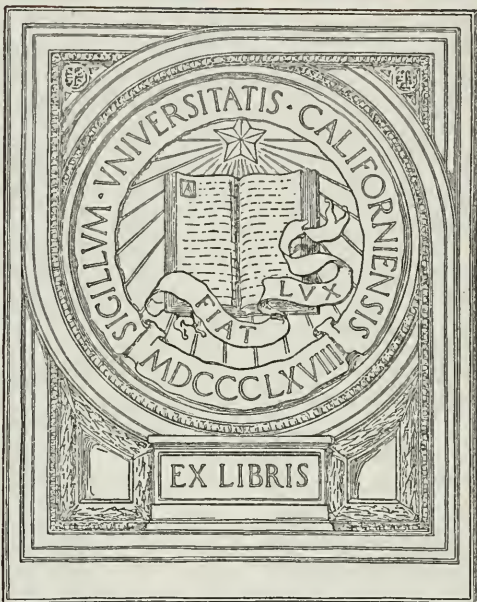


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COUNTRY STORIES.

BY

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

AUTHORESS OF

“OUR VILLAGE,” “BELFORD REGIS,” “RIENZI,” &c.

LONDON

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TO
THE REV. WILLIAM HARNESS,
WHOSE OLD HEREDITARY FRIENDSHIP,
HAS BEEN THE PRIDE AND PLEASURE
OF HER HAPPIER HOURS,
HER CONSOLATION IN THE SORROWS,
AND
HER SUPPORT IN THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE,
THIS LITTLE VOLUME,
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY
INSCRIBED BY
THE AUTHOR.

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COUNTRY STORIES.

COUNTRY LODGINGS.

BETWEEN two and three years ago, the following pithy advertisement appeared in several of the London papers :—

“Country Lodgings.—Apartments to let in a large farm-house, situate in a cheap and pleasant village, about forty miles from London. Apply (if by letter post-paid) to A. B., No. 7, Salisbury-street, Strand.”

Little did I think, whilst admiring in the broad page of the Morning Chronicle the compendious brevity of this announcement, that the pleasant village referred to was our own dear Aberleigh; and that the first tenant of those apartments should be a lady whose family I had long known, and in whose fortunes and destiny I took a more than common interest!

Upton Court was a manor-house of considerable extent, which had in former times been the residence of a distinguished Catholic family, but which, in the changes of property incident to our fluctuating neighbourhood, was now "fallen from its high estate," and degraded into the homestead of a farm so small, that the tenant, a yeoman of the poorest class, was fain to eke out his rent by entering into an agreement with a speculating Belford upholsterer, and letting off a part of the fine old mansion in the shape of furnished lodgings.

Nothing could be finer than the situation of Upton, placed on the summit of a steep acclivity, looking over a rich and fertile valley to a range of woody hills; nothing more beautiful than the approach from Belford, the road leading across a common between a double row of noble oaks, the ground on one side sinking with the abruptness of a north-country burn, whilst a clear spring, bursting from the hill side, made its way to the bottom between patches of shaggy underwood and a grove of smaller trees; a vine-covered cottage just peeping between the foli-

age, and the picturesque outline of the Court, with its old-fashioned porch, its long windows, and its tall, clustered chimneys towering in the distance. It was the prettiest prospect in all Aberleigh.

The house itself retained strong marks of former stateliness, especially in one projecting wing, too remote from the yard to be devoted to the domestic purposes of the farmer's family. The fine proportions of the lofty and spacious apartments, the rich mouldings of the ceilings, the carved chimney-pieces, and the panelled walls, all attested the former grandeur of the mansion; whilst the fragments of stained glass in the windows of the great gallery, the half-effaced coats of arms over the door-way, the faded family portraits, grim black-visaged knights, and pale shadowy ladies, or the reliques of mouldering tapestry that fluttered against the walls, and, above all, the secret chamber constructed for the priest's hiding-place in days of Protestant persecution, for in darker ages neither of the dominant churches was free from that foul stain,—each of these vestiges of the

manners and the history of times long gone by appealed to the imagination, and conspired to give a Mrs. Radcliffe-like, Castle-of-Udolpho-sort of romance to the manor-house. Really, when the wind swept through the overgrown espaliers of that neglected but luxuriant wilderness, the terraced garden; when the screech-owl shrieked from the ivy which clustered up one side of the walls, and "rats and mice, and such small deer," were playing their pranks behind the wainscot, it would have formed as pretty a locality for a supernatural adventure, as ever decayed hunting lodge in the recesses of the Hartz, or ruined fortress on the castled Rhine. Nothing was wanting but the ghost, and a ghost of any taste would have been proud of such a habitation.

Less like a ghost than the inhabitant who did arrive, no human being well could be.

Mrs. Cameron was a young widow. Her father, a Scotch officer, well-born, sickly, and poor, had been but too happy to bestow the hand of his only child upon an old friend and fellow-countryman, the principal clerk in a government office, whose respectable station, easy

fortune, excellent sense, and super-excellent character, were, as he thought, and as fathers, right or wrong, are apt to think, advantages more than sufficient to counterbalance a disparity of years and appearance, which some daughters might have thought startling,—the bride being a beautiful girl of seventeen, the bridegroom a plain man of seven-and-fifty. In this case, at least, the father was right. He lived long enough to see that the young wife was unusually attached to her kind and indulgent husband, and died, about a twelve-month after the marriage, with the fullest confidence in her respectability and happiness. Mr. Cameron did not long survive him. Before she was nineteen the fair Helen Cameron was a widow and an orphan, with one beautiful boy, to whom she was left sole personal guardian, an income being secured to her ample for her rank in life, but clogged with the one condition of her not marrying again.

Such was the tenant, who, wearied of her dull suburban home, a red brick house in the middle of a row of red brick houses; tired of the loneliness which never presses so much upon the spirits

as when left solitary in the environs of a great city; pining for country liberty, for green trees, and fresh air; much caught by the picturesque-ness of Upton, and its mixture of old-fashioned stateliness and village rusticity; and, perhaps, a little swayed by a desire to be near an old friend and correspondent of the mother, to whose memory she was so strongly attached, came in the budding spring time, the showery, flowery month of April, to spend the ensuing summer at the Court.

We, on our part, regarded her arrival with no common interest. To me it seemed but yesterday since I had received an epistle of thanks for a present of one of dear Mary Howitt's charming children's books,—an epistle undoubtedly not indited by the writer,—in huge round text, between double pencil lines, with certain small errors of orthography corrected in a smaller hand above; followed in due time by postscripts to her mother's letters, upon one single line, and the spelling much amended; then by a short, very short note, in French; and at last, by a despatch of unquestionable authenticity, all about doves and rabbits,—a holiday scrawl, rambling, scam-

bling, and uneven, and free from restraint as heart could desire. It appeared but yesterday since Helen Graham was herself a child; and here she was, within two miles of us, a widow and a mother!

Our correspondence had been broken off by the death of Mrs. Graham when she was about ten years old, and although I had twice called upon her in my casual visits to town during the lifetime of Mr. Cameron; and although these visits had been most punctually returned, it had happened, as those things do happen in dear, provoking London, where one is sure to miss the people one wishes most to see, that neither party had ever been at home; so that we had never met, and I was at full liberty to indulge in my foolish propensity of sketching in my mind's eye a fancy portrait of my unknown friend.

Il Penseroso is not more different from L'Allegro than was my anticipation from the charming reality. Remembering well her mother's delicate and fragile grace of figure and countenance, and coupling with that recollection her

own unprotected and solitary state, and somewhat melancholy story, I had pictured to myself (as if contrast were not in this world of ours much more frequent than congruity) a mild, pensive, interesting, fair-haired beauty, tall, pale, and slender;—I found a Hebe, an Euphrosyne,—a round, rosy, joyous creature, the very impersonation of youth, health, sweetness, and gaiety, laughter flashing from her hazel eyes, smiles dimpling round her coral lips, and the rich curls of her chestnut hair,—for having been fourteen months a widow, she had, of course, laid aside the peculiar dress,—the glossy ringlets of her “bonny brown hair” literally bursting from the comb that attempted to confine them.

We soon found that her mind was as charming as her person. Indeed, her face, lovely as it was, derived the best part of its loveliness from her sunny temper, her frank and ardent spirit, her affectionate and generous heart. It was the ever-varying expression, an expression which could not deceive, that lent such matchless charms to her glowing and animated countenance, and to the round and musical voice

sweet as the spoken voice of Malibran, or the still fuller and more exquisite tones of Mrs. Jordan, which, true to the feeling of the moment, vibrated alike to the wildest gaiety and the deepest pathos. In a word, the chief beauty of Helen Cameron was her sensibility. It was the perfume to the rose.

Her little boy, born just before his father's death, and upon whom she doated, was a magnificent piece of still life. Calm, placid, dignified, an infant Hercules for strength and fair proportions, grave as a judge, quiet as a flower, he was, in point of age, exactly at that most delightful period when children are very pleasant to look upon, and require no other sort of notice whatsoever. Of course this state of perfection could not be expected to continue. The young gentleman would soon aspire to the accomplishments of walking and talking—and then!—but as that hour of turmoil and commotion to which his mamma looked forward with ecstasy was yet at some months distance, I contented myself with saying of master Archy, with considerably less than the usual falsehood,

that which everybody does say of only children, that he was the finest baby that ever was seen.

We met almost every day. Mrs. Cameron was never weary of driving about our beautiful lanes in her little pony-carriage, and usually called upon us in her way home, we being not merely her oldest, but almost her only friends; for lively and social as was her temper, there was a little touch of shyness about her, which induced her rather to shun than to covet the company of strangers. And indeed the cheerfulness of temper, and activity of mind, which made her so charming an acquisition to a small circle, rendered her independent of general society. Busy as a bee, sportive as a butterfly, she passed the greater part of her time in the open air, and having caught from me that very contagious and engrossing passion, a love of floriculture, had actually undertaken the operation of restoring the old garden at the Court—a coppice of brambles, thistles, and weeds of every description, mixed with flowering shrubs, and overgrown fruit-trees—

to something like its original order. The farmer, to be sure, had abandoned the job in despair, contenting himself with growing his cabbages and potatoes in a field hard by. But she was certain that she and her maid Martha, and the boy Bill, who looked after her pony, would weed the paths, and fill the flower-borders in no time. We should see; I had need take good care of my reputation, for she meant her garden to beat mine.

What progress Helen and her forces, a shatter-brain boy who did not know a violet from a nettle, and a London-bred girl who had hardly seen a rose-bush in her life, would have made in clearing this forest of underwood, might easily be foretold. Accident, however, that frequent favourer of bold projects, came to her aid in the shape of a more efficient coadjutor.

Late one evening the fair Helen arrived at our cottage with a face of unwonted gravity. Mrs. Davies (her landlady) had used her very ill. She had taken the west wing in total ignorance of there being other apartments to

let at the Court, or she would have secured them. And now a new lodger had arrived, had actually taken possession of two rooms in the centre of the house; and Martha, who had seen him, said he was a young man, and a handsome man—and she herself a young woman unprotected and alone!—It was awkward, very awkward! Was it not very awkward? What was she to do?

Nothing could be done that night; so far was clear; but we praised her prudence, promised to call at Upton the next day, and if necessary, to speak to this new lodger, who might, after all, be no very formidable person; and quite relieved by the vent which she had given to her scruples, she departed in her usual good spirits.

Early the next morning she re-appeared. “She would not have the new lodger disturbed for the world! He was a Pole. One doubtless of those unfortunate exiles. He had told Mrs. Davies that he was a Polish gentleman desirous chiefly of good air, cheapness, and retirement. Beyond a doubt he was one of

those unhappy fugitives. He looked grave, and pale, and thoughtful, quite like a hero of romance. Besides, he was the very person who a week before had caught hold of the reins when that little restive pony had taken fright at the baker's cart, and nearly backed Bill and herself into the great gravel-pit on Lanton Common. Bill had entirely lost all command over the pony, and but for the stranger's presence of mind, she did not know what would have become of them. Surely I must remember her telling me the circumstance? Besides, he was unfortunate! He was poor! He was an exile! She would not be the means of driving him from the asylum which he had chosen for all the world!—No! not for all my geraniums!" an expression which is by no means the anti-climax that it seems—for in the eyes of a florist, and that florist an enthusiast and a woman, what is this rusty fusty dusty musty bit of earth, called the world, compared to a stand of bright flowers?

And finding, upon inquiry, that M. Choynowski (so he called himself) had brought a

letter of recommendation from a respectable London tradesman, and that there was every appearance of his being, as our fair young friend had conjectured, a foreigner in distress, my father not only agreed that it would be a cruel attempt to drive him from his new home, (a piece of tyranny which, even in this land of freedom, might, I suspect, have been managed in the form of an offer of double rent, by that grand despot, money,) but resolved to offer the few attentions in our poor power, to one whom every look and word proclaimed him to be, in the largest sense of the word, a gentleman.

My father had seen him, not on his visit of inquiry, but on a few days after, bill-hook in hand, hacking away manfully at the briers and brambles of the garden. My first view of him was in a position even less romantic, assisting a Belford tradesman to put up a stove in the nursery.

One of Mrs. Cameron's few causes of complaint in her country lodgings had been the tendency to smoke in that important apartment. We all know that when those two subtle es

sences, smoke and wind, once come to do battle in a wide, open chimney, the invisible agent is pretty sure to have the best of the day, and to drive his vapoury enemy at full speed before him. M. Choynowski, who by this time had established a gardening acquaintance, not merely with Bill and Martha, but with their fair mistress, happening to see her, one windy evening, in a paroxysm of smoky distress, not merely recommended a stove, after the fashion of the northern nations' notions, but immediately walked into Belford to give his own orders to a respectable ironmonger; and they were in the very act of erecting this admirable accessory to warmth and comfort (really these words are synonymous) when I happened to call.

I could hardly have seen him under circumstances better calculated to display his intelligence, his delicacy, or his good-breeding. The patience, gentleness, and kind feeling, with which he contrived at once to excuse and to remedy certain blunders made by the workmen in the execution of his orders, and the clearness with which, in perfectly correct and idiomatic En-

glish, slightly tinged with a foreign accent, he explained the mechanical and scientific reasons for the construction he had suggested, gave evidence at once of no common talent, and of a considerateness and good-nature in its exercise more valuable than all the talent in the world. If trifling and every-day occurrences afford, as I believe they do, the surest and safest indications of character, we could have no hesitation in pronouncing upon the amiable qualities of M. Choynowski.

In person he was tall and graceful, and very noble-looking. His head was particularly intellectual, and there was a calm sweetness about the mouth that was singularly prepossessing. Helen had likened him to a hero of romance. In my eyes he bore much more plainly the stamp of a man of fashion—of that very highest fashion which is too refined for finery, too full of self-respect for affectation. Simple, natural, mild, and gracious, the gentle reserve of his manner added, under the circumstances, to the interest which he inspired. Somewhat of that reserve continued even after our acquaintance had ripened into intimacy.

He never spoke of his own past history, or future prospects, shunned all political discourse, and was with difficulty drawn into conversation upon the scenery and manners of the North of Europe. He seemed afraid of the subject.

Upon general topics, whether of literature or art, he was remarkably open and candid. He possessed in an eminent degree the talent of acquiring languages for which his countrymen are distinguished, and had made the best use of those keys of knowledge. I have never met with any person whose mind was more richly cultivated, or who was more calculated to adorn the highest station. And here he was wasting life in a secluded village in a foreign country! What would become of him after his present apparently slender resources should be exhausted, was painful to imagine. The more painful, that the accidental discovery of the direction of a letter had disclosed his former rank. It was part of an envelope addressed, "A Monsieur Monsieur le Comte Choynowski," and left as a mark in a book, all

except the name being torn off. But the fact needed no confirmation. All his habits and ways of thinking bore marks of high station. What would become of him?

It was but too evident that another calamity was impending over the unfortunate exile. Although most discreet in word and guarded in manner, every action bespoke his devotion to his lovely fellow inmate. Her wishes were his law. His attentions to her little boy were such as young men rarely show to infants except for love of the mother; and the garden, that garden abandoned since the memory of man, (for the Court, previous to the arrival of the present tenant, had been for years uninhabited,) was, under his exertions and superintendence, rapidly assuming an aspect of luxuriance and order. It was not impossible but Helen might realise her playful vaunt, and beat me in my own art after all.

John (our gardening lad) was as near being jealous as possible, and, considering the estimation in which John is known to hold our doings in the flower way, such jealousy must

be accepted as the most flattering testimony to his rival's success. To go beyond our garden was, in John's opinion, to be great indeed!

Every thought of the Count Choynowski was engrossed by the fair Helen; and we saw with some anxiety that she in her turn was but too sensible of his attentions, and that everything belonging to his country assumed in her eyes an absorbing importance. She sent to London for all the books that could be obtained respecting Poland; ordered all the journals that interested themselves in that interesting though apparently hopeless cause; turned liberal,—she who had been reared in the lap of conservatism, and whom my father used laughingly to call the little Tory;—turned Radical, turned Republican,—for she far out-soared the moderate doctrines of whiggism in her political flights; denounced the Emperor Nicholas as a tyrant; spoke of the Russians as a nation of savages; and in spite of the evident uneasiness with which the Polish exile listened to any allusion to the wrongs of his country, for he never

mingled in such discussions, omitted no opportunity of proving her sympathy by declaiming with an animation and vehemence, as becoming as anything so like scolding well could be, against the cruelty and wickedness of the oppressors of that most unfortunate of nations.

It was clear that the peace of both was endangered, perhaps gone; and that it had become the painful duty of friendship to awaken them from their too bewitching dream.

We had made an excursion, on one sunny summer's day, as far as the Everley Hills. Helen, always impassioned, had been wrought into a passionate recollection of her own native country, by the sight of the heather just bursting into its purple bloom; and M. Choynowski, usually so self-possessed, had been betrayed into the expression of a kindred feeling by the delicious odour of the fir plantations, which served to transport him in imagination to the balm-breathing forests of the North. This sympathy was a new, and a strong bond of union between two spirits but too congenial;

and I determined no longer to defer informing the gentleman, in whose honour I placed the most implicit reliance, of the peculiar position of our fair friend.

Detaining him, therefore, to coffee, (we had taken an early dinner in the fir grove,) and suffering Helen to go home to her little boy, I contrived, by leading the conversation to capricious wills, to communicate to him, as if accidentally, the fact of her forfeiting her whole income in the event of a second marriage.—He listened with grave attention.

“Is she also deprived,” inquired he, “of the guardianship of her child?”

“No. But as the sum allowed for the maintenance is also to cease from the day of her nuptials, and the money to accumulate until he is of age, she would, by marrying a poor man, do irreparable injury to her son, by cramping his education. It is a grievous restraint.”

He made no answer. And after two or three attempts at conversation, which his mind was too completely pre-occupied to sustain, he bade us good-night, and returned to the Court.

The next morning we heard that he had left

Upton and gone, they said, to Oxford. And I could not help hoping that he had seen his danger, and would not return until the peril was past.

I was mistaken. In two or three days he returned, exhibiting less self-command than I had been led to anticipate. The fair lady, too, I took occasion to remind of this terrible will, in hopes, since he would not go, that she would have had the wisdom to have taken her departure. No such thing; neither party would move a jot. I might as well have bestowed my counsel upon the two stone figures on the great gateway. And heartily sorry, and a little angry, I resolved to let matters take their own course.

Several weeks passed on, when one morning she came to me in the sweetest confusion, the loveliest mixture of bashfulness and joy.

“ He loves me !” she said; “ he has told me that he loves me !”

“ Well ?”

“ And I have referred him to you. That clause——”

“ He already knows it.” And then I told her, word for word, what had passed.

“ He knows of that clause, and he still wishes to marry me ! He loves me for myself ! Loves me, knowing me to be a beggar ! It is true, pure, disinterested affection ! ”

“ Beyond all doubt it is. And if you could live upon true love —— ”

“ Oh, but where *that* exists, and youth, and health, and strength, and education, may we not be well content to try to earn a living *together* ? think of the happiness comprised in that word ! I could give lessons ;— I am sure that I could. I would teach music, and drawing, and dancing — anything for him ! or we could keep a school here at Upton—anywhere with him ! ”

“ And I am to tell him this ? ”

“ Not the words ! ” replied she, blushing like a rose at her own earnestness ; “ not those words ! ”

Of course, it was not very long before M. le Comte made his appearance.

“ God bless her, noble, generous creature ! ” cried he, when I had fulfilled my commission.

“ God for ever bless her ! ”

“And you intend, then, to take her at her word, and set up school together?” exclaimed I, a little provoked at his unscrupulous acceptance of her proffered sacrifice. “You really intend to keep a lady’s boarding-school here at the Court?”

“I intend to take her at her word, most certainly,” replied he, very composedly; “but I should like to know, my good friend, what has put it into her head, and into yours, that if Helen marries me she must needs earn her own living? Suppose I should tell you,” continued he, smiling, “that my father, one of the richest of the Polish nobility, was a favourite friend of the Emperor Alexander; that the Emperor Nicholas continued to me the kindness which his brother had shown to my father, and that I thought, as he had done, (gratitude and personal attachment apart,) that I could better serve my country, and more effectually ameliorate the condition of my tenants and vassals, by submitting to the Russian government, than by a hopeless struggle for national independence? Suppose that I were to confess, that chancing in the course of a

three-years' travel to walk through this pretty village of yours, I saw Helen, and could not rest until I had seen more of her;—supposing all this, would you pardon the deception, or rather the allowing you to deceive yourselves? Oh, if you could but imagine how delightful it is to a man, upon whom the humbling conviction has been forced, that his society is courted and his alliance sought for the accidents of rank and fortune, to feel that he is, for once in his life, honestly liked, fervently loved for himself, such as he is, his own very self,—if you could but fancy how proud he is of such friendship, how happy in such love, you would pardon him, I am sure you would; you would never have the heart to be angry. And now that the Imperial consent to a foreign union—the gracious consent for which I so anxiously waited to authorize my proposals—has at length arrived, do you think,” added the Count, with some seriousness, “that there is any chance of reconciling this dear Helen to my august master? or will she still continue a rebel?”

At this question, so gravely put, I laughed outright. “Why really, my dear Count, I can-

not pretend to answer decidedly for the turn that the affair might take; but my impression—to speak in that idiomatic English, more racy than elegant, which you pique yourself upon understanding—my full impression is, that Helen having for no reason upon earth but her interest in you, *rat*ted from Conservatism to Radicalism, will for the same cause lose no time in ratting back again. A woman's politics, especially if she be a young woman, are generally the result of feeling rather than of opinion, and our fair friend strikes me as a most unlikely subject to form an exception to the rule. However, if you doubt my authority in this matter, you have nothing to do but to inquire at the fountain-head. There she sits, in the arbour. Go and ask."

And before the words were well spoken, the lover, radiant with happiness, was at the side of his beloved.

THE LONDON VISITOR.

BEING in a state of utter mystification, (a very disagreeable state, by-the-bye,) I hold it advisable to lay my unhappy case, in strict confidence, in the lowest possible whisper, and quite in a corner, before my kind friend, patron, and protector, the public, through whose means—for now-a-days every body knows everything, and there is no riddle so dark but shall find an Œdipus to solve it—I may possibly be able to discover whether the bewilderment under which I have been labouring for the last three days be the result of natural causes, like the delusions recorded in Dr. Brewster's book, or whether there be in this little south of England county of ours, year 1836, a revival of the

old science of Gramarye, the glamour art, which, according to that veracious minstrel, Sir Walter Scott, was exercised with such singular success in the sixteenth century by the Ladye of Branksome upon the good knight, William of Deloraine, and others his peers. In short, I want to know—— But the best way to make my readers understand my story, will be to begin at the beginning.

I am a wretched visitor. There is not a person in all Berkshire who has so often occasion to appeal to the indulgence of her acquaintance to pardon her sins of omission upon this score. I cannot tell how it happens; nobody likes society better when in it, or is more delighted to see her friends; but it is almost as easy to pull a tree of my age and size up by the roots, as it is to dislodge me in summer from my flowery garden, or in the winter from my sunny parlour, for the purpose of accepting a dinner invitation, or making a morning call. Perhaps the great accumulation of my debts in this way, the very despair of ever paying them all, may be one reason (as is

often the case, I believe, in pecuniary obligations) why I so seldom pay any; then, whether I do much or not, I have generally plenty to do; then again, I so dearly love to do nothing; then, summer or winter, the weather is commonly too cold for an open carriage, and I am eminently a catch-cold person; so that between wind and rain, business and idleness, no lady in the county with so many places that she ought to go to, goes to so few: and yet it was from the extraordinary event of my happening to leave home three days following, that my present mystification took its rise. Thus the case stands.

Last Thursday morning, being the 23rd day of this present month of June, I received a note from my kind friend and neighbour, Mrs. Dunbar, requesting very earnestly that my father and myself would dine that evening at the Hall, apologising for the short notice, as arising out of the unexpected arrival of a guest from London, and the equally unexpected absence of the General, which threw her (she was pleased to say) upon our kindness to assist

in entertaining her visitor. At seven o'clock, accordingly, we repaired to General Dunbar's, and found our hostess surrounded by her fine boys and girls, conversing with a gentleman, whom she immediately introduced to us as Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Thompson was a gentleman of about—— Pshaw ! nothing is so unpolite as to go guessing how many years a man may have lived in this most excellent world, especially when it is perfectly clear, from his dress and demeanour, that the register of his birth is the last document relating to himself which he would care to see produced.

Mr. Thompson, then, was a gentleman of no particular age; not quite so young as he had been, but still in very tolerable preservation, being pretty exactly that which is understood by the phrase an old beau. He was of middle size and middle height, with a slight stoop in the shoulders; a skin of the true London complexion, between brown and yellow, and slightly wrinkled: eyes of no very distinct colour; a nose which, belonging to none of the recognised classes of

that many-named feature, may fairly be called anonymous; and a mouth, whose habitual mechanical smile (a smile which, by the way, conveyed no impression either of gaiety or of sweetness) displayed a set of teeth which did great honour to his dentist. His whiskers and his wig were a capital match as to colour; and altogether it was a head calculated to convey a very favourable impression of the different artists employed in getting it up.

His dress was equally creditable to his tailor and his valet, "rather rich than gaudy," (as Miss Byron said of Sir Charles Grandison,) except in the grand article of the waistcoat, a brocade brodé of resplendent lustre, which combined both qualities. His shoes were bright with the new French blacking, and his jewellery, rings, studs, brooches, and chains (for he wore two, that belonging to his watch, and one from which depended a pair of spectacles, folded so as to resemble an eye-glass,) were of the finest material and the latest fashion.

In short, our new acquaintance was an old

beau. He was not, however, that which an old beau so frequently is, an old bachelor. On the contrary, he spoke of Mrs. Thompson and her parties, and her box at the opera (he did not say on what tier) with some unction, and mentioned with considerable pride a certain Mr. Browne, who had lately married his eldest daughter; Browne, he it observed, with an *e*, as his name (I beg his pardon for having misspelt it) was Thomson without the *p*; there being I know not what of dignity in the absence of the consonant, and the presence of the vowel, though mute. We soon found that both he and Mr. Browne lent these illustrious names to half a score of clubs, from the Athenæum downward. We also gathered from his conversation that he resided somewhere in Gloucester Place or Devonshire Place, in Wimpole Street or Harley Street, (I could not quite make out in which of those respectable double rows of houses his domicile was situate,) and that he contemplated with considerable jealousy the manner in which the tide of fashion had set in to the south-west, rolling its changeful current round

the splendid mansions of Belgrave Square, and threatening to leave this once distinguished quartier as bare and open to the jesters of the silver-fork school as the ignoble precincts of Bloomsbury. It was a strange mixture of feeling. He was evidently upon the point of becoming ashamed of a neighbourhood of which he had once been not a little proud. He spoke slightingly of the Regent's Park, and eschewed as much as possible all mention of the Diorama and the Zoological, and yet seemed pleased and flattered, and to take it as a sort of personal compliment, when Mrs. Dunbar professed her fidelity to the scene of her youthful gaiety, Cavendish Square and its environs.

He had been, it seemed, an old friend of the General's, and had come down partly to see him, and partly for the purpose of a day's fishing, although, by some mistake in the wording of his letter, his host, who did not expect him until the next week, happened to be absent. This, however, had troubled him little. He saw the General often enough in town. Angling was his first object in the country;

and as the fine piece of water in the park (famous for its enormous pike) remained *in statu quo*, and Edward Dunbar was ready to accompany and assist him, he had talked the night before of nothing but his flies and his rods, and boasted, in speaking of Ireland, the classic land of modern fishermen, of what he meant to do, and what he had done—of salmon caught in the wilds of Connemara, and trout drawn out amid the beauties of Killarney. Fishing exploits, past and future, formed the only theme of his conversation during his first evening at the Hall. On that which we spent in his company, nothing could be farther from his inclination than any allusion, however remote, to his beloved sport. He had been out in the morning, and we at last extorted from Edward Dunbar, upon a promise not to hint at the story until the hero of the adventure should be fairly off, that, after trying with exemplary patience all parts of the mere for several hours without so much as a nibble, a huge pike, as Mr. Thompson asserted, or, as Edward suspected, the root of a tree, had caught fast hold

of the hook. If pike it were, the fish had the best of the battle, for, in a mighty jerk on one side or the other (the famous Dublin tackle maintaining its reputation, and holding as firm as the cordage of a man-of-war,) the unlucky angler had been fairly pulled into the water, and soused over head and ears. How his valet contrived to reinstate his coëffure, unless, indeed, he travelled with a change of wigs, is one of those mysteries of an old beau's toilet which pass female comprehension.

Of course there was no further mention of angling. Our new acquaintance had quite subjects enough without touching upon that. In eating, for instance, he might fairly be called learned. Mrs. Dunbar's cuisine was excellent, and he not only praised the different dishes in a most scientific and edifying manner, but volunteered a recipe for certain little mutton pies, the fashion of the season. In drinking he was equally at home. Edward had produced his father's choicest hermitage and lachryma, and he seemed to me to know literally by heart all the most celebrated vintages, and to

have made pilgrimages to the most famous vineyards all over Europe. He talked to Helen Dunbar, a musical young lady, of Grisi and Malibran; to her sister Caroline, a literary enthusiast, of the poems of the year, "Ion," and "Paracelsus;" to me he spoke of geraniums; and to my father of politics—contriving to conciliate both parties, (for there were Whigs and Tories in the room,) by dubbing himself a liberal Conservative. In short, he played his part of Man of the World perfectly to his own satisfaction, and would have passed with the whole family for the very model of all London visitors, had he not unfortunately nodded over certain verses which he had flattered Miss Caroline into producing, and fallen fast asleep during her sister's cavatina; and if his conversation, however easy and smooth, had not been felt to be upon the whole rather vapid and prosy. "Just exactly," said young Edward Dunbar, who, in the migration transit between Eton, which he had left at Easter, and Oxford, which he was to enter at Michaelmas, was plentifully imbued with the aristocratic prejudices common to

each of those venerable seats of learning “just exactly what in the fitness of things the talk of a Mr. Thompson ought to be.”

The next afternoon I happened to be engaged to the Lady Margaret Gore, another pleasant neighbour, to drink tea; a convenient fashion, which saves time and trouble, and is much followed in these parts during the summer months. A little after eight I made my appearance in her saloon, which, contrary to her usual polite attention, I found empty. In the course of a few minutes she entered, and apologised for her momentary absence, as having been caused by a London gentleman on a visit at the house, who arriving the evening before, had spent all that morning at the side of Loddon fishing, (where, by the way, observed her ladyship, he had caught nothing,) and had kept them waiting dinner. “He is a very old friend of ours,” added Lady Margaret; “Mr. Thompson, of Harley Street, whose daughter lately married Mr. Browne of Gloucester Place,” and, with the word, entered Mr. Thompson in his own proper person.

Was it or was it not the Mr. Thompson of the day before? Yes! no!—No! yes! It would have been, only that it could not be. The alibi was too clearly proved: Lady Margaret had spent the preceding evening with *her* Mr. Thompson in one place, and I myself with *my* Mr. Thompson in another. Different they must be, but oh, how alike! I am too short-sighted to be cognizant of each separate feature. But there it was, the same common height and common size, and common physiognomy, wigged, whiskered, and perfumed to a hair! The self-same sober magnificence of dress, the same cut and colour of coat, the same waistcoat of brocade brodé—of a surety they must have employed one identical tailor, and one measure had served for both! Chains, studs, brooches, rings—even the eye-glass spectacles were there. Had he (this he) stolen them? Or did the Thompsons use them alternately, upon the principle of ride and tie?

In conversation the similarity was even more striking—safe, civil, prosy, dosy, and yet not without a certain small pretension. The Mr.

Thompson of Friday talked as his predecessor of Thursday had done, of Malibran and Grisi, "Paracelsus" and "Ion," politics and geraniums. He alluded to a recipe (doubtless the famous recipe for mutton pies) which he had promised to write out for the benefit of the housekeeper, and would beyond all question have dosed over one young lady's verses, and fallen asleep to another's singing, if there had happened to be such narcotics as music and poetry in dear Lady Margaret's drawing-room. Mind and body, the two Mr. Thompsons were as alike as two peas, as two drops of water, as two Emperor-of-Morocco butterflies, as two death's-head moths. Could they have been twin brothers, like the Dromios of the old drama? or was the vicinity of the Regent's Park peopled with Cockney anglers—Thompsons whose daughters had married Brownes?

The resemblance haunted me all night. I dreamt of Brownes and Thompsons, and to freshen my fancy and sweep away the shapes by which I was beset, I resolved to take a drive. Accordingly, I ordered my little phaeton, and,

perplexed and silent, bent my way to call upon my fair friend, Miss Mortimer. Arriving at Queen's-bridge Cottage, I was met in the rose-covered porch by the fair Frances. "Come this way, if you please," said she, advancing towards the dining-room; "we are late at luncheon to-day. My friend, Mrs. Browne, and her father, Mr. Thompson, our old neighbours when we lived in Welbeck Street, have been here for this week past, and he is so fond of fishing that he will scarcely leave the river even to take his meals, although for aught I can hear he never gets so much as a bite."

As she ceased to speak, we entered: and another Mr. Thompson—another, yet the same, stood before me. It was not yet four o'clock in the day, therefore of course the dress-coat and the brocade waistcoat were wanting; but there was the man himself, Thompson the third, wigged, whiskered, and eye-glassed, just as Thompson the first might have tumbled into the water at General Dunbar's, or Thompson the second have stood waiting for a nibble at Lady Margaret's. There he sat evidently pre-

paring to do the agreeable, to talk of music and of poetry, of Grisi and Malibran, of "Ion" and "Paracelsus," to profess himself a liberal Conservative, to give recipes for patés, and to fall asleep over albums. It was quite clear that he was about to make this display of his conversational abilities; but I could not stand it. Nervous and mystified as the poor Frenchman in the memorable story of "Monsieur Tonson," I instinctively followed his example, and fairly fled the field.

JESSE CLIFFE.

LIVING as we do in the midst of rivers, water in all its forms, except indeed that of the trackless and mighty ocean, is familiar to our little inland county. The slow majestic Thames, the swift and wandering Kennett, the clear and brimming Loddon, all lend life and verdure to our rich and fertile valleys. Of the great river of England—whose course from its earliest source, near Cirencester, to where it rolls calm, equable, and full, through the magnificent bridges of our splendid metropolis, giving and reflecting beauty,* presents so grand

* There is nothing finer in London than the view from Waterloo-bridge on a July evening, whether coloured by the gorgeous hues of the setting sun re-

an image of power in repose—it is not now my purpose to speak ; nor am I about to expatiate on that still nearer and dearer stream, the pellucid Loddon,—although to be rowed by one dear and near friend up those transparent

flected on the water in tenfold glory, or illuminated by a thousand twinkling lights from lamps, and boats, and houses, mingling with the mild beams of the rising moon. The calm and glassy river, gay with unnumbered vessels ; the magnificent buildings which line its shores ; the combination of all that is loveliest in art or in nature, with all that is most animating in motion and in life, produce a picture gratifying alike to the eye and to the heart—and the more exhilarating, or rather perhaps the more soothing, because, for London, so singularly peaceful and quiet. It is like some gorgeous town in fairyland, astir with busy and happy creatures, the hum of whose voices comes floating from the craft upon the river, or the quays by the water side. Life is there, and sound and motion ; but blessedly free from the jostling of the streets, the rattling of the pavement, the crowd, the confusion, the tumult, and the din of the work-a-day world. There is nothing in the great city like the scene from Waterloo bridge at sunset. I see it in my mind's eye at this instant.

and meandering waters, from where they sweep at their extremest breadth under the lime-crowned terraces of the Old Park at Aberleigh, to the pastoral meadows of Sandford, through which the narrowed current wanders so brightly—now impeded by beds of white water-lilies, or feathery-blossomed bulrushes, or golden flags—now overhung by thickets of the rich wayfaring tree, with its wealth of glorious berries, redder and more transparent than rubies—now spanned from side to side by the fantastic branches of some aged oak;—although to be rowed along that clear stream, has long been amongst the choicest of my summer pleasures, so exquisite is the scenery, so perfect and so unbroken the solitude. Even the shy and foreign-looking kingfisher, most gorgeous of English birds, who, like the wild Indian retiring before the foot of man, has nearly deserted our populous and cultivated country, knows and loves the lovely valley of the Loddon.

It is not, however, of the Loddon that I am now to speak. The scene of my little story belongs to a spot quite as solitary, but far less

beautiful, on the banks of the Kennett, which, a few miles before its junction with the Thames, passes through a tract of wild, marshy country—water-meadows at once drained and fertilised by artificial irrigation, and totally unmixed with arable land; so that the fields being for the most part too wet to admit the feeding of cattle, divided by deep ditches, undotted by timber, unchequered by cottages, and untraversed by roads, convey in their monotonous expanse (except perhaps at the gay season of haymaking) a feeling of dreariness and desolation, singularly contrasted with the picturesque and varied scenery, rich, glowing, sunny, bland, of the equally solitary Loddon meadows.

A large portion of these English prairies, comprising a farm called the Moors, was, at the time of which I write, in the occupation of a wealthy yeoman named John Cobham, who, the absentee tenant of an absentee landlord, resided upon a small property of his own about two miles distant, leaving the large deserted house, and dilapidated outbuildings, to sink into gradual decay. Barns half unthatched, tumble-

down cart-houses, palings rotting to pieces, and pigsties in ruins, contributed, together with a grand collection of substantial and dingy ricks of fine old hay—that most valuable but most gloomy looking species of agricultural property—to the general aspect of desolation by which the place was distinguished. One solitary old labourer, a dreary bachelor, inhabited, it is true, a corner of the old roomy house, calculated for the convenient accommodation of the patriarchal family of sons and daughters, men-servants and maid-servants, of which a farmer's household consisted in former days; and one open window, (the remainder were bricked up to avoid taxes,) occasionally a door ajar, and still more rarely a thin wreath of smoke ascending from one of the cold dismal-looking chimneys, gave token that the place was not wholly abandoned. But the uncultivated garden, the grass growing in the bricked court, the pond green with duckweed, and the absence of all living things, cows, horses, pigs, turkeys, geese, or chickens—and still more of those talking, as well as living things,

women and children—all impressed on the beholder that strange sensation of melancholy which few can have failed to experience at the sight of an uninhabited human habitation. The one solitary inmate failed to relieve the pressing sense of solitude. Nothing but the ringing sound of female voices, the pleasant and familiar noise of domestic animals, could have done that; and nothing approaching to noise was ever heard in the Moors. It was a silence that might be felt.

The house itself was approached through a long, narrow lane, leading from a wild and watery common; a lane so deeply excavated between the adjoining hedge-rows, that in winter it was little better than a water-course; and beyond the barns and stables, where even that apology for a road terminated, lay the extensive tract of low, level, marshy ground from whence the farm derived its title; a series of flat, productive water-meadows, surrounded partly by thick coppices, partly by the winding Kennett, and divided by deep and broad ditches; a few pollard willows, so old that the

trunk was, in some, riven asunder, whilst in others nothing but the mere shell remained, together with here and there a stunted thorn, alone relieving the monotony of the surface.

The only regular inhabitant of this dreary scene was, as I have before said, the old labourer, Daniel Thorpe, who slept in one corner of the house, partly to prevent its total dilapidation, and to preserve the valuable hayricks and the tumble-down farm buildings from the pillage to which unprotected property is necessarily exposed, and partly to keep in repair the long line of boundary fence, to clean the graffages, clear out the moat-like ditches, and see that the hollow-sounding wooden bridges which formed the sole communication by which the hay wagons could pass to and from the distant meadows, were in proper order to sustain their ponderous annual load. Daniel Thorpe was the only accredited unfeathered biped who figured in the parish books as occupant of The Moors; nevertheless that swampy district could boast of one other irregular and forbidden but most pertinacious inhabi-

tant—and that inhabitant was our hero, Jesse Cliffe.

Jesse Cliffe was a lad some fifteen or sixteen years of age—there or thereabout; for with the exact date of his birth, although from circumstances most easily ascertained, even the assistant-overseer did not take the trouble to make himself acquainted. He was a parish child born in the workhouse, the offspring of a half-witted orphan girl and a sturdy vagrant, partly tinker, partly ballad-singer, who took good care to disappear before the strong arm of justice, in the shape of a tardy warrant and a halting constable, could contrive to intercept his flight. He joined, it was said, a tribe of gipsies, to whom he was suspected to have all along belonged; and who vanishing at the same time, accompanied by half the linen and poultry of the neighbourhood, were never heard of in our parts again; whilst the poor girl whom he had seduced and abandoned, with sense enough to feel her misery, although hardly sufficient to be responsible for the sin, fretted, moaned, and pined—losing, she hardly knew

how, the half-unconscious light-heartedness which had almost seemed a compensation for her deficiency of intellect, and with that light-heartedness losing also her bodily strength, her flesh, her colour, and her appetite, until, about a twelvemonth after the birth of her boy, she fell into a decline and died.

Poor Jesse, born and reared in the workhouse, soon began to evince symptoms of the peculiarities of both his parents. Half-witted like his mother, wild and roving as his father—it was found impossible to check his propensity to an out-of-door life.

From the moment, postponed as long as possible in such establishments, in which he doffed the petticoat—a moment, by the way, in which the obstinate and masterful spirit of the ungentle sex often begins to show itself in nurseries of a far more polished description;—from that moment may Jesse's wanderings be said to commence. Disobedience lurked in the habit masculine. The wilful urchin stood, like some dandy apprentice, contemplating his brown sturdy legs, as they stuck out from his

new trowsers, already (such was the economy of the tailor employed on the occasion) “a world too *short*,” and the first use he made of those useful supporters was to run away. So little did any one really care for the poor child, that not being missed till night-fall, or sought after till the next morning, he had strayed far enough, when, at last picked up, and identified by the parish mark on his new jacket, to be half frozen, (it was mid-winter when his first elopement happened,) half-starved, half-drowned, and more than half-dead of fatigue and exhaustion. “It will be a lesson!” said the moralising matron of the workhouse, as, after a sound scolding, she fed the little culprit and put him to bed. “It will be a lesson to the rover!” And so it proved; for, after being recruited by a few days’ nursing, he again ran away, in a different direction.

When recovered the second time, he was whipped as well as fed—another lesson which only made the stubborn recusant run the faster. Then, upon his next return, they shut him up in a dark den appropriately called the black-

hole, a restraint which, of course, increased his zest for light and liberty, and in the first moment of freedom—a moment greatly accelerated by his own strenuous efforts in the shape of squalling, bawling, roaring, and stamping, unparalleled and insupportable, even in that mansion of din—in the very instant of freedom he was off again; he ran away from work; he ran away from school; certain to be immersed in his dismal dungeon as soon as he could be recaptured; so that his whole childhood became a series of alternate imprisonments and escapes.

That he should be so often lost was, considering his propensities and the proverbial cunning of his caste, not, perhaps, very remarkable. But the number of times and the variety of ways, in which, in spite of the little trouble taken in searching for him, he was sent back to the place from whence he came, was really something wonderful. If any creature in the world had cared a straw for the poor child, he must have been lost over and over: nobody did care for him, and he was as sure to turn up as

a bad guinea. He has been cried like *Found Goods* in Belford Market: advertised like a strayed donkey in the *H—shire Courant*; put for safe keeping into compters, cages, roundhouses, and bridewells: passed, by different constables, through half the parishes in the county; and so frequently and minutely described in handbills and the *Hue and Cry*, that by the time he was twelve years old, his stature, features, and complexion were as well known to the rural police as those of some great state criminal. In a word, “the lad *would* live;” and the Aberleigh overseers, who would doubtless have been far from inconsolable if they had never happened to hear of him again, were reluctantly obliged to make the best of their bargain.

Accordingly, they placed him as a sort of boy of all-work at “the shop” at Hinton, where he remained, upon an accurate computation, somewhere about seven hours; they then put him with a butcher at Langley, where he staid about five hours and a-half, arriving at dusk, and escaping before midnight: then with a baker at

Belford, in which good town he sojourned the (for him) unusual space of two nights and a day; and then they apprenticed him to Master Samuel Goddard, an eminent dealer in cattle, leaving his new master to punish him according to law, provided he should run away again. Run away of course he did; but as he had contrived to earn for himself a comfortably bad character for stupidity and laziness, and as he timed his evasion well—during the interval between the sale of a bargain of Devonshire stots, and the purchase of a lot of Scotch kyloes, when his services were little needed—and as Master Samuel Goddard had too much to do and to think of, to waste his time and his trouble on a search after a heavy-looking under-drover, with a considerable reputation for laziness, Jesse, for the first time in his life, escaped his ordinary penalties of pursuit and discovery—the parish officers contenting themselves by notifying to Master Samuel Goddard, that they considered their responsibility, legal as well as moral, completely transferred to him in virtue of their indentures, and that whatever might

be the future destiny of his unlucky apprentice, whether frozen or famished, hanged or drowned, the blame would rest with the cattle-dealer aforesaid, to whom they resolved to refer all claims on their protection, whether advanced by Jesse himself or by others.

Small intention had Jesse Cliffe to return to their protection or their workhouse! The instinct of freedom was strong in the poor boy—quick and strong as in the beast of the field, or the bird of the air. He betook himself to the Moors (one of his earliest and favourite haunts) with a vague assurance of safety in the deep solitude of those wide-spreading meadows, and the close coppices that surrounded them: and at little more than twelve years of age he began a course of lonely, half-savage, self-dependent life, such as has been rarely heard of in this civilised country. How he lived is to a certain point a mystery. Not by stealing. That was agreed on all hands—except indeed, so far as a few roots of turnips and potatoes, and a few ears of green corn, in their several seasons, may be called theft. Ripe corn for his winter's

hoard, he gleaned after the fields were cleared, with a scrupulous honesty that might have read a lesson to peasant children of a happier nurture. And they who had opportunities to watch the process, said that it was curious to see him bruise the grain between large stones, knead the rude flour with fair water, mould his simple cakes, and then bake them in a primitive oven formed by his own labour in a dry bank of the coppice, and heated by rotten wood shaken from the tops of the trees, (which he climbed like a squirrel,) and kindled by a flint and a piece of an old horse-shoe:—such was his unsophisticated cookery! Nuts and berries from the woods; fish from the Kennett—caught with such tackle as might be constructed of a stick and a bit of packthread, with a strong pin or needle formed into a hook; and perhaps an occasional rabbit or partridge, entrapped by some such rough and inartificial contrivance, formed his principal support; a modified, and, according to his vague notions of right and wrong, an innocent form of poaching, since he sought only what was requisite for his own

consumption, and would have shunned as a sin the killing game to sell. Money, indeed, he little needed. He formed his bed of fern or dead grass, in the deepest recesses of the coppice—a natural shelter; and the renewal of raiment, which warmth and decency demanded, he obtained by emerging from his solitude, and joining such parties as a love of field sports brought into his vicinity in the pursuit of game—an inspiring combination of labour and diversion, which seemed to awaken something like companionship and sympathy even in this wild boy of the Moors, one in which his knowledge of the haunts and habits of wild animals, his strength, activity, and actual insensibility to hardship or fatigue, rendered his services of more than ordinary value. There was not so good a hare-finder throughout that division of the county; and it was curious to observe how completely his skill in sportmanship overcame the contempt with which grooms and gamekeepers, to say nothing of their less fine and more tolerant masters, were wont to regard poor Jesse's ragged

garments, the sunburnt hair and skin, the want of words to express even his simple meaning, and most of all, the strange obliquity of taste which led him to prefer Kennett water to Kennett ale. Sportsmanship, sheer sportsmanship, carried him through all !

Jesse was, as I have said, the most popular hare-finder of the country-side, and during the coursing season was brought by that good gift into considerable communication with his fellow creatures : amongst the rest with his involuntary landlord, John Cobham.

John Cobham was a fair specimen of an English yeoman of the old school—honest, generous, brave, and kind ; but in an equal degree, ignorant, obstinate and prejudiced. His first impression respecting Jesse had been one of strong dislike, fostered and cherished by the old labourer Daniel Thorpe, who, accustomed for twenty years to reign sole sovereign of that unpeopled territory, was as much startled at the sight of Jesse's wild, ragged figure, and sunburnt face, as Robinson Crusoe when he first spied the track of a human foot upon *his* desert

island. It was natural that old Daniel should feel his monarchy, or, more correctly speaking, his vice-royalty, invaded and endangered; and at least equally natural that he should communicate his alarm to his master, who sallied forth one November morning to the Moors, fully prepared to drive the intruder from his grounds, and resolved, if necessary, to lodge him in the County Bridewell before night.

But the good farmer, who chanced to be a keen sportsman, and to be followed that day by a favourite greyhound, was so dulcified by the manner in which the delinquent started a hare at the very moment of Venus's passing, and still more by the culprit's keen enjoyment of a capital single-handed course, (in which Venus had even excelled herself,) that he could not find in his heart to take any harsh measures against him, for that day at least, more especially as Venus seemed to have taken a fancy to the lad—so his expulsion was postponed to another season; and before that season arrived, poor Jesse had secured the goodwill of an advocate far more powerful than Venus—an ad-

vocate who, contrasted with himself, looked like Ariel by the side of Caliban, or Titania watching over Bottom the Weaver.

John Cobham had married late in life, and had been left, after seven years of happy wedlock, a widower with five children. In his family he may be said to have been singularly fortunate, and singularly unfortunate. Promising in no common degree, his sons and daughters, inheriting their mother's fragile constitution as well as her amiable character, fell victims one after another to the flattering and fatal disease which had carried her off in the prime of life; one of them only, the eldest son, leaving any issue; and his little girl, an orphan, (for her mother had died in bringing her into the world,) was now the only hope and comfort of her doting grandfather, and of a maiden sister who lived with him as housekeeper, and, having officiated as head-nurse in a nobleman's family, was well calculated to bring up a delicate child.

And delicate in all that the word conveys of beauty—delicate as the Virgins of Guido, or

the Angels of Correggio, as the valley lily or the maiden rose—was at eight years old, the little charmer, Phœbe Cobham. But it was a delicacy so blended with activity and power, so light and airy, and buoyant and spirited, that the admiration which it awakened was wholly unmingled with fear. Fair, blooming, polished, and pure, her complexion had at once the colouring and the texture of a flower-leaf; and her regular and lovely features—the red smiling lips, the clear blue eyes, the curling golden hair, and the round yet slender figure—formed a most rare combination of childish beauty. The expression, too, at once gentle and lively, the sweet and joyous temper, the quick intellect, and the affectionate heart, rendered little Phœbe one of the most attractive children that the imagination can picture. Her grandfather idolised her; taking her with him in his walks, never weary of carrying her when her own little feet were tired—and it was wonderful how many miles those tiny feet, aided by the gay and buoyant spirit, would compass in the course of the day; and so bent

upon keeping her constantly with him, and constantly in the open air, (which he justly considered the best means of warding off the approach of that disease which had proved so fatal to his family,) that he even had a pad constructed, and took her out before him on horseback.

A strange contrast formed the old farmer, so gruff and bluff-looking—with his stout square figure, his weather-beaten face, short grey hair, and dark bushy eyebrows—to the slight and graceful child, her aristocratic beauty set off by exactly the same style of paraphernalia that had adorned the young Lady Janes and Lady Marys, Mrs. Dorothy's former charge, and her habitual grace of demeanour adding fresh elegance to the most studied elegancies of the toilet! A strange contrast!—but one which seemed as nothing compared with that which was soon to follow: for Phœbe, happening to be with her grandfather and her great friend and playmate Venus, a jet-black greyhound of the very highest breed, whose fine limbed and shining beauty was almost as elegant and

aristocratic as that of Phœbe herself;—the little damsel, happening to be with her grandfather when, instigated by Daniel Thorpe's grumbling accusation of broken fences and I know not what, he was a second time upon the point of warning poor Jesse off the ground—was so moved by the culprit's tattered attire and helpless condition, as he stood twirling, between his long lean fingers, the remains of what had once been a hat, that she interceded most warmly in his behalf.

“Don't turn him off the Moors, grandpapa,” said Phœbe, “pray don't! Never mind old Daniel! I'm sure he'll do no harm;—will you, Jesse? Venus likes him, grandpapa; see how she puts her pretty nose into his hand; and Venus never likes bad people. How often I have heard you say that. And *I* like him, poor fellow! He looks so thin and so pitiful. Do let him stay, dear grandpapa!”

And John Cobham sat down on the bank, and took the pitying child in his arms, and kissed and blessed her, and said, that, since

she wished it, Jesse *should* stay; adding, in a sort of soliloquy, that he hoped she never would ask him to do what was wrong, for he could refuse her nothing.

And Jesse—what did he say to these, the first words of kindness that he had ever heard from human lips? or rather, what did he feel? for beyond a muttered “Thankye,” speak he could not. But gratitude worked strongly in the poor boy’s heart: gratitude!—so new, so overpowering, and inspired by one so sweet, so lovely, so gentle as his protectress, as far as he was concerned, all-powerful; and yet a mere infant whom he might protect as well as serve! It was a strange mixture of feelings, all good, and all delightful; a stirring of impulses, a quickening of affections, a striking of chords never touched before. Substitute the sacred innocence of childhood for the equally sacred power of virgin purity, and his feelings of affectionate reverence, of devoted service and submission, much resembled those entertained by the Satyr towards “the holy

shepherdess," in Fletcher's exquisite drama.*

Our

"Rough thing, who never knew
Manners nor smooth humanity,"

could not have spoken nor have thought such words as those of the satyr; but so far as our

* That matchless Pastoral, "The Faithful Shepherdess," is so much less known than talked of, that I subjoin the passage in question. One more beautiful can hardly be found in the wide range of English poetry.

Satyr. Through yon same bending plain

That flings his arms down to the main;
And through these thick woods, have I run,
Whose depths have never kiss'd the sun;
Since the lusty Spring began,
All to please my master, Pan,
Have I trotted without rest
To get him fruit; for at a feast
He entertains, this coming night,
His paramour, the Syrinx bright.

[*He sees Clorin and stands amazed.*

But behold a fairer sight!
By that heavenly form of thine,
Brightest fair, thou art divine,
Sprung from great, immortal race

English climate and his unfruitful territory might permit, he put much of the poetry into action.

Of the Gods ; for in thy face
Shines more awful majesty,
Than dull, weak mortality
Dare with misty eyes behold
And live ! Therefore on this mould
Slowly do I bend my knee,
In worship of thy deity.
Deign it, goddess, from my hand
To receive whate'er this land,
From her fertile womb doth send
Of her choice fruits ; and but lend
Belief to that the Satyr tells :
Fairer by the famous wells
To this present day ne'er grew,
Never better nor more true.
Here be grapes whose lusty blood
Is the learned poet's good ;
Sweeter yet did never crown
The head of Bacchus ; nuts more brown
Than the squirrel whose teeth crack 'em.
Deign, oh fairest fair, to take 'em !
For these black-eyed Dryope
Hath often times commanded me,
With my clasped knee to elimb ;
See how well the lusty time

Sluggish of intellect, and uncouth of demeanour, as the poor lad seemed, it was quite

Hath deck'd their rising cheeks in red,
 Such as on your lips is spread.
 Here be berries for a queen,
 Some be red, and some be green ;
 These are of that luscious sweet,
 The great god Pan himself doth eat ;
 All these, and what the woods can yield,
 The hanging mountain, or the field,
 I freely offer, and ere long
 Will bring you more, more sweet and strong ;
 Till when, humbly leave I take,
 Lest the great Pan do awake,
 That sleeping lies in a deep glade,
 Under a broad beech's shade.
 I must go,—I must run
 Swifter than the fiery sun.

Clorin.

And all my fears go with thee !
 What greatness or what private hidden power
 Is there in me to draw submission
 From this rude man and beast ? sure I am mortal ;
 The daughter of a shepherd ; he was mortal,
 And she that bore me mortal : Prick my hand
 And it will bleed ; a fever shakes me, and

wonderful how quickly he discovered the several ways in which he might best please and gratify his youthful benefactress.

The self-same wind that makes the young lambs
shrink

Makes me a-cold. My fear says I am mortal.

Yet I have heard (my mother told it me,

And now I do believe it) if I keep

My virgin flower uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair,

No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,

Satyr, or other power, that haunts the groves,

Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion

Draw me to wander after idle fires,

Or voices calling me in dead of night

To make me follow, and so tempt me on

Through mire and standing pools to find my swain

Else why should this rough thing, who never knew

Manners nor smooth humanity, whose herds

Are rougher than himself, and more misshapen,

Thus mildly kneel to me? &c. &c.

Beaumont and Fletcher's Works, (Seward's edition,)

vol. iii. p. 117—121.

How we track Milton's exquisite Comus in this no less exquisite pastoral Drama! and the imitation is so beautiful, that the perception of the plagiarism rather increases than diminishes the pleasure with

Phœbe loved flowers; and from the earliest tuft of violets ensconced under the sunny southern hedge, to the last lingering sprig of woodbine shaded by some time-hallowed oak, the blossoms of the meadow and the coppice were laid under contribution for her posies.

Phœbe had her own little garden; and to fill that garden, Jesse was never weary of seeking after the roots of such wild plants as he himself thought pretty, or such as he found (one can hardly tell how) were considered by better judges to be worthy of a place in the parterre. The different orchises, for instance, the white and lilac primrose, the golden oxslip, the lily of the valley, the chequered fritillary, which blows so freely along the banks of the Kennett, and the purple campanula which covers with equal profusion the meadows of the Thames, all found their way to Phœbe's flower-plats. He brought

which we read either deathless work. Republican although he were, the great poet sits a throned king upon Parnassus, privileged to cull flowers where he listeth in right of his immortal laurel-crown.

her in summer evenings glow-worms enough to form a constellation on the grass; and would spend half a July day in chasing for her some glorious insect, dragon-fly, or bee-bird, or golden beetle, or gorgeous butterfly. He not only bestowed upon her sloes, and dew-berries, and hazel-nuts "brown as the squirrel whose teeth crack 'em," but caught for her the squirrel itself. He brought her a whole litter of dormice, and tamed for her diversion a young magpie, whose first effort at flattery was "Pretty Phœbe!"

But his greatest present of all, most prized both by donor and receiver, (albeit her tender heart smote her as she accepted it, and she made her faithful slave promise most faithfully to take nests no more,) was a grand string of birds' eggs, long enough to hang in festoons round, and round, and round her play-room, and sufficiently various and beautiful to gratify more fastidious eyes than those of our little heroine.

To collect this rope of variously-tinted beads—a natural rosary—he had sought the mossy and hair-lined nest of the hedge-sparrow for her

turquoise-like rounds; had scrambled up the chimney-corner to bear away those pearls of the land, the small white eggs of the house-martin; had found deposited in an old magpie's nest the ovals of the sparrow-hawk, red and smooth as the finest coral; had dived into the ground-mansion of the skylark for her lilac-tinted shells, and groped amongst the bushes for the rosy-tinted ones of the woodlark; climbed the tallest trees for the sea-green eggs of the rooks; had pilfered the spotted treasures from the snug dwelling which the wren constructed in the eaves; and, worst of all—I hardly like to write it, I hardly care to think, that Jesse could have committed such an outrage,—saddest and worst of all, in the very midst of that varied garland might be seen the brown and dusky egg, as little showy as its quaker-like plumage, the dark brown egg, from which should have issued that “angel of the air,” the songstress, famous in every land, the unparagoned nightingale. It is but just towards Jesse to add, that he took the nest in a mistake, and was quite

unconscious of the mischief he had done until it was too late to repair it.

Of course these gifts were not only graciously accepted, but duly returned; cakes, apples, tarts, and gingerbread, halfpence in profusion, and now and then a new shilling, or a bright sixpence—all, in short, that poor Phœbe had to bestow, she showered upon her uncouth favourite, and she would fain have amended his condition by more substantial benefits: but authoritative as she was with her grandfather in other instances, in this alone her usual powers of persuasion utterly failed. Whether infected by old Daniel's dislike, (and be it observed, an unfounded prejudice, that sort of prejudice for which he who entertains it does not pretend to account even to himself, is unluckily not only one of the most contagious feelings in the world, but one of the most invincible :) whether Farmer Cobham were inoculated with old Daniel's hatred of Jesse, or had taken that very virulent disease the natural way, nothing could exceed the bitterness of the aversion which gradually grew up in his mind towards the poor lad.

That Venus liked him, and Phœbe liked him, added strength to the feeling. He would have been ashamed to confess himself jealous of their good-will towards such an object, and yet most certainly jealous he was. He did not drive him from his shelter in the Moors, because he had unwarily passed his word—his word, which, with yeomanly pride, John Cobham held sacred as his bond—to let him remain until he committed some offence; but, for this offence, both he and Daniel watched and waited with an impatience and irritability which contrasted strangely with the honourable self-restraint that withheld him from direct abuse of his power.

For a long time, Daniel and his master waited in vain. Jesse, whom they had entertained some vague hope of chasing away by angry looks and scornful words, had been so much accustomed all his life long to taunts and contumely, that it was a great while before he became conscious of their unkindness; and when at last it forced itself upon his attention, he shrank away crouching and cowering, and buried himself in the closest recesses of the coppice, until the foot-

step of the reviler had passed by. One look at his sweet little friend repaid him twenty-fold; and although farmer Cobham had really worked himself into believing that there was danger in allowing the beautiful child to approach poor Jesse, and had therefore on different pretexts forbidden her visits to the Moors, she did yet happen in her various walks to encounter that devoted adherent oftener than would be believed possible by any one who has not been led to remark, how often in this best of all possible worlds, an earnest and innocent wish does as it were fulfil itself.

At last, however, a wish of a very different nature came to pass. Daniel Thorpe detected Jesse in an actual offence against that fertile source of crime and misery, the game laws.

Thus the affair happened.

During many weeks, the neighbourhood had been infested by a gang of bold, sturdy pilferers, roving vagabonds, begging by day, stealing and poaching by night—who had committed such extensive devastations amongst the poultry and linen of the village, as well as the game in the

preserves, that the whole population was upon the alert ; and the lonely coppices of the Moors rendering that spot one peculiarly likely to attract the attention of the gang, old Daniel, reinforced by a stout lad as a sort of extra-guard, kept a most jealous watch over his territory.

Perambulating the outside of the wood one evening at sunset, he heard the cry of a hare ; and climbing over the fence, had the unexpected pleasure of seeing our friend Jesse in the act of taking a leveret still alive from the wire. “ So, so, master Jesse ! thou be’st turned poacher, be’st thou ? ” ejaculated Daniel, with a malicious chuckle, seizing, at one fell grip, the hare and the lad.

“ Miss Phœbe ! ” ejaculated Jesse, submitting himself to the old man’s grasp, but struggling to retain the leveret ; “ Miss Phœbe ! ”

“ Miss Phœbe, indeed ! ” responded Daniel ; “ she saved thee once, my lad, but thy time’s come now. What do’st thee want of the leveret, mon ? Do’st not thee know that ’tis part of the evidence against thee ? Well, he may carry that whilst I carry the snare. Master’ll be main

glad to see un. He always suspected the chap. And for the matter of that so did I. Miss Phœbe, indeed! Come along, my mon, I warrant thou hast seen thy last o' Miss Phœbe. Come on wi' thee."

And Jesse was hurried as fast as Daniel's legs would carry him to the presence of Farmer Cobham.

On entering the house (not the old deserted homestead of the Moors, but the comfortable dwelling-house at Aberleigh) Jesse delivered the panting, trembling leveret to the first person he met, with no other explanation than might be comprised in the words, "Miss Phœbe!" and followed Daniel quietly to the hall.

"Poaching, was he? Taking the hare from the wire? And you saw him? You can swear to the fact?" quoth John Cobham, rubbing his hands with unusual glee. "Well, now we shall be fairly rid of the fellow! Take him to the Chequers for the night, Daniel, and get another man beside yourself to sit up with him. It's too late to disturb Sir Robert this evening. To-morrow morning we'll take him to the Hall.

See that the constable's ready by nine o'clock. No doubt but Sir Robert will commit him to the county bridewell."

"Oh, grandpapa!" exclaimed Phœbe, darting into the room with the leveret in her arms, and catching the last words. "Oh, grandpapa! poor Jesse!"

"Miss Phœbe!" ejaculated the culprit.

"Oh, grandfather, it's all my fault," continued Phœbe; "and if anybody is to go to prison, you ought to send me. I had been reading about Cowper's hares, and I wanted a young hare to tame: I took a fancy for one, and told poor Jesse! And to think of his going to prison for that!"

"And did you tell him to set a wire for the hare, Phœbe?"

"A wire! what does that mean?" said the bewildered child. "But I dare say," added she, upon Farmer Cobham's explaining the nature of the snare, "I dare say that the poachers set the wire, and that he only took up the hare for me, to please my foolish fancy! Oh, grandpapa!"

Poor Jesse!" and Phœbe cried as if her heart would break.

"God bless you, Miss Phœbe!" said Jesse.

"All this is nonsense!" exclaimed the unrelenting farmer. "Take the prisoner to the Chequers, Daniel, and get another man to keep you company in sitting up with him. Have as much strong beer as you like, and be sure to bring him and the constable here by nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Oh, grandfather, you'll be sorry for this! I did not think you had been so hard-hearted!" sobbed Phœbe. "You'll be very sorry for this."

"Yes, very sorry, that he will. God bless you, Miss Phœbe," said Jesse.

"What! does he threaten? Take him off, Daniel. And you, Phœbe, go to bed and compose yourself. Heaven bless you, my darling!" said the fond grandfather, smoothing her hair, as, the tears still chasing each other down her cheeks, she stood leaning against his knee. "Go to bed and to sleep, my precious! and

you, Sally, bring me my pipe :” and wondering why the fulfilment of a strong desire should not make him happier, the honest farmer endeavoured to smoke away his cares.

In the meanwhile, old Daniel conducted Jesse to the Chequers, and having lodged him safely in an upper room, sought out “an ancient, trusty, drouthy crony,” with whom he sate down to carouse in the same apartment with his prisoner. It was a dark, cold, windy, October night, and the two warders sate cosily by the fire, enjoying their gossip and their ale, while the unlucky delinquent placed himself pensively by the window. About midnight the two old men were startled by his flinging open the casement.

“Miss Phœbe ! look ! look !”

“What ? where ?” inquired Daniel.

“Miss Phœbe !” repeated the prisoner ; and, looking in the direction to which Jesse pointed, they saw the flames bursting from Farmer Cobham’s house.

In a very few seconds they had alarmed the family, and sprung forth in the direction of the

fire; the prisoner accompanying them, unnoticed in the confusion.

“Luckily, master’s always insured to the value of all he’s worth, stock and goods,” quoth the prudent Daniel.

“Miss Phœbe!” exclaimed Jesse: and even as he spoke he burst in the door, darted up the staircase, and returned with the trembling child in his arms, followed by aunt Dorothy and the frightened servants.

“Grandpapa! dear grandpapa! where is grandpapa? Will no one save my dear grandpapa?” cried Phœbe.

And placing the little girl at the side of her aunt, Jesse again mounted the blazing staircase. For a few moments all gave him up for lost. But he returned, tottering under the weight of a man scarcely yet aroused from heavy sleep, and half suffocated by the smoke and flames.

“Miss Phœbe! he’s safe, Miss Phœbe!—Down, Venus, down—He’s safe, Miss Phœbe! And now, I sha’n’t mind going to prison, ’cause when I come back you’ll be living at the *Moors*.

Sha'n't you, Miss Phœbe? And I shall see you every day!"

One part of this speech turned out true and another part false—no uncommon fate, by the way, of prophetic speeches, even when uttered by wiser persons than poor Jesse. Phœbe did come to live at the Moors, and he did not go to prison.

On the contrary, so violent was the revulsion of feeling in the honest hearts of the good yeoman, John Cobham, and his faithful servant, old Daniel, and so deep the remorse which they both felt for their injustice and unkindness towards the friendless lad, that there was considerable danger of their falling into the opposite extreme, and ruining him by sudden and excessive indulgence. Jesse, however, was not of a temperament to be easily spoilt. He had been so long an outcast from human society that he had become as wild and shy as his old companions of the fields and the coppice, the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air. The hare which he had himself given to Phœbe was easier to tame than Jesse Cliffe.

Gradually, very gradually, under the gentle

influence of the gentle child, this great feat was accomplished, almost as effectually, although by no means so suddenly, as in the well-known case of Cymon and Iphigenia, the most noted precedent upon record of the process of reaching the head through the heart. Venus, and a beautiful Welsh pony called Taffy, which her grandfather had recently purchased for her riding, had their share in the good deed ; these two favourites being placed by Phœbe's desire under Jesse's sole charge and management ; a measure which not only brought him necessarily into something like intercourse with the other lads about the yard, but ended in his conceiving so strong an attachment to the animals of whom he had the care, that before the winter set in he had deserted his old lair in the wood, and actually passed his nights in a vacant stall of the small stable appropriated to their use.

From the moment that John Cobham detected such an approach to the habits of civilised life as sleeping under a roof, he looked upon the wild son of the Moors as virtually reclaimed, and so it proved. Every day he became more and more

like his fellow-men. He abandoned his primitive oven, and bought his bread at the baker's. He accepted thankfully the decent clothing necessary to his attending Miss Phoebe in her rides round the country. He worked regularly and steadily at whatever labour was assigned to him, receiving wages like the other farm servants; and finally it was discovered that one of the first uses he made of these wages was to purchase spelling-books and copy-books, and enter himself at an evening school, where the opening difficulties being surmounted, his progress astonished every body.

His chief fancy was for gardening. The love, and, to a certain point, the knowledge of flowers which he had always evinced increased upon him every day;—and happening to accompany Phoebe on one of her visits to the young ladies at the Hall, who were much attached to the lovely little girl, he saw Lady Mordaunt's French garden, and imitated it the next year for his young mistress in wild flowers, after such a fashion as to excite the wonder and admiration of all beholders.

From that moment Jesse's destiny was de-

cided. Sir Robert's gardener, a clever Scotchman, took great notice of him and offered to employ him at the Hall; but the Moors had to poor Jesse a fascination which he could not surmount. He felt that it would be easier to tear himself from the place altogether, than to live in the neighbourhood and not there. Accordingly he lingered on for a year or two, and then took a grateful leave of his benefactors, and set forth to London with the avowed intention of seeking employment in a great nursery-ground, to the proprietor of which he was furnished with letters, not merely from his friend the gardener, but from Sir Robert himself.

N. B. It is recorded that on the night of Jesse's departure, Venus refused her supper and Phœbe cried herself to sleep.

Time wore on. Occasional tidings had reached the Moors of the prosperous fortunes of the adventurer. He had been immediately engaged by the great nurseryman to whom he was recommended, and so highly approved, that in little more than two years he became foreman of the flower department; another two years saw him chief manager of the garden;

and now, at the end of a somewhat longer period, there was a rumour of his having been taken into the concern as acting partner; a rumour which received full confirmation in a letter from himself, accompanying a magnificent present of shrubs, plants, and flower-roots, amongst which were two Dahlias, ticketed 'the Moors' and 'the Phœbe,' and announcing his intention of visiting his best and earliest friends in the course of the ensuing summer.

Still time wore on. It was full six months after this intimation, that on a bright morning in October, John Cobham, with two or three visitors from Belford, and his granddaughter Phœbe, now a lovely young woman, were coursing on the Moors. The townspeople had boasted of their greyhounds, and the old sportsman was in high spirits from having beaten them out of the field.

"If that's your best dog," quoth John, "why, I'll be bound that our Snowball would beat him with one of his legs tied up. Talk of running such a cur as that against Snowball! Why there's Phœbe's pet Venus, Snowball's great grandam,

who was twelve years old last May, and has not seen a hare these three seasons, shall give him the go-by in the first hundred yards. Go and fetch Venus, Daniel ! It will do her heart good to see a hare again," added he, answering the looks rather than the words of his granddaughter, for she had not spoken, "and I'll be bound to say she'll beat him out of sight. He won't come in for a turn."

Upon Venus's arrival, great admiration was expressed at her symmetry and beauty; the grayness incident to her age having fallen upon her, as it sometimes does upon black greyhounds, in the form of small white spots, so that she appeared as if originally what the coursers call "ticked." She was in excellent condition, and appeared to understand the design of the meeting as well as any one present, and to be delighted to find herself once more in the field of fame. Her competitor, a yellow dog called Smoaker, was let loose, and the whole party awaited in eager expectation of a hare.

"Soho !" cried John Cobham, and off the dogs sprang ; Venus taking the turn, as he had fore-

told, running as true as in her first season, doing all the work, and killing the hare, after a course which, for any part Smoaker took in it, might as well have been single-handed.

“Look how she’s bringing the hare to my grandfather !” exclaimed Phœbe ; “ she always brings her game !”

And with the hare in her mouth, carefully poised by the middle of the back, she was slowly advancing towards her master, when a stranger, well dressed and well mounted, who had joined the party unperceived during the course, suddenly called “ Venus !”

And Venus started, pricked up her ears as if to listen, and stood stock still.

“ Venus !” again cried the horseman.

And Venus, apparently recognising the voice, walked towards the stranger, (who by this time had dismounted,) laid the hare down at his feet, and then sprang up herself to meet and return his caresses.

“ Jesse ! It must be Jesse Cliffe !” said Phœbe, in a tone which wavered between exclamation and interrogatory.

“It can be none other,” responded her grandfather. “I’d trust Venus beyond all the world in the matter of recognising an old friend, and we all know that except her old master and her young mistress, she never cared a straw for anybody but Jesse. It must be Jesse Cliffe, though to be sure he’s so altered that how the bitch could find him out, is beyond my comprehension. It’s remarkable,” continued he in an under tone, walking away with Jesse from the Belford party, “that we five (counting Venus and old Daniel) should meet just on this very spot—isn’t it? It looks as if we were to come together. And if you have a fancy for Phœbe, as your friend Sir Robert says you have, and if Phœbe retains her old fancy for you, (as I partly believe may be the case,) why my consent sha’n’t be wanting. Don’t keep squeezing my hand, man, but go and find out what she thinks of the matter.”

Five minutes after this conversation Jesse and Phœbe were walking together towards the house : what he said we have no business to inquire, but if blushes may be trusted, of a certainty the little damsel did not answer “No.”

MISS PHILLY FIRKIN, THE CHINA-
WOMAN.

IN Belford Regis, as in many of those provincial capitals of the south of England, whose growth and importance have kept pace with the increased affluence and population of the neighbourhood, the principal shops will be found clustered in the close, inconvenient streets of the antique portion of the good town; whilst the more showy and commodious modern buildings are quite unable to compete in point of custom with the old crowded localities, which seem even to derive an advantage from the appearance of business and bustle occasioned by the sharp turnings, the steep declivities, the narrow causeways, the jutting-out windows, and the various obstruc-

tions incident to the picturesque but irregular street-architecture of our ancestors.

Accordingly, Oriel Street, in Belford,—a narrow lane, cribbed and confined on the one side by an old monastic establishment, now turned into alms-houses, called the Oriel, which divided the street from that branch of the river called the Holy Brook, and on the other bounded by the market-place, whilst one end abutted on the yard of a great inn, and turned so sharply up a steep acclivity that accidents happened there every day, and the other *terminus* wound with an equally awkward curvature round the churchyard of St. Stephen's,—this most strait and incommo-
dious avenue of shops was the wealthiest quarter of the Borough. It was a provincial combination of Regent Street and Cheapside. The houses let for double their value; and, as a necessary consequence, goods sold there at pretty nearly the same rate; horse-people and foot-people jostled upon the pavement; coaches and phaetons ran against each other in the road. Nobody dreamt of visiting Belford without wanting something or other in Oriel Street;

and although noise, and crowd, and bustle, be very far from usual attributes of the good town, yet in driving through this favoured region on a fine day, between the hours of three and five, we stood a fair chance of encountering as many difficulties and obstructions from carriages, and as much din and disorder on the causeway as we shall often have the pleasure of meeting with out of London.

One of the most popular and frequented shops in the street, and out of all manner of comparison the prettiest to look at, was the well-furnished glass and china warehouse of Philadelphia Firkin, spinster. Few things are indeed more agreeable to the eye than the mixture of glittering cut glass, with rich and delicate china, so beautiful in shape, colour, and material, which adorn a nicely-assorted show-room of that description. The manufactures of Sèvres, of Dresden, of Derby, and of Worcester, are really works of art, and very beautiful ones too; and even the less choice specimens have about them a clearness, a glossiness, and a nicety, exceedingly pleasant to look upon;

so that a china-shop is in some sense a shop of temptation: and that it is also a shop of necessity, every housekeeper who knows to her cost the infinite number of plates, dishes, cups, and glasses, which contrive to get broken in the course of the year, (chiefly by that grand demolisher of crockery ware called Nobody,) will not fail to bear testimony.

Miss Philadelphia's was therefore a well accustomed shop, and she herself was in appearance most fit to be its inhabitant, being a trim, prim little woman, neither old nor young, whose dress hung about her in stiff regular folds, very like the drapery of a china shepherdess on a mantel-piece, and whose pink and white complexion, skin, eyebrows, eyes, and hair, all tinted as it seemed with one dash of ruddy colour, had the same professional hue. Change her spruce cap for a wide-brimmed hat, and the damask napkin which she flourished in wiping her wares, for a china crook, and the figure in question might have passed for a miniature of the mistress. In one respect they differed. The china shepherdess was a silent personage. Miss

Philadelphia was not; on the contrary, she was reckoned to make, after her own mincing fashion, as good a use of her tongue as any woman, gentle or simple, in the whole town of Belford.

She was assisted in her avocations by a little shopwoman, not much taller than a china mandarin, remarkable for the height of her comb, and the length of her earrings, whom she addressed sometimes as Miss Wolfe, sometimes as Marianne, and sometimes as Polly, thus multiplying the young lady's individuality by three; and a little shopman in apron and sleeves, whom, with equal ingenuity, she called by the several appellations of Jack, Jonathan, and Mr. Lamb—mister!—but who was really such a cock-o'-my-thumb as might have been served up in a tureen, or baked in a pie-dish, without in the slightest degree abridging his personal dimensions. I have known him quite hidden behind a china jar, and as completely buried, whilst standing on tip-toe, in a crate, as the dessert-service which he was engaged in unpacking. Whether this pair of originals was transferred from a show at a fair to Miss Philly's warehouse,

or whether she had picked them up accidentally, first one and then the other, guided by a fine sense of congruity, as she might match a wine-glass or a tea-cup, must be left to conjecture. Certain they answered her purpose, as well as if they had been the size of Gog and Magog; were attentive to the customers, faithful to their employer, and crept about amongst the china as softly as two mice.

The world went well with Miss Philly Firkin in the shop and out. She won favour in the sight of her betters by a certain prim, demure, simpering civility, and a power of multiplying herself as well as her little officials, like Yates or Matthews in a monopolologue, and attending to half-a-dozen persons at once; whilst she was no less popular amongst her equals in virtue of her excellent gift in gossiping. Nobody better loved a gentle tale of scandal, to sweeten a quiet cup of tea. Nobody evinced a finer talent for picking up whatever news happened to be stirring, or greater liberality in its diffusion. She was the intelligencer of the place—a walking chronicle.

In a word, Miss Philly Fir'kin was certainly a prosperous, and, as times go, a tolerably happy woman. To be sure, her closest intimates, those very dear friends, who as our confidence gives them the opportunity, are so obliging as to watch our weaknesses and report our foibles,—certain of these bosom companions had been heard to hint, that Miss Philly, who had refused two or three good matches in her bloom, repented her of this cruelty, and would probably be found less obdurate now that suitors had ceased to offer. This, if true, was one hidden grievance, a flitting shadow upon a sunny destiny; whilst another might be found in a circumstance of which she was so far from making a secret, that it was one of her most frequent topics of discourse.

The calamity in question took the not unfrequent form of a next-door neighbour. On her right dwelt an eminent tinman with his pretty daughter, two of the most respectable, kindest, and best-conducted persons in the town; but on her left was an open bricked archway, just wide enough to admit a cart, surmounted by a dim and dingy representation of some horned

animal, with "The Old Red Cow" written in white capitals above, and "James Tyler, licensed to sell beer, ale, wine, and all sorts of spirituous liquors," below; and down the aforesaid passage, divided only by a paling from the spacious premises where her earthenware and coarser kinds of crockery were deposited, were the public-house, stables, cowhouses, and pigsties of Mr. James Tyler, who added to his calling of publican, the several capacities of milkman, cattle dealer, and pig merchant, so that the place was one constant scene of dirt and noise and bustle without and within;—this Old Red Cow, in spite of its unpromising locality, being one of the best frequented houses in Belford, the constant resort of drovers, drivers, and cattle dealers, with a market dinner on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and a club called the Jolly Tailors, every Monday night.

Master James Tyler—popularly called Jem—was the very man to secure and increase this sort of custom. Of vast stature and extraordinary physical power, combined with a degree of animal spirits not often found in combination

with such large proportions, he was at once a fit ruler over his four-footed subjects in the yard, a miscellaneous and most disorderly collection of cows, horses, pigs, and oxen, to say nothing of his own five boys, (for Jem was a widower,) each of whom, in striving to remedy, was apt to enhance the confusion, and an admirable lord of misrule at the drovers' dinners and tradesmen's suppers over which he presided. There was a mixture of command and good-humour, of decision and fun, in the gruff, bluff, weather-beaten countenance, surmounted with its rough shock of coal-black hair, and in the voice loud as a stentor, with which he now guided a drove of oxen, and now roared a catch, that his listeners in either case found irresistible. Jem Tyler was the very spirit of vulgar jollity, and could, as he boasted, run, leap, box, wrestle, drink, sing, and shoot (he had been a keeper in his youth, and still retained the love of sportsmanship which those who imbibe it early seldom lose) with any man in the county. He was discreet, too, for a man of his occupation; knew precisely how drunk a journeyman tailor ought to get, and

when to stop a fight between a Somersetshire cattle-dealer and an Irish pig-driver. No inquest had ever sat upon any of his customers. Small wonder, that with such a landlord the Old Red Cow should be a hostelry of unmatched resort and unblemished reputation.

The chief exception to Jem Tyler's almost universal popularity was beyond all manner of doubt his fair neighbour Miss Philadelphia Firkin. She, together with her trusty adherents, Miss Wolfe and Mr. Lamb, held Jem, his ale-house, and his customers, whether tailor, drover, or dealer, his yard and its contents, horse or donkey, ox or cow, pig or dog, in unmeasured and undisguised abhorrence: she threatened to indict the place as a nuisance, to appeal to the mayor; and upon "some good-natured friend" telling her that mine host had snapped his fingers at her as a chattering old maid, she did actually go so far as to speak to her landlord, who was also Jem's, upon the iniquity of his doings. This worthy happening, however, to be a great brewer, knew better than to dismiss a tenant whose consumption of double X was so

satisfactory. So that Miss Firkin took nothing by her motion beyond a few of those smoothening and pacificatory speeches, which, when administered to a person in a passion, have, as I have often observed, a remarkable tendency to exasperate the disease.

At last, however, came a real and substantial grievance, an actionable trespass; and although Miss Philly was a considerable loser by the mischance, and a lawsuit is always rather a questionable remedy for pecuniary damage, yet such was the keenness of her hatred towards poor Jem, that I am quite convinced that in her inmost heart (although being an excellent person in her way, it is doubtful whether she told herself the whole truth in the matter) she rejoiced at a loss which would enable her to take such signal vengeance over her next-door enemy. An obstreperous cow, walking backward instead of forward, as that placid animal when provoked has the habit of doing, came in contact with a weak part of the paling which divided Miss Firkin's back premises from Master Tyler's yard, and not only upset Mr. Lamb into a crate

of crockery which he was in the act of unpacking, to the inexpressible discomfiture of both parties, but Miss Wolfe, who, upon hearing the mixture of crash and squall, ran to the rescue, found herself knocked down by a donkey who had entered at the breach, and was saluted as she rose by a peal of laughter from young Sam Tyler, Jem's eldest hope, a thorough Pickle, who, accompanied by two or three other chaps as unlucky as himself, sat quietly on a gate surveying and enjoying the mischief.

“I'll bring an action against the villain!” ejaculated Miss Philly, as soon as the enemy was driven from her quarters, and her china and her dependants set upon their feet:—“I'll take the law of him!” And in this spirited resolution did mistress, shopman, and shopwoman, find comfort for the losses, the scratches, and the bruises of the day.

This affray commenced on a Thursday evening towards the latter end of March; and it so happened that we had occasion to send to Miss Philly early the next morning for a cart-load of garden-pots for the use of my geraniums.

Our messenger was, as it chanced, a certain lad by name Dick Barnett, who has lived with us off and on ever since he was the height of the table, and who originally a saucy, lively, merry boy, arch, quick-witted, and amusing, has been indulged in giving vent to all manner of impertinences until he has become a sort of privileged person, and takes, with high or low, a freedom of speech that might become a lady's page or a king's jester. Every now and then we feel that this licence, which in a child of ten years old we found so diverting, has become inconvenient in a youth of seventeen, and favour him and ourselves with a lecture accordingly. But such is the force of inveterate habit that our remonstrances upon this subject are usually so much gravity wasted upon him and upon ourselves. He, in the course of a day or two, comes forth with some fresh prank more amusing than before, and we (I grieve to confess such a weakness) resume our laughter.

To do justice, however, to this modern Robin Goodfellow, there was most commonly a fund of goodnature at the bottom of his wildest

tricks or his most egregious romances,—for in the matter of a jest he was apt to draw pretty largely from an inventive faculty of remarkable fertility; he was constant in his attachments, whether to man or beast, loyal to his employers, and although idle and uncertain enough in other work, admirable in all that related to the stable or the kennel—the best driver, best rider, best trainer of a greyhound, and best finder of a hare, in all Berkshire.

He was, as usual, accompanied on this errand by one of his four-footed favourites, a delicate snow-white greyhound called Mayfly, of whom Miss Philly flatteringly observed, that “she was as beautiful as china;” and upon the civil lady of the shop proceeding to inquire after the health of his master and mistress, and the general news of Aberleigh, master Ben, who well knew her proficiency in gossiping, and had the dislike of a man and a rival to any female practitioner in that art, checked at once this condescending overture to conversation by answering with more than his usual consequence: “The chief news that I know, Miss Firkin, is, that

our geraniums are all pining away for want of fresh earth, and that I am sent in furious haste after a load of your best garden-pots. There's no time to be lost, I can tell you, if you mean to save their precious lives. Miss Ada is upon her last legs, and master Diomedes in a galloping consumption — two of our prime geraniums, ma'am!" quoth Dick, with a condescending nod to Miss Wolfe, as that Lilliputian lady looked up at him with a stare of unspeakable mystification; "queerish names, a'nt they? Well, there are the patterns of the sizes, and there's the order; so if your little gentleman will but look the pots out, I have left the cart in Jem Tyler's yard, (I've a message to Jem from master,) and we can pack 'em over the paling. I suppose you've a ladder for the little man's use, in loading carts and waggons, if not Jem or I can take them from him. There is not a better-natured fellow in England than Jem Tyler, and he'll be sure to do me a good turn any day, if it's only for the love of our Mayfly here. He bred her, poor thing, and is well nigh as fond of her as if she was a child of his own; and so's Sam. Nay, what's the matter with you all?" pursued Dick,

as at the name of Jem Tyler Miss Wolfe turned up her hands and eyes, Mr. Lamb let fall the pattern pots, and Miss Philly flung the order upon the counter—"What the deuce is come to the people?"

And then out burst the story of the last night's adventure, of Mr. Lamb's scratched face, which indeed was visible enough, of Miss Wolfe's bruises, of the broken china, the cow, the donkey, and the action at law.

"Whew!" whistled Dick in an aside whistle; "going to law is she? We must pacify her if we can," thought he, "for a lawsuit's no joke, as poor Jem would find. Jem must come and speechify. It's hard if between us we can't manage a woman."

"Sad affair, indeed, Miss Firkin," said Dick, aloud, in a soft, sympathising tone, and with a most condoling countenance; "it's unknown what obstropolous creatures cows and donkies are, and what mischief they do amongst gimcracks. A brute of a donkey got into our garden last summer, and ate up half-a-dozen rose-trees and fuchsias, besides trampling over the flower-beds. One of the roses was a present

from France, worth five guineas. I hope Mr. Lamb and Miss Wolfe are not much hurt. Very sad affair! strange too that it should happen through Jem Tyler's cattle—poor Jem, who had such a respect for you!”

“Respect for me!” echoed Miss Philly, “when he called me a chattering old maid,—Mrs. Loveit heard him. Respect for me!”

“Aye,” continued Dick, “it was but last Monday was a fortnight that Kit Mahony, the tall pig-dealer, was boasting of the beauty of the Tipperary lasses, and crying down our English ladies, whereupon, although the tap was full of Irish chaps, Jem took the matter up, and swore that he could show Kit two as fine women in this very street—you, ma'am, being one, and Miss Parsons the other—two as fine women as ever he saw in Tipperary. Nay, he offered to lay any wager, from a pot of double X to half a score of his own pigs, that Kit should confess it himself. Now, if that's not having a respect I don't know what is,” added Dick, with much gravity; “and I put it to your good sense, whether it is not more likely that Mrs. Loveit, who is as deaf as a post,

should be mistaken, than that he should offer to lay such a wager respecting a lady of whom he had spoken so disparagingly."

"This will do," thought Dick to himself as he observed the softening of Miss Philly's features and noted her very remarkable and unnatural silence—"this will do;" and reiterating his request that the order might be got ready, he walked out of the shop.

"You'll find that I have settled the matter," observed the young gentleman to Jem Tyler, after telling him the story, "and you have nothing to do but to follow up my hints. Did not I manage her famously? 'Twas well I recollected your challenge to Mahony, about that pretty creature, Harriet Parsons. It had a capital effect, I promise you. Now go and make yourself decent; put on your Sunday coat, wash your face and hands, and don't spare for fine speeches. Be off with you."

"I shall laugh in her face," replied Jem.

"Not you," quoth his sage adviser: "just think of the length of a lawyer's bill, and you'll be in no danger of laughing. Besides, she's

really a niceish sort of a body enough, a tidyish little soul in her way, and you're a gay widower—so who knows?"

And home went Dick, chuckling all the way, partly at his own good management, partly at the new idea which his quick fancy had started.

About a fortnight after, I had occasion to drive into Belford, attended as usual by master Richard. The bells of St. Stephen's were ringing merrily as we passed down Oriel Street, and happening to look up at the well-known sign of the Old Red Cow, we saw that celebrated work of art surmounted by a bow of white ribbons—a bridal favour. Looking onward to Miss Philly's door, what should we perceive but Mr. Lamb standing on the step with a similar cockade, half as big as himself, stuck in his hat; whilst Miss Wolfe stood simpering behind the counter, dispensing to her old enemy Sam, and four other grinning boys in their best apparel, five huge slices of bridecake.

The fact was clear. Jem Tyler and Miss Philly were married.

THE GROUND-ASH.

AMONGST the many pleasant circumstances attendant on a love of flowers—that sort of love which leads us into the woods for the earliest primrose, or to the river side for the latest forget-me-not, and carries us to the parching heath or the watery mere to procure for the cultivated, or, if I may use the expression, the *tame* beauties of the parterre, the soil that they love; amongst the many gratifications which such pursuits bring with them, such as seeing in the seasons in which it shows best, the prettiest, coyest, most unhackneyed scenery, and taking, with just motive enough for stimulus and for reward,

drives and walks which approach to fatigue, without being fatiguing; amongst all the delights consequent on a love of flowers, I know none greater than the half unconscious and wholly unintended manner in which such expeditions make us acquainted with the peasant children of remote and out-of-the-way regions, the inhabitants of the wild woodlands and still wilder commons of the hilly part of the north of Hampshire, which forms so strong a contrast with this sunny and populous county of Berks, whose very fields are gay and neat as gardens, and whose roads are as level and even as a gravel-walk.

Two of the most interesting of these flower-formed acquaintances, were my little friends Harry and Bessy Leigh.

Every year I go to the Everley woods to gather wild lilies of the valley. It is one of the delights that May—the charming, ay, and the merry month of May, which I love as fondly as ever that bright and joyous season was loved by our older poets—regularly brings in her train; one of those rational pleasures in which (and it

is the great point of superiority over pleasures that are artificial and worldly) there is no disappointment. About four years ago, I made such a visit. The day was glorious, and we had driven through lanes perfumed by the fresh green birch, with its bark silvery and many-tinted, and over commons where the very air was loaded with the heavy fragrance of the furze, an odour resembling in richness its golden blossoms, just as the scent of the birch is cool, refreshing, and penetrating, like the exquisite colour of its young leaves, until we reached the top of the hill, where, on one side, the enclosed wood, where the lilies grow, sank gradually, in an amphitheatre of natural terraces, to a piece of water at the bottom; whilst on the other, the wild open heath formed a sort of promontory overhanging a steep ravine, through which a slow and sluggish stream crept along amongst stunted alders, until it was lost in the deep recesses of Lidhurst Forest, over the tall trees of which we literally looked down. We had come without a servant; and on arriving at the gate of the wood with neither human figure nor

human habitation in sight, and a high-blooded and high-spirited horse in the phaeton, we began to feel all the awkwardness of our situation. My companion, however, at length espied a thin wreath of smoke issuing from a small clay-built hut thatched with furze, built against the steepest part of the hill, of which it seemed a mere excrescence, about half way down the declivity; and, on calling aloud, two children, who had been picking up dry stumps of heath and gorse, and collecting them in a heap for fuel at the door of their hovel, first carefully deposited their little load, and then came running to know what we wanted.

If we had wondered to see human beings living in a habitation, which, both for space and appearance, would have been despised by a pig of any pretension, as too small and too mean for his accommodation, so we were again surprised at the strange union of poverty and content evinced by the apparel and countenances of its young inmates. The children, bareheaded and barefooted, and with little more clothing than one shabby-looking garment, were yet as fine,

sturdy, hardy, ruddy, sunburnt urchins, as one should see on a summer day. They were clean, too: the stunted bit of raiment was patched, but not ragged; and when the girl, (for, although it was rather difficult to distinguish between the brother and sister, the pair were of different sexes,) when the bright-eyed, square-made, upright little damsel clasped her two brown hands together, on the top of her head, pressed down her thick curls, looking at us and listening to us with an air of the most intelligent attention that returned our curiosity with interest; and when the boy, in answer to our inquiry if he could hold a horse, clutched the reins with his small fingers, and planted himself beside our high-mettled steed with an air of firm determination, that seemed to say, "I'm your master! Run awry if you dare!" we both of us felt that they were subjects for a picture, and that, though Sir Joshua might not have painted them, Gainsborough and our own Collins would.

But besides their exceeding picturesqueness, the evident content, and helpfulness, and in-

dustry of these little creatures, was delightful to look at and to think of. In conversation they were at once very civil and respectful (Bessy dropping her little curtsy, and Harry putting his hand to the lock of hair where the hat should have been, at every sentence they uttered) and perfectly frank and unfearing. In answer to our questions, they told us that "Father was a broom-maker, from the low country; that he had come to these parts and married mother, and built their cottage, because houses were so scarce hereabouts, and because of its convenience to the heath; that they had done very well till the last winter, when poor father had had the fever for five months, and they had had much ado to get on; but that father was brave again now, and was building *another house* (house!!) larger and finer, upon Squire Benson's lands: the squire had promised them a garden from the waste, and mother hoped to keep a pig. They were trying to get all the money they could to buy the pig; and what his honour had promised them for holding the horse, was all to be given to mother for that purpose."

It was impossible not to be charmed with these children. We went again and again to the Everley wood, partly to gather lilies, partly to rejoice in the trees with their young leaves so beautiful in texture as well as in colour, but chiefly to indulge ourselves in the pleasure of talking to the children, of adding something to their scanty stock of clothing, (Bessy ran as fast as her feet could carry her to the clear pool at the bottom of the wood, to look at herself in her new bonnet,) and of assisting in the accumulations of the Grand Pig Savings' Bank, by engaging Harry to hold the horse, and Bessy to help fill the lily basket.

This employment, by showing that the lilies had a money value, put a new branch of traffic into the heads of these thoughtful children, already accustomed to gather heath for their father's brooms, and to collect the dead furze which served as fuel to the family. After gaining permission of the farmer who rented the wood, and ascertaining that we had no objection, they set about making nosegays of the flowers, and collecting the roots for sale, and

actually stood two Saturdays in Belford market (the smallest merchants of a surety that ever appeared in that rural Exchange) to dispose of their wares; having obtained a cast in a waggon there and back, and carrying home faithfully every penny of their gainings, to deposit in the common stock.

The next year we lost sight of them. No smoke issued from the small chimney by the hill-side. The hut itself was half demolished by wind and weather; its tenants had emigrated to the new house on Squire Benson's land; and after two or three attempts to understand and to follow the directions as to the spot given us by the good farmer at Everley, we were forced to give up the search.

Accident, the great discoverer and recoverer of lost goods, at last restored to us these good little children. It happened as follows:—

In new potting some large hydrangeas, we were seized with a desire to give the blue tinge to the petals, which so greatly improves the beauty of that fine bold flower, and which is so desirable when they are placed, as these were

destined to be, in the midst of red and pink blossoms, fuchsias, salvias, and geraniums. Accordingly, we sallied forth to a place called the Moss, a wild tract of moorland lying about a mile to the right of the road to Everley, and famous for the red bog, produced, I presume, by chalybeate springs, which, when mixed with the fine Bagshot silver sand, is so effectual in changing the colour of flowers.

It was a bleak gusty day in February, raining by fits, but not with sufficient violence to deter me from an expedition to which I had taken a fancy. Putting up, therefore, the head and apron of the phaeton, and followed by one lad (the shrewd boy Dick) on horseback, and another (John, the steady gardening youth) in a cart laden with tubs and sacks, spades and watering-pots, to procure and contain the bog mould, (for we were prudently determined to provide for all emergencies, and to carry with us fit receptacles to receive our treasure, whether it presented itself in the form of red earth or of red mud,) our little procession set forth early in the afternoon, towards the wildest and most dreary piece

of scenery that I have ever met with in this part of the country.

Wild and dreary of a truth was the Moss, and the stormy sky, the moaning wind, and the occasional gushes of driving rain, suited well with the dark and cheerless region into which we had entered by a road, if a rude cart-track may be so called, such as shall seldom be encountered in this land of Macadamisation. And yet, partly perhaps from their novelty, the wild day and the wild scenery had for me a strange and thrilling charm. The ground, covered with the sea-green moss, whence it derived its name, mingled in the higher parts with brown patches of heather, and dark bushes of stunted furze, was broken with deep hollows full of stagnant water; some almost black, others covered with the rusty scum which denoted the presence of the powerful mineral, upon whose agency we relied for performing that strange piece of natural magic which may almost be called the transmutation of flowers.

Towards the ruddiest of these pools, situated

in a deep glen, our active coadjutors, leaving phaeton, cart, and horses, on the brow of the hill, began rolling and tossing the several tubs, buckets, watering-pots, sacks, and spades, which were destined for the removal and conveyance of the much coveted-bog; we followed, amused and pleased, as, in certain moods, physical and mental, people are pleased and amused at self-imposed difficulties, down the abrupt and broken descent; and for some time the process of digging among the mould at the edge of the bank went steadily on.

In a few minutes, however, Dick, whose quick and restless eye was never long bent on any single object, most of all when that object presented itself in the form of work, exclaimed to his comrade, "Look at those children wandering about amongst the firs, like the babes in the wood in the old ballad. What can they be about?" And looking in the direction to which he pointed, we saw, amidst the gloomy fir plantations, which formed a dark and massive border nearly round the Moss, our old friends Harry

and Bessy Leigh, collecting, as it seemed, the fir cones with which the ground was strewn, and depositing them carefully in a large basket.

A manful shout from my companion soon brought the children to our side—good, busy, cheerful, and healthy-looking as ever, and marvellously improved in the matter of equipment. Harry had been promoted to a cap, which added the grace of a flourish to his bow; Bessy had added the luxury of a pinafore to her nondescript garments; and both pairs of little feet were advanced to the certain dignity, although somewhat equivocal comfort, of shoes and stockings.

The world had gone well with them, and with their parents. The house was built. Upon remounting the hill, and advancing a little farther into the centre of the Moss, we saw the comfortable low-browed cottage, full of light and shadow, of juttings out, and corners and angles of every sort and description, with a garden stretching along the side, backed and sheltered by the tall impenetrable plantation, a wall of trees, against whose dark masses a wreath of light smoke was

curling, whose fragrance seemed really to perfume the winter air. The pig had been bought, fattened, and killed; but other pigs were inhabiting the sty, almost as large as their former dwelling, which stood at the end of their garden; and the children told with honest joy how all this prosperity had come about. Their father, taking some brooms to my kind friend Lady Denys, had seen some of the ornamental baskets used for flowers upon a lawn, and had been struck with the fancy of trying to make some, decorated with fir cones; and he had been so successful in this profitable manufacture, that he had more orders than he could execute. Lady Denys had also, with characteristic benevolence, put the children to her Sunday-school. One misfortune had a little overshadowed the sunshine. Squire Benson had died, and the consent to the erection of the cottage being only verbal, the attorney who managed for the infant heir, a ward in Chancery, had claimed the property. But the matter had been compromised upon the payment of such a rent as the present prospects of the family would fairly allow. Be-

sides collecting fir cones for the baskets, they picked up all they could in that pine forest, (for it was little less,) and sold such as were discoloured, or otherwise unfit for working up, to Lady Denys and other persons who liked the fine aromatic odour of these the pleasantest of pastilles, in their dressing-room or drawing-room fires. “Did I like the smell? We had a cart there—might they bring us a hamperful?” And it was with great difficulty that a trifling present (for we did not think of offering money *as payment*) could be forced upon the grateful children. “We,” they said, “had been their first friends.” For what very small assistance the poor are often deeply, permanently thankful! Well says the great poet—

“I’ve heard of hearts unkind, good deeds
 With ill deeds still returning ;
 Alas, the gratitude of man
 Hath oftener left me mourning!”

WORDSWORTH.

Again for above a year we lost sight of our little favourites, for such they were with both of us; though absence, indisposition, business,

company — engagements, in short, of many sorts—combined to keep us from the Moss for upwards of a twelvemonth. Early in the succeeding April, however, it happened that, discussing with some morning visitors the course of a beautiful winding brook, (one of the tributaries to the Loddon, which bright and brimming river has nearly as many sources as the Nile,) one of them observed that the well-head was in Lanton Wood, and that it was a bit of scenery more like the burns of the North Country (my visitor was a Northumbrian) than anything he had seen in the south. Surely I had seen it? I was half ashamed to confess that I had not—(how often are we obliged to confess that we have not seen the beauties which lie close to our doors, too near for observation!)—and the next day proving fine, I determined to repair my omission.

It was a soft and balmy April morning, just at that point of the flowery spring when violets and primroses are lingering under the northern hedgerows, and cowslips and orchises peeping out upon the sunny banks. My driver was the

clever, shrewd, arch boy Dick ; and the first part of our way lay along the green winding lanes which lead to Everley ; we then turned to the left, and putting up our phaeton at a small farmhouse, where my attendant (who found acquaintances everywhere) was intimate, we proceeded to the wood ; Dick accompanying me, carrying my flower-basket, opening the gates, and taking care of my dog Dash, a very beautiful thorough-bred Old English spaniel, who was a little apt, when he got into a wood, to run after the game, and forget to come out again.

I have seldom seen anything in woodland scenery more picturesque and attractive than the old coppice of Lanton, on that soft and balmy April morning. The underwood was nearly cut, and bundles of long split poles for hooping barrels were piled together against the tall oak trees, bursting with their sap ; whilst piles of faggots were built up in other parts of the copse, and one or two saw-pits, with light open sheds erected over them, whence issued the measured sound of the saw and the occasional voices of the workmen, almost concealed

by their subterranean position, were placed in the hollows. At the far side of the coppice, the operation of hewing down the underwood was still proceeding, and the sharp strokes of the axe and the bill, softened by distance, came across the monotonous jar of the never-ceasing saw.

The surface of the ground was prettily tumbled about, comprehending as pleasant a variety of hill and dale as could well be comprised in some thirty acres. It declined, however, generally speaking, towards the centre of the coppice, along which a small, very small rivulet, scarcely more than a runlet, wound its way in a thousand graceful meanders. Tracking upward the course of the little stream, we soon arrived at that which had been the ostensible object of our drive—the spot whence it sprang.

It was a steep irregular acclivity on the highest side of the wood, a mound, I had almost said a rock, of earth, cloven in two about the middle, but with so narrow a fissure that the brushwood which grew on either side nearly filled up the opening, so that the source of the spring still remained concealed, although the rapid gushing

of the water made a pleasant music in that pleasant place ; and here and there a sunbeam, striking upon the sparkling stream, shone with a bright and glancing light amidst the dark ivies, and brambles, and mossy stumps of trees, that grew around.

This mound had apparently been cut a year or two ago, so that it presented an appearance of mingled wildness and gaiety, that contrasted very agreeably with the rest of the coppice ; whose trodden-down flowers I had grieved over, even whilst admiring the picturesque effect of the woodcutters and their several operations. Here, however, reigned the flowery spring in all her glory. Violets, pansies, orchises, oxslips, the elegant woodsorrel, the delicate wood anemone, and the enamelled wild hyacinth, were sprinkled profusely amongst the mosses, and lichens, and dead leaves, which formed so rich a carpet beneath our feet. Primroses, above all, were there of almost every hue, from the rare and pearly white, to the deepest pinkish purple, coloured by some diversity of soil, the pretty freak of nature's gardening ; whilst the common

yellow blossom—commonest and prettiest of all—peeped out from amongst the boughs in the stump of an old willow, like (to borrow the simile of a dear friend, now no more) a canary bird from its cage. The wild geranium was already showing its pink stem and scarlet-edged leaves, themselves almost gorgeous enough to pass for flowers; the periwinkle, with its wreaths of shining foliage, was hanging in garlands over the precipitous descent; and the lily of the valley, the fragrant woodroof, and the silvery wild garlick, were just peeping from the earth in the most sheltered nooks. Charmed to find myself surrounded by so much beauty, I had scrambled, with much ado, to the top of the woody cliff, (no other word can convey an idea of its precipitous abruptness,) and was vainly attempting to trace by my eye the actual course of the spring, which was, by the clearest evidence of sound, gushing from the fount many feet below me; when a peculiar whistle of delight, (for whistling was to Dick, although no ordinary proficient in our common tongue, another language,) and a tremendous scrambling amongst the bushes, gave

token that my faithful attendant had met with something as agreeable to his fancy, as the primroses and orchises had proved to mine.

Guided by a repetition of the whistle, I soon saw my trusty adherent spanning the chasm like a Colossus, one foot on one bank, the other on the opposite—each of which appeared to me to be resting, so to say, on nothing—tugging away at a long twig that grew on the brink of the precipice, and exceedingly likely to resolve the inquiry as to the source of the Loddon, by plumping souse into the fountain-head. I, of course, called out to warn him; and he equally, of course, went on with his labour, without paying the slightest attention to my caution. On the contrary, having possessed himself of one straight slender twig, which, to my great astonishment, he wound round his fingers, and deposited in his pocket, as one should do by a bit of pack-thread, he apparently, during the operation, caught sight of another. Testifying his delight by a second whistle, which, having his knife in his mouth, one wonders how he could accomplish; and scrambling with the fearless

daring of a monkey up the perpendicular bank, supported by strings of ivy, or ledges of roots, and clinging by hand and foot to the frail bramble or the slippery moss, leaping like a squirrel from bough to bough, and yet, by happy boldness, escaping all danger, he attained his object as easily as if he had been upon level ground. Three, four, five times was the knowing, joyous, triumphant whistle sounded, and every time with a fresh peril and a fresh escape. At last, the young gentleman, panting and breathless, stood at my side, and I began to question him as to the treasure he had been pursuing.

“It’s the ground-ash, ma’am,” responded master Dick, taking one of the coils from his pocket; “the best riding-switch in the world. All the whips that ever were made are nothing to it. Only see how strong it is, how light, and how supple! You may twist it a thousand ways without breaking. It won’t break, do what you will. Each of these, now, is worth half-a-crown or three shillings, for they are the scarcest things possible. They grow up at a little distance from the root of an old tree, like

a sucker from a rose-bush. Great luck, indeed !” continued Dick, putting up his treasure with another joyful whistle ; “ it was but t’other day that Jack Barlow offered me half-a-guinea for four, if I could but come by them. I shall certainly keep the best, though, for myself—unless, ma’am, you would be pleased to accept it for the purpose of whipping Dash.” Whipping Dash!!! Well have I said that Dick was as saucy as a lady’s page or a king’s jester. Talk of whipping Dash ! Why, the young gentleman knew perfectly well that I had rather be whipt myself twenty times over. The very sound seemed a profanation. Whip my Dash ! Of course I read master Dick a lecture for this irreverent mention of my pet, who, poor fellow, hearing his name called in question, came up in all innocence to fondle me ; to which grave remonstrance the hopeful youth replied by another whistle, half of penitence, half of amusement.

These discourses brought us to the bottom of the mound, and turning round a clump of hawthorn and holly, we espied a little damsel with

a basket at her side, and a large knife in her hand, carefully digging up a large root of white primroses, and immediately recognised my old acquaintance, Bessy Leigh.

She was, as before, clean, and healthy, and tidy, and unaffectedly glad to see me; but the joyousness and buoyancy which had made so much of her original charm, were greatly diminished. It was clear that poor Bessy had suffered worse griefs than those of cold and hunger; and upon questioning her, so it turned out.

Her father had died, and her mother had been ill, and the long hard winter had been hard to get through; and then the rent had come upon her, and the steward (for the young gentleman himself was a minor) had threatened to turn them out if it were not paid to a day—the very next day after that on which we were speaking; and her mother had been afraid they must go to the workhouse, which would have been a sad thing, because now she had got so much washing to do, and Harry was so clever at basket-making, that there was every chance, this rent once paid, of their getting on com-

fortably. "And the rent will be paid now, ma'am, thank God!" added Bessy, her sweet face brightening; "for we want only a guinea of the whole sum, and Lady Denys has employed me to get scarce wild-flowers for her wood, and has promised me half-a-guinea for what I have carried her, and this last parcel, which I am to take to the lodge to-night; and Mr. John Barlow, her groom, has offered Harry twelve and sixpence for five ground-ashes that Harry has been so lucky as to find by the spring, and Harry is gone to cut them: so that now we shall get on bravely, and mother need not fret any longer. I hope no harm will befall Harry in getting the ground-ash, though, for it's a noted dangerous place. But he's a careful boy."

Just at this point of her little speech, poor Bessy was interrupted by her brother, who ran down the declivity exclaiming, "They're gone, Bessy!—they're gone! somebody has taken them! the ground-ashes are gone!"

Dick put his hand irresolutely to his pocket, and then, uttering a dismal whistle, pulled it

resolutely out again, with a hardness, or an affectation of hardness, common to all lads, from the prince to the stable-boy.

I also put my hand into my pocket, and found, with the deep disappointment which often punishes such carelessness, that I had left my purse at home. All that I could do, therefore, was to bid the poor children be comforted, and ascertain at what time Bessy intended to take her roots, which in the midst of her distress she continued to dig up, to my excellent friend Lady Denys. I then, exhorting them to hope the best, made my way quickly out of the wood.

Arriving at the gate, I missed my attendant. Before, however, I had reached the farm at which we had left our phaeton, I heard his gayest and most triumphant whistle behind me. Thinking of the poor children, it jarred upon my feelings. "Where have you been loitering, Sir?" I asked, in a sterner voice than he had probably ever heard from me before.

"Where have I been?" replied he; "giving little Harry the ground-ashes, to be sure: I felt just as if I had stolen them. And now, I do

believe," continued he, with a prodigious burst of whistling, which seemed to me as melodious as the song of the nightingale, "I do believe," quoth Dick, "that I am happier than they are. I would not have kept those ground-ashes, no, not for fifty pounds!"

MR. JOSEPH HANSON, THE HABER-
DASHER.

THESE are good days for great heroes ; so far at least as regards the general spread and universal diffusion of celebrity. In the matter of fame, indeed, that grand bill upon posterity which is to be found written in the page of history, and the changes of empires, Alexander may, for aught I know, be nearly on a par with the Duke of Wellington ; but in point of local and temporary tributes to reputation, the great ancient, king though he were, must have been far behind the great modern. Even that comparatively recent warrior, the Duke of Marlborough, made but a slight approach to the popular honours paid to the conqueror of Napoleon. A few alehouse signs

and the ballad of “Marlbrook s’en va’t en guerre,” (for we are not talking now of the titles, and pensions, and palaces, granted to him by the Sovereign and the Parliament,) seem to have been the chief if not the only popular demonstrations vouchsafed by friends and enemies to the hero of Blenheim.

The name of Wellington, on the other hand, is necessarily in every man’s mouth at every hour of every day. He is the universal godfather of every novelty, whether in art, in literature, or in science. Streets, bridges, places, crescents, terraces, and railways, on the land; steam-boats on the water; balloons in the air, are all distinguished by that honoured appellation. We live in Wellington squares, we travel in Wellington coaches, we dine in Wellington hotels, we are educated in Wellington establishments, and are clothed from top to toe (that is to say the male half of the nation) in Wellington boots, Wellington cloaks, Wellington hats, each of which shall have been severally purchased at a warehouse bearing the same distinguished title.

Since every market town and almost every

village in the kingdom, could boast a Wellington house, or a Waterloo house, emulous to catch some gilded ray from the blaze of their great namesake's glory, it would have been strange indeed if the linendrapers and haberdashers of our good town of Belford Regis had been so much in the rear of fashion as to neglect this easy method of puffing off their wares. On the contrary, so much did our shopkeepers rely upon the influence of an illustrious appellation, that they seemed to despair of success unless sheltered by the laurels of the great commander, and would press his name into the service, even after its accustomed and legitimate forms of use seemed exhausted. Accordingly we had not only a Wellington house and a Waterloo house, but a new Waterloo establishment, and a genuine and original Duke of Wellington warehouse.

The new Waterloo establishment, a flashy dashy shop in the market-place, occupying a considerable extent of frontage, and "conducted (as the advertisements have it) by Mr. Joseph Hanson, late of London," put forth by far the boldest pretensions of any magazine of finery and

frippery in the town; and it is with that magnificent *store*, and with that only, that I intend to deal in the present story.

If the celebrated Mr. Puff, he of the Critic, who, although Sheridan probably borrowed the idea of that most amusing personage from the auctioneers and picture-dealers of Foote's admirable farces, first reduced to system the art of profitable lying, setting forth methodically (scientifically it would be called in these days) the different genera and species of that flourishing craft—if Mr. Puff himself were to revisit this mortal stage, he would lift up his hands and eyes in admiration and astonishment at the improvements which have taken place in the art from whence he took, or to which he gave, a name (for the fact is doubtful) the renowned art of Puffing!

Talk of the progress of society, indeed! of the march of intellect, and the diffusion of knowledge, of infant schools and adult colleges, of gas-lights and rail-roads, of steam-boats and steam-coaches, of literature for nothing, and

science for less! What are they and fifty other such nick-nacks compared with the vast strides made by this improving age in the grand art of puffing? Nay, are they not for the most part mere implements and accessories of that mighty engine of trade? What is half the march of intellect, but puffery? Why do little children learn their letters at school, but that they may come hereafter to read puffs at college? Why but for the propagation of puffs do honorary lecturers hold forth upon science, and gratuitous editors circulate literature? Are not gas-lights chiefly used for their illumination, and steam-boats for their spread? And shall not history, which has given to one era the name of the age of gold, and has entitled another the age of silver, call this present nineteenth century the age of puffs?

Take up the first thing upon your table, the newspaper for instance, or the magazine, the decorated drawing-box, the Bramah pen, and twenty to one but a puff more or less direct shall lurk in the patent of the one, while a whole

congeries of puffs shall swarm in bare and undisguised effrontery between the pages of the other.

Walk into the streets;—and what meet you there? Puffs! puffs! puffs! From the dead walls, chalked over with recommendations to purchase Mr. Such-an-one's blacking, to the walking placard insinuating the excellences of Mr. What-d'ye-call-him's Cream Gin*—from the bright resplendent brass-knob, garnished with the significant words "Office Bell," beside the door of an obscure surveyor, to the spruce carriage of a newly arrived physician driving empty up and

* He was a genius in his line (I had almost written an evil genius) who invented that rare epithet, that singular combination of the sweetest and purest of all luxuries, the most healthful and innocent of dainties, redolent of association so rural and poetical, with the vilest abominations of great cities, the impure and disgusting source of misery and crime. Cream Gin! The union of such words is really a desecration of one of nature's most genial gifts, as well as a burlesque on the charming old pastoral poets; a flagrant offence against morals, and against that which in its highest sense may almost be considered a branch of morality—taste.

down the street, everything whether movable or stationary is a puff.

But shops form, of course, the chief locality of the craft of puffing. The getting off of goods is its grand aim and object. And of all shops those which are devoted to the thousand and one articles of female decoration, the few things which women do, and the many which they do not want, stand pre-eminent in this great art of the nineteenth century.

Not to enter upon the grand manœuvres of the London establishments, the doors for carriages to set down and the doors for carriages to take up, indicating an affluence of customers, a degree of crowd and inconvenience equal to the King's Theatre, on a Saturday night, or the queen's drawing-room on a birthday, and attracting the whole female world by that which in a fashionable cause the whole female world loves so dearly, confusion, pressure, heat and noise;—to say nothing of those bold schemes which require the multitudes of the metropolis to afford them the slightest chance of success, we in

our good borough of Belford Regis, simple as it stands, had, as I have said, as pretty a show of speculating haberdashers as any country town of its inches could well desire ; the most eminent of whom was beyond all question or competition, the proprietor of the New Waterloo Establishment, Mr. Joseph Hanson, late of London.

His shop displayed, as I have already intimated, one of the largest and showiest frontages in the market-place, and had been distinguished by a greater number of occupants and a more rapid succession of failures in the same line than any other in the town.

The last tenant, save one, of that celebrated warehouse — the penultimate bankrupt — had followed the beaten road of puffing, and announced his goods as the cheapest ever manufactured. According to himself, his handbills, and his advertisements, everything contained in that shop was so very much under prime cost, that the more he sold the sooner he must be ruined. To hear him, you would expect not only that he should give his ribbons and mus-

lins for nothing, but that he should offer you a premium for consenting to accept of them. Gloves, handkerchiefs, nightcaps, gown-pieces, every article at the door and in the window was covered with tickets, each nearly as large as itself, tickets that might be read across the market-place; and townspeople and country-people came flocking round about, some to stare and some to buy. The starers were, however, it is to be presumed, more numerous than the buyers, for notwithstanding his tickets, his handbills, and his advertisements, in less than six months the advertiser had failed, and that stock never, as it's luckless owner used to say, approached for cheapness, was sold off at half its original price.

Warned by his predecessor's fate, the next comer adopted a newer and a nobler style of attracting public attention. He called himself a steady trader of the old school, abjured cheapness as synonymous with cheating, disclaimed everything that savoured of a puff, denounced handbills and advertisements, and

had not a ticket in his whole shop. He cited the high price of his articles as proofs of their goodness, and would have held himself disgraced for ever if he had been detected in selling a reasonable piece of goods. "He could not," he observed, "expect to attract the rabble by such a mode of transacting business; his aim was to secure a select body of customers amongst the nobility and gentry, persons who looked to quality and durability in their purchases, and were capable of estimating the solid advantages of dealing with a tradesman who despised the trumpery artifices of the day."

So high-minded a declaration, enforced too by much solemnity of utterance and appearance—the speaker being a solid, substantial, middle-aged man, equipped in a full suit of black, with a head nicely powdered, and a pen stuck behind his ear—such a declaration from so important a personage ought to have succeeded; but somehow or other it did not. His customers, gentle and simple, were more select than numerous, and in another six months the high-price

man failed just as the low-price man had failed before him.

Their successor, Mr. Joseph Hanson, claimed to unite in his own person the several merits of both his antecedents. Cheaper than the cheapest, better, finer, more durable, than the best, nothing at all approaching his assortment of linendrapery had, as he swore, and his head shopman, Mr. Thomas Long, asseverated, ever been seen before in the streets of Belford Regis ; and the oaths of the master and the asseverations of the man, together with a very grand display of fashions and finery, did really seem, in the first instance at least, to attract more customers than had of late visited those unfortunate premises.

Mr. Joseph Hanson and Mr. Thomas Long were a pair admirably suited to the concern, and to one another. Each possessed pre-eminently the various requisites and qualifications in which the other happened to be deficient. Tall, slender, elderly, with a fine bald head, a mild countenance, a most insinuating address, and a gene-

ral air of faded gentility, Mr. Thomas Long was exactly the foreman to give respectability to his employer; whilst bold, fluent, rapid, loud, dashing in aspect and manner, with a great fund of animal spirits, and a prodigious stock of assurance and conceit, respectability was, to say the truth, the precise qualification which Mr. Joseph Hanson most needed.

Then the good town of Belford being divided, like most other country towns, into two prevailing factions, theological and political, the worthies whom I am attempting to describe prudently endeavoured to catch all parties by embracing different sides; Mr. Joseph Hanson being a tory and high-churchman of the very first water, who showed his loyalty according to the most approved faction, by abusing his Majesty's ministers as revolutionary, thwarting the town-council, getting tipsy at conservative dinners, and riding twenty miles to attend an eminent preacher who wielded in a neighbouring county all the thunders of orthodoxy; whilst the soft-spoken Mr. Thomas Long was a Dis-

sender and a radical, who proved his allegiance to the House of Brunswick (for both claimed to be amongst the best wishers to the present dynasty and the reigning sovereign) by denouncing the government as weak and aristocratic, advocating the abolition of the peerage, getting up an operative reform club, and going to chapel three times every Sunday.

These measures succeeded so well, that the allotted six months (the general period of failure in that concern) elapsed, and still found Mr. Joseph Hanson as flourishing as ever in manner, and apparently flourishing in trade; they stood him, too, in no small stead, in a matter which promised to be still more conducive to his prosperity than buying and selling feminine gear,—in the grand matter (for Joseph jocosely professed to be a forlorn bachelor upon the look-out for a wife) of a wealthy marriage.

One of the most thrifty and thriving tradesmen in the town of Belford, was old John Parsons, the tinman. His spacious shop, crowded with its glittering and rattling commodities,

pots, pans, kettles, meat-covers, in a word, the whole *batterie de cuisine*, was situate in the narrow, inconvenient lane called Oriel Street, which I have already done myself the honour of introducing to the courteous reader, standing betwixt a great chemist on one side, his windows filled with coloured jars, red, blue, and green, looking like painted glass, or like the fruit made of gems in Aladdin's garden, (I am as much taken myself with those jars in a chemist's window as ever was Miss Edgeworth's Rosamond,) and an eminent china warehouse on the other; our tinman having the honour to be next-door neighbour to no less a lady than Mrs. Philadelphia Tyler. Many a thriving tradesman might be found in Oriel Street, and many a blooming damsel amongst the tradesmen's daughters; but if the town gossip might be believed, the richest of all the rich shopkeepers was old John Parsons, and the prettiest girl (even without reference to her father's money-bags) was his fair daughter Harriet.

John Parsons was one of those loud, violent, blustering, boisterous personages who always

put me in mind of the description so often appended to characters of that sort in the dramatic personæ of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, where one constantly meets with Ernulpho or Bertoldo, or some such Italianised appellation, "an old angry gentleman." The "old angry gentleman" of the fine old dramatists generally keeps the promise of the play-bill. He storms and rails during the whole five acts, scolding those the most whom he loves the best, making all around him uncomfortable, and yet meaning fully to do right, and firmly convinced that he is himself the injured party; and after quarrelling with cause or without to the end of the comedy, makes friends all round at the conclusion;—a sort of person whose good intentions everybody appreciates, but from whose violence everybody that can is sure to get away.

Now such men are just as common in the real workaday world as in the old drama; and precisely such a man was John Parsons.

His daughter was exactly the sort of creature that such training was calculated to produce; gentle, timid, shrinking, fond of her father, who

indeed doated upon her, and would have sacrificed his whole substance, his right arm, his life, anything except his will or his humour, to give her a moment's pleasure; gratefully fond of her father, but yet more afraid than fond.

The youngest and only surviving child of a large family, and brought up without a mother's care, since Mrs. Parsons had died in her infancy, there was a delicacy and fragility, a slenderness of form and transparency of complexion, which, added to her gentleness and modesty, gave an unexpected elegance to the tinman's daughter. A soft appealing voice, dove-like eyes, a smile rather sweet than gay, a constant desire to please, and a total unconsciousness of her own attractions, were amongst her chief characteristics. Some persons hold the theory that dissimilarity answers best in matrimony, and such persons would have found a most satisfactory contrast of appearance, mind, and manner, between the fair Harriet and her dashing suitor.

Besides his one great and distinguishing quality of assurance and vulgar pretension, which it

is difficult to describe by any word short of impudence, Mr. Joseph Hanson was by no means calculated to please the eye of a damsel of seventeen, an age at which a man who owned to five-and-thirty, and who looked and most probably was at least ten years farther advanced on the journey of life, would not fail to be set down as a confirmed old bachelor. He had, too; a large mouth, full of large irregular teeth, a head of hair which bore a great resemblance to a wig, and a suspicion of a squint, (for it did not quite amount to that odious deformity,) which added a most sinister expression to his countenance. Harriet Parsons could not abide him; and I verily believe she would have disliked him just as much though a certain Frederick Mallet had never been in existence.

How her father, a dissenter, a radical, and a steady tradesman of the old school, who hated puffs and puffery, and finery and fashion, came to be taken in by a man opposed to him in religion and politics, in action and in speech, was a riddle that puzzled half the gossips in Belford. It happened through a mutual enmity, often (to

tell an unpalatable truth of poor human nature) a stronger bond of union than a mutual affection.

Thus it fell out.

Amongst the reforms carried into effect by the town-council, whereof John Parsons was a leading member, was the establishment of an efficient new police to replace the incapable old watchmen, who had hitherto been the sole guardians of life and property in our ancient borough. As far as the principle went, the liberal party were united and triumphant. They split, as liberals are apt to split, upon the rock of detail. It so happened that a turnpike, belonging to one of the roads leading into Belford, had been removed, by order of the commissioners, half a mile farther from the town;—half a mile indeed beyond the town boundary; and although there were only three houses, one a beer-shop, and the two others small tenements inhabited by labouring people, between the site of the old turnpike at the end of Prince's Street, and that of the new, at the King's Head Pond, our friend the tinman, who was nothing if not crotchety, in-

sisted with so much pertinacity upon the perambulation of the blue-coated officials appointed for that beat, being extended along the highway for the distance aforesaid, that the whole council were set together by the ears, and the measure had very nearly gone by the board in consequence. The imminence of the peril saved them. The danger of reinstating the ancient Dogberrys of the watch, and still worse, of giving a triumph to the tories, brought the reformers to their senses—all except the man of tin, who, becoming only the more confirmed in his own opinion as ally after ally fell off from him, persisted in dividing the council six different times, and had the gratification of finding himself on each of the three last divisions, in a minority of one. He was about to bring forward the question upon a seventh occasion, when a hint as to the propriety in such case of moving a vote of censure against him for wasting the time of the board, caused him to secede from the council in a fury, and to quarrel with the whole municipal body, from the mayor downward.

Now the mayor, a respectable and intelligent

attorney, heretofore John Parsons' most intimate friend, happened to have been brought publicly and privately into collision with Mr. Joseph Hanson, who, delighted to find an occasion on which he might at once indulge his aversion to the civic dignitary, and promote the interest of his love-suit, was not content with denouncing the corporation *de vive voix*, but wrote three grandiloquent letters to the Belford Courant, in which he demonstrated that the welfare of the borough, and the safety of the constitution, depended upon the police parading regularly, by day and by night, along the high road to the King's Head Pond, and that none but a pettifogging chief magistrate, and an incapable town-council, corrupt tools of a corrupt administration, could have had the gratuitous audacity to cause the policeman to turn at the top of Prince's Street, thereby leaving the persons and property of his majesty's liege subjects unprotected and uncared for. He enlarged upon the fact of the tenements in question being occupied by agricultural labourers, a class over whom, as he observed, the demagogues now in

power delighted to tyrannise; and concluded his flourishing appeal to the conservatives of the borough, the county, and the empire at large, by a threat of getting up a petition against the council, and bringing the whole affair before the two Houses of Parliament.

Although this precious epistle was signed *Amicus Patriæ*, the writer was far too proud of his production to entrench himself behind the inglorious shield of a fictitious signature, and as the mayor, professionally indignant at the epithet pettifogging, threatened both the editor of the *Belford Courant* and Mr. Joseph Hanson with an action for libel, it followed, as matter of course, that John Parsons not only thought the haberdasher the most able and honest man in the borough, but regarded him as the champion, if not the martyr, of his cause, and one who deserved everything that he had to bestow, even to the hand and portion of the pretty Harriet.

Affairs were in this posture, when one fine morning the chief magistrate of Belford entered the tinman's shop.

“Mr. Parsons,” said the worthy dignitary, in

a very conciliatory tone, "you may be as angry with me as you like, but I find from our good vicar that the fellow Hanson has applied to him for a licence, and I cannot let you throw away my little friend Harriet without giving you warning, that a long and bitter repentance will follow such a union. There are emergencies in which it becomes a duty to throw aside professional niceties, and to sacrifice etiquette to the interests of an old friendship; and I tell you, as a prudent man, that I know of my own knowledge that this intended son-in-law of your's will be arrested before the wedding-day."

"I'll bail him," said John Parsons, stoutly.

"He is not worth a farthing," quoth the chief magistrate.

"I shall give him ten thousand pounds with my daughter," answered the man of pots and kettles.

"I doubt if ten thousand pounds will pay his just debts," rejoined the mayor.

"Then I'll give him twenty," responded the tinman.

"He has failed in five different places within

the last five years," persisted the pertinacious adviser; "has run away from his creditors, Heaven knows how often; has taken the benefit of the Act time after time! You would not give your own sweet Harriet, the best and prettiest girl in the county, to an adventurer, the history of whose life is to be found in the Gazette and the Insolvent Court, and who is a high churchman and a tory to boot. Surely you would not fling away your daughter and your honest earnings upon a man of notorious bad character, with whom you have not an opinion or a prejudice in common? Just think what the other party will say!"

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Mallet or Mr. Mayor, if you prefer the sound of your new dignity," broke out John Parsons, in a fury, "I shall do what I like with my money and my daughter, without consulting you, or caring what anybody may chance to say, whether whig or tory. For my part, I think there's little to choose between them. One side's as bad as the other. Tyrants in office and patriots out. If Hanson is a conservative and a churchman, his

foreman is a radical and a dissenter; and they neither of them pretend to dictate to their betters, which is more than I can say of some who call themselves reformers. Once for all, I tell you that he shall marry my Harriet, and that your nephew sha'n't: so now you may arrest him as soon as you like. I'm not to be managed here, however you and your tools may carry matters at the Town Hall. An Englishman's house is his castle."

"Well," said Mr. Mallet, "I am going. God knows I came out of old friendship towards yourself, and sincere affection for the dear girl your daughter. As to my nephew, besides that I firmly believe the young people like each other, I know him to be as steady a lad as ever drew a conveyance; and with what his father has left him, and what I can give him, to say nothing of his professional prospects, he would be a fit match for Harriet as far as money goes. But if you are determined —"

"I *am* determined," roared John Parsons. "Before next week is out, Joseph Hanson shall be my son-in-law. And now, sir, I advise you

to go and drill your police." And the tinman retired from behind the counter into the interior of his dwelling, (for this colloquy had taken place in the shop,) banging the door behind him with a violence that really shook the house.

"Poor pretty Harriet!" thought the compassionate chief magistrate, "and poor Frederick too! The end of next week! This is only Monday; something may turn up in that time; we must make inquiries; I had feared that it would have been earlier. My old tetchy friend here is just the man to have arranged the marriage one day, and had the ceremony performed the next. We must look about us." And full of such cogitations, the mayor returned to his habitation.

On the Thursday week after this conversation a coach drew up, about eight o'clock in the morning, at the gate of St. Stephen's churchyard, and Mr. Joseph Hanson, in all the gloss of bridal finery, newly clad from top to toe, smiling and smirking at every instant, jumped down, followed by John Parsons, and prepared to hand out his reluctant bride elect, when

Mr. Mallet, with a showy-looking middle-aged woman (a sort of feminine of Joseph himself) hanging upon his arm, accosted our friend the tinman.

“Stop !” cried the mayor.

“What for?” inquired John Parsons. “If it’s a debt, I’ve already told you that I’ll be his bail.”

“It is a debt,” responded the chief magistrate; “and one that luckily he must pay, and not you. Three years ago he married this lady at Liverpool. We have the certificate and all the documents.”

“Yes, sir,” added the injured fair one; “and I find that he has another wife in Dublin, and a third at Manchester. I have heard, too, that he ran away with a young lady to Scotland; but that don’t count, as he was under age.”

“Four wives !” ejaculated John Parsons, in a transport of astonishment and indignation. “Why the man is an absolute great Turk ! But the thing’s impossible. Come and answer for yourself, Joseph Hanson.”

And the tinman turned to look for his intended

son-in-law ; but frightened at the sight of the fair claimant of his hand and person, the bridegroom had absconded, and John Parsons and the mayor had nothing for it but to rejoin the pretty Harriet, smiling through her tears as she sate with her bride-maiden in the coach at the churchyard-gate.

“ Well ; it’s a great escape ! and we’re for ever obliged to you, Mr. Mayor. Don’t cry any more, Harriet. If Frederick was but here, why, in spite of the policemen — but a week hence will do as well ; and I am beginning to be of Harriet’s mind, that even if he had not had three or four wives, we should be well off to be fairly rid of Mr. Joseph Hanson, the puffing haberdasher.”

THE BEAUTY OF THE VILLAGE.

THREE years ago, Hannah Colson was, beyond all manner of dispute, the prettiest girl in Aberleigh. It was a rare union of face, form, complexion, and expression. Of that just height, which, although certainly tall, would yet hardly be called so, her figure united to its youthful roundness, and still more youthful lightness, an airy flexibility, a bounding grace, and when in repose, a gentle dignity, which alternately reminded one of a fawn bounding through the forest, or a swan at rest upon the lake. A sculptor would have modelled her for the youngest of the Graces; whilst a painter, caught by the bright colouring of that fair blooming face, the white forehead so vividly contrasted by the masses of dark curls, the jet-black eye-

brows, and long rich eyelashes, which shaded her finely-cut grey eye, and the pearly teeth disclosed by the scarlet lips, whose every movement was an unconscious smile, would doubtless have selected her for the very goddess of youth. Beyond all question, Hannah Colson, at eighteen, was the beauty of Aberleigh, and, unfortunately, no inhabitant of that populous village was more thoroughly aware that she was so than the fair damsel herself.

Her late father, good Master Colson, had been all his life a respectable and flourishing master bricklayer in the place. Many a man with less pretensions to the title would call himself a builder now-a-days, or "by'r lady," an architect, and put forth a flaming card, vaunting his accomplishments in the mason's craft, his skill in plans and elevations, and his unparalleled dispatch and cheapness in carrying his designs into execution. But John Colson was no new-fangled personage. A plain honest tradesman was our bricklayer, and thoroughly of the old school; one who did his duty to his employers with punctual industry, who was

never above his calling, a good son, a good brother, a good husband, and an excellent father, who trained up a large family in the way they should go, and never entered a public-house in his life.

The loss of this invaluable parent about three years before had been the only grief that Hannah Colson had known. But as her father, although loving her with the mixture of pride and fondness, which her remarkable beauty, her delightful gaiety, and the accident of her being by many years the youngest of his children, rendered natural, if not excusable, had yet been the only one about her, who had discernment to perceive, and authority to check her little ebullitions of vanity and self-will; she felt, as soon as the first natural tears were wiped away, that a restraint had been removed, and, scarcely knowing why, was too soon consoled for the greatest misfortune that could possibly have befallen one so dangerously gifted. Her mother was a kind, good, gentle woman, who having by necessity worked hard in the early part of her life, still continued the practice, partly from

inclination, partly from a sense of duty, and partly from mere habit, and amongst her many excellent qualities had the Ailie Dinmont propensity of giving all her children their own way,* especially this the blooming cadette of the family: and her eldest brother, a bachelor,—who, succeeding to his father's business, took his place as master of the house, retaining his surviving parent as its mistress, and his pretty sister as something between a plaything and a pet, both in their several ways seemed vying with each other as to which should most thoroughly humour and indulge the lovely creature whom nature had already done her best or her worst to spoil to their hands.

Her other brothers and sisters, married and dispersed over the country, had of course no authority, even if they had wished to assume anything like power over the graceful and

* “Eh, poor things, what else have I to give them?” This reply of Ailie Dinmont, and indeed her whole sweet character, short though it be, has always seemed to me the finest female sketch in the *Waverly Novels*—finer even, because so much tenderer, than the bold and honest Jeanie Deans.

charming young woman whom every one belonging to her felt to be an object of pride and delight; so that their presents and caresses and smiling invitations aided in strengthening Hannah's impression, poor girl though she were, that her little world, the small horizon of her own secluded hamlet, was made for her, and for her only; and if this persuasion had needed any additional confirmation, such confirmation would have been found in the universal admiration of the village beaux, and the envy, almost as general, of the village belles, particularly in the latter; the envy of rival beauties being, as everybody knows, of all flatteries the most piquant and seducing—in a word, the most genuine and real.

The only person from whom Hannah Colson ever heard that rare thing called truth, was her friend and school-fellow, Lucy Meadows, a young woman two or three years older than herself in actual age, and half a lifetime more advanced in the best fruits of mature age, in clearness of judgment, and steadiness of conduct.

A greater contrast of manner and character than that exhibited between the light-headed

and light-hearted beauty, and her mild and quiet companion could hardly be imagined. Lucy was pretty too, very pretty; but it was the calm, sedate, composed expression, the pure alabaster complexion, the soft dove-like eye, the general harmony and delicacy of feature and of form that we so often observe in a female *Friend*; and her low gentle voice, her retiring deportment, and quaker-like simplicity of dress were in perfect accordance with that impression. Her clearness of intellect, also, and rectitude of understanding, were such as are often found amongst that intelligent race of people; although there was an intuitive perception of character and motive, a fineness of observation under that demure and modest exterior, that, if Lucy had ever in her life been ten miles from her native village, might have been called knowledge of the world.

How she came by this quality, which some women seem to possess by instinct, Heaven only knows! Her early gravity of manner, and sedateness of mind, might be more easily accounted for. Poor Lucy was an orphan, and

had from the age of fourteen been called upon to keep house for her only brother, a young man of seven or eight-and-twenty, well to do in the world, who, as the principal carpenter of Aberleigh, had had much intercourse with the Colsons in the way of business, and was on the most friendly terms with the whole family.

With one branch of that family James Meadows would fain have been upon terms nearer and dearer than those of friendship. Even before John Colson's death, his love for Hannah, although not openly avowed, had been the object of remark to the whole village; and it is certain that the fond and anxious father found his last moments soothed by the hope that the happiness and prosperity of his favourite child were secured by the attachment of one so excellent in character and respectable in situation.

James Meadows was indeed a man to whom any father would have confided his dearest and loveliest daughter with untroubled confidence. He joined to the calm good sense and quiet observation that distinguished his sister, an inventive and constructive power, which, turned as it

was to the purposes of his own trade, rendered him a most ingenious and dexterous mechanic; and which only needed the spur of emulation, or the still more active stimulus of personal ambition, to procure for him high distinction in any line to which his extraordinary faculty of invention and combination might be applied.

Ambition, however, he had none. He was happily quite free from that tormenting taskmaster, who, next perhaps to praise, makes the severest demand on human faculty, and human labour. To maintain in the spot where he was born, the character for honesty, independence, and industry, that his father had borne before him, to support in credit and comfort the sister whom he loved so well, and one whom he loved still better, formed the safe and humble boundary of his wishes. But with the contrariety with which fortune so often seems to pursue those who do not follow her, his success far outstripped his moderate desires. The neighbouring gentlemen soon discovered his talent. Employment poured in upon him. His taste proved to be equal to his skill; and from the ornamen-

tal out-door work—the Swiss cottages, and fancy dairies, the treillage and the rustic seats belonging to a great country place,—to the most delicate mouldings of the boudoir and the saloon, nothing went well that wanted the guiding eye and finishing hand of James Meadows. The best workmen were proud to be employed by him; the most respectable yeomen offered their sons as his apprentices; and without any such design on his part, our village carpenter was in a fair way to become one of the wealthiest tradesmen in the county.

His personal character and peculiarly modest and respectful manners contributed not a little to his popularity with his superiors. He was a fair slender young man, with a pale complexion, a composed but expressive countenance, a thoughtful, deep-set, grey eye, and a remarkably fine head, with a profusion of curling brown hair, which gave a distinguished air to his whole appearance; so that he was constantly taken by strangers for a gentleman; and the gentle propriety with which he was accustomed to correct the mistake was such as seldom failed to heighten their esti-

mation of the individual, whilst it set them right as to his station. Hannah Colson, with all her youthful charms, might think herself a lucky damsel in securing the affections of such a lover as this; and that she did actually think so was the persuasion of those who knew her best—of her mother, of her brother William, and of Lucy Meadows; although the coy, fantastic beauty, shy as a ring-dove, wild as a fawn of the forest, was so far from confessing any return of affection, that whilst suffering his attentions, and accepting his escort to the rural gaieties which be-seemed her age, she would now profess, even while hanging on his arm, her intention of never marrying, and now coquet before his eyes with some passing admirer whom she had never seen before. She took good care, however, not to go too far in her coquetry, or to flirt twice with the same person; and so contrived to temper her resolutions against matrimony with “nods and becks and wreathed smiles,” that, modest as he was by nature, and that natural modesty enhanced by the diffidence which belongs to a deep and ardent passion, James Meadows

himself saw no real cause for fear in the pretty petulance of his fair mistress, in a love of power so full of playful grace that it seemed rather a charm than a fault, and in a blushing reluctance to change her maiden state, and lose her maiden freedom, which had in his eyes all the attractions of youthful shamefacedness. That she would eventually be his own dear wife, James entertained no manner of doubt; and, pleased with all that pleased her, was not unwilling to prolong the happy days of courtship.

In this humour Lucy had left him, when, towards the end of May, she had gone for the first time to spend a few weeks with some relations in London. Her cousins were kind and wealthy; and, much pleased with the modest intelligence of their young kinswoman, they exerted themselves to render their house agreeable to her, and to show her the innumerable sights of the Queen of Cities. So that her stay, being urged by James, who, thoroughly unselfish, rejoiced to find his sister so well amused, was prolonged to the end of July, when, alarmed at the total cessation of

letters from Hannah, and at the constrained and dispirited tone which she discovered, or fancied that she discovered in her brother's, Lucy resolved to hasten home.

He received her with his usual gentle kindness and his sweet and thoughtful smile; assured her that he was well; exerted himself more than usual to talk, and waived away her anxious questions by extorting from her an account of her journey and her residence, of all that she had seen, and of her own feelings on returning to her country home after so long a sojourn in the splendid and beautiful metropolis. He talked more than was usual with him; and more gaily; but still Lucy was dissatisfied. The hand that had pressed hers on alighting was cold as death; the lip that had kissed her fair brow was pale and trembling; his appetite was gone, and his frequent and apparently unconscious habit of pushing away the clustering curls from his forehead proved, as plainly as words could have done, that there was pain in the throbbing temples. The pulsation was even visible; but still he denied that he was ill, and declared that her

notion of his having grown thin and pale was nothing but a woman's fancy,—the fond whim of a fond sister.

To escape from the subject he took her into the garden,—her own pretty flower garden, divided by a wall covered with creepers from the larger plot of ground devoted to vegetables, and bounded on one side by buildings connected with his trade, and parted on the other from a well-stored timber-yard, by a beautiful rustic screen of fir and oak and birch with the bark on, which terminating in a graceful curve at the end next the house, and at that leading to the garden in a projecting gothic porch,—partly covered by climbing plants, partly broken by tall pyramidal hollyhocks, and magnificent dahlias, and backed by a clump of tall elms, formed a most graceful veil to an unsightly object. This screen had been erected during Lucy's absence, and without her knowledge; and her brother smiling at the delight which she expressed, pointed out to her the splendid beauty of her flowers and the luxuriant profusion of their growth.

The old buildings matted with roses, honeysuckles, and jessamines, broken only by the pretty out-door room which Lucy called her greenhouse; the pile of variously tinted geraniums in front of that prettiest room; the wall garlanded, covered, hidden with interwoven myrtles, fuschias, passion-flowers, clematis, and the silky blossoms of the grandiflora pea; the beds filled with dahlias, salvias, calceolarias, and carnations of every hue, with the rich purple and the pure white petunia, with the many-coloured marvel of Peru, with the enamelled blue of the Siberian larkspur, with the richly scented changeable lupine, with the glowing lavatera, the dark-eyed hybiscus, the pure and alabaster cup of the white *œnothera*, the lilac clusters of the phlox, and the delicate blossom of the yellow sultan, most elegant amongst flowers;—all these, with a hundred other plants too long to name, and all their various greens, and the pet weed mignonette growing like grass in a meadow, and mingling its aromatic odour amongst the general fragrance—all this sweetness and beauty glowing in the evening sun, and breath-

ing of freshness and of cool air, came with such a thrill of delight upon the poor village maiden, who, in spite of her admiration of London, had languished in its heat and noise and dirt, for the calm and quiet, the green leaves and the bright flowers of her country home, that, from the very fulness of her heart, from joy and gratitude and tenderness and anxiety, she flung her arms round her brother's neck and burst into tears.

Lucy was usually so calm and self-commanded, that such an ebullition of feeling from her astonished and affected James Meadows more than any words, however tender. He pressed her to his heart, and when, following up the train of her own thoughts,—sure that this kind brother, who had done so much to please her was himself unhappy, guessing, and longing, and yet fearing to know the cause,—when Lucy, agitated by such feelings, ventured to whisper “Hannah?” her brother placing her gently on the steps leading to the green-house, and leaning himself against the open door, began in a low and subdued tone to pour out his whole

heart to his sympathising auditress. The story was nearly such as she had been led to expect from the silence of one party, and the distress of the other. A rival—a most unworthy rival—had appeared upon the scene; and James Meadows, besides the fear of losing the lovely creature whom he had loved so fondly, had the additional grief of believing that the man whose flatteries had at least gained from her a flattering hearing, was of all others the least likely to make her respectable and happy.—Much misery may be comprised in few words. Poor James's story was soon told.

A young and gay Baronet had, as Lucy knew, taken the manor-house and manor of Aberleigh: and during her absence, a part of his retinue with a train of dogs and horses had established themselves in the mansion, in preparation for their master's arrival. Amongst these new comers, by far the most showy and important was the head keeper, Edward Forester, a fine looking young man, with a tall, firm, upright figure, a clear dark complexion, bright black eyes, a smile alternately winning and scornful,

and a prodigious fluency of speech, and readiness of compliment. He fell in love with Hannah at first sight, and declared his passion the same afternoon; and, although discouraged by every one about her, never failed to parade before her mother's house two or three times a-day, mounted on his master's superb blood-horse, to waylay her in her walks, and to come across her in her visits. Go where she might, Hannah was sure to encounter Edward Forester; and this devotion from one whose personal attractions extorted as much admiration from the lasses, her companions, as she herself had been used to excite amongst the country lads, had in it, in spite of its ostentatious openness, a flattery that seemed irresistible.

“I do not think she loves him, Lucy,” said James Meadows, sighingly; “indeed I am sure that she does not. She is dazzled by his showiness and his fluency, his horsemanship and his dancing; but love him she does not. It is fascination, such a fascination as leads a moth to flutter round a candle, or a bird to drop into the rattlesnake's mouth,—and never was flame more

dangerous, or serpent more deadly. He is unworthy of her, Lucy,—thoroughly unworthy. This man, who calls himself devoted to a creature as innocent as she is lovely,—who pretends to feel a pure and genuine passion for this pure and too-believing girl, passes his evenings, his nights, in drinking, in gambling, in debauchery of the lowest and most degrading nature. He is doubtless at this very instant at the wretched beer-shop at the corner of the common—the haunt of all that is wicked, and corrupter of all that is frail, “The Foaming Tankard.” It is there, in the noble game of Four Corners, that the man who aspires to the love of Hannah Colson passes his hours.—Lucy, do you remember the exquisite story of Phœbe Dawson, in Crabbe’s Parish Register?—such as she was, will Hannah be. I could resign her, Heaven knows, grievous as the loss would be, to one whom she loved, and who would ensure her happiness. But to give her up to Edward Forester—the very thought is madness!”

“Surely, brother, she cannot know that he is so unworthy! surely, surely, when she is con-

vinced that he is so, she will throw him off like an infected garment ! I know Hannah well. She would be protected from such an one as you describe, as well by pride as by purity. She cannot be aware of these propensities."

"She has been told of them repeatedly; but he denies the accusation, and she rather believes his denial than the assertion of her best friends. Knowing Hannah as you do, Lucy, you cannot but remember the petulant self-will, the scorn of contradiction and opposition, which used half to vex and half to amuse us in the charming spoilt child. We little dreamt how dangerous that fault, almost diverting in trifles, might become in the serious business of life. Her mother and brother are my warm advocates, and the determined opponents of my rival; and therefore, to assert what she calls her independence and her disinterestedness, (for with this sweet perverse creature the worldly prosperity which I valued chiefly for her sake makes against me,) she will fling herself away on one wholly unworthy of her, one whom she does not

even love, and with whom her whole life will be a scene of degradation and misery.”

“ Will he be to-night at the Foaming Tankard ? ”

“ He is there every night.”

At this point of their conversation the brother was called away ; and Lucy, after a little consideration, tied on her bonnet, and walked to Mrs. Colson’s.

Her welcome from William Colson and his mother was as cordial and hearty as ever, perhaps more so ; Hannah’s greetings were affectionate, but constrained. Not to receive Lucy kindly was impossible ; and yet her own internal consciousness rendered poor Lucy, next perhaps to her brother, the very last person whom she would have desired to see ; and this uncomfortable feeling increased to a painful degree, when the fond sister, with some diminution of her customary gentleness, spoke to her openly of her conduct to James, and repeated with strong and earnest reprehension, all that she had heard of the conduct and pursuits of her new admirer.

“He frequent the Foaming Tankard! He drink to intoxication! He play for days and nights at Four Corners! It is a vile slander! I would answer for it with my life! He told me this very day that he has never even entered that den of infamy.”

“I believe him to be there at this very hour,” replied Lucy, calmly. And Hannah, excited to the highest point of anger and agitation, dared Lucy to the instant proof, invited her to go with her at once to the beer-house, and offered to abandon all thoughts of Edward Forester if he proved to be there. Lucy, willing enough to place the fate of the cause on that issue, prepared to accompany her; and the two girls were so engrossed by the importance of their errand, that they did not even hear Mrs. Colson’s terrified remonstrance, who vainly endeavoured to detain or recal them by assurances that small-pox of the confluent sort was in the house; and that she had heard only that very afternoon, that a young woman, vaccinated at the same time, and by the same person with her Hannah, lay

dead in one of the rooms of the Foaming Tankard.

Not listening to, not even hearing her mother, Hannah walked with the desperate speed of passion through the village street, up the winding hill, across the common, along the avenue ; and reached in less time than seemed possible the open grove of oaks, in one corner of which this obnoxious beer-house, the torment and puzzle of the magistrates, and the pest of the parish, was situated. There was no sign of death or sickness about the place. The lights from the tap-room and the garden, along one side of which the alley for four-corners was erected, gleamed in the darkness of a moonless summer night between the trees ; and even farther than the streaming light, pierced the loud oaths and louder laughter, the shouts of triumph, and the yells of defeat, mixed with the dull heavy blows of the large wooden bowl, from the drunken gamesters in the alley.

Hannah started as she heard one voice ; but, determined to proceed, she passed straight

through the garden-gate, and rushed hastily on to the open shed where the players were assembled. There, stripped of his coat and waistcoat, in all the agony of an intoxicated gambler, stood Edward Forester, in the act of staking his gold-laced hat upon the next cast. He threw and lost; and casting from him with a furious oath the massive wooden ball, struck, in his blind frenzy, the lovely creature transfixed in silent horror at the side of the alley, who fell with the blow, and was carried for dead into the Foaming Tankard.

Hannah did not, however, die; although her left arm was broken, her shoulder dislocated, and much injury inflicted by the fall. She lived, and she still lives, but no longer as the Beauty of the Village. Her fine shape injured by the blow, and her fair face disfigured by the small-pox, she can no longer boast the surpassing loveliness which obtained for her the title of the Rose of Aberleigh. And yet she has gained more than she has lost, even in mere attraction;

the vain coquettish girl is become a sweet and gentle woman; gaiety has been replaced by sensibility, and the sauciness of conscious power, by the modest wish to please. In her long and dangerous illness, her slow and doubtful convalescence, Hannah learnt the difficult lesson to acknowledge and to amend her own faults; and when, after many scruples on the score of her changed person and impaired health, she became the happy wife of James Meadows, she brought to him, in a corrected temper and purified heart, a dowry far more precious in his mind than the transient beauty which had been her only charm in the eyes of Edward Forester.

TOWN VERSUS COUNTRY.

“I’M desperately afear’d, Sue, that that brother of thine will turn out a jackanapes,” was the apostrophe of the good yeoman Michael Howe, to his pretty daughter Susan, as they were walking one fine afternoon in harvest through some narrow and richly wooded lanes, which wound between the crofts of his farm of Rutherford West, situate in that out-of-the-way part of Berkshire which is emphatically called “the Low Country,” for no better reason that I can discover than that it is the very hilliest part of the royal county. “I’m sadly afear’d, Sue, that he’ll turn out a jackanapes!”—and the stout farmer brandished the tall paddle which served him at once as a walking stick and a weeding-hook, and began vigorously

eradicating the huge thistles which grew by the roadside, as a mere vent for his vexation. "You'll see that he'll come back an arrant puppy," quoth Michael Howe.

"Oh, father! don't say so," rejoined Susan; "why should you think so hardly of poor William—our own dear William, whom we have not seen these three years? What earthly harm has he done?"

"Harm, girl! Look at his letters! You know you're ashamed yourself to take 'em of the postman. Pink paper, forsooth, and blue ink, and a seal with bits of make-believe gold speckled about in it like a ladybird's wings—I hate all make-believes, all shams; they're worse than poison;—and stinking of some outlandish scent, so that I'm forced to smoke a couple of pipes extra to get rid of the smell; and latterly, as if this folly was not enough, he has crammed these precious scrawls into a sort of paper-bag, pasted together just as if o' purpose to make us pay double postage. Jackanapes did I call him? He's a worse mollycot than a woman."

"Dear father, all young men will be foolish

one way or another ; and you know my uncle says, that William is wonderfully steady for so young a man, and his master is so well pleased with him, that he is now foreman in his great concern. You must pardon a little nonsense in a country youth, thrown suddenly into a fine shop in the gayest part of London, and with his godfather's legacy coming unexpectedly upon him, and making him too rich for a journeyman tradesman. But he's coming to see us now. He would have come six months ago, as soon as he got this money, if his master could have spared him ; and he'll be wiser before he goes back to London."

"Not he. Hang Lunnon ! Why did he go to Lunnon at all ? Why could not he stop at Rutherford like his father and his father's father, and see to the farm ? What business had he in a great shop ?—a man-mercier's they call it. What call had he to Lunnon, I say ? Tell me that, Miss Susan.

"Why, dear father, you know very well that when Master George Arnot was so unluckily obstinate about the affair of the water-course,

and would go to law with you, and swore that instead of marrying William, poor Mary should be married to the rich maltster old Jacob Giles, William, who had loved Mary ever since they were children together, could not bear to stay in the country, and went off to my uncle, forbidding me ever to mention her name in a letter; and so——”

“Well! well!” rejoined the father, somewhat softened, “but he need not have turned puppy and coxcomb because he was crossed in love. Pshaw!” added the good farmer, giving a mighty tug with his paddle at a tough mullein which happened to stand in his way, “I was crossed in love myself, in my young days, but I did not run off and turn tailor. I made up plump to another wench—your poor mother, Susan, that’s dead and gone—and carried her off like a man; married her in a month, girl; and that’s what Will should have done. I’m afeard we shall find him a sad jackanapes. Jem Hathaway, the gauger, told me last market-day that he saw him one Sunday in the what-dye-call’t—the Park there, covered with rings, and gold chains, and fine vel-

vets—all green and gold, like our great peacock. Well! we shall soon see. He comes to-night, you say? 'Tis not above six o'clock by the sun, and the Wantage coach don't come in till seven. Even if they lend him a horse and cart at the Nag's Head, he can't be here these two hours. So I shall just see the ten acre field cleared, and be home time enough to shake him by the hand if he comes like a man, or to kick him out of doors if he looks like a dandy." And off strode the stout yeoman in his clouted shoes, his leather gaiters, and smockfrock, and a beard (it was Friday) of six days' growth; looking altogether prodigiously like a man who would keep his word.

Susan, on her part, continued to thread the narrow winding lanes that led towards Wantage; walking leisurely along, and forming as she went, half unconsciously, a nosegay of the wild flowers of the season; the delicate hare-bell, the lingering wood-vetch, the blue scabious, the heaths which clustered on the bank, the tall graceful lilac campanula, the snowy bells of the bindweed, the latest briar-rose, and that species

of clematis, which, perhaps, because it generally indicates the neighbourhood of houses, has won for itself the pretty name of the traveller's joy, whilst that loveliest of wild flowers, whose name is now sentimentalised out of prettiness, the intensely blue forget-me-not, was there in rich profusion.

Susan herself was not unlike her posy ; sweet and delicate, and full of a certain pastoral grace. Her light and airy figure suited well with a fair mild countenance, breaking into blushes and smiles when she spoke, and set off by bright ringlets of golden hair, parted on her white forehead, and hanging in long curls on her finely-rounded cheeks. Always neat but never fine, gentle, cheerful, and modest, it would be difficult to find a prettier specimen of an English farmer's daughter than Susan Howe. But just now the little damsel wore a look of care not usual to her fair and tranquil features ; she seemed, as she was, full of trouble.

“ Poor William ! ” so ran her thoughts, “ my father would not even listen to his last letter because it poisoned him with musk. I wonder

that William can like that disagreeable smell! and he expects him to come down on the top of the coach, instead of which, he says that he means to purchase a—a—(even in her thoughts poor Susan could not master the word, and was obliged to have recourse to the musk-scented billet) britschka—ay, that's it!—or a droschky; I wonder what sort of things they are—and that he only visits us *en passant* in a tour, for which, town being so empty, and business slack, his employer has given him leave, and in which he is to be accompanied by his friend Monsieur Victor—Victor—I can't make out his other name—an eminent perfumer who lives next door. To think of bringing a Frenchman here, remembering how my father hates the whole nation! Oh dear, dear! And yet I know William. I know why he went, and I do believe, in spite of a little finery and foolishness, and of all the britschkas, and droschkies, and Victors, into the bargain, that he'll be glad to get home again. No place like home! Even in these silly notes that feeling is always at the bottom. Did not I hear a carriage before me? Yes!—no!—I can't

tell. One takes every thing for the sound of wheels when one is expecting a dear friend!—And if we can but get him to look, as he used to look, and to be what he used to be, he won't leave us again for all the fine shops in Regent Street, or all the britschkas and droschkies in Christendom. My father is getting old now, and William ought to stay at home," thought the affectionate sister; "and I firmly believe that what he ought to do, he will do. Besides which—surely there *is* a carriage now."

Just as Susan arrived at this point of her cogitations, that sound which had haunted her imagination all the afternoon, the sound of wheels rapidly advancing, became more and more audible, and was suddenly succeeded by a tremendous crash, mixed with men's voices—one of them her brother's—venting in two languages (for Monsieur Victor, whatever might be his proficiency in English, had recourse in this emergency to his native tongue) the different ejaculations of anger and astonishment which are pretty sure to accompany an upset; and on turning a corner of the lane, Susan caught her

first sight of the britschka or droschky, whichever it might be, that had so much puzzled her simple apprehension, in the shape of a heavy-looking open carriage garnished with head and apron, lying prostrate against a gate-post, of which the wheels had fallen foul. Her brother was fully occupied in disengaging the horses from the traces, in reprimanding his companion for his bad driving, which he declared had occasioned the accident, and in directing him to go for assistance to a cottage half a mile back on the road to Wantage, whilst he himself intimated his intention of proceeding for more help to the Farm; and the obedient Frenchman—who, notwithstanding the derangement which his coëffure might naturally be expected to have experienced in his tumble, looked, Susan thought, as if his hair were put in paper every night and pomatumed every morning, and as if his whole dapper person were saturated with his own finest essences, a sort of travelling perfumer's shop, a peripatetic pouncet-box—walked off in the direction indicated, with an air of habitual submission, which showed pretty plainly that, whether as proprie-

tor of the unlucky britschka, or from his own force of character, William was considered as the principal director of the present expedition.

Having sent his comrade off, William Howe, leaving his steeds quietly browsing by the wayside, bent his steps towards home. Susan advanced rapidly to meet him; and in a few seconds the brother and sister were in each other's arms; and, after most affectionate greetings, they sat down by mutual consent upon a piece of felled timber which lay upon the bank—the lane on one side being bounded by an old coppice—and began to ask each other the thousand questions so interesting to the children of one house who have been long parted.

Seldom surely has the rough and rugged bark of an unhewed elm had the honour of supporting so perfect an exquisite. Jem Hathaway, the exciseman, had in nothing exaggerated the magnificence of our young Londoner. From shoes which looked as if they had come from Paris in the ambassador's bag, to the curled head and the whiskered and mustachio'd countenance, (for the hat which should have been the

crown of the finery was wanting—probably in consequence of the recent overturn,) from top to toe he looked fit for a ball at Almack's, or a fête at Bridgewater House; and, oh! how unsuited to the old-fashioned homestead at Rutherford West! His lower appointments, hose and trousers, were of the finest woven silk; his coat was claret colour, of the latest cut; his waistcoat—talk of the great peacock, *he* would have seemed dingy and dusky beside such a splendour of colour!—his waistcoat literally dazzled poor Susan's eyes; and his rings, and chains, and studs, and brooches, seemed to the wondering girl almost sufficient to stock a jeweller's shop.

In spite of all this nonsense, it was clear to her from every look and word that she was not mistaken in believing William unchanged in mind and disposition, and that there was a warm and a kind heart beating under the finery. Moreover, she felt that if the unseemly magnificence could once be thrown aside, the whiskers and mustachios cleared away, and his fine manly person reinstated in the rustic costume in which she had been accustomed to see him,

her brother would *then* appear greatly improved in face and figure, taller, more vigorous, and with an expression of intelligence and frankness delightful to behold. But how to get quit of the finery, and the Frenchman, and the britschka? Or how reconcile her father to iniquities so far surpassing even the smell of musk?

William, on his part, regarded his sister with unqualified admiration. He had left a laughing blooming girl, he found a delicate and lovely young woman, all the more lovely for the tears that mingled with her smiles, true tokens of a most pure affection.

“ And you really are glad to see me, Susy? And my father is well? And here is the old place, looking just as it used to do; house, and ricks, and barnyard, not quite in sight, but one feels that one shall see them at the next turning—the great coppice right opposite, looking thicker and greener than ever! how often we have gone nutting in that coppice!—the tall holly at the gate, with the woodbine climbing up, and twisting its sweet garlands round the very topmost spray like a coronet;—many a

time and often have I climbed the holly to twine the flaunting wreath round your straw-bonnet, Miss Susy! And here, on the other side of the hedge, is the very field where Hector and Harebell ran their famous course, and gave their hare fifty turns before they killed her, without ever letting her get out of the stubble. Those were pleasant days, Susan, after all!"

"Happy days, dear William!"

"And we shall go nutting again, shall we not?"

"Surely, dear brother! Only"—— And Susan suddenly stopped.

"Only what, Miss Susy?"

"Only I don't see how you can possibly go into the copse in this dress. Think how the brambles would prick and tear, and how that chain would catch in the hazel stems! and as to climbing the holly-tree in that fine tight coat, or beating the stubbles for a hare in those delicate thin shoes, why the thing is out of the question. And I really don't believe," continued Susan, finding it easier to go on than to begin, "I really don't believe that either Hector or

Harebell would know you if they saw you so decked out."

William laughed outright.

"I don't mean to go coursing in these shoes, I assure you, Susy. This is an evening dress. I have a shooting-jacket and all thereunto belonging in the britschka, which will not puzzle either Harebell or Hector, because it's just what they have been used to see me wear."

"Put it on, then, I beseech you?" exclaimed Susy; "put it on directly!"

"Why, I am not going coursing this evening."

"No—but my father!—Oh, dear William! if you did but know how he hates finery, and foreigners, and whiskers, and britschkas! Oh, dear William, send off the French gentleman and the outlandish carriage—run into the coppice and put on the shooting-dress!"

"Oh, Susan!" began William; but Susan having once summoned up courage sufficient to put her remonstrances into words, followed up the attack with an earnestness that did not admit a moment's interruption.

“ My father hates finery even more than Harebell or Hector would do. You know his country notions, dear William; and I think that latterly he has hated everything that looks Londonish and new-fangled worse than ever. We are old-fashioned people at Rutherford. There’s your pretty old friend Mary Arnott can’t abide gew-gaws any more than my father.”

“ Mary Arnott! You mean Mrs. Giles. What do I care for her likes and dislikes?” exclaimed William, haughtily.

“ I mean Mary Arnott, and not Mrs. Giles, and you do care for her likes and dislikes a great deal,” replied his sister, with some archness. “ Poor Mary, when the week before that fixed for the wedding arrived, felt that she *could* not marry Master Jacob Giles; so she found an opportunity of speaking to him alone, and told him the truth. I even believe, although I have no warrant for saying so, that she confessed she could not love him because she loved another. Master Giles behaved like a wise man, and told her father that it would be very wrong to force

her inclinations. He behaved kindly as well as wisely, for he endeavoured to reconcile all parties, and put matters in train for the wedding that had hindered his. This at that time Master Arnott would not hear of, and therefore we did not tell you that the marriage which you took for granted had gone off. Till about three months ago, that odious lawsuit was in full action, and Master Arnott as violently set against my father as ever. Then, however, he was taken ill, and, upon his deathbed, he sent for his old friend, begged his pardon, and appointed him guardian to Mary. And there she is at home—for she would not come to meet you—but there she is, hoping to find you just what you were when you went away, and hating Frenchmen, and britschkas, and finery, and the smell of musk, just as if she were my father's daughter in good earnest. And now, dear William, I know what has been passing in your mind, quite as well as if hearts were peep-shows, and one could see to the bottom of them at the rate of a penny a look. I know that you went away

for love of Mary, and flung yourself into the finery of London to try to get rid of the thought of her, and came down with all this nonsense of britschkas, and whiskers, and waistcoats, and rings, just to show her what a beau she had lost in losing you—Did not you, now? Well! don't stand squeezing my hand, but go and meet your French friend, who has got a man, I see, to help to pick up the fallen equipage. Go and get rid of him," quoth Susan.

"How can I?" exclaimed William, in laughing perplexity.

"Give him the britschka!" responded his sister, "and send them off together as fast as may be. That will be a magnificent farewell. And then take your portmanteau into the copse, and change all this trumpery for the shooting-jacket and its belongings; and then come back and let me trim these whiskers as closely as scissors can trim them, and then we'll go to the farm, to gladden the hearts of Harebell, Hector, my dear father, and—somebody else; and it will not be that somebody's fault if ever you go to London again, or get into a

britschka, or put on a chain, or a ring, or write with blue ink upon pink paper, as long as you live. Now go and dismiss the Frenchman," added Susan, laughing, "and we'll walk home together the happiest brother and sister in Christendom."

THE WIDOW'S DOG.

ONE of the most beautiful spots in the north of Hampshire—a part of the country which, from its winding green lanes, with the trees meeting over head-like a cradle, its winding roads between coppices, with wide turfy margents on either side, as if left on purpose for the picturesque and frequent gipsy camp, its abundance of hedgerow timber, and its extensive tracts of woodland, seems as if the fields were just dug out of the forest, as might have happened in the days of William Rufus—one of the loveliest scenes in this lovely county is the Great Pond at Ashley End.

Ashley End is itself a romantic and beautiful village, straggling down a steep hill to a clear

and narrow running stream, which crosses the road in the bottom, crossed in its turn by a picturesque wooden bridge, and then winding with equal abruptness up the opposite acclivity, so that the scattered cottages, separated from each other by long strips of garden ground, the little country inn, and two or three old-fashioned tenements of somewhat higher pretensions, surrounded by their own moss-grown orchards, seemed to be completely shut out from this bustling world, buried in the sloping meadows so deeply green, and the hanging woods so rich in their various tinting, along which the slender wreaths of smoke from the old clustered chimneys went smiling peacefully in the pleasant autumn air. So profound was the tranquillity, that the slender streamlet which gushed along the valley, following its natural windings, and glittering in the noonday sun like a thread of silver, seemed to the unfrequent visitors of that remote hamlet the only trace of life and motion in the picture.

The source of this pretty brook was undoubtedly the Great Pond, although there was no

other road to it than by climbing the steep hill beyond the village, and then turning suddenly to the right, and descending by a deep cart-track, which led between wild banks covered with heath and feathery broom, garlanded with bramble and briar roses, and gay with the purple heath-flower and the delicate harebell,* to a

* One of the pleasantest moments that I have ever known, was that of the introduction of an accomplished young American to the common harebell, upon the very spot which I have attempted to describe. He had never seen that English wild-flower, consecrated by the poetry of our common language, was struck even more than I expected by its delicate beauty, placed it in his button-hole, and repeated with enthusiasm the charming lines of Scott, from the *Lady of the Lake*:—

“ For me,”—she stooped, and, looking round,
Plucked a blue harebell from the ground,—
“ For me, whose memory scarce conveys
An image of more splendid days,
This little flower, that loves the lea,
May well my simple emblem be ;
It drinks heaven’s dew as blithe as rose
That in the King’s own garden grows,
And when I place it in my hair,
Allan, a bard, is bound to swear
He ne’er saw coronet so fair.”

Still greater was the delight with which another

scene even more beautiful and more solitary than the hamlet itself.

It was a small clear lake almost embosomed in trees, across which an embankment, formed for the purpose of a decoy for the wildfowl with which it abounded, led into a wood which covered the opposite hill; an old forest-like wood, where the noble oaks, whose boughs almost dipped into the water, were surrounded by their sylvan ac-

American recognised that blossom of a thousand associations—the flower sacred to Milton and Shakspeare—the English primrose. He bent his knee to the ground in gathering a bunch, with a reverential expression which I shall not easily forget, as if the flower were to him an embodiment of the great poets by whom it has been consecrated to fame; and he also had the good taste not to be ashamed of his own enthusiasm. I have had the pleasure of exporting, this spring, to my friend Miss Sedgwick, (to whose family one of my visitors belongs,) roots and seeds of these wild flowers, of the common violet, the cowslip, and the ivy, another of our indigenous plants which our Transatlantic brethren want, and with which Mr. Theodore Sedgwick was especially delighted. It will be a real distinction to be the introductress of these plants into that *Berkshire* village of New England, where Miss Sedgwick, surrounded by relatives worthy of her in talent and in character, passes her summers.

companiments of birch, and holly, and hawthorn, where the tall trees met over the straggling paths, and waved across the grassy dells and turfy brakes with which it was interspersed. One low-browed cottage stood in a little meadow—it might almost be called a little orchard—just at the bottom of the winding road that led to the Great Pond: the cottage of the widow King.

Independently of its beautiful situation, there was much that was at once picturesque and comfortable about the cottage itself, with its irregularity of outline, its gable ends and jutting-out chimneys, its thatched roof and pent-house windows. A little yard, with a small building which just held an old donkey-chaise and an old donkey, a still older cow, and a few pens for geese and chickens, lay on one side of the house; in front, a flower court, surrounded by a mossy paling; a larger plot for vegetables behind; and, stretching down to the Great Pond on the side opposite the yard, was the greenest of all possible meadows, which, as I have before said, two noble walnut and mulberry-trees, and a

few aged pears and apples, clustered near the dwelling, almost converted into that pleasantest appanage of country life, an orchard.

Notwithstanding, however, the exceeding neatness of the flower-court, and the little garden filled with choice beds of strawberries, and lavender, and old-fashioned flowers, stocks, carnations, roses, pinks; and in spite of the cottage itself being not only almost covered with climbing shrubs, woodbine, jessamine, clematis, and musk-roses, and in one southern nook a magnificent tree-like fuchsia, but the old chimney actually garlanded with delicate creepers, the maurandia, and the lotus spermus, whose pink and purple bells, peeping out from between their elegant foliage, and mingling with the bolder blossoms and darker leaves of the passion-flower, give such a wreathy and airy grace to the humblest building;* in spite of this luxuriance of natural

* I know nothing so pretty as the manner in which creeping plants interwreath themselves one with another. We have at this moment a wall quite covered with honeysuckles, fuchsias, roses, clematis, passion-flowers, myrtles, scobæa, acrima carpis, lotus spermus,

beauty, and of the evident care bestowed upon the cultivation of the beds, and the training of the climbing plants, we yet felt, we hardly could tell why, but yet we instinctively felt, that the moss-grown thatch, the mouldering paling, the hoary apple trees, in a word, the evidences of decay visible around the place, were but types of the fading fortunes of the inmates.

And such was really the case. The widow King had known better days. Her husband

and maurandia Barclayana, in which two long sprays of the last-mentioned climbers have jugged out from the wall, and entwined themselves together, like the handle of an antique basket. The rich profusion of leaves, those of the lotus spermus, comparatively rounded and dim, soft in texture and colour, with a darker patch in the middle, like the leaf of the old gum geranium; those of the maurandia, so bright, and shining, and sharply outlined—the stalks equally graceful in their varied green, and the roseate bells of the one contrasting and harmonising so finely with the rich violet flowers of the other, might really form a study for a painter. I never saw anything more graceful in quaint and cunning art than this bit of simple nature. But nature often takes a fancy to outvie her skilful and ambitious handmaiden, and is always certain to succeed in the competition.

had been the head keeper, her only son head gardener, of the lord of the manor; but both were dead; and she, with an orphan grandchild, a thoughtful boy of eight or nine years old, now gained a scanty subsistence from the produce of their little dairy, their few poultry, their honey, (have I not said that a row of bee-hives held their station on the sunny side of the garden?) and the fruit and flowers which little Tom and the old donkey carried in their season to Belford every market-day.

Besides these their accustomed sources of income, Mrs. King and Tom neglected no means of earning an honest penny. They stripped the downy spikes of the bulrushes to stuff cushions and pillows, and wove the rushes themselves into mats. Poor Tom was as handy as a girl; and in the long winter evenings he would plait the straw hats in which he went to Belford market, and knit the stockings, which, kept rather for show than for use, were just assumed to go to church on Sundays, and then laid aside for the week. So exact was their economy.

The only extravagance in which Mrs. King indulged herself was keeping a pet spaniel, the descendant of a breed for which her husband had been famous, and which was so great a favourite, that it ranked next to Tom in her affections, and next to his grandmother in Tom's. The first time that I ever saw them, this pretty dog had brought her kind mistress into no small trouble.

We had been taking a drive through these beautiful lanes, never more beautiful than when the richly tinted autumnal foliage contrasts with the deep emerald hue of the autumnal herbage, and were admiring the fine effect of the majestic oaks, whose lower branches almost touched the clear water which reflected so brightly the bright blue sky, when Mrs. King, who was well known to my father, advanced to the gate of her little court, and modestly requested to speak with him.

The group in front of the cottage door was one which it was impossible to contemplate without strong interest. The poor widow, in her neat crimped cap, her well-worn mourning

gown, her apron and handkerchief, coarse, indeed, and of cheap material, but delicately clean, her grey hair parted on her brow, and her pale intelligent countenance, stood leaning against the doorway, holding in one thin trembling hand a letter newly opened, and in the other her spectacles, which she had been fain to take off, half hoping that they had played her false, and that the ill-omened epistle would not be found to contain what had so grieved her. Tom, a fine rosy boy, stout and manly for his years, sat on the ground with Chloe in his arms, giving vent to a most unmanly fit of crying; and Chloe, a dog worthy of Edwin Landseer's pencil, a large and beautiful spaniel, of the scarce old English breed, brown and white, with shining wavy hair feathering her thighs and legs, and clustering into curls towards her tail and forehead, and upon the long glossy magnificent ears which gave so much richness to her fine expressive countenance, looked at him wistfully, with eyes that expressed the fullest sympathy in his affliction, and stooped to lick his hand, and nestled her head in his bosom, as if trying,

as far as her caresses had the power, to soothe and comfort him.

“And so, sir,” continued Mrs. King, who had been telling her little story to my father, whilst I had been admiring her pet, “this Mr. Poulton, the tax-gatherer, because I refused to give him our Chloe, whom my boy is so fond of that he shares his meals with her, poor fellow, has laid an information against us for keeping a sporting dog—I don’t know what the proper word is—and has had us surcharged; and the first that ever I have heard of it is by this letter, from which I find that I must pay I don’t know how much money by Saturday next, or else my goods will be seized and sold. And I have but just managed to pay my rent, and where to get a farthing I can’t tell. I dare say he would let us off now if I would but give him Chloe; but that I can’t find in my heart to do. He’s a hard man, and a bad dog-master. I’ve all along been afraid that we must part with Chloe, now that she’s growing up like, because of our living so near the preserves—”

“Oh, grandmother !” interrupted Tom, “poor Chloe !”

“But I can't give her to *him*. Don't cry so, Tom ! I'd sooner have my little goods sold, and lie upon the boards. I should not mind parting with her if she were taken good care of, but I never will give her to him.”

“Is this the first you have heard of the matter ?” inquired my father ; you ought to have had notice in time to appeal.”

“I never heard a word till to-day.”

“Poulton seems to say that he sent a letter, nevertheless, and offers to prove the sending, if need be ; it's not in our division, not even in our county, and I am afraid that in this matter of the surcharge I can do nothing,” observed my father ; “though I have no doubt but it's a rascally trick to come by the dog. She's a pretty creature,” continued he, stooping to pat her, and examining her head and mouth with the air of a connoisseur in canine affairs, “a very fine creature ! How old is she ?”

“Not quite a twelvemonth, sir. She was

pupped on the sixteenth of last October, grandmother's birthday, of all the days in the year," said Tom, somewhat comforted by his visiter's evident sympathy.

"The sixteenth of October! Then Mr. Poulton may bid good-bye to his surcharge; for unless she was six months old on the fifth of April, she cannot be taxed for this year—so his letter is so much waste paper. I'll write this very night to the chairman of the commissioners, and manage the matter for you. And I'll also write to Master Poulton, and let him know that I'll acquaint the board if he gives you any farther trouble. You're sure that you can prove the day she was pupped?" continued his worship, highly delighted. "Very lucky! You'll have nothing to pay for her till next half-year, and then I'm afraid that this fellow Poulton will insist upon her being entered as a sporting dog, which is fourteen shillings. But that's a future concern. As to the surcharge, I'll take care of that. A beautiful creature, is not she, Mary? Very lucky that we happened to drive this way." And with kind adieus to Tom and his

grandmother, who were as grateful as people could be, we departed.

About a week after, Tom and Chloe in their turn appeared at our cottage. All had gone right in the matter of the surcharge. The commissioners had decided in Mrs. King's favour, and Mr. Poulton had been forced to succumb. But his grandmother had considered the danger of offending their good landlord Sir John, by keeping a sporting dog so near his coverts, and also the difficulty of paying the tax; and both she and Tom had made up their minds to offer Chloe to my father. He had admired her, and everybody said that he was as good a dog-master as Mr. Poulton was a bad one; and he came sometimes coursing to Ashley End, and then perhaps he would let them both see poor Chloe; "for grandmother," added Tom, "though she seemed somehow ashamed to confess as much, was at the bottom of her heart pretty nigh as fond of her as he was himself. Indeed, he did not know who could help being fond of Chloe, she had so many pretty ways." And Tom, making manful battle against

the tears that would start into his eyes, almost as full of affection as the eyes of Chloe herself, and hugging his beautiful pet, who seemed upon her part to have a presentiment of the evil that awaited her, sate down as requested in the hall, whilst my father considered his proposition.

Upon the whole, it seemed to us kindest to the parties concerned, the widow King, Tom, and Chloe, to accept the gift. Sir John was a kind man, and a good landlord, but he was also a keen sportsman; and it was quite certain that he would have no great taste for a dog of such high sporting blood close to his best preserves; the keeper also would probably seize hold of such a neighbour as a scapegoat, in case of any deficiency in the number of hares and pheasants; and then their great enemy, Mr. Poulton, might avail himself of some technical deficiency to bring Mrs. King within the clutch of a surcharge. There might not always be an oversight in that Shylock's bond, nor a wise judge, young or old, to detect it if there were. So that, upon due consideration, my father (determined, of course, to make a proper return for

the present) agreed to consider Chloc as his own property; and Tom, having seen her very comfortably installed in clean dry straw in a warm stable, and fed in a manner which gave a satisfactory specimen of her future diet, and being himself regaled with plum-cake and cherry brandy, (a liquor of which he had, he said, heard much talk, and which proved, as my father had augured, exceedingly cheering and consolatory in the moment of affliction,) departed in much better spirits than could have been expected after such a separation. I myself, duly appreciating the merits of Chloe, was a little jealous for my own noble Dash, whom she resembled, with a slight inferiority of size and colouring; much such a resemblance as Viola, I suppose, bore to Sebastian. But upon being reminded of the affinity between the two dogs, (for Dash came originally from the Ashley End kennel, and was, as nearly as we could make out, grand-uncle to Chloe,) and of our singular good fortune, in having two such beautiful spaniels under one roof, my objections were entirely removed.

Under the same roof they did not seem likely

to continue. When sent after to the stable the next morning, Chloe was missing. Everybody declared that the door had not been opened, and Dick, who had her in charge, vowed that the key had never been out of his pocket. But accusations and affirmations were equally useless—the bird was flown. Of course she had returned to Ashley End. And upon being sent for to her old abode, Tom was found preparing to bring her to Aberleigh; and Mrs. King suggested, that, having been accustomed to live with them, she would, perhaps, sooner get accustomed to the kitchen fireside than to a stable, however comfortable.

The suggestion was followed. A mat was placed by the side of the kitchen fire; much pains were taken to coax the shy stranger; (Dick, who loved and understood dogs, devoting himself to the task of making himself agreeable to this gentle and beautiful creature;) and she seemed so far reconciled as to suffer his caresses, to lap a little milk when sure that nobody saw her, and even to bridle with instinctive coquetry, when Dash, head and tail up, ad-

vanced with a sort of stately and conscious courtesy to examine into the claims of the newcomer. For the first evening all seemed promising; but on the next morning, nobody knew how or when, Chloe eloped to her old quarters.

Again she was fetched back; this time to the parlour: and again she ran away. Then she was tied up, and she gnawed the string; chained up, and she slipped the collar; and we began to think, that unless we could find some good home for her at a distance, there was nothing for it but to return her altogether to Mrs. King, when a letter from a friend at Bath gave a new aspect to Chloe's affairs.

The letter was from a dear friend of mine—a young married lady, with an invalid husband, and one lovely little girl, a damsel of some two years old, commonly called “Pretty May.” They wanted a pet dog to live in the parlour, and walk out with mother and daughter—not a cross yelping Blenheim spaniel, (those troublesome little creatures spoil every body's manners who is so unlucky as to possess them, the first

five minutes of every morning call being invariably devoted to silencing the lapdog and apologising to the visiter,)—not a pigmy Blenheim, but a large, noble animal, something, in short, as like as might be to Dash, with whom Mrs. Keating had a personal acquaintance, and for whom, in common with most of his acquaintances, she entertained a very decided partiality: I do not believe that there is a dog in England who has more friends than my Dash. A spaniel was wanted at Bath like my Dash: and what spaniel could be more like Dash than Chloe? A distant home was wanted for Chloe: and what home could open a brighter prospect of canine felicity than to be the pet of Mrs. Keating, and the playmate of Pretty May? It seemed one of those startling coincidences which amuse one by their singular fitness and propriety, and make one believe that there is more in the exploded doctrine of sympathies than can be found in our philosophy.

So, upon the matter being explained to her, thought Mrs. King; and writing duly to announce the arrival of Chloe, she was deposited,

with a quantity of soft hay, in a large hamper, and conveyed into Belford by my father himself, who would entrust to none other the office of delivering her to the coachman, and charging that very civil member of a very civil body of men to have especial care of the pretty creature, who was parted with for no other fault than an excess of affection and fidelity to her first kind protectors.

Nothing could exceed the brilliancy of her reception. Pretty May, the sweet smiling child of a sweet smiling mother, had been kept up a full hour after her usual time to welcome the stranger, and was so charmed with this her first living toy, that it was difficult to get her to bed. She divided her own supper with poor Chloe, hungry after her long journey; rolled with her upon the Turkey carpet, and at last fell asleep with her arms clasped round her new pet's neck, and her bright face, coloured like lilies and roses, flung across her body; Chloe enduring these caresses with a careful, quiet gentleness, which immediately won for her the hearts of the lovely mother, of the fond father, (for to an ac-

complished and right-minded man, in delicate health, what a treasure is a little prattling girl, his only one!) of two grandmothers, of three or four young aunts, and of the whole tribe of nursery attendants. Never was debût so successful, as Chloe's first appearance in Camden Place.

As her new dog had been Pretty May's last thought at night, so was it her first on awakening. He shared her breakfast as he had shared her supper; and immediately after breakfast, mother and daughter, attended by nursery-maid and footman, sallied forth to provide proper luxuries for Chloe's accommodation. First they purchased a sheepskin rug; then a splendid porcelain trough for water, and a porcelain dish to match, for food; then a spaniel basket, duly lined, and stuffed, and curtained—a splendid piece of canine upholstery; then a necklace-like collar with silver bells, which was left to have the address engraved upon the clasp; and then May, finding herself in the vicinity of a hosier and a shoemaker, bethought herself of a want which undoubtedly had not occurred to any

other of her party, and holding up her own pretty little foot, demanded "tilk tocks and boo thoose for Floë."

For two days did Chloe endure the petting and the luxuries. On the third she disappeared. Great was the consternation in Camden Place. Pretty May cried as she had never been known to cry before; and papa, mamma, grandmamas, aunts, nursery and house-maids, fretted and wondered, wondered and fretted, and vented their distress in every variety of exclamation, from the refined language of the drawing-room to the patois of a Somersetshire kitchen. Rewards were offered, and handbills dispersed over the town. She was cried, and she was advertised; and at last, giving up every hope of her recovery, Mrs. Keating wrote to me.

It happened that we received the letter on one of those soft November days, which sometimes intervene between the rough winds of October and the crisp frosts of Christmas, and which, although too dirty under foot to be quite pleasant for walking, are yet, during the few hours that the sun is above the horizon, mild

enough for an open carriage in our shady lanes, strewn as they are at that period with the yellow leaves of the elm, whilst the hedgerows are still rich with the tawny foliage of the oak, and the rich colouring of the hawthorn and the bramble. It was such weather as the Americans generally enjoy at this season, and call by the pretty name of the Indian summer. And we resolved to avail ourselves of the fineness of the day to drive to Ashley End, and inform Mrs. King and Tom (who we felt ought to know) of the loss of Chloe, and our fear, according with Mrs. Keating's, that she had been stolen; adding our persuasion, which was also that of Mrs. Keating, that, fall into whatever hands she might, she was too beautiful and valuable not to ensure good usage.

On the way we were overtaken by the good widow's landlord, returning from hunting, in his red coat and top-boots, who was also bound to Ashley End. As he rode chatting by the side of the carriage, we could not forbear telling him our present errand, and the whole story of poor Chloe. How often, without being particularly

uncharitable in judging of our neighbours, we have the gratification of finding them even better than we had supposed! He blamed us for not having thought well enough of him to put the whole affair into his management from the first, and exclaimed against us for fearing that he would compare the preserves and the pheasant-shooting with such an attachment as had subsisted between his good old tenant and her faithful dog. "By Jove!" cried he, "I would have paid the tax myself rather than they should have been parted. But it's too late to talk of that now, for, of course, the dog is stolen. Eighty miles is too far even for a spaniel to find its way back! Carried by coach, too! I would give twenty pounds willingly to replace her with old Dame King and Master Tom. By the way, we must see what can be done for that boy--he's a fine spanking fellow. We must consult his grandmother. The descendant of two faithful servants has an hereditary claim to all that can be done for him. How could *you* imagine that I should be thinking of those coverts? I that am as great a dog-lover as Dame King her-

self! I have a great mind to be very angry with you."

These words, spoken in the good sportsman's earnest, hearty, joyous, kindly voice, (*that* ought to have given an assurance of his kindly nature, —I have a religious faith in voices,) these words brought us within sight of Ashley End, and there, in front of the cottage, we saw a group which fixed our attention at once: Chloe, her own identical self—poor, dear Chloe, apparently just arrived, dirty, weary, jaded, wet, lying in Tom's arms as he sat on the ground, feeding her with the bacon and cabbage, his own and his grandmother's dinner, all the contents of the platter; and she, too happy to eat, wagging her tail as if she would wag it off; now licking Mrs. King's hands as the good old dame leant over her, the tears streaming from her eyes: now kissing Tom's honest face, who broke into loud laughter for very joy, and, with looks that spoke as plain as ever looks did speak, "Here I am come home again to those whom I love best—to those who best love me!" Poor dear Chloe! Even we

whom she left, sympathised with her fidelity. Poor dear Chloe ! there we found her, and there, I need not, I hope, say, we left her, one of the happiest of living creatures.

THE LOST DAHLIA.

IF to have “had losses” be, as affirmed by Dogberry in one of Shakspeare’s most charming plays, and corroborated by Sir Walter Scott in one of his most charming romances—(those two names do well in juxtaposition, the great Englishman! the great Scotsman!)—If to have “had losses” be a main proof of credit and respectability, then am I one of the most responsible persons in the whole county of Berks. To say nothing of the graver matters which figure in a banker’s book, and make, in these days of pounds, shillings, and pence, so large a part of the domestic tragedy of life—putting wholly aside all the grander transitions of property in house and land, of money on mortgage,

and money in the funds—(and yet I might put in my claim to no trifling amount of ill luck in that way also, if I had a mind to try my hand at a dismal story)—counting for nought all weightier grievances, there is not a lady within twenty miles who can produce so large a list of small losses as my unfortunate self.

From the day when, a tiny damsel of some four years old, I first had a pocket-handkerchief to lose, down to this very night—I will not say how many years after—when, as I have just discovered, I have most certainly lost from my pocket the new cambric kerchief which I deposited therein a little before dinner, scarcely a week has passed without some part of my goods and chattels being returned missing. Gloves, muffs, parasols, reticules, have each of them a provoking knack of falling from my hands; boas glide from my neck, rings slip from my fingers, the bow has vanished from my cap, the veil from my bonnet, the sandal from my foot, the brooch from my collar, and the collar from my brooch. The trinket which I liked best, a jewelled pin, the first gift of a dear friend,

(luckily the friendship is not necessarily appended to the token,) dropped from my shawl in the midst of the high road; and of shawls themselves, there is no end to the loss. The two prettiest that ever I had in my life, one a splendid specimen of Glasgow manufacture—a scarlet hardly to be distinguished from Cashmere—the other a lighter and cheaper fabric, white in the centre, with a delicate sprig, and a border harmoniously compounded of the deepest blue, the brightest orange, and the richest brown, disappeared in two successive summers and winters, in the very bloom of their novelty, from the folds of the phaeton, in which they had been deposited for safety—fairly blown overboard! If I left things about, they were lost. If I put them away, they were lost. They were lost in the drawers—they were lost out. And if for a miracle I had them safe under lock and key, why, then, I lost my keys! I was certainly the most unlucky person under the sun. If there was nothing else to lose, I was fain to lose myself—I mean my way; bewildered in these Aberleigh lanes of ours, or in the woodland recesses of the

Penge, as if haunted by that fairy, Robin Goodfellow, who led Hermia and Helena such a dance in the Midsummer Night's Dream. Alas! that there should be no Fairies now-a-days, or rather no true believers in Fairies, to help us to bear the burthen of our own mortal carelessness.

It was not quite all carelessness, though! Some ill luck did mingle with a great deal of mismanagement, as the "one poor happ'orth of bread" with the huge gallon of sack in the bill of which Poin picked Falstaff's pocket when he was asleep behind the arras. Things belonging to me, or things that I cared for, did contrive to get lost, without my having any hand in the matter. For instance, if out of the variety of "talking birds," starlings, jackdaws, and magpies, which my father delights to entertain, any one particularly diverting or accomplished, more than usually coaxing and mischievous, happened to attract my attention, and to pay me the compliment of following at my heels, or perching upon my shoulder, the gentleman was sure to hop off. My favourite mare, Pearl, the pretty docile creature which draws my little phaeton, has such

a talent for leaping, that she is no sooner turned out in either of our meadows, than she disappears. And Dash himself, paragon of spaniels, pet of pets, beauty of beauties, has only one shade of imperfection—would be thoroughly faultless, if it were not for a slight tendency to run away. He is regularly lost four or five times every winter, and has been oftener cried through the streets of Belford, and advertised in the county newspapers, than comports with a dog of his dignity. Now, these mischances clearly belong to that class of accidents commonly called casualties, and are quite unconnected with any infirmity of temperament on my part. I cannot help Pearl's proficiency in jumping, nor Dash's propensity to wander through the country; neither had I any hand in the loss which has given its title to this paper, and which, after so much previous dallying, I am at length about to narrate.

The autumn before last, that is to say, above a year ago, the boast and glory of my little garden was a dahlia called the Phœbus. How it came there, nobody very distinctly knew, nor where it

came from, nor how we came by it, nor how it came by its own most appropriate name. Neither the lad who tends our flowers, nor my father, the person chiefly concerned in procuring them, nor I myself, who more even than my father or John take delight and pride in their beauty, could recollect who gave us this most splendid plant, or who first instructed us as to the style and title by which it was known. Certes never was blossom fittier named. Regular as the sun's face in an almanack, it had a tint of golden scarlet, of ruddy yellow, which realised Shakspeare's gorgeous expression of "flame-coloured." The sky at sunset sometimes puts on such a hue, or a fire at Christmas when it burns red as well as bright. The blossom was dazzling to look upon. It seemed as if there were light in the leaves, like that coloured-lamp of a flower, the Oriental Poppy. Phœbus was not too glorious a name for that dahlia. The Golden-haired Apollo might be proud of such an emblem. It was worthy of the god of day; a very Phœnix of floral beauty.

Every dahlia fancier who came into our gar-

den or who had an opportunity of seeing a bloom elsewhere; and, sooth to say, we were rather ostentatious in our display; John put it into stands, and jars, and baskets, and dishes; Dick stuck it into Dash's collar, his own button-hole, and Pearl's bridle; my father presented it to such lady visiters as he delighted to honour; and I, who have the habit of dangling a flower, generally a sweet one, caught myself more than once rejecting the spicy clove and the starry jessamine, the blossomed myrtle and the tuberose, my old fragrant favourites, for this scentless (but triumphant) beauty; everybody who beheld the Phœbus begged for a plant or a cutting; and we, generous in our ostentation, willing to redeem the vice by the virtue, promised as many plants and cuttings as we could reasonably imagine the root might be made to produce*—perhaps rather more; and half the dahlia growers round rejoiced over the glories of the gor-

* It is wonderful how many plants may, by dint of forcing, and cutting and forcing again, be extracted from one root. But the experiment is not always safe. Nature sometimes avenges herself for the encroach-

geous flower, and speculated, as the wont is now, upon seedling after seedling to the twentieth generation.

Alas for the vanity of human expectations! February came, the twenty-second of February, the very St. Valentine of dahlias, when the roots which have been buried in the ground during the winter are disinterred, and placed in a hotbed to put forth their first shoots previous to the grand operations of potting and dividing them. Of course the first object of search in the choicest corner of the nicely labelled hoard, was the Phœbus: but no Phœbus was forthcoming; root and label had vanished bodily! There was, to be sure, a dahlia without a label, which we would gladly have transformed into the missing treasure; but as we speedily discovered a label without a dahlia, it was but too obvious that they belonged to each other. Until last year we might have had plenty of the consolation

ments of art, by weakening the progeny. The Napoleon Dahlia, for instance, the finest of last year's seedlings, being over-propagated, this season has hardly produced one perfect bloom, even in the hands of the most skilful cultivators.

which results from such divorces of the name from the thing; for our labels, sometimes written upon parchment, sometimes upon leather, sometimes upon wood, as each material happened to be recommended by gardening authorities, and fastened on with packthread, or whip-cord, or silk twist, had generally parted company from the roots, and frequently become utterly illegible, producing a state of confusion which most undoubtedly we never expected to regret: but this year we had followed the one perfect system of labels of unglazed china, highly varnished after writing on them, and fastened on by wire; and it had answered so completely, that one, and one only, had broken from its moorings. No hope could be gathered from that quarter. The Phœbus was gone. So much was clear; and our loss being fully ascertained, we all began, as the custom is, to divert our grief and exercise our ingenuity by different guesses as to the fate of the vanished treasure.

My father, although certain that he had written the label, and wired the root, had his misgivings about the place in which it had been

deposited, and half suspected that it had slipt in amongst a basket which we had sent as a present to Ireland; I myself, judging from a similar accident which had once happened to a choice hyacinth bulb, partly thought that one or other of us might have put it for care and safety in some such very snug corner, that it would be six months or more before it turned up; John, impressed with a high notion of the money-value of the property, and estimating it something as a keeper of the regalia might estimate the most precious of the crown jewels, boldly affirmed that it was stolen; and Dick, who had just had a *démêlé* with the cook, upon the score of her refusal to dress a beef-steak for a sick greyhound, asserted, between jest and earnest, that that hard-hearted official had either ignorantly or maliciously boiled the root for a Jerusalem artichoke, and that we, who stood lamenting over our regretted Phœbus, had actually eaten it, dished up with white sauce. John turned pale at the thought. The beautiful story of the Falcon, in Boccaccio, which the young knight killed to regale his mistress, or

the still more tragical history of Couci, who minced his rival's heart, and served it up to his wife, could not have affected him more deeply. We grieved over our lost dahlia, as if it had been a thing of life.

Grieving, however, would not repair our loss; and we determined, as the only chance of becoming again possessed of this beautiful flower, to visit, as soon as the dahlia season began, all the celebrated collections in the neighbourhood, especially all those from which there was any chance of our having procured the root which had so mysteriously vanished.

Early in September, I set forth on my voyage of discovery—my voyages, I ought to say; for every day I and my pony-phaeton made our way to whatever garden within our reach bore a sufficiently high character to be suspected of harbouring the good Dahlia Phœbus.

Monday we called at Lady A.'s; Tuesday at General B.'s; Wednesday at Sir John C.'s; Thursday at Mrs. D.'s; Friday at Lord E.'s; and Saturday at Mr. F.'s. We might as well

have staid at home; not a Phœbus had they, or anything like one.

We then visited the nurseries, from Brown's, at Slough, a princely establishment, worthy of its regal neighbourhood, to the pretty rural gardens at South Warnborough, not forgetting our own most intelligent and obliging nurseryman, Mr. Sutton of Reading—(Belford Regis, I mean)—whose collection of flowers of all sorts is amongst the most choice and select that I have ever known. Hundreds of magnificent blossoms did we see in our progress, but not the blossom we wanted.

There was no lack, heaven knows, of dahlias of the desired colour. Besides a score of "Orange Perfections," bearing the names of their respective growers, we were introduced to four Princes of Orange, three Kings of Holland, two Williams the Third, and one Lord Roden.*

* The nomenclature of dahlias is a curious sign of the times. It rivals in oddity that of the Racing Calendar. Next to the peerage, Shakspeare and Homer seem to be the chief sources whence they have derived

We were even shown a bloom called the Phœbus, about as like to our Phœbus “as I to Hercules.” But the true Phœbus, “the real Simon Pure,” was as far to seek as ever.

Learnedly did I descant with the learned in dahlias over the merits of my lost beauty. “It was a cupped flower, Mr. Sutton,” quoth I, to my agreeable and sympathising listener; (gardeners *are* a most cultivated and gentlemanly

their appellations. Thus we have Hectors and Diomedes of all colours, a very black Othello, and a very fair Desdemona. One beautiful blossom, which seems like a white ground thickly rouged with carmine, is called “the Honourable Mrs. Harris;” and it is droll to observe how punctiliously the working gardeners retain the dignified prefix in speaking of the flower. I heard the other day of a *serious* dahlia grower who had called his seedlings after his favourite preachers, so that we shall have the Reverend Edward So-and-so, and the Reverend John Such-an-one, fraternising with the profane Ariels and Imogenes, the Giaours and Medoras of the old catalogue. So much the better. Floriculture is amongst the most innocent and humanising of all pleasures, and everything which tends to diffuse such pursuits amongst those who have too few amusements, is a point gained for happiness and for virtue.

race;) “ a cupped dahlia, of the genuine metropolitan shape; large as the Criterion, regular as the Springfield Rival, perfect as Dodd’s Mary, with a long bloom stalk like those good old flowers, the Countess of Liverpool and the Widnall’s Perfection. And such a free blower, and so true! I am quite sure that there is not so good a dahlia this year. I prefer it to ‘ Corinne,’ over and over.” And Mr. Sutton assented and condoled, and I was as near to being comforted as anybody could be, who had lost such a flower as the Phœbus.

After so many vain researches, most persons would have abandoned the pursuit in despair. But despair is not in my nature. I have a comfortable share of the quality which the possessor is wont to call perseverance—whilst the uncivil world is apt to designate it by the name of obstinacy—and do not easily give in. Then the chase, however fruitless, led, like other chases, into beautiful scenery, and formed an excuse for my visiting or revisiting many of the prettiest places in the county.

Two of the most remarkable spots in the

neighbourhood are, as it happens, famous for their collections of dahlias—Strathfield-saye, the seat of the Duke of Wellington, and the ruins of Reading Abbey.

Nothing can well be prettier than the drive to Strathfield-saye, passing, as we do, through a great part of Heckfield Heath,* a tract of wild woodland, a forest, or rather a chase, full of fine sylvan beauty—thickets of fern and holly, and hawthorn and birch, surmounted by oaks and beeches, and interspersed with lawn glades and deep pools, letting light into the picture. Nothing can be prettier than the approach to the duke's lodge. And the entrance to the demesne, through a deep dell dark with magnificent firs, from which we emerge into a finely wooded park of the richest verdure, is also striking and impressive. But the distinctive

* It may be interesting to the lovers of literature to hear that my accomplished friend Mrs. Trollope was "raised," as her friends the Americans would say, upon this spot. Her father, the Rev. William Milton, himself a very clever man, and an able mechanic and engineer, held the living of Heckfield for many years.

feature of the place (for the mansion, merely a comfortable and convenient nobleman's house, hardly responds to the fame of its owner) is the grand avenue of noble elms, three quarters of a mile long, which leads to the front door. It is difficult to imagine anything which more completely realises the poetical fancy, that the pillars and arches of a Gothic cathedral were borrowed from the interlacing of the branches of trees planted at stated intervals, than this avenue, in which Nature has so completely succeeded in outrivalling her handmaiden Art, that not a single trunk, hardly even a bough or a twig, appears to mar the grand regularity of the design as a piece of perspective. No cathedral aisle was ever more perfect; and the effect, under every variety of aspect, the magical light and shadow of the cold white moonshine, the cool green light of a cloudy day, and the glancing sunbeams which pierce through the leafy umbrage in the bright summer noon, are such as no words can convey. Separately considered, each tree (and the north of Hampshire is celebrated for the size and shape of its elms) is a

model of stately growth, and they are now just at perfection, probably about a hundred and thirty years old. There is scarcely perhaps in the kingdom such another avenue.

On one side of this noble approach is the garden, where, under the care of the skilful and excellent gardener, Mr. Cooper, so many magnificent dahlias are raised, but where, alas! the Phœbus was not; and between that and the mansion is the sunny, shady paddock, with its rich pasture and its roomy stable, where, for so many years, Copenhagen, the charger who carried the Duke at Waterloo, formed so great an object of attraction to the visitors of Strathfield-saye.* Then came the house itself, and then I returned home.

* Copenhagen—(I had the honour of naming one of Mr. Cooper's dahlias after him—a sort of *bay* dahlia, if I may be permitted the expression)—Copenhagen was a most interesting horse. He died last year at the age of twenty-seven. He was therefore in his prime on the day of Waterloo, when the duke (then and still a man of iron) rode him for seventeen hours and a half, without dismounting. When his Grace got off, he patted him, and the horse kicked, to the great delight of his brave rider, as it proved that he

Well! this was one beautiful and fruitless drive. The ruins of Reading Abbey formed another as fruitless, and still more beautiful.

was not beaten by that tremendous day's work. After his return, this paddock was assigned to him, in which he passed the rest of his life in the most perfect comfort that can be imagined; fed twice a-day, (latterly upon oats broken for him,) with a comfortable stable to retire to, and a rich pasture in which to range. The late amiable duchess used regularly to feed him with bread, and this kindness had given him the habit, (especially after her death,) of approaching every lady with the most confiding familiarity. He had been a fine animal, of middle size and a chestnut colour, but latterly he exhibited an interesting specimen of natural decay, in a state as nearly that of nature as can well be found in a civilised country. He had lost an eye from age, and had become lean and feeble, and, in the manner in which he approached even a casual visiter, there was something of the demand of sympathy, the appeal to human kindness, which one has so often observed from a very old dog towards his master. Poor Copenhagen, who, when alive, furnished so many reliques from his mane and tail to enthusiastic young ladies, who had his hair set in brooches and rings, was, after being interred with military honours, dug up by some miscreant, (never, I believe, discovered,) and one of his hoofs cut off, it is to be presumed, for a memorial, although one that would hardly go in the compass of a ring. A very fine

Whether in the "palmy state" of the faith of Rome, the pillared aisles of the Abbey church might have vied in grandeur with the avenue at Strathfield-saye, I can hardly say ; but certainly, as they stand, the venerable arched gateway, the rock-like masses of wall, the crumbling cloisters, and the exquisite finish of the surbases of the columns and other fragments, fresh as if chiselled yesterday, which are re-appearing in the excavations now making, there is an interest which leaves the grandeur of life, palaces and their pageantry, parks and their adornments, all grandeur except the indestructible grandeur of nature, at an immeasurable distance. The place was a history. Centuries passed before us as we thought of the magnificent monastery, the third in size and splendour in England, with its area of thirty acres between the walls—and gazed upon it now !

And yet, even now, how beautiful ! Treas of

portrait of Copenhagen has been executed by my young friend Edmund Havell, a youth of seventeen, whose genius as an animal painter, will certainly place him second only to Landseer.

every growth mingling with those grey ruins, creepers wreathing their fantastic garlands around the mouldering arches, gorgeous flowers flourishing in the midst of that decay! I almost forgot my search for the dear Phœbus, as I rambled with my friend Mr. Malone, the gardener, a man who would in any station be remarkable for acuteness and acquirement, amongst the august remains of the venerable abbey, with the history of which he was as conversant as with his own immediate profession. There was no speaking of smaller objects in the presence of the mighty past!*

Gradually chilled by so much unsuccess, the ardour of my pursuit began to abate. I began to admit the merits of other dahlias of divers colours, and actually caught myself committing the inconstancy of considering which of the four Princes of Orange I should bespeak for next year. Time, in short, was beginning to play his part as the great comforter of human afflictions, and the poor Phœbus seemed as likely to be forgotten as a last year's bonnet, or a last

* Vide. note at the end of the volume

week's newspaper—when, happening to walk with my father to look at a field of his, a pretty bit of upland pasture about a mile off, I was struck, in one corner where the manure for dressing had been deposited, and a heap of earth and dung still remained, to be spread, I suppose, next spring, with some tall plant surmounted with bright flowers. Could it be?—was it possible?—did my eyes play me false?—No; there it was, upon a dunghill—the object of all my researches and lamentations, the identical Phœbus! the lost dahlia!

HONOR O'CALLAGHAN.

TIMES are altered since Gray spoke of the young Etonians as a set of dirty boys playing at cricket. There are no such things as boys to be met with now, either at Eton or elsewhere; they are all men from ten years old upwards. Dirt also hath vanished bodily, to be replaced by finery. An aristocratic spirit, an aristocracy not of rank but of money, possesses the place, and an enlightened young gentleman of my acquaintance, who when somewhere about the ripe age of eleven, conjured his mother "*not* to come to see him until she had got her new carriage, lest he should be quizzed by the rest of the men," was perhaps no unfair representative of the mass of his schoolfellows. There are of course

exceptions to the rule. The sons of the old nobility, too much accustomed to splendour in its grander forms, and too sure of their own station to care about such matters, and the few finer spirits, whose ambition even in boyhood soars to far higher and holier aims, are, generally speaking, alike exempt from these vulgar cravings after petty distinctions. And for the rest of the small people, why "winter and rough weather," and that most excellent schoolmaster, the world, will not fail, sooner or later, to bring them to wiser thoughts.

In the meanwhile, as according to our homely proverb, "for every gander there's a goose," so there are not wanting in London and its environs "establishments," (the good old name of boarding-school being altogether done away with,) where young ladies are trained up in a love of fashion and finery, and a reverence for the outward symbols of wealth, which cannot fail to render them worthy compeers of the young gentlemen their contemporaries. I have known a little girl, (fit mate for the above-mentioned amateur of new carriages,) who com-

plained that *her* mamma called upon her, attended only by one footman; and it is certain, that the position of a new-comer in one of these houses of education will not fail to be materially influenced by such considerations as the situation of her father's town residence, or the name of her mother's milliner. At so early a period does the exclusiveness which more or less pervades the whole current of English society make its appearance amongst our female youth.

Even in the comparatively rational and old-fashioned seminary in which I was brought up, we were not quite free from these vanities. We too had our high castes and our low castes, and (alas! for her and for ourselves!) we counted among our number one who in her loneliness and desolation might almost be called a Pariah—or if that be too strong an illustration, who was at least, in more senses than one, the Cinderella of the school.

Honor O'Callaghan was, as her name imports, an Irish girl. She had been placed under the care of Mrs. Sherwood before she was five years old, her father being designated, in an

introductory letter which he brought in his hand, as a barrister from Dublin, of ancient family, of considerable ability, and the very highest honour. The friend, however, who had given him this excellent character, had, unfortunately, died a very short time after poor Honor's arrival; and of Mr. O'Callaghan nothing had ever been heard after the first half-year, when he sent the amount of the bill in a draft, which, when due, proved to be dishonoured. The worst part of this communication, however unsatisfactory in its nature, was, that it was final. All inquiries, whether in Dublin or elsewhere, proved unavailing; Mr. O'Callaghan had disappeared; and our unlucky *gouvernante* found herself saddled with the board, clothing, and education, the present care, and future destiny, of a little girl, for whom she felt about as much affection as was felt by the overseers of Aberleigh towards their involuntary protégé, Jesse Cliffe. Nay, in saying this, I am probably giving our worthy governess credit for somewhat milder feelings upon this subject than she actually entertained; the overseers in question, accustomed to such

circumstances, harbouring no stronger sentiment than a cold, passive indifference towards the parish boy, whilst she, good sort of woman as in general she was, did certainly upon this occasion cherish something very like an active aversion to the little intruder.

The fact is, that Mrs. Sherwood, who had been much captivated by Mr. O'Callaghan's showy, off-hand manner, his civilities, and his flatteries, felt, for the first time in her life, that she had been taken in; and being a peculiarly prudent, cautious personage, of the slow, sluggish, stagnant temperament, which those who possess it are apt to account a virtue, and to hold in scorn their more excitable and impressible neighbours, found herself touched in the very point of honour, piqued, aggrieved, mortified; and denouncing the father as the greatest deceiver that ever trod the earth, could not help transferring some part of her hatred to the innocent child. She was really a good sort of woman, as I have said before, and every now and then her conscience twitched her, and she struggled hard to seem kind and to be so: but it would not do.

There the feeling was, and the more she struggled against it, the stronger, I verily believe, it became. Trying to conquer a deep-rooted aversion, is something like trampling upon camomile : the harder you tread it down the more it flourishes.

Under these evil auspices, the poor little Irish girl grew up amongst us. Not ill-used certainly, for she was fed and taught as we were ; and some forty shillings a year more expended upon the trifles, gloves, and shoes, and ribbons, which make the difference between nicety and shabbiness in female dress, would have brought her apparel upon an equality with ours. Ill-used she was not : to be sure, teachers, and masters seemed to consider it a duty to reprimand her for such faults as would have passed unnoticed in another ; and if there were any noise amongst us, she, by far the quietest and most silent person in the house, was, as a matter of course, accused of making it. Still she was not what would be commonly called ill-treated ; although her young heart was withered and blighted, and her spirit crushed and broken by

the chilling indifference, or the harsh unkindness which surrounded her on every side.

Nothing, indeed, could come in stronger contrast than the position of the young Irish girl, and that of her English companions. A stranger, almost a foreigner amongst us, with no home but that great school-room; no comforts, no indulgences, no knick-knacks, no money, nothing but the sheer, bare, naked necessities of a school-girl's life; no dear family to think of and to go to; no fond father to come to see her; no brothers and sisters; no kindred; no friends. It was a loneliness, a desolation, which, especially at breaking-up times, when all her schoolfellows went joyfully away each to her happy home, and she was left the solitary and neglected inhabitant of the deserted mansion, must have pressed upon her very heart. The heaviest tasks of the half year must have been pleasure and enjoyment compared with the dreariness of those lonesome holidays.

And yet she was almost as lonely when we were all assembled. Childhood is, for the most part, generous and sympathising; and there

were many amongst us who, interested by her deserted situation, would have been happy to have been her friends. But Honor was one of those flowers which will only open in the bright sunshine. Never did marigold under a cloudy sky shut up her heart more closely than Honor O'Callaghan. In a word, Honor had really one of the many faults ascribed to her by Mrs. Sherwood, and her teachers and masters—that fault so natural and so pardonable in adversity—she was proud.

National and family pride blended with the personal feeling. Young as she was when she left Ireland, she had caught from the old nurse who had had the care of her infancy, rude legends of the ancient greatness of her country, and of the regal grandeur of the O'Connors, her maternal ancestors; and over such dim traces of Cathleen's legends as floated in her memory, fragments wild, shadowy, and indistinct, as the recollections of a dream, did the poor Irish girl love to brood. Visions of long-past splendour possessed her wholly, and the half-unconscious

reveries in which she had the habit of indulging, gave a tinge of romance and enthusiasm to her character, as peculiar as her story.

Everything connected with her country had for her an indescribable charm. It was wonderful how, with the apparently scanty means of acquiring knowledge which the common school histories afforded, together with here and there a stray book borrowed for her by her young companions from their home libraries, and questions answered from the same source, she had contrived to collect her abundant and accurate information, as to its early annals and present position. Her antiquarian lore was perhaps a little tinged, as such antiquarianism is apt to be, by the colouring of a warm imagination; but still it was a remarkable exemplification of the power of an ardent mind to ascertain and combine facts upon a favourite subject under apparently insuperable difficulties. Unless in pursuing her historical inquiries, she did not often speak upon the subject. Her enthusiasm was too deep and too concentrated for words. But she was Irish

to the heart's core, and had even retained, one can hardly tell how, the slight accent which in a sweet-toned female voice is so pretty.

In her appearance, also, there were many of the characteristics of her countrywomen. The roundness of form and clearness of complexion, the result of good nurture and pure blood which are often found in those who have been nursed in an Irish cabin, the abundant wavy hair and the deep-set grey eye. The face, in spite of some irregularity of feature, would have been pretty, decidedly pretty, if the owner had been happy; but the expression was too abstracted, too thoughtful, too melancholy for childhood or even for youth. She was like a rose shut up in a room, whose pale blossoms have hardly felt the touch of the glorious sunshine or the blessed air. A daisy of the field, a common, simple, cheerful looking daisy, would be pleasanter to gaze upon than the blighted queen of flowers.

Her figure was, however, decidedly beautiful. Not merely tall, but pliant, elastic, and graceful in no ordinary degree. She was not generally remarkable for accomplishment. How

could she, in the total absence of the most powerful, as well as the most amiable motives to exertion? She had no one to please; no one to watch her progress, to rejoice in her success, to lament her failure. In many branches of education she had not advanced beyond mediocrity, but her dancing was perfection; or rather it would have been so, if to her other graces she had added the charm of gaiety. But that want, as our French dancing-master used to observe, was so universal in this country, that the wonder would have been to see any young lady, whose face in a cotillion (for it was before the days of quadrilles) did not look as if she was following a funeral.

Such at thirteen I found Honor O'Callaghan, when I, a damsel some three years younger, was first placed at Mrs. Sherwood's; such five years afterwards I left her, when I quitted the school.

Calling there the following spring, accompanied by my good godfather, we again saw Honor silent and pensive as ever. The old gentleman was much struck with her figure and her melan-

choly. "Fine girl that!" observed he to me; "looks as if she was in love though," added he, putting his finger to his nose with a knowing nod, as was usual with him upon occasions of that kind. I, for my part, in whom a passion for literature was just beginning to develop itself, had a theory of my own upon the subject, and regarded her with unwonted respect in consequence. Her abstraction appeared to me exactly that of an author when contemplating some great work, and I had no doubt but she would turn out a poetess. Both conjectures were characteristic, and both, as it happened, wrong.

Upon my next visit to London, I found that a great change had happened in Honor's destiny. Her father, whom she had been fond of investing with the dignity of a rebel, but who had, according to Mrs. Sherwood's more reasonable suspicion, been a reckless, extravagant, thoughtless person, whose follies had been visited upon himself and his family, with the evil consequences of crimes, had died in America; and his sister, the richly-jointured widow of a baronet,

of old Milesian blood, who during his life had been inexorable to his entreaties to befriend the poor girl, left as it were in pledge at a London boarding-school, had relented upon hearing of his death, had come to England, settled all pecuniary matters to the full satisfaction of the astonished and delighted governess, and finally carried Honor back with her to Dublin.

From this time we lost sight altogether of our old companion. With her schoolfellows she had never formed even the common school intimacies, and to Mrs. Sherwood and her functionaries, she owed no obligation except that of money, which was now discharged. The only debt of gratitude which she had ever acknowledged, was to the old French teacher, who, although she never got nearer the pronunciation or the orthography of her name than Mademoiselle l'Ocalle, had yet, in the overflowing benevolence of her temper, taken such notice of the deserted child, as amidst the general neglect might pass for kindness. But she had returned to France. For no one else did Honor profess the slightest interest. Accord-

ingly, she left the house where she had passed nearly all her life, without expressing any desire to hear again of its inmates, and never wrote a line to any of them.

We did hear of her, however, occasionally. Rumours reached us, vague and distant, and more conflicting even than distant rumours are wont to be. She was distinguished at the vice-regal court, a beauty and a wit; she was married to a nobleman of the highest rank; she was a nun of the order of Mercy; she was dead.

And as years glided on, as the old school passed into other hands, and the band of youthful companions became more and more dispersed, one of the latter opinions began to gain ground among us, when two or three chanced to meet, and to talk of old schoolfellows. If she had been alive and in the great world, surely some of us should have heard of her. Her having been a Catholic, rendered her taking the veil not improbable; and to a person of her enthusiastic temper, the duties of the sisters of Mercy would have peculiar charms.

As one of that most useful and most benevo-

lent order, or as actually dead, we were therefore content to consider her, until, in the lapse of years and the changes of destiny, we had ceased to think of her at all.

The second of this present month of May was a busy and a noisy day in my garden. All the world knows what a spring this has been. The famous black spring commemorated by Gilbert White can hardly have been more thoroughly ungenial, more fatal to man or beast, to leaf and flower, than this most miserable season, this winter of long days, when the sun shines as if in mockery, giving little more heat than his cold sister the moon, and the bitter north-east produces at one and the same moment the incongruous annoyances of biting cold and suffocating dust. Never was such a season. The swallows, nightingales, and cuckoos were a fortnight after their usual time. I wonder what they thought of it, pretty creatures, and how they made up their minds to come at all! —and the sloe blossom, the black thorn winter as the common people call it, which generally makes its appearance early in March along with the first violets, did not whiten the hedges this

year until full two months later.* In short, everybody knows that this has been a most villainous season, and deserves all the ill that can possibly be said of it. But the second of May held forth a promise which, according to a very usual trick of English weather, it has not kept; and was so mild and smiling and gracious, that, without being quite so foolish as to indulge in any romantic and visionary expectation of ever seeing summer again, we were yet silly enough to be cheered by the thought that spring was coming at last in good earnest.

In a word, it was that pleasant rarity a fine day; and it was also a day of considerable stir,

* It is extraordinary how some flowers seem to obey the season, whilst others are influenced by the weather. The hawthorn, certainly nearly akin to the sloe blossom, is this year rather forwarder, if anything, than in common years; and the fritillary, always a May flower, is painting the water meadows at this moment in company with "the blackthorn winter;" or rather is nearly over, whilst its cousin german, the tulip, is scarcely showing for bloom in the warmest exposures and most sheltered borders of the garden.

as I shall attempt to describe hereafter, in my small territories.

In the street too, and in the house, there was as much noise and bustle as one would well desire to hear in our village.

The first of May is Belford Great Fair, where horses and cows are sold, and men meet gravely to transact grave business; and the second of May is Belford Little Fair, where boys and girls of all ages, women and children of all ranks, flock into the town, to buy ribbons and dolls and balls and gingerbread, to eat cakes and suck oranges, to stare at the shows, and gaze at the wild beasts, and to follow merrily the merry business called pleasure.

Carts and carriages, horsepeople and foot-people, were flocking to the fair; unsold cows and horses, with their weary drivers, and labouring men who, having made a night as well as a day of it, began to think it time to find their way home, were coming from it; Punch was being exhibited at one end of the street, a barrel-organ, surmounted by a most accomplished monkey,

was playing at the other; a half tipsy horse-dealer was galloping up and down the road, showing off an unbroken forest pony, who threatened every moment to throw him and break his neck; a hawkers was walking up the street crying Greenacre's last dying speech, who was hanged that morning at Newgate, and as all the world knows, made none; and the highway in front of our house was well nigh blocked up by three or four carriages waiting for different sets of visiters, and by a gang of gipsies who stood clustered round the gate, waiting with great anxiety the issue of an investigation going on in the hall, where one of their gang was under examination upon a question of stealing a goose. Witnesses, constables, and other officials were loitering in the court, and dogs were barking, women chattering, boys blowing horns, and babies squalling through all. It was as pretty a scene of crowd and din and bustle as one shall see in a summer's day. The fair itself was calm and quiet in comparison; the complication of discordant sounds in Hogarth's Enraged Musician was nothing to it.

Within my garden the genius of noise was equally triumphant. An ingenious device, contrived and executed by a most kind and ingenious friend, for the purpose of sheltering the pyramid of geraniums in front of my greenhouse,—consisting of a wooden roof, drawn by pullies up and down a high, strong post, something like the mast of a ship,* had given way; and another most kind friend had arrived with the requisite machinery, blocks and ropes, and tackle of all sorts, to replace it upon an improved construction. With him came a tall blacksmith, a short carpenter, and a stout collar-maker, with hammers, nails, chisels, and tools of all sorts, enough to build a house; ladders of all heights and sizes, two or

* This description does not sound prettily, but the real effect is exceedingly graceful: the appearance of the dark canopy suspended over the pile of bright flowers, at a considerable height, has something about it not merely picturesque but oriental; and that a gentleman's contrivance should succeed at all points, as if he had been a real carpenter, instead of an earl's son and a captain in the navy, is a fact quite unparalleled in the annals of inventions.

three gaping apprentices, who stood about in the way, John willing to lend his aid in behalf of his flowers, and master Dick with his hands in his pockets looking on. The short carpenter perched himself upon one ladder, the tall blacksmith on another; my good friend, Mr. Lawson, mounted to the mast head; and such a clatter ensued of hammers and voices—(for it was exactly one of those fancy jobs where every one feels privileged to advise and find fault)—such clashing of opinions and conceptions and suggestions as would go to the building a county town.

Whilst this was going forward in middle air, I and my company were doing our best to furnish forth the chorus below. It so happened that two sets of my visiters were scientific botanists, the one party holding the Linnæan system, the others disciples of Jussieu; and the garden being a most natural place for such a discussion, a war of hard words ensued, which would have done honour to the Tower of Babel. “Tetradynamia,” exclaimed one set; “Monocotyledones,” thundered the other; whilst a third friend, a skilful florist, but no botanist, unconsciously

out-long-worded both of them, by telling me that the name of a new annual was "Leptosiphon androsaceus."

Never was such a confusion of noises ! The house door opened, and my father's strong clear voice was heard in tones of warning. "Woman, how can you swear to this goose?" Whilst the respondent squeaked out in something between a scream and a cry, "Please your worship, the poor bird having a-laid all his eggs, we had marked un, and so—" What farther she would have said being drowned in a prodigious clatter occasioned by the downfall of the ladder that supported the tall blacksmith, which, striking against that whereon was placed the short carpenter, overset that climbing machine also, and the clamor incident to such a calamity overpowered all minor noises.

In the meanwhile I became aware that a fourth party of visiters had entered the garden, my excellent neighbour, Miss Mortimer, and three other ladies, whom she introduced as Mrs. and the Misses Dobbs; and the botanists and florists having departed, and the disaster at the

most being repaired, quiet was so far restored, that I ushered my guests into the greenhouse, with something like a hope that we should be able to hear each other speak.

Mrs. Dobbs was about the largest woman I had ever seen in my life, fat, fair, and *fifty*, with a broad rosy countenance, beaming with good-humour and contentment, and with a general look of affluence over her whole comfortable person. She spoke in a loud voice which made itself heard over the remaining din in the garden and out, and with a patois between Scotch and Irish, which puzzled me, until I found from her discourse that she was the widow of a linen manufacturer, in the neighbourhood of Belfast.

“Ay,” quoth she, with the most open-hearted familiarity, “times are changed for the better with me since you and I parted in Cadogan Place. Poor Mr. Dobbs left me and those two girls a fortune of —— Why, I verily believe,” continued she, interrupting herself, “that you don’t know me !”

“Honor !” said one of the young ladies to the other, “only look at this butterfly !”

Honor! Was it, could it be Honor O'Callaghan, the slight, pale, romantic visionary, so proud, so reserved, so abstracted, so elegant, and so melancholy? Had thirty years of the coarse realities of life transformed that pensive and delicate damsel into the comely, hearty, and to say the truth, somewhat vulgar dame whom I saw before me? Was such a change possible?

“Married a nobleman!” exclaimed she when I told her the reports respecting herself. “Taken the veil! No, indeed! I have been a far humbler and happier woman. It is very strange, though, that during my Cinderella-like life at school, I used always in my day-dreams to make my story end like that of the heroine of the fairy tale; and it is still stranger, that both rumours were within a very little of coming true,—for when I got to Ireland, which, so far as I was concerned, turned out a very different place from what I expected, I found myself shut up in an old castle, fifty times more dreary and melancholy than ever was our great school-room in the holidays, with my aunt setting her heart upon marrying me to an old

lord, who might, for age and infirmities, have passed for my great grandfather; and I really, in my perplexity, had serious thoughts of turning nun to get rid of my suitor; but then I was allowed to go into the north upon a visit, and fell in with my late excellent husband, who obtained Lady O'Hara's consent to the match by the offer of taking me without a portion; and ever since," continued she, "I have been a very common-place and a very happy woman. Mr. Dobbs was a man who had made his own fortune, and all he asked of me was, to lay aside my airs and graces, and live with him in his own homely, old-fashioned way amongst his own old people, (kind people they were!) his looms, and his bleaching-grounds; so that my heart was opened, and I grew fat and comfortable, and merry and hearty, as different from the foolish, romantic girl whom you remember, as plain honest prose is from the silly thing called poetry. I don't believe that I have ever once thought of my old castles in the air for these five-and-twenty years. It is very odd, though," added she, with a frankness which was really like think-

ing aloud, "that I always did contrive in my visions that my history should conclude like that of Cinderella. To be sure, things are much better as they are, but it is an odd thing, nevertheless. Well! perhaps my daughters. . . . !"

And as they are rich and pretty, and good-natured, although much more in the style of the present Honor than the past, it is by no means improbable that the vision which was evidently glittering before the fond mother's eyes, may be realised. At all events, my old friend is, as she says herself, a happy woman—in all probability, happier than if the Cinderella day-dream had actually come to pass in her own comely person. But the transition! After all, there are real transformations in this every-day world, which beat the doings of fairy land all to nothing; and the change of the pumpkin into a chariot, and the mice into horses, was not to be compared for a moment with the transmogrification of Honor O'Callaghan into Mrs. Dobbs.

AUNT DEBORAH.

A CROSSER old woman than Mrs. Deborah Thornby was certainly not to be found in the whole village of Hilton. Worth, in country phrase, a power of money, and living (to borrow another rustic expression) upon her means, the exercise of her extraordinary faculty for grumbling and scolding seemed the sole occupation of her existence, her only pursuit, solace, and amusement; and really it would have been a great pity to have deprived the poor woman of a pastime so consolatory to herself, and which did harm to nobody: her family consisting only of an old labourer, to guard the house, take care of her horse, her cow, and her chaise and cart, and work in the garden, who was happily, for

his comfort, stone deaf, and could not hear her vituperation, and of a parish girl of twelve, to do the indoor work, who had been so used to be scolded all her life, that she minded the noise no more than a miller minds the clack of his mill, or than people who live in a churchyard mind the sound of the church bells, and would probably, from long habit, have felt some miss of the sound had it ceased, of which, by the way, there was small danger, so long as Mrs. Deborah continued in this life. Her crossness was so far innocent that it hurt nobody except herself. But she was also cross-grained, and that evil quality is unluckily apt to injure other people; and did so very materially in the present instance.

Mrs. Deborah was the only daughter of old Simon Thornby, of Chalcott great farm; she had had one brother, who having married the rosy-cheeked daughter of the parish clerk, a girl with no portion except her modesty, her good-nature, and her prettiness, had been discarded by his father, and after trying various ways to gain a living, and failing in all, had finally died broken-

hearted, leaving the unfortunate clerk's daughter, rosy-cheeked no longer, and one little boy, to the tender mercy of his family. Old Simon showed none. He drove his son's widow from the door as he had before driven off his son; and when he also died, an event which occurred within a year or two, bequeathed all his property to his daughter Deborah.

This bequest was exceedingly agreeable to Mrs. Deborah, (for she was already of an age to assume that title,) who valued money, not certainly for the comforts and luxuries which it may be the means of procuring, nor even for its own sake, as the phrase goes, but for that which, to a woman of her temper, was perhaps the highest that she was capable of enjoying, the power which wealth confers over all who are connected with or dependent on its possessor.

The principal subjects of her despotic dominion were the young widow and her boy, whom she placed in a cottage near her own house, and with whose comfort and happiness she dallied pretty much as a cat plays with the mouse which she has got into her clutches, and lets go only to catch

again, or an angler with the trout which he has fairly hooked, and merely suffers to struggle in the stream until it is sufficiently exhausted to bring to land. She did not mean to be cruel, but she could not help it; so her poor mice were mocked with the semblance of liberty, although surrounded by restraints; and the awful paw seemingly sheathed in velvet, whilst they were in reality never out of reach of the horrors of the pat.

It sometimes, however, happens that the little mouse makes her escape from madam pussy at the very moment when she seems to have the unlucky trembler actually within her claws; and so it occurred in the present instance.

The dwelling to which Mrs. Deborah retired after the death of her father, was exceedingly romantic and beautiful in point of situation. It was a small but picturesque farm-house, on the very banks of the Loddon, a small branch of which, diverging from the parent stream, and crossed by a pretty footbridge, swept round the homestead, the orchard and garden, and went winding along the water meadows in a thousand

glittering meanders, until it was lost in the rich woodlands which formed the back-ground of the picture. In the month of May, when the orchard was full of its rosy and pearly blossoms, a forest of lovely bloom, the meadows yellow with cowslips, and the clear brimming river, bordered by the golden tufts of the water ranunculus, and garlanded by the snowy flowers of the hawthorn and the wild cherry, the thin wreath of smoke curling from the tall, old-fashioned chimneys of the pretty irregular building, with its porch, and its baywindows, and gable-ends full of light and shadow,—in that month of beauty it would be difficult to imagine a more beautiful or a more English landscape.

On the other side of the narrow winding road, parted from Mrs. Deborah's demesne by a long low bridge of many arches, stood a little rustic mill, and its small low-browed cottage, with its own varied back-ground of garden and fruit trees and thickly wooded meadows, extending in long perspective, a smiling verdant valley of many miles.

Now Chalcott mill, reckoned by everybody

else the prettiest point in her prospect, was to Mrs. Deborah not merely an eye-sore, but a heart-sore, not on its own account ; cantankerous as she was, she had no quarrel with the innocent buildings, but for the sake of its inhabitants.

Honest John Stokes, the miller, was her cousin-german. People did say that some forty years before there had been question of a marriage between the parties ; and really they both denied the thing with so much vehemence and fury, that one should almost be tempted to believe there was some truth in the report. Certain it is, that if they had been that wretched thing a mismatched couple, and had gone on snarling together all their lives, they could not have hated each other more zealously. One shall not often meet with anything so perfect in its way as that aversion. It was none of your silent hatreds that never come to words ; nor of your civil hatreds, that veil themselves under smooth phrases and smiling looks. Their ill-will was frank, open, and above-board. They could not afford to come to an absolute breach, because it would have deprived them of the

pleasure of quarrelling ; and in spite of the frequent complaints they were wont to make of their near neighbourhood, I am convinced that they derived no small gratification from the opportunities which it afforded them of saying disagreeable things to each other.

And yet Mr. John Stokes was a well-meaning man, and Mrs. Deborah Thornby was not an ill-meaning woman. But she was, as I have said before, cross in the grain ; and he—why he was one of those plain-dealing personages who will speak their whole mind, and who pique themselves upon that sort of sincerity which is comprised in telling to another all the ill that they have ever heard, or thought, or imagined concerning him, in repeating, as if it were a point of duty, all the harm that one neighbour says of another, and in denouncing, as if it were a sin, whatever the unlucky person whom they address may happen to do, or to leave undone.

“ I am none of your palavering chaps, to flummer over an old vixen for the sake of her strong-box. I hate such falseness. I speak the truth and care for no man,” quoth John Stokes.

And accordingly John Stokes never saw Mrs. Deborah Thornby but he saluted her, pretty much as his mastiff accosted her favourite cat; erected his bristles, looked at her with savage, bloodshot eyes, showed his teeth, and vented a sound something between a snarl and a growl; whilst she, (like the fourfooted tabby,) set up her back and spit at him in return.

They met often, as I have said, for the enjoyment of quarrelling; and as whatever he advised she was pretty sure *not* to do, it is probable that his remonstrances in favour of her friendless relations served to confirm her in the small tyranny which she exercised towards them.

Such being the state of feeling between these two jangling cousins, it may be imagined with what indignation Mrs. Deborah found John Stokes, upon the death of his wife, removing her widowed sister-in-law from the cottage in which she had placed her, and bringing her home to the mill, to officiate as his housekeeper, and take charge of a lovely little girl, his only child. She vowed one of those vows of anger which I fear are oftener kept than the vows of love, to

strike both mother and son out of her will, (by the way, she had a superstitious horror of that disagreeable ceremony, and even the temptation of choosing new legatees whenever the old displeased her, had not been sufficient to induce her to make one,—the threat did as well,) and never to speak to either of them again as long as she lived.

She proclaimed this resolution at the rate of twelve times an hour, (that is to say, once in five minutes,) every day for a fortnight; and in spite of her well-known caprice, there seemed for once in her life reason to believe that she would keep her word.

Those prudent and sagacious persons who are so good as to take the superintendence of other people's affairs, and to tell by the look of the foot where the shoe pinches and where it does not, all united in blaming the poor widow for withdrawing herself and her son from Mrs. Deborah's protection. But besides that no human being can adequately estimate the misery of leading a life of dependence upon one to whom scolding was as the air she breathed, without it she must die,

a penurious dependence too, which supplied grudgingly the humblest wants, and yet would not permit the exertions by which she would joyfully have endeavoured to support herself;—besides the temptation to exchange Mrs. Deborah's incessant maundering for the Miller's rough kindness, and her scanty fare for the coarse plenty of his board,—besides these homely but natural temptations—hardly to be adequately allowed for by those who have passed their lives amidst smiling kindness and luxurious abundance; besides these motives she had a stronger and dearer in her desire to rescue her boy from the dangers of an enforced and miserable idleness, and to put him in the way of earning his bread by honest industry.

Through the interest of his grandfather the parish clerk, the little Edward had been early placed in the Hilton free school, where he had acquitted himself so much to the satisfaction of the master, that at twelve years old he was the head boy on the foundation, and took precedence of the other nine-and-twenty wearers of the full-skirted blue coats, leathern

belts, and tasseled caps, in the various arts of reading, writing, cyphering, and mensuration. He could flourish a swan without ever taking his pen from the paper. Nay, there is little doubt but from long habit he could have flourished it blindfold, like the man who had so often modelled the wit of Ferney in breadcrumbs, that he could produce little busts of Voltaire with his hands under the table; he had not his equal in Practice or the Rule of Three, and his piece, when sent round at Christmas, was the admiration of the whole parish.

Unfortunately, his arrival at this pre-eminence was also the signal of his dismissal from the free school. He returned home to his mother, and as Mrs. Deborah, although hourly complaining of the expense of supporting a great lubberly boy in idleness, refused to apprentice him to any trade, and even forbade his finding employment in helping her deaf man of all work to cultivate her garden, which the poor lad, naturally industrious and active, begged her permission to do, his mother, considering that no uncertain expectations of money at the death of his kinswoman

could counterbalance the certain evil of dragging on his days in penury and indolence during her life, wisely determined to betake herself to the mill, and accept John Stokes's offer of sending Edward to a friend in town, for the purpose of being placed with a civil engineer:—a destination with which the boy himself—a fine intelligent youth, by the way, tall and manly, with black eyes that talked and laughed, and curling dark hair,—was delighted in every point of view. He longed for a profession for which he had a decided turn; he longed to see the world as personified by the city of cities, the unparagoned London; and he longed more than either to get away from Aunt Deborah, the storm of whose vituperation seemed ringing in his ears so long as he continued within sight of her dwelling. One would think the clack of the mill and the prattle of his pretty cousin Cicely might have drowned it, but it did not. Nothing short of leaving the spinster fifty miles behind, and setting the great city between him and her, could efface the impression.

“I hope I am not ungrateful,” thought Ed-

ward to himself, as he was trudging London-ward after taking a tender leave of all at the mill; "I hope I am not ungrateful. I do not think I am, for I would give my right arm, ay, or my life, if it would serve master John Stokes or please dear Cissy. But really I do hope never to come within hearing of Aunt Deborah again, she storms so. I wonder whether all old women are so cross. I don't think my mother will be, nor Cissy. I am sure Cissy won't. Poor Aunt Deborah! I suppose she can't help it." And with this indulgent conclusion, Edward wended on his way.

Aunt Deborah's mood was by no means so pacific. She staid at home fretting, fuming, and chafing, and storming herself hoarse—which, as the people at the mill took care to keep out of earshot, was all so much good scolding thrown away. The state of things since Edward's departure had been so decisive, that even John Stokes thought it wiser to keep himself aloof for a time; and although they pretty well guessed that she would take measures to put in effect her threat of disinheritance, the first outward demonstration came in the shape of a young

man (gentleman I suppose he called himself—ay, there is no doubt but he wrote himself Esquire) who attended her to church a few Sundays after, and was admitted to the honour of sitting in the same pew.

Nothing could be more unlike our friend Edward than the stranger. Fair, freckled, light-haired, light-eyed, with invisible eye-brows and eye-lashes, insignificant in feature, pert and perking in expression, and in figure so dwarfed and stunted, that though in point of age he had evidently attained his full growth, (if one may use the expression to such a he-doll,) Robert at fifteen would have made two of him,—such was the new favourite. So far as appearance went, for certain Mrs. Deborah had not changed for the better.

Gradually it oozed out, as, somehow or other, news, like water, will find a vent, however small the cranny,—by slow degrees it came to be understood that Mrs. Deborah's visiter was a certain Mr. Adolphus Lynfield, clerk to an attorney of no great note in the good town of Belford Regis, and nearly related, as he affirmed, to the Thornby family.

Upon hearing these tidings, John Stokes, the son of old Simon Thornly's sister, marched across the road, and finding the door upon the latch, entered unannounced into the presence of his enemy.

“I think it my duty to let you know, cousin Deborah, that this here chap's an impostor—a sham—and that you are a fool,” was his conciliatory opening. “Search the register. The Thornlys have been yeomen of this parish ever since the time of Elizabeth—more shame to you for forcing the last of the race to seek his bread elsewhere; and if you can find such a name as Lynfield amongst 'em, I'll give you leave to turn me into a pettifogging lawyer—that's all. Saunderses, and Symonds, and Stokeses, and Mays, you'll find in plenty, but never a Lynfield. Lynfield, quotha! it sounds like a made-up name in a story-book! And as for 'Dolphus, why there never was anything like it in all the generation, except my good old great aunt Dolly, and that stood for Dorothy. All our names have been christian-like and English, Toms, and Jacks, and Jems, and Bills, and Sims,

and Neds—poor fellow! None of your outlandish 'Dolphuses. Dang it, I believe the foolish woman likes the chap the better for having a name she can't speak! Remember, I warn you he's a sham!" And off strode the honest miller, leaving Mrs. Deborah too angry for reply, and confirmed both in her prejudice and prepossession by the natural effect of that spirit of contradiction which formed so large an ingredient in her composition, and was not wholly wanting in that of John Stokes.

Years passed away, and in spite of frequent ebbs and flows, the tide of Mrs. Deborah's favour continued to set towards Mr. Adolphus Lynfield. Once or twice indeed, report had said that he was fairly discarded, but the very appearance of the good miller, anxious to improve the opportunity for his protégé, had been sufficient to determine his cousin to reinstate Mr. Adolphus in her good graces. Whether she really liked him is doubtful. He entertained too good an opinion of himself to be very successful in gaining that of other people.

That the gentleman was not deficient in "left-

handed wisdom," was proved pretty clearly by most of his actions; for instance, when routed by the downright miller from the position which he had taken up of a near kinsman by the father's side, he, like an able tactician, wheeled about and called cousins with Mrs. Deborah's mother; and as that good lady happened to have borne the very general, almost universal, name of Smith, which is next to anonymous, even John Stokes could not dislodge him from that entrenchment. But he was not always so dexterous. Cunning in him lacked the crowning perfection of hiding itself under the appearance of honesty. His art never looked like nature. It stared you in the face, and could not deceive the dullest observer. His very flattery had a tone of falseness that affronted the person flattered; and Mrs. Deborah, in particular, who did not want for shrewdness, found it so distasteful, that she would certainly have discarded him upon that one ground of offence, had not her love of power been unconsciously propitiated by the perception of the efforts which he made, and the degradation to which he submitted, in

the vain attempt to please her. She liked the homage offered to "*les beaux yeux de sa cassette*," pretty much as a young beauty likes the devotion extorted by her charms, and for the sake of the incense tolerated the worshipper.

Nevertheless there were moments when the conceit which I have mentioned as the leading characteristic of Mr. Adolphus Lynfield had well nigh banished him from Chalcott. Piquing himself on the variety and extent of his knowledge, the universality of his genius, he of course paid the penalty of other universal geniuses, by being in no small degree superficial. Not content with understanding every trade better than those who had followed it all their lives, he had a most unlucky propensity to put his devices into execution, and as his information was, for the most part, picked up from the column headed "varieties," in the county newspaper, where of course there is some chaff mingled with the grain, and as the figments in question were generally ill understood and imperfectly recollected, it is really surprising that the young gentleman did not occasion more mischief than

actually occurred by the quips and quiddities which he delighted to put in practice whenever he met with any one simple enough to permit the exercise of his talents.

Some damage he did effect by his experiments, as Mrs. Deborah found to her cost. He killed a bed of old-fashioned spice cloves, the pride of her heart, by salting the ground to get rid of the worms. Her broods of geese also, and of turkeys, fell victims to a new and infallible mode of feeding, which was to make them twice as fat in half the time. Somehow or other, they all died under the operation. So did half a score of fine apple-trees, under an improved method of grafting; whilst a magnificent brown Bury pear, that covered one end of the house, perished of the grand discovery of severing the bark to increase the crop. He lamed Mrs. Deborah's old horse by doctoring him for a prick in shoeing, and ruined her favourite cow, the best milch cow in the county, by a most needless attempt to increase her milk.

Now these mischances and misdemeanors, ay, or the half of them, would undoubtedly

have occasioned Mr. Adolphus's dismissal, and the recal of poor Edward, every account of whom was in the highest degree favourable, had the worthy miller been able to refrain from lecturing his cousin upon her neglect of the one, and her partiality for the other. It was really astonishing that John Stokes, a man of sagacity in all other respects, never could understand that scolding was of all devisable processes the least likely to succeed in carrying his point with one who was such a proficient in that accomplishment, that if the old penalty for female scolds, the ducking-stool, had continued in fashion, she would have stood an excellent chance of attaining to that distinction. But so it was. The same blood coursed through their veins, and his tempestuous good-will and her fiery anger took the same form of violence and passion.

Nothing but these lectures *could* have kept Mrs. Deborah constant in the train of such a trumpery, jiggeting, fidgetty little personage as Mr. Adolphus,—the more especially as her heart was assailed in its better and softer parts, by

the quiet respectfulness of Mrs. Thornly's demeanour, who never forgot that she had experienced her protection in the hour of need, and by the irresistible good-nature of Cicely, a smiling, rosy, sunny-looking creature, whose only vocation in this world seemed to be the trying to make everybody as happy as herself.

Mrs. Deborah (with such a humanising taste, she could not, in spite of her cantankerous temper, be all bad) loved flowers: and Cicely, a rover of the woods and fields from early childhood, and no despicable practical gardener, took care to keep her beaupots constantly supplied from the first snowdrop to the last china rose. Nothing was too large for Cicely's good-will, nothing too small. Huge chimney jars of lilacs, laburnums, horse-chestnuts, peonies, and the golden and gorgeous double furze; china jugs filled with magnificent double stocks, and rich wallflowers,* with their bitter-sweet odour, like

* Few flowers, (and almost all look best when arranged each sort in its separate vase,)—few look so well together as the four sorts of double wallflowers. The common dark, (the old bloody warrior—I have a love for those graphic names—words which paint)

the taste of orange marmalade, pinks, sweet-peas, and mignonette, from her own little garden, or woodland posies that might beseem the hand of the faerie queen, composed of those gems of flowers, the scarlet pimpernel, and the blue anagallis, the rosy star of the wild geranium, with its aromatic crimson-tipped leaves, the snowy star of the white ochil, and that third starry flower the yellow loose-strife, the milk vetch, purple, or pink, or cream coloured, backed by moss-like leaves and lilac blossoms of the lousewort, and overhung by the fragrant bells and cool green leaves of the lily of the valley.

the common dark, the common yellow, the newer and more intensely coloured dark, and that new gold colour still so rare, which is in tint, form, growth, hardiness, and profusion, one of the most valuable acquisitions to the flower garden. When placed together in a jar, the brighter blossoms seem to stand out from those of deeper hue, with exactly the sort of relief, the harmonious combination of light and shade, that one sometimes sees in the rich gilt carving of an old flower-wreathed picture-frame, or, better still, it might seem a pot of flowers chased in gold, by Benvenuto Cellini, in which the workmanship outvalued the metal. Many beaupots are gayer, many sweeter, but this is the richest, both for scent and colour, that I have ever seen.

It would puzzle a gardener to surpass the elegance and delicacy of such a nosegay.

Offerings like these did our miller's maiden delight to bring at all seasons, and under all circumstances, whether of peace or war between the heads of the two opposite houses; and whenever there chanced to be a lull in the storm, she availed herself of the opportunity to add to her simple tribute a dish of eels from the mill-stream, or perch from the river. That the thought of Edward ("dear Edward," as she always called him,) might not add somewhat of alacrity to her attentions to his wayward aunt, I will not venture to deny, but she would have done the same if Edward had not been in existence, from the mere effect of her own peace-making spirit, and a generosity of nature which found more pleasure in giving than in possessing. A sweet and happy creature was Cicely; it was difficult even for Mrs. Deborah to resist her gentle voice and artless smiles.

Affairs were in this posture between the belligerents, sometimes war to the knife, sometimes a truce under favour of Cissy's white flag, when

one October evening, John Stokes entered the dwelling of his kinswoman to inform her that Edward's apprenticeship had been some time at an end, that he had come of age about a month ago, and that his master, for whom he had continued to work, was so satisfied of his talents, industry, and integrity, that he had offered to take him into partnership for a sum incredibly moderate, considering the advantages which such a connexion would ensure.

“You have more than the money wanted in the Belford Bank, money that ought to have been his,” quoth John Stokes, “besides all your property in land and houses and the funds; and if you did advance this sum, which all the world knows is only a small part of what should have belonged to him in right of his father, it would be as safe as if it was in the Bank of England, and the interest paid half-yearly. You ought to give it him out and out; but of course you won't even lend it,” pursued this judicious negotiator; “you keep all your money for that precious chap, Mr. 'Dolphus, to make ducks and drakes with after you are dead; a fine jig he'll

dance over your grave. You know, I suppose, that we've got the fellow in a cleft stick about that petition the other day? He persuaded old Jacob, who's as deaf as a post, to put his mark to it, and when he was gone, Jacob came to me (I'm the only man in the parish who can make him hear) to ask what it was about. So upon my explaining the matter, Jacob found he had got into the wrong box. But as the chap had taken away his petition, and Jacob could not scratch out his name, what does he do but set his mark to ours o' t'other side; and we've wrote all about it to Sir Robert to explain to the Parliament, lest seeing Jacob's name both ways like, they should think 'twas he, poor fellow, that meant to humbug 'em. A pretty figure Mr. 'Dolphus 'll cut when the story comes to be told in the House of Commons! But that's not the worst. He took the petition to the work-house, and meeting with little Fan Ropley, who had been taught to write at our charity-school, and is quick at her pen, he makes her sign her name at full length, and then strikes a dot over the *e* to turn it into Francis, and persuade

the great folk up at Lunnun, that little Fan's a grown-up man. If that chap won't come someday to be transported for forgery, my name's not John Stokes! Well, dame, will you let Ned have the money? Yes or no?"

That Mrs. Deborah should have suffered the good miller to proceed with his harangue without interruption, can only be accounted for on the score of the loudness of tone on which he piqued himself with so much justice. When she did take up the word, her reply made up in volubility and virulence for any deficiency in sound, concluding by a formal renunciation of her nephew, and a command to his zealous advocate never again to appear within her doors. Upon which, honest John vowed he never would, and departed.

Two or three days after this quarrel, Mr. Adolphus having arrived, as happened not unfrequently, to spend the afternoon at Chalcott, persuaded his hostess to accompany him to see a pond drawn at the Hall, to which, as the daughter of one of Sir Robert's old tenants, she would undoubtedly have the right of *entrée*; and Mrs.

Deborah assented to his request, partly because the weather was fine, and the distance short, partly, it may be, from a lurking desire to take her chance as a bystander of a dish of fish; they who need such windfalls least, being commonly those who are most desirous to put themselves in their way.

Mr. Adolphus Lynfield's reasons were obvious enough. Besides the *ennui* of a tête-a-tête, all flattery on one side and contradiction on the other, he was naturally of the fidgetty restless temperament which hates to be long confined to one place or one occupation, and can never hear of a gathering of people, whatever might be the occasion, without longing to find himself amongst them.

Moreover, he had, or professed to have, a passion for field sports of every description; and having that very season contrived, with his usual curious infelicity, to get into as many scrapes in shooting as shall last most sportsmen their whole lives—having shot a spaniel instead of a hare, a keeper instead of a partridge, and his own foot instead of a pheasant, and finally, having been taken up for a poacher, although

wholly innocent of the death of any bird that ever wore feathers,—after all these woeful experiences, (to say nothing of mischances in angling which might put to shame those of our friend Mr. Thompson,) he found himself particularly well disposed to a diversion which appeared to combine in most choice union the appearance of sporting, which he considered essential to his reputation, with a most happy exemption from the usual sporting requisites, exertion or skill. All that he would have to do would be to look on and talk,—to throw out a hint here and a suggestion there, and find fault with everything and everybody, like a man who understood what was going forward.

The weather was most propitious; a bright breezy sunny October day, with light snowy clouds, chased by a keen crisp wind across the deep blue heavens, — and the beautiful park, the turf of an emerald green, contrasting with the brown fern and tawny woods, rivalling in richness and brightness the vivid hues of the autumnal sky. Nothing could exceed the gorgeous tinting of the magnificent trees, which, whether in detached clumps or forest-like masses,

formed the pride and glory of the place. The oak still retaining its dark and heavy verdure; the elm letting fall a shower of yellow leaves, that tinged the ground beneath; the deep orange of the horse-chestnut, the beech varying from ruddy gold to greenish brown; and above all, the shining green of the holly, and the rich purplish red of the old thorns, those hoary thorns, the growth of centuries, gave to this old English gentleman's seat much of the variety and beauty of the American backwoods. The house, a stately ancient mansion, from the porch of which you might expect to see Sir Roger de Coverley issue, stood half-way up a gentle hill, finely backed by woods of great extent; and the pond, which was the object of the visit, was within sight of the windows, but so skilfully veiled by trees, as to appear of much greater extent than it really was.

The master and mistress of the Hall, with their pretty daughters, were absent on a tour:— Is any English country family ever at home in the month of October in these days of fashionable enterprise? They were gone to visit the temples of Thebes, or the ruins of Carthage, the

Fountains of the Nile or the Falls of Niagara, St. Sophia, or the Kremlin, or some such pretty little excursion, which ladies and gentlemen now talk of as familiarly "as maids of puppy dogs." They were away. But enough of the household remained at Chalcott, to compose, with a few visitors, a sufficiently numerous and animated group.

The first person whom Mrs. Deborah espied, (and it is remarkable that we always see first those whom we had rather not see at all,) was her old enemy the miller,—a fisherman of so much experience and celebrity, that his presence might have been reckoned upon as certain—busily engaged, together with some half-dozen stout and active coadjutors, in dragging the net ashore, amidst a chorus of exclamations and cautions from the various assistants, and the breathless expectation of the spectators on the bank, amongst whom were Mrs. Thornly and Cicely, accompanied by a tall, athletic young man of dark complexion, with peculiarly bright eyes and curling hair, whom his aunt immediately recognised as Edward.

“How improved he is!” was the thought that flashed across her mind, as with an air of respectful alacrity he stepped forward to meet her; but the miller, in tugging at his nets, happened to look towards them, and ashamed that he of all men should see her change of feeling, she turned away abruptly, without acknowledging his salutation, and walked off to the other side with her attendant, Mr. Adolphus.

“Drat the perverse old jade!” exclaimed John Stokes, involuntarily, as he gave a mighty tug, which brought half the net ashore.

“She’s heavy, my good sir!” observed the pompous butler, conceiving that the honest miller’s exclamation had reference to the sport; “only see how full she is! We shall have a magnificent hawl!”

And the spectators, male and female, crowded round, and the fishermen exerted themselves so efficiently, that in two minutes the net was on dry land.

“Nothing but weeds and rubbish!” ejaculated the disappointed butler, a peculiarly blank look

taking the place of his usual self-importance.

“What can have become of the fish?”

“The net has been improperly drawn,” observed Mr. Adolphus; “I myself saw four or five large carp just before it was dragged ashore!”

“Better fling you in, master 'Dolphus, by way of bait!” ejaculated our friend the miller; “I've seen jacks in this pond that would make no more bones of swallowing a leg or an arm of such an atomy as you, if they did not have a try at the whole body, than a shark would of bolting down Punch in the show; as to carp, everybody that ever fished a pond knows their tricks. Catch them in a net if you can. They swim round and round, just to let you look at 'em, and then they drop plump into the mud, and lie as still and as close as so many stones. But come, Mr. Tomkins,” continued honest John, addressing the butler, “we'll try again. I'm minded that we shall have better luck this time. Here are some brave large tench, which never move till the water is disturbed; we shall have a good

chance for them as well as for the jacks. Now, steady there, you in the boat. Throw her in, boys, and mind you don't draw too fast!" So to work they all went again.

All was proceeding prosperously, and the net, evidently well filled with fish, was dragging slowly to land, when John Stokes shouted suddenly from the other side of the pond—"Dang it, if that unlucky chap, master 'Dolphus there, has not got hold of the top of the net! He'll pull it over. See, that great jack has got out already. Take the net from him, Tom! He'll let all the fish loose, and tumble in himself, and the water at that part is deep enough to drown twenty such mannikins. Not that I think drowning likely to be his fate,—witness that petition business," muttered John to himself in a sort of parenthesis. "Let go, I say, or you will be in. Let go, can't ye?" added he, in his loudest tone.

And with the word, Mr. Adolphus, still struggling to retain his hold of the net, lost his balance and fell in, and catching at the person next him, who happened to be Mrs. Deborah, with

the hope of saving himself, dragged her in after him.

Both sank, and amidst the confusion that ensued, the shrieks and sobs of the women, the oaths and exclamations of the men, the danger was so imminent that both might have been drowned, had not Edward Thornly, hastily flinging off his coat and hat, plunged in and rescued Mrs. Deborah, whilst good John Stokes, running round the head of the pond as nimbly as a boy, did the same kind office for his prime aversion, the attorney's clerk. What a sound kernel is sometimes hidden under a rough and rugged rind!

Mr. Adolphus, more frightened than hurt, and with so much of the conceit washed out of him by his involuntary cold bath, that it might be accounted one of the most fortunate accidents in his life, was conveyed to the Hall; but her own house being almost equally near, Mrs. Deborah was at once taken home, and put comfortably to bed in her own chamber.

About two hours afterwards, the whole of the miller's family, Mrs. Thornly still pallid and

trembling, Cicely smiling through her tears, and her father as blunt and freespoken as ever, were assembled round the homely couch of their maiden cousin.

“I tell you I must have the lawyer fetched directly. I can’t sleep till I have made my will;” said Mrs. Deborah.

“Better not,” responded John Stokes; “you’ll want it altered to-morrow.”

“What’s that you say, cousin John?” inquired the spinster.

“That if you make your will to night, you’ll change your mind to-morrow,” reiterated John Stokes. “Ned’s going to be married to my Cicely,” added he, “and that you mayn’t like, or if you did like it this week, you might not like it next. So you’d better let matters rest as they are.”

“You’re a provoking man, John Stokes,” said his cousin—“a very provoking, obstinate man. But I’ll convince you for once. Take that key, Mrs. Thornly,” quoth she, raising herself in bed, and fumbling in an immense pair of pockets for a small old-fashioned key, “and open the ’scru-

toire, and give me the pen and ink, and the old narrow brown book, that you'll find at the top. Not like his marrying Cicely! Why I always have loved that child—don't cry, Cissy!—and have always had cause, for she has been a kind little creature to me. Those dahlias came from her, and the sweet posy," pursued Mrs. Deborah, pointing to a nosegay of autumn flowers, the old fragrant monthly rose, mignonette, heliotrope, cloves, and jessamine, which stood by the bedside. "Ay, that's the book, Mrs. Thornly; and there, Cissy," continued Aunt Deborah, filling up the check, with a sum far larger than that required for the partnership—"there, Cissy, is your marriage portion. Don't cry so, child!" said she, as the affectionate girl hung round her neck in a passion of grateful tears—"don't cry, but find out Edward, and send for the lawyer, for I'm determined to settle my affairs to night. And now, John Stokes, I know I've been a cross old woman, but"

"Cousin Deborah," interrupted John, seizing her withered hand with a gripe like a smith's vice,—“Cousin Deborah, thou hast acted nobly, and I

beg thy pardon once for all. God bless thee!—Dang it,” added the honest miller to himself, “I do verily believe that this squabbling has been mainly my fault, and that if I had not been so provoking she would not have been so contrary. Well, she has made us all happy, and we must try to make her happy in return. If we did not, we should deserve to be soused in the fish-pond along with that unhappy chap, Master ’Dolphus. For my part,” continued the good yeoman, forming with great earnestness a solemn resolution—“for my part, I’ve fully made up my mind never to contradict her again, say what she will. No, not if she says black’s white! It’s contradiction that makes women contrary; it sets their backs up, like. I’ll never contradict her again so long as my name’s John Stokes.”

NOTE ON THE LOST DAHLIA.

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BY far the most interesting object in our neighbourhood has always seemed to me the rock-like ruins of Reading Abbey, themselves a history; all the more interesting because, until lately, that, the most important part of these remains, has become the property of my friend, Mr. Wheble, the present High Sheriff of Berks, whose researches have drawn some attention to the subject, these venerable relics of an earlier day, situate close to a wealthy and populous town, not forty miles from London, and actually within sight of the great road from Bath and Bristol to the metropolis, have seemed utterly unnoticed and unknown. Here and there, indeed, some fanciful virtuoso, like Marshal Conway, (best known as the friend and correspondent of Horace Walpole,) has evinced his passion for antiquity by the desire of appropriating what he admired, and

has dragged away whole masses of the walls to assist in his fantastical doings at Henley and elsewhere,—or a set of Goths and Vandals, the county magistrates of fifty years ago (sure am I that their successors would not have dreamt of such a desecration) have pitched upon the outskirts of the old monastery for the erection of their huge, hideous, staring, glaring gaol and Bridewell, with all its miserable associations of wretchedness and crime,—or an education committee, with equal bad taste in a different way (they really seem to have imagined that they had done a fine thing) have run up a roof of red tiles within the walls of the refectory, and moved the children of a national school, upon Dr. Bell's system, into the noble hall, where kings had signed edicts and parliaments framed laws. This last nuisance has been abated. The children have now a school-room of their own, far better adapted to its object, more healthful and more comfortable, and the Abbey is left to the silence and solitude which best beseem the recollections and associations attendant on this stupendous structure.

Reading Abbey was founded by Henry the First, in the beginning of the year 1121, and dedicated to the honour of the Virgin Mary and St. John, as appears by the charter granted four years afterwards: *vide* Dugdale's Monasticon; “for my soul's health, and the souls of King William my father, of my son William, of Queen Matilda my mother,

of Queen Matilda my wife, and of all my predecessors and successors.”

The charter then goes on to recite the immense possessions and regal privileges bestowed upon the monastery at Reading, and its cells at Leominster and at Cholsey.

It grants them a mint, with the privilege of striking money.

It exempts them from all taxes, imposts, or contributions whatsoever, and from all levies of men for wars or other services.

It gives “the abbot and his monks full power to try all offences committed within or without the borough, in the highways, and in all other places, whether by their own servants or strangers, with all causes which can or may arise with socca¹ and sacca,² tol, and theam,³ and infangentheft,⁴ and

¹ Socca, the place or precinct wherein the liberty of court was exercised.

² Sacca, a liberty granted by the king to try and judge causes, and to receive the forfeitures arising from them.

³ Theam, a privilege to take and keep bondsmen, villains, and serfs, with their generations, one after another.

⁴ Infangentheft, a liberty to try and judge a thief taken within the jurisdiction of the manor or borough.

outfangentheft,⁵ and ham socna,⁶ within the borough and without the borough, in the roads and footpaths, and in all places, and with all causes, which do or may arise.

“ And the abbot and his monks shall hold courts of justice for trials of assaults, thefts, and murders, for the shedding of blood, and breaches of the peace, in the same manner that belongs to the royal authority,” &c &c.

Then follows a paragraph which we insert in honour of the accomplished founder. It is worthy of Alfred.

“ But this also we determine and appoint to be for ever observed, that seeing the Abbot of Radyngge hath no revenues but what are in common with his brethren; therefore, whoever by devise, consent and canonical election shall be made abbot, shall not bestow the alms of the monastery on his lay kindred or any others, but reserve them for the entertainment of the poor and strangers.”

And William of Malmesbury certifies that this part of the charter was so well observed, that there

⁵ Outfangentheft, the same privilege to try any thief taken out of the jurisdiction of the manor or borough.

⁶ Ham Socna, the levying a fine on the disturbers of the king's peace.

was always more expended upon strangers than upon the inhabitants, "the monks being," as he asserts, "great examples of piety."

The charter concludes with a strenuous recommendation to all succeeding kings to continue the above privileges and immunities to the monastery, and with this remarkable malison, the fear of which Beauclerc's burly successor, Henry, the eighth of that name, most assuredly had not before his eyes, when he hanged the abbot and knocked down the walls.

"But if any one shall knowingly presume to infringe, diminish, or alter this our foundation charter, may the great God of all withdraw and eradicate him and his posterity, and may he remain without any inheritance, in misery and hunger," &c.

The extent and magnificence of the monastery were commensurate with the high privileges granted by the royal founder, and with the station of the superior, who ranked as third amongst the mitred abbots of England: next after the abbots of Glastonbury and St. Albans.

A space of thirty acres was comprised within the outer walls; and though a considerable part of this was devoted to the inner and outer courts, the cloisters, and the gardens, yet the building itself was stupendous in size and in strength. I have seen decayed specimens of gothic architecture which bear more striking traces of lightness and ornament, but

none that ever seemed so calculated for duration, so prodigally massive and solid. The great hall, whose noble proportions are eighty feet in length, forty in width, and forty to the centre of the arched stone ceiling, had walls six feet thick, coated with freestone, and filled up with flints and stones, cemented with a mortar as durable as the materials themselves. This was the width of all the walls, inner as well as outer, and seems to be only a fair sample of the general proportions of the apartments. The foundations under ground were seven feet deep and twelve wide; and the excavations making in the church, of which many of the surbases of the columns, bits of stained glass, and other ornamental parts, remain as fresh as if only finished yesterday, prove that the execution of this magnificent pile was as perfect and beautiful as the design was stupendous and grand. Sir Henry Englefield says, (*Archæologia*,) every form of Saxon moulding, and many never seen before, may be found in the stones dispersed through the town.

Everything belonging to these magnificent monks seems to have been conducted with this union of largeness and finish. They appear to have brought for their use, from the river Kennett, a canal called the Holy (or Hallowed) Brook, from Coley, an elevated spot nearly two miles from the Abbey, conducting it by a descent so equal and gradual, that it moved the abbey mills (which still exist) with

the same regularity in the most parching droughts or the wildest floods, even taking the precautions of paving it with brick, and arching it in great part over, during its passage through the town. And having thus provided themselves with soft water, and with the constant assurance of grinding their corn through every season, however unfavourable, they provided themselves with the luxury of spring water from the conduit, a celebrated spring rising on a hill on another side of Reading, and at least a mile from the abode of the lord abbot. This water was brought to the monastery in pipes, and from a discovery made accidentally by some labourers who were excavating a sawpit in a bank on the south side of the Kennett, in the middle of the last century, it appears to have passed *under* the Kennett. The story is told in Mann's history of Reading.—“They” (the men employed at the sawpit) “found a leaden pipe, about two inches in diameter, lying in the direction of the conduit, and passing under the river towards the Abbey, part of which, from its situation under the water, they were obliged to leave. The rest was sold for old lead.” Coates also brings undoubted testimony to prove that the conduit spring supplied the Abbey, and that the water was brought under the Kennett.

Certainly, as the river runs between the conduit and the Abbey, the pipe must have gone under or

over it ; but the fact is worth mentioning as curious in itself, and as tending to prove, in these days, when we are a little apt, if not to overvalue our own doings, at least to undervalue those of our ancestors, that, not merely in architecture, (for in that grandest art we are pigmies indeed, compared to those great masters whose names are lost, though their works, in spite of a thousand foes, seem indestructible,) that not in architecture only, but in tunnel-making, we might take lessons from those old-fashioned personages the monks.

From the period of its consecration, we find the name of Reading Abbey occurring frequently in all the histories of the times. Parliaments and councils were holden there ; legates received ; traitors executed ; kings, queens, and princes buried in the holy precincts. Speed mentions, picturesquely, King Henry and his Queen “ who lay there veiled and crowned.” Bishops were consecrated, joustings celebrated, knights dubbed, and money coined.

One incident which has reference to the Abbey, related by Stowe, is so romantic that I cannot refrain from giving the story. It would make a fine dramatic scene—almost a drama.

“ In 1167, a single combat was fought at Reading, between Robert de Montford, appellant, and Henry de Essex, defendant ; the occasion of which was as follows. In an engagement which Henry the Second had with the Welch, in 1157, some of his nobles.

who had been detached with a considerable part of the army, were cut off by an ambuscade; those who escaped, thinking the king was also surrounded, told every one they met that he was either taken or slain.

“The news of this imaginary disaster put to flight the greatest part of the surviving army. Among the rest, Henry de Essex, hereditary standard bearer to the kings of England, threw away the royal banner, and fled. For this act of cowardice he was challenged by Robert de Montford as a traitor. Essex denied the charge, declaring he was fully persuaded that the king was slain or taken; which probably would have happened, if Roger, Earl of Clare, had not brought up a body of troops, and, by displaying again the royal standard, encouraged the soldiers; by which means he preserved the remainder of the army.

“The king ordered this quarrel to be decided by single combat; and the two knights met at Reading, on the 8th of April, on an island* near the Abbey,

* Tradition assigns as the place of this combat a beautiful green island nearly surrounded with willows, in the midst of the Thames, to the east of Caversham bridge. A more beautiful spot could not have been devised for such a combat. It was in sight of the Abbey, and of the remarkable chapel erected in the centre of the bridge, of which the foundation still remains, surmounted by a modern house.

the king being present in person, with many of the nobility and other spectators. Montford began the combat with great fury, and Essex, having endured this violent attack for some time, at length turning into rage, took upon himself the part of a challenger and not of a defender. He fell after receiving many wounds; and the king, supposing him slain, at the request of several noblemen, his relations, gave permission to the monks to enter the body, commanding that no further violence should be offered to it. The monks took up the vanquished knight, and carried him into the Abbey, where he revived. When he recovered from his wounds, he was received into the community and assumed the habit of the order, his lands being forfeited to the king."

Such was the Abbey from its foundation to the Reformation; succeeding Monarchs augmenting its demesnes and revenues by magnificent gifts, and confirming by successive charters the privileges and immunities enjoyed by the abbot and monks; for although the superior had various country houses and parks, and was a spiritual peer of the highest rank, there yet appears, from many of the rules which have come down to us, one especially, in which no member of the community could absent himself for a night without first obtaining permission from every individual monk in the convent, sufficient reason to believe that the internal government of the house was

not altogether monarchical, but that it partook somewhat of the mixed form of the English constitution, and that the commons, if we may so term the brethren of the order, had some voice in the management of its concerns.

Upon the whole, the rule of the monks of Reading over their vassals, the burghers, and their feudal tenants in the villages round, to say nothing of their dependent cells at Leominster and at Cholsey, seems to have been mild, benevolent, and charitable. Rich landlords are, generally speaking, kind landlords; it is those who are themselves pushed for money who become hard creditors in return; and besides the wealth that flowed into the good borough from the trains of knights and nobles who attended the parliaments and councils held in the Abbey, the fathers of the community were not only zealous protectors of their vassals against the aggressions so common in that age of violence, but they furnished alms to the poor, shelter to the houseless, and medical aid to the sick, from their own resources. Traces of their power and their charity, as well as of the manners of the times, meet us constantly in the incidental allusions to the Abbey in our old historians and topographers; thus, for instance, amongst the hospitals attached to the foundation, mention is made of a house for lepers at Erleigh.

That the town flourished under their guardian care, is sufficiently proved, by the fact that Speed's

map,* taken a comparatively short period after the Reformation, might almost have passed for a plan of Reading forty years ago, so little had the old town increased (it has made a huge spring in the present century) during the long period that intervened between Elizabeth and George the Third.

The palmy days of the church of Rome in this country were, however, numbered, and upon none of the great monastic establishments did the storm of the Reformation burst with more unsparing violence than upon the fated Abbey of Reading.

In September, 1539, John London, one of the commissioners for visiting and suppressing religious houses, arrived at Reading, and notwithstanding the submission of Hugh, the then abbot, which

* Very curious is this old map of "Redding." The vacant spaces representing fields round the town being illustrated by certain curious representations of trees and animals particularly unlike, such as a cow in the act of being milked, (the sex of the milking figure is doubtful, the dress being equally unsuitable to man or woman, girl or boy,) two horses fighting, with sheep grazing, and another creature which may stand for a pig or an ox at discretion, standing at ease in a meadow. It is remarkable that each of these animals would make three or four of the trees, under which it is supposed to stand, and is very much bigger and taller than any church in the place. Those old artists had strange notions of perspective and proportion.

appears to have been implicit, he was hanged and quartered with two of his monks at one of the gates of the monastery, on the 14th of November following.

The work of destruction then commenced. No particulars of the demolition of the Abbey have come down to us; but it is clear that the magnificent church was levelled at once, partly, perhaps, for the sake of the valuable materials, and partly to prevent the people, attached by habit to the splendid ceremonies of the Catholic worship, from clinging to the cherished associations connected with the spot.

The site of the monastery itself remained with the crown, and a part of the house was converted into a royal residence, visited more than once by Elizabeth, and mentioned by Camden. But the enormous possessions of the Abbey granted to one favourite and another, were slowly frittered away, while what remained of the house itself was nearly destroyed in the siege of Reading during the civil wars.

Every twenty years has brought a fresh diminution, until little now remains, except the shell of the refectory, and of one or two other large detached buildings more or less entire, parts of the cloisters, and large rock-like fragments of the grey walls, denuded of the cut free-stone by which they were coated, some upright, some leaning against each other, and some pitched violently into the

earth, as if by a tremendous convulsion of nature. But in the very absence of artificial ornament, in the massiveness and vastness of these remains, there is something singularly impressive and majestic. They have about them much of the hoary grandeur, the wild and naked desolation which characterise Stonehenge. And as the paltry modern buildings which disfigured them are gradually disappearing, there is every reason to hope, from the excellent taste of the present proprietor, that as soon as the excavations which have brought to light so much that is curious and beautiful shall be completed, they may be left to the great artist Nature, so that we may, in a few years, see our once-famous Abbey more august and beautiful than it has been at any period since the days of its pristine magnificence; rescued, as far as is now possible, from the din and bustle of this work-a-day world, and rising like the stately ruins of Netley, or rather like the tall grey cliffs of some sylvan solitude, from the fine elastic turf, a natural carpet, the green elder bush and the young ash tree growing amongst the mouldering niches, the ivy and the wall-flower waving from above, and the bright, clear river flowing silently along, adorning and reflecting a scene which is at once a picture and a history.

THE END.

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