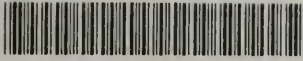


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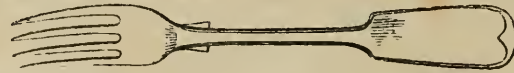
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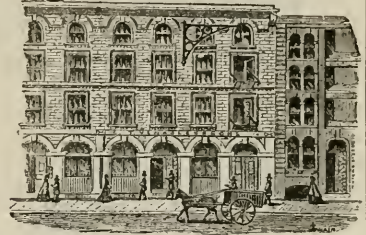
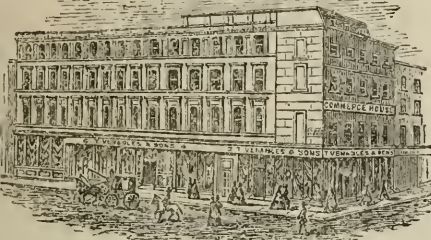
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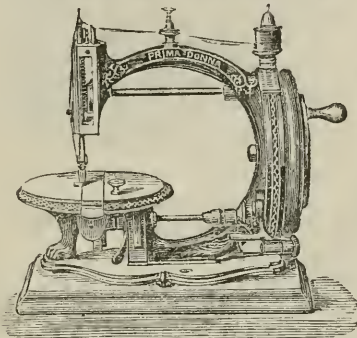
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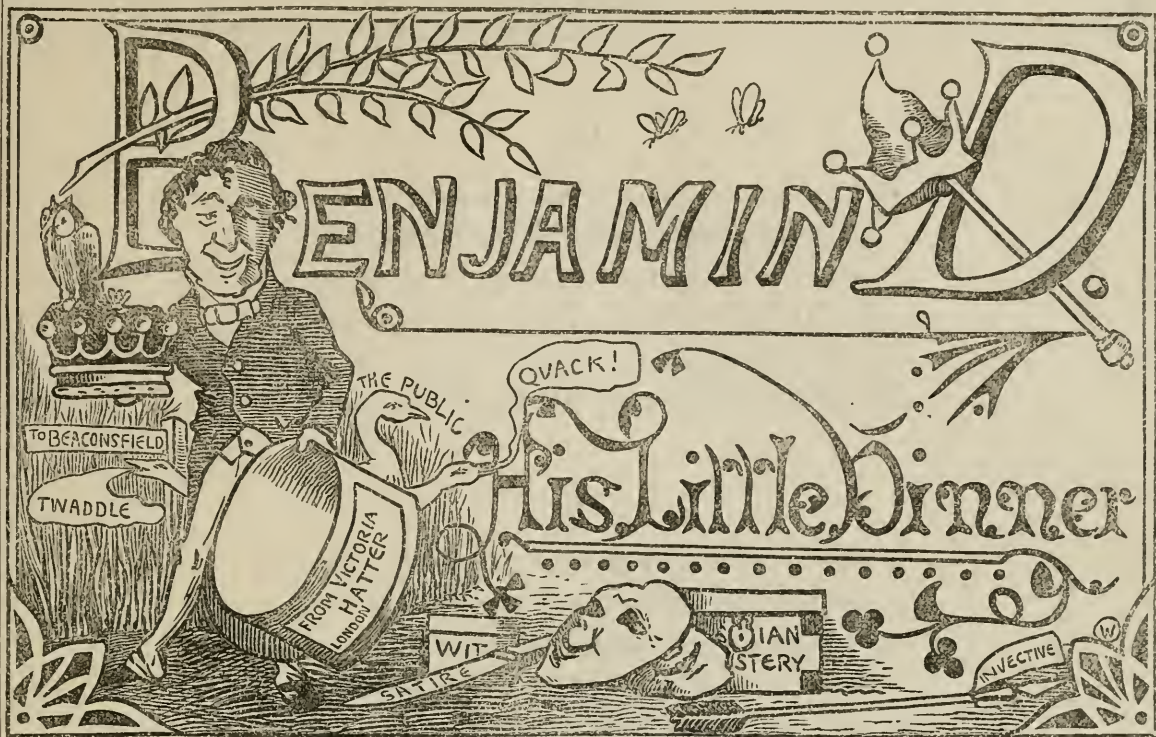
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PEDICATION.

I.

H, hang it all! this world's become so moral,
 And so profoundly pleased with its morality,
 That really I shall seek some island—coral,
 Or try my luck across some unknown sea;
 Or drop among the mermaids in the ocean,
 Or carry out some other absurd notion.

II.

I am by bent a saint, and pre-elected—
 Come, don't you laugh! it won't admit of doubt,
 Or if I sin, at least I'm not detected,
 And sin's not sin unless it be found out
 But this is argument so very subtle
 That p'raps you think its cribbed from Aristotle!

III.

Well, being such a saint, you must admit it—
 In this last sentence really there's no fudge meant—
 That if there is a blot I'm sure to hit it ;
 That's half the reason why I sit in judgment ;
 The other half is this—it's scarcely civil—
 The world is rushing headlong to the devil !

IV.

A man can marry now-a-days on such a salary
 That really I'm quite glad I am not Cræsus,
 For save some *chef d'œuvre* from the Gallery
 Man's wants don't travel far beyond this thesis—
 A pretty wife, a nice suburban villa,
 Champagne, a nag, one's club and his Manilla !

V.

On woman's wants there's even more embargo—
 Let's say a parcel once a week from Worth,
 Some months at Carlsbad or, perhaps, Monaco—
 For after all a woman's only earth !
 Receptions in the season—don't they choke us !—
 The opera, Mudie's, and those meetings Dorcas.

VI.

His son no parent now need keep his eye on,
 Or think his conduct needs the slightest trimming ;
 'Twill be enough if in the coming Zion
 That son still keeps his cards, and wine, and women—
 I mean—but let it pass—I've been a youth ;
 He lies besides who dares not speak the truth.

VII.

For, after all, sweet youth's romantic spell
 Is seldom but a dream of some fair goddess—
 Cocotte, Lorette, Madonna, or Pucelle—
 Some Venus, let us say, of Cos or Paphos!
 If there's a book in which I like tautology
 It is—I say it boldly—the mythology!

VIII.

It's often struck me in a way that's hurt,
 Why classic women's morals were so shady;
 I can't bear Daphne, she was such a flirt,
 And Phryne was a fearful fast young lady;
 Then Cynthia was a modish sort of *meretrix*,
 While Lais and Thais were simply moral heretics!

IX.

But steady, mine old Muse—not quite so fast!—
 This verse is earthy—worse, indeed, than Swinburne,
 Who's been converted. Have you seen his last?
 Let's soon expect to see a tiger's skin turn,
 Or witness Marwood hung with his own rope,
 Or Mr. Whalley flirting with the Pope!

X.

The loves of princes and the wars of poets
 Have been exciting since the days of David;
 Buchanan's not the first who's sought the law courts,
 Nor Swinburne's Muse the only one depravéd.
 Still, hang two poets who can show ill-will,
 Or let their tempers prostitute their quill!

XI.

To see good men go wrong makes angels weep
 (At least, 'tis said so in a work by Madder);
 To see two poets slanging like a sweep
 Must be, of course, *à fortiori* sadder.
 When will they learn—these pasquinaders fiery—
 That Satire's derivation's not *sat. iræ*?

XII.

I'm fond of duels fought with pen and ink—
 They serve to bring such pretty things to daylight;
 But as to choice, I rather like, I think,
 To see a critic slashing at a playwright;
 An author's nowhere who can't take a dram
 And stab the donor with an epigram!

XIII.

Lord, raise the stage! it's sunk to such a level
 That plays are sent from France to make it decent.
 O, Sardou! Dumas! save us from the devil!
 Some ancient plays look vastly like your recent.
 The same old plot, used with the same impunity—
 A wife, a lover, and an opportunity.

XIV.

I rank the stage as one of the fine arts;
 I've often thought his mind must be grotesque,
 And sadly wanting in the finer parts,
 Who cannot see the moral of burlesque;
 For though it's gross and stupid in portraiture
 It holds, at least, the mirror up to NATURE!

XV.

It's said Dundreary's rooted in the West
 And won't come back to London—well, at present;
 An actor's not Platonic at his best,
 And injured men are fools, which isn't pleasant.
 Dundreary'll have his rompings with the ladies
 In spite of gods, and men, and Heaven, and Hades.

XVI.

Though Dun's no Plato we'd hurrah him back
 From Yankee-land, and women, and vile grog.
 Poor Buckstone's languished since he left his track
 Across the ocean and—the Decalogue!
 Still, retribution waits on those who so do—
 I wonder if he thinks of where he'll go to!

XVII.

The air is charged with rumours—quite a flood—
On dit that Bisch has burnt his fingers badly;
 The Opera Comique “spec.” was scarcely good,
 And Amy cost him sums that hurt him sadly.
 It's strange rich men so often prove, alas!
 The noblest work of God is but an—ass!

XVIII.

Ingratitude is getting quite an art,
 And one mankind's an almost perfect Davy at;
 I cannot bear a man who's got no heart;
 The next time you write “Cave,” please write it
 “Caveat!”
 And Edgar B., here's good advice, which follow—
 Put not your trust in Caves, for caves are hollow!

XIX.

To count earth's pleasures you must count her sins,
 They're wed together like perfume and flowers ;
 I wish they sold, say, nightly larks in tins,
 'Twould save a world of latch-keys and late hours ;
 The scheme is new, he'll save who will embark it,
 From certain Hades Mayfair and Haymarket.

XX.

To promenade to sound has been prevailing
 Since music broke upon our ear and history ;
 Old Covent Garden profits by the failing
 To give us yet another Area-n Mystery !
 The object may be moral—pray don't smile ;
 They burn at least less gas at the Argyle !

XXI.

But hang you, Muse, old gal ! your verse grows rapid !
 (My Muse and I, you see, are quite familiar),
 My pen's so slow, while Ginx's is so rapid,
 But he and I, thank God, are not quite similar.
 You've read, of course, his " Blot on the Queen's Head,"
 A shocking blot upon his own instead !

XXII.

I hate a vulgar writer worse than Guido
 Fawkes ; or dances at a Kursaal, or Spa waters,
 Or Paul de Kock, or novels by Ouida ;
 He spoils the morals of your sons and daughters.
 But Ginx's Baby, take thee thine acquittal,
 I've read a ruder book but—very little !

XXIII.

Well, our's the age of philosophic fiction,
 A novel's nothing that's not analytic ;
 If I may state my views of modern diction,
 I most admire the pseudo-scientific ;
 It sounds to reason, though it's seldom stated,
 The work floats best that is the most inflated!

XXIV.

A decent novel speculates on causes,
 Quotes all the tongues, the living and the slain ;
 Dates back its architecture, say, from Moses,
 Its sculpture, say, at least, from Tubal Cain.
 Of all which things a novelist, no doubt,
 Has learned as much as most men—just about.

XXV.

Besides the above a novel's an arcanum
 Of art, of science, literature, and law ;
 I've often wondered how it could contain 'em,
 But that it does most novel-readers know :
 Yet learn, who quote from Bacon, Locke, and Davy,
 A novel may have weight yet not be heavy!

XXVI.

I love thee, Science, still I much deplore,
 The inroads on our speech you're making daily ;
 Farewell to Saxon, Gaelic evermore,
 Farewell the tongue of Spenser, Carlyle, Bayly.
 Our race is Simian ; we can bear the anguish ;
 But do not, Science, Darwinise our English!

XXVII.

The world's demands on talent's not appalling,
 Yet "Daniel D's" by no means what we hoped it,
 And "Dead Men's Shoes" is really dismal scrawling,
 Although some critics who'd not read it soaped it.
 The truth's not far to seek to those who look—
 It's woman's fate to write but one good book.

XXVIII.

Georges Sand wrote "Consuelo"—nothing more ;
 George Eliot rose from "Middlemarch" to fame ;
 Poor Mrs. Stowe expired to sounds of *encore*,
 While Lady Audley's yet Miss Braddon's name.
 I could quote lots of others—several—double,
 But then the fact's so old I needn't trouble.

XXIX.

But *quantum suff.* We're better than our *pères* ;
 We go the pace ; he's lost who skulks or ambles ;
 The meanest clerk now speculates in shares,
 And "bulls" and "bears," but, oh ! he never gambles !
 Of course, at times, there come a few odd crashes,
 But betting on the course explains all smashes.

XXX.

Then take those Bubble Co.'s—I mean directors,
 They downright ask the public to bamboozle 'em
 At such a sacrifice—in the prospectus—
 That I look daily for the New Jerusalem !
 It's true the Emma Mine made lots of scandal,
 But then the critics always find a handle !

XXXI.

Besides, what matters, if you fill your purse
 Who's crushed to-day or struggles o'er to-morrow ;
 For every blessing there must be a curse,
 For every joy a compensating sorrow.
 Stretch forth your hand, bid every ruined cub lick,
 Then "square"—yes, Leicester Square—th' indignant
 public !

XXXII.

I hate a parvenue, I loathe, detest
 With Quakers, Jumpers, and those horrid Mormons ;
 My own's blue blood—but that, of course, you've guessed ;
 Our founder crossed the Channel with the Normans.
 I cannot bear low breeding—it's a pity ;
 I hate a pedigree that smells of city !

XXXIII.

I fly the man whose world is stocks and shares,
 Or grease, or hides, or sugar, boiled or raw ;
 Whose soul is Argentine or Buenos Ayres,
 Who quotes no poet's lines except to know
 The rate of interest fixed between the two
 When distance lent enchantment to the view !

XXXIV.

But go "Ben D——" before my tears ooze through
 And sorrow for my kind has soaked my cambrie ;
 Some friendly eye may perhaps discern in you
 The higher altitudes of things in Sam Slick !
 And some may take a different view, of course—
 If praise—'tis well ; if blame—it is no worse.

XXXV.

Yet still, I own, I wonder which 'twill be—
 Who'll put thee on a shelf, who in a gutter!
 Who'll make thee lining for his trunk, "Ben D——,"
 And who the grave-clothes of short pounds of butter,
 What cynics curse thee, and what critics praise,
 And if they'll find thee after many days.

XXXVI.

Enough! Unto this wicked world, for which there's no
 cure,
 I take the liberty—it's nothing less—
 To dedicate the pages of this *brochure*,
 Which show the world is in an awful mess;
 But p'raps the world may think it doesn't need it—
 Well, if it does, it isn't bound to read it.

XXXVII.

I may just say, while turning on my axis,
 If you'd be happy scorn to tell a lie;
 Make love, as Byron says, and pay your taxes,
 Fear God, of course, and keep your powder dry;
 And then, perhaps, when things mundane are over
 You'll meet me up above where all is clover.



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BEFORE DINNER.

Seven o'clock, and an evening in August.
I find myself on the platform of the pretty little station at Hughenden.
I am utterly exhausted in an effort to catch the train.
A locomotive dwindles away in the distance.
I am in a condition of high-pressure physical and mental excitement.
I wipe the perspiration off my forehead.
"Porter!"
"Yessir!"

"The last train to town?"
"Gone, sir."
"What!" I make a dart for my Benson. Seven o'clock! For my time-table. Seven o'clock!
"Velveteens!"
"Yessir!"
"You're before your time!"
"No, sir."
"I tell you you are. I shall sue the company. Exemplary damages!"
"Some mistake, sir."
"Eh? What? SOME mistake, sir! A devil of a mistake, sir! An infernal mistake!"
"The first day of the month, sir."
"Hang the day, sir! Smother the month! I'm not an almanack! I'm not Old Moore! I'm not a book of dates! What? Ought to know what? Seven o'clock one month's like seven o'clock the next, isn't it? It used to be when I was a boy."
"Yes, sir; but times is changed now."
"Don't care a hang about the 'Times;' it

isn't my Standard. The 'Times' is always changing ; it's its nature to."

"Yes, sir ; but new time-tables. Train to town five minutes earlier."

I tear my "Daily Telegraph" to atoms.

I stamp upon it.

I grind it to powder with my feet.

"Then, hang you ! why didn't you say so before ? Why the——"

But I check myself. I never use strong language.

"Porter !"

"Yessir !"

"Look here ! Get yourself a bottle of Allsopp."

"Thank you, sir."

"But, Velveteens !"

"Yessir !"

"Come here ! I say, hang it ! Is there anything going on in Hughenden to-night ?"

"No, sir ; only the grand Parliamentary dinner at the Manor."

I prick up my ears.

"Grand Parliamentary dinner at the Manor ! Who lives there ?"

"I thought every one knew that, sir !"

"Velveteens ! Pardon me ; but a fellow like you, who's supposed to keep a wife and family on a guinea a week, isn't paid for thinking. It's a wrong point. It's a false signal. Don't do it again. Who lives at the Manor ?"

"The celebrated Benjamin D——, sir ; England's pri-meer !"

"The diners ?"

"Don't know, sir ; but—a—my—"

"Young woman ? Out with it ! It's the custom of modern society not to hesitate in speaking of its women. Remember Balham. What did she say ?"

"The gentlemen coming are all members of Parliament."

"And the reason for this gathering of lambs into the fold of the political shepherd ? Quick !"

"Nothing, sir. It's a knack Benjamin's got. Love your enemies. Feed them that hate you."

"Are the gentlemen here ?"

"No, sir ; all coming up in a special due in about an hour and a-half."

"Thank you, Velveteens. Here ! Another Allsopp."

I pause, reflect, introspect.

I think something must be done.

I resolve that something *shall* be done.

Happy thought ! The new Sultan !

The Insurrection !

The War !

The Atrocities !

Egypt !

The Khedive !

The Canal !

The Session !

I wave my hand tragically—"Benjamin D——, I will interview thee !"

"Porter !"

"Yessir !"

"The shortest cut to the Manor ?"

"The cut direct."

"Don't be saucy, porter !"

"Through the gate, sir, and straight on."

I start.

It is a lovely evening, warm and still. There are summer breaths of Eden in the sighing of the wind, romances in tomes in the whispers of the trees and the fading of the sunlight.

I walk on briskly.

I suddenly stumble over a small packet.

I pick it up.

I feel that it contains a sheet of note paper and a *carte de visite*. I determine to more closely inspect its contents. I am doing so, when my attention is distracted by an excited figure in the avenue, far down in the vista.



The figure advances upon me, flourishing its umbrella in the most deadly manner.

It draws nearer and nearer.

It waves a tasselled felt hat, with a yard and-a-half of brim, as if to attract my attention.

I start back.

I stand stock-still, electrified.

The figure draws rapidly upon me.

I discover it to be a man—a creature with a long clerically-cut coat, a white linen stock—a creature with its hair parted down the middle to make the most of an inch and-a-quarter of forehead—a young—a *very* young ritualist priest.

The creature frightens me.

I try to avoid him.

I cannot.

He comes directly for me.

I cram the letter and its contents into my pocket.

In another instant he is within hearing.

He flourishes his umbrella in my face, and bursts out in the following alarming way:—

Am I Right for Colney Hatch?

I.

Man of Mammon, e'er we part
Read the words upon my heart;
Or, if that has left my breast,
Go to Rome and read the rest.
By my vesper-breathing watch
Am I right for Colney Hatch?

II.

By mine alb and stole and cope,
By my tonsured head and Pope,
By my banners' silken flow,
By my chalice veil of snow,
By the laces that attach,
Am I right for Colney Hatch?

III.

By the chancel dossals hung,
By the incense burnt and swung,
By the candles lit at noon,
By the Sacramental spoon,
By my napkins, cutters, such,
Am I right for Colney Hatch?

IV.

By my chasuble and stool,
By Loyola's holy rule,
By the font's baptismal jugs,
By my maniples and mugs,
By my altar-cloths to match,
Am I right for Colney Hatch?

V.

By the acolytes that file
In procession down the aisle,
By the silken flags they bear,
By the holy Cross that's there,
By my vigil, fast, and watch,
Am I right for Colney Hatch?

VI.

By my piping treble tones,
By my loved Gregorian groans,
By the priest's Confessional,
By man's faults transgressional;
Ah! that whispered word I catch—
Yes, I'm right for Colney Hatch.

Before I can recover my surprise the figure has rushed past me, and vanished into space.

I simply mention this incident as a fact. Please believe it who wish. I take it myself to have been an apparition!

Happy thought! Will write to Tyndall, Huxley, Darwin, Lyell, Carpenter, &c., &c., for an immediate explanation.

I pursue my journey.

A short walk in the drowsy evening, and I come upon Hughenden Manor.

I look at my Benson.

It is eight o'clock.

I make a note of it.

What a glorious place, this Hughenden Manor!
What a wealth of vale, of wood, of hill, of dale!

Condensed Elysium! A pocket Arcadia!
Switzerland in crown octavo!

A door—a veritable pea-green painted door.

I knock.

I am opened unto by a page-boy whose lips are still redolent of oleaginous matter.

I query. I'm in luck. Benjamin D—— is at home. I chuckle.

My card.

Exit page-boy.
 I am requested to enter.
 I walk in.
 I am shown into an ante room. I am requested
 to take a seat.
 I wait. I suddenly remember the letter I found
 in the avenue.
 I open it.
 It contains a *carte de visite*, as follows:—



It is addressed to the Editor of the *Matrimonial News*.

I guess this from the contents.

After expressing his doubts about the genuineness of ladies in general, the writer proceeds to ask the following questions about the above lady in particular:—

Is that sweetly Grecian frame
 Squeezed up in a—what's its name?
 Is its Hyacinthine flow
 Fashioned with a—don't you know?
 Is that skin's transparent blonde
 Bought in Oxford Street or Bond?
 Is that cheek's inviting glow
 Rouge from Breidenbach and Co.?
 Are those teeth so pearly white
 Left in water all the night?
 Is that breath, my love, my queen,
 Fragrant but with Floriline?
 Is the brightness of that eye
 Sipped in corners on the sly?
 Are those locks of auburn hair
 Held by pins to keep them there?
 Is that palpitating breast
 Merely wadding on the chest?

Are those small and tender feet
 Pinched to death to make them neat?
 Has that ring-encircled hand
 Been to Steward's in the Strand?
 Did those diamonds take their shape
 From Alaska or the Cape?
 Tell me, maiden, on my life,
 Could'st thou make a man a wife?

I have scarcely concluded the reading of these lines before a page-boy announces that Benjamin is ready to receive me.

I am ushered into the august presence by four-and-twenty flunkeys.



The august presence receives me kindly.

I subtend at an angle of forty-five.

Benjamin, not to be outdone, subtends at an angle of forty-six.

"Delighted!" says Benjamin.

"The proudest moment of my existence!" I reply.

We subtend at three points round the table.

"Do me the honour," says Benjamin, politely, setting out a chair.

I do him the honour.

We sedentate.

"Plush!" says Benjamin, with a fine sense of what is required, "a flasch of Johannisberger, the O.D.V., and the Havanas."

Exits Plush.

"Thunder and Lightning," he says, turning upon me one of those smiles of irresistible oiliness peculiarly his, "some of my colleagues and friends are coming to dinner at nine. Do me the honour, will you?"

"Ah—yes," I say; "a—thanks," pretending to be confused. "Benjamin you flatter me. I will do you the honour. Certainly."

We subtend again; angle unknown.

We throw ourselves into graceful attitudes, and smoke and talk.

Whereof the sewage of towns, mangold wurzel, guano, and cattle plague constitute the first course of our mental aliment.

We slide into politics.

"Benjamin," I say, puffing at my Havana, "what is the present Tory policy?"

"Policy!" says Benjamin, knocking over his Johannisberger. "Policy! Bah! Policy, sir, is the curse of the political system. It's been the ruin of every party that ever existed."

I look out of a corner of my eye. "Have YOU a policy, Benjamin?" I ask, watching the smoke curl over my head.

"Ah! I thought as much," says Benjamin. "There you go! Pray help yourself to some more cognac."

"Benjamin," I say, firmly but politely, "don't equivocate. Have—*you*—a—policy?"

"No, sir! There! No government can have a policy and hope to endure. The thing's absurd. The proper policy for a government is no policy. I haven't had a policy for years!"

"An example, Benjamin," I say.

"Take William. He had a policy—in fact, he'd no end of policies. He'd a policy of liquor, and made a mortal enemy of every hog's-head in the country. He'd a policy of adulteration, and raised currents of ill-feeling among the grocers. He'd a policy of purchase, and bought himself out of the army. He'd a policy of law reform, and provoked every Whig in the country. Thunder and Lightning——"

I subtend.

"In my opinion there's only one policy worth a ducat!"

"And that, Benjamin," I ask in my captivating way, "is——?"

"Pointedly expressed in the following lines of the poet:—

Let Rads delight to bark and bite,
For God has made 'em so;
Let Butts and Biggars growl and fight,
For 'tis their nature to;
But Hardy, you must never let.
The landed gentry rise
To see the games that I am at
Beneath their nose and eyes."

"Ah! Just so," I say, with a laugh.

At this point Benjamin, with classic grace, plants his feet on the table.



"Benjamin," I say, getting languid, "what about the re-action?"

"Re-action be d——. But pardon me, sir; I never use strong language. There's been no re-action. There's been a revulsion, if you like."

"Exactly. The country, I apprehend, did not send a Tory majority to Parliament because it loved Conservatism more, but because it loved Liberalism less."

"Precisely."

I make a note of it.

"Let me tell you," says Benjamin, "the secret of all re-actions. To me politics appear like this: I see before me two great armies of thinking men.

They are called parties. These two main bodies are supported by an infinite number of other and smaller bodies, which attach themselves to this party or to that as self-interest or a natural bias may happen to determine. Offend one of these smaller bodies, or appear to injure it, and the negative force of predilection becomes the positive force of active hate, and it goes over to the enemy. A powerful and popular government, like that with which William entered office in 1868, may offend one, or even several, of these little bodies with impunity. But—and this is the point—when you come to harass and annoy them in the way and to the extent I pointed out to my dear Grey, you sign the death-warrant of your ministry."

"Ah! Then you believe, Benjamin," I say, "that William's sacrifice, and that of his party, were the necessary consequences of the honesty and assiduity with which the Liberals carried out their policy?"

"I do."

I make another note of it.

"William fell because he did too much. If I fall it shall be because I've done too little. Do you see?"

"The country expects as much," I observe, with a sly wink. "But what are you going to do for the working man?"

"Working man!" says Benjamin, with a look of contempt. "Working man! Nothing. The working man's an ass—a humbug!"

"Never mind!" I say, with a perceptible increase of bile, "Humbug or ass, you gave him the franchise."

"True," says Benjamin, taking his legs off the table, "true, Thunder and Lightning; I did. I confess it. But why? Sir, I gave the franchise to the working man on the same principle that I would give a razor to a suicide—because I knew how readily he would cut his throat with it. I don't disguise it. I fought this battle against my party, but the facts have borne out my anticipations. I knew they would. Of a large proportion of the working men who voted in 1868, I do not hesitate to say—and I say it emphatically—that with a baseness not to be found in any other class, they overthrew and abandoned their best and wisest friends—that, with a folly impossible to surpass, they launched into power we who, as a

party, were for generations the unswerving opponents of every measure for their social and political amelioration. William's misfortune has been to have worked too hard—to have done too much, not only for the working man, but for the country; and when a man works too hard, or does too much, whether for an individual or for the nation, base ingratitude is his common reward."

"Bravo!" I exclaim. "Bravo, Ben! One word more. How about the decay of truth in Parliament?"

"That," says Benjamin, heaving a sigh and placing his hand upon his heart, "grieves me very much. I have a respect for the truth, amounting, I may say, to almost a veneration; and I really think, do you know, Thunder and Lightning, that if I caught my friend, my dearest friend—say, my mother-in-law—in a lie, I should cut her dead."

"Benjamin," I say, soaring into the sentimental, "falsehood is a disease—a canker-worm, slowly but surely gnawing its way into the country's heart."

"Truth," says Benjamin, "truth in a senator is like one of Norton's* Camomile pills in that same senator's stomach—it prevents a great deal of bile."

I smile.

"I'm sorry," adds Benjamin, in a tone of great penitence, looking into the smoke that curls over his head, "that the veracity of some people is not proverbial. But, Thunder and Lightning, not to be personal, I put it to you—may I say, as a friend?—"

I say he may.

"When I was young I wrote fiction; is it unnatural that now I am old the habit should cling to me, and that I should *speak* fiction?"

"Not at all," I say. "Nothing is unnatural in you, Benjamin. You are among us—not of us."

"Do you know, Thunder and Lightning, that I attribute a great deal of my habit of—what shall I say?—of inexact speaking to my early connection with the Press. We did a great deal of that sort of thing on the Press."

I smile pityingly. "If you would care to hear it," I say, "I'll read you a short story I happen to have in my tweeds in MS."

"Certainly," says Benjamin. "But before you

* *Vide Mr. Layard's speech in the House of Commons.*

begin, take a little more cognac. Is the story in any way personal?"

"Not a bit of it," I say. "It is entitled the 'True Story of Little Ben,' and has a moral."

"Ah! I like morals," says Benjamin, dispersing the smoke with a wave of his hand. "Morals is a scarce commodity now-a-days. But pray begin."

I read as follows:—

The True Story of Little Ben.

There was once a little boy named Ben, the son of rich but honest parents, who, whenever he found himself in a difficulty, used to invent wicked little stories on the spur of the moment. And when Little Ben told a particularly large one, or a small but particularly transparent one, he never used to hang down his head after the fashion of other boys. Not a bit of it. He used to give himself spruce and jaunty airs, like a perfectly truthful boy, and wear a large flower in his buttonhole, for Little Ben was an Israelite, and understood not the ways of the Gentiles.

And Little Ben used to go to a very select Academy for boys, called St. Stephen's School, kept by a bluff, hearty, honest, indulgent old gentleman called John Bull.

And Little Ben, though the boys made game of him at first, soon made himself a position in the school, and became a great favourite with the upper form boys because he used to say rude and cruel things about the lower form boys, and so make the upper form boys laugh.

And after a time Little Ben rose to be a monitor in the school, and after that he got to be head of all the other monitors, his popularity was so great.

And when the lower form boys used to ask him questions, as head monitor, which he could not answer, he used to snub them in a way that made him many friends.

Now good John Bull, the master of the school, had in his possession a richly bound book in morocco and gold, entitled the "Empire of India," of which he was very proud, and which was the envy of the masters of all the other schools. Several lustful persons were known to have designs upon this book, and particularly the master of a school in the North called Alick.

Now one day the devil put it into the head of Little Ben to get hold of this priceless book and

alter the title. So Little Ben, under the direction of the devil, *did* get hold of it, and scratched out the word "Empire" and wrote in the word "Empress."

Now when honest John Bull, the master, came to look into his desk the next morning, he discovered what had been done, and his bile rose within him. And when he could not find out who had really done this thing, he fell into a towering passion, and called Little Ben before him, and said, "Ben, who has dared to alter the title of my book in morocco and gold?"

And Little Ben, wishing to please Dame Britannia, who secretly egged him on to do what he had done, jauntily equivocated with all the assurance of a truthful boy, then tried to chaff the head master, and, finally, when he found it wouldn't do, confessed.

But John Bull was exceedingly wroth at being trifled with, but most of all at the violence done to the title of his volume in morocco and gold, for he valued that book beyond all price.

So he took Little Ben by the arm, and placed him in front of all the boys, and said if he could not give sound and substantial reasons for what he had done he (the head master) would have no option but to tickle his little cuticle in the presence of the whole school.

Then Little Ben, knowing that a great majority of the boys in the school were ready to back him up in what he had done, winked at the head master quite openly, and said he could give no end of good reasons if he had time, for the devil had possession of him.

Then the head master, good honest John Bull, not wishing to do an injustice, gave Little Ben three clear days wherein to prepare his reasons.

And on the first day Little Ben, radiant with much cunning and carrying on a flirtation with his *pince-nez*, stood up in his place in the school, and, in presence of all the boys, said the reason he altered the title of the book in morocco and gold was because it was wished for by the monitors and boys of a school which the master kept in the East.

But the head master said this was a lie, because the boys of that school had never been consulted, and sent Little Ben to his place.

And on the second day Little Ben, who was not at all abashed, came forward again and said the

reason he altered the title was to make it agree with certain old almanacks, and particularly with a geography book which a little girl had sent him.

But the head master, feeling sick and ill over Little Ben's want of accuracy, said this was another lie, and sent him again to his place.

And on the third day Little Ben came forward again, bolder than brass, with a bigger flower in his coat, and a whiter waistcoat beneath it, and said this time he was really going to speak the truth. The reason he altered the title of the book in morocco and gold was to prevent Alick breaking into the school in the East.

On hearing this the head master nearly fainted away in his shoes, and put his hand to his heart, and said this was too much. Little Ben was worse than Æsop. He must be instantly and severely punished.



So the head master whipped down Little Ben's trousers, and hooked him up to the great easel by a curl that grew on his forehead, and made him howl. And when it was all over the head master reproached Little Ben for his want of accuracy, and his growing contempt for the details of the business of the school, and deposed him from his high office of head monitor, and sent him about his business.

And Little Ben's disgrace caused a great sensation in the school, and so preyed upon Little Ben's mind, and his habit so grew upon him, that his friends found it necessary in the end to send him to an asylum for the cure of the inveterately Æsopical.

But Little Ben's disease was found to be absolutely incurable, and after a series of "woppers" which choked off half the inmates, he was ultimately snuffed out in a fit of the colic.

This is the true story of little Ben.

"Thunder and Lightning," says Benjamin, rising, "give me your hand, old man. Your story has interested me very much. If my face is of a little deeper crimson, believe me, I don't mean it."

We subtend.

"Thunder—excuse the omission of the Lightning—if you would prefer to follow me to the drawing-room, do so. If you would prefer to amuse yourself in the garden, why——"

"Oh, the garden, certainly!" I say, stepping through the open frame of an elegant French window on to a closely-shaven parterre which, from the quantity of stock everywhere observable, I conclude to be an Egyptian lawn.

I lounge and smoke on the grass.

I indolently untie a charming bundle of cigarettes I brought with me from Alexandria.

I fall into an Egyptian reverie. I dream. Of the Café Il Paradiso, where my talent for idleness was first perfected. Of the style and the splendour and the dash of Alexandrian life, and the luxurious and glorious indolence of Egyptian existence generally. Of unending siestas, and melons and citrons, and baths in oceans of sherbet. Of the musical plashing of creamy blue wavelets down there below me, as of a perpetual honeymoon of water-nymphs. Of that lovely black-eyed Arab girl, Fadl-ed-Deen, and my naughty—my very naughty—flirtations with the Venus of Alexandria, the Signora Messalina.

I call to mind the song she sung to me under an acacia the night I left, accompanying herself on the harpoon. It was an Egyptian song, and told of the deeds of a doughty knight. It ran as follows:—



Young Stephey Cave.



I

O, young Stephey Cave is come out of the East,
 Through borders Levantine his steed was the
 beast!
 And save his grey goosequill he weapon had
 none;
 He rode all unharm'd, and he rode all alone.
 So renowned at accounts, so financially brave,
 There never was knight like the young Stephey
 Cave.

II.

He staid not for passport, he stopped not for
 Stone;
 He took the first steamer where train there was
 none;
 But ere he alighted at Ismail's gate
 The Khedive was ruined; the banker came late,
 For a babe at accounts and a scripholding slave
 Had forestalled the proud mission of young Stephey
 Cave.

III.

So boldly he entered proud Ismail's hall,
 Among Pashas and Agas, Effendis and all.
 Then spoke those Egyptians, ineffably bored,
 (For the poor craven Khedive said never a word,
 "O, come ye to fleece us, or come ye to save,
 "Or to prove us insolvent, thou young Stephey
 Cave?"



IV.

“ I long thought ye bankrupt—the truth ye denied ;
 “ Loans swell like the Solway, but ebb like its tide,
 “ And now I am come with this ledger of mine
 “ To go through your figures. You dare not decline !
 “ There are countries in Europe as bankrupt, proud
 knave,
 “ Who’d gladly be tipped by the young Stephey
 Cave.”

V.

They threw down the records, bills, bonds, and
 such stuff ;
 He tested the figures through sums on his cuff ;
 He bent down to blush, and he got up to sigh,
 With a curl on his lip and disdain in his eye ;
 He gave his right hand a most tragical wave—
 “ They’ve swindled thee proper,” said young
 Stephey Cave.

VI.

One pull at the bell, and one crocodile’s tear,
 And they ope’d the hall-door, and the Khedive
 stood near.
 So plain to his Highness the plan that he showed,
 So strongly perceiving the same he avowed—
 “ We are saved ! We are saved ! spite of loan,
 bond, and knave ! ”
 “ They’ll have sharp wits that beat us,” said
 young Stephey Cave.

VII.

There was raving and stamping ’mong Pashas
 galore ;
 Frenchmen, Germans, and Yankees, they cursed
 and they swore ;
 There was hoping and waiting ’mong bondholders
 free,
 But the fruits of his mission ne’er did they see.
 So renowned at accounts, so financially brave,
 Have ye e’er heard of banker like young Stephey
 Cave ?

But the sun has not yet set. It beats down
 upon me. I find myself becoming a frizzled man
 —a dried-up madreporé—a badly-baked terra-
 cotta likeness of Adam !

I hear voices—a chorus.



"AND SAVE HIS GREY GOOSEQUILL HE WEAPON HAD NONE."



They descend upon me.

Benjamin in the flesh comes laughing and smirking, as if he intends to die away in a smile on the first convenient opportunity.

Two fellows follow.

I rise from the grass.

"O, pray don't disturb yourself!" says Benjamin. "Only two of my much respected colleagues. Allow me to introduce you. The Flying Correspondent of the *Thunder and Lightning Herald*—Dord Lerby. The Flying ditto—Mr. Hard Hunt."

We subtend; angles very obscure.

Dord Lerby agrees with me that the weather is very hot, and falls in with my suggestion for a bath in an ocean of lemonade, and a long, steady downpour of soda-water.

"What's this fellow doing here?" asks Lerby, politely referring to me.

"Ah! there you go," says Benjamin, with an olive-oily smile. "Going to stay dinner. Wants

to know our views about the War, Egypt, the Canal, the Atrocities!"

"Won't know mine," says the hero of the Navy, coming into collision with the rockery; "they've gone to Besika Bay!"

"And mine," chimes in the cold-blooded Lerby, "appear to be known to everybody but myself. *Hide the Press.*"

Another hon. member appears at this moment. It is Bass. Ah! Ale fellow, well met. I'm particularly glad to see Bass. I contemplate getting married shortly, and it is a great pleasure to me to become acquainted with the gentleman who supplies families in casks and bottles.

We link ourselves arm-in-arm, and proceed to dinner, Benjamin obliging us *en route* with the first verse of Moody and Sankey's next hymn—

O, Rectitude! where are the charms
That sages have seen in thy face?
The slave of political qualms
Never tasted the pleasures of place.





Benjamin, who undertakes the ox-tail, is supported on his right by Mr. Lob Rowe, and on his left by Sir Verdant Hardcoat.

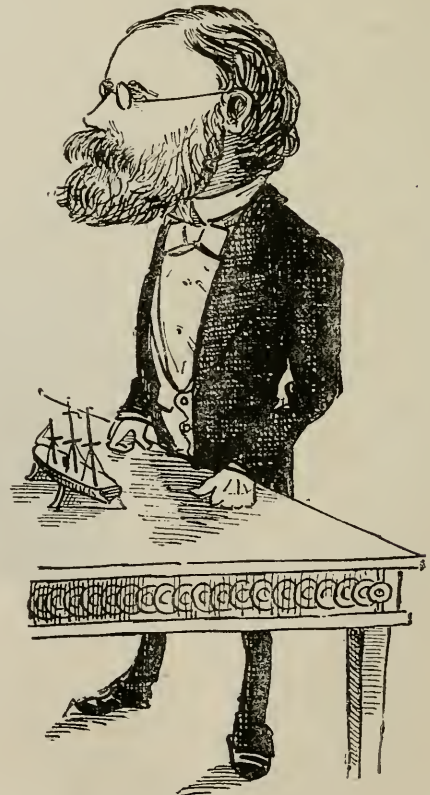
The soup at the lower end of the table—carrot—is gracefully presided over by Sweet William. Sweet William is supported by Dord Lerby and Mr. Hard Hunt.

Among the other guests I observe Sir Wellfried Lawson, Dr. Goneneary, Mr. Marmalade Yenkins, Mr. Slimsoul, Mr. Icano'er Power, Mr. Ime Gorman and the rest.

At the request of Benjamin, Mr. Slimsoul says grace.

He also hopes no gentleman will take advantage of too high a load-line.

T DINNER.



Mr. Bates rises to order. He wishes to know if the remark is intended to be personal, or if Mr. Slimsoul is only seeking for an opportunity to repeat his recent wail.

Sir Wellfried slyly remarks that it was not a whale—it was only the blubber.

Mr. Slimsoul objects to the term whale being applied to him, especially by the member for Carlisle. He leaves *that* term for those who are more in the habit of spouting!

Sir Wellfried demands an immediate apology. He thinks spouting—or any allusion to spouts—a grossly insulting term to apply to an advocate of temperance.

Mr. Slimsoul gracefully apologises.

Lob Rowe will take ox-tail. He graciously remarks that this is not the first time he has taken his *queue* from Benjamin!

We smile.

Mr. Hard Hunt will take ox-tail too. The tail of an ox is no doubt a lowly portion of the animal, but as head of her Majesty's Navy he cannot object to anything that follows a stern!

Mr. Forcitt will take carrot. He never did say "no" to a radical and never will.

Dr. Goneneary will take ox-tail. He is delighted to take anything that reminds him, however faintly, of Wagga-Wagga!

Dord Lerby is not quite sure what to take. It is best to act with caution. He will take carrot. In an age like this it is a pleasure to take any vegetable, however humble, that goes below the surface of things.

We laugh. Lob Rowe makes a special point of it. "To what a tremendous depth," he says, in accents of soft sawder, "you went below the surface of the Suez Canal thing!"

"That I did!" says Lerby. "I should have gone deeper only a Cabinet Minister in foreign affairs can't do exactly as he likes. It is necessary before all things to hold the faith of the Foreign Office, which faith unless a Minister keep whole and undefiled he must perish ministerially. And the faith of the Foreign Office is this, that there be three courses open to us, and yet not three courses but one course. For in the godhead of the Foreign Office there is one course of the musty precedent, another of the diplomatic formulæ,

and another of the red-tape. But the godhead of the musty precedent, of the diplomatic formulæ, and of the red-tape, is all one, the inconvenience equal, the absurdity co-eternal. Such as the musty precedent is, such is the diplomatic formulæ, and such is the red-tape. The musty precedent incomprehensible, the diplomatic formulæ incomprehensible, and the red-tape incomprehensible. The musty precedent eternal, the diplomatic formulæ eternal, and the red-tape eternal. And yet not three eternal but——"

Lerby is prevented trespassing further in this shocking way by cries of "Hold!" "Cut it short!" and "*Quantum suff.*"

"Lob," says Benjamin, pushing him the bottle, "There's plenty more *Veuve Clicquot* in the cellar."

Lob laughs—you know that horrid laugh of his—and we begin to fear the *Clicquot* is getting into his head.

Marmalade Jenkins will take turbot. *Par les mêmes voies on ne va pas toujours aux mêmes fins!*



Sir Wellfried declines to take salmon. Some of the worst forms of intoxication he has ever met with have been attributed to the salmon.

Mr. Newdegate declines to take turbot until a strict inquiry has been instituted into the conventual and monastic habits of that fish.

Mr. Whalley declines to take salmon, or fish of any kind, while the unhappy nobleman continues to languish in Dartmoor.

Mr. Marmalade Yenkins will not take turbot on the ground that he objects to anything fishy—the Royal Titles Bill for instance.

“Talking about the Royal Titles Bill,” says Mr. Bass, “let me read you a cutting I’ve got in my pocket from the Chinese comic periodical O-mi. It comes from the pen of the Chinese comic poet, Hot-tee. It is entitled ‘The Heathen M.P.’”

The Heathen M.P.

I.

Which I wish to remark,
And my language is plain,
That for words that are dark
And for tricks that are vain
The Heathen M.P. is peculiar,
Which the same I would wish to explain.



II.

Ben D— was his name,
And I shall not deny
That who went by the same

Was exceedingly sly;
But his smile it was pensive and child-like,
As I often remarked to Bill-y!

III.

It was April the third,
And quite soft were the skies;
Let it not be inferred
That Ben D— was likewise;
Yet he played it that day upon William
In a way too adroit to be wise.

IV.

Which we had a debate,
And Ben D— took a part,
After begging to state
That it came from his heart;
But he smiled as he stood by the table
With a smile that was hollow and tart.

V.

Now his speech it was stocked
In a way that I grieve,
(And my feelings were shocked
As you cannot believe,)
It was stuffed full of stories and crammers,
And the same with intent to deceive.

VI.

But the points that were made
By that Heathen Ben D—,
And the fibs he essayed
Were quite frightful to see,
Till at last he came out with a crammer
That was known to be such unto G—.

VII.

G— looked to the skies,
(Which was sad for to see,)
And he rose up likewise,
And said, “Darling Ben D—,
“This is false what you say about Russia!”
And he went for that Heathen M.P.

VIII.

In the scene that ensued
William took a large part,
For the way he’d been Jewed
Had gone straight to his heart,
Like the fibs that Ben D— had been telling
In the speech that had come “from his heart.”

IX.

In which speech, which was long,
He had twenty-four *packs*,
Which was coming it strong
As departing from facts ;
And they found in that speech, which was rant,
What is frequent in speeches—that's cant !

X.

Which is why I remark,
And my language is plain,
That for words that are dark
And for tricks that are vain
The Heathen M.P. is peculiar,
And the same I am free to maintain.

Lob is seen to be placidly smiling into space. It is whispered round the table that he has had something to drink before he came.

"I say, Lerby, old boy," he ejaculates, "when you invested in all those lovely Suez Canal Shares you didn't want scrip, did you?"

"No; never thought of it," placidly answers Dord Lerby.

"What you wanted was *power*, eh? P-O-W-E-R—in great big capitals?"

"In the main, certainly," answers the immobile but cautious head of the Foreign Office.

"And all the power that was to be bought with money," persists the relentless Lob, "was ten votes in the affairs of the company, eh?"

"Well," says Lerby, "if you like to put it so, it was."

"And stock enough to give us those ten votes might have been bought any day on the Paris Bourse for £7,000?"

"Hang it, Lob!" protests Dord Lerby, turning very red in the face, and twisting uneasily in his chair, "this is *scarcely* the sort of conversation for a dinner-party!"

"Now, Lerby," persists Lob, in tones of heroic mockery, "don't prevaricate. Could you have got those ten votes for £7,000? A plain question; I want a plain answer."

Dord Lerby appeals to Benjamin for protection. This is too much.

But Lob is inexorable, and repeats his question. "Could you have got those ten votes on the Paris Bourse for £7,000?"

No answer.

"Eh? I repeat it."

"Well, then, if you must know," replies Lerby, in a little bit of a tiff, "I *could*."

"Then, hang it! why didn't you? Why did you spend four millions? (No answer.) You knew that devil of a Chancellor of the Exchequer of yours (Sir Stafford is observed to try to assassinate Lob with his fish-knife) was going to put



another penny on the income-tax, eh? Yet, when you have the chance of getting ten genuine votes for £7,000, you go and spend four millions upon ten doubtful ones, eh?"

"Preposterous!" says Sir Verdant.

"Swindling the country out of a solid £3,300,000!" says Goschen.

"Gross incapacity!" says Newdegate.

"Man Newdegate!" says Lob, sternly, "don't make yourself lugubrious. Lerby, old boy, you're the greatest financier of the age. Believe me you are. Newdegate, Whalley, Goschen, Sir Verdant, and even William, finding themselves in want of ten votes, would have taken their £7,000 and gone to Paris and got them straight, genuine, and unquestionable. But you, Lerby—the greatest financier—the most cautious man of the age—go to a channel nobody ever before thought of, and get the same number of votes—useless, couponless, and mutilated—for FOUR MILLIONS! Lerby, let me embrace thee!"

Lerby blushes behind his napkin.

"But the best of it's yet to come," proceeds Lob. "Lerby is always cautious. He was particularly so about these precious Suez Canal

shares. They were refused again and again when offered in the Paris market for *three and a half* millions, with *eleven* per cent. interest *secured* on the revenues of Port Said; but Lerby—the greatest financier—the most cautious man of the age, bought them afterwards for **FOUR MILLIONS**, at **FIVE** per cent. with **NO** security.”

We blush behind our napkins, and smile upon each other most blandly.

“Splendid!” cries Goschen. “Yet all the world has to say about the perpetrator of this astounding thing in finance is that he is wise! brilliant! cautious! the ablest man of the times!



But *vanitas vanitatum*. Politics are like theology—believed in by everybody and understood by nobody. A transaction that would have been an eternal disgrace to the financial capacity of an agricultural labourer becomes in a Statesman—a peer of the realm—a magnificent piece of high

State policy; a thing—yes, a *thing*—for the world to look on at in breathless admiration. Bah! It makes one sick.”

“Joe!” cries Lob in peremptory tones, “hold your tongue!”

“Gentlemen,” interposes Sweet William, fearing a quarrel, “have you read or heard the true story of the Canal Ægyptacus.”

We confess that we have not; we confess that we should like to hear it very much. We confess—but before we have time to confess anything else, William has begun the story as under:—

The True Story of the Canal Ægyptacus and the Golden Fleece.

There was once upon a time a King named Ismailia, who held sway over the land of Ægyptacus. And Ismailia the King commissioned his nephew,



Riaz Pacha, likewise called Jason, to proceed to the land of Gallia, and to fetch from thence the Golden Fleece of the ram Four Millions Sterling, which was locked up in the coffer of the bankers of Lutetia and Londinium, and guarded by the sleepless dragon Ample Security. And Riaz Pacha, nephew of Ismailia, the King, caused to be gathered together the scrip of the shares of the Canal Ægyptacus, and set sail for Gallia in the

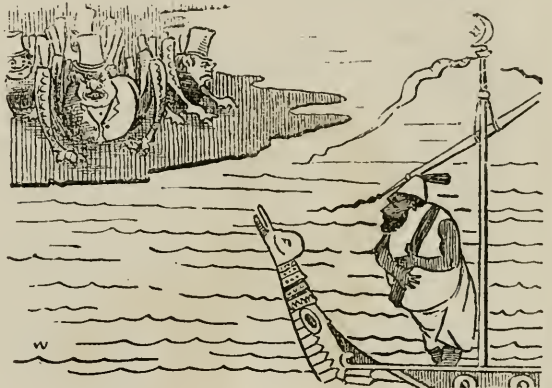
barque *Insolvency*. And after many thrilling and



heroic adventures in the Mare Internum Financii the barque lay, under the favour of Æolus, direct for the shores of Gallia, wherein dwelt a horrible species of monster called Creditors. And Riaz Pacha, when he saw these dread monsters preparing to receive him, felt ill in the liver, for he feared for the safety of his shares of the Canal Ægyptacus. And Lessepsius, the blind seer of the Portus Saidus,



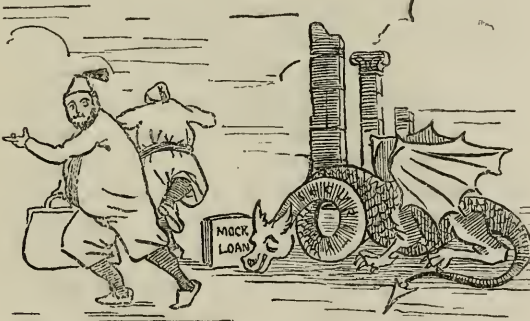
whom Saidus Corpulentis, uncle of Ismailia, had delivered from the hands of the harpies of Londinium and Pera, advised Riaz Pacha to float a small loan, and to judge by its fate of the fortune that awaited them. And Riaz Pacha, profiting by the advice of Lessepsius, floated a small loan, which escaped with the loss of thirty-five per cent. premium. Then Riaz Pacha, judging the omen to be reasonably favourable, resolved to risk landing with his shares of the Canal Ægyptacus. And after many heroic efforts to deceive the dreaded creditors, he



bore his scrip safely to land with only the loss of their coupons. And after numerous exciting adventures, first with the ghoul Mirès and afterwards with the giant Rothschild, and after that with Devaux and others among the heroes of finance in the land of Gallia, Riaz Pacha found himself at the house of one of the kings of banking in Lutetia, now styled Paris, called Dervieu. And King Dervieu, not liking the errand of Riaz Pacha, said unto him, "Yoke ye the brazen-hoofed bull, Eleven per Cent., to the plough called Bankruptcy, and



sow the teeth of the dragon Security, and I will yield ye the Golden Fleece of the ram Four Millions Sterling." And Riaz Pacha, unable to obtain better terms, accepted the conditions imposed upon him by King Dervieu, and, aided by the sorceries of Lessepsius, fulfilled the King's conditions. And straightway from the teeth of the dragon Security there sprung up crowds of the dreaded monsters called Creditors, armed with the weapon of previous hypothecation. But Lessepsius, under promise of further concessions on the Canal Ægyptacus, invested Riaz Pacha with the charm of his name and fame, which were all-powerful in the land of Gallia, whereby he was enabled to slay the armed monsters as they arose. And King Dervieu, when Riaz Pacha had completed his task, repented of what he had promised, and resolved to put to death the credit of Ismailia, and to drive his shares out of the market. But Riaz Pacha, informed of the scheme by Lessepsius, and aided by his sorceries, hastened into the market, stupified the dragon Security by the opiate of a mock loan, made seizure of his



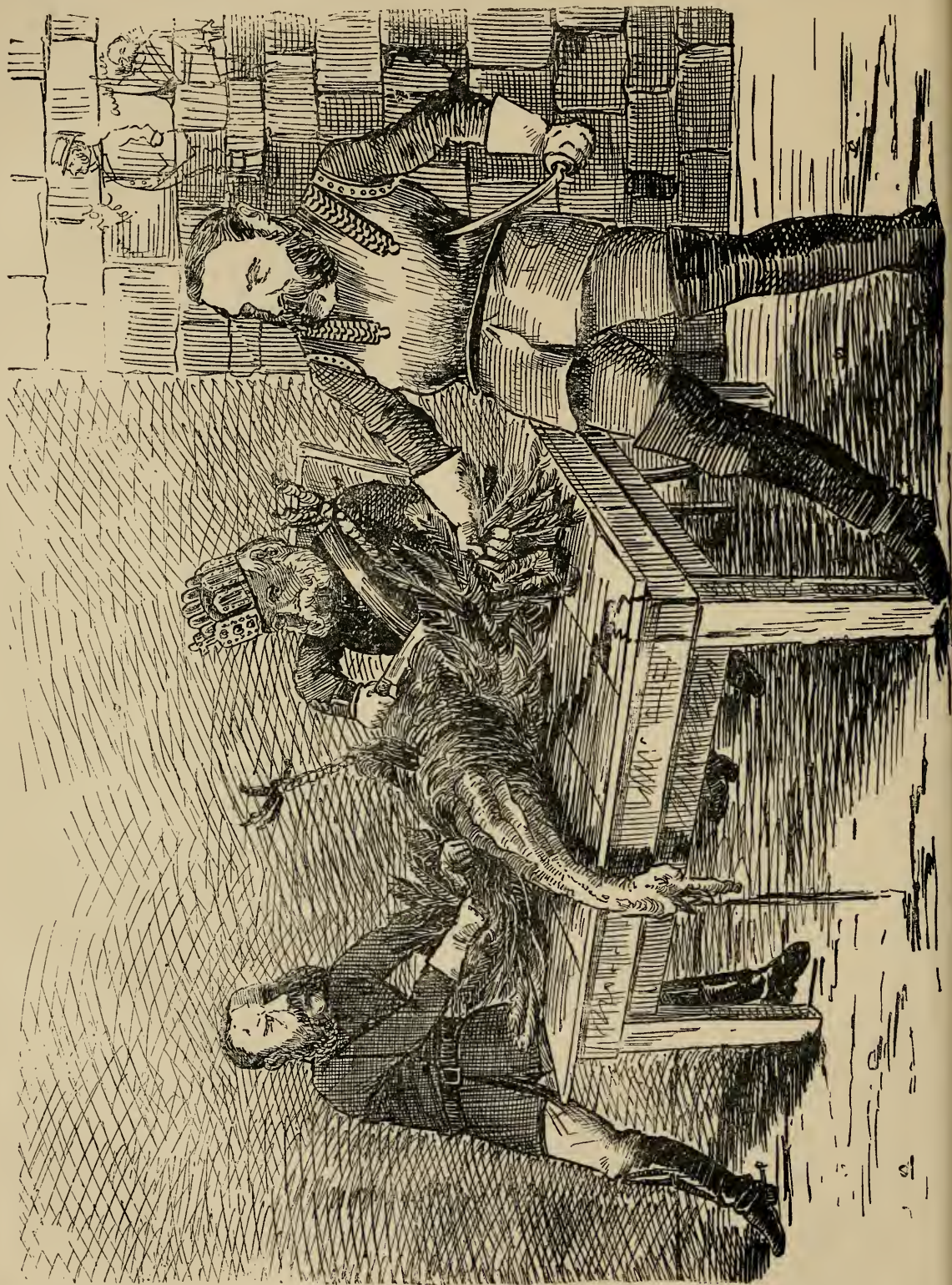
scrip of the Canal Ægyptacus, and left Lutetia by night. And after many trials and temptations by the way, in which they were equally successful in resisting the seductions of the Syrens of the Stock Exchange, and of avoiding the Scylla of exorbitant interest and the Charybdis of low values, they arrived within view of the island of Britannia. Blessed by the favours of Neptune, and wafted by the gentle breaths of Æolus, they sailed without adventure to Londinium, in sight of which a storm arose, and threatened to cast them away on the rocks of Despair. Happily, however, in the last moment of their despondency, Dominus Derbysius,

guardian of the Golden Fleece, appeared unto Riaz Pacha in the guise of Apollo, and revealed



unto him the Bank of England, and in the coffers thereof the fleece of the ram Four Millions Sterling. And Dominus Derbysius, suffering at that moment from a dire disease called Tureophilum tremens, gave to Riaz Pacha the magic key of the secret coffers, and likewise helped him to steal therefrom the fleece of the ram Four Millions Sterling. And Dominus Derbysius, who had thus proved traitor to his country and the betrayer of the Golden Fleece, refused to compensate his country by the present of the brazen-hoofed bull Eleven per Cent., or that of the teeth of the dragon Security, left by Ismailia at Portus Saidus, but accepted only the *bull* Five per Cent., and the scrip of the Canal Ægyptacus, which were useless to his country and generation because of the loss of their coupons. And this is the True Story of the Canal Ægyptacus and the Golden FLEECE.





Before we have time to applaud this story the bell rings for the next course.

Lerby's eyes sparkle like diamonds whilst Turkey is being deposited before Benjamin.

Benjamin is visibly excited, and nervously toys with his knife and fork.

The silence is broken by Sir Verdant.*

Sir Verdant observes that the sight of the plump and savoury bird deposited before Benjamin reminds him of a poem which he had heard during his recent visit to Constantinople, which he should like to repeat. It is entitled "The Good Little Fat Turk-ee," and goes something like this :—

The Good Little Fat Turk-ee.

I.

Hamid Aga was his *nomen*, round and *plenus*
was his vest,
And he got himself appointed to a sanjak in the
West,
For to be that sanjak's ruler, which is simply for
to say,
To amass his little fortune in a quickish sort of
way.

II.

When he reached his little sanjak on the Arab
steed he rode,
Hamid Aga strained his eyeballs for to pick on
his abode,
Till he spied a most umbrageous and enchanting
little dell,
When he said "I thank thee, Alla, this will suit
me very well."

III.

And he called upon the owner of that lone and
mossy dell,
And he blandly did inform him where he'd chosen
for to dwell,
And he said "you'll get the needful, since I must
my dwelling fix,"
And he sat and smoked his hookah till they hunted
up some bricks.

* It is a curious fact that a man who breaks the silence does not keep the peace. But this is stupid.



IV.

When for days the people'd builded and a stately
mansion rose,
It occurred to Hamid Aga that the land was rich
and close,
So he pointed out unto them that it might be just
as well
If they clapt a thousand acres on his little piece
of dell!

V.

When the land had been appended Hamid thought
there'd be no harm
If he utilised a portion for the purpose of a farm,
So he simply told those peasants he detested
shedding blood,
Still he needed lots of cattle and his pasturage
was good!

VI.

While the lowing kine were coming Hamid
thought 'twould be no worse
If he put a little money to the trifle in his purse,
So he just informed the sanjak he was rather
short of cash,
So he'd double all their taxes for he wasn't going
to smash!

VII.

And by such a course of conduct Hamid Aga
soon arose
For to be a little Cræsus in the sanjak of Chénose,
Which he ultimately quitted for his native land
and rest
With the Star of the Medjidie shining brightly on
his breast.

The reading of this poem (which Sir Verdant assures us is true) is the signal for a general discussion on the Eastern Question.

Sir Verdant lays down, as a general proposition, that under a *Mahometan* government the equality of Christians and Mussulmans is impossible.

Dord Lerby replies, with a laugh—not a sneering laugh—*that* would have been incautious, but with a perfectly cautious laugh, which is everything. “Verdant,” he says—very cautiously, mind you—“he who steals your style of argument steals” (he was going to say, “trash,” but that would have been incautious), “steals stuff. It is a fact—”(it is always a good sign of caution to premise that what you are going to say is a fact)—“It is a fact that in India not only Christians and Mahometans but even Jews live together on terms of equality.”

“That,” replies Sir Verdant, “may be either true or false. The government of India is *Christian*. It does not affect in any way the proposition I’ve laid down. What I assert is this—that no such thing as the equality of Christian and Mahometan has ever yet existed *under a Mahometan government*. Is that a fact or not?”

“It may be true or false,” answers Lerby—(you observe the caution). “If the Mahometans are bad, the Christians are not much better.” (It is always a sure sign of caution to assert that your opponent is as bad as you are.) “If there can be no equality for Christians under a Mahometan government, there certainly can be none for Moslems under a Christian government.”

Sir Verdant laughs. “Lerby,” he says, “you must be a little more cautious. You have distinctly contradicted yourself. You referred a moment ago to India. In India, you said, not only Christians and Mahometans, but even Jews

lived together on terms of equality. The government of India is *Christian*. What do you mean, therefore, by declaring to be impossible in *Turkey* what you distinctly told me to observe a moment ago was not only possible but an actually subsisting fact in *India*?”

Dord Lerby is unable to reply, and moves about unceasingly in his chair.

“If the *Mahometans of India* live happily together under a *Christian* government, why shouldn’t the *Mahometans of Turkey*?”

“Ah!” laughs William.

“Ah! ah!” laughs Goschen.

“Ah! ah! ah! ah!” laughs Lob.

Benjamin finds it necessary to stand in the breach, and to come to the rescue of his cautious—of his *very* cautious—but utterly routed Foreign Secretary.

“If I understand you correctly, Verdy,” interposes Benjamin, “you propose to limit the rule of the Turkish Mahometan government to Turkey in Asia, in which thirteen out of the seventeen millions of Turkish Mahometans are, and in Turkey in Europe, which contains ten million Christians and only four million Mussulmans, of whom scarcely two millions are Turks, to put a *Christian* government in place of a Mahometan one.”

“That is my idea exactly,” says Sir Verdant, “and I see in it a complete, and the only complete, settlement of the Eastern Question. You can’t drive the Turks out of Europe. It is impossible. But if three Christians to one Mussulman make a country a Christian and not a Mahometan country, then Turkey in Europe is Christian, and it is quite within the province of the Christian Powers of Europe to declare that while the Mussulmans of European Turkey continue to live in a Christian country, they shall be compelled also to live under a Christian government.”

“Certainly!” says William.

“Certainly!” says Bruce.

“Certainly!” hiccups Lob.

Benjamin laughs compassionately. “You forget, my dear Verdy, the practical difficulties. You are at present flying entirely in the region of sentiment. In the first place, how do you propose to carry this scheme into effect—how do you propose to supplant the Turks by the Christians?”

"And not only that," interposes the cautious Lerby, "but how are you going to give the Christians the Turk's land, the Turk's houses, the Turk's commerce, the Turk's Imperial and Municipal offices and appointments?"

"Ah!" laughs Cross.

"Ah, ah!" laughs Hardy.

"Ah! ah! ah! ah!" laughs Hard Hunt.

Sweet William comes to Sir Verdant's rescue.

"My beloved Ben," he says, "you talk like a child."

"In other words you talk 'kid,'" puts in Sir Wellfried, always on the alert for a joke.

"*We don't want* to give the Turk's property to the Christian. We only want to give the Christian a chance of getting it for himself."

"That's our position," says Goschen.

"Certainly!" says Bruce.

"Certainly!" hiccups Lob.

"Nothing, dear Ben," adds Sweet William, "is more certain than that if the Christians in European Turkey were allowed to compete on equal terms with the Mahometans in schools, in courts of justice, in the army, the navy, and the civil service, they would BECOME the rulers of European Turkey. Nothing could prevent them."

We murmur a general assent.

"The Turks know it. They recruit the army solely from among themselves. They are willing to suffer all the hardships of a crushing blood-tax, rather than allow Christians to be trained to the use of arms."

"That is known to everybody," says Benjamin; "but you argue, William, in a vicious circle. You first say that the equality of Christian and Mahometan is not possible in European Turkey, and then you *assume* it to be possible by formulating a scheme of Turkish regeneration of which that possibility is the basis."

"Ah!" laughs Cross.

"Ah! ah!" laughs Hardy.

"Ah! ah! ah! ah!" laughs Hard Hunt.

"Besides, William," proceeds Benjamin, "you forget our foe in the North. Let me repeat to you a verse or two from the pen of the most talented of our Turcophile poets:—

The Russians.

Who spread no Slavie Empire far
O'er Khiva's deserts and Kashgar,
And murder not, and name it war?

The Russians!

Whose scourging armies never chose
To make Darius' sons their foes,
And dye in blood the Persian rose?

The Russians!

Who camp by Attrek's lonely shore?
Whose sunny vales and Barakpore
Shall hear the clang of arms no more,

The Russians!

Who did not dare destroy, annul,
(Nor since defy us—coward, fool.)
The record of Sevastopol?

The Russians!

Whose new embrasures speak not scorn?
Whose fleet's on never a billow borne
That flows towards the Golden Horn?

The Russians!

Who turn no envious gaze upon
The lands which Clive subdued and won—
Our Indian Empire and Ceylon?

The Russians!

Who were our friends in 'fifty-four,
And spared our country's life and gore,
And hope to shed them nevermore?

The Russians!

Whom should we court and value more
Than bearded statesmen's art and lore,
And love and cherish evermore?

The Russians!

"These verses are all very nice," says William, "but they cannot have the slightest possible bearing upon our present discussion. In re-laying down Sir Verdy's argument you have completely

misrepresented him. He said—not that equality was impossible in Turkey, but that it was impossible *under a Mahometan government.*”

“Certainly!” says Sir Verdant.

“Certainly!” says Goschen.

“Certainly!” says Lob.

“Verdy refuted Lerby’s insinuation that it was also impossible under a Christian government, by pointing him to his own example of India. Thus, our dear Lerby has been hoist with his own petard. I then asserted that if equality were accorded to Christians—I did not say how, or by whom—the problem of Christian supremacy would work out its own solution.”

“See that, Lerby?” asks Lob.

“Yes,” says Lerby. “What I don’t see is, how the equality’s to be brought about.”

“That,” answers Sir Verdant, “you were not *made* to see. You were educated in the wrong school, my boy! Why shouldn’t the Powers of Europe unite together to enforce the literal fulfilment of the Hatt Humayoun of 1856 on some such principle as this? Why shouldn’t they unite and say to the Mahometan government of Turkey—‘We have allowed you twenty years in which to enforce your Charter of Rights. You have hopelessly failed to enforce it. We’ll stand it no longer. We’ve had enough of this sort of thing. Out you go! We’ll try a change. If a Mahometan government can’t carry out the simplest act of constitutional justice, we’ll try what a *Christian* government can do!’ Now, Lerby, why don’t YOU proceed on some such lines as these?”

“Because,” answers Lerby, “we are waiting to see if the Turk won’t do the thing himself.”

“And what’s plainer still, old man,” interposes Benjamin, “we mean to go on waiting.”

Sir Verdant curls his lip in scorn. “Blind, drunken fools!” he answers; “always with your fingers tied up with official red tape, or poking your noses in dusty archives, can’t you see that you’ve been waiting long enough? Why don’t you look at plain facts?”

“My dear boy,” replies Benjamin, “we are too

highly educated in the solemn fictions of our official routine to do that. Besides, if we *did* open our eyes, and *did* see the facts, we shouldn’t understand them. We can’t ALL be Sir Verdant Hardcoats, you know!”

We smile.

“You ought to have known from the beginning,” persists Sir Verdant, throwing himself into an oratorical attitude, “that the Hatt Humayoun could never be enforced by a Mahometan government; first, because of the Turk’s religion, which is the Turk’s law; and, secondly, because of the intuitive principle of self-preservation, which is the first law of all races.”

“Hear!” says William.

“Hear, hear!” says Goschen.

“Hear, hear, hear!” hiccups Lob.

“England ought to have looked these facts in the face in 1856. Twenty years ago England ought to have cast out from her councils, proudly and remorselessly, the whole of that Palmerstonian brood who did then, and do now, feed public opinion with the foul lie that the exclusion of Russia from Constantinople is necessary for the safety of our Indian Empire.”

“Hear!” says William.

“Hear, hear!” says Goschen.

“Things might then have been different,” says Newdegate.

“And would have been,” says Mr. Marmalade Yenkin. “As the poet says—

There are persons on the Bosphorus

Who do not care a toss for us,

That fellow, Hussein Avni—no the duffer has
been shot—

But there still lives Pacha Mahmoud

And Midhat—who mean us no good,

And that man they call Aarify—O, I
execrate the lot!”

“Marmalade having quoted poetry,” says Bruce, “and whilst we are waiting for the next

course, shall I read you a little poem I jotted down coming up in the train?"



"Yes, do! Brucey, dear," says Cross.

"Yes, do, do!" say all of us.

"It is entitled, 'How King Leo Solved the Problem that Puzzled the Three Wise Men,' and goes like this—

How King Leo Solved the Problem that Puzzled the Three Wise Men.

I.

King Leo called for his trumpeters three,
 'O trumpeters blow me a blast!
 O'er mountain and sward,
 O'er valley and fjord
 The sound was heard
 Of the blast of those trumpeters three!

II.

King Leo called for his wise men three,
 'O, three wise men,' said he,
 'I crave by my beard,
 'The oil which besmeared,
 'And all that's revered,
 'The love of my wise men three!'

III.

King Leo called for his henchmen three,
 'O, henchmen three,' quoth he,
 'O, bring unto me
 'As quick as may be,
 'From my poulteric,
 'The best of my Turkeys three!'

IV.

King Leo spake to his wise men three,
 'O, three wise men,' quoth he,
 'By my three-edged sword
 'So divide this bird
 'That there be a third
 'AND A LEG! for my wise men three!'

V.

Outspake the first of those wise men three,
 The wily Russ spake he,
 'By Aga and Beg
 'If I take this leg
 'There must be a leg for me!'

VI.

Outspake the next of those wise men three,
 The Austro-Mag spake he,
 'If I take this other,
 'My Russian brother,
 'There's also a leg for me!'

VII.

Outspake the third of those wise men three,
 The valiant Deutsch spake he,
 'It may not do,
 'The legs are two,
 'Where is the limb for me?'

VIII.

They thought full oft, those three wise men,
 They held of councils three,
 At last to vow
 They knew not how,
 To change two legs to three !

IX.

Outspake the whole of those wise men three,
 Outspake those three wise men,
 'As we live, O king,
 'An impossible thing
 'Thou biddest thy three wise men !'

X.

King Leo called for his trusty sword,
 His sword with its edges three,
 'O solved by the blade,
 'By the gods !' he said,
 'Must this baffling problem be !'

XI.

King Leo dealt a doughty blow,
 Three doughty blows dealt he,
 And Austria fell where Deutschland stood,
 And Russia drank of Magyar blood.
 Outspake the King,
 'My wise men three,
 'So solved at last
 'Must this problem be !''

A long silence follows the reading of these lines.

We feel it impossible to conceal from ourselves that the solution of the Eastern Question depicted in these verses is the only possible termination of the present Eastern policy of England.

So we are sad, and while the next course is being served no one speaks.

Suddenly Dord Lerby breaks the silence. He assures us that a fearful load, which he can bear no longer, is pressing upon his mind, and begs us to hear him relate a vision he has had only the previous night, and which has kept him ever since in a state of continual terror.

Having nothing better to do we listen.

Dord Lerby's Vision.

I seemed in my sleep to be borne to a distant land on the wings of the wind. The countries over which I was whirled were radiant and happy—so much so, indeed, that I scarcely believed it was earth. Nature, down there below me, in cornland and woodland, in vineyard and village, lay all laughing and beautiful. I heard the carol of the maiden at her spinning. I heard the songs of the reapers as they gathered the treasures of harvest. I heard, as I was being hurried along, faster and yet faster, the first prattlings of little lips and the gentle words of young mothers, which were borne, high up above to me, on the wings of soft winds.

But suddenly the scene changed. The earth below me seemed hard and neglected. The further I advanced, the more lonely and still and weird appeared the scene, as if under the spell of some strange forgetfulness. The mountain slopes, groaning under their load of golden corn, called in vain for the hand of the husbandman. The harvest rotted on its stalks.

Faster and faster I was borne along, till the earth became parched and black. A deadness, a stillness, an unutterable desolation oppressed me. My blood was freezing. I dared not think.

Faster and faster the wind bore me along, over deserted homes and untended cattle and rotting crops, till, with a suddenness that sent the blood smarting through my veins, the air became thick with the smoke of arms, and ever and again patches of withered herbage crossed my vision, red with the gore of men.

Then it dawned upon me where I was. I knew I was in the midst of ruin; I dared not look. I knew I was in the midst of horrors I might have prevented; I dared not think.

I was whirled along. Human skulls, bleaching in the silence of unutterable desolation, dotted the green of the roadsides.

I passed over a village. The winds whispered in my ears that it was Panaghurista. I looked; some malignant influence opened my eyes.

I saw a hundred young men gathered together in a dim light, listening to the harangue of a

white-headed old man, and shouting "Death or Freedom!" Then I saw them raise a flimsy barricade of stones and branches, and retire without arms to the peaceful shelter of their homes.

But in a moment methought the corn on the slopes of the mountains changed into a harvest of armed devils, who swept down on the doomed



village of Panaghurista with the terrible swiftness of a pestilence. I saw them demand the arms of the crowding, supplicating people, and I saw them delivered up without a reproach or a murmur of resistance.

Suddenly a fearful presentiment laid hold upon me. Voices whispered to me that Panaghurista was doomed. A dread sinking within my own heart told me that something horrible was about to happen. Suddenly the sky around me in every direction flashed lurid with the work of incendiaries. I saw swarms of Bashi-Bazouks pouring everywhere—burning, pillaging, and destroying—murdering men, women, and children everywhere, with horrible cruelties and mutilations.

The blood rushed violently through my veins. I raised my hand to strike a withering blow for God and my own humanity, but a thousand gibbering spectres burst upon me, whispering, "Caution, my lord; caution!" The word "Caution" was the fiend's talisman, under the

influence of which I was powerless. I saw three thousand people cut up—sabred—butchered in cold blood, without power to defend themselves, without arms in their hands. I saw mothers offer their treasure—their life—everything, body and soul, in exchange for the honour of their daughters.

I tried to speak. I felt the hot blood darting upwards towards my brain. "Let me go!" I cried to the fiends that surrounded me and held me back, "Let me go!" but they only leered at me, and cried "Caution, my lord, caution!" "Caution!" cried I, "caution to the winds! I am a man, let me go!" But the fiends only laughed at me saying I was *not* a man—*only a Statesman*.

I saw an old man violated in holy church, ay, on the steps of God's altar, and I saw him cast into a fire and roasted alive. I saw old men's eyes torn out, and their limbs hacked from their bodies piece by piece. I saw pretty little children driven at the point of the bayonet to carry the mutilated heads of their little comrades while the warm life-drops were still dripping from them. I saw pregnant women ripped open to slay the unborn babe, and I saw children so snatched from the womb spitted in wild glee on the points of Turkish bayonets. Again I tried to burst the invisible bonds that held me, but again the fiends only replied with derisive cries of "Caution!" "The Status Quô!" and "Our Indian Empire!"

For three days and nights was I kept hovering (as I deserved to be) in unspeakable terror over this ruined and gutted village of Panaghurista, my senses fed day and night with incendiaryisms and infamous violations and assassinations, with the shrieks of the mutilated and the groans of the dying. Ever and anon the fiends sung to me, and this is the song they sung—

The Fiends' Song.

I.

D—y, this is thy day's work!
Fold thy palms across thy breast,
Turks but kill—and Statesmen jest!

Let them kill!

Terror of the Russian dirk
Answers for the blood they spill—

Let them kill!

II.

Far from thee be care or pity ;
 Nothing but the status quô
 Stirs thy sullen mental flow—

Let them kill !

English ships guard yonder city,
 England's Turkey's ally still—

Let them kill !



III.

Statesmen's hearts weren't made to feel :
 Is not high State policy
 More than Christianity ?

Let them kill !

Kill—thine England's strength and weal,
 Shielding her from Russian steel—

Let them kill !

A seeming eternity of unspeakable infamies and
 tortures and the scene was changed.

I was whirled over wider and wider expanses of
 ruin, of rapine, and of slaughter.

I was whirled over Tatar-Bazardjik, where these
 aching eyeballs saw churches and schools—more
 than I dared to count—burnt to ashes with
 petroleum and gunpowder ; where, amid unspeak-
 able terrors and horror, I saw altars overturned,
 and holy pictures and holier places denuded,
 desecrated and defiled.

To Perustitsa, where methought I beheld a
 thousand persons—men, women, and children—
 driven into a church, and swept into eternity with
 bullets and grape shot.

Over two hundred villages whose only memorial
 was ashes, whose only epitaph was pestilence.
 Over hamlets strewn with outraged and mutilated
 dead, which their murderers had vainly endeavoured
 to burn, until at last the winds lulled
 and we hovered o'er Philipopolis.

Here the fiends directed my wandering gaze to
 a low, miserable, dilapidated prison of wood and
 stone, confined in which I beheld the wreck—the
 ruin—shall I say the remnant?—of a once proud,
 sweet, susceptible, and even still surpassingly
 beautiful girl.

It was Raika, “Queen of the Bulgarians,” so
 styled by the Turks in derision, the pride of her
 people, and only a few days before the star and
 glory of her native village of Panaghurista. She
 appeared so weak, so wan, so lovely even in her
 loneliness and brokenheartedness, that had I had
 a tear in my whole nature I could have wept.
 But I had not, and I simply fastened my eyes in
 the simulation of compassion on this beautiful
 creature who but a few short hours ago trod her
 native village green with the queenly grace, nay
 with almost the power, of an empress, but who
 was now only the refuse of the vile insults and
 viler outrages of a cowardly and brutal soldiery.

Raika was kneeling in the horrible prison below
 me, on the cold hard stones, her face upturned to
 heaven, with the tears glistening in the soft light
 of her large hazel eyes, praying to the Great God
 in Heaven for help, for pity, for mercy, and for
 death.

Her prayer still haunts my memory, and I will repeat you a portion of it as it came to me hovering o'er her prison in Philipopolis, wafted on the wings of soft breaths.



Raika's Prayer.

I.

Hear my prayer, lost and heart broken,
 Spurned by all, my God, but Thee,
 Light of Judah, Star and Token,
 Saviour of the world—and me.
 Stars their vigil watch are keeping,
 Rainy eyes are pleading Thee
 Hear—by tears of Thine own weeping,
 Tears of lone Gethsemane !

II.

Hear my prayer, poor, blind, mistaken,
 O that I had wings to fly !
 Wounded, bleeding, lone, forsaken,
 It were sweet indeed to die !
 Waft, ye hushed winds, waft my story,
 Holy hearts, O feel for me,
 Torn, insulted, spat on, gory,
 Help, Thou Hope of Galilee !

III.

O, if tears could save our nation,
 Or if torture could redeem,
 Bright had dawned our land's salvation
 Through the darkness of her dream !
 Or if long dark nights of sorrow
 Could remove our curse and rod,
 Long had dawned a brighter morrow
 For our country and our God !

Barely had the last holy word dropped from the thin and pallid lips of the beautiful Raika, than the wind again arose, and I was whirled farther and more rapidly over this seemingly interminable battle-field of infamy.

At last, at the command of the fiends, who at every step sustained my spirit in its sinking flight with their awful chorus, "Caution, my Lord D—y, caution!" (which was their talisman, and which is being continually dinned into my ears even now, and threatens one day to be my ruin, and the ruin of my country) we came to a standstill under the shade of the Balkan mountains.

Below me lay Batak, the sweetest village ever beheld by mortal eye, rich in cornland and woodland, the Eden of the Balkan.

Then in a moment, as with the speed of a sudden tempest, I saw a dusty cloud of Bashi-Bazouks sweep down from the hills upon the peaceful and smiling village. I heard them demand the instant surrender of all the arms possessed by the inhabitants, and I beheld them delivered up along with cries for protection and entreaties for mercy.

I heard Achmet Aga, the chief of this scourging horde, command the assembling of all the young girls of the village, from among whom I saw one hundred selected for the gratification of the brutal impulses of this filthy and ignorant scoundrel and his officers and associates.

I would have interfered to prevent this, but those horrible fiends held me back with derisive yells of "Caution!" "Constantinople!" and "India!"



Then commenced in real earnest the terrible work of destruction and carnage. I saw Bulgarian fathers killing their own wives and children, so as to put them out of the reach of the horrors that awaited them. I saw whole families burned alive in their houses. I saw children cut in two by blows from a sabre. I heard innocent babes shrieking out their little lives on the points of Turkish bayonets. I saw girls dishonoured and then beheaded. I saw the most notable man in the village spitted upon a pike and then roasted alive under a slow fire.

In the midst of the wild, piercing shrieks of the mutilated and dying, I heard ever and again the wild yelling of the Bashi-Bazouks as they shouted their song of victory, and even now the horrible anthem rings vividly in my ear.

The Song of the Bashi-Bazouks.

I.

Drink deep of his blood, my falchion blade,
 Let the curséd Giaour die!
 Or call on his Christ to stem the stream
 That runs so red and high!
 Oh, long before the sunset's glow
 Women shall weep, and weep for woe,
 With ever a husband a-lying low,
 Red in his gore for Alla!
 Then down with the Cross! Burn, kill, and dis sever!
 And *Giaour O eulsen!* Mahomet for ever!



II.

Drip, drip with his blood, my reeking spear,
 And three curses be on the slain!
 High waves the Crescent o'er the Cross
 Her triumph and disdain!
 Oh, long before the sunset's glow
 Fathers shall mourn amidst ashes for woe,
 With the pride of their manhood a-lying low,
 Dead!—dead in his gore for Alla!
 Then down with the Cross! Hack, hew, and
 dis sever!
 And *vurunuz eulsen!* The Prophet for ever!

III.

Reek, reek with his blood, mine ataghan,
 'Tis to-day that the Giaour dies!
 And leave me a path to Paradise
 And the light of the Houris' eyes!
 Long, long before the sunset's glow
 Maidens shall weep in their ruin for woe,
 With ever a lover a-lying low,
 Red in his gore for Alla!
 Then down with the Cross! Destroy and dis sever!
 And *Alla il Alla!* Mahomet for ever!

While the last echoing notes lingered in my ears of this terrible wild war song the scene changed. Horror grew upon horror. To the left and right—all around me—I beheld a hideous wilderness of small stalls, intermixed in one place



with the rags of women's clothing, and in another with tresses and ribands. I saw innumerable foul holes, full of putrid and decomposing bodies. I saw them floating in dams and festering in pits. I saw one hundred young girls—the same I before spoke of as reserved for the lust of the conquerors—violated and killed, and their bones and flesh cast to the dogs; and I saw dogs gnawing their heads in the open street. Then burst upon me a foul and horrible deed, which I thought impossible of conception—at least on this side of hell. I saw two hundred terrified women and

children fly from the ferocity of the Bashi-Bazouks and seek refuge in a schoolroom. I saw a whole army of these organised assassins sweep down upon and surround it. I guessed what was coming, and made a desperate effort to free my limbs from the impalpable bonds which held me, but the fiends only jeered at me, screeching out in hideous Babel their fearful chorus of "Caution, mylord, caution!" "Traditional policy!" "Status quo!" "Russia!" "Constantinople!" and "India!" I saw these Bashi-Bazouks make bands of hay and straw and steep them in petroleum, and when they had made sufficient I saw them ignite them and cast them through the windows among the weeping and shrieking women and children. In another moment I saw the whole place burst into flame, and in an instant, as it were, the two hundred women and children were enveloped in fire. Then occurred an incident which was, if anything, the most fearful of all. In the midst of this awful conflagration, almost completely enveloped in the smoke and flames of the burning edifice, I beheld—I cannot conceal it—I beheld Benjamin. The sight of Benjamin in this horrible situation sent the blood burning to my brain. I saw him—I almost fancy I can see him now—I saw him standing in the midst of it all, with his arms folded as became the hero of such a tragedy, and with a glittering coronet upon his brow, which seemed the fitting reward of the avowed apologist of such murder and infamy. Then, in the midst of the flames, I saw wives and mothers exposing to his gaze the mutilated trunks and limbs of their husbands and sons and brothers, shaking their fists in his face, and importuning and imploring him on all sides, saying, "Give us back the lives of our husbands!" "Give us back our sons and daughters!" and imprecating curses upon his head. I saw heart-broken orphans appealing to him with hot tears in their eyes, in accents that would have moved any but the heart of a Jew, saying, "Give, give, give! Give us back the lives of our murdered fathers and mothers!" But Benjamin, standing there in the conflagration stern and silent, relaxed not a muscle, nor looked like pity, nor whispered one word in commiseration of their fate. All he did was to stand there with his arms folded,

contemplating the advancing flame and frowning contemptuously upon the widows and orphans whose tears and prayers were being quenched in smoke and ruin. Only one word did Benjamin utter, and that was to tell these shrieking, murdered women and children to be of good cheer, for these wholesale murders and mutilations were simply "quaint incidents" of rebellion, and mere "peculiarities of Eastern warfare;" and then I awoke with a start in a cold sweat.

The conclusion of this extraordinary vision of Dord Lerby's is hailed with a visible sense of relief.

Dord Lerby says, by way of addendum, that the only thing he can't understand about his dream is the fact that he was not in the fire as well as Benjamin. He thinks he ought to have been.

So do we.

Mr. Bruce, who is helping himself to the salad, remarks that he should not be surprised to hear if the dream were all true.

But Benjamin, delicately waving his hand into space, pooh-poohs the idea as so much café gossip and mere "coffee-house babble." He adds that, even if true, the British Government is not going to change its Eastern policy at this late period of the existence of the Tory party!

Sweet William suggests, as he cuts up his cheese into little dices, that there is such a power in England as the *vox populi*. He adds that it is scarcely to be supposed that a people who have overturned the tyrannies of more kings than one will calmly allow themselves to be set at defiance by a newly-created earl.

Sir Stafford Northcote comes to the rescue of his chief by remarking that it ought to be remembered that the people of England don't understand foreign politics.

Sir Verdant remarks that a people who can be satisfied with the foreign policy of Dord Lerby *certainly* don't understand foreign politics. At the same time he advises the Government not to presume on their ignorance. It does not follow that because they have mistaken incapacity for caution in the Earl of Derby they will be so ready to mistake senseless inflexibility for high State policy in the Earl of Beaconsfield.

Benjamin, smiling his olive-oiliest, and putting aside his cheese plate, observes that, as a particular friend and admirer of Lord Beaconsfield's, he is privileged to say that, so far as the war in the East is concerned, his lordship's partiality for Turkey is easily explained. Lord Beaconsfield hates the Turks, not from any desire to curb the ambition of Russia—nothing so noble—but because the Servians have been the relentless persecutors of the Jews. Perhaps there is no truth in this belief—there seldom is in any of his lordship's beliefs—still it is an idea he shares in common with the *Daily Telegraph*. He is also privileged to state that Lord Beaconsfield has recently become a great admirer of that journal, and always keeps his coronet wrapped up in a copy of the *D. T.*

Sir Verdant remarks that the only apparent difference between Benjamin and Lord Beaconsfield is that Benjamin had not the audacity to dare the people of England, while Lord Beaconsfield has.

Lob Rowe, who has, in common with most of us, finished his dinner, and reclines languidly back in his chair, remarks that the newspaper was not far from the truth which said that since Benjamin had been made an earl he had conducted himself as if the dignity had made him drunk.

Sir Wellfried (always ready with his little joke), instantly swoops down upon us with an epigram he had intended to send to the *Examiner*.

That liquor's much to answer for
Is true and antiquated;
'Tis said since Ben became an earl
He's seemed intoxicated;
The reason must be obvious—
(Or will be when it's stated)—
How could it well be otherwise
In one so elevated?

Benjamin turns appealingly to me.

"Thunder and Lightning, old man," he says, "do *you* believe there's any truth in this horrible vision?"

I see the compliment and subtend.

"Having," I reply, "having been in Crete at the seat of war during the late insurrection, I unfortunately believe every word of it."

Benjamin smiles upon me benignly.

"Thunder and Lightning, sir," he says, "we understand each other. Thanks for your kindly

reference to the seat of war. I've been on the Press. I know what the seat of war is," and Benjamin graciously winks upon me.



"The true reason, in my opinion," says Hard Hunt, "of the change of public feeling in England on the Eastern Question is not Turkish cruelty, but Turkish bankruptcy and extravagance

—not the sufferings of the Eastern Christians, but the hardships of the Western bondholders—not, in short, the atrocities in Bulgaria, but the atrocities in finance."

"Hard Hunt," says John Bright, who has hitherto abstained from taking a prominent part in the discussion, "you astound me. Is it possible that you—a Tory minister—can believe your country so devoted to money, so base, so completely and infernally selfish as to be ready to decide a question involving the fate of empires and the future of millions of the human race by reference to no other standard than scrip? Have the meetings, the echo of whose voice still reverberates through Europe, been meetings of bondholders? Have the finances of Turkey been the all-absorbing topic of debate? No, Hard Hunt, when you attempt to find in unpaid interest the secret of the nation's indignation at the infamies of the Turkish soldiery, you not only do violence to your own intelligence, but insult to that of your countrymen."

Hard Hunt makes no attempt to reply, but looks completely crumpled up.

"Talking of Turkish bankruptcy and extravagance," says Benjamin, "you remind me of the story of the Good Little Sultan Az-waz."

The Good Little Sultan Az-waz.*



I.

Z-WAZ could trace his lineage from Mahomet,
Which quashed all questions of blood, breed,
and purity;
He wasn't clever, learned, nor wise—far from it,
Nor nearly ripe, though much beyond maturity;
His fatness, too, was awful inconvenient,
And that's the reason why he wasn't lean-ient!

II.

In Eastern countries morals are not fixed
Except for women—there the barrier's rigid;
P'raps harems keep the breeds from getting mixed,
Or *would* do if the climate were but frigid;
But as it isn't (barring better reasons),
We'll lay the blame on ichor and the seasons!

III.

Az-waz, we've said, descended from the Prophet
(Which really means his pedigree was devious);
The Sunnites say so, but the Shiites scoff it,
So no one knows the stock he sprung from
previous;
The only certain fact's an old and dumb one,
And that's that Az-waz must have sprung from
someone.

* This story can be vouched for in Pall Mall.

IV.

Az-waz progressed by waddles, short and jerky,
 His eyes looked heavy, bloated, *blasé*, spent;
 He ruled his toilet even worse than Turkey,
 And blazed with diamonds, dirt, and lace from
 Ghent.

If such a fellow sprung—forgive the doubt—
 The way, I'm sure, was very roundabout!

V.

Where morals are so scarce, no quip or quirk
 Is needed to explain the course we're limning.
 He scorns to look on wine, your holy Turk,
 But falls an easy prey to songs and women.
 Ye fools who think the Maine Law's Britain's need,
 Just look at Turkey where its half the creed!



VI.

Well, Az-waz—this of course distinctly chimes
 In with the theory held by learned Zany—
 Shared all the vices of his race and times,
 Invented some and never shrank from any;
 Denied a soul to woman yet needs find
 In soulless woman his *own* soul and mind.

VII.

Az-waz had wives by hundreds, young and fair;
 The rose-buds of all climes; the bluest eyes,
 The ripest lips and wealths of auburn hair,
 The richest fruits that bounteous earth supplies;
 Won, bought or dragged—e'en kidnapped on a
 stretch—
 To feed the lust of our Imperial wretch.



VIII.

Dark eyes from Spain, in which the burning glow
 Of hot Castilian blood urged on desire;
 And Tuscan eyes in which, not far below,
 Slept sunny laughter with her hidden fire;
 And darker eyes and hotter blood from Naples
 Where corn and wine and loveliness are staples!

IX.

And softer eyes by far than many a knight
 Has won in tourney or seduced in dance,
 The Queen of all that's beautiful and bright,
 Dainty or languid in the bowers of France;
 The chosen home of all that is romantic,
 And much that sends some moral people frantic.

X.

The sweet blue eyes of fair Teutonic maids,
 Those placid orbs that seem too cold to love you,
 Too silent and too deep for classic shades,
 More bright and frigid than the moon above you.
 Yet pray beware; a mountain's ice-clad summit
 May cap a lava pit that knows no plummet!

XI.

And eyes—dark eyes—that whisper subtle things,
 With long black lashes fringing dusky cheeks,
 One glance from which means volumes of sweet
 things,
 And tells them plainer than a tongue that
 speaks.
 Dear Arab maid, the Prophet was not beery
 Who took thee for his model of a Peri!



XII.

And luscious lustrous eyes of classic Greece,
Whose glance made heroes and sent souls to
Hades,
So that the devil's fond of eyes like these,
And keeps a nice cool place for Grecian ladies!
Without the orbs of one frail Athens syren
He feels, of course, he'd never have had Byron!

XIII.

Hence, as you see, Az-waz was so much married
That Brigham Young compared was quite a
bachelor.
His progeny was small; they most miscarried,
In spite of MM. Kraus and Paulovitchilor!
Yet taken as a whole it's fancied rather
He made a decent sort of Turkish father!

XIV.

Az-waz had foibles like his meanest eunuch.
His doats were lions, tigers, leopards, rats—
A perfect Barnum-Sanger sort of monarch,
A maiden lady-man that kept his cats.
It's often stated by the learned and wise
That pets and natures are two good allies!

XV.

And here's the point. A good and clever man
Soaked through the skin in diplomatic learning,
Got telegraphic orders and a plan
To wait upon our Sultan one fine morning;
So to a second at the hour appointed
He sallied forth to see the Lord's anointed.

XVI.

The slaves and splendour sent his eyeballs aching,
Or nearly so, they seemed so vast and endless;
So in the audience room he squatted down
With all the feelings of a man that's friendless.
While slaves, with low salaams, relieved his sweat
With sherbet, coffee, and a cigarette.



XVII.

The slaves retired, still lower their salaams,
And left the learned man to thoughts and silence;
He tried to hum some verses from the Psalms,
Then wished to God that he had been a mile
hence!
A sense of fear made nightmare of his will
Despite his splendid diplomatic skill.

XVIII.

He tried his coffee, lit his cigarette,
But felt too languid to take much of either,
Admired the lordly room in which he sat,
Some broken trinkets and a stringless Zither;
Then murmuring Az-waz was an awful bore
Re-tried his Turkish and his *café noire*.

XIX.

But in the fulness of all things there comes
 A time when patience can hold out no longer ;
 And hence our Diplomat first twirled his thumbs,
 And next used "damn," then words a little
 stronger ;
 When in there walked, his mane in fierce erection,
A lion from the Sultan's Grand collection !



XX.

To say our hero started were untrue—
 No words can picture how he jumped and ran ;
 He found his coffee somehow in his shoe,
 And sherbet soaking all the grand divan ;
 And then he found he'd lost the power of squealing,
 And somehow'd clambered half way up the ceiling.

XXI.

'Twas precious lucky for our learned wight
 Quaint carvings made the wall more animated,
 And precious lucky when he took to flight
 He found the roof what's known as laminated ;
 And that is how, more agile than a mandril,
 He found himself at last perched on a spandril !

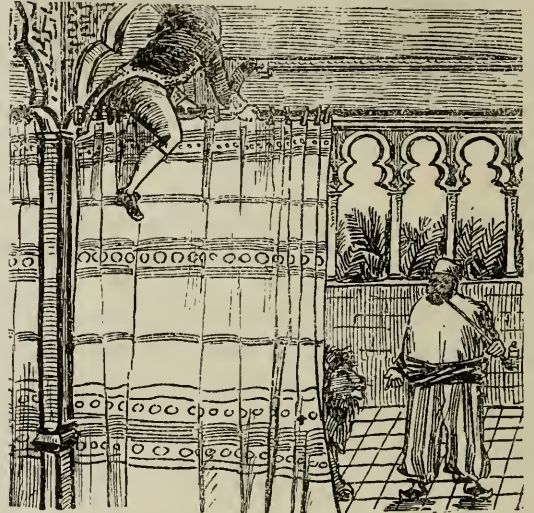
XXII.

Thence, breathless, he surveyed the scene he'd
 quitted,
 And thought of blood he might have been
 imbrued in ;

Then wondered if his country would have pitied
 The shocking way he nearly had been slewed in !
 And whilst the lion eyed him from the floor
 Declared the brute was panting for his gore !

XXIII.

And then he tried to feel quite nerved and cool,
 And think his climbing there was mere pre-
 caution ;
 But somehow thought of hymns he'd sung at
 school,
 Particularly "Brief life is here our portion,"
 And how his darling mama had admonished,
 When entered Az-waz, very much astonished.



XXIV.

What puzzles most our diplomatic hero
 Is that the lion doesn't run and fix him,
 But simply canters when he calls out "Nero,"
 And rubs his nose against his robe and licks him.
 And otherwise declares his vast affection,
 As leading lion of the Grand Collection !

XXV.

Az-waz, of course, was much surprised to find
 That diplomatic wisdom was *non est* ;
 He knew (at least) he was an hour behind,
 But previous Sultans always kept their guest ;
 So, muttering "Dash it !" he was walking off,
 When from the spandril fluttered down a cough !



DORD LERBY'S VISION—After Wiertz.

XXVI.

The Sultan looked amazed—then stood and wondered,

Examined all his pistols and his dagger,
And finding them all right, most bravely thundered,

“Who’s there? Come in!” with true Imperial swagger;

But ’fore a slave could answer this appealing,
He spied our hero sitting near the ceiling!

XXVII.

Az-waz smiled sweetly, blandly on our hero,

In fear and golden lace so high above him;
But guessing at the reason, patted “Nero,”

As if he’d found some sudden cause to love him;
But recollected it gave indications
Of fearful diplomatic complications.

XXVIII.

So Az-waz raised his eyes, with low salaam
Expressed the sorrow that his brute had caused
him;

Was glad our hero’d saved himself from harm,
And that the lion hadn’t metamorphosed him!
Begged he’d descend, and, waiving all formality,
Accept a little royal hospitality.



XXIX.

Hence, with a consciousness he looked absurd,
Our hero left his airy elevation;

And scrambled unto earth without a word,
Except some inward whispers of damnation,
And hopes they’d use a little circumspection
In letting out the Sultan’s Grand Collection!

XXX.

Then Az-Waz called for coffee, sherbet, ices,
Which slaves with low salaams set down before
him.

Some knelt with flowers, and some with Eastern
spices,

And some with prostrate forms lay to adore him.
Then Az-waz called a dark and crouching knave,
“Go—lead this lion out and beat him, slave!”

XXXI.

Hast seen the ashen hue of death o’ertake
A black man’s face when ordered out to die?
If so, thou knowest well the deadly shake,

The *whitened* cheek, the far-protruding eye;
So blanched his face who, being not a lord,
Must *beat a lion!* at a tyrant’s word!

XXXII.

The tragedy was over very quickly;
A whip—a man—a lion—and a blow,
A spring—a shriek, and then (the scene was
sickly)

A lifeless body crushed beneath a paw!
And Az-waz smiled: ’twas murder—he said fun—
And crouching slaves’ salaams hailed what he’d
done!



XXXIII.

Then Az-waz bade his concubines retire ;
 They fled in groups, low crawling on the earth !
 God knows what terror tyrants can inspire
 In souls their betters in all things but birth.
 But what are fetters, toil, to this foul THING,
 Where death is made the pastime of a King !

XXXIV.

Our hero's blood seemed turning into ice,
 He hummed and hawed—"Your pistols, Sire,
 believe me,
 Hold matchless jewels far above all price."
 "They're quite as certain shots, I won't deceive
 thee ;"
 And taking aim he killed—I beg his pardon—
 An unsuspecting slave that crossed the garden !



XXXV.

'Twas awful fun, of course, and nice to see,
 And Az-waz smiled, and thought the sport
 amazing ;
 "I judged them rightly, as you must agree."
 Our hero was too fearful ill for praising,
 They brought him coffee, but he couldn't sup :
 He felt his diplomatic liver coming up !

XXXVI.

"Unbridled despots shoot at whom they will,
 "E'en pluck and learning sometimes take a
 shot at ;"
 So with the deepest diplomatic skill
 Our hero showed that certain MS. must be got at,
 Then demonstrating how he'd get the papers,
 He fled from Az-waz and his deadly capers !

XXXVII.

And Az-waz never more beheld him kneeling,
 And when *en voyage* in Britain vainly sought
 The diplomatic wight who clomb the ceiling,
 And told the story to the Queen and Court.
 We only wish to add to it beside,
 That Az-waz proved a tyrant till he died !

We resume our discussion on the Eastern
 Question.

Hard Hunt, who is a desperate anti-Muscovite, ventures to descant on the policy of Russia. He says her policy appears to him to be to add indefinitely to the confusion of the Porte by keeping alive against it the deadliest animosities of its Christian subjects, deepening the mutual hatreds of creed and race, hoping, finally, to turn the Christian provinces of Turkey into such a horrible and hopeless mass of conflicting aims and ambitions that despairing Europe shall at last call upon her, in the name of European peace, to annex them all for the good of humanity.

Sir Verdant Hardcoat, who is always ready for combat, declines to believe in any such theory. The policy of Russia is, he says, to wait. It is enough for her to know that the rapidly rolling years are doing her work in Turkey far more surely than it can be done by Muscovite armies. The Conference of 1871 has finally abolished the treaty which was the principal result of the Crimean war. The fortifications of Sevastopol are being rebuilt. A Russian fleet rides the Black Sea. With the inevitable future so obviously at work in her favour, he cannot bring himself to believe that Russia, which is so perilously near the verge of bankruptcy, wishes to force on a war. It is self-evident that her wisest policy is to assist the action of time, and not to fight against it.

"Hear, hear !" says Goschen.

"Hear, hear!" hiccups Lob.

Benjamin remarks that one striking effect of the abolition of the Black Sea clauses of the Treaty of Paris has been a complete revolution in the relations of the Czar and the Sultan. In the time of Sir Stratford Canning, the ascendancy obtained by the British Embassy over the imbecile and vacillating mind of the Sultan was the despair of the diplomacy of the Continent. Not a bit of it now remains. England has changed places with Russia. Sir Henry Elliot has been supplanted by General Ignatieff. If Russia had been serious in her desire that Servia should keep the peace, ample power was provided for that purpose under the Twenty-ninth Article of the Treaty of Paris. The rebellion in Eastern Europe existed at all only because Russia permitted it to germinate and break out. It continued to exist only because Russia was not sincere in wishing it to be put down, and did not exercise her means and influence of suppressing it.

"Hear, hear!" says Cross.

"Hear, hear!" says Hardy.

Sweet William replies that the position of Russia is perfectly logical. The corruption, and almost all the internal misgovernment and difficulties of Turkey are to be traced to three sources—to Mahometanism—to the necessities imposed upon the minority when it attempts to govern the majority—and to the ill-conceived and ill-timed efforts of philanthropic Europe after the close of the Crimean war to graft Western civilisation on the Oriental stem. Russia had no propaganda in the Slavonic provinces of Turkey until it was manifest that the equality promised to Christians in the Hatt Humayoun, and satirically recorded in the Ninth Article of the Treaty of Paris, was never likely to be forthcoming. Russia's crime seemed to be to have seen years ago what every man knows and sees now—that the equality of Christians and Mussulmans is impossible under a Mahometan government, if only for the reason that it is denied in express terms in the creed of the dominant sect.

"Certainly!" says Sir Verdant.

"Certainly!" says Bruce.

"Certainly!" hiccups Lob.

"Everything there is in Turkey," proceeds William, "of corruption, of oppression, and of

difficulty, is the product of Mahometan spawn. Let that fact be admitted. If it mean that no remedy is forthcoming, that hope of cure is past, that diplomacy has brought its patient to the door of death, still let it be admitted. The time has arrived when we ought to make an effort to free ourselves from the solemn impostures and fictions of diplomacy. The first step towards curing a disease is to know what the disease is, and he, for one, is of opinion that no cure can be efficacious that does not involve the separation of the Mahometan religion from the Mahometan system of government. In England, theology and law are different and distinct things. In Turkey the State religion is the State law. Mahometanism is not only a creed but a system of government; not only a code of morals, but a code of civil law. Equality of religion is no more comprehensible to a Turk than equality of caste to a Brahmin."

"Hear, hear!" says Goschen.

"Hear, hear!" says Bright.

"Hear, hear, hear!" hiccups Lob.

There is a general disposition to applaud.

"Gentlemen," says Dord Lerby, "if there is one thing on this earth I value more than another it is caution. Sweet William, your speech is incautious, and (which is nearly as bad) it is unpatriotic." (It is always a good sign of caution to say that your opponent is unpatriotic.) Whatever may be the popular feeling in England, there is another thing to be considered scarcely less important—the popular feeling in India. Every advancing step of Russia is regarded in Asia as evidence of one of two things—either that the possession of India is a matter of no importance to England, or that England is powerless to check Slavonic advance. Either of these impressions, Sweet William, if permitted to deepen, is calculated to weaken the hold of this country upon the affections of its Indian subjects, and to do us, in consequence, an incalculable amount of practical injury. The road which Russia has trodden into India is a road red with the blood of hundreds upon hundreds of murdered Asiatic nomads. Russia is a political octopus. Her limbs are stretched out in every direction both in Europe and

Asia, and she is slowly but surely dragging to their doom not only Servia, Montenegro, Bosnia, the Herzegovina, and Bulgaria, but quite as certainly Khiva, Persia, and Afghanistan."



"Certainly," says Cross.

"Certainly," says Sir Stafford Northcote.

"Certainly," says Benjamin.

"Dear Lerby," says John Bright, "the ambition of Russia is one thing, the corruption of Turkey another. If you were to ask me who had done most to destroy Turkey—who was her greatest enemy—who had accomplished most for her humiliation, disintegration, and ultimate and certain ruin, Russia or England, I should say England a thousand times over. You may tell me that I am no patriot. It is an insult to which I am inured. The ruin and destruction of Turkey lie, I repeat, chiefly at the door of England. I will tell you why. At the close of the war with Russia, the Western Powers, and most prominently England, determined that Turkey should be assisted to civilise herself, to develop her natural resources, and to raise the material condition of her people. At that time Turkey had not contracted a State debt. Her people of all races accepted tyranny and oppression like heat in summer and cold in winter. The Sultan slept within the walls of his harem the sleep of the politically dead. Turkey was no longer a part of the world. The condition of the great mass of her people, Christians and Mahometans, was little superior to slavery, her government was a farce, her army and navy a sham. As long as England was willing to let her alone Turkey was content to go on in the old way, inhaling the deadly miasma arising



from her natural corruption, forgetting all and forgotten by all, manifesting occasionally a spasmodic sign of life, but held otherwise without power of motion or hope of cure in the grip of the Oriental idea. But the thunders of 1854 woke her to a new life. She came out of her dream like one waking up from a trance. England assured her that the time had come when she ought to, and must, be admitted into the community of civilised Powers—when she must know the meaning of the "fraternity of nations," the "balance of power"—the meaning of armies, of fleets, of railways, of loans, and of debts. But England forgot to teach Turkey the responsibilities which they entail, and the qualities of wisdom, of honesty and of honour, which they require and imply. Later on, when the financial embarrassments produced by the Crimean war had begun to cripple Turkey in her most vital parts, England pointed

out to her the fatal ease with which she could borrow loans. But England, when she taught Turkey how easy it was to borrow, forgot to instil into her how much easier it was to fall into the abyss of bankruptcy, and what a cruel and horrible abyss it is. The Crimean war cost this country a hundred millions, and every farthing of that hundred millions has been spent by England in a fight against nature. The attempt of this country to force Western civilisation upon Turkey has had no other result than to reduce her to a condition of the most profound contempt and beggary. The present position of Turkey is execrable. There is scarcely a stick or stone of State property, or tax or tithes of State revenue, that has not been mortgaged again and again. At this present instant the external debt of Turkey exceeds two hundred millions, with an annual charge upon it of fourteen or fifteen millions. Beyond this Turkey has contracted an internal debt, which amounts to ten millions, at least, and is believed to be a great deal larger. The whole of this immense burden, mainly contracted at the suggestion of England, has been spent almost entirely on Imperial luxuries—palaces, mosques, harems, Krupp cannon and ironclads, and it is a fact that these things have been paid for while the servants of the State in the army, the navy, and the civil service were vainly clamouring for their arrears of wages. But it is the same old story. There are races which it is impossible to civilise, and it remains yet to be proved that the Turk is not as incapable of receiving Western ideas as the Red Indian, against whom moral force has long since given place to extermination, and whether the elements of his debasement are not as much a part of himself as his bones and blood!"

"Talking of Turkish extravagance," says Sir Verdant Hardcoat, "you remind me of a song I heard whistled by all the little boys of Constantinople during my recent visit there, entitled, "Pop goes the Weazel," which (as you have probably never heard of it before) I will proceed to repeat—

Pop goes the Weazel!

I.

After dinner the harem,
Stimulating dances,
Dusky feet that glint and gleam,
Luscious smiles and glances!
Coffee, cigarettes, repose,
Entertainments regal,
That's the way the money goes,
Pop goes the weazel!



II.

Jewels for a hundred wives,
Silks from Samarcanda,
Luxury that still survives
Western propaganda!
Music, sherbet, and repose,
Court intrigues and legal,
That's the way the money goes,
Pop goes the weazel!

III.

Rotting ships on every sea,
 Cannon made to order,
 Snider for the Osmanlee
 Army of disorder !
 Fleets to spoil the sweet repose
 Of the Russian eagle,
 That's the way the money goes,
 Pop goes the weazel !

IV.

Europe you will never drag
 Up the Orient higher,
 Never while the Turkish flag
 Waves from St. Sophia !
 Music, women, and repose,
 Entertainments regal,
 That's the way the money goes,
 Pop goes the weazel !

The finish of this poem is the signal for a general rising.

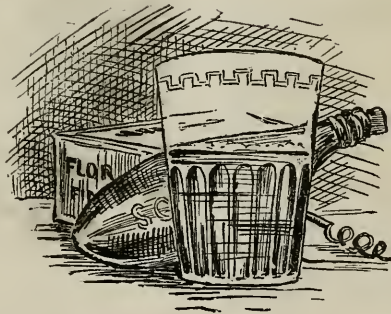
Lob Rowe insists upon saying grace, and in spite of the frantic efforts of us all to pull his coat tails, delivers himself as follows :—

We beg to offer thanks for what we've had,
 And make a special mention of the liquor ;
 We hope the ports and sherries were not bad
 Because they play such hangment with your
 ichor !

We also pray that gout, which most men flum-
 mocks,
 May never rack our marrow with its stings ;
 That all our lives be henceforth like our stomachs—
 A very pleasant storehouse of good things !

Thus falls the curtain on the *political* half of Benjamin's dinner.

We pass on to the convivial.





AFTER DINNER.

By this time the atmosphere has been converted into a dense fog of smoke from our Havanas.

Benjamin himself has become so exceedingly frisky and volatile that I begin to fear the '34 is getting into his head.

Benjamin is irresistible and ubiquitous in his attentions.

"A little more wine, Thunder and Lightning?"

I subtend at the usual angle.

"A little more wine, Hunt?"

"Thanks, Benjamin. One of the privileges of the head of her Majesty's Navy is to be always in port."

We pretend to laugh.

"Lerby, old man, are you drinking up?"

"Drinking *down*," says Lerby (Lerby is always so cautious, you know), helping himself in the same breath to some Turkish delight. "I'm getting on very nicely—I mean very cautiously—thank you."

An hour later we are in the midst of dessert.

It is an invariable rule with Benjamin that guests at Parliamentary dinners at Hughenden shall send their party politics away with their cheese-plates.

Of this rule, Benjamin, in his olive-oiliest tones, most politely reminds us.

We may smoke—we are doing that; we may sing—Lob Rowe threatens to do that; we may crack jokes; we may talk scandal—as if we could help talking scandal; we may get drunk; we may do anything, in short, except talk party politics.

I have said we are in the midst of dessert.

"And you, Dr. Goneneasily?"

"He don't get on at all," says the O'Gorman; "don't eat northen'."

Dr. Goneneasily begs to be allowed to speak for himself. He is getting on quite as well as can be expected. As for eating "northen'," he doesn't profess to be such an O'Gorman-dizer as the member for Waterford.

"Between ourselves, Lerby," cries Benjamin, holding up his glass, while his whole face beams with joviality, "here's a toast—May you never be like the coupons of your Canal shares—cut off!"

We laugh.

"Benjamin!" cries Lerby, "here's one in return—May you never be like those shares themselves—without interest!"

We laugh again.

"Any news from the clubs, any of you fellows?" asks Sir Verdant, puffing at his cigar.

"Not heard any," says Hard Hunt, watching the smoke curl over his head. "Been a terrific row down there in the Isle of Wight. Noble lord threatened to do something considerable to the Heir Apparent. Heir Apparent threatened to do something considerable to noble lord. A lot of extraordinary language used. Everybody sent into a tremendous sensation. Author of 'Men of the Time' hanged himself on the spot; poor Theodore Martin picked up in the street in an insensible condition; Debrett taken to a lunatic asylum. That's the list of casualties, I understand, up to the present."

"Never heard a word about it," says Sir Verdant.

"Not a sound," says William.

"Not a whisper," says Benjamin.

"The deuce you've not!" laughs Hard Hunt, taking his cigar out of his mouth. "They are talking about nothing else at the clubs. Not heard of it! They're talking about it everywhere. The Poet Laureate, indeed, who was in Cowes at the time, has thought it of sufficient importance to write a poem about, which a lot of dirty little boys are selling in the streets at a penny a copy! I bought a copy coming up. Let me read it to you, eh?"

"Oh, yes, *do*, Hard Hunt, dear," coaxes Benjamin. "We hate scandal."

"Oh, do—pray do!" say all of us. "We abominate scandal."

The Row in the Club.

I.

In the scrumptious little cabin
Of a vessel off by Cowes,
Smoking "Turkish," whose aroma
Is so fragrant to the nose,
Sat a dapper little captain
Oh! so nautical and trim,
With a coronetted letter
Lying opposite to him!



II.

Oh! he was a right good captain,
And a yachtsman bold and true,
And the rig out of his garments
Was quite nautical to view.
And no stain his proud escutcheon
Had contaminated yet;
As you'll find by simply looking
In the pages of Debrett!

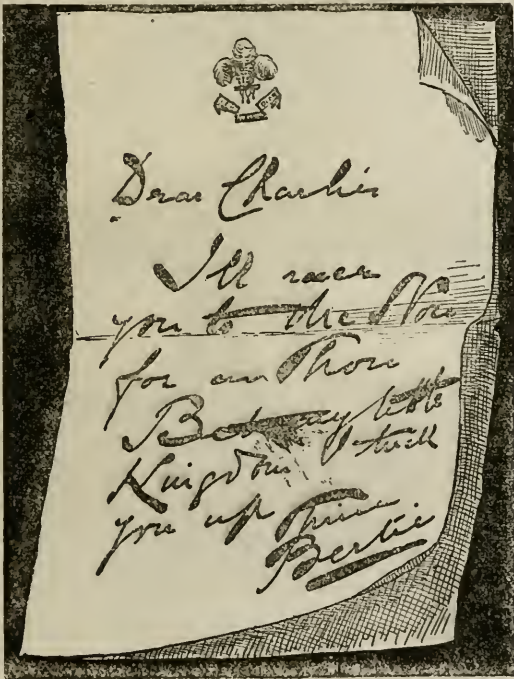
III.

And that dapper little captain
With a grim determined air,
Pondered long and pondered slowly
On the letter lying there.

“ So he sends his royal challenge ;
 “ Well, I know my craft and crew ; ”
 And he seized the royal letter
 And he tore it into two.

IV.

A — E — was its signing,
 And his Royal Highness swore
 He would race his lordship's vessel
 For a wager to the Nore ;
 Or if that was not sufficient
 (This was merely said to rile)
 He would stake his little kingdom
 On a contest round the isle !



V.

So the challenge went its errand,
 And the meeting day was set,
 And the noblest of the squadron
 Laid some hundreds in a bet.
 There was all that vast impatience
 That a yachtsman only knows ;
 Fear and flutter and excitement
 'Mong the nautical of Cowes.

VI.

In the hot and level sunshine
 Of a glorious summer's day,
 Albert Edward hoist his canvas
 (Though 'twas not the racing day),
 For he saw his little rivals
 Under practice on the sea,
 And he slyly sailed unto them
 And he said to them, said he :



VII.

“ Oh, my *nomen* it is Edward,
 “ Duke of Cornwall, and some more,
 “ And I've matched your master's vessel
 “ For a wager round the Nore.
 “ Since your dapper little captain
 “ Is in London for the day,
 “ Up with every stitch of canvas, lads,
 “ And race me round the bay ! ”

VIII.

In the rich, delightful smoke-room
 Of the yachting Club of Cowes,
 There were words of strong indictment
 And still fiercer talk of blows !

“ I decline to beg your pardon ! ”
 Quoth the Prince with flashing eye,
 “ I have never raced your vessel
 “ And who said so told a lie ! ”

IX.

Then that dapper little captain,
 With a sneer upon his lip,
 Said he knew for certain Bertie
 Had competed with his ship.
 And he added “ Oh, you story—
 “ You atrocious little cram ! ”
 And he used a bad expression
 With a terminal in “ damn ! ”



X.

Oh ! the awful shocking things said
 By those two excited men :
 “ You’re a crammer ! ” and “ I’ll hit you,
 “ If you call me that again ! ”
 Oh, the terror and excitement
 When his Royal Highness swore
 That Cowes, and Ryde, and Isle of Wight
 Should know his face no more !

XI.

In the scrumptious little cabin
 Of a vessel leaving Cowes,
 Smoking Turkish, whose aroma
 Is so grateful to the nose,
 Sat a dapper little captain
 Oh ! so nautical and trim,
 With a coronetted letter
 Lying opposite to him !

XII.

And that dapper little captain
 With a grim and thoughtful air,
 Pondered long and pondered slowly
 On the letter lying there.
 “ So His Highness begs my pardon,
 “ It was all in heat of blood ; ”
 And he kissed that manly letter—
 “ Bertie, dear, I *knew* you would ! ”



“ A very charming kettle of fish ! ” sighs Marmalade Yenkins.

“ A very charming kettle of fish, indeed ! ” sighs Anderson. “ Pass me the decanter. To-day it’s a yacht. Yesterday it was a ballet-girl. Oh, Romans and fellow-countrymen ! Oh, Yenkins, Yenkins ! It was a far-seeing Providence that made stage wings without ears and green-rooms without tongues ! ”

“ Come, come, Anderson, ” says Sir Verdant, coaxingly, “ you knock a trifle too hard on the

Royal Family, you know. Excuse my mentioning it, but I am myself an integral portion of the Royal Family of England. I am, as you know, distantly related to the Marquis of Lorne, and therefore, perhaps, qualified to speak with rather



more authority on the habits of princes than you are. I tell you, Anderson, that you paint my illustrious relatives a great deal too black !”

“Oh no,” says Anderson, “I don’t. I don’t paint ’em black enough. I wish I could. I’m a Republican. I don’t deny it. Republicanism is my predominant political sentiment. It is yours, too, Verdy, only your amazing vanity and the paltry little thread that attaches you to your illustrious relatives keep you from avowing it. I stick to my principles.”

“Human rights !” suggests Dr. Goneneasily.

“Leicester Square !” suggests Hard Hunt.

“Islay Malt !” roars the O’Gorman.

Sir Verdant begs to cast back with indignation and contempt the wicked aspersion that he is a Republican. His distant relationship to the

Marquis of Lorne—leaving out of consideration the rest of the Royal Family—ought to be a sufficient answer to an insult like that. However, if that answer is not enough for the honourable member for Glasgow, he wishes to state publicly that if ever Anderson attempts to lead an armed force against the person or property of his illustrious relatives—including, of course, the Marquis of Lorne—he will find the blade of Sir Verdant Hardcoat rammed up to the hilt in a fleshy part of his rebellious stomach.

We applaud deliriously.

Mr. Anderson, in an amazement of good humour, begs to apologise if he has in any way injured the subtle delicacy of Sir Verdant’s egotism. His objection to offspring of the blood royal must not be taken as applying to royalty in the abstract. Kings, as a whole, may be taken to be a fairly respectable body of men, with mortal vices and weaknesses like the rest of mankind, and the same may apply, with greater force, to queens, but he (Anderson) will be hanged if we can honestly say the same of princes.

“Order !” cries a voice in our rear, “and no politics !”

Dear Benjamin, with the influence of Moet lighting up the weird brightness of his Moorish countenance, springs straight to his feet.

“Gentlemen, I beg to give you a toast. I beg to ask you to drink to the health of the Queen, and with that toast I couple the name of Mr. Anderson.”

The satire tells, and we laugh and applaud wildly.

Anderson, raising his glass for a moment to his lip, drinks off its contents to the toast amidst our unanimous applause.

“Gentlemen,” says Anderson, “I am not a bigot, nor am I disloyal. If I cannot drink to the form of government I want, I will drink to the form of government I’ve got. As the French poet says, ‘*C’est le caractère du sage.*’ I want a Republic—I don’t deny it—but as I am not able at present to drink to that Republic, I will drink to what I admire next—the Queen. My sentiments are those of the poet, and those of the poet are as follows :—

"I am loyal, even tender, I don't envy kings their
 splendour,
 But I'm dashed if I can render them a homage I
 don't feel;
 If the venom from my vial pierce the epidermis
 royal
 You must still believe me loyal to my country and
 her weal.
 Where were England's kings and glory and our
 nation's splendid story,
 Writ on many a field and gory in the blood of
 England's poor,
 Had the sickly sentimental souls of ermined folk
 and gentle
 Fought our foemen continental with no daring but
 their own?
 Ah! 'tis past, the old-world notion, God has made
 the poor man's portion
 Burdened with a life's devotion to the crowned
 and kingly caste!
 And methinks the crowning glory of our England's
 age and story
 Is—excuse me, Whig and Tory—dawning on this
 isle at last!

"Those, gentlemen," says Anderson, "are my
 sentiments, and before sitting down I beg to pro-
 pose a toast of my own—May we always be loyal,
 and never have need to change a bad sovereign!"

We drink to the toast with the greatest enthu-
 siasm.

I ought to record that it is whispered through
 the smoke of our cigars and across the fumes of
 our wine that Anderson, cool and collected as he
 usually seems, is subject to occasional fits of in-
 controllable mental excitement, and that on such
 occasions his utterances are not the cool convic-
 tions of his calmer moments.

We believe it.

We relapse more and more into the convivial.

"Heard a most extraordinary story," says Hard
 Hunt, "told up at the Carlton last night. Heard
 there had been a kind of Anglo-Russian quarrel
 among the royal princesses about precedence;
 that the Court was in a state of great excitement,
 and that the shindy with the prince in the club
 was scarcely less edifying than the row with the
 princesses in the palace."

"Never heard a word about it!" says Sweet
 William.

"Never caught a whisper," says Cross.

"Hang it!" laughs Hard Hunt, "what a subtle
 faculty you fellows seem to have for not hearing
 things. Not heard a whisper?" he continues,
 putting his legs on a chair and puffing languidly
 at his Havana, "why, really, you must make
 periodical visitations to some distant planet, or
 take a sub-aqueous holiday with Neptune in our
 submarine navy, or else be continually up in
 balloons trying to skim a little of the cream off
 the Milky Way, or something of that sort. You
 appear never to be at home."

Sir Wellfried (always ready with his little joke)
 observes that such a remark as that certainly fails
 of application to William. William, he ventures
 to assert, is the most domesticated man in the
 House. Other hon. members may be at home for
 ever, but William is always at Homer!

We smile sicklily.

"Well, if you haven't really heard the story of
 the three royal princesses and the golden apple,"
 says Hard Hunt, "I'll tell you the tale exactly as
 I heard it at the Carlton."

The Only True Story of the Golden Apple.

They were having a hot time of it in those
 mysterious altitudes of mythology—the abode of
 the gods. The past month or so had been so
 very prolific of tropical heat (in this world called
 love), that a strong feeling of indignation was
 generally prevalent against young Phœbus for the
 exceedingly disgraceful way in which he was
 managing the sun.

The gods, for the most part, were dispersed
 about different parts of the heavens, the intense
 tropical heat (which, as we have said, mortals
 call love) of their usual abodes in the deitical
 dominions having become a little nauseating and
 tiresome. Gods, like men, are fond of change
 and the pleasures and excitements of other climes.

Jupiter was away sticking pigs in India, or
 watching the dancing of beautiful Nautch girls.
 Neptune had left with his ship for a voyage on the

sea, and was occasionally heard of fiddling pretty tunes to the mermaids, or teaching the great accomplishment of his life—household economy—to the Oceanides and Syrens. Apollo was away hunting with Diana in the braes of Bonny Doon and on his titular moors.

Thus stood matters when one day, under the cool shade of a far-spreading chestnut tree, languidly discoursing of the tropical character of the weather which had scattered so many of the gods, referring also, in undertones, to the fast-goings-on of the excitable Jupiter, sat the three most beautiful of heaven's fair goddesses—Aphrodite of Wales, Hera of Lorne, and Athene of Russia.

The goddesses sat, as we have said, under the cool shade of a huge chestnut tree, talking over the scandal of the heavens, wondering whether "Nauty" ever intends to marry, and taking sweet counsel together over the meaning of his frequent mysterious visits to Germania, when, suddenly, a golden apple, thrown by Eris, the goddess of strife, at the suggestion of Vulcan of Russia, was dropped in their midst, inscribed "To the most illustrious!"

Aphrodite of Wales, who was incomparably the most noble, as she was also the most lovely of the three beautiful goddesses, claimed to be entitled to the golden apple, on the ground that being the future queen of the greatest of all empires, and the chosen wife of Jupiter, she was of necessity the most illustrious of the goddesses.

Hera of Lorne, while admitting on her part the title of Aphrodite of Wales, as the wife of Jupiter and the future queen of his empire, to the term "the most illustrious," and therefore her right to the golden apple, yet claimed to share it with her, and to take at all times and in all places absolute precedence in relation to it of Athene of Russia, on the ground of being the sister of Jupiter, the favourite daughter of the Queen of Heaven, and the sister by marriage of the most illustrious of the goddesses.

Athene of Russia, as the daughter of the god Vulcan of the North, the most autocratic and personally powerful of all the gods, and, in his own opinion, the most personally illustrious and noble—a kind of god of a very select and superior sort—claimed the golden apple for herself exclu-

sively, in preference even of Aphrodite of Wales. However, if the decision of the gods on this point was against her, Athene of Russia claimed to take her fair share of the golden apple with Aphrodite of Wales, and in all times and all places to hold preference of Hera of Lorne.

Neither of the goddesses would give way, and the dispute so waxed in fervour that Phœbus was often heard to express a wish that he could extinguish the sun altogether.

The gods were consulted in every part of the heavens. Vulcan of the North strongly asserted the claims to the golden apple of his daughter Athene, and even at one time threatened to withdraw her altogether from the companionship of Aphrodite of Wales, and Hera of Lorne, and the Court of the Queen of Heaven.

The rest of the gods were far from agreeing. Saturn, who kept his Court in Germania, supported the title of Aphrodite, but declined to adjudicate, or even to express an opinion, on the claims of Hera and Athene.

So the dispute waxed hot and furious, and abated not, and a long and wordy war was threatened in the courts of the gods.

Jupiter received an urgent summons to return from his pig-sticking, Neptune was bidden to leave his ship for home, and to cease playing pretty tunes to the Naiades, and Apollo was called back from his titular moors.

But in the meantime the strife among the three beautiful goddesses waxed more fervently every day. To the Queen of Heaven the noise of this continual discord was a source of great uneasiness and distress, and threatened to turn the abode of the gods into a perfect pandemonium, till at last, fearing the result, the queen suggested, and it was decided to submit the entire cause of dispute to the decision of an umpire. And at the unanimous request of the three goddesses, Paris (on earth called Benjamin) was called in by the queen to adjudicate upon their several claims to the golden apple.

And when Benjamin (Paris) had come forward at the request of the Queen of Heaven to settle the strife of the fair deities, the goddesses attempted in turn to win for themselves his favourable decision by smiles, by tears, and by lively promises of favours to come. Aphrodite, in her sweetly win-

some way, promised to prevail on the Queen of Heaven to raise Benjamin to a great dignity among the illustrious of her Empire. Hera, with her large tearful eyes, promised that if Benjamin would decide that she held preference of Athene she would not only join Aphrodite in her prayers to the Queen of Heaven, but unite with her own supplications those of the economical Neptune. Athene, on her part, though confessing herself unable to lure Benjamin with the dazzling attractions of her rival sisters, promised that, if Benjamin would decide that she held precedence of Aphrodite, or, at the very least, of Hera of Lorne, her father, Vulcan of Russia, should never offer violence to, or stir up war and strife in, that portion of the dominions of the Queen of Heaven in which her son Jupiter was away pig-sticking, and over which Benjamin was the recognised custodian.

Benjamin took three clear days to consider the smiles, the offers, and the blandishments of the three beautiful goddesses, seeking to devise some plan by which he might succeed, not only in acquiring the dignity among the illustrious of the Empire promised by Aphrodite and Hera, and which he so much coveted, but also the security of that portion of the heavens for which he was responsible. For Benjamin was a cunning man.

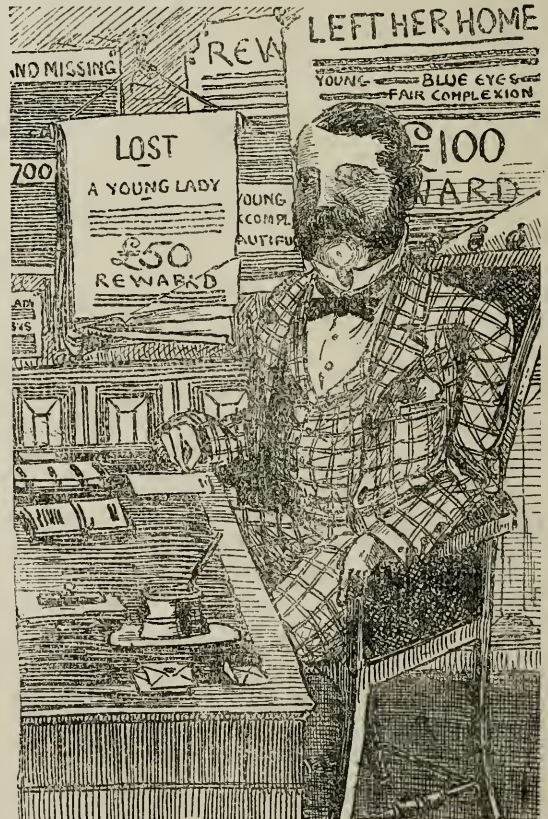
And on the third day Benjamin, having devised the required plan, sought an interview with the Queen of Heaven, and laid before her a scheme that he had devised for the settlement of the rival claims of the three goddesses. Benjamin pointed out, with all the fervency and lucidity of which he was capable, that the assumption by the Queen of Heaven of the title *Imperatrix* would, by placing her daughters on a perfect footing of equality with the sons and daughters of Vulcan of the North, and with all those who, by a similar autocratic assumption, claimed precedence of those who merely bore the title of *rex* or *regina*, be a happy solution of the prevailing difficulty. Benjamin then pointed out to the queen that when once these three goddesses occupied absolutely the same regal status, it was easy enough for her, as Queen of Heaven, to claim that the golden apple of the most illustrious belonged to Aphrodite, not only as the wife of Jupiter, the greatest of all the gods, but as being in her own person

the future queen of heaven. That much having been accomplished, it was quite easy and natural for the queen to claim precedence for Hera, as her own daughter at her own court, over Athene, the daughter of Vulcan, and at the court of her mother-in-law, and quite as easy for Athene to yield that precedence without the shadow of a stain upon her imperial dignity.

And so, Benjamin, after due communication with the Queen of Heaven, announced his decision to the three goddesses, which, after a few murmurings and heartburnings (having become accepted at the courts of the gods) has since restored to heaven and the courts of Vulcan and the queen the blessing of comparative peace.

And this is the only true story of the three princesses and the golden apple.

"Heard at the club last night," says Sir Verdant, as soon as Hard Hunt has finished his story, "that our mutual friend the confidential adviser of deceived husbands and neglected and abandoned wives, the great genius of intrigue,



and the pet confidante and acknowledged detective-general of the aristocracy, has got his hands fearfully full just now."

"I'm awfully sorry to hear it," says Cross. "If the aristocracy of this world isn't speeding to perdition with the haste of an express, then I'm not the Home Secretary and Benjamin isn't Prime Minister. Now it's a ballet-girl, now it's a row about a yacht race, now a dispute about the precedence of three princesses, now a titled lady left to die in an obscure lodging-house—it's fearful, it really is."

"Talking about the great detective-general of the aristocracy," says Icano'er Power, "I've got an MS. poem of Swinburne's about me in my pocket, called 'The Lord of Intrigue.' I haven't read it yet. Shall I read it to you?"

Having nothing else to do, and feeling ourselves at the same time growing very languid under the influence of the smoky clouds which fill the room from our Havanas, and the fumes which ascend into our brains from rather free libations of '34, we acquiesce with a general feeling of great helplessness.

The Lord of Intrigue.

Pollaky sat in his oaken chair,
Carte de visite and letter lay there,
 Princely coronet, lordly crest,
 Many a mystery, many a quest,
 With missive and *billet* of lesser degree,
 In sooth an extraordinary company;
 And they seemed to ask, oh, unravel me;
 Never, I ween,
 Was a subtler seen,
 Concerned in divorce, or elopement, or league,
 Than love's autocrat, Pollaky, lord of intrigue.
 In and out
 Through the motley rout,
 The Lord of Intrigue goes hunting about,
 Here and there,
 Like a dog in a fair,
 Through flights and divorces,
 Eloppements and curses.
 Through a lady's love and a husband's grudge,
 Proud as a Cardinal, sharp as a Judge;

And he smiles in the face
 Of the scrawl of his Grace,
 With a satisfied look, as if he would say,
 "Oh, the duchess must fall in our trap to-day."
 While his clients with awe
 As such schemes they saw,
 Said, "Pollaky's sharper than Hades, you know."
 Never, I ween,
 Was a subtler seen,
 Concerned in divorce, or elopement, or league,
 Than love's autocrat, Pollaky, lord of intrigue.

"I hear it rumoured," says Sir Verdant, "that Sir James Hannen's Court promises to be the scene this season of an unusually plentiful crop of *causes célèbres*. A lot of exceedingly ugly rumours, I hear, are going the round of the clubs with, of course, the usual club exaggerations. The army, I understand, true to its ancient traditions, figures very prominently, and I also hear something far from savoury about a remarkably clever man in Her Majesty's navy. But, *nous verrons*, eh, Benjamin?"

"*Nous verrons*," repeats Benjamin, with a knowing nod of his head.

"I hate," says Bright, "and always have hated, Cassandras, whether ancient or modern. Indeed, I detest oracles of every clime and kind. Wieland, do you know, in his 'Golden Mirror,' lays down two principles as eternally operating upon all constituted communities—one to hold them together, the other to disintegrate and dissolve them. The cohesive principle includes morals, frugality, religion, and law, the dissolving principle, libertinism, profusion, and infidelity. Well, taking this doctrine as *à priori* true, how do we stand in England? I make bold to assert that morals in this country now stand infinitely higher than at any previous period of history, that along with a greater annual expenditure there has grown a greater annual saving—*vide* the returns of the people's banks and friendly societies—that, also, the religious sentiment is profounder than ever; and, lastly, that as regards obedience to the law, we have reached in England the juridical ideal. What's your opinion, eh, Anderson?"

"Well," says Anderson, "I admit, of course, that morals, frugality, religion, and law are the

bases of national stability. No man can deny it. But whose morals, whose frugality, whose religion is it that are saving the country at the present time? John, it is the morals of the poor and the lower middle classes, and not the morals of the rich that are higher now than before; it is among *them*, and not among the aristocracy, that the annual saving is greater, and it is among *them*, and not among the rich, that the religious sentiment has become more profound. Notwithstanding Gleg or Greg, or somebody, I maintain that the working classes—the classes who are being eternally told they are ruining the country, are, if Wieland's principles are true, at once its real saviour and the recipients of its salvation. The dissolving agents, let me tell you, are quite as clearly to me—”

“Quite,” puts in Hard Hunt, sarcastically.

“Are quite as clearly to me,” repeats Anderson, with additional emphasis, “the aristocracy.”

Cries of “No, no,” “nonsense,” and noises with dessert knives and spoons on plates and glasses.

“I repeat it,” cries Anderson, becoming very excited. “I say the dissolving agents at work upon the fabric of constituted order in this country are the vices of the aristocracy, and the new-fangled notions of materialistic scholasticism—the libertinism and profusion of the wealthy on the one hand, and the gilded infidelity of the learned on the other. And in face of this, what are we continually seeing and having preached to us? The man who seeks to alter the scale of his trade's wages by a strike is put down as an enemy to his nation, but the man who endeavours to destroy the basis of his country's morality by insidious developments of scientific thought is promptly exalted to every dignity of patronage and respect. Bah! It makes one's blood boil.”

“Your blood you mean, old man,” says the O'Gorman. “It don't mine—not a boil. Speak for yourself.”

“My blood, then,” repeats Anderson, “and along with mine the blood of every honest man. But never mind. Go on, my country! Down with the flag of the ingenuousness, the frugality, and the simple faith of the working classes, and up with the standard of the dissolving principles of Huxleyism, Tyndallism, and Darwinism!”

“Come, come, Anderson,” says Hard Hunt, “you fire at random, and don't hit. People who blaze away at random seldom do. The standard of morals is not only as high, but higher among the rich than ever. I say it boldly. If cases are



more plentiful in the courts now than formerly, it is, first, the direct result of a constantly-increasing population, but more particularly of the growth among the aristocracy of a chaster moral sentiment. Cases are now dragged into the criminal and divorce courts that would have been hushed up twenty or thirty years ago as mere and simple venalities—isn't it so?”

“No, it is not,” cries Anderson. “I deny it, *in toto*. I maintain that the increase of criminal and divorce cases—Lady Mordaunt and the Grant cases—is due not to any severer conceptions of morality among the rich—nothing so absurd—but to the introduction, rooting, and growth among the aristocracy of French and American sentiments.”

“French and American sentiments!” asks Cross, in a state of great amazement, “whatever in the world, Anderson, are they?”

“Understand me,” says Anderson. “The French, as you know, have the most delicate—I might almost say the most exquisite—perception of vice of any people in the world, and they invariably meet its discovery with the most uncompro-

misgiving resentment. The consequence is that vice in France is all hidden up. It is the vice of the closet. It stalks through the land under all sorts of disguises, stowed out of sight under the cloak of friendship, escort, and the commonest acts of courtesy. It avails itself of every possible deception, imposture, and cheat, and being thus hidden from mortal eyes is admitted by the universal conscience and consent of the nation not to exist. That is what I mean, Cross, by 'French sentiment.' Under the solemn subterfuge of this sentiment the vice of France is enormous; yet, hidden from the world, as I have stated, by deceit, it walks abroad without suspicion in the gilt and imposture of its respectability. I say that there are clear indications that this same French sentiment is beginning to prevail among the aristocracy of England—this sentiment which is perfectly willing to tolerate vice so long as it is kept absolutely concealed from the public eye, and to tacitly declare, in fact, that vice does not and cannot exist so long as it takes the form of a profoundly secret system—a sentiment which permits a husband to overlook the errors of his wife so long as he is absolutely sure her *faux pas* are known only to himself and her paramour."

"Go on," says Cross, "we perfectly understand. This country's coming to a pretty pass according to you. Now tell us what you mean by 'American sentiment.'"

"By the 'American sentiment,'" continues Anderson, "which is threatening to fill our gaols with gentlemen criminals, I refer to the naturalisation among us of that unprincipled speculation which distinguishes the cadaverous scoundrels of Wall Street. I refer to the idleness, the extravagance of living, the discontent with moderate gains, the haste to become rich, and the spirit of trading as distinct from the spirit of production, which characterise the people of the United States and threaten to characterise us. That—the growing prevalence of the American sentiment—is the secret of the increase in the number of gentlemen criminals, and the other—the French sentiment—is the secret of the increase of the work of the English Divorce Court."

"Perhaps," says Sir Stafford, in tones of great sarcasm, "having given us such a beautiful delineation of *le sentiment Français*, Anderson, you will

complete the picture by showing us the mode of operation of the sentiment, and by just giving us an instance of its practical operation—if you can."

"I *can!*" exclaims Anderson, excitedly, with a very fierce accent on the word "can"; "hundreds. This French sentiment is not confined to London. It is quite as common in the country. As to the mode of its operation, *le sentiment Français* is almost invariably the primary cause of conjugal neglect, which is often the primary cause of elopement, which is often the primary cause of divorcement. As an instance, I will read you a poem, written only yesterday, founded on facts for which hundreds can vouch, in which the action of the French sentiment is distinctly traceable, and which was followed by all the events in the sequence I have laid down, with the exception that instead of ending in divorcement it terminated in death. However, I will read it."

Lost for the Love of Him.

One more unfortunate
Woman is fled,
Rashly importunate,
Low with the dead!

Speak of her tenderly,
Shroud her with care,
Fashioned so slenderly,
Proud and so fair!

Where is her husband
Vowing he took but her?
Where is her husband?
Take a last look at her!
Lay her out tenderly,
Rash and undutiful,
Fashioned so slenderly,
Dead and so beautiful!

Shroud her not scornfully,
Think of her mournfully,
Sisterly, humanly;
Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
Now is pure womanly!

What is suspected,
Breathe not a breath,
Coldly neglected
Even in death !

Still for all sins of hers
One of Eve's family ;
Kiss those cold lips of hers
Marbling so clammily !

Lost in her blundering,
All for the love of him,
What are they wondering
Angels above of him !

Where is her father ?
Where is her mother ?
Where is her sister ?
Where is her brother ?
Where is a nearer one
Still, and a dearer one
Yet, than all other ?

Oh ! it was pitiful
'Mid a whole city full
Dying from home !

Sisterly, brotherly,
Husbandly, motherly,
Sentiments changed ;
Love by harsh evidence
Thrown from its eminence,
God and his providence
Seeming estranged.

Coldly neglected,
Hoping to spite,
Gone unsuspected
Into the night !
Oh ! it was wild of her
Daring to roam,
Wicked and wild of her
Leaving her home !

Still for all slips of hers
One of Eve's family ;
Kiss those dead lips of hers
Sticking so clammily !

Soon coming back again
Home to her bourne,

Oh ! the hard heart that then
Cursed her return !

Cursed in her agony,
Spurned from his feet,
Cast like a dog to die
Out in the street !

Speak of her tenderly,
Shroud her with care,
Fashioned so slenderly,
Rich and so fair !

Oh ! it was pitiful,
'Mid a whole city full,
Dying from home !

Lost in her blundering,
All for the love of him ;
What are they wondering
Angels above of him !

We receive the last words of this poem with impatience, for we are rapidly approaching that serenity of mind in which our solicitude for the national morals is lost in the feeling of our unutterable hilarity.

"I rise," says Benjamin, his whole face beaming as if he intends to evaporate in a smile at the earliest possible moment, "to propose a toast. I ask you to drink with me to the Army, the Navy, and the Reserve Forces, and I beg to couple with this toast the names of Mr. Gathorne Hardy, Mr. Hard Hunt, and Sir Verdant Hardcoat."

We cheer frantically.

Benjamin reminds us that our army is the most indomitable and splendid of all armies. Six of our oldest and ablest generals are being wheeled about in Bath chairs, and will no doubt be able to give a good account of any enemy that may attempt to land upon our shores. He reminds us also of the growing preference of the present Pall Mall *regime*, and the personal predilections of her Majesty the Queen, for third-rate German officers, which was the cause of a great deal of enthusiasm among British officers. He intimates that it is the intention of her Majesty's Government, at the suggestion of all the senior officers, to signalise the retirement of his Serene Highness Prince

Edward of Saxe-Weimar by a day of great national mourning, and to mark their sense of his irreparable loss to the service by ordering arms throughout to be reversed, war or no war, for six months. With regard to the Navy, he regrets to confess that only three of our oldest and ablest admirals are at present being wheeled about in Bath chairs. Still, he ventures to think that with even this low percentage of invalided admirals our Navy would be able to uphold the prestige and glory of England in the event of an armed conflict. For the information of Sir Wellfried Lawson, whose active propaganda is slowly forcing its way among the seamen of the fleet, he will say that the Navy is, as usual, half seas over. All that now remains for him to add is, that the splendid behaviour and bearing of Prince Leiningen in connection with the "Mistletoe" disaster have led to the rapid promotion of one or two German officers in the British Navy.

We cheer more lustily than ever.

Gathorne Hardy and Hard Hunt then relieve their patriotic bosoms of the usual military and naval platitudes, and we cheer again.



We are rapidly approaching a condition of incontrollable joviality.

We are smoking our cigars and imbibing our wine, with our chairs and ourselves distributed around the table in all sorts of postures and angles.

Benjamin lolls back in his chair, twirling his cigar in his mouth and looking absolutely scrumptious.

"Will any one sing us a song?" asks Benjamin, looking towards the O'Gorman, "or make us a speech?" he adds, fixing his gaze upon Sir Verdant Hardcoat.

Sir Verdant drinks off his wine with a classical turn-up of nose, as if the public speaking of the nineteenth century is a very contemptible form of oratory indeed, especially to one so distantly related to the Marquis of Lorne.

"Or a recitation *apropos* of the toast?" asks Benjamin, looking to Sir Wellfried. "Come, Sir Wellfried, keep us alive, alive O."

"You must take me as I am, Benjamin," says Sir Wellfried. "I will give you with pleasure the only recitation *apropos* of the army I can call to mind. I think it will do. It is entitled 'The Blue-eyed Soldier Boy,' and the burden of it is this:—

The Blue-eyed Soldier Boy.

[AFTER HOOD.]

I.

"Oh, Sussey, will you live with me,
 "Beneath a cottage thatch?
 "Oh, tell me—I can bear the blow—
 "If you will strike a match!

II.

"I'm not a lord, but then, you know,
 "My raiment's not unkempt;
 "I'm very tall, which proves, of course,
 "I'm not beneath contempt!

III.

"Then say you'll be my wedded bride,
 "Whose passion is so strong,
 "You must admit that six feet three
 "Is bound to love you *long!*"



IV.

“I hate a man that’s six feet three,
 “And I will tell you why;
 “It wouldn’t suit my nostrils, John,
 “To live with one so *high!*”

V.

“Oh, Susey, don’t make *game* of me;
 “My eyes are full like *ewers*—
 “Or else—now, Sue, I swear I will—
 “I’ll leave you for the *Moors!*”

VI.

“Devotion I have owed so long
 “That not to pay were rude.”
 “Sir, your devotion’s not a debt
 “For which you will be *Sue’d!*”

VII.

“You’ll break my heart, I’m sure you will,
 “You wicked, cruel, Sue;
 “How can you be so short with me,
 “Who’ve been so long with you!”

VIII.

“To tell you, John, the simple truth,
 “I could not wed a catch;
 “I even doubt if Lucifer
 “Would make a worser match!”

IX.

Here Susan sweetly raised her shoe,
 And took John in the fore,
 For though so tall she thought she ought
 To put on two feet more.

X.

“When Cupid threw me at your feet,
 “Where still I’d kneeling be,
 “I little thought how very soon
 “You’d throw those feet at me!”

XI.

“Know, Cruel, that you loved me much
 “I never dared to doubt;
 “It’s hard of you to take me in
 “And then to kick me out!”

XII.

“I hate you, John, I hate you, John,
 “And if my tears ooze through;
 “Its ’cause I loved a soldier boy,
 “That’s *sold yer* darling Sue!

XIII.

“A farmer’s son, with eyes of blue;
 “He dwelt by yonder Mill;
 “They said he was too proud to hoe,
 “And so he went to drill!

XIV.

“And years have come, and years have gone,
 “I’ve never seen his foot!
 “He took the pack, but’s not turned up,
 “Although I saw him cut!

XV.

“But ne’er shall any other man
 “Be partner in my joy;
 “By him sustained, I’ll sink or swim,
 “My own dear soldier *buoy!*”

XVI.

“Sue, hear me, Sue! one single word;
 “My eyes—what are they?—blue!”
 “Oh, tell me, can this be some hoax,
 “Or is it really you?”

XVII.

“ Oh, say you’ll love your soldier lad,
 “ Be ever true to me,
 “ Who, having had a leg shot off,
 “ Is now a leg-atec.

XVIII.

“ And we will live down by the Mill,
 “ Secure from all alarms,
 “ And though I’m not a soldier now,
 “ I’m still a man in arms ! ”

We applaud.

Benjamin again springs to his feet, glass in hand.

“ I beg, gentlemen, to give you the toast of ‘ Our Mercantile Marine,’ coupled with the name of Mr. Slimsoul.”

We cheer determinedly.

Benjamin reminds us that the commerce of this country is in a more prosperous and happier condition than ever. It must be a source of immense gratification to the merchants of England to know that since the opening of the Suez Canal there has been a marked and continuous diversion of Eastern trade from Great Britain as a centre. The exports from Egypt to England exhibit, it is a pleasure to note, an almost continuous decline. A large portion of British trade with the East has been diverted in consequence of the Suez Canal to the ports of France, and to countries having

direct access to the Mediterranean. When the commerce of the East was carried round by the Cape it was not only easier, but actually cheaper and better, for foreign countries in Europe to draw their supplies from London and Liverpool as central depôts of Asiatic produce than to import direct for themselves. But the opening of the Suez Canal has met this state of things with a complete revolution. England is no longer allowed to be the depôt of Eastern commerce and the centre of its distribution. The large ports of the Mediterranean and Southern Europe have been enabled to import direct for themselves. Englishmen will be proud to learn that the warehouses of London and Liverpool have ceased to store the immense quantity of produce they stored before the opening of the Suez route, and that if that canal were choked up with sand to-morrow there is not a shipowner in England who would shed a tear or shoulder a spade.

Mr. Slimsoul responds. He has nothing to add to what has already been said by Benjamin, except to remark that, as an intimate friend of many merchants trading through the Red Sea, he can confirm his statements about the Suez Canal. His views are well known to all of us, but if we do not mind, he would like to recite to us a few verses powerfully illustrative of the past condition of our mercantile marine.

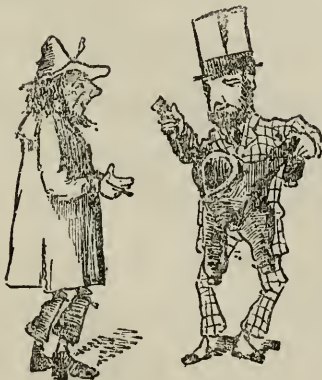
We applaud, and Slimsoul, with a considerable display of pathos, recites the following poem :—

The Hoky-Poky Owner.

I.

Said a hoky-poky owner, as he walked along the cliff,
 “ I could make a little fortune if I had a little skiff ; ”
 So he spied a green-eyed broker, and he said to him, “ My man,
 “ I must have a little vessel for to carry out a plan.
 “ Not an A 1 Blackwall liner, nor a frigate, so to speak,
 “ Nor a bran new ocean clipper that has never sprung a leak ;
 “ But a pretty little vessel ”—and he eyed him with his eye,
 And that broker knew exactly of the sort of ship to buy !





II.

Said that hoky-poky owner, as he drew a deeper whiff,
 "I must have a little captain for to sail my little skiff!"
 And within that very moment in the region of his scan,
 Came a most profoundly simple and unweather-beaten man;
 And that wily owner asked him, whilst he gave his hands a rub,
 If he'd take a glass of liquor in a close-adjointing "pub;"
 And that simple man consented, for he'd yet to learn the rule
 That a stranger treats another when he's hunting for a fool!

III.

Said that hoky-poky owner, "What's your figure? Pretty stiff?"
 "For I want a little captain for to sail my little skiff."
 "But I'm *not* a little captain!" said his unsuspecting tool,
 "And the currents of the ocean are a yet unfathomed rule.
 "And I never touched a rudder, and I know not west from east,
 "And my knowledge of the compass is as Greek unto a beast!"
 Said that hoky-poky owner, with a laugh upon his lip,
 "Then you're just the very fellow for to sail my little ship!"

IV.

Then that hoky-poky owner took his captain mild and meek,
 And he pointed out a vessel that was lying in the creek,
 And he said the picturesqueness of that vessel to the sight
 Would be very much diminished if her timbers were but tight.
 "You will take her very gently, and where ocean's ceased to roll
 "You will load her with a cargo of the splinters of the pole!
 "But should anything befall her, though we're sorry for the crew,
 "There's a life-belt in the cabin, and a Boyton dress for you!"



V.

Then that simple-minded captain was instructed
 what to do,
 And he signed the vessel's papers, and he settled
 with a crew,
 And he hove his bower anchor, and he set his
 mizen sail,
 With a most tremendous horror of an equinoctial
 gale.
 And his heart grew sick in parting from his weep-
 ing Mary Ann,
 As he steered directly northward with his back
 unto the sun.
 And that hoky-poky owner smiled a grim and
 sordid smile
 As he saw his vessel vanish round a corner of the
 isle !

VI.

Then that hoky-poky owner mused him ever on
 the beach
 On the sum of the insurance that was now within
 his reach ;
 And he spent his time in dreaming of the figures
 of his cheque,
 And in making close inspection into every bit of
 wreck,
 Till some long six months had vanished and the
 autumn neared its close,
 When that hoky-poky owner was awoke from his
 repose
 By his pretty little vessel, in the early morning
 grey,
 Coming very gently gliding through the shipping
 in the bay !

VII.

Then that hoky-poky owner spat upon his hands
 and swore,
 And he waited for that captain to appear upon
 the shore,
 And he seized him in his fury by the collar of his
 coat,
 And he twined his fingers firmly round the wind-
 pipe in his throat,
 And he beat him on the optics in a fierce deter-
 mined way
 Till he saw a most astounding pyrotechnical
 display ;
 And he threw him on the pavement, and he bat-
 tered down his head,
 And he jumped upon his stomach and he left him
 there for dead !

VIII.

Then that hoky-poky owner, with a fierce derisive
 yell,
 Fled the murder he'd committed with the speed
 of a gazelle ;
 And when nicely he'd levanted, and his victim
 helpless lay,
 Came some four-and-twenty policemen in a most
 determined way ;
 And they swore they'd catch that owner, and they'd
 try him for this deed,
 And they'd hang him on the gallows—which you'll
 see they hadn't need ;
 And they marched unto his lodgings with a quite
 heroic air,
 Just in time to find their victim hung suspended
 from the stair !



We are becoming jovial more and more.

“ I should like to hear one of you fellows make a speech,” says Benjamin, coaxingly, fixing his eyes on Sir Verdant. “ Come, Verdy, old man, a speech.”

“ Speech, Ben,” says Sir Verdant, with a classical sneer. “ Speech ! I tell you, Benjamin, the art of public speaking has entirely died out. In fact—and you know what my facts are—I can't mention more than three persons who ever made a clever speech in their lives.”

“ And,” asks Hardy, irreverently parodying his catechism, “ which be they ?”

“ The overwhelming sense of modesty,” says Sir Verdant, “ for which I am so remarkable, alone

restrains me from saying that I'm one. The other two are dead.”

“ Yes,” says Lob, throwing his arms round the decanter in a condition of hopeless capitulation to



the effect of the '34, “ he says the other two is dead—dead. Ah ! Creet Sweature, he says the others is dead !”

“ Lob,” expostulates William, “ Come, come, old man, don't be a disgraceful young ass !”

“ You go to Bath, William,” retorts Lob, with considerable more emphasis than politeness, at the same time fixing his eyes vacantly on the decanter, “ I shall talk if I like, Creet Sweature—tell me. Won't you be mine ? Won't you be your Bobby, Lobby, Wobby's ?”

“ Lob,” laughs Benjamin, gently extracting the decanter from his impassioned embraces, “ don't be a fool, there's a dear boy.”

“ Fo-ol,” cries Lob, looking up in boosy amazement, “ Fo-ol ! Benj'min (*hic*) That ish too much. Thish ish an inshult. Fo-ol ! (*hic*) I shall shing if I like. I shay I *shall* ; and *will* shing if I like. O-o-o-oh !

“ Your robe is most awfully classic,
 You dear little Tootle-tum-tay ;
 Like the wine that the poets call Massic—
 But really I'd better not say ;
 For this is an age of excesses,
 (Lord Chamberlain look to your rights),
 Since ballets have taken to dresses,
 The ladies have taken to tights !”



“Restrain him, somebody!” cries Sir Wellfried, but as Lob at this instant utterly collapses, with his face in his dessert plate, the suggested restraint is rendered unnecessary.

“I rise,” says Benjamin, planting his foot upon a chair, “for the purpose of proposing another toast. I ask you this time, gentlemen, to drink a bumper to the foreign nations of the world, and I beg to couple with this toast the name of Dord Lerby.”

We clap our hands to as full an extent as we are permitted by the fumes of our '34, and stamp our little feet.

Dord Lerby, in response, begs to remind us of the eminently pacific character of all the nations of the world, and the total absence of dangerous diplomatic gunpowder, and of all elements of war-like explosions and conflagrations. England, he says, is, as we all know, irrevocably determined that Russian batteries shall never command the Hellespont. The politician must be cunning indeed who can construe this into the possibility of war. Russia, on her part, faithful to the traditions of Czar Nicholas and Catherine I., holds with equal stubbornness her determination to one day



possess Constantinople and the whole command of the Golden Horn. This is one of the most precious of all the promises of peace in the future. If we look further abroad the same pacific intentions are everywhere observable. France—proud, exquisitely sensitive, volatile France—lies in wait for the advent of a suitable moment to carry into effect the grim resolve which slumbers in her heart's core of revenge upon Germany, and the redemption once for all by French blood of her lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. Germany, the supreme idea of whose statesmen is still absolute hegemony, is patiently watching the flow of events for an opportunity to complete German unity by the incorporation of the German provinces of Cisleitha. The Slavonic populations of Hungary contemplate the disruption of the Austro-Hungarian Empire by the erection south of the Danube of a new grand South Slavonic Empire. The Poles in Silesia and Galicia are only awaiting for the Austro-Hungarian government to become entangled in foreign complications to rise in

revolution, and strike a blow for a new and independent Polish kingdom. Italy, whose unity, like that of Germany, is far from being complete, is anxiously on the look-out for opportunities and alliances to effect a further extension of territory by the annexation of the Italian-speaking provinces of Austria. Spain is at present placidly reposing on the summit of a slumbering volcano of Intransigente Radicalism, which may at any instant burst forth in awful irruption. Russia, our hereditary foe in Asia, still continues her victorious march over the corpses of slaughtered nomads to the confines of Afghanistan, projecting gigantic railways into the core of Central Asia, and slowly but certainly bringing her Empire in the East into conflict with ours. These relationships of the nations of the world are, Dord Lerby thinks, replete with promises of peace that cannot but be satisfactory to Mr. Richard and his friends, and give politicians of all shades the strongest grounds for believing in the speedy advent of the international millenium. Dord Lerby would like, before he sits down, to read us "The Egyptian Alphabet," composed and thrust into his hand by Mr. Stephen Cave and Mr. Goschen.

The Egyptian Alphabet.

A was an Agent who wanted a loan ;
 B was the Brokers who made it all known ;
 C was the Credit that none understood ;
 D was the Duffers who thought it was good ;
 E stands for Egypt which wanted the " tin ;"
 F for the Fools who subscribed it all in ;
 G was the Goods upon which they might claim ;
 H was the Humbug surrounding the same ;
 I the Investors who hoped to grow fat ;
 J was the Jews who knew better than that ;
 K was the Khedive to whom it was lent ;
 L was the Ladies on whom it was spent ;
 M was the Mission that England sent out ;
 N was the Nothing the mission found out ;
 O was the Offer by which it was met ;
 P was the Pockets affected by it ;
 Q was the Queries the cunning conceived ;
 R the Replies that they never believed ;
 S was the Scheme of a learned old gent ;
 T was the Time that it took to invent ;
 U was the Usurers who feared to be bled ;
 V is the Views that they hold on that head ;
 W 's the Way they're enforcing their claim ;
 X the Xpenses attending the same ;
 Y is the Years that the holders must wait ;
 Z is the Zanies who thinks it's all right !

We applaud boosily.

I have been entrusted with a very delicate duty, and I here rise to perform it. "Gentlemen," I say, "I beg to propose a toast. I call upon you to drink a bumper to the trades and professions represented at this festive board to-night. I ask you to drink with me to our two eminent Cabinet-makers, Benjamin and Sweet William ; to the equally eminent marine store dealer, Mr. Hard Hunt ; and to the still more eminent stock and share broker, Dord Lerby. With this toast I beg to be permitted to couple the name of Benjamin. (Benjamin subtends.) Gentlemen, I have been requested, on behalf of a large body of subscribers, to offer Benjamin, as a slight proof of their admiration of his invariable courtesy and truthfulness, a full-length portrait of the Earl of Beaconsfield. (A curtain is adroitly drawn back by the O'Gorman, and the following portrait stands



revealed, amidst tremendous cheering.) This portrait, gentlemen," I go on to say, throwing myself into an approved oratorical attitude, "is a fitting climax to a long and laborious life of ambition in the national senate, and a fitting reward of the author of all the glorious achievements of the last session of Parliament. (Cheers.) Gentlemen, it was the good fortune of the last session to bear to the country, under the paternity of Benjamin, a crop—a beautiful crop, I may say—of unripened and unmatutable fruit that has no parallel in the annals of Parliamentary harvests. (Cheers.) The past session has been a session of contemplated reforms. (Cries of "It has," &c.) Among other things, a great revolution in the administration of the prisons of the country was projected, neglected, and forgotten. Subsequently, two magnificent measures of University reform were adroitly elaborated, and then quite as adroitly exposed to the frosts of neglect and the certain influence of premature blight. Bankruptcy reform, marched into the House with such a tremendous blast from the Ministerial clarion, bade fair to become an accomplished fact, but, like many of its peers, found an insuperable obstacle in a second reading. Conferment of tenant-right on Scotch farmers, awaited with so much anxiety on the other side of the Tweed, and Scotch poor-law amendment, experienced the luxury of being still-born. The disgraceful stain upon the fair fame of the Government of the Slave Circular was cunningly removed by the application of a sort of Parliamentary benzoline called a Royal Commission. Then Benjamin, by dint of a totally unexampled sacrifice of private Bills, of the rights of private members, and of the legislative conscience, was mainly instrumental in carrying a Merchant Shipping Bill which possesses the peculiar power of repealing several of its own provisions. (Cheers.) Then, again, Benjamin, gentlemen, was at the bottom of a subtle stroke of foreign and financial policy by which this country has bought the Suez Canal Shares for twenty times their real value. Under the ægis of the same clever Benjamin, Mr. Cave was sent to Egypt, and many favoured recipients of Government secrets made fortunes on the Stock Exchange. (Cheers and laughter.) Above and beyond all this, the title of her Majesty the Queen has been 'writ large.' The Queen is

now an Empress, and, as Benjamin predicted at the time, the Russians have precipitately retreated to Moscow from the banks of the Amoo Daria. Finally, this session of glorious achievements had its moribund movements made lively by the carrying by the exercise of pure *force majeure* of an Education Bill which endows the country with the beautiful anomaly of handing over Imperial funds to voluntary schools unsupported by local rates. This crop of unmatutable and imatutable fruit, gentlemen, I say, and an additional penny on the income-tax, are the nett results of the past unparalleled session of Parliament. (Deafening cheers.) Benjamin, in the name of my own personal admiration, in the name of the esteem of the millions of subscribers whose names are appended hereto, in the name of an amazed and grateful country, I beg to offer thee a full-length portrait of the Earl of Beaconsfield." (Loud and prolonged cheers, stamping of feet, and rending of scalps.)

Benjamin, taking his cigar out of his mouth, and piquantly flirting with his *pince-nez*, rises to respond. He first smiles lusciously upon me, and then gracefully subtends to all of us at an angle of 45, adding greatly to our intense admiration of the whole proceeding. Benjamin then carefully adjusts the beautiful white rose-bud in his button-hole, and after delicately waving his hand into space to restore silence, proceeds as under—

"Unexpected honour, &c., &c.,

"Words fail, &c., &c.,

"Proudest moment, &c., &c.,

"As long as I live I shall cherish, &c., &c.

"It isn't the intrinsic value, &c., &c.,

"Heir-loom in my family, &c., &c.,

"It will be an incentive, &c.,

"Children's children, &c., &c., &c.

"Gentlemen," he then proceeds, "I thank you for your handsome gift. With respect to the very flattering terms in which I have been spoken of by my friend—may I say my dear and beloved friend?—"

I say he may.

"My dear and beloved friend, Thunder and Lightning, I am too much overwhelmed by gratitude to do more than quote from the poet a few lines which, you will easily perceive, are singularly appropriate to myself.

I.

You've heard the name of Paris, and you've read
the siege of Troy,
And your cheeks have burned to crimson at the
doings of that boy ;
Though he stole a monarch's daughter and he
gloried in her shame,
Do you think he'd got the courage for to steal a
monarch's name ?

II.

You have heard of Torricelli and the wonders that
he wrought
By exhaustion of a tubing with its ending in a
moat ;
Do you think that Torricelli with his vast *abilitee*,
Could have made a pump whose suction would
have drawn the truth from me ?

III.

Then the philosophic Plato—such the wisdom
that he taught
That the world still stands astounded at the subtle
things he thought ;
Do you think the learned Plato, full of logic to
the brim,
Could have proved he said the opposite attributed
to him ?

IV.

You have heard of Doctor Johnson and his man-
ners rude and grim,
How he snubbed the simple people that addressed
themselves to him ;
Do you think that Doctor Johnson, rude and
brutal though he be,
Could come up to half the rudeness that's in-
herently in me ?

V.

But I really beg your pardon if I've said or done
amiss,
And I pray you drown its record in a bumper deep
as this ;
For I vow unto this party by my aged locks and
curl,
I will try and mend my manners now I've got to
be an Earl ! ”

Benjamin resumes his seat amidst a perfect
furore of stamping and clapping.

We drink a deep and strong bumper to the
immediate reformation of Benjamin's manners,
and the return of his ancient politeness.

By this time the atmosphere has become of a
Cimmerian density from the smoke from our
Havanas.

Lob Rowe, with his elbows in his dessert plate,
sits blandly smiling into space.

Sweet William is observed at this juncture, after
several and sundry efforts, to do justice to his
literary reputation by lighting his cigar with his
“ Vatican Decrees.”



Benjamin, brimful of the best of good humours,
and smiling his olive-oiliest upon everybody, sits
smoking his cigar only vaguely conscious of the
general situation.

He tries to galvanise us into a semblance of
hilarity by telling us the plot of his forthcoming
new novel, and by asking us for suggestions for a
title.

But we do not become hilarious.

Lob Rowe, apparently beginning to appreciate the situation through the dim indistinctness of things generally, suggests, "Down in the Mouth," by the author of "Up in the Tooth."

Sir Wellfried, more spontaneous than usual, suggests, "Nothing for Him," by the author of "All for Her."

Sweet William suggests, as more appropriate to the times, "Cut off his Coupons," by the author of "Sue his Canal Shares."

Dord Lerby scowls upon William with great fury for suggesting a title so personal, and Benjamin finds it necessary to change the topic of conversation.

"A song, someone," cries Benjamin. "Come, Newdegate—you hilarious old investigator of nunneries—pipe up!"

Mr. Newdegate replies that having recently been on an expedition of inquiry into the conventual and monastic institutions of America, he does not mind singing a negro minstrel ballad which, truth compels him to say, was softly warbled in his ears one evening as he reposed in the tender embraces of a coloured nun.

Sir Wellfried remarks that a man who would allow himself to fall into the embraces of a nun was a nun-entity, but this is poor.

On the restoration of a perfectly hushed silence, Mr. Newdegate sings us, with much feeling, the following pathetic ballad:—

The Ballad of Hoary Anna.

I.

Ah, yes, I 'members what you say,
 Hoary Anna.
 I often tinks about dat day,
 Hoary Anna,
 Which robbed me of a lubbin' wife
 An' changed de current ob my life,
 Hoary Anna,
 An' cut me up wuss den a knife,
 Hoary Anna.

II.

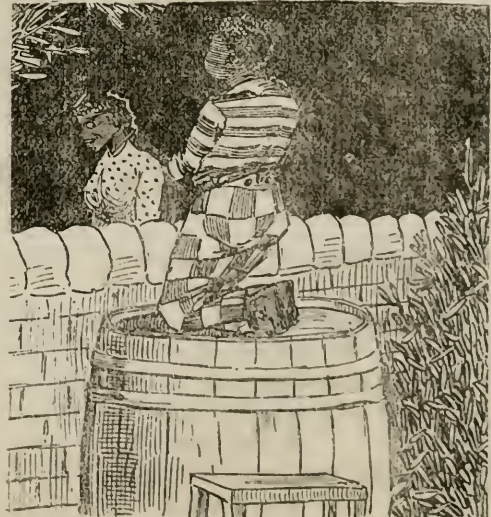
You used to lub me 'ears ago,
 Hoary Anna.
 Dat's when I 'gun to dig an' hoe,
 Hoary Anna.
 Dem eyes wuz 'tractive speres to men ;
 You wuz a lubly nigger den,
 Hoary Anna.
 I wish dem times wuz here agen,
 Hoary Anna.

III.

We used to meet us in de dusk,
 Hoary Anna,
 When Massa slep' upon his busk,
 Hoary Anna.
 Dat mouf wuz roses ob de glen ;
 Lord bless dose 'ours dis nigger spen',
 Hoary Anna.
 I wish dem cheeks wuz dat agen,
 Hoary Anna.

IV.

I stoled out by de star's pale light,
 Hoary Anna.
 De boss wuz fast asleep dat night,
 Hoary Anna.
 I clustered top de water tub,
 An' whispered o'er de wall my lub,
 Hoary Anna,
 With nuffin' but de stars above,
 Hoary Anna.



V.

Dis heart kep' tickin' loud and fast,
 Hoary Anna.
 Dis nigger wuz in lub at last,
 Hoary Anna.
 Dis soul wuz bustin' wid my bliss,
 You must hev' seed dem sighs I guess,
 Hoary Anna.
 Dat Cupid's darts warn't made to miss,
 Hoary Anna.

VI.

I 'voked dem stars den 'voked de Lord,
 Hoary Anna.
 I ope'd dese lips to say de word,
 Hoary Anna ;
 When—glanced dat cussed lid aside,
 An' dropped your lubbin' Sam inside,
 Hoary Anna.
 Your Sam what woo'd you for his bride,
 Hoary Anna.



VII.

You sclutched me by dis curly pate,
 Hoary Anna.
 Dem curls wuz small, dat strengf' wuz great,
 Hoary Anna.
 Dis wool most nobly stood de strain,
 I scrawled dat cussed tub agen,
 Hoary Anna
 Dat duckin' had not cured de pain,
 Hoary Anna.



VIII.

Dat lid was fixed what warn't secure,
 Hoary Anna.
 Dat dampin' made me lub you more,
 Hoary Anna.
 It could not squench de fire wid'in,
 It only bust it out agen,
 Hoary Anna.
 I'd 'gun dat race an' meant to win !
 Hoary Anna.

IX.

You blushed at what I goed to do,
 Hoary Anna.
 Perked on dat lid I knelt anew,
 Hoary Anna.
 De boss jest come a creepin sly,
 Then dropped your Sam one in de eye,
 Hoary Anna.
 Dat cussed lid—an' den—good bye !
 Hoary Anna.

X.

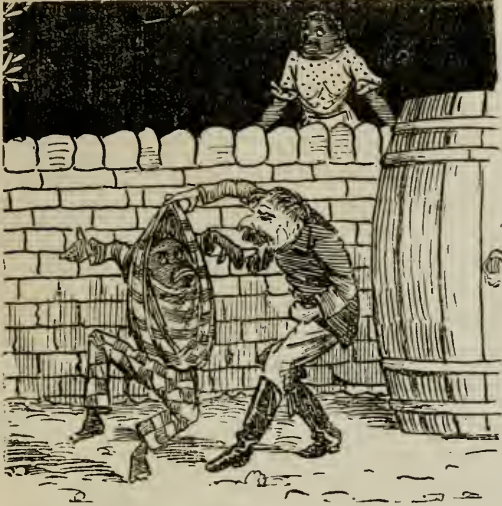
I tried to scramble up de top,
 Hoary Anna.
 De boss he said, " I guess you'll stop,"
 Hoary Anna.

He bobbed me down den bobbed agen,
Jes' let me out as life wuz spen'.

Hoary Anna.

You *wuz* a lubly nigger den !

Hoary Anna.



More and more the minds of us are visibly setting in the direction of a glorious and blessed obscurity.

Benjamin, at spasmodic intervals, appears to recover his volatility.

“More wine! Thunder and Lightning?”

I help myself to a substantial reminder of that dearest of all dear widows, *Veuve Clicquot*.

“Another Havana?”

I take another Havana.

“Gentlemen,” cries a voice from the lower end of the table, “I’ve got an idea!”

“Nonsense!” cry several voices; “I don’t believe it.” “Where is it?” “Let’s have a look at it!” and much laughter.

“But I have,” insists the Member for Peterborough. “I have,” repeats Whalley. “It’s a conundrum.”

“A conundrum,” says Sir Verdant, gruffly, attempting to be sarcastic. “Of course it’s a conundrum. Who ever heard *you* say anything that wasn’t a conundrum?”

We smile sickly.

“Why—Hard Hunt, Forecit, William, and Sir Verdant,” proceeds this irrepressible Papistical

inconveniencer, “why did her Majesty the Queen confer a peerage upon Benjamin? Also, I want to know under what treaty the same was conferred?”

The legislative mind cogitates—at least that portion of it which is in a condition to cogitate.

The legislative mind cogitates again.

“Whalley,” cries Sir Wellfried, “I have it! The Queen conferred a title upon Benjamin because she thought Benjamin *Dis-raeli* deserve it.”

We put our hands on our stomachs.

“No, Lawson,” says Whalley, exultingly.

“Very good; but nothing like it. Try again.”

We try again.

We give it up.

“It is obvious,” says the joyous Whalley, “that the Queen conferred a peerage upon Benjamin because he was peerless!”

We groan audibly.

“Now I want to know,” persists this miserable hanger-on of Joe Miller, “under what treaty the peerage upon Benjamin was conferred?”

We decline to guess anything more about it, and give it up at once.

“The answer,” replies Whalley, “is as obvious as the other (which it may easily be, and not be obvious at all). The treaty under which the Queen conferred the peerage upon Benjamin was the Reciprocity Treaty. (Oh!) The *Quid pro Quo* Treaty. (Oh!) The I’ll-make-you-an-Empress-if-you’ll-make-me-an-Earl Treaty.” (Oh!)

“And that, Whalley, says Sir Verdant, turning very red in the face, “you have the audacity to call a conundrum?”

“I have,” says Whalley. “What do you call it?”

“Well, if you must know my opinion,” says Sir Verdant, “I call it a confounded piece of impertinence!”

“Tush, Verdy!” says Sweet William.

“Fie, fie!” says Benjamin.

“I *do*, Ben,” cries Sir Verdant, hotly. “I’m distantly related to the Marquis of Lorne, and through him to the rest of the Royal Family, and if Whalley thinks I’m going to sit tamely down here while my illustrious relatives are being openly pelted with the mud of his coarse ribaldry, he is

grossly mistaken. Benjamin, if I have not already said so, I will say so now—I'm distantly—very—related to the Marquis of Lorne, and with the authority which that distant relationship confers upon me, I tell you, Whalley, that the man who would propound such a conundrum as yours is a cad and a coward!"

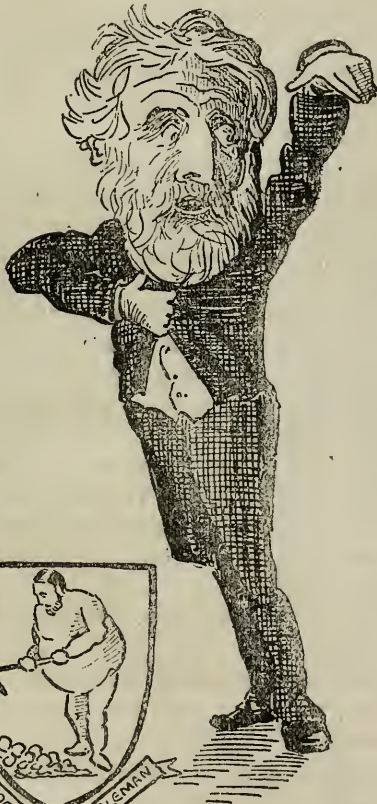
"Verdy," retorts Whalley, "you go to Jericho!"

"I'll Jericho you in two minutes!" cries Sir Verdant, in a towering passion, turning up his sleeves.

"Tush, tush, Verdy," says Sweet William.

"Fie, fie!" says Benjamin.

"You'd better not," retorts Whalley, "or by the Conventual and Monastic Institutions Bill I'll——"



"No, you won't, Whalley," says Sweet William. "Be quiet!"

"No, no, Verdy," says Benjamin. "Calm yourself,"

"Tell the wounded tiger to calm himself!"

says Sir Verdant, striking an attitude. "No, Benjamin, no. My dander's up!"

But at this instant the bell rings, and the threatened hostilities are happily averted by the entrance of Plush.

At the first glimpse of Plush the belligerents sit down.

It is a curious fact that a gentleman who does not hesitate to forfeit the good opinion of his peers will brave death itself rather than lower himself in the good opinion of the waiter.

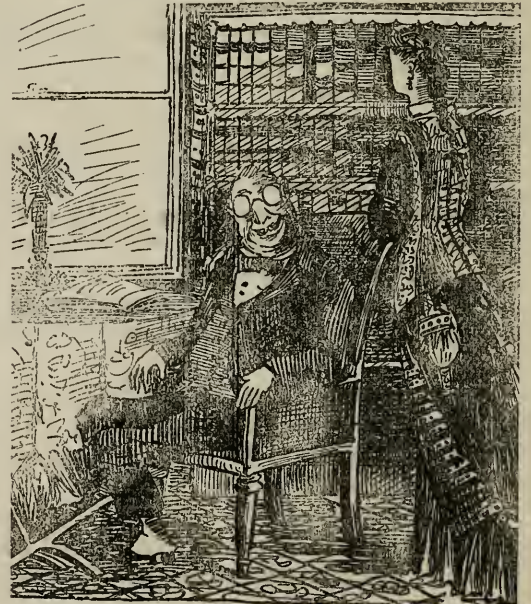
Plush departs, and Benjamin, fearing the renewal of the scene, calls upon Mr. Marmalade Yenkins for a song.

Mr. Marmalade Yenkins, after roundly protesting that he does not know a song, and that he never sung one in his life, obliges us by singing the following:—

You Dear Invalided Old Thing.

I.

You'll take me and make me your pet
 In a villa on bank of the Thames,
 You'll doat on me, darling, and let
 Me escort you to Baden and Ems!
 You will kiss me and love me by night,
 In winter and summer and spring,
 You'll make me so happy and bright,
 You dear invalided old thing!





"BENJAMIN IS NO LONGER COGNISANT OF THE EXISTENCE OF HIS GUESTS."

II.

You'll give me a carriage to ride,
 With footmen so powdered and tall,
 And you'll doatingly sit by my side—
 Your dear little queen of it all!
 You'll love me and kiss me all day,
 And hang on my lip when I sing,
 It's naughty—you *mustn't*, I say,
 You dear invalided old thing!

III.

You'll take me to parties and balls,
 And crushes and routs when you can;
 You'll deck me in laces and falls,
 You scumptiously gouty old man!
 You'll kiss me and love me anew,
 In summer and winter and spring;
 It is wicked—be quiet, now *do*,
 You dear invalided old thing!

The mental energy of all of us visibly wanes more and more under the influence of Mousseux and the ever-to-be-praised-and-be-lauded *Veuve Clicquot*.

"Come, Cross, you little Bacchus," cries the still spasmodically volatile Benjamin, "recite us that little poem you wrote about a cabbage."

"Poem!" says Cross, in mimic amazement. "Poem, Benjamin! Cabbage!"



"Yes," says Benjamin, with a sly wink; "you know what I mean, eh, Cross? You know what I refer to, though you pretend you don't, you sly little spectacled old dog!"

Whereupon Cross, in his blandest tones, recites

us his little poem (which we are subsequently informed is founded upon fact), as follows:—

Ode to a Cabbage.

LINES WRITTEN ON THE SUGGESTIVE PRESENT OF A CABBAGE MADE TO YOURS HUMBLBY BY TWO YOUNG LADIES, ANNO DOMINI, 1876.

O, some may love the lofty palm
 That waves along a foreign strand,
 And some prefer the soothing balm
 Of "Ole Virginny's" dusky land;
 The sweetest thing that blooms for me
 In garden bower or arid dene,
 Is—emblem of simplicity—
 The ever-verdant cabbage green!

O luscious cabbage, rich and rare,
 Would gender mine were feminine
 That I might wear thee in mine hair
 And garlands round my forehead twine!
 O thou should'st be the nice bouquet
 By honied lover pressed between
 Mine hands upon my wedding day,
 Thou ever-verdant cabbage green!

But as I am denied this lot
 By reasons which I can't control,
 Surrounded by forget-me-not
 I'll wear thee in my button-hole!
 And when admiring maids shall see
 Thy beauty but with envious e'eu,
 Thou'lt mirror their simplicity,
 Thou ever-verdant cabbage green!

But this is too much.

One or two of Benjamin's guests are now no longer aware of the existence of themselves or each other. This poem of Cross's has done its deadly and somnolent work. O, awe-stricken constituencies, if ye could only see your legislators now!

"Iceno'er Power," cries Benjamin, "the Grat-tan of the present Parliament and Hibernia's future king, sing us a song."

"The only one I know," replies Iceno'er Power, "is the one I've sung every night in the House of Commons since last February, and I don't intend to sing it here to-night for anybody. That's the true Irish tip. The 'Wrongs of Ould Oireland' was the name of the song last session, but this next session I mean to re-christen the song, and to call it the 'Rights of Ould Oireland.'"

"Wrongs of old Ireland," says Benjamin, rather tartly, "or rights of old Ireland, it is a song we can very well dispense with both here and in the House of Commons."

We applaud.

"Thunder and Lightning," he says, turning round upon me with a smile of exquisite sweetness, "will *you* oblige us with a song?"

"Benjamin," I reply, "I will oblige you with

anything. I am, as you, perhaps, don't know, distantly related to the Marquis of—no,—I beg pardon—distantly related to a prima donna. Her illegitimate child married a cousin of my aunt's niece's great-grandmother. You will accordingly see, Benjamin, that I am musical by descent, and

that my distant relationship to the prima donna aforesaid constitutes me, as Sir Verdant would say, the champion of the French and Italian stage. Benjamin, I know but one song, but that song I will oblige you with with pleasure.

I warble as follows :—

Beautiful Flo.

I.

On Flo, beautiful Flo,
 Filling men's hearts with a passionate glow ;
 Pride of the river and pride of the lawn,
 Queen of the dance till the break of the dawn.
 Dancing—flirting—laughing at me ;
 Beautiful Flo, I could die for thee !
 Glancing, dancing, trilling a song,
 Beautiful Flo, thou cans't do no wrong !
 Brighter than stars are in Heaven above,
 Pure as an angel, gentle as love !

II.

Flo, Flo, beautiful Flo,
 Dragging my heart out wherever you go !
 Scorning my love for a maddening fun,
 Hotter than sunshine yet colder than moon !
 Racing—chasing—hurrying by,
 A smile on thy lip and disdain in thy eye.
 Sweet little archer, oh, heed not the smart,
 Send that swift arrow, love, straight to my heart,
 Quenching for ever its passionate glow,
 Cruel, disdainful, but beautiful Flo !

I observe, in resuming my seat, that the attitude of most of us has become by this time more striking than classic.

The grand old dining hall wears the aspect of a finished banquet, and Benjamin's guests that of finished gentlemen.

Some of us are talking in our sleep. Whalley is heard to say that if ever his legs get right again he'll go over to Rome and beg the Pope's pardon, and wash his hands in the Pope's golden ewer, and receive absolution, and count his beads in some contiguous priory to the end of his natural life.



Sweet William is heard to ask, in the name of the public, if the rod of satire is worth the pickling, but the answer to this conundrum dies away on his lips.

Gathorne Hardy is heard to move for supplementary estimates for the army—now the *Hardy annual* of the House of Commons.

"Gentlemen," says Benjamin, rising with difficulty to his feet, and smiling benignantly into space at nothing, "gentlemen, I rise (*hic*) to propose another toast. I—I ask you to drink to the health—health of the ladies (*hic*). I couple with this toast the name of Mr. Bruce."

There are some faint attempts at applause, but they are scarcely audible.

Bruce is lying with his face in his dessert plate.

"Brucey, old man," says Sir Verdant, digging his fist into the small of his back, "wake up! The toast of the ladies proposed. You've got to respond, old man."

"Shan't!" says Bruce, from the top of his dessert plate. "Smother the ladies; let 'em respond for themselves. I'm asleep."

"Four o'clock in the morning!" says Sir Verdant, repeating his dig in the small of Bruce's back. "Wake up! d'ye hear, Bruce? Where should I be if the royal family were to come in?" Another dig.

"Smother the royal family!" says Bruce, waking up and staring around the room in the greatest astonishment. "Where am I? What do you want me to do?"

"Come, Brucey, dear," says Benjamin, "you inebriated old toper, wake up! You've got to respond to the toast of the ladies. Sing us a song, or give us a recitation."

"I only know one song," stammers Bruce, "and that's a recitation."

"Very well, then," cries Sir Verdant, becoming impatient at Bruce's impenetrable obstinacy, "give us that. Go on."

"It is called——"

"Never mind what it's called," breaks in Sir Verdant—"recite it."

Bruce hereupon hoists himself upon his legs, and recites—we say "recites" charitably—the following:—

The Belles.

I.

Oh, the dancing of the belles,
Silver belles!

What a world of merriment that glancing group
foretells.



How they dance, dance, dance,

In the white and heated light,
Till the berries that o'ersprinkle
Every picture seem to twinkle

With a crystalline delight.
Keeping time, time, time,

To the valse-exciting rhyme

Of Der Schönen Blauen Donau that so musically
wells;

Oh, the belles, belles, belles, belles,

Belles, belles, belles.

Oh, the dancing and the glancing of the belles!

II.

Oh, the Court-invited belles,

Golden belles!

What a world of plush and paint their dazzling
grandeur tells.

Through the balmy air of night,
Through a vision of delight,
From the jarring city notes

Out of tune,

What a splendid vision floats

To the eyes of Miss Belinda Fitz-Neotes
Of Aroon!



Oh, the crushing and the rout,
 And the gathers that come out!
 How the agony voluminously wells.
 How it swells!
 How it dwells!
 On the temper how it tells!
 To what anger it impels.
 Oh, the rushing and the crushing of the belles!
 Of the belles, belles, belles, belles,
 Belles, belles, belles.
 Oh, the tearing and despairing of the belles!

III.

Oh, the belles of the Mabille,
 Brazen belles!
 What a world of lying love their honied accent
 tells.
 In the glare and in the light
 How they dance out their delight,
 Thinking of the future never,
 Dancing on and dancing ever,
 With a weary simulation of a love they cannot
 feel,
 In the glare and in the glitter and the hell of the
 Mabille.

Leaping higher, higher, higher,
 With a desperate desire,
 And a resolute endeavour
 Now—now to win or never,
 Golden youth!
 Oh, the belles, belles, belles,
 What a tale their laughing tells
 Of despair.
 How they dance, dance, dance,
 With a weary smile and glance,
 In the glare and in the glitter that are there!
 Yet the eye it fully knows
 By the sighing
 Lips and dying
 How the hoping ebbs and flows.
 Yet the eye distinctly tells
 How the hoping sinks and swells,
 By the dancing, and the glancing, and the
 prancing of the belles,
 Of the belles—
 Of the belles, belles, belles, belles,
 Belles, belles, belles,
 By the sighing lips and dying of the belles.



But the way in which Bruce drones out this song is too much. It is the *coup de grace*, the finishing touch, the last straw that breaks the convivial camel's back.

Benjamin has lapsed at last into a condition in which he is no longer cognisant of the existence of his guests.

Dord Lerby, with his head gracefully reclining upon his breast, has already followed his leader to that land where all things are forgotten—yea, even Bulgarian atrocities and Berlin Memoranda.

Hard Hunt, after colliding with the chandelier, the decanter, and everybody and everything, has sunk at last like another "Captain," and dreams of mermaids and our submarine navy.

Sir Stafford stares into space with his pockets turned inside-out.

Dr. Goneneasily—poor, dear man!—clasps his umbrella in the convulsions of some horrid nightmare.

Even Sir Wellfried—our well-beloved and trusty Momus—has fallen a prey to the prevailing liquor *quemadmodum profanum vulgum*.

Two of us only—myself and Sir Verdant—now remain unconquered by the seductions of Bacchus.

We two eye each other sympathetically, with the consciousness of superior moral strength.

"Thunder—you will excuse me if I omit the Lightning—Thunder," he asks winningly, "are you an admirer of poetry?"



CLEANED OUT:

I remark that I am—that I adore poetry.

"Then, Thunder and Lightning," he says, "while those other fellows are snoring away allow me to send you to sleep by reciting a verse or two I composed *myself*. Would you like to hear them?"

I reply that I should, merely adding that if I have any preference at all it is for verses composed *not* by himself.

"I composed these verses, Thunder and Lightning, myself, in the short space of five minutes, while waiting for the salad at my club."

I nod my head very profoundly in admiration of his most extraordinary genius.

"I think they are true, Thunder and Lightning," he adds, "even now."

I express a hope they may be.

"I haven't got a title for them," says Sir Verdant: "perhaps they are too good to require one, but they go like this:—

I.

The clouds of war and thunder darkly lour,
 The Flag of Freedom to the breeze is flying,
 The Prophet's sword is drawn ; the hated Giaour
 On many a field lies panting, gasping, dying.
 The cannons roar ; wave yataghan and dirk ;
 O curst the hand that's raised to save the Turk !

II.

Oh, what a plague-spot to be wept with tears—
 This curse of Islam on earth's fairest bowers !
 A fest'ring curse beyond the cure of years,
 And leagues of kings, and statesmen's arts and
 powers,
 That blasts and kills with pestilential breath,
 Whose rule is ruin and whose presence death.

III.

Thou, Russian Eagle, hail ! brave hearts are near
 thee,
 Guard of the wronged and rock of the oppressed ;
 The voice of England's people's raised to cheer
 thee.

Speed thy proud mission, ark of the distressed.
 "Down with the Turk !" It echoes through the
 world ;
 O, curst the lies that keep our ensigns furled !

IV.

Thou———"

But the rest is blank.

Memory fails me.

Darkness is beyond.

I recollect no more.

Vinum ! Quanta magna—you know the rest.

Man is only human.

I can only say, in conclusion, that I owe my
 sincerest thanks to the waiters, butlers, footmen,
 cooks, chambermaids, housemaids, kitchenmaids,
 boots, and bottlewashers for the liberal supply of
 soda-water forthcoming in those small hours of
 the morning.



Sound and Bright

The Half Guinea Ale

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The Half-Guinea Ale is brewed from the Finest MALT and HOPS, with WATER obtained from the deep ARTESIAN WELL on the Premises.

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14, Senior Street, Paddington, Feb. 25, 1874.—Dear Sir,—I write to say that I have taken one box of the Pontardawe Worm Lozenges, and I am thankful to say with most miraculous effect. They are most inestimable, for they have done what three months' physicing at St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, did not do. I have taken as much as four ounces of castor oil in one day, with other medicine, and a quantity of strychnine in prescribed doses, authorised by eminent physicians, yet a day or two after I suffered from seat worms as bad as ever. I beg you will send me another box, for which I enclose stamps, as I shall not feel safe without them in case of a relapse.—Yours respectfully,
J. W. FRANKLIN.

Our Igony Column.

I.

We own that in ailments there's nothing to jest at,
 And leg to remark we've a horror of scoffing,
 Yet men of all climes have agreed and confessed that
 There's little to choose 'twixt a cough and a coffin!
 Then here's health to thee, KEATING; thy lozenge can
 save us
 From coughs and bronchitis that else would en-grave us!

II.

To write about worms you'll admit is not easy,
 Though Baudelaire wrote a great deal on that head too,
 But then all his verse is so awfully wheezy
 That it's only by worms—that is bookworms—he's
 read through!
 Well, WILLIAMS's lozenge, so pungent and sappy,
 Will make a poor worm feel most awful unhappy!

III.

Then for ills in the bowels, and wind on the chest,
 Which will, unrelieved, e'en the strongest man
 flummock,
 The pills of PAGE WOODCOCK's undoubtedly best,
 (And few of us care for cyclones in the stomach);
 While a great many windbags inflated with cant
 Might take a Page Woodcock and get what they want.

IV.

Whence gout was imported has puzzled for ages
 The wise and the learned again and again,
 'Tis strangely reserved for the lore of these pages
 To state that it came from Oporto in Spain.
 BLAIR's pills are the best you can take, if you care to,
 For gout and the twinges that gout is the heir to!

V.

Whence issued rheumatics we give no opinion,
 And fervently hope we may not fall a victim,
 Yet even the fear of its curse and dominion
 Shall never restrain us from printing this dictum:
 For twinges rheumatic the sterling transfixer
 Is doubtless a dose of the WOODHOUSE Elixir!

VI.

Of the cure for all ills we shall never find traces,
 However persistently wisdom may hunt her,
 Yet for cure of all ills of our nerves and our faces
 We owe a vast deal to the science of BUNTER.
 For tic and for toothache the cure most deserving
 Of praise at the hands of the public's his Nerveine!

VII.

A row of white teeth are accounted more precious
 Than the light of an eye or the bloom of a cheek,
 And the fragrant perfume of the breath more delicious
 Than those roses of GÚl that forced Byron to speak.
 Here's a drain to thee, GOSNELL; it's been to me very
 Remarkably useful the paste thou call'st cherry!

VIII.

The teeth of mankind seem half blessing and curse;
 When needed most out most refusing to come,
 And when needed most in—which is just the reverse—
 Declining to stick there in spite of the gum.
 But JONES, bless his name, and hang rival pretensions,
 Is a match for our teeth with his dental inventions!

IX.

It passes our wonder that man should inherit
 A temple a cold in the head will make gloomy,
 Yet even this plan has one obvious merit—
 The smallest of temples is thereby made rheumy!
 But one thing is clear—it was part of the plan
 That colds should be cured by the medicine of MANN.

X.

Botanical research has been the salvation
 Of men in all climates, the torrid and frigid,
 And WHELPTON has wrung from us this asservation—
 His pills in their course are resistless and rigid,
 And heads philosophic pronounce them the best
 For ills in the bowels and kidneys and chest!

XI.

We suffer enough who inhabit this isle
 From head-ache and sickness, eruptions and nausea.
 Can anyone sum up the evils of bile
 Or picture the pains that these horrors can cause you?
 For rescue from sickness these thanks be of mine
 Dear LAMPLOUGH to thee and thy Pyretic Saline!

XII.

That man is a compound of earth and of gases
 Is older by far than the records of fiction,
 To sufficiently praise BRAGG's charcoal surpasses
 The strength of our pen and the flight of our diction.
 For absorbing bad gas when the stomach most queer is
 There nothing like charcoal of BRAGG on this sphere is!

XIII.

That blood is the life is a truth from the Bible
 That flourishes still 'neath the ægis of wisdom,
 Bad blood has been christened the fountain of libel,
 As well as of ailments that speed man to *his* doom!
 Here's a health to thee, CLARKE, for thy Mixture's
 done good
 To the world and thyself by improving our blood!

XIV.

Great GODALL, to thee, be our bumper drained this
 time,
 For next to the man who keeps healthy our blood
 Is the man—Abernethy asserted in *his* time—
 Who gives us enjoyment in taking our food.
 The Relish of GOODALL, like coquettes in poesy,
 Is piquant, delicious, and awfully *saucy*!

XV.

To fatten your babes, mamas, out of a window
 A heartless young cynic once told you to throw them;
 He gave as a reason, as p'raps, you remember,
 The fact they'd drop plump on the pavement below
 them.
 A far better way's Dr. RIDGE'S than that—
 If you give them his food why they're bound to *get fat*!

XVI.

The world has admitted and medical sceptics
 Have said BROWN & POLSON'S Corn Flour is delicious,
 And invalids, infants, and even dyspeptics
 Will find in it aliment richly nutritious.
 And anyone's doubts of its nutritive power
 Will be nipped in the bud if they get in the flour

XVII.

To adulterate Cocoa's become such a practice
 That really the State must step in to protect us,
 The Faculty tell us to drink, but the fact is
 The stuff is so starched they can hardly expect us.
 Who wish for pure cocoa in all its quintessence
 Will certainly find it in CADBURY'S Essence.

XVIII.

"I want a good cheese and don't know where to get it,"
 Is a cry that goes constantly up from the pater;
 If he bought one at WEBBER'S he'd never forget it,
 There breathes not a man who is trimmer or straighter.
 Pork, poultry or butter—he equally pleases;
 Long Lane, seventeen's, the depôt of his cheeses.

XIX.

The HALF-GUINEA ALE is so pleasantly wholesome,
 So brisk and so sparkling, so warm to the blood,
 There exists not a cynic who doubts we ought all some
 To get in of liquor so bright and so good.
 Who is fond of a brew that is good and not dear
 Let him stick to this ale till he takes to his bier!

XX.

The friends of cold water, obtrusive in manner,
 Our ancient old vices are taking a dig at,
 Dogmatic Good Templars are flaunting their banner,
 Proscribing our drink with the zeal of a bigot.
 The best British liquor for warming a fellow
 Is GRANT'S Cherry Brandy, the sterling Morella!

XXI.

Strong clothes to resist the coarse treatment of boyhood,
 Their romping and racing, and frolicsome glee,
 The hearts of fond parents brim over with joy would;
 Then SAMUEL BROTHERS, a bumper to ye!
 Whatever the fashions the beaux bring about
 Resartors of tailors, ye cut them all out!

XXII.

Then SAMPSON AND Co. have achieved themselves
 famous;
 The shirt they call "Surplice" is startling, surprising,
 For dress where it's torrid, for flannels no name has
 In London than their's been more steadily rising.
 The luck that withdraws us to India should thank its
 Stars that this firm sells rugs, drawers and blankets.

XXIII.

First for serge of all mixtures, wools, staple, elastic,
 Stand the Devonshire factors, great SPEARMAN and
 SPEARMAN;
 For boots—riding, walking or hunting, the plastic
 Of leathers is BIRD'S: may they always be near man.
 While as for kid gloves the most notable dealer
 And vendor's *sans pareil* undoubtedly WHEELER.

XXIV.

For silks and for satins we much recommend
 A purchase at VENABLES, Whitechapel Mart;
 And MADAME SCHILD'S dress patterns highly commend
 As the true *ne plus ultra* of cheapness and art.
 And then there is CHADWICK—we'd nearly forgotten
 To mention the claims of his six-corded cotton.

XXV.

The finest of cambric our noses are heir to
 Is sold ready hemmed at half-guinea a dozen
 By ROBINSON, CLEAVER, of Belfast; and there, too,
 Are the sweetest of gifts for a lady—hem!—cousin.
 If stitches be needed your duty is clear,
 Despatch along with it the "Zephyr" by WEIR.

XXVI.

Ah! could we look back through dead ages and answer
 How mothers got on when they stitched with their
 fingers,
 When time had not heard of our dear little Wanzer—
 That awful slow time that so painfully lingers.
 If a stitch can save nine, sure a WANZER, in fine,
 Is at least the salvation of ninety times nine.

XXVII.

By the turn of a wheel, by the throw of a dice,
 Some thousands of fortunes have quitted the perch;
 Can anyone tell us particularly nice
 How many 've been lost for a pen'orth of starch?
 While we pause be our cry as we live and the pen wield,
 No starch in the world can come up to the GLENFIELD!

XXVIII.

Of all the adornments dear Nature provides us
 (And really we trust what we say there's no harm in),
 A wealth of rich tresses whatever betides us
 Is the one the most *rooted* and precious and charming.
 Though we cannot lay claim to the mantle of Coleridge,
 We pen th's odd verse to his BALM and to OLDRIDGE.

XXIX.

Messrs. WILKINSON, Sheffield, so vast their ability,
 Make Magical Drops, which of medical modes
 Are reputed the best in lumbago, debility,
 And scurvy and cancer, boils, blotches and nodes.
 It answers to reason that if you would stop 'em,
 The briefest of methods is simply to *Drop* 'em!

XXX.

As the friends of the Act most persistently premised,
 Education has given a spurt unto science,
 The smallest of urchins expands to a Chemist,
 And calls for the aid of the latest appliance.
 If pestered with calls and a wish to allay them,
 Of course we can best recommend you to STATHAM!

XXXI.

Oh, the COVENTRY BICYCLE—that's the machine
 For racing, for travelling, for all evolutions,
 No lighter, or stronger, or better has been
 Since bicycles wrought in the land revolutions!
 If you want the machine o'er its kind holding sov'reignty
 With the greatest of pleasure we send you to Coventry!

XXXII.

Oh, HODKINSON, CLARKE, we must vow and protest;
 Its shocking the horrible way you remind us,
 Your mode of protecting our windows is best,
 And if we approve you'll be happy to *blind* us!
 Then, come, don't you think we have horrors to sup,
 When you add your revolvers can shut us all up!

XXXIII.

A bundle of rose-trees—a guinea—from Bath
 Seems a kind of announcement that savours of fooling;
 Not often such bargains come crossing our path,
 Yet you'll find it is true if you write unto COOLING.
 But talking of cooling—the JAPANESE CURTAIN
 Admits not a rival—that's perfectly certain.

XXXIV.

For the ailments of dogs try BENBOW and his science;
 His soap medicated's a wonder to wash 'em.
 For salvation from thieves try TANN's safe—the
 RELIANCE—
 The subtlest of prigs is unable to smash 'em.
 For coughs that distress you—we use no compulsion—
 Just try, if you like, TURNER's famous EMULSION.

XXXV.

For restoring grey hair, and for baldness and dandriff,
 A host of good people give SANDELL the preference;
 We know well, of course, no restorer can stand if
 It finds not a rock in the popular reference;
 We only can say—Let them differ who've tried 'em;
 That if there are better we've never applied 'em.

XXXVI.

"LICHEN ISLANDICUS"—that's the strange name of
 The ICELAND MOSS COCOA that sell Dunn and
 Hewett;
 It's good, but it's sad that we can't say the same of
 A host of strange cocoas that claim to outdo it!
 Here's a word—though p'raps strange, and incongruous
 very—
 To MILLARD and also his dentifrice CHERRY.

XXXVII.

Of all the home sounds the decidedly best is
 The click of the SINGER machine at its sewing ;
 The SINGER adapted to stand every test is,
 As thousands of feminine lips are avowing,
 Declaring, proclaiming—who ventures to doubt it?—
 No home in the land can be happy without it?

XXXVIII.

For knives and for forks we can much recommend
 SLACK'S at three hundred and thirty-six Strand ;
 But where all is so good where's the need to commend ?
 And the firm are the BLAND-est of men in the land.
 E'en their blades are good-tempered and never prove
 fickle, .
 And their forks are superbly electro'd on nickel.

XXXIX.

The pianos of BRINSMEAD are much in repute
 For beauty of finish and brightness of tone—
 The medals they've won have removed from dispute
 The practical truth that their rivals are none ;
 Wherever contending—in each exhibition—
 They have carried the palm against all competition.

XL.

A musical box for two shillings at BAUM'S
 Is the greatest of wonders this age has produced us,
 Except DYER'S watch—sing its praises with shawms—
 Or BROWN and GREEN'S stove that's so often seduced
 us ;
 Yet p'raps if it came to a bet we'd bet on a
 Lock-stitch hand-sewing machine—PRIMA DONNA!

XLI.

The collecting of stamps has become a fine art,
 And WHITFIELD and KING can aver it's no blunder.
 This firm are importers—at Ipswich their mart—
 Their "Imperial" Album is truly a wonder ;
 Messrs. Whitfield and King—for their pluck nought can
 coop in—
 Sell the best of all works on collecting and grouping.

XLII.

That Messrs. Tegg and Co.'s books—have you seen the
 variety?—
 Are the cheapest for gifts is a common confession ;
 Not a volume without a world-wide notoriety
 Where English is spoken—but here's a digression ;
 For gifts for the young, for all ages and classes,
 No emporium of books Tegg and Co.'s stock surpasses.

XLIII.

'Mong the greatest of triumphs in dreamland of fiction
 We put "Consuelo," the work of George Sand.
 Ah! the depth of its plot ; ah! the wealth of its
 diction
 Remain to this day unsurpassed in the land.
 Of this wonderful book, with well-founded prevision,
 Messrs. Weldon have published a people's edition.

XLIV.

Our task is completed. In bidding adieu
 To the friends whose announcements embellish our
 pages,
 We hope we've cemented old friendships anew,
 Till they're firm as the rocks and as sure as the ages ;
 We wish all our friends—for the season is here—

A MERRY OLD CHRISTMAS,

AND

HAPPY NEW YEAR.



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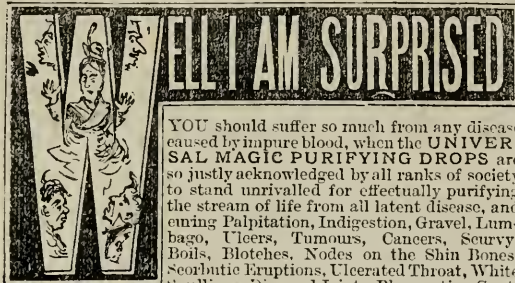
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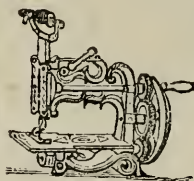
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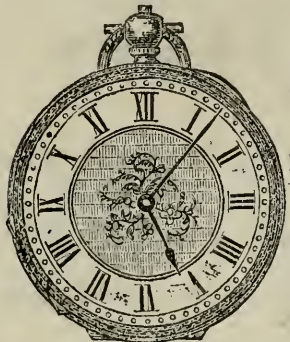
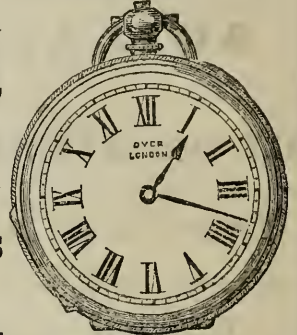
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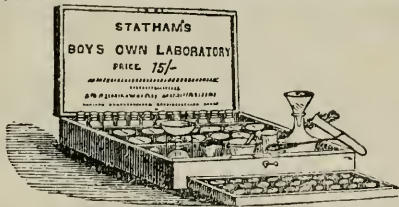
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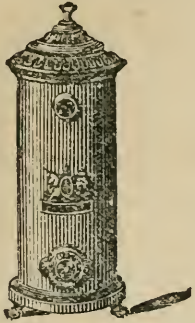
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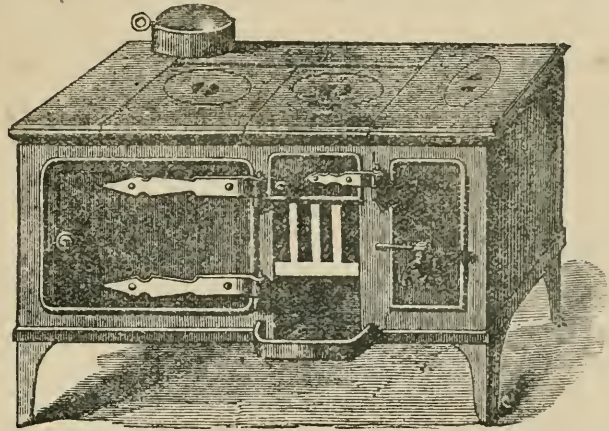
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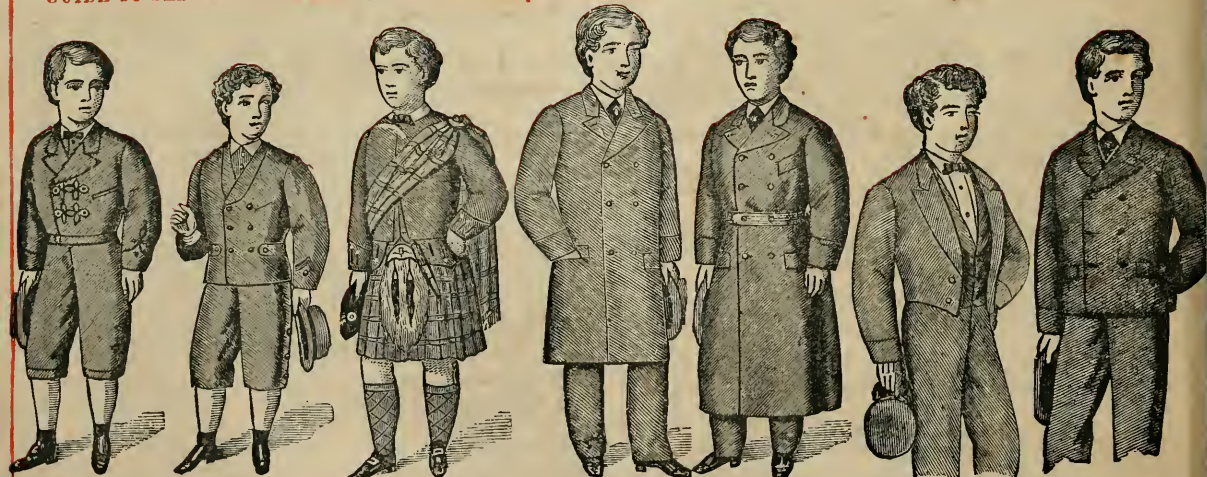
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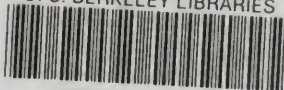
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