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CHAMBERS' EDINBURGH JOURNAL

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PRESERVED MEATS AND MEAT-BISCUITS.

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THE many-headed public look out for 'nine days' wonders,' and speedily allow one wonder to obliterate the remembrance of that which preceded it. So it is with all newspaper topics, and so it has been in respect to the preserved-meat

question. We all know how great was the excitement at the commencement of the present year on this matter. Ships' accounts overhauled; arctic stores re-examined; canisters opened and rejected; contracts inquired into; statements and counter-statements published; questionings of Admiralty officials in the two Houses of Parliament; reports published by committees; recommendations offered for future guidance; descriptions of the preserving processes at different establishments: all went the round of the newspapers, and then the topic was forgotten. It deserves to be held in remembrance, however, for the subject-matter is really important and valuable, in respect not only to the stores for shipping, but to the provisioning of large or small bodies of men under various exceptional circumstances.

A few of the simple laws of organic chemistry suffice to account for the speedy decay of dead animal substances, and for the methods whereby this decay is retarded or prevented. In organised substances, the chemical atoms combine in a very complex but unstable way; several such atoms group together to form a proximate principle, such as gluten, albumen, fibrin, &c.; and several of these combine to form a complete organic substance. The chemical rank-and-file, so to speak, form a battalion, and two or more battalions form the chemical army. But it is a law in chemistry, that the more complex a substance becomes, the less stable is its constitution, or the sooner is it affected by disturbing influences. Hence organic substances are more readily decomposed than inorganic. How striking, for instance, are the changes easily wrought in a few grains of barley! They contain a kind of starch or fecula; this starch, in the process of malting, becomes converted into a kind of sugar; and from this malt-sugar or transformed starch, may be obtained ale or beer, gin or whisky, and vinegar, by various processes of fermenting and distilling. The complex substance breaks up through very slight causes, and the simple elements readjust themselves into new groupings. The same occurs in animal as in vegetable substances, but still more rapidly, as the former are more intricate in composition than the latter, and are held together by a weaker tie.

What the 'vital principle' may be, neither chemists nor physiologists can tell us with any great degree of clearness; but it is this vital principle, whatever it may be, which prevents decay in a living organic substance, however complex. When life departs, the onslaught begins; the defender has been removed, and a number of assailants make their appearance. *Air, heat, and moisture* are the principal of these; they attack the dead organism, and gradually convert it into wholly different and inorganic compounds, such as water, carbonic acid, ammonia, phosphuretted hydrogen, and many others. What, then, would result if these disturbers could be warded off, one or all? It is now pretty well ascertained, that if any one of the three—air, heat, moisture—be absent, the decay is either greatly retarded or indefinitely postponed; and we shall find that in all antiseptic or preserving processes, the fundamental principle has simply such an object in view.

Sometimes the operation of natural causes leads to the preservation of dead animal substances for a great length of time, by excluding one out of the above three disturbing influences. If heat be so deficient that the animal juices become wholly frozen up, the substance is almost proof against decay. Thus, about seventy years ago, a huge animal was found imbedded in the ice in Siberia: from a comparison of its skeleton with those of existing species, Cuvier inferred that this animal must have been antediluvian; and yet, so completely had the cold prevented putrefaction, that dogs willingly ate of the still existing flesh. At St Petersburg, when winter is approaching, the fish in the markets become almost like blocks of ice, so completely are they frozen; and in this state they will remain sound for a lengthened period. Dead poultry, and other articles of animal food, are similarly kept fresh throughout the winter in many rigorous climates, simply by the powerlessness of the attacking agents, when heat is not one of the number. And that which nature effects on a large scale, may reasonably be imitated by man on a more limited one. It is customary to pack many kinds of provisions in ice or snow, either for keeping them in storehouses, or for sending them to market. Thus it is with the tubs of poultry, of veal, and of other kinds of meat, which, killed in the country districts of Russia in autumn, are packed in snow to keep cool till sold at market; and thus it is with much of the salmon sent from Scotland to London. Since the supply of excellent ice from Wenham Lake, commenced about nineteen years ago, has become so abundant and so cheap, it is worth a thought whether the preservative powers of cold might not advantageously be made more available in this country than they have yet been. In the United States, housewives use very convenient refrigerators or ice-boxes, provided with perforated shelves, under which ice is set, and upon which various provisions are placed: a large uncooked joint of meat is sometimes kept in one of these boxes for weeks. Among the celebrities of the Crystal Palace, many

will recollect Masters's elegant ice-making machine, in which, by combining chemical action with centrifugal motion, ice can be made in a few minutes, let the heat of the weather be what it may. This machine, and the portable refrigerators manufactured by the Wenham Company, together with our familiar, old-fashioned ice-houses, might supply us with much more preservative power, in respect to articles of food, than we have hitherto practically adopted.

If, instead of watching the effects produced by abstraction of *heat*, we direct attention to the abstraction of *moisture*, we shall find that antiseptic or preservative results are easily obtainable. All kinds of bacon and smoked meats belong to the class here indicated. The watery particles are nearly or quite driven out from the meat, and thus one of the three decomposing agents is rendered of no effect. In some cases, the drying is not sufficient to produce the result, without the aid of the remarkable antiseptic properties of salt; because decomposition may commence before the moisture is quite expelled. In many parts of the country, hams are hung within a wide-spreading chimney, over or near a turf-fire, and where a free current of air, as well as a warm temperature, may act upon them; but the juices become dissipated by this rude process. Simple drying, without the addition of salt or any condiment, is perhaps more effectual with vegetable than with animal substances.

But it is under the third point of view that the preservative process is more important and interesting, inasmuch as it admits of a far more extensive application. We speak of the abstraction of *air*. Atmospheric air affects dead organic matter chiefly through the agency of the oxygen which forms one of its constituents; and it is principally to insure the expulsion of oxygen that air is excluded. The examples which illustrate the resulting effects are numerous and varied. Eggs have been varnished so as to exclude air, and have retained the vital principle in the chick for years; and it is a familiar domestic practice, to butter the outside of eggs as a means of keeping them. The canisters of preserved provisions, however, are the most direct and valuable result of the antiseptic action by exclusion of air. The Exhibition Jury on Class 3, in their Report on this subject, speak thus warmly thereupon:—'It is impossible to overestimate the importance of these preparations. The invention of the process by which animal and vegetable food is preserved in a fresh and sweet state for an indefinite period, has only been applied practically during the last twenty-five years, and is intimately connected with the annals of arctic discovery. The active measures taken to discover a north-west passage, and to prosecute scientific research, in all but inaccessible regions, first created a demand for this sort of food; and the Admiralty stimulated the manufacturers to great perfection in the art. As soon as the value of these preparations in cold climates became generally admitted, their use was extended to hot ones, and for the sick on board ship under all circumstances. Hitherto they had been employed only as a substitute for salt beef or pork at sea, and if eaten on shore, it was at first as a curiosity merely. Their utility in hot climates, however, speedily became evident; especially in India, where European families are scattered, and where, consequently, on the slaughter of a large animal, more is wasted than can be consumed by a family of the ordinary number.'

Whatever improvements may have been introduced by later manufacturers, the principle involved in the meat-preserving processes is nearly as M. Appert established it forty years ago. His plan consisted in removing the bones from the meat; boiling it to nearly as great a degree as if intended for immediate consumption; putting it into jars; filling up the jars completely with a broth or jelly prepared from portions of the same meat; corking the jars closely; incasing the corks with a luting formed of quicksilver and cheese; placing the corked jars in a boiler of cold water; boiling the water and its contents for an hour; and then allowing the cooling process to supervene very gradually.

Until the recent disclosures concerning the preserved meats in the government depôts, the extent of the manufacture, or rather preparation, was very little known to the general public. In the last week of 1851, an examination, consequent on certain suspicions which had been entertained, was commenced at the victualling establishment at Gosport. The canisters—for since Appert's time stone jars have been generally superseded by tin canisters—contain on an average about 10 pounds each; and out of 643 of these which were opened on the first day's examination, no fewer than 573 were condemned as being utterly unfit for food. On the next day, 734 were condemned out of 779; and by the fourth day, the number examined had risen to 2707, of which only 197 were deemed fit for food. Such wretched offal had been packed in the canisters, instead of good meat, that the stench arising from the decomposing mass was most revolting; the examiners were

compelled to use Sir William Burnett's disinfecting fluid abundantly, and even to suspend their labours for two or three days under fear of infection. The canisters formed part of a supply sent in by a contractor in November 1850, under a warrant that the contents would remain good for five years; the filling of the canisters was understood to have been effected at Galatz, in Moldavia, but the contractor was in England. The supply amounted to 6000 canisters, all of which had to be examined, and out of which only a few hundred were found to contain substances fit for food. Instead of good meat, or in addition to a small quantity of good meat, the examiners found lung, liver, heart, tongue, kidney, tendon, ligament, palate, fat, tallow, coagulated blood, and even a piece of leather—all in a state of such loathsome putridity as to render the office of the examiners a terrible one.

Of course nothing can be predicated from such atrocities as these against the wholesomeness of preserved food; they prove only the necessity of caution in making the government contracts, and in accepting the supplies. The Admiralty shewed, during subsequent discussions, that large supplies had been received from various quarters for several years, for use on shipboard in long voyages and on arctic expeditions; that these had turned out well; and that the contractor who was disgraced in the present instance, was among those who had before fulfilled his contracts properly. Fortunately, there is no evidence that serious evil had resulted from the supply of the canisters to ships; the discovery was made in time to serve as a useful lesson in future to government officials and to unprincipled contractors.

The jury report before adverted to, points out how cheap and economical these preserved meats really are, from the circumstance, that all that is eatable is so well brought into use. It is affirmed by the manufacturers, that meat in this form supplies troops and ships with a cheaper animal diet than salt provisions, by avoiding the expense of casks, leakage, brine, bone, shrinkage, stowage, &c., which are all heavy items, and entail great waste and expenditure; and by a canister of the former being so much smaller than a cask of the latter, in the event of one bad piece of meat tainting the whole contents. The contents of all the cases, when opened, are found to have lost much of the freshness in taste and flavour peculiar to newly-killed meat; they are always soft, and eat as if overdone. As a matter of choice, therefore, few or no persons would prefer meat in this state to the ordinary unpacked and recently-cooked state. But the important fact to bear in mind is, that the nutritious principles are preserved; as nutriment, they are unexceptionable, and they are often pleasantly seasoned and flavoured.

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In the ordinary processes of preparation, as carried on in London and other places, the tin canisters have a minute hole, through which the air may be expelled, while the meat is simmering or boiling within; and in the case of poultry being preserved whole, extra precautions are necessary, to insure the expulsion of the air from the hollow bones of the birds. Soups are more easily prepared than solid meat, on account of the greater facility for getting rid of the confined air. The minute air-hole in the canister is soldered down when the process is completed.

M. Alexis Soyer, who has a notoriety in London as the prince of cooks, and a very ingenious man—a sort of Paxton of the kitchen—wrote to the daily journals, about the time of the disclosure at Gosport, to offer a few suggestions. He said: 'No canister ought to contain more than about six pounds of meat, the same to be very slightly seasoned with bay-salt, pepper, and aromatic herbs in powder, such as bay-thyme and bay-leaf, a small quantity of which would not be objectionable even for invalids. No jelly should be added to the meat; the meat, and the meat alone, should produce its own jelly. With the bones and trimmings of the above, a good *stock* should be made without vegetables, well reduced and skimmed, to form a very strong transparent demi-glaze; six-pound canisters should be filled with the same, bearing a special mark, and one of these allowed to every dozen of the others. This demi-glaze, when diluted in water, would make six gallons of very good broth, with which any kind of soup could be made in a very short time.' He also points out how the condition of the preserved meat may be guessed by the external appearance of the canister. If either the top or bottom of the canister be convex, like the upper surface of a watch-glass, the contents are in a state of decomposition; the bulging being occasioned by the gases generated during the chemical changes. If the contents of the canister be sound, the top and bottom will be either quite flat, or slightly concave.

The Jury on Food, at the Great Exhibition, had quite an *embarras des richesses*; they were surrounded by hundreds of canisters of preserved provisions, all of which they were invited to open and taste. They say, or their reporter says, that the merits of the contributions 'were tested by a selection

from each; the cases were opened in the presence of the jury, and tasted by themselves, and, where advisable, by associates. The majority are of English manufacture, especially the more substantial viands; France and Germany exhibiting chiefly made-dishes, game, and delicacies—of meat, fish, soups, and vegetables.' It is an important fact for our colonies, that viands of this description are as well prepared in Australia, Van Diemen's Land, Canada, and the Cape of Good Hope, as in the mother-country. 'Animal food is most abundant and cheap in some of those colonies. In Australia, especially, during seasons of drought, it is wasted in extraordinary quantities; flocks are slaughtered for the tallow alone, and herds, for their bones and hides. Were the meat on these occasions preserved, it cannot be doubted that it could be imported into England, and sold at a cheaper rate than fresh meat in our metropolitan markets, to the great benefit of the lower-classes.' This is a statement well worth being borne in mind by some of those who are at present dazzled with gold-digging wonders.

In respect to the preserved meats at the Great Exhibition, many were merely cured or dried meats. From Canada, for instance, they comprised hams, bacon, tongues, and barrels of beef and pork. Among the miscellaneous contributions were grated beef, canisters of fresh salmon, 'admirable boiled mutton in tin cases,' dried mullets, '*mouton rôti*,' fish, meats preserved in a fresh state by simple drying—on a plan practised in Switzerland—and preserved larks. Not the least remarkable was a preserved *pig*, which reclined in all its glory on the floor of the south-west gallery, and was a successful example of curing on a large scale. Still more striking than this, was the large partridge-pie, placed somewhat out of general notice in the 'Netherlands' department; a formidable pie it truly was, for it contained 150 partridges, with truffles, and weighed 250 pounds: it had been made a year before it was forwarded to London. But among the contributions more immediately relating to our present subject, may be mentioned those of Mr Gamble, which comprised, among others, a canister of preserved boiled mutton, which had been prepared for the arctic expedition in 1824; many such canisters were landed at Fury Beach in Prince Regent's Inlet; they were found by Sir John Ross at that spot in 1833 in a perfect state, and again by Sir James Ross in 1849, the meat being as sweet and wholesome as when prepared a quarter of a century before.

The range of these preserving processes is singularly wide and varied. If we take the trade-list of one of the manufacturers, such as that of Messrs Hogarth of Aberdeen, and glance through it, we shall find ample evidence of this. There are nearly twenty kinds of soups selling at about 2s. per quart-canister. There is the concentrated essence of beef, much more expensive, because containing the nutriment of so much more meat; and there are, for invalids, concentrated broths of intermediate price. There are about a dozen kinds of fish, some fresh and some dried. There are various kinds of poultry, roast and boiled; hare, roast and jugged; and venison, hashed and minced. There are beef, veal, and mutton, all dressed in various ways, and some having the requisite vegetables canistered with them, at prices varying from 10d. to 15d. per pound. There are tongues, hams, bacon, kidneys, tripe, and marrow; and there are cream, milk, and marmalade. Lastly, there are such vegetables as peas, beans, carrots, turnips, cabbage, and beet, at 6d. to 1s. per pound-canister. The canisters for all these various provisions contain from one pound to six pounds each. It was Messrs Hogarth, we believe, who supplied the preserved meats and vegetables to the arctic ships under Sir E. Belcher which sailed in the spring of 1852.

M. Brocchière, a French manufacturer, has lately extended these economical processes so far, as to attempt to produce concentrated food from the blood of cattle. He dries up the liquid or serous portions of the blood, and forms into a cake, with admixture of other substances, the coagulable portion, which contains fibrin, the source of flesh and muscle. Unless a more delicate name could be given to this preparation, prejudice would have some influence in depriving it of the chance of fair play. The dry blood is in some cases combined with a small portion of flour, and made into light dry masses, like loaves or cakes, to be used as the basis of soups; while in other cases it is combined with sugar, to make sweet biscuits and bon-bons. Another kind of preserved animal fluid is the *ozmazome*, prepared by Messrs Warriner and Soyer. This consists of the nutritious matter or juice of meat, set free during the operation of boiling down fat for tallow in Australia; it is afterwards concentrated, and preserved in the form of sausages. A great amount of nutriment is thus obtained in a portable form; when boiled with gelatine, it forms a palatable diet, and it is also used to form a gravy for meat.

Masson's method of preserving vegetables seems to be very effective, as applied to white and red cabbages, turnips, Brussels sprouts, and such like.

The process, as conducted in France, is very simple. The vegetables are dried at a certain temperature (104 to 118 degrees Fahrenheit), sufficient to expel the moisture without imparting a burnt taste; and in this operation they lose nearly seven-eighths of their original weight. The vegetables are then pressed forcibly into the form of cakes, and are kept in tinfoil till required for use. These vegetables require, when about to be eaten, rather more boiling than those in the ordinary state. Some of the French ships of war are supplied with them, much to the satisfaction of the crews. Dr Lindley has stated, on the authority of a distinguished officer in the antarctic expedition under Sir James Ross, that although all the preserved meats used on that occasion were excellent, and there was not the slightest ground for any complaint of their quality, the crew became tired of the meat, but never of the vegetables. 'This should shew us,' says Dr Lindley, 'that it is not sufficient to supply ships' crews with preserved meats, but that they should be supplied with vegetables also, the means of doing which is now afforded.' Generally speaking, the flavour of preserved vegetables, whether prepared on Masson's or on any other process, is fresher than that of the meats—especially in the case of those which abound in the saccharine principle, as beet, carrot, turnips, &c. The more farinaceous vegetables, such as green peas, do not preserve so well.

One of the most remarkable, and perhaps valuable recent introductions, in respect to preserved food, is the American *meat-biscuit*, prepared by Mr Borden. A *biscuit-beef* is prepared by a Frenchman, M. Du Liscoet, resembling an ordinary coarse ship-biscuit; but this is said to have 'an animal, salt, and not very agreeable taste.' The American meat-biscuit, however, is prepared in a way which renders its qualities easily intelligible. It contains in a concentrated form all the nutriment of meat, combined with flour. The best wheaten flour is employed, with the nutriment of the best beef, and the result is presented for use as food in the form of a dry, inodorous, flat, brittle cake, which will keep when dry for an unlimited period. When required for use, it is dissolved in hot water, boiled, and seasoned at pleasure, forming a soup about the consistence of sago. One pound of the biscuit contains the nutritive matter—fat excepted—of five pounds of prime beef, mixed with half a pound of wheaten flour. One ounce of the biscuit, grated and boiled in a pint of water, suffices to form the soup. It can also be used in puddings and sauces. The manufacture of the meat-biscuit is located at Galveston, in Texas, which abounds in excellent cattle at a very low price. It is said that the meat-biscuit is not liable to heating or moulding, like corn and flour, nor subject to be attacked by insects. The meat-biscuit was largely used by the United States' army during the Mexican campaign; the nutriment of 500 pounds of beef, with 70 pounds of flour, was packed in a twenty-two-gallon cask.

Dr Lindley, as one of the jurors for the Great Exhibition, and as a lecturer on the subject at the Society of Arts, commends the meat-biscuit in the very highest terms. 'I think I am justified in looking upon it,' he says, 'as one of the most important substances which this Exhibition has brought to our knowledge. When we consider that by this method, in such places as Buenos Ayres, animals which are there of little or no value, instead of being destroyed, as they often are, for their bones, may be boiled down and mixed with the flour which all such countries produce, and so converted into a substance of such durability that it may be preserved with the greatest ease, and sent to distant countries; it seems as if a new means of subsistence was actually offered to us. Take the Argentine Republic, take Australia, and consider what they do with their meat there in times of drought, when they cannot get rid of it while it is fresh; they may boil it down, and mix the essence with flour—and we know they have the finest in the world—and so prepare a substance that can be preserved for times when food is not so plentiful, or sent to countries where it is always more difficult to procure food. Is not this a very great gain?' A pertinent question, which intelligent emigrants would do well to bear in mind.

THE BUYER OF SOULS:

A Russian Story.

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ALL over the world, the essential elements of human nature are the same. And it is very fortunate for me that they are so, else I should find myself in considerable difficulty in endeavouring to place before my readers a correct picture of the little, out-of-the-way town of Nikolsk. Making due allowances for the differences in national manners and customs; for Nikolsk being under the dominion of his autocratic majesty the emperor of all the Russias, instead of the mild, constitutional government of Queen Victoria, there is no great

discrepancy between Nikolsk and any equally out-of-the-way town in England. It has the same dearth of excitement, the same monotonous uniformity of life; it lives in the same profound ignorance of the great incidents that the drama of human existence is developing on the theatre of the world at large; it has its priest, its doctor, its lawyer, its post-office where a seal is not so sacred as it might be, or rather where the problem of getting at the news, without breaking the wax, has been successfully solved; it has the same thirst for scandal, the same intense interest for the most contemptible trivialities, the same constantly impending danger of suicide from ennui, did not human nature adapt itself to its environments, and sink into pettiness as naturally as though there were no such things as towns and cities, and enlarged views of man and nature in the world: all these it has the same as any British Little Pedlington. Then it has its circles of social intercourse, as rigidly defined and as intensely venerated as the rules of court precedence. The difference in the social scale between a landowner, a tenant, a member of the professions, a tradesman, a publican, a sweep, and a beggar, is accurately prescribed and religiously observed—with this addition, however, that in Nikolsk the owners of land are also owners of the serfs upon the land, and that the numerous representatives of that most centralised of all governments cut an important figure in the snobberies of the place. In fine, there is one little English word that describes Nikolsk completely, and that is—*dull*. It is dull—beyond comprehension dull. No town in the universe can be duller; because, from its quintessential dullness, there is but one step to total inanition.

Thus, in Nikolsk, the ancient saying, that there is nothing new under the sun, was daily and hourly verified. Week after week, and year after year, the governor pillaged the people; the inspector of charities pillaged the charities; the inspector of nuisances sedulously avoided inspecting at all, lest, by removing them, the need for his services should cease; the landowner ground down the serfs; the tax-assessor ground the landowners; and everybody, in return for the favours a paternal government showered upon them through its immaculate representatives, cheated and defrauded that government with a persistency and perseverance approaching the sublime. Mothers of daughters were in despair, for in Nikolsk there were no 'nice young men,' no eligible matches; fathers of sons despaired in their turn, for as everybody robbed everybody, and the government robbed the robbers, there were no heiresses; ladies wore the fashions of 1820 in 1840, under the impression that they were the newest from Paris; the reading portion of the community were just beginning to hear of Voltaire as a promising writer; and the general public laboured under the fixed idea, that somewhere or other Napoleon was still prosecuting his leviathan campaigns, happily *not* in Russia. The only thing that ever broke the monotony of existence was the prevalence of cholera, or the governor essaying some loftier flight of tyranny than usual by hanging up a score of defaulters to the revenue, or knouting a bevy of ladies whose tongues outran their prudence.

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Such being the state of affairs in Nikolsk, it will be easily imagined, that when mine host of the Black Eagle, in a very important and mysterious manner, announced to a select few that a singular and eccentric stranger, rolling in money, had arrived at his hostelry, with the intention of staying some time in Nikolsk, the news flew like a telegraphic message, or a piece of scandal among a community of old maids, through the place; and that in a few hours after his arrival, nobody, from governor to serf, thought or spoke of anything or anybody else than the mysterious stranger, who, under the name of Tchitchikof, occupied the best suite of apartments in the Black Eagle, and, as the landlord affirmed on oath, was eccentric to a degree, and revelled in untold gold.

Now, whatever had been the station in society of M. Tchitchikof, his means or his idiosyncrasy, the mere fact of his being a stranger had been enough to make the good people of Nikolsk pounce down upon him like a hawk on its quarry, and morally tear him to pieces with rapacious analysis to satiate their ravenous curiosity. But as to the fact of his being a stranger, was added the piquancy of a reputation for eccentricity, and the irresistible recommendation of wealth, the Tchitchikof mania spread over all ranks of society, and raged with the fury of a tornado by the evening of the very day upon which the host of the Eagle first delighted them with the news. In fact, so intense was the rage regarding him, that the landlord of that hostelry reaped a fortune from the constant drain upon his potables by inquisitive callers, and would have assuredly ceased to dispense strong drinks for evermore, had not the governor, in his vexation at the sequel of Tchitchikof's visit, found some pretext to despoil him of his gains, and a good round sum to boot. Various were the speculations as to the occupations and antecedents of Tchitchikof, and the business that had called him to Nikolsk. Enterprising mothers of families hoped that he was a Cossack Cœlebs in search of a wife, and began,

on the strength of the surmise, to lay plots for ensnaring him, justly considering that a fool with money is preferable to a sage without; landowners trembled at the idea of his being a government assessor, come to examine into the state of the properties, and assess accordingly; while government *employés*, knowing too well that a paternal government does not tolerate plundering in subordinates, shuddered, conscience-stricken, at the idea that he must be a St Petersburg inspector, come to Nikolsk with powers of scrutiny, and equally unlimited powers of knouting. Every class, therefore, received with joy the assurance, that, he was simply a private gentleman of fortune, travelling over Russia at his own sweet will. This mine host positively stated that he had heard Tchitchikof say with his own lips. This announcement delighted the officials and landowners, by removing their fears of the knout and taxes, and equally delighted the enterprising mammas, by increasing the probability of his visit being intimately connected with matrimonial intentions. It being thus definitely settled that there was nothing to be feared from Tchitchikof, the good folks of Nikolsk naturally took up the next position—that, being a stranger, and rich and eccentric, there was something to be gained from him. The leading passions of the Nikolskians being curiosity and avarice, their dealings with strangers were generally twofold—to scatter their ennui for a few days, by discovering their histories and affairs, and, where facts failed, calling in the aid of fancy; and when there was nothing more to be discovered or invented, to lighten their money-chests by all the tyranny that power dare venture on, or the effrontery that cunning could devise and execute. Their curiosity regarding Tchitchikof was soon baffled, by discovering, like Socrates, that all they knew was, that nothing could be known. In vain did mine host essay to pump him: with a show of the most voluble confidence, Tchitchikof contrived always virtually to tell nothing. In vain the postmaster looked among the letters with a lynx eye; not one word of writing ever came to Tchitchikof through the medium of the post. Their knowledge of him speedily resolved itself into this: that he was a dashing, handsome young man, of most refined and polished manners, eminently gifted with that self-possession which is the never-failing accompaniment of good-breeding and intercourse with what is termed good society, elegant in dress, and, as the host of the Eagle announced, decidedly eccentric. This eccentricity manifested itself in one way, and one only, and that altogether incomprehensible to the greedy Nikolskians—namely, a morbid desire to part with his money. If Tchitchikof met a serf on the highway, he would offer him a ruble for a stick, a cap, or any other article he wore, intrinsically not worth a handful of corn; and when the bewildered serf hesitated, would manifest the utmost anger and impatience until he had gained possession of the coveted article. With possession, his value for it ceased, and the dear purchase was generally consigned to the fire a few minutes after it was bought. However varied his freaks might be in detail, in spirit they were ever essentially the same; they ever consisted in making some worthless piece of lumber an excuse for lightening his purse of a ruble or two.

The priest of the place was the first to find a solution of Tchitchikof's conduct. He asserted that Tchitchikof, in his love for money, had committed some fraud or some misdeed to obtain it, and that his conscience smiting him, he had sought ghostly solace from some minister, by whom he had been ordered, as adequate penance, to get off a certain portion per annum in bad bargains—thus at once doing good to the sellers and torturing the avaricious spirit of the penitential purchaser. To this the governor objected, with much force, that, money being the end of human existence, the gaining of it, by any means short of murder, must be laudable, and could sit heavily on no sane man's conscience; but being warned by the priest, that such arguments bordered on heresy, he shifted his ground, and maintained that Tchitchikof was much too young and too far from death to dream of penitence, even if he had committed such a crime; though he was evidently too reckless and devil-may-care to leave any dash of the miser in his composition. But the inspector of highways effectually knocked the clerical argument on the head, by saying, that had any priest thought it necessary, for the good of Tchitchikof's soul, that he should part with his money, he would have taken due care that, instead of it being squandered in Nikolsk, it had all gone to swell the revenues of Mother Church. The inspector of the hospital finally settled it to the satisfaction of all parties, by shewing, from attentive observation of Tchitchikof's conduct at the hospital, that he must be a monomaniac, whose particular insanity took the form of philanthropy; but that, believing that a gift debases the recipient, he dexterously contrived to *give* his assistance under the cloak of a purchase. Although his companions could not see how any man could be so insane as to fancy a serf could be debased, this opinion was unanimously adopted, and the whole community set their wits to work to make themselves objects of charity for the nonce, and so obtain a share in the plunder.

Space will not permit, neither would the end of our story be advanced by, a

detail of the numerous and adroit dodges the Nikolskians invented in order to work upon Tchitchikof's supposed philanthropy. Suffice it to say, that they were not in the least degree successful. It seemed as though you had only to appeal directly to Tchitchikof's charity to close up his bowels of compassion, and render him at once callous and niggardly. Perhaps, too, as some thought, he was as acute as he was eccentric, and could distinguish between real and feigned distress. However it might be, it was soon remarkably clear that Tchitchikof, madman though he was, was not to be done; and the baffled conspirators did not hesitate to say, that, after all, he was no such remarkable friend of his species; that he kept a keen eye on the main chance; and if it were his gratification to do good, he made a little go as far as it could, and was singularly blind to meritorious poverty. Accordingly, Tchitchikof having now been a fortnight in Nikolsk, was fast ceasing to be an object of interest, when his eccentricity broke out in a fresh place, and there seemed some likelihood of the children of Nikolsk, in the end, spoiling that Egyptian.

It so happened, that at that time the landowners, or rather serf-owners, constituted the most depressed 'interest' in that portion of the Russian Empire. Not that they were suffering from free-trade of any kind, or clamouring for open or disguised protection: the cause of their depression was the prevalence of a deadly epidemic, which reduced the number of their serfs with remorseless vigour—combined with the tax which a paternal government levied on them, as a consideration for its maintaining them in their humane and Christian property. One of the principles of Russian taxation is this: that as every individual in the empire, European or Asiatic, is the child of the czar, owes him fealty and obedience, and receives protection, light, and glory from him, as from a central sun, so every individual owes in return a direct contribution to the fund by which the czar-father supports that light and glory. This is the theory of Russian taxation; but against its actual carrying out in fact, is opposed the old difficulty, that from him who has nothing, nothing can possibly be extracted; and as the poor serfs have no more means of paying taxes than the hogs and cattle their fellow-slaves, a considerate paternal government drops its theory, and makes the landowner pay the poll-tax for the slaves he possesses, much as an English gentleman pays taxes for his horses and dogs, horses and dogs being as little able to pay tax themselves as the Russian serf. Now, in a kind of deep irony, a serf is called a *soul*. M. K— or M. T— owns so many *souls*, Miss L—'s marriage-portion was so many *souls*, Madame B—'s dowry was a hundred *souls*; and this word soul only applies to the male serfs—women and children being given in, or there being only one soul per family among serfs. Well, a landowner paying so much per soul to the government, and it being a work of much time and trouble to take a census of souls every year, an estimate is made at long intervals—say ten or twenty years—and the landowner is compelled to pay accordingly till the period expires, whether the number of his serfs increase or diminish. It is therefore self-evident, that if the former occur—that if his serfs propagate their species with due rapidity—the serf-owner is a clear gainer during the interval between the soul-censuses, as he will be paying tax for a given number, while he is actually reaping the profit of the labour of treble or quadruple that number; while, if cholera, fever, or any other of the ills that flesh, and especially serf-flesh, is heir to, come and slay their thousands, the exact converse obtains, and he will be paying tax for a certain number, while he only reaps the profit of a third. In the latter case were the landowners of Nikolsk. Cholera had more than decimated the serfs; the impoverished owners regarded their unreaped fields and untilled lands and impoverished exchequers with a sigh—a sigh which deepened into a shudder, when they reflected how soon the collector would arrive with his inexorable demand for soul-tax. The landed interest is in no country, we believe, celebrated for bearing reverses with dignified composure; and the depressed condition of the serf-owning interest was as much noised abroad in that district, as a certain professedly depressed interest connected with the soil has been, and is, in another country we know of much nearer home.

About a dozen miles from Nikolsk there dwelt a widow, Madame Korobotchka by name, who lived on her late husband's estate, and had suffered more than her neighbours by the prevalent serf mortality. Late one evening, when a violent storm was raging without, a stranger, who had been surprised in the storm, demanded the shelter of Madame Korobotchka's château till the morning; and as hospitality is a sacred duty in Russia, his demand was not only granted, but in a few minutes the stranger was seated as her *vis-à-vis* at the best repast her impoverished condition could afford.

'You appear to have a nice property here, *matouchka*,' said the stranger, by way of opening a conversation. 'How many peasants have you?'

'Peasants, *batiouchka*! At present, about eighty; but these are awful times.

This year, we have had a frightful loss of them. Providence have pity on us!

'Nevertheless, your men look well enough, and——But, pardon me—allow me to inquire to whom I am indebted for this hospitality? I am quite confused—arrived so suddenly and so late—I'——

'My name is Korobotchka—my paternal name Nastasie Petrovna.'

'Nastasie Petrovna! Beautiful name.'

'And you, sir?' inquired Nastasie. And then added, palpitating with terror: 'Are you—surely not—are you—an assessor?'

'O no!' was the reply. 'My name is Tchitchikof. I am no assessor; I travel on purely private business.'

'I see: you have come to buy. How annoying! I've just sold all my honey to those thieves of merchants.'

'It is of no consequence. I do not buy honey.'

'Indeed! hemp, then? Dear me, and I have next to none.'

'Never mind, matouchka,' said Tchitchikof. 'My business in these parts is different. You were mentioning that you have had many deaths here?'

'Alas, yes! eighteen souls,' said Nastasie, sighing; 'and such fine fellows: and the worst is, I shall have to pay for them. The assessor arrives, you must pay what he demands—pay to a soul. Eighteen die—it is all one—you pay the same. They are frightful, they are ruinous, these deaths!'

'Ah, Nastasie,' said Tchitchikof, 'it is the will of God: we must not murmur against Providence! But tell me—will you let me have them?'

'Let you have what?'

'Your dead souls.'

'How can I let you have *them*?'

'Nothing easier. Sell them to me: I will give you money for them.'

'How! what! Do you want to disinter them?'

'Disinter them! what nonsense; no!' cried Tchitchikof. 'You hand them over to me by a regular conveyance, and I pay you whatever we agree upon for them.'

'And what will you do with them?' asked Nastasie in great surprise.

'That is my business,' said Tchitchikof.

'But you see they are dead.'

'And who, in the name of goodness, said they were living?' cried he. 'It's a misfortune for you that they are dead, isn't it? You pay the tax for them, don't you?—and that'll half-ruin you, you say. Well, I clear you of the tax for these eighteen dead ones—do you understand?—not only clear you of the tax, but give fifteen rubles into the bargain. Is that clear, or is it not?'

[pg 263] 'No—yes—I can't tell what to say. You see, I have never sold *dead* peasants before, and'——

'It would be queer if you had,' cried Tchitchikof. 'Who'd buy them, do you think? It's my humour, my whim, to have them. I gain nothing by them—how can I?—and you gain everything. Cannot you see that?'

'Yes—but—really I don't know what to say. What puzzles me is, that they are dead.'

'She hasn't the brains of a bullock,' exclaimed Tchitchikof indignantly. 'Listen, matouchka. Pay attention. You pay for them as if they were living: that will ruin you.'

'Ah, that is true indeed, batiouchka. In three months, I must pay one hundred and fifty rubles, and bribe the assessor to boot.'

'Well, then, I save you all that trouble. I pay for these eighteen—I, not you. When you sign the contract, I hand over the money. Do you understand now?'

As Nastasie's cupidity excelled her stupidity, she did begin to understand; and after a little more hesitation and explanation, Tchitchikof drew up a formal conveyance of the eighteen souls, precisely as though they were bodies and souls, inserting their names, however, as a guarantee against his claiming any of Nastasie's living stock. Nastasie signed it, Tchitchikof paid the money, and, after a good night's rest, departed for Nikolsk, with the title-deed of the dead souls safely in his possession.

Of course this new freak of Tchitchikof's was soon noised abroad, and in the eyes of the Nikolskians proved two things:—*1st*, That he was unmistakably mad, or philanthropic to a high degree; *2d*, That there was now a prospect of gaining something by said madness or philanthropy. Accordingly, all the serf-owners made it their business to drop in upon Tchitchikof in a purely casual manner; and contrived, after more or less higgling, to depart with a larger quantity of the current coin of Russia in their possession than they possessed on first seeking the interview. In a few days, Tchitchikof found himself possessed of 2000 souls, at the moderate cost of 19,500 rubles. Dead souls were getting quite a scarce article; and, on the true principles of supply and demand, some enterprising Nikolskians were about to import some defunct souls from a distance, when suddenly, one morning, the host of the Eagle announced, that at dead of the previous night, Tchitchikof had departed, bag and baggage and souls.

This sudden departure created a great sensation. All the old theories about Tchitchikof revived; and the general opinion seemed to be, that it was all a deep-laid scheme of some irresponsible man in authority, the end whereof was to be suffering in some shape or other to the good people of Nikolsk; until the inspector of the hospital, the Nikolsk Socrates, proved clearly, by unassailable argumentation, that Tchitchikof was mad; that his exit was in exact keeping with his conduct during his sojourn; and that they might repose in the peace of easy consciences, proud that they had made the most of his insanity.

Now for the *dénouement*. At St Petersburg is or was a bank established by a paternal government for this most laudable purpose: what with deaths, taxes, and the natural extravagance that seems to accompany the possession of land in all countries, the Russian landowners are often embarrassed, and were driven, before this bank was established, to seek assistance from usurious Jews, the end of which was frequently total ruin, and a Hebraicising of the race of landowners, not pleasant to a Russian and a Christian czar. Therefore this bank was established to lend money to distressed members of the landed interest; compelled by its charter to lend 200 rubles per soul, at a given interest and time, to every landowner who should deposit his title-deeds with the bank. On a certain day very soon after Tchitchikof's abrupt exit from Nikolsk, a solicitor applies at this bank for a loan of 400,000 rubles on the security of 2000 souls. The title-deeds are examined—found correct; the money is paid; and in a few days afterwards M. Tchitchikof and the money are both out of the jurisdiction of the czar.

The time for repayment arrives. The bank hears nothing of M. Tchitchikof. A letter is sent to Nikolsk: no reply. Another of a threatening nature: still no reply. Finally, a special agent is despatched, and finds neither Tchitchikof nor security; but gradually collects the particulars of his visit, as narrated above, and returns to report progress, or no progress, to his superiors. There is nothing for it, one would think, but to write off the 400,000 rubles as a clear loss, and think no more of it. But a paternal government knows better than that. It adjudges that the Nikolskians are virtually accessories to the fraud; apportioned the loan among the sellers of the souls, and compels repayment. So that the Nikolskians have to conclude, in reflecting on M. Tchitchikof, not without acerbity and a certain uncharitableness of spirit, that if he were a friend of his species, he limited *his* species to himself; and if he were mad, there was a very clear and profitable method in his madness.

Meantime the principal actor in this little Russian episode, as the Baron von Rabenstein, captivates the hearts of our English ladies at the ball-room, and empties the pockets of our English gentlemen at the *rouge et noir* table in the fashionable German watering-place of Lugundrugbad. And without disparaging his patriotism, or natural love of country, we believe we speak advisedly when we state, that he has not the slightest idea of returning, within anything like a limited period, to the territories of his autocratic majesty.

SPELLING-BOOK *VERSUS* HORN-BOOK.

NOTHING is considered a more shocking mark of defective education than *false spelling*, or *bad spelling*, or *misspelling*—all which terms are used to express one's spelling a word in some way which the critic does not approve; that is, does not consider the right way. But this is plainly assuming that there is but one right way. Begging his pardon, is he quite certain that there must be true and false, good and bad, right and wrong ways of spelling every word in every language, or even in our own? It seems very doubtful. At all events, we must, I think, tether the critic to his own particular period, and not let him range up and down at his pleasure, condemning the past and legislating for the future.

No doubt there is at this time a common and usual way of spelling most words, which may claim to be called the right way, or *orthography*. It is equally certain, that for any individual writer to depart from that way, is anything but a mark of wisdom. At the same time, it would not be difficult to specify a considerable number of words, of which the spelling has only recently been made what it is, and about which, even now, doubts may be raised.

But this is hardly worth mentioning, for it is clear that there is, generally speaking, a mode of spelling the English language which is followed by all well-educated persons; and as, according to Quintilian, the *consensus eruditorum* forms the *consuetudo sermonis*, so this usage of spelling, adopted by general consent of the learned, becomes a law in the republic of literature. My object is not to insist on what is so plain and notorious, but rather to call attention to a fact which many readers do not know, and many others do not duly consider. I mean this fact—that three or four hundred years ago there was no such settled rule. Not that a different mode was recognised, but that there was no recognised mode. There was no idea in the minds of persons who had occasion to write, that any such thing existed, for in fact it did not exist; and the adoption of this or that mode was a matter of taste or accident, rather than of duty or propriety. Thus it was that the writer who spelt (or spelled, for we have some varieties still) a word variously in different parts of the same book or document, and even the printer whose own name appeared one way on the title-page and another on the colophon, was not contradicting his contemporaries or himself: he was not breaking the law, for there was none to break—or, at least, none that could be broken in that way. He would, perhaps, have said to the same effect, though not so elegantly as Quintilian: 'For my part, except where there is any established custom to the contrary, I think everything should be written as it is sounded; for the use of letters is to preserve sounds, and render them, as things which they have been holding in trust, to the reader.' In short, the people of England, in these old times, had a law of their own, though it did not manifest itself in a fixed mode of spelling, but differed from ours, and, indeed, was based on a very different principle. Perhaps I might say, that they were brought up, not to the Spelling-book, but the Horn-book.

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By this, I mean that the critic of modern times has been no doubt well drilled in the spelling-book, soundly rated if he was guilty of a misspelling, and made to understand that it was next to impossible for him to commit a more disgusting barbarism; while his many-times-great-grandfather (the scholar of Lily, perhaps we might almost say of Busby) went through no such discipline. He was, as I have said, brought up on the horn-book.

Now, I grant that, generally, the major includes the minor; and a man's being able to read is *prima facie* evidence that he knows his letters; yet it is possible that the modern many-times-great-grandson may indulge in as much laxity respecting *letters*, as his ancestor did with regard to *words*. Just try the experiment. Go round to half-a-dozen printers, and ask them to print for you the first letter of the alphabet. They will understand you, and you will understand me, without my puzzling the workman who is to print this—if it is printed—by naming the letter here. Apply to them, I say, successively to print this letter for you. It is not likely that any one of them will ask you: 'What shape will you have it?' because that is not a technical mode of expression among printers; but if any one should do so, you would perhaps answer with some surprise: 'Why, the right shape to be sure. Do not you know your letters, and are not your first, second, and third letters, and all through the alphabet, of the right shape? Only take care that you do not make this first one in the shape of the second, or third, or any of those which follow, for the whole set are distinguished from one another simply and purely by their *shape*.'

As I have said, however, if you applied to a practical man, he would not put the question in this form. At the same time, he certainly would put it in another. He would perhaps say: 'What type will you have? Shall it be Roman, Italic, Black-letter, Script, or any of the grotesque inventions of modern fancy?' You immediately become aware that your order is too indefinite to be

acted on without some further specification. As, however, it is immaterial to you in a matter of mere experiment, you say at once 'Roman.' Does that settle it?—not at all: the question of form and shape is as wide open as ever. The Upper Case and Lower Case in a printing-office differ as much as the Upper House and Lower House in parliament or convocation. Is it to be a great 'A,' or a little 'a?' A great 'A,' I need not tell you, though quite the same in sound and value, is no more like a little 'a,' than a great 'B' is like a little 'b.'

As to writing also, as well as printing—set half-a-dozen critics separately and apart to write a capital 'A,' and see how far the letters which they will produce agree in form and shape—I do not say with any in the printer's stock, for not one will do that, we may be certain, but with each other. One scribe will probably make something like an inverted cornucopia, or wiredrawn extinguisher; and one will cross it with a dash, and another with a loop; while another will make a letter wholly different—something that shall look like a pudding leaning against a trencher set on edge—something that is only a great 'A' by courtesy, being in fact nothing but an overgrown little 'a,' bearing the same proportion to a common 'a' as an alderman does to a common man, and looking as if it had been invented by some municipal scribe or official whose eye was familiar with the outline of recumbent obesity.

But notwithstanding these and many other variations, you freely allow that each of your friends has made a capital 'A.' You do not dream of saying that one is right, and all the rest are wrong. The taste and the skill of their penmanship may be various, and the judgment of good and bad goes so far, but it knows better than to go further. Your toleration on this point is unbounded. If you can but make it out, you say, without the least emotion of resentment or contempt: 'Mr A. always makes *his* Bs in this way;' and 'Mrs C. always makes her Ds in that way.' *Their* Bs and Ds forsooth! Yes: 'every man his own alphabet-maker.' Why not, if you do but understand him? Right or wrong, the fact is that, come in what shape it may, you take what stands for 'A' to *be* 'A,' with all the rights and qualities annexed to that letter. Except so far as taste is concerned, you do not think of rebuking the self-complacent type-founder, who prides himself on having produced a new form which all the world will admit to be a genuine 'A,' as soon as they make out that it was meant for one.

I have thought it worth while to say all this about letters, because I believe that it will illustrate what was once upon a time nearly true as to words. The principle of those who had occasion to write in those early times was, so far as circumstances allowed, just opposite to that of the modern critics who find fault with their practice. They made that which, notwithstanding its fluctuations, we may call 'the constant quantity' to be the sound, exactly as we do with the multiform As and Bs just noticed. On the other hand, modern purists consider, not altogether incorrectly as to the fact, that the notation has somehow been settled and fixed, and they are disposed to force the sound into conformity. 'B, y, spells by,' said Lord Byron; and what he settled for himself, the spelling-book has settled for the rest of the world and all the words in it.

The circumstances of those who wrote English some centuries ago, may be considered as bearing some analogy to those of modern English authors who have occasion to write down Oriental words in English letters, and who are therefore obliged to make the characters which we use represent sounds which we do not utter. Of course there can only be an approximation. Writers feel that there is a discretion, and use it freely. It is easy for one after another to imagine that he has improved on the spelling of his predecessors. How many variegations and transmogrifications has the name of one unhappy Eastern tongue undergone since the days when Athanasius Kircher discoursed of the Hanscreeet tongue of the Brahmins? I am almost afraid to write the name of Vishnoo, for I do not remember to have seen it in any book published within these five years; and what it may have come to by this time, I cannot guess. To a certain point, I think, this progressive purification of the mode of representing Eastern sounds has been acceptable to the world of letters; but the reading-public have shewn that there is a point at which they may lose patience. They not long ago decided that Haroun Alraschid, and Giafar, and Mesrour, and even the Princess Badroulboudour, and the fair slave Nouzhatoul-aouadat, had all 'proper names,' and refused to part with the friends of their youth for a more correctly named set of persons never before heard of.

This by the way, however; for the main object of these remarks is to convey and impress the idea, that what naturally seems to us the strange and uncouth spelling of former times, was not a proof of the gross, untaught ignorance which it would now indicate. The purpose of the writer in those

days was, not to spell accurately words which there was no strict rule for spelling, but to note down words in such a way as to enable those who had not heard them to reproduce them, and to impart their sense through the eye to those who should only see them. One of the finest proofs and specimens of this which we possess, is to be found in a sort of historical drama, now about three hundred years old, written by Bishop Bale, one of the most learned men of his time, and still existing, partly in his hand-writing, and partly in another hand, with his autograph corrections.^[A] Certainly the prelate and the scribe between them did, as we should consider it, most atrociously murder the king and queen's English—for I suppose it would be hard to say how much of it belonged to Edward, and how much to Elizabeth; and there is something quite surprising in the prolific ingenuity with which they evade what we should consider the obvious and natural spelling. For instance, one of the *dramatis personæ*, and a very important one, is an allegorical person called 'Civil Order;' but I believe that the word 'civil' thus spelled never occurs in the whole work, though seven other modes of spelling it are to be found there. What then? You know what the writer means by cyvill, cyvyll, cyvyle, sivyll, syvyll, sivile, and syvile. Only say it out, and don't be afraid. It is mere nervousness that hinders people from reading old spelling. Clear your throat, and set off at full speed, and the top of your voice, with the following paragraph. Do not stop to think; take the rasps without looking at them, and you will find that you get over the ground wonderfully:—

'The suttly munkych rewlars in furdewhodes rewled the pepell with suttlyl rewles. But some of the pepyll were sedycyows scysmatyckes, and did puplyshe them for dysgysyd ipocryts, full of desseyvable gylle and covytous hydolatrye of luker. And these systatykes could in no wysse indewer that lords, nowther dewks, nor yet the kings mageste, nor even the empowr, should ponnysh any vylayn. Because, say they, peples in general, as well as peplys in particular (that is, yehe man and his ayers), hath an aunchant and ondowghted right to do his dessyer attonys. "Yea sewer," said a myry fellawe (for such as be myrie will make myrye jests)—"even as good right as a pertre to yield peres, and praty pygys to eat them."' "

It is, of course, only for the spelling, or various spellings, of these words that the bishop is responsible, they being here arbitrarily brought together from various parts of his work merely to form a specimen. There can be no doubt that he would have pronounced the words 'people' and 'merry' in one uniform manner wherever they occur; but it is curious to consider how little we can judge respecting the pronunciation of our forefathers. Their *litera scripta manet*; but how they vocalised it, we cannot always decide. If the reader takes up any edition of Sternhold and Hopkins, printed less than a hundred years ago, he may, I believe, read in Psalm lxxix—

O God, the Gentiles do invade,
 thine heritage to spoil:
 Jerusalem an heap is made—
 thy temple they defile.

Any one who is aware how many of what are called 'vulgarisms' in pronunciation are in fact 'archaisms,' will naturally think that the ancient pronunciation of 'spoil,' like the modern vulgar one, was 'spile.' But if he goes to one old black letter—say that printed by John Windet for the assignees of Richard Day in 1593—he will find in the fourth line 'defoile;' and if he goes to another edition he may find 'defoyle;' and he will learn that in speculating on such matters, he must be on his guard against modernisers, and go to originals. Even then the rhymes of our ancestors teach us much less of their pronunciation than we might expect; and the curious glimpses which we sometimes get from them, and from other sources, are only enough to make us wish for more. Take, for instance, Master Holofernes's vituperation of Don Adrian de Armado in *Love's Labour Lost*, and see what you can make of it: 'I abhor such phantasms, such insociable and point-devise companions, such rackers of orthography, as to speak *dout* fine, when he should say *doubt*; *det*, when he should pronounce *debt*; d, e, b, t; not d, e, t; he clepeth a calf, *cauf*; half, *hauf*; neighbour vocatur *nebour*; neigh abbreviated *ne*: this is abominable, which we would call *abhominable*.' Such a passage is curious, coming from one of whom it was asked: 'Monsieur, are you not lettered?' and answered: 'Yes, yes; he teaches boys the Horn-book.'

FOOTNOTES:

[A] *Kynge Johan*, a Play in Two Parts. By John Bale. Edited for the Camden Society by J. Payne Collier, Esq., F. S. A., from the Manuscript of the Author in the Library of the Duke of Devonshire. 1838.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT ROOMS AND THEIR ORNAMENTS.

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THE sun shines brightly to-day, and his beams glance lovingly from the flowers without to those within the room, and rest upon the 'Eve' that stands among them; the light is toned into softness by this green drapery, and reminds us of the leaves and tracery which peep in at the windows. We find, in the effect of the whole, such a delicate reflex of the nature outside, that we live with a half-conscious perception that but a tent-like division exists between us and the birds and blossoms in the garden. We love this room as we do few others, not for the evidences of wealth in it, though these exist, but because the idea regulating its arrangement is predominant through all its details. Affection and love of beauty were present at its creation for home-life, and worked it into harmony. All rooms might have this kind of beauty, subject only to slight modifications from position and wealth.

Character, in reality, has everything to do with it. Rooms tell us much of their inhabitants. No one will doubt who remembers the stiff, formal arrangement of the drawing-room 'at school,' where the chairs stood in the primmest rows and couples, and the whole place breathed such an air of strict propriety, that we doubted whether a hearty laugh would not be unbecoming in it; or the uncomfortable, seldom used, conventional drawing-room, which has such fine-looking, unreadable books on its polished tables; or the cheerful tiny room of the friend who has very little money, but very much taste, and who hangs an engraving there, and puts flowers here, and makes a shrine out of an ordinary garret. In some rooms, we see that life is respectably got through in a routine of eating, sleeping, comfort-loving; in others, that it glances to the stars, and lives with the flowers; in others, again, that it finds out good in shady nooks or crowded cities, and is filled with affection and intelligence.

There are very few rooms, except among the poorest and most degraded, that have not in them some indications of the love of beauty, which is so universal in human nature. Influenced by the same feeling, the cottager's wife scours her tins, arranges her little cupboard of cups and saucers, buys barbarous delineations of 'Noah in the Ark,' or 'Christ with the Elders,' from the pedler; and the nobleman collects around him all he thinks precious in bronze or painting. Cleanliness and order are certainly the simplest manifestations of the love of the beautiful in the household—the germ, which the feeling in its highest development must include; but too many among us remain satisfied with the lower form, and from some reason or other, fail to see the further gratification that is possible to all. Nature, however, stimulates and satisfies this love everywhere, and society in many directions is following in her footsteps. Let us see what can be done in the matter. After all, rooms must still retain the impress of the character of their inhabitants. Yes; but there are certain general rules which all who do arrange them would do well to remember. In the first place, they should be well lighted, and as thoroughly ventilated as they can be made; the eye should be pleased with their general effect; no detail of colouring or furniture should mar it; they should be filled with gentle relief, not uniformity of colour; and there should be as many waving lines, instead of angles, as possible. They should contain all things necessary to their several characters, but nothing very superfluous; and their whole arrangement should indicate, and be subservient to, the idea that prompted it. Above all, they should have in them some thing, or things, to soothe the thoughts, stimulate the fancy, and suggest something higher than the ordinary uses which they serve. Human beings, even in the life of a day, experience many fluctuations of mood, of joy or sadness; and there should be some thing, if not person, in their homes, that would suggest to them mute sympathy and comfort.

Are we sad? It is winter now, and these hyacinth bulbs are unsightly, but spring will bring flowers to them, as time and patience will to us. Are we glad? These roses and geraniums glow in the sunbeams, and we rejoice together. Are we dull? That beautiful Greek form rouses us into activity again. Are we weary of climbing, and dissatisfied with our want of success? Turn to that Raphael, and let us remember, that all who faint not by the way, and aspire worthily, shall at length be transfigured in the light of truth and beauty. There are few if any rooms that need be without some such suggestion and comfort. Nature offers them lavishly to all who care to seek them; and first, and most generously, her loveliest of treasures, flowers, which are the brightest of drawing-room accessories, as well as the sweetest of cottage adornments. Sea-weed, too—which is more difficult to get, but when arranged with taste, is so exquisite in colour—is a sweet remembrance

of sea-side beaches and the odour of the spray. Bits of pine-bark and fir-cones are beautiful as to colour, and bring back to us pictures of woods gleaming in the western light, and well-known landscapes seen through vistas of tall stems; sprays of clematis and bryony, a group of ivy-leaves, or bunch of ripe corn, require nothing but a little graceful arrangement to throw a light of beauty over many a dull corner. But some of these ornaments are perishable, and can but delight us for awhile. We must have something more permanent. Ah, then, there are shells which still echo faintly the delicious murmur of the waves, and reflect all the colours of sea and sky together; one or two of them we must secure: the graceful nautilus, from whose mouth shall hang in summer some pendent blossoms; and that Venus's ear, which glitters in the sunbeams as it lies upon the table, and bears the impress of spirits' wings upon its inner surface. Bronzes, marbles, and paintings can be purchased only by the wealthy, so we will not speak of them; we will see them as often as we can in public galleries, and meanwhile rejoice that such fine substitutes in plaster and engraving may become ours. These are yearly becoming more common among us; and treasures of antique and modern art, Grecian gods, and Italian Madonnas, may be our own household delights by the expenditure of a few shillings. Of course, to the taste and requirements of each individual must be left the selection of the kind and character of the beauty he desires to have around him.

Some subjects in art are best suited for enjoyment in rooms destined for solitary use, others for those of general resort—some touch us peculiarly in one mood, some are welcome to us in all. Of this last character 'St Catherine borne by Angels' is a specimen: the earth sinks beneath them, they fly so swiftly and yet so calmly! we are in the air too with them, and mark how small the world looks, with its burdens of wrong and suffering, as we cleave our way through the fields of ether up towards the stars; and that lovely one the spirits hold so tenderly, how still and calm is every line!—she is at peace after the storm and the agony, and for a space we lie still as she in those angel arms. Of the same class is Raphael's 'Transfiguration,' which is magnificent if we only contemplate the grouping of the figures, but truly sublime in the ideas it suggests. Flaxman's 'Mercury and Pandora' likewise, elegant and graceful in the highest degree, is peculiarly suited for generally used rooms and constant delight. But specimens crowd into our recollection for which we have not space. General sitting-rooms can bear a *variety* of subject and suggestion—they will have a variety of inhabitants or visitors; and while bearing the impress of a certain unity, they should contain pleasure for all, and stimuli for differing minds. We would not habitually admit in them works of art which rouse too painful a class of emotions. Fuseli's picture of 'Count Ugolino in Prison,' in which the stony fixedness of despair deprives us, as we gaze, almost of the living hope within us, we could not bear to have near us habitually. That wonderfully beautiful marble of Francesca di Rimini and her lover, which appeared in the Great Exhibition last year, would come under the same law of banishment. It realised so perfectly the hopelessness of hell, that at sight of it we swooned in spirit as Dante did in reality. Life has so many stern realities for most of us, that in art we need relief, and generally desire to find renewed hope and faith through delight and gladness.

In rooms where we need care to please only ourselves, we can follow our own tastes more entirely and freely. In them, shall we not have a Madonna whose 'eyes are homes of silent prayer?'—a copy of De la Roche's 'Christ,' so touching in its sad and noble serenity? or some bust or engraving of poet or hero, which shall be to us as a biography, never failing to stimulate us in the best direction? Or shall we have a copy of that fine Mercury, who stands resting lightly on the earth with one foot, and raised, outstretched arms, in the act of ascending from it—the embodiment of aspiration? All these things are symbols of noble thought, and they may belong to us as easily now as a copy of Bacon or Shakspeare. Here is great cause for rejoicing. Fantastic furniture, old china, and such-like things, will one day be superseded in drawing-rooms, just as the old, barbarously-coloured 'Noahs' and 'Abrahams' of the cottage may now easily be by pictures in better perspective and purer taste. Then there will be danger of crowding rooms with good things—a great mistake also: an ornament should have a simple background, should 'shew like metal on a sullen ground.' Rooms, from temptations of wealth or taste, should never become mere pretty curiosity-shops. Forbearance and self-control are necessary in this as in all things. 'To gild refined gold' is worse than useless.

Let us not question the need of such thought and care for mere dwelling-places. Are not rooms the nurseries of the young spirits among us, the resting-places of all others on their pilgrimage? And because everything is important that influences and educates the soul, love and thought shall work together in our homes, and create in all details something akin to the universal harmony

they should typify.

INVESTMENTS!

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WHAT is to be done with the money which is realised in the ordinary course of affairs, has latterly become a kind of puzzle. There it goes on accumulating as a result of industry; but what then? A person can but eat one dinner in the day; two or three coats are about all he needs for the outer man; he can but live in one house at a time; and, in short, after paying away all he needs to pay, he finds that he has not a little over for—investment. Since our young days, this word investment has come remarkably into use. All are looking for investments; and as supply ordinarily follows demand, up there rise, at periodical intervals, an amazing number of plans for the said investments—in plain English, relieving people of their money. A few years ago, railways were the favourite absorbents. Railways, on a somewhat more honest principle, may possibly again have their day. Meanwhile, the man of money has opened up to him a very comprehensive field for the investment of his cash: he can send it upon any mission he chooses; he may dig turf with it, or he may dig gold; he may catch whales, or he may catch sprats, or do fifty other things; but if he see it again after having relinquished his hold upon it, he must have exercised more discretion than falls to the lot of the majority of Her Majesty's lieges in their helter-skelter steeple-chasing after 20 per cent. Our present business, however, is not with legitimate speculation, but with schemes in which no discretion is exercised, or by which discretion is set to sleep—in a word, with bubble investments; and the history of many of the most promising of these speculations may be read in the following brief and not altogether mythical biography, of an interesting specimen which suddenly fell into a declining way, and is supposed to have lately departed this life.

The Long Range Excavator Rock-Crushing and Gold-Winning Company was born from the brain of Aurophilus Dobrown, Esq., of Smallchange Dell, in the county of Middlesex, between the hours of ten and eleven at night on the 14th of October 1851. It was at first a shapeless and unpromising bantling; but being introduced to the patronage of a conclave of experienced drynurses, it speedily became developed in form and proportion; and before it was ten days old, was formally introduced, with official garniture, to the expectant public, by whom it was received with general approbation and favour. The new company, in a dashing prospectus, held forth a certain prospect of enormous advantages to shareholders, with an entire exemption from responsibility of every sort. The shares were a million in number, at one pound each, without any further call—on the loose-cash principle, and no signing of documents. Aurophilus Dobrown was chairman of the committee of management.

The intentions of the company, as detailed at length in their eloquent prospectus, were to invade the gold regions of the Australian continent with a monster engine, contrived by the indefatigable Crushcliff, and which, it was confidently expected, would devour the soil of the auriferous district at a rate averaging about three tons per minute. It was furnished, so the engineer averred, with a stomach of 250 tons capacity, supplied with peristaltic grinders of steel of the most obdurate temper, enabling it with ease to digest the hardest granite rocks, to crush the masses of quartz into powder, and to deposit the virgin gold upon a sliding floor underneath. The machine was to be set in motion by the irresistible force of 'the pressure from without,' and 1000 pounds-weight of pure gold per diem was considered a very low estimate of its powers of production. These reasonable expectations being modestly set forth in circulars and public advertisements, and backed by the august patronage of the respectable and responsible individuals above named, the Long Range Excavator Company speedily grew into vast repute. The starving herd encamped in Stagg's Alley, flew at once to pen, ink, and paper, and applications for shares poured in by thousands. Referees were hunted up, or they were not—that is no great matter. Half a million of the shares were duly allotted; and that done, to the supreme delectation of the stags, Mr Stickemup the broker, in conjunction with his old friend and colleague Mr Knockemoff, fixed the price of shares by an inaugural transaction of considerable amount, at 25 per cent. above par, at which they went off briskly. Now were the stags to be seen flying in every direction, eager to turn a penny before the inevitable hour appointed for payment on the shares. It was curious to observe the gradual wane of covetousness in the cervel mind; how, as the fateful hour approached, their demand for profit grew small by degrees and beautifully less. From 4s. premium per share to 3s.; from 3s. to 2s.; from 2s. to 1s.; and thence to such a thing as 9d., 8d., 7d., and still downwards, till, as the hand of the dial verged upon the closing stroke of the

bell, they condescended to resign their Long Range Excavators to the charge of buyers who *could* pay for the shares they held. The company was now fairly afloat. By the aid of

A few clever riggers to put on the pot,
To stir it round gently, and serve while 'twas
hot,

the shares rose higher than had been expected. Aurophilus Dobrown sold his 50,000 at a handsome premium, and realised what he was pleased privately to term 'something substantial' by the speculation. The public became enthusiastic on the subject of the Long Range Excavators, and for a few short weeks they were the favourite speculation of the market. By and by, however, a rumour began to be whispered about on the subject of the monster-machine, the stomach of which, it was secretly hinted, was alarmingly out of order, and resisted all the tonics of the engineer. It was currently reported among parties most interested, that from late experiments made, previous to embarkation, it had been ascertained beyond a doubt, that though the peristaltic apparatus digested pints with perfect ease, it yet rejected quartz—a defect which it was but too plain would be fatal to the production of gold. The effect of this rumour was most alarmingly depressing upon the value of the shares. In a few days, they fell 50 per cent. below par, with few buyers even at that. At this juncture, it was discovered that one of the directors was actively bearing the market; but the discovery was not made before that disinterested personage, who had previously disposed of the whole of his original allotment at a handsome premium, had secured above 10,000 new shares at a cost of about half their upset value. A colleague openly accused him of this disgraceful traffic at a general meeting of the directors, and declared that he had not words to express his disgust at one who, for the sake of his own personal profit, could condescend to depreciate the property of his constituents. The accused retorted, and the meeting growing stormy and abusive, ended late at night with closed doors.

A few days after, affairs again began to take a turn upwards. The failure of the engine was declared to be an erroneous and altogether unfounded report. It was boldly asserted, that the small model-engine of one inch to the foot, had actually crushed several masses of Scotch granite, and eliminated seven or eight ounces of pure metal; and these specimens were exhibited under a glass-case in the office of the company, in proof of their triumphant success. Now the shares rose again as rapidly as they had lately fallen, and honourable gentlemen who had held on, had an opportunity of turning themselves round. It is to be supposed that some of them at least did that to their satisfaction; at anyrate, the respectable and responsible concocters of the Long Range Excavator Rock-Crushing and Gold-Winning Company very soon began to turn their backs upon the public altogether. By degrees, the whole body of directors, trustees, counsel and agents, dwindled down to a solitary clerk paring his nails in a deserted office. Shares at a discount of 60, 70, 80, 90 per cent. attested the decline of the speculation. Honourable gentlemen were reported to have gone upon their travels. The office was at first 'temporarily closed,' and then let to the new company for Bridging the Dardanelles on the Tubular Principle. The engine of the Long Range Excavators, according to the last report, had foundered—but whether in the brain of Crushcliff, the engineer, or on the Scilly Rocks, we could not clearly make out. The only one of the original promoters who has latterly condescended to gratify the gaze of the public, is the Baron Badlihoff, who, a few days ago, made his appearance on the monkey-board of an omnibus, whence he was suddenly escorted by policeman B. 1001, to the presence of a magistrate, who unsympathisingly transferred him to Clerkenwell Jail, for certain paltry threepenny defalcations, due to a lapse of memory which our shameful code persists in regarding as worthy of incarceration and hard labour. He is now an active member of a company legally incorporated under government sanction, for grinding the wind upon the revolving principle. It is not precisely known when the first dividend on the Long Range Excavators will be declared. Sanguine speculators in the L. R. E., and the Thames Conflagration Company, expect to draw both dividends on the same day. In the meantime, the books are safe in the custody of Messrs Holdem Tight and Brass, of Thieves' Inn; and ill-natured people are not wanting, who insinuate that they constitute the only property available for the benefit of the shareholders.

Let us now take a glance at a snug little commercial bubble, blown into being by 'highly respectable men,' a private affair altogether, which never had a name upon 'Change, and was managed—we cannot say to the satisfaction of all parties—by the originating contrivers, without making any noise in the papers, or exciting public attention in any way. We will call it, for the sake of a name, 'The Babel and Lowriver Steam Navigation Company.' Lowriver is a

pleasant, genteel little village, which has of late years sprung suddenly into existence on the coast of —shire, and has been growing, for the last seven years, with each succeeding summer, more and more a place of favourite resort with the inhabitants of Babel. Mr Montague Whalebone took an early liking to the place, and built a row of goodly houses by the water-side, and a grand hotel at the end of the few stumps of pitchy stakes dignified by the name of the pier. But the hotel lacked customers, and the houses wanted tenants; and the whole affair threatened to fall a prey to river-fog and mildew, when the Babel and Lowriver Steam Navigation Company came to the rescue, and placed it upon a permanent and expansive footing. Of the original constitution of this snug company, it is not easy to say anything with certainty. All we know is, that, some seven years ago, it was currently spoken of in private circles as a capital investment for money, supposing only that shares could be got: *that* was the difficult thing. Large dividends were to be realised by building four steamers, and running them between Babel and Lowriver. Upon the neat hot-pressed prospectus, privately and sparingly circulated—it was whispered that it was too good a thing to go a begging—appeared the names of Erebus Carbon, Esq., of Diamond Wharf; of Montague Whalebone, Esq., of Lowriver; of Larboard Starboard, Esq., ship-builder; and Piston Rodd, Esq., of the firm of Boiler & Rodd, engineers, as directors. The shares were L.20 each, liable to calls, though no calls were anticipated; and it was reckoned an enormous favour to get them. Traffic in shares was discountenanced: the company had no wish to be regarded as a cluster of speculators, but rather as a band of brothers, co-operating together for their common benefit. Of course, the necessary legal formalities were gone through—that could not safely be dispensed with.

In spite of the difficulty of obtaining shares, a pretty large number of them got into the hands of the respectable portion of the public, and the whole were soon taken up. The boats were built by Larboard Starboard, Esq.; and the engines, as a matter of course, were put on board by Messrs Boiler & Rodd; Erebus Carbon, Esq., supplied, at the current rates, the necessary fuel; and at all hours of the day the vessels ran backwards and forwards, carrying customers to Mr Montague Whalebone's hotel, and lodgers to the new tenements, which soon began to rise around it in all directions. Lowriver took amazingly, and rose rapidly in public estimation; the boats filled well, and the speculation promised great things. When, however, after several mouths of undeviating prosperity, the shareholders began to look for some return for their capital in the shape of a dividend, each one of them was individually surprised by a 'call:' L.5 a share was wanted to clear off urgent responsibilities. 'The outfitting costs had been greater than was foreseen,' and the demands upon the shareholders were not likely to be limited to the first call. The victims rushed, as they were invited to do, to the office, to inspect the accounts. The engineer was there to receive them, and, all suavity and politeness, submitted every fact and figure to their investigation. There was nothing to be found fault with—everything was fairly booked; but there was a heavy balance dead against the company. The engineer himself put a long face upon the affair, and shrugged his shoulders, and mumbled something about having burned his own fingers, &c. After this, reports soon got abroad very prejudicial to the value of the investments. Then came the winter, during which few passengers travelled to Lowriver; and with Christmas came another L.5 call. People grew tired of paying 20 per cent. for nothing, and many forfeited their shares by suffering them to be sold to pay the calls. This game went on for nearly three years—all 'calls' and no dividends; until at length it would have been difficult to find five persons out of the original 500 who held shares in the Babel and Lowriver Steam Navigation Company, and there was next to nobody left to *call* upon.

Years have rolled on since then. Lowriver has grown into a popular and populous marine summer residence. Mr Montague Whalebone, who knew what he was about, having bought and leased the building-ground, has become the owner of a vast property increasing in value every day. Larboard Starboard, Esq., is on the way to become a millionaire, and has several new boats building for the company's service at the present moment. Messrs Boiler & Rodd have quintupled their establishment, and are in a condition to execute government contracts. Erebus Carbon, Esq., has found a market in the company for hundreds of thousands of tons of coal, and, from keeping a solitary wharf, has come to be the owner of a fleet of colliers. At this hour, the company consists of six individuals—the four original projectors, and a couple of old codgers—'knowing files,' who had the penetration, in the beginning, to see through the 'bearing dodge,' and would not be beaten or frightened off. They paid up every call upon shares, and bought others—and then, by shewing a bold front, asserted a voice in the management, and crushed in to a full and fair share of the profits. They have made solid fortunes by the speculation; while the original shareholders, whose money brought the

company into existence, have reaped nothing but losses and vexation in return for their capital.

But enough, and more than enough, on the score of the delusive farces which, with pretences almost as transparent as the above, are from time to time played off for the purpose of easing the public of their superfluous cash. Let us glance briefly at a speculation of a different kind, no less a bubble as it proved, but one whose tragic issues have already wrought the wreck of many innocent families, and which, at the present moment, under the operation of the Winding-up Act, is darkening with ruin and the fear of ruin a hundred humble abodes. We have good reason to know its history too well; and we shall, in as few words as possible, present the facts most important to be known to the reader's consideration, with the view of inculcating caution by the misfortunes of others, and shewing at the same time how possible it is, under the present law regulating joint-stock partnerships, for an honest man, by the most inadvertent act, to entail misery upon himself, and destitution upon his offspring.

It is some fifteen or twenty years ago, since a company of two or three speculative geniuses issued a plan for establishing, in a delightful glen situated but a few miles from a well-known Welsh port in the Bristol Channel, a brewery upon an extensive scale. The prospectus, as a matter of course, promised to the shareholders the usual golden advantages. The crystal current which meandered through the valley was to be converted into malt-liquor—so great were the natural and artificial advantages which combined to effect that result—at one-half the cost of such a transformation in any other locality; and the liquor produced was to be of such exquisite relish and potency, that all Britain was to compete for its possession. So plausible was everything made to appear, that men of commercially acquired fortune, of the greatest experience, and of long-trying judgment, invested their capital in the fullest confidence of success. Following their example, tradesmen and employers did the same; and, in imitation of their betters, numbers of persons of the classes of small shopkeepers and labouring-men invested their small savings in shares in the 'Romantic Valley Brewery.' The number of joint-proprietors amounted in all to some hundreds, holding L.20 shares in numbers proportioned to their means or their speculative spirit. Not one in fifty of them knew anything of the art of brewing, or had any knowledge of the locality where the scheme was to be carried out; but no doubt was entertained of the speedy and great success which was promised.

The land was bought, the necessary buildings were substantially erected, and the three principal concoctors of the scheme, one of whom was a lawyer, were appointed to manage the concern, and empowered to borrow money in case it should be wanted, to complete the plant, and to work it until the profits came in. They had every advantage for the production of a cheap and superior article: labour, land-carriage, and water-carriage, were all at a low charge in the neighbourhood; and materials, upon the whole, rated rather under than over the average. Year after year, however, passed away, and not a farthing of dividend came to the shareholders; promises only of large profits at some future period—that was all. It happened that none of the shareholders had invested any very large sums, and this was thought a fortunate circumstance, as none of them felt very deeply involved. The rich had speculated with their superfluity, and they could bear to joke on the subject of the Romantic Valley, though they shook their heads when the supposed value of the shares was hinted at. The poor felt it more, and some of the neediest sold their single shares or half-shares at a terrible discount, while they would yet realise something. As time rolled on, several of the older proprietors died off, and willed away, with the rest of their property, the Romantic Valley Brewery shares to their friends and relatives. A considerable number of them thus passed from the first holders to the hands of others, one and all of whom naturally accepted the legacies devised to them, and gave the necessary signatures to the documents which made the shares their own.

Meanwhile, the managers went on working an unprofitable business, borrowing money on the credit of the joint proprietors; and in the face of all the advantages upon which they plumed themselves, plunged deeper and deeper into debt, until, being forced to borrow at a high rate of interest to pay for the use of former loans, they found their credit, in the thirteenth year of their existence, completely exhausted; and then the bubble burst at once in ruin, utter and complete, overwhelming all who were legally connected with it, either by original purchase, by transfer, or by inheritance. Independent country gentlemen, west-country manufacturers, and merchants of substantial capital, were summarily pounced upon by the fangs of the law, and all simultaneously stripped of everything they possessed in the world. Professional men, the fathers of families genteelly bred and educated, were

summarily bereft of every farthing, and condemned in the decline of life to begin the world afresh. Not a few, seized with mortal chagrin at the horrible consummation of an affair which had never been anything but a source of loss and annoyance, sunk at once into the grave. Others—accustomed perhaps for half a century to the appliances of ease and luxury, and who were the owners of hospitable mansions, the centres of genteel resort—at the present moment hide their heads in cottages, and huts, and eleemosynary chambers, where they wither in silence and neglect under the cold breath of alien charity. Some, at threescore, are driven forth from a life of indulgence and inactivity, to earn their daily bread. Young and rising tradesmen, who had had the misfortune to inherit from a relative or a patron but a few shares, or even a single one, saw themselves at once precipitated into bankruptcy. One case, for which we can personally vouch, is beyond measure distressing: a gentleman of good fortune dying, had bequeathed to each of a large family of daughters a handsome provision; shortly before the bursting of the fearful bubble, the mother also died, dividing by will her own fortune among the young ladies, and leaving to each one a few shares in the Romantic Valley Brewery. The transference of these shares to the several children made the whole of them liable to the extent of their entire property; and the whole six unfortunates were actually beggared to the last farthing, and cast upon the world to shift as they might. To detail the domestic desolation caused by this iniquitous affair, would require the space of a large volume. It has wrought nothing but wretchedness and ruin to those to whom it promised unexampled prosperity, and it is yet working still more—nor is it likely to stop, for aught that we can see, so long as it presents a mark for legal cupidity. All that could be got for the creditors has been extorted long ago from the wealthier portion of the victims; but the loans are not yet all liquidated, and the claim yet remaining unsatisfied, is now the pretext under which the lawyers are sucking the life-blood from the hard-working and struggling class of shareholders, who, while industriously striving for a respectable position, are considered worth crushing for the sake of the costs, though they will never yield a penny towards the debt.

Besides the persons who have the settlement of affairs in their hands, the original concocters of the company are the only persons who have profited from its operations. They indeed ride gloriously aloft above the ruin they have wrought. The process by which they have managed to extract a lordly independence for themselves, from a scheme which has resulted in the destitution and misery of every other participator, is a mystery we do not pretend to fathom in this case—though it is one of by no means unusual occurrence in connection with bubble-companies of all sorts.

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THE OSTRICH.

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FOR the following particulars relative to the habits of the ostrich, and the various modes of taking it, we are indebted to a gentleman who spent many years in Northern Africa, and collected these details from native sportsmen, his principal informant being Abd-el-Kader-Mohammed-ben-Kaddour, a Nimrod of renown throughout the Arab tribes of this region.

The ostrich country, says Ben-Kaddour, may be described as a rectangle, of which the towns of Insalah, Figig, Sidi-Okba, and Warklah form the angles; that is, it comprises the northern skirts of the Saharian desert, where water and herbage are plentiful in comparison with the arid plains of the centre. Throughout this region, ostriches may frequently be seen travelling in pairs, or in companies of four or five couples; but wherever there has been a recent fall of rain, one is almost sure to find them grazing together in large numbers, appearing at a distance like a herd of camels. This is a favourable opportunity for ostrich-hunting, especially if the weather is very warm; for the greater the heat, the less vigour have the birds for prolonging the chase. It is well known, that though the ostrich cannot raise itself into the air, it is nevertheless so swift of foot, that it cannot be fairly run down even by the horses of this region, which, on an emergency, are known to run 180 miles in a single day. An ostrich-hunt is, therefore, undertaken by at least ten horsemen together, who, being apprized of the spot where a large group are feeding, approach with extreme caution, and form a cordon round them. To prevent the birds from escaping from the circle thus formed, is all they attempt, and it requires their utmost dexterity. The terrified creatures run hither and thither; and not managing their breath as they would do in an ordinary pursuit, they at length become exhausted, and betray it by flapping their wings. The sportsmen now fall deliberately upon them, and either lead them away alive, or fell them with a blow on the head. Their first care is to remove the skin, so as to preserve

the feathers uninjured; the next is to melt down the fat, and pour it into bags formed of the skin of the thigh and leg, strongly tied at the lower end. The grease of an ostrich in good condition fills both its legs; and as it brings three times the price of common butter, it is considered no despicable part of the game. It is not only eaten with bread, and used in the preparation of kooskoos, and other articles of food, but the Arabs reckon it a valuable remedy in various maladies. In rheumatic attacks, for instance, they rub it on the part affected till it penetrates thoroughly; then lay the patient in the burning sand, with his head carefully protected. A profuse perspiration comes on, and the cure is complete. In bilious disorders, the grease is lightly warmed, mixed with salt, and administered as a potion. It acts thus as a powerful aperient, and causes great emaciation for the time; but the patient, say the Arabs, having been thus relieved from all the bad humours in his body, afterwards acquires robust health, and his sight becomes singularly good. The flesh of the ostriches, dressed with pepper and meal, forms the supper of the sportsmen.

Ostrich-shooting is conducted in quite a different manner, and as it is practised only or chiefly during the period of incubation, it is to it we are principally indebted for the acquaintance which the Arabs have gained with the habits of these singular birds.

The pairing-season is the month of August. The *reumda* (female) is generally shy, and the *delim* has often to pursue the object of his choice at full speed for four or five days, during which he neither eats nor drinks. When, however, she has consented to be his, she never again quits him till the young ones are reared; and the bond between them is equally respected by all their companions: there is no fighting about mates, as among some other gregarious species.

The period of incubation begins in the month of November, and presents the best opportunity for shooting the ostrich. At this season, also, the feathers are in the finest condition, though the fat is much less abundant. Five or six sportsmen set out together on horseback, taking with them two camels laden with provisions for a month, besides an abundant supply of powder and ball. They search for places where rain has lately fallen, or where pools of water occur, for in such localities there is likely to be that plentiful herbage which never fails to attract the ostrich. Having discovered its footprints, the sportsmen examine them with care. If they appear only here and there on the bare spots, they indicate that the bird has been here to graze; but if they cross each other in various directions, and the grass is rather trampled down than eaten, the ostrich has certainly made her nest in the neighbourhood, and an active but cautious search for it is commenced. If she is only making her nest, the operation may be detected at a great distance, as it consists simply of pushing out the sand from the centre to the circumference of a circle, so as to form a large hole. The sand rises in dense clouds round the spot, and the bird utters a pining cry all day long. When the nest is finished, she cries only towards three in the afternoon. The female sits on the eggs from morning till noon, while her mate is grazing; at noon, he takes her place, and she goes to the pasture in her turn. When she returns, she places herself facing her mate, and at the distance of five or six paces from the nest, which he occupies all night, in order to defend it from enemies, especially from the jackals, which often lie in ambush, ready to take advantage of an unguarded moment. Hunters often find the carcasses of these animals near ostriches' nests.

In the morning, while the *reumda* is sitting, the sportsmen dig on each side of the nest, and at about twenty paces from it, a hole deep enough to contain a man. In each of these they lodge one of their best marksmen, and cover him up with long grass, allowing only the gun to protrude. One of these is to shoot the male, the other the female. The *reumda*, seeing this operation going forward, becomes terrified, and runs off to join her mate; but he does not believe there is any ground for her terror, and with somewhat ungallant chastisement, forces her to return. If these preparations were made while the *delim* was sitting, he would go after her, and neither would return. The *reumda* having resumed her place, the sportsmen take care not to disturb her; it is the rule to shoot the *delim* first, and they patiently wait his return from the pasture. At noon, he takes his place as usual, sitting with his wings outspread, so as to cover all the eggs. In this position, the thighs are extremely prominent, and the appointed marksman takes aim at them, because, if he succeeds in breaking them, there is no chance of escape, which there would be if almost any other part were wounded. As soon as he falls, the other sportsmen, attracted by the report, run up and bleed him according to the laws of the Koran. They hide the carcass, and cover with sand every trace of the blood that has been shed. When the *reumda* comes home at night, she appears not uneasy at the absence of her mate, but probably concluding that

he was hungry, and has gone for some supper, she takes his place on the eggs, and is killed by the second marksman in the same way as the delim. The ostrich is often waylaid in a similar manner at its usual drinking-place, a good shot being concealed in a hole, whence he fires on it. The ostrich drinks nearly every five days when there is water; otherwise it can do without it for a much longer time. Nothing but excessive thirst induces it ever to approach a human habitation, and then it flies as soon as it is satisfied. It has been observed, that whenever the flashing lightning announces an approaching storm, it hastens towards the water. Though single birds may often be shot on these occasions, it is a much less certain sport than killing them on the nest, and less profitable, as in the latter case the eggs form no contemptible part of the spoil.

The nest of an ordinary pair contains from twenty-five to thirty eggs. But it often happens that several couples unite to hatch together: in this case, they form a great circular cavity, the eldest couple lay their eggs in the centre, and the others make a regular disposition of theirs around them. Thus, if there are four younger couples, they occupy the four angles of a square. When the laying is finished, the eggs are pushed towards the centre, but not mixed; and when the eldest delim begins to sit, all the rest take their places where their eggs have been laid, the females observing similar order. These associations are found only where the herbage is very plentiful, and they are understood always to be family groups, the centre couple being the parents of the rest. The younger birds lay fewer and smaller eggs—those of one year old, for instance, have only four or five. The period of incubation is ninety days.

In the case of several couples associated thus in the same nest, the sportsmen do not attempt to destroy any but the old ones; for if they were to set about making as many holes as there were ostriches, the whole company would take fright and decamp. But perhaps it is determined to leave them all in peaceable possession for the present, and rather make a prey of the brood when hatched. The watching of the nests in such cases has led to further observations. The eggs of each pair are disposed in a heap, always surmounted by a conspicuous one, which was the first laid, and has a peculiar destination. When the delim perceives that the moment of hatching has arrived, he breaks the egg which he judges most matured, and at the same time he bores with great care a small hole in the surmounting egg. This serves as the first food of the nestlings; and for this purpose, though open, it continues long without spoiling, which is the more necessary, as the delim does not break all the eggs on the same day, but only three or four, and so on, as he hears the young ones stirring within. This egg is always liquid, but whether by a provision of nature in its original composition, or through the instinct of the parent-birds in avoiding to keep it covered like the rest, is not ascertained. The young ones, having received this their first nourishment, are immediately dried in the sun, and begin to run about; in a few days they follow the parent-birds to the pastures, always returning to shelter under their wings in the nest.

The paternal affection of the delim is remarkable: he never leaves his offspring; he faces every danger, and combats every foe in their defence. The reumda, on the contrary, is easily terrified, and leaves all to secure her own safety; so that it is usual to compare a man who bravely defends his tent to a delim, and a pusillanimous soul to a reumda. The delim finds himself more than a match for the dog, the jackal, the hyæna, or the eagle: man is his only invincible foe; yet he dares to wage the unequal war when the young are in danger. If the Arabs desire to make a prey of the ral, as the young ostriches are called, they follow their footmarks, and having nearly overtaken them, they begin to shout; the terrified birds run to their parents, who face about, and stand still to fight for them; so the Arabs lead away the ral before their eyes, in spite of the bravadoes of the delim, who then manifests the liveliest grief. Sometimes the greyhound is employed in this sport: the delim attacks him, and while they are fighting, the men carry off the young ones, to bring them up in their tents.

The ral are easily tamed; they sleep under the tent, are exceedingly lively, and play with the children and dogs. When the tents are struck for a flitting, the pet ostriches follow the camels, and are never known to make their escape during the migration. If a hare passes, and the men start in pursuit of it, the ostrich darts off in the same direction, and joins the chase. If she meets in the douar (village of tents) a child holding any eatable thing in its hand, she lays him gently on the ground, and robs without hurting him. But the tame ostrich is a great thief, or rather is so voracious, it devours everything it finds—even knives, female trinkets, and pieces of iron. The Arab on whose authority these details are given, relates that a woman had her coral-necklace carried off and swallowed by an ostrich; and an officer in the African army affirms, that one

of them tore off and ate the buttons of his surtout. The ostrich is, at the same time, exceedingly dexterous; so that she will tear a date from a man's mouth without hurting him. The Arabs are distrustful of her, and know where to lay the blame if, on counting their money, they find two or three dollars missing.

It is no uncommon thing to see, at some distance from a douar, a wearied child riding on the back of an ostrich, which carries its burden directly towards the tent, the young Jehu holding on by the pinions. But she would not carry too heavy a load—a man, for instance—but would throw him on the ground with a flap of her wing.

When ostriches are taken to market in Africa, their legs are tied almost close together with a cord, another cord attached to this one being held in the hand.

PROGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.

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THE official statement of the United States' census, published at Washington in December last, furnishes us with the means of knowing what our American brethren have been doing in the ten years from 1840 to 1850. In that decennial period, the whole territory had increased from 2,055,163 to 3,221,595 square miles, exclusive of the great lakes in the interior, and deeply-indenting bays on the coast. The gross population in June 1850, numbered 23,246,201; an increase from June 1840 of 6,176,848. Of these, 19,619,366 were whites; 3,198,298 were slaves; and free blacks, 428,637; the increase having been respectively, 5,423,371—711,085—42,392. The whole increase was equivalent to 3½ per cent.; while in Europe, it is not more than 1½ per cent.; and if it continue as at present, the population will, forty years hence, exceed that of England, France, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland put together. The deaths in the last of the ten years were 320,194, being 1 to each 72.6, or 10 to each 726 of the inhabitants; this return is, however, supposed to involve an error, as the mortality is less in proportion than in the most favoured parts of Europe; whereas the reverse is generally considered to be the fact. In the same year, 1467 slaves were manumitted, and 1011 escaped. The number of emigrants from foreign countries during the 10 years was 1,542,850.

Among the individual states, the most populous are New York, which numbers 3,097,394 inhabitants; Pennsylvania, 2,311,786; Ohio, 1,980,408; Virginia, 1,421,661; Massachusetts, 994,499; Indiana, 988,416; Kentucky, 982,405; Georgia, 905,999. Taking the whole 31 states, the proportion of inhabitants is 15.48 to the square mile: the free states comprise 13,605,630, and the slave states, 9,491,759 of population.

[pg 272] To supply this population, there are 2800 newspapers: 424 in the New England states; 876 in the middle states; 716 in the southern states; and 784 in the western states. Three hundred and fifty are *dailies*, 150 three times a week, 125 twice a week, 2000 weekly, 50 fortnightly, 100 monthly, and 25 quarterly: the aggregate circulation being 422,600,000 yearly. There is 1 periodical for every 7161 free inhabitants.

The capital invested in manufactures, excluding the establishments under 500 dollars of annual value, amounted to 530,000,000 dollars; the value of raw material was 550,000,000; the amount paid for labour (in one year we presume), 240,000,000; value of articles manufactured, 1,020,300,000; persons employed, 1,050,000. There were 1094 cotton 'establishments' in operation, which produced 763,678,407 yards of sheeting; 1559 woollen establishments, which produced 82,206,652 yards of cloth; 2190 iron establishments, which produced 1,165,544 tons of iron of various kinds.

Of improved lands, there were 112,042,000 acres; of wheat, 104,799,230 bushels were grown in the last year; 591,586,053 bushels of Indian corn; 199,532,494 pounds of tobacco; 13,605,384 tons of hay; 32,759,263 pounds of maple-sugar were made; 314,644 hogsheads of cane-sugar of 1000 pounds each; 312,202,286 pounds of butter; and 103,184,585 pounds of cheese.

EFFECT OF THE EARTH'S ROTATION ON LOCOMOTION.

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The following is from *Herapath's Journal* on the effect of the earth's rotation on locomotion: 'Mr Uriah Clarke, of Leicester, has called our attention to an article in the *Mechanic's Magazine*, by himself, on the influence of the earth's rotation on locomotion. It is well known, that as the earth revolves on its axis once in twenty-four hours, from west to east, the velocity of any point on its surface is greater nearer the equator, and less further from it, in the ratio of the cosine of the latitude. Mr Clarke says: "Some rather important conclusions in relation to railway travelling arise out of the view now taken. The difference between the rotative velocity of the earth in surface-motion at London and at Liverpool is about twenty-eight miles per hour; and this amount of lateral movement is to be gained or lost, as respects the locomotion in each journey, according to the direction we are travelling in from the one place to the other; and in proportion to the speed will be the pressure against the side of the rails, which, at a high velocity, will give the engine a tendency to climb the right-hand rail in each direction. Could the journey be performed in two hours between London and Liverpool, this lateral movement, or rotative velocity of the locomotive, would have to be increased or diminished at the rate of nearly one-quarter of a mile per minute, and that entirely by side-pressure on the rail, which, if not sufficient to cause the engine to leave the line, would be quite sufficient to produce violent and dangerous oscillation. It may be observed, in conclusion, that as the cause above alluded to will be inoperative while we travel along the parallels of latitude, it clearly follows, that a higher degree of speed may be attained with safety on a railway running east and west than on one which runs north and south." There is no doubt of the tendency Mr Clarke speaks of on the right-hand rail, but we do not think it will be found to be so dangerous as he says. It will be greatest on the Great Northern and Berwick lines, and least on the Great Western.'

FOREST SCENERY OF AMERICA.

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The forests between Lake Superior and the Mississippi, where the country is very flat and wet, are composed almost entirely of black cypress; they grow so thick that the tops get intermixed and interlaced, and form almost a matting overhead, through which the sun scarcely ever penetrates. The trees are covered with unwholesome-looking mosses, which exhale a damp earthy smell, like a cellar. The ground is so covered with a rank growth of elder and other shrubs, many of them with thorns an inch long, and with fallen and decayed trunks of trees, that it is impossible to take a step without breaking one's shins. Not a bird or animal of any kind is to be seen, and a deathlike silence reigns through the forest, which is only now and then interrupted by the rattle of the rattlesnake (like a clock going down), and the chirrup of the chitnunck, or squirrel. The sombre colour of the foliage, the absence of all sun even at mid-day, and the vault-like chilliness one feels when entering a cypress swamp, is far from cheering; and I don't know any position so likely to give one the horrors as being lost in one, or where one could so well realise what a desolate loneliness is. The wasps, whose nests like great gourds hang from the trees about the level of one's face; the mosquitoes in millions; the little black flies, and venomous snakes, all add their 'little possible' to render a tramp through a cypress swamp agreeable.—*Sullivan's Rambles*.

THE BETTER THOUGHT.

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THE Better Thought! how oft in days
When youthful passion fired my breast,
And drove me into devious ways,
Didst thou my wandering steps arrest,
And, whispering gently in mine ear
Thine angel-message, fraught with love,
Check for the time my mad career,
And melt the heart naught else could move!

Thine was no stern and harsh rebuke;
No 'friend's advice,' so true, so cold;
No message wise, such as in book,
Or by the teacher oft is told,
Which, like the pointless arrow, falls,
And rings perhaps with hollow sound,

But ne'er the wanderer recalls,
And ne'er inflicts the healing wound.

Thy voice was gentle, winning, mild;
Thy words told thou wert from above,
Like those with which the wayward child
Is wooed by a fond mother's love;
Or like a strain of music stealing
Across the calm and moonlit seas,
Which moves the heart of sternest feeling,
And wakes its deeper harmonies.

Sweet was thy presence, welcomed guest;
And I, responsive to thy call,
Arose, and felt within my breast
A power that made the fetters fall
From off my long enthralled soul,
And woke, as with a magic spell,
Griefs which yet owned the soft control
Of hopes that all might still be well.

But ah, thou wast an injured guest!
How soon departed, soon forgot,
Were all the hopes of coming rest
That clustered round the Better Thought—
The tender griefs, the firm resolves,
The yearnings after better days,
Like transient sunlight which dissolves,
And leaves no traces of its rays!

Yet I despair not—through the night
That long has reigned with tyrant sway,
E'en now I see the opening light,
The harbinger of coming day;
To Heaven I now direct my prayer—
O God of love, forsake me not!
Grant that my waywardness may ne'er
Quench the returning Better Thought!

GARVALD.

J. F.

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