MY MISCELLANIES.

By WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF 'THE WOMAN IN WHITE,' 'NO NAME,' 'THE DEAD SECRET,' &c. &c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—Vol. I.

LONDON:

SAMPSON LOW, SON, & CO., LUDGATE HILL.

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AND CHARING CROSS.

Affectionately Inscribed

TO

HENRY BULLAR

(OF THE WESTERN CIRCUIT).

PREFACE.

The various papers of which the following collection is composed, were most of them written some years since, and were all originally published—with many more, which I have not thought it desirable to reprint—in 'Household Words,' and in the earlier volumes of 'All the Year Round.' They were fortunate enough to be received with favour by the reader, at the period of their first appearance, and were thought worthy in many instances of being largely quoted from in other journals. After careful selection and revision, they are now collected in book-form; having been so arranged, in contrast with each other, as to present specimens of all the shorter compositions which I have contributed in past years to periodical literature.

My object in writing most of these papers—especially those collected under the general heads of 'Sketches of Character' and 'Social Grievances'—was to present what I had observed and what I had thought, in the lightest and the least pretentious form; to address the public (if I could) with something of the ease of letter writing, and something of the familiarity of friendly talk. The literary Pulpit appeared to me at that time—as it appears to me still—to be rather overcrowded with the Preachers of Lay Sermons. Views of life and society to set us thinking penitently in some cases, or doubting contemptuously in others, were, I thought, quite plentiful enough already. More freshness and novelty of appeal to the much-lectured and much-enduring reader, seemed to lie in views which might put us on easier terms with ourselves and with others; and which might encourage us to laugh good-humouredly over some of the lighter eccentricities of character, and some of the more palpable absurdities of custom —without any unfair perversion of truth, or any needless descent to the lower regions of vulgarity and caricature. With that idea, all the lighter contributions to these Miscellanies were originally written; and with that idea they are now again dismissed from my desk, to win what approval they may from new readers.

HARLEY STREET, LONDON.

September, 1863.

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MY MISCELLANIES.

SKETCHES OF CHARACTER.—I.

TALK-STOPPERS.

We hear a great deal of lamentation now-a-days, proceeding mostly from elderly people, on the decline of the Art of Conversation among us. Old ladies and gentlemen with vivid recollections of the charms of society fifty years ago, are constantly asking each other why the great talkers of their youthful days have found no successors in this inferior present time. Where—they inquire mournfully—where are the illustrious men and women gifted with a capacity for perpetual outpouring from the tongue, who used to keep enraptured audiences deluged in a flow of eloquent monologue for hours together? Where are the solo talkers, in this degenerate age of nothing but choral conversation?

The solo talkers have vanished. Nothing but the tradition of them remains, imperfectly preserved in books for the benefit of an ungrateful posterity, which reviles their surviving contemporaries, and would perhaps even have reviled the illustrious creatures themselves as Bores. If they could rise from the dead, and wag their unresting tongues among us now, would they win their reputations anew, just as easily as ever? Would they even get listeners? Would they be actually allowed to talk? I venture to say, decidedly not. They would surely be interrupted and contradicted; they would have their nearest neighbours at the dinner-table talking across them; they would find impatient people opposite, dropping things noisily, and ostentatiously picking them up; they would hear confidential whispering, and perpetual fidgeting in distant corners, before they had got through their first half-dozen of eloquent opening sentences. Nothing appears to me so wonderful as that none of these interruptions (if we are to believe report) should ever have occurred in the good old times of the great talkers. I read long biographies of that large class of illustrious individuals whose fame is confined to the select circle of their own acquaintance, and I find that they were to a man, whatever other differences may have existed between them, all delightful talkers. I am informed that they held forth entrancingly for hours together, at all times and seasons, and that I, the gentle, constant, and patient reader, am one of the most unfortunate and pitiable of human beings in never having enjoyed the luxury of hearing them: but, strangely enough, I am never told whether they were occasionally interrupted or not in the course of their outpourings. I am left to infer that their friends sat under them just as a

congregation sits under a pulpit; and I ask myself amazedly (remembering what society is at the present day), whether human nature can have changed altogether since that time. Either the reports in the biographies are one-sided and imperfect, or the race of people whom I frequently meet with now—and whom I venture to call Talk-stoppers, because their business in life seems to be the obstructing, confusing, and interrupting of all conversation—must be the peculiar and portentous growth of our own degenerate era.

Perplexed by this dilemma, when I am reading in long biographies about great talkers, I do not find myself lamenting, like my seniors, that they have left no successors in our day, or doubting irreverently, like my juniors, whether the famous performers of conversational solos were really as well worth hearing as eulogistic report would fain have us believe. The one invariable question that I put to myself under these circumstances runs thus:—Could the great talkers, if they had lived in my time, have talked at all? And the answer I receive is:—In the vast majority of cases, certainly not.

Let me not unnecessarily mention names, but let me ask, for example, if some such famous talker as, say—the Great Glib—could have discoursed uninterruptedly for five minutes together in the presence of my friend Colonel Hopkirk?

The colonel goes a great deal into society; he is the kindest and gentlest of men; but he unconsciously stops, or confuses conversation everywhere, solely in consequence of his own sociable horror of ever differing in opinion with anybody. If A. should begin by declaring black to be black, Colonel Hopkirk would be sure to agree with him, before he had half done. If B. followed, and declared black to be white, the colonel would be on his side of the question, before he had argued it out; and, if C. peaceably endeavoured to calm the dispute with a truism, and trusted that every one would at least admit that black and white in combination made grey, my ever-compliant friend would pat him on the shoulder approvingly, all the while he was talking; would declare that C.'s conclusion was, after all, the common sense of the question; and would set A. and B. furiously disputing which of them he agreed or disagreed with now, and whether on the great Black, White, and Grey question, Colonel Hopkirk could really be said to have any opinion at all.

How could the Great Glib hold forth in the company of such a man as this? Let us suppose that delightful talker, with a few of his admirers (including, of course, the writer of his biography), and Colonel Hopkirk, to be all seated at the

same table; and let us say that one of the admirers is anxious to get the mellifluous Glib to discourse on capital punishment for the benefit of the company. The admirer begins, of course, on the approved method of stating the objections to capital punishment, and starts the subject in this manner.

"I was dining out, the other day, Mr. Glib, where capital punishment turned up as a topic of conversation——"

"Ah!" says Colonel Hopkirk, "a dreadful necessity—yes, yes, yes, I see—a dreadful necessity—Eh?"

"And the arguments for its abolition," continues the admirer, without noticing the interruption, "were really handled with great dexterity by one of the gentlemen present, who started, of course, with the assertion that it is unlawful, under any circumstances, to take away life——"

"Unlawful, of course!" cries the colonel. "Very well put. Yes, yes—unlawful—to be sure—so it is—unlawful, as you say."

"Unlawful, sir?" begins the Great Glib, severely. "Have I lived to this time of day, to hear that it is unlawful to protect the lives of the community, by the only certain means——?"

"No, no—O dear me, no!" says the compliant Hopkirk, with the most unblushing readiness. "Protect their lives, of course—as you say, protect their lives by the only certain means—yes, yes, I quite agree with you."

"Allow me, colonel," says another admirer, anxious to assist in starting the great talker, "allow me to remind our friend, before he takes this question in hand, that it is an argument of the abolitionists that perpetual imprisonment would answer the purpose of protecting society——"

The colonel is so delighted with this last argument that he bounds on his chair, and rubs his hands in triumph. "My dear sir!" he cries, before the last speaker can say another word, "you have hit it—you have indeed! Perpetual imprisonment—that's the thing—ah, yes, yes, yes, to be sure—perpetual imprisonment—the very thing, my dear sir—the very thing!"

"Excuse me," says a third admirer, "but I think Mr. Glib was about to speak. You were saying, sir——?"

"The whole question of capital punishment," begins the delightful talker, leaning

back luxuriously in his chair, "lies in a nutshell." ("Very true," from the colonel.) "I murder one of you—say Hopkirk here." ("Ha! ha! ha!" loudly from the colonel, who thinks himself bound to laugh at a joke when he is only wanted to listen to an illustration.) "I murder Hopkirk. What is the first object of all the rest of you, who represent the community at large?" ("To have you hanged," from the colonel. "Ah, yes, to be sure! to have you hanged. Quite right! quite right!") "Is it to make me a reformed character, to teach me a trade, to wash my blood-stains off me delicately, and set me up again in society, looking as clean as the best of you? No!" ("No!" from the compliant colonel.) "Your object is clearly to prevent me from murdering any more of you. And how are you to do that most completely and certainly? Can you accomplish your object by perpetual imprisonment?" ("Ah! I thought we should all agree about it at last," cries the colonel cheerfully. "Yes, yes—nothing else for it but perpetual imprisonment, as you say.") "By perpetual imprisonment? But men have broken out of prison." ("So they have," from the colonel.) "Men have killed their gaolers; and there you have the commission of that very second murder that you wanted to prevent." ("Quite right," from the compliant Talk-Stopper. "A second murder—dreadful! dreadful!") "Imprisonment is not your certain protective remedy, then, evidently. What is?"

"Hanging!!!" cries the colonel, with another bound in his chair, and a voice that can no longer be talked down. "Hanging, to be sure! I quite agree with you. Just what I said from the first. You have hit it, my dear sir. Hanging, as you say—hanging, by all manner of means!"

Has anybody ever met Colonel Hopkirk in society? And does anybody think that the Great Glib could possibly have held forth in the company of that persistently-compliant gentleman, as he is alleged, by his admiring biographer, to have held forth in the peculiar society of his own time? The thing is clearly impossible. Let us leave Glib, congratulating him on having died when the Hopkirks of these latter days were as yet hardly weaned; let us leave him, and ascertain how some other great talker might have got on in the society of some other modern obstructor of the flow of eloquent conversation.

I have just been reading the Life, Letters, Labours, Opinions, and Table-Talk of the matchless Mr. Oily; edited—as to the Life, by his mother-in-law; as to the Letters, by his grand-daughter's husband; and as to the Labours, Opinions, and Table-Talk, by three of his intimate friends, who dined with him every other Sunday throughout the whole of his long and distinguished life. It is a very pretty book in a great many volumes, with pleasing anecdotes—not only of the

eminent man himself, but of all his family connections as well. His shortest notes are preserved, and the shortest notes of others to him. "My dear O., how is your poor head? Yours, P." "My dear P., hotter than ever. Yours, O." And so on. Portraits of Oily, in infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, old age active, and old age infirm, concluding with a post-mortem mask, abound in the book—so do fac-similes of his handwriting, showing the curious modifications which it underwent when he occasionally exchanged a quill for a steel-pen. But it will be more to my present purpose to announce for the benefit of unfortunate people who have not yet read the Memoirs, that Oily was, as a matter of course, a delightful and incessant talker. He poured out words, and his audience imbibed the same perpetually three times a week from tea-time to past midnight. Women especially revelled in his conversation. They hung, so to speak, palpitating on his lips. All this is told me in the Memoirs at great length, and in several places; but not a word occurs anywhere tending to show that Oily ever met with the slightest interruption on any one of the thousand occasions when he held forth. In relation to him, as in relation to the Great Glib, I seem bound to infer that he was never staggered by an unexpected question, never affronted by a black sheep among the flock, in the shape of an inattentive listener, never silenced by some careless man capable of unconsciously cutting him short and starting another topic before he had half done with his own particular subject. I am bound to believe all this—and yet, when I look about me at society as it is constituted now, I could fill a room, at a day's notice, with people who would shut up the mouth of Oily before it had been open five minutes, quite as a matter of course, and without the remotest suspicion that they were misbehaving themselves in the slightest degree. What (I ask myself), to take only one example, and that from the fair sex—what would have become of Oily's delightful and incessant talk, if he had known my friend Mrs. Marblemug, and had taken her down to dinner in his enviable capacity of distinguished man?

Mrs. Marblemug has one subject of conversation—her own vices. On all other topics she is sarcastically indifferent and scornfully mute. General conversation she consequently never indulges in; but the person who sits next to her is sure to be interrupted as soon as he attracts her attention by talking to her, by receiving a confession of her vices—not made repentantly, or confusedly, or jocularly—but slowly declaimed with an ostentatious cynicism, with a hard eye, a hard voice, a hard—no, an adamantine—manner. In early youth, Mrs. Marblemug discovered that her business in life was to be eccentric and disagreeable, and she is one of the women of England who fulfils her mission.

I fancy I see the ever-flowing Oily sitting next to this lady at dinner, and innocently trying to make her hang on his lips like the rest of his tea-table harem. His conversation is reported by his affectionate biographers, as having been for the most part of the sweetly pastoral sort. I find that he drove that much-enduring subject, Nature, in his conversational car of triumph, longer and harder than most men. I see him, in my mind's eye, starting in his insinuating way from some parsley garnish round a dish of lobsters—confessing, in his rich, full, and yet low voice (vide Memoirs) that garnish delights him, because his favourite colour is green—and so getting easily on to the fields, the great subject from which he always got his largest conversational crop. I imagine his tongue to be, as it were, cutting its first preliminary capers on the grass for the benefit of Mrs. Marblemug; and I hear that calmly-brazen lady throw him flat on his back by the utterance of some such words as these:

"Mr. Oily, I ought to have told you, perhaps, that I hate the fields: I think Nature in general something eminently disagreeable—the country, in short, quite odious. If you ask me why, I can't tell you. I know I'm wrong; but hating Nature is one of my vices."

Mr. Oily eloquently remonstrates. Mrs. Marblemug only says, "Yes, very likely—but, you see, it's one of my vices." Mr. Oily tries a dexterous compliment. Mrs. Marblemug only answers, "Don't!—I see through that. It's wrong in me to see through compliments, being a woman, I know. But I can't help seeing through them, and saying I do. That's another of my vices." Mr. Oily shifts the subject to Literature, and thence, gently but surely, to his own books—his second great topic after the fields. Mrs. Marblemug lets him go on, because she has something to finish on her plate—then lays down her knife and fork—looks at him with a kind of wondering indifference, and breaks into his next sentence thus:—

"I'm afraid I don't seem quite so much interested as I know I ought to be," she says; "but I should have told you, perhaps, when we first sat down, that I have given up reading."

"Given up reading!" exclaims Mr. Oily, thunderstruck by the monstrous confession. "You mean only the trash that has come into vogue lately; the morbid, unhealthy——"

"No, not at all," rejoins Mrs. Marblemug. "If I read anything, it would be morbid literature. My taste is unhealthy. That's another of my vices."

"My dear madam, you amaze—you alarm me,—you do indeed!" cries Mr. Oily, waving his hand in graceful deprecation and polite horror.

"Don't," says Mrs. Marblemug; "you'll knock down some of the wine-glasses, and hurt yourself. You had better keep your hand quiet,—you had, indeed. No; I have given up reading, because all books do me harm—the best—the healthiest. Your books even, I suppose, I ought to say; but I can't, because I see through compliments, and despise my own, of course, as much as other people's! Suppose, we say, I don't read, because books do me harm—and leave it there. The thing is not worth pursuing. You think it is? Well, then, books do me harm, because they increase my tendency to be envious (one of my worst vices). The better the book is, the more I hate the man for being clever enough to write it—so much cleverer than me, you know, who couldn't write it at all. I believe you call that Envy. Whatever it is, it has been one of my vices from a child. No, no wine—a little water. I think wine nasty, that's another of my vices—or, no, perhaps, that is only one of my misfortunes. Thank you. I wish I could talk to you about books; but I really can't read them—they make me so envious."

Perhaps Oily (who, as I infer from certain passages in his Memoirs, could be a sufficiently dogged and resolute man on occasions when his dignity was in danger) still valiantly declines to submit and be silent, and, shifting his ground, endeavours to draw Mrs. Marblemug out by asking her questions. The new effort, however, avails him nothing. Do what he will, he is always met and worsted by the lady in the same, quiet, easy, indifferent way; and, sooner or later, even his distinguished mouth is muzzled by Mrs. Marblemug, like the mouths of all the degenerate talkers of my own time whom I have ever seen in contact with her. Are Mr. Oily's biographers not to be depended on, or can it really be the fact that, in the course of all his long conversational career, that illustrious man never once met with a check in the shape of a Mrs. Marblemug? I have no tender prepossession in favour of the lady; but when I reflect on the character of Mr. Oily, as exhibited in his Memoirs, I am almost inclined to regret that he and Mrs. Marblemug never met. In relation to some people, I involuntarily regard her as a dose of strong moral physic; and I really think she might have done my distinguished countryman some permanent good.

To take another instance, there is the case of the once-brilliant social luminary, Mr. Endless—extinguished, unfortunately for the new generation, about the time when we were most of us only little boys and girls.

What a talker this sparkling creature must have been, if one may judge by that

racy anonymous publication (racy was, I think, the word chiefly used in reviewing the book by the critics of the period), Evenings with Endless, by A Constant Listener! "I could hardly believe," I remember the Listener writes, "that the world was the same after Endless had flashed out of this mortal scene. It was morning while he lived—it was twilight, or worse, when he died. I was very intimate with him. Often has the hand that writes these trembling lines smacked that familiar back—often have those thrilling and matchless accents syllabled the fond diminutive of my Christian name. It was not so much that his talk was ceaseless (though that is something), as that it moved incessantly over all topics from heaven to earth. His variety of subject was the most amazing part of this amazing man. His fertility of allusion to topics of the past and present alike, was truly inexhaustible. He hopped, he skipped, he fluttered, he swooped from theme to theme. The butterfly in the garden, the bee in the flower-bed, the changes of the kaleidoscope, the sun and shower of an April morning, are but faint emblems of him." With much more to the same eloquent purpose; but not a word from the first page to the last to hint even that Endless was ever brought to a full stop, on any single occasion, by any one of the hundreds of enchanted listeners before whom he figured in his wonderful performances with the tongue from morning to night.

And yet, there must surely have been Talk-Stoppers in the world, in the time of the brilliant Endless—talk-stoppers, in all probability, possessing characteristics similar to those now displayed in society by my exasperating connection by marriage, Mr. Spoke Wheeler.

It is impossible to say what the consequences might have been if my relative and Mr. Endless had ever come together. Mr. Spoke Wheeler is one of those men—a large class, as it appears to me—who *will* talk, and who have nothing whatever in the way of a subject of their own to talk about. His constant practice is to lie silently in ambush for subjects started by other people; to take them forthwith from their rightful owners; turn them coolly to his own uses; and then cunningly wait again for the next topic, belonging to somebody else, that passes within his reach. It is useless to give up, and leave him to take the lead—he invariably gives up, too, and declines the honour. It is useless to start once more, seeing him apparently silenced—he becomes talkative again the moment you offer him the chance of seizing on your new subject—disposes of it without the slightest fancy, taste, or novelty of handling, in a moment—then relapses into utter speechlessness as soon as he has silenced the rest of the company by taking their topic away from them. Wherever he goes, he commits this social atrocity with

the most perfect innocence and the most provoking good humour, for he firmly believes in himself as one of the most entertaining men who ever crossed a drawing-room or caroused at a dinner-table.

Imagine Mr. Spoke Wheeler getting an invitation to one of those brilliant suppers which assisted in making the evenings of the sparkling Endless so attractive to his friends and admirers. See him sitting modestly at the table with every appearance in his face and manner of being the most persistent and reliable of listeners. Endless takes the measure of his man, as he too confidently believes, in one bright glance—thinks to himself, Here is a new worshipper to astonish; here is the conveniently dense and taciturn human pedestal on which I can stand to let off my fireworks—plunges his knife and fork, gaily hospitable, into the dish before him (let us say a turkey and truffles, for Endless is a gastronome as well as a wit), and starts off with one of those "fertile allusions," for which he was so famous.

"I never carve turkey without thinking of what Madame de Pompadour said to Louis the Fifteenth," Endless begins in his most off-hand manner. "I refer to the time when the superb Frenchwoman first came to court, and the star of the fair Chateauroux waned before her. Who remembers what the Pompadour said when the king insisted on carving the turkey?"

Before the company can beg Endless, as usual, to remember for them, Mr. Spoke Wheeler starts into life and seizes the subject.

"What a vicious state of society it was in the time of Madame de Pompadour!" he says, with moral severity. "Who can wonder that it led to the French Revolution?"

Endless feels that his first effort for the evening is nipped in the bud, and that the new guest is not to be depended on as a listener. He, however, waits politely, and every one else waits politely to hear something more about the French Revolution. Mr. Spoke Wheeler has not another word to say. He has snatched his subject—has exhausted it—and is now waiting, with an expectant smile on his face, to lay hands on another. Disastrous silence reigns, until Mr. Endless, as host and wit, launches a new topic in despair.

"Don't forget the salad, gentlemen," he exclaims. "The emblem, as I always fancy, of human life. The sharp vinegar corrected by the soft oil, just as the misfortune of one day is compensated by the luck of another. Heigho! let moralists lecture as they will, what a true gambler's existence ours is, by the very

nature of it! Love, fame, wealth, are the stakes we all play for; the world is the table; Death keeps the house, and Destiny shuffles the cards. According to my definition, gentlemen, man is a gambling animal, and woman——" Endless pauses for a moment, and lifts the glass to his lips to give himself a bacchanalian air before he amazes the company with a torrent of eloquence on the subject of woman. Unhappy man! in that one moment Mr. Spoke Wheeler seizes on his host's brilliant gambling metaphor, and runs away with it as his own property immediately.

"The worst of gambling," he says, with a look of ominous wisdom, "is, that when once a man takes to it, he can never be got to give it up again. It always ends in ruin. I know a man whose son is in the Fleet, and whose daughter is a maid-of-all-work at a lodging-house. The poor devil himself once had twenty thousand pounds, and he now picks up a living by writing begging-letters. All through gambling. Degrading vice, certainly; ruins a man's temper and health, too, as well as his property. Ah! a very degrading vice—very much so indeed!"

"I am afraid, my dear sir, you have no vices," says Endless, getting angry and sarcastic as a fresh pause follows this undeniable commonplace. "The bottle stands with you. Do you abjure even that most amiable of human failings—the cheerful glass? Ha!" exclaims Endless, seeing that his guest is going to speak again, and vainly imagining that he can cut him short this time. "Ha! what a debt we owe to the first man who discovered the true use of the grape! How drunk he must have got in making his immortal preliminary experiments! How often his wife must have begged him to consider his health and his respectability, and give up all further investigations! How he must have shocked his family with perpetual hiccups, and puzzled the medical men of the period with incurable morning headaches! To the health of that marvellous, that magnificent, that inestimable human being, the first Toper in the world! The patriarchal Bacchus quaffing in his antediluvian vineyard! What a picture, gentlemen; what a subject for our artists! Scumble, my dear friend," continues Endless, breathlessly, feeling that Mr. Spoke Wheeler has got his topic again, and anxious to secure assistance in preventing that persistent gentleman from making any use of the stolen property—"Scumble, your pencil alone is worthy of the subject. Tell us, my prince of painters, how would you treat it?"

The prince of painters has his mouth full of turkey, and looks more puzzled than flattered by this complimentary appeal. He hesitates, and Mr. Spoke Wheeler darts into the conversation on the subject of drunkenness, forthwith.

"I'll tell you what," says the Talk-Stopper, "we may all joke about drunkenness as much as we please—I'm no saint, and I like a joke as well as anybody—but it's a deuced serious thing for all that. Seven-tenths of the crime in this country is owing to drunkenness; and of all the incurable diseases that baffle the doctors, delirium tremens is (next to hydrophobia) one of the worst. I like a cheerful glass myself—and this is uncommonly good wine we are drinking now—but there's more than you think for to be said on the temperance side of the question; there is, indeed!"

Will even the most indiscriminate of the surviving admirers of Endless, and of the great talkers generally, venture to assert that he, or they, could have shown off with the slightest approach to success in the company of Mr. Spoke Wheeler, or of Mrs. Marblemug, or of Colonel Hopkirk, or of any of the other dozens on dozens of notorious talk-stoppers whose characters I refrain from troubling the reader with? Surely not! Surely I have quoted examples enough to prove the correctness of my theory, that the days when the eminent professors of the Art of Conversation could be sure of perpetually-attentive audiences, have gone by. Instead of mourning over the loss of the great talkers, we ought to feel relieved (if we have any real regard for them, which I sometimes doubt) by their timely departure from the scene. Between the members of the modern generation who would not have listened to them, the members who could not have listened to them, and the members who would have confused, interrupted, and cut them short, what extremities of compulsory silence they must have undergone if they had lasted until our time! Our case may be lamentable enough in not having heard them; but how much worse would theirs be if they came back to the world now, and tried to show us how they won their reputations!

SOCIAL GRIEVANCES.—I.
A JOURNEY IN SEARCH OF NOTHING.

[Communicated by An Anonymous Traveller.]

NOTE THE FIRST. TRYING FOR QUIET.

"Yes," said the doctor, pressing the tips of his fingers with a tremulous firmness on my pulse, and looking straight forward into the pupils of my eyes, "yes, I see: the symptoms all point unmistakably towards one conclusion—Brain. My dear sir, you have been working too hard; you have been following the dangerous example of the rest of the world in this age of business and bustle. Your brain is over-taxed—that is your complaint. You must let it rest—there is your remedy."

"You mean," I said, "that I must keep quiet, and do Nothing?"

"Precisely so," replied the doctor. "You must not read or write; you must abstain from allowing yourself to be excited by society; you must have no annoyances; you must feel no anxieties; you must not think; you must be neither elated nor depressed; you must keep early hours and take an occasional tonic, with moderate exercise, and a nourishing but not too full a diet—above all, as perfect repose is essential to your restoration, you must go away into the country, taking any direction you please, and living just as you like, so long as you are quiet and so long as you do Nothing."

"I presume he is not to go away into the country without ME?" said my wife, who was present at the interview.

"Certainly not," rejoined the doctor with an acquiescent bow. "I look to your influence, my dear madam, to encourage our patient to follow my directions. It is unnecessary to repeat them, they are so extremely simple and easy to carry out. I will answer for your husband's recovery if he will but remember that he has now only two objects in life—to keep quiet, and to do Nothing."

My wife is a woman of business habits. As soon as the doctor had taken his leave, she produced her pocket-book, and made a brief abstract of his directions, for our future guidance. I looked over her shoulder and observed that the entry

for our future guidance. I looked over her shoulder and observed that the entry ran thus:—

"Rules for dear William's restoration to health. No reading; no writing; no excitement; no annoyance; no anxiety; no thinking. Tonic. No elation of spirits. Nice dinners. No depression of spirits. Dear William to take little walks (with me). To go to bed early. To get up early. N.B.—Keep him quiet. Mem.: Mind he does Nothing."

Mind I do Nothing? No need to mind about that. I have not had a holiday since I was a boy. Oh, blessed Idleness, after the years of merciless industry that have separated us, are you and I to be brought together again at last? Oh, my weary right hand, are you really to ache no longer with driving the ceaseless pen? May I, indeed, put you in my pocket, and let you rest there, indolently, for hours together? Yes! for I am now at last to begin—doing Nothing. Delightful task that performs itself! Welcome responsibility that carries its weight away smoothly on its own shoulders!

These thoughts shine in pleasantly on my mind after the doctor has taken his departure, and diffuse an easy gaiety over my spirits when my wife and I set forth, the next day, for the country. We are not going the round of the noisy watering-places, nor is it our intention to accept any invitations to join the circles assembled by festive country friends. My wife, guided solely by the abstract of the doctor's directions in her pocket-book, has decided that the only way to keep me absolutely quiet, and to make sure of my doing Nothing, is to take me to some pretty retired village and to put me up at a little primitive, unsophisticated country-inn. I offer no objection to this project—not because I have no will of my own and am not master of all my movements—but only because I happen to agree with my wife. Considering what a very independent man I am naturally, it has sometimes struck me, as a rather remarkable circumstance, that I always do agree with her.

We find the pretty, retired village. A charming place, full of thatched cottages with creepers at the doors, like the first easy lessons in drawing-masters' copy-books. We find the unsophisticated inn—just the sort of house that the novelists are so fond of writing about, with the snowy curtains and the sheets perfumed by lavender, and the matronly landlady and the amusing signpost. This Elysium is called the Nag's Head. Can the Nag's Head accommodate us? Yes, with a delightful bedroom and a sweet parlour. My wife takes off her bonnet and makes herself at home, directly. She nods her head at me with a look of triumph. Yes, dear, on this occasion also I quite agree with you. Here we have found perfect

quiet; here we may make sure of obeying the doctor's orders; here we have, at last, discovered—Nothing.

Nothing! Did I say Nothing? We arrive at the Nag's Head late in the evening, have our tea, go to bed tired with our journey, sleep delightfully till about three o'clock in the morning, and, at that hour, begin to discover that there are actually noises even in this remote country seclusion. They keep fowls at the Nag's Head; and, at three o'clock, the cock begins to crow and the hens to cluck under our window. Pastoral, my dear, and suggestive of eggs for breakfast whose reputation is above suspicion; but I wish these cheerful fowls did not wake quite so early. Are there, likewise, dogs, love, at the Nag's Head, and are they trying to bark down the crowing and clucking of the cheerful fowls? I should wish to guard myself against the possibility of making a mistake, but I think I hear three dogs. A shrill dog who barks rapidly; a melancholy dog who howls monotonously; and a hoarse dog who emits barks at intervals like minute guns. Is this going on long? Apparently it is. My dear, if you will refer to your pocket-book, I think you will find that the doctor recommended early hours. We will not be fretful and complain of having our morning sleep disturbed; we will be contented, and will only say that it is time to get up.

Breakfast. Delicious meal, let us linger over it as long as we can,—let us linger, if possible, till the drowsy midday tranquillity begins to sink over this secluded village.

Strange! but now I think of it again, do I, or do I not, hear an incessant hammering over the way? No manufacture is carried on in this peaceful place, no new houses are being built; and yet there is such a hammering that, if I shut my eyes, I can almost fancy myself in the neighbourhood of a dock-yard. Waggons, too. Why does a waggon which makes so little noise in London, make so much noise here? Is the dust on the road detonating powder, that goes off with a report at every turn of the heavy wheels? Does the waggoner crack his whip or fire a pistol to encourage his horses? Children, next. Only five of them, and they have not been able to settle for the last half hour what game they shall play at. On two points alone do they appear to be unanimous—they are all agreed on making a noise and on stopping to make it under our window. I think I am in some danger of forgetting one of the doctor's directions: I rather fancy I am actually allowing myself to be annoyed.

Let us take a turn in the garden, at the back of the house. Dogs again. The yard is on one side of the garden. Every time our walk takes us near it, the shrill dog

barks and the hoarse dog growls. The doctor tells me to have no anxieties. I am suffering devouring anxieties. These dogs may break loose and fly at us, for anything I know to the contrary, at a moment's notice. What shall I do? Give myself a drop of tonic? or escape for a few hours from the perpetual noises of this retired spot by taking a drive? My wife says, take a drive. I think I have already mentioned that I invariably agree with my wife.

The drive is successful in procuring us a little quiet. My directions to the coachman are to take us where he pleases, so long as he keeps away from secluded villages. We suffer much jolting in by-lanes, and encounter a great variety of bad smells. But a bad smell is a noiseless nuisance, and I am ready to put up with it patiently. Towards dinner-time we return to our inn. Meat, vegetables, pudding, all excellent, clean and perfectly cooked. As good a dinner as I wish ever to eat;—shall I get a little nap after it? The fowls, the dogs, the hammer, the children, the waggons, are quiet at last. Is there anything else left to make a noise? Yes: there is the working population of the place.

It is getting on towards evening, and the sons of labour are assembling on the benches placed outside the inn to drink. What a delightful scene they would make of this homely every-day event on the stage! How the simple creatures would clink their tin mugs, and drink each other's healths, and laugh joyously in chorus! How the peasant maidens would come tripping on the scene and lure the men tenderly to the dance! Where are the pipe and tabour that I have seen in so many pictures; where the simple songs that I have read about in so many poems? What do I hear as I listen, prone on the sofa, to the evening gathering of the rustic throng? Oaths,—nothing, on my word of honour, but oaths! I look out, and see gangs of cadaverous savages, drinking gloomily from brown mugs, and swearing at each other every time they open their lips. Never in any large town, at home or abroad, have I been exposed to such an incessant fire of unprintable words as now assail my ears in this primitive village. No man can drink to another without swearing at him first. No man can ask a question without adding a mark of interrogation at the end in the shape of an oath. Whether they quarrel (which they do for the most part), or whether they agree; whether they talk of their troubles in this place or their good luck in that; whether they are telling a story, or proposing a toast, or giving an order, or finding fault with the beer, these men seem to be positively incapable of speaking without an allowance of at least five foul words for every one fair word that issues from their lips. English is reduced in their mouths to a brief vocabulary of all the vilest expressions in the language. This is an age of civilization; this is a Christian

country; opposite me I see a building with a spire, which is called, I believe, a church; past my window, not an hour since, there rattled a neat pony chaise with a gentleman inside, clad in glossy black broad cloth, and popularly known by the style and title of clergyman. And yet, under all these good influences, here sit twenty or thirty men whose ordinary table-talk is so outrageously beastly and blasphemous, that not one single sentence of it, though it lasted the whole evening, could be printed, as a specimen, for public inspection in these pages. When the intelligent foreigner comes to England, and when I tell him (as I am sure to do) that we are the most moral people in the universe, I will take good care that he does not set his foot in a secluded British village when the rural population is reposing over its mug of small-beer after the labours of the day.

I am not a squeamish person, neither is my wife, but the social intercourse of the villagers drives us out of our room, and sends us to take refuge at the back of the house. Do we gain anything by the change? Nothing whatever.

The back parlour, to which we have now retreated, looks out on a bowling-green; and there are more benches, more mugs of beer, more foul-mouthed villagers on the bowling-green. Immediately under our window is a bench and table for two, and on it are seated a drunken old man and a drunken old woman. The aged sot in trousers is offering marriage to the aged sot in petticoats, with frightful oaths of endearment. Never before did I imagine that swearing could be twisted to the purposes of courtship. Never before did I suppose that a man could make an offer of his hand by bellowing imprecations on his eyes, or that all the powers of the infernal regions could be appropriately summoned to bear witness to the beating of a lover's heart under the influence of the tender passion. I know it now, and I derive so little satisfaction from gaining the knowledge of it, that I determine on having the two intolerable old drunkards removed from the window, and sent to continue their cursing courtship elsewhere. The ostler is lounging about the bowling-green, scratching his bare brawny arms and yawning grimly in the mellow evening sunlight. I beckon to him, and ask him if he does not think those two old people have had beer enough? Yes, the ostler thinks they have. I inquire next if they can be removed from the premises, before their language gets worse, without the risk of making any great disturbance. The ostler says, Yes, they can, and calls to the potboy. When the potboy comes, he says, "Now then, Jack!" and snatches the table away from the two ribald old people without another word. The old man's pipe is on the table; he rises and staggers forward to possess himself of it; the old woman rises, too, to hold him by the arm for fear he should fall flat on his face. The moment they are off the

bench, the potboy snatches their seat away from behind them, and quietly joins the ostler who is carrying their table into the inn. None of the other drinkers laugh at this proceeding, or pay any attention to it; and the two intoxicated old people, left helpless on their legs, stagger away feebly without attracting the slightest notice. The neat stratagem which the ostler and the potboy have just performed, is evidently the customary and only possible mode of letting drinkers know when they have had enough at the Nag's Head. Where did those savage islanders live whose manners a certain sea-captain once upon a time described as no manners at all, and some of whose customs he reprobated as being very nasty? If I did not know that we are many miles distant from the coast, I should be almost disposed to suspect that the seafaring traveller whose opinion I have just quoted had been touching at the Nag's Head.

As it is impossible to snatch away all the tables and all the benches of all the company drinking and swearing in front of the house and behind it, I inquire of the ostler, the next time he comes near the window, at what time the tap closes? He tells me at eleven o'clock. It is hardly necessary to say that we put off going to bed until that time, when we retire for the night, drenched from head to foot, if I may so speak, in floods of bad language.

I cautiously put my head out of window, and see that the lights of the tap-room are really extinguished at the appointed time. I hear the drinkers oozing out grossly into the pure freshness of the summer night. They all growl together; they all go together. All? Sinner and sufferer that I am, I have been premature in arriving at that happy conclusion! Six choice spirits, with a social horror in their souls of going home to bed, prop themselves against the wall of the inn, and continue the evening's conversazione in the darkness. I hear them cursing at each other by name. We have Tom, Dick, and Sam, Jem, Bill, and Bob to enliven us under our window, after we are in bed. They begin improving each other's minds, as a matter of course, by quarrelling. Music follows and soothes the strife, in the shape of a local duet, sung by voices of vast compass, which soar in one note from howling bass to cracked treble. Yawning follows the duet; long, loud, weary yawning of all the company in chorus. This amusement over, Tom asks Dick for "baccer," and Dick denies that he has got any, and Tom tells him he lies, and Sam strikes in and says, "No, he doan't," and Jem tells Sam he lies, and Bill tells him that if he was Sam he would punch Jem's head, and Bob, apparently snuffing the battle from afar off and not liking the scent of it, shouts suddenly a pacific good night in the distance. The farewell salutation seems to quiet the gathering storm. They all roar responsive to the good-night roar of Bob.

A moment of silence, actually a moment, follows—then a repetition of the long, loud, weary yawning in chorus—then another moment of silence—then Jem suddenly shouts to the retiring Bob to come back—Bob refuses, softened by distance—Jem insists, and his four friends join him—Bob relents and returns. A shriek of indignation, far down the village—Bob's wife has her window open, and has heard him consent to go back to his friends. Hearty laughter from Bob's five friends; screams from Bob's wife; articulate screams, informing Bob that she will "cut his liver out," if he does not come home directly. Answering curses from Bob; he will "mash" his wife, if she does not hold her tongue. A song in chorus from Bob's five friends. Outraged by this time past all endurance, I spring out of bed and seize the water-jug. My wife, having the doctor's directions ever present to her mind, implores me in heart-rending tones to remember that I am under strict medical orders not to excite myself. I pay no heed to her remonstrances, and advance to the window with the jug. I pause before I empty the water on the heads of the assembly beneath; I pause, and hear—O! most melodious, most welcome of sounds!—the sudden fall of rain. The merciful sky has anticipated me; the "clerk of the weather" has been struck by my idea of dispersing the Nag's Head Night Club, by water. By the time I have put down the jug and got back to bed, silence—primeval silence, the first, the foremost of all earthly influences—falls sweetly over our tavern at last.

That night, before sinking wearily to rest, I have once more the satisfaction of agreeing with my wife. Dear and admirable woman! she proposes to leave this secluded village the first thing to-morrow morning. Never did I share her opinion more cordially than I share it now. Instead of keeping myself composed, I have been living in a region of perpetual disturbance; and, as for doing nothing, my mind has been so agitated and perturbed that I have not even had time to think about it. We will go, love—as you so sensibly suggest—we will go the first thing in the morning, to any place you like, so long as it is large enough to swallow up small sounds. Where, over all the surface of this noisy earth, the blessing of tranquillity may be found, I know not; but this I do know: a secluded English village is the very last place towards which any man should think of turning his steps, if the main object of his walk through life is to discover quiet.

NOTE THE SECOND. DISCOVERY OF—NOTHING.

The next morning we continue our journey in the direction of the coast, and arrive at a large watering-place.

Observing that it is, in every respect, as unlike the secluded village as possible,

we resolve to take up our abode in this populous and perfectly tranquil town. We get a lodging fronting the sea. There are noises about us—various and loud noises, as I should have thought, if I had not just come from a village; but everything is comparative, and, after the past experience I have gone through, I find our new place of abode quiet enough to suit the moderate expectations which I have now learnt to form on the subject of getting peace in this world. Here I can at least think almost uninterruptedly of the doctor's orders. Here I may surely begin my new life, and enjoy the luxury of doing Nothing.

I suppose it *is* a luxury; and yet so perverse is man, I hardly know whether I am not beginning to find it something more like a hardship at the very outset. Perhaps my busy and active life has unfitted me for a due appreciation of the happiness of being idle. Perhaps I am naturally of a restless, feverish constitution. However that may be, it is certain that on the first day when I seriously determine to do nothing, I fail to find in the execution of my resolution such supreme comfort as I had anticipated. I try hard to fight against the conviction (which will steal on me, nevertheless) that I have only changed one kind of hard work for another that is harder. I try to persuade myself that time does not hang at all heavily on my hands, and that I am happier with nothing to do than ever I was with a long day's work before me. Do I succeed or do I fail in this meritorious attempt? Let me write down the results of my first day's experience of the Art of doing Nothing, and let the reader settle the question for me.

Breakfast at nine o'clock, so as not to make too long a day of it. Among the other things on the table are shrimps. I find myself liking shrimps for an entirely new reason—they take such a long time to eat. Well, breakfast is over at last: I have had quite enough, and yet I am gluttonously sorry when the table is cleared. If I were in health I should now go to my desk, or take up a book. But I am out of health, and I must do Nothing. Suppose I look out of window? I hope that is idle enough to begin with.

The sea—yes, yes, the sea! Very large, very grey, very calm; very calm, very grey, very large. Anything else about the sea? Nothing else about the sea.

Yes—ships. One big ship in front, two little ships behind. (What time shall we have dinner, my dear? At five? Certainly at five!) One big ship in front, two little ships behind. Nothing more to see? Nothing.

Let me look back into the room, and study the subjects of these prints on the walls. First print:—Death of the Earl of Chatham in the House of Lords, after Copley, R.A. Just so. Curious idea this picture suggests of the uniformity of personal appearance which must have distinguished the Peers in the last century. Here is a house full of noble lords, and each one of them is exactly like the other. Every noble lord is tall, every noble lord is portly, every noble lord has a long receding forehead, and a majestic Roman nose. Odd; and leading to reflections on the physical changes that must have passed over the peerage of the present day, in which I might respectfully indulge, if the doctor had not ordered me to abstain from thinking.

Circumstanced as I am, I must mournfully dismiss the death of the Earl of Chatham, and pass from the work of Copley, R.A., to the other prints on the walls. Dear, dear me! Now I look again, there is nothing to pass to. There are only two other prints, and they are both classical landscapes. Deteriorated as the present condition of my faculties may be, my mind has not sunk yet to the level of Classical Landscape. I have still sense enough left to disbelieve in Claude and Poussin as painters of Italian scenery. Let me turn from the classical counterfeit to the modern reality. Let me look again at the sea.

Just as large, just as grey, just as calm as ever. Any more ships? No; still the one big ship in front; still the two little ships behind. They have not altered their relative positions the least in the world. How long is it to dinner-time? Six hours and a quarter. What on earth am I to do? Nothing.

Suppose I go and take a little walk? (No, dear, I will not tire myself; I will come back quite fresh to take you out in the afternoon.) Well, which way shall I go, now I am on the door-step? There are two walks in this place. First walk, along the cliff westward; second walk, along the cliff eastward. Which direction shall I take? I am naturally one of the most decided men in the world; but doing nothing seems to have deprived me already of my usual resolute strength of will. I will toss up for it. Heads, westward; tails, eastward. Heads! Ought this to be considered conclusive? or shall I begin again, and try the best of three? I will try the best of three, because it takes up more time. Heads, tails, heads! Westward still. Surely this is destiny. Or can it be that doing nothing has made me superstitious as well as irresolute? Never mind; I will go westward, and see what happens.

I saunter along the path by the iron railings; then down a little dip, at the bottom of which there is a seat overlooking a ship-builder's yard. Close under me is a

small coasting-vessel on the slips for repair. Nobody on board, but one old man at work. At work, did I say? Oh, happy chance! This aged repairer of ships is the very man, of all others, whom I had most need of meeting, the very man to help me in my present emergency. Before I have looked at him two minutes, I feel that I am in the presence of a great professor of the art of doing nothing. Towards this sage, to listen to his precepts and profit by his example, did destiny gently urge me, when I tossed up to decide between eastward and westward. Let me watch his proceedings; let me learn how to idle systematically by observing the actions of this venerable man.

He is sitting on the left side of the vessel when I first look at him. In one hand he holds a crooked nail; in the other, a hammer. He coughs slowly, and looks out to sea; he sighs slowly, and looks back towards the land; he rises slowly, and surveys the deck of the vessel; he stoops slowly, and picks up a flat bit of iron, and puts it on the bulwark, and places the crooked nail upon it, and then sits down and looks at the effect of the arrangement so far. When he has had enough of the arrangement, he gives the sea a turn again, then the land. After that, he steps back a little and looks at the hammer, weighs it gently in his hand, moistens his hand, advances to the crooked nail on the bit of iron, groans softly to himself and shakes his head as he looks at it, administers three deliberate taps with the hammer, to straighten it, finds that he does not succeed to his mind; again groans softly, again shakes his head, again sits down and rests himself on the left side of the vessel. Since I first looked at him I have timed him by my watch: he has killed a quarter of an hour over that one crooked nail, and he has not straightened it yet! Wonderful man, can I ever hope to rival him? Will he condescend to talk to me? Stay! I am not free to try him; the doctor has told me not to excite myself with society; all communion of mind between me and this finished and perfect idler is, I fear, prohibited. Better to walk on, and come back, and look at him again.

I walk on and sit down; walk on a little farther and sit down again; walk on for the third time, sit down for the third time, and still there is always the cliff on one side of me, and the one big ship and the two little ships on the other. I retrace my steps, occupying as much time as I possibly can in getting back to the seat above the coasting-vessel. Where is my old friend, my esteemed professor, my bright and shining example in the difficult art of doing nothing? Sitting on the right side of the vessel this time, with the bit of flat iron on the right side also, with the hammer still in his hand, and, as I live, with the crooked nail not straightened yet! I observe this, and turn away quickly with despair in my heart.

How can I, a tyro Do-Nothing, expect to imitate that consummate old man? It is vain to hope for success here—vain to hope for anything but dinner-time. How many hours more? Four. If I return home now, how shall I go on doing nothing? Lunch, perhaps, will help me a little. Quite so! Let us say a glass of old ale and a biscuit. I should like to add shrimps—if I were not afraid of my wife's disapprobation—merely for the purpose of trying if I could not treat them, as my old friend of the coasting-vessel treated the crooked nail.

Three hours and a half to dinner-time. I have had my biscuit and my glass of old ale. Not being accustomed to malt liquor in the middle of the day, my lunch has fuddled me. There is a faint singing in my ears, an intense sleepiness in my eyelids, a genial warmth about my stomach, and a sensation in my head as if the brains had oozed out of me and the cavity of my skull was stuffed with cotton-wool steeped in laudanum. Not an unpleasant feeling altogether. I am not anxious; I think of nothing. I have a stolid power of staring immovably out of window at the one big ship and the two little ships, which I had not hitherto given myself credit for possessing. If my wife would only push an easy-chair up close behind me, I could sink back in it and go to sleep; but she will do nothing of the sort. She is putting on her bonnet: it is the hour of the afternoon at which we are to take each other out fondly, for our little walk.

The company at the watering-place is taking its little walk also at this time. But for the genial influence of the strong ale, I should now be making my observations and flying in the face of the doctor's orders by allowing my mind to be occupied. As it is, I march along slowly, lost in a solemn trance of beer.

One circumstance only, during our walk, is prominent enough to attract my sleepy attention. I just contrive to observe, with as much surprise and regret as I am capable of feeling at the present moment, that my wife apparently hates all the women we meet, and that all the women we meet, seem, judging by their looks, to return the compliment by hating my wife. We pass an infinite number of girls, all more or less plump, all more or less healthy, all more or less overshadowed by eccentric sea-side hats; and my wife will not allow that any one of these young creatures is even tolerably pretty. The young creatures on their side, look so disparagingly at my wife's bonnet and gown, that I should feel uneasy about the propriety of her costume, if I were not under the comforting influence of the strong ale. What is the meaning of this unpleasant want of harmony among the members of the fair sex? Does one woman hate another woman for being a woman—is that it? How shocking if it is! I have no inclination to disparage other men whom I meet on my walk. Other men cast no

disdainful looks on me. We lords of the creation are quite content to be handsome and attractive in our various ways, without snappishly contesting the palm of beauty with one another. Why cannot the women follow our meritorious example? Will any one solve this curious problem in social morals? Doctor's orders forbid me from attempting the intellectual feat. The dire necessity of doing nothing narrows me to one subject of mental contemplation—the dinner-hour. How long is it—now we have returned from our walk—to that time? Two hours and a quarter. I can't look out of window again, for I know by instinct that the three ships and the calm grey sea are still lying in wait for me. I can't heave a patriot's sigh once more over the "Death of the Earl of Chatham." I am too tired to go out and see how the old man of the coasting-vessel is getting on with the crooked nail. In short, I am driven to my last refuge. I must take a nap.

The nap lasts more than an hour. Its results may be all summed up in one significant and dreadful word—Fidgets. I start from the sofa convulsively, and sit down bolt upright in a chair. My wife is opposite to me, calmly engaged over her work. It is an hour and five minutes to dinner-time. What am I to do? Shall I soothe the fidgets and soften my rugged nature by looking at my wife, to see how she gets on with her work?

She has got a strip of calico, or something of that sort, punched all over with little holes, and she is sewing round each little hole with her needle and thread. Monotonous, to a masculine mind. Surely the punching of the holes must be the pleasantest part of this sort of work? And that is done at the shop, is it, dear? How curious!

Does my wife lace too tight? I have never had leisure before to look at her so long and so attentively as I am looking now; I have been uncritically contented hitherto, to take her waist for granted. Now I have my doubts about it. I think the wife of my bosom is a little too much like an hour-glass. Does she digest? Good Heavens! In the existing state of her stays, how do I know whether she digests?

Then, as to her hair: I do not object to the dressing of it, but I think—strangely enough, for the first time since our marriage—that she uses too much bear's grease and bandoline. I see a thin rim of bandoline, shining just outside the line of hair against her temples, like varnish on a picture. This won't do—oh, dear, no—this won't do at all. Will her hands do? Certainly not! I discover, for the first time, that her hands won't do, either. I am mercifully ready to put up with their not being quite white enough, but what does the woman mean by having such round tips to her fingers? Why don't they taper? I always thought they did taper

until this moment. I begin to be dissatisfied with her; I begin to think my wife is not the charming woman I took her for. What is the matter with me? Am I looking at her with perceptions made morbid already by excessive idleness? Is this dreadful necessity of doing nothing, to end by sapping the foundations of my matrimonial tranquillity, and letting down my whole connubial edifice into the bottomless abyss of Doctors' Commons? Horrible!

The door of the room opens, and wakes me, as it were, from the hideous dream in which my wife's individuality has been entirely altered to my eyes. It is only half an hour to dinner; and the servant has come in to lay the cloth. In the presence of the great event of the day I feel myself again. Once more I believe in the natural slimness of my wife's waist; once more I am contented with the tops of her fingers. Now at last, I see my way to bed-time. Assuming that we can make the dinner last two hours; assuming that I can get another nap after it; assuming——

No! I can assume nothing more, for I am really ashamed to complete the degrading picture of myself which my pen has been painting up to this time. Enough has been written—more than enough, I fear—to show how completely I have failed in my first day's attempt at doing Nothing. The hardest labour I ever had to get through, was not so difficult to contend with as this enforced idleness. Never again will I murmur under the wholesome necessities of work. Never again—if I can only succeed in getting well—will a day of doing nothing be counted as pleasant holiday-time by me. I have stolen away at the dead of the night, in flat defiance of the doctor's directions, to relieve my unspeakable weariness by writing these lines. I cast them on the world as the brief personal narrative of a most unfortunate man. If I systematically disregard medical advice, I shall make myself ill. If I conscientiously obey it, how am I to get through to-morrow? I mustn't work, and I can't idle. Will anybody kindly tell me what I am to do?

NOOKS AND CORNERS OF HISTORY.

I.
A QUEEN'S REVENGE.

The name of Gustavus Adolphus, the faithful Protestant, the great general, and the good king of Sweden, has been long since rendered familiar to English readers of history. We all know how this renowned warrior and monarch was beloved by his soldiers and subjects, how successfully he fought through a long and terrible war, and how nobly he died on the field of battle. With his death, however, the interest of the English reader in Swedish affairs seems to terminate. Those who have followed the narrative of his life carefully to the end, may remember that he left behind him an only child—a daughter named Christina. But of the character of this child, and of her extraordinary adventures after she grew to womanhood, the public in England is, for the most part, entirely ignorant. In the popular historical and romantic literature of France, Queen Christina is a notorious character. In the literature of this country, she has, hitherto, been allowed but little chance of making her way to the notice of the world at large.

And yet, the life of Christina is in itself a romance. At six years old she was Queen of Sweden, with the famous Oxenstiern for guardian. This great and good man governed the kingdom in her name until she had lived through her minority. Four years after her coronation she, of her own accord, abdicated her rights in favour of her cousin, Charles Gustavus. Young and beautiful, the most learned and most accomplished woman of her time, she resolutely turned her back on the throne of her inheritance, and set forth to wander through civilised Europe in the character of an independent traveller who was resolved to see all varieties of men and manners, to collect all the knowledge which the widest experience could give her, and to measure her mind boldly against the greatest minds of the age.

So far, the interest excited by her character and her adventures is of the most picturesquely-attractive kind. There is something strikingly new in the spectacle

of a young queen who prefers the pursuit of knowledge to the possession of a throne, and who barters a royal birthright for the privilege of being free. Unhappily, the portrait of Christina cannot be painted throughout in bright colours only. It must be recorded to her disgrace that, when her travels brought her to Rome, she abandoned the religion for which her father fought and died. And it must be admitted in the interests of truth, that she freed herself from other restraints besides the restraint of royalty. Mentally distinguished by her capacities, she was morally degraded by her vices and her crimes.

The events in the strange life of Christina—especially those connected with her actions in the character of a Queen-Errant—present ample materials for a biography, which might be regarded in England as a new contribution to our historical literature. One among the many extraordinary adventures which marked the Queen's wandering career, may be related in these pages as an episode in the history of her life which is complete in itself. The events of which the narrative is composed, throw light, in many ways, on the manners, habits, and opinions of a past age; and they can, moreover, be presented in the remarkable words of an eye-witness who beheld them two centuries ago.

The scene is the Palace of Fontainebleau, the time is the close of the year sixteen hundred and fifty-seven, the persons are the wandering Queen Christina; her grand equerry, the Marquis Monaldeschi; and Father Le Bel of the Convent of Fontainebleau, the witness whose testimony we are shortly about to cite.

Monaldeschi, as his name implies, was an Italian by birth. He was a handsome, accomplished man, refined in his manners, supple in his disposition, and possessed of the art of making himself eminently agreeable in the society of women. With these personal recommendations, he soon won his way to the favour of Queen Christina. Out of the long list of her lovers, not one of the many whom she encouraged caught so long and firm a hold of her capricious fancy as Monaldeschi. The intimacy between them probably took its rise, on her side at least, in as deep a sincerity of affection as it was in Christina's nature to feel. On the side of the Italian, the connection was prompted solely by ambition. As soon as he had reaped all the advantages of the position of chief favourite in the queen's court, he wearied of his royal mistress, and addressed his attentions secretly to a young Roman lady, whose youth and beauty powerfully attracted him, and whose fatal influence over his actions ultimately led to his ruin and his death.

After endeavouring to ingratiate himself with the Roman lady, in various ways, Monaldeschi found that the surest means of winning her favour lay in satisfying her malicious curiosity on the subject of the secret frailties of Queen Christina. He was not a man to be troubled by any scrupulous feelings of honour when the interests of his own intrigues happened to be concerned; and he shamelessly took advantage of the position that he held towards Christina, to commit breaches of confidence of the most meanly infamous kind. Not contented with placing in the possession of the Roman lady the series of the queen's letters to himself, containing secrets that she had revealed to him in the fullest confidence of his worthiness to be trusted, he wrote letters of his own to the new object of his addresses, in which he ridiculed Christina's fondness for him, and sarcastically described her smallest personal defects with a heartless effrontery which the most patient of women would have found it impossible to forgive. While he was thus privately betraying the confidence that had been reposed in him, he was publicly affecting the most unalterable attachment and the most sincere respect for the queen.

For some time this disgraceful deception proceeded successfully. But the hour of discovery was at hand, and the instrument of effecting it was a certain cardinal who was desirous of supplanting Monaldeschi in the queen's favour. The priest contrived to get possession of the whole correspondence which had been privately confided to the Roman lady, including, besides Christina's letters, the letters which Monaldeschi had written in ridicule of his royal mistress. The whole collection of documents was enclosed by the cardinal in one packet, and was presented by him, at a private audience, to the queen.

It is at this critical point of the story that the testimony of the eye-witness whom we propose to quote, begins. Father Le Bel was present at the terrible execution of the queen's vengeance on Monaldeschi, and was furnished with copies of the whole correspondence which had been abstracted from the possession of the Roman lady. Having been trusted with the secret, he is wisely and honourably silent throughout his narrative on the subject of Monaldeschi's offence. Such particulars of the Italian's baseness and ingratitude as have been presented here, have been gathered from the contradictory reports which were current at the time, and which have been preserved by the old French collectors of historical anecdotes. The details of the extraordinary punishment of Monaldeschi's offence which are now to follow, may be given in the words of Father Le Bel himself. The reader will understand that his narrative begins immediately after Christina's discovery of the perfidy of her favourite.

The sixth of November, sixteen hundred and fifty-seven (writes Father Le Bel), at a quarter past nine in the morning, Queen Christina of Sweden, being at that time lodged in the Royal Palace of Fontainebleau, sent one of her men servants to my convent, to obtain an interview with me. The messenger, on being admitted to my presence, inquired if I was the superior of the convent, and when I replied in the affirmative, informed me that I was expected to present myself immediately before the Queen of Sweden.

Fearful of keeping her Majesty waiting, I followed the man at once to the palace, without waiting to take any of my brethren from the convent with me.

After a little delay in the antechamber, I was shown into the Queen's room. She was alone; and I saw, by the expression of her face, as I respectfully begged to be favoured with her commands, that something was wrong. She hesitated for a moment; then told me, rather sharply, to follow her to a place where she might speak with the certainty of not being overheard. She led me into the Galerie des Cerfs, and, turning round on me suddenly, asked if we had ever met before. I informed her Majesty that I had once had the honour of presenting my respects to her; that she had received me graciously, and that there the interview had ended. She nodded her head and looked about her a little; then said, very abruptly, that I wore a dress (referring to my convent costume) which encouraged her to put perfect faith in my honour; and she desired me to promise beforehand that I would keep the secret with which she was about to entrust me as strictly as if I had heard it in the confessional. I answered respectfully that it was part of my sacred profession to be trusted with secrets; that I had never betrayed the private affairs of any one; and that I could answer for myself as worthy to be honoured by the confidence of a queen.

Upon this, her Majesty handed me a packet of papers sealed in three places, but having no superscription of any sort. She ordered me to keep it under lock and key, and to be prepared to give it her back again before any person in whose presence she might see fit to ask me for it. She further charged me to remember the day, the hour, and the place in which she had given me the packet; and with that last piece of advice she dismissed me. I left her alone in the gallery, walking slowly away from me, with her head drooping on her bosom, and her mind, as well as I could presume to judge, perturbed by anxious thoughts.[1]

On Saturday, the tenth of November, at one o'clock in the afternoon, I was sent for to the Palace again. I took the packet out of my private cabinet, feeling that I might be asked for it; and then followed the messenger as before. This time he

led me at once to the Galerie des Cerfs. The moment I entered it, he shut the door behind me with such extraordinary haste and violence, that I felt a little startled. As soon as I recovered myself, I saw her Majesty standing in the middle of the gallery, talking to one of the gentlemen of her Court, who was generally known by the name of The Marquis, and whom I soon ascertained to be the Marquis Monaldeschi, Grand Equerry of the Queen of Sweden. I approached her Majesty and made my bow—then stood before her, waiting until she should think proper to address me.

With a stern look on her face, and with a loud, clear, steady voice, she asked me, before the Marquis and before three other men who were also in the gallery, for the packet which she had confided to my care.

As she made that demand, two of the three men moved back a few paces, while the third, the captain of her guard, advanced rather nearer to her. I handed her back the packet. She looked at it thoughtfully for a little while; then opened it, and took out the letters and written papers which it contained, handed them to the Marquis Monaldeschi, and insisted on his reading them. When he had obeyed, she asked him, with the same stern look and the same steady voice, whether he had any knowledge of the documents which he had just been reading. The Marquis turned deadly pale, and answered that he had now read the papers referred to for the first time.

"Do you deny all knowledge of them?" said the Queen. "Answer me plainly, sir. Yes or no?"

The Marquis turned paler still. "I deny all knowledge of them," he said, in faint tones, with his eyes on the ground.

"Do you deny all knowledge of these too?" said the Queen, suddenly producing a second packet of manuscript from under her dress, and thrusting it in the Marquis's face.

He started, drew back a little, and answered not a word. The packet which the Queen had given to me contained copies only. The original papers were those which she had just thrust in the Marquis's face.

"Do you deny your own seal and your own handwriting?" she asked.

He murmured a few words, acknowledging both the seal and the handwriting to be his own, and added some phrases of excuse, in which he endeavoured to cast

the blame that attached to the writing of the letters on the shoulders of other persons. While he was speaking, the three men in attendance on the Queen silently closed round him.

Her Majesty heard him to the end. "You are a traitor," she said, and turned her back on him.

The three men, as she spoke those words, drew their swords.

The Marquis heard the clash of the blades against the scabbards, and, looking quickly round, saw the drawn swords behind him. He caught the Queen by the arm immediately, and drew her away with him, first into one corner of the gallery, then into another, entreating her in the most moving terms to listen to him, and to believe in the sincerity of his repentance. The Queen let him go on talking without showing the least sign of anger or impatience. Her colour never changed; the stern look never left her countenance. There was something awful in the clear, cold, deadly resolution which her eyes expressed while they rested on the Marquis's face.

At last she shook herself free from his grasp, still without betraying the slightest irritation. The three men with the drawn swords, who had followed the Marquis silently as he led the Queen from corner to corner of the gallery, now closed round him again, as soon as he was left standing alone. There was perfect silence for a minute or more. Then the Queen addressed herself to me.

"Father Le Bel," she said, "I charge you to bear witness that I treat this man with the strictest impartiality." She pointed, while she spoke, to the Marquis Monaldeschi with a little ebony riding-whip that she carried in her hand. "I offer that worthless traitor all the time he requires—more time than he has any right to ask for—to justify himself if he can."

The Marquis hearing these words, took some letters from a place of concealment in his dress, and gave them to the Queen, along with a small bunch of keys. He snatched these last from his pocket so quickly, that he drew out with them a few small silver coins which fell to the floor. As he addressed himself to the Queen again, she made a sign with her ebony riding-whip to the men with the drawn swords; and they retired towards one of the windows of the gallery. I, on my side, withdrew out of hearing. The conference which ensued between the Queen and the Marquis lasted nearly an hour. When it was over, her Majesty beckoned the men back again with the whip, and then approached the place where I was standing.

"Father Le Bel," she said, in her clear, ringing, resolute tones, "there is no need for me to remain here any longer. I leave that man," she pointed to the Marquis again, "to your care. Do all that you can for the good of his soul. He has failed to justify himself, and I doom him to die."

If I had heard sentence pronounced against myself, I could hardly have been more terrified than I was when the Queen uttered those last words. The Marquis heard them where he was standing, and flung himself at her feet. I dropped on my knees by his side, and entreated her to pardon him, or at least to visit his offence with some milder punishment than the punishment of death.

"I have said the words," she answered, addressing herself only to me; "and no power under Heaven shall make me unsay them. Many a man has been broken alive on the wheel for offences which were innocence itself, compared with the offence which this perjured traitor has committed against me. I have trusted him as I might have trusted a brother; he has infamously betrayed that trust; and I exercise my royal rights over the life of a traitor. Say no more to me. I tell you again, he is doomed to die."

With those words the Queen quitted the gallery, and left me alone with Monaldeschi and the three executioners who were waiting to kill him.

The unhappy man dropped on his knees at my feet, imploring me to follow the Queen, and make one more effort to obtain his pardon. Before I could answer a word, the three men surrounded him, held the points of their swords to his sides —without, however, actually touching him—and angrily recommended him to make his confession to me, without wasting any more time. I entreated them, with the tears in my eyes, to wait as long as they could, so as to give the Queen time to reflect, and, perhaps, to falter in her deadly intentions towards the Marquis. I succeeded in producing such an impression on the chief of the three men, that he left us, to obtain an interview with the Queen, and to ascertain if there was any change in her purpose. After a very short absence he came back, shaking his head.

"There is no hope for you," he said, addressing Monaldeschi. "Make your peace with Heaven. Prepare yourself to die!"

"Go to the Queen!" cried the Marquis, kneeling before me with clasped hands. "Go to the Queen yourself; make one more effort to save me! O, Father Le Bel, run one more risk—venture one last entreaty—before you leave me to die!"

"Will you wait till I come back?" I said to the three men.

"Will you wait till I come back?" I said to the three men.

"We will wait," they answered, and lowered their sword-points to the ground.

I found the Queen alone in her room, without the slightest appearance of agitation in her face or her manner. Nothing that I could say had the slightest effect on her. I adjured her by all that religion holds most sacred, to remember that the noblest privilege of any sovereign is the privilege of granting mercy; that the first of Christian duties is the duty of forgiving. She heard me unmoved. Seeing that entreaties were thrown away, I ventured, at my own proper hazard, on reminding her that she was not living now in her own kingdom of Sweden, but that she was the guest of the King of France, and lodged in one of his own palaces; and I boldly asked her if she had calculated the possible consequences of authorising the killing of one of her attendants inside the walls of Fontainebleau, without any preliminary form of trial, or any official notification of the offence that he had committed. She answered me coldly, that it was enough that she knew the unpardonable nature of the offence of which Monaldeschi had been guilty; that she stood in a perfectly independent position towards the King of France; that she was absolute mistress of her own actions, at all times and in all places; and that she was accountable to nobody under Heaven for her conduct towards her subjects and servants, over whose lives and liberties she possessed sovereign rights, which no consideration whatever should induce her to resign.

Fearful as I was of irritating her, I still ventured on reiterating my remonstrances. She cut them short by hastily signing to me to leave her.

As she dismissed me, I thought I saw a slight change pass over her face; and it occurred to me that she might not have been indisposed at that moment to grant some respite, if she could have done so without appearing to falter in her resolution, and without running the risk of letting Monaldeschi escape her. Before I passed the door, I attempted to take advantage of the disposition to relent which I fancied I had perceived in her; but she angrily reiterated the gesture of dismissal before I had spoken half-a-dozen words. With a heavy heart, I yielded to necessity, and left her.

On returning to the gallery, I found the three men standing round the Marquis, with their sword-points on the floor, exactly as I had left them.

"Is he to live or to die?" they asked when I came in.

There was no need for me to reply in words; my face answered the question. The

Marquis groaned heavily, but said nothing. I sat myself down on a stool, and beckoned to him to come to me, and begged him, as well as my terror and wretchedness would let me, to think of repentance, and to prepare for another world. He began his confession kneeling at my feet, with his head on my knees. After continuing it for some time, he suddenly started to his feet with a scream of terror. I contrived to quiet him, and to fix his thoughts again on heavenly things. He completed his confession, speaking sometimes in Latin, sometimes in French, sometimes in Italian, according as he could best explain himself in the agitation which now possessed him.

Just as he had concluded, the Queen's chaplain entered the gallery. Without waiting to receive absolution, the unhappy Marquis rushed away from me to the chaplain, and, still clinging desperately to the hope of life, besought him to intercede with the Queen. The two talked together in low tones, holding each other by the hand. When their conference was over, the chaplain left the gallery again, taking with him the chief of the three executioners who were appointed to carry out the Queen's deadly purpose. After a short absence, this man returned without the chaplain. "Get your absolution," he said briefly to the Marquis, "and make up your mind to die."

Saying these words, he seized Monaldeschi; pressed him back against the wall at the end of the gallery, just under the picture of Saint Germain; and, before I could interfere, or even turn aside from the sight, struck at the Marquis's right side with his sword. Monaldeschi caught the blade with his hand, cutting three of his fingers in the act. At the same moment the point touched his side and glanced off. Upon this, the man who had struck at him exclaimed, "He has armour under his clothes," and, at the same moment, stabbed Monaldeschi in the face. As he received the wound, he turned round towards me, and cried out loudly, "Father Le Bel! Father Le Bel!"

I advanced towards him immediately. As I did so, the man who had wounded him retired a little, and signed to his two companions to withdraw also. The Marquis, with one knee on the ground, asked pardon of God, and said certain last words in my ear. I immediately gave him absolution, telling him that he must atone for his sins by suffering death, and that he must pardon those who were about to kill him. Having heard my words, he flung himself forward on the floor. While he was falling, one of the three executioners who had not assailed him as yet, struck at his head, and wounded him on the surface of the skull.

The Marquis sank on his face; then raised himself a little, and signed to the men to kill him outright, by striking him on the neck. The same man who had last

to kill him outright, by striking him on the neck. The same man who had just wounded him, obeyed by cutting two or three times at his neck, without, however, doing him any great injury. For it was indeed true that he wore armour under his clothes, which armour consisted of a shirt of mail weighing nine or ten pounds, and rising so high round his neck, inside his collar, as to defend it successfully from any chance blow with a sword.

Seeing this, I came forward to exhort the Marquis to bear his sufferings with patience, for the remission of his sins. While I was speaking, the chief of the three executioners advanced, and asked me if I did not think it was time to give Monaldeschi the finishing stroke. I pushed the man violently away from me, saying that I had no advice to offer on the matter, and telling him that if I had any orders to give, they would be for the sparing of the Marquis's life, and not for the hastening of his death. Hearing me speak in those terms, the man asked my pardon, and confessed that he had done wrong in addressing me on the subject at all.

He had hardly finished making his excuses to me, when the door of the gallery opened. The unhappy Marquis hearing the sound, raised himself from the floor, and, seeing that the person who entered was the Queen's chaplain, dragged himself along the gallery, holding on by the tapestry that hung from the walls, until he reached the feet of the holy man. There, he whispered a few words (as if he was confessing) to the chaplain, who, after first asking my permission, gave him absolution, and then returned to the Queen.

As the chaplain closed the door, the man who had struck the Marquis on the neck, stabbed him adroitly with a long narrow sword in the throat, just above the edge of the shirt of mail. Monaldeschi sank on his right side, and spoke no more. For a quarter of an hour longer he still breathed, during which time I prayed by him, and exhorted him as I best could. When the bleeding from this last wound ceased, his life ceased with it. It was then a quarter to four o'clock. The death agony of the miserable man had lasted, from the time of the Queen's first pronouncing sentence on him, for nearly three hours.

I said the De Profundis over his body. While I was praying, the three executioners sheathed their swords, and the chief of them rifled the Marquis's pockets. Finding nothing on him but a prayer-book and a small knife, the chief beckoned to his companions, and they all three marched to the door in silence, went out, and left me alone with the corpse.

A few minutes afterwards I followed them, to go and report what had happened to the Queen.

to the Queen.

I thought her colour changed a little when I told her that Monaldeschi was dead; but those cold clear eyes of hers never softened, and her voice was still as steady and firm as when I first heard its tones on entering the gallery that day. She spoke very little, only saying to herself, "He is dead, and he deserved to die!" Then, turning to me, she added, "Father, I leave the care of burying him to you; and, for my own part, I will charge myself with the expense of having masses enough said for the repose of his soul." I ordered the body to be placed in a coffin, which I instructed the bearers to remove to the churchyard on a tumbril, in consequence of the great weight of the corpse, of the misty rain that was falling, and of the bad state of the roads. On Monday, the twelfth of November, at a quarter to six in the evening, the Marquis was buried in the parish church of Avon, near the font of holy water. The next day the Queen sent one hundred livres, by two of her servants, for masses for the repose of his soul.

Thus ends the extraordinary narrative of Father Le Bel. It is satisfactory to record, as some evidence of the progress of humanity, that this barbarous murder, which would have passed unnoticed in the feudal times, as an ordinary and legitimate exercise of a sovereign's authority over a vassal, excited, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the utmost disgust and horror throughout Paris. The prime minister at that period, Cardinal Mazarin (by no means an over-scrupulous man, as all readers of French history know), wrote officially to Christina, informing her that "a crime so atrocious as that which had just been committed under her sanction, in the Palace of Fontainebleau, must be considered as a sufficient cause for banishing the Queen of Sweden from the court and dominions of his sovereign, who, in common with every honest man in the kingdom, felt horrified at the lawless outrage which had just been committed on the soil of France."

To this letter Queen Christina sent the following answer, which, as a specimen of spiteful effrontery, has probably never been matched:

"MONSIEUR MAZARIN,—Those who have communicated to you the details of the death of my equerry, Monaldeschi, knew nothing at all about it. I think it highly absurd that you should have compromised so many people for the sake of informing yourself about one simple fact. Such a proceeding on your part, ridiculous as it is, does not, however, much astonish me. What I am amazed at, is, that you and the king your master should have dared to express disapproval of

what I have done.

"Understand, all of you—servants and masters, little people and great—that it was my sovereign pleasure to act as I did. I neither owe, nor render, an account of my actions to any one,—least of all, to a bully like you.

"It may be well for you to know, and to report to any one whom you can get to listen to you, that Christina cares little for your court, and less still for you. When I want to revenge myself, I have no need of your formidable power to help me. My honour obliged me to act as I did; my will is my law, and you ought to know how to respect it.... Understand, if you please, that wherever I choose to live, there I am Queen; and that the men about me, rascals as they may be, are better than you and the ragamuffins whom you keep in your service.

"Take my advice, Mazarin, and behave yourself for the future so as to merit my favour; you cannot, for your own sake, be too anxious to deserve it Heaven preserve you from venturing on any more disparaging remarks about my conduct! I shall hear of them, if I am at the other end of the world, for I have friends and followers in my service who are as unscrupulous and as vigilant as any in yours, though it is probable enough that they are not quite so heavily bribed."

After replying to the prime minister of France in those terms, Christina was wise enough to leave the kingdom immediately.

For three years more, she pursued her travels. At the expiration of that time, her cousin, the king of Sweden, in whose favour she had abdicated, died. She returned at once to her own country, with the object of possessing herself once more of the royal power. Here, the punishment of the merciless crime that she had sanctioned overtook her at last. The brave and honest people of Sweden refused to be governed by the woman who had ordered the murder of Monaldeschi, and who had forsaken the national religion for which her father died. Threatened with the loss of her revenues as well as the loss of her sovereignty, if she remained in Sweden, the proud and merciless Christina yielded for the first time in her life. She resigned once more all right and title to the royal dignity, and left her native country for the last time. The final place of her retirement was Rome. She died there in the year sixteen hundred and eighty-nine. Even in the epitaph which she ordered to be placed on her tomb, the

strange and daring character of the woman breaks out. The whole record of that wild and wicked existence, was summed up with stern brevity in this one line:

CHRISTINA LIVED SEVENTY-TWO YEARS.

SOCIAL GRIEVANCES.—II.
A PETITION TO THE NOVEL-WRITERS.

[Communicated by a Romantic Old Gentleman.]

I hope nobody will be alarmed if I confess that I am about to disclose the existence of a Disreputable Society, in one of the most respectable counties in England. I dare not be more particular as to the locality, and I cannot possibly mention the members by name. But I have no objection to admit that I am perpetual Secretary, that my wife is President, that my daughters are Council, and that my nieces form the Society. Our object is to waste our time, misemploy our intellects, and ruin our morals—or, in other words, to enjoy the prohibited luxury of novel-reading.

It is a settled opinion of mine that the dull people in this country, are the people who, privately as well as publicly, govern the nation. By dull people, I mean people of all degrees of rank and education, who never want to be amused. I don't know how long it is since these dreary members of the population first hit on the cunning idea of calling themselves Respectable; but I do know that, ever since that time, this great nation has been afraid of them—afraid in religious, in political, and in social matters. If my present business were with the general question, I think I could prove this assertion by simple reference to those records of our national proceedings which appear in the daily newspapers. But my object in writing is of the particular kind. I have a special petition to address to the writers of novels, on the part of the Disreputable Society to which I belong; and if I am to give any example here of the supremacy of the dull people, it must be drawn from one or two plain evidences of their success in opposing the claims of our fictitious literature to popular recognition.

The dull people decided years and years ago, as every one knows, that novel-writing was the lowest species of literary exertion, and that novel-reading was a dangerous luxury and an utter waste of time. They gave, and still give, reasons for this opinion, which are very satisfactory to persons born without Fancy or Imagination, and which are utterly inconclusive to everyone else. But, with reason or without it, the dull people have succeeded in affixing to our novels the

stigma of being a species of contraband goods. Look, for example, at the Prospectus of any librarian. The principal part of his trade of book-lending consists in the distributing of novels; and he is uniformly ashamed to own that simple fact. Sometimes, he is afraid to print the word Novel at all in his lists, and smuggles in his contraband fiction under the head of Miscellaneous Literature. Sometimes, after freely offering all histories, all biographies, all voyages, all travels, he owns self-reproachfully to the fact of having novels too, but deprecatingly adds—Only the best! As if no other branch of the great tree of literature ever produced tasteless and worthless fruit! In all cases, he puts novels last on his public list of the books he distributes, though they stand first on his private list of the books he gains by. Why is he guilty of all these sins against candour? Because he is afraid of the dull people.

Look again—and this brings me to the subject of these lines—at our Book Clubs. How paramount are the dull people there! How they hug to their rigid bosoms Voyages and Travels! How they turn their intolerant backs on novels! How resolutely they get together, in a packed body, on the committee, and impose their joyless laws on the yielding victims of the club, who secretly want to be amused! Our book club was an example of the unresisted despotism of their rule. We began with a law that novels should be occasionally admitted; and the dull people abrogated it before we had been in existence a twelvemonth. I smuggled in the last morsel of fiction that our starving stomachs were allowed to consume, and produced a hurricane of virtuous indignation at the next meeting of the committee.

All the dull people of both sexes attended that meeting. One dull gentleman said the author was a pantheist, and quoted some florid ecstacies on the subject of scenery and flowers in support of the opinion. Nobody seemed to know exactly what a pantheist was, but everybody cried "Hear, hear,"—which did just as well for the purpose. Another dull gentleman said the book was painful because there was a death-bed scene in it. A third reviled it for morbid revelling in the subject of crime, because a shot from the pistol of a handsome highwayman dispatched the villain of the story. But the great effect of the day was produced by a lady, the mother of a large family which began with a daughter of eighteen years, and ended with a boy of eight months. This lady's objection affected the heroine of the novel,—a respectable married woman, perpetually plunged in virtuous suffering, but an improper character for young persons to read about, because the poor thing had two accouchements—only two!—in the course of three volumes. "How can I suffer my daughters to read such a book as that?" cried our prolific

subscriber indignantly. A tumult of applause followed. A chorus of speeches succeeded, full of fierce references to "our national morality," and "the purity of our hearths and homes." A resolution was passed excluding all novels for the future; and then, at last, the dull people held their tongues, and sat down with a thump in their chairs, and glared contentedly on each other in stolid controversial triumph.

From that time forth (histories and biographies being comparatively scarce articles), we were fed by the dull people on nothing but Voyages and Travels. Every man (or woman) who had voyaged and travelled to no purpose, who had made no striking observations of any kind, who had nothing whatever to say, and who said it at great length in large type on thick paper, with accompaniment of frowsy lithographic illustrations, was introduced weekly to our hearths and homes as the most valuable guide, philosopher, and friend whom our rulers could possibly send us. All the subscribers submitted; all partook the national dread of the dull people, with the exception of myself and the members of my family enumerated at the beginning of these pages. We resolutely abandoned the club; got a box-full of novels for ourselves, once a month, from London; lost caste with our respectable friends in consequence; and became, for the future, throughout the length and breadth of our neighbourhood, the Disreputable Society to which I have already alluded. If the dull people of our district were told to-morrow that my wife, daughters, and nieces had all eloped in different directions, leaving just one point of the compass open as a runaway outlet for me and the cook, I feel firmly persuaded that not one of them would be inclined to discredit the report. "This is what comes of novel-reading!" they would say—and would return, with renewed zest, to their Voyages and Travels, their accouchements in real life, their canting "national morality," and their blustering "purity of our hearths and homes."

And now, to come to the main object of this paper,—the humble petition of myself and family to certain of our novel-writers. We may say of ourselves that we deserve to be heard, for we have braved public opinion for the sake of reading novels; and we have read, for some years past, all (I hold to the assertion, incredible as it may appear)—all the stories in one, two, and three volumes, that have issued from the press. What, then, have we got to petition about? A very slight matter. Marking, first of all, as exceptions, certain singular instances of originality, I may mention, as a rule, that our novel-reading enjoyments have hitherto been always derived from the same sort of characters and the same sort of stories—varied, indeed, as to names and minor events, but

fundamentally always the same, through hundreds on hundreds of successive volumes, by hundreds on hundreds of different authors. We, none of us complain of this, so far; for we like to have as much as possible of any good thing; but we beg deferentially to inquire whether it might not be practicable to give us a little variety for the future. We have no unwholesome craving after absolute novelty —all that we venture to ask for is, the ringing of a slight change on some of the favourite old tunes which we have long since learnt by heart.

To begin with our favourite Hero. He is such an old friend that we have by this time got to love him dearly. We would not lose sight of him altogether on any consideration whatever. Far be it from us to hint at the withdrawal of this noble, loving, injured, fascinating man! We adore his aquiline nose, his tall form, his wavy hair, his rich voice. Long may we continue to weep on his deep chest and press respectfully to our lips the folds of his ample cloak! Personally speaking it is by no means of him that we are getting tired, but of certain actions which we think he has now performed often enough.

For instance, may we put it respectfully to the ladies and gentlemen who are so good as to exhibit him, that he had better not "stride" any more? He has stridden so much, on so many different occasions, across so many halls, along so many avenues, in and out at so many drawing-room doors, that he must be knocked up by this time, and his dear legs ought really to have a little rest. Again, when his dignity is injured by irreverent looks or words, can he not be made to assert it for the future without "drawing himself up to his full height?" He has really been stretched too much by perpetual indulgence in this exercise for scores and scores of years. Let him sit down—do please let him sit down next time! It would be quite new, and so impressive. Then, again, we have so often discovered him standing with folded arms, so often beheld him pacing with folded arms, so often heard him soliloquise with folded arms, so often broken in upon him meditating with folded arms, that we think he had better do something else with his arms for the future. Could he swing them for a change? or put them akimbo? or drop them suddenly on either side of him? Or could he give them a holiday altogether, and fold his legs by way of variety? Perhaps not. The word Legs—why, I cannot imagine—seems always suggestive of jocularity. "Fitzherbert stood up and folded his arms," is serious. "Fitzherbert sat down and folded his legs," is comic. Why, I should like to know?

A word—one respectful word of remonstrance to the lady-novelists especially. We think they have put our Hero on horseback often enough. For the first five hundred novels or so, it was grand, it was thrilling, when he threw himself into

the saddle after the inevitable quarrel with his lady-love, and galloped off madly to his bachelor home. It was inexpressibly soothing to behold him in the milder passages of his career, moody in the saddle, with the reins thrown loosely over the arched neck of his steed, as the gallant animal paced softly with his noble burden, along a winding road, under a blue sky, on a balmy afternoon in early spring. All this was delightful reading for a certain number of years; but everything wears out at last, and trust me, ladies, your hero's favourite steed, your dear, intelligent, affectionate, glossy, long-tailed horse, has really done his work, and may now be turned loose, for some time to come, with great advantage to yourselves, and your readers.

Having spoken a word to the ladies, I am necessarily and tenderly reminded of their charming representatives—the Heroines. Let me say something, first, about our favourite two sisters—the tall dark one, who is serious and unfortunate: the short light one, who is coquettish and happy.

Being an Englishman, I have, of course, an ardent attachment to anything like an established rule, simply because it is established. I know that it is a rule that, when two sisters are presented in a novel, one must be tall and dark, and the other short and light. I know that five-feet-eight of female flesh and blood, when accompanied by an olive complexion, black eyes, and raven hair, is synonymous with strong passions and an unfortunate destiny. I know that five feet nothing, golden ringlets, soft blue eyes, and a lily-brow, cannot possibly be associated by any well-constituted novelist, with anything but ringing laughter, arch innocence, and final matrimonial happiness. I have studied these great first principles of the art of fiction too long not to reverence them as established laws; but I venture respectfully to suggest that the time has arrived when it is no longer necessary to insist on them in novel after novel. I am afraid there is something naturally revolutionary in the heart of man. Although I know it to be against all precedent, I want to revolutionise our favourite two sisters. Would any bold innovator run all risks, and make them both alike in complexion and in stature? Or would any desperate man (I dare not suggest such a course to the ladies) effect an entire alteration, by making the two sisters change characters? I tremble when I see to what lengths the spirit of innovation is leading me. Would the public accept the tall dark-haired sister, if she exhibited a jolly disposition and a tendency to be flippant in her talk? Would readers be fatally startled out of their sense of propriety, if the short charmer with the golden hair, appeared before them as a serious, strong-minded, fierce-spoken, miserable, guilty woman? It might be a dangerous experiment to make this change; but it would be worth

trying—the rather (if I may be allowed to mention anything so utterly irrelevant to the subject under discussion as real life) because I think there is some warrant in nature for attempting the proposed innovation. Judging by my own small experience, I should say that strong minds and passionate natures reside principally in the breasts of little, light women, especially if they have angelic blue eyes and a quantity of fair ringlets. The most facetiously skittish woman, for her age, with whom I am acquainted, is my own wife, who is three inches taller than I am. The heartiest laugher I ever heard is my second daughter, who is bigger even than my wife, and has the blackest eyebrows and the swarthiest cheeks in the whole neighbourhood. With such instances as these, producible from the bosom of my own family, who can wonder if I want, for once in a way, to overthrow the established order of things, and have a jovial dark sister and a dismal light one introduced as startling novelties in some few of the hundred new volumes which we are likely to receive next season from the Circulating Library?

But, after all, our long-established two sisters seem to be exceptional beings, and to possess comparatively small importance, the moment our minds revert to that vastly superior single personage, THE HEROINE.

Let me mention, to begin with, that we wish no change to be made in our respectable, recognised, old-fashioned Heroine, who has lived and loved and wept for centuries. I have taken her to my bosom thousands of times already, and ask nothing better than to indulge in that tender luxury thousands of times again. I love her blushing cheek, her gracefully-rounded form, her chiselled nose, her slender waist, her luxuriant tresses which always escape from the fillet that binds them. Any man or woman who attempts, from a diseased craving after novelty, to cheat me out of one of her moonlight walks, one of her floods of tears, one of her kneeling entreaties to obdurate relatives, one of her rapturous sinkings on her lover's bosom, is a novelist whom I distrust and dislike. He, or she, may be a very remarkable writer; but their books will not do for my family and myself. The Heroine, the whole Heroine, and nothing but the Heroine—that is our cry, if you drive us into a corner and insist on our stating precisely what we want, in the plainest terms possible.

Being thus faithfully attached to the established Heroine, it will not, I trust, appear a very unaccountable proceeding, if we now protest positively, and even indignantly, against her modern successor—a bouncing, ill-conditioned, impudent young woman, who has been introduced among us of late years. I venture to call this wretched and futile substitute for our dear, tender, gentle,

loving old Heroine, the Man-Hater; because, in every book in which she appears, it is her mission from first to last to behave as badly as possible to every man with whom she comes in contact. She enters on the scene with a preconceived prejudice against my sex, for which I, as a man, abominate her; for which my wife, my daughters, my nieces, and all other available women whom I have consulted on the subject, despise her. When her lover makes her an offer of marriage, she receives it in the light of a personal insult, goes up to her room immediately afterwards, and flies into a passion with herself, because she is really in love with the man all the time—comes down again, and snubs him before company instead of making a decent apology—pouts and flouts at him, on all after-occasions, until the end of the book is at hand—then suddenly turns round and marries him! If we feel inclined to ask why she could not, under the circumstances, receive his advances with decent civility at first, we are informed that her "maidenly consciousness" prevented it. This maidenly consciousness seems to me very like new English for our old-fashioned phrase, bad manners. And I am the more confirmed in this idea, because, on all minor occasions, the Man-Hater is persistently rude and disobliging to the last. Every individual in the novel who wears trousers and gets within range of her maidenly consciousness, becomes her natural enemy from that moment. If he makes a remark on the weather, her lip curls; if he asks leave to give her a potato at dinner-time (meaning, poor soul, to pick out for her the mealiest in the dish), her neck curves in scorn; if he offers a compliment, finding she won't have a potato, her nostril dilates. Whatever she does, even in her least aggressive moments, she always gets the better of all the men. They are set up like nine-pins for the Man-Hater to knock down. They are described, on their introduction, as clever, resolute fellows; but they lose their wits and their self-possession the instant they come within hail of the Man-Hater's terrible tongue. No man kisses her, no man dries her tears, no man sees her blush (except with rage), all through the three volumes. And this is the opposition Heroine who is set up as successor to our soft, feminine, loveable, sensitive darling of former days!

Set up, too, by lady-novelists, who ought surely to be authorities when female characters are concerned. Is the Man-Hater a true representative of young women, now-a-days? If so, what is to become of my son—my unlucky son, aged twelve years?

In a short time, this boy will be marriageable, and he will go into the world to bill and coo, and offer his hand and heart, as his father did before him. My unhappy offspring, what a prospect awaits you! One forbidding phalanx of Man-

Haters, bristling with woman's dignity, and armed to the teeth with maidenly consciousness, occupies the wide matrimonial field, look where you will! Ill-fated youth, yet a few years, and the female neck will curve, the female nostril dilate, at the sight of you. You see that stately form, those rustling skirts, that ample brow, and fall on your knees before it, and make your proposal with the impassioned imbecility which your father exhibited before you. My deluded boy, that is not a woman—it is a Man-Hater—a whited sepulchre full of violent expostulations and injurious epithets. She will lead you the life of a costermonger's ass, until she has exhausted her whole stock of maidenly consciousness; and she will then say (in effect, if not in words):—"Inferior animal, I loved you from the first—I have asserted my dignity by making a fool of you in public and private—now you may marry me!" Marry her not, my son! Go rather to the slave-market at Constantinople—buy a Circassian wife, who has heard nothing and read nothing about man-haters—bring her home (with no better dowry than pots of the famous Cream from her native land to propitiate your mother and sisters)—and trust to your father to welcome an Asiatic daughter-in-law, who will not despise him for the unavoidable misfortune of being a Man!

But I am losing my temper over a hypothetical case. I am forgetting the special purpose of my petition, which is to beg that the Man-Hater may be removed altogether from her usurped position of heroine. The new-fashioned heroine is a libel on her sex. As a husband and a father, I solemnly deny that she is in any single respect a natural woman. Am I no judge? I have a wife, and I made her an offer. Did she receive it as the Man-Haters receive offers? Can I ever forget the mixture of modest confusion and perfect politeness with which that admirable woman heard me utter the most absolute nonsense that ever issued from my lips? Perhaps she is not fit for a heroine. Well, I can give her up in that capacity without a pang. But my daughters and nieces have claims, I suppose, to be considered as examples of what young ladies are in the present day. Ever since I read the first novel with a Man-Hater in it, I have had my eye on their nostrils, and I can make affidavit that I have never yet seen them dilate under any circumstances, or in any society. As for curling their lips and curving their necks, they have attempted both operations at my express request, and have found them to be physical impossibilities. In men's society, their manners (like those of all other girls whom I meet with) are natural and modest; and—in the cases of certain privileged men—winning, into the bargain. They open their eyes with astonishment when they read of the proceedings of our new-fashioned heroines, and throw the book indignantly across the room, when they find a nice

man submitting to be bullied by a nasty woman, because he has paid her the compliment of falling in love with her. No, no! we positively decline to receive any more Man-Haters, and there is an end of it!

With this uncompromising expression of opinion, I think it desirable to bring the present petition to a close. There are one or two other good things in fiction, of which we have had enough; but I refrain from mentioning them, from modest apprehension of asking for too much at a time. If the slight changes in general, and the sweeping reform in particular, which I have ventured to suggest, can be accomplished, we are sure, in the future as in the past, to be grateful, appreciating, and incessant novel-readers. If we cannot claim any critical weight in the eyes of our esteemed authors, we can at least arrogate to ourselves the minor merit, not only of reading novels perpetually, but (and this is a rarer virtue) of publicly and proudly avowing the fact. We only pretend to be human beings with a natural desire for as much amusement as our work-a-day destinies will let us have. We are just respectable enough to be convinced of the usefulness of occasionally reading for information; but we are also certain (and we say it boldly, in the teeth of the dull people), that there are few higher, better, or more profitable enjoyments in this world than reading a good novel.

FRAGMENTS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.—I.
Laid up in lodgings.

My Paris Lodging.

It has happened rather whimsically, and not very fortunately for me, that my first experience of living in furnished lodgings abroad, as well as in England, has occurred at the very time when illness has rendered me particularly susceptible to the temporary loss of the comforts of home. I have been ill, alone, in furnished lodgings in Paris—ill, alone, on the journey back to England—ill, alone, again, in furnished lodgings in London. I am a single man; but as I have already intimated, I never knew what it was to enjoy the desolate liberty of the bachelor until I became an invalid. Some of my impressions of things and persons about me, formed under these anomalous circumstances, may, perhaps, prove not altogether unworthy of being written down, while they are still fresh in my mind.

How I happen, for a temporary period, to be away from the home in which I have hitherto lived with my nearest relatives, and to which I hope soon to return, it is of no importance to the reader to know. Neither is it at all worth while to occupy time and space with any particular description of the illness from which I have been and am still suffering. It will be enough for preliminary purposes, if I present myself at once in the character of a convalescent visiting Paris, with the double intention of passing agreeably an interval of necessary absence from home, and of promoting, by change of air and scene, my recovery from a distressing and a tedious illness. When I add to this, that although I lived alone in my French bachelor apartment, I had the good fortune at Paris, as afterwards in London, to be in the near neighbourhood of the most kind, attentive, and affectionate friends, I have said as much as is needful by way of preface, and may get on at once to my main purpose.

What my impressions of my apartment in Paris might have been, if I had recovered there according to my anticipations, I cannot venture to say; for, before I had got fairly settled in my new rooms, I suffered a sudden relapse. My life, again, became the life of an invalid, and my ways of thought and observation turned back disastrously to the old invalid channel. Change of air

and scene—which had done nothing for my body—did nothing either for my mind. At Paris, as before in London, I looked at the world about me, purely from the sick man's point of view—or, in other words, the events that passed, the sights that appeared, and the persons who moved around me, interested or repelled me only as they referred more or less directly to myself and my own invalid situation. This curious narrowness of view, of which I am not yet well enough entirely to rid myself, though as conscious as another of the mental weakness that it implies, has no connection that I can discover with excessive selfishness or vanity; it is simply the result of the inevitable increase of a man's importance to himself which the very fact of sickness is only too apt to produce.

My own sensations, as a sick man, now fill up the weary blank of my daily existence when I am alone, and form the main topic of inquiry and conversation when my doctor and my friends enliven my solitude. The concerns of my own poor body, which do not, I thank heaven, occupy my attention for much more than one hour out of the twenty-four, when I am well, become the main business and responsibility of all my waking moments, now that I am ill. Pain to suffer, and the swallowing of drugs and taking of nourishment at regulated periods; daily restraints that I must undergo, and hourly precautions that I am forced to practise, all contribute to keep my mind bound down to the level of my body. A flight of thought beyond myself and the weary present time—even supposing I were capable of the exertion—would lead me astray from the small personal rules and regulations on which I now depend absolutely for the recovery of my health.

Have my temper and disposition changed for the worse, under these unfavourable circumstances? Not much, I hope. I can honestly say for myself that I envy no other man's health and happiness. I feel no jealous pang when I hear laughter about me. I can look at people out of my window, running easily across the road, while I can hardly crawl from one end of my chamber to the other, without feeling insulted by their activity. Still, it is true, at the same time, that I warm to people now exactly in proportion as I see them sensibly and sincerely touched by my suffering condition; and that I like, or dislike, my habitation for the time being, just as it happens to suit, or not to suit, all the little requirements of my temporary infirmity. If I were introduced to one of the most eminent men in the country at this moment, and if he did not look sorry to see me ill, I should never care to set eyes on the eminent man again. If I had a superb room with the finest view in the world, but no bed-side conveniences for my pill-boxes and medicine-bottles, I would leave that superb room and fine view,

and go cheerfully to a garret in an alley, provided it adapted itself comfortably to the arrangement of my indispensable invalid's lumber. This is doubtless a humiliating confession; but it is well that I should make it once for all—for, the various opinions and impressions which I am about frankly to write down, will be found to be more or less coloured by what I venture to describe as the involuntary egotism of a sick man.

Let us see how my new lodging in Paris suits me; and why it is that I immediately become fond of it.

I live in a little building of my own, called a Pavilion. Outside, it resembles, as to size, brightness, and apparent insubstantiality, a private dwelling-house in a Pantomime. I expect as I drive up to it, for the first time, to see Clown grinning at the door, and Harlequin jumping through the window. A key is produced, and an odd little white door, through which no fat man could penetrate even sideways, is opened; I ascend a steep flight of a dozen steps, and enter my toy-castle: my own independent, solitary, miniature mansion.

The first room is the drawing-room. It is about the size of a large packing-case, with a gay looking-glass and clock, with bright red chairs and sofa, with a cosy round table, with a big window looking out on another Pavilion opposite, and on a great house set back in a courtyard. To my indescribable astonishment, it actually possesses three doors! One I have just entered by. Another leads into a bed-chamber of the same size as the drawing-room, just as brightly and neatly furnished, with a window that looks out on the everlasting gaiety and bustle of the Champs Elysées. The third door leads into a dressing-room half the size of the drawing-room, and having a fourth door which opens into a kitchen half the size of the dressing-room, but of course possessing a fifth door which leads out again to the head of the staircase. As no two people meeting in the kitchen could possibly pass each other, or remain in the apartment together without serious inconvenience, the two doors leading in and out of it may be pronounced useful as well as ornamental. Into this quaint little culinary crevice the coal-merchant, the wood-merchant, and the water-carrier squeeze their way, and find a doll's cellar and cistern all ready for them. They might be followed, if I were only well enough to give dinners, by a cook and his scullions—for I possess, besides the cellar and cistern, an elaborate charcoal stove in the kitchen, at which any number of courses might be prepared by any culinary artist, who could cook composedly with a row of small fires under his nose, a coal-cellar between his legs, a cistern scrubbing his shoulder, and a lukewarm wall against his back.

But what is the main secret of my fondness for the Pavilion? It does not, I am afraid, lie in the brightness and elegance of the little rooms, or even in the delightful independence of inhabiting a lodging, which is also a house of my own, where I can neither be disturbed nor overlooked by any other lodgers. The one irresistible appeal which my Parisian apartment makes to my sympathies, consists in the perfect manner in which it fits my wants and flatters my weaknesses as an invalid.

I have quite a little druggist's stock-in-trade of physic-bottles, glasses, spoons, card-boxes and prescriptions; I have all sorts of queer vestments and coverings, intended to guarantee me against all variations of temperature and all degrees of exposure, by night as well as by day; I have ready remedies that must be kept in my bed-chamber, and elaborate applications that I must find handy in my dressing-room. In short, I myself am nothing but the centre of a vast medical litter, and the closer the said litter revolves round me the more comfortable I am. In a house of the usual size, and in rooms arranged on the ordinary plan, I should be driven distracted (being an untidy man even in my healthiest moments) by mislaying things every hour in the day, by having to get up to look for them, and by being compelled to walk up and down stairs, or to make others do so for me, when I want to establish communications between dressing-room, bed-room, drawing-room, coal-cellar, and kitchen. In my tiny Parisian house of one small storey, I can wait on myself with the most perfect ease; in my wee sitting-room, nine-tenths of the things I want are within arm's length of me, as I repose in my elbow-chair; if I must move I can get from my bed-chamber to my kitchen in less time than it would take me to walk across an English drawing-room; if I lose my morning draught, mislay my noontide drops, or leave my evening pill-box under my afternoon dressing-gown, I can take my walking-stick or my fire-tongs, and poke or fish for missing articles in every corner of the room, without doing more than turning round in my chair. If I had been well and had given dinner parties, I might have found my habitation rather too small for me. As it is, if my Pavilion had been built on purpose for a solitary lodger to fall ill in with the least possible amount of personal discomfort, it could not have suited my sad case better. Sick, I love and honour the skilful architect who contrived it. Well, I am very much afraid I should never have bestowed so much as a single thought on him.

Why do I become, in one cordial quarter of an hour, friendly, familiar, and even affectionate with my portress? Because it is part of my unhealthy condition of body and mind, that I like nothing so well as being pitied; and my portress

sweetens my daily existence with so much compassion that she does me more good, I think, than my doctor or my drugs.

Let me try to describe her. She is a thin, rapid, cheerful little woman, with a tiny face and bright brown eyes. She has a husband (Hippolyte-senior) and a son (Hippolyte-junior), and a lodge of one room to live in with her family. She has not been in bed, for years past, before two or three in the morning; for my Pavilion and the second Pavilion opposite and the large house behind, are all shut in from the roadway by handsome iron gates, which it is the business of somebody in the porter's lodge to open (by pulling a string communicating with the latch) at all hours of the night to homeward-bound lodgers. The large house has so many tenants that some one is always out at a party or a theatre—so the keeping of late hours becomes a necessary part of the service in the lodge, and the poor little portress is the victim who suffers as perpetual night-watch. Hippolyte-senior absorbs his fair share of work in the day, and takes the early-rising department cheerfully, but he does not possess the gift of keeping awake at night. By eleven o'clock (such is sometimes the weakness even of the most amiable human nature) it is necessary that Hippolyte-senior should be stretched on his back on the nuptial bedstead, snoring impervious to all sounds and all in-comers. Hippolyte-junior, or the son, is too young to be trusted with the supervision of the gate-string. He sleeps, sound as his father, with a half-developed snore and a coiled-up body, in a crib at the foot of the parental bed. On the other side of the room, hard by the lodgers' keys and candlesticks, with a big stove behind her and a gaslight before her eyes, sits the faithful little portress, watching out the weary hours as wakefully as she can. She trusts entirely to strong coffee and the near flare of the gaslight to combat the natural sleepiness which follows a hard day's work begun at eight o'clock every morning. The coffee and the gas deserve, to a certain extent, the confidence she places in them. They keep her bright brown eyes wide open, staring with unwinking pertinacity at the light before them. They keep her back very straight against her chair, and her arms crossed tightly over her bosom, and her feet set firmly on her footstool. But though they stop sleep from shutting her eyes or relaxing her limbs, they cannot prevent some few latent Morphian influences from stealthily reaching her. Open as her eyes may be, the little woman nevertheless does start guiltily when the ring at the bell comes at last; does stare fixedly for a moment before she can get up; has to fight resolutely with something drowsy and clinging in the shape of a trance, before she can fly to the latch-string, and hang on to it wearily, instead of pulling at it with the proper wakeful jerk. Night after night she has now drunk the strong coffee, and propped

herself up stiffly in her straight chair, and stared hard at the flaring gaslight, for nearly seven years past. Some people would have lost their tempers and their spirits under these hard circumstances; but the cheerful little portress has only lost flesh. In a dark corner of the room hangs a daguerreotype likeness. It represents a buxom woman, with round cheeks and a sturdy waist, and dates from the period when she was the bride of Hippolyte-senior, and was thinking of following him into the Porter's Lodge. "Ah! my dear sir," she says when I condole with her, "if we do get a little money sometimes in our way of life, we don't earn it too easily. Aïe! Aïe! Aïe! I should like a good sleep: I should like to be as fat as my portrait again!"

The same friendly relations—arising entirely, let it always be remembered, out of my illness and the portress's compassion for me—which have let me into the secrets of the strong coffee, the daguerreotype portrait, and the sleepy constitution of Hippolyte-senior, also enable me to ascertain, by special invitation, how the inhabitants of the lodge dispose of some of the hardly-earned profits of their situation.

I find myself suffering rather painfully, one morning, under some aggravated symptoms of my illness, and my friend the portress comes into the Pavilion to talk to me and keep up my spirits. She has had an hour's extra sleep, for a wonder, and is in a chirping state of cheerfulness in consequence. She shudders and makes faces at my physic-bottles; entreats me to throw them away, to let her put me to bed, and administer A Light Tea to begin with, and A Broth to follow (un Thé léger et un Bouillon). If I will only stick to these remedies, she will have them ready, if necessary, every hour in the day, and will guarantee my immediate restoration to health and strength. While we are arguing the question of the uselessness of drugs and the remedial excellence of tea and broth, Hippolyte-senior, with a look of mysterious triumph, which immediately communicates itself to the face of his wife, enters the room to tell her that she is wanted below in the lodge. She goes to his side and takes his arm, as if he was a strange gentleman waiting to lead her down to dinner, nods to him confidentially, then glances at me. Her husband follows her example, and the two stand quite unconfusedly, arm-in-arm, smiling upon me and my physic-bottles, as if they were a pair of lovers and I was the venerable parent whose permission and blessing they were waiting to receive.

"Have you been getting a new doctor for me?" I ask, excessively puzzled by their evident desire to connect me with some secret in the lodge.

"No," says the portress, "I believe in no doctors. I believe in nothing but a light

"No," says the portress, "I believe in no doctors. I believe in nothing but a light tea and a broth."

("My sentiments also!" adds her husband, parenthetically.)

"But we have something to show you in the lodge," continues the portress.

(Hippolyte-senior arches his eyebrows, and says "Aha!")

"And when you feel better," proceeds my cheerful little friend, "only have the politeness to come down to us, and you will see a marvellous sight!"

Hippolyte-senior depresses his eyebrows, and says "Hush!"

"Enough," replies the portress, understanding him; "let us retire."

And they leave the room immediately, still arm-in-arm—the fondest and most mysterious married couple that I have ever set eyes on.

That day, I do not feel quite strong enough to encounter great surprises; so my visit to the lodge is deferred until the next morning. Rather to my amazement, the portress does not pay me her usual visit at my waking, on the eventful day. I descend to the lodge, wondering what this change means, and see three or four strangers assembled in the room which is bed-chamber, parlour, and porter's office, all in one. The strangers, I find, are admiring friends: they surround Hippolyte-senior, and all look one way with an expression of intense pleasure and surprise. My eyes follow the direction of theirs; and I see, above the shabby little lodge table, a resplendent new looking-glass in the brightest of frames. On either side of it, rise two blush-coloured wax tapers. Below it are three ornamental pots with blooming rose-trees in them, backed by a fanlike screen of fair white paper. This is the surprise that was in store for me; and this is also the security in which the inhabitants of the lodge have invested their last hard-earned savings. The whole thing has the effect upon my mind of an amateur High Altar; and I admire the new purchase accordingly with such serious energy of expression, that Hippolyte-senior, in the first sweetness of triumph, forgets the modesty proper to his position as proprietor of the new treasure, and apostrophises his own property as Magnifique, with a power of voice and an energy of gesticulation which I have never noticed in him before. When his enthusiasm has abated, and just as I am on the point of asking where my friend the portress is, I hear a faint little voice speaking behind the group of admiring friends:

"Perhaps, Messieurs et Mesdames, you think this an extravagance for people in our situation," says the voice, in feebly polite tones of apology; "but, alas! how could we resist it? It is so beautiful—it brightens the room so—it gives us such a noble appearance. And, then, it is also a property—something to leave to our children—in short, a pardonable extravagance. Aïe! I am shaking all over again; I can say no more!"

While these words are in course of utterance, the group of friends separate, and I see sitting behind them, close to the big stove, the little portress, looking sadly changed for the worse. Her tiny face has become very yellow; her bright brown eyes look disproportionately large; she has an old shawl twisted round her shoulders and shivers in it perpetually. I ask what is the matter, imagining that the poor little woman has got a fit of the ague. The portress contrives to smile as usual before she answers, though her teeth are chattering audibly.

"You will not give me drugs, if I tell you?" she says.

"I will do nothing that is not perfectly agreeable to you," I reply evasively.

"My complaint is a violent indigestion (une forte indigestion)," continues the portress, indicatively laying one trembling fore-finger on the region of her malady. "And I am curing myself with a Light Tea."

Here the fore-finger changes its direction and points to a large white earthenware teapot, with an empty mug by the side of it. To save the portress the trouble of replenishing her drinking vessel, I pour out a dose of the Light Tea. It is a liquid of a faint straw colour, totally unlike any English tea that ever was made; and it tastes as a quart of hot water might taste after a wisp of hay had been dipped into it. The portress swallows three mugsful of her medicine in my presence, smiling and shivering; looking rapturously at the magnificent new mirror with its attendant flower-pots and tapers; and rejecting with grimaces of comic disgust, all overtures of medical help on my part, even to the modest offering of one small pill. An hour or two later, I descend to the lodge again to see how she is. She has been persuaded to go to bed; is receiving, in bed, a levée of friends; is answering, in the same interesting situation, the questions of all the visitors of the day, relating to all the lodgers in the house; has begun a fresh potful of the light tea; is still smiling; still shivering; still contemptuously sceptical on the subject of drugs.

In the evening I go down again. The teapot is not done with yet, and the hay-

flavoured hot water is still pouring inexhaustibly into the system of the little portress. She happens now to be issuing directions relative to the keeping awake of Hippolyte-senior, who, for this night at least, must watch by the gate-string. He is to have a pint of strong coffee and a pipe; he is to have the gas turned on very strong; and he is to be excited by the presence of a brisk and wakeful friend. The next morning, just as I am thinking of making inquiries at the lodge, who should enter my room but the dyspeptic patient herself, cured, and ready to digest anything but a doctor's advice or a small pill. Hippolyte-senior, I hear, has not fallen asleep over the gate-string for more than half-an-hour every now and then; and the portress has had a long night's rest. She does not consider this unusual occurrence as reckoning in any degree among the agencies which have accomplished her rapid recovery. It is the light tea alone that has done it; and, if I still doubt the inestimable virtues of the hot hay-water cure, then of all the prejudiced gentlemen the portress has ever heard of, I am the most deplorably obstinate in opening my arms to error and shutting my eyes to truth.

Such is the little domestic world about me, in some of the more vivid lights in which it presents itself to my own peculiar view.

As for the great Parisian world outside, my experience of it is bounded by the prospect I obtain of the Champs Elysées from my bed-room window. Fashionable Paris spins and prances by me every afternoon, in all its glory; but what interest have healthy princes and counts and blood-horses, and blooming ladies, plunged in abysses of circumambient crinoline, for me, in my sick situation? They all fly by me in one confused phantasmagoria of gay colours and rushing forms, which I look at with lazy eyes. The sights I watch with interest are those only which seem to refer in some degree to my own invalid position. My sick man's involuntary egotism clings as close to me when I look outward at the great highway, as when I look inward at my own little room. Thus, the only objects which I now notice attentively from my window, are, oddly enough, chiefly those which I should have missed altogether, or looked at with indifference if I had occupied my bachelor apartment in the enviable character of a healthy man.

For example, out of the various vehicles which pass me by dozens in the morning, and by hundreds in the afternoon, only two succeed in making anything like a lasting impression on my mind. I have only vague ideas of dust, dashing, and magnificence in connection with the rapid carriages late in the day —and of bells and hollow yelping of carters' voices in connection with the deliberate waggons early in the morning. But I have, on the other hand, a very

distinct remembrance of one sober brown omnibus, belonging to a Sanitary Asylum, and of a queer little truck which carries baths and hot water to private houses, from a bathing establishment near me. The omnibus, as it passes my window at a solemn jog-trot, is full of patients getting their airing. I can see them dimly, and I fall into curious fancies about their various cases, and wonder what proportion of the afflicted passengers are near the time of emancipation from their sanitary prison on wheels. As for the little truck, with its empty zinc bath and barrel of warm water, I am probably wrong in sympathetically associating it as frequently as I do with cases of illness. It is doubtless often sent for by healthy people, too luxurious in their habits to walk abroad for a bath. But there must be a proportion of cases of illness to which the truck ministers; and when I see it going faster than usual, I assume that it must be wanted by some person in a fit; grow suddenly agitated by the idea; and watch the empty bath and the hot-water barrel with breathless interest, until they rumble away together out of sight.

So, again, with regard to the men and women who pass my window by thousands every day; my view of them is just as curiously circumscribed as my view of the vehicles. Out of all the crowd, I now find, on taxing my memory, that I have noticed particularly just three people (a woman and two men), who have chanced to appeal to my invalid curiosity.

The woman is a nursemaid, neither young nor pretty, very clean and neat in her dress, with an awful bloodless paleness in her face, and a hopeless consumptive languor in her movements. She has only one child to take care of—a robust little girl of cruelly active habits. There is a stone bench opposite my window; and on this the wan and weakly nursemaid often sits, not bumping down on it with the heavy thump of honest exhaustion, but sinking on it listlessly, as if in changing from walking to sitting she were only passing from one form of weariness to another. The robust child remains mercifully near the feeble guardian for a few minutes—then becomes, on a sudden, pitilessly active again, laughs and dances from a distance, when the nurse makes weary signs to her, and runs away altogether, when she is faintly entreated to be quiet for a few minutes longer. The nurse looks after her in despair for a moment, draws her neat black shawl, with a shiver, over her sharp shoulders, rises resignedly, and disappears from my eyes in pursuit of the pitiless child. I see this mournful little drama acted many times over, always in the same way, and wonder sadly how long the wan nursemaid will hold out. Not being a family man, and having nervously-acute sympathies for sickness and suffering just now, it would afford me genuine satisfaction to see the oppressed nurse beat the tyrannical child; but she seems

fond of the little despot; and, besides, she is so weak that if it came to blows, I am afraid, grown woman as she is, that she might get the worst of it.

The men whom I observe, are not such interesting cases; but they exhibit, in a minor degree, the peculiarities that are sure to attract my attention. The first of the two is a gentleman—lonely and rich, as I imagine. He is fat, yellow, and gloomy, and has evidently been ordered horse-exercise for the benefit of his health. He rides a quiet English cob; never has any friend with him; never—so far as I can see—exchanges greetings with any other horseman; is never smiled at from a carriage, nor bowed to by a foot-passenger. He rides with his flaccid chin sunk on his fat breast; sits his horse as if his legs were stuffed and his back boneless; always attracts me because he is the picture of dyspeptic wretchedness, and always passes me at the same mournful jog-trot pace. The second man is a police agent. I cannot sympathise with him in consequence of his profession; but I can observe, with a certain lukewarm interest, that he is all but worked to death. He yawns and stretches himself in corners; sometimes drops furtively on to the stone bench before my window; then starts up from it suddenly, as if he felt himself falling asleep the moment he sat down. He has hollow places where other people have cheeks; and, judging by his walk, must be quite incapable of running after a prisoner who might take to flight. On the whole, he presents to my mind the curious spectacle of a languid man trying to adapt himself to a brisk business, and failing palpably in the effort. As the sick child of a thriving system he attracts my attention. I devoutly hope that he will not return the compliment by honouring me with his notice.

Such are the few short steps that I take in advance to get a moderately close glance at French humanity. If my view is absurdly limited to my own dim horizon, this defect has at least one advantage for the reader: it prevents all danger of my troubling him with my ideas and observations at any great length. If other people value this virtue of brevity in writers, orators, and preachers as sincerely as I do, perhaps I may hope, on account of my short range of observation and my few words, to get another hearing, if I write the second chapter of my invalid experiences. I began the first half of them (as herein related) in France; and I am now completing the second (yet to be recorded) in England. When the curtain rises on my sick bed again, the scene will be London.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.—MY LONDON LODGING.

I last had the honour of presenting myself to the reader's notice in the character of an invalid laid up in lodgings at Paris. Let me now be permitted to reappear as

an invalid laid up, for the time being, in a London cab. Let it be imagined that I have got through the journey from Paris, greatly to my own surprise and satisfaction, without breaking down by the way; that I have slept one night at a London hotel for the first time in my life; and that I am now helplessly adrift, looking out for Furnished Apartments as near as may be to my doctor's place of abode.

The cab is fusty, the driver is sulky, the morning is foggy. A dry dog-kennel would be a pleasant refuge by comparison with the miserable vehicle in which I am now jolting my way over the cruel London stones. On our road to my doctor's neighbourhood we pass through Smeary Street, a locality well known to the inhabitants of Northern London. I feel that I can go no further. I remember that some friends of mine live not far off, and I recklessly emancipate myself from the torment of the cab, by stopping the driver at the very first house in the windows of which I see a bill with the announcement that Apartments are to Let.

The door is opened by a tall muscular woman, with a knobbed face and knotty arms besprinkled with a layer of grate-dust in a state of impalpable powder. She shows me up into a second-floor front bed-room. My first look of scrutiny is naturally directed at the bed. It is of the negative sort, neither dirty nor clean; but, by its side, I see a positive advantage in connection with it, in the shape of a long mahogany shelf, fixed into the wall a few inches above the bed, and extending down its whole length from head to foot. My sick man's involuntary egotism is as predominant an impulse within me at London as at Paris. I think directly of my invalid's knick-knacks: I see that the mahogany shelf will serve to keep them all within my reach when I am in bed; I know that it will be wanted for no other purpose than that to which I design to put it; that it need not be cleared for dinner every day, like a table, or disturbed when the servant cleans the room, like a moveable stand. I satisfy myself that it holds out all these rare advantages to me, in my peculiar situation, and I snap at them on the instant—or, in other words, I take the room immediately.

If I had been in health, I think I should have had two cogent reasons for acting otherwise, and seeking apartments elsewhere. In the first place, I should have observed that the room was not very clean or very comfortably furnished. I should have noticed that the stained and torn drugget on the floor displayed a margin of dirty boards all round the bed-chamber; and I should no sooner have set eyes on the venerable arm-chair by the bedside than I should have heard it saying privately in my ear, in an ominous language of its own, "Stranger, I am let to the Fleas: take me at your peril." Even if these signs and portents had not

been enough to send me out into the street again, I should certainly have found the requisite warning to quit the house written legibly in the face, figure, and manner of the landlady. I should probably have seen something to distrust and dislike in everything connected with her, down even to her name, which was Mrs. Glutch; I should have made my escape into the street again, and should not have ventured near it any more for the rest of the day. But as it was, my fatal invalid prepossessions blinded me to everything but the unexpected blessing of that mahogany shelf by the bedside. I overlooked the torn drugget, the flea-peopled arm-chair, and the knotty-faced landlady with the ominous name. The shelf was bait enough for me, and the moment the trap was open, I collected my train of medicine bottles and confidently walked in.

It is a general subject of remark among observant travellers, that the two nations of the civilized world which appear to be most widely separated as to the external aspects of life respectively presented by them, are also the two which are most closely brought together by the neighbourly ties of local situation. Before I had been many days established in Smeary Street, I found that I myself, in my own circumscribed sphere, offered a remarkable example of the truth of the observation just recorded. The strong contrast between my present and my past life was a small individual proof of the great social contrasts between England and France.

I have truly presented myself at Paris, as living independently in a little toy house of my own; as looking out upon a scene of almost perpetual brightness and gaiety; and as having people to attend on me whose blessed levity of disposition kept them always cheerful, always quaintly characteristic, always unexpectedly amusing, even to the languid eye of a sick man. With equal candour I must now record of my in-door life in London, that it was passed with many other lodgers, in a large house without a vestige of toy-shop prettiness in any part of it. I must acknowledge that I looked out upon drab-coloured walls and serious faces through a smoke-laden atmosphere; and I must admit that I was waited on (so far as the actual house-service was concerned) by people whose cloudy countenances seemed unconscious of a gleam of inner sunshine for days and days together. Nor did the contrast end here. In my lodgings at Paris, I have represented myself as having about me a variety of animate and inanimate objects which I might notice or not just as I pleased, and as using my freedom of choice in a curiously partial and restricted manner, in consequence of the narrowing effect of my illness on my sympathies and powers of observation. In my London lodging, I enjoyed no such liberty. I could not get even a

temporary freedom of selection, except by fighting for it resolutely at odds and ends of time. I had but one object which offered itself to my observation, which perpetually presented itself, which insisted on being noticed, no matter how mentally unfit and morally unwilling my illness rendered me to observe it; and that object was—my landlady, Mrs. Glutch.

Behold me then, now, no longer a free agent; no longer a fanciful invalid with caprices to confide to the ear of the patient reader. My health is no better in Smeary Street than it was in the Champs Elysées; I take as much medicine in London as I took in Paris; but my character is altered in spite of myself, and the form and colour of my present fragment of writing will, I fear, but too truly reflect the change.

I *was* a sick man with several things to discourse of—I *am* a sick man with only one topic to talk about. I may escape from it for a few sentences at a time, in these pages, as I escaped from it for a few minutes at a time in Smeary Street; but the burden of my song will be now, what the burden of my life has been lately—my landlady. I am going to begin with her—I shall go on with her—I shall try to wander away from her—I shall get back to her—I shall end with her. She will mix herself up with everything I have to say; will intrude on my observations out of window; will get into my victuals and drink, and drops, and draughts, and pills; will come between me and my studies of character among maids-of-all-work, in this too faithful narrative, just as she did in the real scenes which it endeavours to represent. While I make this acknowledgment as a proper warning to the reader that I have changed into a monotonous sick man since we met last, let me add, in justice to myself, that my one subject has at least the advantage of being a terrible one. Think of a sick fly waited on by a healthy blue-bottle, and you will have a fair idea of the relative proportions and positions of myself and Mrs. Glutch.

I have hardly been settled an hour in my second-floor front room before the conviction is forced on my mind that Mrs. Glutch is resolved to make a conquest of me—of the maternal, or platonic kind, let me hasten to add, so as to stop the mouth of scandal before it is well opened. I find that she presents herself before me in the character of a woman suffused in a gentle melancholy, proceeding from perpetual sympathy for my suffering condition. It is part of my character, as a sick man, that I know by instinct when people really pity me, just as children and dogs know when people really like them; and I have, consequently, not been five minutes in Mrs. Glutch's society, before I know that her sympathy for me is entirely of that sort of which (in the commercial phrase) a large

assortment is always on hand. I take no pains to conceal from Mrs. Glutch that I have found her out; but she is too innocent to understand me, and goes on sympathising in the very face of detection. She becomes, in spite of her knobbed face, knotty arms, and great stature and strength, languidly sentimental in manner, the moment she enters my room. Language runs out of her in a perpetual flow, and politeness encircles her as with a halo that can never be dimmed. "I have been so anxious about you!" is her first morning's salutation to me. The words are preceded by a faint cough, and followed by an expressively weary sigh, as if she had passed a sleepless night on my account. The next morning she appears with a bunch of wallflowers in her mighty fist, and with another faint prefatory cough, "I beg pardon, sir; but I have brought you a few flowers. I think they relieve the mind." The expressively weary sigh follows again, as if it would suggest this time that she has toiled into the country to gather me the flowers at early dawn. I do not find, strange as it may seem, that they relieve my mind at all; but of course I say, "Thank you."—"Thank *you*, sir," rejoins Mrs. Glutch—for it is a part of this woman's system of oppressive politeness always to thank me for thanking her. She invariably contrives to have the last word, no matter in what circumstances the courteous contention which is the main characteristic of our daily intercourse, may take its rise.

Let us say, for instance, that she comes into my room and gets into my way (which she always does) at the very time when she ought to be out of it—her first words are necessarily, "I beg pardon." I growl (not so brutally as I could wish, being weak), "Never mind!"—"Thank you, sir," says Mrs. Glutch, and coughs faintly, and sighs, and delays going out as long as possible. Or, take another example:—"Mrs. Glutch, this plate's dirty."—"I am much obliged to you, sir, for telling me of it."—"It isn't the first dirty plate I have had."—"Really now, sir?"—"You may take away the fork; for that is dirty too."—"Thank you, sir."—Oh for one hour of my little Parisian portress! Oh for one day's respite from the politeness of Mrs. Glutch!

Let me try if I cannot get away from the subject for a little while. What have I to say about the other lodgers in the house? Not much; for how can I take any interest in people who never make inquiries after my health, though they must all know, by the frequent visits of the doctor and the chemist's boy, that I am ill?

The first floor is inhabited by a mysterious old gentleman, and his valet. He brought three cart-loads of gorgeous furniture with him, to fit up two rooms—he possesses an organ, on which, greatly to his credit, he never plays—he receives perfumed notes, goes out beautifully dressed, is brought back in private

carriages, with tall footmen in attendance to make as much noise as possible with the door-knocker. Nobody knows where he comes from, or believes that he passes in the house under his real name. If any aged aristocrat be missing from the world of fashion, we rather think we have got him in Smeary Street, and should feel willing to give him up to his rightful owners on payment of a liberal reward. Next door to me, in the second floor back, I hear a hollow cough and sometimes a whispering; but I know nothing for certain—not even whether the hollow cougher is also the whisperer, or whether they are two, or whether there is or is not a third silent and Samaritan person who relieves the cough and listens to the whisper. Above me, in the attics, there is a matutinal stamping and creaking of boots, which go down-stairs, at an early hour, in a hurry, which never return all day, but which come up-stairs again in a hurry late at night. The boots evidently belong to shopmen or clerks. Below, in the parlours, there seems to be a migratory population, which comes in one week and goes out the next, and is, in some cases, not at all to be depended upon in the matter of paying rent. I happen to discover this latter fact, late one night, in rather an alarming and unexpected manner. Just before bedtime I descend, candle in hand, to a small back room, at the end of the passage, on the ground floor (used all day for the reception of general visitors, and empty, as I rashly infer, all night), for the purpose of getting a sofa cushion to eke out my scanty allowance of pillows. I no sooner open the door and approach the sofa than I behold, to my horror and amazement, Mrs. Glutch coiled up on it, with all her clothes on, and with a wavy, coffee-coloured wrapper flung over her shoulders. Before I can turn round to run away, she is on her legs, wide awake in an instant, and politer than ever. She makes me a long speech of explanation, which begins with "I beg pardon," and ends with "Thank you, sir;" and from the substance of which I gather that the parlour lodgers for the past week are going away the next morning; that they are the likeliest people in the world to forget to pay their lawful debts; and that Mrs. Glutch is going to lie in ambush for them all night, in the coffee-coloured wrapper, ready the instant the parlour door opens, to spring out into the passage and call for her rent.

What am I about? I am relapsing insensibly into the inevitable and abhorrent subject of Mrs. Glutch, exactly in accordance with my foreboding of a few pages back. Let me make one more attempt to get away from my landlady. If I try to describe my room, I am sure to get back to her, because she is always in it. Suppose I get out of the house altogether, and escape into the street?

All men, I imagine, have an interest of some kind in the locality in which they

live. My interest in Smeary Street is entirely associated with my daily meals, which are publicly paraded all day long on the pavement. In explanation of this rather original course of proceeding, I must mention that I am ordered to eat "little and often," and must add, that I cannot obey the direction if the food is cooked on the premises in which I live, because I have had the misfortune to look down certain underground stairs and to discover that in the lowest depth of dirt, which I take to be the stairs themselves, there is a lower deep still, which is the kitchen at the bottom of them. Under these peculiar circumstances, I am reduced to appeal for nourishment and cleanliness in combination, to the tender mercies (and kitchen) of the friends in my neighbourhood, to whom I have alluded at the outset of this narrative. They commiserate and help me with the readiest kindness. Devoted messengers, laden with light food, pass and repass all day long between their house and my bedroom. The dulness of Smeary Street is enlivened by perpetual snacks carried in public procession. The eyes of my opposite neighbours, staring out of window, and not looking as if they cared about my being ill, are regaled from morning to night by passing dishes and basins, which go westward full and steaming, and return eastward eloquently empty. My neighbourhood knows when I dine, and can smell out, if it pleases, what I have for dinner. The early housemaid kneeling on the doorstep, can stay her scrubbing hand and turn her pensive head and scan my simple breakfast, before I know what it will be myself. The mid-day idler, lounging along Smeary Street, is often sweetly reminded of his own luncheon by meeting mine. Friends who knock at my door may smell my dinner behind them, and know how I am keeping up my stamina, before they have had time to inquire after my health. My supper makes the outer darkness savoury as the evening closes in; and my empty dishes startle the gathering silence with convivial clatter as they wend on their homeward way the last thing at night.

Is there no dark side to this bright picture? Is there never any hitch in these friendly arrangements for feeding me in the cleanest way, on the most appetising diet? Yes—there is a hitch. Will you give it a name? I will. Its name is Mrs. Glutch.

It is, I am well aware, only to be expected that my landlady should resent the tacit condemnation of her cleanliness and cookery implied in the dietary arrangements which I have made with my friends. If she would only express her sense of offence by sulking or flying into a passion, I should not complain; for in the first case supposed, I might get the better of her by noticing nothing, and, in the second, I might hope, in course of time, to smooth her down by soft answers

and polite prevarications. But the means she actually takes of punishing me for my too acute sense of the dirtiness of her kitchen, are of such a diabolically ingenious nature, and involve such a continuous series of small persecutions, that I am rendered, from first to last, quite powerless to oppose her. Shall I describe her plan of annoyance? I *must* describe it—I must return to my one prohibited topic (as I foreboded I should) in spite of myself.

Mrs. Glutch, then, instead of visiting her wrath on me, or my food, or my friends, or my friends' messengers, avenges herself entirely on their tray-cloths and dishes. She does not tear the first nor break the second—for that would be only a simple and primitive system of persecution—but she smuggles them, one by one, out of my room, and merges them inextricably with her own property, in the grimy regions of the kitchen. She has a power of invisibly secreting the largest pie-dishes, and the most voluminous cloths, under my very eyes, which I can compare to nothing but sleight of hand. Every morning I see table utensils which my friends lend me, ranged ready to go back, in my own room. Every evening, when they are wanted, I find that some of them are missing, and that my landlady is even more surprised by that circumstance than I am myself. If my friends' servant ventures to say, in her presence, that the cook wants her yesterday's tray-cloth, and if I refer him to Mrs. Glutch, the immoveable woman only sniffs, tosses her head, and "wonders how the young man can have demeaned himself by bringing her such a peremptory message." If I try on my own sole responsibility to recover the missing property, she lets me see, by her manner at the outset, that she thinks I suspect her of stealing it. If I take no notice of this manœuvre, and innocently persist in asking additional questions about the missing object, the following is a sample of the kind of dialogue that is sure to pass between us:—

"I think, Mrs. Glutch"——

"Yes, sir!"

"I think one of my friends' large pudding-basins has gone down-stairs."

"Really, now, sir? A large pudding-basin? No: I think not."

"But I can't find it up here, and it is wanted back."

"Naturally, sir."

"I put it on the drawers, Mrs. Glutch, ready to go back, last night."

"Did you, indeed, sir?"

"Did you, indeed, sir?"

"Perhaps the servant took it down-stairs to clean it?"

"Not at all likely, sir. If you will please to remember, you told her last Monday evening—or, no, I beg pardon—last Tuesday morning, that your friends cleaned up their own dishes, and that their things was not to be touched."

"Perhaps you took it down-stairs then yourself, Mrs. Glutch, by mistake?"

"I, sir! I didn't. I couldn't. Why should I? I think you said a large pudding-basin, sir?"

"Yes, I did say so."

"I have ten large pudding-basins of my own, sir."

"I am very glad to hear it. Will you be so good as to look among them, and see if my friends' basin has not got mixed up with your crockery?"

Mrs. Glutch turns very red in the face, slowly scratches her muscular arms, as if she felt a sense of pugilistic irritation in them, looks at me steadily with a pair of glaring eyes, and leaves the room at the slowest possible pace. I wait and ring—wait and ring—wait and ring. After the third waiting and the third ringing, she reappears, redder of face and slower of march than before, with the missing article of property held out before her at arm's length.

"I beg pardon, sir," she says, "but is this anything like your friends' large pudding-basin?"

"That is the basin itself, Mrs. Glutch."

"Really, now, sir? Well, as you seem so positive, it isn't for me to contradict you. But I hope I shall give no offence if I mention that I had ten large pudding-basins of my own, and that I miss one of them."

With that last dexterous turn of speech, she gives up the basin with the air of a high-minded woman, who will resign her own property rather than expose herself to the injurious doubts of a morbidly suspicious man. When I add that the little scene just described takes place between us nearly every day, the reader will admit that, although Mrs. Glutch cannot prevent me from enjoying on her dirty premises the contraband luxury of a clean dinner, she can at least go great lengths towards accomplishing the secondary annoyance of preventing me from

digesting it.

I have hinted at a third personage in the shape of a servant, in my report of the foregoing dialogue; and I have previously alluded to myself (in paving the way for the introduction of my landlady), as extending my studies of human character, in my London lodging, to those forlorn members of the population called maids-of-all-work. The maids—I use the plural number advisedly—present themselves to me to be studied, as apprentices to the hard business of service, under the matronly superintendence of Mrs. Glutch. The succession of them is brisk enough to keep all the attention I can withdraw from my landlady constantly employed in investigating their peculiarities. By the time I have been three weeks in Smeary Street, I have had three maids-of-all-work, to study—a new servant for each week! In reviewing the three individually before the reader, I must be allowed to distinguish them by numbers instead of names. Mrs. Glutch screams at them all indiscriminately by the name of Mary, just as she would scream at a succession of cats by the name of Puss. Now, although I am always writing about Mrs. Glutch, I have still spirit enough left to vindicate my own individuality, by abstaining from following her example. In obedience, therefore, to these last relics of independent sentiment, permit me the freedom of numbering my maids-of-all-work, as I introduce them to public notice in these pages.

Number One is amazed by the spectacle of my illness, and always stares at me. If I fell ill one evening, went to a dispensary, asked for a bottle of physic, and got well on it the next morning; or, if I presented myself before her at the last gasp, and died forthwith in Smeary Street, she would, in either case, be able to understand me. But an illness on which medicine produces no immediate effect, and which does not keep the patient always groaning in bed, is beyond her comprehension. Personally, she is very short and sturdy, and is always covered from head to foot with powdered black, which seems to lie especially thick on her in the morning. How does she accumulate it? Does she wash herself with the ordinary liquid used for ablutions; or does she take a plunge-bath every morning under the kitchen-grate? I am afraid to ask this question of her; but I contrive to make her talk to me about other things. She looks very much surprised, poor creature, when I first let her see that I have other words to utter in addressing her, besides the word of command; and seems to think me the most eccentric of mankind, when she finds that I have a decent anxiety to spare her all useless trouble in waiting on me. Young as she is, she has drudged so long over the wickedest ways of this world, without one leisure moment to look up from the

everlasting dirt on the road at the green landscape around, and the pure sky above, that she has become hardened to the saddest, surely, of human lots before she is yet a woman grown. Life means dirty work, small wages, hard words, no holidays, no social station, no future, according to her experience of it. No human being ever was created for this. No state of society which composedly accepts this, in the cases of thousands, as one of the necessary conditions of its selfish comforts, can pass itself off as civilised, except under the most audacious of all false pretences. These thoughts rise in me often, when I ring the bell, and the maid-of-all-work answers it wearily. I cannot communicate them to her: I can only encourage her to talk to me now and then on something like equal terms. Just as I am succeeding in the attainment of this object, Number One scatters all my plans and purposes to the winds, by telling me that she is going away.

I ask Why? and am told that she cannot bear being a-railed at and a-hunted about by Mrs. Glutch any longer. The oppressively polite woman who cannot address me without begging my pardon, can find no hard words in the vocabulary hard enough for the maid-of-all-work. "I am frightened of my life," says Number One, apologizing to me for leaving the place. "I am so little and she's so big. She heaves things at my head, she does. Work as hard as you may, you can't work hard enough for her. I must go, if you please, sir. Whatever do you think she done this morning? She up, and druv the creases at me." With these words (which I find mean in genteel English, that Mrs. Glutch has enforced her last orders to the servant by throwing a bunch of water-cresses at her head), Number One curtseys and says "Good-bye!" and goes out resignedly once again into the hard world. I follow her a little while, in imagination, with no very cheering effect on my spirits—for what do I see awaiting her at each stage of her career? Alas, for Number One, it is always a figure in the likeness of Mrs. Glutch.

Number Two fairly baffles me. I see her grin perpetually at me, and imagine, at first, that I am regarded by her in the light of a new kind of impostor, who shams illness as a way of amusing himself. But I soon discover that she grins at everything—at the fire that she lights, at the cloth she lays for dinner, at the medicine-bottles she brings upstairs, at the furibund visage of Mrs. Glutch, ready to drive whole baskets full of creases at her head every morning. Looking at her with the eye of an artist, I am obliged to admit that Number Two is, as the painters say, out of drawing. The longest things about her are her arms; the thickest thing about her is her waist. It is impossible to believe that she has any legs, and it is not easy to find out the substitute which, in the absence of a neck,

is used to keep her big head from rolling off her round shoulders. I try to make her talk, but only succeed in encouraging her to grin at me. Have ceaseless foul words, and ceaseless dirty work clouded over all the little light that has ever been let in on her mind? I suspect that it is so, but I have no time to acquire any positive information on the subject. At the end of Number Two's first week of service, Mrs. Glutch discovers, to her horror and indignation, that the new maid-of-all-work possesses nothing in the shape of wearing-apparel, except the worn-out garments actually on her back; and, to make matters worse, a lady-lodger in the parlour misses one of a pair of lace-cuffs, and feels sure that the servant has taken it. There is not a particle of evidence to support this view of the case; but Number Two being destitute, is consequently condemned without a trial, and dismissed without a character. She too wanders off forlorn into a world that has no haven of rest or voice of welcome for her—wanders off, without so much as a dirty bundle in her hand—wanders off, voiceless, with the unchanging grin on the smut-covered face. How shocked we should all be, if we opened a book about a savage country, and saw a portrait of Number Two in the frontispiece as a specimen of the female population!

Number Three comes to us all the way from Wales; arrives late one evening, and is found at seven the next morning, crying as if she would break her heart, on the door-step. It is the first time she has been away from home. She has not got used yet to being a forlorn castaway among strangers. She misses the cows of a morning, the blessed fields with the blush of sunrise on them, the familiar faces, the familiar sounds, the familiar cleanliness of her country home. There is not the faintest echo of mother's voice, or of father's sturdy footfall here. Sweetheart John Jones is hundreds of miles away; and little brother Joe toddles up door-steps far from these to clamour for the breakfast which he shall get this morning from other than his sister's hands. Is there nothing to cry for in this? Absolutely nothing, as Mrs. Glutch thinks. What does this Welsh barbarian mean by clinging to my area-railings when she ought to be lighting the fire; by sobbing in full view of the public of Smeary Street when the lodgers' bells are ringing angrily for breakfast? Will nothing get the girl in-doors? Yes, a few kind words from the woman who passes by her with my breakfast will. She knows that the Welsh girl is hungry as well as home-sick, questions her, finds out that she has had no supper after her long journey, and that she has been used to breakfast with the sunrise at the farm in Wales. A few merciful words lure her away from the railings, and a little food inaugurates the process of breaking her in to London service. She has but a few days allowed her, however, to practise the virtue of dogged resignation in her first place. Before she has given me many

opportunities of studying her character, before she has done knitting her brows with the desperate mental effort of trying to comprehend the mystery of my illness, before the smut has fairly settled on her rosy cheeks, before the London dirt has dimmed the pattern on her neat print gown, she, too, is cast adrift into the world. She has not suited Mrs. Glutch (being, as I imagine, too offensively clean to form an appropriate part of the kitchen furniture)—a friendly maid-of-all-work, in service near us, has heard of a place for her—and she is forthwith sent away to be dirtied and deadened down to her proper social level in another Lodging-house.

With her, my studies of character among maids-of-all-work come to an end. I hear vague rumours of the arrival of Number Four. But before she appears, I have got the doctor's leave to move into the country, and have terminated my experience of London lodgings, by making my escape with all convenient speed from the perpetual presence and persecutions of Mrs. Glutch. I have witnessed some sad sights during my stay in Smeary Street, which have taught me to feel for my poor and forlorn fellow-creatures as I do not think I ever felt for them before, and which have inclined me to doubt for the first time whether worse calamities might not have overtaken me than the hardship of falling ill.

SKETCHES OF CHARACTER.—II.
A SHOCKINGLY RUDE ARTICLE.

[Communicated by A Charming Woman.]

Before I begin to write, I know that this will be an unpopular composition in certain select quarters. I mean to proceed with it, however, in spite of that conviction, because when I have got something on my mind, I must positively speak. Is it necessary, after that, to confess that I am a woman? If it is, I make the confession—to my sorrow. I would much rather be a man.

I hope nobody will be misled by my beginning in this way, into thinking that I am an advocate of the rights of women. Ridiculous creatures! they have too many rights already; and if they don't hold their chattering tongues, one of these days the poor dear deluded men will find them out.

The poor dear men! Mentioning them reminds me of what I have got to say. I have been staying at the seaside, and reading an immense quantity of novels and periodicals, and all that sort of thing, lately; and my idea is, that the men-writers (the only writers worth reading) are in the habit of using each other very unfairly in books and articles, and so on. Look where I may, I find, for instance, that the large proportion of the bad characters in their otherwise very charming stories, are always men. As if women were not a great deal worse! Then, again, most of the amusing fools in their books are, strangely and unaccountably, of their own sex, in spite of its being perfectly apparent that the vast majority of that sort of character is to be found in ours. On the other hand, while they make out their own half of humanity (as I have distinctly proved) a great deal too bad, they go to the contrary extreme the other way, and make out our half a great deal too good. What in the world do they mean by representing us as so much better, and so much prettier, than we really are? Upon my word, when I see what angels the dear nice good men make of their heroines, and when I think of myself, and of the whole circle of my female friends besides, I feel quite disgusted,—I do, indeed.

I should very much like to go into the whole of this subject at once, and speak

my sentiments on it at the fullest length. But I will spare the reader, and try to be satisfied with going into a part of the subject instead; for, considering that I am a woman, and making immense allowances for me on that account, I am really not altogether unreasonable. Give me a page or two, and I will show in one particular, and, what is more, from real life, how absurdly partial the men-writers are to our sex, and how scandalously unjust they are to their own.

Bores.—What I propose is, that we take for our present example characters of Bores alone. If we were only to read men's novels, articles, and so forth, I don't hesitate to say we should assume that all the Bores in the human creation were of the male sex. It is generally, if not always, a man, in men's books, who tells the long-winded story, and turns up at the wrong time, and makes himself altogether odious and intolerable to everybody he comes in contact with, without being in the least aware of it himself. How very unjust, and, I must be allowed to add, how extremely untrue! Women are quite as bad, or worse. Do, good gentlemen, look about you impartially, for once in a way, and own the truth. Good gracious! is not society full of Lady-Bores? Why not give them a turn when you write next?

Two instances: I will quote only two instances out of hundreds I could produce from my own acquaintance. Only two: because, as I said before, I am reasonable about not taking up room. I can put things into a very small space when I write, as well as when I travel. I should like the literary gentleman who kindly prints this (I would not allow a woman to print it for any sum of money that could be offered me) to see how very little luggage I travel with. At any rate, he shall see how little room I can cheerfully put up with in these pages.

My first Lady-Bore—see how quickly I get to the matter in hand, without wasting so much as a single line in prefatory phrases!—my first Lady-Bore is Miss Sticker. I don't in the least mind mentioning her name; because I know, if she got the chance, she would do just the same by me. It is of no use disguising the fact, so I may as well confess at once that Miss Sticker is a fright. Far be it from me to give pain where the thing can by any means be avoided; but if I were to say that Miss Sticker would ever see forty again, I should be guilty of an unwarrantable deception on the public. I have the strongest imaginable objection to mentioning the word petticoats; but if that is the only possible description of Miss Sticker's figure which conveys a true notion of its nature and composition, what am I to do? Perhaps I had better give up describing the poor thing's personal appearance. I shall get into deeper and deeper difficulties, if I attempt to go on. The very last time I was in her company, we were strolling about Regent

Street, with my sister's husband for escort. As we passed a hairdresser's shop, the dear simple man looked in, and asked me what those long tails of hair were for, that he saw hanging up in the windows. Miss Sticker, poor soul, was on his arm, and heard him put the question. I thought I should have dropped.

This is, I believe, what you call a digression. I shall let it stop in, however, because it will probably explain to the judicious reader why I carefully avoid the subject—the meagre subject, an ill-natured person might say—of Miss Sticker's hair. Suppose I pass on to what is more importantly connected with the object of these pages—suppose I describe Miss Sticker's character next.

Some extremely sensible man has observed somewhere, that a Bore is a person with one idea. Exactly so. Miss Sticker is a person with one idea. Unhappily for society, her notion is, that she is bound by the laws of politeness to join in every conversation which happens to be proceeding within the range of her ears. She has no ideas, no information, no flow of language, no tact, no power of saying the right word at the right time, even by chance. And yet she *will* converse, as she calls it. "A gentlewoman, my dear, becomes a mere cipher in society unless she can converse." That is her way of putting it; and I deeply regret to add, she is one of the few people who preach what they practise. Her course of proceeding is, first, to check the conversation by making a remark which has no kind of relation to the topic under discussion. She next stops it altogether by being suddenly at a loss for some particular word which nobody can suggest. At last the word is given up; another subject is started in despair; and the company become warmly interested in it. Just at that moment, Miss Sticker finds the lost word; screams it out triumphantly in the middle of the talk; and so scatters the second subject to the winds, exactly as she has already scattered the first.

The last time I called at my aunt's—I merely mention this by way of example—I found Miss Sticker there, and three delightful men. One was a clergyman of the dear old purple-faced Port-wine school. The other two would have looked military, if one of them had not been an engineer, and the other an editor of a newspaper. We should have had some delightful conversation if the Lady-Bore had not been present. In some way, I really forget how, we got to talking about giving credit and paying debts; and the dear old clergyman, with his twinkling eyes and his jolly voice, treated us to a professional anecdote on the subject.

"Talking about that," he began, "I married a man the other day for the third time. Man in my parish. Capital cricketer when he was young enough to run. 'What's your fee?' says he. 'Licensed marriage?' says I; 'guinea of course.'—'I've got to

bring you your tithes in three weeks, sir,' says he; 'give me tick till then.' 'All right,' says I, and married him. In three weeks he comes and pays his tithes like a man. 'Now, sir,' says he, 'about this marriage-fee, sir? I do hope you'll kindly let me off at half-price, for I have married a bitter bad 'un this time. I've got a half-a-guinea about me, sir, if you'll only please to take it. She isn't worth a farthing more—on the word of a man, she isn't, sir!' I looked hard in his face, and saw two scratches on it, and took the half-guinea, more out of pity than anything else. Lesson to me, however. Never marry a man on credit again, as long as I live. Cash on all future occasions—cash down, or no marriage!"

While he was speaking, I had my eye on Miss Sticker. Thanks to the luncheon which was on the table, she was physically incapable of "conversing" while our reverend friend was telling his humorous little anecdote. Just as he had done, and just as the editor of the newspaper was taking up the subject, she finished her chicken, and turned round from the table.

"Cash down, my dear sir, as you say," continued the editor. "You exactly describe our great principle of action in the Press. Some of the most extraordinary and amusing things happen with subscribers to newspapers——"

"Ah, the Press!" burst in Miss Sticker, beginning to converse. "What a wonderful engine! and how grateful we ought to feel when we get the paper so regularly every morning at breakfast. The only question is—at least, many people think so—I mean with regard to the Press, the only question is whether it ought to be ____"

Here Miss Sticker lost the next word, and all the company had to look for it.

"With regard to the Press, the only question is, whether it ought to be——O, dear, dear, dear me!" cried Miss Sticker, lifting both her hands in despair, "what is the word?"

"Cheaper?" suggested our reverend friend. "Hang it, ma'am! it can hardly be that, when it is down to a penny already."

"O no; not cheaper," said Miss Sticker.

"More independent?" inquired the editor. "If you mean that, I defy anybody to find more fearless exposures of corruption——"

"No, no!" cried Miss Sticker, in an agony of polite confusion. "I didn't mean that. More independent wasn't the word."

"Better printed?" suggested the engineer.

"On better paper?" added my aunt.

"It can't be done—if you refer to the cheap press—it can't be done for the money," interposed the editor, irritably.

"O, but that's not it!" continued Miss Sticker, wringing her bony fingers, with horrid black mittens on them. "I didn't mean to say better printed, or better paper. It was one word I meant, not two.—With regard to the Press," pursued Miss Sticker, repeating her own ridiculous words carefully, as an aid to memory, "the only question is, whether it ought to be——Bless my heart, how extraordinary! Well, well, never mind: I'm quite shocked, and ashamed of myself. Pray go on talking, and don't notice me."

It was all very well to say, Go on talking; but the editor's amusing story about subscribers to newspapers, had been, by this time, fatally interrupted. As usual, Miss Sticker had stopped us in full flow. The engineer considerately broke the silence by starting another subject.

"Here are some wedding-cards on your table," he said, to my aunt, "which I am very glad to see there. The bridegroom is an old friend of mine. His wife is really a beauty. You know how he first became acquainted with her? No? It was quite an adventure, I assure you. One evening he was on the Brighton Railway; last down train. A lovely girl in the carriage; our friend Dilberry immensely struck with her. Got her to talk after a long time, with great difficulty. Within half an hour of Brighton, the lovely girl smiles, and says to our friend, 'Shall we be very long now, sir, before we get to Gravesend?' Case of confusion at that dreadful London Bridge Terminus. Dilberry explained that she would be at Brighton in half an hour, upon which the lovely girl instantly and properly burst into tears. 'O, what shall I do! O, what will my friends think!' Second flood of tears. —'Suppose you telegraph?' says Dilberry soothingly.—'O, but I don't know how!' says the lovely girl. Out comes Dilberry's pocket-book. Sly dog! he saw his way now to finding out who her friends were. 'Pray let me write the necessary message for you,' says Dilberry. 'Who shall I direct to at Gravesend?'—'My father and mother are staying there with some friends,' says the lovely girl. 'I came up with a day-ticket, and I saw a crowd of people when I came back to the station, all going one way, and I was hurried and frightened, and nobody told me, and it was late in the evening, and the bell was ringing, and, O Heavens! what will become of me!' Third burst of tears.—'We will telegraph

to your father,' says Dilberry. 'Pray don't distress yourself. Only tell me who your father is.'—'Thank you a thousand times,' says the lovely girl, 'my father is ____'"

"ANONYMOUS!" shouts Miss Sticker, producing her lost word with a perfect burst of triumph. "How glad I am I remembered it at last! Bless me," exclaims the Lady-Bore, quite unconscious that she has brought the engineer's story to an abrupt conclusion, by giving his distressed damsel an anonymous father; "Bless me! what are you all laughing at? I only meant to say that the question with regard to the Press was, whether it ought to be anonymous. What in the world is there to laugh at in that? I really don't see the joke."

And this woman escapes scot-free, while comparatively innocent men are held up to ridicule, in novel after novel, by dozens at a time! When will the deluded male writers see my sex in its true colours, and describe it accordingly? When will Miss Sticker take her proper place in the literature of England?

My second Lady-Bore is that hateful creature, Mrs. Tincklepaw. Where, over the whole interesting surface of male humanity (including Cannibals)—where is the man to be found whom it would not be scandalous to mention in the same breath with Mrs. Tincklepaw? The great delight of this shocking woman's life, is to squabble with her husband (poor man, he has my warmest sympathy and best good wishes), and then to bring the quarrel away from home with her, and to let it off again at society in general, in a series of short spiteful hints. Mrs. Tincklepaw is the exact opposite of Miss Sticker. She is a very little woman; she is (and more shame for her, considering how she acts) young enough to be Miss Sticker's daughter; and she has a kind of snappish tact in worrying innocent people, under every possible turn of circumstances, which distinguishes her (disgracefully) from the poor feeble-minded Maid-Bore, to whom the reader has been already introduced. Here are some examples—all taken, be it observed, from my own personal observation—of the manner in which Mrs. Tincklepaw contrives to persecute her harmless fellow-creatures wherever she happens to meet with them:

Let us say I am out walking, and I happen to meet Mr. and Mrs. Tincklepaw. (By the bye, she never lets her husband out of her sight—he is too necessary to the execution of her schemes of petty torment. And such a noble creature, to be used for so base a purpose! He stands six feet two, and is additionally distinguished by a glorious and majestic stoutness, which has no sort of connection with the comparatively comic element of fat. His nature, considering what a wife he has

comparatively comic element of fat. His nature, considering what a wife he has got, is inexcusably meek and patient. Instead of answering her, he strokes his magnificent flaxen whiskers, and looks up resignedly at the sky. I sometimes fancy that he stands too high to hear what his dwarf of a wife says. For his sake, poor man, I hope this view of the matter may be the true one.)

I am afraid I have contrived to lose myself in a long parenthesis. Where was I? O! out walking and happening to meet with Mr. and Mrs. Tincklepaw. She has had a quarrel with her husband at home, and this is how she contrives to let me know it.

"Delightful weather, dear, is it not?" I say, as we shake hands.

"Charming, indeed," says Mrs. Tincklepaw. "Do you know, love, I am so glad you made that remark to me, and not to Mr. Tincklepaw?"

"Really?" I ask. "Pray tell me why?"

"Because," answers the malicious creature, "if you had said it was a fine day to Mr. Tincklepaw, I should have been so afraid of his frowning at you directly, and saying, 'Stuff! talk of something worth listening to, if you talk at all.' What a love of a bonnet you have got on! and how Mr. Tincklepaw would have liked to be staying in your house when you were getting ready to-day to go out. He would have waited for you so patiently, dear. He would never have stamped in the passage; and no such words as, 'Deuce take the woman! is she going to keep me here all day?' would by any possibility have escaped his lips. Don't love! don't look at the shops, while Mr. Tincklepaw is with us. He might say, 'Oh, bother! you're always wanting to buy something!' I shouldn't like that to happen. Should you, dear?"

Once more. Say I meet Mr. and Mrs. Tincklepaw at a dinner-party, given in honour of a bride and bridegroom. From the instant when she enters the house, Mrs. Tincklepaw never has her eye off the young couple. She looks at them with an expression of heart-broken curiosity. Whenever they happen to speak to each other, she instantly suspends any conversation in which she is engaged, and listens to them with a mournful eagerness. When the ladies retire, she gets the bride into a corner; appropriates her to herself for the rest of the evening; and persecutes the wretched young woman in this manner:—

"May I ask, is this your first dinner, since you came back?"

"O, no! we have been in town for some weeks."

"Indeed? I should really have thought, now, that this was your first dinner."

"Should you? I can't imagine why."

"How very odd, when the reason is as plain as possible! Why, I noticed you all dinner time, eating and drinking what you liked, without looking at your husband for orders. I saw nothing rebellious in your face when you eat all these nice sweet things at dessert. Dear! dear! don't you understand? Do you really mean to say that your husband has not begun yet? Did he not say, as you drove here to day, 'Now, mind, I'm not going to have another night's rest broken, because you always choose to make yourself ill with stuffing creams and sweets, and all that sort of thing?' No!!! Mercy on me, what an odd man he must be! Perhaps he waits till he gets home again? O, come, come, you don't mean to tell me that he doesn't storm at you frightfully, for having every one of your glasses filled with wine, and then never touching a drop of it, but asking for cold water instead, at the very elbow of the master of the house? If he says, 'Cursed perversity, and want of proper tact' once, *I* know he says it a dozen times. And as for treading on your dress in the hall, and then bullying you before the servant, for not holding it up out of his way, it's too common a thing to be mentioned—isn't it? Did you notice Mr. Tincklepaw particularly? Ah, you did, and you thought he looked good-natured? No! no! don't say any more; don't say you know better than to trust to appearances. Please do take leave of all common sense and experience, and pray trust to appearances, without thinking of their invariable deceitfulness, this once. Do, dear, to oblige *me*."

I might fill pages with similar examples of the manners and conversation of this intolerable Lady-Bore. I might add other equally aggravating characters, to her character and to Miss Sticker's, without extending my researches an inch beyond the circle of my own acquaintance. But I am true to my unfeminine resolution to write as briefly as if I were a man; and I feel that I have said enough, already, to show that I can prove my case. When a woman like me can produce, without the least hesitation, or the slightest difficulty, two such instances of Lady-Bores as I have just exhibited, the additional number which she might pick out of her list, after a little mature reflection, may be logically inferred by all impartial readers.

In the meantime, let me hope I have succeeded sufficiently well in my present purpose to induce our next great satirist to pause before he, too, attacks his harmless fellow-men, and to make him turn his withering glance in the direction of our sex. Let all rising young gentlemen who are racking their brains in search of originality, take the timely hint which I have given them in these pages. Let us

have a new fictitious literature, in which not only the Bores shall be women, but the villains too. Look at Shakespeare—do, pray, look at Shakespeare. Who is most in fault, in that shocking business of the murder of King Duncan? Lady Macbeth, to be sure! Look at King Lear, with a small family of only three daughters, and two of the three, wretches; and even the third an aggravating girl, who can't be commonly civil to her own father in the first Act, out of sheer contradiction, because her elder sisters happen to have been civil before her. Look at Desdemona, who falls in love with a horrid copper-coloured foreigner, and then, like a fool, instead of managing him, aggravates him into smothering her. Ah! Shakespeare was a great man, and knew our sex, and was not afraid to show he knew it. What a blessing it would be, if some of his literary brethren, in modern times, could muster courage enough to follow his example!

I have fifty different things to say, but I shall bring myself to a conclusion by only mentioning one of them. If it would at all contribute towards forwarding the literary reform that I advocate, to make a present of the characters of Miss Sticker and Mrs. Tincklepaw, to modern writers of fiction, I shall be delighted to abandon all right of proprietorship in those two odious women. At the same time, I think it fair to explain that when I speak of modern writers, I mean gentlemen-writers only. I wish to say nothing uncivil to the ladies who compose books, whose effusions may, by the rule of contraries, be exceedingly agreeable to male readers; but I positively forbid them to lay hands upon my two characters. I am charmed to be of use to the men, in a literary point of view, but I decline altogether to mix myself up with the women. There need be no fear of offending them by printing this candid expression of my intentions. Depend on it, they will all declare, on their sides, that they would much rather have nothing to do with *me*.

NOOKS AND CORNERS OF HISTORY.

II.
THE GREAT (FORGOTTEN) INVASION.

PREAMBLE.

It happened some sixty years ago; it was a French invasion; and it actually took place in England. Thousands of people are alive at the present moment, who ought to remember it perfectly well. And yet it has been forgotten. In these times, when the French invasion that *may* come, turns up perpetually, in public and in private, as a subject of discussion—the French invasion that *did* come, is not honoured with so much as a passing word of notice. The new generation knows nothing about it. The old generation has carelessly forgotten it. This is discreditable, and it must be set right; this is a dangerous security, and it must be disturbed; this is a gap in the Modern History of England, and it must be filled up.

Fathers and mothers, read and be reminded; British youths and maidens, read and be informed. Here follows the true history of the great forgotten Invasion of England, at the end of the last century; divided into scenes and periods, and carefully derived from proved and written facts recorded in Kelly's History of the Wars:

I. OF THE FRENCH INVASION AS SEEN FROM ILFRACOMBE.

On the twenty-second day of February, in the year seventeen hundred and ninety-seven, the inhabitants of North Devonshire looked towards the Bristol Channel, and saw the French invasion coming on, in four ships.

The Directory of the French Republic had been threatening these islands some time previously; but much talk and little action having characterised the proceedings of that governing body in most other matters, no great apprehension was felt of their really carrying out their expressed intention in relation to this country. The war between the two nations was, at this time, confined to naval

operations, in which the English invariably got the better of the French. North Devonshire (as well as the rest of England) was aware of this, and trusted implicitly in our supremacy of the seas. North Devonshire got up on the morning of the twenty-second of February, without a thought of the invasion; North Devonshire looked out towards the Bristol Channel, and there—in spite of our supremacy of the seas—there the invasion was, as large as life.

Of the four ships which the Directory had sent to conquer England, two were frigates and two were smaller vessels. This formidable fleet sailed along, in view of a whole panic-stricken, defenceless coast; and the place at which it seemed inclined to try the invading experiment first, was Ilfracombe. The commander of the expedition brought his ships up before the harbour, scuttled a few coasting vessels, prepared to destroy the rest, thought better of it, and suddenly turned his four warlike sterns on North Devonshire, in the most unaccountable manner. History is silent as to the cause of this abrupt and singular change of purpose. Did the chief of the invaders act from sheer indecision? Did he distrust the hotel accommodation at Ilfracombe? Had he heard of the clotted cream of Devonshire, and did he apprehend the bilious disorganisation of the whole army, if they once got within reach of that luscious delicacy? These are important questions, but no satisfactory answer can be found to them. The motives which animated the commander of the invading Frenchmen, are buried in oblivion: the fact alone remains, that he spared Ilfracombe. The last that was seen of him from North Devonshire, he was sailing over ruthlessly to the devoted coast of Wales.

II. Of the French Invasion as seen by Welshmen in general.

In one respect it may be said that Wales was favoured by comparison with North Devonshire. The great fact of the French invasion had burst suddenly on Ilfracombe; but it only dawned in a gradual manner on the coast of Pembrokeshire. In the course of his cruise across the Bristol Channel, it had apparently occurred to the commander of the expedition, that a little diplomatic deception, at the outset, might prove to be of ultimate advantage to him. He decided, therefore, on concealing his true character from the eyes of the Welshmen; and when his four ships were first made out, from the heights above Saint Bride's Bay, they were all sailing under British colours.

There are men in Wales, as in the rest of the world, whom it is impossible to satisfy; and there were spectators on the heights of Saint Bride's who were not satisfied with the British colours, on this occasion, because they felt doubtful about the ships that bore them. To the eyes of these sceptics all four vessels had

an unpleasantly French look, and manœuvred in an unpleasantly French manner. Wise Welshmen along the coast collected together by twos and threes, and sat down on the heights, and looked out to sea, and shook their heads, and suspected. But the majority, as usual, saw nothing extraordinary where nothing extraordinary appeared to be intended; and the country was not yet alarmed; and the four ships sailed on till they doubled Saint David's Head; and sailed on again, a few miles to the northward; and then stopped, and came to single anchor in Cardigan Bay.

Here, again, another difficult question occurs, which recalcitrant History once more declines to solve. The Frenchmen had hardly been observed to cast their single anchors in Cardigan Bay, before they were also observed to pull them up again, and go on. Why? The commander of the expedition had doubted already at Ilfracombe—was he doubting again in Cardigan Bay? Or did he merely want time to mature his plans; and was it a peculiarity of his nature that he always required to come to anchor before he could think at his ease? To this mystery, as to the mystery at Ilfracombe, there is no solution; and here, as there, nothing is certainly known but that the Frenchman paused—threatened—and then sailed on.

III. Of One Welshman in Particular, and of what he saw.

He was the only man in Great Britain who saw the invading army land on our native shores—and his name has perished.

It is known that he was a Welshman, and that he belonged to the lower order of the population. He may be still alive—this man, who is connected with a crisis in English History, may be still alive—and nobody has found him out; nobody has taken his photograph; nobody has written a genial biographical notice of him; nobody has made him into an Entertainment; nobody has held a Commemoration of him; nobody has presented him with a testimonial, relieved him by a subscription, or addressed him with a speech. In these enlightened times, this brief record can only single him out and individually distinguish him —as the Hero of the Invasion. Such is Fame.

The Hero of the Invasion, then, was standing, or sitting—for even on this important point tradition is silent—on the cliffs of the Welsh coast, near Lanonda Church, when he saw the four ships enter the bay below him, and come to anchor—this time, without showing any symptoms of getting under weigh again. The English colours, under which the Expedition had thus far attempted to deceive the population of the coast, were now hauled down, and the threatening

flag of France was boldly hoisted in their stead. This done, the boats were lowered away, were filled with a ferocious soldiery, and were pointed straight for the beach.

It is on record that the Hero of the Invasion distinctly saw this; and it is *not* on record that he ran away. Honour to the unknown brave! Honour to the solitary Welshman who faced the French army!

The boats came on straight to the beach—the ferocious soldiery leapt out on English soil, and swarmed up the cliff, thirsting for the subjugation of the British Isles. The Hero of the Invasion, watching solitary on the cliffs, saw the Frenchmen crawling up below him—tossing their muskets on before them—climbing with the cool calculation of an army of chimney-sweeps—nimble as the monkey, supple as the tiger, stealthy as the cat—hungry for plunder, bloodshed, and Welsh mutton—void of all respect for the British Constitution—an army of Invaders on the Land of the Habeas Corpus!

The Welshman saw that, and vanished. Whether he waited with clenched fist till the head of the foremost Frenchman rose parallel with the cliff-side, or whether he achieved a long start, by letting the army get half-way up the cliff, and then retreating inland to give the alarm—is, like every other circumstance in connection with the Hero of the Invasion, a matter of the profoundest doubt. It is only known that he got away at all, because it is *not* known that he was taken prisoner. He parts with us here, the shadow of a shade, the most impalpable of historical apparitions. Honour, nevertheless, to the crafty brave! Honour to the solitary Welshman who faced the French army without being shot, and retired from the French army without being caught!

IV. Of what the Invaders did when they got on shore.

The Art of Invasion has its routine, its laws, manners, and customs, like other Arts. And the French army acted strictly in accordance with established precedents. The first thing the first men did, when they got to the top of the cliff, was to strike a light and set fire to the furze-bushes. While national feeling deplores this destruction of property, unprejudiced History looks on at her ease. Given Invasion as a cause, fire follows, according to all known rules, as an effect. If an army of Englishmen had been invading France under similar circumstances, they, on their side, would necessarily have begun by setting fire to something; and unprejudiced History would, in that case also, have looked on at her ease.

While the furze-bushes were blazing, the remainder of the invaders—assured by the sight of the flames, of their companions' success so far—was disembarking, and swarming up the rocks. When it was finally mustered on the top of the cliff, the army amounted to fourteen hundred men. This was the whole force which the Directory of the French Republic had thought it desirable to despatch for the subjugation of Great Britain. History, until she is certain of results, will pronounce no opinion on the wisdom of this proceeding. She knows that nothing in politics, is abstractedly rash, cruel, treacherous, or disgraceful—she knows that Success is the sole touchstone of merit—she knows that the man who fails is contemptible, and the man who succeeds is illustrious, without any reference to the means used in either case; to the character of the men; or to the nature of the motives under which they may have proceeded to action. If the Invasion succeeds, History will applaud it as an act of heroism: if it fails, History will condemn it as an act of folly.

It has been said that the Invasion began creditably, according to the rules established in all cases of conquering. It continued to follow those rules with the most praiseworthy regularity. Having started with setting something on fire, it went on, in due course, to accomplish the other first objects of all Invasions, thieving and killing—performing much of the former, and little of the latter. Two rash Welshmen, who persisted in defending their native leeks, suffered accordingly: the rest lost nothing but their national victuals, and their national flannel. On this first day of the Invasion, when the army had done marauding, the results on both sides may be thus summed up. Gains to the French:—good dinners, and protection next the skin. Loss to the English:—mutton, stout Welsh flannel, and two rash countrymen.

V. Of the British Defence, and of the way in which the women contributed to it.

The appearance of the Frenchmen on the coast, and the loss to the English, mentioned above, produced the results naturally to be expected. The country was alarmed, and started up to defend itself.

On the numbers of the invaders being known, and on its being discovered that, though they were without field-pieces, they had with them seventy cart-loads of powder and ball, and a quantity of grenades, the principal men in the country bestirred themselves in setting up the defence. Before nightfall, all the available men who knew anything of the art of fighting were collected. When the ranks were drawn out, the English defence was even more ridiculous in point of numbers than the French attack. It amounted, at a time when we were at war

numbers than the French attack. It amounted, at a time when we were at war with France, and were supposed to be prepared for any dangers that might threaten—it amounted, including militia, fencibles, and yeomanry cavalry, to just six hundred and sixty men, or, in other words, to less than half the number of the invading Frenchmen.

Fortunately for the credit of the nation, the command of this exceedingly compact force was taken by the principal grandee in the neighbourhood. He turned out to be a man of considerable cunning, as well as a man of high rank; and he was known by the style and title of the Earl of Cawdor.

The one cheering circumstance in connection with the heavy responsibility which now rested on the shoulders of the Earl, consisted in this: that he had apparently no cause to dread internal treason as well as foreign invasion. The remarkably inconvenient spot which the French had selected for their landing, showed, not only that they themselves knew nothing of the coast, but that none of the inhabitants, who might have led them to an easier place of disembarkation, were privy to their purpose. So far so good. But still, the great difficulty remained of facing the French with an equality of numbers, and with the appearance, at least, of an equality of discipline. The first of these requisites it was easy to fulfil. There were hosts of colliers and other labourers in the neighbourhood,—big, bold, lusty fellows enough; but so far as the art of marching and using weapons was concerned, as helpless as a pack of children. The question was, how to make good use of these men for show-purposes, without allowing them fatally to embarrass the proceedings of their trained and disciplined companions. In this emergency, Lord Cawdor hit on a grand Idea. He boldly mixed the women up in the business—and it is unnecessary to add, that the business began to prosper from that lucky moment.

In those days, the wives of the Welsh labourers wore, what the wives of all classes of the community have been wearing since—red petticoats. It was Lord Cawdor's happy idea to call on these patriot-matrons to sink the question of skirts; to forego the luxurious consideration of warmth; and to turn the colliers into military men (so far as external appearances, viewed at a distance, were concerned), by taking off the wives' red petticoats and putting them over the husbands' shoulders. Where patriot-matrons are concerned, no national appeal is made in vain, and no personal sacrifice is refused. All the women seized their strings, and stepped out of their petticoats on the spot. What man in that make-shift military but must think of "home and beauty," now that he had the tenderest memento of both to grace his shoulders and jog his memory? In an inconceivably short space of time every woman was shivering, and every collier

inconceivably short space of time every woman was shivering, and every collier was turned into a soldier.

VI. Of how it all ended.

Thus recruited, Lord Cawdor marched off to the scene of action; and the patriot women, deprived of their husbands and their petticoats, retired, it is to be hoped and presumed, to the friendly shelter of bed. It was then close on nightfall, if not actually night; and the disorderly marching of the transformed colliers could not be perceived. But, when the British army took up its position, then was the time when the excellent stratagem of Lord Cawdor told at its true worth. By the uncertain light of fires and torches, the French scouts, let them venture as near as they might, could see nothing in detail. A man in a scarlet petticoat looked as soldier-like as a man in a scarlet coat, under those dusky circumstances. All that the enemy could now see were lines on lines of men in red, the famous uniform of the English army.

The council of the French braves must have been a perturbed assembly on that memorable night. Behind them, was the empty bay—for the four ships, after landing the invaders, had set sail again for France, sublimely indifferent to the fate of the fourteen hundred. Before them, there waited in battle array an apparently formidable force of British soldiers. Under them was the hostile English ground on which they were trespassers caught in the fact. Girt about by these serious perils, the discreet commander of the Invasion fell back on those safeguards of caution and deliberation of which he had already given proofs on approaching the English shore. He had doubted at Ilfracombe; he had doubted again in Cardigan Bay; and now, on the eve of the first battle, he doubted for the third time—doubted, and gave in. If History declines to receive the French commander as a hero, Philosophy opens her peaceful doors to him, and welcomes him in the character of a wise man.

At ten o'clock that night, a flag of truce appeared in the English camp, and a letter was delivered to Lord Cawdor from the prudent chief of the invaders. The letter set forth, with amazing gravity and dignity, that the circumstances under which the French troops had landed, having rendered it "unnecessary" to attempt any military operations, the commanding officer did not object to come forward generously and propose terms of capitulation. Such a message as this was little calculated to impose on any man—far less on the artful nobleman who had invented the stratagem of the red petticoats. Taking a slightly different view of the circumstances, and declining altogether to believe that the French Directory had sent fourteen hundred men over to England to divert the inhabitants by the

spectacle of a capitulation, Lord Cawdor returned for answer that he did not feel himself at liberty to treat with the French commander, except on the condition of his men surrendering as prisoners of war. On receiving this reply, the Frenchman gave an additional proof of that philosophical turn of mind which has been already claimed for him as one of his merits, by politely adopting the course which Lord Cawdor suggested. By noon the next day, the French troops were all marched off, prisoners of war—the patriot-matrons had resumed their petticoats—and the short terror of the invasion had happily passed away.

The first question that occurred to everybody, as soon as the alarm had been dissipated, was, what this extraordinary burlesque of an invasion could possibly mean. It was asserted, in some quarters, that the fourteen hundred Frenchmen had been recruited from those insurgents of La Vendée who had enlisted in the service of the Republic, who could not be trusted at home, and who were therefore despatched on the first desperate service that might offer itself abroad. Others represented the invading army as a mere gang of galley-slaves and criminals in general, who had been landed on our shores with the double purpose of annoying England and ridding France of a pack of rascals. The commander of the expedition, however, disposed of this latter theory by declaring that six hundred of his men were picked veterans from the French army, and by referring, for corroboration of this statement, to his large supplies of powder, ball, and hand-grenades, which would certainly not have been wasted, at a time when military stores were especially precious, on a gang of galley-slaves.

The truth seems to be, that the French (who were even more densely ignorant of England and English institutions at that time than they are at this) had been so entirely deceived by false reports of the temper and sentiments of our people, as to believe that the mere appearance of the troops of the Republic on these Monarchical shores, would be the signal for a revolutionary rising of all the disaffected classes from one end of Great Britain to the other. Viewed merely as materials for kindling the insurrectionary spark, the fourteen hundred Frenchmen might certainly be considered sufficient for the purpose—providing the Directory of the Republic could only have made sure beforehand that the English tinder might be depended on to catch light!

One last event must be recorded before this History can be considered complete. The disasters of the invading army, on shore, were matched, at sea, by the disasters of the vessels that had carried them. Of the four ships which had alarmed the English coast, the two largest (the frigates) were both captured, as they were standing in for Brest Harbour, by Sir Harry Neale. This smart and

final correction of the fractious little French invasion was administered on the ninth of March, seventeen hundred and ninety-seven.

MORAL.

This is the history of the Great (Forgotten) Invasion. It is short, it is not impressive, it is unquestionably deficient in serious interest. But there is a Moral to be drawn from it, nevertheless. If we are invaded again, and on a rather larger scale, let us not be so ill-prepared, this next time, as to be obliged to take refuge in our wives' red petticoats.

CURIOSITIES OF LITERATURE.—I.
THE UNKNOWN PUBLIC.

Do the customers at publishing-houses, the members of book-clubs and circulating libraries, and the purchasers and borrowers of newspapers and reviews, compose altogether the great bulk of the reading public of England? There was a time when, if anybody had put this question to me, I, for one, should certainly have answered, Yes.

I know better now. So far from composing the bulk of English readers, the public just mentioned represents nothing more than the minority.

This startling discovery dawned upon me gradually. I made my first approaches towards it, in walking about London, more especially in the second and third rate neighbourhoods. At such times, whenever I passed a small stationer's or small tobacconist's shop, I became mechanically conscious of certain publications which invariably occupied the windows. These publications all appeared to be of the same small quarto size; they seemed to consist merely of a few unbound pages; each one of them had a picture on the upper half of the front leaf, and a quantity of small print on the under. I noticed just as much as this, for some time, and no more. None of the gentlemen who profess to guide my taste in literary matters, had ever directed my attention towards these mysterious publications. My favourite Review is, as I firmly believe, at this very day, unconscious of their existence. My enterprising librarian—who forces all sorts of books on my attention that I don't want to read, because he has bought whole editions of them a great bargain—has never yet tried me with the limp unbound picture-quarto of the small shops. Day after day, and week after week, the mysterious publications haunted my walks, go where I might; and, still, I was too careless to stop and notice them in detail. I left London and travelled about England. The neglected publications followed me. There they were in every town, large or small. I saw them in fruit-shops, in oyster-shops, in cigar-shops, in lozenge-shops. Villages even—picturesque, strong-smelling villages—were not free from them. Wherever the speculative daring of one man could open a shop, and the human appetites and necessities of his fellow-mortals could keep it from

shutting up again—there, as it appeared to me, the unbound picture-quarto instantly entered, set itself up obtrusively in the window, and insisted on being looked at by everybody. "Buy me, borrow me, stare at me, steal me. Oh, inattentive stranger, do anything but pass me by!"

Under this sort of compulsion, it was not long before I began to stop at shop-windows and look attentively at these all-pervading specimens of what was to me a new species of literary production. I made acquaintance with one of them among the deserts of West Cornwall; with another in a populous thoroughfare of Whitechapel; with a third in a dreary little lost town at the north of Scotland. I went into a lovely county of South Wales; the modest railway had not penetrated to it, but the audacious picture-quarto had found it out. Who could resist this perpetual, this inevitable, this magnificently unlimited appeal to notice and patronage? From looking in at the windows of the shops, I got on to entering the shops themselves—to buying specimens of this locust-flight of small publications—to making strict examination of them from the first page to the last—and finally, to instituting inquiries about them in all sorts of well-informed quarters. The result has been the discovery of an Unknown Public; a public to be counted by millions; the mysterious, the unfathomable, the universal public of the penny-novel-Journals.[2]

I have five of these journals now before me, represented by one sample copy, bought hap-hazard, of each. There are many more; but these five represent the successful and well-established members of the literary family. The eldest of them is a stout lad of fifteen years' standing. The youngest is an infant of three months old. All five are sold at the same price of one penny; all five are published regularly once a week; all five contain about the same quantity of matter. The weekly circulation of the most successful of the five, is now publicly advertised (and, as I am informed, without exaggeration) at half a Million. Taking the other four as attaining altogether to a circulation of another half million (which is probably much under the right estimate) we have a sale of a Million weekly for five penny journals. Reckoning only three readers to each copy sold, the result is *a public of three millions*—a public unknown to the literary world; unknown, as disciples, to the whole body of professed critics; unknown, as customers, at the great libraries and the great publishing-houses; unknown, as an audience, to the distinguished English writers of our own time. A reading public of three millions which lies right out of the pale of literary civilisation, is a phenomenon worth examining—a mystery which the sharpest man among us may not find it easy to solve.

In the first place, who are the three millions—the Unknown Public—as I have ventured to call them?

The known reading public—the minority already referred to—are easily discovered and classified. There is the religious public, with booksellers and literature of its own, which includes reviews and newspapers as well as books. There is the public which reads for information, and devotes itself to Histories, Biographies, Essays, Treatises, Voyages and Travels. There is the public which reads for amusement, and patronises the Circulating Libraries and the railway book-stalls. There is, lastly, the public which reads nothing but newspapers. We all know where to lay our hands on the people who represent these various classes. We see the books they like on their tables. We meet them out at dinner, and hear them talk of their favourite authors. We know, if we are at all conversant with literary matters, even the very districts of London in which certain classes of people live who are to be depended upon beforehand as the picked readers for certain kinds of books. But what do we know of the enormous outlawed majority—of the lost literary tribes—of the prodigious, the overwhelming three millions? Absolutely nothing.

I myself—and I say it to my sorrow—have a very large circle of acquaintance. Ever since I undertook the interesting task of exploring the Unknown Public, I have been trying to discover among my dear friends and my bitter enemies (both alike on my visiting list), a subscriber to a penny-novel-journal—and I have never yet succeeded in the attempt. I have heard theories started as to the probable existence of penny-novel-journals in kitchen dressers, in the back parlours of Easy Shaving Shops, in the greasy seclusion of the boxes at the small Chop Houses. But I have never yet met with any man, woman, or child who could answer the inquiry, "Do you subscribe to a penny journal?" plainly in the affirmative, and who could produce the periodical in question. I have learnt, years ago, to despair of ever meeting with a single woman, after a certain age, who has not had an offer of marriage. I have given up, long since, all idea of ever discovering a man who has himself seen a ghost, as distinguished from that other inevitable man who has had a bosom friend who has unquestionably seen one. These are two among many other aspirations of a wasted life which I have definitely resigned. I have now to add one more to the number of my vanished illusions.

In the absence, therefore, of any positive information on the subject, it is only possible to pursue the present investigation by accepting such negative evidence as may help us to guess with more or less accuracy, at the social position, the

habits, the tastes, and the average intelligence of the Unknown Public. Arguing carefully by inference, we may hope, in this matter, to arrive at something like a safe, if not a satisfactory, conclusion.

To begin with, it may be fairly assumed—seeing that the staple commodity of each one of the five journals before me, is composed of Stories—that the Unknown Public reads for its amusement more than for its information.

Judging by my own experience, I should be inclined to add, that the Unknown Public looks to quantity rather than quality in spending its penny a-week on literature. In buying my five specimen copies, at five different shops, I purposely approached the individual behind the counter, on each occasion, in the character of a member of the Unknown Public—say, Number Three Million and One—who wished to be guided in laying out a penny entirely by the recommendation of the shopkeeper himself. I expected, by this course of proceeding, to hear a little popular criticism, and to get at what the conditions of success might be, in a branch of literature which was quite new to me. No such result rewarded my efforts in any case. The dialogue between buyer and seller always took some such practical turn as this:

Reader, Number Three Million and One.—"I want to take in one of the penny journals. Which do you recommend?"

Enterprising Publisher.—"Some likes one, and some likes another. They're all good pennorths. Seen this one?"

"Yes."

"Seen that one?"

"No."

"Look what a pennorth!"

"Yes—but about the stories in this one? Are they as good, now, as the stories in that one?"

"Well, you see, some likes one, and some likes another. Sometimes I sells more of one, and sometimes I sells more of another. Take 'em all the year round, and there ain't a pin, as I knows of, to choose between 'em. There's just about as much in one as there is in another. All good pennorths. Bless your soul, just take 'em up and look for yourself! All good pennorths, choose where you like!"

I never got any farther than this, try as I might. And yet, I found the shopkeepers, both men and women, ready enough to talk on other topics. On each occasion, so far from receiving any practical hints that I was interrupting business, I found myself sociably delayed in the shop, after I had made my purchase, as if I had been an old acquaintance. I got all sorts of curious information on all sorts of subjects,—excepting the good pennorth of print in my pocket. Does the reader know the singular facts in connection with Everton Toffey? It is like Eau de Cologne. There is only one genuine receipt for making it, in the world. It has been a family inheritance from remote antiquity. You may go here, there, and everywhere, and buy what you think is Everton Toffey (or Eau de Cologne); but there is only one place in London, as there is only one place in Cologne, at which you can obtain the genuine article. That information was given me at one penny-journal shop. At another, the proprietor explained his new system of Staymaking to me. He offered to provide my wife with something that would support her muscles and not pinch her flesh; and, what was more, he was not the man to ask for his bill, afterwards, except in the case of giving both of us perfect satisfaction. This man was so talkative and intelligent: he could tell me all about so many other things besides stays, that I took it for granted he could give me the information of which I stood in need. But here again I was disappointed. He had a perfect snow-drift of penny journals all over his counter—he snatched them up by handfuls, and gesticulated with them cheerfully; he smacked and patted them, and brushed them all up in a heap, to express to me that "the whole lot would be worked off by the evening;" but he, too, when I brought him to close quarters, only repeated the one inevitable form of words: "A good pennorth; that's all I can say! Bless your soul, look at any one of them for yourself, and see what a pennorth it is!"

Having, inferentially, arrived at the two conclusions that the Unknown Public reads for amusement, and that it looks to quantity in its reading, rather than to quality, I might have found it difficult to proceed further towards the making of new discoveries, but for the existence of a very remarkable aid to inquiry, which is common to all the penny-novel-journals alike.

The peculiar facilities to which I now refer, are presented in the Answers to Correspondents. The page containing these is, beyond all comparison, the most interesting page in the penny journals. There is no earthly subject that it is possible to discuss, no private affair that it is possible to conceive, which the inscrutable Unknown Public will not confide to the Editor in the form of a question, and which the editor will not set himself seriously and resolutely to

answer. Hidden under cover of initials, or Christian names, or conventional signatures—such as Subscriber, Constant Reader, and so forth—the editor's correspondents seem, many of them, to judge by the published answers to their questions, utterly impervious to the senses of ridicule or shame. Young girls beset by perplexities which are usually supposed to be reserved for a mother's or an elder sister's ear, consult the editor. Married women who have committed little frailties, consult the editor. Male jilts in deadly fear of actions for breach of promise of marriage, consult the editor. Ladies whose complexions are on the wane, and who wish to know the best artificial means of restoring them, consult the editor. Gentlemen who want to dye their hair, and get rid of their corns, consult the editor. Inconceivably dense ignorance, inconceivably petty malice, and inconceivably complacent vanity, all consult the editor, and all, wonderful to relate, get serious answers from him. No mortal position is too difficult for this wonderful man; there is no change of character as general referee, which he is not prepared to assume on the instant. Now he is a father, now a mother, now a schoolmaster, now a confessor, now a doctor, now a lawyer, now a young lady's confidante, now a young gentleman's bosom friend, now a lecturer on morals, and now an authority in cookery.

However, our present business is not with the editor, but with his readers. As a means of getting at the average intelligence of the Unknown Public—as a means of testing the general amount of education which they have acquired, and of ascertaining what share of taste and delicacy they have inherited from Nature—these extraordinary Answers to Correspondents may fairly be produced in detail, to serve us for a guide. I must premise, that I have not maliciously hunted them up out of many numbers; I have merely looked into my five sample copies of five separate journals,—all, I repeat, bought, accidentally, just as they happened to catch my attention in the shop windows. I have not waited for bad specimens, or anxiously watched for good: I have impartially taken my chance. And now, just as impartially, I dip into one journal after another, on the Correspondents' page, exactly as the five happen to lie on my desk. The result is, that I have the pleasure of presenting to those ladies and gentlemen who may honour me with their attention, the following members of the Unknown Public, who are in a condition to speak quite unreservedly for themselves:—

A reader of a penny-novel-journal who wants a receipt for gingerbread. A reader who complains of fulness in his throat. Several readers who want cures for grey hair, for warts, for sores on the head, for nervousness, and for worms. Two readers who have trifled with Woman's Affections, and who want to know if

Woman can sue them for breach of promise of marriage. A reader who wants to know what the sacred initials I. H. S. mean, and how to get rid of small-pox marks. Another reader who desires to be informed what an esquire is. Another who cannot tell how to pronounce picturesque and acquiescence. Another who requires to be told that *chiar'oscuro* is a term used by painters. Three readers who want to know how to soften ivory, how to get a divorce, and how to make black varnish. A reader who is not certain what the word Poems means; not certain that Mazeppa was written by Lord Byron; not certain whether there are such things in the world as printed and published Lives of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Two afflicted readers, well worthy of a place by themselves, who want a receipt apiece for the cure of knock-knees; and who are referred (it is to be hoped, by a straight-legged editor) to a former answer, addressed to other sufferers, which contains the information they require.

Two readers respectively unaware, until the editor has enlightened them, that the author of Robinson Crusoe was Daniel Defoe, and the author of the Irish Melodies, Thomas Moore. Another reader, a trifle denser, who requires to be told that the histories of Greece and Rome are ancient histories, and the histories of France and England modern histories.

A reader who wants to know the right hour of the day at which to visit a newly-married couple. A reader who wants a receipt for liquid blacking.

A lady reader who expresses her sentiments prettily on crinoline. Another lady reader who wants to know how to make crumpets. Another who has received presents from a gentleman to whom she is not engaged, and who wants the editor to tell her whether she is right or wrong. Two lady readers who require lovers, and wish the editor to provide them. Two timid girls, who are respectively afraid of a French invasion and dragon-flies.

A Don Juan of a reader who wants the private address of a certain actress. A reader with a noble ambition who wishes to lecture, and wants to hear of an establishment at which he can buy discourses ready-made. A natty reader, who wants German polish for boots and shoes. A sore-headed reader, who is editorially advised to use soap and warm water. A virtuous reader, who writes to condemn married women for listening to compliments, and who is informed by an equally virtuous editor that his remarks are neatly expressed. A guilty (female) reader, who confides her frailties to a moral editor, and shocks him. A pale-faced reader, who asks if she shall darken her skin. Another pale-faced

reader, who asks if she shall put on rouge. An undecided reader, who asks if there is any inconsistency in a dancing-mistress being a teacher at a Sunday-school. A bashful reader, who has been four years in love with a lady, and has not yet mentioned it to her. A speculative reader who wishes to know if he can sell lemonade without a licence. An uncertain reader, who wants to be told whether he had better declare his feelings frankly and honourably at once. An indignant female reader, who reviles all the gentlemen in her neighbourhood because they don't take the ladies out. A scorbutic reader, who wants to be cured. A pimply reader in the same condition. A jilted reader, who writes to know what his best revenge may be, and who is advised by a wary editor to try indifference. A domestic reader, who wishes to be told the weight of a newly-born child. An inquisitive reader, who wants to know if the name of David's mother is mentioned in the Scriptures.

Here are ten editorial sentiments on things in general, which are pronounced at the express request of correspondents, and which are therefore likely to be of use in assisting us to form an estimate of the intellectual condition of the Unknown Public:

1. All months are lucky to marry in, when your union is hallowed by love.

2. When you have a sad trick of blushing on being introduced to a young lady, and when you want to correct the habit, summon to your aid a manly confidence.

3. If you want to write neatly, do not bestow too much ink on occasional strokes.

4. You should not shake hands with a lady on your first introduction to her.

5. You can sell ointment without a patent.

6. A widow should at once and most decidedly discourage the lightest attentions on the part of a married man.

7. A rash and thoughtless girl will scarcely make a steady thoughtful wife.

8. We do not object to a moderate quantity of crinoline.

9. A sensible and honourable man never flirts himself, and ever despises flirts of the other sex.

10. A collier will not better his condition by going to Prussia.

At the risk of being wearisome, I must once more repeat that these selections

from the Answers to Correspondents, incredibly absurd as they may appear, are presented *exactly as I find them*. Nothing is exaggerated for the sake of a joke; nothing is invented, or misquoted, to serve the purpose of any pet theory of my own. The sample produced of the three million penny readers is left to speak for itself; to give some idea of the social and intellectual materials of which a portion, at least, of the Unknown Public may fairly be presumed to be composed. Having so far disposed of this first part of the matter in hand, the second part follows naturally enough of its own accord. We have all of us formed some opinion by this time on the subject of the Public itself: the next thing to do is to find out what that Public reads.

I have already said that the staple commodity of the journals appears to be formed of stories. The five specimen copies of the five separate weekly publications now before me, contain, altogether, ten serial stories; one reprint of a famous novel (to be hereafter referred to); and seven short tales, each of which begins and ends in one number. The remaining pages are filled up with miscellaneous contributions, in literature and art, drawn from every conceivable source. Pickings from Punch and Plato; wood-engravings, representing notorious people and views of famous places, which strongly suggest that the original blocks have seen better days in other periodicals; modern and ancient anecdotes; short memoirs; scraps of poetry; choice morsels of general information; household receipts, riddles, and extracts from moral writers—all appear in the most orderly manner, arranged under separate heads, and cut up neatly into short paragraphs. However, the prominent feature in each journal is the serial story, which is placed, in every case, as the first article, and which is illustrated by the only wood-engraving that appears to have been expressly cut for the purpose. To the serial story, therefore, we may fairly devote our chief attention, because it is clearly regarded as the chief attraction of these very singular publications.

Two of my specimen-copies contained, respectively, the first chapters of new stories. In the case of the other three, I found the stories in various stages of progress. The first thing that struck me, after reading the separate weekly portions of all five, was their extraordinary sameness. Each portion purported to be written (and no doubt was written) by a different author, and yet all five might have been produced by the same man. Each part of each successive story, settled down in turn, as I read it, to the same dead level of the smoothest and flattest conventionality. A combination of fierce melodrama and meek domestic sentiment; short dialogues and paragraphs on the French pattern, with moral English reflections of the sort that occur on the top lines of children's copy-

books; incidents and characters taken from the old exhausted mines of the circulating library, and presented as complacently and confidently as if they were original ideas; descriptions and reflections for the beginning of the number, and a "strong situation," dragged in by the neck and shoulders, for the end—formed the common literary sources from which the five authors drew their weekly supply; all collecting it by the same means; all carrying it in the same quantities; all pouring it out before the attentive public in the same way. After reading my samples of these stories, I understood why it was that the fictions of the regularly-established writers for the penny journals are never republished. There is, I honestly believe, no man, woman, or child in England, not a member of the Unknown Public, who could be got to read them. The one thing which it is possible to advance in their favour is, that there is apparently no wickedness in them. There seems to be an intense in-dwelling respectability in their dulness. If they lead to no intellectual result, even of the humblest kind, they may have, at least, this negative advantage, that they can do no harm.

If it be objected that I am condemning these stories after having merely read one number of each of them, I have only to ask in return, whether anybody ever waits to go all through a novel before passing an opinion on the goodness or the badness of it? In the latter case, we throw the story down before we get through it, and that is its condemnation. There is room enough for promise, if not for performance, in any one part of any one genuine work of fiction. If I had found the smallest promise in the style, in the dialogue, in the presentation of character, in the arrangement of incident, in any of the five specimens of cheap fiction before me, each one of which extended, on the average, to ten columns of small print, I should have gone on gladly to the next number. But I discovered nothing of the kind; and I put down my weekly sample, just as an editor, under similar circumstances, puts down a manuscript, after getting through a certain number of pages—or a reader a book.

And this sort of writing appeals to a monster audience of at least three millions! Has a better sort ever been tried? It has. The former proprietor of one of these penny journals commissioned a thoroughly competent person to translate The Count of Monte Christo for his periodical. He knew that there was hardly a language in the civilised world into which that consummate specimen of the rare and difficult art of story-telling had not been translated. In France, in England, in America, in Russia, in Germany, in Italy, in Spain, Alexandre Dumas had held hundreds of thousands of readers breathless. The proprietor of the penny journal naturally thought that he could do as much with the Unknown Public. Strange to

say, the result of this apparently certain experiment was a failure. The circulation of the journal in question seriously decreased from the time when the first of living story-tellers became a contributor to it! The same experiment was tried with the Mysteries of Paris and the Wandering Jew, only to produce the same result. Another penny journal gave Dumas a commission to write a new story, expressly for translation in its columns. The speculation was tried, and once again the inscrutable Unknown Public held back the hand of welcome from the spoilt child of a whole world of novel-readers.

How is this to be accounted for?

Does a rigid moral sense permeate the Unknown Public from one end of it to the other, and did the productions of the French novelists shock that sense from the very outset? The page containing the Answers to Correspondents would be enough in itself to dispose of this theory. But there are other and better means of arriving at the truth, which render any further reference to the Correspondents' page unnecessary. Some time since, an eminent novelist (the only living English author, with a literary position, who had, at that time, written for the Unknown Public) produced his new novel in a penny journal. No shadow of a moral objection has ever been urged by any readers against the works published by the author of It Is Never Too Late To Mend; but even he, unless I have been greatly misinformed, failed to make the impression that had been anticipated on the impenetrable Three Millions. The great success of his novel was not obtained in its original serial form, but in its republished form, when it appealed from the Unknown to the Known Public. Clearly, the moral obstacle was not the obstacle which militated against the success of Alexandre Dumas and Eugène Sue.

What was it, then? Plainly this, as I believe. The Unknown Public is, in a literary sense, hardly beginning, as yet, to learn to read. The members of it are evidently, in the mass, from no fault of theirs, still ignorant of almost everything which is generally known and understood among readers whom circumstances have placed, socially and intellectually, in the rank above them. The mere references in Monte Christo, The Mysteries of Paris, and White Lies (the scene of this last English fiction having been laid on French ground), to foreign names, titles, manners, and customs, puzzled the Unknown Public on the threshold. Look back at the answers to correspondents, and then say, out of fifty subscribers to a penny journal, how many are likely to know, for example, that Mademoiselle means Miss? Besides the difficulty in appealing to the penny audience caused at the beginning by such simple obstacles as this, there was the great additional difficulty, in the case of all three of the fictions just mentioned, of accustoming

untried readers to the delicacies and subtleties of literary art. An immense public has been discovered: the next thing to be done is, in a literary sense, to teach that public how to read.

An attempt, to the credit of one of the penny journals, has already been made. I have mentioned, in one place, a reprint of a novel, and later, a remarkable exception to the drearily common-place character of the rest of the stories. In both these cases I refer to one and the same fiction—to the Kenilworth of Sir Walter Scott, which is reprinted as a new serial experiment in a penny journal. Here is the great master of modern fiction appealing, at this time of day, to a new public, and (amazing anomaly!) marching in company with writers who have the rudiments of their craft still to learn! To my mind, one result seems certain. If Kenilworth be appreciated by the Unknown Public, then the very best men among living English writers will one of these days be called on, as a matter of necessity, to make their appearance in the pages of the penny journals.

Meanwhile, it is perhaps hardly too much to say, that the future of English fiction may rest with this Unknown Public, which is now waiting to be taught the difference between a good book and a bad. It is probably a question of time only. The largest audience for periodical literature, in this age of periodicals, must obey the universal law of progress, and must, sooner or later, learn to discriminate. When that period comes, the readers who rank by millions, will be the readers who give the widest reputations, who return the richest rewards, and who will, therefore, command the service of the best writers of their time. A great, an unparalleled prospect awaits, perhaps, the coming generation of English novelists. To the penny journals of the present time belongs the credit of having discovered a new public. When that public shall discover its need of a great writer, the great writer will have such an audience as has never yet been known.[3]

SOCIAL GRIEVANCES.—III.
GIVE US ROOM!

[The Imperative Request of a Family Man.]

The entertainments of the festive season of the year, so far as I am personally concerned, have at last subsided into a temporary lull. I and my family actually have one or two evenings to ourselves, just at present. It is my purpose to take advantage of this interval of leisure to express my sentiments on the subject of evening parties and ladies' dress.

Let nobody turn over this page impatiently, alarmed at the prospect of another diatribe against Crinoline. I, for one, am not going to exhibit myself in the character of a writer who vainly opposes one of the existing institutions of this country. The Press, the Pulpit, and the Stage, have been in the habit of considering themselves as three very powerful levers, capable of being used with terrible effect on the inert material of society. All three have tried to jerk that flourishing foreign plant, Crinoline, out of English earth, and have failed to stir so much as a single root of it. All three have run full tilt against the women of England, and have not moved them an inch. Talk of the power of the Press!—what is it, compared to the power of a French milliner? The Press has tried to abridge the women's petticoats, and has entirely failed in the attempt. When the right time comes, a French milliner will abridge them at a week's notice. The Pulpit preaches, the Stage ridicules; and each woman of the congregation or the audience, sits, imperturbable, in the middle of her balloon, and lets the serious words or the comic words, go in at one ear and come out at the other, precisely as if they were spoken in an unknown tongue. Nothing that I can remember has so effectually crushed the pretensions of the Press, the Pulpit, and the Stage, as the utter failure of their crusade against Crinoline.

My present object in writing is likely, I think, to be popular—at least, with the ladies. I do not want to put down Crinoline—I only want to make room for it. Personally, I rather like it—I do, indeed, though I am a man. The fact is, I am a thoroughly well-disciplined husband and father; and I know the value of it. The only defect in my eldest daughter's otherwise perfect form, lies in her feet and

ankles. She is married, so I don't mind mentioning that they are decidedly clumsy. Without Crinoline, they would be seen; with Crinoline (except when she goes up stairs), nobody has the slightest suspicion of them. My wife—pray don't tell her that I ever observed it—my wife used to waddle before the invention of Crinoline. Now she swims voluptuously, and knocks down all the light articles of furniture, whenever she crosses the room, in a manner which, but for the expense of repairs, would be perfectly charming. One of my other single daughters used to be sadly thin, poor girl. Oh, how plump she is now! Oh, my marriageable young men, how ravishingly plump she is now! Long life to the monarchy of Crinoline! Every mother in this country who has daughters to marry, and who is not quite so sure of their unaided personal attractions as she might wish to be, echoes that loyal cry, I am sure, from the bottom of her affectionate heart. And the Press actually thinks it can shake our devotion to our Queen Petticoat? Pooh! pooh!

But we must have room—we must positively have room for our petticoat at evening parties. We wanted it before Crinoline. We want it ten thousand times more, now. I don't know how other parents feel; but, unless there is some speedy reform in the present system of party-giving—so far as regards health, purse, and temper, I am a lost man. Let me make my meaning clear on this point by a simple and truthful process. Let me describe how we went to our last party, and how we came back from it.

Doctor and Mrs. Crump, of Gloucester Place (I mention names and places to show the respectable character of the party), kindly requested the pleasure of our company a week ago. We accepted the invitation, and agreed to assemble in my dining-room previous to departure, at the hour of half-past nine. It is unnecessary to say that I and my son-in-law (who is now staying with me on a visit) had the room entirely to ourselves at the appointed time. We waited half-an-hour: both ill-tempered, both longing to be in bed, and both obstinately silent. When the hall-clock struck ten, a sound was heard on the stairs, as if a whole gale of wind had broken into the house, and was advancing to the dining-room to blow us both into empty space. We knew what this meant, and looked at each other, and said, "Here they are!" The door opened, and Boreas swam in voluptuously, in the shape of my wife, in claret-coloured velvet. She stands five feet nine, and wears —No! I have never actually counted them. Let me not mislead the public, or do injustice to my wife. Let me rest satisfied with stating her height, and adding that she is a fashionable woman. Her circumference, and the causes of it, may be left to the imagination of the reader.

She was followed by four minor winds, blowing dead in our teeth—by my married daughter in Pink Moiré Antique; by my own Julia (single) in Violet Tulle Illusion; by my own Emily (single) in white lace over glacé silk; by my own Charlotte (single) in blue gauze over glacé silk. The four minor winds, and the majestic maternal Boreas, entirely filled the room, and overflowed on to the dining-table. It was a grand sight. My son-in-law and I—a pair of mere black tadpoles—shrank into a corner, and gazed at it helplessly.

Our corner was, unfortunately, the farthest from the door. So, when I moved to lead the way to the carriages, I confronted a brilliant intermediate expanse of ninety yards of outer clothing alone (allowing only eighteen yards each to the ladies). Being old, wily, and respected in the house, I took care to avoid my wife, and succeeded in getting through my daughters. My son-in-law, young, innocent, and of secondary position in the family, was not so fortunate. I left him helpless, looking round the corner of his mother-in-law's claret-coloured velvet, with one of his legs lost in his wife's Moiré Antique. There is every reason to suppose that he never extricated himself; for when we got into the carriages he was not to be found; and, when ultimately recovered, he exhibited symptoms of physical and mental exhaustion. I am afraid my son-in-law caught it—I am very much afraid that, during my absence, my son-in-law caught it.

We filled—no, we overflowed—two carriages. My wife and her married daughter in one, and I, myself, on the box—the front seat being very properly wanted for the velvet and the Moiré Antique. In the second carriage were my three girls—crushed, as they indignantly informed me, crushed out of all shape (didn't I tell you, just now, how plump one of them was?) by the miserably-inefficient accommodation which the vehicle offered to them. They told my son-in-law, as he meekly mounted to the box, that they would take care not to marry a man like him, at any rate! I have not the least idea what he had done to provoke them. The worthy creature gets a great deal of scolding in the house, without any assignable cause for it. Do my daughters resent his official knowledge, as a husband, of the secret of their sister's ugly feet? Oh, dear me, I hope not—I sincerely hope not!

At ten minutes past ten we drove to the hospitable abode of Doctor and Mrs. Crump. The women of my family were then perfectly dressed in the finest materials. There was not a flaw in any part of the costume of any one of the party. This is a great deal to say of ninety yards of clothing, without mentioning the streams of ribbon, and the dense thickets of flowery bushes that wantoned gracefully all over their heads and half-down their backs—nevertheless, I can

say it.

At forty minutes past four, the next morning, we were all assembled once more in my dining-room, to light our bed-room candles. Judging by costume only, I should not have known one of my daughters again—no, not one of them!

The Tulle Illusion, was illusion no longer. My daughter's gorgeous substratum of Gros de Naples bulged through it in half a dozen places. The Pink Moiré Antique was torn into a draggle-tailed pink train. The white lace was in tatters, and the blue gauze was in shreds.

"A charming party!" cried my daughters in melodious chorus, as I surveyed this scene of ruin. Charming, indeed! If I had dressed up my four girls, and sent them to Greenwich Fair, with strict orders to get drunk and assault the police, and if they had carefully followed my directions, could they have come home to me in a much worse condition than the condition in which I see them now? Could any man, not acquainted with the present monstrous system of party-giving, look at my four young women, and believe that they had been spending the evening under the eyes of their parents, at a respectable house? If the party had been at a linendraper's, I could understand the object of this wanton destruction of property. But Doctor Crump is not interested in making me buy new gowns. What have I done to him that he should ask me and my family to his house, and all but tear my children's gowns off their backs, in return for our friendly readiness to accept his invitation?

But my daughters danced all the evening, and these little accidents will happen in private ballrooms. Indeed? I did not dance, my wife did not dance, my son-in-law did not dance. Have we escaped injury on that account? Decidedly not. Velvet is not an easy thing to tear, so I have no rents to deplore in my wife's dress. But I apprehend that a spoonful of trifle does not reach its destination properly, when it is deposited in a lady's lap; and I altogether deny that there is any necessary connection between the charms of society, and the wearing of crushed macaroons, adhesively dotted over the back part of a respectable matron's dress. I picked three off my wife's gown, as she swam out of the dining-room, on her way up-stairs; and I am informed that two new breadths will be wanted in front, in consequence of her lap having been turned into a plate for trifle. As for my son-in-law, his trousers are saturated with spilt champagne; and he took, in my presence, nearly a handful of flabby lobster salad out of the cavity between his shirt-front and his waistcoat. For myself, I have had my elbow in a game-pie, and I see with disgust a slimy path of extinct custard, meandering

down the left-hand lappel of my coat. Altogether, this party, on the lowest calculation, casts me in damages to the tune of ten pounds, eighteen shillings, and sixpence.[4]

In damages for spoilt garments only. I have still to find out what the results may be of the suffocating heat in the rooms, and the freezing draughts in the passages, and on the stairs—I have still to face the possible doctor's bills for treating our influenzas and our rheumatisms. And to what cause is all this destruction and discomfort attributable? Plainly and simply, to this. When Doctor and Mrs. Crump issued their invitations, they followed the example of the rest of the world, and asked to their house five times as many people as their rooms would comfortably hold. Hence, jostling, bumping, and tearing among the dancers, and jostling, bumping, and spilling in the supper-room. Hence, a scene of barbarous crowding and confusion, in which the successful dancers are the heaviest and rudest couples in the company, and the successful guests at the supper-table, the people who have the least regard for the restraints of politeness and the wants of their neighbours.

Is there no remedy for this great social nuisance? for a nuisance it certainly is. There is a remedy in every district in London, in the shape of a spacious and comfortable public room, which may be had for the hiring. The rooms to which I allude are never used for doubtful purposes. They are mainly devoted to Lectures, Concerts, and Meetings. When used for a private object, they might be kept private by giving each guest a card to present at the door, just as cards are presented at the opera. The expense of the hiring, when set against the expense of preparing a private house for a party, and the expense of the injuries which crowding causes, would prove to be next to nothing. The supper might be sent into the large room as it is sent into the small house. And what benefit would be gained by all this? The first and greatest of all benefits, in such cases—room. Room for the dancers to exercise their art in perfect comfort; room for the spectators to move about and talk to each other at their ease; room for the musicians in a comfortable gallery; room for eating and drinking; room for agreeable equal ventilation. In one word, all the acknowledged advantages of a public ball, with all the pleasant social freedom of a private entertainment.

And what hinders the adopting of this sensible reform? Nothing but the domestic vanity of my beloved countrymen.

I suggested the hiring of a room, the other day, to an excellent friend of mine, who thought of giving a party, and who inhumanly contemplated asking at least

a hundred people into his trumpery little ten-roomed house. He absolutely shuddered when I mentioned my idea: all his insular prejudices bristled up in an instant. "If I can't receive my friends under my own roof, on my own hearth, sir, and in my own home, I won't receive them at all. Take a room indeed! Do you call that an Englishman's hospitality? I don't." It was quite useless to suggest to this gentleman that an Englishman's hospitality, or any man's hospitality, is unworthy of the name unless it fulfils the first great requisite of making his guests comfortable. We don't take that far-fetched view of the case in this domestic country. We stand on our own floor (no matter whether it is only twelve feet square or not); we make a fine show in our houses (no matter whether they are large enough for the purpose or not); never mind the women's dresses; never mind the dancers being in perpetual collision; never mind the supper being a comfortless, barbarous scramble; never mind the ventilation alternating between unbearable heat and unbearable cold—an Englishman's house is his castle, even when you can't get up his staircase, and can't turn round in his rooms. If I lived in the Black Hole at Calcutta, sir, I would see my friends *there* because I lived there, and would turn up my nose at the finest marble palace in the whole city, because it was a palace that could be had for the hiring!

And yet the innovation on a senseless established custom which I now propose, is not without precedent, even in this country. When I was a young man, I, and some of my friends, used to give a Bachelors' Ball, once a-year. We hired a respectable public room for the purpose. Nobody ever had admission to our entertainment who was not perfectly fit to be asked into any gentleman's house. Nobody wanted room to dance in; nobody's dress was injured; nobody was uncomfortable at supper. Our ball was looked forward to, every year, by the young ladies, as the especial dance of the season at which they were sure to enjoy themselves. They talked rapturously of the charming music, and the brilliant lighting, and the pretty decorations, and the nice supper. Old ladies and gentlemen used to beg piteously that they might not be left out on account of their years. People of all ages and tastes found something to please them at the Bachelors' Ball, and never had a recollection, in connection with it, which was not of the happiest nature. What prevents us, now we are married, from following the sensible proceeding of our younger days? The stupid assumption that my house must be big enough to hold all my friends comfortably, *because* it is my house. I did not reason in that way, when I had lodgings, although my bachelor sitting-room was, within a few feet each way, as large as my householder's drawing-room at the present time.

However, I have really some hopes of seeing the sensible reform, which I have ventured to propose, practically and generally carried out, before I die. Not because I advocate it, not because it is in itself essentially reasonable; but merely because the course of Time is likely, before long, to leave obstinate Prejudice no choice of alternatives and no power of resistance. Party-giving is on the increase, party-goers are on the increase, petticoats are on the increase,—but private houses remain exactly as they were. It is evidently only a question of time. The guests already overflow on to the staircase. Give us a ten years' increase of the population, and they will overflow into the street. When the door of the Englishman's nonsensical castle cannot be shut, on account of the number of his guests who are squeezed out to the threshold, then he will concede to necessity what he will not now concede to any strength of reasoning, or to any gentleness of persuasion. The only cogent argument with obstinate people is Main Force—and Time, in the case now under consideration, is sooner or later sure to employ it.

CURIOSITIES OF LITERATURE.—II.
PORTRAIT OF AN AUTHOR, PAINTED BY HIS PUBLISHER.

I.

The Author was born a Frenchman, and died in the year 1850. Over the whole continent of Europe, wherever the literature of France has penetrated, his readers are numbered by tens of thousands. Women of all ranks and orders have singled him out, long since, as the marked man, among modern writers of fiction, who most profoundly knows and most subtly appreciates their sex in its strength and in its weakness. Men, whose critical judgment is widely and worthily respected, have declared that he is the deepest and truest observer of human nature whom France has produced since the time of Molière. Unquestionably, he ranks as one of the few great geniuses who appear by ones and twos, in century after century of authorship, and who leave their mark ineffaceably on the literature of their age. And yet, in spite of this widely-extended continental fame, and this indisputable right and title to enjoy it, there is probably no civilised country in the Old World in which he is so little known as in England. Among all the readers—a large class in these islands—who are, from various causes, unaccustomed to study French literature in its native language, there are probably very many who have never even heard of the name of HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

Unaccountable as it may appear at first sight, the reason why the illustrious author of Eugénie Grandet, Le Père Goriot, and La Recherche de l'Absolu, happens to be so little known to the general public of England is, on the surface of it, easy enough to discover. Balzac is little known, because he has been little translated. An English version of Eugénie Grandet was advertised, lately, as one of a cheap series of novels. And the present writer has some indistinct recollection of meeting, many years since, with a translation of La Peau de Chagrin. But so far as he knows, excepting the instances of these two books, not one other work, out of the whole number of ninety-seven fictions, long and short, which proceeded from the same fertile pen, has been offered to our own readers in our own language. Immense help has been given in this country to the

reputations of Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, and Eugène Sue: no help whatever, or next to none, has been given to Balzac—although he is regarded in France (and rightly regarded, in some respects) as a writer of Action superior to all three.

Many causes, too numerous to be elaborately traced within the compass of a single article, have probably contributed to produce this singular instance of literary neglect. It is not to be denied, for example, that serious difficulties stand in the way of translating Balzac, which are caused by his own peculiarities of style and treatment. His French is not the clear, graceful, neatly-turned French of Voltaire and Rousseau. It is a strong, harsh, solidly vigorous language of his own; now flashing into the most exquisite felicities of expression, and now again involved in an obscurity which only the closest attention can hope to penetrate. A special man, not hurried for time, and not easily brought to the end of his patience, might give the English equivalent of Balzac with admirable effect. But ordinary translating of him by average workmen would only lead, through the means of feeble parody, to the result of utter failure.[5]

The difficulties, again, caused by his style of treatment are not to be lightly estimated, in considering the question of presenting this author to our own general public. The peculiarity of Balzac's literary execution is, that he never compromises the subtleties and delicacies of Art for any consideration of temporary effect. The framework in which his idea is set, is always wrought with a loving minuteness which leaves nothing out. Everything which, in this writer's mind, can even remotely illustrate the characters that he depicts, must be elaborately conveyed to the minds of his readers before the characters themselves start into action. This quality of minute finish, of reiterated refining, which is one of Balzac's great merits, so far as foreign audiences are concerned, is another of the hindrances, so far as an English audience is concerned, in the way of translating him.

Allowing all due weight to the force of these obstacles; and further admitting that Balzac lays himself open to grave objection (on the part of that unhappily large section of the English public which obstinately protests against the truth wherever the truth is painful), as a writer who sternly insists on presenting the dreary aspects of human life, literally, exactly, nakedly, as he finds them—making these allowances, and many more if more be needful—it is still impossible not to regret, for the sake of readers themselves, that worthy English versions of the best works of this great writer are not added to the national library of translated literature. Towards the latter part of his career, Balzac's own

taste in selection of subject seems to have become vitiated. His later novels, consummately excellent as some of them were in a literary sense, are assuredly, in a moral sense, not to be defended against the grave accusation of being needlessly and even horribly repulsive. But no objections of this sort apply to the majority of the works which he produced when he was in the prime of his life and his faculties. The conception of the character of "Eugénie Grandet" is one of the purest, tenderest, and most beautiful things in the whole range of fiction; and the execution of it is even worthy of the idea. If the translation already accomplished of this book be only creditably executed, it may be left to speak for itself. But there are other fictions of the writer which deserve the same privilege, and which have not yet obtained it. "La Recherche de l'Absolu,"—a family picture which, for truth, delicacy, and pathos, has been surpassed by no novelist of any nation or any time; a literary achievement in which a new and an imperishable character (the exquisitely beautiful character of the wife) has been added to the great gallery of fiction—remains still unknown to the general public of England. "Le Père Goriot"—which, though it unveils some of the hidden corruptions of Parisian life, unveils them nobly in the interests of that highest morality belonging to no one nation and no one sect—"Le Père Goriot," which stands first and foremost among all the writer's works, which has drawn the tears of thousands from the purest sources, has its appeal still left to make to the sympathies of English readers. Other shorter stories, scattered about the "Scènes de la Vie Privée," the "Scènes de la Vie de Province," and the "Scènes de la Vie Parisienne," are as completely unknown to a certain circle of readers in this country, and as unquestionably deserve careful and competent translation, as the longer and more elaborate productions of Balzac's inexhaustible pen. Reckoning these shorter stories, there are at least a dozen of his highest achievements in fiction which might be safely rendered into English; which might form a series by themselves; and which no sensible Englishwoman could read and be, either intellectually or morally, the worse for them.

Thus much, in the way of necessary preliminary comment on the works of this author, and on their present position in reference to the English public. Readers who may be sufficiently interested in the subject to desire to know something next about the man himself, may now derive this information from a singular, and even from a unique source. The Life of Balzac has been lately written by his publisher, of all the people in the world! This is a phenomenon in itself; and the oddity of it is still further increased by the fact that the publisher was brought to the brink of ruin by the author, that he mentions this circumstance in writing his life, and that it does not detract one iota from his evidently sincere admiration

for the great man with whom he was once so disastrously connected in business. Here is surely an original book, in an age when originality grows harder and harder to meet with—a book containing disclosures which will perplex and dismay every admirer of Balzac who cannot separate the man from his works—a book which presents one of the most singular records of human eccentricity, so far as the hero of it is concerned, and of human credulity so far as the biographer is concerned, which has probably ever been published for the amusement and bewilderment of the reading world.

The title of this singular work is, "Portrait Intime De Balzac: sa Vie, son Humeur et son Caractère. Par Edmond Werdet, son ancien Libraire-Editeur." Before, however, we allow Monsieur Werdet to relate his own personal experience of the celebrated writer, it will be advisable to introduce the subject by giving an outline of the struggles, the privations, and the disappointments which marked the early life of Balzac, and which, doubtless, influenced his after character for the worse. These particulars are given by Monsieur Werdet in the form of an episode, and are principally derived, on his part, from information afforded by the author's sister.

Honoré de Balzac was born in the city of Tours, on the sixteenth of May, seventeen hundred and ninety-nine. His parents were people of rank and position in the world. His father held a legal appointment in the council-chamber of Louis the sixteenth. His mother was the daughter of one of the directors of the public hospitals of Paris. She was much younger than her husband, and brought him a rich dowry. Honoré was her first-born; and he retained throughout life his first feeling of childish reverence for his mother. That mother suffered the unspeakable affliction of seeing her illustrious son taken from her by death at the age of fifty years. Balzac breathed his last in the kind arms which had first caressed him on the day of his birth.

His father, from whom he evidently inherited much of the eccentricity of his character, is described as a compound of Montaigne, Rabelais, and Uncle Toby —a man in manners, conversation, and disposition generally, of the quaintly original sort. On the breaking out of the Revolution, he lost his court situation, and obtained a place in the commissariat department of the army of the North. This appointment he held for some years. It was of the greater importance to him, in consequence of the change for the worse produced in the pecuniary circumstances of the family by the convulsion of the Revolution.

At the age of seven years Balzac was sent to the college of Vendôme; and for

At the age of seven years Balzac was sent to the college of Vendôme; and for seven years more there he remained. This period of his life was never a pleasant one in his remembrance. The reduced circumstances of his family exposed him to much sordid persecution and ridicule from the other boys; and he got on but little better with the masters. They reported him as idle and incapable—or, in other words, as ready enough to devour all sorts of books on his own desultory plan, but hopelessly obstinate in resisting the educational discipline of the school. This time of his life he has reproduced in one of the strangest and the most mystical of all his novels, "La Vie Intellectuelle de Louis Lambert."

On reaching the critical age of fourteen, his intellect appears to have suffered under a species of eclipse, which occurred very suddenly and mysteriously, and the cause of which neither his masters nor the medical men were able to explain. He himself always declared in after-life, with a touch of his father's quaintness, that his brain had been attacked by "a congestion of ideas." Whatever the cause might be, the effect was so serious that the progress of his education had to be stopped; and his removal from the college followed as a matter of course. Time, care, quiet, and breathing his native air, gradually restored him to himself; and he was ultimately enabled to complete his studies at two private schools. Here again, however, he did nothing to distinguish himself among his fellow-pupils. He read incessantly, and preserved the fruits of his reading with marvellous power of memory; but the school-teaching, which did well enough for ordinary boys, was exactly the species of teaching from which the essentially original mind of Balzac recoiled in disgust. All that he felt and did at this period has been carefully reproduced by his own pen in the earlier pages of "Le Lys dans la Vallée."

Badly as he got on at school, he managed to imbibe a sufficient quantity of conventional learning to entitle him, at the age of eighteen, to his degree of Bachelor of Arts. He was destined for the law; and after attending the legal lectures in the various Institutions of Paris, he passed his examination by the time he was twenty, and then entered a notary's office in the capacity of clerk. There were two other clerks to keep him company, who hated the drudgery of the law as heartily as he hated it himself. One of them was the future author of "The Mysteries of Paris," Eugène Sue; the other was the famous critic, Jules Janin.

After he had been engaged in this office, and in another, for more than three years, a legal friend, who was under great obligations to Balzac the father, offered to give up his business as a notary to Balzac the son. To the great scandal

of the family, Honoré resolutely refused the offer—for the one sufficient reason that he had determined to be the greatest writer in France. His relations began by laughing at him, and ended by growing angry with him. But nothing moved Honoré. His vanity was of the calm, settled sort; and his own conviction that his business in life was simply to be a famous man, proved too strong to be shaken by anybody.

While he and his family were at war on this point, a change for the worse occurred in the elder Balzac's official circumstances. He was superannuated. The diminution of income thus produced was followed by a pecuniary catastrophe. He had embarked almost the whole of his own little remaining property and his wife's in two speculations; and they both failed. No resource was now left him but to retire to a small country house in the neighbourhood of Paris, which he had purchased in his prosperous days, and to live there as well as might be on the wreck of his lost fortune. Honoré, sticking fast to the hopeless business of becoming a great man, was, by his own desire, left alone in a Paris garret, with an allowance of five pounds English a month, which was all the kind father could spare to feed, clothe, and lodge the wrong-headed son.

And now, without a literary friend to help him in all Paris; alone in his wretched attic, with his deal-table and his truckle-bed, his dog's-eared books, his bescrawled papers, his wild vanity, and his ravenous hunger for fame, Balzac stripped resolutely for the great fight. He was then twenty-three years old—a sturdy fellow to look at, with a big, jovial face, and a strong square forehead, topped by a very untidy and superfluous allowance of long tangled hair. His only difficulty at starting was what to begin upon. After consuming many lonely months in sketching out comedies, operas, and novels, he finally obeyed the one disastrous rule which seems to admit of no exception in the early lives of men of letters, and fixed the whole bent of his industry and his genius on the production of a tragedy. After infinite pains and long labour, the great work was completed. The subject was Cromwell; and the treatment, in Balzac's hands, appears to have been so inconceivably bad, that even his own family—to say nothing of other judicious friends—told him in the plainest terms, when he read it to them, that he had perpetrated a signal failure. Modest men might have been discouraged by this. Balzac took his manuscript back to his garret, standing higher in his own estimation than ever. "I will give up being a great dramatist," he told his parents at parting, "and I will be a great novelist instead." The vanity of the man expressed itself with this sublime disregard of ridicule all through his life. It was a precious quality to him—it is surely (however unquestionably offensive it may

be to our friends) a precious quality to all of us. What man ever yet did anything great, without beginning with a profound belief in his own untried powers?

Confident as ever, therefore, in his own resources, Balzac now took up the pen once more—this time, in the character of a novelist. But another and a serious check awaited him at the outset. Fifteen months of solitude, privation, and reckless hard writing—months which are recorded in the pages of "La Peau de Chagrin" with a fearful and pathetic truth, drawn straight from the bitterest of all experiences, the experience of studious poverty—had reduced him to a condition of bodily weakness which made all present exertion of his mental powers simply hopeless, and which obliged him to take refuge—a worn-out, wasted man, at the age of twenty-three—in his father's quiet little country house. Here, under his mother's care, his exhausted energies slowly revived; and here, in the first days of his convalescence, he returned, with the grim resolution of despair, to working out the old dream in the garret, to resuming the old hopeless business of making himself a great man.

It was under his father's roof, during the time of his slow recovery, that the youthful fictions of Balzac were produced. The strength of his belief in his own resources and his own future, gave him also the strength, in relation to these first efforts, to rise above his own vanity, and to see plainly that he had not yet learnt to do himself full justice. His early novels bore on their title-pages a variety of feigned names, for the starving, struggling author was too proud to acknowledge them, so long as they failed to satisfy his own conception of what his own powers could accomplish. These first efforts—now included in the Belgian editions of his collected works, and comprising among them two stories, "Jane la Pâle" and "Le Vicaire des Ardennes," which show unquestionable dawnings of the genius of a great writer—were originally published by the lower and more rapacious order of booksellers, and did as little towards increasing his means as towards establishing his reputation. Still, he forced his way slowly and resolutely through poverty, obscurity, and disappointment, nearer and nearer to the promised land which no eye saw but his own—a greater man, by far, at this hard period of his adversity than at the more trying after-time of his prosperity and his fame. One by one, the heavy years rolled on till he was a man of thirty; and then the great prize which he had so long toiled for, dropped within his reach at last. In the year eighteen hundred and twenty-nine, the famous "Physiologie du Mariage" was published; and the starveling of the Paris garret became a name and a power in French literature.

In England, this book would have been universally condemned as an

unpardonable exposure of the most sacred secrets of domestic life. It unveils the whole social side of Marriage in its innermost recesses, and exhibits it alternately in its bright and dark aspects with a marvellous minuteness of observation, a profound knowledge of human nature, and a daring eccentricity of style and arrangement which amply justify the extraordinary success of the book on its first appearance in France. It may be more than questionable, judging from the English point of view, whether such a subject should ever have been selected for any other than the most serious, reverent, and forbearing treatment. Setting this objection aside, however, in consideration of the French point of view, it cannot be denied that the merits of the "Physiology of Marriage," as a piece of writing, were by no means over-estimated by the public to which it was addressed. In a literary sense, the book would have done credit to a man in the maturity of his powers. As the work of a man whose intellectual life was only beginning, it was such an achievement as is not often recorded in the history of modern literature.

This first triumph of the future novelist—obtained, curiously enough, by a book which was not a novel—failed to smooth the way onward and upward for Balzac as speedily and pleasantly as might have been supposed. He had another stumble on that hard road of his, before he fairly started on the career of success. Soon after the publication of "The Physiology of Marriage," an unlucky idea of strengthening his resources by trading in literature, as well as by writing books, seems to have occurred to him. He tried bookselling and printing; proved himself to be, in both cases, probably the very worst man of business who ever lived and breathed in this world; failed in the most hopeless way, with the most extraordinary rapidity; and so learnt at last, by the cruel teaching of experience, that his one fair chance of getting money lay in sticking fast to his pen for the rest of his days. In the next ten years of his life that pen produced the noble series of fictions which influenced French literature far and wide, and which will last in public remembrance long after the miserable errors and inconsistencies of the writer's personal character are forgotten. This was the period when Balzac was in the full enjoyment of his matured intellectual powers and his enviable public celebrity; and this was also the golden time when his publisher and biographer first became acquainted with him. Now, therefore, Monsieur Werdet may be encouraged to come forward and take the post of honour as narrator of the strange story that is still to be told; for now he is placed in the fit position to address himself intelligibly, as well as amusingly, to an English audience.

The story opens with the starting of Monsieur Werdet as a publisher in Paris, on

his own account. The modest capital at his command amounted to just one hundred and twenty pounds English; and his leading idea, on beginning business, was to become the publisher of Balzac.

He had already entered into transactions, on a large scale, with his favourite author, in the character of agent for a publishing-house of high standing. He had been very well received, on that first occasion, as a man representing undeniable capital and a great commercial position. On the second occasion, however, of his representing nobody but himself, and nothing but the smallest of existing capitals, he very wisely secured the protection of an intimate friend of Balzac's, to introduce him as favourably as might be, for the second time. Accompanied by this gentleman, whose name was Monsieur Barbier, and carrying his capital in his pocket-book, the embryo publisher nervously presented himself in the sanctum sanctorum of the great man.

Monsieur Barbier having carefully explained the business on which they came, Balzac addressed himself, with an indescribable suavity and grandeur of manner, to anxious Monsieur Werdet.

"Just so," said the eminent man. "You are doubtless possessed, sir, of considerable capital? You are probably aware that no man can hope to publish for ME who is not prepared to assert himself magnificently in the matter of cash? I sell high—high—very high. And, not to deceive you—for I am incapable of suppressing the truth—I am a man who requires to be dealt with on the principle of considerable advances. Proceed, sir—I am prepared to listen to you."

But Monsieur Werdet was too cautious to proceed without strengthening his position before starting. He entrenched himself instantly behind his pocket-book.

One by one, the notes of the Bank of France, which formed the poor publisher's small capital, were drawn out of their snug hiding-place. Monsieur Werdet produced six of them, representing five hundred francs each (or, as before mentioned, a hundred and twenty pounds sterling), arranged them neatly and impressively in a circle on the table, and then cast himself on the author's mercy in an agitated voice, and in these words:

"Sir! behold my capital. There lies my whole fortune. It is yours in exchange for any book you please to write for me——"

At that point, to the horror and astonishment of Monsieur Werdet, his further progress was cut short by roars of laughter—formidable roars, as he himself

expressly states—bursting from the lungs of the highly diverted Balzac.

"What astonishing simplicity!" exclaimed the great man. "Do you actually believe, sir, that I—De Balzac—can so entirely forget what is due to myself as to sell you any conceivable species of fiction which is the product of MY PEN, for the sum of three thousand francs? You have come here, Monsieur Werdet, to address an offer to me, without preparing yourself by previous reflection. If I felt so disposed, I should have every right to consider your conduct as unbecoming in the highest degree. But I don't feel so disposed. On the contrary, I can even allow your honest ignorance, your innocent confidence, to excuse you in my estimation. Don't be alarmed, sir. Consider yourself excused to a certain extent."

Between disappointment, indignation, and astonishment, Monsieur Werdet was struck dumb. His friend, Monsieur Barbier, therefore spoke for him, urging every possible consideration; and finally proposing that Balzac, if he was determined not to write a new story for three thousand francs, should at least sell one edition of an old one for that sum. Monsieur Barbier's arguments were admirably put: they lasted a long time; and when they had come to an end, they received this reply:

"Gentlemen!" cried Balzac, pushing back his long hair from his heated temples, and taking a fresh dip of ink, "you have wasted an hour of MY TIME in talking of trifles. I rate the pecuniary loss thus occasioned to me at two hundred francs. My time is my capital. I must work. Gentlemen! leave me." Having expressed himself in these hospitable terms, the great man immediately resumed the process of composition.

Monsieur Werdet, naturally and properly indignant, immediately left the room. He was overtaken, after he had proceeded a little distance in the street, by his friend Barbier, who had remained behind to remonstrate.

"You have every reason to be offended," said Barbier. "His conduct is inexcusable. But pray don't suppose that your negotiation is broken off. I know him better than you do; and I tell you that you have nailed Balzac. He wants money, and before three days are over your head he will return your visit."

"If he does," replied Werdet, "I'll pitch him out of window."

"No, you won't," said Barbier. "In the first place, it is an extremely uncivil proceeding to pitch a man out of window; and, as a naturally polite gentleman, you are incapable of committing a breach of good manners. In the second place,

rude as he has been to you, Balzac is not the less a man of genius; and, as such, he is just the man of whom you, as a publisher, stand in need. Wait patiently; and in a day or two you will see him, or hear from him again."

Barbier was right. Three days afterwards, the following satisfactory communication was received by Monsieur Werdet:—

> "My brain, sir, was so prodigiously preoccupied by work uncongenial to my fancy, when you visited me the other day, that I was incapable of comprehending otherwise than imperfectly what it was that you wanted of me.
>
> "To-day, my brain is not preoccupied. Do me the favour to come and see me at four o'clock.
>
> "A thousand civilities.
>
> "DE BALZAC."

Monsieur Werdet viewed this singular note in the light of a fresh impertinence. On consideration, however, he acknowledged it, and curtly added that important business would prevent his accepting the appointment proposed to him.

In two days more, friend Barbier came with a second invitation from the great man. But Monsieur Werdet steadily refused it. "Balzac has already been playing his game with me," he said. "Now it is my turn to play my game with Balzac. I mean to keep him waiting four days longer."

At the end of that time, Monsieur Werdet once more entered the sanctum sanctorum. On this second occasion, Balzac's graceful politeness was indescribable. He deplored the rarity of intelligent publishers. He declared his deep sense of the importance of an intelligent publisher's appearance on the literary horizon. He expressed himself as quite enchanted to be now enabled to remark that appearance, to welcome it, and even to deal with it. Polite as he was by nature, Monsieur Werdet had no chance this time against Monsieur de Balzac. In the race of civility the publisher was now nowhere, and the author made all the running.

The interview, thus happily begun, terminated in a most agreeable transaction on both sides. Balzac cheerfully locked up the six bank notes in his strong-box. Werdet, as cheerfully, retired with a written agreement in his empty pocket-book, authorising him to publish the second edition of "Le Médecin de

Campagne"—hardly, it may be remarked in parenthesis, one of the best to select of the novels of Balzac.

II.

Once started in business as the happy proprietor and hopeful publisher of the second edition of "Le Médecin de Campagne," Monsieur Werdet was too wise a man not to avail himself of the only certain means of success in modern times. He puffed magnificently. Every newspaper in Paris was inundated with a deluge of advertisements, announcing the forthcoming work in terms of eulogy such as the wonderstruck reader had never met with before. The result, aided by Balzac's celebrity, was a phenomenon in the commercial history of French literature, at that time. Every copy of the second edition of "Le Médecin de Campagne" was sold in eight days.

This success established Monsieur Werdet's reputation. Young authors crowded to him with their manuscripts, all declaring piteously that they wrote in the style of Balzac. But Monsieur Werdet flew at higher game. He received the imitators politely, and even published for one or two of them; but the high business aspirations which now glowed within him were all concentrated on the great original. He had conceived the sublime idea of becoming Balzac's sole publisher; of buying up all his copyrights held by other houses, and of issuing all his new works that were yet to be written. Balzac himself welcomed this proposal with superb indulgence. "Walter Scott," he said in his grandest way, "had only one publisher—Archibald Constable. Work out your idea. I authorise it; I support it. I will be Scott, and you shall be Constable!"

Fired by the prodigious future thus disclosed to him, Monsieur Werdet assumed forthwith the character of a French Constable; and opened negotiations with no less than six publishers who held among them the much-desired copyrights. His own enthusiasm did something for him; his excellent previous character in the trade, and his remarkable success at starting, did much more. The houses he dealt with took his bills in all directions, without troubling him for security. After innumerable interviews and immense exercise of diplomacy, he raised himself at last to the pinnacle of his ambition—he became sole proprietor and publisher of the works of Balzac.

The next question—a sordid, but, unhappily, a necessary question also—was how to turn this precious acquisition to the best pecuniary account. Some of the works, such as "La Physiologie du Mariage," and "La Peau de Chagrin," had produced, and were still producing, large sums. Others, on the contrary, such as

the "Contes Philosophiques" (which were a little too profound for the public) and "Louis Lambert" (which was intended to popularise the mysticism of Swedenborg), had not yet succeeded in paying their expenses. Estimating his speculation by what he had in hand, Monsieur Werdet had not much chance of seeing his way speedily to quick returns. Estimating it, however, by what was coming in the future, that is to say, by the promised privilege of issuing all the writer's contemplated works, he had every reason to look happily and hopefully at his commercial prospects. At this crisis of the narrative, when the publisher's credit and fortune depended wholly on the pen of one man, the history of that man's habits of literary composition assumes a special interest and importance. Monsieur Werdet's description of Balzac at his writing-desk, presents by no means the least extraordinary of the many singular revelations which compose the story of the author's life.

When he had once made up his mind to produce a new book, Balzac's first proceeding was to think it out thoroughly before he put pen to paper. He was not satisfied with possessing himself of the main idea only; he followed it mentally into its minutest ramifications, devoting to the process just that amount of patient hard labour and self-sacrifice which no inferior writer ever has the common sense or the courage to bestow on his work. With his note-book ready in his hand, Balzac studied his scenes and characters straight from life. General knowledge of what he wanted to describe was not enough for this determined realist. If he found himself in the least at fault, he would not hesitate to take a long journey merely to ensure truth to nature in describing the street of a country town, or in painting some minor peculiarity of rustic character. In Paris he was perpetually about the streets, perpetually penetrating into all classes of society, to study the human nature about him in its minutest varieties. Day by day, and week by week, his note-book and his brains were hard at work together, before he thought of sitting down to his desk to begin. When he had finally amassed his materials in this laborious manner, he at last retired to his study; and from that time, till his book had gone to press, society saw him no more.

His house-door was now closed to everybody, except the publisher and the printer; and his costume was changed to a loose white robe, of the sort which is worn by the Dominican monks. This singular writing-dress was fastened round the waist by a chain of Venetian gold, to which hung little pliers and scissors of the same precious metal. White Turkish trousers, and red-morocco slippers, embroidered with gold, covered his legs and feet. On the day when he sat down to his desk, the light of heaven was shut out, and he worked by the light of

candles in superb silver sconces. Even letters were not allowed to reach him. They were all thrown, as they came, into a japan vase, and not opened, no matter how important they might be, till his work was all over. He rose to begin writing at two in the morning, continued, with extraordinary rapidity, till six; then took his warm bath, and stopped in it, thinking, for an hour or more. At eight o'clock his servant brought him up a cup of coffee. Before nine his publisher was admitted to carry away what he had done. From nine till noon he wrote on again, always at the top of his speed. At noon he breakfasted on eggs, with a glass of water and a second cup of coffee. From one o'clock to six he returned to work. At six he dined lightly, only allowing himself one glass of wine. From seven to eight he received his publisher again: and at eight o'clock he went to bed. This life he led, while he was writing his books, for two months together, without intermission. Its effect on his health was such that, when he appeared once more among his friends, he looked, in the popular phrase, like his own ghost. Chance acquaintances would hardly have known him again.

It must not be supposed that this life of resolute seclusion and fierce hard toil ended with the completion of the first draught of his manuscript. At the point where, in the instances of most men, the serious part of the work would have come to an end, it had only begun for Balzac.

In spite of all the preliminary studying and thinking, when his pen had scrambled its way straight through to the end of the book, the leaves were all turned back again, and the first manuscript was altered into a second with inconceivable patience and care. Innumerable corrections and interlinings, to begin with, led in the end to transpositions and expansions which metamorphosed the entire work. Happy thoughts were picked out of the beginning of the manuscript, and inserted where they might have a better effect at the end. Others at the end would be moved to the beginning, or the middle. In one place, chapters would be expanded to three or four times their original length; in another, abridged to a few paragraphs; in a third, taken out altogether, or shifted to new positions. With all this mass of alterations in every page, the manuscript was at last ready for the printer. Even to the experienced eyes in the printing-office, it was now all but illegible. The deciphering it, and setting it up in a moderately correct form, cost an amount of patience and pains which wearied out all the best men in the office, one after another, before the first series of proofs could be submitted to the author's eye. When these were at last complete, they were sent in on large slips, and the indefatigable Balzac immediately set to work to rewrite the whole book for the third time!

He now covered with fresh corrections, fresh alterations, fresh expansions of this passage, and fresh abridgments of that, not only the margins of the proofs all round, but even the little intervals of white space between the paragraphs. Lines crossing each other in indescribable confusion, were supposed to show the bewildered printer the various places at which the multitude of new insertions were to be slipped in. Illegible as Balzac's original manuscripts were, his corrected proofs were more hopelessly puzzling still. The picked men in the office, to whom alone they could be entrusted, shuddered at the very name of Balzac, and relieved each other at intervals of an hour, beyond which time no one printer could be got to continue at work on the universally execrated and universally unintelligible proofs. The "revises"—that is to say, the proofs embodying the new alterations—were next pulled to pieces in their turn. Two, three, and sometimes four, separate sets of them were required before the author's leave could be got to send the perpetually rewritten book to press, at last, and so have done with it. He was literally the terror of all printers and editors; and he himself described his process of work as a misfortune, to be the more deplored, because it was, in his case, an intellectual necessity. "I toil sixteen hours out of the twenty-four," he said, "over the elaboration of my unhappy style; and I am never satisfied, myself, when all is done."

Looking back to the school-days of Balzac, when his mind suffered under the sudden and mysterious shock which has already been described in its place; remembering that his father's character was notorious for its eccentricity; observing the prodigious toil, the torture almost, of mind which the act of literary production seems to have cost him all through life, it is impossible not to arrive at the conclusion, that, in his case, there must have been a fatal incompleteness somewhere in the mysterious intellectual machine. Magnificently as it was endowed, the balance of faculties in his mind seems to have been even more than ordinarily imperfect. On this theory, his unparalleled difficulties in expressing himself as a writer, and his errors, inconsistencies, and meannesses of character as a man, become, at least, not wholly unintelligible. On any other theory, all explanation both of his personal life and his literary life appears to be simply impossible.

Such was the perilous pen on which Monsieur Werdet's prospects in life all depended. If Balzac failed to perform his engagements punctually, or if his health broke down under his severe literary exertions, the commercial decease of his unfortunate publisher followed either disaster, purely as a matter of course.

At the outset, however, the posture of affairs looked encouragingly enough. On its completion in the Revue de Paris, "Le Lys dans la Vallée" was republished by Monsieur Werdet, who had secured his interest in the work by a timely advance of six thousand francs. Of this novel (the most highly valued in France of all the writer's fictions), but two hundred copies of the first edition were left unsold within two hours after its publication. This unparalleled success kept Monsieur Werdet's head above water, and encouraged him to hope great things from the next novel ("Séraphita"), which was also begun, periodically, in the Revue de Paris. Before it was finished, however, Balzac and the editor of the Review quarrelled. The long-suffering publisher was obliged to step in and pay the author's forfeit-money, obtaining the incomplete novel in return, and with it Balzac's promise to finish the work off-hand. Months passed, however, and not a page of manuscript was produced. One morning, at eight o'clock, to Monsieur Werdet's horror and astonishment, Balzac burst in on him in a condition of sublime despair, to announce that he and his genius had to all appearance parted company for ever.

"My brain is empty!" cried the great man. "My imagination is dried up! Hundreds of cups of coffee and two warm baths a day have done nothing for me. Werdet, I am a lost man!"

The publisher thought of his empty cash-box, and was petrified. The author proceeded:

"I must travel!" he exclaimed, distractedly. "My genius has run away from me—I must pursue it over mountains and valleys. Werdet! I must catch my genius up!"

Poor Monsieur Werdet faintly suggested a little turn in the immediate neighbourhood of Paris—something equivalent to a nice airy ride to Hampstead on the top of an omnibus. But Balzac's runaway genius had, in the estimation of its bereaved proprietor, got as far as Vienna already; and he coolly announced his intention of travelling after it to the Austrian capital.

"And who is to finish 'Séraphita'?" inquired the unhappy publisher. "My illustrious friend, you are ruining me!"

"On the contrary," remarked Balzac, persuasively, "I am making your fortune. At Vienna, I shall find my genius. At Vienna I shall finish 'Séraphita,' and a new book besides. At Vienna, I shall meet with an angelic woman who admires me—she permits me to call her 'Carissima'—she has written to invite me to Vienna—I

ought, I must, I will, accept the invitation."

Here an ordinary acquaintance would have had an excellent opportunity of saying something smart. But poor Monsieur Werdet was not in a position to be witty; and, moreover, he knew but too well what was coming next. All he ventured to say was:

"But I am afraid you have no money."

"You can raise some," replied his illustrious friend. "Borrow—deposit stock in trade—get me two thousand francs. Everything else I can do for myself. Werdet, I will hire a postchaise—I will dine with my dear sister—I will set off after dinner—I will not be later than eight o'clock—click clack!" And the great man executed an admirable imitation of the cracking of a postilion's whip.

There was no resource for Monsieur Werdet but to throw the good money after the bad. He raised the two thousand francs; and away went Balzac to catch his runaway genius, to bask in the society of a female angel, and to coin money in the form of manuscripts.

Eighteen days afterwards a perfumed letter from the author reached the publisher. He had caught his genius at Vienna; he had been magnificently received by the aristocracy; he had finished "Séraphita," and nearly completed the other book; his angelic friend, Carissima, already loved Werdet from Balzac's description of him; Balzac himself was Werdet's friend till death; Werdet was his Archibald Constable; Werdet should see him again in fifteen days; Werdet should ride in his carriage in the Bois de Boulogne, and meet Balzac riding in his carriage, and see the enemies of both parties looking on at the magnificent spectacle and bursting with spite. Finally, Werdet would have the goodness to remark (in a postscript) that Balzac had provided himself with another little advance of fifteen hundred francs, received from Rothschild in Vienna, and had given in exchange a bill at ten days' sight on his excellent publisher, on his admirable and devoted Archibald Constable.

While Monsieur Werdet was still prostrate under the effect of this audacious postscript, a clerk entered his office with the identical bill. It was drawn at one day's sight instead of ten; and the money was wanted immediately. The publisher was the most long-suffering of men; but there were limits even to his patient endurance. He took Balzac's letter with him, and went at once to the office of the Parisian Rothschild. The great financier received him kindly; admitted that there must have been some mistake; granted the ten days' grace; and dismissed his visitor with this excellent and sententious piece of advice:

visitor with this excellent and sententious piece of advice:

"I recommend you to mind what you are about, sir, with Monsieur de Balzac. He is a highly inconsequent man."

It was too late for Monsieur Werdet to mind what he was about. He had no choice but to lose his credit, or pay at the end of the ten days. He paid; and ten days later, Balzac returned, considerately bringing with him some charming little Viennese curiosities for his esteemed publisher. Monsieur Werdet expressed his acknowledgments; and then politely inquired for the conclusion of "Séraphita," and the manuscript of the new novel.

Not a single line of either had been committed to paper.

The farce (undoubtedly a most disgraceful performance, so far as Balzac was concerned) was not played out even yet. The publisher's reproaches seem at last to have awakened the author to something remotely resembling a sense of shame. He promised that "Séraphita," which had been waiting at press a whole year, should be finished in one night. There were just two sheets of sixteen pages each to write. They might have been completed either at the author's house or at the publisher's, which was close to the printer's. But, no—it was not in Balzac's character to miss the smallest chance of producing a sensation anywhere. His last caprice was a determination to astonish the printers. Twenty-five compositors were called together at eleven at night, a truckle-bed and table were set up for the author—or, to speak more correctly, for the literary mountebank—in the workshop; Balzac arrived, in a high state of inspiration, to stagger the sleepy journeymen by showing them how fast he could write; and the two sheets were completed magnificently on the spot. By way of fit and proper climax to this ridiculous exhibition of literary quackery, it is only necessary to add, that, on Balzac's own confession, the two concluding sheets of "Séraphita" had been mentally composed, and carefully committed to memory, two years before he affected to write them impromptu in the printer's office. It seems impossible to deny that the man who could act in this outrageously puerile manner must have been simply mad. But what becomes of the imputation when we remember that this very madman has produced books which, for depth of thought and marvellous knowledge of human nature, are counted deservedly among the glories of French literature, and which were never more living and more lasting works than they are at this moment?

"Séraphita" was published three days after the author's absurd exhibition of himself at the printer's office. In this novel, as in its predecessor—"Louis

Lambert"—Balzac left his own firm ground of reality, and soared, on the wings of Swedenborg, into an atmosphere of transcendental obscurity impervious to all ordinary eyes. What the book meant, the editor of the periodical in which part of it originally appeared, never could explain. Monsieur Werdet, who published it, confesses that he was in the same mystified condition; and the present writer, who has vainly attempted to read it through, desires to add, in this place, his own modest acknowledgment of inability to enlighten English readers in the smallest degree on the subject of "Séraphita." Luckily for Monsieur Werdet, the author's reputation stood so high with the public, that the book sold prodigiously, merely because it was a book by Balzac. The proceeds of the sale, and the profits derived from new editions of the old novels, kept the sinking publisher from absolute submersion; and might even have brought him safely to land, but for the ever-increasing dead weight of the author's perpetual borrowings, on the security of forthcoming works which he never produced.

No commercial success, no generous self-sacrifice, could keep pace with the demands of Balzac's insatiate vanity and love of show, at this period of his life. He had two establishments, to begin with; both splendidly furnished, and one adorned with a valuable gallery of pictures. He had his box at the French Opera, and his box at the Italian Opera. He had a chariot and horses, and an establishment of men servants. The panels of the carriage were decorated with the arms, and the bodies of the footmen were adorned with the liveries, of the noble family of D'Entragues, to which Balzac persisted in declaring that he was allied, although he never could produce the smallest proof in support of the statement. When he could add no more to the sumptuous magnificence of his houses, his dinners, his carriage, and his servants; when he had filled his rooms with every species of expensive knick-knack; when he had lavished money on all the known extravagances which extravagant Paris can supply to the spendthrift's inventory, he hit on the entirely new idea of providing himself with such a walking-stick as the world had never yet beheld.

His first proceeding was to procure a splendid cane, which was sent to the jeweller's, and was grandly topped by a huge gold knob. The inside of the knob was occupied by a lock of hair presented to the author by an unknown lady admirer. The outside was studded with all the jewels he had bought, and with all the jewels he had received as presents. With this cane, nearly as big as a drum-major's staff, and all a-blaze at the top with rubies, diamonds, emeralds, and sapphires, Balzac exhibited himself, in a rapture of satisfied vanity, at the theatres and in the public promenades. The cane became as celebrated in Paris as

the author. Madame de Girardin wrote a sparkling little book all about the wonderful walking-stick. Balzac was in the seventh heaven of happiness; Balzac's friends were either disgusted or diverted, according to their tempers. One unfortunate man alone suffered the inevitable penalty of this insane extravagance: need it be added that his name was Werdet?

The end of the connexion between the author and the publisher was now fast approaching. All entreaties or reproaches addressed to Balzac failed in producing the slightest result. Even confinement in a sponging-house, when creditors discovered, in course of time, that they could wait no longer, passed unheeded as a warning. Balzac only borrowed more money the moment the key was turned on him, gave a magnificent dinner in prison, and left the poor publisher, as usual, to pay the bill. He was extricated from the sponging-house before he had been there quite three days; and, in that time, he had spent over twenty guineas on luxuries which he had not a farthing of his own to purchase. It is useless, it is even exasperating, to go on accumulating instances of this sort of mad and cruel prodigality: let us advance rapidly to the end. One morning, Monsieur Werdet balanced accounts with his author, from the beginning, and found, in spite of the large profits produced by the majority of the works, that fifty-eight thousand francs were (to use his own expression) paralysed in his hands by the life Balzac persisted in leading; and that fifty-eight thousand more might soon be in the same condition, if he had possessed them to advance. A rich publisher might have contrived to keep his footing in such a crisis as this, and to deal, for the time to come, on purely commercial grounds. But Monsieur Werdet was a poor man; he had relied on Balzac's verbal promises when he ought to have exacted his written engagements; and he had no means of appealing to the author's love of money by dazzling prospects of banknotes awaiting him in the future, if he chose honestly to earn his right to them. In short, there was but one alternative left, the alternative of giving up the whole purpose and ambition of the bookseller's life, and resolutely breaking off his ruinous connexion with Balzac.

Reduced to this situation, driven to bay by the prospect of engagements falling due which he had no apparent means of meeting, Monsieur Werdet answered the next application for an advance by a flat refusal, and followed up that unexampled act of self-defence by speaking his mind at last, in no measured terms, to his illustrious friend. Balzac turned crimson with suppressed anger, and left the room. A series of business formalities followed, initiated by Balzac, with the view of breaking off the connexion between his publisher and himself, now

that he found there was no more money to be had; Monsieur Werdet being, on his side, perfectly ready to "sign, seal, and deliver" as soon as his claims were properly satisfied in due form of law.

Balzac had now but one means of meeting his liabilities. His personal reputation was gone; but his literary reputation remained as high as ever, and he soon found a publisher, with large capital at command, who was ready to treat for his copyrights. Monsieur Werdet had no resource but to sell, or be bankrupt. He parted with all the valuable copyrights for a sum of sixty thousand and odd francs, which sufficed to meet his most pressing engagements. Some of the less popular and less valuable books he kept, to help him, if possible, through his daily and personal liabilities. As for gaining any absolute profit, or even holding his position as a publisher, the bare idea of securing either advantage was dismissed as an idle dream. The purpose for which he had toiled so hard and suffered so patiently was sacrificed for ever, and he was reduced to beginning life again as a country traveller for a prosperous publishing house. So far as his main object in existence was concerned, Balzac had plainly and literally ruined him. It is impossible to part with Monsieur Werdet, imprudent and credulous as he appears to have been, without a strong feeling of sympathy, which becomes strengthened to something like positive admiration when we discover that he cherished, in after life, no unfriendly sentiments towards the man who had treated him so shamefully; and when we find him, in the Memoir now under notice, still trying hard to make the best of Balzac's conduct, and still writing of him in terms of affection and esteem to the very end of the book.

The remainder of Balzac's life was, in substance, merely the lamentable repetition of the personal faults and follies, and the literary merits and triumphs, which have already found their record in these pages. The extremes of idle vanity and unprincipled extravagance still alternated, to the last, with the extremes of hard mental labour and amazing mental productiveness. Though he found new victims among new men, he never again met with so generous and forbearing a friend as the poor publisher whose fortunes he had destroyed. The women, whose impulses in his favour were kept alive by their admiration of his books, clung to their spoilt darling to the last—one of their number even stepping forward to save him from a debtors' prison, at the heavy sacrifice of paying the whole demand against him out of her own purse. In all cases of this sort, even where men were concerned as well as women, his personal means of attraction, when he chose to exert them, strengthened immensely his literary claims on the sympathy and good-will of others. He appears to have possessed in

the highest degree those powers of fascination which are quite independent of mere beauty of face and form, and which are perversely and inexplicably bestowed in the most lavish abundance on the most unprincipled of mankind. Poor Monsieur Werdet can only account for half his own acts of indiscretion, by declaring that his eminent friend wheedled him into committing them. Other and wiser men kept out of Balzac's way, through sheer distrust of themselves. Virtuous friends who tried hard to reform him, retreated from his presence, declaring that the reprobate whom they had gone to convert had all but upset their moral balance in a morning's conversation. An eminent literary gentleman, who went to spend the day with him to talk over a proposed work, rushed out of the house after a two hours' interview, exclaiming piteously, "The man's imagination is in a state of delirium—his talk has set my brain in a whirl—he would have driven me mad if I had spent the day with him!" If men were influenced in this way, it is not wonderful that women (whose self-esteem was delicately flattered by the prominent and fascinating position which they hold in all his books) should have worshipped a man who publicly and privately worshipped them.

His personal appearance would have recalled to English minds the popular idea of Friar Tuck—he was the very model of the conventional fat, sturdy, red-faced, jolly monk. But he had the eye of a man of genius, and the tongue of a certain infernal personage, who may be broadly hinted at, but who must on no account be plainly named. The Balzac candlestick might be clumsy enough; but when once the Balzac candle was lit, the moths flew into it, only too readily, from all points of the compass.

The last important act of his life was, in a worldly point of view, one of the wisest things he ever did. The lady who had invited him to Vienna, and whom he called Carissima, was the wife of a wealthy Russian nobleman. On the death of her husband, she practically asserted her admiration of her favourite author by offering him her hand and fortune. Balzac accepted both; and returned to Paris (from which respect for his creditors had latterly kept him absent) a married man, and an enviable member of the wealthy class of society. A splendid future now opened before him—but it opened too late. Arrived at the end of his old course, he just saw the new career beyond him, and dropped on the threshold of it. The strong constitution which he had remorselessly wasted for more than twenty years past, gave way at length, at the very time when his social chances looked most brightly. Three months after his marriage, Honoré de Balzac died, after unspeakable suffering, of disease of the heart. He was then but fifty years

of age. His fond, proud, heart-broken old mother held him in her arms. On that loving bosom he had drawn his first breath. On that loving bosom the weary head sank to rest again, when the wild, wayward, miserable, glorious life was over.

The sensation produced in Paris by his death was something akin to the sensation produced in London by the death of Byron. Mr. Carlyle has admirably said that there is something touching in the loyalty of men to their Sovereign Man. That loyalty most tenderly declared itself when Balzac was no more. Men of all ranks and parties, who had been shocked by his want of principle and disgusted by his inordinate vanity while he was alive, now accepted universally the atonement of his untimely death, and remembered nothing but the loss that had happened to the literature of France. A great writer was no more; and a great people rose with one accord to take him reverently and gloriously to his grave. The French Institute, the University, the scientific societies, the Association of Dramatic Authors, the Schools of Law and Medicine, sent their representatives to walk in the funeral procession. English readers, American readers, German readers, and Russian readers, swelled the immense assembly of Frenchmen that followed the coffin. Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas were among the mourners who supported the pall. The first of these two celebrated men pronounced the funeral oration over Balzac's grave, and eloquently characterised the whole series of the dead writer's works as forming, in truth, but one grand book, the text-book of contemporary civilisation. With that just and generous tribute to the genius of Balzac, offered by the most illustrious of his literary rivals, these few pages may fitly and gracefully come to an end. Of the miserable frailties of the man, enough has been recorded to serve the first of all interests, the interest of truth. The better and nobler part of him calls for no further comment at any writer's hands. It remains to us in his works, and it speaks with deathless eloquence for itself.

FRAGMENTS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.—II.
MY BLACK MIRROR.

Has everybody heard of Doctor Dee, the magician, and of the black speculum or mirror of cannel coal, in which he could see at will everything in the wide world, and many things beyond it? If so, I may introduce myself to my readers in the easiest manner possible. Although I cannot claim to be a descendant of Doctor Dee, I profess the occult art to the extent of keeping a black mirror, made exactly after the model of that possessed by the old astrologer. My speculum, like his, is constructed of an oval piece of cannel coal, highly polished, and set on a wooden back with a handle to hold it by. Nothing can be simpler than its appearance; nothing more marvellous than its capacities—provided always that the person using it be a true adept. Any man who disbelieves nothing is a true adept. Let him get a piece of cannel coal, polish it highly, clean it before use with a white cambric handkerchief, retire to a private sitting-room, invoke the name of Doctor Dee, shut both eyes for a moment, and open them again suddenly on the black mirror. If he does not see anything he likes, after that—past, present, or future—then let him depend on it there is some speck or flaw of incredulity in his nature; and the sad termination of his career may be considered certain. Sooner or later, he will end in being nothing but a rational man.

I, who have not one morsel of rationality about me; I, who am as true an adept as if I had lived in the good old times ("the Ages of Faith," as another adept has very properly called them) find unceasing interest and occupation in my black mirror. For everything I want to know, and for everything I want to do, I consult it. This very day, for instance (being in the position of most of the other inhabitants of London, at the present season), I am thinking of soon going out of town. My time for being away is so limited, and my wanderings have extended, at home and abroad, in so many directions, that I can hardly hope to visit any really beautiful scenes, or gather any really interesting experiences that are absolutely new to me. I must go to some place that I have visited before; and I must, in common regard to my own holiday interests, take care that it is a place where I have already thoroughly enjoyed myself, without a single drawback to my pleasure that is worth mentioning.

Under these circumstances, if I were a mere rational man, what should I do? Weary my memory to help me to decide on a destination, by giving me my past travelling recollections in one long panorama—although I can tell by experience that of all my faculties memory is the least serviceable at the very time when I most want to employ it. As a true adept, I know better than to give myself any useless trouble of this sort. I retire to my private sitting-room, take up my black mirror, mention what I want—and, behold! on the surface of the cannel coal the image of my former travels passes before me, in a succession of dream-scenes. I revive my past experiences, and I make my present choice out of them, by the evidence of my own eyes; and I may add, by that of my own ears also—for the figures in my magic landscapes move and speak!

Shall I go on the continent again? Yes. To what part of it? Suppose I revisit Austrian Italy, for the sake of renewing my familiarity with certain views, buildings, and pictures which once delighted me? But let me first ascertain whether I had any serious drawbacks to complain of on making acquaintance with that part of the world. Black mirror! show me my first evening in Austrian Italy.

A cloud rises on the magic surface—rests on it a little while—slowly disappears. My eyes are fixed on the cannel coal. I see nothing, hear nothing of the world about me. The first of the magic scenes grows visible. I behold it, as in a dream. Away with the ignorant Present. I am in Italy again.

The darkness is just coming on. I see myself looking out of the side window of a carriage. The hollow roll of the wheels has changed to a sharp rattle, and we have entered a town. We cross a vast square, illuminated by two lamps and a glimmer of reflected light from a coffee-shop window. We get on into a long street, with heavy stone arcades for foot-passengers to walk under. Everything looks dark and confused; grim visions of cloaked men flit by, all smoking; shrill female voices rise above the clatter of our wheels, then subside again in a moment. We stop. The bells on the horses' necks ring their last tiny peal for the night. A greasy hand opens the carriage-door, and helps me down the steps. I am under an archway, with blank darkness before me, with a smiling man holding a flaming tallow candle by my side, with street spectators silently looking on behind me. They wear high-crowned hats and brown cloaks, mysteriously muffling them up to the chin. Brigands, evidently. Pass, Scene! I am a peaceable man, and I don't like the suspicion of a stiletto, even in a dream.

Show me my sitting-room. Where did I dine, and how, on my first evening in Austrian Italy?

Austrian Italy!

I am in the presence of two cheerful waiters, with two flaring candles. One is lighting lamps; the other is setting brushwood and logs in a blaze in a perfect cavern of a hearth. Where am I, now that there is plenty of light to see by? Apparently in a banqueting-hall, fifty feet long by forty wide. This is my private sitting-room, and I am to eat my little bit of dinner in it all alone. Let me look about observantly, while the meal is preparing. Above me is an arched painted ceiling, all alive with Cupids rolling about on clouds, and scattering perpetual roses on the heads of travellers beneath. Around me are classical landscapes of the school which treats the spectator to umbrella-shaped trees, calm green oceans, and foregrounds rampant with dancing goddesses. Beneath me is something elastic to tread upon, smelling very like old straw, which indeed it is, covered with a thin drugget. This is humanely intended to protect me against the cold of the stone or brick floor, and is a concession to English prejudices on the subject of comfort. May I be grateful for it, and take no unfriendly notice of the fleas, though they are crawling up my legs from the straw and the drugget already!

What do I see next? Dinner on table. Drab-coloured soup, which will take a great deal of thickening with grated Parmesan cheese, and five dishes all round it. Trout fried in oil, rolled beef steeped in succulent brown gravy, roast chicken with water-cresses, square pastry cakes with mince-meat inside them, fried potatoes—all excellent. This is really good Italian cookery: it is more fanciful than the English and more solid than the French. It is not greasy, and none of the fried dishes taste in the slightest degree of lamp oil. The wine is good, too—effervescent, smacking of the Muscatel grape, and only eighteen-pence a bottle. The second course more than sustains the character of the first. Small browned birds that look like larks, their plump breasts clothed succulently with a counterpane of fat bacon, their tender backs reposing on beds of savoury toast,—stewed pigeon,—a sponge-cake pudding,—baked pears. Where could one find a better dinner or a pleasanter waiter to serve at table? He is neither servile nor familiar, and is always ready to occupy any superfluous attention I have to spare with all the small talk that is in him. He has, in fact, but one fault, and that consists in his very vexatious and unaccountable manner of varying the language in which he communicates with me.

I speak French and Italian, and he can speak French also as well as his own tongue. I naturally, however, choose Italian on first addressing him, because it is his native language. He understands what I say to him perfectly, but he answers

me in French. I bethink myself, upon this, that he may be wishing, like the rest of us, to show off any little morsel of learning that he has picked up, or that he may fancy I understand French better than I do Italian, and may be politely anxious to make our colloquy as easy as possible to me. Accordingly I humour him, and change to French when I next speak. No sooner are the words out of my mouth than, with inexplicable perversity, he answers me in Italian. All through the dinner I try hard to make him talk the same language that I do, yet, excepting now and then a few insignificant phrases, I never succeed. What is the meaning of his playing this game of philological see-saw with me? Do the people here actually carry the national politeness so far as to flatter the stranger by according him an undisturbed monopoly of the language in which he chooses to talk to them? I cannot explain it, and dessert surprises me in the midst of my perplexities. Four dishes again! Parmesan cheese, macaroons, pears, and green figs. With these and another bottle of the effervescent wine, how brightly the evening will pass away by the blazing wood fire! Surely, I cannot do better than go to Austrian Italy again, after having met with such a first welcome to the country as this. Shall I put down the cannel coal, and determine without any more ado on paying a second visit to the land that is cheered by my comfortable inn? No, not too hastily. Let me try the effect of one or two more scenes from my past travelling experience in this particular division of the Italian peninsula before I decide.

Black Mirror! how did I end my evening at the comfortable inn?

The cloud passes again, heavily and thickly this time, over the surface of the mirror—clears away slowly—shows me myself dozing luxuriously by the red embers with an empty bottle at my side. A suddenly-opening door wakes me up; the landlord of the inn approaches, places a long, official-looking book on the table, and hands me pen and ink. I inquire peevishly what I am wanted to write at that time of night, when I am just digesting my dinner. The landlord answers respectfully that I am required to give the police a full, true, and particular account of myself. I approach the table, thinking this demand rather absurd, for my passport is already in the hands of the authorities. However, as I am in a despotic country, I keep my thoughts to myself, open a blank page in the official-looking book, see that it is divided into columns, with printed headings, and find that I no more understand what they mean than I understand an assessed tax-paper at home, to which by-the-bye, the blank page bears a striking general resemblance. The headings are technical official words, which I now meet with as parts of Italian speech for the first time. I am obliged to appeal to the polite

landlord, and, by his assistance, I get gradually to understand what it is the Austrian police want of me.

The police require to know, before they will let me go on peaceably to-morrow, first, What my name is in full? (Answered easily enough.) Second, What is my nation? (British, and delighted to cast it in the teeth of continental tyrants.) Third, Where was I born? (In London—parish of Marylebone—and I wish my native vestry knew how the Austrian authorities were using me.) Fourth, where do I live? (In London, again—and I have half a mind to write to the Times about this nuisance before I go to bed.) Fifth, how old am I? (My age is what it has been for the last seven years, and what it will remain till further notice—twenty-five exactly.) What next? By all that is inquisitive, here are the police wanting to know (Sixth) whether I am married or single! Landlord, what is the Italian for Bachelor? "Write Nubile, signor." Nubile? That means Marriageable. Permit me to remark, my good sir, that this is a woman's definition of a bachelor—not a man's. No matter, let it pass. What next? (O distrustful despots! what next?) Seventh, What is my condition? (First-rate condition, to be sure,—full of rolled beef, toasted larks, and effervescent wine. Condition! What do they mean by that? Profession, is it? I have not got one. What shall I write? "Write Proprietor, signor." Very well; but I don't know that I am proprietor of anything except the clothes I stand up in: even my trunk was borrowed of a friend.) Eighth, Where do I come from? Ninth, Where am I going to? Tenth, When did I get my passport? Eleventh, Where did I get my passport? Twelfth, Who gave me my passport? Was there ever such a monstrous string of questions to address to a harmless, idle man, who only wants to potter about Italy quietly in a postchaise! Do they catch Mazzini, landlord, with all these precautions? No: they only catch *me*. There! there! take your Travellers' Book back to the police. Surely, such unfounded distrust of my character as the production of that volume at my dinner-table implies, forms a serious drawback to the pleasure of travelling in Austrian Italy. Shall I give up at once all idea of going there, in my own innocent character, again? No; let me be deliberate in arriving at a decision,—let me patiently try the experiment of looking at one more scene from the past.

Black Mirror! how did I travel in Austrian Italy after I had paid my bill in the morning, and had left my comfortable inn?

The new dream-scene shows me evening again. I have joined another English traveller in taking a vehicle that they call a calèche. It is a frowsy kind of sedan-chair on wheels, with greasy leather curtains and cushions. In the days of its prosperity and youth it might have been a state-coach, and might have carried Sir Robert Walpole to court, or the Abbé Dubois to a supper with the Regent Orleans. It is driven by a tall, cadaverous, ruffianly postilion, with his clothes all in rags, and without a spark of mercy for his miserable horses. It smells badly, looks badly, goes badly; and jerks, and cracks, and totters as if it would break down altogether—when it is suddenly stopped on a rough stone pavement in front of a lonely post-house, just as the sun is sinking and the night is setting in.

The postmaster comes out to superintend the harnessing of fresh horses. He is tipsy, familiar, and confidential; he first apostrophises the calèche with contemptuous curses, then takes me mysteriously aside, and declares that the whole high road onward to our morning's destination swarms with thieves. It seems, then, that the Austrian police reserve all their vigilance for innocent travellers, and leave local rogues entirely unmolested. I make this reflection, and ask the postmaster what he recommends us to do for the protection of our portmanteaus, which are tied on to the roof of the calèche. He answers that unless we take special precautions, the thieves will get up behind, on our crazy foot-board, and will cut the trunks off the top of our frowsy travelling-carriage, under cover of the night, while we are quietly seated inside, seeing and suspecting nothing. We instantly express our readiness to take any precautions that any one may be kind enough to suggest. The postmaster winks, lays his finger archly on the side of his nose, and gives an unintelligible order in the patois of the district. Before I have time to ask what he is going to do, every idler about the posthouse who can climb, scales the summit of the calèche, and every idler who cannot, stands roaring and gesticulating below with a lighted candle in his hand.

While the hubbub is at its loudest, a rival travelling carriage suddenly drives into the midst of us, in the shape of a huge barrel-organ on wheels, and bursts out awfully in the darkness with the grand march in Semiramide, played with the utmost fury of the drum, cymbal, and trumpet-stops. The noise is so bewildering that my travelling companion and I take refuge inside our carriage, and shut our eyes, and stop our ears, and abandon ourselves to despair. After a time, our

elbows are jogged, and a string a-piece is given to us through each window. We are informed in shouts, accompanied fiercely by the grand march, that the strings are fastened to our portmanteaus above; that we are to keep the loose ends round our forefingers all night; and that the moment we feel a tug, we may be quite certain the thieves are at work, and may feel justified in stopping the carriage and fighting for our baggage without any more ado. Under these agreeable auspices, we start again, with our strings round our forefingers. We feel like men about to ring the bell—or like men engaged in deep sea-fishing—or like men on the point of pulling the string of a shower-bath. Fifty times at least, during the next stage, each of us is certain that he feels a tug, and pops his head agitatedly out of window, and sees absolutely nothing, and falls back again exhausted with excitement in a corner of the calèche. All through the night this wear and tear of our nerves goes on; and all through the night (thanks, probably, to the ceaseless popping of our heads out of the windows) not the ghost of a thief comes near us. We begin, at last, almost to feel that it would be a relief to be robbed—almost to doubt the policy of resisting any mercifully-larcenous hands stretched forth to rescue us from the incubus of our own baggage. The morning dawn finds us languid and haggard, with the accursed portmanteau strings dangling unregarded in the bottom of the calèche. And this is taking our pleasure! This is an incident of travel in Austrian Italy! Faithful Black Mirror, accept my thanks. The warning of the two last dream-scenes that you have shown me shall not be disregarded. Whatever other direction I may take when I go out of town for the present season, one road at least I know that I shall avoid—the road that leads to Austrian Italy.

Shall I keep on the northern side of the Alps, and travel a little, let us say, in German-Switzerland? Black Mirror! how did I get on when I was last in that country? Did I like my introductory experience at my first inn?

The vision changes, and takes me again to the outside of a house of public entertainment; a great white, clean, smooth-fronted, opulent-looking hotel—a very different building from my dingy, cavernous Italian inn. At the street-door stands the landlord. He is a little, lean, rosy man, dressed all in black, and looking like a master undertaker. I observe that he neither steps forwards nor smiles when I get out of the carriage and ask for a bedroom. He gives me the shortest possible answer, growls guttural instructions to a waiter, then looks out into the street again and, before I have so much as turned my back on him, forgets my existence immediately. The vision changes again, and takes me inside the hotel. I am following a waiter up-stairs—the man looks unaffectedly

sorry to see me. In the bedroom corridor we find a chambermaid asleep with her head on a table. She is woke up; opens a door with a groan, and scowls at me reproachfully when I say that the room will do. I descend to dinner. Two waiters attend on me, under protest, and look as if they were on the point of giving warning every time I require them to change my plate. At the second course the landlord comes in, and stands and stares at me intently and silently with his hands in his pockets. This may be his way of seeing that my dinner is well served; but it looks much more like his way of seeing that I do not abstract any spoons from his table. I become irritated by the boorish staring and frowning of everybody about me, and express myself strongly on the subject of my reception at the hotel to an English traveller dining near me.

The English traveller is one of those exasperating men who are always ready to put up with injuries, and he coolly accounts for the behaviour of which I complain, by telling me that it is the result of the blunt honesty of the natives, who cannot pretend to take an interest in me which they do not really feel. What do I care about the feelings of the stolid landlord and the sulky waiters? I require the comforting outward show from them—the inward substance is not of the smallest consequence to me. When I travel in civilised countries, I want such a reception at my inn as shall genially amuse and gently tickle all the region round about my organ of self-esteem. Blunt honesty which is too offensively truthful to pretend to be glad to see me, shows no corresponding integrity—as my own experience informs me at this very hotel—about the capacities of its wine-bottles, but gives me a pint and charges me for a quart in the bill, like the rest of the world. Blunt honesty, although it is too brutally sincere to look civilly distressed and sympathetic when I say that I am tired after my journey, does not hesitate to warm up, and present before me as newly dressed, a Methuselah of a duck that has been cooked several times over, several days ago, and paid for, though not eaten, by my travelling predecessors. Blunt honesty fleeces me according to every established predatory law of the landlord's code, yet shrinks from the amiable duplicity of fawning affectionately before me all the way up stairs when I first present myself to be swindled. Away with such detestable sincerity as this! Away with the honesty which brutalises a landlord's manners without reforming his bottles or his bills! Away with my German-Swiss hotel, and the extortionate cynic who keeps it! Let others pay tribute if they will to that boor in innkeeper's clothing, the colour of my money he shall never see again.

Suppose I avoid German-Switzerland, and try Switzerland Proper? Mirror! how did I travel when I last found myself on the Swiss side of the Alps?

The new vision removes me even from the most distant view of an hotel of any kind, and places me in a wild mountain country where the end of a rough road is lost in the dry bed of a torrent. I am seated in a queer little box on wheels, called a Char, drawn by a mule and a mare, and driven by a jovial coachman in a blue blouse. I have hardly time to look down alarmedly at the dry bed of the torrent, before the Char plunges into it. Rapidly and recklessly we thump along over rocks and stones, acclivities and declivities that would shake down the stoutest English travelling-carriage, knock up the best-bred English horses, nonplus the most knowing English coachman. Jovial Blue Blouse, singing like a nightingale, drives a-head regardless of every obstacle—the mule and mare tear along as if the journey was the great enjoyment of the day to them—the Char cracks, rends, sways, bumps, and totters, but scorns, as becomes a hardy little mountain vehicle, to overturn or come to pieces. When we are not among the rocks we are rolling and heaving in sloughs of black mud and sand, like a Dutch herring-boat in a ground-swell. It is all one to Blue Blouse and the mule and mare. They are just as ready to drag through sloughs as to jolt over rocks; and when we do come occasionally to a bit of unencumbered ground, they always indemnify themselves for past hardship and fatigue by galloping like mad. As for my own sensations in the character of passenger in the Char, they are not, physically speaking, of the pleasantest possible kind. I can only keep myself inside my vehicle by dint of holding tight with both hands by anything I can find to grasp at; and I am so shaken throughout my whole anatomy that my very jaws clatter again, and my feet play a perpetual tattoo on the bottom of the Char. Did I hit on no method of travelling more composed and deliberate than this, I wonder, when I was last in Switzerland? Must I make up my mind to be half-shaken to pieces if I am bold enough to venture on going there again?

The surface of the Black Mirror is once more clouded over. It clears, and the vision is now of a path along the side of a precipice. A mule is following the path, and I am the adventurous traveller who is astride on the beast's back. The first observation that occurs to me in my new position is, that mules thoroughly deserve their reputation for obstinacy, and that, in regard to the particular animal on which I am riding, the less I interfere with him and the more I conduct myself as if I was a pack-saddle on his back, the better we are sure to get on together.

Carrying pack-saddles is his main business in life; and though he saw me get on his back, he persists in treating me as if I was a bale of goods, by walking on the extreme edge of the precipice, so as not to run any risk of rubbing his load against the safe, or mountain, side of the path. In this and in other things I find

that he is the victim of routine, and the slave of habit. He has a way of stopping short, placing himself in a slanting position, and falling into a profound meditation at some of the most awkward turns in the wild mountain-roads. I imagine at first that he may be halting in this abrupt and inconvenient manner to take breath; but then he never exerts himself so as to tax his lungs in the smallest degree, and he stops on the most unreasonably irregular principles, sometimes twice in ten minutes,—sometimes not more than twice in two hours—evidently just as his new ideas happen to absorb his attention or not. It is part of his exasperating character at these times, always to become immersed in reflection where the muleteer's staff has not room to reach him with the smallest effect; and where, loading him with blows being out of the question, loading him with abusive language is the only other available process for getting him on. I find that he generally turns out to be susceptible to the influence of injurious epithets after he has heard himself insulted five or six times. Once, his obdurate nature gives way, even at the third appeal. He has just stopped with me on his back, to amuse himself, at a dangerous part of the road, with a little hard thinking in a steeply slanting position; and it becomes therefore urgently necessary to abuse him into proceeding forthwith. First, the muleteer calls him a Serpent—he never stirs an inch. Secondly, the muleteer calls him a Frog—he goes on imperturbably with his meditation. Thirdly, the muleteer roars out indignantly, Ah sacré nom d'un Butor! (which, interpreted by the help of my Anglo-French dictionary, means apparently, Ah, sacred name of a Muddlehead!); and at this extraordinary adjuration the beast instantly jerks up his nose, shakes his ears, and goes on his way indignantly.

Mule-riding, under these circumstances, is certainly an adventurous and amusing method of travelling, and well worth trying for once in a way; but I am not at all sure that I should enjoy a second experience of it, and I have my doubts on this account—to say nothing of my dread of a second jolting journey in a Char—about the propriety of undertaking another journey to Switzerland during the present sultry season. It will be wisest, perhaps, to try the effect of a new scene from the past, representing some former visit to some other locality, before I venture on arriving at a decision. I have rejected Austrian Italy and German Switzerland, and I am doubtful about Switzerland Proper. Suppose I do my duty as a patriot, and give the attractions of my own country a fair chance of appealing to any past influences of the agreeable kind, which they may have exercised over me? Black Mirror! when I was last a tourist at home, how did I travel about from place to place?

The cloud on the magic surface rises slowly and grandly, like the lifting of a fog at sea, and discloses a tiny drawing-room, with a skylight window, and a rose-coloured curtain drawn over it to keep out the sun. A bright book-shelf runs all round this little fairy chamber, just below the ceiling, where the cornice would be in loftier rooms. Sofas extend along the wall on either side, and mahogany cupboards full of good things ensconce themselves snugly in the four corners. The table is brightened with nosegays; the mantel-shelf has a smart railing all round it; and the looking-glass above is just large enough to reflect becomingly the face and shoulders of any lady who will give herself the trouble of looking into it. The present inhabitants of the room are three gentlemen with novels and newspapers in their hands, taking their ease in blouses, dressing-gowns, and slippers. They are reposing on the sofas with fruit and wine within easy reach—and one of the party looks to me very much like the enviable possessor of the Black Mirror. They exhibit a spectacle of luxury which would make an ancient Spartan shudder with disgust; and, in an adjoining apartment, their band is attending on them, in the shape of a musical box which is just now playing the last scene in Lucia di Lammermoor.

Hark! what sounds are those mingling with the notes of Donizetti's lovely music—now rising over it sublimely, now dying away under it, gently and more gently still? Our sweet opera air shall come to its close, our music shall play for its short destined time and then be silent again; but those more glorious sounds shall go on with us day and night, shall still swell and sink inexhaustibly, long after we and all who know and love and remember us have passed from this earth for ever. It is the wash of the waves that now travels along with us grandly wherever we go. We are at sea in a schooner yacht, and are taking our pleasure along the southern shores of the English coast.

Yes, this to every man who can be certain of his own stomach, this is the true luxury of travelling, the true secret for thoroughly enjoying all the attractions of moving about from place to place. Wherever we now go, we carry our elegant and comfortable home along with us. We can stop where we like, see what we like, and always come back to our favourite corner on the sofa, always carry on our favourite occupations and amusements, and still be travelling, still be getting forward to new scenes all the time. Here is no hurrying to accommodate yourself to other people's hours for starting, no scrambling for places, no wearisome watchfulness over baggage. Here are no anxieties about strange beds,—for have we not each of us our own sweet little cabin to nestle in at night?—no agitating dependence at the dinner hour upon the vagaries of strange cooks—for have we

not our own sumptuous larder always to return to, our own accomplished and faithful culinary artist always waiting to minister to our special tastes? We can walk and sleep, stand up or lie down just as we please, in our floating travelling-carriage. We can make our own road, and trespass nowhere. The bores we dread, the letters we don't want to answer, cannot follow and annoy us. We are the freest travellers under Heaven; and we find something to interest and attract us through every hour of the day. The ships we meet, the trimming of our sails, the varying of the weather, the everlasting innumerable changes of the ocean, afford constant occupation for eye and ear. Sick, indeed, must that libellous traveller have been who first called the sea monotonous—sick to death, and perhaps, born brother also to that other traveller of evil renown, the first man who journeyed from Dan to Beersheba, and found all barren.

Rest then awhile unemployed, my faithful Black Mirror! The last scene you have shown me is sufficient to answer the purpose for which I took you up. Towards what point of the compass I may turn after leaving London is more than I can tell; but this I know, that my next post-horses shall be the winds, my next stages coast-towns, my next road over the open waves. I will be a sea-traveller once more, and will put off resuming my land journeyings until the arrival of that most obliging of all convenient periods of time—a future opportunity.

SKETCHES OF CHARACTER.—III.
MRS. BADGERY.

[Drawn from the Life. By a Gentleman with No Sensibilities.]

Is there any law in England which will protect me from Mrs. Badgery?

I am a bachelor, and Mrs. Badgery is a widow. Don't suppose she wants to marry me! She wants nothing of the sort. She has not attempted to marry me; she would not think of marrying me, even if I asked her. Understand, if you please, at the outset, that my grievance in relation to this widow lady is a grievance of an entirely new kind.

Let me begin again. I am a bachelor of a certain age. I have a large circle of acquaintance; but I solemnly declare that the late Mr. Badgery was never numbered on the list of my friends. I never heard of him in my life; I never knew that he had left a relict; I never set eyes on Mrs. Badgery until one fatal morning when I went to see if the fixtures were all right in my new house.

My new house is in the suburbs of London. I looked at it, liked it, took it. Three times I visited it before I sent my furniture in. Once with a friend, once with a surveyor, once by myself, to throw a sharp eye, as I have already intimated, over the fixtures. The third visit marked the fatal occasion on which I first saw Mrs. Badgery. A deep interest attaches to this event, and I shall go into details in describing it.

I rang at the bell of the garden-door. The old woman appointed to keep the house answered it. I directly saw something strange and confused in her face and manner. Some men would have pondered a little and questioned her. I am by nature impetuous and a rusher at conclusions. "Drunk," I said to myself, and walked on into the house perfectly satisfied.

I looked into the front parlour. Grate all right, curtain-pole all right, gas chandelier all right. I looked into the back parlour—ditto, ditto, ditto, as we men of business say. I mounted the stairs. Blind on back window right? Yes; blind on back window right. I opened the door of the front drawing-room—and there,

sitting in the middle of the bare floor, was a large woman on a little camp-stool! She was dressed in the deepest mourning; her face was hidden by the thickest crape veil I ever saw; and she was groaning softly to herself in the desolate solitude of my new unfurnished house.

What did I do? Do! I bounced back into the landing as if I had been shot, uttering the national exclamation of terror and astonishment: "Hullo!" (And here I particularly beg, in parenthesis, that the printer will follow my spelling of the word, and not put Hillo, or Halloa, instead, both of which are senseless compromises which represent no sound that ever yet issued from an Englishman's lips.) I said, "Hullo!" and then I turned round fiercely upon the old woman who kept the house, and said "Hullo!" again.

She understood the irresistible appeal that I had made to her feelings, and curtseyed, and looked towards the drawing-room, and humbly hoped that I was not startled or put out. I asked who the crape-covered woman on the camp-stool was, and what she wanted there. Before the old woman could answer, the soft groaning in the drawing-room ceased, and a muffled voice, speaking from behind the crape veil, addressed me reproachfully, and said:

"I am the widow of the late Mr. Badgery."

What do you think I said in answer? Exactly the words which, I flatter myself, any other sensible man in my situation would have said. And what words were they? These two:

"Oh, indeed?"

"Mr. Badgery and myself were the last tenants who inhabited this house," continued the muffled voice. "Mr. Badgery died here." The voice ceased, and the soft groans began again.

It was perhaps not necessary to answer this; but I did answer it. How? In two words again:

"Did he?"

"Our house has been long empty," resumed the voice, choked by sobs. "Our establishment has been broken up. Being left in reduced circumstances, I now live in a cottage near; but it is not home to me. This is home. However long I live, wherever I go, whatever changes may happen to this beloved house, nothing can ever prevent me from looking on it as *my* home. I came here, sir,

with Mr. Badgery after our honeymoon. All the brief happiness of my life was once contained within these four walls. Every dear remembrance that I fondly cherish is shut up in these sacred rooms."

Again the voice ceased, and again the soft groans echoed round my empty walls, and oozed out past me down my uncarpeted staircase.

I reflected. Mrs. Badgery's brief happiness and dear remembrances were not included in the list of fixtures. Why could she not take them away with her? Why should she leave them littered about in the way of my furniture? I was just thinking how I could put this view of the case strongly to Mrs. Badgery, when she suddenly left off groaning, and addressed me once more.

"While this house has been empty," she said, "I have been in the habit of looking in from time to time, and renewing my tender associations with the place. I have lived, as it were, in the sacred memories of Mr. Badgery and of the past, which these dear, these priceless rooms call up, dismantled and dusty as they are at the present moment. It has been my practice to give a remuneration to the attendant for any slight trouble that I might occasion——"

"Only sixpence, sir," whispered the old woman, close at my ear.

"And to ask nothing in return," continued Mrs. Badgery, "but the permission to bring my camp-stool with me, and to meditate on Mr. Badgery in the empty rooms, with every one of which some happy thought, or eloquent word, or tender action of his, is everlastingly associated. I came here on my usual errand to-day. I am discovered, I presume, by the new proprietor of the house—discovered, I am quite ready to admit, as an intruder. I am willing to go, if you wish it after hearing my explanation. My heart is full, sir; I am quite incapable of contending with you. You would hardly think it, but I am sitting on the spot once occupied by *our* ottoman. I am looking towards the window in which *my* flower-stand once stood. In this very place, Mr. Badgery first sat down and clasped me to his heart, when we came back from our honeymoon trip. 'Matilda,' he said, 'your drawing-room has been expensively papered, carpeted, and furnished for a month; but it has only been adorned, love, since you entered it.' If you have no sympathy, sir, for such remembrances as these; if you see nothing pitiable in my position, taken in connection with my presence here; if you cannot enter into my feelings, and thoroughly understand that this is not a house, but a Shrine—you have only to say so, and I am quite willing to go."

She spoke with the air of a martyr—a martyr to my insensibility. If she had been

the proprietor and I had been the intruder, she could not have been more mournfully magnanimous. All this time, too, she never raised her veil—she never has raised it, in my presence, from that time to this. I have no idea whether she is young or old, dark or fair, handsome or ugly: my impression is, that she is in every respect a finished and perfect Gorgon; but I have no basis of fact on which I can support that horrible idea. A moving mass of crape, and a muffled voice—that, if you drive me to it, is all I know, in a personal point of view, of Mrs. Badgery.

"Ever since my irreparable loss, this has been the shrine of my pilgrimage, and the altar of my worship," proceeded the voice. "One man may call himself a landlord, and say that he will let it; another man may call himself a tenant, and say that he will take it. I don't blame either of those two men; I don't wish to intrude on either of those two men; I only tell them that this is my home; that my heart is still in possession, and that no mortal laws, landlords, or tenants can ever turn it out. If you don't understand this, sir; if the holiest feelings that do honour to our common nature have no particular sanctity in your estimation, pray do not scruple to say so; pray tell me to go."

"I don't wish to do anything uncivil, ma'am," said I. "But I am a single man, and I am not sentimental." (Mrs. Badgery groaned.) "Nobody told me I was coming into a Shrine when I took this house; nobody warned me, when I first went over it that there was a Heart in possession. I regret to have disturbed your meditations, and I am sorry to hear that Mr. Badgery is dead. That is all I have to say about it; and now, with your kind permission, I will do myself the honour of wishing you good morning, and will go up-stairs to look after the fixtures on the second floor."

Could I have given a gentler hint than this? Could I have spoken more compassionately to a woman whom I sincerely believe to be old and ugly? Where is the man to be found who can lay his hand on his heart, and honestly say that he ever really pitied the sorrows of a Gorgon? Search through the whole surface of the globe, and you will discover human phenomena of all sorts; but you will not find that man.

To resume. I made her a bow, and left her on the camp-stool, in the middle of the drawing-room floor, exactly as I had found her. I ascended to the second floor, walked into the back room first, and inspected the grate. It appeared to be a little out of repair, so I stooped down to look at it closer. While I was kneeling over the bars, I was violently startled by the fall of one large drop of Warm Water, from a great height, exactly in the middle of a bald place, which has been

from a great height, chiefly in the middle of a bald place, which has been widening a great deal of late years on the top of my head. I turned on my knees, and looked round. Heaven and earth! the crape-covered woman had followed me up-stairs—the source from which the drop of warm water had fallen was Mrs. Badgery's eye!

"I wish you could contrive not to cry over the top of my head, ma'am," I remarked. My patience was becoming exhausted, and I spoke with considerable asperity. The curly-headed youth of the present age may not be able to sympathise with my feelings on this occasion; but my bald brethren know, as well as I do, that the most unpardonable of all liberties is a liberty taken with the unguarded top of the human head.

Mrs. Badgery did not seem to hear me. When she had dropped the tear, she was standing exactly over me, looking down at the grate; and she never stirred an inch after I had spoken. "Don't cry over my head, ma'am," I repeated, more irritably than before.

"This was his dressing-room," said Mrs. Badgery, indulging in muffled soliloquy. "He was singularly particular about his shaving-water. He always liked to have it in a little tin pot, and he invariably desired that it might be placed on this hob." She groaned again, and tapped one side of the grate with the leg of her camp-stool.

If I had been a woman, or if Mrs. Badgery had been a man, I should now have proceeded to extremities, and should have vindicated my right to my own house by an appeal to physical force. Under existing circumstances, all that I could do was to express my indignation by a glance. The glance produced not the slightest result—and no wonder. Who can look at a woman with any effect, through a crape veil?

I retreated into the second-floor front room, and instantly shut the door after me. The next moment I heard the rustling of the crape garments outside, and the muffled voice of Mrs. Badgery poured lamentably through the keyhole.

"Do you mean to make that your bed-room?" asked the voice on the other side of the door. "Oh, don't, don't make that your bed-room! I am going away directly—but, oh pray, pray let that one room be sacred! Don't sleep there! If you can possibly help it, don't sleep there!"

I opened the window, and looked up and down the road. If I had seen a policeman within hail I should certainly have called him in. No such person was

visible. I shut the window again, and warned Mrs. Badgery, through the door, in my sternest tones, not to interfere with my domestic arrangements. "I mean to have my own iron bedstead put up here," I said. "And what is more, I mean to sleep here. And what is more, I mean to snore here!" Severe, I think, that last sentence? It completely crushed Mrs. Badgery for the moment. I heard the crape garments rustling away from the door; I heard the muffled groans going slowly and solemnly down the stairs again.

In due course of time I also descended to the ground-floor. Had Mrs. Badgery really left the premises? I looked into the front parlour—empty. Back parlour—empty. Any other room on the ground-floor? Yes; a long room at the end of the passage. The door was closed. I opened it cautiously, and peeped in. A faint scream, and a smack of two distractedly-clasped hands saluted my appearance. There she was, again on the camp-stool, again sitting exactly in the middle of the floor.

"Don't, don't look in, in that way!" cried Mrs. Badgery, wringing her hands. "I could bear it in any other room, but I can't bear it in this. Every Monday morning I looked out the things for the wash in this room. He was difficult to please about his linen; the washerwoman never put starch enough into his collars to satisfy him. Oh, how often and often has he popped his head in here, as you popped yours just now; and said, in his amusing way, 'More starch!' Oh, how droll he always was—how very, very droll in this dear little back room!"

I said nothing. The situation had now got beyond words. I stood with the door in my hand, looking down the passage towards the garden, and waiting doggedly for Mrs. Badgery to go out. My plan succeeded. She rose, sighed, shut up the camp-stool, stalked along the passage, paused on the hall mat, said to herself, "Sweet, sweet spot!" descended the steps, groaned along the gravel-walk, and disappeared from view at last through the garden-door.

"Let her in again at your peril," said I to the woman who kept the house. She curtseyed and trembled. I left the premises, satisfied with my own conduct under very trying circumstances; delusively convinced also that I had done with Mrs. Badgery.

The next day I sent in the furniture. The most unprotected object on the face of this earth is a house when the furniture is going in. The doors must be kept open; and employ as many servants as you may, nobody can be depended on as a domestic sentry so long as the van is at the gate. The confusion of "moving in" demoralises the steadiest disposition, and there is no such thing as a properly-

guarded post from the top of the house to the bottom. How the invasion was managed, how the surprise was effected, I know not; but it is certainly the fact, that when my furniture went in, the inevitable Mrs. Badgery went in along with it.

I have some very choice engravings, after the old masters; and I was first awakened to a consciousness of Mrs. Badgery's presence in the house, while I was hanging up my proof impression of Titian's Venus over the front parlour fire-place. "Not there!" cried the muffled voice imploringly. "*His* portrait used to hang there. Oh, what a print—what a dreadful, dreadful print to put where *his* dear portrait used to be!"

I turned round in a fury. There she was, still muffled up in crape, still carrying her abominable camp-stool. Before I could say a word in remonstrance, six men in green baize aprons staggered in with my sideboard, and Mrs. Badgery suddenly disappeared. Had they trampled her under foot, or crushed her in the doorway? Though not an inhuman man by nature, I asked myself those questions quite composedly. No very long time elapsed before they were practically answered in the negative by the reappearance of Mrs. Badgery herself, in a perfectly unruffled condition of chronic grief. In the course of the day I had my toes trodden on, I was knocked about by my own furniture, the six men in baize aprons dropped all sorts of small articles over me in going up and down stairs; but Mrs. Badgery escaped unscathed. Every time I thought she had been turned out of the house she proved, on the contrary, to be groaning close behind me. She wept over Mr. Badgery's memory in every room, perfectly undisturbed to the last, by the chaotic confusion of moving in. I am not sure, but I think she brought a tin box of sandwiches with her, and celebrated a tearful pic-nic of her own in the groves of my front garden. I say I am not sure of this; but I am positively certain that I never entirely got rid of her all day; and I know to my cost that she insisted on making me as well acquainted with Mr. Badgery's favourite notions and habits as I am with my own. It may interest the reader if I report that my taste in carpets is not equal to Mr. Badgery's; that my ideas on the subject of servants' wages are not so generous as Mr. Badgery's; and that I ignorantly persisted in placing a sofa in the position which Mr. Badgery, in his time, considered to be particularly fitted for an arm-chair. I could go nowhere, look nowhere, do nothing, say nothing, all that day, without bringing the widowed incubus in the crape garments down upon me immediately. I tried civil remonstrances, I tried rude speeches, I tried sulky silence—nothing had the least effect on her. The memory of Mr. Badgery was the shield of proof with which

she warded off my fiercest attacks. Not till the last article of furniture had been moved in, did I lose sight of her; and even then she had not really left the house. One of my six men in green baize aprons routed her out of the back-garden area, where she was telling my servants, with floods of tears, of Mr. Badgery's virtuous strictness with his housemaid in the matter of followers. My admirable man in green baize courageously saw her out, and shut the garden-door after her. I gave him half-a-crown on the spot; and if anything happens to him, I am ready to make the future prosperity of his fatherless family my own peculiar care.

The next day was Sunday; and I attended morning service at my new parish church.

A popular preacher had been announced, and the building was crowded. I advanced a little way up the nave, and looked to my right, and saw no room. Before I could look to my left, I felt a hand laid persuasively on my arm. I turned round—and there was Mrs. Badgery, with her pew-door open, solemnly beckoning me in. The crowd had closed up behind me; the eyes of a dozen members of the congregation, at least, were fixed on me. I had no choice but to save appearances, and accept the dreadful invitation. There was a vacant place next to the door of the pew. I tried to drop into it, but Mrs. Badgery stopped me. "*His* seat," she whispered, and signed to me to place myself on the other side of her. It is unnecessary to say that I had to climb over a hassock, and that I knocked down all Mrs. Badgery's devotional books before I succeeded in passing between her and the front of the pew. She cried uninterruptedly through the service; composed herself when it was over; and began to tell me what Mr. Badgery's opinions had been on points of abstract theology. Fortunately there was great confusion and crowding at the door of the church; and I escaped, at the hazard of my life, by running round the back of the carriages. I passed the interval between the services alone in the fields, being deterred from going home by the fear that Mrs. Badgery might have got there before me.

Monday came. I positively ordered my servants to let no lady in deep mourning pass inside the garden-door, without first consulting me. After that, feeling tolerably secure, I occupied myself in arranging my books and prints.

I had not pursued this employment much more than an hour, when one of the servants burst excitably into the room, and informed me that a lady in deep mourning had been taken faint, just outside my door, and had requested leave to come in and sit down for a few moments. I ran down the garden-path to bolt the door, and arrived just in time to see it violently pushed open by an officious and

sympathising crowd. They drew away on either side as they saw me. There she was, leaning on the grocer's shoulder, with the butcher's boy in attendance, carrying her camp-stool! Leaving my servants to do what they liked with her, I ran back and locked myself up in my bedroom. When she evacuated the premises, some hours afterwards, I received a message of apology, informing me that this particular Monday was the sad anniversary of her wedding-day, and that she had been taken faint, in consequence, at the sight of her lost husband's house.

Tuesday forenoon passed away happily, without any new invasion. After lunch, I thought I would go out and take a walk. My garden-door has a sort of peep-hole in it, covered with a wire grating. As I got close to this grating, I thought I saw something mysteriously dark on the outer side of it. I bent my head down to look through, and instantly found myself face to face with the crape veil. "Sweet, sweet spot!" said the muffled voice, speaking straight into my eyes through the grating. The usual groans followed, and the name of Mr. Badgery was plaintively pronounced before I could recover myself sufficiently to retreat to the house.

Wednesday is the day on which I am writing this narrative. It is not twelve o'clock yet, and there is every probability that some new form of sentimental persecution is in store for me before the evening. Thus far, these lines contain a perfectly true statement of Mrs. Badgery's conduct towards me since I entered on the possession of *my* house and *her* shrine. What am I to do?—that is the point I wish to insist on—what am I to do? How am I to get away from the memory of Mr. Badgery, and the unappeasable grief of his disconsolate widow? Any other species of invasion it is possible to resist; but how is a man placed in my unhappy and unparalleled circumstances to defend himself? I can't keep a dog ready to fly at Mrs. Badgery. I can't charge her at a police-court with being oppressively fond of the house in which her husband died. I can't set man-traps for a woman, or prosecute a weeping widow as a trespasser and a nuisance. I am helplessly involved in the unrelaxing folds of Mrs. Badgery's crape veil. Surely there was no exaggeration in my language when I said that I was a sufferer under a perfectly new grievance! Can anybody advise me? Has anybody had even the remotest experience of the peculiar form of persecution which I am now enduring? If nobody has, is there any legal gentleman in the United Kingdom who can answer the all-important question which appears at the head of this narrative? I began by asking that question because it was uppermost in my mind. It is uppermost in my mind still, and I therefore beg leave to conclude appropriately by asking it again:

Is there any law in England which will protect me from Mrs. Badgery?

END OF VOL. I.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] Although Father Le Bel discreetly abstains from mentioning the fact, it seems clear from the context that he was permitted to read, and that he did read, the papers contained in the packet.

[2] It may be as well to explain that I use this awkward compound word in order to mark the distinction between a penny journal and a penny newspaper. The "journal" is what I am now writing about. The "newspaper" is an entirely different subject, with which this article has no connection.

[3] Five years have passed since this article was first published, and no signs of progress in the Unknown Public have made their appearance as yet. Patience! patience! (September, 1863).

[4] For the information of ignorant young men, who are beginning life, I subjoin the lamentable particulars of this calculation:—

	£.	*s.*	*d.*
A Tulle Illusion spoilt	2	0	0
Repairing gathers of Moiré Antique	0	5	0
Cheap white lace dress spoilt	3	0	0
Do. blue gauze do.	1	6	0
Two new breadths of velvet for Mama	4	0	0
Cleaning my son-in-law's trousers	0	2	6
Cleaning my own coat	0	5	0
Total	10	18	6

[5] This sentence has unfortunately proved prophetic. Cheap translations of Le Père Goriot and La Recherche de l'Absolu were published soon after the present article appeared in print, with extracts from the opinions here expressed on Balzac's writings appended by way of advertisement. Critical remonstrance in relation to such productions as these would be remonstrance thrown away. It will be enough to say here, by way of warning to the reader, that the experiment of rendering the French of Balzac into its fair English equivalent still remains to be tried.

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