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## A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BY CHARLES DICKENS. .



### STAVE ONE.

MARLEY'S GHOST.

**M**ARLEY was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change for anything he chose to put his hand to.

Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, his sole mourner.

Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name, however. There it yet stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door,—Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley. He answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, was Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! External heat and cold had little influence on him. No warmth could warm, no cold could chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather did n't know where to have him. The heaviest rain and snow and hail and sleet could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect, — they often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge.

Once upon a time — of all the good days in the year, upon a Christmas eve — old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting, foggy weather; and the city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open, that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who, in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he could n't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation Scrooge had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge; "humbug!"

"Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure?"

"I do. Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I had my will, every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart! He should!"

"Uncle!"

"Nephew, keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

“Keep it! But you don’t keep it.”

“Let me leave it alone, then. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!”

“There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say, Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round, — apart from the veneration due to its sacred origin, if anything belonging to it *can* be apart from that, — as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-travellers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!”

The clerk in the tank involuntarily applauded.

“Let me hear another sound from *you*,” said Scrooge, “and you ’ll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! — You ’re quite a powerful speaker, sir,” he added, turning to his nephew. “I wonder you don’t go into Parliament.”

“Don’t be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us, to-morrow.”

Scrooge said that he would see him — yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him in that extremity first.

“But why?” cried Scrooge’s nephew. “Why?”

“Why did you get married?”

“Because I fell in love.”

“Because you fell in love!” growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. “Good afternoon!”

“Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?”

“Good afternoon.”

“I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?”

“Good afternoon.”

“I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I’ll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!”

“Good afternoon!”

“And A Happy New-Year!”

“Good afternoon!”

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. The clerk, in letting Scrooge’s nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge’s office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

“Scrooge and Marley’s, I believe,” said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. “Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?”

“Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago, this very night.”

“At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge,” said the gentleman, taking up a pen, “it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.”

“Are there no prisons?”

“Plenty of prisons. But under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the unoffending multitude, a few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time of all others when Want is keenly felt and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?”

“Nothing!”

“You wish to be anonymous?”

“I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don’t make merry myself at Christmas, and I can’t afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the prisons and the workhouses, — they cost enough, — and those who are badly off must go there.”

“Many can’t go there; and many would rather die.”

“If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.”

At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge, dismounting from his stool, tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the Tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

“ You ’ll want all day to-morrow, I suppose ? ”

“ If quite convenient, sir.”

“ It ’s not convenient, and it ’s not fair. If I was to stop half a crown for it, you ’d think yourself mightily ill-used, I ’ll be bound ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ And yet you don’t think *me* ill-used, when I pay a day’s wages for no work.”

“ It ’s only once a year, sir.”

“ A poor excuse for picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December ! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier *next* morning.”

The clerk promised that he would ; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honor of its being Christmas eve, and then ran home as hard as he could pelt, to play at blind-man’s-buff.

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern ; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker’s book, went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of building up a yard. The building was old enough now, and dreary enough ; for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices.

Now it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particu-

lar about the knocker on the door of this house, except that it was very large ; also, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place ; also, that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the city of London. And yet Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change, not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face, with a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but it looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look, — with ghostly spectacles turned up upon its ghostly forehead.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again. He said, "Pooh, pooh!" and closed the door with a bang.

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every room above, and every cask in the wine-merchant's cellars below, appeared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs. Slowly, too, trimming his candle as he went.

Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for its being very dark. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. He had just enough recollection of the face to desire to do that.

Sitting-room, bedroom, lumber-room, all as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa ; a small fire in the grate ; spoon and basin ready ; and the



little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-room as usual. Old fire-guard, old shoes, two fish-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he took off his cravat, put on his dressing-gown and slippers and his night-cap, and sat down before the very low fire to take his gruel.

As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room, and communicated, for some purpose now forgotten, with a chamber in the highest story of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that, as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. Soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This was succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below, as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine-merchant's cellar.

Then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

It came on through the heavy door, and a spectre passed into the room before his eyes. And upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried, "I know him! Marley's ghost!"

The same face, the very same. Marley in his pigtail,

usual waistcoat, tights, and boots. His body was transparent; so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind.

Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now.

No, nor did he believe it even now. Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him, — though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes, and noticed the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head and chin, — he was still incredulous.

“How now!” said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever. “What do you want with me?”

“Much!” — Marley’s voice, no doubt about it.

“Who are you?”

“Ask me who I *was*.”

“Who *were* you, then?”

“In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.”

“Can you — can you sit down?”

“I can.”

“Do it, then.”

Scrooge asked the question, because he did n’t know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair; and felt that, in the event of its being impossible, it might involve the necessity of an embarrassing explanation. But the ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it.

“You don’t believe in me.”

“I don’t.”

“What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?”

“I don’t know.”

“Why do you doubt your senses?”

“Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There’s more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!”

Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel in his heart by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his horror.

But how much greater was his horror when, the phantom taking off the bandage round its head, as if it were too warm to wear in-doors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!

“Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me? Why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?”

“It is required of every man, that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. I cannot tell you all I would. A very little more is permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house, — mark me! — in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!”

“Seven years dead. And travelling all the time? You travel fast?”

“On the wings of the wind.”

“You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years.”

“O blind man, blind man! not to know that ages of incessant labor by immortal creatures for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed. Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life’s opportunities misused! Yet I was like this man; I once was like this man!”

“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, benevolence, were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business.”

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

“Hear me! My time is nearly gone.”

“I will. But don’t be hard upon me! Don’t be flowery, Jacob! Pray!”

“I am here to-night to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.”

“You were always a good friend to me. Thank’ce!”

“You will be haunted by Three Spirits.”

“Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?  
I — I think I ’d rather not.”

“Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow night, when the bell tolls One. Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third, upon the next night, when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!”

It walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that, when the apparition reached it, it was wide open.

Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. Scrooge tried to say, “Humbug!” but stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the invisible world, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, much in need of repose, he went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep on the instant.

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## STAVE TWO.

## THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS.

WHEN Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that, looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber, until suddenly the church clock tolled a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy ONE.

Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn aside by a strange figure, — like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprang a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

“Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?”

“I am!”

“Who and what are you?”

“I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.”

“Long past?”

“No. Your past. The things that you will see with me are shadows of the things that have been; they will have no consciousness of us.”

Scrooge then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

“Your welfare. Rise, and walk with me!”

It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that the bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose; but, finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped its robe in supplication.

“I am a mortal, and liable to fall.”

“Bear but a touch of my hand *there*,” said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, “and you shall be upheld in more than this!”

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood in the busy thoroughfares of a city. It was made plain enough by the dressing of the shops that here, too, it was Christmas time.

The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

“Know it! Was I apprenticed here!”

They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welsh wig, sitting behind such a high desk that, if he had been two inches taller, he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excite

ment, "Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it's Fezziwig, alive again!"

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his organ of benevolence; and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice, "Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!"

A living and moving picture of Scrooge's former self, a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-'prentice.

"Dick Wilkins, to be sure!" said Scrooge to the Ghost. "My old fellow-'prentice, bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!"

"Yo ho, my boys!" said Fezziwig. "No more work to-night. Christmas eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up, before a man can say Jack Robinson! Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here!"

Clear away! There was nothing they would n't have cleared away, or could n't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life forevermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug and warm and dry and bright a ball-room as you would desire to see upon a winter's night.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned



like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend the milkman. In they all came one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. Away they all went, twenty couple at once; hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round in various stages of affectionate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple starting off again, as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and not a bottom one to help them. When this result was brought about, old Fezziwig, clapping his hands to stop the dance, cried out, "Well done!" and the fiddler plugged his hot face into a pot of porter especially provided for that purpose.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a great piece of Cold Boiled, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer. But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler struck up "Sir Roger de Coverley." Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple, too; with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners; people

who were not to be trifled with; people who *would* dance, and had no notion of walking.

But if they had been twice as many, — four times, — old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to *her*, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance. You could n't have predicted, at any given time, what would become of 'em next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance, — advance and retire, turn your partner, bow and courtesy, corkscrew, thread the needle, and back again to your place, — Fezziwig “cut,” — cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs.

When the clock struck eleven this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side the door, and, shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds, which were under a counter in the back shop.

“A small matter,” said the Ghost, “to make these silly folks so full of gratitude. He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money, — three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?”

“It is n't that,” said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter self, — “it is n't that, Spirit. He has the power to ren-

der us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome, a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

He felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing particular."

"Something, I think?"

"No, no. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all."

"My time grows short," observed the Spirit. "Quick!"

This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again he saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life.

He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a black dress, in whose eyes there were tears.

"It matters little," she said softly to Scrooge's former self. "To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve."

"What Idol has displaced you?"

"A golden one. You fear the world too much. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?"

"What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you. Have I ever sought release from our engagement?"

"In words, no. Never."

“In what, then?”

“In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as its great end. If you were free to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl; or, choosing her, do I not know that your repentance and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were.”

“Spirit! remove me from this place.”

“I told you these were shadows of the things that have been,” said the Ghost. “That they are what they are, do not blame me!”

“Remove me!” Scrooge exclaimed. “I cannot bear it! Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!”

As he struggled with the Spirit he was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He had barely time to reel to bed before he sank into a heavy sleep.



### STAVE THREE.

#### THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS.

SCROOGE awoke in his own bedroom. There was no doubt about that. But it and his own adjoining sitting-room, into which he shuffled in his slippers, attracted by a great light there, had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove. The leaves

of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney, as that petrification of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped upon the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-checked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and great bowls of punch. In easy state upon this couch there sat a Giant glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and who raised it high to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

"Come in, — come in! and know me better, man! I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. Look upon me! You have never seen the like of me before!"

"Never."

"Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?" pursued the Phantom.

"I don't think I have, I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?"

"More than eighteen hundred."

"A tremendous family to provide for! Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it."

“Touch my robe!”

Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast.

The room and its contents all vanished instantly, and they stood in the city streets upon a snowy Christmas morning.

Scrooge and the Ghost passed on, invisible, straight to Scrooge's clerk's; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinklings of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fifteen “Bob” a week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house!

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and, getting the corners of his monstrous shirt-collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honor of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and, basking in luxurions thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until

the slow potatoes, bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

“What has ever got your precious father, then?” said Mrs. Cratchit. “And your brother Tiny Tim! And Martha warn’t as late last Christmas day by half an hour!”

“Here’s Martha, mother!” said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

“Here’s Martha, mother!” cried the two young Cratchits. “Hurrah! There’s *such* a goose, Martha!”

“Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!” said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her.

“We’d a deal of work to finish up last night,” replied the girl, “and had to clear away this morning, mother!”

“Well! Never mind so long as you are come,” said Mrs. Cratchit. “Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!”

“No, no! There’s father coming,” cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. “Hide, Martha, hide!”

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter, exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

“Why, where’s our Martha?” cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

“Not coming,” said Mrs. Cratchit.

“Not coming!” said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim’s blood-horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant, — “not coming upon Christmas day!”

Martha did n’t like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

“And how did little Tim behave?” asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart’s content.

“As good as gold,” said Bob, “and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember, upon Christmas day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.”

Bob’s voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool beside the fire; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs, — as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby, — compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the



hob to simmer, Master Peter and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried, Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they had n't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the

room alone, — too nervous to bear witnesses, — to take the pudding up, and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose, — a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastry-cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered, — flushed but smiling proudly, — with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half a quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

O, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly, too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovelful of chestnuts on the fire.

'Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass, — two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and crackled noisily. Then Bob proposed: —

“A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!”

Which all the family re-echoed.

“God bless us every one!” said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side, upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

Scrooge raised his head speedily, on hearing his own name.

“Mr. Scrooge!” said Bob; “I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!”

“The Founder of the Feast, indeed!” cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. “I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.”

“My dear,” said Bob, “the children! Christmas day.”

“It should be Christmas day, I am sure,” said she, “on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!”

“My dear,” was Bob’s mild answer, “Christmas day.”

“I’ll drink his health for your sake and the day’s,” said Mrs. Cratchit, “not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy New Year! He’ll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!”

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness in it. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn’t care twopence for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. Bob Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five and sixpence weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at the idea of Peter’s being a man of business; and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collars, as if he were deliberating what particular investments he should favor when he came into the receipt of that bewildering income. Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner’s, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie abed to-morrow morning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord some days before, and how the lord “was much about as tall as Peter”; at which Peter pulled up his collars so high that you couldn’t have seen his head if

you had been there. All this time the chestnuts and the jug went round and round ; and by and by they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow, from Tiny Tim, who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family ; they were not well dressed ; their shoes were far from being water-proof ; their clothes were scanty ; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time ; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.

It was a great surprise to Scrooge, as this scene vanished, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognize it as his own nephew's, and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew.

It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humor. When Scrooge's nephew laughed, Scrooge's niece by marriage laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends, being not a bit behindhand, laughed out lustily.

"He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live!" cried Scrooge's nephew. "He believed it too!"

"More shame for him, Fred!" said Scrooge's niece,

indignantly. Bless those women! they never do anything by halves. They are always in earnest.

She was very pretty, exceedingly pretty. With a dimpled, surprised-looking, capital face; a ripe little mouth that seemed made to be kissed, — as no doubt it was; all kinds of good little dots about her chin, that melted into one another when she laughed; and the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature's head. Altogether she was what you would have called provoking, but satisfactory, too. O, perfectly satisfactory!

“He's a comical old fellow,” said Scrooge's nephew, “that's the truth; and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He don't lose much of a dinner.”

“Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner,” interrupted Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner; and, with the dessert upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by lamp-light.

“Well, I am very glad to hear it,” said Scrooge's nephew, “because I have n't any great faith in these young housekeepers. What do *you* say, Topper?”

Topper clearly had his eye on one of Scrooge's niece's sisters, for he answered that a bachelor was a wretched outcast, who had no right to express an opinion on the

subject. Whereat Scrooge's niece's sister — the plump one with the lace tucker, not the one with the roses — blushed.

After tea they had some music. For they were a musical family, and knew what they were about, when they sung a Glee or Catch, I can assure you, — especially Topper, who could growl away in the bass like a good one, and never swell the large veins in his forehead, or get red in the face over it.

But they did n't devote the whole evening to music. After a while they played at forfeits; for it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself. There was first a game at blind-man's-buff, though. And I no more believe Topper was really blinded than I believe he had eyes in his boots. Because the way in which he went after that plump sister in the lace tucker was an outrage on the credulity of human nature. Knocking down the fire-irons, tumbling over the chairs, bumping up against the piano, smothering himself among the curtains, wherever she went there went he! He always knew where the plump sister was. He would n't catch anybody else. If you had fallen up against him, as some of them did, and stood there, he would have made a feint of endeavoring to seize you, which would have been an affront to your understanding, and would instantly have sidled off in the direction of the plump sister.

“Here is a new game,” said Scrooge. “One half-hour, Spirit, only one!”

It was a Game called Yes and No, where Scrooge's

nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what; he only answering to their questions yes or no, as the case was. The fire of questioning to which he was exposed elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and was n't made a show of, and was n't led by anybody, and did n't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every new question put to him, this nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last the plump sister cried out, —

“I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!”

“What is it?” cried Fred.

“It's your uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!”

Which it certainly was. Admiration was the universal sentiment, though some objected that the reply to “Is it a bear?” ought to have been “Yes.”

Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of heart, that he would have drunk to the unconscious company in an inaudible speech. But the whole scene passed off in the breath of the last word spoken by his nephew; and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels.

Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit



stood beside sick-beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority had not made fast the door, and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his precepts. Suddenly, as they stood together in an open place, the bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it no more. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and, lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming like a mist along the ground towards him.



## STAVE FOUR.

### THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS.

THE Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

“I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come? Ghost of the Future! I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your

purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?"

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

"Lead on! Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!"

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them. But there they were in the heart of it; on 'Change, amongst the merchants.

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

"No," said a great fat man with a monstrous chin, "I don't know much about it either way. I only know he's dead."

"When did he die?" inquired another.

"Last night, I believe."

"Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he'd never die."

"God knows," said the first, with a yawn.

"What has he done with his money?" asked a red-faced gentleman.

"I have n't heard," said the man with the large chin. "Company, perhaps. He has n't left it to me. That's all I know. By, by!"

Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Spirit should attach importance to conversation apparently so trivial; but feeling assured that it must have

some hidden purpose, he set himself to consider what it was likely to be. It could scarcely be supposed to have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost's province was the Future.

He looked about in that very place for his own image; but another man stood in his accustomed corner, and though the clock pointed to his usual time of day for being there, he saw no likeness of himself among the multitudes that poured in through the Porch. It gave him little surprise, however; for he had been revolving in his mind a change of life, and he thought and hoped he saw his new-born resolutions carried out in this.

They left this busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, to a low shop where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal were bought. A gray-haired rascal, of great age, sat smoking his pipe.

Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman, similarly laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black. After a short period of blank astonishment, in which the old man with the pipe had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh.

“Let the charwoman alone to be the first!” cried she who had entered first. “Let the laundress alone to be the second; and let the undertaker's man alone to be the third. Look here, old Joe, here's a chance! If we have n't all three met here without meaning it!”

“You could n't have met in a better place. You were

made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two ain't strangers. What have you got to sell? What have you got to sell?"

"Half a minute's patience, Joe, and you shall see."

"What odds then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber?" said the woman. "Every person has a right to take care of themselves. *He* always did! Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose."

Mrs. Dilber, whose manner was remarkable for general propitiation, said, "No, indeed, ma'am."

"If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked old screw, why was n't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself."

"It's the truest word that ever was spoke; it's a judgment on him."

"I wish it was a little heavier judgment, and it should have been, you may depend upon it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it."

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening the bundle, and dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff.

"What do you call this? Bed-curtains!"

"Ah! Bed-curtains! Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now."

"*His* blankets?"

"Whose else's, do you think? He is n't likely to take

cold without 'em, I dare say. Ah! You may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one too. They'd have wasted it by dressing him up in it, if it had n't been for me."

Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror.

"Spirit! I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way now. Merciful Heaven, what is this?"

The scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bare, uncurtained bed. A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon this bed; and on it, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this plundered unknown man.

"Spirit, let me see some tenderness connected with a death, or this dark chamber, Spirit, will be forever present to me."

The Ghost conducted him to poor Bob Cratchit's house, — the dwelling he had visited before, — and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in needlework. But surely they were very quiet!

"'And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them.'"

Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The boy must have read them out, as he and the Spirit crossed the threshold. Why did he not go on?

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

“The color hurts my eyes,” she said.

The color? Ah, poor Tiny Tim!

“They’re better now again. It makes them weak by candle-light; and I would n’t show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time.”

“Past it, rather,” Peter answered, shutting up his book. “But I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother.”

“I have known him walk with—I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.”

“And so have I,” cried Peter. “Often.”

“And so have I,” exclaimed another. So had all.

“But he was very light to carry, and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble,—no trouble. And there is your father at the door!”

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter—he had need of it, poor fellow—came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child, a little cheek against his face, as if they said, “Don’t mind it, father. Don’t be grieved!”

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday, he said.

“Sunday! You went to-day, then, Robert?”

“Yes, my dear,” returned Bob. “I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you’ll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child! My little child!”

He broke down all at once. He could n’t help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart, perhaps, than they were.

“Spectre,” said Scrooge, “something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was, with the covered face, whom we saw lying dead?”

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him to a dismal, wretched, ruinous churchyard.

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One.

“Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of the things that May be only?”

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

“Men’s courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!”

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and, following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, — EBENEZER SCROOGE.

“Am I that man who lay upon the bed? No, Spirit!

O no, no! Spirit! hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope? Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me by an altered life."

For the first time the kind hand faltered.

"I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. O, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!"

Holding up his hands in one last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

Yes, and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard.

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist, no night; clear, bright, stirring, golden day.

"What's to-day?" cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

"EII?"

"What's to-day, my fine fellow?"

"To-day! Why, CHRISTMAS DAY."

"It's Christmas day! I have n't missed it. Hallo, my fine fellow!"



“Hallo!”

“Do you know the Poulterer’s, in the next street but one, at the corner?”

“I should hope I did.”

“An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they’ve sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize Turkey, — the big one?”

“What, the one as big as me?”

“What a delightful boy! It’s a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck!”

“It’s hanging there now.”

“Is it? Go and buy it.”

“Walk-ER!” exclaimed the boy.

“No, no, I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell ’em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction where to take it. Come back with the man, and I’ll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I’ll give you half a crown!”

The boy was off like a shot.

“I’ll send it to Bob Cratchit’s! He sha’n’t know who sends it. It’s twice the size of Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never made such a joke as sending it to Bob’s will be!”

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one; but write it he did, somehow, and went down stairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the poulterer’s man.

“It *was* a Turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird. He would have snapped ’em short off in a minute, like sticks of sealing-wax.

Scrooge dressed himself "all in his best," and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and, walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humored fellows said, "Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!" And Scrooge said often afterwards, that, of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears.

In the afternoon, he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.

He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it.

"Is your master at home, my dear?" said Scrooge to the girl. Nice girl! Very.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he, my love?"

"He's in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress."

"He knows me," said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. "I'll go in here, my dear."

"Fred!"

"Why, bless my soul!" cried Fred, "who's that?"

"It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"

Let him in! It is a mercy he did n't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when *he* came. So did the plump sister when *she* came. So did every one when *they* came. Won-

derful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. O, he was early there! If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it. The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. Bob was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the Tank.

Bob's hat was off before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

"Hallo!" growled Scrooge in his accustomed voice, as near as he could feign it. "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

"I am very sorry, sir. I *am* behind my time."

"You are? Yes. I think you are. Step this way, if you please."

"It's only once a year, sir. It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir."

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend. I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," Scrooge continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again, — "and therefore I am about to raise your salary!"

Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler.

"A merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped

him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavor to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy a second coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him; but his own heart laughed, and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with spirits, but lived in that respect upon the total-abstinence principle ever afterward; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us, every one!

NOTE. — The shorter version of the CHRISTMAS CAROL, condensed by Dickens himself for his public readings, has been chosen for use here, both because this collection is partly intended for social readings and because in the editor's opinion the condensation improved the story.



## THE HAUNTED CRUST.

BY KATHERINE SAUNDERS.

**C**AN'T you remember Jerry Rouse, sir, the little cobbler of Pickersgill? How should you, though? Poor Jerry! I suppose his busy little fingers were stiff and cold in his coffin before you saw the light.

It was on a Christmas eve, forty years ago, that that poor little cobbler, who lies in the churchyard yonder, nothing but senseless dust, was a piece of living flesh and blood, suffering and shaking under such a temptation, that if I told what it was, and that he gave way to it, there are those who would n't let him rest in peace among their kith and kin, — no, not now, though it's forty years ago; they'd go and tear his bones out of their grave this very night, — this very instant.

Now, at the time I'm speaking of, the street running down to the river was the High Street of Pickersgill, and what they call the High Street now was a long, close court, called Gadshill-in-the-Fields. Come, come, Mistress Sicklemore, you're not so young but you remember that, surely? And you remember Jerry, now, I'll be

bound. Call him to mind, — a little man, know you, a tiny little man, with coal-black eyes and hair, and a pale, sickly, happy little face. Have n't you seen him sitting at the open window of number three, the dirtiest house in the court? Of course you have; and his black-eyed, ragged little children playing outside.

His wife, Nance, was a well-looking body enough in her day, but such a scold, and such a dirty, muddling kind of woman, that if Jerry had n't had her, nobody else would. She set her cap at me once, did Nance; but there! what kind of cap was it? so black you wouldn't have picked it up in the street. However, Jerry had a kind heart, you know; and seeing how Nance was getting a longish way on the other side of her teens, and sourer and sourer every day, out of very charity he went to her mother, who was beginning to scout her, and says he, —

“Mistress Jessop, will you put in a word for me with Nance? I have n't a farthing till I get paid for heeling these boots in my hand,” he says. “I earn my bread from hand to mouth, but I think I could earn Nance's too, if she 'd be so kind as to say yes.”

“Do you know what kind of a temper she is?” says Nance's mother.

“Yes, ma'am,” says Jerry; “but not having much temper myself, I think we might get along very well.”

“Do you know she's the dirtiest thing about a house that ever was?”

“That, ma'am,” said Jerry, “is the chief consideration; I know there's not another woman in Pickersgill would put up with my ways in that respect, for I can't abide

cleaning, ma'am; wet boards, and the sight of pails of water about, would be the death of me. So, if you see no objections yourself, and Nance 'ud be so very kind, I think, ma'am, as it 'ud be a very happy union."

And so it was, in Jerry's opinion; and I suppose he was the best judge, was n't he? Nance Jessop kept to her part in the agreement, at any rate; for a dirtier place than Jerry's little house at Gadshill-in-the-Fields, and dirtier children than Jerry's seven, you would n't light on in a month's march.

I say seven; but, now, Jerry's eldest girl was an exception to all the rest. She grew up as fair and clean, in all that dirt, as a flower 'll grow up out of the mould that's nourished it. I've looked at her as I've come through the court many a time, and never been able to get her face from before my eye all day afterwards. There 'ud be five black-eyed, big-headed little things moping about in the dirt, some inside the door, and some out, while Jerry sat in his window whistling over his work; and there on the doorstep 'ud be little Mercy. I've seen her sitting there a good many times, yet I've never seen the same look on that child's face twice in my life; she seemed always so different from the others, so busy in her thoughts. I never saw her play, ever since she was out of her mother's arms; she seemed to do nothing but sit and read, and nurse babies on the doorstep.

Once, when I was having a gossip with Jerry, — who had his share of tongue, I can tell you, — some boys in the court got teasing little humpbacked Tommy, and Mercy's face got quite fierce as she watched them. She asked Jerry to speak to them two or three times, but he

always said, "O, Tommy does n't mind it!" So I went myself and sent the boys off, and brought back Tommy to where his brothers and sisters were at play.

"Do you think he does mind it, then?" I said to Mercy.

"I don't know," she said, with a great sigh. "I do. I mind it so much, when they're mocked and pointed at, that I wish they were dead, and I'm always wishing they'd never been born."

You see, the poor child felt all that Tommy would have felt if he had been right sharp, which he was n't; and all that Jerry would have felt, if his eyes had been open to the wretched bringing up of his children, which they were not; and all that Nance would have felt, if she'd been a different kind of woman: but as for poor Nance, she thought if she clouted them all round once or twice a day, and kept them from getting to any water, she was giving them as good an education as a poor cobbler's children ought to expect.

Well, I went away from Pickersgill for three years or so, and when I came back I found Mercy grown up, and the talk of all the place. Her face was small; not round, nor dimpled, yet not thin-looking, but beautifully soft, and of the same warm whiteness all over; just, perhaps, a little warmer in the middle of the cheeks, as you see a bunch of apple-blossoms gets pinker towards the heart. Yes, certainly, if this kind of face, with full and sorrowful blue eyes, with a blue shadow lying under them, and pinky eyelids heavy with black lashes that seemed always wanting to go to sleep on her cheek, a mouth like two cherries pressing together, — if a face like this, set round



with rings of chestnut hair, can make a girl pretty, certainly Mercy had such a one, and must have been called pretty even now; though ideas have changed since the days she used to put the clerks at Flounger's out of their reckoning every time she passed the office-windows.

Now, at the time of my coming back to Pickersgill, Mercy had four sweethearts.

There was Smilish, the red-haired herring-man, always sliding in a soft word with his herrings, till Jerry was obliged to leave off having them, which was a great privation to the family, — herrings, and Smilish's herrings in particular, being cheap just then.

Then, too, there was Felix Hadup, a real gentleman clerk at Flounger's office, who, for the love of Mercy, took to wearing out his boots in quite a wonderful way, so that Jerry always had a pair on hand. And, one day, when a dragoon regiment was billeted on Pickersgill, all the children playing out of doors at Gadshill-in-the-Fields began to cry and rush home; and Jerry himself, he tells me, quaked a bit when he looked up and found a great fellow, standing six feet in his boots, before his window, with his face as red as his coat, making a downright honest offer through his great mustache for Mercy, wanting to march her off to Ireland with his regiment next morning. Of course, Mercy was called to speak for herself, through the window; and, poor fellow, as he went back up the court he looked so mild and meek that, instead of being afraid of him, all the children took hold of hands, and stood in a line staring at him so that he could n't pass.

He was the third. Well, the fourth was a man who,

of all men in the world, came least to Jerry's fancy, as you may know when I tell you that that man was Dan Harroway, — ay, Dan o' the water, Dan himself. You recollect him, ay, ay? There'll be something happen I should think when black-eyed Dan's forgotten in these parts. Ah, talk of your Charlie Steers and your Willie Stackletons of these days, — the girls stare after them, it's true, — but Dan, dark Dan o' the water, he was something to stare after, I warrant you. Ah, it's all very well; but, Mr. Martin, begging your pardon, I won't believe your housekeeper there forgets all the heartaches Dan made in Pickersgill among the lasses of her day. Come, come, that's part of my story; you need n't take my ale away for that; there's no danger of Dan now; eh, Mistress Sicklemore?

Well, I suppose there's no occasion for me to tell any of you that Dan was n't a saint. Though I do say he was n't worse than Charlie the waterman, or Will the horse-breaker. In the first place, he was driven to lead the sort of life he did in a good part by his old miser of a father, who turned him out of doors at sixteen. Then, you know, being such a dare-devil with horses, such a fellow with his oar, and such a little king in his looks, he got soon picked up, and petted, and spoiled by the sporting gentlemen about here, — ay, and I may say, by more than one sporting lady too. Why, there was my lady Caperdown, they say, would have married him out and out, only she got a shock when Dan took her first love-letter to her son's valet, thinking it was some order about the stables, and commanded him, like an emperor, to read it to him, as he could n't either read or write.

How oiten I've seen him standing in his bright top-boots and scarlet hunting-coat outside here; or in his striped regatta shirt, amongst all the low fellows who seem to grow out of the water at boating times, standing out from them all, as I tell you, like a born king. He had a clear dark skin, with the blood always flushing under it, but never standing florid in his cheeks; curly black hair; and black eyes, — not an eye like Jerry's, though it was as black, but not soft, and merry, and contented, but a restless, fierce black eye, that seemed to be always roaming about, looking for something it could never find; and every glance seemed edged and pointed like a steel dart. He had half a score of names, — the Little King, the Emperor, the Sultan, Lucifer; and as far as pride and dark good looks went, I must say, he deserved them all, and the last particularly. I think he was prouder to women than to men, and had need have been if all the tales I've heard were true. I don't mean to say Dan would pass by a pretty girl without looking at her, not he; but if she minced in her walk, and seemed to know he was looking at her, he would stare in his haughty, scornful way, as much as to say, "You need n't put yourself out; I was only thinking you've got decent eyes, or a decent figure, and it's a pity the rest of you's not as good"; so that really a girl was as much put out as flattered by one of his looks; and he was so cool and proud with the handsome ladies he rode with, that it got quite a saying in Pickersgill, "No more in love than Dan o' the water."

And now I'm going to tell you about Dan and Mercy's first meeting.

I suppose he had noticed her before. I should think he had noticed her as the prettiest girl in Pickersgill, and as the only girl in Pickersgill who did n't gape after him (present company, Mistress Sicklemore, excepted, of course).

Well, it was one muggy November night, Mercy and little Tommy and I were coming up the High Street together. I was trying to comfort the poor lass a bit, for times just then were going hard with Jerry; indeed, just then was the coming on of hard times for more than him. We had got to the end of the street, when Dan came flashing round the corner on Richardson's black horse.

"Holloa, Matthew!" he shouts, in his grand, commanding way, stopping close to the pavement, "give me a light, quick; come, man. I've got a seven-mile ride, — look sharp!"

"Quicker said than done, Dan Harroway, in this wind," says I, taking out my tinder-box.

Dan held his match down while I struck; but the wind blew it out directly it was lighted; so I, stupid-like, asked Mercy to come and hold up her shawl to make shade against the wind. She did come close to the horse, and held up her shawl while Dan bent down, holding the reins and his pipe in one hand, and the match in the other ready to catch the light. It lit and went out half a dozen times, and while I was scraping and scraping away, I knew well enough that Dan was looking at Mercy; she knew it too, and you would have thought such a girl would have kept her eyes to herself; but, whether she got angry or what, Mercy raised hers to Dan's face as it bent down close to her.

Now, I don't know much about love nonsense myself, still I could but feel, when Mercy raised her eyes and found Dan's face within a few inches of hers, looking at her as I'd never seen him look at any other woman in his life, his fiery eyes all soft, and seeming to have found somewhere to rest on at last, and his proud-set lips in a smile, — when I saw this, I say, and saw, too, how he seemed to have the power of holding those sorrowful blue eyes of Mercy's to his as by a charm, I said to myself, "There, you've done something for Jerry, calling her to hold up her shawl, you have; you thought if you could n't strike one match, you'd strike another. I'm mistaken if this is n't the beginning of trouble."

And so it turned out to be.

Dan may have courted her with his eyes all that winter, for what I know; but I saw nothing more myself, till one fine morning early in the year. He was riding slowly up the road from Paisley woods, with a bunch of wild blue hyacinths lying on his horse before him, close to the path where Mercy was coming along. I was on the other side: I don't think either of them saw me.

Presently Dan stopped his horse, and stooped and held the flowers out to her, smiling. Mercy stopped and looked at them. No doubt it seemed pleasant to the poor child, who never had time to pick a flower for herself, and who got many a slap from Nance for running to pick up the clover-blooms that fell out of the wagons passing the top of the court; no doubt it seemed very pleasant and tempting to have a bunch of sweet-smelling bluebells held out to her like that by Emperor Dan. She looked and looked for nearly a minute, and

then shook her head, as much as to say, "I must n't," like a child, and began to walk on quicker.

Dan's face darkened, and he turned his horse right across her path, and held the flowers down to her again, while his black eyes seemed half begging, half commanding, her to take them. Then she held out her little hand and took them, still like a child frightened into doing wrong.

Dan pricked his horse, and went galloping up the road.

I never smell hyacinths but I see that old road again, with the light green hedges and the primroses under them; and Dan turning in his saddle as he galloped away, resting one hand on the horse's back; and his dark face, with the sun on it, smiling bright and proud, like a sultan that had been balked many times, but got his own way at last, — smiling at Mercy while the yellowy-green hedges spun by; and Mercy herself standing just where he had left her, shading her eyes with the flowers, looking after him, ready to cry at what she had done, and yet sick at heart that his horse should bear him so fast out of her sight.

"Trouble coming, Jerry," I said to myself as I saw her, — "trouble coming."

That same morning I had to call on old Harroway, Dan's father, who was my landlord, you know, and who owned half the wretched houses at Gadshill-in-the-Fields. Dan was in the office, coming out as I went in. I was n't surprised to see him there, for matters had long been patched up between them; but I was surprised to hear him say, —

“What does it matter to you where the money comes from, so long as you get it?”

“I don’t know about that,” said old Harroway, locking up his tin box. “Jerry’s money is honest money when it does come.”

“What is mine, then?” Dan said, coming back with a scowl on his face.

“There, there, let it drop,” said the old man, pettishly. “You ’ve had your own way, and that’s enough; I don’t know what you’re after, but if you choose to pay me the rent, of course I sha’ n’t worry him for it.”

“But, mind, the debt goes on just the same,” said Dan; “and I take my money back when I like, giving you a week to get it from him.”

And Dan went out, just nodding to me; and old Harroway, not seeing me yet, looked out of the grimy window after him, and screwed up his yellow face, and shook his bald head, as much as to say, “Do you think I don’t know what you’re after, my boy?”

I can tell you I wished no little that I knew; for though I could make neither head nor tail of what I had heard, and would n’t for the world have made Jerry uncomfortable about it, and so stopped any good Dan in his love for Mercy might be going to do him, still I found myself every time I passed their place croaking like an old raven, —

“There’s trouble coming, Jerry, — trouble coming!”

That same year, just a week before Christmas, on a Saturday night, I set off from the Water-Lily to pay Jerry Rouse a visit. Ay, that was a time that won’t be forgotten in Pickersgill for a few years to come, I

should say, — not by any, at least, who saw what I saw on my walk to Jerry's that Saturday night. Half-dozens and dozens of hungry, ragged men outside bakers' shops, staring as if they'd draw the loaves out with their eyes; women going from shop to shop, to get the most they could for their few halfpence; and here and there a man carrying a pole with a loaf at the top, and a great ticket to show the price and the size together. What did it mean, Mr. Martin? Why, it was the time of the great distress in all the factory places; and at Pickersgill it was as bad, or worse, than anywhere, and it was the hearing of a sore tale of starvation at Gadshill-in-the-Fields that made me get up from the comfortable fireside of the Water-Lily, and set out on my visit to Jerry.

Now, Saturday night, I should tell you, was not by any means a pleasant time for visiting Jerry. In the first place, Saturday was Nance's washing-day, and you would n't be able to move for wet rags of clothes hung on lines across and across the room. It was her cleaning day too, such cleaning as she did; and you'd be sure to find her broke down in the midst of it, squatting before the fire, railing at Jerry because he would n't take the baby, who was always cross on a Saturday night, because the steam of the wet clothes brought his cough on. Jerry himself would be sitting in the corner where Nance had driven him, bending his pale, good-tempered little face over his work, and surrounded by old boots, which the children would be playing with and mauling about so that when he wanted a left, he found all rights, or when he wanted a right, all lefts.

That was Jerry's home on that Saturday night; not



a very bright one certainly, but a palace to many a home at Gadshill-in-the-Fields.

But now Jerry did n't look upon any of these things as his troubles, but as all Nance's; and listened patiently to her complaining, pitying her from the bottom of his kind, simple heart, and wondering if ever a woman, let her be saint, martyr, or what, had as much to put up with as his Nance.

He had one trouble of his own, though, had Jerry. Where was Mercy these Saturday nights? Tramping through the mud and mire, taking home the work as fast as he could do it? As fast as he could do it: yes, but Mercy was not so quick gone on these errands as she used to be, and poor Jerry noticed it; and had queer, uneasy thoughts about it, that made him stick his awl into his thumb sometimes.

And so I found him that Saturday night, sitting sweating over his work, in the steam and smoke, and pondering these things concerning Mercy.

I made the best of my way among the wet clothes to him, after speaking to Nance and the children.

"Ah, Matthew," he said, with a shake back of his matted hair and a lightening up of his pale face, "all the compliments of the season to you for coming to see us in this family kind o' way. You must take us as we are, you know; we don't make no stranger of you, do we, Nance? Will you clear a chair for Matthew, my dear? and I dare say he'll be so good as to hold the little 'un for you."

"No, thank you, Jerry; I'm much beholden to you, but I'd rather be excused," says I. "Me hold a baby,

indeed! No, no; that's a thing I never could do. In the first place, I never can guess how far a child comes down to in its long-clothes; and if you go to stretch your arms out, taking it to be taller than it is, it'll slip through 'em; or if you go to take it by the middle, the head will hang down and bring on convulsions or something."

So I let Jerry's baby alone, and took a chair, and while I was talking to him stuck my pockets out behind, to show the mince-meat pies and oranges. It was n't long before they were found out; for soon, instead of fretting and whining, you could hear nothing but sucking and munching all over the room; and then by degrees came the whole lot hanging about my knees, and looking up at me with their big eyes as if I was the most wonderful old boy that ever lived. I don't like children, I never did; but I liked to feel Jerry's children pick my pockets.

"So you've got a new landlord, Jerry?" I said to him.

Jerry looked up from the thread he was waxing, quite astonished.

"Have n't you heard that old Harroway said good by to us all last night?" says I.

"No," said Jerry.

"Well, he did; he died at his sister's farm at Basset."

"And who'll be our landlord now?" asked Jerry.

"Who? Why, who but his son," said I, "young Dan o' the water?"

Jerry laid down the boot he was welting, and sat considering, drawing up his little knees, and winding his piece of waxed thread round and round them.

“Matthew,” he said presently, in a low voice, so that Nance should n’t hear him, “I’m sorry. I’m sorrier for this yer than I can tell you.”

“And why, Jerry?” I asked him.

“Because,” says he, taking up his boot again, and sticking it between his knees, sole upwards, and bringing his fist down upon the sole with all his might, “I’d rather Dan Harroway be obligated to me for a sound lickin’, than I ’ud be obligated to him for the standin’ over of half a year’s rent, as ’ll have to be the case now. Poor old Harroway, he must have foresaw as his end was nigh, for he’s let me alone since the spring, and not worried me once.”

Ay, thinks I, Dan could tell you two stories to that one, but I only said, —

“It appears to me, Jerry Rouse, you’re a shade *too* hard on that lad, — that Dan Harroway; it does, now.”

“Well, I’m sorry if I am, and I’m willin’ to give him every excuse, so long as he keeps out o’ my way. He may mend some time or other, but I ain’t much hopes myself o’ such a character; he’s had too much to do with the water for me.”

“Why, man alive, what harm could the water do him?” says I.

“What harm?” says Jerry; “why, it’s my opinion as the first harm that ever was, was washed ashore by water. Ah, it’s a queer thing, and it’s the greatest pity as is that we can’t do without it; but we can’t, I suppose. It’s one o’ the necessities as came to us with the fall o’ man. What harm is there in it, indeed? Why, don’t you suppose as the sarpint that tempted

Adam's missus was a sea-sarpint? o' course he was; and I tell you there's no countin' the harm there is in water. Look at yer mud larks, and your river thieves, and your pierits, and then tell me as there's no harm in water. And this Dan Harroway, — why, as I may say, he's been bred to it. I mind him when he come up no higher than my knee, a chippin' little boats out o' nothing one minute, and a pumpin' on hisself in the market-plaee at Basset another; and when I saw it, I always said as he'd come to ruin. So he's my landlord, is he? Well, landlord or no landlord, let me eatch him making eyes at my gal agen, that's all."

"How do you know but what he means well by her, Jerry?" said I.

"Mean well by her?" says Jerry; "not he. No, no, whatever Dan is, he's a bit above us; though as for Merey herself, a king might mean well by her, for that matter. She has a face of her own, has Mercy, and a figure too, bless her. As Smilish over the way says (for I can't never go to have a chat with Smilish now but what he begins spelling and speering about her; though, poor chap, he's lived off a herring and a tater this fortnight, they say), 'She's as pretty,' says Smilish, speakin' o' Merey, 'as a wilet, and she don't know it no more 'an a wilet.' No more she don't; but I'll warrant if Dan Harroway sets his evil eye upon her, she'll know it soon enough. Halloa! who's that?"

It was Smilish himself, poking his red head in at the door.

"Talk of angels," said Jerry, "and — But, lor', man, what's the matter with you? Have you seen a ghost?"

“Come here, Jerry Rouse,” said Smilish, beckoning with his great hand.

Jerry and I got up and went to the door.

“Look there, Jerry Rouse,” said Smilish, dragging him out and pointing up the court.

Now, when I tell you the moon was so bright you could see the fish-scales sticking to Smilish’s red hand as he pointed, you ’ll see that there was no mistaking two figures which stood by the wall of a half-finished house at the top of the court. In that light, if they belonged to the parish at all, Jerry must know them. They did belong to the parish, and Jerry did know them.

It was Dan and Mercy.

They were holding hands, saying good by, as it seemed. We all three stood looking at them a minute or more, then Jerry took up the corner of his leather apron, and tucked it in the string that went round his waist, and went up the court to them. His house was number three, you know, so there was but the length of two houses to go.

The two dropped each other’s hands, as they saw him ; Mercy shrank back, but Dan stood up in his boots and faced him like a man.

“Mercy, my gal,” said Jerry, laying his hand on her shoulder, and pointing to his wretched little place, “go home.” And she went home, and Smilish turned his face away.

Then Jerry turned to Dan, and says he, —

“Dan Harroway,” says he, “you ’re my landlord, as I hear, and I ’m half a year’s rent in your debt ; I don’t want to see my little ones turned out in the cold without

a roof to cover 'em, so I can't say exactly what I should 'a' said to you if to-day had been yesterday. All as I say now is, don't let me catch you talking to my gal agen."

Now I think by Dan's face he was going to make him a quiet answer, but as ill-luck would have it, who should pass the end of the court that minute but Jem Barnes and Stackleton, and a lot more of Dan's friends, on their way home from a card-party at the Water-Lily; and of course when they caught sight of Dan and Jerry standing like that, and knowing Dau's goings on with Mercy, of course they stopped to see the fun. Dan turned on his heel to go up to them.

Jerry griped him by the collar and jerked him back.

"Dan Harroway," says he, "you don't go out o' this yer court till you've giv me your promise as you'll never speak another word to my gal in your life."

"Don't I?" said Dan, wrenching himself away; "we'll see about that. What, do you suppose I care for your girl? and if I did, why, have n't I as much right to have my say to her as any one else?"

"I'll tell you," said Jerry, his passion up as he heard all the young fellows laughing at him. "Because, Dan Harroway, you have n't a rag to your back as belongs to you by good rights, nor a drop o' blood in your body that's been made by honest-earned wittles. You live by hook and by crook, spendin' here and takin' there, and betting and gambling and drinking. They tell me as you're proud, but I tell you, Dan Harroway, that me as cuts this yer poor figure by the side of you have got more pride in me 'an you have, for I've got pride enough to keep me slaving and sweating in that 'ere hole as you

calls yourself landlord of, from year's end to year's end, rathener I'd take a penny from the parish or any man alive to go to the feed o' them little uns."

"Then look you, Jerry Rouse," said Dan, flashing on him with his eyes as the young fellows came nearer, "you owe me two quarters' rent; if you've got the pride you're telling of, pay it me down now."

"I can't, you know it," Jerry said, with a groan; "I'd give my head if I could."

"Very well, you'll beg my pardon for every word you've said to me this night, or you'll suffer for it. I'll give you till over Christmas day; if you have n't begged my pardon or paid down your rent by then, you turn out, bag and baggage."

And Dan turned and walked away.

"Stop a bit," said Jerry, following him and laying his hand on his shoulder; "do you promise me what I asked you about my gal?"

"No," said Dan Harroway, fiercely, "I don't; is that plain?"

Jerry did n't answer him, but turned and walked home.

"Mercy," he said, taking off his apron as he came in at the door, "put on your bonnet and come along o' me. I'm a goin' to take you over to your grandmother's at Bassett, my wench. You can't bide here no longer."

With a face white as a sheet, Mercy got a handkerchief and rolled up a few things in it; among 'em I saw some dead flowers, and I knew by the long stalks what they were. Then she kissed 'em all round, and followed her father out of the door without speaking a word.

What I'm going to tell you now about Jerry, I did n't see myself, but he's told it to me so many a time that I've got it all before me as clear and real as if I had seen it, and it had happened a week ago instead of forty years.

It was Christmas eve, then, going on for eleven o' the clock ; Jerry sat by himself, finishing Jem Barnes's Sunday boots, which he'd been patching up.

The candle stood on a three-legged stool in front of him, and every now and then Jerry would look at it, and each time he looked at it, his fingers flew faster.

There were two inches of candle, and there was what a quick man would call a good hour's work. Two inches of candle and not a scrap more in the house, — not a scrap more, most likely, in all the court. Few houses, indeed, at Gadshill-in-the-Fields had a scrap of bread in them that night, let alone candle or firing.

Two inches of candle and a good hour's work to do ! It seemed as sure as fate the candle must go out before that work was done, yet Jerry looked at it and worked fiercer, — looked at it and worked fiercer. His dirty, pallid, flat-nailed fingers flew, and the candle burned.

It was a race that would have held your breath to watch, a race for life or death. If Jerry's fingers won it, it was life, — if the candle won it, it was death ; for while he worked so that he could tell if one second was shorter weight than another, there came from the up-stairs room faint cries and wailings. And Jerry knew what it was. He had heard it in many a house this winter ; but it had never been to his before.

It was a wolf up there in that room, — a wolf gnawing



away at his seven little children, and his poor sick wife, — hunger it was, and it had come upon them sudden and savage, and Jerry knew that if it was n't driven off that night it must devour them all away from him, devour him too, and the only thing he could drive it away with was the shilling he would get when he took Jem Barnes's boots home.

So he raced with the candle till the drops came out thick on his forehead.

There was one inch now, and there was more than half an hour's work to do.

The candle burned and the fingers flew, — flew, ay, so fast, that every now and then Jerry felt in doubt as to whether they carried the thread along with them or not; but if he stopped to find out, his race was lost, for the candle had nothing to stop for, so he let 'em tremble and shake over the boot that was stuck between his knees.

The fingers flew, and the candle burned; the race was drawing to an end.

The candle blazed up.

Jerry stuck his last stitch.

The wick fell and went out.

Jerry hugged his boot, and gave a great cry. His job was done.

The moonlight falling through the dusty window showed him where his battered old hat lay on the chair. He snatched it up, and the fellow-boot, and ran out in his shirt-sleeves, calling up the dark narrow stairs as he went by them, —

“Take the little uns to you, Nance, and keep 'em warm. I've done it, and I'll be back in a minute with some wittles.”

“Back in a minute,” Jerry said; but it took him a sharpish run to get to Jem Barnes’s house in five. When he got there, there was n’t a light to be seen in any of the windows. He knocked once. No one came. Twice, — still no one came.

Jerry took hold of the knocker, and thumped it down every two seconds fierce and hard. Still no one came.

By and by old Constable Mullinger turned up the street to see what the noise was about.

“Are you gone mad?” said he to Jerry. “Don’t you see they ’re all out? Be off about your business, or I’ll be helping you with your knocking.”

Jerry reeled back into the middle of the road, and stared up at the house. He had never thought of this. Had he run his race with the candle for nothing?

No wonder old Mullinger thought he was mad, to see him standing there without his coat, his old hat stuck at the back of his head, and his boots in his hand, staring at the dark windows. Soon the cold began to go through and through him, and he turned shivering and half stupefied, and went back home.

Going in, he stumbled against the stairs and made a noise, and then he stood listening, feeling sure that all the seven little children would cry out to him for the food he had promised to be back with in a minute.

No. All was still, — all except his own heart thumping away at the foot of the stairs.

“They ’ve fell asleep,” he said to himself; “they won’t feel the wolf for a little while, not perhaps till I get ’em some work’us bread in the morning.”

He would n’t go up for fear of disturbing them, so he

went and sat on his bench in the dusky moonlight, and took up a boot of little Tommy's and his awl, and tried to work, just for the sake of keeping himself from thinking, and from feeling the gnawing at his inside.

He worked, but the thinking and the gnawing went on just the same.

He worked, but the dark handsome face of Dan Harroway kept coming between him and little Tommy's boot, making him grip his awl and breathe hard.

He worked, but the loneliness and the gnawing made him get so light and sharp in his wits that he could n't sit still, so he stood up with his work in his hand.

By and by he dropped the boot, and stood still, not breathing at all, with the awl in his hand.

A thought had come to him, — a thought of how to muzzle the wolf.

He went to the foot of the stairs and listened: still all was quiet. He kicked off his boots, and crept up, feeling by the damp wall. The door was open, and Jerry went in and stood in the middle of the room, looking at the row of ragged little beds that lay along the splintery floor. The moonlight fell upon each wizened sharp face, and each wizened dirty hand lying over the patchwork quilts.

Now, while Jerry stood looking at them all with that dreadful uncommon sharpness I told you of, which made him feel as if he could do anything in the world if he set his mind on it, he heard Nance muttering, and when he went to listen what she said, he found she was cursing him in her sleep for having married her. Jerry listened, and got all cold and stiff about the roots of his hair, and

the room seemed to spin round and round him, — beds, door, patched window, with the big yellow moon staring in it, and all, — all seemed to spin round; and Jerry looked after the spinning beds, and then at the spinning moon, and wished it away. He gripped his awl hard and fast, and flung himself down by the first of the beds. Still it seemed spinning away from him, and he made a clutch at it with his left hand, and when he had got it, set his knee on it, then his left hand clutched a thin little shoulder, clutched it so tight that there was a scream, and that scream woke Nancee and all the rest; and taking him to have come back with the victuals, they all set up a wailing cry for joy, and stretched out their hands.

And Jerry lifted up his head and looked at the empty thin hands and hungry faces, and pointed to his awl, and said to 'em, with a great lift of his chest at every word, —

“Look here, little uns, it's earned your bread all along, this yer, and if so be it can't arn your bread any more, can't it — can't it put you to — to — to sleep, little uns — just to sleep — only to sleep?”

He laid himself down on the bed. The bright tip of the awl glittered, and then was hidden in the clothes. He pressed himself closer and closer over the child, and his awl was in his hand under him. There was just a touch — a cold, sharp touch — on a bony chest, only a touch; and it was not Jerry's chest, yet it was Jerry who leaped to his feet with almost a yell, as if a sword had gone through him, — leaped to his feet and cleared the dark stairs in two springs, and rushed out of the house door, and away up the court, without ever a bit of

shoe to his foot, or coat to his back, or cap to his head ; rushed along towards the town-end of the court in his shirt and ragged trousers, and bare feet, and with his awl in his hand ; rushed as if a demon were after him ; rushed, and once he knocked himself against a post, like a blind, wild animal. Then he ran on till he got to the end of the court and out into the street, — the dark, still street, and he saw one man in it, and he made up to him. The man turned, and, seeing Jerry coming towards him with his awl, so wild and strange, began to quicken his pace.

But Jerry got up to him, and made a spring, and threw both his arms round him so violently that the man was felled to the ground.

“Don’t run away from me ! Feller-creetur, brother, I got more on me nor I can bear, come and help me ! You sha’ n’t go away till you ’ve helped me !”

“Let me go,” said the man, struggling, — “let me go free, will you ?”

“Hah !” cried Jerry ; and, looking down on his face, with his knee on his chest, and his awl raised above him, he saw it was Dan Harroway.

The cause of all his trouble that night was there under his knee, and the awl which through him had been nearly turned against his little children was in his hand. Did n’t it seem like justice put into his own hands to deal ? The knee planted on Dan’s chest shook, and the eyes looking down upon him blazed like balls of fire.

Dan Harroway thought his last was come. Suddenly he felt the weight gone off his chest, and looking up he saw the back of a ragged figure, which seemed to be

wringing its hands, with the awl in them, and then he saw it run back down the dark court.

Yes, Jerry was running back. He had been to the world for help, and it had sent him greater temptation. Where was he to go now?

Now, while Jerry rushed back down the dark quiet court, crying to himself, "Who'll help me? Is there nobody as'll help me?" there flashed upon him a recollection of a story he had heard, — a story which had always struck him as being much too hard to believe in, and much too wonderful to be at all true; but now, I say, the recollection of it struck upon him like a sudden light in his darkness.

He began to run faster. He passed his own house. He came to the other end of the court, and out into the great brick-fields.

Just before him was a high heap of bricks and stones and rubbish, where a house had been pulled down. Jerry had but one thought just then, he wanted to get high. He seemed as if he could n't get high enough for what he wanted. So he began to climb this mound, sticking his bare feet into the sharp stones and broken bricks till they bled, and helping himself up with his hands till they bled, and when he got to the very top he was wellnigh fainting, and he fell upon his knees.

The big, set moon seemed to be on a level with his head as it stared at him through two window-holes of a half-finished house, and it lighted everything; the pool of black water below him, the frosted rushes growing round it, and the gray line of field rats passing from the cellar of one of the new houses to a hole in the clay-bank.

Jerry threw up his two arms, still holding the awl, and cried out as loud as ever he could cry in his faintness, —

“If You as made me,” says he, “can see me now; if You knows me better than I knows You, come anigh me! I don’t arst You for myself. There’s somethin’ a tearin’ my inside like a wild beast; but that I can bear. What I arst You is, save my little uns from me! Save Dan Harroway from me! Come anigh me, wherever You are, and lay hold on this yer. I’m only a poor human creetur, and there’s more put on me nor I can bear, an’ it’s makin’ a devil of me. I don’t know how to get at You, I don’t know no prayers; but I tell You as I want You; if ever any poor creetur You’ve made ever wanted You, I do. O, come anigh me! Come anigh me!”

*Did* anything come anigh him? Jerry says as the wind rose he heard a rustling all about the mound, like a swooping down of great wings or garments, and his hand got loose, and the awl went whirling down, and fell with a splash into the black water; and Jerry, when he heard the splash, fell a-trembling and hiding his face with his two hands.

He was n’t alone, he says; the sweep-down of wings and the talking in the wind went on. For some time — how long he could n’t tell — he seemed to be lifted right up out of his trouble, and he did n’t feel the sharp stones under his knees; and he stayed with those that seemed to have come about him till the moon went down in the window-hole.

At last the bark of a dog made him remember himself,

and he looked up, and, finding his awl gone, gave a great shout for joy.

“You ’ve heered me,” he said, — “You ’ve heered me ; and I ain’t alone, nor my little uns ain’t alone ; they ’ve got a better father ’an me.”

Then he came down, slipping and sliding among the stones, and began to run home all shaking and close to the ground like a lamb just out of the lion’s jaw.

As he ran, the dog he had heard bark came across his path with a crust of bread in his mouth, and Jerry seized him by the nape, and took the crust from him, and ran home to divide it amongst his children.

When he had got in, though, that wild beast he had told of on the mound clawed him for it ; and he was just going to fall upon and devour it, and had got it between his teeth, when another wonderful old story, coming across him, made him stop and think.

He cleared the table ; he moved all the rubbish on the floor on one side with his foot, and covered it over. Then he began looking about for some kind of a table-cloth. He found one, clean and white, in a drawer, and he felt ready to cry with gratefulness to Nance that she should have such a thing. He spread it on the table, and then he took his crust and laid it in the middle ; and after looking at it a long time, he went out softly and shut the door.

He crawled up stairs once more, so faint that he could scarce drag one foot after the other.

The children were all awake, and wailing still. Jerry went and took ’em up, and cuddled ’em one by one in his poor tired arms, and said, with the tears running down his cheeks, —



“Don’t cry, little uns ; I’ve been out and I could n’t get you nothing, but coming back I see a dog with a crust in his mouth, and I lugged it away, and it lies on the table down below, and I’m a goin’ to arst Him as they say made seven loaves and five little fishes feed four thousand creeturs, if He won’t make that ’ere little crust below enough to fill us all by mornin’. So go to sleep, little uns, and you, Nance, my woman, go to sleep, — go to sleep all on you, and let Him do His will by that ’ere little crust ; and we’ll go down in the mornin’ all together and see what we shall find.”

And Jerry went to lie down himself, but somehow he felt as if he’d no right to lie among them that night after his evil thoughts, so he went and stretched himself on the landing outside the threshold of the door, and by and by they all fell sound asleep.

It was a cold place, was Jerry’s. But the wind that whistled up the stairs and came up through every crack and cranny of the old boards only made him sleep the sweeter, for he dreamed it was the great wings that had come anigh him on the mound.

And so they slept ; and there in the room below, all by itself in the moonlight, on the clean white table-cloth, lay THE CRUST.

Now in the morning Jerry woke with the sun on his face, and he got up and woke Nance and the children. He helped Nance on with her things, for she was very sick, and dressed each of the little ones himself, and while he dressed them, each had a different dream to tell him about the CRUST, and the angels that were making

a feast for them out of it. And Jerry listened, feeling as if his heart would burst, for what could he say if they all went down and opened the door and found only the CRUST? Still he daren't gainsay that there would be a feast. He washed them all, and made them kneel down and say the prayers Mercy had taught them, and he made the dressing and the prayers take as much time as he could, for he had great fear of going to the CRUST.

At last, shaking in every limb, he took up the two youngest, one on each arm, and went to the stairs, two more took hold of his coat, and Nance dragged herself along after with the others, and so they all went slowly down.

But when they had got to the foot of the stairs, and Jerry had laid his thumb on the latch of the room door, his heart quite failed him, for he seemed to see, before he opened it, the CRUST lying there with the marks of the dog's teeth in it, and all just as he had left it overnight; so he turned and said to them, in a light kind of way, —

“P'raps they have n't done yet, little uns. You won't be disappointed if so be they ain't?”

But seven pairs of black sharp eyes looked at him so suspicious and so keen, that Jerry thought he'd better get the worst over at once, so he lifted the latch and pushed the door in.

He gave one look into the room before him, and then turned back suddenly, as if he'd had fire blown into his face.

“Nance, Nance!” he said, “here's a judgment on us! Here's more'n I can bear. O, look, old woman! Down on your knees and look. O little uns, I did n't

believe not half myself, — but come along! come and look.”

The father and mother, on their knees outside the threshold, and the children clinging to them, all stared into the room.

There *was* a feast spread on the cobbler's table. Ay, a delicate feast. There was white bread, and there was wine, and rich pasties, and in the middle, where the crust had lain, there was a shining silver basket of bright Christmas fruit. It was a fair table, I can tell you, for I saw it. Yes, I was there, and I saw it. And I saw Jerry, too, kneeling with his wife Nance, and the children on the threshold.

“I knowed as You 'd heered me,” cried Jerry, presently, lifting his big full eye to the grimy ceiling. “And whatever hand You 've done this by, human creetur's hand or not, me and my little uns thanks You for it, and will never 'a' done thanking You for it, while there 's breath in our bodies; and I forgive Dan Harroway as You 've forgive me. I forgive him, and I 'm at peace with him, let him do what he likes.”

Just as they were going to get up from their knees, the Christmas waits in the court began, and among them there was Nell Gwire and Alice Blane, the sweetest singers in all the country-side, and the music seemed to hold Jerry and the rest to their knees, for coming just then it was like angels' voices giving them a welcome to the feast. Nance and him both began to cry and cling together; and then she, who had been a good singer in her time, but had n't sung for temper for twenty years, began joining in, low and soft, with her face raised and

her black hair falling all about her to the ground; and one at a time the little things caught up the tune and sung out loud and shrill, like starved sparrows at the sight of rain. So loud and shrill and piercing that I could n't stand it long, but went and picked them up and brought them into the room. When they all came in, treading as if the ground was n't common ground, Jerry saw me and said, —

“Is this yer doings, Matthew?” says he; and I said, “No.”

“Then,” says Jerry, “tell me what man’s doings it is, that I may thank him, and that all my little uns may thank him.”

“Jerry,” said I, taking him apart, “when you run out in your sore trouble last night, you met a man.”

“Ay!” says Jerry, looking at me hard.

“You threw him down and told him your trouble, and before he had got free of his first fright, you saw who he was and left him.”

“Ay,” said Jerry again, with a shudder.

“You went up a mound in the brick-fields?”

“Ay.”

“You went up and told your trouble to some one else. You did n't see that man following you and listening to you? No. Nor you did n't see that man looking at you through that window, when you laid your crust out.”

“No,” said Jerry.

“Well, he saw you, then; he saw all, and he came and knocked me up out of my bed, and we went in the night to Bassett and fetched Mercy. And that man fetched

the best silver plate out of his father's house, and the best Christmas pasties and wine, and we three laid the feast together."

"And where is that man?" said Jerry, hardly noticing Mercy as she came from where she was feeding the children.

"When he had laid the feast, Jerry, he went outside."

"Is he there now?" said Jerry.

"Perhaps he is."

Jerry said nothing more, but went out.

Dan was there.

"Dan Harroway," said Jerry, "I've spoke words to you as I can't never take back, because they was true."

"I don't want you to take 'em back, Jerry Rouse," said Dan. "I know they were true."

"Then, Dan Harroway, though I can't take them words back, I can tell you this, and that is as this yer thing you've done this yer Christmas eve has made me feel that for you I never felt for mortal man afore. You ain't only spread them fine wittles in there, but there's a somethin' you've brought anigh me as I've hungered for without knowin' it this many a year. I don't arst you to come in, I ain't worthy as you should come in; but, Dan Harroway, I should like to shake you by the hand, and I should like the little uns to thank you."

There! I suppose you guess the rest.

Of course Dan did n't go in then, nor let Jerry show him off to the children as the angel in top-boots that had been sent to make these wonderful things out of the CRUST. Of course he did n't sit at the end of the table by Mercy all the time of the feast, and have those bright

top-boots smeared all over afterwards by thankful, dirty little hands. And of course Jerry got turned out by his landlord next day!

They were married, Dan and Mercy, when the blue hyacinths came round again, and you could smell nothing else from Gadshill-in-the-Fields to the church, and Mercy wore them in her hair.





## A DISSERTATION UPON ROAST PIG.

BY CHARLES LAMB.

**M**ANKIND, says a Chinese manuscript, which my friend M. was obliging enough to read and explain to me, for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal, just as they do in Abyssinia to this day. This period is not obscurely hinted at by their great Confucius in the second chapter of his *Mundane Mutations*, where he designates a kind of golden age by the term *Cho-fang*, literally the *Cooks' Holiday*. The manuscript goes on to say, that the art of roasting, or rather broiling (which I take to be the elder brother), was accidentally discovered in the manner following. The swineherd, *Ho-ti*, having gone out into the woods one morning, as his manner was, to collect mast for his hogs, left his cottage in the care of his eldest son, *Bo-bo*, a great lubberly boy, who, being fond of playing with fire, as youngers of his age commonly are, let some sparks escape into a bundle of straw, which, kindling quickly, spread the conflagration over every part of their poor mansion, till it was reduced to ashes. Together with

the cottage (a sorry antediluvian makeshift of a building, you may think it), what was of much more importance, a fine litter of new-farrowed pigs, no less than nine in number, perished. China pigs have been esteemed a luxury all over the East, from the remotest periods that we read of. Bo-bo was in the utmost consternation, as you may think, not so much for the sake of the tenement, which his father and he could easily build up again with a few dry branches, and the labor of an hour or two, at any time, as for the loss of the pigs. While he was thinking what he should say to his father, and wringing his hands over the smoking remnants of one of those untimely sufferers, an odor assailed his nostrils, unlike any scent which he had before experienced. What could it proceed from? Not from the burnt cottage, — he had smelt that smell before; indeed this was by no means the first accident of the kind which had occurred through the negligence of this unlucky young firebrand. Much less did it resemble that of any known herb, weed, or flower. A premonitory moistening at the same time overflowed his nether lip. He knew not what to think. He next stooped down to feel the pig, if there were any signs of life in it. He burnt his fingers, and to cool them he applied them in his booby fashion to his mouth. Some of the crumbs of the scorched skin had come away with his fingers, and for the first time in his life (in the world's life indeed, for before him no man had known it) he tasted — *crackling!* Again he felt and fumbled at the pig. It did not burn him so much now, still he licked his fingers from a sort of habit. The truth at length broke into his slow understanding that it was the



pig that smelt so, and the pig that tasted so delicious ; and, surrendering himself up to the new-born pleasure, he fell to tearing up whole handfuls of the scorched skin with the flesh next it, and was cramming it down his throat in his beastly fashion, when his sire entered amid the smoking rafters, armed with retributory cudgel, and, finding how affairs stood, began to rain blows upon the young rogue's shoulders, as thick as hail-stones, which Bo-bo heeded not any more than if they had been flies. The tickling pleasure, which he experienced in his lower regions, had rendered him quite callous to any inconveniences he might feel in those remote quarters. His father might lay on, but he could not beat him from his pig, till he had fairly made an end of it, when, becoming a little more sensible of his situation, something like the following dialogue ensued : —

“ You graceless whelp, what have you got there devouring ? Is it not enough that you have burnt me down three houses with your dog's tricks, and be hanged to you ! but you must be eating fire, and I know not what ? What have you got there, I say ? ”

“ O father, the pig, the pig ! do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats.”

The ears of Ho-ti tingled with horror. He cursed his son, and he cursed himself that ever he should beget a son that should eat burnt pig.

Bo-bo, whose scent was wonderfully sharpened since morning, soon raked out another pig, and fairly rending it asunder, thrust the lesser half by main force into the fists of Ho-ti, still shouting out, “ Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father, only taste — O Lord ! ” with such-like barba-

rous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke.

Ho-ti trembled every joint while he grasped the abominable thing, wavering whether he should not put his son to death for an unnatural young monster, when the crackling scorching his fingers, as it had done his son's, and, applying the same remedy to them, he in his turn tasted some of its flavor, which, make what sour mouths he would for pretence, proved not altogether displeasing to him. In conclusion (for the manuscript here is a little tedious) both father and son fairly set down to the mess, and never left off till they had despatched all that remained of the litter.

Bo-bo was strictly enjoined not to let the secret escape, for the neighbors would certainly have stoned them for a couple of abominable wretches, who could think of improving upon the good meat which God had sent them. Nevertheless, strange stories got about. It was observed that Ho-ti's cottage was burnt down now more frequently than ever. Nothing but fires from this time forward. Some would break out in broad day, others in the night-time. As often as the sow farrowed, so sure was the house of Ho-ti to be in a blaze; and Ho-ti himself, which was the more remarkable, instead of chastising his son, seemed to grow more indulgent to him than ever. At length they were watched, the terrible mystery discovered, and father and son summoned to take their trial at Peking, then an inconsiderable assize town. Evidence was given, the obnoxious food itself produced in court, and verdict about to be pronounced, when the foreman of the jury begged that some of the

burnt pig, of which the culprits stood accused, might be handed into the box. He handled it, and they all handled it; and, burning their fingers, as Bo-bo and his father had done before them, and nature prompting to each of them the same remedy, against the face of all the facts, and the clearest charge which judge had ever given, — to the surprise of the whole court, townsfolk, strangers, reporters, and all present, — without leaving the box, or any manner of consultation whatever, they brought in a simultaneous verdict of Not Guilty.

The judge, who was a shrewd fellow, winked at the manifest iniquity of the decision; and when the court was dismissed, went privily, and bought up all the pigs that could be had for love or money. In a few days his Lordship's town-house was observed to be on fire. The thing took wing, and now there was nothing to be seen but fire in every direction. Fuel and pigs grew enormously dear all over the district. The insurance offices one and all shut up shop. People built slighter and slighter every day, until it was feared that the very science of architecture would in no long time be lost to the world. Thus this custom of firing houses continued, till in process of time, says my manuscript, a sage arose, like our Locke, who made a discovery that the flesh of swine, or indeed of any other animal, might be cooked (*burnt*, as they called it) without the necessity of consuming a whole house to dress it. Then first began the rude form of a gridiron. Roasting by the string or spit came in a century or two later, I forget in whose dynasty. By such slow degrees, concludes the manuscript, do the most useful and seemingly the most obvious arts make their way among mankind.

Without placing too implicit faith in the account above given, it must be agreed, that if a worthy pretext for so dangerous an experiment as setting houses on fire (especially in these days) could be assigned in favor of any culinary object, that pretext and excuse might be found in ROAST FIG.

Of all the delicacies in the whole *mundus edibilis*, I will maintain it to be the most delicate, — *princeps obsoniorum*.

I speak not of your grown porkers — things between pig and pork — those hobbydeloys — but a young and tender suckling — under a moon old — guiltless as yet of the sty — with no original speck of the *amor immunditie*, the hereditary failing of the first parent, yet manifest — his voice as yet not broken, but something between a childish treble and a grumble — the mild forerunner, or *prælude*, of a grunt.

*He must be roasted.* I am not ignorant that our ancestors ate them seethed, or boiled, — but what a sacrifice of the exterior tegument!

There is no flavor comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, *crackling*, as it is well called — the very teeth are invited to their share of the pleasure at this banquet in overcoming the coy, brittle resistance — with the adhesive oleaginous — O call it not fat! but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it — the tender blossoming of fat — fat cropped in the bud — taken in the shoot — in the first innocence — the cream and quintessence of the child-pig's yet pure food — the lean, no lean, but a kind of animal manna — or, rather, fat and lean (if it must be so) so

blended and running into each other, that both together make but one ambrosian result, or common substance.

Behold him, while he is “doing,” — it seemeth rather a refreshing warmth, than a scorching heat, that he is so passive to. How equably he twirleth round the string! Now he is just done. To see the extreme sensibility of that tender age! he hath wept out his pretty eyes — radiant jellies — shooting stars.

See him in the dish, his second cradle, how meek he lieth! Wouldst thou have had this innocent grow up to the grossness and indocility which too often accompany maturer swinehood? Ten to one he would have proved a glutton, a sloven, an obstinate, disagreeable animal — wallowing in all manner of filthy conversation — from these sins he is happily snatched away —

Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade,  
Death came with timely care —

his memory is odoriferous — no clown curseth, while his stomach half rejecteth, the rank bacon — no coal-heaver bolteth him in reeking sausages — he hath a fair sepulchre in the grateful stomach of the judicious epicure — and for such a tomb might be content to die.

He is the best of sapers. Pineapple is great. She is indeed almost too transcendent — a delight, if not sinful, yet so like to sinning that really a tender-conscienced person would do well to pause — too ravishing for mortal taste, she woundeth and excoriateth the lips that approach her — like lovers’ kisses, she biteth — she is a pleasure bordering on pain from the fierceness and insanity of her relish — but she stoppeth at the palate — she meddleth

not with the appetite — and the coarsest hunger might barter her consistently for a mutton-chop.

Pig — let me speak his praise — is no less provocative of the appetite than he is satisfactory to the criticalness of the censorious palate. The strong man may batten on him, and the weakling refuseth not his mild juices.

Unlike to mankind's mixed characters, a bundle of virtues and vices, inexplicably intertwined, and not to be unravelled without hazard, he is — good throughout. No part of him is better or worse than another. He helpeth, as far as his little means extend, all around. He is the least envious of banquets. He is all neighbors' fare.

I am one of those who freely and ungrudgingly impart a share of the good things of this life which fall to their lot (few as mine are in this kind) to a friend. I protest I take as great an interest in my friend's pleasures, his relishes, and proper satisfactions, as in mine own. "Presents," I often say, "endear Absents." Hares, pheasants, partridges, snipes, barn-door chickens (those "tame villatic fowl"), capons, plovers, brawn, barrels of oysters, I dispense as freely as I receive them. I love to taste them, as it were, upon the tongue of my friend. But a stop must be put somewhere. One would not, like Lear, "give everything." I make my stand upon pig. Methinks it is an ingratitude to the Giver of all good flavors to extra-domiciliate or send out of the house, slightingly (under pretext of friendship, or I know not what), a blessing so particularly adapted, predestined, I may say, to my individual palate. It argues an insensibility.

I remember a touch of conscience in this kind at school. My good old aunt, who never parted from me at the end of a holiday without stuffing a sweetmeat, or some nice thing, into my pocket, had dismissed me one evening with a smoking plum-cake, fresh from the oven. In my way to school (it was over London Bridge) a gray-headed old beggar saluted me (I have no doubt, at this time of day, that he was a counterfeit). I had no pence to console him with, and in the vanity of self-denial, and the very coxcombry of charity, schoolboy-like, I made him a present of — the whole cake! I walked on a little, buoyed up, as one is on such occasions, with a sweet soothing of self-satisfaction; but before I had got to the end of the bridge, my better feelings returned, and I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my good aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger that I had never seen before, and who might be a bad man for aught I knew; and then I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I — I myself, and not another — would eat her nice cake — and what should I say to her the next time I saw her — how naughty I was to part with her pretty present! — and the odor of that spicy cake came back upon my recollection, and the pleasure and the curiosity I had taken in seeing her make it, and her joy when she had sent it to the oven, and how disappointed she would feel that I had never had a bit of it in my mouth at last — and I blamed my impertinent spirit of alms-giving, and out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness; and above all I wished never to see the face again of that insidious, good-for-nothing, old gray impostor.

Our ancestors were nice in their method of sacrificing these tender victims. We read of pigs whipt to death, with something of a shock, as we hear of any other obsolete custom. The age of discipline is gone by, or it would be curious to inquire (in a philosophical light merely) what effect this process might have towards intensifying and dulcifying a substance, naturally so mild and duleet as the flesh of young pigs. It looks like refining a violet. Yet we should be cautious, while we condemn the inhumanity, how we censure the wisdom of the practice. It might impart a gusto.

I remember an hypothesis, argued upon by the young students, when I was at St. Omer's, and maintained with much learning and pleasantry on both sides, "Whether, supposing that the flavor of a pig who obtained his death by whipping (*per flagellationem extremam*) super-added a pleasure upon the palate of a man more intense than any possible suffering we can conceive in the animal, is man justified in using that method of putting the animal to death?" I forget the decision.

His sauce should be considered. Decidedly, a few bread crumbs, done up with his liver and brains, and a dash of mild sage. But banish, dear Mrs. Cook, I beseech you, the whole onion tribe. Barbecue your whole hogs to your palate, steep them in shalots, stuff them out with plantations of the rank and guilty garlic; you cannot poison them, or make them stronger than they are; but consider, he is a weakling, — a flower.





## THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF INANIMATE THINGS.

BY MRS. E. A. WALKER.

**I** AM confident, that, at the annunciation of my theme, Andover, Princeton, and Cambridge will skip like rams, and the little hills of East Windsor, Meadville, and Fairfax, like lambs. However divinity schools may refuse to “skip” in unison, and may butt and batter each other about the doctrine and origin of *human* depravity, all will join devoutly in the *credo*, I believe in the total depravity of inanimate things.

The whole subject lies in a nutshell, or rather an apple-skin. We have clerical authority for affirming that all its miseries were let loose upon the human race by “them greenins” tempting our mother to curious pomological speculations; and from that time till now, — Longfellow, thou reasonest well! — “things are not what they seem,” but are diabolically otherwise, — masked batteries, nets, gins, and snares of evil.

(In this connection I am reminded of — can I ever cease to remember? — the unlucky lecturer at our lyceum a few winters ago, who, on rising to address his audience, applauding him all the while most vehemently, pulled out

his handkerchief, for oratorical purposes only, and inadvertently flung from his pocket three "Baldwins" that a friend had given to him on his way to the hall, straight into the front row of giggling girls.)

My zeal on this subject received new impetus recently from an exclamation which pierced the thin partitions of the country-parsonage, once my home, where I chanced to be a guest.

From the adjoining dressing-room issued a prolonged "Y-ah!" — not the howl of a spoiled child, nor the protest of a captive gorilla, but the whole-souled utterance of a mighty son of Anak, whose amiability is invulnerable to weapons of human aggravation.

I paused in the midst of toilet exigencies, and listened sympathetically, for I recognized the probable presence of the old enemy to whom the bravest and sweetest succumb.

Confirmation and explanation followed speedily in the half-apologetic, wholly wrathful declaration, "The pitcher was made foolish in the first place." I dare affirm, that, if the spirit of Lindley Murray himself were at that moment hovering over that scene of trial, he dropped a tear, or, better still, an adverbial *ly* upon the false grammar, and blotted it out forever.

I comprehended the scene at once. I had been there. I felt again the remorseless swash of the water over neat boots and immaculate hose; I saw the perverse intricacies of its meanderings over the carpet, upon which the "foolish" pitcher had been confidently deposited; I knew, beyond the necessity of ocular demonstration, that, as sure as there were "pipe-hole" or crack in the

ceiling of the study below, those inanimate things would inevitably put their evil heads together, and bring to grief the long-suffering Dominic, with whom, during my day, such inundations had been of at least bi-weekly occurrence, instigated by crinoline. The inherent wickedness of that "thing of beauty" will be acknowledged by all mankind, and by every female not reduced to the deplorable poverty of the heroine of the following veracious anecdote.

A certain good bishop, on making a tour of inspection through a mission-school of his diocese, was so impressed by the aspect of all its beneficiaries, that his heart overflowed with joy, and he exclaimed to a little maiden whose appearance was particularly suggestive of creature-comforts, "Why, my little girl! you have everything that heart can wish, have n't you?" Imagine the bewilderment and horror of the prelate, when the miniature Flora McFlimsey drew down the corners of her mouth lugubriously, and sought to accommodate the puffs and dimples of her fat little body to an expression of abject misery, as she replied, "No, indeed, sir! I have n't got any — skeleton!"

We, who have suffered, know the disposition of graceless "skeletons" to hang themselves on "foolish" pitchers, bureau-knobs, rockers, cobble-stones, splinters, nails, and, indeed, any projection a tenth of a line beyond a dead level.

The mention of nails is suggestive of voluminous distresses. Country-parsonages, from some inexplicable reason, are wont to bristle all over with these impish assailants of human comfort.

I never ventured to leave my masculine relatives to their own devices for more than twenty-four consecutive hours, that I did not return to find that they had seemingly manifested their grief at my absence after the old Hebraic method ("more honored in the breach than the observance"), by rending their garments. When summoned to their account, the invariable defence has been a vehement denunciation of some particular *nail* as the guilty cause of my woes.

By the way, O Christian woman of the nineteenth century, did it ever enter your heart to give devout thanks that you did not share the woe of those whose fate it was to "sojourn in Mesceh and dwell in the tents of Kedar"? that it did not fall to your lot to do the plain sewing and mending for some Jewish patriarch, patriot, or prophet of yore?

Realize, if you can, the masculine aggravation and the feminine long-suffering of a period when the head of a family could neither go down town, nor even sit at his tent-door, without desecrating some wickedness in high places, some insulting placard, some exasperating war-bulletin, some offensive order from headquarters, which caused him to transform himself instantly into an animated rag-bag. Whereas, in these women-saving days, similar grievances send President Abraham into his Cabinet to issue a proclamation, the Reverend Jeremiah into his pulpit with a scathing homily, Poet-Laureate David to the "Atlantic" with a burning lyric, and Major-General Joab to the privacy of his tent, there to calm his perturbed spirit with Drake's Plantation Bitters. In humble imitation of another, I would state that this in-

dorsement of the potency of a specific is entirely gratuitous, and that I am stimulated thereto by no remuneration, fluid or otherwise.

Blessed be this day of sewing-machines for women, and of safety-valves and innocent explosives for their lords! But this is a digression.

I awoke very early in life to the consciousness that I held the doctrine which we are considering.

On a hapless day when I was perhaps five years old, I was, in my own estimation, intrusted with the family dignity, when I was deposited for the day at the house of a lordly Pharisee of the parish, with solemnly repeated instructions in table-manners and the like.

One who never analyzed the mysteries of a sensitive child's heart cannot appreciate the sense of awful responsibility which oppressed me during that visit. But all went faultlessly for a time. I corrected myself instantly each time I said, "Yes, ma'am," to Mr. Simon, and "No, sir," to Madam, which was as often as I addressed them; I clinched little fists and lips resolutely, that they might not touch, taste, handle, tempting *bijouterie*; I even held in check the spirit of inquiry rampant within me, and indulged myself with only one question to every three minutes of time.

At last I found myself at the handsome dinner-table, triumphantly mounted upon two "Comprehensive Commentaries" and a dictionary, fearing no evil from the viands before me. Least of all did I suspect the vegetables of guile. But deep in the heart of a bland, mealy-mouthed potato lurked cruel designs upon my fair reputation.

No sooner had I, in the most approved style of nursery good-breeding, applied my fork to its surface, than the hard-hearted thing executed a wild pirouette before my astonished eyes, and then flew on impish wings across the room, dashing out its malicious brains, I am happy to say, against the parlor-door, but leaving me in a half-comatose state, stirred only by vague longings for a lodge with "proud Korah's troop," whose destination is unmistakably set forth in the "Shorter Catechism."

There is a possibility that I received my innate distrust of things by inheritance from my maternal grandmother, whose holy horror at the profanity they once provoked from a bosom-friend in her childhood was still vivid in her old age.

It was on this wise. When still a pretty Puritan maiden, my grandame was tempted irresistibly by the spring sunshine to the tabooed indulgence of a Sunday walk. The temptation was probably intensified by the presence of the British troops, giving unwonted fascination to village promenades. Her confederate in this guilty pleasure was a like-minded little saint; so there was a tacit agreement between them that their transgression should be sanctified by a strict adherence to religious topics of conversation. Accordingly they launched boldly upon the great subject which was just then agitating church circles in New England.

Fortune smiled upon these criminals against the Blue Laws, until they encountered a wall surmounted by hickory rails. Without intermitting the discussion, Susannah sprang agilely up. Quoth she, balancing herself for one moment upon the summit, "No, no, Betscy!

*I believe God is the author of sin!*" The next she sprang toward the ground; but a salient splinter, a chip of depravity, clutched her Sunday gown, and converted her incontinently, it seems, into a confessor of the opposing faith; for history records, that, following the above-mentioned dogma, came from hitherto unstained lips, "The Devil!"

Time and space would, of course, be inadequate to the enumeration of all the demonstrations of the truth of the doctrine of the absolute depravity of things. A few examples only can be cited.

There is melancholy pleasure in the knowledge that a great soul has gone mourning before me in the path I am now pursuing. It was only to-day, that, in glancing over the pages of Victor Hugo's greatest work, I chanced upon the following: "Every one will have noticed with what skill a coin let fall upon the ground runs to hide itself, and what art it has in rendering itself invisible; there are thoughts that play us the same trick."

The similar tendency of pins and needles is universally understood and execrated, — their base secretiveness when searched for, and their incensing intrusion when one is off guard.

I know a man whose sense of their malignity is so keen that, whenever he catches a gleam of their treacherous lustre on the carpet, he instantly draws his two and a quarter yards of length into the smallest possible compass, and shrieks until the domestic police come to the rescue, and apprehend the sharp little villains. Do not laugh at this. Years ago he lost his choicest friend by the stab of just such a little dastard lying in ambush.

So also every wielder of the needle is familiar with the propensity of the several parts of a garment in the process of manufacture to turn themselves wrong side out, and down side up; and the same viciousness cleaves like leprosy to the completed garment so long as a thread remains.

My blood still tingles with a horrible memory illustrative of this truth.

Dressing hurriedly and in darkness for a concert one evening, I appealed to the Dominie, as we passed under the hall-lamp, for a toilet inspection.

“How do I look, father?”

After a sweeping glance came the candid statement, —  
“Beau-tifully!”

O, the blessed glamour which invests a child whose father views her “with a critic’s eye”!

“Yes, *of course*; but look carefully, please; how is my dress?”

Another examination of apparently severest scrutiny.

“All right, dear! That’s the new cloak, is it? Never saw you look better. Come, we shall be late.”

Confidingly I went to the hall; confidingly I entered; since the concert-room was crowded with rapt listeners to the Fifth Symphony, I, gingerly, but still confidingly, followed the author of my days, and the critic of my toilet, to the very uppermost seat, which I entered, barely nodding to my finically fastidious friend, Guy Livingston, who was seated near us with a stylish-looking stranger, who bent eyebrows and glass upon me superciliously.

Seated, the Dominie was at once lifted into the midst



of the massive harmonies of the Adagio ; I lingered outside a moment, in order to settle my garments and — that woman's look. What ! was that a partially suppressed titter near me ? Ah ! she has no soul for music ! How such ill-timed merriment will jar upon my friend's exquisite sensibilities !

Shade of Beethoven ! A hybrid cough and laugh, smothered decorously, but still recognizable, from the courtly Guy himself ! What can it mean ?

In my perturbation, my eyes fell and rested upon the sack, whose newness and glorifying effect had been already noticed by my lynx-eyed parent.

I here pause to remark that I had intended to request the compositor to "set up" the coming sentence in explosive capitals, by way of emphasis, but forbear, realizing that it already staggers under the weight of its own significance.

That sack was wrong side out !

Stern necessity, proverbially known as "the mother of invention," and practically the step-mother of ministers' daughters, had made me eke out the silken facings of the front with cambric linings for the back and sleeves. Accordingly, in the full blaze of the concert-room, there sat I, "accoutred as I was," in motley attire, — my homely little economies patent to admiring spectators : on either shoulder, budding wings composed of unequal parts of sarcenet-cambric and cotton-batting ; and in my heart — *paricide*, I had almost said, but it was rather the more filial sentiment of desire to operate for cataract upon my father's eyes. But a moment's reflection sufficed to transfer my indignation to its proper object, —

the sinful sack itself, which, concerting with its kindred darkness, had planned this cruel assault upon my innocent pride.

A constitutional obtuseness renders me delightfully insensible to one fruitful source of provocation among inanimate things. I am so dull as to regard all distinctions between "rights" and "lefts" as invidious; but I have witnessed the agonized struggles of many a victim of fractious boots, and been thankful that "I am not as other men are," in ability to comprehend the difference between my right and left foot. Still, as already intimated, I have seen wise men driven mad by a thing of leather and waxed-ends.

A little innocent of three years, in all the pride of his first boots, was aggravated, by the perversity of the right to thrust itself on to the left leg, to the utterance of a contraband expletive.

When reprovèd by his horror-stricken mamma, he maintained a dogged silence.

In order to pierce his apparently indurated conscience, his censor finally said, solemnly, —

"Dugald! God knows that you said that wicked word."

"Does he?" cried the baby victim of rerel depravity, in a tone of relief; "then *he* knows it was a doke" (*Anglicè*, joke).

But, mind you, the sin-tempting boot intended no "doke."

The toilet, with its multiform details and complicated machinery, is a demon whose surname is Legion.

Time would fail me to speak of the elusiveness of

soap, the knottiness of strings, the transitory nature of buttons, the inclination of suspenders to twist, and of hooks to forsake their lawful eyes, and cleave only unto the hairs of their hapless owner's head. (It occurs to me as barely possible, that, in the last case, the hooks may be innocent, and the sinfulness may lie in capillary attraction.)

And, O my brother or sister in sorrow, has it never befallen you, when bending all your energies to the mighty task of "doing" your back-hair, to find yourself gazing inanely at the opaque back of your brush, while the hand-mirror, which had maliciously insinuated itself into your right hand for this express purpose, came down upon your devoted head with a resonant whack?

I have alluded, parenthetically, to the possible guilt of capillary attraction, but I am prepared to maintain against the attraction of gravitation the charge of total depravity. Indeed, I should say of it, as did the worthy exhorter of the Dominic's old parish in regard to slavery, "It's the wickedest thing in the world, except sin!"

It was only the other day that I saw depicted upon the young divine's countenance, from this cause, thoughts "too deep for tears," and, perchance, too earthy for clerical utterance.

From a mingling of sanitary and economic considerations, he had cleared his own sidewalk after a heavy snow-storm. As he stood, leaning upon his shovel, surveying with smiling complacency his accomplished task, the spite of the arch-fiend Gravitation was raised against him, and, finding the impish slates (had n't Luther something to say about "as many devils as

tiles"?) ready to co-operate, an avalanche was the result, making the last state of that sidewalk worse than the first, and sending the divine into the house with a battered hat, and an article of faith supplementary to the orthodox thirty-nine.

Prolonged reflection upon a certain class of grievances has convinced me that mankind has generally ascribed them to a guiltless source. I refer to the unspeakable aggravation of "typographical errors," rightly so called, — for, in nine cases out of ten, I opine it is the types themselves which err.

I appeal to fellow-sufferers, if the substitutions and interpolations and false combinations of letters are not often altogether too absurd for humanity.

Take, as one instance, the experience of a friend, who, in writing in all innocency of a session of the Historical Society, affirmed mildly in manuscript, "All went smoothly," but weeks after was made to declare in blatant print, "All went *snoringly!*"

As among men, so in the alphabet, one sinner destroyeth much good.

The genial Senator from the Granite Hills told me of an early aspiration of his own for literary distinction, which was beheaded remorselessly by a villain of this type. By way of majestic peroration to a pathetic article, he had exclaimed, "For what would we exchange the fame of Washington?" — referring, I scarcely need say, to the man of fragrant memory, and not to the odorous capital. The black-hearted little dies, left to their own devices one night, struck dismay to the heart of the aspirant author by propounding in

black and white a prosaic inquiry as to what would be considered a fair equivalent for the *farm* of the father of his country!

Among frequent instances of this depravity in my own experience, a flagrant example still shows its ugly front on a page of a child's book. In the latest edition of "Our Little Girls" (good Mr. Randolph, pray read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest) occurs a description of a christening, wherein a venerable divine is made to dip "his *head*" into the consecrating water, and lay it upon the child.

Disembodied words are also sinners and the occasions of sin. Who has not broken the Commandments in consequence of the provocation of some miserable little monosyllable eluding his grasp in the moment of his direst need, or of some impertinent interloper thrusting itself in, to the utter demoralization of his well-organized sentences? Who has not been covered with shame at tripping over the pronunciation of some perfectly simple word like "statistics," "inalienable," "inextricable," etc., etc., etc.?

Whose experience will not empower him to sympathize with that unfortunate invalid, who, on being interrogated by a pious visitor in regard to her enjoyment of means of grace, informed the horror-stricken inquisitor, "I have not been to church for years, I have been such an *infidel*"; and then, moved by a dim impression of wrong somewhere, as well as by the evident shock inflicted upon her worthy visitor, but conscious of her own integrity, repeated still more emphatically, "No; I have been a confirmed infidel for years"?

But a peremptory summons from an animated nursery forbids my lingering longer in this fruitful field. I can only add an instance of corroborating testimony from each member of the circle originating this essay.

The Dominie *loq.* — “Sha’ n’t have anything to do with it! It’s a wicked thing! To be sure, I do remember, when I was a little boy, I used to throw stones at the chip-basket when it upset the cargo I had just laded, and it was a great relief to my feelings too. Besides, you’ve told stories about me which were anything but true. I don’t remember anything about that sack.”

Lady visitor *loq.* — “The first time I was invited to Mr. ——’s (the Hon. —— ——’s, you know), I was somewhat anxious, but went home flattering myself I had made a creditable impression. Imagine my consternation, when I came to relieve the pocket of my galagown, donned for the occasion, at discovering among its treasures a tea-napkin, marked gorgeously with the Hon. —— ——’s family crest, which had maliciously crept into its depths in order to bring me into disgrace! I have never been able to bring myself to the point of confession, in spite of my subsequent intimacy with the family. If it were not for Joseph’s positive assertion to the contrary, I should be of the opinion that his cup of divination conjured itself deliberately and sinfully into innocent Benjamin’s sack.”

Student *loq.* (Testimony open to criticism.) — “Met pretty girl on the street yesterday. Sure I had on my ‘Armstrong’ hat when I left home, — sure as fate; but when I went to pull it off, — by the crown, of course, — to bow to pretty girl, I smashed in my beaver! How

it got there, don't know. Knocked it off. Pretty girl picked it up and handed it to me. Confounded things, any way!"

Young divine *loq.* — "While I was in the army, I was in Washington on 'leave' for two or three days. One night, at a party, I became utterly bewildered in an attempt to converse, after long desuetude, with a fascinating woman. I went stumbling on, amazing her more and more, until finally I covered myself with glory by the categorical statement that in my opinion General McClellan could 'never get across the Peninsula without a *fattle*; I beg pardon, madam! what I mean to say is, without a *bight*.'"

School-girl *loq.* — "When Uncle —— was President, I was at the White House at a state-dinner one evening. Senator —— came rushing in frantically after we had been at table some time. No sooner was he seated than he turned to Aunt to apologize for his delay; and, being very much heated, and very much embarrassed, he tugged away desperately at his pocket, and finally succeeded in extracting a huge blue stocking, evidently of home-manufacture, with which he proceeded to wipe his forehead very energetically and very conspicuously. I suppose the truth was, that the poor man's handkerchiefs were 'on a strike,' and thrust forward this home-spun stocking to bring him to terms."

School-girl, No. 2, *loq.* — "My last term at F., I was expecting a box of 'goodies' from home. So when the message came, 'An express-package for you, Miss Fanny!' I invited all my specials to come and assist at the opening. Instead of the expected box, appeared a mis-

shapen bundle, done up in yellow wrapping-paper. Four such dejected-looking damsels were never seen before as we, standing around the ugly old thing. Finally, Alice suggested, —

“ ‘Open it!’ ”

“ ‘O, I know what it is,’ I said; ‘it is my old thibet, that mother has had made over for me.’ ”

“ ‘Let’s see,’ persisted Alice. ”

“ So I opened the package. The first thing I drew out was too much for me. ”

“ ‘What a funny-looking basque!’ exclaimed Alice. All the rest were struck dumb with disappointment. ”

“ No! not a basque at all, but a man’s black satin waistcoat! and next came objects about which there could be no doubt, — a pair of dingy old trousers, and a swallow-tailed coat! Imagine the chorus of damsels! ”

“ The secret was, that two packages lay in father’s office, — one for me, the other for those everlasting freedmen. John was to forward mine. He had taken up the box to write my address on it, when the yellow bundle tumbled off the desk at his feet and scared the wits out of his head. So I came in for father’s second-hand clothes, and the Ethiopians had the ‘goodies’! ”

Repentant Dominic *loq.* — “ I don’t approve of it at all; but then, if you must write the wicked thing, I heard a good story for you to-day. Dr. — found himself in the pulpit of a Dutch Reformed Church the other Sunday. You know he is one who prides himself on his adaptation to places and times. Just at the close of the introductory services, a black gown lying over the arm of the sofa caught his eye. He was rising to



deliver his sermon, when it forced itself on his attention again.

“‘Sure enough,’ thought he, ‘Dutch Reformed clergymen do wear gowns. I might as well put it on.’

“So he solemnly thrust himself into the malicious (as you would say) garment, and went through the services as well as he could, considering that his audience seemed singularly agitated, and indeed on the point of bursting out into a general laugh, throughout the entire service. And no wonder! The good Doctor, in his zeal for conformity, had attired himself in the black cambric duster in which the pulpit was shrouded during week-days, and had been gesticulating his eloquent homily with his arms thrust through the holes left for the pulpit-lamps!”





## THE SKELETON IN THE CLOSET.

BY J. THOMAS DARRAGH (late C. C. S.).

**I** WAS in the Civil Service at Richmond. Why I was there, or what I did, is nobody's affair. And I do not in this paper propose to tell how it happened that I was in New York in October, 1864, on confidential business. Enough that I was there, and that it was honest business. That business done, as far as it could be with the resources intrusted to me, I prepared to return home. And thereby hangs this tale, and, as it proved, the fate of the Confederacy.

For, of course, I wanted to take presents home to my family. Very little question was there what these presents should be, — for I had no boys nor brothers. The women of the Confederacy had one want, which overtopped all others. They could make coffee out of beans; pins they had from Columbus; straw hats they braided quite well with their own fair hands; snuff we could get better than you could in "the old concern." But we had no hoop-skirts, — skeletons, we used to call them. No ingenuity had made them. No bounties had forced them. The Bat, the Greyhound, the Deer, the Flora, the J. C.

Cobb, the Varuna, and the Fore-and-Aft all took in cargoes of them for us in England. But the Bat and the Deer and the Flora were seized by the blockaders, the J. C. Cobb sunk at sea, the Fore-and-Aft and the Greyhound were set fire to by their own crews, and the Varuna (our Varuna) was never heard of. Then the State of Arkansas offered sixteen townships of swamp land to the first manufacturer who would exhibit five gross of a home-manufactured article. But no one ever competed. The first attempts, indeed, were put to an end, when Schofield crossed the Blue Lick, and destroyed the dams on Yellow Branch. The consequence was, that people's crinoline collapsed faster than the Confederacy did, of which that brute of a Grierson said there was never anything of it but the outside.

Of course, then, I put in the bottom of my new large trunk in New York, not a "duplex elliptic," for none were then made, but a "Belmonte," of thirty springs, for my wife. I bought, for her more common wear, a good "Belle-Fontaine." For Sarah and Susy each, I got two "Dumb-Belles." For Aunt Eunice and Aunt Clara, maiden sisters of my wife, who lived with us after Winchester fell the fourth time, I got the "Scotch Harebell," two of each. For my own mother I got one "Belle of the Prairies" and one "Invisible Combination Gossamer." I did not forget good old Mamma Chloe and Mamma Jane. For them I got substantial cages, without names. With these, tied in the shapes of figure eights in the bottom of my trunk, as I said, I put in an assorted cargo of dry-goods above, and, favored by a pass, and Major Mulford's courtesy on the flag-of-truce

boat, I arrived safely at Richmond before the autumn closed.

I was received at home with rapture. But when, the next morning, I opened my stores, this became rapture doubly enraptured. Words cannot tell the silent delight with which old and young, black and white, surveyed these fairy-like structures, yet unbroken and unmended.

Perennial summer reigned that autumn day in that reunited family. It reigned the next day, and the next. It would have reigned till now if the Belmontes and the other things would last as long as the advertisements declare ; and, what is more, the Confederacy would have reigned till now, President Davis and General Lee ! but for that great misery, which all families understand, which culminated in our great misfortune.

I was up in the cedar closet one day, looking for an old parade cap of mine, which I thought, though it was my third best, might look better than my second best, which I had worn ever since my best was lost at the Seven Pines. I say I was standing on the lower shelf of the cedar closet, when, as I stepped along in the darkness, my right foot caught in a bit of wire, my left did not give way in time, and I fell, with a small wooden hat-box in my hand, full on the floor. The corner of the hat-box struck me just below the second frontal sinus, and I fainted away.

When I came to myself I was in the blue chamber ; I had vinegar on a brown paper on my forehead ; the room was dark, and I found mother sitting by me, glad enough indeed to hear my voice, and to know that I knew her. It was some time before I fully understood

what had happened. Then she brought me a cup of tea, and I, quite refreshed, said I must go to the office.

“Office, my ehild!” said she. “Your leg is broken above the ankle; you will not move these six weeks. Where do you suppose you are?”

Till then I had no notion that it was five minutes since I went into the closet. When she told me the time, five in the afternoon, I groaned in the lowest depths. For, in my breast-pocket in that innocent coat, which I could now see lying on the window-seat, were the duplicate despatches to Mr. Mason, for which, late the night before, I had got the Secretary’s signature. They were to go at ten that morning to Wilmington, by the Navy Department’s special messenger. I had taken them to insure care and certainty. I had worked on them till midnight, and they had not been signed till near one o’clock. Heavens and earth, and here it was five o’clock! The man must be half-way to Wilmington by this time. I sent the doctor for Lafarge, my elerk. Lafarge did his prettiest in rushing to the telegraph. But no! A freshet on the Chowan River, or a raid by Foster, or something, or nothing, had smashed the telegraph wire for that night. And before that despatch ever reached Wilmington the navy agent was in the offing in the Sea-Maid.

“But perhaps the duplicate got through?” No, breathless reader, the duplicate did not get through. The duplicate was taken by Faucon, in the Ino. I saw it last week in Dr. Lieber’s hands, in Washington. Well, all I know is, that if the duplicate had got through, the Confederate government would have had in March a chance at eighty-three thousand two hundred and eleven

muskets, which, as it was, never left Belgium. So much for my treading into that blessed piece of wire on the shelf of the cedar closet, up stairs.

“What was the bit of wire?”

Well, it was not telegraph wire. If it had been, it would have broken when it was not wanted to. Don't you know what it was? Go up in your own cedar closet, and step about in the dark, and see what brings up round your ankles. Julia, poor child, cried her eyes out about it. When I got well enough to sit up, and as soon as I could talk and plan with her, she brought down seven of these old things, antiquated Belmontes and Simplex Elliptics, and horrors without a name, and she made a pile of them in the bedroom, and asked me in the most penitent way what she should do with them.

“You can't burn them,” said she; “fire won't touch them. If you bury them in the garden, they come up at the second raking. If you give them to the servants, they say, ‘Thank-e, missus,’ and throw them in the back passage. If you give them to the poor, they throw them into the street in front, and do not say, ‘Thauk-e.’ Sarah sent seventeen over to the sword factory, and the foreman swore at the boy, and told him he would flog him within an inch of his life if he brought any more of his sauce there; and so — and so,” sobbed the poor child, “I just rolled up these wretched things, and laid them in the cedar closet, hoping, you know, that some day the government would want something, and would advertise for them. You know what a good thing I made out of the bottle corks.”

In fact, she had sold our bottle corks for four thousand

two hundred and sixteen dollars of the first issue. We afterward bought two umbrellas and a corkscrew with the money.

Well, I did not scold Julia. It was certainly no fault of hers that I was walking on the lower shelf of her cedar closet. I told her to make a parcel of the things, and the first time we went to drive I hove the whole shapeless heap into the river, without saying mass for them.

But let no man think, or no woman, that this was the end of troubles. As I look back on that winter, and on the spring of 1865 (I do not mean the steel spring), it seems to me only the beginning. I got out on crutches at last; I had the office transferred to my house, so that Lafarge and Hepburn could work there nights, and communicate with me when I could not go out; but mornings I hobbled up to the Department, and sat with the Chief, and took his orders. Ah me! shall I soon forget that damp winter morning, when we all had such hope at the office? One or two of the army fellows looked in at the window as they ran by, and we knew that they felt well; and though I would not ask Old Wick, as we had nicknamed the Chief, what was in the wind, I knew the time had come, and that the lion meant to break the net this time. I made an excuse to go home earlier than usual; rode down to the house in the Major's ambulance, I remember; and hopped in, to surprise Julia with the good news, only to find that the whole house was in that quiet uproar which shows that something bad has happened of a sudden.

"What is it, Chloe?" said I, as the old wench rushed by me with a bucket of water.

“Poor Mr. George, I ’fraid he ’s dead, sah!”

And there he really was, — dear, handsome, bright George Schaff, — the delight of all the nicest girls of Richmond; he lay there on Aunt Eunice’s bed on the ground-floor, where they had brought him in. He was not dead, — and he did not die. He is making cotton in Texas now. But he looked mighty near it then. “The deep cut in his head” was the worst I then had ever seen, and the blow confused everything. When McGregor got round, he said it was not hopeless; but we were all turned out of the room, and with one thing and another he got the boy out of the swoon, and somehow it proved his head was not broken.

No, but poor George swears to this day it were better it had been, if it could only have been broken the right way and on the right field. For that evening we heard that everything had gone wrong in the surprise. There we had been waiting for one of those early fogs, and at last the fog had come. And Jubal Early had, that morning, pushed out every man he had, that could stand; and they lay hid for three mortal hours, within I don’t know how near the picket-line at Fort Powhatan, only waiting for the shot which John Streight’s party were to fire at Wilson’s Wharf, as soon as somebody on our left centre advanced in force on the enemy’s line above Turkey Island stretching across to Nansemond. I am not in the War Department, and I forget whether he was to advance *en barbette* or by *échelon* of infantry. But he was to advance somehow, and he knew how; and when he advanced, you see, that other man lower down was to rush in, and as soon as Early heard him he



was to surprise Powhatan, you see; and then, if you have understood me, Grant and Butler and the whole rig of them would have been cut off from their supplies, would have had to fight a battle for which they were not prepared, with their right made into a new left, and their old left unexpectedly advanced at an oblique angle from their centre, and would not that have been the end of them?

Well, that never happened. And the reason it never happened was, that poor George Schaff, with the last fatal order for this man whose name I forget (the same who was afterward killed the day before High Bridge), undertook to save time by cutting across behind my house, from Franklin to Green Streets. You know how much time he saved, — they waited all day for that order. George told me afterwards that the last thing he remembered was kissing his hand to Julia, who sat at her bedroom window. He said he thought she might be the last woman he ever saw this side of heaven. Just after that, it must have been, his horse — that white Messenger colt old Williams bred — went over like a log, and poor George was pitched fifteen feet head-foremost against a stake there was in that lot. Julia saw the whole. She rushed out with all the women, and had just brought him in when I got home. And that was the reason that the great promised combination of December, 1864, never came off at all.

I walked out in the lot, after McGregor turued me out of the chamber, to see what they had done with the horse. There he lay, as dead as old Messenger himself. His neck was broken. And do you think, I looked to

see what had tripped him. I supposed it was one of the boys' bandy-holes. It was no such thing. The poor wretch had tangled his hind legs in one of those infernal hoop-wires that Chloe had thrown out in the piece when I gave her her new ones. Though I did not know it then, those fatal scraps of rusty steel had broken the neck that day of Robert Lee's army.

That time I made a row about it. I felt too badly to go into a passion. But before the women went to bed, — they were all in the sitting-room together, — I talked to them like a father. I did not swear. I had got over that for a while, in that six weeks on my back. But I did say the old wires were infernal things, and that the house and premises must be made rid of them. The aunts laughed, — though I was so serious, — and tipped a wink to the girls. The girls wanted to laugh, but were afraid to. And then it came out that the aunts had sold their old hoops, tied as tight as they could tie them, in a great mass of rags. They had made a fortune by the sale, — I am sorry to say it was in other rags, but the rags they got were new instead of old, — it was a real Aladdin bargain. The new rags had blue backs, and were numbered, some as high as fifty dollars. The rag-man had been in a hurry, and had not known what made the things so heavy. I frowned at the swindle, but they said all was fair with a pedler, — and I own I was glad the things were well out of Richmond. But when I said I thought it was a mean trick, Lizzie and Sarah looked demure, and asked what in the world I would have them do with the old things. Did I expect them to walk down to the bridge themselves with great

parcels to throw into the river, as I had done by Julia's? Of course it ended, as such things always do, by my taking the work on my own shoulders. I told them to tie up all they had in as small a parcel as they could, and bring them to me.

Accordingly, the next day, I found a handsome brown-paper parcel, not so very large, considering, and strangely square, considering, which the minxes had put together and left on my office table. They had a great frolic over it. They had not spared red tape nor red wax. Very official it looked, indeed, and on the left-hand corner, in Sarah's boldest and most contorted hand, was written, "Secret service." We had a great laugh over their success. And, indeed, I should have taken it with me the next time I went down to the Tredegar, but that I happened to dine one evening with young Norton of our gallant little navy, and a very curious thing he told us.

We were talking about the disappointment of the combined land attack. I did not tell what upset poor Schaff's horse; indeed, I do not think those navy men knew the details of the disappointment. O'Brien had told me, in confidence, what I have written down probably for the first time now. But we were speaking, in a general way, of the disappointment. Norton finished his cigar rather thoughtfully, and then said, "Well, fellows, it is not worth while to put in the newspapers, but what do you suppose upset our grand naval attack, the day the Yankee gunboats skittled down the river so handsomely?"

"Why," said Allen, who is Norton's best-beloved friend, "they say that you ran away from them as fast as they did from you."

“Do they?” said Norton, grimly. “If you say that, I’ll break your head for you. Seriously, men,” continued he, “that was a most extraordinary thing. You know I was on the ram. But why she stopped when she stopped I knew as little as this wineglass does; and Callender himself knew no more than I. We had not been hit. We were all right as a trivet for all we knew, when, skree! she began blowing off steam, and we stopped dead, and began to drift down under those batteries. Callender had to telegraph to the little Mosquito, or whatever Walter called his boat, and the spunky little thing ran down and got us out of the scrape. Walter did it right well; if he had had a monitor under him, he could not have done better. Of course we all rushed to the engine-room. What in thunder were they at there? All they knew was they could get no water into her boiler.

“Now, fellows, this is the end of the story. As soon as the boilers cooled off they worked all night on those supply pumps. May I be hanged if they had not sucked in, somehow, a long string of yarn, and cloth, and, if you will believe me, a wire of some woman’s erinoline. And that French folly of a sham Empress cut short that day the victory of the Confederate navy, and old Davis himself can’t tell when we shall have such a chance again!”

Some of the men thought Norton lied. But I never was with him when he did not tell the truth. I did not mention, however, what I had thrown into the water the last time I had gone over to Manchester. And I changed my mind about Sarah’s “secret-service” parcel. It remained on my table.

That was the last dinner our old club had at the Spotswood, I believe. The spring came on, and the plot thickened. We did our work in the office as well as we could; I can speak for mine, and if other people — But no matter for that! The 3d of April came, and the fire, and the right wing of Grant's army. I remember I was glad then that I had moved the office down to the house, for we were out of the way there. Everybody had run away from the Department; and so, when the powers that be took possession, my little sub-bureau was unmolested for some days. I improved those days as well as I could, — burning carefully what was to be burned, and hiding carefully what was to be hidden. One thing that happened then belongs to this story. As I was at work on the private bureau, — it was really a bureau, as it happened, one I had made Aunt Eunice give up when I broke my leg, — I came, to my horror, on a neat parcel of coast-survey maps of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. They were not the same Maury stole when he left the National Observatory, but they were like them. Now, I was perfectly sure that on that fatal Sunday of the flight I had sent Lafarge for these, that the President might use them, if necessary, in his escape. When I found them, I hopped out and called for Julia, and asked her if she did not remember his coming for them. "Certainly," she said, "it was the first I knew of the danger. Lafarge came, asked for the key of the office, told me all was up, walked in, and in a moment was gone."

And here, on the file of April 3d, was Lafarge's line to me: —

"I got the secret-service parcel myself, and have put

it in the President's own hands. I marked it 'Gulf coast,' as you bade me."

What could Lafarge have given to the President? Not the soundings of Hatteras Bar. Not the working-drawings of the first monitor. I had all these under my hand. Could it be — "Julia, what did we do with that stuff of Sarah's that she marked *secret service*?"

As I live, we had sent the girls' old hoops to the President in his flight.

And when the next day we read how he used them, and how Pritchard arrested him, we thought if he had only had the right parcel he would have found the way to Florida.

That is really the end of this memoir. But I should not have written it, but for something that happened just now on the piazza. You must know, some of us wreeks are up here at the Berkeley baths. My uncle has a place near here. Here came to-day John Sisson, whom I have not seen since Memminger ran and took the clerks with him. Here we had before, both the Richards brothers, the great paper men, you know, who started the Edgerly Works in Prince George's County, just after the war began. After dinner, Sisson and they met on the piazza. Queerly enough, they had never seen each other before, though they had used reams of Richards's paper in correspondence with each other, and the treasury had used tons of it in the printing of bonds and bank-bills. Of course we all fell to talking of old times, — old they seem now, though it is not a year ago. "Richards," said Sisson at last, "what became of that last order of ours for water-lined, pure linen

government-called paper of *sureté*? We never got it, and I never knew why."

"Did you think Kilpatrick got it?" said Richards.

"None of your chaff, Richards. Just tell where the paper went, for in the loss of that lot of paper, as it proved, the bottom dropped out of the treasury tub. On that paper was to have been printed our new issue of ten per cent, convertible, you know, and secured on that up-country cotton, which Kirby Smith had above the Big Raft. I had the printers ready for near a month waiting for that paper. The plates were really very handsome. I'll show you a proof when we go up stairs. Wholly new they were, made by some Frenchmen we got, who had worked for the Bank of France. I was so anxious to have the thing well done, that I waited three weeks for that paper, and, by Jove, I waited just too long. We never got one of the bonds off, and that was why we had no money in March."

Richards threw his cigar away. I will not say he swore between his teeth, but he twirled his chair round, brought it down on all fours, both his elbows on his knees and his chin in both hands.

"Mr. Sisson," said he, "if the Confederacy had lived, I would have died before I ever told what became of that order of yours. But now I have no secrets, I believe, and I care for nothing. I do not know now how it happened. We knew it was an extra-nice job. And we had it on an elegant little new French Fourdrinier, which cost us more than we shall ever pay. The pretty thing ran like oil the day before. That day, I thought all the devils were in it. The more power we put on

the more the rollers screamed; and the less we put on, the more sulkily the jade stopped. I tried it myself every way; back current, I tried; forward current; high feed; low feed; I tried it on old stock, I tried it on new; and, Mr. Sisson, I would have made better paper in a coffee-mill! We drained off every drop of water. We washed the tubs free from size. Then my brother there worked all night with the machinists, taking down the frame and the rollers. You would not believe it, sir, but that little bit of wire," — and he took out of his pocket a piece of this hateful steel, which poor I knew so well by this time, — "that little bit of wire had passed in from some hoop-skirt, passed the pickers, passed the screens, through all the troughs, up and down through what we call the lacerators, and had got itself wrought in, where, if you know a Fourdrier machine, you may have noticed a brass ring riveted to the cross-bar, and there this cursed little knife — for you see it was a knife, by that time — had been cutting to pieces the endless wire web every time the machine was started. You lost your bonds, Mr. Sisson, because some Yankee woman cheated one of my rag-men."

On that story I came up stairs. Poor Aunt Eunice! She was the reason I got no salary on the 1st of April. I thought I would warn other women by writing down the story.

That fatal present of mine, in those harmless hour-glass parcels, was the ruin of the Confederate navy, army, ordnance, and treasury; and it led to the capture of the poor President too. But, Heaven be praised, no one shall say that my office did not do its duty!





## SANDY WOOD'S SEPULCHRE.

BY HUGH MILLER.

**T**HE ruins of the old chapel of St. Regulus, in Cromarty, occupy the edge of a narrow, projecting angle in which the burying-ground terminates toward the east. The old enclosure of the burying-ground, which seems originally to have been an earthen wall, has now sunk into a grassy mound, and on the southern and western sides some of the largest trees of the fence—a fine, stately ash, fluted like a Grecian column, a huge elm, roughened over with immense wens, and a low, bushy larch with a bent, twisted trunk and weeping branches—spring directly out of it. At one place we see a flat tombstone, lying a few yards outside the mound. The trees which shoot up on every side fling so deep a gloom over it during the summer and autumn months, that we can scarcely decipher the epitaph, and in winter it is not unfrequently buried under a wreath of withered leaves. By dint of some little pains, however, we come to learn from the darkened and half-dilapidated inscription, that the tenant below, one Alexander Wood, a native of Cromarty, died

in the year 1690; and that he was interred in this place at his own especial desire. His wife and some of his children have taken up their places beside him; thus lying apart like a family of hermits; while his story — which, almost too wild for tradition itself, is yet as authentic as most pieces of written history — affords a curious explanation of the circumstance which directed their choice.

Wood was a man of strong passions, sparingly gifted with common-sense, and exceedingly superstitious. No one could be kinder to his friends or relatives, or more hospitable to a stranger; but when once offended, he was implacable. He had but little in his power as either a friend or an enemy; his course through the world lying barely beyond the bleak edge of poverty. If a neighbor, however, dropped in by accident at meal-time, he would not be suffered to quit the house until he had shared with the family their simple fare. There was benevolence in the very grasp of his hand and the twinkle of his eye and the little set speech, still preserved by tradition, in which he used to address his wife every time an old or mutilated beggar came to the door. "Alms, gude-wife," he would say, — "alms to the crippled and the blin' and the broken-down." When injured or insulted, however, — and certainly no one could do either without being very much in the wrong, — there was a toad-like malignity in his nature, that would come leaping out like the reptile from its hole, and no power on earth could shut it up again. He would sit hatching his venom for days and weeks together with a slow, tedious, inoperative kind of perseverance that achieved nothing. He

was full of anecdote; and, in all his stories, human nature was exhibited in only its brightest lights and its deepest shadows, without the slightest mixture of that medium tint which gives color to its working, every-day suit. Whatever was bad in the better class he transferred to the worse, and *vice versa*; and thus not even his narratives of the supernatural were less true to nature and fact than his narratives of mere men and women. And he dealt with the two classes of stories after the same fashion, lending the same firm belief to both alike.

In the house adjoining the one in which he resided, lived a stout little man, a shoemaker, famous in the village for his great wit and his very considerable knavery. His jokes were mostly practical, and some of the best of them exceedingly akin to felonies. Poor Wood could not understand his wit; but, in his simplicity of heart, he deemed him honest, and would fain have prevailed on the neighbors to think so too. He knew it, he said, by his very look.

Their gardens, like their houses, lay contiguous, and were separated from each other, not by a fence, but by four undressed stones laid in a line. Year after year was the garden of Wood becoming less productive; and he had a strange misgiving, but the thing was too absurd to be spoken of, that it was growing smaller every season by the breadth of a whole row of cabbages. On the one side, however, were the back walls of his own and his neighbor's tenements; the four large stones stretched along the other; and nothing surely could be less likely than that either the stones or the houses should take it

into their heads to rob him of his property. But the more he strove to exclude the idea, the more it pressed upon him. He measured and remeasured, to convince himself that it was a false one, and found that he had fallen on just the means of establishing its truth. The garden was actually growing smaller. But how? Just because it was bewitched! It was shrinking into itself under the force of some potent enchantment, like a piece of plaiding in the fulling-mill. No hypothesis could be more congenial; and he would have held by it, perhaps, until his dying day, had it not been struck down by one of those chance discoveries which destroy so many beautiful systems and spoil so much ingenious philosophy, quite in the way that Newton's apple struck down the vortices of Descartes.

He was lying abed one morning in spring, about day-break, when his attention was excited by a strange noise which seemed to proceed from his garden. Had he heard it two hours earlier, he would have wrapped up his head in the bedclothes and lain still; but now that the cock had crowed, it could not, he concluded, be other than natural. Hastily throwing on part of his clothes, he stole warily to a back window, and saw, between him and the faint light that was beginning to peep out in the east, the figure of a man, armed with a lever, tugging at the stones. Two had already been shifted a full yard nearer the houses, and the figure was straining over a third. Wood crept stealthily out at the window, crawled on all fours to the intruder, and, tripping up his heels, laid him across his lever. It was his knavish neighbor, the shoemaker. A scene of noisy contention ensued;

groups of half-dressed townsfolk, looming horribly in their shirts and nightcaps through the gray of the morning, came issuing through the lanes and the closes ; and the combatants were dragged asunder. And well was it for the shoemaker that it was so ; for Wood, though in his sixtieth year, was strong enough, and more than angry enough, to have torn him to pieces ; now, however, that the warfare had to be carried on by words, the case was quite reversed.

“ Neebours,” said the shoemaker, who had the double advantage of being exceedingly plausible and decidedly in the wrong, “ I ’m desperately ill used this morning, — desperately ill-used, — he would baith rob and murder me. I lang jaloused, ye see, that my wee bit o’ a yard was growing littler and littler ilka season ; and though no verra ready to suspect folk, I just thought I would keep watch and see wha was shifting the mark-stanes. Weel, and I did. Late and early did I watch for mair now than a fortnight ; and wha did I see this morning through the back winnock but auld Sandy Wood there in his very sark, — O, it’s no him that has ony thought o’ this end ! — poking the stones wi’ a lang kebar, intil the verra heart o’ my grun’ ? See,” said he, pointing to the one that had not yet been moved, — “ see if he hasna shifted it a lang ell ; and only notice the craft o’ the body in stirring up the yird about the lave, as if they had been a’ moved fra my side. Weel, I cam out and challenged him, as wha widna ? Says I, ‘ Sanney, my man, that’s no honest ; I’ll no bear that ’ ; and nae mair had I time to say, when up he flew at me like a wull-cat ; and if it wasna for yoursels, I dare say he would hae throttled

me. Look how I'm bleedin'; and only look till him, — look till the cankart, deceitful bodie, if he has one word to put in for himsel'."

There was truth in, at least, this last assertion; for poor Wood, mute with rage and astonishment, stood listening, in utter helplessness, to the astounding charge of the shoemaker, — almost the very charge he himself had to prefer. Twice did he spring forward to grapple with him, but the neighbors held him back; and every time he essayed to speak, his words — massed and tangled together, like wreaths of sea-weed in a hurricane — stuck in his throat. He continued to rage for three days after; and when the eruption had at length subsided, all his former resentments were found to be swallowed up, like the lesser craters of a volcano, in the gulf of one immense hatred.

His house, as has been said, lay contiguous to the house of the shoemaker, and he could not avoid seeing him every time he went out and came in, — a circumstance which he, at first, deemed rather gratifying than otherwise. It prevented his hatred from becoming vapid, by setting it working at least ten times a day, as a musket would a barrel of ale if discharged into the bung-hole. Its frequency, however, at length sickened him, and he had employed a mason to build a stone-wall, which, by stretching from side to side of the close, was to shut up the view, when he sickened in right earnest, and at the end of a few days found himself dying.

Still, however, he was possessed by his one engrossing resentment. It mingled with all his thoughts of the past and the future; and not only was he to carry it with him

to the world to which he was going, but also to leave it behind him as a legacy to his children. Among his many other beliefs, there was a superstition, handed down from the times of the monks, that at the day of final doom all the people of the sheriffdom were to be judged on the moor of Navity; and both the judgment and the scene of it he had indissolubly associated with the shoemaker and the four stones. Experience had taught him the importance of securing a first hearing for his story; for was his neighbor, he concluded, to be beforehand with him, he would have as slight a chance of being righted at Navity as in his own garden. After brooding over the matter for a whole day, he called his friends and children round his bed, and raised himself on his elbow to address them.

“I’m weering awa, bairns and neebours,” he said, “and it vexes me sair that that wretched body should see me going afore him. Mind, Jock, that ye’ll build the dike, and make it heigh, heigh, and stobbie on the top; and oh! keep him out o’ my lykewake; for should he but step in at the door, I’ll rise, Joek, frae the verra straiiking-board and do murder; dinna let him sa muekle as look on my coffin. I’ve been pondering a’ this day about the meeting at the Navity, and the mark-stanes; and I’ll tell you, Joek, how we’ll match him. Bury me ayont the saint’s dike, on the Navity side, and dinna lay me deep. Ye ken the bonny green hilloek, speckled o’er wi’ gowans and puddoek-flowers,—bury me there, Jock; and yoursel’ and the auld wife may just, when your hour comes, tak’ up your places beside me. We’ll a’ get up at the first tout,—the ane helping the other;

and I 'se wad a' I 'm worth i' the warld, we 'll be half-way up at Navity afore the shochlan, short-legged body wins o'er the dike."

Such was the dying injunction of Sandy Wood ; and his tombstone still remains to testify that it was religiously attended to. An Englishman who came to reside in the parish nearly an age after, and to whom the story must have been imparted in a rather imperfect manner, was shocked by what he deemed his unfair policy. The litigants, he said, should start together ; he was certain it would be so in England, where a fair field was all that would be given to St. Dunstan himself, though he fought with the Devil. And that it might be so here, he buried the tombstone of Wood in an immense heap of clay and gravel. It would keep him down, he said, until the little fellow would have clambered over the wall. The townsfolk, however, who were better acquainted with the merits of the case, shovelled the heap aside ; and it now forms two little hillocks which overtop the stone, and which, from the nature of the soil, are still more seantly covered with verdure than any part of the surrounding bank.







## A VISIT TO THE ASYLUM FOR AGED AND DECAYED PUNSTERS.

BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

**H**AVING just returned from a visit to this admirable Institution in company with a friend who is one of the Directors, we propose giving a short account of what we saw and heard. The great success of the Asylum for Idiots and Feeble-minded Youth, several of the scholars from which have reached considerable distinction, one of them being connected with a leading daily paper in this city, and others having served in the State and national legislatures, was the motive which led to the foundation of this excellent charity. Our late distinguished townsman, Noah Dow, Esquire, as is well known, bequeathed a large portion of his fortune to this establishment, — “being thereto moved,” as his will expressed it, “by the desire of *N. Downing* some publick Institution for the benefit of Mankind.” Being consulted as to the rules of the institution and the selection of a superintendent, he replied, that “all boards must construct their own platforms of operation. Let them select *anyhow* and he should be

pleased." N. E. Howe, Esq., was chosen in compliance with this delicate suggestion.

The charter provides for the support of "One hundred aged and decayed Gentlemen-Punsters." On inquiry if there was no provision for *females*, my friend called my attention to this remarkable psychological fact, namely: THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A FEMALE PUNSTER.

This remark struck me forcibly, and on reflection I found that *I never knew nor heard of one*, though I have once or twice heard a woman make a *single detached* pun, as I have known a hen to crow.

On arriving at the south gate of the Asylum grounds, I was about to ring, but my friend held my arm and begged me to rap with my stick, which I did. An old man with a very comical face presently opened the gate and put out his head.

"So you prefer *Cane* to *A bell*, do you?" he said, — and began chuckling and coughing at a great rate.

My friend winked at me.

"You're here still, Old Joe, I see," he said to the old man.

"Yes, yes, — and it's very odd, considering how often I've *bolted* nights."

He then threw open the double gates for us to ride through.

"Now," said the old man, as he pulled the gates after us, "you've had a long journey."

"Why, how is that, Old Joe?" said my friend.

"Don't you see?" he answered; "there's the *East hinges* on one side of the gate, and there's the *West hinges* on t' other side, — haw! haw! haw!"

We had no sooner got into the yard than a feeble little gentleman, with a remarkably bright eye, came up to us, looking very seriously, as if something had happened.

“The town has entered a complaint against the Asylum as a gambling establishment,” he said to my friend, the Director.

“What do you mean?” said my friend.

“Why, they complain that there’s a *lot o’ rye* on the premises,” he answered, pointing to a field of that grain, — and hobbled away, his shoulders shaking with laughter, as he went.

On entering the main building, we saw the Rules and Regulations for the Asylum conspicuously posted up. I made a few extracts which may be interesting.

## SECT. I. OF VERBAL EXERCISES.

5. Each Inmate shall be permitted to make Puns freely from eight in the morning until ten at night, except during Service in the Chapel and Grace before Meals.

6. At ten o’clock the gas will be turned off, and no further Puns, Conundrums, or other play on words, will be allowed to be uttered, or to be uttered aloud.

9. Inmates who have lost their faculties and cannot any longer make Puns shall be permitted to repeat such as may be selected for them by the Chaplain out of the work of Mr. *Joseph Miller*.

10. Violent and unmanageable Punsters, who interrupt others when engaged in conversation, with Puns or attempts at the same, shall be deprived of their *Joseph Millers*, and, if necessary, placed in solitary confinement.

## SECT. III. OF DEPORTMENT AT MEALS.

4. No Inmate shall make any Pun, or attempt at the same, until the Blessing has been asked and the company are decently seated.

7. Certain Puns having been placed on the *Index Expurgatorius* of the Institution, no Inmate shall be allowed to utter them, on pain of being debarred the perusal of *Punch* and *Vanity Fair*, and, if repeated, deprived of his *Joseph Miller*.

Among these are the following:—

Allusions to *Attic salt*, when asked to pass the salt-cellar.

Remarks on the Inmates being *mustered*, etc., etc.

Associating baked beans with the *benefactors* of the Institution.

Saying that beef-eating is *befitting*, etc., etc.

The following are also prohibited, excepting to such Inmates as may have lost their faculties and cannot any longer make Puns of their own:—

“—your own *hair* or a wig”; “it will be *long enough*,” etc., etc.; “little of its age,” etc., etc.;—also, playing upon the following words: *hospital*; *mayor*; *pun*; *pitied*; *bread*; *sauce*, etc., etc., etc. See INDEX EXPURGATORIUS, printed for use of Inmates.

The subjoined Conundrum is not allowed:—Why is Hasty Pudding like the Prince? Because it comes attended by its *sweet*;—nor this variation to it, *to wit*: Because the *'lasses runs after it*.

The Superintendent, who went round with us, had been a noted punster in his time, and well known in the

business-world, but lost his customers by making too free with their names, — as in the famous story he set afloat in '29 of *four Jerries* attaching to the names of a noted Judge, an eminent Lawyer, the Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, and the well-known Landlord at Springfield. One of the *four Jerries*, he added, was of gigantic magnitude. The play on words was brought out by an accidental remark of Solomons, the well-known Banker. “*Capital punishment!*” the Jew was overheard saying, with reference to the guilty parties. He was understood as saying, *A capital pun is meant*, which led to an investigation and the relief of the greatly excited public mind.

The Superintendent showed some of his old tendencies, as he went round with us.

“Do you know” — he broke out all at once — “why they don’t take steppes in Tartary for establishing Insane Hospitals?”

We both confessed ignorance.

“Because there are *nomad* people to be found there,” he said, with a dignified smile.

He proceeded to introduce us to different Inmates. The first was a middle-aged, scholarly man, who was seated at a table with a Webster’s Dictionary and a sheet of paper before him.

“Well, what luck to-day, Mr. Mowzer?”

“Three or four only,” said Mr. Mowzer. “Will you hear ’em now, — now I ’m here?”

We all nodded.

“Don’t you see Webster *ers* in the words *center* and *theater*?”

“If he spells leather *lether*, and feather *fether*, is n't there danger that he'll give us a *bad spell of weather*?”

“Besides, Webster is a resurrectionist; he does not allow *u* to rest quietly in the *mould*.”

“And again, because Mr. Worcester inserts an illustration in his text, is that any reason why Mr. Webster's publishers should hitch one on in their appendix? It's what I call a *Connect-a-cut* trick.

“Why is his way of spelling like the floor of an oven? Because it is *under bread*.”

“Mowzer!” said the Superintendent, — “that word is on the Index!”

“I forgot,” said Mr. Mowzer; “please don't deprive me of *Vanity Fair*, this one time, Sir.

“These are all, this morning. Good day, Gentlemen.” Then to the Superintendent, — “Add you, Sir!”

The next Inmate was a semi-idiotic looking old man. He had a heap of block-letters before him, and, as we came up, he pointed, without saying a word, to the arrangements he had made with them on the table. They were evidently anagrams, and had the merit of transposing the letters of the words employed without addition or subtraction. Here are a few of them: —

TIMES . . . . . SMITE!

POST . . . . . STOP!

TRIBUNE . . . . . TRUE NIB.

WORLD . . . . . DR. OWL.

ADVERTISER . . . . . { RES VERI DAT.  
IS TRUE. READ!

ALLOPATHY . . . . . ALL O' TH' PAY.

HOMEOPATHY . . . . . O, THE —! O! O, MY! PAH!

The mention of several New York papers led to two or three questions. Thus: Whether the Editor of the Tribune was *H. G. really*? If the complexion of his politics were not accounted for by his being *an eager* person himself? Whether Wendell *Fillips* were not a reduced copy of John *Knocks*? Whether a New York *Feuilletoniste* is not the same thing as a *Fellow down East*?

At this time a plausible-looking, bald-headed man joined us, evidently waiting to take a part in the conversation.

“Good morning, Mr. Riggles,” said the Superintendent. “Anything fresh this morning? Any Conundrum?”

“I have n’t looked at the cattle,” he answered dryly.

“Cattle? Why cattle?”

“Why, to see if there’s any *corn under ’em!*” he said; and immediately asked, “Why is Douglas like the earth?”

We tried, but could n’t guess.

“Because he was *flattened out at the polls!*” said Mr. Riggles.

“A famous politician, formerly,” said the Superintendent. “His grandfather was a *seize-Hessian-ist* in the Revolutionary War. By the way, I hear the *freeze-oil* doctrines don’t go down at New Bedford.”

The next Inmate looked as if he might have been a sailor formerly.

“Ask him what his calling was,” said the Superintendent.

“Followed the sea,” he replied to the question put by one of us. “Went as mate in a fishing-schooner.”

“Why did you give it up?”

“Because I didn’t like working for *two mast-ers*,” he replied.

Presently we came upon a group of elderly persons, gathered about a venerable gentleman with flowing locks, who was propounding questions to a row of Inmates.

“Can any Inmate give me a motto for M. Berger?” he said.

Nobody responded for two or three minutes. At last one old man, whom I at once recognized as a Graduate of our University (Anno 1800), held up his hand.

“Rem *a cue* tetigit.”

“Go to the head of the Class, Josselyn,” said the venerable Patriarch.

The successful Inmate did as he was told, but in a very rough way, pushing against two or three of the Class.

“How is this?” said the Patriarch.

“You told me to go up *jostlin*,” he replied.

The old gentlemen who had been shoved about enjoyed the Pun too much to be angry.

Presently the Patriarch asked again, —

“Why was M. Berger authorized to go to the dances given to the Prince?”

The Class had to give up this, and he answered it himself: —

“Because every one of his carroms was a *tick-it* to the *ball*.”

“Who collects the money to defray the expenses of the last campaign in Italy?” asked the Patriarch.

Here again the Class failed.

“The war-cloud’s rolling *Dun*,” he answered.



“And what is mulled wine made with?”

Three or four voices exclaimed at once, —

“*Sizzle-y* Madeira!”

Here a servant entered, and said, “Luncheon-time.” The old gentlemen, who have excellent appetites, dispersed at once, one of them politely asking us if we would not stop and have a bit of bread and a little mite of cheese

“There is one thing I have forgotten to show you,” said the Superintendent, — “the cell for the confinement of violent and unmanageable Punsters.”

We were very curious to see it, particularly with reference to the alleged absence of every object upon which a play of words could possibly be made.

The Superintendent led us up some dark stairs to a corridor, then along a narrow passage, then down a broad flight of steps into another passage-way, and opened a large door which looked out on the main entrance.

“We have not seen the cell for the confinement of ‘violent and unmanageable’ Punsters,” we both exclaimed.

“This is the *sell!*” he exclaimed, pointing to the outside prospect.

My friend, the Director, looked me in the face so good-naturedly that I had to laugh.

“We like to humor the Inmates,” he said. “It has a bad effect, we find, on their health and spirits to disappoint them of their little pleasantries. Some of the jests to which we have listened are not new to me, though I dare say you may not have heard them often before. The same thing happens in general society, with

this additional disadvantage, that there is no punishment provided for 'violent and unmanageable' Punsters, as in our institution."

We made our bow to the Superintendent and walked to the place where our carriage was waiting for us. On our way, an exceedingly decrepit old man moved slowly towards us, with a perfectly blank look on his face, but still appearing as if he wished to speak.

"Look!" said the Director, — "that is our Centenarian."

The ancient man crawled towards us, cocked one eye, with which he seemed to see a little, up at us, and said, —

"Sarvant, young Gentlemen. Why is a — a — a — like a — a — a —? Give it up? Because it's a — a — a — a — a —."

He smiled a pleasant smile, as if it were all plain enough.

"One hundred and seven last Christmas," said the Director. "He lost his answers about the age of ninety-eight. Of late years he puts his whole Conundrums in blank, — but they please him just as well."

We took our departure, much gratified and instructed by our visit, hoping to have some future opportunity of inspecting the records of this excellent charity and making extracts for the benefit of our readers.





## MR. TIBBOT O'LEARY, THE CURIOUS.

BY GERALD GRIFFIN.

**I**N that exceedingly romantic, but lonesome tract of country which extends along the Upper Lake of Killarney, stood, within my own recollection, one of those antique mansions which are to be found in different stages of decay in many parts of the country. It was easy to see, from the style of building, that the hands by which it was raised had given up business for more than a century, at least.

In this house, somewhat less than fifty years since, dwelt a gentleman of very ancient family indeed. He was one of those persons whose faces ought to be turned behind them, in order to correspond with the prevailing bias of their intellects, for he seemed to think of nothing but the past, and was infinitely more familiar with the days of Moses and Zoroaster, than with his own. As to the future, he saw, and desired to see, no more of it than a man beholds of those objects which stand in a right line behind him. His tastes, if not so entirely sentimental as those of Sterne, who could find more satisfaction in communing with a dead ass than with a living Christian,

appeared yet sufficiently fantastic in their way to that very limited number of persons who had the honor of being scattered in his neighborhood. A mouldy Irish manuscript, a Danish rath or fort, a craggy ruin of an Abbey or Castle, which had survived the very memory of their possessors, a moss-covered cromlech, or lonely Druid stone, were to him more welcome company any day in the year, than the wittiest or most sociable amongst his living friends. As to the ladies, if Cleopatra herself were to arise from the grave, unless her great antiquity might awaken some interest for her, she would find her charms and talents as entirely wasted on the insipid mind of Mr. Tibbot O'Leary, as they were in her natural lifetime on that very ill-bred gentleman whom they call Octavius Cæsar. Although habits of retirement and absence of mind had made him very unobservant of the manners of his own time, and he was apt to make awkward mistakes occasionally, both at his own table and at those of others, yet he could hardly be taxed with a want of breeding, for he would have known to a nicety how to conduct himself at the tables of Lucullus or Mæcenas, when those who now laughed at him for his ignorance would have looked like fools or clodpoles by his side.

But the darling object of his affections was a round tower. What especially charmed him about these singular buildings was, that nobody in the world could tell for what possible use they were intended. Volumes on volumes had been written, all proving the great learning and acuteness of the different writers, yet the subject still remained as much a mystery as ever. What in the

world could they be for? That was the question which constantly recurred to his mind, alone or in company, silent or conversing, sleeping or awake. There they were, round, lofty edifices; as cylindrical inside and outside as the barrel of a gun, exact in all their proportions, and admirable in their masonry, yet of no possible use that anybody could divine, — no steps, — no way of getting up to the top, either inside or outside, no apartment underneath, nothing but its small doorway, and the tall circular wall, as if the sole object of the founder had been to show how high it was possible to build a round wall which could not be of any earthly use to himself or to anybody else. They could scarcely have been watch-towers, seeing that some (as at Glendaloch) were at the bottom of a valley, and surrounded by hills, any one of which would give a better view than the top of the round tower. Nor could they have been Stylite columns, since that was acknowledged to be almost exclusively an Oriental institution. Nor could he see that great resemblance in structure which others professed to discover between them and the Pyratheia of the Persian Gaurs, which are still to be seen in the East, for those last were at least habitable and accessible. What on earth could they be for? There was no knowing, and that was the very circumstance which fascinated his mind, and kept his intellectual powers forever on the stretch.

Absorbed by such pursuits, he felt not for a long time the loneliness of his position, living in a dilapidated house, with no other company than that of his man, Tom Nash, and a moving antique in the shape of an old woman who took care of his housekeeping. Tom felt no great interest

for ruins either old or new, and had a much keener taste for a corned round of beef, or a cheek of pork and greens, than for all the round towers between Scatterry Island and the Persian Gulf. However, he always listened or seemed to listen attentively, while his master spoke; and as the latter, in their rambles from place to place, unfolded to his mind's eye the most recondite learning of past ages, he was careful to mark at the same time his attention, and his astonishment, at every new piece of information, by such intelligent observations as, "See that!" "Murther, murther!" "Well, well, there's nothing can surpass the art o' man!"

In this complacency he found his account. An attentive or patient pair of ears was an article which his master valued in proportion to its rarity; and as amongst the few which flourished in his vicinity, still fewer were at his service as often as he could wish, his esteem for those which adorned the head of Tom Nash made him liberal to their owner. And if ever any piece of neglect or awkwardness occurred to diminish the cordiality with which his master always treated him, Tom had it always in his power to restore himself to favor by taking the first opportunity to ask, as if from a revery, "Why then, I wondher, masher, what in the airthly universe could them ould round towers be built for?"

This was certain to bring baek good-humor, and in the learned disquisition which followed all traces of displeasure were sure to be forgotten.

I have already said that Mr. O'Leary lived almost alone, nor, though yet young, did he seem to have any idea of (as the phrase is) "changing his condition."

Rumor said, indeed (for rumor will find its way even into a wilderness), that it had not always been so, and that a disappointment of a nature which least of all could be suggested by his present character and pursuits had much to do both with his present retirement and his studies. It was whispered, moreover, that he owed it all to an unreasonable exercise of the same spirit of restless and fidgety curiosity which had been a leading feature in his character from childhood, and many thought his present occupations were no more than a new direction taken by the ruling passion. The manner in which he first met with his man Nash furnished a proof that he had been afflicted with it long before it took its present turn.

Mr. Tibbot O'Leary was left early in possession of his property; so early that he was compelled to become a man of business almost before he was a man at all. Even at this period, however, and indeed long before, he was the same busy, systematic, prying, inquisitive, untiring burden to himself and plague to his neighbors that he was all his life, until his river of curiosity happily emptied itself into the boundless ocean of antiquarian research. There was scarce a sentence left his lips, or a thought passed through his mind, which might not have a note of interrogation placed at the end of it.

One of his numerous daily practices was to walk down as far as the gate of his own avenue, which opened on the mail-coach road, at half past nine o'clock every morning, and at quarter to four every evening; these being the two diurnal periods at which the coach passed, or ought to pass, on its way to and from the nearest county town. And if he were too early for the coach

(he never was too late), he would wait patiently, with his back against the pier of his gate, until the "conveniency" made its appearance, and at the very instant it was passing his own gate, he would draw out his silver hunting-watch and mark the time, and then leisurely walk home and compare his watch with the dial, and then compare the dial with the almanac, making allowance to the fourth place of decimals for difference of longitude, and thus discover exactly how many minutes, or fractions of minutes, the coach had been "behind time" in its progress for that day. Nor was he a jot disconcerted by observing (indeed, he did not observe it at all) that in progress of time the automaton-like regularity of his appearance and of his movements, the punctual apparition of his figure seen afar off leaning against the pier, the motion of the hand to the watch-fob as the coach drew nigh, the production of the time-piece, and the glance at the coach to observe the precise moment when they were in a direct line opposite the gate, all became matter of undisguised amusement to the coachman and his passengers, who might be seen looking back with laughing countenances, as he put up his watch with the air of a philosopher, and walked up the avenue, to complete the troublesome process which he had imposed on himself as a morning and evening recreation.

"Have you any news?" was at this time the second or third, and often the first question which he put to every acquaintance at meeting. Having, unlike busy-bodies in general, brought his own affairs into tolerable order, little remained for him to do besides interesting himself in those of the world outside; and his feeble



mind, like a creeping shrub unable to support itself, went throwing its tendrils about in all directions, seeking for events and circumstances to prevent it from falling back an inert mass upon itself. Fortunately, his hunger for novelty was of a kind which was easily appeased. His more observant friends soon remarked that any answer satisfied him, except a direct negative, and this was his aversion. To tell him of a sick cow, a dog strayed or poisoned, a servant turned off, a leg of mutton spoiled in the cooking, anything was preferable to the barren and unwelcome "No." Indeed, to those who knew him, few things could be more painful than its infliction; and, accordingly, where it was understood that nothing more was requisite than merely to keep the sense of hearing in play for a certain portion of time, there was scarcely any one who had not got news of some kind for Tibbot O'Leary. Those who did *not* know him were not so well aware of the nature of the food for which he craved, and were not so prompt in satisfying his hunger, as was exemplified in his first meeting with his man Tom Nash.

One morning Mr. Tibbot O'Leary arrived as usual a few minutes before half past nine o'clock at his own pier gate. Crossing the stile, he was surprised and disconcerted to find his place occupied by a young country lad, who seemed to have made a long and wearisome journey, and was now resting in Tibbot's favorite attitude, and against his favorite pier. The lad touched his hat respectfully, but did not move. Mr. O'Leary began to grow fidgety, but felt as if it would be inhospitable to desire him to change his quarters; besides that, it would

look somewhat ridiculous to turn him away from the pier merely for the purpose of taking the place himself, and the fellow had an arch eye which looked as if nothing ridiculous would be likely to escape it. The exclusive possession of the pier of a gate could hardly be an object of ambition to any being, except a cow to whom the sharp angle at the corner might be a temptation, or a human being inclined to indulge in the same pastime. Mr. O'Leary, however, had no such inclination; so, on that morning, the coachman, the guard, and the passengers were astonished to behold Mr. O'Leary for the first time go through his customary evolutions on the opposite side of the gate to that at which he was wont to stand. After the coach had passed, and the watch was put up, Tibbot glanced at the individual who ornamented the opposite pier, and said, —

“ Well, my man, who are you ? ”

“ A poor boy, plase your honor.”

“ Have you any news ? ”

“ Not a word, your honor.”

“ No news ! What 's your name ? ”

“ Tom Nash, sir ” (respectfully touching the leaf of his hat with the tip of his forefinger).

“ Where do you come from ? ”

“ E'stwards, your honor.”

“ And where are you going ? ”

“ Westwards, your honor.”

“ And you have no news ? ”

“ Not a word, plase your honor.”

“ How far do you mean to go ? ”

“ Why then, just until somebody axes me to stay.”

“And whom do you expect to ‘ax’ you, as you call it?”

“Wisha, some gentleman that’ll have an open heart an’ a house by the roadside. Sure, ’t is n’t any close-fisted negar I’d expect to ax me.”

“Umph! And who do you imagine would give a night’s lodging to a person like you, who has n’t got a word of news or anything to say that would make his company entertaining or desirable?”

“Wisha, that’s as it falls out. If they does n’t do it for God’s sake, I don’t expect they’d do it for mine. ’T is n’t any fault o’ mine. If I hard any news goin’ I would n’t begridge tellin’ it.”

“But you did n’t hear it?”

“I did not.”

“Not a word?”

“Not one.”

“Don’t you come from town?”

“I docs.”

“And did n’t you hear any news there?”

“I did not.”

“That’s very strange. They almost always have news in town of some kind or another.”

“If they had it, they were very sparin’ of it this turn, for they did n’t give me any.”

“Did you ask for it?”

“Wisha, then, not to tell your honor a lie, I did n’t. I had something else to think of.”

“What else had you to think of?”

“O, then, my poverty and my hunger, an’ the distance that was betune me an’ home!”

“Where is your home?”

“Wisha, nowhere, until some one makes it out for me. But my native place is behind near Kenmare.”

“How long is it since you left it?”

“Six years.”

“And you are now going back?”

“I am.”

“I suppose you had a great many strange adventures during your absence from home?”

“Och, then, not belyin’ your honor, sorrow a ’venther, ’cept that it was a venthersom thing o’ me ever to think of lavin’ it.”

“And did you never hear anything worth relating during all those six years?”

“Sorrow ha’p’orth.”

“Did nothing ever happen to any of your friends or acquaintances that might be worth mentioning?”

“Sorrow ha’p’orth ever happened any of ’em as I know.”

“Nor to yourself?”

“Not a ha’p’orth. What should happen me?”

“Did nobody ever tell you a story of any kind that was worth listening to?”

“I never heard one.”

If ever there was an individual less likely than another to get into the good graces of Tibbot O’Leary, it was the uninquisitive, incommunicative being who now stood before him. After contemplating his figure in silence for some moments, he turned away, saying, —

“Upon my word, my man, if you have no more than that to say to your friends when you get to Kenmare,

you 'll be no great prize to them when they have you, or to any one you meet on the way either."

By this time the traveller began to form a better estimate of the man with whom he had to deal. Seeing the inquisitive gentleman turn up the avenue with a discontented air, he thrust his head between the bars of the gate, and called aloud, —

"Plase your honor!"

"Well?" said Tibbot, looking over his shoulder.

"I have some news, plase your honor."

The brow of Mr. O'Leary relaxed.

"Well," said he, "what is it?"

"I was eomin' through a part o' the County Tipperary the other day, and passing near the foot o' the Galteigh mountains, what should I see only a power o' people with horses and taeklin' an' they dhraggin' after 'em the longest bames o' timber I ever seen upon the road, — great firs and pine-trees fit for the mast of a man-of-war, an' bigger, that looked as if they were just cut down for some purpose or another, an' so they wor. I wondhered greatly, an' I axed one o' the people where it is they were goin' with the big threes. 'We're goin' to plant 'im on the top o' the Galteighs,' says he. 'What to do?' says I. 'A big split that comes in the sky,' says he, 'an' 't is only lately we observed it. So we're gettin' the tallest threes we can find to prop it up, for the split is ineraisn', an' there 's no knowin' the minute it may fall.' When I hard that, I axed him no more, but left him an' come away."

"Well," exclaimed Mr. O'Leary, "and why did n't you tell me that at first?"

“O, sure, ’tisn’t every news a *keowt* o’ my kind would hear, that would be worth relating to larned quollity like your honor.”

“Come along, — come along and get your dinner,” said Mr. O’Leary. “You should never say you have no news, man.”

They went up the avenue together, and so well did the traveller contrive to obliterate the bad impression he had made in the first instance, that before the day was over he was formally inaugurated into the post which he ever after continued to hold in Mr. O’Leary’s household.

It was very shortly after this auspicious meeting that Mr. O’Leary made the visit to the Metropolis, which was the subject of so much mysterious whispering and question and conjecture in his own neighborhood long after his return. And about the period of this last event, likewise, it was that the vane of Tibbot O’Leary’s curiosity (to the great joy and relief of all his living friends) began to stream backward steadily towards the past, and ceased to interest itself as much as before in the petty affairs of his contemporaries, on which his genius had been hitherto exhausted. It was hinted that it would have been happier for him had his inquiries taken this turn before his return from Dublin. The fair cause of his disappointment and retreat had, it was said, no other ground of dissatisfaction, on her own admission, than poor Tibbot’s ruling foible, which had become more and more intolerable as their intimaey increased. Many a characteristic scene, whether real or imaginary, was retailed among the fireside circles in the neighborhood as having led to the lachrymose result which exercised so strong an

influence over O'Leary's subsequent fortunes. If poor Tibbot was fidgety and inquisitive with his acquaintances in general, there was no end to his queries in the company of one in whom he felt a particular interest; and without having a particle of jealousy in his constitution, all his conduct was like that of a jealous person. Now, without having anything the least in the world criminal to conceal, all ladies know, and gentlemen too, that a thousand things happen in the customary routine of life which it may not suit one's purpose to speak of even to one's most intimate friend. Even the poet who insists most strongly on the merit of confidential frankness advises you, though in the company of "a bosom crouy," to

"Still keep something to yoursel,  
Ye'll scarcely tell to ouy."

If Tibbot saw Miss Crosbie talking to a stranger in the street, he should know who he was, who was his father, who was his mother, what was his business in town, etc., besides a thousand similar queries, the repeated answering or evading which was found so burdensome, that it finally outweighed all the good qualities of the querist. Among many appropriate speeches which were kindly ascribed to the hero and heroine of the fireside romance by the tattle-mongers in the country-side, there was one which was said to have produced a powerful effect in making poor Tibbot look like a fool at the time it was uttered.

"If notes of interrogation were as current as other notes, Mr. O'Leary," said the lady, "what an immense capital you could set afloat!"

Others averred that there was no such exclusive feeling of disappointment whatever on the part of the gentleman, and that it was quite as much in accordance with his own desire as with that of the lady that the affair ended as it did. However this might be, Tibbot did not seem to allow the event to weigh very heavily upon his spirits, and it was with much equanimity that he subsequently even heard of her marriage to another. His beloved studies supplied to him the place of all other domestic happiness; and but for one of those accidents which so much more frequently determine the fortunes of men than any efforts of prudence or foresight, he might have continued his solitary pursuits until he had become himself as venerable a relic of the past as any of the weather-worn *dallans* or *trilithons* or musty manuscripts over which he was accustomed to consume his youthful hours with all the devotion of an enthusiast.

It was late on an autumn evening, and throughout the lonesome apartments of Mr. O'Leary's dwelling that interval of stillness reigned which precedes the hour of general nightly rest. Tom Nash was getting out turf for the next morning. The old woman was raking the kitchen fire in the huge ash-pit. The proprietor of the mansion was in a distant corner of the building, with a chamber candle in his hand, looking over the precious antiquarian treasures contained in that apartment which he called his library, but which had much more the appearance of a museum, or the cabinet of a dealer in the black art. Here stood the jaw-bones of an enormous grampus which was stranded on the coast of Dingle half a century before; there a huge stalactite from some



inland cavern; here a penny struck in Galway, when Edward IV. had a mint in that town; there a thigh-bone of Heaven knows what animal, with a neck and head of a moose-deer; here a model of the five-inch hail-stones which fell in 1748; there a massive silver brooch, which had figured on the breast of some Kerry chieftain of the Middle Ages; here a whole array of battered trumpets, rusty swords, wicker targets, skenes, bows and arrows, bells, crosses, and other mementos, to show how our ancestors used to live, and how people used to kill one another; there a row of fossils, Kerry diamonds, pyrites from Bantry, mare asites from Carberry, and so forth.

Nor was his library less curious. Heaps of Irish manuscript songs, and metrical histories of the ancient bards and senachies of historiographers of the isle; volumes, the contents of which, like the vane of a vessel sailing against the wind, still pointed backwards towards the year of the creation; huge folios in various languages; and, above all, a whole shelf of learned treatises on the probable use and origin of round towers, — were ranged against the walls of his apartment.

On a sudden, the unusual sound of a horse's hoof was heard upon the avenue. Mr. O'Leary, in his room, holding the candle in his hand, and Tom Nash in the kitchen, at the same instant paused to listen. What belated wight could it be who sought so unfrequented a place of shelter as Chore Abbey at this lonesome hour? It was evident the rider was a man, and a merry fellow too, for as he drew near the house they could hear him singing at the top of his voice a burlesque Latin version of a popular song: —

“ Quum tyrocinii tempus in Drogheda  
 Impiger egi ut ullus in oppido,  
 Magistri filia Bidelia Doghertidas  
 Foramen fecit in corde Raffertidis.”

Both the voice and words seemed familiar to the ear of Tibbot O’Leary, for his countenance immediately exhibited a mingled expression of pleasure and alarm.

“ Bless me ! ” he exclaimed, “ it is he, sure enough. Was ever anything more unfortunate ? How did he find me out here, and what shall I do with him ? ”

“ Why then, who in the airthly universe is that, that ’s comin’ singin’ to the doore at such an hour ? ” ejaculated Tom Nash, below stairs.

“ Now for an arrowy shower of ridicule and shallow derision,” said the master above.

“ Now for another job o’ work afther I thinkin’ all my business was done for the night,” said the servant below.

Unconscious of this querulous duct, which his arrival occasioned within door, the *sans souci* horseman, instead of taking the trouble to alight at the hall door, continued to shout and sing alternately, at the top of his voice, —

“ What ho ! house ! Why, house ! I say ! Is there any one within ?

‘ Eu ! Eu ! Patrici Raffertides !  
 Macte virtute, Patrici Raffertides !  
 Magistri filia,  
 Pulchra Bidelia,  
 Foramen fecit in corde Raffertidis.’

What ! house ! ”

In the mean time Tom Nash had made his way to the presence of his master.

“The key of the hall doore, sir, if you please.”

“O Tom, I'm ruined!”

“How so, sir?”

“This is Mr. Geoffrey Gunn, an old college chum of mine, and the last person in the world whom I would have find me in this place.”

“Well, sure 't is aisy for me to give him the nien she-sthig, or for us all to hould our tongue, an' purtind we don't hear him, an' lave him bawlin' an' singin' abroad there till he's tired. The Gunns ar' n't only a modhern stock in these parts. The first of 'em come over ondher Queen Lizabit.”

“Nay, nay, that would never answer; I am very glad to meet him, though I could wish — There he calls again, run — run and open the door. And stay, have you got anything for supper?”

“Lashins and lavins.”

“Very well, have it ready, and bring it when I call!”

If it be true, as some wise men have asserted, that the more a man does the more he is able to do, it is no less a fact that the less a man does the less he is inclined to do. The comparatively idle life which Tom Nash led under his studious master had strengthened to the utmost a powerful natural taste for doing nothing, and rendered him proportionably unfriendly to any demands upon his labor, especially when they happened to be unforeseen or out of course.

“Why then, you're welcome, as the farmer said to the tithe proethor,” he muttered, going down stairs;

“what a charmin’ voice you have this evenin’. I must go, make up your horse now, and give him a feed, and be cleanin’ your boots an’ stirrups, in place o’ bein’ where I ought to be this time o’ night, in my warm bed. An’ all on account of a roysterin’ bawlin’ bedlamite that — What ’s wantin’, plase your honor?” he added in an altered tone, as he opened the door and confronted the belated horseman.

“Is your master at home?”

“He is, plase your honor.”

“Will you tell him that his old friend, Mr. Gunn, is come to see him?”

“He knows it already, plase your honor. He hear your honor singin’ on the aveny, an’ he knows the voice. ‘Tom Nash,’ says he (mainin’ myself), ‘that ’s Misther Geoffrey Gunn, my old friend, an’ I ’m very glad to meet him,’ says he; ‘take care an’ have supper ready when I call!’”

“It appears to me, Tom,” said the stranger, as he dismounted, and gave the bridle to Nash, “that you cannot be much troubled with visitors in this place.”

“Only middlin’, sir, of an odd turn. The last we had was Aisther two years, a very civil, aisy-spoken gentleman indeed. He stopped only the one night, an’ ga’e me a half-crown in the mornin’ when he was goin’, although I never seen any one that gave so little throuble. I wanted not to take it, but he would n’t be said by me.”

“Um. And where am I to find your master?”

“If your honor will condescend to take the light in your hand, an’ go sthrait up stairs, while I ’m takin’ round the horse, you ’ll find him above, in the library.

That's the place for you to visit. He has all the ould rattle-thraps an' curiosities up there that ever was dug out o' the bowls o' the airth since the creation. That's the man that has the long head. Take care of the hole upon the first landing. You'll see yoursel' where there's a step wantin', — in the second flight. You can see the kitchen down through it. The gentleman we had here last was near breakin' his leg in it, comin' down stairs in the mornin'. We forgot to tell him about it."

Taking the candle in his hand, Mr. Gunn proceeded to ascend the venerable staircase, with all the caution which these hints were calculated to excite. It is curious to think of what materials we are made, and how apt we are to consider an object rather as it appears to men than as it really is in itself. The idea that there could be anything absurd or ridiculous in his present pursuits had never once occurred to Mr. O'Leary; yet now that he found himself and them about to be subjected to the eye of one who, whatever he might think of the present or the future, did not, as he knew, care a button for the past, he felt as much ashamed as if he were conscious himself that his life was spent in a very silly manner. Whether it was, however, that it is not so easy or so amusing to quiz a man in his own house as elsewhere, or that the world had altered him, Geoffrey Gunn did not manifest the least inclination to turn his old companion or his "curiosities," as Nash called them, into ridicule. On the contrary, he even manifested a degree of interest about them; and after mutual and cordial inquiries had been interchanged between them, he had the civility to ask the names of two or three of the most fantastic-

looking objects which he beheld around him. Charmed the more with his complacency, as it was so wholly unexpected, Mr. O'Leary explained their uses and history, much admiring the change which time had wrought in his old friend since the period when himself was wont to form the target of his merriment.

“And that long spike with the ring and two heavy balls at one end of it. It seems of silver.”

“The purest silver. It is a brooch.”

“A brooch!” exclaimed Gunn, placing it against his shirt-frill. “Why, it weighs half a pound!”

“The more nearly resembling the menial but necessary utensil from which it derives its name,” said Mr. O'Leary. “It is the dealg-fallain, or ancient Irish cloak bodkin, worn at the cosherings or feasts of the nobility.”

“Bless me!” said Gunn; “who would have thought it! I say, O'Leary, what a figure a man would cut goin' to a subscription ball at the Rotunda with such a thing as that stuck in his buttonhole! Well, you have a complete museum here, a second Noah's ark. What a time it must have taken you to get them all together! And you have them all so pat at your finger's end.” (Here he yawned slightly.) “Well, it is all very curious, I dare say, and very entertaining to those who have a talent for such studies. Besides, it is so much more interesting and instructive to spend one's time amid the relics of the past — the memorials of the mighty dead, as somebody calls them — than amongst the frivolous beings who usurp the name of men in our own degenerate time. As Tully says, *Hæu quanto minus est cum iis versari quam te meminisse!*”

Mr. O'Leary made no reply, unwilling to interrupt a flow of sentiment which he could not sufficiently admire.

"Yes," said Geoffrey Gunn, "there is a grandeur about the past, which, the more one thinks of it, makes him shrink with distaste from the pettiness and littleness of the present. There is a sublimity of feeling associated with the preterite *Was* which its fellow tense *Is* can never produce. The very sound of the words indicates a superiority in the former. *Was*, full-toned and broad, opens the whole mouth. *Is* comes forth between the teeth like the hiss of a goose. How pleasing to turn from the tiresome, matter-of-fact illumination of our own times, that spread of dry practical knowledge which takes away from learning half its importance by removing its singularity, and contemplate the beautiful gloom of those majestic ages when the very alphabet itself, to the mass of mankind, was invested with all the interests of mystery!"

"My dear Geoffrey, I forgot to ask, have you dined?"

"Psha! a fig for dinner or breakfast either," said Gunn, after another stifled yawn; "I am not so entirely void of taste as to think about eating, while such a mental treat as this is spread before me. And, not to speak of the pleasure, the utility of such pursuits must be apparent to everybody. For instance, but for the fortunate recovery of those silver bodkins, would not the knowledge of the manner in which the old O'Donoghues and their contemporaries fastened their cloaks be lost forever to the world? Besides, it is so much more useful to study how people lived a thousand years ago, than it is to reflect how we are to live ourselves. Any fool can

know his own business, but it is only men of sense and understanding, as well as charity, who take an interest in that of persons who are no longer able to take care of it themselves." (Another heroic effort to suppress a yawn.)

"You must be hungry, however. It is a good step from Killarney here." (He rung the bell.) "Besides, we can so much more agreeably talk over old times at a supper-table by the fireside."

Geoffrey Gunn suffered himself to be prevailed upon, and a very tolerable supper was speedily laid before the pair, to which Gunn did such justice as showed that his antiquarian enthusiasm had not taken away his appetite. On a sudden, while they conversed upon indifferent subjects, Gunn raised his head and said, as if a sudden thought had struck him, —

"Apropos of antiquities, Tibbot, are you acquainted with this great female antiquarian who lives in your neighborhood?"

"Not I. Whom do you mean?"

"Why, now that's very odd. I have only come down to this part of the country to snatch a peep at the lake during the vacation, and I know more of your neighbors than you who live on the spot; but then, rogue as you are, I would be a fool to you, I warrant, if we came to question about the court of the Ptolemies or Phamesas. But, indeed, it was accidentally I heard of her first. She is a Miss Moriarty (a genuine west country stock), and a very witch at the books; knows Hebrew, and can even scrawl a hieroglyphic or two of the Chaldaic and such things. As for Greek and Latin, she makes no more of them than a squirrel would of cracking a nut."



“Is it possible? How odd I should never have heard of her!”

“Not at all odd, my dear fellow; you were busy about more important things. It is only for us ephemeral beings to have our ears cocked for such every-day novelties. But, indeed, you ought to know her. She lives not more than half a mile from here, on the Keunare Road, in an humble farm-house, tenanted by the husband of a relative, where she has a couple of rooms filled with all the antediluvian rarities in the world. You should have heard her upon the round towers.”

“You don't tell me so?”

“She has a theory of her own about them. I had the full benefit of it; for a few days since I was compelled to take shelter in the house from a shower of rain, and had the honor and happiness of hearing, during the half-hour I remained, more words I could n't understand than I did the whole time I was in college.”

A lady in his neighborhood who knew Hebrew and had got an original theory upon the origin of round towers! Little more was said upon the subject during supper, unless that a particular description was given of the lady's residence; but Tibbot O'Leary was far from letting it slip out of memory. On the following morning, after Geoffrey Gunn had taken his leave (not forgetting the gentleman who had given Nash a half-crown “last Aisther two years”), he remained, as that faithful domestic conceived, unusually pensive and silent, though loquacity, indeed, was never amongst his failings. Let us, however, follow Mr. Gunn. He was one of a class of persons very common in Ireland, and for aught I know

as common elsewhere. He was a liberal dealer in what might be called white lies. Dining out, or paying a visit, or breakfasting, or even meeting a friend in the street, he seemed to consider his time thrown away if he did not leave a few such fictions behind him; nor was it necessary that they should be in any degree humorous, or have any particular object in view; it was quite sufficient if they had no foundation in truth. A foreign potentate dead, a coach upset, Mrs. O'What-d'ye-call brought to bed of twins, Mr. So-and-so killed in a duel, — such were the species of inventions which rolled from his lips like a little torrent whenever he found himself amongst a civil set of hearers, and in which he was encouraged by the laughter of some friends with whom he passed for a genuine wit. The instant he turned from Tibbot O'Leary's avenue, he trotted briskly away, and slaekened not his speed until he pulled bridle at the door of a Mr. O'Connor, who was not less a gentleman for being a farmer, and not less a farmer for being a gentleman. This gentleman farmer appeared to have observed his approach from the windows of the sitting-room; for Geoffrey Gunn had no sooner pulled up his horse, than the hall door opened, and Mr. O'Connor appeared with outstretched hand and smiling countenance.

“Good morrow, good morrow! you are welcome. Well?”

“I told you I'd do it.”

“But have you done it? Have you seen him?”

“Seen him! If *you* see him not here before a month is at an end, I'll give you leave to say this head is good for nothing more than slashing wheat upon.”

“You're a nonpareil. And is *she* to know anything about it?”

“As much as your love of small talk may induce you to communicate; provided always, and be it excepted, that no mention be made of a preconcerted plan. One word of *that* would ruin us forever.”

“I understand: trust me for the discreet thing. But come in, come in, we are just going to luncheon. She'll be delighted to see you.”

“To tell you the truth,” Gunn continued in a lower tone, as he entered the little hall and took off his great-coat, “it is partly a matter of conscience with me, for I had a greater share than sits easy on my memory in that former transaction, so that I have something like a personal interest in seeing — Ah, Miss Moriarty, how d'ye do?” etc., etc. And all sat down to luncheon.

There is generally a degree of decorous silence attending the commencement of any serious meal (such as luncheon often is in a mountainous country) which gradually wears off according as the motives diminish which stimulate to action rather than to dialogue. Accordingly, for some time, little was heard except the jingle of knives and forks, interspersed with an occasional sentence or two in the way of courtesy. At length the attention of the company to the business before them appeared to relax, and conversation gradually became general.

“A shocking accident I witnessed this moment on the road, Mrs. O'Connor,” said Mr. Gunn; “a child run over by a wheelbarrow — never saw such a spectacle — driven by a blind man. Unfortunately it was loaded

with stones — saw the infant — the wheel passed over its neck.”

“Had they medical aid in time?” asked Mr. O’Connor.

“Why, no; unfortunately the doctor was out of the way, attending a lady who required his services under very peculiar circumstances. She had taken her passage hither in the canal-boat at Shannon Harbor, paying cabin fare for one, of course, when, lo and behold you, before they had got half-way she thought proper to fall ill, and add two fine boys and a lovely girl to the number of her Majesty’s subjects. However, all was well until she came to settle with the captain at parting, when he insisted on being paid his fare for the whole force. She refused: he insisted, and was for keeping possession of the three young defaulters until he should be paid. However, on second thoughts, reflecting that he would probably be no gainer by such an arrangement, he preferred suing for the amount. The case is to come on next term, — ’t is a very knotty question, — bets are even upon it all over the country, — the curiosity is most intense. Apropos of curiosity, Miss Moriarty, I saw a friend of yours lately.”

“A friend of mine?”

“One at least who ought to be so, — as great an anti-quarian as yourself, — a terrible fellow for round towers, — Mr. Tibbot O’Leary.”

“Is it possible? How I should like to see him!”

“Like all very clever people, he has some oddities; amongst others, I hear he can’t bear the idea of a wig or a false tooth; has some extraordinary prejudice about them.” Here the speaker and Mr. O’Connor exchanged

significant looks, which seemed to indicate that their last remark had a meaning or a purpose beyond what it might bear upon the surface.

While this was passing, Mr. O'Leary continued silent and reflective, as he had been ever since Geoffrey Gunn's departure. Days passed away, and the same moodiness of mind continued. Tom Nash knew not what to think of it. It was in vain that he strove to draw him into a communicative humor, in vain did he even call the talismanic round towers to his aid. From the moment in which Mr. O'Leary first heard of this female Puudit, he was smitten with a desire to hold some conversation with her, and learn her opinion of past ages and matters before the flood. It was not easy, however, to accomplish it, for there was nothing in the world which he abhorred at any time more than a visit of ceremony; and, even if it were otherwise, what formal motive could be assigned for such a visit as this? Geoffrey Gunn, however, had thrown out a hint which recurred to the memory of the Irish antiquarian. For many days, Nash observed him consulting the weather-glass with a frequency which betokened a secret solicitude of mind. It continued during the space of about a month, hovering between the degrees Fair and Set Fair, with a constancy which did not seem to afford his master any considerable degree of satisfaction. At length, about the end of the month, the mercury began to fall, and his master's spirits to rise in an inverse ratio, which was exceedingly puzzling to Nash.

"Tom," said his master, with a look of sprightliness and glee such as he had not manifested before since

the visit of Mr. Gunn, — “Tom, I’m in hopes we’ll have rain to-morrow.”

“In hopes, masther? ’m sure ’t would be our ruination. Sure, ’t is to-morrow we have men hired to have the piaties dug in the next field.”

“Hang the potatoes!” exclaimed Mr. O’Leary.

“Hang the piaties! Millia murdher! I never heard so foolish a speech as that from him before. Hang the piaties! The whole stock we have again’ the winter! Lord send them ould books an’ round towers ar’ n’t makin’ a whirligig of his brains,” Nash muttered, as he left the room. “Wisha, we never hard more than that, any way. Hang the piaties!”

Early on the following morning Nash went into his master’s room as usual, to take his clothes to brush. While he emptied the pockets and laid the contents on the table, Mr. O’Leary, awoke by the jingling of keys and half-pence, turned his head and asked, —

“Well, Nash, are we likely to have rain?”

“I never seen such a mornin’, sir. The sky is all one cloud from e’st to west, an’ so low that I could a’most tetch it with my hand. I don’t know from Adam what we’ll do about the piaties; the men won’t be able to give half a day with the weather, a clane loss of half a guinea at the laste.”

“That ’s delightful.”

“Delightful!” Nash repeated, looking over his shoulder with surprise. “He ’s pursewarin’ in it, I see.”

“Nash,” said Mr. O’Leary, pulling baek his night-cap and sitting up, “have both horses saddled and fed. I intend riding out immediately after breakfast.”

"Is it in the rain, masther?"

"It is. Make haste and do as I desire you."

"Pursewarin' all through!" ejaculated Nash, as he went out and shut the door behind him. "A whole month of the fairest weather that ever come out o' the shky he laves the horses in the stable without stirrin', an' now the first day he hears 't is rainin' he ordhers 'em out for a ride. 'That 's delightful!' he says, when I tell him we 'll lose a guinea by the men. 'Hang the piaties!' If he bean't gettin' light I do'n' know what to make of it. I suppose we must only do his biddin'."

Some drops were just beginning to fall, as Mr. O'Leary and his faithful squire set off upon their journey.

"Will you bring the umbrella, sir?" inquired Nash, as they were about leaving the hall door.

"No, that would never do."

"'T is goin' to rain, sir."

"So much the better."

Nash opened his mouth as if to let his astonishment come forth.

"Would n't you take a cloak or a coat itself, masther, seeh a day as this?"

"No, no, 't would never answer."

"The lord betune uz an' harm! A' why so, masther?"

"Wonder, Tom, is the ehild of ignorance, and experience the fruit of time. Be patient, therefore, and content yourself with doing as you are directed."

They rode on for something more than half a mile, at the termination of which space the rain began to fall in torrents. Mr. O'Leary now quickened his pace, and

Nash followed his example, but their speed did not save them from a thorough drenching.

“Dear knows, masther,” exclaimed Nash, who really feared that the antiquarian was becoming demented, “we’ll be dhrowned this way. Would n’t it be betther turn into some house till it gets lighter, any way?”

“I hinted to you, Tom, that patience is the sister of content,” replied his master, continuing his gallop.

“O, bother to herself an’ her sisher!” muttered Nash, gathering the collar of his coat up under the leaf of his hat, so as to prevent the water running down his neck, and fortifying, as well as he could, that part of his person on which the wind beat. “I never had such a ride in my life. I wondher is he cracked in airnest. Dear knows, if it was n’t that I’m dhread which might happen to him, I’d be apt to let him folly his coorse alone. This day flogs all I ever hear.”

After riding about a quarter of a mile farther, Mr. O’Leary suddenly pulled up his horse and said, —

“Tom, is n’t that the avenue leading to Mr. O’Connor’s?”

“’T is, sir.”

“I think we might as well turn in and ask for shelter there, until this shower passes, at all events.”

“The Lord be praised, he’s comin’ to again,” Nash added to himself, as he alighted and opened the gate. They followed the windings of the path for nearly a quarter of an hour, amid the wildest and barest scenery, at the end of which time they reached a cottage somewhat superior in appearance to the general description of farm-houses in the country, with at least a sufficient



degree of decoration about the doors and windows to intimate that the inmates were not compelled to be at all times toiling at the spade or the plough-handle. As the door, which was on that side of the house on which the wind did not then blow, stood open at the moment, our travellers alighted and entered the porch without ceremony. Here they stood but a few moments, when one of the side doors opened, and a hale-looking man, of respectable appearance, presented himself before the visitors. Mr. O'Leary apologized for their intrusion, talked of the rain, and mentioned his name, at the same time looking out and expressing a hope (which Nash could not help thinking either strangely inconsistent or very insincere) that it would shortly clear.

“Mr. O'Leary!” exclaimed the host with an expression of great satisfaction, “the very man of all others who should be most welcome to this house. I can assure you, you are no stranger here. Many a time your name is spoken of amongst us. Come in, come in. In the first place, you'll stop and dine with us, — that's settled, — not a word now. Hallo! Pat, take round those horses and see them well taken care of. But you are dripping wet!”

“O, 't is nothing!”

“Nothing? Why you could n't do a worse thing than to sit in wet clothes, that and reading a wet newspaper. My poor father ought to know both, for he lost his eyes by one, and his life by the other. The time of the election he used to be in such a hurry to learn the state of the poll, and to read the editor's remarks, that he never would wait to dry the paper after taking it out

of the cover. I used often to say to him, 'Now, father, might n't you as well just hold it to the fire for a minute? You 'll certainly lose your eyesight.' True for me, so he did. Come up stairs and change your clothes. Not a word, now. I tell you 't is madness not to do it. Peg, tell Miss Moriarty that Mr. O'Leary is come to spend the day with us. Step into the kitchen, my good friend" (addressing Nash) "and warm yourself."

There was no resisting, so that Mr. O'Leary abandoned himself into the hands of his host, and, after the necessary change of attire, was by him conducted to the sitting-room, where he found the antiquarian lady ready to receive him. To his surprise, there was nothing at all extraordinary either in her manner or appearance, except that she wore a profusion of very fine hair, which made some amends for a decidedly ordinary set of features. He had not, however, much time to speculate on either, when the blunt and hospitable master of the mansion arose and said in his customary tone, —

"Well, now, as I have a little business to do before dinner, and would be only a blockhead in your company, I will leave you both to talk of all that took place before the flood and after, while I settle an account with one or two of my tenants in another room. Let me see, now, which of ye will puzzle the other."

One of the parties was already in this predicament. Mr. Tibbot O'Leary, at this instant, found himself in the condition of those unhappy individuals who rashly place themselves in situations for which they are wholly unfitted by nature, and only discover their want of capacity when it is too late to make a graceful retreat. Not a word had

yet passed between them; he had merely bowed to the lady seven yards off, on being introduced, when they were left, as it were, caged together, with the pleasant consciousness that he was expected to entertain her. Had it been with a lioness, Tibbot O'Leary could not have felt a greater confusion of mind. Being totally unused to anything like strange society, he never, until this moment, became aware of his failing. Miss Moriarty, with a polite movement of the hand, invited him to be seated. He placed himself in a chair with the utmost celerity; then, after a few minutes, perceiving that the lady was yet standing, he sprung from his seat with the greatest embarrassment, and bowed repeatedly, by way of apology, without the power of uttering a syllable. After a time both obtained chairs, but without seeming to have approached the nearer to anything like a sociable interchange of sentiments. The longer the silence continued, the more difficulty Mr. O'Leary found in breaking it, and yet the more embarrassing it became. It was not that he had got nothing to say. The evil was, that a thousand things occurred to him, but all were rejected as unsatisfactory. The lady, whether that she shared his awkwardness, or resolved to enjoy it, was equally silent. At length, when the chimney ornaments were beginning to dance before his eyes, and the room to move slowly round, he ventured to stammer forth, —

“P-p-p-pray, ma-ma'am, what is your opi-pi-pinion of the r-r-round towers?”

“I can hardly say,” replied Miss Moriarty, with a degree of ease which somewhat diminished the confusion of her visitor, “that I am satisfied with any of the theo-

ries which have been broached upon that most interesting subject. Cambrensis calls them 'ecclesiastical towers,' with some probability. Lynch attributes them to the Danes, as does also Peter Walsh, who are followed by Ladwich and Molyneux; but then, as Harris very properly asks, if so, why are no remains to be found in Denmark? As to Dean Richardson's conjecture, that they were used by anchorites, I can hardly admit it, when I know that history furnishes but one instance of a Stylite monk in the Western Christendom, in the celebrated woods of Ardennes. Neither can I say that the ingenious but fanciful author of *Collectanea de rebus Hibernicis* has thoroughly convinced me, though I admit his conjecture to be plausible as his evidences are ingenious."

During the delivery of this speech, Mr. O'Leary gazed from side to side, opened wide his eyelids in astonishment, and from time to time gradually moved his chair an inch or two nearer to the speaker.

"What a woman!" he exclaimed in his own mind, and then added aloud: "I cannot help thinking, ma'am, that one who is so familiar with the theories of others, cannot but have formed some conjecture of her own upon a subject which has deservedly occupied so much of her attention."

"Why, I cannot but say I have been thinking of it," said Miss Moriarty, "though I have not yet ventured to mention it to any one, there is such danger of a person's being anticipated. However, for all I have heard of Mr. O'Leary, I am sure he would be incapable of taking so unhandsome an advantage."

Mr. O'Leary acknowledged the exemption in his favor

by a low bow, accompanied by a look of horror at the very idea of such baseness.

“My idea, then, is that they were built for none of the ends I have mentioned,” said Miss Moriarty. “You are aware that mankind have, in all ages, been remarkable for a love of the arduous, and that no pursuits have been carried on with greater zeal, expense, and perseverance than those which held our least hope of ever yielding any profitable result; and the most important practical discoveries in science have often been attained in the pursuit of some visionary and unattainable end. The search after the philosopher’s stone led to the discovery of Glauber’s salts; the study of judicial astrology produced those elaborate calculations in old times which are of such importance to the astronomer; and the desire to effect a Northwest Passage conducted the voyagers of England to the magnetic pole. Now, my theory is, that some philanthropic patron of letters in old time, observing this disposition in his species, had those round towers built with no other view than that they should exercise the research and ingenuity of the learned in succeeding ages, and, by furnishing an inscrutable subject of inquiry, perpetuate the study of Irish antiquities through all succeeding time.”

The astonishment and admiration of Mr. O’Leary had been reaching a climax during the delivery of this ingenious speech, at the conclusion of which he again sprang from his seat, and seemed about to fling himself on his knees in an ecstasy of delight; but, recollecting himself in time, he drew back with a respectful bow, and remained in his chair. At the same instant the master of

the mansion returned, in time to prevent any repetition of such ecstasies, and the conversation became more general and less abstruse. In some time after dinner was announced, and served up with a degree of comfort which made the recollection of his own solitary meals at Chore Abbey less tolerable, in the comparison to Mr. O'Leary's inward eye, than they had hitherto been. The worthy farmer's family was numerous, and did cordial justice to the cheer which was set before them. After the cloth was removed and grace said, Mr. O'Connor turned to his guest, and made the following speech:—

“I don't know, Mr. O'Leary, whether you are a patron of those modern fashions which they have begun to introduce, such as not drinking healths after dinner, bowing as if you had not a joint below the shoulder, and such like; but for our parts, we still keep up the good old custom here, and I hope you will have no objection to join us.”

“I can assure you, sir,” said Mr. O'Leary, with equal cordiality, “that I am no friend to modern innovations or creations, which very often savor more of self-sufficiency than of politeness. As the poet says,—

‘We think our fathers fools, so wise we grow;  
Our younger sons, no doubt, will think us so.’”

“Ah!” said Mr. O'Connor, shaking his head, “many a palmer those two lines cost me, when I used to write them in my copy-book at school.”

The glasses were now changed, and the next ten minutes were occupied with a confused babble of “Mrs. O'Connor, your health,” “Miss Moriarty,” “Miss

O'Connor," "Mr. O'Connor," "Mr. O'Leary," "Mr. O'Leary," "Mr. O'Leary, your health," and a perpetual ducking of about a dozen heads around the table, which would have had a somewhat comical appearance to any person not immediately interested.

During their ride home, and for months after, Tom Nash observed an extraordinary change in the deportment of his master. He became more talkative than usual, began to show more solicitude about his dress, shaved every day, found fault with everything, stayed little in his museum, talked much of repairs and alterations about the house, and acted, on the whole, as if some strange influence was at work within his mind. At length the secret came out, one morning, when Nash was in the act of carrying a bag of seed sets into the back parlor.

"Tom," said Mr. O'Leary, "you must not put oats or potatoes into that parlor any more."

"Why so, masther? what hurt is it doin' there?"

"No matter. She might n't like it."

"Is it ould Nelly, sir?"

"No, your mistress."

"*My* missiz!" Nash exclaimed, dropping the bag of oats.

"Yes: did n't I tell you I am going to be married?"

For nearly a quarter of an hour the master and man remained gazing in each other's countenances, without uttering a syllable. At length the latter found words to say in a tone of the profoundest sympathy, —

"The Lord preserve us, masther!"

"Amen, Tom!" sighed Mr. O'Leary; and not another

sentence was exchanged between them upon the subject, until Mrs. O'Leary, *ci-devant* Miss Moriarty, was introduced, amid rejoicings that resounded far and near, to the venerable mansion which it was the owner's will and pleasure should thenceforth call her mistress.

For a considerable time after his marriage, Nash observed nothing in the demeanor or conversation of his master which could lead him to suspect that he regretted the step which he had taken. Mrs. O'Leary was all that could be wished in every respect, either by master or servant; and indeed it surprised Nash a great deal more than he cared to let Mr. O'Leary understand, how she came to be so easily satisfied. Matters continued in this even course until they received a second visit from Mr. Geoffrey Gunn, now "Cousellor" Gunn, who, on hearing the humorous antiquarian repeat his happiness for the hundredth time, exclaimed, —

"I can tell you then, that if ladies are curious, they sometimes know how to keep a secret. Did you hear about Captain —— and his wife?"

"No; what of them?"

"A most extraordinary story they tell, indeed. They had been living together in perfect harmony, it seems, for more than twenty years, when she died, and it was for the first time discovered that she had exactly got two faces, — one behind, and one before."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. O'Leary.

"It may be so," replied his friend. "I do not answer for the reality of the story.

'I know not how the truth may be,  
I say the tale as 't was said to me.'"



“If it be true,” said Tibbot, “I think the worst part of the affair was the keeping it concealed from her husband.”

As he said this, he could not help observing that his wife looked uneasy and confused, and a strange doubt rushed into his mind, which reawakened his original foible in more than all its former force. The conversation ended; but for a long time after Tibbot did not retain the untroubled peace of mind which had till now accompanied his steps. The extreme amiability of his helpmate had won all his confidence, but it made him uneasy to perceive that Mrs. O'Leary did not behave towards him with an equal absence of reserve. There was evidently something preying on her mind, and the more pains he took to remove everything that could in the least degree interfere with her peace and comfort, the more she seemed to feel it.

“I don't know what to do about it, Tom,” he said one day, addressing Nash, who was the only person in whom he could repose a confidence. “She scarcely eats a morsel, and instead of going off as I thought it would, it is only growing worse and worse every day.”

“Ah, murther,” said Nash, “don't be vexin' yourself about it. You don't know the women. They 'd keep on dyen' that way, from the age of fifteen to a hundherd. The only way in the world is to let 'em alone an' lave 'em to themselves. The more notice that 's tuk of 'em, the worse they gets. They don't know theirselves what is it ails 'em half their time. Take it from me, 't is never any good to be frettin', more especially if you lets 'em observe it.”

Mr. O'Leary adopted Tom's advice, and found his account in doing so. For a considerable time after he observed that the less he appeared to notice the anxiety which preyed on Mrs. O'Leary's mind, the more visibly it diminished.

Years rolled away, and after a life spent in the most exemplary discharge of all her duties as a wife and mother, Mrs. O'Leary felt her death to be at hand. In disposing her mind with all the tranquillity which an untroubled conscience afforded, to enter on its final passage to a better world, her faithful spouse took notice that something of her long-forgotten and mysterious melancholy would occasionally cast a gloom upon her manner. At length, finding her end approach, she called him to her bedside, and after saying much to him in the way of consolation and advice, as to the care of the house and children, she added with an appearance of anxiety, —

“I have now but one request to add. It is that my head-dress, such as it is, be not removed after my death; that you will not yourself uncover my head, nor suffer any one else to do so. I have a particular objection to it. Great and good minds, my dear Tibbot, are always superior to the mean vice of curiosity. I am sure I need say no more to you, except to add that the injury will be your own, if you neglect to comply with this, my last injunction.”

In the first access of sorrow for the loss of so faithful and so amiable a partner, Mr. O'Leary found nothing very arduous in the accomplishment of her dying wishes. After the first day, however, when Nature had exhausted

herself in fits of mourning, and intervals of quiet reflection would succeed the tumult of the widower's grief, he could not prevent the question repeatedly presenting itself to his mind, — what in the world could be her motive for desiring that her head-dress might not be removed?

In palliation of any negligence which the worthy antiquarian might have committed in resisting such suggestions, it should be remembered that a great portion of his life had been spent in researches having chiefly for their end the gratification of that foible on which his excellent wife, in dying, had imposed so grievous a burden. By continually recurring, and meeting at each fresh assault a fainter resistance, it obtained at length a complete mastery over his mind. It was in vain he thought of Blue-beard, and a thousand other awful warnings of the kind. In the throes of his curiosity, desiring rather to gain an accomplice than a counsellor, he confided his agonies to Nash, and desired his opinion.

“Be dis an’ be dat,” said Nash, who, in a matter which appeared to him indifferent on the score of morality, considered rather what would be agreeable to his master than what was most in accordance with the laws of chivalric honor, “dat I may never die in sin, but I’d have a dawny peep.”

“But then her last words, Tom, — her dying wishes.”

“Aych, sure she never’ll know it.”

“Well,” said Mr. O’Leary, much shocked, “I am sure you do not consider the meaning of what you say. I wish indeed she had never given such an injunction,

for it is probable I never should have thought for a moment about her head-dress. Could I trust you, Tom, with what I suspect to be the true cause of her injunction?"

"Could *you* thrust *me*, mather!"

"I believe I can. Well then, Tom, I think the true reason is" — he looked around, and then whispered in horrified accents in his ear — "that my wife had two faces."

"Erra, howl!"

"I often remarked some mystery about her on that point. However, I, who have all my life been so free from this ridiculous foible, must not yield myself up to it now."

"Wisha, the dear knows," said Nash, whose curiosity was now wound up to as high a pitch as that of his master, "I would n't have the laste scruple in life about it. If it was anything that would bring her any harm, or keep any good from her, the case would be defferent."

"That is true, Tom," said his master. "She told me that it would be to my own injury. Now, were any other interests at stake, I would n't for the world, — but as it can injure no one but myself — Come along, you must assist me in this awful inquiry."

They entered the room in which lay the remains of the poor lady, Mr. O'Leary's mind filled with the story of Geoffrey Gunn, which had occupied his thoughts since he first heard it a great deal oftener than he would have wished Mrs. O'Leary to suspect. Having excluded, on different pretexts, every other individual, they proceeded to the task of removing the head-dress.

A cold perspiration already stood on Nash's brow, as he lent his aid in the investigation, holding the candle in his hand, while his master, with a countenance expressing the most horrible anticipations, removed the mysterious head-dress.

All that Mr. O'Leary discovered was, that the fine hair of which he had so often expressed an enthusiastic admiration was only his wife's by purchase. The good lady had no more than the average quantity of features, and less than the average quantity of hair, and, sharing the weakness of the lady who, on a like occasion, charged her handmaid to

“ Give her cheek a little red ! ”

she feared that it should be known, even after her death, that she was indebted for almost her only personal attraction to — a wig.





## NEAL MALONE.

BY WILLIAM CARLETON.

**T**HERE never was a greater-souled or doughtier tailor than little Neal Malone. Though but four feet four in height, he paced the earth with the courage and confidence of a giant; nay, one would have imagined that he walked as if he feared the world itself was about to give way under him. Let no one dare to say in future that a tailor is but the ninth part of a man. That reproach has been gloriously taken away from the character of the cross-legged corporation by Neal Malone. He has wiped it off like a stain from the collar of a second-hand coat; he has pressed this wrinkle out of the lying front of antiquity; he has drawn together this rent in the respectability of his profession. No. By him who was breeches-maker to the gods,—that is, except, like Highlanders, they eschewed inexpressibles,—by him who cut Jupiter's frieze jocks for winter, and eke by the bottom of his thimble, we swear that Neal Malone was *more* than the ninth part of a man.

Setting aside the Patagonians, we maintain that two

thirds of mortal humanity were comprised in Neal; and perhaps we might venture to assert that two thirds of Neal's humanity were equal to six thirds of another man's. It is right well known that Alexander the Great was a little man, and we doubt whether, had Alexander the Great been bred to the tailoring business, he would have exhibited so much of the hero as Neal Malone. Neal was descended from a fighting family, who had signalized themselves in as many battles as ever any single hero of antiquity fought. His father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather were all fighting men, and his ancestors in general, up, probably, to Con of the Hundred Battles himself. No wonder, therefore, that Neal's blood should cry out against the cowardice of his calling; no wonder that he should be an epitome of all that was valorous and heroic in a peaceable man, for we neglected to inform the reader that Neal, though "bearing no base mind," never fought any man in his own person. That, however, deducted nothing from his courage. If he did not fight, it was simply because he found cowardice universal. No man would engage him; his spirit blazed in vain; his thirst for battle was doomed to remain unquenched, except by whiskey, and this only increased it. In short, he could find no foe. He has often been known to challenge the first cudgel-players and pugilists of the parish, to provoke men of fourteen stone weight, and to bid mortal defiance to faction heroes of all grades,—but in vain. There was that in him which told them that an encounter with Neal would strip them of their laurels. Neal saw all this with a lofty indignation; he deplored the degeneracy of the

times, and thought it hard that the descendant of such a fighting family should be doomed to pass through life peaceably, whilst so many excellent rows and riots took place around him. It was a calamity to see every man's head broken but his own; a dismal thing to observe his neighbors go about with their bones in bandages, yet his untouched; and his friends beat black and blue, whilst his own cuticle remained undiscolored.

"Blur-an'-agers!" exclaimed Neal one day, when half tipsy in the fair, "am I never to get a bit of fightin'? Is there no cowardly spalpeen to stand afore Neal Malone? Be this an' be that, I'm blue-mowlded for want of a batin'! I'm disgracin' my relations by the life I'm ladin'! Will none o' ye fight me aither for love, money, or whiskey, frind or inimy, an' bad luck to ye? I don't care a traneeen which, only out o' pure frindship, let us have a morsel o' the rale kick-up, 'tany rate. Frind or inimy, I say agin, if you regard me; sure *that* makes no differ, only let us have the fight."

This excellent heroism was all wasted; Neal could not find a single adversary. Except he divided himself like Hotspur, and went to buffets one hand against the other, there was no chance of a fight; no person to be found sufficiently magnanimous to encounter the tailor. On the contrary, every one of his friends — or, in other words, every man in the parish — was ready to support him. He was clapped on the back until his bones were nearly dislocated in his body, and his hand shaken until his arm lost its cunning at the needle for half a week afterwards. This, to be sure, was a bitter business, a state of being past endurance. Every man



was his friend, — no man was his enemy. A desperate position for any person to find himself in, but doubly calamitous to a martial tailor.

Many a dolorous complaint did Neal make upon the misfortune of having none to wish him ill; and what rendered this hardship doubly oppressive, was the unlucky fact that no exertions of his, however offensive, could procure him a single foe. In vain did he insult, abuse, and malign all his acquaintances. In vain did he father upon them all the rascality and villany he could think of; he lied against them with a force and originality that would have made many a modern novelist blush for want of invention, — but all to no purpose. The world for once became astonishingly Christian; it paid back all his efforts to excite its resentment with the purest of charity; when Neal struck it on the one check, it meekly turned unto him the other. It could scarcely be expected that Neal would bear this. To have the whole world in friendship with a man is beyond doubt an affliction. Not to have the face of a single enemy to look upon, would decidedly be considered a deprivation of many agreeable sensations by most people, as well as by Neal Maloue. Let who might sustain a loss, or experience a calamity, it was a matter of indifference to Neal. They were only his friends, and he troubled neither his head nor his heart about them.

Heaven help us! There is no man without his trials; and Neal, the reader perceives, was not exempt from his. What did it avail him that he carried a cudgel ready for all hostile contingencies, or knit his brows and shook his kippeen at the fiercest of his fighting

friends? The moment he appeared, they softened into downright cordiality. His presence was the signal of peace; for, notwithstanding his unconquerable propensity to warfare, he went abroad as the genius of unanimity, though carrying in his bosom the redoubtable disposition of a warrior; just as the sun, though the source of light himself, is said to be dark enough at bottom.

It could not be expected that Neal, with whatever fortitude he might bear his other afflictions, could bear such tranquillity like a hero. To say that he bore it as one, would be basely to surrender his character; for what hero ever bore a state of tranquillity with courage? It affected his cutting out! It produced what Burton calls "a windie melancholie," which was nothing else than an accumulation of courage that had no means of escaping, if courage can, without indignity, be ever said to escape. He sat uneasy on his lap-board. Instead of cutting out soberly, he flourished his scissors as if he were heading a faction; he wasted much chalk by scoring his cloth in wrong places, and even caught his hot goose without a holder. These symptoms alarmed his friends, who persuaded him to go to a doctor. Neal went, to satisfy them; but he knew that no prescription could drive the courage out of him,—that he was too far gone in heroism to be made a coward of by apothecary stuff. Nothing in the pharmacopœia could physic him into a pacific state. His disease was simply the want of an enemy, and an unaccountable superabundance of friendship on the part of his acquaintances. How could a doctor remedy this by a prescription? Impossible. The doctor, indeed, recommended blood-

letting; but to lose blood in a peaceable manner was not only cowardly, but a bad cure for courage. Neal declined it: he would lose no blood for any man until he could not help it; which was giving the character of a hero at a single touch. *His* blood was not to be thrown away in this manner; the only lancet ever applied to his relations was the cudgel, and Neal scorned to abandon the principles of his family.

His friends, finding that he reserved his blood for more heroic purposes than dastardly phlebotomy, knew not what to do with him. His perpetual exclamation was, as we have already stated, "I'm blue-mowlded for want of a batin'!" They did everything in their power to cheer him with the hope of a drubbing; told him he lived in an excellent country for a man afflicted with his malady; and promised, if it were at all possible, to create him a private enemy or two, who, they hoped in heaven, might trounce him to some purpose.

This sustained him for a while; but as day after day passed, and no appearance of action presented itself, he could not choose but increase in courage. His soul, like a sword-blade too long in the scabbard, was beginning to get fuliginous by inactivity. He looked upon the point of his own needle, and the bright edge of his scissors, with a bitter pang, when he thought of the spirit rusting within him: he meditated fresh insults, studied new plans, and hunted out cunning devices for provoking his acquaintances to battle, until by degrees he began to confound his own brain, and to commit more grievous oversights in his business than ever. Sometimes he sent home to one person a coat, with the legs

of a pair of trousers attached to it for sleeves, and despatched to another the arms of the aforesaid coat tacked together as a pair of trousers. Sometimes the coat was made to button behind instead of before; and he frequently placed the pockets in the lower part of the skirts, as if he had been in league with cut-purses.

This was a melancholy situation, and his friends pitied him accordingly.

“Don’t be cast down, Neal,” said they; “yóur friends feel for you, poor fellow.”

“Divil carry my frinds,” replied Neal; “sure there’s not one o’ yez frindly enough to be my inimy. Tare-an’-ounze! what’ll I do? I’m blue-mowlded for want of a batin’!”

Seeing that their consolation was thrown away upon him, they resolved to leave him to his fate; which they had no sooner done than Neal had thoughts of taking to the *Skiomachia* as a last remedy. In this mood he looked with considerable antipathy at his own shadow for several nights; and it is not to be questioned but that some hard battles would have taken place between them, had it not been for the cunning of the shadow, which declined to fight him in any other position than with its back to the wall. This occasioned him to pause, for the wall was a fearful antagonist, inasmuch as it knew not when it was beaten; but there was still an alternative left. He went to the garden one clear day about noon, and hoped to have a bout with the shade, free from interruption. Both approached, apparently eager for the combat, and resolved to conquer or die, when a villanous cloud, happening to intercept the light, gave the shadow an

opportunity of disappearing; and Neal found himself once more without an opponent.

“It’s aisy known,” said Neal, “you have n’t the *blood* in you, or you’d come to the scratch like a man.”

He now saw that fate was against him, and that any further hostility towards the shadow was only a tempting of Providence. He lost his health, spirits, and everything but his courage. His countenance became pale and peaceful looking; the bluster departed from him; his body shrunk up like a withered parsnip. Thrice was he compelled to take in his clothes, and thrice did he ascertain that much of his time would be necessarily spent in pursuing his retreating person through the solitude of his almost deserted garments.

God knows it is difficult to form a correct opinion upon a situation so paradoxical as Neal’s was. To be reduced to skin and bone by the downright friendship of the world was, as the sagacious reader will admit, next to a miracle. We appeal to the conscience of any man who finds himself without an enemy, whether he be not a greater skeleton than the tailor; we will give him fifty guineas, provided he can show a calf to his leg. We know he could not; for the tailor had none, and that was because he had not an enemy. No man in friendship with the world ever has calves to his legs. To sum up all in a paradox of our own invention, for which we claim the full credit of originality, we now assert that more men have risen in the world by the injury of their enemies, than have risen by the kindness of their friends. You may take this, reader, in any sense; apply it to hanging if you like; it is still immutably and immovably true.

One day Neal sat cross-legged, as tailors usually sit, in the act of pressing a pair of breeches; his hands were placed, backs up, upon the handle of his goose, and his chin rested upon the back of his hands. To judge from his sorrowful complexion, one would suppose that he sat rather to be sketched as a picture of misery, or of heroism in distress, than for the industrious purpose of pressing the seams of a garment. There was a great deal of New Burlington Street pathos in his countenance; his face, like the times, was rather out of joint; "the sun was just setting, and his golden beams fell, with a saddened splendor, athwart the tailor's —" The reader may fill up the picture.

In this position sat Neal when Mr. O'Connor, the schoolmaster, whose inexpressibles he was turning for the third time, entered the workshop. Mr. O'Connor himself was as finished a picture of misery as the tailor. There was a patient, subdued kind of expression in his face which indicated a very fair portion of calamity; his eye seemed charged with affliction of the first water; on each side of his nose might be traced two dry channels which, no doubt, were full enough while the tropical rains of his countenance lasted. Altogether, to conclude from appearances, it was a dead match in affliction between him and the tailor; both seemed sad, fleshless, and unthriving.

"Misther O'Connor," said the tailor, when the schoolmaster entered, "won't you be pleased to sit down?"

Mr. O'Connor sat; and, after wiping his forehead, laid his hat upon the lap-board, put his half-handkerchief in his pocket, and looked upon the tailor. The tailor, in

return, looked upon Mr. O'Connor; but neither of them spoke for some minutes. Neal, in fact, appeared to be wrapped up in his own misery, and Mr. O'Connor in his; or, as we often have much gratuitous sympathy for the distresses of our friends, we question but the tailor was wrapped up in Mr. O'Connor's misery, and Mr. O'Connor in the tailor's.

Mr. O'Connor at length said, "Neal, are my inexpressibles finished?"

"I am now pressin' your inexpressibles," replied Neal; "but, be my sowl, Mr. O'Connor, it's not your inexpressibles I'm thinkin' of. I'm not the ninth part of what I was. I'd hardly make paddin' for a collar now."

"Are you able to carry a staff still, Neal?"

"I've a light hazel one that's handy," said the tailor; "but where's the use of carryin' it, whin I can get no one to fight wid? Sure I'm disgracin' my relations by the life I'm ladin'. I'll go to my grave widout ever batin' a man, or bein' bate myself; that's the vexation. Divil the row ever I was able to kick up in my life; so that I'm fairly blue-mowlded for want of a batin'. But if you have patience—"

"Patience!" said Mr. O'Connor, with a shake of the head that was perfectly disastrous even to look at,—"patience, did you say, Neal?"

"Ay," said Neal, "an' be my sowl, if you deny that I said patience, I'll break your head!"

"Ah, Neal," returned the other, "I don't deny it; for, though I'm teaching philosophy, knowledge, and mathematics every day in my life, yet I'm learning patience myself both night and day. No, Neal; I have

forgotten to deny anything. I have not been guilty of a contradiction, out of my own school, for the last fourteen years. I once expressed the shadow of a doubt about twelve years ago, but ever since I have abandoned even doubting. That doubt was the last expiring effort at maintaining my domestic authority, — but I suffered for it.”

“Well,” said Neal, “if you have patience, I’ll tell you what afflicts me from beginnin’ to endin’.”

“I *will* have patience,” said Mr. O’Connor; and he accordingly heard a dismal and indignant tale from the tailor.

“You have told me that fifty times over,” said Mr. O’Connor, after hearing the story. “Your spirit is too martial for a pacific life. If you follow my advice, I will teach you how to ripple the calm current of your existence to some purpose. *Marry a wife*. For twenty-five years I have given instruction in three branches, namely, philosophy, knowledge, and mathematics. I am also well versed in matrimony, and I declare that, upon my misery, and by the contents of all my afflictions, it is my solemn and melancholy opinion that, if you marry a wife, you will, before three months pass over your concatenated state, not have a single complaint to make touching a superabundance of peace or tranquillity, or a love of fighting.”

“Do you mane to say that any woman would make me afeard?” said the tailor, deliberately rising up and getting his cudgel. “I’ll thank you merely to go over the words agin, till I thrash you widin an inch of your life. That’s all.”



“Neal,” said the schoolmaster, meekly, “I won’t fight; I have been too often subdued ever to presume on the hope of a single victory. My spirit is long since evaporated; I am like one of your own shreds, a mere selvage. Do you not know how much my habiliments have shrunk in, even within the last five years? Hear me, Neal; and venerate my words as if they proceeded from the lips of a prophet. If you wish to taste the luxury of being subdued, — if you are, as you say, blue-moulded for want of a beating, and sick at heart of a peaceful existence, — why, marry a wife. Neal, send my breeches home with all haste, for they are wanted, you understand. Farewell.”

Mr. O’Connor, having thus expressed himself, departed, and Neal stood, with the cudgel in his hand, looking at the door out of which he passed, with an expression of fierceness, contempt, and reflection strongly blended on the ruins of his once heroic visage.

Many a man has happiness within his reach if he but knew it. The tailor had been hitherto miserable, because he pursued a wrong object. The schoolmaster, however, suggested a train of thought upon which Neal now fastened with all the ardor of a chivalrous temperament. Nay, he wondered that the family spirit should have so completely seized upon the fighting side of his heart as to preclude all thoughts of matrimony; for he could not but remember that his relations were as ready for marriage as for fighting. To doubt this would have been to throw a blot upon his own escutcheon. He therefore very prudently asked himself to whom, if he did not marry, should he transmit his courage. He was a single man,

and, dying as such, he would be the sole depository of his own valor, which, like Junius's secret, must perish with him. If he could have left it as a legacy to such of his friends as were most remarkable for cowardice, why, the case would be altered: but this was impossible, — and he had now no other means of preserving it to posterity than by creating a posterity to inherit it. He saw, too, that the world was likely to become convulsed. Wars, as everybody knew, were certain to break out; and would it not be an excellent opportunity for being father to a colonel, or, perhaps, a general, that might astonish the world?

The change visible in Neal, after the schoolmaster's last visit, absolutely thunderstruck all who knew him. The clothes, which he had rashly taken in to fit his shrivelled limbs, were once more let out. The tailor expanded with a new spirit; his joints ceased to be supple, as in the days of his valor; his eye became less fiery, but more brilliant. From being martial, he got desperately gallant; but, somehow, he could not afford to act the hero and lover both at the same time. This, perhaps, would be too much to expect from a tailor. His policy was better. He resolved to bring all his available energy to bear upon the charms of whatever fair nymph he should select for the honor of matrimony; to waste his spirit in fighting would, therefore, be a deduction from the single purpose in view.

The transition from war to love is by no means so remarkable as we might at first imagine. We quote Jack Falstaff in proof of this; or, if the reader be disposed to reject our authority, then we quote Ancient Pistol

himself, — both of whom we consider as the most finished specimens of heroism that ever carried a safe skin. Acres would have been a hero had he worn gloves to prevent the courage from oozing out at his palms, or not felt such an unlucky antipathy to the “snug lying in the Abbey”; and as for Captain Bobadil, he never had an opportunity of putting his plan for vanquishing an army into practice. We fear, indeed, that neither his character, nor Ben Jonson’s knowledge of human nature, is properly understood; for it certainly could not be expected that a man whose spirit glowed to encounter a whole host, could, without tarnishing his dignity, if closely pressed, condescend to fight an individual. But as these remarks on courage may be felt by the reader as an invidious introduction of a subject disagreeable to him, we beg to hush it for the present and return to the tailor.

No sooner had Neal begun to feel an inclination to matrimony, than his friends knew that his principles had veered, by the change now visible in his person and deportment. They saw he had ratted from courage, and joined love. Heretofore his life had been all winter, darkened by storm and hurricane. The fiercer virtues had played the devil with him; every word was thunder, every look lightning; but now all that had passed away: before, he was the *fortiter in re*; at present, he was the *suaviter in modo*. His existence was perfect spring, — beautifully vernal. All the amiable and softer qualities began to bud about his heart; a genial warmth was diffused over him; his soul got green within him; every day was serene, and if a cloud happened to become visible, there was a roguish rainbow astride of it, on which sat

a beautiful Iris that laughed down at him, and seemed to say, "Why the dickens, Neal, don't you marry a wife?"

Neal could not resist the afflatus which descended on him; an ethereal light dwelled, he thought, upon the face of nature; the color of the cloth which he cut out from day to day was, to his enraptured eye, like the color of Cupid's wings, — all purple; his visions were worth their weight in gold; his dreams, a credit to the bed he slept on; and his feelings, like blind puppies, young and alive to the milk of love and kindness which they drew from his heart. Most of this delight escaped the observation of the world, for Neal, like your true lover, became shy and mysterious. It is difficult to say what he resembled; no dark-lantern ever had more light shut up within itself than Neal had in his soul, although his friends were not aware of it. They knew, indeed, that he had turned his back upon valor; but beyond this their knowledge did not extend.

Neal was shrewd enough to know that what he felt must be love; nothing else could distend him with happiness until his soul felt light and bladder-like, but love. As an oyster opens, when expecting the tide, so did his soul expand at the contemplation of matrimony. Labor ceased to be a trouble to him; he sang and sewed from morning to night; his hot goose no longer burned him, for his heart was as hot as his goose; the vibrations of his head, at each successive stitch, were no longer sad and melancholy. There was a buoyant shake of exultation in them which showed that his soul was placid and happy within him.

Endless honor be to Neal Malone for the originality

with which he managed the tender sentiment! He did not, like your commonplace lovers, first discover a pretty girl, and afterwards become enamored of her. No such thing; he had the passion prepared beforehand, — cut out and made up, as it were, ready for any girl whom it might fit. This was falling in love in the abstract, and let no man condemn it without a trial; for many a long-winded argument could be urged in its defence. It is always wrong to commence business without capital, and Neal had a good stock to begin with. All we beg is, that the reader will not confound it with Platonism, which never marries; but he is at full liberty to call it Socratism, which takes unto itself a wife, and suffers accordingly.

Let no one suppose that Neal forgot the schoolmaster's kindness, or failed to be duly grateful for it. Mr. O'Connor was the first person whom he consulted touching his passion. With a cheerful soul he waited on that melancholy and gentleman-like man, and in the very luxury of his heart told him that he was in love.

"In love, Neal!" said the schoolmaster. "May I inquire with whom?"

"Wid nobody in particular yet," replied Neal; "but of late I'm got divilish fond o' the girls in general."

"And do you call that being in love, Neal?" said Mr. O'Connor.

"Why, what else would I call it?" returned the tailor. "Am n't I fond of them?"

"Then it must be what is termed the Universal Passion, Neal," observed Mr. O'Connor, "although it is the first time I have seen such an illustration of it as you present in your own person."

“I wish you would advise me how to act,” said Neal; “I’m as happy as a prince since I began to get fond o’ them, an’ to think of marriage.”

The schoolmaster shook his head again, and looked rather miserable. Neal rubbed his hands with glee, and looked perfectly happy. The schoolmaster shook his head again, and looked more miserable than before. Neal’s happiness also increased on the second rubbing.

Now, to tell the secret at once, Mr. O’Connor would not have appeared so miserable, were it not for Neal’s happiness; nor Neal so happy, were it not for Mr. O’Connor’s misery. It was all the result of contrast; but this you will not understand unless you be deeply read in modern novels.

Mr. O’Connor, however, was a man of sense, who knew, upon this principle, that the longer he continued to shake his head, the more miserable he must become, and the more also would he increase Neal’s happiness; but he had no intention of increasing Neal’s happiness at his own expense, — for, upon the same hypothesis, it would have been for Neal’s interest had he remained shaking his head there, and getting miserable until the day of judgment. He consequently declined giving the third shake, for he thought that plain conversation was, after all, more significant and forcible than the most eloquent nod, however ably translated.

“Neal,” said he, “could you, by stretching your imagination, contrive to rest contented with nursing your passion in solitude, and love the sex at a distance?”

“How could I nurse and mind my business?”

replied the tailor. "I'll never nurse so long as I'll have the wife; and as for 'magination, it depends upon the grain of it whether I can stretch it or not. I don't know that I ever made a coat of it in my life."

"You don't understand me, Neal," said the schoolmaster. "In recommending marriage, I was only driving one evil out of you by introducing another. Do you think that, if you abandoned all thoughts of a wife, you would get heroic again; that is, would you take once more to the love of fighting?"

"There is no doubt but I would," said the tailor: "if I miss the wife, I'll kick up such a dust as never was seen in the parish, an' you're the first man that I'll lick. But now that I'm in love," he continued, "sure I ought to look out for the wife."

"Ah! Neal," said the schoolmaster, "you are tempting destiny; your temerity be, with all its melancholy consequences, upon your own head."

"Come," said the tailor, "it was n't to hear you groaning to the tune of 'Dhrimindhoo,' or 'The old woman roekin' her eradle,' that I came; but to know if you could help me in makin' out the wife. That's the discourse."

"Look at me, Neal," said the schoolmaster, solemnly; "I am at this moment, and have been any time for the last fifteen years, a living *caveto* against matrimony. I do not think that earth possesses such a luxury as a single solitary life. Neal, the monks of old were happy men; they were all fat and had double chins; and, Neal, I tell you, that all fat men are in general happy. Care cannot come at them so readily as at a thin man;

before it gets through the strong outworks of flesh and blood with which they are surrounded, it becomes treacherous to its original purpose, joins the cheerful spirits it meets in the system, and dances about the heart in all the madness of mirth; just like a sincere ecclesiastic, who comes to lecture a good fellow against drinking, but who forgets his lecture over his cups, and is laid under the table with such success, that he either never comes to finish his lecture, or comes often to be laid under the table. Look at me, Neal, how wasted, fleshless, and miserable I am. You know how my garments have shrunk in, and what a solid man I was before marriage. Neal, pause, I beseech you; otherwise you stand a strong chance of becoming a nonentity like myself."

"I don't care what I become," said the tailor; "I can't think that you'd be so unreasonable as to expect that any of the Malones should pass out of the world widout either bein' bate or marrid. Have reason, Mr. O'Connor, an' if you can help me to the wife, I promise to take in your coat the next time for nothin'."

"Well, then," said Mr. O'Connor, "what would you think of the butcher's daughter, Biddy Neil? You have always had a thirst for blood, and here you may have it gratified in an innocent manner, should you ever become sanguinary again. 'T is true, Neal, she is twice your size, and possesses three times your strength; but for that very reason, Neal, marry her if you can. Large animals are placid; and Heaven preserve those bachelors whom I wish well, from a small wife; 't is such who always wield the sceptre of domestic life, and rule their husbands with a rod of iron."



“Say no more, Mr. O’Connor,” replied the tailor; “she’s the very girl I’m in love wid, an’ never fear but I’ll overcome her heart if it can be done by man. Now, step over the way to my house, an’ we’ll have a sup on the head of it. Who’s that calling?”

“Ah! Neal, I know the tones, — there’s a shrillness in them not to be mistaken. Farewell! I must depart; you have heard the proverb, ‘those who are bound must obey.’ Young Jack, I presume, is squalling, and I must either nurse him, rock the cradle, or sing comic tunes for him, though Heaven knows with what a disastrous heart I often sing, ‘Begone, dull care,’ the ‘Rakes of Newcastle,’ or, ‘Peas upon a Trencher.’ Neal, I say again, pause before you take this leap in the dark. Pause, Neal, I entreat you. Farewell!”

Neal, however, was gifted with the heart of an Irishman, and scorned caution as the characteristic of a coward; he had, as it appeared, abandoned all design of fighting, but the courage still adhered to him even in making love. He consequently conducted the siege of Bidy Neil’s heart with a degree of skill and valor which would not have come amiss to Marshal Gerald at the siege of Antwerp. Locke or Dugald Stewart, indeed, had they been cognizant of the tailor’s triumph, might have illustrated the principle on which he succeeded; as to ourselves, we can only conjecture it. Our own opinion is, that they were both animated with a congenial spirit. Bidy was the very pink of pugnacity, and could throw in a body-blow, or plant a facer, with singular energy and science. Her prowess hitherto had, we confess, been displayed only within the limited range

of domestic life ; but should she ever find it necessary to exercise it upon a larger scale, there was no doubt whatsoever, in the opinion of her mother, brothers, and sisters, every one of whom she had successively subdued, that she must undoubtedly distinguish herself. There was certainly one difficulty which the tailor had *not* to encounter in the progress of his courtship ; the field was his own ; he had not a rival to dispute his claim. Neither was there any opposition given by her friends ; they were, on the contrary, all anxious for the match ; and when the arrangements were concluded, Neal felt his hand squeezed by them in succession, with an expression more resembling condolence than joy. Neal, however, had been bred to tailoring, and not to metaphysics ; he could cut out a coat very well, but we do not say that he could trace a principle, — as what tailor, except Jeremy Taylor, could ?

There was nothing particular in the wedding. Mr. O'Connor was asked by Neal to be present at it ; but he shook his head, and told him that he had not courage to attend it, or inclination to witness any man's sorrows but his own. He met the wedding party by accident, and was heard to exclaim with a sigh as they flaunted past him in gay exuberance of spirits, " Ah, poor Neal ! he is going like one of her father's cattle to the shambles ! Woe is me for having suggested matrimony to the tailor ! He will not long be under the necessity of saying that he is ' blue-moulded for want of a beating.' The butchress will fell him like a Kerry ox, and I may have his blood to answer for, and his discomfiture to feel for, in addition to my own miseries."

On the evening of the wedding day, about the hour of ten o'clock, Neal, whose spirits were uncommonly exalted, for his heart luxuriated within him, danced with his bridesmaid; after the dance he sat beside her, and got eloquent in praise of her beauty; and it is said, too, that he whispered to her, and chucked her chin with considerable gallantry. The *tête-à-tête* continued for some time without exciting particular attention, with one exception; but *that* exception was worth a whole chapter of general rules. Mrs. Malone rose up, then sat down again, and took off a glass of the native; she got up a second time, — all the wife rushed upon her heart, — she approached them, and, in a fit of the most exquisite sensibility, knocked the bridesmaid down, and gave the tailor a kick of affecting pathos upon the inexpressibles. The whole scene was a touching one on both sides. The tailor was sent on all-fours to the floor! but Mrs. Malone took him quietly up, put him under her arm, as one would a lap-dog, and with stately step marched away to the connubial apartment, in which everything remained very quiet for the rest of the night.

The next morning Mr. O'Connor presented himself to congratulate the tailor on his happiness. Neal, as his friend, shook hands with him, gave the school-master's fingers a slight squeeze, such as a man gives who would gently entreat your sympathy. The school-master looked at him, and thought he shook his head. Of this, however, he could not be certain; for, as he shook his own during the moment of observation, he

concluded that it might be a mere mistake of the eye, or, perhaps, the result of a mind predisposed to be credulous on the subject of shaking heads.

We wish it were in our power to draw a veil, or curtain, or blind of some description, over the remnant of the tailor's narrative that is to follow; but as it is the duty of every faithful historian to give the secret causes of appearances which the world in general do not understand, so we think it but honest to go on, impartially and faithfully, without shrinking from the responsibility that is frequently annexed to truth.

For the first three days after matrimony, Neal felt like a man who had been translated to a new and more lively state of existence. He had expected, and flattered himself, that the moment this event should take place, he would once more resume his heroism, and experience the pleasure of a drubbing. This determination he kept a profound secret; nor was it known until a future period, when he disclosed it to Mr. O'Connor. He intended, therefore, that marriage should be nothing more than a mere parenthesis in his life, — a kind of asterisk, pointing, in a note at the bottom, to this single exception in his general conduct, — a *nota bene* to the spirit of a martial man, intimating that he had been peaceful only for a while. In truth, he was, during the influence of love over him, and up to the very day of his marriage, secretly as blue-moulded as ever for want of a beating. The heroic *penchant* lay snugly latent in his heart, unchecked and unmodified. He flattered himself that he was achieving a capital imposition upon the world at large, — that

he was actually hoaxing mankind in general, — and that such an excellent piece of knavish tranquillity had never been perpetrated before his time.

On the first week after his marriage there chanced to be a fair in the next market-town. Neal, after breakfast, brought forward a bunch of shillelahs, in order to select the best; the wife inquired the purpose of the selection, and Neal declared that he was resolved to have a fight that day, if it were to be had, he said, for “love or money.” “The truth is,” he exclaimed, strutting with fortitude about the house, — “the truth is, that I’ve *done* the whole of yez, — I’m as blue-mowlded as ever for want of a batin’.”

“Don’t go,” said the wife.

“I *will* go,” said Neal, with vehemence; “I’ll go, if the whole parish was to go to prevint me.”

In about another half-hour Neal sat down quietly to his business, instead of going to the fair!

Much ingenious speculation might be indulged in upon this abrupt termination to the tailor’s most formidable resolution; but, for our own part, we will prefer going on with the narrative, leaving the reader at liberty to solve the mystery as he pleases. In the mean time, we say this much, — let those who cannot make it out, carry it to their tailor; it is a tailor’s mystery, and no one has so good a right to understand it, — except, perhaps, a tailor’s wife.

At the period of his matrimony, Neal had become as plump and as stout as he ever was known to be in his plumpest and stoutest days. He and the school-master had been very intimate about this time; but

we know not how it happened that soon afterwards he felt a modest, bride-like reluctance in meeting with that afflicted gentleman. As the eve of his union approached, he was in the habit, during the schoolmaster's visits to his workshop, of alluding, in rather a sarcastic tone, considering the unthriving appearance of his friend, to the increasing lustiness of his person. Nay, he has often leaped up from his lap-board, and, in the strong spirit of exultation, thrust out his leg in attestation of his assertion, slapping it, moreover, with a loud laugh of triumph, that sounded like a knell to the happiness of his emaciated acquaintance. The schoolmaster's philosophy, however, unlike his flesh, never departed from him; his usual observation was, "Neal, we are both receding from the same point; you increase in flesh, whilst I, Heaven help me, am fast diminishing."

The tailor received these remarks with very boisterous mirth, whilst Mr. O'Connor simply shook his head, and looked sadly upon his limbs, now shrouded in a superfluity of garments, somewhat resembling a slender thread of water in a shallow summer stream, nearly wasted away, and surrounded by an unproportionate extent of channel.

The fourth month after the marriage arrived, Neal, one day, near its close, began to dress himself in his best apparel. Even then, when buttoning his waistcoat, he shook his head after the manner of Mr. O'Connor, and made observations upon the great extent to which it over-folded him.

"Well," thought he with a sigh, "this waistcoat cer-

tainly *did* fit me to a T; but it's wonderful to think how — cloth stretches!"

"Neal," said the wife, on perceiving him dressed, "where are you bound for?"

"Faith, *for life*," replied Neal, with a mitigated swagger; "and I'd as soon, if it had been the will of Provid —"

He paused.

"Where are you going?" asked the wife a second time.

"Why," he answered, "only to dance at Jemmy Connolly's; I'll be back early."

"Don't go," said the wife.

"I'll go," said Neal, "if the whole cuntry was to prevint me. Thunder an' lightnin', woman, who am I?" he exclaimed, in a loud, but rather infirm voice; "am n't I Neal Malone, that never met a *man* who'd fight him! Neal Malone, that was never beat by *man*! Why, tare-an-ounze, woman! Whoo! I'll get enraged some time, an' play the divil! Who's afeard, I say?"

"*Don't go*," added the wife, a third time, giving Neal a significant look in the face.

In about another half-hour Neal sat down quietly to his business, instead of going to the dance!

Neal now turned himself, like many a sage in similar circumstances, to philosophy; that is to say, he began to shake his head upon principle, after the manner of the schoolmaster. He would, indeed, have preferred the bottle upon principle; but there was no getting at the bottle, except through the wife; and it so happened that by the time it reached him, there was

little consolation left in it. Neal bore all in silence; for silence, his friend had often told him, was a proof of wisdom.

Soon after this, Neal one evening met Mr. O'Connor by chance upon a plank which crossed a river. This plank was only a foot in breadth, so that no two individuals could pass each other upon it. We cannot find words in which to express the dismay of both, on finding that they absolutely glided past one another without collision.

Both paused, and surveyed each other solemnly; but the astonishment was all on the side of Mr. O'Connor.

"Neal," said the schoolmaster, "by all the household gods, I conjure you to speak, that I may be assured you live!"

The ghost of a blush crossed the churchyard visage of the tailor.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "why the divil did you tempt me to marry a wife?"

"Neal," said his friend, "answer me in the most solemn manner possible; throw into your countenance all the gravity you can assume; speak as if you were under the hands of the hangman, with the rope about your neck, for the question is indeed a trying one which I am about to put. Are you still 'blue-moulded' for want of a beating?"

The tailor collected himself to make a reply; he put one leg out, — the very leg which he used to show in triumph to his friend; but, alas, how dwindled! He opened his waistcoat and lapped it round him, until he looked like a weasel on its hind legs. He then raised himself up on



his tiptoes, and, in an awful whisper, replied, "No!!! the divil a bit I 'm blue-mowlded for want of a batin'!"

The schoolmaster shook his head in his own miserable manner; but, alas! he soon perceived that the tailor was as great an adept at shaking the head as himself. Nay, he saw that there was a calamitous refinement, a delicacy of shake in the tailor's vibrations which gave to his own nod a very commonplace character.

The next day the tailor took in his clothes; and from time to time continued to adjust them to the dimensions of his shrinking person. The schoolmaster and he, whenever they could steal a moment, met and sympathized together. Mr. O'Connor, however, bore up somewhat better than Neal. The latter was subdued in heart and in spirit; thoroughly, completely, and intensely vanquished. His features became sharpened by misery, for a termagant wife is the whetstone on which all the calamities of a henpecked husband are painted by the Devil. He no longer strutted as he was wont to do; he no longer carried a cudgel as if he wished to wage a universal battle with mankind. He was now a married man. Sneakingly, and with a cowardly crawl, did he creep along as if every step brought him nearer to the gallows. The schoolmaster's march of misery was far slower than Neal's: the latter distanced him. Before three years passed he had shrunk up so much, that he could not walk abroad of a windy day without carrying weights in his pockets to keep him firm on the earth which he once trod with the step of a giant. He again sought the schoolmaster, with whom, indeed, he associated as much as possible. Here he felt certain of receiv-

ing sympathy; nor was he disappointed. That worthy but miserable man and Neal often retired beyond the hearing of their respective wives, and supported each other by every argument in their power. Often have they been heard in the dusk of evening singing behind a remote hedge that melancholy ditty, "Let us *both* be unhappy together"; which rose upon the twilight breeze with a cautious quaver of sorrow truly heart-rending and lugubrious.

"Neal," said Mr. O'Connor, on one of those occasions, "here is a book which I recommend to your perusal; it is called 'The Afflicted Man's Companion'; try if you cannot glean some consolation out of it."

"Faith," said Neal, "I'm forever obliged to you, but I don't want it. I've had 'The Afflicted Man's Companion' too long, and not an atom of consolation I can get out of it. I have *one* o' them, I tell you; but, be me sowl, I'll not undertake a *pair* o' them. The very name's enough for me." They then separated.

The tailor's *vis vitæ* must have been powerful, or he would have died. In two years more his friends could not distinguish him from his own shadow; a circumstance which was of great inconvenience to him. Several grasped at the hand of the shadow instead of his; and one man was near paying it five and sixpence for making a pair of small-clothes. Neal, it is true, undeceived him with some trouble, but candidly admitted that he was not able to carry home the money. It was difficult, indeed, for the poor tailor to bear what he felt; it is true he bore it as long as he could; but at length he became suicidal, and often had thoughts of "making his own

*quietus* with his bare bodkin." After many deliberations and afflictions, he ultimately made the attempt; but, alas! he found that the blood of the Malones refused to flow upon so ignominious an occasion. So *he* solved the phenomenon; although the truth was, that his blood was not "i' the vein" for it; none was to be had. What then was to be done? He resolved to get rid of life by some process; and the next that occurred to him was hanging. In a solemn spirit he prepared a selvage, and suspended himself from the rafter of his workshop; but here another disappointment awaited him; he would not hang. Such was his want of gravity that his own weight proved insufficient to occasion his death by mere suspension. His third attempt was at drowning; but he was too light to sink; all the elements, all his own energies, joined themselves, he thought, in a wicked conspiracy to save his life. Having thus tried every avenue to destruction, and failed in all, he felt like a man doomed to live forever. Henceforward he shrunk and shrivelled by slow degrees, until in the course of time he became so attenuated that the grossness of human vision could no longer reach him.

This, however, could not last always. Though still alive, he was to all intents and purposes imperceptible. He could only now be heard; he was reduced to a mere essence; the very echo of human existence, *vox et præterea nihil*. It is true the schoolmaster asserted that he occasionally caught passing glimpses of him; but that was because he had been himself nearly spiritualized by affliction, and his visual ray purged in the furnace of domestic tribulation. By and by Neal's voice lessened, got fainter

and more indistinct, until at length nothing but a doubtful murmur could be heard, which ultimately could scarcely be distinguished from a ringing in the ears.

Such was the awful and mysterious fate of the tailor, who, as a hero, could not of course die; he merely dissolved like an icicle, wasted into immateriality, and finally melted away beyond the perception of mortal sense. Mr. O'Connor is still living, and once more in the fulness of perfect health and strength. His wife, however, we may as well hint, has been dead more than two years.









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