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BELFORD REGIS:
OR
SKETCHES OF A COUNTRY TOWN.

BY MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,
AUTHORESS OF "RIENZI," "OUR VILLAGE," &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:
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1835

[NP]

PREFACE.

IN an Article on the last Volume of "Our Village," the courteous critic recommended, since I had taken leave of rural life, that I should engage lodgings in the next country town, and commence a series of sketches of the inhabitants; a class of the community which, whilst it forms so large a portion of our population, occupies so small a space in our literature, and amongst whom, more perhaps than amongst any other order of English society, may be traced the peculiarities, the prejudices, and the excellences of the national character.

"Upon this hint I *wrote*;" and the present work would have been called simply "Our Market Town," had not an ingenious contemporary, by forestalling my intended title, compelled me to give to "my airy nothings, a local habitation and a name."* It would not quite do to have two "Simon Pures" in the field, each asserting his identity and jostling for precedence; although I am so far from accusing Mr. Peregrine Reedpen (as the Frenchman did the ancients) of having stolen my best thoughts, that I am firmly of opinion, that were twenty writers to sit down at once to compose a book upon this theme, there would not be the slightest danger of their interfering with each other. Every separate work would bear the stamp of the author's mind, of his peculiar

* "Our Town; or, Rough Sketches of Character, Manners, &c. By Peregrine Reedpen." 2 vols, London, 1834.

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train of thought, and habits of observation. The subject is as inexhaustible as nature herself. One favour, the necessity of which has been pressed upon me by painful experience, I have to entreat most earnestly at the hands of my readers,—a favour the very reverse of that which story-tellers by profession are wont to implore! It is that they will do me the justice *not* to believe one word of these sketches from beginning to end. General truth of delineation I hope there is; but of individual portrait painting, I most

seriously assert that none has been intended, and none, I firmly trust, can be found. From this declaration I except, of course, the notes which consist professedly of illustrative anecdotes, and the paper on the Greek plays, which contains a feeble attempt to perpetuate one of the happiest recollections of my youth. Belford itself too, may, perhaps, be identified: for I do not deny having occasionally stolen some touches of local scenery from the beautiful town that comes so frequently before my eyes. But the inhabitants of Belford, the Stephen Lanes, the Peter Jenkinases and the King Harwoods, exist only in these pages; and if there should be any persons who, after this protest, should obstinately persist in mistaking for fact that which the Author herself declares to be fiction, I can only compare them to the sagacious gentleman mentioned in "*The Spectator*," who upon reading over "The Whole Duty of Man," wrote the names of different people in the village where he lived, at the side of every sin mentioned by the author, and with half-a-dozen strokes of his pen, turned, the whole of that devout and pious treatise into a libel. Be more merciful to these slight volumes, gentle reader, and farewell!

Three Mile Cross

Feb. 25, 1835

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BELFORD REGIS.

THE TOWN.

ABOUT three miles to the north of our village, (if my readers may be supposed to have heard of such a place,) stands the good town of Belford Regis. The approach to it, straight as a dart, runs along a wide and populous turnpike-road, (for, as yet, railways are not,) all alive with carts and coaches, wagons and phaetons, horse people and loot people, sweeping rapidly or creeping lazily up and down the gentle undulations with which the surface of the country is varied; and the borders, checkered by patches of common, rich with hedge-row timber, and sprinkled with cottages, and, I grieve to say, with that cottage pest, the beer-houses,—and here and there enlivened by dwellings of more pretension and gentility—become more thickly inhabited as we draw nearer to the metropolis of the county: to say nothing of the three cottages all in a row, with two small houses detached, which a board affixed to one of them informs the passers-by is “Two mile Cross;” or of those opposite neighbours, the wheelwrights and blacksmiths, about half a mile farther; or the little farm close to the pound; or the series of buildings called the Long Row, terminating at the end next the road with an old-fashioned and most picturesque public-house, with pointed roofs, and benches at the door, and round the large elm before it,—benches which are generally filled by thirsty wayfarers and wagonners, watering their horses, and partaking a more generous liquor themselves. Leaving these objects undescribed, no sooner do we get within a mile of the town, than our approach is indicated by successive market-gardens on either side, crowned, as we ascend the long hill on which the turnpike-gate stands, by an extensive nursery-ground, gay with long beds of flowers, with trellised walks covered with creepers, with whole acres of flowering

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shrubs, and ranges of green-houses, the glass glittering in the southern sun. Then the turnpike-gate, with its civil keeper—then another public-house—then the clear bright

pond on the top of the hill, and then the rows of small tenements, with here and there a more ambitious single cottage standing in its own pretty garden, which forms the usual gradation from the country to the town.

About this point, where one road, skirting the great pond and edged by small houses, diverges from the great southern entrance, and where two streets meeting or parting lead by separate ways down the steep hill to the centre of the town, stands a handsome mansion, surrounded by orchards and pleasure-grounds; across which is perhaps to be seen the very best view of Belford, with its long ranges of modern buildings in the outskirts, mingled with picturesque old streets; the venerable towers of St. Stephen's and St Nicholas'; the light and tapering spire of St. John's; the huge monastic ruins of the abbey; the massive walls of the county jail; the great river winding along like a thread of silver; trees and gardens mingling amongst all; and the whole landscape enriched and lightened by the dropping elms of the foreground, adding an illusive beauty to the picture, by breaking the too formal outline, and veiling just exactly those parts which most require concealment.

Nobody can look at Belford from this point, without feeling that it is a very English and very charming scene: and the impression does not diminish on farther acquaintance. We see at once the history of the place, that it is an ancient borough town, 'which has recently been extended to nearly double its former size; so that it unites, in no common degree, the old romantic irregular structures in which our ancestors delighted, with the handsome and uniform buildings which are the fashion now-a-days. I suppose that people are right in their taste, and that the modern houses are pleasantest to live in; but, beyond all question, those antique streets are the prettiest to look at. The occasional blending, too, is good. Witness the striking piece of street scenery, which was once accidentally forced upon my attention as I took shelter from a shower of rain in a shop, about ten doors up the right-hand side of Friar-street: the old vicarage-house of St Nicholas, embowered in evergreens; the lofty town-hall, and the handsome modern house of my friend Mr. Beauchamp; the fine church-tower of St Nicholas; the picturesque piazza underneath; the Jutting corner of Friar-street; the old irregular shops

in the market-place, and the trees of the Forbury just peeping between, with all their varieties of light and shadow! It is a scene fit for that matchless painter of towns, Mr. Jones. I went to the door to see if the shower were over, was caught by its beauty, and stood looking at it in the sunshine long after the rain had ceased.

Then, again, for a piece of antiquity, what can be more picturesque

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than the high, solitary bay-window in that old house in Mill-lane, garlanded with grapes, and hanging over the water, as if to admire its own beauty in that clear mirror? The projecting window is a picture in itself.

Or, for a modern scene, what can surpass the High Bridge, on a sunshiny-day? The bright river, crowded with barges and small craft; the streets, and wharves, and quays, all alive with the busy and stirring population of the country and the town;—a combination of light and motion. In looking at a good view of the High Bridge at noon, you should seem to hear the bustle. I have never seen a more cheerful subject.

Cheerfulness is, perhaps, the word that best describes the impression conveyed by the more frequented streets of Belford. It is not a manufacturing town, and its trade is solely that dependent on its own considerable population, and the demands of a thickly inhabited neighbourhood; so that, except in the very centre of that trade, the streets where the principal shops are congregated, or on certain public occasions, such as elections, fairs, and markets, the stir hardly amounts to bustle. Neither is it a professed place of gaiety, like Cheltenham or Brighton; where London people go to find or make a smaller London out of town. It is neither more nor less than an honest English borough, fifty good miles from "the deep, deep sea," and happily free from the slightest suspicion of any Spa, chalybeate, or saline. We have, it is true, "the Kennet swift, for silver eels renowned," passing through the walls, and the mighty Thames for a near neighbour—water in plenty, but, luckily, all fresh! They who sympathize in my dislike of the vulgar finery, the dull dissipation of a watering-place, will feel all the felicity of this exemption.

Clean, airy, orderly, and affluent; well paved, well lighted, well watched; abounding in wide and spacious streets, filled with excellent shops and handsome houses;—such is the outward appearance, the bodily form of our market-town. For the vital spirit, the life-blood that glows and circulates through the dead mass of mortar and masonry,—in other words, for the inhabitants,—I must refer my courteous reader to the following pages. If they do not appear to at least equal advantage, it will be the fault of the chronicler, and not of the subject; and one cause, one singular cause, which may make the chronicler somewhat deficient, as a painter of modern manners, may be traced to the fact of her having known the place, not too well, but too long.

It is now about forty years ago, since I, a damsel scarcely so high as the table on which I am writing, and somewhere about four years old, first became an inhabitant of Belford; and, really, I remember a great deal not worth remembering concerning the place; especially our own garden, and a certain dell on the Bristol road, to which I used to resort for primroses. Then we went away; and my next recollections date some ten years afterwards, when my father again resided in the outskirts or the town, during

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over it, so, perchance, may be the no less courteous and far more courtly readers of these slight sketches. I insert it, therefore, for their edification, together with the answer, which was not published in the “Herald” until the H—shire public bad remained an entire week in suspense:—“*Query*—Why is Mr. Stephen Lane like Rembrandt?”
Answer—Because he is famous for the breadth of his shadow.”

The length of his shadow, although by no means in proportion to the width,—for that would have recalled the days when giants walked the land, and Jack, the famous Jack, who borrowed his surname from his occupation, slew them,—was yet of pretty fair dimensions. He stood six feet two inches without his shoes, and would have been accounted an exceedingly tall man, if his intolerable fatness had not swallowed up all minor distinctions. That magnificent beau ideal of human mountain, “the fat woman of Brentford,” for whom Sir John Falstaff passed not only undetected, but unsuspected,

never crossed my mind's eye but as the feminine of Mr. Stephen Lane. Tailors, although he was a liberal and punctual paymaster, dreaded his custom. They could not, charge how they might, contrive to extract any profit from his "huge rotundity." It was not only the quantity of material that he took, and yet that cloth universally called broad was not broad enough for him,—it was not only the stuff, but the work—the sewing, stitching, plaiting, and button-holing without end. The very shears grew weary of their labours. Two fashionable suits might have been constructed in the time, and from the materials consumed in the fabrication of one for Mr. Stephen Lane. Two, did I say? Ay, three or four, with a sufficient allowance of cabbage,—a perquisite never to be extracted from his coats or waistcoats,—no, not enough to cover a penwiper. Let the cutter cut his cloth ever so largely, it was always found to be too little. All their measures put together would not go round him; and as to guessing at his proportions by the eye, a tailor might as well attempt to calculate the dimensions of a seventy-four gun ship,—as soon try to fit a three-decker. Gloves and stockings were made for his especial use. Extras and double extras failed utterly in his case, as the dapper shopman espied at the first glance of his huge paw, a fist which might have felled an ox, and somewhat resembled the dead oxflesh, commonly called beef, in texture and colour.

To say the truth, his face was pretty much of the same complexion—and yet it was no uncomely visage either; on the contrary, it was a bold, bluff, massive, English countenance, such as Holbein would have liked to paint, in which great manliness and determination were blended with much good-humour, and a little humour of another kind; so that even when the features were in seeming repose, you could foresee how the face would look when a broad smile, and a sly wink, and a knowing nod, and a demure smoothing down of his straight shining hair on

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his broad forehead gave his wonted cast of drollery to the blunt but merry tradesman, to whom might have been fitly applied the Chinese compliment, "Prosperity is painted on your countenance."

Stephen Lane, however, had not always been so prosperous, or so famous for the breadth of his shadow. Originally a foundling in the streets of Belford, he owed his very name, like the "Richard Monday," of one of Crabbers finest delineations, to the accident of his having been picked up, when apparently about a week old, in a by-lane, close to St Stephen's church-yard, and baptized by order of the vestry after the scene of his discovery. Like the hero of the poet, he also was sent to the parish workhouse; but, as unlike to Richard Monday, in character as in destiny, he won, by a real or fancied resemblance to a baby whom she had recently lost, the affection of the matron, and was by her care shielded, not only from the physical dangers of infancy, in such an abode, but from the moral perils of childhood.

Kindly yet roughly reared, Stephen Lane was even as a boy eminent for strength and hardihood, and invincible good-humour. At ten years old, he had fought with and vanquished every lad under fifteen, not only in the workhouse proper, but in the immediate purlieus of that respectable domicile; and would have got into a hundred scrapes, had he not been shielded, in the first place, by the active protection of his original patroness, the wife of the superintendent and master of the establishment, whose pet he continued to be; and, in the second, by his own bold and decided, yet kindly and affectionate temper. Never had a boy of ten years old more friends than the poor foundling of St. Stephen's workhouse. There was hardly an inmate of that miscellaneous dwelling, who had not profited, at some time or other, by the good-humoured lad's delightful alertness. In obliging, his ready services, his gaiety, his intelligence, and his resource. From mending Master Hunt's crutch, down to rocking the cradle of Dame Green's baby—from fetching the water for the general wash, a labour which might have tried the strength of Hercules, down to leading out for his daily walk the half-blind, half-idiot, half-crazy David Hood, a task which would have worn out the patience of Job nothing came amiss to him. All was performed with the same cheerful good-will; and the warm-hearted gratitude with which he received kindness was even more attaching than his readiness to perform good offices to others. I question if ever there were a happier childhood than that of the deserted parish-boy. Set aside the pugnaciousness which he possessed in common with other brave and generous animals,

and which his protectress, the matron of the house, who had enjoyed in her youth the advantage of perusing some of those novels—now, alas! no more—where the heroes, originally foundlings, torn out to be lords and dukes in the last volume,

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used to quote, in confirmation of her favourite theory, that he too would be found to be nobly born, as proofs of his innate, high blood;—set aside the foes made by his propensity to single combat, which could hardly fail to exasperate the defeated champions, and Stephen had not an enemy in the world.

At ten years of age, however, the love of independence, and the desire to try his fortunes in the world, began to stir in the spirited lad; and his kind friend and confidant, the master's wife, readily promised her assistance to set him forth in search of adventures, though she was not a little scandalized to find his first step in life likely to lead him into a butcher's shop; he having formed an acquaintance with a journeyman slayer of cattle in the neighbourhood. Who had interceded with his master to take him on trial as an errand boy, with an understanding that, if he showed industry and steadiness, and liked the craft, he might, on easy terms, be accepted as an apprentice. This prospect, which Stephen justly thought magnificent, shocked the lady of the workhouse, who had set her heart on his choosing a different scene of slaughter—killing men, not oxen—going forth a soldier, taming the Bite of a battle, marrying some king's daughter or emperor's niece, and returning in triumph to his native town, a generalissimo, at the very least

Her husband, however, and the parish-overseers were of a different opinion. They were much pleased with the proposal, and were (for overseers) really liberal in their manner of meeting it. So that a very few days saw Stephen in blue sleeves and a blue apron—the dress which he still loves best—parading through the streets of Belford, with a tray of meat upon his head, and a huge mastiff called Boxer—whose warlike name matched his warlike nature—following at his heels, as if part and parcel of himself. A proud boy was Stephen on that first day of his promotion; and a still prouder, when, perched on a

pony, long the object of his open admiration and his secret ambition, he carried out the orders to his country customers. His very basket danced for joy.*

*Few things in a country life are more remarkable than the wild, triumphant, reckless speed with which a butcher's boy sweeps along the streets, and lanes, whether mounted; or in a rumbling, jolting cart, no accident ever happening, although it seems inevitable that the young gentleman must either kill, or be killed (perhaps both,) every day of his life. How the urchins manage, Heaven knows!—but they do contrive to get horses on in a manner that professed jockeys would envy, and with an appearance of ease to the animal, and an evident enjoyment in the rider, which produce sympathy rather than indignation in the lookers-on. It is seldom that an affair of plain, sober, serious business, (and the bringing us our dinner does certainly belong to the most serious business of life,) is transacted with such overflowing delight—such gay, gallant, inexpressible good humour.

The following anecdote (communicated by a friend) may serve to illustrate their peculiar dexterity in putting a steed on his mettle:—A gentleman of fortune, residing in Berkshire, who prides himself very highly on the superiority of his horses, was greatly struck by the trotting of a roadster, belonging to a butcher in his neighbourhood. The owner, however, refused to part with the animal, till an offer of seventy guineas proved irresistible, and the gentleman mounted his prize in high glee. To his utter astonishment, however, the brute could not be prevailed upon to exceed an ordinary amble.

Whip and spur were tried in vain. For weeks, he persevered in the hopeless attempt, and, at last, he went, in despair, to the butcher, rating him in good set terms for having practised an imposition. "Lord bless you sir, said the knight of the cleaver; "he can trot as well as ever. Here, Tom." continued he, calling to his boy, "get on his back." The youngster was scarcely in the saddle, when off the pony shot, like an arrow. "How the deuce is this?" inquired the astonished purchaser. "Why, he will trot just as fast with you," returned the butcher, chuckling, "*only you must carry the basket!*"

I need hardly add, that the gentleman, not being able to comply with this condition, was forced to make the best bargain he could with the original proprietor of the steed— who, by the way, was not my good friend Stephen Lane.

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Years wore away, and found the errand-boy transmuted into the apprentice, and the apprentice ripened into the journeyman with no diminution of industry, intelligence, steadiness, and good-humour. As a young man of two or three and twenty, he was so remarkable for feats of strength and activity, for which his tall and athletic person, not, at that period, encumbered by flesh, particularly fitted him, as to be the champion of the town and neighbourhood; and large bets have been laid and won on his sparring, and wrestling, and lifting weights oil but incredible. He has walked to London and back, (a distance of above sixty miles,) against time, leaping, in his way, all the turnpike-gates that he found shut, without even laying his hand upon the bars. He has driven a flock of sheep against a shepherd by profession, and has rowed against a bargeman; and all this without suffering these dangerous accomplishments to beguile him into the slightest deviation from his usual sobriety and good conduct. So that, when at six and twenty he became, first, head man to Mr. Jackson, the great butcher in the Butts; then married Mr. Jackson's only daughter; then, on his father-in-law's death, succeeded to the business and a very considerable property; and, finally, became one of the most substantial, respectable, and influential inhabitants of Belford,—every one felt that he most thoroughly deserved his good fortune: and, although his prosperity has continued to increase with his years, and those who envied have seldom had the comfort of being called on to condole with him on calamities of any kind, yet, such is the power of his straight-forward, fair dealing, and his enlarged liberality, that his political adversaries, on the occasion of a contested election, or some such trial of power, are driven back to the workhouse and St. Stephen's lane, to his obscure and ignoble origin, (for the noble parents whom his poor old friend used to prognosticate have never turned up,) to find materials for party malignity.

Prosperous, most prosperous, has Stephen Lane been through life; but by far the best part of his good fortune (setting pecuniary advantages quite out of the question) was his gaining the heart and hand of such a woman as Margaret Jackson. In her youth she was splendidly beautiful—of the luxuriant and gorgeous beauty in which Giorgione revelled; and now, in the autumn of her days, amplified, not like her husband, but so as to suit her matronly character, she seems to me almost as delightful to look

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upon as she could have been in her earliest spring. I do not know a prettier picture than to see her sitting at her own door, on a summer afternoon, surrounded by her children and her grand-children,—all of them handsome, gay, and cheerful,—with her knitting on her knee, and her sweet face beaming with benevolence and affection, smiling on all around, and seeming as if it were her sole desire to make every one about her as good and as happy as herself. One cause of the long endurance of her beauty is undoubtedly its delightful expression. The sunshine and harmony of mind depicted in her countenance would have made plain features pleasing; and there was an intelligence, an enlargement of intellect, in the bright eyes and the fair expanded forehead, which mingled well with the sweetness that dimpled round her lips. Butcher's wife and butcher's daughter though she were, yet was she a graceful and gracious woman,—one of nature's gentlewomen in look and in thought. All her words were candid—all her actions liberal—all her pleasures unselfish—though, in her great pleasure of giving, I am not quite sure that she was so—she took such extreme delight in it. All the poor of the parish and the town came to her, as a matter of course—*that* is always the case with the eminently charitable; but children also applied to her for their little indulgences, as if by instinct. All the boys in the street used to come to her to supply their several desires; to lend them knives and give them string for kites, or pencils for drawing, or balls for cricket, as the matter might be. Those huge pockets of hers were a perfect toy-shop, and so the urchins knew. And the little damsels, their sisters, came to her also for materials for doll's dresses, or odd bits of riband for pincushions, or coloured silks to embroider their needle-cases, or any of the thousand-and-one knick-knacks which young girls

fancy they want. However out of the way the demand might seem, there was the article in Mrs. Lane's great pocket. She knew the taste of her clients, and was never unprovided. And in the same ample receptacle, mixed with knives and balls, and pencils for the boys, and doll's dresses, and sometimes even a doll itself, for the girls, might be found sugar-plums, and cakes, and apples, and gingerbread-nuts, for the "toddling wee things," for whom even dolls have no charms. There was no limit to Mrs. Lane's bounty, or to the good-humoured alacrity with which she would interrupt a serious occupation to satisfy the claims of the small people. Oh, how they all loved Mrs. Lane!

Another and a very different class also loved the kind and generous inhabitant of the Butts—the class who, having seen better days, are usually averse to accepting obligations from those whom they have been accustomed to regard as their inferiors. With them, Mrs. Lane's delicacy was remarkable. Mrs. Lucas, the curate's widow, often found some unbespoken luxury, a sweet-bread, or so forth, added to her slender order; and Mr. Hughes,

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the consumptive young artist, could never manage to get his bill. Our good friend the butcher had his full share in the benevolence of these acts, but the manner of them belonged wholly to his wife.

Her delicacy, however, did not, fortunately for herself and for her husband, extend to her domestic habits. She was well content to live in the coarse plenty in which her father lived, and in which Stephen reved; and by this assimilation of taste, she not only ensured her own comfort, but preserved, unimpaired, her influence over his coarser but kindly and excellent disposition. It was, probably, to this influence that her children owed an education which, without raising them in the slightest degree above their station or their home, yet followed the spirit of the age, and added considerable cultivation, and plain but useful knowledge, to the strong manly sense of their father, and her own sweet and sunny temperament. They are just what the children of such parents ought to be. The daughters, happily married in their own rank of life; the sons,

each in his different line, following the footsteps of their father and amassing large fortunes, not by paltry savings or daring speculations, but by well-grounded and judicious calculation—by sound and liberal views—by sterling sense and downright honesty.

Universally as Mrs. Lane was beloved, Stephen had his enemies. He was a politician—a Reformer—a Radical, in those days in which reform was not so popular as it has been lately: he loved to descant on liberty, and economy, and retrenchment, and reform, and carried his theory into practice, in a way exceedingly inconvenient to the tory member, whom he helped to oust; to the mayor and corporation, whom he watched as a cat watches a mouse, or as Mr. Hume watches the cabinet ministers; and to all gas companies, and paving companies, and water companies, and contractors of every sort, whom he attacks as monopolizers and speculators, and twenty more long words with bad meanings, and torments out of their lives;—for he is a terrible man in a public meeting, hath a loud, sonorous voice, excellent lungs, cares for nobody, and is quite entirely inaccessible to conviction, the finest of all qualities for your thorough-going partisan. All the Tories hated Mr. Lane.*

But the Tories latterly have formed but a small minority in Belford; and amongst the Whigs and Radicals, or, to gather the two parties into one word, the Reformers, he was decidedly popular—the leader of the opulent tradespeople both socially

* All women hate elections, and politics, and party collision of all sorts; and so, especially at an election time, do I. But, after all, I believe we are wrong. The storm clears the air, and stirs the water, and keeps the lakes and pools from growing stagnant. Hatreds and enmities pass away, and people learn one of the great arts of life, one of the great secrets of happiness—to differ without bitterness, and to admit that two persons, both equally honest and independent, may conscientiously take directly opposite views of the same question. I am not sure that this was exactly Stephen Lane's notion; but I think the world is coming gradually to such a conclusion.

and politically. He it was—this denouncer of mayor's feasts and parish festivals—who, after the great contest, which his candidate gained by three, gave to the new member a dinner more magnificent, as he declared, than any he had ever seen or ever imagined—a dinner' like the realization of an epicure's dream, or an embodying of some of the visions of the old dramatic poets, accompanied by wines so aristocratic, that they blushed to find themselves on a butcher's table. He was president of a smoking club, and vice-president of half-a-dozen societies where utility and charity come in the shape of a good dinner; was a great man at a Smithfield cattle-show; an eminent looker-on at the bowling-green, which salutary exercise he patronised and promoted by sitting at an open window in a commodious smoking-room commanding the scene of action; and a capital performer of catches and glees.

He was musical, very did I not say so when talking of his youthful accomplishments?—playing by ear “with fingers like toes” (as somebody said of Handel) both on the piano and the flute, and singing, in a fine bass voice, many of the old songs which are so eminently popular and national. His voice was loudest at church, giving body as it were, to the voices of the rest of the congregation, and “God save the King” at the theatre would not have been worth hearing without Mr. Lane—he put his whole heart into it; for, with all his theoretical radicalism, the King—any of the three kings in whose reign he hath flourished, for he did not reserve his loyalty for our present popular monarch, but bestowed it in full amplitude on his predecessors, the two last of the Georges—the King hath not a more loyal subject He is a great patron of the drama, especially the comic drama, and likes no place better than the stage-box at the Belford theatre, a niche meant for six, which exactly fits him. All- fours is his favourite game, and Joe Miller his favourite author.

His retirement from business and from Belford occasioned a general astonishment and consternation. It was perfectly understood that he could afford to retire from business as well as any tradesman who ever gave up a flourishing shop in that independent borough; but the busy-bodies, who take so unaccountable a pleasure in meddling with every body's concerns, had long ago decided that he never would do so; and that he should

abandon the good town at the very moment when the progress of the Reform Bill had completed his political triumphs—when the few adversaries who remained to the cause, as he was wont emphatically to term it, had not a foot to stand upon—did appear the most wonderful wonder of wonders that had occurred since the days of Katterfelto. Stephen Lane without Belford!—Belford, especially in its reformed state, without Stephen Lane, appeared as incredible as the announcements of the bottle-conjurer. Stephen Lane to abandon the great shop in the Butts! What other place would ever hold him? And to quit the scene of his

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triumphs too! to fly from the very field of victory!—the thing seemed impossible!

It was, however, amongst the impossibilities that turn out true. Stephen Lane *did* leave the reformed borough, perhaps all the sooner because it was reformed, and his work was over—his occupation was gone. It is certain that, without perhaps exactly knowing his own feelings, our good butcher did feel the vacuum, the want of an exciting object, which often attends upon the fulfilment of a great hope. He also felt and understood better the entire cessation of opposition amongst his old enemies, the corporation party. "Dang it, they might ha' shown fight, these corporationers! I thought Ben Bailey had had more bottom!" was his exclamation, after a borough-meeting which had passed off unanimously; and, scandalized at the pacific disposition of his adversaries, our puissant grazier turned his steps towards "fresh fields and pastures new."

He did not move very far. Just over the border-line, which divides the parish of St. Stephen, in the loyal and independent borough of Belford, from the adjoining hamlet of Sunham—that is to say, exactly half a mile from the great shop in the Butts, did Mr. Lane take up his abode, calling his suburban habitation, which was actually joined to the town by two rows of two-story houses, one of them fronted with poplars, and called Marvell Terrace, in compliment to the patriot of that name in Charles's days,—calling this *rus in urbe* of his "the country," after the fashion of the inhabitants of Kensington and Hackney, and the other suburban villages which surround London proper; as if

people who live in the midst of brick houses could have a right to the same rustic title with those who live amongst green fields. Compared to the Butts, however, Mr. Lane's new residence was almost rural; and the country he called it accordingly.

Retaining, however, his old town predilections, his large, square, commodious, and very ugly red house, with very white mouldings and window-frames, (red, so to say, picked out with white,) and embellished by a bright green door and a resplendent brass knocker, was placed close to the road-side—as close as possible; and the road happening to be that which led from the town of Belford to the little place called London, he had the happiness of counting above sixty stage coaches, which passed his door in the twenty-four hours, with vans, wagons, carts, and other vehicles in proportion; and of enjoying, not only from his commodious mansion, but also from the window of a smoking-room at the end of a long brick wall which parted his garden from the road, all the clatter, dust, and din of these several equipages—the noise being duly enhanced by there being, just opposite his smoking-room window, a public house of great resort, where most of the coaches stopped to take up parcels and passengers, and were singing, drinking, and four-comers were going on all the day long.

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One of his greatest pleasures in this retirement seems to be to bring all around him—wife, children, and grand-children—to the level of his own size, or that of his prize ox,—the expressions are nearly synonymous. The servant-lads have a chubby breadth of feature, like the stone heads, with wings under them (*soi-disant* cherubim,) which one sees perched round old monuments; and the maids have a broad, Dutch look, full and florid, like the women in Teniers' pictures. The very animals seem bursting with over-fatness: the great horse who draws his substantial equipage, labours under the double weight of his master's flesh and his own; his cows look like stalled oxen and the leash of large red greyhounds, on whose prowess and pedigree he prides himself, and whom he boasts, and vaunts, and brags of, and offers to bet upon, in the very spirit of the inimitable dialogue between Page and Shallow in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," could

no more run a course in their present condition than they could fly,—the hares would stand and laugh at them.

Mr. Lane is certainly a very happy person although when first he removed from the Butts, it was quite the fashion to bestow a great deal of pity on the poor rich man, self-condemned to idleness,—which pity was as much thrown away as pity for those who have the power to follow their own devices generally is. Our good neighbour is not the man to be idle. Besides going every day to the old shop, where his sons carry on the business, and he officiates en *amateur*, attending his old clubs, and pursuing his old diversions in Belford, he has his farm in Sunham to manage, (some five hundred acres of pasture and arable land, which he purchased with his new house,) and the whole parish to reform. He has already begun to institute inquiries into charity-schools and poor-rates, has an eye on the surveyor of highways, and a close watch on the overseer; he attends turnpike meetings, and keeps a sharp look-out upon the tolls; and goes peeping about the workhouse with an anxiety to detect speculation that would do honour even to a Radical member of the reformed House of Commons.

Moreover, he hath a competitor worthy of his powers in the shape of the village orator, Mr. Jacob Jones, a little whippersnapper of a gentleman farmer, with a shrill, cracked voice, and great activity of body, who, having had the advantage of studying some odds-end-ends of law, during a three years residence in an attorney's office, has picked up therein a competent portion of technical jargon, together with a prodigious volubility of tongue, and a comfortable stock of impudence; and, under favour of these good gifts, hath led the village senate by the nose for the last dozen years. Now, Mr. Jacob Jones is, in his way, nearly as great a man as Mr. Lane; rides his bit of blood a fox-hunting with my Lord; dines once a year with Sir John (and advocates abuses through thick and thin—he does not well know why—almost as stoutly as our good knight of the cleaver does

battle for reform. These two champions are to be pitted against each other at the next vestry-meeting, and much interest is excited as to the event of the contest I, for my part, think, that Mr. Lane will carry the day. He is, in every way, a man of more substance; and Jacob Jones will no more be able to withstand "the momentum of his republican fist," than a soldier of light infantry could stand the charge of a heavy dragoon. Stephen, honest man, will certainly add to his other avocations that of overseer of Sunham. Much good may it do him!

WILLIAM AND HANNAH.

"DON'T talk to me, William, of our having been asked in church. Don't imagine that I mind what people may say about that. Let them attend to their own concerns, and leave me to manage mine. If this were our wedding morning, and I were within half an hour of being your wedded wife, I would part front you as readily as I throw away this rose-leaf if I were to know for certain what I have heard to-day. Were you or were, you not three times tips last week, at that most riotous and disorderly house, "The Eight Bells?"

This searching question was put by the young and blooming Hannah Rowe, a nursery-maid, in the family of general Maynard, of Oakley Manor, to her accepted lover, William Curtis, a very fine young man, who followed his trade of a shoemaker in the good town of Belford. The courtship had, as their damsel's words implied, approached as nearly as well could be to the point matrimonial; Hannah having given her good mistress warning, and prepared her simple wardrobe; and William, on his part, having taken and furnished a room—for, to a whole house, neither of them aspired—near his master's shop: William, although a clever workman, and likely to do well, being as yet only a journeyman.

A finer couple it would be difficult to meet with any where, than William and his Hannah. He was tall, handsome, and intelligent, with a perpetual spring of good humour, and a fund of that great gift of Heaven, high animal spirits, which being sustained by equal life of mind, (for otherwise it is not a good gift,) rendered him

universally popular. She had a rich, sparkling, animated beauty—a warmth of manner and of feeling, equally prepossessing. She loved William dearly, and William knew it. Perhaps he did not equally know that her quickness of

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temper was accompanied by a decision and firmness of character, which, on any really essential point, would not fail to put forth its strength. Such a point was this, as Hannah knew from woful experience: for her own father had been a frequenter of the alehouse—had ruined himself altogether, health, property, and character, by that degrading and ruinous propensity, and had finally died of sheer drunkenness, leaving her mother a broken-hearted woman, and herself a child of eight years old, to struggle as best they might through the wide world. Well did Hannah remember her dear mother, and that dear mother's sufferings;—how she would sit night after night awaiting the return of her brutal husband, bending silently and patiently over the needlework, by which she endeavoured to support herself and her child; and how, when he did return, when his reeling, unsteady step was heard on the pavement, or his loud knock at the door, or the horrid laugh and frightful oath of intoxication in the street, how the poor wife would start and tremble, and strive to mould her quivering lips into a smile, and struggle against her tears, as he called fiercely for comforts which she had not to give, and thundered forth imprecations on herself and her harmless child. Once she remembered—she could not have been above five years old at the time, but she remembered it as if it had happened yesterday—awaking suddenly from sleep on her wretched bed, and seeing, by the dim moonlight that came in through the broken windows, her father, in his drunken frenzy, standing over her, and threatening to strangle her, whilst her mother, frantic with fear, tore him away, and had her arm broken in the struggle. This scene, and scenes like this, passed through Hannah's mind, as she leant over the calm face of Mrs. Maynard's lovely infant, who lay sleeping on her lap, and repeated, in a low, calm voice, her former question to William—

"Were you not three times tipsy last week?"

"Now, Hannah," replied William, evasively, "how can you be so cross and old-maidish? If I did get a little merry, what was it but a joyful parting from bachelor friends before beginning a steady married life? What do you women know of such things? What can you know? and what can a young fellow do with himself when his work is over, if he is not to go to a public house? We have not work now for above half a day—that is to say, not more work in a week than I could finish in three days; and what, I should like to know, am I to do with the remainder? At the Eight Bells, say what you like of the place, there's good liquor and good company, a good fire in winter, a newspaper to read, and the news of the town to talk over. Does not your master himself go to his club every night of his life when he s m London? And what— since you won't let me come above twice a week to see you—what would you have me do with the long evenings when my work is over?"

Hannah was a little posed at this question. Luckily however,

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a present sent to her mistress by an old servant who had married a gardener, consisting of a fine basket of strawberries, another of peas, and a beautiful nosegay of pinks and roses, caught her eye as they lay on the table before her.

"Why not take a little plot of ground, and work in that of evenings, and raise vegetables and flowers? Any thing rather than the public-house!"

William laughed outright.

"Where am I to get this plot of ground? tell me that, Hannah! You know that at present I am lodging with my aunt in Silver-street, who has only a little bricked yard; and when we move to our room in Newton-row, why the outlet there will not be so large as that table. This is all nonsense, as you well know. I am no gardener, but a merry shoemaker; and such as I am you have chosen me, and you must take me."

"And you will not promise to give up the Eight Bells?" asked Hannah imploringly.

"Promise—no—" hesitated William. "I dare say I should do as you like; but as to promising—it is *you* who have promised to take me 'for better for worse,' " added he, tenderly: "surely you do not mean to deceive me?"

"Oh, William!" said Hannah, "it is you who would deceive me and yourself. I know what the public-house leads to; and suffer what I may, better suffer now and alone, than run the risk of *that* misery. Either promise to give up the Eight Bells, or, dearly as I love you, and far as things have gone, we must part," added she, firmly.

And as William, though petitioning, remonstrating, coaxing, storming, and imploring, would not give the required pledge, part they did; his last speech denouncing a vengeance which she could ill bear.

"You will repent this, Hannah! for you have been the ruin of me. You have broken my heart; and if you hear of me every night at the alehouse, endeavouring to drown care, remember that it is you, and you only, who have driven me there!" And so saying, he walked sturdily out of the house.

William went away in wrath and anger, determined to be as good, or rather as bad, as his word. Hannah remained, her heart overflowing with all the blended and contending emotions natural to a woman (I mean a woman that has a heart) in such a situation. Something of temper had mingled with the prudence of her resolution, and, as is always the case where a rash and hasty temper has led a generous mind astray, the reaction was proportionably strong. She blamed herself—she pitied William—she burst into a passion of tears; and it was not until the violence of her grief had awakened and terrified the little Emily, and that the necessity of pacifying the astonished child compelled her into the exertion of calming herself, (so salutary in almost all cases is the recurrence of our daily duties!) that she

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remembered the real danger of William's unhappy propensity, the dying injunctions of her mother, and those fearful scenes of her own childhood which still at times haunted

her dreams. Her father, she had heard, had once been as kind, as gay, as engaging as William himself—as fond of her mother as William was of her. Where was the security that these qualities would not perish under the same evil influence and degrading habits? Her good mistress, too, praised and encouraged her, and for awhile she was comforted.

Very, very soon the old feeling returned. Hannah had loved with the full and overflowing affection of a fond and faithful nature, and time and absence, which seldom fail to sweep away a slight and trivial fancy, only gave deeper root to an attachment like hers: her very heart clung to William. Her hours were passed in weaving visions of imaginary interviews, and framing to herself imaginary letters. She loved to plan fancied dialogues—to think how fondly he would woo, and how firmly she would reject—for she thought it quite sure that she should reject; and yet she yearned (oh! how she yearned) for the opportunity of accepting.

But such opportunity was far away. The first thing she heard of him was, that he was realizing his own prediction by pursuing a course of continued intemperance at the Eight Bells; the next, that he was married!—married, it should seem, from hate and anger, not from love, to a young and thoughtless girl, portionless and improvident as himself. Nothing but misery could ensue from such a union;—nothing but misery did. Then came the beer-houses, with their fearful addition of temptation; and Hannah, broken-hearted at the accounts of his evil courses, and ashamed of the interest which she still continued to feel for one who could never be any thing to her again, rejoiced when General and Mrs. Maynard resolved to spend some time in Germany, and determined that she should accompany them.

From Germany the travellers proceeded to Italy, from Italy to Switzerland, and from Switzerland to France; so that nearly five years elapsed before they returned to Oakley Manor. Five years had wrought the usual changes amongst Hannah's old friends in that neighbourhood. The servants were nearly all new, the woman at the lodge had gone away, the keeper's daughter was married; so that, finding none who knew her anxiety

respecting William, and dreading to provoke the answer which she feared awaited her inquiries, she forbore to ask any question respecting her former lover.

One evening, soon after their arrival. General Maynard invited his wife and family to go and see the cottage gardens at Belford. "We'll take even little Emily and Hannah," added he "for it's a sight to do one's heart good— ay, fifty times more good than famous rivers and great mountains! and I would not have any of my children miss it for the fee-simple of the laud

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which, by the by, happens to belong to me. You remember my friend Howard writing to me when I was at Manheim, desiring to rent about thirty acres near Belford, which had just fallen vacant. Well, he has fenced it and drained it, and made roads and paths, and divided it into plots of a quarter of an acre, more or less, and let it out for exactly the same money which he gives me, to the poor families in the town, chiefly to the inhabitants of that wretched suburb Silver-street, where the miserable hovels had not an inch of outlet, and the children were constantly grovelling in the mud and running under the horses' feet; passing their whole days in increasing and progressive demoralization; whilst their mothers were scolding and quarrelling and starving, and their fathers drowning their miseries at the beer shops—a realization of Crabbe's gloomiest pictures! Only imagine what these gardens have done for these poor people! Every spare hour of the parents is given to the railing of vegetables for their own consumption, or for sale, or for the rearing and fattening that prime luxury of the English peasant, a pig. The children have healthy and pleasant employment. The artisan who can only find Work for two or three days in the week is saved from the parish; he who has full pay is saved from the alehouse. A feeling of independence is generated, and the poor man's heart is gladdened and warmed by the conscious pride of property in the soil—by knowing and feeling that the spring shower and the summer sun are swelling and ripening his little harvest.

"I speak ardently," continued the General, rather ashamed of his own enthusiasm; "but I've just been talking with that noble fellow Howard, who, in the midst of his many

avocations, has found time for all this, and really I cannot help it. Whilst I was with him, in came one of the good folks to complain that his garden was rated. 'I'm glad of it,' replied Howard; 'it's a proof that you are a real tenant, and that this is not a charity affair.' And the man went off an inch taller. Howard confesses that he has not been able to resist the temptation of giving them back the amount of the rent in tools and rewards of one sort or other. He acknowledges that this is the weak part of his under taking; but, as I said just now, he could not help it. Moreover, I doubt if the giving back the rent in that form be wrong—at least, if it be wrong to give it back at first The working-classes are apt to be suspicious of their superiors—I am afraid that they have sometimes had reason to be so; and as the benefits of the system cannot be immediately experienced, it is well to throw in these little boons to stimulate them to perseverance. But here we are at Mr. Howard's," pursued the good General, as the carriage stopped at the gate of the brewery; for that admirable person was neither more nor less than a country brewer.

A beautiful place was that old-fashioned brewery, situated on an airy bit of rising ground at the outskirts of the town, the very last house in the borough, and divided from all other buildings

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by noble rows of elms, by its own spacious territory of orchard and meadow, and by the ample outlet, full of drays, and carts, and casks, and men, and horses, and all the life and motion of a great and flourishing business; forming, by its extent and verdure, so striking a contrast to the usual dense and smoky atmosphere, the gloomy yet crowded appearance of a brewer s yard.

The dwelling-house, a most picturesque erection, with one end projecting so as to form two sides of a square, the date, 1642, on the porch, and the whole front covered with choice creepers, stood at some distance from the road; and General Maynard and his lady hurried through it, as if knowing instinctively that on a fine summer evening Mrs. Howard's flower- garden was her drawing-room. What a flower-garden it was! A sunny turfey knoll sloping abruptly to a natural and never-failing spring that divided it from a

meadow rising on the other side with nearly equal abruptness; the steep descent dotted with flower-beds, rich, bright, fresh, and glowing, and the path that wound up the hill, leading through a narrow stone gateway—an irregular arch overrun with luxuriant masses of the narrow-leaved, white-veined ivy, which trailed its long pendent strings almost to the ground into a dark and shadowy walk, running along the top of a wild precipitous bank, clothed partly with forest trees, oak, and elm, and poplar—partly with the finest exotics, cedars, cypresses, and the rare and graceful snow-drop-tree, of such growth and beauty as are seldom seen in England,—and terminated by a root-house, overhung by the branches of an immense acacia, now in the full glory of its white and fragrant blossoms, and so completely concealing all but the entrance of the old root-house, that it seemed as if that quiet retreat had no other roof than those bright leaves and chain-like flowers.

Here they found Mrs. Howard, a sweet and smiling woman, lovelier in the rich glow of her matronly beauty than she had been a dozen years before as the fair Jane Dorset, the belle of the country side. Here sat Mrs. Howard, surrounded by a band of laughing rosy children; and directed by her, and promising to return to the brewery to coffee, the General and his family proceeded by a private path to the cottage allotments.

Pleasant was the sight of those allotments to the right-minded and the kind, who love to contemplate order and regularity in the moral and physical world, and the cheerful and willing exertion of a well-directed and prosperous industry. It was a beautiful evening, late in June, and the tenants and their families were nearly all assembled in their small territories, each of which was literally filled with useful vegetables in every variety and of every kind. Here was a little girl weeding an onion-bed, here a boy sticking French beans; here a woman gathering herbs for a salad, here a man standing in proud

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and happy contemplation of a superb plot of cauliflower Every where there was a hum of cheerful voices, as neighbour greeted neighbour, or the several families chatted among each other.

The General, who was warmly interested in the subject, and had just made himself master of the details, pointed out to Mrs. Maynard those persons to whom it had been most beneficial. "That man," said he, "who has, as you perceive, a double allotment, and who is digging with so much good-will, has ten children and a sickly wife, and yet has never been upon the parish for the last two years. That thin young man in the blue jacket is an out-door painter, and has been out of work these six weeks—(by the by, Howard has just given him a job)—and all that time has been kept by his garden. And that fine-looking fellow who is filling a basket with peas, whilst the pretty little child at his side is gathering strawberries, is the one whom Howard prizes most, because he is a person of higher qualities—one who was redeemed from intolerable drunkenness, retrieved from sin and misery, by this occupation. He is a journeyman-shoemaker—a young widower—“

Hannah heard no more—she had caught sight of William, and William had caught sight of her; and in an instant her hands, were clasped in his, and they were gazing on each other with eyes full of love and joy, and of the blessed tears of a true and perfect reconciliation.

"Yes, Hannah!" said William, "I have sinned, and deeply; but I have suffered bitterly, and most earnestly have I repented. It is now eighteen months since I have entered a public-house, and never will I set foot in one again. Do you believe me, Hannah?"

"Do I!" exclaimed Hannah, with a fresh burst of tears; "oh, what should I be made of if I did not?"

"And here are the peas and the strawberries," said William, smiling; "and the pinks and the roses," added he, more tenderly, taking a nosegay from his lovely little girl, as Hannah stooped to caress her; "and the poor motherless child—my only child! she has no mother, Hannah—will you be one to her?"

"Will I!" again echoed Hannah; "oh, William, will I not?"

"Remember, I am still only a poor journeyman—I have no money," said William.

"But I have," replied Hannah.

"And shall we not bless Mr. Howard," continued he, as, with his own Hannah on his arm, and his little girl holding by his hand, he followed Mrs. Maynard and the General,— "shall we not bless Mr. Howard, who rescued me from idleness and its besetting temptations, and gave me pleasant and profitable employment in the cottage-garden?"

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Note,—The system on which the above story is founded, is happily no fiction; and although generally appropriated to the agricultural labourer of the rural districts, it has, in more than one instance, been tried, with eminent success, amongst the poorer, artisans in towns—to whom, above all other classes, the power of emerging from the (in every sense) polluted atmosphere of their crowded lanes and courts must be invaluable.

The origin of the system is so little known, and seems to me at once so striking and so natural, that I cannot resist the temptation of relating it almost in the words in which it was told to me by one of the most strenuous and judicious supporters of the cottage allotments.

John Denson was a poor working man, an agricultural labourer, a peasant, who, finding his weekly wages inadequate to the support of his family, and shrinking from applying for relief to the parish, sought and obtained of the lord of the manor, the permission to enclose a small plot of waste land, of which the value had hitherto been very trifling. By diligent cultivation he brought it to a state of great productiveness and fertility. This was afterwards sufficiently extended to enable him to keep a cow or two, to support his family in comfort and independence, and, ultimately, to purchase the fee-simple of the land. During the hours of relaxation, he educated himself sufficiently to enable him to relate clearly and correctly the result of his experience; and feeling it his duty to endeavour to improve the condition of his fellow-labourers, by informing them of the advantages which he had derived from industrious and sober habits, and the cultivation of a small plot of ground, he published a pamphlet called "The Peasant's Warning

Voice," which, by attracting the attention of persons of humanity and influence, gave the first impulse to the system.

Among the earliest and most zealous of its supporters was Lord Braybrooke, to whom, next after John Denson, (for that noble-minded peasant must always claim the first place,) belongs the honour of promulgating extensively a plan replete with humanity and wisdom.

It was first carried into effect by his Lordship, several years ago, in the parish of Saffron Walden, a place then remarkable for misery and vice, but which is now conspicuous for the prosperity and good conduct of its poorer inhabitants. The paupers on the rates were very numerous, (amounting, I believe, to 135,) and are now comparatively few, and—which is of far more importance, since the reduction of the poor-rates is merely an incidental consequence of the system—the cases of crime at the Quarter Sessions have diminished in a similar proportion.

Since that period, the cottage allotments have been tried in many parts of England, and always with success. Indeed, they can hardly fail, provided the soil be favourable to spade-husbandry, the rent not higher than that which would be demanded from a large

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occupier of land, the ground properly drained and fenced, and the labourers not encumbered with rules and regulations: for the main object being not merely to add to the physical comforts, but to raise the moral character of the working classes, especial care should be taken to induce and cherish the feeling of independence, and to prove to them that they are considered as tenants paying rent, and not as almsmen receiving charity.

I am happy to add, that the Mr. Howard of this little story (that is not quite his name) does actually exist. He is an eminent brewer in a small town in our neighbourhood, and has, also, another great brewery near London; he has a large family of young children and orphan relations, is an active magistrate, a sportsman, a horticulturist, a musician, a

cricketer; is celebrated for the most extensive and the most elegant hospitality; and yet, has found time, not only to establish the system in his own parish, but, also, to officiate as secretary to a society for the promotion of this good object throughout the county. Heaven grant it success! I, for my poor part, am thoroughly convinced, that, if ever project were at once benevolent and rational, and practicable, and wide, it is this of the cottage allotments; and I can hardly refrain from entreating my readers—especially my fair readers—to exert whatever power or influence they may possess in favour of a cause which has, for its sole aim and end, the putting down of vice and misery, and the diffusion of happiness and virtue.

THE CURATE OF ST. NICHOLAS

AMONGST the most generally beloved, not merely of the clergy, but of the whole population of Belford, as that population stood some thirty years ago, was my good old friend, the Curate of St. Nicholas; and, in my mind, he had qualities that might both explain and justify his universal popularity.

Belford is, at present, singularly fortunate In the parochial clergy. Of the two vicars, whom I have the honour and the privilege of knowing, one confers upon the place the ennobling distinction of being the residence of a great poet; whilst both are not only, in the highest sense of that highest word, gentlemen, in birth, in education, in manners, and in mind—but eminently popular in the pulpit, and, as parish priests, not to be excelled, even amongst the generally excellent clergymen of the Church of England—a phrase, by the Way, which just at this moment sounds so

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like a war-cry, that I cannot too quickly disclaim any intention of inflicting a political dissertation on the unwary reader. My design is simply to draw a faithful likeness of one of the most peaceable members of the establishment.

Of late years, there has been a prodigious change in the body clerical. The activity of the dissenters, the spread of education and the immense increase of population, to say nothing of that "word of power," Reform, have combined to produce a stirring spirit of emulation amongst the younger clergy, which has quite changed the aspect of the profession. Heretofore, the "church militant" was the quietest and easiest of all vocations; and the most slender and lady-like young gentleman, the "mamma's darling" of a great family, whose lungs were too tender for the bar, and whose frame was too delicate for the army, might be sent with perfect comfort to the snug curacy of a neighbouring parish, to read Horace, cultivate auriculas, christen, marry, and bury, about twice a quarter, and do duty once every Sunday. Now times are altered; prayers must be read and sermons preached twice a day at least, not forgetting lectures in Lent, and homilies at tide times; workhouses are to be visited; schools attended, boys and girls taught in the morning, and grown-up bumpkins in the evening; children are to be catechised; masters and mistresses looked after; hymn-books distributed; bibles given away; tract -societies fostered amongst the zealous, and psalmody cultivated amongst the musical. In short, a curate, now-a-days, even a country curate, much more if his parish lie in a great town, has need of the lungs of a barrister in good practice, and the strength and activity of an officer of dragoons.

Now this is just as it ought to be. Nevertheless, I cannot help entertaining certain relentings in favour of the well-endowed churchman of the old school, round, indolent, and rubicund, at peace with himself and with all around him, who lives in quiet and plenty in his ample parsonage-house, dispensing with a liberal hand the superfluities of his hospitable table, regular and exact in his conduct, but not so precise as to refuse a Saturday night's rubber in his own person, or to condemn his parishioners for their game of cricket on Sunday afternoons; charitable in word and deed, tolerant, indulgent, kind, to the widest extent of that widest word; but, except in such wisdom (and it is of the best,) no wiser than that eminent member of the church, Parson Adams. In a word, exactly such a man as my good old friend the rector of Hadley, *cidevant* curate of St Nicholas' in Belford, who has just passed the window in that venerable relique of antiquity, his one-horse chaise. Ah, we may see him still, through the budding leaves of

the clustering China rose, as he is stopping to give a penny to poor lame Dinah Moore—stopping, and stooping his short round person with no small effort, that he may put it into her little hand, because the child would have some difficulty in picking it up, on account of her crutches. Yes,

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there he goes, rotund and rosy, "a tun of a man," filling three parts of his roomy equipage; the shovel-hat with a rose in it, the very model of orthodoxy, overshadowing his white hairs and placid countenance; his little stunted foot-boy in a purple livery, driving a coach-horse as fat as his master; whilst the old white terrier, fatter still—his pet terrier Venom, waddles after the chaise (of which the head is let down, in honour, I presume, of this bright April morning), much resembling in gait and aspect that other white waddling thing, a goose, if a goose were gifted with four legs.

There he goes, my venerable friend the Reverend Josiah Singleton, rector of Hadleycum-Doveton, in the county of Southampton, and vicar of Delworth, in the county of Surrey. There he goes, in whose youth tract societies and adult schools *were* not, but who yet has done as much good and as little harm in his generation, has formed as just and as useful a link between the rich and the poor, the landlord and the peasant, as overdid honour to religion and to human nature. Perhaps this is only saying, in other words, that, under any system, benevolence and single-mindedness will produce their proper effects.

I am not, however, going to preach a sermon over my worthy friend—long may it be before his funeral sermon is preached! or even to write his *éloge*, for *éloges* are dull things; and to sit down with the intention of being dull,—to set about the matter with malice prepense (howbeit the calamity may sometimes happen accidentally), I hold to be an unnecessary impertinence. I am only to give a slight sketch, a sort of birds' eye view of my reverend friend's life, which, by the way, has been, except in one single particular, so barren of incidents, that it might almost pass for one of those proverbially uneventful narratives, *The Lives of the Poets*.

Fifty-six years ago, our portly rector—then, it may be presumed a sleek and comely bachelor—left college, where he had passed through his examinations and taken his degrees with respectable mediocrity, and was ordained to the curacy of St: Nicholas parish, in our market-town of Belford, where, by the recommendation of his vicar. Dr. Grampound, he fixed himself in the small but neat first-floor of a reduced widow gentlewoman, who endeavoured to eke out a small annuity by letting lodgings at eight shillings a-week, linen, china, plate, glass, and waiting included, and by keeping a toy-shop, of which the whole stock, fiddles, drums, balls, dolls, and shuttlecocks, might be safely appraised at under eight pounds, including a stately rocking-horse, the poor widow's *cheval de bataille*, which had occupied one side of Mrs. Martin's shop from the time of her setting up in business,, and still continued to keep his station uncheaped by her thrifty customers.,

There, by the advice of Mr. Grampound, did he place himself

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on his arrival at Belford; and there he continued for full thirty years, occupying the same first-floor; the sitting-room—a pleasant apartment, with one window (for the little toy-shop was a corner-house) abutting on the High Bridge, and the other on the market-place—still, as at first, furnished with a Scotch carpet, cane chairs, a Pembroke table, and two hanging-shelves, which seemed placed there less for their ostensible destination of holding books, sermons, and newspapers, than for the purpose of bobbing against the head of every unwary person who might happen to sit down near the wall; and the small chamber behind, with its tent-bed and dimity furniture, its mahogany chest of drawers, one chair and notable; with the self-same spare, quiet, decent landlady, in her faded but well-preserved mourning gown, and the identical serving maiden, Patty, a demure, civil, modest damsel, dwarfed, as it should seem, by constant curtseying, since from twelve years upwards she had not grown an inch. Except the clock of time, which, however imperceptibly, does still keep moving, every tiling about the little toy-shop in the markets place at Belford was at a stand still. The very tabby-cat which Jay basking on the hearth, might have passed for his progenitor of happy memory, who took

his station there the night of Mr. Singleton's arrival; and the self-same hobby-horse still stood rocking opposite the counter, the admiration of every urchin who passed the door, and so completely the pride of the mistress of the domicile, that it is to be questioned—convenient as thirty shillings, lawful money of Great Britain, might sometimes have proved to Mrs. Martin—whether she would not have felt more reluctance than pleasure in parting with this, the prime ornament of her stock.

There, however, the rocking-horse remained; and there remained Mr. Singleton, gradually advancing from a personable youth to a portly middle-aged man; and obscure and untempting as the station of a curate in a country-town may appear, it is doubtful whether those thirty years of comparative poverty were not amongst the happiest of his easy and tranquil life.

Very happy they undoubtedly were. To say nothing of the comforts provided for him by his assiduous landlady and her civil domestic, both of whom felt all the value of their kind, orderly, and considerate inmate; especially as compared with the racketty recruiting officers and troublesome single gentlewomen who had generally occupied the first-floor; our curate was in prime favour with his vicar, Dr. Grampound, a stately pillar of divinity, rigidly orthodox in all matters of church and state, who having a stall in a distant cathedral, and another living by the sea-side, spent but little of his time at Belford, and had been so tormented by his three last curates—the first of whom was avowedly of whig politics, and more than suspected of Calvinistic religion y the second a fox-hunter, and the third a poet—that he was

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delighted to intrust his flock to a staid, sober youth of high-church and tory principles, who never mounted a horse in his life, and would hardly have trusted himself on Mrs. Martin's steed of wood; and whose genius, so far from carrying him into any flights of poesy, never went beyond that weekly process of sermon-making which, as the doctor observed, was all that a sound divine need know of authorship. Never was curate a

greater favourite with his principal. He has even been heard to prophesy that the young man would be a bishop.

Amongst the parishioners, high and low, Josiah was no less a favourite. The poor felt his benevolence, his integrity, his piety, and his steady kindness; whilst the richer classes (for in the good town of Belford few were absolutely rich) were won by his unaffected good-nature the most popular of all qualities. There was nothing shining about the man, no danger of his setting the Thames on fire, and the gentlemen liked him none the worse for that; but his chief friends and allies were the ladies—not the young ladies, by whom, to say the truth, he was not so much courted, and whom, in return, he did not trouble himself to court; but the discreet mammas and grand-mammas, and maiden gentlewomen of a certain age, amongst whom he found himself considerably more valued and infinitely more at home.

Sooth to say, our staid, worthy, prudent, sober young man, had at no time of his life been endowed with the buoyant and mercurial spirit peculiar to youth. There was in him a considerable analogy between the mind and the body. Both were heavy, sluggish, and slow. He was no strait-laced person either; he liked a joke in his own quiet way well enough; but as to encountering the quips, and cranks, and quiddities of a set of giddy girls, he could as soon have danced a cotillon. The gift was not in him. So with a wise instinct he stuck to their elders; called on them in the morning; drank tea with them at night; played whist, quadrille, cassino, backgammon, commerce, or lottery-tickets, as the party might require; told news and talked scandal as well as any woman of them all; accommodated a difference of four years standing between the wife of the chief attorney and the sister of the principal physician; and was appealed to as absolute referee in a question of precedence between the widow of a post-captain and the lady of a colonel of volunteers, which had divided the whole gentility of the town into parties. In short, he was such a favourite in the female world, that when the ladies of Belford (on their husbands setting up a weekly card-club at the Crown) resolved to meet on the same night at each other's houses, Mr. Singleton was, by unanimous consent, the only gentleman admitted to the female coterie.

Happier man could hardly be, than the worthy Josiah in this lair company. At first, indeed, some slight interruptions to his comfort had offered themselves, in the shape of overtures

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matrimonial, from three mammas, two papas, one uncle, and (I grieve to say) one lady, an elderly young lady, a sort of dowager spinster in her own proper person, who, smitten with Mr. Singleton's excellent character, a small independence, besides his curacy in possession, and a trifling estate (much exaggerated by the gossip frame) in expectancy, and perhaps somewhat swayed by Dr. Grampound's magnificent prophecy, had, at the commencement of his career, respectively given him to understand that he might, if he chose, become more nearly related to them. This is a sort of dilemma which a well-bred man, and a man of humanity, (and our curate was both,) usually feels to be tolerably embarrassing., Josiah, however, extricated himself with his usual straightforward simplicity. He said, and said truly," that he considered matrimony a great comfort—that he had a respect for the state, and no disinclination to any of the ladies; but that he was a poor man, and could not afford so expensive a luxury." And with the exception of one mamma, who had nine unmarried daughters, and proposed waiting for a living, and the old young lady who had offered herself, and who kept her bed and threatened to die on his refusal, thus giving him the fright of having to bury his inamorata, and being haunted by her ghost—with these slight exceptions, every body took his answer in good part.

As he advanced in life, these sort of annoyances ceased—his staid, sober deportment, ruddy countenance, and portly person, giving him an air of being even older than he really was; so that e came to be considered as that privileged person, a confirmed old bachelor, the general beau of the female coterie, and the favourite marryer and christener of the town and neighbourhood.. Nay, as years wore away, and he began to marry some whom he had christened, and to bury many whom he had married, even Mr. Grampound's prophecy ceased to be remembered, and he appeared to be as firmly

rooted in Belford as St Nicholas's church, and as completely fixed in the toy-shop as the rocking-horse.

Destiny, however, had other things in store for him. The good town of Belford, as I have already hinted, is, to its own misfortune, a poor place! an independent borough, and subject, accordingly, to the infliction (privilege, I believe, the voters are pleased to call it) of an election. For thirty years—during which period there had been seven or eight of these visitations—the calamity had passed over so mildly, that, except three or four days of intolerable drunkenness, (accompanied, of course, by a sufficient number of broken heads,) no other mischief had occurred; the two great families, whig and tory, might be said to divide the town—for this was before the days of that active reformer, Stephen Lane—having entered, by agreement, into a compromise to return one member each; a Compact which might have held good to this time, had not some slackness of attention on the part of the whigs (the Blues, as they were called in election jargon) provoked the

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Yellow or tory part of the corporation, to sign a requisition to the Hon. Mr. Delworth, to stand as their second candidate, and produced the novelty of a sharp contest in their hitherto peaceful borough. When it came, it came with a vengeance. It lasted eight days—as long as it could last. The dregs of that cup of evil were drained to the very bottom. Words are faint to describe the tumult, the turmoil, the blustering, the brawling, the abuse, the ill-will, the battles by tongue and by fist, of that disastrous time. At last the Yellows carried it by six; and on a petition and scrutiny in the House of Commons, by one single vote: and as Mr. Singleton had been engaged on the side of the winning party, not merely by his own political opinions, and those of his ancient vicar, Dr. Grampound, but, also, by the predilections of his female allies, who were Yellows to a man, those who understood the ordinary course of such matters were not greatly astonished, in the course of the ensuing three years, to find our good curate rector of Hadley, vicar of Delworth, and chaplain to the new member's father. One thing, however, was remarkable that, amidst all the scurrility and ill blood of an election

contest, and in spite of the envy which is pretty sure to follow a sudden change of fortune, Mr. Singleton neither made an enemy nor lost a friend. His peaceful, unoffending character disarmed offence. He had been unexpectedly useful too to the winning party, not merely by knowing and having served many of the poorer voters, but by possessing one eminent qualification, not sufficiently valued or demanded in a canvasser: he was the best listener of the party,* and is said to have gained the half-dozen votes which decided the election, by the mere process of letting the people talk.

This talent, which, it is to be presumed, he acquired in the ladies' club at Belford, and which probably contributed to his popularity in that society, stood him in great stead in the aristocratic circle of Delworth Castle. The whole family was equally delighted and amused by his *bonhomie* and simplicity; and he, in return, captivated by their kindness, as well as grateful for their benefits, paid them a sincere and unfeigned homage, which trebled their good-will. Never was so honest and artless a courtier. There was something at once diverting and amiable in the ascendancy which every thing connected with his patron held over Mr. Singleton's imagination. Loyal subject as he unquestionably was, the king, queen, and royal family would have been as nettling in his eye compared with Lord and Lady Delworth, and their illustrious offspring. He purchased a new peerage, which, in the course of a few days, opened involuntarily on the honoured page which contained an account of their genealogy;

* A friend of mine, the lady of a borough member, who was very active in canvassing for her husband, once said to me, on my complimenting her on the number of votes she had obtained: "It was all done by listening. Our good friends, the voters, like to bear themselves talk"

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his walls were hung with ground plans of Hadley House, elevations of Delworth Castle, maps of the estate, maps of the late and present lords, and of a judge of Queen Anne's reign, and of a bishop of George the Second's worthies of the family; he had, on his dining-room mantel-piece, models of two wings, once projected for Hadley, but which

had never been built; and is said to have once bought an old head of the first duke of Marlborough, which a cunning auctioneer had fobbed off upon him, by pretending that the great captain was a progenitor of his noble patron.

Besides this predominant taste, he soon began to indulge other inclinations at the rectory, which savoured a little of his old bachelor habits. He became a collector of shells and china, and a fancier of tulips; and when he invited the coterie of Belford ladies to partake of a syllabub, astonished and delighted them by the performance of a piping bull-finch of his own teaching, who executed the Blue Bells of Scotland in a manner not to be surpassed by the barrel organ, by means of which this accomplished bird had been instructed. He engaged Mrs. Martin as his housekeeper, and Patty as his housemaid; set up the identical one-horse chaise in which he was riding to-day; became a member of the clerical dinner club; took in St. James's Chronicle and the Gentleman's Magazine; and was set down by every body as a confirmed old bachelor.

All these indications notwithstanding, nothing was less in his contemplation than to remain in that forlorn condition. Marriage, after all, was his predominant taste; his real fancy was for the ladies. He was fifty-seven, or thereabouts, when he began to make love; but he has amply made up for his loss of time, by marrying no less than four wives since that period. Call him Mr. Singleton, indeed!—why, his proper name would be Doubleton. Four wives has he had, and of all varieties. His first was a pretty rosy smiling lass just come from school, who had known him all her life, and seemed to look upon him just as a school-girl does upon an indulgent grandpapa, who comes to fetch her home for the holidays. She was as happy as a bird, poor thing! during the three months she lived with him—but then came a violent fever and carried her off.

His next wife was a pale, sickly, consumptive lady, not over young, for whose convenience he set up a carriage, and for whose health he travelled to Lisbon and Madeira, and Nice, and Florence, and Hastings, and Clifton, and all the places by sea and land, abroad and at home, where sick people go to get well,—at one of which she, poor lady, died.

Then he espoused a buxom, jolly, merry widow, who had herself had two husbands, and who seemed likely to see him out; but the small-pox came in her way, and she died also.

Then he married his present lady, a charming woman, neither fat nor thin, nor young nor old—not very healthy, nor particularly

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sickly— -who- makes him very happy, and seems to find her own happiness in making him so.

He has no children by any of his wives; but has abundance of adherents in parlour and hall. Half the poor of the parish are occasionally to be found in his kitchen, and his dining-room is the seat of hospitality, not only to his old friends of the town and his new friends of the country, but to all the families of all his wives. He talks of them (for he talks more now than he did at the Belford election, having fallen into the gossiping habit of "narrative old age") in the quietest manner possible, mixing, in a way the most diverting and the most unconscious, stories of his first wife and his second, of his present and his last. He seems to have been perfectly happy with all of them, especially with this. But if he should have the misfortune to lose that delightful person, he would certainly console himself, and prove his respect for the state, by marrying again; and such is his reputation as a super-excellent husband, especially in the main article of giving his wives their own way, that, in spite of his being even now an octogenarian, I have no doubt but there would be abundance of fair candidates for the heart and hand of the good Rector of Hadley.

KING HARWOOD.

THE good town of Belford swarmed, of course, with single ladies—especially with single ladies of that despised denomination which is commonly known by the title of old maids. For gentlewomen of that description, especially of the less affluent class, (and although such a thing may be found here and there, a rich old maid is much rarer

than a poor one,) a provincial town in this protestant country, where nunneries are not, is the natural refuge. A village life, however humble the dwelling, is at once more expensive—since messengers and conveyances, men and horses, of some sort, are in the actual country indispensable,—and more melancholy, for there is a sense of loneliness and insignificance, a solitude within doors and without, which none but an unconnected and unprotected woman can thoroughly understand. And Loudon, without family ties, or personal importance, or engrossing pursuit,—to be poor and elderly, idle and alone in London, is a climax of desolation which every body can comprehend, because almost every one must, at some time or other, have felt, in a greater or less degree, the humbling sense

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of individual nothingness—of being but a drop of water in the ocean, a particle of sand by the sea-shore, which so often presses upon the mind amidst the bustling crowds and the splendid gaieties of the great city. To be rich or to be busy is the necessity of London.

The poor and the idle, on the other hand, get on best in a country town. Belford was the paradise of ill jointured widows and portionless old maids. There they met on the table-land of gentility, passing their mornings in calls at each other's houses, and their evenings in small tea-parties, seasoned with a rubber or a pool and garnished with the little quiet gossiping (call it not scandal, gentle reader!) which their habits required. So large a portion of the population consisted of single ladies, that it might almost have been called a maiden town. Indeed, a calculating Cantab, happening to be there for the long vacation, amused his leisure by taking a census of the female householders, beginning with the Mrs. Davisons—fine alert old ladies, between seventy and eighty, who, being proud of their sprightliness and vigour, were suspected of adding a few more years to their age than would be borne out by the register,—and ending with Miss Letitia Pierce, a damsel on the confines of forty, who was more than suspected of a slight falsification of dates the converse way. I think he made the sum total, in the three parishes, amount to one hundred and seventy-four.

The part of the town in which they chiefly congregated, the lady's *quartier*, was one hilly corner of the parish of St. Nicholas, a sort of highland district, all made up of short rows, and pigmy places, and half-finished crescents, entirely uncontaminated by the vulgarity of shops, ill-paved, worse lighted, and so placed that it seemed to catch all the smoke of the more thickly inhabited part of the town, and was constantly encircled by a wreath of vapour, like Snowden or Skiddaw.

Why the good ladies chose this elevated and inconvenient position, one can hardly tell; perhaps, because it was cheap; perhaps, because it was genteel—perhaps, from a mixture of both causes; I can only answer for the fact; and of this favourite spot the most favoured portion was a slender line of houses, tall and slim, known by the name of Warwick-terrace, consisting of a tolerably spacious dwelling at either end, and four smaller tenements linked two by two in the centre.

The tenants of Warwick-terrace were, with one solitary exception, exclusively female. One of the end houses was occupied by a comfortable-looking, very round Miss Blackall, a spinster of fifty, the richest and simplest of the row, with her parrot, who had certainly more words, and nearly as many ideas, as his mistress: her black footman, whose fine livery, white, turned up with scarlet, and glittering with silver lace, seemed rather ashamed of his “sober-suited” neighbours; the plush waistcoat

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and inexpressibles blushing as if in scorn. The other corner was filled by Mrs. Leeson, a kind-hearted bustling dame, the great ends of whose existence were visiting and cards, who had, probably, made more morning calls and played a greater number of rubbers than any woman in Belford, and who boasted a tabby cat, and a head maid called Nanny, that formed a proper pendent to the parrot and Cesar. Of the four centre habitations, one pair was the residence of Miss Savage, who bore the formidable reputation of a sensible woman—an accusation which rested, probably, on no worse foundation than a gruff voice and something of a vinegar aspect,—and of Miss Steele, who, poor thing, underwent a still worse calumny, and was called literary, simply

because forty years ago she had made a grand poetical collection, consisting of divers manuscript volumes, written in an upright taper hand, and filled with such choice morceaus as Mrs. Grenville's "Ode to Indifference," Miss Seward's "Monody on Major Andre," sundry translations of Metastasio's "Nice," and a considerable collection of enigmas, on which stock, undiminished and unincreased, she still traded; whilst the last brace of houses, linked together like the Siamese twins, was divided between two families, the three Miss Lockes,—whom no one ever dreamt of talking of as separate or individual personages—one should as soon have thought of severing the Graces, or the Furies, or the Fates, or any other classical trio, as of knowing them apart: the three Miss Lockes lived in one of these houses, and Mrs. Harwood and her two daughters in the other.

It is with the Harwoods only that we have to do at present.

Mrs. Harwood was the widow of the late and the mother of the present rector of Dighton, a family living, purchased by the father of her late husband, who, himself a respectable and affluent yeoman, aspired to a rivalry with his old landlord, the squire of the next parish; and, when he sent his only son to the university, established him in the rectory, married him to the daughter of an archdeacon, and set up a public house, called the Harwood Arms—somewhat to the profit of the Heralds' Office, who had to discover or invent these illustrious bearings—had accomplished the two objects of his ambition, and died contented.

The son proved a bright pattern of posthumous duty; exactly the sort of rector that the good old farmer would have wished to see, did he turn out,—respectable, conscientious, always just, and often kind; but so solemn, so pompous, so swelling in deportment and grandiloquent in speech, that he had not been half a dozen years inducted in the living, before he obtained the popular title of bishop of Dighton—a distinction which he seems to have taken in good part, by assuming a costume as nearly episcopal as possible, at all points, and copying, with the nicest accuracy, the shovel hat and buzz wig of the prelate of the diocess, a man of seventy-five. He put his coachman and footboy into the right

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clerical livery, and adjusted his household and modelled his behaviour according to his strictest notions of the stateliness and decorum proper to a dignitary of the church.

Perhaps he expected that the nickname by which he was so little aggrieved would some day or other be realized; some professional advancement he certainly reckoned upon. But, in spite of his cultivating most assiduously all profitable connexions—of his christening his eldest son "Earl," after a friend of good parliamentary interest, and his younger boy "King," after another—of his choosing one noble sponsor for his daughter Georgina, and another for his daughter Henrietta—be lived and died with no better preferment than the rectory of Dighton, which had been presented to him by his honest father five-and-forty years before, and to which his son Earl succeeded: the only advantage which his careful courting of patrons and patronage had procured or his family being comprised in his having obtained for his son King, through the recommendation of a noble friend, the situation of clerk at his banker's in Lombard-street.

Mrs. Harwood, a stately portly dame, almost as full of parade as her husband, had on her part been equally unlucky. The grand object of her life had been to marry her daughters, and in that she failed, probably because she had been too ambitious and too open in her attempts. Certain it is that, on the removal of the widow to Belford, poor Miss Harwood, who had been an insipid beauty, and whose beauty had turned into sallowness and haggardness, was forced to take refuge in ill health and tender spirits, and set up, as a last chance, for interesting; whilst Miss Henrietta, who had five-and-twenty years before reckoned herself accomplished, still, though with diminished pretensions, kept the field—sang with a voice considerably the worse for wear, danced as often as she could get a partner, and flirted with beaux of all ages, from sixty to sixteen—chiefly, it may be presumed, with the latter, because of all mankind a shy lad from college is the likeliest to be taken in by an elderly miss. A wretched personage, under an affectation of boisterous gaiety was Henrietta Harwood! a miserable specimen

of that most miserable class of single women who, at forty and upwards, go about dressing and talking like young girls, and will not grow old.

Earl Harwood was his father slightly modernized. He was a tall, fair, heavy-looking man, not perhaps quite so solemn and pompous as "the bishop," but far more cold and supercilious. If wished to define him in four letters, the little word "prig" would come very conveniently to my aid; and perhaps, in its compendious brevity, it conveys as accurate an idea of his manner as can be given: a prig of the slower and graver order was Earl Harwood.

His brother King, on the other hand, was a coxcomb of the brisker sort; *up*—not like generous champagne; but like cider,

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or perry, or gooseberry-wine, or "the acid flash of soda-water; or, perhaps, more still like the slight froth that runs over the top of that abomination, a pot of porter, to which, by the way, together with the fellow abominations, snuff and cigars, he was inveterately addicted. Conceit and pretension, together with a dash of the worst because the finest vulgarity, that which thinks itself genteel, were the first and last of King Harwood. His very pace was an amble—a frisk, a skip, a strut, a prance—he could not walk; and he always stood on tiptoe, so that the heels of his shoes never wore out. The effect of this was, of course, to make him look less tall than he was; so that, being really a man of middle height, he passed for short. His figure was slight, his face fair, and usually adorned with a smile half supercilious and half self-satisfied, and set off by a pair of most conceited-looking spectacles. There is no greater atrocity than his who shows you glass for eyes, and, instead of opening wide those windows of the heart, fobs you off with a bit of senseless crystal which conceals, instead of enforcing, an honest meaning—"there was no speculation in those *pebbles* which he did glare withal." For the rest, he was duly whiskered and curled; though the eyelashes, when by a chance removal of the spectacle they were discovered, lying under suspicion of sandiness; and, the whiskers and hair being auburn, it was a disputed point whether the barber's part of

him consisted in dyeing his actual locks, or in a supplemental periwig: that the curls were of their natural colour, nobody believed that took the trouble to think about it.

But it was his speech that was the prime distinction of King Harwood: the pert fops of Congreve's comedies. *Petulant*, *Witwoud*, *Froth*, and *Brisk*, (pregnant names!) seemed but types of our hero. He never opened his lips (and he was always chattering) but to proclaim His own infinite superiority to all about him. He would have taught Burke to speak and Reynolds to paint, and John Kemble to act. The *Waverley* novels would have been the better for his hints; and it was some pity that Shakspeare had not lived in these days, because he had a suggestion that would greatly have improved his *Lear*.

Nothing was too great for him to meddle with and nothing too little; but his preference went very naturally with the latter, which amalgamated most happily with his own mind: and when the unexpected legacy of a plebeian great-aunt, the despised sister of his grandfather, the farmer, enabled him to leave quill-driving, of which he was heartily weary, and to descend from the high stool in Lombard-street, on which he had been perched for five-and-twenty years, there doubtless mingled with the desire to assist his family, by adding his small income to their still smaller one—for this egregious coxcomb was an excellent son and a kind brother, just in his dealings, and generous in his heart, when, through the thick coating of foppery one could find the way to it

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—some wish to escape from the city, where his talents were his talents were, as he imagined, buried in the crowd, smothered against the jostling multitudes, and to emerge, in all his lustre, in the smaller and more select coteries of the country. On his arrival at Belford, accordingly, he installed himself, at once, as arbiter of fashion the professed *beau garcon*, the lady's man of the town and neighbourhood; and having purchased a horse, and ascertained, to ma great comfort, that his avocation as a banker's clerk was either wholly unsuspected in the county circles which his late father had frequented, or so indistinctly known, that the very least little white lie in the world would pass him off as belonging to the House, he boldly claimed acquaintance with every body in the

county whose name he had ever heard in his life, and, regardless of the tolerably visible contempt of the gentlemen, proceeded to make his court to the ladies with might and with main.

He miscalculated, however, the means best fitted to compass his end. Women, however frivolous, do not like a frivolous man: they would as soon take a fancy to their mercer as to the man who offers to choose their silks; and if he will find fault with their embroidery, and correct their patterns, he must lay his account in being no more regarded by them than their milliner or their maid. Sooth to say, your fine lady is an ungrateful personage: she accepts the help, and then laughs at the officious helper—sucks the orange and throws away the peel. This truth found King Harwood, when, oiler riding to London, and running all over that well-sized town to match, in German lamb's wool, the unmatchable brown and gold feathers of the game-cocks neck, which that ambitious embroideress, Lady Delaney, aspired to imitate in a table-carpet, he found himself saluted for his pains with the malicious sobriquet of King of the Bantams. This and other affronts drove him from the county society, which he had intended to enlighten and adorn, to the less brilliant circles of Belford, which, perhaps, suited his taste better, he being of that class of persons who bad rather reign in the town than serve in the country; whilst his brother Earl, safe in cold silence and dull respectability, kept sedulously among his rural compeers, and was considered one of the most unexceptionable grace-sayers at a great dinner, of any clergyman in the neighbourhood.

To Belford, therefore, the poor King of the Bantams was content to come, thinking himself by far the cleverest and most fashionable man in the place; an opinion which, I am sorry to say he had pretty much to himself. The gentlemen smiled at his pretensions, and the young ladies laughed, which was just the reverse of the impression which he intended to make. How the thing happened I can hardly tell, for, in general, the young ladies of a country town are sufficiently susceptible to attention from a London man. Perhaps the man was not to their taste, as conceit finds new favourers; or, perhaps, they disliked the kind

of attention, which consisted rather in making perpetual demands on their admiration, than in offering the tribute to his own; perhaps, also, the gentleman, who partook of the family fault and would be young in spite of the register, was too old for them. However it befell, he was no favourite amongst the Belford belles.

Neither was he in very good odour with the mammas. He was too poor, too proud, too scornful, and a Harwood, in which name all the pretension of the world seemed gathered. Nay, he not only in his own person out-Harwooded Harwood, but was held accountable for not a few of the delinquencies of that obnoxious race, whose airs had much argued since he had honoured Belford by his presence. Before his arrival, Miss Henrietta and her stately mamma had walked out, like the other ladies of the town, unattended: the King came, and they could not stir without being followed as their shadow by the poor little footboy, who formed the only serving-man of their establishment; before that *avatar* they dined at six, now seven was the family hour; and whereas they were wont, previously, to take that refection without alarming their neighbours, and causing Mrs. Blackall's parrot to scream, and Mrs. Leeson's cat to mew, now the solitary maid of all-work, or perchance the King himself, tinkled and jangled the door-bell, or the parlour-bell, to tell those who knew it before that dinner was ready, (I wonder he had not purchased a gong,) and to set every lady in the Row a moralizing on the sin of pride and the folly of pretension. Ah! If they who are at once poor and gently bred could but understand how safe a refuge from the contempt of the rich they would find in frank and open poverty! How entirely the pride of the world bends before a simple and honest humility!—how completely we, the poorest, may say with Constance (provided only that he imitate her action, and throw ourselves on the ground as we speak the words,) “Here is my throne,—let kings come bow to me!” —if they would but do this, how much of pain and grief they might save themselves! But this was a truth which the Harwoods had yet to discover.

Much of his unpopularity might however, be traced to a source on which has befallen a wiser man.

Amongst this other iniquities the poor King of the Bantams had a small genius for music, and accomplishment that flattered at once his propensities and his pretensions, his natural love of noise and his acquired love of consequence. He sung, with a falsetto that rang through one's head like the screams of a young peacock, divers popular ballads in various languages, very difficult to distinguish each* from each; he was a most

* Non articulation is the besetting sin of flourishing singers of all ranks. It is only the very best and the very highest who condescend, not merely to give expression to their words, but words to their expression. Some, of a far better order of taste than Mr. King Harwood, are addicted to his tantalizing defect. I remember an instance of two such who were singing very sweetly, as to mere musical sound, some Italian duets, when an old gentleman, quite of the old school., complained that he could not understand them. They then politely sung an English air; but as they had omitted to announce their intention, he never discovered the change of language, and repeated his old complaint, "Ah, I dare say it's all very fine; but I can't understand it!"

* The circumstances under which music is heard often communicate to it a charm not its own. A military band, for instance, in the open air, wind instruments upon the water, the magnificent masses of the Romish church, or the organ pealing along the dim aisles of our own venerable cathedrals, will scarcely fail to exercise a strong power over the imagination. There is another association in music, that is perhaps more delightful than all: the young innocent girl who trips about the house, carolling snatches of songs with her round, dear, youthful voice—gay and happy, and artless as an uncaged bird.

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pertinacious and intolerable scraper on the violoncello, an instrument which it is almost as presumptuous to touch, unless finely, as it is to attempt and to fail in an epic poem or an historical picture; and he showed the extent and variety of his want of power, by playing quite as ill on the flute, which again may be compared to a failure in the

composition of an acrostic, or the drawing of a butterfly. Sooth to say, he was equally bad in all; and yet he contrived to be quite as great a pest to the unmusical part of society—by far the larger part in Belford certainly, and, I suspect, every where—as if he had actually been the splendid performer ho fancied himself. Nay, he was even a greater nuisance than a fine player can be; for if music be, as Mr. Charles Lamb happily calls it, “measured malice,” malice out of all measure must be admitted to be worse still.

Generally speaking, people who dislike the art deserve to be as much bored as they are by the "concord of sweet sounds." There is not an English lady in a thousand who, when asked if she be fond of music, has the courage enough to say. No: she thinks it would be rude to do so; whereas, in my opinion, it is a civil way of getting out of the scrape, since, if the performance be really such as commands admiration, (and the very best music is an enjoyment as exquisite as it is rare,) the delight evinced comes as a pleasant surprise, or as a graceful compliment; and if (as is by very far most probable) the singing chance to be such as one would rather not hear, why then one has, at least, the very great comfort of not being obliged to simper and profess oneself pleased, but may seem as tired, and look as likely to yawn as one will, without offering any particular affront, or incurring any worse imputation than that of being wholly without taste for music—a natural defect, at which the amateur who has been excruciating one's ears vents his contempt in a shrug of scornful pity, little suspecting how entirely (as is often the case with that amiable passion) the contempt is mutual.

Now there are certain cases under which the evil of music is much mitigated: when one is not expected to listen, for instance, as at a large party in London, or, better still, at a great house in

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the country, where there are three or four rooms open, and one can get completely out of the way, and bear no more of the noise than of a peal of bells in the next parish. Music, under such circumstances, may be endured with becoming philosophy. But the poor Belfordians had no such resource. Their parties were held, at the best, in two small

drawing-rooms laid into one by the aid of folding-doors; so that when Mr. King, accompanied by his sister Henrietta, who drummed and strummed upon the piano like a boarding-school Miss, and sung her part in a duet with a voice like a raven, began his eternal vocalization, (for, never tired of hearing himself, he never dreamt of leaving off until his unhappy audience parted for the night,)—when once the self-delighted pair began, the deafened whist-table groaned in dismay; lottery-tickets were at a discount; commerce at a stand-still; Pope Joan died a natural death, and the pool of quadrille came to an untimely end.

The reign of the four kings, so long the mild and absolute sovereigns of the Belford parties, might be said to be over, and the good old ladies, long their peaceable and loving subjects, submitted with peevish patience to the yoke of the usurper. They listened and they yawned; joined in their grumbling by the ether vocalists of this genteel society, the singing young ladies and manoeuvring mammas, who found themselves literally "pushed from their stools," their music stools, by the Harwood monopoly of the instrument, as well as affronted by the Bantam King's intolerance of all bad singing except his own. How long the usurpation would have lasted, how long the discontent would have been confined to hints and frowns, and whispered mutterings, and very intelligible innuendoes, without breaking into open rebellion,—in other words, how long it would have been before King Harwood was sent to Coventry, there is no telling. He himself put an end to his musical, sovereignty, as other ambitious rulers have done before him, by an overweening desire to. Add to the extent of his dominions.

Thus it fell out.

One of the associations which did the greatest honour to Belford; was a society of amateur musicians—chiefly tradesmen, imbued with a real love of the art, and a desire to extend and cultivate an amusement which, however one may laugh at the affectation of musical taste, is, when so pursued, of a very elevating and delightful character—who met frequently at each other's houses for the sake of practice, and encouraged by the leadership of an accomplished violin player, and the possession of two or three voices of extraordinary brilliancy and power, began about this time to extend their plan, to

rehearse two or three times a week at a great room belonging to one of the society, and to give amateur concerts at the Town-hall.

Very delightful these concerts were. Every man exerted himself to the utmost, and, accustomed to play the same pieces with

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the same associates the performance had much of the unity which makes the charm of family music. They were so unaffected, too, so thoroughly unpretending—there was such genuine good taste, so much of the true spirit of enjoyment, and so little of trickery and display that the audience, who went prepared to be indulgent, were enchanted; the amateur concerts became the fashion of the day, and all the elegance and beauty of the town and neighbourhood crowded to the Belford Town-hall. This was enough for Mr. King Harwood. He had attended once as a hearer, and he instantly determined to be heard. It was pretermittting his dignity, to be sure, and his brother, Earl, would have been dumb for ever before he would have condescended to such an association. But the vanity of our friend the King was of a more popular description. Rather than not get applause, he would have played Punch at Belford fair; accordingly, he offered himself as a tenor singer to the amateur society, and they, won by his puffs of his musical genius,—which, to say the truth, had about them the prevailing power which always results from the speaker's perfect faith in his own assertions, the self-deluding faith which has never failed to make converts, from Mahomet down to Joanna Southcot,—they, won to belief, and civilly unwilling to put his talents to the proof accepted his services for the next concert.

Luckless King Harwood! He to sing in concerted pieces! Could not he have remembered that unhappy supper of the Catch and Glee Club in Finsbury-square, where, for his sake, "Non Nobis, Domine," was hissed, and "Glorious Apollo" wellnigh damned? He to aspire to the dictatorship of country musicians! Had he wholly forgotten that still more unlucky morning, when, aspiring to reform the church music of Dighton, he and the parish clerk and the obedient sexton, began, as announced and pre-arranged,

to warble Luther's Hymn; whilst all the rest of the singing gallery, three clarionets, two French horns, the bassoon, and the rustic vocalists struck up the Hundreth Psalm; and the uninstructed charity children, catching the last word as given out by the clerk, completed the triple chain, not of harmony, but of discord, by screaming out at the top of their shrill childish voices the sweet sounds of the Morning Hymn? Was that day forgotten, and that day's mortification?— when my lord, a musical amateur of the first water, whom the innovation was intended to captivate, was fain to stop his cognoscentic ears, whilst Lady Julia held her handkerchief to her fair face to conceal her irrepressible laughter, and the unhappy source of this confusion ran first of all to the Rectory to escape from the tittering remarks of the congregation, and then half-way to London to escape from the solemn rebuke of the Rector? Could that hour be forgotten?

I suppose it was. Certain he offered himself and was accepted;

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and was no sooner installed a member of the Society, than he began his usual course of dictation and finding fault His first contest was that very fruitful ground of dispute, the concert bill. With the instrumental pieces he did not meddle; but in the vocal parts the Society had wisely confined themselves to English words and English composers, to the great horror of the new *primo tenore*, who proposed to substitute Spohr and Auber and Rossini, for Purcell and Harrington and Bishop, and to have “no vulgar English name,” in the whole bill of fare.

"To think of the chap! exclaimed our good friend Stephen Lane, when Master King proposed a quartet from the "Cenerentola," in lieu of the magnificent music which has wellnigh turned one of the finest tragedies in the world into the very finest opera—(I mean, of course, Matthew Locke's music in Macbeth)—"To think of the chap!" exclaimed Stephen, who had sung Hecate with admirable power and beauty for nearly forty years, and whose noble bass voice still retained its unrivalled richness of tone—“To think of his wanting to frisk me into some of his parly-voos stuff; and daring to sneer and snigger not only at old Locks music!—and I’ll thank any of your parly-voos

to show me finer,—but at Shakspeare himself! I don't know much of poetry, to be sure," said Stephen; "but I know this, that Shakspeare's the poet of old England, and that every Englishman's bound to stand up for him, as he is for his country or his religion; and, dang it, if that chap, dares to fleer at him again before my face, I'll knock him down and so you may tell him, Master Antony," pursued the worthy butcher, somewhat wroth against the leader, whose courtesy had admitted the offending party, —"so you may tell him; and I tell you, that if I had not stood up all my life against the system, I'd strike, and leave you to get a bass where you could. I hate such puppies, and so you may tell him!" So saying, Stephen walked away, and the concert bill remained unaltered.

If (as is possible) there had been a latent hope that the new member would take offence at his want of influence in the programme of the evening's amusement, and "strike" himself, the hope was disappointed. Most punctual in the orchestra was Mr. King Harwood, and most delighted to perceive a crowded and fashionable audience. He placed himself in a conspicuous situation and a most conspicuous attitude, and sat out first an overture of Weber's, then the fine old duet, "Time has not thinned my flowing hair," and then the cause of quarrel, "When shall we three meet again," in which Stephen had insisted on his bearing no part, with scornful *sang froid*—although the Hecate was so superb, and the whole performance so striking, that, as if to move his spleen, it had been rapturously encored. The next piece was "O Nanny!" harmonized for four voices, in which he was to bear a part—and a most conspicuous part he

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did bear, sure enough! The essence of that sweetest melody, which "custom cannot stale," is, as every one knows, its simplicity; but simplicity made no part of our vocalist's merits! No one that heard him will ever forget the trills, and runs, and shakes, the cadences and flourishes, of that "O Nanny!" The other three voices (one of which was Stephen's,) stopped in astonishment, and the panting violins "toiled after him in vain." At last, Stephen Lane, somewhat provoked at having been put out of his own straight course by any thing,—for, as he said afterwards, he thought he could have sung "O Nanny," in the midst of an earthquake, and determined to see if he could stop the

chap's flourishes,—suddenly snatched the fiddle-stick out of the hands of the wondering leader, and jerked the printed, glee out of the white-gloved hands of the singer, as he was holding the leaves with the most delicate affectation—sent then sailing and fluttering over the heads of the audience, and then as the King, nothing daunted, continued his variations on "Thou wert fairest," followed up his blow by a dexterous twitch with the same convenient instrument at the poor beau's caxon, which flew spinning along the ceiling, and alighted at last on one of the ornaments of the centre chandelier, leaving the luck-less vocalist with a short crop of reddish hair, slightly bald and somewhat grizzled, a fierce pair of whiskers curled and dyed, and a most chap-fallen countenance, in the midst of the cheers, the bravos, and the encores of the diverted audience, who laughed at the exploit from the same resistless impulse that tempted honest Stephen to the act.

"Flesh and blood could not withstand it, man!" exclaimed he apologetically, holding out his huge red fist which the crest fallen beau was far too angry to take; "but I'm quite ready to make the wig good; I'll give you half a dozen, if you like, in return for the fun; and I'd recommend their fitting tighter for really it's extraordinary what a little bit of a jerk sent that fellow flying up to the ceiling just like a bird. The fiddlestick's none the worse—nor you either, if you could but think so."

But in the midst of this consolatory and conciliatory harangue, the discomfited hero of the evening disappeared, leaving his "O Nanny!" under the feet of the company, and his periwig perched on the chandelier over their heads.

The result of this adventure was, in the first place, a most satisfactory settlement of the question of wig or no wig, which had divided the female world of Belford; and a complete cure of his musical mania on the part of its hero. He never sang a note again, and has even been known to wince at the sound of a barrel organ, whilst those little vehicles of fairy tunes, French work-boxes and snuff-boxes, were objects of his especial alarm. He always looked as if he expected to hear the sweet air of "O. Nanny!" issuing from them.

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One would have thought that such a calamity would have been something of a lesson. But vanity is a strong-rooted plant that soon sprouts out again, crop it off closely as you may, and the misadventure wrought but little change in his habits. For two or three days, (probably, whilst a new wig was making) he kept his room, sick or sulky; then he rode over to Dighton, for two or three days more; after which he returned to Belford, revisited his old haunts and renewed his old ways, strutting and skipping, as usual, the loudest at public meetings—the busiest on committees—the most philosophical member of the Philosophical Society, at which, by the way, adventuring with all the boldness of ignorance on certain chemical experiments, he very literally burnt his fingers; and the most horticultural of the horticulturalists, marching about in a blue apron, like a real gardener, flourishing watering-pots, cheapening budding-knives, and boasting of his marvels in grafting and pruning, although the only things resembling trees in his mother's slip of a garden were some smoky China roses that would not blow, and a few blighted currants that refused to ripen.

But these were trifles. He attended all the more serious business of the town and country—was a constant man at the vestry, although no householder, and at borough and county meetings, although he had not a foot of land in the world. He attended railroad meetings, navigation meetings, turnpike meetings, gas-work meetings, paving meetings. Macadamizing meetings, water-work meetings, cottage-allotment meetings, anti-slavetrade meetings, education meetings of every sort and dissenting meetings of all denominations; never failed the bench; was as punctual at an inquest as the coroner, at the quarter-sessions as the chairman, at the assizes as the judge, and hath been oftener called to order by the court, and turn out of the grand-jury room by the foreman, than any other man in the country. In short, as Stephen Lane, whom he encountered pretty frequently in the course of his perambulations, pithily observed of him, “A body was sure to find the chap wherever he had no business.”

Stephen, who, probably, thought he had given him punishment enough, regarded the poor King after the fashion in which his great dog Smoker would look upon a cur whom

he had tossed once and disdained to toss again—a mixture of toleration and contempt. The utmost to which the good butcher was ever provoked by his adversary's noisiest nonsense or pertest presumption, was a significant nod towards the chandelier from whence the memorable wig had once hung pendent, a true escutcheon of pretence; or, if that memento were not sufficient, the whistling a few bars of “Where thou wert fairest,”—a gentle hint, which seldom failed of its effect in perplexing and dumbfounding the orator.

They were, however, destined to another encounter; and, as

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often happens in this world of shifting circumstance, the result of that encounter brought out points of character which entirely changed their feelings and position towards each other.

Stephen had been, as I have before said, or meant to say, a mighty tricketer in his time; and, although now many stone too heavy for active participation, continued as firmly attached to the sport, as fond of looking on and promoting that most noble and truly English game, as your old cricketer, when of a hearty and English character, is generally found to be. He patronised and promoted the diversion on all occasions, formed a weekly club at Belford, for the sake of practice, assigned them a commodious meadow for a cricket-ground, trained up sons and grandsons to the exercise, made matches with all the parishes round, and was .so sedulous in maintaining the credit of the Belford Eleven, that not a lad came into the place as an apprentice or a journeyman—especially if he happened to belong to a cricketing county—without Stephen's examining into his proficiency in his favourite accomplishment. Towards blacksmiths, who, from the development of muscular power in the arms, are often excellent players, and millars, who are good cricketers, one scarcely knows why—it runs in the trade—his attention was particularly directed, and his researches were at last rewarded by the discovery of a filtrate batsman, at a forge nearly opposite his own residence.

Caleb Hyde, the handicraftsman in question, was a spare, sinewy, half-starved looking young man, as ragged as the wildest colt he ever shod, Humphry Clinker was not in a more unclothed condition when he first shocked the eyes of Mrs. Tabitha Bramble; and, Stephen seeing that he was a capital ironsmith, and sure to command good wages, began to fear that his evil plight arose, as in nine cases out of ten raggedness does arise, from the gentle seductions of the beer-houses. On inquiry, however, he found that his protégé was as sober as if there were not a beer-house in the world; that he had been reduced to his present unseemly plight by a long fever; and that his only extravagance consisted in his having, ever since he was out of his apprenticeship, supported by the sweat of his brow an aged mother and a sickly sister, for whose maintenance, during his own tedious illness, he had pawned his clothes, rather than allow them to receive relief from the parish. This instance of affectionate independence won our butcher's heart.

"That's what I call acting like a man and an Englishman!" exclaimed honest Stephen. "I never had a mother to take care of," continued he, pursuing the same train of thought,— "that is, I never knew her; and an unnatural jade she must have been: but nobody belonging to me should, ever have received parish money whilst I had the use of my two hands;—and this poor fellow must be seen to!"

And as an induction to the more considerable and more permanent benefits which he designed for him, he carried Caleb off

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to the cricket-ground, where there was a grand rendezvous of all the amateurs of the neighbourhood, beating up for recruits for a great match to come off at Danby-park on the succeeding week.

"They give their players a guinea a day," thought Stephen; "and I'd bet fifty guineas that Sir Thomas takes a fancy to him."

Now, the Belford cricket-ground happened to be one of Mr. King Harwood's many lounges. He never, to be sure, condescended to play there; but it was an excellent

opportunity to find fault with those that did, to lay down the law on disputed points, to talk familiarly of the great men at Lord's, and to boast how, in one match, on that classic ground, he had got more notches than Mr. Ward, and had caught out Mr. Budd, and bowled out Lord Frederick. Any body, to have heard him, would have thought him, in his single person, able to beat a whole eleven. That marquée, on the Belford cricket-ground, was the place to see King Harwood in his glory.

There he was, on the afternoon in question, putting in his word on all occasions; a word of more importance than usual, because Sir Thomas being himself unable to attend, his steward, whom he had sent to select the auxiliaries for the great match, was rather more inclined than his master would have been to listen to his suggestions, (a circumstance which may be easily accounted for by the fact, that the one did know him, and the other did not,) and, therefore, in more danger of being prejudiced by his scornful disdain of poor Caleb, towards whom he had taken a violent aversion, first as a protégé of Mr. Lane, and, secondly, as being very literally an "unwashed artificer;" Stephen having carried him off from the forge without even permitting the indispensable ablutions, or the slight improvement in costume which his scanty wardrobe would have permitted.

"He would be a disgrace to your eleven, Mr. Miller!" said his Bantamic Majesty to the civil steward; "Sir- Thomas would have to clothe him from top to toe. There's the cricketer that I should recommend," added he, pointing to a young linendraper in nankeen shorts, light shoes, and silk stockings. "He understands the proper costume, and is, in my mind, a far prettier player. Out!" shouted "the skipping King," as Caleb, running a little too hard, saved himself from being stumped out by throwing himself down at full length, with his arm extended, and the end of his bat full two inches beyond the stride; "Out! fairly out!"

"No out!" vociferated the butcher; "it's a thing done every day. He's not out, and you are!" exclaimed the man of the cleaver.

But the cry of "out" having once been raised the other side, especially the scout who had picked up and tossed the ball, and

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triumph with unrestrained delight, until his antagonist, who had borne his defeat with much equanimity, approach him with the amount of his bet: it then seemed to strike him suddenly that Mr. Harwood was a gentleman, and poor, and that thirty pounds was too much for him to lose.

"No, no, sir," said Stephen, gently putting aside the offered notes; "all's right now: we've had our frolic out, and its over. "I was foolish enough, at the best, in fin old man like me, and so my dame will say; but, as to playing for money, that's quite entirely out of the' question."

"These notes are yours, Mr. Lane," replied King Harwood gravely.

"No such thing, man," rejoined Stephen, more earnestly; "I never play for money, except now and then a sixpenny game at all-fours, with Peter Jenkins there. I hate gambling. We've all of us plenty to do with our bank-notes, without wasting them in such torn-foolery. Put 'em up, man, do. Keep 'em till we play the return match, and that won't be in a hurry, I promise you; I've had enough of this sport for one while," added Stephen, wiping his honest face, and preparing to reassume his coat and waistcoat; "put up the notes, man, can't ye!"

"As I said before, Mr. Lane this money is yours. You need not scruple taking it; for, though I am a poor man, I do not owe a farthing in the world. The loss will occasion me no inconvenience. I had merely put aside this sum to pay Charles Wither the difference between my bay mare and his chestnut horse; and now I shall keep the mare; and, perhaps, after all, she is the more useful roadster of the two. You *must* take the money."

"I'll be hanged if I do!" exclaimed Stephen, struck with sudden and unexpected respect at the frank avowal of poverty, the good principles, and the good temper of this speech. "How can I? Wasn't it my own rule, when I gave this bit of ground to the cricketers, that nobody should ever play in it for any stake high or low? A pretty thing it would be if I, a reformer of forty years' standing, should be the first man to break a law of my own

making! Besides, His setting a bad example to these youngsters, and ought not to be done—and sha'n't be done," continued Stephen, waxing positive. "You've no notion what an obstinate old chap I can be! Better let me have my own way."

"Provided you let me have mine. You say you cannot take these notes—I feel that I cannot keep them. Suppose we make them over to your friend Caleb, to repair his wardrobe?"

"Dang it, you are a real good fellow!" shouted Stephen, in an ecstasy, grasping King Harwood's hand, and shaking it as if he would shake it off; "a capital fellow! a true-born Englishman! and I beg your pardon, from my soul, for that trick of the wig and all my flouting and fleering before and since. You've taught me a lesson that I sha'n't forget in a hurry. Your heart's in the

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right place; and when that's the case, why a little finery and non sense signifies no more than the patches upon Caleb's jacket, of the spots on a bullock's hide, just skin deep, and hardly that. I've a respect for you, man! and I beg your pardon over and over." And again and again he wrung King Harwood's hand in his huge red fist; whilst borne away by his honest fervency, King returned the pressure and walked silently home, wondering a little at his own gratification, for a chord had been struck in his bosom that had seldom vibrated before, and the sensation was as new as it was delightful.

The next morning little Gregory Lane made his appearance at Warwick-terrace, mounted on Mr. Charles Wither's beautiful chestnut.

"Grandfather sends his duty, sir," said the smiling boy, jumping down, and putting the bridle into King Harwood's hand, "and says that you had your way yesterday, and that he must have his to-day. He's as quiet as a lamb," added the boy, already, like Harry Blount in Marmion, a "sworn horse-courser;" "and such a trotter! He'll carry you twelve miles an hour with ease." And King Harwood accepted the offering; and Stephen and he were good friends ever after.

THE CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER.

OF all living objects, children, out of doors, seem to me the most interesting to a lover of nature. In a room, I may, perhaps be allowed to exercise my privilege as an old maid, by confessing that they are in my eyes less engaging. If well-behaved, the poor little things seem constrained and *genés*—if ill-conducted, the gene is transferred to the unfortunate grown-up people, whom their noise distracts and their questions interrupt. Within doors, in short, I am one of the many persons who like children in their places,—that is to say, in any place where I am not. But out of doors there is no such limitation: from the gypsy urchins under a hedge, to the little lords and ladies in a ducal demesne, they are charming to look at, to watch, and to listen to. Dogs are less amusing, flowers are less beautiful, trees themselves are less picturesque.

I cannot even mention them without recalling to my mind twenty groups or single figures, of which Gainsborough would

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Have made at once a picture and a story. The little aristocratic-looking girl, for instance, of some five or six years old, whom I used to see two years ago, every morning at breakfast-time, tripping along the most romantic street in England, (the High-street in Oxford,) attended or escorted, it is doubtful which, by a superb Newfoundland dog, curly and black, carrying in his huge mouth her tiny workbag, or her fairy parasol, and guarding with so true a fidelity his pretty young lady, whilst she, on her part, queened it over her lordly subject with such diverting gravity, seeming to guide him whilst he guided her—led, whilst she thought herself leading, and finally deposited at her daily school with as much regularity as the same sagacious quadruped would have displayed in carrying his master's glove, or fetching a stick out of the water. How I should like to see a portrait of that fair demure elegant child, with her full short frock, her frilled trousers, and her blue kid shoes, threading her way, by the aid of her sable attendant, through the many small impediments of the crowded streets of Oxford!

Or the pretty scene of childish distress which I saw last winter on my way to East Court,—a distress which told its own story as completely as the picture of the broken pitcher I Driving rapidly along the beautiful road from Eversley Bridge to Finchamstead, up hill and down; on the one side a wide shelving bank, dotted with fine old oaks and beeches, intermingled with thorn and birch, and magnificent holly, and edging into Mr. Palmer's forest-like woods; on the other, an open hilly country, studded with large single trees. In the midst of this landscape, rich and lovely even in winter, in the very middle of the road, stood two poor cottage children, a year or two younger than the damsel of Oxford f a large basket dangling from the hand of one of them, and a heap of barley-meal—the barley-meal that should have been in the basket—the week's dinner of the pig, scattered in the dirt at their feet Poor little dears, how they cried! They could not have told their story, had not their story told itself;—they had been carrying the basket between them, and somehow it had slipped. A shilling remedied that disaster, and sent away all parties smiling and content

Then again, this very afternoon, the squabbles of those ragged urchins at cricket on the common—a disputed point of *out* or not *out*? The eight-year-old boy who will not leave his wicket; the seven and nine-year-old imps who are trying to force him from his post; the wrangling partisans of all ages, from ten downwards, the two contending *sides* who are brawling for victory; the grave, ragged umpire, a lad of twelve, with a stick under his arm, who is solemnly listening to the cause; and the younger and less interested spectators, some just breeched, and others stilt condemned to the ignominious petticoat, who are sitting on the bank, and wondering which party will carry the day!

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What can be prettier than this, unless it be the fellow-group of girls—sisters, I presume, to the boys—who are laughing and screaming round the great oak; then darting to and fro, in a game compounded of hide-and-peek and base-ball. Now tossing the ball high, high amidst the branches; now flinging it low along the common, bowling as it were, almost within reach of the cricketers; now pursuing, now retreating, running, jumping, shouting, bawling—almost shrieking with ecstasy; whilst one sunburnt black-eyed

gypsy throws forth her laughing face from behind the trunk of the old oak, and then flings a newer and a gayer ball—fortunate purchase of some hoarded sixpence—amongst her admiring playmates. Happy, happy children! that one hour of innocent enjoyment is worth an age!

It was, perhaps, my love of picturesque children that first attracted my attention towards a little maiden of some six or seven years old, whom I used to meet, sometimes going to school, and sometimes returning from it, during a casual residence of a week or two some fifteen years ago in our good town of Belford. It was a very complete specimen of childish beauty; what would be called a picture of a child, the very study for a painter: with the round, fair, rosy face, coloured like the apple-blossom; the large, bright, open blue-eyes; the broad white forehead, shaded by brown clustering curls, and the lips scarlet as winter berries. But it was the expression of that blooming countenance which formed its principal charm; every look was a smile, and a smile which had in it as much of sweetness as of gaiety. She seemed, and she was, the happiest and the most affectionate of created beings. Her dress was singularly becoming. A little straw bonnet, of a shape calculated not to conceal, but to display the young pretty face, and a full short frock of gentianella blue, which served, by its brilliant yet contrasted colouring, to enhance the brightness of that brightest complexion. Tripping along to school with her neat covered basket in her chubby hand, the little lass was perfect.

I could not help looking and admiring, and stopping to look; and the pretty child stopped too, and dropped her little courtesy; and then I spoke, and then she spoke,—for she was too innocent, too unfearing, too modest to be shy; so that Susy and I soon became acquainted; and in a very few days the acquaintanceship was extended to a fine open-countenanced man, and a sweetlooking and intelligent young woman, Susan's father and mother—one or other of whom used to come almost every evening to meet their darling on her return from school; for she was an only one,—the sole offspring of a marriage of love, which was, I believe, reckoned unfortunate by every body except the parties concerned: they felt and knew that they were happy.

I soon learnt their simple history. William Jervis, the only

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son of a rich carpenter, had been attached, almost from childhood, to his fair neighbour, Mary Price, the daughter of a haber-dasher in a great way of business, who lived in the same street. The carpenter, a plodding, frugal artisan of the old school, who trusted to indefatigable industry and undeviating sobriety, for getting on in life, had an instinctive mistrust of the more dashing and speculative tradesman, and even, in the height of his prosperity, looked with cold and doubtful eyes on his son's engagement. Mr. Price's circumstances, however, seemed, and at the time were, so flourishing—his offers so liberal, and his daughter's character so excellent, that to refuse his consent would have been an unwarrantable stretch of authority. All that our prudent carpenter could do was, to delay the union, in hopes that something might still occur to break it off; and when ten days before the time finally fixed for the marriage, the result of an unsuccessful speculation placed Mr. Price's name in the Gazette, most heartily did he congratulate himself on the foresight which, as he hoped, had saved him from the calamity of a portionless daughter-in-law. He had, however, miscalculated the strength of his son's affection for poor Mary, as well as the firm principle of honour, which regarded their long and everyway sanctioned engagement as a bond little less sacred than wedlock itself; and on Mr. Price's dying, within a very few months, of that death, which, although not included in the bills of mortality, is yet but too truly recognised by the popular phrase, a broken heart, William Jervis, after vainly trying every mode of appeal to his obdurate father, married the orphan girl—in the desperate hope, that the step being once taken, and past all remedy, an only child would find forgiveness for an offence attended by so many extenuating circumstances.

But here, too, William, in his turn, miscalculated the invincible obstinacy of his father's character. He ordered his son from his house and his presence, dismissed him from his employment, forbade his very name to be mentioned in his hearing, and, up to the time at which our story begins, comported himself exactly as if he never had had a child.

William, a dutiful, affectionate son, felt severely the deprivation of his father's affection, and Mary felt for her William; but, so far as regarded their worldly concerns, I am

almost afraid to say how little they regretted their change of prospects. Young, healthy, active, wrapt up in each other and in their lovely little girl, they found small difficulty and no hardship in earning—he by his trade, at which he was so good a workman as always to command high wages, and she by needle-work—sufficient to supply their humble wants; and when the kindness of Walter Price, Mary's brother, who had again opened a shop in the town, enabled them to send their little Susy to a school of a better order

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than their own funds would have permitted, their utmost ambition seemed gratified.

So far was speedily made known to me. I discovered also that Mrs. Jervis possessed, in a remarkable degree, the rare quality called taste—a faculty which does really appear to be almost intuitive in some minds, let metaphysicians laugh as they may; and the ladies of Belford, delighted to find an opportunity of at once exercising their benevolence, and procuring exquisitely fancied caps and bonnets at half the cost which they had been accustomed to pay to the fine yet vulgar milliner who had hitherto ruled despotically over the fashions of the place, did not fail to rescue their new and interesting protégée from the drudgery of sewing white seam, and of poring over stitching and button-holes.

For some years all prospered in their little household. Susy grew in stature and in beauty, retaining the same look of intelligence and sweetness which had, in her early childhood, fascinated all beholders. She ran some risk of being spoiled, (only that, luckily, she was of the grateful, unselfish, affectionate nature which seems unspoilable,) by the admiration of Mrs. Jervis's customers, who, whenever she took home their work, would send for the pretty Susan into the parlour, and give her fruit and sweetmeats, or whatever cakes might be likely to please a childish appetite; which, it was observed, she contrived, whenever she could do so without offence, to carry home to her mother, whose health, always delicate, had lately appeared more than usually precarious. Even her stern grandfather, now become master-builder, and one of the richest tradesmen in the town had been remarked to look long and wistfully on the lovely little girl, as,

holding by her father's hand, she tripped lightly to church, although, on that father himself, he never deigned to cast a glance; so that the more acute denizens of Belford used to prognosticate, that, although William was disinherited, Mr. Jervis's property would not go out of the family.

So matters continued, awhile. Susan was eleven years old, when a stunning and unexpected blow fell upon them all. Walter Price, her kind uncle, who had hitherto seemed as prudent as he was prosperous, became involved in the stoppage of a great Glasgow house, and was obliged to leave the town; whilst her father, having unfortunately accepted bills drawn by him, under an assurance that they should be provided for long before they became due, was thrown into prison for the amount. There was, indeed, a distant hope that the affairs of the Glasgow house might come round, or, at least, that Walter Price's concerns might be disentangled from theirs; and for this purpose, his presence, as a man full of activity and intelligence, was absolutely necessary in Scotland; but this prospect was precarious and

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Distant. In the mean time, William Jervis lay lingering in prison, his creditor relying avowedly on the chance that a rich father could not, for shame, allow his son to perish there; whilst Mary, sick, helpless, and desolate, was too broken-spirited to venture an application to a quarter, from whence any slight hope that she might otherwise have entertained was entirely banished by the recollection that the penalty had been incurred through a relation of her own.

"Why should I go to him?" said poor Mary to herself when referred by Mr. Barnard, her husband's creditor, to her wealthy father-in-law,—“why trouble him? He will never pay my brother's debt: he would only turn me from his door, and, perhaps, speak of Walter and William in a way that would break my heart” And, with her little daughter in her hand, she walked slowly back to a small room that she had hired near the jail, and sat down sadly and heavily to the daily diminishing millinery work, which was now the only resource of the once happy family.

In the afternoon of the same day, as old Mr. Jervis was seated in a little summer-house at the end of his neat garden, gravely smoking his pipe over a tumbler of spirits and water, defiling the delicious odour of his honey-suckles and sweetbriers by the two most atrocious smells on this earth—the fumes of tobacco* and of gin—his meditations, probably, none of the most agreeable, were interrupted, first by a modest' single knock at the front door, (which, the immediate doors being open, he heard distinctly,) then by a gentle parley, and, lastly, by his old housekeeper's advance up the gravel walk, followed by a very young girl, who approached him hastily yet tremblingly, caught his rough hand with her little one, lifted up a sweet face, where smiles seemed breaking through her tears, and, in an attitude between standing and kneeling—an attitude of deep reverence—faltered, in a low, broken voice, one low, broken word—"Grandfather!"

"How came this child here?" exclaimed Mr. Jervis, endeavouring to disengage the hand which Susan had now secured within both hers—"how dared you let her in, Norris, when you new my orders respecting the whole family?"

"How dared I let her in?" returned the housekeeper—"how could I help it? Don't we all know that there is not a single house in the town where little Susan (Heaven bless her dear face!) is not welcome! Don't the very jailers themselves let her into the prison before hours and after hours? And don't the sheriff himself, as strict as he is said to be, sanction it? Speak

* Whenever one thinks of Sir Walter Raleigh as the importer of this disgusting and noisome weed, it tends greatly to mitigate the horror which one feels for hit unjust execution. Had he been only beheaded as the inventor of smoking, all would have been right.

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to your grandfather, Susy, love—don't be dashed."* And, with this encouraging exhortation, the kind-hearted housekeeper retired.

Susan continued clasping her grandfather's hand, and leaning her face over it, as if to conceal the tears which poured down her cheeks like rain.

"What do you want with me, child?" at length interrupted Mr. Jervis, in a stern voice, "What brought you here?"

"Oh, grandfather! Poor father's in prison!"

"I did, not put him there," observed Mr. Jervis, coldly: "you must go to Mr. Barnard on that affair."

"Mother did go to him this morning," replied Susan, "and he told her that she must apply to you—"

"Well!" exclaimed the grandfather, impatiently.

"But she said she dared not, angry as you were with her—more especially as it is through uncle Walter's misfortune that all this misery has happened. Mother dared not come to you."

"She was right enough there," returned Mr. Jervis. "So she sent you?"

"No, indeed; sire knows nothing of my coming. She sent me to carry home a cap to Mrs. Taylor, who lives in the next street, and, as I was passing the door, it came into my head to knock—and then Mrs. Norris brought me here—Oh, grandfather! I hope I have not done wrong! I hope you are not angry! —But if you were to see how sad and pale poor father looks in that dismal prison—and poor mother, how sick and ill she is; how her hand trembles when she tries to work—Oh, grandfather! if you could but see them, you would not wonder at my boldness."

"All this comes of trusting to a speculating knave like Walter Price!" observed Mr. Jervis, rather as a soliloquy than to the child, who, however, heard and replied to the remark.

"He was very kind to me, was uncle Walter! He put me to school, to learn reading, and writing, and ciphering, and all sorts of needle-work—not a charity-school, because he wished me to be amongst decent children, and not to learn bad ways. And he has written to offer to come to prison himself, if father wishes it—only—I don't understand about business—but even Mr. Barnard says that the best chance of recovering the money is his remaining at liberty; and, indeed, indeed, grandfather, my uncle Walter is not so wicked as you think for—indeed he is not"

"This child is grateful!" was the thought that passed through her grandfather's mind; but he did not give it utterance. He, however, drew her closer to him, and seated her in the summer-house

* *Dashed*—frightened. I believe this expression, though frequently used there, is not confined to Berkshire. It is one of the pretty provincial phrases by which Richardson has contrived to give a charming rustic grace to the early letters of Pamela.

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at his side. "So you can read and write, and keep accounts, and do all sorts of needle work, can you, my little maid? And you can run of errands, doubtless, and are handy about a house? Should you like to live with me and Norris, and make my shirts, and read the newspaper to me of an evening, and learn to make puddings and pies, and be my own little Susan ? Eh!—Should you like this?"

"Oh, grandfather!" exclaimed Susan, enchanted.

"And water the flowers," pursued Mr. Jervis, "and root out the wends, and gather the beau-pots? Is not this a nice garden, Susy?"

"Oh, beautiful! dear grandfather, beautiful!"

"And you would like to live with me in this pretty house and this beautiful garden—should you, Susy?"

"Oh, yes, dear grandfather!"

"And never wish to leave me?"

"Oh, never! never!"

"Nor to see the dismal jail again—the dismal, dreary jail?"

"Never!—but father is to live here too?" inquired Susan, interrupting herself—"father and mother?"

"No!" replied her grandfather—"neither of them. It was you whom I asked to live here with me. I have nothing to do with them, and you must choose between us."

"They not live here! I to leave my father and my mother—my own dear mother, and she so sick! my own dear father, and he in a jail! Oh, grandfather! you cannot mean it—you cannot be so cruel!"

"There is no cruelty in the matter, Susan. I give you the offer of leaving your parents, and living with me; but I do not compel you to accept it. You are an intelligent little girl, and perfectly capable of choosing for yourself. But I beg you to take notice that, by remaining with them, you will not only share, but increase their poverty; whereas, with me, you will not only enjoy every comfort yourself, but relieve them from the burden of your support."

"It is not a burden," replied Susan, firmly;—"I know that, young and weak, and ignorant as I am now, I am yet of some use to my dear mother—and of some comfort to my dear father; and every day I shall grow older and stronger, and more able to be a help to them both. And to leave them! to live here in plenty, whilst they were starving! to be gathering posies, whilst they were in prison! Oh, grandfather! I should die of the very thought Thank you for your offer," continued she, rising, and dropping her little courtesy—"but my choice is made. Good evening, grandfather!"

"Don't be in such a hurry, Susy," rejoined her grandfather, shaking the ashes from his pipe, taking the last sip of his gin and

water, and then proceeding to adjust his hat and wig—"Don't be in such a hurry: you and I shan't part so easily. You're a dear little girl, and since you won't stay with me, I must e'n go with you. The father and mother who brought up such a child, must be worth bringing home. So, with your good leave, Miss Susan, we'll go and fetch them."

And, in the midst of Susy's rapturous thanks, her kisses and her tears, out they sallied; and the money was paid, and the debtor released, and established with his overjoyed wife in the best room of Mr. Jervis's pretty habitation, to the unspeakable gratitude of the whole party, and the ecstatic delight of the CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER.

SUPPERS AND BALLS;

OR, TOWN VERSUS COUNTRY.

THIRTY years ago Belford was a remarkably sociable place, just of the right size for pleasant visiting. In very small towns people see each other too closely, and fall almost unconsciously into the habit of prying and peeping into their neighbours' concerns, and gossiping and tittle-tattling, and squabbling, and jostling, as if the world were not wide enough for them; and such is the fact—their world is too narrow. In very great towns, on the other hand, folks see too little of one another, and do not care a straw for their near dwellers. Large provincial towns, the overgrown capitals of overgrown counties, are almost as bad in that respect as London, where next-door neighbours may come into the world, or go out of it—be born, or married, or buried, without one's hearing a word of the birth, or the wedding, or the funeral, until one reads the intelligence, two or three days afterwards, in the newspapers.

Now in Belford, thirty years ago, whilst you were perfectly secure from any such cold and chilling indifference to your well or ill being, so you might reckon on being tolerably free from the more annoying impertinence of a minute and scrutinizing curiosity. The place was too large for the one evil, and too small for the other: almost every family of the class commonly called genteel, visited and was visited by the rest of

their order; and not being a manufacturing town, and the trade, although flourishing, being limited to the supply of the inhabitants, and of

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the wealthy and populous neighbourhood, the distinction was more easily drawn than is usual in this commercial country; and the gentry of Belford might be comprised in the members of the three learned professions, the principal partners in the banks, one or two of the most thriving brewers, and that numerous body of idle persons who live upon their means, and whom the political economists are pleased, somewhat uncivilly, to denominate "the unproductive classes"

Another favourable circumstance in the then state of the Belford society, was the circumstance of nobody's being over rich. Borne had, to be sure, larger incomes than others; but there was no great monied man, no borough Croesus, to look down upon his poorer neighbours, and insult them by upstart pride or pompous condescension. All met upon the table-land of gentility, and the few who were more affluent contrived, almost without exception, to disarm envy by using their greater power for the gracious purpose of diffusing pleasure and promoting sociability. And certainly a more sociable set of people could not easily have been found.

To say nothing at present of the professional gentlemen, or of that exceedingly preponderating part of the female "interest" (to borrow another cant phrase of the day,) the widows and single ladies, the genteel inhabitants of Belford were as diversified as heart could desire. We had two naval captains: the one, a bold, dashing open hearted tar, who, after remaining two or three years unemployed, fuming, and chafing, and grumbling over his want of interest, got a ship, and died, after a brilliant career, at the summit of fame and fortune; the other, a steady, business-like person, who did his duty as an English sailor always does, but who, wanting the art of making opportunities, the uncalculating bravery, the hoppy rashness, which seems essential to that branch of the service, lived obscurely, and died neglected. His wife had in her temperament the fire that her husband wanted, she was a virago, and would, beyond all doubt, have thought

nothing of encountering a whole fleet, whether friends or foes; whilst Sir Charles's lady (for our gallant officer had already won that distinction) was a poor, shrinking, delicate, weak-spirited little woman, who would have fainted at the sound of a signal-gun, and have died of a royal salute. They were great acquisitions to the society, especially Sir Charles, who, thought he would have preferred a battle every day, had no objection, in default of that diversion, to a party of any sort,—dance, supper, dinner, rout, nothing came amiss to him, although it must be confessed that he liked the noisiest best.

Then arrived a young Irish gentleman, who having run away with an heiress, and spent as much of her fortune as the Court of Chancery would permit, came to Belford to retrench, and to

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wait for a place, which, through some exceedingly indirect and remote channel of interest, he expected to procure, and for which he pretended to prepare, and doubtless thought that he was preparing himself by the study of Cocker's Arithmetic. *He study Cocker!* Oh, dear me! all that he was ever likely to know of pounds, shillings, and pence, was the art of spending them, in which he was a proficient. A gay, agreeable, thoughtless creature, he was, and so was his pretty wife. They had married so young, that whilst still looking like boy and girl, a tribe of boys and girls were rising round them, all alike gay and kind, and merry and thoughtless. They were the very persons to promote parties, since without them they could not live.

Then came a Scotch colonel in the Company's service, with an elegant wife and a pretty daughter. A mighty man for dinnering and suppering was he! I question if Ude be a better cook. I am quite sure that he does not think so much of his own talents in that way as our colonel did. He never heard of a turtle within twenty miles, but he offered to dress it, and once nearly broke his neck in descending into a subterranean kitchen to superintend the haunches at a mayor's feast. An excellent person was he, and a jovial, and a perfect gentleman even in his white apron.

Then came two graver pairs: a young clergyman, who had married a rich and very charming widow, and seemed to think it right to appear staid and demure to conceal the half-a-dozen years by which she had the disadvantage of him; and a widow and her son, a young man just from college, and intended for the diplomatic line, for which, if to be silent, solemn, safe, and dull, be a recommendation, he was very eminently gifted.

Then we had my friend the talking gentleman and his pretty wife; then a half-pay major, very prosy; then a retired commissary, very dozy; then a papa with three daughters; then a mamma with two sons; then a family too large to count; and then some score of respectable and agreeable ladies and gentlemen, the chorus of the opera, the figurantes of the ballet, who may fairly be summed up in one general eulogy as very good sort of people in their way.

This *catalogue raisonné* of the Belford gentlefolks does not sound very grand or very intellectual, or very much to boast about; but yet the component parts, the elements of society, mingled well together, and the result was almost as pleasant as the colonel's inimitable punch—sweet and spirited, with a little acid, and not too much water—or as Sir Charles's champagne, sparkling and effervescent, and completely tip as his own brilliant spirits and animated character. I was a girl at the time—a very young girl, and, what is more to the purpose, a very shy one, so that I mixed in none of the gaieties; but, speaking from

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observation and recollection, I can fairly say that I never saw any society more innocently cheerful, or more completely, free from any other restraints than those of good breeding and propriety. The gentlemen had frequent dinner-parties, and the young people occasional dances at such houses where the rooms were large enough; but the pleasantest meetings were social suppers, preceded by a quiet rubber, and a noisy round game, succeeded by one or two national airs, very sweetly sung by the Irishman's wife and the colonel's daughter, enlivened by comic songs by the talking gentleman—a genius in that line, and interspersed with more of fun and jest, and jollity of jokes that

nobody could explain, and of laughter no one knew why, than I ever have happened to witness amongst any assemblage of well-behaved and well-educated people. One does sometimes meet with enjoyment amongst a set of country lads and lasses; but to see ladies and gentlemen merry as well as wise, is, in these utilitarian days, somewhat uncommon.

N. B. If I were asked whether this happy state of things still continues, I should find the question difficult to answer. Belford is thirty years older since the joyous Christmas holidays which have left so pleasant an impression on my memory, and more than thirty years larger, since it has increased and multiplied; not after the staid and sober fashion of an English country town, but in the ratio of an American city—Cincinnati for instance, or any other settlement of the West, which was the wilderness yesterday, and starts into a metropolis to-morrow. Moreover, I doubt if the habits of the middle ranks in England be as sociable now as they were then. The manners immortalized by Miss Austen are rapidly passing away. There is more of finery, more of literature, more, of accomplishment, and, above all, more of pretension, than there used to be. Scandal vanished with the tea-table; gossiping is out of fashion; jokes are gone by; conversation is critical, analytical, political—any thing but personal. The world is a wise world, and a learned World, and a scientific world; but not half so merry a world as it was thirty years ago. And then, courteous reader, I too am thirty years older, which must be taken into the account; for if those very supper-parties, those identical Christmas holidays, which I enjoyed so much at fourteen, were to return again bodily, with all their "quips and cranks, and jollity," it is just a thousand to one but they found the woman of forty-four too grave for them, and longing for the quiet and decorum of the elegant *conversazione* and select dinners of 1834: of such contradictions is this human nature of ours mingled and composed!

To return once more to Belford, as I remember it at bonny fifteen.

The public amusements of the town were sober enough. Ten

years before, clubs had flourished; and the heads of houses had met once a week at the King's Arms for the purpose of whistplaying; whilst the ladies, thus deserted by their liege lords, had established a meeting at each other's mansions on club-nights, from which, by way of retaliation, the whole male sex was banished except Mr. Singleton. At the time, however, of which I speak, these clubs had passed away; and the public diversions were limited to an annual visit from a respectable company of actors, the theatre being, as is usual in country places, very well conducted and exceedingly ill attended; to biennial concerts, equally good in their kind, and rather better patronised; and to almost weekly incursions from itinerant lecturers on all the arts and sciences, and from prodigies of every kind, whether three-year old fiddlers or learned dogs.

There were also balls in their spacious and commodious town-ball, which seemed as much built for the purposes of dancing as for that of trying criminals. Public balls there were in abundance; but at the time of which I speak they were of less advantage to the good town of Belford than any one, looking at the number of good houses and of pretty young women, could well have thought possible. Never was a place in which the strange prejudice, the invisible but strongly felt-line of demarcation, which all through England divides the county families from the townspeople, was more rigidly sustained. To live in that respectable borough was in general a recognised exclusion from the society of the neighbourhood; and if by chance any one so high in wealth, or station, or talent, or connexion, as to set the proscription at defiance, happened to settle within the obnoxious walls, why then the country circle took possession of the newcomer, and he was, although living in the very heart of the borough, claimed and considered as a country family, and seized by the county and relinquished by the town accordingly.* The thing is too absurd to reason upon; but so it was, and so to a great degree it still continues all over England.

A public ball-room is, perhaps, of all others, the scene where this feeling is most certain to display itself; and the Belford balls bad, from time immemorial, been an arena where the convicting vanities of the town and county belles came into collision. A circumstance that bad happened some twenty years before the time of which I write

(that is to say, nearly fifty years ago) hail, however, ended in the total banishment of the Belford beauties from the field of battle.

Every body remembers the attack made upon George III., by

* They order matters rather better now; at least, I know some three or four very delightful persons who, although guilty of living amongst streets and brick-walls, do yet visit in town or country as they see lit; and the ball-room distinction is, I believe, partly swept away—but not quite

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an unfortunate mad woman, of the name of Margaret Nicholson; the quantity of addresses sent up in consequence, from all parts of the kingdom, and the number of foolish persons who accompanied the deputations and accepted the honour of knighthood on the occasion. Amongst these simple personages were two aldermen of Belford, a brewer and a banker, whose daughters, emulous of their fathers' wisdom, were rash enough) at the next monthly assembly, to take place above the daughters of the high sheriff, and the county members, and half the landed gentry of the neighbourhood. The young country ladies behaved with great discretion; they put a stop to the remonstrances of their partners, walked in a mass to the other end of the room, formed their own set there, and left the daughters of the new-made knights to go down the dance by themselves. But the result was the establishment of subscription balls, under the direction of a county committee, and a complete exclusion, for the time, at least, of the female inhabitants of Belford.

By some means or other, the gentlemen contrived to creep in as partners, though not much to their own comfort or advantage. The county balls at Belford were amongst the scenes of King Harwood's most notable disappointments; and a story was in circulation (for the truth of which, however, I will not venture to vouch) that our young diplomatist, who, from the day he first entered Oxford to that in which he left it, had been a tuft-hunter by profession, was actually so deceived, by her being on a visit to a noble family in the neighbourhood, as to request the hand of a young lady for the first two dances,

who turned out to be nothing letter than the sister of the curate of his own parish, who came the very next week to keep her brother's house, a house of six rooms little better than closets, in Belford, who had not the apology of beauty, and whose surname was Brown!

It follows, from this state of things, that, in tracing the annals of beauty in the Belford ball-room, in our subsequent pages, our portraits must be chiefly drawn from the young ladies of the neighbourhood, the fair damsels of the town (for of many a fair damsel the town could boast) having been driven to other scenes for the display of their attractions. I am not sure that they lost many admirers by the exclusion; for a pretty girl is a pretty girl, even if she chance to live amongst houses and brick walls, instead of trees and green fields,—and, somehow or other, young men will make the discovery. And a pair of bright eyes may do as much execution at a concert, or a lecture, or a horticultural show, or even—with all reverence be it spoken—at a missionary meeting, as if threading the mazes of the old-fashioned country dance, or *dos-a-dos*-ing in the most fashionable quadrille. Nothing breaks down artificial distinctions so certainly as beauty; and so, or I mistake, our Belford lasses have found.

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THE OLD EMIGRÉ.

THE town of Belford is, like many of our ancient English boroughs, full of monastic remains, which give an air at once venerable and picturesque to the irregular streets and suburban gardens of the place. Besides the great ruins of the abbey extending over many acres, and the deep and beautiful arched gateway forming part of an old romantic house which, although erected many centuries later, is now falling to decay, whilst the massive structure of the arch remains firm and vigorous as a rock,*—besides that graceful and shadowy gateway which, with the majestic elms that front it, has formed the subject of almost as many paintings and drawings as Durham Cathedral—besides these venerable remains, every comer of the town presents some relic of “hoar antiquity” to the eye of

the curious traveller. Here, a stack of chimneys,—there, a bit of garden wall,—in this place, a stone porch with the date 1472,—in that, an oaken-raftered granary of still earlier erection—all give token of the solid architecture of the days when the mitred abbots of the great monastery of Belford, where princes have lodged and kings been buried.) as witness the stone coffins not long since disinterred is the ruined chapel,) were the munificent patrons and absolute suzerains of the good burghers and their borough town. Even where no such traces exist, the very names of the different localities indicate their connexion with these powerful Benedictines. Friar Street, Minster Street, the Oriel, the Holy Brook, the Abbey Mills,—names which have long outlived, not only the individual monks, but even the proud foundation by which they were bestowed,—still attest the extensive influence of the lord abbot If it be true, according to Lord Byron, that "words are things," still more truly may we say, that names are histories.

Nor were these remains confined to the town. The granges and parks belonging to the wide-spreading abbey lands, their manors and fisheries, extended for many miles around; and more than one yeoman, in the remoter villages, claims to be descended of the tenants who held farms under the church; whilst many a mouldering parchment indicates the assumption of the

* It was not, I believe, at this gateway, but at one the very remains of which are now swept away, that the abbot and two of his monies were hanged at the time of the Reformation: a most causeless piece of cruelty, since no resistance was offered by the helpless Benedictines.

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abbey property by the crown, or its bestowal as some favourite noble of the court. And, amidst these relics of ecclesiastical pomp and wealth, be it not forgotten, that, better things were mingled—almshouses for the old, hospitals for the sick, and cranes and chapels at which the pilgrim or the wayfarer might offer up his prayers. One of the latter, dedicated to "Our Ladye," was singularly situated on the centre pier of the old

bridge at Upton, where, indeed, the original basement, surmounted by a more modern dwelling-house, still continues.

By far the most beautiful ruin in Belford is, however, the east end of an old Friary, situate at the entrance of the town from the pleasant village of Upton above mentioned, from which it is divided by about half a mile of green meadows sloping down to the great river, with its long straggling bridge, sliding, as it were into an irregular street of cottages, trees, and gardens, terminated by the old church, imbosomed in wood, and crowned by the great chalk-pit, and the high range of Oxfordshire hills.

The end of the old Friary forming the angle between two of the streets of Belford, and being, itself the last building of the town, commands this pretty pastoral prospect. It is placed in about half an acre of ground, partly cultivated as a garden, partly planted with old orchard trees, standing back both from the street on the one side, and the road on the other, apart and divided from every meaner building, except a small white cottage which is erected against the lower part, and which it surmounts in all the pride of its venerable beauty, retaining almost exactly that form of a pointed arch, to which the groined roof was fitted; almost, but not quite, since, on one side, part of the stones are crumbling away into a picturesque irregularity, whilst the other is overgrown by large masses of ivy, and the snapdragon and the wallflower have contributed to break the outline. The east window, however, is perfect—as perfect as if finished yesterday. And the delicate tracery of that window, the rich fretwork of its Gothic carving, clear as point-lace, regular as the quaint cutting of an Indian fan, have to me—especially when the summer sky is seen through those fantastic mouldings, and the ash and elder saplings, which have sprung from the fallen masses below, mingle their fresh and vivid tints with the hoary apple trees of the orchard, and the fine mellow hue of the weather-stained gray stone—a truer combination of that which the mind seeks in ruins, the union of the beautiful and the sad, than any similar scene with which I am acquainted, however aided by silence and solitude, by majestic woods and mighty waters.

Perhaps, the very absence of these romantic adjuncts, the passing at once from the busy hum of men to this memorial of past generations, may aid the impression; or, perhaps, the associations connected with the small cottage that leans against it, and harmonizes

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so well in form and colour, and feeling with the general picture, may have more influence than can belong merely to form and colour in producing the half-unconscious melancholy that steals over the thoughts.

Nothing could be less melancholy than my first recollections of that dwelling, when, a happy school-girl at home for the holidays, I used to open the mall wicket, and run up the garden path, and enter the ever-open door to purchase Mrs. Duval's famous brioches and marangles.

Mrs. Duval had not always lived in the cottage by the Friary. Fifteen years before, she had been a trim black-eyed maiden, the only daughter and heiress of old Anthony Richards, an eminent confectioner in Queen Street. There she had presided over turtle-soup and tartlets, ices and jellies—in short, over the whole business of the counter, with much discretion, her mother being dead, and Anthony keeping close to his territory—the oven. With admirable discretion had Miss Fanny Richards conducted the business of the shop; smiling, civil, and attentive to every body, and yet contriving,—in spite of her gay and pleasant manner, the evident light-heartedness which danced in her sparkling eyes, and her airy steps, and her arch yet innocent speech, a light-heartedness which charmed even the gravest—to avoid any the slightest approach to allurements or coquetry. The most practised recruiting officer that ever lounged in a country town could not strike up a flirtation with Fanny Richards; nor could the more genuine admiration of the raw boy just come from Eton, and not yet gone to Oxford, extort the slenderest encouragement from the prudent and right-minded maiden. She returned their presents and laughed at their poetry, and had raised for herself such a reputation for civility and propriety that, when the French man-cook of a neighbouring nobleman, an *artiste* of the first water, made his proposals, and her good father, after a little John

Bullish demur, on the score of language and country, was won, imitating the example related of some of the old painters to bestow on him his daughter's hand, in reward of the consummate skill of his productions, (a magnificent *Paté de Périgord* is said to have been the *chef-d'oeuvre* which gained the first prize,) not a family in the town or neighbourhood but wished veil to the young nymph of the counter, and resolved to do every thing that their protection and patronage could compass for her advantage and comfort.

The excellent character and excellent confectionary of the adroit and agreeable Frenchman completely justified Fanny's choice; and her fond lather, from the hour that he chuckingly iced her wedding-cake, and changed his old, homely, black and white inscription of "Anthony Richards, pastry-cook," which had whilom modestly surmounted the shop-window, into a very grand

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and very illegible scroll, gold on a blue ground, in the old. English character, (Arabesque the bridegroom. called it; indeed, if it had been Arabic, it could hardly have been more unintelligible,) of "Anthony Richards and Louis Duval, man-cooks and restorers," which required the contents of the aforesaid window to explain its meaning to English eyes,—from that triumphant hour to the time of his death, some three years afterwards, never once saw cause to repent that he had intrusted his daughter's fortune and happiness to a foreigner. So completely was his prejudice surmounted, that, when a boy was born, and it was proposed to give him the name of his grandfather, the old man positively refused. "Let him be such another Louis Duval as you have been," said he, "and I shall be satisfied."

All prospered in Queen-street, and all deserved to prosper. From the noblemen and gentlemen, at whose houses, on days of high festival, Louis Duval officiated as *chef de cuisine*, down to the urchins of the street, half-penny customers whose object it was to get roost sweets for their money, all agreed that the cookery and the cakery, the soufflés and the buns, were inimitable. Perhaps the ready and smiling civility, the free and

genuine kindness, which looked out and weighed a pennyworth of sugar-plums with an attention as real and as good-natured as that with which an order was taken for a winter dessert, had something to do with this universal popularity. Be that as it may, all prospered, and all deserved to prosper, in Queen-street; and, until the old man died, it would have been difficult, in the town or the country, to fix on a more united, or a happier family. That event, by bringing an accession of property and power to Louis Duval, introduced into his mind a spirit of speculation an ambition, (if one may apply so grand a word to the projects of a confectioner,) which became as fatal to his fortunes as it has often proved to those of greater men. He became weary of his paltry profits and his provincial success—wearily even of the wont of competition,—for poor old Mrs. Thomas, the pastry-cook in the market-place, an inert and lumpish personage of astounding dimensions, whose fame, such it was,, rested on huge plum-cakes almost as big round as herself, and little better than bread with a few currants interspersed, wherewith, under the plea of whole—someness, poor children were crammed at school and at home,—poor old Mrs. Thomas could never be regarded as his rival;—these motives, together with the wish to try a wider field, and an unlucky suggestion from his old master, the Earl, that he and his wife would be the very persons for a London hotel, induced him to call in his debts, dispose of his house and business in Queen-street, embark in a large concern in the West-end, and leave Belford altogether.

The result of this measure may be easily anticipated. Wholly

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unaccustomed to London, and to that very nice and difficult undertaking, a great hotel,—and with a capital which, though considerable in itself, was yet inadequate to a speculation of such magnitude,—poor Monsieur and Madame Duval (for they had assumed all the Frenchifications possible on setting up in the great city) were tricked, and cheated, and laughed at by her country-men and by his, and in the course of four years were completely ruined; whilst he, who might always have procured a decent livelihood by going about to different houses as a professor of the culinary art, (for though Louis had lost every thing else, he had not, as he used to observe, and it was a

comfort to him, poor fellow! lost his professional reputation,) caught cold by overheating himself in cooking a great dinner, fell into a consumption, and died; leaving his young wife and her little boy friendless and penniless in the wide world.

Under these miserable circumstances, poor Fanny naturally returned to her native town, with some expectation, perhaps, that the patrons and acquaintances of her father and her husband might re-establish her in her old business, for which, having been brought up in the trade, and having retained all the receipts which had made their shop so celebrated, she was peculiarly qualified. But, although surrounded by well-wishers and persons ready to assist her to a certain small extent, Mrs. Duval soon found how difficult it is for any one, especially a woman, to obtain, money without security, and without any certainty of repayment. That she had failed once, was reason enough to render people fearful that she might fail again. Besides, her old rival, Mrs. Thomas, was also dead, and had been succeeded by a Quaker couple, so alert, so intelligent, so accurately and delicately clean in all their looks, and ways, and wares, that the very sight of their bright counter, and its simple but tempting cates, gave their customers an appetite. They were the fashion, too, unluckily. Nothing could go down for luncheon in any family of gentility, but Mrs. Purdy's biscuits, and poor Mrs. Duval found her more various and richer confectionary comparatively disregarded. The most that her friends could do for her was to place her in the Friary Cottage, where, besides carrying on a small trade with the few old customers who still adhered to herself and her tartlets, she could have the advantage of letting a small bed-chamber and a pleasant little parlour to any lodger desirous of uniting good air, and a close vicinity to a large town, with a situation peculiarly secluded and romantic.

The first occupant of Mrs. Duval's pleasant apartments was a Catholic priest, an *émigré* to whom they had a double recommendation, in his hostesses knowledge of the French language, of French habits, and French cookery, (she being, as he used to affirm, the only Englishwoman that ever made drinkable coffee,)

and in the old associations of the precincts ("piece of a cloister") around which the venerable memorials of the ancient faith still lingered even in decay. He might have said, with Antonio, in one of the finest scenes ever conceived by a poet's imagination, that in which the Echo answers from the murdered woman's grave,—

"I do love these ancient ruins;
We never tread upon them bat we set
Our foot upon some reverend history;
And, questionless, here in this open court
(Which now lies open to the injuries
Of stormy weather) some do lie interr'd,
Loved the church so well, and gave so largely to't,
They thought it should have canopied their bones
Till doomsday: but all things have their end:
Churches and cities (which have diseases like to men)
Must have like death that we have."

WEBSTER—*Duchess of Malfy*,

If such were the inducements that first attracted M. l'Abbé Villaret, he soon found others in the pleasing manners and amiable temper of Mrs. Duval, whose cheerfulness and kindness of heart had not abandoned her in her change of fortune; and in the attaching character of her charming little boy, who—singularly tall of his age, and framed with the mixture of strength and delicacy, of pliancy and uprightness, which characterizes the ideal forms of the Greek marbles, and the reality of the human figure amongst the aborigines of North America,* and a countenance dark, sallow, and colourless, but sparkling with expression as that of the natives of the South of Europe, the eye all laughter, the smile all intelligence,—was as unlike in mind as in person to the chubby, ruddy, noisy urchins by whom he was surrounded. Quick, gentle, docile, and graceful to a point of elegance rarely seen even amongst the most carefully-educated children, he might have been placed at court as the page of a fair young queen, and have been the plaything and pet of the maids of honour. The pet of M. l'Abbé he became

almost as soon as he saw him; and to that pleasant distinction was speedily added the invaluable advantage of being his pupil.

L'Abbé Villaret had been a cadet of one of the oldest families in France, destined to the church as the birthright of a younger son, but attached to his profession with a seriousness and earnestness not common amongst the gay noblesse of the *ancien régime*, who too often assumed the *petit collet* as the badge of

* My readers will remember West's exclamation on the first sight of the Apollo,—"A young Mohawk Indian, by Heaven!"

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one sort of frivolity, just as their elder brothers wielded the sword, and served a campaign or two by way of excuse for an idleness and dissipation of a different kind. This devotion had of course been greatly increased by the persecution of the church which distinguished the commencement of the Revolution. The good Abbé had been marked as one of the earliest victims, and had escaped, through the gratitude of an old servant, from the fate which swept off sisters, and brothers, and almost every individual except himself, of a large and flourishing family. Penniless and solitary, he made his way to England, and found an asylum in the town of Belford, at first assisted by the pittance allowed, by our government to those unfortunate foreigners, and subsequently supported by his own exertions as assistant to the priest of the Catholic Chapel in Belford and as a teacher of the French language in the town and neighbourhood; and so complete had been the ravages of the Revolution in his own family and so entirely had he established himself in the esteem of his English friends, that when the short piece of Amiens restored so many of his brother *émigrés* to their native land, he refused to quit the country of his adoption, and remained the contented inhabitant of the Friary Cottage.

The contented and most beloved inhabitant, not only of that small cottage, but of the town to which it belonged, was the good Abbé. Every body loved the kind and placid old man, whose resignation was so real and so cheerful, who had such a talent for making the best of things, whose moral alchymy could extract some good out of every

evil, and who seemed only the more indulgent to the faults and follies of others because he had so little cause to require indulgence for his own. One prejudice he had—a lurking predilection in favour of good blood and long descent; the Duke de St Simon himself would hardly have felt a stronger partiality for the Montmorenciess or the Mortemars; and yet so well was this prejudice governed, so closely veiled from all offensive display, that not only *la belle et bonne bourgeoise* Madame Lane, as he used to call the excellent wife of that great radical leader, but even *le gros bourgeoise son époux* desperate whig as he was, were amongst the best friends and sincerest well-wishers of our courteous old Frenchman. He was their customer for the little meat that his economy and his appetite required; and they were his for as many French lessons as their rosy, laughing daughters could be coaxed into taking during the very short interval that elapsed between their respectively leaving school and getting married. How the Miss Lanes came to learn French at all, a piece of finery rather inconsistent with the substantial plainness of their general education, I could not comprehend, until I found that the daughters of Mrs. Green, the grocer, their opposite neighbour, between whom

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and dear Mrs. Lane there existed a little friendly rivalry, (for good woman as she was, even Margaret Lane had something of the ordinary frailties of human nature,) were studying French, music, dancing, drawing, and Italian; and, although she quite disapproved of this hash of accomplishments, yet no woman in Christendom could bear to be so entirely outdone by her next neighbour: besides she doubtless calculated that the little they were likely to know of the language would be too soon forgotten to do them any harm; that they would settle into sober tradesmen's wives, content "to scold their maidens in their mother tongue;" and that the only permanent consequence would be, the giving her the power to be of some slight service to the good *émigré*. So the Miss Lanes learned French; and Mrs. Lane, who was one of poor Mrs. Duval's best friends and most constant customers, borrowed all her choicest receipts to compound for the Abbé his favourite dishes, and contrived to fix the lessons at such an hour as should authorize her offering the refreshment which she had so carefully prepared.

Bijou, too, the Abbé's pet dog, a beautiful little curly spaniel, of great sagacity and fidelity, Always found a dinner ready for him at Mrs. Lane's: and Louis Duval, his master's other pet, was at least equally welcome;—so that the whole trio were soon at home in the Butts. And although Stephen held in abomination all foreigners, and thought it eminently patriotic and national to hate the French and their ways, never had tasted coffee or taken a pinch of snuff in his days: and although the Abbé, on his part, abhorred smoking, and beer, and punch, and loud talking, and all the John Bullisms whereof Stephen was compounded; although Mr. Lane would have held himself guilty of a sin had he known the French for "how d'ye do?" and the Abbé, teacher of languages though he were, had marvellously contrived to learn no more English than just served him to make out his pupils' translations, (perhaps the constant reading of those incomparable compositions might be the reason why the real spoken idiomatic tongue was still unintelligible to him;) yet they did contrive, in spite of their mutual prejudices and their deficient means of communication, to be on as friendly and as cordial terms as any two men in Belford; and, considering that the Frenchman was a decided aristocrat and the Englishman a violent democrat, and that each knew the others politics, that is saying much.

But from the castle to the cottage, from the nobleman whose children he taught down to the farmer's wife who furnished him with eggs and butter, the venerable Abbé was a universal favourite. There was something in his very appearance—his small neat person, a little bent, more by sorrow than age— his thin white hair—his mild intelligent countenance, with a sweet placid smile, that spoke more of courtesy than of gaiety—his

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quiet manner, his gentle voice, and even the broken English, which reminded one that he was a sojourner in a strange land, that awakened a mingled emotion of respect and of pity. His dress, too, always neat, yet never seeming new, contributed to the air of decayed gentility that hung about him; and the beautiful little dog who was his constant attendant, and the graceful key who so frequently accompanied him, formed an interesting group on the high roads which he frequented; for the good Abbé was so

much in request as a teacher, and the amount of his earnings was so considerable, that he might have passed for well-to-do in the world, had not his charity to his poorer countrymen, and his liberality to Louis and to Mrs. Duval, been such as to keep him constantly poor.

Amongst his pupils, and the friends of his pupils, his urbanity and kindness could not fail to make him popular; whilst his gentleness and patience with the stupid, and his fine taste and power of inspiring emulation amongst the cleverer children, rendered him a very valuable master. Besides his large connexion in Belford, he attended, as we have .intimated, several families in the neighbourhood, and one or two schools in the smaller towns, at eight or ten miles distance; and the light and active old roan was accustomed to walk to these lessons, with little Bijou for his companion, even in the depth of winter; depending, it may be, on an occasional cast for himself and his dog in the gig of some good natured traveller, or the cart of some small farmer or his sturdy dame returning from the market-town, (for it is a characteristic of our county that we abound in female drivers—almost all our country wives are capital whips,) who thought themselves well repaid for their civility by a pinch of rappee in the one case, or a "Tank you, madame!" "Moche obligué, sar!" on the other.

Nobody minded a winter's walk less than M. l'Abbé; and as for Bijou, he delighted in it, and would dance and whisk about, ramp round his master's feet, and bark for very joy, whenever he saw the bat brushing, and the great-coat putting on, and the gloves taken out of their drawer, in preparation for a sortie, especially in snowy weather—for Bijou loved a frisk in the snow, and Louis liked it no less. But there was one person who never liked these cold and distant rambles, and that personage was Mrs. Duval; and on one dreary morning in January, especially, she opposed them by main and by might. She had had bad dreams, too; and Mrs. Duval was the least in the world superstitious; and "she was sure that no good would come of taking such a walk as that to Chardley, full a dozen miles, on such a day—nobody could be so unreasonable to expect M. l'Abbé in such weather; and as for Miss Smith's school, Miss Smith's school might wait!"

M. l'Abbé reasoned with her in vain. "Your dreams—bah!

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—I must go, my dear little woman. All Miss Smith's pupils are come back from the holidays, and they want their lessons, and they have brought the money to pay me, add I want the money to pay you, and I will bring you a pink riband as bright as your cheeks, and Louis—"

"Oh, pray let me go with you, M. l'Abbé!" interrupted Louis. "And Louis shall stay with you," pursued M. l'Abbé. "You must not go, my dear boy; stay with your mother; always be a good son to your good mother, and I will bring you a book. I will bring you a new Horace, since you get on so well with your Latin. God bless you, my dear boy! Aliens, Bijou!" And M. l'Abbé was setting of

"At least stay all night!" interposed Mrs. Duval; "don't come home in the dark, pray!"

"Bah!" replied the Abbé, laughing.

"And with money, too! and so many bad people about! and such a dream as I have had!" again exclaimed Madame Duval "I thought that two wolves—"

"Your dream!—bah!" ejaculated the Abbé. "I shall bring you a pink riband, and be home by ten." And with these words he and Bijou departed.

Ten o'clock came—a cold, frosty night, not moonlight, bat starlight, and with so much snow upon the ground, that the beaten pathway on the high road to Chardley might be easily traced. Mrs. Duval who had been fidgetty all through the day, became more so as the evening advanced, particularly as Louis importuned her vehemently to let him go and meet their dear lodger.

"You go! No, indeed!" replied Madame Duval—"at this time of night, and after my dream! It's quite bad enough to have M. l'Abbé wandering about the high roads, and money with him, and so many bad people stirring. I saw one great, tall, dangerous-looking fellow at the door this morning, who seemed as if he had been listening when

he talked of bringing money home: I should not wonder if he broke into the house—and ray dream, too! Stay where you are, Louis. I won't hear of your going."

And the poor boy, who had been taking down his furred cap to go, looked at his mother's anxious face, and stayed.

The hours wore away—eleven o'clock struck, and twelve—and still there were no tidings of the Abbé. Mrs. Duval began to comfort herself that he must have stayed to sleep at Chardley; that the Miss Smiths, whom she knew to be kind women, had insisted on his sleeping at their house; and she was preparing to go to bed in that persuasion, when a violent scratching and whining was heard at the door, and on Louis, running to open it, little Bijou rushed in, covered with dirt, and without his master.

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"Oh, my dream!" exclaimed Mrs. Duval. "Louis, I thought that two wolves—" "Mother," interrupted the boy, "see how Bijou is jumping upon me, and whining, and then running to the door, as if to entice me to follow him. I 'must go."

"Oh, Louis! remember!"—again screamed his mother—"Remember the great ill-looking fellow who was listening this morning?"

"You forget, dear mother, that we all spoke in French, and that he could not have understood a word," returned Louis.

"But my dream!" persisted Mrs. Duval. "My dreams always come true. Remember the pot I dreamt of your finding in the ruins, and which, upon digging for, you *did* find."

Which you dreamt was a pot of gold, and which turned out to be a broken paint-pot," replied Louis, impatiently. "Mother," added he; "I am sorry to disobey you, but see how this poor dog is dragging me to the door; hark how he whines! And look! look! there is blood upon his coat! Perhaps his master has fallen and hurt himself, and even my slight help may be of use. I must go, and I will."

And following the word with the deed, Louis obeyed the almost speaking action of the little dog, and ran quickly out of the house, oh the road to Chardley. His mother, after an instant of vague panic, recovered herself enough to alarm the neighbours, and send more efficient help than a lad of eleven years old to assist in the search.

With a beating heart the brave and affectionate boy followed the dog, who led with a rapid pace and an occasional low moan along the high road to Chardley. The night had become milder, the clouds were driving along the sky, and a small, sleety rain fell by gusts; all, in short, bespoke an approaching thaw, although the ground continued covered with snow, which cast a cold, dreary light on every object. For nearly three miles Louis and Bijou pursued their way alone. At the end of that time, they were arrested by shouts and lanterns advancing rapidly from the town, and the poor lad recognised the men whom his mother had sent to his assistance.

"Any news of the poor French gentleman, master?" inquired John Gleve, the shoemaker, as he came up, almost breathless with haste. "It's lucky that I and Martin had two pair of boots to finish, and had not left our work; for poor Mrs. Duval there is half crazy with her fears for him and her dread about you. How couldst thou think of running off alone? What good could a lad like thee do, frightening his poor mother?— And yet one likes un for 't," added John, softening as he proceeded in his harangue; '* one likes un for 't mainly. But look at the dog!" pursued he, interrupting himself; "look at the dog, how he's

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snuffing and shuffling about in the now! And hark how he whines and barks, questing like! And see what a trampling there's been here, and how the snow on the side of the path is trodden about!"

"Hold down the lantern!" exclaimed Louis "Give me the light, I beseech you. Look here! this is blood—*his* blood!" sobbed the affectionate boy; and, guided partly by that awful indication, partly by the disturbed snow, and partly by the dog, who, trembling in every limb, and keeping up a low moan, still pursued the track, they clambered over a

gate into a field by the road-side; and in a ditch, at a little distance, found what all expected to find—the lifeless body of the Abbé.

He had been dead apparently for some hours; for the corpse was cold, and the blood had stiffened on two wounds in his body. His pockets had been rifled of his purse and his pocket-book, both of which were found, with what money might have been in them taken out, cast into the hedge at a small distance, together with a sword with a broken hilt, with which the awful deed had probably been committed. Nothing else had been taken from the poor old man. His handkerchief and snuff-box were still in his pocket, together with three yards of rose-coloured riband, neatly wrapped in paper, and a small edition of Horace, with the leaves uncut. It may be imagined with what feelings Mrs. Duval and Louis looked at these tokens of recollection. Her grief found in tears the comfortable relief which Heaven has ordained for woman's sorrow; but Louis could not cry—the consolation was denied him. A fierce spirit of revenge had taken Cession of the hitherto gentle and placid boy: to discover and bring to justice the murderer, and to fondle and cherish poor Bijou (who was with difficulty coaxed into taking food, and lay perpetually at the door of the room which contained his old master's body,) seemed to be the only objects for which Louis lived.

The wish to discover the murderer was general throughout the neighbourhood, where the good, the pious, the venerable old man—harmless and inoffensive in word and deed, just, and kind, and charitable—had been so truly beloved and respected. Large rewards were, offered by the Catholic gentry*, and every exertion

* I cannot name the Catholic gentry without "paying my humble but most sincere tribute of respect to the singularly high character of the old Catholic families in this county. It seems as if the oppression under which they so long laboured, had excited them to oppose to such injustice the passive but powerful resistance of high moral virtue, of spotless integrity, of chivalrous honour, and of a diffusive charity, which their oppressors would have done well to imitate. Amongst them are to be found the names of Throckmorton, the friend and patron of Cowper, and of Blount, so wound up with every recollection of Pope, and of Eyston, of East Hendrid, more ancient, perhaps, than any

house in the county, whose curious old chapel, appended to his mansion, is mentioned in a deed bearing date the 19th of May; A. D 1323, now in the possession of the family. Nothing can be more interesting than the account, in a MS. belonging to Mr. Eyston, of the re-opening of this chapel during the short period in which the Roman Catholic religion was tolerated under James the Second; and of the persecution which succeeded at the Revolution. These scenes are not matters of history, and of history only; since the growing wisdom and the humanizing spirit of the legislature and the age forbid even the fear of their recurrence; but as curious historical documents, and as a standing lesson against bigotry and intolerance, however styled, a collection of such narratives (and many such, I believe, exist amongst the old Catholic families,) would be very valuable. One of the most remarkable MSS. that I have happened to meet with, is an account of the life and character of Sir Francis Englefyld, Knt., privy counsellor to Queen Mary, who retired into Spain to escape from the persecutions of Elizabeth, and died in an exile which he shared with many of his most eminent countrymen. He also belonged to our neighbourhood; the family of Englefield, now extinct, being the ancient possessors of Whiteknights. The Catholic gentleman, however, of our own day, whom Belford has the greatest cause to rank amongst its benefactors, is our neighbour—I will venture to say our friend—Mr. Wheble, a man eminently charitable, liberal, and enlightened, whose zeal for his own church, whilst it does not impede the exercise of the widest and most diffusive benevolence towards the professors of other forms of faith, has induced him to purchase all that could be purchased of the ruins of the great abbey, and to rescue the little that was still undesecrated by the prison, the school, and the wharf. Of these fine remains of the splendour and the piety of our ancestors, the beautiful arch and the site of the abbey-church are fortunately amongst the portions thus preserved from baser uses. It is impossible not to sympathize strongly with the feeling which dictated this purchase, and equally impossible not to lament, if only as a matter of taste, that there was no such guardian hand fifty years ago, to prevent the erection of the county jail, and the subsequent introduction of quays and national schools amongst some of the most extensive and finely situated monastic ruins in England, now irreparably contaminated by objects the most unsightly, and associations the most painful and degrading.

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was made by the local police, and the magistracy of the town and country, to accomplish this great object. John Gleve had accurately measured the shoe-marks to and from the ditch where the body was found; but farther than the gate of the field they had not thought to trace the footsteps; and a thaw having come on, all signs had disappeared before the morning. It had been ascertained that the Miss Smiths had paid him, besides some odd money, in two 10*l.* notes of the Chardley bank, the numbers of which were known; but of them no tidings could be procured. He had left their house, on his return, about six o'clock in the evening, and had been seen to pass through a turnpike-gate, midway between the two towns, about eight, when, with his usual courtesy, he bade a cheerful good-night to the gate-keeper; and this was the last that had been heard of him. No suspicious person had been observed in the neighbourhood; the most sagacious and experienced officers were completely at fault; and the coroner's inquest was obliged to bring in the vague and unsatisfactory verdict of "Found murdered, by some person or persons unknown."

Many loose people, such as beggars and vagrants, and wandering packmen; were, however, apprehended, and obliged to give an account of themselves; and on one of these, a rag-man, called James Wilson, something like suspicion was at last fixed. The

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sword with which the murder was committed, an old regimental sword, with the mark and number of the regiment ground out, had, as I have said before, a broken hilt; and round this hilt was wound a long strip of printed calico, of a very remarkable pattern, which a grocer's wife in Belford, attracted by the strange curiosity with which vulgar persons pursue such sights, to go and look at it as it lay exposed for recognition on a table in the Town Hall, remembered to have seen in the shape of a gown on the back of a girl who had lived with her a twelvemonth before; and the girl, on being sought out in a neighbouring village, deposed readily to having sold the gown, several weeks back, to

the rag-man in question. The measure of the shoes also fitted; but they unluckily were of a most common shape and size. Wilson brought a man from the paper-mill, to prove that the entire gown in question had been carried there by him, with other rags, about a month before; and called other witnesses, who made out a complete alibi on the night in question; so that the magistrates, although strongly prejudice against him, from countenance and manner,—the down look and the daring audacity with which nature, or rather evil habit, often stamps the ruffian,—were, after several examinations, on the point of discharging him, when young Louis, who had attended the whole inquiry with an intelligence and an intensity of interest which, boy as he was, had won for him the privilege of being admitted even to, the private examinations of the magistrates, and whose ill opinion of Wilson had increased every hour, he himself hardly knew why, suddenly exclaimed, “Stop until I bring a witness!” and darted out of the room.

During the interval of his absence,—for such was the power of the boy’s intense feeling and evident intelligence, that the magistrates *did* stop for him,—one of the police-officers happened to observe how tightly the prisoner grasped his hat. “Is it mere anger?” thought he within himself; “or is it agitation? or can they have been such fools as not to search the lining?”—“Let me look at that hat of yours, Wilson,” said he aloud.

“It has been searched,” replied Wilson, still holding it.

“What do you want with the hat!”

“I want to see the lining.”

“There is no lining,” replied the prisoner grasping it still tighter.

“Let me look at it, nevertheless. Take it from him,” rejoined the officer. “Ah, ha! here is a little ragged bit of fining, though, sticking pretty fast too; for as loose and as careless as it looks,—a fine, cunning, hiding-place! Give me a knife—a penknife!” said the myrmidon of justice, retiring with his knife and the hat to the window, followed by the eager looks of the prisoner, whose attention however, was immediately called to a

nearer danger, by the return of Louis, with little Bijou in his arms. The poor dog flew at him instantly, barking, growling, quivering, almost shrieking, with fury, bit his heels and his legs, and was with difficulty dragged from him, so strong had passion made the faithful creature.

"Look!" said Louis. "I brought him from his master's grave to bear witness against his murderer. "Look!"

"Their worships will hardly commit me on the evidence of a dog," observed Wilson, recovering himself.

"But see here," rejoined the police-officer, producing two dirty bits of paper, most curiously folded, from the old hat. "Here are the two Chardley notes—the 10*l.* notes—signed David Williams,. Nos. 1025 and 662. What do you say to that evidence? You and the little dog are right, ray good boy: this is the murderer, sure enough. There can be no doubt about committing him now."

It is hardly necessary to add, that James Wilson was committed, or that proof upon proof poured in to confirm his guilt and discredit his witnesses. He died confessing the murder; and Bijou and Louis, somewhat appeased by having brought the criminal to justice, found; comfort in their mutual affection, and in a tender recollection of their dear old friend and master.

Note.—Not to go back to the dog of Montargis, and other well-attested accounts of murderers detected by dogs, I can bring a living spaniel to corroborate the fact, that these faithful and sagacious animals do seek assistance for their masters when any evil befalls them. The story, as told to me by Bramble's present mistress, whom I have the great pleasure to reckon amongst thy friends, is as follows:—

The blacksmith of a small village in Buckinghamshire went blind, and was prevented from pursuing his occupation. He found, however, a friend in a surgeon of the neighbourhood, a man of singular kindness and benevolence, who employed him to

carry out medicines, which he was enabled to do by the aid of a dog and a chain. But old John was a severe master, and of his dogs many died, and many ran away. At last, he had the good fortune to light upon our friend Bramble, a large black-and-white spaniel, of remarkable symmetry and beauty, with wavy hair, very long ears, feathered legs and a bushy tail, and with sagacity and fidelity equal to his beauty. Under Bramble's guidance, blind John performed his journeys in perfect safety; wherever the poor dog had been once, he was sure to know his way again; and he appeared to discover, as if by instinct, to what place his master wished to go. One point of his conduct was peculiarly striking. He constantly accompanied his master to church,

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and lay there perfectly quiet during the whole service. For three years that he formed regularly one of the congregation, he was never known to move or to make the slightest noise.

One bitter night old John had been on a journey to Woburn, and not returning at his usual hour, the relations with whom he lived went to bed, as it was not uncommon for the blind man, when engaged on a longer expedition than common, to sleep from home. The cottage was accordingly shut up, and the inhabitants, tired with labour, went to bed and slept soundly. The people at a neighbouring cottage, however, fancied that they heard, during the long winter-night, repeated howlings as of a dog in distress; and when they rose in the morning, the first thing they heard was, that old John lay dead in a ditch not far from his own door. The poor dog was round close by the body; and it was ascertained by the marks on the path, that he had dragged his chain backward and forward from the ditch to the cottage, in the vain hope of procuring such assistance as might possibly have saved his master.

Luckily for Bramble, the benevolent surgeon, always his very good friend, was called in to examine if any spark of life remained in the body; and he having ascertained that poor John was fairly dead, told the story of the faithful dog to his present excellent mistress with whom Bramble is as happy as the day is long.

It is comfortable to meet with a bit of that justice which, because it is so rare, people call poetical, in real actual life; and I verily believe that in this case Bramble's felicity is quite equal to his merits, high as they undoubtedly are. The only drawback that I have ever heard hinted at, is a tendency on his part to grow over fat; a misfortune which doubtless results from his present good feed, coming after a long course of starvation.

Now that I am telling stories of dogs, I cannot resist the temptation of recording one short anecdote of my pet spaniel Dash, a magnificent animal, of whose beauty I have spoken else-where, and who really does all but speak himself.

Every May I go to the Silchester woods, to gather wild lilies of the valley. Last year the numbers were, from some cause or other, greatly diminished: the roots, it is true, were there, but so scattered over the beautiful terraces of that unrivalled amphitheatre of Woods, and the blossoms so rare, that in the space of several acres, thinly covered with the plants and their finely lined transparent green leaves, it was difficult to procure half-a-dozen of those delicate flower-stalks hung with snowy bells, and amidst the shifting lights and shadows of the coppice, where the sunbeams seemed to dance through the branches, still more difficult to discover the few that there were. I went searching drearily through the wood, a little weary of seeking and not

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finding, when Dash, who had been on his own devices after pheasants and bares, returning to me, tired with his sort of sport, began to observe mine; and at once discerning my object and my perplexity, went gravely about the coppice, lily hunting; finding them far more quickly than I did, stopping, wagging his tail, and looking round at me by the side of every flower, until I came and gathered it; and then, as soon as I had secured one, pursuing his search after another, and continuing to do so without the slightest intermission until it was time to go home. I am half afraid to tell this story, although it is as true as that there are lilies in Silchester wood; and the anecdote of Cowper's dog Beau and the water lily is somewhat of a case in point. Whether Dash found the flowers by scent or by sight, I cannot tell: probably by the latter.

THE TAMBOURINE.

A CHEESE-FAIR ADVENTURE.

EVERY body likes a fair. Some people, indeed, especially of the order called fine ladies, pretend that they do not. But go to the first that occurs in the neighbourhood, and there, amongst the thickest of the jostling crowd, with staring carters treading upon their heels, and grinning farmers' boys rubbing against their petticoats,—there, in the very middle of the confusion, you shall be sure to find them, fine ladies though they be! They still, it is true, cry “How disagreeable!”—but there they are.

Now, the reasons against liking a fair are far more plausible than those on the other side: the dirt, the wet, the sun, the rain, the wind, the noise, the cattle, the crowd, the cheats, the pick-pockets; the shows with nothing worth seeing, the stalls with nothing worth buying, the danger of losing your money, the certainty of losing your time,—all these are valid causes for dislike; whilst, in defence of the fair, there is little more to plead than the general life of the scene, the pleasure of looking on so many happy faces, the consciousness that one day, at least, in the year, is the peasant's holiday—and the undeniable fact, that, deny it as they may, all English people, even the cold fine lady, or the colder fine gentleman, do, at the bottom of their hearts, like a fair. It is a taste, or a want of taste, that belongs to the national temperament, is born with us, grows up with us, and will never be got rid of, let fashion declaim against it as she may.

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The great fair at Belford had, however, even higher pretensions to public favour than a deep-rooted old English feeling. It was a scene of business as well as of amusement, being not only a great market for horses and cattle, but one of the principal marts for the celebrated cheese of the great dairy counties. Factors from the West, and dealers from London, arrived days before the actual fair-day; and wagon after wagon, laden with the round, hard, heavy merchandise, rumbled slowly into the Forbury, where the great space before the school-house, the whole of , the boys' play-ground, was fairly covered with stacks of Cheddar and North Wilts. Fancy the singular effect of piles of cheeses, several

feet high, extending over a whole large cricket-ground, and divided only by narrow paths littered with straw, amongst which wandered the busy chapmen, offering a taste of their wares to their cautious customers, the country shopkeepers, (who poured in from every village within twenty miles,) and the, thrifty housewives of the town, who, bewildered by the infinite number of samples, which, to an uneducated palate, seemed all alike, chose, at last, almost at random! Fancy the effect of this remarkable scene, surrounded by cattle, horses, shows, and people, the usual moving picture of a fair; the fine Gothic church of St Nicholas on one side; the old arch of the abbey, and the abrupt eminence called Forbury Hill, crowned by a grand clump of trees, on the other; the Mall, with its row of old limes, and its handsome houses, behind; and, in front, the great river flowing slowly through green meadows, and backed by the high ridge of Oxfordshire hills;—imagine this brilliant panorama, and you will not wonder that the most delicate ladies braved the powerful fumes of the cheese—an odour so intense that it even penetrated the walls and windows of the school-house—to contemplate the scene. When lighted up at night, it was, perhaps, still more fantastic and attractive, particularly before the Zoological gardens had afforded a home to the travelling wild beasts, whose roars and howlings at feeding-time used to mingle so grotesquely with the drums, trumpets, and fiddles, of the dramatic and equestrian exhibitions, and the laugh, and shout, and song, of the merry visitors.

A most picturesque scene, of a truth, was the Belford cheese-fair; and not always unprofitable: at least, I happen to know one instance, where, instead of having his pocket picked by the light-fingered gentry, whom mobs of all sorts are sure to collect, an honest person of my acquaintance was lucky enough to come by his own again, and recover in that, unexpected place a piece of property of which he had been previously defrauded.

The case was as follows:—

The male part of our little establishment consists not of one man-servant, as is usual with persons of small fortune and some

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gentility, who keep, like that other poor and genteel personage, yclept Don Quixote, a horse and a brace of greyhounds, (to say nothing of my own pony phaeton and my dog Dash,) but of two boys—the one a perfect pattern of a lad of fifteen or thereabout, the steadiest, quietest, and most serviceable youth that ever bore the steady name of John; the other, an urchin called Ben, some two years younger; a stunted dwarf, or rather a male fairy—Puck, or Robin Goodfellow) for instance—full of life and glee, and good-humour, and innocent mischief—a tricksy spirit, difficult to manage, but kindly withal, and useful after his own fashion, though occasionally betrayed into mistakes by overshrewdness, just as other boys blunder from stupidity. Instead of conveying a message word for word as delivered, according to the laudable practice of the errand gods and goddesses, the Mercurys and Irises in Homer's immortal poems*, master Ben hath a trick of thinking for his master, and clogging his original missive with certain amendments and additional clauses hatched in his own fertile brain.

Occasionally, also, he is rather super-subtle in his rigid care of his master's interest, and exercises an over-scrupulous watchfulness in cases where less caution would be more agreeable. At this very last fair, for instance, we had a horse to sell, which was confided to a neighbouring farmer to dispose of, with the usual charges against being overreached in his bargain, or defrauded of the money when sold. "I'll see to that," responded Ben, taking the words out of the mouth of the slow, civil farmer Giles,—“I'll see to that; I'm to ride the mare, and nobody shall get her from me without the money.” Off they set accordingly, and the horse, really a fine animal, was speedily sold to a neighbouring baronet, a man of large estate in the county, who sent his compliments to my father, and that he would call and settle for him in a day or two. This message perfectly satisfied our chapman the former, but would, by no means, do for Ben, who insisted on receiving the money before delivering the steed: and after being paid by a check on a county banker, actually rode to the bank to make sure of the cash before he would give up his charge, either to the amazed Sir Robert or his wondering groom. "I suppose, Ben, you did not know Sir Robert?" inquired his master, rather scandalized, when Ben, finding

him out in the fair, handed him the money triumphantly, and told his story. "Why, sir," rejoined Ben, "I knew him as well as I know you; but great people's money is sometimes as hard to get as poor ones; besides, this Sir Robert is a prodigal chap, dresses as smart and talks as fine as his valet—'twas best to secure the money if he

*The schoolmaster is abroad!" If ever he arrive at the point of teaching Greek to the future inmates of the kitchen, the stable, and the servants' hall, which really seems not unlikely, I hope he will direct their particular attention to those parts of the Iliad and Odyssey.

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were ten times over a baronet You can tell him, though, that I did not know him, if you like, sir, the next time you meet" And the white fib was told, accordingly, and the affront happily got over.

This fact, however illustrative of Master Ben's general character, has nothing to do with our present story, though, as the *dénouement* of the tambourine adventure took place on the same day, the two legends may be considered as in some small degree connected.

Amongst Ben's other peculiarities was a strong faculty of imitation, which he possessed in common with monkeys, magpies, and other clever, and mischievous animals, but which, in his particular case, applied as it generally was to copying, so correct a model, as John served as a sort of counterpoise to his more volatile propensities, something like the ballast to the ship, or the balance-wheel to the machinery. The point to which this was carried was really ludicrous. If you saw John in the garden carrying a spade, you were pretty sure to see Ben following him with a rake. When John watered my geraniums after the common fashion of pouring water into the pots, Ben kept close behind him, with a smaller implement, pouring the refreshing element into the pans. Whilst John washed one wheel of my pony phaeton, Ben was, at the self-same moment, washing another. Were a pair of shoes sent to be blacked, so sure as John assumed the brush to polish the right shoe, Ben took possession of the left. He cleaned the forks to

John's knives; and if a coat were to be beaten, you were certain to hear the two boys thumping away at once, on different sides.

Of course, if this propensity were observable in their work, it became infinitely more so in their amusements. If John played marbles, so did Ben; if cricket, there, in the same game, on the same side, was Ben. If the one went a-nutting, you were sure, in the self-same copse, to find his faithful adherent; and when John, last winter, bought a fiddle, and took to learning music, it followed, as a matter of necessity, that Ben should become musical also. The only difficulty was the choice of an instrument A fiddle was out of the question, not only because the price was beyond his finances, and larger than any probable sum out of which he could reasonably expect to coax those who, wrongfully enough, were accused of spoiling him—the young gentleman being what is vulgarly called spoiled long before he came into their bands—but because Master Ben had a very rational and well-founded doubt of his own patience, (John, besides his real love of the art, being naturally of a plodding disposition, widely different from the mercurial temperament of his light-hearted and light-headed follower,) and desired to obtain some implement of sound, (for he was not very particular as to its sweetness,) on which he

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might, with all possible speed, obtain sufficient skill to accompany his comrade in his incessant, and, at first, most untenable, practice.

Ben's original trial was an old battered flageolet, bestowed upon him by the ostler at the Rose, for whom he occasionally performed odd jobs, which, at first, was obstinately mute, in spite of all his blowings, and when it did become vocal, under his strenuous efforts, emitted such a series of alternate shrieks, and groans, and squeaks, as fairly frightened the neighbourhood, and made John stop his ears. So Ben found it convenient to put aside that instrument, which, in spite of the ostler's producing from it a very respectable imitation of "Auld Lang Syne," Ben pronounced to be completely good for nothing.

His next attempt was on a flute, which looked sufficiently shapeable and glittering to have belonged to a far higher performer, and which was presented to him by our excellent neighbour, Mr. Murray's smart footman, who being often at our house with notes and messages from his mistress, had become captivated, like his betters, by her constant gaiety and good-humour—the delightful festivity of temper and fearless readiness of wit, which rendered the poor country-boy so independent, so happy, and so enviable. Mr. Thomas presented his superb flute to Ben—and Ben tried for three whole days to make it utter any sound—but, alas! he tried, in vain. So he honestly and honourably returned the gift to Mr. Thomas, with a declaration "that he had no doubt but the flute was an excellent flute, only that he had not breath to play on it; he was afraid of his lungs." Ben afraid of his lungs! whose voice could be heard, of a windy day, from one end of the village street to the other—ay, to the very hill-top, rising over all the din of pigs, geese, children, carriages, horses, and cows! Ben in want of breath! Ben! whose tongue, during the whole four and twenty hours, was never still for a moment, except when he was asleep, and who even stood suspected of talking in his dreams! Ben in want of breath! However, he got out of the scrape, by observing, that it was only common civility to his friend, Mr. Thomas, to lay the fault on himself rather than on the flute, which, as Ben sagaciously, and, I think, truly observed, was like the razors of the story, "made for sale and not for use."

The next experiment was more successful.

It so happened that a party of gipsies had pitched their tent and tethered their donkeys in Kibes-lane, and fowls were disappearing from the henroost, and linen vanishing from the clothes-line, as is usual where an encampment of that picturesque* but

* Besides their eminent picturesqueness, there is a poetical feeling about these wandering tribes, that can hardly fail to interest. The following anecdote, illustrative of this fact, is new to me, and may be so to my readers:—One fine spring morning, a friend of mine saw a young gipsy girl jumping and clapping her hands, and shouting to an elderly female. "I have done it! I have done it!"—"Done what?" inquired my friend.—"Set my foot on nine daisies at once, ma'am," was the reply; and then she and an elder

one began chanting a song, the burden of which was, as nearly as the auditress could recollect, as follows:

“Summer is come,
With the daisy bud,
To gladden our tents
By the merry green wood;
Summer, is come! Summer is come!”

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slippery order of vagabonds takes place. The party in question consisted of tall, lean, suspicious-looking men, an aged sibyl or two of fortune-telling aspect, two or three younger women with infants at their backs, and children of all ages and sizes, from fifteen downwards. One lad, apparently about our hero's age, but considerably larger, had struck up an acquaintance with Ben, who used to pass that way to fetch a dole of milk from our kind neighbours the Murrays, and usually took his master's greyhounds with him (or company: and had made sufficient advances towards familiarity to challenge him to a coursing expedition, promising that their curs should find hares, provided the greyhounds would catch them; and even endeavouring to pique him on the point of honour (for Ben was obviously proud of his beautiful and high-bred dogs,) by insinuating that the game might be more easily found than caught. Ben, however, too conversant with the game-laws to fall into the snare, laughed at the gipsy-boy, and passed quietly on his way.

The next day, Dick (for such was the name of his new acquaintance) made an attack upon Ben after a different fashion, and with a more favourable result

Perched on a knoll, under a fine clump of oaks, at a turning of the lane, stood the gipsy-boy, beating the march in Bluebeard with the most approved flourishes, on a tambourine of the largest size. Ben was enchanted. He loitered to listen, stopped to admire, proceeded to question Dick as to the ownership of the instrument, and on finding that this splendid implement of noise. Was the lad's own property, and to be sold to the best

bidder, commenced a chaffering and bargaining, which in its various modifications of beating down on one side, and crying up on the other, and pretended indifference on both, lasted five days and a half! and finally became the happy possessor of the tambourine for the sum of four shillings—half a guinea having been the price originally demanded.

Who now so triumphant as Ben! The tambourine (though greatly the worse for wear) was still a most efficient promoter of din, and for four-and-twenty hours (for I really believe that during the first night of its belonging to him the boy never went to bed) it was one incessant tornado of beating, jingling, and rumbling—the whole house was deafened by the intolerable noise which the enraptured tambourinist was pleased to call music

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At the end of that time the parchment (already pretty well worn) fairly cracked, as well it might, under such unmerciful pommelling, and a new head, as Ben called it became necessary. It had been warranted to wear fur six months, under pain of forfeiting eighteen-pence by the former possessor; but on repairing to Kibes-lane, Dick and his whole tribe, tents, donkeys, and curs, had disappeared, and the evil was so far without remedy. The purchaser had exhausted his funds; every body was too much out of humour with the noise to think of contributing money to promote its renewal, and any other boy would have despaired.

But Ben was a lad of resource. Amongst his various friends and patrons, he numbered the groom of an eminent solicitor in Belford, to whom he stated his case, begging him to procure for him some reversionary parchment, stained, or blotted, or discoloured, or what not—any thing would do, so that it were whole; and the groom was interested, and stated the case to the head clerk; and the clerk was amused, and conveyed the petition to his master; and the master laughed, and sent Ben forthwith a cancelled deed; and the tambourine was mended; and for another four and twenty hours we were stunned.

At the end of that time, having laid down the instrument from pure weariness, his left arm being stiff from holding and tossing, and his right knuckles raw from thumping, Ben deposited his beloved treasure in a nook which he had especially prepared for it in the stable; and on going to pay it a visit the next morning, the dear tambourine was gone—vanished—stolen—lost, as we all thought, for ever! and poor Ben was so grieved at the loss of his plaything, that, nuisance as the din had been, we could not help being sorry too, and had actually commissioned him to look out for another second-hand instrument, and promised to advance the purchase-money, when the aspect of affairs was suddenly changed by the adventure before alluded to, which occurred at the great cheese-fair at Belford.

After receiving the money from Sir Robert—or rather, after getting his check cashed at the bank, and delivering the horse to the groom, as I have before stated,—Ben having transferred the notes to his master, and received half-a-crown to purchase a fairing, proceeded to solace himself by taking a leisurely view of the different shows, and having laughed at Punch, stared at the wild-beasts, and admired the horsemanship, was about to enter a booth, to enjoy the delight of a threepenny play, when, on a platform in front, where the characters, in full costume, were exhibiting themselves to attract an audience to the entertainment about to commence, he was struck by the apparition of a black boy in a turban, flourishing a tambourine, and in spite of the change of colour in the player, and a good deal of new gilding on the instrument, was instantly convinced that he beheld

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his quandam friend Dick the gipsy, and his own beloved tambourine!

Ben was by no means a person to suffer such a discovery to pass unimproved; he clambered on the railing that surrounded the booth, leaped on the platform, seized at one clutch the instrument and the performer, and in spite of the resistance offered by a gentleman in a helmet and spangles, a most Amazonian lady in a robe and diadem, and a personage, sex unknown, in a pair of silver wings, gold trousers, and a Brutus wig, he

succeeded in mastering the *soi-disant* negro-boy, and raising such a clamour as brought to his assistance a troupe of constables and other officials, and half the mob of the fair.

Ben soon made known his grievance. "He's no blackamoor!" shouted the lad, dexterously cleaning with a whetted finder part of the cheek of the simulated African, and discovering the tanned brown skin underneath. "He's a thief and a gipsy! And this is my tambourine! I can prove the fact!" roared Ben. "I can swear to the parchment, and so can lawyer Lyons," added Ben (displaying the mutilated but clerk-like writing, by which Simon Lackland, Esq., assigned over to Daniel Holdfast, Gent the manor and demesnes, woods and fisheries, parklands and pightles, of Flyaway, in consideration, and so forth.) "I can swear to my tambourine, and so can my master, and so can the lawyer! Take us to the bench! Carry us before the Mayor! I can swear to the tambourine, and the thief who is playing it, who is no more a negro than I am!" pursued Ben, sweeping off another streak of the burnt cork from the sunburnt face of the luckless Dick. "I'm Doctor M's. boy," bawled Ben, "and he'll see me righted, and the tambourine's mine, and I'll have it!"

And have it he did; for the lawyer and his master both happened to be within hearing, and bore satisfactory testimony to his veracity; and the mob, who love to administer summary justice, laid hold of the culprit, whom Ben, having recovered his property, was willing to let off scot-free, and amused themselves with very literally washing the blackamoor white by means of a sound ducking in the nearest horse-pond. And the tambourine was brought home in triumph; and we are as much stunned as ever.

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MRS. HOLLIS, THE FRUITERER.

At the comer of St Stephen's church-yard, forming a sort of angle at the meeting of four roads, stands a small shop, the front abutting on the open space caused by the crossing of the streets, one side looking into the Butts, the other into the church-yard, and one

end only connected with other houses; a circumstance which, joined to the three open sides being, so to say, glazed—literally composed of shop-windows, gives an agreeable singularity to the little dwelling of our fruiterer. By day it looks something like a greenhouse, or rather like the last of a row of stove-houses; and the resemblance is increased by the contents of the shop-windows, consisting of large piled-up plates of every fruit in season, interspersed with certain pots of plants which, in that kind of atmosphere, never blow,—outlandish plants, names unknown, whose green, fleshy, regular leaves have a sort of fruity-look with them, .seem as if intended to be eaten, and assort wonderfully well with the shaddocks, dates, cocoa-nuts, pine-apples, and other rare and foreign fruits, amongst which they stand. By night it has the air of a Chinese lantern, all light and colour; and whether by night or by day, during full months of the year, that ever open door sends forth the odours of countless chests of oranges, with which, above all other productions of the earth, the little shop is filled, and which come steaming across the pavement like a perfume.

I have an exceeding affection for oranges and the smell of oranges in every shape: the leaf, the flower, the whole flowering tree, with its exquisite elegance,* its rare union of richness

* So elegant is it, that the very association connected with it will sometimes confer a grace not its own. For instance, an indifferent play called *Elvira*, taken from the Spanish some two hundred years ago by George Digby, Earl of Bristol, is really made tasteful by the scene being laid partly amongst the orange-groves of a Spanish garden, and partly in the “perfuming room,” a hall, or laboratory, where the flowers were distilled, and in which the mistress sets one of her attendants, a lady in disguise, the pretty task of gathering and changing the flowers. No one can conceive the effect of this tasteful fixing of the scene, in heightening and ennobling the female characters. Our own green-houses were originally built for tender evergreens, chiefly oranges and myrtles; and an orangery is still one of the rarest and most elegant appurtenances to a great hose. Some of my happiest days were spent in that belonging to Belford Manor-house, looking out from amid orange-trees, second only to those at Hampton Court, on gay flowers, green

trees, and a bright river, in the sunny month of June and enjoying society worthy of the scenery.

* My friend, Mr. Jerrold, has added still another theatrical association by his inimitable creation of Orange Moll—a pleasant extravagance worthy of Middleton.

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and delicacy, and its aristocratic scarcity and unwillingness to blossom, or even to grow in this climate, without light and heat, and shelter and air, and all the appliances which its sweetness and beauty so well deserve. I even lave that half-evergreen, flexible honeysuckle, with the long wreaths of flowers, which does condescend to spread and flourish, and even to blow for half the year, all the better, because its fragrance approaches nearer to that of the orange blossom than any other that I know: and the golden fruit with its golden rind, I have loved both for the scent and the taste from the day when a tottering child, laughing and reaching after the prize which I had scarcely words enough to ask for, it was doled out to me in quarters, through the time when, a little older, I was promoted to the possession of half an orange to my own share, and that still prouder hour when I attained the object of my ambition, and had a whole orange to do what I liked with, up to this very now, when, if oranges were still things to sigh for, I have only to send to Mrs. Hollis's shop, and receive in return for one shilling, lawful money of Great Britain, more of the golden fruit than I know what to do with. Every body has gone through this chapter of the growth and vanity of human wishes—has longed for the fruit, not only for its own sweetness, but as a mark of property and power, which vanish when possessed—great to the child, to the woman nothing. But I still love oranges better and care for them more than grown people usually do, and above all things I like the smell; the rather, perhaps, that it puts me in mind of the days when, at school in, London, I used to go to the play so often, and always found the house scented with the quantity of orange-peel, in the pit, so that to this hour that particular fragrance brings John Kemble to my recollection. I certainly like it the better on that account, and as certainly, although few persons can be less like the great

tragedian—glorious John!—as certainly I like it none the worse for recalling to my mind, my friend Mrs. Hollis.*

As long as I can recollect, Mrs. Hollis has been the inhabitant of this grand depôt of choice fruits, the inmate not so much of the house as the shop. I never saw her out of that well-glazed apartment, or heard of any one that did, nor did I ever see the shop without her. She was as much a fixture there as one of her flowerless plants, and seemed as little subject to change or decay in her own person. From seven o'clock, when it was

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opened, till nine, when the shutters were closed, there she sat in one place, from whence she seldom stirred, a chair behind the right-hand counter, where she could conveniently reach her most tempting merchandise, and hold discourse with her friends and customers, (terms which in her case were nearly synonymous,) even although they advanced no nearer towards the sanctum than the step at the door. There she has presided, the very priestess of that temple of Pomona, for more years than I can well reckon,—from her youth (if ever she were young,) to now, when, although far from looking so, she must, I suppose, according to the register, be accounted old. What can have preserved her in this vigorous freshness, unless it be the aroma of the oranges, nobody can tell. There she sits, a tall, stout, square, upright figure, surmounted by a pleasant comely face, eyes as black as a sloe, cheeks as round as an apple, and a complexion as ruddy as a peach, as fine a specimen of a healthy, hearty English tradeswoman, the feminine of “John Bull,” as one would desire to see on a summer day.

One circumstance which has probably contributed not a little to that want of change in her appearance, which makes people who have been away from Belford for twenty years or more declare, that every thing was altered except Mrs. Hollis, but that she and her shop were as if they had left it only yesterday, is undoubtedly her singular adherence to one style of dress—a style which in her youth must have had the effect of making her look old, but which now, at a more advanced period of life, suits her exactly. Her costume is very neat, and, as it never can have been at any time fashionable, has the

great advantage of never looking old-fashioned. Fancy a dark gown, the sleeves reaching just below the elbow, cotton in summer, stuff or merino in winter, with dark mittens to meet the sleeves; a white double muslin handkerchief outside of the gown, and a handsome shawl over that, pinned so as not to meet in front; a white apron, a muslin cap with a highish formal crown, a plaited muslin border trimmed with narrow edging, (I dare say she never wore such a gewgaw as a bit of net in her life,) a plaited *chinnum* to match fastened to the cap at either ear, and a bit of sober-coloured satin riband pinned round without bow or any other accompaniment; imagine all this delicately neat and clean, and you will have some notion of Mrs. Hollis. There is a spice of coquetry in this costume—at least, there would be, if adopted with malice prepense, it is so becoming. But as she is, probably, wholly unconscious of its peculiar allurements, she has the advantage without the sin, the charm “without the illness should attend it.”

Nobody that knew Mrs. Hollis would suspect her of coquetry, or of any thing implying design or contrivance of any sort. She

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was a thoroughly plain and simple-minded woman, honest and open in word and deed, with an uncompromising freedom of speech, and a directness and singleness of purpose, which answer better, even as regards worldly prosperity, than the cunning or the cautions would allow themselves to believe. There was not a bolder talker in all Belford than Mrs. Hollis, who saw in the course of the day people of all ranks, from my lord in his coronet carriage, to the little boys who came for ha'porths or penn'orths of inferior fruits (judiciously preferring the liberality and civility of a great shop to the cheaterly and insolence of the inferior chapwoman, who makes money by the poor urchins, and snubs them all the while:) from the county member's wife to the milk-woman's daughter, every body dealt with Mrs. Hollis, and with all of them did Mrs. Hollis chat with a mixture of good humour and good spirits, of perfect ease and perfect respectfulness, which made her one of the most popular personages in the town. As a gossip she was incomparable. She knew every body and every thing, and every thing about every body; had always the freshest intelligence and the newest news; her reports,

like her plums, had the bloom on them, and she would as much have scorned to palm upon you an old piece of scandal as to send you strawberries that had been two days gathered. Moreover, considering the vast quantity of chit-chat of which she was the channel, (for it was computed that the whole gossip of Belford passed through her shop once in four-and-twenty hours, like the blood through the heart,) it was really astonishing how authentic, on the whole, her intelligence was; mistakes and misstatements of course there were, and a plentiful quantity of exaggeration; but of actual falsehood there was comparatively little, and of truth, or of what approached to truth, positively much. If one told a piece of news out of Mrs. Hollis's shop, it was almost an even wager that it was substantially correct. And of what other gossip-shop can one say so much?

Chit-chat, however, eminently as she excelled in it, was not the sort of discourse which our good fruiterer preferred. Her taste lay in higher topics. She was a keen politician, a zealous partisan, a red-hot reformer, and to declaim against taxes and tories, and poor-rates and ministers—subjects which she handled as familiarly as her pippins—was the favourite pastime of our fruiterer. Friend or foe made little difference with this free-spoken lady, except that perhaps she preferred the piquancy of a good-humoured skirmish with a political adversary to the flatness of an agreement with a political ally; and it is saying not a little for tory good-humour, that her antagonists listened and laughed, and bought her grapes and oranges just as quietly after a diatribe of her fashion as before, I rather think that

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they liked her oratory better than the whigs did—it amused them.*

A contested election turns her and her shop topsy-turvy. One wonders how she lives through the excitement, and how she contrives to obtain and exhibit the state of the poll almost as it seems before the candidates themselves can know the numbers. It even puts her sober-suited attire out of countenance. Green and orange being the colours of her party, she puts on two cockades of that livery, which suit as ill with her costume as they

would with that of a Quaker; she hoists a gay flag at her door, and sticks her shop all over with oranges and laurel-leaves, so that it vies in decoration with the member's chair; and in return for this devotion, the band at an election time, make a halt of unusual duration before her door, (to the great inconvenience of the innumerable stage-coaches and other vehicles which pass that well-frequented corner, which by the way is the high road to London,) and the mob, especially that part of it which consists of little boys and girls, with an eye to a dole of nuts or cherries, bestow upon her almost as many cheers as they would inflict upon the candidate himself.

At these times, Mr. Hollis (for there was such a personage, short and thick, and very civil) used to make his appearance in the shop) and to show his adhesion to the cause by giving a plumper to its champion; on other occasions he was seldom visible, having an extensive market-garden to manage in the suburbs of the town, and being for the most part engaged in trotting to and fro between Mount Pleasant and the Church-yard corner, the faithful reporter of his wife's messages and orders. As you might be certain at any given hour 'to find Mrs. Hollis at her post behind the counter—for little as she looked like a person who lived without eating, she never seemed to retire for the ordinary purposes of breakfast or dinner, and even managed to talk scandal without its usual accompaniment of tea—so sure were you to see her quiet steady husband (one of the best-natured and honest

* As an illustration both of her passion for politics, and of the way in which one is oneself possessed by the subject that happens to be the point of interest at the moment. I cannot help relating an equivoque which occurred between Mrs. Hollis and myself I had been to London on theatrical business, and called at the shop a day or two after my return, and our little marketing being transacted, and civil inquiries as to the health of the family made and answered, I was going away, when Mrs. Hollis stopped me by asking, "how they were getting on at the two great houses in London?" "Badly enough, I am afraid, Mrs. Hollis," said I. "No doubt, ma'am," responded the lady of the orange-shop; "but what can be expected from such management?" Just then free customers entered, and I walked off, wondering what Mrs. Hollis could have heard of Drury Lane

and Covent Garden, and their respective mismanagements, and how she came to know that I had been tossing in those troubled waters, when all on a sudden it occurred to me, that strange as it seemed for people to talk to me of politics, she must have meant the Houses of Lords and Commons. And so she did.

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men in the place) on the full trot from the garden to the shop, or the shop the garden, with a huge fruit-basket on one arm, and his little grand-daughter, Patty, on the other.

Patty Hollis was the only daughter of our good fruiterer's only son; and her parents having died in her infancy, she had been reared with the tenderness which is usually bestowed on the only remaining scion of a virtuous and happy family in that rank of life. Her gran-father specially idolized her; made her the constant companion of his many walks to the garden on the side of Mount Pleasant, and installed her, before she was twelve years of age, leader of the fruit-pickers, and superintendent of the gardeness: offices in which she so conducted herself as to give equal satisfaction to the governors and the governed, the prince and the people. Never was vice-queen more popular, or more fortunate, both in her subjects and her territory.

It would have been difficult to find a prettier bit of ground than this market-garden, with its steep slopes and romantic hollows, its groves of fruit-trees, its thickets of berry-bushes, and its carpets of strawberries. Quite shut out of the town by the sudden and precipitous rise of the hill, it opened to a charming view of the Kennet, winding through green meadows, and formed, in itself, with its troop of active labourers men, women and girls, a scene of great animation; and during the time of the pearly pear-blossom, the snowy cherty, and the rosy apple-bossom, and, again, in the fruit season, (for next to flowers, fruit is the prettiest of all things,) a scene of great beauty. There was one barberry-bush, standing by itself, on the top of a knoll of strawberries, which was really a picture.

But by far the most beautiful part of that pleasant scene, was the young: fruit-gatherer, Patty Hollis. Her complexion, a deep rich brown, with lips like the fruit of her favourite

barberry-tree, and cheeks coloured like damask roses, suited her occupation. It had a sweet sunniness that might have beseemed a vintager, and harmonized excellently with the rich tints of the cherries and currants with which her boskets were so often overbrimmed. She had, too, the clear black eye, with its long lashes, and the dark and glossy hair, which give such brightness to a brown beauty. But the real charm of her countenance was its expression. The smiles, the dimples—the look of sweetness of innocence, of perfect content, which had been delightful to look upon as a child, were still more delightful, because so much more rare, as she advanced towards womanhood. They seemed, and they were, the result of a character equally charming, frank, gentle, affectionate, and gay.

When about seventeen, this youthful happiness, almost too bright to last, was overclouded by a great misfortune—the death

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of her kind grandfather. Poor Patty's grateful heart was almost broken. She had lost one who had loved her better than he had loved any thing in the world, or all the world put together; and she felt (as every body does feel on such an occasion, though with far less cause than most of us,) that her own duty and affection had never been half what his fondness for her deserved,—that she had lost her truest and most partial friend, and that she should never be happy again. So deep was her affliction, that Mrs. Hollis, herself much grieved, was obliged to throw aside her own sorrow to comfort her. It was no comfort, but seemed rather an accession of pain, to find that she was what, considering her station, might be called an heiress,—that she would be entitled to some hundreds on her marriage or her coming of age, and that the bulk of the property (accumulated by honest industry and a watchful, but not mean, frugality) was secured to her after the death of her grandmother.

The trustees to the property and executors of the will, who were also joined with Mrs. Hollis in the guardianship of her granddaughter, were our old friend Stephen Lane, his near neighbour and political ally, and another intimate acquaintance, who, although no

politician, was a person of great and deserved influence with all those of his own rank who had come in contact with his acuteness and probity.

Andrew Graham* was a Scotch gardener, and one of the very best specimens of a class which unites, in a remarkable degree, honesty, sobriety, shrewdness, and information. Andrew had superadded to his northern education, and an apprenticeship to a duke's gardener, the experience of eight years passed as foreman in one of the great nurseries near London: so that his idiom, if not his accent,* was almost entirely Anglicised; and when he came to Belford to superintend the

* Of a northern clan, I fancy— not one of those Grahams of the "land debateable," to whom I have the honour of being distantly related, and of whom the Great Minstrel tells, that they stole with a laudable impartiality from both sides of the border. Speaking of the old harper, Albert Graeme, Sir Walter says,

"Well friended, too, this hardy kin,
Whoever lost, were sure to win;
They sought the beeves that made their broth
In Scotland and in England both."

Lay of the Last Minstrel,

* The accent is not so easily got quit of. A true-born Scot rarely loses that mark of his country, let him live ever so long on this side of the Tweed; and even a Southern sometimes finds it sooner learned than unlearned. A gardener of my acquaintance, the head man in a neighbouring nursery-ground, who spoke as good Scotch as heart could desire, and was universally known among the frequenters of the garden by the title of the "Scotchman," happened not only to have been born in Hertfordshire, but never to have travelled farther north than that county. He had worked under a gardener from Aberdeen, and had picked up the dialect. Some people do catch peculiarities of tone. I myself once returned from a visit to Northumberland, speaking the Doric of Tynedale like a native, and, from love of "the north countrie" was really sorry when I lost the pretty imperfection.

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garden and hothouses of a very kind and very intelligent gentleman, who preferred spending the superfluities of a large income on horticultural pursuits, rather than in showier and less elegant ways, he brought into the town as long a head and as sound a heart as could be found in the country. To Mr. Hollis (who had himself begun life as a gentleman's gardener, and who thoroughly loved his art) his society was exceedingly welcome; and he judged, and judged rightly, that to no one could he more safely confide the important trust of advising and protecting two comparatively helpless females, than to the two friends whom he had chosen.

Andrew vindicated his good opinion by advising Mrs. Hollis to resign the garden (which was held on lease of our other good friend, Mr. Howard,) dispose of the Shop (which was her own,) take a small house in the suburbs, and live on her property; and he urged this the rather as he suspected her foreman of paying frequent visits to a certain beer-house, lately established in the neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant, and bearing the insidious sign of 'The Jolly Gardener;' and because, as he observed, "when an Englishman turned of fifty once takes to the national vice of tippling, you may as well look to raise pine-apples from cabbage-stocks, as expect him to amend. He'll go to the Jolly Gardener and the rest of the lads will follow him, and the garden may take care of Itself. Part with the whole concern, my good lady, and ye are safe—keep it, and ye'll be cheated."

Now this was good advice; and it had the usual fate of good advice in being instantly and somewhat scornfully rejected. Mrs. Hollis had a high opinion of her foreman, and could not and would not live out of her shop; and as even Patty pleaded for the garden, though she intimated some suspicion of its manager; the whole concern remained in *statu quo*; and Andrew, when he saw the smiles return to her lips, and the bloom to her cheeks, and found how much her health and happiness depended on her spending her days in the open air, and in the employments she loved, ceased to regret that his counsel had not been followed, more especially as the head man, having more, than verified his

prediction, had been discharged, and replaced, according to his recommendation, by a young and clever labourer in the garden.

Sooner than Patty had thought it possible, her cheerfulness came back to her; she half lived at Mount Pleasant, did all she could to assist the new head man, who, although merely a self taught lad of the neighbourhood, did honour to Andrew's discrimination, and was beginning to discover (the god of love only knows how) that to be, in a small way, an heiress was no insupportable misfortune, when a vexation arising from that very cause almost made her wish herself really the "wild wandering gipsy" which her poor grandfather had delighted to call her,

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The calamity in question was no trifle. Poor Patty was unfortunate enough to be courted by Mr. Samuel Vicars, hair-dresser and perfumer, in Bristol-street; and, to add to the trial, the suitor was the especial favourite of her grandmother, and his addresses were supported by all her influence and authority.

Mr. Samuel Vicars was one of those busy-bodies who are the pests of a country town. To be a gossip is perhaps permitted to the craft, as inheritors of those old privileged disseminators of news and scandal, the almost extinct race of barbers; but to be so tittle-tattling, so mischief-making, and so malicious as Mr. Samuel Vicars, is not allowed to any body; and the universal ill-will which such a style of conversation indicates is pretty certain to be returned in kind. Accordingly, the young gentleman had contrived to gather around himself as comfortable a mixture of contempt and hatred as one would desire to see on a summer's day.

It was a little, pert, dapper personage, as slight and flimsy as his -white apron or his linen jacket, with a face in which all that was not curl and whisker was simper and smirk, a sharp conceited voice, and a fluency, which as it might be accounted a main cause of the thousand and one scrapes into which he was perpetually getting, was almost as unlucky for himself as for his hearers. He buzzed about one like a gnat, all

noise and sting and motion, and one wondered, as one does in the case of that impertinent insect, how any thing so insignificant could be so troublesome.

Besides the innumerable private quarrels into which his genius for "evil-speaking, lying, and slandering," could not fail to bring him,—quarrels the less easily settled, because having a genuine love of litigation, an actual passion for the importance and excitement of a law-suit, he courted an action for damages, in which he could figure as defendant on the one hand, and blessed his stars for a horsewhipping, in which he shone as plaintiff on the other; besides these private disputes, he engaged with the most fiery zeal and the fiercest activity in all the public squabbles of the place, and being unhappily, as Stephen Lane used to observe, of his party, and a partisan whom it was morally impossible to keep quiet, contrived to be a greater thorn in the side of our worthy friend than all his opponents put together. Wo to the cause which he advocated! The plainest case came out one mass of confusion from the curious infelicity of his statements, and right seemed wrong when seen through the misty medium of his astounding and confounding verbiage. Stephen's contempt for his adherent's orations was pretty much such as a stanch old hound might evince, when some young dog, the babbler, of the pack, begins to give tongue:—"But, dang it," cried the good butcher, "he brings the

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cause into contempt too! It's enough to make a man sell himself for a slave," added the poor patriot, in a paroxysm of weariness and indignation, "to hear that chap jabber for three hours about freedom. And the whole world can't stop him. If he would but rat now!" exclaimed the ex-butcher. And, doubtless Samuel would have ratted, if any body would have made it worth his while; but the other party knew the value of such an opponent, and wisely left him in the ranks of opposition, to serve their cause by speaking against it; so Mr. Samuel Vicars continued a Reformer.

It was this circumstance that first recommended him to the notice of Mrs. Hollis, who, herself a perfectly honest and true-hearted woman, took for granted that Samuel was as veracious and single-minded as herself, believed all his puffs of his own speeches, and

got nearer to thinking him, what he thought himself) a very clever fellow, than any other person whom he had ever honoured by his acquaintance. Besides the political sympathy, they had one grand tie in a common antipathy. A certain Mrs. Deborah Dean, long a green-grocer in the Butts, and even then taking higher ground than Mrs. Hollis thought at all proper, had recently entered into partnership with a nursery-man, and had opened a magnificent store for seeds, plants, fruit, and vegetables, in Queen-street; and, although the increasing size of Belford, and the crowded population of the neighbourhood, were such as really demanded another shop, and that at the corner of the church-yard continued to have even more customers than its mistress could well manage, yet she had reigned too long over all the fruitage of the town to “bear a *sister* near the throne;” and she hated Mrs. Deborah (who, besides, was a “blue”) with a hatred truly feminine—hot, angry, and abusive; and the offending party being, as it happened, a mild, civil, unoffending woman, poor Mrs. Hollis had had the misfortune to find nobody ready to join in speaking ill of her, until she encountered Samuel Vicars, who poured the whole force of his vituperative eloquence on the unfortunate dame. Now, Samuel, who had had some pecuniary dealings with her whilst she lived in his neighbourhood—certain barterings of cabbages, celery, carrots, and French beans, against combs and tooth-brushes, and a Parisian front, which had led first to a disputed account, and then to the catastrophe in which he most delighted, a law-suit,—was charmed, .on his side, to meet, with what seldom came in his way, a sympathizing listener. He called every day to descant on the dear subject, and feed Mrs. Hollis's hatred with fresh accounts of her rival's insolence and prosperity; and, in the course of his daily visits, it occurred to him that she was well to do in the world, and that he could not do a better thing than to cast the eyes of affection on her pretty grand-daughter.

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Samuel's own affairs were exceedingly in want of a rich wife. What with running after la *chose publique*, and neglecting his own affairs,—what with the friends that he lost and the enemies that he gained by the use of that mischievous weapon, his tongue—to say nothing of the many law-suits in which he was cast, and those scarcely less

expensive that he won—his concerns were in as much disorder as if he had been a lord. A hairdresser's is, at the best, a meagre business, especially in a country town, and his had declined so much, that his one apprentice, an idle lad of fourteen, and the three or four painted figures; on which his female wigs were stack in the windows, had the large showy shop, with its stock of glittering trumpery, pretty much to themselves; so that Samuel began to pay most assiduous court, not to his fair intended—for, pretty girl as Patty was, our Narcissus of the curling-irons was far too much enamoured of himself to dream of falling in love with a pair of cherry cheeks,—but to her grandmother; and having picked up at the Jolly Gardener certain rumours of Mount Pleasant, which he related to his patroness with much of bitterness and exaggeration, awakened such a tempest of wrath in her bosom, that she wrote a letter to Mr. Howard, giving him notice that in six months she should relinquish the garden, discharged her new foreman on the spot, and ordered Patty to prepare to marry the hairdresser without let or delay.

Poor Patty! her only consolation was in her guardians. Her first thought was of Andrew, but *he* was sure to have the evil tidings from another quarter; besides, of him there could be no doubt; her only fear was of Stephen Lane. So, as soon as she could escape from the Padrona's scolding, and wipe the tears from her own bright eyes, she set forth for the great shop in the Butts.

"Well, my rosebud!" said the good butcher, kindly chucking his fair ward under the chin; "what's the news with you? Why, you are as great a stranger as strawberries at Christmas! I thought you had taken root at Mount Pleasant, and never meant to set foot in the town again."

"Oh, Mr. Lane!"—began poor Patty, and then her courage failed her, and she stopped suddenly and looked down abashed;—"Oh! Mr. Lane!"—

"Well, what's the matter?" inquired her kind guardian; "are you going to be married, and come to ask my consent?"

"Oh, Mr. Lane!" again sighed Patty.

“Out with it, lass!—never fear!” quoth Stephen.

"Oh, Mr. Lane I" once more cried the damsel, stopping as if spell-bound, and blushing to her fingers' ends.

"Well, Patty, if you can't speak to a friend that has dandled you in his arms, and your father before you, you'd best send the ma to see what he can say for himself. I sha'n't be cruel, I promise you. Though you might do better in the way of money, I

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would rather look to character. That's what' tells in the long run, and I like the chap."

“Oh, Mr. Lane, God forbid!” exclaimed Patty; “my grand-mother wants me to marry Samuel Vicars!”

“Sam Vicars! the woman's mad!” ejaculated Stephen.

"She cannot be other than demented," observed Andrew, who had just entered the shop, "for she has discharged William Reid,—the steadiest and cleverest lad that ever came about a garden, a lad who might be taken for a Scotchman,—and wants to marry Miss Patty to a loon of a hairdresser."

"Whom any body would take for a Frenchman," interrupted the butcher; and having thus summed up the characters of the two rivals in a manner that did honour no less to their warm feelings than to their strong prejudices, the two guardians and their fair ward, much comforted by the turn the conversation had taken, began to consult as to their future proceedings.

“She must give up the garden, since she has given notice,” quoth Andrew; “but that won't much signify. This is only the beginning of January, but Christmas being passed, the notice will date only from Lady-day, so that she'll keep it till Michael-mas, and will have plenty of opportunity to miss William Reid's care and skill, and honesty—”

"But poor William, what will become of him?" interposed his fair mistress: "William to be turned away at a day's warning, like a drunkard or a thief! What will he do?"

"Just as a very industrious and very clever gardener always does. He'll prosper, depend upon it. And, besides, my dear, to tell ye a bit of a secret, your good friend Mr. Howard, who likes William so well, has given him an acre and a half of his cottage allotments, in capital order, and partly stocked, which happened to fall vacant just as it was wanted. And you must wait quietly, my bonny lass, and see what time will do for ye. William's three and twenty, and ye are nineteen,—ye have a long life before ye—wait and see what'll turn up. Mr. Howard is one of the best men in the world, although he has the ill luck to be a tory," pursued Andrew, with a sly glance at Stephen.

"Never a better, although he had the ill luck to be born on the south of the Tweed," responded Stephen, returning the glance.

"Mr. Howard is your stanch friend," pursued Andrew; "and as for your grandmother, she's a good woman too, and will soon be sick of that jackanapes, if she be only left to find him out herself. So go home, my bonny doo, and be comforted," said the kind-hearted Scotchman, patting the round cheek to which the colour and the dimples were returning under the reviving influence of hope.

"Ay, get along home, rosebud," added the equally kind Englishman,

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chucking her under the chin, and giving her a fatherly kiss, "get along home, for fear they should miss you. And, as to being married to that whipper-snapper with his curls and his whiskers, why, if I saw the slightest chance of such a thing, I'd take him up between my finger and thumb, and pitch him up to the top of St. Stephen's tower before you could say Jack Robinson! Get along, rosebud! I'll not see thee made unhappy, I promise thee."

And, much consoled by these kind promises, poor Patty stole back to the little shop at the corner of the church-yard.

The winter, the spring, and the summer, crept slowly by, bringing with them a gradual melioration of prospect to our nutbrown maid. Time, as Andrew had predicted, had done much to sicken Mrs. Hollis of the proposed alliance. Her honest and simple nature, and her real goodness of heart, soon revolted at his bitterness and malice, and enduring enmities. Her animosities, which vanished almost as she gave them utterance, had no sympathy with such eternity of hatred. Even her rival and competitor, Mrs. Dean, had been forgiven, as soon as she discovered that the- world (even the little world of Belford) had room enough for both, and that, by adding the superior sorts of vegetables to her stock, with the very finest of which she was supplied through the medium of Andrew Graham, she had oven increased the number of her customers and the value of her business, which, in spite of her having given notice of quitting the garden, (a measure which Patty suspected her of regretting,) she had determined to continue. She was weary, too, of his frivolity, his idleness, and his lies, and having taken upon her to lecture him on his several sins of gadding, tattling, meddle-making, and so forth, even intimating some distrust of his oratorical powers and his political importance, Mr. Samuel began to be nearly as tired of his patroness as his patroness was of him; so that, although no formal breach had taken place, Patty felt herself nearly rid of that annoyance.

In the mean while, a new attraction, particularly interesting to the gardening world, had arisen in Belford, in the shape of a Horticultural Society. Nothing could be more beautiful than the monthly shows of prize flowers, fruits, and vegetables, in the splendid Townhall. All the county attended them, and our country belles never showed to so much advantage as side by side by their rivals the flowers, giving themselves up with their whole hearts to a delighted admiration of the loveliest productions of Nature. Andrew Graham was of course one of the most successful competitors, and Mr. Howard one of the most zealous and intelligent patrons of the society, whilst even our friend Stephen took some concern in the matter, declaring that good cabbage was no bad accompaniment to good beef, and that all the

wearers of blue aprons, whether batcher or gardener, had a claim to his affection—a classification at which Andrew, who had a high veneration for the dignity of his art, was not a little scandalized. Patty from the first had been an enthusiastic admirer of the whole plan, and Mrs. Hollis had been bribed into liking it, (for old people do not spontaneously take to novelties, especially in their own pursuits,) by the assurance of Andrew that the choice fruit and vegetables, the rare Carolina beans and green Indian corn—the peas and strawberries so very early and so very late, so large of size and delicate of flavour—the lettuces and cauliflowers unmatched in whiteness and firmness, and a certain new melon which combined all the merits of all the melons hitherto known, came exclusively from one of the prize exhibitors of the horticultural meeting, and should be reserved exclusively for her, if she desired to purchase them. Farther Mrs. Hollis was too discreet to inquire. There are secrets in all trades, and none are more delicate than those regarding the supply of a great fruit-shop. She knew that they did not come from Andrew, for his character set suspicion at defiance; but all his friends might not be equally scrupulous. Silence was safest.

So much had Patty been delighted with the prize-shows, all of which she attended, as was permitted to respectable trades-people in the afternoon when the gentry had returned home to dinner, that she had actually excited in Mrs. Hollis a desire to go with her, and at every meeting the expedition had been threatened, but had gone off, on the score of weather, or of illness, or of business—or, in short, any one of the many excuses which people who seldom go out make to themselves to avoid the exertion, so that the last day arrived and "Yarrow" was still "unvisited." But that it was the last was a powerful plea with Patty, whose importunity, seconded by a bright sunshiny September evening, and by the gallantry of Mr. Lane, who arrived dressed in his best blue coat and red waistcoat on purpose to escort her, proved irresistible; and Mrs. Hollis, leaving the shop in charge of a trusty maid-servant, an alert shopboy, and a sedate and civil neighbour, (a sort of triple guardianship which she considered necessary to supply her own single presence,) gave to the inhabitants of Belford the great and unprecedented novelty of seeing her in the streets on a week-day. The people of Thibet would hardly be more astonished at the sight of the Dalai Lama.

On reaching the Townhall, she was struck even as much as she intended to be with the fragrance and beauty of the hothouse plants, the pines, grapes, peaches, and jars of flowers from the gardens of the gentlemen's seats in the neighbourhood, shown as they were with all the advantages of tasteful arrangement and

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the magical effect of the evening light "What a many flowers have been *invented* since I was young!" was her natural thought, clothed in the very words in which it passed through her mind.

She turned, however, from the long rows in which the contributions of the members had been piled, to some smaller tables at the top of the room, filled, with the productions of cottage exhibitors. One of these standing a little apart was understood to be appropriated to an individual of this description, a half-taught labourer tilling his own spot of ground, who had never in his life worked in any thing beyond a common market-garden, but who had won almost every prize for which he had contended—had snatched the prizes not only from competitors of his own class, but from the gardeners of the nobility and gentry—had, in short beaten every body, even Andrew Graham. To this table Mrs. Hollis turned with peculiar interest—an interest not diminished when she beheld there, piled with a picturesqueness that looked as if copied from Van Huysum; the identical green Indian corn, Carolina beans, the lettuces and cauliflowers, the late peas and autumnal strawberries, and the newest and best of all possible melons, with which she had been so mysteriously supplied, flanked by two jars of incomparable dahlias, and backed by a large white rose, delicate and regular as the *rose de Meaux*, and two seedling geraniums of admirable beauty, labelled 'The Mount pleasant' and 'The Patty.' By the side of the table stood Andrew Graham, Mr. Howard, and William Reid.

"The lad has beaten me, Mrs. Hollis, but I forgive him," quoth our friend Andrew, smiling; "I told ye that his wares were the best in the market"

"And you must forgive me, Mrs. Hollis, for having made him your successor in the Mount Pleasant garden," said Mr. Howard. "I have been building a pretty cottage there

for him and his wife, when he is fortunate enough to get one; and now that I see you do get out sometimes, if you would but come and see it—"

"And if you would but let me give away the bride"—added honest Stephen, seizing Patty's hand, while the tears ran down her cheeks like rain.

"And if you would but let me manage the garden for you, Mrs. Hollis, and be as a son to you"—said William, pleadingly.

And vanquished at once by natural feeling and professional taste—for the peas, melons, and strawberries, had taken possession of her very heart,—Mrs. Hollis yielded. In less than a month the young couple were married, and the very next day Mr. Samuel Vicars ran away from his creditors, whom till then he had pacified by the expectation of his making a wealthy match, and was never heard of la Belford again.

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BELLES OF THE BALL-ROOM.

THE WILL.

I NOW proceed to record some of the more aristocratic belles of the Belford assemblies, the young ladies of the neighbourhood, who, if not prettier than their compeers of the town, were at least more fashionable and more admired.

Nothing in the whole routine of country life seems to me more capricious and unaccountable than the choice of a county beauty. Every shire in the kingdom, from Brobdignaggian York to Lilliputian Rutland, can boast of one. The existence of such a personage seems as essential to the well-being of a provincial community as that of the queen-bee in a hive; and except by some rare accident, when two fair sisters, for instance, of nearly equal pretensions appear in similar dresses at the same balls and the same archery meetings, you as seldom see two queens of Brentford in the one society as the other. Both are elective monarchies, and both tolerably despotic; but so far I must

say for the little winged people, that one comprehends the impulse which guides them in the choice of a sovereign far better than the motives which influence their brother-insects, the beaux: and the reason of this superior sagacity in the lesser swarms is obvious. With them the election rests in a natural instinct an unerring sense of fitness, which never fails to discover with admirable discrimination the one only she who suits their purpose; whilst the other set of voluntary subjects, the plumeless bipeds, are unluckily abandoned to their own wild will, and, although from long habits of imitation almost as unanimous as the bees, seem guided in their admiration by the merest caprice, the veriest chance, and select their goddess, the goddess of beauty, blindfold—as the Bluecoat boys draw, or used to draw, the tickets in a lottery.

Nothing is so difficult to define as the customary qualification of the belle of a country assembly. Face or figure it certainly is not; for take a stranger into the room, and it is at least two to one but he will fix on twenty damsels prettier than the county queen; nor, to do the young gentlemen justice, is it fortune or connexion; for, so as the lady come within the prescribed limits of county gentility, (which, by the way, are sufficiently arbitrary

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and exclusive,) nothing more is required in a beauty—whatever might be expected in a wife; fortune it is not, still less is it rank, and least of all accomplishments. In short, it seems to me equally difficult to define what is the requisite and what is not; for, on looking back through twenty years to the successive belles of the Belford balls, I cannot fix on any one definite qualification. One damsel seemed to me chosen for gaiety and good humour, a merry, laughing girl; another for haughtiness and airs; one because her father was hospitable, another because her mother was pleasant; one became fashionable because related to a fashionable poet, whilst another stood on her own independent merits as one of the boldest riders in the hunt, and earned her popularity at night by her exploits in the morning.

Among the whole list, the one who commanded the most universal admiration, and seemed to me to approach nearest to the common notion of a pretty woman, was the high-born and graceful Constance Lisle. Besides being a tall, elegant figure, with finely chiselled features and a pale but delicate complexion, relieved by large dark eyes, full of sensibility, and a profusion of glossy black hair, her whole air and person were eminently distinguished by that undefinable look of fashion and high breeding, that indisputable stamp of superiority, which, for want of a better word, we are content to call style. Her manners were in admirable keeping with her appearance. Gentle, gracious, and self-possessed; courteous to all and courting none, she received the flattery, to which she had been accustomed from her cradle, as mere words of course, and stimulated the ardour of her admirers by her calm non-notice, infinitely more than a finished coquette would have done by all the *agraceries* of the most consummate vanity.

Nothing is commoner than the affectation of indifference. But the indifference of Miss Lisle was so obviously genuine, that the most superficial coxcomb that buzzed around her could hardly suspect its reality. She heeded admiration no more than that queen of the garden, the lady lily, whom she so much resembled in modest dignity. It played around her as the sunny air of June around the snow-white flower, her common and natural atmosphere.

This was, perhaps, one reason for the number of beaux who fluttered round Constance. It puzzled and piqued them. They were unused to be of so little consequence to a young lady, and could not make it out. Another cause might, perhaps, be found in the splendid fortune which she inherited from her mother, and which, independently of her expectations from her father, rendered her the greatest match and richest heiress in the county.

Richard Lisle, her father, a second son of the ancient family of Lisle of Lisle-End, had been one of those men born, as it seems,

to fortune, with whom every undertaking prospers through a busy life. Of an ardent and enterprising temper, at once impetuous and obstinate, he had mortally offended his father and elder brother by refusing to take, orders, and to accept, in due season, the family livings, which, time out of mind, had been the provision of the second sons of their illustrious house. Rejected by his relations, he had gone out as an adventurer to India, had been taken into favour by the head-partner of a great commercial house, married his daughter, entered the civil service of the Company, been resident at the court of one native prince and governor of the forfeited territory of another, had accumulated wealth through all the various means by which, in India, money has been found to make money, and finally returned to England a widower, with an only daughter, and one of the largest fortunes ever brought from the gorgeous East.

Very different had been the destiny of the family at home. Old Sir Rowland Lisle, (for the name was to be found in one of the earliest pages of the Baronetage,) an expensive, ostentatious man, proud of his old ancestry, of his old place, and of his old English hospitality, was exactly the person to involve any estate, however large its amount; and, when two contests for the county had brought in their train debt and mortgages, and he had recourse to horse-racing and hazard to deaden the sense of his previous imprudence, nobody was astonished to find him dying of grief and shame, a heart-broken and almost ruined man.

His eldest son, Sir Everard, was perfectly free from either of these destructive vices; but he, besides an abundant portion of irritability, obstinacy, and family pride, had one quality quite as fatal to the chance of redeeming his embarrassed fortunes as the electioneering and gambling propensities of his father—to wit, a love of litigation so strong and predominant that it assumed the form of a passion.

He plunged at once into incessant law-suits with creditor and neighbour, and, in despite of the successive remonstrances of his wife, a high-born and gentle-spirited woman, who died a few years after their marriage,—of his daughter, a strong-minded girl, who, moderately provided for by a female relation, married at eighteen a respectable clergyman,—and of his son, a young man of remarkable promise still at college,—he

had contrived, by the time his brother returned from India, not only to mortgage nearly the whole of his estate, but to get into dispute or litigation with almost every gentleman for ten miles round.

The arrival of the governor afforded some ground of hope to the few remaining friends of the family. He was known to be a man of sense and probity, and by no means deficient in pride after his own fashion; and no one doubted but a reconciliation would take place, and a part of the nabob's rupees be applied to

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the restoration of the fallen glories of Lisle-End. With that object in view, a distant relation contrived to produce a seemingly accidental interview at his own house between the two brothers, who had had no sort of intercourse, except an interchange of cold letters on their father's death since the hour of their separation.

Never was mediation more completely unsuccessful. They met as cold and reluctant friends; they parted as confirmed and bitter enemies. Both, of course, were to blame; and equally, of course, each laid the blame on the other. Perhaps the governor's intentions might be the kindest. Undoubtedly his manner was the worst: for, scolding, haranguing, and laying down the law, as he had been accustomed to do in India, he at once offered to send his nephew abroad with the certainty of accumulating an ample fortune, and to relieve his brother's estate from mortgage, and allow him a handsome income on the small condition of taking possession himself of the family mansion and the family property—a proposal coldly and stiffly refused by the elder brother, who, without deigning to notice the second proposition, declined his son's entering into the service of a commercial company, much in the spirit and almost in the words of Rob Roy, when the good Baillie Nicol Jarvie proposed to apprentice his hopeful offspring to the mechanical occupation of a weaver. The real misfortune of the interview was, that the parties were too much alike, both proud, both irritable, both obstinate, and both too much accustomed to deal chiefly with their inferiors.

The negotiation failed completely; but the governor, clinging to his native place with a mixed feeling, compounded of love for the spot and hatred to its proprietor, purchased at an exorbitant price an estate close at hand, built a villa, and laid out grounds with the usual magnificence of an Indian, bought every acre of land that came under sale for miles around, was shrewdly suspected of having secured some of Sir Everard's numerous mortgages, and, in short, proceeded to invest Lisle-End just as formally as the besieging army sat down before the citadel of Antwerp. He spared no pains to annoy his enemy; defended all the actions brought by his brother, the lord of many manors, against trespassers and poachers; disputed his motions at the vestry; quarrelled with his decisions on the bench; turned whig because Sir Everard was a tory; and set the whole parish and half the county by the ears by his incessant squabbles.

Amongst the gentry, his splendid hospitality, his charming daughter, and the exceeding unpopularity of his adversary, who at one time or other had been at law with nearly all of them, commanded many partisans. But the common people, frequently great sticklers for hereditary right, adhered for the most part to the cause of their landlord—ay, even those with whom he had

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been disputing all his life long. This might be partly ascribed to their universal love for the young squire Henry, whose influence among the poor fairly balanced that of Constance among the rich; but the chief cause was certainly to be found in the character of the governor himself.

At first it seemed a fine thing to have obtained so powerful a champion in every little scrape. They found, however, and pretty quickly, that in gaining this new and magnificent protector they had also gained a master. Obedience was a necessary of life to our Indian, who, although he talked about liberty and equality, and so forth, and looked on them abstractedly as excellent things, had no very exact practical idea of their operation, and claimed in England the same "awful rule and just supremacy" which he had exercised in the East. Every thing must bend to his sovereign will and pleasure,

from the laws of cricket to the laws of the land; so that the sturdy farmers were beginning to grumble, and his *protégés*, the poachers, to rebel, when the sudden death of Sir Everard put an immediate stop to his operations and his enmity.

For the new Sir Henry, a young man beloved by every body,, studious and thoughtful, but most amiably gentle and kind, his uncle had always entertained an involuntary respect—a respect due at once to his admirable conduct and his high-toned and interesting character. They knew each other by sight, but had never met until a few days after the funeral, when the governor repaired to Lisle-End in deep mourning, shook his nephew heartily by the hand, condoled with him on his loss, begged to know in what way he could be of service to him, and finally renewed the offer to send him out to India, with the same advantages that would have attended his own son, which he had previously made to Sir Everard. The young heir thanked him with that smile, rather tender than glad, which gave its sweet expression to his countenance, sighed deeply, and put into his hands a letter ‘which he had found,’ he said, ‘amongst his poor father's papers, and which must be taken for his answer to his uncle's generous and too tempting offers.’

"You refuse me, then?" asked the governor.

"Read that letter, and tell me if I can do otherwise. Only read that letter," resumed Sir Henry; and his uncle, curbing with some difficulty his natural impatience, opened and read the paper.

It was a letter from a dying father to a beloved son, conjuring him by the duty he had ever shown to obey his last injunction, and neither to sell, let, alienate, nor leave Lisle-End; to preserve the estate entire and undiminished so long as the rent sufficed to pay the interest of the mortgages; and to live among his old tenantry in his own old halls so long as the ancient structure

would yield him shelter. "Do this, my beloved son," pursued the letter, "and take your father's tenderest blessing; and believe that a higher blessing will follow on the sacrifice of interest, ambition, and worldly enterprise, to the will of a dying parent. You have obeyed my injunctions living—do not scorn them dead. Again and again I bless you, prime solace of a life of struggle—my dear, my dutiful son!"

"Could I disobey?" inquired Sir Henry, as his uncle returned him the letter;" could it even be a question?"

"No!" replied the governor, peevishly. "But to mew you up with the deer and pheasants in this wild old park, to immure a fine, spirited lad in this huge old mansion along with family pictures and suits of armour, and all for a whim, a crotchet, which can answer no purpose upon earth—it's enough to drive a man mad!"

"It will not be for long," returned Sir Henry, gently. "Short as it is, my race is almost run. And then, thanks to the unbroken entail—the entail which I never could prevail to have broken, when it might have spared *him* so much misery—the park, mansion, and estate, even the old armour and the family pictures, will pass into much better hands—into yours. And Lisle-End will once more flourish in splendour and in hospitality."

The young baronet smiled as he said this; but the governor, looking on his tall, slender figure and pallid cheek, felt that it was likely to be true, and, wringing his hand in silence, was about to depart, when Sir Henry begged him to remain a moment longer.

"I have still one favour to beg of you, my dear uncle—one favour which I may beg. When last I saw Miss Lisle at the house of my sister Mrs. Beauchamp, (for I have twice accidentally had the happiness to meet her there,) she expressed a wish that you had such a piece of water in your grounds as that at the east end of the park, which luckily adjoins your demesne. She would like, she said, a pleasure vessel on that pretty lake. Now I may not sell, or let, or alienate—but surely I may lend. And if you will accept this key, and she will deign to use as her own the Lisle-End mere, I need not, I trust, say how sacred from all intrusion from me or mine the spot would prove, or how honoured I

should feel myself if it could contribute, however slightly, to her pleasure. Will you tell her this?"

"You had better come and tell her yourself."

"No! Oh no!"

"Well, then, I suppose I must"

And the governor went slowly home whistling, not for "want of thought," but as a frequent custom of his when any thing vexed him.

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About a month after this conversation, the father and daughter were walking through a narrow piece of woodland, which divided the highly ornamented gardens of the governor, with their miles of gravel-walks and acres of American borders, from the magnificent park of Lisle-End. The scene was beautiful, and the weather, a sunny day in early May, showed the landscape to an advantage belonging, perhaps, to no other season: on the one hand, die gorgeous shrubs, trees, and young plantations of the new place, the larch in its tenderest green, lilacs, laburnums, and horse-chestnuts, in their flowery glory, and the villa, with its irregular and oriental architecture, rising above all; on the other, the magnificent oaks and beeches of the park, now stretching into avenues, now clumped on its swelling lawns, (for the ground was remarkable for its inequality of surface,) now reflected in the clear water of the lake, into which the woods sometimes advanced in mimic promontories, receding again into tiny bays, by the side of which the dappled deer lay in nerds beneath the old thorns; whilst, on an eminence, at a considerable distance, the mansion, a magnificent structure of Elizabeth's day, with its gable-ends and clustered chimneys, stood silent and majestic as a pyramid in the desert. The spot on which they stood had a character of extraordinary beauty, and yet different from either scene. It was a wild glen, through which an irregular footpath led to the small gate in the park, of which Sir Henry had sent Constance the key; the shelving banks on either side clothed with furze in the fullest blossom, which scented the air with

its rich fragrance, and would almost have dazzled the eye with its golden lustre but for a few scattered firs and hollies, and some straggling clumps of the feathery birch. The nightingales were singing around, the wood pigeons cooing overhead, and the father and daughter passed slowly and silently along, as if engrossed by the sweetness of the morning and the loveliness of the scene. They were thinking of nothing less; as was proved by the first question of the governor, who, always impatient of any pause in conversation, demanded of his daughter "what answer he was to return to the offer of Lord Fitzallan."

"A courteous refusal, my dear father, if you please," answered Constance.

"But I do not please," replied her father, with his crossest whistle. "Here you say No! and No! and No! to every body, instead of marrying some one or other of these young men who flock round you, and giving me the comfort of seeing a family of grandchildren about me in my old age. No to this lord! and not to that! I verily believe, Constance, that you mean to die an old maid."

"I do not expect to be an old maid," sighed Constance; but nothing is so unlikely as my marrying."

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"Whew!" ejaculated the governor. "So she means to die, as well as her cousin! What has put that notion into your head, Constance? Are you ill?"

"Not particularly," replied the daughter. "But yet I am persuaded that my life will be a short one. And so, my dear father, as you told me the other day that now that I am of age I ought to make my will, I have just been following your advice."

"Oh! that accounts for your thinking of dying. Every body, after first making a will expects not to survive above a week or two. I did not, myself, I remember, some forty years ago, when, having scraped a few hundreds together, I thought it a duty to leave them to somebody. But I got used to the operation as I became richer and older. Well,

Constance! you have a pretty little fortune to bequeath—about three hundred thousand pounds, as I take it. What have you done with your money?— not left it to me, I hope?"

"No, dear father; you desired me not."

"That's right. But whom have you made your heir? Your maid, Nannette ? or your lap-dog, Fido?—they are your prime pets—or the County Hospital? or the Literary Fund? or the National Gallery? or the British Museum ?—eh, Constance?"

"None of these, dear father, I have left my property where it will certainly be useful; and, I think, well used—to my cousin Henry of Lisle-End."

"Her cousin Henry of Lisle-End!" re-echoed the father, smiling, and then sending forth a short loud whistle, eloquent of pleasure and astonishment. "So, so! her cousin Henry!"

"But keep my secret, I conjure you, dear father!" pursued Constance, eagerly.

"Her cousin Henry!" said the governor to himself, sitting down on the side of the bank to calculate: "her cousin Henry! And she may be queen of Lisle-end, as this key proves, queen of the lake, and the land, and the land's master. And the three hundred thousand pounds will more than clear away the mortgages, and I can take care of her jointure and the younger children. I like your choice exceedingly, Constance," continued her father, drawing her to him on the bank.

"Oh, my dear father, I beseech you keep my secret!"

"Yes, yes, we'll keep the secret quite as long as it shall be necessary. Don't blush so, my charmer, for you have no need. Let me see—there must be a six months' mourning—but the preparations may be going on just the same. And in spite of my foolish brother and his foolish will, my Constance will be lady of Lisle-End."

And within six months the wedding did take place; and if there could be a happier person than the young bridegroom or his lovely bride, it was the despotic but kind-hearted governor.

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THE GREEK PLAYS.

AFTER speaking of the excellent air and healthy situation of Belford, as well as its central position with regard to Bath, Southampton, Brighton, and Oxford, and its convenient; distance from the metropolis, the fact of its abounding in boarding-schools might almost be assumed; since in a country-town with these recommendations you are as sure to find a colony of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, as you are to meet with a rookery in a grove of oaks. It is the natural habitation of the species.

Accordingly, all the principal streets in Belford, especially the different entrances to the town, were furnished with classical, commercial, and mathematical academies for young gentlemen, or polite seminaries for young ladies. Showy and spacious-looking mansions they were for the most part, generally a little removed from the high road, and garnished with the captivating titles of Clarence House, Sussex House, York House, and Gloucester House; it being, as every one knows, the approved fashion of the loyal fraternity of school-masters to call their respective residences, after one or other of the princes, dead or alive, of the royal House of Brunswick. Not a hundred yards could you walk, without stumbling on some such rural academy; and you could hardly proceed half a mile on any of the main roads, without encountering a train of twenty or thirty pretty prim misses, arranged in orderly couplets like steps in a ladder, beginning with the shortest, and followed by two or three demure and neatly arrayed governesses; or some more irregular procession of straggling boys, for whom the wide foot-path was all too narrow, some loitering behind, some scampering before—some straying on one side, some on the other—dirty, merry, untidy and unruly, as if Eton,* or Westminster, or the London University itself had the honour of their education: nay, if you chanced to pass the Lancasterian School, or the National School, towards four in the evening, or twelve at noon, you might not only witness the

* Every body remembers the poet Gray's description of the youthful members of the aristocracy, the future peers and incipient senators at Eton: "dirty boys playing at cricket."

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turbulent outpouring of that most boisterous mob of small people, with a fair prospect of being yourself knocked down, or at best of upsetting some urchin in the rush, (the chance of playing knocker or knockee being almost even;) but might also, if curious in such matters, have an opportunity of deciding whether the Dissenters under Mr. Lancaster's system, or the Church of, England children under Dr. Bell's, succeeded best in producing a given quantity of noise, and whether the din of shouting boys or the clamour of squalling girls, in the ecstatic uproariousness of their release from the school-room, be the more intolerable to ears of any delicacy.

Besides these comparatively modern establishments for education, Belford boasted two of those old picturesque foundations, a blue-coat school for boys, and a green-school for girls,—proofs of the charity and piety of our ancestors, who, on the abolition of monasteries, so frequently bestowed their posthumous bounty on endowments for the godly bringing up of poor children, and whose munificence, if less extended in the numbers taught was so much more comprehensive and complete with regard to the selected objects; including not only bed and board, and lodging and clothing during the period of instruction, but even apprentice fees for placing them out when they had been taught the simple and useful knowledge which their benefactors thought necessary. For my own part, I confess myself somewhat old fashioned in these matters, and admitting the necessity of as wide a diffusion of education as possible, cannot help entertaining a strong predilection for these limited and orderly charity-schools, where good principles and good conduct, and the value of character, both in the children and their teachers, form the first consideration. I certainly do not like them the less for the pleasant associations belonging to their picturesque old fashioned dress—the long-waisted bodies and petticoat-like skirt of the blue-coat boys, their round tasselled caps, and monkish leathern girdles; or the little green stuff gowns of the girls, with their snow

white tippets, their bibs and aprons, and mobs. I know nothing prettier than to view on a Sunday morning the train of these primitive-looking little maidens, (the children of "Mr. West's charity") pacing demurely down the steps of their equally picturesque and old-fashioned dwelling, on their way to church, the house itself a complete relique of the domestic architecture of Elizabeth's day, in excellent preservation, and the deep bay windows adorned with geraniums (the only modern things about the place,) which even my kind friend, Mr. Foster* need not be ashamed to own. I doubt if any body else in the county could surpass them.

* Edward Foster, Esq. of Clewer.—Mr. Foster is perhaps, I may say certainly, the greatest geranium grower in England. That his gardener wins the head prizes, wherever his master deems the competition worthy of his notice, is little;—his commonest geraniums would bear away the meed from any of I his rivals—although commonest is the wrong word, since his flowers are all, so to say, original—being seedlings raised by himself, or by his brother Captain Foster. Although so thoroughly independent of any adventitious aid in his own collection, he is yet most kind and generous in the distribution of his own plants, as I can well testify. People are very kind to me in every way and in nothing kinder than in supplying my little garden with flowers: one kind friend sends me roses, another dahlias, a third heart's ease. Every body is kind to me, but Mr. Foster is kindest of all. Perhaps I may be permitted to transcribe here some trifling lines, accompanied by a still more trifling book, in which I endeavoured, not to repay, but to acknowledge, my obligation for his innumerable favours—favours greatly enhanced by the circumstance of my being personally unknown to my kind and liberal friend.

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But the school of schools in Belford, that which was pre-eminently called Belford School, of which the town was justly proud, and for which it was justly famous, was a

foundation of a far higher class and character, but of nearly the same date with the endowments for boys and girls which I have just mentioned.

Belford School was one of those free grammar-schools which followed almost as a matter of course upon the Reformation, when education, hitherto left chiefly to the monks and monasteries, was taken out of their hands, and placed under the care of the secular clergy;—the master, necessarily in orders, and provided with testimonials and degrees, being chosen by the corporation, who had also the power of sending a certain number of boys, the sons of poor townsmen, for gratuitous instruction, and the

TO EDWARD FOSTER, ESQ.

OF CLEWER LODGE, SEPT. 1832.

Rich as the lustrous gems which line
With ruddy light the Indian mine:
Bright as the gorgeous birds which fly
Glittering across the Tropic sky;
And various as the beams which pass
To Gothic fines through storied glass
In such distinct yet mingling glow,
Foster, thy famed geraniums show,
That scarce Aladdin's magic bowers.
Where trees were gold, and gems were flowers,
(That vision dear to Fancy' s eye,
Can match thy proud reality.

And bounteous of thy flowery store,
My little garden burnished o'er
With thy rich gifts, seems to express
In each bright bloom its thankfulness,—
The usance nature gives for good
A mute but smiling gratitude!

Ill payment for thy splendid flowers,
This sober-suited book of ours:
And yet in homely guise it shows
Deep love of every flower that blows,
And with kind thanks may haply blend
Kind wishes from an unknown friend.

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privilege of electing off a certain number of boys to scholarships and fellowships at various colleges in Oxford. The master's salary was, as usual, small, and his house large, so that the real remuneration of the gentlemen who conduct these grammar schools—one of which is to be found in almost every great town in England, where the greater part of our professional men and country gentry have been educated, and from whence so many eminent persons have been sent forth—depends almost wholly upon the boarders and day-scholars not on the foundation, whilst the number of boarders is, of course, contingent on the character and learning of the master.

And it was to the high character, the extensive learning, and the well-merited popularity of the late venerable master, that Belford School was indebted for being at one period next perhaps, to Rugby, in point of numbers, and second to none in reputation.

The school was the first thing shown to strangers. Prints of the school hung up in the shops, and engravings and drawings of the same cherished spot might be met in many mansions far and near. East and west, north and south,—in London, in India, abroad and at home, were those pictures seen—frequently accompanied by a fine engraving of the master, whose virtues had endeared to his pupils those boyish recollections which, let poets talk as they will, are but too often recollections of needless privation, repulsed affection, and unrewarded toil.

Belford school was in itself a pretty object—at least, I, who loved it almost as much as if I had been of the sex that learns Greek and Latin, thought it so. It was a spacious dwelling, standing in a nook of the pleasant green called the Forbury, and parted from

the churchyard of St Nicholas by a row of tall old houses, in two or three of which the under-masters lived, and, the Doctor's mansion being overflowing, received boarders, for the purpose of attending the school. There was a little court before the door with four fir trees, and, at one end, a projecting bay-window, belonging to a very long room, or, rather, gallery lined with a noble collection of books, several thousand volumes, rich, not merely in classical lore, but in the best editions of the best authors in almost every language.

In the sort of recess formed by this window, the dear Doctor, (die Doctor *par excellence*) generally sat out of school-hours. There he held his levees, or his drawing-rooms (for ladies were by no means excluded,)—finding time, as your very busy (or, in other words, your very active) people so often do, to keep up with all the topics of the day, from the gravest politics (and the good Doctor was a keen politician) to the lightest pleasantry. In that long room, too, which would almost have accommodated a mayor's feast, his frequent and numerous dinner-parties were

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generally held. It was the only apartment in that temple of hospitality large enough to satisfy his own open heart. The guests who hid a general invitation to his table would almost have filled it.

His person had an importance and stateliness which answered to the popular notion of a schoolmaster, and certainly contributed to the influence of his manner over his pupils. So most undoubtedly did his fine countenance. It must have been a real punishment to have disturbed the serenity of those pale placid features, or the sweetness of that benevolent smile.

Benevolence was, after all, his prime characteristic. Full of knowledge, of wisdom, and of learning, an admirable schoolmaster,* and exemplary in every relation of life, his singular kindness of heart was his most distinguishing quality. Nothing could ever warp his candour—that candour which is so often the wisest justice, or stifle his charity; and his pardon followed so immediately an offence, or an injury, that people began to think

that there was no great merit in such placability—that it was an affair of temperament, and that he forgave because he could not help forgiving—just as another man might have resented. His school was, of course, an unspeakable advantage to the town; but of all the benefits which he daily conferred upon his neighbours, his friends, his pupils, and his family, by very far the greatest was his example.

If he were beloved by his pupils, his sweet and excellent wife was almost idolized. Lovelier in middle age than the lovely daughters (a wreath of living roses) by whom she was surrounded, pure, simple, kind, and true, no human being ever gathered around her more sincere and devoted affection than the charming lady of Belford School. Next to his own dear mother, every boy loved her; and her motherly feeling, her kindness, and her sympathy seemed inexhaustible; she had care and love for all.*

*He teacheth best who knoweth best."—*Cary's Pindar*.

* The following lines were written on the lamented death of this most charming and excellent woman:—

Heavy each heart and clouded every eye.
And meeting friends turn half away to sigh;
For she is gone, before whose soft control
Sadness and sorrow fled the troubled soul;
For she is gone, whose cheering smites had power
To speed on pleasure's wing the social hour;
Long shall her thought with friendly greeting blend.
For she is gone who was of all a friend!
Such were her charms as Raphael loved to trace,
Repeat, improve, in each Madonna's face:
The broad fair forehead, the full modest eye,
Cool cheeks, but of the damask rose's die,
And coral lips that breathed of purity.
Such, but more lovely; far serenely bright
Her sunny spirit shone with living light.

Far, far beyond the narrow bounds of art,—
Here was the very beauty of the heart,

Beauty that must be loved. The weeping child,
Home sick and sad, has gazed on her and smiled—
Has heard her voice, and in its gentle sound
Another home, another mother found.
And as she seemed she was: from day to day
Wisdom and virtue marked her peaceful way.
Large was her circle, but the cheerful breast
Spread wide around her happiness and rest.
She had sweet words and pleasant looks for all,
And precious kindness at the mourner's call;
Charity, quick to give and slow to blame,
And lingering still in that unfaded frame,
The fairest, the most fleeting charms of youth,
Bloom of the mind, simplicity and truth;
And, pure Religion, thine eternal light.
Beamed round that brow in mortal beauty bright.
Spake in that voice, soft as the mother dove,
Found in that gentle breast thy home of love.
So knit she friendship's lovely knot. How well
She filed each tenderer name, no verse can tell;
That last best praise lives in her husband's sigh,
And floating dims her children's glistening eye,
Embalming with fond tears her memory.

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There is a portrait of her, too; but it does not do her justice. The pictures that are really like her, are the small Madonnas of Raphael, of which there are two or three in the

Stafford Gallery: they have her open forehead, her divine expression, her simple grace. Raphael was one of the few even of the old masters who knew how to paint such women; who could unite such glowing beauty with such transparent purity!

Perhaps, one of the times at which the Doctor was seen to most advantage was on a Sunday afternoon in his own schoolroom, where, surrounded by his lovely wife, his large and promising family, his pupils and servants, and occasionally by a chosen circle of friends and guests, he was accustomed to perform the evening service, two of the elder boys reading the lessons, and he himself preaching, with an impressiveness which none that ever heard him can forget, those doctrines of peace and good-will, of holiness, and of charity, of which his whole life was an illustration.

It is, however, a scene of a different nature that I have undertaken to chronicle; and I must hasten to record, so far as an unlettered woman may achieve that presumptuous task, the triumphs of Sophocles and Euripides on the boards of Belford School.

The foundation was subject to a triennial visitation of the Heads of some of the Houses at Oxford, for the purpose of examining the pupils, and receiving those elected to scholarships in their respective colleges; and the examination had been formerly accompanied, as is usual, by Greek and Latin recitations, prize-poems, speeches, &c.; but about thirty years back it occurred to the good Doctor, who had a strong love of the drama, knew Shakspeare nearly as well as he knew Homer, and would talk of the old actors, Garrick, Henderson,* Mrs. Yates, and Miss

* Henderson was his favourite. So, from MS. letters in my possession, I find him to have been, with Captain Jephson, the author of the "Count de Narbonne." the "Italian Lover," &c., and the friend both of Garrick and of John Kemble. Intellect seems to have been his remarkable characteristic, and that quality which results from intellect, but does not always belong to it—taste. What an artist must. that man have been who played Hamlet and Falstaff on following nights, beating his young competitor, Kemble, in the one part, and his celebrated predecessor, Quin, in the other! His early death was, perhaps, the greatest loss that the stage ever sustained.

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Farren, until you could fancy that you had seen them, that a Greek drama, well got up, would improve the boys both in the theory and practice of elocution, and in the familiar and critical knowledge of the language; that it would fix their attention and stimulate their industry in a manner far beyond any common tasks or examinations; that it would interest their parents and amuse their friends; that the purity of the Greek tragedies rendered them (unlike the Latin comedies which time has sanctioned at Westminster) unexceptionable for such a purpose; and that a classical exhibition of so high an order would be worthy of his own name in the world of letters, and of the high reputation of his establishment.

Hence arose the Greek plays of Belford School.

Every thing conduced to the success of the experiment. It so happened that the old school-room—not then used for its original destination, as the Doctor had built a spacious apartment for that purpose, closer to his own library—was the very place that a manager would have desired for a theatre; being a very long and large room, communicating at one end with the school-house, and opening at the other into the entrance to the Town-hall, under which it was built. The end next the house, excellently fitted up with scenery and properties, and all the modern accessories of the drama, formed the stage, whilst the rest of the room held the audience; and a prettier stage, whether for public or private theatricals, hath seldom been seen. It was just the right size, just a proper frame for the fine tragic pictures it so often exhibited. If it had been larger, the illusion which gave the appearance of men and women to the young performers would have been destroyed, and the effect of the grouping much diminished by the comparative unimportance which space and vacancy give to the figures on the scene. That stage would be the very thing for the fashionable amusement of tableaux;* but even then they would want the presiding genius of our great master, who, although he pretended to no skill in the art, must have had a painter's eye, for never did I see such grouping. “Oh for an historical painter!” was Mr. Bowles, the poet's, exclamation, both at the death and the unveiling of Alcestis; and I never saw any one of the performances

in which a young artist would not have found a series of models for composition and expression.

* The usual tableaux, mere copies of pictures by living people—a pretty retaliation on Art, who, it is to be presumed, herself copied from Nature—are, with all their gracefulness, rather insipid; but some fair young friends of mine, girls of great taste and talent, have been introducing a very pretty innovation on the original idea, by presenting, in dumb show, some of the most striking scenes of Scott's poems, “Marmion” and “The Lay” thus superadding the grace of motion to that of attitude, and forming a new and graceful amusement, half way between play and picture, for the affluent and the fair.

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Besides the excellence of the theatre, the audience, another main point in the drama, was crowded, intelligent, and enthusiastic. The visitors from Oxford, and the Mayor and Corporation of Belford, (in their furred gowns,—poor dear aldermen, I wonder they survived the heat!—but I suppose they did, for I never remember to have heard of any coroner's inquest at Belford, of which the verdict was "Died of the' Greek plays,") these, the grandees of the University and the Borough, attended *ex-officio*; the parents and friends of the performers were drawn there by the pleasanter feelings of affection and pride, and the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood crowded to the theatre for a double reason—they liked it, and it was the fashion.

Another most delighted part of the audience consisted of the former pupils of the school, the Doctor's old scholars, who had formed themselves into a sort of club, meeting in the winter in London, and in the autumn at one of the principal inns at Belford, whither they thronged from all parts of England, and where, especially at the time of the triennial plays, they often stayed days and weeks, to assist at rehearsals and partake of the social gaiety of that merry time. For weeks before the plays, the Doctor's ever-hospitable house was crowded with visitors; his sons stealing a short absence from their several professions, with sometimes a blushing bride (for, in imitation of their

father, they married early and happily;) fair young friends of his fair daughters; distinguished foreigners; celebrated scholars; nephews, nieces, cousins, and friends, without count or end. It was one scene of bustle and gaiety; the gentle mistress smiling through it all, and seeming as if she had nothing to do but to make her innumerable guests as happy and as cheerful as she was herself. No one that entered the house could doubt her sincerity of welcome. However crowded the apartments might be, the gentle hostess had heart-room for all.

A pleasant scene it was for weeks before the play, since of all pleasures, especially of theatrical pleasures, the preparation is the most delightful and in these preparations there was a more than common portion of amusing contrasts and diverting difficulties. Perhaps the training of the female characters was the most fertile in fun. Fancy a quick and lively boy learning to tread mincingly, and carry himself demurely, and move gently, and courtesy modestly, and speak softly, and blush, and cast down his eyes, and look as like a girl as if he had all his life worn petticoats. Fancy the vain attempt, by cold cream and chicken-skin

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gloves to remove the stain of the summer's sun, and bring the coarse red paws into a semblance of feminine delicacy! Fancy the rebellion of the lad, and his hatred of stays, and his horror of paint, and the thousand droll incidents that, partly from accident and partly from design, were sure to happen at each rehearsal, (the rehearsal of an English tragedy at a real theatre is comical enough, Heaven knows!) and it will not be astonishing that, in spite of the labour required by the study of so many long speeches, the performers as well as the guests behind the scenes were delighted with the getting-up of the Greek plays.

And in spite of their difficulties with the feminine costume, never did I see female characters more finely represented than by these boys. The lads of Shakspeare's days who played his Imogenes, and Constances, and Mirandas, could not have exceeded the Alcestises, and Electras, and Antigones of Belford School. And the male characters

were almost equally perfect The masterpieces of the Greek stage were performed not only with a critical accuracy in the delivery of the text, but with an animation and fervour which marked all the shades of feeling, as if the young actors had been accustomed to think and to feel in Greek. The effect produced upon the audience was commensurate with the excellence of the performance. The principal scenes were felt as truly as if they had been given in English by some of our best actors. Even the most unlettered lady was sensible to that antique grace and pathos, and understood a beauty in the words, though not the words.

Another attraction of these classical performances was the English prologue and epilogue by which they were preceded and followed. These were always written by old pupils of the school, and I cannot resist the temptation of transcribing one from the pen of the most remarkable person, the most learned, the most eloquent, and the most amiable which that school has ever produced—Mr. Serjeant Talfourd. It is a trifle, for a great Jawyer has no time to dally with the Muse; but if one or two stray copies of these desultory volumes should chance to survive the present generation, they will derive a value not their own from possessing even the lightest memorial of a man whose genius and whose virtues can never be forgotten, whilst the writer will find her proudest ambition gratified in being allowed to claim, the title of his friend.

PROLOGUE TO THE HECUBA OF EURIPIDES.

SPOKEN OCT. 1827.

“Kind friends, with genial plaudits may we close
Our feeble miniature of mighty woes?

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Or think you that we aim to strike, too late.
With crimes antique, and passions out of date?
No: altered but in form life's stage they fill,
And all our characters are extant still.

“First, Hecuba:—nay, there my scheme 's too bold,
I grant—no lady in these times grows old;
But not in vain you'll seek the ancient rage
In some starch vixen of ‘*a certain age*.’
Thus if you chance, though fair in her regards,
At whist her partner, to forget the cards,
Stop scandal's torrent with a word of peace,
Offend her cat, or compliment her niece;
Beneath her rouge when deeper colours rise,
Remember Hecuba—and mind your eyes.

“Still would the mild Ulysses win the town
His armour barter'd for a Counsel's gown:
Severest truths, he never practised, teach,
And be profuse of wealth and life—in speech.
Or on the hustings gain th' inspiring cheer;—
But hold! we own no politicians here.

The radiant colours Iris wreathes in heaven,
May but be foes at most one year in seven,
And mingling brighter from the generous strife
Shed rainbow hues on passion-wearied life.

“What! if the Thracian's guilt, we rarely see—
Thousands for gun were lately mad as he;
When Trade held strange alliance with Romance,
And Fancy lent delusive shades to Chance—
Bade golden visions hover o'er the Strand,
And made 'Change-alley an enchanted land.
There the rapt merchant dreamt of Sinbad's vale,
And catalogued in thought its gems for sale;
There divided to Vigo's time-unalter'd caves

And ransom'd millions from the courteous waves.
Still might some daring band their arts employ,
To search for Priam's treasures hid in Troy—
For gold, which Polymnestor did *not find*,
But only missed, because the rogue was blind.
Or, since our classic robbers dote on Greece,
Set paper-sails to win her Golden Fleece;
And bid her hopes, revived by civic pity.
Flash in a loan to fade in a committee.

“Nor need we here Imagination's aid
To own the virtue of the Trojan maid.

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Would any ask where courage meek as hers
Truth's saddest tests to garish joy prefers,
Where Love earth's fragile clay to heaven allies,
And life prolong'd is one sweet sacrifice—
Where gentlest wisdom waits to cheer and guide ye; —
Husbands and lovers, only look beside ye!

“And if our actors gave but feeble hints
Of the old Bard's imperishable tints,
Yet, if with them some classic grace abide.
And bid no British thought or throb subside,
Right well we know your fondest wish you gain,
We have not toiled, nor you approved in vain.”

PETER JENKINS, THE POULTERER.

AS I prophesied in the beginning of this book, so it fell out: Mr. Stephen Lane became parish-officer of Sunham. I did not, however, foresee that the matter would be so easily and so speedily settled; neither did he. Mr. Jacob Jones, the ex-ruler of that respectable hamlet, was a cleverer person than we took him for; and, instead of staying to be beaten, sagely preferred to "evacuate Flanders," and leave the enemy in undisputed possession of the field of battle. He did not even make his appearance at the vestry, nor did any of his partisans. Stephen had it all his own way; was appointed overseer, and found himself, to his eat astonishment, carrying all his points, sweeping away, cutting down, turning out, retrenching, and reforming so as never reformer did before;—for in the good town of Belford, although eventually triumphant, and pretty generally successful in most of his operations, he had been accustomed to play the part, not of a minister who originates, but of a leader of opposition who demolishes measures; in short, he had been a sort of check, a balance-wheel in the borough machinery, and never dreamt of being turned into a main-spring; so that, when called upon to propose his own plans, his success disconcerted him not a little. It was so unexpected, and he himself so unprepared for a catastrophe which took from him his own dear fault-finding ground, and placed him in the situation of a reviewer who should be required to write a

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better book than the one under dissection, in the place of cutting it up.

Our good butcher was fairly posed, and, what was worse, his adversary knew it. Mr. Jacob Jones felt his advantage, returned with all his forces (consisting of three individuals, like "a three-tailed bashaw") to the field which he had abandoned, and commenced a series of skirmishing guerilla warfare—affairs of posts, as it were—which went neap to make his ponderous, and hitherto victorious enemy, in spite of the weight of his artillery and the number and discipline of his troops, withdraw in his turn from the position which he found it so painful and so difficult to maintain. Mr. Jacob Jones was a great man at a quibble. He could not knock down like Stephen Lane, but he had a real talent for that sort of pulling to pieces which, to judge from the manner in which all children, before they are taught better, exercise their little mischievous fingers upon

flowers, would seem to be instinctive in human nature. Never did a spoilt urchin of three years old demolish a carnation more completely than Mr. Jacob Jones picked to bits Mr. Lane's several propositions. On the broad question, the principle of the thing proposed, our good ex-butcher was pretty sure to be victorious; but in the detail, the clauses of the different measures, Mr. Jacob Jones, who had a wonderful turn for perplexing and puling whatever question he took in hand, a real genius for confusion, generally contrived (for the gentleman was a "word-catcher who lived on syllables") by expunging half a sentence in one place, and smuggling in two or three words in another—by alterations that were any thing but amendments, and amendments that overset all that had gone before, to produce such a mass of contradictions and nonsense, that the most intricate piece of special pleading that ever went before the Lord Chancellor, or the most addle-headed bill that ever passed through a Committee of the whole House, would have been common sense and plain English in the comparison. The man had eminent qualities for a debater, too, especially a debater of that order,—incorrigible pertness, intolerable pertinacity, and a noble contempt of right and wrong. Even in that matter which was most completely open to proof, a question of figures, he was wholly inaccessible to conviction: show him the fact fifty times over, and still he returned to the charge; still was his shrill squeaking treble heard above and between the deep sonorous bass of Stephen; still did his small narrow person whisk and flitter around the "huge rotundity" of that ponderous and excellent parish-officer, buzzing and stinging like some active hornet or slim dragon-fly about the head of one of his own oxen. There was no putting down Jacob Jones.

Our good butcher fretted and fumed, and lifted his hat from his head, and smoothed down his shining hair, and wiped his

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honest face, and stormed, and thundered, and vowed vengeance against Jacob Jones; and finally threatened not only to secede with his whole party from the vestry, but to return to the Butts, and leave the management of Sunham, workhouse, poor-rates, highways, and all, to his nimble competitor. One of his most trusty adherents indeed, a

certain wealthy yeoman of the name of Alsop, well acquainted with his character, suggested that a very little flattery on the part of Mr. Lane, or even a few well-directed bribes, would not fail to dulcify and even to silence the worthy in question; but Stephen had never flattered any body in his life—it is very doubtful if he knew how; and held bribery of any sort in a real honest abhorrence, very unusual for one who had had so much to do with contested elections;—and to bribe and flatter Jacob Jones! Jacob, whom the honest butcher came nearer to hating than ever he had to hating any body! His very soul revolted against it. So he appointed Farmer Alsop, who understood the management of “the chap,” as he was wont to call his small opponent, deputy overseer, and betook himself to his private concerns, in the conduct of his own grazing farm, in overseeing the great shop in the Butts, in attending his old clubs, and mingling with his old associates in Belford; and, above all, in sitting in his sunny summer-house during the sultry evenings of July and August, enveloped in the fumes of his own pipe, and clouds of dust from the high-road,—which was his manner of enjoying the pleasures of the country.

Towards autumn, a new and a different interest presented itself to the mind of Stephen Lane, in the shape of the troubles of one of his most intimate friends and most faithful and loyal adherents in the loyal borough of Belford Regis.

Peter Jenkins, the poulterer, his next-door neighbour in the Butts, formed exactly that sort of contrast in mind and body to the gigantic and energetic butcher which we so often find amongst persons strongly attached to each other. Each was equally good and kind, and honest and true; but strength was the distinguishing characteristic of the one man, and weakness of the other. Peter, much younger than his friend and neighbour, was pale and fair, and slender and delicate, with very light hair, very light eyes, a shy timid manner, a small voice, and a general helplessness of aspect. “Poor fellow!” was the internal exclamation, the unspoken thought of every body that conversed with him; there was something so pitiful in his look and accent: and yet Peter was one of the richest men in Belford, having inherited the hoards of three or four miserly uncles, and succored to the well-accustomed poultry-shop in the Butts, a high narrow tenement,

literally stuffed with geese, ducks, chickens, pigeons, rabbits, and game of all sorts, which lined the doors and windows, and dangled from the ceiling, and lay ranged upon the counter in every possible state, dead or alive, plucked or unplucked,

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crowding the dark, old-fashioned-shop, and forming the strongest possible contrast to the wide ample repository next door, spacious as a market, where Stephen's calves, and sheep, and oxen, in their several forms of veal, and beef, and mutton, hung in whole carcasses from the walls, or adorned in separate joints the open windows, or filled huge trays, or lay scattered on mighty blocks, or swung in enormous scales, strong enough to have weighed Stephen Lane himself in the balance. Even that stupendous flesh-bazaar did not give greater or truer assurance of affluence than the high, narrow, crowded menagerie of dead fowl next door.

Yet still was Peter justly called "Poor fellow!" In the first place, because he was, for a man, far over gentle, much too like the inhabitants of his own feathery den,—was not only "pigeon-livered and lacked gall," but was actually chicken-hearted;—in the next, because he was, so to say, chicken-pecked, and, although a stranger to the comforts of matrimony, was comfortably under petticoat government, being completely dominered over by a maiden sister.

Miss Judith Jenkins was a single woman of an uncertain age, lean, skinny, red-haired, exceedingly prim and upright, slow and formal in her manner, and, to all but Peter, remarkably smooth-spoken. To him her accent was invariably sharp, and sour, and peevish, and contradictory. She lectured him when at home, and rated him for going abroad. The very way in which she called him, though the poor man flew to obey her summons, the method after which she pronounced the innocent dissyllable "Peter," was a sort of taking to task. Having been his elder sister, (although nothing now was less palatable to her than any allusion to her right of primogeniture,) and his mother having died whilst he was an infant, she had been accustomed to exercise over him, from the time that he was in leading strings, all the privileges of a nurse and gouvernante, and

still called him to account for his savings and spendings, his comings and goings much as she used to do when he was an urchin in short coats. Poor Peter never dreamt of rebellion; he listened and he endured; and every year as it passed over their heads seemed to increase her power and his submission. The uncivil world, always too apt to attribute any faults of temper in an old maid to the fact of her old-maidism, (whereas there really are some single women who are not more ill-humoured than their married neighbours,) used to attribute this acidity towards poor Peter, of which, under all her guarded upper manner, they caught occasional glimpses, to her maiden conditions. I, for my part, believe in the converse reason. I hold that, which seemed to them the effect of her single state, to have been, in reality, its main cause. And nobody who had happened to observe the change in Miss

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Judith Jenkins' face, at no time over-beautiful, when, from the silent, modest, courtesying, shop woman-like civility with which she had been receiving an order for a fine turkey poult, a sort of "butter won't melt in her mouth" expression was turned at once into a "cheese won't choke her" look and voice as she delivered the order to her unlucky brother, could be much astonished that any of the race of bachelors should shrink from the danger of encountering such a look in his own person. Add to this, that the damsel had no worldly goods and chattels, except what she might have saved in Peter's house, and to do her justice, she was I believe, a strictly honest woman; that the red hair was accompanied by red eye-brows and red eye-lashes, and eyes that, especially when talking to Peter, almost seemed red too; that her face was unusually freckled; and that, from her exceeding meagreness, her very fairness (if mere whiteness may be called such) told against her by giving the look of bones starting through the skin; and it will be admitted that there was no immediate chance of the unfortunate poulterer, getting rid, by the pleasant and safe means called matrimony, of an encumbrance under which he groaned and bent, like Sinbad the Sailor, when bestridden by that he-tormentor the Old Man of the Sea.

Thus circumstanced, Peter's only refuge and consolation was in the friendship and protection of his powerful neighbour, before whose strength and firmness of manner and character (to say nothing of his bodily prowess, which, although it can never be exerted against them, does yet insensibly influence all women) the prim maiden quailed amain. With Stephen to back him, Peter dared attend public meetings and private clubs; and, when sorely put to it by Judith's lectures, would slip through the back way into Mrs. Lane's parlour, basking in the repose of her gentleness, or excited by her good husband's merriment, until all the evils of his home were fairly forgotten. Of course, the kind butcher and his sweet wife loved the kind and harmless creature whom they, and they alone, had the power of raising into comfort and happiness; and he repaid their affection by the most true and faithful devotion to Stephen in all affairs, whether election contests or squabbles of the corporation or the vestry. Never had leader of a party a more devoted adherent; and abating his one fault of weakness, a fault which brought its own punishment, he was a partisan who would have done honour to any cause—honest, open, true, and generous,—and one who would have been thoroughly hospitable, if his sister would but have let him.

As it was, he was a good fellow when she was out of the way, and had, like the renowned Jerry Sneak, his own moments of half-afraid enjoyment, on club-nights, and at Christmas parties; when, like the illustrious pin-maker, he sang his song and told his story with, the best of them, and laughed, and rubbed his

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hands, and cracked his joke, and would have been quite happy, but for the clinging thought of his reception at home, where sat his awful sister, for she would sit up for him,

“Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.”

However, Stephen generally saw him in, and broke the first fury of the tempest, and sometimes laughed it off altogether. With Stephen to back him, he was not so much

afraid. He even when unusually elevated with punch, his favourite liquor, would declare that he did not mind her at all; what harm could a woman's scolding do? And though his courage would ooze out somewhat as he approached his own door, and ascended the three steep steps, and listened to her sharp, angry tread in the passage, (for her very footsteps were, to Peter's practised ear, the precursors of the coming lecture,) yet, on the whole, whilst shielded by his champion and protector, the jolly butcher, he got on pretty well, and was, perhaps, as happy as a man linked to a domineering woman can well expect to be.

Mr. Lane's removal was a terrible stroke to Peter. The distance, it was true, was only half a mile; but the every-day friend, the next-door neighbour, was gone; and the poor poulterer fretted and pined, and gave up his club and his parish-meetings, grew thinner and thinner, and paler and paler, and seemed dwindling away into nothing. He avoided his old friend during his frequent visits to the Butts, and even refused Mrs. Lane's kind and pressing invitations to come and see them at Sunham. His sister's absence or presence had ceased to make any difference in him; his spirits were altogether gone, and his very heart seemed breaking.

Affairs were in this posture, when, one fine afternoon in the beginning of October, Stephen was returning across Sunham Common from a walk that he had been taking over some of his pastures, which lay at a little distance from his house. He was quite unaccompanied, unless, indeed, his pet dog, Smoker, might be termed his companion—an animal of high blood and great sagacity, but so disguised by his insupportable fatness, that I, myself, who have generally a tolerable eye when a greyhound is in question, took him for some new-fangled quadruped from foreign parts,—some monstrous mastiff from the Anthropophagi, or Brobdignaggian pointer. Smoker and his master were marching leisurely up Sunham Common, under the shade of a noble avenue of oaks, terminating at one end by a spacious open grove of the same majestic tree; the sun at one side of them, just sinking beneath the horizon, not making his usual "golden set," but presenting to the eye a ball of ruddy light; whilst the vapoury clouds on the east were suffused with a soft and delicate blush,

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like the reflection of roses on an alabaster vase; —the bolls of the trees stood out in an almost brassy brightness, and large portions of the foliage of the lower branches were bathed, as it were, in gold, whilst the upper boughs retained the rich russet brown of the season;—the green turf beneath was pleasant to the eye and to the tread, fragrant with thyme and aromatic herbs, and dieted here and there with the many coloured fungi of autumn;—the rooks were returning to their old abode in the oak-tops; children of all ages were gathering acorns underneath; and the light smoke was curling from the picturesque cottages, with their islets of gardens, which, intermingled with straggling horses, cows, and sheep, and intersected by irregular pools of water, dotted the surface of the village-green.

It was a scene in which a poet or a painter would have delighted. Our good friend Stephen was neither. He paced along, supporting himself on a tall, stout hoe, called a paddle, which since he had turned farmer, he had assumed instead of his usual walking-stick, for the purpose of eradicating docks and thistles:—now beheading a weed—now giving a jerk amongst a drift of fallen leaves, and sending them dancing on the calm autumnal, air;—now catching on the end of his paddle an acorn as it fell from the tree, and sending it back amongst the branches like a shuttlecock;—now giving a rough but hearty caress to his faithful attendant Smoker, as the affectionate creature poked his long nose into his hand;—now whistling the beginning of one tune, now humming the end of another; whilst a train of thoughts, pleasant and unpleasant, merry and sad, went whirling along his brain. Who can describe or remember the visions of half an hour, the recollections of half a mile? First, Stephen began gravely to calculate the profits of those upland pastures called and known by the name of the Sunham Crofts; the number of tons of bay contained in the ricks, the value of the grazing, and the deduction to be made for labour, manure, tithe, and poor-rate,—the land-tax, thought Stephen to himself, being redeemed;—then poor little Dinah Keep crossed his path, and dropped her modest courtesy, and brought to mind her bedridden father, and his night-mare, Jacob Jones, who had refused to make this poor cripple the proper allowance; and

Stephen cursed Jacob in his heart, and resolved to send Dinah a bit of mutton that very evening;—then Smoker went beating about in a patch of furze by the side of the avenue, and Stephen diverged from his path to help him, in hopes of a hare;—then, when that hope was fairly gone, and Stephen and Smoker had resumed their usual grave and steady pace, a sow, browsing among the acorns, with her young family, caught his notice and Smoker's, who had like to have had an affair with her in defence of one of the little pigs, whilst his master stopped to guess her weight.,

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"Full fourteen score," thought Stephen, "as she stands; what would it be if fatted?"—twenty, at least. A wonderful fine animal! I should like one of the breed." Then he recollected how fond Peter Jenkins used to be of roast pig;—then he wondered what was the matter with poor Peter;—and just at that point of his cogitations, he heard a faint voice cry, "Stephen!"—and turning round to ascertain to whom the voice belonged, found himself in front of Peter himself, looking more shadowy than ever in the deepening twilight.

Greetings, kind and hearty, passed between the sometime neighbours, and Smoker was, by no means, behindhand in expressing his pleasure at the sight of an old friend. They sat down on a bank of turf and moss, and thyme, formed by a water-channel, which had been cut to drain the avenue in winter; and the poor poulterer poured his griefs into the sympathizing ear of his indignant friend.

"And now she's worse than ever," quoth Peter; "I think soon that she'll want the key of the till. She won't let me go to the club, or the vestry, or the mayor's dinner: and the Tories, have got hold of her, and if there should happen to be an election, she won't let me vote."

"Marry, and be rid of her, man!—that's my advice," shouted Stephen. "Dang it! if I'd be managed by any woman that ever was born. Marry, and turn her out of doors!" vociferated Stephen Lane, striking his paddle into the bank with such vehemence, that

that useful implement broke in the effort to pull it out again. "Marry, I say!" shouted Stephen.

"How can I?" rejoined the meek man of chickens; "she won't let me."

"Won't let him!" ejaculated the ex-butcher, with something like contempt. "Won't let him! Afore I'd let any woman dare to hinder me—Howsomever, men are not all alike. Some are as vicious as a herd of wild bulls, and some as quiet as a flock of sheep. Every man to his nature. Is there any lass whom you could fancy, Peter, provided a body could manage this virago of a sister of yours? Does any pretty damsel run in your head?"

"Why, I can't but say," replied Peter, (and, doubtless, if there had been light enough to see him, Peter, whilst saying it, blushed like a young girl,) "I can't but confess," said the man of the dove-cot, "that there is a little maiden—Did you ever see Sally Clements?"

"What!" rejoined the hero of the cleaver, "Sally Clements! Did I ever see her! Sally Clements—the dear little girl that, when her father first broke, and then died broken hearted, refused to go and live in ease and plenty in Sir John's family here, (and I always respected my lady for making her the offer) as nursery

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governnness because she would not leave her sick grandmother and who has stayed with her ever since, waiting on the poor old woman, and rearing poultry—"

"She's the best fattener of turkeys in the country, interrupted Peter.

"Rearing poultry," proceeded Stephen, "and looking after the garden by day, and sitting up half the night at needlework! Sally Clements—the prettiest girl within ten miles, and the best! Sally Clements—whom ray mistress (and she's no bad judge of a young woman) loves as if she was her own daughter. Sally Clements! dang it, man! you shall have her. But does Sally like you?"

"I don't think she dislikes me," answered Peter, modestly. "We've had a deal of talk when I have been cheapening her poultry,—buying, I should say; for God knows, even if I had not liked her as I do, I never could have had the heart to bate her down. And I'm a great favourite with her good grandmother; and you know what a pleasure it would be to take care of her, poor old lady! as long as she lives, and how comfortably we could all live together in the Butts.—Only Judith—"

"Hang Judith!—you shall have the girl, man!" again ejaculated Stephen, thumping the broken paddle against the ground—"you shall have her, I say!"

"But think of Judith! And then, since Jacob Jones has got hold of her—"

"Jacob Jones!" exclaimed Stephen, in breathless astonishment.

"Yes. Did not I tell you that she was converted to the Tories? Jacob Jones has got hold of her; and he and she both say that I'm in a consumption, and want me to quarrel with you, and to make my will, and leave all to her, and make him executor; and then I do believe they would worry me out of my life, and marry before I was cold in my coffin, and dance over my grave," sighed poor Peter.

"Jacob Jones!" muttered Stephen to himself, in soliloquy; "Jacob Jones!" And then, after ten minutes hard musing, during which he pulled off his hat, and wiped his face, and smoothed down his shining hair, and broke the remains of his huge paddle to pieces, as if it had been a willow twig, he rubbed his hands with a mighty chuckle, and cried, with the voice of a Stentor, "Dang it, I have it!"

"Harkye, man!" continued he, addressing Peter, who had sat pensively on one side of his friend, whilst Smoker reposed on the other—"Harkye, man! you shall quarrel with me, and you shall make your will. Send Lawyer Davis to me to-night; for we must see that lit shall be only a will, and not a conveyance

or a deed of gift; and you shall also take to your bed. Send Thomson, the apothecary, along with Davis: they're good fellows both, and will rejoice in humbugging Miss Judith. And then you shall insist on Jacob's marrying Judith, and shall give her five hundred pounds down,—that's a fair fortune as times go; I don't want to cheat the woman; besides it's worth any wing to be quit of her; and then they shall marry. Marriages are made in heaven, as my mistress says; and if that couple don't torment each other's heart out, my name's not Stephen. And when they are fairly gone off on their bridal excursion,—to Windsor, may be; ay, Mistress Judith used to want to see the Castle,—off with them to Windsor from the church-door;—and then for another will, and another wedding—hey, Peter! and a handsome marriage-settlement upon little Sally. We'll get her and her grandmother to my house to-morrow, and my wife will see to the finery. Off with you, man! Don't stand there, between laughing and crying: but get home and set about it. And mind you don't forget to send Thomson and Lawyer Davis to me this very evening."

And home went Stephen, chuckling; and, as he said, it was done,—ay, within a fortnight from that very day; and the two couples were severally as nappy and as unhappy as their several qualities could make them—Mr. and Mrs. Jones finding so much employment in plaguing each other, that the good poulterer and his pretty wife, and Stephen, and the hamlet of Sunham, were rid of them altogether.

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THE SAILOR'S WEDDING.

BESIDES Mrs. Martin, her maid Patty, and her cat, there was one inmate of the little toyshop in the market-place, who immediately attracted Mr. Singleton's attention, and not only won, but secured, the warm and constant affection of the kind-hearted bachelor. It was a chubby, noisy, sturdy, rude, riotous elf, of some three years old, still petticoated, but so self-willed, and bold, and masterful, so strong, and so conscious of his strength, so obstinate and resolute, and, above all, so utterly contemptuous of female objurgation, and rebellious to female rule, (an evil propensity that seems born with the

unfair sex;) that it was by no means necessary to hear his Christian name of Tom to feel assured that the urchin in question belonged to the masculine half of the species. Nevertheless, daring, wilful, and unruly as it was, the brat was loveable, being, to say the truth, one of the merriest, drollest, best-natured, most generous, and most affectionate creatures that ever bounded about this work-a-day world; and Mr. Singleton, who, in common with many placid quiet persons, liked nothing so well as the reckless light-heartedness which supplied the needful impetus to his own tranquil spirit, took to the boy the very first evening, and became, from that hour, his most indulgent patron and protector, his champion in every scrape, and refuge in every calamity. There was no love lost between them. Tom, who would have resisted Mrs. Martin or Patty to the death; who, the more they called him, the more he would not come, and the more they bade him not do a thing, the more he did it; who, when cautioned against wetting his feet, jumped up to his neck* in the water-tub, and when desired to

* I remember an imp, the son of a dear friend of mine, of some four or five year old, of very delicate frame, but of a most sturdy and masterful spirit, who one day standing on the lawn without a hat, in the midst of a hard rain, said to his mother, who, after nursed and nursery-maids had striven in vain with the screaming, kicking, struggling urchin, tried her gentler influence to prevail on him to come in doors for fear of catching cold:—"I won't go in! I will stand here! I choose to catch cold! I like to be ill! and if you plague me much longer, I'll die!" This hopeful young gentleman has outlived the perils of his childhood, (I suppose his self-will was drubbed out of him by stronger and equally determined comrades at a public school,) and he is now an aspirant of some eminence in the literary and political world. I have not seen him these twenty years: but if this note should meet his eye, and he should happen to recognise his own portrait, he would be amused by my tender recollection of his early days.

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keep himself dean, solaced himself and the tabby cat with it game at romps in the coal-hole; who, in short, whilst under female dominion, played every prank of which an unruly boy is capable—was amenable to the slightest word or look from Mr. Singleton,

came at his call, went away at his desire; desisted at his command from riding the unfortunate wooden steed, who, to say nothing of two or three dangerous falls, equally perilous to the horse and his rider, ran great risk of being worn out by Master Tom's passion for equestrian exercise; and even under his orders abandoned his favourite exercise of parading before the door beating a toy-drum, or blowing a penny-trumpet, and producing from those noisy implements a din more insupportable than ever such instruments have been found capable of making, before or since.

Mr. Singleton did more: not content with the negative benefit of restraining Master Tom's inclination for idleness, he undertook and accomplished the positive achievement of commencing his education. Under his auspices, at the cost of many cakes and much gingerbread, and with the great bribe of being able to read for himself the stories of fairies and giants, of Tom Thumb, and Blue Beard, and Cinderella, and Sinbad the Sailor, which he was now fain to coax his aunt and her maid Patty into telling him, did Tom conquer the mysteries of the alphabet and spelling-book in spite of the predictions of the dame of a neighbouring day-school, who had had the poor boy at her academy, as she was pleased to call it, for half a year, during which time she and her birch, put together, had never been able to teach him the difference between A and B, and who now, in that common spirit of prophecy in which "the wish is father to the thought," boldly foretold that "all the Mr. Singletons in England would never make a scholar of Tom Lyndham; she, for her part, had no notion of a child, who not only stole her spectacles, but did not mind being whipt for it when he had done. She wished no ill to the boy, but he would come to no good. All the world would see that."

Strange as it may seem, this effusion of petty malice had its effect in stimulating the effort of our good curate. The spirit of contradiction, that very active principle of our common nature, had its existence even in him; but, as bees can extract wax and honey from poisonous plants, so in his kind and benevolent temper it showed itself only in an extraordinary activity in well-doing. "Tom Lyndham shall be a scholar," thought and said Mr. Singleton; and as his definition of the word was something different from that of the peevish old sibyl, whose notion of

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scholarship reached no farther than the power of reading or rather chanting, without let or pause, a chapter of crabbed names in the Old Testament, with such a comprehension of the sense as it pleased Heaven, and such a pronunciation as would have made a Hebraist stare, he not only applied himself earnestly to the task of laying the foundation of a classical education, by teaching the boy Writing, ciphering, and the rudiments of the Latin grammar, but exerted all his influence to get him admitted, at as early an age as the rules would permit, to the endowed grammar-school of the town.

The master of the school, a man who united, as we have before said, great learning to a singular generosity of character and sweetness of temper, received with more than common kindness the line open-countenanced boy, whom Mr. Singleton recommended so strongly to his notice and protection. But after he had been with him about the same time that he had passed with the dame of the day-school, he, in answer to his patron's anxious inquiries, made a prophecy nearly resembling hers,—to wit, that Tom Lyndham, spirited, intelligent, and clever as he undoubtedly was, seemed to him the most unlikely boy of his form to become an eminent scholar.

And as time wore away, this persuasion only became the more rooted in the good Doctor's mind. “He may, to be sure, take to Greek, as you say, Mr. Singleton, and go off to Oxford on the archbishop's foundation; things that seem as impossible do sometimes happen; nevertheless, to judge from probabilities, and from the result of a pretty long experience, I should say that to expect from Tom Lyndham any thing beyond the learning that will bear him creditably through the school and the world, is to demand a change of temper and of habit not far from miraculous. I don't say what the charms of the Greek Grammar may effect, but, in my mind, the boy who is foremost in every sport, and first in every exercise; who swims, and rows, and dances, and fences better than any lad of his inches in the county; and who, in defence of a weaker child, or to right some manifest wrong, will box, ay, and beat into the bargain, a youth half as big again as himself; and who moreover is the liveliest merriest, pleasantest little fellow that ever came under my observation is far fitter for the camp than the college. Send him

into the world, that's the place for him. Put him into the army, and I'll answer for his success. For my own part, I should not wonder to find him enlisting some day; neither should I care; for if he went out a drummer, he'd come back a general; nothing can keep down Tom Lyndham:" and with this prognostic, at once pleasant and puzzling, (for poor Mr. Singleton had not an acquaintance in the army, except the successive recruiting-officers who had at various

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times carried off the heroes of Belford,) the worthy Doctor marched away.

Fortune, however, who seems to find amusement in sometimes disappointing the predictions of the wise, and sometimes bringing them to pass in the most unexpected manner and by totally opposite means, had a different destiny for our friend Tom.

It so happened that one of the principal streets of our good town of Belford, a street the high road through which leading westward, bore the name of Bristol Street, boasted a bright red mansion, retired from the line of houses, with all the dignity of a dusty shrubbery, a sweep not very easy to turn, a glaring bit of blank wall, and a *porte cochère*. Now the wall being itself somewhat farther back than the other houses in the street, and the space between that and the ordinary pavement being regularly flagged, an old sailor without his legs had taken possession of the interval, for the sake of writing, with white and coloured chinks, sundry loyal sentences, such as "God save the King," "Rule Britannia," and so forth, by way of excitement to the passer's-by to purchase one from a string of equally loyal sea-ballads that hung overhead, intermixed with twopenny portraits of eminent naval commanders, all very much alike, and all wearing very blue coats and very red faces.

At first, the two respectable ladies of the mansion (dowager spinsters, Morris by name) objected greatly to the use made of their wall and their pavement by the crippled veteran in question, who was commonly known throughout Belford by the name of "Poor Jack;" probably from his attachment to the well-known sailor's ditty, which happened to form his first introduction to the younger of the two ladies in question:

"Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack,—
Pray what d'ye think of me?"

"I think you a very saucy person," replied Miss Arabella Morris to this question, not said but sung by the sailor in a most stentorian voice, as he lay topping and tailing the great I in "God save great George our King," just on one side of their gate. "I think you are a very saucy person." quoth Miss Arabella, "to sit begging here, just at our door."

"Begging!" rejoined poor Jack; "I'm no beggar, I hope. I've lost my precious limbs, when I fought under Admiral Rodney; I've a pension, bless his Majesty, and have no call to disparage the service by begging like a land-lubber,

"Sailors to forget their duty,
Must not come for to go—"

chanted Jack.

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"I must really apply to the Mayor," said Miss Arabella,

"Go," said Jack, continuing his work and resuming his stave.

"When the captain he heard of it,
He very much applauded what she had done,
And he made her the first lieutenant
Of the gallant Thunder bomb."

"Made me a first lieutenant!" exclaimed the affronted Arabella. "Was ever any thing so impertinent? Pray, if you are not a beggar, what may you be?"

My name, d'ye see, 's Tom Tough,
Oh, I've seen a little sarvice.

Where the foaming billows roar and the winds do blow;
I've sailed with noble Howe,
And I've sailed with gallant Jervis,
And only lost an eye, and got a timber toe;
And more if you'd be knowing,
I've sailed with old Boscawen:"

again shouted (for singing is hardly the word to express his sort of music) the incorrigible Jack.

"Well, I must go to the mayor," said Miss Arabella; and Jack again uplifted his voice:—

"Then in Providence I trust.

For you know what must be, must;"

and, consoled by this philosophical strain, he tranquilly continued his occupation, which, after a little persuasion from the mayor, and something like an apology from Jack himself, (to whose looks and ways they began to get accustomed, the good ladies permitted him to pursue in peace and quietness under their sheltering wall.

The above conversation will have shown that poor Jack was something of a humorist; but his invincible good humour was his distinguishing qualification. I doubt if there was in all England a more contented person than the poor cripple who picked up a precarious livelihood by selling loyal ballads in Bristol street in Belford. Maimed as he was, there was something in his round bullet-head, and rough sun-burnt countenance,—in his nod, his wink, his grin, (for it would not do to call such a contortion a smile,) in the snap of his fingers, and the roll of his short athletic body—more expressive of fun and merriment than I ever beheld in any human being. Call him poor Jack, indeed! Why, if happiness be wealth, he was the richest Jack in Christendom!

So thought Tom Lyndham, whose road to and from school

passed the lair of the sailor, and who having stood one evening to hear him go through the whole ballad,

“On board of the *Arethusa*,”

and finally joined in the refrain with much of Jack's own spirit, fell into conversation with him on the battles he had fought, the ships he had served in, and the heroes he had served under, (and it was remarkable that Jack talked of the ships with the same sort of personal affection which he displayed towards their captains,) and from that evening made up his mind that he would be a sailor too.

Sooth to say, the enthusiasm with which Jack spoke of Kepple and Rodney, and Parker and Howe, as well as of the commanders of his youth, Hawke and "old Boscawen;" his graphic description of the sea-fights in which the English flag did really seem to be the ensign of victory; the rough, bold, manly tone of the ballads which he sung, and the personal character of the narrator—were in themselves enough to work such an effect on a lively, spirited, ambitious boy, whose bravery of mind and hardihood of body made him account toil and danger rather as elements of enjoyment, like the bright frosty air of winter, than as evils to shrink from; whilst his love of distinction made him covet glory for its own sake, and his grateful and affectionate temper rendered the prospect of wealth (for of course he was to be a second Rodney) delightful as the means of repaying to his aunt and Mr. Singleton the benefits which he had derived from their kindness.

Besides this, he had always had an innate passion for the water. His earliest pranks of dabbling in kennels, and plunging in pools, had shown his duck like propensities; and his scrapes at school had occurred in a similar way:—bathing before the appointed day, swimming in dangerous places, rowing and fishing at forbidden hours; he had been caught half-a-dozen times boat-building at the wharf, and had even been detected in substituting *Robinson Crusoe* for the Greek Grammar,—from which Mr. Singleton expected such miracles. In short, Tom Lyndham was one of those boys whose genius may fairly be called semi-squatic.

That he would be a sailor was Tom's firm resolution. His only doubt was whether to accomplish the object in the regular manner by apprizing Mrs. Martin and Mr. Singleton of his wishes, or to embrace the speedier and less troublesome method of running away. The latter mode offered the great temptation of avoiding remonstrances equally tedious (and the grateful boy would hardly allow himself to think *how* tedious!) and unavailing, and of escaping from the persuasions of which his affectionate heart felt in anticipation the power to grieve, though not to

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restrain; besides, it was the approved fashion of your young adventurer,—Robinson Crusoe had run away: and he consulted Jack seriously on the measure, producing, in answer to certain financial questions which the experience of the tar suggested, a new half-crown, two shillings, a crooked sixpence, and sundry halfpence, as his funds for the expedition,

"Five and threepence halfpenny!" exclaimed the prudent mariner, counting the money, and shaking his head,—"'Twont do, master! Consider, there's the voyage to Portsmouth, on board o' the what d'ye call 'um, the coach there; and then you'll want new rigging, and have to lie at anchor a shortish bit may be, before you get afloat. I'll tell you what, messmate, leaves light; ax his honour the chaplain, the curate, or whatever you call him, and if so be lie turns cantankerous, you can but cut and run, after all."

And Tom agreed to take his advice; and after settling in his own mind, as he walked home, various ingenious plans for breaking the matter gradually and tenderly to his good old aunt, (on whom he relied for the still more arduous task of communicating this tremendous act of contumacy to his reverend patron,) he, from sheer nervousness and over-excitement, bolted into the house, and forgetting all his intended preparations and softenings,—a thing which has often happened, from the same causes to older and wiser persons,—shouted out at once to Mrs. Martin, who happened to be in the shop talking to Mr. Singleton, "Aunt, I'm determined to go to sea directly; and if you won't let me, I'll run away."

Never were two people more astonished. And as the hitherto respectful and dutiful boy, who, with all his spirit, had never before contradicted a wish expressed by either, continued to answer, to all remonstrances, "I will go to sea; and if you won't let me, I'll run away," Mr. Singleton began to think it best to inquire into his own views, motives and prospects.

Vague enough they were, to be sure! Robinson Crusoe, and a crippled sailor, and half a dozen ballads for inducements, and a letter of introduction from poor Jack to a certain veteran of his own standing. Bob Griffin by name, formerly a boatswain, and now keeping a public-house at Portsea, and *commanding*, according to him of the stumps, a chain of interest somewhat resembling Tom Bowling's famous ladder of promotion in Roderick Random, a scrawl directed in red chalk, in printed letters, half an inch long, to MISTUR BOB GRIFIN LANLURD SHIP AGRUND PORSEE, by way of introduction to the naval service of Great Britain! However, there was in the earnestness of the lad, in the very slightness of the means on which he built, and in his bold, ardent, and manly character, that evidence of the bent of

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his genius, the strong and decided turn for one pursuit, and one only, which it is scarcely wise to resist.

Mr. Singleton, remembering, perhaps, the prediction of the good Doctor, yielded. He happened to have a first cousin, a captain in the navy; and on visiting our friend Jack, whom he found repairing the chalking of "Rule Britannia," and chanting two lines of his favourite stave,

"But the worst of it was when the little ones were sickly,
Whether they would live or die the doctor could not tell,"

he had the satisfaction to find that he had sailed with his relation when second lieutenant of a sloop called the *Gazelle*; and although relinquishing, with many thanks, the letter of introduction to "Mistur Bob Grifin," actually accepted one from the same hard honest

fist to Captain Conyers; and it is to be doubted whether poor Jack's recommendation of "the tight youngster," as the veteran called him, had not as much to do with the captain's cordial reception of his new midshipman, as the more elaborate praises of Mr. Singleton.

A midshipman, however, he was. The war was at its height, and he had the luck (excellent luck as he thought it) to be in the very hottest of its fury. In almost every fight of the great days of our naval glory, the days of Nelson and his immediate successors, was Tom Lyndham, first of the first, bravest of the brave, readiest of the ready. From the moment that his age and rank allowed him to be officially noticed in the despatches, he was so; and it is to be questioned whether the very happiest moment of Mr. Singleton's life was not that in which he first read Tom's name in the Gazette. He cried like a child; and then he read it to Mrs. Martin, and whilst trying to lecture her for crying, cried again himself. He took the paper round the town to every house of decent gentility, from the mayor's downwards; read it to the parish-clerk, and the sexton; and finally relinquished an evening party to which he was engaged at the Miss Morrises, to carry the news and the newspaper to poor Jack, who, grown too infirm to face the weather, had been comfortably placed, through his kindness, in an almshouse about two miles off. It is even reported that, on this occasions Mr. Singleton, although by no means noted for his skill in music, as so elated as to join poor Jack in the chorus of

"On board of the Arethusa,"

in honour of Tom Lyndham.

From this time all prospered with our gallant sailor,—except, indeed, a few glorious scars which he would have been ashamed to want, and one of which, just after he had been appointed first lieutenant to the *Diana*, gave him the opportunity of coming back

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to Belford, for a short time, to regain his health, and revisit his old friends. Think of the delight of Mr. Singleton, of Mrs. Martin, of her maid Patty, and of poor Jack!

"Here am I, poor Jack!"

shouted the veteran, when Tom made his appearance;

“Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack,—
Pray what d’ye think of me?”

And the above, as it happened, was highly appropriate; for, between battles and prizes, Mr. Lyndam, although still so young a man, was rich enough to allow him to display his frank and noble generosity of spirit in the most delicate way to Mr. Singleton and his aunt, and in the most liberal to Jack and Patty. None who had been kind to him were forgotten; and his delightful spirit and gaiety, his animated good humour, his acuteness and intelligence, rendered him the very life of the place.

He was a singularly fine young man, too; not tall, but strong, muscular, and well built, with a noble chest, and that peculiar carriage of the head, which gives so much of dignity to the air and figure. The head itself was full of manliness and expression. The short curling black hair, already giving token of early baldness, and exposing a high, broad, polished forehead, whose fairness contrasted with the sun-burnt complexion of the rest of the face; an eagle eye, a mouth combining firmness and sweetness, regular features, and a countenance at once open, spirited, and amiable,—harmonized well with a character and reputation of which his fellow-townsmen already felt proud. Tom Lyndham was the very pride of Belford; happy was the damsel whom he honoured with his hand at the monthly assembly; and, when he rejoined his ship, he was said to have carried away, unintentionally, mere hearts than had been won with care, and pain, and malice prepense, by any half-dozen flirting recruiting-officers in the last half-dozen years.

No Belford beauty was, however, destined to captivate the brave sailor. Love and fortune had prepared for him a very different destiny.

Returning home towards the end of the war, (I mean the great war, the war *par eminence* the war with Napoleon,) into Portsmouth harbour, or rather bringing in a prize, a frigate of many more guns and much greater force than his own, the gallant Captain Lyndham (for he had now been for some years posted) no sooner set foot on shore, than he encountered an old mess mate. "Ha, Lyndham! your old luck, I see! You and the little Laodamia have peppered the Frenchmen, as usual," said the

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brave Captain Manning. "Do you make any stay at Portsmouth?"

"Yes," replied Captain Lyndham; "I have sent my first lieutenant to London with despatches, and shall be fixed here for some days."

"I am thoroughly glad to hear it," rejoined his friend; "for I myself am rather awkwardly situated. An old aunt of mine has just brought two of my cousins to see the lions, depending on me or their escort. Now I must be off to the Admiralty immediately; dare not stay another hour for all the aunts and cousins in Christendom. They, poor souls, don't know a creature in the place; and I shall be eternally obliged to you if you will take my turn of duty, and walk them over the dock-yards, and so forth. By the way, they are nice girls—not sisters, but cousins. One is heiress, with above 3,000*l.* a-year, and a sweet place by the side of the Wye; the other is called a beauty. I don't think her so; or rather, I prefer the heiress. But nice girls they are both. I have the honour to be their guardian, and if either should hit your fancy, you have my free leave to win her and wear her. So now come with me, and I'll introduce you."

And in five minutes more they were in one of the best rooms at the Fountain, and Captain Lyndham was introduced to Mrs. Lacy, and to Miss Manning and Miss Sophia Manning.

Mrs. Lacy was a lady-like elderly woman, a widow without a family, and very fond of her nieces, who had been brought up under her own eye, and seemed to supply to her the place of daughters. "This is the heiress!" thought Captain Lyndham as he glanced

over a tall commanding figure, expensively and fashionably dressed, and with that decided air of consequence and self-importance which the habit of power is too apt to give to a person in that unfortunate predicament. "This is the heiress! and this, I suppose, must be the beauty," thought Captain Lyndham, turning to a shorter, slenderer, fairer young woman, very simply dressed, but all blushes and smiles, and youthful animation. "This must be the beauty," thought the Captain, "and whatever Manning may say, beautiful she is—never saw a sweeter creature than this Miss Sophy."

And if he thought Sophy Manning pretty then, the impression was far deepened when he had passed two or three days in her company—had walked her over the wonders of that floating world, a man of war—had shown her the dock-yards, with their miracles of machinery; and had even persuaded Mrs. Lacy, a timorous woman, the least in the world afraid of being drowned and Miss Manning, a thorough fine lady, exceedingly troubled for her satin pelisse, first of all to take a dinner on board the dear Laodamia, and then to suffer themselves to be rowed round St,

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Helen's in the captain's own boat, gallantly manned by the officers of the ship.

Small enjoyment had Mrs. Lacy, in fear of her life, or the stately Honoria, in care for her finery; but Sophy, in a white gown and a straw bonnet, thinking nothing of herself or of her dress, but wholly absorbed by a keen and vivid interest in the detail of a sailor's life—in admiration of the order and cleanliness that every where met her eye, (always the first point of astonishment to a landswoman,) and in a still more intense feeling of pleasure and wonder at the careless good humour of those lords of the ocean,—bold as lions to their enemies, playful as kittens to their friends,—was full of delight. Nothing could equal her enthusiasm for the navy. The sailors, who, like dogs and children and women, and all other creatures who have not spoilt their fine natural instinct by an over-cultivation of the reasoning powers, are never mistaken in the truth of a feeling, and never taken in by its assumption, perceived it at once, and repaid it by the most unfeigned and zealous devotion. They took all possible care of Mrs. Lacy and

Miss Manning, as women, and ladies, and friends of their Captain; but Miss Sophy was the girl for them. They actually preferred her pretty face to the figure-head of the *Laodamia*.

And Captain Lyndham, himself an enthusiast for his profession, what thought he of this enthusiasm for the sea, and the navy, and that frigate of frigates, the *Laodamia*? Did he like it the less because he might honestly suspect that some little reference, to himself had strengthened and quickened this deep interest? because she had drawn from him his own early history, and talked of the toy-shop in the market-place of Belford, and of poor Jack and the maid Patty, and even of Mr. Singleton himself, (little as one would think that good gentleman, now abroad with his third wife, was calculated to strike a young lady,) with almost as much affection as of his frigate and his prize, and his ship's crew, and the absent first lieutenant, his especial friend, and a little midshipman, his especial protégé? To any roan of sensibility, this sensibility, shown by a woman, young lovely, animated, and artless, would have been dangerous; to a sailor just come ashore it was irresistible. He made her talk in return of her own friends and pleasures and amusements, of her home at Sanbury, where she had lived all her life with her aunt and her cousin, and where she hoped always to live; ("not always," thought our friend the Captain;) and how much more loveable those dear relations were in that dear home. "My aunt," said Sophy, "is nervous and timid, so that you know nothing of her but that infirmity; and dear Honor does not love travelling, and does not like the sea, and has been all her life so much admired,

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that she is a little spoilt, and does not always know what she would have; but you will love Honor when you see her at home."

"I may like her," said the captain, "but I shall never love any woman but one;" and then followed in full form, the declaration and the acceptance. "I am so glad that you are not the heiress," added Captain Lyndham, after repeating to her her cousin's jesting

permission to him to marry which of his wards he liked best; "I am so glad that you are not the heiress!"

"Are you?" said Sophy, quietly. "Now I should have thought that you, thorough sportsman as you are, for a sailor," added Sophy, slyly, "would have liked Sanbury Manor, with its right of shooting, coursing, and fishing, and its glorious Wye river. You would like Sanbury Manor."

"Hang Sanbury Manor!" exclaimed the captain.

"Nay," said Sophy, "it's a pretty place, and a pretty house; one of those old-fashioned houses that fall upon the eye like a picture. The very lodge at Sanbury is beautiful. You must not take an aversion to Sanbury."

"I should like any place that had been your home, pretty or ugly," replied Captain Lyndham;" or, rather, I should think any house pretty that you lived in. But, nevertheless, I am heartily glad that you are not the heiress of Sanbury, because I have been so fortunate with prizes, and you seem so simple in your tastes, that I have enough for both of us; and now no one can even suspect me of being mercenary—of thinking of any thing or any body but your own dear self."

"I should not have suspected you," said Sophy, tenderly; "but you must go to Sanbury, and look at the old place, my home for so many years; you promise me that?"

"Yes," replied the captain, " but it roust be with Sophy Lyndham, and not with Sophy Manning;"—and, in spite of Sophy's blushing, "must, indeed!" so it was settled. They were all to go to London, to which the affairs of his ship and his prize now called the captain. There they were to be married; and on their return from a bridal excursion to Bath, and Clifton, and Wales, were to pay a short visit to Mrs. Lacy and Honor, at the old manor-house, which had for so many, years beep the fair bride's only home.

Mrs. Lacy, on being apprized of the intended marriage, began talking about money and settlements, and those affairs which, to persons not in love, seem so important; but Captain Lyndham, stopped her, and Sophy stopped her; and as, in a letter to Captain

Manning, the generous sailor desired that writings might be prepared, by which all that he was worth in the world should be settled on Sophy and her children—and as these settlements, read over by the lawyer in the usual unintelligible manner, were

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signed by the enamoured seaman without the slightest examination, it was impossible for any guardian to object to conduct so confiding and so liberal.

"Oh, that poor Jack could see this day!" was Captain Lyndham's exclamation, as they were leaving London after the happy ceremony, in his own elegant new carriage, attended, somewhat to his surprise, by the lady's maid, whom he had thought exclusively devoted to the service of Miss Manning,— "Oh that poor Jack could see this day!—you must make acquaintance with him, Sophy, and with my good aunt, and Mr. Singleton. You must know them, Sophy; they will so adore you!"

"And I shall so love the people whom you love," rejoined Sophy: but we have no room for bridal talk, and must hasten to the conclusion of our story.

After a few days of rapid travelling,—short days they seemed to the married lovers,—after a very brief tour, for the bride-groom's time was limited,—they arrived at the beautiful village of Sanbury.

"There it is—the dear manor-house!" exclaimed Sophy, as they approached a fine old building, imbosomed in its own venerable oaks, the silver Wye winding like a shining snake amid the woody hills and verdant lawns;—"There it is!" exclaimed the fair bride; "mine own dear home! and your home, too, my own dear husband! for, being mine, it is yours," continued she, with a smile that would have made a man overlook a greater misfortune than that of having married an heiress. "You are really the master of Sanbury, think of it what you may," pursued the fair bride. "It is my first deceit, and shall be my last. But when I found that, because Honoria was the elder, you took her for the richer cousin, I could not resist the temptation of this little surprise; and if you are angry, there," pointing to the side of the road, "sits one who will plead for me."

And suddenly, from the beautiful Gothic lodge, the gate belonging to which had been so arranged as to open with a pulley, arose the well-known sounds.

“Here am I, poor Jack,
Just come home from sea,
With shiners in my sack—
Pray what d'ye think of me?”

And there sat poor Jack himself in all his glory, waving his hat over his gray head, with the tears streaming down his honest cheeks, absolutely tipsy with joy.

And before Captain Lyndham had sufficiently recovered from his astonishment to speak a word—indeed, whilst he was still, clasping his lovely wife to his own warm heart, the carriage had

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reached the mansion, on the steps of which stood, in one happy group, her people and his; Captain Manning, Mrs. Lacy, and Honor, (then really beautiful in her smiling sympathy,) Mr. Singleton, (who, by good luck, had just returned to England,) Mrs. Martin, and the little maid Patty, standing behind on the upper step, and looking two inches taller in her joy and delight.

So much for the Sailor's Wedding. There can be no need to say that the married life which sprang from such a beginning was as happy as it was prosperous.

COUNTRY EXCURSIONS.

SOME celebrated writer (was it Addison?) cites, as a proof of the instinctive love of the country, which seems implanted in the human breast, the fact, that the poorest inhabitants of great cities cherish in their wretched garrets or cellars some dusty myrtle or withering geranium, something that vegetates and should be green; so that you shall see in the meanest window of the meanest street some flower or flowering plant stuck in

a piece of broken crockery,—a true and genuine tribute to that inherent love of nature which makes a part of our very selves. I never see such a symptom of the yearning after green fields without recognising the strong tie of fellow-feeling with the poor inmate; and the more paltry the plant, the more complete and perfect is the sympathy.

There is a character in one of the old plays, (I think "The Jovial Crew," by Ben Jonson's servant, Broome,) who conducts himself like a calm, sedate, contented justice's clerk all the winter, but who, at the first sign of spring, when the bap mounts into the trees, and the primrose blossoms in the coppices, feels the impulse of the season irresistible, obeys literally the fine stage-direction of the piece, "The nightingale calls without," and sallies forth to join the gipsies, to ramble all day in the green lanes, and sleep at night under the hedges.*

* A friend of mine, one of the most accomplished and eloquent preachers in London, says that as the spring advances, he feels exactly the yearning for the country described by the old dramatist. He does not join the gipsies; but he declares that it requires all the force of his mind, as well as the irresistible claims of the most binding of all professions, to detain him in London. Talk of slavery! Are we not all the bondsmen of circumstances, the thralls of conscience and of duty? Where is he that is free?

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Now one of the greatest proofs of the truth of these delineations was to be found in the fact, that the quiet old ladies of Belford, the demure Spinsters and hustling widows, to say nothing of their attendant beaux, were themselves seized, two or three times in the course of the summer with the desire of a country excursion. It is true that they were not penned up like the poor artisans of London, or even the equally pitiable official personage of the old dramatist—they were not literally caged birds, and Belford was not London: on the contrary, most of them had little slips of garden-ground, dusty and smoky, where currants and gooseberries came to nothing, and even the sweet weed mignonette refused to blow; and many of them lived on the outskirts of the town, and might have walked country-ward if they would; but they were bound by the minute and

strong chains of habit, and could turn no other way than to the street,—the dull, darksome, dingy street. Their feet had been so used to the pavement, that they had lost all relish for the elastic turf of the greensward. Even the road-side paths were too soft for their tread. Flagstones for them; and turf, although smooth, and fine, and thick, and springy as a Persian carpet—although fragrant and aromatic as a bed of thyme,—turf for those who liked it!

Two or three times in the year, however, even these street-loving ladies were visited with a desire to breathe a freer air, and become dames and damsels errants for the day. The great river that glided so magnificently under the ridge of the Upton hills, within a mile of the town, seemed to offer irresistible temptations to a water-party, the more so as some very fine points of river scenery were within reach, and the whole course of the stream, whether sweeping gradually along its own rich and open meadows, or shut in by steep woody bank, was marked with great and varied beauty. But, somehow or other, a water-party was too much for them. The river was navigable; and ill that strange and almost startling process of being raised or sunken in the locks, there was a real or an apparent danger that would have discomposed their nerves and their dignity. Ladies of a certain age should not squall if they can help it. The spinsters of Belford had an instinctive perception of the truth of this axiom; and although Mr. Singleton, who liked the diversion of gudgeon-fishing, (the only fishing, as far as I can perceive, which requires neither trouble, nor patience, nor skill, and in which, if you put the line in, you are pretty sure within a few minutes to pull a fish out)—although Mr. Singleton, who liked this quiet sport, often tried to tempt his female friends into a sober water-frolic, he never could succeed. Water-parties were reserved for the families of the neighbourhood.

And perhaps the ladies of Belford were the wiser of the two.

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Far be it from me to depreciate the water! writing as I am at 4 o'clock, P. M. on the twenty-sixth of this hot, sunny, droughty August, 1834, in my own little garden—which has already emptied two ponds, and is likely to empty the brook,—my garden, the

watering of which takes up half the time of three people, and which, although watered twice a day, does yet, poor thing! look thirsty—and, for my garden, prematurely shabby and old;* and who, dearly as I love that paradise of flowers, have yet, under the influence of the drought, and the heat and the glare of the sunshine, been longing all day to be lying under the great oak by the pool, at our own old place, looking through the green green leaves, at the blue blue sky, and listening to the cattle as they plashed in the water; or better still, to be in Mr. Lawson's little boat—that boat which is the very model of shape and make, rowed by that boatman of boatmen, and companion of companions and friend of friends, up his own Loddon river, from the fishing-house at Aberleigh, his own beautiful Aberleigh, under the turfy terraces and majestic avenues of the park, and through that world of still, peaceful and secluded water meadows, where even the shy kingfisher, who retires before cultivation and population with the instinct of the Red Indian, is not afraid to make her nest, until we approach as nearly as in rowing we can approach to the main spring head (for, like the Nile, the Loddon has many sources,) of that dark, clear, and brimming river;—or, best perhaps of all, to foe tossing about as we were last Wednesday, on the lake at Gore Mount, sailing, not rowing—that was too slow for our ambition—sailing at the rate of ten knots an hour, under the guidance of the gallant Captain Lumley, revelling in the light breeze and the inspiring motion, delighted with the petty difficulties and the pleasant mistakes of our good-humoured crew—landsmen who did not even understand the language of their brave commander—now touching at an island, now weathering a cape, enjoying to its very height the varied loveliness of that loveliest spot, and only lamenting that the day *would close*, and that we *must* land. I, for my part, could have been content to have floated on that lake for ever.

Far be it from me, who have been all the morning longings panting as it were, for the water, for its freshness, its coolness, its calm repose, its vivid life, to depreciate water-parties! And yet, in this fickle climate of ours, where a warm summer is one rarity, and a dry summer is another, they are not often found to

* Besides the great evils of a drought in the flower garden, of dwarfing the blossoms—especially of the autumnal plants, lobelias, dahlas, &c., which may almost be called semi-aquatic, so fond are they of water—and robbing roses, honeysuckles, and even myrtles of their leaves,—the very watering, which is essential to their life, brings a host of enemies above ground and beneath, in the shape of birds of all sorts pecking after worms, and moles out of number following the watering-pot. We have caught four of these burrowing creatures to-day in my little garden.

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answer. To have a boat and a river as Mr. Lawson has, and his own thews and sinews for rowing, and his own good-will for the choice of time; or to command, as they do at Gore Mount, lake and boat and boatmen,* and party, so as to catch the breeze and the sunshine, and the humour and inclination of the company; to have, in short, the power of going, when you like and how you like,—is the true way to enjoy the water. In a set expedition, arranged a week or ten days beforehand, the weather is commonly wet, or it is cold, or it is showery, or it is thundery, or it threatens, to be one or other of these bad things: and the aforesaid weather having no great reputation, those of the party who pique themselves on prudence shake their heads, and tap their barometers, and hum and ha, and finally stay at home. Or even if the weather be favourable, and the people well-assorted, (which by-the-by seldom happens,) twenty accidents may happen to derange the pleasure of the day. One of the most promising parties of that kind which I remember, was entirely upset by the casualty of casting anchor for dinner in the neighbourhood of three wasps' nests. Moving afterwards did no good, though in mere despair move of course we did. The harpies had got scent of the food, and followed and ate, and buzzed and stung, and poisoned all the comfort of the festival There was nothing for it but to fling the dinner into the river, and row off home as fast as possible. And even if these sort of mishaps could be guarded against (which they cannot,) boating is essentially a youthful amusement The gentlemen should be able to row upon occasion, and the ladies to sing; and a dance on the green is as necessary an accessory to a water-party as a ballet to an opera.

Now, as in spite of some occasional. youthful visiter, some unlucky god-daughter, or much-to-be-pitied nieces, the good ladies of Belford—those who formed its most select and, exclusive society—were, it must be confessed, mostly of that age politely called uncertain, but which is to every eye, practised or unpractised, one of the most certain in the world; they did very wisely to eschew excursions on the broad river. Nobody not very sure of being picked up, should ever put herself in danger of falling overboard. No lady not sure of being listened to, should ever adventure the peril of a squall. Accordingly, they stuck firmly to *terra firma*.

The selection of places for a land expedition presented, however, considerable difficulties. One would have thought that the fair garrison of Belford might have made a sortie through any gate of the town, pretty much as it happened, sure of meetings every where good roads and pleasant spots in a country full of green pastoral valleys watered by clear winding streams, of breezy downs and shady, woodlands. There was, however, always

* Not indeed the Captain: that was an accidental felicity.

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considerable hesitation, doubt, and delay hi fixing on the favoured scene of their tranquil amusement. Perhaps this difficulty made a part of the pleasure, by prolonging the discussion Mind introducing those little interludes of *tracasserie*, and canvassing, and opposition—those pretty mockeries of care, which they who have no real trouble are often found to delight in, stirring the tranquil waters of a too calm existence, and setting intentionally the puddle in a storm.

“Why, if the castle be too far,” grumbled Miss Arabella Morris to her sister, “why not go to the gardens at Wyndhurst? I dare say we could have our dinner in the Fishing-scat; and any thing would be better than that tiresome Warren House, where we have been for the last half-dozen years, and where there is no reason on earth for our going, that I can discover, except that Mrs. Colby's maid's father keeps the lodge, and that Dr. Fenwick

likes the stewed carp. Why should we be managed by Mrs. Colby, I wonder? For my part, I have a great mind not to join the party."

"Only think of our going to the Warren House again!" said Lady Dixon, the not over rich widow of a corporation knight, to her cousin Miss Bates, who lived with her as a sort of humble companion; "only think of that odious Warren House, when the Ruins are but three miles farther, and so much more agreeable—a pic-nic in the old walls!—how nice that would be this hot weather, among the ivy an ash trees, instead of being stewed up in the Warren House, just to please Mrs. Colby! It would serve her right if we were all to stay at home."

And Miss Bates gave, as usual, a dutiful assent; and yet Mrs. Colby had her way, and to the Warren House they went—the two Misses Morris, Miss Blackall, Miss Bates, Lady Dixon, Mrs. Colby herself, and the beaux of the party.

Mrs. Colby was one of those persons whose indomitable self-will does contrive to carry all before it. She was a little, bustling woman, neither young nor old, neither pretty nor ugly; not lady-like, and yet by no means vulgar; certainly not well-read, but getting on all the better for her want of information,—not, as is the usual way, by pleading ignorance, and exaggerating and lamenting her deficiency—but by a genuine and masterful contempt of acquirement in others, which made educated people, if they happened to be modest, actually ashamed of their own cultivation: "I'm no musician, thank God! Heaven be praised, I know nothing of poetry!" exclaimed Mrs. Colby; and her abashed hearers felt they had nothing to do but to "drown their books," and shut up the piano.

For this influence she was indebted entirely to her own force of character and her natural shrewdness of mind; since, so far were her pretensions to superiority from being borne out by fortune or petition, that, moderately endowed with the gifts of

fortune as her companions were, she was probably, by very much, the poorest amongst them, living in paltry lodgings with one solitary maid-servant; whilst upon the very ticklish points of birth and gentility, her claims were still more equivocal, she having now resided ten years at Belford without any one having yet discovered more of her history than that she was a widow: what her husband had been, or who was her father—whether she came from the east, the west, the north, or the south, still remained a mystery. Nobody had even been lucky enough to find out her maiden name.

Of one thing her acquaintances were pretty sure,—that if her family and connexions had been such as to do her credit in society, Mrs. Colby was not the woman to keep them concealed. Another fact appears to me equally certain,—that if any one of the gossiping sisterhood who applied themselves to the examination of her history, had been half as skilful in such inquiries as herself; the whole story of her life—her birth, parentage, and education—would have been laid open in a month. But they were simple inquisitors, bunglers in the great art of meddling with other people's concerns, and Mrs. Colby baffled their curiosity in the beat of all ways—by seeming perfectly unconscious of having excited such a feeling.

So completely did she evade speaking of her own concerns, (a subject which most people find particularly agreeable,) that the fact of her widowhood had been rather inferred from the plain gold circlet on the third finger of the left hand, and a very rare and very slight mention of "poor Mr. Colby," than from any direct communication even to those with whom she was most intimate. Another fact was also inferred by a few shrewd observers, who found amusement in watching the fair lady's manœuvres,—namely, that although when occasionally speaking of "poor Mr. Colby's" tastes and habits—such as his love of 'schalots with his beef-steak, and his predilection for red mullet—she had never failed to accompany those tender reminiscences with a decorous accompaniment of sighs and pensive looks, yet that she was by no means so devoted to the memory of her first husband, as to render her at all averse to the notion of a second. On the contrary, she was apparently exceedingly well disposed to pay that sort of compliment to the happiness she had enjoyed in one marriage, which is comprised in an

evident desire to try her fate in another. Whatever might have been her original name, it was quite clear to nice observers, that she would not entertain the lightest objection to change that which she at present bore, as soon as might be, provided, always, that the exchange were, in a pecuniary point of view, sufficiently advantageous.

Nice observers, as I have said, remarked this; but we are not to imagine that Mrs. Colby was of that common and vulgar race of husband-hunters, whose snares are so obvious, and whose traps

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are so glaring, that the simplest bird that ever was caught in a spring can hardly fail to be aware of his danger. Our widow had too much tact for that. She went cautiously and delicately to work, advancing as stealthily as a parlour cat who meditates an attack on the cream-jug, and drawing, back as demurely as the aforesaid sagacious quadruped, when she perceives that the treasure is too well guarded, and that her attempts will end in detection and discomfiture.

It was only by slight indications that Mrs. Colby's designs became suspected:—for instance, her neighbour, Mr. Selwood, the attorney, lost his wife, and Mrs. Colby immediately became fond of children, spent a world of money in dolls and gingerbread, and having made herself popular amongst all the young ladies and gentlemen of Belford between the ages of eight and two, established a peculiar intimacy with Misses Mary and Eliza, and Masters John and Arthur Selwood; played at domino and cat's-cradle with the girls, at trap-ball and cricket with the boys; courted the nurse, was civil to the nursery-maid, and made as judicious an attack upon the papa's heart, through the medium of the children, as could well be devised. She failed, probably because that worthy person, Mr. John Selwood, attorney-at-law, was not much troubled with the commodity commonly called a heart. He was a kind father and a good-humoured man; but matrimony was with him as much a matter of business as with Mrs. Colby, and, about fourteen months after the death of his wife, he brought home as his spouse a wealthy maiden from a distant county, who was far from professing any inordinate love

for children in general, and had never set eyes upon his, but who, nevertheless, made as good a step-mother as if she had played at trap-ball and cat's-cradle all the days of her life.

Her next attempt was on a young physician, a bachelor, whose sister, who had hitherto kept his house, was on the point of marriage—an opportunity that seemed too good to be lost, there being no axiom more current in society than the necessity of a wife to a medical man. Accordingly, she had a severe illness and a miraculous recovery; declared that the doctor's skill and assiduity had saved her life became his *prôneuse* in all the Belford coteries, got him two or three patients, and would certainly have caught her man, only that he happened to be Scotch, and was saved from the peril matrimonial by his national caution.

Then she fixed her eye on a recruiting officer, a man of some family, and reputed fortune; but he was Irish, and the national instinct saved him.

Then she turned her attention towards Mr. Singleton, who, dear man, soon let her know, with his accustomed simplicity, that he could not possibly marry till he got a living.

Then she resumed her fondness for children, which had lain in abeyance since Mr. Selwood's affair, on the occasion of an

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ex-curate of St Stephen's setting up a higher class of preparatory school; but it turned out that he took the school to enable him to marry a woman whom he loved—and so that card failed her.

Then she turned sickly again, (delicate is the more lady-like phrase,) in order to be cured by the ale of a rich old bachelor brewer, and went about the town crying up his XX, as she had formerly done the doctor's drugs; and then (for of course she did not catch the old bachelor) she carried all Belford to buy bargains of a smart linendraper just set up in the market-place, and extolled his ribands and muslins with as much unction as she had bestowed on the brewer's beer or the physician's prescriptions, or Mr.

Selwood's boys and girls; but all in vain! The linendraper played her the worst trick of all. He was married already—married before ever he saw Belford, or was patronised by Mrs. Colby. N. B.—I cannot help thinking that these two last conjectures are rather super-subtle, and hold with another particular friend of the lady's, (for they could, only have been her very particular friends who watched with such amusement and recorded with such fidelity her several failures and mortifications,) that her attentions to the XX and the linendrapery might be accounted for on other grounds; and that a desire to obtain a certain green shawl under prime cost, and a barrel of strong beer for nothing, in both which objects she succeeded, would supply a reasonable and characteristic motive for her puffery in both cases.

One thing is certain: that after the series of fruitless schemes which we have enumerated, Mrs. Colby seemed so far discouraged as to intermit, if not wholly relinquish, her designs on that ungrateful half of the creation called man, and to direct her entire attention to the softer-hearted and more impressible sex to which she herself belonged. Disappointed in love, she devoted herself, as the fashion is amongst ladies of her class, to an exclusive and by no means unprofitable friendship.

The friend on whom she pitched was one of the richest and simplest spinsters in all Belford. A good, harmless, comfortable woman, somewhat broader than she was high, round as a ball, smooth as satin, soft as silk, red as a rose, quiet as a dormouse, was Miss Blackall. Her age might be five and forty, or there-about; and to any one who knew her small wit and easy fortune, it was matter of some surprise that she should have lived so many years in the world without becoming, in some form or other, the prey of one of the many swindlers with which the age abounds. She had, however, always been under some sort of tutelage, and had hitherto been lucky in her guardians. First of all, her father and mother took care of her; and, when they died, her brother and sister: they marrying, consigned her to a careful duenna,

who bore the English title of lady's-maid; and, on her abdicating her post, Miss Blackall fell into the hands of Mrs. Colby.

The reason of Mrs. Tabitha's leaving a family over which she ruled with the absolute sway that in this country of freedom is so often conceded to a lady's-maid, (a race far more our mistresses than we are theirs,) was a quarrel with her lady's favourite parrot.

Vert-vert (for this accomplished feathered orator was named after the hero of Gresset's delightful poem) was a bird of singular acquirement and sagacity, almost rivalling the parrot of whom so curious and entertaining an account is given in Mr. Jesse's charming *Gleanings in Natural History*. There was a spirit of dialogue in Vert-vert's fluent talk which really implied his understanding what was said to him. Not only did he, like the Irish echo in the story, answer "Very well, I thank you," to "How d'ye do?" and so on with a hundred common questions—for that might proceed merely from an effort of memory—from his having (in theatrical phrase) a good study, and recollecting his cues as well as his part; but there was about him a power of holding a sustained and apparently spontaneous conversation, which might have occasioned much admiration, and some perplexity, in wiser women, than Miss Blackall.

In the matter of personal identity he was never mistaken. He would call the whole household by name, and was never known to confound one individual with another. He was a capital mimic, and had the faculty, peculiar to that order of wits, of counterfeiting not merely tone and voice, and accent and expression, but even the sense or nonsense of the person imitated; spoke as if the same mind were acting upon the same organs, and poured forth not only such things as they had said, but such as they were likely to say. The good-natured twaddle and drawling non-ideas of his mistress, for instance, who had rather less sense and fewer words than an ordinary child of four years old; the sharp acidity of Mrs. Tabitha, who, with every body but her lady, and sometimes with her, was a shrew of the first water, the slip-slop and gossiping of the housemaid, the solemn self-importance of the cook, and the jargon and mingled simplicity and cunning of the black footman,—were all given to the life.

To the black footman Vert-vert had originally belonged, and it was mainly to the great fancy that Miss Blackall at first sight took to the bird, which, on offering himself as a candidate for her service, he had had the shrewdness to bring with him, that Pompey owed the honour and happiness of exhibiting his shining face and somewhat clumsy person in a flaming livery of white and scarlet and silver lace which set off his sooty complexion with all the advantage of contrast. She bought the bird and hired

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the man; and from the first instant that Vert-vert's gorgeous cage swung in her drawing-room, the parrot became her prime favourite, and Mrs. Tabitha's influence was sensibly diminished.

That this might occasion in the mind of the soubrette an unusual portion of ill-will, (which amiable feeling we rational beings generally reserve for the benefit of our own species,) is beyond all manner of doubt; and the parrot, who, amongst his other extraordinary gifts, had his fancies and aversions, with cause and without, and loved and hated like any Christian—did not fail to return the compliment, and detested Mrs. Tabitha with all his heart. He was sure to bite her fingers whenever, in compliance with her lady's orders, she attempted to feed him; and mocked her, taunted her, and laughed at her in a manner which, as the unfortunate object of his jibes was wont to assert, was never heard of before in a feathered creature! Well was it for Vert-vert that the days of witchery were gone by, or, most assuredly, Tabitha would have arraigned him before the tribunals of the land, and have had him roasted, feathers and all, as something "no' canny!" I am far from certain that she, for her particular part, did not really suspect him of being something elfish or fiendish,—a sort of imp in disguise, sent into the world for her especial torment; and the sable colour of his quondam master served to confirm the impression.

The immediate cause of offence was, it roust be confessed, provoking enough. "Tabitha! Tabitha! Tabitha!" ejaculated the bird one day from his cage on the landing-

place, as the damsel in question was ascending the stairs; "Tabitha, you're an old fright!"

"What!" exclaimed the affronted damsel, remonstrating as if addressing a human being; "what is that you dare to say?"

"Look in the glass, Tabitha!" replied the parrot, swinging himself with great nonchalance in the sort of wire circle suspended from the centre of his large and commodious gilt cage: "Look in the glass, and you'll see a cross-grained, squinting; shrivelled old fright!"

The allusion to her personal defects—for squint she did, and shrivelled, alas! she was—increased, almost to frenzy, the ire of the incensed damsel. "Say that again," retorted she, "and I'll wring your head off!"

"Tabitha, you're an old fright!" repeated the bird; "a sour, cross-grained, shrivelled old fright, Tabitha!" said Vert-vert, swinging and nodding, and swaying his neck from side to side; "Look in the glass, Tabitha!"

And Tabitha was approaching the cage with dire intent, and Vert-vert might have rued his boldness, had not Miss Blackall from the drawing-room, and Pompey from the hall, rushed to the

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scene of contest, and rescued their favourite from the furious waiting-woman.

Too much irritated to be prudent, she at once gave the lady the choice of parting with herself or the parrot; and as there was no sort of comparison between the two in Miss Blackall's opinion; her warning was accepted, and off she went—all the sooner, because, during the short time she did stay in the house, her triumphant enemy continued to ejaculate, alternately, "Look in the glass, Tabitha!" and "Ugly, cross-grained, squinting old fright!"

How the bird came by these phrases was a mystery—unless, indeed, Mrs. Colby, who wished the duenna away that she might succeed her in the management of her lady, might have had some hand in the business. Certain it was, that any sentence, sharply and pungently spoken, was pretty sure to be caught up by this accomplished speaker, and that his poor inoffensive mistress had several times got into scrapes by his reporting certain disagreeable little things which happened to be said in his presence, to the parties concerned. Vert-vert was the greatest scandal-monger in Belford; and every body, except the persons aggrieved, cherished him accordingly.

From this time forth, Mrs. Colby became a sort of guardianess to Miss Blackall. She slept, indeed, at her own lodgings, but she lived almost constantly with her friend; used her house, her carriage, her servants, her table; protected her from mercenary suitors, and seemed to have entirely relinquished in her favour her own matrimonial designs—the more readily, perhaps, as her attempts in that line had been so singularly unfortunate.

Thus passed several years. At the time, however, of the meditated country excursion, Mrs. Colby had just admitted into her ever-teeming brain another well-laid scheme for changing her condition; and the choice of the Warren House, at which the other ladies grumbled so much, was made, not for the gratification of her servant, whose family kept the house, but for the furtherance of her own plans, which were, as yet, wholly unsuspected in Belford.

Dr. Fenwick loved the stewed carp of the Warren House, and to propitiate Dr. Fenwick was, at present, the great object of Mrs. Colby, although he was about the last person whom she would ever have intended to honour with her hand, being almost as poor as herself, and with no very great prospect of ever being richer.

The doctor was a burly, pompous personage, with large features, a large figure, a big voice, a slow, oracular mode of conversation, and a considerable portion of self-importance. What he could have been like when young, one can hardly imagine; nor was it very easy to guess at his present age, for ever since he first came to Belford, a

dozen years before, he had seemed exactly the same heavy, parading, consequential Doctor Fenwick, with a buzz-wig and a shovel-hat, that he was at the moment of which
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we write. And yet this Strephon had been, in his time, as great a fortune-hunter as Mrs. Colby herself; and was said to have made, in one week, four offers, three of them being to Lady Dixon and the two Misses Morris. The swain was however, soon discouraged, and for many years appeared to have given up any design of making his fortune by matrimony, as completely as Mrs. Colby herself.

For the rest, he was a good-natured man, with more sense than any one, judging from his egregious vanity, would have supposed. His way through life had been, although quite free from moral imputation, yet sufficiently out of the common course to hinder his professional advancement; since he had been, originally, an apothecary, then an army surgeon, then a physician with a Scotch diploma, and then, finding medicine unprofitable, he contrived, through some channel of interest, to get ordained, and now lived partly on his half-pay as army surgeon, and partly in officiating as an occasional preacher in the different parishes round about; for in the pulpit, although somewhat coarse, he was forcible and not ineloquent, and there was a kindness and a simplicity about the man, in the midst of his pomposity, his vanity, and his Epicurean tastes, which, together with his thorough inoffensiveness, and his blameless character, ensured him considerable attention from the leading persons in the town. He had many old friends, also, of a respectable class in society, at whose houses he frequently made long visits; and one of these, a gentleman of the name of Musgrave, descended, like the doctor, from an old family in the North, was, at this very time, his visiter in Belford, and the object of Mrs. Colby's secret hopes.

Mr. Musgrave was really a delightful person; shrewd, acute, lively, rich, and not at all too young or too handsome to make the union preposterous on the score of appearance. Since his arrival, too, the gentlemen had been assiduous in their visits and attentions; they had dined at Mrs. Blackall's, in company with Mr. Singleton, the day before the

excursion, Vert-vert, aided, it was to be presumed, by a little prompting, had vociferated on their names being announced,—“He’s a fine preacher. Doctor Fenwick! Mr. Musgrave's a charming man!”—at which Mrs. Colby had blushed and cried “Fie!” and the doctor had chuckled, and the simple hostess had laughed, and Mr. Musgrave had given his friend a glance of much meaning; symptoms which were renewed more than once in the course of the evening, as the parrot, according to his general habit, was so pleased with his new phrase that he repeated it over and over again, until, fearing that even good, unsuspecting Mr. Singleton might take more notice than she wished, Mrs. Colby threw a green cloth over the cage, and the bird, after wishing the company "good night!" composed himself to rest.

The next day was as fine as ever blessed an English party in

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chase of pleasure, and the company set forth in three carriages: Lady Dixon and Mr. Singleton in the Miss Morris's' coach; Mrs. Colby, with Miss Blackall, in her chariot and Dr. Fenwick and Mr. Musgrave in a well-appointed curricule, (the fashionable, vehicle of the day,) belonging to the latter. Vert-vert and Miss Bates were left behind.

Arrived at the place of destination, the first business of this rural party was to discuss the stewed carp, the roast lamb, the ducks and green peas, and strawberries and cream, provided for their refreshment; their second was to enjoy, after the several ways, the beautiful scenery amongst which they found themselves. Mr. Singleton, Lady Dixon, and the Misses Morris preferred the mode of sitting down to a rubber in the close room in which they had dined; the other four sallied forth into the air, Mrs. Colby taking Mr. Musgrave's arm, and Miss Blackall leaning on the doctor.

The more alert and active pair soon outstripped their heavier companions, and led the way across a narrow strip of broken common, with old pollards scattered here and there, into a noble tract of woodland scenery, majestic oaks and elms, and beeches rising from thickets of the weeping birch, the hornbeam, the hawthorn, and the holly, variegated with the brier rose and the wild honeysuckle, bordered with fern and foxglove, and

terminated by a magnificent piece of water, almost a lake, whose picturesque shores, indented by lawny bays and wooded headlands, were as calm and tranquil as if the foot of man had never invaded their delicious solitude. Except the song of the wood-pigeon, the squirrel leaping from bough to bough overhead, and the shy rabbit darting across the path, the silence was unbroken; and Mr. Musgrave and Mrs. Colby, who had the tact to praise, if not the taste to admire, the loveliness of the scene, found a seat on the fantastic roots of a great beech, and talked of the beauties of nature until summoned by the care of good Mr. Singleton to partake of a syllabub under the cow, with which the ruralities of the day were to conclude.

On their return home, a slight difference was proposed by Mr. Musgrave in their travelling arrangements: Mrs. Colby accompanied him in his curriole, and Dr. Fenwick took her place in Miss Blackall's carriage. The prospect seemed most promising:—but, alas for the vanity of human expectations! Mr. Musgrave did not propose to Mrs. Colby; and Dr. Fenwick, encouraged by Vert-vert's hint, did propose to Miss Blackall,—and was accepted on the spot, and married within the month; and poor Mrs. Colby was fain to smother her disappointment, and smile through the bridal festivities, and (each Vert-vert to drink to the new-married couple, and draw bride-cake through the wedding-ring.

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THE YOUNG SCULPTOR.

FOR some time after the dreadful catastrophe of the poor Abbé, the Friary Cottage was deserted by all except Mrs. Duval and poor Louis. The vulgar appetite for the horrible, in all its ghastly and disgusting detail, had not been so fully awakened then as it has been since by repeated exhibitions of murder in melo-dramas on the stage, and even in penny and twopenny shows at fairs and revels—or by the still more exciting particulars, (with wood-cuts to illustrate the letter-press,) in the Sunday papers. Belford was too far from London to attract the hordes of inquisitive strangers, who flocked from the metropolis to Elstree, to contemplate the lane where Thurtell slew his victim, or the house where the dreadful scene was planned; and, to do. the inhabitants of our town

justice, the popular feeling both there and in the neighbourhood was one comprising too much genuine pity for the good old man, so inoffensive, so kind, and so defenceless—too much indignation against his murderer, and too sincere a sympathy with his avengers, (for as such Louis and Bijou were considered,) to admit of the base alloy of vulgar curiosity. Every body would have been glad to be sure, to make acquaintance with the boy and the dog who had cut so distinguished a figure in the justice-room,—to know, and, if possible, to serve them; but there was a sort of respect—young lad and pastry cook's son though he was—which forbade an intrusion on a grief so deep and so recent; so that the gentry contented themselves with raising a handsome subscription for the boy, and patronising his mother in the way of her trade; whilst the common people satisfied their feeling of justice by attending the execution of Wilson, and purchasing and commenting on the "Last dying Speech and Confession," which was written, and printed, and distributed for sale by some ingenious speculator in such commodities, the night before it purported to be spoken, and some copies actually vended in the country villages, owing to a mistake of the time of execution, some hours before the criminal was brought out upon the scaffold. Having so assuaged their indignation, the excitement gradually subsided, and the murder of the poor priest sank into oblivion, like other tales of horror, a mere nine days' wonder!

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One impression only seemed permanent: a shuddering aversion to pass at night, or even by day, the picturesque ruins amongst which he had dwelt, and in the consecrated pounds belonging to which his remains, in pursuance of a wish which he had expressed only a few weeks before the fatal night, had been interred. The persons who avoided the spot would have been puzzled to tell why, for it had been a favourite rendezvous with the inhabitants of Belford—a walk for the grown-up, a playground for the children; why they shunned it they could hardly have told, unless they had answered, in the words of the great poet, that

"Something ail'd it now—the place was cursed."

Mrs. Duval fretted over this desertion; not so much from any decline in her business, for from the large orders of the neighbouring gentry she had as much as she could well manage; but because her cheerful and social disposition felt the loneliness oppressive. It almost seemed, she said, as if the folk ran away from her; besides, she thought it too melancholy, (*unked* was her word—and a most expressive word it is, combining loneliness, melancholy, dreariness, and vacuity;—a more intense and positive fueling of mental weariness than *ennui*.) she thought it too unked for a boy of Louis' age, and wished to take advantage of her improved circumstances, and remove into the interior of the town, where her son would be near an excellent day-school, at which she proposed to place him, and would be in the way of cheerful society in an evening. But Louis, with an obstinacy very unlike his general character, positively refused to leave the Friary Cottage. The violence of his grief had of course abated after the detection and the execution of the murderer, and more particularly after he had ascertained, not merely from Wilson's confession, but from the corroborating testimony of Miss Smith's maid, that her carelessly mentioning in a shop to which she was sent to get change for a five-pound note, that her mistress wanted gold to make up the amount of some money, which she was going to pay to the old French master, had been overheard by this ruffian, who was himself in the shop making some small purchase, and had been the actual cause of the murder. This discovery was an indescribable relief to Louis, who had been haunted by the fear that his own dear mother's unguarded expressions of terror at M. l'Abbé's intended return at night, and with a charge of money, after her repeated cautions and her dream, which story she had related at full length to every creature whom she had seen during the day, had in some way or other been the occasion of this horrible catastrophe. To be so fully assured that her indiscretion had not produced this tremendous result, proved an unspeakable comfort to the thoughtful and sensitive boy; but still his grief, although it had changed its violent and tumultuous character, and seemed fast settling into a fixed though gentle melancholy,

appeared rather to increase than diminish. He shrunk from society of all kinds, especially the company of children, and evidently suffered so much both in mind and body when forced from his beloved solitude, that his fond mother, fearful of risking the health, if not the life, of this precious and only child, at length desisted from the struggle and left him to pursue his own inclinations in peace, much to the annoyance of Stephen Lane, who, having taken a great fancy to the boy, from the part he had acted in the discovery of the poor Abba's body, and the detection of the murderer, had resolved to be his friend through life, and wished to begin his kindness at that very *now*, by putting him to school, or binding him apprentice, and gave the preference to the latter mode of proceeding.

"Talk of his delicacy!" exclaimed the good butcher to poor Mrs. Duval, in a loud earnest tone, which, kind as his meaning was, and good-humoured as was the speaker, did certainly sound a little like the voice of a man in a passion. "His delicacy, for-sooth! Won't your coddling make him more delicate? Delicacy! Nobody ever talked of such nonsense when I was a young-ster. Why, before I was his age, I was head-boy with old Jackson, my wife's father that now is,—used to be up between three and four of a morning, and down to the yard to help the men slaughter the beasts; then back again to the Butts, to open the windows and sweep the shop; then help cutout; then carry home the town orders;—I should like to see Louis with such a tray of meat upon his head as I used to trot about with and think nothing of it!—then carry out the country orders, galloping with my tray before me like mad, ay, half over the county at a sweep; then drive the cart to fetch home the calves; then see to the horses; then feed the beasts; then shut up shop; then take a scamper through the streets for my own diversion; go to bed as fresh as a four-year-old, and sleep like a top. There's a day's work for you! Just send Louis down to the Butts, and I'll make a man of him; take him 'prentice for nothing, feed and clothe and lodge him, and mayhap, by and by, give him a share of the business. Only send him to me."

"But, Mr. Lane," interposed Mrs. Duval, "poor Louis does not like butchering; he has not the heart to kill a worm, and would never do in that line of business, I 'm sure."

“More fool he!” ejaculated Stephen. “Heart, indeed! As if butchers were harder-hearted than other folk! I’ll tell you what, Mrs. Duval, no good will come to the boy whilst you let him sit moping all day with a book in his hand amongst those ruins. Move yourself off! Get into the middle of the town, and wean him from that dismal place altogether. Delicate, quotha! Well he may, such a life as he leads there, sitting upon the poor old man’s grave along with the little dog, just like two figures on a tombstone. As to the poor brute, I don’t blame him, because ’tis his instinct, poor dumb thing, and he can’t help it; but Louis

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can—or you can for him, if you will. Dang it!” continued the honest butcher, warming as he pursued his harangue; “dang it! you women folk are all alike, young and old. There is my daughter Bessy—I caught her this very morning coaxing young Master Stephen to let the maid wash him, and my young gentleman squalled, and kicked, and roared, and would have coaxed and scolded, if he could but ha’ spoke; and mother, and grandmother, and nurse, were all going to put off the washing till another time, for fear of throwing the urchin into fits, he being delicate, forsooth! when I came in and settled the matter, by whipping up young master, and flinging him into the water-tub in the yard before you could say ‘Jack Robinson;’ and Dr. Davies says I was right, and that my sousing will do the boy more good than all their coddling with warm water. So the young gentleman is to be ducked every morning, and the doctor says that in a month he’ll have cheeks like a rose. Now this is what you should do with Louis.”

“What! duck him?” inquired Mrs. Duval, smiling.

“No, woman!” replied Stephen, waxing wroth, “but get away from this dreary place, and fling him amongst other boys. Put him to school for a year or two, if he is such a fool as not to like the butchering line; I’ll pay the expense, and we’ll see what else we can put him to when he’s of a proper age. Only leave that old Friary. No good can come to either of you while you stay there.”

"Well, and I wish to leave the ruins, I assure you, Mr. Lane, and I cannot thank you enough for your kindness towards Louis," returned the affectionate mother; "but the poor boy falls sick if he's taken away for a day; and then sometimes I think he may be right, on account of my dream."

"Your dream!" exclaimed Stephen. "Is the woman mad?"

"Did you never hear," resumed Mrs. Duval, taking no notice of this civil ejaculation, "that I dreamt of Louis' finding a pot of gold in the ruins? and you know how true my dream about the wolves filing upon the poor Abbé turned out—so that I sometimes think—"

"The woman's crazy!" interrupted Mr. Lane, sailing off; for this discussion had taken place at the small gate leading up to the cottage:—"she's madder than a March hare! one might as well attempt to drive a herd of wild bulls along the turnpike road, as to bring her round to common sense; so she may manage matters her own way, for I've done with her:" and off marched Stephen Lane.

His description of Louis and Bijou was not much unlike the truth. The faithful dog, with the remarkable instinct which characterizes his race, lay for hours and hours on the simple flagstone marked only with his name and the date of his death (that of his birth being unknown) which covered the remains of his master. And, reclining beside him on the same stone, sat his

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equally faithful companion, sometimes reading one of the good Abbés books, which unclaimed by any relation, and no will having been found, had been consigned by the local authorities to the care of Mrs. Duval; sometimes pursuing, with irregular but successful ardour, the studies marked out for him by his venerable instructor; and often sketching designs for a monument, which it was the object of his affectionate day-dreams to erect to his memory. Gradually, however, his designs extended to other objects. Louis' talent for drawing was remarkable; and as he had inherited a little of his

mother's superstition—and encouraged, it may be, in the present instance, by the verification of the bad dream, had formed his own version of the good—the pencil soon became his principal occupation. If Stephen Lane had heard to the end the story of dreaming of a pot of gold, and finding an old paint-pot, and had happened to have had any faith in the legend, he would have construed it differently, and have bound Louis upon the spot either to a glazier and house-painter, or to an oil and colourman: but the boy, as I said before, put his private interpretation on the vision, and as prophecies sometimes work their own accomplishment, so did it bid fair to prove in this case, since by repeated and assiduous and careful copying of the romantic buildings and the fine natural scenery about him, he was laying the foundation of an artist's education, by at once acquiring facility and certainty of drawing, and a taste for the beautiful and the picturesque. Thus occupied, and with the finest books in French literature—and Louis read French like English, and some of the easier classics to occupy him—he never had dared to open the Horace which seemed like a sacred legacy,—days and weeks passed on, and, with no apparent change in the habits, a silent amelioration was taking place in the mind of the pensive boy, on whom time was working its usual healing effect, taking the sting from grief and the bitterness from memory, ("the strong hours conquer us"—why should we resist them?) when a circumstance occurred, which tended more than any thing could have done to divert his attention and sooth his sorrow.—A new lodger offered himself at the Friary Cottage, and of all the lodgers that could have been devised, one the most congenial to his disposition, and the most calculated to foster and encourage his predominant pursuit.

He was sitting among the ruins as usual, one fine morning early in May, attempting, for the twentieth time, to imitate on paper the picturesque forms, and the contrasted, yet harmonious, colouring of a broken arch garlanded with ivy, whose dark shining wreaths had straggled from the old stone-work to a tall pear tree in full blossom that overhung it, breaking with its pale green leaves and its ivory blossoms the deep blue of the almost cloudless sky,—when his mother called him to a young gentleman, who wished, she said, to sketch the great window, and who, after sufficient conversation with her to prove his good-breeding and

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good feeling, sat down to the task which had so often taxed the poor boy's simple skill. The stranger brought to it talent, practice, taste. The work grew under his hand, and in two hours, which seemed but two minutes to Louis, to whom he had been talking most kindly during the greater part of the time, he produced a drawing, free, vigorous, and masterly beyond any that his youthful admirer had ever beheld.

"You must be a great artist!" exclaimed the boy, involuntarily, returning the sketch after a long examination, his eyes sparkling, and his cheeks glowing with generous fervour; "for, as young as you look, you must be some great painter."

"Not a painter, certainly, nor a great artist," replied the stranger, smiling. "I am a young sculptor, or rather a student of sculpture, driven by medical advice into the country, and in search of some cheap, quiet, airy lodging;—if your apartments are vacant, and your mother would venture to take into her house an unknown youth—" And, in five minutes, the affair was settled, and Henry Warner established as an inhabitant of the Friary Cottage.

To a boy like Louis the companionship of such a person as Henry Warner—for, in spite of the differences of station, age, and acquirement, companions they speedily became—proved not only an almost immediate cure for his melancholy, but an excellent although unconscious education.

The young sculptor was that rare thing, a man of genius, and of genius refined and heightened by elevation. His father had been a clerk in a public office, and having only one other child, an elder daughter comfortably married in her own rank of life, he devoted all that could be spared of his own income to the improvement of his promising boy, sending him first to a public school, then to the Royal Academy, and from thence to Italy; but even at the moment that he was rejoicing over a printed letter dated Rome, which mentioned Henry Warner as likely to become a second Canova, apoplexy, caused, perhaps, by the very excess of pleasurable excitement, seized him with that one fatal, and therefore merciful grasp, with which that tremendous disease sometimes

sweeps away the hardiest and the strongest. He died, leaving his beloved son to struggle with the penury which he was by nature and by temperament peculiarly unfitted either to endure or to surmount.

On his return to England, Henry found himself alone in the world. His mother had long been dead; and his sister, a well-meaning, but vulgar-minded person, differing from him in appearance, intellect, and character—as we so often see, yet always with something like surprise, in children of the same parents—and married to a man still coarser than herself, had no thought or feeling in common with him, could not comprehend his hopes, and was more than half tempted to class his habits of patient observation, of strenuous thought, and of silent study,

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under the one sweeping name of idleness. She could not understand the repetition of effort and of failure which so often lead to the highest excellence; and, disappointed in the sympathy of his only relation—the sympathy which, above all others, would have soothed him, our young artist, after collecting the small remains of his father's property, withdrew from a house where he suspected himself to be no longer welcome, and plunged at once into the mighty sea of London.

His first outset was unexpectedly prosperous. A nobleman of acknowledged taste, whom he had met at Rome, not only purchased a bust of the Grecian Helen, in which he fancied a resemblance to his youngest and favourite child, but engaged him to accompany his family to their country seat, and execute a group of his two daughters, then on the point of marriage.

The group was most successfully begun—one figure quite finished, and the other nearly so, and the nuptials of the elder sister were celebrated with all due splendour, and adorned by the varied talents of the accomplished sculptor, who united strong musical taste to a slight turn for lyrical poetry, and poured forth his united gifts with unbounded prodigality on this happy occasion. But, a few days before that fixed for the marriage of the young and lovely Lady Isabel, the artist, whose manner had latterly assumed a

reckless gaiety little in accordance with his gentle and modest character, suddenly quitted the Hall, leaving behind him the fine work of art, now so near its completion, and a letter to the Earl, which excited strange and mingled feelings in the breast of his noble patron. "Wayward, presumptuous, yet honourable boy!" was his internal exclamation, as the open and artless questions of the unconscious Isabel, who wondered with a pretty and almost childish innocence why a person whom she liked so much should leave her figure unfinished and run away from her wedding, convinced the anxious father that the happiness, of his favourite child was uninjured. The nuptials were solemnized; the noble family returned to Italy; and Henry Warner, retiring to his London lodgings, strove to bury thought and recollection in an entire and absorbing devotion to his great and noble art.

From this point, his history was but a series of misfortunes—of trembling hopes, of bitter disappointments, of consuming anxiety, and final despair. Every one knows the difficulty with which excellence in art bursts, often as it seems by some casual accident, through the darkness of obscurity and the crowd of competition. Doubtless many a one has felt, as Henry Warner felt, the aching, burning consciousness of unrecognised genius—the agonizing aspiration after the fame, always within view, yet always eluding his pursuit. Mr. Moore, in one of the finest songs that even he ever wrote, has depicted a glittering vessel, laden with fairy treasures, sailing lightly over a summer sea, followed by a little boat, rowed by one single mariner, closely

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chasing yet never overtaking, the phantom bark. The sun rises and the sun sets, and still sees the magic ship floating onward, and the solitary boatman labouring after at one unvaried distance, ever near, but never nearer—wearing away life and strength for an illusion that mocks whilst it allures. That lonely mariner might be the type of many an artist of high but unacknowledged talent, more especially of many a young sculptor, since in that pure and lofty branch of art there is no room for second-rate merit, no middle path between hopeless obscurity and splendid reputation.

To attain to this proud eminence was not the destiny of Henry Warner. With funds almost exhausted, a broken constitution, and a half-broken heart, he left the great city—so dreary and so desolate to those who live alone, uncheered by bosom sympathy, unsoothed by home affection—and retired to Belford, as his medical adviser said, to recruit his health—as his own desponding spirit whispered, to die!

At the Friary Cottage he found unexpected comfort. The quiet was delightful to him; the situation, at once melancholy and picturesque, fell in with his taste and his feelings; and with the cheerful kindness of Mrs. Duval and the ardent admiration of her enthusiastic boy it was impossible not to be gratified.

Henry was himself one of those gifted persons who seem born to command affection. The griefs that were festering at the core, never appeared upon the surface. There all was gentle, placid, smiling, almost gay; and the quickness with which he felt, and the sweetness with which he acknowledged, any trifling attention, would have won colder hearts than those of Louis and his mother. The tender charm of his smile and the sunny look of his dark eyes were singularly pleasing, and without being regularly handsome, his whole countenance had a charm more captivating than beauty. Sweetness and youthfulness formed its prevailing expression, as grace was the characteristic of his slight and almost boyish figure; although a phrenologist would have traced much both of loftiness and power in the Shakspearian pile of forehead and the finely-moulded head.

His conversation was gentle and unpretending, and occasionally, when betrayed into speaking on his own art, fervent and enthusiastic. He talked little, as one who had lived much alone, preferring to turn over the French and Latin books of which the poor Abbé's small library consisted, or buried in "Haley's Essay on Sculpture," a chance-found volume, of which not merely the subject, but the feelings under which the poem was written, particularly interested him;* or forming plans for new works, which,

* The Letters on Sculpture were addressed to Flaxman, whose pupil, Thomas Hayley, the poet's only son, was during the time of their composition rapidly declining of a

lingering and painful disease. He did actually die between the completion and the publication of the poem; and the true and strong expression of the father's grief for the sufferings and death of this amiable and promising youth, is to me singularly affecting. It is very old-fashioned to like the writings of Haley, who paid in the latter part of his career the usual penalty for having been over-praised in his earlier days, and is now seldom mentioned but as an object of ridicule and scorn; but, set aside the great and varied learning of his notes, I cannot help feeling some kindness for the accomplished and elegant scholar who in his greater works, the Essays on History, on Epic Poetry, on Painting, and on Sculpture, has communicated, so agreeably, so rich a store of information, and whose own observations are always so just, so candid, and so honourable—so full of a tempered love of liberty, and of the highest and purest admiration for all that is great and beautiful in literature or in art.

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under the temporary revival caused by change of scene, and of air, he in his happier moments began to think it possible that he might live to complete.

His great pleasure, however, was in rambling with Louis through the lanes and meadows, now in the very prime and pride of May, green and flowery to the eye, cool and elastic to the tread, fresh and fragrant to the scent, pleasant to every sense; or in being rowed by him in a little boat (and Louis was a skilful and indefatigable waterman) amongst the remotest recesses of the great river; between beech-woods with the sunbeams wandering with such an interchange of light and shadow over the unspeakable beauty of their fresh young tops; or through narrow channels hemmed in by turfey hills and bowery islets, beautiful solitudes from which the world and the world's wo seemed excluded, and they and their little boat sole tenants of the bright water, into whose bosom the blue sky shone so peacefully, and whose slow current half seemed to bear along the slender boughs of the weeping willow as they stooped to kiss the stream.

In such a scene as this, Henry's soothed spirit would sometimes burst into song—such song as Louis fondly thought no one had ever heard before. It was in truth a style of singing as rare as it was exquisite, in which effect was completely sacrificed to expression, and the melody, however beautiful, seemed merely an adjunct to the most perfect and delicious recitation. Perhaps none but the writer of the words (and yet, considered as poetry, the words were trifling enough) could have afforded to mate that round and mellow voice, and that consummate knowledge of music, that extraordinary union of taste and execution, so entirely secondary to the feeling of the verse.

One great charm of Henry's singing was its spontaneity—the manner in which, excited by the merest trifle, it gushed forth in the middle of conversation, or broke out after a long silence. "How sweetly that sky lark, sings!" cried Louis one morning laying aside his oar that he might listen at his ease—"and the deep-soothing cooing of the wood-pigeon, and the sighing of the wind, and the rippling of the waters! How delightful are all natural sounds!"

"Ay, rejoined Henry—

“There is a pure and holy spell
In all sweet sounds on earth that dwell:

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The pleasant hum of the early bee,
As she plies her cheerful industry;
The whirl of the mail'd, beetle's wing,
Sailing heavily by at evening;
And the nightingale, so poets say,
Wooing the rose in his matchless lay.

There is a pure and holy spell
In all sweet sounds on earth that dwell:
The Indian shell, whose faithful strain

Echoes the song of the distant main;
The streamlet gurgling through the trees,
The welcome song of the cool night-breeze;
The cataract loud, the tempest high.
Hath each its thrilling melody."

"Yes," continued Louis, after warmly thanking the singer—for though the matter was little, the manner was much—"Yes! and how much beauty there is in almost every scene, if people had but the faculty, not of looking for it—that were too much to expect—but of seeing it when it lies before them. Look at the corner of that meadow as it comes sloping down to the water, with the cattle clustered under the great oak, and that little thicket of flowery hawthorn and shining holly, and golden-blossomed broom, with the tangled sheep walk breading it, and forming a bower fit for any princess."

Again Henry answered in song.

"She lay beneath the forest shade
As midst its leaves a lily fair—
Sleeping she lay, young Kalasrade,
Nor dreamt that mortal hover'd there.
All as she slept, a sudden smile
Play'd round her lips in dimpling grace.
And softest blushes glanced the while
In roseate beauty o'er her face;
And then those blushes pass'd away
From her pure cheek, and Kalasrade
Pale as a new-blown lily lay,
Slumbering beneath the forest shade.

Oh! lovely was that blush so meek,
That smile half playful, half demure,
And lovelier still that pallid cheek—

That look so gentle, yet so pure.
I left her in her purity.
Slumbering beneath the forest glade;
I fear'd to meet her waking eye.
The young, the timid Kalasrade.
I left her; yet by day, by night,
Dwells in my soul that image fair,

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Madd'ning as thoughts of past delight,
As guilty hope, as fierce despair."

"Is that subject quite imaginary?" Louis at last ventured to inquire, taking care, however, from an instinctive delicacy, that he would have found it difficult to account for, to resume his oar and turn away from Henry as he spoke—"or did you ever really see a sleeping beauty in a bower, such as I was fancying just now?"

"It is and it is not imaginary, Louis," replied Henry, sighing deeply; "or rather, it is a fancy piece, grounded, as rhymes and pictures often are, on some flight foundation of truth. Wandering in the neighborhood of Rome, I strayed accidentally into the private grounds of an English nobleman, and saw a beautiful girl sleeping as I have described under a bay tree, in the terraced Italian garden. I withdrew as silently as possible, the more so as I saw another young lady, her sister, approaching, who, in endeavouring to dispose a branch of the bay-tree, so as to shelter the fair sleeper from the sun, awakened her."

"What a subject for a group!" exclaimed Louis. "Did you never attempt to model the two sisters?"

"It is a fine subject," replied Henry; "and it has been attempted, but not completed. Do you not remember singling out a sketch of the recumbent figure, the other day, when you were turning over my drawings?"

Yes, and saying how like it was to the exquisite bust marked 'EAENH.—Helena! But all your female figures are more or less like that Helen. She is your goddess of beauty."

"Perhaps so," rejoined Henry. "But where we are now? Is this the old church of Castlebar which you were promising to show me, with its beautiful tower, and the great yew trees? Yes, it must be. You are right in your admiration, Louis. That tower is beautiful, with its fine old masonry, the quaint fantastic brickwork left, to the honour of the rector's taste, in the rich tinting of its own weather-stains, undaubed by whitewash, and contrasting so gracefully with the vivid foliage of that row of tall limes behind. A strange tree for a churchyard, Louis, the honeyed, tasseled lime! And yet how often we see it there blending with the dark funereal yew—like life with death! I should like to be buried there."

"Nay," said Louis, "a churchyard is sometimes devoted to gayer purposes than burials. Hark! even now!" and as he spoke the bells struck up a merry peal, the church-door opened, and the little procession of a rustic wedding,—the benign clergyman looking good wishes, the smirking clerk, the hearty jolly bridal-father, the simpering bride-maidens, the laughing bridesmen—and the pretty, blushing, modest bride, listening with tearful smiles to the fond and happy lover-husband, on whose arm she hung—issued from the porch. "I should like just such a wife

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As that myself," added Louis, talking of marrying as a clever boy of thirteen likes to talk;* should not you?"

But Henry made no answer—he was musing on another wedding; and after a silence of some duration, in the course of which they had rowed away almost out of hearing of the joyous peal that still echoed merrily from the church tower, he broke again into song.

“Forth the lovely bride ye bring:
Gayest flowers before her fling,
From your high-piled baskets spread,

Maidens of the fairy tread!
Strew them far and wide, and high,
A rosy shower twixt earth and sky,
 Strew about! strew about!
Larkspur trim, and poppy dyed,
And freak'd carnation's bursting pride,
Strew about! strew about!
Dark-eyed pinks, with fringes light,
Rich geraniums, clustering bright,
 Strew about! strew about!
Flaunting pea, and harebell blue,
And damask-rose, of deepest hue,
And purest lilies, Maidens, strew!
 Strew about! strew about!

Home the lovely bride ye bring:
Choicest flowers before her fling
Till dizzying streams of rich perfume
Fill the lofty banquet room!
Strew the tender citron there,
The crush'd magnolia proud and rare,
 Strew about! strew about!
Orange blossoms newly dropp'd.
Chains from high acacia cropp'd,
 Strew about! strew about!
Pale musk-rose, so light and fine
Cloves and stars of jessamine,
 Strew about! strew about!

Tops of myrtle, wet with dew,
Nipp'd where the leaflets sprouts anew.

Fragrant bay-leaves, Maidens, strew,
Strew about! strew about "

* It was somewhere about that ripe age that a very clever friend of mine, travelling in the North with a young clergyman, his private tutor, wrote to his mother a letter beginning as follows:—

“Gretna Green, Thursday.

“My dear mother,—Here we are, in the very land of love and matrimony; and it is a thousand pities that my little wife is not here with us for Mr. G. being at hand, we could strike up a wedding without loss of time, and my father and Mr. D. would have nothing to do but to settle the income and the dowry at their leisure.” So lightly are those matters considered at thirteen! At three-and-thirty, the case is altered.

*This song and one or two of the others belong to two forthcoming operas, already set to music under the auspices of the authoress. She has thought it right to mention this fact to prevent the possibility of their being selected for such an honour by any other composer.

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Louis was about to utter some expression of admiration, which the ringing, air, and the exquisite taste and lightness of the singing, well deserved, when he perceived that the artist, absorbed in his own feelings and recollections, was totally unconscious of his presence. Under the influence of such associations, he sang, with a short pause between them, the two following airs:

“They bid me strike the harp once more,
My gayest song they bid me pour,
In pealing notes of minstrel pride
They bid me hail Sir Hubert’s bride.
Alas! alas! the nuptial strain
Faltering I try and try in vain;

'Twas pleasant once to wake its spell—
But not for Lady Isabel.

They bid me vaunt in lordly lay
Sir Hubert's mien and spirit gay.
His wide demesnes and lineage high,
And all the pride of chivalry.

Alas! alas! the knightly lay
In trembling murmurs dies away;
'Twere sweet the warrior's fame to tell-
But not to Lady Isabel.

They bid me blend in tenderest song
The lover's fears, unutter'd long,
With the bold bridegroom's rapturous glee,
And vows of endless constancy.
Alas! alas! my voice no more
Can tale of happy passion pour;
To love, to joy, a long farewell!—
Yet blessings on thee, Isabel!"

"Bless thee! I may no longer stay!
No longer bid thee think on me;
I cannot 'bide thy bridal day—
But, Helen, I go blessing thee.

Bless thee! no vow of thine is broke;
I ask'd not thy dear love for me;
Though tears, and sighs, and blushes spoke—
Yet, Helen, I go blessing thee.

Bless thee! yet do not quite forget;
Oh, sometimes, sometimes pity me!
My sun of life is early set—
But, Helen, I die blessing thee."

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And then the minstrel sank into a silence too sad and too profound for Louis to venture to interrupt, and the lady—for Kalasrade, Isabel, or Helena, ('ELENH,) was clearly one—the Helen of the lover's thought was never again mentioned between them.

His spirits, however, continued to amend, although his health was fluctuating; and having, at length, fixed on the Procession in honour of Pan, from Keats's "Endymion," as the subject of a great work in basso-relievo, and having contrived, with Louis' assistance, to fit up a shed in the most retired part of the ruins, as a sort of out-of-door studio, he fell to work with the clay and the modelling tools with an ardour and intensity partaking, perhaps, equally of the strength of youth and the fever of disease, of hope, and of despair.

These mixed feelings were in nothing more evinced than in the choice of his subject; for eminently suited as the passage in question* undoubtedly was to his own classical taste and graceful execution, it is certain that he was attracted to the author, not merely by his unequal and fitful genius, his extraordinary pictorial and plastic power, but by a sympathy, an instinctive sympathy, with his destiny. Keats had died young, and with his talent unacknowledged,—and so he felt should he.

In the mean while, he laboured strenuously at the Endymion, relinquishing his excursions on the water, and confining his walks to an evening ramble on Sunham Common, pleased to watch Bijou (who had transferred to our artist much of the allegiance which he had formerly paid to his old master, and even preferred him to Louis) frisking among the gorse, or gambolling along the shores of the deep irregular

pools, which, mingled with islets of cottages and cottage-gardens, form so picturesque a foreground to the rich landscapes beyond.

Better still did he love to seek the deep solitude of the double avenue of old oaks that skirted the upper part of the common; and there—

“Like hermit, near his cross of stone
To pace at eve the silent turf alone,
And softly breathe, or inly muse a prayer.”

Rhymed Plea for Tolerance.

More fitting place for such meditation he could hardly have found than that broad avenue of columned trunks, the boughs arching over his head, a natural temple! the shadows falling heavily

* Vide note 1, at the end of the paper.

* A poem of which (if it were not presumptuous in me to praise such a work) I should say, that it united the pregnant sense and the beautiful versification of Pope, the eloquent philosophy of Wordsworth, the wide humanity of Scott, and the fervent holiness of Cowper, with a spirit of charity all its own. That little volume is a just proof (if such were needed) how entirely intellect of the very highest class belongs to virtue. The work is out of print: must it continue so? Is it quite consistent in one imbued with so sincere a love for his fellow-creatures to withhold from them such an overflowing source of profit and delight?

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as between the pillared aisles of some dim cathedral, and the sunbeams just glinting through the massive foliage, as if piercing the Gothic tracery of some pictured window. The wind came sweeping along the branches, with a sound at once solemn and soothing; and to a mind high-wrought and fancy-fraught as Henry's, the very song of the

birds, as they sought their nests in the high trees, had something pure and holy as a vesper-hymn.

The sweetest hour in all the day to Henry Warner was that of his solitary walk in the avenue. Quite solitary it was always; for Louis had discovered that this was the only pleasure which his friend wished to enjoy unshared, and with instinctive delicacy contrived to keep away at that hour.

The only person who ever accosted Henry on these occasions was our good friend Stephen Lane, who used sometimes to meet him when returning from his farm, and who won, first by his countenance, and then by his manner, and a little, perhaps, by the close but often unsuspected approximation which exists between the perfectly simple and the highly refined, had taken what he called a fancy to the lad, and even forgave him for prognosticating that Louis would some day or other be a painter of no common order,—that he had the feeling of beauty and the eye for colour, the inborn taste and the strong love of art which indicate genius. "So much the worse!" thought our friend Stephen; but such was the respect excited by the young artist's gentleness and sweetness, that, free-spoken as he generally was on all matters, the good butcher, on this solitary occasion, kept his thoughts to himself.

In strenuous application to the Procession, and lonely twilight walks, the summer and part of the autumn passed away. One bright October evening, Stephen, who had been absent for some weeks on a visit to a married daughter, met the young sculptor in his usual haunt, Sunham Avenue, and was struck with the alteration in his appearance. Crabbe has described such an alteration with his usual graphic felicity.

“Then his thin cheek assumed a deadly hue,
And all the rose to one small spot withdrew:
They called it hectic; ‘twas a fiery flush
More fix'd and deeper than the maiden blush;
His paler lips the pearly teeth disclosed,
And lab'ring lungs the lengthened speech opposed.”

Parish Register.

But, perhaps, Hayley's account of his son still more resembles Henry Warner, because it adds the mind's strength to the body's extenuation. "Couldst thou see him now"—he is addressing Flaxman—

“Thou might'st suppose I had before thee brought
A Christian martyr, by Ghiberti wrought,

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So pain has crush'd his form with dire control,
And so the seraph Patience arm'd his soul"

Letters on Sculpture.

He was leaning against a tree in the full light of the bright Hunter's moon, when Stephen accosted him with his usual rough kindness, and, insisted on his accepting the support of his stout arm to help him home. Henry took it gratefully; in truth, he could hardly have walked that distance without such an aid; and for some time they walked on slowly and in silence; the bright moonbeams checkering the avenue, sleeping on the moss-grown thatch of the cottage roofs, and playing with a silvery radiance on the clear ponds that starred the common. It was a beautiful scene, and Henry lingered to look upon it, when his companion, admonished by the fallen leaves damp and dewy under foot, and the night wind sighing through the trees, begged him not to loiter, chiding him, as gently as Stephen could chide, for coming so far at such an hour.

“It was foolish," replied Henry; "but I love these trees, and I shall never see them again." And then he smiled, and began talking cheerfully of the bright moonbeams, and their fine effect upon the water; and Stephen drew the beck of his hard huge hand across his eyes, and thought himself a great fool, and wondered how sweet smiles and hopeful happy words should make one sad; and when an acorn dropped from a tree at his feet, and the natural thought passed through his mind, “Poor youth, so he will fall?" Stephen

had nothing for it but to hem away the choking sensation in his throat, and began to lecture the invalid in good earnest.

After landing him safely in his own parlour, and charging Louis to take care of his friend, Stephen drew his good hostess to the gate of her little garden:

"This poor lad must have the best advice, Mrs. Duval."

"Oh, Mr. Lane! he won't hear of it. The expense—"

"Hang the expense, woman! he *shall* have advice," reiterated Stephen; "he must and he shall."

"Oh, Mr. Lane! I have begged and entreated," rejoined Mrs. Duval, "and so has Louis. But the expense I For all he pays me so regularly, I am sure that he is poor—very poor. He lives upon next to nothing; and is so uneasy if I get him any little thing better than ordinary;—and Louis caught him the other day arranging his drawings and casts, and putting up his books; and writing letters about them to some gentleman in London, to pay for his funeral, he said, and save me trouble after he was dead:—I thought Louis would have broken his heart He reckoned upon selling that fine work in the shed here—the Procession—I forget what they call it, and it's almost finished; but he's too weak to work upon it now, and I know that it frets him, though he never utters a complaint. And then, if he dies, my poor boy will die too!"

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"Could not one manage to make him take some money, somehow, as a loan, or a gift?" inquired Stephen, his hand involuntarily seeking his breeches-pocket, and pulling out a well-laden canvass bag.

"No," replied Mrs. Duval, "that's impossible. The poorer he gets, the prouder he grows. You could no more get him to take money than to send for a doctor."

"Dang it! he shall, though," returned honest Stephen. "We'll see about that in the morning. In the mean while, do you go home with me, and see if you and my mistress

can't find something that the poor lad will like. She has been making some knick-knacks to-day, I know, for little Peggy, our grand-daughter, who has been ill, and whom we have brought home for change of air. Doubtless, there'll be some to spare,—and if there is not, he wants it worst."

And in a half an hour Mrs. Duval returned to the Friary Cottage, laden with old wine and niceties of all sorts from the well-furnished store closet, and a large basin of jelly of dear Mrs. Lane's own making. Ill as he was, and capricious as is a sick man's appetite, our invalid, who, like every body that had ever seen her, loved Margaret Lane, could not reject the viands which came so recommended.

The next morning saw Stephen an unexpected visitor in the young sculptor's studio, fixed, in wondering admiration before the great work. "A procession in honour of Pan!" repeated the good butcher. "Well, I'm no great judge, to be sure, but I like it, young man; and I'll tell you why I like it, because it's full of spirit and life, like; the folk are all *moving*. Dang it! look at that horse's head! how he's tossing it back! And that girl's petticoat, how light and dancy it seems! And that lamb, poking its little head out of the basket,—ay, that's right, bleat away! One would think you had been as much amongst them as I have."

Henry was charmed at Stephen's criticism, and frankly told him so.

"Well, then!" continued Mr. Lane, "since you think me such a good judge of your handiwork, you must let me buy it.* Tell me your price," added he, pulling out, an enormous brown leathern book, well stuffed with bank-notes; "I'm the man for a quick bargain."

"Buy the relievo! But, my dear Mr. Lane, what will you do with it?" replied the artist "Handsome as your new house at Sunham is, this requires space, and distance, and—"

"I'm not going to put it in any house of mine, I promise you, my lad," replied Mr. Lane, half affronted. "I hope I know better what is fitting for a plain tradesman; and if I don't, my Margaret does. But I'll tell you what I mean to do with it, continued he, recovering

his good-humour,—"it was my wife's thought I shall make a present of it to the corporation, to put up in the town-hall. I've been a rare plague to them all my life

* Vide note 2, at the end of the paper.

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and it is but handsome, now that I am going away as far as Sunham, to make up with them; so I shall send them this as a parting gift. Dang it! how well it'll look in the old hail!" shouted he, drowning with his loud exclamations poor Henry's earnest thanks, and unfeigned reluctance—for Henry felt the real motive of a purchase so much out of the good butcher's way, and tried to combat his resolution. "I will have it, I tell you! But I make one condition, that you'll see a doctor this very day, and that you are not to touch the Procession again till he gives you leave. I certainly sha'n't send it them till the spring. And now tell me the price, for have it I will!"

And the price was settled, though with considerable difficulty, of an unusual kind; the estimate of the patron being much higher than that of the artist. The purchase was completed—but the work was never finished: for before the last acorn fell, Stephen's forebodings were accomplished, and the young Sculptor and his many sorrows, his hopes, his fears, his high aspirations, and his unhappy love, were laid at rest in the peaceful grave. The only work of his now remaining at Belford is a monument to the memory of the poor Abbé, executed from one of Louis' most simple designs.

Note 1.—The poetry of John Keats is, like all poetry of a very high style and very unequal execution, so much more talked of than really known, that I am tempted to add the Hymn to Pan, as well as the Procession, which is necessary to the comprehension of my little story. Perhaps it is the finest and most characteristic specimen that could be found of his wonderful pictorial power.

PROCESSION AND HYMN IN HONOUR OF PAN.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,
Bearing the burden of a shepherd-song;

Each having a white wicker overbrimm'd
With April's tender younglings: next, well-trimm'd,
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
As may be read of in Arcadian books;
Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe,
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'erflowing die
In music through the vales of Thessaly:
"Some idly trail'd their sheep-hooks on the ground,
And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound
With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these,
Now coming from beneath the forest trees,

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A venerable priest full soberly
Begirt, with ministering looks: always his eye
Steadfast upon the matted turf he kept,
And after him his sacred vestments swept.
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk white,
Of mingled wine out-sparkling generous light;
And in his left he held a basket full
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull;
Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still
Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.
His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,
Seem'd like a poll of ivy, in the teeth
Of Winter hoar. Then came another crowd
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,
Up-follow'd by a multitude that rear'd

Their voices to the clouds, a fair- wrought car,
Easily rolling, so as scarce to mar
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown,
Who stood therein did seem of great renown
Among the throng; his youth was fully blown,
Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown;
And, for those simple times, his garments were
A chieftain-king's: beneath his breast, half bare,
Was hung a silver bugle, and between
His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen,
A smile was on his countenance; he seem'd
To common lookers-on like one who dream'd
Of idleness in groves Elysian;
But there were some who feelingly could scan
A lurking trouble in his nether-lip.
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip
Through his forgotten hands: then would they sigh,
And think of yellow leaves, of owlet's cry,
Of logs piled solemnly.—Ah, well-a-day!
Why should our young Endymion pine away?
Soon the assembly, in a circle ranged,
Stood silent round the shrine: each look was changed
To sudden veneration: women meek
Beckon'd their sons to silence: while each cheek
Of virgin-bloom paled gently for slight fear;
Endymion, too, without a forest peer.
Stood wan and pale, and with an unawed face,
Among his brothers of the mountain-chase.
In midst of all, the venerable priest
Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least.

And, after lifting up his aged hands,
Thus spake he:—"Men of Latmos! shepherd bands!
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks:
Whether descended from beneath the rocks

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That overtop your mountains; whether come
From valleys where the pipe is never dumb;
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs
Blue harebells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibble their fill at Ocean's very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn,
By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn:
Mothers and wives! who day by day prepare
The scrip with needments for the mountain air;
And all ye gentle girls, who foster up
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup
Will put choice honey for a favour'd youth:
Yea, ever one attend! for, in good truth,
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
Night-swollen mushrooms? Are not our wide plains
Speckled with countless fleeces? Have not rains
Green'd over April's lap? No howling sad
Sickens our fearful ewes; and we have had
Great bounty from Endymion, bur lord.
The earth is glad: the merry lark has pour'd
His early song against yon breezy sky,
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnly."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire
Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred, fire;
Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod
With wine, in honour of the Shepherd-god.
Now, while the earth was drinking it, and while
Bay-leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light
Spread grayly eastward, thus a chorus sang:

“O thou! whose mighty palace-roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;
Who lovest to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken.
And through whole solemn hours dost sit and hearken
The dreary melody of bedded reeds,
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth;
Bethinking thee how melancholy loath
Thou wert to lose fair Syrinx—dost thou now,
By thy love's milky brow,
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan!

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“O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet turtles
Passion their voices cooingly among myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through sunny meadows that out-skirt the side

Of thine enmossed realms: O thou, to whom
Broad-leaved fig-trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow-girted bees
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas
Their fairest-blossom'd beans and popped corn;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee; low-creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness; pent-up butterflies
Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh-budding year
All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O Forester divine!

“Thou to whom every faun and satyr flies
For willing service; whether to surprise
The squatted hare, while in half-sleeping fit;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewilder'd Shepherds to their path again;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main.
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping
The while they pelt each other on the crown
With silvery oak-apples and fir-cones brown;—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O Satyr-King!

“Oh hearkener to the loud-clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A lamb goes bleating: winder of the horn,
When snorting wild-boars, routing tender corn.
Anger our huntsmen; breather round our farms
To keep off mildews and all weather harms:
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds
That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors:
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope!
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows!—
Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings; such as dodge

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Conception to the very bourn of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain; be still the leaven
That, spreading in this dull and clodded earth,
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth:
Be still a symbol of immensity;
A firmament reflected in a sea;
An element fillings the space between;
An unknown—but no more: we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads lowly bending,
And giving out a shout most heaven-rending.
Conjure thee to receive our humble paean
Upon thy mount Lycean!"

Everwhile they brought the burden to a close
A shout from the whole multitude arose
That linger'd in the air like dying rolls
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
Mean time, on shady levels, mossy fine,
Young companies nimbly began dancing
To the swift treble pipe and humming string:
Ay, those fair living forms swam heavenly
To tunes forgotten, out of memory;
Fair creatures, whose young children's children bred
Thermopylae its heroes, not yet dead,
But in old marbles ever beautiful.

KEATS'S *Endymion*

Note 2.—Let not Stephen Lane's conduct be called unnatural! I do verily believe that there is no instance that can be invented of generosity and delicacy that might not find a parallel amongst the middle classes of England, the affluent tradesmen of the metropolis and the great towns, who often act as if they held their riches on the tenure of benevolence.

With regard to Stephen Lane's purchase, I happen to be furnished with a most excellent precedent—a case completely in point, and of very recent occurrence. It was told to me, and most charmingly told, by one whom I am proud to be permitted to call my friend, the Lady Madalina Palmer, who related the story with the delightful warmth with which generous people speak of generosity;—and I have now before me a letter from one of the parties concerned, which states the matter better still. But that letter I must not transcribe, and Lady Madalina is too far off to dictate to me in the pretty Scotch, which, from her, one like better than English; so that I am fain to record the naked facts as simply and briefly as possible, leaving them to produce their own effect on those who love the arts, and who admire a warm-hearted liberality in every rank of life.

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Some time in November 1881, Mr. Cribb, an ornamental gilder in London, a superb artist in his line, and employed in the most delicate and finest work by the Duke of Devonshire and other men of taste amongst the high nobility, was struck with a small picture—a cattle piece—in a shop window in Greek Street. On inquiring for the artist, he could hear no tidings of him; butt the people of the shop promised to find him out. Time after time our persevering lover of the arts called to repeat his inquiries, but always unsuccessfully, until about three months after, when he found that the person he sought was a Mr. Thomas Sydney Cooper, an English artist, who had been for many years settled at Brussels as a drawing-master, but had been driven from that city by the revolution! which had deprived him of his pupils, amongst whom were some members of the Royal Family, and, unable to obtain employment in London as a cattle painter, had, with the generous self-devotion which roost ennobles a roan of genius, supported his family by making lithographic drawings of fashionable caps and bonnets,—I suppose as a puff for some milliner, or some periodical which deals in costumes. In the midst of this interesting family, and of these caps and bonnets, Mr. Cribb found him; and deriving from what he saw of his sketches and drawings additional conviction of his genius, immediately commissioned him to paint him a picture on his own subject and at his own price, making such an advance as the richest artist would not scruple to accept on a commission, conjuring him to leave off caps and bonnets and foretelling his future eminence. Mr. Cribb says he shall never forget the delight of Mr. Cooper's face when he gave the order—he has a right to the luxury of such a recollection. Well! the picture was completed, and when completed, our friend Mr. Cribb, whole not a man to do his work by halves, bespoke a companion, and, while that was painting, showed the first to a great number of artists and gentlemen, who all agreed in expressing the strongest admiration, and in wondering where the painter could have been hidden. Before the second picture was half finished, a Mr. Carpenter (I believe that I am right in the name) gave Mr. Cooper a commission for a piece, which was exhibited in May, 1833, at the Suffolk Street Gallery; und from that moment orders poured in, and the artist's fortune is made.

It is right to add, that Mr. Cooper was generously eager to have this story made known, and Mr. Cribb as generously averse from its publication. But surely it ought to be recorded, for the example's sake, and for their mutual honour. I ought also to say, that it is only in heart, and pocket, and station that Mr. Cribb resembles my butcher! the former being evidently a man of fair education and excellent taste. Oh! that I could have printed his account of this matter! It was so natural, so *naif*, so characteristic, so amusing. I dared not commit such a trespass on the sacredness of private communication; but I shall keep

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it to my dying day, and leave it to my heirs; so that if hereafter, some sixty years hence, a future Allen Cunningham (if there can ever be another biographer like him) shall delight the world with another series of Lives of the Painters, the history of the English Paul Potter may be adorned and-illustrated by the warm- hearted and graphic narrative of his earliest patron.

BELLES OF THE BALL-ROOM, No. II.

MATCH-MAKING.

The proudest of all our proud country gentlewomen,—she who would most thoroughly have disdained the unlucky town ladies, who are destined to look on brick walls instead of green trees, and to tread on stone pavements instead of gravel walks,—was, beyond all doubt, my good friend Mrs. Leslie.

Many years ago, a family of that name came to reside in our neighbourhood, und being persons thoroughly *comme il faut*, who had taken, on a long lease, the commodious and creditable mansion called Hallendeu Hall, with its large park-like paddock, its gardens, greenhouses, conservatories, and so forth, and who evidently intended to live in a style suited to their habitation,—were immediately visited by the inmates of ail the courts, manors, parks, places, lodges, and castles within reach.

Mr. Leslie was, as was soon discovered, a man of ancient family and good estate, who had left his own county on the loss of a contested election, or some such cause of disgust, and had passed the last few years in London for the education of his daughters. He was, too, that exceedingly acceptable and some what rare thing, a lively, talking, agreeable man, very clever and a little quaint, and making his conversation tell as much by a certain off-handedness of phrase and manner, as by the shrewdness of his observations, and his extensive knowledge of the world. He had also, besides his pleasantry and good humour, another prime requisite for country popularity: although greatly above the general run of his neighbours in intellect, he much resembled them in his tastes;—loved shooting, fishing, and hunting in the morning; liked good dinners, good wine, and a snug rubber at night; farmed with rather less loss of money than usually befalls a gentleman; was a stanch partisan at vestries and turnpike meetings; a keen politician at the reading-room And the club; frequented races and coursing meetings; had a fancy for the more business-like gaieties of quarter sessions and grand

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juries; accepted a lieutenancy in the troop of yeoman cavalry, and actually served as churchwarden during the second year of his residence in the parish. At a word, he was an active, stirring, bustling personage, whose life of mind and thorough unaffectedness made him universally acceptable to rich and poor. At first sight there was a homeliness about him, a carelessness of appearance and absence of pretension, which rather troubled his more aristocratic compeers; but the gentleman was so evident in all that he said or did, in tone and accent, act and word, that his little peculiarities were speedily forgotten, or only remembered to make him still more cordially liked.

If Mr. Leslie erred on the side of unpretendingness, his wife took good care not to follow his example: she had pretensions enough of all sorts to have set up twenty fine ladies out of her mere superfluity. The niece of an Irish baron and the sister of a Scotch countess, she fairly wearied all her acquaintance with the titles of her relatives. "My uncle, Lord Linton—my brother-in-law, the Earl of Paisley," and all the Lady Lucys, Lady Elizabeths, Lady Janes, and Lady Marys of the one noble house, and the

honorable masters and misses of the other, were twanged in the ears of her husband, children, servants, and visiters, every day and all day long. She could not say that, the weather was fine without quoting my lord, or order dinner without referring to my lady. This peculiarity was the pleasure, the amusement of her life. Its business was to display, and if possible to marry her daughters; and I think she cherished her grand connexions the more, as being, in some sort, implements or accessories in her designs upon rich bachelors, than for any other cause; since, greatly as she idolized rank in her own family, she had seen too much of its disadvantages when allied with poverty, not to give a strong preference to wealth in the grand pursuit of husband- hunting. She would, to be sure, have had no objection to an affluent peer for a son-in-law, had such a thing offered; but as the commodity, not too common any where, was particularly scarce in our county, she wisely addressed herself to the higher order of country squires, men of acres who inherited large territories and fine places, or men of money who came by purchase into similar possessions, together with their immediate heirs, leaving the younger brothers of the nobility, in common with all other younger brothers, unsought and uncared-for.

Except in the grand matters of pedigrees and match-making, my good friend Mrs. Leslie was a sufficiently common person; rather vulgar and dowdy in the morning, when, like many country gentlewomen of her age and class, she made amends for unnecessary finery by more unnecessary shabbiness, and trotted about the place in an old brown stuff gown, much resembling the garment called a Joseph worn by our great-grandmothers, surmounted by a weather-beaten straw-bonnet and a sunburnt bay wig; and particularly stately in an evening, when silks and satins

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made after the newest fashion, caps radiant with flowers, hats waving with feathers, chandelier ear-rings, and an ermine-lined cloak, the costly gift of a diplomatic relation—("My cousin, the envoy," rivalled in her talk even "my sister the countess")—converted her at a stroke into a chaperon of the very first water.

Her daughters, Barbara and Caroline, were pretty girls enough, and would probably have been far prettier, had Nature, in their case, only been allowed fair play. As it was, they had been laced and braced, and drilled and starved, and kept from the touch of sun or air, or fire, until they had become too slender, too upright, too delicate, both in figure and complexion. To my eye they always looked as if they had been originally intended to have been plumper and taller, with more colour in their cheeks, more spring and vigour in their motions, more of health and life about them, poor things! Nevertheless, they were prettyish girls, with fine hair, fine eyes, fine teeth, and an expression of native good humour, which, by great luck, their preposterous education had not been able to eradicate.

Certainly, if an injudicious education could have spoilt young persons naturally well-tempered and well-disposed, these poor girls would have sunk under its evil influence. From seven years old to seventeen, they had been trained for display and for conquest, and could have played without ear, sung without voice, and drawn without eye, against any misses of their inches in the county. Never were accomplishments more thoroughly travestied. Barbara, besides the usual young-lady iniquities of the organ, the piano, the harp, and the guitar, distended her little cheeks like a trumpeter, by blowing the flute and the flageolet; whilst her sister, who had not breath for the wind instruments, encroached in a different way on the musical prerogative of man, by playing most outrageously on the fiddle—a female Paganini!

They painted in all sorts of styles, from "the human face divine," in oils, crayons, and miniatures, down to birds and butterflies, so that the whole house was a series of exhibition-rooms; the walls were hung with their figures and landscapes, the tables covered with their sketches; you sat upon their performances in the shape of chair cushions, and trod on them in the form of ottomans. A family likeness reigned throughout these productions. Various in style, but alike in badness, all were distinguished by the same uniform unsuccess. Nor did they confine, their attempts to the fine arts. There was no end to their misdoings. They japanned boxes, embroidered work-bags, gilded picture-frames, constructed pincushions, bound books, and made

shoes. For universality the admirable Chrichton was a joke to them. There was nothing in which they had not failed.

During one winter (and winter is the season of a country belle) Mrs. Leslie traded upon her daughters' accomplishments. Every morning visit was an exhibition, every dinner-party a concert, and the unlucky assistants looked, listened, yawned; and lied,

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and got away as soon as possible, according to the most approved fashion in such cases. Half-a-year's experience, however, convinced the prudent mamma that acquirements alone would not suffice for her purpose; and having obtained for the Miss Leslies the desirable reputation of being the most accomplished young ladies in the neighbourhood, she relinquished the proud but unprofitable pleasure of exhibition, and wisely addressed herself to the more hopeful task of humouring the fancies and flattering the vanity of others.

In this pursuit she displayed a degree of zeal, perseverance and resource, worthy of a better cause. Not a bachelor of fortune within twenty miles, but Mrs. Leslie took care to be informed of his tastes and habits, and to offer one or other of her fair nymphs to his notice, after the manner most likely to attract his attention and fall in with his ways. Thus, for a whole season, Bab (in spite of the danger to her complexion) hunted with the Copley hounds riding and fencing* to admiration—not in chase of the fox, poor girl, for which she cared as little as any she in Christendom—but to catch, if it might be, that eminent and wealthy Nimrod, Sir Thomas Copley,—who, after all, governed by that law of contrast which so often presides over the connubial destiny, married a town beauty, who never mounted a horse in her life, and would have fainted at the notion of leaping a five-barred gate; whilst Caroline, with equal disregard to her looks, was set to feed poultry, milk cows, make butter, and walk over ploughed fields with Squire Thornley, an agriculturist of the Old school, who declared that his wife should understand the conduct of a farm as well as of a house, and followed up his maxim by marrying his dairy-maid. They studied mathematics to please a Cambridge scholar, and made versed

to attract a literary lord; taught Sunday schools and attended missionary meetings to strike the serious; and frequented balls, concerts, archery clubs, and water-parties to charm the gay; were everything to everybody, seen everywhere, known to every one; and yet at the end of three years were, in spite of jaunts to Brighton, Cheltenham, and London, a trip to Paris, and a tour through Switzerland, just as likely to remain the two accomplished Miss Leslies as ever they had been. To "wither on the virgin stalk," seemed their destiny.

How this happened is difficult to tell. The provoked mother laid the fault partly on the inertness of her husband, who to say truth, had watched her manœuvres with some amusement, but without using the slightest means to assist her schemes; and partly on the refractoriness of her son and heir, a young gentleman who, although sent first to Eton, most aristocratic of public

* By "fencing," I do not mean here practising "the noble science of defence," but something, sooth to say, almost as manly. I use the word in its fox-hunting sense, and intend by it that Miss Barbara took flying leaps over hedges and ditches, and five-barred gates.

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schools, and then to Christ Church, most lordly of colleges, with the especial maternal injunction to form good connexions, so that he might pick up an heiress for himself and men of fortune for his sisters, had, with unexampled perversity, cultivated the friendship of the clever, the entertaining and the poor, and was now on the point of leaving Oxford without (having made a single acquaintance worth knowing. "This, this was the unkindest cut of all;" for Richard, a lad of good person and lively parts, had Always been in her secret soul his mother's favourite; and now, to find him turn round on her, and join his father in laying the blame of her several defeats on her own bad generalship and want of art to conceal her designs, was really too vexatious, especially as Barbara and Caroline, who had hitherto been patterns of filial obedience, entering blindly into all her objects and doing their best to bring them to bear, now began to show symptoms of

being ashamed of the unmaidenly forwardness into which they had been betrayed, and even to form a resolution (especially Barbara, who had more of her father's and brother's sense than the good-natured but Simple Caroline) not to join in such manœuvring again. "It cannot be right in me, mamma," said she one day, "to practise pistol-shooting* with Mr. Greville, when no. other lady does so; and therefore, if you please, I shall not go—I am sure you cannot wish me to do any thing not right."

"Particularly as there's no use in it," added Richard: "fire as often as you may, you'll never hit that mark."

And Mr. Greville and the pistol-shooting were given up; and Mrs. Leslie felt her authority shaken.

Affairs were in this posture, when the arrival of a visiter after her own heart—young, rich, unmarried, and a baronet—renewed the hopes of our match-maker.

For some months they had had at Hallenden Hall a very unpretending, but in my mind a very amiable inmate, Mary. Morland, the only daughter of Mr. Leslie's only sister, who, her parents being dead, and herself and her brother left in indigent circumstances, had accepted her uncle's invitation to reside in his family as long as it suited her convenience, and was now on the point of departing to keep her brother's house,—a young clergyman recently ordained, who intended to eke out the scanty income of his curacy by taking pupils, for which arduous office he was eminently qualified by his excellent private character and high scholastic attainments.

Mary Morland was that very delightful thing, an unaffected intelligent young woman, well-read, well-informed, lively and conversable. She had a good deal of her uncle's acuteness and talent, and a vein of pleasantry, which differed from his only as

* That ladies should practice pistol-shooting, is not so incredible as it seems. A very beautiful bride of the highest rank is said to have beguiled the ennui of the honeymoon by pursuing this recreation, in company with her most noble and most simple spouse.

much as pleasantry feminine ought to differ from pleasantry masculine: he was humorous, and she was arch. I do not know that I ever heard any thing more agreeable than her flow of sprightly talk, always light and sparkling, spirited and easy, often rich in literary allusion, *but never degenerating* into pretension or pedantry. She was entirely devoid of the usual young lady accomplishments; (an unspeakable relief in that house!) neither played, nor sung, nor drew, nor danced; made no demand on praise, no claim on admiration, and was as totally free from display as from affectation in the exercise of her great conversational power. Such a person is sure to be missed, go where she may; and every one capable of appreciating her many engaging qualities felt, with Mr. Leslie, that her loss would be irreparable at Hallenden.

The evil day however arrived, as such days are wont to arrive, all too soon. William Morland was actually come to carry his sister to their distant home; for they were of the "North countrie," and his curacy was situate in far Northumberland. He was accompanied by an old schoolfellow and intimate friend, in whose carriage Mary and himself were to perform their long journey; and it was on this kind companion, rich and young, a baronet and a bachelor, that Mrs. Leslie at once set her heart for a son-in-law.

Her manœuvres began the very evening of his arrival. She had been kind to Miss Morland from the moment she ascertained that she was a plain though lady-like woman of six and twenty, wholly unaccomplished in her sense of the word, and altogether the most unlikely person in the world to rival her two belles. She had been always kind to "poor dear Mary," as she called her; but as soon as she beheld Sir Arthur Selby, she became the very fondest of aunts, insisted that Barbara should furnish her wardrobe, and Caroline paint her portrait, and that the whole party should stay until these operations were satisfactorily concluded.

Sir Arthur, who seemed to entertain a great regard and affection for his two friends,—who, the only children of the clergy-man of the parish, had been his old companions and playmates at the manor-house, and from whom he had been parted during a long tour in Greece, Italy, and Spain,—consented with a very good grace to this arrangement; the more so as, himself a lively and clever man he perceived, apparently with great

amusement, the designs of his hostess, and for the first two or three days humoured them with much drollery; affecting to be an Epicure, that she might pass off her cook's excellent confectionary for Miss Caroline's handiwork; and even pretending to have sprained his ankle, that he might divert himself by observing in how many ways the same fair lady—who, something younger, rather prettier, and for more docile than her sister, had been

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selected by Mrs. Leslie for his intended bride—would be pressed by that accomplished match-maker into his service; handing him his coffee, for instance, fetching him books and newspapers, offering him her arm when he rose from the sofa, following him about with footstools, cushions, and ottomans, and waiting on him just like a valet or a page in female attire.

At the end of that period,—from some unexplained change of feeling, whether respect for his friend William Morland, or weariness of acting a part so unsuited to him, or some relenting in favour of the young lady,—he threw off at once, his lameness and his affectation, and resumed his own singularly natural and delightful manner. I saw a great deal of him, for my father's family and the Selbys had intermarried once or twice in every century since the Conquest; and though it might have puzzled a genealogist to decide how near or how distant was the relationship, yet, as amongst North-country folk “blood is warmer than water,” we continued not only to call cousins, but to enter into much of the kindly feeling by which family connexion often is, and always should be, accompanied. My father and Mr. Leslie had always been intimate, and Mary Morland and myself having taken a strong liking to each other, we met at one house or the other, almost every day; and, accustomed as I was, to watch the progress of Mrs. Leslie's manœuvres, the rise, decline, and fall of her several schemes, I soon perceived that her hopes and plans were in full activity on the present occasion.

It was, indeed, perfectly evident that she expected to hail Caroline as Lady Selby before many months were past; and she had more reason for the belief than had often happened

to her, inasmuch as Sir Arthur not only yielded with the best possible grace to her repeated entreaties for the postponement of his journey, but actually paid the young lady considerable attention, watching the progress of her portrait of Miss Morland, and aiding her not only by advice but assistance, to the unspeakable benefit of the painting, and even carrying his complaisance so far as to ask her to sing every evening,—he being the very first person who had ever voluntarily caused the issue of those notes, which more resembled the screaming of a macaw than the tones of a human being. To be sure, he did not listen,—that would have been too much to expect from mortal; but he not only regularly requested her to sing, but took care, by suggesting single songs, to prevent her sister from singing with her,—who, thus left to her own devices, used to sit in a corner listening to William Morland with a sincerity and earnestness of attention very different from the make-believe admiration which she had been used to show by her mamma's orders to the clever, men of fortune whom she had been put forward to attract. That Mrs. Leslie did not see what was going forward in that quarter, was marvelous; but her whole soul was engrossed by the desire to clutch

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Sir Arthur, and so long as he called on Caroline for bravura after bravura, for scena after scena, she was happy.

Mr. Leslie, usually wholly inattentive to such proceedings, was on this occasion more clear-sighted. He asked Mary Morland one day "whether she knew what her brother and Sir Arthur were about?" and, on her blushing and hesitating in a manner very unusual with her, added, chucking her under the chin, "A word to the wise is enough, my queen: I am not quite a fool, whatever your aunt may be, and so you may tell the young gentlemen." And with that speech he walked off.

The next morning brought a still fuller declaration of his sentiments. Sir Arthur had received, by post, a letter which had evidently affected him greatly, and had handed it to William Morland, who had read it with equal emotion; but neither of them had mentioned its contents, or alluded to it in any manner. After breakfast, the young men

walked off together, and the girls separated to their different employments. I, who had arrived there to spend the day, was about to join them, when I was stopped by Mr. Leslie. "I want to speak to you," said he, "about that cousin of yours. My wife thinks he's going to marry Caroline; whereas it's plain to me, as doubtless it must be to you, that whatever attention he may be paying to that simple child and, for my own part, I don't see that he is paying her any—is merely to cover William Morland's attachment to Bab. So that the end of Mrs. Leslie's wise schemes will be, to have one daughter the wife of a country curate—"

"A country curate, Mr. Leslie!" ejaculated Mrs. Leslie, holding up her hands in amazement and horror.

"And the other," pursued Mr. Leslie, "an old maid."

"An old maid!" reiterated Mrs. Leslie, in additional dismay—"An old maid!" Her very wig stood on end; and what farther she would have said was interrupted by the entrance of the accused party.

"I am come, Mr. Leslie," said Sir Arthur,— "do not move, Mrs. Leslie—pray stay, my dear cousin,—I am come to present to you a double petition. The letter which I received this morning was, like most human events, of mingled yarn—it brought intelligence of good and of evil. I have lost an old and excellent friend, the rector of Hadley-cum-Appleton, and have, by that loss, an excellent living to present to my friend William Morland. It is above fifteen hundred a-year, with a large house, a fine garden, and a park-like glebe, altogether a residence fit for any lady; and it comes at a moment in which such a piece of preferment is doubly welcome, since the first part of my petition relates to him. Hear it favourably, my dear sir—my dear madam: he loves your Barbara—and Barbara, I hope and believe, loves him."

"There, Mrs. Leslie!" interrupted Mr. Leslie, with an arch nod. "There! do you hear that?"

"You are both favourably disposed, I am sure," resumed Sir Arthur. "Such a son-in-law must be an honour to any man—must he not, my dear madam?—and I, for my part, have a brother's interest in his suit."

"There, Mr. Leslie!" ejaculated in her turn Mrs. Leslie, returning her husband's nod most triumphantly. "A brother's interest!—do you hear that?"

"Since," pursued Sir Arthur, "I have to crave your intercession with his dear and admirable sister, whom I have loved, without knowing it, ever since we were children in the nursery, and who now, although confessing that she does not hate me, talks of want of fortune—as if I had not enough, and of want of beauty and want of accomplishments—as if her matchless elegance and unrivalled conversation were not worth all the doll-like prettiness or tinsel acquirements under the sun. Pray intercede for me, dear cousin!—dear sir!" continued the ardent lover; whilst Mr. Leslie, without taking the slightest notice of the appeal, nodded most provokingly to the crest-fallen match-maker, and begged to know how she liked Sir Arthur's opinion of her system of education?

What answer the lady made, this deponent saith not—indeed, I believe she was too angry to speak—but the result was all that could be desired by the young people: the journey was again postponed; the double marriage celebrated at Hallenden; and Miss Caroline, as bridesmaid, accompanied the fair brides to "canny Northumberland," to take her chance for a husband amongst "fresh fields and pastures new."

MRS. TOMKINS, THE CHEESEMONGER.

PERHAPS the finest character in all Moliere is that of Madame Pernelle, the scolding grandmother in the "Tartufe;" at least, that scene (the opening scene of that glorious play,) in which, tottering in at a pace which her descendants have difficulty in keeping up with, she puts to flight her grandson, and her daughter-in-law's brother, (think of making men fly the field!) and puts to silence her daughter-in-law, her grand-daughter,

and even the pert soubrette, (think of making women hold their tongues!) and finally boxes her own waiting-maid's ears for yawning and looking tired,—that scene of matchless scolding has always seemed to me unrivalled in the comic drama.* The English

* I cannot resist the temptation of subjoining, at the end of this paper, some part of that inimitable scene; believing that, like other great writers of an older date, Molière has been somewhat "pushed from his stool" by later dramatists and is more talked of than read. At all events, anyone who does remember Madame Pernelle will not be sorry to meet with her again.—*Vide note at the end of this paper.*

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version of it in "The Hypocrite" is far less amusing, the old lady Lambert being represented in that piece rather as a soar devotee, whose fiery zeal, and her submission to Cantwell, and even to Mawworm, form the chief cause, the mainspring—as it were, of her lectures; whilst Madame Pernelle, although doubtless the effect of her harangues is heightened and deepened by her perfect conviction that she is right and that ail the rest are wrong, has yet a natural gift of shrewishness—is, so to say, a scold born, and would have rated her daughter-in-law and all her descendants, and bestowed her cuffs upon her domestics with equal good-will, though she had never aspired to the reputation of piety, or edified by the example of M. Tartufe. The gift was in her. Not only has Moliere beaten, as was to be expected, his own English imitator, but he has achieved the far higher honour of vanquishing, in this single instance, his two great forerunners, Masters Shakspeare and Fletcher. For, although the royal dame of Anjou had a considerable talent for vituperation, and Petruchio's two wives, Katherine and Maria,* were scolds of promise; none of the three, in my mind, could be said to approach Madame Pernelle,—not to mention the superior mode of giving tongue (if I may affront the beautiful race of spaniels by applying in such a way. a phrase appropriated to their fine instinct,)—to say nothing of the verbal superiority, Flipote's box on the ear remains unrivalled and unapproached. Katherine breaking the lute over her master's head is a joke in comparison.

Now, notwithstanding the great Frenchman's beating his English rivals so much in the representation of a shrew, I am by no means disposed to concede to Our Continental neighbours any supremacy in the real living model. I should be as sorry that French women should go beyond us in that particular gift of the tongue, which is a woman's sole weapon, her one peculiar talent, as that their soldiers should beat ours in the more manly way of fighting with sword and with gun, or their painters or poets overpass us in their respective arts. The art of scolding is no trifling accomplishment, and I claim for my countrywomen a high degree of excellence in all the shades and varieties thereunto belonging, from the peevish grumble to the fiery retort—from "the quip modest" to "the countercheck quarrelsome." The gift is

* Shakspeare's fine extravaganza, "The Taming of the Shrew," gave rise to an equally pleasant continuation by Fletcher, entitled "The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed;" a play little known, except to the professed lovers of the old drama, in which Petruchio, having lost his good wife Katherine, is betrayed into a second marriage to a gentle, quiet, demure damsel, called Maria who, after their nuptials, changes into an absolute fury, turns the tables upon him completely, and succeeds in establishing the female dominion upon the firmest possible basis, being aided throughout by a sort of chorus of married women from town and country.

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strictly national too; for although one particular district of London (which, indeed, has given its name to the dialect*) has been celebrated, and I believe deservedly celebrated, for its breed of scolds; yet I will undertake to pick up in any part of England, at four-and-twenty hours' notice, a shrew that shall vie with all Billingsgate.

To go no farther for an instance than our own market-town, I will match my worthy neighbour, Mrs. Tomkins, cheesemonger, in Queen-street, against any female fish-vender in Christendom. She, in her single person, simple as she stands there behind her counter, shall outscold the whole parish of Wapping.

Deborah Ford, such was Mrs. Tomkins's maiden appellatio, was the only daughter of a thrifty and thriving yeoman in the county of Wilts, who having, to her own infinite dissatisfaction and the unspeakable discomfort of her family, remained a spinster for more years than she cared to tell, was at length got rid of by a manœuvring stepmother, who made his marrying Miss Deborah the condition of her supplying Mr. Simon Tomkins, cheesemonger, in Belford, with the whole produce of her dairy, celebrated for a certain meek Stilton, which his customers, who got it at about half the price of the real, were wont to extol as incomparably superior to the more genuine and more expensive commodity.

Simon hesitated—looked at Deborah's sour face; for she had by strong persuasion been induced to promise not to scold—that is to say, riot to speak, (for, in her case, the terms were synonymous;)—muttered something which might be understood as a civil excuse, and went to the stable to get ready his horse and chaise. In that short walk, however, the prudent swain recollected that a rival cheesemonger had just set up over against him in the same street of the identical town of Belford; that the aforesaid rival was also a bachelor, and, as Mrs. Ford had hinted, would doubtless not be so blind to his own interest as to neglect to take her mock Stilton, with so small an incumbrance as a sour-looking wife, who was said to be the best manager in the county: so that by the time the crafty stepmother reappeared with a parting glass of capital currant wine, (a sort of English stirrup-cup, which she positively affirmed to be of Deborah's making,) Simon had changed, or, as he expressed it, made up his mind to espouse Miss Deborah, for the benefit of his trade and the good of his customers.

* Even the Americans—although, in a land so celebrated for freedom of speech, and so jealous of being outdone in any way by the another country, one would think that they might by this time have acquired an established scolding-place of their own—still use the word " Billingsgate" to express the species of vituperation of which I am treating. I found the phrase in that sense in a very eloquent speech of their very eloquent advocate, Mr. Mason, as reported in a New York paper, no longer ago than last June; a diffusion

of fame which our fish-wives owe to the wide spread of our language. Who in the New World ever heard of their Parisian rivals, *les Dames de la Halle!*

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Short as was the courtship, and great as were the pains taken by Mrs. Ford (who performed impossibilities in the way of conciliation) to bring the marriage to bear, it had yet nearly gone off three several times, in consequence of Deborah's tongue, and poor Simon's misgivings, on whose mind, especially on one occasion, the night before the wedding, it was powerfully borne, that all the excellence of the currant wine, and all the advantages of the mock Stilton, were but poor compensations, not only for "peace and happy life," and "awful rule and just supremacy," but for the being permitted, in common parlance, to call his soul his own. Things, however, had gone too far. The stepmother talked of honour and character, and broken hearts; the father hinted at an action for damages, and a certain nephew, Timothy, an attorney-at-law; whilst a younger brother, six feet two in height, and broad in proportion, more than hinted at a good cudgelling. So Simon was married.

Long before the expiration of the honeymoon, he found all his worst fears more than confirmed. His wife—"his mistress," as in the homely country phrase he too truly called her—was the greatest tyrant that ever ruled over a household. Compared with our tigress, Judith Jenkins, now Mrs. Jones, was a lamb. Poor Simon's shopman left him, his maid gave warning, and his apprentices ran away; so that he who could not give warning, and was ashamed to run away, remained the one solitary subject of this despotic queen, the luckless man-of-all-work of that old and well-accustomed shop. Bribery, under the form of high wages and unusual indulgences, did to a certain point remedy this particular evil; so that they came at last only to change servants about once a fortnight on an average, and to lose their apprentices, some by running away and some by buying themselves off, not oftener than twice a year. Indeed, in one remarkable instance, they had the good fortune to keep a cook, who happened to be stone deaf, upwards of a twelvemonth; and, in another still more happy case, were provided with a permanent shopman, in the shape of an old pliant rheumatic Frenchman, who had lived

in some Italian warehouse in London until fairly worn off his legs, in which plight his importers had discarded him, to find his way back to *la belle France* as best he could, happening to fall in with him, on going to the London warehouse with an order for Parmesan, receiving an excellent character of him from his employers, and being at his wit's end for a man. Mr. Simon Tomkins, after giving him due notice of his wife's failing, engaged the poor old foreigner, and carried him home to Queen Street in triumph. A much-enduring man was M. Leblanc! Next after his master, he, beyond all doubt, was the favourite object of Deborah's objurgation; but, by the aid of snuff and philosophy, he bore it bravely, "*Mais je suis philosophe!*" cried the poor old Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders, and tapping his box when the larum of his mistress's tongue ran through

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the house—"*Toutefois je suis philosophe!*" exclaimed he with a patient sigh; and Deborah, who, without comprehending the phrase, understood it to convey some insinuation against herself, redoubled her clamour at the sound.

Tobacco in its various forms seems to have been the chief consolation of her victims. If snuff and philosophy were Leblanc's resources, a pipe and a tankard were his master's; and in both cases the objects to which they resorted for comfort drew down fresh lectures from their liege lady. Site complained of the smell. And of a surety the smell is an abomination; only that, her father and her seven brothers, to say nothing of half-a-dozen uncles and some score of cousins, having been as atrociously given to smoking as if they had been born and bred in Germany, so that eight or ten chimneys had been constantly going in one room in the old farm-house of Bevis-land, the fumes of tobacco might be said to be her native air; and Mr. Tomkins's stock-in-trade consisting, besides the celebrated cheese which had so unluckily brought him acquainted with her, of soap, candles, salt-butter, bacon pickles, oils, and other unsavoury commodities, one would really think that no one particular stench could greatly increase the ill odours of that most unfragrant shop. She, however, imputed all the steams that invaded her nostrils either to her shopman's snuff or her husband's smoking, and threatened ten times a day

to demolish the pipes and the boxes, which were good for nothing, as she observed, but to keep "the men-folk idle and to poison every Christian thing about them;" an affront which both parties endured with a patient silence, which only served to exasperate her wrath.*

Find it where he would, much need had poor Mr. Tomkins of Comfort. Before his marriage, he had been a spruce dapper little man, with blue eyes, a florid complexion, and hair of the colour commonly called sandy,—alert in movement, fluent in speech, and much addicted to laughing, whether at his own jokes or the jokes of his neighbours; he belonged to the Bachelors' Club and the Odd Fellows, was a great man at the cricket-ground, and a person of some consideration at the vestry; in short was the *beau*

* Nothing is so provoking in an adversary as silence. During the great dispute in France about the Ancients and Moderns, in Madame Dacier's time, one of the combatants published a pamphlet with the title, *Reponse au Silence de M. de la Mutte*. I confess that I have some sympathy with the writer. It was but the other day that I and another lady were engaged in an argument with one of the stronger sex, and had just beaten him out of the field were on the very point of giving him the *coup de grace*, when all on a sudden my gentleman made us a low bow, and declared that we should have it in our own way—that he would not say another word on the subject. I don't know that I was ever so much provoked in my life. To be defrauded of our just victory (for of course we were right,) whilst the cunning wretch (a clever man, too, which made it worse) looked as complacent and as smiling as if he had yielded the point from pure compassion to our weakness! Mrs. Tomkins would have boxed his ears. It is just as if an opponent at chess, whose pawns are almost gone, and whose pieces are taken, whose game, in short, is desperate—and who must in a move or two he checkmated—should suddenly proclaim himself tired, and sweep away the board. I wonder what Mrs. Tomkins would say to that!

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idéal of the young thriving country tradesman of thirty years ago.

He had not been married half a year before such an alteration took place as really would have seemed incredible. His dearest friends did not know him. The whole man was changed—shrunk, shrivelled, withered, dwindled into nothing. The hen-pecked husband in the farce, carrying his wife's clogs in one hand and her bandbox in the other, and living on the "tough drumsticks of turkeys, and the fat flaps of shoulders of mutton," was but a typo of him. The spirit of his youth was departed. He gave up attending the coffee-house or the cricket-ground, ceased to joke or to laugh at jokes; and he who had had at club and vestry "a voice potential as double as the *mayor's*" could hardly be brought to answer Yes or No to a customer. The man was evidently in an atrophy. His wife laid the blame to his smoking, and his friends laid it to his wife, whilst poor Simon smoked on and said nothing. It was a parallel case to Peter Jenkins's, and Stephen Lane might have saved him; but Stephen not being amongst his cronies, (for Simon was a Tory,) and Simon making, no complaint, that chance was lost. He lingered through the first twelve months after their marriage, and early in the second he died, leaving his widow in excellent circumstances, the possessor of a flourishing business and the mother of a little boy, to whom she (the will having of course been made under her super-vision) was constituted sole guardian.

Incredible as it may seem, considering the life she had led him while alive, Deborah was really sorry for poor Simon—perhaps from a touch of remorse, perhaps because she lost in him the most constant and patient listener to her various orations—perhaps from a mixture of both feelings; at all events, sorry she was; and as grief in her showed itself in the very novel form of gentleness, so that for four and twenty hours she scolded nobody, the people about her began to be seriously alarmed for her condition, and were about to call in the physician who had attended the defunct, to prescribe for the astounding placability of the widow, when something done or left undone, by the undertaker or his man, produced the effect which medical writers are pleased to call "an effort of nature;" she began to scold, and scolding all through the preparations for the funeral, and the funeral itself, and the succeeding ceremonies of will-reading, legacy-paying, bill-settling, stock-valuing, and so forth, .with an energy and good-will, and an unwearying perseverance that left nothing to be feared on the score of her physical strength. John

Wesley preaching four sermons, and Kean playing Richard three times in one day, might have envied her power of lungs. She could have spoken Lord Brougham's famous six hours' speech on the Law Reform without exhaustion or hoarseness. But what do I talk of a six hours' speech? She could have spoken a whole night's debate in her own single person, without let or

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pause, or once dropping her voice, till the division, so prodigious was her sostenuto. Matthews and Miss Kelly were nothing to her. And the exercise agreed with her—she throve on it.

So for full twenty years after the death of Mr. Tomkins did she reign and scold in the dark, dingy, low-browed, well-accustomed shop of which she was now the sole directress. M. Pierre Leblanc continued to be her man of business; and as, besides his boasted philosophy, he added a little French pliancy and flattery of which he did not boast, and a great deal of dexterity in business and integrity, as well as clearness in his accounts, they got on together quite as well as could be expected. The trade flourished; for, to do Deborah justice, she was not only a good manager, in the lowest sense of the term—which, commonly speaking, means only frugal,—but she was, in the most liberal acceptation of the words, prudent, sagacious, and honest in her pecuniary dealings, buying the very best commodities, and selling them at such a lair and moderate profit as ensured a continuation of the best custom of the county—the more especially as her sharp forbidding countenance and lank raw-boned figure were seldom seen in the shop. People said (but what will not people say?) that one reason for her keeping away from such excellent scolding-ground was to be found in *les doux yeux* of M. Pierre Leblanc, who, withered, wizened, broken-down cripple as he was, was actually suspected of having made an offer to his mistress;—a story which I wholly disbelieve, not only because I do not think that the poor philosopher, whose courage was rather of a passive than an active nature, would ever have summoned resolution to make such a proposal; but because he never, as far as I can discover, was observed in the neighbourhood with a scratched face—a catastrophe which would as certainly have followed the audacity in

question, as the night follows the day. Moreover, it is bad philosophy to go hunting about for a remote and improbable cause, when a sufficient and likely one is close at hand; and there was, in immediate juxta-position with Mrs. Tomkins's shop, reason enough to keep her out of it to the end of time.

I have said that this shop, although spacious and not incommodious, was dark and low-browed, forming a part of an old-fashioned irregular tenement, in an old-fashion irregular street The next house, with a sort of very deep and Square bay-window, which was, by jutting out so as to overshadow it, in some sort the occasion of the gloom which, increased, perhaps, by the dingy nature of the commodities, did unquestionably exist in this great depository of cheese and chandlery-ware, happened to be occupied by a dealer in whalebone in its various uses, stays, umbrellas, parasols, and so forth,—a fair, mild, gentle Quakeress—a female Friend, with two or three fair smiling daughters, the very models of all that was quiet and peaceful, who, without even speaking to the furious virago, were a standing rebuke to that “perturbed spirit.” The deep bay-window was their

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constant dwelling-place. There they sat tranquilly working from morning to night, gliding in and out with a soft stealing pace like a cat, sleek, dimpled, and dove-eyed, with that indescribable nicety and purity of dress and person, and that blameless modesty of demeanour, for which the female Friend is so generally distinguished. Not a fault could Mrs. Tomkins discover in her next neighbour,—but if ever woman hated her next neighbour, she hated Rachel May.

The constant sight of this object of her detestation was, of course, one of the evils of Mrs. Tomkins' prosperous life;—but she had many others to fight with—most of them, of course, of her own seeking. What she would have done without a grievance, it is difficult to guess; but she had so great a genius for making one out of every thing and every person connected with her, that she was never at a loss in that particular. Her stepmother she had always regarded as a natural enemy; and at her father's death, little

as she, generally speaking, coveted money, she contrived to quarrel with her whole family on the division of his property, chiefly on the score of an old japanned chest of drawers, not worth ten shillings which her brothers and sisters were too much of her own temper to relinquish.

Then her son, on whom she doted with a peevish, grumbling, fretful, discontented fondness that always took the turn of finding fault, was, as she used reproachfully to tell him, just like his father. The poor child, do what he would, could never please her. If he were well, she scolded; if he were sick, she scolded; if he were silent, she scolded; if he talked, she scolded. She scolded if he laughed, and she scolded if he cried.

Then the people about her were grievances, of course, from Mr. Pierre Leblanc downward. She turned off her porter for apprehending a swindler, and gave away her yard-dog for barking away some thieves. There was no foreseeing what would displease her. She caused a beggar to be taken up for insulting her, because he, with his customary cant, blessed her good-humoured face; and she complained to the mayor of the fine fellow Punch for the converse reason, because he stopped before her windows and mimicked her at her own door.

Then she met with a few calamities of which her temper was more remotely the cause;—such as being dismissed from the dissenting congregation that she frequented, for making an over free use of the privilege, which pious ladies sometimes assume of quarrelling with their acquaintance on spiritual grounds, and venting all manner of angry anathema for the love of God; an affront that drove her to church the very next Sunday. Also, she got turned off by her political party, in the heat of a contested election, for insulting friends and foes in the bitterness of her zeal, and thereby endangering the return of her favourite candidate. A provincial poet, whose works she had abused, wrote a

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song in her dispraise; and three attorneys brought actions against her for defamation.

These calamities notwithstanding, Deborah's life might, for one and twenty years, be accounted tolerably prosperous. At the end of that time, two misfortunes befell her nearly at once,—Pierre Leblanc died, and her son attained his majority.

“Mother!” said the young man, as they were dining together off a couple of ducks two days after the old shopman's funeral; “Mother!” said John Tomkins, mustering up his courage, I think I was one and twenty last Saturday.”

“And what of that?” replied Deborah, putting on her stormiest face; “I'm mistress here, and mistress I'll continue: your father, poor simpleton that he was, was not fool enough to leave his house and business to an ignorant boy. The stock and trade are mine, sir, and shall be mine, in spite of all the undutiful sons in Christendom. One and twenty, forsooth! What put that in your head, I wonder? What do you mean by talking of one and twenty, sirrah?”

“Only, mother,” replied John, meekly, “that though father left you the house and business, he left me three thousand pounds which, by your prudent management, are now seven thousand; and uncle William Ford, he left me the new Warren Farm; and so, mother, I was thinking, with your good will, to marry and settle.”

“Marry!” exclaimed Mrs. Tomkins, too angry even to scold—“marry!” and she laid down her knife and fork, as if choking.

“Yes, mother!” rejoined John, taking courage from his mother's unexpected quietness, “Rachel May's pretty grand-daughter Rebecca; she is but half a Quaker, you know, for her mother was a Churchwoman: and so, with your good leave,” and smack went all that remained of the ducks in poor John's face; an effort of nature that probably saved Deborah's life, and enabled her to give vent to an oration to which I have no power to do justice; but of which the non-effect was so decided, that John and his pretty Quakeress were married within a fortnight, and are now happily settled at the new Warren House; whilst Mrs. Tomkins, having hired a good-humoured, good-looking, strapping Irishman of three and twenty, as her new foreman, is said to have it in contemplation, by way, as she says, of punishing her son, to make him, the aforesaid Irish foreman, successor to

Simon Tomkins, as well as to Pierre Leblanc, and is actually reported, (though the fact seems incredible,) to have become so amiable under the influence of the tender passion, as to have passed three days without scolding any body in the house or out. The little God of Love is, to be sure, a powerful deity, especially when he comes somewhat out of season; but this transition of character does seem to me too violent a change even for a romance, much more for this true history; and I hold it no lack of charity to continue doubtful of Deborah's reformation till after the honey-moon.

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Note.

MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, MARIANNE, CLEANTE, DAMIS,
DORINE, FLIPOTE.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Allons, Flipote, allons; que d'eux je me délivre.

ELMIRE.

Vous marchez d'un tel pas qu'on a peine à vous suivre.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Laissez, ma bru, laissez; ne venex pas plas loin:

Ce sont toutes façons dont je n'ai paa besoin.

ELMIRE.

De ce que l'on vous doit en vers vous l'on s'acquitte.

Mais, ma mère, d'où vient que vous sortez si vit?

MADAME PERNEILLE.

C'est que je ne puis voir tout ce menage-ci,

Et que de me complaire on ne prend nul souci.

Oui, je sors de chez vous fort mal edifiée;

Dans toutes mes leçons j'y suis contrarié;

On n'y respecte rien, chacun y parle haut,
Et c'est tout justement la cour du roi Petaud.

DORINE.

Si...

MADAME PERNELLE.

Vous êtes, ma mie, une fille suivante
Un peu trop forte en gueule, et fort impertinente;
Vous, vous mêlez sur tout de dire votre avis.

DAMIS.

Mais...

MADAME PERNELLE.

Vous êtes un sot, en trois lettres, mon fils;
C'est moi qui vous le dis, qui suis votre grand'mère;
Et j'ai prédit cent fois a mon fils, votre père,
Que vous preniez tout l'air d'un méchant garnement,
Et ne lui donneriez jamais que du tourment.

MARIANNE.

Je crois...

MADAME PERNELLE.

Mon Dieu! sa soeur, vous faites la discrète;
Et vous n'y touchez pas, tant vous semblez Doucette!
Mais il n'est, comme on dit, pire eau que Teau qui dort;
Et vous menez, sous cape, un train que je hais fort.

ELMIRE

Mais, ma mere...

MADAME PERNELLE.

Ma bru, qu'il ne vous en déplaise,
Votre conduite en tout est tout-à-fait mauvaise;
Vous devriez leur mettre un bon exemple aux yeux;
Et leur defunte mère en usait beaucoup mieux.
Vous êtes depensière; et cet état meblesse,
Que vous alliez vêtue ainsi qu'une princesse,
Quiconque à son mari veut plaire seulement.
Ma bru, n'a pas besoin de tant d'ajustement,

CLEANTE.

Mais, madame, après tout...

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MADAME PERNELLE.

Pour vous, monsieur son frère,
Je vous estime fort, vous aime, et vous revère;
Mais enfin, si j'étais de mon fils, son époux,
Je vous prierais bien fort de n'edtrer point chez nous.
Sans cesse vous prechez des maximes de vivre
Qui par d'honnêtes gens ne se doivent point suivre.
Je vous parle un peu franc; mais c'est la mon humeur,
Et je ne mache point ce que j'ai sur le coeur.

DAMIS.

Votre monsieur Tartufe est bien heureux, sans doute.

MADAME PERNELLE.

C'est un homme de bien, qu'il faut que l'on écoute;
Et je ne puis souffrir, sans me mettre en courroux,
De le voir quereller par un fou comme vous.

DAMIS.

Quoi! je souffrirai, moi, qu'un cagot de critique
Vienne usurper céans un pouvoir tyrannique;
Et que nous ne puissions à rien nous divertir.
Si ce beau monsieur-là n'y daigne consentir?

DORINE.

S'il le faut écouter et croire à ses maximes,
On ne peut faire rien qu'on ne fasse des crimes;
Car il contrôle tout, ce critique zélé.

MADAME PARNELLE.

Et tout ce qu'il contrôle est fort bien contrôlé.

MADAME PARNELLE, *A El mire*.

Violà les contes bleus qu'il vous faut pour vous plaire,
Ma bru. L'on est chez vous contrainte de se taire:
Car madame, à jaser, tient le de tout le jour.
Mais enfin je pretends discourir à mon tour:
Je vous dis que mon fils n'a rien fait de plus sage
Qu'en recueillant chez soi ce devot personnage;
Que le ciel, au besoin, l'a ceans envoyé
Pour redresser à tous votre esprit fourvoyé;
Que, pour votre salut, vous le devez entendre;
Et qu'il ne reprend rien qui ne soit à reprendre.
Ces visites, ces bals, ces conversations,
Sont du malin esprit toutes inventions.
Là, jamais on n'entend de pieuses paroles;
Ce sont propos oisifs, chansons et fariboles:
Bien souvent le prochain en a sa bonne part,
Et l'on y sait médire et du tiers et du quart.

Enfin les gens sensés ont leurs têtes troubles
De la confusion de telles assemblées:
Mille caquets divers s'y font en moins de rien;
Et, comme l'autre jour un docteur dit fort bien,
C'est véritablement la tour de Babylone,
Car chacun y babille, et tout du long de l'aune:
Et, pour conter l'histoire où ce point l'engagea.

(montrant Cleante)

Violá-t-il pas monsieur qui ricane déjà.

Allez chercher vos fous qui vous donuent à rire,

(*a Elmire.*)

Et sans... Adieu, ma bru; je ne veux plus rien dire.

Sachez que pour céans j'en rabats de moitié,

Et qu'il fera beau temps quand j'y mettrai le pié.

(*donnant un soufflet a Flipote.*)

Allons, vous, vous rêvez, et bayez aux corneilles.

Jour de Dieu! je saurai vous frotter les oreilles.

Marchons, gaupe, marchons.

TARTUFE—ACTE I., SCENE I.