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CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL OF POPULAR LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

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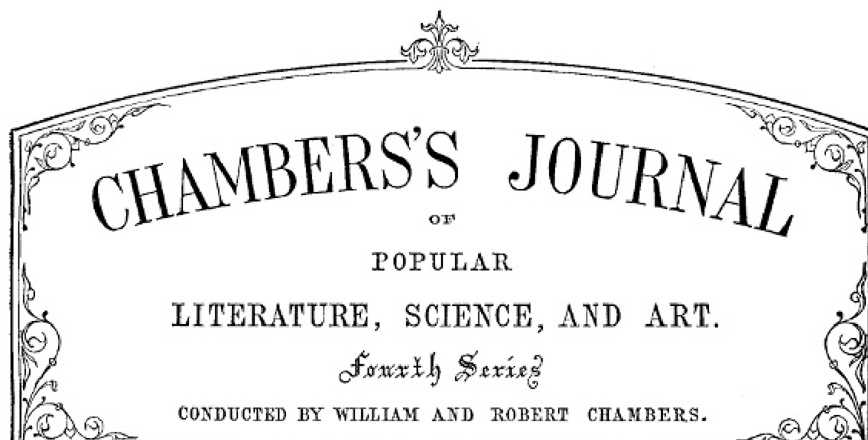

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THE LAST OF THE HADDONS.

By Mrs NEWMAN, Author of 'Too Late,' &c.

CHAPTER I.—'INCONGRUOUS MATERIALS.'

'No. 81. Yes; this must certainly be the house,' I murmured, turning my eyes somewhat disappointedly towards it again, after consulting an address in my hand. A large, gloomy, dilapidated-looking house, in a respectably dull street in Westminster, its lower windows facing a dead-wall, and its upper ones overlooking venerable ecclesiastical grounds. The lower rooms appeared to be the only portion of the house which was occupied; and, to judge by the shabbiness of the blinds, they were kept but in a mean condition. None the less dreary was the present aspect of the house for the suggestions of by-gone prosperity in the noble proportions of the entrance, with its link-extinguishers on either side, and great massive doors opening from the centre. It would require a vivid imagination to picture those doors flung hospitably open, and light and warmth from within streaming down upon a gay party of the present generation, alighting before the broad steps.

'Not very promising,' was my mental comment, as I gathered courage to ascend the steps and lift the heavy iron wreath of flowers, which used to be considered high-art in the way of knockers. Nor was I certain that the house was inhabited at all, until I heard footsteps within, and presently one of the doors was opened a few inches and a bony hand thrust out.

'A pretty time this to be bringing coffee that was wanted for breakfast!'

'Does Mr Wentworth live here?'

A tall, thin, grim-visaged woman looked out, and shortly replied: 'Yes; he does.'

'Is he at home? Can I see him?'

'He's at home,' she slowly and reluctantly admitted: adding, as she determinedly blocked up the doorway: 'But he can't see anybody; he's engaged.'

'Please give this card to Mr Wentworth, and say'——

'If it's the advertisement, you should have come before. Ten to twelve was the time.'

'Please give this card to Mr Wentworth, and'——

'It won't be any use.'

'And say I shall be greatly obliged if he will see me for five minutes.'

Evidently this was a woman accustomed to have her way, at anyrate with such callers as came there. The very novelty of my persistence seemed for the moment to disconcert her, as she eyed me from beneath her bent brows before replying: 'Haven't I just told you?'

'Please give this card to Mr Wentworth, and say I shall be greatly obliged if he will see me for five minutes.'

She appeared for a moment undecided as to whether she should shut the door in my face or do my bidding; then ungraciously moved aside for me to pass into the hall, which I unhesitatingly did. Mumbling something to herself, which, to judge by her countenance, was the reverse of complimentary to me, she left me standing on the mat, and went into a room on the right of the square hall, the stone floor of which was sparsely covered here and there with old scraps of carpet. I had just time to note that, poor and forlorn as everything looked, it was kept scrupulously clean, when I heard a man's voice, and the words: 'Did I not tell you?' uttered in a stern low voice.

'I know you did; and I told her, but she wouldn't take "No" for an answer.'

'Nonsense! Say I'm engaged; it's past the time. I have all but arranged with some one already. Get rid of her somehow, and do not disturb me again. I thought you prided yourself upon your ability to keep off intruders.' {2}

'This one isn't like the others,' grumbled the old woman. 'She goes on hammering and hammering. However, I'll soon send her off now.'

A nice introduction this! I had not really believed that she was acting under orders, and I had too grave a reason for desiring an interview, to allow a disagreeable old woman to prevent my obtaining it. I felt that an apology ought to be made before I was 'sent off.' Advancing to the door of the room from which the voices came, and standing on the threshold, I said: 'Allow me to exonerate your housekeeper, sir' (it was really a pretty compliment to give that gaunt personification of shabbiness so sounding a title, and she ought to have been touched by it). 'I am afraid I was more pertinacious than are the generality of intruders, in my anxiety to obtain an interview.'

A gentleman sat facing me, frowning down at my card. A pen still in his hand, and the quantity of papers and pamphlets covering the large library-table at which he sat, seemed to shew that it had been no mere excuse about his being engaged. A tall, broad-chested man, with a fine massive head, and good if somewhat rugged features, looking at first sight, I fancied, about forty years of age. I saw that there were a great many books in the room, and two or three fine specimens of old carved furniture, in curious contrast with the small square of well-worn and well-mended carpet at the end of the room where he sat.

At sight of me he laid down his pen, and pushed his chair back from the table, ruffling up his already sufficiently ruffled-up hair with a look of dismay which was almost comical. As he appeared somewhat at a loss how to answer me, I added: 'I set out immediately I read the advertisement; and I hope you will excuse my being an hour and thirty-seven minutes late;' looking at my watch in order to be quite correct as to time.

A smile, which had a wonderfully improving effect upon him, dwelt for a moment on his lips, and remained in his eyes.

'Will you take a seat, Miss—Haddon?' consulting my card for the name. Then to the old woman: 'You need not wait, Hannah.'

Throwing a look over her shoulder at him, as though to say, 'I told you,' she went out and shut the door.

He placed a chair for me, then returned to the old-fashioned library-chair he had risen from, and courteously waited for me to begin. So far good—he was a gentleman.

'I will be as concise as possible, Mr Wentworth. I am seeking a situation of some kind, and can, I think, offer as good testimonials as any one who has not had an engagement before could have. If you have not yet decided upon engaging any particular lady, I shall be much obliged by your kindly looking through these;' taking a little packet of letters from my pocket, and placing it upon the table before him.

He was eyeing me rather curiously, and I earnestly went on: 'I have been accustomed to use both my brains and hands, and I would do my very best with either to earn a respectable living.'

'I fear that I am committed in another direction,' he said courteously.

'In that case, I can only hope that the lady upon whom your choice has fallen needs an engagement as much as I do,' I replied, trying to stifle a sigh.

'I am extremely sorry that you should be disappointed.'

'You are very kind' (for I felt that he really was sorry); 'but I am accustomed to disappointments; and there is a sort of poetical justice in this, after intruding upon you as I have done,' I said, trying to speak lightly.

'I am very sorry indeed,' he repeated.

'Pray do not think of it, Mr Wentworth,' rising from my seat; 'allow me to'——

'A moment, Miss Haddon. It is of the first importance to find a lady thoroughly competent to undertake the office, and to be candid, I do not feel quite sure that I have succeeded.'

'But if you are committed?'

'I have been considering that, and I do not think that I am wholly committed—only so far as having promised to communicate with one lady goes. For the moment, I could not arrange matters with my conscience. Out of those who were good enough to notice the advertisement only one appeared to me at all suitable. But,' he added apologetically, 'I ought to explain that the requirements are of a somewhat exceptional character.'

'May I ask what they are, Mr Wentworth?'

'Principally tact in dealing with incongruous materials, and the exercise of a healthy influence over a sensitive girl.'

'Tact in dealing with incongruous materials,' I repeated musingly. 'Yes; certainly I ought to know something about that.'

Our eyes met, and we both broke into a little laugh, as he said: 'Most of us have opportunities for acquiring a little experience of the kind.'

'And I think I may claim to have made use of my opportunities,' I rejoined, after a moment or two's deliberation. 'But the healthy influence over a sensitive girl,' I went on more doubtfully; 'people hold such very opposite opinions as to what *is* a healthy influence. I certainly should not like to have my own weaknesses petted.'

'You have been accustomed to training?'

'I have been accustomed to *be* trained, so far as circumstances could do it, Mr Wentworth,' I returned with a half-smile at the thought of all that was implied by my words. I could not enter into my history to him; I could not tell him what I had resigned in order to remain in attendance upon my dear mother. Indeed, she had been a confirmed invalid so long a time, that the giving up had ceased to cost anything; the dread of losing her having become my only trouble, though year by year the difficulty of getting the little luxuries she needed and keeping out of debt, had terribly increased. When the parting came, it took something from the bitterness of regret to think that she knew nothing of the difficulties which had beset us. 'Still,' I added, desirous of making the best of myself, and led on by his evident anxiety to select the right kind of association for his child, or whoever she was, to be as frank as himself, 'mine has been an experience which ought to be worth something. One's experiences are hardly to be talked of; but I honestly think you might do worse than engage me, if it is any recommendation to have been accustomed to struggle against adverse circumstances, as I think it ought to be. My testimonials are from the clergyman of the parish, the medical man who attended my mother during a long illness, and an old friend of my father's. The last is more complimentary than could be wished; but the first two gentlemen knew me during a long heavy trial, and, as I begged them to do, they have, I think,

{3}

stated only what is fair to me.'

He was smiling, his eyes fixed upon me; and I went on interrogatively: 'It is a chaperon and companion for a young girl required—your daughter or ward, I presume?'

He laughed outright; and then I saw he was younger than I had at first supposed him to be. At most, he could not be over thirty-five, I thought, a little confused at my mistake.

'No relation, and I am glad to say, no ward, Miss Haddon. I am simply obliging a friend who resides out of town, in order to spare both him and the ladies replying to the advertisement unnecessary trouble, by seeing them here. To say that I have regretted my good-nature more than once this morning, would of course be impolite.'

'It must have been very unpleasant for you sitting in judgment over a number of women,' I said; 'almost as unpleasant as for them.'

'Pray do not think that I have ventured so far as that, Miss Haddon,' he returned with an amused look.

But I had not gone there to amuse him, so I simply replied: 'I think you were bound to do so, having undertaken the responsibility, Mr Wentworth;' and returned straight to business, asking: 'Do you think there is any chance for me?'

'Your manners convince me that you would be suited to the office, Miss Haddon. Mr Farrar is an invalid; and his daughter, for whom he is seeking a chaperon, is his only child, and motherless. That may excuse a little extra care in selecting a fitting companion for her, which every good woman might not be. There is only one thing'—— He trifled with the papers before him a few moments, and then went on hesitatingly: 'The lady was not to be very young.'

Greatly relieved, I smiled, and put up my veil. 'I am not very young, Mr Wentworth. I was nine-and-twenty the day before yesterday.' It would be really too ridiculous to be rejected on account of being too young, when that very morning I had been trying to lecture myself into a more philosophic frame of mind about the loss of my youth, and had failed ignominiously. The loss of youth meant more to me than it does to most people.

'Ah! Then I think we may consider that the only objection is disposed of,' he gravely replied.

Relieved and glad as I was at this decision, I could not but think it curious that he had not first examined my testimonials. For one so cautious in some respects, this omission appeared rather lax. But I still allowed them to lie on the table, as his friend might desire to see them, though he did not.

'Am I to write to your friend, Mr Wentworth?'

'I was to ask the lady selected, to go to Fairview as soon as she conveniently could, Miss Haddon,' presenting me with a card upon which was the address—Mr Farrar, Fairview, Highbrook, Kent.

'To make arrangements with Mr Farrar?' I inquired, not a little surprised at the suddenness with which matters seemed to be settling themselves.

'To remain, if you are willing so to do, Miss Haddon. But I ought to state that the engagement may possibly be for only a limited period; not longer than a year, perhaps. Miss Farrar is engaged to be married.' ('Ah, now I understand your anxiety about her finding a suitable companion,' was my mental comment.) 'She will not leave her father in his present state of health; but in the event of his recovery, there is some talk of her marriage in a year or so.'

'I do not myself desire a long engagement, Mr Wentworth,' I replied, with a slight pressure of a certain locket on my watch-chain. If the illusions of youth were gone, certain things remained to me yet.

He looked a little curious, I fancied, but simply bowed; too much a gentleman to question about anything not connected with the business in hand.

'Was there any mention made of salary, Mr Wentworth?'

'Salary? O yes. I really beg your pardon. Something was said about eighty or a hundred a year. But there were no restrictions about it. You will find that Mr Farrar is'—— Whatever he was about to say, he hesitated to say; and after a moment's pause, substituted the word 'liberal. He is a man of large means, Miss Haddon.'

I was rather surprised at the amount; and in my inexperience of such matters, I failed to take into account the appearance a chaperon would be expected to make. The little I had hitherto been able to do in the way of money-getting had brought but very small returns. But then it had been done surreptitiously, whilst my dear mother was sleeping. She had been too anxious about me to be allowed to know that her small pension did not suffice for our expenses; and mine had been such work and for such pay as I could obtain from shops in the neighbourhood. 'Eighty pounds a year certainly is liberal; I did not hope for anything so good as that,' I replied. Then I once more rose, and bade him good-morning, begging him to excuse my having taken up so much of his time. 'In truth, Mr Wentworth, I was getting almost desperate in my sore need.'

'I can only regret that a gentlewoman should be put to so much inconvenience, Miss Haddon; although it bears out my creed, that gentlewomen are more capable of endurance than are their inferiors.'

All very nice and pleasant of him; but even while he spoke, I was painfully conscious that I should have the greatest difficulty in getting out of the room as a gentlewoman should. The sudden revulsion—the great good fortune—coming so swiftly after bitter disappointments, told, I

suppose, upon my physical strength, lowered by a longer fast than usual. In fact, a course of discipline in the way of bearing inconvenience, was telling upon me just at the wrong moment; and it seemed that his pretty compliment about a gentlewoman's capability of endurance was about to be proved inapplicable to me. The furniture appeared to be taking all sorts of fantastic shapes, and he himself to be expanding and collapsing in the most alarming manner. But angry and ashamed as I felt—could anything be more humiliating than an exhibition of weakness at this moment—I strove to smile and say something about the heat, as with some difficulty I made my way towards the door.

'But I fear—— Pray allow me,' he ejaculated, springing towards the door, where I was groping for the handle, telling myself that if I could only get into the hall and sit there in the fresh air a few moments, all would be well again.

ITALIAN BRIGANDAGE.

When we were at Naples a few years ago, and wished to make an excursion to Paestum—which would have occupied only two days altogether in going and returning—the landlord of our hotel strongly discommended the attempt. The roads, he said, were unsafe. Brigands might lay hold of the party, and great trouble would ensue. As this advice was corroborated by what we heard otherwise, the proposed excursion was given up. Perhaps, since that time things may have improved on the route to Paestum; but from all accounts, brigandage is as rife as ever in the south of Italy and Sicily, or has rather become much worse.

The Italians have generally been congratulated on their establishment of national independence. The many petty states into which the country had been divided for centuries, are now united into a single kingdom, with Rome as the capital. All that sounds well, and looks well. But here is the pinch. The south of Italy is now much more disturbed and kept in poverty by brigands than it was when under the Bourbons. A nominally strong and united government is apparently less able or willing to keep robbers in subjection than a government of inferior pretensions, which used to be pretty roundly abused and laughed at. Possibly, the political convulsion that led to the consolidation of power may have bequeathed broken and dissolute bands, which took to robbery as a profession. Possibly, also, the dissolution of monastic orders may have had something to do with the present scandalous state of affairs. A still more expressive reason for the corrupt state of society has been assigned. This consists in the feebleness of the laws and administrative policy of the country. Capital punishments have been all but abolished. The most atrocious crimes are visited by a condemnation to imprisonment for years or for life; but the punishment is little better than a sham, for prisoners contrive in many instances to escape, through the connivance of their jailers, or get loose in some other way. In a word, the law has no terrors for the criminal, who is either pardoned or gets off somehow. He is coddled and petted as an unfortunate being—looked upon rather as a hero in distress than anything else. In this view of the matter, the blame for the wretched condition of Southern Italy rests mainly on those higher and middle classes who are presumably the leaders of public opinion.

There is a moral blight even beyond what may be suggested by these allegations. It is absolutely asserted that there are vast numbers of persons, high and low, from the courtier to the peasant, who, for selfish purposes, wink at brigandage and theft. Strange tales have been told of a confederation in Naples, known as the *Camarista*, the members of which live by extorting under threats a species of black-mail on every commercial transaction. Shopkeepers are laid under contribution for a share in the profits of every sale they happen to make. And it has been said, that a cabman is expected to deliver up a percentage of every fare he pockets. As little has been lately heard of the Camarista, we entertain a hope that, taking shame to itself, the municipality has successfully stamped out this illegal and intolerable tyranny.

If we take for granted that the Camarista has disappeared or been abated, it is certain that in Sicily a much more cruel species of oppression, called the *Mafia*, is still in a flourishing condition. The Mafia might almost be called a universal conspiracy against law and order. Its basis is terror. All who belong to the confederacy are protected, on the understanding that they aid in sheltering evil-doers and facilitating their escape from justice. On certain terms, they participate in the plunder of a successful act of brigandage. Men in a high position, for instance, who are seen driving about in elegant style, derive a part of their income from the contributions of robbers, whom by trickery they help to evade the law. Just think of nearly a whole community being concerned in this species of underhand rascality! Neither law nor police has any chance of preserving public order. Society is rotten to the backbone. Who knows but the higher government officials, while ostentatiously hounding on Prefects to do their duty, are all the time pocketing money from the audacious wretches whom they affect to denounce? If the persons in question are not open to this suspicion, they at least, by their perfunctory proceedings, are chargeable with scandalously tolerating a condition of things disgraceful to their country.

No doubt, the government officials ostentatiously offer large rewards for the capture of certain notorious brigands; but they must well know that the public are in such a terror-stricken state that no one dares to bring malefactors to justice. The greatest ruffians swagger about unchallenged. Local magistrates are so intimidated and brow-beaten by them, that they are fain to let them go about their business. It is perfectly obvious that the civil authorities are powerless. Nothing but martial law, firmly administered, is fit to check the disorder. The Carabinieri, a

species of armed police, seem to be a poor-spirited set. A few companies of French gendarmerie, with authority to capture, try, and shoot every brigand, would very speedily render Southern Italy as quiet and orderly as any part of France or England.

Within the last two or three years several cases of brigandage in Sicily have been made known through the newspapers. One of the latest, which occurred early in November 1876, was that of Mr Rose, an Englishman connected with a mercantile firm in Sicily. 'Mr Rose and his brother with two servants (so runs the account) alighted at the railway station of Lercara. There Mr Rose mounted a horse, accompanied by one of the servants. His brother followed in a carriage with the other servant. Other carriages appeared immediately behind the brothers filled with apparently friendly people. At a turn of the road suddenly the celebrated brigand Leone, on whose head a reward of one thousand pounds has been set for three years, presented himself, with three other men, all well mounted. Leone caused Mr Rose to dismount and take another horse, and made for the village of Montemaggiore. Mr Rose, looking back, saw his brother in the carriage and other carriages following. He dismounted, ran towards his brother, thinking the party would outmatch the brigands, and called to them for help. But Leone riding up dared the whole party to raise a finger. All seemed paralysed. Mr Rose offered fifty thousand lire as ransom. Leone contemptuously shrugged his shoulders, made Mr Rose remount, and carried him off. Four hours after, the Carabinieri were informed of the matter, and the chase of Leone began, but came to nothing. It appears that Mr Rose had to ride for sixteen hours on horseback. His horse being at last exhausted, had to be abandoned. They arrived at a cave on the morning of the 5th inst., and remained there seven days, being abundantly supplied with provisions. On the eighth night the brigands, knowing that they were pursued by an armed force, abandoned the cave and remained on the march all night, the same thing occurring every subsequent night until the captive was released. From morning until mid-day they remained stationary in a wood, supporting themselves on poor fare, consisting of bread, cheese, and wine. In the afternoon the brigands, knowing that the troops were reposing, made prudent exploring excursions. Mr Rose never undressed from the time of his capture until he returned home. He was set at liberty near the Sciarra Railway Station, and the brigands gave him a mantle and a cap, with a third-class passenger ticket.' Mr Rose was liberated only on giving a ransom of four thousand pounds. {5}

A Sicilian newspaper courageously commenting on this case of abduction, makes the following candid remarks: 'The putting of Mr Rose to ransom has proved incontestably two things—that ransoms in Sicily are not arranged by the brigands, but are the result of a vile and dastardly speculation of wealthy persons, and that round a band of brigands a vast association of evil-doers belonging to the upper class forms itself and enriches itself in different ways by means of brigandage. We ask, who furnished the brigand Leone with all the necessary indications to make the seizure? Who informed him in advance of the coming of Mr Rose? Who gave to the bandit the exaggerated audacity of going and seeking again his prey among thirteen persons in the midst of three carriages, at a short distance from three "Carabinieri?" Who communicated to the brigand the password that the mounted soldiers use with the "Carabinieri?" And again, who posted to Palermo the letters which Leone made Mr John Rose write to the members of his family? And who gave him the account, with such marvellous exactness, of the conversations which occurred in the house of Rose and with the friends of the family? Who gave complete information of the movements of the public force? Who furnished them in the plain country (for during twenty days the band did not come near a single house) with victuals, with warnings, and who had care of the bandits' horses? This is what we wish to know, what we ought to know. The civic power has the supreme right, the supreme duty, of bringing these things to light. The state of alarm is intolerable; the state of fear is unworthy of us. Citizens, arouse yourselves! you are sons of a free country—and there is no liberty where order is not—and let it be a blow of the executioner; put a price on the head and kill without pity. But the government does not believe that if it ought to arouse for itself the vigour of the citizens it would not have the duty of completing it. The security of the infected Sicilian provinces can only be regained by Herculean efforts and exceptional intelligence.' Very true; but where is that intelligence to be found?

A correspondent of *The Times* (December 11), dating from Naples, throws some light on the audacious proceedings of Leone, and the weakness of magisterial authority in dealing with Sicilian brigandage. 'To shew you (says this writer) what is the state of Sicily, I cite briefly the report of a recent trial at Assisi. The band of Leone, which lately carried off Mr Rose, some time ago carried off a gentleman of Termini called Paoli. As he was rich, money was supposed to be the motive of the capture, and a large ransom was offered, but vengeance was the object, and Signor Paoli was murdered. His friends, who were ignorant of the fact, sent a ransom amounting to between seventy and eighty thousand lire, not to be delivered until Paoli was in their hands. The brigands, however, insisted on the money being given up immediately, promising to send their prisoner to his friends. This the two messengers refused to do, and were returning, when they were riddled with shot, and the ransom money was seized. A companion of Leone, called De Pasquale, who had some regard for the murdered man and some sense of honour, resolved to take vengeance on Leone, but he was anticipated, for Leone murdered him treacherously, and placed his head on a cross in the commune of Alia, which, by-the-bye, has a population of from four to five thousand inhabitants. The trial which has been alluded to above concerned three of the band who had been arrested after these atrocious crimes. Each had his advocates, but on the day of trial they were not forthcoming. The president of the court assigned them three other advocates, but these were refused by the brigands, who demanded an adjournment. To this the court would not consent, and the accused then began to insult the president, jury, advocates, and witnesses, till it was found necessary to remove them and continue the trial in their absence. The result was, that two were condemned to capital punishment, and the third to the Ergastolo, in

consideration of his youth, he having been under twenty-one years when the crimes were committed. As to the two condemned to death, no doubt a pardon or commutation will be granted, the more so that the abolition of capital punishment is resolved on; but whether pardoned or not, it will make little difference under the present weak system of judicial administration.'

Nothing, we repeat, but a stern course of martial law will remedy the disorder. But of that or any intelligent system of repression there is little prospect. The ministers of the crown, and likely enough other members of the legislature, will talk plentifully on the subject, and there will be an end of the affair. Mawkish philanthropy, to say nothing of black-mail, is keeping a large portion of Sicily in a state of chronic disorder. Capital has deserted that beautiful and productive island. Tourists are afraid to visit it. Roads are in a bad condition. Lands are uncultivated. Unless from some mercantile compulsion, well-disposed persons flee from a country so delivered up by misgovernment to a parcel of unscrupulous ruffians. A sad blot this on modern Italy, which it does not seem in a hurry to remove. Nor, we fear, will it be removed until a higher moral tone pervades the classes connected with the public administration. As regards the personal security of travellers, the southern parts of Italy at present rank below Turkey; and we advise all who have the power to do so, to refrain from visiting a country so unhappily delivered up to the demon of brigandage!

W. C.

WITS AND WITTICISMS.

Shakspeare's statement, that 'a jest's prosperity lies not in the tongue of him who makes it,' is unhappily not quite correct. It often lies not only in his tongue but in his manner of speaking it, and in the occasion which brings it forth; and all these advantages are lost when it is re-told. In works, therefore, such as Timbs' *Anecdote Lives of the later Wits and Humorists* (Bentley) before us, the editor has a much more difficult task, and one less likely to be appreciated than may be supposed. With the exception too of Douglas Jerrold and one or two others, whose sayings have not only been 'extremely quoted,' as Praed expresses it, but published, it is very hard to discover what they said. A wit is in this view almost as unfortunate as an actor, since if we have neither seen nor heard him, we are not likely to be in a position to judge how great a wit he was. On the other hand, a work of this kind is very useful in putting the saddle on the right horse, and also in tracing the accepted witticism to its true source.

For example, no *bon mot* has been in more general use of late than that attributed to Sir George Cornewall Lewis. 'How pleasant would life be but for its amusements; and especially if there was no such thing as "a little music" in the world.' Now, the germ of this, as Mr Timbs shews us, is to be found in Talleyrand's *Memoirs*. 'Is not Geneva dull?' asked a friend of his. 'Yes,' he replied, 'especially when they amuse themselves.'

There has been no one like Talleyrand for cynicism; for though Jerrold has a reputation for bitter aloes, there was generally some fun about his satire, which prevented irritation on the part of its object. Imagine a lady hearing that this had been said of her: 'She is insupportable;' with the addition (as if the prudent statesman had gone too far, and wished to make amends): 'that is her only defect.' Thulieres, who wrote on the Polish Revolution, once observed: 'I never did but one mischievous work in my life.' 'And when will it be ended?' inquired Talleyrand. It was he who remarked upon the murder of the Duke d'Enghien, that 'it was worse than a crime; it was a blunder.' Curiously enough, Charles Buller said of this 'that such an expression could never be uttered by an Englishman, and could be heard by no Englishman without disgust;' and yet this saying has been more quoted of late—and seriously too—than almost any other, both by our statesmen and our newspaper writers. Madame de Staël drew a portrait of him, as an elderly lady, in her novel of *Delphine*, and also of herself as the heroine. 'They tell me,' said he, 'that we are both of us in your novel in the *disguise* of women.' Perhaps his very best witticism was upon an old lady of rank, who married a *valet de chambre*, and it was made at the whist-table. 'Ah,' said he, 'it was late in the game: at nine[1] we don't reckon honours.'

A very different sort of Wit was Archbishop Whately; for though he was caustic enough, he could be comical, and even did not shrink from a pun. This is generally a low species of wit, but it must be remembered that perhaps the very best 'good thing' that was ever uttered, Jerrold's definition of dogmatism (grown-up puppyism), included it. Pinel was speaking to the archbishop about the (then) new and improved treatment of lunatics, and mentioned that gardening was found to be a good occupation for them. 'I should doubt that,' replied His Grace; 'they might *grow madder*.' He once confounded a horse-dealer who was endeavouring to sell him a very powerful animal. 'There is nothing, your Grace,' said he, 'which he can't draw.' 'Can he draw an inference?' inquired Whately. It is curious how many now popular jokes and even riddles emanated from the brain of the Archbishop of Dublin: What Joan of Arc was made of; the difference between forms and ceremonies; why a man never starves in the Great Desert, &c. The answer to the following he withheld; it has puzzled many persons who make nothing of a double acrostic, and will probably continue to do so:

When from the Ark's capacious round
  The beasts came forth in pairs,

Who was the first to hear the sound
   Of boots upon the stairs?

One of his great pleasures was to poke fun at people who will think philosophically upon questions that only require the commonest of common-sense. He propounded to a whole roomful of divines the problem: 'Why do white sheep eat so very much more than black sheep?' There were all sorts of reasons suggested. One profound person thought since black attracted the sun, that black sheep could get on with less nutriment than the others. Dr Whately shook his head: 'White sheep eat more because there are more of them.'

The archbishop was the very personification of shrewdness, and he was not afraid to say what he thought.

'Concealment,' he observed, 'is a good spur to curiosity, which gives an interest to investigation, and the *Letters of Junius* would have been long forgotten if the author could have been clearly pointed out at the time.' This is very true, though few would have had the courage to say it. The *Letters of Junius* are inferior to those of *The Englishman* (also, by-the-bye, anonymous), published in the *Times* newspaper some years ago, and even inferior to many of the biting personal articles (beneath contempt, viewed in that light) printed later still in the *Queen's Messenger*.

Lord John Russell, like 'Single-speech Hamilton,' said one good thing, on which we believe his reputation in that line rests; he defined a proverb as 'The wisdom of many and the wit of one.' Rogers observed it was the only saying for which he envied any man, and Rogers was a good judge. Sydney Smith said of the latter's slow habit of composition, that 'when he produced a couplet he went to bed, the knocker was tied up, straw laid down, the caudle made, and that the answer to inquirers was, that Mr Rogers was as well as could be expected.' And he was almost as elaborate with his sayings as with his verses. When they were said, however, they were very good. 'When Croker wrote his review in the *Quarterly* upon Macaulay's *History*, Rogers remarked that he had "intended murder, but committed suicide."'

A great advantage bestowed on us by the publication of these volumes is that they contain several famous things which are not to be found elsewhere, or only with much difficulty. One of these is Lord Byron's *Question and Answer* upon Rogers, which (if we remember right) is suppressed, and at all events is not to be found in many editions of his works; another, of a very different kind, is Albert Smith's 'Engineer's Story,' which used to convulse the audience in the Egyptian Hall. Of course one misses the hubble-bubble of the pipe, and the inimitable manner with which the narrator informed us: 'He told me the stupidest story I ever heard in my life, and now I am going to tell it to you.'

There are some very disappointing things in this work, which, however, are not to be laid at the door of Mr Timbs; a good many wits appear in it, who—for all that is related of them—never made a witticism. Dr Maginn, for example, had a great reputation, but it has not outlived him, and nothing we read here of him impresses us favourably, or indeed at all. 'Father Prout' also, as the Rev. Francis Mahoney called himself, may have been a most charming companion, but he is very dull reading. We are afraid that whisky had a good deal to do with the exhilaration experienced in their society by these gentlemen's friends. Even John Hookham Frere—when he comes to be 'fried,' as the Americans call it—was not so much of a joker, and made a little wit go a very long way. It is true that the farther we go back the less likely it is that good *sayings* should be preserved; but those that *are* preserved should be worth hearing. On the other hand, all that is written stands on the same ground, and it is certain that the examples given of the more modern writers are much superior to those of their elder brothers.

Of the seniors, Canning is one of the most remarkable, though the impression that he was greatly overrated by his contemporaries is not to be eluded. In many respects he reminds us of the living Disraeli. Moore says of him, in his *Life of Sheridan*, that he joined the Tories 'because of the difficulties which even genius like his would experience in rising to its full growth under the shadowy branches of the Whig aristocracy;' and generally the interest attaching to him, as in the case of the present Premier, is of a personal character. His mode of life was, for statesmen of that day, domestic, and he is said to have invented the now popular game of 'Twenty Questions.' In the example here given of it, however, the answers are not simply 'Yes' and 'No,' so that the thing which is to be guessed must have been very much more easily arrived at, and his 'power of logical division' need not have been overwhelming. As a drawing-room wit he had a great reputation; but as a statesman, Sydney Smith gives this characteristic account of him: 'His being "in office" is like a fly in amber. Nobody cares about the fly; the only question is, How the mischief did it get there? When he is jocular, he is strong; when he is serious, he is like Samson in a wig. Call him a legislator, a reasoner, and the conductor of the affairs of a great nation, and it seems to me as absurd as if a butterfly were to teach bees to make honey. That he is an extraordinary writer of small poetry, and a diner-out of the highest metre, I do most readily admit.' He certainly said some very injudicious things in parliament; for example, his description of the American navy—'Half-a-dozen fir frigates with bits of bunting flying at their heads'—excited Cousin Jonathan, as it well might, beyond all bounds. He compared Lord Sidmouth (Mr Addington), because he was included in every ministry, to the small-pox, 'since everybody must have it once in their lives.' His wittiest verses perhaps occur in the poem composed on the tomb of Lord Anglesey's leg, lost at Waterloo:

And here five little ones repose,
   Twin-born with other five;
Unheeded of their brother toes,

Who all are now alive.

A leg and foot, to speak more plain,
Lie here of one commanding;
Who though he might his wits retain,
Lost half his understanding....

And now in England, just as gay,
As in the battle brave,
Goes to the rout, the ball, the play,
With one leg in the grave....

Fate but indulged a harmless whim;
Since he could *walk* with one,
She saw two legs were lost on him
Who never meant to *run*.

A very lively poem, no doubt; but how inferior, when compared with one on a somewhat similar subject by Thomas Hood, namely, *Ben Battle*:

Said he: 'Let others shoot,
For here I leave my *second* leg,
And the *forty-second foot*.'

Comparisons, however, are odious; and it would be especially odious to Mr Canning to pursue this one.

Of the once famous Captain Morris, we read that his poems reached a twenty-fourth edition. But where are they now? His verses were principally Anacreontic; his *To my Cup* received the gold cup from the Harmonic Society; but they are greatly inferior to Tom Moore's. In Hood's line, however, he was more successful, and his *Town and Country* might well have been written by that great humorist himself: {8}

Oh, but to hear a milkmaid blithe,
Or early mower whet his scythe
The dewy meads among!
My grass is of that sort, alas!
That makes no hay—called sparrow-grass
By folks of vulgar tongue....

Where are ye, birds that blithely wing
From tree to tree, and gaily sing,
Or mourn in thicket deep?
My cuckoo has some ware to sell,
The watchman is my Philomel,
My blackbird is a sheep!

The above is excellent; nor is the Captain less felicitous in describing the other view of the subject—which was no doubt his own—namely, the disadvantages of a rustic life:

In London I never know what to be at,
Enraptured with this, and transported with that;
. . . .
Your jays and your magpies may chatter on trees,
And whisper soft nonsense in groves, if you please;
But a house is much more to my mind than a tree;
And for groves—oh, a fine grove of chimneys for me....

Then in town let me live and in town let me die,
For in truth I can't relish the country, not I.
If I must have a villa, in London to dwell,
Oh, give me the sweet shady side of Pall-Mall.

It is sad to think that the last line will be almost the only one familiar to our readers, and that the memory of the gallant captain has died away, not indeed 'from all the circle of the hills,' but from the London squares he loved, and which knew him so well.

It is not as a wit that Samuel Taylor Coleridge is chiefly famous, but his *Table-talk* contains many things that would have made the reputation of a diner-out; sometimes they are metaphorical, as when, upon a friend of Fox's, who would take the very words out of his mouth, and always put himself forward to interpret him, he observed that the man always put him in mind of the steeple of St Martin's on Ludgate Hill, which is constantly getting in the way when you wish to see the dome of St Paul's. Sometimes they are philosophic, as when he remarked that all women past seventy, whom ever he knew, were divided into three classes—1. That dear old soul; 2. That old woman; 3. That old witch. And again, they are sometimes purely witty, as, 'Some men are like musical glasses—to produce their finest tones, you must keep them wet.'

Coleridge has also left some fine definitions, which are only not witty because of their wisdom.

He compares a single Thought to a wave of the sea, which takes its form from the waves which precede and follow it; and Experience to the stern-lights of a ship, which illumine only the track it has passed.

His epigram on a bad singer is excellent:

> Swans sing before they die; 'twere no bad thing
> Should certain persons die before they sing.

With respect to the Irish wits who are introduced in these volumes, the reader is in many cases disposed to imagine that some of the joke must lie in the brogue, which print is unable to render; but Curran is a brilliant exception. There is nothing more humorous in the whole work than the account of his duel with Judge Egan. The latter was a big man, and directed the attention of the second to the advantage which in this respect his adversary had over him.

'He may hit me as easily as he would a haystack, and I might as well be aiming at the edge of a knife as at his lean carcass.'

'Well,' said Curran, 'let the gentleman chalk the size of my body on your side, and let every ball hitting outside of that go for nothing.'

Even Sydney Smith never beat this; but he said many things as humorous as this one of Curran's, and indeed was always saying them. Here is one, also, as it happens, respecting fat and leanness. Speaking of having been shampooed at Mahommed's Baths at Brighton, he said: 'They squeezed enough out of me to make a lean curate.' Every one knows the advice he gave to the Bishop of New Zealand, just before his departure for that cannibal diocese: 'A bishop should be given to hospitality, and never be without a smoked little boy in the bacon-rack and a cold missionary on the sideboard.' The above is perhaps the best example of the lengths to which Sydney Smith's imagination would run in the way of humour; as the following is the most characteristic stroke of Jerrold's caustic tongue. At a certain supper of sheep's heads a guest was so charmed with his fare that he threw down his knife and fork, exclaiming: 'Well, say I, sheep's heads for ever!' 'There's egotism,' said Jerrold.

There is nothing, it has been written, so dreary as a jest-book; and for fear our article on this subject should come under the same condemnation, we here bring it to a conclusion, with a cordial expression of approval of the cake from which we have extracted so many plums.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] They played long-whist in those times; we should say of course 'at four' nowadays.

RURAL LIFE IN FRANCE.

The ordinary tourist has in general no time to get acquainted with the inner life of the people to whom his flying visits are paid. He has the largest possible space to get over in the shortest possible time, and thanks to railways and steamboats, he accomplishes his object. He goes to see Paris, and finds it not altogether unlike London; the people are not very dissimilar; the habits of life have a general resemblance; he need not even talk French unless he chooses; and except that he is generally pretty well got up in his Continental Bradshaw, he returns little wiser than he went away.

This ignorance about continental nations in general, and about our nearest neighbours in particular, Mr Hamerton does his best to remedy in his very interesting and instructive account of rural life in France.[2]

His first difficulty was to find a house there which should be tolerably convenient, and within easy reach of the picturesque scenery in which a landscape painter finds his treasure-trove. In company with his wife he visited a variety of places, such as Vienne, Macon, Collonges, and the wine districts of Burgundy; but with none was he satisfied. He next tried Nuits, Besançon, the valley of the Doubs and other spots, without being able to find the particular one which could alone suit his wandering foot; and when about to give up the search in despair, a friend came to the rescue. 'Make a note of what you want,' said this sensible man, 'and I will find it for you.' He was as good as his word; the house was found (precisely where, we are not told); and a very charming little house it was, out of the world, but still sufficiently in it to be accessible, with fine natural scenery near, and an abundance of hills, valleys, and streams sufficiently large to be navigable by a canoe. {9}

The roads around were good, having been made by the government of Louis-Philippe just before the introduction of railways; and good roads, as Mr Hamerton justly observes, are 'one of the very greatest blessings of a civilised country.' In looking out for and choosing his house he had thought very little of the society in which his lot might be cast, and yet he did not intend to live like a hermit; he was ready to make friends, but it must be in his own way. In England, when a stranger settles in a neighbourhood, the families around call upon him; but in France it is quite the reverse. There a new-comer must push his own way, and card in hand, call upon every one with whom he would like to become acquainted; and blowing his own trumpet as judiciously as he can, endeavour to impress them with the desirability of his acquaintance. This Mr Hamerton refused to do; and finally his neighbours, becoming convinced of his respectability, called upon

him in the English fashion, and he had as much society as he desired. He found, however, that he had in a sense fallen upon evil times; the easy old-fashioned hospitality of the good country folks around him was beginning to decline, stifled by the demon of the state dinner, which some ambitious wretch had had the inhumanity to introduce from Paris; and which, with its many courses, expensive wines, and grandes toilettes, threatened to annihilate the enjoyable family meal, at which the only difference made for a guest was the addition of a few flowers, sweets, and candles. The society 'round my house' was not distinguished for intellectual culture, although there were a few brilliant exceptions to the general dullness of the small squires of the neighbourhood. One or two, he found, had studied painting in Paris under Delacroix; another was an enthusiastic ornithologist; another was an excellent botanist and entomologist; and there were one or two antiquaries; and a really first-rate musician, who was so modest, that when he wished to practise, he always locked himself and his violin into a cellar.

The ladies he found decidedly behind the gentlemen in point of culture and attainments. They invariably belonged to one of two classes—the women of the world, and the women who preferred domesticity and home. The latter were most respectable individuals, deeply read in cookery-books, and *au fait* in every housekeeping detail, but not interesting as companions. Nor were their more ambitious rivals greatly preferable to them in this respect; they were dressy, and had plenty of small-talk, but their conversation was confined to the gossip of the neighbourhood, or the latest things in the ever-changing Paris fashions. It is to this cause that Mr Hamerton assigns that separation of the sexes which most travellers have remarked as characteristic of French society. There is nothing else to account for it; the English custom of leaving the gentlemen alone over their wine after dinner is unknown; but still in most provincial salons it will be found that the men collect into one corner, and the women into another, and there discuss undisturbed the separate questions which interest them.

We are accustomed to consider the aristocratic feeling as much stronger with us than in France; but this Mr Hamerton found was a great mistake. Around his house, the caste feeling in all its genuine feudal intensity was peculiarly strong. Without the all-important *de* prefixed to a man's surname he was a *roturier*, an ignoble wretch, a creature sent into the world only to be snubbed. The social value of these two letters is incalculable, and as a matter of course, they are often fraudulently assumed by the vulgar rich; nor does it, curiously enough, when the transition is once accomplished, seem to make much difference whether the coveted prefix is real or borrowed. A false title steadily kept up for a series of years is found to answer quite as well as a true one; and while a constant manufacture of this *pseudo*-nobility is going on, there is side by side with it a continual process of degradation, by which the true nobles lose their nobility. They become poor; the necessity of earning their bread by manual labour is forced upon them; they drop the *de*, or if they try to cling to it, their neighbours drop it for them, and in the crucible of poverty the transmutation soon becomes complete: the gold is changed by the roughness of daily toil into simple clay. The *de*, which is not to be sneezed at, at any time of life, becomes supremely important to the Frenchman when he is about to marry; then, without any trouble on his part, merely by getting a friend to act as his ambassador, it may, and often does procure for him the hand of a rich heiress.

Sometimes people are ennobled in spite of themselves, as when Mr Hamerton, much to his own annoyance, had the title of 'My Lord' bestowed upon him by his French neighbours. It was in vain that he protested against it; he was shewn the title duly registered in an official book at the prefecture; and half-angry, half-amused, he at last accepted his fate, and settled tranquilly down into the dignity of the peerage.

From the noble of the earth, who may be, and sometimes are very poor indeed, one glides by a natural transition into a consideration of the very wealthy. These do not abound in France. As a rule, it is difficult to find a Crœsus; but gentlemen with comfortable incomes, which, with careful management, may be made to procure all the luxuries of life, are very common. The law of the division of property militates against either very large estates or very large incomes, and has made great nobles, such as were common in the days of Louis XIV., an impossibility. The great castles built by these men still exist, and are out of all keeping with the establishments maintained in them. It is not unusual to find a stable with stalls for forty horses, and in a corner the family stud of four unobtrusively munching their oats; while in the great house beyond, the proprietor lives quietly with two or three servants in a tower or wing of his ancestral palace, often thinking very little of himself at all, and a great deal of those who are to come after him, and pinching and saving, that the old place may not require to be sold. {10}

No one is ashamed of saving; thrift is the rule in France; and Mr Samuel Smiles himself cannot have a more genuine admiration of it than the French middle classes have. They are economical to a fault, and their thrifty habits form the great financial strength of their country. A middle-class Frenchman almost invariably lives so as to have something to his credit at the end of the year; if he is rich the balance is large; if he is poor it is small; but, unless in exceptional circumstances, it is always there. In the country the French rise early; five in summer and seven in winter is the usual hour. Ladies in the morning have generally a cup of coffee when they rise and a piece of bread; but the majority of men eat nothing until breakfast, which is the great meal of the day. There is always at breakfast one or two dishes of meat, vegetables, and dessert, and the beverage used is wine, *vin ordinaire*. A Frenchman never tastes tea except when ill, and then he regards it as a kind of medicine. In summer, white wine mixed with seltzer-water is often used at breakfast; and after the meal, coffee is drunk. Breakfast is usually served between ten and eleven in the forenoon, and dinner at six in the evening. Unless when guests are present, it is a much lighter meal than breakfast, and often consists of an omelette and salad, or *soupe maigre*

and cold chicken.

In rural districts the usual hour for retiring at night is nine o'clock; and after dinner it is not unusual to find some of the elderly gentlemen so sleepy that they are almost incapable of conversation. This drowsiness is caused by their open-air habits and the great amount of exercise they take.

In the country, all the gentlemen shoot; the game consists of partridges, rabbits, hares, snipe, woodcock, wolves, and wild boars; the hunting of which last is by no means child's play. Few country-gentlemen ride; they all of them drive a little, and are most of them great walkers, thinking nothing of what we would count very long distances, such as fifteen miles and back in a day.

Formerly, country-life in France had a certain charming rural rusticity about it, which admitted of the utmost freedom in matters of dress and housekeeping; but now, Mr Hamerton tells us, the old liberty to do exactly as one pleased is disappearing, and fashion and a superficial veneer of external polish are greatly increasing the cost of living, without improving in any way the minds, manners, or constitutions of the people.

On one most important point, however, the old freedom is still maintained—no Frenchman burdens himself with more servants than are absolutely necessary for the requirements of his household. Mr Hamerton relates a case in point: he had an intimate friend in Paris, who went out into the best society and received at his house the greatest people in Europe, yet this man kept only three servants and had no carriage.

It is in this liberty to spend or not as you choose, in this freedom from the tyranny of custom in the matter of expenditure, that the cheapness of continental life lies. Added to this is the pre-eminently practical tone of the French mind, which is always striving with incessant activity to solve the problem, how to make the best of life. As a means to this end, the French almost invariably get on comfortably with their servants; and French servants, when frankly and familiarly treated, and considered as human beings and not as mere machines, generally make very good servants indeed; and the tenure of service, which with us is not unfrequently a matter of months, often continues unbroken in France until the servant is married or dies.

Such is life in the country. Life in a small French city is very different in many respects. It is full of a lazy, purposeless enjoyment, which is always ready with some trifling amusement to fill up every vacant moment in the too abundant leisure of men, who are either independent in fortune, or have professions yielding them an easy maintenance without engrossing much of their time. To such individuals the cafés and clubs of a small town, with their good eating and drinking and sociable small-talk, form a realisation of contented felicity beyond which they do not care to aspire, although it stifles all that is noblest in their nature, and too often lays the foundation of what we would call drinking habits.

The peasantry in France form a class, a world by themselves, full of prejudices, devoid of culture, and very independent in their tone of feeling. The French peasant is inconceivably ignorant, and yet very intelligent; his manners are good, and he can talk well; but he can neither read nor write, and his knowledge of geography is so small, that he cannot comprehend what France is, much less any foreign state. Freed from the grinding oppressions of the past, he is still under bondage to the iron slavery of custom. Every other Frenchman may dress as he chooses, but the peasant must always wear a blue blouse, a brownish-gray cloak, and a hat of a peculiar shape. Custom also prescribes to him the furniture of his house; he must have a linen press, a clock and a bed, and these must be all of walnut wood. Cookery, which is the national talent *par excellence*, does not exist for him. In the morning he has soup, cheaply compounded of hot water, in which float a few scraps of rusty bacon, a handful or two of peas, and a few potatoes; and if there is not enough of soup to satisfy his hunger, he finishes his meal with dry bread and cold water *ad libitum*. At noon he dines on potatoes, followed (as an occasional variety in his perennial diet) either with a pancake, a salad, or clotted milk. He never tastes wine or meat except during hay-making and harvest, when he has a little bit of salt pork, and a modest allowance of wine with a liberal admixture of water. Among the peasantry, many of the old superstitions are still prevalent.

Between husband and wife there is little love, but there is also little wrangling or disputing, and they are mutually true and helpful each to each. The children grow up in this cold home, under a rigid patriarchal discipline, in which personal chastisement plays an important part, and is continued even to mature age. In peasant as in town life, however, the tendency is towards change; the children now are in course of being educated; and the young men, although frugal still, are not so parsimonious as their fathers were. They smoke, heedless of the expense, a piece of extravagance which their stoic ancestors would have most sternly denounced; and in the train of tobacco the common comforts of life are slowly finding their way into the houses of the more wealthy peasants. {11}

No subject is more interesting to the English observer in France than marriage, a subject, however, which has already been adverted to in these columns.[3] We conclude this notice of Mr Hamerton's interesting work by relating how he remained in the country during the Franco-Prussian war, and how he shared to the full the anxiety of his French neighbours, for he was constantly expecting that the district around his house would be included in the circle of the invasion, as eventually it was. First came Garibaldi and his army, a very unwelcome sight to the bishop and clergy, to whom the Italian hero seemed the very impersonation of evil. Then came the Prussians quite suddenly and unexpectedly; and naturally Mr Hamerton has very lively recollections of that day, which he spent in a garret of his house, surrounded by a bevy of ladies,

reconnoitring the enemy through a very excellent telescope. Throughout the day he remained on the outlook, and when evening fell he went out into the birchwood above his house to bury a certain precious strong-box. When he had concealed his treasure, he returned home in the twilight, watching in the distance, as he descended from the wood, the red flashes of flame leaping from the cannon's mouths, and illuminating with their dusky glow all the surrounding scenery, and then—what does the reader think he did? Take refuge in immediate flight? He did no such thing; he went to bed, and had a comfortable night's sleep. The Prussians were still at the distance of a few miles, and there the armistice stopped them; peace soon followed; and the pleasant little house, which the Englishman had beautified and made comfortable and home-like, escaped the devastation which its occupation by a detachment of Uhlans would in all probability have entailed.

FOOTNOTES:

[2] *Round my House; Notes on Rural Life in France.* By Philip Gilbert Hamerton. London, Seeley.

[3] *Journal*, No. 578, January 23, 1875.

A CURATE'S HOLIDAY.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

Fifteen years ago I was a slim, tolerably good-looking young curate, addicted to long coats and Roman collars, condemned by poverty to celibacy, and supporting myself upon the liberal salary of seventy pounds a year. I am now a Liverpool merchant in flourishing circumstances, 'fat and forty,' with a wife, lots of children, and religious views somewhat latitudinarian. 'What a change was there!' it may well be exclaimed. And indeed, when I look back upon what I once was, and compare my present with my past self, I can scarcely believe I am the same man. I shall, therefore, conceal my name, in relating, as I am about to do, certain occurrences accidentally connected with my change of state, and substitute for that of each person and place concerned in the little narrative, some fictitious appellation.

To commence then. I had been for three years curate of St Jude's Church, Ollyhill, a populous agricultural district in Lancashire, when one morning in Easter-week, as I was disrobing after an early celebration, I fell upon the vestry floor in a dead-faint. The sacristan, who fortunately was at hand to render assistance, after accompanying me home, and observing that I was still weak and indisposed, thought proper to convey intelligence of what had happened to the vicar. The result was that in the course of the morning I received a visit from that gentleman, the Rev. Fitz-Herbert Hastings. He found me stretched upon the typical horse-hair-covered sofa of a poor curate's lodgings, suffering from a severe nervous headache, and to judge from his exclamation of concern, looking, as I felt, really ill. Taking a seat by my side, he condoled with me very kindly, expressed his opinion that I had been overworking myself; and went on to prove the sincerity of his sympathy by offering me a fortnight's holiday, with the very requisite addition of a cheque for expenses. Most gladly did I hail his proposition, affording me as it did an opportunity for which I had just been longing, of getting away for a time from Ollyhill. But neither my desire for change of scene, nor my illness, arose from the cause to which the vicar attributed them. It was true that I had of late, during Lent, been working very hard, as also had Mr Hastings himself.

But in producing the state of utter physical and mental prostration in which I now found myself, these duties of my sacred calling had had little share. My malady, unhappily, was not the effect of any mere temporary reaction of overstrained faculties—its seat was the heart. In that tender, though not hitherto susceptible region, I had been sorely wounded—loath as I am to admit it—by the mischievous little god of Love. Six months ago, Lily, only daughter of Squire Thornton, our principal churchwarden and most wealthy parishioner, had returned home from her Parisian boarding-school a lovely girl of eighteen, with rippling auburn hair and distracting violet eyes, but with tastes and manners which I considered a little frivolous. Fenced about by celibacy, and little dreaming of any dangerous result, I had, from our first introduction, set myself to effect an improvement in her taste, and to take a general interest in her spiritual welfare. Only too abundant had been the success which rewarded my efforts. Lily had proved an excellent pupil, looking up to her self-elected monitor (at the superior but not altogether fatherly age of twenty-five) with the utmost reverence, and obeying with an unquestioning childlikeness eminently charming, my slightest wish or suggestion. Under my directions she had given up novel-reading, and had become an active member of the Dorcas Society, a teacher in the Sunday school, and a visitor of the sick. As a matter of course, her attention to these good works had involved frequent meetings and consultations; and the constant intercourse had by degrees proved destructive of my peace of mind. In vain had I, tardily awakening to a knowledge of the truth, made every endeavour to exercise self-discipline. The mischief, almost before I was aware of its existence, had gone too far for remedy. There had been nothing for it, as I had eventually seen, but to avoid as far as possible all further intercourse with my charmer; and upon that principle I had accordingly shaped my action. Then had followed a time of very severe trial. Unable to understand my coldness, Lily at first had treated me to reproachful glances whenever we chanced to meet; subsequently, growing indignant at the continuance of what seemed to her my unaccountable change of demeanour, she had scornfully seconded the avoidance. And finally, my breast had been wrung in perceiving that she too suffered, as was evidenced by her sorrowful air,

and by the fact that she was becoming pale and thin.

For several days before that upon which my fainting-fit had occurred, I had missed her from her accustomed place in the church; forbearing, however, to make inquiries concerning her, I had failed to learn, as I might have done, that she had been sent for the benefit of her health to visit a relative residing at a sea-bathing place in North Wales. In ignorance of this, I set off on the morning following my vicar's visit, for the same country, bent upon a pedestrian excursion, and determined, during my absence from Ollyhill, to make vigorous efforts towards conquering my unfortunate passion.

About a week afterwards I found myself, at the close of a day's hard walking, at a small fishing village on the south-west coast, frequented during the summer season as I learned, from the cards in two or three lodging-house windows, by a few visitors. But as yet Lleyrudrigg was, I surmised, empty of all save its ordinary inhabitants. At anyrate, there appeared to be no other stranger than myself in the rather large hotel in which I had taken up my quarters for the night. It was a dismal dispiriting evening. The rain, which had been threatening all day, was now descending in torrents, beating against the windows of the coffee-room and swelling the gutters of the narrow street.

Not a living thing was to be seen; and the long, scantily furnished apartment of which I was sole tenant, looked very dreary as I turned away from the cheerless prospect. Its gloom was increased rather than otherwise, however, when presently that prospect was shut out and two uncompromising tallow-candles were set upon the table. On their appearance I drew a volume from my knapsack, and eliciting a feeble blaze from the smouldering fire, seated myself in front of it and commenced to read. But all endeavours to concentrate my attention upon the book failed; and at length, depressed by the solitude and my melancholy thoughts, I determined upon ringing the bell and begging the landlord to give me his company. I had just risen for the purpose of putting this resolve into execution, when my attention was arrested by the sound of approaching footsteps, and in another instant the door was unclosed and a gentleman entered the room. I say gentleman advisedly, although at a cursory glance there was little about the appearance of the new-comer to indicate his right to the title. He was a small spare man, with large features, and a head almost ludicrously out of proportion with his body. His dress, which was black, was of an unfashionable cut and very shabby, and he wore a voluminous white neckcloth. Pausing at a few paces from the door, he gave orders to the waiter for chops and tea. Then advancing towards the fireplace, energetically rubbing his hands together, he addressed me in perfectly good English, but with a strong Welsh accent, telling me that he had arrived at the inn some quarter of an hour ago, drenched through with the rain—having carried his own carpet-bag from a station distant about a mile—and that in consequence, he had been obliged to change all his clothes. 'And by the way,' he continued somewhat abruptly, 'I had the misfortune whilst doing so to drop my purse, and several pieces of money rolled out amongst the furniture of the room. I feel almost sure that I managed to collect all again; but if you would excuse me doing so in your presence, I should like to satisfy myself completely upon that point. The fact is,' he added with a frank smile, 'that the money in question does not belong to me, and I am the more anxious about it on that account.'

Whilst thus speaking, the little man had drawn from his pocket a huge wash-leather purse, and after waiting until I had bowed permission, he proceeded to empty its contents upon the table. They consisted of a large roll of bank-notes and a considerable sum in gold and silver—and as I watched him furtively over the edges of my book, which I had again taken up—I saw him carefully count and arrange the latter into heaps. A sigh of relief accompanied the announcement which he shortly made to me, that he had found the money correct; and he was in the act of opening his purse to replace it, when the landlord—a meagre, sharp-nosed individual—entered the room with a tray. Happening to glance at this man as he stood by cloth in hand, I detected a gleam of intense avarice crossing his face; and although the expression was but momentary—vanishing as the glittering piles were swept into their receptacle—it left me with the impression that the small Welshman's exhibition of his riches in the presence of strangers had not been an altogether judicious proceeding. No suspicion of its imprudence, however, appeared to disturb that gentleman's mind, and I soon forgot all about the little incident in the interest of the conversation which ensued between us.

From his dress and general appearance I had already conjectured my chance companion to be a Dissenting parson, and his first words as, having finished his tea, he drew a chair to the opposite side of the fireplace, confirmed my surmise. Throwing his eye over my attire, he remarked that he thought we were 'both in the same profession,' and inquired if I were not a 'minister of the gospel.' And upon my informing him that I was a clergyman of the Church of England, we were soon in the midst of a polemical discussion, which lasted a couple of hours and covered a large amount of ground; and which ended (at least as far as I was concerned) in producing feelings akin to sincere friendship.

The insignificant-looking, ill-formed, shabbily dressed Welsh minister had interested and attracted me more than any man I had ever met in my life. Endowed with a rich melodious voice, and with wonderful conversational powers, he was possessed also of an excellent memory and a keen intelligence. His reading, moreover, had been various and deep, as I found when, later on in the evening, the conversation turned upon other than ecclesiastical matters. But it was perhaps even more to his imperturbable good-humour, and to the singular innocence and candour which shone in his clear gray eyes and exhibited themselves in every word he uttered, than to his rare natural gifts, that he owed his ability to please. However that might be, I had certainly found the Rev. Peter Morgan a most charming companion, and when, just as we were about to separate for

the night, I learned that he was going upon the following day to Twellryst, a town I was myself intending to visit, I eagerly proposed that we should make the journey together. The suggestion met with a ready and pleased acquiescence from my new acquaintance, and we then exchanged information as to the different objects which were taking us both to this rather out-of-the-way place.

Mine was a very simple one, that of examining the ruins of an ancient monastery in its vicinity. My friend's was a more business-like and, as he laughingly said, a more agreeable errand. It was to receive certain subscriptions which a friend of his, resident in the town, had collected on his behalf. These subscriptions were to be applied to the purpose of enlarging the chapel of which he was pastor at Pwlwyln, a rapidly growing village on the northern sea-board. The money which I had seen him count, the little man went on to state, was the fruit of his own labours for the same cause. He had obtained it by travelling about the country begging from town to town amongst the members of the denomination to which he belonged, and had been engaged in this manner nearly two months. The mission, he concluded, had been crowned with much greater success than he had anticipated. With the subscriptions he was to receive on the morrow, and those already in his custody, he expected to be able to return home (as he was intending to do on the day afterwards) with upwards of three hundred pounds in his pocket, which, together with another hundred raised by his own very poor congregation, would, he anticipated, be amply sufficient to cover all expenses of the alterations.

'And how, sir, do you propose to get to Twellryst?' I inquired. 'As you are no doubt aware, there is no railway line in that direction. I was intending to *walk* myself; but *you* surely were not thinking of doing so?'

'Indeed no, my friend,' he replied with the sunny smile which upon the slightest provocation would break over his large plain features. 'At upwards of sixty, one doesn't undertake a walk of thirty miles unless it be under the pressure of stern necessity. No, no; I could walk well enough at your age; but now, alas! the infirmities of age, &c. &c. So if you please, we will go by coach. I have ascertained that one runs twice a week from Abermeulth to Twellryst, passing through Lleyrudrigg. To-morrow will be one of its days, though I do not yet know at what hour of the morning it will arrive here. The landlord, however, will be able to tell us that; and if you will kindly ring the bell, which I see is on your side of the fireplace, we can make inquiries forthwith.'

In bending forward to obey this request, I noticed that a door immediately behind my chair stood a little ajar, and it at once flashed upon me that for some time I had been vaguely conscious of a slight draught. The bell still in my hand, I remained for a moment after ringing, with my eyes fixed upon the door. When last I had looked in that direction it had, I felt quite sure, been closed; and as an instant's reflection convinced me, no person had entered the room by it throughout the entire evening.

Prompted by an unpleasant suspicion which had suggested itself against my will, I advanced quietly, and throwing it more widely apart, peered through. It opened into a small china-closet, connected by another door with a long passage. Both passage and closet were flagged. I had heard no sound of footsteps, yet there, within the latter, stood the landlord. Upon seeing me, he looked, I thought, confused, but immediately recovering himself, stepped into the room, as though he had been coming that way in answer to the bell. I had certainly no proof that he had been listening, but I felt, nevertheless, a moral assurance of the fact, and wondering what could have been his motive in the act, I eyed him sharply whilst he gave a not very satisfactory reply to Mr Morgan's interrogations respecting the stage-coach. According to his account, the vehicle in question was a most irregular and unpunctual one, starting at hours varying from ten to twelve in the morning, and being even less reliable as to the time of its return. This report naturally was not agreeable to the minister; but expressing a hope that the coach would be upon its best behaviour next day, he requested that bedroom candles might be sent in; and the landlord departed to order them. In a few moments, however, he returned, and made us a proposition which had apparently just occurred to him. It was to the effect that we should hire a horse and dog-cart belonging to the hotel. The horse, its owner affirmed, was a splendid animal, and would carry us to Twellryst in half the time it would take the coach to get there. We should, moreover, he promised, have the conveyance for little more than the amount of our coach-fares, since not only did the horse need exercise greatly, but he had besides some business of his own in that town, which could be transacted for him by a cousin who would drive us. By adopting this plan, too, he concluded, we could see the Spike Rocks. Everybody who came to these parts in the summer-time went to see the Spike Rocks, and Jonathan should drive us round that way.

A question or two convincing us that the rocks referred to would be well worth a visit, we gladly accepted the landlord's offer; and waiting only to make arrangements as to the time of starting, bade each other good-night and separated for our respective chambers.

CHILDREN'S TROUBLES.

If children occasionally turn out to be 'Torturations,' their parents are not uniformly guiltless of bringing such a result on themselves. What with over-indulgence or neglect, or it may be harshness of discipline, there is little wonder that children fall short of expectations. We have known a father who paid no end of attentions to his girls, and let his boys grow up any way. We have also known the greatest mischief arise from unnecessary severity and snubbing. Some

parents seem to imagine that they sufficiently perform their duty when they give their children a good education. They forget that there is the education of the fireside as well as of the school. At schools and academies there is no cultivation of the affections, but often very much of the reverse. Hence the value of kindly home influences that touch the heart and understanding. Children need to be spoken to and treated as if they were rational beings, and who are for the most part keenly observant of what goes on before their eyes. Good example along with gentle hints as to manners and conduct are consequently of first importance. As children learn much from being allowed to listen to conversations on subjects of interest, it is an unwise policy to turn them out of the room when any useful information may be picked up. Of course they must be taught to be discreetly silent, and not lend in their word on subjects they know nothing about. {14}

It is useless to speak of the terribly real suffering which selfish, careless parents cause their children; but we shall advert to a few of the common mistakes of well-meaning persons who, from want of thought, prevent their children being as happy as they ought to be. How much happiness and improvement do those children miss who are never encouraged to observe the beauties and marvels of nature! Instead of this, they are put to books, containing dull abstractions, far too soon, and as a consequence they remain all their lives bad observers, seeing everything through books—that is, through other men's eyes, and ignorant of almost everything except mere words.

When a child begins to cross-examine its parents as to why the fire burns, how his carte-de-visite was taken, how many stars there are, and such like—grown-up ignorance or want of sympathy too often laughs at him; says that children should not ask tiresome questions, and, as far as it can, checks the inquiring spirit within him. 'Little people should be seen and not heard,' is a stupid saying, which makes many young observers shy of imparting to their elders the things that arrest their attention, until they stop learning and overcome their sense of wonder—the spur of all philosophy—from want of sympathy and encouragement. And yet grown-up people should surely be aware that Nature has implanted in us a desire to know and to communicate knowledge, considering how very much most of us love to hear and to spread gossip. Children 'would gladly learn and gladly teach;' but if they are early snubbed, they will not be glad to do either in after-life.

If we only reflected how 'queer' everything must appear to a mind newly arrived on such an earth as ours, children's questions would not appear at all foolish. During the first four or five years, which is occupied in distinguishing and naming the commonest objects, perhaps children solve more difficult intellectual problems than at any future period of their lives. How keenly, then, must young children feel want of sympathy and encouragement!

As an example of the physical misery which 'is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart,' we may allude to the 'Can't you be quiet?' which puts young children to the unnecessary torture of sitting still like 'big people.' Why do not parents reflect that it is almost a physical impossibility for any young animal to remain quiet for more than a few moments?

Then, as regards food; some are too prone to put in practice ascetic theories in the rearing of their offspring, which they shrink from as far as their own personal conduct is concerned. And yet, why should not appetite be a good guide for childhood as it is for animals; as it is for infancy; as it is for every adult who obeys Nature's laws?

We must, however, thankfully acknowledge that people are beginning more and more to conform their education to children's opinion; that is, generally speaking, to the promptings of Nature. It is found that those turn out worst who during youth have been subjected to most restrictions. 'Do children take to this or that?' is therefore a common question. Good teachers now endeavour to make the acquirement of knowledge pleasurable rather than painful. They study children's intellectual appetites, in order to discover what knowledge they are fit to assimilate. Disgust felt towards any information is now considered a sign either that it is prematurely presented, or that it is presented in an indigestible form.

We shall say nothing about the sufferings endured by boys at public schools, because so many are the counteracting pleasures such places afford, that most boys would prefer school-life to remaining at home for a continuance. We are not sure, however, that the pains of school-girls are counterbalanced by their pleasures. They have not cricket, rowing, paper-chases, and the unequalled excitement of bolster-fights to compensate for indifferent food, home-sickness, the torture of 'deportment,' and the dreadful tread-mill exercise of the hour's promenade. We do not advocate girls adopting boys' sports; but surely they should have out-of-door games of some kind. Why will schoolmistresses care so little for health and happiness as never to allow the gardens of 'Establishments for Young Ladies' to ring with the laughter and shouts of romping children? Do they fancy that a miserable walk of one hour, during which the attention of the young ladies is on the rack about the proper holding of themselves, is as health-giving as out-of-door games in which the players can forget themselves?

In his book on *Responsibility in Mental Disease*, Dr Maudsley well says: 'There is hardly any one who sets self-development before him as an aim in life. The aims which chiefly predominate—riches, position, power, applause of men—are such as inevitably breed and foster many bad passions in the eager competition to attain them. Hence, in fact, come disappointed ambition, jealousy, grief from loss of fortune, all the torments of wounded self-love, and a thousand other mental sufferings—the commonly enumerated moral causes of insanity. They are griefs of a kind to which a rightly developed nature should not fall a prey. There need be no disappointed ambition if a man were to set before himself a true aim in life, and to work definitely for it; no envy nor jealousy, if he considered that it mattered not whether he did a great thing or some one else did it, Nature's only concern being that it should be done; no grief from loss of fortune, if he

estimated at its true value that which fortune can bring him, and that which fortune can never bring him; no wounded self-love, if he had learned well the eternal lesson of life—self-renunciation.'

This may be called 'unpractical;' but we cannot help thinking that if parents would sometimes reflect on such ideals, they would have less of false and more of true ambition than they now have. They would wish their children to turn out useful rather than brilliant, good rather than clever. As it is, a dull child is too often snubbed and rendered miserable because he does not give promise of shining in the world; while his precocious brother, who will probably do far less (precocious brains being often the worst), is lionised to strangers, and regarded as a sort of Liebig's Essence for the support of the family. Perhaps it is owing to this association of early ideas that at school the clever boy who spends the shortest time possible at his books is considered by his companions a far greater man than his less clever class-fellow who wins in the long-run by working more conscientiously.

How much unhappiness then might children be spared if their parents would goad them less and sometimes cheer up that dullness which has fallen to the lot of most of us, by saying:

> Be good, dear child, and let who will be clever;
>   Do noble things—nor dream them all day long;
> And so make life, death, and that vast for-ever,
>   One grand sweet song.

If now we allow our thoughts to pass on from childhood to youth, we shall find that in the case of many young men the choice of a profession is attended with much anxiety and no little misery. Some there are who take kindly to the profession which their friends advise or which is cut out for them by circumstances. There is, however, a class of young men for whom we have much sympathy, who find it very difficult to get started in life, because they have no strong inclination or pre-arranged reason which would induce them to choose one profession rather than another. These are speculative rather than practical men, who are better adapted for taking college honours than for the struggle for existence. They do not wish to enter the clerical profession; they may not have sufficient money to enable them to live through the winter of discontented brieflessness at the bar; their tastes and nerves are not such as would qualify them for the medical profession; they may have no business connection. At last they begin to fancy that they are *de trop* in the world, and come to the very erroneous conclusion that mankind has no need for their service.

To such we would say: Go into the profession you dislike least, and habit will make it bearable. Remember that patience and conscientious plodding, though sneered at by shallow young men, are the highest virtues and synonymous with true genius. Life is too short to make ourselves miserable over the choice of a profession, or to spend years speculating about what is best to do, which would be better employed in doing it. We must not seek for mathematical demonstration that the road we propose to travel on is the right one, when we come to cross-roads in life. A certain amount of probability is sufficient to make us take either, especially if the wolf of Hunger be at our heels, or the nobler incentive of a desire to be useful to our fellow-creatures is urging us.

In the choice of a profession, as of a wife, there must be a certain venture of faith, and in this unintelligible world there is a rashness which is not always folly. Young men cannot always adapt circumstances to themselves, let them therefore endeavour to mould themselves to circumstances.

Medical men tell us that at every great physiological change in our systems the mind is apt to be for some time greatly out of tune. Now this is especially the case when boys and girls are becoming youths and maidens, and should not be overlooked when considering the sorrows of youth. At this period they see everything as it were upside down, and are sometimes tormented by strange fancies, which will vanish when the tissues of their flesh and of their characters become firmer. Mr Carlyle says that young men should be shut up in barrels and kept somewhere out of sight until they have passed their twenty-fifth year, because it is about this time that they 'attain to their maximum of detestability.' Now we are quite sure that this was not said in a cynical tone, for Mr Carlyle values the freshness and enthusiasm of youth, as every great man must. And indeed it must be acknowledged that some young men do make themselves very objectionable when they speak and act, as though they fancied that nothing half so valuable as themselves had ever been produced on this earth before.

Is it not probable, however, that young people would better attend to the lessons which their elders can teach them if these elders had more sympathy for their peculiar trials and sorrows, and were willing to consider the originality and fire of youth as little less indispensable to the movement of society, than is steam to the locomotion of a railway engine? Youth may make itself absurd, but it does not always become every old man to rebuke it. The old should not speak disparagingly of 'inexperienced young men,' unless they themselves make use of the experience they possess. One of the Earls of Chatham was once taunted on account of his youth, and his reply was: 'Sir—The atrocious crime of being a young man, which the honourable gentleman has with such spirit and decency charged upon me, I shall neither attempt to palliate nor deny, but content myself with wishing that I may be one of those whose follies may cease with their youth, and not of that number who are ignorant in spite of experience. Whether youth can be imputed to any man as a reproach, I will not, sir, assume the province of determining; but surely age may become justly contemptible, if the opportunities which it brings have passed away without

improvement, and vice appears to prevail when the passions have subsided.'

We conclude these few random notes by saying that people should try to be the friends and companions as well as the parents of their children; for if true friends do not win their confidence, false ones will. Nothing is more difficult than to understand a thoughtful child; but if once you do so, you can bring him up in the way he should go. Do not solve your child's nature or anything else too quickly, for 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy,' or in mine, or in any man's. Certainly childhood ought to be the happiest period of life; but it greatly depends on the sympathy of parents whether it is so or not.

THE BECHE-DE-MER.

On the reefs of the Southern Ocean is found a kind of sea-slug termed the Beche-de-mer. There are as many as sixteen different species found in Fiji alone, and known all over the group by the generic name of Dri (pronounced Endree); and this word we will continue to use throughout this article, as being shorter and more definite than the French term. It was the French who first came across the mollusc in China; and in that country it is held in great esteem, and commands a very high price, two hundred pounds a ton being paid for the best sorts. The mandarins and the porcelain-makers cannot do without their favourite dish of dri soup; and even in Paris it is coming into use; and in Melbourne beche-de-mer is by no means an uncommon dish. When cotton came down in Fiji from four shillings to one shilling a pound, many a planter not knowing what else to do, turned to dri-fishing; but several years ago, the price fell from one hundred and seventy pounds to seventy pounds a ton, and the inferior sorts became unsaleable. Some Chinamen say the fall was in consequence of the death of their emperor, and while in mourning for him (a year), they were obliged to give up their favourite soup; hence the fall. But some whites say that the Europeans in Sydney bought inferior dri, and shipped it to China direct on their own account in a leaky ship: the dri was all spoiled; the merchants lost heavily, and refused to have anything more to do with the article; and the Chinamen have the trade in their hands, and give what they like, and that the price in China still remains the same. However, it yet pays to fish for the two best sorts, the tit-fish[4] and black-fish, which are now (1876) worth from sixty to seventy pounds a ton in Levuka—ten or fourteen corn-bagsful making a ton.

The first thing required in dri-fishing is a good boat from twenty-five to thirty feet long with plenty of beam; then a dri station is settled on—an island, or on the coast close to the big reefs, as may be. The next thing is to get thirty or forty girls and boys, and curiously enough the girls are the best fishers and divers by far. At half-tide, all hands sail off to the reefs. Sometimes you fish the day, sometimes the night tides, according to the sort of fish you are getting and the stage of the moon; the tit-fish being a day-fish, and the black only coming out at night. When the tide is nearly low, you put your labourers on to the reef, and anchor yourself in a deep spot. The water on the reef is from six inches to three or four feet deep, according to the moon and state of the tide; and your labourers walk about and pick up the fish here and there, each having a basket and stick. Sometimes a shark comes up, looking for a tit-bit, when he is pelted off. If a black one (the most dangerous), it is hard to make him go; and if the water is deep (three or four feet), they generally sing out for the boat. You generally remain with the boat. Sometimes you go overboard and fish for yourself; but three hours in three-feet water is cold work, and if not accustomed to it one is apt to catch cold. The labourers pick up shell-fish, crabs, &c. for themselves. At the end of two or three hours, the tide begins to make fast; the boat is poled on to the reef, and you pick up your fishers and start for home.

After measuring the 'take' in order to pay your fishers, the fish are placed in large boilers. After being on the boil for half an hour they are done, taken up, a stick driven through them to clean and knock the water out; and are then taken to the smoking-house, where they are put on large frames of reeds over a slow smoky fire. These frames are technically called *vatas*; and they are left on the lower vata about three days, and then removed to the upper, where they are left eight or ten days longer. They are by that time smoked hard and dry; then sorted carefully (one improperly dried fish will injure the rest), and put in bags for sale.

Besides paying you also feed your labourers, giving them yams or Indian corn or sweet potatoes, with what shell-fish they get themselves. They work for two, three, or six months, or even a year; and on a good calm night an expert fishing-girl will fill what is termed a *qui* case and earn a shilling, occasionally two. Not bad for a little thing twelve or thirteen years old. In some parts of Fiji—Maenata, for instance—the natives get and smoke the dri themselves, and sell it to you cured; you giving about twenty shillings a bag for good cured fish. On dark nights, when there is no moon, torches are used; but the tit-fish is got during the day-tides. Five or six big tit-fish will fill a good-sized hand-basket. The labourers, after fishing, can hardly keep awake, and sleep all over the boat in every position.

Dri is an extraordinary sort of sea-slug; it moves very slowly, and has hundreds of little suckers or legs. It seems to feed on the small insects that live in the reef-sand, and very small fish. It has no bone. It has the power of covering itself with sand, to hide its whereabouts, and gives out a sort of gummy fluid, which makes the sand stick to it. This is only correct with regard to the tit-fish. The black-fish is not half the size of the other. The latter comes out only in calm sunshiny weather. Let a shower come, or even dark clouds, and hardly a slug will be got; it slips into holes in the rocks in no time. It has one or two young ones at a time, and is very domestic; where you

find one, its mate is generally close by. Like many other favourite delicacies, such as the oyster of Great Britain, the beche-de-mer has been over-fished; and unless the government establish a close time the employment of gathering it must cease to exist.

FOOTNOTES:

[4] Though in commerce the Beche-de-mer is called 'fish,' it belongs to a family of invertebrate animals, and in consequence occupies a comparatively low rank in the scale of life. This delicacy is also termed trepang.

EDITORIAL NOTE.

Beginning another year, and again taking a short retrospect, we are glad to announce to our readers that Chambers's Journal continues to increase in circulation, and is to all appearance more acceptable as a Family Magazine than ever. This is encouraging. We feel satisfied that the resolution to exclude wild sensational fiction from our pages, however much that kind of literature may be in demand, has met with very general approval. We shall accordingly, as in the past twelve months, endeavour to sustain the reputation of the work on the basis which secured for it a high meed of popular favour pretty nearly half-a-century ago. We might be excused for indulging in some exultation, that our small periodical, without adventitious aid—without professing to lean upon great names, either as writers or patrons—has so successfully kept its ground for so long a period of time. But, while offering all proper acknowledgments for the esteem in which the work is apparently held, content ourselves with saying that now, as heretofore, no effort will be spared by the Editors of Chambers's Journal to maintain it as a weekly and monthly miscellany of recreative and instructive literature—a literature as free from political or sectarian bias as from aught that is morally objectionable.

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