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PROSAIC SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

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THERE are some phrases that convey only a vague and indefinite meaning, that

make an impression upon the mind so faint as to be scarcely resolvable into shape or character. Being associated, however, with the feeling of beauty or enjoyment, they are ever on our lips, and pass current in conversation at a conventional value. Of these phrases is the 'poetry of life'—words that never fail to excite an agreeable though dreamy emotion, which it is impossible to refer to any positive ideas. They are generally used, however, to indicate something gone by. The poetry of life, we say, with sentimental regret, has passed away with the old forms of society; the world is disenchanted of its talismans; we have awakened from the dreams that once lent a charm to existence, and we now see nothing around us but the cold hard crust of external nature.

This must be true if we think it is so; for we cannot be mistaken, when we feel that the element of the poetical is wanting in our constitutions. But we err both in our mode of accounting for the fact, and in believing the loss we deplore to be irretrievable. The fault committed by reasoners on this subject is, to confound one thing with another—to account for the age being unpoetical—as it unquestionably is—by a supposed decay in the materials of poetry. We may as well be told that the phenomena of the rising and setting sun—of clouds and moonlight—of storm and calm—of the changing seasons—of the infinitely varying face of nature, are now trite and worn-out. They are as fresh and new as ever, and will be so at the last day of the world, presenting, at every recurring view, something to surprise as well as delight. To each successive generation of men, the phenomena both of the outer and inner world are absolutely new; and the child of the present day is as much a stranger upon the earth as the first-born of Eve. But the impression received by each individual from the things that surround him is widely different—as different as the faces in a crowd, which all present the common type of humanity without a single feature being alike. This fact we unconsciously assert in our everyday criticism; for when any similarity is detected in a description, whether of things internal or external, we at once stigmatise the later version as a plagiarism, and as such set it down as a confession of weakness.

But although the manifestations of nature, being infinite, cannot be worn out, the capacity to enjoy them, being human, may decay. It may, in fact, in some natures, be entirely wanting, and in some generations at least partially so. Seamen, for instance, who live, move, and have their being in a world of poetry and romance, are the least poetical of men; even in their songs they affect the prosaic and matter of fact, and discard everything appertaining to the fanciful.^[1] Here is a direct instance of the materials of poetry being present, and its spirit wanting. So common, however, is it to confound the poetical with the faculty of enjoying it, that we find a hygienic power ascribed as an absolute property to the beauty of that very element, from which they who view it, both in its sweetest and grandest aspects, derive no elevation of feeling whatever. Hufeland, who reckons among the great panaceas of life the joy arising from the contemplation of the beauties of nature, in estimating the advantage of sea-bathing as the chief natural tonic, attributes it in great part to the action of the prospect of the sea upon the nervous system. 'I am fully convinced,' says he, 'that the physical effects of sea-bathing must be greatly increased by the impression on the mind, and that a hypochondriac or nervous person may be half-cured by residing on the sea-coast, and enjoying a view of the grand scenes of nature which will there present themselves—such as, the rising and setting of the sun over the blue expanse of the waters, and the awful majesty of the waves during a storm.' Now, if all patients were alike impressionable, this would be sound doctrine; but, as it is, few see the sun rise at all, many retire before the dews of evening begin to condense, and almost all shut themselves carefully up during a storm.

The poetry of life, we need hardly say, is not associated exclusively with the things of external nature:

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,

are likewise a portion of the materials which it informs as with a soul. For poetry does not create, but modify. It is neither passion nor power; neither beauty nor love; but to one of these it gives exaltation, to another majesty; to one enchantment, to another divinity. It is not the light of 'the sun when it shines, nor of the moon walking in brightness,' but the glory of the one, and the grace and loveliness of the other. It is not instruction, but that which lends to instruction a loftier character, ascending from the finite to the infinite. It is not morality, but that which deepens the moral impression, and sends the thrill of spiritual beauty throughout the whole being. But its appeals, says an eloquent writer, are mainly 'to those affections that are apt

to become indolent and dormant amidst the commerce of the world;' and it aims at the 'revival of those purer and more enthusiastic feelings which are associated with the earlier and least selfish period of our existence. Immersed in business, which, if it sharpen the edge of intellect, leaves the heart barren; toiling after material wealth or power, and struggling with fortune for existence; seeing selfishness reflected all around us from the hard and glittering surface of society as from a cold and polished mirror; it would go hard with man in adversity, perhaps still more in prosperity, if some resource were not provided for him, which, under the form of an amusement and recreation, administered a secret but powerful balsam in the one case, and an antidote in the other.' Poetry elevates some of our emotions, disinters others from the rubbish of the world, heightens what is mean, transforms what is unsightly,

Clothing the palpable and the familiar
With golden exhalations of the dawn.

It is a spiritual wine which revives the weary denizen of the vale of tears, and softens, warms, and stimulates, without the reaction of material cordials. 'It gives him wings,' says another writer, 'and lifts him out of the dirt; and leads him into green valleys; and carries him up to high places, and shews him at his feet the earth and all its glories.'

The poetry of life, therefore, although one of those expressions that baffle definition, points to something of vast importance to the happiness of men and the progress of the race. It is no idle dream, no mere amusement of the fancy. Whenever we feel a generous thrill on hearing of a great action—that is poetry. Whenever we are conscious of a larger and loftier sympathy than is implied in the exercise of some common duty of humanity—that is poetry. Whenever we look upon the hard realities of life through a medium that softens and relieves them—that medium is poetry. Without poetry, there is no loftiness in friendship, no devotedness in love. The feelings even of the young mother watching her sleeping child till her eyes are dim with happiness, are one half poetry. Hark! there is music on the evening air, always a delightful incident in the most delightful scene; and here there are ruins, and woods, and waters, all the adjuncts of a picture. This is beauty; but if we breathe over that beauty the spirit of poetry, see what a new creation it becomes, and what a permanent emotion it excites!

The splendour falls on castle walls,
And snowy summits, old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle blow, set the wild echoes flying;
Blow bugle, answer echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark! O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, further going;
O sweet and far, from cliff and scar,
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying;
Blow bugle, answer echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky!
They faint on field, and hill, and river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle blow, set the wild echoes flying;
And answer, echoes answer, dying, dying, dying.^[2]

This is a sample of the spiritual wine we have talked of—something to elevate and intoxicate. But the picture it presents does not pass away in the reaction of the morning. It haunts us in all after-life, rising up before us in the pauses of the world, to heal and refresh our wearied spirits.

As in this poem the pleasure is caused by its appeals to the imagination heightening the feeling the scene naturally excites; by the spiritual and material world being linked together as regards the music; and by the connection established between the echoes and the sky, field, hill, and river, where they die—just so it is with the poetry of moral feeling. The spectacle we have instanced of the young mother watching her sleeping infant, is in itself beautiful; but it becomes poetical when we imagine the feeling of beauty united in her mind with the instinct of love, and detect in her glance, moist with emotion, the blending of hopes, memories, pride, and tearful joy. Poetry, therefore, is not moral feeling, but something that heightens and adorns it. It is not even a direct moral agent, for it deepens the lesson only through the

medium of the feelings and imagination. Thus moral poetry, when reduced to writing, is merely morality conveyed in the form of poetry; and in like manner, religious poetry, is religion so conveyed. The thing conveyed, however, must harmonise with the medium, for poetry will not consent to give an enduring form to what is false or pernicious. It has often been remarked, with a kind of superstitious wonder, that poems of an immoral character never live long; but the reason is, that it is the characteristic of immorality to tie down man in the chains of the senses, and this shews that it has nothing in common with the spiritual nature of poetry. For the same reason, a poem based upon atheism, although it might attract attention for a time, would meet with no permanent response in the human breast; religion being Truth, and poetry her peculiar ministrant.

Although written poetry, however, does not necessarily come into this subject, it may be observed, that the comparative incapacity of the present generation to enjoy the poetical is clearly exhibited in its literature. Never was there so much verse, and so little poetry. Never was the faculty of rhyming so impartially spread over the whole mass of society. The difficulty used to be, to find one possessed of the gift: now it is nearly as difficult to find one who is not. Formerly, to write verses was a distinction: now it is a distinction not to write them—and one of some consequence. But with all this multitude of poets, there is not one who can take his place with the comparatively great names of the past, or vanishing generation. Now and then we have a brilliant thought—even a certain number of verses deserving the name of a poem; but there is no sustained poetical power, nothing to mark an epoch, or glorify a name. When we commend, it is some passage distinct from the poem, something small, and finished, and complete in itself. The taste of the day runs more upon conceits and extravagances, such as Cowley would have admired, and which he might have envied. The suddenness of the impression, so to speak, made by great poets, their direct communication with the heart, belongs to another time. It is our ambition to come to the same end by feats of ingenuity; and instead of touching the feelings, and setting the imagination of the reader instantaneously aglow, to exercise his skill in unravelling and interpretation. We expect the pleasure of success to reward him for the fatigue.

The same feeling is at work, as we have already pointed out, in decorative art; in which 'a redundancy of useless or ridiculous ornament is called richness, and the inability to appreciate simple and beautiful, or grand and noble forms, receives the name of genius.' The connection is curious, likewise, between this ingenuity of poetry and that of the machinery which gives a distinguishing character to our epoch. It looks as if the complication of images, working towards a certain end, were only another development of the genius that invents those wonderful instruments which the eye cannot follow till they are familiarly entertained—and sometimes not even then. If this idea were kept in view, there would be at least some wit, although no truth, in the common theory which attempts to account for the decline of poetry. Neither advancement in science, however, nor ingenuity in mechanics, is in itself, as the theory alleges, hostile to the poetical; on the contrary, the materials of poetry multiply with the progress of both. The prosaic character of the age does not flow from these circumstances, but exists in spite of them. It has been said, indeed, that the light of knowledge is unfavourable to poetry, by making the hues and lineaments of the phantoms it calls up grow fainter and fainter, till they are wholly dispelled. But this applies only to one class of images. The ghost of Banquo, for instance, may pale away and vanish utterly before the light of knowledge; but the air-drawn dagger of Macbeth is immortal like the mind itself. Knowledge cannot throw its illumination upon eternity, or dissipate the influences by which men feel they are surrounded. A candle brought into a darkened room discloses the material forms of the things in the midst of which we are standing, and which may have been involved, to our imagination, in a poetical mystery. But the light itself, as an unexplained wonder—its analogies with the flame of life—the modifications it receives from the faint gleam of the sky through the shadowed window—all are poetical materials, and of a higher character. Where one series of materials ends, another begins; and so on in infinite progression, till poetry seems to spurn the earth from beneath her foot—

Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And in clear dream and solemn vision
Telling of things which no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begins to cast a beam on the outer shape—
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turn it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal.

Science with us, however, is a business instead of an ambition; ingenuity a trade rather than a taste. We go on from discovery to discovery, from invention to invention, with an insatiate but prosaic spirit, which turns everything to a profitable and practical account—imprisoning the very lightning, that it may carry our messages over land and under sea! We do not stop to look, to listen, to feel, to exalt with a moral elevation the objects of our study, and snatch a spiritual enjoyment from imagination. All with us is material; and all would be even mean, but for the essential grandeur of the things themselves. And here comes the question: Is this material progress incompatible with spiritual progress? Is the poetry of life less abundant because the conveniences of life are more complete and admirable? Is man less a spirit of the universe because he is a god over the elements? We answer, No: the scientific and the prosaic spirit are both independent elements in the genius of the age; or, if there is a necessary connection, it is the converse of what is supposed—the restless mind in which the fervour of poetry has died, plunging into science for the occupation that is necessary to its happiness. Thus one age is merely poetical, another merely scientific; although here, of course, we use, for the sake of distinctness, the broadest terms, unmindful of the modifications ranging between these extreme points. The age, however, that has least poetry has most science, and *vice versâ*.

But man, unlike the other denizens of the earth, has power over his own destiny. He is able to cultivate the poetical as if it were a plant; and if once convinced of its important bearing upon his enjoyment of the world, he will do so. The imagination may be educated as well as the moral sense, and the result of the advancement of the one as well as the other is an expansion of the mind, and an enlargement of the capacity for happiness. The grand obstacle is precisely what we have now endeavoured to aid in removing—the common mistake as to the nature of the poetical, which it is customary to consider as something remote from, or antagonistic to, the business of life. So far from this, it is essentially connected with the moral feelings. It neutralises the conventionalisms of society, and makes the whole world kin. It enlarges the circle of our sympathies, till they comprehend, not only our own kind, but every living thing, and not only animate beings, but all created nature.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] See *Journal*, No. 425. Article, 'Dibdin's Sailor-Songs.'

[2] Tennyson.

A DUEL IN 1830.

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I HAD just arrived at Marseilles with the diligence, in which three young men, apparently merchants or commercial travellers, were the companions of my journey. They came from Paris, and were enthusiastic about the events which had lately happened there, and in which they boasted of having taken part. I was, for my part, quiet and reserved; for I thought it much better, at a time of such political excitement in the south of France, where party passions always rise so high, to do nothing that would attract attention; and my three fellow-travellers no doubt looked on me as a plain, common-place seaman, who had been to the luxurious metropolis for his pleasure or on business. My presence, it seemed, did not incommode them, for they talked on as if I had not been there. Two of them were gay, merry, but rather coarse boon-companions; the third, an elegant youth, blooming and tall, with luxuriant black curling hair, and dark soft eyes. In the hotel where we dined, and where I sat a little distance off, smoking my cigar, the conversation turned on various love-adventures, and the young man, whom they called Alfred, shewed his comrades a packet of delicately perfumed letters, and a superb lock of beautiful fair hair.

He told them, that in the days of July he had been slightly wounded, and that his only fear, while he lay on the ground, was that if he died, some mischance might prevent Clotilde from weeping over his grave. 'But now all is well,' he continued. 'I am going to fetch a nice little sum from my uncle at Marseilles, who is just at this moment in good-humour, on account of the discomfiture of the Jesuits and the Bourbons. In my character of one of the heroes of July, he will forgive me all my present and past follies: I shall pass an examination at Paris, and then settle down in quiet, and live happily with my Clotilde.' Thus they talked together; and by and by we parted in the court-yard of the coach-office.

Close by was a brilliantly illumined coffee-house. I entered, and seated myself at a little table, in a distant corner of the room. Two persons only were still in the saloon, in an opposite corner, and before them stood two glasses of brandy. One was an elderly, stately, and portly gentleman, with dark-red face, and dressed in a quiet coloured suit; it was easy to perceive that he was a clergyman. But the appearance of the other was very striking. He could not be far from sixty years of age, was tall and thin, and his gray, indeed almost white hair, which, however, rose from his head in luxurious fulness, gave to his pale countenance a peculiar expression that made one feel uncomfortable. The brawny neck was almost bare; a simple, carelessly-knotted black kerchief alone encircled it; thick, silver-gray whiskers met together at his chin; a blue frock-coat, pantaloons of the same colour, silk stockings, shoes with thick soles, and a dazzlingly-white waistcoat and linen, completed his equipment. A thick stick leant in one corner, and his broad-brimmed hat hung against the wall. There was a certain convulsive twitching of the thin lips of this person, which was very remarkable; and there seemed, when he looked fixedly, to be a smouldering fire in his large, glassy, grayish-blue eyes. He was, it was evident, a seaman like myself—a strong oak that fate had shaped into a mast, over which many a storm had blustered, but which had been too tough to be shivered, and still defied the tempest and the lightning. There lay a gloomy resignation as well as a wild fanaticism in those features. The large bony hand, with its immense fingers, was spread out or clenched, according to the turn which the conversation with the clergyman took. Suddenly he stepped up to me. I was reading a royalist newspaper. He lighted his cigar.

'You are right, sir; you are quite right not to read those infamous Jacobin journals.' I looked up, and gave no answer. He continued: 'A sailor?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And have seen service?'

'Yes.'

'You are still in active service?'

'No.' And then, to my great satisfaction, for my patience was well-nigh exhausted, the examination was brought to a conclusion.

Just then, an evil destiny led my three young fellow-travellers into the room. They soon seated themselves at a table, and drank some glasses of champagne to Clotilde's health. All went on well; but when they began to sing the *Marseillaise* and the *Parisienne*, the face of the gray man began to twitch, and it was evident a storm was brewing. Calling to the waiter, he said with a loud voice: 'Tell those blackguards yonder not to annoy me with their low songs!'

The young men sprang up in a fury, and asked if it was to them he alluded.

'Whom else should I mean?' said the gray man with a contemptuous sneer.

'But we may drink and sing if we like, and to whom we like,' said the young man. '*Vive la République et vive Clotilde!*'

'One as blackguardly as the other!' cried the gray-beard tauntingly; and a wine-glass, that flew at his head from the hand of the dark-haired youth, was the immediate rejoinder. Slowly wiping his forehead, which bled and dripped with the spilled wine, the old man said quite quietly: 'To-morrow, at the Cap Verd!' and seated himself again with the most perfect composure.

The young man expressed his determination to take the matter on himself; that he alone would settle the quarrel, and promised to appear on the morrow at the appointed time. They then all departed noisily. The old man rose quietly, and turning to me, said: 'Sir, you have been witness to the insult; be witness also to the satisfaction. Here is my address: I shall expect you at five o'clock. Good-night, Monsieur l'Abbé! To-morrow, there will be one Jacobin less, and one lost soul the more. Good-night!' and taking his hat and stick, he departed. His companion the abbé followed soon after.

I now learned the history of this singular man. He was descended from a good family of Marseilles. Destined for the navy while still young, he was sent on board ship before the Revolution, and while yet of tender years. Later, he was taken prisoner; and after many strange adventures, returned in 1793 to France: was about to marry, but having been mixed up with the disturbances of Toulon, managed to escape by a miracle to England; and learned before long that his father, mother, one brother, a sister of sixteen years of age, and his betrothed, had all been led to the guillotine to the tune of the *Marseillaise*.

Thirst for revenge, revenge on the detested Jacobins, was now his sole aim. For a long time he roved about in the Indian seas, sometimes as a privateer, at others as a slave-dealer; and was said to have caused the tricoloured flag much damage, while he acquired a considerable fortune for himself. With the return of the Bourbons, he came back to France, and settled at Marseilles. He lived, however, very retired, and employed his large fortune solely for the poor, for distressed seamen, and for the clergy. Alms and masses were his only objects of expense. It may easily be believed, that he acquired no small degree of popularity among the lower classes and the clergy. But, strangely enough, when not at church, he spent his time with the most celebrated fencing-masters, and had acquired in the use of the pistol and the sword a dexterity that was hardly to be paralleled. In the year 1815, when the royalist reaction broke out in La Vendée, he roved about for a long time at the head of a band of followers. When at last this opportunity of cooling his rage was taken from him by the return of order, he looked out for some victim who was known to him by his revolutionary principles, and sought to provoke him to combat. The younger, the richer, the happier the chosen victim was, the more desirable did he seem. The landlord told me he himself knew of seven young persons who had fallen before his redoubted sword.

The next morning at five o'clock, I was at the house of this singular character. He lived on the ground-floor, in a small simple room, where, excepting a large crucifix, and a picture covered with black crape, with the date, 1794, under it, the only ornaments were some nautical instruments, a trombone, and a human skull. The picture was the portrait of his guillotined bride; it remained always veiled, excepting only when he had slaked his revenge with blood; then he uncovered it for eight days, and indulged himself in the sight. The skull was that of his mother. His bed consisted of the usual hammock slung from the ceiling. When I entered, he was at his devotions, and a little negro brought me meanwhile a cup of chocolate and a cigar. When he had risen from his knees, he saluted me in a friendly manner, as if we were merely going for a morning walk together; afterwards he opened a closet, took out of it a case with a pair of English pistols, and a couple of excellent swords, which I put under my arm; and thus provided, we proceeded along the quay towards the port. The boatmen seemed all to know him. 'Peter, your boat!' He seated himself in the stern.

'You will have the goodness to row,' he said; 'I will take the tiller, so that my hand may not become unsteady.'

I took off my coat, rowed away briskly, and as the wind was favourable, we hoisted a sail, and soon reached Cap Verd. We could remark from afar our three young men, who were sitting at breakfast in a garden not far from the shore. This was the garden of a *restaurateur*, and was the favourite resort of the inhabitants of Marseilles. Here you find excellent fish; and also, in high perfection, the famous *bollenbresse*, a national dish in Provence, as celebrated as the *olla podrida* of Spain. How many a love-meeting has occurred in this place! But this time it was not Love that brought the parties together, but Hate, his stepbrother; and in Provence the one is as ardent, quick, and impatient as the other.

My business was soon accomplished. It consisted in asking the young men what weapons they chose, and with which of them the duel was to be fought. The dark-haired youth—his name was M— L— insisted that he alone should settle the business, and his friends were obliged to give their word not to interfere.

'You are too stout,' he said to the one, pointing to his portly figure; 'and you'—to the other—'are going to be married; besides, I am a first-rate hand with the sword. However, I will not take advantage of my youth and strength, but will choose the pistol, unless the gentleman yonder prefers the sword.'

A movement of convulsive joy animated the face of my old captain: 'The sword is the weapon of the French gentleman,' he said; 'I shall be happy to die with it in my hand.'

'Be it so. But your age?'

'Never mind; make haste, and *en garde*.'

It was a strange sight: the handsome young man on one side, overbearing confidence in his look, with his youthful form, full of grace and suppleness; and opposite him that long figure, half naked—for his blue shirt was furled up from his sinewy arm, and his broad, scarred breast was entirely bare. In the old man, every sinew was like iron wire: his whole weight resting on his left hip, the long arm—on which, in sailor fashion, a red cross, three lilies, and

other marks, were tattooed—held out before him, and the cunning, murderous gaze rivetted on his adversary.

"'Twill be but a mere scratch,' said one of the three friends to me. I made no reply, but was convinced beforehand that my captain, who was an old practitioner, would treat the matter more seriously. Young L—, whose perfumed coat was lying near, appeared to me to be already given over to corruption. He began the attack, advancing quickly. This confirmed me in my opinion; for although he might be a practised fencer in the schools, this was proof that he could not frequently have been engaged in serious combat, or he would not have rushed forwards so incautiously against an adversary whom he did not as yet know. His opponent profited by his ardour, and retired step by step, and at first only with an occasional ward and half thrust. Young L—, getting hotter and hotter, grew flurried; while every ward of his adversary proclaimed, by its force and exactness, the master of the art of fence. At length the young man made a lunge; the captain parried it with a powerful movement, and, before L— could recover his position, made a thrust in return, his whole body falling forward as he did so, exactly like a picture at the Académie des Armes—'the hand elevated, the leg stretched out'—and his sword went through his antagonist, for nearly half its length, just under the shoulder. The captain made an almost imperceptible turn with his hand, and in an instant was again *en garde*. L— felt himself wounded; he let his sword fall, while with his other hand he pressed his side; his eyes grew dim, and he sank into the arms of his friends. The captain wiped his sword carefully, gave it to me, and dressed himself with the most perfect composure. 'I have the honour to wish you good-morning, gentlemen: had you not sung yesterday, you would not have had to weep to-day;' and thus saying, he went towards his boat. "'Tis the seventeenth!' he murmured; 'but this was easy work—a mere greenhorn from the fencing-schools of Paris. 'Twas a very different thing when I had to do with the old Bonapartist officers, those brigands of the Loire.' But it is quite impossible to translate into another language the fierce energy of this speech. Arrived at the port, he threw the boatman a few pieces of silver, saying: 'Here, Peter; here's something for you.'

'Another requiem and a mass for a departed soul, at the church of St Gèneviève—is it not so, captain? But that is a matter of course.' And soon after we reached the dwelling of the captain.

The little negro brought us a cold pasty, oysters, and two bottles of *vin d'Artois*. 'Such a walk betimes gives an appetite,' said the captain gaily. 'How strangely things fall out!' he continued in a serious tone. 'I have long wished to draw the crape veil from before that picture, for you must know I only deem myself worthy to do so when I have sent some Jacobin or Bonapartist into the other world, to crave pardon from that murdered angel; and so I went yesterday to the coffee-house with my old friend the abbé, whom I knew ever since he was field-preacher to the Chouans, in the hope of finding a victim for the sacrifice among the readers of the liberal journals. The confounded waiters, however, betray my intention; and when I am there, nobody will ask for a radical paper. When you appeared, my worthy friend, I at first thought I had found the right man, and I was impatient—for I had been waiting for more than three hours for a reader of the *National* or of *Figaro*. How glad I am that I at once discovered you to be no friend of such infamous papers! How grieved should I be, if I had had to do with you instead of with that young fellow!' For my part, I was in no mood even for self-felicitations. At that time, I was a reckless young fellow, going through the conventionalisms of society without a thought; but the event of the morning had made even me reflect.

'Do you think he will die, captain?' I asked: 'is the wound mortal?'

'For certain!' he replied with a slight smile. 'I have a knack—of course for Jacobins and Bonapartists only—when I thrust *en quarte*, to draw out the sword by an imperceptible movement of the hand, *en tierce*, or *vice versâ*, according to circumstances; and thus the blade turns in the wound—and *that kills*; for the lung is injured, and mortification is sure to follow.'

On returning to my hotel, where L— also was staying, I met the physician, who had just visited him. He gave up all hope. The captain spoke truly, for the slight movement of the hand and the turn of the blade had accomplished their aim, and the lung was injured beyond the power of cure. The next morning early L— died. I went to the captain, who was returning home with the abbé. 'The abbé has just been to read a mass for him,' he said; 'it is a benefit which, on such occasions, I am willing he should enjoy—more, however, from friendship for him, than out of pity for the accursed soul of a Jacobin, which in my eyes is worth less than a dog's! But walk in, sir.'

The picture, a wonderfully lovely maidenly face, with rich curls falling around

it, and in the costume of the last ten years of the preceding century, was now unveiled. A good breakfast, like that of yesterday, stood on the table. With a moistened eye, and turning to the portrait, he said: 'Thérèse, to thy memory!' and emptied his glass at a draught. Surprised and moved, I quitted the strange man. On the stairs of the hotel I met the coffin, which was just being carried up for L—; and I thought to myself: 'Poor Clotilde! you will not be able to weep over his grave.'

THE TREE OF SOLOMON.

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Wide forests, deep beneath Maldivia's tide,
From withering air the wondrous fruitage hide;
There green-haired nereids tend the bowery dells,
Whose healing produce poison's rage expels.

The Lusiad.

IF Japan be still a sealed book, the interior of China almost unknown, the palatial temple of the Grand Lama unvisited by scientific or diplomatic European—to say nothing of Madagascar, the steppes of Central Asia, and some of the islands of the Eastern Archipelago—how great an amount of marvel and mystery must have enveloped the countries of the East during the period that we now term the middle ages! By a long and toilsome overland journey, the rich gold and sparkling gems, the fine muslins and rustling silks, the pungent spices and healing drugs of the Morning Land, found their way to the merchant princes of the Mediterranean. These were not all. The enterprising traversers of the Desert brought with them, also, those tales of extravagant fiction which seem to have ever had their birthplace in the prolific East. Long after the time that doubt—in not a few instances the parent of knowledge—had, by throwing cold water on it, extinguished the last funeral pyre of the ultimate Phoenix, and laughed to scorn the gigantic, gold-grubbing pismires of Pliny; the Roc, the Valley of Diamonds, the mountain island of Loadstone, the potentiality of the Talisman, the miraculous virtues of certain drugs, and countless other fables, were accepted and believed by all the nations of the West. One of those drugs, seldom brought to Europe on account of its great demand among the rulers of the East, and its extreme rarity, was a nut of alleged extraordinary curative properties—of such great value, that the Hindoo traders named it *Trevanchere*, or the Treasure—of such potent virtue, that Christians united with Mussulmen in terming it the Nut of Solomon. Considered a certain remedy for all kinds of poison, it was eagerly purchased by those of high station at a period when that treacherous destroyer so frequently mocked the steel-clad guards of royalty itself—when poisoning was the crime of the great, before it had descended from the corrupt and crafty court to the less ceremonious cottage. Nor was it only as an antidote that its virtues were famed. A small portion of its hard and corneous kernel, triturated with water in a vessel of porphyry, and mixed, according to the nature of the disease and skill of the physician, with the powder of red or white coral, ebony, or stag's horns, was supposed to be able to put to flight all the maladies that are the common lot of suffering humanity. Even the simple act of drinking pure water out of a part of its polished shell was esteemed a salutary remedial process, and was paid for at a correspondently extravagant price. Doubtless, in many instances it did effect cures; not, however, by any peculiar inherent sanative property, but merely through the unbounded confidence of the patient: similar cases are well known to medical science; and at the present day, when the manufacture and sale of an alleged universal heal-all is said to be one of the shortest and surest paths that lead to fortune—when in our own country 'the powers that be' encourage rather than check such wholesale empiricism—we cannot consistently condemn the more ancient quack, who having, in all faith, given an immense sum for a piece of nut-shell, remunerated himself by selling draughts of water out of it to his believing dupes. The extraordinary history of the nut, as it was then told, assisted to keep up the delusion. The Indian merchants said, that there was only one tree in the world that produced it; that the roots of that tree were fixed, 'where never fathom-line did touch the ground,' in the bed of the Indian Ocean, near to Java, among the Ten Thousand Islands of the far East; but its branches, rising high above the waters, flourished in the bright sunshine and free air. On the topmost bough dwelt a griffin, that sallied forth every evening to the adjacent islands, to procure an elephant or rhinoceros for its nightly repast; but when a ship chanced to pass that way, his griffinship had no occasion to fly so far for a supper. Attracted by the tree, the doomed vessel remained motionless on the waters, until the wretched sailors were, one by one, devoured by the monster. When the nuts ripened, they dropped off into

the water, and, carried by winds and currents to less dangerous localities, were picked up by mariners, or cast on some lucky shore. What is this but an Eastern version—who dare say it is not the original?—of the more classical fable of the dragon and the golden fruit of the Hesperides?

Time went on. Vasco de Gama sailed round the Cape of Good Hope, and a new route was opened to Eastern commerce. The Portuguese, who encountered the terrors of the Cape of Storms, were not likely to be daunted by a griffin; yet, with all their endeavours, they never succeeded in discovering the precious tree. By their exertions, however, rather more of the drug was brought to Europe than had previously been; still there was no reduction in its estimated value. In the East, an Indian potentate demanded a ship and her cargo as the price of a perfect nut, and it was actually purchased on the terms; in the West, the Emperor Rodolph offered 4000 florins for one, and his offer was contemptuously refused; while invalids from all parts of Europe performed painful pilgrimages to Venice, Lisbon, or Antwerp, to enjoy the inestimable benefit of drinking water out of pieces of nut-shell! Who may say what adulterations and tricks were practised by dishonest dealers, to maintain a supply of this costly medicine? but, as similar impositions are not unknown at the present day, we may as well pass lightly over that part of our subject.

The English and Dutch next made their way to the Indian Ocean; yet, though they sought for the invaluable Tree of Solomon, with all the energy supplied by a burning thirst for gain, their efforts were as fruitless and unsuccessful as those of the Portuguese. Strange tales, too, some of these ancient mariners related on their return to Europe: how, in the clear waters of deep bays, they had observed groves of those marvellous trees, growing fathoms down beneath the surface of the placid sea. Out of a mass of equally ridiculous reports, the only facts then attainable were at length sifted: these were, that the tree had not been discovered growing in any locality whatever; that the nut was sometimes found floating on the Indian Ocean, or thrown on the coast of Malabar, but more frequently picked up on the shores of a group of islands known as the Maldives; from the latter circumstance, the naturalists of the day termed it *Cocus Maldivicus*—the Maldivian cocoa-nut. Garcius, surnamed Ab Horto (of the garden), on account of his botanical knowledge, a celebrated authority on drugs and spices, who wrote in 1563, very sensibly concluded that the tree grew on some undiscovered land, from whence the nuts were carried by the waves to the places where they were found; other writers considered it to be a genuine marine production; while a few shrewdly suspected that it really grew on the Maldives. Unfortunately for the Maldivians, this last opinion prevailed in India. In 1607, the king of Bengal, with a powerful fleet and army, invaded the Maldives, conquered and killed their king, ransacked and plundered the islands, and, having crammed his ships with an immense booty, sailed back to Bengal—without, however, discovering the Tree of Solomon, the grand object of the expedition. Curiously enough, we are indebted to this horrible invasion for an interesting book of early Eastern travel—the Bengalese king having released from captivity one Pyrrard de Laval, a French adventurer, who, six years previously, had suffered shipwreck on those inhospitable islands. Laval's work dispelled the idea that the nut grew upon the Maldives. He tells us, that it was found floating in the surf, or thrown up on the sea-shore only; that it was royal property; and whenever discovered, carried with great ceremony to the king, a dreadful death being the penalty of any subject possessing the smallest portion of it.

The leading naturalists of the seventeenth century having the Maldives thus, in a manner, taken away from beneath their feet, took great pains to invent a local habitation for this wonderful tree; and at last they, pretty generally, came to the conclusion, that the vast peninsula of Southern Hindostan had at one time extended as far as the Maldives, but by some great convulsion of nature, the intermediate part between those islands and Cape Comorin had sunk beneath the waters of the ocean; that the tree or trees had grown thereon, and still continued to grow on the submerged soil; and the nuts when ripe, being lighter than water, rose to the surface, instead—as is the habit of supermarine arboreal produce—of falling to the ground. Scarcely could a more splendid illustration of the fallacies of hypothetical reasoning be found, than the pages that contain this specious and far-fetched argument. Even the celebrated Rumphius, who wrote so late as the eighteenth century, assures his readers that 'the *Calappa laut*, the Malay term for the nut, 'is not a terrestrial production, which may have fallen by accident into the sea, and there become hardened, as Garcias ab Horto relates, but a fruit, growing itself in the sea, whose tree has hitherto been concealed from the eye of man.' He also denominates it 'the wonderful miracle of nature, the prince of all the many rare things that are found in the sea.'

In the fulness of time, knowledge is obtained and mysteries are revealed. Chemistry and medicine, released from the tedious but not useless apprenticeship they had served to alchemy and empiricism, set up on their own account, and as a consequence, the 'nut of the sea' soon lost its European reputation as a curative, though it was still considered a very great curiosity, and the unsettled problem of its origin formed a famous stock of building materials for the erectors of theoretical edifices. In India and China, it retained its medicinal fame, and commanded a high price. Like everything else that is brought to market, the nuts varied in value. A small one would not realise more than L.50, while a large one would be worth L.120; those, however, that measured as much in breadth as in length were most esteemed, and one measuring a foot in diameter was worth L.150 sterling money. Such continued to be the prices of these nuts for two centuries after the ships of Europe had first found their way to the seas and lands of Asia. But a change was at hand. In the year 1770, a French merchant-ship entered the port of Calcutta. The motley assemblage of native merchants and tradesmen, Baboos and Banians, Dobashes, Dobies, and Dingy-wallahs, that crowd a European vessel's deck on her first arrival in an Eastern port, were astounded when, to their eager inquiries, the captain replied that his cargo consisted of *cocos de mer*.^[3] Scarcely could the incredulous and astonished natives believe the evidence of their own eyesight, when, on the hatches being opened, they saw that the ship was actually filled with this rare and precious commodity. Rare and precious, to be so no longer. Its price instantaneously fell; persons who had been the fortunate possessors of a nut or two, were ruined; and so little did the French captain gain by his cargo, that he disclosed the secret of its origin to an English mercantile house, which completed the utter downfall of the nut of Solomon, by landing another cargo of it at Bombay during the same year.

A singular circumstance in connection with the discovery of the tree, a complete exemplification of the good old tale, *Eyes and no Eyes*, is worthy of record, as a lesson to all, that they should ever make proper use of the organs which God has bestowed upon them for the acquisition of useful knowledge. Mahé de la Bourdonnais, one of the best and wisest of French colonial governors, whose name, almost unknown to history, is embalmed for ever in St Pierre's beautiful romance of *Paul and Virginia*, sent from the Isle of France, in 1743, a naval officer named Picault, to explore the cluster of islands now known as the Seychelles. Picault made a pretty correct survey, and in the course of it discovered some islands previously unknown; one of these he named Palmiers, on account of the abundance and beauty of the palm-trees that grew upon it; that was all he knew about them. In 1768, a subsequent governor of the Isle of France sent out another expedition, under Captain Duchemin, for a similar purpose. Barré, the hydrographer of this last expedition, landing on Palmiers, at once discovered that the palms, from which the island had, a quarter of a century previously, received its name, produced the famous and long-sought-for *cocos de mer*. Barré informed Duchemin, and the twain kept the secret to themselves. Immediately after their return to the Isle of France, they fitted out a vessel, sailed to Palmiers, and having loaded with nuts, proceeded to Calcutta. How their speculation turned out, we have already related. We should add that Duchemin, in his vain expectation of making an immense fortune by the discovery, considering that the name of the island might afford future adventurers a clue to his secret, artfully changed it to Praslin, the name of the then intendant of marine, which it still retains.

We shall speak no more of the Tree of Solomon; it is the *Lodoicea Seychellarum*—the double cocoa-nut of the Seychelles—as modern botanists term it, that we have now to deal with. As its name implies, it is a palm, and one of the most nobly-graceful of that family, which have been so aptly styled by Linnæus the princes of the vegetable kingdom. Its straight and rather slender-looking stem, not more than a foot in diameter, rises, without a leaf, to the height of from 90 to 100 feet, and at the summit is superbly crowned with a drooping plume, consisting of about a score of magnificent leaves, of a broadly-oval form. These leaves, the larger of which are twenty feet in length and ten in width, are beautifully marked with regular folds, diverging from a central supporting chine; their margins are more or less deeply serrated towards the extremities; and they are supported by footstalks nearly as long as themselves. Every year there forms, in the central top of the tree, a new leaf, which, closed like a fan, and defended by a downy, fawn-coloured covering, shoots up vertically to a height of ten feet, before it, expanding, droops gracefully, and assumes its place among its elder brethren; and as the imperative rule pervades all nature, that, in course of time, the eldest must give place unto their juniors, the senior lowest leaf annually falls withered to the ground, yet leaving a memento of its existence in a distinct ring or scar upon the parent trunk. It is clear, then, that by the number of these rings the

age of the tree can be accurately determined; some veterans shew as many as 400, without any visible signs of decay; and it seems that about the age of 130 years, the tree attains its full development.

As in several other members of the palm family, the male and female flowers are found on different individuals. The female tree, after attaining the age of about thirty years, annually produces a large drupe or fruit-bunch, consisting of five or six nuts, each enveloped in an external husk, not dissimilar in form and colour to the coat of the common walnut, but of course much larger, and proportionably thicker. The nut itself is about a foot in length; of an elliptic form; at one end obtuse, at the other and narrower end, cleft into two or three, sometimes even four lobes, of a rounded form on their outsides, but flattened on the inner. It is exceedingly difficult to give a popular description when encumbered by the technicalities of science; we must try another method. Let the reader imagine two pretty thick vegetable marrows, each a foot long, joined together, side by side, and partly flattened by a vertical compression, he will then have an idea of the curious form of the double cocoa-nut. Sometimes, as we have mentioned, a nut exhibits three lobes; let the reader imagine the end of one of the marrows cleft in two, and he will have an idea of the three-lobed nut; and if he imagines two more marrows placed side by side, and compressed with and on the top of the former two, he will then have an idea of the four-lobed nut. In fact, almost invariably, the four-lobed nut parts in the middle, forming two of the more common two-lobed nuts, only distinguishable by the flatness of their inner sides from those that grew separately. When green, they contain a refreshing, sweetish, jelly-like substance, but when old, the kernel is so hard that it cannot be cut with a knife.

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The enormous fruit-bunches, weighing upwards of fifty pounds, hang three or four years on the tree before they are sufficiently ripened to fall down; thus, though only one drupe is put forth each season, yet the produce of three or four years, the aggregate weight of which must be considerable, burdens the stem at one time. This great weight, suspended at the top of the lofty and almost disproportionately slender stem, causes the tree to rock gracefully with the slightest breeze; the agitated leaves creating a pleasing noise, somewhat similar to that of a distant waterfall. Some French writers have enthusiastically alluded to this rustling sound as a delightful adjunct of the interesting scene; nor have our English travellers spoken in less glowing language. 'Growing in thousands,' says Mr Harrison, 'close to each other, the sexes intermingled, a numerous offspring starting up on all sides, sheltered by the parent plants, the old ones fallen into the sear and yellow leaf, and going fast to decay to make room for the young trees, presents to the eye a picture so mild and pleasing, that it is difficult not to look upon them as animated objects, capable of enjoyment, and sensible of their condition.'

Though no longer producing a drug of great value for the exclusive use of the wealthy, the double cocoa-nut of the Seychelles affords many humbler benefits to the inhabitants of those islands. The trunk, when split and cleared of its soft, fibrous interior, serves to make water-troughs and palisades. The immense leaves are used, in that fine climate, as materials for building: not only do they make an excellent thatch, but they are also employed for walls. With one hundred leaves, a commodious dwelling, including doors, windows, and partitions, may be constructed. Baskets and brooms are made from the ribs of the leaves and the fibres of their footstalks. The young leaf, previous to its expanding, is soft, and of a pale-yellow colour; in this state it is cut into longitudinal stripes, and plaited into hats; while the downy substance by which it is covered, is found valuable for stuffing beds and pillows. Vessels, of various forms and uses, are made out of the light, strong, and durable nut-shells. When preserved whole, with merely a perforation at the top, they are used to carry water, some holding nearly three gallons. When divided, the parts serve, according to their size and shape, for platters, dishes, or drinking-cups. Being jet-black, and susceptible of a high polish, they are often curiously carved, and mounted with the precious metals, to form sugar-basins, toilet-dishes, and other useful and ornamental articles for the dwellings of the tasteful and refined.

The group of islands termed the Seychelles lie to the northward and eastward of Madagascar, in the latitude of 6 degrees south of the equinoctial. The tree, in its natural state, is found on three small, rocky, and mountainous islands only—Praslin, containing about 8000 acres; Curieuse, containing but 1000; and Round Island, smaller still; all three lying within a few hundred yards of each other. These islands are about 900 miles distant from the Maldives; and as Garcias ab Horto, in the sixteenth century, supposed, the nuts, many of which grow on rocky precipices overhanging the sea, drop into the waves, and are transported by the prevailing currents to other shores. It is a remarkable

fact, that the trees will not flourish on any other of the adjacent islands of the Seychelles group. Many have been planted, but they merely vegetate, and are wretchedly inferior to the splendid natural trees of Praslin and Curieuse. From the time that the nut falls from the tree, a year elapses before it germinates; it only requires to lie on the ground without being covered, for the germ shoots downwards, forming a root, from which ascends the plumule of the future plant.

Several attempts have been made to grow this tree in some of the larger horticultural establishments in Great Britain, but hitherto without success. Hopes, however, are now entertained; for the interesting spectacle of a double cocoa-nut in the act of germination may be witnessed at this moment in the national gardens at Kew.

FOOTNOTES:

[3] Cocoa-nuts of the sea—the French appellation of the nut.

FALSE POLITICAL ECONOMY.

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LEGISLATIVE PROTECTION AGAINST FRAUDS.

THERE IS a proverb full of wisdom—as these brief embodiments of experience often are—to the effect that in commerce 'the buyer's eye is his merchant.' It has found its way into our legal text-books, to express a principle which modern law has had much in view—that people should look to their own skill and knowledge in making their purchases, and should not trust to the legislature to protect them, by interference and penalties, from purchasing unworthy commodities. Undoubtedly, fraud, when it occurs, must be punished. If a merchant sell by sample, and intentionally give a different article—if a dog-dealer clothe a cur in the skin of a departed lap-dog, and sell him warranted an undoubted Blenheim spaniel—there should be some punishment for the fraud. It will not be found expedient, however, to go far, even in such clear cases. In too entirely superseding the buyer's eye, and substituting the judge's, we remove a very vigilant check on fraud. If people never bought Blenheim spaniels without an ample knowledge of the animal's character and appearance, followed by minute observation, it would do more to prevent fraud in this small by-article of commerce than a host of penal statutes.

And when we come to less palpable imperfections in goods, it will be seen that legislation is quite incapable of coping with them. If every thrifty housewife, whose last bought bushel of potatoes is more waxy than they ought to be—if every shabby dandy, who has bought a glossy satin hat, 'warranted superfine, price only 5s.,' and who finds it washed into a kind of dingy serge by the next shower—had his action for the infliction of penalties, it would be a more litigious world even than it is. With thimble-riggers, chain-droppers, fortune-telling gipsies, and the like, the law wages a most unproductive war. Penal statutes and the police do little to put them down, while there are fools whose silly selfishness or vanity makes them ready dupes: if these fools would become wise and prudent, all the penalties might be at once dispensed with. But only imagine the state of litigational confusion in which this country would be plunged, if every tradesman who sold 'an inferior article,' which had a fair and attractive appearance, could be subject to penal proceedings!

Yet our ancestors made this attempt; and under the early monarchs of England there were passed a number of statutes, which vainly endeavoured to compel every manufacturer and dealer to be honest. The wool-trade was an especial favourite of this kind of legislation. Indeed, if any one be in search of violent legislative attempts to force trade into artificial channels, he will be very sure to find them if he turn up the acts on the wool and woollen trade. They would fill some volumes by themselves. One great object of the government, was to prohibit the exportation of wool, to export it only in the manufactured article, and to sell that only for gold. A tissue of legislation of the most complicated kind was passed to establish these objects. Costly arrangements were made, by which not only in this country, but also in others, the sale of the woollens was conducted only by Englishmen. This, however, is not our immediate subject—it relates rather to the curious efforts to make the manufacturers produce a sound article.

An act of the 13th of Richard II. (1389), gives this melancholy account of the dishonesty of certain cloth-makers, and provides a penal remedy: 'Forasmuch

as divers plain clothes, that be wrought in the counties of Somerset, Dorset, Bristol, and Gloucester, be tacked and folded together, and set to sale, of the which clothes a great part be broken, brused, and not agreeing in the colour, neither be according to breadth, nor in no manner to the part of the same clothes showed outwards, but be falsely wrought with divers wools, to the great deceit, loss, and damage, of the people, in so much, that the merchants who buy the same clothes, and carry them out of the realm to sell to strangers, be many times in danger to be slain, and sometimes imprisoned, and put to fine and ransom by the same strangers, and their said clothes burnt or forfeit, because of the great deceit and falsehood that is found in the said clothes when they be untacked and opened, to the great slander of the realm of England. It is ordained and assented, that no plain cloth, tacked nor folded, shall be set to sale within the said counties; but that they be opened, upon pain to forfeit them, so that the buyers may see them and know them, as it is used in the county of Essex.' One would think, that if the buyers found themselves habitually cheated by made-up goods, they would find the remedy themselves, by insisting on seeing them, and declining, according to a Scottish saying, to buy 'a pig in a poke.' Another clause of the same act seems equally gratuitous: 'Provided always, that after the merchants have bought the same clothes to carry, and do carry them out of the realm, they may tack them and fold them at their pleasure, for the more easy carriage of them.' What a very accommodating statute!

And it really is reasonable, in comparison with other enactments on the same subject. In the ninth year of Henry VIII., for instance, an act was passed for 'avoiding deceits in making of woollen clothes,' containing a whole series of troublesome regulations, such as the following: 'That the wool which shall be delivered for or by the clothier to any person or persons, for breaking, combing, carding, or spinning of the same, the delivery therefore shall be by even just poise and weight of averdupois, sealed by authority, not exceeding in weight after the rate of xii pound seemed wool, above one quarter of a pound for the waste of the same wool, and in none other manner; and that the breaker or comber do deliver again to the same clothier the same wool so broken and combed, and the carder and spinner to deliver again to the said clothier yarn of the same wool, by the same even just and true poise and weight (the waste thereof excepted), without any part thereof concealing, or any more oil-water, or other thing put thereunto deceivable.

'Item, that the weaver which shall have the weaving of any woollen yarn to be webbed into cloth, shall weave, work, and put into the web, for cloth to be made thereof, as much and all the same yarn as the clothier, or any person for him, shall deliver to the same weaver, with his used mark put to the same, without changing, or any parcel thereof leaving out of the said web; or that he restore to the same clothier the surplus of the same yarn, if any shall be left not put in the same web, and without any more oil brine, moisture, dust, sand, or other thing deceivably putting or casting to the same web, upon pain to forfeit for every default three shillings and four pence.

'Item, that no manner of person buy any coloured wool, or coloured woollen yarn, of any carder, spinner, or weaver, but only in open market, upon pain of forfeiture of such wool and yarn so bought.' And so on: these, in fact, are but the beginning of a series of regulations, which it would tire the reader to peruse throughout.

One would think, that shoes and other leather manufactures are among the last things that require to be made sufficient by legislation. The ill-made shoes wear out, and the purchaser, if he be wise, will not go again to the same shop. Parliament, however, did not leave him in the matter to the resources of his own wisdom. By a statute of the 13th of Richard II., it is provided: 'Forasmuch as divers shoemakers and cordwainers use to tan their leather, and sell the same falsely tanned—also make shoes and boots of such leather not well tanned, and sell them as dear as they will, to the great deceit of the poor commons—it is accorded and assented, that no shoemaker nor cordwainer shall use the craft of tanning, nor tanner the craft of shoemaking; and he that doth contrary to this act, shall forfeit to the king all his leather so tanned, and all his boots and shoes.'

Fifty-two years later—in the year 1485, it was found that the people were still cheated with bad boots and shoes—especially, we doubt not, when they bought them cheap—and the legislature, pondering on a possible remedy, thought they might find it in further subdivision, and prohibiting tanners from currying their leather; and so it is enacted, 'that where tanners in divers parts of this realm usen within themselves the mystery of currying and blacking of leather insufficiently, and also leather insufficiently tanned, and the same leather so insufficiently wrought, as well in tanning as in currying and

blacking, they put to sale in divers fairs and markets, and other places, to the great deceit and hurt of liege people'—so no tanner is to 'use the mystery of a currier, nor black no leather to be put to sale, under the forfeiture of every hyde,' &c.

Let us now introduce our readers to a legislative protection against frauds of a more dire and mysterious character, in the shape of an act passed in the sixth year of Edward VI., 'for stuffing of feather-beds, bolsters, mattresses, and cushions.' Our readers, we hope, will not suppose—as the words might lead them to infer—that these articles are to be stuffed with the act; on the contrary, it would be highly penal so to do. The chief provisions are: 'For the avoiding of the great deceit used and practised in stuffing of feather-beds, bolsters, pillows, mattresses, cushions, and quilts—be it enacted, that no person or persons whatsoever shall make (to the intent to sell, or offer to be sold) any feather-bed, bolster, or pillow, except the same be stuffed with dry-plucked feathers, or clean down only, without mixing of scalded feathers, fen-down, thistle-down; sand, lime, gravel, unlawful or corrupt stuff, hair, or any other, upon pain of forfeiture,' &c. One would like to know what 'unlawful or corrupt stuff' is, and whether the corruptness be physical through putridity, or merely metaphysical and created, like the unlawfulness by statute. The act provides further, that after a certain day no person 'shall make (to the intent to sell, or offer, or put to sale) any quilt, mattress, or cushions, which shall be stuffed with any other stuff than feathers, wool, or flocks alone,' on pain of forfeiture.

But the most stringent enactments for the protection of the public against such wholesale deceptions appear to have been in the article of fustian; and perhaps the hidden adulterations that suggested the enactments, may be the reason why unsound reasonings and hollow speeches are called fustian. There is something mysteriously awful in the act of the eleventh year of Henry VII., called 'A remedy to avoid deceitful slights used upon fustians.' It begins thus:

'That whereas fustians brought from the parts beyond the sea unshorn into this realm, have been and should be the most profitable cloth for doublets and other wearing clothes greatly used among the common people of this realm, and longest have endured of anything that have come into the same realm from the said parts to that intent—for that the cause hath been that such fustians afore this time hath been truly wrought and shorn with the broad sheare, and with no other instruments or deceitful mean used upon the same. Now so it is, that divers persons, by subtlety and undue slights and means, have deceivably imagined and contrived instruments of iron, with which irons, in the most highest and secret places of their houses, they strike and draw the said irons on the said fustians unshorn—by means whereof they pluck off both the nap and cotton of the said fustians, and break commonly both the ground and threads in sunder; and after, by crafty sleeking, they make the same fustians to appear to the common people fine, whole, and sound; and also they raise up the cotton of such fustians, and then take a light candle, and set it on the fustian burning, which singeth and burneth away the cotton of the same fustian from the one end to the other down to the hard threads, instead of shearing; and after that put them in colour, and so subtly dress them, that their false work cannot be espied, without it be workmen shearers of such fustian, or the wearers of the same.'

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Many penalties and forfeitures are laid on the persons who so treacherously corrupt honest fustian. But one is apt to fear, that the accurate account given of the process may have induced some people to follow it, who would not have thought of doing so but for the instruction contained in the act for abolishing it.

Our manufacturing operatives have been justly censured for their occasional—and, to do them justice, it is but occasional—enmity to machinery. Sometimes it may be palliated, though not justified, by the hardship which is often, without doubt, suffered by those who have to seek a new occupation. We suspect, however, that the legislature is not entirely free from this kind of barbarous enmity. We are led to this supposition by finding, in the sixth year of Edward VI., an act 'for the putting down of gig-mills.' It sets out with the principle, that everything that deteriorates manufactured articles does evil, continuing: 'And forasmuch as in many parts of this realm is newly and lately devised, erected, builded, and used, certain mills called gig-mills, for the perching and burling of cloth, by reason whereof the true drapery of this realm is wonderfully impaired, and the cloth thereof deceitfully made by reason of the using of the said gig-mills'—and so provisions follow for their suppression. It is a general effect of machinery to fabricate goods less lasting than those which are handwrought, but with an accompanying reduction of price, which makes the machine produce by far the cheaper. We fear the

legislature saw only the deterioration, and was not alive to the more than compensating facility of production.

VISIT TO THE ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA.

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It is by the territorial division of labour that a country arrives most successfully at wealth and civilisation. Our hops are grown in Kent and Essex; Glasgow annually sends forth the engines of our steam fleets; Sunderland is the focus of our shipbuilding; Edinburgh, with her legion of professors, and her busy presses, is one vast academy. In short, each district does something peculiar to itself, while all avoid sending coal to Newcastle.

A large number of manufactures, particularly those of luxury, are peculiar to the metropolis, and one of the most prominent of this class is public amusement. Every season has its novelty, whether the opera of a great foreign composer, or the lectures of a literary lion; besides endless panoramas, dioramas, cosmoramas, and cycloramas, which bring home to John Bull the wonders of the habitable globe, and annihilate time and space for his delectation. We see the Paris of the Huguenots to the sound of Meyerbeer's blood-stirring trumpets; or gain companionship with Hogarth, Fielding, or Smollett as we listen to Thackeray; or, after paying our shilling in the Chinese Junk, are, to all intents and purposes, afloat in the Hoang Ho.

London is the place at which these amusements are manufactured and first presented, and at which the stamp is sought which enables a portion of them to pass current in the provinces, and make large returns to the more fortunate speculators. In the metropolis, the vast capital afloat in such schemes is first cast on the waters, and a large amount annually sunk and engulfed for ever in the great vortex. The continued series of splendid fortunes which have been sacrificed in such schemes, would excite our astonishment that the fate of previous adventurers had not acted as a warning, if the moral of the gambling-table and the Stock Exchange were not always ready, by collateral illustration, to explain a riddle which would otherwise be insoluble.

Indisputably foremost of all the establishments which offer amusement to the London public, is the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden; and we say this without attempting to enter into the question of whether it has rightly or wrongly achieved a preponderance of vocal talent over the rival theatre. While noting, however, the combination of talent it presents, and the continued flow of capital it sends forth in the production of the highest class of works, we must at the same time express our admiration of the spirited efforts of Mr Lumley to sustain himself against such odds; and our hope that nothing will induce this gentleman to give up a rivalry which has been a stimulus to the exertions of the other house, and which has rendered London the musical capital of the world. Thus much premised, we sit down to give an account of a day spent at Covent Garden, devoted to a thorough examination of this vast establishment, from its extensive catacombs to the leads which overlook the panorama of London; persuaded as we are that the public has but an obscure idea of the capital, labour, and ingenuity expended in the production of what is visible to the eye of the audience. Access to the stage during rehearsal is strictly confined to the performers, although that is the least part of the exhibition; but by special favour, we were taken in charge by the chief mechanist, an individual provided with the necessary technical knowledge, as well as with a material bunch of keys to unlock all the mysteries of the place.

Our *début* was made upon the stage, which we examined in its various parts and appendages while the ballet practice was proceeding. The curtain was up: the audience part of the house, from the pit to the ceiling, was covered with linen, in order to preserve the satin draperies from dust. Comparative darkness pervaded the vast space; but the front of the stage was illumined by a pipe of gas, pierced for jets, running over the orchestra from wing to wing; while a beam of sunlight, penetrating through the cords and pulleys of the upper regions, cast a strange lustre on the boards, as if it had come through green glass. Half a dozen chairs were placed in front of the stage, on one of which sat the ballet-master—a stout, bald-headed man, who beat time with his stick. A violinist played at his elbow the skeleton airs of the ballet music, while the male and female dancers executed their assigned parts; the stout bald-headed gentleman occasionally interrupting the rehearsal to suggest improvements, or to issue a peremptory reprimand to one of those pale, pretty things who were bounding across the stage in short muslin petticoats and faded white satin rehearsal chaussure. 'Elle est folle!' 'Allez aux petites

maisons!' sounded rather ungallant, if we did not know that an effective drill for so refractory a corps is not to be got through by the aid of the academy of compliments. The master himself, suiting the action to the word, occasionally started up, and making some *pas*, as an illustrative example, with his heels flying in the air, was certainly in a state of signal incongruity with his aspect, which, when seated, was that of a steady-looking banker's clerk from Lombard Street.

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The width of the stage between the so-called fly-rails is 50 feet; while the depth from the footlights to the wall at the back, is 80 feet. But on extraordinary occasions, it is possible to obtain even a longer vista; for the wall opposite the centre of the stage is pierced by a large archway, behind which, to the outer wall, is a space of 36 feet; so that by introducing a scene of a triumphal arch, or some other device, a depth of 100 feet can be obtained, leaving still a clear space of 16 feet behind the furthest scene, round the back of which processions can double. It would otherwise be difficult to comprehend how it is possible, as in the opera of *La Juive*, to manoeuvre here a procession of 394 persons, including a car drawn by eight horses.

The stage itself is covered all over with trap-doors and sliding panels, although it feels sufficiently firm to the tread; the depth from the boards to the ground below the stage is twenty-two feet, divided into two floors, the lower deck—if I may so call it—being also furnished with abundant hatchways down to the hold. On the left of the stage, facing the audience, is a room of good size, close to the flies; this is the property-room of the night, in which are accumulated, previous to the performance, all the articles required for that night, whether it be the toilette-table of a princess, or the pallet and water-jug of a dungeon prisoner. This apartment, the reader may easily understand, is quite distinct from the property store-room, which contains everything required for every opera, from the crown of the *Prophet of Munster* to the magpie's cage in *La Gazza Ladra*. There is one property, however, which is of too great dimensions to be transportable. The large and fine-toned organ, used in the *Prophète*, *Huguenots*, and *Robert le Diable*, is to the right of the stage, opposite the property-room; and the organist, from his position, being unable to see the baton of Mr Costa, takes the time from a lime-tree baton fixed to the organ, which is made to vibrate by machinery under the control of Mr Costa, from his place in the orchestra. It would take up too much space to enter more at large into the machinery used in theatrical entertainments; and at anyrate, the parallel slides, the pierced cylinder—by which a ripple is produced on water—and many other devices, however curious and interesting, could not be made intelligible without woodcuts.

Our conductor now provided himself with a lantern, in order to lead us to the regions under the stage; for, in consequence of the mass of inflammable material connected with a theatre, there are as strict regulations against going about with open lights as in a coal-pit addicted to carbonic acid gas. Descending a trap, we reached the so-called mazarine-floor, a corruption of the Italian *mezzanine*, from which the musicians have access to the orchestra. It is not much higher than the human stature; and hither descends that *Ateista Fulminato*, Don Juan, or any other wight unlucky enough to be consigned to the infernal regions until the curtain drops. In this floor is a large apartment for the orchestra, in which are deposited the musical instruments in their cases; and beside it is the so-called pass-room, in which note is taken of the punctual arrival of performers.

Below this is the ground-floor, and below that, again, a vast extent of catacombs. One of these is the rubbish-vault, and this is of considerable size; for although dresses and properties are often made of the coarsest materials, and will not stand a close inspection—the problem to be solved being the combination of stage effect with economy—yet, on the other hand, their want of durability, and the constant production of new pieces, necessarily creates a large amount of waste; and for this accommodation must of course be provided.

Leaving the rubbish-vault, we examined the gasometer, and the remains of gas-works; for Covent Garden made its own gas, until an explosion took place, which suffocated several men. My conductor pointed out to me the spot where they attempted to escape, having gone through a long corridor until they were stopped by a dead wall, now pierced by a door. Near the gasometer is the hydraulic machine for supplying with water the tank on the top of the house; all the other services on this line of pipe are screwed off, and thus the water is forced to the top of the building. In the Queen's Theatre, Haymarket, a supply for the tank on the roof is obtained from a well which was sunk by Mr Lumley

under the building, in consequence of the river company having raised his water-rate from L.60 to L.90. From the well, the water is forced up by a machine.

We next ascended a stair, flight after flight; then wound our way through a region of flies and pulleys; and then scrambled up ladders until we arrived at the tank itself, which is large enough to hold sufficient water to supply six engines for half an hour. It has long hose attached to it, ready, at the shortest notice, to have the water directed either over the scenery or the audience part. We now proceeded over the roof of the audience part, to what appeared to be a large well, fenced by a parapet; and looking down ten or twelve feet, saw below us the centre chandelier, the aperture, which would otherwise be unsightly, being closed by an open framework in Arabesque. Through this the chandelier is lighted by a long rod, having at the end a wire, to which is attached a piece of ignited sponge soaked in spirits of wine: the chandelier is raised and lowered at pleasure by a three-ton windlass.

Not less than eighty-five apartments, great and small, surround the stage or adjoin it, and are used as dressing-rooms, workshops, store-rooms, and offices. We first visited the dressing-room of Madame Grisi, nearest the stage, and it had the air of an elegant boudoir, hung and furnished in green and crimson; while another close beside it, fitted up in precisely the same style, was somewhat prematurely called the dressing-room of Mademoiselle Wagner. The dresses of the various performers, we may mention, are supplied by the management; but some of them, with large salaries, and priding themselves on appearing before the public in costly and well-fitting garments, choose to incur this expense themselves.

The sempstresses-room looks exactly like a large milliner's shop, and here we found a forewoman with eighteen assistants at work. Books of costumes are always at hand, so that a degree of historical accuracy is now attained in Opera costume, which materially assists the illusion; and no such anachronism is visible in Covent Garden as in a certain theatre across the Thames, where, instead of the Saracenic minarets of Cairo, this gorgeous Arab city is represented by pyramids, obelisks, and sphynxes. The painting-room of Covent Garden is a light and lofty apartment at the top of the house, and the name of Mr Grieve is a sufficient guarantee both for historical accuracy and artistic character. Scene-painting, as practised at Covent Garden, is a most systematic process: a coloured miniature of each scene is made on Bristol-board, and consigned to an album; then a larger miniature is made, and placed in a model of the Opera stage, on a large table, and from this the scenes themselves are executed. Near the painting-room is the working property-room, filled with carpenters, mechanists, smiths, painters, and other artificers—everything either before or behind the curtain being kept up, repaired, and altered by the people of the establishment.

We now proceeded to hear the rehearsal of the opera of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and entering the stalls, found the orchestra full and nearly ready to commence, Mr Costa discussing a glass of port-wine and a sandwich, while the stage-manager was marshalling the people for the first tableau, the principal singers being seated on chairs at the side. What would most have struck those accustomed only to English theatricals, was the respectable appearance of the chorus, so different from the ragamuffin troop that fill up the back-ground of an English scene. The Covent Garden chorus includes, at rehearsal, a considerable number of well-dressed men in shining hats and new paletots, many of whom are good music-teachers, not the less qualified for that business by the opportunities they have in this establishment of becoming familiar with the way in which the best works of the best masters are executed by the best artists.

The rehearsal over, we turned our attention to the audience part of the house, more particularly the Queen's box, of the privacy and splendour of which even old *habitués* have no idea. In the first place, Her Majesty has a separate courtyard for entrance, in which she may alight, which is a check not only upon obtrusive curiosity on the part of the public, but upon the evil disposed; for although one might naturally suppose, that if there is any individual who ought to enjoy immunity from danger or disrespect, it would be a lady who is exemplary in her public duties as a constitutional sovereign, as well as in those of a consort and mother—experience has shewn the fallaciousness of the idea.

The staircase is very noble, such as few mansions in London possess. Passing through the vestibule, we enter the grand drawing-room, in the centre of which is one of those tables that formed an ornament of the Exhibition last year. The drapery is of yellow satin damask. The principal feature of this drawing-room is the conservatory, which is separated from it by one vast

sheet of plate-glass, the gas-light being contrived in such a way as to be unseen by those in the room, although bringing out the colours of the flowers with the greatest brilliancy.

Adjoining the drawing-room is the Queen's dressing-room; and between the grand drawing-room and the royal box is the little drawing-room, the walls of which are hung with blue satin damask, relieved by rich gilt ornaments, mouldings, and bronzes, in the style of Louis Quinze. The royal box itself is fitted up with crimson satin damask, a large arm-chair at the extreme right of the front of the box being the one Her Majesty usually occupies; but when she visits the theatre in state, fourteen boxes in the centre of the house, overlooking the back of the pit, are opened into one, involving a large amount of expense and trouble, which, however, is no doubt amply compensated by the extraordinary receipts of the night.

A private and separate entrance is not the exclusive privilege of royalty. The Duke of Bedford, as ground-landlord, and Miss Burdett Coutts, who has likewise a box in perpetual freehold, have separate entrances, just under that of the Queen's box, with drawing-rooms attached, which are small and low-roofed, but sumptuously fitted up. Such were the principal objects appertaining to the audience part of the house.

Returning behind the scenes, the two principal public rooms are the manager's room and green-room, which both suggested recollections of old Covent Garden in its British drama-days. Unlike the audience part of the theatre, which has been entirely reconstructed, the stage part has only been refurnished—and yet not entirely refurnished—for in this very manager's room, where John Kemble used to play the potentate off the stage with as much dignity as on it, stands a clock with the following inscription: 'After the dreadful fire of Covent Garden Theatre, on the morning of September the 21st 1808, this clock was dug out of the ruins by John Saul, master-carpenter of the theatre, and repaired and set to work.' When we reached the green-room itself, what recollections crowded on me of the stars that glittered around the Kemble dynasty! In Costa, seated at the pianoforte, I saw the face of an honest man, who unites dogged British perseverance and energy with the Italian sense of the beautiful in art. A feeling of regret, however, came over me, to think that our British school of dramatic representation and dramatic literature, which dawned brightly under Elizabeth, and in the eighteenth century was associated with everything distinguished in polite letters and polite society, should have become all but extinct. But this feeling was momentary, when I reflected that our sense of the beautiful, including the good and the true, had not diminished, but had merely gone into new channels; and, more especially, that Meyerbeer and Rossini, in order to hear their own incomparable works executed in perfection, must come to the city which the Exhibition of last year has indelibly stamped as the capital of the civilised world.

NUMBER TWELVE.

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WHEN I was a young man, working at my trade as a mason, I met with a severe injury by falling from a scaffolding placed at a height of forty feet from the ground. There I remained, stunned and bleeding, on the rubbish, until my companions, by attempting to remove me, restored me to consciousness. I felt as if the ground on which I was lying formed a part of myself; that I could not be lifted from it without being torn asunder; and with the most piercing cries, I entreated my well-meaning assistants to leave me alone to die. They desisted for the moment, one running for the doctor, another for a litter, others surrounding me with pitying gaze; but amidst my increasing sense of suffering, the conviction began to dawn on my mind, that the injuries were not mortal; and so, by the time the doctor and the litter arrived, I resigned myself to their aid, and allowed myself, without further objection, to be carried to the hospital.

There I remained for more than three months, gradually recovering from my bodily injuries, but devoured with an impatience at my condition, and the slowness of my cure, which effectually retarded it. I felt all the restlessness and anxiety of a labourer suddenly thrown out of an employment difficult enough to procure, knowing there were scores of others ready to step into my place; that the job was going on; and that, ten chances to one, I should never set foot on that scaffolding again. The visiting surgeon vainly warned me against the indulgence of such passionate regrets—vainly inculcated the opposite feeling of gratitude demanded by my escape: all in vain. I tossed on

my fevered bed, murmured at the slowness of his remedies, and might have thus rendered them altogether ineffectual, had not a sudden change been effected in my disposition by another, at first unwelcome, addition to our patients. He was placed in the same ward with me, and insensibly I found my impatience rebuked, my repinings hushed for very shame, in the presence of his meek resignation to far greater privations and sufferings. Fresh courage sprang from his example, and soon—thanks to my involuntary physician—I was in the fair road to recovery.

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And he who had worked the charm, what was he? A poor, helpless old man, utterly deformed by suffering—his very name unnoticed, or at least never spoken in the place where he now was; he went only by the appellation of No. 12—the number of his bed, which was next to my own. This bed had already been his refuge during three long and trying illnesses, and had at last become a sort of property for the poor fellow in the eyes of doctors, students, nurse-tenders, in fact, the whole hospital staff. Never did a gentler creature walk on God's earth: walk—alas! for him the word was but an old memory. Many years before, he had totally lost the use of his legs; but, to use his own expression, 'this misfortune did not upset him:' he still retained the power of earning his livelihood, which he derived from copying deeds for a lawyer at so much per sheet; and if the legs were no longer a support, the hands worked at the stamped parchments as diligently as ever. But some months passed by, and then the paralysis attacked his right arm: still undaunted, he taught himself to write with the left; but hardly had the brave heart and hand conquered the difficulty, when the enemy crept on, and disabling this second ally, no more remained for him than to be conveyed once more, though this time as a last resource, to the hospital. There he had the gratification to find his former quarters vacant, and he took possession of his old familiar bed with a satisfaction that seemed to obliterate all regret at being obliged to occupy it again. His first grateful accents smote almost reproachfully on my ear: 'Misfortune must have its turn, but *every day has a to-morrow*.'

It was indeed a lesson to witness the gratitude of this excellent creature. The hospital, so dreary a sojourn to most of its inmates, was a scene of enjoyment to him: everything pleased him; and the poor fellow's admiration of even the most trifling conveniences, proved how severe must have been his privations. He never wearied of praising the neatness of the linen, the whiteness of the bread, the quality of the food; and my surprise gave place to the truest pity, when I learned that, for the last twenty years, this respectable old man could only afford himself, out of the profits of his persevering industry, the coarsest bread, diversified with white cheese or vegetable porridge; and yet, instead of reverting to his privations in the language of complaint, he converted them into a fund of gratitude, and made the generosity of the nation, which had provided such a retreat for the suffering poor, his continual theme. Nor did his thankful spirit confine itself to this. To listen to him, you would have believed him an especial object of divine as well as human benevolence—all things working for his good. The doctor used to say, that No. 12 had 'a mania for happiness;' but it was a mania that in creating esteem for its victim, infused fresh courage into all that came within its range.

I think I still see him seated on the side of his bed, with his little black silk cap, his spectacles, and the well-worn volume, which he never ceased perusing. Every morning, the first rays of the sun rested on his bed, always to him a fresh subject of rejoicing and thankfulness to God. To witness his gratitude, one might have supposed that the sun was rising for him alone.

I need hardly say, that he soon interested himself in my cure, and regularly made inquiry respecting its progress. He always found something cheering to say—something to inspire patience and hope, himself a living commentary on his words. When I looked at this poor motionless figure, those distorted limbs, and, crowning all, that smiling countenance, I had not courage to be angry, or even to complain. At each painful crisis, he would exclaim: 'One minute, and it will be over—relief will soon follow. *Every day has its to-morrow*.'

I had one good and true friend—a fellow-workman, who used sometimes to spare an hour to visit me, and he took great delight in cultivating an acquaintance with No. 12. As if attracted by a kindred spirit, he never passed his bed without pausing to offer his cordial salutation; and then he would whisper to me: 'He is a saint on earth; and not content with gaining Paradise himself, must win it for others also. Such people should have monuments erected to them, known and read of all men. In observing such a character, we feel ashamed of our own happiness—we feel how comparatively little we deserve it. Is there anything I can do to prove my regard for this good, poor No. 12?'

'Just try among the bookstalls,' I replied, 'and find the second volume of that

book you see him reading. It is now more than six years since he lost it, and ever since, he has been obliged to content himself with the first.'

Now, I must premise that my worthy friend had a perfect horror of literature, even in its simplest stages. He regarded the art of printing as a Satanic invention, filling men's brains with idleness and conceit; and as to writing—in his opinion, a man was never thoroughly committed, until he had recorded his sentiments in black and white for the inspection of his neighbours. His own success in life, which had been tolerable—thanks to his industry and integrity—he attributed altogether to his ignorance of those dangerous arts; and now a cloud swept across his lately beaming face as he exclaimed: 'What! the good creature is a lover of books? Well, we must admit that even the best have their failings. No matter. Write down the name of this odd volume on a slip of paper; and it shall go hard with me, but I give him that gratification.'

He did actually return the following week with a well-worn volume, which he presented in triumph to the old invalid. He looked somewhat surprised as he opened it; but our friend proceeding to explain that it was at my suggestion he had procured it in place of the lost one, the old grateful expression at once beamed up in the eyes of No. 12; and with a voice trembling with emotion, he thanked the hearty giver.

I had my misgivings, however; and the moment our visitor turned his back, I asked to see the book. My old neighbour reddened, stammered, and tried to change the conversation; but, forced behind his last intrenchments, he handed me the little volume. It was an old Royal Almanac. The bookseller, taking advantage of his customer's ignorance, had substituted it for the book he had demanded. I burst into an immoderate fit of laughter; but No. 12 checked me with the only impatient word I ever heard from his lips: 'Do you wish our friend to hear you? I would rather never recover the power of this lost arm, than deprive his kind heart of the pleasure of his gift. And what of it? Yesterday, I did not care a straw for an almanac; but in a little time it is perhaps the very book I should have desired. *Every day has its to-morrow*. Besides, I assure you it is a very improving study: even already I perceive the names of a crowd of princes never mentioned in history, and of whom up to this moment I have never heard any one speak.'

And so the old almanac was carefully preserved beside the volume of poetry it had been intended to match; and the old invalid never failed to be seen turning over the leaves whenever our friend happened to enter the room. As to him, he was quite proud of its success, and would say to me each time: 'It appears I have made him a famous present.' And thus the two guileless natures were content.

Towards the close of my sojourn in the hospital, the strength of poor No. 12 diminished rapidly. At first, he lost the slight powers of motion he had retained; then his speech became inarticulate; at last, no part obeyed his will except the eyes, which continued to smile on us still. But one morning, at last, it seemed to me as if his very glance had become dim. I arose hastily, and approaching his bed, inquired if he wished for a drink; he made a slight movement of his eyelids, as if to thank me, and at that instant the first ray of the rising sun shone in on his bed. Then the eyes lighted up, like a taper that flashes into brightness before it is extinguished—he looked as if saluting this last gift of his Creator; and even as I watched him for a moment, his head fell gently on the side, his kindly heart ceased to beat. He had thrown off the burden of To-day; he had entered on his eternal To-morrow.

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THINGS TALKED OF IN LONDON.

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June 1852.

As usual, everything shews in this month that our season will soon be past its perihelion: soirées, whether scientific, exquisite, or political, take place almost too frequently for the comfort and wellbeing of the invited; and loungers and legislators are alike beginning to dream of leafy woods and babbling brooks. Our learned societies have brought their sessions to a close, with more or less of satisfaction to all concerned, the Royal having elected their annual instalment of new Fellows, and the Antiquaries having decided to reduce their yearly subscription from four guineas to two, with a view to an increase and multiplication of the number of their members, so that the study of antiquity may be promoted, and latent ability or enthusiasm called into play. The British Association are making preparations for their meeting at

Belfast, and if reports speak truth, the result of the gathering will be an advancement of science in more than one department. Concerts, musical gatherings, spectacles, are in full activity, the *entrepreneurs* seizing the moments, and coins too, as they fly. In short, midsummer has come, and fashion is about to substitute languor for excitement. Meantime, our excursion trains have commenced their trips to every point of the compass; and during the next few months, thousands will have the opportunity of exploring the finest scenery of our merry island at the smallest possible cost; and for one centre of attraction, as London was last year, there will now be a hundred.

The award of Lord Campbell on the bookselling question has given a great triumph to the innovating party, to which the authors to a man, and the great bulk of the public, had attached themselves. The *Trade*, as the booksellers call themselves, while admitting that they can no longer stand under a protective principle, feel certain difficulties as to their future career, for unquestionably there is something peculiar in their business, in as far as a nominal price for their wares is scarcely avoidable. If so, the question is, How is it to be adjusted? at a lower allowance for the retailer? In that case, some would still undersell others; and the old troubles would still be experienced. Ought there, then, to be no fixed retailing price at all, but simply one for the publisher to exact from the retailer, leaving him to sell at what profit he pleases or can get? In that case, the publisher's advertisement, holding forth no price to the public, would lose half its utility. Shall we, then, leave the retailer to advertise? All of these questions must occupy the attention of booksellers for some time to come, and their settlement cannot speedily be hoped for. The general belief, however, is, that the cost for the distribution of books from the shops of the publishers must be considerably reduced, the prices of books of course lowered, and their diffusion proportionately extended. It will perhaps be found that some of the greatest obstructions that operate in the case are not yet so much as touched upon.

The French have resumed their explorations and excavations at Khorsabad, and will doubtless bring to light many more remains of the arts of Nineveh; and Colonel Rawlinson has found the burial-place of the kings and queens of Assyria, where the bodies are placed in sarcophagi, in the very habiliments and ornaments in which they were three thousand years ago! What an important relic it will be for our rejuvenated Society of Antiquaries to exercise their faculty of investigation upon! If discoveries go on at this rate, we shall soon want to enlarge our British Museum.

The Registrar-General tells us, in his first Report for the present year, that 90,936 persons were married in the last quarter of 1851—a greater number than in any quarter since 1842, except two, when it was slightly exceeded. It is altogether beyond the average, and confirms what has been before observed, that marriages are most numerous in England in the months of September, October, and November, after the harvest. To every 117 of the whole population there was one marriage. On the other hand, births are found to be most abundant in the first quarters of the year; the number for the first three months of the present year was 161,776. 'So many births,' says the Registrar, 'were never registered before in the same time.' In the same period of 1851, it was 157,374; and of 1848, 139,736. The deaths during the three months were 106,682, leaving an increase in the population of 55,094, which, however, disappears in the fact, that 57,874 emigrants left the United Kingdom in the course of the quarter. The mortality, on the whole, was less than in the ten previous winters, owing, perhaps, to the temperature having been 3° above the average; but the difference was more marked in rural districts than in the large towns. According to the meteorological table attached to the Report, it appears that the mean temperature for the three months ending in February was 41°.1, being 4°.2 above the average of eighty years. On the 10th of February, the north-east wind set in, and on seventy nights during the quarter the temperature went below freezing. The movement of the air through January and February was 160 miles per day—in March, 100 miles. Up to February 9, the wind was generally south-west, and rain fell on twenty-three days, and on six days only after that date. These periodical reports, and those of our Meteorological and Epidemiological Societies will doubtless, before long, furnish us with sufficient data for a true theory of cause and effect as regards disease, and for preventive measures.

Gold is, and will be for some time to come, a subject much talked about. Some of our financiers are beginning to be of opinion, that the period is not distant when a great change must be made in the value of our currency—the sovereign, for instance, to be reduced from 20s. to 10s. If so, there would be a good deal of loss and inconvenience during the transition; but, once made, the difficulty would cease. Others, however, consider that the demand for gold for

manufacturing purposes and new appliances in the arts, will be so great, that not for many years to come will its increase have any effect on the value of the circulating medium. It will be curious if the result, as not unfrequently happens, should be such as to falsify both conclusions. Connected with this topic is the important one of emigration; and so important is it, that either by public or private enterprise, measures will be taken to insure a supply of labourers to the Australian colonies to replace, if possible, those who have betaken themselves to the diggings. Convicts will not be received; and as something must be done with them, Sir James Matheson has offered to give North Rona, one of the Orkney Islands, to the government for a penal settlement. It has been surveyed, and found to contain 270 acres, sufficient to support a population of 1000. Should the proposal be adopted, it will afford an opportunity for trying an entirely new system of discipline with the criminal outcasts.

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Some attention has been drawn to the fact, that our 'Ten Hour Bill' has produced an effect on the other side of the Atlantic. The legislature of Ohio has just passed a 'ten hour law,' to apply to 'all manufactories, workshops, and other places used for mechanical or manufacturing purposes' throughout the state; the penalty to be a fine of from one guinea to ten. Something has already been said about extending its provisions to agricultural labourers and domestic servants—not so easy a task as the other; but when one remembers how desperately hard people are made to work in the United States, it is gratifying to observe ever so small a beginning towards more temperate and life-preserving regulations. In New York, great efforts are made towards establishing female schools of design and female medical colleges, with a view to open to women a wider sphere of employment than that to which they are now restricted. Notwithstanding the objections expressed in many quarters against female physicians, it is certain that they would find favour among a large class of invalids. Another Women's Rights Convention has been held, and an Industrial Congress. One of the questions discussed at the latter was: Why in the United States some have all the work and no property, and others all the property and no work? Harriet Martineau's stories of Political Economy would have helped the debaters to a satisfactory solution.

Our sanitary reformers, also, are felicitating themselves on the spread of their principles to the West, seeing that the first Baths for the People were opened in New York a few weeks since. It appears from accounts which have been sent over, that the edifice cost 30,000 dollars, and is provided with every convenience to insure the end in view—the promotion of cleanliness. The charge for plunge-baths is two cents; for warm-baths, five cents; and first-class baths, ten cents. For washing, a range of stalls extends through the building, in the bottom of which is a contrivance for admitting hot or cold water, as may be desired. The drying machinery is 'arranged after the plan of a window-sash, with weights and pulleys, so as to rise and fall at pleasure. This sliding apparatus, when elevated, is brought into contact with confined heated air for a few minutes, followed by a rapid draught of dry air, which dries the clothes with great rapidity. The same heat is made use of for heating the flat-irons, which are brought from the furnace to the hands of the laundresses on a miniature railway.' With such an establishment as this in full play, the 71,000 emigrants who landed in New York during the first four months of the present year, would have little difficulty in purifying themselves after their voyage.

There is yet another topic of interest from the United States—namely, the earthquake that was felt over a wide extent of country on the 29th of April last. Our geologists are expecting to derive from it some further illustration of the dynamics of earthquakes, as the Smithsonian Institution has addressed a circular to its numerous staff of meteorological observers, calling for information as to the number of shocks, their direction, duration, intensity, effects on the soil and on buildings, &c. There have been frequent earthquakes of late in different parts of the world, and inquiry may probably trace out the connection between them. The centre of intensest action appears to have been at Hawaii, where Mauna Loa broke out with a tremendous eruption, throwing up a column of lava 500 feet high, which in its fall formed a molten river, in some places more than a mile wide. It burst forth at a point 10,000 feet above the base of the mountain.

Dr Gibbons has published a few noteworthy facts with respect to the climate of California, which shew that San Francisco 'possesses some peculiar features, differing from every other place on the coast.' The average yearly temperature is 54°; at Philadelphia it is 51°.50; and the temperature is found to be remarkably uniform, presenting few of those extremes common to the Atlantic states. On the 28th of April last year, it was 84°; on October 19th, 83°; August 18th, 82°—the only day in the three summer months when it rose

above 79°. It was 80° on nine days only, six of them being in October; while in Philadelphia it is 80° from sixty to eighty days in the year. In the latter city, the temperature falls below the freezing-point on 100 days in the year, but at San Francisco on twenty-five mornings only. The coldest month is January; the hottest, October. 'In the summer months, there is scarcely any change of temperature in the night. The early morning is sometimes clear, sometimes cloudy, and always calm. A few hours after sunrise, the clouds break away, and the sun shines forth cheerfully and delightfully. Towards noon, or most frequently about one o'clock, the sea-breeze sets in, and the weather is completely changed. From 60° or 65°, the mercury drops forthwith to near 50° long before sunset, and remains almost motionless till next morning.' The summer, far from being the beautiful season it is in other countries, parches up the land, and gives it the aspect of a desert, while the 'cold sea-winds defy the almost vertical sun, and call for flannels and overcoats.' In November and December, or about midwinter, the early rains fall, and the soil becomes covered with herbage and flowers. These are facts which emigrants bound for California will do well to bear in mind.

To come back to Europe. M. Fourcault has addressed a communication to the Académie on 'Remedies against the Physical and Moral Degeneration of the Human Species,' intended more especially for the working-classes. He would have schools of gymnastics and swimming established along the great rivers, and on the sea-shore; gymnastic dispensaries, and clinical gymnastic in towns; and agricultural and other hospitals, combining simple and economical means of water-cure. His clinical gymnastic comprehends three divisions: hygienic or muscular exercise, not violent or long-continued, or productive of perspiration; medical, in which the exercise is to be kept up until perspiration is induced; and orthopedic, which, by means of ropes, bands, and loops attached to a bed, enable the patient to take such straining and stretching exercise as may be likely to rectify any deformity of limb. Whichever method be adopted, it must be carried out conscientiously, because 'feeble muscular contractions, without energy or sustained effort, produce no hygienic, medical, or orthopedic effect.' M. Fourcault may perhaps find some of his objects accomplished in another way, for the Prince President has, by a decree, appropriated 10,000,000 francs to the improvement of dwellings for the working-classes—3,000,000 of the sum being set apart for Paris—and has offered 5000 francs for the best design. If such works as these continue, we shall soon cease to hear that enough is not done for the working-classes; and they will have, in turn, to shew how much they can do for themselves.

A portable electric telegraph has lately been introduced on some of the French railways, by which, in case of accident, the conductors may communicate with the nearest stations. It is all contained in a single box, the lower portion of which contains the battery, the upper, the manipulator and signal apparatus. When required to be used, one of the wires is hooked on to the wires of the telegraph, and the other attached to an iron wedge thrust into the earth. It answers so well, that the directors of the Orleans line have provided thirty of their trains with the portable instruments. In connection with this, I may tell you that Lamont of Munich, after patient inquiry, has come to the conclusion, that there is a decennial period in the variations of the magnetic declination; it increases regularly for five years, and decreases as regularly through another five. If it can be discovered that the horizontal intensity is similarly affected in a similar period, another of the laws of terrestrial magnetism will be added to the sum of our knowledge.

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NATIVITY AND PARENTAGE OF MARSHAL MACDONALD, DUKE OF TARENTUM.

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M. de Lamartine having made a mistake in his *History of the Restoration*, in describing Marshal Macdonald as of Irish extraction, it may be worth while to state what really was the parentage of that highly respectable man.

When Prince Charles Stuart had to voyage in an open boat from the isle of South Uist in the Hebrides to Skye, he was guided and protected, as is well known, by Miss Flora Macdonald. On that occasion, Flora had for her attendant a man called Neil Macdonald, but more familiarly Neil Macechan, who is described in the *History of the Rebellion* as a 'sort of preceptor in the Clanranald family.' This was the father of Marshal Macdonald. He remained more or less attached to the fugitive prince during the remainder of his wanderings in the Highlands, and afterwards joined him in France, under the influence of an unconquerable affection for his person. It was thus that his

son came to be born abroad.

Neil Macdonald, though a man of humble rank, had received the education proper for a priest at the Scots College in Paris. His acquaintance with the French language had enabled him to be of considerable service to Prince Charles, when he wished to converse about matters of importance without taking the other people about him into his confidence. There is some reason to believe, that he wrote, or at least gave the information required for, a small novel descriptive of the poor Chevalier's wanderings, entitled *Ascanius, or the Young Adventurer*. (Cooper, London, 1746.)

When Marshal Macdonald visited Scotland in 1825, he made his way to the farm of Howbeg, in South Uist, where his father had been born, and where his ancestors had lived for many generations. He found here an old lady and her brother, his cousins at one remove, to whom he shewed great kindness, settling a pension at the same time upon a more distant relation whom he found in poverty. When about to leave the spot, he took up some of the soil, and also a few pebbles, which he got packed up in separate parcels, and carried back with him to France.

The facts respecting Marshal Macdonald's parentage were lately communicated to M. de Lamartine, who promptly sent the following answer: 'J'ai reçu, avec reconnaissance, monsieur, vos intéressantes communications sur le Maréchal Macdonald, homme qui honore deux pays. J'en ferai usage l'année prochaine à l'époque des nouvelles éditions.'

DOMESTICATION OF WILD BEES.

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The following account of the process of transplanting bodily a tribe of wild bees, is given in the notes to *The Tay*, a descriptive poem of considerable merit by David Millar. (Perth, Richardson, 1830.) 'When the boy, whose hobby leads him in that direction, has found out a "byke," he marks the spot well, and returns in the evening, when all its inmates are housed for the night. Pushing a twig into the hole as far as it will go, in case he should lose it by the falling in of the rubbish, he commences digging freely till the hum of the hive is distinctly heard, when he proceeds more cautiously to work. By this time, the more adventurous of the bees come out to ascertain what is going on, and are caught as they make their appearance, and put into a bottle. When the nest is fully exposed, it is lifted carefully up, and placed, as it stood, in a box prepared for it, along with the captured bees. The lid being now closed, the whole is carried home, and placed in the spot assigned for it in the garden. Next morning, a hole in the side of the box is quietly opened, when one or two of the strangers soon make their appearance, wondering, evidently, where they are, but apparently resolved to make the most of their new circumstances. At last, they rise slowly on the wing, and buzz round and round their new habitation for some time, taking, no doubt, special note of its every peculiarity. The circle of observation is then gradually enlarged, till it is thirty or forty yards in circumference, when the earnest reconnoitrer disappears, to return again in a short time with something for the general good. The curious in those matters, by placing the grubs of all the different kinds in one box beside a hive in operation, will soon have a choice assortment of all descriptions, working as amicably together as if they were all of the same family.'

COPPER-PLATE ENGRAVINGS COPIED ON STONE.

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In No. 439 of this Journal, Lieutenant Hunt received the credit of inventing a process by which copper-plate engravings may be transferred to stone, and the copies from a single print thus multiplied indefinitely. A correspondent, however, makes us fear that Lieutenant Hunt may have been unacquainted with what others had done before him. The process, it is stated, is not at all new; although, so far as we have heard, it has never been applied to the transfer of complicated pictorial engravings.

SONNET:

ON MY LITTLE BOY'S FIRST TRYING TO SAY 'PA-PA.'

MARKED day! on which the earliest dawn of speech
Glimmered, in trial of thy father's name!
Albeit the sound imperfect, yet the aim
Thrilled chords within me, deeper than the reach
Of music! Happy hearted, I did claim
The title which those silver tones assigned;
And in me leaped my spirit, as when first
The father's strange and wondering feeling came!
While this dear thought woke up within my mind,
Which careful memory in her folds has nursed:
'If thus to earthly parent's heart so dear
His child's first accents, though imperfect all—
Dear, too, to FATHER-GOD, when faint doth fall
His new-born's half-formed "Abba" on his ear!'

P.

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