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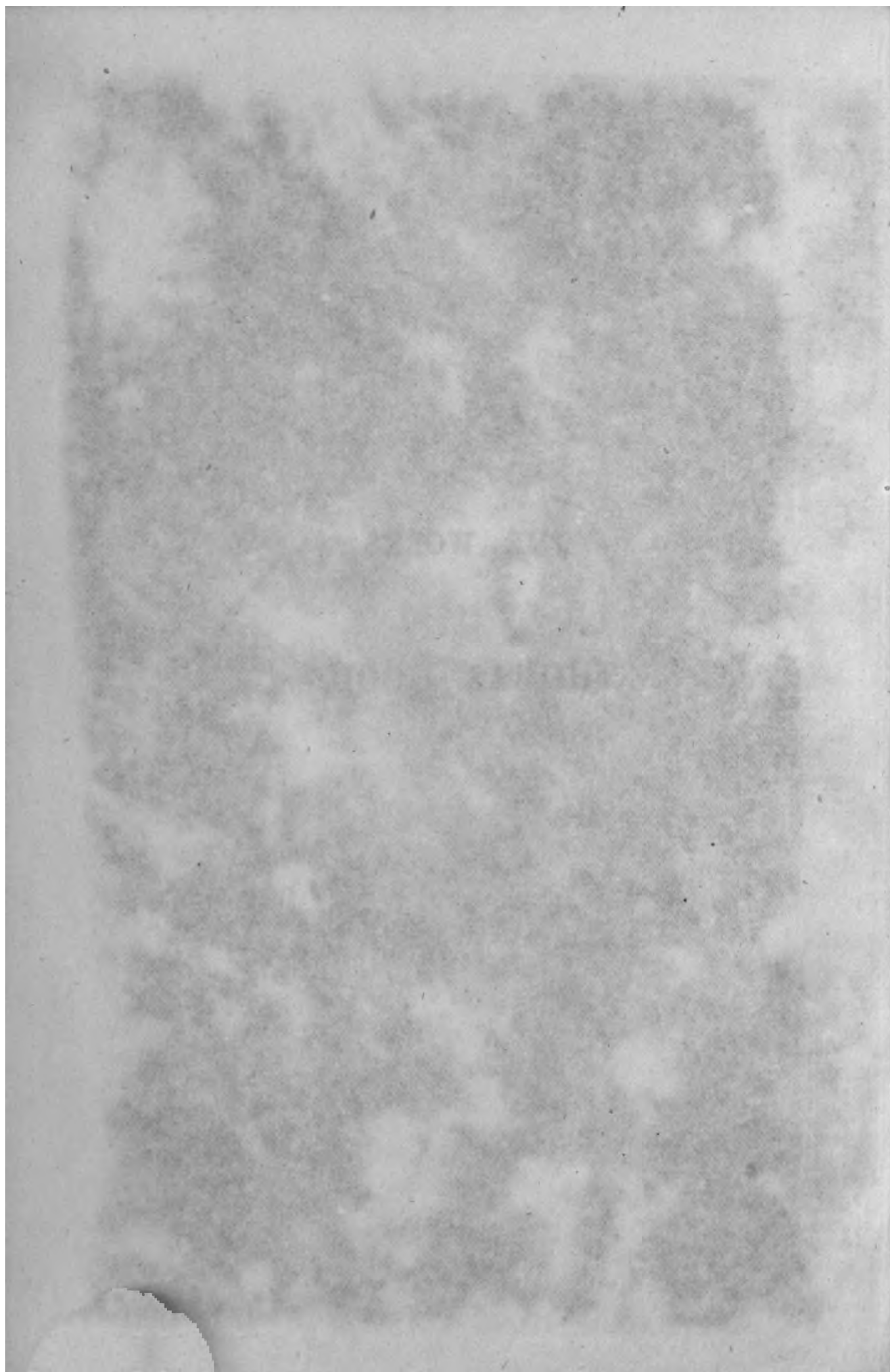


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THE WORKS
OF
THOMAS HOOD.

THE WORKS
OF
THOMAS HOOD.

COMIC AND SERIOUS, IN PROSE AND VERSE.

EDITED, WITH NOTES, BY HIS SON.

VOLUME VII.

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ERRATA.

Vol. I. p. 288, four lines from foot, *for* "what is mine," *read* "what is
a mine."

p. 417, fourth line, *for* "in this life," *read* "in the life."

p. 417, seventh line, *for* "its chords of Melancholy," *read* "its
chord in Melancholy."

Vol. V. p. 387, An autograph—ought to begin "Sir."

HOOD'S COMPLETE WORKS.

1844.

[Continued.]

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

A FARCE.

—♦—

SCENE.—*A street at the west end of London. Enter SQUIRE HAMPER and his Lady, personages rather of the rustic order, recently come up from the family seat in Hampshire.*

Squire. WELL, Ma'am, I hope you've had shopping enough.

Lady. Almost. Only one more—O! there it is, over the way.

Squire. What, the one yonder? Why, it's all raven gray, picked out with black; and a hatchment over the door. What can you want at an undertaker's?

Lady. An undertaker's!—no such thing. Look at the goods in the window.

Squire. O, shawls and gowns! A foreign haberdasher's, I suppose, and that's the French for it. Mason de Dool?

Lady. Hush! Don't expose your ignorance in the street; everybody knows French at the West End. It means the House of Mourning.

Squire. What, the one mentioned in the Bible ?

Lady. No—no—dear me !—no. I tell you it's a mourning establishment.

Squire. O, I understand. The master's dead, and the shop's put into black for him. The last new-fangled mode, I suppose, instead of the old-fashioned one of putting up the shutters.

Lady. Nonsense ! It's a shop to buy black things at.

Squire. Humph ! And pray, Ma'am, what do *you* want with black things ? There's nobody dead belonging to us, as I know of, nor like to be.

Lady. Well ; and what then ? Is there any harm in just looking at their things—for I'm not going to buy. What did we come up to town for ?

Squire. Why, for a bit of a holiday, and to see the sights, to be sure.

Lady. Well, and that black shop is one of them, at least for a female. It's quite a new thing, they say, just come over from Paris ; and I want to go in and pretend to cheapen something, just out of curiosity.

Squire. Yes, and pay for peeping. For in course you must buy after tumbling over their whole stock.

Lady. By no means—or only some trifle—a penn'orth of black pins—or the like. If I did purchase a black gown, it is always useful to have by one.

Squire. Yes—or a widow's cap. Perhaps, Ma'am, you're in hopes ?

Lady. La, Jacob, don't be foolish ! Many ladies wear black for economy, as well as for relations. But I only want to inspect—for they do say, what with foreign tastiness, and our own modern refinements, there's great improvements in mourning.

Squire. Humph—and I suppose a new-fashioned way of crying.

Lady. New fiddlesticks ! It's very well known the Parisians always did out-do us in dress ; and in course go into black more elegantly than we do.

Squire. No doubt, Ma'am—and fret in a vastly superior manner.

Lady. No, no. I don't say that. Grief's grief all the world over. But as regards costume, the French certainly do have a style that entitles them to set the fashion to us in such matters.

Squire. Can't say. I'm no judge.

Lady. In course not. They're women's matters, and should be left to our sex.

Squire. Well, well, come along, then ! But stop. Ask your pardon, Sir (*to a passenger*), would you oblige me with the English of that Greek or Latin, yonder, under the hatchment ?

Stranger. O, certainly—"Mors Janua Vitæ"—let me see—it means, Jane, between life and death.

Squire. Thankee, Sir, thankee. I'll do as much for you when you come into our parts. Poor Jane ! So it may come, mayhap, to be a real house of mourning after all !

[The Squire and his Lady cross over the road and enter the shop, where ebony chairs are placed for them by a person in a full suit of sables, very like Hamlet, minus the cloak and the hat and feathers. A young man, also in black, speaks across the counter with the solemn air and tone of a clergyman at a funeral.]

May I have the melancholy pleasure of serving you, Madam ?

Lady. I wish, Sir, to look at some mourning.

Shopm. Certainly, by all means. A relict, I presume ?

Lady. Yes ; a widow, Sir. A poor friend of mine, who has lost her husband.

Shopm. Exactly so—for a deceased partner. How deep

would you choose to go, Ma'am? Do you wish to be very poignant?

Lady. Why, I suppose crape and bombazine, unless they're gone out of fashion. But you had better show me some different sorts.

Shopm. Certainly, by all means. We have a very extensive assortment, whether for family, Court, or complimentary mourning, including the last novelties from the Continent.

Lady. Yes, I should like to see *them*.

Shopm. Certainly. Here is one, Ma'am, just imported—a Widow's Silk—*watered*, as you perceive, to match the sentiment. It is called the "Inconsolable;" and is very much in vogue in Paris for matrimonial bereavements.

Squire. Looks rather flimsy, though. Not likely to last long—eh, Sir?

Shopm. A little slight, Sir—rather a delicate texture. But mourning ought not to last for ever, Sir.

Squire. No, it seldom does; especially the violent sorts.

Lady. La! Jacob, do hold your tongue; what do you know about fashionable affliction? But never mind him, Sir; it's only his way.

Shopm. Certainly—by all means. As to mourning, Ma'am, there has been a great deal, a very great deal indeed, this season, and several new fabrics have been introduced, to meet the demand for fashionable tribulation.

Lady. And all in the French style?

Shopm. Certainly—of course, Ma'am. They excel in the *funèbre*. Here, for instance, is an article for the deeply afflicted. A black crape, expressly adapted to the profound style of mourning,—makes up very sombre, and interesting.

Lady. I dare say it does, Sir.

Shopm. Would you allow me, Ma'am, to cut off a dress?

Squire. You had better cut *me* off first.

Shopm. Certainly, Sir—by all means. Or, if you would prefer a velvet—Ma'am—

Lady. Is it proper, Sir, to mourn in velvet?

Shopm. O quite!—certainly. Just coming in. Now, here is a very rich one—real Genoa—and a splendid black. We call it the Luxury of Woe.

Lady. Very expensive, of course?

Shopm. Only eighteen shillings a yard, and a superb quality; in short, fit for the handsomest style of domestic calamity.

Squire. Whereby, I suppose, sorrow gets more superfine as it goes upwards in life?

Shopm. Certainly—yes, Sir—by all means—at least, a finer texture. The mourning of poor people is very coarse—very—quite different from that of persons of quality. Canvas to crape, Sir?

Lady. To be sure it is! And as to the change of dress, Sir, I suppose you have a great variety of half-mourning?

Shopm. O, infinite,—the largest stock in town! Full, and half, and quarter, and half-quarter mourning, shaded off, if I may say so, like an India-ink drawing, from a grief *prononcé* to the slightest *nuance* of regret.

Lady. Then, Sir, please to let me see some Half Mourning.

Shopm. Certainly. But the gentleman opposite superintends the Intermediate Sorrow Department.

Squire. What the young fellow yonder in pepper-and-salt?

Shopm. Yes, Sir; in the suit of gray. (*Calls across.*) Mr. Dawe, show the Neutral Tints!

[*The Squire and his Lady cross the shop and take seats vis-à-vis; Mr. Dawe, who affects the pensive rather than the solemn,*

Shopm. You wish to inspect some Half Mourning, madam?

Lady. Yes—the newest patterns.

Shopm. Precisely—in the second stage of distress. As such, Ma'am, allow me to recommend this satin—intended for grief when it has subsided,—alleviated you see, Ma'am, from a dead black to a dull lead colour!

Squire. As a black horse alleviates into a gray one, after he's clipped!

Shopm. Exactly so, Sir. A Parisian novelty, Ma'am. It's called "Settled Grief," and is very much worn by ladies of a certain age, who do not intend to embrace Hymen a second time.

Squire. Old women, mayhap, about seventy.

Shop. Exactly so, Sir,—or thereabouts. Not but what some ladies, Ma'am, set in for sorrow much earlier :—indeed, in the prime of life : and for such cases, it's very durable wear.

Lady. Yes ; it feels very stout.

Shopm. But perhaps, Madam, that is too *lugubre*. Now, here is another—not exactly black, but shot with a warmish tint, to suit a woe moderated by time. We have sold several pieces of it. That little *nuance de rose* in it—the French call it a Gleam of Comfort—is very attractive.

Squire. No doubt ; and would be still more taking, if so be it was violet colour at once, like the mourning of the Chinese.

Shopm. Yes, Sir. I believe that is the fashionable colour at Pekin. Now here, Ma'am, is a sweet pretty article, quite new. A morning dress for the Funeral Promenade. The French ladies go in them to Père la Chaise.

Squire. What's that—a chaise and pair?

Shopm. Excuse me ; no, Sir. By your leave it's a scene of rural interment, near Paris. A black cypress sprig, you see, Ma'am, on a stone-colour ground, harmonises beautifully with the monuments and epitaphs. We sold two this very morning—one to Norwood, and one to Kensal Green. We consider it the happiest pattern of the season.

Squire. Yes ; some people are very happy in it, no doubt.

Shopm. No doubt, Sir. There's a charm in melancholy, Sir. I'm fond of the pensive myself. But possibly, Madam, you would prefer something still more in the transition state, as we call it, from grave to gay. In that case, I would recommend this lavender Ducape, with only just a *souvenir* of sorrow in it—the slightest tinge of mourning, to distinguish it from the garb of pleasure. Permit me to put aside a dress for you.

Lady. Why, no—not at present. I am not going into mourning myself ; but a friend, who has just been left with a large family——

Shopm. Oh, I understand ;—and you desire to see an appropriate style of costume for the juvenile branches, when sorrow their young days has shaded. Of course, a milder degree of mourning than for adults. Black would be precocious. This, Ma'am, for instance—a dark pattern on gray ; an interesting dress, Ma'am, for a little girl, just initiated in the vale of tears.

Squire. Poor thing !

Shopm. Precisely, so, Sir,—only eighteen pence a yard, Ma'am—and warranted to wash.—Possibly you would require the whole piece ?

Lady. Why no—I must first consult the Mama. And that reminds me to look at some widow's caps.

Shopm. Very good, Ma'am. The Coiffure department is backwards—if you would have the goodness to step that way.—

[*The Lady, followed by the Squire, walks into a room at the back of the shop :—the walls are hung with black, and on each of the three sides is a looking-glass, in a black frame, multiplying infinitely the reflections of the widows' caps, displayed on stands on the central table. A show-woman in deep mourning is in attendance.*]

Show. Your melancholy pleasure, Ma'am ?

Lady. Widow's caps.

Squire. Humph !—that's plump any how !

Show. This is the newest style, Ma'am—

Lady. Bless me ! for a widow !—Isn't it rather, you know, rather a little,—

Squire. Rather frisky in its frilligigs !

Show. Not for the mode, Ma'am. Affliction is very much modernised, and admits more *gout* than formerly. Some ladies indeed for their morning grief wear rather a plainer cap,—but for evening sorrow, this is not at all too *ornée*. French taste has introduced very considerable alleviations—for example, the *sympathiser*—

Squire. Where is he ?

Show. This muslin *ruche*, Ma'am, instead of the plain band.

Lady. Yes ; a very great improvement, certainly.

Show. Would you like to try it, Ma'am ?

Lady. No, not at present. I am only inquiring for a friend—Pray what are those ?

Show. Worked handkerchiefs, Ma'am. Here is a lovely pattern—all done by hand,—an exquisite piece of work—

Squire. Better than a noisy one !

Show. Here is another, Ma'am,—the last novelty. The *Larmoyante*—with a fringe of artificial tears, you perceive, in mock pearl. A sweet pretty idea, Ma'am.

Squire. But rather scrubby, I should think, for the eyes.

Show. O dear, no, Sir !—if you mean wiping. The wet style of grief is quite gone out—quite !

Squire. O ! and a dry cry is the genteel thing. But, come, Ma'am, come, or we shall be too late for the other Exhibitions.

[*The Squire and his Lady leave the shop: on getting into the street, he turns round, and takes a long last look at the premises.*]

Squire. Humph ! And so that's a Mason de Dool ! Well, if it's all the same to you, Ma'am, I'd rather die in the country, and be universally lamented, after the old fashion—for, as to London, what with the new French modes of mourning, and the "Try Warren" style of blacking the premises, it do seem to me that, before long, all sorrow will be sham Abram, and the House of Mourning a regular Farce !

MAGNETIC MUSINGS.



SCEPTICAL, as we have always been, as to the imputed miracles of Phreno-Magnetism, the interests of science and truth demand the insertion of the following case, vouched for, as it is, by a medical gentleman, prepared to be answerable for unquestionable facts.

It is proper to recall beforehand, that Coleridge published a Poetical Fragment, called Kubla Khan, which he dreamt during a sleep obviously magnetic. The Poet, indeed, implies as much, by calling the piece a Psychological Curiosity ; which he would scarcely have done, if his verses had been merely composed, like a majority of modern poems, during a common doze. But whoever reads that splendid Fragment, will recognise from its tone, that it was inspired, in a fit of somnambulism, under the influence of which he ascended to the top of Parnassus, as some persons, in the same state, have climbed to the roof of the house.

In the present instance, the Improvisatrice is a Mrs. Z—, a woman, in her ordinary or waking state, of rather a prosaic turn than otherwise ; so much so, that it cannot be traced

that she ever attempted, even in a valentine, to throw her sentiments into rhyme. Certain phrenological developments, however, suggested to the family physician that the poetical faculty had a local habitation in her cerebrum, and only awaited the touch of the magician to awaken its tones. Accordingly, having thrown her, by the usual *passes*, into a mesmeric state, he placed his forefinger on the organ of Extempore Composition, whereupon she immediately improvised the following verses :—

PASSING my brow, and passing my eyes,
 And passing lower with devious range,
 Passing my chest,
 And passing the rest,
 I feel a something passing strange !

Over my soul there seems to pass
 A middle state of life or death,
 And I almost seem to feel, alas !
 That I am drawing my passing breath !
 And, methinks I hear the passing-bell ;
 But, Mr. Passmore, that reverend elf,
 Gives me a pass that I know well,
 A sort of passport to Heaven itself !

Passing my brow, and passing my eye,
 And passing lower, with devious range,
 Passing my chest,
 And passing the rest,
 I feel a something passing strange !

Oh, Mr. Eyre, Lieutenant dear !
 Oh ! Lady Sale, thou gallant lass !

I know for certain that ye are near,
For I feel, I feel, the Khyber Pass !
But no—'tis Brockedon passes my brow,
And I'm in the Alpine Passes now,
With icy valleys, and snowy crests,
Whereon the passing vapour rests ;
And guide and English traveller pass,
Each on a very passable ass !

Passing my ear and passing my eye !
O joy ! what pastoral meads I spy,
Full of lambs that frisk and feed
While the Pastor plays on his rustic reed—
To the very best of his humble ability,
Piping ever shrill and loud,
But oh ! what new magnetic cloud
Passes over my passability !

Over my soul there seems to pass
A middle state of life or death
And I almost seem to feel, alas !
That I am drawing my passing breath.
No more prospects bright and sunny,
No more chance of pleasant cheer,
No more hope of passing money—
I feel the pass of the Overseer !

THE ECHO.



It would require the voices of fifty echoes to respond to the queries, hints, suggestions, and advice of innumerable correspondents and critics, on our first number. Only on one point has there been a general concurrence, in deference to which the cover is printed in black, for the million, instead of red for the vermilion, a change the eyes of Europe, we hope, will duly appreciate.

A Correspondent from Glasgow, dating on the 12th January, complains that copies were then not delivered in that city to several subscribers. The delay, in such cases, rests with the parties who took the orders; the Magazine having been ready for delivery on the morning of the 30th December, in time for the trade parcels. The same answer will apply to a communication from Liverpool.

We fear X. writes his poetry on the railroad—his style is so level. It does not rise an inch in the mile.

Who can wonder at nocturnal incendiarism, when a Scotchman is allowed to publicly advertise a Night with Burns?

“*An Inquirer*,” who asks the origin of opening Parliament in person, is respectfully referred to the learned in gingerbread at the Preparatory School.

It is quite true that the wild beasts at the Zoological are opposed to any embankment of the Thames, which they consider will trench on their prerogatives.

We are unable to satisfy our correspondent with information on the best mode of getting his Waste Inclosure Bill passed. He should go to the commons.

“*A Young Lady*,” who asks us if we will accept “some lines,” will be good enough to say what lines she means ; are they the Birmingham or Midland Counties ?

Our correspondent’s joke on the word “grateful” is not new. It was invented contemporaneously with Dr. Arnott’s stoves. The epigram is not within our range.

Our poetical friend will, we think, admit that no verse can be grander than the universe.

“An observer of the clouds,” who has remarked the glass to rise during wet, is informed, that the phenomenon is peculiar to Glass-go.

THE KEY.

A MOORISH ROMANCE.

“On the east coast, towards Tunis, the Moors still preserve the keys of their ancestors’ houses in Spain ; to which country they still express the hopes of one day returning, and again planting the crescent on the ancient walls of the Alhambra.”—SCOTT’S *Travels in Morocco and Algiers*.

“Is Spain cloven in such a manner as to want closing ?”

SANCHO PANZA.

THE Moor leans on his cushion,
 With the pipe between his lips ;
 And still at frequent intervals
 The sweet sherbét he sips ;
 But, spite of lulling vapour
 And the sober cooling cup,
 The spirit of the swarthy Moor
 Is fiercely kindling up !

One hand is on his pistol,
On its ornamented stock,
While his finger feels the trigger
And is busy with the lock—
The other seeks his ataghan,
And clasps its jewell'd hilt—
Oh ! much of gore in days of yore
That crooked blade has spilt !

His brows are knit, his eyes of jet
In vivid blackness roll,
And gleam with fatal flashes
Like the fire-damp of the coal ;
His jaws are set, and through his teeth
He draws a savage breath,
As if about to raise the shout
Of Victory or Death !

For why? the last Zebeck that came
And moor'd within the Mole,
Such tidings unto Tunis brought
As stir his very soul—
The cruel jar of civil war,
The sad and stormy reign,
That blackens like a thunder cloud
The sunny land of Spain !

No strife of glorious Chivalry,
For honour's gain or loss,
Nor yet that ancient rivalry,
The Crescent with the Cross.
No charge of gallant Paladins
On Moslems stern and stanch ;

But Christians shedding Christian blood
Beneath the olive's branch !

A war of horrid parricide,
And brother killing brother ;
Yea, like to " dogs and sons of dogs "
That worry one another.
But let them bite and tear and fight,
The more the Kaffers slay,
The sooner Hagar's swarming sons
Shall make the land a prey !

The sooner shall the Moor behold!
Th' Alhambra's pile again ;
And those who pined in Barbary
Shall shout for joy in Spain—
The sooner shall the Crescent wave
On dear Granada's walls :
And proud Mohammed Ali sit
Within his father's halls !

" Alla-il-alla ! " tiger-like
Up springs the swarthy Moor,
And, with a wide and hasty stride,
Steps o'er the marble floor ;
Across the hall, till from the wall,
Where such quaint patterns be,
With eager hand he snatches down
An old and massive Key !

A massive Key of curious shape,
And dark with dirt and rust,

And well three weary centuries
 The metal might encrust !
 For since the King Boabdil fell
 Before the native stock,
 That ancient Key, so quaint to see,
 Hath never been in lock.

Brought over by the Saracens
 Who fled across the main,
 A token of the secret hope
 Of going back again ;
 From race to race, from hand to hand,
 From house to house it pass'd ;
 O will it ever, ever ope
 The Palace gate at last ?

Three hundred years and fifty-two
 On post and wall it hung—
 Three hundred years and fifty-two
 A dream to old and young ;
 But now a brighter destiny
 The Prophet's will accords :
 The time is come to scour the rust,
 And lubricate the wards.

For should the Moor with sword and lance
 At Algesiras land,
 Where is the bold Bernardo now
 Their progress to withstand ?
 To Burgos should the Moslem come,
 Where is the noble Cid
 Five royal crowns to topple down
 As gallant Diaz did ?

Hath Xeres any Pounder now,
When other weapons fail,
With club to thrash invaders rash,
Like barley with a flail ?
Hath Seville any Perez still,
To lay his clusters low,
And ride with seven turbans green
Around his saddle-bow ?

No ! never more shall Europe see
Such Heroes brave and bold,
Such Valour, Faith, and Loyalty,
As used to shine of old !
No longer to one battle cry
United Spaniards run,
And with their thronging spears uphold
The Virgin and her Son !

From Cadiz Bay to rough Biscay
Internal discord dwells,
And Barcelona bears the scars
Of Spanish shot and shells.
The fleets decline, the merchants pine
For want of foreign trade ;
And gold is scant ; and Alicante
Is seal'd by strict blockade !

The loyal fly, and Valour falls,
Opposed by court intrigue ;
But treachery and traitors thrive,
Upheld by foreign league ;
While factions seeking private ends
By turns usurping reign—

Well may the dreaming, scheming Moor
Exulting point to Spain !

Well may he cleanse the rusty Key
With Afric sand and oil,
And hope an Andalusian home
Shall recompense the toil !

Well may he swear the Moorish spear
Through wild Castile shall sweep,
And where the Catalonian sowed
The Saracen shall reap !

Well may he vow to spurn the Cross
Beneath the Arab hoof,
And plant the Crescent yet again
Above th' Alhambra's roof—
When those from whom St. Jago's name
In chorus once arose,
Are shouting Faction's battle-cries,
And Spain forgets to "Close !"

Well may he swear his ataghan
Shall rout the traitor swarm,
And carve them into Arabesques
That show no human form—
The blame be theirs whose bloody feuds
Invite the savage Moor,
And tempt him with the ancient Key
To seek the ancient door !

THE MASONIC SECRET.

AN EXTRAVAGANZA.



CHAPTER I.

It shall all out !

“ If it does, I’ll be chisell’d ! ” cries a burly Mason, flourishing the very tool that gave rise to the verb.

“ Stop his mouth with mortar ! ” shouts a fellow of the association, called Free, perhaps from being associated with free-stone.

“ Sew it up, like a ferret’s, ” squeaks a Cross-Legged Knight,—in common parlance a Tailor.

“ Pitch into him, like bricks, ” roars an Apprentice, of the ancient Babylonian order of Builders.

“ Give him a clod with your hod, ” bellows an Irish Labourer in the Lodge of Harmony.

“ Pitch him off the Mysterious Ladder ! ” puts in a member of the same masonry, renowned for making wooden tombstones.

“ Throw the lime in his eyes ! ”

“ Brain him with the mallet ! ”

“ Stab him with the compasses ! ”

“ Square at him ! ”

“ Level him ! ”

“ Dig into him with the trowel ! ”

“ Lay a first stone on him, ” suggests a noble Grand Master, who has officiated at such a ceremony, and is as proud by the way of laying the stone—as if he had hatched the building.

“Split him!” ejaculates a Grand Warden—of course a repeal one.

“Bite him!” growls a Purple Badger.

“Worry him!” snarls a Blue ditto.

“Let’s strangle him with our apron strings——”

“Or give him the sledge-hammer!” puts in a Master Tyler, a descendant, of course, of the famous Wat.

“Over the bridge with him——” cries a Grand Arch.

“Into my barge!” shouts a Master of the Craft.

“Hit him in the Temple!” says a Brother in Solomon’s spectacles.

“Hang him!” screams one of the “Mystic Tie.”

“Peek out his eyes—and reep up his sanguinary poitrine!” mutters a foreign member of the Eagle and Pelican.

“Whip him with the Rod of Moses!” recommends a Jewish convertite.

“Na, na; wi’ the Triple *Taws!*” whispers a masonic Scotchman.

“Stone him! stone him!” shrieks a member of the Lodge of St. Stephen.

“Pitch him down the ‘Winding Staircase’——”

“And out of the House of Humanity beyond its Porch and Pillars!”

“Beyond the Pales of Society.”

“And its ‘Geometrical Gate,’” says the masonic keeper of that Lodge, commonly called the Porter’s.

“Kick him! Stick him! Bother him! Smother him! Hit him! Split him! Throttle him! Bottle him! Pound him! Confound him! Drat him! Go at him! Floor him! Score him! Scrag him! Gag him! Thrash him! Smash him! Walk into him! Run him through!”—That’s plain English at any rate.

“Gouge him! Tar and feather him! Lynch him! Bark

him ! Mark him ! Chaw him up ! Be worse than a bear to him, and lick him into no shape at all !”—That’s American !

“Boke his bipe down his windbipe !”—That’s German.

“Break him on one wheel ! Blow his head off at one blow ! A la lanterne !”—That’s French. “Let him look through the little window of Saint Guillotine.”

“Knout him !”—That’s Russian.

“Cow-hide him ; and let the flies blow his wounds !”—That’s Brazilian.

“Shackle him ; tackle him ; barrel him up, and overboard with him !”—That’s Portuguese.

“Rack him ! Thumb-screw him !”—That’s Spanish.

“Put him into the iron boots.”—That’s Scotch.

“Poison him by instalments !”—That’s Italian.

“Kill him entirely ; and twice over !”—That’s Irish, of course.

“Cut off his eyelids—boil him in oil—broil him on a gridiron—crucify him head downwards—drench him with melted lead—blow him away from a gun—starve him—roll him in a hogshead of cutlery—flay him alive—roast him at a slow fire—tear him in pieces by wild horses—give him a bed of steel—impale him—scalp him—bastinado him—cold press him—flog him—picket him—put him into solitary confinement—send him to the tread-mill—tie a tight-rope round his forehead—bake him in a brazen bull—throw him into a vault with adders and scorpions—cast him into the lion’s den—bury him alive—keelhaul him—make him walk the plank !”

[Merciful Heaven ! How many personal inconveniences and bodily discomforts have human creatures invented for each other ? What bitter draughts and cruel operations, as a set-off against the charitable prescriptions and benevolent inflictions of medicine and surgery !]

“Choke him ! Break his jaw ! Tear his tongue out with

pincers ! Silence him with the poker ! Stop his mouth with the table-cloth ! Gag him with a red-hot respirator !”

“Build him up in a wall !”—That should be the voice of a Mason, at any rate.

But no matter ; the Bag is my own, if the Cat isn't. I was never sworn to secrecy ; and so out it shall come, whoever gets clawed for it !

CHAPTER II.

“MERCY on us !” ejaculates Fear, his lank locks stiffening into a hair-brush, or more like a hearth-broom, his knees knocking together, his jaws clattering like castanets, and shattering every word into broken English. “Would you really dare to disclose the Free-Mason's secret ? Consider what an ancient body they are—as old as Adam and Eve—at least, when they wore aprons. And then such architects ! some say they built the Pyramids, and Stonehenge, let alone Solomon's Temple.”

“Yes, as much as Mr. Pecksniff did !”

“Hush ! pray hush ; walls have ears, you know. For my part, if there's any men I'm afraid of, it's the Free-Masons. They certainly do know more than other people. For instance, there's the toad in a hole——”

“What, the batter-pudding ?”

“No ; but a toad in the very middle of a block of stone or marble, where he has been for a thousand years, and as brisk as ever. How he got there, or lived so long without food, nobody knows, unless it's the Masons. Some think it's their Secret.”

“Then I should like to know it, for it's the cheapest style of boarding and lodging in the world.”

“Hush ! don't joke. There's perhaps a Brother listening. Who knows ? They're very mysterious. Let's whisper. Did you ever read of the Secret Assassins and the Vehme Gericht ?”

“Yes, in ‘Anne of Gierstein.’”

“Humph ! then you know what I mean. Come closer ; still closer. There *was* a man, I've heard—an American—who blabbed the Secret, and was never seen or heard of afterwards. Never !”

“But that story was denied.”

“Well, it may have been, but I believe it. At any rate, if they don't take one's life, they can save or spare it. There was a story in the last ‘Freemason's Quarterly Review’—stop, here it is :—

“Many have probably heard of the French officer in the battle of Waterloo, who was so badly wounded that he was unable to keep up with his regiment ; and in that situation was discovered by a Scotch Highlander of the British army ; who, with his blood-stained weapon drawn, his teeth clenched, and his eyes flashing fire, put spurs to his horse, and galloped up to despatch him ; but just as he was on the point of striking the fatal blow, the officer gave a Masonic sign of distress—it was well understood by the Scotsman, whose giant arm was immediately unnerved ; love and sympathy were depicted in his countenance ; and, as he turned his horse to ride off, was heard to say, ‘The Lord bless and protect thee, my Brother !’”

“There, what do you think of it ?”

“Why, I think there was something very inconsistent in the affair ; that the two professions are quite incompatible with each other. A Mason-Soldier is as great an anomaly as a Fighting Quaker ; nay, of the two, the ‘brain spattering, windpipe-slitting art’ must become a Brother even less than a Friend. And, besides, it is too like ‘Exclusive Dealing.’ As a lover of fair play, I cannot admire the bestowing mercy and benediction on one head, and the curse and the sabre on another ; for, of course, the next poor Frenchman who could not give the sign was carved into Scotch collops.”

“Hush—hush—pray speak lower. I’m all of a tremble.”

“Pshaw! let the whole world hear me. I say, a Mason ought not to be in such a scene at all. I think I see him with his teeth clenched—his eyes flashing fire—hewing—slashing—stabbing—running a poor fellow-Christian clean through the body with a ‘There! Take that, from a Brother of the Lodge of Benevolence!’”

“Pray—pray—not so loud.”

“Nonsense!—let me finish my picture. Down goes the Frenchman of course—a victim to Universal Philanthropy. But he is not quite dead—he breathes—he moves—he groans, kicks, and writhes in agony, making a hundred natural signs of distress, if not the masonic one—when fortunately he is perceived by one of an order devoted to works of mercy—a Sister of Charity—who hastens to his relief—but no—by Jove! she finishes him!”

“What! kills him!”

“Yes—and why not? Where a Brother of Benevolence thrusts his sword, a Sister of Charity may surely poke her scissors.”

• CHAPTER III.

BUT the Secret!

“The Secret—the Secret!” cry a thousand daughters of Eve, not degenerated from their great first parent in the article of curiosity.

“The Secret!” shout five hundred Paul Prys, quite as inquisitive as if they wore petticoats, and went mystery-hunting in bonnets and pattens.

“The Secret—the Secret—the Secret!” scream ten thousand of both sexes, who as boys and girls in their provincial

towns have trotted till dog-tired after the masonic processions—not more delighted with the music, the banners, the scarves, and aprons, and the glittering emblems of the craft, than astounded by the stupendous dignity of Mr. Gubbins, and the supernatural solemnity of young Griggs. Well do I remember wearing out a pair of my own little shoes with tagging after the Stoke Pogis Lodge of Ancient Druids, every man of them looking at the least a conjuror, and the Grand Master like a very King Solomon! No wonder Widow Drury called on him the very next morning to beg him to unbewitch her red cow—and to find out, by his Bible and compasses, who had stolen her black pig! “Ize warrant,” said she, “he knows more secrets than one!”

“Yes, yes, the Secret—the Secret!” bellows out the whole herd of the curious—“that’s what we want!”

No doubt. And so did Mrs. Stringer when she drove her husband, by her curiosity, into the other world. In vain the poor man pleaded his oath to his lodge, that he dared not divulge the mysterious formula under the most awful penalties, that he might drop stone dead at her feet, or at the least be struck deaf and dumb; that he should be burked, kidnapped, poisoned. In vain he told her a hundred stories, true or invented, of blabbing Masons who had been stabbed, shot, drowned, or whisked away from the face of the earth, as if by evil spirits. The perverse inquisitiveness of the woman pertinaciously insisted on the revelation; sometimes by coaxing, sometimes by threats, and, above all, by interminable curtain lectures on mutual confidence in the married state. She even helped him to get into his cups, in the hope that he might babble out the mystery in his tipsy loquacity. Worst of all, she set all her she-gossips on him, all giving tongue to the same text—the abominableness of reserve towards the wife of his

bosom. In short, the poor fellow became weary of his life; so weary, indeed, that one morning he was discovered hanging from a beam in the garret, with the following bitter billet pinned to his bosom.

“Mrs. S.—I am gone to learn the GREAT SECRET!

You shall know it when I come back,

“S. S.”

“Ah! the Secret! the Secret!” That unlucky word has revived all the old hubbub; the female voices screaming high above the rest of the chorus. I verily believe that when Pandora pried into the fatal Box she thought it contained the mystic paraphernalia of the craft; that when Fatima determined to inspect the forbidden Chamber, she fancied that it was a Masonic Lodge. Nay, I verily believe the fair creatures long to have a lodge or two of their own!

“And why not, sir?” exclaims a little brisk body, bustling up like an offended bantam, “Why not, sir? Why shouldn’t there be she Masons as well as he ones, and particularly considering what masonry sets up for, namely, wisdom, strength, and beauty, in which last our sex has always been allowed to stand first? Sure am I we should look quite as well as the men do, in jewels, and sashes, and aprons, let alone personal charms. As to which I may say, without vanity, whether for face or figure, I’m quite as fit for a public procession as that regular Guy, old Griffis, with his red nose, and pot-belly, and spindle-shanks. Then as to wisdom; to be sure that nincum, Mr. Boggles, is a fine model of it;—who knows his own mind one minute, and don’t know it the next, any more than if it was a shabby acquaintance.”

“And as regards strength, ma’am.”

“Well, as regards strength, sir. There’s some women

could knock down some men with a poker. There's myself—supposing it was proper for females to be pugilistical—I shouldn't mind fisticuffing little Snitch the Taylor, and he's a Mason, in a roped ring. I did have a scuffle once with a man when I was the Bear, and I've had two or three since I've been the Dragon."

"A Masonic sign, I presume, ma'am."

"No—a ninn. Talking of signs, I've talked on my fingers by the hour together, to the deaf and dumb boy at our next door. So, if that's masonry, I'm fit for it already. But any one can make signs. Even the little blaggard boys that take sights, as they call it, just as if they was blowing a flageolet with their noses, and playing on it with their fingers, only they've no flageolet."

"Little 'Sons of Harmony,' perhaps."

"No, sir; little sons of the parish. As to signs and signals, I'd back old Jack Duff, at the telegrafts, agin the best Mason as stands in shoe leather. And what's more to the pint, when old Jack's laid up, his wife telegrafts for him—and as well as he can—let alone she once put up the high-water flag instead of the low one, and by which the Lovely Nancy struck the bar, and got knocked to pieces. The more fool she for striking first!"

"Very true, ma'am."

"Howsomever, as I said afore, why shouldn't women be Masons as well as the male sex, who, for all their fuss about Brotherhood and Benevolence, are not a bit fonder of mankind than we are?"

"That, ma'am, is undeniable."

"To be sure we mayn't be quite such dabs at chiselling and levelling as the regular Operatives: but we could get through it allegolically as well as the best of them: for they do say, that except laying a first stone now and then, it's only

playing at Bilding and Arketecter, after all, and their trowels have as little to do with mortering as my own fish-slice."

"Certainly, ma'am. But some of the Masonic orders are Military ones—the Knight Templars, for instance."

"Ah! them's another thing. And to go fighting and skrimmaging abroad with Turks and Tartars is, to be sure, rather out of Woman's provinces. Not to name the encampments, and which is hardly fit for females, except the gipsy ones that are accustomed to living in tents."

"Of course, ma'am. I will ask only one more question, and pray excuse it; but the fair are popularly supposed to be rather accessible to curiosity. Do you really think, then, that a lady could preserve the Masonic Secret?"

"The Secret! the Secret!" the old chorus strikes up, only with twice as strong a company as before: for all the young ladies' schools in London have chimed in: and there is no such Secret-monger in the world as your Miss in her teens. They must be pacified somehow.

"My dear ladies——"

"The Secret! the Secret!"

"My dear gentlemen——"

"The Secret!"

"My dear ladies and gentlemen, only one word. How do you know there is any Secret at all?"

CHAPTER IV.

Now I think of it, there was once a female who contrived to be present at a Masonic Meeting.

"To be sure there was!" exclaims the little bustling body of the Dragon, "for it was me, myself!"

"You, ma'am?"

“ Yes, me, sir. And the way were this. There was an execution put in at the White Horse, which, in consequence, couldn't be convivial ; and as Masons likes to lay a good foundation, the warden applies to the Dragon, for hospitality, and engages my great club-room. There was to be grand doings, and especially initiating of new members ; and thinks I, if I don't initiate myself at the same time, I'm no woman. So I takes out the shelves in the club-room closet, which, by good luck, would just hold my low easy cheer, in which I could sit comfortable, with my eye flush with the keyhole. First taking a glass of cordial to steady my nerves, having such a Mellow Drammer, as I may say, agoin to be acted afore me. For they do say there's awful ceremonies at the binding of fresh Apprentices, and what with brandishing red hot pokers, and flashing naked swords overhead, a Mason, after being 'nitiated, needn't fear nothin' for the rest of his life. Well, there I am all snug, but uncommon tedious, for the Grand Lodge of Fidelity was anything but true to their time. However, at long and at last in they come, Grand Masters, Deputy Grands, Past-Masters, Wardens, Tylers, and all the rest of them. Old Griffis, with his red nose and spindle-shanks at their head ! I don't mind saying I felt a sort of misgiving come over me, and a wish to be settin' anywhere else, partickly with the cramp in both legs, and not daring to call out ; for in course I should have been murdered on the spot for prying into their mysteries. But it were too late to alter, so there I was with my two poor calves tying themselves up in double knots ; besides, almost bustin' with supprest hiccups. Not that I should have minded my sufferings a pin, provided I could have indulged my curiosity ; but what with pain and fright, and nervous noises in my ears, I was as deaf as a post.”

“ Why, then, you heard nothing at all ? ”

“ Not a syllable. Only a sort of mumbling, and a whiz, whiz, whizzing like a mill full of spinning jennies in my own head.”

“ But you could see, ma'am ! ”

“ Yes, a bit of the back of a brown coat, for Brother Somebody had plumped himself down right afore the key-hole—and that's all as I know of the Freemason's Secret ! ”

CHAPTER V.

“ THE Secret ! The Secret ! The Secret ! ”

The uproar is greater than ever ! That last disappointment, from the closet of the Dragon, has turned Curiosity and her vast brood into mere savages, fierce as Furies, ravenous as famished wolves, and so fearless, that were there a Tiger in the bag instead of a Cat, they would ask for it to be let out !

If I could only sell the thing in shares I should make my fortune. Already an official gentleman, who for obvious reasons must remain nameless, has bribed me, in a whisper, with the offer of a round sum of the public “ Service Money,” called Secret.

“ The Secret ! The Secret ! The Se—se—secret ! ”

Oh, those dreadful gossips ! those terrible School Girls. Hark to Prospect House ! “ Do tell us, do, do, do, do, do, there's a love, there's a duck, there's a darling, there's a dear creature ; only the first syllable, only the first letter. Make a riddle of it, and let us guess it ! ”

What a strange yet fearful sight ! A hundred thousand at the least of men and women, boys and girls, all agape, as if they were listening with their mouths ; and five thousand

deaf people, with their tubes, cornets, and trumpets, fighting, pushing, and elbowing like mad things to get in front.

And all this striving to hear a word, a single word, not so long by an inch as "Honorificabilitudinitatibus," a word, possibly, of only two syllables, perhaps only of one, and, may be, not even that !

CHAPTER VI.

"AND do you mean to say, sir,"—bellows a burly, pompous personage, with the very tone and manner of an oracle in his own circle—one of those human omnibuses that are invariably "All right" by their own proclamation, whether full or empty, fast or slow, going up the road, or breaking down in it—"do you really mean to say that the Freemasons have no Secret, sir—no private signs, sir—no symbolical rites, sir—no symbolical ceremonies, sir—of the highest significance ?"

"By no means. On the contrary, I propose, according to my promise in the first chapter, to tell all I know on the subject ; and to that end am about to detail what I personally witnessed last Christmas."

"Very good, sir,"—replies the Great Infallible, with that complacent air with which he bestows such patronage on a modest opinion when it coincides with his own—"Very good, sir—go on, sir."

"I shall premise, then, that the performance in question took place at a House about six miles from London."

"Ah—a Provincial Lodge—Well, sir—and the ceremony was a mystery to you, of course ?"

"Quite. A perfect riddle."

"No doubt—as it must be, sir, to the uninitiated."

“ O ! completely. However, as I said before, the meeting took place in the country—in a large room, handsomely decorated, and profusely lighted up——”

“ Stop, sir ! Did you observe any Candlesticks ? ”

“ Yes — several very massive ones, and apparently of silver.”

“ I thought so—very good. And some of the company wore purple scarves, and some had blue ones—and some were decorated with jewels ? ”

“ Certainly—and feathers.”

“ No doubt, sir—and now for the ceremonies. What came first, sir ? ”

“ A tall gentleman—in a cap and feathers, and a mantle ; followed by several companions.”

“ Companions ?—well, sir—what next ? ”

“ The tall gentleman knelt down, very humbly, before another gentleman,—I should say, from his accent and physiognomy, a North Briton.”

“ Not a doubt of it. They’re reviving the Order of Chivalry in Edinborough. Pray how was he dressed, sir ? ”

“ I hardly remember, except that he looked much like a gentleman going to a masquerade.”

“ Any sword, sir ? ”

“ Yes, naked, in his right hand. He flourished it a great deal about the head of the kneeling gentleman, till I thought he was going to kill him, but, instead of decapitating him, he only gave him a smart blow with the flat of the blade on the shoulder.”

“ Precisely. I knew it.”

“ After that the tall gentleman got up, and one of his companions fixed a pair of riding spurs on his heels.”

“ I said so ;—a Knight Templar.”

“ The tall gentleman in the cap and feathers and mantle

then retired with his companions, escorting the gentleman with the drawn sword, with as great ceremony as if he had been a Prince of Blood Royal."

"And so some of them were in old times. Go on, sir."

"After a few minutes the Scotch gentleman came in again, but in a different costume—a robe more like a figured dressing-gown, with a fur cape over his shoulders, and a gold chain over the cape. The tall man walked before him with a long sword, but sheathed; and a shorter man walked behind, with something like a mace. There was a great deal of bowing and ceremony, and then the Scotch gentleman in the robes seated himself, like a judge, in a large elbow chair. I suppose at least that he represented some kind of judge, for several persons were brought before him on some charge which, being rather deaf, I could not hear."

"For a breach of discipline, sir; something against the Rules of the Order."

"Perhaps so. However, by degrees, the whole party began to wrangle, and got to high words."

"What about, sir—what about?"

"Heaven knows! for they all talked together, and made such a noise, that at last, by order of the great man in the chair, whatever he was, the whole of the disputants were put under arrest and forced out of the presence."

"Yes! there has been some schism in the Chapters;—but surely they would not expose themselves so before a stranger! Then you don't know, sir, what the quarrel was about, sir?"

"Not in the least. I only heard the gentleman in the robe, and fur tippet, and gold collar——"

"The Grand Master, sir."

"Well, I only heard him invite the rest of the gentlemen to some Banquet or Festival."

"Where, sir—where?"

“ I presume at the *Provisional* Priory. And then the chairman departed, with the same state and ceremony as at his entrance.”

“ And that was the end, sir ?”

“ By no means. After a little while the Scotch gentleman——”

“ The Knight, sir—the Knight Templar !”

“ Well, the Knight Templar, or whatever he was, returned ; but with a white cap on his head, and in a long white garment, like a nightgown.”

“ A surplice, sir—a surplice. First, a Knight and then a Priest, to represent the Church Militant.”

“ I do not know, sir, whether he was a clergyman or not. At least he did not preach : though he knelt down and seemed to say his prayers, after which he snuffed all the candles in the room, and then lay down on the floor, with only a cushion under his head, and apparently went to sleep.”

“ Like a Crusader in Palestine.—Good ! capital ! very symbolical, indeed ! Very !—Well, sir, the Knight went to sleep ?”

“ Or, at least, made believe ; and snored louder than any gentleman I ever heard. But he had hardly slumbered five minutes, when the door suddenly burst open, and in rushed a dozen men, dressed up like savages, and with their faces blacked, as if to represent devils.”

“ Moors, sir, Moors !—Excellent !—An irruption of the Saracens !”

“ Why, they certainly looked more like Pagans than Christians ; and more like wild Indians, or hobgoblins, than either. And then to see how they danced round the sleeping man ; brandishing shovels, tongs, pokers, swords, guns, clubs, bows and arrows, and all sorts of strange weapons ; whilst one of

the figures straddled across the poor gentleman on the floor, and finally sat down on his body, compressing his chest and stomach till he groaned again ! ”

“ Beautiful ! famous ! And now, sir, having been present—lord knows how—at a Grand Conclave of the Knight Templars, will you presume, sir—to say, sir—that Free Masonry has no Secrets, sir—no significant rites, sir—no signs, sir—no symbols, no mystical word, sir ? ”

“ Excuse me. All I mean to say is, that, in my decided opinion, the Ceremony just described was only—”

“ What, sir ; pray what ? ”

“ An ACTED CHARADE, sir ; and that the Grand Secret, the mystical word, expressed by symbols, was simply *Knight-May'r !* ”

ANECDOTE OF HER PRESENT MAJESTY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF “ REAL RANDOM RECORDS.”

KING George the Fourth, the uncle of the reigning sovereign, Queen Victoria, is very well known to have held strong opinions on the subject of Catholic Emancipation. I forget on which side, but he could not bear O'Connell ; and when Kemble the Poet wrote a Poem called “ O'Connell's Child,” his Majesty would not read it. Franklin was another of his aversions ; I mean the man who drew down lightning with a kite, and went to the North Pole. But his favourite antipathy, or rather his royal Father's, was Wilkie, the North Briton. He was supposed, if I remember rightly, to have a hand with Canning in the famous work called the “ Anti-Something ” against the French republican principles, which

Burke attacked about the same time in Parliament in his celebrated speech, when he threw down the dagger, and said to Fox, "There's a knife and fork." Canning, who afterwards became Prime Minister, was stolen in his youth by a gipsy, one Elizabeth Squires, who was tried for it, and either acquitted or hung. It made a great noise at the time: which reminds me of Mother Brownrigg, who starved her apprentices so cruelly that one of them, named Otway, choked himself in ravenously swallowing a penny roll. I think there was something written on it, called the "Rolliad," but am not sure. Swift was certainly writing on or about the time; and his notorious "Draper's Letters," in favour of shutting up early, were very popular with the shopmen of the metropolis. So were "Sinbad's Voyages to Lilliput." I forget what great people were shown up in it. But the rage was for the "Beggar's Opera," the author of which was said to have made Rich, rich; and Gay, gay. Something runs in my head that he also wrote the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard." Perhaps it was Gray—or did Gray write the "Beggar's Opera?" One gets puzzled between such similar names. For example, one of my own favourite works is White's or Wright's "History of Shelburne or Selburne," I never can remember which. However, as I said before, King William the Fourth had his political prejudices, and who has not? Every bias, as some one says, has its bowl; probably Lord Shaftesbury in his Maxims, if it was Shaftesbury, and if they were maxims. My head is not what it was, nor will be on this side the grave—but so long as my memory serves me to recal an anecdote or two, however imperfectly, I must not complain.

E. T.

THE ECHO.



THE writer of the following Letter guesses so truly at the main cause of the delay in the publication of the present Number, that our best explanation to our Subscribers will be, to give the epistle entire, *verbatim et literatim*,—as addressed to the Editor :

“SIR,

“By your not cumming out on the Furst, I conclude you are lade up—being notorus for enjoyin bad helth. Pullmery, of course. Like my poor Robert—for I’ve had a littery branch in my own fammily—a periodical one like yourself, only every Sunday, insted of once a munth ; and as such, well knew what it was to write long-winded articles with Weekly lungs. Poor fellow ! As I often said, so much head work, and nothin but Head work, will make a Cherubbim of you : and so it did.—Nothing but write—write—write, and read—read—read ; and, as our Doctor says, it’s as bad to studdy till all is brown, as to drink till all is blew. Mix your cullers. And verry good advice it is—when it can be follerd, witch is not always the case : for if necessity has no Law, it has a good deal of Litterature, and Authers must rite what they must.

“As poor Robert used to say about seddontary habits, it’s very well, says he, to tell me about—like Mr. Wordsworth’s single man as grew dubble—sticking to my chair ; but if there’s no sitting, says he, ther’ll be no hatching ; and if I do brood too much at my desk it’s because there’s a brood expected from me once a week. Oh, its very well, says he, to cry Up, up with you ; and go and fetch a walk, and take

a look at the daisies, when you've sold your mind to Miffy Stofilis ; and there's a Divil waiting for your last proofs, as he did for Doctor Forster's. I know it's killin me, says he ; but if I die of overwork it's in the way of my vacation. Poor boy ! I did all I could to nurridge him : Mock Turkey soop and strong slops, and Wormy Jelly and Island Moss ; but he couldn't eat. And no wunder ; for mental laber, as the Doctor said, wares out the stummack as well as the Branes, and so he'd been spinning out his inside like a spider. And a spider he did look at last, sure enuff—one of that sort, with long spindle legs, and only a dot of a Boddy in the middle.

“Another bad thing is settin up all nite as my Sun did, but it's all agin Natur. Not but what sum must, and partickly the writers of Polliticks for the Papers ; but they ruin the Constitushun. And, besides, even Poetry is apt to get prosy after twelve or one ; and some late authors read very sleepy. But as poor Robert said, what is one to do when no day is long enuff for one's work, nor no munth either ? And to be sure, April, June, November, and September, are all short munths, but Febber-*very* ! However, one grate thing is, relaxing—if you can. As the Doctor used to say, what made Jack a dull boy—why being always in the workhouse and never at the playhouse. So get out of your gownd and slippers, says he, and put on your Best Things and unbend yourself like a Beau. If you've been at your poeticle flights, go and look at the Tems Tunnel ; and if you're tired of being Witty, go and spend a hour with the Wax Wurk. The mind requires a Change as well as the merchants.

“So take my advice, Sir—a mother's advice—and relax a littel. I know what it is : You want brassing, a change of Hair, and more stummuck. And you ought to ware flannin, and take tonicks. Do you ever drink Basses Pail ? It's as

good as cammomile Tea. But above all, there's one thing I'd recummend to you : Steal Wine. It's been a savin to sum invallids.

“Hoping you will excuse this libberty from a Stranger”
but a well-meening one,

“ I am, Sir,

“ A SUBSCRIBER.”

THE WORKHOUSE CLOCK.

AN ALLEGORY.

THERE'S a murmur in the air,
And noise in every street—
The murmur of many tongues,
The noise of numerous feet—
While round the Workhouse door
The Labouring Classes flock,
For why ? the Overseer of the Poor
Is setting the Workhouse Clock.

Who does not hear the tramp
Of thousands speeding along
Of either sex and various stamp,
Sickly, crippled, or strong,
Walking, limping, creeping
From court, and alley, and lane,
But all in one direction sweeping
Like rivers that seek the main ?

Who does not see them sally
From mill, and garret, and room,

In lane, and court and alley,
 From homes in poverty's lowest valley,
 Furnished with shuttle and loom—
 Poor slaves of Civilization's galley—
 And in the road and footways rally,
 As if for the Day of Doom ?
 Some, of hardly human form,
 Stunted, crooked, and crippled by toil ;
 Dingy with smoke and dust and oil,
 And smirch'd besides with vicious soil,
 Clustering, mustering, all in a swarm.
 Father, mother, and careful child,
 Looking as if it had never smiled—
 The Sempstress, lean, and weary, and wan,
 With only the ghosts of garments on—
 The Weaver, her sallow neighbour,
 The grim and sooty Artisan ;
 Every soul—child, woman, or man,
 Who lives—or dies—by labour.

Stirr'd by an overwhelming zeal,
 And social impulse, a terrible throng !
 Leaving shuttle, and needle, and wheel,
 Furnace, and grindstone, spindle, and reel,
 Thread, and yarn, and iron, and steel—
 Yea, rest and the yet untasted meal—
 Gushing, rushing, crushing along,
 A very torrent of Man !
 Urged by the sighs of sorrow and wrong,
 Grown at last to a hurricane strong,
 Stop its course who can !
 Stop who can its onward course
 And irresistible moral force ;

O ! vain and idle dream !
For surely as men are all akin,
Whether of fair or sable skin,
According to Nature's scheme,
That Human Movement contains within
A Blood-Power stronger than Steam.

Onward, onward, with hasty feet,
They swarm—and westward still—
Masses born to drink and eat,
But starving amidst Whitechapel's meat,
And famishing down Cornhill !
Through the Poultry—but still unfed—
Christian Charity, hang your head !
Hungry—passing the Street of Bread ;
Thirsty—the street of Milk ;
Ragged—beside the Ludgate Mart,
So gorgeous, through Mechanic-Art,
With cotton, and wool, and silk !

At last, before that door
That bears so many a knock
Ere ever it opens to Sick or Poor,
Like sheep they huddle and flock—
And would that all the Good and Wise
Could see the Million of hollow eyes,
With a gleam deriv'd from Hope and the skies,
Upturn'd to the Workhouse Clock !

Oh ! that the Parish Powers,
Who regulate Labour's hours,
The daily amount of human trial,
Weariness, pain, and self-denial
Would turn from the artificial dial

That striketh ten or eleven,
 And go, for once, by that older one
 That stands in the light of Nature's sun,
 And takes its time from Heaven !

 REVIEW.

A NEW SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

It was our intention to have reviewed this work seriously, in the present number of the Magazine ; but an unlucky curiosity prompting us to turn, first, to the chapter at page 57, volume 2, we stumbled on so bewildering a passage, that we have done nothing but grope about in it ever since—even as the old woman who had her identity “cut all round about,” and tried, in vain, to recognise herself by the help of her little dog.

“Mr. Hood was a wit about town, and a philosopher while recovering from ‘the effects of last night.’ His writings tended to give an unfavourable view of human nature, to make one suspicious and scornful. On the whole, though you had been amused and interested as you went on, you were left uncomfortable, and wished you could forget what you had read.”

A wit about town ! What town ? Certainly not London. Not, it may be taken for Granted, the Great Metropolis. The country knows better. We are hardly reckoned a wit, even at Whitsuntide, about Ponder's End—a mere village. About town, as unknown for *jeux d'esprit* as the Townley marbles. Had the phrase referred, indeed, to Horace or James Smith, it might have had some consonance ; or likelier still, if it had been applied to our all-but namesake, the author of “Sayings and Doings,” who was notoriously a wit

about town, and especially about midnight. Hook, as Mr. R. H. Horne truly says, possessed both wit and humour. It was he who, when C., the publisher, wished to re-christen his unprofitable "Factory Boy," replied, "O, nothing more easy—call him the Unsatisfactory Boy!"—a repartee far beyond the wickedness of our wit, if it had been had up at Marlborough Street on purpose.

Such a convivialist, famous for lighting up certain of the club-houses with laughing gas, had occasionally, no doubt, to philosophise at a serious breakfast, after a gay supper. As much has been hinted by his biographers. But who ever heard of our recovering from "the effects of over night." Why, last night we drank nothing but gruel—not elevated by rum, and sugar, and spice, into a caudle,—but plain temperance gruel—a cup of Scotch porridge drowned in a bason of water. Who could recover from that? The early Edinburgh Reviewers, indeed, professed, according to Sidney Smith, to "philosophise on a little oatmeal," but experience soon showed that it was impossible to be Transcendental on Horse-Parliament cakes.

A worse count in the indictment now demands a plea—that "our writing tends to give an unfavourable view of human nature; to make one suspicious and scornful." Not Guilty! It is no fault of ours if some noses have a pugnacious turn-up with all mankind; if some faces, with what ought to be a pair of right and left eyes, cast only a sinister glance at the human race. It was never our peculiar pleasure to represent our fellow-creatures as no better than they should be—on the contrary, like the good mother when somebody described her children as little angels, we "wish they was." If, therefore, those who have been amused and interested by our poor lucubrations, have been left uncomfortable on the whole, and wished to forget what they had

read, it must have been from some other cause than our misanthropy—the presence, perhaps, as objected to in the majority of our “Whims and Oddities,” of some “painful physicality ;” for example, an old man with his night-cap a-light ; an unpleasant incident enough, as a bare fact, but at least serio-comic when he goes sniffing down stairs to ask John and Mary if they do not smell fire. But it is as impossible to please all tastes as to suit some notions of coziness. Even in the first number of this Magazine, there were readers of the “Haunted House,” to whom a ghost or goblin of any kind would have been a real comfort. A desirable spectre is certainly “A New Spirit of the Age,” and ought to figure conspicuously in Mr. George Robins’s next advertisement of an old Family Mansion.

And now to come to a palpable personality, who will believe that we, a wit about town, and a philosopher on sermons and soda-water, resemble “a gentleman of a serious turn of mind, who is out of health”—or, in plain English, a consumptive Methodist parson ? Grave we certainly are, and an invalid ; but who can credit that with “this unpromising outside and melancholic atmosphere,” we are the wit of the Athenæum—the wag of the Carlton—the practical joker of the Garrick—the life of the Green Room ? Who will swallow—? but stop. An ingenious friend suggests that we are, possibly, the victim of a mistake of the press—the substitution of a D for a K—that we have had our name, as Byron says, blundered in the Gazette.

“Thrice happy he whose name has been well spelt
In the dispatch : I know a man whose loss
Was printed Grove, although his name was Grose.”

An explanation the more plausible, seeing that Mr. Horne has hung us elsewhere with compliments much too flattering

to quote. So for the present we gratefully make our best bow to him, only requesting that in his second, or at any rate his third edition of "A New Spirit of the Age," he will have the kindness to insert the following erratum :—

"Vol. ii., page 57, 6th line from the top, for 'Hood,' read 'Hook.'"

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

"Drown'd ! drown'd !" — *Hamlet.*



ONE more Unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death !

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care ;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair !

Look at her garments
Clinging like cerements ;
Whilst the wave constantly
Drips from her clothing ;
Take her up instantly,
Loving, not loathing.—

Touch her not scornfully ;
Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly ;

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
Rash and undutiful :
Past all dishonour,
Death has left on her
Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,
One of Eve's family—
Wipe those poor lips of hers
Oozing so clammily.

Loop up her tresses
Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses ;
Whilst wonderment guesses
Where was her home ?

Who was her father ?
Who was her mother ?
Had she a sister ?
Had she a brother ?
Or was there a dearer one
Still, and a nearer one
Yet, than all other ?

Alas ! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun !

Oh ! it was pitiful !
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly
Feelings had changed :
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence ;
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged.

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
With many a light
From window and casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood, with amazement,
Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver ;
But not the dark arch,
Or the black flowing river :
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurl'd—
Any where, any where
Out of the world !

In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

The rough river ran,—
Over the brink of it,
Picture it—think of it,
Dissolute Man !
Lave in it, drink of it,
Then, if you can !

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care ;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair !

Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
Decently,—kindly,—
Smoothe, and compose them ;
And her eyes, close them,
Staring so blindly !

Dreadfully staring
Thro' muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
Fix'd on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,
Spurr'd by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
Into her rest.—
Cross her hands humbly,
As if praying dumbly,
Over her breast !

Owning her weakness,
 Her evil behaviour,
 And leaving, with meekness,
 Her sins to her Saviour !

[Among the MSS. connected with the Bridge of Sighs I find the following fragmentary verses.]

BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

PART II.

WEARY with troubles
 That Death must deliver
 Once more life bubbles
 Away in the river—

* * * *

The moon in the river shone
 And the stars some six or seven—
 Poor child of sin, to throw it therein
 Seemed sending it to Heaven.

* * * *

Cover her, cover her,
 Throw the earth over her—
 Victim of murder inhumanly done ;
 With gravel and sod—
 Hide—hide her from God,
 And the light of the sun !

THE MONSTER TELESCOPE.



[WE feel infinite pride and gratification in being able to present the following letter *exclusively* to our Subscribers ; who will thus be in possession of discoveries, which for some days, probably some weeks, will not appear in the scientific journals. The astronomical reader will readily recognise the stupendous instrument referred to by our Correspondent, as the one constructed at the expense and under the direction of a nobleman of distinguished mechanical genius, and devoted to the sublime study of the stars. Its dimensions may be estimated from the fact that it is twice as long (eighty feet) as the famous telescope erected by Sir William Herschel at Slough. The diameter of the speculum is two yards !—EDITOR.]

Dublin, 21st April, 1844.

MY DEAR * * * *

Since my last, an event has occurred here of unusual interest to the scientific world, and the astronomers in particular :—nothing less than the testing of the monster telescope !—with results so extraordinary and of such thrilling interest, that, jaded as I am with fatigue and excitement, I cannot resist sitting down to give some account of our discoveries.

It was my good fortune, you will remember, to be present at the casting of the great speculum, when his lordship so signally exhibited his skill, energy, and presence of mind : and on Friday last I was agreeably surprised by receiving a courteous invitation to assist, as the French say, at an experimental trial of the powers of the stupendous machine, at

last happily completed after the expenditure of so much time, labour, and money. Finding that my friend Maclure, the well-known author of a Treatise on the Differential Calculus, had received a similar card, we hired a chaise and proceeded together to the appointed rendezvous, his lordship's country seat. To prevent interruption, or intrusion, the affair was a profound secret, except to the initiated—in all about a score of persons, several of whom had come over expressly from England, and one or two from the Continent. According to Maclure, there was even a Professor from the Swedish University of Upsala.

The company being all mustered, we repaired in a body, led by our noble host, to the grounds, where we found the telescope erected *pro tempore* on a gentle eminence in the park; the abundant brass work glittering brightly in the moonbeams, and the huge frame throwing a complicated skeleton-like shadow across the smooth grass. Seen against the dark blue sky by the dubious lunar light, its dimensions seemed even greater than they really were. Altogether it looked more like some gigantic engine of war—a “hollow tube” of that artillery described by Milton as pointed by the rebellious angels against the host of Heaven, than a machine intended to aid in the peaceful achievements of science,—a quiet victory over space.

Some minutes were spent in walking round the telescope, watching its singular appearance in different aspects, and then in testing and admiring the simplicity of its construction and the facility of the movements. The workmanship was perfect. Not a screw was loose; not a hinge was stiff; every joint and pivot moved as easily and silently as those of the human frame. So delicate was the adjustment, so nice the poise, a child could have turned the enormous tube, at will, in any direction. No vibration, no oscillation. None

but the operatives of our country and our own times could have produced such a result. It was verily the triumph of modern Mechanic Art !

At last we all congregated in a group round the inferior end of the machine. The huge brass cap over the larger disc had been removed ; the covering of the smaller lens was now withdrawn, and the tube stood ready to disclose its wondrous visions to the human eye. Expectation was on tip-toe—curiosity wound up to the highest pitch—anxiety on the rack—but nobody stirred or spoke. There was a dead, solemn pause of wonder, and I might say awe, for who knew what sublime revelations might be in store for us !—sights invisible to the mortal organ since the creation of the world ! What perplexing problems were perhaps about to be solved ! What long-cherished theories confirmed or overturned for ever !

In the meantime the glass was carefully levelled at one “bright particular star,” and through the intense silence came an emphatic whisper distinctly audible to us all.

“Now then, gentlemen, for the first look through the virgin instrument.” This honour was assigned to a personage who stood beside me :—the Astronomer Royal, probably, or Sir John Herschel ; but my old infirmity prevented me from catching the name, and I am acquainted, personally, with very few of our *sçavans*. Possibly you will recognise him from my description—a large square-built man, very bald, with a bland countenance, and a peculiar hitch in his speech. He trembled visibly as he applied his eye to the glass, and to judge by myself we all quivered more or less with the same nervous excitement. By a stop-watch, his gaze would perhaps have occupied some forty or fifty seconds ; but to my feeling, and doubtless to that of the rest of the company, the long, long look endured for several minutes. Nevertheless, nobody hurried to take his place when he

turned away from the glass. Every eye was intently riveted on his face as if to guess by its expression the nature and amount of his emotions. But to all our glances and inquiries he only answered by the exclamation—"Look! look!" with a gesture of his arm towards the telescope.

The noble proprietor was now urged to take the turn, and after a very hasty peep resigned his place to a foreigner, whom I should have guessed to be Mons. Arago, who certainly ought to have been there, if he had borne the least resemblance to the portraits of that distinguished philosopher. But he wanted the commanding figure, as well as the marked features, of the French astronomer. However, he wore the star of some foreign order on his bosom; and another of his attributes was a prodigious gold snuff-box, from which he drew and inhaled an intolerably long-drawn pinch before he settled to the glass. Like his Lordship, his politeness did not allow him to engross the sight for more than a few seconds; but they sufficed to convince him that the spectacle was "superbe! magnifique!" as he continued to ejaculate between each *prise* from his *tabatière*.

We now stood rather less ceremoniously on the order of our peeping. One after another hurried eagerly to the glass, curiosity sometimes taking precedence of good breeding; but the expressive faces of those of us who had looked, their excited gestures and vehement expressions of surprise and admiration, had worked impatience into a fever. These raptures, however, owed a portion of their intensity to some gratification vouchsafed only to the scientific; for, when my own turn came, my first feeling was one of disappointment. The two brilliant stars that I beheld, magnified almost into moons, were indeed beautiful objects—their discs sharply defined, and without any prismatic halo, or diffused light from scratches on the speculum,—defects which had been appre-

hended as likely to occur with lenses and a mirror of such enormous size. But that was all. I was not aware till afterwards of the true value of the phenomenon—that up to the hour, those twin orbs had been supposed to be one!

The company having warmly congratulated the noble proprietor on the signal success of his enterprise, the Gigantic Telescope was turned towards another quarter of the heavens, by this time studded with stars. The Frenchman now took the lead; and whatever he saw, the spectacle was too much for his equanimity. He hastily seized on his nearest neighbour, whom, with a “*Mon Dieu!*” he literally dragged to the glass—still exhorting every one about him to *regarder*, as if they could all have looked simultaneously through the tube. His successor was also a foreigner, possibly the Swedish Professor, for he had the same cast of face, with the long light hair flowing over his shoulders, as our old friend Jorgenson of Stockholm. He was also strongly excited, as was a very venerable white-haired gentleman, who followed him in turn; the last indeed, by the glistening of his eyes, was even in tears. And really there was cause for such strong emotion, considering the singular beauty of the spectacle, and the interesting nature of the discovery which I shall endeavour to describe.

In common with many others, I have often wondered at the little resemblance between the constellations and the objects after which they are named. With trifling exceptions, they suggest no figures at all, certainly not the monsters, real or fabulous, that sprawl on our celestial maps. For example, it would require a very courtier’s imagination to detect in the stars of Taurus any similarity to a bull, or in Cetus, anything “*very like a whale.*” As to the Bear, he much more resembles his vulgar alias the Plough. But we did injustice to the Chaldean seers, and the patriarchal

shepherds, or whoever recognised the ancient signs in heaven, and bestowed on them their names. In the course of ages, many of the stars belonging to the Constellations have receded, and disappeared, like the remarkable one missed from its place by Hipparchus of Rhodes, about 160 years before the Christian era. These lost stars, till now invisible to modern eyes, were however plainly discernible through the Monster Telescope ; and it was obvious, that when they occupied their original places, the Constellations to which they belonged must have presented a striking, not to say startling, resemblance to the figures with which they were associated. For instance, Leo, which was as well defined in outline by its stars, as our Royal Crowns, &c., in illumination lamps !

The excitement produced by this brilliant discovery it would be difficult to describe. One little brisk personage actually capered with delight ; whilst the Frenchman threw himself, after the national fashion, on his Lordship, whom he overwhelmed with his embraces and his voluble felicitations. Another, a tall, large man, walked rapidly to and fro, rubbing his hands vehemently, and muttering to himself, "It beats the solar eclipse at Pisa!"* In the meantime some of the more composed of the party took occasional peeps through the telescope, and from their successive reports, beheld not only double, triple, and quadruple stars of various colours, blue, red, green, and purple, but absolute swarms of comets, not less than sixty-four being counted within the same field of view—some with a single tail, others with two, and one projecting from its nucleus three distinct trains of light, diverging from each other at angles of about twenty degrees !

Judge of our state of enthusiasm and rapture at these

* Probably Mr. Baily, the astronomer.—ED.

thronging novelties ! Everybody seemed more or less in a state of delirium ! For my own part I can only compare my feeling to the exaltation which I once experienced after inhaling the laughing gas. I seemed literally lifted

Above the earth,
And possessed joys not promised at my birth.

Nothing but the dread of alarming the neighbourhood, and attracting a concourse of the peasantry, prevented our joining in a general shout.

As yet nobody had positively mentioned the Moon ; but sundry glances at the planet had shown that she was not absent from our thoughts. These significant looks now became more frequent ; and her name even began to be uttered amongst us, in spite of a previous understanding that she was to be left to the last, by way of a *bonne bouche*. But the wonders we had already seen had excited our appetite for the marvellous to a ravenous pitch ; and of all the celestial bodies, the Moon, the nearest to the earth—our own satellite, with her maplike face—her dark and bright spots—her prodigious mountains, valleys, and active volcanoes, has ever been a subject of supreme interest in human speculation. These conjectural fancies the Monster Telescope, with its immense powers, now promised to set at rest, together with the romantic theory of Fontenelle, of a Plurality of Worlds, each inhabited like our own.

Inspired by these hopes, and eager to realise them, there sprung up amongst us a sort of agitation, carried on by murmurs and gestures, which finally led to the investigation of the Moon, in preference to Jupiter and his Satellites, Saturn and his Ring, the Nebulæ, or the Milky Way. The venerable gentleman already alluded to was the first to look ; and after a while actually staggered away from the glass with

an ejaculation, which, though natural under the circumstances, would seem profane if deliberately committed to paper. However, it sufficed, with his look of concern, if not horror, to drive us from our propriety. There was a general rush towards the glass, each individual who succeeded, in turn, having to endure entreaties, remonstrances, and even reproaches, from the more impatient of the throng. In this unsatisfactory way I obtained a hurried glimpse; but it served to show me such a scene of desolation as I had never contemplated even in a dream. Wide dreary wastes of white sand, bounded by barren rocks, enclosing gloomy valleys, dark as that of the Shadow of Death! Vegetation there was none; but one immense shady tract proved to be a vast forest—literally a Black Forest—of charred trees! In its shape I seemed to recognise one of those dark patches, on the surface of the full moon,* which are visible to the naked eye. Dismal as these features were, there were others of quite as melancholy a character. Thus the bright spot named after Kepler by the astronomers, was made out by the Swedish Professor to be a great conical hill of bones bleached to a dazzling whiteness. To what class of animals they belonged it was impossible to determine; but none of them resembled the bones of the human species.

From these indications we at first entertained sanguine hopes of seeing some living creatures; but not the least sign or stir of life could be detected in any part of the planet. But the most astounding discovery was yet to come. Amongst the dark patches on the face of the moon, discernible by the naked eye, is a remarkable one, supposed to be a valley or cavity, which has been estimated by some astronomers as fifty miles broad, and nearly three miles in

* Perhaps the one called Cleomedes.—ED.

depth. It is called after Tycho Brahe, I believe, by the learned. In the midst of this huge hollow there appears a bright spot, formerly the object of much speculation and controversy, but now ascertained, by the extraordinary powers of the new telescope, to be *the skeleton of a gigantic animal—of dimensions so enormous as to surpass the mammoth or mastodon as much as they exceed in size our ordinary oxen!*

The skeleton was lying on its side ; and most of the bones retaining their places, afforded a very good notion of its figure. According to the Frenchman, who professed to have studied osteology under Cuvier, the structure was very peculiar, and unlike that of any known terrestrial animal, living or fossil. From the valley where it lay there ran a long narrow ravine, which you may trace by referring to a map of the moon. It was strewn with detached bones, and was doubtless the passage by which the monster issued and returned from his foragings.

The total absence of life, and the conical mound of bleached bones, were now accounted for ; the Monster, after ravaging all around, had at last perished by famine ; but there is something bewildering in the idea of a creature of such magnitude inhabiting a planet not so large by two-thirds as our own.

To give you any idea of the effect produced on us by so unexpected, and I may say so appalling, a spectacle, is impossible. It was absolutely stunning. We stood and looked silently in each other's faces like men suddenly awakened from a sound sleep. Could it be real ? Was it not all a dream ? And *that*, then, was the Moon, the favourite haunt of poetical and romantic love fancies—one of the retreats of the fairies ! Well might the Frenchman shrug his shoulders and exclaim that it was "*triste—vraiment affligeante!*" Nor did it much surprise me to see the old white-haired gentle-

man, sitting on the grass, weeping like a child. In reality there was something depressing and shocking in the horrible desolation we had witnessed ; yet withal so strangely fascinating, that we returned to it again and again. But we made no new discovery ; except of the crater of an extinct volcano, in the vicinity of the charred forest already described.

At this point the party broke up, and Maclure and myself took leave. But there are mysterious whisperings afloat of subsequent explorations by a "select few ;" and in particular of some supposed ethereal or angelic beings discovered in Vesta. Their shape, it is said, cannot be distinguished ; nor are they visible whilst within the disc of the planet, which is a very bright one ; but when beyond its edge they are discernible, against the dark sky, hovering about with a soft greenish light, like that of the fire flies one sees on the banks of the Rhine. As soon as I can obtain any authentic particulars you shall hear from me again. In the meantime, adieu.

Yours ever,

CHARLES MAITLAND KILGOUR.

I omitted to mention that, observing how everybody rubbed their eyes after looking through the telescope, I determined to watch my own sensations, and detected a slight drawing or shooting pain in the organs, of course from the immense power of the lenses overstraining the optic nerve. I have just learned that several of the party are suffering from the same cause, one of them even with a temporary blindness of the right eye.

ANECDOTE

OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE ALBERT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "REAL RANDOM RECORDS."



THE Consort of our gracious Queen is, as everybody knows, a Prince of the house of Saxe Gotha. Whether the famous Marshal Saxe was a member of the same family I cannot trace; but the place is celebrated for its well-known Almacks. Not that it was the first work of the kind by any means. Poor Richard's Almanack preceded it by many years. So did Francis, or Frances, Moore's; and there was a Popular one called Partridge's. One of his descendants is a Professor of Astrology, or Astronomy, or Anatomy—at any rate of something beginning with A, at one of our Universities or Colleges. I am not sure that the name was not Woodcock; but it reminded me of some wild bird of the kind. That notorious sporting character, Colonel Thornville, of Thornton Royal, once shot sixty brace of them on the same day. Another celebrated sporting character was Sir John Lade, or Ladd. I forget how much he betted to drive some sort of a vehicle, with two, or four, or six horses, a certain number of miles in a certain number of hours, and whether he won or lost; but it was reckoned a great feat. Then there was Merlin's carriage, without any horses at all. I am sure, at least, it went without horses; but am not positive if it was moved by springs or steam. Perhaps steam was not then invented. There are still carriages in the present day called Merlins, or Berlins—which is it?—but they are drawn by horses. The last invented vehicles, I believe, are called Broughams, or Brooms. But to return to

Prince Albert of Prussia, the son or brother—no, the cousin of the present king. There are some curious particulars about the Court of Prussia, and Frederick the Great in the Memoirs of his aunt, the Margravine of Anspach and Bareuth. I remember reading them in the original French—who, by the way, excel in their biographies. The only thing we have to compare with them is the life, by himself, of Lord Herbert of Cherburg. A noted place in war time for harbouring the enemy's privateers. They did a great deal of damage to our export, and picked up some very rich prizes in the Channel. One of them, called the Jones Paul, or some such names, terribly infested the Scotch and English coasts, till, according to a memorandum now lying before me, she was driven ashore in Kent by Commodore G. P. R. James, and the pirates were taken prisoners at Sevendroog Tower on Shooter's Hill.

REVIEW.

—♦—

ETCH'D THOUGHTS. By the ETCHING CLUB.—Longman & Co.

THE process called Etching, although patronised and practised by the highest personage in the kingdom, is little known or understood by the public in general, who commonly suppose the term to be synonymous with engraving. It may be briefly defined as drawing on copper with a steel point or needle, for the shape of which see a representation of the "sharp thing" in the title-page of the work itself. The design thus scratched through a waxen coat on the metal, is corroded or bit in with *aqua fortis*; the finest lines of all being afterwards scratched on the copper with the tool

without the use of the acid, or, as it is called, with the dry point. The roughness at the sides of the slight furrows thus made in the metal is called the burr, which, in printing, retains some of the ink that would otherwise be wiped off the surface of the plate, and produces that soft smeary tint so much admired by the initiated. An etching, properly, is never touched by the *graver*, a sharp cutting tool that makes deep lines in the copper, as the surgeons would say, by the first intention, without the help of the *aqua fortis*. And in etchings, painter's etchings at least, the effect is produced, more artistically, and less mechanically, than in engravings where the various tints are obtained by ruled lines of different degrees of closeness and thickness, according to the shade required.

The vulgar eye, accustomed to the sleekness of modern engravings, and especially those executed on steel, will be very apt to take fright at what would probably be called the scratchy appearance of an etching by a painter—just as some foreigners would object to a coat of English broad-cloth, compared to those glossy ones to be seen abroad, shining as if fresh from a drenching shower of rain. Nevertheless, as fine or finer tints and tones of colour are produced by the hand, than by the ruler or machine—as in the plates called the Burial Place and the Village Church, both by Creswick, in the handsome work before us.

In one essential particular the etching point brings the power of the artist to the test, namely drawing, in which our native painters are generally supposed to be somewhat deficient. There is no striking the outline with the sharp decisive needle as may be done with a soft pencil, a crayon, or a brush-full of colour. All deformities or disproportions are glaringly apparent : a glance shows whether the designer can or cannot draw, however he may affect a careless execu-

tion and a disregard for details. Every touch is visibly good or bad, right or wrong ; and judging from the book before us, we are rather disposed to concur in the opinion above alluded to as to the character of our countrymen as draughtsmen. In colouring they are unrivalled in modern times and masterly at effect, of which there are some favourable examples in the "Etch'd Thoughts," as well as of the besetting sin of painter-etchers in exaggerated light and dark, positive white opposed to blacker shadows than are at all consistent with nature, except during severe thunder-storms and awful conflagrations. As illustrating the reverse of this fault, and the mock-heroical clare obscure, let the reader refer to the gem called the Chase, by Frederick Townsend, breathing the very cool, dewy, breezy freshness of nature, shining with the tender, pearly light of the young morning ! On the other hand there are exceptions where blackness is a merit and even aids the sentiment. Witness the beautiful plate by Cope, called the Wanderer's Return, with that yew of a sable hue overhanging the grave-stone like *a tree in mourning*. But surely again a little colour might have been spared from the face—looking as if it wanted shaving all over—of the English Peasant, so named, but mistaken by us, at first, for Mr. Wordsworth, in the character of his own Waggoner. There is fine truth of colour in the face of Knight's Gipsy Boy.

These last mentioned subjects induce us to remark, *en passant*, on the title of the work, "Etch'd Thoughts"—clearly, as regards nine-tenths of the illustrations, a misnomer, inasmuch as it implies a collection of what the old writers called conceits, only expressed graphically instead of verbally. A mere half length of a countryman in a smock frock, or a gipsy boy drawn literally, are no more thoughts than our bare description in words of the same objects. Neither are

Mr. Lewis's two trees, or rather stems of trees, flanking a brook, however naturally depicted—a thought. But Mr. Redgrave's Fairies are a thought—more substantial than such gossamer creatures ought to be. The Love's Enemies, of Mr. Cope, are however a thoughtful allegory; and so is the Devill's Webbe of Bell, who has also rung out his thoughts on the matter in a quaint sonnet.

THE DEVILL'S WEBBE.

Thys Webbe our Passions bee, and eke the Flies
 Be wee poore Mortals; in the centre coyles
 Old Nicke, a Spider grimme who doth devyse
 Ever to catch us in his cunninge Toyles.
 Look at his Claws, how long they are and hooked!
 Look at his Eyes, and mark how grim and greedie!
 Look at his horrid Fangs, how sharp and crooked!
 Then keep Thy Distance so, I thus arrede ye.
 Oh sillie Flie! an thou would'st keep thee whole,
 For, an he catch thee, he will eate thy Soule.

Severn's idea of a *Step-Lover* in the Neapolitan Vintage, is quite a new thought; but, generally, there is an absence of *that*, for want of which Cymon whistled on his way. By the way, we would give a trifle to know what that young Damsel and the Page, drawn by Frank Stone, are really thinking of, besides the Lesson. It is a very pleasing plate, and a sample of good sound etching, and no trickery, to boot.

On the whole, spite of a rather unequal collection of plates, good, bad, and indifferent, the "Etch'd Thoughts" have some very good points about them, and form a very handsome and desirable book, (the typography, from the Chiswick Press, is splendid), and fit to set before the Queen, to whom it is dedicated.

THE ECHO.

It is with unfeigned pleasure that, after a silence of a month, I renew my intercourse with my readers, through the "still small voice of print."

During the interval it has been my lot to undergo a fearful wrestling with Death ; and although I have, for the present, escaped that fatal back fall which he has thrown so many of his mortal antagonists, enough remains in my shattered frame to remind me of the physical pangs and wrenches of so protracted a contest. Indeed, for the future, as at present, the serious and incurable nature of my complaints will require my whole stock of that cheerful philosophy which it has been my aim to recommend, heretofore, by my pen and personal practice. And, after all (and be this my answer to the correspondent who signs himself "Verity"), it is better to have an enlarged heart than a contracted one ; and even such a hæmorrhage as mine than a spitting of spite.

It will doubtless surprise some persons who have read the "Echo," in the last number, to find me so soon resuming the pen and the pencil. The truth is, such exercises are somewhat against the triple injunction of my medical advisers, who strenuously ordered me "to do nothing," which, on trial, was so hard to do, that a head and hand, unaccustomed to sheer idleness, flew to any work in preference. To the kind, but unknown friends, who have afforded me their sympathy—some, by letter—a few designs and a chapter will be welcome evidences of my recovery, or rather, amendment ; for I have not even yet taken a final leave of my physicians, nor made, without reserve, the present, recommended by Macbeth, to the canine race.

THE LAY OF THE LABOURER.
—♦—

It was a gloomy evening. The sun had set, angry and threatening, lighting up the horizon with lurid flame and flakes of blood-red—slowly quenched by slants of distant rain, dense and dark as segments of the old deluge. At last the whole sky was black, except the low driving grey scud, amidst which faint streaks of lightning wandered capriciously towards their appointed aim, like young fire-fiends playing on their errands.

“There will be a storm !” whispered Nature herself, as the crisp fallen leaves of autumn started up with a hollow rustle, and began dancing a wild round, with a whirlwind of dust, like some frantic orgie ushering in a revolution.

“There will be a storm !” I echoed, instinctively, looking round for the nearest shelter, and making towards it at my best pace. At such times the proudest heads will bow to very low lintels ; and setting dignity against a ducking, I very willingly condescended to stoop into “The Plough.”

It was a small hedge alehouse, too humble for the refinement of a separate parlour. One large tap-room served for all comers gentle or simple, if gentlefolks, except from stress of weather, ever sought such a place of entertainment. Its scanty accommodations were even meaner than usual ; the Plough had suffered from the hardness of the times, and exhibited the bareness of a house recently unfurnished by the broker. The aspect of the public room was cold and cheerless. There was a mere glimmer of fire in the grate, and a single unsnuffed candle stood guttering over the neck of the stone bottle in which it was stuck, in the middle

of the plain deal table. The low ceiling, blackened by smoke, hung overhead like a canopy of gloomy clouds ; the walls were stained with damp, and patches of the plaster had peeled off from the naked laths. Ornament there was none, except a solitary print, gaudily daubed in body-colours, and formerly glazed, as hinted by a small triangle of glass in one corner of the black frame. The subject, "the Shipwrecked Mariner," whose corpse, jacketed in bright sky-blue, rolled on a still brighter strip of yellow shingle, between two grass-green wheat-sheaves with white ears—but intended for foaming billows. Above all, the customary odours were wanting ; the faint smell of beer and ale, the strong scent of spirits, the fumes of tobacco ; none of them agreeable to a nice sense, but decidedly missed with a feeling akin to disappointment. Rank or vapid, they belonged to the place, representing, though in an infinitely lower key, the bouquet of Burgundy, the aroma of choice liqueurs—the breath of Social Enjoyment.

Yet there was no lack of company. Ten or twelve men, some young, but the majority of the middle age, and one or two advanced in years, were seated at the sordid board. As many glasses and jugs of various patterns stood before them ; but mostly empty, as was the tin tankard from which they had been replenished. Only a few of the party in the neighbourhood of a brown earthenware pitcher had full cups ; but of the very small ale called Adam's. Their coin and credit exhausted, they were keeping up the forms of drinking and good fellowship with plain water. From the same cause, a bundle of new clay pipes lay idle on the table, unsoiled by the Indian weed.

A glance sufficed to show that the company were of the labouring class—men with tanned, furrowed faces, and hairy freckled hands—who smelt "of the earth, earthy," and were

clad in fustian and leather, in velveteen and corduroy, glossy with wear or wet, soiled by brown clay and green moss, scratched and torn by brambles, wrinkled, warped, and threadbare with age, and variously patched—garments for need and decency, not show ;—for if, amidst the prevailing russets, drabs, and olives, there was a gayer scrap of green, blue, or red, it was a tribute not to vanity but expediency—some fragment of military broadcloth or livery plush.

As I entered, the whole party turned their eyes upon me, and having satisfied themselves by a brief scrutiny that my face and person were unknown to them, thenceforward took no more notice of me than of their own shadows on the wall. I could have fancied myself invisible, they resumed their conversation with so little reserve. The topics, such as poor men discuss amongst themselves :—the dearness of bread, the shortness of work, the long hours of labour, the lowness of wages, the badness of the weather, the sickliness of the season, the signs of a hard winter, the general evils of want, poverty, and disease ; but accompanied by such particular revelations, such minute details, and frank disclosures, as should only have come from persons talking in their sleep ! The vulgar indelicacy, methought, with which they gossiped before me of family matters—the brutal callousness with which they exposed their private affairs, the whole history and mystery of bed, board, and hearth, the secrets of home ! But a little more listening and reflection converted my disgust into pity and concern. Alas ! I had forgotten that the lives of certain classes of our species have been laid almost as bare and open as those of the beasts of the field ! The poor men had no domestic secrets—no private affairs ! All were public—matters of notoriety—friend and foe concurring in the advertisement. The Law had ferreted their huts, and scheduled their three-legged tables and bottomless chairs.

Statistical Grose had taken notes, and printed them, of every hole in their coats. Political reporters had calculated their incomings and outgoings down to fractions of pence and half ounces of tea ; and had supplied the minutiae of their domestic economy for paragraphs and leading articles. Charity, arm in arm with curiosity, and clerical Philanthropy, linked perhaps with a religious Inquisitor, had taken an inventory of their defects moral and spiritual ; whilst medical visitors had inspected and recorded their physical sores, cancerous or scrofulous, their humours, and their tumours.

Society, like a policeman, had turned upon them the full blaze of its bull's eye—exploring the shadiest recesses of their privacy, till their means, food, habits, and modes of existence were as minutely familiar as those of the animalculæ exhibited in Regent Street by the solar microscope. They had no longer any decent appearances to keep up—any shabby ones to mask with a better face—any petty shifts to slur over—any household struggles to conceal. Their circumstances were known intimately, not merely to next-door neighbours, and kith and kin, but to the whole parish, the whole county, the whole country. It was one of their last few privileges to discuss in common with the Parliament, the Press, and the Public, the deplorable details of their own affairs. Their destitution was a naked Great Fact, and they talked of it like proclaimed Bankrupts, as they were, in the wide world's Gazette.

“What matters?” said a grey-headed man, in fustian, in answer to a warning nudge and whisper from his neighbour. “If walls has ears, they are welcome to what they can ketch—ay, and the stranger to boot—if so be he don't know all about us already—for it's all in print. What we yarn, and what we spend—what we eat, and what we drink—what we wear, and the cost on it from top to toe—where we sleep,

and how many on us lie in a bed—our concerns are as common as waste land.”

“And as many geese and donkeys turned on to them, I do think!” cried a young fellow in velveteens—“to hear how folk crackle and bray about our states. And then the queer remedies as is prescribed, like, for a starving man! A Bible, says one—a Reading made Easy, says another—a Temperance Medal, says another—or maybe a Hagricultural Prize. But what is he to eat, I ax? Why, says one, a Corkassian Jew—says another, a cricket-ball—says another, a Maypole—and says another, the Wenus bound for Horsetrailye.”

“As if idle hands and empty pockets,” said the grey-headed man, “did not make signs, of themselves, for work and wages—and a hungry belly for bread and cheese.”

“That’s true, any how,” said one of the water-drinkers. “I only wish a doctor could come at this minute, and listen with his *telescope* on my stomach, and he would hear it a-talking as plain as our magpie, and saying ‘I wants wittles.’”

There was a general peal of mirth at this speech, but brief and ending abruptly, as laughter does when extorted by the odd treatment of a serious subject—a flash followed by deeper gloom. The conversation then assumed a graver tone, each man in turn recounting the trials, privations, and visitations of himself, his wife, and children, or his neighbour’s—not mentioned with fierceness, intermingling oaths and threats, nor with bitterness—some few allusions, excepted, to harsh overseers or miserly masters—but as soldiers or sailors describe the hardships and sufferings they have had to encounter in their rough vocation, and evidently endured in their own persons with a manly fortitude. If the speaker’s voice faltered, or his eyes moistened, it was only when he painted the sharp bones showing through the skin, the skin through the rags, of the wife of his bosom; or how the

traditional Wolf, no longer to be kept from the door, had rushed in and fastened on his young ones. What a revelation it was! Fathers, with more children than shillings per week—mothers travelling literally in the straw—infants starving before the parents' eyes, with cold, and famishing for food! Human creatures, male and female, old and young, not gnawed and torn by single woes, but worried at once by Winter, Disease, and Want, as by that triple-headed Dog, whelped in the Realm of Torments!

My ears tingled, and my cheeks flushed with self-reproach, remembering my fretful impatience under my own inflictions, no light ones either, till compared with the heavy complications of anguish, moral and physical, experienced by those poor men. My heart swelled with indignation, my soul sickened with disgust, to recal the sobs, sighs, tears, and hysterics—the lamentations and imprecations bestowed by pampered Selfishness on a sick bird or beast, a sore finger, a swelled toe, a lost rubber, a missing luxury, an ill-made garment, a culinary failure!—to think of the cold looks and harsh words cast by the same eyes and lips, eloquent in self-indulgence, on nakedness, starvation, and poverty. Wealth, with his own million of money, pointing to the new half-farthings as fitting money for the million—Gluttony, gorged with dainties, washed down by iced champagne, complacently commending his humble brethren to the brook of Elisha and the salads of Nebuchadnezzar; and Fashion, in furs and velvet, comfortably beholding her squalid sisters shivering in *robes de zephyr*, woven by winter itself, with the warp of a north, and the woof of an east wind!

“The job up at Bosely is finished,” said one of the middle-aged men. “I have enjoyed but three days' work in the last fortnight, and God above knows when I shall get another, even at a shilling a day. And nine mouths to feed, big and

little—and nine backs to clothe—with the winter a-settin in —and the rent behind-hand—and never a bed to lie on, and my good woman, poor soul, ready to ——”—a choking sound and a hasty gulp of water smothered the rest of the sentence. “There must be something done for us—there **MUST**,” he added, with an emphatic slap of his broad, brown, barky hand, that made the glasses jingle and the idle pipes clatter on the board. And every voice in the room echoed “there must,” my own involuntarily swelling the chorus.

“Ay, there must, and that full soon,” said the grey-headed man in fustian, with an upward appealing look, as if through the smoky clouds of the ceiling to God himself for confirmation of the necessity. “But come, lads, time’s up, so let’s have our chant, and then squander.”

The company immediately stood up; and one of the elders, with a deep bass voice, and to a slow, sad air, began a rude song, the composition probably of some provincial poet of his own class, the rest of the party joining occasionally in a verse that served for the burden.

A spade ! a rake ! a hoe !
 A pickaxe, or a bill !
 A hook to reap, or a scythe to mow,
 A flail, or what ye will—
 And here’s a ready hand
 To ply the needful tool,
 And skill’d enough, by lessons rough,
 In Labour’s rugged school.

To hedge, or dig the ditch,
 To lop or fell the tree,
 To lay the swarth on the sultry field,
 Or plough the stubborn lea ;

The harvest stack to bind,
The wheaten rick to thatch,
And never fear in my pouch to find
The tinder or the match.

To a flaming barn or farm
My fancies never roam ;
The fire I yearn to kindle and burn
Is on the hearth of Home ;
Where children huddle and crouch
Through dark long wintry days,
Where starving children huddle and crouch,
To see the cheerful rays,
A-glowing on the haggard cheek,
And not in the haggard's blaze !

To Him who sends a drought
To parch the fields forlorn,
The rain to flood the meadows with mud,
The blight to blast the corn,
To Him I leave to guide
The bolt in its crooked path,
To strike the miser's rick, and show
The skies blood-red with wrath.

A spade ! a rake ! a hoe !
A pickaxe, or a bill !
A hook to reap, or a scythe to mow,
A flail, or what ye will—
The corn to thrash, or the hedge to plash,
The market-team to drive,
Or mend the fence by the cover side,
And leave the game alive.

THE LAY OF THE LABOURER.

Ay, only give me work,
And then you need not fear
That I shall snare his Worship's hare,
Or kill his Grace's deer ;
Break into his lordship's house,
To steal the plate so rich ;
Or leave the yeoman that had a purse
To welter in a ditch.

Wherever Nature needs,
Wherever Labour calls,
No job I'll shirk of the hardest work,
To shun the workhouse walls ;
Where savage laws begrudge
The pauper babe its breath,
And doom a wife to a widow's life,
Before her partner's death.

My only claim is this,
With labour stiff and stark,
By lawful turn, my living to earn,
Between the light and dark ;
My daily bread, and nightly bed,
My bacon, and drop of beer—
But all from the hand that holds the land,
And none from the overseer !

No parish money, or loaf,
No pauper badges for me,
A son of the soil, by right of toil
Entitled to my fee.

No alms I ask, give me my task :
Here are the arm, the leg,
The strength, the sinews of a Man,
To work, and not to beg.

Still one of Adam's heirs,
Though doom'd by chance of birth
To dress so mean, and to eat the lean
Instead of the fat of the earth ;
To make such humble meals
As honest labour can,
A bone and a crust, with a grace to God,
And little thanks to man !

A spade ! a rake ! a hoe !
A pickaxe, or a bill !
A hook to reap, or a scythe to mow,
A flail, or what ye will—
Whatever the tool to ply,
Here is a willing drudge,
With muscle and limb, and woe to him
Who does their pay begrudge !

Who every weekly score
Docks labour's little mite,
Bestows on the poor at the temple door,
But robb'd them over night.
The very shilling he hoped to save,
As health and morals fail,
Shall visit me in the New Bastille,
The Spital, or the Gaol !

As the last ominous words ceased ringing, the candle-wick suddenly dropped into the neck of the stone bottle, and all was darkness and silence.

* * * * *

The vision is dispelled—the Fiction is gone—but a Fact and a Figure remain.

Some time since, a strong inward impulse moved me to paint the destitution of an overtasked class of females, who work, work, work, for wages almost nominal. But deplorable as is their condition, in the low deep, there is, it seems, a lower still—below that gloomy gulf a darker region of human misery,—beneath that Purgatory a Hell—resounding with more doeful wailings and a sharper outcry—the voice of famishing wretches, pleading vainly for work ! work ! work !—imploing as a blessing, what was laid upon Man as a curse—the labour that wrings sweat from the brow, and bread from the soil !

As a matter of conscience, that wail touches me not. As my works testify, I am of the working class myself, and in my humble sphere furnish employment for many hands, including paper-makers, draughtsmen, engravers, compositors, pressmen, binders, folders, and stitchers—and critics—all receiving a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. My gains consequently are limited—not nearly so enormous as have been realised upon shirts, slops, shawls, &c.—curiously illustrating how a man or woman might be “ clothed with curses as with a garment.” My fortune may be expressed without a long row of those ciphers—those 0's, at once significant of hundreds of thousands of pounds, and as many ejaculations of pain and sorrow from dependent slaves. My wealth might all be hoarded, if I were miserly, in a gallipot or a tin snuff-box. My guineas, placed edge to edge, instead of extending

from the Minorities to Golden Square, would barely reach from home to Bread Street. My riches would hardly allow me a roll in them, even if turned into the new copper mites. But then, thank God! no reproach clings to my coin. No tears or blood clog the meshes, no hair, plucked in desperation, is knitted with the silk of my lean purse. No consumptive seamstress can point at me her bony forefinger, and say, "For thee, *sewing in formâ pauperis*, I am become this Living Skeleton!" or hold up to me her fatal needle, as one through the eye of which the scriptural camel must pass ere I may hope to enter heaven. No withered workwoman, shaking at me her dripping suicidal locks, can cry, in a Piercing voice, "For thee, and for six poor pence, I embroidered eighty flowers on this veil"—literally a veil of tears. No famishing labourer, his joints racked with toil, holds out to me in the palm of his broad hard hand seven miserable shillings, and mutters, "For these, and a parish loaf, for six long days, from dawn till dusk, through hot and cold, through wet and dry, I tilled thy land!" My short sleeps are peaceful; my dreams untroubled. No ghastly phantoms with reproachful faces, and silence more terrible than speech, haunt my quiet pillow. No victims of Slow Murder, ushered by the Avenging Fiends, beset my couch, and make awful appointments with me to meet at the Divine bar on the day of Judgment. No deformed human creatures—men, women, children, smirched black as Negroes, transfigured suddenly, as Demons of the Pit, clutch at my heels to drag me down, down, down, an unfathomable shaft, into a gaping Tartarus. And if sometimes in waking visions I see throngs of little faces, with features preternaturally sharp, and wrinkled brows, and dull, seared orbs,—grouped with pitying clusters of the young-eyed cherubim,—not for me, thank Heaven! did those crippled children become prematurely old; and

precociously evaporate, like so much steam power, the "dew of their youth."

For me, then, that doleful cry from the Starving Unemployed has no extrinsic horror; no peculiar pang, beyond that sympathetic one which must affect the species in general. Nevertheless, amidst the dismal chorus, one complaining voice rings distinctly on my inward ear; one melancholy Figure flits prominently before my mind's eye,—vague of feature indeed, and in form with only the common outlines of humanity,—but the Eidolon of a real person, a living breathing man, with a known name. One whom I have never seen in the flesh; never spoken with; yet whose very words a still small voice is even now whispering to me, I know not whence, like the wind from a cloud.

For months past, that indistinct Figure, associated, as in a dream, with other dim images, but all mournful—stranger faces, male and female, convulsed with grief—huge hard hands, and smaller and tenderer ones, wrung in speechless anguish, and everlasting farewells—involved with obscure ocean waves, and momentary glimpses of outlandish scenery—for months past, amidst trials of my own, in the intervals of acute pain, perchance even in my delirium, and through the variegated tissue of my own interests and affairs, that sorrowful Vision has recurred to me, more or less vividly, with the intense sense of suffering, cruelty, and injustice, and the strong emotions of pity and indignation, which originated with its birth.

It may be, that some peculiar condition of the body inducing a morbid state of mind—some extreme excitability of the nerves, and through them of the moral sensibility, concurred to induce so deep an impression, to make so warm a sympathy attach itself to a mere Phantom, the representative of an obscure individual, an utter stranger. The Reader

must judge : and when the case of my unknown, unconscious, invisible client shall be laid before him, will be able to say whether it required any unnatural sensitiveness of the system, any extraordinary softening of the heart or brain, to feel a strong human interest in the fate of Gifford White.

In the spring of the present year this very unfortunate and very young man was indicted, at the Huntingdon Assizes, for throwing the following letter, addressed externally and internally to the Farmers of Bluntisham, Hunts, into a strawyard :—

“ We are determined to set fire to the whole of this place, if you don't set us to work, and burn you in your beds, if there is not an alteration. What do you think the young men are to do if you don't set them to work ? They must do something. The fact is, we cannot go on any longer. We must commit robbery, and every thing that is contrary to your wish.

“ I am,

“ AN ENEMY.”

For this offence, admitted by his plea, the prisoner, aged eighteen, was sentenced, by a judge since deceased, to Transportation for Life !

Far be it from me to palliate Incendiarism. Least of all, when so many conflagrations have recently illuminated the horizon ; and so near the time when the memory of that Arch Incendiary Guy Faux will be revived by effigies and bonfires. I am fully aware of the risk of even this appeal, at such a season, but, with that pleading Shade before me, dare the reddest reflections that may be cast on this paper.

Only catch a real Incendiary, bring his guilt clearly home to him, and let him suffer the extreme penalty of the law. Hang him. Or, if absolutely opposed to capital punishment and inclined towards the philanthropy of a very French philosophy, adopt the Christianly substitute, recommended

in the "Mysteries of Paris," and blind the criminal. Let fire avenge fire, and, according to the prescription for Prince Arthur, with irons hot burn out both his eyes. Cruel and extreme as such tortures may seem, they would scarcely expiate one of the most dastardly and atrocious of human crimes, inasmuch as the perpetrator can neither control its extent nor calculate the results.

The truth is, my faith stops far short of the popular belief in the prevalence of wilful and malignant Fire-raising—that an epidemic of that inflammatory character is so rife and raging as represented in the provinces. I am too jealous of the national character, too chary of the good name of my humble countrymen, and think too well of "a bold peasantry, our country's pride," to look on them, willingly, as a mere pack of Samson's foxes, running from farm to farm with fire brands tied to their tails. If there be any notable increase in the number of fires, some portion of the excess may be fairly attributable to causes which have converted simple risks into Doubly Hazardous ; for example, the prevalence of cigar smoking, and especially the substitution for the old tinder-box of dangerous chemical contrivances, facile of ignition, and distributed by myriads throughout the country. Talismans, that like the Arabian ones, on a slight rubbing, place a Demon at the command of the possessor—spells which have subjected the Fire Spirit to the instant invocation not merely of the wicked, but of the weak and the witless, the infant and the idiot. Generally, we work and play with the element more profusely than formerly ; witness the glowing flames, flakes, sparks, and cinders, that sweep across streets, over seas and rivers, and along railroads from the chimneys, funnels, and furnaces, of the factories, and floating and flying conveyances of Pluto, Vulcan, and Company. Another cause, Spontaneous Combustion, has lately

been convicted of the destruction of the railway station at New Cross ; and there is no reason to suppose that conflagrations from carelessness, and excessive house-warmings from inebriety, are less common than of old. Children will still play with fire ; servants, town and country, persist in snuffing long wicks, as well as noses, with finger and thumb ; and Agricultural distress has not so annihilated the breed of Jolly Farmers, but that one, here and there, is still capable of blowing himself out, and putting his candle to bed.

In the meantime, vulgar Exaggeration ascribes every "rapid consumption" of property, not clearly traceable to accident, to a malicious design. The English public, according to Goldsmith, are prone to panics, and he instances them as arming themselves with thick gloves and stout cudgels against certain popular bugbears in the shapes of mad dogs. And a fatal thing it is, proverbially, for the canine race to get an ill name. But a panic becomes a far more tragical affair when it arms one class of society against another ; and instead of mere brutes and curs of low degree, animals of our own species are hunted down and hung, or at best, all but banished to another world, by transportation for life. It is difficult to believe that some such local panic did not influence the very severe sentence passed on Gifford White. Indeed the existence of something of the kind seems intimated by the judge himself, along with the extraordinary dictum that a verbal burn is worse than the actual cautery. Lord Abinger said :—

"The offence was of a most atrocious character ; and it might almost be said, that the sending of letters threatening to burn the property of the parties to whom they were addressed was worse than putting the threat into execution ; for when a man lost his property by fire, he at least knew the worst of it, but he to whom such threats were made, was made to live in a state of continual terror and alarm."

Very true—and very harshly applied. The Farmers of

Bluntisham are not of my acquaintance ; but presuming them to be not more nervous and timorsome than farmers in general, might not their terror and alarm have been pacified on rather easier terms ? Would not the banishment of the culprit for seven, or at most fourteen years, have allowed time, ample time, for the yeomanry nerves to have recovered their tone ; for their affrighted hair, erect as stubble, to have subsided prone as rolled grass ; nay, for the very name of Gifford White to have evaporated from their agricultural heads ? Were I a Bluntisham farmer, I could not eat with relish another rasher of bacon, or swallow with satisfaction another glass of strong ale, without protesting publicly against such a sacrifice to my supposed aspen-fits, and setting on foot a petition amongst my neighbours for a mitigation of that severe and satirical sentence which condemned a fellow parishioner to expiate my fears by fifty-two years of penance—according to the scriptural calculation of human life—in the land of the kangaroo. I could not sleep soundly, and know, that for my sake a son of the same soil had been rooted out like a common weed—severed from kith and kin ; from hearth and home, if he had one ; from his mother-country, hard step-mother though she had proved ; from a familiar land and native air, to a foreign one and a new climate, with strange faces around him, and strange stars above him,—a banished man, not for a little while, or for a long while, but for ever !

But, methinks I hear a voice say, it was necessary to make an example—a proceeding always accompanied by a certain degree of hardship, if not injustice, as regards the party selected to be punished *in terrorem* ; unless the choice be made of a criminal especially deserving such a painful preference—as for robbery with personal violence : whereas there appear to be no aggravations of the offence for which Gifford

White was sentenced to a murderer's atonement. On the contrary, he pleaded guilty, a course generally admitted as an extenuation of guilt. His youth ought to have been a circumstance in his favour; and, above all, the consideration that a threat does not necessarily involve the intent, much less the deed. All who have been led, by word or writing, to hope or fear, for good or evil, have had reason to know how far is Promise from Performance,—as far as England from New South Wales. Expectants never die the sooner for golden prospects held out to them; and threatened folks are long-lived, to a proverb. And why? Because the enemy who announces his designs is the least dangerous: as the Scotch say, "his bark is waur than his bite." The truth is, menaces are about the most abundant, idle, and empty of human vapourings; the mere puffings, blowings, gruntings, and growlings from the safety-valves and waste-pipes of high-pressure engines. The promissory notes of threateners to large amounts are ludicrously associated, instead of payment, with "no effects." Who of us has not heard a good mother, a fond mother, a doting mother, but sharp tempered, promise her own dear but troublesome offspring, her very pets, such savage inflictions, such breaking of bones and knocking off plaguy little heads, as ought, sincerely uttered, to have consigned her to the custody of the police? There, as my Uncle Toby says, she found vent. Who has never known a friend, a worthy man, but a passionate one, to indulge in such murderous threats against the life, body, and limbs of a tight boot-maker, or a loose tailor, a blunt creditor, or a sharp critic, as ought, if in earnest, to have placed him in handcuffs and a straight waistcoat? But nobody takes these blazes of temper for the burnings of settled malignity—these harmless flashes of sheet lightning for the destructive gleam of the forked. It is quite possible,

therefore, that the incendiary letter of Gifford White, though breathing Congreves and Lucifers, was purely theoretical; albeit read by the judge as if in serious earnest, like the fulminating prospectuses of the Duc de Normandie or Captain Warner.

I confess to have searched, in vain, through the epistle for any animus of peculiar atrocity. Its address, generally to the farmers, shows it not to have been the inspiration of personal malice or private revenge. The threat is not a direct and positive one, as in resolved retaliation for some by-gone wrong; but put hypothetically, and rather in the nature of a warning of probable consequences, dependent on future contingencies. The wish of the writer is obviously not father to the menace: on the contrary, he expostulates, and appeals, methinks most touchingly, to the reason, the justice, even the compassion, of the very parties—to be burnt in their beds. So clear a proof, to me, of the absence of any serious intent, or malice prepense, that the only agitation from the fall of such a missive in my farmyard, if I had one, would be the flutter amongst the poultry. At least theirs would be the only personal terror and alarm,—for, with other feelings, who could fail to be moved by a momentous question and declaration re-echoed by hundreds and thousands of able and willing but starving labourers. “What are we to do if you don’t set us to work? We must do something. The fact is, we cannot go on any longer!”

Can the wholesale emigration, so often proposed, be only transportation in disguise for using such language in common with Gifford White?

To me—speaking from my heart, and recording my deliberate opinions on a material that, frail as it is, will long outlast my own fabric,—there is something deeply affecting in the spectacle of a young man, in the prime of health and

vigour, offering himself, a voluntary slave, in the Labour-market without a purchaser—eagerly proffering to barter the use of his body, the day-long exertion of his strength, the wear and tear of flesh and blood, bone and muscle, for the common necessaries of life—earnestly craving for bread on the penal conditions prescribed by his Creator—and in vain—in vain! Well for those who enjoy each Blessing of earth that there are volunteers to work out the Curse! Well for the drones of the social hive that there are bees of so industrious a turn, willing for an infinitesimal share of the honey to undertake the labour of its fabrication!

Let these considerations avail an unfortunate man, or rather youth, perhaps an oppressed one, subject to the tyranny of some such ticket system as lately required the interference of the Home Secretary, in behalf of the labourers of another county.—

Methinks I see him, poor-Phantom! an impertinent unit of a surplus population, humbly pleading for bread, and offered an acre of stones—to be cleared at five farthings a rood. Work and wages for the asking!—with the double alternative of the Union-house, or a free passage—the North-West one—to the still undiscovered coast of Bohemia!—

Is a rash youth, so wrought on, to be eternally Ex-Isled from this sweet little one of our own, for only throwing a few intemperate “thoughts that breathe and words that burn” into an anonymous letter?

Let these things plead for a fellow-creature, goaded, perhaps, by the sense of wrong, as well as the physical pangs of hunger, and driven by the neglect of all milder applications to appeal to the selfish fears of men who will neither read the signs of the times, nor heed warnings, unless written, like Belshazzar’s, in letters of fire!

One thing is certain. These are not times for visiting

with severity the offences of the labouring poor, a class who, it is admitted by all parties, have borne the severest trials that can afflict the soul and body of man, with an exemplary fortitude and a patience almost superhuman. A great fact at which every true Englishman should exult, as at a National Victory, as in moral heroism it is. I, for one, am proud of my poor countrymen, and naturally loth to believe that a character which so reluctantly combines with disaffection, and indulges so sparingly in outbreak, will freely absorb so vile a spirit as that of incendiarism. At any rate, before rashly adopting such a conclusion, common justice and common sense bid me look elsewhere for the causes of any unusual number of fires in the rural districts. As a mere matter of patriotism, one would rather ascribe such unfilial outrages to an alien than to a son of the soil. We have lately seen a Foreign Prince, an ally, in a time of peace, speculating with much playful naïveté on the best modes for squibbing our shipping and rocketing our harbours—the facility with which he could ignite the Thames and mull the Medway—sink the Cinque Ports—blow off Beachy's head, shiver Deal into splinters, and knock the two Reculver steeples into one. His Highness, it is true, contemplated a bellicose state, ceremoniously proclaimed according to the usage of polite nations ; but suppose some outlandish savage, as uncivilised as unshorn, say from Terra del Fuego, animated with an insane hostility to England, and burning to test his skill in Pyrotechnics—might not such a barbarian be tempted to dispense with a formal declaration of war, and make a few experimental essays how to introduce his treacherous combustibles into our perfidious towns and hamlets ? Foreign incendiaries for me, rather than native ; and accident or Spontaneous Combustion before either ! But if we must believe in it home-made—surely, in preference to

the industrious labourer, suspicion should fall on those sturdy trampers that infest the country, the foremost to crave for food and money, the last to ask for work, and one of whom might light up a dozen parishes. If it be otherwise, if a class eminently loyal, patient, peaceable, and rational, have really become such madmen throwing about fire, it is high time, methinks, with universal Artesian borings, to begin to scuttle our island for fear of its being burnt. But no—that Shadow of an Incendiary, with uplifted hands, and streaming repentant eyes, disavows with earnest gesture the foul intent : and shadow as he is, my belief acquits him, and makes me echo the imaginary sigh with which he fades again into the foggy distance between me and Port Sydney.

It is in your power, Sir James Graham, to lay the Ghost that is haunting me. But that is a trifle. By a due intercession with the earthly Fountain of Mercy, you may convert a melancholy Shadow into a happier Reality—a righted man—a much pleasanter image to mingle in our waking visions as well as in those dreams which, as Hamlet conjectures may soothe or disturb us in our coffins. Think, Sir, of poor Gifford White—inquire into his hard case, and give it your humane consideration, as that of a fellow-man with an immortal soul—a “possible angel”—to be met hereafter face to face.

To me, should this appeal meet with any success, it will be one of the dearest deeds of my pen. I shall not repent a wide deviation from my usual course : or begrudge the pain and trouble caused me by the providential visitings of an importunate Phantom. In any case, my own responsibility is at an end. I have relieved my heart, appeased my conscience, and absolved my soul.

T. HOOD.

[This appeal was so earnest and so urgent, that, at the risk of overburdening the volume with compositions which are not my father's, I venture to insert, whole and unabridged, the answer which Sir James Graham returned to an address, which, however publicly made, was a direct personal pleading of the strongest kind.

The answer runs thus :—

“ Sir James Graham presents his compliments to Mr. Hood, and begs to acknowledge the Magazine accompanying his letter of the 30th instant.

Whitehall, 31 October, 1844.”]

EPIGRAM.

ON HER MAJESTY'S VISIT TO THE CITY, 1844.

—◆—

We've heard of comets, blazing things,
 With “fear of change” perplexing Kings ;
 But, lo ! a novel sight and strange,
 A Queen who does not fear a 'Change !

ON THE QUEEN'S VISIT TO THE CITY.

BY A TRADESMAN IN CORNHILL.

—◆—

SURE the measure is strange
 That all Commerce so stops,
 And, to open a 'Change,
 Make us shut up our shops.

SONNET TO A SONNET.

Particularly commended, with the Fifth of Sir Philip Sidney's, and the pages of Froissart, to the perusal of certain Journalists across the Channel ; and generally to their *Young* countrymen, who would do well to affect, with the beards and moustaches of the olden time, the gallant courtesy of the ancient manners.



RARE Composition of a Poet-Knight,
 Most chivalrous amongst chivalric men,
 Distinguish'd for a polish'd lance and pen
 In tuneful contest, and the tourney-fight ;
 Lustrous in scholarship, in honour bright,
 Accomplish'd in all graces current then,
 Humane as any in historic ken,
 Brave, handsome, noble, affable, polite,
 Most courteous to that race become of late
 So fiercely scornful of all kind advance,
 Rude, bitter, coarse, implacable in hate
 To Albion, plotting ever her mischance,—
 Alas ! fair Verse, how false and out of date
 Thy phrase "*sweet enemy*" applied to France !

EPIGRAM.

ON A PICTURE (407) IN THE BRITISH INSTITUTION, 1843.



SIR, let me just your tasteful eye enveigle
 To yonder Painting, of the Madman Eagle.
 Which, *that* by Poole ? Excuse me, sir, I beg,
 I really have no wish to catch "The Plague."

MRS. PECK'S PUDDING.

A CHRISTMAS ROMANCE.



“THE disappointment will be dreadful,” said Mrs. Peck, speaking to herself, and looking from the dingy floor, up the bare wall, at the blank ceiling. “But how to get one Heaven only knows !”

It was the afternoon of the 24th of December. Christmas Day was at hand, and for the first time in her existence Mrs. Peck was without a plum-pudding. For years past she had been reduced in life ; but never so reduced as that ! She was in despair. Not that she particularly doted on the composition ; but it was a sort of superstition with her that, if she failed to taste the dish in question on that festival, she should never again enjoy luck in this world, or perhaps in the next. It was a foolish notion : but many enlightened Christians cling religiously to similar opinions ; for example, as to pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, or hot cross buns on a Good Friday. So with Mrs. Peck a plum-pudding on Christmas day was an article of her faith.

Yes—she must have one, though it should prove but a dumpling of larger growth. But how ? Buying was out of the question : she had not half a farthing in the house—a widow without a mite !—and stealing was not to be thought of—she must borrow or beg. Once arrived at this conclusion, she acted on it without delay. There were plenty of little emissaries at hand, in the shape of her own children, for the necessary errands—namely, Careful Susan, Dirty Polly, Greedy Charley, Whistling Dick, Little Jack, and Ragged

Peter, so called from a fragment of linen that usually dangled behind him, like a ship's ensign from its stern.

"Children!" said Mrs. Peck, "I am going to have a Christmas plum-pudding."

At such an unexpected announcement, the children shouted, jumped about, and clapped their skinny hands. But their mirth was of brief duration. Second thoughts, for once none of the best, soon reminded them that the cupboard was as bare as Mother Hubbard's! while the maternal pocket was equally empty. How the thing was to happen, therefore they knew not—unless by some such fairy feat as sent black puddings tumbling down the chimney; or some such scriptural miracle as showered quails and manna in the Wilderness; or that one, which Greedy Charley remembered to have seen depicted in blue and white on a Dutch tile, of horned cattle and sheep coming down from Heaven to St. Peter, in a monster bundle. But having vainly watched the hearths, the walls, and the ceiling, for a minute or so, they gave up all such extravagant expectations. The hopes of Ragged Peter were like his nether garment, in tatters; and the dingy face of Dirty Polly looked darker than ever. There was a dead silence, at last broken by little Jack.

"But mammy, you have got no plums."

"And no flour," said Careful Susan.

"And no suet," said Dirty Polly.

"Nor no sugar," said Ragged Peter.

"And no almonds and orange-peel," said Greedy Charley.

"No eggs," said Careful Susan.

"And never a sarcepan," said Whistling Dick.

"As to almonds and orange peel," said Mrs. Peck, "we must do without. Our pudding will be a very plain one. That is to say, if we get it at all, for there is not one ingre-

dient in the house. We must borrow and beg ; so get ready, all of you, to run on my errands."

"Let me go for the plums, mother," said Greedy Charley ; but knowing his failing, she assigned to him to plead to Mr. Crop, the butcher, for a morsel of suet. Dirty Polly was to extract a few currents and raisins and some sugar, if she could, out of Mr. Perry, the grocer ; Little Jack was to wheedle a trifle of flour from Mr. Stone, the baker ; and Careful Susan was to get three eggs of Mrs. Saukins, who did mangling in her parlour and kept fowls in her cellar. Whistling Dick undertook to borrow a saucepan ; and as Ragged Peter insisted also on a commission, he was sent to hunt about the streets, and pick up a little orange peel—candied, if possible.

As the children had no promenade dresses to put on, they were soon ready. Susan merely reduced the angles of her bonnet front to something of a semicircle ; and Dirty Polly, with a single tug, made her short scanty garment look a little more like a frock, and less like a kilt. She might, indeed have washed her face, as Ragged Peter might have tucked in some dingy linen, with personal advantage ; but as they were not going to a juvenile party, they waived the ceremony. Little Jack clapped on his crownless hat ; Greedy Charley took his jew's harp, the gift of a generous charity-boy ; Whistling Dick set up his natural pipe ; and away they went, in search of a pudding by instalments.

As soon as they were gone, Mrs. Peck, having made up the fire, washed her hands and arms very clean, and then seating herself at the round deal table, with her elbows on the board, and her chin between her palms, began to calculate her chances of success. The flour, provided Mr. Stone, and not his wife, was in the shop, she made sure of. The fruit was certain—the suet was very possible—the saucepan as

good as in her own hand—in short, being of a sanguine temperament, she dreamed till she saw before her a smoking hot plum-pudding, of respectable size, and dappled with dark spots, big and little, like a Dalmatian dog.

In the meantime, Charley, twanging all the way on his jew's, arrived at the butcher's, who was standing before the shop with his back to the road, admiring, as only butchers can admire, the rows of fat carcasses and prime joints on the tender-hooks before him. Could that meat have known his sentiments concerning it, what proud flesh it would have been! Hearing a step behind him, and anticipating a customer, he turned round with the usual "What d'ye buy?"

"I haven't got no money to buy with," said Charley, "or else"—and looking round for the desired object, he pointed to it with his finger—"I'd buy that ere lump of suet."

"And what do you want with suet?" asked the butcher.

"If you please, sir," replied Charley, "it's for our pudding. But mother is out of money: so if you don't let her have that bit of suet, either on credit or for charity ——"

"Well, what then?" said the butcher.

"Why then," said Charley, "it will be the first time in our lives that we've gone without plum-pudding on this blessed festival."

The butcher was a big florid man, bloated and reddened, as persons of his trade are said to be, by constantly imbibing invisible beef-tea and mutton-broth, or, as it is called, the smell of the meat. But, although thus appropriating by minute particles the flesh and fat of sheep, oxen, and pigs, he was far from becoming a brute. He cast a kindly glance at the poor boy, who looked sickly and ill-fed, and then a triumphant one at his halves and quarters, glorious with nature's red and white, and gay with sprigs of holly, suggest-

ing the opportune reflection that Christmas comes but once a year.

“There—take it, boy—you’re welcome to it, gratis, by way of a Christmas box—and my compliments of the season to your mother.”

So saying, he tossed the suet to Charley, who, forgetting in his joy to thank his benefactor, ran straight home with the treasure, as delighted as if he had just won the Prize Ox in a Beef-Union Lottery.

The success of Dirty Polly was less decisive. Before entering the grocer’s shop, she took a long, longing look through the window, unconsciously nibbling at her own fingers, instead of those delicious Jordan almonds, and that crisp candied citron and orange peel—and sucking in imagination at those beautiful Smyrna figs, and Damascus dates, and French plums, so temptingly displayed in round drums and fancy boxes, with frills of tinted paper round each compartment. And there, too, were the very articles she wanted—new currants from Zante—rich Malaga rasins, or of the sun, or sultanas—with samples of sugar of every shade and quality, from a fine light sand to a coarse dark gravel; but, alas! all ticketed at impracticable rates, in obtrusive figures! The owner had marked a price on every thing except the long twisted sticks of sugar-candy and the canes of cinnamon that leaned against the China figure. “Will he give anything away for nothing,” she asked herself, “if I beg ever so?” The China mandarin nodded his head, and she stepped in.

The grocer himself was in the shop, in his snow-white apron, busily dusting, with a clean cloth, some imaginary impurities from the polished counter. He was not a harsh man, but a particular one, scrupulously neat in his apparel, and cleanly in his person. The slovenly frock and grubby

flesh of dirty Polly did not therefore prepossess him in her favour. He hastily took down a pair of dazzling bright scales and asked her what she wanted. But Polly was silent. She was haunted by those large black numerals, no figures of fun, but formidable to penniless poverty, as giants with clubs. The grocer again inquired what she wanted.

"Why, then, if you please, sir," said Polly, "it's raisins, and currants, and brown sugar."

"How much of each?"

"As much, sir," replied Polly, dropping a low curtsey, "as you'll please to give us."

"Pshaw!" said the grocer.

"It's for a Christmas pudding," said Polly, beginning to whimper; "and if you don't take pity on us, we shall have none at all."

The grocer was silent, and turned away from her towards his shelves and canisters.

"Do, sir—pray do," said Polly, wringing her hands and beginning to cry, not much to the advantage of her looks, as the tears washed away the dirt in stripes; and still less when she wiped her cheeks and eyes with the skirt of a frock that was daggled with mud. Luckily the grocer's back was still turned, so that he did not see the grimy drops which fell on his bright mahogany.

"Pray, pray, pray—only a few plums and currants, and a little, a very little sugar," said Polly, between her sobs.

"There," said the grocer, turning suddenly round, and thrusting a square paper of something into her hand. "Take that, and tell your mother to make a good use of it."

In the eagerness of her joy, for the thing felt like a money-box, Dirty Polly hurried out of the shop, and sure in the absence of sugar and plums of the means of buying

them, she ran home to her mother with the speed of a young heifer.

The next subject for experiment was Mr. Stone, the baker ; but unfortunately Mr. Stone was from home, and his help-mate was at the desk in the shop, in charge of the pecks, quarterns, and half-quarterns, the fancy twists, and the French rolls. She was a little pale woman, with quick grey eyes, and a sharp-pointed nose, so sharp and pointed that she might have drilled with it the holes in the butter-biscuits. A glance at little Jack and the receptacle he carried informed her at once of his errand.

“Flour, eh ? And in that odd thing !”

“Yes, ma'am,” said little Jack. “When poor daddy was alive it was one of his double nightcaps ; but mammy has turned it into a flour bag by cutting-off one end.”

“A quartern, I suppose,” said Mrs. Stone, going towards the large tin scale.

“If you please, ma'am,” said Jack, “and be as good as not to let it be seconds or middlins, but the best flour.”

“There then, child,” said Mrs. Stone, holding out one hand with the full bag, and the other for the money.

“There's no money, ma'am,” said little Jack. “Mammy's not got any. The flour isn't to be paid for.”

“No, no—that won't do,” said Mrs. Stone, “I'm not going to book it.”

“We don't want you to,” said little Jack.

“You don't ?” exclaimed Mrs. Stone.

“No, ma'am,” said little Jack. “I'm begging, ma'am,—it's for charity.”

“In that case,” said Mrs. Stone, deliberately returning the flour into the great tin scale, “charity begins at home.” So saying, she tossed the empty nightcap into the black face of the urchin, who, beginning to cry and having nothing else to

wipe his eyes with, made use of the flour-bag, which soon converted his woe into dough.

"It's for our Christmas pud—pud—pudding," he blubbered. "We only had a very tiddy one last year, and now there won't be none at all."

"A Christmas fiddlestick!" exclaimed Mrs. Stone. "Here, come hither, you little wretch, and I will give you something worth all the creature comforts in the world."

"Is it good to eat?" asked little Jack.

"To eat!" cried Mrs. Stone, with upraised hands and eyes. "Oh, belly gods! belly gods! belly gods!"—a singular exclamation enough for a woman who sold fancy bread and took in bakings. "When will the poor leave off hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt!"

"I don't know," said little Jack.

"No, but your mother might!" retorted Mrs. Stone. "A quartern of flour indeed! When will she ask for heavenly manna?"

"Perhaps she will," said Jack, "arter she's finished her pudding."

"There again!" exclaimed Mrs. Stone, "nothing but gluttony. But come this way,"—and she led little Jack into the parlour, behind the shop, where she first unlocked her bureau, and then opened a private drawer. "There!" she said, thrusting a paper parcel into his tiny hand—"there's spiritual food—go home and tell your mother to feed you well with it."

Little Jack took the gift with the best bow he could make. To be sure it was not flour, but the packet might contain Embden groats, which was better than nothing, and he was fond of gruel; so he made the best of his way home, not quite so well pleased as Greedy Charley, or Dirty Polly, but better satisfied than Careful Susan.

She had picked her way through the dirt to Mrs. Saukins's, before whose door a spangled bantam, with a magnificent red comb and wattles, was strutting about, cock-sure of possessing the handsomest feather-trousers in the whole parish ; and responding at intervals with a screeching chuckle to a more distant cackle in the cellar. Accepting the hint of this bird of good omen, Susan at once ascended the steps, and walking into the mangling parlour, explained her wants to the proprietor.

"By all means," said Mrs. Saukins. "Three eggs—yes, certainly—I'll fetch 'em directly—warranted new-laid—hark ! there's Polly Phemus."

"Polly who ?" said Susan.

"Polly Phemus. I give female names to all my hens ; and know every one by her voice. Yes, that's her—black with a white tuft—a Polish everlasting layer—she's in her nest, in the old candle-box up in the dark corner. Well—three eggs—I think you said three ?—Yes, certainly—you shall have them warm, as I may say, from the hen."

"Thankee, ma'am," said Susan. "Mother can't pay for them now, but she will out of her very first money."

"Dear me !" exclaimed Mrs. Saukins. "That alters the case. I'm very sorry to deny—but eggs is eggs now, and the new-laid uns fetches tuppence a piece. Besides, it's not the season, and my poultry don't lay."

"*Kuk-kuk-kuk-a-larcock !*" cried the hen in the cellar.

"*Larcock !*" echoed the spangled bantam.

"No, they don't lay !" said the unblushing Mrs. Saukins. "And if they did, my fowls pay ready money for their barley, and can't afford to give credit."

"Then you won't let us have them ?" said Susan.

"It's impossible," said Mrs. Saukins. "My poultry has suffered such bad debts already. If they once knew I booked,

they'd turn pale in the combs, and leave off laying directly. They've done it afore—yes—often and often. I'm very sorry I'm sure—and if it was anything else—for example, a little mangling——”

“You're very kind,” said Susan, “but we've got no linen. So you won't oblige us with the eggs?”

“Dear me, no—I said no,” replied Mrs. Saukins. “My poultry is my partner, and would dissolve directly. Their terms for new-laid is tuppence a piece, cash down, or three for sixpence. That's the lowest; but to a friend I'd venture to go so far as to give one in—that one there, in the little moss basket in the window. To be sure the flies has spotted it a little, till it looks more like a thrush's, but it's a hen's—and as fresh a one as ever was broke in a basin.”

“But I haven't got sixpence,” said Susan.

“The more's the pity,” said Mrs. Saukins, “for my hens is imperative. My mangle sometimes accommodates with credit, but my poultry won't. Birds is so cunning, and my fowls in particular. I do really believe they would know a bad shilling from a good one.”

“But mother promises faithfully to pay,” said Susan.

“No, no,” said Mrs. Saukins. “My poultry won't take promises. They know pence from piecrust—you might offer them a bushel of promises, and promissory notes besides, without getting an egg out of them—but only show them the money, and they go off to their nestes and lay like lambs.”

“There goes our pudding then!” said Susan, in a tone of deep dejection.

“Do you mean a Christmas pudding—a plum one?” inquired Mrs. Saukins.

“I do,” replied Susan. “It will be the first time that we have missed having one, and mother will feel it dreadfully. It's quite a religious point with her.”

“Well, that’s lucky!” exclaimed Mrs. Saukins, “for if I can’t oblige with the eggs for a pudding, I can favour with a receipt for making one—rich, yet economical.”

“I would rather have the eggs,” thought Susan ; but as the pudding promised to be anything but a rich one, and the recipe professed to be a cheap one, she thought it prudent to take advantage of the offer. Accordingly, the document having been transcribed, she put the copy in her pocket, and returned home, the least satisfied of all the foraging party with the result of her expedition.

Ragged Peter, it is true, had failed equally in his search for orange-peel. Whether some elderly lady or gentleman had stepped on a piece, at the cost of a compound fracture, and so had sharpened *pro tempore* the vigilance of the police, or whether it had become the fashion to eat the rind with the fruit, there was not a morsel of it to be picked up, candied or uncandied. But to make amends for this disappointment, in passing along a street at the West End, the ragged boy had the good luck to be espied by a personage who had before time noticed him, on account of some fancied resemblance to a deceased nephew. Peter’s eyes twinkled with joy as he recognised his old acquaintance in his splendid livery ; and the more from remembering that at their last meeting he had been presented with some of the requisites for a plum-pudding. He crossed the road, therefore, with alacrity, in compliance with the friendly signal from the powdered gentleman at the open street-door.

The porter was a very tall and very portly man, with a very convex chest, and a very stiff frill projecting from it, from top to bottom, like a palisade to keep off all intruders on his heart or bosom. Nor was there anything very promising to poor boys in general in his livery, blue turned up with red, and trimmed with gold lace, making him look

merely a free translation of a parish beadle. Nevertheless, the porter was a good-natured fellow ; and his glance was genial, and his voice was kindly, as he accosted the ragged child.

“ Well, young un !—Where now ?—Do you remember me ? ”

“ Yes, sir,” said Peter, with a cheerful smile. “ You give me once a pocketful of almonds and reasons.”

“ Ah, that was after our dinner-party,” said the porter. “ I’ve none to-day.”

Peter sighed, and was turning away from the steps, a movement that exhibited the dilapidations in his rear, when he was recalled by the same friendly voice. Peter stopped.

“ Stay here till I come back.” And the gentle giant went inwards, whence he presently returned with a bundle, which he placed in Peter’s arms. “ There, take that—it’s good stuff—and tell your mother to do her best with it.”

“ We shall have a pudding, anyhow,” thought Peter, not doubting that the bundle of good stuff had been made up by contributions from the cook and housekeeper ; wherefore, spluttering some broken thanks to the porter, he ran home with his rags fluttering in the wind, as fast as he could scamper.

The last of the adventurers was Whistling Dick. To the tune of “ O where, and O where,” he had successively visited the whole of his mother’s friends and acquaintance—no great number in all, as often happens to a widow with a limited income—but from nobody could he obtain a loan of the indispensable culinary utensil. One had lent her saucepan already ; another had burnt a hole in it ; a third had it on the fire with the family dinner ; a fourth had pawned it, but his mother was welcome to take it out ; and a fifth, an

Irishwoman, had never had any saucepan at all except the frying-pan.

"I do believe," said Dick, "if there is such things as saucepans in kitchens, they have all asked for a holiday, like the servants, and gone out for a day's pleasure."

At last he gave up the search in despair, and was walking slowly homewards, when his attention was attracted by a tapping at a parlour-window. He looked up and recognised, over the Venetian blind, the three faces of the young Masters Britton, who had once called him into the house to whistle to them.

"Who knows," thought Dick, "if I am invited in again, but I may make friends with the cook, and so get the lend of a saucepan?"

But the hope was fallacious. He was indeed asked in; but the moment he mentioned the object of his expedition, and confessed his design on the kitchen, the youngsters, one and all, declared that the thing was impossible. Their mamma was out, and the cook was such a termagant, and, that morning particularly, in so fierce a temper, that he might as well confront a fiery dragon. But what did he want with a saucepan?

"To bile our puddin' in," said Dick. "It's Christmas time, you know; and we don't like to miss keepin' it."

At the mention of Christmas and keeping it, the young Brittons withdrew into a corner, and held a whispered consultation, which seemed a long one, before they broke up, and clustered again round their *protégé*.

"Do you ever play at a round game?" inquired Master John.

"Sometimes," answered Dick. "Only I harn't got a hoop."

The young Brittons looked in some perplexity at each other.

“ You know what counters are, don't you ?” asked Master William.

“ Yes,” replied Dick ; “ they nail bad ha'pence to them.”

The young Brittons were again disconcerted by this answer.

“ He don't understand us,” observed Master William.

“ Give it him at once,” said Master Benjamin.

Thus instructed, Master John advanced close up to Dick, and poked something into his hand, which the receiver thoroughly looked at, and then in turn at each of the young gentlemen.

“ It's to play with,” said Master John.

“ You'll find it very amusing,” said Master William.

“ But you must whistle us a tune for it,” said Master Benjamin.

Dick immediately complied, and struck up “ Sich a gittin' up Stairs,” but rather dolefully : he would have preferred a good-sized, well-tinned saucepan to the thing in his hand, or all the toys in the world. However, a trifle is better than nothing ; so, thrusting it into his pocket, he took leave of the young gentlemen, and returned home, whither we will follow him.

The Widow Peck has been described as a woman of sanguine disposition. We left her sitting with her elbows on the table, and her chin between her hands, with a dreamy steamy plum-pudding in all its glory before her—a vision not at all dispelled by the arrival of Greedy Charley with a real substantial lump of suet. He was closely followed by Dirty Polly, but, alas ! without those conical paper bags associated with sugar and spice, and all that is nice, in grocery.

"What! no raisins—no currants—no sugar—no nothing?"

"Yes,—that!" said Dirty Polly, throwing her packet on the table; "and you're to make a good use of it."

The mother caught up the packet, and impatiently tearing off the envelope, in a faint voice proclaimed the contents.

"A square of yellow soap!"

"A square of yellow soap!" repeated both of the children.

"I should like to know of Heaven," said the widow, holding up the article towards the ceiling, "how I am to use *that* in a pudding!" But Heaven made no answer.

"It's for washing my face with!" cried Dirty Polly, very indignantly. "I saw him stare at me!"

"Well, there can't be a plum-pudding without plums," said the widow, looking the very picture of despair. But her lamentations were cut short by the entrance of Little Jack: he had brought the flour, of course.

"No, mammy," said Jack, "I've got no flour at all; but there's grits."

"Grits!" exclaimed the widow. "Who wants grits?" But the case, when opened, appeared even worse. "Grits, indeed! It's a parcel of religious tracks!"

"It ain't my fault," said little Jack, blubbering, and again having recourse to the old nightcap for want of a handkerchief. "It was Mrs. Stone's. She said it was for spiritous food, and I thought she meant gruel, with rum in it."

"Well, well," said the widow, forgetting, mother-like, her own troubles in the grief of her little one. "Don't cry. We shall, perhaps, have a pudding yet—who knows? Susan, maybe, will have better luck."

As she spoke, Susan stepped into the room, and walking gravely up to the table, began to search under her frock.

"Why, in Mercy's name!" exclaimed the alarmed widow,

“what is the girl fumbling at! You surely have not brought the eggs in your pocket?”

“I haven't brought the eggs in anything,” said Susan, still groping among her petticoats.

“No! Then what *have* you brought?”

“A receipt for a plum-pudding.”

“A receipt!” screamed the excited widow,—“a receipt! Why it's the only thing I don't want! I can write a receipt myself. Take a pound of suet, a pound of currants, a pound of plums—but how am I to take 'em? Where's my materials!”

“Here they are, mother,” shouted the well-known voice of ragged Peter, as he bounded into the room and threw a good-looking bundle on the table. “There's the materials!”

“Then we're in luck after all!” said the widow, nervously tugging at the knots of the old handkerchief, which suddenly gave way and allowed the materials to unfold themselves.

“O Lord! O cri! O criminy!” ejaculated Peter and Charley, and little Jack, the girls using similar interjections of their own.

“Hold me!” cried the widow, “lay hold of me or I shall run away. I'm going off my head—I'm half crazy—take 'em out of my sight!—A pair of old red plushes!”

“I thought,” whined Peter, “they was things from the pantry. But that comes of turning my back to the porter and exposing my rags. I wish, I do, that I was all front!”

“There's Dick,” exclaimed Susan; “I hear his whistle in the distance. I wonder if he has got the saucepan!”

“Oh, of course we shall have that,” said the widow, with great bitterness; repeated disappointments had brought her to the mood for what she called arranging Providence.—“Yes, we shall have the saucepan, no doubt, just because we've

nothing to put in it." She was wrong. In another minute Dick was standing amongst his brothers and sisters, but empty-handed.

"Why, bless the boy! He hasn't brought the saucepan after all!"

"No," said Dick,—“nor even a tin-pot. But I've brought this,” and he chucked his present on the table.

"As I live!" cried the widow,—“it's an ivory totum!”

"Yes," said Dick. "It was given me by the young Brittons. They seemed to think, as we had no pudding, we should like to divert our hungers."

"Divert a fool's head!" cried the poor widow, throwing herself back in her chair, and laughing hysterically. "The world's gone mad!—the world's gone mad, and everybody is crazy! The more one wants anything, the more they give one something else—and the more one don't want anything, the more they force it upon you! Here am I, going to make a plum-pudding—or rather wanting to make one—and what have I got towards it!"

"A lump of suet!" muttered Charley.

"Yes, that's something," said the widow. "But what else—tell me what else have I got towards my pudding? Why, a square of yellow soap—a bundle of tracks—a written receipt—a pair of red plushes,—and a teetotum!"

The circle of children, down-hearted as they were, could not forbear a titter at the idea of the comical pudding to be made of such ingredients; but their mirth was speedily damped by the tears of their mother.

"It's all over," she said, "and Christmas must go by without its pudding! What will come of it, Lord knows! Once break through a religious rule, and who knows the consequence? There was your poor father and me: every wedding-day in our lives, as sure as it came round, we made

a point to have pickled streaky pork and pea-pudding, the same as at our nuptials ; but one year, somehow or another, we missed—and in less than a week after he was called away.”

“And why, mammy,” asked little Jack, “why didn’t you die too, then ?”

The widow, doubtless, would have answered this heartless question ; but unfortunately she was seized with such a violent fit of coughing as almost took away her breath. At last she recovered, rather suddenly, and assumed the attitude of a listener.

“Hush ! there’s somebody tapping at the door.”

The children immediately rushed to the latch, and let in a tall, thin man, in black clothes and green spectacles, with an umbrella in one hand, and a red book in the other. A glance at the breast of his coat confirmed the widow’s worst fears ; an inkhorn with a pen in it was dangling from one of the button-holes.

“If it’s rates or taxes,” she said, “you must seize at once—for I haven’t a farthing.”

The man in black made no answer, but kept prying through his green glasses at the circle of young faces, and at length fixed upon Dick.

“Didn’t I see you, my lad, looking in at the window of a cook-shop ?”

“Yes,” answered Dick, “and you asked me about the family, and if we wasn’t in distress.”

“Very good,” said the man in black. “And you replied that you were in very deep distress indeed.”

“Yes, for a sarcepan,” said Dick.

“It was to boil our Christmas pudding in.” said the widow. “But we haven’t got one, sir, nor no hopes of one.”

"Very good," said the man in black. "I am a Perambulating Member of the District Benevolent Visitation Society, and am come to relieve your wants."

"You are very good, I'm sure," said the widow, quite flustered by such moral plunges from hot to cold, and then to hot again. "As you say, sir, I have seen better days,"—though how or when the gentleman said so was known only to herself. "Yes, for twenty years I have been a householder, and up to this time have never missed celebrating my Christmas in a respectable way. And I do own it would go nigh to break my heart."

"Very good, very good," said the man in black, busily writing in the red book, from which he eventually tore out a leaf, that he folded up and presented to the widow.

"There's an order, ma'am, for what you want."

"The Lord in heaven bless you!" cried the widow, starting up from her chair, with a first impulse to throw herself on the good man's neck; and a second one, to go down on her knees to him; but which she checked just as the genuflection arrived at the proper point for a very profound curtsy.

"Oh, sir!—but I'm too full to speak. Yet, if the prayers of a widow and six fatherless children ——"

"Very good, very good, very good," said the man, in black, waving off the six ragged, dirty, grateful, fatherless children, who wanted to hug and kiss him—and shuffling as fast as he could to the door, through which he bolted more like a detected swindler than a professed Samaritan.

"Well, that comes of trusting to Providence," said the widow, quite forgetting a recent lapse, the least in the world, towards atheism. "Come, children, sing 'O be joyful,' for we have got our pudding at last."

The children needed no further hint; but at once joined

hands, and began dancing round the table, as if the grand object of their hopes had been already smoking in the middle—Dick whistling “Merrily danced the Quaker’s Wife,” as loud and fast as he could rattle it, whilst the mother ecstatically beat time with her head and foot. At last they were all out of breath.

“There, that will do,” said the widow. “Now then, some of you put on your hats and bonnets to fetch the things; for, of course, it’s an order on the baker and the grocer.”

“It’s an order,” said Careful Susan, reading very deliberately the paper which she had taken from her mother’s passive hand,—“an order for six yards of flannel.”

“Flannin!”

“Yes, flannel.”

The widow snatched the paper; glanced at it; threw it from her; and dropped into her chair; not as if for a temporary rest, but as though she would fain have sunk through the bottom of it, and right through the floor, and down through the foundation of the house, and six foot of earth beneath, for a quiet grave.

In a moment she had six comforters at her neck; not woollen ones, but quite as warm and more affectionate, though their loving assiduities were repelled.

“Don’t hang on me—don’t! And don’t tell me to hope, for I won’t, I can’t, be consoled! So don’t come nigh me—no, not even if you see me fainting away—for I’m grown desperate, like an over driv’ beast, and don’t know what I may commit!”

The panic-stricken children instinctively backed into a distant semicircle, and fixing their eyes on their parent, as if she had really been the enraged animal she had described, awaited in awful silence her next words. At last they came, in a fierce harsh voice.

“Wipe Jackey’s nose.”

A brother and sister on either hand of the little one immediately performed the desired office ; and then trembling, waited the next command.

“Tear up that divilish paper !”

Susan immediately picked up the unfortunate order, but as she hesitated, with her usual prudence, to destroy what was equivalent to six yards of flannel, Dirty Polly snatched the paper from her, and tore it up as small as she could mince it.

“I have hoped as long as I could,” cried the widow, suddenly starting to her feet, “but now I give up ! When bad luck sets in that way, blow upon blow, it’s for good. We shall never prosper again—never, never, never ! We’re a ruined family, root and branch—and if it was not for the sin, I’d wish nothing better at this blessed moment than to have you all six tied round my waist, enjoying a Serpentine death ?”

At this horrible picture, which the speaker dramatised by frantically throwing up her arms, as at the fatal plunge, and then letting herself sink gradually, by a sort of curtsey, as if subsiding into the mud, the poor devoted children set up a general howl ; and then broke into a series of sobbings and ejaculations, only checked by the opening of the door and the entrance of another stranger.

If the former visitor resembled a tax-gatherer, his successor hardly made a more favourable impression on the widow, from whom, had he asked the same question as the Baronet in the Poor Gentleman, “Do I look like a bailiff ?” he would probably have received the same answer—“I don’t know but you do.” He had no red book in his hand, and no ink-horn at his button-hole ; but he carried a very formidable bludgeon, and wore a very old wig, and a very broad-brimmed

hat, as much on one side as a yacht in a squall. Altogether there was such an air of disguise about him, that if not a bailiff, he was certainly, as the next best guess, a policeman in plain clothes.

"I believe, ma'am," said the stranger, "you have just had a visit from an agent of a Benevolent Society?"

"Yes, and be hanged to him!" thought the widow; "and perhaps you're another!" but she held her tongue. The stranger, therefore, repeated his question to Susan, as the eldest of the children, and was answered in the affirmative.

"I knew it," said the stranger. "And he asked if you were not in distress; and you said that you were, and he told you he was come to relieve it."

"Yes, with six yards ——" burst from several voices.

"Hush—hold your little tongues! I know it all—with an order for six yards of flannel—wasn't it so? Six yards of flannel for a Christmas pudding—ha! ha! ha!"

The children would have laughed, too, but they were afraid. The stranger had suddenly turned into a conjurer, who knew their thoughts and wishes.

"You are right, indeed, sir," said the widow. "He called himself by some hard name."

"Yes, an ambulating member," said the stranger, "of the District Visitation. I know them well. Six yards of flannel—just like them. That's their way. There was poor Bidy Hourigan, an Irish Catholic, ma'am—they visited her, too, and found her in deep distress, not about a pudding though, but because she had not a farthing in the world to get her husband out of purgatory. And how do you think, ma'am, they relieved a poor soul in purgatory? Why, with a bushel of coals!"

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the widow; adding, in the simplicity of her heart, "that perhaps it was in the winter?"

“No, ma'am, there's no winter *there*,” said the stranger. “But to business. You have seen better days.”

The poor widow cast a piteous glance at the bare walls and rickety furniture of her humble dwelling.

“You have been a housekeeper many years in this parish,” continued the stranger, “and have been accustomed all your days to a plum-pudding at Christmas ; and you cannot bear to go without it—hush ! not a word !—I know it all by sympathy. I like myself to keep up old customs—better, most of them, than the new ones.”

“They are, indeed,” said the widow, shaking her head. “But if it is not a liberty, may I ask, sir, if you belong to any Society yourself ?”

“Why, yes, ma'am,” said the stranger, “In one sense I do—namely, the Universal Society of Human Nature. But if you mean such as the District Visitation, I do not. I tread in their steps, it is true, but it is to do what they leave undone. Their ambulators serve me for pointers to find my birds.”

“And a noble sort of sporting, if ever there was one !” exclaimed the widow, with enthusiasm. “It's a thousand pities more rich people don't take out licences, and follow the same game.”

“It is, indeed, a thousand pities, ma'am,” said the stranger ; “and a thousand shames to boot. In this motley world of ours, some people have their happiness cut thick, and buttered on both sides ; and some have it thin, and no butter at all. As one of the former class, it's my duty to bestow some of my greasy superfluity on my poorer fellow creatures. But what are all those heterogeneous articles on the table, neither eatables nor drinkables—have you been visited, ma'am, by half a dozen Societies ?”

The widow, with the help of her family, related their ad-

ventures in search of a pudding ; at the end of which the stranger laughed so long and immoderately, and choked, and got so black in the face, that the children shrieked in chorus for fear he should go to heaven before his time. But ready-made angel as he was, heaven spared him a little longer by letting him come to ; at which, however, instead of seeming overjoyed, he looked very grave, and shook his head, till the widow feared he had "bust a vessel."

"Too bad," he said, at last, "too bad of me to laugh at such distress. I must make amends on the spot—and the best way will be to make you all, if I can, as merry as myself. There, ma'am"—and he placed in the widow's hand a purse, through the green meshes of which she perceived the glitter of sovereigns, like gold fish among weeds. "Properly laid out, that money will purchase all the requisites for a Christmas plum-pudding, and some odd comforts and clothing besides. Hush—no words, I guess them all by sympathy! Only a shake of the hand all round, and a kiss from the little one. There! Be good boys and girls! God bless you all! Good-bye!"

The children watched the exit of the generous stranger till the last bit of him had disappeared, and then, as if "drowned in a dream," still continued gazing on the door.

"He was a real gentleman!" cried Dick.

"A saint! a saint!" exclaimed Mrs. Peck, "a real saint upon earth—and I took him for a bailiff! but no matter. He don't know it, that's one comfort ; and if he did, such an angelical being would forgive it. But come, children, what are you all staring at? Why don't you huzza now, as you did afore, and whistle, and take hands, and dance round the table? Vent yourselves how you like—only don't quite pull the house down—for we've got a Christmas Pudding at last!"

THE SAUSAGE MAKER'S GHOST.

A LONDON LEGEND.

SOMEWHERE in Leather Lane—

I wonder that it was not Mincing,
And for this reason most convincing,

That Mr. Brain

Dealt in those well-minced cartridges of meat

Some people like to eat—

However, all such quibbles overstepping,

In Leather Lane he lived ; and drove a trade

In porcine sausages, though London made,

Call'd "Epping."

Right brisk was the demand,

Seldom his goods stay'd long on hand,

For out of all adjacent courts and lanes,

Young Irish ladies and their swains—

Such soups of girls and broths of boys!—

Sought his delicious chains,

Preferr'd to all polonies, saveloys,

And other foreign toys—

The mere chance passengers

Who saw his "sassengers,"

Of sweetness undeniable,

So sleek, so mottled, and so "friable,"

Stepp'd in, forgetting ev'ry other thought,

And bought.

Meanwhile a constant thumping
Was heard, a sort of subterranean chumping—
 Incessant was the noise !
But though he had a foreman and assistant,
 With all the tools consistent,
(Besides a wife and two fine chopping boys)
 His means were not yet vast enough
 For chopping fast enough
To meet the call from streets, and lanes, and passages,
 For first-chop "sassages."

 However, Mr. Brain
Was none of those dull men and slow,
Who, flying bird-like by a railway train,
Sigh for the heavy mails of long ago ;
He did not set his face 'gainst innovations
 For rapid operations,
And therefore in a kind of waking dream
Listen'd to some hot-water sprite that hinted
To have his meat chopp'd, as the Times was printed,
 By steam !

 Accordingly in happy hour,
A bran-new Engine went to work
 Chopping up pounds on pounds of pork
With all the energy of Two-Horse-Power,
 And wonderful celerity—
When lo ! when ev'rything to hope responded,
Whether his head was turn'd by his prosperity,
Whether he had some sly intrigue, in verity,
 The man absconded !

His anxious Wife in vain
 Placarded Leather Lane,
 And all the suburbs with descriptive bills,
 Such as are issued when from homes and tills
 Clerks, dogs, cats, lunatics, and children roam ;
 Besides advertisements in all the journals,
 Or weeklies or diurnals,
 Beginning "LEFT HIS HOME"—
 The sausage-maker, spite of white and black,
 Never came back.

Never, alive !—But on the seventh night,
 Just when the yawning grave its dead releases,
 Filling his bedded wife with sore affright
 In walk'd his grisly Sprite,
 In fifty thousand pieces !
 "O Mary !" so it seem'd
 In hollow melancholy tone to say,
 Whilst thro' its airy shape the moonlight gleam'd
 With scarcely dimmer ray,—
 "O Mary ! let your hopes no longer flatter,
 Prepare at once to drink of sorrow's cup—
 It ain't no use to mince the matter—
 The Engine's chopp'd me up !"

. THE ECHO.

—♦—

OUR best thanks are due to a Correspondent who signs himself "Civis." The writer of the Letter in the "Britannia" newspaper, who accused us of favouring incendiarism, evidently did not put forward his true objection to our article. He is probably a wholesale dealer in cheap shirts or embroidered shawls—and a lineal descendant from Mrs. Brownrigge, of atrocious memory.

To "P. R." There was a trial of a labourer for sending a threatening letter, very similar to that of Gifford White, recently reported by Judge Alderson. But the sentence was very different—ten years' transportation.

We must refer "Maria" to her French and English Dictionary for the translation of "La Belle Poule." It seems to mean the bell-pull.

To "N. N." The most characteristic "Mysteries of London" are those which have lately prevailed on the land and the river, attended by collisions of vessels, robberies, assaults, accidents, and other features of Metropolitan interest. If N. N. be ambitious of competing with the writers whom he names, let him try his hand at a genuine, solid, yellow November fog. It is dirty, dangerous, smoky, stinking, obscure, unwholesome, and favourable to vice and violence.

P. W. Too political for us—but might suit the columns of our friend Punch.

A. Too personal. He ought to know better than to send such shells, which are only fit for burial in Woolwich Marshes, to a Magazine.

[During this year my father's pen—guided now by a hand weakened by increasing illness—was employed entirely in the service of his own Magazine—with one exception. That exception was in favour of "Punch," for which he wrote the following poem, an allusion to a well-known incident in the State Trials in Ireland.]

A DREAM.



'Twas night—the Globe was folded up,
 (The paper, not the earth,)
 And to its proper shelf restored
 The fairest "Maid of Perth :"
 But still with strange intricacy
 The things that I had read—
 The Irish News, the Scottish Tale—
 Kept running in my head ;
 While over all a sort of mist
 Began to slowly creep,
 The twilight haze of Thought, before
 It darkens into Sleep ;
 A foggy land where shady shapes
 Kept stirring in the gloom,
 Till with a hint of brighter tint
 One spot began to bloom,
 And on the blank, by dreamy prank,
 I saw a Figure tall,
 As vivid as from painted glass,
 Projected on a wall !

The face as well as I could trace,
 Two sparkling eyes were there,
 Black as the beard, and trim moustache,
 And curling head of hair ;

The nose was straight, the mouth was large,
The lips disclosed beneath
A set, full white and regular,
Of strong and handsome teeth—
The whiter, that his brow and cheek,
And thick uncovered gorge,
Were ruddy as if baked by heat
Of sun or glowing forge.

His dress was buff, or some such stuff,
And belted at the waist ;
A curious dirk, for stabbing work,
Was in the girdle placed,
Beside a sort of pouch or purse
Of some wild creature's skin,
To safely hold his store of gold
Or silver coin therein ;—
But—suddenly his doublet changed
To one of brighter hue,
A jerkin fair and superfine,
Of cloth of azure blue,
Slash'd front and back with satin black,
Embroider'd o'er and laced
With sable silk, as used to suit
The ancient time and taste ;
His hose were of the Flemish cut,
His boots of Cordovan ;
A velvet bonnet on his head,
Like that of Scottish man,—
Nay, not a velvet one,—for why,
As dreams are apt to deal,
With sudden change, as swift as strange,
It shone a cap of steel !

His coat of buff, or azure stuff,
 Became a hauberk bright,
No longer gay in his array,
 But harness'd for the Fight !
Huge was his frame, and muscular,
 Indicative of strength :
His bosom broad, his brawny arms
 Of more than common length ;
And well the sturdy limbs might be
 So sinewy, stark, and strong,
That had to wield in battle-field
 A sword so broad and long !
Few men there were of mortal mould,
 Although of warlike trade,
But had been rash to stand the crash
 Of that tremendous blade ;
And yet aloft he swung it oft,
 As if of feather weight,
And cut amid the empty air
 A monstrous figure eight ;
Whilst ever, as it cleft the wind,
 A whisper came therewith,
That low and clear, said in my ear,
 “ Behold the Fighting Smith !” *

And lo ! another “ change came o'er
 The spirit of my dream :”
The hauberk bright no longer shone
 With that metallic gleam—
No ruddy visage furnace-scorch'd,
 With glowing eyes, was there,

* *Vide* Scott's “ Fair Maid of Perth.”

No sable beard, no trim moustache,
Nor head of raven hair ;
No steely cap, with plume mayhap,
No bonnet small or big ;
Upon his brow there settled now
A curly powder'd Wig !
Beneath the chin two cambric bands
Demurely drooped adown ;
And from his brawny shoulders hung
A black forensic gown.
No mail beneath, to guard from death,
Or wounds in battle dealt,
Nor ready dirk for stabbing work,
Dependent at his belt—
His right hand bore no broad claymore,
But with a flourish, soon
He waved a Pistol huge enough
For any horse-dragon,
And whilst he pointed to and fro,
As if to aim therewith,
Still in my ear, the voice was clear,
“ Behold the Fighting Smith !” *

* *Vide* “The State Trials in Ireland.”

[It has been no easy task to arrange the following fragmentary verses, as they were very roughly written in the original MS. The last four lines are given, though very unfinished, as they afford some hint as to the probable intention of the Poem. After due consideration, I am led to think it belongs to this year, as well as the fragment which succeeds it.]

THE LAY OF THE LARK.

WITH dew upon its breast
 • And sunshine on its wing,
 The lark uprose from its happy nest
 And thus it seemed to sing :—
 “ Sweet, sweet ! from the middle of the wheat
 To meet the morning gray,
 To leave the corn on a merry morn,
 Nor have to curse the day.”

* * * * *

With the dew upon their breast,
 And the sunlight on their wing,
 Towards the skies from the furrows rise
 The larks, and thus they sing :—
 “ If you would know the cause
 That makes us sing so gay,
 It is because we hail and bless,
 And never curse the day.
 Sweet, sweet ! from the middle of the wheat
 (*Where lurk our callow brood*)
 Where we were hatch'd, and fed
 Amidst the corn on a very merry morn
 (*We never starve for food.*)
 We never starve for bread !”

* * * * *

Those flowers so very blue
 Those poppies flaming red,
 * * * * *
 His heavy eye was glazed and dull,
 He only murmur'd "bread !"

FRAGMENT.

To note the symptoms of the times,
 Its cruel and cold-blooded crimes,
 One sure result we win.
 Tho' rude and rougher modes, no doubt,
 Of murder are not going out,
 That poison's coming in.
 * * * * *
 The powder that the doom'd devour
 And drink,—for sugar,—meal,—or flour,
 Narcotics for the young—
 And worst of all, that subtle juice
 That can a sudden death produce,
 Whilst yet upon the tongue.

So swift in its destructive pace,
 Easy to give, and hard to trace,
 So potable—so clear !
 So small the needful dose—to slip
 Between the fatal cup and lip,
 In Epsom salts or beer.
 * * * * *

Arrest the plague with cannabis—
And * * * publish this,
 To quench the felon's hope :—
Twelve drops of prussic acid, still
Are not more prompt and sure to kill
 Than one good Drop of Rope.

1845.

[THIS year—the last year of my father's labours—found him stretched on a bed of sickness, from which he wrote the few contributions which this year helped to fill the numbers of the Magazine. Hardly able to perform this necessary task, he was utterly unable to write for any other periodical. All, therefore, that remains of his writings, to complete this volume, I have reprinted from "Hood's Magazine."]

A LETTER FROM THE CAPE.

THE authenticity of the following epistle will be believed or not, according to the temperament of the reader. There are persons who will recognise the genuineness of the "Letters from the Dead to the Living," but reject those of Fum Hoam as a fictitious correspondence. How, and from whom the document came into the possession of the editor it is unnecessary to state : it will suffice to say that he received full permission to print it, as well as to illuminate it, if he pleased, with his pencil.

To Mr. Philip Muller, Shoe Mart, 91, Minories, London.

DEAR UNCLE,

You will be astonished, no doubt, at my dating from Africa, and particularly after our giving out only a trip to the Continent—but for reasons you shall have in due course. In the meantime please to note the present as strictly confidential, as containing matters, which for our

interests it is material to prevent getting wind : the truth is we are in what the Americans call a fix—but you shall have the whole story item by item, and almost verbatim, for I have a retentive memory, as if from a short-hand reporter.

As a relation and intimate visitor, you are aware of my father's fondness for rural life. Every summer, as regularly as it came, he took some country place in the suburbs, with a bit of ground where he might indulge in gardening, but which, as I may say, was only taking the edge off his stomach—his real hankering was after farming—and above all the tiptop of his ambition was to have a landed estate of his own for his agricultural pursuits. "No leasing or renting for me," he used to say, "but a regular out-and-out freehold, if it's ever so small, where I can turn out my hobby into my own fields. For if there's an enviable character on the earth," said he, "it's a Proprietor of the Soil, that can stand on his own ground with his own clay sticking to his shoes, and say, 'Here I am, a landlord, and all between the sky and the centre is my own.'" Which, for a long time, in the depressed state of business, seemed only a Utopian idea, no more to be realised than the Pennsylvanian bonds. However, what with one lucky spec' and another, prospects improved, and particularly by a bankrupt, intending to make himself scarce, who sold his whole stock to us, at sixty per cent. discount, for cash down, whereby we realised considerably, being able to undersell all the rest of the trade—not such a sum, to be sure, as would enable us to buy one of those splendid domains or manors constantly advertised by Mr. Robins, but enough to purchase a snug little bit of land in England, or a good track of it in Australia, New Zealand, or the United States ; between which the governor, as I call him, having no objection to go abroad, and being

ambitious of farming on a large scale, was studying to make up his mind, when one day he came home from the City all cock-a-hoop with the news that a Mr. Braggins had a vast quantity of land to dispose of at the Cape of Good Hope, at the unprecedented low price of a shilling an acre.

“That’s the place,” said he, “for my investment. Improveable land of course, or it wouldn’t be so reasonable ; and, as such, offering opportunities for drawing out its capabilities by chemical cultivation.” And nothing would serve him but I must clap on my hat at once, and go off with him to Mr. Braggins, whom we found in his office, hung round with maps of the country, and ground plans of the African estates.

“I believe,” said Father, plunging at once *in medias res*, “you have some foreign land to dispose of?”

“Yes—there it is,” said Mr. Braggins, jumping down from his stool, and pointing with his finger to the biggest map—“all that tract marked red, beginning here at Bavian Boomjes—a noble expanse, calling aloud on Man, with his physical and intellectual energies, to convert it from a wilderness to a fertile and populous province—a Land of Promise, only awaiting civilisation’s dairies and apiaries to overflow with milk and honey.”

“And what’s the general quality of the soil?” asked my father.

“Why, to be candid,” said Mr. Braggins, “there are worse and there are better. Not quite so rich as the fat loams of Kent, nor exactly so hard and sordid as the bare bleak rocks of Cornwall. It needs cultivation of course, being virgin earth, fresh from the hands of nature ; rather dry, and therefore requiring the less outlay for draining.”

“And stiff?” asked my father.

“Why, medium ; but remarkably free from stones, roots, or stubbs,—an eligible substance for the operations of the plough, or spade husbandry if preferred. As I said before, a soil not superlatively rich in quality, but amply compensated by a feature of commanding advantage, namely, the proximity to the African Islands, with an unlimited supply of guano, that miraculous manure that has proved the salvation of the British Farmer ; and which, if spread thick enough, must, by analogy, produce the most abundant harvests.”

“And the climate ?” said my father.

“Superb. None of those cloudy, foggy skies, the curse of England, and the reproach of foreigners ; but deeply, beautifully blue, with a tropical sun, as Byron says—

‘ Not, as in northern climes, obscurely bright,
But one unclouded blaze of living light,’—

entirely superseding stoves and hot beds, and all our expensive apparatus for the production of melons and cowcubers ; to say nothing of the grape, and the possible luxury of quaffing your own Cape, home-made, under your own eye, with due regard to the fermentation, and which is all that is necessary to render it a racy, generous wine, equal to the most celebrated vintages of the Bacchanalian provinces of the Continent.”

“What, equal to sherry ?” said I.

“Why, no,” said Mr. Braggins, “not exactly equal, but superior—positively superior to some qualities of the Spanish juice ; and especially should you be favoured, during the ripening of the fruit, by the presence of one of those eccentric heavenly visitors, a comet, like the famous one of 1822. Then, if you’re horticultural, the gifts of Flora, including the rarest exotics of our conservatories, flourish in luxuriant profusion—the Scipio Africanus and the African marigold, in

their most splendid varieties, growing indigenously in the open air."

"And as to the sporting?" I inquired.

"Oceans of game, sir, oceans, and self-protected—the poacher, that bane of our *feræ naturæ*, being unknown; and, on the other hand, no manorial rights to be infringed, nor jealous preserver offended, in your uncertificated pursuit of your sport. No, sir; you'll be monarch of all you survey, as the poem says, and lord of the fowl and the brute."

"But to return to the farming," interrupted my father; "I should like to pursue both pasture and arable."

"Well, my good sir," said Mr. Braggins, "the land is equally adapted for either; as fit to pasture cattle, as capable of bearing corn."

"And suppose I should fancy," said my father, "to breed and fatten live stock?"

"Nothing better, sir, a certain speculation. The animals in that country have a natural tendency to take on fat—for example, the well-known Cape sheep, whose tails become one mass of living mutton tallow, which is supported, and trundles after them in a sort of go-cart or truck. And talking of mutton, reminds me to mention its piquant accessory, capers, a common weed, which you will have for the mere picking, as gratis as groundsel. Yes, sir, breed and fatten. You may judge by the sheep what your cattle will be. Your fat bullocks will vie with our Smithfield Club prize oxen, and even your lean beasts will be equalled to the stock that is imported from Holland, under Sir Robert's New Tariff."

"Very good," said my father, rubbing his hands. "I have heard and read of the African sheep. And how as to the natives—no fear of their coming down on a moonlight

night from the hills like a band of rude barbarians, as the play says, and sweeping our flocks and herds ?”

“Oh, none in the world,” said Mr. Braggins. “The nearest tribe is the Gondolas, or Dongolas, and they are limited to a distance of a hundred and fifty miles, by an express treaty with King Tongataboo, in consideration of an annual tribute—a mere trifle, six gross of brass buttons and a few bucketfuls of cowries, a sort of foreign sea-shell, plentiful as periwinkles, that you may pick up by millions, billions, and trillions, on the seacoast.”

“Yes, I have read of cowries,” said my father, “they serve for money.”

“No, sir, no,” resumed Mr. Braggins, “there will be few natives, black or white, to trespass on a delicious solitude, where banishing conventional forms, the restraints of etiquette, and the trammels of fashion, you may live in almost the primeval simplicity of a state of nature.”

“But I shall want labourers—ploughmen, herdsmen, and cowboys and the like,” said my father.

“True, sir,” said Mr. Braggins ; “and if you don’t object to Black labour, which, except the clean look to the eye, is quite equal to white, you may get slaves at first hand, from the interior, for a mere trifle—or with a little management you may catch your own. And talking of the interior, should you fancy such an excursion, and have a turn for traffic, you can barter with the natives ; and between ourselves, there are unprecedented bargains to be obtained of their commercial simplicity. For instance, if you have a matrimonial partner, (my father nodded,) she’d get ostrich feathers, equal to any from the court plumassiers, for a mere song. As for gold dust, sir, you may roll in it—and pick up elephant’s teeth, almost as cheaply as Sinbad did when he was introduced to their monster cemetery.”

“Egad!” cried my father, “the estate has so many desirable advantages, I wonder you don’t turn farmer, sir, and settle on it yourself!”

“Ah, city habits,” said Mr. Braggins, “city habits. All my thoughts and feelings are town made: and whatever some people may say, I prefer consols at ninety-eight, to a landed investment. The truth is, I have not, like you, Mr. What’s-your-name, a pastoral bias, or any rural sympathies. If I had, *there* would be my location,” and he placed his finger again on the map, just beyond Bavian Boomjes—“a little Goshen, enclosed in a magnificent panorama, including the Table Mountain with all its hospitable associations, and that singular meteorological phenomenon, called ‘laying the cloth.’”

“And now,” said my father, “there is only one thing more that I want to know, and expect a candid answer,—and that is, how you can afford to sell your land so dirt cheap?”

“Of course,” said Mr. Braggins, “the most frank and open explanation will be afforded without reserve. In the first place, then, the expense, to the purchaser, of going out so far, is liberally taken into consideration; and secondly, the land is unsettled waste land, without churches, without highways, and altogether free of that modern curse, a surplus population; and consequently, unburthened with tithes, parish, and poor-rates, that press so heavily on land like so many incubuses, in England.”

“That’s enough!” cried my father, who you know is a bit of a radical. “That’s the country for me! No insolent squirearchy or proud aristocracy to snub and brow-beat, and cut a retired tradesman; no rapacious clergy to take the tenth of his pigs and poultry; and no tax-gatherers and collectors, with their six quarters to the year,

and a half year always due. Yes, that's the country for me !”

To shorten a long story, my father bought five thousand acres of the Cape land outright, with the title deeds to the same : and I do believe he was as happy as if he had got a slice of Paradise in a ring fence. The hopes and dreams of his life seemed fulfilled at last ; and it was better than half the Speeches at the Agricultural Meetings, to hear him talk of drilling, and ploughing, and manuring, and draining by irrigation, and salts, and carbon, and ammonia, and nitrogen, and hydromel, and oxymel, and ashes, and guano, and how he would subsoil and top-dress, with a rotation of crops. In fact it was a perfect monomania, so that he could hardly express his sentiments on the cut of a coat, without prefacing as one of the landed interest ; and scarcely allowed himself time for his meals, with trotting about town to look at patent chaffcutters, and prize ploughs, and other new invented agricultural implements. All which helped to keep him agog ; and especially the *Times*, day after day, with its long list of vessels bound direct to the Cape, or with leave to touch at it, till he had not patience to wait for the winding up of the business, but one morning walked off to the broker's and engaged berths for himself and me, by the very first ship ; our departure being kept as snug and secret as possible, the governor judging that if it was known he was a landed proprietor, he should be beset by all our poor relations on both sides of the house, to be made stewards, and bailiffs, and the like. In the meanwhile, Samuel was to dispose of the stock, premises, and goodwill, and then to follow abroad with my mother, as soon as advised to that effect, after our arrival on the estate.

I need not describe our voyage, which was much the same as usual, with waves mountains high, and sea-sickness in pro-

portion ; but the governor's prospects kept him up under it, and me too. "Courage, Joseph," says he, "we shall soon see land, and, what's more, land of our own. Five thousand acres is no bad lot ; and you'll have all the shooting over it to yourself,—wild turkeys and peacocks, and all, and which I take it will be a vast deal better sport than popping at Battersea blue rocks, or Chalk Farm sparrows."

"No doubt of it," said I, "but in the meantime this up and down motion is very unpleasant to endure."

"Not if you think of it agriculturally," said the governor. "Only hills and valleys, Joseph, only hills and valleys. A desirable diversity of high and low ground, such as I trust the estate is ; and therefore, with wood and water, capable of being laid out picturesque."

Well, at long and at last, we arrived at Cape Town ; and after an interview with Mr. Braggins's agent set out, as advised by him, in a bullock-waggon, driven by a black Hottentot, who knew every inch of the country, to inspect the estate, which, however, lay much further off than was expected or agreeable ; but, for want of milestones, cannot tell the distance, except that it took us two whole days and a half to travel ; the country getting wilder and wilder as we went on, more tangled with outlandish brushwood, and encumbered with broken ground, till the waggon could get no further. Luckily we were close to Bavian Boomjes, and there was only a wooded hill between us and the property to traverse on foot, which we did, leaving the Hottentot in charge of the waggon and bullocks ; and on emerging at the other side of the hill, lo ! and behold, there was our estate lying before us as flat as a pancake, and as yellow as a guinea !

I really thought my father would have gone off in an apoplexy on the spot ; his face turned, through the blue of

disappointment and the crimson of rage, into such a deep purple. "Scrape a grave in it," says he, as soon as he could speak, "scrape a grave in it, Joseph, and bury me at once, for I'm a dead landlord! Land, indeed! I've come into five thousand acres of sand—desert sand—and if I'm not mistaken," says he, turning from purple to white, "there's a lion on it!" As in fact there was, beside a thicket, about as far off from us as our shop from the church.

You may imagine our terror! But though the beast lifted up his head from between his paws to look at us, and gave a flourish with his tail, and growled a little, he did not rise, but allowed us to run off, which we did at double quick; and, indeed, as regards my father, at a supernatural pace, considering his age and bulk, and the heat of a broiling hot tropical sun. I feared at first he would have a fever in consequence, which providentially is not the case; but he has hardly eaten or drunk, or spoken a syllable ever since, through mortification and dejection; and no wonder, for if ever there was Agricultural Distress in this world it is his. What we are to do with the estate Lord knows. Some great people would, perhaps, have interest enough to get a railroad brought through it, and so obtain compensation; but that is not our case. As to the agent, in answer to our remonstrances, he only asks what sort of land we could expect for a shilling an acre; and says, that instead of objecting to the lion, we ought to consider him in the light of a bonus.

The purport of the present is, therefore, to beg that you will break the news to mother and Samuel, who, no doubt, are looking forward to an African Juan Fernandes, and planning a farm or nay. And in the meantime I need not recommend keeping the thing quiet; our only chance being to get some friend or customer to take the estate off our hands,

by the same flourishing representations that Mr. Braggins made to us.

I am, dear Uncle,
Your dutiful and loving nephew,
JOSEPH MULLER, junior.

REVIEW.



THE CHIMES : A GOBLIN STORY. By CHARLES DICKENS.

THIS is another of those seasonable books, intended by Boz to stir up and awaken the kindly feelings, which are generally diffused amongst mankind ; but too apt, as Old Weller says, to lie dormouse in the human bosom. It is similar in plan to the Christmas Carol, but is scarcely so *happy* in its subject—it could not be—as that famous Gobbling Story with its opulence of good cheer and all the Gargantuan festivity of that hospitable tide. New Year's Day is a graver season, its rejoicings associated with sterner reflections, its lights with darker shadows ; its promises and hopes with regrets and tears ; and its bells have tones of melancholy as well as of mirth in their chimes.

The hero of the tale is one Toby Veck—we wish that surname had been more English in its sound, it seems to want an outlandish De or Van before it—a little old London ticket-porter,—who does not know the original, and his humble dwelling down the mews, with his wooden-cardboard at the door, with his name and occupation, and the N. B. “ Messuages carefully delivered ” ! But for fear of mistake, here he is.

“They called him Trotty from his pace, which meant speed if it didn’t make it. He could have walked faster perhaps ; most likely ; but rob him of his trot, and Toby would have taken to his bed and died. It bespattered him with mud in dirty weather ; it cost him a world of trouble ; he could have walked with infinitely greater ease ; but that was one reason for his clinging to it so tenaciously. A weak, small, spare old man, he was a very Hercules, this Toby, in his good intentions. He loved to earn his money. He delighted to believe—Toby was very poor, and couldn’t well afford to part with a delight—that he was worth his salt. With a shilling or an eighteenpenny message or small parcel in hand, his courage, always high, rose higher. As he trotted on, he would call out to fast postmen ahead of him to get out of the way ; devoutly believing that, in the natural course of things, he must inevitably overtake and run them down ; and he had perfect faith—not often tested—in his being able to carry anything that man could lift.

“Thus, even when he came out of his nook to warm himself on a wet day, Toby trotted. Making, with his leaky shoes, a crooked line of slushy footprints in the mire ; and blowing on his chilly hands, and rubbing them against each other, poorly defended from the searching cold by threadbare mufflers of grey worsted, with a private apartment only for the thumb, and a common room or tap for the rest of the fingers ; Toby, with his knees bent, and his cane beneath his arm, still trotted. Falling out into the road to look up at the belfry when the Chimes resounded, Toby trotted still.”

His regular stand, where he plied for jobs, was just outside of the door of St. Magnus’s Church (nicely drawn by Stanfield), a haunt selected rather out of an old regard for the chimes in the belfry than for any peculiar comfort about the place, which in fact was no snuggery, but at times windy enough to scatter the froth—no—to blow the porter’s head off.

“And a breezy, goose-skinned, blue-nosed, red eyed, stony-toed, tooth-chattering place it was, to wait in in the winter time, as Toby Veck well knew. The wind came tearing round the corner—especially the east wind—as if it had sallied forth express, from the confines of the earth, to have a blow at Toby. And oftentimes it seemed to come upon him sooner than it had expected ; for, bouncing round the corner, and passing Toby, it would suddenly wheel round again, as if it cried, ‘Why, here he is !’ Incontinently his little white apron would be caught up over his head like a naughty boy’s garments, and his feeble little cane would be seen to wrestle and struggle unavailingly in his hand, and his legs would undergo tremen-

dous agitation, and Toby himself all aslant, and facing now in this direction, now in that, would be so banged and buffeted, and touzled, and worried, and hustled, and lifted off his feet, as to render it a state of things but one degree removed from a positive miracle that he wasn't carried up bodily into the air as a colony of frogs or snails, or other portable creatures, sometimes are, and rained down again, to the great astonishment of the natives, on some strange corner of the world where ticket-porters are unknown."

Now, amongst the characteristics of Toby Veck was one, the hinge upon which the whole story turns ; a propensity, not very porter-like, to think small-beer of himself and the whole order of poor people in general—and small beer of the worst sort, too, sour, and good for nothing. He held and allowed that they were one and all born bad—could not do right or go right—always committing dreadful things, and giving a great deal of trouble—intruders who had no business on the face of the earth, and without even a right to a new year.

Expressions that, vented ironically, or bitterly, would sound naturally enough ; but that Toby Veck, full of kindly impulses, and munificent for his means, a practical philanthropist, a very carrier-pigeon of a porter, should entertain such hard harsh opinions in common with the cold-blooded economists and utilitarians, the Filers of the day, is a little startling ; and presents a difficulty only to be got over by a strong reliance on the author's knowledge of life, and a remembrance of the strange anomalies of human nature. Perhaps as a sort of beast of burthen, a common fardelbearer, he had acquired such a passive camel-like humility as made him kneel down in spirit to receive any load, moral or physical, that might be laid upon him : however, such was his bias—making us sometimes a little out of patience with his patience, for instance, at his putting up with the "Putting Down" of that civic nuisance Alderman Cute. Surely

the porter is drawn too mild, when he concurs in such a lecture as is delivered by the justice, in Toby's presence, to Toby's daughter, for only contemplating lawful matrimony with young Richard, the smith.

“ ‘You are going to be married, you say,’ pursued the Alderman. ‘Very unbecoming and indelicate in one of your sex ! But never mind that. After you are married, you’ll quarrel with your husband, and come to be a distressed wife. You may think not ; but you will, because I tell you so. Now I give you fair warning, that I have made up my mind to put distressed wives down. So don’t be brought before me. You’ll have children—boys. Those boys will grow up bad of course, and run wild in the streets, without shoes and stockings. Mind, my young friend ! I’ll convict ’em summarily, every one ; for I am determined to put boys without shoes and stockings down. Perhaps your husband will die young (most likely), and leave you with a baby. Then you’ll be turned out of doors, and wander up and down the streets. Now don’t wander near me, my dear, for I am resolved to put all wandering mothers down. All young mothers, of all sorts and kinds, it’s my determination to put down. Don’t think to plead illness as an excuse with me ; or babies as an excuse with me ; for all sick persons and young children (I hope you know the church-service, but I am afraid not) I am determined to put down. And if you attempt, desperately, and ungratefully, and impiously, and fraudulently attempt, to drown yourself, or hang yourself, I’ll have no pity on you, for I have made up my mind to put all suicide down. If there is one thing,’ said the Alderman, with his self-satisfied smile, ‘on which I can be said to have made up my mind more than on another, it is to put suicide down. So don’t try it on. That’s the phrase, isn’t it ! Ha, ha ! now we understand each other.’ ”

There, reader, is a nice magistrate to sit on a bench, and judge and sentence, not only the guilty but the unfortunate ! Fit President for a new Inhumane Society, for punishing the rescued unchanged and undrowned ! In the name of poetical justice, why did not the Bells with their warning voices din, clapperclaw, and ring their iron lessons into *him* ? Why did not the Goblins of the Chimes steeplechase and haunt that cold bad man, with a heart hard as Haytor granite, instead of poor Trotty, and startle and wrench his selfish soul with phantasmal shows of his own daughter with her babe, driven

by infamy and destitution to the suicidal plunge in the river? Surely he required such a schooling on Bells' system, infinitely more than the porter, of Humanity's Entire, whose hospitable heart and door opened so readily to the outcast labourer Will Fern and his orphan niece! That picture is true: for the poor are notoriously kind and tender to the poor; and why?—because they know practically the extreme wants, the urgent temptations and terrible trials to which their ragged fellow-beings are exposed; and necessarily think charitably and indulgently of each other, and extend to their failings and misdeeds a large allowance. Accordingly the Toby of the tale is a Shandean one, full of the milk of human kindness; and, therefore, when he says that the poor are all bad by birth, habit, and repute, we feel, in spite of the author, that Toby must be only facetious or ironical, merely parodying the Cutes and Filers; and, consequently, that there is no *Casus Belli* to justify the bellowing chorus of "Hunt him, and haunt him! Break his slumbers! Break his slumbers!" On the contrary, he seems hardly used by the Bells, and has good reason to complain, like the thief in the old story, of their long tongues and empty heads.

However, Trotty Veck, having just read in a newspaper an account of a mother laying violent hands on herself and her own infant at once, overlooking the desperation of shame, the dread of imminent starvation, and perhaps insanity itself, ascribes the deed to the wholesale depravity of the lower orders.

"'Unnatural and cruel!' Toby cried. 'Unnatural and cruel! None but people who were bad at heart—born bad—who had no business on the earth—could do such deeds. It's too true, all I've heard to-day; too just, too full of proof. We're bad!'"

For this offence he is stunned and lectured by the Bells

and mobbed by the Goblins ; and, like Scrooge, undergoes an awful vision, in which he sees his own daughter, impelled by destitution and misgivings as to the future destiny of her infant, to drown herself and her babe. In his struggles to prevent the catastrophe, the Porter awakes, and discovers that he has only been dreaming a bad dream, induced by a too hearty dinner of tripe. His Margaret is safe and sound beside him, preparing her dress for her marriage on New Year's Day with Richard the smith—an old friend, one Mrs. Chickenstalker, drops in to congratulate, with a huge pitcher of flip—the big drum, the handbells, and the marrow-bones and cleavers, muster round ; and the story winds up with one of those Bozzian merry-makings which leave everybody inclined to shake hands with everybody—and their own left hand with the right.

Such, with some episodes, is the plot ; in the development of which there occur various scenes of humour, pathos, and power. Here is an unctuous riddle, pleasantly solved.

“ ‘But what is it, father?’ said Meg. ‘Come! You havn’t guessed what it is. And you must guess what it is. I can’t think of taking it out till you guess what it is. Don’t be in such a hurry! Wait a minute! A little bit more of the cover. Now guess!’

“ ‘Meg was in a perfect fright lest he should guess right too soon ; shrinking away, as she held the basket towards him ; curling up her pretty shoulders ; stopping her ear with her hand, as if, by so doing, she could keep the right word out of Toby’s lips ; and laughing softly the whole time.

“ ‘Meanwhile Toby, putting a hand on each knee, bent down his nose to the basket, and took a long inspiration at the lid ; the grin upon his withered face expanding in the process, as if he were inhaling laughing gas.

“ ‘Ah! It’s very nice,’ said Toby. ‘It an’t—I suppose it an’t Polonies.’

“ ‘No, no, no!’ cried Meg delighted. ‘Nothing like Polonies!’

“ ‘No,’ said Toby, after another sniff. ‘It’s—it’s mellower than Polonies. It’s very nice. It improves every moment. It’s too decided for Trotters. An’t it!’

“ ‘Meg was in an ecstasy. He could *not* have gone wider of the mark than Trotters—except Polonies!’

“ ‘Liver?’ said Toby, communing with himself. ‘No. There’s a mildness about it that don’t answer to liver. Pettitoes? No. It an’t faint enough for pettitoes. It wants the stringiness of Cocks’ heads. And I know it an’t sausages. I’ll tell you what it is. It’s chitterlings!’

“ ‘No, it an’t!’ cried Meg, in a burst of delight. ‘No, it an’t!’

“ ‘Why, what am I thinking of!’ said Toby, suddenly recovering a position as near the perpendicular as it was possible for him to assume. ‘I shall forget my own name next. It’s tripe!’

“ ‘Tripe it was; and Meg, in high joy, protested he should say, in half a minute more, it was the best tripe ever stewed.’”

On this savoury dish the Porter fell-to with great relish; for he knew by heart and stomach the truth of his own observation—“there’s nothing more regular in its coming round than dinner-time; and nothing less regular in its coming round than the dinner.” Yet with an appetite stropped to a keen edge by exercise and the open air, he could postpone his own cravings and sham repletion in favour of a pair of chance guests—Will Fern and his niece—picked up in the streets.

“ ‘Stay!’ cried Trotty, catching at his hand, as he relaxed his grip. ‘Stay! The New Year never can be happy to me if we part like this. The New Year never can be happy to me, if I see the child and you go wandering away you don’t know where, without a shelter for your heads. Come home with me! I’m a poor man, living in a poor place; but I can give you lodging for one night, and never miss it. Come home with me! Here! I’ll take her!’ cried Trotty, lifting up the child. ‘A pretty one! I’d carry twenty times her weight, and never know I’d got it. Tell me if I go too quick for you. I’m very fast. I always was!’ Trotty said this, taking about six of his trotting paces to one stride of his fatigued companion; and with his thin legs quivering again beneath the load he bore.

“ ‘Why, she’s as light,’ said Trotty, trotting in his speech as well as in his gait—for he couldn’t bear to be thanked, and dreaded a moment’s pause—‘as light as a feather. Lighter than a peacock’s feather—a good deal lighter. Here we are, and here we go! Round this first turning to the right, Uncle Will, and past the pump, and sharp off up the passage to the left, right opposite the public-house. Here we are, and here we go! Cross over, Uncle Will, and mind the kidney-pieman at the corner! Here we are, and here we go! Down the Mews here, Uncle Will, and stop at the back-door, with “T. Veck, Ticket Porter,” wrote upon a board; and here we are, and here we go, and here we are indeed, my precious Meg, surprising you!’

“With which words Trotty, in a breathless state, set the child down before his daughter in the middle of the floor. The little visitor looked once at Meg; and doubting nothing in that face, but trusting everything she saw there, ran into her arms.

“‘Here we are, and here we go!’ cried Trotty, running round the room and choking audibly. ‘Here! Uncle Will! Here’s a fire, you know! Why don’t you come to the fire? Oh, here we are, and here we go! Meg, my precious darling, where’s the kettle? Here it is, and here it goes, and it’ll bile in no time!’

“Trotty really had picked up the kettle somewhere or other in the course of his wild career, and now put it on the fire; while Meg, seating the child in a warm corner, knelt down on the ground before her, and pulled off her shoes, and dried her wet feet on a cloth. Aye, and she laughed at Trotty, too—so pleasantly, so cheerfully, that Trotty could have blessed her where she kneeled; for he had seen that, when they entered, she was sitting by the fire in tears.

“‘Why, father!’ said Meg, ‘you’re crazy to-night, I think. I don’t know what the Bells would say to that. Poor little feet. How cold they are!’

“‘Oh, they’re warmer now!’ exclaimed the child. ‘They’re quite warm now!’

“‘No, no, no,’ said Meg. ‘We havn’t rubbed ’em half enough. We’re so busy. So busy! And when they’re done, we’ll brush out the damp hair; and when that’s done, we’ll bring some colour to the poor pale face with fresh water; and when that’s done, we’ll be so gay, and brisk, and happy—!’

“The child, in a burst of sobbing, clasped her round the neck; caressed her fair cheek with its hand: and said, ‘Oh, Meg, oh, dear Meg!’

“Toby’s blessing could have done no more. Who could do more!

“‘Why, father!’ cried Meg, after a pause.

“‘Here I am, and here I go, my dear,’ said Trotty.

“‘Good gracious me!’ cried Meg. ‘He’s crazy! He’s put the dear child’s bonnet on the kettle, and hung the lid behind the door!’

“‘I didn’t go to do it, my love,’ said Trotty, hastily repairing this mistake. ‘Meg, my dear?’

“Meg looked towards him, and saw that he had elaborately stationed himself behind the chair of their male visitor, where, with many mysterious gestures, he was holding up the sixpence he had earned.

“‘I see, my dear,’ said Trotty, ‘as I was coming in, half an ounce of tea lying somewhere on the stairs; and I’m pretty sure there was a bit of bacon, too. As I don’t remember where it was exactly, I’ll go myself and try to find ’em.’

“With this inscrutable artifice, Toby withdrew to purchase the viands he had spoken of, for ready money, at Mrs. Chickenstalker’s; and presently

came back, pretending that he had not been able to find them, at first, in the dark.

“ ‘But here they are at last,’ said Trotty, setting out the tea-things, ‘all correct! I was pretty sure it was tea, and a rasher. So it is. Meg, my pet, if you’ll just make the tea, while your unworthy father toasts the bacon, we shall be ready immediate. It’s a curious circumstance,’ said Trotty, proceeding in his cookery, with the assistance of the toasting-fork, ‘curious, but well known to my friends, that I never care myself for rashers, nor for tea. I like to see other people enjoy ‘em,’ said Trotty, speaking very loud, to impress the fact upon his guest; ‘but to me, as food, they’re disagreeable.’

“Yet Trotty sniffed the savour of the hissing bacon—ah!—as if he liked it; and when he poured the boiling water in the teapot, looked lovingly down into the depths of that snug cauldron, and suffered the fragrant steam to curl about his nose, and wreath his head and face in a thick cloud. However, for all this, he neither ate nor drank, except, at the very beginning, a mere morsel for form’s sake, which he appeared to eat with infinite relish, but declared was perfectly uninteresting to him.

“No. Trotty’s occupation was to see Will Fern and Lilian eat and drink; and so was Meg’s. And never did spectators at a city dinner or court banquet find such delight in seeing others feast—although it were a monarch or a pope—as those two did in looking on that night.”

A very different entertainment is described as given by Sir Joseph Bowley, Baronet and M.P., the “friend and father of the poor,” in honour of his lady’s birthday—a plum-pudding dinner to the tenantry, accompanied by one of those interludes, or farces, so in vogue with a certain party, who in imitation of the proverbial eccentricity of driving carts before horses, and lighting candles at the wrong end, forgetting that Leisure results from Labour, and Pastime from Leisure—provide starving, naked, and houseless people with bats, balls, and stumps, instead of food, clothes and lodging.

Accordingly, in lieu of lowering rents and raising wages, Sir Joseph and his son condescendingly played a game at skittles with the peasantry; “and everybody said that now, when a baronet and the son of a baronet played at skittles, the country was coming round again as fast as it could come.” There was however one dissentient. “The La-

bourer" had been drunk as a toast, and the outcast labourer Will Fern, intruding on the festival, thus delivered his "experiences" on the subject.

" 'Gentlefolks, I've lived many a year in this place. You may see the cottage from the sunk fence over yonder. I've seen the ladies draw it in their books a hundred times. It looks well in a picter, I've heerd say; but there an't weather in picters, and maybe 'tis fitter for that, than for a place to live in. Well! I lived there. How hard—how bitter hard, I lived there, I won't say. Any day in the year, and every day, you can judge for your own selves!'

"He spoke as he had spoken on the night when Trotty found him in the street. His voice was deeper and more husky, and had a trembling in it now and then; but he never raised it passionately, and seldom lifted it above the firm stern level of the homely facts he stated.

" 'Tis harder than you think for, gentlefolk, to grow up decent—commonly decent—in such a place. That I grewed up a man, and not a brute, says something for me—as I was then. As I am now, there's nothing can be said for me, or done for me. I'm past it.'

" 'I am glad this man has entered,' observed Sir Joseph, looking round serenely. 'Don't disturb him. It appears to be ordained. He is an example—a living example. I hope and trust, and confidently expect, that it will not be lost upon my friends here.'

" 'I dragged on,' said Fern, after a moment's silence, 'somehow. Neither me nor any other man knows how; but so heavy that I couldn't put a cheerful face upon it, or make believe that I was anything but what I was. Now, gentlemen—you gentlemen that sits at Sessions—when you see a man with discontent writ on his face, you says to one another, 'He's suspicious. I has my doubts,' says you, 'about Will Fern. Watch that fellow!' I don't say, gentlemen, it ain't quite nat'ral, but I say 'tis so; and from that hour, whatever Will Fern does, or let's alone—all one—it goes against him.'

"Alderman Cute stuck his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, and leaning back in his chair, and smiling, winked at a neighbouring chandelier. As much as to say, 'Of course! I told you so. The common cry! Lord bless you, we are up to all this sort of thing—myself and human nature.'

" 'Now, gentlemen,' said Will Fern, holding out his hands, and flushing for an instant, in his haggard face; 'see how your laws are made to trap and hunt us when we're brought to this. I tries to live elsewhere; and I'm a vagabond. To jail with him! I comes back here. I goes a nutting in your woods, and breaks—who don't?—a limber branch or two. To jail with him! One of your keepers sees me in the broad day, near my own patch of garden, with a gun. To jail with him! I has a nat'ral

angry word with that man, when I'm free again. To jail with him! I cuts a stick. To jail with him! I eats a rotten apple or a turnip. To jail with him! It's twenty mile away; and coming back, I begs a trifle on the road. To jail with him! At last the constable, the keeper—anybody—finds me anywhere, a doing anything. To jail with him, for he's a vagrant, and a jail-bird known; and jail's the only home he's got.'

“ ‘The Alderman nodded sagaciously, as who should say, ‘A very good home too!’

“ ‘Do I say this to serve MY cause!’ cried Fern. ‘Who can give me back my liberty, who can give me back my good name, who can give me back my innocent niece? Not all the Lords and Ladies in wide England. But, gentlemen, gentlemen, dealing with other men like me, begin at the right end. Give us, in mercy, better homes when we're a lying in our cradles; give us better food when we're a working for our lives; give us kinder laws to bring us back when we're a going wrong; and don't set Jail, Jail, Jail, afore us everywhere we turn. There an't a condescension you can show the Labourer then that he won't take, as ready and as grateful as a man can be; for he has a patient, peaceful, willing heart. But you must put his rightful spirit in him first; for whether he's a wreck and ruin such as me, or is like one of them that stand here now, his spirit is divided from you at this time. Bring it back, gentlefolks, bring it back! Bring it back afore the day comes when even his Bible changes in his altered mind, and the words seem to him to read, as they have sometimes read in my own eyes—in Jail: ‘Whither thou goest I can Not go! where thou lodgest, I do Not lodge; thy people are Not my people! Nor thy God my God!’”

We have pointed out what seems to us the flaw or defect in the “Chimes;” and have now only to hang them with our warmest good wishes. May they be widely and wisely heard, inculcating their wholesome lessons of charity and forbearance—reminding wealth of the claims of Want,—the feasting of the fasting, and inducing them to spare something for an aching void from their comfortable repletion.

DOMESTIC MESMERISM.

“Gape, sinner, and swallow.”—MEG MERRILIES.

It is now just a year since we reviewed Miss Martineau's “Life in the Sick Room,” and left the authoress set in for a house-ridden invalid, alternating between her bed and the sofa ; unable to walk out of doors, but enjoying through her window and a telescope the prospect of green downs and heath, an old priory, a limekiln, a colliery railway, an ancient church, a windmill, a farm, with hay and corn stacks, a market garden, gossiping farmers, sportsmen, boys flying kites, washerwomen, a dairymaid feeding pigs, the light houses, harbour, and shipping of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and a large assortment of objects, pastoral, marine, and picturesque. There we left the “sick prisoner,” as we supposed, quite aware of a condition beyond remedy, and cheerfully made up for her fate by the help of philosophy, laudanum, and Christian resignation.

There never was a greater mistake. Instead of the presumed calm submission in a hopeless case, the invalid was intently watching the progress of a new curative legerdemain, sympathising with its repudiated professors, and secretly intending to try whether her own chronic complaint could not be conjured away with a “Hey, presto ! pass and repass !” like a pea from under the thimble. The experiment it seems has been made, and lo ! like one of the patients of the old quacksalvers, forth comes Miss Martineau on the public stage, proclaiming to the gaping crowd how her long-standing, inveterate complaint, that baffled all the doctors, has been charmed away like a wart, and that, from being a help-

less cripple, she has thrown away her crutches, literal or metaphorical, and can walk a mile as well as any Milesian. And this miraculous cure, not due to Holloway, Parr, Morison, or any of the rest of the faculty, nor to any marvellous ointment, infallible pills, or new discovery in medicine, but solely to certain magical gesticulations, as safe, pleasant, and easy as playing at cat's cradle—in short, by Mesmerism !

Now we are, as we have said before, the greatest Invalid in England ; with a complication of complaints requiring quite a staff of physicians, each to watch and treat the particular disease which he has made his peculiar study : as, one for the heart, another for the lungs, a third for the stomach, a fourth for the liver, and so on. Above all, we are incapable of pedestrian locomotion ; lamer than Crutched Friars, and, between gout in our ancles and rheumatism in our knees, could as easily walk on our head, like Quilp's boy, as on our legs. It would delight us, therefore, to believe that by no painful operation, but only a little posture-making behind our back or to our face, we could be restored to the use of our precious limbs, to walk like a Leaguer, and run again like a renewed bill. But alas ! an anxious examination of Miss Martineau's statements has satisfied us that there is no chance of such a desirable consummation ; that, to use a common phrase, "the news is too good to be true." We have carefully waded through the Newcastle letters, occupying some two dozen mortal columns of the "Athenæum," and with something of the mystified feeling of having been reading by turns and snatches in Moore's Almanack, Zadkiel's Astrology, a dream book, and a treatise on metaphysics, have come to the sorrowful conclusion that we have as much chance of a cure by Mesmerism, as of walking a thousand miles in a thousand hours through merely reading the constant advertisements of the Patent Pedometer. A conviction

not at all removed by an actual encounter with a professor, who, after experimenting on the palms of our hands without exciting any peculiar sensation, except that quivering of the diaphragm which results from suppressed laughter, gravely informed us—slipping through a pleasant loophole of retreat from all difficulties—that “we were not in a fit state.”

The precise nature of Miss Martineau's complaint is not stated ; nor is it material to be known except to the professional man : the great fact, that after five years' confinement to the house she can walk as many miles without fatigue, thanks to the mysterious Ism, “that sadly wants a new name,” is a sufficient subject for wonder, curiosity, and common sense to discuss. A result obtained, it appears, after two months *passed* under the hands of three several persons—a performance that must be reckoned rather slow for a miracle, seeing that if we read certain passages aright, a mesmeriser “with a white hat and an illuminated profile, like a saint or an angel,” is gifted with powers little, if at all, inferior to those of the old Apostles. The delay, moreover, throws a doubt on the source of relief, for there are many diseases to which such an interval would allow of a natural remission.

In the curative process, the two most remarkable phenomena were—1st, That a patient, with a weazel-like vigilance, did not go as usual into the magnetic sleep or trance : and, 2dly, That every glorified object before her was invested with a peculiar light, so that a bust of Isis burnt with a phosphoric splendour, and a black, dirty, Newcastle steam-tug shone with heavenly radiance. Appearances, for which we at once take the lady's word, but must decline her inference, that they had any influence in setting her on her legs again. The nerves, and the optic ones especially, were, no

doubt, in a highly excited state : but that a five year old lameness derived any relaxation from that effulgence we will believe, when the broken heart of a soldier's widow is bound up by a general illumination. Indeed, we remember once to have been personally visited with such lights, that we saw two candles instead of one—but we decidedly walked the worse for it.

On the subject of other visionary appearances Miss Martineau is less explicit, or rather tantalizingly obscure ; for after hinting that she has seen wonders above wonders, instead of favouring us with her Revelations or Mysteries, like Ainsworth or Eugene Sue, she plumply says that she means to keep them to herself.

“Between this condition and the mesmeric sleep there is a state, transient and rare, of which I have had experience, but of which I intend to give no account. A somnambule calls it a glimmering of the lights of somnambulism and clairvoyance. To me there appears nothing like glimmering in it. The ideas that I have snatched from it, and now retain, are, of all ideas which ever visited me, the most lucid and impressive. It may be well that they are incommunicable—partly from their nature and relations, and partly from their unfitness for translation into mere words. I will only say that the condition is one of no ‘nervous excitement,’ as far as experience and outward indications can be taken as a test. Such a state of repose, of calm translucent intellectuality, I had never conceived of ; and no reaction followed, no excitement but that which is natural to every one who finds himself in possession of a great new idea.”

So that whether she obtained a glimpse of the New Jerusalem, or a peep into the World of Spirits, or saw the Old Gentleman himself, is left to wide conjecture. Our own guess, in the absence of all direction is, that she enjoyed a mesmeric translation into another planet, and derived her great idea from the Man in the Moon.

This, however, is not the only suppression. For instance, it is said that one of the strongest powers of the girl J., the somnambulist, was the discernment of disease, its condition

and remedies ; that she cleared up her own case first, prescribing for herself very fluently, and then medically advised Miss Martineau, and that the treatment in both cases succeeded. Surely, in common charity to the afflicted, these infallible remedies ought to have been published ; their nature ought to have been indicated, if only to enable one to judge of supernatural prescribing compared with professional practice ; but so profound a silence is preserved on these points as to lead to the inevitable conclusion, that the mesmeric remedies, like the quack medicines, are to be secured by patent, and to be sold at so much a family bottle, stamp included. One recipe only transpires, of so commonplace and popular character, and so little requiring inspiration for its invention,—so ludicrously familiar to wide-awake advisers, that our sides shake to record how Miss Martineau, restless and sleepless for want of her abandoned opiates, was ordered ale at dinner and brandy and water for a nightcap. Oh, J. ! J. ! well does thy initial stand also for Joker !

In addition to these suppressions, one unaccountable omission has certainly staggered us, as much as if we had considered it through a couple of bottles of wine. In common with ourselves, our clever friend T. L., and many other persons—who all hear the music of the spheres, dumb-bells, and other mute melodies, as distinctly as the rest of the world, but of gross mundane sounds and noises are unconscious as the adder—Miss Martineau is very deaf indeed. Here then was an obvious subject for experiment, and having been so easily cured of one infirmity, it seems only natural that it should have occurred to the patient to apply instantly to the same agency for relief from another disability—that she should have requested her mesmeriser to quicken her hearing as well as her pace. But on the contrary, her ear seems

quite to have slipped out of her head ; and at an advanced stage of the proceedings we find her awaiting J.'s revelations, "with an American friend repeating to her on the instant, on account of her deafness, every word as it fell." And to make the omission more glaring, it is in the midst of speculations on the mesmeric sharpening of another sense, till it can see through deal-boards, mill-stones, and "barricades as lustrous as ebony," that she neglects to ascertain whether her hearing might not be so improved as to perceive sounds through no denser medium than the common air ! Such an interesting experiment in her own person ought surely to have preceded the trials whether "J." could see, and draw ships and churches, with her eyes shut ; and the still more remote inquiry whether, at the day of judgment, we are to rise with or without our bodies, including the auricular organs. If dull people can be cured of stone-deafness by a few magnetic passes, so pleasant a fact ought not to be concealed ; whatever the consequence to the proprietors of registered Voice Conductors and Cornets.

Along with this experiment, we should have been glad of more circumstantial references to many successful ones merely assumed and asserted. There is, indeed, nothing throughout the Letters more singular than the complacency with which we are expected to take disputed matters for granted ; as if all her readers were in magnetic *rapport* with the authoress, thinking as she thinks, seeing as she sees, and believing as she believes. Thus the theory, that the mind of the somnambulist mirrors that of the mesmeriser, is declared to be pretty clearly proved, "when an ignorant child, ignorant especially of the Bible, discourses of the Scriptures and divinity with a clergyman, and of the nebulae with an astronomer"—and when perfectly satisfactory to the writer—but which sticks in our throat like its namesake, the English

for *goître*. We should be delighted to know the whereabouts of that Wonderful Child, and its caravan. And here are more whens—

What becomes of really divine inspiration *when* the commonest people find they can elicit marvels of provision and insight? What becomes of the veneration for religious contemplation *when* ecstasies are found to be at the command of very unhallowed—wholly unauthorized hands? What becomes of the respect in which the medical profession ought to be held, *when* the friends of the sick and suffering, with their feelings all alive, see the doctor's skill and science overborne and set aside by means at the command of an ignorant neighbour,—means which are all ease and pleasantness? How can the profession hold its dominion over minds, however backed by law and the opinion of the educated, *when* the vulgar see and know that limbs are removed without pain, in opposition to the will of doctors, and in spite of their denial of the facts? What avails the decision of a whole College of Surgeons that such a thing could not be, *when* a whole town full of people know that it was? What becomes of the transmission of fluid *when* the mesmerist acts, without concert, on a patient a hundred miles off?

To all of which Echo answers “When?”—whilst another memorable one adds “Where?” In fact, had the letters been delivered as speeches, the orator would continually have been interrupted with such cries, and for “name! name!”

In the same style we are told that we need not quarrel about the name to be given to a power “that can make the deaf and dumb hear and speak; disperse dropsies, banish fevers, asthmas, and paralysis, absorb tumours, and cause the severance of nerve, bone, and muscle to be unfelt. Certainly not—nor about the name to be bestowed on certain newly invented magnetic rings that have appeared simultaneously with the Newcastle letters, and are said to cure a great variety of diseases. We only object—as we should in passing a tradesman's accounts—to take mere items for facts that are unsupported by vouchers. But it is obvious throughout that Miss Martineau forgets she is not addressing magnetisers; instead of considering herself as telling a ghost story

to people who did not believe in apparitions, and consequently fortifying her narrative with all possible evidence corroborative and circumstantial. This is evident from the trusting simplicity with which she relates all the freaks and fancies of the somnambulist J. in spite of their glaring absurdities and inconsistencies. For instance, her vocabulary is complained of, with its odd and vulgar phrases, so inferior to the high tone of her ideas, and the subjects of her discourse: whereas, like the child that talked of *nebulæ*, and was up to astronomical technicals, she ought to have used as refined language as her mesmeriser, the well-educated widow of a clergyman. So when a glass of proper magnetic water was willed to be porter on her palate, she called it obliquely "a nasty sort of beer," when, reflecting the knowledge of her mesmeriser, she should have recognised it by name as well as by taste: and again, in the fellow experiment, when the water was willed to be sherry, she described it as "wine, white wine;" and moreover, on drinking half a tumbler became so tipsy, that she was afraid to rise from the chair or walk, or go down stairs, "for fear of falling and spoiling her face." The thing however was not original. Miss Martineau insinuates that mesmerism is much older than Mesmer; and in reality the reader will remember a sham Abram feast of the same kind in the Arabian Nights, where the Barmecide willed ideal mutton, barley broth, and a fat goose with sweet sauce,—and how Shacabac, to humour his entertainer, got drunk on imaginary wine.

The whole interlude, indeed, in which J. figures, if not very satisfactory to the sceptical, is rather amusing. She is evidently an acute, brisk girl of nineteen, with a turn for fun,—“very fond of imitating the bagpipes” in her merry moods—and ready to go the whole Magnetic Animal, even to the “mesmerising herself,”—an operation as difficult, one

would imagine, as self-tickling. She exhibits in fact a will of her own, and an independence, quite at variance with the usual subjection to a superior influence. She wakes at her own pleasure from her trances—is not so abstracted in them as to forget her household errands, that she has to go to the shop over the way—and without any mesmeric introduction gets into *rapport* with the music next door, which sets her mocking all the instruments of an orchestra, dancing, and describing the company in a ball-room. Another day, when one of the phrenological organs was affected, she was thrown into a paroxysm of order, and was “almost in a frenzy of trouble because she could not make two pocket-handkerchiefs lie flat and measure the same size”—all very good fun, and better than stitching or darning. But she preferred higher game. “I like to look up and see spiritual things. I can see diseases, and I like to see visions !” And accordingly she did see a vision,—by what must be called Clairvoyance’s long range—of a shipwreck, with all its details, between Gottenburg and Elsinore.

This “inexplicable anecdote” Miss Martineau gives with the usual amiable reliance on the reader’s implicit credence, declaring that she cannot discover any chink by which deception could creep in ; whereas there is a gaping gap as practicable as any breach ever made by battery. To give any weight whatever to such a tale, two conditions are absolutely essential : that the intelligence should not have been received in the town ; and that if it had, the girl should have had no opportunity of hearing the news. And was this the case ? By no means. On the contrary, *J. had been out on an errand*, and immediately on her return she was mesmerised, and related her vision ; the news arriving by natural means, so simultaneously with the revelation, that she presently observed, “my aunt is below telling them all about it,

and I shall hear all about it when I go down." To be expected to look on a maid of Newcastle as a she-Ezekiel, on such terms, really confirms us in an opinion we have gradually been forming, that Miss Martineau never in her life looked at a human gullet by the help of a table-spoon.

In justice, however, it must be said, that the latter writer gives credit as freely as she requires it ; witness the vision just referred to, which it is confidently said was impossible to be known by ordinary means, coupled with an equally rash assertion that the girl had not seen her aunt, "the only person (in all Newcastle!) from whom tidings of the shipwreck could be obtained." The truth is, with a too easy faith, Miss Martineau greatly underrates the mischievous propensities and wicked capabilities of human nature. She says,

"I am certain that it is not in human nature to keep up for seven weeks, without slip or trip, a series of deceptions so multifarious ; and I should say so of a perfect stranger, as confidently as I say it of this girl, whom I know to be incapable of deception, as much from the character of her intellect as of her *morale*."

It is certain, nevertheless, that Mary Tofts, the Rabbit-breeder, Ann Moore, the Fasting Woman of Tutbury, Scratch-ing Fanny, and other impostors, young and old, exhibited extraordinary patience and painful perseverance in their deceptions, combined with an art and cunning that deluded doctors medical, spiritual, and lexicographical, with many people of quality of both sexes. These, it is true, were all superstitious or credulous persons, who believed all they could get to believe ; and what else are those individuals now-a-days, who hold that Mesmerism is as ancient as the Delphian Oracle, and that Witchcraft was one of its forms ? In common consistency such a faith ought to go all lengths with the American Sea Serpent, the whole breadth of the

Kraken, and not believe by halves in the Merman and the Mermaid.

In one thing we cordially agree with Miss Martineau, namely, in repudiating the cant about prying into the mysteries of Providence, perfectly convinced that what is intended to be hidden from us will remain as hermetically sealed as the secrets of the grave. The Creator himself has implanted in man an inquisitive spirit, with faculties for research, which He obviously intended to be exercised, by leaving for its discovery so many important powers—for instance, the properties of the loadstone—essential to human comfort and progress, instead of making them subjects of special revelation. Let man then, divinely supplied with intellectual deep sea-lines, industriously fathom all mysteries within their reach. What we object to is, that so many charts are empirically laid down without his taking proper soundings, and to his pronouncing off-hand, without examination by the plummet, that the bottom off a strange coast is rock, mud, stone, sand or shells. Thus it is that in Mesmerism we have so much rash assertion on the one hand, and point blank contradiction on the other. To pass over such subtleties as the existence of an invisible magnetic fluid, and the mode of magnetic action, there is the broad problem, whether a man's leg can be lopped off as unconsciously as the limb of a tree? That such a question should remain in dispute or doubt, in spite of our numerous hospitals and their frequent operations, is disgraceful to all parties. But speculation seems to be preferred to proof. Thus Miss Martineau talks confidently of such painless amputations; yet, with a somnambulist at her fingers' ends, never assures herself by the prick of a pin, of the probability of the fact. Nay, she is very angry with the Experimentalist who tried to satisfy himself of the reality of J.'s insensibility by a sudden alarm,

without giving notice that he was going to surprise her ; a violation, it seems, of the first rule of mesmeric practice, but certainly according to the rules of common sense.

“ Another incident is note-worthy in this connexion. A gentleman was here one evening, who was invited in all good faith, on his declaration that he had read all that had been written on Mesmerism, knew all about it, and was philosophically curious to witness the phenomena. He is the only witness we have had who abuses the privilege. I was rather surprised to see how, being put in communication with J., he wrenched her arm, and employed usage which would have been cruelly rough in her ordinary state ; but I supposed it was because he ‘knew all about it,’ and found that she was insensible to his rudeness ; and her insensibility was so obvious, that I hardly regretted it. At length, however, it became clear that his sole idea was (that which is the sole idea of so many who cannot conceive of what they cannot explain,) of detecting shamming ; and, in pursuance of this aim, this gentleman, who ‘knew all about it,’ violated the first rule of mesmeric practice, by suddenly and violently seizing the sleeper’s arm, without the intervention of the Mesmerist. J. was convulsed, and writhed in her chair. At that moment, and while supposing himself *en rapport* with her, he shouted out to me that the house was on fire. Happily, this brutal assault on her nerves failed entirely. There was certainly nothing congenial in the *rapport*. She made no attempt to rise from her seat, and said nothing, —clearly heard nothing ; and when asked what had frightened her, said something cold had got hold of her. Cold indeed ! and very hard too !”

In the meantime how many sufferers there are, probably, male and female, afflicted with cancers and diseased limbs, who are looking towards mesmerism for relief, and anxiously asking, is it true that a breast can be removed as painlessly as its bodice ; or a leg cut off, and perhaps put on again—why not, by such a miraculous agency ?—without the knowledge of its great or little toe ? Such inquirers ought at once to have their doubts resolved, for, as we all know, there is nothing more cruel, when such issues are at stake, than to be kept dangling in a state of uncertainty.

On the subject of itinerant mesmerists Miss Martineau is very earnest, and roundly denounces the profane fellows, who make no scruple of “ playing upon the nerves and brains

of human beings, exhibiting for money, on a stage, states of mind and soul held too sacred in olden times to be elicited elsewhere than in temples by the hands of the priests of the gods !”

“ While the wise, in whose hands this power should be, as the priesthood to whom scientific mysteries are consigned by Providence, scornfully decline their high function, who are they that snatch at it, in sport or mischief,—and always in ignorance? School children, apprentices, thoughtless women who mean no harm, and base men who do mean harm. Wherever itinerant Mesmerists have been are there such as these, throwing each other into trances, trying funny experiments, getting fortunes told, or rashly treating diseases.

* * * * *

“ Thus are human passions and human destinies committed to reckless hands, for sport or abuse. No wonder if somnambules are made into fortune-tellers,—no wonder if they are made into prophets of fear, malice, and revenge, by reflecting in their somnambulism the fear, malice, and revenge of their questioners ;—no wonder if they are made even ministers of death, by being led from sick-bed to sick-bed in the dim and dreary alleys of our towns, to declare which of the sick will recover, and which will die !

* * * * *

“ If I were to speak as a moralist on the responsibility of the *savans* of society to the multitude—if I were to unveil the scenes which are going forward in every town in England, from the wanton, sportive, curious, or mischievous use of this awful agency by the ignorant, we should hear no more levity in high places about Mesmerism.”

A statement strangely at variance with the following diotum, which as strangely makes Morality still moral, whatever her thoughts or her postures—and whether controlled by the volition of “ thoughtless women who mean no harm,” or “ base men who do mean harm.”

“ The volitions of the Mesmerist may actuate the movements of the patient’s limbs, and suggest the material of his ideas ; but they seem unable to touch his *morale*. In this state the *morale* appears supreme, as it is rarely found in the ordinary condition.”

We can well understand the “ social calamity ” apprehended from a promiscuous use of the ulterior powers of

mesmerism. But what class, we must ask, is to arrogate to itself and monopolise the exercise of miraculous powers, alien to, if not identical with, those bestowed aforetime on certain itinerant apostles? An inspired fisherman will prescribe as safely, prophesy as correctly, and see visions as clearly, as an inspired doctor of medicine or divinity. There seems to be, in the dispensation of the marvellous gift, no distinction of persons. Miss Martineau's maid mesmerizes her as effectually as Mr. Hall; and J. owes her first magnetic sleep, and all its beneficial results on her health and inflamed eyes, to the passes of the maid of the clergyman's widow. A domestic concatenation that suggests to us a curious kitchen picture—and an illustrative letter.

To Mary Smash, at No. 1. Chaney Walk, Chelsea.

DEAR MARY,

This cums hoping yure well, and to advize you to larn Mismersing. Its dun with yure Hands, and is as easy as taking sites at Pepel, or talking on yure fingers. If I was nigh you, I'd larn you in no time to make Passes, witch is only pawing, like, without touchin, at sumboddys face or back, witch gives them a tittevatting feeling on the galvanic nerves, And then off they go into a Trance in a giffy, and talk in their sleep like Orators, I should say Oracles, and anser watever you ax. Whereby you may get yure Fortin told, and find out other fokes sweatharts & luv secrets, And diskiver Theaves better than by Bible & Key, And have yure inward Disorders told, & wats good for them. Sukey's was the indigestibles, and to take as much rubbub as would hide a shillin. All witch is done by means of the sombulist, thats the sleeper, seeing through every think quite transparent, in their Trance, as is called Clare Voying, so that

they can pint out munny hid under the Erth, & burried bones, & springs of water, and vanes of mettle, & menny things besides.

Yesterdy I was mismerized meself into a Trance, & clare voyed the chork Gout in John's stomack as plane as Margit Cliffs. So I prescribed him to take Collyflower, witch by rites should have been Collycinth, but I forgot the propper word. Howsumever he did eat two large ones, and promises to cum round.

It would make you split your sides with laffing to see me mismerize our Thomas & make him go into all sorts of odd postures & anticks & capers Like a Dotterel, for watever I do he must copy to the snapping of a finger, and cant object to nuthing for as the song says I've got his Will and his Power. Likewise you can make the Sombulist taste watever you think propper, so I give him mesmerized Warter witch at my Command is transmoggrified on his pallet to Shampain & makes him as drunk as Old Goosberry and then he will jump Jim Crow, or go down on his bended knees and confess all his peckaddillos Witch is as diverten as reading the Misteries of Parris.

The wust to mismerize is Reuben the Cotchman, not that hes too wakeful, for hes generally beery, And goes off like a shot, but he wont talk in his sleep, only snores.

The Page is more passable and very clarevoying. He have twice seed a pot of goold in the middle flower-bed But the gardner wont have it dug up. And he says theres a skelliton bricked into the staircase wall, so that we never dares at nite to go up alone. Also he sees Visions and can profesy and have foretold two Earthquacks and a grate Pleg.

Cook wants to mismerize too but what with her being so much at the fire and her full habbit she always goes off to

sleep afore the Sombulist. But Sukey can do it very well. Tho in great distress about Mrs. Hardin's babby witch Sukey offered to mismerize in loo of surrup of Poppies or Godfrey's Cordial, but the pore Innocent wont wake up agin, nor havent for two hole days. As would be a real blessin to Muthers and Nusses in a moderate way, but mite be carried too far, and require a Crowners Quest. As yet that's the only Trial we have made out of the House, But we mean to mismerize the Baker, and get out of him who he really does mean to offer to, for he is quite a General Lover.

Sum pepel is very dubbius about Mismmerizing, and sum wont have it at any price ; but Missis is for it, very strong, and says she means to believe every attom about it till sum-boddy proves quite the reverse. She practises making passes every day, and is studdyin Frenology besides, for she says between the two you may play on pepel's pennycraniums like a Piany, and put them into any Key you like. And of course her fust performance will be a Master piece on the Head of the Fammily.

To be shure it seems a wonderful power to be give to one over one's Fellow Creturs, and as mite be turned to Divilish purposes But witch I cant stop to pint out, for makin the beds. To tell the truth, with so much Mismmerizing going on, our Wurks has got terrible behind hand And the carpits has not been swep for a week. So no more at present in haste from

Your loving Friend

ELIZA PASSMORE.

P.S. A most remarkable Profesy ! The Page have fore-told that the Monkey some day would bite Missis, & lo ! and behold he have flone at her, and made his teeth meet in her left ear. If that ant profesyng I dont know what is.

THE ECHO.

SOME months since, Mr. Edward Davis, the well-known sculptor, applied to me to sit to him for a Bust. My vanity readily complied with the request ; and in due time I found myself in his studio, installed in a crimson-covered elbow-chair, amidst an assemblage of Heads, hard and soft, white, drab, and stone-colour. Here, a young Nobleman—one of the handsomest of the day—in painted plaster ; there, a benevolent-looking Bishop in clear white sparkling marble, next to a brown clay head, like Refined and Moist. A number of unfinished models, of what Beau Brummell would have called “damp strangers,” were tied up in wet cloths, from which every moment you expected to hear a sneeze ; the veiled ones comprising a lady or two, a barrister and a judge. All these were on pedestals : but in the back ground, on the boards, stood numerous other busts, dwarfish or gigantic, heads and shoulders, like Oriental Genii coming up through the floor—some white and clean, as if fresh from the waters under the earth ; others dingy and smoky, as if from its subterranean fire-places—some young, some old, some smiling, and others grave, or even frowning severely ; with one alarming face, reminding me of those hard brutal countenances that are seen on street-doors.

On the mantel-shelf silently roared the Caput of the Laocöon, with deeply indented eyeballs, instead of the regulation blanks ; and what the play-people call a practicable mouth, i. e. into which you might poke your finger down to the gullet ; and, lastly, on the walls were sundry mystical sketches in black and white chalk, which you might turn, as

fancy prompted, like Hamlet's cloud, into any figure you pleased, from a weazel to a whale.

To return to self. The artist, after setting up before me what seemed a small mountain of putty, with a bold scoop of his thumbs marked out my eyes; next taking a good pinch of clay—an operation I seemed to feel by sympathy—from between my shoulders, clapped me on a rough nose, and then stuck the surplus material in a large wart on my chest. In short, by similar proceeding, scraping, smoothing, dabbing on and taking off, at the end of the first sitting, Sculptor had made the upper half of a mud doll, the size of life, looking very like “the *idol* of his own circle” in the Cannibal Islands.

At subsequent sittings, this heathen figure gradually became not only more Christian-like, but more and more like the original: till finally it put on that striking resemblance which is so satisfactory to one's wife and family, and, as it were, introduces a man to himself.

An Engraving by Mr. Heath, from this Bust, is intended to form the frontispiece to the Second Volume of this Magazine, and will be given with the next Number, should the interval be sufficient for the careful execution and finish of the plate. The Address that should have been offered, the present month, will accompany the engraving; the same cause that postpones it—a severe indisposition—will be accepted perhaps as a sufficient apology for the absence of the usual Answers to Correspondents. In the mean time all good wishes are briefly tendered to the vast ring of friends, and the increasing circle of subscribers, to whose entertainment, at the present season, I have tried to contribute.

[It is not improbable that these few lines were written at the commencement of this year, as well as the Epigrams immediately following.]

FRAGMENT.

PROBABLY WRITTEN DURING ILLNESS.

I'm sick of gruel, and the dietetics,
 I'm sick of pills, and sicker of emetics,
 I'm sick of pulses' tardiness or quickness,
 I'm sick of blood, it's thinness or its thickness,
 In short, within a word, I'm sick of sickness.

EPIGRAM.

My heart's wound up just like a watch,
 As far as springs will take—
 It wants but one more evil turn,
 And then the cords will break !

EPIGRAM.

THE SUPERIORITY OF MACHINERY.

A MECHANIC his labour will often discard,
 If the rate of his pay he dislikes ;
 But a clock—and it's case is uncommonly hard—
 Will continue to work, tho' it *strikes* !

EPIGRAM.



As human fashions change about,
 The reign of Fools should now begin,
 For when the *Wigs* are going out
 The *Naturals* are coming in.



RESULTS OF GERMAN STUDY.



THE TWO MINERS.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT ninety years ago, a workman at one of the most profitable of the mines in the Harz mountains, lived Michael Hauser. He was at that time an old man; he toiled hard for eight hours during the day, and the interval between his leaving off work and retiring to rest was spent always in the bosom of his family. His wife was still living, affectionate towards her husband, and carrying her love for her children, of many that she had borne, two remaining sons, to an extent that became the common talk of the neighbourhood.

Karl and Wilhelm were both handsome, bold, and vigorous young men, but with characters as unlike as they could be, and which distinctly marked the conduct of each; in nothing more, perhaps, than the difference of their regard for one another. Karl, the elder, was not what would be called

athletic ; yet his figure, although thin, seemed to possess strength that might be dangerous to a far bulkier antagonist than himself. His complexion was sallow, and his whole face had an air of reserve, and if the expression may be granted to the case, of pride, that kept at a distance most of the young men of his age and station. None of his features were very remarkable, or drew the attention, with the exception of his eye, which certainly had an appearance that no human eye had ever before possessed. It was large, full, and open to a fearful degree. You never saw it wink. You never saw it lighted up in laughter, or obscured with tears. It has been said, I do not know with what truth, that Karl Hauser never wept in his life. He worked with his father in the mine, but with the rest of his fellow-labourers he had little or no communication. Wilhelm was eighteen years of age, and two years younger than his brother, whom he loved tenderly, and, as it would seem, yet the more that his brother continued to avoid him. He was thick set, and his face chubby. His sparkling blue eye, that seemed to have usurped all the motion that his brother's wanted, was never still. He was his father's favourite. His mother, urged perhaps by pity, showed, though a delicate observer only could have perceived it, a partiality for her Karl.

About six months previous to the commencement of this narrative, Wilhelm had become enamoured of the simple beauty of Bertha Kramer, the only daughter of the widow of a poor lieutenant, who gained, in the small town of Klausthal, a livelihood for herself and daughter by needlework. The young miner had made no mention of his attachment, not even to the maiden herself. He contented himself with walking in the dusk every evening to a clear and beautiful spring—one of the many which are found bursting forth as

with all the freshness of an eternal youth in the famed hilly region of which we are speaking. Sheltered by the trees which shadowed the spring, he watched the tender Bertha, as she held her can at the mouth of the fountain, and gazed a full half-mile after her whilst she retraced the path in the mountain which led to her own home.

One day, however, whilst performing some household work with Karl, being no longer able to retain his dear secret, Wilhelm took the following method of revealing it to his brother.

“Karl,” he said, “mother and father have been man and wife forty years, and they have lived all that time happily together. How preferable is a married life to a single one !”

Karl turned his head towards him, and Wilhelm proceeded.

“Now, brother, tell me, would *you* live in this world alone and comfortless ?”

“No,” said Karl, and resumed his work.

“Well, now, I like that, brother ; you do speak but very seldom, and when you do it is not always to such good purpose.”

Karl smiled, but his eye changed not.

“Tell me, Karl, will you walk with me this evening to the Mägdesprung ?”

“For what purpose ?”

“It is *not* to see—a devil.”

Karl suddenly turned round, and every feature—his eye excepted, which was like a stone—had a fearful expression. Recollecting himself, however, he said,—

“I suppose not. There are no devils now to be seen in the Harz mountains.”

“Oh, Karl, I do not know that,” said Wilhelm, assuming

a mock serious tone of voice ; “if what old Verloff says be true, there is a goblin and a sprite, not only in many parts of the mountains, but actually in our own good Carolinamine. And as for *der Teufel*”—and here, endeavouring to assume a deeper tone of seriousness, he laughed out for some time in great ecstasy. “If young Spindelman speak sooth, you, Master Karl, have had dealings with such a personage. It was only the night before last, as we were taking a glass of Schnapps together, that he told me how one morning, as he was walking alone in the mountains, he saw you in close conversation with—a *man*, as he at first supposed him to be, as large as yonder tree ; how he heard you say these dreadful words :—“*No less ? Will nothing less suffice you ? Great God, what a doom !*” and how, shortly afterwards, he saw him descend into the earth, whereby he knew him to be no man at all, but the black gentleman himself. What do you think of that, Master Karl ? And Spindelman is an authority, for he gets drunk every day. Poor fellow, he’ll soon drink himself to death. The Brantwein plays sad tricks with his five senses. The devil and you, Karl,”—and he again burst out into an ecstasy of laughter, in which his brother seemed to join most heartily, though he did not utter one syllable, nor turn his head, but employed himself more diligently than ever in chopping wood—as it chanced, his morning’s occupation.

“No, Karl,” still continued the gay Wilhelm, “I will take you to see *a fairy*, the sweetest in all Germany—a fairy that shall make sparkle again those stern and dumb—”

Karl turned suddenly round, and the word Wilhelm would have uttered died on his lips. Karl, without taking any notice of the effect he had produced, said, “Do not trifle with me. Speak seriously, Wilhelm. What do you wish me to do ?”

“ Well then, in sober seriousness, I want to show you—”

Before he could say more, his mother entered and interrupted the conversation.

Whoever has made the tour of the Harz mountains will not forget whilst he lives the majestic and awful appearance of their innumerable trees, which, crowded together over the undulating tracts of the hills, and swayed by the winds, present the picture of some mighty and supernatural ocean. To such a scene were Karl and the anxious lover now hastening. The sun still hung among the hills, and the pleasure of seeing that huge ball of fire drop into the valleys was yet reserved for the youths: their road led them over a mountain top.

Karl seemed to be acquainted with the business upon which they were bound. He listened to the frequent bursts of passion which escaped from his brother's lips with a cold and unchangeable silence.

“ Oh, Karl!” exclaimed the fond youth, “ you are cold and quiet, and have no experience, no sympathy. If it were otherwise, you would know how blessed a thing it is to love—to love as I do, with a fear of rejection, creeping and trembling before a hope that is dearer than certainty itself. Karl, am I not happy?” He looked into his brother's face for an answer, but receiving none, poor Wilhelm continued—

“ You know, Karl, that father said, whichever married first should have the two rooms in the cottage. Now, as there is little chance of your entering upon the married state for some time, if ever, I shall become the owner, and you, my dear Karl, must be content to visit us there.”

At length they arrived at the Mägdesprung. The sun went down.

“ My dear brother, look at that light foot. See with what a maidenly grace it bounds over the stones. Wait till she approach—look on her face, and tell me if she is not an angel ?”

Karl looked towards the spot to which he pointed, but in truth he saw nothing ; for little Bertha was at such a distance, and her form so indistinct, that none but a lover’s accustomed eye could trace it. Karl continued silent, and a quarter of an hour elapsed before the maiden drew near.

Wilhelm exclaimed at the top of his lowest voice—

“ There, there ——.”

And in his eagerness to observe the treasure, he did not at all perceive the movement of his brother, who, as if impelled from the mouth of a cannon, rushed from his hiding-place, and stood before the widow’s daughter. She shrieked, and crying “ Oh, my dear Karl,” threw herself into his arms.

CHAPTER II.

THE first impulse of Wilhelm was to leap upon his brother and Bertha. A few moments afterwards he was retracing his steps homeward, and weeping like a child. “ It is too hard,” he said. “ I cannot bear it.” As his tenderness became relieved by his tears, and as *they* soon ceased to be any relief whatever to him, vexation, disappointment and ill-feeling got the better of his good heart. “ He shan’t carry it so prettily,” he said. “ He has done it to

baulk me, and to kill me. I understand his silence now very well, and his smiles, and his contempt, and his patient listening to all that I said about her. He knew that I loved her better than my own soul, and look, how he has trifled with me. I will not bear it patiently—I cannot. It is very, very hard!” he exclaimed, and leaning passionately against a tree, once more he burst into tears.

As he approached his home he was at a loss to know what excuse he should make for Karl. This difficulty, however, was got over, when, upon entering the cottage, he saw Karl quietly sitting at the *ofen*, his mother busy preparing the *abendbrod*, old Michael reading the *Stunden der Andacht*, and his brother himself employed in carving a pipe out of a twisted branch of a tree, an employment in which the miners are particularly skilful. His surprise was great, but he said nothing. Karl, looking towards him without any embarrassment, said, “Wilhelm, why did you leave me? You take me to a spot which I have seldom, if ever, visited, and you leave me to find my way home as I best may. This is hardly kind of you.” It was now Wilhelm’s turn to remain silent. He stared at his brother almost wildly, seemed choked with the suppression of a feeling in which he dared not indulge, but said nothing. No notice was taken of his behaviour by the old people. The supper was eaten rather silently; but, in other respects, the evening passed off as usual.

The next morning, as was their wont, the brothers went together to their work at the mine. They had walked some time in silence. Wilhelm looked now quiet and calm, and seemed to be preparing himself to act upon a determination which his good sense, his pure manly heart, and one night’s reflection had probably suggested to him.

Suddenly he stopped, and in a steady, settled, and im-

pressive voice, as if he were compelling the words which came from him, said,

“Karl ! I can't speak to you as I should wish to speak to a brother. You are either too proud or too ill-natured to answer my questions,—and I will not—I am determined—be angry with you, because it is so. Never mind. I can bear it and more. If yesterday morning I had been offered the whole of the mine over which we are walking to give up that girl, I should have refused, and thought myself rich in doing so. If you had cut this limb from me,” and he held out his big arm, whilst a tear started in his eye, but he checked it, “if you had cut off this arm, I say, I should have borne the pain and the loss of it much more easily than I can—do bear the loss of hope. I am not saying all this to show you how great a sacrifice I am willing to make, or to brag of it ; but you shall know that I have not loved her lightly ; you shall know that I am able to give up even to you, from whom I *can* expect no return, the only—next to our dear father and mother—the only thing worth living for. Tell me, do you love her ? Does she ?”—and it was here that his voice first began to tremble,—“does she love you ?”

Karl had been unmoved during the whole of this pathetic appeal. He turned now towards Wilhelm, and with a stern, inflexible manner, said——

“Boy ! when you took me to the spring, I knew not whom I was to meet there. What passed there, or as much of it as you witnessed, for I know not how long you remained, may be a sufficient answer to your question.” With which words he turned his head away, and was again silent.

“I have done,” said Wilhelm, and putting on their miner's clothes, they went down the pit to work.

A week afterwards and there were no bounds to the happiness of Michael Hauser's wife. She knew, she said, that one thing only had been wanting to make her Karl as gay as the wildest of them. "In fact," she said, and she was a woman of experience, "it takes different things to make different people happy. Now some must go to the Wirthshaus—some waltz—some gamble, and if a man can get no pleasure in any of these, all that is left to give it him, and which he, without knowing it, requires, is a wife."

Little Bertha smiled ; and assisted her future mother-in-law in removing the coverings from the gay furniture, now five years deposited—having been originally designed as the marriage portion of a daughter who did not live to enjoy it, in those two rooms which poor Wilhelm had so ardently hoped to have made the home of *his* Bertha.

Of all the lovers that have been known Karl was the most singular ; and how the charming Bertha could fancy him was a matter of no small surprise to all who knew nothing in the world about love affairs. Whatever had been the origin and progress of their attachment, it is unquestionably true that the sullen and gloomy miner had now a more than common influence over the affections and conduct of his betrothed ; yet even towards her, as to all the world besides, he was cold and peevish.

Love blinded Bertha, and she did not feel his conduct. Perhaps there was some reason for his moroseness with which she was unacquainted, and for which she pitied him, and, it may be, loved him the more. We shall learn in the sequel.

Wilhelm went about his work as before. Afflicted, as he was, by his loss, he was too good to give to the causes of it the least uneasiness. He left home earlier in the morning, and returned home later at night. And it was only when his

pride was working within him, or when he was compelled by circumstances, that he ventured into the room in which *she* sat. On such an occasion he had remarked the apathy of his brother's manner to her. "He does not love her," he internally said; "does not love her, as I do—did. I hope she may be happy. Heaven bless her!" The last three words were unconsciously *uttered*, and in a tone that did not escape the mole-eared Karl. Wilhelm perceived it. He arose from his seat, approached his brother kindly, took him by the hand, and saying softly, "Forgive me; I could not help it," left the room.

"Not later than ten," said little Bertha to her *Braitigam*, as she stepped over the threshold of the door for the last time previous to her marriage. "Good bye!" and so saying, she kissed him, and departed.

Wilhelm was lying at the foot of that spring, which even now he cherished more than any other spot, as Bertha passed it on her way home. He saw her, but he turned his head away, and played with the waters of the fountain. He felt the whole world going round with him, as the sensation of a delicate hand, touching his back, crept through his blood. Having apologised for the interruption, "Master Wilhelm," said Bertha, "I am a very foolish girl, and I know you will think me half crazy for my superstition; but I must throw myself upon your generosity, or be unhappy for ever."

Wilhelm's heart beat violently, but he did not interrupt the lady.

"You must know that—I'm sure you will laugh outright—twelve years ago, when I was a little girl at school, having more time upon my hands than I knew how to employ to any

good use, I one day entered into a compact with a young school-fellow,—of which, as she some three years since removed within five miles of our village, I have lately been reminded by her,—that whichever was first married should invite the other to the wedding, under the penalty—such did each imprecate upon herself—of being made—now I see you are smiling—a widowed bride. It is very possible that I should not now have concerned myself much about it, if I had not dreamt of it three times last night, and it has really made me so unhappy that I do not know if I shall be easy again, unless I find means to ask her.”

It did not require much argument to prevail upon Wilhelm to become the messenger. He set out on his errand. Though nine o'clock, it was not yet dark. Upon his arrival at the house, he was informed that the family had, the day preceding, on account of the ill health of some of its inmates, left it for a temporary residence in a warmer climate. Nothing was left for Wilhelm but to return to his home, which he did not reach until a late hour, when every one had for some time retired to rest. Having entered, which to him was not difficult, he made his way cautiously to his own room, where, for some time, he sat musing upon the business in which he had been engaged. He could not think it right that the imagination of Bertha should be permitted, by a knowledge of the truth, to become, as in all probability it would eventually, the instrument of her own destruction. And yet he was assured that she could not for any period be kept ignorant of the fact, which, coming to her in suspicion, and after it had been thought necessary to withhold it from her, would be doubly alarming and injurious in its consequences. Perplexed and uneasy, and seeing no way to extricate himself, he determined upon speaking to Karl.

He went at once to his brother's bedroom, the door of

which he gently opened : nor, until after he had opened it, did it occur to him, that that door had never been known to remain unlocked, when Karl was at the inside. He trod softly, and with the candle approached the bed ; he called his brother's name

* * * *
* * * *

Exactly four minutes after Wilhelm had left his own room, he was again sitting in it, his eyes bursting from his head—his hair standing on end—his strong limbs quivering—he gasped, panted, and seemed to be choking from the violent effect of horror and dread. Confronting him, stood his brother, foaming with rage, and every feature, his large eye excepted, maddened with expression. There was no candle in the room, but the moon was shining full on their faces.

“ O Karl ! O Karl ! Karl, Karl ! ”

“ Silence ! ” said the elder in a loud whisper, and thrusting his fist into his brother's mouth to stop his utterance.

“ Silence !—By Hell, I'll murder you if they hear you ! ”

“ Oh ! how horrible ! ” exclaimed Wilhelm, still in vehement agitation, but adopting his brother's whisper.

“ How dared you, viper ! enter that room ? How dared you pry—— ”

“ No, Karl, I did not pry. Believe me, I did not—I——. ”

“ Lower, lower,—if they hear you, I'll kill you. ”

“ Well, then ! but, indeed I did not pry. It was for your own good that I came. For *her* good. I would rather have been shot than known that—— ”

“ Name it not. I spurn you, boy ! But the misery is on you, not on me. *I* have learnt nothing. You have a living curse within you : and the pains and the tortures of damnation are honey-drops compared with it. ”

“ Oh, Karl, kill me if you will ! but do not talk thus. ”

“ Yes ! you shall die ! but not now, nor by my hand. ”

You *must* die! You cannot live, knowing these things. Your good angel shall be your destroyer."

"Oh! I am not awake,—and, Karl! you are not——"

"What?" said Karl, sharply and bitterly: and Wilhelm, not daring to answer, rushed to his bed, and hid his head in the clothes.

For some minutes both were silent. At length Karl spoke:—"What brought you into that room?" Wilhelm explained the nature of the transaction in which he had been engaged for Bertha, hastily, but intelligibly: and his recital seemed to call upon Karl for all his natural boldness and self-dependency.

"Look you, Wilhelm! No human soul has seen me at such a moment. You are the first. I have not repined at my lot. I have lived above it. I never felt the common passions of men, and therefore sorrow and fear could be no part of my feelings, in bearing it. I have seen great things. I have bought knowledge which you can never learn—that kings do not possess, and wise men dream not of. Is this nothing?—I have leaped into the bowels of the earth, and traced nature in all her handiworks. Is this nothing?—I have held commune with the invisible spirits of another world, and spoken with restless and departed souls. But I have paid for all this—and you know the price, Wilhelm! You must leave this place to-morrow. Let your secret *be* a secret: and never let me see you more. Be wise—content yourself—leave me to myself—and, if you can,—forget this night."

Wilhelm, more collected after his first shock, said, "Karl! I am in your power. You have the means of crushing me—body, but not soul. I have become innocently acquainted with your secret—call it what you please—by your own inadvertency. Take what advantage of my situation you

think proper. I shall *not* leave my old parents now, when more than ever they need a protector—a protector and a comfort. When you ask me to forget this night, you ask me to forget the light which is in heaven, the air that we breathe——”

“But,” interrupted Karl, “there is one thing. You will not divulge this to the old people?”

“It would break their hearts.”

“You will not divulge it to them, then? You promise?”

“I do, I do!” and he sighed deeply.

“Nor to any one?—You promise?”

“Nor to any *but* ONE,” said Wilhelm, firmly, but with intense passion: “nor to any *but* ONE, Karl. That poor wretch—she shall not be your victim.”

Karl, who seemed to have forgotten the tender maiden, now unconsciously and peacefully sleeping, received this intimation as if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet; he was frantic, and his tempestuous passion added to the whisper which he was compelled to adopt, and his wide eye all the while quietly glistening in the moonbeam, gave to the scene a hideous effect. He fell upon both knees, and really clung to his lately despised and discarded brother.

“Wilhelm! dear Wilhelm! if you have one spark of brotherly love in you—if you feel one drop of your mother’s blood throbbing in your veins—spare me. Be not so cruel. I told you that I had nothing in common with man—that I was a stranger to his passions. One being has linked me to this world; else I had not borne the load of life so long. Bertha has been a whole world to me. I am no less to her. For her sake, I have sustained life, which was bitter, and found it sweet. And she, before she knew me, life was to her a joy, a blessing. Since then, it has become a paradise. Rob her of that, and you murder her. Take from her one

thing, and you annihilate her. Wilhelm! you know how much I am accustomed to kneel for favours. But, beggar as I am, and as you see me, be kind to me! be good! be charitable! be brotherly! and I will make you richer than empires. Do not refuse me, for her sake,—and you once loved her,—do not!”

Wilhelm replied, “The man, Karl, who turns from his God, has need to bend to a worm. You would not be in this posture, if what you had occasion to ask were right. I may kill her; or, it may be, only humble your fiendish pride. But, come what may, I know, and shall do my duty.”

“The riches of these mines shall be poor compared with yours:” and he waited for a reply.

“Thrice their value!” Again he waited.

“You shall have power infinite! Will nothing satisfy you?”

Wilhelm remained silent.

Karl, after a pause, rose from the ground. His features, now nearer to their wonted austerity, assumed an expression of scorn and pity; and without uttering one word more, he retired to his room. Wilhelm threw himself upon his bed, and burst into tears; and, when he awoke the next, or rather the same morning at seven o'clock, was surprised to find that he could have slept at all.

CHAPTER III.

“*Viel Glück Nachbar.*”—“*Congratulire.*”—“*Viele Freude theurste Nachbarinn*”—“*Der Brautigam soll leben*”—“*Die kleine schatz soll leben.*”

Upon the morning that was to change Bertha Kramer from the happiest girl in the village to the happiest woman

in the world, at half-past eight o'clock, exactly two hours before the ceremony was to take place, the neighbours and fellow-workmen of Karl were amusing old Michael and themselves with these and similar attempts at civility, all of which were received by the old miner with bows that threatened to reach to the bottom itself of the deep Carolina. Karl and Wilhelm were both present. Karl astonished every one by his gaiety, and nobody more than his brother, who sat quite apart in a corner of the room with his face buried in his hands. Poor Wilhelm! He had been wishing himself dead a thousand times; and then, thinking that wrong, had wished a thousand times again that he had never been born. Worn out by such vain conflicts, he collected himself as well as he could, muttered "God's will be done!" and continued sitting with his face hid. He might, perhaps, have remained in that position until the marriage was over, if he had not been roused by Karl, who, in a voice that sounded as if it was meant to comfort and revive him, said,—

"Come, man, rouse; never sigh on such a day; *you* may be as happy yet."

Wilhelm, like a man who has lost his senses, held up his head, and stared his brother widely and full in the face. Karl, without noticing this, continued,—

"There, that's right. Donner wetter, brother, you are not to take it to heart in this fashion. Wish me joy——"

"Joy—joy—joy—" cried out the youth. Wish *you* joy—*you*—*you*—JOY—HIM! Father—oh—oh, oh—" and he again dropt his face into his hands.

All the neighbours looked at Michael, and then at Karl; but as they did not seem willing to make any inquiry into this singular conduct, the old man, having previously ascertained that Wilhelm was not observing him, gently seized

the oldest of the party by the coat, drawing the wearer nearer to him, and then, by look, getting the rest of the company round him, he, in a low voice, thus spoke :—" It was not, friends, until this morning that Karl told me that Wilhelm himself here has an affection for our little Bertha. It appears, although he never mentioned it to us, that it has been going on for some time. As he never disclosed the secret himself, Karl says, it would have been very wrong in him to have betrayed it, if he had not feared that his hot temper, as the moment approached, would lead him into some excess of violence, which, you see, might very easily have happened."

"Father, he lies!" cried the youth, starting from his chair. "I do indeed love her, but——"

"Ah, poor fellow," thought the neighbours, "we see how it is," and they let him go on.

"—but he lies most foully. Ask him one question," he said, his cheeks crimsoning with rage.

Karl passed him hastily, and whispered into his ear, "Your promise!"

"True, true," he replied, and burst out of the room.

"And a better heart than thine never beat, my dear Karl," said Frau Hauser, moved to tears, as her eldest son followed Wilhelm out of the room, as she said, to appease and tranquillise him—"Heaven bless you both!"

"But did he tell you *all*? And can you forgive me?"

"All, and I forgive you."

"And will she come?"

"She cannot. The illness of her mother prevents her: but she acknowledges the fulfilment of your share of the

compact. Wilhelm himself would tell you this, and more, if his jealousy and unkindness did not keep him away. He left his father and mother about an hour since, and has hid himself no one knows where. I almost despise him for his want of generosity; but I hope the fool will come to no harm. Why do you sigh, Bertha?"

"For Wilhelm, love."

"For him?"

"Yes. Have I not made him unhappy? Have I not nourished a passion in him which may be his ruin? Did I not daily visit that dreadful spot? Indeed, Karl, these are things to make a girl sigh, whose days have crept on so quietly as mine have. I am sure, if I had known it, I would not have gone to that ugly spring a second time.

"Forget it, child."

"But surely he will not offer you any violence? Oh no, I am sure he will not. No, my dear Karl—he is too good. He loves you too well. Ah, yes, and I could prove it to you, if you would not be angry with me."

"Was I ever angry with you?"

"Well, you must know that I saw Wilhelm about an hour ago."

"You!" interrupted Karl.

"Well, well, but he did not see me. There, I said you would be angry—I will *not* tell you."

"Oh! Bertha, if you knew what agony your words bring to this heart, you would not trifle with me."

"Indeed, indeed! I am sorry for it. But why should they? Can you be jealous of Wilhelm?"

"You say you saw him this morning. Was he alone?"

"You shall hear. Anxious to receive an answer to my message, I was descending to your cottage in the hope of meeting with Wilhelm, when I saw him rush from the door

so violently, that for my life I could not approach him. I retreated—he did not stop until he came to the foot of that large tree which stands at the end of the road leading to the old mountain track. I felt myself compelled to follow him thither: he did not perceive me. He was crying and raving; but getting at last more composed, he took a book from his pocket—he knelt against the tree—he prayed. I heard him—it was the Bible, Karl, and he spoke most fervently and distinctly; he mentioned your name, and hoped God would be kind to you; and he spoke of me, wished that I might be happy and know no sorrow. At this moment, seeing you coming, I was frightened and ran away.”

Karl, by his manner, had evidently expected to hear more than was conveyed to him in these words. As it was, this speech of Bertha's had a visible disheartening effect upon him. From that moment till he entered the church with his lovely and innocent bride, he was silent and gloomy. At the altar, even, as he stood, the pride of his parents and the envy of his companions, his brow was overcast, and his spirit was oppressed. To the many congratulations that were offered him he returned not a word. To the tears shed, half in joy half in fear, by his loving Bertha, he was cold and insensible. He led her from the church because she clung to his arm, but he supported her so carelessly that it seemed as if it would be a matter of indifference to him whether she withdrew her tender hold or not. At his particular desire, the neighbours returned to his father's cottage together, and permitted Bertha and himself to find their way home alone and uninterrupted. The friends of Michael availed themselves of the opportunity to discuss the absence of Wilhelm, of whom nothing had been seen since his hasty departure in the morning. Some called him an ill-willed

boy, and foresaw that he would come to no good : others pitied him, and said that he had been unfairly outwitted by his brother. His absence, however, made nobody unhappy or uneasy, but Michael himself, who called his Wilhelm a loving, kind-hearted boy, that deserved to be horsewhipped for making his old father wretched.

Karl and Bertha were meanwhile loitering on the mountains. The latter, happy as her situation could make her ; the former, still silent and dull. At any other moment Bertha would have been affected by his reserve—a stranger would have been struck with it ; but the novelty of her situation had bewildered her, and she knew not whether the silence of Karl was the result of the late ceremony, or his natural temper. She would not, she could not, find fault with him ; and, trembling at his side, she walked, unwilling and unable to disturb him. At length, Karl stopped, and taking her by the hand, which he held fast, looking her full in the face, he said,—

“ Bertha, it was his own fault—his own deed—he had the choice—I offered it to him—there was no alternative.”

“ What do you mean, love ?” said Bertha, timidly.

“ Wilhelm—my brother—that prayed for me at the tree—you cannot deny it—you told me so yourself.”

“ Yes, I did, Karl ; but why do you look so wildly ? Why do you press my hand ? You hurt me, Karl.”

“ Do I, child ?” said he, as if starting from a dream. “ I do. Forgive me, love, forgive me :” and he walked slowly on ; and she followed, amazed and frightened ; and so they reached home.

It is midnight, and there is not one sound to be heard in the whole village of Klausthal. Every creature has gone to

rest. The miners that danced at the wedding, the young girls who had been three days making the *kranze* for Bertha, the youths who had neglected their work, wooing them; the old and the young, the strong and the weak, all were asleep—all, including Michael Hauser and his wife, who, although the day had closed in upon them without their receiving any tidings of Wilhelm, had gone at their usual hour quietly to sleep. It is twelve o'clock, and they are all at rest. One o'clock sounds—Bertha is awakened by a noise like the striking of a flint. She looks up, and—catches a glimpse of her husband creeping from the room, and concealing with his hand a lighted candle. He treads softly towards the stairs, and, without looking behind him, descends. The heart of Bertha beats with emotion. She has but one impulse, and she obeys it. Stealing from her bed, more gently even than Karl, she hastens to the staircase, and follows the glimmering of the light.

Karl reaches the bottom, and stops—listens for one moment, assures himself that everything is silent in the house, and opens carefully the cottage door. He steps over the threshold, and as carefully closes it. Bertha is left in utter darkness. She stands fixed to the stair which she had reached at the moment of her husband's quitting the house, and her fear and her surprise render her motionless. How long she remained in this situation it was impossible for her to know. Agitated as she was, time seemed to have no power or influence. It became at once, as it were, divested of its importance, and was nothing. She felt as if she could suffer years of suspense, rather than receive the information which every succeeding minute threatened to bring to her. A light that appeared through the crevice of the door gave the first intimation of Karl's return. Bertha drew herself up, and having a full view of the passage, escaped, herself, the

chance of being observed. The door opened—and Karl entered, but looking most pale, anxious, and disturbed. In his left hand he bore a spade. His right hand—and Bertha, to her inexpressible horror, perceives it—is covered with blood. The assassin, the murderer, the fratricide—for such indeed she imagines him—mutters to himself these words—she hears him distinctly—“I am happier now, much happier.” A gleam of hope burst in upon her. “Thank God,” she thought, “he is innocent; he could not speak thus with his brother’s blood upon his soul. There is some mystery connected with it all, and in the morning I shall be made acquainted with it.” Karl spoke again. “For Bertha’s sake I am glad of this. Her life will be more peaceful. The storm that threatened her days has passed over, and, at all events, there will be sunshine for her.” Saying these words, he made a movement, as Bertha thought, towards the staircase. As cautiously as she could, she reached her room again, and, almost fainting with apprehension, waited her husband’s return to bed. Some time elapsed before he made his appearance. His back is turned towards Bertha, and she gazes upon his hand—the blood was gone. Leaving the candle still burning in the room, he resumed his place at the side of his lovely and innocent wife.

“He sleeps,” said Bertha, hearing him draw his breath heavily, and having herself kept awake upwards of an hour: “he sleeps—no murderer could sleep.” She raises herself in the bed, and her motion does not awake him. She *leaves* the bed; still is he undisturbed, and still he breathes as calm as in sleep. “One look, and I will be satisfied.” She took the candle and placed it before his face.

Wretched, wretched Bertha!—with affright, with horror, with an astonishment that took from her the ability to speak, the power of moving one muscle of her fair and deli-

cate frame, she looked upon the face of her partner. He slept profoundly—she held the taper before him, he stirred not, he slept on—but *his eyes*, his large, his quiet, stony eyes, always large, always still, were at this very moment *open and motionless*. More distended, more protruding, and more icy-looking than ever, it seemed as if some leaden hand had raised the lids, that space itself might be scared by their fixedness.

The body of Bertha shook before the spectacle. It was long before her speech returned to her; but it did return, and she wept, and she fell on her knees, and she called his name. “Karl, my dear Karl,—my love—my life!” He breathed, his chest rose and fell, but no answer came from him. She seized him violently and screamed. Karl jumped up. The candle fell from her hand, and she sunk upon the floor. The moonbeams mantled her with their cold light. The appearance of Karl’s features, as he rushed to Bertha and spoke to her, was truly awful. It was not anger, it was not fear, it was not remorse. It was frenzy and weakness—human weakness and distress. He clasped his hands, and bending over the poor wretch, whose face was buried in the earth, in a piercing, heart-rending tone, he cried, “My child, my wife! I CANNOT, I CANNOT—it is my curse—I CANNOT CLOSE THESE MARBLE MOCKERIES!!!”

Dear Mr. Hood,

I am very much obliged to you for the loan of that interesting work, “*The Grim Spectre of Schaffenwalden* ;” but please do not send me any more of the same kind. I read it last night, and I can truly say, I never suffered so much in my life from any undertaking. I retired, it would be a mockery to say, *to rest*—at one o’clock this morning :

no, it was to *dream* and perspire ; from one until three, the Grim Spectre of Schaffenwalden danced without ceasing at the bottom of the bed : from three till six I was oppressed with the vision which I commit to paper, and now send for your edification. Publish it—do what you please with it—but I beseech you entertain a proper esteem for past favours, and send me no more Spectres from Schaffenwalden.

Your faithful

January, 1845.

BENJAMIN JONES.

A NOTE FROM MY NOTE BOOK.

ONE of the most beautiful poems in the English language is Collins's Ode to Evening. Its melody is exquisite ; and the construction and rhythm are worthy of study. There is in the composition a peculiarity which greatly helps the charm ; by one of those happy characteristic effects which genius by art or instinct is so apt to produce. *The whole poem is but one sentence.* There is no full stop till the end. The verse flows on unbroken, like one of those gentle continuous breezes that breathe on a fine summer evening.

EPIGRAM.

A LORD bought of late an outlandish estate,
 At its Wild Boars to Chevy and dig ;
 So some people purchase a pig in a poke,
 And others, a poke in a pig.

[The Novel of "Our Family"—unfortunately only a fragment—was the latest literary undertaking of my father. Overflowing with fun and humour as they are, the majority of the chapters were dictated from what he knew was a bed of death. Cheerful to the last, he toiled on, as long as life remained, not so much for Fame, to ensure which he had already written more than enough, as to do what he could, while he could, for those dear ones whom he was so soon to leave.

In February, 1845, he wrote the Stanzas with which the volume practically closes,—the Appendix containing Notes, and papers which should have been contained in previous volumes.—From that time until his death, except to write farewells to his friends, he laid his pen aside.]

OUR FAMILY.

A DOMESTIC NOVEL.



CHAPTER I.

WE ARE BORN.

THE clock struck seven——

But the clock was a story-teller; for the true time was One, as marked by the short hand on the dial. The truth was, our family clock—an old-fashioned machine, in a tall mahogany case, and surmounted by three golden balls, as if it had belonged to the Lombards—was apt to chime very capriciously.

However, it struck seven just as my father came down stairs from the bedroom, rubbing his hands, and whistling in a whisper, as his custom was when he was well pleased, and walking along the passage somewhat more than usual on his tiptoes, with a jaunty gait, he stepped into the sitting-room to communicate the good news. But there was nobody in the parlour except the little fairy-like gentleman, who walked jauntily to meet him, rubbing his hands, and silently whistling, in the old mirror,—a large circular one, presided over by some bronze bird, sacred perhaps to Æsculapius, and

therefore carrying a gilt bolus, attached by a chain to his beak.

From the parlour my father went to the surgery: but there was nobody there; so he repaired, perforce, for sympathy, into the kitchen, where he found the maid, Kezia, sitting on a wooden chair, backed close against the white-washed wall, her hands clasped in her lap, and her apron thrown over her head, apparently asleep and snoring, but in reality praying half aloud.

“Well, Kizzy, it’s all happily over.”

Kezia jumped up on her legs, and having acknowledged, by a bob, her master’s presence, inquired eagerly “which sects?”

“Doublets, Kizzy, doublets. A brace of boys!”

“What, twins! O, gimini!” exclaimed the overjoyed Kezia, her cheeks for a while glowing both of the same colour. “And all doing well, missis and babes?”

“Bravely—famously—mother and all!”

“The Lord preserve her!” said Kezia, with emphatic fervour—“the Lord preserve her and her progeny,” pronouncing the last word so that it would have rhymed with mahogany.

“Progeny—with a soft *g*,”—muttered my father, who had once been a schoolmaster, and had acquired the habit of correcting “cakeology.”

“Well, prodge, then,” murmured Kezia, her cheeks again looking, but only for a moment, both of a colour. For, by a freak of nature, one side of her face, from her eye to the corner of her mouth, was blotched with what is called a claret-mark—a large irregular patch of deep crimson, which my father, fond of odd coincidences, declared was of the exact shape of *Florida* in the map. Be that as it might, her face, except when she blushed, exhibited a diversity of colour

quite allegorical, one side as sanguine as Hope, and the other as pallid as fear.

Now, a claret-mark is generally supposed to be "born with the individual;" whereas Kezia attributed her disfigurement to a juvenile face-ache, to relieve which, she had applied to the part a hot cabbage-leaf, but gathered unluckily from the red pickling brassica instead of the green one, and so by sleeping all night on it, her cheek had extracted the colour. An explanation, offered in perfect good faith; for Kezia had no personal vanity to propitiate. She had no more charms, she knew, than a cat—not any cat, but our own old shabby tabby, with her scrubby skin, a wall-eye, and a docked tail. But in moral Beauty—if ever there had been an annual Book of it—Kezia might have had her portrait at full length.

Her figure and face were of the commonest human clay, cast in the plainest mould. Her clumsy feet and legs, her coarse red arms and hands, and dumpy fingers, her ungainly trunk, and hard features, were admirably adapted for that rough drudgery to which she unsparingly devoted them, as if only fit to be scratched, chapped, burnt, sodden, sprained, frost-bitten, and stuck with splinters. And if sometimes her joints stiffened, her back ached, and her limbs flagged under the severity of her labours, was it not all for the good of that family to which she sacrificed herself with the feudal devotion of a Highlander to his clan? In short, she combined in one ungainly bundle of household virtues, all the best qualities of our domestic animals and beasts of burthen—loving and faithful as the dog, strong as a horse, patient as an ass, and temperate as a camel. At nineteen years of age she had engaged herself to my mother as Servant of All Work; and truly, from that hour, no kind of labour, hot or cold, wet or dry, clean or dirty, had she shunned: never

inquiring whether it belonged to her place, but toiling, a voluntary Slave, in all departments; nay, as if her daily work were not enough, sleep-walking by night into parlour and kitchen, to clean knives, wash-up crockery, dust chairs, or polish tables!

To female servants in general, and to those in particular who advertise for small families, where a footman is kept, the advent of two more children would have been an unwelcome event: perhaps equivalent to a warning. Not so with Kezia. Could one have looked through her homely bosom into her heart, or through her plain forehead into her brain, they would have been found rejoicing beforehand in the double, double toil and trouble of attending on the twins. My father's thoughts were turned in the same direction, but with a gravity that put an end to his sub-whistling, and led him, half in jest and half in earnest, to moralise aloud.

"Two at once, Kizzy, two at once—there will be sharp work for us all. Two to nurse—two to suckle—two to wean—two to vaccinate (he was sure not to forget that!)—two to put to their feet——"

"Bless them!" ejaculated Kezia.

"Two to cut their teeth—two to have measles, and hooping-cough——"

"Poor things!" murmured Kezia.

"Ay, and what's worse, two more backs to clothe; and two more bellies to fill—and I can't ride on two horses, and pay two visits at once."

"You must double your fees, master."

"No, no, Kizzy, that won't do. My patients grumble at them already."

"Then I'd double their physicking, and order two draughts, and two powders, and two boxes of pills, instead of one."

“But how will they like such double drugging, Kizzy—supposing that their constitutions are strong enough to stand it?”

Kezia was silent. She had thrown out her suggestion for the benefit of the family; and beyond that limited circle her mind never revolved. Her sympathies began, and, like Domestic Charity, ended at home. Society, and the large family of human kind in general, she left to shift for themselves.

The conversation having thus dropped, my father crept upstairs again, to see how matters were going on overhead, whilst the maid proceeded to answer a muffled knock at the front door, followed by an attempt to ring the night bell, but which had been completely dumb-founded by Kezia with paper and rag. The appellant was Mr. Postle, the medical assistant.

“A nice night for a ride through the Fens,” grumbled the deputy-doctor, shaking himself in his great-coat, like a wet water-dog, before he followed the maid into the kitchen, where he seated himself in his steaming clothes before the fire.

“Mr. Postle!”

Mr. Postle looked up at the speaker, and saw her hard features convulsively struggling into what bore some distant resemblance to a smile.

“Mr. Postle!” and her voice broke into a sort of hysterical chuckle. “You don’t ask the news?”

“What news?”

“What! Why, there’s an increase of the family!” said Kezia, her face crimson on both sides with the domestic triumph. “We’ve got twins!”

“Humph!” grunted Mr. Postle. “Better one strong one, than two weakly ones.”

“Weakly!” exclaimed Kezia; “why they’re little Herculeses. Our babbies always are.”

A suppressed laugh caused the assistant and Kezia to look round, and they beheld, close beside them, the nurse, Mrs. Prideaux. It was one of her peculiarities that she never shuffled about slipshod, or in creaking leather; but crept along, noiselessly as a ghost, in a pair of list mocassins: and thus, taking advantage of my father’s visit to the bed-chamber, she had descended for a little change to the kitchen.

A very superior woman was Mrs. Prideaux: quite the attendant for an aristocratic invalid, lying in down, beneath an embroidered quilt, and on a laced pillow. She was never seen in that slovenly deshabelle, so characteristic of females of her profession; no, you never saw *her* in a slatternly coloured cotton gown, drawn up through the pocket-holes, and disclosing a greasy nankeen petticoat with ticking pockets—nor in a yellow nightcap tied over the head and under the chin with a blue-and-white bird’s-eye handkerchief—looking like a hybrid between a washerwoman and a watchman. A pure white dimity robe tied with pale green ribands, was her undress. Her personal advantages were very great. Her figure was tall and genteel; her features were small and regular—so different to those dowdy Dodo-like creatures, bloated and ugly as sin, who are commonly called “nusses.” Then, she did not take snuff; nor ever drank gin or rum, neat or diluted: a glass of foreign wine or liqueur, or brandy, if genuine Cognac, she would accept; but beer, never. No one ever heard her sniff, or saw her spit, or trim the candle-snuff with her fingers. And if ever she dozed in her chair, as nurses sometimes must, she never snored: but was lady-like even in her sleep. Her language was not only free from vulgarisms and provincialisms, but so

choice as to be generally described as "book English." You never heard Mrs. Prideaux blessing her stars, or invoking Goody Gracious, or asking Lawk to have mercy on her, or asseverating by Jingo. She would have died ere she would have complained of her lines, her rheumatiz, her lumbargo, or the molligrubs. Such broad coarse words could never pass those thin compressed lips. But perhaps the best test of her refined phraseology was, that though the word was so current with mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, gossips, and servants of both sexes, that it rang in her ears, at least once in every five minutes, she never said—babby.

In nothing, however, was Mrs. Prideaux more distinguished from the sisterhood, than the tone of her manners: so affable, yet so dignified—and, above all, that serene self-possession under any circumstances, supposed to accompany high breeding and noble birth. Thus, nobody ever saw her flustered, or non-plush'd, or at her wit's ends, or all in a twitter, or narvous, or ready to jump out of her skin; but always calm, cool, and correct. She hinted, indeed, that she was a reduced gentlewoman, deterred by an independent spirit from accepting the assistance of wealthy and titled connections. In short, she was a superior woman, so superior, that many a calculating visitor who would have tipped another nurse with a shilling, felt compelled to present a half-crown, if not a whole one, to Mrs. Prideaux, and even then with some anxiety as to her reception of the offering.

Such was the prepossessing person, whose presence notwithstanding was so unwelcome to the medical assistant, that her appearance in the kitchen seemed the signal for his departure. He rose up instantly from his chair, but halted a moment to ask Kezia if there had been any applications at the surgery in his absence.

"Yes, the boy from the curate's, for some more of the paradoxical lozenges: he says he can't preach without 'em."

"Paregorical. Well?"

"And Widow Wakeman with a complaint——"

"Ah! in her hip."

"No, in her mouth, that she have tried the Scouring Drops, and they won't clean marble."

"I should think not—they're for sheep. Well?"

"Only a prescription to make up. Pulv. something—aqua, something—summon'd, and cockleary."

"Anything else?"

"O yes, a message from the great house about the Brazen monkey."

"Curse the Brazil monkey!" and snatching up a candle, Mr. Postle yawned a good night apiece to the females, and with half-closed eyes stumbled off to bed.

"A quick-tempered person," observed Mrs. Prideaux, as soon as the subject of her comment was beyond earshot.

"Yes, rather caloric," she meant choleric. As an exception to her simple habits, Kezia was fond of hard words, perhaps because they were hard, just as she liked hard work.

"Well, Kezia, you observed the clock?"

"The clock, Ma'am?"

"Yes. The precise date of birth is of vast importance to human destiny."

"O, for their fortune-telling! I never thought of it—never!" And the shocked Kezia began to heap on herself, and her sieve of a head, the most bitter reproaches.

"No matter," said the nurse. "I *did* mark the time exactly." And as she spoke she drew from her bosom, and gazed at, a handsome enamelled watch, with a gold dial, and a hand that marked the seconds.

“You are aware that one of the twin infants was born before, and the other after, the hour of midnight?”

“No, really!” exclaimed Kezia, her dull eyes brightening at the prospect of a double festival. “Why then, there will be two celebrated birthdays!”

“The natal hour involves matters of much deeper importance than the keeping of birthdays,” replied the nurse, with a startling solemnity of tone and manner. “Look here, Kezia,” and returning the watch to her bosom, she drew forth a little blue morocco pocket-book, from which she extracted a paper inscribed with various signs and a diagram. “Do you know what this is?”

“I suppose,” said Kezia, turning the paper upside down, after having looked at it in every other direction, “it is some of Harry O’Griffis’s characters.”

“Not precisely hieroglyphics,” said the nurse. “It is a scheme for casting nativities. See, here are the Twelve Houses,—the first, the House of Life; the second, of Riches; the third, of Brethren; the fourth, of Parents; the fifth, of Children; the sixth, of Health; the seventh, of Marriage; the eighth, of Death; the ninth, of Religion; the tenth, of Dignities; the eleventh, of Friends; and, the twelfth, of Enemies.”

“And in which of those houses were our two dear babbies born?” eagerly asked Kezia.

Mrs. Prideaux looked grave, sighed, and shook her head so ominously, that Kezia turned as pale as marble, her very claret-mark fading into a scarcely perceptible tinge of pink.

“Don’t say it—don’t say it!” she stammered, while the big tears gathered in her eyes: “What! cut off pre-cockshiously like blighted spring buds!”

“I did not say death,” replied the nurse. “But there are other malignant signs and sinister aspects, that foretell

misfortunes of another kind—for instance, poverty. But hush——” and she held up a warning forefinger whilst her voice subsided into a whisper.

“I hear your master. Leave your door ajar, and I will come to you presently in your own room.” So saying, she rose and glided spectre-like from the kitchen—where she left Kezia staring through a haze, damp as a Scotch mist, at a vision of two little half-naked and half-famished babes turning away, loathingly, from a dose of parish gruel, administered by a pauper nurse, with a workhouse spoon.

CHAPTER II.

OUR HOROSCOPE.

A LONG hour had worn away, and still Kezia sate in her attic with the door ajar, anxiously expecting the promised visit from the mysterious nurse. Too excited to sleep, she had not undressed, but setting up a rushlight, seated herself on the bed, and gave full scope to her forboding fancies, till all the round bright spots, projected from the night-shade on the walls and ceiling, appeared like so many evil planets portending misfortunes to the new-born. From these reveries she was roused by a very low, but very audible whisper, every syllable clear and distinct as the sound of a bell.

“Whose room is that in front?”

“Mr. Postle’s.”

“Can he overhear us through the partition?”

“No, not a word.”

“You are certain of it?”

“Yes, I have tried it.”

“Very good.” And Mrs. Prideaux having first carefully

closed the door, seated herself beside the other female on the bed. "I have left the mother and her lovely twins in a sound sleep."

"The little cherubs!" exclaimed Kezia. "And must they, will they, sink so low in the world, poor things! Are they unrevocably marked out for such unprosperous fortunes in life?"

"They must—they will—they are. Listen, Kezia? I have not been many days, not many hours under this roof; but my art tells me that the wolf already has more than looked in at the door—that the master of this house knows, by experience, the bitter trials of a poor professional man—the difficulties, the cruel difficulties, of one who has to keep up a respectable appearance with very limited means."

"The Lord knows we have!" exclaimed Kezia, quite thrown off her guard. "The struggles we have had to keep up our genteelity! The shifts we have been obligated to make—as well as our neighbours," she added hastily, and not without a twinge of mortification at having let down the family by her disclosures.

"I understand you," said Mrs. Prideaux, with a series of significant little nods. "Harassed, worried to death, for the means to meet the tradesmen's bills, or to take up overdue acceptances. I know it all. The best china, and linen parted with to help to make up a sum (Kezia uttered a low inward groan), the plate in pledge (another moan from Kezia), and the head of the family even obliged to absent himself, to avoid personal arrest."

"She is a witch, sure enough," said Kezia to herself. "She knows about the baileys."

"Yes—there have been sheriff's officers in this very house," continued the nurse, as if reading the secret thought of the other. "Nor are the circumstances of your master much

mended even at the present time,"—and she fixed her dark eyes on the pale blue ones, that seemed to contract under their gaze like the feline organ under excess of light—"at this moment, when there are not six bottles of what, by courtesy, we will call sherry, in his cellar, nor as many guineas in his bureau."

"Why, as to the wine," stammered Kezia, "we have had company lately, and I would not answer for a whole dozen; but as regards the pecuniary, I feel sure—I know—I'm positive there's nigh a score of golden guineas in the house, at this blessed moment—let alone the silver and the copper."

"Your own, perhaps?"

Kezia's face seemed suddenly suffused all over with claret, and felt as hot too as if the wine had been mulled, at being thus caught out in an equivocation, invented purely for the credit of the family.

"In a word," said the nurse, "your master is a needy man; and the addition of two children to his burthens will hardly improve his finances."

"But our practice may increase," said Kezia. "We may have money left to us in a legacy—or win a grand prize in the lottery."

"I wish it was on the horoscope," said Mrs. Prideaux, looking up at the ceiling, as if appealing through it to the planetary bodies. "But the stars say otherwise. Rash speculations—heavy losses by bad debts—and a ruinous Chancery suit, as indicated by the presence of Saturn in the twelfth house."

"Satan!" ejaculated Kezia, with a visible shudder. "If *he's* in the house, there'll be Chancery suits no doubt, for he is in league, they say, with all the lawyers, from the judges down to the 'turneys."

"And, with litigation," said the nurse, "will come

rags and poverty, ay, down to the second and third generations."

"What, common begging—from door to door?"

"Alas, yes—mendicity and pauperism."

"Never!" said Kezia, with energy, starting up from the bed, and holding forth her clumsy coarse hands, with their ruddy digits, like two bunches of radishes to tempt a purchaser—"Never! whilst I can work with these ten fingers!"

"Of course not, my worthy creature, only don't be quite so vehement—of course not. And, as far as my own humble means extend, you shall not want my poor co-operation. I have already devoted my nursing fee and perquisites, whatever may be the amount, towards a scheme that will help to secure the little innocents from absolute want. There is a society, a sort of masonic society of benevolent individuals, privately established for the endowment of such unfortunate little mortals. For a small sum at the birth of a child, they undertake to pay him, after a certain age, a yearly annuity in proportion to the original deposit—a heavenly plan, devised by a few real practical Christians, who delight in doing good by stealth; and especially to such forlorn beings as are born under the influence of a malignant star. Now the year that threatens our dear darling twins is the seventh; a tender age, Kezia, to be left to the charity of the wide world!"

Poor Kezia turned as white as ashes; and for some minutes sate speechless, writhing her body and wringing her hands, as if to wring tears out of her finger ends. At last, in a faltering voice, she inquired how much seventeen guineas would grow into, per annum, in seven years.

"Why, let me see;" and Mrs. Prideaux began to calculate, by the help of a massive silver pencil-case and her tablets;

“seventeen guineas, for seven years, with interest—and interest upon interest—simple and compound—with the bonus, added by the society—why, it would positively be a little fortune—a good twenty pounds a year—enough at any rate to secure one, or even two persons, from absolute starvation.

Kezia made no reply, but darted off to a large iron-bound trunk, which she unlocked, and then drew from it a little round wooden box, the construction of which, every one who has swallowed Ching’s worm medicine, so celebrated some thirty or forty years ago, will very readily remember. Unscrewing one half of this box with a shrill screeching sound, that jarred the nerves of Mrs. Prideaux, and set all her small white teeth on edge, Kezia poured into her own lap, from a compartment formerly occupied by oval white lozenges, ten full weight guineas of the coinage of King George the Third; then turning the box, and opening the opposite half, with a similar *skreek*, and a fresh shock to the nerves and teeth of the genteel nurse, she emptied from the division, once filled with oval brown lozenges, eight half guineas, and nine seven-shilling pieces, in all, seventeen guineas, the sum total of her hoarded savings since she had been at service.

“There, take them,” she said, holding out her apron by the corners, with the precious glittering contents, towards the nurse.

“Bless you—bless you, for a true Samaritan!” replied Mrs. Prideaux, passing her hand lightly across her eyelashes—whilst something like a tear glistened upon one of her fingers, but the radiance came from a brilliant ring. “I will add this bauble to the stock,” said the nurse, drawing it off, and throwing it into Kezia’s apron. “But, my good girl, I am afraid you have contributed your all. You ought to

consider yourself a little—you may be ill—or out of place. At any rate, reserve a trifle against a rainy day.”

“No, no—don’t consider me—take it all—all, every penny of it,” sobbed Kezia. “The poor dear innocents! they are as welcome to it as my own little ones—at least, if I had any.”

“To be sure it is for *them*,—one, two, three,” said the nurse, counting the pieces separately into a stout green silk purse with gilt rings: “seventeen guineas exactly. With my own poor mite, and the ring, say twenty, or five and twenty, to be invested for the dear twins in the Benevolent Endowment Society for Children born under Malignant Planets.”

“Oh! I do wish,” exclaimed Kezia, with the abruptness of a sudden inspiration, “I do wish I knew the fortune-teller that prophesies for Moore’s Almanack!”

The nurse turned her keen dark eyes on the speaker, and for a minute regarded her, as if, in the popular phrase, she would have looked her through and through. But the scrutiny satisfied her; for she said in a calm tone, that the name in question was very well known, as Francis Moore, physician.

“But people say,” objected Kezia, “that Francis Moore is only his alibi,” she meant, alias.

“It is *not her* name,” replied Mrs. Prideaux, with a marked staccato emphasis on the negative and the pronoun. “But that is a secret. And now, mark me, Kezia—not a syllable of this matter to any one, and least of all to the parents. The troubles we know are burthensome enough to bear, without an insight into futurity. And to foresee such a melancholy prospect predestined to the offspring of their own loins—”

“Oh! not for the world!” exclaimed Kezia, clasping her

hands together. "It would kill them outright—it would break both their hearts! As for me, it don't signify. I'm used to fretting. Oh! if you knew the wretched sleepless hours I've enjoyed, night after night, when master was in his commercial crises, with unaccommodating bills—he'd have had that money long and long ago, if I had had the courage to offer it to him, but he's as proud on some points as Lucifer. And, to be sure, we've not been reduced more than our betters, perhaps, at a chance time, when they could not get in their rents—or the steward absconded with them—or the stocks fell suddenly—or the bank was short of cash for the dividends, or the key of the bureau——"

She stopped short, for Mrs. Prideaux had vanished. So, after an exclamation of surprise, and a thoughtful turn or two up and down her chamber, the devoted Kezia threw herself on her knees beside the bed, and prayed fervently for her master, her mistress, and the dear little progeny, till in that devout posture she fell asleep.

CHAPTER III.

WE ARE NAMED.

IT is assuredly a mercy for humankind that we are born into this world of folly as we are, mere purblind, sprawling, oysterly squabs, with no more *nous* than a polypus, instead of coming into it with our wits ready sharpened, and wide awake as young weasels! Above all, it is providential that we are so much more accessible to lachrymose than ludicrous impressions; more prone to tears, squallings, sobs, sighs, and blubberings, than to broad grins or crowings like chanticler. For, while at a royal or imperial establishment, one

Fool has generally been deemed sufficient ; at the court of a Lilliputian Infant or Infanta, it seems to be held indispensable that every person who enters the presence must play the zany or buffoon, and act, talk, sing, cut, and pull such antics, gibberish, nonsense, capers, and grimaces, that nine tenths of the breed of babies, if their fancies were at all ticklesome, must needs die of ruptured spleen, bursten blood-vessels, split sides, or shattered diaphragms. Yes, nine tenths of the species would go off in a guffaw, like the ancient who lost his breath in a cachinnation, at seeing an ass eating figs. For truly that donkey was nothing to the donkeys, nor his freak worth one of his figs, compared to the farcicalities exhibited by those he and she animals who congregate around the cots and cradles of the nursery.

Thus, had our own little vacant goggle eyes at all appreciated, or our ignorant sealed ears at all comprehended, the absurdities that were perpetrated, said, and sung, daily and hourly, before and around us, my Twin-Brother and myself must inevitably, in the first week, have choked in our pap, and died, strangled in convulsion fits of inextinguishable laughter, or perhaps jaw-locked by a collapse of the overstrained risible muscles.

It would have been quite enough to shatter the tender lungs and midriff of a precocious humourist, to have only seen that ungainly figure which so constantly hung over us, with that strange variegated face, grotesquely puckering, twisting, screwing its refractory features to produce such indescribable cacklings, chucklings, and chirrupings ;—to have heard her drilling that impracticable peacocky voice, with its rebellious falsetto, and all its mazy wanderings, from nasal to guttural, from guttural to pectoral, and even to ventral, with all its involuntary quaverings, gugglings, and gratings,—into a soothing lullaby, or cradle hymn. It

must have asphyxiated an infant, with any turn for the comic, to have seen and heard that Iö-like creature with her pied red and white face, lowing—

“There’s no ox a-near thy bed ;”

or that astounding flourish of tune, accompanied by an appropriate brandishing of the mottled upper limbs, with which she warbled—

“Tis thy Kizzy sits beside thee,
And her harms shall be thy guard.”

It was ten thousand mercies, I say, that the stolid gravity of babyhood was proof against such sounds and spectacles : not to forget that domestic conclave, with its notable debate as to the names to be given to us in our baptism.

“For my own part,” said my mother, enthroned in a huge dimity-covered easy chair, “I should like some sort of names we are accustomed to couple together, so as to make them out for a pair of twins.”

“Nothing more easy,” said my father. “There’s Castor and Pollux.”

“Was Castor the inventor of castor-oil,” inquired my mother, in the very simplicity of her heart.

“Why, not exactly,” replied my father, suddenly rubbing his nose as if something had tickled him. “He was invented himself.” An answer, by the way, which served my other parent as a riddle for the rest of the day.

“And what was their persuasion ?”

“Heathen, of course.”

“Then they shall never stand sponsors for children of mine,” said my mother, whose religious sentiments were strictly orthodox. “But are there no other twin brothers celebrated in history ?”

“Yes,” replied my father. “Valentine and Orson.”

“Why one—one—one of them,” exclaimed Kezia, stuttering in her eagerness—“one of them was a savage, like Peter the Wild Boy, and sucked a she-bear!”

“Then *they* won’t do,” said my mother, in a tone of great decision.

“And Romulus and Remus are equally ineligible,” said my father, “for they were suckled by a she-wolf.”

“Bless me!” exclaimed my mother, lifting up her hands, “the ferocious beasts in those days must have been much tamer and gentler than in ours. I should be sorry to trust flesh and blood of mine to such succedaneums for wet-nurses.”

“And what would be your choice, Kizzy?” inquired my father, turning towards the maid of all work, who, by way of employing both hands and feet, had volunteered to rock the cradle, whilst she worked at the duplicate baby-linen, so unexpectedly required.

“Why then,” said Kezia, rising up to give more weight to the recommendation, “if that precious pair of infants was mine, I’d christen them Jachin and Boaz.”

“The pillars of the temple,”—said my father. “But suppose, Kizzy, the boys chose to go into the army and navy?”

“They would fight none the worse,” said Kezia, reddening, “for having Bible names!”

“Nor better,” said my father, *sotto voce*. “And now, perhaps Mrs. Prideaux will favour us with her opinion?”

But the genteel nurse, with a sweet smile, and in her silvery voice, declined advising in such a delicate matter; only hinting, as regarded her private taste, that she preferred the select and euphonious, as a prefix. Her own son was named Algernon Marmaduke Prideaux.

“Perhaps,” said my father, leaning his head thoughtfully

on one side, and scratching his ear, "perhaps Postle could suggest something. His head's like an Encyclopædia."

"He have," said Kezia, suspending for a moment her needlework and the rocking of the cradle. "He's for Demon and Pithy."

"For what !!!" exclaimed my mother,——

"Demon and Pithy."

"Phoo, phoo—Damon and Pythias," said my father, "famous for their friendship, like David and Jonathan, in the classical times."

"Then they're heathens, too," said my mother, "and won't do for godfathers to little Christians."

A dead pause ensued for some minutes, during which nothing was audible but my father's ghost of a whistle, and the gentle creak, creak of the wicker cradle. The expression of my mother's face, in the meantime, changed every moment for the worse; from puzzled to anxious, from anxious to fretful.

"Well, I do wish," she exclaimed at last, just at the tail of a long sigh, "I do wish, George, that you would think of some name for our twins. For, of course, you don't wish them to grow up anonymous like Tobit's dog!"

"Of course not," replied my father. "But I can hit on only one more suggestion. Supposing the infants to be remarkably fine ones——"

"And so they are!" put in Kezia.

"And of an uncommon size for twins——"

"They're perfect Herculuses," cried Kezia.

"What think you of Gog and Magog?"

"Fiddle and fiddlestick!" exclaimed my mother, in great indignation. "But I believe you would joke on your death-bed."

"Rabelais did," said my ather. "But come," he added,

in his genuine serious voice, for he had two, a real and a sham Abraham one, "it is my decided opinion that we could not do better than to name the children after your brother. He is wealthy, and a bachelor ; and it might be to the advantage of the boys to pay him the compliment."

"I have thought of that too," said my mother. "But my brother doesn't shorten well. Jinkins Rumbold is well enough ; but you wouldn't like to hear me, when I wanted the children, calling for Jin and Rum."

"Pshaw !" said my father, "I am philosopher enough to bear that for the chance of a thumping legacy to our sons."

The genteel nurse, Mrs. Prideaux, backing this worldly policy of my father's with a few emphatic words, my mother concurred ; and, accordingly, it was decided that we should be called after Jinkins Rumbold ; the Jinkins being assigned to my twin brother, the first-born, and the Rumbold to my "crying self."

It is usual, however, in dedicating works, whether of Art or Nature, in one or two volumes, to ask previously the permission of the dedicatee. To obtain this consent, it was necessary to write to our Godfather Elect : and accordingly my father retired to the parlour, and seated himself, on epistolary deeds intent, at the old escrutoire. But my parent was an indifferent letter-writer at the best ; and the task was even more perplexing than such labours usually are. His brother-in-law was a formalist of the old school ; an antiquarian in dress, speech, manners, sentiments, and prejudices, whom it would not be prudent to address in the current and familiar style of the day. The request, besides, involved delicate considerations, as difficult to touch safely, as impossible to avoid. In this extremity, after spoiling a dozen sheets of paper and as many pens, my father had recourse, as usual, to Mr. Postle who came, characteristically at his

summons, with a graduated glass in one hand, and a bottle of vitriolic acid in the other. It was indeed one of his merits, that he identified himself, soul and body, with his business ; so much so, that he was reported to have gone to an evening party with his handkerchief scented with spirits of camphor.

“Mr. Postle,” said my father, “I want your opinion on a new case. Suppose a rich old hunk of a bachelor uncle, whom you wished to stand godfather to your twins, what would be your mode of treatment, by way of application to him ?”

The assistant, thus called in to consultation, at once addressed himself, seriously, to the consideration of the case. But in vain he stared at the Esculapian bronze bird with the gilt bolus suspended from its beak, and from the bird, at the framed sampler, and thence to the water-colour view of some landscape in Wales, and then at the stuffed woodpecker, and in turn at each of the black profiles that flanked the mirror. There was no inspiration in any of them. At last he spoke.

“If it’s all the same to you, sir, I think, if we were to adjourn to the surgery, I could make up my mind on the subject. Like the authors, who write best, as I have heard, in their libraries, with their books about them, my ideas are always most confluent, when, in looking for them, my eyes rest on the drawers, and bottles, and gallipots. It’s an idiosyncrasy, I believe, but so it is.”

“So be it,” said my father, gathering up his rough composing drafts, and hurrying, with Postle at his heels, into the surgery, where he established himself at the desk. The assistant in the meantime took a deliberate survey of all the wooden, earthenware, and glass repositories for drugs, acid, salt, bitter, or saccharine ; liquid, solid, or in powder.

“Now then, Postle,” said my father, “how would you set to work to ask a rich old curmudgeon to stand sponsor to your children?”

“Why, then, sir,” replied Postle, “in the first place, I would disclaim all idea of drawing upon him”—(and he glanced at a great bottle apparently filled with green tinsel, but marked “cantharides”—“or of bleeding him. Next I would throw in gentle stimulants, such as an appeal to family pride, and reminding him of your matrimonial mixture. Then I would exhibit the babies—in as pleasant a vehicle as possible—flavoured, as it were, with cinnamon”—(he looked hard at a particular drawer)—“and scented with rose water. As sweet as honey”—(he got that hint from a large white jar)—“and as lively as leeches.” (He owed that comparison to a great fact on the counter.)

“Very good,” said my father.

“After that,” continued Mr. Postle, “I would recommend change of air and exercise, namely, by coming down to the christening : with an unrestricted diet. I would also promise to make up a spare bed for him, according to the best prescriptions ; with a draught of something comforting to be taken the last thing at night. Say, diluted alcohol, sweetened with sugar. Add a little essential oil of flummery ; and in case of refusal, hint at a mortification.”

“Capital!—Excellent!” exclaimed my father. And on this medical model he actually constructed a letter, before dinner time, which might otherwise have puzzled him for a week!

CHAPTER IV.

THE bed in the spare bed-room had been aired for my father : who, between his attendance on my mother and another lady in the same predicament, had never been out of his clothes for three successive nights. But the time for repose had arrived at last ; he undressed hastily, and was standing in his night-gown and night-cap, his hand, with the extinguisher just hovering over the candle, when he heard, or thought he heard, his name called from without. He stopped his hand and listened—not a sound. It had been only the moaning of the wind, or the creaking of the great poplar at the end of the house ; and the hollow cone was again descending over the flame when his name was shouted out in a peremptory tone by somebody close under the window. There could be no mistake. With a deep sigh he put down the extinguisher—opened the casement, and put forth his head. Through the gloom he could just perceive the dark figure of a man on horseback.

“ Who is there ? ”

“ Why the devil,” grumbled the fellow, “ have you muffled the night-bell ? I’ve rung a dozen times.”

“ Why ? ”—replied my father—“ why, because my mistress is confined.”

“ I wish mine was,” growled the man, “ in a madhouse. You’re wanted.”

“ To-night ? ”

“ Yes : I’m sent express for you. You’re to come directly.”

“ Where ? ”

“ At the Great House, to be sure.”

“ Well, I’ll come—or, at any rate, Mr. Postle —— ”

“ No—you must come yourself.”

My father groaned in spirit, and shuddered as if suddenly struck to the lungs by the night-air.

“Who is ill?” he asked; “is it Prince George?”

“No—it’s the little”—the rest was lost in the sound of the horse’s heels as the messenger turned and rode off.

My father closed the casement with a slam that nearly broke the jingling glass; and for some minutes stood ruefully looking from the candle to the bed, and from the bed to the chair with his clothes. But there was no remedy; with his rapidly increasing family he could not afford to slight a patient at the Great House. So he plucked off his nightcap, threw it on the floor, and with both hands harrowed and raked at his hair, till every drowsy organ under it was thoroughly wakened up; then he dressed hastily, crept down stairs, wisped a bandanna round his throat, struggled into his great coat, thrust on his worst hat, and, pocketing the door-key, stepped forth into the dark, damp, chill air. He thought he never felt so uncomfortable a night in his life, or encountered worse weather; but he thought a mistake. He had met with inferior qualities by fifty degrees. However, there were disagreeables enough, wind and fog, and his road lay for half a mile on the border of a Lincolnshire river, and through a dreary neighbourhood,—for, out of Holland or Flanders, there was not such another village, so low and flat, with so much water, running and stagnant, in canals and ditches, amidst swampy fields growing the plant cannabis, or hemp; or with so many windmills, and bulrushes, and long rows of stunted willows, relieved here and there by an aspen, that seemed shivering with the ague. On he went, yawning and stumbling, past the lock, and over the bridge, and along by the row of low cottages, all as dark as death except one, and that was as dark as death too, in spite of its solitary bright window. For the doctor stopped as he went by to

peep in at the narrow panes, and saw one of those sights of misery that the eye of Providence, a parish doctor, a clergyman occasionally, and a parliamentary commissioner still more rarely, have to look upon. On the bed—if bed it might be called, for it was a mere heap of straw, matting, rushes, and rags, covered by a tattered rug—sat the mother, rocking herself to and fro, over the dead child, wasted to a skeleton, that was lying stark across her lap. Beside her sat her husband, staring steadfastly, stupid with grief, at the flame of the rushlight, his hollow cheeks showing yellow, even by the candle light, from recent jaundice. Neither moved their lips. On the floor lay an empty phial, with the untasted medicine beside it in a broken tea-cup; there was a little green rush basket near the mother's feet, with a few faded butter-cups—the last toys. My father saw no more, for the light that had been flickering suddenly went out, and added Darkness to Sorrow and Silence.

In spite of his medical acquaintance with similar scenes of wretchedness, he was shocked at this startling increase of desolation; and for a moment was tempted to step in and offer a few words of consolation to the afflicted couple. But before his hand touched the latch, reflection reminded him from his experience, how inefficacious such verbal comfort had ever been with the poor, except from sympathisers of their own condition. In the emphatic words of one of his pauper patients, "When a poor man or woman, as low down in life as myself, talks to me about heaven above, it sounds as sweet-like as a promise of going back some day to my birth-place, and my father's house, the home of my childhood; but when rich people speak to me of heaven, it sounds like saying, now you're old and worn out, and sick, and past work, and come to rags, and beggary, and starvation, there's heaven for you—just as they say to one, at the

last pinch of poverty—by way of comforting—there's the parish.”

So my father sighed and walked on : those two wretched, sickly, sorrow-stricken faces, and the dead one, seeming to flash fitfully upon him out of the darkness, as they had appeared and vanished again by the light of the flickering candle. And with this picture of human misery in his mind's eye, he arrived at the Great House : and still carrying the dolorous images on his retina, across the marble hall, and up the painted staircase, and through the handsome antechamber, stepped, with it still vivid, into the luxurious drawing-room, that presented a new and very different scene of distress.

On her knees, beside the superb sofa, was the weeping lady of the mansion, bending over the little creature that lay shivering on the chintz cushion, with its arms hugging its own diminutive body, and the knees drawn up to the chest. Its dark almond-shaped eyes rolled restlessly to and fro : its tiny mouth seemed puckered up by suffering, and its cheeks and forehead were deeply wrinkled, as if by premature old age. The nurse, a young woman, was in attendance, so exhausted by watching that she was dozing on her feet.

As my father advanced into the room, he could distinguish the low moaning of the afflicted lady, intermixed with all those fond doting epithets which a devoted mother lavishes on her sick child. The moment she became aware of his presence she sprang up, with a slight hysterical shriek, and running to meet him, exclaimed,

“Oh ! doctor, I am so glad you are come ! I have been in agonies ! My poor dear darling, Florio, is ill—going—dying ;” and she sobbed aloud, and buried her face in her handkerchief.

My father hastily stepped past her, to the sofa, to look at

the patient : and, at the risk of bursting, suppressed an oath that tingled at the very tip of his tongue. A single glance had filled up the hiatus in the groom's communication—the sufferer was a little Brazilian monkey.

My father's surprise was equal to his disgust, aggravated as it was by a vivid remembrance of the domestic distress he had so recently witnessed through the cottage window. His head filled with that human bereavement, he had totally forgotten the circumstance that once before he had been summoned to the Great House on a similar errand—to prescribe for a sick lap-dog, named after an illustrious personage, at that time very popular, as Prince George. But the whispers of Prudence stifled the promptings of Indignation, reminding him, just in time, that he was a poor country practitioner, the father, within the last eight-and-forty hours, of a pair of twins. Accordingly he proceeded with all gravity to feel the pulse and examine the skin of the dwarf animal ; laying his hand on the chest to estimate the action of the heart ; and even ascertaining, at the expense of a small bite, the state of the tongue.

The weeping lady in the meantime looked on with intense anxiety, uttering incoherent ejaculations, and putting questions with unanswerable rapidity. "Oh, the darling!—my precious pet!—is he hot—is he feverish? My little beauty!—Isn't he very, very ill? He don't eat, doctor—he don't drink—he don't sleep—he don't do anything—poor dear! Look how he shivers! Can you—can you—do anything for him—my little love of loves! If he dies I shall go distracted—I know I shall—but you'll save him—you will, won't you? Oh do, do, do prescribe—there's a dear good doctor. What *do* you think of him—my suffering sweet one—tell me, tell me, pray tell me—let me know the worst—but don't say he'll die! He'll get over it, won't he—with a

strong constitution?—say it's a strong constitution. Oh, mercy! look how he twists about!—my own, poor, dear, darling little Flora!”

My father, during this farrago, felt horribly vexed and annoyed, and even looked so in spite of himself: but the contrast was too great between the silent, still, deep, sorrow—still waters are deep—for a lost child, and these garrulous lamentations over a sick brute. But the hard, cold, severe expression of his face gradually thawed into a milder one, as the idea dawned upon him of a mode of extracting good out of evil, which he immediately began to put in practice.

“This little animal,”—he intended to have said my little patient, but it stuck in his throat—“this little animal has no disease at present, whatever affection may hereafter be established, unless taken in time. It is suffering solely from cold and change of climate. The habitat of the species is the Brazils; and he misses the heat of a tropical sun.”

“Of course he does—poor thing!” exclaimed the lady. “But it is not my fault—I thought the Brazils were in France. He shall have a fire in his bed-room.”

“It will do no harm, Madam,” said the Doctor. “But he would derive infinitely more benefit from animal heat—the warmth of the human body.”

“He shall sleep with Cradock!” exclaimed the lady, looking towards the drowsy young woman, who bit her lips and pouted: and mind, Cradock, you cuddle him.”

“I should rather recommend, Madam,” said my father, “a much younger bed-fellow. There is something in the natural glow of a young child peculiarly restorative to the elderly or infirm, who suffer from a defect of the animal warmth—a fact well known to the faculty: and some aged persons even are selfish enough to sleep with their grandchildren on that very account. I say selfish, for the benefit

they derive is at the expense of the juvenile constitution, which suffers in proportion."

"But where is one to get a child for him?" inquired the lady, perfectly willing to sacrifice the health of a human little one to that of her pet brute.

"I think I can manage it, Madam," said my father, "amongst my pauper patients with large families. Indeed I have a little girl in my eye."

"Can she come to-night?" asked the lady.

"I fear not, said my father. "But to-morrow, Ma'am, as early as you please."

"Then for to-night, poor dear, he must make shift with Cradock," said the lady, "with a good tropical fire in the room, and heaps of warm blankets."

(Poor Cradock looked hot at the very thought of it.)

"And about his diet?" asked the lady—"it's heart-breaking to see his appetite is so delicate. He don't eat for days together."

"Perhaps he will eat," said my father, "for monkeys, you know, Madam, are very imitative, when the child sets him the example."

"I'll stuff her!" said the lady.

"It can do her no harm," said my father; "on the contrary, good living will tend to keep up her temperature. And as her animal warmth is the desideratum, she must be carefully guarded against any chill."

"I'll clothe her with warm things," said the lady, "from head to foot."

"And make her take exercise, Madam," added my father: "exercise in the open air, in fine weather, to promote the circulation of the blood, and a fine glow on the skin."

"Cradock shall play with her in the garden," said the lady; "they shall both have skipping-ropes."

“I can think of nothing else,” said my father ; “and if such careful treatment and tender nursing will not cure and preserve her, I do not know what will.”

“Oh, it must, it will, it shall cure her, the darling precious !” exclaimed the delighted lady, clapping her jewelled hands. “What a nice clever doctor you are ! A hundred, thousand, million thanks ! I can never, never, never, repay you ; but, in the meantime, accept a slight token of my gratitude,” and she thrust her purse into my father’s hand.

For an instant he hesitated ; but, on second thoughts, he pocketed her bounty, and with due thanks took his leave. “After all,” he thought, as he stepped through the ante-chamber, “I am glad I was called in. The monkey may live or die ; but, at any rate, poor little Betty Hopkins is provided for one while with a roof over her, and food, and raiment.”

The night was finer ; the weather, as he stepped into it, was wonderfully improved : at least he thought so, which was the same thing. With a light brisk step he walked homewards, whistling much above his usual pitch, till he came abreast of the cottage of mourning. There he stopped, and his sibilation sank into silence, as the three melancholy faces—the yellow, the pale, and the little white one—again flashed on his memory. Then came the faces of his own twin children, but fainter, and soon vanishing. His hand groped warily for the latch, his thumb stealthily pressed it down ; the door was softly pushed a little ajar, and the next instant something fell inside with a chinking sound on the cottage floor. The door silently closed again, the latch quietly sank into the catch ; and my father set off again, walking twice as fast, and whistling thrice as loud as before. A happy man was he, for all his poverty, as he let himself in with the house key, to his own home, and remembered that

he had under its roof two living children, instead of one dead one. Quickly, quickly he undressed, and got into bed : and, oh ! how soundly he slept, and how richly he deserved to sleep so, with that delicious dream that visited him in his slumbers, and gave him a foretaste of the joys of heaven !

CHAPTER V

A DILEMMA.

THE sun was high in heaven ere my father awoke the next morning, roused from his Elysian dreams by the swallows which first twittered at the eaves above the window, and then, after wheeling round the gable, went skimming along the surface of the glittering river in front of the house : contriving, temperate creatures though they be, to *moisten their clay* in the passage. The good Doctor sprang from his bed, threw open his casement, and looking cheerfully out into the fresh bright air, began whistling, in his old quiet way, the White Cockade. In the language of the professional bulletins, he had passed a good night : whereas my mother's had been a bad one. On paying his morning visit, he found her weak and languid : her face faded to a dull white, that, with its solid settled gravity, reminded him of cold suet dumpling.

“Your mistress seems poorly this morning,” said my father, addressing himself to Mrs. Prideaux, who had just entered the bedroom, dressed in a morning costume of peculiar neatness.

“I have certainly had the pleasure of seeing your lady look better,” answered the nurse, “but she has been watchful, and giving way to mental solicitude.”

“Solicitude!—about what?”

“It’s about the christening,” said my mother, with a sigh of exhaustion. “I have hardly slept a wink all night for thinking of it—and cannot yet make up my mind.”

“As to what?”

“Why, whether we should have two godfathers, or four.”

“Four godfathers!”

“Yes—four,” said my mother. “Kezia says, as there are twins to baptize, there must be a double set of sponsors. And certainly, according to the Book of Common Prayer, she is right. Here it is—” and she pulled the authority from under her pillow—“The Ministration of Public Baptism of Infants, to be used in the Church. *And note, that there shall be for every male child to be baptized two godfathers and one godmother.*”

“Humph!” said my father. “The rule seems plain enough. But will not the same pair of sponsors serve over again for the second child?”

“That is the very point,” said my mother. “I have been turning it over and over, all night long, till my poor head is in a whirl with it; but am none the nearer. What is your impression about it?”

“The duties of a godfather are rather serious,” said my father, “and if duly fulfilled would be somewhat onerous. But, as they are commonly performed, or rather compounded for, by some trifling gift, a spoon, a mug, or a coral——”

“And some godfathers,” exclaimed my mother, “neglect even that! There was old Mackworth, who stood for little Tomkins, and, rich as he is, never gave his godson so much as a salt spoon!”

“Such being the case,” said my father, putting on his gravest face, “I really think that a couple of able-bodied

men might stand sponsors, not merely for two babies, but for a whole regiment of infantry."

"It depends on the canons," said my mother, unconsciously supplying the infantry of my father's equivoque with appropriate artillery.

"On the what?"

"On the canons of the church," said my mother; "and I do wish that in your rounds you would look in on the Curate and obtain his dictum on the subject."

"Perhaps Mrs. Prideaux can enlighten us," said my father, turning towards that ladylike personage, who was hushing my brother on her lap, with a lullaby refined enough to have been of her own composition.

"No, I have asked Mrs. Prideaux," interposed my mother; "but she has never nursed twins before, she says, and therefore cannot furnish a precedent."

"And if the Curate has never baptized twins before," said my father, "he will be in the same predicament."

"Of course he will," said my mother, looking as blank as if the clergyman in question had already declared himself at the supposed nonplus. "I'm quite troubled about it, and have been sleepless all night. It would break my heart to find hereafter that the dear infants had only been half Christianized through any departure from the orthodox rules."

"I'll tell you what," said my father, starting up from a brief reverie, during which he had assumed his usual air and attitude, at the consideration of an intricate case. "I'll ask Postle."

"Kezia has asked him," said my mother.

"Well?"

"Why, he said that two godfathers are the proper dose for a male child, but whether it ought to be repeated for

twins, was more than he could say, and advised a consulting clergyman to be called in."

"Precisely so—it is a clerical case."

"For my part," continued my mother, "I am at my wit's ends about it; for four sponsors, if there must be four, are not to be looked up in a hurry——"

"There's no need of four," exclaimed a voice, and in another moment the face of Kezia became visible between the foot-curtains of the bed, her claret-mark mullied by heat and haste to a rich purple, and the other cheek vying with it in colour through triumph and excitement. "There's no need for four! Two godfathers will be enough for both twins; here it is under the Church's own hand;" and she held out an open letter to her mistress.

That invaluable Kezia! At the first hint of the dilemma, from my mother—having previously teased, and tried to unpick the difficulty, in her own mind, she had carried it down stairs, to where all mysteries and doubts were taken for analysis and solution—the surgery. But Mr. Postle, as already stated, was unable to decide the question. In this extremity, it occurred to her that there was a certain channel, through which she might obtain the requisite information: one Mrs. Yardly, whose husband, the parish clerk, would be as competent an authority as to the baptismal ceremonial as the curate himself. The acquaintance, it was true, was a very slight one: but where the good of the family was concerned, the faithful maid of all work was accustomed to get over far more formidable fences. Accordingly she at once composed and dispatched a missive, of which the following is a correct copy, to the Amen Corner of our village.

"Dear Maddam

"Hopping you will xcuse the Libberty from allmost a purfect Strainger havin but wunce xchanged speach with you in the Surgary, about

a Pot of Lennitive Electricity. But our hole Fammily being uncommon anxous respectin the Cristnin of Hinfants. About witch we are all in a Parradox thro havin Twinns. The sweatest, finest thrivingest littel Cherubs you ever saw. As lick as too pees And a purfect plesure to nus only rayther hoarse and roopy with singin dubblikit lullabis and so much Cradle Him. Not to menshun a xtra sett of Babby linnin to be made at a short notis for the Supper nummery And all the housold wurk besides. But its unpossible to help slavin wuns self to Deth for such a pare of dear luvable littel hinnocents, and I allmost wish I was ded to be a Gardian Angle for their sacks being perfectly miserable wen I think wat Croops and Convulshuns and Blites beset such young toothless Buds. And half crazy besides with divided oppinions between Small Pock and Cow Pock witch by report runs sum times into horns and Hoofs. Lord preserve the dear littel Soles from such a trans moggrificashun. But lettin alone Waxnation our present hobject bein to make them Hares of Grace. And as such how menny must stand Sponasers for them at the Fount? The Prayer Book says two god fathers for evvery Mail but the Pint is wether the same two cannot anser or not for boath. As yet only two have been providid namely their unkel Mr. Rumbold the Dry Salter and a Mister Sumboddy, a Proxy in Docters Commons. So that if so be Fore Fathers is necessary for Twinns we shall be at a Non Plush. The nus Mrs. Priddo never havin nust Twinns afore cant find a President. And Mr. Postle say it is out of his line of practis. But your Husbund Mister Y bein a clisiasticle Character of course knows wat is propper and ortherdoxical and an erly Line from ether him or you to that effect would grately obleege and releave all our minds. For as you may suppose we are anxous for the dear Hinfants to have a reglar Babe teasing. And shud be shockt arterwards to find they had been skrimpt in their Spirritual rites. Witch is a matter in witch wun would prefer their Babbies to be rayther over then under dun. Bless, bless, their preshus littel harts. With witch I remane dear Maddam

“ Yours &c.

KEZIA JENKS.”

The answer to this epistle had just arrived; and after a hasty perusal by Kezia, was thrust open into her mistress's hand.

“ Here, take it George,” said my mother, “ and read it aloud.”

My father took the document, and began to read,—the owner of the letter lending her ears as intently, as if she learned the sense of the writing for the first time.

“Madam,

“In reply to your epistolary favour to my Wife beg to say you are quite wellcome gratis to any experience or information in my Power, parochial, ecclesiastical, or scholastic—Copies of Births, Deaths, or Marriage Certificates excepted, and searching the Register, which is charged for according to time and trouble.

“As regards the Sacrament of Baptism, the quotation from the Prayer Book is ceremoniously correct. Whereby, according to the Rule of Three, if one Male Infant require two Godfathers how many will two require? Answer, Four. But in Practice two are religiously sufficient for twin juveniles. Our fees in any case being the same. Not that the Church object to the full sponsorial complement if parental parties think proper to indulge in the same; whether for the sake of a greater Shew, or with a view to the multiplication of customary presents. *Exempli Gratia*, Mrs. Fordige with the extraordinary number of Four Twin Sons at a Birth, who were named after the Holy Evangelists, videlicet, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, when it was thought proper to have the full number of Godfathers, $4 \times 2 = 8$, and which I well remember walking up the aisle two and two, with Nosegays, like the team of a Stage Waggon. As was considered an interesting spectacle, especially by the Female part of the congregation. And profitable, besides, to parents, the eight Godfathers having agreed amongst themselves, and the four Godmothers likewise—Sum Total, twelve—to present Plate of the same pattern.

“In conclusion, my matrimonial Partner desires her compliments, & trusts to be excused answering the domestic details in your Letter for the present, hoping shortly to enjoy the pleasure of a Call, and to enter into the dear little innocents in person.

“I am, Madam,

“Your very humble Servant,

REUBEN YARDLEY, P.C.

“There!” said my father, returning the letter to Kezia; and then gaily addressing my mother, “Our perplexities are at an end! We may drive our christening coach with a pair of godfathers, or four in hand, at our own option. For which do you vote?”

“O, for only a pair, of course,” replied my mother. “The four would be so hard to collect,” she added in a tone which showed that she lamented the difficulty. She was proud of her twins, and would have liked to have seen them attended up the church aisle by a double set of sponsors, walking two

and two, with nosegays, and forming, as the learned clerk said, an interesting spectacle to the female spectators. For a minute or so, closing her eyes, she had even enjoyed, in a day-dream, a sort of rehearsal of such a procession: but there were too many obstacles in the way of its realisation; and she reluctantly gave up the scheme.

“That’s settled, then!” exclaimed my father, rubbing his hands together in a most high and palmy state of satisfaction.

“Not quite,” said my other parent; who from stewing had only subsided into a simmering. “There’s the godmother. I have gone through every female name in the place, without hitting on any body likely to undertake the office.”

“Phoo, phoo, it’s a mere form.”

“I beg your pardon,” said my mother rather hastily. “Some persons think it a very responsible office, and refuse to be godmothers at all on that account. Others, again, profess a deep sense of its duties, and insist on acting up to the character.”

“And is there any harm in that?” asked my father.

“There might be a world of trouble and annoyance in it,” said my mother. “There’s Mrs. Pritchard, whom I sounded on the subject, when she called yesterday. “I’m agreeable to stand,” said she, “if I’m asked, but, mind, I shall stand on conscientious grounds. I’m not going to be a nominal godmother, like some people:—not a mere automaton, or a figure in wax-work. If I become one of their religious sureties, I’ll act up to it, and do my duty as regards their spiritual bringing up,” which is all very well, but might be made a pretext, you know, for interfering in the children’s education, and every-thing.”

“No doubt of it,” said my father. “And from the perseverance with which Mrs. Pritchard meddles in the temporal

concerns of her neighbours, she would unquestionably be a rank nuisance where she had any pretence for busying herself with their spiritual ones. But there's Mrs. Hewley."

"She's in favour of Adult Baptism," replied my mother.

"Old Mrs. Trent?"

"She's for total immersion, or dipping in running streams."

"Mrs. Cobley, then?"

"Why, she's a Papist!"

Poor Kezia! Her variegated York and Lancaster face had undergone, during the discussion, a dozen changes—from red and white to all red, and then back again,—her lips twitching, her brows knitting, her eyes twinkling and moistening. What would she not have given to have been in a station that would have entitled her to volunteer the god-mothering of those evangelical twin babes—to have undertaken the care of their precious little souls, as well as of their dear little bodies!—to have stood for them at the font, as well as at the fire, the dresser, the tub, and the ironing-board—slaving for their spiritual welfare as well as their temporal comfort! How heartily she would have pledged herself to teach them the Creed and the Commandments, and the Catechism, in the vulgar tongue, and "all that a Christian ought to know," if she learned some branches of education herself for the purpose! But she had, alas! no chance of enjoying such drudgery.

"There's Mrs. Spencer," suggested my father.

"She's confined," said my mother.

"Well, well," said my father, smiling, "if it comes to the worst, there's the pew-opener."

"The Lord forbid!" exclaimed Kezia, lifting up her hands and her eyes at the proposition. "What, Mrs. Pegge! Why she stands for all the naturalized children in the parish."

“As mine are, I hope,” said my father, with due gravity.

Kezia turned indignantly away: she felt sure that her master must be joking, but the subject was too serious for such treatment. What,—those beautiful twin babes—both in one cradle—both on one pillow—both under one blanket! “Bless them,” she ejaculated aloud, “bless them, bless them, the dear little cherubims—I’ve boil’d their tops and bottoms!”

The last announcement was aimed at the nurse, but it evidently hit my father also, and in some ticklesome place, for he rubbed his nose as smartly as if a fly had settled on it, and then setting up his whisper of a whistle, stepped briskly out of the bedchamber and down the stairs into the surgery. Why he stopped his music, to laugh out at about the middle of the flight, was known only to himself.

CHAPTER VI.

CATECHISM JACK.

My father was the parish doctor; and when he entered the surgery, Mr. Postle was making up a parish prescription. A poor, shabbily-dressed woman was waiting for the medicine, and a tall, foolish-looking lad was waiting for the poor woman. She was a widow, as it is called, without incumbrance, and had a cottage and some small means of her own, which she eked out, with the stipend allowed to her by the overseers for taking charge of some infirm or imbecile pauper. The half-witted boy was her present ward.

“It’s for Jacobs,” said the woman, as my father glanced over the shoulder of his assistant at the prescription. “He gets wus and wus.”

“Of course he does,” said my father; “and will, whilst he takes those opium pills.”

“So I tell him,” said the woman—“with the ague, and in a flat marshy country like this, with water enough about to give any one the hydraulics.”

“Hydroptics.”

“Well—droptics. You want stimulussess, says I, and not nar—nar—cis—”

“Narcotics.”

“Well—cotics. But the poor people all take it. If it's their last penny, it goes for a pennorth of opie, as they call it, at Doctor Shackle's.”

“I wonder he sells it,” said my father.

“And asking your pardon, doctor,” said the woman, “I wonder you don't. They say he makes a mint of money by it.”

“Never!” said my father, with unusual emphasis—“never if I want a shilling!”

“Talking of money,” said the woman, “there's a report about goolden guineas, chucked last night by nobody knows who—for it was done in the dark—into the Hobbes's cottage. They have just lost their only child, you know.”

The assistant suddenly checked the pestle with which he was pounding, and looked inquisitively at his principal, who fixed his eyes on the idiot boy.

“Well, my lad, and who are you?” inquired my father. “What's your name?”

“M. or N.,” answered the boy, slowly dragging the wet forefinger, which he had withdrawn from his mouth, with a long snail-like trail along the counter.

“Fiddlesticks,” exclaimed the woman, giving her charge a good shaking by the shoulder. “You've got another name besides that.”

"Yes," drawled the boy, "some call me Catechism Jack."

"Ah!—that's an odd name!" said my father. "Who gave it you!"

"My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism," said Jack.

"No such thing, sir," said the woman; "it was the idle boys of the village, because he was always repeating on it; and, indeed, poor fellow, he can repeat nothing else."

"Then how did he get that?"

"Why you see, sir," said the woman, "between ourselves it was all along of his godmother."

"Ah!—indeed!" exclaimed my father, pricking up his ears at such an appendix to the recent discussion in the bedroom. "His godmother, eh?"

"Yes, Mrs. Tozer as was, for she's dead now, as well as his own mother; and that's how he came into my care. His mother went first, while he was in petticoats, and so Mrs. Tozer took charge of him, and sent him to the infant day-school. She was a very strict woman in her religious principles, and so was the schoolmistress; and both made it a great pint for the children to be taught accordingly, which they was. Well, one day there they were, all in the school-room up one pair, and little Jack amongst the rest, the last of the row, a-setting on the very end of a long form close to the open door. Well, by-and-by the children were all called up to say Catechism; so up they all got at once, except Jack, who had been playing instead of getting his task by rote, which made him backwarder to rise than the rest,—when, lo! and behold! up tilts the form, like a rearing horse, and pitches Jack, heels over head, through the door and down the whole stone flight, where he was picked up at the bottom perfectly unsensible."

"Ah!—with a concussion of the brain," said my father.

“A contusion of the occiput,” added Mr. Postle ; “the spinal vertebræ excoriated, of course, and bruises on both patellæ.”

“I don’t know about that,” said the woman, “but he had a lump on the back of his head as big as an egg ; the nubbles of his back were rubbed raw, and his two kneepans were as black as a coal. It was thought, too, that his intellex were shook up into a muddle.”

“No doubt of it,” said my father.

“Well, to go on with Jack. At long and at last he came to, sore enough and smarting, as you may suppose, for he had been carried home to his godmother, and she had rubbed his wounds with spirits and salt, which had got into the cuts. And now Jack, says she, mark my words, and let them be a warning. It’s a judgment of God upon you, says she, for not knowing your Catechism ; for if so be you had got it by heart, you would have riz with the rest, and then all this would never have happened. But it’s a judgment upon you, says she, and the schoolmistress said the same thing ; till between both the poor thing was so scared, he set to work, he did, at his Catechism, and never rested, day or night, till he had got it by heart, as he has now, so thoroughly, you may dodge him any how, backward or forward, and he won’t miss a syllable. And that’s how he come by it, Sir, as well as the nickname : for except Catechism, which his head is too full of, I suppose, to hold any thing else, he don’t know a thing in the world.”

“Poor fellow !” said my father, opening one of the surgery drawers. “Here, Jack, will you have a lozenge ?”

“Yes, verily, and by God’s help, so I will. And I heartily thank——”

“There, there, hush ! go along with you,” said the woman, giving her protégé a push towards the outer door, and then,

taking up the medicine, with a nod of acknowledgment to Mr. Postle, and a curtsey to my father, she departed, her forlorn charge clinging to her garments, and muttering scraps of that formula which had procured for him the *soubriquet* of Catechism Jack.

CHAPTER VII.

A PATIENT.

“Poor creature!” muttered my father, carefully fishing a drowning fly out of the inkstand with the feather end of a pen, and then laying the draggled insect to dry itself on the blotting paper; “poor harmless, helpless creature!”

The assistant stopped his pounding, and looked inquisitively, first at the speaker, and then at the supposed object of his sympathy.

“I wonder,” continued my father, still talking to himself, “if he would like to carry out the medicine?”

Mr. Postle hastily resumed his mortar-practice, with an interjectional “Oh!”

“Job is gone, I suppose?”

Mr. Postle pounded like mad.

“Job is gone, isn’t he?” repeated my father.

“Yes, with the best livery.”

“In that case,” said my father, heedless of the best blue and drab, “we shall want another boy. And I’m thinking, Postle, that yonder half-witted fellow might, perhaps, carry the basket as well as another.”

“What, the Catechism chap! Why, he’s an idiot!”

“Or nearly so,” said my father; “and, as such, shut out

from the majority of the occupations by which lads of his rank in life obtain a livelihood. The greater the obligation, therefore, to prefer him to one of the few employments adapted to his twilight intelligence."

"What—to carry out the physic?"

"And why not?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Postle, but plying the pestle as if he would have pounded the mortar itself into a powder, "nothing at all. Only when an idiot carries out physic, it's time to have a lunatic to make it up."

"Phoo! phoo!" said my father, "the boy has arms and legs, and quite head-piece enough for such simple work. At a verbal message, no doubt, he would blunder."

"Yes—wouldn't he?" said Mr. Postle. "Take of compliments and Catechism, each a dram—mix—shake well up—and administer."

"Like enough," said my father, "if one entrusted any verbal direction to his memory. But he goes on parish errands, and knows every house in the place; and might surely deliver a written label at the right door, as well as a printed notice."

"I wish," said Mr. Postle, gloomily, "there may be any to deliver. Our drugs *are* drugs! We hardly do a powder a day. The business is in a rapid decline, and in another month won't be worth a pinch of magnesia. There's the Great House gone already—and next we shall lose the parish."

"How!—the Great House?" exclaimed my father, with more anxiety and alarm than he had betrayed before about his simious patient. "Is the monkey dead, then?"

"Yes—of bronchitis."

"Poor child!" ejaculated my father.

"I should like to open him," said Mr. Postle.

"I hoped she was provided for," said my father with a sigh.

"If you mean little Betty," said the assistant, "it is no loss to her,—at least to judge by Mother Hopkins's language."

"Why, what does she say?" asked my father, with a tone and look of unmitigated surprise.

"Only all that is bitter and acid. The ungrateful old hag! I should like to stop her mouth with a pitch plaster!"

"Hush, hush!" whispered my father; and Postle did hush, for, confirming an old proverb, Mother Hopkins herself hobbled into the surgery, with foul weather on her face. Her lips were compressed—there was a red angry spot in the middle of each sallow cheek, and anger glimmered in her dark black eye like a spark in a tinder-box. She spoke harshly and abruptly.

"I'm come to return the bottles."

"Very good!" said my father, receiving phial after phial from the cankered woman, with as much courtesy and humility as if he had been honoured and obliged by her custom. "I hope the medicine has done you good. How is your lameness?"

"As bad as ever."

"I am sorry to hear it," said my father; "but your complaint is chronic, and requires time for its treatment. By-and-by we shall see an amendment."

"We shall see no such thing," said the Shrew. "I arn't going to take any more physic."

"No!"

"No. It's good for nothing, or you wouldn't give it away gratis."

My father's face flushed slightly—as whose would not?—with so much physic thrown into it, though but metaphori-

cally—all the draughts and embrocations he had supplied her with for the last six months! But the angry hue passed away long ere one could have washed off a splash of rose-water. It was hard for him to be long angry with any one,—impossible, with a decrepit woman, so poor, so sickly, and so ragged. One glance at her cooled the transient heat in an instant. As to speaking harshly to so much wretchedness, he would as soon have poured vitriol on her tatters. His words were still kind, his voice cordial, his smile genial.

“Well! and how is little Betty?”

“Little Betty’s at home,” replied the woman, with a short sharp twang in her tone that showed the very chord most out of tune had been struck upon. “She might have been at the Great House;—but, thank God, she isn’t. She’s not an animal!”

“You mean a beast!” suggested my father.

“I say she’s not an animal—nor shan’t sleep with one. And a monkey, too—a nasty, filthy, basilicon monkey!”

“Brazilian,” muttered my father—“Brazilian.”

“Well, Brazilian—an ugly, foreign, outlandish varment!”

“Ah,” exclaimed my father, “there’s the prejudice! If the creature had been a little dog, now, or a kitten, or a squirrel, you would never have objected to it.”

“Squirrels and kittens be hanged!” cried the old woman, waxing in wrath. “It an’t the sort of creature—it an’t the species; but the detriment to the juvenile constitution. A doctor might know better the vally of the natural warmth of the human body than to have it extracted by a brute beast.”

My father was dumbfounded. The charge was so plausible, and couched in such set phrase, that he did not know what to think of it; but appealed, by a perplexed look, to his assistant.

“Prompted—put up to it,” muttered Mr. Postle, in a

characteristic *aside*. He had turned his back to the counter, and was apparently reading aloud the label on one of the drawers. The woman, in the mean time, thrust the last phial into the Doctor's hand as hastily as if it burnt her fingers.

"That's all the bottles," she said; "and there," throwing a paper bag on the counter—"there's the corks."

O Ingratitude!—marble-hearted fiend!—how hadst thou possessed that thankless woman with a demon, fit only, like those of old, to inhabit a swine. Weekly, daily, recalling the better times she had known, she had bemoaned her inability to fee a physician, or pay an apothecary; daily, almost hourly, she had lamented the delicate constitution of her little Betty, and the impossibility of furnishing her with a better bed, more generous diet, and warmer garments—wants for which, by will and deed, her benefactor had endeavoured to provide; and to throw, in his very teeth, all his charitable unguents, lotions, composing draughts, and tonic mixtures, bottles and corks included, and then, in return, to pour on his benevolent head the full phials of her wrath, bitter as the waters of Marah, and corrosive as aqua fortis! It might have moved a saint! But there was in my father's nature so much of the milk of human kindness, and in that milk such a sweet butterish principle, that stirring his temper the wrong way seemed merely to oil it. Thus, when he responded again to the querulous ingrate, it was as the music of an *Æolian* harp in the parlour-window to a hurdy-gurdy at the area rails.

"Well, well—we need not quarrel, Mrs. Hopkins. The monkey is dead, and so there is no harm done. I meant all for the best, and hoped to do you a service. Little Betty would have been comfortably lodged, and well fed, and was to be warmly clothed from head to foot."

“Thank ye for nothing!” retorted the snappish one. “I can clothe little Betty myself: and when she famishes for victuals and drink, and not afore, she shall sleep with apes, baboons, and orange outangs.”

“Orang,” said my father, *sotto voce*—“o—rang.”

“Well—horang. I should like to see your own twins, I should, with a great Wild Man of the Woods in their cradle!”

My father’s lips moved to reply; but before he could utter a syllable he was forestalled by a noise like the groan of execration which is sometimes heard at a public meeting. All eyes turned in the direction of the sound; and lo! there stood Kezia, her mouth still open and round as that of a cannon, her eyes staring, her cheeks both of a crimson, her arms uplifted, and her hands clenched with utter indignation. One of her many errands to the surgery had brought her just in time to overhear the atrocious wish that converted her, *pro tempore*, into a she-dragon. In another moment she confronted the cantankerous Mrs. Hopkins, who assumed an attitude of defiance, and plainly showed that if the flesh was weak the spirit was willing enough for the encounter. My father would fain have interfered, but was intreated, by signs and in a whisper, by Postle, not to “check the effervescence.”

But the combatants shall have a chapter to themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ALTERCATION.

THOSE two angry females—just imagine them, ripe for their verbal duel!—Mrs. Hopkins fierce, resolute, and pale as the mask, in marble, of an ancient Fury: Kezia, with her

homely person, coarse limbs, scrubby head, staring eyes, and that violent red blotch on her cheek, not unlike the ill-painted figure-head of the Bellona, or some such termagant ship of war.

“O you wretch!” began Kezia, panting for utterance.

“Wretch yourself!” returned the woman. “Who gave you leave to meddle?”

“Those babes—those blessed babes!” exclaimed Kezia; “to want them devoured in their innocent cradle by a wild man of the woods! Babes only fit to devour with kisses—and such as would soften any heart but a stone one, that nothing will touch, except the fizzling stuff as cleans marble!”

“Say, muriatic acid,” suggested Mr. Postle.

“Twin babes, too!” continued Kezia, “the very pictures of heavenly innocence—and might sit to a painter for a pair of Cherubims!—and to abuse them so—it’s almost blasphemy—it’s next to irreligious!”

“Heyday!” exclaimed Mrs. Hopkins; “here’s a fuss, indeed, about babies!—As if there was no more of them in the world! Prize ones, no doubt. I should like to see them soaped and scrambled for!”

“You would!” cried Kezia, almost in a scream;—“you would! Oh! you wicked, wicked monster!”

“Monsters are for caravans,” said the woman; “and if I was you, before I talked of monsters, I would go to some quack doctor,”—and she glanced viciously at my father—“for a cosmetical wash, to make both my cheeks of a colour.”

“My cheeks are as God made them,” said Kezia; “so it’s Providence’s face that you’re flying into, and not mine. But I don’t mind personals. It’s your cruel ill-wishing to those precious infants; and which to look at would convert a she-

gress into a maternal character. Do you call yourself a mother?"

"Do *you*?" asked the woman with a spiteful significance.

"No, I don't," answered Kezia, "and not fit I should. I'm a single spinster, I know, and therefore not a mothy character; but I may stand up, I hope, without committing matrimony, for two helpless innocent babes. Dear little infants, too, as I've washed, and worked for and fed with my own hands; and nussed on my own lap; and lulled on my own buzzum; and as such I don't mind saying, whomever attacks them, I'm a lioness with her yelps."

"Whelps, Kizzy, whelps," but Kizzy was too angry to notice the correction.

"A rampant lioness sure enough! And if I was your keeper," said Mrs. Hopkins, with a malicious glance at my father, "I'd keep you to your own den. The business hasn't improved so much, I believe, as to require another assistant."

The wrath of Kezia was at its climax. Next to an attack on the family, a sneer at the business was a sure provocative. "I know my place," she said, "and my provinces. It's the kitchen, and the back kitchen, and the washus, and the nussery; and if I did come into the surgery, it was to beg a little lunatic caustic to burn off a wart. As for our practice, Mr. Postle must answer for himself. All I know is, he can hardly get his meals for making up the prescriptions; what with mixing draughts, and rolling pills and boluses, and spreading blisters, and Bergamy pitch plasters, and pounding up drugs into improbable powders."

"Impalpable," said my father.

"Well, impalpable. Not to name the operations, such as cupping, and flea-botany, and distracting decayed teeth."

"*Extracting*," said my father, "the other would be a work of supererogation."

“Well, extracting—and the vaccinating besides,—and all the visiting on horseback and on foot,—private and parishional,—including the workus. Then there’s Master himself,” continued Kezia, dropping a sort of half curtsy to him, as an apology for the liberty of the reference,—“if he gets two nights’ rest in a week, it’s as much as he does, what with confinements, and nocturnal attacks, and sudden accidents—it’s enough to wear out the Night Bell! There was this very morning, between one and two, he was called up out of his warm bed, to the Wheel of Fortune, to sow up a juggler.”

“Jugular,” said my father.

“Well, jugular.—And the night before, routed out of his first sleep by a fracturous rib. I only wonder we don’t advertise in the papers for a partner, for there’s work enough for a firm. First there’s a put-out shoulder to be put in again,—then a broken limb to set,—and next a cracked penny cranium to be japanned——”

She meant trepanned, and the correction was on my father’s lips, but was smothered in the utterance by the vehement Mrs. Hopkins. “Japan, a fiddlestick!” she cried, impatiently rolling her head from side to side, and waving her hands about, as if battling with a swarm of imaginary gad-flies. “What do I care for all this medical rigmarole?”

“Oh! of course not!” said Kezia, “not a brass button. Only when people affront our practice, and insinuate that we have a failing business, it’s time to prove the reverse. But perhaps you’re incredible. There was no such thing, I suppose, as the pison’d charity-boy, with his head as big as two, and his eyes a-squeezing out of it, because of eating a large red toadstool, like a music-stool, in loo of a mushroom.”

“There might, and there might not,” said Mrs. Hopkins.

“I thought as much!” exclaimed Kezia, “and in course you never heard of the drowned female who was dragged out of the canal, a perfect sop! and was shocked into life again, by our galvanic battering?”

“I never did,” replied Mrs. Hopkins.

“Oh no—not you!” said Kezia, bitterly. “Nor the stabbed Irishman, as was carried into this very surgery, all in a gore of blood, and pale, and fainting away, and in a very doubtful state indeed, till Master applied a styeptic.”

“A styptic,” said my father, “a styptic.”

“Well, a styptic. And maybe you’ve not heard neither of the scalded child—from pulling a kettle of boiling water over her poor face and neck,—and which was basted with sweet oil, and drudged with flower, and was so lucky as to heal up without leaving a cockatrice.”

“If I was you,” said Mrs. Hopkins, “I would say a cicatrix.”

“Well, perhaps I ought,” said Kezia. “Howsomever there wasn’t a scar or a seam on her skin,—so that’s a cure at any rate. Then there’s the Squire.—But, maybe, nobody has seen his groom come galloping, like life or death, to fetch Master to a consulting of the faculty—no, nor the messenger from the Rectory—nor the Curate himself dropping in here for medical advice,—quite out of sorts, he said, and as hoarse as a raven with a guitar.”

“A catarrh,” said my father, “a catarrh!”

“Well, catarrh—and couldn’t swallow for an enlarged tonsor in his throat.”

It is uncertain how much farther Kezia might have “carried on the business,” and improved it, but for an importunate voice which began calling in a stage whisper for Mrs. H. Mrs. Hopkins looked towards the road, where a shadow had for some time been fluttering on the threshold, whilst part of the skirt of a female garment dodged about the

door-post, and a bobbing head now and then intercepted the sunshine, and uttered its subdued summons. But as Mrs. H. did not seem inclined to obey the call, the Unknown stepped, or rather stumbled, into the surgery, for she was purblind from a complaint in her eyes, and therefore wore a green shade, so deep, that it shadowed her crimson nose, like a pent-house over a pet carnation. The two females were obviously confederates, for the new-comer took up a position beside her predecessor, with a determined air and attitude which showed that the broadside of the Tartar would be supported by a volley from the Vixen. Kezia, who would have engaged a fleet of shrews in the same cause, maintained as bold a front, and there wanted but the first shot to bring on a general action, when my father interposed, and suspended hostilities by a friendly salute.

“Glad to see you, Mrs. Pegge.”

“That’s as may turn out,” replied Mrs. Pegge, throwing back her head, with her chin up in the air, and looking along her nose, at the Doctor, in a posture, as it seemed, of the most ineffable disdain.

“Your sight must be better at any rate,” said my father, “to let you come out so far without a guide.”

“Well, it is better,” said Mrs. Pegge, and then turning as on a pivot to her ally—“No thanks to nobody, eh, Mrs. H.?”

“Certainly not,” said Mrs. Hopkins.

“I didn’t follow the Doctor’s directions,—did I, Mrs. H.?”

“Certainly not.”

“And should have been no better if I had—eh! Mrs. H.?”

“Not a tittle,” said Mrs. Hopkins, “but quite the reverse.”

“It isn’t the hoptalmy at all,—is it, Mrs. H.?”

“By no manner of means.”

“Nor gutty sereny—it don’t come from the stomach—do it, Mrs. H.?”

“Not in the least.”

“I never said that it did,” put in my father, more tickled than hurt by the attack on his medical skill.

“Of course not,” said Mrs. Pegge; “you’d have been wrong if you had,—for it’s Amor Rosis—eh, Mrs. H.?”

“Exactly so—the very name,” said Mrs. Hopkins.

“I can guess where they got that,” muttered Mr. Postle, just loud enough to be heard by his principal; but my father was in too good a humour, and rubbing his nose too briskly to be accessible to sinister suspicions.

“Well, well,” he said, with a tone and smile of conciliation enough to have smoothed a pair of ruffles into Quakerly wristbands. “Amor, in the eye, is a very common affection amongst females, and so you may be right. And in spite of all that has passed, should you or Mrs. Hopkins wish at any time for medical advice or medicaments——”

“Oh, no, no, no!” exclaimed Mrs. Pegge, tossing her head like a horse at the hay-rack. “We are poor,—but we won’t be experimented on any longer—eh, Mrs. H.?”

“The Lord forbid!” cried Mrs. H. “We’ve been too much experimented upon already!”

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Postle, determined to test his secret suspicions, “you had better seek other advice.”

“Eh, what?” asked Mrs. Pegge, wheeling about with her green verandah, till she brought her red ferret-like eyes to bear on the assistant. “What might you say, young man?”

“I said, that perhaps you had better seek other advice.”

“Perhaps *we have*,” replied Mrs. Pegge, with a suppressed chuckle, and the usual appeal for confirmation to Mrs. H.

“We certainly did,” said Mrs. Hopkins.

“And whatever was advised,” said Mrs. Pegge, “there was one thing not recommended, namely, for a young child to sleep in an apiary—eh, Mrs. H.?”

“If you mean with a monkey,” said Mrs. Hopkins, “most decidedly not.”

“Oh, no,” said Mrs. Pegge, “Doctor Shackle knows better than that—eh, Mrs. H.?”

“I said so!” exclaimed Mr. Postle, with a slap of his hand on the desk that would have crushed a beetle into a dead flat.

“Hush, hush,” whispered my father. “Dear me, you have killed the poor inky fly!”

“Curse the fly!” cried Mr. Postle, fairly beside himself with vexation. “I wish they had both been in its skin,—a couple of ungrateful old Jezebels!”

“He! he! he!” tittered Mrs. Pegge. “Some people will want one of their own cooling draughts!”

“Why, you ungrateful creature!” cried Kezia, whose face had been purpling and swelling with indignation till it seemed ready to burst like an over-ripe gooseberry. “I wonder you can name a ’fevervescing draught, for fear of its flying in your face!”

“Hoity toity!” said Mrs. Pegge, turning on Kezia, with her green shade over her glistening red eyes, like an angry Hooded Snake.—“What have we here?—A Hen Doctor—a ’pothecary in petticoats?”

“I don’t mind names,” answered Kezia, “so you may be as scrofulous as you please.”

“Scurrilous,” said my father.

“Well, scurrilous. I don’t mind that,” continued Kezia. “It’s your base return for our pharmacy, and your sneers at our practice. Such shocking unthankfulness! And to think of all the good physic you have enjoyed, gratis!”

“Physic?” retorted Mrs. Pegge with a sneer of unutterable contempt. “Physic indeed! such physic! If it’s so good, why don’t you enjoy it yourself? I’m sure we don’t

want to rob you of it. If it was worth any thing it wouldn't be given away—eh, Mrs. H.?"

"My own words," replied Mrs. Hopkins, "to a syllable."

"It's not physic at all!" said Mrs. Pegge.

"No!" exclaimed my father: "what then?"

"It's the grouts of other people's," said Mrs. Pegge, "and that's how we get it in charity. But come, Mrs. H., we have been long enough here."

"Quite," said Mrs. Hopkins.

"And it will be long enough before we come here again,—eh, Mrs. H.?"

"Ages," said Mrs. Hopkins; and drawing the arm of her purblind confederate under her own, she led her towards the door, through which,—the one stumbling and the other limping—the two ingrates groped and hobbled away, and were seen no more.

"Say I told you so!" exclaimed Mr. Postle, desperately snatching up the pestle, but grinding nothing, except some inarticulate execrations between his teeth. My father even looked a little grave; and as for Kezia, she could only stare up at the ceiling, flap her hands about, and ejaculate "Oh, I never!"

"Yes, Shackle's at the bottom of it all," muttered Mr. Postle, shrewdly adopting my father's own mode of thinking aloud as a vehicle for administering his private sentiments. "Those two beldams have been prompted by him, that's certain,—and he has been called in at the Great House."

"He has?" said my father.

Postle, however, took no notice of the interrogation, but shook his head, despondingly, and proceeded. "That infernal little monkey has done for us! We shall never be sent for again, master or mate. No, no, a doctor who couldn't save such a little creature would never preserve so

great a lady! So there is our best patient gone—gone—gone! And the Parish will go next, for Shackle has got the Board by the ear.”

“Not he,” said my father.

“Then he sells opium and we don’t, and that gives him the village. The more fools we,”—and Postle shrugged his shoulders and elevated his eyebrows—“We’re unpopular with rich and poor.—I should not wonder, some day, if we were even to be hung or burnt in effigy!”

My father smiled, and rubbed his nose, and none the less, that Kezia clasped her hands and groaned aloud at the imaginary picture. But he repented of his mirth, when he saw her eyes, swimming in tears, fixed alternately on himself, and the assistant, as if they were already swinging, like Guys, over the opprobrious bonfire.

“Postle—Mr. Postle”—he began, but the assistant continued his soliloquy.

“There’s Widow Warner’s child in one of her old convulsions——”

“Poor thing!” cried my father, “I will go and look to her directly!”

“But there has been no message,” said Mr. Postle, suddenly waking up from his pretended fit of abstraction. “We’re not sent for.”

“No matter,” said my father; and snatching up his hat, and clapping it on, the wrong side before, was about to hurry out of the surgery, when he was checked by an exclamation from Kezia.

“Gracious!—The yellow lamp is broke again!”

“Yes—last night—for the fifth time,” said Mr. Postle.

“It is very strange,” said my father, looking up at the gap in the fanlight, where there ought to have been a glass globe, filled with a certain yellow fluid; and which nightly

by the help of a lamp behind it cast a flaring advertisement over a post, across the road, and partly up a poplar tree on the opposite side of the way. "It is very strange—there must be some cause for it."

"Nobody breaks Shackle's green lamp," observed Mr. Postle.

My father made no reply ; but, stepping hastily out of the surgery, set off—at what Postle called his acute pace, in opposition to his slower, or chronic one—towards the Widow Warner's Cottage.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR CARVER.

AMONGST my father's little vanities—and in him it was partly professional—he rather piqued himself on his dexterity in dividing a fowl or cutting up a joint of meat. The performance, nevertheless, was generally a slovenly one,—not for want of skill in the operator, but through the fault of the carver, which was as blunt as any *messer* in Germany.

Every family has some standing nuisance of the kind,—a smoky chimney, a creaking door, a bad lock, a stiff hinge, or a wayward clock, which, in spite of a thousand threats and promises, never gets Rumfordized, oiled, mended, eased, rectified, or regulated. Our stock grievance was the carver. In vain Kezia, who never grudged what she called elbow-grease, rubbed the steel to and fro, and round and round, and laboured by the hour to sharpen the obstinate instrument ; wherever the fault lay, in her manipulation, the metal, the knife-board, or the Flanders brick, the thing remained as

dull as ever. My father daily hacked and haggled, looked at the edge, then at the back of the blade, and passed his finger along both, as if in doubt which was which,—pshaw'd—blessed his soul—wondered who could cut with such a thing—and swore, for the hundredth time, that the carver must and should go to the cutler's. Perhaps, as he said this so positively, it was expected that the carver would go of itself to the grindstone : however, it never went ; but Kezia and the knife rubbed on till the board, and the brick, and my father's patience were nearly worn out together. The dinner-tool was still as blunt as a spade ; and might have remained so till Doomsday, but for the extraordinary preparations for the Christening, when, every other household article having undergone a furbishing, the eye of our maid-of-all-work fell on the refractory knife, which she declared—please the pigs—should go forthwith to be set and ground by Mr. Weldon the smith.

Luckily there was an errand due in the same direction ; so huddling herself into her drab shawl, and flinging on her black bonnet, without tying the strings—for there was no time for nicety—away went Kezia through the village at her best pace—a yellow earthenware basin in one hand, and the naked carving knife in the other ; a combination, be it said, rather butcherly, and to a country-bred mind inevitably suggestive of pig-sticking, and catching the blood for black puddings : but the plain homely Kezia, who seldom studied appearances, or an ideal picture of her own person, held sturdily on her way, with striding legs and swinging arms, the domestic weapon flashing to the sunshine in her red right hand. How her thoughts were occupied, may be guessed,—that the usual speculations of menials had no place in her brain. Instead of thinking of sweethearts, fairings, ribbons, new bonnets, cast-off gowns, tea and sugar, the kitchen

stuff, vails, perquisites, windfalls, petty peculations, warnings, raised wages, and what did or did not belong to her place, her mind was busy with the Baptism, the dear babes, Mrs. Prideaux, her master, mistress, and Mr. Postle, and generally all those household interests in which her own were as completely merged and lost as water in water. Amongst these the medical interest of course held a prominent place, and induced in her, not only a particular attention to the practice and the patients, but a general observance—which became habitual—of looks and symptoms, with a strong tendency, moreover, to exhibit what she called her physical knowledge. This propensity she was enabled to indulge in her passing along “the Street,” a long straggling row of one-storied cottages, mud-built and thatched, and only separated by the road in front from the sluggish river, which added its unwholesome damps to the noxious effluvia from mouldy furniture, musty garments, and perhaps rancid provisions, and sluttish accumulations of dust and dirt, in dark, ill-ventilated rooms. At the back, dotted with stunted willow-pollards, and windmills, and intersected by broad ditches, lay the Fens, a dreary expanse, flat as a map, and as diversely coloured by black and brown bogs, water, purple heath, green moss, and various crops, blue, red, and yellow, including patches of hemp and flax, which at certain seasons were harvested and placed to steep in stagnant ponds, whence the rotting vegetable matter exhaled a pestilential malaria as fetid in its stench as deadly in its influence on the springs of health and life. The eyes of Kezia rested, therefore, on many a sickly sallow face and emaciated frame amongst the men and women who lounged or worked beside the open windows, and even in some of the children that played round the thresholds, biting monstrous cantles out of slices of bread and butter, or nursing baby brothers and sisters only

half a size smaller than themselves. With all these people, big and little, Kezia exchanged familiar greetings, and nods and smiles of recognition, occasionally halting for a brief conference,—for example, to recommend “scurvy treatment” for little Bratby, to prescribe a dose of “globular salts” for the younger Modley, or to hint to Mrs. Pincott, whose infant was suffering from dentition, that its gums wanted “punctuation” with the lancet. But at one house she paused to deliver an especial salute; for on the door-step sat little Sally Warner, cuddling her arms in her pinafore, and upturning a cheerful chubby face, with a fair brow, bright blue eyes, and rosy cheeks, but sadly disfigured between the snubby nose and dimpled chin, and all round the pretty mouth, by an eruption which might have been averted by a timely dose of brimstone and treacle,—a spectacle Kezia no sooner observed than abruptly stopping for an instant, with a certain gesture, she pronounced certain ambiguous words, so appalling, in one sense, that the scared child immediately fled indoors to her widowed mother, on whose lap, after a paroxysm of grief and terror, she went off into one of those constitutional fits to which she had been subject from her cradle.

Poor Kezia! How little she dreamt that, by merely pointing at a child with a carving knife, and saying, “You want opening!” she was seriously endangering a young life! How little she thought that she was preparing for her dear master another of those mortifications which were beginning to throng round him so thickly as to justify the old proverb, that misfortunes never come single, but are gregarious in mischief, and hunt in packs like the wolves.

In the mean time my father, good easy man! walked on quite unconscious of the impending annoyance; for the incident of the carving-knife, which furnished this little

episode, occurred prior to the scene in the surgery recorded in the last chapter.

CHAPTER X.

THE VISIT ; AND THE VISITATION.

A GOOD man, of kindly impulses, and contented with their gratification, is not apt to resent very violently the ungracious reception of his benefits ; but, however indifferent on his own account, he cannot help feeling some vexation, partly for the sake of the ingrate himself, and partly on behalf of mankind in general. There is a wrong done to the species ; a slur cast on human nature ; and his cheek flushes, if not with personal indignation, with shame for his race. Thus, there are men whom a series of injuries, readily forgiven, has failed to convert into misanthropes ; but has inspired, nevertheless, with a profound melancholy.

Something of this depression probably weighed down my father's spirits, seeing that he walked without his usual music, the whisper of a whistle, and looking earthwards besides—as if out of tune for sunshiny thoughts—into his own shadow—heedless alike of the sparrow's taking a dust-bath in the road, and the wagtail that kept just a-head of him by a series of short swift runs, its delicate legs almost invisible from the rapidity of their motion, and its tail, at every halt, balancing with that peculiar vibration from which the bird derives its name.

And yet the scene was much brighter than when he had last paced the same road : the day was fine, and the landscape as lovely and cheerful as its "capabilities" allowed. The river glittered in the sun ; the bleak rose at the flies,

making numberless rings and dimples in the surface ; and myriads of minnows and stickle-backs—for which the water was famous—wheeled and manœuvred in dark shoals, like liquid clouds, amidst the shallows ; while larger fish skulked in the eddies round the lock-gates, or glistened silverly through the intricate golden arabesques that sparkled in the rippled water, and thence reflected, danced on the piles of the dam, and the supports of the Dutch-looking swing-bridge. For a swarm of expatriated Flemings had settled aforetime in the neighbourhood ; and by the style of such erections had made the country, in its artificial features, as well as in its natural aspect, very similar to their own.

On the other hand lay the broad ditch ; here and there widening into a little pool, that bristled with rushes and flags, amidst patches of brown water, and green scum, and aquatic weeds, enlivened by numerous yellow blossoms, like bathing buttercups, over which the red, blue or green dragon flies, all head and tail—like glorified tadpoles—darted about on their gauzy wings ; or with a dipping motion, regular as a pulsation, deposited their eggs in the stagnant fluid ; or settled, and clung motionless to some reedy stem. In the clear spaces, the water-spider, skating without ice, performed its eccentric evolutions on the surface ; whilst clouds of gnats pertinaciously hovered over some favourite spot, though dissipated again and again by the flutter of the fly bird, hawking at insects, and returning after each short flight to perch on the same dead twig of the alder. The bank was gay with flowering weeds, and covered with tangled verdure—plants, shrubby, pyramidal, and pendulous, interlaced and festooned by straggling creepers and parasites, out of which, at intervals, struggled the trunk of the pollard willow, still clasped by the glossy ivy, and embossed with golden or emerald moss—or the silvery stem of the aspen, up-turning

at every breath the hoary side of its twinkling leaves, and changing its foliage from green to grey, and from grey to green, with the variable shades of the summer sea. The very slime oozing round the muddy margin of the pool, and filling the holes poached by the feet of horses and cattle, assumed prismatic tints; whilst the fresh splashes, running up into the road-ruts, glanced alternate blue and white with the shifting sky: in short, there was all the beauty that colour, change, light and shade, life and motion, can give to even common-place objects; and on which, generally, my father, a lover of nature, would not have turned a careless eye, no more than he would have let the sedge-bird warble, as unheard as invisible, amongst the waving reeds.

But his mind was preoccupied. In spite of himself the harsh voice of Mrs. Hopkins still echoed in his ear; he still saw the red and black eyes of Mrs. Pegge glimmering, like live charcoal, under their green shade. With every step, however, the image and the sounds became fainter, and the cloud passed away from his soul.

“Pshaw,” he said to himself, “I am as unreasonable as the old women! Poor creatures that have hardly daily bread enough to justify a thanksgiving—and to expect from them a grace before and after a dose of physic! To be sure they might have been more civil—and yet, poor, ragged, infirm, disappointed in life, and diseased—the one half-blind and the other a cripple—what worldly sugar have they in their cup to sweeten their dispositions?—What cream of comfort, or soothing syrup, to make them mild, affable, and good-humoured? And besides, what do they meet with themselves from society at large but practical rudeness? Scorned and shunned because penniless and shabby; oppressed, snubbed, and wronged, because weak and powerless; neglected and insulted, because old and ugly; and unceremoniously

packed off at last, as no longer ornamental, useful or profitable, to that human lumber-hole, the workhouse! Accustomed to endure poverty without pity, age without reverence, want without succour, pain without sympathy,—what wonder if their minds get warped with their frames, and as sensitive to slights and affronts as their bodies to damp and cold winds,—if their judgments become as harsh as their voices, or if their tempers sharpen with their features? What wonder if their prejudices stiffen with their limbs—their whims increase with their wrinkles—their repinings with their infirmities—nay, if their very hearts harden with their fates, or their patience fails utterly under the tedious suffering of some chronic disease, which Art can only palliate, whilst Hope perhaps promised a cure? No, no, we must not expect too much from human nature under such trials, and so many privations!—And so let them enjoy their discontents,” said my father, raising his voice: “the worse for them, poor souls, that they are past other pleasure!—and if grumbling be a comfort, who would grudge it, any more than their solitary luxury—a pinch of snuff?”

“Or a drop of lodnum,” grumbled a surly voice.

My father looked up and recognised the speaker; but the man, gazing straight before him, as if suddenly seized with a stiff neck, passed hastily by, to escape the words which pursued him.

“Yes, yes, Roger Heap, or a dram of oxalic acid, which I would as soon sell you as the other. It’s the curse of the county, what with their laudanum drops—and opie pills—and syruping the infants—and if ever I saw a flower like a well-frilled last night-cap it’s the White Poppy!”

My father stopped, for he had reached the widow’s pretty cottage, and stepping through the open front door, walked into the parlour. It was a small room, neatly but tastily

furnished ; for Mrs. Warner had been left in easy circumstances by her late husband, a farmer, in those prosperous war times when farmers reaped golden harvests ; and long before the distressed agriculturist learned to cry "*Ichaboe !* My glory is departed from me ! and I am dependent for profitable crops on a species of foreign Penguin, of dirty habits !" His competence, indeed, was rapidly growing into a fortune, when he perished suddenly after a market-dinner by an accident which, communicated too abruptly to the widow, made her, prematurely, the mother of an infant, afflicted from its ill-starred birth with convulsions. A black profile of the father hung over the mantel-piece, beside the old-fashioned mirror ; and in his vacant elbow-chair, beside the fire-place, reposed his favourite terrier, blind with age, and asthmatic, from the pampering of his mistress, whose whole affections were divided, though in unequal portions, between her little Sally and the dog. At the sound of a strange foot the wheezy animal uttered a creaking growl, but quickly began to thump the damask seat with his tail on recognizing my father, already met, or rather intercepted, by the widow, who, omitting her usual courtesy, placed herself directly before him, so as to bar his passage to the inner room.

"Well, and how is Sally ?" asked my father, kindly looking down at the diminutive widow, for she was the smallest woman, to use the popular description, "that ever stood in shoe leather, not to be an absolute dwarf." Besides which, since Master Warner's death, she had pined and wasted away to a perfect atomy, and looked even less than she really was in that pinched cap and the black dress which reduced her figure. Not that she fretted visibly, or wept : her eyes shed no more tears than those of the peacock plumes over the old mirror ; but if grief has a *dry rot* of its own, by that decay

she had crumbled away till her whole widowed body, as my father said, contained but just clay enough to make one little lachrymatory urn. In truth, she was singularly withered and shrivelled, and, in the common belief, still shrank so rapidly as to beget a notion amongst the more imaginative of the village children, that she would eventually dwindle to the fairy standard, and then disappear.

“Well, how is Sally?” asked my father: “I hear she has had a fit.”

“She has,” answered the tiny widow. Her very voice seemed smaller than usual, and to come, a mere sibilant murmur, through her thin compressed lips and closed teeth.

“Poor thing! I’ll go in and look at her,” said my father, making one step sideways, and then another forward.

“There is no need,” said the widow, stepping one pace backward, and then another sideways, so as to still keep in his front.

“Is she well then?”

“No.”

“I had better see her then,” said my father.

“Doctor Shackle has seen her,” said the widow.

“Quite right—he was the nearest”—replied my father, who was as free from the professional as from any other species of jealousy. “Quite right! then I am easy about her—for she is in good hands.”

Just as my father pronounced this eulogium the object of it issued from the inner room; and the little widow, stepping apart, left the rival doctors—if there can be rivalry all on one side—standing face to face. What a contrast it was! my father, plump, rosy as a redstreak, and bright-eyed—one of those men of the old school who looked handsome in hair-powder; the other a tall bony personage, sandy haired, with large yellow whiskers, stony light grey eyes, a straight sharp

nose, high cheek-bones, colourless cheeks, and thin lips, parted in a perpetual smile that resulted less from good temper than good teeth—a proper enough personification of Lent, reminding one of the hard sordid dryness of the stock-fish, and the complexion of the parsnip. Then, his manners were cold and reserved, his voice uniform in its tone—his words few and sarcastic, and often marked in *italics*, by a sneering curl of the lip—one of those men from whose veins, if pricked, you would expect not blood but milk—not milk warm and sweet, but acrid like that of the dandelion—men whose livers, you feel sure, are white; their hearts of the palest flesh-colour, and always on the wrong side; their brains a stinging jelly, like the sea-nettle. That my father, one of the warmest of the warm-blooded animals, could endure such a polypus—that they could meet without his instinctively antipathising and flying off, was proof of his easy disposition, his exquisite temper, his child-like simplicity, large faith in human goodness, and catholic attraction towards all his race.

“Well, Doctor,” said my father, “how is the little patient?”

“All safe now,” answered Shackle. “But a terrible shock to the system—tremendous fit—brought on by a fright.”

“A fright?”

“Yes: some fool or other, with a knife, or magical instrument, or something—threatened to rip her up.”

“The brute deserved a flogging!” exclaimed my father.

“I think so, too,” said Shackle, with a glance aside at the mother.

“Why, the brute, as you call her,” began the widow, but was checked by Shackle, who placed his finger on his lip, and, stooping down to her ear, whispered,

“Assumed ignorance!”

“Poor child!” said my father; “I have been quite anxious about her.”

“You must have been,” said Shackle; “you came so quickly!” a sarcasm my father, in the innocence of his heart, mistook for a civility.

“It happened hours ago,” remarked the little widow.

“Is it possible?” cried my father. “But I knew nothing of it—not a syllable.”

Shackle said nothing, but looked incredulously at the widow, who replied by an almost imperceptible shake of the head.

“Postle only told me,” said my father, “about ten minutes since.”

“Oh, that Postle!” exclaimed Shackle, “what a treasure he must be!”

“He is, indeed,” said my father, quite unconscious of the intended sneer.

“And that—what’s her name?—Kezia?” cried Shackle, “taking such a family interest in everything—even to the medical practice!”

At the mention of Kezia and medical practice, the figure of the little widow appeared to dilate; her eyes flashed, and her tiny tongue began rapidly to moisten her thin lips; but before she could speak, Shackle broke in with some directions about the sick child; and then seizing my father by the arm, hurried him out of the cottage. “I have another case to attend,” he said, “and a very urgent one.”

“I hope the present one,” said my father, “is going on favourably.”

“Oh, quite; she is all right;” answered Shackle. “By the by, I hope I am excused. There is a certain etiquette between medical men—and I ought to apologise for interfering with one of your patients.”

“Not at all! not at all!” cried my father. “We are both of us engaged in the same great mission—co-operators in the good work of alleviating human suffering.”

“Exactly so—of the same order of *charity*,” said Shackle, with a sneering emphasis on the last word, intended secretly for my father’s gratuitous practice. “Yes, both of us are of one fraternity, or, as we should be called abroad, Brothers of Mercy,”—a phrase which so delighted my father, that, seizing Shackle’s hand between both his own, he warmly urged a request conceived some minutes before.

“With the utmost pleasure,” replied Shackle, bowing, and returning the squeeze with apparent cordiality; and then the two doctors parted—one with an ivory smile on his face, that vanished the moment he turned his back; the other with a kindly glow on his countenance which promised to endure till the next meeting.

My father, however, instead of turning homewards, guided by some vague impulse, bent his steps towards the dwelling of the Hobbeses.—To see, after so many disappointments, how his kind intentions had thriven in that quarter? Perhaps so. Meanwhile little Sally was safe, and his whistle was resumed. He was conscious of the warmth and glory of the sunshine; heard and enjoyed the carol of the lark; observed the grey goose leading her callow yellow gulls across the road to the river; and laughed at the consequential airs of the hissing gander, as he sailed on, with raised stern, and one broken wing hanging down at his side, like the weather-board of a Dutch yacht. But a stranger spectacle was in store for him—a low mud cottage, rudely thatched with brown mossy straw and reeds—the broken panes of its one window stopped with dingy rags—and two men, in the livery of the magpie but repudiating its loquacity, in short, two Mutes, in black and white, standing one

on each side of the humble door! My father stopped and rubbed his eyes like a man "drowned in a dream." But no, there they were, the two mummers, with their paraphernalia in their hands, surrounded by an undress circle of the village children, backed by an outer ring of men and women, who stared over their black, white, brown, red, yellow, cropped or curly little heads.

In another minute there was a stir and murmur of expectation amongst the crowd—and first a black and white hat, and then a man in black with a white scarf, came stooping through the low door; followed by two other men in sables, carrying a little coffin, covered with French grey cloth, and studded with silvered nails. After a pause, as if to afford time for the spectators to gaze and comment on the handsome coffin and its ornaments, another attendant threw over it a black velvet pall with a white border; and then came forth the mourners, stumbling over the threshold, the Mother with a white handkerchief at her eyes; but the Father with his grief, all unveiled, writhing in his hard-featured yellow face. The silk hood and scarf but partially concealed the shabby ragged clothing of the poor woman; and the funeral mantle was far too short for the tall man, whose mud-stained corduroys were visible a foot below its skirt; whilst one half of his best and worst beaver, brown in colour and of no particular shape, bulged out roughly above the sleek hat-band which encircled it, and thence flowed down his nape, and with a full convex curve over his high round shoulders. There was a moan from the crowd as the mourners appeared, and then a hush, only broken by the sobs of the bereaved parents, whereat the tender-hearted of the circle looked tearfully at each other, and clasped their hands. At last the man in black with the white scarf—composing his face as it were to some inaudible Dead March

—solemnly took three steps forward, and then suddenly wheeling about, walked six steps backwards, with his eyes steadfastly fixed on the moving pall which followed him—and then three more steps backwards, but on his tiptoes, to look over the pall at the mourners—when, all being right, he turned round again, and walked on, as slowly as he could pace, to eke out the very short distance between the hut of mourning and the church. The crowd, which had opened to the procession, closed again, and followed in its wake—men, women, boys, and girls, all seriously or curiously interested in Death, except the vacant baby faces, which leaning chubbily on the mothers' shoulders, looked quite the other way.

“A foolish job, bean't it?” said an old woman, leaning on a crutch,—too lame to follow the funeral. “To chuck away money that way! Quite a waste, bean't it?”—and she put up a tin ear-trumpet, and turned its broad end towards my father.

“It is, indeed!” cried my father, surprised by such an echo of his own reflections.

“Ay, bean't it?” repeated the old deaf woman. “And such poor paupers as them too—as might have had a burying by the parish!”

My father hesitated to answer. He knew the poor well; their intense abhorrence of a parish funeral; and the extreme sacrifices they would make to subscribe to a burial society, and secure a decent interment. But he thought it best to chime in with the old woman's humour.

“Of course they might,” he said. “The Hobbeses are on the parish books already, and the overseer would, no doubt, have given them an order on the parish undertaker.”

“Who will take her?” asked the deaf woman.

My father loudly repeated his words.

“Ay—an order for a common deal box,” screamed the old woman, in a voice so different to her former one, that my father looked round for another speaker. “A rough wooden thing, only fit for soap and candles! Look there!” and she pointed with her crutch—“I’d sooner bury a child o’ mine, wi’ a brickbat in yonder pool! But anything is good enow for the like of us to be packed into. Ay, an old tea-chest, or a forrin fruit-chest, with our pauper corpses a-bulgin out the sides, and showin, like the orangers, thro’ the cracks!”

“No, no, no!” shouted my father.

“But I say yes, yes,” cried the old woman. “Screwed down in a common box, and jolted off, full trot, to be chucked into the parish pit-hole—and a good riddance of old rubbidge! And better that than to be made a gift of, privily, to the parish doctor! Ay, you! you! you!” she screamed, shaking her cruch in my father’s face—“with your surgical cuttings, and carvings, and ’natomizings! And can hardly have patience to wait till people are dead!”

“If I know what you mean,” bawled my father, “I’ll be ’natomized myself!”

“Oh! not you, forsooth!” answered the old woman, who had imperfectly heard the anecdote of Kezia and the carving-knife, and, like other deaf people, had made her own blundering version of the story. “But you long, you know you do, to cut open little Sally Warner, and to look in her inside for the cause of her fits!”

My father winced—it would have vexed Job himself.

“Plague take it!” he said, as much rumped as it was possible for him to be in his temper. “I do believe some dog has run mad, and bitten all the old women in the village!”

“Ay, that comes home to you,” cried the crabbed cripple.

“And mind Death don’t come home too—to your own twin babies. To begrudge poor Sukey Hobbes her funeral! Suppose it was even a hearse-and-six, with ostrich plumage—and why not? An only child, quite a doting-piece, and begrudged nothing in life, by fond parents, if it cost the last penny, and why should she be begrudged by them in death—and gold and silver in the house? And which some say was flung in, by night, through the window by Doctor Shackle, and that he owns to it, or, leastways, don’t deny it—but I say, chucked down the chimbley by a Guardian Angel, in the shape of a white pigeon, as was seen sitting on the roof.”

“No doubt of it,” shouted my father, rubbing his nose, and quite restored to good humour by his new metamorphosis. “There was a guardian angel seen lately sitting on a rock in America—only”—and he dropped his voice—“it turned out to be an exciseman tarred and feathered.”

“That’s true, then,” said the old woman. “But the funeral will be coming back, and I must speak a condoling word to the Hobbeses. Poor souls! I know myself what it is to be childless—but it will be an everlasting blessed comfort and consoling to them to reflect they have given her such a genteel burying as was never seen afore in their spheres of life.” And the old crone hobbled off on her crutch, leaving my father to whistle or talk to himself as he pleased. He did the last.

“Yes, the old deaf body is right. The money was intended for the comfort and consolation of the bereaved couple; and they were justified in seeking for them in the mode most congenial to their own feelings. An odd mode, to be sure, considering their usual habits and rank in life! And yet, why should not the poor have their whims and prejudices as well as the rich? Grief is grief, in high or low,

and, like other morbid conditions, is apt to indulge in strange fancies. So let the guineas go—there are worse lavishings in this world than on the obsequies of an only child! And after all, if the money went foolishly, it came quite as absurdly—for medical attendance on a sick monkey!”

CHAPTER XI.

OUR DOCTOR'S BOY.

THE surgery was quiet—the assistant leisurely making up some sort of medical swan-shot—when my father entered, and hung up his hat.

“Well, I have met Doctor Shackle at last:—he was at Mrs. Warner's—and the child is better.”

“I should like to meet him too,” observed Mr. Postle, very calmly in tone, but squeezing his finger and thumb together so energetically, that the bolus which was between them—instead of a nose—was flattened into a lozenge.

“Then you will soon have that pleasure,” said my father, “for I have asked him to the christening.”

Mr. Postle turned faint, sick, red, and then white, with disgust: symptoms the Doctor must have observed, but that his attention was absorbed by a phenomenon elsewhere.

It was Catechism Jack,—who after a preliminary peep or two from behind the door-post, at last crept, with a sidling gait and a sheepish air, into the surgery, where by eccentric approaches, like those of a shy bird, he gradually placed himself at the counter.

“Well, Jack,” said my father, “what do you want?”

Jack made no reply; but dropping his head on his right

shoulder, with a leer askance at my father, plucked his sodden finger out of his mouth, and pointed with it to one of the drawers.

“You see,” said my father, in an aside to Postle, “the fellow is not quite a fool. He remembers where the lozenge came from.”

“Mere animal instinct,” answered Postle, in the same under tone : “a monkey would do as much, and remember the canister where he got a lump of sugar.”

“I will try him further,” said my father, putting his hand in the drawer for a lozenge, which he held out between his finger and thumb. “Well, Jack, what will you do if I give you this ?” Jack eyed the lozenge—grinned—looked at my father ; and then drawled out his answer.

“I’ll say my Catechism.”

“No, no, Jack, cried my father, “we don’t want that. But will you be a good boy ?”

“Yes,” said Jack, his head suddenly drooping again, while a cloud passed over his face. “Yes, I will,—and not tumble down stairs.”

“Poor fellow !” said my father. “They made a fault of his misfortune. I have a great mind to take him. Should you like, Jack, to get your own living ?”

“Yes,” answered Jack with alacrity, for my father had unconsciously given him a familiar cue—“to learn and labour truly to get my own living, and to do my duty in that state of life to which it may please God to call me.”

“Catechism again !” whispered Mr. Postle.

“Yes, but aptly quoted and applied,” answered my father. “Do you know, Jack, what physic is ?”

Jack nodded and pantomimically expressed his acquaintance with medicine by making a horrible grimace.

“Well, but speak out, Jack,” said my father. “Use your

tongue. Let us hear what you know about it. What's physic?"

"Nasty stuff," said Jack, "in a spoon."

"Yes, said my father, "or in a wine-glass, Jack, or in a cup. Very good. And do you remember my foot-boy Job, who used to carry out the physic in a basket?"

Jack nodded again.

"Should you like to take his place, and carry out the medicine in the same way?"

"I—don't—know," drawled Jack, sympathetically sucking his finger, while he ogled the little oval confection, which my father still retained in its old position.

"Do you think you could do it?"

Jack was silent.

"Would you try to learn?"

"I learn two things," mumbled Jack, "my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour."

"Not very apposite that," muttered Mr. Postle.

"Not much either way," answered my father; and he resumed the examination.

"Well, Jack, suppose I were to take you into my service, and feed and clothe you—should you like a smart new livery?"

"Yes."

"And a new hat?"

"Yes."

"And if I were to give you a pair of new shoes, would you take care of them?"

"Yes," answered Jack, "and walk in the same all the days of my life."

"There!" said my father, giving Postle a nudge with his elbow; "what do you think of that?"

"A mere random-shot," answered Mr. Postle.

“Not at all,” said my father, turning again to his protégé. “Well, Jack, I have a great mind to give you a trial. If I take you into the house, and find you in a good bed, and comfortable meals, and a suit of clothes, and provide for you altogether, would you promise to behave yourself?”

“They did promise and vow three things in my name,” answered Jack; “first, that I should renounce the devil and all his works ——”

“Yes, yes,” cried my father rather hastily, for Postle was grinning. “We know all that. But would you take care of the basket, Jack, and leave the medicine for the neighbours at the right houses, and attend to your duty?”

“My duty towards my neighbour,” answered Jack, “is to love him as myself; and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me—Give us the lozenge.”

My father gave him the lozenge, which the lad eagerly popped into his mouth, occasionally taking it out again, to look edgewise at its thinness, till all was gone; and then deliberately licked his sweetened hand, beginning at the thumb, and ending with the little finger. My father, who had watched every motion with intense interest, mechanically turned round to the drawer for another “Tolu;” but falling into a fit of musing at the same time, forgot the destination of the lozenge, and eventually clapped it into his own mouth, to the infinite discomfiture of Jack, who by a sudden depression of his features, while his head dropped on his bosom, and his arms fell straight by his sides, typified very vividly the common catastrophe of the Hope going down with all hands.

“Yes, my mind is made up,” said my father, awakening from his reverie. “At any rate the unfortunate creature shall have a chance. With a little looking after at first, he will do very well.”

Mr. Postle looked earnestly at my father, with an expression which might be translated "What next?"—then up at the ceiling with a shrug which signified "Lord, help us!"—and then performed "Confound it!" by a frantic worrying of his hair, as if it had been wool or flock that required teasing. To remonstrate, he knew, was in vain. My father, in ordinary cases, was not what is called pig-headed; but in matters of feeling, his heart, as Postle said, was "as obstinate as the influenza, which will run its own course." In fact, from that hour "the Idiot" was virtually engaged *vice* Job,—for the parish of course made no objection to the arrangement; and as to the old dame, his guardian, my father found means, never exactly known, to reconcile her to the loss of her charge and the stipend. So, the thing being settled, Mr. Postle made the best of it, and endeavoured to initiate his subordinate in his duties: but it was hard work, and accordingly Kezia volunteered her help to convert Jack into our Doctor's Boy.

"To be sure," she said, "his faculties were not over bright, and he would protrude his catechiz at unseasoned times; but he was very willing, and well-disposed, and an orphan besides, and, as such, every woman ought to be his mother." And truly, however she found time for the labour, she turned him out daily so trim and clean, that could she have scoured up his dull mind to the same polish, Jack would have been one of the smartest boys in the parish.

CHAPTER XII.

OUR GODFATHER.

A MONTH and two days of our little lives had passed away, and another evening was in the wane, without any appearance of our worthy Uncle and Godfather elect, the rich and respectable Mr. Jinkins Rumbold.

He had written, briefly indeed, to accept the sponsorship, and to beg that the spare bed might be regularly slept in, seeing that he was subject to the rheumatism : but, although the morrow was appointed for the Christening, still he came not. No—although his mattress, thanks to the indefatigable Kezia, was well shaken, his blankets thoroughly aired, his sheets sweetly lavendered—a fire laid ready for lighting in the grate—a bowpot, daily renewed, on the mantel-shelf—and the Book of Common Prayer, with the leaf turned down at the Public Baptism of Infants, deposited on the walnut-wood table.

My mother was in despair ; for she was a devotee of a very ancient and numerous sect, renowned for self-torture and voluntary martyrdom. Not that she ever scourged or flagellated her own body with cords or rods, or gashed her flesh with knives, or seared it with uncut talons, or wore sackcloth next her skin, or emaciated her frame by long fasts or frequent vigils ; but for such painful exercises as lying on metaphorical thorns, sitting on figurative pins and needles, or hanging on colloquial tenter-hooks, she was a first-class saint of the self-tormenting order of the Fidgets.

“ It don't signify ! ” she said in a crying tone, and flouncing down in the great white dimity-covered chair in the bedroom, as if her legs had suddenly struck work. “ I'm quite worn

out! If my brother means to stand for his nephews, he ought to be here by this time. Here we are, as I may say, on the very brink of the font, and no godfather!—at least, not certain. It is running it cruelly fine; it is, indeed!”

As my mother during these observations had first looked down at the floor, as if addressing the spirits under the earth, and then up at the ceiling, as though appealing to all the angels in heaven, Mrs. Prideaux, in her intermediate sphere, did not feel called upon to reply, but continued quietly to rock the cradle.

“A stranger,” continued my mother, “might be excused for indifference; but when a brother and an uncle exhibits such apathy, what is one to think?”

Still the nurse remained silent; for the speaker, during her apostrophe, had fixed her eyes on the neglected twins. But my mother was yearning for sympathy, and, therefore, aimed her next appeal point blank at the mark.

“I confess it does fret and worry me; but it is too bad, Mrs. P.; is it not?”

“Not having the pleasure to know the gentleman,” replied Mrs. P., “I must beg to decline hazarding an opinion. The delay may have proceeded from procrastination, or it may have arisen from some accident.”

“Gracious Heaven!” exclaimed my mother, clasping her hands as if wrung by some positive calamity. “Yes, you are right! There must have been an accident! You only echo my own misgivings. There have been heavy rains lately, and the waters are out of course. Oh! my poor, dear, drowned brother! To think that, perhaps, whilst I am blaming and reproaching you——”

She stopped, for at that very instant the door opened; and, ushered in by my father, and closely followed by Kezia, the dear undrowned brother walked into the chamber, per-

fectly safe and dry, and not a little astonished at the hysterical scream and vehement caress with which he was welcomed.

At last my mother untwined her arms from his neck, and sank again into the easy chair.

“Thank God!” she exclaimed, “you are safe! But oh! how changed!” an observation she prudently whispered to herself; but which, nevertheless, was plainly telegraphed by the workings of her features. And truly the alteration she beheld would have justified a louder exclamation. From top to toe, the former Jinkins Rumbold had undergone a complete metamorphosis. Instead of his old-fashioned wig—formal, as if cut in yew, by some Dutch topiarian—he wore his own hair, or rather a fringe of it, to his bald head;—the quaint pigtail, which used to dangle at his nape, was also retrenched; but his chin, by way of compensation, displayed a beard like a French sapper’s. And where was his precise white cravat, with its huge bow? Discarded for a black silk kerchief, carelessly tied round his neck in the sailor style, with a lax double-knot. His silver knee and foot buckles were likewise gone; for his square-toed shoes were replaced by a kind of easy buskins, and his kerseymere shorts had become longs, as wide and loose as the trousers of a marine. His waistcoat was unique; and his coat—cut after some original pattern of his own—was remarkable for the number and amplitude of its pockets: fit, there was none. He seemed to have won a suit of clothes in a raffle, and to have adopted them for his own wear from the sole merit of being so easy and roomy that he could roll about in them—like a great oracle of those days, Doctor Johnson.

What an Uncle!—what a Godfather!

Well might Kezia gape and gasp like a hooked gudgeon at such a phenomenon! Nay, the genteel nurse herself opened

her eyes to a most vulgar width, and stared at the strange gentleman with a pertinacity quite inconsistent with her usual good manners.

My father alone was unmoved. Accustomed to the extraordinary whims and crotchets of sick and insane humanity, he was not surprised by the oddities of his kinsman, which he ascribed to their true source. The truth is, whilst the worthy drysalter remained in trade the monotonous routine of business induced and required a corresponding precision and formality of conduct and character. He had neither leisure nor leave to be eccentric. To caper and curvet on the commercial railroad is as dangerous as inconvenient and inconsistent. But once released from business and its habits, like the retired tradesman who sets up his fancy carriage, or builds his "Folly," he started his hobby. Its nature Chance helped to determine, by throwing into his way a certain treatise, by some cosmogony man of the Monboddo school, if not actually an unacknowledged work from the pen of the speculative philosopher, who maintained that Man, at the creation, had a tail like the Monkey. However, the original uncle Rumbold had so translated himself as to be hardly recognisable by his next of kin.

"Ah! I see how it is," he said. "You miss my wig and tail, and are boggling at my beard. A manly ornament, isn't it—as intended by the Creator? For eighteen months, sister—for a year and a half, brother-in-law—no razor has touched my chin, and, please God, never shall again—never!—at least while I preserve my reason. As for shaving, it's a piece of effeminacy, the invention of modern foppery; to say nothing of the degradation of having your nose, that very sensitive feature, and one of the seats of honour, pulled here and there, right and left, up and down, at the will of a contemptible penny barber."

“Very degrading, indeed,” said my father, stroking his own chin with his hand, as if coaxing a beard to grow from it.

“If there’s a ridiculous spectacle in the world,” continued Uncle Rumbold, “it’s a full-grown man, a son of Adam the Great, with his human face divine lathered like a dead wall at its whitewashing—now crying with the suds in his eye, and then spitting with the soap in his mouth—and undergoing all this painful, and absurd, and disgusting penance for what? Why, to get rid of the very token that gives the world assurance of a man.”

“Ridiculous enough!” said my father.

“My wig, on the contrary, was an artificial appendage, and accordingly I have abandoned it. If, as a sign of mature age, nature ordains me to be as bald as a coot, so be it—I will go to my grave with an unsophisticated bare sconce. The same with my queue. If she had intended me to wear a pig’s tail bound in black ribbon, at my nape, she would have furnished me with one, or at least the germ of one, at my birth—but she did not, and therefore I have docked off the substitute.”

“So I perceive,” said my father.

“Yes, sir, as a foreign anomaly. But a beard,” resumed Uncle Rumbold, “is quite another thing—a hair-loom, as I may say, from our first ancestor. Its roots were implanted in Paradise—and its shoots grew and flourished on the chins of the patriarchs. And what can we conceive more awful and majestic than the beards, white as the driven snow, and reaching down to the girdle of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, in their old age? But would they have been looked up to and implicitly obeyed by the people as God’s own vicegerents if they had shaved? Not they!—And what, I should like to

know, intimidated the barbarian Gauls when they invaded the Roman Capitol?"

"A flock of cackling geese," cried my mother, who had some random recollections of ancient history.

"A flock of cackling fiddlesticks!" replied Uncle Rumbold. "It was the beards, the venerable beards, of the Roman Senators. And I cannot help thinking that if our Members of Parliament adopted that classic fashion, and no men appeal oftener to the classics, they would not only deliberate with far more gravity and decorum, but frame laws much more wise, and profound, and just, than they do at present. In fact, all the great lawgivers wore beards. Look at Moses!—look at Solon!—look at Lycurgus!—look at our Alfred."

"If you please, sir," said Kezia—her patience worn out to the last thread—"won't you look at our twins?"

"Eh? what?" snapped Uncle Rumbold, annoyed in his turn, and waving off the maid of all work with an impatient sweep of his oratorical right arm. "By and by, my good woman, by and by. The twins, I suppose, are pretty much the same as other infants—little fat human squabs."

"As you please, sir," replied Kezia, with a courtesy, but heightening in colour and expression towards a Red Lioness. "All I know is, they are such a pair of twin nevies as any uncle might be proud of—if he was the Grand Turk himself!"

"Well, well," said Uncle Rumbold, rather pleased than piqued by the allusion to his Oriental appendage. "Where are they? Oh, yonder!—Poor little wretches!"

"Poor little wretches!" exclaimed an echo, very like the voice of Kezia, but attributed by Uncle Rumbold to Mrs. Prideaux.

“Yes, poor little wretches!” he repeated, addressing himself to the nurse. “I do pity them—for of course they are to be bound up and bandaged like young mummies of the Nile.”

“I presume you mean swaddled, sir,” replied Mrs. Priedeaux.

“I do, ma’am,” said Uncle Rumbold, “that is to say, imprisoning their young tender free-born limbs with linen rollers and flannel fetters, and other diabolical contrivances for cramping the liberty of nature. But perhaps, ma’am, you wear garters?”

The genteel nurse assented, with a slight bend of acquiescence.

“Because I never do,” said Uncle Rumbold. “I detest all ligatures; they check the circulation of the blood, and consequently the flow of ideas. I once got upon my legs, with garters on, to speak in public, and I broke down at the very first sentence—I did, indeed! No, no—no ligatures for me! Look here, ma’am—and he threw open the bosom of his waistcoat—“no braces, you see!—but one garment buttoned on the other, like a schoolboy’s.”

“I am no judge, sir, of masculine habiliments,” replied the genteel nurse; “but of the infantine costume I can speak, which is the same as custom prescribes in the highest families.”

“Custom!” exclaimed Uncle Rumbold. “Confound custom! Why not be guided by the light of nature?” And he gave such a rhetorical blow on the head of the cradle, that the twins started broad awake in a fright, and began to pipe in concert like a double flageolet. In another moment they were sending their smothered cries, through stuff and linen, into the bosom and very heart of the maid of all work, who, with an infant on each arm, hurried to the door, which

she contrived to unfasten, and then pushed wide open, with one leg and foot.

But Uncle Rumbold either overlooked or withstood the hints, and continued his harangue to the nurse.

“In the savage state, ma’am, the human animal has no swaddling. Look at the wild American papoose.”

“But ours an’t papoozes,” cried Kezia—“they’re babbies.”

“Pshaw!—nonsense, woman!” said Uncle Rumbold. “Go to your kitchen. I say, ma’am, the human animal, in a state of nature, is never swaddled!—never! For example, the American Indians. Let us suppose that those two infants there, in the housemaid’s arms, were young Crows, or Dog-Ribs——”

“I won’t suppose any such falsities!” cried the indignant housemaid.

“Hush! hush, pray hush!” whined my mother. “Kezia, do hold your tongue, or I shall go distracted!” As in fact she was, poor woman, between her dread of offending our wealthy Godfather, and her horror of his doctrines. But my father enjoyed the discussion, and was sawing away with his forefinger across the bridge of his nose, as if it had been that of a fiddle.

In the mean time my mother’s interruption had drawn Uncle Rumbold’s discourse upon herself. “I don’t know, sister,” he said, “if my spiritual capacity of Godfather invests me with any control over their physical education; but if those two boys were mine, every blessed day of their lives, wet or dry, shade or shine, hot or cold, they should enjoy for an hour or two the native liberty of their limbs, and sprawl and crawl as naked as they were born, on the grass-plot.”

“Gracious goodness!—On the damp lawn!”

“Ay, or soaking wet, if it so happened; and what’s more,

the youngsters should have to climb some tree or other for their suspended victuals."

"Why the poor things would starve!" exclaimed my mother.

"Not they," said Uncle Rumbold. "Trust to the light of nature! Hunger and instinct would soon teach them to scramble up the stem, like young monkeys—ay, as nimble as marmosets!"

My mother shook her head. "But they would sprawl and crawl into the fish-pond."

"So much the better," said Uncle Rumbold, "for then they might have a swim."

"But does that come by nature, too," inquired my mother.

"Of course," answered Uncle Rumbold—"as it does to a fish. Look at the savage islanders—I forget what author relates it—but when one of the native canoes or proas was upset, a little Carib, of a week old, who had never been in the water before, kept swimming about in the sea till the vessel was righted, as spontaneously as a dog."

My mother again shook her head.

"Fact, and in print," said Uncle Rumbold—"he was paddling about like a water-spaniel; and why not? The art of swimming is innate. Take your own twins, there, and chuck them into the river opposite——"

"The Lord forbid!" ejaculated my mother, to which Kezia responded with as fervent an "Amen."

"I say, chuck them into the river," repeated Uncle Rumbold, "and you will see them strike out with their arms and legs as naturally as frogs. In fact, it is my decided opinion that man in his pristine state was intended by the Creator to be amphibious."

“Did you ever make, personally, any experiments in natation?” inquired my father, in his most serious voice.

“Why, I can’t say that I ever did, exactly,” replied Uncle Rumbold. “But what does that signify, when I’m convinced of my theory? However, as I said before to my sister, if I am to have any share in the physical education of my godsons, those are the principles upon which, guided by the light of nature, I mean to act.”

My father made a low bow, so low, that it would have seemed farcical, but for the air of profound gratitude which he contrived to throw into his countenance; but my mother involuntarily uplifted her hands and eyes, while Kezia, forbidden to speak, gave a low groan or rather grunt.

“In the mean time,” resumed Uncle Rumbold, “I have not forgotten a sponsorial offering,” and diving his hand into one of the many huge cloth closets or pockets in his coat, he extricated with some difficulty a brown paper parcel, which he presented rather ostentatiously to my mother.

“No trumpery spoons, sister, or jingling corals,” he said, as her fingers nervously fumbled at the string—“but something that, rightly employed, will increase in interest and be a benefit to the boys through life.”

My mother’s fingers trembled more than ever at these words, and twitched convulsively at the double knot, whilst a score of vague images, including a pile of Bank notes, to be invested in twin annuities, passed through her agitated mind. Kezia, with held breath, and broad undisguised anxiety in her party-coloured face, intently watched the unfolding of the successive coverings; and even in the well-bred Mrs. Prideaux curiosity triumphed so completely over courtesy, that she jostled and incommoded our Godfather in her eagerness to partake of the revelation. At last the inmost veil of lawn paper was removed.

“A book!” murmured my mother.

Kezia, fetching her breath again with a deep-drawn sigh, deposited the dear twins in the cradle and hastily left the room; while the genteel nurse, giving her head the slightest toss in the world, resumed her seat and her needle-work.

“A book!” repeated my mother.

“Ay, the Book of Books, as I call it,” said Uncle Rumbold—“the Bible, of course, excepted.”

“And a presentation copy,” remarked my father, adroitly catching the volume as it slid off my mother’s knees, “with the writer’s autograph on the fly-leaf!”

“Yes—and a tall copy and unique, and privately printed,” said Uncle Rumbold. “A work as original as scarce—as logical as learned—as correct as copious—as sensible as sublime—as captivating as convincing—as playful as powerful—as elegant as elevating—the life-long study of a profound philosopher—in short, a work worthy of its title—‘The Light of Nature!’”

“It is all very fine, no doubt,” said my mother.

“A perfect treasury—a mine of riches!” exclaimed Uncle Rumbold. “The Holy Testament excepted, the world has never received such a legacy. And this, as I believe, the only copy extant! A gift, let me tell you, sister, that nothing but our near relationship, and my anxiety for the future welfare of two—I say *two* nephews—could have extorted from me.”

“A mine—a treasury—and a legacy,” repeated my mother, with a tear, that might or might not be a pledge of sincerity, gushing from either eye. “You are very kind, I’m sure—very kind and considerate, indeed.—Who’s there?”

It was Catechism Jack, come to announce that supper was on the table, in the parlour. So the conference in the bed-chamber broke up. Uncle Rumbold offered his arm to my

mother to lead her down stairs ; and my father, whistling a march, in a whisper, brought up the rear. Nothing worthy of record passed during the meal, except that the guest received and relished the mixture which had been promised to him by letter at the suggestion of Mr. Postle, namely, "a draught of something comforting to be taken the last thing at night—say, diluted alcohol sweetened with sugar." The dose was even repeated—and then the parties separated, and retired to their respective chambers.

"Well, my dear," asked my father as he stepped into bed, "how did you like the 'Light of Nature?'"

"I wish," said my mother—but stopping short in the middle of her wish to give a vehement puff at the candle—"I wish I could blow it out!"

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR OTHER GODFATHER AND THE GODMOTHER.

"GEORGE!"

"Well?"

"How is the morning?" asked my mother, entering full-dressed, and accosting my father, as he looked over the Venetian half-blind of the parlour window.

"Why, I think," replied my father, "considering those low dirty-looking clouds, with tattered dripping skirts, lounging about the horizon, like ragged reprobates who have slept all night in the open air and the gutter, that we shall have a general sprinkling to-day, as well as the particular one in the church."

"I am always unlucky in my weather," grumbled my mother, "especially when it is wanted to be fine. We shall

be nicely soaked and draggled, of course ; for the glass-coach must draw up at the turnstile-gate ; and we shall have to paddle up the wet sloppy churchyard, and the path has been new gravelled, and the dripping yew-trees will green-spot all our things."

"You must take umbrellas and clogs," said my father.

"To go clattering up the avenue, and clattering with into the porch ! And the poor children will catch colds, and have the snuffles," added my mother, taking a desponding look at the dull sky over my father's shoulder. "Yes, it will rain cats and dogs, sure enough !"

"There will be the less mobbing," suggested my father.

"That's no comfort !" retorted my mother. "I don't mind a crowd, or being a spectacle, or I should certainly object to walk in public with my brother ; for, unless I'm mistaken, we shall have all the tag-rag and bobtail boys in the parish running after him like a Guy Fox. And Kezia too—as if it was necessary at a christening to dress up like a she-Harlequin, with cherry ribbons on a Mazarine blue bonnet, and a scarlet shawl over a bright green gown !"

"And our twins ?"

"Oh, Mrs. Prideaux has kept *them* genteel—though it was a struggle too—what with the rosettes and lace quiltings that Kezia wanted to stitch on their caps and robes. And then Jack ——"

"What of him ?" asked my father, with some alarm.

"I have only had one glimpse of him," replied my mother, "in his new livery ; and clean washed and combed, and smartened up respectable enough, if he hadn't ornamented his jacket with a parcel of strips of French grey cloth, as well as a great bow stuck in his hat, with a white-headed nail. But Mr. Postle has stripped off his finery, and sent him out with the basket."

“Very good,” said my father ; “and my bearded brother-in-law, has he been called ? He ought to be dressed and down by this time, for he hasn’t to shave.”

“Oh, pray don’t joke about him,” exclaimed my mother ; “as it is, I’m sadly afraid he’ll be affronted before he goes. Do all I can, I can hardly keep myself from flying out at his daring doctrines about the poor children—and, as to Kizzy, I verily believe she suspects he is an ogre in disguise. She can’t bear him even to come near the infants, though he has only kissed them once since he came, and then she wiped their dear little faces directly, as if she thought they would catch his beard.”

“And if they had,” roared the gruff voice of Uncle Rumbold, as he pushed open the parlour-door which had been ajar ; “if they had caught my beard, it’s better than catching the chin cough. But come, come, no apologies ; I’m not easily offended, or I should have been huffy just now with your housemaid, who told me to the hairy thing itself, that it ought to have been blue.”

“Poor Kizzy,” said my father, “she is plain and plain-spoken, but as honest and faithful as unrefined.”

“Ah ! a child of Nature,” said Uncle Rumbold, “well, I like her all the better ; and, if she has a sister disengaged in the same capacity, I’ll hire her on the spot. The true old breed of domestic servants is almost worn out, nearly extinct in England, like the bustard and the cock-of-the-wood—partly their fault and partly our own, by always setting them too high or too low—over our heads or under our heels—either pampered like pet monkeys, or snubbed like born slaves—never treated according to the light of nature. For instance, there’s the tender passion. It’s notorious that nine-tenths of the poor girls in Bedlam went crazy from suppressed sweethearts, and yet, forsooth, no followers are to be allowed ;

so that unless Molly falls in love with my lord, and John nourishes a flame for my lady, as he often does, by the way, they might as well have no human hearts in their bosoms. Whereas, servants have passions and feelings as well as ourselves—the same natural capacities for liking and loving—ay, and perhaps stronger at it too, as they are at scouring floors and scrubbing tables !”

How long this harangue might have proceeded is uncertain, probably till church time, but for a new arrival, our second godfather, the proctor from Doctors' Commons. In all outward and visible signs he was the direct antagonist of his co-sponsor. His beard and whiskers were cleanly shaved off ; and although he was not bald, his hair was cropped as close as a pugilist's. Then his cravat was starched so stiffly, and tied so tightly, that he seemed in constant peril of strangulation : his coat fitted him like a skin, exhibiting a wasp-like figure suspiciously suggestive of stays ; and his tight pantaloons were as tight as those famous ones, into which the then Prince of Wales could not get, it was said, without supernatural assistance. In his manners, besides, he was as prim and reserved as our uncle was free and easy, —so that while introducing Mr. Titus Lacy to Mr. Jenkins Rumbold, my father could not help adding to himself, “ alias Lord Chesterfield and Lord Rokeby.”

Another tap at the parlour door, and in stalked our godmother, Miss, or, as she was generally called, Mrs. Pritchard, a spinster as virtuous in reputation as Cato's daughter, and as towering above her sex, for she stood nearly six feet high without her cap. In features she rather countenanced the Rumbold practice, for though her upper lip was decidedly hairy she never shaved ; but in her figure she inclined to the Titus Lacy persuasion, her waist was so very slender—whilst in her notions of the powers and duties of a sponsor, she

differed from both ; mysteriously hinting that by some mystical spiritual connection with the twins, she became more their mother than their mother, who was simply their parent in the flesh, and as such only entitled to wash, feed, and clothe their bodies, or to whip them if naughtiness required. My mother, it may be supposed, did not greatly relish or approve of this doctrine : but the truth is, the unexpected refusal of a female friend, at the eleventh hour, had compelled her to accept the proffered sponsorship of Mrs. Pritchard, in spite of that lady's former declaration, that if she did become a religious surety, she would not be a nominal one, but fulfil her vows and act up to the character : the nature of which character she painted during breakfast in such colours, that, as Uncle Rumbold whispered to my father, " she promised to make a devil of a godmother ! "

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHRISTENING.

MY mother was out in her forebodings. By the time that breakfast was over, the ragged dirty-looking clouds had skulked off, and the tall poplar over the way shot up into a clear blue sky. The narrow strip of river that was visible above the grassy bank glittered like a stream of molten gold ; and the miller's pigeons, a sure sign of settled weather, were flying in lofty circles in the sunny air, casting happy glances, no doubt, at the earth beneath and the heaven above, instead of a steak under and a crust over them.

Even the little shabby boys who kept jumping over the post on the near side of the road, evidently reckoned on " Set Fair," for while many of them were without hat or cap,

and some had no coat, great or small, none had brought umbrellas—few had even water-proof shoes on their feet, much less clogs. A great comfort and relief it was, the said solitary post, to the young expectants, most of whom had to wait a couple of hours more or less, before the glass-coach driven by one man and a nosegay, and drawn by a pair of horses and two peonies, pulled up at the Doctor's door.

The mob in the mean time greatly increased, for a rumour of the bearded godfather, exaggerated, as the tale travelled, into the Grand Turk and the Great Mogul, had flown throughout the parish, so that when the gentlemen—who preferred to walk to the church—issued from the house, it was through an avenue planted with men, women, and children, six deep, and amidst a cheer which only the united Charity Schools, of both sexes, could have composed.

“Huzza!” they shouted,—“Moses for ever!—Huzza! for the Great Mogul!” with other cries which our eccentric uncle would fain have loitered to enjoy and retort, but for the hauling at one arm of Mr. Titus Lacy, who was disgusted with the familiarity of the lower orders, and the dragging on the other side of my father, anxious to be in good time. But the mob was not to be shaken off or left behind any more than the swarming flies that encircle a horse's head. Even so, a buzzing cluster of satellites, male and female, old, middle-aged, and young, kept running, shuffling, trotting, behind, beside, and before the persecuted trio, whom, with a suffocating cloud of dust, they accompanied along the road, through the churchyard, and up the yew-tree avenue to the ancient porch, where an offcast of the curious but less active inhabitants, the lame, the infirm, and the indolent, awaited their arrival.

Thanks to this diversion, the glass-coach followed with a smaller escort, yet not so few but that there was constantly

at each window the bobbing head of some long-legged lad or lass snatching peeps, by running jumps, at my mother and godmother, in full dress, sitting bolt upright on the back seat, and on the front one Mrs. Prideaux and Kezia, both in their best, and each holding a remarkably fine twin in her arms or on her lap. But it was otherwise when the females alighted at the churchyard gate and walked up the avenue, where the minority joined the majority of the mob. Then all the clamour was renewed. "Huzza! Old Close! Long-beard for ever! Huzza for the Great Mogul! Who's lost his Billy Goat?" with other cries more or less jocose, and some hostile ones, indicative, alas! of my poor father's declining popularity.

"Who frightened Sally Warner into fits?" screamed a gawky girl, pointing with her coarse red finger at Kezia.

"And who wanted to 'natomize her?" bawled an old lame woman, shaking her crutch at the Doctor.

"And won't sell opie!" grumbled a surly-looking labourer.

"And prescribed a child to sleep with a sick monkey!" cried a woman with a green shade over her eyes.

"And a parish burying for our poor Sukey!" muttered a tall man with a black hatband on his brown hat.

"And begrudged us our Godsend!" murmured a woman in rusty mourning.

"That is untrue at any rate," said my father to himself, and with the serenity of a good man conscious of the rectitude of his intentions, he stepped smilingly into the church, where the curate was waiting, and the whole party being assembled the baptismal ceremony immediately began. And for a time the service proceeded with due decorum, till about the middle of it, when the clergyman had to demand, "Dost thou in the name of this child renounce the Devil and all his works?"

“I do,” shouted a voice from one of the pews, “and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.”

Every eye instantly turned in the direction of the sound, and at once recognised a well-known face, with its mouth sucking at a forefinger just clapped into it.

It was Catechism Jack—who had been betrayed by a familiar phrase in the service into one of his old responses.

The curate paused, and made a signal to the beadle, who proceeded to eject the unlucky respondent from the church—not without an altercation and a struggle, for Jack pleaded piteously to be allowed to see the christening, and even clung to the pew-door, from which at length he was wrenched, with a crash and a jingle of broken glass, whilst a powerful and disagreeable odour quickly diffused itself throughout the building.

“There goes a whole basketful of physic,” said my father *sotto voce* to himself.

“So much the better,” said Uncle Rumbold, in the same suppressed tone. “Trust to nature.”

“O! I shall die! I shall swoon away!” murmured my mother, showing a strong inclination to go into a fit on the spot, but the hysterical passion was scared away by a stern emphatic whisper from Mrs. Pritchard.

“Don’t faint **HERE!**” and then turning to the curate and pointing with her long bony forefinger to the font, she added aloud: “I object, sir, to that consecrated element being used for reviving!”

The protest, however, was unnecessary, for my mother recovered without any relief from water, save what stood in her own eyes; and order being restored, the ceremony proceeded to the end without interruption, or anything extraordinary—except that at the final exhortation, when every one else was standing up according to the printed direction,

Kezia was observed on her knees, evidently offering up a private extempore prayer—a departure from the orthodox rite which incurred a severe rebuke from Mrs. Pritchard, the moment the curate had pronounced the last syllable of the service.

“Well,” said Kezia, mistaking the drift of a lecture that insisted on a strict observance of the ceremonials, “and if I did kneel down without a cassock——” she meant a hassock.

“But you were putting up a heterodox petition of your own framing,” interrupted the angry spinster.

“Well, I own I was,” answered Kezia; “for the two dear little lively members just admitted into the church. And where’s the harm if it did proceed from my own heart and soul, instead of the Common Prayer Book?—It was religiously composed, and I do hope,” she added, unconsciously adopting the language of her bakery, “I do hope and trust it won’t rise the worse for being home-made.”

Here the controversy dropped; and the usual entries and signatures having been made in the vestry, the family party re-issued from the porch, saluted by the same cries as before, along the yew-tree avenue, and through the churchyard gate, where the majority of the mob dispersed in different directions, so that the Great Mogul and the glass coach were followed by only the idlest of the boys and girls, and of those one or two dropped off in every dozen yards.

The moment my father reached home he hurried into the surgery, and related to Mr. Postle what had occurred in the church with the medicine and Catechism Jack.

“I knew it! Say I told you so!” exclaimed Mr. Postle. “What else could come of entrusting the basket practice to an idiot! But of course, sir, you will discharge him directly.”

“Certainly,” replied my father, his good sense imme-

diately recognising the policy of the measure, but his humanity as promptly suggesting a loophole for evasion. "Yes, he shall be discharged on the spot—that is to say, should the beadle be dismissed, for from what I saw of the scuffle, he had quite as much to do with the downfall of the basket as poor Jack."

By a curious coincidence, whilst Mr. Postle in the surgery was thus advising my father to send away the footboy, Mrs. Pritchard in the parlour was recommending to my mother a month's warning for Kezia, and with a similar result.

"Why, she does forget her own sphere dreadfully," said my mother; "and puts herself very forward in the parlour, and in the nursery, and even in the surgery, besides behaving very improperly and independently, as you say, ma'am, in the church.—Yes, I must and will part with her—at least as soon as I can find another like her, to do the work of three servants—and which I never shall."

CHAPTER XV.

THE SUPPER.

THE clock struck nine.

As settled in domestic conclave, the dinner had been only a plain early meal, at which the two godfathers and the godmother were treated as three of the family, the grand festival in honour of the christening being reserved for the evening; and my mother, attended by Mrs. Pritchard, had just slipped from the drawing-room to inspect the preparations.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" she said, looking along the supper-

table, gay with flowers and lights, and brilliant with plate, of which there was an imposing display.

“Very genteel, indeed I might say elegant,” replied Mrs. Pritchard, fixing her gaze especially on her own epergne. “And those silver branches, too, they are almost as handsome and massy as the Cobleys’, and of the same pattern.”

“Between you and me,” said my mother, “they *are* the Cobleys’; and the tankard, you know, is Mr. Ruffy’s, a present from one of his rich clients.”

“And those silver-gilt salts are the curate’s, I believe,” said Mrs. Pritchard, “a parting gift from his late flock?”

“I believe it was,” said my mother.

“And the dessert-spoons,” inquired the tall spinster, who had made the tour of the table; “all with different crests and initials—pray is that a new fashion?”

“They are the school spoons from Mrs. Trent’s,” said my mother, reddening. “But the knife-rests are our own.”

“And if I may ask,” said Mrs. Pritchard, “how many friends do you expect?”

“Why, all those who have lent plate, of course,” replied my mother—“namely, the Curate, the Cobleys, the Ruffys, Mrs. Trent, and Mrs. Spinks.”

“Who!” exclaimed Mrs. Pritchard, in a tone like the pitch-note of an Indian war-whoop.

“Why, she is rather unpleasant, to be sure,” said my mother; “but that is her salver on the sideboard. Then there’s Colonel Cropper of the Yeomanry, who is to come in his uniform, and the Squire has half promised to drop in—and if it hadn’t been for that nasty little Brazilian Marmot—I ought to have said Marmoset—we might have hoped for the lady at the great house. Then there’s Doctor Shackle, and the Biddles—and the Farrows—and young Fitch, altogether about fourteen or fifteen, besides ourselves.”

“Just a nice number for a party,” said Mrs. Pritchard, “if they all come.”

“They are late, certainly, very late,” replied my mother, her heart sinking like the barometer before a storm, at the mere suggestion of disappointments. “But hark! there is an arrival!” and with the tall spinster, she hurried into the drawing-room to receive her guest. It was the unpleasant Mrs. Spinks. Next came Dr. Shackle; and then, after a long interval, the wit of the neighbourhood, young Mr. Fitch, a personage against whom Uncle Rumbold instantly felt that violent antipathy which he invariably entertained towards a dandy, or, in the language of those days, a buck.

“I’m early, I’m afraid,” said the wit, looking round at the circle of unoccupied chairs.

“Or like myself, a little behind the mode,” said Doctor Shackle. “I forgot that nine o’clock with fashionable people means ten.”

“Then we are to have a fashionable squeeze, I suppose,” said young Fitch, “a rout as they call it—a regular cram?”

“Oh, no!” cried my mother, eagerly, “only a few, a very few friends, quite in a quiet way.”

“About twenty,” said Mrs. Pritchard.

“And there are only six come!” observed the unpleasant Mrs. Spinks, deliberately counting heads.

“Are you sure, my dear,” inquired Mrs. Pritchard, “that your invitations were correctly dated?”

“O, quite!” replied my mother, “for I wrote all the notes myself, and to make sure had them delivered——”

“By Catechism Jack,” said Doctor Shackle.

“No, indeed!” cried my mother, “but by a special messenger.”

“Yes, a charity boy,” said Mrs. Spinks. “And I know

personally that Mrs. Trent had her note ; and so had the curate, and the Biddles."

"It is very odd," muttered my mother ; "the Biddles were always early, and I made sure of Mrs. Trent. She ought indeed to have come to tea. It is very strange—very strange indeed !"

"Pooh ! pooh !" said my father. "By and by they will all come in a lump ; and if they don't we shall only be the snigger."

"And in the meantime," said young Fitch, "the great Bashaw there with the black beard will perhaps amuse us with one of his three *tails* !"

"I am sorry, young man," said Uncle Rumbold, in his gruffest voice, "that I am not a naval Bashaw, or I would amuse you with nine."

At this retort, delivered with the look and growl of an enraged lion, the abashed wit hastily retreated to a chair ; and the little buzz of conversation which had sprung up, was hushed as by a clap of thunder. There was a pause—a long dead pause—and to make it more dreary, the family clock—an old-fashioned machine with stout works and a strong pulse—stood in the hall, so near the drawing-room door, that its tick ! tack ! was distinctly audible, like the distant hammering of endless nails into an eternal coffin. Tick ! tack !—tick ! tack ! Oh ! that monotonous beat,—only broken by a sudden "click !" like the cocking of a gigantic pistol, and which made every one start, as if Death had actually given warning instead of Time ! And then, tick ! tack ! again,—till with an alarming preliminary buzz the clock struck ten. The odious Mrs. Spinks was the first to speak.

"Quite a quakers' meeting !"

But nobody replied to the remark. The wit continued

mute—the tall spinster merely looked wonderingly at my mother, who looked inquiringly at my father, who slightly shrugged his shoulders, and looked up at the ceiling. Mr. Titus Lacy was habitually taciturn, and Doctor Shackle only opened his lips in a sardonic smile.

At last, at a private signal from my mother, my father came and placed his ear to her mouth.

“For heaven’s sake, George, do talk!—and get young Fitch to rattle—why don’t he rattle?”

“The Bashaw killed him,” whispered my father. “But I will do what I can.” And by a desperate rally, he contrived to get up a brief conversation;—but the fates were against him. Doctor Shackle seemed determined to answer in monosyllables; and Uncle Rumbold’s hobby, in spite of a dozen allusions to the light of nature, refused to be trotted out. At last my father’s own spirit began to share in the general depression—the discourse, such as it was, again dropped, and then—tick! tack! tick! tack!—Oh! it was horrible!—the only sound, it seemed, in the wide world. Not a knock—not a ring! No one came—nobody sent an apology.—What on earth could be the matter! The clock struck eleven!

“I believe,” said my mother in a faint voice, “we need not wait any longer.”

“We have waited too long already,” said Uncle Rumbold; “at least I have—and long to satisfy the cravings of nature.”

“Give your arm, then, to Mrs. Pritchard,” said my father—“Mr. Lacy will escort Mrs. Spinks; the Doctor will convey my wife, and I will take care of Fitch; and in this order the company, if company it might be called, marched, melancholy as a walking funeral, into the supper-room—joined, in their progress through the hall, by Mr. Postle.

My poor mother! A demon might have pitied her, as she

took her place, and cast a rueful look at my father at the bottom of the table, flanked on each side by six empty chairs. A fiend would have felt for Kezia, as she stood, death-pale, behind the back of Doctor Shackle, not from any partiality to that sneering personage, but that she might exchange looks and signs of wonder and grief with Mr. Postle, who sat opposite.

“A pity, isn't it?” said Mrs. Spinks across the table to Mrs. Pritchard; “such a beautiful supper!—enough for thirty—and only nine to sit down to it!”

“We must make up in mirth,” said my father, “for our lack of numbers,” and again he made a gallant but vain attempt to revive the spirits of his guests. Besides the common gloom, he had to contend with the animosity of Mr. Postle against Dr. Shackle, and the antipathy of Uncle Rumbold to Mr. Fitch. An unlucky joke hastened the catastrophe. The wit, emboldened by wine, had the temerity again to attack the Bashaw.

“Allow me,” he said, “to recommend a little of this,” at the same time thrusting a frothy spoonful of trifle as near as he dared to the redoubtable beard.

“Sir,” said Uncle Rumbold, snatching up a full glass of ale, “if I consulted the law of retaliation—which is one of the laws of nature—in return for your lather, I should present you with this wash for the face. I say, I should be justified in so doing; but from respect to the present company I shall only drink to your better manners.”

A momentary silence followed this rebuke; and then came a sound which startled all the company, but one, to their feet. As in pile-driving, there is a point beyond which the weight, called the monkey, cannot be screwed up; so there is a certain pitch at which human fortitude gives way,—and my mother's had reached that limit. The agitation, the

mortification, the mental agony she had so long suppressed, had at last overstrained her nerves, and with an involuntary scream, such as is said to come from persons who have swallowed prussic acid, she went into strong hysterics. My father and Kezia instantly hastened to her assistance, but to little effect ; either the fit was so obstinate, or the patient.

“ Nothing serious,” said Dr. Shackle, “ she will soon recover, and in the meantime her best place is bed.”

The hint was taken ; the company immediately broke up ; and whilst my mother was carried up stairs to her chamber, her grand christening party—of two gentlemen and two ladies—unceremoniously departed.

“ Only four out of twenty !” gasped Kezia to Mrs. Priedeaux, whom she had dragged apart into a corner of the bedroom, “ only four out of twenty !—What, in mercy’s name, can it all mean !”

“ The meaning is plain enough,” answered the genteel nurse, in her calm sweet voice,—“ your master is a ruined man.”

CHAPTER XVI.

A MYSTERY.

OUR family was in bed. My mother had sobbed herself to sleep ; my father lay dreaming by her side ; the twin infants were in their cradle ; the whole house was quiet, excepting only the ticking of the old clock in the hall, the chirping of the cricket in the kitchen, and a dull intermitting sound from one of the upper bed-rooms, as if from somebody imitating through his nose the croaking of a frog in the fens.

The clock had struck one, and was about to strike again, when the door of the back attic opened, and Kezia stepping forth in her night clothes, and without any candle, walked deliberately down the stairs to the door of the room in the first floor appropriated to the nursery. Here for a moment she paused, the attraction within having overcome or diverted her original impulse ; but her true errand speedily recurred to her, and descending the other flight, she crossed the hall, and entered the surgery, to the extreme alarm and astonishment of the two persons who were conversing therein.

The one was a female in a flannel wrapper, tied with green ribbon, and occupying the wooden arm-chair devoted to the accommodation of patients or impatiently awaiting the making up of their prescriptions : the other, a strange man, with his hat on, was seated on the counter, whence, with his elbow resting on his knees, he stooped down towards his companion, his face close to hers, in earnest communion. At a glance he was what was called in the slang of those days a Blood or Buck ; in the cant of our own times, a Swell. Cigars were not yet in vogue ; or, to a certainty, he would have had one between his lips : but he wore his beaver with the rakish jaunty air still affected by gentlemen, and journeymen who conceive themselves superior in acuteness, spirit, and an extensive knowledge of life, to the rest of the world. His clothes were expensive and fashionable. Round his throat he wore a very fine white cravat, so ample that his neck seemed poulticed, the ends being tied in a large ostentatious bow. His coat was blue, with fancy gilt buttons, a deep turned-down collar, and lappels that for size might have served for ears to a Newfoundland dog. His waistcoat, of buff or primrose colour, was double-breasted, long in the waist, and flapped, with a black ribbon crossing it from the left shoulder to the gold-mounted quizzing-glass in the left-

hand pocket. His lower limbs were clad in grey stocking pantaloons, tight as skin, and cased up to the well-made calf in Hessian boots, but somewhat deficient in polish, and minus one tassel. His coat, too, had the fluffy tumbled appearance of having occasionally taken its own nap with its master's on a feather-bed, or one of flock; his waistcoat was ill-washed; his pantaloons were soiled in sundry parts, and especially at the knees; and his cravat, besides its dingy hue, was wrinkled and flaccid. Altogether, there was as much of the sloven as of the beau in his costume—in his physiognomy, a corresponding mixture of the gentleman and the reprobate. His face was handsome; but had the faded, jaded look consequent on habitual debauchery. His large dark eyes were dry and bloodshot, with crowfoot wrinkles at the corners; and under each organ a flabby bag, as if for secreting the tears to be shed in the maudlin stage of intoxication. His cheeks were of a dull white, blotched with yellow and red, that deepened in his prominent nose to a crimson. His lips were parched and cracked; his chin was neutral-tinted by a bluish beard of two days' growth; and his long black hair and whiskers were foul and matted. Smart and slovenly; well featured, but with a sinister expression; dashing, but dirty; unbrushed, unwashed, uncombed, unshorn, he looked the rake, with a strong spice of the ruffian, whose attribute, a thick knotted bludgeon, lay handy beside him on the counter. On the other side, stood something of indefinite shape tied up in a cotton shawl; and near the bundle, the nursery rushlight, and an empty rummer, with a silver spoon in it. There could hardly be a greater contrast than between the female in the arm-chair and her nocturnal visitor; and yet the time, the scene, and the manner of their tête-à-tête, inferred the most confidential and familiar intercourse. Was it possible that the repulsive,

dissolute, villainous-looking man on the counter, was anything near or dear to the genteel, sweet-spoken, well-bred, lady-like Mrs. Prideaux ?

To confirm and justify an affirmative answer, certain chronological characteristics must be taken into consideration. In these, our own times, so remarkable for a refined taste in art and literature, in manners and morals, the Court Calendar possesses more attractions for females than the Newgate one. There is no longer a rage for genteel highwaymen or eminent housebreakers. As pets, Brazilian monkeys are preferred to malefactors, and parrots to jail birds. Our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters no longer admire the chivalrous courage of a horse-pad, whose utmost deed of daring—the presentment of a loaded pistol at an unarmed man—has been outdone by every light or heavy dragoon who has seen service. They no longer fall in love with a Knight of Roads for robbing them like a gentleman, and paying compliments to their beauty, and calming their feminine fears, at the cost of their purses, watches, brooches, bracelets, and finger-rings and ear-rings. A vulgar burglar, renowned for breaking into houses and out of prisons, is hardly reckoned on a par with the hero of successful sieges and sorties ; or an obdurate ruffian who goes to the gallows with a bold face as a rival of the gallant veteran who leads a forlorn hope. A common murderer is no longer a lady-killer to boot ; nor does a dashing pickpocket triumph in female preference over a plain honest man “innocent of stealing silver spoons.” But it was otherwise formerly ; when, in the current phrase, a daring felon became a darling fellow, and a precious rascal a charming rogue. It was then quite usual for ladies of rank and breeding, of family and fortune, to visit condemned criminals in Newgate—entwining with fair and noble arms the neck destined to an ignominious

rope,—beseeking keepsake locks from the head soon to be shrouded in an infamous night-cap; and hanging with aristocratical fondness on a plebeian body about to swing shamefully from Tyburn Tree.

Thus, as worn-out fashions descend, like cast-off clothes, from mistress to maid, the example set by a lady of quality in the time of the First George might very well be followed by a nurse in the reign of George the Third. However, robber or rake, there was the strange man, admitted, in the middle of the night, to a mysterious interview in the surgery, the door of which opened, round the corner of the house, into a lane.

At the entrance of Kezia the parties both started, and the man would have sprung up and spoken but for the warning of the nurse, who raised one hand with its fore-finger on her lips, whilst she held him down with the other. In truth, the figure of the housemaid in its white garments, obscurely seen by the dim gleam of the rushlight, was quite spectral enough to shake the courage of a dissolute man, with nerves unsettled by drink. His frame trembled, his face turned ashen pale, and his teeth chattered as he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper—

“A stiff-un walking—by G—d!”

The nurse with a dissenting shake of the head and her lips indicating a silent “No!” repeated her warning gesture to her companion, who, open-mouthed but breathless, watched with straining eyes every movement of the apparition. In the meantime Kezia, walking behind the counter, took her usual station beside the desk, but in silence, as if awaiting the leisure of her confidential adviser in all difficulties, Mr. Postle.

“All safe!” said the nurse in a very low but distinct whisper: “she’s sleep-walking!”

The man, as if suddenly relieved of a pectoral spasm, immediately drew his breath in a long deep sigh, and set himself intensely to watch and listen to the sayings and doings of the somnambulist, who at length spoke.

“This is a dreadful mysterious business, Mr. Postle. Twenty invited, and only four to come! What can it all mean?” and she paused for a reply, which having dreamed, she resumed:—

“No, the night was not bad enough for that. Besides, the Cobleys have their own carriage, and so has the Colonel and the Squire, who would have brought the Curate along with him. Then the Biddles have the mule cart, and the Ruffys always hire a po-shay. As for Mrs. Trent and the rest, they don’t mind wind and rain, but lap up and visit in all weathers. No,—it couldn’t be that! And such a beautiful supper too! And such a splendid turkey—with a giver under one wing, and a lizard under the other—I should say quite the reverse. And then the sweets! I could have cried into hysterics myself, to see all the nice jellies, and creams, and custards, and nobody to eat them, for they *was* nice—if they did taste a little of the shop, as that odious Doctor Shackle said, meaning, I suppose, the almond flavour you was so kind as to oblige me with out of the surgery.”

The imaginary Mr. Postle here probably vented an oath, for which she checked him.

“Yes, he certainly is malicious—but don’t imprecate. It’s profane, and forbid in Scripture. Swear not at all—no, not even at an enemy or a buzzum friend. To be sure, the Doctor was very sneering and provoking, and especially about the wine being good enough to need no bush except out of our own garden. I could have found in my heart to drop a blank mangle on his medical head! And that foolish young Fitch, to affront Mr. Uncle Rumbold to his very beard, in-

stead of having a perfect haw of it, as any one would in their senses, it makes him look so like a conjurer. And then that abominable Mrs. Spinks as wouldn't let the thing drop, but kept counting the empty chairs and saying that every one had a banker's ghost in it—Banko's I should say—I declare she made the hair stand upright on my very head. Though for that matter, I would almost as soon have seen a ghost in every seat, and Scratching Fanny among them, rather than nobody at all! I never knew such a case afore—never, except once,—and that was at my first place.”

The ideal assistant of course asked for the story.

“Why, the way was this. Master had come home with a prodigious wealth of money from foreign parts, and on setting up his establishment in London, determined to give a very grand party, by way of housewarming, to his neighbours. Well, the night came, with the rooms chalked for dancing, and all lighted up with wax candles and cut-glass chandeliers, and the most elegant supper set out, only for seventy people instead of twenty,—but nobody came. Nine o'clock, ten, eleven,—the same as at our own unfortunate regalia, but not a soul—not a knock or a ring, except the cook's cousin, the footman's sister, and the housemaid's brother and uncle—at least not till about twelve, when a single gentleman asked to speak with master in private, and then out it all came, for we listened at the study-door. Some spiteful person, in revenge for not being invited, had ferreted out master's secret history, and had whispered about in unanimous letters that he were a returned convert—I should have said convict—from Botany Bay. He had been there for some errors in youth, but had reformed himself, and got rich by opulence, like Dick Whittington, and so got leave to come home again. But of course that don't apply to us, whom have never been arranged in court or transported, though fought as shy of

by society as if we had. What is your own notion of it, Mr. Postle?"

A long silence ensued, of which the nurse took advantage to whisper to her companion, whom she beckoned with her finger, and then pointed to the door. "She must not wake and see you. Come; but move cautiously—as quiet as death."

"Is this all?" asked the man in a low grumble, and with a motion of his head towards the bundle.

"It must serve for this turn," whispered the nurse. "Quick! and away!"

The fellow instantly slid gently down from the counter and clutched the bundle, whilst the nurse turned down the rushlight in the socket. Then there was a slight rustle, with the sound of two or three hasty kisses. The next moment the outer door was partially opened—a cool gust of air came inwards, as the dark figure of the man passed outwards—the door slowly closed again, and the fastenings were replaced with less noise than is made by a mouse. The nurse then groped to the counter, where she found her candlestick and the empty rummer, but not the spoon, a loss she instantly comprehended—the bundle had not quite served for the turn—but her equanimity was undisturbed; and cautiously feeling her way out of the surgery, she crept, silent as a spirit, up the stairs to the nursery, leaving Kezia to her dreaming conference with Mr. Postle.

"Yes," she said, "there is some dreadful misfortune hanging over us, no doubt. My poor dear master! Mrs. Prideaux foretells he is a ruined man. But oh! Mr. Postle!"—and the tears oozed from her eyelids while she clasped her hands in earnest appeal to him—"whatever comes of it, don't let nothing tempt us two to leave and better ourselves, and forsake them, whose bread we eat, in their adversity.

For my part, I'm ready and willing to take a solemn religious oath on my bended knees"—and she suited the action to the word—"and trust you will do the same ; never, never, never to give warning, nor take it neither, but to stand by the family and do for it to my last grasp,—namely, my poor dear master and missis, and them two lovely, helpless, innocent, twin babes !”

What promise the imaginary Mr. Postle made, and whether with the prescribed ceremony, is unknown ; but it gave the liveliest satisfaction to the devoted maid of all work. The expression of her features was indeed invisible in the dark to human ken ; but heaven, with its starry eyes, beheld her face shining with joy and gratitude.

“The Lord bless you, dear, dear Mr. Postle, for that comfort,” she said, rising from her knees, and wiping her eyes with the sleeve of her only garment. “It's exactly my own feeling and sentiments. Yes, if I was courted at this very moment by twenty prostrated lovers at my feet, with bags of gould in one hand, and wows of constancy in the other, I wouldn't change my state, but refuse them all, and live single for the sake of the family—and which reminds me it's eight o'clock, and the breakfast to make.”

So saying, led by that mysterious guidance which directs the somnambulist—whether some supernatural *clairvoyance*, or more probably an internal geographical scheme, corresponding with the external locality, and producing an exquisite consciousness by touch, independent of sight, of long familiar distances and habitual turns and windings—however, without blunder or collision, the sleeping Kezia passed hastily from the surgery, through the hall, into her kitchen, to prepare the morning meal to which she had referred. But here the guiding faculty was at fault. Besides the old furniture and utensils, on every article of which she could, blindfolded,

have laid her hand, the floor was occupied by sundry novel and strange contrivances for holding the superabundant relics of the festival overnight. Against one of these extempore dressers she walked, with a force and a clatter that startled her wide awake, with one hand in a jelly, and her nose seemingly testing the sweetness of a boiled ham. The darkness, the cold, her undress, and the remembrance of former nocturnal excursions, instantly suggested the truth; her mind, however, retaining no trace of her recent dream; so, after a single exclamation of surprise, she quietly groped for the tinder-box, lighted a spare candle, and yawning and shivering, crept up stairs to the back garret, to get a brief rest, before the very early hour at which she regularly resumed the multifarious labours of her industrious days.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CLUE.

IN the surgery—so lately the scene of a double mystery, of a clandestine midnight meeting and unconscious somnambulism—of treacherous heartless vigilance and honest devotion faithful even in sleep—at his old desk stood Mr. Postle, apparently studying some medical work, but in reality thinking over the supper of the night before and puzzling himself to account for the absence of the guests. But his meditations were in vain: to use one of his own favourite illustrations, he might as well have tried to make a nosegay with Flowers of Sulphur.

Meanwhile, in looking at his old prompters, along the wall from shelf to shelf, with all the parade of nice-looking nastiness arranged thereon in rows of glass bottles and white jars,

marked with cabalistical signs—his eye detected one receptacle breaking the uniformity of the series by being turned with its label to the wall. But he did not need to see the gilt scroll to know its inscription—"Tinct. Opii."

"Confound that idiot!" he muttered. "He will poison himself yet with his sweet tooth and his tastings. I can trace the mark of his wet finger on the bottles and drawers like the track of a snail. Only yesterday I had to teach him that Ferrum Tart. does not stand for pastry, nor Cerat. Plumb. for almonds and raisins—and now he has been at the laudanum!"

For once, however, Catechism Jack was mistakenly accused. No finger of his, wet or dry, had approached the dangerous narcotic. Another meddler, rather sharp than dull of intellect, had removed the stopper for a less innocent purpose than to test the flavour of the tincture. The dear Twins owed their very sound sleep in the night to a minute dose from that displaced bottle.

The assistant carefully rectified its position, and returning to his desk began, with pen and ink, to sketch—another of his habits—on the quire of blotting-paper before him, his designs being generally of the anatomical class, outlines of bones, muscles, and organs, rarely deviating into landscape or rather into scraps of foliage, and even then what was meant for a tree resembled rather a drawing of the Vena Porta or Vena Cava, with its branching veins. This time, however, his subject was the human face, not dissected, but in its natural state; and as very commonly happens to artists, fine or unfine, the features took the form and expression of a countenance remotely present to his thoughts, so that without any premeditated portraiture, he had just achieved a rather striking but ugly likeness of Doctor Shackle, when a shadow fell across the paper, and looking

up, he beheld the original of the picture standing right before him.

The Doctor was accompanied by a Mr. Hix, a parish official, and a very active one—but especially notable for a double propensity to turn private business into public, and public business into private—at once an indefatigable meddler in, and advertiser of, the personal concerns of his neighbours, and the uniform advocate of select vestries, secret committees, private reports, sealed books, suppressed accounts, the exclusion of reporters, and closed doors. Indeed, so far did he carry this love of mystery that, when certain parochial notices were to be posted, according to law, for the benefit of the community at large, he was said to have seriously recommended their being pasted up with their printed sides to the wall.

The ostensible errand of Doctor Shackle was merely to ask, in a friendly way, after the heads of the family, and how they had passed the night after the trying disappointments they had endured: an inquiry urged with such seeming interest, that in the absence of any authentic bulletin, Mr. Postle deemed it expedient to fetch my father himself to reply personally to the application.

His back was no sooner turned, than Shackle, reaching his long arm over the low rail in front of the desk, snatched up something which he exhibited to his companion—namely, a fragment of French grey cloth in one hand, and in the open palm of the other two silver-washed nails. The pantomime that followed was silent, but expressive.

“*Do you see these, and understand what they mean?*” asked the fixed significant look of the Doctor, as plainly as in words.

“*I do,*” replied the intelligent nod of Mr. Hix.

The Doctor raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders. "*Could there be a clearer case?*"

The Churchwarden shook his head and made a grimace.—"*Nor a more ugly business.*"

"I'm sorry for it—very!" said Shackle, hastily replacing the cloth and nails on the desk, and then suddenly turning his back on them, and fixing his eyes on a large glass jar full of snow-white magnesian bricks, as if projecting how to build with them some castle in the air. So intensely, indeed, was he occupied with this ideal fabric, as not to be aware of the entrance of my father, till the latter came close up to him, and shook him cordially by the hand. Then he awoke, and how delighted he was, or said he was, to find my father not merely as well but better than could have been expected, after the late untoward events—a series of disappointments borne, he must say, with an equanimity worthy of the palmy days of the Stoic Philosophy.

"Had it been my own case," said Shackle, "to say nothing of the dead convivial failure, yet to meet with such a slight from the whole neighbourhood, as it were—the cut wholesale as well as direct—I really think, with my own more sensitive, irritable temperament, I should either have gone there"—and he pointed to the laudanum bottle—"for oblivion, or there"—and he indicated another drug—"for annihilation."

"No, no," said my father, "you know better. And besides, there was no great stoicism needed in the matter. A medical man, and a Christian, who had walked the hospitals and the poor-house, and seen human misery and anguish in all their complicated shapes, and who could not bear such a petty mishap—provoking as I confess it was—would be a disgrace to his profession and his religion. As

to the absence of our friends, no doubt it will be accounted for."

"No doubt," said Doctor Shackle.

"For the rest," continued my father, "the worst we are threatened with is to be cloyed with sweets for a few days to come, or surfeited with cold victuals; evils for which between young folks and poor ones, we may easily find a remedy."

"I am glad to find you so well armed against trouble," said Doctor Shackle; "and wish I had a little of your philosophy. I have equal need of it—for we are likely to be mutually involved in a very disagreeable business."

"A parochial, and perhaps a public business," said Mr. Hix. My father looked inquiringly from one speaker to another.

"The short of the matter is this," said Doctor Shackle. "You have heard, of course, of the pauper family, who gave their dead child that ridiculous funeral?"

"The Hobbeses," said Mr. Hix. "Indulged themselves with a genteel burial—and on our books for three shillings a week!"

"Yes, inconsistent enough," said my father. "I was accidentally an eye-witness of the procession."

"Well," said Shackle, "the grave was robbed the other night, and the child's body stolen. The whole village is in a ferment about it—the poor especially—the paupers outrageous, and the Hobbeses rampant."

"Poor things," said my father.

"Yes, poor enough," said Shackle; wilfully wresting my father's phrase of commiseration into another sense.

"And idle enough, and troublesome enough, and more than enough," added Mr. Hix.

"And scandalous enough," said Shackle, "to say that

their beggarly corpses are less cared for than the carcasses of brute beasts."

"The coarse expression," said my father, "of a strong but natural prejudice."

"Oh, quite natural," sneered Doctor Shackle; "and quite harmless, if their prejudices went no farther. But, as human corpses are not eaten, except by ghouls, hyænas, and beasts of prey, of which there are none in this blessed Lincolnshire, the natural inference is that graves are robbed, and bodies snatched for other than pantry purposes. In short, in their own low language, that the poor are only poked into pit-holes, to be hoked up agin, and cut and hacked about like dog's meat, by raw 'prentices and Saw-boneses,—and heaven knows what vulgar libels besides."

"Well, and what then?" asked my father. "As a surgeon, *you* are not going, I presume, to deny the practices of the resurrectionists, or the uses to which the articles they deal in are applied?"

"Not I," said Shackle. "The thing is too notorious; and, as you say, too surgical; though I never had, directly, a finger in any cold meat pie of the kind. Probably you have. However, the popular suspicion necessarily falls on the medical men of the place; under which category we share the odium between us: at least, *pro tempore*; for, as regards myself, as we doctors say, I shall very soon remove all that; and hope you are in as good case."

"Most decidedly," said my father.

"So much the better," said Shackle. "Your official connection with the poor, as parish doctor, makes your exculpation of even more importance than my own."

"There must be a parochial inquiry!" exclaimed Mr. Hix.

"Of course, with closed doors," said Shackle; unable to

resist a sarcasm, even on a friend and ally—a propensity that explained his otherwise unaccountable influence in a place where so few persons liked, but so many feared him.

“In fact,” he continued, “the wretches do not scruple to say that the anatomising of their remains is winked at by the workhouse authorities.”

“And if we did,” cried Mr. Hix, “every ounce of flesh on their bones was composed of parish victuals. There isn’t a pauper dies, man, woman, or child, but in equity we have a mortgage, as I may say, on their bodies.”

“That’s undeniable,” said Shackle. “However, the paupers are all up in arms, and declare openly that they won’t work; and even that they won’t die, unless assured of decent and safe interment.”

“Won’t die!” exclaimed Mr. Hix.

“So they say,” answered Shackle.

“Won’t die!” repeated the churchwarden. “That must be looked to.”

My father, who had been lost in thought, here awoke from his reverie, and addressed himself to Shackle.

“Yes, Doctor, you are right. This is a very disagreeable business, and a very serious one, at least for me.”

“And for the parish too,” said Mr. Hix, “to have such a slur on it.”

“Especially,” said Shackle, “as it is not a matter that can be shelved, or cushioned, or hushed up.”

“And ought not to be,” said my father, “must not! Last night’s mystery is now solved. I am socially excommunicated. How or why, I know not,—but a suspicion has fallen upon me, which I must remove, or give up my practice, and quit the neighbourhood. A public inquiry will be necessary for my own sake.”

“And for mine too,” said Shackle.

“For all our sakes!” cried Mr. Hix. “The excitement of the lower orders will be sure to fall first on the authorities—the churchwardens and overseers. The least I expect is, to be hung or burnt in effigy, or to have my windows smashed!”

My father mechanically looked up over the surgery-door at the yellow glass globe, so often broken; and true to his misgivings, if not actually smashed, it was starred in all directions by some missile that had struck it in the centre. He pointed it out to his visitors.

“There is a token of the popular feeling—the local current that has set in against me. For some time past I have fancied myself treated with coldness and aversion by the humbler class of the inhabitants; but a clear conscience and my goodwill towards them repelled the supposition. Now, however, there is a direct imputation on me which I must at once rebut, or be a ruined man.”

“The Board sits this morning,” suggested Mr. Hix.

“In that case,” said my father, “I will at once go before it, and clear my character. I need not say, I hope, that I am altogether innocent in the matter—as innocent as those leeches,” and he pointed to the bottle—“of the blood of Julius Cæsar.”

“I am truly happy to hear you say so,” cried Shackle, seizing and squeezing my father’s hand; “and shall be more happy to hear you prove it.”

The churchwarden expressed a similar wish, but instead of shaking hands, contented himself with a stiff bow, externally taking a simple leave of my father, but internally bidding good-bye to him, though somewhat precociously, as the parish doctor. The real functionary, in his eyes, was the medical gentleman with whom he walked off arm in arm.

“A clue at last!” cried my father to Mr. Postle, whose

entrance into the surgery was synchronous with the exit of Doctor Shackle—a hint that Animal Magnetism ought properly to have two poles,—of repulsive Antipathy as well as of sympathetic Attraction. “A clue at last! We have found out the disease!” And my father imparted to his assistant the substance of the information he had just obtained.

“Say I told you so!” cried the assistant; an exclamation he would have made, however, if just informed of a shower of addled brains from the moon. “And that, then, is why we were sent last night to Coventry—to sup by ourselves! Not that they would have touched the supper if they had come—they would have fancied human brains in the blanc mange, and coagulated blood in the currant jelly. Yes—for the future we are ghouls, vampires, carrion vultures—and nobody will come near us. There is nothing that unscientific people are so squeamish about as violating graves and desecrating their remains—though why the suspicion should fall on us, more than on Doctor Shackle, he knows best. If any one wants a refresher in anatomy, he does. And what, sir, do you mean to do?”

“Confront the report,” said my father. “Go before the Board and demand an inquiry. Is not that always the best course—to take the bull by the horns?”

“Perhaps so—except you’re run at by a polled cow,” answered Mr. Postle. “For my part I’d as soon go at once at Farmer Noake’s bull with a board over his eyes, with ‘beware’ upon it. It’s the Board, or a parcel of it, that wants to get you out, and have Shackle in your place.”

“I don’t—I can’t—I won’t believe it!” cried my father.

“As you please,” said Mr. Postle. “If *they* don’t, the paupers will, which comes to the same thing. I know them well: when the poor once catch a prejudice in their heads, it’s as obstinate as ringworm. I lost my own practice by it

when I was a doctor on my own account. My patients were mostly provincials of the lower and middle class, but all brutally ignorant, and of course superstitious, and devout believers in witchcraft. And how do you think I lost them? By a joke,—sir, a mere joke—through telling a credulous old woman,—ass as I was!—that I could show her *Mindererus's Spirit*, dancing with *Saint Vitus*, round *Saint Anthony's Fire!*”

“But surely a jest,” said my father, “might have been explained.”

“Not it,” said Mr. Postle. “To the vulgar, a doctor with his hieroglyphics on his bottles, and his Latin, is already half a conjuror, and I had made myself a necromancer outright. There was no revoking it. You may make an ignorant stomach give up its poison, but an ignorant faith never gives up a legend it has once swallowed.”

“I should like to hear your definition of an ignorant stomach,” said my father, straying, as he was too apt, from serious matters after a whim.

“We are likely to know practically,” answered the assistant, in a gloomy tone, “if ignorance and emptiness be synonymous, as they are in the head; for I don't suppose, as the practice goes, that the Board will board us.”

“That's true,” said my father. “I must go to the work-house.” And with a smile at the unintentional equivoque, he put on his hat, and set out for the parochial meeting.

Had he delayed a minute longer, he would have been startled and stopped by a sound ringing in his own house from hall to attic,—that sudden shrill cry which only comes from a female in distress, anguish, or alarm,—and electrifies the hearer like a flash of lightning turned from visible into audible. As it flew first from the kitchen to the surgery close at hand, Mr. Postle was soonest at the spot, where,

close to the ironing-board, the moveable supports of which she had knocked away in her fall, lay Kezia in a strong hysterical fit, in the middle of a chaos of crockery, glasses, decanters, knives, forks, tongue, cold fowls, tarts, salad, cakes, and jellies,—amidst which she kicked and struggled like a passenger desperately swimming, or trying to swim, from the wreck of some well-provisioned steamer.

Having dashed into her face the first water at hand, the assistant stepped back into the surgery for the *Sal. Vol.* or *Liq. Vol. C. C.*, but with so much professional deliberation—knowing such fits may be safely left to run their course—that when he returned to the kitchen, he found the patient propped up against the wall, in a sitting posture, between Mrs. Prideaux and Uncle Rumbold, the first loosening the sufferer's dress, and the last, having lent a hand in her removal, gazing calmly on, very like a bearded Turk confiding in Predestination, and still more like himself “trusting to Nature.” Mr. Postle nevertheless plied the stimulants.

“One more application of the restoratives,” said Mrs. Prideaux, “and she will revive. There!—she is resuming her senses.”

As she spoke, the colour began to return to the claret-bald cheeks of Kezia, who, after a gasp or two, opened her eyes—sneezed—stared at each person in turn,—then suddenly turned pale again—closed her eyes—clasped her hands wildly together—and shrieking “the plate! the plate!” relapsed into insensibility.

The restorative process was again applied, and with success. The maid-of-all-work, after a short struggle, sprang up, as if galvanised, on her feet; and amidst gulps, sobs, broken ejaculations, and distracted gestures, informed her audience by bits and snatches that “there had been thieves in the house,—and Mr. Ruffy's silver tankard—and the Reverend

Curate's silver-gilt salts—and all Mrs. Trent's school spoons—were missing!”

Poor faithful, devoted Kezia! No hand had she in that felonious abstraction; and yet, for all her innocence, how fearfully within the range of suspicion, whilst Guilt stood by in comparative safety, without a tremor in her silvery voice, or a faltering in her correct carriage! Had some wakeful ear, startled by the unseasonable issuing of the housemaid from her bedroom, heard her descending the stairs, marked her passage from hall to surgery, from surgery to kitchen, and recognised, by listening, her voice in conversation though but with a shadow, and then her stealthy retreat before dawn to her own attic, she was in all human probability a lost, undone, ruined creature. Like other Somnambulists, who, in their nocturnal, unconscious wanderings, step, dream-led, on the narrow window-sill or perilous parapet, she had walked to the very verge of a moral precipice—would she keep her footing or fall?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PARISH BOARD.

It was a sad journey, though a short one, for my father, from his home to the Workhouse. At every step he was painfully reminded of his position. In return for the ready smile and friendly greeting for everybody he met, he received only cold looks, and sullen or fierce replies. The very children, with whom he had been so popular, shrank from him inspired by the common prejudice: little heads, that used to nod to him, were immoveable on their shoulders; little faces, that used to brighten at his approach, were frowning their

aversion ; not a few of the youngsters ran indoors as from the minister of a new Herod. And yet so innocent was he of the revolting act attributed to him, that he had yet to learn particulars which were known to almost every man, woman, and child in the place—that the grave of the little Hobbes had been re-opened ; the removed earth being placed, as the practice was in such operations, in a sheet, so that the mould might all be returned to its place without leaving a vestige to tell the tale of disturbance ; but the resurrectionists had been alarmed at their work, and had decamped with the corpse, leaving the clay in the sheet, at one side of the yawning void, and the shattered coffin on the other.

To add to this discomfort, when my father arrived at the Workhouse, a number of applicants for out-door relief were in waiting at the gate ; a squalid group, including the ungrateful Mrs. Hopkins, the bitter Mrs. Pegge, with her green shade, and the old deaf cripple, with her crutch and her ear-trumpet. As several of these persons were his patients, he inquired as usual after their complaints ; but his questions were met by a dogged silence, or rude answers ; whilst the three shrews were loud in their revilings, the deaf woman screaming high above the rest.

“ Yes, ax em, do, poor things ! when they mean to go to the pit-hole. And much rest they’ll get in it,—just earthed over at night, and dug out again afore morning ; that’s all we enjoy of our narrow homes ! Well, you’ve snatched one at any rate—poor Sukey Hobbes ! Aye, you may shake your head—you didn’t do it,—not you,—nor she isn’t you know where, with her bones surgically picked into a skeleton, to stand behind a green curtain in a glass case. But, mark my words,—she’ll harnt ye some day ! She’ll harnt ye in her little shrowd ! ”

My father rang the bell : the sliding panel in the gate

moved aside ; and a hard red face looked through the grating ; but the porter still delayed to withdraw the bolt. He was an officer whose duty it was to admit rags and tatters, and as a character was being torn to shreds outside, he resolved to afford time for the operation. So the vituperation went on.

“ Yes, go in to the Board, and hush and huddle it up among ye ! It was not body-snatching—oh no—poor paupers have not bodies, but only carcasses like brute beasts, so it wasn't body-snatching at all ! And if it was, who cares for the remains of the like of us ? If we make away with ourselves, we're mangled and mammoked with stakes through our corpses ; and if we die nateral, we're cut up like Haggerty and Holloway ! Who did poor Sukey kill that she's to be made a 'natomy ?—But murderers is dissected, and so is paupers ! ”

The gate here opened ; and my father entered, bestowing on the porter a gentle rebuke, that was received with a sneer, and revenged by leaving the panel open, so that as the Doctor crossed the yard he received through the grating a parting salute.

“ Take care of John Hobbes, that's all. If *he* comes nigh your body, he'll snatch it alive ! ”

With these sounds ringing in his ears, my father entered the Workhouse ; not unmarked by sundry dingy paupers, who were in waiting as messengers, and nodded and winked to each other, but omitted the customary tokens of respect as he passed them in the passage. Not a creature seemed to recognise him but the master's dog.

My father, for all his virtues, was not a favourite with the Board. In those days of general prosperity, and under the Old Poor Law, the expenditure for the maintenance of paupers was in many parishes very liberal, in some lavish ;

yet there were examples even then of a harsher spirit and sterner system ; and in certain localities, the sole aim of the parochial authorities was to reduce the poor and their rates to the lowest possible pitch. In our own district especially, the management of the Workhouse had gradually fallen into the hands of rigid utilitarians and strict economists, who were continually seeking to discover that minimum of support on which human life can subsist ; and their rules, by augmenting labour and diminishing food, had already brought their Work Tables and Dining Tables to proportions that would have astonished an upholsterer.

My father, from natural disposition, was ill-adapted to second such views ; and was, in the opinion of the authorities, an expensive doctor : he was too apt to prescribe wine and a generous diet for very reduced patients ; and to recommend extra comforts in clothing, and improvements in lodging the poor. Moreover, his evidence at inquests on defunct paupers was not always exactly what could have been wished ; and in one case had tended directly to induce a verdict of "Died from Neglect." He was therefore no favourite with the Board, who, as Postle suspected, had secretly encouraged the establishment of a rival doctor, in whose private opinion the milk of human kindness, to say nothing of the cream of it, was a luxury to be reserved for the wealthy classes. With the poor, on the other hand, my father ought to have been popular : but his good intentions towards them were nullified by orders that were disobeyed, and recommendations that were disregarded : he was supposed, by some, to drink the wine that did not follow his prescription, and when it did, that *he* changed the Port into Elder, and the Sherry into Raisin. Thus he was associated with all sins of omission and commission ; and as one of the Parochial Body, shared in the general odium that attached

to it. His kind manners indeed, his prompt attendance, tender treatment, and private charity, as far as his very limited means allowed, might have procured an exemption in his favour ; but his decided opposition to the local and growing habit of opium taking, by the lower classes, had excited a discontent, sedulously fostered by the opposite practice and secret machinations of Shackle, into a dislike, which the imputed outrage in the churchyard had aggravated to abhorrence. And so—a Martyr Elect—my father entered the Board-room, and placed himself in one of the vacant seats at its long table.

The senior churchwarden, Mr. Peckover, was in the chair ; supported on his right by Mr. Hix, who had lost no time in circulating the story of his visit to the Doctor's surgery, with the discovery of the scraps of French-grey cloth and the silver-washed nails—but ending with a recommendation to bury the matter in their own bosoms. There were present besides, Mr. Bearcroft the overseer, Mr. Poplitt the assistant overseer, Mr. Tally the vestry clerk, and a few more official gentlemen. The greater part of the business of the meeting had been already disposed of : several tenders had been accepted ; a complaint against the Master and Matron, and another against the Porter, had been heard and dismissed ; a retrenchment in the Dietary had been agreed to ; and the last question, the better punishment of the refractory paupers, was under discussion. Bread and water and solitary confinement were soon decided on ; and then came a pause. The Boardmen looked at each other, and at the Doctor, and then with one accord at the Chairman ; who rose, coughed, stammered, and proceeded to lay before them a very disagreeable business—the desecration of the churchyard, the violation of a grave, and the abstraction of a corpse—according to popular rumour—by their own medical officer. The

gentlemen would no doubt recollect the remarkable funeral bestowed by one John Hobbes, a pauper on the parish books, on his deceased child, who was interred in an elegant coffin, covered with French-grey cloth, and richly ornamented with silver nails? It was her grave that had been disturbed; and her body which had been stolen for anatomical purposes. He thought, with his friend on the right, such a slur ought not to rest on the parish and its officers. The Doctor himself, he understood, wished for an immediate inquiry. It would have been more regular, no doubt, to have given notice, but as he was present for the purpose, the Board would perhaps dispense with the form, and hear what he had to say on the subject.

This course being assented to, my father rose, promptly yet embarrassed, for the old difficulty of proving a negative reduced his eloquence to little more than an assertion.

“All I can say is, gentlemen, that I am an innocent man. As for any guilty knowledge of this matter, it was only this very morning—within an hour ago—that I knew of any grave being robbed, or any body stolen; my informants being Mr. Hix, there, and Doctor Shackle.”

“Yet it was pretty widely known last night, before your christening supper,” observed Mr. Poplitt, who had been one of the uninvited.

“The surer proof of my having nothing to do with it,” replied my father; “that I was behind the whole parish in the information. That I was suspected, nay, condemned, was indeed signified to me at the family festival just alluded to, in a very marked and painful matter—but it is only recently that I have become aware of the cause of that general desertion. On what grounds the charge is grounded it is impossible to divine; my long practical acquaintance with anatomy, in the schools and hospitals, and my professional

knowledge, vouched for by the most eminent surgeons of the day, place me beyond the need of such studies of the human subject ; and if I did require any aid from dissection, my principles, publicly avowed, deprecate the exclusive application of the remains of the poor to purposes equally beneficial to the rich."

"That is true," said the vestry clerk. "I have heard the Doctor express that sentiment on various occasions."

"No doubt of it," said Mr. Poplitt ; "but people's practice don't always square with their professions."

"Well, let me be judged by my practice then," said my father. "What have I ever done, as a medical man, that such a suspicion should fall on me rather than on any one else ?"

"If you mean to glance at Doctor Shackle," said the chairman, "I myself can speak to his alibi ; for he was in close attendance on my wife, who was confined on the night in question."

"I glanced at nobody, Mr. Chairman," replied my father ; "nor have an aim beyond my own exculpation. I repeat, that I knew nothing of the affair till this morning ; and if you will send for my assistant, Mr. Postle, he will confirm my statement."

"Mr. Postle !" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"Phoo ! Phoo ! Doctor," said the chairman,— "You know better than that ! In a little quiet bit of body-snatching for the surgery, assistant and accomplice are synonymous."

"So be it," said my father. "Postle had certainly quite as much to do with the matter as myself ; and I was sound asleep in my own bed. But that rests, too, on domestic, and therefore, I presume, on questionable evidence."

"I think," said Mr. Poplitt, appealing to Mr. Hix, "you

told us something about some French-grey cloth and silver-headed nails that were seen in the Doctor's surgery?"

"I did," replied Mr. Hix, looking rather confused; "but on the understanding that the communication was to be suppressed as strictly confidential."

"There is no need of suppression," cried my father; "the articles were taken from my basket-boy, Catechism Jack, who is weak of intellect, and had childishly adorned himself with them on the morning of the christening."

"A likely story!" mumbled Mr. Hix, in a tone between publishing and smothering the remark.

"And pray, Doctor, how did *your* boy become possessed of the cloth and nails?" inquired Mr. Poplitt.

My father was silent: he could not form the remotest guess; for he was still ignorant that the coffin had been left above ground by the marauders.

"Why, of course," suggested the vestry clerk, "the boy picked up the things in the churchyard——"

"Yes, when he were there delivering their sleeping draughts to the dead folks," said Mr. Bearcroft, the overseer, with a grim smile. Mr. Hix bestowed an approving nod on the overseer, and Mr. Poplitt cast a sneer at the vestry clerk.

"Perhaps," said a little withered man with a pigtail, an Auditor and Trustee, "we had better send for the lad and examine him?"

"It would be to no purpose!" exclaimed my father. "The poor creature is so timorous that, if seriously interrogated, he would recur to his old lapse, and nothing would be got out of him, except that he would be a good boy, and say his Catechism, and not tumble down stairs. However, gentlemen, the suspicion attached to that cloth and those nails extorts from me a confession which nothing else should

have induced me to make"—and my father blushed, as if about to plead guilty to the charge against him.

Now then it was coming! Mr. Hix nudged his neighbour, and the overseer winked across the table at Mr. Poplitt.

"It was I, gentlemen," resumed my father, in a faltering tone, "who supplied the Hobbeses with the means for that preposterous funeral."

The Boardmen looked at each other, and interchanged signals of various import: brow-raisings of wonder, head-shakings of disbelief, and shrugs of doubt.

"If you mean the money chucked in at the Hobbes's door or window," said Mr. Poplitt, "that gift has generally been attributed to Doctor Shackle."

"Universally so," said Mr. Hix.

"And might be still," replied my father, "if nothing but common humanity were in question. I trust the Doctor is as capable as I am of feeling for a bereaved father and mother. The deed is only claimed, because it tends directly to contradict the charge that has fallen upon me. Were I capable," and the speaker's eyes filled with tears as he recalled the poor dead child, with her flowers and toys about her, as he had seen through the cottage window—"were I capable of robbing a churchyard, *that* little grave would have been the very last on earth I should have dreamed of violating!"

This speech, emphatically delivered, with the air and tone of the deepest feeling, caused a visible sensation amongst the auditors: several seemed affected, and one or two looked foolish, the only softness of which they were capable; but the impression was transient.

"Why, as to that," said the burly overseer, "if the trick had been cleverly done, the father and mother would have been never the wiser, while the purse, may be, you considered in the light of purchase-money, like, for the body."

My father's face flushed, his eyes glistened, his lips quivered, and he was about to start up for some angry explosion, when the vestry clerk laid his hand on his arm, held him down, and rose in his stead.

“Mr. Chairman, allow me to propose that this business be dropped. There is much more mystery about it than we can hope to unravel, except by course of time. As yet, we are all in the dark, and where there is a doubt we are bound to give the benefit of it to the accused, and to suppose him innocent, as in this case I honestly believe he is.”

Mr. Hix, Mr. Poplitt, and Mr. Bearcroft, rose together; but the loud voice of the big overseer soon found itself in possession of the air.

“The benefit of the doubt! Aye, that's very well for a legal friction, I should say fiction—but what's to benefit us, the parochial authorities, if we connive at such doings to dead paupers, surrounded as we are by such a vast proportion of live ones, and uncommon audacious and refractory? Their excitement is awful.”

“They will easily be pacified,” said the vestry clerk. “Post a few handbills with a reward for the discovery of the offender——”

“When we have discovered him gratis!” growled Mr. Bearcroft. “Not a shilling, sir, not a shilling! The parish funds are not to be rewarded away in any such manner. The offender is before us, and his guilt or innocence ought to be established at once.”

“By all means!” exclaimed my father:—“it is for that purpose that I am here,—that every equivocal circumstance may be explained away or contradicted, before I visit another parish patient, or set my foot again in the Infirmary.”

“I believe that is the general feeling of the Board,” said the chairman, stooping sideways to receive the communi-

cation which Mr. Hix was whispering into his ear. "We will come therefore to the point. Perhaps, Doctor, you can tell us the mark or marks on your family linen?"

My father started, and stared at what seemed so strangely irrelevant a question; but to a repetition of it, replied that he presumed the marks would be the initials of himself and wife, or G. E. B. with the number.

"And in what colour?"

"Either red or blue—red to the best of my recollection."

The chairman made a signal to a subordinate official who was in attendance, and delivered his order.

"Budge, produce the sheet to the Board."

Budge immediately proceeded to a cupboard in one corner of the room, and unlocking it, drew forth a large strong sheet, soiled with clay, which he laid on the table, when it was eagerly inspected by the Boardmen,—and alas! there were the fatal signs G. E. B. No. 4., worked with red marking cotton in one corner!

The vestry clerk having satisfied himself of the fact by ocular inspection, sank back into his chair, violently striking the Minute Book before him with his open hand.

My father was petrified!

"In that cloth, gentlemen," said the chairman, "the earth was deposited, which had been taken out of the grave, with a view to its being all returned to its place. The discovery of the robbery was made by the sexton, who reported it to me, and by my orders brought away the sheet, which has remained in the possession of Budge, under lock and key, ever since."

"A clear case! palpable! undeniable! a clencher! a settler!" resounded from different quarters of the room.

"Doctor," asked the vestry clerk, in an aside tone, "do you employ a laundress?"

“ No,” replied my father, with a sorrowful shake of the head, for he understood the drift of the question. “ The washing is all done at home.”

The Chairman, Mr. Hix, Mr. Bearcroft, and Mr. Poplitt, were busily writing on strips of paper, which they passed across the table to each other. To judge by their looks and signals, the communications were generally approved ; and some secret resolution having been passed by a succession of affirmative nods, they bent their eyes on the Doctor. He was gazing on vacancy, as a man gazes who seeks at once to comprehend the past, the present, and the future.

“ Yes,” he said, speaking half aloud to himself, “ that sheet is certainly mine, though how it was obtained for such a purpose is an impenetrable mystery. I cannot pretend to fathom it. Time and Providence some day may clear it up—but now, and from me, an explanation is impossible. Gentlemen !” here he raised his voice ; “ you MUST think me guilty. The presumption is too strong against me,—the current of circumstances too violent to be stemmed by a simple though solemn denial. Hereafter the dark cloud that is hanging over me may disperse ; and its shadow that now blackens me so deeply may pass away. In the mean time there is but one course for me to pursue. I cannot—I feel that I cannot—remain your medical officer any longer. The place is vacant. I will send my formal resignation as soon as I get home.”

There was a dead silence of assent : nobody said “ Stop !—consider—take time !”

My father rose, and bowed to the chairman, and the Board, and made a movement to shake hands with the vestry clerk, but observing no sign of encouragement, bowed to him too, and hurried out of the room.

The pauper messengers, who had learned the whole business

by relays of listeners, made jeering comments as he passed through their lounging place—the Matron, whom he encountered in the passage, read in his face ere she arose from her curtsey, that he was disgraced, skipped aside into her parlour, and shut the door. Only the Master's dog still recognised him with his old salutes, and trotting across the forecourt with him, licked his hand for the last time. The hard red-faced porter, the moment the Doctor emerged from the workhouse, had set the gate as wide open as it would swing ; my father passed through it, and it closed with a loud slam.

Perhaps in the whole course of his days his heart had never felt so heavy as it weighed on his way home. In his progress to the Workhouse, he had been shocked and grieved by the frequent manifestations of dislike, and the sad change he had suffered in the golden opinions of all sorts of people ; but on his return, the same tokens were embittered by tormenting reflections of more domestic interest. His prospects in life, within the last hour, had altered materially for the worse ; and particularly resembled a natural one that was often before him—the Fens, on a bad day. The situation of Parish Doctor was attended, indeed, with little direct emolument. The fees were calculated on a scale that only allowed for moderate morbus, reasonable rheumatisms, cheap agues, and very low fevers ; and afforded little profit to a conscientious practitioner, who was not content, in treating a sick pauper, to do it very well for the price. But the parochial connection was valuable : and by his secession from the Board, he would lose as patients the churchwardens and overseers, their spouses and children. In short, he saw before him, very distinctly, a Wife, two dear Twins, and a household to support, but no clear prospect of that indispensable requisite, a livelihood.

CHAPTER XIX.

AMONGST the minor difficulties of our perplexing family affairs, none was more puzzling than the communication of the robbery, or breaking the plate as Kezia called it, to my mother. She had slept all through the alarm of the discovery, and had risen, and was about to come down, quite unconscious that Fate, which had mixed up such a black dose for her over night, had prepared another bitter draught for her in the morning. That the revelation would kill her poor mistress stone dead on the spot like a thunderbolt was broadly predicted by the weeping maid-of-all-work. Mrs. Prideaux anticipated that a very hysterical tendency might bring on a succession of fainting fits, and Mr. Postle compared the disclosure to imparting a blow to a packet of fulminating mercury.

At last Uncle Rumbold, in virtue perhaps of his likeness to a philosopher, undertook to deliver the evil tidings, and after some reflection determined to do it at the late breakfast which in my father's absence he was to enjoy *tête-à-tête* with my mother.

The task nevertheless was a nervous one for an inexperienced bachelor. A dozen times he stopped short in his meal, and clutching his beard in his hand—a trick he had in any case of perplexity—fixed his large speculative eyes on the face before him, asking himself will she scream? or go off in a fit? will her tea go the wrong way? will she choke with her muffin? or jump up and knock over the tea-urn? If she did not wear ligatures, thought he, I would not mind; but a woman wears so many bands and ties and laces, that when nature attempts a gallop in her veins she bursts a blood-vessel.

All this while he was eating an egg, out of which, all at once plucking the spoon he held it up, in a line with my mother's nose, and very solemnly exclaimed,

"Egad! my little fellow, it is well you did not go too!"

This opening however was a failure; my mother thought that the spoon had merely escaped being swallowed with one of those very large mouthfuls of food which her brother was in the habit of bolting. He therefore tried another tack; and began, in his oratorical tone, as follows:

"In former times, sister, there was a certain sect of philosophers who professed to endure the severest pain with the most perfect indifference."

"Yes," said my mother, "they swallowed melted lead, and washed their hands in boiling oil, and carried about red-hot pokers by the red ends, and allowed any of the company to satisfy themselves that the things were actually burning and scalding hot."

"I alluded to the Stoics," said Uncle Rumbold.

"And so did I," said my mother.

"Humph!" said Uncle Rumbold. "However, that was the Stoic doctrine; and the young Spartans were brought up in its principles. You remember the story of the Spartan boy who had a stolen fox under his cloak, and allowed the animal to gnaw away his bowels, rather than betray himself by crying out?"

"Ah! I see," said my mother, closing her eyes, and shuddering. "You want your two neves to be brought up like young Stoics and Spartans—but what I call hardened little wretches."

"I was not thinking of my nephews at all," replied Uncle Rumbold. "In referring to the Stoic philosophy, what I wanted, sister, was to incite you to summon up your own fortitude."

“Then why did you not say so at once?” said my mother. “Is there any thing the matter?”

“Of course there is,” replied Uncle Rumbold, “or what occasion would there be for the Spartan virtue? But before you hear it, let me recommend to you to finish your breakfast.”

“Good gracious!” exclaimed my mother, pushing away the tea, and toast, and egg, to which she had helped herself, “as if I could eat, with my heart in my mouth! I do wish you had kept it till George’s return. He has ten times more fortitude than I have,—indeed it sometimes amounts to apathy. With his example before me, I might bear up against what might tempt me to stick myself with a breakfast-knife, or to run out and fling myself in the river.”

“Well, I will wait,” said Uncle Rumbold, “for my brother-in-law’s return.”

“O no, no, no,” cried my mother; “I must hear it now. If there is one thing I cannot bear, it is suspense. Dear me! What can it be? Is it anything more about my poor supper party?”

“No,” said Uncle Rumbold. “Though the origin of that cut by the neighbourhood, as I have just learned from Mr. Pestle—or Postle—is an awkward affair too. In short, sister—but you must first solemnly promise me not to shriek, or faint away, or do yourself any mischief, or tip over the urn——”

“I won’t! I won’t!” reiterated my mother.

“Well then, the silver plate——”

“The plate! I knew it was the plate!” exclaimed my mother, with difficulty suppressing the forbidden scream. But she had not promised anything about the bell, so she jumped up, and tugged at it till one bell-rope gave way with

its blue and yellow rosette, and then she began jerking at the other.

Kezia answered the summons,—pale as a ghost.

“The plate—where’s the plate?”

The maid-of-all-work wrung her hands, and looked piteously at Uncle Rumbold.

“Where’s the plate, I say?”

Poor Kezia dropped on her knees, with a *plump* that would have split any pans but those common brown ones, so hardened by frequent scrubbing, and with uncouth gesticulations referred her mistress to the gentleman with the beard.

“The truth is, sister,” said Uncle Rumbold, “the plate—which was all borrowed, I believe—has been fetched away in the night; but whether by the right parties is very doubtful.”

“Thieves!—robbers!” gasped Kezia, in a hoarse whisper.

My mother had heard enough. Without speaking she went and threw herself at full length on the horse-hair sofa; whither Kezia, by a mode of progression familiar to housemaids that scour, shuffled after her on her knees. Uncle Rumbold, in the meantime, deliberately drew out his gold watch and gravely laid it on the breakfast cloth before him, determined to allow sorrow exactly five minutes of uninterrupted indulgence before he and comfort interposed.

Such was precisely the position of the parties in the parlour—the door of which Kezia had left open—when my father quietly entered!

If a domestic man is especially to be pitied, it is when after the rebuffs, conflicts, defeats, disappointments, affronts, losses, and crosses, he has encountered abroad in his business, he returns baffled, tired, disgusted, dejected, to be indemnified by the comforts of home—and finds it desolate—that

whilst the reptiles of that foul hag Adversity had been stinging, biting, hissing, and spitting at him in his path out of doors, others of the same malignant brood had been spawning and hatching on the household hearth. That was precisely my father's case. He stood wonder and thunder struck—looking from Uncle Rumbold to Kezia, and from her to my Mother, on the sofa, trying vainly to catch the purport of her broken exclamations.

“Brother-in-law—Kezia—Wife—what is the meaning of this?”

At the sound of his voice, my mother exchanged her recumbent for a sitting position, and began incoherently to inform him of the catastrophe.

“O George, George—we are ruined at last! We can never hold up our heads again in the place—never, never, never! What the curate will say—and what Mr. Ruffy may do, for he's a lawyer—and then that horrid Mrs. Spinks ——.”

“She had hern, ma'am!—she had hern!” cried Kezia—“for she carried it away under her shawl!”

“Thank Heaven for that!” exclaimed my mother, with extraordinary fervour. “*She* can't ride then on our necks!”

“In the name of common sense,” said my father, appealing to his brother-in-law, “what is all this about?”

“Why, the house has been robbed,” answered Uncle Rumbold, “and the plate carried off.”

In making this abrupt communication, the Philosopher had reckoned on the cheerful, manly, and generally sanguine disposition of my father, whom he was surprised therefore to see turn pale and stagger into a seat. But the Doctor's spirits were unusually jaded and depressed by the trial they had so recently undergone, and made him keenly sensible of a loss, which he felt bound to make good; but yet

knew to be an impracticable obligation, in the present hopeless posture of his affairs.

“Yes, it really is a heavy trouble, isn’t it, George?” said my mother. “No wonder I felt it deeply, when you take it to heart so seriously. But what is to be done?”

“Oughtn’t we to raise the hue and cry, and print hand-bills, and offer a reward for the stolen plate?”

“Turned into white soup by this time!” said Uncle Rumbold. “Melted down almost into a state of nature. All we can do is to report the robbery to the next magistrate, and leave him and his myrmidons to find the thieves, if they can. As the Doctor is tired, and may be wanted, I will step down myself to his Worship: but before I go, I should like to know, brother-in-law, the upshot of the body-snatching story of which Mr. Pestle or Postle has given me the heads—and the result of your visit to the Board.”

“The result is simply,” said my father, “that I am no longer the Parish Doctor.”

At this announcement, there was a general expression of surprise, the exclamatory “We an’t!” of Kezia ringing high above all.

“But how, George?”

“On what grounds, brother-in-law?”

“To be candid,” said my father, “though some of the members of the Board were less friendly than I expected, they had sufficient grounds, founded on circumstantial evidence, to go upon—that the mould cast out of the poor child’s grave was deposited in one of my own sheets.”

“One of our own sheets!” screamed my mother.

“Our sheets!” echoed Kezia.

“Yes; I saw it produced,” said my father. “It was marked G. E. B. No. 4. with red cotton.”

The description was no sooner complete, than, after a col-

lision that made our bearded Uncle reel like a classic Bacchanalian, Kezia dashed out of the parlour, and was heard racing up the stairs at a horse-gallop.

“We shall soon know if any of the linen is deficient,” said my mother. “For Kizzy is very careful of it, and that it is worn fairly, turn and turn about.”

“I wish she had been more careful of the plate,” growled Uncle Rumbold, “instead of trusting to country fastenings—a thin deal shutter, and a strong oaken bar.”

“Did the thieves break in, then, at the kitchen window?” asked my father.

“If they broke in anywhere,” muttered Uncle Rumbold, “which his Worship’s two-legged ferrets must determine;” and our godfather was setting out on that errand, when he was delayed by the return of Kezia, with the result of her search on her lips and in her face. The household linen was all correct, with the exception of the identical sheet in question, which was missing, though she remembered marking it, as described, with her own hands. Our godfather immediately left the room, and the next minute his bearded profile, surmounted by a very broad-brimmed hat, was seen to pass above the blind of the parlour window.

My father and mother, released from the restraint which all persons felt, more or less, in the presence of our strange uncle, immediately became confidential; the first relating what had taken place at the Workhouse, and the last commenting bitterly on a mass of trouble, not spreading itself fairly like a flood on the Flats, but discharging itself, like a terrific waterspout she had lately read of in the county paper, on one devoted house and family.

Kezia, meanwhile, repaired to her old post beside the desk in the surgery, to derive comfort and counsel from Mr. Postle; and was about to reveal to him the mysterious dis-

appearance of the fatal sheet, when she perceived that a very little woman, with a straw-coloured face, was shivering in the patient's chair. The influence of old habits instantly took possession of her.

"Ah! a case for chinchony. My good woman, you've got the ha-gue, and I should say the stertian. You must take bark; and the best form is in canine pills."

"No, no," said the woman; "I'm weary of that old dose. I've took bark enough to turn me into a holler tree. But I'm not come about myself, but my sister, who is troubled about her legs—she has such very coarse veins."

"Has she any occasion to be showing her legs?" inquired Kezia, not a little puzzled by the novelty of the complaint.

"Pshaw! she means varicose veins," said Mr. Postle.

"Yes, so I suppose," said Kezia. "It's very kind of her, I'm sure, to come to us instead of Doctor Shackle, after all the falsities that has been spread about us, and has gone thro' the parish like an infection of a malignant nature——"

She was interrupted by the entrance of Uncle Rumbold, who swept through the surgery like a bearded meteor, with the parish constable in his vortex, in which, by an imperative beckon, he involved the maid-of-all-work, who was hurried along with them into the parlour.

"Dear me!" exclaimed my mother, "what is all this, brother? Who is that strange gentleman with the paper?"

"I am the Constable, ma'am, at your service," said the stranger, referring to the document in his hand; "and this here is a sarch warrant, for sarching the box or boxes of one Kezia Jenks."

"Mine!" faltered Kezia,—who, like many very innocent persons, had nevertheless a most intense dread and awe of the law, and all that belonged to it. "Mine!"

“I do wish, brother-in-law,” said my father, in a tone of the deepest vexation, “I do wish you had been less precipitate! What has this faithful, devoted, hardworking, and affectionate creature done, that she should be affronted by suspicion, and have her character tarnished by such a proceeding? I would pledge my life for her honesty.”

“I know you would!” replied Uncle Rumbold, “and therefore acted without consulting you, on my own judgment and responsibility. But I do nothing without grave deliberation; no man does, who wears this—” and he touched his beard. “Listen. In the dead of the night, with my own ears, I heard your paragon of fidelity open her chamber door, and proceed stealthily down stairs, where, by listening over the banisters, I heard her voice, which I can swear to, in conversation with some person or persons unknown. The words I could not distinguish.—Silence, woman, and let me proceed——”

But Kezia was not to be silenced; but dropping on her knees, appealed to Heaven, and her master and mistress, to testify to her innocence.

“I was only sleep-walking,—which I have done afore, in this house, and other places besides,—being my misfortune, and such as will kill me, some day, off a parapet, or out of a window—as there is a judge in Heaven, it was only sleep-walking! And I waked up in the kitchen, by stumbling over the cold supper things, with my face on an am.”

“A pretty story!” said Uncle Rumbold—echoed by his satellite, the constable.

“But a true one,” said my father. “The poor girl is, to my knowledge, a somnambulist.”

“A bamboozleist!” exclaimed Uncle Rumbold. “If you believe in such fables, brother-in-law, I do not—and never will. They’re contrary to nature. And the spoons walked

off too in their sleep! Bah! Then you will not allow her box to be searched?"

"I will NOT," said my father.

"In that case," said Uncle Rumbold, "I shall remove my own person and property from the premises."

My mother looked horror-struck; yet not more so than her housemaid, as deeply interested in the hopes, for the dear twins, that hung on the smiles and frowns of Godfather Rumbold.

"O pray, pray," she sobbed, "don't quarrel and differ about me. I'm not worth it, whatever becomes of me. O Master—consider those dear precious innocent twins. Let my box be searched—I want to have it searched—it will do the things good to give them a fresh-airing!"

"You had better, George," whispered my mother with a twitch at my father's sleeve,—“There will be nothing found in it.”

"Well—I wash my hands of it!" cried my father,—and the company in a body proceeded up-stairs to the attic landing, whither Kezia's box, that she kept in her bed-room, was lugged and ransacked. And never did searcher, legal or fiscal, expose such a heterogeneous medley of articles, of so little intrinsic value! A few clothes—scraps of ribbon, and fragments of patchwork—bits of dried orange and lemon-peel, various ha'penny ballads, and last dying speeches, with one solitary play-bill—a Moore's Almanack, and a Dream Book—keepsakes innumerable—locks of hair, of all colours, folded up in papers inscribed with female names, and one long silver tress labelled "My dear Muther's," with a date—a red-leather heart-pincushion—several double nuts—a reel-in-a-bottle—and a little bone needle-case, in the shape of a closed umbrella, with a paper tied to the handle, "*presented me by Mister Postle,*"—an old-fashioned wooden spice-box,

and last, not least, a yellow canvas sampler, with its worked alphabets and numerals, and Adam and Eve and the Apple Tree, and Kezia's own name, and the date at the bottom. On the whole, the impression produced by the exhibition was decidedly in favour of the honesty of the proprietor—that she was disinterested, and affectionate, somewhat superstitious, and had one more grain of romance than was suspected in her homely composition.

“Well, I've sarched many a sarvant's box in my time,” said the constable, “and I never come across a more innocent one than that !”

As the party returned down stairs, they were met at the door of the nursery by Mrs. Prideaux, who, dropping a very lady-like curtesy to Uncle Rumbold, tendered a bunch of keys on a steel ring. She was in that house, she said, a hired nurse, and so far in the capacity of a servant, and therefore begged to submit her boxes to inspection. But Uncle Rumbold as politely declined the offer : he had had quite enough of searching, and had become irksomely indebted in an apology to the maid-of-all-work ; for he was a proud man in his way, and of all things that disagreed with his stomach, none was more indigestible than the proverbial pasty of Humility, humble pie.

CHAPTER XX.

OUR LUCK.

OUR Uncle Rumbold, though fierce of aspect and manner, was not absolutely hard-hearted; and his pride relented considerably when he saw the maid-of-all-work come down stairs, with her eyes red and swollen with weeping. But his apologies were disclaimed. "It wasn't the searching her box," she said, "she didn't mind that, nor the being suspected, that made her cry, but the sight of her dear mother's hair, who died, poor soul! of a bilious calculation."

"Calculus," said my father, "calculus. But come, brother-in-law, let us inspect the premises, and have the constable's opinion of the burglary."

The trio accordingly repaired to the kitchen, where they minutely inspected the window and its fastenings, from which it appeared that a piece had been cut out of the shutter, so as to allow of the removal of the bolt, the sill was scratched and soiled with clay, and the ground, on the outside, bore in several places the imprint of a man's shoe or boot, thickly studded with hobnails. There was no doubt of the manner in which the entrance had been effected; and the parties having come to an unanimous conclusion on the subject, the constable was despatched to take the necessary steps for the discovery and apprehension of the offender or offenders. Uncle Rumbold undertook to order the printing and issue of the handbills, whilst my father, with a heavy heart, proceeded to his escritoire in the parlour, with a task before him which, to a man who disliked letter-writing in general, was a heavy infliction—seeing that he had to indite three several epistles, all on subjects of the most painful and

disagreeable nature, namely, to the Board, with his resignation of office ; to Mr. Ruffy, communicating the fate of his presentation tankard ; and to the curate, conveying the loss of the silver-gilt salts. It would have moved a heart of nether millstone to have seen how he spoiled pen after pen, and sheet after sheet of paper, vainly turning his eyes for inspiration from the mirror, with its bird and ball, to the ceiling or the floor, the wall or the window, the poplar-tree, and the blue sky. Oh, if my father ever envied a rich or great man, it was then, just then, for the sake of his private secretary !

To add to his distress, his usual resource in such emergencies was unavailable. In reply to his application for help, Mr. Postle had excused himself under the pretence of urgent business in the surgery ; but, in reality, the assistant was indisposed with a fit of spleen. He had heard of the affair of the search-warrant ; and after indignantly asking of the jar of conserve of roses why Mrs. Prideaux had not been suspected instead of Kezia, had solemnly promised the pestle and mortar to pluck old Rumbold, at the very first opportunity, by the beard—a threat he would probably have put in execution but for a positive injunction from the injured maid, who overheard him pledging himself to the same effect to the bottle of leeches.

“No, Mr. Postle,” she said, “you will do no such thing. It’s a heathen fashion, to be sure, and makes him look more like a satire of the woods than a Christian : but when you consider what hangs on it, namely, the future prospects in life of our poor helpless innocent twins, you’ll respect his beard as if it belonged to Moses or Aaron. As for my being suspected, it comes natural to a servant, and like a part of her work, to clear up her character sometimes as well as her kitchen : and as regards the searching of my box, it’s no-

thing to the rummaging of one's thoughts and feelings which I have had to undergo in other places. But so long as master and missis, and you don't suspect me, I can bear it from any one else. So, for the sake of the dear twins, you must let the matter drop, and not offend Mr. Rumbold by look, or word, or deed, and especially by touching his beard, which would be cutting off young heirs with a shilling."

Having extorted a promise to this pacific effect, Kezia repaired to the nursery, where she relieved her full heart and excited feelings by a good cry and a hearty fondling of the precious babes. But beyond this solace, she had a secret project of her own, in accordance with which she addressed herself to the genteel nurse.

"Oh, Mrs. Prideaux, isn't it a shocking thing to see a family like ours, for no fault of their own, coming step by step, deeper and deeper, into misfortune and misery! First, that dreadful supper, and then the robbery, and then the loss of the parish—it reminds me of one of my own runs of bad luck, when first I was knocked down by a runaway horse, and then picked up by a pickpocket, and then sent home in a hackney-coach that had just carried a patient to the hospital with a putrid fever."

"The planets," said the nurse, "are decidedly sinister."

"Then you think," said Kezia, delighted with the astrological turn of the conversation, "that it is our ill stars are in fault?"

"Of course," said the nurse. "The aspects of the planets, at this juncture, and as affects this house, are particularly malignant."

"They must be, indeed!" said Kezia, with a melancholy shake of her head. "According to the Almanac, their bad influences affect sometimes one part and sometimes

another, and at different times ; but here they are, as I may say, smiting us back and belly, hip and thigh, all at once !”

“The natural effect,” said the nurse, “of the planetary configurations, and especially of the position of Saturn.”

“Ah ! with his ring !” exclaimed Kezia. “Mr. Postle once showed him to me through his refractory telescope.”

“A refracting one, I presume,” said the nurse.

“I believe it was,” said Kezia, “and it brought down the moon till it looked as big as a silver waiter. Talking of which reminds me of the stolen plate ; and which it is my private notion that you know as much or more about than any one else.”

“That *I* do !” exclaimed the nurse, with a slight start, and fixing her keen eyes on the face of the maid-of-all-work as if she would read her very soul. “That I know who stole the plate !”

“Yes,” said Kezia, “by means of the heavenly bodies. I have heard of many persons recovering their lost things through star-gazers and fortune-tellers ; and of course as you can cast nativities, *you can do the other.*”

This was the very point at which she had been aiming ; but the answer of the nurse put an extinguisher on her hopes.

“Between ourselves,” she said, “I have cast some figures on purpose ; but there is a mystery in the matter that defies my art.”

“The more’s the pity,” said Kezia ; “for I made sure that you could discover the thief. And then that lost sheet, as was found in the churchyard—how it was abstracted from a press to which nobody but ourselves had access : I own to thoughts, and suspicions, and misgivings about it, that make me shudder !”

“Then do you really suppose,” asked the nurse, “that your master was guilty of stealing tha dead child?”

“The Lord forbid!” exclaimed Kezia. “I would as soon suspect him of kidnapping live ones for the Plantations! No, I was not thinking of him, but of a treacherous, deceitful being, whom to think of under the same roof, and in the same room with one, makes my very blood in a curdle.”

The nurse again fixed one of her scrutinising looks on Kezia; but the latter was thinking of quite another personage, as implied by her next question.

“What is your real opinion, Mrs. Prideaux, of supernatural agency?”

“The same as your own,” was the prompt answer of the nurse.

“In that case,” said Kezia, “I don’t mind saying it’s my belief that our sheet was purloined away by Satan himself, whose delight is in casting down the good and the godly, and for the express purpose of ruining my poor master.”

“It is quite possible,” said the nurse, who seemed to take delight in pampering the credulity of her simple-minded and single-hearted companion. “Such an act would be perfectly in unison with the diabolical character. My belief coincides with your own. But remember, Kezia, the age is a sceptical age, and its infidels especially repudiate astrology and demonology; so that the less we say of our own convictions the better. Indeed, it would cost me my bread were it known that I had cast the nativity of those dear twins.”

“But it never shall be,” cried Kezia—“never! Do you think I would break the solemn oath you made me take on the Testament?”

“No—I know that you would not,” said the nurse, in her sweetest tone; “for if you did, there are lightnings to burn

your body, and other fires to scorch your soul for the perjury." And so the conference ended.

My father, meanwhile, had toiled on at his irksome task in the parlour—blotting, blundering, erasing, correcting, tearing up, and beginning *de novo*, in a way that a corresponding clerk would have gone crazy to witness ; for if my parent's sustenance had depended on the exercise of his pen, he must have died of starvation. At last, after infinite trouble, he had completed the whole of the missives, and was just in the act of drawing that long sigh of satisfaction with which a weary man is apt to hail the accomplishment of his labour, when my mother entered the room, drew a chair beside him, seated herself, and laid her hand on his arm. There was nothing in her face to indicate any interruption of the mental repose and relief which my father had promised himself ; her looks were as cheerful as the tone with which she uttered her preluding monosyllable—

"George !"

"My dear !"

"Can you forgive me for keeping from you a little secret ?"

"Of course I can," replied my father, with his old smile. "But will your own sex—for being so unwomanly ?"

"No matter for them," said my mother. "I meant to have hoarded it up for an agreeable surprise ; but with such troubles as have come upon us, it seems only fair that you should share in any comfort which I am enjoying myself. You remember the 20*l.* note that you gave me last week ?"

"Yes—for Mr. Lobb."

"Ah, Mr. Lobb must wait a bit," said my mother. "That note went quite a different way, and for another purpose. Up to London, George, and for a purchase. Can you guess ?"

“For winter clothing, perhaps,” said my father, “or a fresh stock of household linen.”

“For winter wealth, George,” said my mother, “and a stock of good luck. What do you think of a lottery ticket?”

My father made no reply—he was confounded by this new blow.

“Do you hear, George,” cried my mother — “a lottery ticket!”

“Yes, twenty pounds gone,” murmured my father.

“But they are not gone!” said my mother.

“As completely,” said my father, “as if the note had lighted a candle. The last money in the house, too, and which ought to have paid the butcher. That accounts, then, for Lobb’s insolence about the tainted mutton.”

“Well, well,” said my mother, “we shall soon get rid of Lobb after the drawing. The ticket is sure to come up a prize.”

“I wish it may!” said my father.

“It is sure to come up a prize,” repeated my mother, “for I dreamt three times running of the number.”

My father jumped up from his seat, and after pacing a few turns up and down the room, suddenly stopped short and addressed himself to himself in the mirror.

“If ever there was a Minister deserved impeachment—if ever a Chancellor of the Exchequer who ought to have lost his head on the block—it was the man who first invented a mode of raising money by the encouragement of public gambling?” He then turned abruptly to my mother, and inquired whether the ticket was registered.

“Yes, and the lottery was to be drawn on the 16th.”

“And this is the 18th,” said my father.

My mother instantly started up from her seat, and rang

the bell, to know if the post had come in, and whether there were any letters.

"Yes, one," which Kezia had laid on the kitchen shelf, where, in the unusual bustle of the morning, it had been forgotten. It was addressed to my mother, who seized the letter, broke the seal, glanced over the contents, and dropping the paper from her hand, sank, gasping, on the sofa—the blankness of her face sufficiently indicating the nature of the intelligence.

"Then the money is gone!" exclaimed my father.

My mother sobbed, and covered her face with her hands; Kezia wrung hers in mute despair. Our evil stars were verily shooting ones, and were practising on our devoted family as at a target!

"Well, what is this new disaster?" inquired the voice of Uncle Rumbold, who had just entered the parlour, but stopped short at two paces from the door, clutching his beard in his right hand.

"Nothing, nothing," replied my father, forgetting his own vexation in the affliction of my mother—"only a lost bank-note."

"What, another robbery?"

"No," replied my father, "thrown into the fire—blown out of window—washed down the sink—a mere trifle."

"A trifle!" exclaimed my mother, unwilling to forego any benefit to be derived from her brother's sympathy—"our last twenty pounds in the world—intended to pay the butcher."

But her indirect appeal had no effect. Liberal of advice and personal exertion, Uncle Rumbold, from habit and inclination, was slow in drawing his purse-strings. The amount, he admitted, was no trifle; but sometimes a loss became a gain in the end, by teaching those who had

neglected their twenties to take care of their fifties. This new misfortune, however, seemed gradually to touch him, for shortly afterwards, having deliberately seated himself, he addressed his unlucky relatives as follows :—" Sister, I have been thinking over your various troubles, and have come to the conclusion, brother-in-law, that, what with your loss of the parish appointment and other drawbacks, your affairs are, or soon will be, in anything but a prosperous condition. Such being the case, I feel called upon, as a near relative, to step a little beyond my original intentions for the family benefit, and especially as regards my twin nephews, though I trust I have sufficiently testified my regard for them already by that invaluable present, the Light of Nature. However, as I said before, I have determined to stretch a point, but on the condition that what I do shall be done in my own way."

" I am sure," said my mother, " we shall be truly grateful for your kindness in any way."

" I am not so certain of that," replied Uncle Rumbold : " however, what I propose is this,—to relieve you altogether of the care and maintenance of one of those two boys. As soon, therefore, as my godson can run alone, I am ready to adopt him ; to board, lodge, and educate—in short, to provide for him through life at my own cost and charge, and of course according to my own system and views."

Here he paused, expecting an answer, whereas his proposition was met by a dead silence. My father, taken by surprise, was at a loss what to say, and my mother looked absolutely aghast. She had not forgotten certain features of the system alluded to, and in her mind's eye saw her poor offspring, now climbing a tree for his food, at the risk of his neck, and now thrown doglike into a river, to sink or swim as might happen—in short, undergoing all the hard

discipline associated with a young Indian savage, or child of nature.

“Humph! I see how it is,” said Uncle Rumbold; “but I do not press an immediate answer. Perhaps you will make up your minds before my departure. I have ordered a chaise at five o’clock, which will carry me to Wisbeach, where I shall meet the coach;—no words: my arrangements once made are never altered, and, let me add, my offers once refused are never repeated.”

So saying, he rose and walked off to make his preparations for his departure; whilst my mother took the opportunity of expressing her sentiments to her helpmate on the godfatherly offer.

“No, I never will consent to it,” she said—“never, never! To have a child of mine climbing trees, and swimming ponds, and sleeping in the open air, like a gipsy, or Peter the Wild Boy! And taught bird’s nesting, and tomahawking, and all sorts of savage tricks, instead of the accomplishments of a young gentleman—and, at any rate, dressed up more like a Guy Fawkes than a Christian—and with a beard, when he’s old enough, like a Jewish rabbi,—Oh! it would break my heart, it would indeed, George! to have a boy of mine begin the world with such a prospect before him!”

“Well, well,” said my father, “so be it. I am as loth as you are to have a son of mine bred up into a bearded oddity, like his uncle, or old Martin Van Butchell. So go and see to the dinner, and in the interim I will invent the best excuse I can to offer to my redoubtable kinsman.”

Thus comforted, my mother applied herself to the arrangement of the dinner, which, thanks to what Kezia called the “superfluties” of the night before, presented an unusual variety and profusion of the delicacies of the season. The meal, nevertheless, passed off very drearily. The spirits of

the presiding pair were weighed down by the communication they had to make, and the certain resentment that awaited their decision ; whilst the temper of Uncle Rumbold himself was still ruffled by a short but sharp argument on somnambulism with Mr. Postle in the surgery. The conversation, such as it was, had flagged into silence, when the post-chaise drew up at the door.

“ Now then, sister,” cried Uncle Rumbold, rising from his seat, “ now then, brother-in-law, for your ultimatum. Am I to have the boy or not ? ”

“ Why then, brother,” began my mother, but her voice failed and died away in an inarticulate croak.

“ The truth is,” said my father, “ we are deeply sensible of your kindness, and sorry to decline it. If the children had not been twins, we might have felt and decided otherwise ; but we really cannot find in our hearts to separate, so early in life, a pair of brothers, that nature herself has so closely united.”

“ That’s enough,” said Uncle Rumbold. “ A plain offer has met a plain refusal—no offence on either side ; but, by my beard, if ever I offer to adopt a child again—” What followed was inaudible or suppressed : he hastily shook hands with his relatives, and hurried into the gaping vehicle, wherein he threw himself back, as if determined on sulks and silence. In another moment, however, his face and beard appeared at the open window.

“ God bless you, sister,” he said ; “ brother-in-law, God bless you,—though how you are to be blessed, is more than I know, for you will never be guided by the light of nature ! ”

Every word of this leave-taking was overheard by Kezia, who with outstretched neck and straining ears listened eagerly for his least syllable. But those words were his

last,—not a breath about the dear twins, his own nephews. The whip cracked, the horse-shoes clattered, the wheels rattled ; and the few boys who had assembled set up a cheer for the Grand Mogul. The last chance was gone. In another minute, the black and yellow body, which contained Uncle Rumbold, was out of sight ; and with it vanished, alas ! all the hopes that he had engendered !

CHAPTER XXI.

A DEMONSTRATION.

“ So much for relatives ! ” said my mother, as she poured out the tea, and handed a cup of the beverage to my father. “ My precious brother, who would not shave off a hair of his beard for love or money, will now cut off his own nephews without a scruple ! ”

“ Nothing more likely, ” said my father.

“ Do you really think, then, ” inquired my mother, “ that he will leave them quite out of his will ? ”

She waited in vain for an answer ; and at last obtained, in lieu of it, another query, far wide of her mark. Throughout his troubles and vexations, my father’s mind had been haunted by a vague sense of a something amiss ; but his thoughts had always been diverted elsewhere before his fears could assume a definite shape ; now, however, his misgivings, after many gleamings and vanishings, suddenly recurred to him, and taking a distinct character prompted the abrupt question—“ Where is Catechism Jack ? ”

Nobody knew. In the crowding events of the day he had not been missed ; there had been no medicine to deliver, so that his services were not in requisition, and even Mr. Postle

could not tell what had become of him. On comparing notes, he had not been seen by any one since an early hour in the morning, when he had slipped out at the surgery door.

Here was a new cause of anxiety for my father ; if any mischance happened to the idiot, the blame in the present temper of the parish was certain to be visited on the master, who had taken the half-witted boy from the care of the old dame, and become responsible for his safety and welfare. Many were the conjectures that were hazarded on the cause of his absence. In my father's opinion, Jack had gone on a visit to his former guardian, and was spending the day with her : my mother, prone to dream of disasters, at once pronounced him drowned in the river ; Kezia's fancy sent him tramping after a recruiting party which had passed through the village ; and the assistant supposed that he was playing truant and chuck-farthing with other young dogs as idle as himself. The last guess was most probably the true one ; however, in the midst of their speculations, his voice was clearly recognised, and in another moment Jack, in an unusual state of excitement, burst into the parlour, round which he pranced with a sort of chimney-sweep's caper, exclaiming with ecstasy, "The tongs and bones ! The tongs and bones !"

"Why, Jack," asked my father, "what is the matter with you ?"

"The tongs and bones," said Jack, standing still for a moment, and then resuming his dance and his song.

"Speak, idiot !" cried Mr. Postle, seizing the boy by the shoulder and shaking him. "What is the meaning of this mummery ?"

"O don't, pray don't beat me," whined Jack. "I will say my catechism."

“Poor fellow!” said my father. “Be gentle with him.”

“Huzza! The tongs and bones!” shouted Jack, extricating himself by a sudden twist from the grasp of the assistant; and darting through the parlour door, and across the hall, into the kitchen, to the infinite horror of Kezia, who really believed, as she declared afterwards, that the boy had been bitten by “a rapid dog.” Here he continued his capering and his cry; till observing the table with food on it, by one of those abrupt transitions common to weak intellects, his thoughts fastened on a new object; and at once subsiding into his usual demeanour, and seating himself at the board, he asked Kezia to give him his supper. The maid-of-all-work immediately complied; and as after some minutes he continued to eat and drink very quietly, Mr. Postle returned to the surgery, and my parents to the parlour.

“The tongs and bones,” muttered my mother as she resumed her seat at the tea-table, “what on earth can it mean?”

“Why, I suspect it means,” said my father, “that the tag-rag and bobtail of the village have been treating some quarrelsome couple with what is called rough music; and Jack has been present and perhaps performing at the concert.”

This explanation was so satisfactory to both parties, that Jack and his chorus were speedily forgotten; and the pair had resumed their quiet confidential intercourse, when Mr. Postle entered, with an ominous face, and placed in my father’s hands something which he said he had just found upon the counter. It was a scrap of dirty coarse paper, folded note-fashion, and containing only the following words: “Let the Dockter and Family keep in Dores to nite And look to yure Fastnings. A Frend.”

“Well, and what do you make of this document?” asked my father.

“That it is what it professes to be,” answered the assistant, looking uneasily at my mother, as if embarrassed by her presence.—“I will put the thing technically. There is, you know, sir, a certain local epidemic in the parish, of a very malignant type, and attended with very extensive irritation. Now this party intends to say that probably there will be an eruption.”

“I understand,” said my father, with a nod of intelligence —“but doubt very much if the disease will take that active turn.”

“There is no doubt at all,” said Mr. Postle. “I know a party who has been round amongst the infected, on purpose to feel their pulse; and the symptoms are of a most unfavourable character. For instance, tongue hot—breath acrimonious and offensive—voice loud and harsh—with the use of expressions bordering on furious mania.”

“A mere temporary fever,” said my father, “that will pass off without any dangerous paroxysm.”

“I wish it may,” said Mr. Postle, “and without a nocturnal crisis.”

My mother’s head during this mysterious discussion had turned mechanically from speaker to speaker, as if moved by internal clockwork; but she could gather no more information from their faces than from their words; and as the consultation might be a long one, and she hated medical matters, she briefly intimated to my father that she should go up-stairs to the children, and left the room.

“And do you really suppose,” asked my father, “that there is going to be any disturbance or outrage? Pooh, pooh—I can’t and won’t believe it.”

“So you said of the hostility of the parish Board,” retorted the assistant.

“Well, well, do as you please,” said my father. “I leave the matter entirely in your own hands.”

“In that case,” said Mr. Postle, “I shall at once lock all the doors, and secure the lower windows, and this one to begin with;” and accordingly he pulled up the sliding parlour-shutter, and inserted the screws. “Now then for the others.”

“Very good,” said my father, “and then come to supper with us in the parlour. Poor Postle,” he continued, as the assistant departed to look to the household defences, “he was always an alarmist, and I’ll be bound expects the premises to be stormed and sacked, on the strength of an anonymous letter, intended, most probably, to play upon his fears.”

True to his plan, the alarmist, meanwhile, proceeded from window to window, and from door to door, locking, bolting, barring, screwing; the surgery door alone, for convenience, being left but partially fastened by a single latch, which, however, could only be raised on the inside. The fanlight above he barricaded with a stout board; and ascertained, shutter by shutter, that the defences of the window were all sound and secure. He then took a final peep at Jack, who was still quietly making an interminable meal in the kitchen; and finding all safe, repaired to the parlour, and took his usual place at the supper-table; not without some bantering from my father as to the preparations in a certain fortress for a state of siege, and the strength of its garrison. But the joke was mistimed.

The meal was about half finished, when attracted by the attitude of my mother, whose sense of hearing was remarkably acute, my father laid down his knife and fork, and

began listening ; in which he was soon imitated by Mr. Postle ; and for awhile the three, silent and motionless, seemed stiffened into as many statues. There was certainly some unusual humming in the air.

“It sounds,” said my father, “like the distant murmur of the sea.”

“More like the getting up of a gale,” said Mr. Postle.

“It’s the noise of a mob !” exclaimed my mother ; “I hear voices and the tramping of feet !”

“Say I told you so !” cried Mr. Postle, jumping up from his chair, and resuming the knife with which he had been cutting his cold meat.

“And if it be a mob,” said my father, “it may not be coming to us.”

“Hark ! it comes nearer and nearer,” said my mother, turning pale. “In the name of wonder, George——” she stopped, startled by a loud noise and a sudden outcry close at hand.

The distant sounds, which excited so intense an interest in the parlour, had reached the kitchen ; where they no sooner struck on the tympanum of Jack, than, like a young savage who recognises the warwhoop of his tribe, he started up, overturning his heavy wooden chair, and shouting his old cry, the “Tongs and bones—the tongs and bones !” rushed through the hall, and the surgery, and out of the door, which he left wide open. Kezia, in hot pursuit, with my father and Mr. Postle, were soon on the spot ; but only just in time to distinguish the flying figure of the idiot, before he disappeared in the gloom of the lane ; his cry being still audible, but getting fainter and fainter till it was lost in the general murmur of the mob.

“They are coming up the lane—there is no time to be lost,” said Mr. Postle, pushing Kezia, and then drawing my

father by the arm into the surgery ; the door of which he bolted and locked. They then hurried to the parlour ; but my mother, with hen-like instinct, had flown up to her young ones, and was sitting in the nursery to meet whatever might happen, with her twin babes at her bosom. Kezia, by a kindred impulse, was soon in the same chamber ; while my father and his assistant posted themselves at a staircase window which overlooked the lane. It was quite dusk ; but at the turn of the road the crowd was just visible, a darker mass amid the gloom, and a moving one, which, as it approached, occasionally threw out a detached figure or two in front, barely distinguishable as of human shape. Now and then there was a shout ; and more rarely a peal of hoarse laughter. As the mob neared the house, its pace quickened.

“There’s Jack !” exclaimed Mr. Postle, whose eyesight was much keener than my father’s ; “he’s winding in and out among them like an eel !”

“And if I mistake not,” said my father, “they have something like a black flag.”

“Yes—borne by a tall big fellow,” answered the assistant. “As I live, it’s John Hobbes !”

“Poor man,” sighed my father.

“As yet I can make out no fire-arms,” said Mr. Postle ; “but they have pitchforks and sticks. And yonder’s a stuffed figure like a Guy—they are going to burn us in effigy. Yes, they’ve got faggots and a truss of straw. Here they come at a run ! But ah, ah ! my fine fellows, you are too late. Look !—they are trying the surgery door !”

The foremost of the mob, in fact, were endeavouring to effect an entrance as described ; but, being foiled, commenced a smart rattling with their sticks on the doors and

shutters, accompanied by frequent and urgent invitations to the doctor and his assistant to come out and receive their fees. Tired at last of this pastime, they set up a cry "to the front!—to the front!"

Anticipating this movement, my father and his companion hurried into the nursery, the abode of Terror and Despair. My mother, with an infant on each arm, was seated in the easy chair, her eyes closed, and her face of a ghastly white; so that she might have been taken for dead, or in a fit, but for occasional ejaculations. Kezia, with her apron thrown over her head, knelt beside her mistress; whilst the nurse, with folded arms, leaned her back against the wall between the windows—a position secure from any missile from without. The two babes alone were unconscious of danger—the one smiling and crowing; the other fast asleep.

Taking the hint from Mrs. Prideaux, my father removed his partner and her progeny into a safe nook beyond the angle of projectiles; and only in good time; for the arrangement was hardly completed when a large stone came crashing through the window and rebounded on the floor.

"Put out the lights!" cried Mr. Postle; "they only serve for marks to aim at,"—and in spite of the remonstrances of the females the candles were extinguished.

The whole mob by this time had weathered the corner of the house; and having vainly tried the front door, and thoroughly battered it, as well as the parlour-shutter with their bludgeons, proceeded to organize that concert of rough music with which the lower orders in the provinces were accustomed to serenade an obnoxious character—a hideous medley of noises extracted from cow-horns, catcalls, whistles, old kettles, metal pans, rattles, and other discordant instruments, described by Jack as the tongs and bones. The din was dreadful; and yet far less so than the profane impre-

cations and savage threats that were shouted out at every pause of the wild band. There were women too in the crowd; and the cry of "Where's Sukey Hobbes?—Come out, you body-snatcher!" were frequently repeated by voices much shriller than the rest.

"I must—I will speak to them," said my father; and before Mr. Postle could remonstrate or interpose, he had thrown up the sash, and uttered the first three words of his address. But he was heard no further. His appearance was the signal for one of those yells of execration so awful to hear from a multitude of human throats: a ferocious howl fit only to salute an incarnate fiend, and from which my father recoiled in soul, more than he shrank in body from the ensuing volley of stones. His place, however, was immediately occupied by another orator, in the person of Kezia, who, regardless of the pelting, presented herself to the assembly, screaming at the highest pitch of her voice:—

"You sanguine monsters! do you want to kill us with fright, and our poor innocent babies!"

"Yes—and to make skeletons of you," replied a hoarse voice from the crowd; a retort applauded by so vociferous a cheer, and such atrocious expressions, that Kezia, with an exclamation of horror, precipitately withdrew to her old position.

Her retreat was hailed with a loud huzza, mingled with derisive laughter, and as it ceased ringing the dark room was suddenly illuminated by a red glare that projected the shadow of the window-frames, inwards, upon the ceiling. The mob had ignited a quantity of straw and wood, forming an enormous bonfire, by the light of which the persons and features of the ringleaders were easily recognised.

"There is Jack again!" said Mr. Postle, "fitting amidst the smoke like an imp of mischief. And John Hobbes is

waving his black flag about like a madman—and yonder is Roger Heap, with a child's bonnet on a pitchfork !”

“And there am I, burning by proxy,” said my father, pointing to the dark stuffed figure that was dangling from a triangle of poles in the midst of the blaze. “I shall soon be done to a cinder, and then the cooks will disperse.”

“I wish they may,” said Mr. Postle, “but the faces they turn up to us are desperately fierce and vicious, as well as their words. I hardly think that their excitement will be satisfied without an attack on the premises, and perhaps taking a few ounces of blood. But what is the matter now ?”

As he spoke there was an uncertain stir and movement among the crowd, with a confused outcry, amidst which the words “justice” and “constables” were prominently audible. But it was a false alarm : his worship and his myrmidons either did not or would not know of the tumult, and were snugly and safely housed at home, or in their usual haunts. The report, however, served the same purpose that their presence would have done ; for after some hesitation and wavering of the mass to and fro, Roger Heap thrusting his pitchfork into the burning effigy, ran with it up the river bank, and pitched the half-consumed figure, still blazing, into the stream. The mob then dispersed in different directions, the last of them being Catechism Jack, who, after tossing about the glowing sparkling embers, squib-fashion, for a minute or two, ran after the main body.

The smouldering figure meanwhile slowly floated along on the surface of the sluggish river, silently watched by my father and his assistant ; till after a few turns and windings, it vanished like the last twinkle of a burnt paper, in the black, blank, distance.

“ So ends the auto-da-fé,” exclaimed Mr. Postle. “ Now, then, for candles to inspect and repair our damage.”

It was less than might have been expected. Thanks to the precaution of extinguishing the lights, the majority of the stones had missed the windows : only a few panes were broken ; and the holes were soon stopped with paper and rags.

“ Are the wretches all gone, George ?” asked my mother before she ventured to uncloset her eyes.

“ All,” answered my father—“ man, woman, and boy !”

Thus reassured, my mother, with many broken phrases of thanksgiving, came out of her corner, and willingly resigned the dear twins to Kezia, who covered them with her kisses. The nurse also quitted her position, and in her usual calm sweet voice suggested that her mistress, after her fright and exhaustion, would be the better for some restorative ; to which the assistant added that nobody, the infants excepted, would be the worse for some sort of stimulant.

Accordingly the brandy, the kettle, the sugar, tumblers, and spoons, were fetched from below ; and cheered by a cordial mixture, the nerves of the company, manly and womanly, soon recovered their tone, and enabled the parties to discuss the circumstances of the recent riot. It was generally agreed that, for that night at least, there would be no further disturbance ; they, nevertheless, continued to sit up, keeping a vigilant watch, back and front, till two hours having elapsed without any fresh alarm, they retired to their respective chambers.

“ And how is all this dreadful work to end, George ?” inquired my mother, as soon as she found herself, with her husband, in their bedroom.

“ Heaven knows ! replied my father. “ Only one thing is certain—that the practice must be given up, and we must quit the neighbourhood.”

“What, sell the business!” exclaimed my mother.

“Yes, if anybody will buy it,” said my father. “He must be a liberal man, indeed, who, after this night’s demonstration, will bid me anything for the good-will.”

“Why then we are ruined!” cried my mother.

“Or something very like it,” responded my father—as indeed appeared but too probable when my unlucky parents came to talk over their future prospects; the only comfort before them being that very forlorn hope held out by the old proverb—when things are at the worst they will mend.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN INVALID.

THE moment my father opened his eyes in the morning, they rested on the shattered window panes, with their holes patched with paper or stuffed with rags, the transparent and the opaque, as they admitted or excluded the early sunshine, forming strong diversities of light and shadow. Still, the events of the overnight seemed so dream-like, that he mechanically stepped out of bed, and went to look abroad for confirmation. And, alas! there it was, in the road; that great dark mark, indicating the site of the opprobrious bonfire—a round black spot, a blot, as it were, on the parish. The leaves on one side of the poplar tree were visibly scorched; and he could even trace where Roger Heap had run up the bank to heave the burning effigy in the river. On these tokens he looked, however, with more pain than resentment. Accustomed, as a medical man, to witness the infirmities, frailties, frenzies, and morbid irritability of human nature, he made large allowance for its violence and

its weakness ; and felt little more anger at the outrage of the mob, than if he had been struck by a crazy patient, or abused by a delirious one.

My mother, on the contrary, was no sooner awake to the dilapidations in the casement, with all their suggestions of glaziers, and new panes, and putty, than she burst out into the most bitter reproaches on the whole parish ; and especially the authorities, who ought to have preserved the peace, from the justice down to the beadle. They were a set, she said, of helpless, cowardly sots, and deserved to be locked in their own cage and set in their own stocks for neglecting their duties.

“ Well, well,” said my father, “ thank Heaven, we are all safe and unhurt ; for nobody has even received a scratch ; which, considering such missiles as those ”—and he pointed to a large stone on the floor—“ must be regarded as providential.”

“ It’s that,” replied my mother, “ that makes me so mad ! One had better be murdered at once, than subjected to such dreadful alarms, and scared out of one’s senses ; ” and again she launched out in vituperation of the village wretches. The truth is, there is nothing that people resent more strongly, or forgive less easily, than a thorough frightening ; the absence of personal injury serving to aggravate the offence. Thus my mother, finding herself safe and sound, as well as all who belonged to her, begrudged, miserlike, the needless expenditure of terror on so little real damage ; just as a certain traveller reproached the highwayman, who pleaded in extenuation of having shot at him, that there was no bullet in the pistol. “ So much the worse,” exclaimed the indignant old gentleman, “ so much the worse, you villain ; for then you frightened me for nothing ! ”

My mother’s denunciations, however, did not confine

themselves to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood ; but gradually took a wider range ; and finally involved so large a portion of mankind in general, as to compel my father to remind her, that, with such sentiments, one ought to renounce society, and retire into solitude.

“ And why shouldn't we renounce society ? ” cried my mother. “ Didn't society renounce us on the night of the christening ? For my part, I could begin to-morrow—and go into a desert ! ”

“ No doubt of it, ” replied my father, very gravely. “ The only difficulty is to dwell there. It may do very well for a lone man or woman, disgusted with society, to become a recluse, and live in a cave, a cell, or a grotto ; but I fear it would be extremely inconvenient, if not impracticable, for married people, with a young family, to turn hermits. ”

“ No matter, ” said my mother. “ I know what I mean. I hate the world, and wish I could fly from it. ”

“ Pooh, pooh, ” said my father.

“ And what am I to do then, ” whined my mother, “ if I am not to complain ! ”

“ Why, come here, ” said my father, “ and look at the flight of the miller's pigeons, how pretty, and playful, and harmless, they look, after the burning flakes that were fluttering in the air last night. ”

My mother immediately slid out of bed, and slipped on her dressing-gown, but instead of looking at the miller's pigeons, went off to her own dovecote, the nursery, to assure herself of the welfare of her twin-babes. They were fast asleep ; and their calm, chubby innocent faces soon put to flight whatever remained of her misanthropy. An effect they had previously produced on Kezia, who, like her mistress, had walked up in such a virulent humour against the whole county, that, as she declared, “ provided the

family had an ark, she shouldn't care if all Lincolnshire was under water."

My father meanwhile dressed himself with professional celerity, and went down to the surgery ; which he no sooner entered, than to his astonishment he found himself in utter darkness. The shutters had not been taken down ; and the fanlight over the door was still blocked up by its temporary barricade. It was the first time that the assistant had failed to begin business at the usual hour, and my father hastened into the kitchen, and anxiously inquired if anything was the matter with Mr. Postle.

"I am afraid there is, sir," said Kezia, "for I overheard him very restless in the night. He got up several times, and walked about his room, a-talking to himself. Afterwards, towards morning, he was quiet : so thinking he was asleep, instead of calling him, I thought best to let him indulge a little."

"Quite right, Kizzy," replied my father. "The poor fellow's zeal and excitement last night have been too much for him."

"I believe they have, indeed," said Kezia, with great animation ; "for to be sure Mr. Postle takes as much excitement and interest in us as if he had been born and bred in the family ; and its good or bad luck comes home to him like a blood relation."

"Yes," said my father, "and more than to some blood relations with long beards : " an allusion that Kezia understood and intensely relished, "But I must go and open shop," and, rejecting the housemaid's assistance, he took down the surgery shutters, and locking the outer door, repaired to the breakfast parlour, where he found my mother and two unopened letters awaiting his presence. The first, from the curate, was kind and considerate. He

did not deny some temporary vexation at the loss of the plate, as the gift of his late congregation : but fortunately their regard and good will were not removable with the salt-cellars ; the intrinsic value of which was so immaterial to him, that he begged my father would think no more of the matter. The lawyer's letter from Mr. Ruffey was more rigid : clients, he said, were not so grateful a class in general, as to make presentation tankards to attorneys of common occurrence. He did therefore set a very high value on the testimonial to his professional zeal and ability, independent of its worth as solid silver. The exact value he could not state : but it was considerable. To bring home such a robbery to the perpetrators was a duty to society. He relied accordingly that for the public interest my father would leave no stone unturned, and spare no expense, to trace the stolen property, and thereby bring the offender or offenders to justice. In this hope he would say nothing about compensation, or an equivalent—at least for the present.

“Humph!” said my father, “the lawyer, at any rate, must be indemnified.”

“And here,” said my mother, holding out a three-cornered epistle, “is the answer to a note which I wrote to Mrs. Trent.” My father took the billet and read as follows :—

“MADAM,

“In answer to your distressing communication, what can I say, or, indeed, what can be said, where necessity extorts submission? My plate is gone—and by this time melted down—and consequently irretrievable.

“My poor silver souvenirs! Every spoon represented a young lady! I have others left ; but those were my favourites. All massy and solid, and stamped with the Gold-

smith's mark, and each recalling some interesting young female, now a highly polished and well-educated woman. One of the spoons, with a ducal crest, was left me by a charming, accomplished creature, just finished, and now moving in the first circles of rank and fashion. Another, with a plain cipher, belonged to the present Lady Mawbey, and retained the marks of her little aristocratic teeth. To a preceptress, such memorials of the juvenile objects of her affectionate solicitude have a preciousness beyond Potosi and Peru. Of course, as regards mere metallic value, they may be replaced by an equal number of spoons, of equal weight, or coalesced into a silver teapot ; but, alas ! all the endearing associations are obliterated for ever !

“ I am, Madam,

“ Your very obedient humble servant,

“ AMELIA TRENCH.”

“ She must have a silver teapot ! ” exclaimed my father. “ Though where it is to come from, in the present state of our finances, is beyond my guess. And, talking of teapots, Postle is poorly this morning, my dear, and must have his breakfast in bed—Kezia will take it up to him.” Had my father looked at the maid-of-all-work as he spoke, he would have perceived a sign of prudency that would have greatly diverted him, for both her cheeks seemed flushed with a claret-mark ; but his attention was attracted towards his own meal, and the blush evaporated without a comment. Kezia quietly placed a great cup of tea and a small plate of toast on her waiter, and proceeded up stairs to introduce his breakfast, with all proper discretion, into the bedchamber of Mr. Postle.

“ Well, I must and will say,” cried my mother, “ we are a persecuted family. Our misfortunes never come singly—

they never rain but they pour. After all our other troubles, here is Mr. Postle taken ill—breeding an infectious fever perhaps—and with those dear children in the house—I declare I shall go distracted !”

“Make yourself easy,” replied my father, “Postle is only a little out of sorts, and rest and quiet will soon set him to rights. And in the mean time the burden of his illness will fall chiefly on myself; for I shall not only have to make up the prescriptions, but as that Catechism Jack has absconded, I must carry out my own physic.”

“I wish it may be so,” said my mother, shaking her head. “But I am far from satisfied in my mind. Mr. Postle is a very feverish subject, and when he shakes hands with one his palm is always burning hot. If he breaks out with anything catching, I shall go wild !”

“At any rate, ma’am,” said Kezia, who had returned in time to hear the latter part of the discussion, “fever or no fever, we’ll use all the preventives. The dear infants shall have camphor bags directly, and Mr. Postle’s landing shall be well fumigated with hot vinegar, and we’ll burn bastilles all over the house.”

“Pastils,” said my father, “pastils.”

“Well, pastils. And, perhaps, if somebody was to smoke about the house,” added Kezia, with a look that applied the “somebody” to her master, “for they do say that in the Great Plague, the tobacconists were the only unaffected people in London.”

“You are quite correct,” said my father, “and if needful, the house shall stink like a tap room. Only in that case, as I never could stomach even a cigar, and your mistress does not smoke, and I will venture to answer for Mrs. Prideaux, you must take to the pipe yourself, Kezia, and do the fumigations.”

“And I would, too!” cried Kezia with energy, “if it made me as sick as a dog!”

“Ah, you don’t know what you undertake,” said my mother. “The truth is, I did once try to smoke my favourite geraniums, to destroy the insects.”

“And didn’t it kill ’em, ma’am?” asked Kezia.

“By no means,” replied my mother. “Quite the contrary; for your master found me insensible in the greenhouse, and the vermin as lively as ever.”

My mother’s anecdote put an end to the discussion; and my father having finished his breakfast, repaired to the surgery, and posted himself at the desk usually occupied by Mr. Postle. A glance at the blotting-book showed how the assistant’s thoughts had been lately occupied, for the paper was covered with rough pen and ink illuminations, in the style called the Grotesque. Amongst the figures, two were particularly prominent and plainly recognisable by their features, however otherwise transformed. Thus the bearded profile of a certain goat was obviously that of Uncle Rumbold—he was, of course, the rampant Bear with the turbaned head of the Great Mogul; and as unmistakably he was the hideous Ogre, elsewhere striding along, and clutching a fat naked child in each hand by the hair of its head. The Demon with horns and a tail was a strong likeness of Doctor Shackle; and the bottle-bellied Spider, with a human face, was evidently the same obnoxious personage. In a third design, he was dangling from a gibbet; and in a fourth, he lent his marked physiognomy to a huge Serpent, which, after a natural coil or two, twisted off into a corkscrew that went wandering half over the paper, as if in search of something to draw. Other emblems were equally significant of the assistant’s despondency and the decay of the practice. The mortar, turned into a garden-pot, had a rose growing in it;

and from the physic-basket, converted to domestic uses, protruded a bunch of carrots.

And, in truth, the gloomy prospect entertained by the artist seemed likely to be realised : hour after hour passed away, and still the doctor found himself in the surgery without a patient or a prescription. At last the confinement became so irksome, that he ran up-stairs to the assistant's bed-room, to ascertain the true state of his case. The invalid was still asleep ; but restless ; grinding his teeth, turning from side to side, muttering, and occasionally tossing his arms and clenched hands, as if labouring under the influence of some horrible dream. Nevertheless he did not awake when the Doctor felt his forehead and examined his pulse : for conscious of an impending illness, and to counteract his nervous excitement, he had taken a narcotic.

"This is more serious than I thought," muttered my father. "He is really ill, and must be looked to when he wakes." And with a heavy heart and step the doctor slowly descended the stairs ; at the foot of which he was intercepted by Kezia, with an inquiry after poor Mr. Postle.

"Worse than I could wish," replied my father ; and with a deep sigh, he passed into the surgery, paralysed, so to speak, in his professional right arm.

Still there came no customer ; a dearth of business less annoying, however, to the proprietor than to another party who looked on. Led by the impulse of old habit, Kezia every now and then made a move towards the surgery, but on looking through the glass door, and seeing my father at the desk instead of Mr. Postle, immediately retreated. Yet these brief glimpses sufficed to fret her with the fact that, come when she would, there never was a living creature with the Doctor, except the leeches. "It's well," she said, "that our cordials and compounds are so nasty ; for many

publican in such a case would take to drinking, and swallow up his own stock in trade."

At last, on one of her visits to the surgery, there was actually a strange man in it ; no patient, however, but the carrier, who, having delivered a small parcel, and received the carriage money, immediately departed. My father opened the packet, briefly inspected the contents, and then, with an audible remark, deposited it in a drawer. The remark was meant for himself ; but the glass door being ajar, the observation reached another, and not indifferent ear.

All this time my mother was in the nursery discussing with Mrs. Prideaux the topics appropriate to the locality, and in particular the merits of various kinds of food for babes ; not forgetting her favourite story of the man-servant who was sent to the biscuit-baker's for the infant victual, and forgetting the name of tops and bottoms, clapped his shilling on the counter, and said "Head or tail." This anecdote she had told, and was just beginning another, when Kezia entered the room, with a melancholy face, of faded red and white, like an ill-dyed handkerchief with the colour partly washed out. She was evidently the bearer of evil tidings, which my mother immediately guessed to refer to Mr. Postle.

"Yes, poor Mr. Postle is very poorly," replied Kezia. "The Doctor does not say so implicitly, but he shakes his head, which stands, medically, for the same thing."

"Why, then, we may have a fever in the house, after all!" exclaimed my mother.

"And I have bad news besides," said Kezia, her looks becoming still more gloomy, and her voice more dismal. "Master has got his nymph down from London."

"His what!" cried my mother.

“His nymph,” repeated Kezia.

“I conceive she means lymph,” suggested Mrs. Prideaux.

“Yes, lymph, or nymph,” said Kezia, “it’s a pleasanter word than vaccinating matter. However, it’s come down from town,—and I wish Doctor Jenner had been hung, I do, before he invented it.”

“But are you certain of it?” inquired my mother.

“Quite,” answered Kezia: “I saw the parcel. And as soon as Mr. Postle goes down, you will have master up here, at those dear babes to scarify their poor arms, and introduce the beastly virus into their little systems.”

Her prophecy was correct. In about half an hour my father made his appearance in the nursery, packet in hand, and proceeded to impart to my mother a piece of intelligence, of which to his surprise he found her already in possession.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OUR VACCINATION.

THE practice of vaccination, which has since proved such a blessing to mankind, was received at its first introduction into England with anything but a gracious welcome. Like other great public benefits, it had of course to encounter the opposition of that large class of persons who set their stereotype faces against all innovations; but besides this resistance, active or passive, it involved, in its most material feature, a peculiarity adverse to its popularity. The mere notion of deriving a disease from a brute beast was sufficient to excite a prejudice against it in the minds of the million; and the most absurd stories of the deplorable effects of the cow-pock were currently circulated and believed by the ignorant and

the credulous, especially in the provinces. Narratives were gravely repeated, and swallowed, of horns that sprouted from human heads ;—of human feet that hardened into parted hoofs ;—of human bodies that became pied or brindled with dappled hair ;—in short, the ancient metamorphosis of Iö seemed to have been only an extreme case of vaccination.

My mother, prone to misgiving, and easily *cowed*, readily entertained the common fears and doubts on the subject ; an impression in which she was strongly backed by Kezia, who adopted the vulgar opinions to their utmost extent, and devoutly put faith in all the extravagant tales that were told of the victims of the operation. It may be supposed, therefore, that the two females looked with no favourable eye on my father's preparations ; indeed, as far as wishing could effect it, the "nymph" and the lancet were more than once thrown out of the window.

"And are you really going, George, to vaccinate the children?" asked my mother, with a faltering voice.

"I really am," replied my father, and then resumed his quiet whistle, whilst he carefully charged a sharp lancet with the vaccine matter.

"Well, if you must, you must," said my mother. "But for my part I cannot reconcile my mind to it ; and I'm afraid I never shall. There seems something so unnatural and revolting in transferring the humour of a diseased brute beast into the human frame!"

"Ah! the old story," said my father. "That we may expect to see the bovine humour break out again in horns and a tail. And do you really believe, my dear, that there is any foundation for such popular romances?"

"Heaven knows!" said my mother. "But very strange things are said to have happened from it. Ask Kezia."

“ And pray what is your legend ?” said my father, turning towards the maid-of-all-work.

“ It’s about a little girl, sir,” replied Kezia, “ as was vaccinated down in our part of the country ; namely, Suffolk.”

“ And was turned into a heifer, eh ?” said my father.

“ Why no, at least not in corporal shape,” said Kezia. “ And I won’t speak positive, though some do, to a pair of little knobs of horns, that one could just feel under the skin on her forehead. But this I know, it was moral impossible to keep her out of the fields, and from running about the common, and wading up to her knees in pools of water.”

“ Pshaw ! a mere country hoyden,” said my father.

“ Perhaps she were,” said Kezia, reddening. “ Only in that case she needn’t have moo’d whenever a cow did ; and what’s more, in summer time she always had a swarm of flies about her nose and ears.”

“ I think I could account for that,” said my father.

“ Well, then,” cried Kezia, “ there was one thing that was cow-like at any rate. She couldn’t abide scarlet ; and when they wanted to put her into a red frock she tore, and butted so with her head, that they were forced to give it up.”

“ Very good,” said my father, again turning towards my mother. “ Well, my dear, I have heard Kezia’s story, and in spite of it, I think we may safely vaccinate the children, and run the risk of being tossed by them-afterwards.”

“ It’s no joke,” said my mother in a crying tone, “ though you make one of it. It’s introducing an animal change into the constitution, and who knows, if such a thing as a murrain was to break out among the cattle, but the children might have it too ?”

“ Why it would only be according to the old doctrine of sympathy,” said my father.

“ And why not ? ” said my mother. “ It is well known that if a man is bit by a dog, and the dog afterwards runs mad, the man will go crazy too ! ”

“ A vulgar error, my dear,” said my father. “ An exploded fallacy. But come ; make your mind easy. There is no more danger of the children’s having the murrain than of their bursting themselves, as a cow sometimes does, in a clover field. As to the operation itself, it is a mere flea-bite, and I will be responsible for the consequences.—Mrs. Prideaux, may I trouble you to hold this little one on your lap,”—and the wilful doctor took one of the twins from the cradle and placed it in the arms of the genteel nurse.

“ I can’t—I won’t see it done ! ” screamed Kezia, turning her face to the wall, and throwing her apron over her head.

“ Nor I neither,” exclaimed my mother, covering her face with her hands. And they were sincere in their horror. We, of this year of grace, 1845, convinced by experience of the beneficial effects of the discovery of Jenner, and consequently wiser in our *Jenneration*, cannot sympathise with the ludicrous terrors that prevailed when vaccination was a new thing. They were nevertheless both strong and general, and hundreds and thousands of females would have had the same dread of the operation as my mother and her maid.

My father, meanwhile, grasping a little plump arm so firmly as to tighten the skin, thrice plunged his lancet obliquely into the flesh ; the infant expressing its sense of the proceeding by as many squalls. Had it *bellowed*, there were two persons in the room who would not have been surprised in the least. My father then charged his lancet with fresh lymph, which he introduced into the wounds ; and then, having repeated the whole process on the other little fat arm, the babe was exchanged for his twin-brother, who underwent *seriatim* the same operations.

“There!” said my father, as he finished the work. “There, they are insured for life against the smallpox and its disfigurements.”

“I wish they may be, and from all disfigurements besides,” said my mother, taking her hands from her eyes; while Kezia removed her apron, and turning round from the wall, gazed mournfully on each little arm, scarred with what she called mentally, “the mark of the beast.”

[The following stanzas have a peculiar interest as the last poem—indeed, the last literary work of any sort—written by my father.]

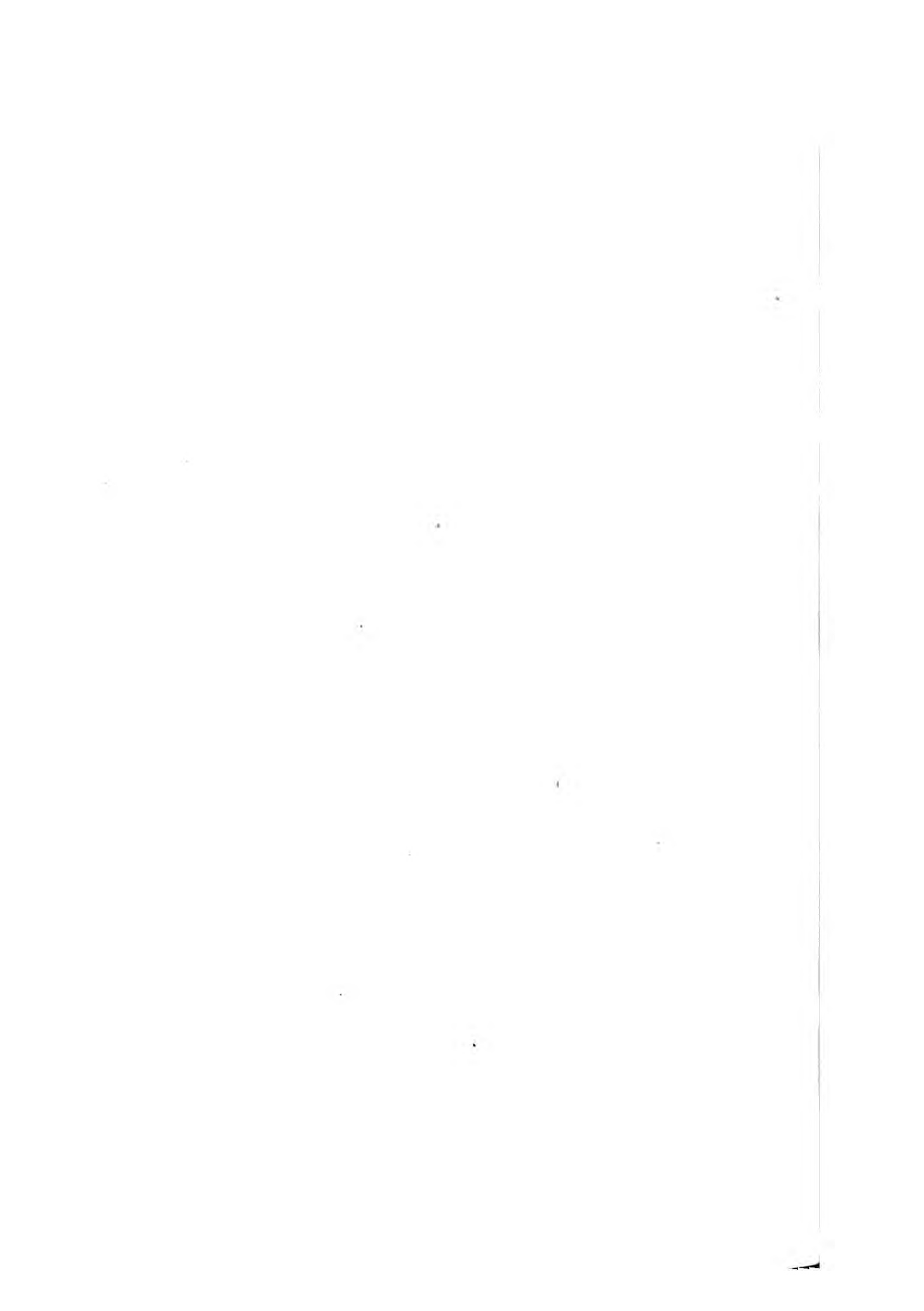
STANZAS.



FAREWELL, Life ! My senses swim ;
 And the world is growing dim ;
 Thronging shadows cloud the light,
 Like the advent of the night,—
 Colder, colder, colder still
 Upward steals a vapour chill—
 Strong the earthy odour grows—
 I smell the Mould above the Rose !

Welcome, Life ! the Spirit strives !
 Strength returns, and hope revives ;
 Cloudy fears and shapes forlorn
 Fly like shadows at the morn,—
 O'er the earth there comes a bloom—
 Sunny light for sullen gloom,
 Warm perfume for vapour cold—
 I smell the Rose above the Mould !

APPENDIX.



APPENDIX.



SINCE the publication of the first volume of this series many kind friends—and many kind strangers, one as far off as Australia—have afforded information which throws some light on the earlier portion of my father's career as an author.

The first thing I had better do is to correct a mistake of my own, the insertion of a review of the Cook's Oracle, which I was led to believe was my father's, but which really was from the pen of John Hamilton Reynolds. Between him and my father I am now able to apportion the Odes and Addresses, my Australian correspondent having furnished me with a list of those marked by my father as his own, in a presentation copy. According to this, he contributed the verses addressed to Graham, Mrs. Fry, Richard Martin, the Great Unknown, Joseph Grimaldi, the Steam Washing Company, Captain Parry, and William Kitchener.

I have also found that my father was for a short time a contributor to "Maga," in which, in 1826, appeared the "Ode to the Moon," and the "Monkey Martyr;" the former subsequently republished in "the Plea of the Midsummer Fairies," the latter in the second series of "Whims and Oddities."

The "Verses in an Album" (p. 230, vol. i.) were written in 1823, and not in 1825 as I supposed. I have found the

original leaf, whereon, beneath them, are the following lines by Barry Cornwall :—

TO THE WRITER OF THE ABOVE LINES.

WHY then,—sing for ever
 In an amorous tone
 Till the great Apollo
 Crown thee for his own,—
 So may laurel shade thee,
 And no care invade thee
 Near his golden throne !

There,—with love and singing,
 Happy may'st thou be
 As the green woods ringing,
 When from branch and tree
 Music falls in showers
 Hiding the spring hours
 With its rich melody.

There,—with song and pleasure
 Dower'd, and the ray
 Of the God, whose treasure
 Passeth not away,—
 Live, and sing for ever,
 Like the Pindus river
 Crowned with deathless bay.

B. W. P.

May, 1823.

Proctor, with the true poetic instinct, recognised my father as a brother bard even at this early period. In the "Flood of Thessaly," and other poems, published by him at the beginning of the same year, one of the poems in the

volume, "The Genealogies," is dedicated to my father in the following words :—

" To THOMAS HOOD.

" My dear Sir,

" I offer this fragment to you partly because you are a lover of the mirthful, as well as of the serious ; but principally because I am anxious to incite you by this open acknowledgment of your rare poetical powers to exercise them for the gratification of the public.

" I would not be thought forward in thus becoming the herald of your reputation, but I am nevertheless desirous of saying (what I have never before said to you) that believing your poetical faculty to be equal to very high accomplishment, I shall venture, in case you enrol your name among the living poets, to look forward with confidence to your complete success.

" I am,

" Sincerely yours,

" B. C."

The lines by Pauper, at p. 379, vol. ii., which I conjectured to be Reynolds's, are, I am informed, by Mr. Dilke (who has my most sincere thanks for the valuable assistance he has given me in this edition) by Barry Cornwall.

At p. 348 of vol. ii., I have given my reasons for believing that my father wrote some pieces for the stage. My conjecture has been borne out by several facts I have since learnt. Mr. Folkard, an old friend of my father's, informs me that a farce of his, called "York and Lancaster—or a School without Scholars," was acted at the Adelphi Theatre about thirty years ago. Of this, unfortunately, only the following song remains. It was sung by Wilkinson, as a melancholy school-boy—in fact, the only scholar at a Yorkshire school: the

other two characters in the farce being sustained by Yates and Matthews.

When I was first a scholar, I went to Doctor Monk,
And elephant-like I had, sir, a cake put in my trunk ;
The Rev. Doctor Monk, sir, was very grave and prim,
He stood full six foot high, sir, and we all looked up to him.

They didn't pinch and starve us, as here they do at York,
For every boy was ask'd, sir, to bring a knife and fork.
And then I had a chum too, to fag and all of that,
I made him sum up my sums too, and eat up all my fat.

For goodness we had prizes, and birch for doing ill,
But none of the Birch that visits the bottom of Cornhill.*
And we'd half a dozen ushers to teach us Latin and Greek,
And all we'd got in our head, sir, was combed out once a
week.

And then we had a shop, too, for lollipops and squibs,
Where I often had a lick, sir, at Buonaparty's ribs ! †
Oh ! if I was at Clapham, at my old school again,
In the rod I could fancy honey, and sugar in the cane.

I am indebted to Mr. Robert Bell—and much indebted to him—for a further proof of my father's connection with the stage. In the year 1826, under Mr. Bell's editorship, appeared "The Atlas," supporting on its shoulders the world of literature and art, "the largest sheet ever issued from the press," and almost the only one treating of such topics at that time. For this journal my father was for some time the dramatic critic. In the second number appeared the Ode to Gibbon Wakefield, to be found at page 443 of vol. i.

* Birch's pastry-cook's shop is still at the bottom of Cornhill.

† Buonaparte's ribs—a favourite sweetmeat some thirty years since.

of the Works. Unable to trace its origin, I assigned to it the date of Wakefield's trial instead of the date of Miss Turner's abduction. In the eighth number was given "the Ode to Mr. Wrench," which will be found at page 363 of vol. ii. of the Works. Mr. Wrench was again acting at the English Opera House in 1831, to which date I erroneously attributed the ode that I possessed only as an undated newspaper cutting.

Of course the reprinting of these criticisms entire is out of the question. But I have gone through them carefully with a view of extracting such portions as are characteristic of my father's style and manner of thinking. In many instances these extracts will have the further merit of recalling to the minds of old play-goers the dramatic celebrities of their youth. They have appeared to me on both these grounds so interesting—and on the former so valuable as specimens of my father's writing at that early period in his career, that I print them in the belief that the public will agree with me that they deserve a place here.

THEATRICALS.

ON taking our place as theatrical critics in the "Atlas," it may be expected that we should bestow a few words on ourselves. And first, we hope, and mean, to dispense impartial justice amongst those jealous, ambitious, unreasonable, amusing people called actors, and actresses. We are aware of the difficulty of the task,—but we come unbiassed by any stage connections, and resolute to perform our office without fear or favour. We are not partisans of any lady or gentleman upon the boards. There are persons, we know, who

cannot tolerate any performer but Mr. Macready, and some who can allow of no excellence extant but Mr. Young's. It is impossible, with many judges, that there can be a clever Mr. Yates, because there is such a clever Mr. Mathews. With others, there is but one actor, and that is Mr. Penley. We have our favourites, but they do not engross all our liking. Our delight in Miss Kelly does not hinder us from seeing what is pleasant in Mrs. Farlowe. Our partiality for Mr. Wrench does not blind us to the merits of Mr. Bennet. There are other persons who never value any talents till they are gone by, and therefore could not say a good word for Munden till after his retirement. But although we have been happy enough to have seen Mrs. Jordan and Mrs. Siddons, and the great Kemble, our praises will not be of that retrospective kind. The living actors and actresses who shall deserve them, may expect our hearty commendations, in prose and verse,—the faulty will be treated, of course, with a wholesome severity. In the first row of the pit—the critic's proper place, though he cannot always get to it—we shall take our seat, and from thence keep a wary eye upon both play-wrights and players.

For the present week it was our design to notice Mr. Elliston's Falstaff. But his untimely accident on Monday tripped up the heels of our intentions, and brought it down with him upon its face. As far as looks went, they promised well for his performance ; his laughing eye told admirably of the roguish, humorous knight, and the owner, both on and off the boards, was ever a very pleasant comedian. Perhaps he was not stuffed enough ; but it turned out providential. Even as Cassio miscarried, so did he ! Just at that speech—“ Hal, if thou see me down in the battle, bestride me, so—'tis a point of friendship,”—the performer staggered to the stage-door, and fell. Bunn's dictator—Winston's master—

Macready's manager—fell!—Drury's Emperor lay grovelling upon the boards!

“ Fallen ! fallen ! fallen !
Fallen from his high estate.”

Oh ! Great Lessee, then wert thou lessened ! thou didst lose, Great Manager ! all thyself, and self-management. The Whitsuntide rabble, that had perhaps quaked before thee at the Surrey—holiday butchers that had scrambled down from thy benches at thy bidding—men that had bowed to thy Olympic dignity—beheld thee prostrate ! They hooted and hissed thee to scorn. The gentle Sambo, thy own Mr. Spring, sigheth now, instead of his usual smiling ; and Wenston shaketh his head. Thy enemies—men that have smarted from thy kick and thy stick—have lifted up their horns. Williams croweth at thee. Poole is avenged. The refractory glass-blowers are chuckling over thee in a paragraph. “ There are forty laughing like one.”

Thy fault is, after all, venial—a gentlemanly frailty—though the fit was ill-timed. To drink is human ; but we dread the effect of such high, flagrant example upon the universal establishment. If, hereafter, a Hamlet shall come in maudlin, who shall reprove it ? Canst thou fine Lear for being only in his cups ? In our mind's eye we see a groggy Macbeth. The three overtaken witches are tumbling into their own cauldron. The figurantes dance reels bacchanalian. The scene-shifters are misjoining fragments of land and sea—ill-painted blotches, for Stanfield has dipped his brush into a full rummer. Rosina is singing suspiciously out of tune and time ; and Othello (there is precedent for it) is unaffectedly drunk. Wilt thou ever hold up thy head again upon the stage ? We hope so, after a few salutary vows, and a decent retirement. But remember the lesson for ever—

more. An old dramatist has well hinted at the danger of such disasters to the performer ; and oh ! remember, in thy heart of hearts, his emphatic warning—

“ Close up thy rigid teeth, and ne'er undo 'em,
To suffer wet damnation to run thro' em.”

COVENT GARDEN.

WOODSTOCK.—As soon as the Great Unknown has treated the public with a novel, the next operation is to hash it up for the drama ; and, in most cases, it does not bear the after process quite so well as hare. The present is one of those cases—the three volumes are served up again, in five acts ; and the public have accepted it with a sufficiently hearty relish. The novel did not seem to us furnished with plot enough for stage adaptation—and for want of a sufficient story, the play drags on rather heavily. We would have Mr. Farren to reconsider the character of Sir Henry Lee, against the next representation. There was too much of face-making, and not enough of the hearty, hunter-like roughness—it was not, in fact, the Sir Henry Lee of the novel ; he looked too much an innocent to be classed amongst the Malignants ; but it would have made a capital Polonius. Let Mr. Warde, too, sober his transports of anguish a little at sight of the first Charles's portrait. Old Noll might perchance feel as tenderly, but he certainly would have never displayed it—and before a cavalier. The language is sufficiently near the original ; but the conclusion of the play is dismally huddled up,—of the surprise of the garrison—the King's escape—the Protector's

liberation—of the Loyalists, and the marriage of Alice Lee with Markham Everhard—literally all in a breath.

On giving out Woodstock for repetition, it was answered with general approbation ; but we should advise a great deal of pruning before the piece is played again—or, to refer to our first comparison, let the gristles and skin be taken out. One scene, indeed, proved so uninteresting to the gallery that the gods betook themselves to conversation, not in whispers—and a noise ensued that would have silenced Miss Paton for ever.

We have read strange stories lately of this lady abruptly leaving off in the middle of her song, because an unlucky boatswain made a remark in the one shilling gallery. On a second observation, it is said that she threw up her song, and left the stage ! The very singing-birds might have taught her not to be so easily put up, or put down. It is but an Irish method, after all, of spiting her friends and obliging her enemies ; and besides, singers are not paid to give themselves airs, but for giving them to other people.

BENEFITS.

THE performers' nights are, by custom, exempt from criticism. They are set apart for the actor's harvest, and it would be as unkind to enforce the right of censorship as to insist upon the privileges of the free list. At such times the children of the drama play, not for reputation, but for profit. They are reduced to the condition of the unfortunate gentleman in the Spectator, who advertised to murder himself by subscription. It is not the fault of performers if they must burlesque themselves, like the late Billy Waters,

to get at the public pocket. They are expected to gratify their friends (and, next to enemies, there are none so difficult to satisfy as one's connections), not only with double measures of entertainment for the usual money, but with extraordinary novelties. They must please the friendly bakers that take their tickets, and the butchers that stick their bills upon the sheep's backs. They must, especially, tempt the sober families who make it a point to visit the theatres once a year, to attend on the particular night of their benefit; and they must tempt, too, the ordinary play-goer with some extravagance. A gentleman from Whitechapel may see Mr. Macready's *Virginius* sundry times in a month, but his *Looney MacTwolter* will happen only once in a season. It is from none of Bottom's ambition, if Mr. Farren abuses the character of Iago. It is only "to put money in his purse," if Mr. Young takes to *Don Giovanni* in feathers; or Harley to prove how fit he is for a fidgety Hamlet. Their follies are not more cognizable than the slips of gentlemen in their cups. If dancers sing, and singers dance, it must be winked at. Mr. Braham may promise a *pas de trois* with Mrs. Gibbs and Mrs. Glover; while Mr. Fawcett condescends, "for that night only," to swallow a broadsword; and the favourite song of "Cherry Ripe" is volunteered by Mrs. Davenport. Madame Vestris in pantaloons is no novelty, but she will black her face, and murder Othello and Desdemona. Even Mr. Liston must double his own attractions by the introduction of a real jackass, and perhaps recite a chapter out of Hervey's *Meditations*. The critic smothers his growl at such excesses; he is expected to have neither eyes nor ears at a Benefit.

COVENT GARDEN.



AT Covent Garden, the new piece of Woodstock has lasted, like a bachelor's leg of mutton, all through the week ; but we would rather see the joint a second time than the play. *A propos* of mutton,—we must object to Mr. Kemble's farce of eating in the supper scene. There was an abundance of knife-and-fork work, as if the very platter would follow the eatables, but little of true mouth-service ; it was a sham fight with the victuals. He played it as brother Stephen used to play Falstaff—without stuffing. He was like the miller in the proverb, that makes a meal, but does not eat at all. It had the mere sound of eating, like a turkey's gobbling. We can fancy how Wrench would have devoured it ; but a manager, perhaps, cannot be expected to be so hungry as an actor. Let him doff, too, those transverse sticking-plaster patches, as numerous and frightful as Munchhausen's in the authentic portrait. They seem a burlesque allusion to the dethroned Charles, as “a king of shreds and patches.” As there is a deviation in that part from the novel, the whole story of his bricklayer's accident down the front of the house, and the scratching of his august face against the rough cart, had better be omitted.

AMERICAN THEATRICALS.



THERE has been a theatrical row at Philadelphia, but between a manager and an actor. A Mr. Wemyss persisted in using the expression of “a brave Englishman,” as set

down in the play, but which words it had been customary with the American performers to omit—we presume about the time when the Chesapeake was worsted by the Shannon. Mr. Wemyss finally triumphed, though the mention of our valour incurred a few hisses. In the Pope's dominions all expressions of applause or disapprobation have been prohibited, under a recent code of regulations that must seem intolerable in our climate. Conceive a free asthmatic Englishman thrust neck and crop out of the pit for an untimely cough ; or an unfortunate merry gentleman of our acquaintance, who has a snake-like laugh, so near akin to a hissing that Mr. Mathews once, in a nervous moment, would have offered him a guinea to get out of the Lyceum.

PASTA'S MEDEA.



OF Madame Pasta's acting in the character of Medea, it is impossible to speak in terms of sufficient praise. It is a performance full of genius, and a study for the poet, the sculptor, and the musician. It would require a genius equal to her own to describe the sublime expression of her voice and gesture with which she gave the one word "Io," where Jason asks, "Che sperar posso? Che mi resta?" ("What can I hope, and what remains for me?" in the English version of the books,) and she replies; "Io," a shout of admiration followed this magnificent burst, which spoke a soul in a single sound. Here we had Medea in the agony of her pride and passion. In another scene, that of the preparations for the marriage of Jason and Creusa, we saw her a suppliant at Jason's feet, and nothing could exceed the touching effect

with which she gave the passage, "Mira infido, a quale stato, sol per te ridotto io sono." In the expression of tenderness in all its shapes, Madame Pasta is unrivalled. Her caresses are always full of grace and beauty ; and is there, in the whole world, a more lovely sight than the gentle endearments which mark the affections of a fond but delicate woman ?

Our vulgar performers, our Romeos and Juliets, show their ardours by the extremity of their hugs—they love as bears fight. Madame Pasta, in the last scene of Romeo, throws back the hair from the forehead of Juliet, and simply clasps her head. There is a depth of love in that single action that we never before saw expressed ; it is not a caress of dalliance—that would be out of place when Romeo is on the brink of eternity—but of a love as pure from grossness as that the mother bears her child. It is a beautiful commentary on a phrase which has always been a great favourite of ours, the *carum caput* of the Latins, the *φίλη κεφαλή* of the Greeks. Madame Pasta, when she clasped the lovely head of Ronzi de Begnis, made us feel the full force of the *carum caput*. We have since seen the same action used on a less bewitching subject, but with almost equal effect. In Medea, her caresses of her children are unspeakably lovely ; she does not smother them with kisses in the manner of our Coras, but the mother's passion speaks in her eloquent face, and she bestows one kiss on her babes, single and sweet as the feeling which fills her heart. But these are beauties to be seen, not to be told ; and our readers, to appreciate, must behold them in the inimitable acting of the Siddons of the lyric drama.

THE DOG OF DRURY LANE.

DRURY LANE was once saved by a dog. He held the head of its sinking prosperity above water, and dragged it, dripping, not of water, but gold, into the treasury. The story is told by Reynolds in his "Life and Times;" and Elliston seems to have had a friendly reading of the proof sheets, and to have adopted the hint. It was a jewel of a suggestion. Dogs draw, the manager knew, in Kamtschatka, and why not in Drury Lane? The readers of the "Crusaders" will remember, in the tale called the "Talisman," a notable Scotch hound, belonging to Sir Kenneth, and attending constantly on the warrior, like Crab upon Launce. There was an excellent opportunity to dramatise the novel of the Great Unknown, and to have a real dog at the same time. The ingenious Mr. Beazley undertook the literary arrangements; Bishop, the songs to dish up; whilst the manager roamed all the repositories of dog-dealers and dog-stealers, and the wharfs of Bankside and Horsleydown, for an appropriate mastiff. He succeeded finally, we believe, in Newfoundland. The new performer is a fine creature of that breed; black turned up with white, and a bushy tail, and answers to the name of Neptune. We are not in possession of the terms of his engagement, but rumour hints that his salary is equal to that of Miss Stephens, and that he is to have a joint benefit at the end of the season with Mr. Penley.

* * * * *

MR. WALLACK, in goodly armour, as the lion-hearted Richard, divides the applauses with the dog; but the gentleman is the better performer. His forte is decidedly melodrame. As the Knight of Snowdown, and warriors of that romantic

breed, he excels. He looks well in armour and feathers ; he has a good presence, with a skill and energy at fencing, and a taste in dress and attitude, which the designers of the lottery-pictures toil after in vain. He is just such a prince as schoolboys dream of when they read of Valentine, the subduer of Orson—he would make a capital king's Champion at a coronation. But he has no soul of whim, no airiness. He will never be the sprightly Prince Hal, which he lately attempted. His mirth is as hollow as the pathos of Mrs. W. West, whom we can fancy to wipe dust sometimes out of the corner of her eye, but not tears. She is contented to charm without the sorrow that "makes beauty more beautiful than beauty's self." So Mr. Wallack is not born to jest and smile, but to fight and frown—both favourite habits of the royal Crusader. His exclamation of "Ha!" supposed to be characteristic of Richard, was too much after the pattern of a pavior's sigh ; but through the rest of the part he bore himself right gallantly, and tore down the "rag of Austria" like a lion indeed.

Mr. Bennet is accused of copying Mr. Macready, which is a pity, when he might be as good an original. The proprietor of *Virginius* could not have done better for the Knight of the Leopard—but comparisons, Mrs. Jenkins says, are odorous. Sir Kenneth was worthily sustained, and his personation of the dumb Nubian in particular ; but we wish there had been another Mr. Younge for the Hermit of Engaddi. Mr. Archer has a good sensible face, and he brought no discredit on physiognomy by his performance. Though obliged to be three gentlemen at once, like Cerberus, he had little to do, and he did not overdo it—a rare merit in an actor. Neptune, on the contrary, threatened to exceed his part. He defended the standard of England, and limped on with one leg wounded,—that is, tied up,—very plausibly ; but in the last

scene, when he should not have even strained at the leash till the approach of Monserrat, he betrayed rather an inclination to have a wrestle with each of the allies. He seems to enjoy the romping part of his work ; however, he was restrained till the proper moment, and then setting off in a canter, and catching Mr. Howell by his red worsted comforter, they had a roll and tumble together, to the audible delight of the house.

* * * * *

ON the second night, an apology was made for the absence of Mr. Horn, through indisposition. The baneful example of the manager begins already to prevail ! Miss Stephens, too, was away, though her name was set down in the bills. Another lady sang “ Di piacer,” and “ Should he upbraid,” on her behalf ; and the “ Horn, the lusty horn,” was supplied by the chorus singers in the last act. To make amends for these accidents there was a delightful young party in the left-hand stage box. A group of three little girls—the youngest, a blue-eyed child, with fair glossy hair, as pretty and natural as a flower ; the two others, in caps and cherry coloured ribbons, both arch and artless in expression ; and the trio looking altogether like a picture of Sir Joshua’s. We wish he had painted them, for then they might be seen again.

VELLUTI.

BUT let us come to his voice, which is “ the main business. The defects of his voice,” says Anglo-Italicus, “ are so glaring as to be evident to the coarsest ears, and are therefore the less to be insisted on by the judicious and delicate.” This

is an odd argument. By a parity of reasoning, when we object to a horse-dealer that the horse we are examining has three lame legs, the jockey may say, "The defects of his legs are so glaring as to be evident to the eyes of a tailor, and are therefore the less to be insisted on by the judicious and delicate horseman." But our main business is with the legs of the horse, and the voice of the singer, and we cannot pass over defects in either one or the other on the score of their grossness.

VAUXHALL.

—♦—

It is no slight merit in these times to redeem pledges ; and on Wednesday we redeemed ours by visiting these Surrey Gardens. It happened to be the night of the re-celebration of the battle of Waterloo. For at Vauxhall it was found profitable to keep such festivals twice over, and the place was all in a blaze with emblems of military glory. The names of Wellington and Waterloo showed fiery off indeed in parti-coloured flame, and seemed a pattern for History to write of the hero—

"With a pencil of light,"

according to the suggestion of Moore. There was an abundance of illumination, but we think we have seen the ornaments more tastefully and airily disposed. The trophy shields were formal, and the crowns somewhat lumpish and heavy—light, as Dr. Donne would quibble, should be *light*—but there was a seasonable and splendid rose in June that did honour to the genius of the lamps.

The conversion of the Rotunda into a concert-room is a decided improvement. We never relished much the gusty

songs set to the open air of the gardens. The audience shivering to the singer's quivering—the rain getting the better of the words—and Miss Tunstall, quite out of curl, warbling on like a steam-boat with the wind in her teeth. Besides, listening is a sedentary pleasure; noise is active; silence is passive. Speechmakers instinctively “get on their legs” to speak, but the hearers as naturally sit. It is no fiction, therefore, to say that in the new concert-room Charles Taylor sings all the better for the benches. We prick up our ears to Miss Stephens with tenfold pleasure whilst we are squatting, like a hare, upon a form.

* * * * *

BUT Vauxhall, in spite of the insinuations of a learned punning friend, is not exclusively vocal, or *Vox—et preterea nihil*. To pass over panoramic views of Florence, &c., and an artificial waterfall (a relation, by the sound, of Mr. Tinney); there is the ballet. Mademoiselle Rossignol and Monsieur B. Vestris dance with equal grace and agility. The fireworks are splended; and the adventurous rope-walker comes down the perilous cord, small and radiant with squibs and crackers, like an American fire-fly.

COME, come, I am very
 Disposed to be merry—
 So hey! for a wherry
 I beckon and bawl!
 'Tis dry, not a damp night,
 And pleasure will tramp light
 To music and lamp light
 At shining Vauxhall!

Ay, here's the dark portal—
 The check-taking mortal

I pass, and turn short all
At once on the blaze—
Names famous in story,
Lit up *con amore*,
All flaming in glory,
Distracting the gaze!

Oh *my* name lies fallow—
Fame never will hallow
In red light and yellow
Poetical toil—
I've long tried to write up
My name, and take flight up ;
But ink will not light up
Like cotton and oil !

But sad thoughts, keep under!—
The painted Rotunder
Invites me. I wonder
Who's singing so clear?
'Tis Sinclair, high-flying,
Scotch ditties supplying ;
But some hearts are sighing
For Dignum, I fear !

How bright is the lustre,
How thick the folks muster,
And eagerly cluster,
On bench and in box,—
Whilst Povey is waking
Sweet sounds, or the taking
Kate Stephens is shaking
Her voice and her locks !

What clapping attends her !—
 The white doe befriends her—
 How Braham attends her
 Away by the hand,
 For Love to succeed her ;
 The Signor doth heed her,
 And sigheth to lead her
 Instead of the band !

Then ott we all sally—
 Time's ripe for the Ballet,
 Like bees they all rally
 Before the machine !—
 But I am for tracing
 The bright walks and facing
 The groups that are pacing
 To see and be seen.

How motley they mingle—
 What men might one single,
 And names that would tingle
 Or tickle the ear—
 Fresh Chinese contrivers
 Of letters—survivors
 Of pawnbrokers—divers
 Beau Tibbses appear !

Such little and great men,
 And civic and state men—
 Collectors and rate-men—
 How pleasant to nod

To friends—to note fashions,
 To make speculations
 On people and passions—
 To laugh at the odd !

To sup on true slices
 Of ham—with fair prices
 For fowl—while cool ices
 And liquors abound—
 To see Blackmore wander,
 A small salamander,
 Adown the rope yonder,
 And light on the ground !

Oh, the fireworks are splendid ;
 But darkness is blended—
 Bright things are soon ended,
 Fade quickly and fall !
 There goes the last rocket !—
 Some cash out of pocket,
 By stars in the socket,
 I go from Vauxhall !

WRENCH.

NEXT to the inimitable Kelly,—accomplished as art can make her, yet natural as instinct—the only complete actress on the stage—a bequest seemingly from the superlative old school, talked of by the elderly playgoers—there is Wrench, worthy of her companionship—

“ Each lends to each a double charm.”

They play delightfully together, like a pair of consummate whist-partners, either one knowing and aiding the other's game. Here a she-sun, there a he-moon—as old Donne whimsically expresses it—they reflect the spirit of pleasantry from one to the other, and not a single ray is wasted between them. From this well-matched pair, there is a regular gradation of second and third, and fourth rates, down to the very poor-rates of performance.*

WE are aware that the rise and fall of popular favourites do not excite an equal interest, like those of a balloon, but we do trust that Mrs. Bland will not be forgotten by the many who were once charmed with a passing sweet voice, because it is somewhat past its sweetness.

SURREY THEATRE.

THE Rake's Progress.—We thought the managers of the theatres had ceased to take charge of the morals of the town; at least it is some Easters since *George Barnwell* was played at both houses, for the benefit of the London apprentices. Did uncle-killing become more frequent for the representation, or were the holiday folks at last disgusted with that annual stage homily? Perhaps the numerous Milwoods and young profligates, presumed to be sitting to have their conscience caught at a play, like the King in *Hamlet*, refused to patronise it any longer as one of their amusements. It must have seemed unhandsome to the lower orders, at a season marked as their own—nay, at a time when, in consideration of their countenance, they ought even to have commanded a play, to be twitted, in the mass,

* Here follows the Ode to Wrench, see vol. ii. p. 363.

with embezzlement and murder. They would not like, whilst enjoying their holiday fruit, to be reminded of that last bitter orange that moisteneth the culprit's lip—to have the gallows for an everlasting drop scene. There must have been, too, something dull and uninteresting in a tragedy, tending to a catastrophe which they had witnessed, probably in reality, at least once a week, before the Debtors' door of Newgate. Perhaps, having been sundry times admonished in earnest by the Judge or the Recorder, they resented, as superfluous and impertinent, such a make-believe lecture. Folks that have snuffed the Old Bailey rosemary and rue—that have witnessed the awful black cap, jostled with Jack Ketch himself, and nodded farewells to condemned friends with halters about their necks—must find something marvellously stale, flat, and unprofitable, in the play's unemphatical warnings!

AN IMAGINARY FIRST NIGHT.

—♦—

IN the absence of a real subject, we will attempt to sketch the progress of an imaginary modern play, and to show up, by the way, some of the prevailing absurdities of authors, actors, and composers. Not to seem invidious, we will lay the scene at Drury Lane; because, whatever sorry picture we may draw, that theatre cannot be damaged by the application, as it is expected to show quite as a different thing under a new and judicious management.

Gentle reader, link your own arm in mine, if you please, to Brydges-street. There is no mob, you see, unless we count in the bill-mongers about the entrances. The public promenade without a single shriek to the pit, and are

particularly nice and fickle in their selection of situation. There is no Hobson's choice about seats. There is room for small families in the gallery. The first, "first company," two youths in black cravats, and three ladies in Braganzas, monopolise the dress circle. Nineteen gentlemen, on the free list, straggle in about five minutes before seven. The pittites and the party in No. 6 look at each other for half an hour longer, till the ting-tinkling bell announces that the orchestra are going to "play away the overture"—a medley of music discomposed for the occasion, and called new, as we speak of the New River. It commences according to the recommendation of Mr. Puff, in *The Critic*, with three crashes, or "morning guns;" and then away go the notes, capering and scampering up and down the gamut, shivering and quivering, sometimes in concord, sometimes all discords, shrieking and scratching and grating, like the dragging about of ragged iron fenders, with every now and then a smart crash like the splitting of a piece of new Irish linen. Anon, a bumping running bass, as if the double drum had a bad tumble down stairs from the garret to the bottom of the house. The secondary violinists seem to be sawing, and the leader with a finer hand-movement to be filing, their instruments. The music has something of the sound of both of those harsh mechanical operations. The trombonist, with despairing energy, seems operating on himself with a patent stomach-pump. The kettle-drummer—good with both hands, like Randall—is punishing his instrument up in a corner. Heads and arms are wriggling with universal rapidity; the music is in full gallop; when suddenly it pulls up on its haunches, and the listening faculty is canted head foremost a good yard in advance. A dead pause—and then the fiddles fall again into hysterics. Another rumble of thunder, and a small peaking pipe drops in, all alone, like a

dribblet of small beer, or the childish treble of an infant at a christening. Before it is turned off, the bass-viol grumbles in, as if weary of standing so long upon its head. And then a fresh crash, followed by three little crashes. The trumpets blow up for a storm; the fiddles work themselves into a tearing passion (it is Orpheus being torn into pieces anew by the raving Bacchanals), the whole winding up in a row of descriptive uproar. There is no need of telling what noises the music speaks for; like the labelled passages in the Battle of Prague, the delighted Londoner easily recognizes the beating of beds—the Tower guns—a runaway coal-waggon—the mail-coaches—and a chorus of coppersmiths.

A moderate applause, running about fourteen hands high, succeeds. The musicians rub down their bald heads and shining brows with their handkerchiefs; and this is a modern overture. Our remarks upon the music are suspended by the rising of the green curtain; and the stage discloses two walking gentlemen, in feathers, preparing the foundation of the play. They are the pioneers of the plot, and have a deal of rubbish to clear off before the piece can begin its march. One of them is a military officer, and his sweetheart, it appears, has just been carried off by banditti. He orders, of course, an immediate pursuit, but loses his start by coming forward to sing two verses about love and a soldier's duty;—and as there is no time to be lost, the audience encore the song.* The lady and the robbers might get a good five miles ahead in the interval; but you shall see, in the next scene, that the ruffians forego all the advantage, by stopping to dance with some holiday-making villagers on the road.

The captive lady quickly interests the youngest and handsomest of the countrymen, and they converse apart, uninter-

* Vide "The Last Guerilla."

ruptedly, whilst the head robber is hob-nobbing with the farmer's wife. She declares that she can sing the tale of her woes, though she cannot speak ;* and the clown listens most attentively, for he has heard hitherto only of females that speak but cannot sing. In the meantime the militia come up, so secretly that not one of the robbers discovers that he is a prisoner till, on preparing for a dance *à la ronde*, he feels that the regulars have tied his legs.† While the felons are disposed of, a young female, in a Hampshire Leghorn and a short russet petticoat, trimmed with with sky blue, comes and dry-sobs over the stage lamps. She confesses that she is jealous of the attentions of her rustic lover to the lady in chains. The villagers crowd round. She appeals to the dairymaids and shepherdesses for a character, and they all range at her side ; she dares the male rustics to say that they have ever kissed even her ruddy little finger, and they drop their heads to a man, as acknowledged victims of rejected addresses, and hold up their hands.‡ She leaves off crying, and sings, reproaching Lubin, to the tune of "Auld lang syne," with his perfidy, and tears the marriage licence before his face. The villagers look blue and brown, but the lady in chains, learning the cause of the quarrel, comes forward, and declares that Lubin can hope for no part in her love, for her heart has long been bestowed on another. The eyes of the bandit sparkle, but she places her hand in the glove of the captain of infantry. The bandit stamps his boot firmly on, and cries, Hah ! He slaps his forehead—thumps his chest, as if to try the soundness of his lungs against a fit of raving—clutches his hair, and tries to turn his own head, and then to pull his own scalp off ; in the

* Vide last scene of "The Shepherd Boy."

† Vide the surprise scene in "The Last Guerilla."

‡ "Broken Promises."

meantime wriggling himself by a sort of toe-and-heel work, expressive of great agitation, to her side. He demands fiercely if she has forgotten their former engagement, but she replies that since he was outlawed, and dead, therefore, in the eyes of the law, she had considered herself released from the former vows.* The robber swallows the news the wrong way, and chokes; but at last, remembering that it is but a jilt lost, leads her over to the King's captain. The officer and the lady make a profound bow and curtesy to the malefactor, thus turned benefactor; the wedding day is fixed on the nail, and the romantic footpad is requested to give away the bride. The rest of the gang are immediately released, without the forms of a trial; each takes the hand of a pretty villager, they strike up first a dance and then a chorus;—and this, reader, is somewhat like the progress of a modern play!

TO MISS KELLY,
OF THE ENGLISH OPERA HOUSE.

KELLY, two quiet hours ago,
Thy part was o'er, the play was done,
The tragic vision fled.
My lobster salad is discuss'd,
My wine and water mingled just,
And thou art in my head!

CLIFFORD is gone—for all the while,
And BAKER's everlasting smile,
Is vanish'd from me quite,

* "The Last Guerilla."

Like foolish portraits on a wall,
Sway'd by a curtain's rise or fall,
And not for after sight.

But thou, without or with my will,
Thy ringing tones attend me still,
And melancholy looks ;
Again I see, and echo these
Again, like golden passages
Gather'd from olden books.

Not apt to lend my faith to cheats,
Or look for honey in the sweets
Of artificial flowers ;
Though critical and curst withall,
Though early mingled grief and gall,
I recognise thy powers.

Tears thou canst bring, where tears have sprung,
Oft, from an aching heart—not wrung
By griefs at second hand ;
And smiles, to lips that have not curl'd
Seldom at humours of a world
Most vigilantly scann'd.

And years bring very chilly damps,
That dim the splendour of the lamps,
And shame the canvas skies ;
The brightest scenes, I know not how,
Have changed—and Mrs. GROVE is now
No fairy in my eyes.

I cannot weep when lovers weep,
Nor throne a tyrant in my sleep,
 Nor quake at tragic screams ;
The fond, the fervent faith is flown
Of boyhood ; and a play is grown
 Less real than my dreams.

And yet when I confront thee, still
I quite forget that sullen chill,
 So perfect is thy art ;
Again the vision cheats my soul,
For why ? Thou dost present a whole,
 Where others play a part.

The saddest or the shrewdest flights
Of tragical or comic wights
 Are ne'er put out of joint,
And things by feebler authors writ,
Are better'd by thy better wit,
 And dullness finds a point.

A kind of verbal novelist,
Up and down life, thou dost enlist
 All humours, high and low ;
That, dramatised, inform thy face
And voice, with every trick and trace
 Of human whim and woe !

The stage, it is thy element,
Wherein thy mind preserves its bent,
 Thou dost not seek or scorn,
The critic's meed, the public praise,
As if ordain'd to live in plays,—
 Not actress made, but born !

HOT WEATHER AT THE PLAY.



THE present is scarcely weather for theatrical amusements. Without a paradox, they are too much of a relaxation. It is too warm for crowds of any kind; and the heat furnishes a quiet answer, at least as regards summer theatres, to the recent proposal of a contemporary for having plays performed about noon. The stage hour and the fashionable dinner time might not clash quite so awkwardly, but the peers and peeresses would have an objection to coming in cool undress chintzes. In such a memorable hot week as the present, when Atkinson has just killed a brace of bears without any profit to the grease-pot, a melodrama about lunch time must be a luxury! Even after seven, the atmosphere of an overflowing house is sufficiently genial; glowing and steaming like the air of an orangery, but without its fragrance.

Let us suppose ourselves in the dress circle, but wishing ourselves in any other sort of balcony. What a scene of general relaxation! The "perspiration of delight," to borrow a phrase from the critic in the *Chronicle*, stands upon every forehead; handkerchiefs, as signals of distress, are flagging with their owners in all directions; curls, unwinding into lankness like cotton balls; and collars curling off from the obnoxious glowing cheek, like the leaves of the American sensitive plant. The thin pale gentleman at our right looks cool, but he is only at a white heat, and his powder is going off, for the very reason that it ought not to go off,—because it is wet. That stout lady's visage in the left-hand box might pass for Aurora's,—intensely rosy,—and a leash of pearls—(are they not?)—escaped, perhaps, from her tiara,

are stealing down her brow. The whole front row, "with dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms," according to the tremendous lines in Milton, is all in a flutter of fans. There are but two cool persons in the house,—that sugar-baker, in his great coat, in the pit, and the anchorsmith up in the gallery.

A momentary relief! The box-door opens, not at, but, in our backs, and lets enter a current of air that cools us all on one side, like a sole on a fishmonger's slab; but the comfortable zephyr is soon smothered by the entrance of two stout Lancashire agricultural gentlemen, with the chill off. The air warms up again; the fumes of extra strong lavender endeavour in vain to suppress the odour of the unconsumed gas—that baneful vapour, which Sir Humphry Davy, instigated by the complaints of a playgoer, recently inhaled, and nearly died, as he had lived, for the interests of science. After the noxious inflation, he was but just able to throw himself, for a superficial grave, on his grass-plot! Of the unwholesomeness of coal smoke, as a drink, we have no doubt; but we think the simple glare of the lamps, with the tearing tentarrare music of a modern opera, might have accounted of themselves for the head-splitting symptoms of the playgoer.

The curtain draws up, and the house is a trifle cooler. On the stage there are correspondent tokens of a mild summer. The performers are evidently distressed; but, unlike other distressed people, fight very shy of their handkerchiefs. They use them gingerly like dusters; the cunning red and white on their cheeks being anything but "warranted fast colours." The ghost looks flushed in spite of his flour; the Siberian exile indulges in nankeens, and Rosina shows as dishevelled as Ophelia. The tyrant that came in a lion goes out like a lamb; and arms and legs, just before passionately

energetic, fall suddenly tame and ridiculously listless before they are well clear of the side-scene. In some instances the heat works an improvement. The languishings of affectation for once seem natural, and a pair of carmine cheek bones, as if only coloured after nature and the French apples. Liston looks admirably lax and oily, in keeping with the season; Mr. Bartley, who inclines to overact himself—a failing that leans to virtue's side on the stage—plays always the better for hot weather; and the lady who used about Christmas to volunteer an encore, is content to come only when she is well called, and to sing if she must.

* * * * *

Theatrical matters, to speak in the language of the price-current, continue in a dull state. The few people in town who have ears have been attracted during the last week to Mr. Arnold's, by the translation of an opera of Winter's, which is said to have been popular on the Continent. It sounds oddly, for Winter's music to be heard in a summer theatre; and no less so, that translations of foreign pieces should be called "English Operas," the presumed staple of the house in the Strand. We always supposed it was a foundation for the encouragement of native compositions; but the production of Tarrare, Der Frieschutz, and the Interrupted Sacrifice, have corrected that delusion. Far is it from our hearts to be ungrateful to the importer of Weber and Winter; it is not his fault, doubtless, that our operas must be born abroad; but we must lament over the fact. It used to seem to us not quite Utopian, that we might grow a real indigenous opera—if not quite new, and of the same composer, at least out of our stock melodies and old airs in bottle—short and sweet snatches of song, like those in the Beggar's Opera; and that it might run a race of favour with any of its cousins-german, and be half as popular as Gay's.

We have an objection to the divorce of music from its husband tongue, the language of its fatherland. It becomes broken music, as we say of broken English. It discourses with difficulty and doubt. The words and sounds have, before translation, a natural agreement, like the features of a face, but which is disfigured inevitably when A and B exchange noses. We are more averse still to serious opera, which is generally a bad melodrama made tedious with music—neither a concert nor a play; or a concert interrupted by a lord mayor's procession in the street—a compound interest that, in spite of Cocker, is of less value than either of the simple ones. Finally, we have an invincible dislike, on or off the stage, to all Peruvian loans, feather capes, bows and arrows, and red-bosomed savages, like brick-makers gone outlandish—one and the last of our objections to the new opera. The music is generally replete with beauty, but of a delicacy that will not make it so popular as the Freischutz about the smaller streets.

HINTS TO PAUL PRY.

OH, pleasing, teasing, Mr. Pry,
 Dear Paul—but not Virginia's Paul,
 As some might haply deem, to spy
 The umbrella thou art arm'd withal,
 Cool hat, and ample pantaloons,
 Proper for hot and tropic noons;—

Oh no! for thou wert never born
 To watch the barren sea and cloud
 In any desert isle forlorn—

Thy home is always in a crowd
 Drawn nightly, such is thy stage luck,
 By Liston—that dramatic Buck.

True as the evening's primrose flower,
 True as the watchman to his beat,
 Thou dost attend upon the hour
 And house, in old Haymarket Street.
 Oh, surely thou art much miscall'd,
 Still Paul—yet we are never pall'd!

Friend of the keyhole and the crack,
 That lets thee pry within and pore,
 Thy very nose betrays the knack—
 Upturn'd through kissing with the door;
 A peeping trick that each dear friend
 Sends thee to Coventry, to mend!

Thy bended body shows thy bent,
 Inclined to news in every place;
 Thy gossip mouth and eyes intent,
 Stand each a query in thy face;
 Thy hat a curious hat appears,
 Pricking its brims up like thy ears;

Thy pace, it is an ambling trot,
 To post thee sooner here and there,
 To every house where thou shouldst not;
 In gait, in garb, in face, and air,
 The true eavesdropper we perceive,
 Not merely dropping in at eve,—

But morn and noon, through all the span
 Of day,—to disconcert and fret,
 Unwelcome guest to every man,

A kind of dun, without a debt,
Well cursed by porter in the hall,
For calling when there is no call.

Harm-watching, harm thou still dost catch—
That rule should save thee many a sore ;
But watch thou wilt, and, like a watch,
A box attends thee at the door—
The household menials e'en begin
To show thee out ere thou art in !

Old Grasp regards thee with a frown,
Old Hardy marks thee for a shot,
Young Stanley longs to knock thee down,
And Subtle mourns her ruin'd plot,
And bans thy bones—alas! for why!
A tender curiosity !

Oh leave the Hardys to themselves—
Leave Mrs. Subtle to her dreams—
'Tis true that they were laid on shelves—
Leave Stanley, junior, to his schemes ;
More things there are, the public sigh
To know the rights of, Mr. Pry !

There's Lady L —— the late Miss P——,
Miss P—— and lady both were late,
And two in ten can scarce agree,
For why the title had to wait ;
But thou mightst learn from her own lips
What wind detain'd the lady-ship ?

Or Mr. P !—the sire that nursed
Thy youth, and made thee what thou art,
Who form'd thy prying genius first—

(Thou wottest his untender part),
 'Twould be a friendly call and fit,
 To know "how soon he hopes to sit."

Some people long to know the truth
 Whether Miss T. does mean to try
 For Gibbon once again—in sooth,
 Thou mightst indulge them, Mr. Pry ;
 A verbal extract from the brief
 Would give some spinsters great relief !

Suppose, dear Pry, thou wert to dodge
 The porter's glance, and just drop in
 At Windsor's shy sequester'd lodge,
 (Thou wilt, if any man can win
 His way so far)—and kindly bring
 Poor Cob's petition to the king.

There's Mrs. Coutts—hath she outgrown
 The compass of a prying eye ?
 And, ah ! there is the Great Unknown,
 A man that makes the curious sigh ;
 'Twere worthy of your genius quite
 To bring that lurking man to light.

O, come abroad, with curious hat,
 And patch'd umbrella, curious too—
 To poke with this, and pry with that—
 Search all our scandal through and through,
 And treat the whole world like a pie
 Made for thy finger, Mr. Pry !

I HAVE now completed my task. It has been no easy one, but I have found a great pleasure and pride in its accomplishment. Numerous letters from various quarters have convinced me that my labours have been appreciated. From them I feel some satisfaction in learning that my comprehensive reproduction of all my father's writings, however slight, is rather widely approved. I intended this edition for those students and lovers of my father's writings, to whom everything he published would have some interest. For the general reader, as I stated at the very outset, there are the volumes of serious poems, those of wit and humour, and the two series of Hood's Own.

I am not, however, at all disinclined to bow to the decision of those friendly critics, who decide that I have not learned "the art to blot." I did not expect to escape censure altogether, and I had rather be blamed for reprinting too much than too little. My belief is that my father's fame is too well established to be injured by the reprinting (granting it, for the argument, injudicious reprinting) of some of his more ephemeral writings. On the other hand, I should be very sorry if any admirer of his works could point to this edition, and mention some favourite bit, however unimportant, as "conspicuous for its absence."

My own conviction, and an honest one, is that I have done best in not blotting. But at the same time I am ready to believe that my convictions may be wrong. It would be ungracious in me to quarrel with criticism so friendly expressed and so candidly given.

Throughout the whole course of the work I have on all sides received advice, information, and assistance, for which I can only return my most sincere thanks here to all collectively. To attempt to enumerate those to whom I am indebted would entail a list sufficiently long to warrant some

of my less friendly critics in calling it "book-making," after their genial wont. As my conscience most clearly absolves me of that charge hitherto, I cannot allow even my most sincere gratitude for many kind acts to lead me astray here.

My experience since the commencement of the series assures me that there will be many alterations—possibly additions—to be made in this collection hereafter. I shall feel much obliged to any of my readers who will point such out to me. It is my earnest hope to leave behind me a perfect edition of my father's works, for the study, the delight, and the benefit of a public, which is, I think, daily becoming better acquainted with his writings.

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