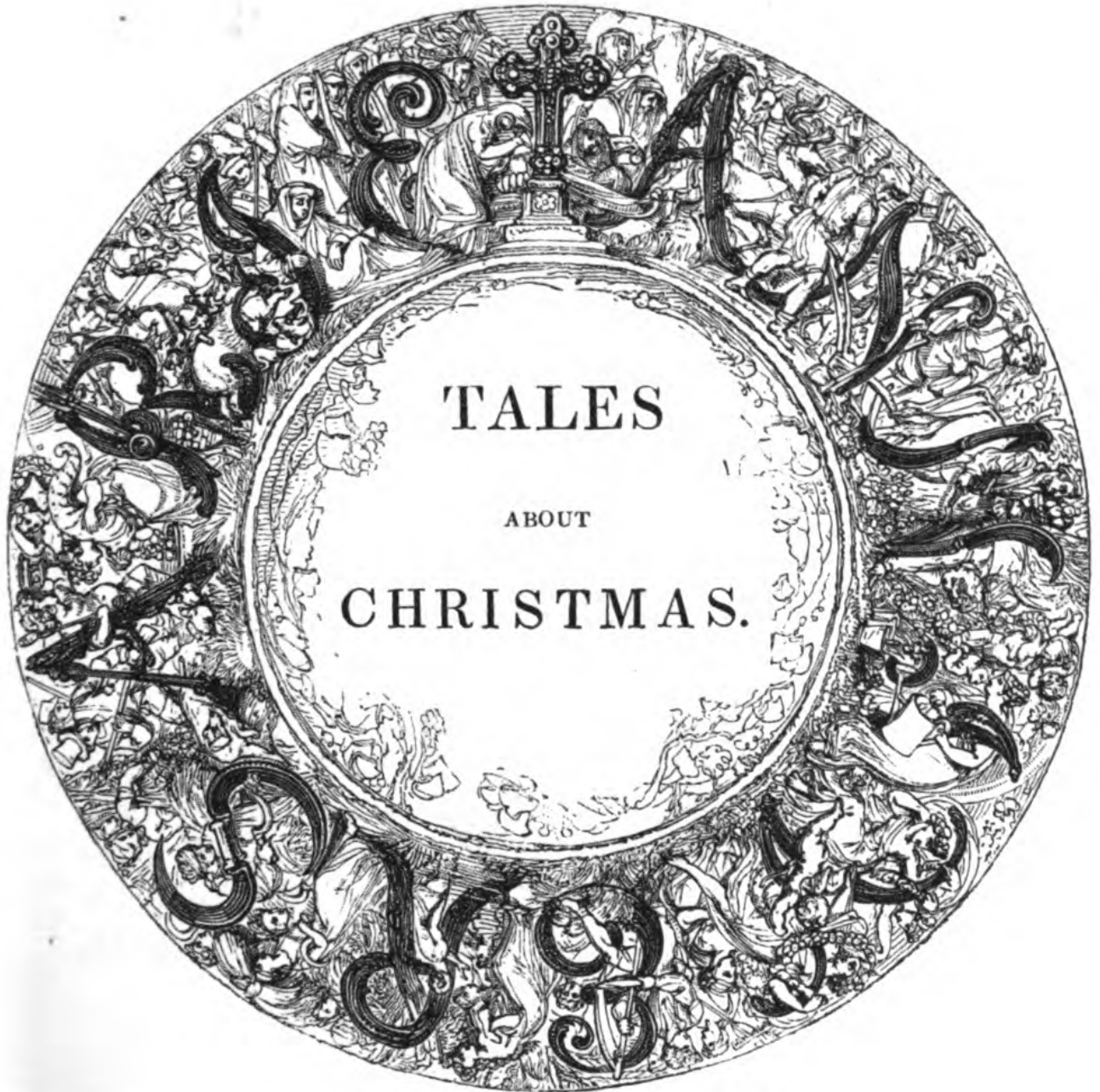


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PETER PARLEY'S
TALES ABOUT CHRISTMAS.





BY PETER PARLEY.

Bright hearths, bright hearts, bright faces, and bright holly,
Will welcome thee, and make thy sojourn jolly. *Bentley.*

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THOMAS TEGG AND SON, CHEAPSIDE;
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TALES ABOUT CHRISTMAS.



THERE is no one word that can be spoken, which can conjure up, at once, so many pleasant associations as *Christmas*. It brings home and happiness before us. It is a sunbeam that bids the green leaves and spring flowers of the heart unfold themselves and burst forth.

PPETER PARLEY.

ADDRESS
OF
THE PUBLISHERS.

IN the following Tales about Christmas, our good friend, Peter Parley, has entered into old English customs with all the kind-heartedness that belongs to his character: a stranger would suppose him to be an Englishman. He puts a good natured construction on all he sees and hears, and when he feels himself compelled to condemn, he does it with evident reluctance. It is this trait of kindness that makes him welcome wherever he goes.

Fond as he undoubtedly is of telling tales himself, he never loses an opportunity of introducing a good one when he hears it from the

lips of another. There is a spirit of fairness in this, and a quiet contentment withal, which shows that he is not over anxious to engross the attention of his young friends to himself. Nor does he lose any of his interest by the introduction of such tales. Every one who has read, in his Stories, the adventures of "Leo" and "James Jenkins," and the "Cabin Boy," will acknowledge how much gratification they have afforded, and we believe this remark will equally apply to the tales introduced into the present volume.

Christmas is, of all others, the time for telling entertaining stories, and Peter Parley has availed himself of this privilege in relating the tales he has gleaned among his friends, at those fire-side parties, in which he has, evidently, freely mingled. The interesting account of the life of "Mr. Douglas," the affecting story of "Sarah Wilmot," "Alfred Huckaback's account of the

Ghost of old Blue Stockings," "The fat Country Gentleman's Visit to Camberwell," and the "Invitation to Tea," as well as other relations, have much entertained us, and we doubt not they will entertain our young readers also.

Since the publication of our last volume, we have had numerous proofs that our old friend is increasing his influence in many a family group. When fathers and mothers are seen lingering over pages addressed to childhood, they must possess more than common attraction. We wish that we could thoroughly *Parleyize* the rising generation, not only for our own interest, but, also, for their advantage.

But we must conclude our remarks. If our old friend has furnished amusement and instruction as a sailor, and a traveller; if he has spoken pleasantly of Great Britain; if he has given a fresh interest to the mighty deep; and pointed an instructive finger to "the sun that

ruleth by day, and the moon and stars that rule by night," we trust that a place will be reserved for him at many a Christmas fireside.

It is said that "one man in his time plays many parts," and in the case of our old friend this truism is strikingly set forth. Make way then, for Peter Parley, not as you have generally seen him, but buttoned up to the chin, with a wreath of snow round the brim of his hat, and a cheerful bunch of greenleaved, red berried holly sticking in his bosom.



PETER PARLEY'S
TALES ABOUT CHRISTMAS.

CHAPTER I.

PARLEY SPEAKS A WORD OR TWO ABOUT CHRISTMAS.



PETER PARLEY AND SOME OF HIS YOUNG FRIENDS.

WELL, boys, I see you are brightening up at the sight of me ; you expect to hear more of my Tales, for you know that I have again been on my travels : you shall not be disappointed.

There is hardly a greater enjoyment to an old man than that of telling about the things he has seen and heard of, to a party of young people, and few old men have had more of this enjoyment than Peter Parley. In whatever part of the world I have been, young people have always listened to me with eagerness, and their sparkling eyes and inquiring faces have led me on from one story to another.

I hope that young people have learned something from me, for every now and then I have learned something from them. Once, when talking about the wide ocean to a very little boy, he asked me if the sea was big enough for God to see his face in it? "Big enough," said I, "O yes! God can see his face in every drop of dew that falls upon the grass, and we ought to see his face in it too." I have often wished that I had as grand and impressive an idea of the greatness of Almighty God on my mind as that child seemed to have.

A little girl was once listening to me while I described the many dangers in which I had been preserved. "God has been good to me, my little love," said I, "every minute of my life." She looked innocently up in my face, and said, "And have you knelt on the carpet, and held up your hands to him to

thank him every minute?" The question made me dumb, and reddened my cheek at the same time: I have learned many a lesson from a child.

I have already told so many stories that you may wonder what else I have to say: but, consider how wide the world is; how varied its climate and productions; and how numerous its inhabitants! The velvet carpet of creation under our feet, and the starry canopy over our head, are of themselves subjects which cannot be exhausted. Then, again, the mind of man is a fountain continually bubbling over with fresh thoughts and fancies; and the customs of men are for ever changing. If there be a difficulty, it is not that of having nothing to say, but of having too little time to say it in. I hope that the stories I am about to tell you will be equally entertaining with what you have already heard, and I shall be sorry if they do not prove equally instructive.

I am about to speak of Christmas, and of the manners and customs observed in England at that season. The very name of Christmas is pleasant to the ear, and grateful to the heart of English people. It seems to remind them, not only of all they have seen themselves of good cheer and good fellowship, but also, of all that they have heard from their

fathers before them, of the "good old times" that have long passed away.

There is no one word that can be spoken which can conjure up, at once, so many pleasant associations as Christmas. It brings home and happiness before us. It is a sun-beam that bids the green leaves and spring flowers of the heart unfold themselves and burst forth!

If you were to ask me what English people mean when they speak of Christmas, it would puzzle me to tell you, for it seems to me that Christmas is, in their minds, made up of religious feeling, of acts of charity, holiday, and fire side enjoyment; of church going, alms giving, and family gathering. Christmas carols, and pleasant acquaintance, crackling faggots, and farm house fare; bunches of holly, and boughs of mistletoe; smoking joints, and foaming jugs; laughing, story telling, and blind man's buff, are all contained in the word Christmas.

I love to see people happy, whether the rose bud of youth is in their cheeks, or the snow of age on their heads, and, therefore, I cannot help loving Christmas, for English people of all classes regard it as a happy season.

"We love," says an English writer, "those mile-

stones on the journey of life, beside which, man is called upon to pause and take a reckoning of the distance he has passed, and of that which he may have yet to go. We love to enter those houses of refreshment by the way-side of existence, where we know we shall encounter with other wayfarers like ourselves; perchance with friends long separated, whom the chances of the world keeps far apart, and from whence, after a sweet communion, a lusty festival, and needful rest, we may go forth upon our journey new fortified against its accidents, and strengthened for its toils." "We love," says an American author, "the season for gathering together of family connexions, and drawing closer again those bonds of kindred hearts, which the cares, and pleasures, and sorrows of the world are continually operating to cast loose," and, it may be added, "above all, we love those seasons which call for the exercise of a general hospitality, and give the poor man his few and precious glimpses of a plenty, which, as the world is managed, his toil cannot buy; which shelter the houseless wanderer, and feed the starving child, and clothe the naked mother, and spread a festival for all." I know not what you may think of these beautiful expressions, but they are as music in

my ears, and make me love Christmas more than ever.

If the season had nothing but its merriment and good cheer to recommend it, its approach would be hailed with joy, and thousands would be ready to cry out,

“Let's dance and sing and make good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year.”

Yet those who love the season only for its mirth, and its mince pies, know not how to keep Christmas. Pleasant as it is to sit at the well spread board, and to mingle with a merry throng of mad caps, there is, my young friends, something better still to which you all ought to attend.

He who with unfeigned reverence bows his knee, and offers up his grateful praise in the house of God to his Almighty Maker, at this advent of the Redeemer; he who honours his parents, loves his brethren, helps the poor according to his ability, forgives those who have offended him, and fosters a kindly feeling for all mankind, has a peace, a sunshine in his heart that the wildest merriment can never give. Christmas should be a general jubilee; a festival of chastened joy, wherein every heart should

be an harmonious instrument tuned with the love of God and man.

You should not only try to be happier but to be better at Christmas, than you have been all the year before. When I read of the warm-hearted doings of days gone by, in old English mansions, of the reverent attention to holy things, at Christmas time, of wide spread benevolence to the poor, and unbounded hospitality to all, a glow gathers round my heart, and I say, let not these things be forgotten.

I know, well enough, that in the wildness of their revelry, the Christmas observers of olden time too often gave way to folly. Their good fellowship was mingled with much of infirmity. No doubt many of them, after a night of reckless merriment, had reason to say with Solomon, "I said of laughter it is mad, and of mirth what doeth it?" but while we fling away from us what is faulty, let us cling to every thing that calls forth good fellowship and good affections.



RAILWAY CARRIAGE FOR PASSENGERS.

CHAP. II.

PARLEY TELLS ABOUT HIS ARRIVAL IN LONDON, AND HIS
INTRODUCTION TO THE FAMILY OF MR. DOUGLAS.

WHEN the thought first occurred to me, to make myself acquainted with Christmas customs in England, that I might entertain you with an account of them, I went back in imagination to the days of my boyhood. I read all the books on Christmas that came in my way. I must, said I, think and make myself, in some small degree, master of my subject, for a traveller, without previous knowledge, is like a bird without wings.

Surely, said I, my time will not be thrown away in telling tales to my little friends, for I will try to lead their young minds to virtue by a flowery path, and the humblest effort to do good is not worthless. An acorn is but a small thing, yet when set in the ground, it becomes, in time, a goodly oak tree. Why may not some of my acorns become oaks? Who can tell, but that some of my remarks may take root in the hearts of my young friends, and grow up in strengthly habits of prudence and virtue?

I will now proceed, without any further delay, to tell you my Tales about Christmas, for, after all, Christmas is the time for telling stories, when it is cold without, and comfortable within; when cheerful and happy faces are grouped round a blazing fire,



CHRISTMAS EVENING TALES.

and when good humour so much prevails, that the least thing in the world will set the whole party in a roar; but let us remember while we relate our stories, that if we do not profit, as well as amuse those who hear them, our time is lost.

I will now relate to you, my young friends, some

anecdotes of my last visit to London; but first I must tell you that before I left Boston I got from my friends some letters of introduction. "These," thought I, "will, at least, give me an opportunity of knowing the manners and customs of the respectable families in the middle ranks of society in England, so that I shall be better able to form a judgment of the domestic habits of the people."

After a fine voyage in the good ship Sampson, Captain Chadwick commander, I arrived in London on the fifteenth of October, and put up at the Bull and Mouth, a large inn near the Post Office. I will not, however, describe this city, having already done so in my Tales about Great Britain, but confine myself to some of those personal adventures which occurred to me in delivering my letters of introduction. I waited on one gentleman, a merchant, at his counting house in the city, and presented my letter; he requested me to sit down while he read it, and "while," said he, "I fill up a proxy for this poor widow; she is desirous of getting her child into the London Orphan School."

On seeing my name, he turned towards me and with great warmth and friendliness of manner said, "Have I the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Peter Parley?"

“Yes, Sir, my name is Parley. I have crossed the seas purposely to collect materials for more Tales about your interesting country.” “Mr. Parley,” said the gentleman, “my children have read with delight your various books for youth, and I am sure nothing will give them and their mother greater pleasure than to have the happiness of your company for a few days at



MR. DOUGLAS'S COUNTRY HOUSE.

my country house, and as you have only just landed, you cannot have any engagements, I shall therefore insist on the pleasure of taking you with me, and personally introducing you to my family. We will

give you a hearty English welcome; you shall stay with us Sunday and Monday, and on Tuesday morning I will bring you to town again, that you may proceed with the delivery of your letters."

"Now remember, it is a settled thing, on Saturday afternoon I shall expect you to go with me. You shall accompany the family to church in the morning,



and in the evening, if you wish, you shall go with them to the chapel; both the churchman and the dissenter discharge the duties of their holy office with a hearty zeal, they will tell us some wholesome truths that will amply repay us for the time we spend there.

“For my part,” said Mr. Douglas, “I like to go to a place of worship in the village, as well for the sake of others, as for my own advantage. I am looked up to by some of my poorer neighbours, and therefore consider it a duty to set them a good example.

“I think, Mr. Parley, that the influence of good example is better than that of power; power presses upon the fear and selfish feelings of those under us, while the influence of kindness and good example addresses itself to their hearts and understanding; power compels men, influence guides them.”

“On Monday morning we will take a ride and return home to a late dinner: I shall thus be able to show you some of the most delightful scenery among the beautiful hills in the neighbourhood. I trust, Mr. Parley, you will have no cause to regret going into the bosom of an Englishman’s family. I love to talk with those who have travelled, it makes me very happy to hear the adventures they relate; there is a freshness in the narratives of those who have been observers while they have been travellers, that is truly edifying; it not only informs the head, but it warms the heart.”

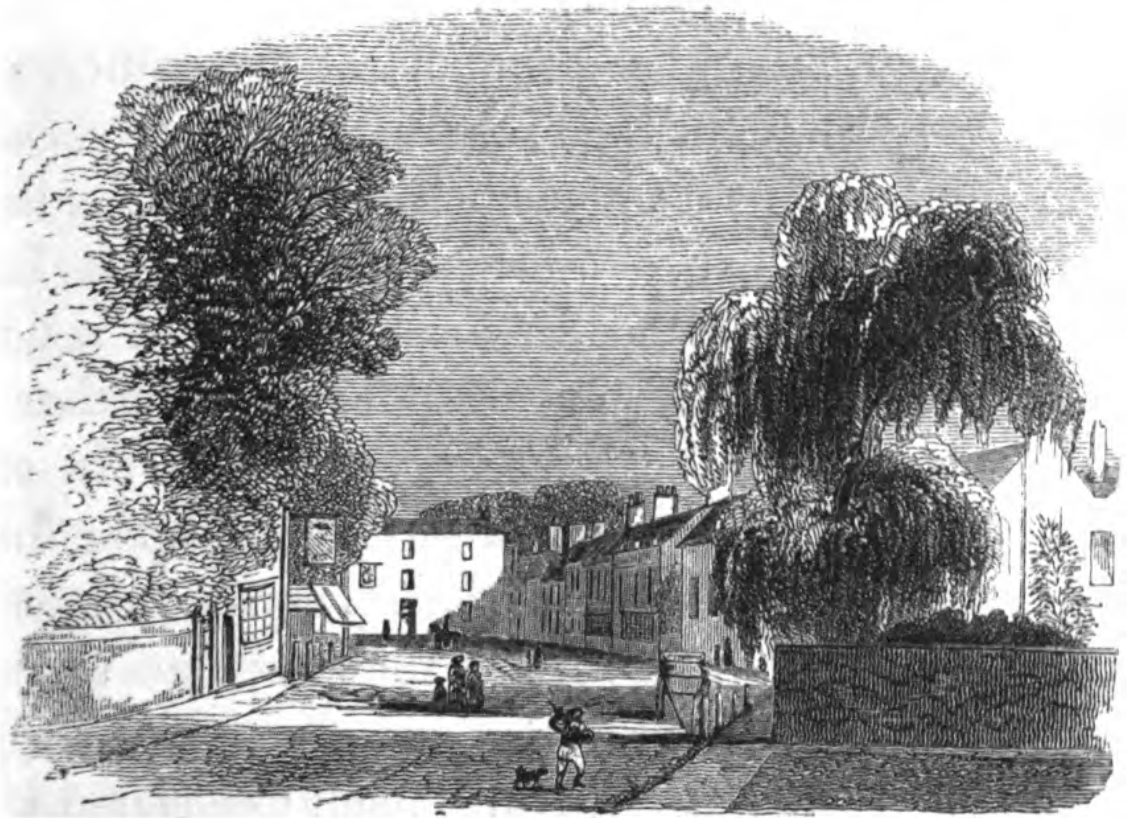
Well! on Saturday afternoon I went in my friend’s carriage and met a part of his truly excellent family;

most of the younger branches were absent on a temporary visit. After the usual introduction, we sat down to dinner, which was plain and good; our conversation was pleasing to all parties. I related to Mr. Douglas some of my adventures, and I could not resist the opportunity of drawing some comparisons respecting the situation in life of many worthy individuals, congratulating my friend on his present prosperity. "Stop, Mr. Parley," said he, "I too have experienced reverses of fortune; I have not obtained the blessings I enjoy, without first passing through many severe trials. On Monday evening I will relate to you a few anecdotes of my early career, and of my progressive success in life."

After spending a delightful evening I retired to rest, and awoke on Sabbath morning refreshed in body and mind, and thankful to God for his especial protection. This was to me a happy day; it was profitably employed in attending divine service, and in sharing serious and rational conversation; and if the comfort, the peace, and the happiness of my friend's family furnish a fair sample of an Englishman's fire-side, the English are a happy people.

On Monday morning Mr. and Mrs. Douglas and Peter Parley set off in the family carriage to make

some morning calls, and to see the beautiful scenery of the neighbourhood. The fine houses, the parks, and the gardens my friend showed me, excited my utmost wonder. Surely, thought I, this must be a wealthy country. "That fine old house you see," said he, "on your left, was the favourite abode of Dr. Samuel Johnson, our great moral and philological writer; and on coming to a beautiful little village on the borders



MR. DOUGLAS'S NATIVE VILLAGE.

of a fine common, round which were planted majestic elms and oaks, and on which flocks of sheep and many horses were grazing, with here and there a score

or two of geese stocking their bills into the grass, Mr. Douglas said, "I will now show you the residences of some of our former aristocracy, as well as the country seats of some of the distinguished members of the opposition. Here it was, after the toil of long parliamentary duties, that they met in convivial parties, both Whig and Tory; but first I must call your attention to yonder small gable-end house: that is the habitation," said Mr. Douglas, "in which I was born. At the further end of the common, at the corner, you see a house through the trees; there lived the celebrated Horne Tooke. In that mansion nearly opposite lived Mr. Pitt; in yonder old brick house resided Lord Melville; the celebrated Sir Francis Burdett resided in the large dwelling you see yonder; and further on is the residence of the late Sir W. Rush. In that splendid park resides the Right Honourable Lord Spencer. This village was the favourite retreat of great men of all parties; here they used to unbend from the cares of public life, and for a time forget the spirit of party; here royalty itself associated with Fox, Pitt, Sheridan, and other great men, in seasons of relaxation."

"We will now show you," continued Mr. Douglas, "the church and the church yard, and we will take

with us the old sexton, to tell us the ‘simple annals of the poor.’” “There,” said he, with a sigh, “there



THE VILLAGE CHURCH.

is the grave that contains the remains of my parents. I regularly come, every year, to offer up my prayers beside the grave of all I once held dear.”

While Mrs. Douglas was standing a little way apart, Mr. Douglas stood thoughtfully looking on the grave and the tombstone at the head of it. I did not speak a word, for I knew what was going on under his waistcoat. I had rather, under such circumstances, visit a country churchyard, than go to

Westminster Abbey on an ordinary occasion. After a while Mr. Douglas walked silently away, but I observed that his voice faltered a little, when, some time after, he said, "Now let us go into this beautiful village church. How finely the spire springs up among the trees! how sweet are the village bells! they remind me of former days, and former joys.

"How beautifully is the music of the village bells described in the following verse, by the poet Hood.

'Dear bells! how sweet the sound of village bells,
When on the undulating ear they swim!
Now loud as welcomes! faint, now, as farewells!
And trembling all about the breezy dells,
As flutter'd by the wings of cherubim!'

"Look at that fine old yew tree! under the luxury of its shade many a good game have I had, and in the kitchen of yonder farm house often have we

'Chased the slipper by its sound,
And turn'd the blindfold hero round and round.'"

We passed by a tall poplar tree, which, fifty years ago, Mr. Douglas planted with his own hand. "You see, Mr. Parley," said he, "the tree has outgrown me, but, who can tell? I may reach the sky first yet."

On one occasion when Mr. Douglas visited the place, one of his little boys climbed the tree, that he might break off a branch, and set it in the ground at home. He was told that he must not climb the tree, as it grew on another's ground. "Why not?" said he, "*We* set it." Thus it is that children take merit from the deeds of their fathers. As he grows up he must remember,

"They who on virtuous ancestors enlarge,
Produce a debt, instead of a discharge."

Well, after a most delightful ride we returned to dinner; I then reminded Mr. Douglas of his promise to give me some anecdotes of his early life, which he did in the following manner.



CHAP. III.

MR. DOUGLAS GIVES SOME ANECDOTES OF HIS EARLY LIFE

“MR. PARLEY,” said Mr. Douglas, “I have no claims from birth. I am so far a republican as to consider that a man’s merit rests entirely with himself, without any regard to family blood or connexion.

“My father, as you saw by the inscription on the tomb stone, died at an early age. I was then quite young, but by one thing I can recall him to my mind. He was always pleased to sit at the door when there was a storm. One day there was a violent thunder storm, and I went to stand between his legs, fearful that the lightning might injure him: many a time in after life have I gone back in my memory to that moment.

“After his death, my mother, oppressed with business, was induced to marry again; she got no helpmate in her husband, and found that she had done wrong, while sorrow soon brought her down to the same grave with my father.

“Left an orphan, I was sent a long way into Scotland to a parish school. Schools, much to the

credit of Scotland, are in every parish, and all persons are rated to pay the expenses. Ignorance there is a crime; I wish it were so in England; and I do hope, although I am now old, to see the day when all will be compelled to be properly educated; we shall then, with God's blessing, be better Christians, and more fit to fulfil all our relative duties. Half a crown for a quarter of a year, was all the money ever spent in my education, and yet even with that small payment, my education was not neglected. You must not, however, expect to hear me quote the classics.

“Part of my master's plan was to call on the parents of his scholars, and ask what they intended to do with the lads when they quitted school, ‘because,’ he used to say, ‘when I know this I shall be better able to direct the plan of their studies to their future course of life.’

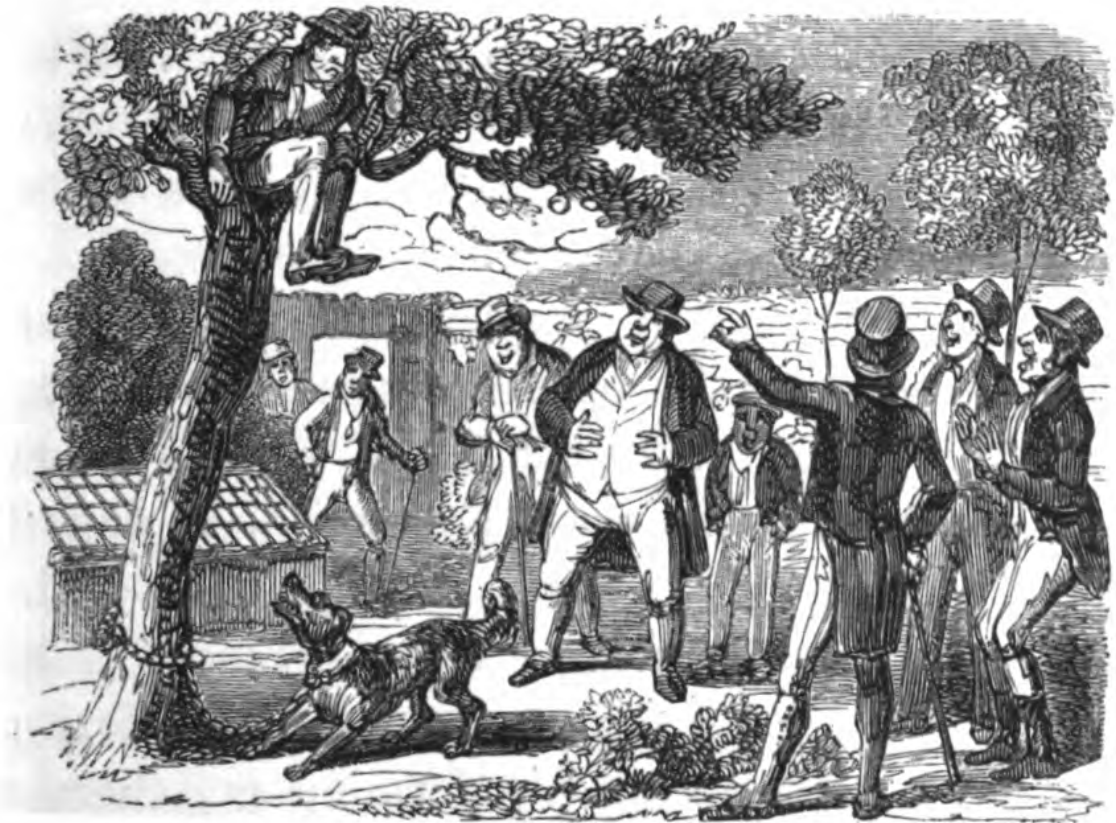
“I never shall forget Mr. Graham: his mode of teaching was always good, and frequently interesting. Saturday was wholly devoted to what he used to call refreshing: on that day, we put all our knowledge into practice, and frequently, in our walks, derived great and lasting benefits. I remember one day when we were out walking, that he pointed across a field,

and asked what that man was doing? The answer was ready, he is ploughing the land to prepare it for the seed. 'That is good,' said he, 'but answer me, boys, is it necessary to plough the land to produce crops.' 'Not in all cases,' said David Thompson, an intelligent lad, one of our schoolfellows; 'you know, sir, Calmet explains the passage, Cast your bread upon the waters, and after many days it shall increase, by referring to the eastern mode of sowing, when the waters of the Nile are beginning to subside. There is no plough used there, sir.' Many such anecdotes I could relate; but I will only say, on the day that I quitted the school to begin a new era in life, all the boys were called together, and, in a speech that never will be forgotten, he bade me farewell:—that was a day of heaviness and sorrow. When he had finished addressing me, he gave me a copy of Franklin's works. I then left him to join my schoolfellows for the last time, and to partake of joys that none but school boys know.

"In course of time I was put apprentice in Edinburgh. My master was a tyrant, and an infidel; my mistress, God bless her! was almost an angel. My master regularly, every market day, got drunk, and then came home and beat the whole of his servants,

and his wife also. One day I remonstrated with him, when beating me; I told him I had done nothing worthy of a beating. 'You young rascal,' he replied, 'you may want a beating when I am busy, so I will give it you now I am at leisure.' This, Mr. Parley, you will say was a poor reason for his oppression.

"I will tell you of a curious method that my master had to punish a thief. His garden had been robbed several times, so he set a man to watch. Presently the man came in great haste into the parlour, 'Sir,'



THE THIEF IN THE APPLE TREE.

said he, 'there be a man up in the apple tree.' 'Very

well, Robert,' replied my master, 'take the house dog with his chain, and fasten him to the foot of the tree, then leave the dog and the thief to pass the night together as well as they can; in the morning I will go and look at them.'

"Well, in the morning he went, and true enough there was the thief up in the tree and Dash at the bottom. 'Why don't you come down, my man?' said my master; but a look at the dog was quite answer enough. The bellman was then sent round the village, requesting the inhabitants to come and see some curious outlandish fruit; and rare fun it was for them. In the evening the dog was removed, and the man got so laughed at that he was actually compelled to leave the village.

"I stayed with this master until my situation became unbearable; I then left my place, and at the early age of sixteen, without friend, without money, and without a guide, with one shilling, and Dr. Franklin's life in my pocket, I began the world. I found great reason for hope when I read Franklin, and in my mind's eye saw my happy star before me. This small volume assisted in forming my character. It established certain fixed principles in my heart, which, I am thankful to say, have never forsaken me.

My friend Franklin taught me early habits of industry and frugality ; he taught me that industry without prudence may become a vice ; he instructed me never to eat my breakfast until I had earned it ; he taught me to profit by experience. Those, Mr. Parley, who learn from the experience of others are happy men, those who learn from their own experience are wise men, but those who learn neither from their own nor from other people's experience, must be fools. The moral maxims of my old friend 'Poor Richard' have made such an indelible impression on my mind, that they never can be effaced. It is to Dr. Franklin's volume I owe all I possess in life. I was fond of his life and essays, and read it eagerly, as if I had foreseen, what, indeed, came to pass, that when I lost my favourite volume, I should never again meet so instructive a companion. During my apprenticeship many things happened, which, at the time, were considered to be things of consequence, but revolving years strangely alter our views, and put a different complexion on even the most momentous occurrences. I will give you two anecdotes, characteristic of the Scotch people, who, at that time, were dirty in their habits, and much given to drunkenness. Now they are a different people, they

are more cleanly, and do not drink to that excess which they formerly did.

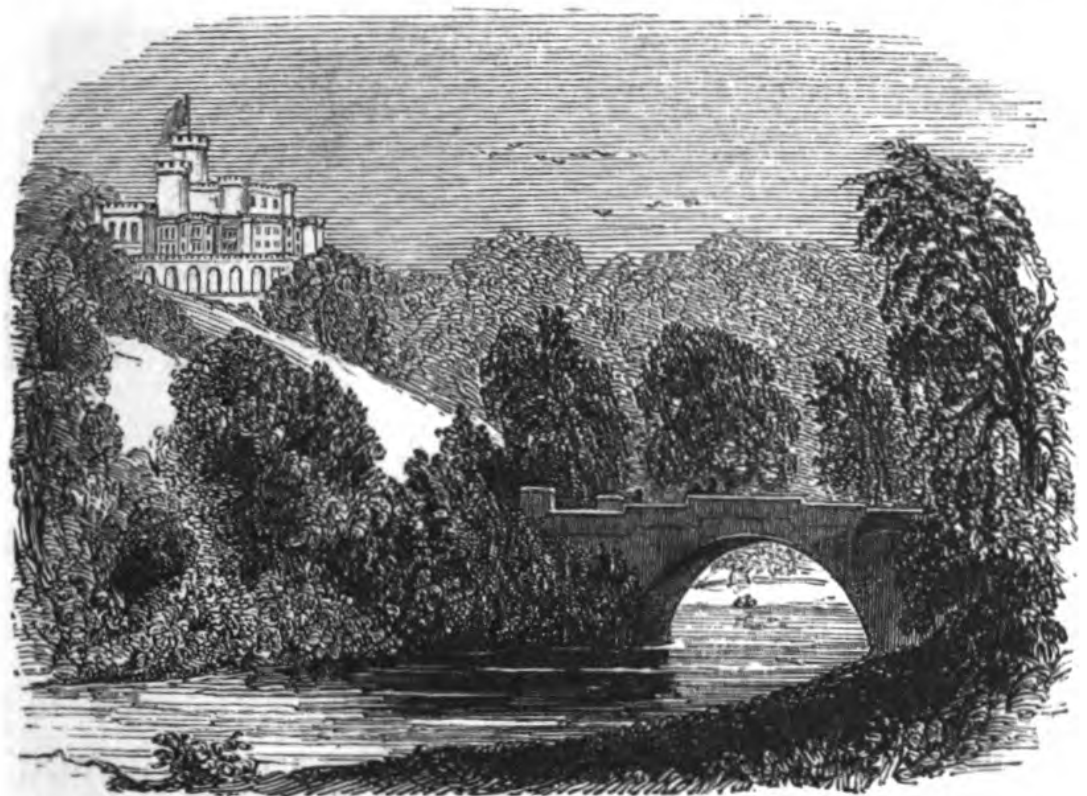
“My master was once invited to the funeral of a young child, a little way out of town. When the mourners were on their way to the grave, a violent shower came on, and they took shelter in one of those whisky shops which occasion such disgraceful scenes, where they had some liquor. As the rain continued they drank, glass after glass, till the mournful object of their journey was quite forgotten. About eleven o'clock at night, the father, having a glimpse of returning reason, asked where the corpse of his poor child was laid? When it appeared that one of the attendants had put the coffin under the bench where he sat. The drunken party retraced their steps back to the disconsolate mother's house, and the child was committed to the dust next day.

“Another anecdote,” said Mr. Douglas, “is of a less serious character. My master had a fine goose sent from the country; the cook put it down to the fire, and, when roasted, served it up to table. The children and family were delighted with its fragrance, but in attempting to carve it, my master found something hard, that prevented his putting in the fork. Not being overstocked with patience he gave it a

violent push in, when an explosion took place, accompanied with a very strong smell that astonished every one. My master's friend had put a bottle of smuggled whisky in the inside of the goose, the cook had not troubled herself to see that all was right, and so ended our expected treat!

“To resume my narrative, I left my master's house with a heavy heart, and set off to walk to London: ‘That is the place,’ thought I, ‘after all, there is no place like London!’

“I never shall forget the beautiful scenery of the Scottish Borders, the Cheviot Hills, the venerable



A CASTLE ON THE SCOTTISH BORDERS.

Border Castles, the fine old fortified town of Berwick,

the splendid bridge over the Tweed, the windings of that sweet river, the magnificent sea view, and the coast of Northumberland from the heights of Berwick; these may be seen, but the enjoyment they yield the spectator cannot be expressed.

“I passed on till I came in view of the splendid castellated residence of Earl Percy, at Alnwick.



ALNWICK CASTLE AND BRIDGE.

Then it was that all my limited youthful reading, which had been chiefly confined to Scottish History, the battles of Chevy Chace, the wars of Wallace and Bruce, and such like pieces, came fresh to my memory. The sight of this fine castle made me forget

that I was hungry, and an orphan, and destitute. I forgot every thing. I forgot that I had not the means to buy a dinner unless at the expense of my only comfort, my Franklin. I stood on the beautiful bridge at the north end of Alnwick, I leaned on the ballustrade, and mused for some time above the water which bubbled over the stones, looking with a vacant eye on the embattled castle before me, while the tears silently stole down my cheeks. It is when we are alone, Mr. Parley, that the beauties of nature and beneficence of God burst upon the mind, and then, too, our own faults, in all their sad reality, appear before us. The fine river that flowed under my feet, by its beauty excited my feelings, so that I did not perceive a gentleman who was intently looking in my face. 'Where are you going, my boy?' said he. 'I am going to sell my Franklin, sir,' I replied. 'Keep your book, my good lad, it may yet be a comfort to you.' He gave me a shilling, and then walked away, while my tongue and my heart thanked him.

"It was now my intention to dine sumptuously, and for this purpose I called at a small public-house. I know that house now; and although my hair is gray, and the furrows of my cheeks show decay, yet the remembrance of a good deed done to me that

day, with no other inducement than pity, and the kind emotions of a benevolent heart, is firmly fixed on my mind. On entering the door, a young girl, the servant of the house, said, 'Well, my pretty boy! what do you want? why, I declare, you have been crying.' She called me in; it was on a Sunday, just before one o'clock; she filled my pocket with nice hot potatoes; my mouth was soon at work, and did ample justice to this simple meal. Since the days of my boyhood I never eat a heartier dinner. She bade God bless me, and I went on my journey. Little did she think, as she looked after the poor limping lad, that her kindness would be graven on his heart. Thirty years after that day, when Providence had blessed my endeavours, I made it a point of duty to find out my former good friend at Alnwick. I found her the mother of a family. When I told her my errand, she remembered me; she said she had often spoken of me, she had often thought of the bonny poor lad. Oh! Mr. Parley, I had that day such a treat; I felt that God had indeed been good to me, in giving me the power and the will to reward that good-hearted creature. Well, sir, after long and patient endurance of sorrows and privations, after the most strenuous exertions and prudent industry, and with rigid economy, I saved enough to begin

business ; but even here I was unfortunate : I lent the major part of my hard earnings to a false friend. I did not surmount the misfortune for many years ; but now, Mr. Parley, I can say, like Joseph, the Lord prospers all my undertakings. I have a most valuable wife, the mother of my large family ; some of which are now spread over the wide world, many thousand miles from each other and from us : I trust they will be a blessing to my declining years. I could, Mr. Parley, enlarge on this narrative ; I could tell you of my adventures both by sea and land ; I could tell you of the thoughts and of the impulses of a mind naturally ambitious while under severe adversity : but the evening draws on apace, we will now have a little music, we will converse together, we will rationally enjoy all the blessings we possess."

During the time that Mr. Douglas's daughters presided at the piano, a little grand-daughter was introduced, and soon began to skip about the room in agreement with the music. Mr. Douglas looked at her with affection, and then playfully joined her in her dance. It was a pretty picture to see a man of Mr. Douglas's years, and standing, and influence in society, thus unbending his mind in affectionate pastime with a child of five years old. It reminded me of some great man, I think he was a king of

France, who was found on some particular occasion on all fours, with one or two of his children riding him pick-a-back.

I was much struck with the tale Mr. Douglas told of his many trials; I hope, my good boys, the relation of it will stimulate you to exertion; that in the most severe trials you will never despond, but use every laudable exertion to become the first of your profession in ability, integrity, and honour. Never forget that indolence is a stream that flows slowly on, but yet undermines the foundation of every virtue. Study to be acquainted with the laws and constitution of civilized nations, especially of those which flourish in your own time; this perhaps is one of the most useful parts of knowledge. Never cease to get knowledge and wisdom; recollect that an uneducated man judges by his feelings; the half educated by rules laid down by others; he who is thoroughly well educated returns again to his feelings, but to feelings corrected and purified by study and reflection.

Mr. Douglas gave me some further anecdotes of his past life, and as I think you will listen to them with pleasure I will relate them. He went on thus.

CHAP. IV.

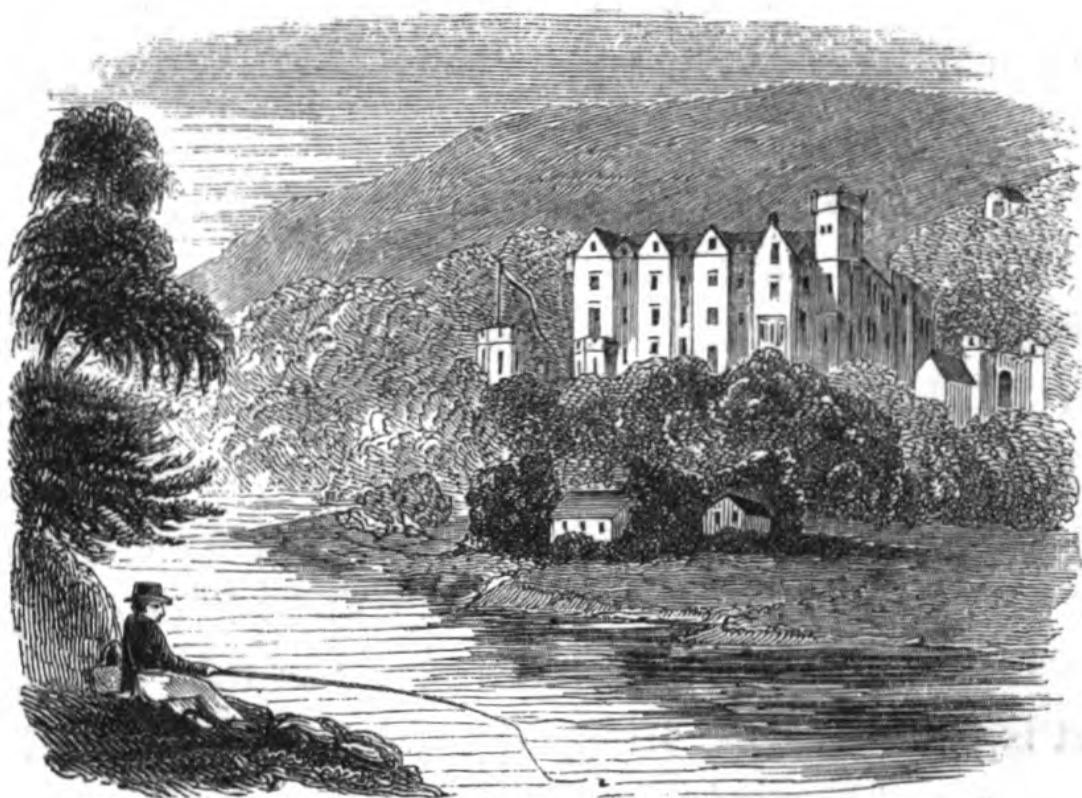
MR. DOUGLAS CONTINUES HIS NARRATIVE.

“MY master, Mr. Parley, was as fond of my working hard as he was of his own indolence, he was never satisfied, and never thought I did enough: ‘Robert,’ he said to me one day, ‘if your eating was like your working, you would soon be as thin as a rat. I shall never have to make the same complaint to you that Mr. Pritchard, the bricklayer, made to his apprentice. Mr. Pritchard was ordered to put the usual repairs on Mr. Palmer’s outhouses, so he told John Turner, his apprentice, to go and do what was required. John went on Monday morning, and on Thursday he presented himself to his master and asked for another job. “A what?” said Mr. Pritchard. “Another job, sir.”—“Did not I tell you to do that at Mr. Palmer’s? go and do it.”—“It is done, sir.”—“Done, sir; go back again, you young rascal; when I was an apprentice I always made that job last a fortnight, and you must do the same;—done, indeed, forsooth!”’

“ Life is an uncertain thing, Mr. Parley, under the most favourable circumstances ; we are here to-day and gone to-morrow. Like mariners we ought not only to look out for the squalls a head of us, but, also, to keep in mind the port we hope to make. My master died, and my mistress survived him, but, poor creature, did not mend her condition by marrying again. Her second husband kept a powder manufactory, and some short time after the wedding, while he was walking in the garden, the magazine blew up, a beam fell upon him and killed him on the spot. My mistress, nothing daunted, some time afterwards married again, but most unhappily. Her husband, a drunken fellow, would not let her have any peace until she had assigned her little property over to him, which he speedily spent. It was after this that I found her out, a poor old woman ; her fine intelligent black eyes were glassy ; her beautiful white teeth were gone ; her skin was shrivelled and dry ; her memory was so much impaired, and her intellects so far gone, that she never knew who for years fed, and, at last, laid her head in the grave. Her memory is to me most dear ; she was a good mistress ; she was kind and indulgent ; she will ever have my grateful remembrance.

“ While I am giving you this relation, Mr. Parley, things appear to rise again fresh in my memory, and though they do not come in their natural order, yet I will not pass them by. Well do I remember the school to which I went before I was bound apprentice. When I was at this school, boy like, I frequently could have eaten more, if I could have got it, but superabundance was not one of the words used at dinner time. One Saturday noon I went home with a fine sharp appetite, fit for any thing digestible, and not disposed to be particular, whatever kind it might be. ‘ Well, granny !’ cried I, for thus I used to call the old lady, ‘ is dinner ready ? what is it to be ?’—‘ In good troth,’ said the old lady, ‘ I have na’ any thing in the house, ye must just gang away and fish for your dinner,’ so putting the fishing-rod, line, and flies into my hand, she sent me off to the bonnie water of Tweed. Just opposite the spot which has since been made classic ground by becoming the residence of Sir Walter Scott,—just opposite Abbotsford, I put in my line, and in a short time brought home several dozen trout of various sizes, which were soon over the fire across the tongs. With no other sauce than a good appetite, nor any other accompaniment than a good mealy potatoe, my

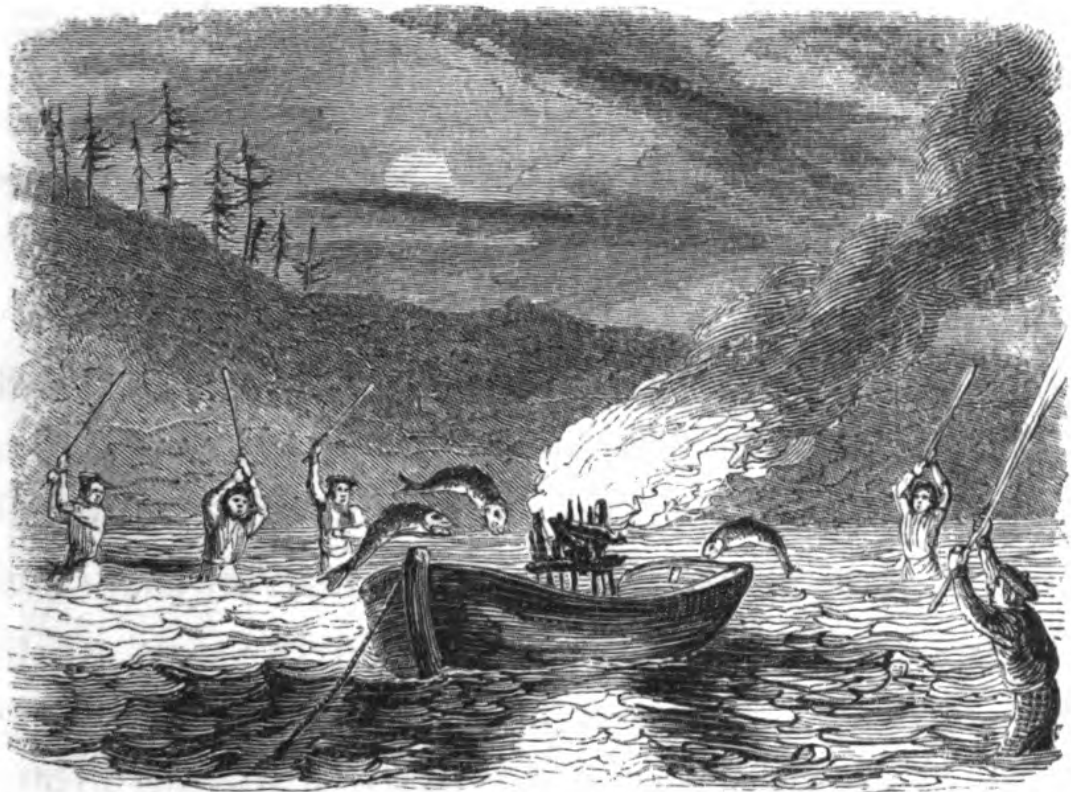
good landlady and I dined with as much happiness as falls to the lot of a king.



MR. DOUGLAS FISHING AT ABBOTSFORD.

“I dare say you have heard the saying, ‘He will never set the Thames on fire.’ Now there is a custom in Scotland that yields better sport than even that would be; it is very much like setting the water on fire. A tar-barrel, or any thing that will burn very bright and give a good glare, is placed in the middle of a boat, this is set on fire at night, when men, both below and above the boat, on each side of the river, begin to beat the water violently. The splashing and dashing

so frightens the salmon, that they make for the light with precipitation, and leap into the boat. The sport is excellent, and many a fine kipper has been caught in this manner.



CATCHING SALMON BY FIRE LIGHT.

“ During my apprenticeship I had frequent opportunity of seeing some of our first rate literary characters in Scotland : among others I met, at the table of Mr. Creech, the celebrated Robert Burns ; he appeared to be a plain, homely, good man, and his kind notice of me has left a lasting impression on my mind. Poor Burns was ruined by the would-be-great of

Edinburgh, who lionized him, intoxicated his brain with praises, and made him discontented and idle. The moment he quitted his native mountains he ceased to be the child of nature. I remember him with pleasure, for his conversational powers fully sustained the character he had acquired by his writings.

“ I have spoken to you, Mr. Parley, in high terms of my friend Franklin, of whose merits I know you are fully sensible. In your Tales about Greece you tell us that ‘ Poor Richard ’ is universally read in that classic land, being translated into modern Greek. I must now tell you wherein I differ from ‘ Poor Richard : ’ it is in regard to early marriages. I took Dr. Franklin’s advice, I married early ; but in doing so I did wrong. I forgot, Mr. Parley, that Franklin wrote in, and for, America, where children are at a premium, while I applied his reasoning to England, where children are at a discount. I am of opinion, Mr. Parley, that a man should not set up either a wife, or a carriage, until he is competent to maintain his new acquisition with some degree of comfort. If this maxim were attended to, we should have less pauperism, and fewer unhappy marriages than we have. It is not my wish to deprive the poor of any

advantage, but simply to inculcate prudence in attaining it.

“ I know, Mr. Parley, that in relating my anecdotes I am taking up your time, and running a risk of losing the advantage of your very welcome visit ; but you listen like one who feels interested in what he hears : your heart as well as your ear is enlisted.

“ It excites in our mind both pain and pleasure when the altered circumstances of those who have served us afford us the opportunity of returning the benefits we have received. I remember that in the year 1803, when going out of my house with an ugly companion at my elbow, I was met at the door by a widow, a friend, who was then in decent circumstances. She soon learnt that my companion was a sheriff's officer, who had arrested me for a debt of fifteen pounds, which at the time I had not the ability to pay. ‘ I have ten pounds,’ said the widow ; ‘ you can, perhaps, make up the remainder.’ I did so, and in a short time repaid the sum with my best thanks for her well timed kindness. Who knows, Mr. Parley, but that this kind-hearted action gave a turn to my future fortune. At that time my cup of trial was full, my load of care as much as I could sustain ; had I been taken to a jail, it might have been the

drop to make my cup of sorrows overflow,—the feather to weigh me down to the very ground.

“For many years I lost sight of my old friend; she had gone to live with her husband's relations in Scotland, and there, at last, I found her out, with her only daughter. She was evidently declining in prosperity, and stood in need of a friend. At my desire she left Scotland, and came and lived in a cottage



THE WIDOW'S COTTAGE.

which I gave her; so that, for many years, I had the pleasing satisfaction of repaying in person my debt of gratitude to her. In that cottage they lived, and

there she died, only a few months ago, in hope of a blessed immortality.”

You may be sure that I had some curiosity to see the cottage of which Mr. Douglas had spoken. He kindly took me to it. It stood in a pretty little garden, and had, I think, a vine clinging to the walls. A neatly dressed young woman was in the cottage sewing: she came to the door to ask us in, dropping us a courtesy at the same time. I regarded her with sympathy, for she was in mourning for her mother,—that mother of whom Mr. Douglas had spoken so highly. I told her that I was glad to see her in so comfortable a cottage, and hoped she would long occupy it happily. “Happiness,” said I, “does not always live in a big house; there is quite room enough to be happy in your little cottage.” She seemed to be a tidy, industrious creature, and Peter Parley wished, with all his heart, that she might prosper through her life in this world, and then go to a better.



RAILWAY CARRIAGE FOR CATTLE.

CHAPTER V.

MR. DOUGLAS CONCLUDES.

“I HAVE,” continued Mr. Douglas, “in my chequered progress through life associated with both rich and poor; I have lodged with ‘jolly beggars,’ and enjoyed the honour of a presentation to King William the Fourth. I have pleaded for assistance, and I have been elected to the first office next to the supreme one in the city of London. Attention and neglect, respect and rudeness, have I shared; but though I have, at times, met with hearts of flint among my fellow men, woman has always treated me with kindness. It has been truly said, that she ‘is the last and best of all God’s works.’ Never yet did I plead in vain to woman, never did I speak of my trials and sorrows, but she offered me the good word of consolation and the tear of sympathy. This has been the case with me through my life, from my poor old landlady on the borders of Gala Water, to my amiable wife, the ornament of my present abode.

“I remember once, when a wanderer, taking up my residence with a poor widow at Rotherham, in

Yorkshire; at sight of me she burst into tears. 'Alas!' said this poor creature, 'perhaps my poor boy, my William, at this moment may, like you, be a wanderer.'

' Throughout the day, look where I will,
In every place I see him still ;
And in my dreams—upon my bed
My poor boy rests his weary head.'



MR. DOUGLAS AND THE WIDOW AT ROTHERHAM.

“ After making me wash my feet, she tenderly ran a needle with some worsted through the blisters upon them, and made me a famous mess of warm gruel.

That night I slept sweetly. In the morning the poor widow told me of her sorrows. A neighbour, a grocer, had taken her son into his service. Some time after, the boy's master was robbed, and as the marked money was found on her son, he was sent to jail, tried, and sentenced to be transported. 'I went,' said the poor woman, 'to Portsmouth to see my boy before he was sent off; but my heart will break if I tell you about that meeting and parting: it is many years ago; but every thing is clearly before me now. My son was innocent; he told me so; he told his judge so; but the evidence seemed against him. Poor fellow! he had given change to the boy who robbed his master, and thus had stolen money in his possession. When this was discovered it was too late to save him.'

"Many years after this I learnt that the widow's son died of a broken heart in New South Wales. He lies in the burial-ground at Sydney, where his tombstone tells the sad event.

"I regret that I did not keep a copy of the letter sent by the son to comfort his poor mother. If ever pen conveyed the feelings of the heart, that letter did: he blessed his mother for giving him a religious education, and that she had taught him to detest a lie.

He had full confidence that she would not consider him guilty, and assured her he was not.

“Alas! long before she received that letter she knew his innocence, and her son’s master knew it too. Except the sorrow arising from this foul stain on her dear son’s character, she had no other reason to repine; she was kept from want, and she died happy. Her son repaid the great care she had bestowed on his limited education; she knew he was honest, and her neighbours have recorded in the church-yard of Rotherham the widow’s name, her sorrows, and their cause.”

There is no one in the world more fond of telling a tale than Pêter Parley; but I am quite as fond of hearing as of relating one, and those told me by Mr. Douglas had so much nature, simplicity, and good feeling in them, that they delighted me. It was plain enough that his heart was at work; that he spoke of things which had affected him in days gone by, and that he still loved to remember them.

As soon as Mr. Douglas had finished his narrative, he said to me, “Now, Mr. Parley, I will show you all I have left on hand of my little family, for my young people are now returned home, and our circle is complete.” He rang the bell, when in came Wil-

liam and Mary, and Frederick and Charlotte, also Alfred Byron and Hannah; all fine children. They had not been told of my being there.—“Now, children,” said Mr. Douglas, “I have a great treat for you this evening;—who do you think has come five thousand miles to see you?”—“Why, Brother James,” said Alfred.—“No, guess again.”—“Five thousand miles! which way, father?”—“From the west.”—“Then, father, I will lay you a wager it is Mr. Parley.”—“Ay, so it is.”



PETER PARLEY INTRODUCED TO THE FAMILY.

In a minute Peter Parley and the children seemed

to know each other as if they had been acquainted for years. "Are you the real Mr. Parley that lives in the little brown house at Boston?" said Frederick. I replied that I was. "Then," said he, "we shall be very happy. See, Mr. Parley, here are your Tales about the Sun, Moon, and Stars; what beautiful cuts!"—"There is one thing," said I, "that I have not put into that book."—"O, what is it? do tell us," they all cried out."—"Why, it is the weight of the moon."—"Well, I declare," said Charlotte, "I never heard of such a thing as the weight of the moon. Mamma, did you ever?"—"I am apt to think," said Mr. Douglas, "that if we guess and guess again we shall never be nearer;—now do, Mr. Parley, tell us how heavy the moon is."—"Do you give it up?"—"Yes, yes," they all said.—"Why, then," said I, "it weighs just four quarters!" Heartily did they all laugh at the astronomical conundrum.

"Now, Mr. Parley," said Mr Douglas, "I will show you a little of our domestic economy, a little of the mode we adopt in teaching the children to be attentive, to be diligent, to reflect, and to compose. We cannot do better than pay a just compliment to your great talents, by taking the subject of our studies this evening from your beautiful Tales about the Sun,

Moon, and Stars. Now children," said Mr. Douglas, "listen to Mr. Parley while he reads to you from the the book." I read some passages on comets, in which the children seemed very much interested. One of the boys was called on to repeat the substance of what had been read, which he did with great clearness and without hesitation. Slates were then ordered, and all were required to write down the tale that had been read. In a few minutes they presented me with the result, which was highly satisfactory.

"By these means," said Mr. Douglas, "we form in our young people a habit of attending to what is read or spoken; a habit of great importance, but much neglected. We thus fix their attention, cultivate their memory, and qualify them to relate any thing they read or hear. To excite reflection is one of the highest objects of education, and if there be any one thing which should be urged upon the young again and again, it is that they should learn to think."

After three of the most delightful days I ever spent, with conversation that never flagged, because it possessed the four principal ingredients to make it valuable and lasting, namely, first truth, secondly good sense, thirdly good humour, and lastly wit. I left this happy family to witness other customs and

traits of character in this highly intellectual and interesting country, which is truly the envy and admiration of all the world.

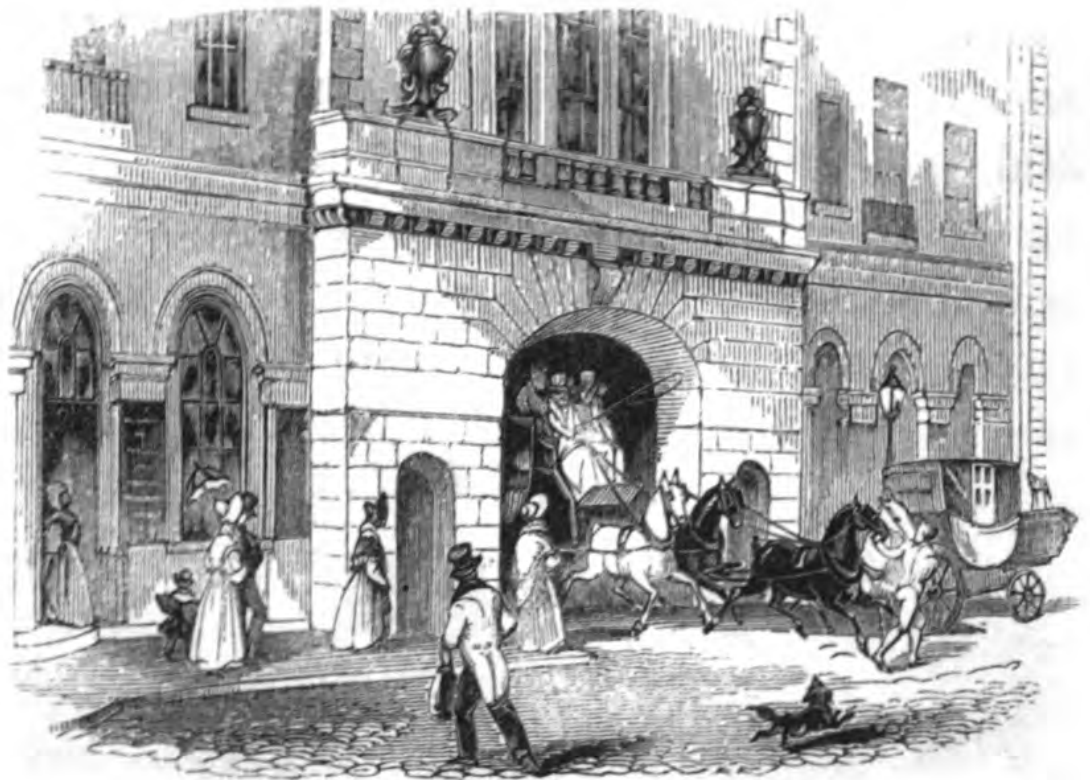
Thus far I have had a very favourable specimen of English habits, and domestic life, and I have experienced the great pleasure that arises from a hearty welcome. Few things, I am convinced, are more pleasant than a friendly reception, and nothing more grateful than warm hearted hospitality.



A CHRISTMAS PARTY.

CHAP. VI.

PARLEY RECEIVES A WELCOME LETTER AT HIS INN, THE
BULL AND MOUTH, ALDERSGATE STREET.



BULL AND MOUTH INN.

THE day after I left Mr. Douglas, I was up betimes, looking about me before breakfast. I walked up to the Post Office; it is a noble building. Then I came back and stood opposite the finely executed carving or sculpture, for I know not which it is, of the Bull and the head with the wide mouth in front of the inn,

and after that I strolled into the inn yard, to look at the stage coaches as they started off one after another. It was a bustling scene, and pleased me much.

No sooner was the yard clear than the head ostler, seeing me I suppose a little curious, came up, "May be, sir," said he, "that you would like to see the stables; they are all under ground, as dry as a bone, lighted up with gas, and will hold hard upon a hundred horses."

I lost no time, but told the ostler to lead the way. He took me into the upper yard and then down a sloping passage which led under the buildings. "There, sir," said he, "we have good water for our cattle; capital hay; plenty of clean straw; and the best of corn. These places are fit for christians to sleep in."

He then showed me all the horses, with their backs as sleek as corn and curry-combing could make them. A rail was suspended between every two horses to keep them apart, and this could be let down in an instant in case any accident took place.

In one part stood four capital bays belonging to the Crown Prince coach, with bright harness on their backs. In another four beautiful dappled greys belonging to the Wonder; further on were the horses

of the Ruby, and a dozen other coaches. He told me there were about fourteen men employed in the stables, and each had four horses one day, and eight the next, to take care of.

I was very well pleased with my visit, for I had never seen such stables before : dry under foot, arched over head, well lighted with gas, and well supplied with water.

Soon after breakfast the postman brought a letter for me, and a very welcome one it was. While I was at the house of Mr. Douglas, I had sent one of my letters of introduction, under cover to Messrs. William and Henry Charlton of Kensington ; two old bachelors, and very respectable men : and the letter brought me by the postman was a reply to it. On breaking open the seal, I found that it ran thus—

DEAR SIR,

WE were delighted to find by the receipt of the letter of our respected friend, Mr. Radcliffe of Boston that you had once more visited England. Nothing will be more agreeable to us, than to render you every assistance in prosecuting your design of collecting correct information respecting our Christmas customs for the entertainment of young people. You must

positively spend some time at Redhill Grange, where a cousin of ours resides. We have, for some time, meditated a holiday, and one, or both, of us will be ready to accompany you there, whenever you please.

It is a pleasant thing to us to go back to the days of our boy-hood, when we were among the first to keep up the games and sports of holiday times. Since then we have fed on daintier dishes, been clad in gayer apparel, and had more money in our pockets, but these things have not made us happier.

We have, very many years ago, cast aside our humming tops, and our cricket bats; we have given over flying our kites in the air, and launching our ships on the pond; and it is a rare thing for us now, to set eyes on a game of turn the trencher, or blind man's buff. We have exchanged these things for graver pursuits, but though we have become a great deal wiser, we are not a bit happier than we were in our boy-hood.

It takes a great deal to make us contented now manhood sits on our brows; but when we were young, in balancing a straw, or in blowing up a feather into the air, we were as happy as kings. O happy boy-hood! thou gatherest delight from every trifling

incident, as the bee extracts honey from every flower ! A blackberry bush is to thee a banquet ; a bag of marbles renders thee rich as the Rothschilds ; and a victory in a mimic battle makes thee, in thy own estimation, great as Alexander. A hazel switch serves thee for a warrior's sword ; a painted sheet of paper for a costly robe ; and a few platted rushes for a kingly crown !

At the farm house of our worthy cousin, you will have an opportunity of witnessing, with your own eyes, such of the customs of olden time as are still in use ; and you may, also, by moving about in the neighbourhood, pick up much information respecting customs now passed away. Many a Christmas night have we sung in the gaiety of our hearts, before creeping up to our warm snuggerly at Redhill Grange, the words

“ Without the door let sorrow lie,
And if with cold it chance to die,
We'll bury it in a Christmas pie,
And evermore be merry.”

So long as we have any remembrance of country scenes, so long must the hospitable mansion of Redhill Grange live in our memory. We have spent happy days there in Spring, when the birds were

singing, and the balmy breath of the morning was scented with the flowery hawthorn, when the milkmaid blithely chaunted her early carol, and the primrose peeped forth timidly to see whether it might safely come forth, unscathed and unscared by the wintry blast.

We have been guests there in Summer, and wandered abroad among hedgerows and coppices, green lanes, and knolly fields, while the lambs were scampering one after another up the sunshiny slopes, and the daffodils were dancing in the breeze.

We have visited the place in Autumn, when the orchards were laden with fruit, and the wide-spread fields waved with golden grain, ornamented here and there with a blue button and a scarlet poppy. We have mingled with the reapers, followed the last loaded waggon, and shared the heaped up abundance and rural revelry of the harvest supper.

But though these seasons were rich in enjoyment, we much question if they equalled, in amount of pleasure, what we derived from the hardy habits, the healthy exercise, and delightful in-door fire side amusements of winter.

Christmas nights are different from all others; the

pinching frost, the roaring wind, the driving sleet, and the falling snow, drive us, not only to each other's fire sides, but, into each other's hearts for comfort. We are all ready to listen, and have all something to say, for one Christmas reminds us of another. By-gone days come back again, and persons and things start up before us with all the freshness of yesterday. The changes and even the troubles we have passed through, heighten the contrast; the present enjoyment, and the very absence of one dear friend, by deepening the tone of our feelings and affections, binds us the more closely to those, if any such remain, who have an equal hold on our hearts.

But we are forgetting ourselves in calling to remembrance by-gone seasons. One of us will make an early call at your inn; in the mean time allow us to say how gladly we should, at all times, receive you as our guest, and how much we remain,

Your admirers and obedient servants,

WILLIAM and HENRY CHARLTON.

To Mr. PETER PARLEY,

Bull and Mouth Inn, Aldersgate.

In the course of the day Mr. William Charlton, the elder of the two brothers, called upon me, and I found, that, of all men in the world, he seemed the best suited to lend me a helping hand, being so well versed in Christmas customs, and so very much attached to them.



WINGFIELD MANOR HOUSE.

CHAP. VII.

PARLEY'S INTERVIEW WITH MR. CHARLTON.

MR. WILLIAM CHARLTON had not been with me an hour before it was agreed that we should both proceed, in a few weeks, to Redhill Grange, the farm of his cousin; the strong hold of English customs and English hospitality.

The conversation I had with him much pleased me, for I soon perceived that he knew all about festivals, and the religious services of Christmas, and the sports and revelries of the season in doors and out, in town and in country.

No one could be more at home than he seemed to be, when describing jugglers, and ancient harpers, masks, mummers, and gallantee shows, as well as the omens and superstitions of olden times.

He had been present at Christmas Eve parties, Christmas Day festivals, and Twelfth-night banquetings, and had often watched the Old Year out, and welcomed the New Year in.

He could repeat no end of Christmas carols, wild ballads, and ghost stories; and was familiar with midnight masses, yule clogs, wassail bowls, bob apple, shoe the wild mare, and hoodman blind, steal the white loaf, hot cockles, and snap dragon.

But what gave an interest to all he said, was, the ardour with which he went into every subject. I could have listened to him from morning to night. "Mr. Parley," said he, "I love Christmas because I love to see people happy. The season ought strikingly to remind us of our duty to God, and also of what we owe to our poorer neighbours.

"In ancient times the savage Danes held a festival at this season of the year. Their galleys were pulled up high on the beach, that the pirate crew might feast and revel in their 'pine built hall.'

"There hung their spears, their battle axes, and their shields. There they banqueted on the half-roasted steer, and caroused through the night in capacious cups of mead wine and black beer, boasting of their victories, and flinging about, in brutal mirth, the half-gnawed rib and splintered marrow-bone.

"Suddenly, half mad with wassailry, they rose

from the banqueting board, to dance around the blazing pile, yelling their war songs in savage delight, while their red locks streamed loosely in the breeze.

“This is not exactly the way that we keep Christmas. With us, it is a happy domestic season, for then, many a family group assemble round the well spread table, in town and country, that have not met together the livelong year. The old father and the aged mother look on their assembled children with pride, and sons and daughters, with sparkling eyes, try which shall pay the most attention to their aged parents. Christmas day dinner is the feast of affection, and family hearts are drawn more closely together!

“I could give you twenty sketches of Christmas day. Look at the cottage scene: Old Gaffer Andrews has been at his great wooden coffer, for he is dressed in his Sunday blue coat with gilt buttons broad and flat; his leathern breeches are yet almost as good as new. Gammer Andrews is a capital match to her honest old helpmate; there is a matronly comeliness in her russet gown and spotted red handkerchief, that inclines one to feel respect as well as to pay it.

“The aged pair have been at church together, the

church on the hill that Gaffer has attended from his



REDHILL GRANGE CHURCH.

boyhood. Their hearts are grateful to God for his manifold blessings, and now they see themselves once more surrounded by their children, 'their heads,' in the language of Holy Scriptures, appear to be 'anointed with oil, and their cups to run over.'

"John and Thomas, sturdy young fellows, have walked full nine miles, from the farms at which they are at work, to join the party, and their ruddy-faced sister Betty has got a holiday from her mistress, to spend Christmas day at her father's cottage.

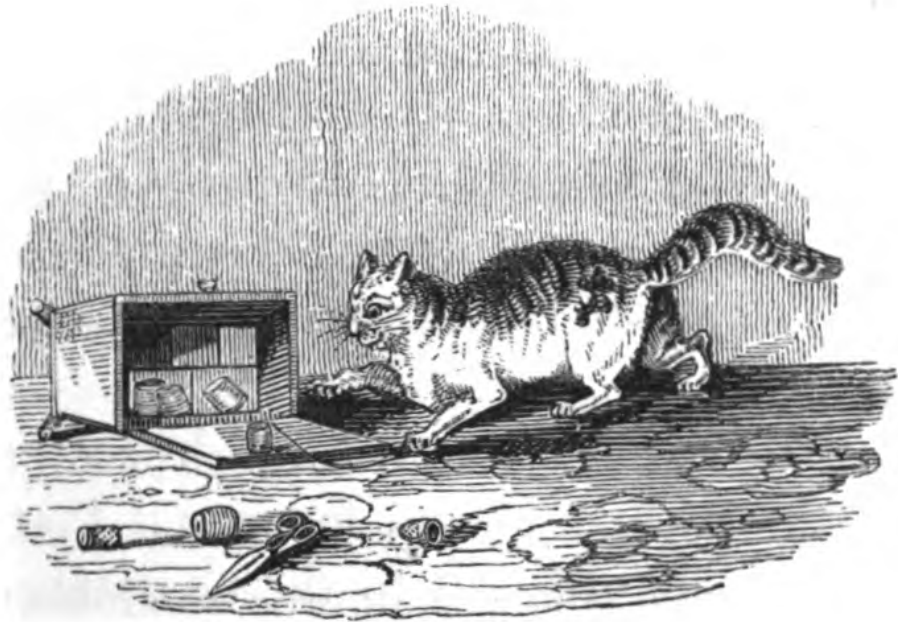
“Christmas day, Mr. Parley, the birthday of the Saviour of the world, cheering and reviving though it be, is yet too solemn, in my poor opinion, to be spent in light-hearted revelry; therefore, without presuming to indulge in severity towards those who think otherwise, I had rather see the ‘big auld Bible’ on the table on that day after dinner, than any thing else that could be placed there, and I had rather hear the lips of old Gaffer Andrews reading the words in the prophet Isaiah, ‘Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given,’ or the chapter in the New Testament wherein the shepherds set out to present their offerings to the Holy Child, the Infant Redeemer, than listen to the rude uproar of riotous mirth.

“But look again at the aged couple, for their eldest son, William, has just arrived with his hearty looking wife and three children; Gaffer has a little grandson on each of his knees, and Gammer is almost smothering with kisses her little granddaughter.

“The good cheer smells savoury. The red berried holly in the window is cheerful, pleasant is the click of the wooden clock behind the cottage door, sprightly is the kitten playing with the dangling strings at Thomas’s breeches knees, and bright is the log burning on the chimney hearth. Happy as John,

Thomas, and Betty, William, his wife, and their three children are, they are not half so happy as old Gaffer and Gammer Andrews.”

In this manner he went on, till I felt certain that I should find him a pleasant companion in my intended visit to Redhill Grange, nor was I mistaken in my opinion. My curiosity was excited to see the scenes he had described, and I looked forward to the time of our departure from London with increased pleasure.



CHAP. VIII.

PARLEY SPEAKS OF THE CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS OF OLDEN
TIMES.

IN delivering the remainder of my letters of introduction, I found a welcome every where, every one seemed anxious to have me for a guest, but I thought to myself, my inn will be the best place for me just at present, there I shall be alone, and at liberty to follow out my own plans.

After all, a good inn is a very comfortable place: you can go to bed and rise at your own hour; you can go out and come in when you please; and have your meals, what you will, and when you will, without putting people out of their way; and then, the delightful feeling of independence is worth all put together.

I began to inquire about English customs from different people, and I soon found out that modern Christmas is very different to the Christmas of days gone by.

Boys and girls may sing carols in Aldersgate Street now, when the frost pinches their fingers and toes,

and go from house to house hardly getting a half-penny for their pains, but it was not always so; Christmas was once a joyous time indeed.



TOWN CAROLS.

“England was merry England when
 Old Christmas brought its sports again ;
 ’Twas Christmas broach’d the mightiest ale,
 ’Twas Christmas told the merriest tale,
 And Christmas pastimes oft would cheer
 The poor man’s heart throughout the year.”

The Post Office and the buildings round, and the inn at which I was, occupy the place where once

stood buildings of a different description. Those who lived there in olden time would not know Aldersgate Street now.

The old gate once stood there, and the priory of Martin's le Grand. This was a proud building, with a royal endowment. Many a sleek-headed, fat-sided, monk found there comfortable quarters.

And then there was the mansion of the Duke of Brittany, a splendid pile, well filled with noble guests, and rosy-faced serving men, in livery, to wait upon them. Many "a fayre ladye" sat down to the banquet board, thronged with gallants, and many a noble steed neighed aloud from the well supplied stalls.

Then was the time for Christmas carols, and groups of the holy brotherhood wandered, from place to place, with their sacks and wallets gathering "largesse." Few sent them away empty; for the hand is liberal when the heart is happy. In the king's own court yard might be seen, in those days, the warbling minstrel, habited in green, with silver badge, nor was there any lack of attendants to listen while he chaunted the accustomed strain. "The first good joy that Mary had," or "Good morrow, merry gentlemen!"

The carol singer must have been in his glory in those "good old times," when his well known ditty was freely rewarded by the priory porter, with a loaf



CAROL SINGERS OF THE OLDEN TIME.

of good brown bread, and a mug of good brown beer, to say nothing of the broken victuals, and the silver penny, and the hearty blessing of the season.

And still more must he have rejoiced when some jovial serving man, half in fun and half in merry mischief, dragged him along, nothing loth, into the hospitable kitchen of the Duke of Brittany, where haunches and sirloins and buttocks lay in heaps, and

the groaning meat blocks, the creaking spits, the blazing fires, the reeking cauldrons, the rich and racy fumes of roast, and boiled, and stewed, and the smoking plum porridge, delighted his senses.

I can fancy that I see him with a goodly group of turnspits and scullions around him, as well as cooks and pantlers, and housemaids, waiting maids, and serving men, stretching out their necks to catch his strains. And I can fancy that I now hear him, with a shrill voice, chaunt forth the words,

“Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born king;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled,”

till grooms, huntsmen, falconers, and falconers' men, come trooping from all quarters to join the kitchen party.

The great dine not, now, at the hour they did then. Five and six o'clock is, now, far from being thought late, but in those days an alarum was sounded at the buttery hatch, and right loud were the strokes given there, as notes of preparation, that the dinner might be duly and truly served up at “ten of the clock.”

The carol singer left not the place till he had fared sumptuously, for though he had an appetite, what he

consumed was but a morsel from the mass; and though he drank deeply, he diminished not visibly the nutbrown abundance of the broached cask. His bits and drops were freely awarded him.

The grandfathers of the present generation of English people kept up Christmas bravely. During their days, silver salvers, flagons, tankards, and cups were made to wear an unusual brightness, furbished afresh for this honoured festival. China jars, and costly tea things came suddenly to light, and things, rare and curious, were ostentatiously displayed, stuck with rosemary and holly.

Many were the guests, and all welcome, that sat down to the bounteous board, of good old English orthodox dishes. It would have driven a miser mad to see how lavishly the table was spread, and how lustily the good humoured party pulled away at the smoking sirloin, and drained the mantling cup.

The worthy host, with his damask napkin drawn through an upper button hole, looked, every inch, a good old English gentleman; and madam, in her high head-gear and brocade stomacher, with her lawn handkerchief, and pinned up point ruffles, was a fit and worthy helpmate. There she sat at the

head of her own table dexterously carving for the company.

During the reign of Elizabeth, or as the English call her "Old Queen Bess," there were merry doings at Christmas time. The nobles of the land would have held it a sin not to keep open house and was-sailry, and every "gentleman of worship," nothing backward to keep up the observances of olden time,

"Had a good old custom when Christmas was come,
To summon his poor neighbours with bagpipe and drum,
And good cheer enough to furnish every old room,
And good ale to make a cat speak and a man dumb."

English people, though now "the right hearted revelry" of ancient days has in a great degree ceased, have no lack of ballads, and carols, and whimsical ditties, that remind them of what took place among their forefathers.

One English writer expresses himself thus:—

"A man might then behold,
At Christmas, in each hall,
Good fires to curb the cold,
And meat for great and small:
The neighbours were friendly bidden,
And all had welcome true;
The poor from the gates were not chidden
When this old cap was new.

Black jacks to every man
Were filled with wine and beer ;
No pewter pot, nor can,
In those days did appear.
Good cheer in a nobleman's house
Was counted a seemly show ;
We wanted no brawn nor souse
When this old cap was new."



OLD BARONIAL HALL.

But though Christmas was "kept alive" in the time of "Old Queen Bess," the customs of those days were not equal in mirth and table revelry to the festivities of olden times before them. "Manchet," and "wastel bread," and "peacock pie," and the

prodigious provision of ancient revelry, are now unknown; the imposing ceremonies of the church, the gorgeous revellings of the court, and the ruder hospitality of the common people, were, at one season, almost unbounded. I am, now, just alluding to these things, by and by, I shall describe them more fully to you.



CHAP. IX.

PARLEY CONTINUES HIS OBSERVATIONS.

I CAN hardly hope to make you fully understand the influence that old Christmas had over English people in the middle ages; religious services were so mingled with unrestrained feasting, that every man seemed to consider it as much a duty to wassail, as to go to church. From Advent to Christmas eve, was a time of gorgeous preparation.

The palace of the king, and the castle of the bold baron, vied with each other in hospitality; the slaughtered beeves, the broached wine casks, and the huge barrels of nut brown ale, gladdened the eye that saw them; and the poor man who heard of them felt a glow in his heart, for he knew that he should share the abundance that was provided: he knew, hard as was his fare at other seasons, that, at Christmas, no one would grudge him his banquet, let him eat and drink what he would.

In those golden days of free-hearted banqueting, they seemed to take for their motto, the precept in the

gospel parable, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled;" for messengers were sent forth from every castle gate to give due notice of the approaching festival. No wandering knight, or toil-worn pilgrim wanted a welcome; all were freely invited to make merry, and partake the joyous sports provided for them.

Nor was this all, for, at the different market crosses, when the people were abroad in the greatest numbers,



POURSUIVANTS PROCLAIMING THE FESTIVAL.

embroidered coated heralds, and scarlet clothed poursuivants, proclaimed aloud at what place the king

would hold his full court, and where he invited his liege and loving subjects to meet him, and freely share his forty days' hospitality.

If the invitation was freely given, it was as freely accepted, and the high ways, and by ways, became thronged with light hearted revellers. Minstrels and mummers, fire eaters and jugglers, were mingled with knights, and esquires, clerks, archers, and grooms. Here the carol singer dabbled through the miry road, and there the gay and gallant troubadour, on his palfry, rich with spangled housings, curvetted proudly amid the throng.

It sounds strange in our ears that, the psalm singing of the church should be so closely followed by the wild shout of revelry, but in those days it was as a matter of course. No sooner did the time come, for the priest to stand up in his rich and sacred vestments, at the altar illumined with tapers, and decked with holly, to sing aloud,

“Sound the trumpet in Zion,”

than a general jubilee began throughout the land.

From that hour labour was forgotten, the ancient dame no longer seated herself at her spinning wheel, the hard working hind yoked not his steer to the

team, but sounds of rejoicing were heard. The carol was sung, the wassail shout rang to the echoing roof, while the Christmas candle was lighted, and the yule clog was placed upon the hearth stone.

Then were the days of superstition, for every man believed that the rose tree blossomed, and the thorn tree at Glastonbury put forth its green and shining leaves, at twelve o'clock on Christmas eve. They were confident that, while the midnight bell was chiming, the ox in the stall, the horse in the stable, and the stag in his ferny lair, were kneeling down in humble adoration.

Those who were afraid to go abroad on other nights, went without fear on Christmas eve, for neither witches, nor warlocks, ghosts, nor will-o'-the-wisp, could then, in their apprehension, do them any mischief. The faint hearted youth ventured out, alone, in the solitary place; and the timid maid went into the churchyard, while the cold moon lit up the death's head and cross bones on her father's grave.

It was an imposing spectacle, when at break of day, the second mass was sung, for then the officiating priest chaunted aloud, "Unto us a child is born," and the harmonious choir burst forth in loud rejoicings.

That chaunt was not hailed alone by the rich, or by the poor, for every class regarded Christmas as a peculiar season, when the privilege to be happy seemed to be extended. The act of devotion that served as a signal to the jubilee which was to follow, was acceptable to all. The chaunt of the priest, and the choral response from the choir, were grateful music that rung in the delighted ears of the assembled throng. "Unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given," was responded to by the hearts of the congregation, for it proclaimed in the same breath, the Saviour of the world, and a season of general joy.

The palace of the king, and the baron's hall, were then widely opened; and the high born, and the lowly, freely mingled together. The courtly baron laughed with his vassals, and the "dame of high degree," condescended to sport with her handmaidens.

At other times the seneschal, the stern constable of the castle, kept order all around him; but, at Christmas, a lord of misrule was appointed to heighten as well as to regulate the sports, as though common wassailry was not enough for the occasion. Games and pageantry, and banqueting, went hand in hand

with devotional ceremonies, for the morning was given to the church, and the rest of the day to feasting and revelry. Such was old England at Christmas time.

You may have heard of King Arthur, and his knights of the round table; if all that is reported of him be true, respecting his Christmas feasting, both he and his knights were lusty wassaillers.

“They served up salmon, venison, and wild boars,
By hundreds, and by dozens, and by scores.

Hogsheads of honey, kilderkins of mustard,
Muttons, and fatted beeves, and bacon swine;

Hérons, and bitterns, peacock, swan, and bustard,
Teal, mallard, pigeons, widgeons, and, in fine,

Plum puddings, pancakes, apple pies, and custard;

And therewithal they drink good Gascon wine,

With mead, and ale, and cider of our own,

For porter, punch, and negus, were not known.”

The humbler classes are always disposed to enjoy themselves, when they have the opportunity; but in old times, when their “betters” shared their carousals; when the rich sat down with the poor, and the learned walked in the same childish pageant with the clown, the enjoyment of the labourer must have been doubled; he was kept in countenance by those whom he regarded as his examples.

Bear in mind, and be not surprised if I, again and again, repeat the remark, that I am only describing the Christmas mirth of olden time, and not undertaking to justify it, in all its recklessness. Those who are most attached to pleasure must admit that an old English Christmas had many habits and customs, which they cannot defend; nor can the most scrupulous opposer of intemperance deny the value of that open hearted hospitality, and open handed charity, practised by the Christmas revellers of other days.

You must not forget, my little friends, that at the time of which I have been speaking, the Holy Scriptures were not in the hands of every one, as they are now; printing was not known, and the written copies of the Holy Word, which then existed, were in the hands of learned men only.

“The Scriptures were in ancient tongue,
The truth was hard to seek,
In Hebrew they were written then,
In Latin, and in Greek.”

The great doctrine of the Gospel, the coming of the Redeemer into the world to tabernacle among men, being set forth more fully at Christmas time, might be attended with many excellent consequences. It is true that the common people saw the truths

of Christianity "through a glass darkly," for the teachers of those times surrounded the Scriptures with many clouds and much darkness; yet even the glimpses they had of the Saviour of the world might be a blessing to them.

Their ignorance respecting Divine things should make us regard them less severely. It becomes us to be very merciful in judging one another. Christmas was to them a season that brought "peace on earth," and "good will towards men." In the midst of their wild mirth, the cheerful red-berried holly in the hall, the illumined church, the "glad tidings of great joy," and the hymn of praise at morn and midnight, were doubtless not altogether useless.

If we were a little more charitable in thinking of those who have gone before us, and a little more severe in reprovng ourselves, it would be an advantage to us all. When I read of the Christmas doings of days gone by, I find something to avoid and something worthy of imitation; but being of a cheerful disposition, I love to look on the sunshiny side of all things. So long as I live, a sprig of red-berried holly will be found in my button-hole on Christmas Day.

CHAP. X.

THE AFFECTING STORY OF SARAH WILMOT.

AMONG the many things which I have now undertaken to tell you, I must not omit an affecting story related to me by a gentleman, in whose company I happened to be before I left London. There is something to be learnt from it, and that may render it valuable to you.

So much does the happiness of after years depend, under Divine providence, on our conduct in youth, that I should be neglecting a duty if I did not point out this fact whenever I had the opportunity. Yes! my dear young friends, the actions of our younger days are seeds sown by us, and they spring up again after their own kind. Holy Scriptures tell us that men cannot gather grapes of thorns, nor figs from thistles; and it is equally true that happiness and peace will never be gained by folly and disobedience. The gentleman accosted me thus.

“ I have pleasure in addressing myself to you, Mr. Parley, because I know that your excellent

books for young people have great moral influence with the youth of Great Britain and America. I wish that you had lived, and written, in the days of my boyhood.

“The story I am about to relate is the history of Sarah Wilmot, the only surviving child of her widowed mother, a young woman of a headstrong disposition, who would not obey the just commands of her parent. Melancholy were the consequences that followed the first act of her disobedience. I scarcely need observe that we are desired by the laws of both God and man, to love, honour, and obey our parents, as well as all those who are placed over us for our good. This is a truth so plain and reasonable that it requires no argument in its support.

“It was one morning, when mother and daughter were sitting together at breakfast that Sarah suddenly exclaimed, ‘O mother, there is going to be a fancy fair at Villa Field for the benefit of some charity, and I am requested to attend. I wish very much to have the care of a stall; it will be so delightful to sell goods, and have all the gentry round about me;—pray, mother, let me keep a stall.’—‘My dear,’ said Mrs. Wilmot, ‘I am not quite satisfied about these fancy fairs. Some think that they injure many poor

honest folks, who live by selling such articles as are sold at the stalls; and I greatly fear that they do mischief to many respectable females who, while they preside at the stalls, are exposed to the impertinent gaze and conversation of the vulgar and the dissolute. My dear Sarah, I am sure that you will give up this plan when you know that it is decidedly against my judgment and inclination. Write an excuse; say that I requested you not to attend.'

“ Well had it been for Sarah had she followed this advice; but, no, she was self-willed. Led on by vanity, she took the first step towards vice by telling her mother an untruth. She attended at Villa Field during the three days of the fair, though she had pledged herself to a contrary course. This first act of disobedience, this determined opposition to her mother's will, was the foundation of all her sorrows, and eventually the cause of her death.

“ Mrs. Wilmot was a good and affectionate mother, but her spirits were not equal to the task of educating her headstrong and misguided child; she wanted firmness, and therefore lost all power over her. Often has she spoken to me on the subject. Left friendless, as she was, her peace of mind was destroyed.

She had tasted happiness ; but, alas ! it pleased God for wise purposes to deprive her of her only support.

She murmur'd not, but wore the meek address
Of deep, abiding, settled, keen distress.

“ While Sarah Wilmot presided at her stall, a young man, of respectable appearance, purchased some small article, and so ingratiated himself into



her favour, that, in an unguarded moment, she consented to see him privately, unknown to her mother. Poor girl, your first step is taken ; smooth after this

is the path to error. The result of this act of disobedience was other meetings, and finally a private marriage.

“ It now became necessary to inform her mother, who, bereaved by death of one to whom she used to look up for advice and support, was almost heart-broken. Alas, for the poor widow who is left alone in the world !

“ On making inquiry, Mrs. Wilmot found that her daughter’s husband was a dissolute young man, whose conduct had broken his mother’s heart. Poor creature ! she was hurried to an early grave. It has been truly stated that there is no affection so rooted in the heart, even among savages, as the love of a parent to a child.

“ What a lamentable thing it was that this young man, born with bright prospects, should not have possessed more honourable, more manly pride ; but true it is, that many will proudly refuse to wear their neighbour’s cast-off clothes, who meanly take up with their bad habits.

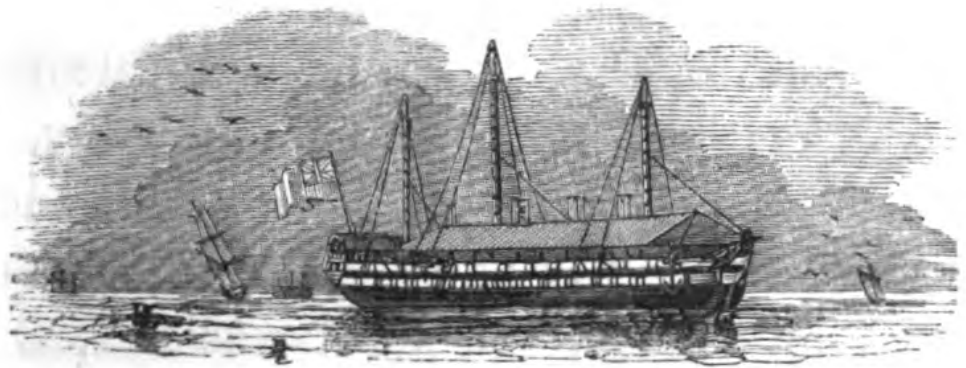
“ By his imprudence this young man had lost an excellent place under government, which his father had long filled with respectability, beloved by all who knew him. The young man was just in this

situation when he first saw Sarah Wilmot; he had lost his place; he had forfeited the affection of his father; he was overwhelmed in debt; and, knowing that Sarah, at the age of twenty-one, would be entitled to the sum of two thousand pounds, he determined to marry her. His very first act, after marriage, was to sell the reversion of his wife's fortune to a Jew broker for five hundred pounds; whereas, if he had waited two years, she was then nineteen, he would have received the two thousand.

“The way to wealth is as plain as the way to market; it chiefly depends on two words,—industry and frugality; that is, waste neither time nor money, but make the best use of both. Without industry and prudence nothing will succeed, and with them almost every thing may be accomplished.

“The money got from the Jew was soon expended, and poverty stared them in the face, when the young man's father, as a last resource, obtained a place for his son, of about two hundred pounds a year, in a far distant colony. All things were soon arranged for the voyage. Mrs. Wilmot bought a large quantity of furniture and other necessaries for their comfort. The mother was seen in all things: with a sorrowful heart she deprived herself almost of the necessaries

of life to complete her daughter's outfit. In addition to this she borrowed two hundred pounds, that they might not be destitute when they arrived at the place of their destination, giving strict injunctions to her daughter to sew up the money in her stays, that, in the event of shipwreck and escape from death, the amount might be a comfort to her. She promised to obey her mother. The ship sailed from Gravesend with every prospect of a good voyage. Sarah's husband was to join the ship in the Downs, as the desperate state of his affairs rendered this necessary. On the vessel arriving there, a blue light was set up, the signal agreed on between the captain and the young man's father: immediately a Deal boat was engaged to take the young man on board; but a fog coming on, the boat could not find the ship. After sailing about for twelve hours it returned to the shore."



CHAP. XI.

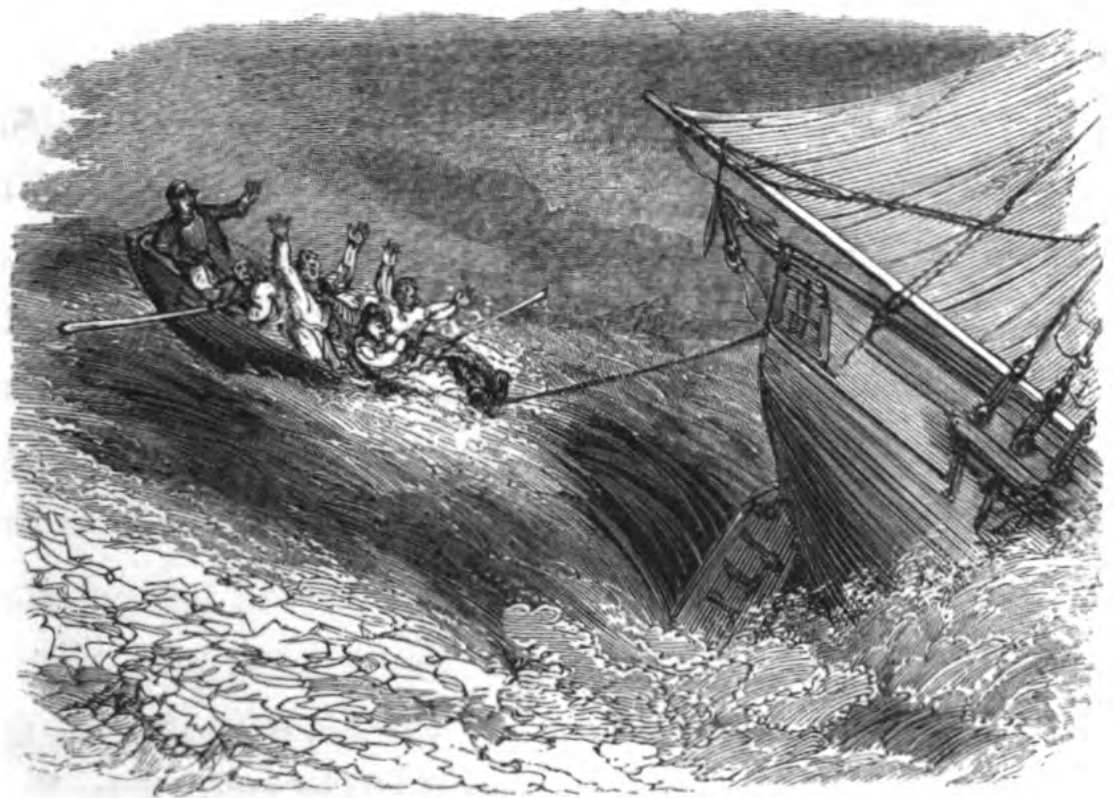
CONTINUATION OF THE STORY OF SARAH WILMOT.

“THE vessel went on her voyage, and Sarah’s situation, without her husband, was a most painful one, surrounded as she was by strangers, and going to a far distant land in a state likely soon to become a mother. The still voice of conscience spoke of her unfeeling conduct to her poor widowed parent. O that children would learn to obey their parents! how many evils would they avoid that they now endure.

“When they had been at sea about four months, the vessel came near her place of destination. Another day, and some would meet their friends, and all would once more walk on the dry land.

“The captain, being off his watch, had retired to bed, Sarah was with other passengers enjoying songs and cards, and otherways carousing, little thinking of her poor mother, who was most probably, at that moment, listening to the whistling wind, and offering up prayers for her daughter’s preservation. It was just nine o’clock, the night was fine, the ship

was going at the rate of eight knots, and the passengers were in high glee anticipating the happiness that awaited them on the morrow. Poor blind creatures ! in a moment of apparent security, while a fine breeze was blowing, the ship struck. The captain and mate ran upon deck, and too soon learned that she had bulged her bows against a rock ; the water was rushing in with great velocity, and no time was to be lost ; all hands were instantly ordered out.



BOAT PULLED UNDER WATER BY THE SINKING SHIP.

“ The captain, mate, three boys, and the passengers, were placed in one boat, and the crew in another.

When the boat, in which the passengers were, had proceeded about a hundred yards, the ship reeled forward and sank in deep water. Dreadful to relate, the crew, in the hurry of the moment, had forgotten to unloose their boat rope, so that their boat, and all on board, went down with the ship and were drowned.

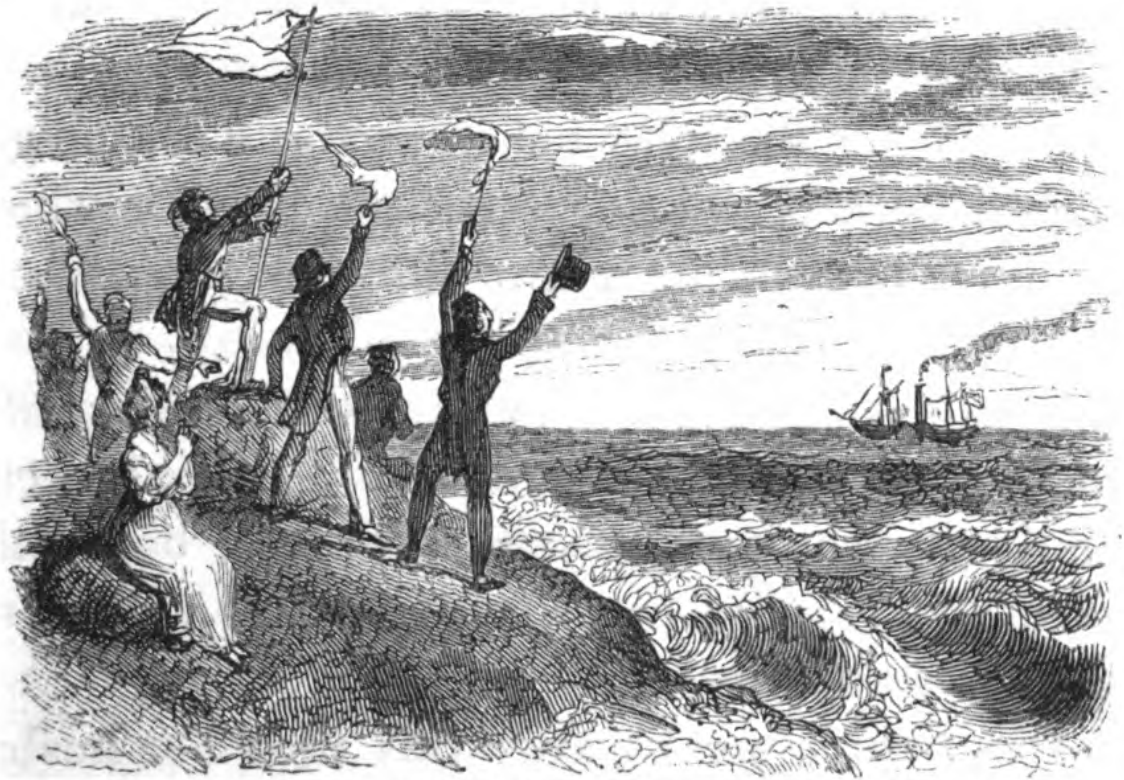
“About ten o'clock, the captain, having discovered land, ran the boat over the surf, right ashore, high and dry, on an island, but, to their grief, they found it was uninhabited; there was not even a hovel to shelter them from the heavy night dews.

“Without food, and with no means of communication with their fellow creatures, they had nothing before them but a slow death by starvation. Sarah's conscience again rebuked her. Seated on a rock on this desert island, seventeen thousand miles from home, sorely she repented the past. Among other things that rose in her mind, to recall the evils of disobedience, was her neglect to follow her mother's advice respecting her money. She had put her two hundred pounds in her clothes chest, and it had gone to the bottom with all her other little property.”

“On the following morning after the shipwreck, the sun rose with eastern splendour. The whole party dried their clothes on the rocks, and though,

at first, they had nothing wherewith to satisfy their hunger, when the tide was out they found abundance of muscles among the rocks. This was a timely relief, but then, they had not a drop of fresh water. Two days were passed on the island, anxiously keeping a look out for some passing vessel to notice and relieve them.

“On the morning of the third day they saw the smoke of a steam boat at a great distance, and in a



PASSENGERS ON A ROCK MAKING SIGNALS FOR RELIEF.

few hours had the great happiness to find that their signal, which was tied to one of the oars, had attracted the notice of those on board.

“The steamer was employed in trading with the natives among the islands for tortoise shell, palm oil, and other commodities. They were all taken on board, and the same evening landed at their place of destination.

“How different were their prospects to those they had before them, when carousing on board ship, only three days ago! Then they had every means of support, now they were destitute, in a foreign land; but the goodness of God was still manifest to them.

“Christianity had reared her head in that distant clime, and her disciples held out the hand of good fellowship, freely pouring forth the oil and wine of christian kindness, to relieve the weary and broken spirited shipwrecked strangers.

“Two days after landing, at a distance of seventeen thousand miles from her native home, Sarah became a mother. She was among strangers, but with a broken and contrite heart, she received their assistance and sympathy.

“About three weeks after this time her husband arrived. Instead of going to his wife, and giving that consolation she so much needed, he never went near her. He took, at once, to his usual mode of life, gambling, and drinking to excess. He did not even

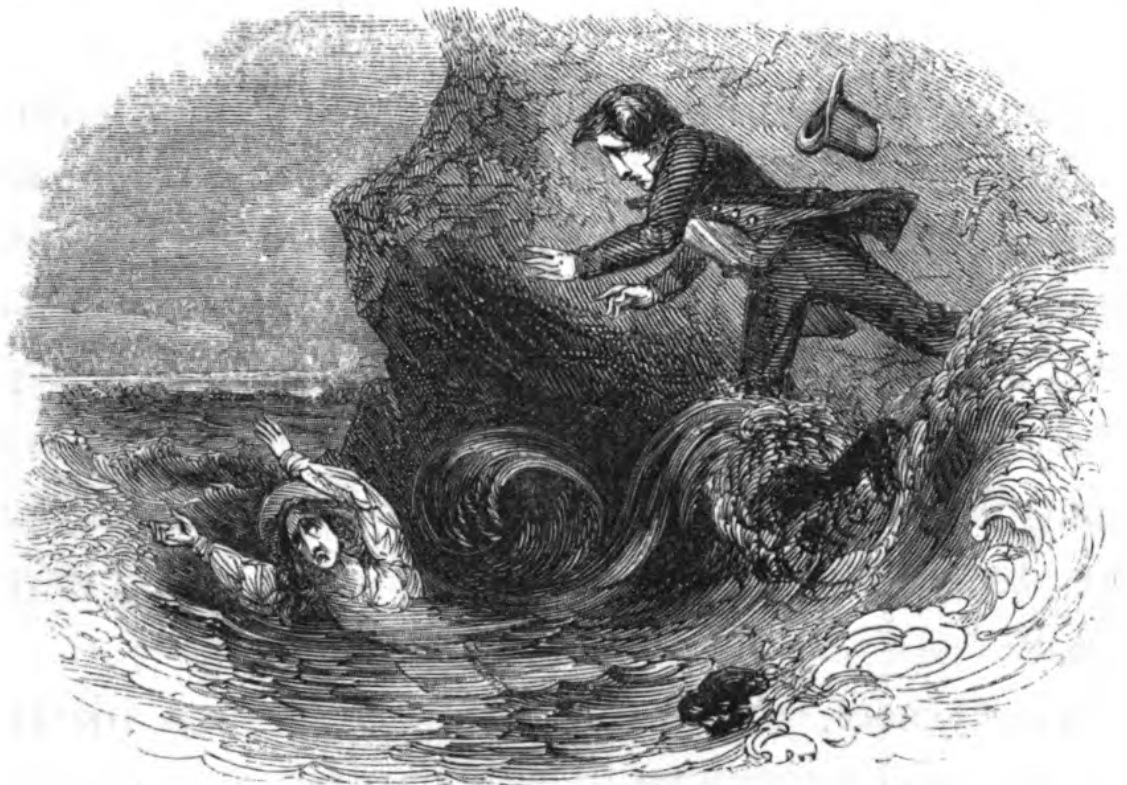
see her till she found him in one of those dens of misery and wickedness, which, unfortunately for human nature, are in most places to be found. With a sorrowful heart she determined, by the advice of those who had befriended her, to return to England. She thought of the resolution of the prodigal son, 'I will arise and go to my father;' it fortified her mind. 'I will also return,' said she, 'I will go to my poor mother, I will lay my sorrows before her, I will implore her forgiveness. I feel sure that I shall find my mother ready to receive her prodigal, her repentant daughter.'

"The sorrows of the young mother had affected her child; two days before she left the kind hearted people of that distant land, she committed her infant to the dust. She embarked on board the Hope, Captain Maxwell, bound for London, having previously sent a letter by another vessel to her mother, making known her design, and supplicating her, once more to receive her broken hearted and penitent child.

"The vessel, under providence, seemed likely to have a good voyage, and the captain put in at St. Jago, one of the Cape de Verd islands, to get fruit, and other ship stores. Some of the passengers went

on shore by the ship's boat in the morning, intending to take a stroll, that they might see the manners and customs of the inhabitants. The boat was to return to take them on board again in the evening.

“This island is situated on the coast of Africa, and is subject to great swells on the shore, frequently without any visible cause. Sarah was standing on the rocks with another passenger, a young man, waiting the arrival of the boat, which they saw at a little distance, when the water came suddenly up and



SARAH WILMOT WASHED OFF THE ROCK.

washed her off the rocks into the sea. The young

man jumped into the water to save her life, but in this philanthropic endeavour he nearly lost his own. She clung to his body so strongly that he could not use either his hands or legs, so as to keep himself above the water ; they both sank to the bottom.

“The crew in the boat, seeing the struggle, pulled the oars with all their power, but it was too late. They got up the young man with a boat hook, and with much care he was restored, but the young woman was never found : it was her unhappy destiny to die thus suddenly in a far distant country, without the forgiveness of her mother, and without a moment’s preparation for so awful a change. I had this narrative from the young man’s own lips. He said, if ever there was a penitent in the world, it was Sarah. Many times she had prayed that her example might be so placed before children that they might be taught to love, honour, and obey their parents in all things, and then, through Divine Providence, they might hope to avoid numberless evils brought about by disobedience.

“It is in furtherance of these good wishes that I have told the history of her sufferings to you, Mr. Parley, hoping that you will put it into one of your books for children, because I see and feel the moral

influence and good effect of your lessons ; they inculcate principles, and cherish affections, that will be sure to make us wiser and better. I will merely add that the tale which I have told you is strictly true, and that the widow still lives, patiently waiting the time when she shall be called from a world of cares, to join, through God's grace, her daughter in the realms above."



CHAP. XII.

PARLEY GOES TO REDHILL GRANGE WITH MR. CHARLTON.

I FORGET whether I explained to you the name of the inn I was at, in London, the "Bull and Mouth;" if not, I will do it now, with two or three other things, for in every direction round the inn, there once stood buildings which now are only known by name. The old wall of the city ran at the back of Bull and Mouth Street. Newgate, Ludgate, Cripplegate, and Oldgate were at no great distance from the place.

The Barbican, or Roman watch-tower, stood somewhat more northerly, and, then, there was the mansion of the duke of Brittany, as well as the old priory of St. Martin's le Grand.

During the reign of Henry the Eighth, the English fought a grand battle at Boulogne harbour, and took the place; after which many innkeepers in England put up for their sign "Boulogne Mouth," signifying the mouth of Boulogne harbour; but the English are famous at altering foreign names, so they altered Boulogne Mouth to Bull and Mouth.

The carved work in front of my inn, of which I

spoke before, represented a bull standing in the enormous mouth of a man.

There is a tavern at no great distance, on the other side of the street, called "the Mourning Bush;" no doubt you would like to know why it is called so. I will tell you.

In old times it was customary for vintners and tavern keepers to put up a bush for a sign. Now after King Charles was beheaded, the landlord of this tavern, being a very loyal man, put his bush in mourning, and thus the house obtained the name of the "Mourning Bush."

What with reading, collecting information, paying a short visit to the Charltons, of Kensington, making a few calls, and looking about me, the days rolled on rapidly, and the time came for me to set off to Redhill Grange, Gloucestershire, with Mr. Charlton.

Our places were taken at the Bolt in Tun, Fleet Street. We were both punctual, Mr. Charlton met me there, and away we went, two companions well suited to each other. I had seen more of the world than he had, having crossed the wide ocean in all directions, and visited distant lands; but of men, and books, he knew much more than I did: he had studied both the one and the other deeply.

We passed through Uxbridge, High Wycomb, and Oxford; Witney, famous for blankets, Burford, North Leach, and Gloucester; and arrived, the same night, at Redhill Grange, where a warm welcome, a good supper, and a comfortable bed awaited us both.

Redhill Grange is an ancient stone building with



REDHILL GRANGE.

many gable ends, pointed roofs, and stocks of high and heavy chimneys. The windows have stone mullions, and diamond panes of glass, the door is of

heart of oak knobbled with iron, and the porch has in it two strong oaken settles.

This antiquated mansion and its large farm yard are surrounded with barns, stables, and cowhouses; granaries, piggeries, henlofts, and ricks of wheat, barley, oats, rye, beans, peas, and hay; while a pigeon house, with a weathercock at the top, towers up by the corner of the well planted garden.

Farmer Holbeach has lived at Redhill Grange all his days, as his father did before him. He is a stout stickler for the keeping up of olden customs. "I know," said he, one day to me, "that when I am gone, Redhill Grange will be Redhill Grange no longer; but while I live, these old customs shall be maintained."

Farmer Holbeach is a hearty old man of about seventy: he has never known want, and being blessed with abundance, the liberality of his heart and hand are unbounded. He loves to think and to talk of old times, and his memory is well stocked with short and pithy sayings in praise of country habits and old English customs. "A hard hand is the sign of an honest heart," is an observation very frequently in his mouth, as well as the adage,

“ Hard work and good fare,
Is the best country trade,
For master and mistress,
For man and for maid.”

He rails at the refined notions and pinching parsimony of modern times, and in his boastings of the days gone by, frequently repeats, in a firm voice, the words,

“ All the world after new fangled follies may run,
But I’ll do, as my fathers before me have done.”

The honest farmer is no lie-a-bed, he rises with the lark; and though he keeps a good bailiff, he does not leave his farm unlooked after. Weekday and Sunday he has his eyes on his people.

Every Sunday morning he may be seen, stick in hand, trudging along on his way to the parish church, long before any other soul in the neighbourhood has regarded the church-going bell. He calls at the cottages right and left in his road, rapping at the door of one with his stick, shouting out at another, so that by the time he reaches the white gate leading into the church yard, a goodly posse of old gaffers and gammers and young children are at his heels.

In the afternoon it is the same, hail, rain, or shine,

to church he will go; ay, and make others go too. The old hundredth psalm is regularly sung before the service, and the full, deep, bass voice of the farmer may be heard distinctly from all others, even in the church porch. The only angry words that he ever had with the minister of the parish was, because the latter wanted to omit prayers on the saints' days, but this was an infringement on well established customs that the farmer would not listen to for a moment. The saints' days were mentioned in the Prayer Book, they always were observed in the times of his fathers, and they should be in his, so long as he was the owner of Redhill Grange, and the churchwarden of the parish.

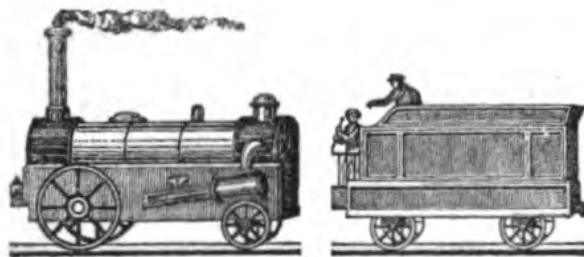
Farmer Holbeach's wife is, in every way, suited to her situation, a better, or a more industrious housewife is not to be found in the country.

The farmer is not without sons and daughters, though most of them are settled in respectable farms in different parts of the country. They collect together, however, as much as they can on all particular occasions, especially at Christmas, bringing with them an increasing number of healthy children.

I soon found myself at home at Redhill Grange, and began to observe the symptoms of approaching

Christmas. The weather had become very cold, and the fires were more abundantly supplied. The sere leaves had, for the most part, been blown off the trees. Great coats were more in request than the month before, and fieldfares, and redwings, began to fly about in flocks.

There was but little going on in the farming way, except drawing manure on the ground; the sounding flail was, to be sure, heard all day long in the barn. But though neither ploughing, nor sowing, reaping, nor mowing could be attended to, the domestic part of Redhill Grange were busy enough. Christmas seemed not only in their hearts, but in their finger ends, for all was industry and bustle, in preparation for the coming festival.



RAILWAY ENGINE, ETC.

CHAP. XIII.

PARLEY PICKS UP SOME PICTURES IN SNOWY WEATHER.

YOU may be sure that I was soon on good terms with all the young people in the neighbourhood: all of them soon knew Peter Parley.

The frost set in hard before Christmas, and the snow was coming down fast enough one afternoon, when I met a boy of the name of Edmund, who went to a day school in the neighbouring village; he came up panting with a face as red as a rose. "Well, Edmund," said I, "you have been pretty well peppered!"

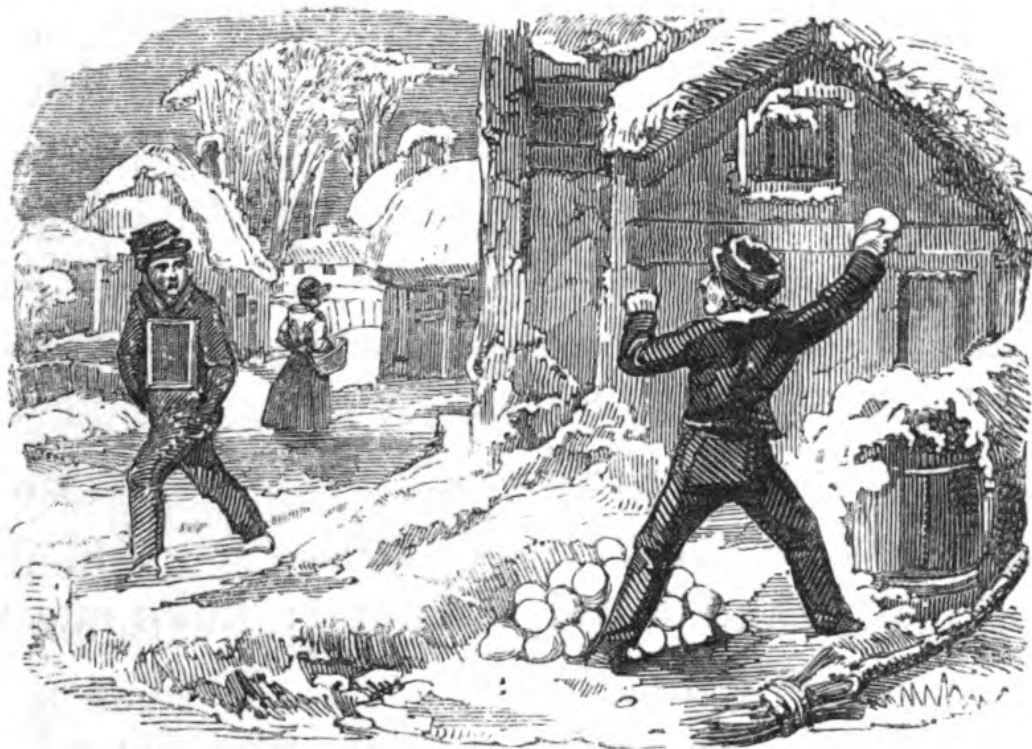
"Indeed I have, Mr. Parley," said he, "O what a run have I had, almost all the way from school, with my green bag hanging from my neck, with my books in it! It has snowed all the way. What a white world it is! Now I will tell you, Sir, what I have seen in the road."

"Do, Edmund, I should like to know."

"Painter's pool is frozen over very hard, except by the floodgate, and more than a dozen boys and girls are sliding upon it, for they have swept away the snow

with a besom. As they were running one after another, trying to trip up each other's heels, Bill Horton fell down on the slide, and all the rest tumbled over him pell mell. Some laughed, and some cried; but all at once the ice gave such a crack! and away they ran in all directions, as though a bear was after them. It was fine fun."

"No doubt it was."



LUKE ALLEN AND THE SNOW BALLS.

"Luke Allen had made a great pile of snow balls, behind Potter's cow house; and every one who passed by, had one thrown at him. Harry Stevens had one in his ear, and Mary Harris one in her neck hole."

“Luke Allen was rather hard upon the young folks.”

“While this was going on, Edward Jarvis, who had his slate hanging from his neck, came up. Dash came a snow ball against his slate, and half rubbed out the sum, that had taken him almost all the morning to do.”

“Poor fellow ! If I could fall in with him, I would do the sum again for him, with all my heart.”

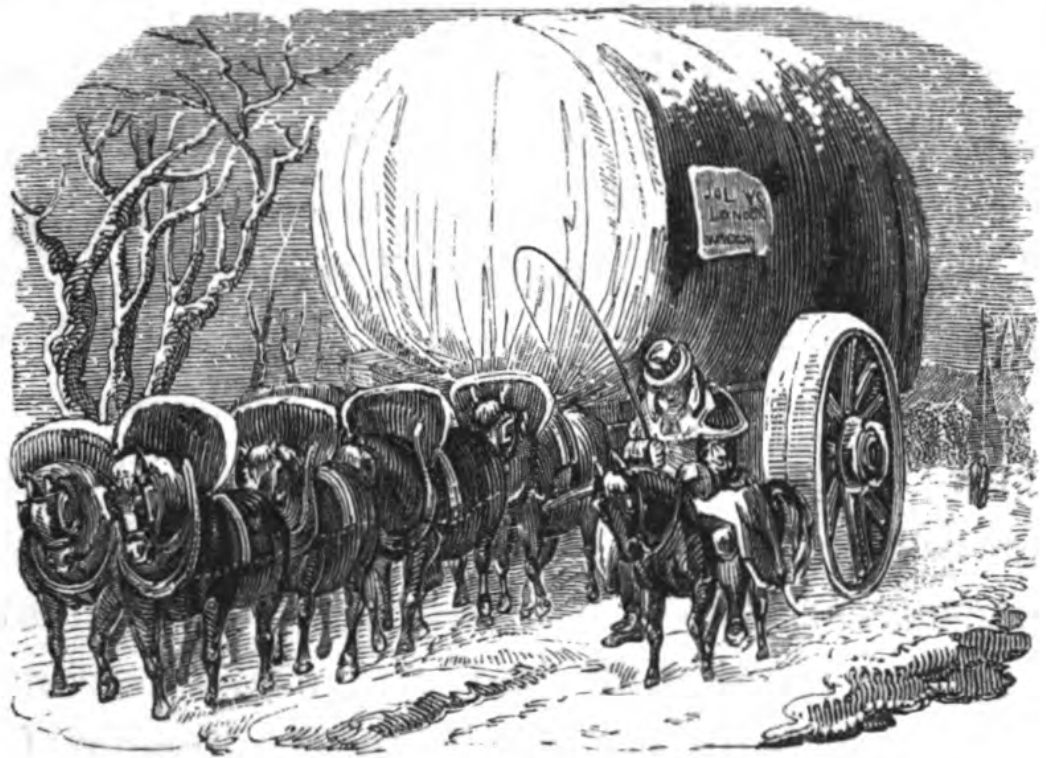
“Now Harry Stevens, and Mary Harris, and Edward Jarvis, are all younger than Luke Allen, so that it was but a cowardly trick to serve them so; but presently Frank Bates came up. Frank has a fine spirit, and as soon as he saw what Luke was about, though he is the least of the two, he pelted Luke heartily, with his own snow balls, and rolled him in the snow. It served him just right.”

“I do really think it did, Edmund ; Luke met with his match at last then.”

“Sally Freeth, the errand woman, was going by the grocer's, when down came a whole spadeful of snow, right into her basket ; and just as she turned round in a passion, to see where it came from, another spadeful almost knocked off her bonnet. A man was on the top of the house, shoveling off the snow, and

knew nothing at all about Sally Freeth being under him. Sally stormed like a crazy woman, but the man never heard her, and she was obliged to get out of his way, as fast as she could scuffle.”

“Sally must have been in a sad pickle, but she should have borne it more patiently than she did.”



JOLLY'S BROAD WHEELED WAGON.

“You should have seen Jolly's broad wheeled, covered waggon, Mr. Parley! It came slowly along the road, the tarpaulin in front plastered with snow; every horse in the team had a rare powdered topknot, and the waggoner on the little black pony, in his shaggy great coat, was as white as a miller. There

were two or three women and children, in the after part of the waggon, but the snow being in front, they were as safe, and as snug among the straw, as if they had been sitting in a comfortable kitchen."

"I am glad the children were snug, however, bless their little hearts of them!"

"Harvey the blacksmith, had a famous roaring fire in his shop, where Jem Jenkins his apprentice was blowing the bellows. The hot fire had melted the snow on the roof, and the eaves were dropping all round, as if it had been raining."

"You have kept your eyes open, to see all these things."

"Sam Baker, the wheelwright's son, and his brother Joe, had rolled up a snow ball almost as high as themselves. Sam was pushing at it with all his might, when his foot slipped, and down he came, on his face; when he got up he had a bosom full of snow."

"O rare Sam Baker!"

"Burrows' two dogs, the spotted pointer, and the black terrier, were running about like mad things, sometimes catching at the falling flakes, with their opened mouths, and sometimes rolling on their backs in the snow: never were dogs happier in the world."

“It’s a pleasant sight to see even a dog happy.”

“Miss Barret, the milliner, popped out of her house door, with her muff and tippet on; just as I passed



MISS BARRET THE MILLINER.

by, the snow drove full in her teeth, and she screwed up such a face, that I could hardly help bursting out a laughing.”

“Hah! hah! hah! poor Miss Barret! I dare say she looked comical enough.”

“Poor old Margaret Walters had to cross the road with a great jug of soft water, that she had been fetching from Stevens’s pump, but the snow came so fast into her face, that she could not see her way

before her. There she stood, not knowing what to do; so I carried her jug across for her, and set it down at her own door. If I could draw well, Mr. Parley, I might half fill a book with the pictures I have seen. My feet are warm, my face is all in a glow, and my heart is as light as a feather. This fall of snow is a capital thing; though it won't suit the poor birds very well; however I will give them some crumbs in the morning, for their breakfast: and now, after hanging up my bag of books, I will come out again, and have a rare game of snowballing."

I was so pleased with Edmund's spirit, and with his kindness to poor old Margaret, and the birds, and so entertained with the pictures in snowy weather that he had drawn, that I would not let him go, till I had given him a shilling for a Christmas box.

"Be always kind," said I, "to aged people, and to dumb creatures, and whether the sun shines or the snow falls, be cheerful, and turn God's good gifts to the best advantage." I was well pleased with Edmund, and he appeared to be quite as well pleased with Peter Parley.

CHAP. XIV.

PARLEY POINTS OUT THE ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTMAS
FESTIVAL.

THE more I saw of Farmer Holbeach, at Redhill Grange, the better he pleased me; for, though he was blunt in speech, he was kind in his affections. I never met with a man more honest, hospitable, and generous. Thinks I, if this be a fair specimen of English farmers, I hope they will never alter their straight forward habits.

Mr. Charlton every day increased my knowledge of old English customs, and, especially, of those that relate to Christmas time. You must now have a more regular account of some of these customs, before I describe the Christmas doings at Redhill Grange.

It is a good thing, as we journey through life, to look backwards, now and then, from the hills we have climbed up. We can then trace the pathways we have trod, and discern the wrong turnings we have made. In looking back to the Christmas customs of our great grandfathers, and those who

lived before them, we shall be better able to judge whether we have made any improvement in the same.

I will first tell you something about the origin, or beginning, of Christmas customs, and it shall be done in few words. It is often necessary to go back a great many years, before we can understand common customs, which are observed now.

After the great flood which destroyed all people, except Noah's family, God was worshipped in the same manner by all; but when men began to multiply and spread abroad, they soon became corrupted in their lives, and in their worship of their Creator.

They began to worship idols of different kinds, and to observe ceremonies, and establish festivals in honour of them. You have read in the bible about Baal, and Moloch, and Ashtaroth, and the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar; and you may remember that when Moses was absent from the children of Israel, the people got Aaron to make them a molten calf for an idol. These ceremonies and festivals had great influence over our ancestors, for they were ignorant and superstitious, and strongly given to idolatry.

Then, besides the ceremonies observed in honour of

the idols they worshipped, there were many established in commemoration of other things; and when our Saviour came into the world, and christianity began to extend itself, pagan observances, and christian festivals, became much mingled together.

Many of the catholic celebrations of the church of Rome came from pagan customs, for those who embraced the catholic religion did not altogether renounce their heathen festivals; and, in like manner, protestants, when they separated from the church of Rome, retained many of her rites and ceremonies.

There is a disposition in all of us to cling to old sayings and doings, and to hold fast to old superstitions: we do things for no better reason, than because our fathers used to do them. No wonder, then, that it was the same in the days of our ancestors.

In very old times, pagan people feasted at the season which we now call Christmas; and it is thought that they did so, because the bleak and barren part of the year had arrived, and in part passed away, and the spring was about to burst forth.

The Romans had a festival at this season called Saturnalia, when hymns were sung in praise of their

god Saturn; gifts made one to another, and a ruler appointed over their sports.

The northern nations too had a festival at this season, in honour of their god Thor, when singing, dancing, and feasting were mingled with their barbarous rites and savage superstitions. This festival had many names, Yule, Jule, Iul, and Iol.

The Christian festival of Christmas, as you know, is held in commemoration of our Saviour's birth; but it has mingled up with it something of all the rest. Christmas carols may have sprung from the hymns to Saturn; Christmas boxes, from the old custom of giving gifts on joyful occasions. The use of evergreens, and mistletoe, from the superstition of the Druids, and others; and feasting and wassailry, from the practice of all nations.

The Christmas festival was held in great pomp, by English kings, both Saxon, and Norman. Its observance spread from the palace to the baron's hall, the manor house, the public inn, and the private dwelling; till every substantial yeoman had his yule clog, his bough of mistletoe in his kitchen, and his sirloin, plum pudding, and wassail bowl, on his own table.

There is no doubt at all, that the spirit of Christ-

mas revelry, and wassailry, at one time exceeded due bounds. It received a check during the reign of Queen Mary, and especially in the time of Cromwell ; that it is not likely ever to overcome. A modern Christmas is but the shadow of one in ancient times.

To make the most of Christmas we should regard it as a holy commemoration, and a festival of joy. The holiday feelings of the heart should be chastened by devotion, and the gloom that sometimes gathers around the brows of pious people, be chased away by the endearments of family connexions, by friendly intercourse, and, above all, by active charity.

Perhaps, as a happy hearted old man, finding more pleasure in praising than in condemning those around me, I may be a little too fond of Christmas parties.

It is not, however, the smoking sirloin, the plum-pudding, and the mince pie that win me over, though all these are excellent things in their places ; neither do I care much for the mulled wine or the wassail bowl, but the glow of friendly faces does me good ; the brotherly mingling together of frank-hearted men, their happy wives, and delighted children, and

the good fellowship, good feeling, and good neighbourhood overflowing in every sentence they utter, is a feast that I cannot but covet. There are cares enough in the world, and we should not begrudge the happy hours that in some measure recruit our spirits and enable us to bear them.



CHAP. XV.

PARLEY RELATES MR. CHARLTON'S ACCOUNT OF THE LORD OF MISRULE AND THE ABBOT OF UNREASON.

It was after a long walk together, that Mr. Charlton and I seated ourselves in a snug little back parlour at Redhill Grange: we had enjoyed the sharp frosty air, and the prospect around us.



PARLEY AND MR. CHARLTON AT REDHILL GRANGE.

The trees were coated with snow on one side their

stems, while they were bare on the other. The oak, the hornbeam, and the beech, still, in part, retained their faded leaves, and the ash tree was yet hung with his locks and keys.

The boughs and finer sprays of the stript trees looked beautiful, powdered as they were with snow, and relieved by the clear blue sky, while the cheerful green holly was blooming with a thousand red berries.

We had, now and then, discovered in a snug corner, shielded from the north wind, a solitary primrose, and many a flight of starlings flew up from the stubble. There is much for a man to admire in the fields, even in winter, if his heart be in tune in his bosom.

“He finds in winter many a scene to please,
The morning landscape fringed with frost work gay ;
The sun at noon, seen through the leafless trees,
The clear calm ether at the close of day.”

I pity that man, or woman, who can walk abroad long together in the country, at any season of the year, without thanking God for being permitted to gaze on his glorious creation ; and I verily believe, that if the worst members of society were fonder of rural scenery than they are, one half of them would

grow ashamed of the heartless roguery with which they try to overreach one another.

I had been talking for some time with Mr. Charlton, about Christmas customs, when he began to speak of the Lord of Misrule, and the Abbot of Unreason; and as his remarks were full of information, I will try to recollect them.

“Mr. Parley,” said he, “it was high time to put a stop to the senseless revelry and immoral buffoonery, that at one time disfigured the good old festival of Christmas.

“You have made yourself acquainted with many of our English customs, ancient and modern; but, perhaps, you are not aware of the length to which our merry ancestors carried their tomfooleries.

“At the Christmas festival, wherever the court was held by the king, an officer, called the lord of misrule, was appointed to take upon himself the direction of the sports. Some think the custom came from the practice of the Romans, who appointed a temporary ruler, or king, over the sports of the Saturnalia. Some say it came from an ancient ceremony called the boy bishop.

“It was a Romish custom to institute, on St. Nicholas day, a child to the office and work of a

bishop. The boy bishop, or St. Nicholas, was commonly one of the choristers; and, therefore, in the



THE BOY BISHOP.

old offices was called, *Episcopus Choristarum*, bishop of the choristers, and was chosen by the rest to this honour. But afterward, there were many St. Nicholases; and every parish almost, had its St. Nicholas. And from this St. Nicholas's day, to Innocents' day at night, this boy bore the name of a bishop, and the state and habit too, wearing the mitre, and the pastoral staff, and the rest of the pontifical attire; nay, even reading the holy offices. While he went his procession, he was much feasted

and treated, the people, as it seems, highly valuing his blessing; which made them so fond of keeping this holiday.

“It appears from the register of the capitulary acts of York cathedral, that the boy bishop, there, was to be handsome and elegantly shaped.

“Others are of opinion that either an eastern festival in honour of Budha, or the feast in Babylon in honour of the goddess Dorcetha, is the true source of the appointment of the lord of misrule. In the Babylonish feast the masters were for the time under the dominion of their servants.

“But from whatever source the custom came, it was a very ancient one. Sometimes the lord of misrule was called the ‘abbot of misrule,’ and ‘master of merry disports.’ Under all his titles he was an arch buffoon.

“You may judge how necessary he was considered to the revels, by the fact that an order in council on one occasion was issued, stating the pleasure of the king, that he should be provided with apparel, and all necessaries to keep up his state; and what that state was, may be in some measure guessed at, when I tell you that among the attendants of his mock court he had, besides a chancellor, a comptroller, and

treasurer, a vice chamberlain, and lord counsellor; a divine, a master of requests, messengers, trumpeters, herald, orator, and hunters.

“But, even now, I have not done half justice to his state and quality, for I have left out his poet, philosopher, and astronomer; his apothecary and physician; his civilian, clown, gentlemen ushers, pages, marshals and sergeants at arms; his footmen, his jugglers, and tumblers; his band, his fools, and his friars.

“Among other of his requirements, may be mentioned, ‘twelve hobby horses,’ and ‘two dryads,’ with ‘Irish dresses,’ three score and ten ‘bucknam jerkins,’ for his body guard, and swords, daggers, and visors, for a ‘drunken masque.’

“Now, though, at first, the lord of misrule was only known at court, in process of time, an officer resembling him was appointed, in the commonest parish festivals, where he freely indulged his temporary power, so much so that one Philip Stubs, moved with disgust at what he considered the folly and impiety of his proceedings, thus writes a lively description of what had so much offended him.

“‘First, all the wilde heades of the parishe, conventynge together, chuse them a grand capitaine (of

mischeef), whom they innoble with the title of my "lorde of misserule," and hym they crown with great solemnitie, and adopt for their kyng. This kyng anoynted, chuseth for the twentie, fourtie, three score, or a hundred lustie guttes like to hymself, to waite uppon his lordely majestie, and to garde his noble persone. Then every one of these his menne, he investeth with his liveries of greene, yellowe, or some other light wanton colour. And as though that were not (baudie) gaudy enough, I should saie, they bedecke themselves with scarffes, ribons, and laces, hanged all over with golden rynges, precious stones, and other jewelles: this doen, they tye about either legge twentie or fourtie belles, with rich handkercheefes in their handes, and sometymes laied acrossse over their shoulders and neckes, borrowed for the moste parte of their pretie Mopsie's and loovyng Bessies, for bussyng them in the darcke. Thus thinges sette in order, they have their hobbie horses, dragons and other antiques, together with their baudie pypers, and thunderyng drommers, to strike up the deville's daunce withall,' (meaning the morris dance,) 'then marche these heathen companie towardes the churche and churche yarde, their pipers pipyng, drommers thonderyng, their stumpes dauncyng, their belles

yingling, their handkerchefes swyngyng about their heades like madmen, their hobbie horses, and other



PROCESSION.

monsters skyrmyshyng amongst the throng: and in this sorte they goe to the churche (though the minister bee at praier or preachyng,) dauncyng, and swingyng their handkercheefes over their heades, in the churche, like devilles incarnate, with suche a confused noise, that no man can heare his owne voice. Then the foolishe people, they looke, they stare, they laugh, they fleere, and mount upon formes and pewes, to see these goodly pageauntes in this sort.'

“‘The abbot of unreason,’ was only as it were

another name for 'the lord of misrule.' In Scotland, this mighty personage exceeded even the extended bounds of folly observed in England, so much so, that an edict forbad him to exercise his demoralizing authority. King James is said, on one occasion, to have exchanged his regal state for the mitre of the abbot of unreason in his Christmas revel.

"The court celebrations of Christmas, during the reign of Charles the First, were exceedingly splendid. King Charles, with his queen, took a part in the courtly pageantry, as also did his lords and their ladies.

"Now I am on the subject, Mr. Parley, I will describe to you what part the inns of court took in Christmas revelries. Lawyers look grave enough when they have on their full dressed wigs, and their gowns, but you will find, by the account which I shall give you, that no class of the community entered more freely into the sports and festivities of Christmas than they did.

"These by-gone customs tell us, perhaps, what man is, better than the more grave historical accounts that are handed down to us: when men act wisely they are under restraint, but when they give way to folly, the natural working of the heart is plainly seen.

CHAP. XVI.

PARLEY TELLS WHAT MR. CHARLTON SAID ABOUT THE INNS
OF COURT.

MR. CHARLTON went on with his account thus: "Lawyers see as many long faces, Mr. Parley, as most men, and their habits of poring over old musty records, black letter books, engrossed skins of yellow parchment, law cases, and long winded acts of parliament are more likely to bend the corners of their mouths downwards than upwards.

"But let the habits of men be what they will, their hearts are made of the same materials; and when a lawyer has his out-breaking, he will laugh as loud and as long as his neighbour.

"In the revelry of old Christmas times the lawyers scorned to play a meaner part than other classes of society. The four Inns of Court, in London, were among the gayest of the gay, and rivaled each other in the pomp and pageantry of their merry festivals.

"Lincoln's Inn, at one time, held by far the most splendid festivals, but, by degrees, Gray's Inn, and

the two Temples became worthy competitors, and folly reigned in every court.

“You may be sure that if a lord of misrule was appointed at the court of the king, the benchers would not be without so necessary a ruler. One of these worthies presided at the Inner Temple in the reign of Elizabeth, with the title of ‘Palaphilos, prince of Sophie, high constable marshal of the Knights’ Templars, and patron of the honourable order of Pegasus.’

“Another bore sway at Gray’s Inn, but his title was still more assuming. He was ‘The high and mighty prince, Henry, prince of Purpoole; archduke of Stapalia, and Bernardiæ; duke of High and Nether Holborn; marquis of St. Giles and Tottenham; count palatine of Bloomsbury, and Clerkenwell; great lord of the cantons of Islington, Kentish Town, Paddington, and Knightsbridge; knight of the most heroical order of the Helmet, and sovereign of the same.’

“Had this high and mighty potentate been called upon frequently to enumerate his titles, without doubt, he would willingly have abridged them; but this we may suppose was not the case.

“I will give you the title of only one more of

these mock monarchs, who presided at a splendid Christmas revel at Oxford. He was no less a personage than 'The most magnificent and renowned Thomas, by the favour of fortune, prince of Alba Fortunata, lord of St. John's, high regent of the hall, duke of St. Giles's, marquis of Magdalens, landgrave of the Grove, count palatine of the Cloysters, chief bailiff of Beaumont, high ruler of Rome, master of the manor of Walton, governor of Gloucester Green, sole commander of all tiltes, tournaments, and triumphs, superintendent in all solemnities whatever.'

"The very titles of these lords of misrule are enough to prepare us for all sorts of buffoonery; and to do the lawyers of the inns of court justice, their proceedings were quite in keeping with the wildest expectations that could be formed of them. The first lord of misrule, whose title I gave you, had for his master of the game Christopher Hatton, who was afterwards lord chancellor; he had, also, various other officers, with three or four masters of the revels, and a strong body guard.

"Masques and other entertainments were given to the royal court by the lawyers; and, on one occasion, a masque cost the sum of twenty-four

thousand pounds: this, in the money of the present day, would amount to an enormous sum.

“But you will like to know, Mr. Parley, the way in which the lawyers conducted their revels. I will tell you in a few words.

“At Christmas Eve, in the hall, a banquet was held, at which no expense was spared.

“The master of the revel and others were expected to sing carols, and this they did right merrily, for seldom do men sing so heartily as when the glass has gone freely round.

“For the twelve succeeding nights they had revels and dancing after supper, with singing and other entertainments; and, every morning, a good substantial breakfast recruited their strength for the day. Brawn and mustard were eaten, and malmsey wine drunk freely.

“The mummeries on St. Stephen’s Day were of a more uproarious character, for then the constable, marshal, and lieutenant of the Tower made their appearance to offer their good services, bravely clad in bright armour, with a pole-axe in their hands, and a cluster of coloured feathers on their crests, and with them came drums, and fifes, and trumpeters, and men in armour carrying halberts.

“After sundry kneelings to the lord chancellor, and a grand speech, and a great deal of bustle, parade, and clamour, and walking three times round the fire, the constable, and the lieutenant of the Tower got seats at the chancellor’s table, their service being accepted, and then, for a moment, all was quiet.

“Soon, however, another bustle began, for the master of the game, and the ranger of the forest came to offer their services, as fine as green velvet and satin could make them, with a green bow and arrows, and hunting horns. They blew a mellow blast with their horns three times, and then having marched three times round the fire in the same way the constable, marshal, and the lieutenant of the Tower had done before them, they, in like manner, got a seat at the table.

“And now a ruder scene commences, for a huntsman, arrayed as if for the chase, enters the hall with a score of hounds at his heels. He and his attendants blow their hunting horns as though they were in the forest, and a fox and cat, which they have brought with them, fastened to the end of staves, are set upon by the hounds and worried to death before the blazing hearth. The whooping and hal-

looming of the hunter-train, the sound of the horns, the noise made by the cat, the fox, the howling of



WORRYING A CAT AND FOX.

the hounds, and the wild bursts of boisterous laughter, echo from the walls.

“Being now in high glee and good humour, the whole party sat down to dinner. You may be sure the table was profusely spread, for it was no part of the lawyer’s creed to fast on St. Stephen’s day. They ate, they drank, they pledged one another, and they sang till they were all as happy as good fare could make them, and if, after a long carouse, some

few of them were found under the table in a state of deep abstraction, we must, I suppose, good naturedly put it down to those studious and profound habits of reflection in which so learned a body were wont to indulge.

“After supper, something like the same mummeries took place as those which had preceded dinner. The constable marshal in a different dress, but not



CONSTABLE ON A PLATFORM.

a whit less fine, was ushered in on a scaffold, borne on men's shoulders. When he had performed the

necessary rites and ceremonies, he condescended to come down from his platform, and amuse the jovial party with a dance. Full of fun and covered with finery, he capered about in a surprising manner for some time, and then called upon others to imitate the excellent example he had set them.

“Sir Randle Rackabite, Sir Morgan Mumchance, and Sir Francis Flatterer, with a few score others, of names equally imposing, then astonished the assembly with an exhibition of their capering talents. At this time of day, Mr. Parley, we can see neither the wit nor the wisdom of such proceedings, but as these learned lawyers were in the habit of giving advice to the rest of the world, it would be unreasonable in us to suppose that they would wear the ‘cap and bells’ without a good and sufficient end being answered thereby.

“I can scarcely decide whether the merry benchers enjoyed themselves most on St. Stephen’s, or on St. John’s day; there was no lack of good fare, merriment, or folly, on either of them.

“The inns of court do not now keep up the customs of ancient times, therefore we are bound to suppose, however wise it might be to observe them then, it is equally wise to abandon them now.”

CHAP. XVII.

PARLEY GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF THE WAITS, AND OF
CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

BEFORE I tell you of the Christmas proceedings at Redhill Grange, I must describe a few customs which are more or less observed, in all parts of England, as Christmas approaches. "Good old Christmas," as it used to be commemorated, is clearly passed away, and many of the present customs seem to be trying to overtake it. I know not why this should be the case, seeing that all classes of people seem fond of Christmas; but there is a beginning and an end, to most things.

Many a drowsy head is lifted from its pillow in the moonshiny nights of the month of December, to listen to the sound of distant music, and many a wakeful wight leaves his bed, in his drapery, to peep through the frosted panes of his chamber window at the musicians gathered on the pavement below.

These musicians are called "waits," and in the country usually consist of a part of the church choir. With doubled handkerchiefs round their necks, and

great coats on their backs, they wander through the night from house to house, or from street to street, stopping every now and then to puff at their flutes, clarionets, and trombones, and to scrape on their violins and violoncellos. You may have heard that in old times kings and princes had bands attached to their courts; and, also, that minstrels used to wander from one festival or tournament to another; these used often to collect together at Christmas time. The name wait or "wayte" was given to one of these bards or minstrels.

The waits are also supposed to have been watchmen in ancient times. They belonged to the king's court and sounded the watch every night, as well as defended the city from depredations. In London the waits are remains of the musicians attached to the corporation. At one time they wore a badge on the arm, showing that they were the lord mayor's music men; but taking the word "waits" generally, we may suppose that it may be dated as far back in its meaning, as the time when the shepherds watched their flocks by night, at the advent of the Saviour.

Perhaps, when the waits are now heard, it is with a mixed feeling of joy and religious veneration; for

they set forth, not only, that season when "Jesus was born at Bethlehem," but proclaim also the arrival of a festival that is very generally enjoyed.

It can hardly be expected while the waits wander in the chilly night air, and the frost is pinching their noses, their toes, and fingers, that their music can be very excellent, and yet, softened by the distance, and still more by the pleasant announcement that Christmas is coming, it sounds very harmonious.

There is a power in holy things that gives a melody to the rudest music, and to the roughest voice. When the Saviour of the world was born, a multitude of the heavenly host appeared to the shepherds as they "kept watch over their flocks by night." Their hymn of praise was "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." It is in some degree in remembrance of this event, that the midnight waits, and carol singers, at Christmas time, make pleasant music, and chaunt their joyous strains; no wonder that they should be listened to with more than common pleasure.

These midnight wanderers, after Christmas, go about collecting money to reward their nightly service, and every true lover of Christmas cheerfully responds to the application.

A group of waits huddled together at the corner of a street, or by an old market cross, cut a curious appearance when partly discovered by the moonbeams,



THE WAITS.

and partly hid by the deep shadow of some projecting angle, or it may be that the moon and the dim lamps are striving for the mastery.

In their clothing, warmth, and not neatness has been consulted. A Bond Street tailor was not called in to fit them out on the occasion. Suddenly awakened, and somewhat blinded by the light, such

as it is, you see at first a cluster of dark patches ; then you perceive a movement, and, at last, clearly discern brown and blue coats ; red, yellow, and green handkerchiefs ; musical instruments, gaiters, and spectacles, with a bottle sticking out of a great coat pocket.

The party may be half asleep, they may be playing a song tune instead of a hymn, and the time they keep may be but indifferent. Never mind ! you know what it all means : you know that the thing signified is “ A merry Christmas, and a happy new year.”

The custom of carol singing, as I said, springs from the same origin as the waits. In olden times carols were sung by bishops themselves among the clergy, and when the words were well chosen, and chaunted with devotional feelings, this practice must have had an excellent effect ; but Christmas carols, that should be confined to the praise of the Saviour, have been so wretchedly put together, and so mingled with other subjects, that they often lower, rather than heighten our reverence for divine things : this is to be regretted.

Though the meaning of the word carol is a song of joy, yet it seems to convey a notion of religious

exultation more than any other, especially a Christmas carol. The opinion held by an old writer on this subject is, I think, a correct one: he says, "Christmässe keriles, if they be such as are fit for the time, and of holy and sober composures, and used with Christian sobriety and piety, are not unlawful, and may be profitable if they be sung with grace in the heart."

Sure enough it is a pleasant thing to hear, early in the morning, a Christmas carol, for it seems to tone the heart for the day, and to fit it for grateful emotions and deeds of kindness. It is a good beginning, and that, in this bad world of cold heartedness, is of great value.

Bad as Christmas carols, on the whole are, yet, here and there, good verses are to be found: how simple and sweet are the following, in allusion to the infant Saviour!

As Joseph was a walking,
He heard an angel sing—
"This night shall be born
Our Heavenly King.
He neither shall be born
In housen, nor in hall,
Nor in the place of paradise,
But in an ox's stall.

“ He neither shall be clothed
 In purple nor in pall,
 But all in fair linen
 As were babies all :
 He neither shall be rocked
 In silver nor in gold,
 But in a wooden cradle
 That rocks on the mould.”

And again,

Awake! awake! good people all!
 Awake, and you shall hear
 How Christ, our Lord, died on the cross
 For those he loved so dear.

O fair! O fair Jerusalem!
 When shall we come to thee?
 When shall my griefs be at an end,
 That I thy tents may see?

There is a carol much sung in the west of England and other parts that I must repeat to you, as it has in it none of that free, and foolish language with which carols frequently abound.

A VIRGIN MOST PURE.

A virgin most pure, as the prophets do tell,
 Hath brought forth a Babe, as it hath befell,
 To be our Redeemer from death, hell, and sin,
 Which by Adam's transgressions hath wrapt us all in.
 Rejoice and be you merry, set sorrow aside,
 Christ Jesus our Saviour was born on this tide.

In Bethlehem city, in Jury it was,
Where Joseph and Mary together did pass,
And there to be taxed, with many one more,
For Cæsar commanded the same should be so.
Rejoice, &c.

But, when they had entered the city so far,
The number of people so mighty was there,
That Joseph and Mary, whose substance was small,
Could get in the city no lodging at all.
Rejoice, &c.

Then they were constrained in a stable to lie,
Where oxen and asses they used to tie ;
Their lodging so simple, they held it no scorn,
But against the next morning our Saviour was born.
Rejoice, &c.

The King of all glory to the world being brought,
Small store of fine linen to wrap him was brought ;
When Mary had swaddled her young Son so sweet,
Within an ox manger she laid him to sleep.
Rejoice, &c.

Then God sent an angel from heaven so high,
To certain poor shepherds in fields where they lie,
And bid them no longer in sorrow to stay,
Because that our Saviour was born on this day.
Rejoice, &c.

Then presently after, the shepherds did spy
A number of angels appear in the sky,
Who joyfully talked, and sweetly did sing,
To God be all glory, our Heavenly King.
Rejoice, &c.

Three certain wise princes, they thought it most meet
To lay their rich offerings at our Saviour's feet ;
Then the shepherds consented, and to Bethlehem did go,
And when they came thither, they found it was so.
Rejoice, &c.

Now and then may be seen in the country, groups of ruddy children, boys with their hands in their pockets, and girls wrapped up in cloaks, singing carols in a clear, shrill voice at the door of the



COUNTRY CAROL SINGERS.

minister, or the churchwarden, or in the porch of a substantial farm house, and often enough may be

heard, in the towns, the vile scraping of a cracked fiddle, and the bawling of an old man and his wife, veteran, siden-mouthed ballad singers, who, with a hopeful son and daughter in rags, scream out a Christmas carol, in a dreamy, doleful tune, enough to fright away merry-hearted Christmas from the streets.

It is wonderful how some men of this class fiddle their way, with their families, through the world; but I suppose money is given them as a bribe to move them on, and not as an encouragement to delay them in the progress of their laudable pursuits.

There are large sheets of carols, with wretched prints attached to them, published every year. Before I leave this subject I must relate a very old tale of a Christmas carol sung by women.

“There was sometime an old knight, who being disposed to make himselfe merry in a Christmas time, sent for many of his tenants, and poore neighbors, with their wives to dinner; when having made meat to be set on the table, would suffer no man to drinke, till he that was master over his wife should sing a carrall, to excuse all the company: great nicenesse there was who should be the musician, now the cuckow time was so farre off. Yet

with much adoe, looking one upon another, after a dry hemme or two, a dreaming companion drew out as much as he durst towards an ill fashioned ditty.

“When having made an end, to the great comfort of the beholders, at last it came to the women’s table, where likewise commandment was given that there should no drinke be touched, till she that was master over her husband had sung a Christmas carrall; whereupon they fell all to such a singing, that there was never heard such a catterwalling peece of musicke; whereat the knight laughed heartely, that it did him halfe as muche good as a corner of his Christmas pie.”



CHAP. XVIII.

PARLEY TALKS ABOUT FIRESIDE GATHERINGS, AND SONGS,
AND BALLADS, AND FEARFUL TALES.

WHOEVER would form a correct opinion of the friendliness of English people, at Christmas time, should visit the fireside gatherings of all ranks. He would then see that the rich man, who can afford to drink Champaign, and the poor man, who takes his mug of ale in a pot house, have both the same disposition to indulge kindly and friendly feelings, and to talk over times gone by.

It is not for a plain man, like Peter Parley, to pretend that he knows much of the habits of great people, except by report; with the middle, and lower classes he is better acquainted, having mingled with, and observed both; but he has made his inquiries respecting all, and is in no danger of being wrong in describing the English as a warm-hearted, hospitable, Christmas-loving people.

The singing of carols is now pretty much confined to young people, and to those who hope to reap some advantage from keeping up the custom; but

songs are common in most Christmas gatherings. When the board has been cleared of its smoking viands, and the glass begins to go round, the heart grows too happy for its emotions to be limited to common bounds. A song is called for, when "Here's a health to all good lasses," or "Drink to me only with thine eyes," or "John Anderton my Joe," or "Auld lang syne," is sung with a feeling that binds the party together in closer fellowship. Nor is the song of "The good Old English Gentleman" forgotten, for it is a great favourite with all who have English hearts, and English feelings in their bosoms. I must repeat it to you by and by.

If ladies are present, the piano is opened, and one of them is handed to it, and then, perhaps, among other touching melodies, that simplest and sweetest of all songs "Auld Robin Gray" is listened to with delight.

In bolder company, songs that for years and years have called down universal applause are still sung. "The national Anthem," and "Rule Britannia," "This day a stag must die," "The Thorn," "The Storm," "Black-eyed Susan," "Hearts of Oak," "Britons, strike home," and "Tom Bowling," are not yet out of fashion.

In public houses, and pot houses by the way side, at times, there are strange ditties to be heard. Having occasion to call on the landlord of a house of this description, I could see, through the glass door of the little parlour where I sat, a group of country people sitting with their mugs before them. One of them sung,

“ John Bull was a bumpkin born and bred,
In a clodhopping village in Gloucestershire,”

with a good deal of spirit; and though the party had, perhaps, heard him repeatedly sing the same song for twenty years, there was no want of attention paid to it.

A bricklayer, judging by his appearance, then entertained the company with the long ballad of “ Lord Bateman’s Daughter:” though he had by no means a good voice, yet you might have heard a pin drop on the floor while he was singing; and yet I question if equal attention was not given to a labourer, in a smock frock, who was the next singer.

He began his ditty with a twang, singing somewhat through his nose; but that did not signify, for the narrative contained in his ballad was full of interest. It began thus,

“ Near Tunbridge waters a man there lived,”

and went on to say that the man had two sons and a daughter, whom he loved very dearly.

“ A servant man with them there lived ;
A servant man as you shall hear,
And this young lady did him admire,
And they loved each other dear.”

It seems that the brothers of the young lady were highly offended, for, after some time,

“ A hunting match there was provided
To take this young man's sweet life away.”

This cruel plan succeeded too well, for the two brothers fell upon the servant man, in a lonely place, and killed him ; thus the young lady was deprived of her lover, and thus the hard hearted brothers rid themselves of the servant man.

“ Near Tunbridge waters a brook there runneth ;
With thorns and briers it is overgrown,
And, all for to hide their cruel murder,
In that brook he was killed and thrown.”

The last ballad that I heard in the pot house was sung by a butcher, and, I should think, all within a hundred yards of the place must have heard it too, the butcher's voice was so loud and clear. The ballad he sang was

“ Jarvis, the Hackney Coachman ;”

in which Jarvis himself gives an account of his being compelled to drive a party to a gibbet. The party made him take down the gibbeted man, and then they hung him up instead, and left him swinging in the gibbet. In vain poor Jarvis cried aloud for assistance, for the shrill wind sadly drowned his voice, and even the few persons who came near enough to hear him, took to their heels through fear.

“ At last, a bold butcher came by,
Who gave heed to my pitiful moan ;
Says he, ‘ Was you hung without law ?’
So Jarvis, the coachman, got down.’

The pot house scene, which I have described, is only one of the many fireside gatherings of Christmas times ; I must give you two or three others.

Fancy to yourselves a great hall pannelled, and wainscoted, and hung round with men in armour, and ancient dames, with high head-dresses, and jewelled stomachers.

The roof is of carved fret-work ; and the massy tables, and the high-backed carved chairs, of dark oak, take one back a few centuries. A group are gathered round the flickering fire, that one moment bursts into a flame, and the next presents a lurid glare.

At the far end of the old hall the moon is shining in at the great gothic window, throwing a light upon



THE OLD HALL.

the oaken floor, and, now, the fire has left off flickering, and the moonlight prevails. Hark! the old nurse, bending forwards from her arm chair, is telling a fearful story to a listening throng of young people, who, every now and then, give a timid glance at the armed figures that appear about to walk down from their frames.

Or, fancy that a group of school girls, of twelve,

fourteen, and sixteen years, are huddled together in the school-room, a little before breaking up day. The fire is low, and one of the group, out of mischief, has put out the only candle that was burning.

There is a strange mixture of fear and fun in their youthful faces, for one is relating a ballad to awaken the apprehensions of her mates, who draw close around her. How hollow she tries to make her voice sound while she repeats the words,

“ My bones are buried in a kirk yard,
Afar beyond the sea ;
And it is but my sprite, Marg’ret,
That’s speaking now to thee !”

Another takes up her tale and tries to outdo her schoolmate, by relating, at full length, the fearful ballad of “ Alonzo, the brave, and the fair Imogine.”

A change has taken place, for a fair-haired girl is reciting fitfully, as they occur to her memory, detached verses of olden ballads that tell of gallant knights, and dark-eyed Spanish maidens.

“ O Bellerina ! O my dear one !
For my pride and pleasure born ;
Seven long years I served thee, fair one !
Seven long years my fee was scorn.”

She is well versed in the wild imagery of romance,

and pours forth, with mingled mirth, and high wrought emotions, distichs that have moved her heart,

Of valorous knights and ladies fair ;
 Of armour bright and sable weeds ;
 Of palfreys vain and flying steeds :
 Enchanters, necromancers, sages,
 Dragons and griffins, dwarfs and pages.

She has now begun her favourite ancient ballad. It is not very long, you shall hear it all.

SYR BERTRAMME.

AN ANCYANTTE BALLADDE.

Ryde faste, Syr Bertramme ! spurre thye steede,
 Haste o'er the hills so greye !
 Forre yonder soldaune comes wythe speedde
 To beare thye bryde awaye.

Ryde faste, Syr Bertramme ! crosse the floodde,
 And scale the mountaine's syde !
 Forre yonder soldaune seekes the bloodde
 Of thee and thye fayre bryde.

Syr Bertramme spurr'de hys flyinge steedde
 Swyft o'er the hylls so greye ;
 But styll, the soldaune soughte wythe speedde
 To beare hys bryde awaye.

Syr Bertramme cross'd the roarynge floodde,
And scall'de the mountaine's syde;
But still the soldaune soughte the bloodde
Of hym and hys fayre bryde.

Ye archeres! bendde your bowes wythe care;
Lette manye a deadlye dartte,
Flye swyftlye throughe the yeldyng airre,
To pierce the Christianne's heartte!

Hys archers bentte theyrre bowes wythe care,
And manye a deadlye dartte,
Flewe swyftlye throughe the yeldyng aire,
And pyerc'dde Syr Bertramme's heartte.

The deadlye darttes theye dranke hys breathe,
Hee felle, and fallynge sygh'dde;
And yn the agonyes of deathe
Hee clasp'tte hys lovelye brydde.

And whyle, wythe gryeffe, the lovelye fayre
Syr Bertramme's bodye prestte;
The soldaune seizz'dde her flowyng hayre
And tore her from his breastte.

And thryce hee rays'dds hys swordde yn ayre
Wythe wrathe and vengeance wyldde;
And thryce she kneltte yn dreadde dispayrre
And cry'dde forgive thy chylde!

In vayne yn Bertramme's bloode bedydde,
She thryce kneltte on her knee,
In vayne forre mercye thryce she cry'dde,
For mercye none hadde hee.

She caught hys dreadde uplyftedde handde
 She clasptte hys knees and sygh'dde ;
 And neathe the soldaune's vengefulle brandde
 She felle, and fallynge dyedde.

Nor ought we to forget the little rosy faces round the nursery fire, or the cottage hearth, for they all partake of Christmas recreations. "Jack the Giant Killer," "Tom Hickathrift," "Blue Beard," and "Greensleeves," are pretty much out of fashion now ; yet are there nurses, who will relate these wondrous histories, and mammas who will yet allow their lovely ones to buy the books.

"Robin Hood" is too entertaining to be generally discarded, and "Chevy Chase" will be known these hundred years to come. How the eyes of the young rogues brighten when they hear the words—

"Against Sir Hugh Montgomery
 So right the shaft he set,
 The gray goose quill that was thereon
 In his heart's blood was wet!"

And how mournfully look the little maidens, when Earl Percy takes "the dead man by the hand," and says,

"Earl Douglass, for thy sake
 Would I had lost my land!"

Of all ballads, however, that have yet been written, "The Babes in the Wood" is the most likely to be held in remembrance among young people. I saw three little sisters and a brother listening, with innocent faces, to the following verses, repeated by their mother on a Christmas night: it was a picture that will never be forgotten by Peter Parley.

"These pretty babes, with hand in hand,
Went wandering up and down,
But never more could see the man
Approaching from the town.

Their pretty lips, with blackberries,
Were all besmear'd and dyed,
And when they saw the darksome night
They sat them down and cried.

Thus wandering, those two little babes,
Till death did end their grief,
In one another's arms they died,
As babes wanting relief:

No burial this pretty pair
Of any man receives,
Till robin redbreast painfully
Did cover them with leaves."

CHAP. XIX.

PARLEY RELATES ALFRED HUCKABACK'S ACCOUNT OF THE
GHOST OF OLD BLUE STOCKINGS.

OF all kinds of stories told to young people, none is ever listened to, with so much attention, as a ghost story: whether it ought to be so, is a question that might very readily be answered; but that it is so, no one at all acquainted with the habits and feelings of young people will deny.

It would ill become an old man like me to say any thing in praise of ghost stories; they are idle and silly, and often do a deal of mischief; and yet I must freely confess that, before now, a young urchin, seated on my knee, has so coaxed and wheedled himself into my heart, that I could deny him nothing. I know not how it is, but sometimes when a ruddy faced boy, or an innocent-looking, fair-haired girl, comes and clings around me, and looks up into my face, I can no more refuse what I am asked to do, than I can help eating when I am hungry.

There are many men in the world, of my disposition,

in this respect, and one instance of the truth of this I will give you for your entertainment. It may teach you rather to laugh at a ghost story, than to believe it; and prevent you from being frightened by the nonsense which is often told, with as much seriousness, as if it were really true.

One night my friend Mr. Charlton took me to a farm house, and we stayed late : we sat in the kitchen, with the farmer, his wife, and a few neighbours. There were also present, about half a dozen young people, who were spending a few days there ; for the farmer was their uncle, and a happy time they had of it, at the farm house.

The wood fire blazed cheerfully, and the pewter plates and dishes, above the great dresser, shone very bright ; we had eaten a good supper, and had each drunk a glass of hot elder wine, and smiling faces plainly told that a happy heart was dancing in every bosom.

Among the party was a kind-hearted, homely-drest man, with a gray lock of hair hanging down on each side his head. His name was Huckaback ; the young people were very fond of him, and the more so, because he was a capital teller of tales. Nothing

would do but Alfred Huckaback must tell them his very best ghost story.

Alfred was an old hand at this kind of work, so he set forth many excuses, which made the young folks still more desirous to have his story. At last, when the wind was heard howling round the house, when the fire was getting a little low, and the candles were almost burning in their sockets, he agreed to begin his wonderful account. In an instant the young people got round him; the farmer, and a friend or two, still went on puffing their pipes, at the small round table, placed on the far side the fire place; Peter Parley was a quiet observer of all that passed, and every eye was fixed on Alfred Huckaback, as he began to relate the following mysterious story of the ghost of old Blue Stockings.

“Many years ago, but how many I won't pretend to say, there lived, in a little corporation town, an old miser. Folks said that he had a chest full of money, but though he contrived to save money, he never seemed to spend any.

“No one knew how he lived, nor how he spent his time; but every body knew that he had a long white beard, and dressed in a red waistcoat, with a yellow

nightcap and green tassel on his head, and a pair of broad ribbed blue stockings pulled half way up his thighs.

“All of a sudden old Blue Stockings was missing from his crazy and shattered habitation, and no one could tell what had become of him. The house was searched, but all in vain; for though they looked up stairs and down, and examined the whole neighbourhood, neither the old man, nor his chest of money, was to be found. Strange tales got abroad, and I wouldn't venture to tell you one half of what I have heard about the matter. The neighbours would have it, that old Blue Stockings had been murdered for his money, and his crazy habitation was left without a tenant for many years.

“The old man was almost forgotten by many people, when, all at once, a report was spread abroad, that he had been seen at twelve o'clock at night, groping among the rubbish in his garden. The tale spread apace, and though some laughed at it, many believed it, so that half the neighbourhood went to the place.

“The watchman was examined, and he declared that as he was standing about twenty yards from the garden pales, looking towards the back of the house,

the church clock struck twelve, and just then the figure of the old miser appeared in the garden. It so frightened him that his knees knocked together, and his lantern fell out of his hand, but he could not take his eyes off the figure. There stood the old miser, with his long beard, as plain as he had ever seen him in his life. He was dressed as usual, in his red waistcoat, a yellow cap, and green tassels on his head, and a pair of broad ribbed blue stockings pulled half way up his thighs.

“A few nights after this, some strange noises were heard in the crazy old habitation, about eight or nine o'clock. Boys and girls went; men and women went; and at last the constable went: while these were all together, a lad happened to look behind him; no sooner did he do this, than he set up a shout, for there stood the figure of old Blue Stockings, shaking and quivering as though he had got the ague. In one minute the whole party, boys and girls, men and women, took to their heels, and the constable himself ran like a lusty fellow.

“That very night as Gammer Griffiths, who sold coals, went with a pail of water into the coal shed, according to custom, to pour water over the small coals to make them weigh the heavier, she saw a

sight that made her cheeks as white as a table cloth.



GAMMER GRIFFITHS AND THE GHOST OF OLD BLUE STOCKINGS.

Gammer knew that the errand on which she went into the coal shed was a bad one, and that made her the more frightened at the sudden appearance of old Blue Stockings. Down went the pail on the ground, and up the steps into her house went Gammer Griffiths, as fast as her trembling limbs would allow. She was never known to water her coals after.

“Old Gaffer Greensel, the milkman, soon after went into his dairy to water his milk, for he sold a great quantity of sky-blue every day. He was pour-

ing water from a jug into a brown milk pan, when old Blue Stockings, at full length, appeared before



GAFFER GREENSEL AND THE GHOST OF OLD BLUE STOCKINGS.

him. He seemed, at one time, to come so close that Gaffer could almost have touched him. The jug fell, the brown pan was broken, the milk flooded the floor, and old Gaffer Greensel made the best of his way out of the dairy. These things made a wonderful stir in the neighbourhood, and many people were sadly afraid of a visit from the ghost of old Blue Stockings.

“Lawyer Sleight was all alone, busily engaged in

his office, among his parchments; bills and bonds, transfers and mortgage deeds, were piled up in different directions. Sleight was not the most honest lawyer in the world, though his conscience seldom troubled him; now and then, however, it gave him a twinge, and so it was on this occasion, for just as he had taken up a warrant, with which he intended to arrest a poor man, for debt, in the morning, opposite his back window appeared, in his white beard and red waistcoat, the apparition of old Blue Stockings. The teeth of the lawyer began to chatter, and the warrant fell from his hand; staggering backward, he reached the door and made his escape. The next day he settled the affair of the poor man without having him arrested.

“Figgins, the grocer, after closing his shop, was carefully treacling some dry raisins and currants, which had long been exposed in his window. He had made them look quite fresh, and was about to leave the place, when lo! not a dozen feet distant from him, stood old Blue Stockings. He could not be mistaken, for the very green tassel on his yellow night cap was plainly seen. He was petrified with fear, and stood like a statue, nor did he stir from the

spot till the figure, before him, had vanished away. Figgins, after that, became an upright grocer.

“At a little distance from Figgins’ shop lived Doctor Dolittle, the apothecary. His bell had been rung by a man who came from a regular patient, and the doctor, after mixing up a little chalk and water in a phial, proceeded to make up a dozen oatmeal pills. With the pill-box in one hand, and the phial in the other, he had occasion to move a step or two towards the dark end of his shop, and directly gave a leap backwards as nimble as a harlequin; who should be standing there, but old Blue Stockings. Neither the chalk and water, nor the oatmeal pills ever reached the hands of his patient, for the phial was broken to pieces by its fall, and the contents of the pill-box rolled in all directions on the floor.”

When Alfred Huckaback had proceeded thus far in his ghost story, one of the candles sunk down in the socket, and Huckaback, in snuffing the other, put it out; but whether this was by accident or whether he did it on purpose I cannot say; whichever it was he would not let the candle be lighted again. As we had no other light than that given by the flickering fire, the kitchen looked rather dismal, and the

two servant girls, who had been sitting a little behind, drew up closer, as though they were afraid of the ghost of old Blue Stockings. After a little pause, during which the honest farmer once more filled his pipe, Alfred Huckaback finished his story in the following manner.



CHAP. XX.

CONTINUATION OF THE ACCOUNT OF THE GHOST OF OLD
BLUE STOCKINGS.

AT the corner of a narrow street lived a common informer, who got his bread by laying informations against others, when he had the opportunity. He was a bad man, and would do any thing to get a penny. Every body feared, and almost every body hated him.

He had been very busy in making out a list of people, he intended to inform against the next day; his fire had gone out, and he began to feel a little lonely; for a man with a guilty conscience is seldom at rest.

All at once he started, thinking that he heard a noise at his back window. A hollow blast of wind rumbled in the chimney, the candle seemed to burn blue, and before he could draw in his breath, the long-bearded figure of old Blue Stockings was staring him in the face. How he got out of the house he never could tell, but when he arrived, without his hat, and his hair standing up all an end, at

the house of his sister, who lived at the other end of the town, he stared like a throttled cat, and did not recover himself for an hour.

“It was between nine and ten o’clock that Saunderson, the sexton, passing near the church, saw something very unusual in the church yard. It was in the corner, and seemed to come from behind the high tomb with the iron palisades.

“Being a bold man, he went up almost to it, at once; but if it took him little time to go there, it took him still less time to come back again; for if ever he made the best use of his legs, he did so on that occasion.

“Without once looking behind him, he scampered in the best way he could to the clerk of the parish, who lived at a little distance from the place, and told him, while he panted for breath, that he had just seen the ghost of old Blue Stockings.

“Ay! ay!” said the clerk, “so have a many more seen him, by all accounts; but I have not had the luck to meet with him, and am sadly afeard I never shall.” The sexton, nettled at the clerk for not believing what he told him, mustered up courage enough to go back with him to the church yard.

When they came there it was almost too dark to

see the old tomb with the iron palisades, and as to the ghost of old Blue Stockings, he had altogether disappeared. The clerk, to show his bravery, clambered over the wall, which was not very high, but in two minutes he came tumbling over it back again, ready to break his neck. He was worse frightened than the sexton, for, when he least expected it, old Blue Stockings sprung up and came towards him all in a hurry.

“You may be sure the matter did not rest here: it soon reached the ears of the parson, who, believing the whole to be an idle tale, sharply reproved both the sexton and the clerk. However, he went with them, and having ordered the gates to be opened, led the way along the gravel walk, and then turned towards the old tomb, closely followed by Saunderson and the clerk.

“It was blind and unked work to go among the hillocks and foot stones in so dark a night, but the parson went on till he came within about a dozen yards of the ——

Here Huckaback lowered his voice to a whisper, and then making a pause looked towards the door, as if he felt a little afraid. You might have heard a pin drop, for what with the candles being put out,

and the flickering fire, and the ghost tale, and Huck-aback's whispering, and altogether, it was a dismal affair. The silence, however, was soon broken by the most horrid din that you can imagine. The kitchen door was burst open, and a loud clanging,



GHOST AND PARTY.

and rattling almost stunned us. The young folks gave a cry; the servant girls set up a shrill scream; and the farmer, flinging down his pipe on the floor, and overturning the round table, seized hold of the poker like a desperate man.

All this hubbub was followed by a loud laugh, in which the farmer joined most heartily, he set his back against the dresser and made the kitchen ring again. It now turned out that several of those present, as well as the farmer, were in the secret and knew what was to follow. Favoured by the putting out of the candles, two of the party had slipped away from us, and when they burst open the door, one, of them kept banging the iron cleaver with a poker, while the other poured out the whole contents of the farmer's great shot bag into the tin dripping pan.

It was a full quarter of an hour before any thing like order was restored, and when Alfred Huckaback again took up his tale, to tell us the remainder of the ghost story, a continual tittering was heard from one, or another, so that it did not produce much effect.

He went on to tell us how the parson, getting alarmed at the appearance of old Blue Stockings, retraced his steps, and applied to the constable, who, having already been well frightened, showed but little disposition to come forward again.

The alarming appearance of the ghost spread like

wildfire, far and wide, so that the whole town was in a commotion, and a posse, of at least fifty people, went to the church yard in a body. Not only were the clerk and the sexton, the parson and the constable, among the number, but the aldermen, the mayor, and the better part of a company of soldiers, quartered in the place.



GHOST IN THE CHURCH YARD.

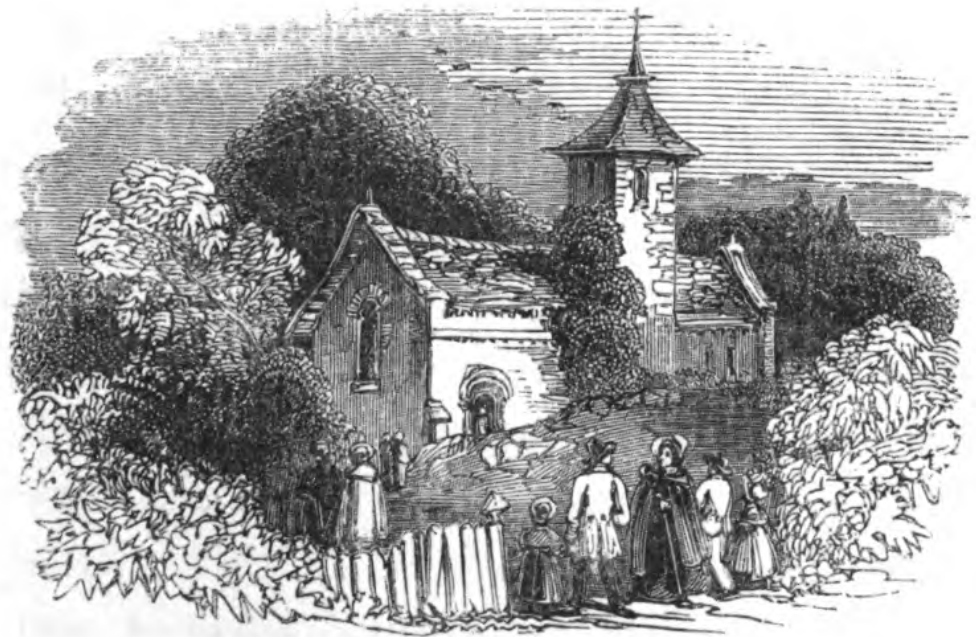
Once more the ghost appeared, with a long white beard, dressed in a red waistcoat, a yellow night cap with a green tassel on his head, and a pair of broad

ribbed blue stockings pulled half way up his thighs. There is little doubt but that, on this occasion, his ghostship would have been put to flight, had it not been for two soldiers, who, it was afterwards supposed, knew all about the matter. These two men, pretending to be dreadfully alarmed, took to their heels, followed by their comrades and the whole party, so that mayor and aldermen, parson and clerk, sexton, constable, and soldiers, were all driven away, like a flock of geese, by the ghost of old Blue Stockings.

When the truth of the matter was fully known, it appeared that the old miser, fearing he should be robbed, had quietly retired with his money to another town, where he lived for many years after. The whole affair of the ghost was contrived by two light-hearted young men, who, with the assistance of a magic lantern, had succeeded in frightening the whole town by a painted likeness of the old miser.

Let this story show you the folly of believing tales about ghosts, which too many are fond of relating, and let it also protect you from unnecessary fears. A conscience void of offence, and a confidence in

divine protection, afford us the best security. Peter Parley hopes that you will smile at the very next ghost story you hear, for, depend upon it, it will contain no more real cause of alarm than Alfred Huckaback's tale of the ghost of old Blue Stockings.



CHAP. XXI.

PARLEY SPEAKS OF THE SPIRIT OF COMPANIONSHIP OBSERVABLE AT CHRISTMAS, AND ABOUT HIGHWAY TRAVELLERS, LOADED COACHES, AND SCHOOLBOYS BREAKING UP FOR THE HOLIDAYS, AND RECITING PIECES.

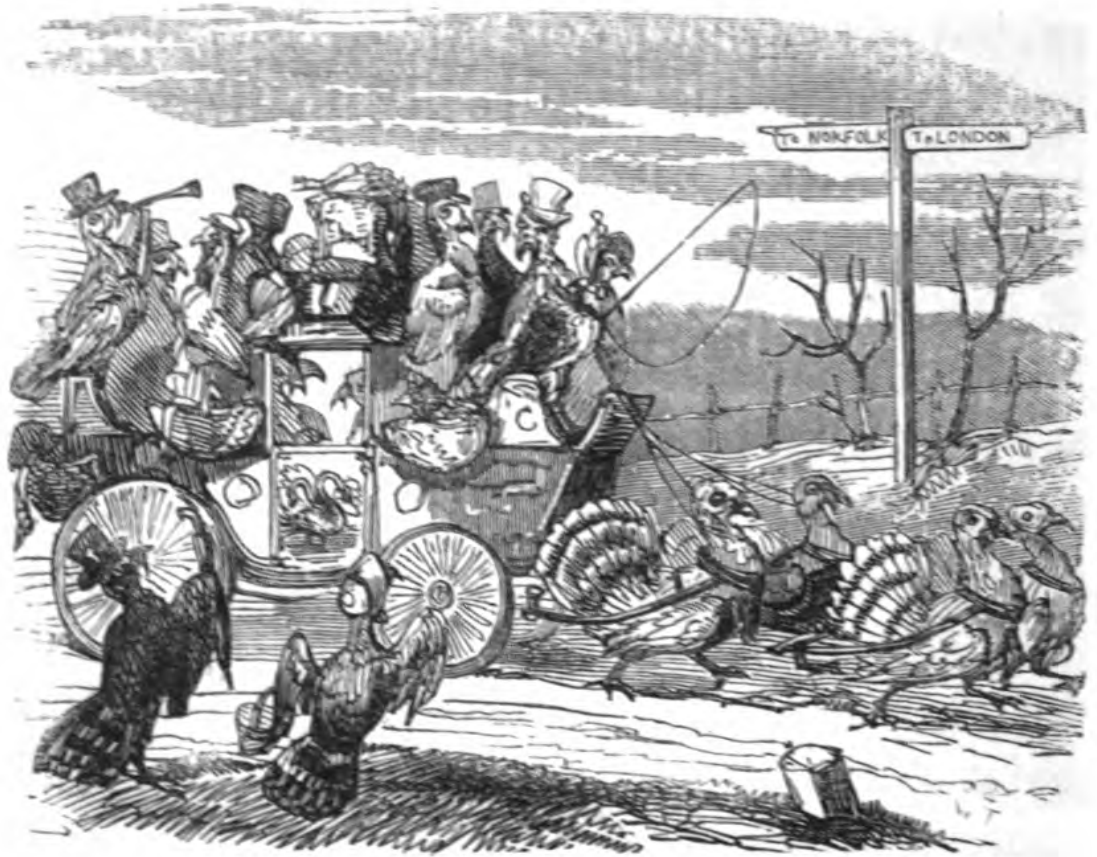
As Christmas draws near there seems a disposition, in one half of the population of England, to leave their stated homes, and in the other half to receive company. Heads of families, and servants, are generally occupied in preparing for visitors; so that they cannot stir abroad, and the aged, of course, remain within doors; but all who have fathers or mothers, grandfathers or grandmothers, uncles, aunts, or cousins a dozen times removed, usually contrive to find them out at Christmas.

Then visiting among friends takes place to a great extent, hardly a house without a party. A spirit of companionship is spread abroad, taverns and public houses are fuller than ordinary, and it seems lawful, in the estimation of most people, to take a deeper draught, and to laugh louder, than at other times.

There is no such a thing as resisting the desire of gathering together, that beats in every bosom. At other seasons people may wander alone and be happy, but at Christmas this is altogether impossible, the heart is clamorous for friendly intercourse.

In trudging a few miles along the turnpike road with Mr. Charlton, I could not but observe the bustle that prevailed. Every traveller had a holiday appearance; there were an unusual number of caravans, wagons, and vehicles of all kinds, the coaches were unmercifully loaded, and the coachmen had an air of more than common importance. One stage coach could hardly get up a chalky hill that it had to ascend, though six horses were attached to it, so heavy was the pile of hampers, baskets, packages, and parcels piled on the roof. Mr. Charlton said that it reminded him of once seeing the Norfolk coach, so loaded with turkeys, that it ought to have been called the turkey stage. There was scarcely any thing to be seen but turkeys, so piled was the outside of the coach, and so crammed the inside, that they wanted nothing in the world but a turkey for a coachman, and another for a guard to render the thing quite complete. "I should hardly have been

surprised," added he, "to see a turkey or two, running after the coach, labelled round the neck



THE NORFOLK TURKEY COACH.

‘for Leadenhall Market,’ and screaming out that their places had been booked three days before.”

Mr. Charlton, the preceding day, had accompanied me to see the breaking up of a school, at some little distance, and to hear the pieces in prose and poesy that the boys repeated. As we looked along the road before us, we saw two chaises rattling towards

us, as fast as the chaise boys could make the horses scamper, and we thought, directly, that some of the schoolboys we had seen, were on the road home, closely packed in the coming chaises. In this supposition we were quite right.

There are two seasons in a boy's life that are all sunshine, whether they occur in summer or in winter: the one is, when he is first put into button clothes.

O, it is, indeed, a moment of exultation, after all his longings and disappointments, to find himself all at once "a little man." To rub his hand, not in a dream, but in reality, over the soft sleeves of his blue jacket, to gaze on its shining blue buttons, and, what is still dearer, to fumble in his very own pocket, while the jingling of his silver sixpence and new penny is sounding like music in his ears.

The other season of delight is, when he breaks up for the holidays, and mounts the steps of the chaise, whose rattling wheels are to convey him to his happy home. Long before the chaise came up, the wild mirth of the merry madcaps, inside and out, had reached our ears.

There were, at least, half a dozen inside each chaise, some flourishing their caps, some waving their flags inscribed with that dear word "Home,"

and all shouting, or blowing a blast on their horns or peppering right and left at the passers by, with their pea-shooters.



SCHOOLBOYS GOING HOME.

All the mirth in their boyish hearts appeared to have broken loose. At the breaking up over night they had been riotous and happy; but the knowledge, or rather the feeling, that their master was under the same roof with them, in some small degree then restrained them; now they were free. Nothing seemed wanted to complete their joy; the whips were

smacking, the wheels were rattling, the horses were galloping, and they were going home.

I quite expected that, as they passed, they would give me and Mr. Charlton a volley from their pea-shooters, but instead of doing this, every boy waved his cap towards me, and cried out "Farewell, Mr. Parley!" The young rogues had read my books, and felt as kindly towards me as I felt towards them. Crack, crack, went the whips! round went the whirring wheels, and away went a dozen and a half of happy hearts, the blessing of Peter Parley going with them.

I ought to have told you about the pieces which they recited before they broke up, and I may as well do so yet, for some of them pleased me much. The breaking up itself cannot be described: you must therefore fancy that you see from thirty to forty boys, of different ages, half wild with joy, left, for some time, to themselves, under the influence of cake and wine, holiday, and liberty to enjoy themselves.

In the wantonness of newly acquired power, they had thrown away the sticks on which they had notched the days of their imprisonment; flung their books into their boxes, forgiven old grudges, and felt somewhat kindly even towards their master.

There was something beyond a mere love of fun in

them, there was a reckless daring, that seemed to be looking out for an opportunity of proving their independence. What did they care for tasks, and teachers, and schoolmasters, and canes? they grew uproarious, and then it was that they joined riotously in the following

BREAKING UP SONG.

BRING your fun, your frolic bring, boys;
 Throw your wisdom all away;
 Let the roof with laughter ring, boys,
 Now for home and holiday.
 Alpha, beta, gamma, delta,
 Off to Greece,—for we are free;
 Helter skelter, pilter pelter,
 We're the lads for mirth and spree!

Grammars, dictionaries, sum books—
 Plagues that words can ne'er define!
 Are at best but precious *hum*-books,
 Nouns that we will now *decline*.
 Alpha, beta, gamma, delta,
 Off to Greece,—for we are free;
 Helter skelter, pilter pelter,
 We're the lads for mirth and spree!

Masters, though your power is waning,
 Keep your hands in, crabbed elves!
 As you know there must be *caning*,
 Doff your coats and *cane* yourselves.

Alpha, beta, gamma, delta,
 Off to Greece,—for we are free;
 Helter skelter, pilter pelter,
 We're the lads for mirth and spree!

Ushers now may dress in satin;
 Bite their fingers, fret and pine;
 Teach the mastiff dog, dog latin;
 Tell the cat—of Cataline.
 Alpha, beta, gamma, delta,
 Off to Greece,—for we are free;
 Helter skelter, pilter pelter,
 We're the lads for mirth and spree!

Magistrorum is a *bore*-um,
 Hic, hæc, hoc, may make his bow,
 Let us cry "High cock a lorum!"
 That's the latin for us now.
 Alpha, beta, gamma, delta,
 Off to Greece,—for we are free;
 Helter skelter, pilter pelter,
 We're the lads for mirth and spree!

Bring your fun, your frolic bring, boys;
 Throw your wisdom all away;
 Let the roof with laughter ring, boys,
 Now for home and holiday.
 Alpha, beta, gamma, delta,
 Off to Greece,—for we are free;
 Helter skelter, pilter pelter,
 We're the lads for mirth and spree!

The pieces recited before the breaking up, were

numerous. "The Seven Ages," "Cato's Soliloquy," "My name is Norval," "The Chameleon," "Collins's Ode on the Passions," "Pope's Universal Prayer," and a score others, with one or two humorous dialogues. The following was well delivered.

MONTELHERY AND LA ROCHELLE.

A WORTHY man, of Paris town,
Came to the bishop there ;
His face, o'erclouded with dismay,
Betray'd a fix'd despair.

"Father," said he, a "sinner vile
Am I against my will :
Each hour I humbly pray for faith,
But am a doubter still.

"Sure, were I not despised of God,
He would not leave me so,
To struggle thus, in constant strife,
Against the deadly foe."

The bishop to his sorrowing son
Thus spoke a kind relief:—
"The king of France has castles twain ;
To each he sends a chief.

"There's Montelhery, far inland,
That stands in place secure ;
While La Rochelle upon the coast
Doth sieges oft endure.

“ Now, for these castles both preserved,
First in his prince’s love
Shall Montelhery’s chief be placed,
Or La Rochelle’s above ?”

“ Oh, doubtless, sire,” the sinner cried,
“ That king would love the most
The man whose task was hard, to keep
The castle on his coast !”

“ Son,” said the bishop, “ thou art right ;
Apply this reas’ning well :
My heart is *Montelhery fort*,
And thine is *La Rochelle !*”

A sober looking boy repeated a short and impressive piece, on the value of time ; which it will be worth your while to commit to memory. Listen, and you shall hear it.

THE VALUE OF TIME.

WASTE silver and gold, waste pearls and diamonds, rather than waste time, which is of greater value than them all. Never squander an hour unprofitably under pretence of “killing time.” Killing time ! It is a culpable expression, and a still more culpable deed when reduced to practice. If you were to begin this hour, and employ yourself till your dying

day, you could never read half the good books that have been written, nor do half the kind acts that your fellow creatures around you require: you could neither reprove half their errors, nor seek with sufficient fervour at the throne of mercy, for all the blessings you and others need. While, then, there is a good book unread, a kind deed undone, an error unreproved, a christian grace unattained, or any blessing still needed by yourself or others, never, never think of "killing time."

At last one of the biggest boys stood up; and if ever a schoolboy deserved praise for his performance he did: you shall hear the piece he recited.

THE
DREAM OF YOUTH, OF MANHOOD, AND OF YEARS.

"OH! there is a dream of early youth,
And it never comes again;
'Tis a vision of light, of life, and truth,
That flits across the brain.
And love is the theme of that early dream,
So wild, so warm, so new,
That in all our after years, I deem,
That early dream we rue.

Oh! there is a dream of maturer years,
More turbulent by far ;
'Tis a vision of blood, and of woman's tears,
For the theme of that dream is war :
And we toil in the field of danger and death,
And shout in the battle array,
Till we find that fame is a bodiless breath,
That vanisheth away.

Oh! there is a dream of hoary age,
'Tis a vision of gold in store,
Of sums noted down on the figured page,
To be counted o'er and o'er ;
And we fondly trust in our glittering dust,
As a refuge from grief and pain,
Till our limbs are laid on that last dark bed,
Where the wealth of the world is vain.

And is it thus, from man's birth to his grave
In the path which all are treading?
Is there nought in that long career to save
From remorse and self-upbraiding?
O yes, there's a dream so pure, so bright,
That the being, to whom it is given,
Hath bathed in a sea of living light,
And the theme of that dream is heaven."



CHAP. XXII.

PARLEY CONTINUES HIS ACCOUNT OF RECITED PIECES.

BUT though, on the whole, the pieces recited by the boys went off well, there was none among them that occasioned half so much mirth, as a long one spoken by a merry looking, thick set lad, dressed up like an old man. This lad seemed to enter into the very spirit of Christmas drollery. He humoured the character of the piece excellently, and there was a general burst of laughter from almost the beginning to the end of it. You shall hear it all.

MY UNCLE'S ACCOUNT OF HIS VISIT TO THE FARM HOUSE.

A KINDLY spirit is of inestimable value, and if a man has every other good quality, and possesses not this, though he may be feared, obeyed, served, and respected, yet he cannot be sincerely loved. All the talent and integrity in the world will never compensate for the want of kindness. If, in his thoughts, words, and deeds, a man has no kindly

feelings towards those around him, he is more fit to live in the solitary desert, than in the social circle.

But though kindness is so necessary, so indispensable, so delightful a thing, and throws such a balmy influence over the intercourse of man and man, yet it is possible to carry it too far; or rather, to manifest such a want of judgment in exercising it, that a pang is inflicted, instead of a pleasure being conferred.

Some years ago, in the latter end of the month of September, I spent a complete day at a farm house; and never, sure, was there a more frank, hospitable man in the world than farmer Brown; or a more kind-hearted woman than his wife; and yet, notwithstanding the hospitality of the farmer, and the kindness of his wife, they, between them, made my visit a most uncomfortable one. Few persons can make themselves more happy in the country than I can, but then I must have my own way; I must go in and out when it suits me; ramble where I please; follow out my own whims; and not be placed under restraint. Every thing belonging to a farm, or a farm house, is interesting to me, provided I can be left to my own plans. This, however, unfortunately

for me, was not allowed at the house of farmer Brown; for my worthy host, and kind-hearted hostess, so persecuted me with their attentions, that my visit gave me any thing but pleasure.

In the first place, instead of the farmer attending to his farm, and his wife to her dairy, the one and the other had decked themselves in their Sunday clothes, out of respect to me, and appeared to think that it would be a breach of hospitality and kindness to leave me one single moment to myself.

After breakfast the honest farmer would show me his stock; and I had to accompany him through all his barns, stabling, cow-houses, and pig-sties, while he discussed the price of barley, slapped the backs of Ball and Dobbin, felt the flanks of his fat cattle, and scratched the bristled necks of his store pigs.

After a full hour had been employed, out came Mrs. Brown to take me through her hen-coops and duck-pens, and then to lead me a dance into her dairy.

I dearly love a glance and away at such things, but two hours at the treadmill could scarcely be more disagreeable than to be dragged, against your inclination, through the puddle of a fold yard, where

your shoes sink, at every step, into the dirty straw, till they are soaked, through and through, by the unclean slop beneath it.

All this I bore patiently, for I knew that it arose from nothing but kindness; but when the farmer proposed to take me over his grounds, my heart sank within me: he did it, however, with such hearty good will, that I must have been a Turk to refuse; so off I set on my painful pilgrimage.

The farmer was up to his knees in boots, with thick soles, and strong upper leathers, and cared but little for the stiff stubble, the ploughed ground, or the flooded meadow; but I was not so well provided for. My white cotton stockings but ill defended my legs, and my thin soled shoes, already soaked through by the puddle in the fold yard, were but a poor defence to my feet; yet, still, the farmer told me, with such good humour, the number of loads of barley he had carried from one field, and how many bushels of wheat had been produced per acre by another, that I did my utmost to appear interested in his remarks. A smart shower fell, on our return, so that, by the time we arrived at the farm house, my coat was soaked through, as well as my shoes.

Dinner was about to be served in the best parlour,

a chamber not frequently used, and not half so comfortable as the common sitting room; but this arrangement was made out of kindness, and a few smart neighbours had been invited from the same motive to meet me. When I heard of the company, I would willingly have kept on my wet clothes, rather than put on those of the farmer, which I well knew would be nearly twice the size of my own; but this Mrs. Brown would by no means allow. She kindly insisted that I should exchange my coat, stockings, and shoes; so that when I made my appearance before the company, the farmer's best blue coat and red waistcoat hung upon me as loose as a blanket, while I dragged along the floor a pair of his strongest shoes, one of which was nearly large enough for both my feet. During dinner, my glass was no sooner emptied than the farmer instantly filled it, pressing me, out of kindness, to drink more than I desired; while Mrs. Brown so piled my plate with wings, breasts, and merry-thoughts, from the dish of fowls before her, that I felt ashamed to leave them untouched, as many of them were.

I had eaten an extra slice of ham from mere necessity, and was about to lay down my knife and fork, when my kind hostess, ever on the watch,

popped on my plate a thick lump of fat gammon, the very sight of which made my heart heave within me. "You must and shall eat it," said the hospitable woman: and if I had really done so, I verily believe that its vacant place would have been immediately supplied with a lump from the same dish, not a whit inferior in size to its predecessor.

Mrs. Brown was sorry that I did not like her dinner, and regretted that she had not provided a greater variety, though the table had enough upon it, in quantity and quality, to satisfy a dozen aldermen.

As it was with the bacon, so it was with the puddings, pies, tarts, custards, and syllabubs. The more I ate, the more plentifully was I supplied; and the kindness of my good friends incessantly tormented me.

After dinner, it was my intention to put on my own coat and waistcoat, and walk out alone; but alas! farmer Brown and his wife were too kind to allow me to go moping about by myself. The farmer had ordered the pipes in his snug little smoking room, and Mrs. Brown kindly promised me a treat in hearing her little Fanny play on the spinnet; but as I could not do both these things at the same

time, it was kindly arranged for me to retire with the farmer and his friends for an hour, and then to join the company in the parlour.

Not being a smoker, I could not avail myself of the farmer's kindness, when he filled me a pipe, lighted me a spill, and told me that it was one of the best things in the world, for a man to take a dozen whiffs after dinner.

When he found that I could not smoke, he kindly insisted on my making amends for it with my glass.

As soon as I could, I escaped to the parlour; but here the kindness of Mrs. Brown so plied me with cake and wine, that I was almost as much annoyed as when with the honest farmer.

Miss Fanny played sadly out of time on the old spinnet, which was terribly out of tune; but, bad as her playing was, her singing was much worse, and I hoped that every line would be the last; I could not conscientiously praise her performance, yet was unwilling to give offence; so that the kindness of Mrs. Brown in requiring her daughter, from time to time, to play another tune, because she saw that I was fond of music, was a sad trouble to me.

Perceiving that the shoes I wore inconvenienced me by their size, Mrs. Brown kindly fetched me a

purple pair of her own, finely ornamented, which she thought might fit me better. In vain I assured her that the pair which I already had would do very well; in vain I refused to take them from my feet: she was too kind to let me have my own way; so I was compelled to sit in thick worsted stockings and ornamented purple shoes, to be laughed at by the company.

It was quite a relief to me when the farmer and his friends came to take their tea, though the room rang again, with their laughter, at my expense; Mr. Brown declaring that he did not know whether I looked best in his high-topped shoes, or in his wife's purple slippers.

It was by no means a pleasant thing to me to cut the figure that I did, when every one else around me was well dressed. Willingly, would I have occupied a seat in a retired part of the room, but I was to be persecuted with kind attentions, and Mrs. Brown had placed the arm chair for me in the most conspicuous place possible, to show me respect. There I sat in my blue coat, red waistcoat, worsted stockings, and ornamented purple slippers, a most ridiculous figure; Mrs. Brown, ever and anon, drawing on me the attention of the whole company, by her kind

regrets, lest I should take cold from the wetting I had got, and lamenting that she could not accommodate me with more suitable clothing.

The farmer recommended me to take a little rum in my tea ; but his wife, insisting that brandy was much better for me, filled up my tea cup with that active stimulant until it ran over ; and sadly disappointed was she, to learn that I had a dislike to spirituous liquors.

Having some miles to return home, I rose as soon as I could from the tea table, to dress myself in my own clothes ; but the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Brown would not allow me to leave the room.

They had a well aired bed, and I must stay the night with them. When they were convinced that I could not stop, the farmer insisted on my mounting his brown mare, which he said, though a little gay and inclined to caper, was one of the surest-footed creatures in the country. She would go along as brisk as a lark, and he would send a man for her in the morning.

Now, among my manifold deficiencies, may be reckoned the circumstance of my never having been used to horsemanship, and the very thought of climbing upon the back of a strange steed, that was

gay, and inclined to caper, and that would go almost as briskly as a lark, was terrible to me ; but the more stoutly I refused to ride, the more kindly resolved was my worthy friend, that I should go home in no other way than by mounting his hackney.

The brown mare was brought to the door, and I, muffled up in the farmer's great coat, which he had kindly forced me to put on, was led like a bear to the stake, all in a perspiration, to the fearful spot, where I had to mount my prancing palfrey, in the presence of the whole company, who had kindly issued from the house to see me set off.

Here was a pretty situation to be placed in : but the case was unavoidable ; so, advancing with all the courage that I could muster, I placed my trembling foot in the stirrup, and fearfully raised myself upon the saddle. Just at this moment, the honest farmer, almost as full of fun as he was of kindness, pulled up a stinging nettle by the root, that was growing within a few yards, and clapped it under the tail of the brown mare. This was a good joke to the farmer, but it was quite a calamity to me, for I had enough to do to keep my seat, in a respectable manner, under ordinary circumstances.

The brown mare frisked her tail, and soon began

to kick up her heels, when, leaning forwards, desperately clung to her mane with both my hands



VISITOR ON HORSEBACK LEAVING THE FARM HOUSE.

raising my knees almost as high as the pommel of the saddle; and in this ludicrous condition I left my kind friends, pursued by the tittering of the young people, and the loud laugh of the hospitable farmer. Thus was I disappointed of an agreeable day, persecuted from morning to night, and made a laughing stock to a whole company, by the injudicious *kindness* of my friends.

CHAP. XXIII.

PARLEY RELATES THE FAT COUNTRY GENTLEMAN'S TALE OF HIS VISIT TO CAMBERWELL.

AMONG the many Christmas visits that I paid, I shall not soon forget one, which took place on a very snowy afternoon. It was a white world all round the house, and large flakes were flying about, like so many butterflies fluttering in the air. The drawn curtains, the blazing fire, the hissing tea urn, and the pleasant company, together with the open-hearted hospitality of the owner of the mansion, made the scene very cheerful. Among the gentlemen present, was one from London, the rest of the party were from the neighbourhood around.

The conversation turned upon the subject of hospitality, and the country folks were a little hard upon the Londoners. "Mr. Parley," said a short, fat, comical gentleman, who sat next to me, "I will give you, in few words, an account of a visit to Camberwell that I once paid with a friend. Camberwell people are looked upon as Londoners, and

you will judge whether, or not, they treated us hospitably.

“ My friend, Mr. Wharton, is a neighbour of mine and we went up to London in the mail together. One evening he proposed to me, to go with him to see his friend Flicker, at Camberwell, but I objected, fearing it might be thought troublesome, I having no acquaintance with Mr. Flicker; but my neighbour would have no denial. ‘ He will make you as welcome as he will me,’ said he.

“ My scruples being at length overcome, we set off for Camberwell. As we had a few calls to make in our road, it grew quite dusk before we arrived there, and I ventured again to intimate my fear of being looked upon as an intruder. ‘ I tell you,’ said my neighbour, ‘ that my friend Frank will be delighted to see us. Over, and over, and over again has he pressed me to come and see him at Camberwell. He is a very hospitable, warm hearted man, and has often spent a week together at my house.’

“ On we went, and though I was not without my misgivings, I thought to myself, if Mr. Flicker is on such friendly terms with my neighbour, and ha

spent a week at a time with him, it alters the case; no doubt we shall be received kindly.

“It happened, that in passing a fishmonger’s shop, my neighbour set his eyes on some fine lobsters. In he went, and picked out the very best among them, ‘for,’ said he, ‘as we are rather late, friend Flicker may not be altogether provided for supper.’ Once more we proceeded, neighbour Wharton carrying the lobster in his hand, well wrapped up in brown paper.

“When we arrived at the house, I wished my friend to go first, and see how matters stood, telling him that I would join him in an instant if all was right.

“‘Right?’ said he, ‘it is sure to be right. You don’t know my good friend Flicker, or you would not be so backward. He will give us a warm welcome. The last time he left me, he wrung me by the hand, and told me, that nothing in the world would give him more pleasure than to see me at his house at Camberwell.’

“My neighbour Wharton was hospitality itself, and never, for a moment, suspected that his friend Flicker was not made of the same materials. Up the steps he went, and gave a rap, neither loud enough

to show ill mannerly boldness, nor low enough to manifest a doubt of his reception; just such a rap as a warm hearted, yet modest man would give at the door of a friend, whom he had not seen for some time.

“After my neighbour had given his name, we were shown into a parlour without fire, and took our seats in silence. Soon, however, we heard sundry suppressed voices and whisperings, and a scuffling backwards and forwards, accompanied with the ringing of an up stairs bell, which, altogether, told us that the domestic establishment of Mr. Flicker had, by some circumstance, or other, been thrown into disorder.

“My neighbour, who expected that at the announcement of his name, his friend Flicker would spring forwards into the room to give him a welcome, could make neither top nor tail of being put into a cold room, and allowed to sit there a quarter of an hour without seeing any one of the family. There we sat, the scuffle still continuing: heartily did I wish myself safe back again at our inn, the George and Blue Boar, in Holborn.

“After performing an unreasonable quarantine we heard steps approaching the parlour door, and

Mrs. Flicker, with her face a little flushed, entered the room. With more etiquette than I was prepared to expect, she announced to us that Mr. Flicker was engaged at the moment, but that he would soon be forthcoming.

“We dragged on a conversation as well as we



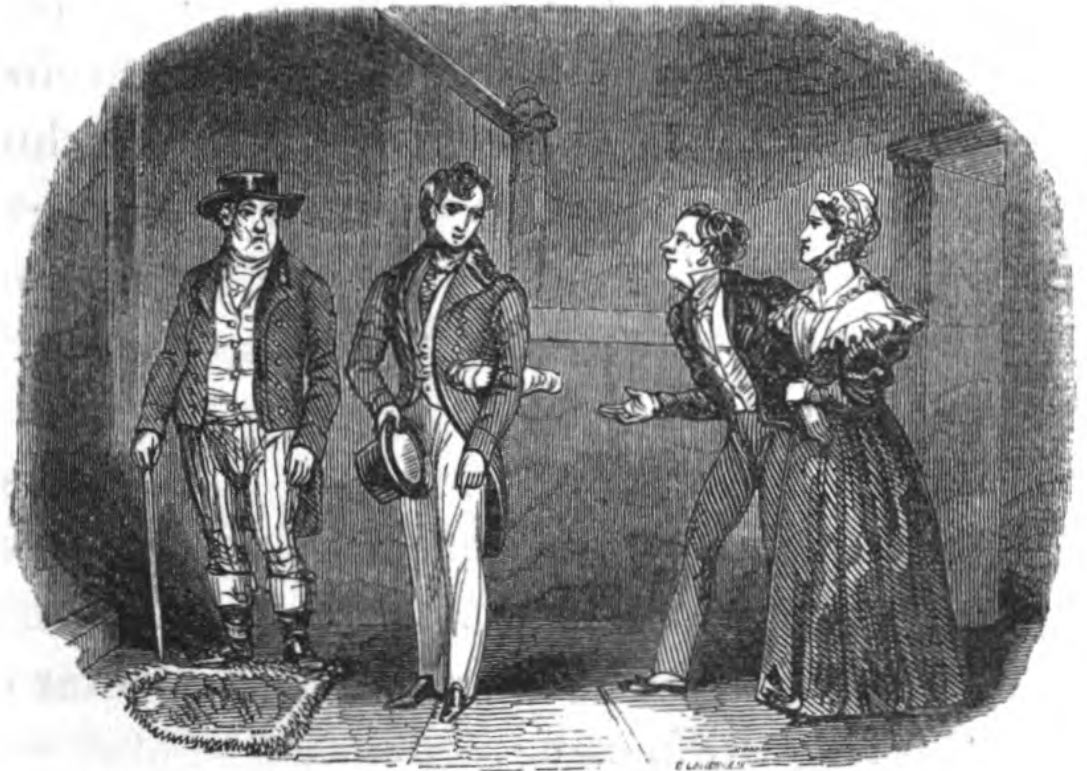
SITTING WITH MRS. FLICKER, A COLD-HEARTED SCENE.

could, but it was cold hearted work, and glad was I to hear the tread of Mr. Flicker crossing the hall. In he came, with an ‘Ah! how do you do? glad to see you, how is Mrs. Wharton, and how are the children?’

“This seemingly warm reception put a different face on the matter for a moment. My neighbour Wharton began to brighten up, and I thought that he was about to produce the lobster, but, alas! it was all a flash in the pan; soon we were as dull and as flat as ditch water, for every time Mr. Flicker spoke he gave a timid look towards his amiable wife, and I soon saw that we lay at the mercy of Mrs. Flicker; that it altogether rested with her whether we were to be treated hospitably at Camberwell, or trudge back again to Holborn; for, though there are cabs and omnibuses by dozens, plying between London and Camberwell now, it was not so then. Now, Mr. Parley, that man cannot be a good husband who willingly gives his wife trouble, but he that will use a friend ill, who has treated him well, merely because his wife hangs her lip, and is a little out of temper, does not deserve to have a friend. If my wife were to play the part of Mrs. Flicker once, I think she would never do it again. But I will finish my tale.

“Every common subject of conversation being exhausted, and nothing being said by Mr. or Mrs. Flicker, either about refreshment, or our staying the night with them, my neighbour Wharton himself

got fidgety, and, at last, observed it was getting late; the truth of which observation was immediately confirmed by Mr. and Mrs. Flicker, who expressed their regret that we had so far to go: 'But I'll tell you what,' said Mr. Flicker, 'there is a very comfortable inn near, and my servant shall go with you. I am sure that you will be well accommodated there, and that will be much better than returning to London in the dark.'



TAKING LEAVE OF MR. FLICKER.

“I stole one glance at my neighbour Wharton, as he grasped the lobster in the brown paper; but he was so cut up, and chop fallen, that I had not the

heart to look at him again. As what Mr. and Mrs. Flicker had said amounted to a dismissal, we both rose to depart: when we were fairly on our legs, Mrs. Flicker inquired, very faintly, whether we would take a glass of wine, and Mr. Flicker hoped he should see us before we left town. The proffered wine, and the servant to show us the inn, were alike dispensed with, and after a freezing courtesy from the lady, and an icicle-like shake of the hand from her husband, we left the hospitable abode of the friendly, warm hearted Mr. Flicker, of Camberwell.

“My poor neighbour seemed absolutely frost-bitten, by the unexpected treatment we had received; nor had I the cruelty to indulge in a single jest, till we had eaten up the lobster at the inn, and drank each of us a hearty glass of white wine negus. We remained at Camberwell that night, and just before we returned to London, in the morning, I proposed to my neighbour Wharton to make another call on his friend Flicker. ‘He will make you as welcome,’ said I, ‘as he will me, he will be delighted to see you,’ and remember, ‘he has often spent a week together at your house.’ ‘All is sure to be right,’ for ‘nothing in the world will give him more pleasure than to see you at his house at Camberwell.’

“ My neighbour has been to London many times since then, and met with good treatment, but never once has he had the slightest desire to darken the doors of his kind, hospitable, warm hearted friend Mr. Flicker, of Camberwell.”

This account occasioned a hearty laugh at the expense of the London gentleman, but he soon turned the tables in his favour, by relating the following story.



CHAP. XXIV.

PARLEY TELLS THE STORY HE HEARD ABOUT AN INVITATION
TO TEA.

“I HAVE often thought, Mr. Parley,” said he, addressing himself to me, “that London people have been accused, a little unjustly, of inhospitality. The bustle, and business-like habits of Londoners leave them but little time, during the day, for the interchange of those civilities that are so agreeable between man and man; but when business-like hours are over, I am not aware that they have a less social and hospitable turn than their country friends. However this may be, the following occurrence is not at all calculated to increase my desire to practise indiscriminate hospitality.

“Mrs. Jackson and I, having a desire for a few days relaxation, visited the Isle of Wight. While on our way, at Portsmouth, waiting for a change of weather, Mrs. Jackson was taken ill, when several of the neighbours, and among the rest Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, the silversmith, opposite our hotel, sent kind inquiries after her health. On our re-

turning from the island we resolved to call on Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, and thank them for their kind attention; the result was an invitation to tea that afternoon. We went; the conversation was general, and naturally turned upon the great improvements going on in London, when, in reply to a desire expressed by Miss Wilson, I said that we should be most happy to accommodate her at our house, for a few days, if she thought proper to visit the metropolis. Mutual compliments took place; the evening passed away, and we retired to our hotel: the following morning found us on our journey towards home.

“Some time after this a letter, bearing the Portsmouth mark, recalled to mind our visit there. The letter stated that Miss Wilson would avail herself of Mr. and Mrs. Jackson’s kind invitation to stay a few days at their house, and that she would be in London the following day. Whether it passed through Mrs. Jackson’s mind or not I cannot say, but it certainly occurred to me that Miss Wilson should have allowed us the benefit of a post, in case it had been inconvenient to us; however, on the morrow a hackney coach drew up at the door with

Miss Wilson and her papa, who soon made their appearance with a pile of bonnet, and other boxes.

“We did what we could to make the time pass pleasantly, and neither Mr. Wilson nor his daughter had any just cause to complain of our want of hospitality. We invited friends to meet Mr. Wilson, and we took his daughter to places of public amusement; thus things went on till a week had passed away.

“One day, after dinner, when the ladies had retired to the drawing room, Mr. Wilson drew his chair close to mine, and, in a low tone, said that he had a matter of a somewhat delicate nature to communicate, and, in furtherance of the object he had in view, he requested my assistance.

“He then told me, that a Mr. Smith, a most respectable young gentleman, a townsman of his, had lately come to London, and that he wished, if the matter could at all be brought about, for a connexion to be formed between the two families. ‘My daughter,’ said he, ‘is a most amiable, interesting creature, and, if opportunities were afforded, they might—’

“I cut the matter short by intimating, rather plainly, that I was no matchmaker, and that, as I

understood the parents of Mr. Smith were in utter ignorance of Mr. Wilson's desires, the only upright and honourable course was, to communicate with them on the subject.

“Mr. Wilson seemed by no means to approve of so straight-forward a mode of proceeding, and the matter ended, for the time, by his writing two letters, one, to the identical Mr. Smith, and the other to a Mr. Jones, another promising young man, with whom he had had some dealings. It appeared but too plain, afterwards, that the purport of these letters was to secure their friendly attentions to his daughter, during her residence in London. Mr. Jones was to be kept in play, that Miss Wilson might have ‘two strings to her bow.’ Mr. Smith had occasion to leave town for a short time, and this circumstance gave Mr. Jones an opportunity of playing the agreeable.

“While we were at breakfast one morning, a letter came for Mr. Wilson: after reading it, he regretted the absolute necessity he was under to leave us, but spoke not a word of his daughter's accompanying him. Neither my wife nor I had the ill manners to intimate, that Miss Wilson's longer abode with us would be at all disagreeable.

“There are some visitors, Mr. Parley, who really render themselves valuable by their cheerful habits, their obliging disposition, and by the little trouble they give; but Miss Wilson was, by no means, one of this description: she seemed to consider herself as the centre of a circle, and that all around were called upon to contribute to her gratification.

“A few days after the departure of Mr. Wilson, she began to hint some hope that her papa would allow her to have her harp in London, as it would be a delightful way of passing the time, to play on her favourite instrument. My wife and I were a little alarmed at this suggestion, for, as she had already spent ten or twelve days with us, and occasioned us no little trouble and expense, the arrival of her harp would, in our apprehension, have made her at once a parlour boarder without payment. We kept silence, but were determined, in our own minds, to oppose the plan of introducing the harp among us, should it be again mentioned. Surely Miss Wilson could practise upon it at home quite as well as in London!

“The very next day, to our surprise and mortification, a carrier's van brought a great, thundering case into the hall, addressed to Miss Wilson; it

contained her harp. Without troubling herself to consult with us about the matter, she and her



CARRIER WITH THE HARP IN A CASE.

indulgent papa had arranged the whole affair. I wished the case, and the harp it contained, at the bottom of the sea. The harp was soon unpacked, carried into the drawing room and tuned, and Miss entertained herself, and did her best to entertain us, by playing some of those common, modern, namby pamby song tunes, which, at the same time, disgrace our teachers and degrade their pupils.

“Neither I nor my wife had any knowledge that

Miss Wilson, when she came to us, had any acquaintance in London, but as the two-penny post not unfrequently brought her letters, we concluded that we were not her only friends in the metropolis.

“When our visitor had been with us about a month, one morning, while at breakfast, she took from her reticule a letter, which she said she had just received from a Mr. Jones. ‘Don’t you think he is very kind,’ said she, ‘he sends me an invitation to go with him to the Caledonian ball the first of next month?’ Mr. Jones was the gentleman to whom Mr. Wilson had written; by management, he had been drawn in to pay particular attentions to Miss Wilson.

“The evening came, Miss Wilson went to the ball, and was highly delighted. ‘And what do you think he has done?’ said she on her return. We expressed our inability to answer this knotty question. ‘He has actually asked me,’ she replied, ‘to go with him to the next ball that will take place this day month.’ ‘Of course,’ observed my wife, ‘you told him you could not accept his invitation, as you would, by that time, be out of London.’ ‘Oh dear no!’ said she, ‘I accepted the invitation, for I thought it so kind of him.’

“ Here was a pretty piece of business ! the agreeable prospect of another month being added to Miss Wilson’s visit ! My wife and I had a long consultation about the way in which we ought to act ; for it really seemed that our amiable visitor was a leech that would stick by us to the last.

“ It was at length agreed to inform Miss Wilson, that, after the next Caledonian ball, we should require her sleeping room, as we expected some friends.

“ This was, in fact, the case, though we, certainly, might have managed without the lodging room, had we been so disposed.

“ I should weary you, Mr. Parley, if I were to mention one half the vexations that occurred during the month ; however, time rolled on, the second ball was attended, and an invitation received, by Miss Wilson, to the third ; by this time our patience began to give way. For myself, had she been an obliging young lady, I should not have minded her remaining with us the whole year ; but, as it was, I was heartily tired of her company, and made up my mind to bring affairs to a close.

“ When it was intimated to our young friend that in a week her bedroom would positively be wanted,

she inquired if we could not write and say that we had a friend in town, and desire the party to delay their visit? We rejected this modest proposal, telling her that the friends we expected were too highly valued, by us, to be put off.

“She tried other expedients to prolong her visit, and even proposed to sleep with one of the servants, till our friends were gone; but this we would not hear of, we could not think of treating her in that manner. As a last resource she told us of an invitation she had received to spend a few days in Bedford Square; that she would go there, and finish her visit with us afterwards. This proposal made us almost unmannerly, and we stated in plain terms, that, not knowing how long our expected friends might remain with us, it would inconvenience us if she remained more than a week longer.

“When the week had expired, we proposed to send for a man accustomed to pack up musical instruments, that her harp might be properly secured in the packing case. ‘Well, really,’ said Miss Wilson, ‘I suppose, then, I must write and tell my mamma that I am coming home, but, I feel sure that they do not want me.’

“She did not write her letter till the next day,

and then she wanted to put it into the post herself. At one time it was too hot to walk, at another too cold; now it was too early to go out, and now too late; so that I was obliged to take the letter from the chimney piece, one morning before she was up, and send it to the office.

“ Luckily our expected friends delayed their visit a little, and before they came the postman brought a Portsmouth letter, stating that Mrs. Wilson would come up to London on the following Monday, to take charge of her daughter; but as the journey, up and down in one day, would be too fatiguing, she requested permission to take half a bed with her daughter for one night. On the appointed day, mamma came with three large boxes; on seeing which my wife and I exchanged looks of inquiry, as to the purport of all this luggage.

“ During the day, nothing was said about securing seats in the stage coach, nor about making preparation for their return. Towards evening Mrs. Wilson intimated that she should, if perfectly convenient, prefer a separate bed, as she feared, her daughter being a very bad bedfellow, that her rest, after her journey, might be disturbed.

“The next morning we found, to our astonishment, that Mrs. Wilson had taken possession of a chest of drawers, and that her wardrobe was laid out in due order. All symptoms, indeed, of departure had totally vanished.

“Mrs. Wilson soon expressed a desire to see some of the sights of London, because, as she said, it would really look so strange, when she went back to Portsmouth, to say that she had been in London and seen nothing; adding, ‘you, Mrs. Jackson, shall accompany us; as you have been so kind, I shall insist on your going with us, and, remember, it is my treat!’

“A coach was called, and off went the party. At each place our visitors contrived to go forward, giving my wife an opportunity to pay the admission; but this she did not do, she was determined to keep the lady to her resolution of treating her. Mrs. Wilson paid all, and when she returned, after some moments’ hesitation, she said, ‘Oh dear! now while I remember it, let me put down our expenses.’ On adding up the amount, it was found to be exactly thirty shillings.

“‘My dear Mrs. Jackson,’ said she, ‘we cannot

expect my daughter, dear creature, to pay, you know she is so young ; so, you see, it is exactly fifteen shillings for each of us.'

"At this observation, my wife, whose spirit rose, asked her if she did not invite her to go with them, and say it should be her treat. 'Oh yes, certainly, my treat,' she said, 'that is to say, I meant I would pay for myself.' My wife gave her fifteen shillings, and then told her, very coolly, that she was ready to help her in packing her clothes. Mrs. Wilson declared it was quite impossible to attend to them that day, as she had tickets for the theatre that evening, where she and her daughter were to be attended by a Mr. Smith, and, besides, added she, 'if I stop another day or two, it is not impossible that Mr. Wilson will bring Johnny with him, and come and fetch us.' Thinks I, my house will be filled with Wilsons. It made me think of the plague of the locusts.

"Mr. Smith, who was to attend mother and daughter to the theatre, was the gentleman with whom Mr. Wilson was so desirous to form a connexion. Mrs. Wilson had assisted in the plan to secure Mr. Smith, who was greatly preferred, by all parties, to Mr. Jones.

“ I and my wife had altogether declined to have any thing to do with the play party, but the ladies were both ready dressed, watches were frequently consulted, it was six o'clock, and Mr. Smith was not yet come ; really this was too bad. What could be done ? It would be a great pity to lose the tickets ; it was resolved, as a stop-gap, to send for Mr. Jones. That gentleman, as in duty bound, came immediately, and, just as they were going off, a loud randan at the door announced that Mr. Smith was there, with a carriage for the ladies.

“ Here a scene took place of the most embarrassing and ludicrous description. What could be done ? How could they get rid of Mr. Jones ? What could they say to Mr. Smith ? How, and in what character, could they introduce the former gentleman, so as not to mar their schemes ? The mother went into hysterics, the daughter fainted, and the gentlemen, each thinking himself in the way of the other, left the ladies, who, on recovering, had the mortification to find themselves alone with the servants. Thus by manœuvring did Miss Wilson lose both her lovers, and thus did the dishonourable and mean attempt of her parents, at matchmaking, meet its reward.

“The following day, with great exertion on our part, and no little cunning, contriving, and delay on the part of our visitors, we were enabled to bid them adieu, having had the pleasure of the excellent company of Miss Wilson, to say nothing of that of her respected parents, for nearly five months. Do you not think, Mr. Parley, that this was paying a tolerable good price, for a cup of tea in the country?”

This account occasioned as much diversion to the fireside party, as the former one had done, and it was agreed on all hands, that one tale ought never to be told without the other. The Wilsons, of Portsmouth, and the Flickers, of Camberwell, ought to go together through the world.



CHAP. XXV.

PARLEY'S ACCOUNT OF MASQUES, MUMMERS, ANCIENT JUGGLERS, BARDS AND HARPERS, PLAYS, PANTOMIMES, AND OTHER THINGS.

It seems a great pity, that there should be so many things in the world beloved by the heart, and condemned by the judgment. Why cannot we be happy at Christmas without going to excess? There is so much in this ancient festival calculated to mend the heart, to soften its hardness, to wear away its sharpness, and to call forth its best affections, that its excesses are the more to be regretted. Why can we not enter upon Christmas, with an unfeigned love of its devotional services, and a desire to make all around us happy?

When I observe any human being looking around him, to see what kind act he can do, my heart yearns towards him, whether he be young or old. When the old English Gentleman keeps open house and relieves the poor at his gate, I love him. When the humble minded pastor visits the poor in the alms house, to add to their earthly comforts, and to direct

them to a better world, I love him; and when I see young people paying attention to the blind, or the lame, or acting kindly to their playmates, I love them with all my heart.

I would not, willingly, speak irreverently of holy things, but in my opinion there is no patriotism like the patriotism of prayer and active benevolence. He loves his country best who commends her most to God. He contributes most to lengthen her tranquillity, who draws down upon her the divine blessing by showing mercy to the poor.

But I have to tell you of more old English customs. I must speak of masques and mummers, and ancient jugglers, and bards and harpers, and such like things, which used to be common enough, though, now, they are but little known.

In old times bards and harpers were drawn together in the baron's hall, by the festivities of Christmas time; and then they poured forth their glowing thoughts, in honour of armed knights and their achievements. The old halls rung again with the wild burst of battle songs, and echoed with the praises of high born dames, and lovelorn damsels. Then might be seen the bard, with a chain of gold around his neck, placed there by the baron's own

hand ; and the harper, with a silver cup presented by the ruler of the feast.



BARON'S HALL.

Time was, ere Modred peal'd the song resounding ;
 Ere yet Cadwalla's muse had stretch'd her wings,
 When poets pour'd their lays on palfreys bounding,
 And bards were canopied in courts of kings.

These customs are now gone by ; and if we see and hear a harper or a ballad singer in the street, he attracts very little of our attention.

We have jugglers still in abundance, who make us

stare with their wonderful feats ; but, instead of showing off by the Christmas fire side, as the Tregetours, the ancient jugglers, used to do, they exhibit in the open air, on fine summer days, or in rooms hired for the purpose.

One of the strangest feats done by Indian jugglers, is that of setting a ladder up straight on the ground, and then winding up, between the rounds, to the top, and down again, no one holding the ladder.

Of masques and mummers we know but little practically, though, now and then, we may amuse ourselves in reading such accounts of them as happen to come into our hands.

Mummers were people who used to wear strange masks over their faces, and dress themselves up in all manner of fantastic dresses. In this way they went from place to place, with music and flags, jumping, and gamboling, and playing strange antics, to the great delight of the crowds gathered to witness their exploits.

Among the mummers, the hobby horse was seldom forgotten. A man, dressed like a fool, with a cap on his head, and a laughable figure with a staff in his hand, rode on, or rather in, a wooden horse, or horse of pasteboard, gaily decorated, and covered

with painted stars, and other devices; capering about, he played all manner of antics.

Most of us have our hobby horses now, of one kind or other, though they may not much resemble those which were so fashionable in the old Christmas revels.

Another favourite figure among the mummers, was a fierce and fiery dragon, with a wide mouth filled with long sharp teeth, and great goggling eyes in his



OLD FATHER CHRISTMAS AND HIS FAMILY.

head; but there was no end to the odd and uncouth monsters introduced among them.

Things draw to a close: Mr. Higgins has certainly an excellent chance of being elected, only Mr. Figgins has a few more votes than he; and nothing can hinder Mr. Figgins's success save the majority in favour of Mr. Wiggins. All is now over, and Mr. Wiggins's name is at the head of the poll.



CHAP. XXVII.

PARLEY SPEAKS ABOUT THE LAND AT REDHILL GRANGE,
AND OF THE PREPARATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS.

PLEASANT were the days that were passed, by me, at Redhill Grange, and pleasant, too, were the Christmas doings in that hospitable abode. Farmer Holbeach and I had many an hour's conversation together about country pursuits, for though the hard frost and the fallen snow prevented almost all outdoor work from being carried on, they could not prevent our talking by the fire side.

I was told all about the farm, from the Brook field at one end, to Five Farthing Close at the other, with the varied improvements which had taken place, in the Grange, since the day it came into the farmer's hands.

It would have done you good to hear the honest farmer speak of the crops of hay that had been gathered on Flamstead Meads, and the Pond field, and of the crops of wheat grown in the Forty Acres.

Stony End, Sandy Rise, and Rocky Hill, were

not to be cracked about, but never was better land turned over with a share than May field, Great Hide, Bishop's Bury, and Pig's Mutton Close.

The best barley ground, on the whole farm, was the Fore field, and Broad Cast Ridge; while little Bushy Croft, and Polehurst Pitch, and the Woodside Range, were as pretty bits of pasture land as any in the country.

Winter as it was, I seemed to know more every day about "good tilth," and "good sward," ploughing and sowing, reaping and mowing, cattle, sheep, and pigs; nor was I left in ignorance about the produce of the dairy, and the live stock in the stables, and the poultry yard.

Farmer Holbeach was loud and long in his descriptions of the several harvest homes which had been held at Redhill Grange, but, after all, the festivities of Christmas were what he most delighted to talk about. In this respect, Mr. Charlton and he were well suited to each other.

One day I joined them, by the blazing hearth, while they were conversing on their favourite subject.

"I found, in an interesting book, the other day," said Mr. Charlton, "some sweet allusions to Christ-

mas customs, and I honoured the writer for the beautiful sentiments he had expressed.

“He set forth that while the courtly and baronial pageantries prepared entertainments of different kinds for the people in cities and towns, other arrangements were made, whereby the country villages, and more secluded parts, might share the jubilee of the season.

“There was no Lazarus begging, in vain, at the rich man's gate; no broken victuals were grudgingly brought forth, but all was liberal handed hospitality.

“The kindly spirit of Christmas charity had gone forth through the lengths and breadths of the land. It seemed as though ‘Boaz’ was abroad in every place, and that every ‘Ruth’ was looked upon with favour, and permitted to ‘eat of the bread and dip her morsel in the vinegar.’

“Doubtless there were many, in those days, whom the world had treated churlishly, and who, at times, and, indeed, generally, writhed beneath the iron grasp of poverty; but at Christmas time even these were permitted, as it were, to glean even among the sheaves without reproof. It is said, in Holy Scriptures, that the generous Bethlemite commanded his

young men, at harvest time, to let fall handfuls of ears of corn on purpose, that they might be picked up, and the old English gentleman imitated, in his hospitality this liberal spirit, so that the prayer of many a 'Naomi' ascended the skies, that he might be blessed for his kind hearted liberality, yea, that he might indeed be blessed of the Lord.

"Christmas of olden times," continued Mr. Charlton, "is one of my hobbies, I could talk about it from sunrise to nightfall. Let me give you a sketch of it, Mr. Parley, just as my memory serves me, for I have met with many glowing descriptions of the 'good old time,' in authors ancient and modern.

"No sooner did frosty-headed Christmas arrive, than the country damsel dressed herself in her best and bonniest kirtle, while away went many a merry man to the wood, to crop and bear home the mistletoe.

"The hall of the baron was decorated with holly, green in the leaf and red in the berry, and the doors were flung wide open for his vassals, his tenantry, and poorer neighbours.

"The haughty scowl of power was changed for the smile of condescension, every guest did as he

listed, for etiquette and ceremony were laid aside. The heir to the baronial estate danced with a rustic partner, and the lord played at fool plough and horse cockles.

“The fire burned brightly, for it was well supplied with the driest logs, and the flame roared its Christmas music up the broad chimney. The huge oaken table, in the hall, shone again, for it had been rubbed and scrubbed with hearty good will to do honour to the festival; the customary mark that divided the lord from the squire was rubbed off, and all sat down in common.

“The lusty brawn was carried in on a lordly dish by the ancient serving man in his blue coat, and up above the rest of the goodly fare, was placed the head of the bristly boar, at the top of the table. Grim and fearful it looked even there, though crested and crowned with bays and rosemary.

“Who is he, clad in green, that is gazing on the dish? He is the ranger of the wood and the forest, and he can tell you how many dogs the grisly monster tore with his fangs; ay, and the very spot where he fell, with a dozen hog spears in his sides, and a hunting knife sheathed in his throat.

“There reeked the sirloin in its rich pool of de-

licious gravy, nobly attended by the round plum porridge, and the Christmas pie; and round went the good brown wassail bowls, garnished with coloured ribbons.

“The guests cut freely and drank without restraint, and laughed loudly, till the merry masquers burst in among them, blithely singing their Christmas carol with voices uproarious, loud, and strong.

“Wonder gaped at their fantastic pageantry, and few of the merry hearted revellers understood the mysteries of the olden time, that lay concealed in their quaint and curious comic garbs.

“In those times England was ‘merry England,’ the mightiest ale was then broached for the festive board, and the merriest tale was told, and the poor man’s heart was gladdened, for half the year, by the remembrance of the Christmas festival. Such, Mr. Parley, was the Christmas of ‘the olden time.’”

The preparations for Christmas had been going on, for some time, at Redhill Grange. Rooms had been aired for company, and sheets, white as the snow on the ground, had been placed on many an ample bed of olden damask furniture; the old oak staircase, and carved banister, looked brighter than ordinary.

The best of the beeves had been slaughtered, and sirloins and buttocks lay, in abundance, in the brine tubs. Turkeys, without their feathers, were hanging up by their heels, the finest gammons had been cut from the flitches, and scores of fowls been doomed to destruction.

The chopper, and wooden bowl, had been at work in preparing mince meat; raisins were being stoned ready for the puddings, and the Christmas butt of strong ale was about to be broached.

The hall was even now hung with evergreens; holly, and ivy, and laurel, and mistletoe, with rosemary, and sprigs of myrtle, were seen in all directions. The diamond panes, and stone mullions of the windows were already adorned, on the outside, by the clustering ivy, which required, once or twice a year, the pruning knife of John, the gardener.

The church, too, had been decorated by the daughters of the farmer, some of them having left their own homes, and visited Redhill Grange, for the express purpose of performing this agreeable office. Farmer Holbeach had proposed a walk to the church, to see how 'the hussies' had executed their task, and we were just about to quit the house, by the knobbled oak door, when the plaintive voice of a

sweet singer was heard, from a little sitting parlour, where a granddaughter of the farmer was using her needle.

“That’s Kate,” said Farmer Holbeach, “and I’ll match the gipsy against any lass in the parish in singing a song.”

We all stood near the porch to listen, and never did a mellower tone thrill through the heart, than



THE FARMER, MR. CHARLTON, AND PETER PARLEY.

that which poured forth the following plaintive and well known song.

It was a winter's evening, and fast came down the snow,
And keenly o'er the wide heath the bitter blast did blow;
When a damsel all forlorn, quite bewilder'd in her way,
Press'd her baby to her bosom, and sadly thus did say :

“ Oh! cruel was my father, that shut his door on me,
And cruel was my mother, that such a sight could see;
And cruel is the wintry wind, that chills my heart with cold;
But crueller than all, the lad that left my love for gold.

“ Hush, hush, my lovely baby, and warm thee in my breast;
Ah, little thinks thy father how sadly we're distress!
For, cruel as he is, did he know but how we fare,
He'd shield us in his arms from this bitter piercing air.

“ Cold, cold, my dearest jewel! thy little life is gone:
Oh! let my tears revive thee, so warm that trickle down;
My tears that gush so warm, oh! they freeze before they fall;
Ah! wretched, wretched mother! thou'rt now bereft of all.”

Then down she sunk despairing upon the drifted snow,
And, wrung with killing anguish, lamented loud her woe:
She kiss'd her babe's pale lips, and laid it by her side;
Then cast her eyes to heaven, then bow'd her head, and died.



RAILWAY CARRIAGE.

CHAP. XXVIII.

PARLEY VISITS THE CHURCH WHEN IT IS DECORATED WITH
EVERGREENS FOR CHRISTMAS.

WE set off to the church, and met, in our way, just as we had crossed the paddock called Mill Hoppet, two red-faced young rogues, grandchildren of farmer Holbeach. They had come home from school the day before, and had set off to Redhill Grange, to see their grandfather and grandmother.

The farmer shook them by the hand, very heartily, and then told them to hasten into the house, where, perhaps, "Granny" would find a mince pie for them, if the rats and mice had not eaten them all.

The lads scampered off with this pleasant intelligence, and Mr. Charlton, having watched them with an affectionate smile, for a few moments, began to talk about days gone by as he proceeded, with us, in the direction of the church.

"They take me back three score years," said he, "when I used to run over the very same ground. The thought of Christmas touches a chord in every heart that vibrates with pleasure; for who has not

been a schoolboy, and who has not broken up for the Christmas holidays ?

“ Hundreds of old fellows, like me, are now hobbling about in the world, who, at Christmas tide, live the days of their boyhood over again. It seems but as yesterday since I wrote my letter to thank my father for the humming top, and my mother for the plum cake, as well as to have the pleasure of informing them of the ensuing vacation, when I hoped the progress made in my studies would merit their approbation.

“ What joy it was, after a glorious rattle in the postchaise, to leap out, without touching the steps, and to bounce into my own happy home, before my father could get to the door, flinging my arms round my mother's neck, and then doing the same thing to black Pincher, who had followed me, barking, into the parlour.

“ What a deal had I to say to sister Susan about my broken pegtop, and my lost penknife, and with what glee I showed her the last round hand copy in my last copy book, taking care to keep my thumb over the blot at the corner.

“ Pardon me, Mr. Parley,” continued Mr. Charlton, “ these lads have made me run after the butter-

flies of my youthful days ; but I have not forgotten where we are going to ; we are going to see the evergreens in the church.

“ It is a goodly custom to deck the temple of the Most High with all that is green, and fresh, and fair, at this holy festival ; for it seems to set forth, that the fresh feelings of our hearts should be offered up freely to the Father of mercies in commemoration of his goodness.

“ Many of our English customs, Mr. Parley, as you well know, had their origin in pagan superstitions : but let us try to dedicate them to holier purposes ; let these things, which once called forth nothing but idol worship, now be rendered influential in tuning the heart with praises to the Lord of lords and Kings of kings.

“ At Christmas time, every family feud should be forgiven and forgotten, and the ornament of a loving, and affectionate spirit should adorn the young and the old, the kind-heartedness of ‘ Abigail ’ should drive away the churlishness of ‘ Laban.’

“ The custom of ornamenting our houses and churches with evergreens is very ancient. Some plants have a direct reference to the season, on account of ancient usage, and others are used merely

on account of their greenness, their freshness, and beauty, so that almost all evergreens are now adopted for this purpose.

“There is no wonder that laurel should be used, seeing that it has, from ancient times, been an emblem of victory, joy, and peace. Let it then still be used to celebrate ‘peace on earth,’ and those ‘glad tidings of great joy,’ which the coming of the Saviour set forth.



DONKEY CART WITH EVERGREENS.

“And let holly also be used, and call it Christmas if you will, as thousands do; its glossy green leaves,

and cheerful red berries are grateful to gaze on. I love to see a donkey drawing a cart, piled up high with Christmas evergreens. I will repeat to you some ancient stanzas, written in praise of this favourite tree. The words are old fashioned enough for any body :—

Nay, Ivy! nay, it shall not be, I wys;
Let Holy hafe the maystry, as the manner ys.

Holy stond in the halle, fayre to behold,
Ivy stond without the dore; she ys ful sore a cold.
Nay, Ivy! &c.

Holy and hys mery men they dawnsyn and they syng,
Ivy and hur maydenys they wepyn and they wryng.
Nay, Ivy! &c.

Ivy hath a lyve she laghtyt with the cold,
So mot they all hafe that wyth Ivy hold.
Nay, Ivy! &c.

Holy hath berys as rede as any rose,
The foster the hunters kepe hem from the doos.
Nay, Ivy! &c.

Ivy hath berys as blake as any slo;
Ther com the oule and ete hym as she goo.
Nay, Ivy! &c.

Holy hath byrdys a ful fayre flok,
The nyghtyngale, the poppingy, the gayntyl lavyrok.
Nay, Ivy! &c.

Good Ivy! what byrdys ast thou?

Non but the howlet that kreye 'how, how!'

Nay, Ivy! &c.

“The rosemary, being in bloom at Christmas time, is enough of itself to recommend it, but its perfume renders it still more attractive. This plant has long been used at weddings and funerals, so that hope and remembrance are among its associations.

“And what if the Druids did, in their superstitious rites, gather the mistletoe with a golden sickle, is that a sufficient reason why we should not use so beautiful a plant in a Christian commemoration? If we were to attempt to forbid its use, even in our houses, at Christmas time, we fear that hundreds, if not thousands, would rebel against us. The custom of stealing a kiss from the lass who is caught under it, and then plucking off a berry, has endeared it too much in public estimation for us to frown it out of usage. While the custom lasts, ill betide the village swain, or city beau, who would be ungentle enough to abuse its privilege.

“Some say the mistletoe has medicinal qualities, but if it have, I do not know them; others say it will drive away evil spirits and misfortunes, but this we are not credulous enough to believe. Enough

Masques, of olden time, were representations in which fancied characters appeared. Old Christmas was one, with his white shoes and thin long beard, his round hose and doublet; his high crowned hat, scarfs and garters tied across, and his drum beating before him. After the old gentleman, came a great many of his children, all drest in a way to suit their several characters. There was Misrule, in his large frill and slashed sleeves, his sword, and ermine robe; with large rosettes on his shoes, and long peacock feathers in his hat.

Then came Roast Beef, a fat-faced, bonny looking figure, waddling along as though he had a good dinner within him.

“ O the roast beef of old England,
And O the old English roast beef!”

King Charles the Second, it is said, in a merry vein knighted a loin of beef, and ever since then, it has been called the sirloin. This joint is held in high estimation at the present time, and most likely will be for many years to come; for it is an excellent dish, and very generally introduced.

“ First the fuelled chimney blazes wide;
The tankards foam, and the strong table groans
Beneath the smoking sirloin stretched immense

From side to side; in which, with desperate knife,
They deep incision make, and talk the while
Of England's glory, ne'er to be defaced
While hence they borrow vigour."

Plum Pudding had a face as round as Roast Beef. He was once called Plum Porridge, but that was in his youthful days. Roast Beef and Plum Pudding agree as well now, as they did in ancient times; they are, indeed, almost inseparable companions at Christmas time, and Peter Parley would not, on any account whatever, occasion a quarrel between them.

Wassail, you may be sure, was not without her bowl. She came forward as a laughter-loving lady; ready to do her best, to heighten the mirth of Christmas tide.

Mumming was there, too; for how could they have got up a pageant without his aid? and Mince Pie, and New Year's Gift, and Post and Pair, with Offering and Baby Cake. Old father Christmas had a numerous family in his palmy days. I might have mentioned among them merry-eyed St. Distaff, and clear-voiced Caroll, and Twelfth Cake, and Snap Dragon, and Hot Cockles; with a dozen other such characters, who never failed to get together at the time of wassail.

The plays and pantomimes of old Christmas used

to afford much entertainment, as indeed they do now. There is but little wit to be seen in these, and still less wisdom to be gained from them ; but they make young people laugh, and at the merry season, when they take place, there is a general disposition to look on folly itself with more indulgence than at other times.

The old Christmas play of St. George and the Dragon, though still acted, has been so frequently altered, that it is hardly ever represented, in the same manner, in different places. St. George in his white trowsers, shirt sleeves, and coloured ribbons, with his drawn sword, and high pasteboard cap, cuts a curious appearance.

The turbaned Turk, the painted-faced, cocked-hat doctor, and the old, antiquated female, are only outdone in appearance by the giant, the hobby horse, and the dragon. You would, I dare say, like to hear the customary plan and plot of the piece.

In comes a Turkish knight.

“ Whether I rise, or whether I fall,
I’ll do my best to please you all.”

Then follows Father Christmas.

“Here come I, old Father Christmas,
Welcome, or welcome not ;
I hope old Father Christmas
Will never be forgot.”

After these the King of Egypt enters, and then St. George, who boldly defies the Dragon in the following magnanimous couplet :

“I'll clip his wings; he shall not fly ;
I'll cut him down, or else I'll die.”

No sooner does the Dragon make his appearance, than St. George, full of resolution, and burning hot for glory, attacks him, and soon overcomes him. While the Dragon lies dead, the doctor enters boasting that he can cure

“All sorts of diseases
Whenever he pleases.”

He pours something down the throat of the Dragon from a little phial; this brings him to life again, and another battle takes place. The doctor charges a fee of ten or fifteen pounds.

Once more the Dragon is slain, and then a terrible battle takes place between St. George and the Turkish knight, in which the Turk, grim as he appears, is overcome.

But the most terrible of all combats is that between St. George and the giant. This is something like a battle. After banging one another about in fine style, for a long time, the conquering sword of St. George is once more victorious, and the huge length of the hideous giant sprawls upon the ground.

There is nothing very instructive in all this ; but I am telling you of Christmas customs, and therefore cannot omit the Christmas play of St. George. You know, I dare say, that St. George is considered to be the patron saint of old England.

Pantomimes still abound at Christmas. Harlequin in his chequered dress, with his black mask and magic wand, throws himself into imposing postures, leaps over the head of all who come in his way, and flies head foremost through a window. Then waving his wooden sword he changes the mansion into a cottage, and the pump into a pigeon box ; roots the feet of old Pantaloon to the ground, and, giving the Clown some hearty slaps with the flat side of his sword, skips off with the fair Columbine under his arm.

How few of the young people who look with delight on Harlequin and Columbine, know that they

are taken from Mercury and Psyche, of ancient times; and that the Clown and Pantaloon spring from laughter-loving Momus and the ferryman Charon!

Those things which gave us pleasure in our childhood, have a strange hold upon us in our after years. Many a man of threescore, and many a dame leaning on her stick, lingers, in passing by, to catch a glance



PUNCH AND JUDITH.

of a puppet show; and when Mister Punch with his hump back, long red nose, and shrill voice, knocks down Mr. Catchpole, with his cudgel, or chastises his

wife Judith in the same manner, young, middle aged, and old laugh together. We may feel ashamed that folly should have so much influence over us, and yet we go on laughing as heartily as ever.

Forfeits, hotcockles, and blindman's buff, with cards, and music, are still kept up at Christmas; neither is dancing at all neglected: many new dances have been introduced, but none of them equal, in amusement, the country dances which have been so long in fashion.

Few things, in the way of capering, are more amusing than a country bumpkin, in a smock frock, dancing the sailor's hornpipe. There he is, while the blind fiddler is playing, flourishing his arms in the air, twirling round and round, and striking the thick heels of his hobnailed shoes against the brick floor, ending every fresh movement with a rap, tap, tap.

While these things are going on within doors, skating, sliding, and snowballing furnish amusement without; so that Christmas is merry Christmas still, either on the frozen pond, the snow-covered field, or by the blazing hearth.

CHAP. XXVI.

PARLEY TELLS ABOUT ST. THOMAS'S DAY, AND ABOUT
CHARITABLE CUSTOMS, AND ELECTIONS.

THOUGH particular days are kept in a particular manner, many amusements are spread over the whole extent of Christmas. It is not to be wondered at, that all sorts of joyous games should be resorted to, in a season of general festivity. It matters but little whether they belong to Christmas, or not, so that they add to the mirth of the general jubilee.

If I give you a list of some of the sports of ancient Christmas, it will show you that our forefathers had no reason to feel at a loss for amusement, of one kind or other. Many of the games of those gone before us, are still kept up; while others have passed away, perhaps, for ever.

We must remember that in old times, they had no newspapers, nor news rooms, with which to amuse themselves. These are great advantages, but good principles ought to go before them. There is hardly a more serious spectacle than that of a man in rags,

and without any moral cultivation, reading a newspaper. You cannot stop the reading of the newspaper, but you may give the education that will act as the preceding antidote.

Let me see: there was music, and masks, and singing, and dancing, as well as chess, and cards, and dice, and shovel board. There was also the philosopher's game, and shuttlecock, and small trunks, and billiards, and ule games, and frolics, and jests, and riddles, and catches, and purposes, and questions and commands.

Besides these, there were merry tales, and ghost stories, and adventures of knights errant, and queens, and lovers, and lords, and ladies, and giants with many heads, and big-headed dwarfs, and highwaymen, and fairies, and witches, and warlocks, and goblins, and monks, and friars.

Nor must I forget the jackpuddings, and jugglers, dancing the hobby horse, the foolplough, hotcockles, hunting owls and squirrels, thread my needle nan, feed the dove, hunt the slipper, blindman's buff, shoeing the wild mare, snap dragon, post and pair, the gathering of omens, and galantee show. A score or two of others might be given.

St. Thomas's day, the shortest in all the year, is a

busy time with many people, for on that day, the poor begin to dip their fingers into the purses of the rich; in other words they begin to profit by those charitable and alms-giving customs, which, more or less, prevail throughout all England.

O, it is a goodly thing, when the snows are abroad, and the sharp wintry winds are whistling round the habitations of the poor, to give seasonable comforts to those who require them.

St. Thomas's day is, in one part of England, called "Doleing day," when charity is dealt, or doled, to the poor. In another part it is called "Mumping day," when alms are asked and bestowed. In a third part people go a "gooding," giving "good even," and presenting sprays of evergreen, and receiving money, or gifts, in return; and in a fourth part the poor "go a corning," with bags, in hand, to hold the corn they get from the farmers.

In country places bread, and beer, and cider, and flour, and milk, used to be given almost as readily as they were asked for; but this hospitality and charity has been, for some time, on the decline; for the farmers of England, taken as a body, are a different race of people to what they used to be.

In towns, it is customary to give away porridge,

and bread, and coals, and blankets, and shoes, on the approach of winter; so that, in town and country, St. Thomas's day is looked for with anxious expectation.

The decayed housekeeper and poor widow, who have placed their bits of coal on the fire with care, and often sighed to see their store get so low, hope to have a fresh supply through the kindness of some richer neighbour. Think of the joy that a cartload of coals must give to a poor, shivering wretch, whose shrivelled arm and bony fingers have been held, hour after hour, over the expiring spark of her ill supplied hearth.

Think of the luxury of a strong pair of shoes, to a ragged lad who has long dragged, through the miry street, a pair of old ones big enough for his grandfather; or, to a girl who has usually worn the cast-off slippers of her mother, tying them on with a piece of pack string; or to a meagre, tattered and torn mother, with a baby in her arms, paddling through the snowy puddle with an old pair of thin-soled shoes, which only cost one and ninepence when they were new.

If you have never seen a poor wretch stoop down

to push a brown paper sock into her saturated shoe, in the midst of a miserable puddle, I have : and if you have never yet given away a pair of shoes, under such circumstances, there is a pleasure that you have not yet enjoyed.

Did you ever enjoy the luxury of a good, thick, warm pair of blankets, on a raw winter's night, when icicles were hanging from the water butt, and when the wind was cold enough to freeze the heart, as well as the finger ends ? Did you ever pull your night cap over your ears, and tuck the bed clothes close round your neck, when the biting blast was rattling your casement window, and think of the miserable beings, in the world, who had no blanket to cover them ? I hope you have done this, and are ready to give away a blanket whenever you have the ability, and the occasion.

The darkest wintry night, the keenest blast, and the rudest storm confer a benefit upon us, when they dispose us to feel for others, and make us thankful for the roof that covers us, the fire that warms us, and the blanket that wraps us from the cold. Hundreds of benevolent English people give away blankets on St. Thomas's day.

In London, this day is a busy one; for then it is that common councilmen, and parish officers, and others are chosen by election. The bellman fails not to ring his bell, and to shout out,

“ My masters all, this is St. Thomas’s Day,
And Christmas now can’t be far off, you’ll say.
And when you to the wardmotes do repair,
I hope such good men will be chosen there,
As constables for the ensuing year,
As will not grudge the watchmen good strong beer.”

The election of a common councilman is a thing of importance; for the lord mayor, aldermen, and common councilmen are to London, what the sovereign, lords, and commons are to the country. There are usually plenty of people anxious to undertake the office.

I hold it a high honour for any man to be chosen, on account of his merit, to an office of dignity and responsibility among his fellow citizens, yet, sometimes, large sums are paid by persons anxious to decline such honour.

The old clubs, “the Codgers,” the “Lumber Troop,” the “Free and easy Johns,” and others, are all alive

during the elections. Let me just tell you, that if you wish to enter the Lumber Troop, you must be able to drink off a quart of porter without taking your breath. If you cannot do this, your attempts to enter the company will be in vain.

The Lumber Troop, said to be originally formed to defend the city in the absence of the inhabitants fighting at Boulogne, keep up "merry Christmas" as well as most people. I cannot venture to say how they can handle their guns and swords, but nobody calls in question their skill in handling their knives and forks.

You never saw a "Lumber-pie," I dare say: it was a dish, famed far and near, very savoury, and contained highly seasoned meats. This reminds me, that, the other day, I read of a Christmas pie which was shipped at Berwick, for London, in the year 1770. This pie contained two bushels of flour, twenty pounds of butter, four geese, two turkeys, two rabbits, four wild ducks, two woodcocks, six snipes, four partridges, two neats' tongues, two curlews, seven blackbirds, and half-a-dozen pigeons. It was near nine feet in circumference at the bottom, weighed about twelve stone, and took two men to

present it to table. It was fitted, very neatly, in a case, under which were four small wheels, so that it could easily be moved on to any guest who wished to partake of its contents.

Sometimes it happens, on St. Thomas's day, that party spirit runs high in the election of a common councilman. Mr. Higgins is the favourite with the ward of Cripplegate, Mr. Figgins with that of Can-



THE ELECTION.

dlewick, while the felt makers and fishmongers, to a man, are determined to bring in Mr. Wiggins.

Nothing is heard of, nothing thought of, but the candidates Higgins, Figgins, and Wiggins.

Every candidate makes a speech, or, if he cannot, there are plenty of friends to make one for him. The Cripplegate men declare that Mr. Higgins is the only man in the world to fill up the vacant office to which he aspires.

The good people of Candlewick allow the great merit of Mr. Higgins, but a man of independent principles, sterling integrity, unflinching courage, and commanding talent, is essentially necessary in critical times; Mr. Figgins, therefore, must be elected.

Meanwhile, the fishmongers and felt makers proclaim aloud, that one way only remains to preserve the peace, the respectability, and independence of the ward, and that is to elect Mr. Wiggins. The hubbub increases, the confusion spreads around, and the air is rent with the cries "a Higgins!" "a Figgins!" and "a Wiggins!"

"Vote for Higgins, the man of the people," says one placard. "Hasten to the poll," says another, "Figgins the uncompromising champion of independence!" "Now or never," says a third, "Wiggins the sworn enemy of corruption, and the staunch supporter of British liberty."

that it is a beautiful plant, and conjures up agreeable associations in our minds.

“ Let laurel, and holly, and ivy, and rosemary, and mistletoe still mingle together to afford us pleasure, and, connecting us with joyous seasons, render our hearts grateful.

“ Farmer Holbeach, when we came near the church, gave us the date when the spire was fresh shingled, the weathercock regilt, and the gallery enlarged for the use of the school; these things are important to a church warden, and the worthy farmer had been one for many years.”

Topped as the tombstones were with snow, and sharp as the air was, I could not help stopping to read two of the inscriptions. One was on a low stone, on which was rudely sculptured a death's head and cross bones, and ran thus:—

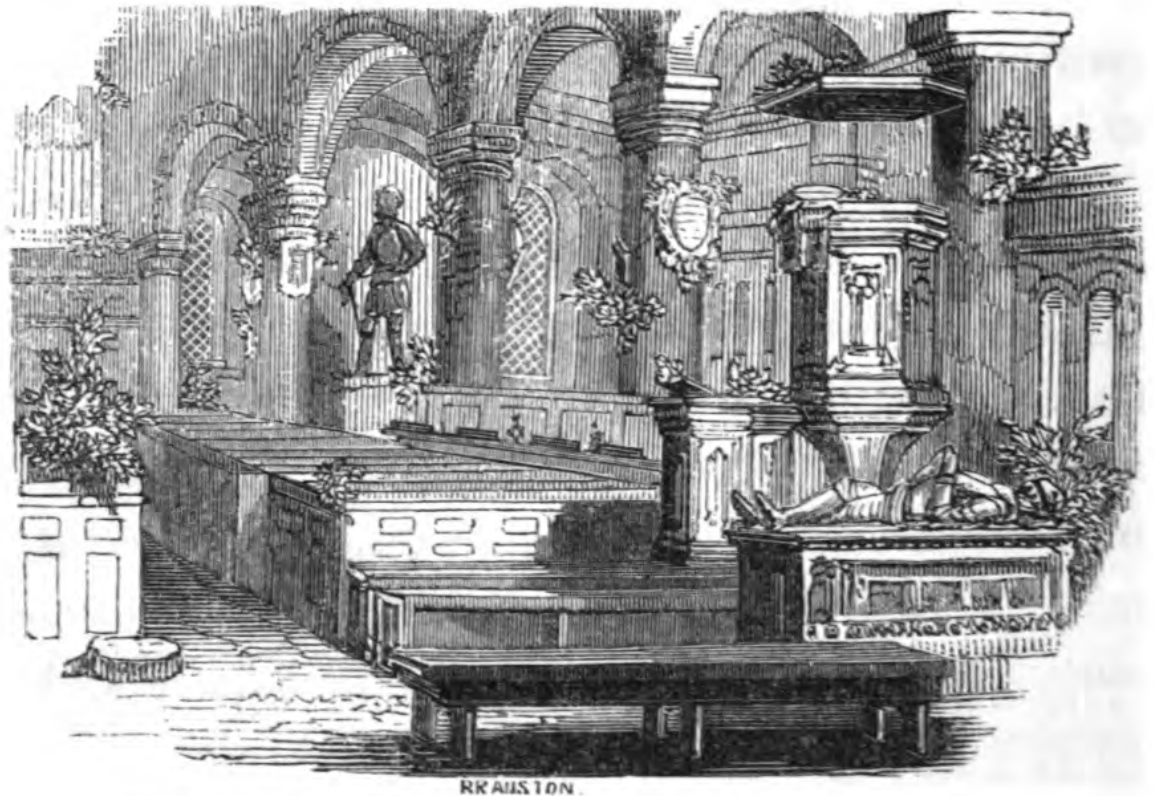
“ Affliction dug this grave for me,
And Time is digging thine for thee.”

The other was graven on a plain square slab: it was as follows.

“ He labour'd in the fields his bread to gain;
He plough'd, he sow'd, he reap'd the yellow grain;
And now, by death, from future service driven,
Is gone to keep his harvest home in heaven.”

But neither of these so much moved me, as the simple text which was inscribed on a moss-covered stone. "Man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"

The church was nicely decorated, the pulpit, the communion, the singing loft, and the pews. Every window had sprigs stuck about it, of various kinds, and not a single monument was neglected. The black marble figure of the old lord, in his doublet



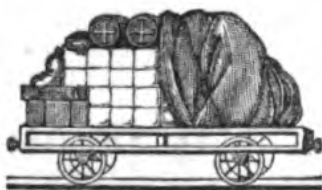
INTERIOR OF A CHURCH DECORATED FOR CHRISTMAS.

and trunk hose, was rich in berries, and the cross-legged crusader, lying on his back, in a coat of mail, had a bough of laurel on his brows.

As I looked around me, at the communion, where the ten commandments were printed in gilt letters ; at the high roof of the church ; at the empty pews, and on the dusty monuments, solemn thoughts came over me. I and my companions were aged men, and could not reasonably hope to live much longer, and the words “ Man dieth, and wasteth away : yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ? ” seemed to follow me.

At that moment mine eye fell on the gray stone on which I was treading. It marked the resting place of a fellow mortal, whose frame had long since mouldered away. I removed my feet to read the words beneath them, they were these : “ There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

Though I longed to be pure as an angel, I felt myself to be an unworthy sinner, and I left the church more than ever desirous to look to that Saviour whose coming the evergreens around me commemorated ; that Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.



RAILWAY CARRIAGE FOR LUGGAGE.

CHAP. XXIX.

PARLEY TELLS ABOUT THE BELFRY, THE DIAL-PLATE, AND THE FARMER'S TALE OF ATTENDING TO ONE THING AT A TIME.

BEFORE we left the church, farmer Holbeach took us up into the belfry, for he had been fond of ringing



A BELFRY SCENE.

in his youthful days. He pointed, with much pride to a board on which was commemorated the fac

that a complete set of grandsire cators and treble bob majors had been rung near fifty years ago, in the parish church of the neighbouring town; the names of the ringers were written up in a very legible manner, and among them appeared that of Thomas Holbeach.

As we came through the churchyard, old Frank the sexton was just pushing his long iron borer into the ground, to see if there were any coffins in the place where he was about to dig a grave. Mr. Charlton looked up at the sun-dial against the church tower, and as we walked away repeated some old verses, written to impress seriously the mind of any one looking on the dial plate.

*One God, one baptisme, and one fayth,
One Truth there is, the Scripture sayth.*

*Two Testaments, the Old and New,
Wee doe acknowledge to be true.*

*Three Persons are in Trinitie,
Which make One God in unitie.*

*Foure sweet Evangelists there are,
Christ's birth, life, death, which doe declare.*

*Fiue Sences (like fiue kings) maintaine
In euery man a seuerall reigne.*

Six dayes to labour, is not wrong,
For God himselfe did worke so long.

Seuen liberall Arts hath God sent downe,
With Diuine skil man's soule to crowne.

Eight in Noah's ark aliue were found,
When in a word the world lay drown'd.

Nine Muses, like the heauen's nine spheares,
With sacred tunes intice our eares.

Ten Statutes God to Moyses gaue,
Which kept or broke, doe spill or saue.

Eleuen with Christ in heauen doe dwell,
The twelfth for euer burnes in hell.

Twelue are attending on God's Sonne,
Twelue make our creede. The dyall's done.

Count *One* the first houre of thy birth,
The houres that follow lead to earth :
Count *Twelue* thy doleful striking knell,
And then thy dyall shall goe well.

No sooner did we get near Redhill Grange, than the farmer's two grandchildren, who had so lately come from school, ran out to meet us, for they had spied us through the hall window. They wanted, in a great hurry, their grandfather to find them a

shuttlecock and battledoors, to play with in the hall. Then they asked Mr. Charlton to tie on the lash of one of their whips, with which they had been flogging their humming top; and, lastly, nothing would do, but they must have a tale from Mr. Peter Parley.

“A tale you shall have, and welcome, my boys,” said I, “if you will be content with it; but as you are asking for three things at once, I am afraid that you are among those who cannot be contented with one thing at a time. With that, so soon as we were comfortably seated by the fire, I pulled out a little book which I had in my pocket, and set them laughing by reading the following tale—

‘ONCE on a time, when the snow was deep on the ground, and the wintry winds howled among the oak and elm trees, a party were sitting round the blazing hearth of a farm house. It was Christmas, as it now is, the farmer and a few friends sat nearest the fire, and the men servants, some with clean frocks on, and others with red waistcoats and blue jackets, sat at a little distance. It was about eight o’clock at night, and the great oak table had upon it a large tin can filled with ale, and mugs were placed around

for the men to drink from. They had all had their supper, for in those days men went to bed earlier than many now do; ay! and got up earlier, too. The bright pewter plates and dishes above the large dresser, and the bacon and hams, and hung-beef on the cratch, at the ceiling, looked as though the men did not live without eating. It was a merry night with them all, and farmer Broomfield was telling them how things went on in the world when he was young.



FARMER BROOMFIELD TELLING HIS TALE.

““ I will tell you what,” said the farmer, taking his

pipe from his mouth, "I will tell you what was my principal fault when I was a lad: I could never be contented with doing one thing at a time. Many a scrape I got into on account of this failing; and I often think, that if I had not broken through the habit, I should not, now, have such a farm as I have got.

"I remember, once, going with my father to a church at some distance, and a grand church it was; and so, after service, I looked about me. There was the marble monument of a great hero, who had died in defence of his country; and another put up in memory of a great writer of books. At one end of the church were the names, printed in gold letters, of some noblemen who had left money and land to the poor; and at the other the name of a church-warden who had given, I know not how much, towards repairing and beautifying the church. As soon as I came out, 'Father,' said I, 'how I should like to be a great hero, and die for my country; and write learned books, and have a marble monument; and give money to the poor; and repair and beautify the church!' 'Stop! stop!' said my father, 'not so fast, attend to one thing at a time; for if you are to be a great hero, as you say, and die for your country, I

hardly know how you will contrive to write learned books, and give money to the poor, to say nothing about repairing and making the church beautiful.'

“The very next day I was out with my father,



OVERTHROWN WAGGON.

when, by some accident, a waggon load of hay was thrown over, and the shaft horse lay kicking and plunging on the ground. I cried out directly, ‘Draw the waggon back! cut the belly-band! hold the horse’s head down! undo the—’ ‘Hold! hold! my lad,’ cried my father, ‘and do let us be satisfied in doing one thing at a time. So I held down the

horse's head, he unhooked the back-chain and belly-band, undid the traces, and, in two minutes, the horse was on his legs; presently after, all the hay was in the waggon again; and I saw the advantage of doing one thing at a time."

'The farmer here filled up his mug, and after taking a draught, putting some fresh tobacco into his pipe, and bidding his friends take care of themselves, thus resumed his story.

'“Never shall I forget what a piece of business I made of it one day that I went to market. I had a good large basket of eggs to sell, and was told to order several things to be sent home. There was a new red waistcoat of my father's, to be sent from the tailor's; a loaf of lump sugar, which was then a great luxury, from the grocer's; and other things from other places. Now it happened that I did not sell all my eggs, and as I thought it would be of no use for the tailor and the other people to send their things, when I could take them all home myself, I called for the waistcoat, and the sugar-loaf, and the other articles: putting the waistcoat carefully at the bottom of my basket, and the eggs at the top, and spreading a clean cloth over them all, I mounted Dobbin to ride home.

“At first I walked Dobbin quietly along, but thinking it might save a journey if I rode half a mile round, to call on a neighbouring farmer whom my father had directed me to see the next day, about some turnip seed, I set Dobbin off at a trot, quite forgetting the eggs in my basket. When I got home, the first thing my father did was to ask if I had remembered to call about his waistcoat: I told him that I had not only called, but brought it with me: and the loaf of sugar, and the other things; and called on farmer Reynolds into the bargain. ‘Ay! that is just like you!’ said he, ‘you must do every thing, or nothing, but I hope you have no eggs in your basket.’ Then it was, for the first time, that my heart misgave me; but when my father went to the basket, to take out his waistcoat, what a cry did he set up! As I trotted Dobbin along, the sugar-loaf had jumped up and down, the eggs had got under it, and every one of them was broken or cracked, upon my father’s new red waistcoat. I thought I should never hear the last about it, for my father talked to me for an hour, and finished by saying, that he hoped this would cure me; that in future I must call to mind his red waistcoat, and content myself with doing one thing at a time.”

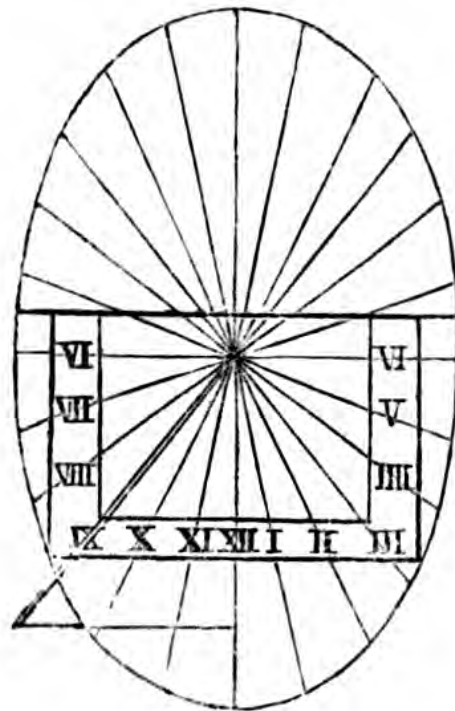
‘Here there was a loud laugh from the servant men, that made the kitchen ring again; and farmer Broomfield lighted his pipe, for it had gone out while he was telling his tale. When the laugh was over, the farmer again went on.

“Some time after, being out in the fields at work, our dog was running after some birds, that were flying about and picking up the seeds. The dog chased first one and then another, but never caught any. ‘Look there, Joe!’ said my father, ‘that dog is very much like a son of mine!’ ‘Why so?’ replied I, ‘he is running after the birds, but he does not seem to catch any.’ ‘No, Joe,’ said my father, ‘and he is not likely to catch any while he plays that game; for, like *some* people we know, he is not contented with doing one thing at a time.’”

‘Here the servants had another laugh, and once more farmer Broomfield went on.

“At last I was thoroughly cured; for a fire broke out in the kitchen, soon after we were in bed, and up we got, in a pretty bustle as you may suppose. As soon as I saw the fire, I called out as loud as I could, ‘Pump some water! run and alarm neighbour Yates! get the goods out of the house! cry fire! raise the neighbourhood!’ My father soon stopped

my foolish bawling, and by attending properly to one thing at a time, put out the fire. I was terribly alarmed, and saw so clearly the advantage of my father's plan, that I was determined to adopt it; and ever since then, whatever has been the occasion, I have tried to omit nothing that ought to be done, and have generally succeeded in my undertaking, by doing only one thing at a time."'



A SUNDIAL.

CHAP. XXX.

PARLEY DESCRIBES CHRISTMAS EVE AT REDHILL GRANGE.

THOUGH I have no reason to complain of the want of hospitality, and friendliness, among any class of English people, yet the open-hearted welcome of a farm house seems, to me, to have more honesty in it than any other. It is rude and rough, but then it is sincere and hearty.

And then, again, though Christmas customs are observed in other habitations, you can hardly help thinking that those present are acting their part; but, in a farm house, there is a simplicity and a blunt straight-forwardness in the people, that show you, at once, they are doing what they have been accustomed to do all their days. To keep up good old customs, and to do as they have done who have lived in the world before them, seem as necessary to their happiness as the air they breathe.

They must have their kitchen cratch well furnished with chawls and gammons, and fitches must hang from the ceiling, or up the chimney. On Shrove

Tuesday pancakes and fritters must appear on the big oak table, and at Christmas the yule clog, the beef, the pudding, and the wassail bowl, must be provided.

“Follow thy father, good son,
And do as thy father has done,”

is the creed of many an English farmer.

This may be said of many, but of none more truly than of Thomas Holbeach of Redhill Grange, for his meat and drink would have done him little good, had he not kept up the customs of his forefathers. He might have been pounded in a mortar, before he could have been separated from his homebred feelings, and his firesidé enjoyments. This might be seen at all seasons, but especially at Christmas time. You must not suppose, because I describe the Christmas merry-making of Redhill Grange, that the farm houses and tenements around, were deficient in hospitality. Hilltop farm, and the Pumphouse, and Moreton Hall, and the old Court house, and a score others, had abundance of light-hearted guests.

The kitchen too, of the Green Dragon cut no mean appearance, for what with the laid-out tables, the blazing fire, the well-spread sideboard, where beef, and ham, and tongue rivalled each other; the sprigs

of ivy, holly, rosemary, and mistletoe, adorning the bright pewter dishes and plates, the bright block-tin dish covers against the wall, and the busy preparations of the domestics, there was every thing to warrant the opinion that the night would not pass without many a hearty cut at the roast and boiled, and many a lusty pull at the tankard. The mansion of farmer Holbeach, however, stood first and foremost in Christmas revelry.

Peter Parley, when at Redhill Grange, was far from his native land and his countrymen; the great deep was rolling its waves between him and them, yet did his heart glow with a brotherly feeling when farmer Holbeach held out his hard, broad hand, to thank him for sharing the Christmas customs of his habitation.

Yes, I felt that I had sprung from the same stock, and considered all around me as relations and friends. It is when such feelings as these rise within us, that we prize more highly the social gatherings, that unite man to man, and heart to heart. At such seasons there may be frost in the fields, but none in the bosom; what is mean, and selfish, and covetous, gives way to all that is friendly, and free-hearted,

and generous. No one wishes to overreach his neighbour, but all desire to contribute to the general joy.

There is much in the preparation for a Christmas feast that disposes the heart to be sociable ; the very sight of the good cheer provided, the cheerfulness thrown around by the varied evergreens, stuck up in all directions, the spirit of bustle visible in the servants, and the holiday glow seen in every face, are irresistible. They who are ill tempered, and sulky and self willed, have no business in a hospitable farmhouse on Christmas eve.

Without the door all was cold, and bleak, and barren, at Redhill Grange on Christmas eve ; but within, all was warmth, and bustle, and cheerfulness and joy. The inmates of the farm had been considerably increased, and every fresh comer made farmer Holbeach happier than before. Mr. Charlton seemed to be quite in his glory, and I felt a dozen years younger than ordinary.

Farmer Holbeach had dispatched many a piece of beef and half-peck of flour, to the poorer inhabitants around him, to enable them to keep Christmas ; and a barrel of good strong beer, brewed according to

custom for the same benevolent purpose, had been freely drained, that the habitations of the indigent might resound with mirth and joy.

There must be something wrong in that man's affections who can be churlish while all around him are happy. The sunshine of one bosom usually lights up another, and glowing features have their beams reflected in the sparkling eyes of the circling group.

When farmer Holbeach wrung a son, or grandson, by the hand, and his worthy wife received the affectionate kiss of a daughter, or a granddaughter, my heart yearned towards them. The deep current of affection was noiselessly gliding through their hearts, and the homestead of Redhill Grange seemed a hallowed spot, where the affections of a family had agreed to meet together.

I am not one who would willingly break the third commandment, but when I heard the fervent "God bless you," break from the farmer's lips, while his beaming eyes were fixed on his children, and children's children, I regarded it as a prayer, to the Father of mercies, put up in behalf of those that were dear to him, and added my hearty, Amen!

As evening drew near, we began to form ourselves

into groups, in the large kitchen, where we knew the working men would hold their revel. Presently a confused sound, that we had heard at first at a distance, came nearer; a trampling of feet, and a heavy brushing against the ground, as though something was being dragged along, approached us, with strains of music, and the farmer's voice was heard singing.

“Come, bring with a noise,
My merrie, merrie boyes,
The Christmas log to the firing;
While my good dame, she
Bids ye all be free,
And drink to your heart's desiring.”

In another minute Bill Allan, the cowlad, Bond, the old shepherd, who would have a finger in the pie, and two of the working men, entered the kitchen, dragging, along the floor, the stump of a large tree, from which the roots had been rudely hacked away.

This enormous log was first placed in the middle of the kitchen, where a man stood upon it and sang a yule song; afterwards it was put on the hearth, in the midst of sundry odd sayings and doings, which the honest farmer seemed very much to enjoy. A brand, of the last year's log, was then brought, thoroughly lighted, and placed underneath the dry,

rooty stump, which soon caught fire. This appeared to be a signal to get together, which every one



THE YULE CLOG.

understood, though it was not till the yule clog, as the old stump was called, was blazing away, making every corner comfortable, and flaring up, when any one touched it, into ten thousand sparkles, that the whole company of domestics were seated round the fire.

CHAP. XXXI.

CONTINUATION.

SUPPER was served up in the hall for the household. The great table had been enlarged, by the addition of others, that the honest farmer might entertain not only his own family and friends, but some dozen or more, of his old servants, whose strength had been expended on his estate.

It was the custom, in ancient times, for the rich to mingle with the poor, and farmer Holbeach would have had but an unhappy Christmas eve, if he had sat down to table without some of those, who had ploughed his fields, and gathered his wheat into his garners. There sat farmer Holbeach in his arm-chair, where his father, and his grandfather had sat before him, the happiest of the whole party, while his worthy helpmate, smiling her welcome around, and speaking kind things to the young people, occupied a seat at the head of the table, where two huge Christmas candles were burning, wreathed round with evergreens.

Though no turtle was served up at the meal, an alderman might have made an excellent supper out of the various dishes provided. Neither the farmer, nor Mr. Charlton, could be prevailed on to give up their favourite frumenty. This Christmas eve standing dish was made of the finest wheat boiled in milk, sweetened, and flavoured with spices of different kinds. The young people made wide gaps in the mince pies, and found their way to the bottom of many a jelly glass, and custard cup, while the old farming men played, what is called, a tolerable knife and fork, at the more substantial joints.

The glass freely went round; mulled, and spiced wines were drunk with right good will; horns of nutbrown ale chased each other round the table; and then came the wassail bowl, filled to the very brim.

Farmer Holbeach talked of his father and his grandfather, and lamented the decline in good old Christmas, which had taken place since their days.

The following song, which he gave us in capital style, took us back to old times: whether we, or the warm-hearted farmer, enjoyed it the most, I cannot say.

THE FARMER'S SONG.

O! BLITHE were the days, when good old fashioned ways,
Without folly or phrase, in the land did prevail;
When in hall or in cot, each was pleased with his lot,
And all cares were forgot o'er a tankard of ale.

Then cheerful, I ween, in the midsummer e'en,
On the smooth village green were the dance and the tale,
And the long winter night never lagged in its flight,
By the fire blazing bright, with the tankard of ale.

Few books we possessed—only one 'tis confessed—
But that book was the best—for it taught, without fail,
Life's balm to ensure, its mishaps to endure,
And to comfort the poor from our tankard of ale.

Each week in their pew, squire and dame you might view;
He in English true blue, she in broad farthingale;
And they walk'd home to dine, not on frogs and French wine,
But on ample sirloin, and a tankard of ale.

Sound doctrines to each then our parsons would preach,
Though to some, now, their speech may seem musty and stale;
Love your King, they would say—read your Bible each day—
Nor with more wet your clay than one tankard of ale.

Mr. Charlton then explained to us that, in ancient times, the Christmas candles, and the yule clog, were considered as symbols of the great light dawning on mankind, when our Saviour was about to

come into the world. He reminded us of the superstitious belief of olden times, that the "bird of dawning," sings all night long on Christmas eve, so that spirits dare not walk abroad then, and witches, and warlocks, and fairies have no power; that the stalled ox, and the antlered stag, go down on their bended knees in adoration of the Saviour, and bees hum at the midnight hour. He dwelt on the midnight mass which used to be observed,

"That only night of all the year,
Saw the stoled priest his chalice rear."

He also described the London preparations for keeping Christmas. The fat cattle, sheep, and pigs; the abundantly supplied butchers' stalls; the loads of evergreens; the blaze of light; the boundless stores of Leadenhall market, and the shops, where turkeys, and fine poultry, and fish, and pastry seemed inexhaustible.

Among such an assemblage of old and young people, parents, children, and grandchildren, uncles, aunts, and cousins, there was no lack of conversation; kind-hearted inquiries, and friendly replies, were poured forth on all sides; nor were such friends forgotten as, in the course of the year, had been

removed from the world. The kindly feeling called forth by convivial seasons, disposes the heart to regret the absence of those who no more mingle with our enjoyments.

After a while, Mr. Charlton was called on for a song, when he gave us, in a rich-toned, mellow voice, the Old English Gentleman—in the following words.



OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN.

I'LL sing you an old song, that was made by an old pate,
 Of a worshipful old gentleman, who had an old estate ;
 He kept a brave old mansion at a bountiful old rate,
 With a good old porter to relieve the old poor at his gate,
 Like a brave old country gentleman, all of the olden time.

His hall so old was hung around, with pikes, and guns, and bows,
With swords and bucklers that had stood against old foes,
And there his worship held his state in doublet and trunk hose,
And quaffed his cup of good old wine to warm his good old nose,
Like a brave old country gentleman, all of the olden time.

When winter cold brought Christmas old, he open'd house to all,
And though threescore and ten his years, he featly led the ball ;
Nor was the houseless wanderer then driven from the hall,
For while he feasted all the great, he ne'er forgot the small.
The brave old country gentleman, who loved the olden time.

But Time, though old, is strong in flight, and years wend swiftly by,
And autumn's falling leaf foretold the old man he must die ;
He laid him down, and tranquilly gave up life's latest sigh,
While a heavy sadness fell around, and tears dimm'd every eye,
For the last old country gentleman, that loved the olden time.

Other songs followed ; after which the young people cried out for a country dance. Old Pegley, the leader of the church choir, and his son Harry, soon made their appearance with their fiddles, and struck up a jig that set a dozen pair of feet patting against the floor. Farmer Holbeach said, his dancing days were over, but that did not prevent him from going once down the dance with his worthy dame, after which, they seated themselves to enjoy the delight of seeing others happy.

Among the party was a handsome young man,

who paid great attention to the farmer's granddaughter Kate. It seemed to be a settled thing between them, and taken for granted, by all, that on some future day they were to be wedded. I watched them as they went down the dance; their heaving hearts and sparkling eyes told me they were happy; and when I saw the stripling, as I did afterwards, press the lips of his fair partner under the mistletoe, I gave them an old man's blessing.



GROUP OF MEN IN THE KITCHEN.

Every now and then a loud roar of laughter, softened by the distance, burst from the kitchen, to

the great delight of Farmer Holbeach, who, two or three times, left the dancers to see that his kitchen customers were well attended to.

It is delightful when, in a large party, every one feels at liberty to follow out his own inclination. While the wassail bowl went round, and the dance continued, a party of the younger guests got together in the little parlour. They amused themselves with hunt the slipper, turn the trencher, and blind man's buff, and then sat down to tell tales.

“Wearied now of their romping sport,
With minds unimpaired still,
The hearth had become their last resort,
Where they tried their learning's skill.

And to tales of ghosts and of robbers bold,
Of witches, and fairies small,
So often by wrinkled grandames told,
How eagerly listen'd they all.

And many a deed was brought to light,
That was done in the days of yore ;
And many a hero was led to fight,
Who never had fought before.”

It is considered to be an unlucky omen, if the yule clog goes out during the merry disports of Christmas eve, but this is an event which does not, very often,

occur; the remaining brand of the clog, is carefully put by, to light the log of the next Christmas eve, and farmer Holbeach took care that this time-honoured custom should be scrupulously performed.

To see so many merry hearts grouped together at Redhill Grange, did me good; so much kind feeling prevailed among the whole party, that it was quite a treat to partake of it.

Before breaking up, for the night, farmer Holbeach took his worthy dame under the mistletoe bough, saying that for fifty years he had never omitted plucking a berry with her, and hoped that he never should, as long as he lived.

Just as the whole party had shaken hands, one with another, and were dispersing, the village waits came up to the house. This occasioned another gathering, and though the air was cold and piercing, especially to us who had so lately left a blazing hearth, we stood, for some time, listening to the village musicians. Old Pegley and his son were among them, for no sooner were the country dances over at Redhill Grange, than, putting up their fiddles into their green baize covers, they left the place to join their musical companions.

The moon was sailing through the sky as I retired

to rest, and as her beams shone full into my chamber, I put out my candle. The dark oak chest of drawers, almost as black as ebony, and the high testered bed, and thick damask curtains cast a strong shade against the far wall, while the ivy, of the stone mullioned window, gently moving to and fro with the breeze, chequered the light that lit up the well rubbed floor. I bent my knees in thankfulness and praise to the Giver of all good, and sank into a sound sleep.



CHAP. XXXII.

PARLEY'S ACCOUNT OF CHRISTMAS DAY.

I COULD have lain in bed, very pleasantly, an hour longer than I did on Christmas day, and, no doubt, I should have done so, had it not been for the loud voice of Bond, the old shepherd, singing, in the court yard, a Christmas carol.

Whether it was that the old man was so accustomed to early rising, that even late going to bed was not sufficient to make him break through his accustomed habits, or whether he had been to bed at all, I cannot say, but he seemed to me to be not a whit the worse for the last night's revel.

As the old man, in his loose great coat, leaned upon his staff, he brought to my mind the shepherds of olden time, who, abiding in the fields, kept watch over their flocks by night, and hastened to Bethlehem, where the Saviour was born, "glorifying and praising God," on their return, "for all the things that they had heard and seen."

The moon had not yet left the sky, so that the

pastoral figure of the old man, with his white locks, was plainly seen. Beside him stood Bill Allen who,



THE OLD SHEPHERD AND THE COW LAD SINGING A CAROL BY MOONLIGHT
IN THE COURT YARD.

as often as the chorus of the carol came round, joined him at the top of his voice in the words,

“ Rejoice, our Saviour he was born
On Christmas day, in the morning.”

Early as it was, the pigeons were on the wing, whirling, in rapid flight, round the pigeon house, with the weathercock at the top, and now and then alighting on the barns and stables.

I soon dressed myself and took a turn in the open

air, admiring, from a distance, the substantial homestead beneath whose ample roof I had been so hospitably entertained.

Christmas day was really come, that day when the pealing organs of cathedrals, and the clarionets and violoncellos of village churches mingled with innumerable voices, would join the heavenly chorus, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will toward men." That day when ten thousand domestic circles would be made happy by the gathering together of affectionate hearts, and as many households of the poor gladdened, by a well spread table, at the expense of the wealthy.

In describing the day, as it was spent at Redhill Grange, I must freely confess that the scrupulous attention to devotional duties seemed hardly to agree with the keen enjoyment of wassail and revelry that spread itself through all the establishment. The honest farmer did not appear to be at all sensible of this; he was equally particular in setting an example in church going, and convivial mirth. He would not, for all the Christmas dinners in the land, have had his pew at the church empty, nor would he have set aside his Christmas dinner to have been made lord of the manor.

It was early when the different parts of the establishment began to assemble, for farmer Holbeach's habits were well known. He was busy at break of day in giving, with his own hands, at his own door, provisions to such poor people as had not been supplied with them the day before. This charity to others contributed to, or rather constituted, his own gratification. We had family prayer in the large parlour. In good time we set off to the parish church, the same that I had visited, with my worthy host, and Mr. Charlton, attracted by its evergreen decorations.

The church services, for Christmas day, are of a particularly cheerful and interesting character, and the sermon given, by the vicar, was of an animating kind, exhorting us to show the sincerity of our love to God, by our deeds of kindness, and benevolence towards men. He dwelt much on the coming of our Saviour, and on the necessity there was for the sacrifice offered up by him on the cross, that repentant sinners, through him, might have everlasting life. According to established custom, the vicar took his Christmas dinner at Redhill Grange.

From a very early hour the servants had been at work, preparing for the mid-day meal, as it is called,

though it was full two hours after mid-day before we were seated at table.

Mr. Charlton who entered, with all his heart, into the domestic arrangements, explained to me, while the tables were being decorated in the hall, that different opinions were held as to what formed the most important feature in a Christmas family circle. Taking a book of Christmas customs from his pocket, he read me the following extract.

“I remember we had a discussion that time, as to what was the great point and crowning glory of Christmas. Many were for mince pie; some for the beef, and plum pudding; more for the wassail bowl; a maiden lady timidly said, the mistletoe, but we agreed, at last, that although all these were prodigious, and some of them exclusively belonging to the season, the *fire* was the great indispensable. Upon which we all turned our faces towards it, and began warming our already scorched hands. A great blazing fire, too big, is the visible heart and soul of Christmas. You may do without beef and plum pudding; even the absence of mince pie may be tolerated; there must be a bowl, poetically speaking, but it need not be absolutely wassail. The bowl may give place to the bottle. But a huge, heaped

up, over heaped up, all attracting fire, with a semi-circle of faces about it, is not to be denied us. It is the very genius of the meeting; the proof positive of the season; the representative of all our warm emotions and bright thoughts; the glorious eye of the room; the inciter of mirth, yet the retainer of order; the amalgamater of the age and sex; the universal relish. Tastes may differ even on a mince pie; but who gainsays a fire? The absence of other luxuries still leaves you in possession of that."

Among Christmas comforts, next to that of the fire, Mr. Charlton considered the sirloin of beef, entitled to importance, repeating the lines with great glee,

"O the roast beef of Old England,
And O the Old English roast beef!"

He admitted, that of olden time, the bringing in of the boar's head was attended with unusual pomp and ceremony. It was the first dish in point of order; and soused, and adorned as it was

"With garlands gay, and rosemary,"

must have had an imposing appearance, especially when he who carried it in his lusty arms was arrayed in a scarf of green silk, and a swordless

scabbard dangling at his heels, preceded by a man in a horseman's coat, carrying a hog spear in his hand ; a huntsman, in green, with a naked and bloody sword ; and two pages clad in " tafaty sarcenet," each with a mess of mustard.

But then he would have it that all this pomp and ceremony was rather a compliment to the danger incurred, and the valour displayed, in hunting and killing the wild boar, than a proof that the boar's head surpassed the sirloin in importance, at the banquet. He then described the mode in which the dish was formerly served in the following words :

" If you would send up the brawler's head,
Sweet rosemary, and bays around it spread,
His foaming tusks let some large pippin grace,
Or midst these thundering spears an orange place.
Sauce like himself, offensive to his foes,
The rougish mustard, dangerous to the nose ;
Sack, and the well spiced hippocras, the wine,
Wassail, the bowl with ancient ribands fine,
Porridge with plums, and turkeys with the chine."

There was an earnestness in Mr. Charlton's manner when he spoke of Christmas customs, which gave an interest to all that fell from his lips. The following verses, he said, used to be sung on serving up the boar's head at table.

“The boare is dead,
 Loe, heare is his head,
 What man could have done more
 Than his head off to strike,
 Meleager like,
 And bringe it as I do before ?

He, livinge, spoyled
 Where good men toyled,
 Which made kind Ceres sorrye ;
 But now, dead and drawne,
 Is very good brawne,
 And wee have brought it for y^u.

Then sett down y^e swineyard,
 The foe to y^e vineyard,
 Lette Bacchus crowne his fall ;
 Lette this boare's head and mustard
 Stand for pigg, goose, and custard,
 And so y^u are welcome all.”

After speaking, with much animation, in praise of the smoking sirloin, reeking in its own savoury and delicious gravy, he dwelt with equal rapture on the excellences of plum pudding, a national dish, that might be looked for all over the world, but would only be found in perfection in old England.

So particular was he in his descriptions, that nothing would satisfy him but giving me the receipt how it ought to be made. It ran thus :

“Of suet, currants, and raisins stoned, take one pound each; the yolks of eight eggs, and the whites of four; the crumb of a penny roll grated, one pound of flour, half a nutmeg, a tea spoonfull of grated ginger, two ounces of candied lemon and orange peel cut fine, a little salt, and a teacup full of brandy. First beat the eggs, and then mix with some milk; add the flour and other ingredients by degrees, and as much more milk as you may think necessary. It must be very thick and well stirred. It will take five hours boiling, but much longer if the pudding be large; some boil it double this time.

“I suppose,” said Mr. Charlton, “you have heard the droll tale of the plum pudding, and the English ambassador?”

Finding that I did not know to what he alluded, he told me the following story. “A certain king of France, anxious to regale the English ambassador with a plum pudding, on Christmas day, procured a capital receipt for making one; this he gave to his cook, with strict injunctions to prepare it, in every respect, with particular attention.

“The weight of the ingredients, the size of the copper boiler, the quantity of water, and the time required for the boiling, were all attended to, but

one trifling direction was omitted. The king forgot to state that the pudding should be boiled in a cloth. The consequence was that the plum pudding was served up, like so much soup, in immense tureens, to the great surprise of the English ambassador, who was, however, too well bred to express his astonishment." How long Mr. Charlton would have continued his observations I know not, but a message from farmer Holbeach put an end to our discourse.



CHAP. XXXIII.

CONTINUATION.

It seemed as though the whole heart of farmer Holbeach was filled with thankfulness, charity, and hospitality, for he looked around for opportunities of making others happy. With his own hand he that day fed, more liberally than usual, the two greyhounds, and the spotted pointer, who appeared privileged to follow their master wherever he went. No one more heartily than he adopted the adage,

“ At Christmas be merry, and thankful withal,
And feast thy poor neighbours, the great with the small.”

The farmer's summons to Mr. Charlton was to consult him about the worthies, who formed the choir of the village church. Accustomed to regard Christmas day with great veneration, he did all he could, at the Grange, to discountenance cards, dancing, and games of a riotous character; contenting himself with the free-hearted mirth which the dinner table, and a moderate indulgence in the wassail bowl, are sure to call forth.

To make amends, however, to his guests for this interruption of Christmas freedom and revelry, he made it a rule to invite the village choir on the evening of Christmas day, that the time might be cheerfully spent; he gave also a feast on the following day, St. Stephen's, wherein a freer revel and a wilder mirth were indulged.

It would be saying too much for Redhill Grange, if I were to declare that merry sport was altogether banished from the place, on Christmas day. There were many out-breakings, for it is not an easy thing to make happy hearts move by rule and compass; but the farmer did what he could to controul mirth of a turbulent kind. It must be admitted, however, that his notions of such matters were not over rigid, so that neither smiling nor laughing faces had occasion to counterfeit gravity.

The farmer would have said Amen, to every word that Mr. Charlton once read to me. "Every face that you contribute to set sparkling at Christmas, is lighting a lamp to illuminate others' hearts. Every holly bough and lump of berries, with which you adorn your houses, is a homage to nature, as well as a perception of beauty, and will enable you to relish the green world of which you show yourselves not

forgetful. Every wassail bowl which you set flowing without drunkenness, every harmless pleasure, every innocent mirth, however mirthful, every forgetfulness, when it is swallowed up in the kindness and joy which it is the end of wisdom to produce, is

‘ Wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best.’ ”

The old custom of the cook striking three hearty blows on the dresser with the rolling pin, was kept up at Redhill Grange. No sooner was this summons given, than dinner was carried into the hall, and a noble dinner it was.

The vicar said grace with much reverence, and farmer Holbeach added his hearty Amen. Mrs. Holbeach at the head of the table, acquitted herself excellently, carving and serving the different joints and dishes in a very skilful manner. I scarcely need describe any of them.

There was the boar's head, though not that of a wild boar of the woods, decorated with rosemary, with a bouncing russet pippin in his mouth.

The sirloin, that “standard of old English hospitality,” that “joint of goodly presence, and full of expectation,” nobly overtopped the dish in which it seemed to swim in rich gravy.

Scarcely could the red deer, that bound over the ridges and ravines of the forest of Atholl, supply a more splendid dish, than the haunch of mutton that smoked upon the board.



THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.

The pheasant pies, adorned with goodly plumes of the peacock, had a right royal appearance; nor were they, in real value, a whit behind what they appeared to be.

The turkeys were no common farm house birds, but of an extraordinary size. Had they been other-

wise, they would never have tossed up their heels on the Christmas dinner table of farmer Holbeach.

Mr. Charlton, who never remained long without bringing forth some of his antiquarian stores, told us, though now we had hardly any other term for carving than that of "cutting up," yet, that in olden times a distinct term was applicable to every principal dish. Thus the good people of those days, would not say cut up, but *rear* a goose; *disfigure* a peacock; *thigh* a pigeon; *untache* a curlew; *alay* a pheasant; *dismember* a heron; *sauce* a capon; *spoil* a hen; *string* a lamprey; *spray* a bream; *chine* a salmon; *culpon* a trout; *transelme* an eel; *tame* a crab; and *barb* a lobster.

The plum pudding was magnificent, not only of the very best materials, but of the true cut-and-come-again size. It honoured the table, and the guests honoured it. I might say much, but hardly could I say too much in its praise.

The chine, the gammons, the tongues, the moor fowl, the custards, the jellies, and the kickshaws were a feast of themselves.

Nothing could exceed the mince pies. This being a dish of which Mr. Charlton was particularly fond, he was kind enough to furnish me with a receipt,

that I might know how to make the mince meat that the pie contains.

“Take,” said he, “the juice of three lemons, and the rind of two cut fine; two pounds of sugar, and one pound of currants; half a pound of chopped sultana raisins, half a pound of suet chopped very fine, three apples chopped very fine; a little salt, quarter of a pound of candied lemon and orange peel cut very small, and a teacup full of brandy; mix these ingredients all well together, then put the whole in a jar till wanted for use.”

The dinner seemed like one glorious glow of sunshine, from first to last; eyes flashed with merriment, and happy hearts responded to each other. When it was nearly over, farmer Holbeach would have it that his guests had spoiled his sirloin, haunch, and turkeys, and as to the plum pudding, they had made it look quite foolish.

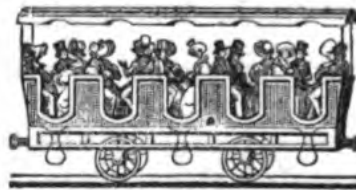
The wassail bowl was introduced with the cry of “Wassail!” three times repeated. It was a warm, rich, enlivening, and generous beverage, that seemed to wrap round the heart, giving it fresh energy, and renewed cheerfulness. Many were the roasted apples that floated in the racy and luscious drink.

Mr. Charlton sometimes called the bowl “wassail,”

and sometimes "lambswool," for it went by both these names in olden times, as in the following verse.

" Next crowne the bowle full
 With gentle lamb's wooll,
 Add sugar, nutmeg, and ginger,
 With store of ale too ;
 And thus ye must doe,
 To make the wassaile a swinger."

It was a picture to see farmer Holbeach, with his rosy red face, and sparkling eyes, looking round him with honest pride and pleasure. He knew that he had provided for the comfort and Christmas enjoyment of his poorer neighbours; he saw that his family connexions and friends, seated at his hospitable table were happy, and he felt that he was keeping up a custom that his fathers delighted in. A spirit of thankfulness to the Great Giver of all the blessings he enjoyed, filled his cup of delight and made it overflow: heartily did he enjoy the day, and continually did he watch for opportunities to heighten the enjoyment of his guests.



RAILWAY CARRIAGE FOR PASSENGERS.

CHAP. XXXIV.

CONCLUSION OF CHRISTMAS DAY.

WHILE the wassail bowl went round, a spirit of companionship seemed to increase, and friendly conversation became general. Every one said what came uppermost in his mind without restraint.

Mr. Charlton failed not to remark that an old English gentleman, in ancient times, used to have his hall crowded with his tenants and neighbours, before breakfast on a Christmas day, when the brawn and beef were spread on the board, when the black jacks of strong beer, with toast, sugar, nutmeg, and old Cheshire cheese, went merrily round. Ay, and if something was not in the pot boiling by peep of day, woe betide the cook! for she was taken by the arms, by two young men, and run round some public place till she felt ashamed of herself.

“Nor was it,” said he, “on Christmas day alone, but during all the holidays, that tables were spread with sirloins of beef, capons, turkeys, and geese for comers of all kinds. Mince pies were in abundance,

and plum porridge and plum puddings were no stinted. The host felt honoured by the arrival of his guests, for it showed that they neither doubted a hearty welcome, nor a well spread board."

One of the guests present, gave an account of an uncommonly deep snow which fell a dozen years ago, and blocked up Roger Jenkins's barn door for a week; and another, related a tale, which he had told regularly for the last five years, of Luke Palmer, the cowherd, being frozen to death in the hard winter.

The good vicar made some excellent remarks in praise of charity and hospitality, but regretted that men, too often, in the provision they made for their bodies, forgot what was due to their souls. He told us that he had written down in verse the characters of many of his parishioners, who had left the world. Some of these descriptions he repeated in a very impressive manner. I will relate two of them, the first is that of the old schoolmaster.

THE man who moulders 'neath the ground,
Was known to all the village round,
For he was simple, meek, and kind,
And stores of knowledge graced his mind:
Skilled in each art and mystic rule,
He sagely taught the village school.

With mild persuasion, not with force,
He urged his scholars on their course ;
Set virtue still before their eyes,
And did his best to make them wise.
Not his, to rule with fear and dread ;
To beat the bumpkins on the head
With clenched fist, or lifted cane ;
A milder method mark'd his reign ;
For trembling truants, while they heard
The grievous charge his tongue preferr'd,
Amid his threatnings, still might spy
Triumphant mercy in his eye:
And if, their lessons conning o'er,
They feared him less, they loved him more.
He left, with his expiring breath,
His last, best lesson, in his death:
That they who heavenly joys increase
Can calmly quit this world in peace."

Every one paid great attention while this piece was recited, for all knew that it was a faithfully drawn picture of the man whose virtues it commemorated.

The other character was that of the old sexton, whose name was Dyke.

Not only did the pothouse know
His merry catches, lewd and low ;
Light-hearted Dyke a joke could spread,
E'en when he delved among the dead ;
Jest at a skull, in part decay'd,
And rudely strike it with his spade.

Oft have I seen, when gazing round
Within the consecrated ground,
His doublet on a tombstone cast,
His mattock in the ground stuck fast,
While he, indulging low grimace,
With flaxen head and round red face,
Has crack'd his joke and laugh'd amain,
Till all the churchyard rang again.
But what avails his idle glee
His untired mirth and revelry,
The tales he told, the life he led
Are over now, for, Dyke is dead!

Farmer Holbeach always found occasion to connect present with past times. In the faces of his grandchildren he saw likenesses of his grandfather and grandmother; the very dishes on the table took him back to the days of his boyhood, while the laughter, which occasionally rang round the walls, reminded him that the old hall, had often echoed back the revelry of his forefathers.

The farmer's granddaughter, Jane, was so taken up with the conversation of her beau, who sat beside her, that two or three times she did not hear when her grandmother spoke to her. This occasioned a general titter, till poor Jane's face and neck were almost as red as vermilion.

In the evening the vicar left the Grange, and the

church choir came to sing the anthem, which had been written by Mr. Charlton for the occasion; but it seemed that poor old Pegley was doomed to contend with a series of misfortunes.

It is said that, on one occasion, he unfortunately fell asleep in the singing gallery during the delivery of the sermon, and that, suddenly awaking from an harmonious dream, he snatched up his old parchment roll, and began beating time with might and main, chaunting loud enough to drown the voice of the minister, the words—

“Awake, my joy, awake, I say;
My lute, my harp, and string;
And I myself, before the day,
Will rise, rejoice, and sing.”

Whether there be any truth in this report or not, I cannot say; but certain it is, that in the affair of the anthem he was a little unfortunate.

A kind of orchestra had been formed on the dais, or elevated floor, in the recess of one of the hall bow windows, and there stood old Pegley in front, with his parchment roll (not improved in its appearance by frequent use) in his hand, and his music book before him.

The green bags had been opened which contained the flutes, clarionets, violins, and violoncello; the stringed instruments had been scraped into tune, the pitchpipe had been blown, and all was ready for a grand burst, when it was discovered that old Pegley had brought the wrong book with him.

No time was lost in trying to put matters on a better footing. Young Pegley ran off for the book in which the anthem was plainly written, and soon returned with it. Old Pegley rubbed his pinchbeck glasses, spread the book before him, opened at the right place, and, raising his parchment roll, led off in fine style.

For myself, I had rather hear the old hundredth psalm sung and played by a country choir, than the choicest anthem that ever was composed. There is that in the modern anthem that old men can hardly enter into, they are more at home with the fine old tunes. Nevertheless, old Pegley and his supporters acquitted themselves for some time in a very creditable manner.

I can only remember one verse of the anthem, but the whole seemed to me to do credit to the piety and poetic talent of Mr. Charlton; the verse I will here repeat.

Who glads with friends my joyous hearth?
My bosom fills with grateful mirth?
Crowns all my toil with plenty?—leaves
A blessing in my path, and gives
A hundred fold what I have sown?
Thy good and gracious hand alone!
I owe whate'er I am, and yet shall be,
To thee, Almighty Lord! alone to thee.

Young people are fond of amusement at all times, but especially when their hearts are lighter than ordinary, and this was the case with many who listened to the anthem at Redhill Grange. The singers, consisting mostly of aged men, had a great deal of character in their dress and appearance; their attitudes, at times, were uncouth, and their grimaces of the most comical kind.

A tall thin man played the clarionet, but his nose was so long that it rested on his instrument, and he kept moving from one foot to the other regularly while he performed his part, to the no small diversion of the young people.

One of the violin players held his head so much on one side, that he always appeared to be putting his ear on the fiddle to hearken to something inside it. But what entertained the youthful titterers the most was, the figure of Abram Bridgens, who played

the violoncello. Not a stroke could he take without wriggling his neck and bald head about in differen



THE VILLAGE MUSICIANS.

directions, opening his wide mouth, and pushing out his long tongue from one side to the other in accordance with the music.

When the first page of the anthem was sung, as the evil stars of poor Pegley would have it, he turned over two leaves instead of one, so that while he was singing one part, they were loudly chanting

another. Now, though this occurrence was vexatious enough to the choir, it was the cause of much mirth to the young people, who smiled and tittered, and were obliged to put their hands to their mouths to prevent bursting out into a loud laugh.

Once more the anthem went on. Up went the roll of old Pegley, the clarionet player balanced himself on one foot, and bald headed Bridgens drew his bow bravely across the strings of his violoncello, when the bridge of a fiddle which had been screwed up a little too tight, gave a loud smack, flying off with a bounce that made most of the company start.

The noise and interruption occasioned by this accident would have been enough of itself to put so limited an orchestra into confusion; but what made the matter worse was, the fiddle bridge flew in the direction of old Pegley, and catching the corner of his pinchbeck spectacles, as they hung loosely at the end of his nose, skimmed them across the hall. This was more than the young people could bear, and, in spite of every attempt to control it, a hearty laugh rang from all sides of the table.

The evening was a joyous, warm-hearted season of rejoicing. The blazing fire flung its genial influence around, the wassail bowl called forth the good

wishes of the season, and a spirit of thankfulness was generally expressed that Christmas-day was a winter festival. Nothing appeared to go wrong. Farmer Holbeach was brimful of kindness, Mr. Charlton was unusually intelligent, and the hearts of all seemed to be knitted to each other.

A pleasant change was, now and then, made by the



BOYS AND GIRLS OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

arrival of village children to sing carols; some of these were admitted to the hall, and some to the

kitchen, and none went away empty handed. One circumstance, which I must not omit, much pleased me, for it seemed to say that Farmer Holbeach could not be happy, unless every body else in the world was happy too.

The boys and girls of the Sunday school, about twenty of each, made their appearance by the farmer's express invitation. The boys, buttoned up to their chins, and the girls in their little gray cloaks, together formed an interesting sight.

They sang a few short carols, and then partook of the good cheer provided for them. This consisted of capital plum cake and mulled wine. Of the one they had a bouncing slice each, and of the other a liberal draught. With warm hearts and sparkling eyes, they took their departure.

Thus have I given you a sketch, imperfect though it be, of the Christmas doings of Redhill Grange; and if accused, by some churlish spirit, of having taken more pains to amuse than to instruct you, I fear that I must plead guilty to the charge. Let me finish then my present remarks in the words of a happy author, altering them a little to suit my purpose.

Faulty as I may be, "if in these days of evil, I

can rub out one wrinkle from the brow of care, or beguile the heavy heart of one moment of sorrow ; if I can, now and then, penetrate through the gathering film of misanthropy, prompt a benevolent view of human nature, and make those around me more in good humour with their fellow beings and themselves, my poor observations will not have been made in vain."



CHAP. XXXV.

PARLEY'S RETURN TO LONDON, AND HIS ACCOUNT OF
ST. STEPHEN'S DAY.



PETER PARLEY BIDDING FAREWELL TO FARMER HOLBEACH.

WILLINGLY would I have remained at Redhill Grange a few days longer, especially as St. Stephen's day was a high day there, but business

obliged Mr. Charlton to set out for London, and I did not like to allow him to return alone; so, after a good night's rest, we prepared to take leave of our hospitable host, and his worthy family, and guests.

As I shook farmer Holbeach by the hand, I felt that I was taking a last farewell of a worthy man whose warm welcome, and friendly attentions, had much attached me to him. I was about to thank him, but my voice faltered, and the words stuck in my throat. I wrung him by the hand in silence and the heartiness with which he returned my grasp told me that he understood me.

When a little way from the house, I turned my head to take a parting glance at the antiquated mansion. Its high chimneys, its pointed roof, and its gable ends seemed more venerable than when I first beheld them. I muttered an old man's blessing on all that it contained, and bid adieu to Redhill Grange, as I believe, for ever.

It happened that Mr. Charlton and I were alone in the coach, the principal part of our journey, and as we talked about the customs of St. Stephen's day, I picked up enough information to satisfy the reasonable curiosity of any one.

St. Stephen's day, in some places, used far to

exceed Christmas day in revelling and festivity. Only imagine the "Ancientest" of the masters of the revels among the lawyers of the Inner Temple, on St. Stephen's day, carrying matters so far as to sing

" Bring hither the bowle
The burning browne bowle,
And quaff the rich juice right merrilie ;
Let the wine cup go round
Till the solid ground
Shall shake at the noise of our revelrie."

If you remember, I repeated a verse about a feast made by king Arthur, at Carlisle, at Christmas time. Mr. Charlton, during our journey together, alluded to the same feast, and repeated four verses very descriptive of the supposed junketing and wassailry of olden time. I will try to remember them, though, as I said, you have heard one of them already.

THE great king Arthur made a sumptuous feast,
And held his royal Christmas at Carlisle,
And thither came the vassals, most and least,
From every corner of this British isle ;
And all were entertain'd, both man and beast,
According to their rank in proper style ;
The steeds were fed, and litter'd in the stable,
The ladies and the knights sat down to table.

The bill of fare (as you may well suppose)
 Was suited to those plentiful old times,
 Before our modern luxuries arose
 With truffles, and ragouts, and various crimes ;
 And, therefore, from the original in prose,
 I shall arrange the catalogue in rhymes :
 They served up salmon, venison, and wild boars,
 By hundreds, and by dozens, and by scores.

Hogsheads of honey, kilderkins of mustard,
 Muttons, and fatted beeves, and bacon swine :
 Herons and bitterns, peacocks, swan, and bustard,
 Teal, mallard, pigeons, widgeons, and, in fine,
 Plum puddings, pancakes, apple pies, and custard,
 And therewithall they drank good Gascon wine,
 With mead, and ale, and cider of our own ;
 For porter, punch, and negus, were not known.

All sorts of people there were seen together,
 All sorts of characters, all sorts of dresses ;
 The fool with fox's tail and peacock's feather,
 Pilgrims, and penitents, and grave burgesses ;
 The country people with their coats of leather,
 Vintners and victuallers with cans and messes ;
 Grooms, archers, varlets, falconers, and yeomen,
 Damsels, and waiting-maids, and waiting-women."

St. Stephen's day, which is the twenty-sixth of December, is a busy day in London, for then hundreds, nay, I may say thousands, of people, go about gathering their Christmas boxes.

As you have read the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, in the New Testament, so, most likely, you may remember that St. Stephen was stoned to death, and he is usually considered to be the first martyr for the Christian faith; but then, you will want to know what St. Stephen has to do with Christmas boxes?

This is rather a puzzling question, but I must answer it in the best manner I can. Things that have no apparent connexion are frequently put together, and one instance of this you will find in the following stanza.

“Yer Christmas be passed,
 Let horsse be lett blood,
 For many a purpose
 It doth him much good.
 The day of St. Stephen
 Old fathers did use;
 If that do mislike thee,
 Some other day choose.”

Now what St. Stephen had to do with horses, or Christmas boxes, is not a very easy matter to determine, but some people have thought, and with good reason too, that, as spring is coming on when St. Stephen's day arrives, and as there are then several days of rest, on account of the holidays, a

better day cannot be chosen for the purpose of letting horses blood.

With regard to Christmas boxes, it has been thought, that the multiplied business of the festival of Christmas day, rendered it a matter of convenience to put off, till the following day, St. Stephen's, those gifts or charities, which were the origin of Christmas boxes.

It was once customary to have boxes on board ship, in which was put, during the voyage, the donations for the priest. For these donations he was to offer masses or prayers to the Saints, for the prosperity of the vessel. At that period mass was called *Christ-mass*, and the boxes, whose contents were to pay for it, were, naturally enough, called Christmas boxes. So that you now know the probable origin of Christmas boxes, and the reason why they are collected on St. Stephen's day.



CHAP. XXXVI.

CONTINUATION OF ST. STEPHEN'S DAY.

GENERALLY speaking, young people care very little about the origin of those customs which yield them pleasure. It is most comfortable to enjoy them, without having to listen to a grave lecture, or to pore over a tedious book. In after years, however, they change this opinion, and become more anxious to obtain a little knowledge.

That Christmas-box day should be called Boxing day is not very remarkable, seeing that the latter is a shorter, and more familiar way, of expressing the same thing.

Well, on boxing day, or St. Stephen's day, for they are both the same, the knockers, in the streets of London, are kept going all day long; for the waits, with the violoncello in the green bag, the belman, with his verses, and the charity boys, with their Christmas pieces, are sure to call. Many an apprentice, too, sets off on this pleasant errand.

“ Gladly the boy, with Christmas box in hand,
Throughout the town, his devious rout pursues ;
And of his master's customers implores
The yearly mite: often his cash he shakes,
The which, perchance, of coppers few consists,
Whose dulcet jingle fills his little soul.”



BOXING DAY.

Nor will the clerk, the beadle, the watchman, if there be one, the postman, the lamplighter, the waterman, the dustmen, the scavengers, the chimney sweeps, and a score of other sorts of people, fail to pay their respects in the same manner.

Boxing day is a kind of harvest home with them all, and when their gains are secured, the night is a season of festival, and, oftentimes, of folly. Not but what there are many exceptions to this rule. There are many who conduct themselves well, and lay out their money in a proper manner. Peter Parley is not the man to speak evil of any one without cause; but too many are reckless in their mirth.

In "the Every Day Book," there are some instances given of this kind. I will relate them to you.

"Having talked this matter over with a friend, he promised to carry me where I might see the good effects of this giving box-money. In the evening, away we went to a neighbouring alehouse, where abundance of these gentry were assembled round a stately piece of roast beef, and as large a plum pudding. When the drink and brandy began to work, they fell to reckoning of their several gains that day: one was called a stingy dog for giving but sixpence; another called an extravagant fool for giving half-a-crown, which, perhaps, he might want before the year was out; so I found these good people were never to be pleased. Some of

them were got to cards by themselves, which soon produced a quarrel and broken heads. In the interim came in some of their wives, who roundly abused the people for having given them money; adding, that instead of doing good, it ruined their families, and set them in a road of drinking and gaming, which never ceased, till not only their gifts, but their wages were gone. One good woman said, if people had a mind to give charity, they should send it home to their families: I was very much of her opinion; but, being tired with the noise, we left them to agree as they could.

“ My friend next carried me to the upper end of Piccadilly, where, one pair of stairs over a stable we found near a hundred people of both sexes, some masked, others not, a great part of which were dancing to the music of two sorry fiddles. It is impossible to describe this medley of mortals fully; however, I will do it as well as I can. There were footmen, servant maids, butchers, apprentices, oyster, and orange women, and sharpers, which appeared to be the best of the company. This horrid place seemed to be a complete nursery for the gallows. My friend informed me, it was called a ‘threepenny hop;’ and while we were talking, to my great satis-

faction, by order of the Westminster justices, to their immortal honour, entered the constables and their assistants, who carried off all the company that was left; and had not my friend been known to them, we might have paid dear for our curiosity."

You must not suppose that Christmas boxes and new year's gifts are the same things, for that is not the case. Christmas boxes are given by superiors to inferiors: but new year's gifts are exchanged between persons of the same situation in life; relations, friends, neighbours, and acquaintances.

I have mentioned the belman among those who apply for Christmas boxes, and I ought to have told you, that for some nights, before boxing day, he goes about with his bell, awaking the good people at the midnight hour, or, what would be, if it were in summer, "the gray of the morning," with some such doggrel lines as these, which he sings, or rather shouts aloud.

" Good masters and mistresses all,
From noise of scare-fires rest ye free;
From murders benedicite;
From all mischances that may fright
Your pleasing slumbers in the night
Mercie secure ye all, and keep
The goblin from ye, while ye sleep;
Past one o'clock, and almost two;
My masters all, Good day to you!"

With a broadside copy of verses in his hand, he usually reaps a goodly harvest of "siller and brass" when he makes his Christmas call.

The dustman, and scavenger also deliver bills, and the leader of the waits produces his authority for levying contributions on those whom he has serenaded with his companions.

The old monkish custom of hanging up, in the parish church, the work of the most skilful penman has been long since abandoned ; but the charity boys bring the old usage to remembrance, for after they have exhibited their Christmas pieces, these goodly ornamented specimens of their skill are hung up to adorn the habitations of their parents and friends.

You like to hear a tale, and I like to tell one, but the story of the wren and the Irish soldier has, for aught I know, been told already twenty times over.

It is said that at a time when some Irish troops were about to surprise and put to the sword a Danish army, a poor little wren pecked at some crumbs, left by a sleeping drummer, on a drum's head, and thus gave an alarm. Ever since then the peasants, in the south of Ireland, go a wren hunting on St. Stephen's day, as though they were determined to avenge themselves for being robbed of their intended victory.

These wren hunters having caught their birds, put one, or more of them, into a holly bush arranged with coloured ribands, and go about collecting Christmas boxes, singing an old song. A verse or two of which I will give you.

“The wren, the wren, the king of all birds,
St. Stephen’s day was caught in the furze ;
Although he is little, his family’s great ;
I pray you, good landlady, give us a treat.

My box would speak if it had but a tongue,
And two or three shillings would do it no wrong ;
Sing holly, sing ivy, sing ivy, sing holly,
A drop just to drink, it would drown melancholy.”

But now, if you were to guess till next Christmas, you would never make out why it is that the Irish call the wren the king of birds. Do not puzzle your heads about it, for I will let you into the secret without further trouble.

Once on a time say the “Paddies,” the birds, about to choose a king, had some difficulty in deciding who should reign ; for wherever there is a crown to be had, there are always plenty who are anxious to obtain it.

Well, it was settled at last that the bird who fled high st should be king. Up went the birds,

and up went the eagle above them all. But, mark you, when he had fled up as high as he could, and was almost ready to fall with fatigue, a sly little rogue of a wren, who had hid himself under one of his wings, sprang up, quite fresh, into the air, and won the crown.

Though I tell you these Irish tales, which pass current in many parts of the country for truth, you are too wise to believe them. It is well to know what even the most credulous people put faith in, for then you can form some estimate of their character.

One of the worst things attending St. Stephen's day is, the lawless night that too frequently follows it. Scores of those who go about collecting money get tipsy, and grow quarrelsome, so that though they begin the day by *boxing the public*, they end it by *boxing themselves*.



CHAP. XXXVII.

PARLEY SPENDS ANOTHER DAY AT THE COUNTRY HOUSE OF
MR. DOUGLAS.

I WAS not a little gratified to find, when I arrived at my inn, that Mr. Douglas had called to know if I had returned from the country. This circumstance much pleased me, for, say what we will, we all love to be respected by those whom we respect.

There were many traits of character in Mr. Douglas that suited me. He could either act his part in high life, or mingle among common people. It seemed no trouble to him to step from his handsome carriage, and cast aside all etiquette, entering into conversation with the poorest man he met in his path.

Then, again, he was of a cheerful disposition, and though his remarks on men and things were always to the purpose, and worth attending to, yet he never lost the opportunity of enjoying a joke when it occurred. This buoyant spirit made him very companionable ; it just suited Peter Parley.

He had much energy of character; a spirit that sprang up under difficulties, and would not be bowed down, so that had he been deprived, at once, of all he possessed, I verily believe, instead of sitting down to despond, that he would have pulled off his coat, and industriously set to work to repair his shattered fortunes.

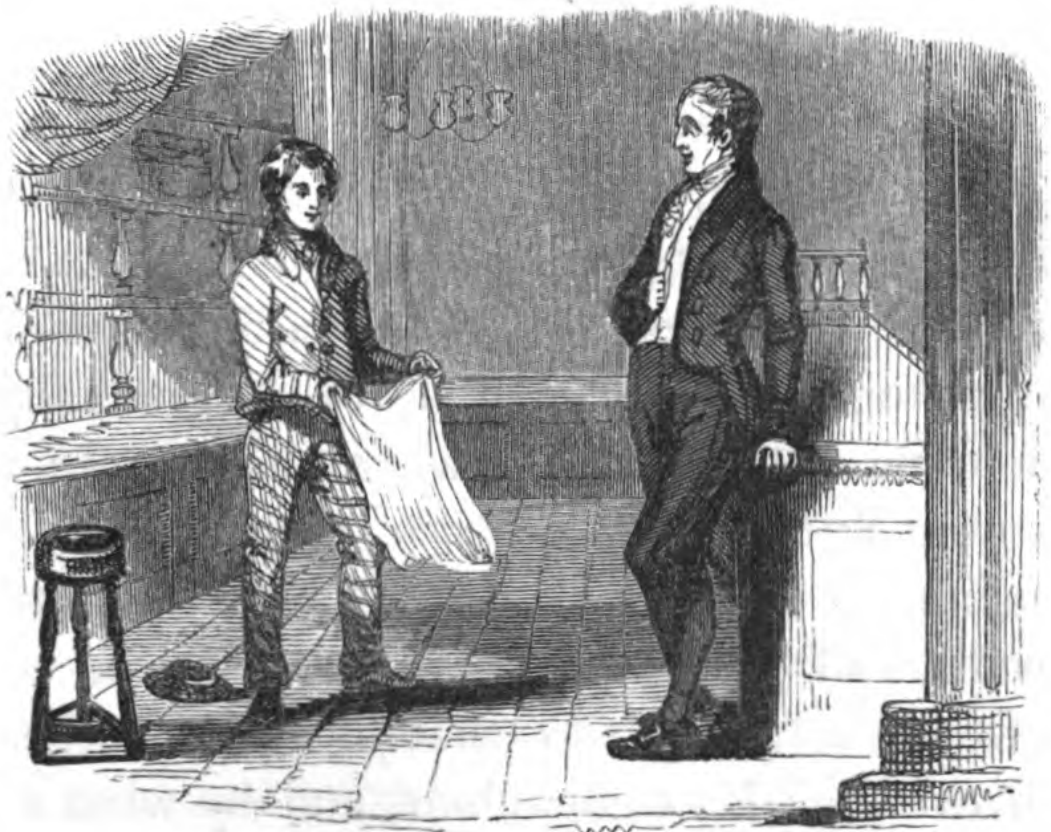
“Mr. Parley,” said he, once to me, with animation,

“The spider o'er his lines will run,
Though weary, till his web be spun:
Break but a thread, what does he then?
Why, nimbly sets to work again,
With industry, and full intent,
To mend his shatter'd tenement.
Noting his vigilance, let me
As indefatigable be,
That I, with equal skill and care,
My shatter'd fortunes may repair.”

Mr. Douglas soon made another call, and the consequence was, that I spent another day at his country seat, where every attention was paid me by the kind-hearted inmates of his hospitable abode.

I begged he would allow me to ask of him a few anecdotes of his first introduction to London. “With all my heart,” said Mr. Douglas, and he began as follows:

“You remember that I left Scotland at the age of sixteen. Some time after this, in all the ardour of youthful friendship, eight of us, young men, residing in the same town, and of about the same age, resolved to go together to London to try our fortunes. Accordingly, on Easter Monday, 1796, we arrived at the Green Dragon Inn, Bishopsgate Street, and, while my companions were waiting for breakfast, and making arrangements for our spending the day, I went out to take a short walk.



MR. DOUGLAS PULLING OUT HIS APRON.

Seeing a fine large shop, I walked in, and asked

the gentleman, who was standing in it, if he wanted a young man. "What can you do?" he asked. I replied, that I could not boast of my skill, but that I would use my best endeavours to please him, if he would try me. He asked if I had got an apron? I fortunately had one in my pocket, and, in five minutes, I was at work. In the evening, when I returned to the inn, my companions reproached me; they had spent a most delightful day, and did not wish for my company any longer, if I would not take a week with them, to see the sights of London, before setting to work; so we parted. I was then in London, young, and without friend, without money, without reputation, and without any apparent means whatever of bettering my station in life, but, yet, I determined to succeed. Occasionally I saw some of my young country friends, but they gradually left London, no better off than when they came: all of them went fast to ruin."

Feeling, as I trust ever to do, a great interest in the welfare of young people, I was induced to ask Mr. Douglas how it was that he escaped the ruin which overtook his companions, and by what means he had succeeded so well in life?

Mr. Douglas said that when he arrived in London

he was struck with its great extent and its capabilities, and soon came to the conclusion, that, under providence, if he did not succeed in a place of such great and varied resources, it would be his own fault, seeing that his mind had sufficient energy to persevere in whatever designs he might form. "I was convinced," said Mr. Douglas, "that if I wished to succeed, I had only to look to myself. I then laid down certain rules for my future guidance, which were steadily adhered to. Among them was the resolution that I would regularly attend some place of worship on Sundays; that I would never read loose or infidel books; that I would devote some portion of every day to profitable study; that I would be diligent, and faithful in business; that I would not frequent public houses, unless for necessary food; that I would form no friendships nor acquaintances with any, until I knew them to be virtuous and safe companions; and that I would not go to any theatre, until my reasoning powers got the upper hand of my passions, and then I should not be so liable to be led astray.

"My unfortunate fellow travellers, by following no fixed moral principle, and by indulging their passions,

became loose in principles and habits; one wrong step led to another; they went headlong to ruin: every one left London poorer than he came, with the forlorn hope of bettering himself elsewhere. But, no, I ought not to say every one had even this hope, for there was one among the number who made an exception, and a very melancholy one. He, I am sorry to say, after a short course of iniquity, was tried at the Old Bailey and transported. He died at Hobart Town in the prime of life; in that distant land he found a grave of infamy. For some time he had fostered his crimes in secret, hiding them by a fair outside behaviour; but when the heart is evil, even the outward conduct will not long remain correct; the weak barriers of virtue gave way, and the fearful result I have already made known, took place; all which might most probably have been avoided if this young man had followed the advice of his parents! How true is the answer to the question "Do you now ask me how much you owe to your parents?" I cannot tell; neither can you. You can never love them so much as they have loved you. But I can tell you how you can pay the whole debt;—all they ask,—all they wish,—enough to make them forget

all their sacrifices for your sake, and thank God a thousand times for such a son. It is expressed in two short words—DO WELL.

During my short stay with Mr. Douglas, we visited some of the cottages in his neighbourhood, and it gave me great pleasure to see the cleanliness, and spirit of industry, that generally prevailed among them. "I have always observed," said Mr. Douglas, "that if you can get a cottager to love his little garden, and take a pride in cultivating it, you are sure to make him a good member of society."

Soon after this Mr. Douglas lifted up the latch of a cottage door, belonging to a man who was, I am afraid, not over scrupulous in his integrity; the door case was ornamented with a fine flourishing china rose.

"Well, Betty," said Mr. Douglas, "how is John, and how are the children?" "Quite well, I thank you, sir," said she, "we are very well;" then turning round to their son William, a boy of about six or seven years old, she bade him make his bow. "And how do you get on at school, William?" said Mr. Douglas. "You must be diligent, and mind your lessons. What trade do you intend to be?"

"I don't know sir," said he, "but if I had my

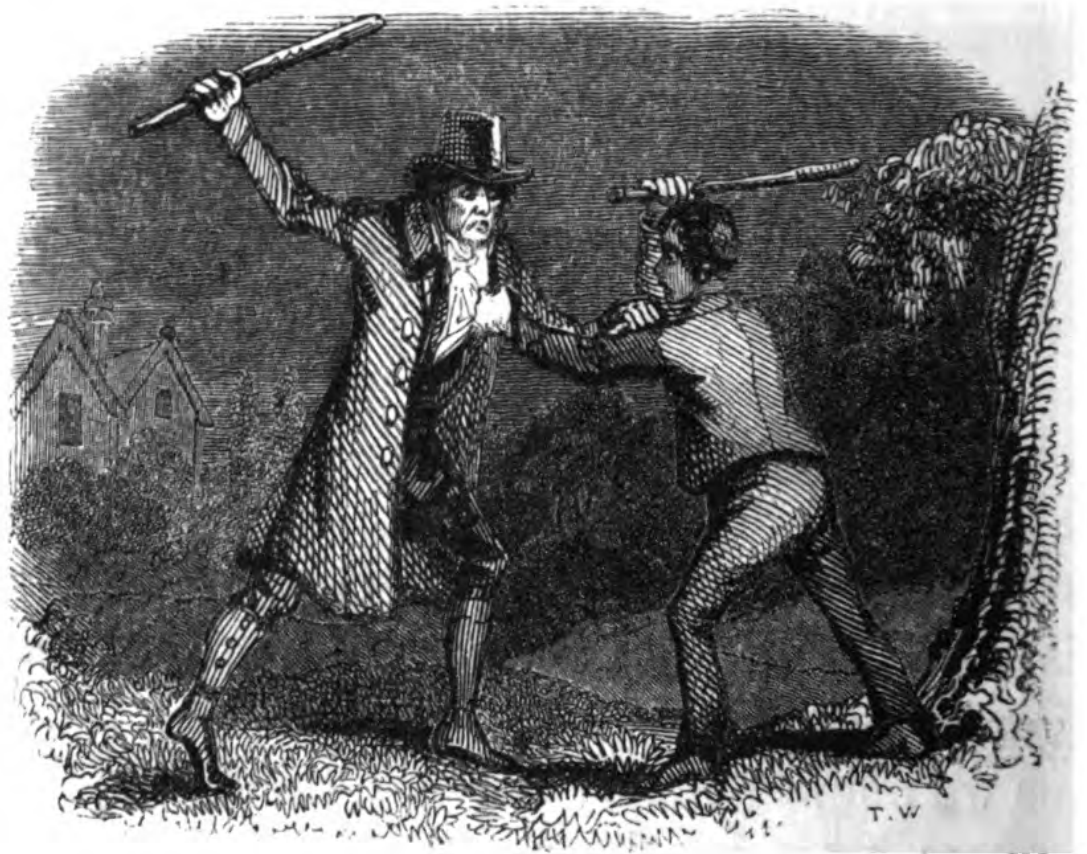
choice, I should like to be an executor." "An executor!" said Mr. Douglas, "that is a curious choice, and what is your reason for it?" "Why, sir," said the boy, "about a year ago, father was made executor; before that time we had no meat for dinner, only a few potatoes, and sometimes bread and milk, but since he has been made executor, we have meat every day, and on Sunday too!" Thinks I, That's a shrewd lad, and if he is not an executor himself, some day or other, my name is not Peter Parley.

It was, evidently, a great pleasure to Mr. Douglas, to look back on his past life and trace the paths he had trodden. He did this in a grateful spirit, and seemed to wish that all young people might profit from his experience. He had found thorns and briars beneath his feet, but he had mercifully been enabled to remove them, and to plant roses and myrtles in their stead. He did not disguise the mistakes he had made, nor keep back the difficulties with which he had struggled, but freely stated all as it was, whether it entitled him to praise or blame! Of this last trait in his character, I will here give you an instance.

"Few young people, Mr. Parley," said he, "are

more fond of mischief than I was in my boyhood : one example of this I will give you. The garden of an old man, a near neighbour, had frequently been robbed, and the old gentleman and my master were not over delicate in their allusions to me when the matter was spoken of. Being very irritable, the old boy determined at once to watch his garden at night, club in hand, and give a sound cudgelling to the thief. Accident made me acquainted with this intention, and gave me an opportunity of paying off an old grudge I had against father and son together. Having watched the father into the garden, I lost no time in letting the son know that an ugly ruffian-looking fellow had hid himself in the corner, and I advised him to go cautiously with a thick stick into the garden while I watched at the gate ; by which means we might possibly take the thief and clear our characters from suspicion ; for he also had been suspected. Accordingly the young man fetched a knobbed stick, and went to the place, walking on tiptoe ; but no sooner had he got half way up the garden walk than the old man, not doubting for a moment that the thief was approaching, rushed from his hiding place, attacked his son with his club, and gave him a severe drubbing before he found out his

mistake. The son, supposing the thief was beating him, struck some hard blows, and then bawled out as loudly as he could to his father, who he expected was in the house. "Murder! father! murder!"



THE FATHER AND THE SON GRAPPLING IN THE GARDEN.

This scene of merriment I heartily enjoyed, but soon paid for it to the full, by both father and son giving me an ample meal of the same food I had so ingeniously cooked up for them."

The experience of Mr. Douglas had taught him the advantages of education, and made him desirous

that young people should not, in this respect, be neglected. Good attainments in the head, and right principles in the heart, were, in his opinion, when united with industry and perseverance, the sure means of attaining affluence, influence, and respectability.

“We have,” said he, “in our village, two schools for the children of the poorer classes of our neighbours. I subscribe to both the National, and the



PAROCHIAL SCHOOL VISITED.

Dissenters' school, and consequently have the privilege of visiting each; this I do about once a

week. I am afraid that my neighbours, when they give their annual guinea subscription to these schools, consider they have done their duty, but this is a most fatal error. Surely it is their duty, and mine, to visit these schools, to strengthen the hands of the teachers, to reward good conduct, and to check bad habits, taking care to inculcate those right principles in the minds of the children, which, when once fixed, will not easily afterwards be eradicated.

“Children naturally look up to their superiors: a word of reproof from them renders them ashamed, and a word of encouragement does them good. We should turn this to advantage. You know, Mr. Parley, that without morality there can be no spirituality; and that our duty to God includes also our duty to our neighbour. We should teach the children these things, and say to them, My dear children, pay attention to your teachers, and let it be the general and governing principle of your conduct, through all your lives, to entertain a supreme reverence for the will of God, and a benevolent regard to the interests of your fellow men.

“If parochial and Sunday schools had all the encouragement they deserve, we should soon cease to exclaim against the severity of our laws, we

should rarely witness executions, nor should we have that occasion, which we now have, to regret the destitution of right principles among the lower ranks of society.”

Mr. Douglas's daughters played admirably on the pianoforte, and what pleased me much was, that they sat down to the instrument, without the forward display that courts admiration or the foolish, affected



PIANOFORTE AND FAMILY.

backwardness, which never fails to create dislike. There is a golden mean in most things.

Mrs. Douglas and I had enough conversation

together to convince me, that she had much of the energy of her husband. She seemed not averse to the style in which Mr. Douglas's property and position entitled her to live; but, if I judged aright, the calm quiet of domestic life, and the society of warm-hearted friends, were more in accordance with her real disposition, than the cold etiquette of splendour and display.

Just before I left Mr. Douglas and his family, Mr. Douglas requested his son William, an intelligent youth, to accompany his sister Charlotte while she played the melody of the following beautiful lines, by Mr. Hood, a popular writer, which so feelingly described his earlier associations; this he did in a very agreeable and effective manner.

I REMEMBER, I remember,
The house where I was born;
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn:
He never came a wink too soon,
Nor made too long a day;
But now, I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away.

I remember, I remember,
The roses red and white;
The violets, and lily cups,
Those flowers made of light;

The lattice, where the robin built,
And where my brother set
The laburnum on his birthday,—
The tree is living yet.

I remember, I remember,
The fir trees dark and high ;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky :
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm further off from heaven
Than when I was a boy.



CHAP. XXXVIII.

PARLEY TELLS ABOUT NEW YEAR'S EVE, AND NEW YEAR'S DAY.

I COULD pity him, be he old or young, who could pass through the last day of the year without allowing a shadow to becloud the sunshine of his spirit. Peter Parley is an upholder of cheerfulness, but not of that reckless mirth which shuts out profitable reflection.

The last day of the year is an important monitor that should speak to the heart. It should point to the past, that we may see the wrong turnings we have made in our pathway. It should set before us the blessings we have shared, the friends we have lost, and our nearer approach to our latter end.

There is enough at the close of the year to occasion rejoicing, and enough, also, to make us ponder on the future, and the past. At such seasons we should be faithful to ourselves. Happy is he who can look into the garden of his heart on New Year's Eve, and find there no nettles and thistles of his own sowing.

Sorrow, sickness, and pain, may be endured, if we bring them not on ourselves, but an accusing conscience, who can bear! Try, my young friends, whatever trials you may endure, to keep a clear conscience.

A custom used to be observed on New Year's eve, in many parts of England, but I am not certain whether it is now kept up in any, of young women carrying a wassail bowl from door to door at midnight, and singing a wassail ditty.

It should be remembered, that, though the wassail bowls of Christmas time were filled with liquors of different kinds, from the richest wines to the poorest small beer, the favourite beverage of English people, from olden times, has been "nut brown ale." The love of this drink has been, in many cases, excessive, as you may gather from the following old verses.

I LOVE no rost, but a nut-brown toste,
 And a crab layde in the fyre;
 A little bread shall do me stead,
 Much breade I not desyre.
 No froste, nor snow, no winde, I trow,
 Can hurt me if I wolde;
 I am so wrapt, and throwly lapt
 Of jolly good ale, and olde.

Back and syde go bare, go bare ;
Both foot and hand go colde,
But belly, God send thee good ale enough,
Whether it be new or olde.

The omens of New Year's eve, used to be many, but since the schoolmaster has been abroad they have much declined. The last and first day of the year are seasons of much importance in Scotland, and the omens of New Year's eve are still numerous : both the winds and the clouds are, in the belief of the highlanders, full of instruction with regard to future events.

Guisars, or mummers, with cudgels in their hands, and masks over their faces, go about the streets, in Scotland, uttering uncouth gibberish, and performing strange antics.

It is thought by many, that, at New Year's eve, good and evil spirits are abroad, and that human adjurations have much power over them. The highlanders are deeply impressed with superstitious notions respecting spirits, and witches, and warlocks ; they burn juniper piles in their habitations, and sprinkle the household with water, drawn from " the dead and living ford," to protect them from evil.

They have another strange custom of setting meat and drink on the bench, at night fall, to feed such goblins as may be disposed to avail themselves of their hospitality, and at New Year's eve, the "het pint" of ale, spirits, nutmeg, and sugar, used to be carried about the streets at midnight.

The first person who crossed the threshold, after midnight, had the privilege of a kiss from the fair inmates, the latter were, therefore, very careful who they admitted.

New Year's eve is now passed in various ways: some devote it entirely to pleasure, and others to religious exercises: generally, however, it is a season of rejoicing; the wine, and the wassail bowl, the jug of cider, and the frothy mug of nut brown ale, are in high estimation.

Perhaps, on no night in the year are more friendly and convivial groups drawn together than on New Year's eve, and never are the affections and sympathies of human beings more freely called forth. A tenderness, and depth of emotion, unknown at other seasons, is felt; "deep answers to deep" in the human heart, so that, in the wildest laugh, a tear is ready to start into the eye.

Perhaps it would be impossible to find more simple

and expressive language on this subject than that of the following verses, written by Mr. Tennyson, which are very deservedly admired:—

IF you're waking, call me early, call me early, mother dear,
For I would see the sun rise upon the glad New Year—
It is the last New Year that I shall ever see,
Then ye may lay me low i' the mould, and think no more o' me.

To-night I saw the sun set: he set and left behind
The good old year, the dear old time, and all my peace of mind;
And the New Year's coming up, mother, but I shall never see
The may upon the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree.

Last May we made a crown of flowers: we had a merry day:
Beneath the hawthorn on the green they made me queen of May;
And we danced about the maypole, and in the hazel-copse,
Till Charles's wain came out above the tall white chimney-tops.

There's not a flower on all the hills: the frost is on the pane:
I only wish to live till the snowdrops come again:
I wish the snow would melt and the sun come out on high—
I long to see a flower so before the day I die.

The building rook 'ill caw from the windy tall elm-tree,
And the tufted plover pipe along the fallow lea,
And the swallow 'ill come back again with summer o'er the wave,
But I shall lie alone, mother, within the mouldering grave.

Upon the chancel-casement, and upon that grave of mine,
In the early, early morning the summer sun 'll shine,
Before the red cock crows from the farm upon the hill,
When you are warm asleep, mother, and all the world is still.

When the flowers come again, mother, beneath the waning light,
Ye'll never see me more in the long gray fields at night;
When from the dry dark world the summer airs blow cool,
On the oat-grass and the sword-grass, and the bulrush in the pool.

Ye'll bury me, my mother, just beneath the hawthorn shade,
And ye'll come sometimes and see me where I am lowly laid,
I shall not forget ye, mother, I shall hear ye when ye pass,
With your feet above my head in the long and pleasant grass.

I have been wild and wayward, but ye'll forgive me now:
Ye'll kiss me, my own mother, upon my cheek and brow;
Nay,—nay, ye must not weep, nor let your grief be wild,
Ye should not fret for me, mother, ye have another child.

If I can, I'll come again, mother, from out my resting-place;
Though ye'll not see me, mother, I shall look upon your face;
Though I cannot speak a word, I shall hearken what ye say,
And be often—often with ye when ye think I'm far away.

Good night! good night! when I have said good night for
evermore,

And ye see me carried out from the threshold of the door,
Don't let Effie come to see me till my grave be growing green;
She'll be a better child to you than ever I have been.

She'll find my garden tools upon the granary floor;
Let her take 'em,—they are her's,—I shall never garden more:
But tell her, when I'm gone, to train the rosebush that I set,
About the parlour window, and the box of mignonette.

Good night, sweet mother! call me when it begins to dawn:
All night I lie awake, but I fall asleep at morn:
But I would see the sun rise upon the glad New Year,
So, if you're waking, call me, call me early, mother dear!

Old times, old occurrences, and old friends, flit before the merry group on New Year's eve. Faces are absent that once glowed in their presence, and the *dying year* and the *last day*, hang somewhat heavily on the lightest heart. "Give me your hand, Tom," says one, lifting his glass to his lips, "we have passed many a New Year's eve together." "Ay," replies the other, grasping his companion harder than usual with his clenched fingers, "God only knows, Ned, whether we shall ever spend another together."

Some give vent to their feelings in this way, and some are silent, but all think, more or less, about the uncertainty of life. This is a thought that cannot be scared away by the glass, nor drowned in the wassail bowl.

Who can tell what changes may be wrought in another year? The young and the old, before then, may be laid low.

ANOTHER year, another year,
 O! who shall see another year?
 Shalt thou, old man of hoary head,
 Of eye-sight dim, and feeble tread?
 Expect it not! time, pain, and grief,
 Have made thee like an autumn leaf,
 Ready, by blast, or self-decay,
 From its slight hold to drop away—

And some sad morn may gild thy bier
Long, long before another year !

Another year, another year,
O ! who shall see another year ?
Shall you, ye young ? or you, ye fair ?
Ah ! the presumptuous thought forbear !
Within this church-yard's peaceful bounds—
Come, pause and ponder o'er the mounds !
Here beauty sleeps—that verdant length
Of grave contains what once was strength,—
The child—the boy—the man—are here :
Ye may not see another year !

I will now tell you about a very solemn custom, which is observed the last night of the year among the people called Methodists. It is called, "The Watch Night." If you have never heard of it, I dare say that it will strike you as a very singular custom.

The Methodists meet together on New Year's eve to watch and to pray, so that the last moment of the old year, as well as the first moment of the new, finds them on their knees at a throne of grace. I had never been at a watch night, and felt a strong curiosity to attend, so, about ten o'clock at night, I set off to the Methodist chapel, in City Road.

You may be sure that I did not forget my great coat ; no, nor my worsted wrapper, to tie round my

neck, for the frosty night air was bitter cold, and I cannot walk so fast now, as I could forty winters ago. The blue sky over my head was beautifully clear, and never were the moon and the stars brighter. I passed between Bunhill fields burial ground, and the grave yard of the Methodists. In one, lay John Bunyan, and in the other, John Wesley.

The chapel was as full as it could hold, and the aisles were almost as full as the pews. Several ministers went to prayer, one preached a sermon, and two or three hymns were sung, till it was almost twelve o'clock.

It seemed an odd thing to be in a place of worship at that time of night, and the thought that in a few minutes the old year would be passed, gave a great solemnity to the scene. The minister who preached, again mounted the pulpit, and reminded us that it was not likely we should ever all meet again on earth, though we must all assemble at the judgment day. "Think," said he, "of the sins you have committed this year! think of the mercies you have received! In a few minutes the angel of the Lord will spread his wide wings and bear the dread account of our transgressions, to the throne of the

Eternal. Let us go down on our bended knees, and give the remaining moments of this year to God. Let us enter into a fresh covenant with him, and seek and supplicate for more faith, and hope, and joy in his son Jesus Christ."

We all knelt down, and every thing was silent but the ticking of the chapel clock. I lifted up my head to gaze a moment on the vast assembly. The minister, in the pulpit, and the people, in the pews, had hid their faces with their hands; not an eye met mine. I then heard myself breathe, and my heart beat hard against my side.

I fixed my eye on the clock; it wanted two minutes of midnight, but those two minutes seemed half an hour. Solemn thoughts rushed into my mind. It was as if God had come down from heaven, and was among us.

I shall never forget that fearful pause; bound by some spell, I could not move my eyes from the clock, that was ticking out the last gasps of the dying year. Something terrible seemed about to happen, as though we were all hung by a huge chain over a frowning gulf, and an angel was about to sever the chain with a stroke of his flaming sword.

All at once, kneeling as we were in awful silence,

the clock struck ; the whole congregation, in a moment, rose from their knees and burst into a hymn of thanksgiving. Not one of the customs of Christmas impressed my mind more than that of "The Watch Night."

" Let the bells upon their wheels,
While our fond ideas veer,
Ring the solemn midnight peals,
Lingering for the dying year.
Hark ! the peal has ceased to roll ;
Silence reigns ;—but now a toll
Breaks upon the startled ear ;—
Gone for ever is the year !"

The bells of the different steeples strike up a merry peal, the very moment that the old year is gone, but somehow, the heart can scarcely respond to it. Thoughts sober and serious, if not absolutely mournful, have been indulged at the close of the old year, and we are hardly prepared for mirth.

The old year is but just dead, and is yet unburied in our remembrances. Our spirits are dressed in sables, and to laugh so very suddenly seems out of character. With some such thoughts as these many a New Year's eve observer retires to rest a little before the cock begins to crow.

No sooner do people go abroad on New Year's day,

than they begin to congratulate their friends:—"The compliments of the season to you,"—and "A happy new year," are phrases that may be heard from every mouth.

New year's gifts are made, and various are the devices of affectionate hearts, to manifest their love and respect. "If I send," says one, "a new year's gift to my friend, it shall be a token of my friendship; if to my benefactor, a token of gratitude; if to the poor, which at this season must never be forgotten, it shall be to make their hearts sing for joy, and give praise and adoration to the Giver of all good gifts."

The practice of presenting new year's gifts to the sovereign, which once existed, must have been a heavy tax upon those attached to the court, for though the sovereign made a return, it was frequently of a trifling kind, and by no means equal to the gift presented.

When I walked out on New Year's day, the different belfries of the city were doing their best to keep the world alive. The merry peals of a thousand bells seemed like a chorus of giants singing at the top of their voices, bidding boisterous welcome to the new born year.

The night of New Year's day is spent like those which have gone before it, games and good fellowship and feasting and wassailry divide it between them : but the lightest spirit, the most buoyant heart, must in time become weary of enjoyment ; and though many may regret that the merry days and nights of Christmas are so far advanced, yet there are some who will rejoice in the prospect of a little respite, which will enable them to enter on Twelfth night with greater glee.



CHAP. XXXIX.

PARLEY GIVES SOME ACCOUNT OF TWELFTH DAY AND
TWELFTH NIGHT.

AMONG the holidays of Christmas, there is one greater than all the rest. Among the merry days and nights of this happy season of general festivity, Twelfth day and Twelfth night are the most merry.

No wonder that the last happy day and night that Christmas presents to us should be prized: as the setting sun appears bigger to us just as he is about to leave the skies, so this mirthful season increases, in our estimation, to its very close. At other times the heart is merry, and the wassail bowl is full, but on Twelfth night the heart and the bowl run over.

The Christian festival of the Epiphany is held in commemoration of our Saviour being manifested to the Gentiles. Epiphany means an appearance from above, and, no doubt, you remember that a star in the heavens guided the wise men to the place where our Saviour was born. Epiphany is called Twelfth

day, because it is held on the Twelfth day after Christmas.

There are very many circumstances belonging to the observances of Twelfth day, which seem to point out that it had its beginning in the Saturnalia of the Romans; but as my reasonings on this point might not be so amusing to you, as an account of the odd customs still in practice on this day, I will enter on the latter course.

There are in "Hone's Every Day Book" such excellent Twelfth day and Twelfth night sketches of customs and characters, that I should act an unwise part if I kept them back from you. Whenever Peter Parley finds an account of any thing he wishes to describe, done better by another than he can do it himself, he is always ready to avail himself of the advantage.

There are some country customs that relate to the eve of Epiphany, of a singular kind, which ought not to be omitted.

"In certain parts of Devonshire, the farmer, attended by his workmen, with a large pitcher of cider, goes to the orchard this evening; and there, encircling one of the best bearing trees, they drink the following toast three times :

“ Here’s to thee, old apple tree,
Hence thou may’st bud, and whence thou may’st blow !
And whence thou may’st bear apples enow !
Hats full ! caps full !
Bushel—bushel—sacks full,
And my pockets full too ! huzza !”

This done, they return to the house, the doors of which they are sure to find bolted by the females, who, be the weather what it may, are inexorable to all entreaties to open them till some one has guessed at what is on the spit, which is generally some nice little thing, difficult to be hit on, and is the reward of him who first names it. The doors are then thrown open, and the lucky clodpole receives the tit-bit as his recompense. Some are so superstitious as to believe, that if they neglect this custom, the trees will bear no apples that year.

Another account describes the Devonshire people as going “after supper into the orchard, with a large milkpan full of cider, having roasted apples pressed into it. Out of this each person in company takes what is called a clayen cup, that is, an earthenware cup, full of liquor, and standing under each of the more fruitful apple trees, passing by those that are not good bearers, he addresses it in the following words :

“Health to thee, good apple tree,
Well to bear, pockets full, hats full,
Pecks full, bushel bags full!”

And then drinking up part of the contents, he throws the rest, with the fragments of the roasted apples, at the tree. At each cup, the company set up a shout.”

“In Herefordshire, at the approach of evening, on the vigil of the Twelfth day, the farmers, with their friends and servants, meet together, and about six o'clock walk out to a field where wheat is growing. In the highest part of the ground, twelve small fires and one large one are lighted up. The attendants, headed by the master of the family, pledge the company in old cider, which circulates freely on these occasions. A circle is formed round the large fire, when a general shout and hallooing takes place, which you hear answered from all the adjacent villages and fields. Sometimes fifty or sixty of these fires may be all seen at once. This being finished, the company return home, where the good housewife, and her maids, are preparing a good supper. A large cake is always provided, with a hole in the middle. After supper, the company all attend the bailiff, (or head of the oxen) to the wain-house, where the

following particulars are observed. The master, at the head of his friends, fills the cup (generally of strong ale or cider,) and stands opposite the first or finest of the oxen. He then pledges him in a curious toast: the company follow his example with all the other oxen, addressing each by his name. This being finished, the large cake is produced, and, with much ceremony, put on the horn of the first ox, through the hole above mentioned. The ox is then tickled, to make him toss his head: if he throw the cake behind, then it is the mistress's perquisite; if before (in what is termed the boosy), the bailiff himself claims the prize. The company then return to the house, the doors of which they find locked, nor will they be opened till some joyous songs are sung. On their gaining admittance, a scene of mirth and jollity ensues, which lasts the greatest part of the night."

The custom of wassailing the cow is still kept up at Basham farm, in this county. I have spoken of Basham farm before, in my Tales about Great Britain and Ireland.

When they wassail the cow, the men stand round with their cider mugs in their hands, and shout aloud,

“ Here’s to thee, Violet, and to thy white horn,
 May thy master and mistress have good crops of corn,
 Both wheat, rye, and barley, and all sorts of grain,
 If we live till next year, we will drink to thee again !”



WASSAILING THE COW.

The men sit down to a capital supper, and farmer Jones is as happy as any man there.

“ There sits the farmer all hearty and hale,
 With youth in his smile and years on his brow ;
 His ‘ Old Black Ram,’ is a capital tale,
 ‘ He’s holt o’ me now ! he’s holt o’ me now ! ’ ”

But I must enter on a description of Twelfth day, as it is observed in London, and must, again, make

free with "The Every Day Book," otherwise you will lose much that is worth knowing.

In London, with every pastry cook in the city, and at the west end of the town, it is "high change" on Twelfth day. From the taking down of the shutters in the morning, he, and his men, with additional assistants, male and female, are fully occupied by attending to the dressing out of the window, executing orders of the day before, receiving fresh ones, or supplying the wants of chance customers. Before dusk, the important arrangement of the window is completed. Then the gas is turned on, with supernumerary grand lamps and manifold wax lights, to illuminate countless cakes of all prices and dimensions, that stand in rows and piles on the counters and sideboards, and in the windows. The richest in flavour, and heaviest in weight and price, are placed on large and massy salvers; one, enormously superior to the rest in size, is the chief object of curiosity; and all are decorated with all imaginable images of things animate and inanimate. Stars, castles, kings, cottages, dragons, trees, fish, palaces, cats, dogs, churches, lions, milk maids, knights, serpents, and innumerable other forms in snow-white confectionary, painted with variegated

colours, glitter, by "excess of light," from mirrors against the walls, festooned with artificial "wonders of Flora." This "paradise of dainty devices" is crowded by successive and successful desirers of the seasonable delicacies, while alternate tapping of hammers, and peals of laughter, from the throng surrounding the house, excite smiles from the inmates.

"On Twelfth night, in London, boys assemble round the inviting shops, and dexterously nail the coat-tails of spectators, who venture near enough, to the bottoms of the window frames; or pin them together strongly by their clothes. Sometimes eight or ten persons find themselves thus connected. The dexterity and force of the nail driving is so quick and sure, that a single blow seldom fails of doing the business effectually. Withdrawal of the nail without a proper instrument is out of the question; and, consequently, the person nailed must either leave part of his coat, as a cognizance of his attachment, or quit the spot with a hole in it. At every nailing and pinning, shouts of laughter arise from the perpetrators and the spectators. Yet it often happens to one who turns and smiles at the duress of another, that he also finds himself nailed. Efforts at extrication increase mirth, nor is the presence of

a constable, who is usually employed to attend and preserve free 'ingress, egress, and regress,' sufficiently awful to deter the offenders."

"Such are the scenes, that, at the front and side
Of the Twelfth-cake shops, scatter wild dismay,
As up the slippery curb, or pavement rude,
We seek the pastry cooks, to keep Twelfth day;
While ladies stand aghast, in speechless trance
Look round, dare not go back, and yet dare not advance."

Determined to see as much of Twelfth night as possible, I walked along Cornhill, Cheapside, Ludgate Hill, Fleet Street, and the Strand, and then made the best of my way to Regent Street. What bursts of light! what boundless stores of confectionary met my eyes! and what throngs of happy-hearted, mischief loving young people did I find abroad!

There was a sumptuous cake, in one window, with a beautiful Chinese temple upon it, so I pushed amid the throng to get a sight of it.

People were going in and out; boys and girls were crowding round the windows. Policemen were keeping as clear a road as they could to the door, and jests and laughter were heard on all sides, when suddenly I felt a pull at my coat tail.

"O ho," thinks I, "you are up to your pranks,

are you?" They little thought they had got Peter Parley among them. Well, I turned round, for my coat tail was still pulled very hard, and then I saw that a lady's muslin gown was made fast to my skirt. O how the lady did rate at me!



MR. PARLEY PINNED TO A LADY.

"Madam," said I, bowing, and was beginning to explain to her, that it was not my fault; but she would not hear a word; her temper was gone, and she flirted and flounced about, calling me an "old

simpleton," but this only furnished amusement for the throng.

Fortunately for me, my black coat was of stronger material than the muslin gown. The lady gave an indignant flourish, the muslin gown gave way, a long strip of it was left dangling to my coat tail, and a roar of laughter burst from the mischievous crowd.

Young people, naturally enough, look forward to Twelfth night within doors as a treat of no ordinary kind, for then the cake is placed upon the table, and they draw characters, which are to be sustained all the evening after. This furnishes abundance of amusement.

In old times a great deal of superstition was mingled with Twelfth day and Twelfth night customs, a cake was made, and among the plums it contained, a pea and a bean were slipped in. When the cake was cut up and given to the assembled party, whoever had the pea was queen, and whoever had the bean was king for the night; but, sometimes, a piece of money was put in, to determine who should be king, and then his majesty had to rub the beams and rafters of the house, to scare away evil spirits, with many other such idle devices. The following

old verses will plainly set forth the custom of ancient times.

“Then also every householder,
To his abilitie,
Doth make a mightie cake, that may
Suffice his companie :
Herein a pennie doth he put,
Before it come to fire,
This he divides according as
His householde doth require.
And every peece distributeth,
As round about they stand,
Which in their names, unto the poore
Is given out of land.
But whoso chaunceth on the peece
Wherein the money lies,
Is counted king amongst them all,
And is with showtes and cries
Exulted to the heavens up.”

I passed a pleasant night at a house where a youthful party was assembled. Every master and miss drew a character, but they were either too happy, or too negligent, to support them well.

The names of some of these characters were a little silly; but I was in too good a humour to knit my brow; so I sat watching the young people, laughing when they laughed, and wishing in my very

spirit that they might always be as free from care as they were then. Winter as it was in the season of the year, it was the spring tide of their lives, and I would not willingly have robbed them of one ray of that sunshine that lighted up their faces, and their hearts.

Heartily can I join one who has well expressed himself on the subject of Twelfth night gratifications.



TWELFTH CAKE AND COMPANY.

“I delight to see a score of happy children, sitting huddled all round the dainty fare, eyeing the cake and each other, with faces sunny enough to thaw the

white snow. I like to see the gazing silence, which is kept so religiously while the large knife goes its round, and the glistening eyes which feed beforehand on the huge slices, dark with citron and plums, and heavy as gold. And then, when the 'characters' are drawn, is it nothing to watch the peeping delight which escapes from their little eyes? One is proud, as king, another stately, as queen; then there are two whispering grotesque secrets, which they cannot contain, (those are Sir Gregory Goose, and Sir Tunbelly Clumsy.) The boys laugh out at their own misfortunes; but the little girls, almost ashamed of their prizes, sit blushing and silent. It is not until the lady of the house goes round, that some of the more extravagant fictions are revealed. And then, what a roar of mirth! ha! ha! The ceiling shakes, and the air is torn. They bound from their seats like kids, and insist on seeing Miss Thompson's card. Ah! what merry spite is proclaimed,—what ostentatious pity! The little girl is almost in tears, but the large lump of allotted cake is placed seasonably in her hands, and the glass of sweet wine 'all round,' drowns the shrill urchin laughter, and a gentler delight prevails. Does not this make a charming picture?"

There were two old maiden ladies at the party, who amused themselves up in a corner with a quiet game at cribbage ; one of these showed me a copy of verses which she had just received with the present of a cribbage board. They ran as follows :

THERE is a proverb, " you may put
A deal of love in a hazel nut."
If this be true, then what a hoard
Of love may dwell in a cribbage board !
The one that I in friendship send,
Will be accepted by my friend :
Not for its value prized a minute,
But for the love that lurks within it.
And now, while time so swiftly flies,
Let me a moment moralize.
With all its gay devices stored,
The world is but *a cribbage board* :
Painted, and varnish'd, and array'd,
How soon will all its beauties fade !
And though amid the crowd there be
Friends that are doubly dear to me ;
Mankind, with all their fond regards,
Are very like *a pack of cards*.
Sometimes our partners are unkind,
And peevish : sometimes they are blind,
And will not see, though red as roses,
The *suit* that lies beneath their noses.
Kings, with their robes and their grimaces,
And *queens*, with pretty simpering faces,

Though they have favours at command,
 We rarely *hold* them in our hand.
 And then whatever game we play,
 Some *knave* will steal our *hearts* away.
 All must confess in doleful dumps,
 Of many friends how few are *trumps* ;
 Trumps that will serve us when, in strife,
 We play the losing game in life:
 E'en while we count our treasures o'er,
 With *fifteen-two* and *fifteen-four*,
 And *pairs*, and *prials*, *sequence*, *flush*,
 And painted *honours* make us blush,
 By some untoward trouble crost,
 Some lurking ill, the game is lost.
 Well! come what will, let us agree
 To keep our temper fair and free,
 And never, willingly, descend
 To rob a foe, or cheat a friend:
 That, from the earliest days of youth,
 It may be said of us, in truth,
 When all our cards aside are laid,
 Our game of life was fairly play'd.

The following word of advice was given to husbandmen, by a prudent and kind-spirited old man, as to how they ought to conduct themselves after the Christmas festivities.

WHEN Christmas is ended,
 Bid feasting adieu,
 Gae play the good husband,
 Thy stock to renew.

Be mindful of rearing,
In hope of a gaine,
Dame Profit shall give thee
Reward for thy paine.

And I, following his example, advise you, after every pleasure, whether at Christmas or at any other time of the year, to fall back into habits of sobriety, and attention to your several duties; this is the way to prepare for future pleasure, and the only way to secure present peace.

Among the amusements of the young people on Twelfth night, tale telling was not altogether forgotten. One of the maiden aunts who played at cribbage together told us the following story:

“I must tell you the tale of the poor maniac; for even if you have heard it before, it will matter but little: poor indeed is that tale that will not bear telling twice over.

“I have looked on Mary the maniac, till the big tears have chased one another down my cheeks, for her wildly fixed eyes show that a load of care weighs heavy on her heart. I have never yet seen her weep, nor heard her complain, but her sighs are fearful, and her very silence only shows the hopelessness of her distress. She neither seeks for aid

nor compassion, though cold and hunger pinch her, and the bleak winds of winter blow on her pale cheek, and pierce through the rags that only half cover her withered bosom.

“And yet for all she looks so sad now, I knew her when she was as gay as a lark. Her eye had laughter in it, and her smile lured the traveller and the wayfaring man into her father's pothouse. There was a ruined abbey at no great distance, and when the night wind whistled along the aisles and arches, Mary was not afraid to go there; either when the moonbeam fell on the cold pavement, or when darkness mingled the trembling ivy and the thick walls together.

“Such a guileless heart as Mary's was not likely to remain a stranger to love. Richard, a young neighbour, won her affections. All who knew Richard, and all who knew Mary, said they would make an ill-matched pair. How can the wolf and the lamb dwell together? or how could the simple-hearted and virtuous-minded Mary live in peace with so idle and worthless a fellow as Richard? Every one said it would never do! every body said that Mary was too good for him.

“Well, things were just as I have described them,

and the day was fixed for the wedding, when, one dark stormy night, two travellers, whom business and pleasure had brought into the neighbourhood, sat smoking a friendly pipe by her father's bright fire. The door and windows were all fastened, but the wind, as it raved round, made them rattle, and the travellers felt glad to have a glowing fire before them, and a dry roof over their head.

“ ‘What a night this would be,’ said one of them, ‘to visit the old abbey in! I would not set the sole of my foot within the dreary pile, to become the owner of it. Mercy on me, for I should shake and shiver like an aspen leaf, when the ivy rustled over my head! I should be sure to fancy that some bare-headed, barefooted monk was bidding his beads at my elbow; or, that the white spirit of some ugly old abbot was rising from his grave, in the cloisters, and staring at me through the mullioned windows.’

“ ‘I’ll wager a dinner,’ replied the other, ‘that Mary, our landlord’s daughter, will go to the abbey and bring away a bough from the alder tree, in the aisle, in spite of the ghost of the bald-headed monk, and ugly old abbot, for I have heard much of her courage; she is not so chicken-hearted as you are, therefore, take my wager if you dare.’

“‘That I will, and welcome,’ rejoined his companion,—‘she no more durst go there than myself. If a sheep were to get up amid the ruins, or a white cow make her appearance, Mary would faint away on the spot.’

“Poor Mary heard this conversation, and was willing enough to pay a visit to the abbey, especially when a new bonnet was promised her as a recompense for her hardihood. Up sprung the simple-hearted damsel with a laugh, and set out on her lonely enterprise.

“They who mean to do no wrong themselves are the last to suspect it in others. Mary tripped along fearlessly, though, every now and then, a dreary gust of wind whistled hollowly around her. She entered the gateway of the solitary pile, and reached the spot where the alder tree grew. All was silent but the mournful blast and the rustling ivy, and scarcely could she see any difference between the massy walls and the dark clouds that overspread the skies. Mary was not long in gathering a branch from the alder tree, but suddenly she paused and listened, and her heart panted fearfully against her side, for she felt certain that she heard voices, and that footsteps approached the spot. It was enough to make

her heart sink within her, for the place was dreary, and the hour somewhat late for the solitary pile to be visited by honest people ; again she listened, and again voices came upon the blast.

“ As the footsteps came nearer, Mary shrunk behind a white column ; for, dark as the night was, there was a difference in the decayed pillars to be seen. Scarcely had she hid herself when the moon rose from behind a cloud. Mary had reason enough then to tremble, for, at no great distance, she saw two ruffians carrying a corpse. She regarded them as murderers, coming to bury the dead body of some one whose money they had taken, and whose life they had destroyed.

“ As the rough wind swept by, Mary felt her blood curdle in her veins. The blast shook the streaming ivy to and fro, and blew off the hat of one of the ruffians, which rolled near Mary’s feet ; hardly could she keep life within her, when the ruffian, cursing his hat, came to the spot and stretched out his hand to regain it. ‘ Let your hat alone,’ cried out the other comrade, ‘ till we have buried the body.’ They passed on, dragging their victim heavily along, when Mary snatched up the hat, and fled through the abbey, for fear lent her wings.

“ Breathless was her speed as she hurried on to her father’s abode ; she rushed through the door, and her eyes glanced around horribly, but it was but for a moment ; her limbs could no longer support her weight ; exhausted she fell, at once, on the floor, pale as a statue.

“ What poor Mary suffered in the abbey, and when she fell to the ground, in her father’s dwelling, was bad enough, but it was nothing to the cold horror that thrilled through her heart when she came to herself ; for, at the first glance, she saw that the hat which she had brought from the abbey belonged to Richard, her lover.

“ Yes, Richard was a robber and a murderer ! he was taken by the officers of justice, and tried for his life ; the hat that Mary had snatched up was produced against him, and convicted him of the crime. On the common, near the old ruined abbey, a gibbet stands, and the culprit swinging there, in the rusty iron, is Richard the murderer.

“ As the traveller passes the place he gazes with horror on the fearful spectacle, and when he makes inquiry, he is told the tale of the Old Abbey ; and Poor Mary, the Maid of the Inn.

“ The maniac still wildly wanders near the spot,

and every one that meets her heaves a sigh of regret that one so good, and so simple hearted, should have been made miserable by fixing her love on one who was unworthy of her. Take warning, ye maidens, and give not away your hearts thoughtlessly, lest ye become as hopelessly wretched as Mary the maniac.”



CHAP. XL.

PARLEY TELLS ABOUT ST. DISTAFF'S DAY, AND CONCLUDES.

WHEN Twelfth night was past, Christmas was considered, in old times, to be fairly over. The next morning every husbandman began his accustomed employment. His implements of labour were got ready, his team was yoked, and the plough, with its shining share, once more delved the clay, or the earthy soil.

But much must not, at first, be expected from the holiday keeper, especially if his revels have been lusty ones; therefore, after a morning spent at the plough tail, the husbandman unyoked his team, abandoned his labour, and made a sort of half holiday; nor did he set himself properly to the cultivation of the fields till the following Monday, which on that account was called Plough Monday.

As it was with the men, so it was with the maidens, on the day following Twelfth day, for they were only half inclined to their labours. It is true, that the rock, or distaff, was prepared, that the spinning wheel was set in motion, and that the day

on this account was called St. Distaff's day; but no sooner did the men return home from the fields, than the love of mischief led them to burn all the flax and tow, found on the spinning wheels.

The maids, nothing loth again to make holiday, filled their pails and pipkins with water, and liberally



ST. DISTAFF'S DAY.

sluiced the burners of their flax: this gave rise to a friendly contention, in which all disposition to labour was lost; revelling and laughter once more reigned supreme.

It would be somewhat disagreeable, in the very midst of a pleasant party, for the guests suddenly to disperse, and go home each to his own habitation ; but when the night wears away, gradually, and one after another retires, it becomes a thing of course, and we put on our hats and walk away contented.

And so it is with Christmas customs. To leave off all merry making at once, directly after the blaze of Twelfth night, would suit very few people. Such a half holiday as that on St. Distaff's day, makes the affair easier, and enables the light-hearted reveller gradually to retire from his holiday sports.

Some such thoughts as these, I suppose, entered the heads of those who lived in days gone by, and produced the following stanzas :

PARTLY work, and partly play,
You must on St. Distaff's day :
From the plough soone free youre teame,
Then come home and fother them.
If the maides a spinning goe,
Burne the flax, and fire the tow.

Bring in pailles of water then,
Let the maides bewash the men :
Give the distaffe all the right,
Then bid Christmas sport good night.
And next morrow, every one
To his own vocation.

Young people, and especially those who are spending their holidays at home, usually have their share of Christmas sports; but, alas! the time will come, when to school again they must go.

I suppose the darkest day in a boy's life, is that on which, for the first time, he leaves home to go to a boarding school. His ear has been told that his playfellows will be cheerful, and kind to him, and that he will be as happy as a king, but his heart does not believe it. He has heard that the holidays will soon come, but he knows that they are a long way off; and nothing passes through his dejected mind but a fearful foreboding of long lessons, severe punishments, and the cross face of his angry school-master.

His father goes with him to school, and talks cheerfully to him, though he is almost as heart-broken as his son; he tells him to be a good boy, and after a while, takes his leave. From that moment all is dark and desolate; the poor lad is left among strangers, and there is no bright spot in the whole world.

O, what a tugging takes place at his heart-strings! for he cannot help feeling, and yet is too proud to

complain. A group gathers round him, to invite him to partake in their sports.

But how shall he play whose enjoyments are dead,
And whose heart and whose heels are as heavy as lead?

He tries to whistle, but that brings his brother Tom to mind, who is a famous whistler; he fumbles in his pocket for his new shilling, but that reminds him of his mother: thus is he met at every corner. It won't do;—his spirit is desolate;—he turns on his heel, wanders into a shady lane, gets behind a tree or a bush, sobs, and bursts into tears.

If you remember, I told you of the schoolboys that I saw going home for the holidays during my visit at Redhill Grange. Bless their happy hearts!

When gazing on the rosy train,
All noisy, happy, wild,
My heart beat faster, and again
I wish'd myself a child.

Now it happened that on Black Monday, in the neighbourhood of London, I saw a hackney coach, laden with boys going back again to school; and a greater contrast I never yet beheld.

It seemed as if all things had conspired to make

the day miserable. Neither the coach nor the coachman was one of the handsomest. The ribs of the sorry horses told a tale, but it was not about



BOYS RETURNING TO SCHOOL.

peace or plenty; and their broken knees made known that they had met with some ups and downs in the world.

It was a wet day; not one of your sharp showers that have life in them, but a heavy, dull drizzle, that looked likely enough to last all day and all night.

The youngsters in the coach were sadly chop-fallen: they had their horns with them, but they could not blow them; they had their pea shooters in their hands, but they did not use them; not a joke fell from their lips, nor did even the love of mischief sparkle in their eyes. There was one sitting on the coachbox wiping his eyes, while the coachman tried to comfort him; another held an old umbrella over him, which ill defended him from the rain; and two or three kept looking back towards the home they had left. Taking the thing altogether, a more miserable set out I never saw.

“O,” thinks I, “Christmas is indeed ended.” I would have stopped the coach, and spoken a word of comfort to the poor lads, for I pitied them from my heart; but they were not in a mood to be comforted; so on they went one way, and I another, consoling myself with the reflection, that, in a little time, they would be as blithe and light-hearted as ever.

“The tear down childhood’s cheek that flows
Is like the dew drop on the rose,
For when the sunny breeze comes by
And waves the bush, the flower is dry.”

A few days before I left London, I was agreeably

surprised by a call from my good friend Mr. Douglas, who, although he had already taken leave of me, could not rest satisfied without another shake of the hand.

Mr. Douglas said that he wished to introduce me to a friend or two of his, who had expressed a strong desire to see me, having long been familiar with the Tales I had told for the pleasure and profit of young people. It is not my intention to give an account of Mr. Douglas's friends, generally, but only to relate what passed at the house of one of them.

After a few pleasant calls, Mr. Douglas took me to the dwelling of a friend who lived in the neighbourhood of Red Lion Square. Though the house was not exactly at the west end of London, yet it was a goodly habitation, and never did any one pay me more marked attention than Mr. Muggins, its worthy and hospitable owner.

Mr. Douglas and I dined there together, with Mr. Muggins and his family, and passed the time very agreeably. After dinner Mr. Douglas was unexpectedly called away, and no sooner had the ladies retired, than Mr. Muggins, drawing his chair close up to mine, addressed me as follows :

“ Mr. Parley, it sometimes happens that we fall

into the company of strangers, with whom we feel ourselves immediately at home. It is just so with me, now, for though I never before enjoyed an hour of your excellent society, I feel as much at home with you as if I had known you for years. You appear to me to be a man well acquainted with human character; one who can smile, good humouredly, at the oddities of mankind, and make allowances for human weakness. If it will not be unpleasant to you to listen to me, I will give you a sketch of myself in the most interesting and important era of my life: you will not fail to draw from it a lesson of instruction, which may be rendered profitable to some of your young friends."

No sooner had I signified that nothing would be more agreeable to me than to hear the narrative in question, than he placed the wine at the upper end of the table, that it might be near us, pushed an arm chair towards the fire, for me to sit in, and, seating himself beside me, thus began:

"Something like what I am about to make known has, no doubt, been experienced by many, but it will be enough for me to describe my own situation, and feelings, without stopping to notice how much they resemble those of others in a similar situation. Most

of us, perhaps, feel more alike than we are apt to suppose, in exciting scenes of joy or sorrow.

“ I sprang from a lowly origin, Mr. Parley, and I care not who knows it, for he who has raised himself, by honest industry, has no need to be abashed before any one. Solomon himself says that a man diligent in business shall stand before kings.

“ My father lived in a small house, in a small town, and carried on business on a small scale. He sold bacon, bobbins of cotton, skeins of thread, salt, butter, candles, tea, coffee, sugar-candy, red herrings, and pigtail tobacco, and maintained an unblemished reputation; bringing up nine children in a creditable manner. Over his door was painted, in yellow letters, ‘ John Muggins, dealer in tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff.’ He was, in short, a huckster; and I, as his eldest son, frequently served over the counter in the absence of my respected parents.

“ But, though for a season I accommodated myself to my father’s situation, such a state of things could not last for ever. An aspiring spirit cannot brook restraint, and I soon discovered that I was born for greater things than vending farthing rushlights, and halfpennyworths of treacle. I made up my mind to go to London, where, as I had heard from excellent

authority in my earlier days, the streets were paved with gold, and any apprentice lad, by care, and good conduct, might become Lord Mayor of London: not that I exactly believed these things, but they had some influence over me. I took advantage of a slight quarrel with my worthy father, and, bidding farewell to Sukey Tibbs, the daughter of a near neighbour, with whom I had scraped an acquaintance, hastily tied up a few necessaries, in a blue cotton handkerchief, and set off for this great metropolis.

“The particulars of my journey we will pass over, though they are graven on my memory. A friendless lad, with a light purse, and a heavy heart, has enough to occupy his thoughts. When I arrived at Charing Cross, (it was a different place then to what it is now,) I sat down, and began to consider what course I should take.

“My capital in money amounted to seven shillings and fourpence. I would willingly record this fact, for the encouragement of those who begin the world with little. My conscience upbraided me for quarrelling with my father, but my ambitious disposition told me that I should make my way in life, and serve him better, by my absence, than by remaining with him at home. The next day I was seen sweeping

out the shop of Mr. Garbet, the grocer and chandler, having obtained the situation of errand boy. Mr. Garbet occupied a corner house in Wapping, a capital situation for business.

“ Well, I will hurry on, for it would be needless to dwell on the numberless disappointments and mortifications endured by those who toil up the steep hill of enterprise, with great objects in view, and small means wherewith to attain them. In a word, I served my master faithfully, and as I never deceived him, he put confidence in me. I extended his interests, and he forwarded mine; and, in course of years, when he was gathered to his fathers, the name of Garbet was taken down from over his shop door, and that of Francis Muggins was written up.

“ I made mistakes like other men, and met with disasters, but by close attention to business, I grew rich, and then every one was ready to serve me. I might have married a fine lady, for there were many such who set their caps at me; but, Mr Parley, it is sweet to share prosperity with the friends of our youth. Sukey Tibbs had got low in the world, for her parents died and left her, as it were, a friendless being. She went to service; but I thought none the worse of her for preferring an honest bread of her

own getting, to an idle chair at the table of an upbraiding relation.

“ I married Sukey Tibbs, and servant as she was, I have never yet repented the hour when I took her to church. What was I better than she? Pride is not made for man, Mr. Parley. Stations in society are necessary to promote and preserve order, but they ought not to make us proud. We all sprang from the dust, and to dust shall we all return. Sukey was the playmate of my youth, she is now my honoured wife, the sharer of my joys and griefs, and the ornament of my years.

“ My family increased, I had six daughters, and reason had I to love them. If I prospered when alone, still better did I thrive assisted by the prudent counsel and excellent management of my wife. Humble as she was, she assisted me to rise in life; and to my dying day I will try to make her as happy as she has made me.”

I regarded Mr. Muggins, while he spoke thus, and felt a kindling in my heart towards him; he was evidently speaking what affection prompted.

“ As a well whipped top,” continued Mr. Muggins, “ may be kept up with little trouble, so a rich man may become richer with little exertion. Money

seemed to roll in upon me. I provided amply for my parents, my brothers, and sisters; for what could add to my happiness more than the opportunity of doing them good? At last I fell into a snare.

“By degrees my wealth lifted me up in my own eyes; I had greatly extended my business, and began to purchase property. Perhaps you may know Maldon, in Essex, Mr. Parley. It is a borough, seated on an eminence, by the river Blackwater, about thirty-eight miles from London. I liked the place, bought property there to some amount, and, on the sudden illness and expected death of one of its representatives, was foolish enough to imagine myself qualified to become a member of parliament.

My wife, though she always thought highly of my understanding, saw through my folly, and, for a time, tried to persuade me to abandon my design, but, seeing my mind set upon the thing, with her usual kindness she let me have my way.

“No man can pursue, for years, a prosperous course without coming into contact with those above his situation in life. In the purchase of property at Maldon I became acquainted with Sir Oswald —— a baronet of great affluence and influence. Monied men have not always money at command, I ren-

dered Sir Oswald a service, he did not forget it; and when he was apprized of my intention to stand for the borough, every assistance that he could render me he did.

“What a simpleton I must have been, Mr. Parley, to imagine that a huckster’s son, with very little education, and hardly any other association than that of his customers, could be qualified to sit as a legislator in the House of Commons! I knew nothing of law, and next to nothing of the history of my country. Satisfied with getting money, I had never reflected on the subject of commerce, manufactures, or agriculture. How could I enact laws, who knew not the wants of the people? How could I correct grievances, who was a stranger to the evils complained of? The truth is, ambition had blinded me, and, therefore, with no other requisite on earth than an upright intention to benefit my country, I went on in my headlong career.

“When it was first proposed to me to propose myself for Maldon, in case the invalided member should die, I laughed at the joke; but soon I thought of the matter more seriously. Why should I not? was a question that occurred to me. I had wealth, and upright intentions, and ambition whispered that

I was not altogether deficient in qualities which might, in time, make me eminently useful.

“When our friends flatter us, Mr. Parley, we are in great danger, but when we flatter ourselves we are lost for ever. I made preparations for canvassing, and considering a carriage indispensable, I set off with my wife to Long Acre, to give the necessary directions. Who would ever have thought that Frank Muggins would ride in his carriage?”

“Pride and vanity are plants of a quick growth! By degrees my wife began to hold up her head higher than ordinary, and my daughters were too dutiful not to follow their mother’s example. I hastily took a house on Clapham Common, and there the carriage was sent; it was, Mr. Parley, truly magnificent!”

“I was delighted with it, and when first it drove up to the door, with a pair of beautiful bays, in black and brass harness; I thought it one of the finest things in the world. The rich brown ground of the panels, the yellow-picked crimson wheels, the chaste drab hammercloth, and pendent fringe, the coat of arms—*my* coat of arms—and the handsome livery of the coachman and footman rendered the equipage complete.

“You may wonder, Mr. Parley, where I got my

coat of arms from. I should have been at a sad loss, but the industrious perseverance of the herald's office set all matters right. It was an hogshead *Or*, I think they told me, with three sugar loaves for a crest. The inside of the carriage was equal to the out, the linings, cushions, tassels, and carpets were all in perfect keeping one with another.

“ My wife, five of my daughters, and myself crowded into the carriage; my youngest child had a violent toothache, or she would have crushed in too. We drove in all directions; never did my wife look better. I verily think that she considered me the first man in the world.

“ Well! I went down to Maldon to canvass, for the sick member died. I was wonderfully successful. As I hated party, and had no other object, at least I endeavoured to persuade myself so, than the good of my country, so I neither pledged myself to Whigs nor Tories. The names Radicals and Reformers were then almost unknown. My colours were blue and yellow mingled together. I kept open house at the several taverns and public houses, and the profuse hospitality of ‘the great London grocer,’ was talked of by every body.

“ It seemed to me, that I had hardly done my duty

in remaining so long a private character. The nation required men of energy and unflinching integrity at its head, and I felt strong in my disinterestedness and patriotism. Every hour I grew more enterprising; every promised vote added to my self-importance. My name appeared in the newspapers as Francis Muggins, Esq. of Clapham, the favourite candidate for the representation of the borough of Maldon.

“I had an opponent, a shrewd clever man; he had the longer tongue, but I the longer purse; it was a hard struggle. In our canvass I always avoided him, I can hardly tell why. His colour was blue. We had each our bands of music and our partisans among the mob. Maldon was all alive.

“The day of nomination came, and both parties assembled on the hustings erected for the occasion. I had employed an intelligent friend to provide me with a suitable speech for the occasion. It was clearly written in a legible hand, and though it was an arduous enterprise to commit to memory, the thing was achieved. I repeated it to my wife and daughters the evening before, without the omission of a single word.

“Sir Oswald proposed me in a handsome address, setting forth my high character, unsullied integrity,

and uncompromising independence. My good friend, Peter Perkins, Esq. seconded the nomination in a very flattering manner; and after the same necessary attentions had been paid to my opponent, I stepped forward—I wonder, even now, at my temerity—raised my right hand and my voice at the same moment, and spoke thus, with manly resolution:—

“ ‘Gentlemen freeholders of this ancient and honourable borough, this is the proudest moment of my life: to be proposed as a candidate for the high honour of representing you in parliament, and to have the promise of your liberal support, fills my heart with emotions of joy. Should I obtain the proud pinnacle of my ambition, you may confidently rely on my best, my most indefatigable exertions to forward the best interests of my country, and especially of this ancient and most honourable borough.

“ ‘England, gentlemen, is the envy of surrounding nations, and the wonder of the world; it shall be my honest and earnest endeavour to preserve her glory, to extend her power, and to increase the happiness of her freeborn sons. Gentlemen, I stand here—I spoke this part with unusual animation—for Magna Charta, and the first principles of the British constitution! I stand here the advocate of an enlightened

and liberal policy, to wage war with corruption, to support our venerable institutions in church and state, and to oppose equally party spirit, reckless democracy, and arbitrary power. Whether I shall be deemed worthy to fill the honourable and enviable post of your representative, will be made known by your generous support. Come what will, gentlemen,'—I repeated this sentence—'Come what will, gentlemen freeholders of the Borough of Maldon, I am determined,—I say that I am determined to nail my colours to the mast, and sink or swim, as you shall determine.'

“The effect of this speech was truly astonishing.—A deafening shout of approbation rose from the assembly as soon as I had done speaking. During my address, ‘Go it, my boy!’ ‘Well done, old Cock-a-lorum!’ and ‘Bravo, Corporal Canister!’ echoed around.

“Though my spirits were wondrously animated by the success of my speech, they were considerably depressed by the low ribaldry of the opposing mob. It was known that I was a grocer and chandler, that I lived at Wapping, and that I had a fat wife, and six daughters somewhat low in stature. Though these things in no way disparaged me, an ungenerous

advantage was taken of them. On one placard I was represented in the shape of a sugar hogshead, underneath which was written, 'The great *whopping* Grocer.' On another, my six daughters—amiable girls—were hung up together like a bunch of candles, and labeled 'Muggins' Short *Sizes*;' and on a third my worthy wife, myself, and my children, were drawn regaling ourselves at an empty sugar cask; my daughters climbing up the sides, my spouse licking her fingers at the bunghole, and I, working away, like a duck in a shallow pond, with my head in the hogshead, and my heels in the air.

"I mention these things, Mr. Parley, to show you that I had something to endure. Every path has its briers. For myself I cared not, but it grieved me to see Mrs. Muggins, and my dutiful children, the sport of an ignorant and brutal mob. Notwithstanding my indignation, I treated the thing with silent contempt.

"Before I entered on my election scheme, I had no conception of the strange extremes of pride and humiliation, which, in public proceedings, tread on each other's heels. At one moment I felt like a monarch on his throne, at another, I was ready to hide my face with my hands.

"It was at a season when my heart was lifted up

with a proud feeling, of what my father would have thought, had he then been alive, of his son Frank putting himself up for a member of parliament, when another placard met my eye. It was the drawing of a pair of scales held up by a hand, the little finger placed dishonestly on the beam to help out the short weight of a pound of sugar—under the scales was printed, in large letters, ‘John Muggins’ *method* of making a man.’

“This atrocious attack on the unsullied integrity of my deceased and revered parent stung me to the quick. I rushed forward, wrenched the placard from the filthy hands of the brute that bore it, and trampled it beneath my feet.

“I should have told you that my talented opponent did not spare me on the hustings. He called on the electors to decide between intelligence and ignorance! a gentleman, and an obscure vender of musty raisins. ‘Let it not be said,’ cried he aloud, ‘to the dishonour of the freeholders of Maldon, that they are content to be represented by a mere side of fat bacon! a lump of tallow! a tub of salt butter!’—Every word he spoke gave me the back ache.

“It was a hard fought field, Mr. Parley, but for

tune decided in my favour. Francis Muggins, Esq. was declared by the returning officer to be elected with an overwhelming majority.

“ No one can tell the delight with which I hurried home to communicate the agreeable intelligence to my worthy wife, who was on the tiptoe of anxious expectation. She and my daughters gathered around me, almost stifling me with affectionate kisses.

“ It seemed like a dream, but it was a reality ! Frank Muggins was, indeed, an M. P. ! O the delightful sound, Francis Muggins, Esq. Member for Maldon ! I had never heard so harmonious an alliteration.

“ It was a proud day when the chairing took place. No expense was spared ; never had Maldon beheld a gayer scene ; bands of music, flags and streamers, horsemen and footmen ; rank, fashion, and beauty, all assembled : favours of blue and yellow ribbon, and medals, bearing the inscription, ‘ Muggins and Independence,’ were as plentiful as blackberries. I was chaired in the handsomest manner. The church bells rang a merry peal, and all was good humour and rejoicing.

“ My wife, bless her, was seated in a balcony with

my six daughters. She was dressed in a yellow satin gown, spotted with silver; a favour, of blue and yellow, of unusual size, adorned her bosom, and a medal hung from her neck, while from her head-dress of crimson velvet, a plume of ostrich feathers, tipped with yellow, gracefully waved in the air. My daughters were equally splendid in their dress and decorations, and never was man happier than I was on that day.

“At the ball which I gave in the evening, my wife, my own Sukey, was led out by Sir Oswald, and my eldest daughter by his son. I know not how they felt, but I was half wild with joy. I only wanted my revered parents again on earth to see their son Frank in all his glory. Habits are strong things. I had always been accustomed to consult my father on things of importance, ever since I began to rise in the world, and I felt still, that he had an influence over me. The commandment, ‘Honour thy father and thy mother,’ Mr. Parley, should be fostered in our hearts even when our parents are resting in the grave.

“Well, I took my seat in the House of Commons as the member for Maldon, and sat on one of the

cross benches, but though I felt proud, very proud to be a senator in the first assembly in the world, I felt also very humble on account of my slender qualifications to discharge the duties of so important a station. I had been accustomed to associate with those who were no better educated than myself. Among chests of tea, hogsheads of sugar, and tubs of butter, I felt myself at home; but in the parliament house I was a stranger. I had a feeling persuasion of my folly; an inward conviction that I was totally unfit for what I had undertaken. There is an old saying that a one-eyed man is great among the blind, but he cuts a poor figure with those who have two eyes. I knew that I was the least important member in the whole house.

“There I sat as a stranger, feeling like a fish out of water, puzzling myself, by attempting to commit to memory the manner in which members addressed each other, for, with the forms of the house I was utterly unacquainted. I was confused with the titles of ‘Mr. Speaker,’ ‘Chancellor of the Exchequer,’ ‘Secretaries for the Home, Foreign, and Colonial Departments,’ ‘Presidents of the Board of Controul and Board of Trade,’ ‘Paymaster of the Forces,’ and

‘Master of the Mint:’ I felt an awful kind of fear of being called upon to speak that operated upon me as effectually as a locked jaw.

“For two or three weeks I attended the house with the hope of getting familiarized with its usages, but I made little progress; while in the different committees in which I acted I felt myself, and knew that all the other members felt me, to be a cipher.

“I was sitting one night, when my colleague was absent, on the cross bench in my accustomed seat, listening to a warm discussion on the subject of imports and exports, when the President of the Board of Trade uttered these alarming words: ‘Seeing the new member for Maldon in his place, I shall, by and by, request him fully to explain to the house certain anomalies in the salt, coal, iron, and timber trade of Maldon, and I trust the honourable member will be able, by the intimate and accurate knowledge which, no doubt, he possesses on this subject, to enlighten the house, and relieve my mind relative to impressions of a very unfavourable character.

“Had a sudden crash of thunder burst over my head, it could not, Mr. Parley, have affected me more seriously. My heart sank in my bosom, and my

very blood seemed to curdle in my veins. At that moment of unutterable agony I would have willingly accepted the Chiltern Hundreds, and abandoned all my new made greatness to become, once more, plain Frank Muggins.

“Every moment I expected the President of the Board of Trade to call upon me, and yet my feet seemed rooted to the floor: I absolutely trembled with apprehension. Eyes seemed turned upon me from all quarters, and malicious titterings reached my ears. My situation was desperate; with a convulsive struggle I seized my hat, and staggered, how I know not, towards the door. Just as I made my exit, the loud voice of the President of the Board of Trade again thundered in my ears,—‘And, now, I call for the explanation of the honourable member for Maldon.’

“This untoward adventure was a death blow to my parliamentary career; never from that moment did I sit as a senator. My eyes being fully opened to my folly, I began to balance my accounts. As member for Maldon I had run into profuse expenses, not only in my private establishment, but in public institutions, subscriptions to races, assemblies, and

clubs. The expenses of my election were great, for I had been recklessly extravagant; add to which my wife had imbibed a love of finery; Fanny's head had been turned by the fine things whispered in her ear, by Sir Oswald's son, at the election ball; and Kitty had sent to the right about a respectable man, her received lover, because, as the daughter of a member of parliament, she had a right to expect a man of fortune. Nothing had I to put against all this but the solitary fact that I was member for Maldon, and even this was a distinction of which I was heartily tired.

“Fortunately for me, Mr. Parley, though unfortunately for many others, a sudden dissolution of parliament took place: this at once relieved me from my grandeur and my grief; for my wife had good sense enough to see things in a proper point of view, and to aid me in my future plans. I abandoned all notions of a sphere of life for which I was unfit, and again became plain Francis Muggins; determined, with God's help, never again to set up for a member of parliament, nor to covet any situation in society for which habit and education had utterly disqualified me.”

The open-heartedness, simplicity, and good feeling of Mr. Muggins, manifested in this narrative, much pleased me ; and I now entertain for the old gentleman a sincere respect.

What a long tale have I given you about Christmas customs, from the sunshiny season, when boys break up for the holidays, to the shadowy hour of their returning to school !

Feasts and festivals, masques and mummers, pantomimes and jugglers, smoking joints, puddings, and wassail bowls, carols, Christmas boxes, and superstitious omens, must all be present to your memory ; as well as the religious services, the charities, and hospitality of Christmas.

You have seen, though "Christmas disports" are not what they were of olden time, that England is "merry England" still. Her church-going bells are yet heard ; her charities freely flow ; and many a well spread board proclaims her hospitality.

In a free-hearted manner have I described things as they were, and as they are, hoping that you will take the good, and refuse the evil.

The more I have seen of England the better I like her ; and were I not an American, my bones

should rest in one of her village churchyards: as it is, the mighty ocean must roll between England and the last resting place of Peter Parley.

Aged though I am, my heart beats warmly for the welfare of Old England, and never, while I live, will she want an old man's blessing.



THE
POPULAR WORKS OF MR. PETER PARLEY,
VOYAGER, TRAVELLER, AND STORY-TELLER.

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“ IN the evening of a long toilsome life, if a man were to be obliged solemnly to declare, what, without any exception, has been the most lovely thing which, on the surface of this earth, it has been his good fortune to witness, I conceive that, without hesitation, he might reply, ‘THE MIND OF A YOUNG CHILD.’”

“ We observe with what delight a Child beholds light—colours—flowers—fruit, and every new object that meets his eye; and we all know, that (before his judgment be permitted to interfere) for many years he feels—or rather suffers—a thirst which is almost insatiable.

“ He desires, and very naturally desires, to know what the Moon is?—What are the Stars?—Where the rain, wind, and frost come from?—With innocent simplicity, he asks, what becomes of the light of a candle, when it is blown out? Any story, or any history, he greedily devours.”

COPY OF A LETTER TO PETER PARLEY.

TO MR. PETER PARLEY, *Somewhere in London.*

HAMPSTEAD, *July, 1837.*

DEAR SIR,—I write this to tell you a story about myself. I have read your “Tales about Animals”—also, your “Tales about Europe, Asia, Africa, and America”—and your “Tales about Great Britain”—likewise

POPULAR WORKS OF PETER PARLEY.

your "Tales about the Sea, and the Islands in the Pacific Ocean"—and your "Tales about the Sun, Moon, and Stars"—as well as your "Tales about Greece;" but I want to see you very much. I learnt from your Books a great deal that I did not know before; and I thought if I could see you, you would tell me something more. Besides, I want to know how you look, and hear you talk (for I am told that you are now in London); and I thought you would let me sit down with the little boys and girls that come to hear your stories, and then I should have been very happy.

Well, I asked my mother to let me go to London and see you; so she put me into the omnibus, and told the driver to put me down at Mr. Parley's house, and bring me back at night. I was very impatient till we got to where the omnibus stops: the driver inquired for your house, but nobody could tell any thing about it. I went to my uncle's, but he was not at home: however, his son, Ben, told me that you lived in the City Road, and that he would go with me and find you. He was the more willing to go, as he wished to get a peep at you himself.

So we set out, and went up one street and down another, for two hours: we asked about at several places, but nobody could tell us any thing about you. At last we saw an old man coming along with a cane; he was gray and lame, and looked very much like your picture in the little books. Now, thought I, here is Mr. Parley himself! Never was I more happy: I thought I was about to talk with a friend, and that my journey would not be in vain, after all.

With eager eyes, and with our hands squeezed in each other, Ben and I stood a little aside waiting till you should come up. I thought I saw your very face, and read in your countenance a welcome smile to my companion and me. I took heart to speak, and asked if his name was Mr. Parley? O dear! how much was I disappointed at the answer! "No," said the good old man, smiling; "no, my boy; my name is not Parley, it is Williams; though I have been taken for Peter Parley before." He then walked along, as if he had a great deal of business to do.

We asked a young man, with a book in his hand, if he knew where Mr. Parley lived. "I wish I did," said he; "I would go from one end of London to the other to see him." We then asked a girl, and she said you "was in every body's house," yet you "was no where to be found." We asked at the post office, they told us we should find out your place of abode by inquiring of Mr. Tegg, in Cheapside.

We went to Mr. Tegg's warehouse, which was stocked with nice books; but he was not at home. I was, at last, obliged to return home at night, sick at heart and disappointed; and now I write this letter, hoping that it

POPULAR WORKS OF PETER PARLEY.

may have better luck in its journey after you than I had myself. Should it reach you, I pray you be so kind as tell me where you live, so that I may some day, during the holidays, go and see you. I am, dear sir, a reader of all your books,

FRANK HOWARD.

* * * This little friendly letter having come into Messrs. Tegg's hands, it is deemed proper to remark, that although, at No 73, Cheapside, we converse with Mr. Peter Parley very often, we do not know where he lives. It is said that during his present visit to London (collecting materials for *New Tales*), he inhabits a little Brown House, in the City Road; but we could never find it. His books are all that he chooses to exhibit to the Public, and perhaps our little friend must be content with them; though we are not at all surprised at his anxiety to see and talk with the good old gentleman who has wound himself round our hearts; in truth, nothing has been so much the subject of our daily thoughts and nightly dreams as PETER PARLEY.

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* * * The encomiums on the Works of Mr. PETER PARLEY are so numerous and so laudatory, that the Publishers find no small difficulty in determining which to present for the attention of the Public. The following are the opinions of some of the first journals of the present day.

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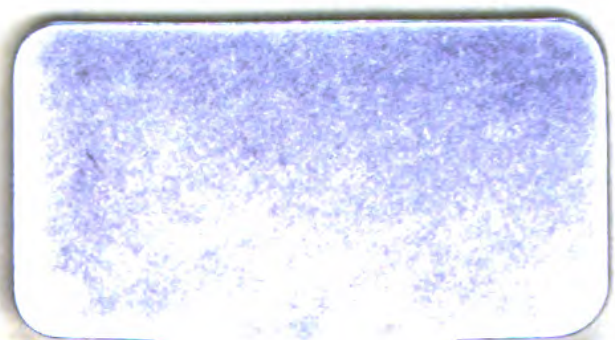
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