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RECREATIONS  
OF  
A LITERARY MAN





RECREATIONS  
OF  
A LITERARY MAN  
OR  
*DOES WRITING PAY?*

By PERCY FITZGERALD



*IN TWO VOLUMES*  
VOL. I.

London  
CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1882

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INSCRIBED TO  
MY MOTHER,  
WHO WILL BEST APPRECIATE  
THESE PAGES.

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## PREFACE.

THESE "Recreations" or Confessions may, I fear, be accounted somewhat egotistical. This, however, is unavoidable in a book of the kind. The object has been to put before the reader, in the frankest way, the experiences of a Literary Life, together with some hints on the Art of Enjoying Trifles. I have also been encouraged by the remark of Lord Orford, that whoever set down truthfully and simply what he had felt and observed, could not fail of making an interesting book.



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RECREATIONS  
OF  
A LITERARY MAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE STUDY.

LIFTING the heavy curtain which hangs before so many London interiors, very opposite views will present themselves of the labouring literary man at his work. With some there is the *res angusta domi*, "the wolf at the door," the large family above; the weary pen is plied desperately, like the spade, and the room is but another form of workshop. Nothing is more curious than the contrast between the jocund Christmas story, in which luxurious scenes of enjoyment are painted and revels take place; charming girls, gallant youths,

and good-natured fathers and uncles, with their ever-ready cheque-books, flit across—and the almost rude room and well-inked desk at which the worn, overworked writer sits to conjure up these unreal dreams. On the other hand, there are the happy few who have been successful, and are at their ease, and who may use writing as their walking-stick, and not as a crutch.

Most writers who own to a taste for their work—and there is something fascinating in the calling—can hardly help impressing their own fancies on what surrounds them as they labour. The room, its desk, the pictures, the very chair, are all combined and associated with memorable thoughts, ways, and works. The novel, the sketch, the successful “life,” all were formed and developed here. Here were forgotten the world’s troubles outside, in those exciting, thrilling last chapters, written at a white heat and at a stretch against time, from morning all through the night until morning again—just as Ainsworth wrote his “Turpin’s Ride to York.” Here are the little cherished objects picked up in many a walk; the portrait

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with autograph given by a greater author. In short, in a course of long years there will be a gathering of favourite things, each associated, it may be, with something pleasant. A little taste—not to a ridiculous and costly æsthetic excess—does much. It can be known with a glance when “things”—Queen Anne, Cinquecento, and the rest—have been ordered home to give the room an antique air, and when they have been brought together in the slow natural process thus described.

Charles Lamb described in a vivid cozy way the scene when the day's work is done. The curtains are drawn, “the world is shut out,” the fire stirred, the favourite book taken down, and, it may be added, the pipe lit, the favourite dog snoozing lazily on the rug. Those are the welcome, enjoyable hours, from, say, ten till midnight or past. Such a scene is now before me;—the room, the walls of dark flowered green for three-fourths of the height, the rest to the ceiling of a paler shade, the border between both of a maroon velvet with an oak moulding. Deep crimson curtains hang in

heavy folds. Bookcases, not glazed (which, as Elia would say, are heartless), run along one side some five feet high—giving a sufficiency of long rows of shelves. The rest of the walls are cheerful with choice favourites, picked up as I have described. In the corner a bronzed bust of Mr. Carlyle, arrayed in his favourite broad-brimmed hat—no indifferent likeness. Pictures on glass, richly coloured; a fine etching or two—the magnificent “Mrs. Bischoffsheim” of Millais, vivid and brilliant—are perpetual company. A bold blue bit of colour, a Worcester dish, a few china figures on brackets, complete the decorations. These things cost but trifles—the etching but half-a-crown, being one of the “L’Art” series. An old-fashioned *écritoire*, its drawers wavy-lined, was a rare bargain, “picked up” Islington-wards for thirty shillings. For the same sum a corresponding table, old French, was secured. A Turkey rug and a stained oak floor may finish the catalogue. All these things cost not nearly so much as the ordinary showy things of commerce, but are much more effective. A little taste really saves money;

and he who is furnished with it can always indulge it *bon marché*.

From below, hark to the whirring wheezing sound of the cuckoo clock, with its friendly chirrup of quail and cuckoo, which has thus sounded quarterly—or every quarter—uninterrupted, almost, for a course of twelve years, night and day. As with a dog or faithful servant who has been with you long, so with those two trusty little birds, one gradually gains an affection and a sense of companionship. There is something cheerful and cheering in the tone, heard in the watches of the night or at dawn, without any failure of duty during that long period. At every quarter the little door to the left flies open brusquely, and with some clatter out leaps the little fluttering quail, and with open mouth and flapping wing gives his “Too-too!” and retires; while his neighbour’s door bursts open and reveals the principal performer, the cuckoo, who, attended by sonorous gong, sounds the hour. This little performance, trivial as it seems, lends a dramatic interest to so simple an operation as striking the time. When contract-

ing for the purchase long ago—it was on one of the sylvan walks at Spa—there was a hesitation as to the claims of another more elaborate time-keeper, where the doors of two sentry-boxes flew open, and two soldiers appeared, who, performing first a flourish of trumpets, sounded the hour solemnly, and then retired as they came. Later, recounting these little phenomena to Mr. Dickens, ever appreciative of such details, he entered into the idea, and played with it in his own pleasant style. He drew a picture of the soldiers coming out to perform their solos ; but the invariable hitch would come : the door would catch, and but partially open, the *militaire* meanwhile vainly attempting to get out, checked ; his arm, it might be, caught in the act of being raised for the flourish—the result being feeble wheezes and spasms behind the door, which would throb at his ineffectual efforts, subsiding into total inaction ; his fellow, however, coming up bravely to time and starting fairly, but suddenly brought up motionless. Then a surgeon sent for ; when, on probing, and the release of some catch behind, the struggling trumpeter would burst

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his door open and finish his suspended solo. This seems trivial now, but his friends will recall how thoroughly it was in his manner, and how it would be set off by his expressive face and bright eyes twinkling with humour.

## CHAPTER II.

## PATERNOSTER ROW.

FOR many years now, I have been an industrious *littérateur*—of all work, I may add, and labouring in all the departments. At the same time, this work has not been what is called “hard,” such as that of a barrister in good practice, but of a rapid and concentrated kind. The result is that I have succeeded in earning by my brains a sum that I fancy will surprise, though I delay naming it until I have communicated my little experiences. These, I fancy, will be a useful contribution to the question, whether writing be a profitable profession. And as for the greater portion of the time I have kept a sort of fee-book, it is really no speculative appraisalment.

For at least half the period alluded to I followed



the profession of the bar ; and it may be said that this word "following" is well chosen, for it entailed daily attendance for a number of hours. But the profession scarcely followed me as well as I followed it, though it brought in certain returns, and engrossed a share of attention. Yet I contrived gaily and with a light heart to woo and win the more engaging sister, who eventually rewarded me in the satisfactory way described. She gave me a return for the off-hand, rattling, and somewhat careless attention bestowed upon her.

I do not put myself in the first rank, nor in the second—I might modestly enter the third ; though some might reasonably dispute with me even that unassuming place. What have I done ? what is my "literary baggage" ? is naturally the next question. Not long ago, an ingenious Dryasdust took the trouble to hunt up the name of the person to whom a well-known writer had addressed his letters. There were private reasons for not mentioning the name. But what did that concern the detective ? He set to work, and discovered it by following out certain allusions in the text, hunting through news-

papers of the day, and arrived by a most exhaustive process at its solution. Without being over confidential, I may confess that this same "baggage" consists of great biographical chests—heavy, perhaps massive; of light serial portmanteaux, or novels and tales, three-, two-, and one- vol.; hat-boxes; bags, Gladstone "collapsing," and some collapsed, in the form of volumes of essays, short stories, disquisitions, criticisms, etc. I have written plays that have succeeded, and plays that have failed, and have been paid sufficiently in both categories. I have been a dramatic critic. I have attended a music-hall opening, and an exhibition of fans, as "our own reporter." I have contributed to an advertising paper which was left gratuitously at all doors,—and which dealt with its contributors on the same principle. I have "gone special" to the Continent for one of the great leading daily papers, and I have written for almost every magazine that has been born, died, or exists. I have written on painting, music, building, decorative art, dress, the classics, history, travels, my own life, the lives of other people, dancing, etc. In short,

like Swift and his broomstick, I have learned the knack of writing decently and respectably on any subject "briefed" to me.

It will be said, however, that this confession is, as it were, *hors concours*, and of no value as a contribution to the question, as a person with this general versatility must gain money as a matter of course. Not at all. It is the gaining of money that has brought or stimulated these gifts, rather than the gifts that have brought the money. This may be paradoxical, but if I might liken myself to so successful a personage, it is exactly akin to the progress of the great Mr. William Whiteley—who added to his departments, now a grocery, now a butchery, now coals, etc., according as the demand on him came. My wares I would not, of course, pretend to be of the same quality as his, be they excellent or the reverse; but the analogy holds. I did all these things, and do them still, though we all feel, like other *entrepreneurs*, the pressure of the times.

The stock-in-trade for all this is, of course, first a general taste for literature, and a familiarity with

all the blind alleys, "wynds," crannies, and passages of letters, which are invaluable in furnishing subjects for essays. This is all amusing reading to the person with the proper taste, and you can go on for ever emptying the stuff out of the old clumsy demijohns into nice modern flasks. There are innumerable forgotten personages and episodes which can be treated, and become new and interesting in the treatment. This is all acquired. So, too, is style—that ready, lively, and superficial style, though it takes a long time. But I had better begin at the beginning, and tell, "from the egg," how I became a writer.

This style, then, with a certain dramatic way of putting things so as to present a picture without the formal lines of a picture, which shall yet interest, I unconsciously secured very early and with little trouble. On leaving a great school for which I had an extraordinary affection, and where I had spent some happy and even romantic days, I fell into the habit of trying to reproduce the old impressions in writing, recalling the pleasant scenes after as vivid a fashion as I could.

As this was often done, and earnestly done, and with all sincerity, the same scene being described and redescribed as often as the humour seized me, there came to be a certain rude power and vividness in the description which I recognize now when turning over the innumerable volumes with their crowded pages and minute writing. What eyes one had then ! Even now the figures move, the lights glitter, the pleasant fragrance of the past exhales. Any one that saw this huge mass of manuscript, and the mass of description, characters, dialogues, and incidents therein contained, would admit that here was an advantage in the way of training of no inconsiderable kind.

So far, there was no advance. All the world has written in private records, and in local papers, to say nothing of the privately (and expensively) printed volumes of poems. But in my case, as indeed in most other cases, it is the first difficult step that costs, and that makes or mars. Just as in mastering skating evolutions : until you have fearlessly thrown yourself on the outside edge, nothing can be done or ever will be done.

Presently, of course, came the early contributions to the local paper, and the delight of seeing it in the local paper's type—the only form of recognition, too, known to the local papers. All writers agree in the special and unique sweetness of this sensation. I confess I always feel the charm of print.

Every writer recalls with a peculiar delight that first entering into print, be it even into the "Poet's Corner" of the local newspapers. There is almost a delicious intoxication connected with the sensation. Every writer has probably this humble beginning. To a local newspaper, distributed gratis, half its surface being devoted to advertisements, the rest filled in with abundant "literary matters" ("We regret," generally say the proprietors, "that the circulation of the paper does not, *as yet*, admit of offering remuneration to our contributors")—to such an organ was timorously offered a story called "The Little Quarto," a scene relating to the purchase, in an auction-room, of a small volume, which the poverty, not the will, of a bidder compelled him to deny himself. How

well I recall the actual terms of its acceptance in the notices to correspondents!—"Your sketch is happy and humorous. It shall appear." And when it did appear, was not it read aloud in full household—ay, read twice and thrice, lent with pride to a select neighbour or two; the news not generally, however, published, as being likely to be hurtful to one going to a learned profession? I always look with infinite relish to that old drab-coloured magazine, now actually before me, the *Monthly* of February, 1834, which contains "Horatio Sparkins"—Dickens's second contribution—and think of his agitation only a few weeks before, when he saw his first in the same journal. It has a strange sacred interest, this magazine of now nearly fifty years ago.

Not for some years did I venture on a bolder flight. Mr. Leitch Ritchie's name I always hold in regard and veneration, as it was from his hand that the first of the golden showers began to descend. A paper called "A Page of Professional Life," describing that of a Belgian professor in the sixteenth century, was despatched to *Chambers's*

*Journal*, with but little hope, in truth; but there was returned speedily a letter in these words: "Sir, there is something novel in your sketch, and I shall try and find a place for it in the *Journal*. The remuneration is one pound per printed page." One pound! A fortune! A place was found within a short time; then came the almost ecstatic delight of the post-office order, the first *earned* money. The little story accidentally had merits for success; it was legible, short, and dramatic. I have no doubt, too, some accident determined its reception, akin to the turn of a card; it might have been tossed aside or returned with thanks. A grave letter of approval was returned, and two pounds ten.

I fear that nowadays this advantage of having his contributions read for approval is lost to the beginner, as the packets sent in are overwhelming. Two or three other papers were accepted. I could have poured them in or out as by machinery; but then began certain disagreeable checks—not for cash—but "unsuitable," "no space," "so much in type," which conveyed the first lesson in writing



profitably, that you must not merely put all your eggs in one basket, but must have about as many baskets as eggs. What will not suit one will suit another; what there is not room for in one there will be room for in another; as a man with many daughters offers his fairest to a man of means and position, and gives his ugliest with money to a man of good will though obscure. So I now cast about for new channels, and tried and tried till I was heartsick and angry, meeting for my investment in paper and postage-stamps, certainly, large returns. I very soon saw that this system would not do, and that one might go on posting contributions for the term of one's natural life without result, save the restoration of the compositions—about as disagreeable a thing as the news of their loss. A total reversal of this policy and a brilliant *coup* in quite a new direction was rewarded with success, and set me on the road to fortune.

✓ There was at this time a well-known *littérateur*, or critic and writer of authority and Johnsonian prestige, who was engaged upon a most important

work of biography, "The Life of Swift." This was Mr. John Forster. "The Clarendon notes," he wrote, "as reproduced by you, are most valuable, and I observe several memoranda at the close, on which I shall take another opportunity of writing to you. If the memoranda you have taken of the principal 'marked paragraphs' enable you to tell me what passages they seem to have been (apart from those to which the marginal comments apply) which most attracted his attention, perhaps you will some time or other indicate them to me. A mere *general* notice as to that is all I require. But so delightful are these little sketches you send me, so exactly what it comes within my plan to use wherever we may yet be able to get upon his actual *footprints* in this way, that I will not scruple to ask you to add to them whatever may hereafter occur to you. Though the tomb has been often done, still your sketch I would rather have than any other. If the actual house in Hocys Court be still standing too (it is sketched in Mr. Wilde's book), and if you could give me a little view of the Deanery—in short, of any place or locality

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associated with him of which actual living vestiges remain—all will be very welcome to me. You see how unscrupulous already your kindness has made me; but I am sure I best show my sense of its worth by receiving it as frankly as it is offered. It will be a true pleasure to me to acknowledge it in the edition it helps me to enrich." I was at the time much interested in him and his subject, and as I lived in the city where his hero had flourished, I set to work to collect matter that would be useful to him. In particular, I nearly blinded myself deciphering some "marginalia," as they are called, in some huge folios preserved in an old library, drew neat water-colour sketches of localities, collected traditions, and, in short, made myself rather useful, and earned his grateful acknowledgment. That was the beginning of a long friendship.

At this time also the amiable as well as gifted Dickens was flourishing in the height of his popularity, and directing his *Household Words* with great success. To be a writer in that journal and associated with so great a master was, in itself, an

enormous advantage, which writers in other periodicals were devoid of. I ventured to presume on the grateful feelings of my new friend in this useful direction. Previously I had, indeed, essayed an entrance to the Wellington Street Paradise, but had been firmly but courteously repulsed by the Peri who stood at the gate—the late Mr. W. H. Wills, who returned their contributions to the contributors with a lithographic circular, in which they were assured their efforts had been read and weighed, as was the custom of the office. This may have been a good-natured exaggeration for reading an extract or glancing at the whole; for the daily post brought pounds of such matters which no staff could have grappled with. It was long, however, a tradition of the place how my patron strode in one morning, and, laying down the document, required that it should “be *seen to at once*, and set up in type.” He was a man not to be trifled with. Within a fortnight it appeared. It was a not undramatic tale, in the vein of Mr. Wilkie Collins, then in high fashion. I had been again lucky in the subject and treatment; it was

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short and telling. There seemed to be an *empressement* even to secure me. Had I anything else ready? The Christmas Number was getting ready—would I be able to send them something for *that*? On that hint I set to work, and from that moment to the present have never ceased to work for that pleasant journal, the connection with which under the *régime* of father and son has ever been agreeable and satisfactory. The word “satisfactory” recalls me to the point of this chapter, for it represents in this case many thousand pounds, as the ledgers of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* can tell. The moral, also, is that other agencies besides literary merit are essential in earning money; there must be knowledge of men and things. The assiduous showering in of papers will not do. One might ply this method for a whole life with, of course, the chance that a stray paper on some timely and seasonable subject might arrest the editor’s eye and gain adoption. There must be some contrived personal relation between the contracting parties, otherwise there is no more interest in you than in the manuscript itself. You are no

more than one of many bundles of manuscript, always an object of repulsion, to be put aside or held over as long as possible, like the poor patients at a doctor's. Hence the indifferent chance of the tribe of governesses, clergymen's wives and daughters, clerks and others, who write from provincial towns, who are made sick all the year round with deferred hope, and receive back their productions which are "declined with thanks," as a sort of favour. Hence, too, some courageous fellows who have come to London to push their way personally, like Johnson and others, have shown more wisdom and policy than they have obtained credit for. I have known not a few to succeed, not by their literary merit, which was indifferent, but by the art of making themselves useful and necessary, and of doing some little job which a bare chance threw in their way, in a style that they made especially satisfactory. In short, friends and connection is the basis. I know one instance, at least, of this sort of energy and purpose being quite successful—a young fellow marrying, and, after due deliberation, selecting this profession. He set to work at once,

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got introductions, and began his uphill task. He had his qualities of care and industry, and could be depended on. It seemed madness at the first, but in two or three years he had "formed a connection," was found useful, and now, at the end of five or six years, I find his name known, while he himself writes to me in the capacity of editor. He is sure to succeed.

Once established on *Household Words*, I found that the mere connection with that journal and its director was a passport to other magazines. For the first year my return was, I think, some fourteen to fifteen pounds. The next year it rose to sixty or seventy; the next it grew into hundreds. As to the paper itself, I saw that what was required was originality of subject, something fresh and taking. I gave great thought to the selection of what would be desirable. This is really in itself an art and of the highest importance, for if it be found that you are sending in what is unsuitable your credit sinks, and your at last really suitable article may share the fate of others. Where, too, the contributor is to be depended on, his paper

goes unread to the printers to be "set up." Nothing used to be pleasanter than a periodical visit to the office to "settle subjects" with the editor.

But to show how pleasant profit and pleasure may be combined in this most agreeable of all professions, I will note one "department," which I have exploited systematically, to my own great enjoyment, and I hope to the satisfaction of others concerned. I have travelled a great deal, *but never at my own cost: rather, to exceeding profit.* I will give some special instances. I once spent a single week in Holland, and wrote twelve papers—"Down among the Dutchmen!" they were called—on the country, for a journal, for which I received forty pounds, the net profit being thirty. I went specially to Rome at an interesting period, wrote observations on men and manners in a series of twenty papers, for which I received sixty pounds. They were also published in a volume for which I had received seventy—leaving a net profit after expenses of eighty pounds. I have never made an expedition to France, Belgium, Ireland, anywhere, without turning it into cash. Nay, I have never



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been anywhere or seen anything important without making it take this agreeable shape of profit. During the French war, when the Germans were advancing on Paris, I was eager to put this favourite principle in action. But special writers and correspondents were abundant, and every one was well supplied ; so the chance of seeing anything as a commissioned writer was desperate. However, a friendly editor in conversation was excited by the prospect of a vivid sketch of the unhappy city on the eve of a siege, and offered to "stand" all railway expenses to the scene of action, as well as the usual charge for an article. I look back to that hurried and dramatic expedition with infinite pleasure. There is something flattering to the *amour propre* in being thus despatched at the cost of others.

Another hurried expedition of the kind not only forms a delightful recollection, but illustrates what I said of the necessity of a certain judgment and nice sense of what is "the psychological moment" to secure success in writing. If any ordinary writer of position were to offer himself as special corre-

spondent to any of the greater daily journals, his services would, to a certainty, be declined, on the ground that their own staff was sufficient. Yet on one occasion I was lucky enough to enter the charmed circle, simply owing to a happy combination and prompt seizure of the "psychological moment," as our neighbours call it. It was a few days after Christmas Day, in the year of the suppression of the gaming-houses in Germany. It occurred to me that it would be interesting to record the dying struggle of these institutions. I wondered, would there be any chronicle thereof in the great papers? I resolved to address two leading ones with a suggestion of the subject. One took no notice; from the other came a hurried despatch acceding to the idea, and fixing an almost midnight interview. The thought even now gives me pleasure. There was no time to be lost. How pleasant the hurried interview with the editor, planning the arrangement! I started, travelling all night. It was a pleasant sense of importance to find oneself in the German telegraph-office at Homburg on that frosty day, the town

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deserted, and writing a long telegraph message to the newspaper—*my* newspaper—whereof I was the special. I hurried back, got to town that night, and instantly sat down to write a couple of “cols.,” which appeared next morning. The whole expedition by sea and land, there and back, the writing of the long article, was all accomplished within sixty to seventy hours. I received a most handsome *honoraire* for what was really only a pleasure trip.

But now came the idea of a larger and more profitable extension—the novel—which the success of Miss Braddon, may be said to have opened up for the average writer. Fifteen or twenty years ago, the various topics of character and incident—the “sensation,” the wicked woman of sensation, the hulking muscular man of unbridled passions, and the female with steel eyes, cold heart, and yellow hair—were novelties, and people loved to hear as much as possible about them, and from any description of writer. These are now all hackneyed and “used up.” Delineation of characters of the “Jane Eyre” model was in fashion. Good prices were paid, and it was

actually stated that, by the system at the libraries, and owing to the voracious greed of readers, any story in three volumes, by any writer, was certain to "do"—to return even some meagre remuneration to its writer. Thus inspired, I determined to set my skiff afloat on the already crowded stream. A friend who was directing a magazine that enjoyed a gasping asthmatic sort of existence furnished an opening, and allowed me to "run" this first immature effort through his pages. The remuneration was fixed at, I think, five-and-twenty or thirty pounds. The production was issued in two volumes by a firm which, awkwardly enough, was at the moment in the agonies of death, so the child actually perished with the mother that brought it forth. The late Mr. Bentley was at that time directing his firm, a man of energy and spirit; to him, as a desperate chance, it was sent as a specimen of the author's powers. This spirited man interposed with an act which seems to belong to the romance of publishing, and, with an intrepidity now unfamiliar to the Row, said, "Write me a novel in three volumes as good, and

I will give you one hundred and fifty pounds!" Trumpet-tongued words indeed, which I fear neither Smith nor Jones nor clergyman's daughter is ever likely to hear again. I complied with a jocund alacrity. First the work went through my friendly editor's journal, by which some thirty pounds adhered to it; it then came forth from Burlington Street with a fictitious name attached to it. It was called "BELLA DONNA," and was given out as written by one Gilbert Dyce. It was a success, and passed through two editions, and still sells. With these credentials I applied to my editor of Wellington Street; he, having read my successful venture, gave me an order for a story, at what seemed a munificent remuneration—this, too, without having seen a line of the story, and with the further handsome treatment of accepting merely a few chapters in hand as a sufficient instalment, with which to start.

But, indeed, to the records of the generosity and confidence of the "chief," as we would call him, there was no end. To this, however, I shall return later. Nothing, too, was more delightful than his

heartily relish and appreciation of anything to be approved, though indeed the chief merit of most of these productions was that they were ingeniously successful imitations of his own manner. All that laboured, if it can be called labour, under such auspices—"G. A. S.," Yates, Moy Thomas, Halliday (defunct now), Dutton Cook, Hollingshead, and myself (most industrious and perhaps making his bow oftenest)—can, or could, tell the same story. For this journal I have written no fewer than seven novels, which have brought me, in their magazine shape alone, two thousand pounds; have altogether written some fifteen stories, each contrived "a double debt to pay," and first passed through the periodical press before appearance in its orthodox coat of three or two volumes. The total receipts from this source have been close on three thousand pounds. Many of the books have gone through two editions, one has gone through four, and several enjoy a steady annual sale—their titles familiar enough at the railway bookstalls.

This, however, would have been but a poor result spread over so many years. So the next golden

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or profitable rule of the system soon suggested itself, viz. while you kept literary fire all ablaze and crackling, to have a number of irons heating in it. And I not only had a number of irons—I once drove three novels abreast—but a number of fires. Whether, as the wit said, your writings should go where your irons are, is another important question, and might dispense with discussion of the matter at all. But this “versatility” not only furnishes relief, but, as a source of profit, is invaluable. I accordingly very soon had broken new ground with my literary “pick,” and started writing the lives of important personages, neglected unaccountably, as it seemed to me, till I took them in hand. I am ashamed when I think of the free-and-easy mode in which I selected these great men for resurrection purposes; but I am bound to own that there was some art and nice judgment in the choice. One, the most successful of the series, was suggested by the publisher, taken in hand that night, and completed—“polished off,” the irreverent would say—in three months. It was disposed of—they were always respectable, portly, squire-

looking things, two vols. octavo—to the tune of eight hundred copies at thirty shillings. In this department I wrote; for four or five of such monuments I received nigh a thousand pounds, most of them, however, having also paid the double debt before alluded to. Again another stroke of the pick, and I became “an editor” of works—a laborious and unprofitable duty. I “edited” two masters of English literature, but great favourites of mine, for twenty pounds apiece. They filled nine large volumes. But these were truly labours of love, and, in the case of an author I was fond of, I would cheerfully go through any such drudgery unremunerated. There is nothing so fascinating as working thus on an author, hunting up evidence, and finding it, to illustrate obscure passages. Nothing I ever did was more enjoyable to me than preparing an edition of “Boswell’s Johnson.”

The “double debt to pay” principle is an admirable one, but requires some art to carry out. A great difficulty, as it might seem at first sight, would be the disposal in this wise of the innumerable short tales which the diligent writers turn out,



much as the diligent painter does his "pot-boilers." These I used to collect in the old palmy days in volumes, as Mr. Wilkie Collins might do now. Publishers will now have nothing to do with such miscellanies. But I was not daunted, and, after issuing a volume, ventured on the familiar device of collecting a number of persons on a journey and making them tell stories. I was not, however, *au bout*, and had another and more original device on my banner, namely, writing each short story in such a way that it shall be complete and yet form part of a whole—like the shield platform formed by Rienzi's soldiers, in the late representation of the opera. Each is carefully written in the same character, and forms an episode in his experience. Thus the casual reader is gratified, while I am equally so. On this principle I lately issued a three-volume novel which was itself a continuous story, and yet was composed of all the short humorous stories I had written during the past dozen years.

These various productions might fill from sixty to seventy volumes of the official form, while the scattered papers, if brought together, would raise

the tale to nearly one hundred. The material with which the literary baggage is packed is gathered from the sources before mentioned, namely, "curious" reading in all directions; but the chief supply is drawn from myself. It is not too much to say that all the incidents of my life, such as it is—feelings, thoughts, loves, sights, characters—have been pressed in to do duty, more or less coloured and treated, but giving a genuineness and vitality which always quickened the pace of the pen. I wrote an account of my school-days in a series of papers for Mr. Dickens, with which he was much pleased; these figured duly in several numbers of his *Journal* at a return of a good many pounds, and, with some additions, reappeared as a little volume which enjoyed much popularity, and ran through three editions in a few months. For this, however, I only received twenty pounds more; but then, we did not anticipate this success. I may be pardoned for adding, that the *Journal* "written for gentlemen" declared that my book was superior to the popular "Tom Brown." Still, the outlay in time and composition was far below the sum I

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received, as it amounted to little more than that employed in writing letters to friends, or one's journal. Mr. James Payn lately started an interesting discussion as to the springs from which the novelist was to draw inspiration—whence gather his story, characters, etc. The discussion also gave rise to some ingenious suggestions as to story, etc. My belief is, that no one can *devise* a character; all my own, such as they are, have been drawn from real life. But I would say that there was art in this process; a literal copy is worthless and has small effect. In my own case, the personages would not recognize themselves. I have seen instances where the very speeches and actions of certain eccentric persons, producing extreme mirth in society, have been literally set down, without any humorous results. The art consists in abstracting the peculiar phenomena of manner and speech, and devising situations which would call them out far more effectively. You see vividly, that personage in the situation, and by a sort of inspiration it supplies new language and actions corresponding. It was thus that Mr. Dickens "worked out" Mrs.

Gamp, whose oddities had no real existence, though he had seen something analogous in the hospital nurse. With me, having got my character, the character was certain to supply the story, which is only following the precedent of real life, where strange characters really bring about strange events.

The great mistake in novel-writing, as a writer only gradually discovers, is—confounding what you find you have a knack of doing well and with fluency, and as you fancy with telling effect, with what will be relished by the public. It is thus that “clever” dialogue, written *con spirito* and *con amore* fills many pages. But the question is, is it to the point? Does it help on the story, rouse attention, excite the reader? But in truth, a good story is all in all; and in this the untiring, never-flagging Miss Braddon is unapproachable. Many feel their strength lies in character and dialogue, but these without a story are worthless. You might as well issue essays in the style of the old *Spectator*. Nor is a good story so difficult to find, even by a person who has not the art of constructing stories. It is a wonderful fact, that the same outline of story

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will furnish to different minds, not merely the idea of different treatment, but actually a different story in the result. This often becomes a most effective mode of supplying a want of originality. I myself often, in reading a powerful tale, have felt a sort of inspiration ; the whole fell into new situations and new characters offered. In real life, it will be seen how a particular situation would be modified or altered, according as different characters were concerned in it. Some would control the situation ; others would let the situation control *them*. One writer would be inclined to show—autobiographically, as it were—how the leading person was affected ; another would show the effect on him from a bystander's view. I have often, reading a French story, met with a situation which set me tracing backwards what might lead to such a situation, and forwards what might come from it, until a complete and novel story lay before me. But, as I said, a really good and striking character will of itself suggest a story, if it be bold and broad enough. I will give an illustration. Suppose that character of which Mr. Toole is so fond—a

retired tradesman or merchant going into society, good-natured, sterling, and with a sensible disposition under the absurdities of his new situation. Give him a daughter on whom he doats. Immediately the story begins to crystallize. Let him marry her to a man of rank, the man of her heart, after many difficulties and opposition of his aristocratic parents. This with many might be the end of a story. But stay. It is in truth but the foundation. For see how many interesting and exciting elements *must* be at work to disturb and complicate!—the man of rank growing discontented, feeling he has lost caste; his “taking it out,” as it is called, of his father-in-law; the latter submitting for a time for the sake of his daughter; the wish of the aristocrat to recover his old position, by ignoring his new connections, in which is gradually included the wife; the alienation of the latter; the anger of the father then roused and unrestrained, because the only motive for restraint is removed; his punishment of his son-in-law by a manly assertion of himself, and making the other feel the meanness of being supported by one whom he

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despises. It will be seen at once what capabilities of treatment are here opened up, stretching in many various directions. Half a dozen writers would treat this in half a dozen ways. And yet it is but a beginning. Here we have the foundation of "Our Boys," "Crutch and Toothpick," "Le Gendre de Monsieur Poirier." Sometimes you can get a whole story from a mere dramatic opening. Say that a railway accident has taken place at night near a retired country house. A lady has fainted, or is slightly injured, and is introduced to a pleasant family party—a widower gentleman and his two daughters, his son and his betrothed on a visit. The lady is of a good family, but going to be a governess. She stays a day—another day—a week ; fixes herself ; fascinates the young man, etc. Or another way. A marriage is to take place in a village church. The ceremony is about to commence, when the gentleman is fetched out, and returns saying it cannot be ; gives no explanation ; owns his heartlessness and cruelty. I have a book full of these crude hints, suggestions, names, and characters.

In many of Mr. Dickens's letters will be found admirable counsels to the novelist; one special one — avoid painful and disagreeable endings. The public likes everything pleasant. In certain episodes, it is not a bad plan to let your characters *act for you*; that is, plunge into the situation without considering the distinct issue, and trust that something effective will suggest itself spontaneously. Often something more brilliant is thus offered than anything you yourself could devise thoughtfully and laboriously. There is a curious passage in one of the Lives of Alfred de Musset, in which he speaks of the composition of his piece, "Les Caprices de Marianne." In this there is a debate between two persons, in which the woman presses the other with an extraordinary and vigorous repartee. On this the author confessed at the time that he was himself silenced, bewildered by the power of the being he had raised up, and whom he could not answer. Yet the play was destroyed, unless the victory was given to the other. "I myself," he said, "would in real life have been beaten by such a person." And by an immense mental exertion



or inspiration, he found the proper and triumphant reply which gave his character the victory.

We may fairly speculate how far writing a particular passage would be affected by the circumstance that some one interrupts. You lay it aside to resume it next day. Would the result be the same? I fancy so, except under incidents of particular enthusiastic inspiration, such as carried Mr. Ainsworth through his "Turpin's Ride to York," written without interruption. This, however, can be tested fairly enough. Once, having mislaid a chapter, I had to rewrite it, and later, finding the missing document, discovered that both were nearly alike.

I have one favourite heroine that figures in six or seven of these stories—drawn from one favourite person. In the last of these I drew her career as I intended it, and my own as I intended it, bringing the two characters together at the close, as is done in all novels; and a few months later the same history came about in the case of the living personages.

As to publishers, here is the result of my ex-

perience. The most eminent, perhaps, have curiously and invariably preferred that arrangement of "sharing," or "half-profits," which consists in tendering the author the shells, while the firms in question swallow the oyster. I have had two transactions of the "sharing" kind, but these were in early salad days. The first was with an eminent firm who had taken two of my works—one a novel for which they had given a large price, the other a biographical work on "sharing" terms. But the biography had to help to pay them for the novel. The other transaction of the kind was with the worthy publisher of Catherine Street, my old friend and encourager, William Tinsley, who honestly and faithfully divided the profits, and on a not very successful work handed me some eighty pounds as my share. I may add that with this excellent man—and we have had innumerable transactions—I have never had a scrap of writing in the shape of an agreement. His word and my word were sufficient and made the bond. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that a publisher is entitled to charge you all things as they would be

charged to him if he were not a publisher; though, owing to his position and responsibilities, he obtains on printing, paper, and advertisements, discounts and other advantages, which you cannot enjoy.

All through this literary life nothing disagreeable has occurred to me, and no unhandsome treatment has been encountered, save in perhaps two or three instances. I have always met with the most scrupulous honesty in settlements; and only in the case of one or two obscure journals have I been what is called "done."

From various illustrated journals and magazines a woodcut often arrives, representing a young lady at a fancy ball, two children on a ghostly staircase, or something of the kind, with a request that I will illustrate *them*, instead of their illustrating *me*, by a story. This often taxes one's ingenuity sorely, as it will not do merely to bring in the scene in question, but it must be made of the essence of the story. This, however, is what is called "knack."

Thus omnivorous, it may be assumed that the

stage was not likely to be overlooked. As a lesson in perseverance, it deserves to be recorded that I was fifteen years struggling to find entrance to that jealously walled-up preserve. Once, after years of effort, I succeeded in getting a piece accepted, but the management collapsed at the critical moment, and I had to begin again. For my first farce I received ten pounds; for my second, twenty; and for my grand drama, in which I had worked with a partner, one hundred pounds. But I hope yet to do considerably more in this direction.

A few guineas, I should say, would comprise all my receipts in the direction of verse-making. Distinctly I fear little or nothing is to be made in this way. Yet I console myself with the thought that many who have published volumes of poems have not made even that modest sum.

In addition to this pleasant and profitable life, there are many personal advantages. Your moderately successful author is often asked to sit for his photograph for some "series," and is, of course, never charged for it. In nine cases out of ten, an application to any of the London managers

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secures you a gratuitous stall. For years I have been a constant playgoer on these easy terms. So that now, when on a rare occasion I have to pay for a stall, it seems to border on a cruel imposition, as though the money had been taken from me unfairly. Such is the force of habit.

A great mistake in the diplomacy of authors is to be too grasping. Men cannot resist a present advantage in hand, and so sacrifice what is in the bush. One work of mine—a truly monstrous one for its carelessness—failed utterly,—the only one that met such a fate. I was to have sixty pounds; the publisher was in despair, but I held his signed agreement. I nobly forbore, and tore my bond. But mark; when that was long forgotten, I repaired to him with another work. He was good enough to say I had behaved so handsomely that he was ready to treat on satisfactory terms for the new work. So I did not lose on the whole.

Publishers do not relish, any more than other people, losing money. As to “corrections” they are specially sore. I could tell a curious thing. I was once the author of a work in two volumes,

numbering in all over a thousand pages, the corrections for which cost about as much as the original printing! The sums were, I think, one hundred and forty and one hundred and fifty pounds. Yet the generous publisher, before paying what he had covenanted to pay, said he thought it right to put it to me whether this style of "correcting" was not excessive? He good-naturedly mulcted me in only forty pounds, as my legitimate share of the cost.

As for the essays, sketches, descriptions, they are simply innumerable. It is agreeable work, and so lightly done. If you are sometimes extravagant to the tune of five pounds, you sit down for a morning (having found a subject in your last walk), and the debt is paid. Indeed, during these walks, it is wonderful how agreeable profit for mind and purse can be made. Being ever of an artistic turn, I began, some time ago, to work out, as I walked along, principles of criticism as applied to the buildings, houses, etc., in the streets, and soon elaborated a pleasant series. Extending this idea, I began to think how many unnoticed curious

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things there were in the London streets, houses, doorways, etc., and this I worked out in a more elaborate series still. All this and more goes on with the greater labours, and used to represent with me from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds a year,—now not nearly so much. I put the sums from this source at about four thousand pounds. Adding all up, I should fix my total earnings at fifteen or twenty thousand pounds.

Such is the earthy financial view of the calling—“the seamy side,” as some might think it—or the most satisfactory answer to the question, “Does writing pay?” But there is a yet larger view and a wider sense in the phrase: Does it pay in the sense of the enjoyment of the task, the new interests it creates—in the troops of friends and acquaintances it gathers? This is better worth inquiry.

## CHAPTER III.

## CHARLES DICKENS AS AN EDITOR.

THE figure of the amiable, accomplished, and ever-to-be-regretted Charles Dickens has been lately brought before us "even in his habit as he lived," with abundance of detail and colour. Mr. Forster's complete and admirable Biography, done with the taste and workmanlike finish of a true "man of letters," will be more and more esteemed as the time from his death lengthens. Objection was indeed taken to the biographer accompanying his hero about as closely as Boswell did Johnson; but this really brought before the world much that would otherwise have been lost or unseen; and in the last volume, where the author seems to have accepted this criticism and to have become historical, there is a sensible loss of dramatic vivid-



ness. Lately the world has received the closing collection of his Letters, edited by Miss Hogarth and Miss Dickens, and set off with a graphic and most pleasing commentary whose only fault is that of being too short. Here his *gaieté de cœur* his unflagging spirit, wit, and genial temper, are revealed in the most striking way.

There is, however, one view of him which has scarcely been sufficiently dealt with, namely, his relations with his literary brethren and friends, as editor and otherwise. These exhibit him in a most engaging light, and will perhaps be a surprise even to those abundantly familiar with his amiable and gracious ways.

In the old *Household Words* days, the "place of business" was at a charming miniature office in Wellington Street—close to the stage door of the Gaiety Theatre. It seemed all bow window; at least, its two stories—it had only two—were thus bowed. The drawing-room floor seemed a sunshiny, cheerful place to work in. This is now the workshop of another magazine, the *Army and Navy*. But I always pass it with respect and

affection. I never came away from it without taking with me something pleasing.

Often, about eleven o'clock, he was to be seen tramping briskly along the Strand, coming from Charing Cross Station, fresh from his pleasant country place in Kent, keen and ready for the day's work, and carrying his little black bag full of proofs and manuscripts. That daily journey from Higham station, with the drive to it in his little carriage or Irish car, took full an hour each way, and was a serious slice out of his time. It has, indeed, seemed always a problem to me why business men, to whom moments are precious, should be thus prodigal in time devoted to travelling—coming from Brighton and returning at headlong speed. At Bedford Street, by the bootmaker's shop, he would turn out of the Strand—those in the shops he passed would know his figure well, and told me, after his death, how they missed this familiar apparition—would then post along in the same brisk stride through Maiden Lane, past "Rule's," where he often had his oyster, through Tavistock Street, till he emerged in Wellington

Street, the last house he passed before crossing being "Major Pitt's," the hatter's. This mention of "Major Pitt" suggests that it was always pleasant to see what pride tradesmen took in having him for a customer, and what alacrity they showed in serving him or in obliging him in any way. This I believe was really owing to his charming hearty manner, ever courteous, cordial, and zealous; his cheery fashion of joking or jest, which was irresistible. The average tradesman has small sympathy or intelligence for the regular literary man. He is sometimes *caviare* indeed to him.

Our writer, however, was a serious personality of living flesh and blood, and would have made his way in life under any condition. His extraordinary charm of manner, never capriciously changed, the smile and laugh always ready—that sympathy, too, which rises before me, and was really unique—I can call no one to mind that possessed it or possesses it now in the same degree. Literary men, as a rule, have a chilliness as regards their brethren; every one is more or less working

for his own hand. Yet, few men have had more anxious responsibilities or troubles to disturb them, or so much depending upon them, as he had in many ways. I believe the number of people who were always wanting "something done for them," either in the shape of actual money advance, or advice, or productions "to be taken," or to be seen, or to have their letters answered, or who desired letters from him in their interests, was perfectly incredible. Many a man takes refuge in a complete ignoring of these worries, which would require a life to attend to. An eminent and highly popular man of our own day, who is thus persecuted, has adopted this latter mode, and rarely takes notice of a letter from a friend or stranger, unless he is minded so to do. He is strictly in his right. You are no more bound to reply to persons that do not know you, than you are to acknowledge the attentions of an organ-grinder who plays for an hour before your window.

There were many little *Household Words* traditions. The "chief" himself always wrote with blue ink on blue paper. His was a singularly neat

and regular hand, really artistic in its conception, legible—yet not very legible to those unfamiliar with it. Here, as in everything else, was to be noted the perfect *finish*, as it might be styled, of his letter-writing—the disposition of the paragraphs, even the stopping, the use of capitals, all showing artistic knowledge, and conveying excellent and valuable lessons. His “copy” for the printers, written as it is in very small hand, much crowded, is trying enough to the eyes, but the printers never found any difficulties. It was much and carefully corrected, and wherever there was an erasure, it was done in thorough fashion, so that what was effaced could not be read. Nearly all the band followed his example in writing in blue ink and on blue paper, and this for many years; but not without inconvenience. For, like the boy and his button, described by Sir Walter Scott, the absence of paper or ink of the necessary colour affected the ideas, and one worked under serious disabilities—strangeness, etc. Another idiosyncrasy of his was writing the day of the month in full, as “January twenty-sixth.”

It is in his relations with writers in his periodical, and, indeed, in all connections with his "literary brethren," as he modestly called them, that this amiable and engaging man appears to the most extraordinary advantage. As I read over his many letters on those points, I am amazed at the good-natured allowance, the untiring good humour, the wish to please and make pleasant, the almost deference, the modesty in one of his great position as head, perhaps, of all living writers—to say nothing of his position as director of the periodical which he kindled with his own perpetual inspirations. There was ever the same uniform good nature and ardour, the eagerness to welcome and second any plan, a reluctance to dismiss it, and this done with apologies; all, too, in the strangest contrast to the summary and plain-spoken fashion of the ordinary editor. I fancy this view has scarcely been sufficiently brought out in all the numerous estimates of this most charming of men. And, at the risk of some intrusion of my own concerns, I shall be enabled to show him in even a more engaging and attractive

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light. The various accounts have scarcely been concerned with this side of his character.

This patient interest should, in these editorial matters, be considered more wonderful when it is remembered that his position as head of an important periodical made him a marked figure for importunity. Many of his friends were tempted to become "literary." They even had *their* friends who desired to become literary, and under pressure would introduce to this great writer immature and unprofitable efforts, which he had to put aside with what excuses he could. Then there were his "literary brethren," each with his "novel" or short paper, which it would occur to him some morning "he would send off to Dickens." These had to be considered, and his good nature or courtesy drawn upon. As for the general herd of scribblers, the postman on "this beat" could give due account of the packages of manuscript that daily arrived. It was no wonder that he had to compose a sort of special circular answer, which was duly lithographed and returned with their productions to the various candidates. I believe every composition

was seriously glanced at, and some estimate made—and many an obscure clever girl was surprised to find her efforts appreciated. The usual rejection form was as follows :—

“SIR,

“I am requested by Mr. Charles Dickens to express his regret that he cannot accept the contribution you have had the goodness to offer him for insertion in this periodical. So many manuscripts are forwarded to this office, that Mr. Dickens trusts it is only necessary to suggest to you the impossibility of its business being transacted if a special letter of explanation were addressed to every correspondent whose proffered aid is declined. But he wishes me to convey to you the assurance,—firstly, that your favour has been honestly read, and secondly, that it is always no less a pleasure to him than it is his interest to avail himself of any contributions that are, in his judgment, suited to the requirements of *Household Words*.”

The band of writers he assembled round him



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and inspired was certainly remarkable. There was Hollingshead, incisive, wonderful in collecting facts where abuses were concerned, and in putting his facts into vigorous, downright English. His strokes always told, and a little paper of his conceived in this spirit, entitled "The City of Unlimited Paper," a simple subject, was copied at length into the *Times*, and from the *Times* into other papers. There was Moy Thomas, now the pleasant writer of the Monday "Causeries" in the *Daily News*. There was Walter Thornbury, with his extraordinary knowledge of London antiquities and curious "out-of-the-way" reading, an explorer of old "wynds" and alleys, from "Booksellers' Row" to Red Lion Square; very dainty in his taste, as his quaint bookplate, designed for him by Mr. Marks, shows. He had great antiquarian knowledge, and yet, odd to say, a facile dramatic and unantiquarian style. There was also the amiable Charles Collins—our "Conductor's" son-in-law—a man of a quiet pleasant humour with a flavour of its own, and who was heartily liked by his friends. He had a remarkably sweet disposition, though

sorely tried by perpetual ill health. His humour was stimulated by the companionship of his father-in-law, and took somewhat the same cast. For instance when he was appointed, during one of the great exhibitions, to the odd function—but that era of exhibitions engendered all sorts of fantastic things—of making a collection of all the existing newspapers of the kingdom, the oddities that cropped up during this duty tickled his fancy and that of his friends hugely. He noted that the smaller and more obscure the place, the grander and more commanding was the title of its organ—witness *The Skibbereen Eagle*, a name that gave him much delight. Writing he delighted in, but, by a cruel fate, it was a labour, if of love, yet accompanied by something like torture. Every idea or sentence was wrung from him, as he said, like drops of blood. Neither ideas nor words would flow. His “Cruise upon Wheels,” a record of a journey along the French roads in a gig, is a most charming travel-book, in which his quaint humour is well shown. The late Andrew Halliday was another useful writer that could be depended on to gather

hard facts, and set them out when gathered in vivacious style. He enjoyed a fixed substantial salary—think of that, ye occasional “contributors” —and I have seen him arrive in his hansom with his formal list of “subjects” for treatment, which were carefully gone through, debated, and selected. He afterwards made play-writing his regular vocation, but was cut off in his prime, like many a writer. There was Parkinson, and there was Professor Morley; above all, there was the always brilliant George Augustus Sala, perhaps the only writer in periodicals who writes a distinctly original style, with personality and unflagging vivacity. I have not space to dwell on his merits here, but I may at least confess to looking with a sort of wistful envy at his exquisite penmanship, that seems never to depart from one steady standard of excellence. The surprising neatness and clear picturesqueness of his calligraphy is the delight of compositors, as with humiliation I have to confess that mine is their despair. Indeed, I may make a clean breast of it and further own that on one journal of enormous circulation the men demanded,

and obtained, extra pay "for setting Mr. Fitzgerald's copy!" The old *Household Words*—a title infinitely superior to *All the Year Round*—has lately been revived by the old editor's son, a capable, energetic, and clever man, who has pushed his way with success. One of the old guild thus writes of the new venture in the *Daily News* :—

"One function of the original *Household Words*, as of its legitimate successor *All the Year Round*, has proved to be that of ushering in new claimants to a place in the world of literature and journalism. The great position enjoyed by Dickens in the literary world, his early and intimate connection with newspaper work as a man 'in the gallery,' and his genial and helpful nature, attracted a crowd of aspirants around him. He was immeasurably more infested than ever was Pope by 'frantic poetess' and 'rhyming peer,' and the 'parson much bemused with beer' was assuredly not wanting. Out of this crowd of claimants he chose his 'young men' with the skill of a born leader, and helped them on by tongue and pen, by shrewd counsel, and fierce 'cutting' of their

articles. If he had any fault, it was the good nature which prevented him from crushing unhappy creatures, doubtless well fitted for every pursuit but that of letters, who were induced to persevere by his mistaken kindness, to their own ultimate sorrow and discomfiture. Some had written much or little before they came to him, but the fact remains that it was under his leadership that they achieved reputation. Beneath the banner upheld by Charles Dickens and his faithful friend, the late Mr. W. H. Wills, marched a brilliant array of writers, if not quite of the Titanic proportions of the early contributors to *Fraser's Magazine*, yet noteworthy by their brilliant success in the new periodical. Mr. Wilkie Collins had previously written fiction, but his most famous work, 'The Woman in White,' appeared in *Household Words*. The late Mr. Charles Collins was actually egged on by 'the chief' into writing his remarkable 'Eye-Witness' and other papers. Mr. Sala's 'Key of the Street' unlocked for him the avenue to his successful career; and Mr. Grenville Murray spread his wings as 'The Roving

Englishman,' and made his mark by a fierce attack on the late Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, whom he satirized as 'Sir Hector Stubble.' Mr. Edmund Yates's best novel, 'Black Sheep,' and scores of his best articles, appeared in the journal 'conducted by Charles Dickens,' as did Lord Lytton's 'Strange Story;' as well as 'Hard Times,' 'Great Expectations,' the 'Uncommercial Traveller,' and a regiment of Christmas stories by the hand of the Master himself. Among the writers of poems and stories, short and long, essays and descriptions, are the well-known names of Harriet Martineau, Mrs. Gaskell, Peter Cunningham, Miss Jewsbury, John Forster, Albert Smith, James Hannay, and Mark Lemon."

The time when "the Christmas Number" had to be got ready was always one of pleasant expectancy and alacrity. It was an object for all to have a seat in "a vehicle" which travelled every road and reached the houses of a quarter of a million persons. With his usual conscientious feeling of duty to the public, he laboured hard, first, to secure a good and telling idea; and second, to work it

out on the small but effective scale with which he had latterly grown unfamiliar, owing to his habit of dealing with large canvases. Hence the labour was in proportion, and at last became so irksome that he gave the place up altogether, though it must have been a serious loss of profit. *Frappez vite et frappez fort*, was the system. I remember his saying, when complaining of this tax, "I have really put as much into *Mrs. Lirriper* as would almost make a novel." He himself generally supplied a framework and a couple of short stories, and the rest was filled in by "other hands." I have myself furnished two in a single number.

As the time drew near, a pleasantly welcome circular went forth to a few of the writers of the journal; the paragraphs of which, as they exhibit his lighter touches, will be welcome. They show, too, the matter-of-fact, business-like style in which the matter was conceived and carried out.

"In inviting you to contribute to our Christmas Number, I beg to send you Mr. Dickens's memorandum of the range that may be taken this year. You will see that it is a wide one.

“The slight leading notion of the Number being devised with a view to placing as little restriction as possible on the fancies of my fellow-writers in it, there is again no limitation as to scene or first person or third person ; nor is any reference to the season of the year essential.

“It is to be observed that the tales are not supposed to be narrated to any audience, but are supposed to be in writing. How they come to be in writing *requires no accounting for whatever*. Nothing to which they refer can have happened within seven years. If any contribution should be of a kind that would derive any force or playfulness, or suggestiveness of any sort, from the pretence that it is incomplete—that the beginning is not there, or the end, or the middle, or any other portion—the pretence will be quite consistent with the general idea of the Number.”

On another anniversary the circular ran :—

“Your tale may be narrated either in the first or in the third person—may be serious or droll—may be told by an individual of either sex, and of any station. It is not essential to lay the scene



of action in England (though the tale is told in England), and no reference whatever to Christmas is desired.

“The tale is supposed to be related by word of mouth to a man who has retired from the world and shut himself up moodily, gloomily, and dirtily. Generally it should have some latent bearing by implication on the absurdity of such a proceeding—on the dependence of mankind on one another—and on the wholesome influences of the gregarious habits of humanity.”

A third was to this effect:—

“The tales may be in the first person or in the third, and may relate to any season or period. They may be supposed to be told to an audience or to the reader, or to be penned by the writer without knowing how they will come to light. How they come to be told at all does not require to be accounted for. If they could express some new resolution formed, some departure from an old idea or course that was not quite wholesome, it might be better for the general purpose. Yet even this is not indispensable.”

The following was more elaborate:—

“An English trading-ship (with passengers on board), bound for California, is supposed to have got foul of an iceberg, and becomes a wreck. The crew and passengers, not being very many in number, and the captain being a cool man with his wits about him, one of the boats was hoisted out, and some stores were got over the side into her before the ship went down. Then all hands, with a few exceptions, were got into the boat—an open one—and they got clear of the wreck, and put their trust in God.

“The captain set the course and steered, and the rest rowed by spells when the sea was smooth enough for the use of the oars. They had a sail besides. At sea in the open boat for many days and nights, with the prospect before them of being swamped by any great wave, or perishing with hunger, the people in the boat began, after a while, to be horribly dispirited. The captain remembering that the narration of stories had been attended with great success on former occasions in similar disasters, in preventing the shipwrecked persons’

minds from dwelling on the horrors of their condition, proposed that such as could tell anything to the rest should tell it. So the stories are introduced.

“The adventures narrated need not of necessity have happened in all cases to the people in the boat themselves. Neither does it matter whether they are told in the first or in the third person. The whole narrative of the wreck will be given by the captain to the reader in introducing the stories, also the final deliverance of the people. There are persons of both sexes in the boat. The writer of any story may suppose any sort of person—or none, if that be all—as the captain will identify him if need be. But among the wrecked there might naturally be the mate, the cook, the carpenter, the armourer (or worker in iron), the boy, the bride passenger, the bridegroom passenger, the sister passenger, the brother passenger, the mother or father passenger, or son or daughter passenger, the runaway passenger, the child passenger, the old seaman, the toughest of the crew, etc., etc.”

This was the skeleton or ribs of “The Wreck of

the *Golden Mary*," which had extraordinary success, though some critics were merry on the idea of the suffering passengers having to listen to such long narratives—one adding that he wondered that it did not precipitate the catastrophe.

Another was more general:—

"Mr. Dickens is desirous that each article in the new year's Number of *Household Words* shall have reference to something *new*, and I beg to ask you to assist us in producing a paper expressive of that always desirable quality.

"I can give you no better hint of the idea than the roughest notion of what one or two of the titles of the papers might be: A New Country; A New Discovery (in science, art, or social life); A New Lover; A New Play, or Actor, or Actress; A New Boy.

"Your own imagination will doubtless suggest a topic or a story which would harmonize with the plan."

Yet one more:—

"In order that you may be laid under as little constraint as possible, Mr. Dickens wishes to pre-

sent the requirements of the Number, in the following general way :—

“A story of adventure—that is to say, involving some adventurous kind of interest—would be best adapted to the design. It may be a story of travel, or battle, or imprisonment, or escape, or shipwreck, or peril of any kind—peril from storm, or from being benighted or lost ; or peril from fire or water. It may relate to sea or land. It may be incidental to the life of a soldier, sailor, fisherman, miner, grave-digger, engineer, explorer, pedlar, merchant, servant of either sex, or any sort of watcher—from a man in a lighthouse, or a coastguardsman, to an ordinary night nurse. There is no necessary limitation as to the scene, whether abroad or at home ; nor as to the time, within a hundred years. Nor is it important whether the story be narrated in the first person or in the third. Nor is there any objection to its being founded on some expedition.”

In connection with this matter, I may say that nothing was more delightful than the unrestrained way in which he confided his plans about his own stories, or discussed others connected with mine,

imparting quite a dramatic interest and colour to what might, as mere business details, have been left to his deputy.

Once, in a little town in Wales, I had seen a quaint local museum, formed by an old ship captain who had collected odds and ends of his profession, mostly worthless, much like what is described in "Little Pedlington." The oddest feature was the garden, in which he had planted various figure-heads of vessels, Dukes of York, Queen Charlottes, and others, who gazed on the visitors with an extraordinary stare, half ghastly, half grotesque. This seemed to furnish a hint for the machinery of one of the Christmas stories, and was suggested to him.

"That notion of the shipbreaker's garden," he wrote, November, 1865, "takes my fancy strongly. If I had not been already at work upon the Christmas Number when you suggested it, I think I must have tried my hand upon it. As it is, I often revert to it, and go about and about it, and pat it into new forms, much as the buttermen in the shops (who have something of a literary air

at their wooden desks) pat the butter. I have been vexed at not being able to get your story into 'Doctor Marigold.' I tried it again and again, but could not adapt its length to the other requirements of the Number. Once I cut it, but was not easy afterwards, and thought it best to restore the excision and leave the whole for a regular Number. The difficulty of fitting and adapting this annual job is hardly to be imagined without trying it. For the rest, I hope you will like the Doctor—and know him at once—as he speaks for himself in the first paper and the last. Also I commend to your perusal a certain short story, headed 'To be taken with a grain of salt.'

"I hope you are in force and spirits with your new story, and hope you noticed in the *Times* the other day that our friend —— is married."

How amazing this modesty, and these excuses for not using what another would have simply said he found "unsuited to the magazine."

As I look over the records of his interest in my undeserving scribblings, there comes, mingled with pain and regret for this genial, never-flagging

friend, something of a little pride in having gained the interest of so true and genuine a nature. It will be seen how he encouraged—how even grateful he appeared to be for anything he thought good or successful, and how patient and apologetic he was under circumstances where his good will and good nature were tried. It was so for a long period of years; he was the same from beginning to end; no caprice; steady, firm, *treu und fest*. Carlyle, in a single line, gave the truest estimate of him.

Another trait in him was his unfailing pleasure in communicating some little composition with which he was particularly pleased; or he would tell of some remarkable story that he had been sent, or would send one of his own which he fancied hugely. It was a source, too, of pleasant, welcome surprise to find how he retained in his memory, and would quote, various and sundry of one's own humbler efforts—those that had passed into his own stock associations. These generally referred to some experience or humorous adventure, or it might be some account of a dog.



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After two or three years of industrious practice in short stories and essays, I had fancied I could succeed in novel-writing with a first attempt, and timidly suggested that I might "try my hand" in his weekly journal. He at once agreed, and good-naturedly had about half a volume "set up," so as to give the production every chance in the reading. But the attempt was immature; the waxen wings melted, and he was obliged to decline it. By-and-by I got a new pair, and, making a more formal attempt in two volumes, was lucky enough to make a success.

The history of this little transaction will be found interesting, not, of course, from my own share, but as illustrating that charm of hearty good will which marked every act of his where his friends were concerned. Here also enters on the scene his faithful coadjutor and assistant, W. H. Wills; a sterling character, practical, business-like, and yet never letting his naturally friendly temper be overcome by the stern necessities of his office. He had a vast amount of business, as may be conceived; yet his letters, of

which I have some hundreds before me now, were always playful, amusing, clever, and written in a flowing lengthy style—even to “crossing.” His sagacity was heartily appreciated by his chief. He ever appeared a most favourable specimen of the successful literary man.

At the risk of becoming more personal, I may enter a little at length on the subject of what Lamb calls the “kindly engendure” of this story—which, in truth, has some flavour of the romance of authorship. I had sent my successful two-volume venture to my friend.

“MY DEAR FITZGERALD,

“Do not condemn me unheard (I know you are putting on the black cap). I have been silent, but only on paper; for a fortnight after you last heard from me I was roaring with pain. The first use of my convalescence was to read your story—like a steam-engine. My impression is that it is the best novel I have read for years; why I think so I need not tell you. I posted off with it to Dickens, whose impression of it results

in this: that we should like you to write a novel for *All the Year Round*. If you respond to that wish, it will afford me very great pleasure.

“In that case, it would be very necessary for you to begin at once; for should you make a hit with your plot, we would require to publish the first instalment in September next. The *modus operandi* I propose is this: let us have a rough sketch of your plot and characters; Dickens would consider it, offer you suggestions for improvement if he saw fit, or condemn it, or accept it as you present it if he saw no ground for remark. In case of a negative you would not mind, perhaps, trying another programme. I need not tell you how great an advantage it would be for you to work under so great a master of the art which your novel shows you to know the difficulties of, and your artistic sympathies will, I know, prompt you to take full advantage of hints which he would give you, not only in the construction and conduct of your story, but in details, as you proceed with it in weekly portions.

“Experience has shown us that the preappear-

ance of a novel in our pages, instead of occupying the field for after-publication in volumes, gives an enormous stimulus to the issue in a complete form. We can therefore insure you for your work, if it will fill three volumes, five hundred pounds (£500), part of which we would pay for our use of your manuscript, and part the publisher of the volumes would pay; but we would, in case of acceptance, guarantee you £500, whatever the republication may fetch.

“Think this over, and when your thoughts are matured, let me have them in your next letter.”

This was almost thrilling to read. Every word was as inspiring as the blast of a trumpet. It will be noted how pleased the writer is at the very communication of his intelligence. And then the *pécune!* Five hundred pounds! The diligent magazine-writer might exclaim with one of Jerrold's characters, “Is there so much money in the world!” It was really liberal and generous.

No time was lost in setting to work. I had soon blocked out a plan—what dramatists call a *scenario*—and had, about as soon, set to work

and written a good many chapters and sent them in.

It will now be characteristic to see what pains were taken—how heads were laid together to improve and make good—all under the master's directions and inspirations, who, as he said often, always gave to the public his best labour and best work. This constancy always seemed to me wonderful. He never grew fagged or careless, or allowed his work to be distasteful to him. This is a most natural feeling, and comes with success; and there is a tendency to "scamp" work when the necessity for work is less. Mr. Thackeray confessed to this sense—in the days when he became *recherché*—and found a sort of distaste to his work almost impossible to surmount.

The first questions started on this great business came from my old friend the sub-editor, the master's excellent auxiliary. It will be seen how staunch he was, and true to both interests—that of his journal and that of the writer.

"I am nearly as anxious as you are about your story. I may tell you that my judgment is in

favour of it, so far as it has gone ; but Dickens, while never wholly losing sight of the main end, object, and purpose of the story, often condemns one because its details are ill done. He takes such infinite pains with the smallest touches of his *own* word-pictures, that he gets impatient and disgusted with repetitions of bad writing and carelessness (often showing want of respect for, as well as ignorance of, the commonest principles of art). I, perhaps, sin too much on the other side. I say that the *general* public—whom we address in our large circulation—are rather insensible than otherwise to literary grace and correctness ; that they are often intensely excited by incidents conveyed to their minds in the worst grammar.

“Mind, I only make these remarks for your guidance. My advice to you is, write for all your proofs, go over them very carefully. Take out as many Carlyleisms as you can see (your writing abounds with them), make clear that which is here and there obscure without a reader’s consideration and retracing of the text—a labour which novel-readers especially hate ; in short, put as high a

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polish on your details as you can, and I may almost *promise* you success. Dickens is vagabondizing at present, and won't be back for ten days ; get all ready by that time.

“It is not impossible that we may have to call upon you suddenly to let us commence the story in a week or two ; but it may be deferred for a year. At all events, I can promise you a decision on all points when C. D. shows up.

“I find a fault in your other novel which is creeping into Miss ——'s : a want of earnestness ; a Thackerayish pretence of indifference, which you do not feel, to the stronger emotions and statements of your characters. If you excite the emotions of your readers, and convey the idea that *you* feel a lofty contempt for emotion in general, *they* feel sold, and will hate your want of taking them in.

“I don't say a word in praise of your new venture, though I think a great deal. I want you and your writing to make a hit, not only with C. D. but with the public ; and what I have said (which will make you detest me, at least till after church-time

on Sunday) *may* be a small contribution towards that object, which I do most earnestly desire. About Monday, when your heart is open to forgiveness of sins like mine (or before it prove less obdurate), let me hear from you.

“One other thing. You see Sala’s story lies chiefly in Paris. Could you not adopt my suggestion of giving your story its natural progression, and postponing chapter the first to its natural place in the story? My conviction is that you would make an improvement thereby in all respects.”

After many debates, it was at last determined to attempt the venture.

“Next let me convey to you the intelligence,” wrote our chief, “that I resolve to launch it, fully confiding in your conviction of the power of the story? On all business points Wills will communicate with you.

“The only suggestion I have to make as to the MS. in hand and type is that Fermor wants relief. It is a disagreeable character, as you mean it to be, and I should be afraid to do so much with him, if



the case were mine, without taking the taste of him here and there out of the reader's mouth. It is remarkable that, if you do not administer a disagreeable character carefully, the public have a decided tendency to think that the *story* is disagreeable, and not merely the fictitious person.

“What do you think of this title, ‘Never Forgotten?’ It is a good one in itself, and would express the eldest sister's pursuit, and, glanced at now and then in the text, would hold the reader in suspense. Let me know your opinion as to the title. I need not assure you that the greatest care will be taken of you here, and that we shall make you as thoroughly well and widely known as we possibly can.”

Now, this was all encouraging and cordial to a degree. Yet, I seem to see the editor here, more or less; and friendly and good-natured as these assurances were, in the case of an acquiescence, it will be seen what a difference there was in his tone as time went on, and he was good enough to have a “liking,” as it is called, for the writer; even the

slightly authoritative air that is here disappeared. I frankly confess that, having met innumerable men, and having had dealings with innumerable men, I never met one with an approach to his genuine, unaffected, unchanging kindness, or one that ever found so sunshiny a pleasure in doing one a kindness. I cannot call to mind that any request I ever made to him was ungranted, or left without an attempt to grant it.

The letter just quoted conveys a most precious lesson to the novel-writer—whose craft, indeed, requires many lessons. Having written nearly twenty novels myself, I may speak with a little experience, and frankly own that it was not till I had passed my dozenth that I began to learn some few principles of the art; having written, as so many do, “as the spirit moved,” or by fancied inspiration.

The allusion to the “bold advertisement” was, indeed, handsomely carried out. Few would have such advantages of publicity as one writing a novel for *All the Year Round* in those days. There was the *prestige* of association with the master, while

the condition in which your work was brought before the public was truly effective.

All this happily settled, the affair was duly announced. No expense was spared. Vivid yellow posters, six or seven feet long, proclaimed the name of the new story in black brilliant characters on every blank wall and hoarding in the kingdom; while smaller and more convenient-sized proclamations, in quarto as it were, told this tale in a more modest way. So that, if there was really any light at all, it was not under a bushel. I had a pride in, and fondness for, these testimonials, and have religiously preserved all that dealt with my own efforts, a kind of literature, as may be conceived, of a bulky sort, and filling great space as they accumulated. When debating effectual titles for these and other writings, I recall his taking me to his room without telling me what he had selected, and, by way of test or surprise, exhibiting one of these gigantic proclamations stretched at full length across the floor of the room. "What do you think?" he would ask. "You must know," he would add, his eye beginning to twinkle with

merriment, "that when Wills corrects the proofs of these things, he has to go on his knees, with a brush and pot of paint beside him?" The cost of this system of advertising was enormous in the year, but everything was done magnificently at "the office."

A little later I was informed that—

"The next Number we make up will contain the first part of your story. I like what you have done extremely. But I think the story flags at ——'s 'chaff.' There is too much of it. A few pregnant hits at —— would do all you want better. Again, the C—— party requires, I think, the exciseman up to the quadrille, where the real business of the evening begins. You see, in publishing hebdomadally, any kind of alternation is very dangerous. One must hit, not only hard, but quick.

"Please look well to the passage revealing the acceptance of F—— T——, and overthrow of V——, in the bedroom, after the party. This is a strong situation, and, to my mind, is confusedly expressed—in fact, can only be vaguely guessed at by the reader.

“More criticism! Everything goes on well so far; but I tell you what we all yearn for—some show of *tenderness* from somebody: the little glimpse of B—, a Number or two ago, with his little touch of humour-feeling, was refreshing in the highest degree. The characters seem to be all playing at chess—uncommonly well, mind you—but they neither do nor say anything sympathetic.”

As the story advanced the councils multiplied, as well as the suggestions and improvements. Experiments even were made in particular directions, and an episode was furnished “to see how it would look in print;” sheets being “set up” in this way regardless of cost, and dismissed as unsatisfactory. All this was laborious and troublesome, but, as was said, the experiment was worth making, and few sensible writers but would have welcomed the opportunity of learning their craft under such a teacher. It would be impossible to describe the fertility of his resources, the ingenuity exhibited, the pains and thought he gave to the matter. Under such auspices—and it was admitted that I was a willing pupil, with equal readiness to adopt

and to carry out all that was suggested—the work benefited, it need hardly be said.

“Is it worth your while,” wrote my sub-editor, “to be bothered with a second scrawl merely to let me say how admirable I think it? Tender, true, and too pathetic even for an old hack waiting for his dinner to read with dry eyes. My first mouthful would have choked me if I had not written this.”

The end gained 'was satisfactory to all concerned. The work was successful, passed through several editions, and still sells. The copyright was disposed of for a sum nearly equal to what was allotted to me. Indeed, before it was concluded, the following pleasant communication, as full of sensible advice as it was agreeable, set me to work again. One curious evidence of its success was the fact that a firm of perfumers in Bond Street named a new perfume after the story, which is largely sold to this hour.

“Io Pæan! I congratulate you on being at last able to flourish the word *Finis*. I have not yet read a line of your ending, and this omission will give you a better relish for what I am going to

say : dictated solely by the 'merits' already developed, Dickens's answer to the wish you express at the end of your letter was a glad and eager 'Yes ;' in which I heartily and cordially concurred, as you may guess. Let your next novel be for us. We shall want it in from twelve to eighteen months' time ; and, if I may venture some advice, let me urge upon you to employ at least a quarter of it in constructing the skeleton of it from the end of your story, or modifying any little detail in the beginning of it—if you would set yourself the task of at least seeing land before you plunge into your voyage with no chance of veering, or 'backing or filling,' or shortening sail.

"I am sure you have a great chance before you, if you will only give your powers their full swing ; especially if you will let us see a *leetle* of the good side of human nature.

"Ever very faithfully yours,

"W. H. W."

I have many proof-sheets by me, corrected by his own hand in the most painstaking and elabo-

rate way. The way he used to scatter his bright touches over the whole, the sparkling word of his own that he would insert here and there, gave a surprising point and light. The finish, too, that he imparted was wonderful; and the "dashes," stops, shiftings, omissions, were all valuable lessons for writers.

On another occasion, when he did not "see," as he says, the point of another attempt—and, indeed, there was not much—he excuses himself in this fashion for not using it:

"Don't hate me more than you can help, when I say I have been reading 'Sixpenny Shakespeare,' and that I don't *see* it. I don't think this joke is worth the great ingenuity, and I don't think the public would take it. 'Wills and Will-making' most excellent. I have placed it in two parts already. It is capital. Once again, don't hate me more than you can help, and your Petitioner will ever pray. (I don't know what Petitioners pray for.)

"Ever yours,

"C. D."



So also, when an unhappy monkey, trained to ride in a circus, offered a tempting subject for a paper which I had sent to him, he answers in the same spirit :

“I am afraid the monkey is anticipated. It has been exceedingly well done by Buckland in *Land and Water*, and would be the day after the fair. I was going to place him to-day, but in the mean time caught sight of Buckland’s paper, which has been extensively copied both in weekly and country journals.”

Indeed, the pleasant ardour with which he followed the course of a story, anticipated its coming, debated its name, and helped its writer over various stiles, and even extricated him from bogs, was all in the same spirit. His aid as to the name and conduct of the story was, it may be conceived, invaluable. Many and earnest were the consultations upon this matter of naming. No one had a nicer ear as to what would “hit” or suit the taste of the town.

“I am glad to hear that the story is so far advanced now that you think well of it, for I have

no doubt that you are right. I don't like either of your names, for the reason that they don't seem to me solidly earnest enough for such a story. But give me a little time to think of another, and I flatter myself that I may suggest a good one."

And again :

"I think the plan of the story very promising, and suggestive of a remarkably good, new, and strong interest. What do you think of the pursuing relative dying at last *of the same disorder as the baronet's daughter*, and under such circumstances as to make out the case of the clergyman's daughter and clear up the story? As, for example, *suppose her husband himself does almost the same thing in going for help when the man is dying*. I think I see a fine story here. As to the name. No, certainly not. 'What could She do?' No again. 'What will He do with It?' 'Can He forgive Her?' 'Put Yourself in His Place.' Remember these titles."

And again :

July, 1868.

"'O where! O where! is the rest of "Tom Butler"?' A hasty word. I prefer —— (without

the article). I cannot possibly answer the question Mr. — does me the honour to propose, without knowing what length of story is meant.

“I answer your letter to myself. It is perfectly understood between us that you write the long serial story next after —. That is a positive engagement. When I told — to write to you respecting a shorter story meanwhile, I meant that to be quite apart from, and over and above, the aforesaid long one. May I look at the chapters you speak of on Decoration?

“I am in a brilliant condition, thank God. Rest, and a little care immediately, *unshook* the Railway shaking.

“I don't quite understand from your kind note (forwarded here this morning) whether — purposes to write these papers or whether he suggests them to you. In either case, I shall be delighted to have them. It is necessary that they should appear under separate headings, each with its own title, as we have already three running titles. Your story — is going on famously, and I think will make a hit. I had a letter from Wilkie Collins

yesterday, much interested in perceiving your idea, and in following your working of it out. We purpose being in town on Thursday, and going on that afternoon. I hope we shall find you in readiness to go along with us."

"Your hint that you are getting on with your story, and liked it, was more than golden intelligence to me in foreign parts. The intensity of the heat in Paris and in the Provinces was such that I found else so refreshing in the course of my rambles.

"Make yourself quite easy. There is not the slightest need to hurry, and you can take your own time. I have a story in two parts still to place in Numbers not yet made up. Until Wednesday, and always.

So again :

"It strikes me that a quaintly expressive title for such a book would be 'The ——.' What do you think of it?"

The "eminent literary personage," as he called him, had now other ambitions—trying his hand at a short dramatic piece. He took charge of it, and

sent it to his friend Webster. As it did not suit—others did, in due time—he good-naturedly broke the fall with the following:—

“The play goes very glibly, and merrily, and smoothly, but I make so bold as to say you can write a much better one. The most characteristic part in it is much too like Compton in ‘The Unequal Match.’ And the best scene in it, where he urges his wife to go away, is so excessively dangerous, that I think the chances would be very many to one against an audience’s acceptance of it. Because, however drolly the situation is presented, the fact is not to be got over that the lady seriously supposes her husband to be in league with another man.”

With some humiliation I must own to trying the tolerance of this most amiable of men with various failures and sad carelessness on many occasions. His printer would grumble at the perfunctory style in which the copy was presented, and even in print it was sometimes difficult to put matters in shape.

“My difficulty,” he wrote, “about your story has been a report from the Printer that the copy of

some part of another story had got mixed with it, and it was impossible to make sense. You were then just gone. I waited until you should have leisure—now that I hear from you, I tell you only I have waited—and ask: *Is* the story made straight, and *is* it at the Printer's? Reply, reply, reply, as Bishop's duett says. Reply also to this: How long is it?"

"Waited until you should have leisure!" There was almost unlimited indulgence in the matter of changing and revising printed pages, condemned at the author's suggestion—new bits introduced here and there. He had a pleasant joke in this trying behaviour, and vowed that I had introduced a new term in the printing-house "chapel," a thing unknown for centuries in that most conservative of professions. These introduced columns and half-columns had to be denominated, somehow to distinguish them from the regular narrative. A number being brought by the foreman one day, and in his asking what this was, he was told that "they were my "*Randoms*." The delight he felt in this seemed to compensate for any annoyance.

I see the exuberant twinkle in his bright eye, and his hearty relish. I believe to this hour the term obtains. At last, however, his patience would give way.

“For my sake, if not for Heaven’s,” he would write, “do, I entreat you, look at this manuscript before I send it to the printer. And again, please keep on abrupt transitions into the present tense your critical eye. ‘Tom Butler,’ in type, is just brought in. I will write to you of him to-morrow or Sunday.”

How gentle was this!

Once, however, and only once, he delivered himself with a severity that I own was deserved. Two novels were being actually written by “my facile pen” at the same moment, much as a barebacked rider, or rider of barebacked steeds, would ride the same number of horses round the circus. At the same time we were preparing for a long serial in his journal. “You make me very uneasy,” he began, “on the subject of your new story here by undertaking such an impossible amount of fiction at one time.”

How easily propitiated he was will be seen when, on a mere undertaking to be careful, he writes that—"Your explanation is (as it would be, *being yours*) manly and honest, and I am both satisfied and hopeful." Nay, some weeks later, he recurred to the matter in this strain :

"I am very sorry I was not at home. It gives me the greatest pleasure to receive such good tidings of the new story, and I shall enter upon its perusal in proof with the brightest appreciation. Will you send as much of it as you can spare to the office?"

Thus much for Charles Dickens in the editor's chair.



## CHAPTER IV.

### CHARLES DICKENS AT HOME.

A FEW further recollections of this most interesting of men, changing the scene to his home and fireside circle, will be received with welcome. It will have been seen that I knew him very intimately. I saw much of him ; indeed, I may feel a sort of pride in saying he had a particular friendship for me, and showed it in many substantial ways.

I will first try to recall what he was like. There never was a man so unlike a professional writer : of tall, wiry, energetic figure ; brisk in movement ; a head well set on ; a face rather bronzed or sunburnt ; keen, bright, searching eyes, and a mouth which was full of expression, though hidden behind a wiry moustache and grizzled beard.

Thus the French painter's remark that "he was more like one of the old Dutch admirals we see in the picture galleries, than a man of letters," conveyed an admirably true idea to his friends.

He had, indeed, much of the quiet resolute manner of command of a captain of a ship. He strode along briskly as he walked; as he listened his searching eye rested on you, and the nerves in his face quivered, much like those in the delicately formed nostrils of a finely bred dog. There was a curl or two in his hair at each side which was characteristic; and the jaunty way he wore his little morning hat, rather on one side, added to the effect. But when there was anything droll suggested, a delightful sparkle of lurking humour began to kindle and spread to his mouth, so that, even before he uttered anything, you felt that something irresistibly droll was at hand. No one ever told a story so drolly, and, what is not so common, relished another man's story so heartily. A man of his great reputation and position might have chosen what company he pleased, and would have been welcome in the highest circles; but he

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never was so happy as with one or two intimate friends who understood him, who were in good spirits or in good humour. He was always grateful, as it were, to hear a good thing.

Gad's Hill, on the Rochester road, has been often described. It is a snug old red-brick house—quaint, too—with a belfry in the roof; a little lawn in front; a cosy porch and bow windows. It was old-fashioned and snug, and yet modern and modernized—as the great plate-glass windows set in the sound old brickwork seem to evidence. The country about was charming: spreading out pleasantly, well furnished, dotted here and there with little patches of red, other houses, as snug, upon hills or in dells. Nothing was more agreeable than a “run down” for a few days, or even from Saturday till Monday, arranged at “the office” in a hearty cheery style there was no resisting. Even here, his accurate, business-like mode would be shown; the hour and train fixed, or a leaf torn from his little book and the memorandum written down for guidance. His day was mapped out; there was haste but no scramble.

Then came the meeting at Charing Cross Station, he posting up in good time. It was pleasant to note the deep respect of the guards—much more than a conventional greeting to a familiar passenger of importance.

I do not recall anything more delightful than one of these holidays. There is something in the Kentish country—land of hop-poles and lanes—that in the summer time has the most pleasing associations. The basket carriage or car waited at Higham; the old village church, the road to Gad's Hill, all had a special charm. The Medway, Rochester, Chatham, all these opening out, are ever associated with him. This tract of country always seems to be painted in two colours: warm brick, mellow red tiles or shingle roof, and a deep green, as rich and mellow; add to this a third tint, the chill greys of the strangely bending river which attend you side by side almost all the way. Nearly opposite his gate was the old Falstaff Inn so often described.

Bestowed here, in this charming circle, with the pleasant gardens and flowers, the little croquet-

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ground—a recent acquisition—each day went by like an hour. I seem to see him now, lying on the grass, enjoying its calm, or standing about in his resolute fashion and attitude. I recall one Sunday, sultry even during the early hours, when I started off on a walk before breakfast. I fancy that I may quote a little description, written by myself, in his own journal :

“The scene is a charming bit of double colour, red brick and green sward on an English high-road, or rather, in these railway times, green lane, with an old tree or two, and a belfry in the roof; and from this I start on a *very* bright Sunday morning, making for a semi-military, semi-nautical settlement some miles away. I have never seen the nautico-military settlement, and do not know the road, so the whole has a prospect of adventure. Adventure there was to be none; but the reader will understand how pleasantly one turns back, for reasons unmeaning as compared with the incidents of other days, to little pictures of this sort. The green lane went up and down, became a high-road, encountering with gigs and a stray waggon

and a yellow van—there was to be a race or a fair somewhere on the Monday—with a two-wheeled show-cart of meaner pretensions ; the proprietor of which walked by his vehicle in a Sunday cloak made out of the gaudy and dappled oilcloth which served on profane occasions as his roulette board. There was distinctly the blue and the red, and the less fortunate black, and the all lucky crown, most gorgeous in its yellow, displayed upon the proprietor's back.

“Next, I met ‘tidy’ women, very smart, and their lords in very roomy royal blue dress-coats and brass buttons, and those extra-short double-breasted waistcoats which honest but sorely tempted children of the soil always wear in melodramas. These were distinctly *not* going to church ; and I could pardon them for turning aside to the rustic inn, to which you mounted by steps, which had two bow-windows with diamond panes and plenty of flowers, and a sign well on the road, and called the Jolly Waggoner. If it were a little later, I should myself have liked to go up and make the acquaintance of the Jolly Waggoner and his ale.

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After three or four miles, during which the sun was growing a little strong, and the dust perhaps rather acrimonious in its visits to the eyes, the great river and bridge came in sight. And there, while the spectator leaned on the bridge and looked in every direction, was a view that might sanctify any Sunday morning. A great full river, with that most satisfactory *brimming* fulness which recalled the Rhine, and a noble bridge of many arches, hill-shaped according to the old pattern, and whose piers seemed to stand firmly and confidently in the water and to defy any winter's flood, as if they were great granite calves of legs belonging to a many-legged granite giant, who could stride up or down the river with ease. At the opposite side was the little old town, and the little old town's ruined castle rising solemnly on the hill, and the little old town's houses very much crowded, and forced down to the edge of the water. And then beyond the little old town was the nautico-military town, which climbed up a hill laid out in ancient 'lines' and more ancient fosses; and beyond the hill, down far below, the river had

got in again and was wading under that Sunday's sun, glittering and glistening very far below, with the dockyards at its edge and the great ship-building sheds—monster coach-houses, but which now looked like tiny mousetraps. A charming view until modern man stepped in to spoil all, or rather the cruel, rapacious, and ubiquitous London, At'em, and Dashover Railway, running amuck through the country, hurled a heavy iron trough across the pretty river, and side by side of the pretty bridge. As I looked at its raw lines with disgust, and at its endless rivets, and heard it reverberating and clanging with a passing train, I seemed to hear it say, like an ugly bully, 'I've as much right to be here as *you*. I can go beside *you*, if I like, or *over* you, or go anywhere I like !'

“Still pressing on, I entered the little old town, which is all a snake-shaped street, with old rusty inns, and old posting-yards, and a few old framed houses ; their old bones and joints well looked to and kept as fresh as paint could keep them. I liked the way they projected over and covered the pathway, and I liked their gables still more. I



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went out into the road to have a good stare : to the amazement of the family, who were reading their Bibles on a Sunday morning, and thought the profane stranger might be better employed. Everything looked as bright and clean as a Dutch town, even to the one policeman, who, having little to do, began an affable conversation. Taking another bend, the little old town showed me some genuine red-brick houses with yellow stone corners and high French roofs—little Kensingtons, with a delightful old clock that hung out over the street in a mass of florid carving. Behind was a niche, and a flamboyant statue of a naval officer in a wig and gauntlets, pointing, I *know*, to the French—the brave old admiral Sir Cloudesley, in whose honour the red-brick tenement had been reared. Further on was a famous almshouse where Six Poor Travellers get their lodging and fourpences, and which looked snug and clean enough to make one *wish* to be a poor traveller ; and further on again was an unmistakable edifice, in good repair, with a portico and pillars, and some little dwindled bills on the walls by which I was glad to see that the

Theatre Royal was in play. Approaching and reading with interest—the commonest booth of a theatre has ever a fascination for me—(much to the disgust of a sour middle-aged lady with her husband and boy, who was making uncharitable sabbatarian remarks), I find that MR. GEORGE JENBY, the eminent character actor and vocalist, would ‘give two nights’ in this

“HIS NATIVE TOWN.

“He was to be assisted by

MISS MARION JENBY, of the London Concerts ; by

MISS SUSAN JENBY, of the London and Ealing Concerts ; by

MR. WILLIAM JENBY, on ‘this occasion only,’ who was of no concerts at all ; and by

THE INFANT MARIE JENBY.

“The programme was ‘rich and varied,’ including Miss Marion Jenby in her great character song of the ‘Battle of the Alma,’ subdivided into ‘The Advance, Charge of the Heavy Brigade! Quick step, they run! Prodigies of Valour! The Naval

Brigade; England's Wooden Walls;' the two latter headings I suspected to be specially introduced as adroit compliments to the dockyards. Wished Jenby and his family all success, being really worked into sympathy by a quotation concerning 'coming home at last,' with which William Jenby ended his bill—

As the hare whom hounds and horse pursue  
Pants to the spot from which at first it flew.

"But I passed on, and began to meet soldiers. Then I heard sounds of an organ coming out of a pretty little building, and found my middle-aged lady, her husband and boy, peeping in at the door with disgust and alarm. For, doing the same, I find this to be a chapel full of Irish soldiers, which having a stained-glass window looked very tranquil and cool and inviting on that Sunday morning. But if I were to tell all I saw on that pleasant Sunday morning, I should grow tedious—and so I stop here."

He was particularly delighted with that quotation of the actor's, likening himself to the "hare whom hounds and horse pursue." Never, indeed, was

there a more appreciative listener, or one that welcomed a story more cordially. Many a walk we took along those Kentish lanes in sun and snow. He once "showed" Rochester Castle to me—a subject he knew by heart, and most interesting it was to hear him on this subject, as well as on all Rochester and Chatham curiosities.

Sometimes he held little festivals in a field attached to the house—a recent purchase, of which he was rather proud, and which he humorously styled "his estate." I recall a cricket match here—"the Higham Eleven" against some other competitors, and which drew an attendance of villagers and others. He treated it with a grave solemnity that was amusing, and enjoyed the proceedings heartily. There was the "umpire's marquee" pitched, chairs arranged, flags flying. We even got up a sort of eager enthusiasm. Our host himself officiated as marker. I see him in his white jean coat, and his grey hat set a little on one side, his double glasses on, going conscientiously through his work; scoring down "byes," and "overs," and runs; at times cheering some indifferent "hit" with

an encouraging "Well run! well run!" This he kept up the whole day. He was partial to marking. There were plenty of cooling drinks on the ground, a cask of beer for the crowd, and some wonderful cup, for which he had some special receipt—as he had for everything else. I remembered this too seductive drink to my cost next morning, for the day was oppressively hot, and every one was athirst.

One Christmas time, when he was preparing some new Readings, he devised a pleasant entertainment for his neighbours and guests, in the shape of a sort of rehearsal, or experiment with, I think, "Barbox Brothers" and "Mugby Junction." The snow was very deep, and it was not the night for distant journeys, but all within "a measurable distance" assembled. His house was overflowing at the time, and numbers were billeted away with much ingenuity. Among them was Mr. Otway, and other Chatham notabilities. Even the dinner tables had to develop into side tables, but all was jovial and merry. After dinner his desk was arranged, and he read; but I fancy he was not so pleased with "Barbox Brothers" as with his

other public performances. After dinner we had small plays, one in which he exhibited singular cleverness, viz. that of guessing a subject fixed on when he was out of the room, in half a dozen questions. I have often seen this performed, but never in so masterly a style, for it is a test of character, and proves a power of getting at the essence of things. His selection of subjects to puzzle others when their turn came was characteristically ingenious—"The Lantern in a Railway Guard's Hand;" "The Powder used in the Gunpowder Plot" (we got as far as "Guy Fawkes," but no farther). He told how he piqued himself on a former occasion on a great triumph—the discovery of a regular poser: "The Boot on the off leg of a Postilion."

I have by me a little programme of another of these festivals. It runs thus :—

45th Kentish Royal Volunteers.  
Annual Sports, September 28th.

1st Race.

Scramble stakes. 300 yards. 1st Prize, Electro-plated Cup and Stand.  
2nd Prize, a Cigar Case.

2nd Race.

200 yards. 1st Prize, a Gold Pencil Case. 2nd Prize, a Penknife.

## 3rd Race.

80 yards. Three-legged Race. 1st Prize, a Handsome Walking-Stick.

2nd Prize, Cigars.

## 4th Race.

A Quarter Mile (Walking). 1st Prize, "Pickwick Papers," by

Charles Dickens. 2nd Prize, a new Drill Book.

These sports were held on "the estate." He gave some of the prizes, and I think it was on this occasion that his friend Mr. Layard assisted heartily in keeping the course.

A great attraction of Gad's Hill were the dogs. There were always three or four great dogs prancing about—Linda one was named—great St. Bernard dogs and others. He appreciated dogs, and understood their ways and fine nature better than any one, as we see from his writings. I recollect his sort of comic grief as he related his visit to the well-known monastery of St. Bernard, when, in answer to his eager inquiries as to the saving of life in the snow by the dogs, the good monks had informed him that, like many two-footed creatures, they enjoyed a reputation they scarcely deserved, and rather followed the monks than were followed by them. There was a little

white fox-nosed Pomeranian, belonging to his elder daughter, and which he had christened by the name of the landlady in "Box and Cox," Mrs. Bouncer, for, unlike all landladies, she had a disrelish for her lodgers. At one time I was offered a magnificent Spanish mastiff—one of those awe-inspiring buff-coloured creatures with a great coal-black snout we sometimes meet stalking with dignity through the street. This I made him a present of, and it was accordingly despatched to Gad's Hill, and he was much pleased at the idea of receiving it. The animal spent the night at our house, signifying his presence occasionally by long melancholy baying. I had sundry misgivings, as these beasts are of a ferocious kind, and are or were used in their own country for the amiable occupation of hunting down escaped slaves. However, he liked him; and Sultan—such was his name—though affecting a surly reserve to every one else, was sagacious enough to show great affection to the master of the house. Things went on very well for a time: when a favourite kitten, admitted to the drawing-room and much petted, one day



unaccountably disappeared. Search was made, but it was never heard of again, and it was assumed it had been stolen by one of the tramps who were always passing the gate. No suspicion, however, rested on the real culprit. The next incident shall be related in his master's own pleasant words, taken from a letter to myself:—

“Sultan has grown amazingly, and is a sight. But he is so accursedly fierce to other dogs that I am obliged to take him out muzzled. Also he has an invincible repugnance to soldiers, which in a military district like Chatham is inconvenient. Such is his spirit, that with his muzzle tight on he dashed into the heart of a company in heavy marching order, and pulled down a private. Except under such provocation he is as gentle and docile with me as a dog can possibly be.”

Later came another incident in Sultan's career:—

“Last night,” he says, “the gardener fired at some man in the garden upon whom he had come suddenly, and who kicked him in a dangerous manner. I immediately turned out, unloosed Sultan, and hunted the vagabond. We couldn't

get hold of him, but the intelligence of the dog, and the delighted confidence he imparted to me, as we tumbled across country into the dark, were quite enchanting. Two policemen, appearing in the distance and making a professional show of energy, had a narrow escape. As he was in the act of rushing at them, I was obliged to hold him round the neck with both arms, and call on the force to vanish in an inglorious manner."

"A friend," he wrote on another occasion, "has sent me from America a thoroughbred young black Newfoundland dog since you were here. Sultan (who hates him mortally), Linda, I, and three or four small dogs with the nature of canine parasites and toadies, make a show in the lanes and woods which I specially beseech you to come and see. We only want the 'renowned dog Cæsar' (alluding to a story of mine) to make us matchless."

He was making rapid way with his master. "I cannot thank you too much," he wrote again, "for Sultan. He is a noble fellow, has fallen into the ways of the family with a grace and dignity that denote the gentleman, and came down to the

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railway to welcome me home, with a profound absence of interest in my individual opinion of him, which captivated me completely. I am going home to-day to take him about the country and improve his acquaintance. You will find a perfect understanding between us, I hope, when you next come. (He has only swallowed Bouncer once and temporarily.)”

All this seemed friendly and encouraging; but in the household, and among the neighbours, suspicion was rife. It was alarming to hear of his having broken loose muzzled, and coming home covered with blood.

He went off one day to have a sort of prize-fight with a dog of his own size, weight, and age, residing some distance off, of whom he was jealous, and after a terrible battle left him almost dead. Yet his master still clung to him. Indeed, no dog ever had such a chance, or was more tolerated. But at last it came to a fatal point beyond which toleration could not safely go. One day a scream was heard at the gate, and those who rushed out found that the dog had seized a

neighbour's child by the leg. It was rescued just in time, though mangled. This was an outrage for which the country ever exacts one satisfaction. The keeping of "a ferocious dog" is not tolerated.

Fortunately, the luckless creature did no serious mischief. But he little guessed that he had sealed his own doom. "The child's leg is sore and stiff, but it has not presented a single bad symptom, and she has very nearly recovered from her fright. After such a warning, there could be no doubt that so fierce an animal should not be kept. Mr. Dickens, of course, immediately flogged him. At the time he knew as well as possible how guilty he was. He was muzzled and shut up for the night, and yesterday morning the gardener took him to the end of the meadow and shot him, and he was buried in the field. The poor dog dropped *without a struggle or even a cry*, I am happy to say—so the execution was performed as skilfully and mercifully as it could be done. The gardener took him as far away from the house as he could to kill him, still we all heard the shot, and I can't tell you how terrible it was. We all

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went to bed dreading it the night before, and I don't think we, any of us, slept for an hour at a time during the night, from the dread and expectation of hearing the execution. We were all afraid the poor dog would give a howl which would be heard a long way. Every way, I think he is better dead, for he led an unhappy life. We never dared to take him out without a muzzle since the time when he nearly killed our neighbour's dog."

Such was the account of one of the family. But to the master himself there was something curiously dramatic in the affair. And he wrote of the event—an important one in the district—to myself and other friends: "Your mention of the late Sultan touches me nearly. He was the finest dog I ever saw, and between me and him there was a perfect understanding. But, to adopt the popular phrase, it was so very confidential that 'it went no further.' He would fly at anybody else with the greatest enthusiasm for destruction. I have frequently seen him, muzzled, hold a great dog down with his chest and feet. He has broken

loose (muzzled) and come home covered with blood, again and again. And yet he never disobeyed me, unless he had first laid hold of a dog. You heard of his going to execution, evidently supposing the procession to be a party detached in pursuit of something to kill or eat? It was very affecting. Also of his bolting a blue-eyed kitten, and making me acquainted with the circumstance by his agonies of remorse (or indigestion).”

And to his Swiss correspondent, Cerjat: “The big dog on a day last autumn, having seized a little girl (sister to one of the servants) whom he knew and was bound to respect, was flogged by his master and then sentenced to be shot at seven next morning. He went out very cheerfully with the half-dozen men told off for the purpose, evidently thinking that they were going to be the death of somebody unknown. But observing in the procession an empty wheelbarrow and a double-barrelled gun, he became meditative, and fixed the bearer of the gun with his eyes. A stone deftly thrown across him by the village

blackguard (chief mourner) caused him to look round for an instant, and he then fell down dead, shot through the heart."

Such was the fate of Sultan.

The Guild of Literature and Art brings back another day spent with him in the greatest enjoyment; so charming and pleasant in all its incidents, that it seemed like some school-holiday in the country. Weather, scenery, company, good spirits, everything combined to set off the little junketing. We started betimes from Gad's Hill, coming up through that ever-inviting Kentish country which looks more inviting of a June morning; then, after an hour or so in town, repaired to the Great Northern Railway, where a large crowd of visitors had assembled. Stevenage, our destination, lay in the district of which Charles Lamb talked so fondly, and where he placed "Mackery End," in the green lanes of pleasant Hertfordshire; and green, rich enough it looked on this holiday. As we drew up at the station, there was the bustle of improvised vehicles, as usual insufficient; all that was handy or available

in the way of transport being laid under contribution. The Lord of Knebworth, on whose demesne we were, had sent his carriage for his friend and his party. Away we sped through those green lanes, the stately country, and its ancient trees stretching out beyond, a spectacle to delight the author of "Rookwood," who I believe was present. The first duty of the day was to repair to the "College" itself—a pretty little row of red-brick houses, a colonnade, with tiny cheerful rooms into which every one insists on pushing his or her way, as if determined to inspect conscientiously and report under affidavit. Presently we were in the halls of the old mansion, received by the host, whom I had then met for the first time. I see the picturesque scene as we drive up, the long antique front of the house as background, like a scene in a play, while the steps and broad space in front of the entrance were crowded with a festive gaily dressed throng, in the centre of which, leaning on his stick, stood the host, who advanced to greet his famous guest. That meeting would have made a picture. Yet



it would be difficult to meet him under more interesting circumstances—the host of the day in his own ancient castle, and surrounded by what one of the newspapers in a generous and alliterative enthusiasm called “all the leaders of literature,” an expression that amused some of the “leaders” themselves hugely.

He was a strangely interesting man, with his dreamy manner, and low voice and curious eyes, and the tranquil yet effective way in which he acquitted himself showed what quiet force and dignity there was in him. I always admired the genuine interest he took in the craft of letters, having always that delight in the old profession which never leaves a man. He read everything that came out, and with enjoyment. A story of my own he was good enough thus to appreciate :

“I want to tell you,” he wrote to his friend, “that I greatly admire the novel now running. It strikes me to be a really great novel, which is a very rare thing. There are bits about the heroine which show wholesale knowledge of the human heart, and the plot seems hitherto deeply

planned and well carried out. It is impossible for any writer who comes after you to escape some obligations to you, and this is shown in one of the characters. But I like the work altogether, and it is original. I am the more surprised at its merit, because I had read some other work by the same reputed writer and had not been much struck by it. It is a better work than 'Felix Holt.' I know what risk I run in printing these lines; but the motive may be understood. It served as a flattering encouragement; but it is really a proof of the hearty eagerness with which this interesting man followed the common course of the publications of the day; not accepting merely the official recognized productions, but examining for himself, on the chance of finding what would be entertaining and have merit. In a letter to myself, he explained that he had been "exceedingly struck by the depth of power in all the earlier portions; but with the later Numbers I am not quite so well pleased or satisfied; and I believe the reason to be, not in any fault of mere construction, but because towards the close the

antagonistic or disagreeable element overpowers the sympathetic or agreeable. I do not know whether you quite understand what I mean." I shall only say that the story was called "The Second Mrs. Tillotson," and return to Knebworth.

The numbers gathered there were extraordinary, and of all departments. There were actors, like Webster and Buckstone, dramatists, novelists, "press men," etc. A plain, white-haired looking man was the venerable Charles Knight, while near him was to be seen Peter Cunningham—two persons whom it was impossible not to regard with deep interest and respect, and to whom "Old London" owes so much. Inquiries being in a short time made for "Peter," it was found that he had disappeared; and I read the roguish delight of our chief as he expatiated on the characteristic cause of the absence. Presently we were in the quaint and antique gardens, where a band was performing, and where soon our host had organized quadrilles and waltzes, sultry as it was. And I recall my own *vis-à-vis* in the former of these measures—a pleasant Cabinet Minister,

who footed it merrily, with many a jest, though he has since become very serious, and cast off that "old man." The day sped on thus *al fresco*. In the afternoon we repaired to the great hall, where a banquet, or "collation," was set out. In due course our host made his speech, graceful and cultured, as everything that came from his hand was. Then rose the bright, keen, brilliant figure, as if on his main-deck in the breeze, and offering a curious contrast to the Moslem-like tranquillity of the person who preceded him; and with singular dramatic and incisive tones, he spoke:—

"Ladies and gentlemen, it was said by a very sagacious person, whose authority I am sure my friend of many years will not impugn, seeing that he was named Augustus Tomlinson, the kind friend and philosopher of Paul Clifford—it was said by that remarkable man, 'Life is short, and why should speeches be long?' An aphorism so sensible under all circumstances, and particularly in the circumstances in which we are placed, with this delicious weather and such charming gardens near us, I shall practically

adopt on the present occasion ; and the rather so because the speech of my friend was exhaustive of the subject, as his speeches always are, though not in the least exhaustive of his audience. . . .

“Now, I am sure I shall be giving utterance to the feelings of my brothers and sisters in literature in proposing ‘Health, long life, and prosperity to our distinguished host.’ Ladies and gentlemen, you know very well that when the health, life, and beauty now overflowing these halls shall have fled, crowds of people will come to see the place where he lived and wrote. Setting aside the orator and statesman—for happily we know no party here but this agreeable party—setting aside all this, you know very well that this is the home of a very great man whose connection with Hertfordshire every other county in England will envy for many long years to come. You know that when this hall is dullest and emptiest you can make it, when you please, brightest and fullest by peopling it with the creations of his brilliant fancy. Let us all wish together that they may be many more—for the more they are

the better it will be, and, as he always excels himself, the better they will be. I ask you to listen to their praise and not to mine, and to let them, not me, propose his health."

It is impossible to describe the effect of these well-chosen words, delivered with every grace that fitted the scene, the gala dresses, the sunlight through the stained glass, and the cheerful board. I know I found myself, with many others, shouting at its close with enraptured delight. The day stole by too fast, for now it was evening ; we had to depart. Our host seemed to retire and fade out, as it were ; and as I wandered from room to room I would come on him, seated at a little table, in his somewhat fantastic dress *à la* D'Orsay, looking at some mystic volume, or languidly showing it. However, at last we drove away in the slow-setting sunlight. Near the station a new inn or "public" had been opened, named, in compliment to the guest, "OUR MUTUAL FRIEND;" on approaching which, in our stately equipage, we noted that the green benches, set outside for the comfort of the traveller, were full

to overflowing. As we swept by, all rose, and, with uplifted goblets, gave stentorian cheers. The favourite twinkle of enjoyment came into his eyes at this compliment, and a mixed or compound expression of amusement, restraint, and gravity passed over his face. "My literary brethren," he said, "offering homage to genius." After all, who but must confess "he still has found his warmest welcome at an inn"! And so all had sensibly adjourned to the Mutual Friend. Somewhere about ten o'clock at night we were all at the rooms of "the office"—a convenient, pleasant *pic-d-à-terre* for such transitory passage—when, according to his hospitable thought, we must have a short, hurried but satisfactory supper before going down to "Gad's," some time about eleven o'clock. "Just a morsel," he said; which took the shape of a noble tongue from Fortnum's, and a lobster salad, and a bottle of the "sparkling." He himself used to invest such delicacies with an extra flavour and sparkle. A few phrases from him, and you thought of wassail and the feasting at Dingley Dell: though, apart from this, everything he set down

or ordered was really choice, and marked by his own good taste and judgment. If it was a cigar, it was out of a parcel the present of an American captain, or some one competent to buy. If it were cognac or whisky, it was from one best competent to know such things. And yet no one was more really moderate in such matters; his performance did not correspond to his anticipatory *gusto*. He liked talking in a cosy way of such things.

At last we got to Charing Cross Station, hence to Gravesend about midnight, where his Irish jaunting-car was waiting, which he drove himself; and so, in the midnight air, we rolled along these Kentish green lanes, and after a short, swift run, reached "home." The work of that day seems a dream; and dream it is in one sad sense. Though not so long since, how many figures are wanting to the group! Host, and the great guest; many, many of the "leaders of literature," real and sham, who assisted; John Forster, who was deputed to receive guests and organize the whole; Charles Knight; "Peter" Cunningham, who dis-



appeared ; Halliday, etc. The said houses, so sportively inaugurated, I believe never sheltered a tenant, and have since been sold to private persons.

His house was on the line between London and Paris, and he could be in France, a country of which he was very fond, almost in a couple of hours. The dreadful, well-remembered Staplehurst accident, which occurred on his return from one of these favourite expeditions, had, as is well known, a serious effect on his system ; but he had another narrow escape, some years later, which has never been noted. After giving his Readings in Belfast, he started for Dublin by the mid-day limited mail, the party consisting of himself, his agent, his sister-in-law, and myself. As we were walking up and down the platform, I remember the station-master coming to make a request on the part of a local functionary that he might be allowed to share the compartment, "for the pleasure of enjoying Mr. Dickens's society." This, however, was politely declined, simply from the awkwardness and constraint which such a companionship would involve. The train consisted but of three or four carriages,

with a *coupe'* next the engine which was kept for the great author and his party. It was somewhere beyond Portadown, I think, that there came a crash or bang on the top of the carriage, which was followed by a grinding of the wheels and violent exertion and excitement on the part of the engine-driver and his mates, who suddenly brought the train to a stop. Every one got out and gathered round the engine, when it appeared that the tire of the great driving-wheel had flown in huge fragments, one of which, a couple of feet long, had struck the top of our carriage, *en face*, just over the glass. A little lower, and it would have been in among us, and must certainly have struck dead a couple of the party. The prompt action of the driver had brought all to a halt before the train could get off the rails, though I think the engine did. It was a curious scene, at that lonely part of the road, the dozen or so passengers standing round the engine, wrecked, the broken fragments jammed into the works or scattered about. A guard went on behind with a flag, to stop an expected train coming in the other direction. We

waited nearly half an hour, when it arrived and drew up. The engine was taken off, and took us on. I have often thought since of the horrible and unusual form of death by a second "railway accident" from which he certainly had escaped.

On another occasion I found myself at Gad's Hill, with the late excellent, worthy George Moore—a simple, earnest man, whose simplicity was, I know, welcome to the host. I recollect telling this gentleman a piece of news about some friend in a distant part of the kingdom, which gave him an agreeable surprise, on which our host shook his head significantly. "There, again!" he said, "what I always say: the world is so much narrower and smaller than is believed." This was a favourite theory of his: that people were more nearly and curiously connected than appeared. He had many of these little theories, illustrated, not by any means solemnly, but with a sort of bright and smiling mystery, and, indeed, they added a charm to his conversation:—to wit, his account of "averages," such as that a particular number of people *must* be killed on the railways within the

year. Once he told me that I had been seen walking by the office, and that I had looked at him fixedly, walked on, and disappeared, at the time being at the other end of the kingdom. He was thus fond of the mysterious in a small way, and had generally a store of something curious in this direction.

The following are some extracts from his ever-pleasing letters:—

“W—— is ordered away for rest and change. The Paris paper is welcome, and ‘Theodore of Corsica’ shall receive unbounded hospitality in these halls. I am ready for him as soon as he likes. . . . Regarding the Readings, thus the case stands. I mean to take farewell of this great occupation in the ending winter and spring. I shall not fail to claim your promise to join the pilgrimage. Dolby begs me to tell you that he is full of joyful anticipations. He has been utterly hardened by his American bullying, and has none but private feelings left. Many thanks for your kind welcome home. Always cordially yours. . . .”

“I shall be delighted to see you at Gad’s Hill,

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and hope you will bring a bag with you." He then added that they "were but a small party," for one of the family had "been decoyed away to —— for the election week—in the Conservative interest! Think of my feelings as a Radical parent. *M——*" (the person in question) "is at this moment helping to receive (and deceive) the voters—which is very awful. . . . But in the week after this next we shall be in great croquet force, so I shall then hope to persuade you to come back for a few days, and we will try to make you some amends for a dull Sunday. Turn it over in your mind, and try to manage it. . . .

"I ought to have written to you days and days ago to thank you for your charming book; to tell you with what interest and pleasure I read it as soon as it came here, and to add that, honestly affected (far more so than your modesty will readily believe) by your intimate knowledge of those touches of mine concerning childhood, it has become a matter of real feeling with me, and I postponed its expression because I couldn't satisfactorily get it out of myself, and at last I came to the conclusion it must be left in. . . .

“‘Tom Butler’ is in print, and I like him very much. But I do not understand how long you propose to make him. How tall is he to grow? With how many parts is he to expand? Enlighten me, there’s a dear fellow, and I will presently respond. . . .

“I am glad you like the Children, and am particularly glad that you like the Pirate. I remember very well when I had a general idea of occupying that place in history—at the same age. But I loved more desperately than Boldheart. Enclosed is the American story.”

This was in reference to an audience that had been strangely and ignorantly cold :

“It was very considerate and thoughtful in you to write to me, and I have been much gratified by your note. It is extraordinarily difficult to understand (from the point of action) an audience that does not express itself, and I certainly mistook mine on Wednesday night. When the murder was done in London the people were frozen while it went on, but came to life when it was over, and rose to boiling point. I have now told D—

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that henceforth it must be set apart from all our other effects, and judged by no other 'Reading' standard. . . .

"Meantime—and till you come here for a few days—please consider that the dreadful epithet and description are not withdrawn, but *cleave* to you. . . . I hope you haven't forgotten what the Honourable Charles Townshend vowed—'She was beautiful.'

"I hope that —— has wrought miracles in the way of diabolically direct and persistent decision on the part of an eminent literary personage. It will be the crowning triumph and glory of the great institution.

"As to wills and will-making, I think the —— case altogether too grimly dismal and too recent for revival with the B—— family. I will have nothing to do in possession, remainder, or expectancy."

One of the pleasantest of his suggestions was a proposal to go with him on one of his reading tours. I was only able to carry out this plan partially, as other matters interrupted the plan,

but I know how much I lost. I hear him now expatiating, laying out the attractions and enjoyments, as though such seductions were not needed. He spoke of a saloon-carriage which had been promised him to make the journey from London to Edinburgh—which would be victualled with baskets of dainties *à la* Fortnum and Mason. Arrived at Edinburgh, there were introductions and friends and sights *galore* held out. This part of the programme had to be set aside, as far as I was concerned, by some business matters, but I was enabled to go with him in another direction, and a most enjoyable time it was. There was with us the energetic and useful Dolby, ever on the *qui vive* where business was concerned. Our destination was a great northern manufacturing town. The incidents, apart from the interest of his companionship, were most novel and entertaining, and reminded one of his own stories. The curiosity at the hotel ; the awkward attempts at accidental meeting on the stairs and lobby with a view of having a good look ; the general stare from the less delicate-minded ; the little attentions



and offerings going on, incessantly imparted something dramatic.

It must, however, have been a weary business, tedious and monotonous for such a man; yet the most delightful thing to note was that he was ever buoyant, full of spirits and animation. He never flagged. Few could conceive what a delightful and dramatic story-teller he was, calling up a situation before you by a few touches of a high dramatic kind—the eyes twinkling and sparkling; the cheeks, the mouth, wreathed over and over again in jocund smiles. Nor was he a mimic in the common sense, but carried away by a sort of intense expression which lighted all up. It was this which gave such a dramatic force to any story that he told. In the railway I recall his filling more than an hour with some sketches of “Old Rogers,” the poet, and of his mode of telling a story. Those who attended the Readings will recall Justice Stareleigh: the strangely obtuse and owl-like expression, and the slow, husky croak with which the words were projected. This was borrowed from the “Poet of Memory,” and many

were the stories he told in his manner. The old man would relate his cut-and-dried "tales," always in the same fashion, and "go on," like a wheezy musical-box, on the smallest invitation. Sometimes he would go and dine with him, and he described the scene as piteously grotesque, a faithful man-servant cheerily suggesting the old stories which they knew by heart. Thus: "Tell Mr. Dickens, sir, the story of the Honourable Charles Townshend and the beautiful Miss Curzon." The old poet would start in a slow, almost Gregorian tone, and in curious old-fashioned phrase: "The Hon—our—able Charles Townshend" (this name will serve as well as another)—"became enamoured of Miss Curzon. She was beeyewtiful. He beribed her maid to conceal him in her checamber, and when she arrived to dress for a ball, emerged from his hiding-place. She looked at him fixedly, then said, 'Why don't you begin?' *She took him for the 'air-dresser.*" This, in this place, has not much effect, but with the face that was supplied, twisted so strangely, and the mournful unchanging voice, it became a histrionic feat of high order.

One day, from breakfast until almost past the afternoon, was spent at the table, when he was in extraordinary spirits and full of enjoyment, and told stories and drew fanciful sketches of droll, far-fetched situations, which he played with and touched and heightened in the most farcical style.

In nothing was he more delightful, or "in his element," as it is called, than in talking of all matters connected with the stage. He delighted in the very scent of the place, and welcomed any bits of news or gossip connected with it. It was enjoyable to watch his keen interest even in the obscurest histrionic elements. On this little expedition, as there was a free evening, it was understood, almost as of course, that we should visit the little local theatre, where he sat out very patiently some rather crude and ancient melodrama. Next morning at breakfast he was in possession of all local histrionic information—how the manager's wife engrossed all the leading characters for herself, and would let no one have any of the "fat," which was true almost literally ;

the manager a patient being. These things were pleasantly retailed and set off in his own lively way over the tea and coffee—and these things to hear one did seriously incline—for those who like the stage can never dismiss this sort of interest and reverence, and the sight of the meanest country theatre always raises curiosity and respect. In this view, he enjoyed allusions and stories connected with the melodramas of old times, and had some good ones to relate: as of the actor of Rochester Theatre, who forgot his part and could not attract or hear the prompter. At last, in desperation, he said to his comrade with deep “no-meaning,” “*I will return anon!*” and then went off to consult his book. Another of his stories was connected with the “Castle Spectre,” where an actor had taken the part of the imprisoned Earl on an emergency. He was told to say anything expressive of his condition and sufferings—fifteen years’ imprisonment, etc. “For fifteen years have I been imprisoned here” (here a stop, with hoarse prompting, “Say you were starved!”), “and during *the whole of that period*

*not a morsel of food has passed my lips!*" I recall his delight when "The Miller and his Men" was announced at Drury Lane. We were to have a regular night's enjoyment of this old fossil, the first words of which he used to quote, "more sacks for the mill!" A box was secured, and we went; but here again there was disappointment. It was not absurd, as we had hoped; it was simply tedious—there was nothing to laugh at. We came away looking a little ruefully at each other, and a more dramatically expressive face than his it would be hard to conceive, especially for those neutral or compounded expressions, half sly, half serious. "A merrier man within the limits of becoming mirth," etc.

One day he was not very well, and said he would lie on his sofa at the hotel and nurse himself. As a great treat, he had sent for a copy of "The Bride of Lammermoor," a work, he said, he had not read for a vast number of years, and of which he had almost forgotten the details. It would be a rare treat, therefore. It was amazing to find at the close of that long day how he had

been *désillusionné*, and it was pleasant and instructive to hear his criticism. The strength of the story was there : but, he said, the clumsy shifts and inartistic treatment of the machinery ! Many have felt the same feeling on returning to some old favourite. And there can be no doubt that much of the Waverley Novels would fall under the slang definition of “padding.” A favourite book of his, and one which he always delighted in, was “Tom Cringle’s Log,” and I think, too, “Two Years before the Mast”—both these books having the true briny element. Another work he relished was “Little Peddington,” whose author he knew well, and assisted charitably. There is a breath of humour akin to that in “Pickwick.” “Little Peddington” is a work too good and fine in its humour for the present generation, and indeed worthy of the “old masters.” It was spoiled by clumsy additions and unnecessary episodes dragged in anyhow and everyhow ; but the humours are after the best old style. I always, however, set the author down as belonging to an era at the beginning of the century ; and, indeed, the fact that

Liston "created" Paul Pry shows that he was remote enough. Once, talking in a railway carriage on this subject, he joined in the praises of this novel, saying that he was always particularly delighted with the parody of "The Guide-Book"—amazing me by telling me he had just been to see the author. It was hard to believe that he was actually alive, though in a sadly decayed state of body, mind, and condition. He then, with that singular power which he possessed, brought him before me, as it were, by a few touches. This, however, was not a mimicry—it was an intellectual operation; he gave the air and tone of the person. He went to see him regularly and aided him.

Looking back to the incidents of my knowledge of him, there is nothing, as I have so often said, but what is pleasant and agreeable to think of. He was ever ready, not so much with a jest or joke, as with a sympathetic good humour so much more welcome. On a certain occasion going abroad, we had found cash flying with alarming rapidity, and from Folkestone I had written to him to ask him to come to my aid with whatever was

standing to my credit in his books. From him came at once :

“ I enclose a cheque. ‘ The little victims play ’—with ready money—always under those circumstances, I am told! Ever your Venerable Sage,

“ C. D.”

I remember, too, a great and important event on the commencement of housekeeping—his coming with his sister-in-law to dine, to a special dinner of inauguration : a nervous business. He was never so cheerful and good humoured at this experiment ; and there were many things about it that must have suggested David Copperfield’s attempt. As when, in the middle of the banquet, a splashing sound seemed to come from the hall, or rather from the roof down to the hall. The “ new servant ” had forgotten to turn off the water-cock at the top of the house, and the stream, soon overcharging and overflowing the tank, made its way on to the landing, and thence gushing downwards as a shower-bath. The distress caused by this *con-  
trctemps* may be conceived, as it was assumed that



“all the pipes had burst !” But he soon made all pleasant. He entered into all these little incidents, and long since I had found that what pleased myself pleased him. I can safely say that no one of all my acquaintance so heartily enjoyed a story or adventure. So with stories about himself. “Concerning the Green Covers, I find their leaves to be budding on unquestionable newspaper authority ; but, upon my soul, I have no other knowledge of their being in embryo. I cannot find that there is any one in Rochester (a sleepy old city) who has anything to tell about Garrick, except what is not true. His brother the wine merchant would be more in Rochester way, I think.” I recollect one story he was genuinely delighted with—the debate over the inscription for a monument to a Dublin physician, to be erected in a cemetery, and some one suggesting that one in St. Paul’s to Wren : “ *Si monumentum quæris, circumspice !* ”

I have now on my shelves a complete set of his works, in, I think, thirty volumes, which came to me in a curious and pleasant way. I had pre-

pared a series of papers on some popular subject, the execution of which was not what he intended, though they were duly printed and filled a large space. In the next settlement a very handsome sum was set down for this, which I firmly declined to accept. When this resolution was not to be shaken, his delicate mind hit on what he knew would be most acceptable. I have also a fine copy of his "Copperfield," bound according to his directions in mazarine blue. Finally, on the desk before me is his well-worn paper-knife, sprinkled with blue ink, and his paper-weight—some of those articles which he directed by his will to be distributed among a few friends.

During the last season of his life, as it was to prove, he had taken a house in town, at the Marble Arch,—a house which belonged to Mr. Milner Gibson. Here he found opportunity to be most hospitable, as he ever was, and gave dinner-parties and a concert. At one of those dinner-parties I found myself next to Sir Edwin Landseer, then, like his host, almost close on his term. The house had been, it is well known, associated with Mr. Home's

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feats, and an amusing discussion arose between the host and the painter, who had witnessed some of them. Nay, it was affirmed that on the drawing-room ceiling there was still to be seen the medium's signature in pencil, written while he was aloft floating in the air. Sir Edwin was an agreeable neighbour. Not very long before, he had gone to an artist, of whom I knew something, and who also painted animals. Noticing the lumps of paint—"scrapings" of the palette—on a piece of board, he took it up, and carelessly, but with art, worked all into a spirited dog's head.

But the concert was a more ambitious effort, and a very interesting thing indeed it was, to see his rooms filled with a mixture of the town elements—artistic, literary, and fashionable. His friend Joachim came to play for him, with also various singers of eminence, gratified to give him that proof of their regard. There were Santley, Hallé, Cummings, and the Glee Union. So the music was admirable. He himself was in good spirits, though not looking well; but was genial, doing his host-duties everywhere with animation, taking

ladies up and down to supper. I am looking now at a little cosaque, which I saw him merrily "exploding" at the supper-table, holding it out to a lady, who carefully treasured it. Almost that day two months he was gone for ever.

Indeed, at this time he knew not what was on him. And yet, as was indeed to be expected with a man of his position, he was pursued with invitations to dinners and parties.

"I have delayed," he wrote, two days after his own party, "answering your kind note on the chance of discovering some loophole in my engagements for to-night. But I am sorry to say that I have got into a complicated state of engagements. This almost always happens in the last month of my term or stay in town, but this year it is worse than ever. Pray accept a dismal absentee's best wishes for a great success to-night, and give — my kindest regards. To crown my distresses, I write with a steel pen (which I can never use), closely hemmed in on each side" (he was writing from a club) "by a talkative person of disagreeable opinions."

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Every letter he thus contrived to make pleasant by some little stroke or picture in his own manner. Within a few days, he had written at his favourite country place :

“ I have been obliged to fly for a time from the dinings and other engagements of this London season, and to take refuge here to get myself into my usual gymnastic condition, where I am looking forward to the pleasure of welcoming you and — to this pretty country. I have been subject for a few years past to a neuralgic attack in the foot, originating in overwalking in deep snow, and revived by a hard winter in America. For the last three weeks it has made me dead-lame, and it now obliges me to beg absolution from all the social engagements I had made. Deprivation of my usual walks is a very serious matter to me, as I cannot work unless I have my constant exercise. Your kind note, therefore, finds me helpless and moody, but virtuously virtuous. I shall hope to be vicious again soon, and to report myself to you as a good example of dissipation and free living, until when and always, yours,” etc.

On the 2nd of June, just before this letter was written, Mr. Freake's pretty theatre in Cromwell Road was filled to overflowing by a large and fashionable company, to witness a dramatic performance in which his daughter, Miss Dickens, and Mrs. Charles Collins took part. The pieces were got up with extraordinary pains—the first being a French one, "The Prima Donna," with a blind girl as heroine. The scenery was arranged and designed by Mr. Millais.

## CROMWELL HOUSE.

*Thursday, June 2, 1870.*

## "A HAPPY PAIR."

## CHARACTERS.

Mr. Honeyton	...	...	MR. AUGUSTUS SPALDING.
Mrs. Honeyton	...	...	MISS HARRIET YOUNG.

## "PRIMA DONNA."

## CHARACTERS.

Dr. Holbein	...	...	MR. HASTINGS HUGHES.
Eric	...	...	MR. CRAWFORD GROVE.
Rouble	...	...	MR. HERMAN MERIVALE.
Stella	...	...	... MISS DICKENS.
Alice	...	...	MRS. CHARLES COLLINS.

## "LE MYOSOTIS."

*Bouffonnerie.*

Corbillon (Empailleur)	...	...	MR. HAROLD POWER.
Schuitzberg (Violoncelliste)	...	...	MR. ALFRED THOMPSON.

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The acting of the two ladies was exceedingly touching and clever—as was indeed to be expected, with so skilled and painstaking an instructor, who had taken enormous pains. He was behind the scenes the whole time, but no one saw him; and he got home as speedily as he could, and away to the country to the soft restoring breezes of his loved Kentish home. That night of the play was Thursday. On the following Thursday he was seized with the last fatal attack.

Mr. Forster speaks of “that blithe face”—a happy word. “‘It is almost thirty years,’ Mr. Carlyle wrote, ‘since my acquaintance with him began; and on my side, I may say, every new meeting ripened it into more and more clear discernment of his rare and great worth as a brother man: a most cordial, sincere, clear-sighted, quietly decisive, just and loving man: till at length he had grown to such a recognition with me as I have rarely had for any man of my time. This I can tell you three, for it is true and will be welcome to you: to others less concerned I had as soon *not* speak on such a subject.’ ‘I

am profoundly sorry for *you*,' Mr. Carlyle at the same time wrote to me; 'and indeed for myself and for us all. It is an event world-wide; a *unique* of talents suddenly extinct; and has "eclipsed," we too may say, "the harmless gaiety of nations." No death since 1866 has fallen on me with such a stroke. No literary man's hitherto ever did. *The good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever-friendly, noble Dickens,—every inch of him an Honest Man.*'" Those five words, and that last sentence, always seem the happiest and most *recalling* description of him that has been penned.

The last time I saw him was some three or four weeks before his death, at the Wellington Street office. I see now the spare, almost feminine shoulders (this always recurred to me), in which there was much expression—the line was so delicate and nervous. But he was a little depressed. I had called about some amateur plays to which I asked him to come, and he spoke of the innumerable invitations which were being showered on him. That was the last glimpse of my true and genial friend.



But I shall not forget his kindly hearty look, as he seemed to say, "This does not apply to you." He had to dine somewhere; "but I'll come in to you afterwards if I can." He spoke then cheerfully of various things, and of his friend Regnier the actor—how he had seen him play in the "Vieux Garçon:" but how he had got too old for the stage; "in fact," he added, with his old merry twinkle, "he is a *vieux garçon* himself!" The last thing was to take me into another room, to show me one of the huge yellow placards—announcing one of my new stories—hung up against the wall, which he thought would please me.

On June 14, 1870, one of the most fiercely hot days of that summer, I walked into the cool and shaded aisles of Westminster. On that morning had been his funeral, and many were going in, too, for the same purpose. At the end of the transept some forms covered with a black drapery had been brought together to make a fence round the opening in the pavement. Down below, and not very far down, lay the oak coffin—handsome, solid, and panelled; while in bright bold

characters the familiar cheery name "CHARLES DICKENS" looked up with a sort of hint of the bright face below. There was a wreath of white roses at his feet, ferns at his head, rows of white and red roses down the side. It was a pleasing and gracious thing to leave all this visible, which, I believe, was done for some days.

Illustration is one of the most flattering forms of homage. The public must have its favourite in convenient shape to frame. One would have thought, in a photographic age, that this taste could be more than satisfied; but the woodcut and lithograph are called even more abundantly in aid.

To prove what may be done in a small way, so as to form an always agreeable souvenir of a person we liked, I will show here what I have done with the rather slender materials that I possess connected with the memory of Mr. Dickens. These I arranged, not very scientifically, in a large volume; and as I turn them over, they are truly suggestive. For there are some forty letters, most

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interesting and confidential. There are playbills, and a vast number of engravings, sketches, and innumerable other little souvenirs. Indeed a very interesting essay might be written on his various portraits. In his youth he seems to have had a bright, brilliant face, full of spirit and intelligence, set off by the abundance of hair and the picturesque stock then in fashion, and which threw out a face effectively. I have got together as many of these records of him, at different periods of his life, as I could discover. The first is a very brilliant head by Lane, in 1838, done with a free black brilliant touch: a fine forehead, round speaking eyes, out of which the hair is with difficulty kept. The lips seem thick. Something like this is the one given in Horne's book. Then comes the profile sketch by D'Orsay, showing an almost feminine outline, and dated 1841. Next come those of Maclise, who sketched him often. The most charming and elegant of these is a little airy profile placed by Mr. Forster at the head of his sonnet to his friend at the beginning of the "Life of Goldsmith," and which is also given in a trio

of profiles—himself, his wife, and sister-in-law—in the “Life.” There is here a refined boyish delicacy of outline that is charming. Then there is the well-known Maclise portrait—often engraved—with the stock and pin; but here the face has got more firm and solid. Of this I have a fine proof, it being re-engraved in the boldest style by Graves. Next there comes a drawing, one by Lehmann, done at a time when the author had begun to let his beard and moustache grow, which considerably altered his look. This drawing has been photographed and published in various sizes in Germany. Next there is one of the same character and effect, though rather heavy, by the once fashionable and now forgotten Baugniet, who lithographed everybody that was worth lithographing. Then there is the charming characteristic scene in Maclise’s sketch of his reading his work to his friends, admirable for the vividness of the drawings of Forster, Carlyle, and others; while with sly compliment he sets a faint halo round the reader’s head. Now comes Leslie’s capital and splendid theatrical picture of Bobadil in costume, in which

the eyes speak and the likeness is perfect. There is the large engraving after Frith's portrait, which did not give satisfaction, but always seemed to me to convey his quick, keen, piercing gaze admirably. Ary Scheffer's portrait of him may be seen at the National Portrait Gallery; but there is a gentle feebleness about it, a mediæval spiritualness which the artist imparted. It is more like the pictures of Hawthorne, and lacks spirit; in fact, it is unrecognizable, at first. These are the more official portraits. It is something to have been painted by Ary Scheffer, Leslie, Maclise, and Frith! Some time ago, a drawing by Cruikshank of him was bought for twenty or thirty pounds, and a clever etching of it published by Mr. Kerslake, who had for sale more curious things—"seven original portraits, in pencil, by George Cruikshank, one full length, five heads, and a slight preliminary sketch (from the artist's private collection)." The price asked was ten guineas—not by any means excessive. The date was about 1837, when both belonged to a club where his sketches were said to have been executed. Then there is

a curious etching of him by "Phiz," with an extravagant length of limb and rather insipid expression, a Punch and Judy in the background. Most of the later engravings have been done from photographs. He always said himself that what he thought the best likeness was one of these gigantic heads on tiny legs, a form once in high favour, the original, by "Sem," which I saw in a dealer's shop. I have also two French coloured pictures of the same kind by "Gill." A pleasing picture is the photo-lithograph published in *Life*, "Charles Dickens reading to his Daughters at Gad's Hill," which recalls him very forcibly.

But "Dickens" has now become quite a department for collectors and booksellers: witness the following list of "curios," and the prices demanded:—

"'A Christmas Carol,' 'The Chimes,' 'The Poor Traveller,' Boots at the Holly Tree Inn, and Mrs. Gamp. In 1 vol., 12mo, stamped binding. £2 2s. 1858. Being the versions arranged by the author for his own Readings. This was his own set, and some of the pages have excisions,

underlines, and other marks denoting emphasis in reading, while the fly-leaf bears his autograph, 'Charles Dickens, at Plymouth, Tuesday, Seventh January, 1862.' The binding has flaps for protecting the book while in use.

"A collection of six pencil drawings by George Cruikshank, being original designs for plates in the first edition of 'Sketches by Boz,' signed by the artist, framed and glazed. £21. 1836-37. Comprising, among others, 'May Day in the Evening,' 'Horatio Sparkins,' 'The Boarding House,' 'The Great Winglebury Duel,' 'The Bloomsbury Christening.' Being the same size as the plates, they are admirably adapted for insertion in the book, thus making a copy of high interest.

"Address on the issuing of a new edition of his works, the original manuscript in Charles Dickens's autograph, signed, 3 pages, 4to, with the same printed. £6 6s. Accompanying the manuscript are two portraits of Dickens and a plate of his grave.

"Dickens's Christmas Books, viz. 'Christmas

Carol,' 1845; 'The Chimes,' a goblin story, 1845; 'Cricket on the Hearth,' a fairy tale of home, 1846; 'Battle of Life,' a love story, 1846; 'Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain,' 1848. Together 5 vols., 12mo, all first editions, fine set in the original red cloth, gilt edges. £10 10s. 1843-48. Perhaps the most interesting set ever offered for sale. At the last page of 'A Christmas Carol,' the following, on a slip of paper, is inserted, "And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us every one!" Charles Dickens, Twenty-ninth May, 1846.' The 'Cricket on the Hearth' has a playbill of the first performance at York of the drama founded upon it, with an elaborate analysis of the piece, and extracts from the book, April 15, 1846. The 'Battle of Life' contains an autograph letter signed by Dickens, dated from Rosemont, Lausanne, Switzerland, August 31, 1846, addressed, per favour of John Forster, Esq., to Robert Keeley, Esq., respecting the dramatization by him of the book in time to act on the night of its publication. It contains also the playbill of its production as a Christmas piece by



Keeley at the Lyceum Theatre, as foreshadowed in Dickens's letter, and announced as being adapted, by the express permission of the author, from the proof-sheets, by Albert Smith. It is the more interesting being dated from Switzerland, in that the dedication reads: 'This Christmas Book is cordially inscribed to my English friends in Switzerland.'

"'Oliver Twist.'—A collection of four original drawings by George Cruikshank, illustrating this work; one a finished design in sepia, the others in pencil, one signed, and all framed and mounted. £10 10s. 1838. Comprising—1. 'The Evidence destroyed' (vol. iii. page 20); 2. 'Monks and the Jew' (vol. ii. page 260), varying from the finished engraving considerably; 3. 'Oliver escapes being bound Apprentice to the Sweep' (vol. i. page 48), comprising two sketches for the plate, each varying from the other and from the engraving; 4. A series of sketches, on one sheet, signed, and bearing in the artist's autograph the following:—'Sketches for "Oliver Twist." Suggestions to Mr. C. Dickens, the writer.' It was upon this dispute

that Dickens and Cruikshank parted company, and it will be remembered that in 1872 the latter issued a very acrid pamphlet, entitled 'Artist and Author,' dealing with the question of the origin of this and other books illustrated by him.

"'Pickwick Papers.' With fine original impressions of the forty-three plates by Seymour and 'Phiz.' First edition, 8vo, uncut copy in the original parts, with all the green paper wrappers. £8 8s. 1843. Containing the characteristic address issued with Part 10, which is often wanting.

"Playbill of an amateur performance at Knebworth, on November 18, 1850, of Ben Jonson's 'Every Man in his Humour,' and Inchbald's farce 'Animal Magnetism.' 18s. 1850. Dickens playing Captain Bobadil and the Doctor, other parts being taken by Sir Henry Hawkins, Mark Lemon, John Forster, Douglas Jerrold, John Leech, Frederick Dickens, Miss Hogarth, and Mrs. Mark Lemon, 'who has most kindly consented to act, in lieu of Mrs. Charles Dickens, disabled by an accident.' Accompanying the playbill is a four-page 'Epilogue, written for the occasion, by Mr. Delmé Radcliffe.'

“Playbill of an amateur performance of the Guild of Literature and Art, at the Hanover Square Rooms, on June 18, 1851. The play, Lytton’s ‘Not so Bad as We seem,’ and a Farce, by Charles Dickens and Mark Lemon, entitled ‘Mr. Nightingale’s Diary;’ the whole produced under the direction of Mr. Charles Dickens. 10s. 6d. 1851. Among the performers were Dickens, John Forster, Douglas Jerrold, Mark Lemon, R. H. Horne, Wilkie Collins, John Tenniel, Dr. Westland Marston, etc.

“Playbill of an amateur performance of the Guild of Literature and Art, before the Queen and Prince Albert, at Devonshire House, Piccadilly, on May 16, 1851. The play, Lytton’s ‘Not so Bad as We seem,’ for the first time; the whole produced under the direction of Mr. Charles Dickens. 15s. 1851. With the same cast as at the Hanover Square Rooms, Dickens playing the part of Lord Wilmot. The Duke of Devonshire’s private band performed an overture composed for the occasion.

“‘Sketches by Boz.’ First octavo edition, extra

copy, containing a duplicate coloured set of the forty plates by George Cruikshank. 8vo, fine copy in polished calf, super extra, gilt edges. £10 10s. 1839. Twelve of the designs are entirely new, not having appeared in the first and smaller edition, while all the plates are engraved in a larger and better style. There is no record of any copy having been sold with two sets of plates—plain and coloured.

“‘Sunday under Three Heads,’ As it is, As Sabbath Bills would make it, and As it might be made, by Timothy Sparks. With six illustrations by ‘Phiz,’ first edition, 12mo, fine copy in the original wrapper, uncut (presentation copy), very rare. £12 12s.”

Returning now to my volume, I find proof-sheets of my own, corrected by him in his neat hand and familiar blue ink. Here are tickets and programmes for the Readings in red ink; original wrappers of the “Pickwick” and “Nickleby” numbers, which have an odd air; and, which is curious enough, the February number, 1834, of the *Monthly Magazine*, with its head of Milton, the

fifth article in which is "Horatio Sparkins," which was his second contribution to literature—and a spirited and amusing one it is. Here also is a memorandum written after dinner at a friend's house: "You go by the North Kent Railway, by the train nearest to twelve o'clock, and take tickets for Higham station;" and here is the ticket itself, preserved I know not how. Then there are pictures of all his various residences: Tavistock House, Gad's Hill, Doughty Street, at the Marble Arch, Broadstairs, and many others. Here is the Raven; bills of fare; report of the dinner given to him on going to America; the songs, toasts, etc., and card that marked one's place; a thick folio pamphlet, the auctioneer's sale catalogue of Gad's Hill; the catalogue of his library, of the sale at Christie's, and pictures of scenes from his plays; and, more interesting still, some bills of those early dramas written when a young man. Pictures of him giving his Readings, and, saddest of all, the last procession to Westminster Abbey.

But one of the most interesting *souvenirs* is an almost complete "file," if it may be so called, of a

little journal which one of his younger children, now a clever and prospering barrister, conducted and published. A friend had made him a present of a boy's printing press, and his father was glad to encourage this dawning literary taste. The little enterprise was maintained for a very long time, and was a pleasant official record for acquaintances of what went on at Gad's Hill. A single specimen will not be an undue violation of confidence.

# THE GAD'S HILL GAZETTE

August 5th 1865

Price 2d

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The management of the railway companies seems still to be in the same blundering & negligent state as it has been for some time, and more especially that of the Great Northern. As an instance of this, we annex the following. On Saturday evening, Chas Dickens Esqre, accompanied by the rest of the residents & visitors at Gad's Hill (who had been to Knebworth for the day)\* were returning to London, when their journey was delayed by some wandering luggage trains, causing some danger & much inconvenience.

\* For their visit to Knebworth see next page

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## Arrivals & Departures

P Fitzgerald Esqre left on Tuesday 1st. The visitors and residents of Gad's Hill, comprising P Fitzgerald Esqre, Mr & Mrs C Collins, C Dickens Esqre, Miss Dickens, and Miss Hogarth left on Saturday and returned very early next morning (1 o' clock a.m). C Dickens junr Esqre arrived on Friday and left on the next day.

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### Miscellaneous

The Gad's Hill party went to Knebworth on Saturday morning to view the new houses, built by the society of the Guild, Literature, & Art.

A very handsome lunch was given by Sir E B Lytton Bart, in the course of which he, and C Dickens Esqre delivered two brilliant speeches. Dancing then followed, and the Gad's Hill party, who had spent a very pleasant day returned late at night.

Since we published our list, we are proud to annex the names of two new subscribers to it viz Mrs Stunt and A Halliday Esqre.

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of letters on business from The Dean of Bristol, Miss Ely, C Kent Esqre, A Halliday Esqre, Miss Boyle and W H Humphery Esqre M P.

We are glad to inform our readers that Linda is much better.

The school children were to have had their annual treat on Tuesday last; but owing to the inclemency of the weather, it was postponed till next week.

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 Cricket

## Upper v Lower Higham

This match was played on Friday July 28th and resulted in favour of the latter by 6 wickets.

In the first innings of both sides nobody distinguished himself except S Ford, who played very well. In the second innings, the Upper made a better stand, Messrs Gouge and Hindle playing best. Annexed is the score.

## Upper

1st Innings		2nd Innings	
Blackman	bd Barnes	0	bd Barnes 4
Mr H Dickens	bd Lewis	3	bd Lewis 1
Whiting	bd Barnes	0	bd Lewis 3
Gouge	bd Barnes	5	bd Darkey 19
Mr Hindle	ct & bd Barnes	0	bd Darkey 11
Mr C D junr	bd Lewis	0	bd Barnes 0
Russell	ct & bd Lewis	4	ct Barnes 0
Mr E Dickens	ct & bd Lewis	1	bd Darkey 1
Ring	bd Barnes	2	bd Darkey 0
Brooker	bd Barnes	1	bd Barnes 0
Marsh	Not out	1	Not out 0
		Extras 11	Extras 21
		Total—28—	Total—60

Grand Total—88—

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## Lower

	1st Innings	2nd Innings
Lewis ct & bd Hindle	4	Run out 2
Ford bd Hindle	9	ct & bd Gouge 3
Barnes bd Hindle	9	Not out 28
Batchelor	Run out	0 st H Dickens 1
Wright bd Gouge	0	bd Hindle 2
Mr Stunt junr ct E D	0	Not out 3
Stringer st Hindle	1	
Read	Not out	0
Darkey st Russell	0	
Mr H Cobb ct C Dickens	0	
Collier ct C Dickens junr	0	
	Extras 20	Extras 7
	Total — 43 —	Total — 46
	Grand Total — 89 —	

## LATEST INTELLIGENCE.

Miss Dickens and Mrs Collins went to London, this morning (Friday) and are to return this evening, accompanied by M Stone Esqre. Ch Dickens Esqre left on Wednesday.

In Page 2, there is a missprint. Instead of The Guild, Literature & Art, read — The Guild 'OF' &c.

H Dickens is the present champion at billiards.

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Some of the other members had a greater and more "grown up" interest, there being grotesque controversies carried on between the editor's father, who delighted in such an occasion, and some friend, such as the late (alas! this is a word I find myself using very often) Mr. Chorley. This gentleman wrote as to some coined grievance—it may have been real—of obstruction in the grounds, I think, over which he had fallen. Our host replied in his most delightful strain. Here, when unofficial, he was ever at his best.

## CHAPTER V.

## LITERARY FRIENDS: FORSTER—CARLYLE.

DURING the last dozen years, it is wonderful what a mortality there has been among men of mark in art and letters: Dickens, Lytton, Maccready, Landseer, Mark Lemon, Leech, Wills, Thornbury, Tom Taylor, Landor, Harness, Peter Cunningham, Carlyle, Chorley, Procter, and more having passed away. One of the most remarkable figures in his circle was JOHN FORSTER, who seems to offer one of the most characteristic and telling specimens of a successful literary career, achieved by honest work and force of character. No one fought his way so resolutely from the days when he came up to town—like Johnson, determined to succeed—to learn in the lines of his own sonnet to his friend Dickens, that :

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“Genius and its rewards are briefly told—  
A liberal nature and a niggard doom.”

All his friends knew that story of his intrepid, steadily forward course, his determination to get on—not to be denied, as may be seen in that remarkable head, full of character and purpose. He always seemed to be the exemplar of the true literary man — no mere *writer*, like so many, able to write and write at any notice, and about everything or anything. He was a diligent student, and laboured hard to cultivate his talent. The most gratifying thing in his course was to note his work: conscientious throughout, in everything he did his best, looking on “*giving anything to the press*” as a sort of solemn, responsible thing, not to be lightly attempted. His “Life of Goldsmith” and his “Life of Dickens” are most *artistic* specimens of the craft. They are written with a “style,” the sentences are varied and constructed for effect, and the facts are admirably selected. The abundance of letters used would have been treated by an ordinary writer in the ordinary way—inserted wholesale, all being pre-

sumed to be of equal value. But he has doubled, by the selection of passages chosen with cultivated tact and interwoven with the text. This gift is gained only by long experience and longer study. A more entertaining book than the "Life of Dickens" was never written; even the type, paper, and size are exceptional. It forms one of the handsomest works issued in our time. There was, indeed, a complaint that, in the first two volumes, he had made himself too prominent; and I have always fancied that, in the third, he yielded somewhat to this view, and with a loss of effect. On the contrary, the charm of the first volume seemed to be in this constant revelation to a single mind, and the confidential relations between the two showed us Dickens's real character far better than any more conventional communications. His hopes and fears were thus shown as they rose and fell all through his life; and the study of two minds thus operating on each other was really interesting, and brought out character effectively. His "Goldsmith," in its last finally revised shape, is a truly wonderful work, for the amount of in-

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formation it contains and the vast amount of interesting facts given in the notes and text ; all, too, set out in an agreeable style, marked by constant displays of shrewd observation, judgment, and valuable criticism. Any one about to take on himself the duty of writing a memoir may find himself full of reasonable doubts after reading this work, and he will at least learn here the art of judging facts or drawing conclusions from them. His other books—those dealing with the Cromwellian times, the “Life of Landor,” etc.—are less attractive, as the subjects are somewhat dry ; but they involved enormous labour, research, and expense. Witness the “Life of Sir John Elliot,” based on diaries in a crabbed old English hand, which had to be deciphered and written out. All his books, too, were models of scientific and logical arrangement. He was fond of that admirable plan of giving at the beginning of his book an abstract of each chapter in due order, also of giving side-notes for each paragraph, besides the fullest possible index at the close. These things are easy to do ; but to do well, so that the abstract

shall merely describe the sense, requires time, thought, and judgment, as well as care, pains, and labour.

No man had such enjoyment in society and in gathering his friends about him ; and, when in good spirits, he had a hearty, vigorous humour that was enlivening. He was truly hospitable. At his fine mansion, Palace-Gate House, at Kensington, built by himself, stored with a well-chosen and interesting collection of modern pictures, it was pleasant to be welcomed by him in his spacious and handsome library. The catalogue of his collection, just completed at his death, filled a closely printed octavo. Here were rare manuscripts—volumes that had belonged to great men—engravings, water-colours, sketches of friends by Maclise and other painters. Hither he would bid his friends and entertain them right hospitably, and on such nights would forget his troubling cough, which harassed him all night long. What pleasant meetings were these ! Here we would meet Charles Reade, Robert Browning, Mr. Robert Lytton, the genial, cultivated Elwyn, and, above



all, on a rare day, THOMAS CARLYLE. This was a privilege which, as he grew old, was accorded to but few, and I recall certain festal days when it was a sacred custom that the sage of Chelsea should come to dine. Most pleasant were those nights, and delightful to hear his placid, grim comments; while our "dear Fooster," as he became in that dialect, listened with delight and artfully encouraged. I see him now by the fireside puffing his long pipe, uttering his dry humorous sayings, and hear his quaint phrases and melodious *burr*. Sometimes he rose to vehemence.

He was scarcely ever induced to dine out save at one or two houses, and then on a very rare occasion. I am speaking of a time about six or seven years ago. The few that were invited had a rare treat; for the occasion came but once or twice in the year, notably on a Christmas Day, when he went to his old friend's. It was a privilege to be asked to meet him. On this high solemnity a servant was despatched to purchase and select with care a yard-long "churchwarden," with a screw of the seer's favourite

tobacco, our host finding a pleasure and sacrifice in thus consenting to what was perhaps odious to him. On this high solemnity we would have Browning or Reade, or it might be the present Lord Lytton. And after dinner the sage drew in his chair, and the "churchwarden" being lit, a picturesque figure enough he looked as he puffed and discoursed his quaint wisdom. Once, an Irish gentleman being present, the state of his country was discussed, whereon the sage thus delivered himself, I recollect well, in his not unmusical tones :

"Ye see the Airish may have their grievances, and they have been hairshly treated ; but I tell you, sairs, before I'd listen to one waird from 'em, I'd just, wi' sword and gun, shoot and cut and hew them a' until I'd taught them to respect human life, and give up their murdering. *Then* I'd listen to 'em." The Irish gentleman proceeding to argue that they would not accept the existing domination or be reconciled to it—"Then what would ye propose, sir? There is no remedy," said the sage. "Yes," said the gentleman ; "they think you ought to go away—go home." With

flashing eyes and fierce burst, "We'll cut a' your throats first!" cried the sage. Those present—Mr. Browning was—will recall the roar which the vehement sally evoked. It was like Johnson assailing Boswell on Scotland before company.

He then went on to dwell in a very interesting way on that country, and the reader will not be surprised to find him deploring the abolition of the Irish Church. He said that the grievance of an educated clergyman in the wilder districts was a wholesome evidence of civilization.

*En revanche*, as the subject of Ireland is interesting now, the following characteristic "screed" may be given here:—

"DEAR SIR,—

"I am much obliged by your goodness to me. If the French pamphlet is of any value to you, as I suppose likely, then please do not send it hither: I could get little or no use of it, except what is already got, what is implied in your kind offer of it. You mistake much if you consider me blind to the beautiful natural faculties

and capabilities of the Irish character, or other than a loving friend to Ireland (from a very old date now), though I may have my own notions as to what would be real friendship to Ireland and what would be only sham friendship.

“ Believe me yours,

“ With many thanks and wishes,

“ T. CARLYLE.”

In the drawing-room he would listen with delight to his favourite Scotch songs, sung by a Scotch lady, *illustrating* each with quaint gesture and subdued remarks. His face and figure were truly characteristic and original—grim and grizzled, yet mild and gentle. It was sad to see the decay coming on, after these pleasant days. In this very room again, scene of such hospitality, I met him, one dismal morning, we with others assembled to attend our dear friend to his grave, around us his favourite books, his desk! A year or two later, having a fancy for modelling, I ventured to ask him to let me “do” his fine head, and he consented cheerfully, giving me two hours of his

time, descanting on "our *Few* Premier," as he called him, recalling his friend Irving and many more departed. But at that time he seemed shrunk, chilled inwardly, and suffering. It was the last time that I saw him; but I have the bust, accounted like, arrayed in the favourite broad-brimmed hat.

Once asking our friend and host what his genuine opinion was of Carlyle's style and writing generally, he sent me the following admirable criticism:—

"Don't permit yourself to be laughed out of an honest admiration of Carlyle's way of writing. No doubt it is well to have models of a pure and perfectly correct style (which his is not) for general imitation—for those, that is, who must imitate, and cannot originate. If there were any chance, indeed, of *his* becoming the object of such imitation, the language might soon be corrupted: but there is this protection against such a danger,—that whereas any one, in as far as in him lies, may ground himself upon Swift or Addison, and give to such thoughts as he has the most easy and natural

flow of which they are capable, to imitate Carlyle, with nothing of his genius, is to make yourself simply repulsive. The great merit of Carlyle's style is that it so wonderfully reflects the man himself; it is really a part of his individuality—a part of that quality in a man which marks him out for the chance of surviving his generation. You have but to talk with Mr. Carlyle himself for an hour to see that he does not put it on as an actor would his dress, but that his thoughts take (for the most part) necessarily that form, and involuntarily move in harmonious, but often very abrupt numbers. If he were a more logical reasoner he would probably be a clearer writer, but if he gets his result he cares little by what means—and, like Luther's, his words are less arguments than blows. The final test, after all, is whether a man's style helps him to the very best method of saying what he has to say; and in this case I think it does, and that the meaning would be less perfect even if the brevity, abruptness, and indefiniteness were wholly away. There never was such a style for pictures. 'The French

Revolution' is quite marvellous in that respect. Even without the connections and explanations that might have been thought absolutely essential, the succession of scenes flash all their philosophy and meaning into you as if by intuition; and I have often thought that old Samuel Johnson must have had writing of this sort in view, when he told Boswell one day that he fancied mankind might come in time to write all aphoristically, growing weary of preparation, and connection, and illustration, and all those arts by which a big book is made. Nor let me conclude this brief and hasty note on a writer of the truest genius without saying that I hold him—however grotesque or uncouth he may sometimes seem to be—for one of the greatest masters of English now living. He can write sentences heavier with thought, richer with humour, and of deeper pathos, than any other man, though he never lays himself out for mere writing. His narrative of the flight and capture of Varennes was never excelled—seldom I think equalled—for vigour, animation, and enthralling interest. Nor can any man, in my opinion, blend

in the same passage so many opposite yet quite natural qualities—the earnest with the sarcastic, the jocular and pathetic. But here I am in danger of repeating what I have already sufficiently said ; but if you compare some of his earlier essays (his life of Schiller, for instance, or such papers as his first on Voltaire) with his later things, you may be interested to observe how his later style has grown upon him with the growth and enlargement of his mind. As to his estimation or ‘true appreciation’ of his work here in England, it has greatly increased of late years, if you measure it by the sale of his works. But, as happens with all men of originality, especially when they run amuck at everybody, and delight never so much as when in a minority of one (which is too much Carlyle’s weakness), his detractors are as fierce as his disciples are earnest. Opinion about him will always be so divided, but I should say that, while few of the old school tolerate him at all, most men that have entered literature more recently, and are thoughtful men, admire and profit by him. At our universities he has made



considerable way ; and you would probably observe, the other day, that his ‘Cromwell’ was made a class-book with Guizot’s in Sir James Stephen’s ‘Examination for Modern History.’”

I always relished hugely, as having an olive-like taste, one of the best specimens of his humour, that letter to the Scotch boot and shoe maker at Charing Cross. What gives me a more particular interest in the matter is that I had heard him descant on the decay of shoemaking. It was like a bit of the “Sartor ;” and he would tell “hoo there was a mon i’ Doomfrees, who mad’ me shoes the like o’ which the world had never seen. And when I cam’ bock in eight years, I took him the shoes,” etc. Read by this light, how quaint is the following, nor do I wonder that the worldly handicraftsman makes it as widely known as he can.

“To Mr. Dowie, Boot and Shoe Maker, Charing  
Cross (or whatever the right address is).

“DEAR SIR,

“Not for your sake alone, but for that

of a public suffering much in its *feet*, I am willing to testify that you have yielded me complete and unexpected relief in that particular ; and, in short, on trial after trial, that you seem to me to possess, in signal contrast to so very many of your brethren, the actual *art of making shoes which are easy to the wearer*. My thanks to you are emphatic and sincere.

“T. CARLYLE.

“5, Cheyne Row, Chelsea, 10th July, 1868.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### BEHIND THE SCENES.

AFTER all, the truest fascination is in the drama and in being connected with the stage. As of old the green curtains, the smell of sawdust and oranges, and the lampblackened bills, the ink of which came off on the gloves, had this charm, so now the gossip concerning actors, the new theatres, and new scenery and plays have a certain indescribable attraction. At this moment of writing, somewhat *blasé* as one is after a good many campaigns, I know nothing that gives such secret pleasure as, in a daily walk through the Strand, to see one's name to a little piece on the board that reclines against the entrance to the playhouse. Every night to know that some hundreds are listening to

*your* thunder, ay, and laughing heartily—this is a pleasing, complacent thought. Such is true publicity. How pleasant, too, the rehearsals; the *demi-jour* of the stage in the morning; the carpenters busy hammering at the scenes laid flat on the floor; the passing in by the mysterious hatch of the stage—delightful privilege!—greeted by the crabbed old Cerberus, who is invariably on guard! Who does not like actors? They are always agreeable and good-humoured and good-natured. Actresses are for the most part inferior, but indeed there are so few worthy of the name, though there are quantities of “ladies on the stage,” but very few actresses. Irving, Toole, Lionel Brough, Farren, to take a few specimens, are men of force of character. Of those who are passed away, who was like Charles Mathews? How airy, how delightful was his talk! His tongue seemed to trip over all subjects with a French grace. I did not know him very intimately, but there was no one one would have liked to have cultivated more. His remarks had a quaint flavour. I see him sitting in a chair before me, telling some pleasant

story, his cab waiting. Our acquaintance began in an odd way.

Once I was writing a series of criticisms on all the leading performers of the day, and these appeared month by month. In one of these rather juvenile performances—perhaps jejune also—I had taken occasion to object to his reading of Balzac's *Mercadet*, which, after seeing *Got*, appeared somewhat airy and not tragic enough. The good and sound critic of the *Observer* was the first to find fault with my view, while in that paper I came forward to vindicate it.

“As regards *Mercadet*,” I said, “and Mr. Mathews, we are on other ground, and I differ totally from your critic. This is a subject where there can be little or no dispute; and really your critic has himself disposed of the matter, for he says that Mr. Mathews took care to avoid anything tragic in his view of the character. This English conception is utterly foreign to the whole meaning of the piece, and a student of Balzac would only smile, or rather groan, to see a subject worthy of *Æschylus* nicely trimmed and polished into a gay,

farcical piece of comedy, to be glided over by the pleasant and ever-juvenile Charles. 'A version of Balzac from the Charles Mathews point of view,' says your critic—'a great play, should be fitted, like a garment, to the ways and humour of a particular actor.' This statement alone would show how erroneous the theory is. Let any one who, however deficient in dramatic knowledge, has studied his Balzac conscientiously, explain what Mercadet is. Imagine some great English speculator, living in princely style, to have staked nearly all his fortune on some Stock Exchange operation, the result of which he cannot know until, say, to-morrow. To-day he is giving a State dinner-party to lords and great political men, and one of the former he hopes to secure for his daughter. Imagine him through the dinner smiling ghastly smiles, affecting merriment, telling stories; imagine, too, the sickly agitation of his heart! No more tragic situation could be conceived. We should smile to think of Charles Mathews, with all his gifts, portraying such a character. Yet this is Balzac's Mercadet! This is the Mercadet of Got

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and the great French actors ; this is the tradition of the great Théâtre Français, where they religiously preserve the author's traditions ; and this, as any reader of Balzac feels by instinct, is Balzac himself. Instead of this we have—what ? The great play adapted in twenty-four hours, or some such time, by 'Slingsby Laurence,' Mr. G. H. Lewes, who, excellent critic as he is, is yet the author of some indifferent novels, and is by no means guaranteed against failure in dramatic matters. Then we hear of Got's having one way of interpreting the character and Mr. Mathews another ; *i.e.* a tragic and a comic way. When French pieces are every day put forward as being 'by' the adapters and translators, there is nothing out of keeping in a great piece like Balzac's being pared down and altered so as to suit the 'touch-and-go' style of a rattling comedian. But to return whence I started. Your critic might find in the essays which I have written on the various actors something not unprofitable. In spite of a few mistakes I venture to say that the principles they contain are sound, and impartial judges might

hold that they are at least carefully considered and equal to those current. I will be generous, and say I think your critic's performances are superior to the average.

“THE AUTHOR OF THE ARTICLES.”

This criticism, as it stands, seems to me to commend itself. In the following week the lively Charles himself rushed into the arena, and in a warm letter, of good length, assailed his assailant. Here are some extracts from this amusing composition.

“I claim,” he said, “to assert that I have not mistaken Balzac's idea, . . . for I defy the writer or any one else to show the slightest pretence that Balzac has afforded for any such view. That it may be the Mercadet of Got I don't dispute, but that it is the Mercadet of the great French actors I deny.” He then goes on to state that the only other actor who played it in Paris, Geoffroy, was so far from taking a lachrymose view of the character, that he made it a sort of off-hand Robert Macaire. “Is the gentleman who makes



these assertions aware that the great Théâtre Français *refused* Balzac's piece, that it was never acted there till twenty years after the actor's death, and that consequently it could not have been in possession of any of his traditions?" He adds that it was put into dramatic shape by D'Ennery, and that I was not justified in asserting that it was the Mercadet of Balzac.

"I am perfectly convinced of two things First, that the writer never saw the 'Game of Speculation' at all, and that he never read Balzac's original play.

"As to the tragic view of the idea, it is simply ridiculous. M. Got has no greater admirer than myself, but if he takes a tragic view of the character and plays it with pathos, in my humble opinion he has for once made a mistake. Mercadet is depicted by Balzac as a hard, sarcastic man of the world, stopping at no baseness, revelling in falsehood. Fancy such a man being pourtrayed from a tragic point of view! Fancy Jeremy Diddler crying while endeavouring to do Sam the waiter out of his tenpence." He then asks, How can his

hypocritical tears with the asides, "He's yielding!" be reconciled with tragedy?\*

There was, however, a curious "note" in his character which many must have remarked. Vivacious and hard hitting as he could be, he was in truth timorous, and as soon as he had made the stroke, "back recoiled," alarmed at "the sound himself had made." Almost with the publication in the newspaper, a letter reached me of a different complexion :

"37, Half-Moon Street, December 10th, 1872.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"The first lawyers in the land bully each other in public, and then walk off together arm-in-arm to dinner, the best friends in the world. With such high precedents, I address you as a man and a brother, and boldly ask

\* Mr. Dutton Cook has, curiously enough, just discussed this question in his recently published "Hours with the Players." It will be seen at once that the actor misapprehended the point, his mistake turning on the meaning of "tragic." Tragedy, that is, a bitter earnestness, must certainly underlie even the buffoonery and jesting that he speaks of. Such a scheming speculator, had he power at all, must have felt his desperate situation, as he found his edifice toppling. He was playing his last stake.

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you, as a favour to me, to do in earnest what I only proposed in jest, viz. to come and see the 'Game of Speculation.' I will keep you a stall for any night this week you will select. You write too well not to make it a laudable ambition to obtain your honest and, if possible revised criticism. I promise to play the part exactly as I have always done, and if, after seeing it patiently from beginning to end, you still condemn, I will meekly bow my head and regret my inability to please you ; while, should I succeed in inducing you to change your opinion, I shall feel sincere pride in causing you to modify your verdict.

"I give you my word that I do not know whom I am addressing, beyond the fact of your being the author of the papers in question ; but, as a writer worthy of attention, I am naturally anxious to obtain your matured criticism, which I hope you will as freely give as I will resignedly receive.

"My dear sir, faithfully yours,

"C. J. MATHEWS.

“I find I have written on two sheets of paper. I will not re-copy—it may make my request the more emphatic.”

This little discussion—not unpleasant—made us friends. I accepted his stall, though his charge of my never having seen him in the part was unfounded, and went to the performance. There was something quaint in the idea of his playing to his unknown critic, thus asked to revise his judgment. Of course, in the case of so admirable a veteran, one was not to stand on a conscientious rigour. A cordial letter was despatched to him, with some acknowledgment of hasty judgment and of great admiration.

But, in truth, what an extraordinary charm there is in the stage and in all that concerns actors. I never can look on an actor without a certain reverence, and without calling up the wonderful fairyland in which they move and have their being by night. There they always seem to lose their earthiness, hackneyed as the spectacle is.

What shall be said of dramatic criticism

generally? In fairness it must be owned that the average critic is cruelly hampered, and in certain papers it is rather difficult to give a true verdict according to the evidence. In some instances the proprietor is *lié* with the theatre, or knows the manager. His play must not, therefore, be abused. I confess that there are cases, when one thinks of the vast outlay in dresses, mounting, and salaries that has been incurred on some play, that it seems almost cruelty to assail the performance. Some explanation, too, may be found in the fact that nowadays the essential part for the public is *the show*, not the play. The critic's position is embarrassing; and, I must say, many extricate themselves with skill, contriving to praise a good deal, and good-naturedly deprecate defects as if they were spots on the sun. They are, with one or two exceptions, good-natured, and are never "down" on a writer, where they see good intentions and a genuine attempt at work. Most are really cultivated men, and know the principles of their art thoroughly.

Doctors and critics disagree, and once I could

not resist publishing, in the *St. James's Gazette*, as a little bit of raillery—harmless enough—a collection of these opposing judgments. The occasion was the performance of Modjeska in Juliet, and I assumed the character of a visitor from Little Pedlington sent to London to make out what was *really* thought of her.

“I was able to get away last week from Little Pedlington for a couple of days—from Saturday till Monday. At the station I met Yawkins, formerly of the circulating library, but now managing our theatre with much spirit, and who said to me, ‘I wish you to go and see the new foreign actress, Modjeska, and find out what is thought of her, and if she would go down in Little Pedlington.’ He added that if she did, he would not mind giving the highest salary ever given in Little Pedlington—namely, £3 a night; that is, for a single night. It is this sort of prompt spirit that has distinguished Yawkins’s management. ‘Find out exactly what the London press thinks,’ he went on; ‘for I don’t go much by what our local organs say, or indeed their London correspondents.’ And

I fancy myself it would be foolish to 'go much,' or even a little, on the reports of these latter gentlemen, whom we all knew as regular residents at Little Pedlington, which, by the way, is pronounced Li'pleton. His idea was sound. The London press and London critics would be the best guides in the case of the Modjeska. I went to see her; waited impatiently, and next day consulted them all patiently.

"The first I took up—and took up eagerly—was the *Daily Telegraph*. In an instant my doubts were confirmed. It was but a partial success—the first portion good, the second bad. The balcony scene beautiful and inartificial. 'It is not,' I read, 'a tricky scene of theatrical flirtation. . . . All was natural, charming, and graceful here, and seldom have the mere artifices of acting been so well disguised.' It was 'charming, ideal, and poetical.' Modjeska was, in short, 'a Juliet that thoroughly satisfied to the close of the balcony scene, flickered, waned, and died out before the end. Gradually she lost her influence and ascendancy. A certain monotony prevailed, and

grew till it became distracting.' This was all clear and distinct: there could be no mistake in so positive a judgment; and, looking back, I began to see the thing as he so described it. It did flicker, and die out towards the end. We all felt the growing monotony until it became distracting. I knew now what I would tell Yawkins; first glancing at one or two of the others—say the *Morning Post*, organ of the aristocracy. But what was this? 'In no respect could it be accounted a success.' It was all 'strained, cold, artificial, destitute of grace, and fraught with no true passion.' Her English was 'flawed and fractured.' In the balcony scene, 'Juliet was manifestly conscious of the presence of some hundreds of spectators, to whom, much more than to her enraptured lover, she addressed her appeals.' Heavens! Why, had not the other said that the balcony scene was all natural and graceful, and without artifice?

"Well, here is a paper written by revolutionaries for revolutionists, and likely to take a firm uncompromising view. It considers it 'one of the most interesting experiments our stage ever witnessed.



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No one could have anticipated *the success* that was achieved.' There! then it *was* successful. The balcony scene 'supreme tenderness.' (Ah! then it *wasn't* artificial.) And 'the entire performance, whether in the delicacy of the *early scenes*, or *intensity of the latter*, is alike admirable, and full of beauty and charged with passion.' Come, come, this is better. But how about the 'monotony' and failure of the last portion—the 'consciousness of the presence of the audience'—the 'flickering out.' Stay: here is *Truth*. 'A most gracious and graceful lady, certainly, and a very sincere and industrious artist; but one who *had no electricity* in her touch. Juliet exhibits this clever lady at her best and at her worst. She can suggest, but she cannot sustain. Her style is poetical and pure, but her power is easily spent. As she floats through the earlier acts in those gauzy robes, she is as pleasant to the eye as an escaped butterfly on a spring morning, but when the test-acts of Juliet come, the *actress is nowhere*. Her strength is never spontaneous; her power, such as it is, is an obvious effort.' Upset again!

I am growing bewildered. 'Actress nowhere: no electricity'—but the others said she *had*. Ah! I fear she can't do. The *St. James's Gazette* will say the same. 'Her interpretation of it was an exquisitely finished whole, everywhere marked by originality. . . . And in the balcony scene in the next act she gave full and admirable expression to the voluptuous nature, the passionate sensibility, combined with maiden innocence, and marred by *no touch of self-consciousness* or coyness or coquetry. So, too, in the third act, the morning after her marriage, the "sweet, girlish lingering, and busy movement" of the hapless bride were charmingly rendered.' But then she fell off at the end—'was nowhere' in the tragic portion. But the 'shuddering horror with which she thinks of her being laid in the tomb, culminating in the appalling vision which she conjures up of "the bloody Tybalt" seeking out Romeo—in all this Mdme. Modjeska certainly showed herself a tragedian of no mean order. . . . So much must suffice as to the new Juliet. It is not enough to do her justice. But it may be enough to convey some faint impression of the

highly finished and artistic character of her impersonation.' Oh, this is conclusive—the rest were all wrong. But I may as well look at the *Standard*: 'On the whole, she perhaps agreeably surprised the more judicious of her admirers; but it cannot be called an unmitigated triumph.' What a *douche*—how chilling and distrustful! 'Exceedingly graceful and charming she was in the balcony scene, but not wholly spontaneous:' there was something 'artificial.' One did not feel that 'she was under the spell of overwhelming love.' The last critic speaks of 'passionate sensibility,' with 'no touch of self-consciousness;' and yet the other talks of artificiality and something 'not wholly spontaneous'—'it was in the later and more powerful scenes she did best;' 'not until the potion scene did she create anything like enthusiasm.' Yet the *Telegraph* critic says she fell off, and so does *Truth*.

"Stay: now for the *Globe*. 'Few suspected how much illumination she would cast on it. It was obvious that the light of a clever and exquisitely feminine perception had been brought to bear on

it.' As the play proceeded, 'a new revelation was to be afforded.' The love-scenes in the balcony were 'immured in tones of delicious tenderness. From first to last she carried the audience with her.' Yet his predecessor said it was not until the potion scene that she succeeded in raising enthusiasm. Still he qualifies his praise. It was 'not complete,' he says, 'and it lacked the flavour of girlhood.'

"But to go on. The *Morning Advertiser* found it 'not an emanation of commanding genius.' There was a certain suggestion of preparation—and, strangest of all (what all the fault-finders had been satisfied with), 'the potion scene was a little forced.' On the other hand, 'the balcony scene was given with a refined charm and delicacy we have never seen surpassed.' More rapturous still the *Echo*: 'It will rank as one of her finest impersonations. The living, moving embodiment of loving, unfortunate Juliet is before the audience.' Further, she triumphed over 'difficulties of the English.' Come, come, this is comforting; and perhaps on the whole—— Ah! the *Daily News*.

'It was not wanting,' he says, 'in force, refinement, or depth of feeling, though it can hardly be said to be distinguished by girlish impulse.' The balcony scene was 'full of subtle touches.' Cold again: only 'subtle touches.' Her utterance, too, was 'indistinct.' My *Echo* friend thought she triumphed over the difficulties of the English. The *Sunday Times* can only say that her Juliet was of 'surpassing and many gifts,' without going into particulars. The *Observer's* critic, for whom I have a sincere respect, declares that in the balcony scene she showed 'exquisite delicacy and grace.' But there was 'no spontaneity or girlish impulse.' On the other hand, the first act is 'less within her range than the potion scene.'

"But I grow bewildered as these various judges crowd upon me and thrust their contradictory verdicts in my face. The *Athenæum* holds that in the earlier scenes she stirs the spectator, and in the later fails to recommend herself. The balcony scene, however, 'never possessed more enchantment.' There is much 'freshness,' but 'little girlishness or impulse.' I turn to my

*Saturday Review* for light, and find, to my amazement, that she 'lacks freshness.' 'In the potion scene she finally persuaded us that Juliet is a character she should never attempt to personate. The eccentricities of the performance seem to us monotonous and dispiriting in the highest degree.' 'Seldom,' says C. S., in the *Illustrated London News*, 'has such a fragrant sense of poetry been instilled into the opening scenes.' The *Whitchall Review* holds that she had all the *naïveté* and freshness of a young girl by whom love was first welcomed. She was 'wayward,' natural, etc. Yet another paper and another verdict: 'As to what are usually considered the two best scenes—the balcony and the sleeping-draught scenes—*there can be no two opinions whatever*: there is all the tender poetic feeling that can be desired in the one and all the dramatic intensity in the other.' Rachel might not have disdained to learn from 'the potion scene.' 'Creditable,' but 'not a success,' says the *Academy*. 'Juliet's girlish rapture' (mark!) she is unable to exhibit. 'On the other hand,' urges the *Graphic*, 'the suddenness

of her girlish love and all its absorbing truthfulness are depicted with a very natural truth. All through the act of the balcony scene her delivery was remarkably free from the errors of accent and emphasis.' Yet another, the clever 'D. C.,' in the *World*, calling a spade a spade, thus breaks out:—'She is a conventional and artificial actress, gifted, graceful, and accomplished, well qualified to present the heroines of modern drama, able at times to display vehemence of a special kind, but absolutely incompetent to cope with the heroines of Shakspeare. As Juliet, her airs of ingenuousness become almost grimaces, her smiles degenerate into smirks; she would render the juvenility of the character by crossing the stage now and again with a certain skipping, ambling, skittish gait; she cannot reconcile the apparent inconsistency of Juliet's intensity of passion and innateness of purity. In her hands Juliet's love for Romeo declines into an intrigue; it is attended by so much calmness and calculation, it is so completely made a matter of deliberation and self-consciousness. *Of the wild transport of sudden*

*love*, the intoxication of a first passion, *no suggestions are forthcoming*. In fine, Mdme. Modjeska's Juliet lacks youth and truth, nature, freshness, passion, and poetry.'

"Now, I wish to know, what am I to say to Yawkins when I get back to Little Pedlington? How can this lady be all this at once? 'Girlish,' and yet 'old and conventional;' 'fresh,' and yet 'lacking freshness;' exactly Shakspeare's Juliet, and yet utterly unsuited to Shakspeare; speaking English clearly, and yet utterly unintelligible; excellent at the beginning and falling off at the end; excellent at the end, but not at the beginning; good in the potion scene and bad in the balcony one; good in the balcony one, but bad in the other, etc. Please, sir, help me."



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE DIARY.

THAT invaluable private friend and confidant, the DIARY, should be "entreated" by every literary man. Nothing is more useful. I do not mean one of those ridiculous records of Nothings—"Walked out; *paid bills*; dinner, roast mutton; Smith called; spoke to James about the water-pipes, etc." As I have hitherto done in these confessions, I will illustrate this by my own practice. A "Letts's Diary" should be kept for official entries of absences and returns, and of other various important acts—payments, etc., and even of dinings out, the company met, etc. Such things are useful, and show how life has gone by. But the real sort of diary, and which I have tried to keep, is not ordered on such regular

principles. In it is entered everything of interest that occurs: "ideas" that may occur to the mind, thoughts, speculations—all set down as shortly as possible, a habit gained by practice; descriptions of little scenes visited, which gave pleasure, and which offered something remarkable; the curious little incidents which occur occasionally or are related by others; and those good stories—*bon mots*—we often hear, and which, being unprinted, are often lost. It is astonishing what a pleasant, valuable (to one's self) collection is thus made. As I have said, too, practice furnishes the shortest but most sufficient mode of setting down these matters. A few well-chosen words will reveal a whole scene. This is, of course, a very different thing from the Diaries of Moore, Crabbe, Robinson, and others, professedly written for publication, and which are really "books." The value of a diary, too, is in its opportunity for setting down the curious little adventures and mishaps—not very important certainly—we all encounter. These are forgotten: but there is no doubt one who "goes about a good deal," and keeps his eyes open, sees a good many strange things, and—forgets them.

Take house-hunting. What singular people one meets! what surprises, pleasant and disagreeable! Once, when looking for a house at Chiselhurst, I was directed to a charming villa, exquisitely furnished and decorated. Being shown over, I find the young ladies busy with their governess, but astonished at the inspection: difficulties made as to showing the bedrooms by the seemingly bewildered maid: everything, after stern examination, found complete and even elegant, yet the price absurdly low. It was the *wrong house!* It belonged to very opulent people, gone into town, and who would be confounded to learn that their house "was to be let." The scene was like a bit of comedy. Here are some other scenes dramatic in their way. Thus, when engaged in this pursuit, I met with an eminently desirable investment near, say, Wilton Crescent—everything in the house-taking or house-letting direction is "desirable"—which was "dirt cheap" at one thousand pounds premium, and one hundred and fifty pounds per annum. The locality was aristocratic. Still, for such an outlay, there was an air of "squeeze." The

hall was as a little tunnel. But, subject to these narrow conditions, there was an elegant air about the tenement, even in spite of the stair, which was like a ladder leading to a loft. A distinguished-looking menial, powdered, led the way. He assumed that the tenant was a visitor; at least, he would not see him in the other light. He threw open the drawing-room door, announced him by his name, and threw the rest of the degrading office on those whom it most concerned. He made some remark about "a *pusson*," and retired. Now this was what I saw as I entered. A richly dressed lady, good-looking, and with two or three children about her, was at the fire, busy, I think, with some department of their toilet. A maid *aide-de-camp* was in attendance. The room seemed handsome, with a great deal of velvet and gilding. I never shall forget the haughty and angry stare she gave me.

"What do you want?" she said. "What is this?"

The tenant faltered out some explanation, at the same time tendering the order which the

agent, or some one else, had drawn in his favour.

“*Oh, more of Mr. Wilkinson's doings,*” the haughty lady said, turning to her attendant, her eyes flashing and her cheeks flushing. “It is intolerable. This house, sir, is *not* to be let. I shall *not* give my consent to it. It's quite a mistake—I shall *not* stir out of it. It is getting intolerable.”

Rather bewildered, the desirable tenant, seeing himself quite undesirable, protested he would not wish to be the cause of such discordant views between the two persons most concerned, and withdrew hurriedly, the lady rustling her stiff silk, fuming, and darting fierce looks at an imaginary Mr. Wilkinson. There was a whole story behind that significant little episode.

One of the most curious features in these visits was the surprise, as the servant rashly showed you into the midst of some highly domestic scene; an entire family at lunch, for instance, a very fat leg of mutton steaming on the board, black bottles, sentry-wise, scattered up

and down the table. The resentful looks at being thus surprised were indescribable; the family indignation, strange to say, passing entirely over their own menial, whose fault it was, and settling on the desirable tenant.

I recall another awkward intrusion, where a pale sickly lady was discovered, with a bearded man on his knees before her, who rose and asked angrily "what I wanted there." To enter into explanation that "you came to see the house" appeared too absurd—the best thing to do was to withdraw abruptly. A good-natured but untidy maid-of-all-work explained confidentially "that it was Mr. and Mrs. Littlejohn, who had at last come together, and Miss Mew had put them in the front parlour for the day." I felt that a mansion hallowed by such a sacred reconciliation was not to be lightly profaned, so I took my way hurriedly from the place.

Another little incident. Not very long ago, passing through Deptford, nautically flavoured, with a friend, I noted an ugly bull-dog, ill-favoured, with the usual patch on his eye, and a strap doing

duty as a collar. He had come up a lane, and was walking on briskly in front, turning occasionally to give a short bark at some one, no doubt, following—his master possibly. But, presently, as we turned to the right or left, it was clear he was doing the same: his greetings, still kept up, were addressed to us. For an experiment we tried turning back, or striking suddenly down a lane; he would turn back as hurriedly, and was beside us in an instant. A mile and more had been thus covered. It was clear the odious animal was resolute to hold by us. We were now far from his native home; the evening was drawing on. We were about to walk to London, and it seemed something ghostly or hobgoblinish that this unclean spirit should thus haunt us. He would probably beset the hall-door—rush in at its first opening. If we took the Greenwich tram-car, he would, no doubt, race the whole way. Nothing was more curious than the tenacity with which he kept by us; if we lagged, he waited in the middle of the road. He disdained threats; he belonged to us by adoption, or rather we to him.

What was to be done? Suddenly an idea occurred. Here was a coal-store, with a small door in the greater door, fortunately half open. With an affectation of curiosity, as if to see the yard, we entered. The brute, some way on before, instantly marked it, and returned with all speed to see what was the delay. The moment he entered the coal-store, we issued forth, and hurriedly closing the door after us, posted away. However, a crowd of little boys was to be noted, attracted by the odd, mysterious nature of the proceeding. Not an instant was to be lost; fortunately here were some of those curious windings of Greenwich town, into which we struck, out of the high road. And not an instant too soon; for the prying boys had opened the door, out of which our enemy leaped and set off in pursuit of his companions. Looking up the retired lane, we saw him scamper by at full speed, his eager eyes ranging in all directions save one. We were saved, and never saw him more!

Again, lately one dark night, entering a Hansom cab, I was duly encased within the glass and



shutters. As the vehicle shot off on its course, something white appeared to flash on the foot-board in front, which by-and-by resolved itself into the outline of a greyish-white cur dog, who had leaped up in a half-professional way, much as the little tigers of another generation used to skip up behind the cabriolet. There this curious creature remained, poising itself at the edge, like some spectral dog, and balancing itself with ease, as a circus rider might. When the cab stopped, he was gone as suddenly as he came. "Oh! he were there, were he?" the driver merely exclaimed, in answer to a question. It turned out that this lean and unkempt pariah had drawn near the cab a few nights before, had received less churlish greeting than what he was accustomed to, and had attached himself to the cab in this mysterious way. He was now actually to be seen hovering in the shadow afar off. There was something ghostly in the fashion in which he came out of the night and appeared upon the footboard. I was once acquainted with a dog that had a no less singular *penchant* for seeing a train pass under an arch at

a particular hour each day. Punctually at five o'clock he would rouse himself and set off at full speed to keep his appointment, using cunning devices when he suspected he might be detained. Having seen his train go by, and looked down with a wary and critical air to watch that the passage was performed properly, he jogged home with a contented mind. The mystery was how he knew the hour so exactly.

Again, every morning there comes to the door a little trap, in the service of the butterman. It is drawn by a frisky, waggish little pony, evidently a pet; and on the pony's back rides a vivacious little terrier, who, from practice, can balance himself in a secure and dashing style. Both pony and terrier understand each other, though the terrier capers about the pony's neck in an inconvenient fashion. On cold days pony has his cloth, while the terrier has a miniature covering of the same kind, securely fitted to his person. When the butterman comes up the area the sly pair are watching him, and if in his hurry he incautiously slam the back-door of his

cart, a pretence is made of accepting the noise as a signal, and off starts the pony galloping, the terrier barking and almost erect on pony's neck, while the driver is running along frantically striving to climb into his vehicle as it goes. Another dog, a red Irish retriever, whose acquaintance I made lately, was sent down forty miles into Kent, shut up in a dog-box. On his first day's sport, he took offence at the keeper's using a whip to him: a freedom he perhaps thought was not justified by so short an acquaintance. The following morning he was at the door of his house in Victoria Street! How was this accomplished? He must have come straight across the country, guided by some faculty that his two-legged superiors have not.

A favourite dog was accidentally killed; on which the poetical gardener in our family wrote an epitaph:

“Beneath this yew-tree, in this Oval *so completely*,  
Lies Hector, our dog, whom his master loved dearly.  
He barked and he yeowled when the children went a-walking;  
He was shot by Peter on Christmas morning.  
*I blame Archie Tobin for not feeding him regularly,*  
*And Mullins at the gate, who was in the constabulary.”*

As to letters. Many people destroy every letter that is not important, or relating to business. Not long before his death, Mr. Dickens thus sacrificed all his accumulated papers, which made a remarkable collection of interesting autographs, and, in actual money, worth a great deal. The dilemma is, unless you destroy at once, you must keep; for it is difficult to find time, and the task is distasteful also, to go over an enormous mass of papers. A good plan is to put aside, as they arrive, anything of interest or from interesting people. Acting on this principle, one may form a very entertaining volume or collection of volumes, the letters being from all sorts of persons. It is astonishing how excellent and entertaining some letters are, and how admirably written; and I have noted that clever *littérateurs* write their letters as though they were writing "copy," possibly because they cannot resist the inspiration. Mr. Sala and Mr. Burnard are of this class, and their letters are ever full of spirit and wit and gaiety. The former's beautiful penmanship is well known, and is the delight of the printers, as my own, I fear, is the reverse.

It is astonishing what an interesting and entertaining gathering may be thus made. In the large volumes before me I find letters from every writer of note—novelists, poets, players, statesmen, musicians; and as most of these persons have had their portraits given in illustrated papers, these I have set opposite, so that face, handwriting, and mind are there before me. Nothing, too, is more agreeable, when engaged on a literary task, than to see how cordially your brethren come to your aid with such knowledge as falls within their department, communicated in a pleasant style.

It is curious what odd incidents turn up in one's literary course. Once, having written a series of Italian sketches, duly published, I was astonished to see, in a well-known journal, a full description of some ceremony at St. Peter's, taken textually from my series, but "written by an architect who was studying there." On pointing this out to the editor, the following explanation was sent by its author:—

"I have this morning received a letter, saying

the shell has burst which I have expected so long. I wrote the 'Easter at Rome.'

"I am in verity an architectural student, and was busy all that week doing the sights like everybody else, and then was bound to write an account home of them; so, like a schoolboy, having read your Roman paper, I thought it very good—that it would interest my father and mother, and save me lots of time and bother, answering every purpose. An original account would have been awfully dry. I need hardly say I never had the slightest conception it would ever cross the threshold of our house. That would have been too green, as I had also interpolated passages from 'Rubicond Murray' and Dickens.

"It was a common thing for the fellows at the Caffé Greco, when they wanted to fill a letter, to write a page of Murray; but that's no excuse for me.

"I did not hear till I was in Naples that it had been sent to the papers and published; and I have felt like Damocles ever since. I was dreadfully vexed, but hoped it might blow over.

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“I regret exceedingly if it has caused you any annoyance, and am heartily sorry for it, but it was quite unintentional. I have also written to the editor of the journal to explain.

“Therefore I hope you will accept my apology, and say no more about it; though, as I have made a fool of myself, I will only subscribe myself your obedient servant.”

It is not to be supposed that “Grub Street” and its privations, and the struggles for existence—“garret toil and London loneliness”—must be put back to the days of Johnson and Savage. There are innumerable instances of desperate battle and piteous succumbing, as every literary worker knows from the appeals sent to him. Sometimes it comes to a terrible crisis, in many instances drink unfortunately helping or leading to the catastrophe. I am not speaking now of the almost professional out-of-elbows writer, who really lives and thrives in a sort of fashion, but of the genuine hard worker, with the traditional wife and four or six children. Not long ago came a despairing, pleading letter from such a one, a clever man, on

whom an execution was impending; if it fell, destruction was the result. The sum, however, was too large, and only a contribution could be made to it. He contrived to surmount his difficulties.

But here was a truly dramatic instance. Some years ago, when Homburg was in the flush of all its gaieties, I met there a good-looking gentleman—a leading writer on the press, a poet, with a university education—altogether a very accomplished and agreeable person. He was, indeed, rather *recherché*. I had before known of him, as he had of me, and we became friends. I lost sight of him, as one so often does of hastily made watering-place acquaintances—the duration being in proportion to the intensity. Later, I heard he had gone to the war as a correspondent. Later again by some years, I read an inquest on a person who had died in the most abject condition in one of those lodging-houses where fourpence is charged for a night's accommodation. A letter was found in his pocket from a gentleman, a son of a nobleman and an old friend—a touching, manly production—enclosing some money, adding that he could do



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little for him, but begging him, if in worse difficulties, to apply to his friend. It proved to be my old acquaintance, who had sunk lower and lower, and, being afflicted with some dreadful malady and without friends, had chosen to hide himself in this squalid place, and there had died! Lately there was an eminent scholar thus reduced. No one who is connected with the societies formed for helping literary men is surprised by these things, so strange and unexpected are the applications. The truth is the competition is so great that, if there be any interruption, by illness or otherwise, their place is likely to be filled up. On the other hand, connection with the press is a laborious business, and leaves little time for magazine or novel writing.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE STORY OF A WALTZ.

IN a career of hard work, and often of drudgery, there arises sometimes little strange unexpected turns of fortune, not very marvellous of their kind, but still welcome and encouraging, and often flavoured with a little romance. I have noted lately, in those colloquial columns of gossip which are a special feature of the newspapers of the time, allusions to a certain waltz, which came into existence under odd circumstances. Now, it may be found entertaining to relate what really took place.

Of waltzes the world is full, and overstocked it may be. The amateur writes his waltz, of which a copy is never sold. The professional musician brings out his waltz, which may not take, or drops still-born. Waldteufel, and Strauss, and Gungl,

Coote and Tinney, and Godfrey are or were past masters in the art, and they command a sale. A true waltz, such as *Waldteufel*, the most popular now, writes, is a poem, and might engage the talent of the first composers. There is infinite art and dramatic feeling required, a melancholy despairing strain, strange to say, best quickening the dancers' motions; there is the artful contrast of rough and uninteresting passages introduced like bitters, so as to make return to the more exquisite bits longed for and welcomed when they do arrive. On this account there are but few really good waltzes. Sometimes a popular and good air will carry the whole waltz through, and the taking tune of Mr. Sullivan's "Sweethearts"—a song turned into a waltz—has formed one of the most successful of this day. The "Soldaten Lieder," the "Beautiful Blue Danube," are perfect poems in their way, and have been little fortunes to their publishers—probably not to their authors.

Half a dozen years ago, I was getting ready for Christmas, that is to say, for furnishing those jovial festival stories which were until lately as indis-

pensable as the plum-pudding on the day itself. Now these matters seem to be avoided. There are no outcast brothers to come home exactly on Christmas Eve in the snow, and look in at the squire's window—the Hall—where everybody is merry-making. There are no making-ups of old enemies, and the like, all which have gone out. But still a certain amount of jovial narrative is in demand, for annuals and the like. Being busy one October night with this sort of provender, a letter came in from one of the great illustrated papers—the more important of the two, which is said to enjoy a vast circulation—rather its proprietors enjoy it. This was a request to furnish a large contribution suited to the festival, but to be done at once, as there was not an hour to be lost. Two large but effective engravings accompanied it, one of which pourtrayed a lady in ball dress, fastening her glove; the other the outside of "The Grange," its mullioned windows all lit up—picturesque enough as a subject. This is lifting the corner of the curtain a little discreetly or the reverse; but the fact is so, that more often the

story illustrates the illustration rather than the illustration the story. In the days of the old "Annuals" the elaborate copper-plate engravings were done first and sent to contributors to write up to. This was a pleasing office. Working at white heat, I had soon produced a tale of some length—a genuine thing, based on that best of all foundations, one's own experiences; of course, varied a little for dramatic effect. It was despatched—in both senses, that is, completed and sent in in a short period of time.

Now, this story was called "LOVED and LOST (Geliebt und Verloren); or, the Last Waltz." It turned on what might be suggested by some of those pathetic melancholy airs or tunes we hear at a ball in the small hours. A man had met a young girl some years before at such a ball, and during this waltz had declared his affection. Events, however, had interposed and parted the lovers. Some years pass by and he returns. One night he is accidentally at another ball at the Grange—the building with the lit-up mullions—looking on sadly at the dancing, when this very

waltz, played again, brings him back to the old scene. But I quote a short passage.

“Here indeed was the scene; ‘Skipper’s band’ was the orchestra. So it went on the rather monotonous round—now quadrille, now lancers, now waltz and headlong galop, wild Balaclava charges; the more sober dances were gradually becoming extinct, to the annoyance of what might be called the Quakers and Methodists of the ball-room, who, with their discreet measures, were coolly put aside in defiance of all law and agreement. At that time of night, to be ‘wading’ patiently through steps and slow measures was unendurable; and, accordingly, here were the greedy waltzers and galopers devouring dance after dance; while the aggrieved quadrillers, partners on arm, looked on, rueful and indignant. And now I see Skipper bending down in earnest talk with a sort of deputation, who had waited on him, and now came back with alacrity and rejoicing, ready for fresh exertion.

“Hark! What was it that kindled for me a sudden interest in the proceedings? that made the nerves thrill and the pulse quicken? Where had

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I heard it? It seemed a strain lent from Paradise! How it rose, and fell, and swelled, and died away; growing tender, pleading, and pathetic; now turning into a fierce clash and whirl, as though impelled by despair and driven by furies; then becoming soothed into piteous entreaty, and winding out in a dying fall. It was, in short, one of those divine waltzes, as they may be called. Where, when, had I heard it? I knew it. There are a few of these that seem part of your life, like a poem. It may have happened that one of those tender, complaining measures has been the accompaniment to some important act. It is then no longer mere vulgar music. Some, such as the newer German waltzes, touch strange mysterious themes, reaching beyond this earth. The time of night or morning, when it winds out, the lights whirling round in rings, the bewildering motion, the floating sylphs, the nebulous tulle, the flowers, the jewels, all join to make up the scene of wild festivity, and it would be enough, one might think. But the artful enchanter then suddenly dissolves into a sad and pathetic strain, for, merry as

the dance is, a merry tune would not be in keeping; alternated with the crash of cymbals are desperate protests, as it were, appeal for mercy or reckless defiance, to be succeeded even by grotesque and reckless antic, all, however, to revert to the pleading of the original strains, led by the sad and winding horn! Such was the 'last waltz' of this night, which thrilled me, yet seemed to thrill Skipper himself far more, who led, as some one near me said, now 'like a demon,' and now like a suppliant begging for mercy. What was it? Where had I heard it? It was charged brimful of agitating memories. Some dancer near me said flippantly, 'Oh, that's the "Loved and Lost"—pretty thing, isn't it?' And, looking down on the card, I read:

“‘WALZER, “Geliebt und Verloren (Loved and Lost).” Müller.’

“Again, where had I heard it? For it was music that seemed to belong to other spheres far away, and to time quite distant. There it was again, returning to the original sad song—a complaining horn, full of grief and pathos, which invited such



dancers as were standing or sitting down to turn hurriedly, seize their partners, and once more rush into the revolving crowd! It was slow, and yet seemed fast as the many twinkling feet of the dancers. Skipper, mournfully sympathetic, beat time in a dreamy way, as though he were himself travelling back into the past, searching up some tender memories. Then turns briskly, and calls vehemently on his men, dashing into a frantic strophe, with crashing of cymbals and grasshopper tripping of violins; dancers growing frantic with their exertions, and all hurrying round like bacchantes; the strain presently relaxing and flagging a little, as though growing tired—to halt and jerk—then, after a pause, the sad horn winds out the original lament in the old pathetic fashion. For how long would it go on? Skipper knew well its charm, and was ungrudging in his allowance—would probably go over and over it again, so long as there were feet able to twirl. I know I could have listened till past the dawn.

“Airy, cloudy thoughts and recollections came with the music; it floats to him with a ‘dying fall,’

it rises again as the brass crashes out, and then, suddenly, flits by him the figure of his old love!"

That night all is made straight and the past forgotten. As much depended on the waltz, a sort of vivid description of the music and its alternations was thus attempted. "Word-painting" is the phrase. We hear the soft inviting sad song with which it began, the strange fluttering trippings into which it strayed—aside as it were from its original purpose—the relaxing, the sudden delirious burst which sent every one whirling round in headlong speed, and the last return to the sad song of the opening.

The story was duly printed, and went forth with a highly coloured portrait of a child, hung up in every shop window. I received a very handsome sum for my services, and was content.

Now begins the story of the waltz. With that curious literalness which characterizes our public or publics—for there are many—and the paper having so large a circulation, there were found persons to assume that there *must* be some waltz of the kind existing, and which had been

performed, if not at the ball in question, at least somewhere else! Orders were accordingly sent to various music-sellers for copies, which, as was natural, could not be supplied. A sagacious vendor thus applied to, wrote to the author in question, asking for a copy. It could be published, he said; and suggesting that if only performed in the author's brain hitherto, it could be brought into more tangible and profitable shape for all concerned.

On this hint I went to work, and having a fair, perhaps unscientific, musical taste—having before now written “little things of my own,” yea, and sung them too—I soon put together a string of waltzes. A near relative, also with a taste, had devised a tune which was popular in the family, and this I fashioned into an introduction. It was sent off; a clever professional artist took it in hand, shaped and trimmed and re-arranged, added something of his own, and to my astonishment declared that the introduction—a sad slow measure—was the very thing to be shaped for the rapid step of a waltz. This was somewhat of a surprise, and

it was believed that, in consequence, the whole would make certain shipwreck.

In due course the waltz made its appearance. The publisher was an enterprising person and knew how to advertise. Everywhere appeared "Loved and Lost." I think something was quoted from the newspaper in question. It began to be asked for—to sell. The next step was to have it arranged for any stringed orchestra. Next for the military bands, in what is known as "Boosey's Journal." Next it was arranged as a duet, *a quatre mains*. Next, in easy fashion for the juveniles. Next, our publisher came mysteriously to ask would I, "being a literary man, and, of course, a poet," write words for a "vocal arrangement"? I agreed to do so, and supplied the lines :—

"LOVED AND LOST

('GELIEBT UND VERLOREN').

"Now the city sleepeth,  
The night is calm and sweet,  
The dying embers rustle—  
There's silence in the street.  
Oh, my heart feels lonely  
As all the shadows fall ;

The spirits softly whisper,  
I hear their voices call :  
Loved and Lost ! they sigh,  
For grief shall never die.  
Through weary, weary Time,  
Sounds the dismal chime,  
Loved and Lost !

“ Now sinks the failing lamp—  
Through the lagging night,  
I hear the tender accents—  
I see a figure bright.  
Return, ye golden hours—  
Sweet vision, linger ! stay !  
The spirits softly whisper,  
And all dissolves away—  
Loved and Lost ! they sigh,  
For grief shall never die.  
All through the weary time  
Hark to the dismal chime,  
Loved and Lost !

“ So pass the heavy hours,  
I chide the long delay,  
The night so chill and dark—  
I wait the lingering day.  
At last, the blissful summons,  
What notes my heart enthrall !  
I'm coming, I am ready !—  
I hear their voices call—  
Loved, not Lost ! they cry,  
For love shall never die.  
And so, through endless time,  
Shall swell the joyful chime,  
Loved, not Lost ! ”

Presently the song was being sung at the Aquarium, Brighton. In short, the arrangements in every shape and form now fill a very respectable volume. But what strain was more refreshing than the first grind on the organ, coming round the street corner ; or, later, its regular performance by the German bands, and by the grand orchestra at the Covent Garden Concerts. Yet all this could be referred to the story itself, which was like the whirl of a waltz, dreamy and romantic and sad. When we came to reckon up the results, some sixty or seventy thousand copies had been disposed of. And some time later, on the copyright changing hands, it was disposed of for a sum of two hundred pounds.

Such is the highly satisfactory story of a waltz.

I may add one of the most amusing, original literary incidents of this generation, which was the foundation of that great enterprise, "England in the Nineteenth Century." An enterprising gentleman, well known from his giving "bold advertisement" of many things, some years ago

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conceived the idea of a purely literary venture—a vast cyclopædia which should pourtray England in all its aspects. For this purpose all the “eminent” literary ones of the day—which, of course, included many that had no claim at all to the title—were called on to supply descriptions; and, under the direction of the vivacious GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA, England was to be shown as it had never before been shown—its fashionable, theatrical, “seamy,” and other sides. To open the venture with all *éclat*, the hospitable speculator invited all his future contributors to the appropriate hostelry of the Albion, to a magnificent banquet, at which, I suppose, some hundred and fifty persons must have “sat down” to table. It was a curious miscellany of guests; for our hospitable host had gathered, not merely *littérateurs*, musicians, and artists, but many who were connected with his own profession, and who would be eager to push “England” by every legitimate means. Our chairman, who has a special happy vein for after-dinner speaking, opened the business in one of his best efforts, expounding

the plan, complimenting our host on his enterprise, and announcing, with much humour, that the venture would be started on a particular day from the offices of Messrs. Tinsley, in Catherine Street, Strand—"God *willing*," he added devoutly. Other speeches followed, everybody lavishly showering praise on the "enterprising" host; though, looking round at the vast number of *littérateurs* engaged, it seemed a puzzle how room was to be found for all in the ranks. It was a pleasant evening, and withal a merry one. There were French speeches and French songs, though news came in during the night that "poor Hodder" had been overset—an accident of which he died. Notwithstanding this flourishing, "England," while expecting every man to do his duty, unaccountably failed in hers. Articles were written—the first number even printed—when it was announced abruptly that the plan was given up. Everybody was paid handsomely. I confess I admired this proof of the good sense, and even wisdom, of our host. The truth was, on reflection, he had seen that the scheme could only end in loss.



From the Diary, too, I take a record of one of the drollest scenes conceivable. The officers of the garrison at a provincial town had hired the theatre for a performance. On the night it was crowded, and between the acts a lady that taught elocution had kindly consented to come forward to recite Edgar Allan Poe's poem of "The Bells." It will be remembered that the piece describes various descriptions of bells with singular power, the first strophe being devoted to the "wedding bells." We listened with pleasure to the melodious lines—

"Hear the music of the bells,  
Wedding bells,  
How they," etc.

She imparted a sort of tender nuptial tone, with a kind of conjugal grace, to the lines, and when the burden came she chimed it out :

"Bells, bells, bells,  
Bells, bells, bells, bells,"

beginning to peal them as if she were a bell-ringer herself! Her voice fell into a sing-song; her hand was raised to her ear as if to catch the distant chiming. Some few behind tittered, but we were

all more astonished than amused. The effect was odd. But at the next verse, which dealt with funeral bells, the lady became mortuary and dead-cart-like. She turned suddenly into a ghoul, and when it came to the burden we seemed to hear the chimes of an adjoining tower :

“To the pealing of the bells,  
Bee-yells, beeyulls,  
Boolls, boolls, bulls, bulls, bulls,  
Boles—BOWLES—BOWLES !”

Between each “toll” of “be-ells!” there was a long pause. She boomed out the words, as it were, while her hands, holding an imaginary rope, slowly and sadly drew it down at every peal. As this extraordinary mimetic representation set in, some began to look wonderingly at each other, then to smile, and at last a wave of tittering began to spread away even to the last benches. People roared and roared again. For myself, I can say I never witnessed anything more diverting, the exquisite sense being increased, since as the peals of laughter rose, the fair elocutionist was to be seen still slowly and gently pulling the rope, the booming being unheard, until, at last, her grasp

seemed to relax and an air of deep reproach and wounded sensibility, mixed with wonder, spread over her face. The better bred felt the reproach and hushed down the ill-timed merriment. We composed ourselves for the concluding verses, those on the alarm of fire, when the fire bells ring out and rouse the population. She began calmly—

“Hear the music of the bells,  
Fiery bells !”

But as the conflagration spread, her agitation increased, the peals of the bell followed short and fast, and when she got to the refrain—

“Bells, bells, bells !”

her arms worked at the rope, up and down, with frantic energy, and with every stroke came the word “bells ;” but contending with this were the hearty roars of laughter that rose again and again, some falling back in almost hysterical agonies : amid which the poor lady, wounded to the very heart, retired.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE TAVERN.

THE *littérateur*, if he be not a mere workman, has a number of plain entertainments which form the contemplative man's recreation, as old Isaac has it. He may live by himself, yet he is not solitary. He can people his room. His day goes by swiftly; at evening there is the dinner at the Club, or he can afford himself the chop at the old tavern, the Cock, on the sanded floor near to the hob. Thence home to the cheerful fire, the curtains drawn close, the friendly comforting pipe, and from, say, nine till midnight, the pleasant book of Memoirs or novel. For as a certain versifier chants—

“The student is not lonely—  
His children he can call;  
His books are his companions,  
His pictures on the wall.  
For him the kindly past unrolls  
Rich tapestries and rare;

At night he hears the sad patrols,  
The footsteps on the stair !  
The footsteps on the stair,  
As though a crowd were there !

“ The student is not lonely—  
His clock is on the wall ;  
His thoughts are ever company,  
His pipe is all in all.  
What visions in its fumes,  
What dreamings in his chair,  
And whisperings from the tombs,  
The footsteps on the stair !  
The footsteps on the stair,  
As though a crowd were there ! ”

No student will disdain the ancient charm of tavern life, which, oddly, still endures after a fashion. One can relish a visit to these places—not, of course, for companionship, but for the tranquil air and old-fashioned solitude amid numbers. The excellent Boswell says in his journal: “ We dined at an excellent inn, where Johnson expatiated on the felicity of England in its taverns and inns, and triumphed over the French for not having, in any perfection, the tavern life. ‘ There is no private house,’ said he, ‘ in which people can enjoy themselves so well as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good

things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that everybody should be easy; in the nature of things it cannot be: there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him; and no man but a very impudent dog indeed can as freely command what is in another man's house as if it was his own. Whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome: and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. No servants will attend you with the alacrity which waiters do who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.' He then repeated, with great emotion, Shenstone's lines:—

'Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,  
Where'er his stages may have been,  
May sigh to think he still has found  
The warmest welcome at an inn.'"

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Many and many a pleasant contemplative hour have been spent there, during many a year. To persons who have never entered a tavern in their lives, the COCK in Fleet Street has a certain charm of association, mainly owing to its having been celebrated in verse by the Poet Laureate: though perhaps few are familiar with what he has said or sung upon the subject, and fancy he has contented himself with the oft-quoted lines to the "plump head waiter at the Cock," which gave that personage an immortality as unexpected as perhaps it was undeserved. The lines on "Will Waterproof's" visit give no actual description of the place, but they have an extraordinary charm of pensive retrospect and solitary meditation, and convey an idea of the tone of the old place, and of the fancies it is likely to engender in some solitary and perhaps depressed guest. A series of pictures and moods is unfolded in this charming poem, with a dreamy rumination and pleasant sadness; visions float upwards in the curling fumes of the smoker's "long clay." But only a great poet could extract a refined

quintessence from the mixed vapours of chops and steaks. It was called, it will be remembered, "Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue, made at the Cock," and began—

"O plump head waiter at the Cock,  
To which I most resort,  
How goes the time? 'Tis five o'clock.  
Go fetch a pint of port :  
But let it not be such as that  
You set before chance comers,  
But such whose father-grape grew fat  
On Lusitanian summers."

We could wish that Doctor Johnson, who haunted Fleet Street, had been a frequenter of the Cock, an excellent subsisting specimen of the old taverns. Temple Bar passed away to utter indifference, and even some derision; the old monument was abused, jeered at; why did it cumber the ground? Yet it was certainly an attraction. That rumbling under the old gateway, as you entered Fleet Street, had a certain piquancy. Though it was giving way, it was but an idle pretext to say that nothing could be done to repair it. As you passed beneath, you felt you came within the precincts—you entered the City.



There was the Temple to the right; the old gilt cock, not without a certain air of strut and spirit, over the little stunted doorway of the tavern on the left. Now all is open and clear—the City has no beginning.

You go through a little squeezed and panelled passage to enter, and at the end of the passage you pass the little window of the “snuggery,” or bar, of a most inviting sort on a winter’s night, with something simmering on the hob. There sits one whom we might call “Miss Abbey”—like Dickens’s directress of the “Fellowship Porters”—to whom come the waiters, to receive the good hunches of bread, “new or stale,” which she, according to old unvarying rule, chinks down, or up, on the mahogany sill of the door. All is duly sawdusted. The ceiling of the long low tavern room is on our heads. The windows are small, like skylights, and give upon the hilly passage or lane outside. There are “boxes” or pews all round, with green curtains, of mahogany black as ebony. But the coveted places—say, about a sharp Christmas time—are the two that face the

good fire, on which sings a huge kettle. The curious old chimney-piece over it is of carved oak, with strange grinning faces, one of which used to delight Dickens, who invited people's attention to it particularly. There is a quaintness, too, in the china trays for the pewter mugs, each decorated with an effigy of a cock. On application, those in office produce to you a well-thumbed copy of Defoe's "History of the Plague," where the allusion is made to the establishment, and also a little circular box, in which is carefully preserved one of the copper tokens of the house—a little lean, battered piece, with the device of a cock, and the inscriptions "The Cock Alehouse" and "C. H. M. ATT. TEMPLE BARR. 1655."

It is a pity to see that there is not the conservative continuity in the line of waiters, which should be found in such a place. They seem to come and go—go rather than come. They used to be all "in key," as it were—had grown stout and old in the service. Latterly, time, in its whirligig changes, has brought round changes almost revolutionary, and we find strange, unsuit-

able beings in office. One was a dry, wiry man of despotic character, who administered on new modern principles, unsuited to the easy-going manners of the place. He dealt with the customers in a prompt, almost harsh style. He knew and recognized no distinction between old frequenters and new. I fancy he was not popular. I believe his place was in the new "restaurants;" but here, among the "boxes" and pews, and on the sanded floor, he was an anachronism. With the old *habitués* he was a perfect fly in the ointment. When he found himself distasteful, he adopted a strange device to recommend himself—the compounding a curious sauce, which he called "pick-ant," and which he invited guests to try. It did not much avail him, and death has since removed him to pay his own score. The good old "brown stout" is to be had in perfection at the Cock, and port good in its kind.

To stray into this cheerful hostelry of a chill winter's evening, finding snug shelter, with snow or rain outside, recalls one of those scenes in old inn parlours which Dickens was so fond of

describing. Here are cosy red curtains ; the world shut out ; warmth and light. Many of the creations of the great writer will be found here ; the Temple clerk, the retired solicitor—dry, quiet men of the Perker class, that have come across from their lonely chambers, and sit solitary, content with themselves, while they mix comforting brew of “hot Scotch” or “Irish.” These beings are interesting of their kind. At times there will hardly be a sound in the place, so placid is the old-world temper of the tavern. An old frequenter of the Cock remembers the tankards hung round in shining rows, each the special property of a customer.

The “all-knowing” Timbs—now, with Peter Cunningham, passed into the domain of the antiquities they both explored so well—was a frequenter of the place.

There are old rites and customs of service here which are maintained according to the tradition. Your good clay pipe is brought to you, and your twist of good and fragrant tobacco. And an anchorite would find it hard to resist the appa-

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ratus for mixing the "brew" of "hot drink" or "Scotch," the little pewter "noggin," the curling rind of lemon with the more juicy fragment of the interior, and the tiny glass holding a sufficiency of sugar, with the neat block-tin jug filled from the copper kettle boiling on the hob.

There are two other taverns almost *vis-à-vis*, and each with antique claims. One, the RAINBOW, which boasts a remote pedigree. But though you enter in the favourite Fleet Street style through a narrow passage, the place itself has undergone much restoration. "Dicks'," the other, is down one of the Temple lanes, dark and grimed, and somewhat rudely appointed, as though it wished to rest its claims entirely upon its "chops and steaks," and upon nothing else. "Dicks'" is labelled outside "Ben Jonson's Noted House," and boasts with reason, or without, to have enjoyed the custom of that eminent man. But the art and science of cooking chops is not nearly so highly esteemed as it used to be in the last century, when noblemen and gentlemen frequented taverns, and clubs did not exist, save at taverns.

I confess to loving Fleet Street—interesting in so many ways—almost as much as Dr. Johnson. It is remarkable for the curious little courts and passages into which you make entry, under small archways. These are Johnson's Court, Bolt Court, Racquet Court, and the like. Indeed, it is evident that the strange little passage which leads into the Cock must have been originally an entrance to one of these courts, on which the tavern gradually encroached. Much the same are found in the Borough, only these lead into great courts and inn yards. But in Fleet Street they are specially interesting. We can fancy the Doctor tramping up to his favourite tavern. Passing into the dark alley known as Wine Office Court, we come to the Old Cheshire Cheese, in a narrow flagged passage, the house or wall on the other side quite close and excluding all light. The Cheese looks, indeed, a sort of dark den, an inferior public-house—its grimed windows like those of a shop which we can look in at from the passage. On entering, there is the little bar facing us, and always the essence of snugness and cosi-

ness; to the right a small room, to the left a bigger one. The Cheshire Cheese offers its dirty walls and sawdusted floor, a few benches put against the wall, and two or three rude tables of the plainest kind against the wall. The grill is heard hissing in some back region, where the chop or small steak is being prepared; and it may be said, *en passant*, that the flavour and treatment of the chop and "small dinner steak" are there—breakfast and luncheon steaks also?—are quite different from those done on the more pretentious grills which have lately sprang up. On the wall is a testimonial portrait of a rather bloated waiter—Todd, I think, by name—quite suggestive of the late Mr. Liston. He is holding up his corkscrew of office to an expectant guest, either in a warning or exultant way, as if he had extracted the cork in a masterly style. Underneath is a boastful inscription that it was painted in 1812, to be hung up as an heirloom and handed down, having been executed under the reign of Dolamore, who then owned the place. Strange to say, the waiter at the Cheshire Cheese has been sung,

like his brother of the Cock, but not by such a bard. There is a certain irreverence; but the parody is a good one. It has its regular *habitués*; and on Saturday or Friday there is a famous "rump-steak pie," which draws a larger attendance; for it is considered that you may search the wide world round without matching that succulent delicacy. Hither it was that Dr. Johnson used to repair. True, neither Boswell, nor Hawkins, nor after them Mr. Croker, take note of the circumstance; but there were many things that escaped Mr. Croker, diligent as he was.

The left-hand room on entering, it seems, and the table on the right on entering that room, having the window at the end, was the table occupied by Johnson and his friends almost uniformly. This table and the room are now as they were when I first saw them, having had the curiosity to visit them recently. They were, and are, too, as Johnson and his friends left them in their time. Johnson's seat was always in the window, and Goldsmith sat on his left hand."

On the other side of Fleet Street we can see



the Mitre Tavern, closing up the end of a court—but not the old original Mitre where Johnson sat with Boswell. It was pulled down within living memory, and with it the corner in which the sage used to sit, and which was religiously marked by his bust. Yet even as it stands in its restoration, there is something quaint in the feeling as you enter through a low covered passage from Fleet Street, and see its cheerful open door at the end. There are other taverns with such approaches in the street. The Old Bell is curiously retired. The passage to the Mitre is as it was in Johnson's day, and his eyes must have been often raised to the old beams that support its roof. Even in its modern shape it retains much that is old-fashioned and rococo. It is like a country tavern in London, with its "ordinary" at noon—and a good one too—and its retirement so close and yet so far from the hum and clatter of Fleet Street.

We have yet another tavern to which we can track him, and which still "stands where it did." We pass from the open *Place* where St. Clement

Danes stands—one of the most Dutch-like spots in London, to which idea the quaint and rather elegant tower lends itself. To hear its chimes, not at midnight, but on some frosty evening nigh to Christmas, when the steeple is projected on a cool blue background, while you can see the shadows of the ringers in the bell-tower, is a picturesque feeling. They fling out their janglings more wildly than any peal in London; they are nearer the ground, and the hurly-burly is melodious enough. Those tones the Doctor often heard in Gough Square and Bolt Court, and inside he had his favourite seat, to this day reverently marked by a plate and inscription. Yet St. Clement's is in a precarious condition, and when the Law Courts are completed its fate will be decided.

It is, perhaps, GOUGH SQUARE, to which one of the little passages out of Fleet Street leads, that most faithfully preserves the memory of Johnson. It is rather a court than a square; so small is it that carriages could never have entered, and it is surrounded with good old brick houses that in

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their day were of some pretension. A worthy society has fixed a tablet in the wall, recording that "Here lived Samuel Johnson." The houses are of the good sound old brick ; some have carved porticoes, and one is set off by two rather elegant Corinthian pilasters. There is a pleasant flavour of grave old fashion and retirement about the place, and little has, as yet, been touched or pulled down. Johnson's house faces us, and is about the most conspicuous. He had, of course, merely rooms, as it is a rather large mansion, a little shaken and awry, queerly shaped about the upper story, but snug and compact. It is now a "commercial family boarding-house," and the hall is "cosy" to a degree, with its panelled dado running round and up the twisted stairs in short easy lengths of four or five steps, with a landing—which would suit the Doctor's chest. The whole is in harmony. We can see him labouring up the creaking stairs. A few peaceful trades are in occupation of the place—printers, and the like. It is an old-world spot, has an old-world air, and suggests a snug country inn.

But, turning to Essex Street, and not many doors down on the left, at the corner of a little cross-passage, leading to the pretty Temple gate, with its light ironwork, we come on the ESSEX HEAD TAVERN, an old, mean public-house of well-grimed brick. It was here, in his decay, that Johnson set up a kind of inferior club. Boswell is angry with Hawkins for calling it "an alehouse," as if in contempt ; but certainly, while the Cheshire Cheese, the Mitre, and the Cock are taverns, this seems to have been more within the category of an ale- or public-house. It has been so rearranged and altered to suit the intentions and purposes of the modern "public," that there is no tracing its former shape. In the passage there is a little room known as the "parlour," underneath which accommodation has been found for a cobbler's stall. They should surely have Johnson's "rules" hung up. Probably they never heard of his name, viewing it much as did an officer of the *Morning Advertiser* when notice of a birth was sent from an eminent novelist's family—it was then customary to insert such without charge in the

case of eminent *littérateurs*—"Oo is he?" was the reply; "what 'ouse does he keep?"

There is a strange sense in living in a large house, many rooms above untenanted, alone, the world abed. Yet, as I have said, this is not solitude. The turning over the old letters and diaries at midnight works as an enchanter's spell, and calls up figures and events shadowy enough. There is a little cabinet within easy reach, filled with such records—with memorials, relics even. These supply company.

“THE LITTLE SHOE!

- “Little Blue Shoe! sad little shoe!  
Face that was tender, heart that was true!
- “Full many and many a year has flown  
Since into the sunlight she came:  
And one there is left, and one there is gone—  
The tender, bright little Dame.  
I see her now—with the dancing eyes,  
The sea-shell tint, the glance so sweet.  
The fluttering lip and laugh of surprise—  
And the bright blue shoes on the little feet.  
Little Blue Shoe! gay little shoe!  
Face that was tender, heart that was true!
- “Full many and many a year has flown  
Since the sunny day in June

When she brightened the house that was now her own :  
Her laugh as gay as a tune.  
For up the stair, and down the stair,  
And busily through the street,  
Fluttered fast, in matronly care,  
The little blue shoes and restless feet.  
Little Blue Shoe ! bright little shoe !  
Face that was tender, heart that was true !

“ Now, many and many a year has flown,  
Each bringing a colder chill ;  
And one there is left, and one there is gone—  
The little feet are still.  
All in the days of November gloom  
The house I wander through,  
And find in a lone, forgotten room,  
Lost in a corner, the little Shoe !  
Little Blue Shoe ! sad little shoe !  
Face that was tender, heart that was true ! ”

## CHAPTER X.

### ENTERTAINMENT FOR BREAKFAST.

I HAVE of late often found a diverting pastime in watching for and noting, at the pleasant morning meal, the eccentric mistakes which for the last few years have given the Leading Journal a reputation of its own. An explorer of ordinary diligence can scarcely have failed every week to have lit upon some strange oddity or solecism in history, topography, tradition, or English grammar. Murder, or supposed murder, used to be headed "Murder," the idea being that the inverted commas left the description indistinct and the case unprejudiced ; and where a boy has fired a gun into a crowd, the incident has been introduced ironically as "Accident ?"

It was amusing to find the late Cardinal Cullen

described as the "Pope's Legatee" in Ireland, and no less entertaining to hear that the Rev. Mr. Carlyon—who becomes further on the Rev. Mr. Collier—had been suspended for his "views on the Real *Referce*" (*i.e.* Real Presence). Herr Krupp once cast a singular cannon, weighing so many *kilomètres* (as who should say weighing so many *yards*!). We are told of a wonderful volume of plays, sold at the Didot sale, "revised by Molière *after* his death;" of "a collection of fine *arts*," sent to Paris for exhibition; of Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone having gone down to *Mentone*, the seat of Lord Rosebery; of a ship ordered to be "removed, repaired, and replaced"—the allusion being to its broken shaft. A funeral is described, which "had a picturesque *though* melancholy effect;" while praise is given to the late Pope worthy of an eminent City man—"in *spite* of many losses he retained *respect*." Presently we hear of "innocuous," instead of innocuous, pleasures; of Protection being at its last "grasp;" of something taking place in the year 7847; of "Henri Monmir, the well-known novelist and dramatist, *i.e.* Henri Monnier; of



“the Prince and Princess of Walse;” of “M. Mamel,” the well-known baritone. Allusion is made to the “hatchet with which Captain Cook was killed” as being in some museum; but the navigator, it is well known, was stabbed. An accident is described as having occurred to “a retired gentleman.” The Duke of Guise, not De Guiche, is spoken of as the Duke of Aumale’s son; Sir H. Drummond Wolff is made into a baronet; Lord Dorchester appears as an Earl, and Lord Lurgan as a Knight of the Garter. One Lady Cooper died not long ago, and was bewailed as Lady Cowper. A picture of Delaunay, painted by the composer Gounod, is pronounced an interesting effort; but it turns out that it is Gounod who had sat to Delaunay. To convey that Lord Hartington put a question in the House, to which he received an answer, the following phrase is used:—“Lord Hartington asked, and *asked successfully*,” *i.e.* had succeeded in asking, or in getting an answer, or in getting such an answer as he thought was a success. An agreement for the carriage of the mails was made in *consort* with Mr. Inman. A

very droll effect was produced by the appearance of a letter from the Prince of Wales's Secretary. No doubt the foreman had told the compositor, "Here is Mr. Knollys' letter," giving the correct pronunciation; and it was accordingly printed with the signature, "W. KNOWLES." A prisoner is indicted *with* certain felonious acts; and a personage, or site—I forget which—is declared, in an artistic sense, to be capable of "obeliskal treatment."

Equally droll are the allusions to the Caudine Forks, which it is declared used to be solemnly *erected* every session in Lord John Russell's day, in order that the Dissenters might be forced to pass *under* them. These "forks," of course, were nothing but a mountain pass. The writer had, no doubt, some hazy notion of passing under the yoke. Then we have an allusion to that curious "list of Darius' instruments of music in the Book of Daniel;" the instruments being Nebuchadnezzar's, not Darius'. In a more poetical vein the *Leading Journal* talks feelingly of the bells of Shandon sounding "so grand on" Shannon's shore. They

were, or are, heard on the river Lee. Speaking of a debate which it said "began at a quarter to four in the afternoon, and ended at a quarter to six next morning," it says, with contempt, "If it be asked what passed in this long interval, the answer must be, twenty-six hours." There is no "must" in the case, for the interval was fourteen hours. Not long after there was a description of a play called "New Babylon;" and a scene is mentioned in which two vessels appear to come in collision. "A steamer going down before the outraged red-and-green light of the other." A steamer that "collides" may be said to "outrage" the other; but why should the "red-and-green light" be made the centre of this sentiment?

On the death of Count Palikao there was the usual mortuary retrospect, in which was the singular blunder: "It was he who during the fatal days of July and August, 1870, made himself famous by his *bouton de guêtre*. It was he who narrated a story of the Prussian dragoons, and who said 'if Paris knew,' etc. Now, it was Lebœuf who spoke of "the button on the gaiters;" and it

became evident it was merely a slip, and not a very heinous one; but it is characteristic of the writer that, instead of owning the mistake, he should attempt to justify his own exactness. "Owing to the *telegraphic omission of a line*," he wrote, "a remark was attributed to him (Palikao) which was uttered by his predecessor." An allusion to Lebœuf had been dropped out, and the whole should run, "It was he who during the fatal days of 1870, *even after* Marshal Lebœuf had made himself famous by the *bouton de guêtre*, narrated the story of the Prussian dragoons," etc. It will be seen at once that this could never have been the original shape, as the "*even after*" is nonsense. There is no connection whatever between Lebœuf and his *bouton* and Palikao's declaration. Certain Madrid festivities are described in the following jargon:—"From nine o'clock in the evening the hall was crowded from the stalls to the fourth gallery, the front boxes being filled with *all that Madrid contains of noble, elegant, beautiful, and young*. . . . Here the mingled magnificence exceeded in picturesque and elegant variety every-

thing imaginable." Then one sentence, after describing the ladies' toilettes, ends thus: These, "and a hundred others, whose names Spain repeats with pride and admiration, *looking about them and regarded with curiosity, formed round the Royal Lodge the most beautiful and seductive circle a romantic imagination could devise.*" The word "Lodge" is, of course, meant as a translation of "Loge." On another day it spoke with pitying contempt of the "apocryphal signal which has become as religiously held an article of faith in the English navy as the 'Vive la République' of the sinking Vengeur in the French." This, it seems, alludes to Nelson's signal, "England expects every man to do his duty." Apocryphal! No doubt the writer has some hazy idea of Cambronne's speech and the Duke's "Up, guards!" but the immortal signal is historical, and vouched for by captains of the fleet and others.

The use of metaphors is even more extraordinary. Unlike Lord Castlereagh, who made the "features of a case hinge," the gentleman who chiefly deals in similes in Printing-house Square

carries them out with audacious precision. Thus, after likening the European Assurance Office to a shark, the details were elaborated with scientific consistency. "The societies it had successively swallowed down," it seems, "had themselves subjected others to the same process. The British Nation Life Assurance Association, for instance, contained inside it ten other life-offices which it was endeavouring to digest." "A strange and horrible spectacle was presented when it was ripped up. Other fishes, great and small, were disinterred in handfuls from their living tomb, and lay writhing and mouthing at each other in a fashion even to astound an Equity barrister." "It was impossible to say where they ended and the European Society began. Heads and tails and scales were sticking here and there out of their stepmother's carcass in every direction." At the same time elaborate metaphor is often dangerous; and when a country is likened to a man deprived of his arms and legs it is a mistake to employ a nut as the simile of a body. "It will be evident that when arrangements of this kind are made, Turkey will be reduced at

*its extremities*, but will retain *a solid kernel* of rude territory." \*

These specimens will show that much entertainment, independently of its news and notes, can be extracted from the columns of the *Leading Journal* by the observant reader.

\* I do not assume the credit of discovering all these diverting mistakes, many of them having been noted in the journals, *The Pall Mall* and *St. James's Gazette*, under Mr. Greenwood's direction.

END OF VOL. I.







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