Aglen Dowty's short stories

by

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Aglen Dowty wrote numerous short stories, which were published in the humourous serial publications to which he contributed.

No list of them exists, and it would a major research project in a copyright library to trace them all. However, a few have been digitised by the Hathi Trust. This website has the facility of Optical Character Recognition of the digitised texts, so it is a simple matter copy and extract the texts to insertion in another document.

Thus, representative samples have been reproduced here. These give a good idea of his writing style, and also insights into lives of the lower Victorian middle class. His work is akin to George and Weedon Grossmith's *Diary of a Nobody.* which had originated as an intermittent serial in Punch magazine in 1888–89. It appeared as book in 1892, but did not achieve fame until after the First World War. See the extensive Wikipedia Essay for more.

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KING JA-JO-JA AND THE POSTAGE STAMPS

A Traveller's Warning.

FROM my earliest days, ay, and nights too! I have had the instincts of a traveller. I can scarcely remember a time, indeed, when I did not show a marked taste for exploration and adventure. I have since been told that I used to weep bitterly even in my perambulator, and refuse to be comforted, when my nursemaid failed to take turnings that led to roads new to my infantine gaze. As soon as I gained the free use of my nether limbs, I signalized the fact by toddling off for my little life through a gap in our garden palings; and was discovered, after a long search, placidly sleeping beneath a rhubarb-leaf in a garden some quarter of a mile distant, with my dimpled face smeared with the juice of the bilberries on which I had supped, thus evincing that faculty for roughing it in the open which stands in such good stead to the traveller.

As I grew up, running away from school for the day was my besetting sin, and it was soon found out that no more hardly-felt punishment could be inflicted on me than depriving me of my boots.

It was not until I was eleven, however, that my first ambitious journey was undertaken. At that age I had ardently read all Captain Mayne Reid's works then published, and their perusal led to my joining to my instinctive desire to explore new districts a strong wish to be a trapper, with intensely hostile relations with Indians, à la Old Rube. Thus, when I set out to discover the source of the muddy stream that flowed through my birth-place, I determined to make myself independent of the facilities offered me by the civilized character of the country I should pass through; and for this purpose included in my scanty kit a large lens, surreptitiously taken from my father's telescope; a clothes-line, purloined from the wash-house; a piece of pork that happened to be in pickle at the time; and a bow and arrows. On the

lens I intended to fall back as a means of cooking my ration of pork, in case I failed, as I had good reason to suppose I should, in making a fire by rubbing two sticks together; for Lucifer-matches I despised as a mean invention which served to rob the campaign of its delightful difficulties. The clothes-line it was my intention to use as a lasso for any big game that might cross my path; whilst I am bound to admit that the notion in my mind when I took the bow and arrows was to shoot rabbits and stray cats with them, with the view of bartering their skins for firearms and ammunition.

Looking on that expedition as my initiatory one, it was anything but propitious; and long ago as it is since I started on it, I can vividly remember the very unromantic aspect which heavy rain through-out the first night put upon my journey; and how very unlike the rough but cheery meals of Mayne Reid's trappers was my attempt to gnaw a piece of sodden pickled pork, jobbed off with a blunt pocket-knife. Disheartened and damp as I was, I thought it my duty to discharge all my arrows at a rook's nest, which I failed to hit; and then in desperation, climbed a gate and flung my clothes-line at a calf, the infuriated mother of which at once came out from behind a haystack and charged at me most furiously. Humiliating as it was, and untrapper-like as I felt it to be, I had to run for my life; and, clearing a ditch in fine style, I positively ran into the arms of my uncle Ebenezer, who had been advised of my loss by that morning's post, and who took me back home that very afternoon in a quaint covered conveyance, much affected by the yeomen of the neighbourhood, called a Coburg, and some-thing like an exaggerated old poke bonnet swung on two wheels. I was caned by my father, and wept over by my mother, as she administered to me nauseous concoctions of herbs to keep away ague; and, worst of all, had my pocket-money stopped to pay for the purloined pork.

But I do not propose to give details of my youthful escapades further than to state that, after running away from three boarding-schools and being brought back, I finally got right off and went to sea, where, true to my instincts, I was wrecked on a previously-undiscovered island, of which I drew a map, on the only pocket-handkerchief I had left, with the bone of a penguin dipped in cuttlefish ink. This map I presented to the Royal Geographical Society on my return; and I should have had a medal had not a Fellow spitefully suggested that I no more deserved merit for discovering the island than a drowning man did for slipping a life-belt over his shoulders when it was thrown to him.

Soon after this, whilst I was looking for rubies in the Rocky Mountains, both my parents died, leaving me a small competency, that enabled me, how-ever, to fulfil the wish of my heart, which was African exploration. Never yet had I been able with my scanty funds to purchase the half a ton or so of

glass beads without which no African traveller dares set out. But at last, by realizing a portion of my property, I could get the desiderated "gewgaws," and a gross of pocket-mirrors and two hundred and fifty yards of peony-patterned chintz to boot; and I commenced a series of incursions into the Dark Continent which have continued ever since.

But how is it, it will be asked, that, after such long devotion to African travel (for it is twenty years ago since I began), I remain unknown to fame ?-for it would be ridiculous for me to claim the acquaintance of the public even with the name of Theodore John Pulliver. The answer is simple. Lord High Admiral Nelson, I believe I am right in saying, was always a quarter of an hour too early throughout his life, and to this habit owed the fact that, when he cried in the words of the showman, "Kiss me, ' Ardy; I'm a-wownded!" he had reached the summit of professional glory.

I, Theodore John Pulliver, on the contrary, unlike the Lord High Admiral I have named, have been always a quarter of an hour too late, and with the most disastrous consequences. Had I, for instance, caught the Nile boat that left Alexandria on a Wednesday morning, some score of years ago, at 11.15 for the Upper Cataracts, it would have been the name of Pulliver, and not those of Speke and Grant, that would have been handed down to posterity as the discoverer of the sources of the Nile. But I missed it, thanks to a stubborn donkey that insisted on travelling tail first, by some twelve minutes; and had the chagrin, many months after, when I came upon the source of the mighty Egyptian river, to find from a visiting card Captain Speke had courteously nailed to a palm-tree, that he and his companion had forestalled me by a few hours at most, as the strong smell of fresh tobacco smoke hanging about the spot convinced me.

Then, again, on the very day that Stanley uttered those historical words," Dr. Livingstone, I presume ?" I was rapidly approaching Ujiji on express camels, bound on a similar mission of discovery on behalf of the Elgin and Banff Courier. Never shall I forget my intense excitement, as, catching sight of the man whose photograph I had fixed in the crown of my hat, and flinging myself excitedly from my camel, I exclaimed," That nose! those eyes! it must be it is the long-lost Dr. Livingstone!"*

* In my natural excitement at this moment, I believe what I really said was," Those nose, that eyes, it must is! it be the lost-long Doctor Livingstone!" But, had the speech become historical, it would have been in its corrected form..

Nor, again, shall I ever forget my disappointment as the Doctor, gently smiling, calmly replied," You're a day too late, young man; I was discovered just about this time yesterday by one Stanley."

So, too, last year, I was really in front of Henry William on the Congo till the Cataracts were reached, but there I unfortunately broke my leg, and my followers mutinied and left me literally up a bread-fruit-tree, in the branches of which I had made them place me for safety. Stanley and his party must have gone by one night whilst I slept; for when I at last was strong enough to get down again,-- and this was only just in time, for I had eaten the tree quite bare, and must have starved in another week, I found traces of them on the bank, and feared at once that my luck had been bad as usual.

I struggled on, however, single-handed, but only to experience, when I at last reached the coast, a very one-horse kind of welcome, and to find all the Bass in the settlement drunk up by my successful rival.

Most men would have given up geographical discovery after such disappointments, and, retiring to some quiet rural district, would have revenged themselves on their fellow-men by agitating for a school board, or instituting penny readings; but with me it was discovery or death; and my journeys were as frequent as my limited means would allow, it being necessary sometimes to allow my spare in-come to accumulate before I could purchase the requisite quantity of glass beads, for which I found a more extortionate demand the farther I penetrated into the terra incognita of the Dark Continent.

In the opening of the year 1874 I started under unusually favourable auspices, for I had more glass beads than I had ever taken before, to say nothing of a dozen second-hand firemen's helmets, which, though bulky to carry, would, I knew, win me a welcome where even cocked hats and Union Jack pocket-handkerchiefs had failed to open me a path.

Nor was I mistaken. Three Negro Emperors, each more powerful than the Mtesa-or Empty Esau as I call him for fun, about whom Stanley made such a fuss-begged on their bended knees for one of those firemen's helmets; and each and all decreed that it should constitute, in conjunction with a necklace of half-inch beads and an eye-glass, the Imperial state dress of their dynasties. Another potentate offered me a thousand elephants just for the

loan of one whilst he went to fight a neighbour; and as the news spread of the novel article I had in my possession, all the Kings of the country sent pressing messages to me to come and see them. As I had, of course, to reserve the best helmet for myself, and as moreover I used another secretly for culinary purposes, I could not be at all lavish with them; but one invitation I at once made up my mind to accept, and that was the one sent me by Ja-jo-ja, the King of Mimemi, a monarch to whom report accorded characteristics and capabilities unique in a Central African potentate. Rumour also mentioned, as the cause of his peculiar enlightenment, the fact that, some years before, a balloon had fallen in his country, in the car of which was found no living occupant, it is true, but a number of books that had evidently been put in for ballast, including some odd volumes of Cassell's "Popular Educator," a Mavor's "Spelling Book," the"Habits of Good Society," and an "Etiquette for Gentlemen." I made immediate efforts to visit this interesting monarch, in whom I hoped to find a fitting instrument for carrying out a plan of which I will give details later on; and, being met at the confines of his kingdom of Mimemi by an official in white gloves and bathing drawers, who received me with a series of bows, evidently formulated on the directions given in a "Handbook of Etiquette," the rumour I had heard concerning Ja-jo-ja and the balloon was at once partially confirmed. Nor did any doubt remain after entering the kingly presence, for the potentate himself, in addition to a bead neck-lace, was attired in a cool-looking surtout made of balloon netting, whilst a pile of well-worn volumes was conspicuously placed to the right of the throne.

I lost no time in putting my least battered and best burnished helmet on Ja-jo-ja's head, a compliment he reciprocated by creating me his Prime Minister on the spot, and placing all my followers on his Civil List, with pensions of a quart of cowries a day, equal to one and eleven pence, say, of our money.

The general appearance of things about the Court, however, suggested that cowries were anything but plentiful, and I heard an old black woman, who looked suspiciously like the Court Washerwoman, having an angry altercation outside the palace with Yum-yum, the official who had come to meet us; whilst I could not but notice that a big oil-jar to the left of the throne, which was labelled with the Minemese equivalent for"National Treasury,"was so far from full that the Negro Chancellor of the Ex-chequer nearly fell headlong into it, in his efforts to get at enough cowries to pay for a barrelful of potted elephant, which the bearer-ominous sign!-sturdily refused to leave without the money.

I was the more encouraged, therefore, as soon as I was alone with the King, to allude openly to the state of his finance, which he promptly confessed was most unsatisfactory. In fact, he went on to tell me that so great had been his expenses-thanks principally to the extravagant example of an uncle of his, who, after passing ten years of his life in England as a lion-tamer, had returned to Mimemi to die amongst his people-that the regular taxes had been collected for the next four years in advance, all the current revenue being of an uncertain and fitful character. The ex-lion-tamer, from whom Ja-jo-ja had learned his English, was no more, and since his demise matters had been growing worse and worse, until the King — and this will show you to what depths of impecuniosity he had sunk— actually suggested to me that an exhibition should be made of his new helmet and the large necklace of blue and yellow beads he wore on state occasions, to which his subjects should be admitted on payment of twopence a head.

I assured him that no such step would be necessary if my advice was followed, and I at once proceeded to unfold the plan already hinted at.

"May it please your Majesty," I began, "in this otherwise perfect kingdom I surely miss something. You have no post."

"Post!" re-echoed the King. "Oh, yes, we have. A man was whipped at it yesterday, and he didn't surely miss it, I can tell you".

As in duty bound, I went off into convulsions at his Majesty's quip, and, presuming on my high office, I even ventured to slightly prod the regal ribs, as I exclaimed "Tchuk! you mad wag, you!" But, resuming my gravity, I went on to assure my new Sovereign that it was not a whipping-post I meant." Oh, dear, no! your Majesty," said I. What your country is languishing for is a penny post, which, as your lion-taming relative may have informed you, is the glory of Old England."

"No," returned the King, after reflection: "my uncle Bobo, I believe, told me the glory of your land was rum; but if the penny post is a good drink, let us have some of him by all means."

It required considerable explanation on my part to make clear my design to Ja-jo-ja; but directly he understood its introduction meant a steady income of cowries, he jumped at it, and fell on my neck and embraced me till I was all over native butter.

I must now take the reader back a little, as they do in the three-volume novels, and let him into a secret. Three months before I had started on the journey I am speaking of, my aunt Hephzibah passed away. She was an innocent old spinster, who had spent her life in making patchwork quilts and collecting old postage stamps; and, much to my surprise, I found that of her hoard of the latter, filling three big tea-chests, I was left sole legatee.

As the Government refused to take legacy duty on these old stamps, and as a collection of a million of them does not confer on the possessor the right of nomination to an Orphanage, as used to be rumoured; and as, moreover, I had not the ambition to have a room papered with them (nor a room either, if it came to that), my first notion was to burn my legacy, tea-chests and all. On second thoughts, however, not only did I decide to keep the old stamps, but I also had them packed carefully in a waterproof box, and took them with me on my African journey with my helmets and my beads.

When, therefore, Ja-jo-ja asked what he was to do for stamps for the new postal service, I was able to assure him that he might rely on me for all such details, if he would only supply, on his part, the requisite arbitrary decrees and despotic regulations to bring the postal system into general use.

Possibly King Ja-jo-ja's uncle had told him that in England the Crown jewels were on view to all who could pay sixpence for the sight, and the savage potentate thought, maybe, he was merely proposing something of the same kind.-Ed. H. C. A. I left the regal residence that day Postmaster-General as well as Prime Minister of Mimemi, and with a duly signed document in my pocket, securing me half the gross profits of my undertaking.

It was with a light heart and pleasant thoughts of my aunt Hephzibah I opened the case and found the old stamps in capital condition, with the exception of the top layer, for which, in consideration of their bleached appearance, I promptly resolved to charge four pence and use for registered letters.

When all was ready, and a large hut near the palace set apart for the sale of stamps, the King, at my instigation, issued an edict, of which the following is a free translation: —"Our thoughts are ever for your welfare. Night and day have we pondered how to make you happy." At last, We, your King, the lord of many elephants and no few rattlesnakes, have taken counsel on your behalf with the stranger from beyond the seas. The white-faced traveller has opened his heart to us; and, lo! it is very fair and good towards you." Rejoice, therefore, and buy many postage stamps of the great Yum-yum at the gates of our palace."KING JA-JO-JA. ”

On the face of it, this proclamation may seem somewhat vague and inconsequent; but it should be remembered that for days my followers, acting on my instructions, had been spreading the praise of the postal system throughout the country. I had translated, for one thing, a handbill relating to some famous quack pills into Mimemese, only for the word "pills" I substituted "postage stamps;" and having made my people learn this by heart, I bade them recite it wherever they went to all they met.

The popular idea of the new organization, there-fore, was that it was a kind of state medicine; and not a few of the earlier purchasers of the stamps, which had been carefully re-gummed, stuck them all over their persons like Lilliputian plasters.

In spite of the rush of the sick and ailing to avail themselves of the new postal facilities, the general result of the first day's business was by no means up to our expectations, and the public disappointment, on finding that the postage stamp was not an immediate cure for warts, pimples, or tumours, threatened at one time to take the shape of a violent attack on the post-office. This danger, though we warded off; but, to imbue the populace with a desire to write letters either of friendship, or of business, or to stimulate it to take a proper view of the boon thus placed within its reach, seemed such hope-less work, that, finding, after the office had been open three days, the takings only amounted to the equivalent, in cowries, of £ 1 45. 2d., including the 8s. 4d. for the stamps bought by an old chief with intercostal rheumatism to apply to his side like a mustard plaster, I went to Ja-jo-ja to assure him he must adopt more stringent measures.

"People that can write and won't write," said I, "must be made to write, your Majesty. "Just so," returned the genial potentate;" and perhaps you would like to teach them to do so." "What!" I exclaimed," you mean to say, King Ja-jo-ja, that your people cannot write ?" "Write ?" said the monarch, smiling, "not a single one of them!" "Then, why, for goodness ' sake, didn't you tell me so ?"I cried, angrily." Here have I been arranging for big daily deliveries of letters, and now you tell me no one in your country can write."

"Wrong is more in my people's way," returned Ja-jo-ja, again smiling. But look here," he went on more seriously: "what must we do really ?"and his face fell perceptibly as

he gazed down into the still hopelessly empty oil-jar.

I had soon hit upon a new plan to meet the prevailing lack of calligraphic skill, and this was embodied in a fresh edict issued by the monarch. By this arbitrary document it was arranged that every adult inhabitant of Mimemi should send at least two letters per week to some one or another; but that, to overcome the writing difficulty, the envelope should be directed (for a small additional charge) by the postal officials, whilst the contents might consist of a leaf, a small flower, a butterfly, or even nothing at all, so anxious was Ja-jo-ja to meet his people's wishes. As he had 20,000 adult subjects at the very least, the weekly returns ought under these circumstances to be close on £ 170, and I still saw my way to clearing a handsome sum by my aunt Hephzibah's legacy.

But, alas! once more were we doomed to disappointment. In spite of the peremptory proclamation, few customers came; and those that did severely taxed our resources by wishing to enclose such un-anticipated articles as store pigs, pickled elephants ' feet, and puncheons of palm oil.

Ja-jo-ja, enraged at finding his first day's share in the receipts was but 9s. 2d., sent out his palace guards to seize the first twenty adult subjects they came to. Brought into the royal presence, he furiously demanded of them why they had disobeyed the last edict. Their reply suggested collusion, for, lifting up their voices with one accord, they cried, "O King! thine unworthy worms have no one to whom they can send a letter."

"What!" exclaimed the King, "no relative ?" "No, your Majesty," returned the adults; no relative." "What!"exclaimed the King, "no friend ?, "No, your Majesty ,"returned they; "no friend." "What!"exclaimed the King, no anybody ?" "No, your Majesty," returned the adults, no anybody, and we only wish we had!"

And with the same they turned on their heels, as though that must necessarily be the end of the discussion.

But King Ja-jo-ja was not to be foiled like this. For a moment he was silent; but a glance into the empty oil-jar seemed to reassure him, and, looking up, he hastily winked at me, and then, calling after the adults, he exclaimed,

"Here, stay a minute! You have no one to send a letter to, and you only wish you had, eh ? ”"Ah, your Majesty, that we do!" cried they, still with one accord.

"Then, look here!" returned their monarch-and I never felt prouder of that potentate than at that moment— “ you shall all send letters to me, to tell me how you love and honour me, twice a week. The first letter's due to-morrow! Do you hear ?"

"Yes, your Majesty," replied the adults, but no longer in glib unison, for they knew Ja-jo-ja meant what he said; whilst I, well satisfied at the King's happy thought, stepped out to sell stamps to the discomfited twenty as they passed.

A third edict put the monarch's notion most un-mistakably before the people; and as it further stated that the King would expect to hear daily from those who failed in their bi-weekly epistle, the rush for stamps the next morning was almost over-whelming, and Yum-yum was kept licking them till he dropped, what with fatigue and bad gum.

That afternoon I proudly escorted a file of slaves bearing nearly 9,000 letters in baskets to their King, and, what was better, filled two big oil-jars and a bucket with the cowries representing Ja-jo-ja's share of the receipts.

To shorten my story, I may say that in about six months not a single stamp of my aunt Hephzibah's legacy was in hand; but I had instead elephants ' tusks and teeth in my possession, which, on my subsequent return to this country, brought me in close upon £ 2,500, upon which sum, however, I have not yet remitted any legacy duty under the head of "conscience money."

King Ja-jo-ja pressed me to continue in his service, but the fact was my faithful followers warned me that, as the originator of the postal service in Mimemi, I was cordially hated by the populace; so I promised him to return shortly with a fresh stock of stamps, and, pressing on him my last glass beads, went off in the night, with just enough of my followers to carry my ivory. The others I left charge-able to the Mimemi Civil List, and, so far as I know, they are drawing their quarts of cowries to this day. As for me, I am still what I always was, a traveller, with no civil list to draw upon. So, in default, I draw, as you see, upon my imagination.

AGLEN A. DOWTY.

Hood’s Comic Annual 1877

WOE TO WHIFFIN!

A Story of Chiffney's Revenge.

I AM a Poet! and as poets are born and not made, I suppose I must have been born one. Suppose, in soothe! do I not know it, feel it, glory in it ?

Ah, yes! it must have been so, for ere yet my infant lips could "lisp in numbers," I have it on undeniable authority that I often composed myself to sleep in my mother's

arms. Chiffney declares that my compositions have since induced similar somnolence in others; but Chiffney is an unscrupulous rival, whose observations I despise.

Born a poet! Oh, yes, indeed I was. I cried, so to speak, for Apollo's lyre to play with-or rather to play on-whilst still in my cradle, and my wails whilst teething were, in effect, my earliest invocation of the Muse, or as Chiffney would put it with his vulgar humour, the Canine Muses.

For years I guarded my secret jealously, and no one, I think, ever guessed why I collected all the old envelopes, and so frequently inked my bed-clothes. My father once birched me for rolling my eyes at the dinner-table. He, blind man! said I was making rude faces at my Aunt Jane, knowing nothing, of course, of the poetic frenzy that just then was filling my soul. And my mother-bless her innocent heart!-chided me often for evading the family hairdresser when he came to cut our hair on the premises the first Saturday in every month. But I held faithfully to my purpose, and poured out my heart in the privacy of my own bedroom, un-regarded save by the cold eye of the faithless moon-to whom the majority of my earlier odes were addressed-and by an uncanny black cat, which I found on one occasion lapping with intense relish from the pomatum-pot in which I surreptitiously kept my ink.

I do not propose to describe in detail how at last my great gift was revealed to the world. Of course the time came, as it was bound to come, when the yearning for a human audience for my soul's impassioned utterances waxed too strong to be repressed. The black cat, after listening stolidly for years to my nocturnal outpourings, suddenly rushed off one night with a weird caterwaul whilst I was in the middle of an unusually powerful apostrophe addressed to the "Gin Fiend" (suggested by the summary dismissal of our plain cook that day for secret drinking), and never returned to my window-sill again. By a strange coincidence there was no moon on the night to which I refer; and in the absence of both my old friends, I was impelled by an involuntary though irresistible impulse I would have gladly overcome to go and knock up my father, that he might hear the conclusion of my perfervid lines.

I shall never forget my mingled feelings of ecstasy and fear when, in answer to a naturally impatient "Who's there at this time of night ?" I replied ,"Oh, if you please, father, it is I, Frederic Adolphus, and I wish to recite to you the latter portion of my lines to the Gin Fiend!"

My male parent, always practical — too practical, it has often seemed to me, for a poet's papa-did not catch at the chance thus offered him of realizing a son's genius. The gist of his answer was, in fact, that my invocation of the power of darkness already named would surely keep till the morning. Fancy poetry keeping, as though it were fresh milk or new-laid eggs!

In the end, after the keyhole had served to convey other and harsher words to my ear, I left the door-mat on which I had been shivering, with the Gin Fiend's dithyrambics, or the greater part of them, still weighing heavily upon my soul, and sought my ink-stained couch.

But not to sleep! It was well, in soothe, my Aunt Jane was not in my chamber, for my eye must have rolled that night as it had never rolled before; but with the morning light came calm, for the die was cast, the Rubicon was crossed, and I had made my mind up to announce my mission to the world.

When, therefore, my father after breakfast called me to him, and asked me how long I had taken to walking in my sleep, and what I meant by the gibberish I had talked, I could in my most respectful but reserved manner refer him to the "Poet's Corner" of the next issue of the *Muddleton Mercury* for an explanation.

Yes, it had come to that! Burning with a sense of injured pride, I had risen early and rushed off to the editor of the local journal with a biscuit-tin full of my favourite poems, and in a few eager sentences, broken with emotion, laid them at his feet.

To his everlasting shame, I have to record here that he did not rise to the occasion. On the contrary, he descended! —yes, positively stooped to discuss sordid business details, and made me pay for six copies of the next Mercury in advance, before he would agree to allow me to address the Gin Fiend through the medium of its columns.

I paid him out, though, ere I slept, in six bitter stanzas, beginning-

"Beware, thou venal huckster, thou

That dar'st to seam the poet's brow! '

though, as he inserted these also the following week on the usual terms (six prepaid copies of the paper), I fear the iron of my wrath did not enter into his soul as deeply as I had intended.

I only refer to the *Muddleton Mercury* and its sordid editor, however, as marking an important epoch in my life. In the "Poet's

Corner" of that print I poured out my soul for nearly three years, until, in fact, it ceased to appear. It must evidently have been dying when I first put into it my burning thoughts and galvanized it into fresh life. It says much, I think, for the vitality of my poems that I kept it alive so long.

That odious fellow Chiffney, on the other hand, declares that he can't make out, for the life of him, why my attempts did not kill it sooner. But Chiffney, as I have said, is a rival, whom, let me repeat, I hate and despise. And with good reason too, for to Chiffney I owe the shipwreck of my life's hopes.

But for him I might now have been rivalling the Laureate himself in popularity; my poems might have been on every table, instead of — (down, down, foolish, emotional flutterer, down! the truth must and shall be told!) —-on every butter-shop counter; and my name, Adolphus Frederic Whiffin, might have been inscribed on England's bede-roll of fame and glory!

I am still a poet, it is true! No one, nay, not the sinister Chiffney himself, can snatch from me my birthright, or dare to stay my rolling eye. I defy the proudest in this land of ours to bring my back hair beneath the barber's scissors, or to tamper with my cape or collar. My bed linen is now my own, and I ink it at my own sweet will, none daring to make me afraid. I find strange satisfaction too in allowing my finger-nails to grow, and in the thought that there is no theatrical lessee in this great city who has not during the past few years received and promptly lost a five act tragedy of mine in blank verse. It is something too to be the producer and possessor of two portmanteaux and a long-drawer full of unpublished poems.

It is something too-ay, it is a great deal-to have an old Uncle Silas, so poor and so meek that he is glad to come to take an early cup of tea with me every week, though afterwards he has to remain awake in an arm-chair and listen to poems varying according to my mood, till he is fetched by his landlady's son at ten sharp.

Chiffney, to be sure, tells everybody that it would have killed the old chap months ago, had it not been that he is providentially deaf; but I have more than once told you what I think of Chiffney.

Well, all the above things are consolatory as far as they go; but I must candidly confess that that is not very far. I feel, for one thing, that it is horribly selfish of Uncle Silas and me to sit and enjoy my poetical masterpieces alone week after week. It is true I have left all my poems, and the portmanteaux and chest of drawers in which they are, to the British Museum; but it by no means follows, I fear, that the trustees will carry out my wishes, and exhibit the original MS. of my great poem on the "Fallacy of Fame" (unpublished) in the glass case containing Magna Charta ,"Paradise Lost," and the death warrant of King Charles I.

But even if my posthumous popularity were assured, it would be much pleasanter, not to say more profitable, had it been secured by me in the flesh. I am not sordid, thank goodness! but I certainly think it would have been nice to have magazine editors eager to give me gold for every line I write. Nor should I have spurned the more sentimental aspects of renown, which would have made my semi-detached villa a shrine dear to tourists and disciples of my special poetic cult. I will even admit that there was a time when I looked forward to the realization of such fame as this, and actually planted my front garden with specially hardy evergreens that would stand rough usage, and even survive whittling at the hands of enthusiastic Americans anxious to carry off relics of a great poet's home.

But Chiffney, as I have more than once hinted, has blasted my hopes of contemporary fame; and I am anxious to ease my stricken spirit by telling you how he did it.

I have stated that he too claims to be a climber of Parnassus, if, indeed, a comic poet can be said to mount its slopes. For myself, I despise all comic poets, and Chiffney most of all, as the British Museum authorities will find if they only go conscientiously through the contents of the portmanteau marked

"No. II.-SATIRES AND APOLOGUES."

From the early days when his ribald and jesting rhymes jostled my soul's outbursts in the Poet's Corner" of the *Muddleton Mercury* has Chiffney crossed my path. It is true I poured out the bitterness of my spirit upon him in the first instance in a series of twelve sonnets, printed for private circulation; but in that I did but follow the promptings of my higher nature. For him to take it up as a personal matter was absurd. As well, as I told him in a supplementary sonnet, might the worm protest against the boot-heel that grinds it into the dust, or the flea object to the avenging thumb-nail.

But Chiffney had no soul to rise to this view of the relations between us, and he actually took exception to my poetic excursions, as though, forsooth, he could control my pinions, or attempt to direct their flight. In vain I reasoned with him in a special ode, commencing,

"Insensate Chiffney! malice still to bear!

Stick to thy comic rhyming, and beware!”

This, in fact, only made matters worse; and having sent me a ribald post-card assuring me he would be revenged, Chiffney set himself to perfect the plan that has wrecked my hopes of gold and glory this side the grave.

To show you his spiteful malice in all its heinous deformity, I must go back to the month of March, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight. It was a season fraught with the deepest anxiety for me, for then it was that, after numerous vicissitudes, my first volume of poems was to see the light of day. I will not go into the terms on which I had arranged with my publishers to produce it. I must say, how-ever, to their eternal disgrace, that they failed to rise to the occasion as I could have hoped. It was to no purpose that I promised, on certain conditions, to immortalize them in a poem specially added; and it was with equal lack of success I threatened to hand them down to everlasting opprobrium in a modern Dunciad. They stuck to their terms, which were hard ones, the result being that I had far more than an ordinary interest in my literary bantling-had, in fact, a considerable portion of my small capital in it as well.

But I will come to the morning of publication. Preliminary difficulties had been overcome, my publishers ' prejudice as to the propriety of using the Laureate's green cloth for the binding of my book included; and I had been allowed to feast my eyes on 500 copies of

A SOUL ON THE TENTER-HOOKS, And other Poems,

BY

ADOLPHUS FREDERIC WHIFFIN,

as they stood stacked in their verdant newness ready for the morning's rush. Then I had gone to my home, and spent the livelong night in pouring out my agitated soul in a blank verse soliloquy.

But in the meantime I had not neglected practical measures for insuring the success of my book. Soon as the morning broke I had arranged for my Uncle Silas to start, accompanied by his landlord's son, in "a growler," regardless of expense, on a tour embracing all the West-End book-shops. Alighting at each emporium, my aged relative was to inquire in earnest accents for a copy of "A Soul on Tenter-Hooks, and other Poems," at the same time putting down a sovereign on the counter. On being told that the book was not in stock, Uncle S. was to mutter "Dear me! dear me! how very provoking!" and taking up the sovereign, to begin to hobble from the shop. On this the landlord's son, who had also been coached by me, was to chime in with a "Perhaps you could get a copy for the old gentleman by the afternoon," and, without committing himself to call for it, or pay in advance, to leave the shopkeeper with the impression that it would be as well to order the book.

I myself had arranged to inquire for it hurriedly at all the London bookstalls just as a train was starting, and then rush off, shouting out that I would ask for it when I returned the next day. My landlady too, on condition that I wrote out the name of the book on a piece of paper, and did not ring for her whilst she was gone, allowed her servant to go round to all the Kennington and Walworth book-shops in the evening.

In these and many other ways I hoped to stimulate the trade, in their own interest, to take up a volume that I felt was bound to be a success; and it was with a sanguine heart that I called on my publishers the next day to see how the work was going off. I was prepared for good news, too, I admit, but not for the glad tidings that met my ear.

"A Soul on the Tenter-Hooks ' ?"returned the senior partner enquiringly to my query, as though in the magnitude of the firm's business he had already forgotten what book it was. "Let me see: that was a cookery book, wasn't it ?"

When I had indignantly explained what it really was (which, of course, he very well knew), he held a muffled conversation through a pipe with a subordinate, and then turning to me, said, “ Well, sir, you ' ll be pleased to hear, first five hundred copies of ' Tenter-Hooks ' are all gone, and that we have put another thousand in sheets in the binder's hands. At this rate, sir, you will soon begin to make a little profit."

I was too full of joy to answer him. Five hundred copies gone already! Why, that was a Tennysonian coup! a Swinburnian stroke of business! and my brain reeled as I realized the fact. Profit! what cared I for that ? It was fame, however-glory, I saw awaiting me in the distance; and, full of wild dreams of future greatness, I rushed speechless from my publishers ' premises.

No thought of Chiffney obtruded at that ecstatic moment! Not once did his threats of vengeance recur! I could, in fact, have shaken hands with a thousand Chiffneys in the fulness of my heart at the time. I was overflowing with love to the human race generally; and grateful to my Uncle Silas in the hour of triumph for a victory due, at least in part, I felt, to his good aid, I went into the

first hosier's shop I came to and bought him some silk bandannas, knowing they would be acceptable to him, as he suffered from a chronic influenza.

It was in Fleet Street that I effected the purchase, and coming out of the shop, scarcely knowing whether I was on my head or my heels, I found myself turning instinctively to look at the contents of an old bookstall which was next door. In front of this shop, as is often the case in London, was a series of big boxes, in which miscellaneous volumes, thrown there higgledy-piggledy, were marked up,

"ALL THESE BOOKS AT 6d.," or 4d., or 3d., or 2d., as the case might be.

I shall never know, I suppose, what led me to turn directly to the box over which was seen the legend,

"ALL THESE BOOKS AT 2d.!"

But turn to it I did; and with my habitual curiosity, although in an unusually absent spirit, I began to toss over the contents of this cut-down tea-chest. They were of the ordinary character, just what from long experience I expected to find-a back number or two of the *Cornhill* with the pictures abstracted; an odd volume of "*Blair's Village Sermons,* " paper boards; a " *Continental Bradshaw*" for July, 1869; a few political pamphlets of ancient date; some old Books of the Play; a stray part of "*Cassell's Bible;"*a Guide to Clackton-on-Sea, and other miscellaneous odds and ends of a second-hand book-shop.

I have not yet mentioned, I think, that my sight is bad-injured, I may add, by persistent contemplation of the moon in my younger days; but such is the fact; and my examination of the book-box was, therefore, a protracted and elaborate operation. But time was just then no object to me, nor money either, for I saw a golden vista ahead, only bounded by the 50th edition of my new work; and I had lavishly selected five twopenny volumes for purchase, and, regardless of expense, was seeking a sixth to make up the shilling, when I came upon a book of such spick-and-span appearance that I felt it must have got into the box by mistake.

That, however, is no business of mine, thought I to myself, as I brought the volume closer to my eyes for examination, —a reflection that I had summary reason to alter when, a moment later, I opened the cover, and read all too plainly on the title-page,

A SOUL ON THE TENTER-HOOKS, And other Poems,

BY

ADOLPHUS FREDERIC WHIFFIN,

Author of Midnight Yearnings; Wails of Woe; A Stableful of Nightmares, & c. (unpublished).

My eyes, as I have stated, are not so good as they might be, and I had, I thought, some reason, there-fore, for refusing to believe them when they told me such an unaccountable story as this.

"It is all a mistake!" I muttered, "a wild freak of an overwrought brain!" and then looking about me, and remarking an intelligent member of the police closely watching me, for I had in my excitement crammed the five selected volumes into my coat-tail pockets, I beckoned him to me.

"Sergeant," I said, well knowing he was a private, but wishing to secure his friendly assistance, "kindly read me the title of this book, for my eyesight is bad, and I cannot quite make it out."

Holding up the title-page to him, I waited for his words as a felon hangs upon the lips of the foreman of the jury.

Each moment was to me as an age; and as the constable leisurely took the bearings of the page before committing himself to speech, an eternity had seemingly passed before his harsh and unsympathetic voice fell upon my ears.

"Hay-So-ul-hon-the-Tender-' ooks," he began; and I waited to hear no more.

"It is too terrue!" I wailed, adopting in my strong emotion the pronunciation of the tragic stage; and snatching the book from the astonished policeman, I dashed into the shop, when I found the proprietor on his knees amongst a lot of books just in from a sale at Sotheby's.

In a moment I was on my knees at his side. "Pardon me for this intrusion," I gasped," but I thought it right to tell you that this new and valuable book of poems has got into your ' All-these-at-Twopence! ' box in mistake. I happen to know it was only published yesterday, and that nine shillings is the price."

Staring at me through his glasses, the bookseller took the volume, glanced at it contemptuously, as it seemed to me (I felt I could have had his blood as he did so), and then throwing it carelessly aside, and resuming his work, said coolly,

"Oh, no! it's very kind of you to take all this trouble, but it's no mistake, thank you. Tuppence is the right price of the book, and the worth of it too, I dessay. At any rate, that's what I sell ' em at, and you can have as many ' Tenter-Hooks ' as you like at the price."

I am a man of sudden impulses, as you have seen, and scarcely had that ruthless bookseller finished his reply than, struck by a fresh and maddening thought, I rushed from the shop, and running through what was left of Temple Bar, kept on at my top speed till I had reached the first second-hand book-shop in the narrow street now known as Bookseller's Row.

One glance in the "All-these-at-2d.! ” box confirmed my hideous suspicion. There only too surely, conspicuous in its bright green cover, was, "A Soul on the Tenter-Hooks, and other Poems"! There was another old book-shop next door, and taking a step or two forward, I could there, too, see gazing at me like a basilisk the same vivid, verdant volume.

At the same moment two urchins went gaily by. "G'long," one was saying to the other, "d'yer see any green ?"It was only a coincidence; but such as it was, it proved the last straw; and I fell fainting into the arms of a policeman, who, after bringing me to with brandy at a cab stand, said it was his painful duty to hand me over to the City authorities for stealing five volumes, price 2d. each, from a book-shop in Fleet Street.

I was too far gone to fully comprehend my awkward position; and, when a considerate inspector at the police station kindly asked me to explain, I retorted with one hundred and fifty or so of the bitterest lines of my somewhat lengthy satire on the "Hollowness of Hope," which I delivered so wildly that it was deemed prudent to let me complete my recitation in the padded cell, and to send for the divisional surgeon without delay.

Fortunately for me, he turned out to be the medical attendant of my Uncle Silas, whom I had often met at my aged relative's rooms in Brook Street, Holborn; and he so far interested himself in my case as to soon secure my liberation.

I promptly hastened to continue my crushing though soul-absorbing quest; and hiring a "growler" (taken by time), I visited, during the next two hours, at least a score of old book-shops between Islington Green and Oxford Circus. Wherever I found the boxes outside, there, only too surely, was my book; though, as I neared the West-end, I found some slight consolation in the fact that it was classed with the "All these at 4d." lot.

How it had come into such a place at all, however, was a mystery that still baffled my soul as I alighted at a shop in Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road, where my eye had been caught by the now-familiar patch of verdant colour. But, as I stood verifying its identity, a voice, only too well known, fell upon my ear.

"If you'd like another dozen of those ' Tenter-Hooks ' at ninepence," the voice was saying," you can have them. I wan't to clear out the rubbish without delay."

Ere the bookseller could answer, I had sprung into the shop, exclaiming, "Viper! It's you, then who have crossed my path!"

"Why, good gracious me!" cried Chiffney-for need I say his was the treacherous voice I heard ?-"it's Whiffin!" Then, recovering his composure, he added, "I say, old man, how goes the book eh ?"

"Crocodile!"was not the most effective rejoinder in the world to make, but it was all I could then hiss.

"So ho, Whiffy! So ho, then!" retorted my imperturbable foe." Why, I've been your best customer. I've spent a little fortune on your ' Tenter-Hooks, ' I can tell you. Still, I owed you one; and now we ' re quits. So ta-ta, old man; and let me hear when your second edition is ready."

With that my triumphant rival coolly walked out, leaving me speechless and well-nigh foaming at the mouth.

I did not go to any more old book-shops, for I knew enough of Chiffney to be sure his revenge had been complete; but I went home, and poured out my soul in a tragic ode that will now, alas! never be published, unless, indeed, the British Museum trustees are moved to do me posthumous honours.

Of course, not another copy of my book was ordered from the publishers. The public, seeing a brand-new volume of poems in an "All these at 2d." box, naturally drew its own conclusions, which were not favourable to the work. As a matter of fact, even at 2d. it still hangs on hand, as I am only too frequently reminded when I take my walks abroad.

To this day I am paying, by weekly instalments, the cost of binding the one thousand copies, so hastily put in hand on the strength of Chiffney's large order.

And yet I am as far from fame as ever!

AGLEN A. DOWTY.

Hood’s Comic Annual, 1877, page 78

MRS. HUCKITT'S HOBBY.

THE reader of the following narrative is affectionately desired to reserve the dropping of the sympathetic tear, or the utterance of the indignant "Pish!" or contemptuous "Pooh!" as the case may be, till the end of it be reached. If to this modest request I add the hope that American papers will please

not copy without acknowledgment, I have, I think, made the only prefatory remarks that, under the painful circumstances, are necessary.

On the sixth of March, then, in this very year, we sat down to breakfast in the shop parlour of No. 73 Sturminster Street, Ball's Pond, at the usual time, in the usual spirits, and, as I hap to know, as carver of the ham, with our usual appetites.

We consisted of me, Adolphus Frederick Huckitt; Mary Jane my wife; our five olive-branches-there was a baby in the shop with Hephzibah, the maid-of-all-work, besides; and the apprentice, a thin, modest young man, whose taciturnity at the table was only equalled by his edible capacity. I do not say it with any desire to injure this youth's character; but when he was as yet a growing boy, his inordinate appetite was such that he literally ate his widowed mother onto the parish. I should also observe, to be strictly accurate in my chronicle, that only four of our little ones clustered round the board when breakfast commenced. Anthony Henry was late, as usual.

Subsequent events have caused me to remember every trivial incident of this meal with strange vividness. Thus I know it was whilst I was helping Mrs. H. to a little fat that Hephzibah, who always watches the shop for us at this time, as the apprentice is of no use whatsoever till he has broken bread, came in and called him to serve some methylated spirits and a boot-brush. I recollect, too, that when he returned, smelling strongly of lamp oil, he brought the day's correspondence just left by the postman. It included, as I can also recall, a packet of business communications for me; a letter for the apprentice himself, containing eighteen stamps sent him by his widowed mother, which were all spent in buns to keep under the counter and eat at odd times; and what appeared to be a stout pamphlet, per book post, for Mrs. Huckitt.

The arrival of the mail did not, I confess, interfere with my taking a second helping of ham. The oil market, indeed, was too firm, and the colour trade too dull, to admit of my correspondence being of any especial interest. It thus happened I had not opened a single letter when Anthony Henry slunk into the room, and, with the smears of the liquorice he took to bed with him the night before lingering on his dry-washed face, was about to take his seat. To order him to the pump, there to await my coming, was the work of a moment; and then looking across to Mrs. Huckitt, to read assent in her eyes, I for the first time noticed that a strange change had come over her. She was gazing at me tenderly and beseechingly, whilst there was at the same time in the curl of her lip a something which told me plainly as though she spoke "My mind is made up, so don't speak to me. Argument would be vain!" Thinking the sudden transformation expressed in her look might imply her internal resolve to summarily chastise Anthony Henry after I had pumped over him, I did not allude to it. A moment after she was deeply engaged in perusing the pamphlet already referred to, and without saying a word — to my silence at this moment I now attribute the calamity that ensued-I rose and went into the back yard.

My hydropathic task performed, I proceeded to the performance of the duties appertaining to the business of an oil and colourman, who was, more-over, the sole manufacturer of a sauce, better known to the public as *Huckitt's Helpdown*. "That I also had an aërated water agency is a fact not necessary to the telling of my story, the more so as this branch was entirely managed by my brother-in-law, who, having run through two fortunes and the Bankruptcy Court, had come down to selling soda-water on commission in a spring cart. The morning's traffic was not brisk, and in default of business, I sent the apprentice to weed our small garden, whilst I experimented on a new mixed pickle I was intending to bring out as a companion to my sauce. I had been busy for some time when I heard the side door quietly opened and as quietly closed again. Knowing that Hephzibah did not dis-countenance the policeman on our beat as she ought, I looked through the window to see who had gone out. But I was too late, for I saw no one.

In an hour the children trooped in from school, and advancing to me in Indian file, my eldest boy at eight-placed his slate in my hand. It was covered on both sides with a bold text hand, in which I was asked, there being a holiday in honour of their mistress's birthday, to let them take out the stock of scouring-bricks into the back yard, and play at Tower of Babel all the afternoon.

Ere I had time to convey my qualified consent-for scouring-bricks require very careful handling-the glass door of the parlour opened, and Hephzibah appeared with a face so perturbed, that, my thoughts recurring to the police force, I expected to hear that one of its members had so abused her hospitality as to be at that moment drunk and incapable in the kitchen. It was, therefore, with a sense of relief I heard her say,

"Oh! if you please, sir, about dinner ?" "Ah, it's ready, is it ? ” was my reply ."Well, no, sir," returned she; "there's the cold

mutton, an ' there's a kookimber; but missis ain't lef ' no horders. ”

"Left no orders!" I echoed. "Why, you know, Hephzibah, she always sees to the dinner herself." "Ye-yes, sir," stammered the maid-of-all-work;" but please, sir, missis went out suddenly at ' leven, an ' this was on the pincushing when I went to make your bed." And she held out a note.

Now, I knew enough of life to be aware that when a communication for the master of the house is found attached to the pincushion on his toilet-table, some great grief or sensational incident is at hand. So, excitedly leaning forward to grasp the letter, I put my foot on a clothes-peg, and failing to save myself by clutching at a large jar of family jam, fell heavily amongst the stock of black-lead and penny cakes of soft blacking. The children began to howl, Hephzibah screamed, and the apprentice, who had been availing himself of the opportunity to purloin pickled cabbage, ran to help me up with his stained fingers. But I waved him away, and, opening the note, just had strength to read,

"ADOLPHUS FREDERICK, — Yielding to an old and long-resisted temptation, I have fled. You will best consult your own and the children's happiness by leaving me unsought. Try to forget me, but remember it is the big wash next Thursday. MARY JANE."

Then it fell from my hand; and laying my head recklessly amongst the blacking and the debris of my pickle experiment I had brought to the ground with me in my fall, I became unconscious.

For the remaining hours of this terrible day I was utterly distraught. Called on to serve golden syrup whilst the apprentice was at tea-the sad event seemed to sharpen his appetite-I sent off the urchin who came for it with a basinful of our strongest "turps." The tiny innocent, dipping in his fingers and licking them in his juvenile glee, reached his native court in such a state of internal disorder, that all the mothers in the alley came back in an infuriated crowd, and demanded satisfaction. I was in hysterics on the second floor at the time, and the apprentice secreted himself beneath the counter; so that after using much strong language, they drew a large jugful of treacle, and leaving the saccharine fluid running in a thick stream over the counter, returned home to rub the victim of my inadvertence with soothing oils.

That night I sat up in the passage on a soda barrel. I wanted to keep the side door open, but to this the policeman objected. But I placed a lighted lamp at each window, so that if the wanderer returned she should not find herself unexpected. Twice I fancied I heard a voice singing, "There's a light in the window for me!" and began to undo the door-bolts; but each time it turned out to be a vagrant cat frightened into abnormal vocal effort by a straight-aimed brickbat or well-directed boot. When the morning dawned I was myself again, and at once made up my mind for action. Calling the apprentice before his usual time, I gave him a pocketful of biscuits, and sent him with an urgent note to one of the best-known Private Inquiry offices. In less than an hour I was closeted with Mr. Pundywick and had told him all. His first proceeding was to search the house. After an hour's absence he rejoined me in the parlour — which for some abstruse reason he did not search-and placing the carte of a large-bearded man in my hands, said,

"Bear up, good sir; women are faithless ever! This photograph I found behind the kitchen dresser. It is taken by an eminent artist in the Euston Road. I shall see that eminent artist, and he will put us on the track of your rival. Meantime I—— ”

"Stay, sir," I exclaimed,"my wife's not faithless in the way you assume that I feel certain of." (Leaving out the moral impossibility of such a thing, my Mary Jane at forty, I may say, is freckled and far from a beauty.)" Besides, I think Hephzibah, our housemaid, can explain this carte." And I said this with confidence, for I had detected, with an eye sharpened by mental torture, the sheen of pewter buttons beneath the big beard in the portrait.

When the girl came, I said, "Now, Hephzibah, we know all, so don't deceive me. Is your sweetheart" (and I pointed to the carte)" a sergeant yet ?"

"Oh! not yet, please, sir," she said, blushing all over her face; "but he's going to be, sir, an ' the banns is to be put hup when he gets ' is stripes."

"Then don't keep his likeness behind the dresser, ' said I, giving it to her:" it's misleading."

As she went out I looked at the Private Inquirer: he was evidently self-abashed. But not for long. Looking up, he asked in an oracular tone, "Your wife's relations live at-"Melton Mowbray,"I replied.

"Ah," he murmured, "then I will telegraph to Liverpool and all the outports. Meanwhile, good day." And making dummy entries in his note-book, he left me alone with--well, with what do you think ? He had left me alone with what proved to be the clue to the mystery!

Under the table, close to where Mrs. H.'s chair had been placed at the meal I have

mentioned, my eyes rested on a piece of crumpled paper. As the girl Hephzibah had done nothing since her mistress's flight but hold levées over the garden wall, attended by all the servants round, I knew the room had not been swept since the fatal morning: that piece of paper, then, had probably been there all the time. I picked up the torn fragment, and smoothing it out, not without thoughts of Mr. Wilkie Collins, I saw what follows:

CATA

John B

Surpl

171 MINNIVE HOLLO

Had I intended to adapt my story to the exigencies of a periodical appearance, I should have availed myself of this undeniably good chance to swoon. As it was, I sent to borrow the "London Directory." The solution was only too easy. There was in it a "Minniver Street, Holloway Road;" there was in that street a No."171;"and at No. 171 lived a firm of drapers marked with an * to show their silk-mercering propensities, named "John Bott and Sons."

So far, so good! and had it not been that I began to estimate the cost of the telegrams the Private Inquirer was probably sending all over England at that moment, I should have been positively cheery as I chartered a cab to follow up the newly-found trail.

It was still early morning when I arrived at my destination, and the majority of shop windows I passed were out of bed, so to speak, but not yet dressed. At 171 it was different. There the panes of the plate glass front were covered with whiting, except where a placard in red-ink announced:

ANNUAL SALE NOW ON. DESPERATE BARGAINS!

& c., & c.

I vainly tried to clear away sufficient space to gain a view of the inside of the shop. My only chance was the door, which continually swung on its hinges as customers pushed in. At last an unusually portly dame, with a parcel that looked like an undersized bolster, essayed to come out, and for a moment was jammed in the doorway. Looking in over her head, I saw what set my heart beating a wild tattoo.

I saw at the farther end of the shop a form clad in grass-green silk trimmed with yak lace. Without further identifying that form to the reader, I will go on to state that this sight changed my hesitation into resolution, and I dashed in.

A splendid shopwalker, armed with the usual soapy smile and inevitable "weepers," advanced to meet me, bowing and scraping, as though he kept his spine upstairs for use after shop hours only. "What can we show you, sir ?" said he. "Sir," I replied, almost beside myself with excitement," I want my Mary Jane!"

Mr. Jones!" shouted the dreadful creature. “ Forward, if you please, and pass this gentleman on to the light goods counter!"

"No, no!" I said, "I don't mean that. What I want is Mrs. Huckitt back."

"I beg your pardon, sir, "returned he most obsequiously," but I did not understand you to say huckaback before. Mr. Jenkins! this gentleman requires some huckaback. Upstairs, sir, if you please, and first counter to the right."

With a mighty effort I kept down the impulse to borrow a yard measure of a counter-bounder, and lay the Dundreary-whiskered one low. Quieting myself as much as possible, I said, "Pray pardon me; but the fact is, I saw my wife in here, and I wish to speak to her. She has passed round that counter to the left," and I pointed to where I had just before seen the grass-green silk skirt and yak lace disappear.

"Oh!" said he, quite affably, "that's it, eh ? keep forward by all means." And then he shouted with what I thought unnecessary vehemence, Miss Robinson, show this gentleman into the muff department."

Mrs. Huckitt--for it was she--was sitting before a pile of furs, and buying, as I came up, a pair of beaver cuffs. Sitting there, but how changed! An anxious look of eager excitement shone in her eye; her face was shaded by an expression of painful avidity; and as she heard my footsteps, she clutched at the heap of things before her as though fearful she would be deprived of a single bargain.

"Mary Jane!" I exclaimed in her ear, "it's me, Adolphus Frederick!"

She looked round, but made no sign of recognition. "You said these cuffs were nineteen and eight ?" she went on to the young lady serving her. "Nineteen and eleven, ” said she.

"I will take them," said Mrs. H., though I am sure she didn't want cuffs, for I bought her a sable set last winter.

"Mary Jane," I said again, "don't you know me ?" "I see," she said, turning to the catalogue in her hand, which I now identified as the packet she had received on the yester-morn; and still ignoring me, "you have some reduced tucked petticoats."

Come, come, Mary Jane," I said, "this is a capital joke, but you've kept it up long enough, really."

Her only reply was to turn to the young lady and say, "Who is this rude person ?"

"Can I show you anything, sir ?"asked a second shop girl who was near," or do anything for you ? ”"Do anything ?"I echoed. "Yes; pray do me the favour of telling me if I am mad. ”

"Really," said the shopwalker, who had come up," I think you are. This gent claims you as his wife, madam," he exclaimed, addressing Mrs. Huckitt.

She gave a short dry laugh, such as I had never heard before. "You have so many nice bargains," she said," and the sale is so short, I can waste no more time here. Please take me to the petticoats." "You'd really better go," said the shopwalker to me.

I began to think so too, and whistling some bars of Mrs. H.'s favourite air, "Home, sweet home," I went.

There was a telegram from the Private Inquiry Office at home. "Two ladies answering to your description sailed from Liverpool yesterday for Utah. I have cabled to the New York police."

I tore up that telegram in a rage.

Happily, before I had long had time to brood over my trouble, the children, like a sunbeam, burst into the back parlour from school. They thought – bless them their mamma had gone to see their Aunt Martha, at Camberwell, and I did not undeceive them

But their advent suggested another plan to me for winning their mother back from the life of bargain-hunting to which seemingly she was committed.

Telling Hephzibah to dress the infant in its best bib and tucker, I myself dressed little Jacky and Jemmy (our only twins, thank Heaven!) in their sailor suits, and told the apprentice to dust the perambulator.

Leading my sons, and followed by Hephzibah wheeling the baby, we reached Minniver Street in about an hour. Leaving the three children in the maid's charge at the corner, I went on and reconnoitred No. 171. There were four windows in the front; and in the farthest, one of the placards had luckily become partially unstuck, and hung down so as to allow me to see into this part of Messrs. J. Bott and Sons ' establishment by tiptoeing.

I began to think fortune had declared for me, when, sitting close to the door, I saw a form clad in grass-green silk trimmed with yak lace, busily buying remnants of check dustering. That was enough.

Stealthily I moved the children down, putting into the hand of each a penny tin trumpet I had bought on the way. Then forming them into an effective group on the step outside the shop entrance, I told them all to blow their trumpets, and throwing open the door at the same moment, I flung myself into an appropriate attitude and cried, False mother, behold thy helpless offspring!" whilst Hephzibah, not knowing how to take it, sobbed aloud. Naturally, the lady who was buying remnants of check dustering looked up.

When she did so I saw she was not my wife!

I draw a veil over the scene which ensued, though I may say the ruling feeling in the heart of Bott and Sons was to lock me up for a lunatic, after this my second escapade in one day. However, I did manage to get off at last; but on arriving home, found that Hephzibah, thinking me hopelessly mad, had hurried there, and put up the apprentice to locking me out. It being useless to parley from the street, I went up an adjacent passage, and, scaling two garden walls, got in at the back of my premises. But even when inside, it was the work of hours to persuade Hephzibah and the youth that I was not a maniac; and had they not wanted money to pay the baker, I should never have convinced them, I fear. I passed another miserable night, lighting the lamps in the windows as usual.

No wife came. In the morning, having disguised myself thoroughly, I ventured down to 171 Minniver Street again. I was earlier than usual, and I saw a crowd waiting to go in. In that crowd was Mrs. Huckitt. She was next the door, and, from her heavy, sleepy look, had probably been there for many hours. She went in, and all day I hung about the premises. She never appeared; but I observed an apprentice come out at one o'clock and return with a plate of sandwiches and a bottle of Bass; and I drew my own conclusions. It was not till eight I saw her again. Then a cab was fetched, and loaded with parcels, after which the shopwalker loomed in sight, escorting Mrs. H., who got in and told the driver, "York Road, Waterloo."

I followed with feet impelled by love, and was in time to see the four-wheeler stop at a railway arch close to Hungerford Bridge. Unlocking the door, she and the cabman deposited all the parcels within. Then she relocked the door, and, giving an address I failed to hear, drove off once more.

I followed again, but at the Obelisk I cricked my foot, and adjourned to the nearest coffee-house to meditate. I had seen the arch was nearly full of drapery parcels, and I knew the bargains at Bott's were for cash only. Mrs. H. left me with the balance of

£ 5, after providing a hot Sunday dinner out of it. But she had £ 1,000 in Consols in her own right. Was she spending her little all ? The thought was maddening; so I drove to the Bank. Of course it was shut; but getting the beadle in a corner, I so worked on his feelings that he gave me the Governor's private address. I was a desperate man, and before I or that Governor slept, I knew that Mary Jane Huckitt's stock had been transferred two days before to a perfect stranger.

This confirmed my theory, which was that my wife had suddenly been bitten by the bargain mania; had an attack of cheap drapery, in fact, and very badly too. Soon after her marriage she had broken out in the same way, and went so far as to pawn the gravy-spoon to buy two-button gloves, not even her right size. But, luckily, our first-born came into the world, and that cured her. Since then she had avoided even entering a draper's shop, leaving her sister Martha to do the shopping.

Evidently it was that catalogue of Bott and Sons ' that had done all the mischief.

Another miserable night. The next morning again did I hie to 171, but in vain. The sale was over. On consulting the "Times," I found other clearance sales on in various parts of London. I went to all the addresses, *seriatim*. At last, after twelve failures, I found my Mary Jane in a shop in Mare Street, Hackney. She was buying plain gimp fringe at half-price. I spoke to her, as before, in vain; I mentioned the baby's name--'t was useless. I told her Hephzibah had gone to her wardrobe and was wearing about her best under-linen. For a moment I thought she would reply; but she repressed her strong emotion with a gulp, and went on with the gimp. Again I returned to my home discomfited.

I am afraid to think how long this kind of thing went on. I sent out Hephzibah with the children to waylay her; I dispatched the apprentice with notes to the railway arch, saying that the baby had the whooping-cough; in short, there was no plan I did not try to bring back Mrs. Huckitt to the path of duty. But all my schemes seemed futile, and I was sinking into confirmed melancholia, when, five weeks after the memorable morning, I received news of the demise of Uncle Tolcher. He left me all his fortune, £ 9,000; and though money was so much dirt to me without my Mary Jane, I did rejoice at this windfall, because it gave me funds to carry out an elaborate ruse I had designed, but could not execute previously for want of means.

I took some large business premises in the Upper Street, Islington, and bought £ 200 worth of cheap drapery. I then whitened the windows, had a catalogue compiled, showing the most astounding reductions (for instance, silk-striped grenadine that usually sold at Is. 9½d., I put down at 4 $^{3}/_{4}$d.); and also got out a sensational poster in four colours. But my chief care was that Mrs. Huckitt should know of the sale; and not only did I strew all the streets leading to her railway arch with my catalogues-the name used was Hoppus & Co.-but I pushed several under the door, and even went so far as to paste up a poster on her outside wall.

The first of May dawned, and I was at my new premises betimes. The children, dressed in their best, were also brought down at an early hour by Hephzibah, who, having placed them in ambush under the counter at my request, went and prepared a dainty little meal in the room behind the shop. To better assume the character of Hoppus & Co., I wore blue spectacles and very bushy chestnut whiskers.

Before ten o'clock there was such a crowd outside that a policeman came to the side door to say if Hoppus & Co. didn't open he couldn't answer for their shutters. I sent Hephzibah to a top room to throw out reels of cotton for them to scramble. Meantime, from a front window I had assured my-self that my Mary Jane was there. I went down to the side door, and just when the fall of a handful of reels scattered the crowd, beckoned to her to come to me.

"Madam," I said, in a feigned voice, "Hoppus and Co. know your gift for bargain-buying, and would like you to have a private inspection."

Oh! how my arms longed to clasp her to my breast, as, yard measure in hand, I led the way to the grenadines!

She was beside herself when she saw the prices; and, stopping at last before a roll of French merino, marked 8d., she exclaimed "Oh, sir, I could spend all my life buying such bargains as this!"

It was not according to my preconcerted pro-gramme, but I could not resist the favourable opportunity thus given me to throw off my spectacles and whiskers, and to reply, "My own Mary Jane, you shall, you shall! and never pay for them either!"

Three raps on the top of the counter also brought the five olive-branches simultaneously from beneath it, who rushed to their mother's arms, thus making, as I thought, the reconciliation sure.

Unfortunately, however, before I could get Mrs. Huckitt to the room behind the shop,

the front door burst open, the crowd surged in, and in a moment had flung itself with excited frenzy upon the piles reduced goods. Simultaneously the expression on my Mary Jane's face changed to that stolid and stony stare it had worn when I found her at J. Bott and Sons '.

"Come, my dear, let us go, "I exclaimed, alarmed at the new phase of events.

"I don't understand you," she said. "Let me see, at once, the ninepenny-halfpenny barathea announced on your bill. Be quick, or that creature will have bought it all, " and she pointed to another such respectable middle-aged female as herself, who was making large purchases at the other side of the shop.

I must again draw the veil over the ensuing scene. Suffice it to say, after serving my wife with barathea, alpaca, and check dustering, as though she were a perfect stranger, and, as a husband and a father, vainly appealing to her as a wife and mother between the sales, my feelings overcame me, and I fell behind the counter in a swoon, about a quarter to one P.M.

When I came to myself Mrs. Huckitt was gone, but not without leaving a note, fastened this time to my yard measure. It was very brief, and merely said:

"Why vainly fight against my fate? Shall drapers make alarming sacrifices for nought? Not whilst there is life left to your lost Mary Jane.

I have seen her since, fitfully, through whitened windows and swinging doors, at the scenes of the alarming "sacrifices" and "desperate sales" now so general. She looks thinner and weaker, but no whit less determined. Several times, too, bundles of children's ready-made garments and packages of hosiery have been forwarded anonymously, per the "Parcels Delivery Company," to my new residence. No single article of attire has ever chanced to fit any one of my little ones or myself; but it comforts me to think Mary Jane meant well in sending them. Otherwise, she has made no sign.

I live in hope that she may be yet restored to us, and still laugh to scorn Mr. Pundy-wick's notion that there is a draper, as well as his bargains, in the case. The front door of the semi-detached villa on Hornsey Rise, bought with a portion of my uncle's legacy, is always on the latch, and the light is kept burning in the passage all night. Meantime I am practically a widower.

AGLEN A. DOWTY.

LAWN TENNIS, LIMITED; OR, THE BLIGHTED BACK GARDEN.

Hood's Comic Annual, 1881, p 70

THE Steam Launch has been of late frequently referred to by indignant and rhetorical writers to the Times, as the Juggernaut of the river! What, then, is to prevent me from denouncing Lawn Tennis as the Moloch of the back garden, I should like to know ?

But alas! there is but scant satisfaction in thus addressing the destroyer of my domestic peace! For the moment, when I was newly smarting from the wounds inflicted on my semi-detached comfort by this fell and fashionable nuisance, I really did derive satisfaction from alluding to it (metrically) as *"Thou Vampire Bat, that suckest home's sweet joys;" but I am not sorry now that the editor of the *Penge Vindicator* saw fit in his discretion to decline my proffered ode with thanks. It was better so.

** I see now, in my calmer state of mind, that such an epithet as "Vampire Bat" applied to lawn tennis was not well advised, for it gave the scoffer a chance of suggesting "Vampire Racket " as a more appropriate term; but I wrote it in hot blood, and was reckless.*

Society would only have laughed, probably, at my rhythmical complaint; ay, laughed and gone on with its "faults" and "services," its "volleys" and "setts" as before. Yes, 't was better so!

But though I have ceased to upbraid the editor of the *Penge Vindicator*, it must not be supposed that I have forgotten my cruel wrongs, or forgiven their inflictor. How could that be, in fact, when I cannot even look out of my back parlour window without contrasting the existing enraging or depressing (according to the state of my liver) scene, with that peaceful and variedly domestic "back-premisescape," if I may use the term, which it has replaced.

Two months ago, when I started with my wife for Eastbourne, there was no cloud upon the domestic horizon. We left our semi-detached home in peace with all men, and, I think I may add, with all women; for the long-standing feud with our laundress, which originally grew out of a table-cloth lost in the wash, only blazed up when collars were missing or the mangling not a success.

Eastbourne was full, and lodgings were expensive; but my disposition is not one to be easily harassed by trifles, and I set myself with considerable success to test the entertaining resources of our temporary abode. We bathed–my wife and I–in the fine old English fashion, from different parts of the beach; we promenaded on the pier; we

drove to the neighbouring objects of interest in that distinctively "sea-sidey" vehicle, the "brake and pair;" we boated; we listened to bands; we took tracts (an inevitable episode on the margin of the trackless deep now-a-days); and lastly, though not least, we went to Devonshire Park!

From the first I noticed that Laura-I refer to Mrs. Entwhistle, who is the wife of my bosom, I must try to remember, spite of what has passed-was particularly attracted to that part of the Park set apart for lawn tennis. At the cricket I could not get her to look, even when there was a good match on; whilst the rink she despised as old-fashioned, and the music as old and slow. But from the day our friends and neighbours, the Ashcotts, who chanced to be staying within a few doors of us in the Langney Road, asked her to play a "sett" with them, she well-nigh lived on one or other of the tennis-courts to which so large a slice of Devonshire Park is devoted.

I will promptly give Mrs. Entwhistle her due, and admit she soon made a good player, if the term "player," indeed, can be applied to a participator in such a feeble, foolish sport as the knocking of a hollow india-rubber ball backwards and forwards over a cabbage-net stretched out to dry.

Croquet was silly enough, goodness knows, and is played to perfection, I am told, in the grounds at Earlswood; but lawn tennis--well, no matter; perhaps I am a little prejudiced.

At all events, I have good reason to be so, for* Under happier circumstances, I should be tempted here to ventilate my theory that it is the frequency of these brake-rides at the seaside which has given rise to the well-known proverb, "Who ' brakes, ' pays!"

From the ill-omened day, already referred to, when the Ashcotts first placed a racket in Laura's hand, all my enjoyment of Eastbourne, qua watering-place, as the lawyers would say, was over. Mrs. Entwhistle thenceforth virtually lived in Devonshire Park, refusing towards the end to even leave the premises for her meals, but depending for sustenance on the boiled tea and gritty buns which were to be had within the ground. Our boating, our delightfully lazy beach mornings, as we called them, when the programme was to buy all the morning papers, flop on the shingle, and read, doze, and chuck pebbles aimlessly into the sea, all came suddenly to an end, and I was dragged, for I determined to do my duty to Laura, into a semi-fashionable world, occupied by a race of inane people, the men in white flannels, with striped jackets that would have made it possible for Joseph in his historical coat to pass unnoticed; and the ladies in astounding costumes, made to suit the game; who, from early morn to dewy eve, played interminable "setts," or watched others play them, with a pertinacity worthy of a better sport.

Thus it was that I was not at all sorry when our three weeks were up, and made no effort whatever to prolong our stay. In fact, on the eve of our departure, I rejoiced inwardly at the thought that a few more hours would bring us to our peaceful home, when Mrs. Entwhistle, I said to myself, will soon for-get the madness of the past fortnight as she resumes her domestic duties; whilst I shall find the solace I need in my children, my fowls, my rabbits, my flowers, my bees, my dog – in brief, in all the varied peaceful adjuncts of our small semi-detached but comfortable home.

It was this consideration that made me unusually amiable as we steamed next day to town, and not even when Laura's racket fell from the hat-rack on to my head, as we crossed some facing points, did I allow my temper to be ruffled. I merely put it up again, and said, with one of my most amiable looks, “ Ah, my dear, your racket will have to be put away in lavender when you get home."

Mrs. Entwhistle's reply was a stare expressive of her most intense wonderment as to whatever I could mean.

"Well, the Ashcotts have no court, Laura, you know, "I went on, in answer to her look;" in fact, none of our friends have, that I remember."

Well, Adolphus ?"exclaimed Mrs. Entwhistle in a most uncomfortable tone. "Well, my dear,"I returned,"that being the case, I don't see how you will get any lawn tennis till we go to Eastbourne again."

Now this was a most Jesuitical remark for me to make, for I well knew I had resolved a thousand times, during the past week, that wild horses should not drag me to Eastbourne, or, in fact, to any flat and lawn tennis-playing locality again.

"Oh, so you think I may as well put my racket away, and let it get warped ?" continued Mrs. E., still in the chilliest and most uncomfortable of tones." As to that, my dear," I answered, cheerily (amiability of temper, you will notice, is my strong point) " I would soon get you another, you know."

But Mrs. Entwhistle would not stand at ease, conversationally speaking, do what I would.

"You are very kind, Adolphus, ” she said, raising her voice, for just then the brake whistle sounded. "You can get me a set of rackets directly, if you please."

Directly, my dear!" I echoed. "Why, what ever can you want to do with them now?" "Why, to play with them, of course," answered my better half.

"And may I ask where, Mrs. Entwhistle ?" I inquired, raising my voice also as the whistle waxed still shriller.

"Certainly, Adolphus," said my wife, with provoking coolness, " though I should have thought you would have guessed. I propose to play with them in our own back garden! ”

With the same the engine gave a shriek, and plunged desperately into the Clayton Tunnel.

Now, there are back gardens and back gardens, but I flatter myself that to no semi-detached house-holder throughout the whole of Penge did his back garden mean what mine, up to the 31st of August last, meant to me. You see, I am pre-eminently a home-loving man, and the leisure hours of my five years ' tenancy of 19 Primula Terrace, Burnt-ash Road, Penge, S.E., have been mainly devoted to developing the resources of that diminutive home-stead. Especially had I revelled in the open air part of the undertaking, and considering its size-the back yard and back garden combined were some 90 feet by 30, I should say-I had made more out of it than any one who failed to see it in its prime could suppose.

When, therefore, Mrs. Entwhistle, bitten by the tarantula of lawn tennis, pronounced the doom of our back garden, she committed no ordinary act of selfishness. No, Laura knew full well what our back garden was to me, and what I had been to our back garden, and the very fact that she could have decided on such an act of domestic Vandalism as to turn it into a lawn tennis court, proves conclusively the demoralizing effects that the playing of an inane and fashionable game may have upon the female heart.

It is too late to regret now that I did not hold out against Mrs. Entwhistle's determination. One may yield too much in endeavouring to keep the domestic peace; I see now that I did this, and it adds to my anguish.

Within three days of our return, so eager was Laura for the change, the fatal consultation which sealed the doom of our back garden was held. A young man, from the firm of Mashwick and Murton, was in attendance, and having run his tape over what is called the "back-let" in the advertisements, he naturally assured Mrs. E. that the ground would serve most admirably for lawn tennis, adding in a gently deprecatory tone, for my benefit, that of course it was scarcely roomy enough to admit of aught else but the game in question.

"You hear that, Adolphus ?" said Mrs. Entwhistle, speaking cheerily, as she could well afford to speak, seeing she was having her own way so completely. "You must just shift your pets and things out of the way, my dear. Let me see," she added turning to the young man from Mashwick and Murton's; “you can send in the men to-morrow, you say ?"

The young man bowed, waving his hand as he did so in the direction of the bee-hive, the rabbit-hutch, the rockery, and other objects around, as though to suggest that their removal would take longer.

"Oh, they will be all right," my heartless Laura continued; "Mr. Entwhistle will clear those out of the way this evening; so please let the men come early to-morrow, for I want the ground finished out of hand."

"I fear we shall have to remove that water-butt also," rejoined the young man. "Five feet of the yard must be turfed as well as the garden, if you wish the court to be large enough for a four-handed game."

"Quite so!" cried my infatuated wife, seemingly oblivious that with the said butt went all our rain-water supply. "Remove it by all means."

Really, I think that just then Mrs. E. was so thoroughly crazed about her trumpery lawn tennis, that if Messrs. Mashwick and Murton's representative had gone on with an "Oh, yes! and by-the-bye, madam, this gentleman is rather in the way; and I think, if you don't object, he had better be removed with the water-butt," she would have promptly replied, "Certainly, certainly, cart him away this very minute, by all means!"

It was not until the young man had left, and the usual hour for making my al fresco rounds had come, that I realized the catastrophe which had so suddenly fallen upon me and my own peculiar outdoor belongings.

For nearly one hour I stood gazing vacantly before me at the little fountain, with the gold-fish in the basin, that I had only rigged up just before making that fatal journey to Eastbourne; and I was called to myself by the advent of our maid-of-all-work, who had come out, she told me, at her "missis's" direction, to help me to shift my litter." These were her very words, and I confess I was all but stung by them into action; and I had advanced three steps towards the back door, with a view of seeing Mrs. Entwhistle, and insisting, thus late, on her countermanding her men from Mashwick and Murton's. But once more my

extraordinary gift of amiability stopped me, and I resolved, for the sake of peace, to suffer on.

My "litter," as Laura so unworthily called it, was not a collection to be shifted bodily at five minutes ' notice. In its curious variety it represented the growth of years, dating, indeed, from the time I had begun with a pair of Dorkings I won in a raffle at a bazaar; and still going on, as a fact, seeing I had actually been at work, when we left for the sea, on a small cucumber-frame, made out of an old bed-room window-sash I had bought at a sale.

It was all very well, then, to send our maid-of-all-work to tell me to shift it all; but shift it whither ? was what I wanted to know. Fortunately, I am a man of undoubted resource; and to clear out a portion of the coal-cellar for the coop with the fowls, which were laying admirably at the time-the more's the pity-was the work of only a quarter of an hour or so. The rabbits, kept for the special delectation of our first-born, Adolphus Leopold, aged five and a half years, in a Gothic hutch of my own make, took up but a small corner; but Mashwick and Murton's young man had declared that for two courts, each 39 feet long and 27 feet wide, every inch of space was required, and certainly he was quite right in saying that.

So the rabbits had to be banished temporarily to the wash house, leaving me face to face with the problem of how to deal with my hive of healthy and industrious bees. The coal-cellar would be a purgatory to them, whilst if placed in the back kitchen, I knew they would hold it against all comers. give them away just when their comb was ripe for appropriation seemed too bad; and so at length, as the evening was closing in, I acted suddenly on a chance thought, and mounting by means of a pair of steps, I eagerly carried up the hive, and deposited it on the sill of my study window overlooking our back premises.

The tortoise was not to be found, and could not be shifted, therefore; but the gold-fish, dipped up in a butter boat and deposited in a bucket, were placed on a shelf in the wash house, out of the reach of the cat, whilst the fountain, alas! —a triumph of "Wemmickian" ingenuity on my part-had to be ruthlessly broken up, as had the pretty rockery I had made of slagg and spar at the end of the garden; and I positively wept as Rebecca, our domestic, stuffed plants which had originally cost as much as 55.9d. into two of my old hats filled with mould, and put them out of the way on the top of the kitchen dresser. Five choice standard rose-trees I handed over the wall to our neighbour, old Mr. Foggarty, and even the walnut-tree planted by Mrs. Entwhistle's mamma in commemoration of the birth of Adolphus Leopold, aged 5½, had to be dug up and re-planted temporarily in the ash-bin, which, by the way, was itself removed bodily two days after, to give the lawn-tennis players more scope for back-handed strokes in that particular corner.

I made a strong effort to save Dinah and her kennel from removal,– Dinah being a fine retriever I had possessed in my bachelor days,– by craftily suggesting a compromise, by virtue of which the said kennel might be transformed on lawn-tennis days into a table for serving cups of tea on. But Laura was again inexorable, cruelly observing that "for her part, she had never seen the good of keeping such a big dog at all in so small a dwelling as ours," so that I was glad from politic motives to smuggle both Dinah and her kennel out of sight without another word, having in a fit of desperation fixed on the leads at the top of our semi-detached villa as the place of refuge.

Before ten o'clock, so busily had I worked-solely in the interests of domestic peace, you understand-that our back premises, relieved of every object that had diversified the scene, except, of course, the water-butt and the ash-bin, which I had left for the work-men to deal with, presented the appearance of a wilderness, which, on very slight pressure, I could have readily turned into a "howling" one. All was flat, and bare, and character-less, and ready, as Mrs. Entwhistle admitted after making a survey of the spot with a bed-room candle, for the advent of Messrs. Mashwick and Murton's men.

It is to me so excessively painful to recall the events of the next few days that I must ask to be allowed to allude to them but briefly. Destiny, I may say, refused to interfere on my behalf, and no serious obstacle delayed, even temporarily, the consummation of what was to me a hideous metamorphosis. The young man from Mashwick and Murton's came again, and running his tape over what was now our back desert, doomed the pump as well as the ash-bin to removal, doing his best also-no doubt in the interests of a friendly builder — to induce Mrs. Entwhistle to consent to the rounding off (that is how he put it) of the wash house wall. This nice little job, however, by painting in vivid colours-for Laura's information-our serious responsibilities under our repairing lease, I managed to avert.

Within a fortnight of the fatal night when I my-self assisted in destroying the source and scene of my outdoor pleasures, the lawn

tennis-court was reported finished, and from behind the back parlour curtains I had the unutterable chagrin of seeing Mrs. Entwhistle – our maid-of-all-work having been called from her duties for the purpose of assisting her mistress to practise-deliver her first "service" from the end of our transformed back garden. The ball, hit somewhat eagerly in the excitement of the moment probably, struck the washhouse wall, which had not been rounded off, you will remember, and thence, rebounding high in the air, went over the wall, in spite of the netting placed along the top, into Mr. Foggarty's garden, falling almost into his pet terrier's teeth, which a moment later had bitten it through.

"*Absit omen*!" I moaned behind the curtain, for I had to pay for the balls, you see.

But Mrs. Entwhistle, regardless of the mishap, sent another ball over to Rebecca, who, inefficiently instructed, flung the racket she held after it with all her might. The window at which I stood was open, and I only escaped personal injury by ducking my head. As to the fragments of the rare old china presented to me on my marriage by my godmother, I really had not the heart to stay and pick them up, but, stealing noiselessly from the house, I relieved my much-perturbed feelings by a two hours' walk along the dusty high-road.

This inauspicious opening of the lawn tennis campaign at No. 19 Primula Terrace, Burnt-ash Road, following, as it did, a week of disaster, filled me with yet gloomier forebodings for the future. But I never, in my darkest hours, anticipated such a Nemesis as has descended upon our house and back garden. That my own happiness had been sacrificed on the lawn tennis altar I was tolerably sure; but I did not-how could I ? —suppose that this feeble game was to be the source of woes innumerable to us as a household as well. But so it has been. Since that fateful night, when I carried Dinah and her kennel upstairs, nothing but tribulation in assorted forms has been our lot. Had the young man from Mashwick and Murton's been Mephistopheles himself, indeed, his presence could not have resulted more disastrously.

So far as what I may call my personal losses, they were, to a certain extent, to be expected. That the hens would flourish amongst our knubbles I never really imagined, and neither their premature death, nor the demise of the rabbits after two days ' isolation on the wash house shelf, surprised me much. I was not prepared, though, I admit, for my bees swarming in a body in the middle of the night, without notice, when they had been but twenty-four hours on my window-sill; whilst I think even practised apiculturists will allow that for them to have fallen in a cluster down the chimney at No. 21 into the kitchen fire, where they all perished except a few of the more vigorous insects, which escaped and stung Mrs. Foggarty's innocent cook so badly that I am likely to pay for her board wages for some six months to come, was a casualty quite novel in apiarian annals.

Of course the gold-fish would have eventually succumbed, though I cannot doubt that the fact of Adolphus Leopold and his sisters having discovered them in their bucket of refuge, and proceeded to play shop with them, hastened their untimely end. The plants I could not hope to save, and the birth-day walnut-tree had no chance of surviving after the removal of the dust-bin. But it was distinctly an unexpected blow,-- Heaven knows I mean no pun! —when the wind carried Dinah over the parapet in front of our roof. Like the obnoxious "god" whom it was proposed to throw at a fiddler, my pet retriever was not wasted, for she fell on a passing policeman, who had been instrumental in my being summoned on her account the previous year; but as the constable has recovered, and is now bringing an action for damages, I really did not score to any appreciable extent.

Of my personal losses, however, I will not speak— [You have devoted some five pages to the subject; but no matter.-EDITOR HOOD'S COMIC ANNUAL.]-but lawn tennis has also destroyed our domestic peace; it has cost us all our friends; it has all but driven me into the Bankruptcy Court; nay, worse, it has caused our olive-branches to wither about our feet.

Time was there was space for Adolphus Leopold, aged five and a half, and our other offspring, to share the small but breezy back-let with the bunnies and the bees, but with the establishment of lawn tennis came a change: they were warned by their mother on no account to gambol on the closely-cropped turf. Nor indeed are they likely to attempt it, poor little dears, since my firstborn fell over the net in the twilight and cut his forehead, whilst surreptitiously going for a stray ball. The result is the little ones visibly pine, though their mother, still wrapt up in lawn tennis, notices it not. They miss their rabbits with their funny little habits. I sigh for the good old days when they fished for gold-fish with a crooked pin, poor little dears! Rickets, I have heard Laura say in her more domesticated days, have been the bane of

thousands of infants; rackets methinks are proving the curse of ours.

Mrs. Entwhistle has rudely snubbed all our older and more valued friends because they cannot help make up a four-handed game. No one who objects to wielding a racket is permitted to visit us; and both my maiden aunts have altered their wills within the past three months, whilst my rich uncle Adolphus, finding the fowls, for which he had originally sent us the eggs, dis-established without consultation with him, went off in high dudgeon, the last time he called, and made it up the same evening with his scapegrace nephew, Charlie Ponto, to whom he had not previously spoken since the birth of our Adolphus Leopold, aged five and a half.

Our new friends, introduced by the Ashcotts, are "lawn tennisy," and therefore "rackety, ” as one may say, to an individual. They generally ignore me unless I am wanted to score during a match, in which latter case I find myself putting down the cost of the lost balls instead of the score.

This one item of tennis-balls is costing me £ 1 6s. 8d. per week on an average. Eleven were lost yesterday; for all that go over the wall into old Foggarty's are retained by him and sold by the dozen to a club at Peckham, since he finally quarrelled with Mrs. Entwhistle about the net that had been put upon the party wall so insecurely that it fell on the poor old man one evening in a stiff breeze, whilst he was "smoking ” the blight on his roses, and completely enveloping him, kept him rolling about on his own gravel for nearly an hour, as all his people were out.

There is also a deadly feud with our neighbours on the other side, who like taking tea in the garden, but do not like tennis-balls in their tea-cups. The paterfamilias, a retired schoolmaster, keeps a register of all the balls that come into his domain, and when Mrs. Entwhistle has what she calls a "Tourna-ment" afternoon, conducts a series of asphyxiating chemical experiments in his arbour. He also threatens a Chancery injunction by post-card every Tuesday; and his servant tells our servant that he thinks me a poor weak man, deserving of much pity.

The washing formerly done at home, and dried in our own breezy if smutty garden, has now to be put out, to a duster, thus appreciably adding to the house-hold expenses. Soft water is no longer to be obtained on the premises; and the roof-drippings once drained into the butt, removed with the ash-bin, have collected on the roof, and utterly spoiled the ceilings of three bed-rooms. Three men and a boy have been on our leads for the past three weeks in consequence.

The removal of the ash-bin to make room for that fatal tennis-court has brought down the sanitary inspector upon me; and I'm told that the fever in Convolvulus Cottages at our back is all blamed to my bin-less state, and that two bereaved mothers have vowed to have my blood.

But how can I go on ? My Michaelmas rent, spent long since in tennis-balls and sherry and mixed biscuits for the "champions" who visit us, is not yet paid, and is not likely to be, and I may be turned into the streets any day with my wife and family.

Nor, seeing the comfortless state to which my home has been reduced, would such a change really trouble me much. I am desperate, and that's the truth, and there might have been a tragedy in Primula Terrace long ago were the water-butt still in situ.

As for Mrs. Entwhistle, she is madder than ever about the game, which seems destined to be my death. She rises early enough to sometimes lose as many as four balls before breakfast, and last Tuesday night the first of a series of "illuminated games" was held, which only ended when the whole of the two dozen balls in reserve had been hit away into the darkness of adjacent back gardens.

Not only am I treated shamefully, and my meals and my buttons invariably neglected, but now, if you please, Mrs. E. refuses to speak to me at all, because I object to have the back kitchen thrown bodily into the lawn tennis ground.

It is not often that what there is of the British lion lying latent in me is roused, but when Mrs. Entwhistle awakened me last night to demand this fresh sacrifice, she knows I have two rabbits under the copper and am nursing a sickly fern or two at the back of the sink,-I was driven to use, for me, unprecedented language. As a matter of fact I addressed her as "Insatiate woman "! and, sitting up in bed, denounced her selfishness roundly. "Already," I said, "you have thrown my assorted pets, my al fresco pleasures, nay, my very domestic peace, into your trumpery ground. Now you would throw in our back kitchen also. Never!" And I think I called her "Insatiate woman!" again, but I am not sure.

Nor does it much matter, for she only coldly replied, "Adolphus, you have been drinking!" and, as I have said, has ignored me ever since.

But I know she sent a post-card to Mashwick and Murton's this morning, telling them to send over their young man tomorrow, so I fear the worst. It seems a somewhat clumsy simile, but our back kitchen, I verily believe, is destined to prove the last straw for me, and when Mrs. Entwhistle has metaphorically broken my back with it, as she has actually broken up our back premises with her lawn tennis, perhaps she will be satisfied.

I have left sealed directions that on my tombstone shall be graven the words-

"RACKETED TO DEATH."

And if the publication of my sad fate should prevent the transformation of a single semi-detached back garden of limited size into a lawn tennis court, I shall feel that my sufferings have not been altogether in vain.

AGLEN A. DOWTY

Hood's Comic Annual, 1881, p 94

SNOWED UP IN A CUTTING.

A Romance of the Rail.

FEW of the readers of these pages are likely to forget Tuesday, the 18th January, in this year of grace, 1881, which, by-the-bye, had it gone on as it began, would, in spite of nominal precedent, have been styled this disgraceful year! They will recall, without difficulty, the Arctic realities of that frightful day when the snow came down with such unusual violence that the wariest Londoner scarcely saw its drift till they were floundering in it; and the most strait-laced suburban householders had to admit, as they dug their way to their doors, that spades were trumps in the fullest sense of the term. Well, on that rigorous evening, so terribly frigid that the most Tapleyan Cockney pedestrian had not only to grin, but to "Polar-bear" it, the stiff and benumbed officials of the Nor-nor-Western Line made up the 6.45 express for the North with considerable misgiving as to whether the violent quarrel just then raging with the elements was not of a character to render any attempt at "making up," for the present, wholly abortive.

Sinister rumours had been brought to the station from the heights of Camden and hilly Highgate as to the state of the metals and the permanent way; whilst, more eloquent than all, the snow itself penetrated everywhere, and was blown by the eddying wind into the faces of the hapless passengers, who mutely accepted this fresh attack as another sample of the cruelly inconsiderate "way of the whirled."

Should the 6.45 express be dispatched? — that was the question which harassed the station-master, until at length, resolving to share his responsibility, he caused an inspector to collect all who had tickets for it into a waiting-room. To the nineteen individuals who were thus gathered he proceeded to put the pros and cons of the case-on the one side "pro"-gress, on the other its "con"-sequences-remarking in conclusion, "I consider to dispatch a train in such weather as this would be suicidal!"

"Then why doesn't he call it a case of ' happy dispatch, ' and have done with it?" muttered a passenger, whose bronzed face proclaimed the traveller. "Phew! there's another gust for you!" exclaimed a muffled figure, as a mixture of snow and soot was driven down the chimney.

"Not for me, tha-a-nks!" returned a young man in the fashionable drawl of the period." Gusts are not at all in my way."

"Just so," put in a stout old gentleman. "I was taught at school De gustibus, & c.-don't you know ?"

"Gentlemen," pleaded the station-master," will you please decide one way or the other ?"

"I want to get to the North particularly," observed a veiled female in an earnest voice.

"Well, as to that," said the stout gentleman who had before spoken, "this is a mail train, I believe." "Does any one else wish particularly to start ?" asked the station-master, cutting in to prevent further conversation. Perhaps those who wish to go on will hold up their hands," he continued.

"A very ' handy ' way of settling it," murmured the obese jester; but no one noticed his remark." One-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten-eleven!" counted the station-master, his voice growing sadder as he passed the "nine." "Then that decides it: the majority desires to go on; and I wish you joy of your journey, ladies and gentlemen!" \he added, significantly.

Ten minutes later the 6.45 express, drawn by two engines, steamed slowly cut into the wild and whirling night. Two composite carriages, a luggage-van, and another devoted to the conveyance of Her Majesty's mails, constituted the train-the shortest 6.45 express which had ever left the Nor-nor-West Terminus, and yet the longest when-but we anticipate.

In the centre of composite carriage No. 04751 was a first-class compartment, every one of the six seats in which was occupied. On the engine-side sat, in the order named-

I. The "passenger whose bronzed face proclaimed the traveller;"

II. The "veiled female" with "the earnest voice," and

III. Another figure in feminine and befurred attire. On the other side sat-

IV. The stout old gentleman of facetious tendencies;

V. The muffled passenger who had noticed the gust in the waiting-room; and

VI. A mysterious gentleman of colour, with a wooden leg.

There was room in the other first-class compartment, but for once the desire for warmth overcame the British love of isolation; and even before the train started, something like a community of interest had prompted the arrangement of the numerous rugs, and the disposal of the available hot-water bottles.

From the first the train went as slowly as though it was being carefully engraved, instead of merely drawn (this was the corpulent joker's remark), and the progress reported was as small as it is in a Committee down at the House when the engine of obstruction is at its work. Still, the train did keep moving, which was something; as was the waggish passenger's assurance that they could not be snowed– "up," because they were on the "down"line.

But, at last, after nearly half an hour of slow and spasmodic advance, the train came to a full-stop in a cutting, the engine's repeated charges having failed to penetrate the accumulated snow in its path.

We can't get up run enough to break the bank, eh ?" asked the stout old humourist of the guard, when he came to announce the state of affairs.

"That's the truth, sir, "returned the official, shaking the snow from his beard; we shall have to make a night of it here, I'm afraid. ”

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the muffled passenger; we can back into the terminus, surely ?"

The guard shook his head ."Fact is, sir," said he, "the snow's so high it has put out the engine fires, and here we must stick and make the best of it till the morning."

"Then it's simply disgraceful! "returned the same passenger, as the guard retired. "If any gentleman can lend me a stylographic pen I'll write to the *Times* at once, and show up the Company."

"Present company always excepted, sir, of course ?"queried his fat neighbour, with a chuckle. "Now, I think," he added, "I have a better suggestion to make than that."

"If you are about to propose cards, sir, I object," said the muffled passenger next him, severely. "I never thought of them," was the reply. "May I ask what your proposal is, sir?" said the passenger with the bronzed face.

"Can you really doubt? If current Christmas literature is to be credited, there is but one course six people, situated as we now are, can consistently follow. Snowed-up in a cutting! Why, the very words are suggestive of the manner in which precedent requires us to proceed! Here we are, six passengers, two ladies and four gentlemen,- snowed for a whole night in a railway train up somewhere in the neighbourhood of Kentish Town, I believe. Why, it is one of the best introductions for a Christmas Annual that was ever heard of, and it would be positively iniquitous to separate without telling our respective stories. Come, then, I will for once, in spite of the rule place aux dames, call on my some-what irritable neighbour to begin."

Thus challenged, the muffled passenger seemed first inclined to angrily protest; but overcoming his reluctance with an evident effort, he began: —

THE MUFFLED-UP TRAVELLER'S STORY

"The facetious gentleman on my left calls me. I am more than somewhat-somewhat irritable.

I am very much so. I am, in fact, a misanthropic misogynist, and I think with good reason. Ten years ago I had a happy home at Hexham, and a wife and daughter; the former loving, the latter fair. Nellie – so my child was called – was obedience itself, till one fatal day a handsome, head-strong youth crossed her path; and ere I well knew she had seen him, she was hopelessly in love. This was undutiful, for but a fortnight before I had introduced her to my sleeping partner, a man of mature years, but exceptionally wide-awake even for a Lowland Scot. He would have been a father to her as well as a husband, and his money in my business was simply invaluable, as I told my child. But she refused to accept him even as a wooer, and clung to her penniless Adolphus, who at that time sold, or rather did not sell, coals on commission.

"Weeks passed, and one day all Hexham was in commotion at the news that Adolphus, my child's lover, had been arrested for obtaining samples of coal on false pretences from my sleeping partner. He protested his innocence, but the evidence was direct, and he was sent to prison. At first I thought Nellie would have died, but she

recovered, and still refused my sleeping partner's hand.

"Then I felt it my paternal duty to insist on the match; when, much to my surprise, my wife sided with her daughter and called me cruel. This was too much; and I gave a piece of my mind to each, though without inducing either of them to change hers.

"Shortly after I received a most circumstantial letter charging my wife with unfaithfulness. I taxed her with it, and asked her to prove her innocence, by joining me in persuading our child to better her-self; but she proudly refused, and I denounced her. Things altogether, in fact, might have been pleasanter, for my sleeping partner, too, vowed he would withdraw his capital-my notion now is, that he had no "principle" to spare-and ruin me unless he had my daughter's consent by the following Wednesday, which happened to be the 19th of January.

"On this I spoke to the girl again, and also to her mother, and said I would not be burdened with either of them if they continued to disobey me. I don't think I really meant this, though I was very angry at the time; but they took me at my word, and when Wednesday, the 19th, dawned, my home was desolate. It is just ten years ago this happened, and I have never since missed spending the anniversary of my loss in the deserted old house at Hexham. It was to be there to-morrow that I was so anxious to travel to night, and my disappointment has perhaps made me more disagreeable than usual."

"And that sleeping partner, now, did he ruin you as he promised ?"asked the gentleman of colour, suddenly starting out of his corner, and violently wagging his wooden leg.

"He did his best to, confound him!" was the reply;" and it's no thanks to him I am now fairly successful again. ”

"I beg your pardon for having alluded to your irritability," said the stout old gentleman. "That's the best of this story telling, you see, we get to know all about each other, and to make allowance for each other's weaknesses.-What! not a sandwich ?"he added, as his case was refused by the veiled female figure. "I wished you to take refreshment particularly, for I was about to ask you for your tale next."

"Thank you," returned the lady;" I am not hungry just now; but as to my tale, such as it is, I may as well tell it forthwith and have done with it.”

THE VEILED FEMALE'S STORY.

"I too, once had a happy home; where, I will not say, as I understand these narratives are intended for publication; but beneath its roof my child grew up to womanhood as happy and contented as the violent and self-willed temper of my misguided husband and her despotic pa would permit her to be. "In due time-the case is a common one-rival suitors claimed my darling's hand. ”

"You did not mention your darling's name, I think, madam ?"queried the muffled passenger, leaning forward, and peering into the face of the veiled female with scarcely pardonable earnestness."I did not, sir, ” returned the lady loftily.

"Let it be M. or N., then, madam, as the case may be,"put in the stout old wag.

"I will make it N., then,"said the lady, resuming.

"For that may apply to ' N '-y-one"muttered the ancient punster, but no one pretended to hear him."My darling N.,"the lady continued,"assailed by Mammon and Cupid, naturally submitted to the latter deity. She loved passionately, devotedly, her penniless admirer, whilst she contemptuously told her rich suitor, who had married twice already, to be faithful to the memory of his latest wife."

Bravo!"cried the plump old quipster;"this young lady had the best proverbial ground for thus bidding her suitor not to go beyond his last."

The gentleman of colour, who had been apparently asleep for some time, was here seized with a violent fit of coughing, and had to be patted on the back; when he was quiet again, the veiled lady continued:--

"I have little to add the story of a loving daughter and of a despotic pa is, alas! only too common. My husband would have dragged his child at the chariot-wheels of Moloch had I not interfered in the interests of the penniless one, who, however, had excellent prospects".

"The crisis came: old Money Bags, as I will call-him, pressed his suit, and just at the critical moment cruel Fate removed his rival from his path. It was a bitter blow for my daughter and myself, for it was said that — but no, I will not recall the black and bitter past, nor the dastard hand that plotted my ruin and my daughter's slavery simultaneously."

"I beg pardon for interrupting, "exclaimed the muffled passenger, "but I am compelled to publicly beg this gentleman on my right to keep his artificial limb still. It is causing us serious annoyance."

The gentleman of colour apologized profusely on the ground that he had been dreaming; on which the veiled passenger, evidently tired of such interruptions, said," I will not detain you longer; I will only add that injured pride impelled me to take a step I have since regretted; and one winter's night, now many years ago, I wrote my child a loving adieu, and left my home for ever. I have since earned an honest livelihood as a lady-help, and it was to fill a new situation in that capacity I have endeavoured to proceed North tonight. My child and husband I have never heard of since."

The speaker had not removed her veil whilst telling her story, and even now, though pressed to refresh herself with sherry by the muffled passenger opposite, she only raised it to the level of her lips. The gentleman of colour was seemingly asleep again, whilst the befurred young lady in the corner was apparently also in the arms of Morpheus.

Taking in the state of affairs at a glance, the self-constituted Master of the Ceremonies said, addressing the passenger with the travel-stained features, "I am sure, sir, if you would oblige us, that the company would much like to hear your tale."

The gentleman thus addressed at once commenced, with all the readiness of a man who had seen many and strange adventures:-

THE BRONZE-FACED PASSENGER'S STORY.

"My features, I doubt not, have prepared you to hear that I have travelled much; but it may surprise you to hear that Randolph Radcliffe, the hero of the dromedary-ride from St. Petersburgh to Pekin, and the discoverer of an entirely new source for the Nile, now sits in this compartment." "Delighted to meet you, sir," exclaimed the cheery old punster. May I ask if you are of the Rutlandshire Radcliffes ?"

The bronze-faced one frowned darkly as he replied, "No, sir, I am not one of the Rutlandshire Radcliffes; and to tell you the truth, the name I have mentioned is but a nom de guerre. My patronymic, thanks to the base plots of a villain I shall yet punish-in fact, to punish whom I am now on my way to the North-I am unwilling to use until I have cleared it from the unmerited shame it bears. But enough of that; let me take you to St. Petersburgh one fine morning five years since my dromedary is at the door; my moujik— ”

"Pardon me," interrupted the merry old passenger, "but before you give us that moujik again allow me to hint that the chances are that every one of us has read your thrilling volume ' From Petersburgh to Pekin; ' and that some other episode in your wonderful life would be more entrancing." "Oh, yes!" chimed in the fair befurred passenger from the other corner, who had suddenly sat up, and shown the liveliest interest in the proceedings ."Tell us, please, of your earlier life. ”

"I am loth to refuse a lady anything," returned the traveller;" but even the thought of my earlier life exasperates me. The cruel fate that deprived me of my love opened up the world to me, it is true, and sent me forth a determined man, to win fame in a more extended field than was furnished by the limited walks of commercial life. Still, I would gladly give back the Blue Nile its long-maintained mystery could I but regain the fair being, who, alas! I have reason to believe, became another's."

"Are you quite sure, sir, that she did?" exclaimed the befurred passenger, with imperfectly concealed agitation, also shared by her vis-à-vis; for it was clearly only by a violent effort that the gentleman of colour kept his wooden leg in statu quo.

"I am journeying North this evening," returned the hero of the dromedary ride," to settle the point alluded to one way or the other, and also to clear my name. So let the villain who, by a well-laid plot, secured my disgrace, beware!"

At this point the muffled passenger had to again complain of his neighbour's uncontrollable limb.

"I hope I may be pardoned," exclaimed the befurred lady, loosening the hood that covered her face, "if I interrupt this gentleman's narrative; but I have a tale I should like to tell myself, and at once, for it has a moral which I hope the far-famed explorer now present will be wise enough to apply." And without delay she commenced:-

THE BEFURRED PASSENGER'S STORY.

My narrative will be very brief," (she began), "for it contains but little new. It is merely a story of woman's constancy and man's neglect. Years and years ago I had loved devotedly, and, like many another, found the course of true love run anything but smoothly. A cruel parent, not content with harsh threats to make me marry an old horror I abhorred, joined in a wicked scheme to vilify the man I loved, who was unsuccessful, it's true, but he was not to blame for that. His aspirations soared far above the black and sordid article of commerce in which he would have dealt but for the prejudices of the public."

"One morning they told me he was for ever disgraced, that I should never see him more,

and I was ordered by an unnatural male parent (my mother, God bless her! was true to me) to accompany the rich widower he had chosen to the altar. I said nothing, but mentally vowed defiance, and sent an advertisement to the Era by that night's post.

"Within a week I left my home, on the eve of what was to have been my wedding-day. I went to my dear mother's room to say "good bye," but found her not-nothing but a note telling me she too had fled from a husband who insulted her by vile suspicions. Then, heavy-hearted but firm, I left the parental roof; and, ere another week had passed, had appeared, with much success, at the T.R. Croydon, as a singing chambermaid. Since then I have devoted myself to the stage, and the name of Amy Vavaseur may not be unknown to you. As to the man for whom I sacrificed so much, I have never heard of him since, though I have anxiously scanned the agony column of the *Times* daily, and periodically inserted a message to him. But no matter, I am wedded to my profession, and am this very night en route for Newcastle-on-Tyne, where I am billed for to-morrow as the heroine in *Love or Money*. Let Mr. Radcliffe, then, take my story to heart, and think better things of my sex till he has proved it false."

The behaviour of the bronzed traveller whilst Miss Vavaseur had been telling her simple tale had been so extraordinary, that the agitation of the veiled lady and the convulsive movements of the muffled passenger opposite failed to attract the attention they would otherwise have obtained. It was only by a strong effort that the former kept his seat, the knotted muscles in his forehead, meanwhile, affording proof of the reality of his emotion.

As for the gentleman of colour, he outdid them all, for, rising from his seat as the young lady concluded her story, he hastily removed his hat and the curly negro's wig beneath it, revealing a perfectly bald and polished poll; and proceeded, in a voice choked with emotion, to tell what, in spite of his subsequent disclosures, may still be called "Infirmity alone," (he began, slapping his wooden limb as he spoke)" prevents me kneeling on the floor and praying the pardon of you all for the evil I have done. First let me convince you further I am not a man of colour at all" (here he wiped off enough burnt cork with his handkerchief to prove his words), "and assure you I only assumed this disguise that I might the better consummate my bitter repentance. Jacob Burrington," (he continued, turning to the muffled passenger), "need I tell you that Fate has at last brought you face to face with your villainous sleeping partner, Nathaniel Medlicott ? After helping to drive your wife and daughter from their home ten long, long years ago, I tried to ruin you, Jacob; and having delivered my fell blow, realized my property and sailed for the Republic of San Domingo, where, after rising to the dignity of Vice-President, I became the victim of a periodical revolution, and only escaped with the loss of all my property and a leg. Since my return to this country fortune has favoured me, and my earnings as a member of a real nigger minstrel troupe (I had studied the negroes in San Domingo to good purpose), have placed me in comparative affluence. But my conscience has been at work; remorse has darkened my existence, and to day, unable to bear its sting any longer, I determined to go in my professional disguise to Hexham, and inquire after the victims of my plots. For, need I say, it was I, Nathaniel Medlicott, who suborned witnesses to swear away the liberty of my rival for Miss Nellie Burrington's hand ? —or that by my hand was written the vile letter which drove Mrs. Burrington from her family hearth ? Now you know, Jacob Burrington, why my wooden leg has so annoyed you this evening It was agitated by an irrepressible emotion. If, as I think I may safely assume, I see my old rival, Adolphus Egerton, in yonder travel-stained hero; if—— ”

"Stay! Stay!" interrupted the merry old gentleman." Do not be in too great a hurry, I beg. Every one I can see is very much excited; but I have not told my tale yet. Do not be afraid. I notice everybody's anxiety to explain and rush into one another's arms, and I will not detain you long. Still, completeness demands

THE STOUT OLD GENTLEMAN'S STORY.

Know, then, that I am the editor of the Weekly Windmill, or The Garner of Fiction, whose Christmas Number, "Adrift in a Captain's Gig,"cwas such a feature of this season's festive literature.

"I was already thinking out a framework for our next annual when the storm of to-day set in." We shall have trains snowed up tonight, ” thought I, and instantly the notion flashed through my mind, "Why not let a snowed-up compartment full of passengers tell the tales for our next Christmas Number ?"Clearly a "first-class" idea!

"I took instant steps to reach the Nor-nor-Western Terminus. What has followed you all know, for I may safely assume that those of you who have feigned sleep were dissembling.

"Fact is indeed stranger than fiction. Whilst I was studying in my own mind how I should connect your various stories by a

thread of interest common to all, fate stepped in and managed the business for me much better than I could have done it. In my whole experience as editor of the Windmill I never heard of such a series of curious coincidences ending so pleasantly, for surely I may assume a pleasant finale. Come, Mr. Jacob Burrington, I see the veiled lady opposite you is yearning to accord you her forgiveness. Don't mind me, I beg: I go through dozens of such scenes every day-on paper."

With the same the veiled lady with a loud sob flung herself on the bosom of her repentant Jacob. Leaving them locked in a warm embrace, the editor of the Windmill continued: "And now nothing need prevent you, Mr. Adolphus Egerton, from repaying Miss Nellie's devotion as it should be repaid. Take her to your arms, you lucky dog, you! whilst I talk to our desolate friend in the corner."

"It all seems like a dream, "cried the pseudo gentleman of colour." I booked for Hexham to-night, fearing to learn the worst; but now — well, what could be better ?"and he pointed to the two loving couples still folded in each other's arms.

"Yes, it's all right now; but, I say, Nathaniel Medlicott, you've been a precious bad lot, eh ? ”

A PRONOUNCED *CHARACTER*.

I have, I have; and yet remember, Mr. Editor, that it is my villany which has given the chief interest to the plots of to-night's stories."

True, true, "returned the corpulent old wag;" and I suppose we must forgive him, eh ?" he asked, turning to the beaming pairs, as they sat pouring long-deferred explanations into each other's ears.

Before they could give their answer the snow-wreathed face of the guard again appeared. "Beg pardon, ladies and gents all, "he began; "but I've managed to knock ' em up at a hotel just at the end of the cutting here, and if so be as a hot supper would suit any of you, why—— ”

A hot supper!" cried the editor of the Windmill." Capital! —the very thing. We will gather round the festive board, and complete the explanations just commenced. Guard, go and say that there will be-well, how many shall I say ?"he asked, turning to Mr. Burrington and Adolphus Egerton in turn. "Is our friend in the corner to join us ?"

"I am too happy to be vindictive, ” said Jacob." And so am I,"added Adolphus.

"Then order hot supper for six, guard," said the stout old gentleman decisively.

Half an hour later our travellers were surrounding the hospitable table of the Kentish Town Arms Hotel, and con-gratulating one another anew on the luck which had led to their being snowed up together in the Kentish Town cutting, and in the company of the editor of the Weekly Windmill.

Hoods Comic Annual — 1883, p 70

LOVE IN THE LIMELIGHT. A Tale of the Giessbach.

MRS. EMILY MATILDA KILKUMPTON was more than fair-freckly would be, in fact, the word to express her complexion; very much more than fat--I might use the term "Jumboesque" in relation to her, and with safety; and so much more than forty that I wonder she did not bring the census enumerator down upon her last year, when she returned her age as five and thirty. But when I add that Mrs. Emily Matilda Kilkumpton (I paid a shilling to see the will at Somerset House, so I know I am right as to the name) was a widow possessed of nearly £ 3,000 a year in her own right, and in her own right, curiously enough, because it had been all left to her, it will no longer seem strange that for me, as an utterly impecunious and prospectless man,, she possessed attractions as strong as though I had been all steel, and she (if she will pardon the suggestion) all loadstone.

She had smiled upon my suit, too, in a way, little guessing, by-the-bye, that it was at the time the only one-the only dress one, that is to say--which I had for her to smile on. Nay, on one occasion the suit upon which she smiled was not my own at all, but had been positively hire-but no, no! there are social mysteries which should be kept secret from a ribald public.

But though Mrs. Kilkumpton had thus given me cause to hope, no definite understanding existed be tween us, and I had altogether failed to bring her to the point, when, towards the close of last July, she abruptly told me in the drawing-room of the boarding-house we both inhabited that she intended to leave her native isle at once, and travel in Switzerland. "The Biffens are going," she added," and Captain Manchipper, and all the nice people, so what can a poor lone woman like me do all alone here in London ?"

"But I shall be here, Mrs. Kilkumpton," I re-returned in my most effusive tones." Am I no one ?"And then, fancying I saw a sign of responsive feeling in her expansive face, I was about to plunge into a serious declaration, when the squeaky sound of the

odious Captain Manchipper's voice on the other side of the folding-doors told me my chance, for the present, at any rate, was gone. In another moment, in fact, he had joined us, *Continental Bradshaw* in hand, and the rest of the evening was given up to the arrangement of the details of the continental trip.

Unlike most ponderous bodies, Emily Matilda was very impulsive and wanted to start immediately, and, as I soon found, could think of nothing but her coming journey.

It was hopeless to think of securing her before she went, and yet, if she once left England without me, my chance was as good as gone. Fat widows, as I knew from a rather voluminous experience, were always sentimental, and especially so amongst romantic scenery. Somebody, it seemed to me certain, then, would win Mrs. Kilkumpton's heart and hand amongst the sublime views of the Bernese Oberland; and to let her go without me would be to give up the fight and resign the prize to my military rival without a struggle.

"Perish the thought!" I cried at the juncture in question, I remember, which was all very well as an expression of my determined feeling; but, at the same time, there was an immediate and ready- money outlay necessary for a circular ticket, which I could not find any way of meeting, till in an in-spired moment I resolved to go to my tailor and put the case to him in all its bearings.

How well I succeeded in convincing him that the payment of my account, which, including moneys borrowed, was over £ 300, and his chance of ministering to my sartorial extravagance in future, depended on my accompanying Mrs. Kilkumpton to Switzerland, may be judged from the fact that he advanced me £ 35 on no better security than my own note of hand for £ 100. It was only just in time, for the widow was starting the next morning; and it was generally understood at the boarding-house that I was not going with the party-a belief I was careful, for reasons I need not dwell upon, to foster all the more when I knew it was an incorrect one.

But in any case I was far too old a domestic tactician to be at fault in my strategy in such an emergency, and though I was not seen at Victoria when the widow and her friends departed, mine was the first form, gallantly pacing the paddle-box as I was, on which Mrs. Kilkumpton's eyes rested when she left the train at Dover Pier, and her little cry of surprise, followed by her effusive salute of " Oh, you naughty, naughty man, you, to go and frighten us all like this!" when she came on board, were accepted by me as encouraging auguries of future success.

As for Manchipper, he looked furious, and that I thought a good omen too. He was evidently afraid of me when it came to a fair fight, and his only hope was to get me out of the way and make the running in my absence.

But, alas! just as my prospects seemed brightest, and as I had partitioned off a snug little-well, no, not little exactly, but let me say a snug big corner, well aft, with bags and rugs and things in which I had hoped to ensconce the widow, and then proceed to wile away the passage with my merriest chat, the steamer began to pitch and roll in the most unaccountable fashion. Good gracious! thought I, can it be that the envious elements are about to upset my plans ? Before I could quite decide this the envious elements proceeded to upset me in the most unequivocal way, and had Captain Manchipper been equal to the occasion, he would have a fine chance for playing the hero and of earning Emily Matilda's gratitude. But he wasn't, and he didn't. In fact, when we landed at Calais, we were all of us so limp and disorganized, that it is still a mystery to me how we ever got into the Bâle train.

But as we duly reached Bâle at six the next morning, after a terrible night spent, as it seemed to me, in receiving unexpected visits from bearded officials, who popped in now at one door, now at the other, then through the lamp-hole in the roof, and, towards the end of the journey, up through the floor and from under either seat, for the purpose of punching our tickets, it is clear that we were sorted out on Calais Pier by some one, and sent on as per the coupons in our pockets.

Poor Emily Matilda suffered more than any of us. There was such a lot of her to be shaken up, you see, and once thoroughly disturbed and disorganized, such a quantity to settle down again, that it was with her a matter of days before she was right again all over. But a short stay "by the mar-gin of Zurich's fair waters" worked wonders, and after the third table d'hôte at the Hotel Baur-au-Lac, she was sufficiently herself again to shed tears of rapture at the sight of the distant Alpine summits, clothed with perpetual snow, "the old snow-cladders," as Mr. Biffen, Senior, in his matter-of-fact way insisted on calling them.

These tears gave me much satisfaction. heart is softening, thought I, and will be open to the language of devoted passion. I think Man-chipper thought the same, for I noticed

that he took too much Neûchatel Mousseux at dinner. He was priming himself for a declaration; but he used to overdo it, and instead of talking sentimentally to the widow in the salon de lecture, he only talked thick.

My great, in fact I may say my chief, difficulty was the lack of opportunity. Swiss hotels, as a rule, in August, are far too crowded to render a declaration possible beneath their roof. You can't pop at the dinner-table, for instance, and after dinner in the salon, what with the music and the chatter, it is impossible to do much more than utter a few burning words, or squeeze a hand at intervals behind an open Galignani.

Of course it would have been possible to seek a solitary spot in the open air, to have wandered far away from the busy haunts of men, and, alone with nature and one's love, to have poured forth one's soul, and all that kind of thing.

But there was one important drawback to the consummation of such an arrangement in my case. My love wouldn't, or rather couldn't, wander away from the busy haunts of men to any appreciable extent. Even in Holland she would not have been much use as a pedestrian; in Switzerland she was no good at all. You see, directly you begin to wander from the busy haunts of Swiss men, you begin to go up a mountain, and Emily Matilda, I soon found, was only good at mountain climbing in imagination. She was always longing to be amongst the snow-capped peaks; but when it came to going only a very little way towards them, she used to get very hot and puffy, and as surely as she did that, my opportunity was gone for the day. Directly she began to pant and look round at the view, I knew passion and sentiment had no further chance that journey. Her short breath was allied to a short temper, and after being called dreadful names on three different mountain-paths, I gave up trying to wander with her far from the busy thingummies I mentioned above.

Was not mine a hard case, then ? There was a fine and rich woman willing, as I believed, to receive my addresses, and yet I could not, for the life of me, find a chance of paying them; for you must re-member that there was that odious Captain Manchipper also on the spot, and doing all he could to thwart my plans.

From Zurich we went to Lucerne, from Lucerne we did the Rigi, and I did think my chance had come at last, for when we had got to the top a mist came down on us, and I at once took steps, as I thought, to be isolated in it with Mrs. Kilkumpton. I don't know to this day how it happened, but the result of my carefully arranged plan was that, after pouring out my heart's desire to a form I could but vaguely distinguish at my side, but which instinct told me was Emily Matilda's, I found I had been wasting my eloquence on one of the Rigi Kulm Hotel cows!

Meanwhile Mrs. K. nearly fell over the precipice, declared it was my fault, and would not speak to me for two days.

It would be tedious to relate how many times I tried and failed to find the longed-for opportunity during the next week. It did seem at one time that my widow and I would really have to go through the Brünig Pass alone together in a supplementary carriage, the diligence and the other available vehicles having been filled. But at the last moment it was found there was room for one more in the banquette of the said diligence, and one inside, and the cup was once more dashed from my lips.

Let me hasten on, then, drawing a veil over similar disappointments, to the afternoon of our arrival at the Giessbach, a lovely spot, celebrated, as every one knows, for its splendid falls, opposite which the palatial Hotel Giessbach has been erected.

No tourist thinks of passing here without stopping. I doubt, indeed, if the steamboat people would con-sent to permit one to pass even if he wished to do So. But of course we did not wish to go by it, especially as it was understood that the enterprising landlord had constructed an ingenious funicular tramway-I didn't see where the fun came in as I looked out on my way up, I may add-up which we could be drawn at some frightful angle to the hotel above.

So about five o'clock one beautiful August after-noon our party, including the widow, the Biffens, Captain Manchipper, on whom the cheap Swiss champagne was manifestly telling, and myself, were duly landed on the terrace of the hotel, and after just one peep at the glorious falls, hurried off to our rooms, conducted thither by the picked Swiss maidens, dressed in the curious garb of their own Canton, who, later on, waited on us at table d'hôte.

But my first thought, as of late it had always been on reaching a new place, was of its possible facilities for the fulfilment of the dream of my life; and as soon as I had washed and changed my dress I descended to reconnoitre the neighbourhood of the hotel.

To my great joy I found that there was no town nor village. The Giessbach consisted simply of the falls and two hotels, and of other dwellings I found no sign. So far so

good. But, better still, I discovered that, thanks to the landlord's further enter-prise, the way leading to the higher falls was, in effect, a level zigzag path, the ascent being almost imperceptible: whilst at frequent intervals the most secluded seats and summer-houses invited the passer-by to rest. I almost shouted with joy. "At last! at last!" I cried, for here was a path that even Emily Matilda could ascend without becoming puffy and short-tempered, whilst the seclusion seemed absolute and complete. And then with a light heart I went in to table d'hôte.

"Where are you taking me, Mr. Mauleverer ? Is it quite safe, now ?" asked Mrs. Kilkumpton, as, some hours later, she allowed me to link her arm with mine.

"Safe, my charming lady ?" I replied gallantly ."Would Ferdinand Mauleverer lead you into danger ?"

"Why, there's the waterfall!"

"Yes, I knew you would like to hold commune with this great and sublime work of nature. Lean more on me, do."

"Oh, Mr. Mauleverer, isn't it grandly picturesque, and so dark too! You're sure it's safe ?"

"Do not say Mr. Mauleverer, Emily Matilda, my adored one-say Ferdinand. Yes, whilst the waters soar and roar above us, let me hear your lips utter my name, ” and I ventured to put my arm round as far as it would go.

There was a heavy sigh on my left, and then, as the sound of a horn loudly blown suddenly filled the still night air beneath us, I felt my arm more tightly clutched.

"What is it ? What was that ?" cried the widow. "Nay, do not be alarmed, my sweet one, ' t was but some Alpine shepherd returning to his châlet in the vale, or the hunter greeting his mistress by the lake-side. But see, my dear Matilda, yonder is a rustic arbour, close to the roaring falls. Let us sit there and muse awhile in sweet silence."

I led her gently and slowly to the spot. Thank Heaven! so level has been the ascent she had no puffed once. The Fates at last are with me, thought I; here by the mighty cataract I will plead my cause.

We sat down on the wooden bench almost over-hanging the falls, and I held Emily Matilda's hand, at any rate, a good deal of it, in mine ."Darling!" I cried in her ear, for the roar of the water was loud, "I have longed to tell you how I love you, how I adore you-let me tell you upon my knees in this sublime Alpine solitude, where ”

"Stay a minute, hush!" cried the widow;" didn't you hear something crackling in the bushes ?"

"Nay," I cried, seizing her hand, "it was but some belated chamois hastening to his lair; but tell me, sweet one, may I hope ? Do those eyes I see flashing look on me tenderly, or—"

My speech was interrupted by the violent ringing of a loud and most discordant bell.

"Good gracious! what's that ?" cried Mrs. Kilkumpton.

It was a most annoying interruption. "Be calm!" I whispered, pulling her down on the seat and still kneeling; "Some lost Alpine cow is calling to its anxious master, that is all. But no matter, we are far up the mountain-side, alone with ourselves and love. Oh, say then, Matilda Emily, will you-P-s-s-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-t!"

It was both of us that cried "Good gracious!" this time, for a falling star, or a flying meteor, or a skyrocket, or something of that kind, went past us so closely that I really felt the sparks. I was too

"Oh! go along with you, you naughty man, or I surprised to move; whilst Mrs. Kilkumpton in her shall scream! I shall, I tell you!"

"Say Ferdinand, then!" alarm fell forward upon my neck, and hung there in a state of limp terror.

All this happened in a few seconds, and in much less time than I take to write the fact there came a second rocket whizzing by us, and then instantaneously the place where we were sitting, and the falls above us, below us, and on either side, were flooded with the most dazzling light it is possible to imagine.

The wonder to me is that in our fright we did not both of us fall over into the abyss beneath, so sudden and intensely brilliant was the blaze. My own private notion at first was that the end of the world had come, and, before I had time to get hold of an alternative suggestion, the sound of loud and hearty laughter, waxing more and more boisterous, came up to me on the wind, almost drowning the roar of the falls; and it then struck me that something more mundane and prosaic than the Millennium accounted for our sudden illumination.

The laughter, too, seemed to bring Mrs. Kilkumpton to her senses, though I do not think she realized as soon as I did that we were affording a most odd and ridiculous variation of the scene they had expected to see to some hundreds of visitors sitting on the terrace of the hotel far beneath us.

I concluded this was so because Mrs. K. made no effort to relieve me of her ponderous person, the weight of which I found made it impossible for me to rise from my knees.

And the more I struggled the more the crowd below roared with laughter, amongst which my sensitive ear could plainly distinguish the squeaky tones of the sottish Manchipper; whilst the blaze, far from going out, became more brilliant, and successively presented us in a red, and green, and purple light.

At length, after an interval which appeared eternal, Mrs. Kilkumpton seemed to realize the state of affairs, and, throwing at me a look of combined disgust and anger, she managed, by a mighty effort, to get upon her feet, when, with one wild cry of vexation, she plunged into the dark woods on our right and, for her, quickly disappeared.

I also plunged into darkness after her, but I failed to find her; and, in point of fact, I have never seen her since.

I did return to the Hotel Giessbach, but not until past midnight, when I thought all the visitors would be in bed, and I insisted on having my bill made out, and leaving, I cared not for where, before day-break. As I went up to my room to pack my bag,

I saw on the walls, in letters so large that it is wonderful I could have missed them before, this announcement in English, French, and German: —

"Due notice will be given each evening of the Illumination of the Falls. A horn will sound about half-past nine, in order to warn visitors, and a bell will be rung immediately before the ascent of the signal rocket."

Had I not in my infatuated haste omitted to read this notice, I might now be the husband of nearly £ 3,000 a year. As it is, I hear that Mrs. Kilkumpton, after staying in seclusion in her room at the Hotel Giessbach for three days, continued her journey, and was actually married to the odious Captain Manchipper by the British Minister's chaplain at Berne.

I am positively in a desperate condition, and my tailor now threatens to prosecute me for obtaining the £ 35 under false pretences. A commission in the Salvation Army seems the only possible chance for me left.

AGLEN A. DOWTY

Hoods Comic Annual — 1883, p 70,

AN AGRICULTURAL ROMANCE

In Two Spasms.

SPASM I.-FARMER OCKLEBERRY AT HOME.

THE sun was shining brightly–-very "Brightly," in fact as West Gravelshire was a Tory division of the county–as Farmer Jabez Ockleberry, the jovial tenant of Clovernook Farm, put down his double-barrel gun against the settle, and strode in his muddy half-Wellingtons into the room where his family and the farm servants had gathered, in the good old English fashion, about bountifully covered board.

With one accord the grateful hinds rose and sang a rough but hearty chorus of welcome, whilst the farmer's youngest and favourite daughter placed in his hands a capacious pewter mug, filled to the brim with frothing October ale, which, with a cheery glance and nod to the company, he emptied at a draught. Then, with his usual formula of "Now, good people, this is Liberty Hall, remember!" he began to shovel the breakfasts of the carters on to their plates with a coal-scoop, with all the profuseness of the good old English yeoman.

"Good morning, dear daddy!" exclaimed his daughter Flora, who had been helping herself to bilberry jam with her fingers, and subsequently wiping them on the sunny curls of her little brother Sammy; what do you think ? My old white hen has laid the odds again!"

"Yes, and she's sitting on the two ducks ' eggs I brought home from the cricket-field yesterday," chimed in Benjamin Ockleberry, the hope and pride of the family.

"Good boy!"cejaculated the farmer approvingly;"cand what else have you been doing this morning, eh ?"

"I have been booking a stall for our new heifer,"creturned Benjamin, with his mouth full of liver and bacon,"cand breaking in that stubborn cow which won't give any milk."

"And did you succeed, my son ?"eagerly inquired his proud parent.

"Well, she wouldn't give milk,"csaid the youth," but I took her by the tail and soon made her give whey!"

"Bravo!"cried the farmer, rising from his seat, and filling his pewter with rare old mulled ale. Come, my men, let us drink to our brave Master Benjamin!"

And they drank with three rounds of Kentish fire, as was the custom in that part of the county.

"But come," cried Farmer Ockleberry, as he transferred a second cold fowl to his plate," what has my little Belinda been doing this fine morning ?" Sewing up the tares in the skirts of the wheat-field," lisped the fair child in response, taking two more hard-boiled eggs as she spoke. As to the farmer, he sighed deeply, for his little Belinda's words recalled the time when he used to sew his wild oats.

But he soon recovered himself." Dash my buttons!" he exclaimed, again draining the pewter," this will never do," and observing that Abednego Botley, one of the hired men, was pocketing the bright luxuriously yellow butter by the half-pound pat at a time, he shouted in stentorian tones, "Nego, are those oxen of thine polled ?"

"Naw, measter," returned the stalwart hind, as he attacked the flitch of bacon hanging from the ceiling above him with his jack knife.

"Then go and poll them," said the farmer," and if there's money going, take it from both sides; dost chins, and then began to slice off, for the dogs that hear ?"

Abednego Botley nodded assent as he rose and, cannoning heavily off the eight-day clock on to the sideboard, lurched clumsily from the room.

"Now then," continued the farmer, "let us all be setting about our various duties. You, Benjamin, be off, my boy, with my Sunday razor, and cut the corn on the foot of the hillside; you, Joseph," he said, turning to a boy who had been slowly but surely eating his way through a plate of buttered muffins," you take the hunting crop I threshed the wheat with yesterday, and go and whip the cream for your sister."

"And what shall I do, dear father ?"asked Flora." You, Flo," he returned, "why, look here, child, take this money," and as he spoke he pulled out ninepence halfpenny in bronze coin from his capacious fob," and go and make the mare go."

"And I," cried Belinda, who had been the laughing light of the Ockleberry family since the day her Uncle Silas had sent her a calf from Kilkenny, which had grown up under her fostering care to be a fine Irish Bull, that comic journalists came to see from all the country round, "I will at once ' a-churn ' to the dairy!"

"Then I will make for the kitchen," added the farmer," and see what there is in the larder of Clovernook Farm, for we shall have a neighbour or two to dinner."

Farmer Ockleberry was a widower, and was therefore brought into more intimate relation with Martha Pepperharrow than would have been the case had Mrs. Ockleberry survived, for Martha Pepperharrow was plain cook at Clovernook Farm, and ruled the roast, and boiled and stewed without a rival.

Her worthy master's visit to her in the kitchen was an event of daily occurrence, for Farmer Ockleberry prided himself on the profusion of his hospitality, and would have killed his last milch cow rather than there should be any lack at his table.

"Good morning, Martha," he said presently, as in his usual free and open way he chucked his portly plain cook under the lowest of her series of chins, and who had followed him, large hunks of gammon from one of the numerous sides of bacon depending from the ceiling; "what have we in the larder of Clovernook Farm, eh ?"

"What have we in the larder, indeed!" re-echoed Mrs. Pepper-harrow, with an aggressive snort, and folding her arms across her chest;" you may well ask, master."

"What!" cried the hospitable yeomen, turning pale ,"you don't mean to say it is empty, Martha ?"

"Well, 't isn't far off, master, if you must know," replied the plain cook." You see, I had ' Bednego and the rest o ' them men in here last night-keeping up your birthday they said, sir; and the maids had a bit of a spread too, because they'd been so disappointed about the ' arvest ' ome supper".It was not my birthday,"returned Farmer Ockleberry;" but the master o ' Clovernook Farm never did yet begrudge his men an extra meal, and he won't begin now. As to that harvest home-dash my wig if I can make out what's become o ' the harvest this year!-I must speak to Mr. Angus MacAnderson about it."

"And about dinner, master ?"queried Mrs. Pepperharrow.

"Quite so," answered the farmer. "Well, there's just time to kill a bullock, and there is half a pig coming from Farmer Bottomley's; so, with a brace or two of fowls, and a couple of ducks, and that green goose we put under the coop last week, I dare-say we shall be able to get a snack ready for half-past one, and I'll go and broach a hogshead of that fine old ale, for I know that my neighbour, Farmer Clutterbuck, enjoys a glass."

"Master!" shouted Mrs. Pepperharrow, as Farmer Ockleberry was starting off to have his commission carried out," there's that one-eyed fiddler still about the premises, and he do ate oncommon ' arty. He says he's hired to play at the ' arvest ' ome."

"So he is, Martha; it's quite right. Though, as I said before, I can't make out what this new steward of mine has done with the harvest this year. I must see about it at once. But meantime let the fiddler have his snack, Martha, and see that the men and maidens foot it merrily tonight. Clover-nook Farm must not forget the good old usages of the merry past."

"Very well, master," returned the plain cook, "I'll tell the fiddler what you say." And

with the same she took down an enormous dish in which to make a steak and pigeon pie, whilst her worthy employer went whistling on his way to see to the poleaxing of the fat bullock, & c., and to make anxious inquiry over the harvest, which was now some week or two overdue.

SPASM II.-FARMER OCKLEBERRY'S STEWARD.

Now, in spite of his Conservative tendencies, and his affection to the good old days and their profuse customs, Farmer Ockleberry was quite aware that husbandry had become a science; and so it was that, unable to take up with the new-fangled theories and modern inventions himself, he had engaged a managing steward-one Angus McFayden Mac-Anderson-who was steeped up to the very button of his Glengarry cap in scientific agriculture, and who was allowed to "gang his own gait," whilst his sturdy employer kept up the generous traditions of the old-fashioned British yeoman.

As Farmer Ockleberry came singing cheerily from the kitchen, the steward stepped out from the little room in which he kept his accounts and conducted his experiments, and beckoned to the yeoman. "Hi, mon!"he began," I want a ward wi ' ye. It's aboot that flock o ' South Downs. Ye ken they rayquires shearing."

"Why not have them sheared, then ?"said the farmer;" there's Botley and Bumfield both handy lads with the shears. Shall I-"

"Hoot, mon, it wad be jist a sheer waste o ' valy-ble wool. But ye must know that when I was at Mucham Agricultural Show, I saw a verra braw mickle maychine for cleepping the wool off by electreecity, and it's that I thocht o ' trying." "Very well," assented the farmer, “so long as I can give a sheep-shearing supper to the men after the job's over, I don't care what you use."

"Verra guid," said the steward; and then, seeing the farmer gazing with wonder at certain mouth-pieces hanging against the wall, he went on. "Jest put your ear to one o'them. Do ye hear aught ?"

"Why, there's some-thing keeps on popping like mad!"a nswered the astonished farmer.

"Exactly!"exclaimed MacAnderson ,"it's just the new seed on your four-teen-acre piece that ye can hear garminating and sprouting in the airth. Try this one,"he added, pointing to another of the stethescope-like articles," and ye'll be able to judge how your turnips are growing."

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" ejaculated the astonished yeoman.

"By this means, ye ken," explained his steward, "I am able to regelate the growth o ' the crops, and to keep ' em back, or hurry ' em forrard, as the case may be. Now these beans," he added, putting his ear to a third of the stethescopes as he spoke," are filling out too speedily, so I must e'en gie them a sprinkling of anti-deveelopment phosphate by-and-bye." "Hullo!" cried the farmer, looking into a sack," what have we here ? Seed potatoes ?"

"Nay, nay, mon! don't be after touching those. They are a sample of the new dynamite balls for ploughing. We just lay down a few in a field and explode them, and the land's as thoroughly turned over as though there'd been a young airthquake."

"Ah! then you've done away with the plough then, now, have you ?" queried Farmer Ockleberry, with a deep sigh. "And, by the way, Mr. Mac-Anderson, ” he continued, “ when are we to have our harvest home ? There's a couple of fat pigs I'm | keeping on purpose for the supper, and ' Bednego and the other fellows are getting almost mazed rampant about it."

"Hairvest home is it ye ' re asking for ?" returned the steward. "Well, ye can hae it when ye please." "But the harvest isn't home," objected the farmer;" and I've been keeping the one-eyed fiddler that plays The Last Load Up! ' on board wages these three weeks, and the young people are longing for the dance we have on the green when the last rick is finished."

"Look ye here, Mr. Ockleberry," answered the steward," ye can tell that feedler to start that toon o ' his right awa ', for the hairvest is home, last load and all, as much as it ever will be. Why, on Saturday next I shall hand ye ower a muckle cheque for a ' the year's wheat and bairley."

"But where is it all, then ?"asked the bewildered Jabez Ockleberry.

"Why, made into bread and malt lang ago," re-turned the steward." We modern fairmers nae let the grass grow under our feet. Listen to me, noo. Your wheat was all cut before breakfast last Thursday week by electreecity, it was thrashed by hydraulic pressure before noon, and deleevered in Liver-pool Docks the same evening through pneumatic tubes."

"Bless us and save us! you don't mean to say so ?"exclaimed the sturdy yeoman.

"Nay, but I do, mon, and that's the only way to keep pace wi ' the competeetion o ' the times. But ye'll hae to pardon me, Farmer Ockleberry, for I hae an appointment this forenoon wi ' a pairty as has brought me a milking maychine to try on the COOS. It

tackles fourteen at once. ye'll come alang wi ' me and see it ?"

But mayhap the worthy yeoman would fain have refused, but found himself unable to say "No." There was something in his "cannie" steward that seemed to fascinate him in spite of himself, and he went off with him, without a word, through his transformed barton. Of ricks there was not a sign; but in the middle of the yard a powerful dynamo-engine was at work, forcing the root crops of the farm by elec-tricity, hauling guano, hatching chickens, sawing rails, and working the press at which the clover from a ten-acre field was being compressed into a few small boxes of hay lozenges, one of which was, enough to keep a horse for several days; though, for that matter, no horse was now kept on the farm, save that on which Farmer Ockleberry rode over his altered fields, in his vain attempt to keep up the notion that he was still a rare old English yeoman.

"Here come the coos!" cried MacAnderson, drawing his companion aside; and in a few moments a number of terrified quadrupeds rushed by, followed by a mechanical dog, belching forth sparks and smoke, and clattering like an automatic cash-box running down a flight of stone steps.

"Oh! you have not seen the electric collie be-fore ?"observed MacAnderson, pressing a button by the side of the barn door, which at once reduced the mechanical sheep-dog to an inert mass of watch-spring and metal." But you seem in deep thought, Maister Ockleberry. What is it, sir ? what is it ? ”

"Oh!" exclaimed the farmer, suddenly aroused from his lethargy, "I was only thinking how long it would be before you would get mechanical cows too."

“ That's verra funny, noo,"creturned the steward,c"for I received a prospectus o ' something o ' the sairt this very morning. If the milking maychine dinna answer weel, I'll be after giving the artifeecial coo a trial. But here's the pairty I was speaking of, I expect,"che added, as a thin and haggard-looking man stepped forward to meet them.

"Ye've come respecting the coo-milker ?"cqueried Mr. MacAnderson.

"Just so!"creturned the strangerc.cs"It's over yonder,"and he pointed to a strange-looking apparatus, something like a set of harness that had got mixed up with the buckets of a fire-engine.

"I think," remarked Farmer Ockleberry, after closely scrutinizing the new contrivance, "that I prefer the milkmaid all round."

"Foodge, Mr. Ockleberry! Foodge, sir!" replied Mr. Angus MacAnderson; "why, with this apparatus it is possible to extract fifteen pair cent. more meelk than any woman's fingers can squeeze out. But, p'rhaps, sir," he added, turning to the patentee ,"you'll kindly adjoost the maychinery and prove your stayteestics."

"I don't know whether you wash at home, gentlemen," said the stranger, as he began to buckle his apparatus to the cow," but this little invention of mine answers equally well as a wringing machine, or, if you please, as a cider press. And you may not have heard of this novel article I have brought out," he continued, handing, as he spoke, a hand-bill to Mr. Ockleberry, headed with a diagram of a machine for extracting butter from mangold-wurzels." It is in great demand in the home counties."

Our worthy farmer took the handbill and perused it with a feeling of deep melancholy, whilst the patentee, having blindfolded the more restive of the milch kine, proceeded to connect the milking apparatus with a series of wires communicating with the dynamo-engine already referred to.

"Now, if you please," cried the stranger," you will observe I have adjusted the apparatus on each of the twenty-seven cows, and I am now about to touch this spring, which will cause the electric current to act on each of the twenty-seven udders. Do not be alarmed if the quadrupeds are at first slightly demonstrative. Now, are you ready ? One!-Two!-THREE!" and with the same there followed an unearthly chorus of yells, and a general stampede of the electrified cattle, the rush of which over my chest quickly awakened me, to find myself sitting by an extinguished fire, with the *Quarterly Review* lying at my feet, still open at the article on "Agriculture Past and Present; or, Science versus Sentiment," which I had been so earnestly perusing when I fell into my post-prandial sleep.

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