

Punch Among the Planets eBook

Punch Among the Planets

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PUNCH,

Or the London charivari.

Christmas Number 1890.

* * * * *

[Illustration: Punch Among the Planets]

Christmas number 1890.

* * * * *

Introduction.

The Old Year was fast nearing its close, the night was clear and starry, and Father Time, from the top of his observatory tower, was taking a last look round.

To him entered, unannounced save by the staccato yap of the faithful *Tobias*, Time's unfailing friend, unerring Mentor, and immortal contemporary, *Mr. Punch*.

"I am not for an age, but for All Time," freely quoted the Swan's sole parallel. "And very much at Time's service," he added, throwing open his fur-lined "Immensikoff," and lighting a cigar at the Scythe-bearer's lantern.

[Illustration: Punch Among the Planets]

“Happy to meet you once more, *Mr. Punch*,” responded old Edax Rerum, turning from what the poet calls his ‘Optic Tube’ to welcome his sprightly visitor. “Awfully good of you to turn up just now. Like True THOMAS’s *Teufelsdröckh*, ‘I am alone with the Stars,’ and was beginning to feel just a little bit lonely.”

“With the Voces Stellarum to keep you company? You surprise me,” said *Mr. Punch*. “But what is all this?” he added, pointing with accustomed eye to a pile of *Ms.* at TIME’s elbow.

If so old a stager as Father *time* can blush, he certainly did so on this occasion.

“Fact is, *Mr. Punch*,” he rejoined, “I, like younger and shall I say lesser Celebrities, have been writing my ‘Reminiscences.’ Ha ha! *The Chronicles of Chronos* in 6,000 volumes or so—up to now. This is a small portion of my *Magnum Opus*. Can you recommend me to a publisher?”

“Ask my friend Archdeacon *Farrar*,” responded the Sage, drily. “What a work! And what a sensation! TALLEYRAND’s long-talked-of ‘Memoirs’ not in it! Do you know, my dear *time*, I think you had better postpone the publication—for an aeon or so at least. *Your Magnum Opus* might become a *Scandalum Magnatum*.”

“Ah, perhaps so,” replied TIME, with a sigh.

“Alone with the Stars,” pursued *Mr. Punch*, meditatively. “Humph! The Solar System alone ought to provide you with plenty of company.”

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"Yes." responded TIME, "but, after all, you know, telescopic intercourse is not entirely satisfactory. Like EDGAR POE's *Hans Pfaal*, I feel I should like to come to closer quarters with the 'heavenly bodies' as the pedagogues call them."

"And why not?" queried *Mr. Punch*, coolly.

"As how?" asked his companion.

"TIME, my boy" laughed the Sage, "you seem a bit behind yourself. Listen! 'Mr. EDISON is prosecuting an experiment designed to catch and record the sounds made in the sun's photosphere when solar spots are formed by eruptions beneath the surface.' Have you not read the latest of the Edisoniana?"

TIME admitted he had not.

"TIME, you rogue, you love to get
Sweets upon your list—put *that* in,"

quoted the Sage. "Something piquant for the 6001st Vol. of your Chronicles. But, after all, what is EDISON compared with Me? If you really wish for a turn round the Solar System, a peregrination of the Planets, put aside that antiquated spy-glass of yours and come with Me!"

And, "taking TIME by the forelock," in a very real sense, the Sage of Fleet Street rose with him like a Brock rocket, high, and swift, and light-compelling, into the star-spangled vault of heaven.

"SIC ITUR AD ASTRA!" said the Sage.

"Twinkle, twinkle, Fleet Street Star!
Saturn wonders who *you* are,
Up above the world so high,
Like a portent in the sky.
Wonders if, Jove-like, you want,
Him to banish and supplant!
Fear not, Saturn; *Punch's* bolt
Arms Right Order, not Revolt;
Dread no fratricidal wars
From this 'Star' among the Stars!"

* * * * *

VISIT TO SATURN.



"I am glad to hear *that*, at any rate," said Saturn, welcoming the illustrious guests to his remote golden-ringed realm.

[Illustration]

Saturn, however, did not look exactly comfortable, and his voice, how unlike "To that large utterance of the early gods," sounded quavering and querulous.

"It is customary," said he, "to talk, as the old Romans rather confusedly did, of 'the Saturnian reign' as the true 'Golden Age,' identified with civilisation, social order, economic perfection, and agricultural profusion. As a matter of fact, I've always been treated badly, from the day when Jupiter dethroned me to that when, the Grand Old Man—who *ought* to have had more sympathy with me—banished hither the strife-engendering Pedant's hotch-potch called Political Economy."

"Be comforted, Saturn, old boy—I am here!" cried *Mr. Punch*. "I am 'personally conducting' Father TIME in a tour of the Planets. Let's have a look round your realm!"

Mr. Punch sums up much of what he saw in modern "Saturnian Verses."

Punch. Good gracious! my worthy old Ancient, who once held the sway
of the heavens,
Your realm seems a little bit shaky; what mortals call "sixes and
sevens"!

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Saturn. That's scarcely god-lingo, my boy; but 'tis much as you say, and no wonder.

Free imports have ruined my realm—I refer to Bad-Temper and Blunder, Two brutish and boobyish Titans—they've wholly corrupted our morals, And taught us "Boycotting," and "Strikes," and "Lock-outs," and all sorts of mad quarrels.

I hope you don't know them down there, in your queer little speck of a planet,

These humbugging latter-day Titans?

Punch. That cannot concern you—now can it?

Saturn. Just look at the shindy down yonder!

Punch. By Jove, what the doose are they doing?

Saturn. Oh, settling the Great Social Question!

Father Time. It looks as though mischief were brewing.

Saturn. Sort of parody of the old fight, which was splendid at least, if tremendous,
'Twixt Jove and the Titans of old. That colossus, gold-armoured, stupendous,
Perched high on the "Privilege" ramparts, and bastioned by big bags of bullion,
Is "Capital"; he's the new Jove, and each Titan would treat as his scullion,
But look at the huge Hundred-Handed One, armed with the scythe and the sickle,
The hammer, the spade, and the pick!

Father Time. Things appear in no end of a pickle!

Saturn. Precisely! That's Labour-Briareus; backed up by "Bad Temper" and "Blunder,"
And egged on by "Spout" (with a Fog-Horn); he's "going for" him of the Thunder,
And Gold ramparts headlong, *a outrance*.

Punch. But look at the spectres behind them!

Saturn. Ah! Terrors from Tartarus, those to which only Bad Temper can blind them.
Those spectres foreshadow grim fate; they are Lawlessness, Ruin,

Starvation;
To the Thunderer dismal defeat, to the conquerors blank desolation.

The Sage looked serious.

These things, mused he, are an allegory, perhaps, but of a significance not wholly Saturnian.

[Illustration]

“Saturn, old boy” said he, “cannot what sentimentalists call ‘the Dismal Science,’ which as you say has been banished hither, do anything to help you out of this hobble?”

“The Dismal Science,” responded Saturn, whose panaceas of Unrestricted Competition, Free Combination, Cheap Markets, Supply and Demand, &c., have landed its disciples in Sweating Dens on the one side and Universal Strikes on the other, can hardly offer itself as a cure for the New Socialism. Like Rhea of old, when asked for food, it proffers a stone.”

“Ah!” quoth Father TIME, “you manage these things much better on the Earth, doubtless.”

“Doubtless,” replied the Sage, drily, as he and Father TIME took their departure.

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* * * * *

VISIT TO MARS.

[Illustration]

So Mr. PUNCH, holding TIME by the forelock, continued his journey.

“Where are we now?” asked the more elderly gentleman.

“My good friend,” replied the Sage of Fleet Street, “we are approaching Mars, which as you know, or should know (if your education has been completed under the supervision of the School Board) is sometimes called the Red Planet.”

“So I have often heard. But why?”

“That is what we shall soon discover. But now keep quiet, as we have arrived.”

With the gentlest of gentle shocks *Mr. Punch* and his companion found themselves on a mound, which they soon recognised as a mountain. Looking below them, they saw masses of scarlet, apparently in motion. It was then that TIME regretted that he had not brought with him his telescope.

“It would have been so useful,” he murmured, “and if a little bulky, what of that? Surely *Mr. Punch* is accustomed to make light of everything?”

“See, some one is approaching,” observed the Sage of Fleet Street, whose eye-sight was better than that of his companion. And sure enough a lively young officer at this moment put in an appearance, and saluted.

“Glad to see you both,” said he; “and, by order of the General Commander-in-Chief, you are to make what use you please of me. I am entirely at your service.”

“Why, you speak English!” exclaimed *Mr. Punch*.

[Illustration]

“That is so!” returned the young officer in American; “and why not? Besides I know French, Russian, German, and all the languages spoken on your little globe, to say nothing of the dialects used by those who inhabit the rest of the planets. It’s our system. Nowadays, a man in the Service is expected to be up in everything. If he wasn’t, how on earth could he fight, or do anything else in a satisfactory fashion? And now let us bustle along.”

“But first,” put in TIME, who did not relish being silent, “will you kindly tell us what those masses of colour are?”

[Illustration]

“Certainly. They are troops. We put them in scarlet in peace, but they appear in their shirtsleeves the moment war’s declared. Novel idea, isn’t it?”

And then the pleasant-spoken young officer led the way to a lift, and, touching a button, the three descended from the top of the mountain to the valley beneath.

“On the counterweight system,” explained the A.D.C. “We cribbed the idea from Folkestone, and Lynmouth. And here, *Mr. Punch*, is something that will interest you. We absolutely howled at that sketch of yours showing the mechanical policeman. Don’t you know—old woman puts a penny in the slot and stops the traffic? And here’s the idea developed. See that mechanical sentry. I put a penny in the slot, and he pays me the usual compliment. He shoulders arms, as I am only a captain—worse luck! If I were of field rank he would come smartly to the present.”

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And sure enough the mechanical soldier saluted.

"It's not half a bad idea," continued the agreeable A.D.C. "You see sentry-go is awfully unpopular, and a figure of iron in times of peace is every bit as good as a man of brass. The pence go to the Canteen Fund along with the fines for drunkenness. It seems reasonable enough that a fellow, if he wants to be saluted, should pay for the swagger. If a fellow likes to turn out the guard, he can do it with sixpence—but then of course he hasn't the right unless his rank permits it—see?"

By this time the mechanical soldier had returned to the slope, and was parading his beat in a somewhat jerky manner.

"And now what would you fellows like to do?" asked the A.D.C. "Pardon the familiarity, but nowadays age doesn't count, does it? Everybody's young. One of the best *Juliets* I ever knew had turned sixty, and played to a *Romeo* who was twenty years her senior. Nothing like that down below, I suppose?"

"Nothing," returned *Mr. Punch*.

"So I have always understood. Well, where shall we go first?"

"Anywhere you like," said the Sage of Fleet Street. "But are you sure that we are not unduly trespassing on your time?"

[Illustration]

"Not at all—only too delighted. It's all in the day's work. We have a lot of distinguished visitors that we have to take round. I like it myself, but some of our fellows kick against it. Of course it doesn't refer to you two; but you can fancy what a nuisance it must be for all our fellows to have to get up in full rig, and bow and scrape, and march and countermarch, and go through the whole bag of tricks, to some third-rate Royalty? Ah! they are happier off at Aldershot, aren't they?"

"No doubt," was the prompt reply.

Mr. Punch and Father TIME had now entered a barrack square, wherein a number of trembling recruits were standing in front of a sergeant.

"I am just putting them through their paces, Sir," said he: "they are a bit rusty in bowing drill."

The A.D.C. nodded, and, turning on his heel, explained to the visitors that it was the object of the Authorities to introduce as much as possible of the civil element into the Army.

“You will see this idea carried out a little further in the institution we are now entering,” he added, as the three walked into a building that looked like a handsome Club-house. At the door was an officer in the uniform of the Guards.

“Hullo, HUGHIE,” said the A.D.C., “on duty to-day?”

“As hall-porter. CHARLIE is smoking-room waiter. I say, do you want to take your friends round?”

“Well, I should like to let them get a glimpse of TOMMY ATKINS at his ease.”

“All right, you can pass. But, I say, just warn them to keep quiet when they get near him. We have had no end of a time to smooth him down.”

[Illustration]

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Thus warned, the Sage and Father TIME passed through the hall and entered the smoking-room. Stretched at full length on a couple of chairs was a Private, lazily sipping a glass of brandy and soda-water, that had just been supplied to him by an officer of his own battalion. On withdrawing, the A.D.C. greeted the commissioned waiter who answered to the name of CHARLIE.

“Rather rough, eh?” said he, with a glance at a tray containing a cork-screw and an empty bottle.

“A bit better than Bermuda. If we don’t coerce them, we must be polite. After all, fagging turned out the heroes of Winchester and Westminster, and wasn’t Waterloo won on the playing-fields of Eton?”

“Rather a dangerous game, isn’t it?” observed *Mr. Punch*. “You’ll have to fall in next, and TOMMY will inspect you, and give you a couple of days’ extra drill for not having cleaned your rifle!”

“Well, if I don’t look after my arms, I shall have merited the punishment; and, after all, it will only be a case of turn and turn about,” was the reply. Then the A.D.C. added, “Hang me, too, I believe, with all we fellows have to do nowadays, that if we *did* change with TOMMY ATKINS, we, and not he, would have the best of the bargain!”

[Illustration]

Leaving the Soldiers’ Club, *Mr. Punch* and Father TIME continued their journey. They had not proceeded far, when the A.D.C. invited them to enter a building known as the Museum.

“It really is a most useful and interesting institution,” said the officer of the Planet Mars. “Here, you see, we have portrait models of the officer of the past and present. In the past, you will notice, he sacrificed everything to athletic sports—if he could fence, shoot, hunt, and play cricket, polo, and football, he was quite satisfied. His successor of to-day devotes all his time to study. He must master the higher branches of mathematics before he is considered fit to inspect the rear-rank of a company, and know the modern languages before he can be entrusted with the command of a left half-battalion. Here again we have the uniform of an officer in peace and war—swagger and gold lace on the one side, and stern simplicity and kharki on the other.”

In another room *Mr. Punch* and Father TIME discovered that everyone was fast asleep. There was a Cabinet Minister supported by two minor officials—all three of them absolutely unconscious. There were any number of Generals decorated from belt to neck—any quantity of higher-grade clerks—one and all slumbering: “This is called the Intelligence Department of the Army,” explained the A.D.C. “You have nothing like it in England?”

“Nothing!” returned *Mr. Punch*, as he disappeared.

* * * * *

VISIT TO MERCURY.

[Illustration]

Mr. Punch and Father Time were once again whirling on their way through boundless space.

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They were approaching their next destination, and the dark globe of the planet had just come into view on the horizon. Rapidly it increased in size as they neared it, and the seas and continents could be easily traced.

“Dear me?” exclaimed *Mr. Punch*. “Why, I declare if there is not something written upon it!” and he put up his binoculars, “Why, it is nothing more nor less than a big advertisement. Looks like humbug,” he continued. “What’s the name of the Planet, eh?”

“Mercury,” replied Father TIME, with cheery spirit; “and with that device they try to catch the eye of a passing Comet.”

“Hum—they won’t catch me!” observed the Sage, brightly. “I brought my truth-compeller with me—a little, patent, electrical hypnotic arrangement, in the shape of this ring”—he showed it as he spoke. “I have only to turn it on my finger, and it obliges anyone who may be addressing me instantly to speak the truth.”

They suddenly found themselves deposited in the centre of a vast square, surrounded by large palatial-looking buildings, public offices, stores, shops, picture-galleries, gigantic blocks of private residences, in flats five-and-twenty storeys high, and other architectural developments of the latest constructive crazes, fashioned, apparently, after the same models, and on similar lines, to those at present so much in vogue in that now distant planet, the Earth. There was a profusion of advertisement-boards, these, in many instances, entirely covering the whole facade of the building with large-lettered announcements of the nature of the trade or business conducted within. An eager and excited crowd thronging the pavements, and hustling each other, without any apparent purpose or aim, was pushing in all directions.

“I wonder what all this is about,” observed *Mr. Punch*; “suppose we ask a Policeman?”

They noticed a being attired in every respect like the familiar guardians of the peace on Earth, except that he carried a harmless and gaily-decked bladder in place of the more serviceable *baton*, and beckoned to him. He approached with polite alacrity.

“You want to know what’s up, Gents?” he commenced, divining their purpose instinctively. “It’s the Half-Quarterly Meeting of the Solid Gold Extract of Brick-Dust Company. There’s been some little talk about the dividend not being quite so good as the prospectus led the shareholders to believe, and as the shares have been mostly taken up by widows and orphans, some of their friends, you see, are a little anxious to hear the Chairman’s Report. But, you see, it’ll be all right.”

At this moment a widow, with blanched cheeks and dishevelled hair, who had been listening with an anxious and eager gaze to what the Policeman had been saying, joined the group.

Mr. Punch looked at her with mournful sympathy, and slowly turning the ring on his finger, addressed the Policeman. "Tell me, my good man," he said, persuasively, "is that the truth? Is it really all right?"

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"All right?" rejoined the guardian of the peace in amazement, but apparently unconscious of the purport of his speech, "I should rather think not. Call it 'all wrong' and then you'll about hit it. Why it's well known that the patent's all *fudge*. It's the biggest swindle out. No more in it than in this here bladder. But you'll see; the whole thing's burst, and you'll know it in a minute."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a roar of a thousand angry voices, followed by a sudden rush from the building of a mad and raging crowd, obliged *Mr. Punch*, for a moment, to pause. When the uproar had somewhat subsided, he turned to the Policeman, and pointed feelingly to the unfortunate widow, who had fallen on to an apple-stall in a fit of hysterics, and, locking his arm in that of his aged companion, proceeded to cross the square. "Give us a song, old 'un!" shouted a portion of the mob, who had followed them.

"Certainly. Oblige them!" added *Mr. Punch*, taking a banjo from one of the crowd and placing it in Father TIME's hands. "Give them a stanza of the Ballad of Truth."

He turned his ring, and his aged companion struck up the following ditty:—

"Know ye the land where dwells only mock-turtle,
Where wine that should gladden but makes you fell queer.
Where bayonets bend, where guns burst and hurtle
Their breech in the face of their friends at the rear,
Where lamps labelled 'safety' with just terrors fill you,
Where water supplied you for milk is no theft,
Where pills that should cure, if persisted in, kill you
And the 'Hair Resurrector' takes all you've got left!
Where soap, that should soften your skin, only flays you,
Where a horse proves a screw though got through a friend,
Where the loss of your 'cover' confounds and dismays you,
Though assured by the *Firm* 'if you hold on t'will mend'?
Know ye, in fine, where by pushing and 'rushing,'
This—and much more, down the public throat crams,
Blatant Advertisement, brazen, unblushing—?
If you do, then you've spotted the *Planet of Shams*."

[Illustration]

Though a few paving-stones were hurled at the aged singer, the conclusion of his song was greeted by a general roar of laughter, the populace apparently recognising the picture of their own chicanery with amusement and relish.

After that they held on their way for some minutes in silence. They had now reached the other side, and were confronted by a couple of respectable-looking gentlemen of an

almost clerical aspect, who appeared to be catering in the public streets in the interests of some institution. They approached *Mr. Punch* and Father TIME, and offered them a prospectus.

“THE DEAR LITTLE CHILDREN’S HAPPY AND ELEGANT BURIAL INSTITUTION,” read *Mr. Punch*, surveying the paper presented to him, and continuing, “*A trivial payment of Ninepence a Month will ensure the youthful Subscriber, or his Representative, a sweet and elegantly-constructed little Coffin, beautifully frilled, with a one-black-horse Family Omnibus Hearse, and a tray of Two Handsome Plumes. N.B. —if preferred, payment of L2 19s. 6d. in cash on production of Corpse.*”

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They showed *Mr. Punch* and Father TIME up the front steps, and ushered them into a large hall. It was thronged with a crowd of dirty and raggedly-dressed people, and partitioned off by a handsome and massive mahogany counter, beyond which sat a staff of clerks busily engaged in keeping the books and generally discharging the duties of the institution.

[Illustration]

“Ha, Mrs. MACSTOGGINS, and are we in your debt again?” asked the Agent of a beetle-browed woman of a sinister and forbidding expression, who was thrusting a paper across the counter to the cashier.

“Yes; and I’ll trouble you not to keep me waiting, either—seeing that it’s gone three days since the burial.”

“Is this woman demanding the insurance money for the burial of her own child?” asked *Mr. Punch*, sternly. And he turned his ring. “And pray, Madam,” he continued, addressing the beetle-browed woman, “tell me the truth.”

“Certainly,” replied the woman, as if in a trance. “First, I insured my own KATE—then I starved her to death, and took the money. Then little BILL followed. I let him catch cold in the winter, and gave him a night or two on the stones, and that finished him. Then came TIM FLAHERTY, and I managed him with the beetle-poison, and—”

“Come,” said *Mr. Punch*, taking Father TIME’s arm once more; “let us get out of this—I can’t breathe here.”

Scarcely had they quitted the place ere they had to encounter an appeal for custom, the Applicant being apparently one of the big guns in the Mercury wine trade, and he was not long in importuning *Mr. Punch* just to step inside his office, and sample a delicious Lafitte of the 1874 vintage.

“Now, try that, Sir,” he said, at the same time offering *Mr. Punch* a glass of the rich ruby-coloured beverage, “and tell me what you think of it. We have a small parcel of it still left, and could let you have it at the remarkably low figure of 112s. the dozen.”

“It looks all right,” drily replied *Mr. Punch*, “but I can’t think how you can sell it at the price.” Then holding up the glass critically, and turning his ring, continued, “How do you manage it?”

“How do I manage it?” replied the unconscious merchant, laughing heartily at the apparent joke. “Why, my dear Sir, there’s not much difficulty about that. I just make it myself. Listen to my receipt:—

“Potato spirit—that the ‘body’ finds;
And then, as for colour,
Be it brighter or duller,
You see I am supplied with several kinds,
And as to flavour, I get that desired,
By adding various poisons as required.

[Illustration]

Ha! ha! Let me send you in a few dozen.” He offered *Mr. Punch* an elaborate price-list as he concluded his self-condemnatory verse with an obsequious bow.

“Come,” said *Mr. Punch*, once more taking hold of his aged companion’s arm, without condescending to give the cheating tradesman any reply, “come—let us get out of this. ‘Pon my word, I think we’ve almost had enough of Mercury!”

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"Their morality does seem to have reached rather a low ebb, I must confess," replied Father TIME.

"Nothing like this on our Earth, anyhow," continued *Mr. Punch*, with a satisfied sigh of relief. "But come, we'll hear what the whole people say of themselves. See here's a chance. I believe there's a lot of them over there singing their National Anthem."

They listened as *Mr. Punch* spoke. He was right. There was a vast crowd collected outside one of the principal buildings on the other side of the square, and they were clearly finishing some popular anthem in chorus, for, as Father TIME and *Mr. Punch* paused to listen, the well-known familiar refrain—

"Never, never, never,
Shall be slaves!"

smote their ear.

"Capital! Capital!" cried *Mr. Punch*, approaching the throng. "We'll have that again." He turned his ring once more as he spoke, and the mob responded by shouting their second verse.

"Fool! Mercurius!
Of greed thy sons are slaves;
And they ever, ever, ever—
Shall be knaves!"

"Come," cried *Mr. Punch*, "I think that judgment of themselves out of their own mouths settles the matter! I have done with them. Come, let us seek some healthier place. Up we go!"

He seized hold of Old Father TIME as he spoke, and bounded with him upwards suddenly into space. In another minute they were in search of a brighter, a better, and a truer world.

[Illustration]

* * * * *

VISIT TO JUPITER.

Father TIME with his glorious guide dropped gently down. They found themselves in the centre of a bare expanse of dry, grassy country, broken here and there by sand-hills. On their right was the sea, dotted with ships. Parties of men in red coats, and carrying in their hands curiously-shaped sticks, were walking about in all directions. They all looked very earnest, some of them were gloomy, some positively furious.

Occasionally they stopped, placed themselves in an uncouth straddle-legged attitude, whirled their sticks, looked eagerly towards the horizon, and then marched on again as solemnly as before. One party in particular attracted the attention of Father TIME. It was a large, mixed gathering of men, and women, and children. They all moved or stood at a respectful distance from the central figure, a benevolent-looking gentleman, with a flowing white beard. He too wore a red coat, and carried a stick. A crowd of attendants bearing more sticks followed him.

[Illustration]

“Let me explain,” said the Arch-Provider of Merriment to his companion, “this ground is known as Links; the game of ‘Golf’ is being played. These gentlemen are golfers. The sticks they carry are called clubs. That bearded old gentleman is the King of Jupiter, FOOZLER THE FIFTH. He is playing his morning round. I will introduce you.”

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So saying, the King of all Clubs advanced with the Scythe-holder, and, taking advantage of a moment when King FOOZLER, having made a long shot, was in good humour, rapidly effected the necessary presentation.

"I know this game well," said *Mr. Punch*. "It is said to be much played in my own country now. Permit me to have the honour of playing one hole against your Majesty."

The King smiled a gracious assent. His ball had been already placed for him on a little heap of sand about an inch high. He advanced towards it, anxiously measured his distance, waved his club to and fro over his ball as if in blessing, and then, swinging it through the air, struck—nothing. The ball remained unmoved.

"He's missit the globe," muttered one of the attendants; "I've aye tellt him to keep his eye furrmer on the ball."

Four times His Majesty, whose good humour was now entirely gone, repeated the operation with similar results. At last he hurled his club to the ground, breaking it into splinters, and addressed his immovable ball in strong terms.

"Allow me, Your Majesty," said *Mr. Punch*, as he stepped airily forward and selected the king's best driver from the heap of clubs carried by the chief caddie, "I think I know how this ought to be done," and without a moment's hesitation he delivered his stroke. The ball flew true and far until it was merely a speck in the air, and finally dropped down about a quarter of a mile away. "You will find it in the hole," said the Golfer of Golfers, carelessly turning to the discomfited King; "Oh, my Royal and Ancient One," he continued, "there are certain things we do better in another country, and Golf is one of them."

But at this moment a great commotion arose. A messenger on a foaming steed dashed up, and handed a despatch to the king, who at once read it.

"Dear me!" said His Majesty, "this is most annoying. The Emperor of BARATARIA is to arrive in half an hour. He's a bit of a young prig, and bores me dreadfully—but we must meet him." With that he retired at once to the nearest palace, to change his uniform. In about ten minutes he came forth a changed man. On his head glittered an immense helmet, with a waving plume; a tunic of gold lace was buttoned tightly round his chest. Row upon row of stars and medals encircled him like so many belts; his legs were hidden in an enormous pair of jack-boots, to which were fixed a pair of huge Mexican spurs. An immense sword dangled at his side.

"This," said the King, as he motioned *Mr. Punch* and Father TIME into his state carriage, and vaulted in after them with as much agility as his sword and boots would permit, "is the uniform of the Baratarian Die-hards, of which regiment I am honorary Colonel."

Thus they drove to the balloon station, at which the Imperial guest was expected. After a few minutes, a sound of cheering was heard.

“He’s coming,” observed the King. “Have I got my kissing face on?”

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Mr. Punch reassured him. A moment afterwards the state-balloon of BARATARIA soared up to the platform, and a young man, gorgeously attired in the uniform of the Tenth (Jupiter's Own) Lancers, sprang lightly from it.

Loud pealed the loyal anthem, and rattled all the drums,
And, as the guard presented, the cry went up, "He comes!"
He steps upon the platform, and, while the plaudits ring,
A King hangs round an Emperor's neck, an Emperor hugs a King;
And, with impartial kisses on both cheeks duly pressed,
The guest does homage to his host, the host salutes his guest.

The Emperor then, having shaken *Mr. Punch* warmly by the hand, departed with his royal host. After this, the three potentates, *Punch* the Only, FOOZLER THE FIFTH, and the Baratarian Emperor, called upon one another at intervals of half an hour. This process occupied the afternoon.

For the evening a state-ball at the Royal Palace had been announced. Thither, at the appointed hour, *Mr. Punch* and his hoary associate were conveyed. As they approached, the royal band struck up a martial air, the Lord Chamberlain advanced to meet them, and ushered them into the magnificent hall in which the guests were assembling. From this a wide double staircase led up to a marble gallery. Hall, gallery, and staircase were filled with a brilliant crowd; the men arrayed in every variety of uniform; the ladies, to a woman, in V-shaped dresses, the openness of which appeared to vary in a direct ratio to the age of their wearers.

[Illustration]

"We will repose awhile," *Mr. Punch* remarked to the Father, "and scan the multitude. This, my dear Tempus, is the pick of Society. That stout lady, with a face like a haughty turtle, is the Duchess of DOUBLECHIN; that graceful little woman next to her is Lady ANGELINA BATTLEAXE—she is a dress-maker."

"A what?" inquired Father TIME.

"A dress-maker," answered the Master, calmly.

"In her shop, ancient notions forsaking,
The proud ANGELINA unbends;
And her figure's a tall one for making
A fit for the figures of friends.
Our cynical latter-day Catos
Are dumb when invited to dine
With a Marquis who deals in potatoes,
Or an Earl who takes orders for wine.



And, though old-fashioned folk think it funny,
It's as common as death, or as debts,
To find gentlemen making their money
Out of shops for the making of bets.

The stout puffy old fellow there is the wealthiest man in Jupiter. He floats mines, asteroid mines mostly, and makes it pay him. He can command the very best society. Those ladies clustering round the Prince-Royal come from over the ocean. Pretty, but twangy. A fresh consignment arrives every year. And the Prince-Royal has the pick of them."

[Illustration]

But before *Mr. Punch* could finish his explanatory sketch, a tremendous uproar was heard in the court-yard of the Palace. There was a sound as of a huge mob shouting in unison, shots were heard, and cries of "Liberty for Ever:" vent the air. The royal guests were in a state of terrible agitation. An orderly covered with mud forced his way through the crowd, up the stairs, and stood before the King.

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"Your Majesty," he panted, "a revolution has broken out. The populace has erected barricades, the deposition of your House has been declared, and a Republic proclaimed. The mob is now marching to the Palace."

The King drew himself up to his full height. Where are my Golf-clubs? he asked in a calm voice.

"Your Majesty, they have been seized and secreted."

"Then all is lost. It only remains for me to depart," was the King's heartbroken reply. "I will, in person, announce my resignation." "I resign!" shouted the King, appearing on a balcony overlooking the court-yard. Deafening cheers greeted this announcement. "Bless you, my children!" sobbed the King—"I am off to the station. Take care of my poodle, and my pet parrot."

At this the mob unanimously burst into tears. They insisted on accompanying the deposed monarch to the station, the popular band playing "*The Dead March in Saul*." But the King remained calm, and marched on without swerving. At the station he took his seat silently in the Royal Balloon, a whistle was heard, and the car floated off into space.

"I cannot say I think much of all that," said *Mr. Punch*. "In our part of the Universe we generally manage to get a little more bloodshed out of it."

* * * * *

VISIT TO URANUS.

The next place that the distinguished travellers visited was Uranus, where *Mr. Punch* and his companion were much surprised to find the entire population members of the legal profession.

[Illustration]

"I have really no time to attend to you," said one of the inhabitants, when questioned. "I have an appointment before a Chief Clerk in Chancery of great importance—it is to decide whether some children shall be sent to school with money left to them by their grandfather, or if it shall be saved up until they come of age? It would be better for the children that they should be educated, from a layman's point of view; but, then, this is a matter of law and not expediency."

"And how will it go?"

“Oh, of course, against the children. I am their father, and appear for them. But the application is a good thing, although it’s sure to be unsuccessful—good for them, and good for me.”

“But how can that be?”

“You are really very dense,” said the Inhabitant of Uranus. “Haven’t you noticed that the entire population is concerned in one vast Chancery suit; consequently, on attaining majority, one man becomes a judge, another a barrister, a third a solicitor, and so on, and so on. Why, the place would be a perfect Paradise to your friend Mr. A. BRIEFLESS JUNIOR! It is, at this time of day, to the interest of no one that litigation should cease, and so the Chancery suit, in which we are all concerned, is likely to go on for ever.”

“But, surely litigation is expensive?” suggested *Mr. Punch*.

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"I should rather think it was," returned the wig-wearer. "The Law is a noble profession, and it is only right and proper that those who indulge in it should pay for it. In the present instance our entire estate will be absolutely exhausted."

"But how will you all live?"

"On the costs!" was the reply, as the Inhabitant of Uranus hurried away to attend his appointment.

"Lawyers keeping a suit alive to live upon the costs!" exclaimed *Mr. Punch*, in tones of pained astonishment. "I never heard the like!"

And, horrified and sorrowful, he seized Father TIME by the forelock, and once more floated into space.

* * * * *

VISIT TO CASTOR.

[Illustration]

Father TIME shivered, and wrapped his ancient cloak more closely about him.

"Come, come," said *Mr. Punch*, "I understand your disgust. But there is still something left to us in which we may take pleasure. Upon a neighbouring star the people delight in horses. All day long they bestride them with a courage never equalled. Swift as the wind are the steeds, and for mere honour and glory are they matched one against the other, and from all parts of the star the populace is gathered together in its hundreds of thousands to applaud and to crown them that ride the victors in the races. Let us fare thither, for the sport is splendid, and we shall there forget the pain we have suffered here. Indeed, it is but a short flight to Castor."

Thus speaking, he seized the Father by his lock, and floated with him into space. The roar of the Pollucian streets grew fainter and fainter, the lights twinkled dimly, until at length they disappeared. Then gradually the land loomed up above them out of a bank of clouds, and in another moment the wandering pair stood once more on *stella firma*.

[Illustration]

They had alighted on an immense grassy plain, which stretched away in every direction, as far as the eye could reach. On every side were to be seen men and women and children, mounted on horses. To their right a band of youths, arrayed in coloured shirts, white linen breeches, and yellow boots, and wearing little coloured caps, jauntily set upon their heads, were careering wildly hither and thither on swift and wiry ponies. They were waving in the air long sticks, fitted with a cross block of wood at the end, and

were pursuing a wooden ball. Many were the collisions, the crashes, and the falls. On every side men and ponies rolled over in the dust; but they rose, shook themselves as though nothing had happened, and dashed again into the fray. Father TIME shouted with enthusiasm.

“Yes,” said the Sage, “you do well to cheer them. They are gallant youngsters these. The game they play is ‘Polo,’ and though the expense be great, the contempt of danger and pain is also great. They play it well, but I doubt not we could match them at Hurlingham. But see,” he added, “on our left. What rabble is that?” As he spoke a panting deer flew past them hard pressed by a pack of yelping hounds. Close behind came a mob of riders, two or three of them glittering in scarlet and gold, the rest in every variety of riding-dress.

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"Behold," said the Arch-philosopher, "a Royal Sport. These are the Castorian Buckhounds; that elderly gentleman is their master. They pay him L1500 a-year to provide sport for Cockneys. The sport consists in letting a deer out of a cart and chasing him till he nearly dies of fatigue. Then they rope him and replace him in the cart. After that they all drain their flasks, and consider themselves sportsmen. Poor stuff, I think."

"Of course," said the Father, "you have nothing of that sort in England."

[Illustration]

Mr. Punch was about to reply when a well-appointed four-in-hand drove up, and a courteous gentleman who handled the ribbons, offered the two strangers seats.

"I will take you," he remarked, "to our great national race-meeting. I assure you it is well worth seeing."

The offer was accepted. A pleasant drive brought them to the race-course. To tell the truth it was much like most other race-courses. A huge crowd was assembled, and the din of roaring thousands filled the air. As they drove up a race had just started, and it was pretty to see the flash of the coloured caps and jackets in the sun. The horses came nearer and nearer. As they rounded the bend which led into the straight run in, the excitement became almost too great for Father TIME. A torrent of sporting phrases broke from his lips. One after another he backed every horse on the card for extravagant sums, and the bets were promptly, but methodically booked by *Mr. Punch*. A handsome chestnut was leading by two good lengths, and apparently going strong, but about a hundred yards from the post he suddenly slowed down for some unaccountable reason. In a moment a bay and a brown flew past him, there was a final roar and the race was over. The bay had won, the brown was second, and the chestnut a length behind, was only third. "Most extraordinary thing that," said the Paternal One; "I made sure the chestnut would win."

"That's just it," broke in the owner of the coach; "the public thought so too, and they've lost their money."

"Just look at the mob," he continued, "crowding round the jockey and the owner. 'Gad, I shouldn't care to be hooted like that. But, of course, *they've* made their pile on it; never intended him to win. Just sent him out for an airing. Pretty bit of roping, wasn't it?" he continued, addressing *Mr. Punch*.

But the Sportsman of Sportsmen only frowned.

"In the land we come from," he rejoined, "the sport of racing is pure, and only the most high-minded men take part in it. Their desire is not to make money, but merely to



improve the breed of British horses. I grieve to find that here the case is otherwise. Reform the Sport, Sir; reform it, and make it worthy of Castorian gentlemen.”

His newly-found friend only smiled.

Then he winked as he hummed to himself the words of a song, which ran something like this:—

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“Come, sportsmen all, give ear to me, I’ll tell you what occurred,
But of course you won’t repeat it when I’ve told you;
For with honourable gentlemen I hope that mum’s the word,
When a horse you’ve laid your money on has sold you.
I presume you lost your shekels, and you think it rather low,
Since you’re none of you as rich as NORTH or BARING.
But another time you’ll get them back by being ‘in the know,’
When a favourite is started for an airing.

“That’s an odd sort of song,” said *Mr. Punch*.

“Not so odd as the subject,” replied the singer. “But you have only heard the first verse; wait till you know the second.”

“‘But they didn’t tell the public; it’s a precious, jolly shame;’
(Such behaviour to the public seems to shock it)—
Now if *you’d* been placed behind the scenes you wouldn’t think the same,
But put principles and winnings in your pocket.
A gent who owns a stable doesn’t always think of *you*,
And he doesn’t seem to fancy profit-sharing.
And you really shouldn’t curse him when he manages a ‘do.’
With a favourite who’s only on an airing.”

Before the singer could proceed any farther, a frightful hubbub arose. A pale, gasping wretch, rushed past, pursued by a howling, cursing mob of ruffians. As he fled, he tripped, and fell, and in a moment they were on the top of him, buffeting, and beating the very life out of him.

“That’s murder,” said *Mr. Punch*. “Where are the police?”

And he was on the point of stepping down, to render assistance, when his friend laid a hand upon his arm.

“Oh, that’s only a welsher,” he said; “he’s bolting with other people’s money.”

“Is it the owner of the chestnut?” inquired Father TIME.

“Bless your heart, no,” was the reply. “It’s only a low-class cheat. The owner of the chestnut is—”

But *Mr. Punch* had no wish to hear or see more.

He took TIME’s arm, and together they floated away into space, to land shortly afterwards in another sphere.

* * * * *

VISIT TO POLLUX.

The street in which they had descended was situated in the heart of a great city. The roar of traffic sounded in their ears from the larger thoroughfares close by. Most of the houses were small and mean—a remarkable contrast to one large building, brilliantly lighted, in front of which a mob was gathered together. A more ruffianly-looking assemblage it would have been hard to discover. The rest of the street was filled with hansoms, the long line of which was constantly being augmented by fresh arrivals, whose occupants sprang out and swiftly mounted a flight of steps leading up to the entrance of the large building mentioned, and passed through swing-doors of glass, which gave admission to a broad passage. In front of this house the Sage paused, and addressed his companion.

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"Venerable One," he said, for he had become aware of a reluctance on the part of the Lord of the Hour-Glass, "have no fear. We are now, as you know, in the metropolis of Pollux. This is the country of the [Greek: pux agathos], the home of the noble boxer; and this," he added, pointing to the glittering palace, "is the headquarters, I am informed, of the boxer's art. Let us enter, so that I may show you how the game should really be played. I like not the crowd without. Within we shall see something very different."

So saying, he linked his arm in that of the Paternal One, and together they ascended the stairs. At the top stood an official dressed in a dark uniform, his breast adorned with medals.

"I beg your pardon, Gentlemen," said the minion to the pair, "are you Members?"

Mr. Punch vouchsafed no answer. He looked at the man, who quailed under the eagle glance, and, muttering a hasty apology, drew back. A door flew open; the Champion of Champions and his friend passed through it. They found themselves in a spacious hall. In the centre a square had been roped off. All round were arranged seats and benches. In the square were four men, two of them stripped to the waist sitting in chairs in opposite corners, while the two others were busily engaged in fanning them with towels. The seats and benches were all occupied by a very motley throng.

"Aha," said *Mr. Punch*, as he made his way to the throne reserved for him, "this is good. I have done a little bit of fighting myself in my time. My mill with the Tutbury Boy is still remembered. One hundred and twenty rounds, at the end of which I dropped him senseless. But that was with the knuckles. Here they fight with gloves. But of course they fight now for the mere honour of the thing, I presume."

[Illustration: A PAIR OF SPECTACLES.]

But here the heroic Muse insists on taking up the strain:—

The Father spake—"O skilled in men and books,
Read me this crowd, inspect them, scan their looks;
See, from their shining heads electric rays,
Reflected, sparkle in their barbers' praise.
Lo, on each bulging front's expansive white
A single jewel flames with central light;
To vacant eyes the haughty eye-glass clings,
Stiff stand their collars, though their ties have wings.
What of their faces? Bloodshot eyes that blink,
And thick lips, framed for blasphemy and drink.
Here the grey hair, that should adorn the Sage,
Serves but to mark a weak, unhonoured age;



There on the boy pale cheeks proclaim the truth,
The faded emblems of a wasted youth.
All, all are loathsome in this motley crew,
The Peer, the Snob, the Gentile, and the Jew,
Young men and old, the greybeards and the boys,
These dull professors of debauch and noise."

* * * * *



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He ceased. The Wise One gazed in silent gloom,
While oaths and uproar hurtled through the room—
“Hi, there, a monkey on the Pollux Pet;”
“Fifty to forty;” “Blank your eyes, no bet;”
“A level thousand on the Castor Chick;”
“Brandy for two, and, curse you, bring it quick.”
While one who spake to *Punch* rapped out an oath—
“Who cares?” he said, “I stand to win on both.
Fair play be blowed, that’s all a pack of lies,
Let fools fight fair, while *these* cut up the prize.
Old Cock, you needn’t frown; I’m in the know,
And if you don’t like barneys, dash it, go!”
One blow from *Punch* had quelled th’ audacious man,
He raised his hand, when, lo, the fight began. “Time! time!” called one; the cornered
ruffians rose,
Shook hands, squared up, then swift they rained in blows.
Feint follows feint, and whacks on whacks succeed,
Struck lips grow puffy, battered eye-brows bleed.
From simultaneous counters heads rebound,
And ruby drops are scattered on the ground.
Abraded foreheads flushing show the raw,
And fistic showers clatter on the jaw.

* * * * *

Now on “the mark” impinge the massive hands,
Now on the kissing-trap a crasher lands.
Blood-dripping noses lose their sense of smell,
And ribs are roasted that a crowd may yell.
Each round the other’s neck the champions cling,
Then break away, and stagger round the ring.
Now panting Pollux fails, his fists move slow,
He trips, the Chicken plants a smashing blow.
The native “pug” lies spent upon the floor,
Lies for ten seconds,—and the fight is o’er.

* * * * *

Thunders of cheering hail th’ expected end,
High in the air ecstatic hats ascend.
While frenzied peers and joyous bookies drain
Promiscuous bumpers of the Club champagne.

But *Mr. Punch* had seen enough.

[Illustration]

“Do you call this one-round job a fight?” he said, as he rose to depart. “I call it the work of curs and cowards. Who can call these fellows fighting-men? They are merely mop-sticks. Men were ruffianly enough years ago in the country we have left, but they were men at any rate. Here, they seem to be merely a pack of bloodthirsty molly-coddles, crossed with calculating rogues. The mob outside was better than this. But, thank Heaven, we have nothing like this in London.”

And with that he and Father TIME walked gloomily from the hall, and found themselves once more in the street.

* * * * *

“What ho! my trusty Shooting Star,” cried *Mr. Punch*. Whirr-r-r—

And in the thousandth part of a second they found themselves within measurable distance of TOBY’s own Planet. And here *the Dog* speaks for himself.

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* * * * *

[Illustration: PUNCHIUS PHOEBUS, THE GREAT UNIVERSAL HYPNOTISER.

("He who must be Obeyed!")

A TRANSFORMATION SCENE.]

* * * * *

VISIT TO THE DOG-STAR.

[Illustration: THE DOG STAR]

"Take care of the plank, Sir," I said, as my esteemed master lightly skipped across the gangway, marshalling a well-grown youth carrying a scythe; "we don't have many visitors here. One who looked in the other day slipped his foot, fell over, and we've never seen him since. Listening intently, watch in hand, we heard a slight thud, and have reason to believe he dropped on Jupiter. It was useful to us, seeing that, by use of a well-known formula, we were able to reckon our precise distance from that planet. For him, I fancy, it must have been inconvenient."

"Are you serious, TOBY?" said *Mr. Punch*, stepping with added caution.

"No, Sir, *I'm* not. This," I said, waving my hand with graceful and comprehensive gesture around the orb where I am temporarily located, "*this* is Sirius."

"Ah, I see," said *Mr. P.*, glad to find himself with his foot on our native heath; "I want to present you to an old friend, whom, I am afraid, you have sometimes misused. TIME, this is TOBY, M.P., a humble but faithful member of my terrestrial suite. I am showing the young fellow round, TOBY, and we looked in on you, hearing that you had a Parliament that should serve as a model for the firmament."

"I am afraid," observed TIME, whittling a piece of stick with his scythe, "that we may have looked in at a wrong season. As far as I can judge from a consideration of the temperature, and a glance round your landscape, we are now at Midsummer—in the dog days, if I may so put it without offence. Of course your legislators would not be in Town just now, sweltering at work that might as well be performed in winter weather, when, regarded as a place of business or residence, Town has attractions superior to those of the country." "Ah, young fellow," I said, perhaps a little sharply, not relishing his somewhat round-about way of putting things, "when you are as old as me or my esteemed master, you will not be so cock-sure of things. Our Parliamentary Session begins on the threshold of Spring; we stop in Town hard at work, through the pleasantest months of the year; we toil through Summer nights, see August out, and,

somewhere about the first week in September, when the days are growing short, the air is chill, and Autumn gets ready to usher in Winter, we go off to make holiday.”

“Dear me, dear me!” cried *Mr. P.*, “how very sad. How deliberately foolish. We manage things much better than that down in our tight little Earth. When we take that in turn, you will find, my good TIME, that we burrow at our legislative work through the Winter months, getting it done so as to leave us free to enjoy the country in the prime of Spring, and amid the wealth of Summer. But come along, TOBY, let’s get on to your House.”

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"It will be no use going now," said TIME, holding up his hour-glass; "it is five o'clock; the working day is practically over, and we shall find these sensible dogs travelling off to take a turn in the park, or pay a round of visits in search of the culinary receptacle that cheers, but does not intoxicate."

[Illustration]

"Wrong again, young Cock-sure," I said; "we shall just find our house of Commons settling down to the business of the night. We begin about four o'clock in the afternoon, and peg away till any hour to-morrow morning that one or two Members please. It is true we have a rule which enjoins the suspension of business at midnight; but instead of suspending business we can (and do) suspend the Rule, and sometimes sit all night."

"Ah!" said *Mr. Punch*, gravely shaking his head, "we manage things much better than that at Westminster."

Got my two friends with some difficulty across Palace Yard, eyed suspiciously by the police-dogs on duty. One concentrated his attention on *Mr. Punch's* dorsal peculiarity.

"We have strict orders from the Sergeant-at-Arms," he said, "to examine all parcels carried by strangers."

"That's not a parcel," I said, hurriedly, and taking him on one side, succinctly explained the personal peculiarity of my esteemed Master. "Humph!" said the police-dog.

"Exactly," I responded, and he let us pass on, though evidently with lingering apprehension that he was allowing a valuable clue to slip out of his hands, as it were.

"Wait here a moment," I said, "till I get an order for your admission."

[Illustration]

Absent only a few minutes; when I got back terrible commotion; *Mr. P.'s* friend was in the hands of the Police; they had attempted to take his scythe from him, and he had smartly rapped one on the head with his hour-glass.

"I've carried it a million years," he said, swinging the scythe with practised hand, till he made a clean sweep of the police-dogs.

"Make it a couple of millions, whilst you are at it, young man," said a sarcastic police-dog.

With some difficulty calmed him; explained that no one, not even a Member, was permitted to enter House with a scythe, or other lethal weapon. Only exception made once a year, when Hon. Members, moving and seconding Address, are allowed to carry property-swords, which generally get between their legs. TIME partially mollified at last,

consented to leave scythe behind chair of door-keeper, where the late TOM COLLINS used to secrete his gingham-umbrella.

“It seems to me,” he said, “that the public are treated in this place worse than jackals. Hustled from pillar to post, suspected of unnamed crimes, grudged every convenience, and generally regarded as intolerable intruders.”

“Ah,” said *Mr. P.*, “we manage things much better at Westminster.”

“Order! Order!” cried an angry voice, and *Mr. P.* and his companion were within an ace of being trundled out of the gallery, where strangers are permitted to see and hear whatever is possible from their position—and it is not much.

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“What are they talking about?” asked TIME, in guarded whisper, being, by this time, completely cowed.

“They haven’t reached public business yet,” I explained. “Been for last two hours debating a private Bill, providing that the pump-handle in the village of Plumberry shall be chained at eight o’clock at night. The Opposition want it done at nine.”

“Well, I suppose they know all about it,” said TIME. “Probably been down to Plumberry, examined into bearing of whole question, and formed their opinion accordingly?”

“Nothing of the sort; some of them don’t even know where Plumberry is—never heard its name before this Pump-handle business came up. Don’t even now wait in House to hear question, debated by Members with local knowledge. You see only twenty or thirty Members in their places. But, when bell rings for division, four hundred will troop in, and their vote will settle the question whether Plumberry shall be privileged to pump water as late as nine o’clock, or whether at eight the handle shall be chained.”

So it turned out: In House of four hundred and seventy-nine Members Bill was read a second time by majority of twenty-three. Division occupied twenty minutes, which, with debate, appropriated two of the most precious hours of the sitting.

Mr. P. narrowly escaped expulsion, attention being awkwardly concentrated upon him, owing to the exuberance of his delight in recollection of how much better these things are managed at Westminster.

After this, public business was approached, beginning with questions. Of these there were a list of eighty, the large majority on exceedingly trivial circumstances. Nine-tenths of them could have been answered in a sentence by the Minister addressed, supposing the Member had dropped him a private note, or crossed the floor of the House, to speak to him. TIME openly contemptuous at such a way of doing business, more especially when, on question which appeared on printed paper having been answered, half-a-dozen Members sprang up from different parts of House, and volleyed forth supplementary interrogations. Explained to him things used to be worse when questions were propounded *vivi voce*, and at length.

“Now,” I said, not liking *Mr. P.*’s crowing over us, “the SPEAKER will not allow the terms of a question to be recited. They appear on printed paper, and are taken as read.”

“Then,” queried TIME, “what are these Members putting questions ‘arising,’ they say, ‘out of the answer just given? They don’t spare a syllable, and take up five times as much of the Sitting as Members who put their questions on the Paper, and are not allowed to read them. You don’t mean to say that such a transparent evasion of the rule is permitted?”

“It looks very like it,” said *Mr. P.*; “but it’s not at all the sort of thing that would be permitted in our House of Commons. We make Rules, and the Speaker sees that they are obeyed in the spirit, as well as in the letter.”

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By the time questions were over, following on the prelude of private business, the evening was getting on. Members evidently tired out; had crowded in to vote on the Pump-handle question; sat in serried rows during the squabbles of question-time; and as soon as business was actually reached, House swiftly emptied, leaving about a score of Members. TIME more than ever distracted. *Mr. P.* increasingly perky.

“Ho! ho!” he said, rubbing his hands, “I don’t wonder at this Star going to the Dogs. Stop till you come over to Westminster, TIME, dear boy, and we’ll show you how public business should be carried on.”

[Illustration]

Explain to them that House is now in Committee on a Bill that had at earlier stages occupied some months of the Session, practically the greater portion of its working time. Now Session drawing to a close; agreed on both sides that it is too late to conclude Bill this Session; will be dropped after another night or two; Members knowing this, do not think it worth while to give up more time to Bill. Next Session it will be brought in again, and if the Government have better luck, and get earlier stages through in less time, there will be a chance of it passing.

“What!” shrieked TIME, forgetting where he was, “you don’t mean to say that after devoting nearly a whole Session to a measure, laboriously shaping it up to a certain stage, you chuck away all your work because the Almanack says it’s August? Why don’t you, when you meet again in February, take the Bill up at the stage you dropped it? Why don’t you—”

Here our friend’s observations were brought to a sudden close. TIME was, as *Mr. P.* subsequently remarked, reduced to the status of a half-Timer. Angry cries of “Order! Order!” broke in on his unpremeditated speech. Two attendants, approaching him on either flank, seized him, and led him forth under the personal direction of the Sergeant-at-Arms. *Mr. P.*, following his friend, and endeavouring from the top of the staircase to assure him that, “we manage these things better at Westminster,” was promptly taken into custody, and led forth beyond the precincts, a combination of circumstances that interrupted and, indeed, as far as my friends were concerned, finally closed what was beginning to promise to prove an agreeable and instructive evening.

Business Done.—*Mr. Punch* and another Stranger expelled from the Gallery, and TOBY’s narrative completed.

* * * * *

VISIT TO VENUS.

[Illustration]

The two Travellers made their way through space in silence, but on a sudden Father TIME plucked his conductor by the sleeve, and spoke.

“Sir,” he said, “I perceive in the distance a wonderful light, and there is a sound of soft and beautiful music that attracts me strangely. Shall we approach the light, and listen more closely to these strains?”

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"Have patience," replied the Sage. "The light and the music come from the planet Venus. Thither I am directing our course. In a few moments we shall arrive."

Even as he spoke the light grew brighter, the music of the invisible choir swelled to a louder strain, and before the King of the Hours had time to express his rapture, the pair had alighted in a scene of veritable enchantment. Fairy-like structures of crystal, sparkling with all the hues of the rainbow, rose on every side. Spires and domes of the most fantastic but graceful design seemed to soar into the clear and perfect air. All were bathed in a rosy glow, the source of which was hidden. Spacious walks paved with huge blocks of opal divided the rows of palaces. Along them grew tall and slender trees of a curious and delicate foliage. Birds of Paradise, King Fishers and doves flitted from branch to branch. The broadest of these avenues ended in a sweeping flight of steps of alabaster which led to a vast and perfectly proportioned hall, the roof of which was supported on columns of pure jewels, diamonds, rubies, sapphires and emeralds.

A throng of maidens, in classical attire and wearing wreaths of roses on their heads, made their way along this avenue to where *Mr. Punch* and his companion were standing. Their leader, a fair and lovely girl of seventeen, advanced to the Wise One and addressed him.

"Sire," she sang in a low and gracious voice, "Our Queen has sent me to say that she waits for your coming. She holds her Court in yonder hall, and thither I am bidden to guide you. Is it your pleasure to come at once?"

Mr. Punch signified his assent, the maiden took him by the hand, and beckoning to Father TIME to follow, they walked slowly towards the Royal Hall and mounted the steps. A double gate of wrought gold opened as they reached the top, and passing through it, they found themselves in the Court of Queen CALLISTA. A marvellous sight met their eyes. The Queen sat on a raised throne in the midst of a throng of attendants. She was of surpassing beauty. Her deep-blue eyes were set like jewels beneath a broad low forehead on which a light crown of pearls and diamonds rested. Her garments were of a soft gauzy material that half concealed and half revealed the beautiful lines of her bust and limbs. In one hand she held a spray of myrtle, the other rested lovingly on the head of the magnificent hound who sat beside her, looking trustfully into her face. The great hall was filled with beautiful women grouped together here and there, some seated and some standing. They were all talking. Suddenly the Queen raised her hand and commanded silence. She then rose and thus addressed the two visitors:—

"You have come from below to the Realm of Women. Here we abide as you behold us. Age and decay hold aloof from us, and we order our lives with wisdom and modesty. Speak, if you have aught to ask."

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"Pardon me, Madam," said Father TIME, somewhat rashly, "are we not here on the planet Venus? and have I not somewhere heard strange tales of what was done by ____?"

But CALLISTA interrupted him. She smiled a beautiful smile.

"Ah, yes," she said, "those stories are of the vanished past. Now we blush even to think they might once have been true;" and surely enough the whole charming assemblage became suffused with the prettiest imaginable blush. "I will speak plainly with you," continued the Queen; "for plain speech is best. No men live here. Therefore, we dwell in peace. But we permit the fairest and best among our number to descend from time to time to earth, and to dwell there in mortal shapes for awhile. You may have seen them," she went on, mentioning some names well known to *Mr. Punch*. "They are allowed to marry; but only the wisest and noblest men may approach them. On earth their will is free, and sometimes, alas, they fall away from righteousness, and pass through bitter tribulation."

"Yes," said the Fleet Street Sage, "We call it the Divorce Court—your Majesty will pardon the rough speech of an old man—and, somehow, we don't seem able to get on without it. But here, of course, you have no such institution?"

"No," replied the Queen. "There once was such a court among us, hundreds of years ago, ere we had banished the men from our midst. Now, however, we use the building in which petitions used to be heard as our chief College. Come hither, ZOE," she proceeded, addressing a sweet little girl of about fifteen. "Tell this wise gentleman your solution of that pretty question relating to the concomitants of a system of ternary quadrics."

Without a moment's hesitation, ZOE stated the question, and, what is more, solved it with absolute correctness.

"Marvellous!" said *Mr. Punch*. "I congratulate you."

"CYNTHIA," said the Queen, beckoning with her rosy fingers to another maiden, "will you recite to me your Pindaric Ode on the late foot-race?"

CYNTHIA at once complied, and *Mr. Punch* listened in amazement to the resounding lines of an ode worthy of the great Greek. "Nor do we confine ourselves to such accomplishments," the Queen went on. "We all sew perfectly, our knitting is universally admired, and our classes on the Management of Domestic Servants, or the true theory of Making Both Ends Meet are always largely attended. Moreover, we do not neglect the body. Some play at ball, some even form elevens for cricket, others fence or play your Scotch game, or even lawn-tennis, and all dance gracefully. See!" she cried, clapping her hands, "they shall show you."

[Illustration]

At this signal delicious music burst forth in a strange measure, swaying, rhythmical, and delightful. The maidens enlaced one another, and moved across the floor in perfect time. Their bodies seemed to float rather than tread the ground, as they passed the spell-bound visitors. The dance ceased as suddenly as it began.

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"Your Majesty" said *Mr. Punch*, "your country is, indeed, highly blessed, and your subjects are marvellously accomplished. You dwell here without men, without chaperons, and you are lovely," he added, with emotion, "beyond the power of words to express. Would that your example could be followed upon earth!"

And with this, he and the Father kissed the young Queen's hand, and left the royal presence chamber.

* * * * *

VISIT TO SERIOCOMIX.

"And so," said TIME, as he carefully arranged his forelock before a mirror in the corridor, in reply to a communication recently made to him by *Mr. Punch en route*, "and so we're to make a regular rollicking night of it? You insist on taking me into every Music Hall in Seriocomix, hey, you young dog, you! Well, well, Sir, I'm not so young as I used to be—but I'm as fond of a bit of good honest wholesome fun as ever I was. So lead on!"

[Illustration]

They were in Seriocomix—a new and brilliant planet recently discovered by *Mr. Punch*—by the aid of WELLER's patent double-million gas-magnifying microscope (extra power). This star, as all astronomers are by this time aware, is a howling waste of extraordinary density, and occupied entirely by Music Halls, which TIME, for some inexplicable reason, was desirous of visiting in *Mr. Punch's* company.

Mr. Punch, though considerably TIME's junior, almost envied his companion's boyish eagerness for pleasure; he was so evidently unfamiliar with Music Halls.

"If you are expecting to be vastly amused, Sir," *Mr. Punch* ventured to hint, "I am afraid you may be just a trifle disappointed."

"Disappointed?" said TIME; "not a bit of it, Sir; not a bit of it! Isn't a Music Hall a place of entertainment? You've plenty of them where *you* come from, haven't you? They wouldn't be filled night after night, as I'm given to understand they are, if they didn't succeed in entertaining, *would* they, now?"

Mr. Punch felt a natural reluctance to betray the weak points of any terrestrial institution.

"Oh, *our* Music Halls? they are perfection, of course," he said. "The entertainments there are distinguished by humour of the most refined and intellectual order. It only struck me that they mayn't be quite the same *here*, you know, that's all."

"We shall see, Sir, we shall see," said TIME. "I don't think I'm particularly difficult to amuse." By this time they had entered the dazzling hall, and, reclining on sumptuous



seats, were prepared to bestow their best attention upon the proceedings. A stout man with a fair wig, a dyed moustache and a blue chin, occupied the stage. He was engaged in representing a Member of the Seriocomican aristocracy with irresistible powers of social fascination, and he wore a loose-caped cloak over garments of closely-fitting black, which opened in front to display a mass of crumpled white, amidst which scintillated an enormous jewel. In his hand he held a curious black disc, with which he beat time to a ditty, of which *Mr. Punch* only succeeded in catching the following refrain:

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"Oh, I 'ave sech a w'y with the loydies! All the dorlins upon me are gorn!
For they soy—'Yn't he noice! you can tell by his vice,
He's a toff and a gentleman born!"

And here the singer suddenly caused the black disc to expand with a faint report to a cylindrical form of head-dress, which he placed upon one side of his head, amidst thunders of approval.

But TIME seemed rather depressed than exhilarated by this performance.

"He ought to be kicked off the stage," he muttered. "I'd do it myself if I was younger!"

"You would make a mistake," said *Mr. Punch*; "he is just the person that a Music Hall audience idolises as their highest ideal of a man and gentleman—in *Serocomix*."

"At least," said TIME, "you wouldn't stand such an outrageous cad as that in any of *your* Music Halls, I hope?"

A deeper tinge stole into *Mr. Punch's* already highly-coloured countenance. "Certainly not," he replied, with perhaps the slightest suspicion of a gulp. "Our 'Lion Comiques' are without exception, persons of culture and education, and, if they sing of love at all, it is only to treat the subject in a chaste and chivalrous spirit. They are worthy examples to all young people who are privileged to listen to their teachings."

"I wish you could send one or two out to *Serocomix*, then, as missionaries," said TIME.

"I wish we could send them *all*," rejoined *Mr. Punch*, feelingly, and they went on to another Music Hall. Here TIME had no sooner perceived the artist who was upon the stage than he exclaimed indignantly, "Disgraceful, Sir. This man is in no condition to entertain a respectable audience—he is *intoxicated*, Sir—look at his *tie*!"

"I think not," said *Mr. Punch*, after observing him attentively through his opera-glass; "he merely affects to be so because the point and humour of the song depend on it. But he has evidently forced himself to make a close study of the symptoms, or he could hardly have produced so marvellous an imitation. Art does demand these sacrifices. You will observe that he represents another Music-Hall ideal—the hero who can absorb the largest known quantity of ardent spirits, and whose prowess has earned for him the proud title of the Boozier King."

It was a spirited chorus, and the accomplished vocalist reeled in quite a natural manner as he chanted:—

"So every pub I enter, boys,
With welcome the room will ring;
Make room for him, there, in the centre, boys!

For he is the Boozer King!
Yes, give him a seat in the centre, boys.
Three cheers for our Boozer King!"

[Illustration]

But TIME's worn features exhibited nothing but the strongest disgust.

"Is it possible," he exclaimed, "that this sort of thing can be considered amusing anywhere!"

"It is considered extremely facetious," said *Mr. Punch*—"in *Seriocomix*."

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"What would they think of such a—such an apotheosis of degradation in one of your Music Halls at home, eh?" demanded TIME.

Privately, *Mr. Punch* was of opinion that it would not be at all unpopular. However, he was not going to admit this:—

[Illustration]

"It would be hissed off the stage," he said, courageously. "The fact is, that our Eccentric Vocalists have always shrunk from the responsibility of presenting a national vice under an attractive light, and so such exhibitions are absolutely unknown among us."

"I respect them for their scruples," said TIME; "they have their reward in a clear conscience," "No doubt," said *Mr. Punch*. "Shall we go on?" And as TIME had had enough of the Boozer King, they went on, and entered the next hall, just as a remarkably pretty young girl, with an innocent rosebud mouth and saucy bright eyes like a bird's, tripped daintily on to the platform.

"Come," said TIME, with more approval than he had yet shown, "this is better—*much* better. We need feel no shame in listening to *this* young lady, at all events. What is she going to give us? Some tender little love-ditty, I'll be bound?"

She sang of love, certainly, though she treated the subject from rather an advanced point of view, and this was the song she sang:—

"True love—you tyke the tip from me—'s all blooming tommy-rot!
And the only test we go by is—'ow much a man has got?
So none of you need now despair a girlish 'art to mash,—
So long as you're provided with the necessairy cash!"

And the chorus was:—

"You may be an 'owling cad;
Or be gowing to the bad;
Or a hoary centenarian, or empty-headed lad;
Or the merest trifle mad—
If there's rhino to be had,
Why, a modern girl will tyke you—yes, and only be too glad!"

As she carolled out this charming ditty in her thin high voice, TIME positively shivered in his stall, "Are *all* the girls like that in Seriocomic?" he moaned. "I trust not."

"It seems the fashion to assume so here, at any rate," said *Mr. Punch*, not without a hazy recollection of having heard very similar sentiments in Music Halls much nearer

home than Seriocomix. “The young woman is probably an authority on the subject. Are you off already?”

“Yes,” said TIME, as he made for the exit. “I think she is going to sing again presently. Come along!”

At the next Music Hall they were just in time to hear the announcement of a new Patriotic Song, and old TIME, who had in his day seen great and noble deeds accomplished by men who loved and were proud of their Fatherland, was disposed to congratulate both himself and the audience on the choice of topic.

Only, as the song went on, he seemed dissatisfied somehow, as if he had expected some loftier and more exalted strain. And yet it was a high-spirited song, too, and told the Seriocomicans what fine fellows they were, and how naturally superior to the inhabitants of all other planets, while the chorus ran as follows:—

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“Yes, we never stand a foreigner’s dictation!
No matter if we’re wrong or if we’re right;
We’re a breed of good old bulldogs as a nation,
And we never stop to bark before we bite!”

And then the singer, a fat-necked man, in a kind of military uniform, drew a sword and struck an attitude, amidst red fire, which aroused vociferous enthusiasm.

TIME seemed to be getting restless again, so they moved on once more, and presently entered a hall where they found a stout lady with a powdered face and extremely short skirts, about to sing a pathetic song, which had been expressly written to suit her talents.

She began in a quavering treble that was instinct with intense feeling:—

“Under the dysies to rest I have lyed him;
My little cock-sparrer so fythful and tyme!
And the duckweed he loved so is blooming beside him,
But I clean out his cyge every d’y just the syme!
For it brings him before me so sorcy and sproightly,
As with seed and fresh water his glorsis I fill:
Though the poor little tyle which he waggled so lytely
Loys under the dysies all stiffened and still!”

—And then, to a subdued *obbligato* upon a bird-whistle, came the touching refrain:

“Yes, I hear him singing ‘Tweet,’ so melodious and sweet!
Till his shadder comes and flits about the room. ‘Tweet-tweet-tweet!’
All my sorrer I forget. For I have the forncy yet,
That he twitters while he’s loyin’ in his tomb—’Tweet-tweet!’
Yes, he twitters to me softly from his tomb!”

Mr. Punch observed his elder attentively during this plaintive ditty, but there was no discernible moisture in TIME’s hard old eyes, though among the rest of the audience noses were being freely blown.

“Well,” he said, “it may be very touching and even elevating, for anything I know—but it’s not my notion of cheerful entertainment. I’m off!”

“I should like,” said TIME, rather wistfully, as they proceeded to visit yet another establishment, “yes, I *should* like to hear something *comic* before the evening is over.”

“Now is your opportunity, then,” said *Mr. Punch*, taking his seat and inspecting the programme, “for I observe that the gentleman who is to appear next is described as a ‘Mastodon Mirth-moving Mome.’”

“And does that mean that he is funny?” inquired TIME, hopefully.

“If it doesn’t, I don’t know what it *does* mean,” replied *Mr. Punch*, as the Mastodon entered.

His mere appearance was calculated to provoke—and did provoke—roars of laughter, though TIME only gazed the more sadly at him. He had coarse black hair falling about his ears, a white face, and a crimson nose; he wore a suit of dingy plaid, a battered hat, and long-fingered thread gloves. And he sang, very slowly and dolefully, this side-splitting ballad:—

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"We met at the corner, Marire and me.
Quite permiscuous! Who'd ha' thought of it?
She took and invited me 'ome to tea;
Quite permiscuous! Who'd ha' thought of it?
I sat in the parler along with her,
Tucking into the eggs and the bread and but-ter,—
When in come her Par with the kitching po-ker!
Quite permiscuous! Who'd ha' thought of it?"

There was a chorus, of course:—

"Quite permiscuous! Who'd ha' thought of it?
Who can guess what's going to be!
Whatever you fancy'll fall far short of it.
That's the way things 'appen with me!"

It seemed that this was the first occasion on which the audience had had the privilege of hearing this chaste and simple production, and nothing could exceed their frantic delight—the song was rapturously re-demanded again and again. Tears stood in TIME's eyes, but they were not the tears of excessive mirth; it was almost incredible—but the "Mastodon Mome" had only succeeded in rendering his depression more acute.

"A melancholy performance that," he said, shaking his head, "a sorry piece of vulgar buffoonery, Sir!"

"Aren't you rather severe, Sir?" remonstrated *Mr. Punch*; "the song is an immense hit—it has, as they say on this planet, 'knocked them;' from henceforth that vocalist's fortune is made; he will receive the income of a Cabinet Minister, and his fame will spread from planet to planet. Why, to-morrow, Sir, that commonplace phrase, '*Quite permiscuous! Who'd ha' thought of it?*' will be upon the lips of every inhabitant; it will receive brevet-rank as a witticism of the first order, it will enrich the language, and enjoy an immortality, which will endure—ah, till the introduction of a newer catchword! I assure you the most successful book—the wittiest comedy, the divinest poem, have never won for their authors the immediate and sensational reputation which this singer has obtained at a bound with a few doggerel verses and an ungrammatical refrain. Isn't there genius in *that*, Sir?"

[Illustration]

"Ah!" said TIME, "I'm old-fashioned, I daresay. I'm no longer in the movement. I might have been amused once by the story of a clandestine tea-party and an outraged parent with a poker; I don't know. All I *do* know is, that I find it rather dreary at present. We'll drop in at just one or two more places, Sir, and then go quietly home to bed, eh?" They entered a few more Music Halls, and found the entertainment at each pretty much alike;

now and then, instead of songs about mothers-in-law, domestic disagreements, and current scandals, they were entertained by the spectacle of acrobats going through horrible contortions, or women and little children performing feats high up aloft to the imminent peril of life and limb.

“With *us*,” said *Mr. Punch*, complacently, “there is a net stretched below the performers.”

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“An excellent arrangement,” said TIME; “and I suppose, if they *did* happen to fall—”

“The spectators underneath would be to some extent protected,” said *Mr. Punch*.

Then there were ballets, so glittering and gorgeous and interminable, that poor old TIME dropped asleep more than once, in spite of the din of the orchestra. At last, although several other places remained to be visited, he broke down altogether. “To tell you the truth,” he said, “I’ve had about enough of it. At my age, Sir, the pursuit of this sort of amusement is rather hard work. I’ll do no more Music Halls on this planet. But I tell you what I *will* do. After all this I want a little rational amusement. I want to be cheered up. Now when will you take me round *your* Music Halls, eh? Any evening will suit me—shall we say Boxing Night?”

“*Not if I know it!*” was *Mr. Punch*’s internal reflection—but all he said was, “‘Boxing Night?’ let me see, I’m going *somewhere* on Boxing Night, I know. Well, I’ll look up my engagements when I get home, and drop you a line.”

“Do,” said TIME—“mind you don’t forget. I am sure we shall have capital fun.”

“Oh, capital,” replied *Mr. Punch*, hurriedly—“capital—but now for (excuse the paradox) the Land of the Sea.”

And so again they started. But *Mr. Punch*’s presentiment will turn out to be quite correct. He *will* be unfortunately engaged on Boxing Night, and so his tour of the terrestrial Music Halls with TIME will be postponed *sine die*.

* * * * *

VISIT TO NEPTUNE.

[Illustration]

In a very short time the two august travellers found themselves in Neptune. To their surprise they learned that the planet consisted entirely of land. They were met by one of the inhabitants in full naval uniform, who heartily greeted them, promising to show them everything his country contained.

“The only thing that must for the present be unexhibited is the sea,” he concluded. “Truth to speak, we have lost sight of it, and the disappearance has caused considerable inconvenience.”

Mr. Punch condoled with the son of Neptune, and asked what were the chief amusements in the planet.

“Well, badgering the Engineers is considered excellent sport—especially just now when their services are not absolutely required. We snub them and underpay them, we refuse them the rank due to them, and lead them a generally happy life! Nothing of that sort of thing down below, I suppose?”

Mr. Punch at the moment this question was put was probably thinking of something else—at any rate he gave no answer.

[Illustration]

“But this is about the best thing we have here,” continued the Resident, pointing to a scene recalling the traditional pictures of Greenwich Fair, “the Royal Naval Exhibition. You see we have pictures and models and fireworks. Everything connected with the Navy inclusive of ladies’ foot-ball.”

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"Ladies' foot-ball," echoed *Mr. Punch*, "why what has that to do with matters nautical?"

"Pardon me, *Mr. Punch*," returned the Resident in a tone of impatience, "but to-day you are certainly dense. Ladies' foot-ball is entirely nautical. Are not the ladies, as they play it, quite at sea?"

The Sage of Fleet Street bowed, and admitted that second thoughts were best.

"And now you must really excuse me," continued the Resident, "for it is my duty, as a director of the Royal Naval Exhibition to start the donkey races. I suppose you have had nothing like our Exhibition down below?"

"Nothing," returned the Sage.

[Illustration]

"So I thought," was the reply. "If you have time, you can call upon the Admiral Survival of the Fittest."

"Gentlemen," said that illustrious official, after they had entered his bureau, "it is usual to salute me by tugging at your forelocks and scraping the deck with your right feet. While you perform this operation, you will notice that I will hitch up my trousers in true nautical style."

"Oh, certainly," returned *Mr. Punch*, "Delighted! But, Admiral, isn't that sort of thing a little old-fashioned?"

"And what of that, Sir? In spite of everything we still have hearts of oak. We have *not* changed since the time of NELSON and Trafalgar. We can still run up the rigging (there isn't any but that is an unimportant detail) like kittens, and reef a sail (there's not one left, but what does *that* matter?) in a Nor-Wester as our ancestors did before us. And if you don't believe me, go to any public dinner when response is being made for the Navy."

"But if the ships have changed, would it not be better if the crews had undergone an appropriate transformation?"

"We don't think so. But, there, it's no use palavering. Some day the matter will be put to the test?"

"By a war?"

"No; by the Fleet starting for a cruise in calm weather. Some say we should all go to the bottom. But I am talking of the Planet Neptune. On your little Earth, I suppose, things are *very* different?"

“Very,” replied *Mr. Punch*. “We have the Admiralty!”

And considering this an appropriate moment for departure, the Sage and his Venerable Companion floated amongst the stars.

* * * * *

[Illustration: AMONG THE DRAMATIC AND OPERATIC STARS.

AIRY FAIRY LILIAN.

KING ARTHUR.

THE ONLY ADELINA.

OUR ELLEN.

OUR HENRY.

THE GRASSHOPERATIC STAR.

THE SOCIETY CLOWN.

“O.K.”

OUR JOHNNIE.]

* * * * *

ARTISTIC STARS.

[Illustration]

“It’s wonderful!” exclaimed TIME. “We haven’t got anything like this on Earth.”

“Plenty more where they come from,” said his Guide Philosopher and Friend; “but now just give me a lock of your hair, and I’ll stand you a fly through the artistic quarter.”

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And Mr. PUNCH, like Beauty, “drawing him with a single hair,” carried the Ancient Wanderer along with him, past galaxies of talent, musical, dramatic, and operatic, refusing to stop and gratify the old Gentleman’s pardonable curiosity.

“I know I’ve got Time for it all,” quoth the flying Sage, “but I haven’t space, that’s where the difficulty is. As for Literary Stars, from TENNYSON and SWINBURNE, to LANG, STEVENSON, BLACK, BESANT, and our excellent friend, Miss BRADDON, with other novelists too numerous to mention, we must leave our cards on them, pay a flying visit, and just skirt the artistic quarter.”

“There’s the President!” exclaimed Old TIME.

“Ah! everyone knows *him*,” said *Mr. Punch*—“artist and orator, and ever a Grand Young Man, the flower of the Royal Academy.”

“Sir JOHN, too,” cried TIME.

“As fresh as his own paint is our MILLAIS,” returned *Mr. Punch*. “But ‘on we goes again,’ as the showman said, and you can pick out for yourself the Artist-Operatic-Composer-Painter-Etcher-Fellow-of-All-Souls, and master of a variety of other accomplishments, yclept HUBERT HERKOMER; then the gay and gallant FILDES, the chiseler BOEHME, the big PETTIE, the Flying, not the Soaring, Dutchman, TADEMA, the always-purchased BOUGHT’UN, the gay dog POYNTER, Cavalier Sir JOHN GILBERT, and the chivalric DON CALDERON! There’s a galaxy for you, my boy! Can you touch these on Earth?”

“Well,” said TIME, slowly scratching the tip of his nose, “I fancy I’ve heard of ‘all the talents’ before. Besides these, there are a few more who are celebrated in black and white—”

“Rather!” cried *Mr. Punch*, enthusiastically. “My own dear boys, with JOHN TENNIEL at their head. But they’re all so busy just now that I couldn’t take up their time.”

“But you’re taking *me* up,” observed the aged T., slily.

“Quite so,” returned his guide—who if, *per impossibile*, he ever *could* be old, would be “*the* aged P.”—and then giving another tug at his companion’s forelock, he cried, “On we goes again! We’ll be invisible for awhile, and I’ll show you our ‘ARRY in the clouds. You remember IXION in Heaven, or as ‘ARRY would call him, IXION in ‘Eaven. Now see ‘ARRY dreamin’ o’ Goddesses. Here we go Up! Up! Up!”

And what happened is told by ‘ARRY in the following letter.

[Illustration: “PHYLLIS IS MY ONLY JOY!”

QUEEN OF SONG.

THE JERSEY LILY.]

* * * * *

'ARRY'S VISIT TO THE MOON.

Dear CHARLIE,—I've bin on the scoop, and no error this time, my
dear boy!

I must tell yer my rounds; it's a barney I know you are bound to
enjoy.

Talk of *Zadkiel's Halmanack*, CHARLIE, JOHN KEATS, or the *Man
in the Moon*—

Yah! I've cut all *their* records as clean as a comet would lick
a balloon.

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'ARRY ain't no Astronomer, leastways I ain't never made it my mark
To go nap on star-gazing; I've mostly got other good biz arter dark.
But when *Mister Punch* give me the tip 'ow he'd take poor old
TIME on the fly,
Wy I tumbled to it like a shot; 'ARRY's bound to be in it, sez I.

So I took on the Lockyers and Procters, and mugged up the planets
and stars.
With their gods and their goddesses, likeways their thunderbolts,
tridents and cars.
I jogged on with old Jupiter, CHARLIE, and gave young Apoller
a turn,
While as to DIANNER!—but there, that is jest wot you're going
to learn.

It wos dry and a little bit dazing, this cram, and you won't
think it's odd
If yours truly got doosedly drowsy. In fact I wos napped on
the nod,
But the way I got woke wos a winner. Oh! CHARLIE, my precious
old pal,
If you'd know wot's fair yum-yum, 'ook on to a genuine celestial
gal.

“Smack!” “Hillo!” sez I, starting sudden, “where ham I, and
wot's this 'ere game?”
Then a pair o' blue eyes looked in mine with a lime-lighty sort of
a flame,
As made me feel moony immediate. “Great Pompey,” thinks I, “here's
a spree!
It's DIANNER by all that is proper, and as for Enjimmyun—that's
Me!”

[Illustration]

For I see a young person in—well, I ain't much up in classical
togs,
But she called it a “chlamys,” I think. She'd a bow, and a couple
of dogs,
“Rayther forward and sportive young party,” thinks I, Sandown-Parky
in style;
But pooty, and larky no doubt, so I tips her a wink and a smile.



“All right, Miss DIANNER,” sez I. “You ’ave won ’em—the gloves—and no kid.

Wot size, Miss, and ’ow many buttons?” But she never lowered a lid, And the red on her cheeks warn’t no blush but a reglar indignant flare-up,

Whilst the look from her proud pair of lamps ’it as ’ard and as straight as a Krupp.

Brought me sharp to my bearings, I tell yer. “Young mortal,” she sez, “it is plain

An Enjimyun is not to be found in the purlieus of Chancery Lane. And that Primrose ’Ill isn’t a Latmos. The things you call gloves I don’t wear,

Only buskins. But don’t you be rude, or the fate of Actaeon you’ll share.”

I wosn’t quite fly to her patter, but “mortal” might jest ’ave bin “cub,”

From the high-perlite way she pernounced it, and plainly DIANNER meant “snub.”

Struck me moony, her manner, did CHARLIE, she hypnertised me with her looks,

And the next thing I knowed I was padding the ’oof in a region of spooks.

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Spooks, is bogies and ghostesses, CHARLIE, according to latter-day chat,—
And the place where DIANNER conveyed, me was spooky, and spectral at that.
“Where *are* we, Miss, if I *may* arsk?” I sez, orfully ‘umbl for me.
Then she turns ‘er two lamps on me sparkling. “Of course we’re in Limbo,” sez she.

Didn’t quite like the lay on it, CHARLIE, for Limbo sounds precious like quod:
But *she* meant Lunar Limbo, dear boy, sort o’ store-room, where everythink odd,
Out of date, foolish, faddy, and sech like, is kept like old curio stock.
(Ef yer want to know more about Limbo, read Mr. POPE’s *Rape of the Lock*.)

“So this ‘ere is the Moon, Miss!” sez I. “Where’s the Man there’s sech talk on downstairs?”
She looked at me ‘orty. Thinks I, “You’re a ‘ot ‘un to give yourself hairs.
I may level you down a bit later: The Man in the Moon, Miss,” I adds.
Sez she, “We don’t ‘ave Men up here; they are most of them tyrants or cads!”

“Oh,” sez I, “on the MONA CAIRD lay, eh, my lady?” Jest then, mate, I looks
And sees male-looking things by the dozen: but then they turned out to be spooks.
There was TOLSTOI the Rooshian romancer, a grim-looking son of a gun,
Welting into young Cupid like scissors, and walloping Hymen like fun.

[Illustration]

Old Hymen looked ‘orrified rayther; but as for young Arrers-and-’Arts,
He turned up his nose at the old ‘un, whilst all the gay donas and tarts,
Not to mention the matronly mivvies, were arter the boy with the bow,
Plainly looking on TOLSTOI and IBSEN as crackpots, and not in the know.

“Queer paper, my dear Miss DIANNER,” sez I, “wot do *you* think?” Sez she,
“A mere Vision of Vanities, mortal, of no speshal interest to me.
I am not the keeper of Limbo, although it is found in my sphere.

Everything that's absurd and unnatural claims a clear right to come
here.

"See, the latest Art-Hobbies are ambling about with their 'eads in the
air,
And their riders are tilting like true toothpick paladins. SMUDGE over
there
Makes a bee-line for SCRATCH in this corner, whilst MUCK and the
Mawkish at odds,
Clash wildly, and Naturalism pink Sentiment painfully prods."

Then I twigged Penny WHISTLER's white plume, and the haddypose HOSCAR
upreared,
His big hairy horryflame, CHARLIE, whilst Phillistines looked on and
jeered.
I see Nature, as Narstiness, ramping at wot Nambybamby dubbed Nice,
And Twoddle parading as Virtue, and Silliness playing at Vice.

Here was pooty girls Primrosing madly, and spiling their tempers a lump,
By telling absurd taradiddles for some big political pump;

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[Illustration]

And there was 'ard-mouthed middle-aged 'uns a shaking the Socherlist
flag,
And a ramping like tiger-cats tipsy around a rediklus red rag.

[Illustration]

There was patriots playing the clown, there was magistrates playing the
fool;
There was jugginses teaching the trombone to kids at a bloomin' Board
School.
"This is Free Hedgercation in Shindy," sez I. "They're as mad as March
hares,
All these Limboites, dear Miss DIANNER. We do it *much* better
downstairs!"

She smiled kinder scoffish, I fancied, and give 'er white shoulders a
hunch.
Says she; "I've no comments to make. It's along of my friend *Mr. Punch*
Whom the whole Solar System obeys, and the Court of Olympus respects,
That I wait on you 'ere, Mister ARRY. Pray what would you like to see
next?"

"Well," sez I, with a glance at her gaiters, "I've heard you're a whale,
Miss, at Sport.
Do you 'know anythink' wuth my notice?" She gave me a look of a sort,
As I can't put in words, not exactly, a sort o' cold *scorch*,
dontcherknow.
That's a bit of a parrydocks p'raps; anyhow, it hurt wus than a blow.

But we went on the fly once agen—can't say 'ow it wos managed, but soon
We 'ad passed to a rum-looking region—the opposite side of the Moon,
Where no mortal afore had set foot, nor yet eyes, Miss DIANNER declared.
"Here's a Region of Sport!" sez the lady. Good Gracechurch Street, mate,
'ow I stared!

Seemed a sort of a blend-like of Hepsom, and Goodwood, and Altcar, mixed
up
With the old Epping 'Unt and new Hurlingham, thoughts of the Waterloo Cup,
Swell Polo and Pigeon-match tumbled about in my mind, while the din
Was like Putney Reach piled on a Prizefight, with Kennington Oval chucked
in.



There was toffs, fair top new 'uns, mixed hup with the welcher, the froth
with the scum;
There was duchesses, proud as DIANNER, and she-things as sniffed of the slum;
There was "champions" thick as bluebottles, and plungers as plenty as peas,
With stoney-brokes, pale as a poultice, and "crocks," orful gone at the knees;

I see a whole howling mix-up of "mug" booky, dog-owner and rough,
A-watching of snaky-shaped hounds pelting 'ard 'after bits o' brown fluff,
I see—and the Sportsman within me began for to bubble and burn,
And I yelled, "O my hazure-horbed Mistress, can't you and me 'ave jest
a turn?"

We *did*, and my "Purdey Extractor" made play, though it ain't me to brag,
But somehow her arrers went straighter, and 'ers was the heaviest bag.
"Let *me* 'ave a try, Miss," sez I, "with that trifle from Lowther Arcade!"
I tried, and hit one of her dogs, as she didn't think sport I'm afraid.

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The 'ound didn't seem much to mind it; immortal, I spose, like Miss D.; Then we 'ad a slap arter the deer, and she'd very soon nailed two or three. *I* wos out of it, couldn't pot one, and it needled me orful, dear boy, To be licked by a gal, *though* a goddess, and armed with a archery toy!

Her togs wos a little bit quisby—for moors as ain't pitched in the Moon,
And *there wasn't no pic-nic, dear boy!* I got peckish and parched pooty soon.

She lapped from a brook, and her hoptics went wide as a cop on the watch,
When I hinted around rayther square, *I* should like a small drop of cold Scotch.

Well, well; I must cut this yarn short. We'd a turn at Moon Sports like all round,
Wish I'd time to describe our Big Boar Hunt—DIANNER's pet pastime I found,
Can't say it was *mine*; bit too risky. Pigsticking in Ingy may suit
White Shikkarries or Princes, dear boy, but yer Boar is a nasty big brute.

Too much tusk for my taste! 'Owsomever DIANNER she speared him to rights,
And I dropped from the tree I'd shinned up when the boar had made tracks
for my tights.

"Bravo, Miss DIANNER!" I sez. "You are smart, for a gal, with that spear.
But didn't yer get jest a mossel alarmed—fur yer 'ARRY, my dear?"

Put it hamorous like, with a wink, snugging up to the lady, I did;
For she'd found a weak spot in my 'art, this cold classical gal, and no kid.
I'd been 'aving a pull at my flask, up that tree, and her pluck and blue eyes
Made me feel a bit spoony; in fact I was mashed. But, O wot a surprise!

"Alarmed? about *you*, Sir! And *why?*" sez DIANNER, with eyes all aflash,
I sez, "Don't yer remember Adonis, love, Venus's boar-'unting mash?
No wonder the lady felt fainty like; fear for a sweetheart, yer see.
And—well, if I'm not quite Adonis, *you found your Enjimmyun in Me!*

[Illustration]

"One more, only one, dear DIANNER," I sez. And I aimed for a kiss,
I made for her lips, a bee-line. But great snakes, my dear boy, wot a miss!
Hit me over the 'ed with her boar-spear, a spanker, she did, like a shot.
Don't you never spoon goddesses, CHARLIE; you'll find it a dashed sight
too 'ot!

"Adonis!" she cried. "Nay, Actaeon! And his shall be also thy fate.
There is *Punch* looking on, he'll approve!" And she jest set 'er dogs



on me, straight!
“Way-oh! Miss DIANNER!” I yells. “No offence! Don’t be ’ard on a bloke!
Beg yer pardon, I’m sure!” Here a hound nipped my calf like a vice,
and—I woke.

Leastways, I persoom it *wos* waking, if ’tother was sleep and a dream,
But I feel a bit moon-struck, dear boy. Spooks abound, and things ain’t
what they seem.

Mister Punch sez, “it served me quite right.” Well, next time
correspondence he’d carry
With satterlites, spesh’ly the Moon, he had better not drop upon ’ARRY.

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"Poor fellow, I pity him," said *Mr. Punch* to Father TIME, as the pair passed away from the Lunar precincts together, bowing courteously, and a little apologetically, to 'ARRY's late hostess, who called off her dogs, and affably responded to their parting salutation. "Fact is," pursued the Sage, "my young friend 'ARRY, though smart and *fin de siecle*, in his way, is a little of 'the earth, earthy,' and lacks both the adventurousness and the tact of an Ixion."

"I presume," said the Scythe-bearer, "our inter-planetary peregrinations are now pretty nearly at an end—for this time?"

"We have yet one more visit to pay," said *Mr. Punch*.

At this moment, as the space-pervading trio fleeted forward, a strange unusual effulgence grew to the eastward, and began to bathe them in golden light. Miraculously metamorphic was its action upon the aerial travellers. *Mr. Punch* flung aside his hat and his "Immensikoff," and appeared as the Apollo-like personage he really is. TOBY's wings expanded, and his pace mended. As for "Old Father TIME" himself, the combined influence of the regenerating philtre in *Faust*, and the fire-bath in *She*, could not more completely have transmogrified him. His face brightened with youthfulness, his solitary forelock bushed out into a wavy and hyacinthine hirsute crop, his ancient and magician-like garments fell from him, his plumes expanded, until he looked more like "the herald Mercury" than old Edax Rerum.

Then they swung, as on airy *trapeze*, or on wings of the thunder-bird
strong,
With the sound in their ears of the voice of the starry and sisterly
throng.
Did the orbs of splendiferous Sol give a wink as they ranged into
reach?
Was his genial mouth all alight with the flame of the friendliest
speech?
Hey, Presto! Great Scott! Transformation on DRURIOLANUS's stage
Was never so sudden as this! Who rides there as the Sun-God? The Sage!
The Great Hypnotiser! Utopia's lord! He Who Must Be Obeyed!
He whose Magical Spell is on Princes and Peoples, on Art and on Trade.
Houp-la! Transformation tremendous! The round of the Planets we've
travelled,
Some curious secrets unveiled, and some mysteries mighty unravelled.
We manage things better on Earth! That's the formula! Sounds it
sardonic?
Was *Punch* just a morsel sarcastic, his hosts just a trifle ironic?
At any rate, *Punch* here explains to the World how to manage things
better,
By purging Humanity's spirit, and snapping Hate's tyrannous fetter.



He'd Hypnotise Man into health, both of body and spirit, and out of
The follies, and vices, and greeds, and conceits. See the whole
Comus-rout of
Absurdities, Appetites, Antics, Antipathies, personal, national,
Driven before his bright Sun-Car! The Rule of the Rosily Rational
He would inaugurate, making Earth's atmosphere healthy as Thanet's,
That Father TIME, is his aim; *that's* the Moral of *Punch* and the
Planets!

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[Illustration]