

Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, No. 425 eBook

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VENICE.

At six, on a bright morning, the 1st of September 1851, we left the quay of Trieste in the steamer for Venice. We were in no particular mood upon the subject. If anything, we rather feared that the famous City of the Sea might turn out to have been overpraised. However, we resolved to be candid.

The morning passed pleasantly enough. We admired the snowy tops of the Styrian Alps on the right, and the deep green of the Adriatic was beautiful. We had calculated upon an eight hours' voyage; but it was scarcely eleven o'clock when the pinnacles and towers of the city began to appear above the water's edge to the west, taking us a little by surprise. It was thenceforward an interesting occupation for an hour or so to watch these objects gradually rising out of the waves. By and by, a large dome took its place amongst them; then some little domes and more pinnacles: at length a connected range of city objects lay along the horizon, and this we knew was *Venice*. The steamer by and by began to wind through some straits or channels of the sea, with fortifications covering the low banks on both sides. It went on; and about one o'clock, under a bright sun, we found ourselves in an open space of sea, opposite the famous series of



buildings composed of the Doge's Palace, the Cathedral of San Marco, the Piazza, &c. —objects perhaps of their kind the most generally known in Europe.

The first few minutes was a confused mixture of romantic association and solicitude about a right hotel. Our thoughts slid with prosaic facility from the lion on the top of the obelisk, so well remembered from Canaletti's pictures, to the sign of the Leone Bianca —a place of entertainment not far off, much recommended by Murray. I recalled the Byronian heroines sailing about in those gondolas, which we saw skimming away here and there, and wondered whether it would be best to go to Dameli's or

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the Emperor of Austria. The first business was to get a gondola for ourselves and luggage; thus, at the very first reducing to the character of a mere cab that picturesque species of conveyance—I, the conductor of the party, wondering all the time how much those two cowed villains would charge me. Seated there with my two ladies, we speedily proceeded along the Grand Canal towards the hotel last mentioned, to try if we could obtain accommodation in it. It was curious to land from a boat at the steps of a house, and walk from the sea into the hall. It was dazzling to see the splendour of the building, with its fine marble vestibule within, and its superb staircases. We did not find in it, however, exactly the range of rooms we required, and we after all returned along the canal, and tried the Hôtel de l'Europe, a similar, but somewhat plainer house, where we got apartments to our mind.

I was curious at first to study the arrangements of houses and streets in Venice. Here I found that what had once been the palace of a noble, presented, first, a ground-floor about three feet above the medium level of the Adriatic, composed of a broad vestibule crossing through from front to rear, with the inferior apartments on each side; second, a floor of good apartments, with an open hall in the centre right over the vestibule—this hall adorned with pictures; third, a similar good floor, with another hall in the centre, which had been the banqueting or dining-room, and was now used as the *salle-a-manger* of the hotel—and this *salle* had balconied windows at one end looking out upon the canal. There was, I suppose, a fourth floor of inferior rooms, but there I never had occasion to be. Most of the rooms, looking out at the sides of the building into narrow lanes, were ill-lighted: only those having windows to the front were light or cheerful. The walls, staircases, and floors, were all of marble—the proportions large, and the decorations elegant. The date, 'Jan. 1676,' appeared over an inner door in the *salle*.

A side-door in the rear of the house gave me exit for a walk into the town. I found myself in a paved lane, here called a *calle*, with good houses on each side. It led me into a wider lane, which had all the characters of a street, excepting that it was comparatively narrow, and only traversed by people on foot. Here I found shops of many kinds, but almost all on a small scale; as also many stalls for the sale of fruit and other petty articles. Following this way to the right, I soon came to the outside of the great square, which is the principal public place in the city. It was but necessary to go through a wide passage, to find myself in the *Piazza*—that well-known paved and arcaded quadrangle, which we have seen so often in pictures; the far extremity being closed by the singular church of St Mark, while close by rose the lofty campanile and the three tall flag-staffs. We sauntered for an hour about this grand central region, viewing

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the outsides of things only, and dreaming of those scenes of the past with which they were connected. After dinner, I again went out by myself to walk through the town, for it was agreed that we should put off regular sight-seeing till next day. Let not the reader be surprised to hear of walking through Venice. It is permeated in all directions by calles and narrow streets, which cross the canals by high-arched stone bridges, thus giving pedestrian access to and from all parts of the city. Certainly, however, no such thing as a leading thoroughfare exists, and it must be difficult for strangers to acquire that local knowledge which will enable them to find their way without a guide. Unlike all other cities, no kind of vehicle, not so much as a wheelbarrow, ever rattles along these narrow, tortuous ways. The gondolas upon the canals are strictly the only conveyances used in Venice. Thus the city has a stillness which, even in its most brilliant days, must have impressed strangers with a sense of melancholy. In our time, when Venice is reduced at once from independence and from wealth, the effect is peculiarly depressing. I felt as if Venice were only a *curiosity* to look at for a few days, not a place in which any considerable portion of life could be spent with comfort.

Next morning, at eight o'clock, by which time we had breakfasted, a gondola with two rowers waited for us at the porch of the hotel, along with a clever, well-informed youth named Alessandro, who had undertaken to be our *cicerone*. The charges for both gondolas and guides had, we found, been raised since the late troubles, in common with everything else in Venice, liberty being always somehow a provocative to taxation, whether temporarily or permanently enjoyed. What in 1843 would have cost six English shillings, now stood us eight or nine. The gondola, as is well known, is a long boat, pointed at both ends, and painted black—furnished in the centre with cushioned seats, all black, over which is erected a kind of cot, with windows, to screen the passengers. One man stands in the fore, another in the back part, rowing with their faces forward, the oar working in a twisting manner on the top of a piece of wood curiously grooved for the purpose. I cannot say that I saw anything very peculiar in the dress of the gondoliers, or indeed in the appearance of any of the people of Venice, excepting the female water-carriers. With that exception, the people are dressed in much the same manner as is customary over Europe generally. So far as I recollect, not a single veiled or half-veiled lady, sailing in her own gondola, met our eyes while we were in Venice. We have to revert for all such things to Goldoni's plays and the pages of our own Byron.



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The real grand thoroughfare of Venice is the *Canale Grande*—a wide curving street, which sweeps through a great part of the city. The principal palaces of the nobility, the superbest of the churches, and the best hotels, are placed along this water-street. As we moved along, Alessandro told us, in respectable French, the history of each great mansion, and what its owners had done in the history of the republic: a recital as intelligent and as accurate as could have been expected in a book. Most of these buildings have a melancholy, decayed look, being generally very old, and few of the owners being able to spend much in or on them. A few that look tolerably fresh, are found to be occupied by the post, the customs, or some other office, the insignia of which figure in gaudy colouring over the principal entrance. In connection with most of the palaces, the name of some architect of reputation is mentioned. They are wholly of marble; and, in many cases, round stones of a precious kind, or pieces of marble of a brilliantly veined character, are set in a species of framework in front, communicating a peculiarly rich effect. The least pleasing circumstance connected with these superb mansions, is their being so closely beset by other buildings. We saw only one or two which had any spare space associated with them, to form either a court-yard or a piece of garden-ground. Space is indeed the great want of Venice. Many of the canals, dividing lines of houses as lofty as those of the Old Town of Edinburgh, are not wider than the *wynd*s of that celebrated city. And yet there we see the landing-places and entrances of magnificent mansions, though more frequently the houses on such narrow canals have the air of merchants' stores and warehouses.

It would be vain to attempt a detailed description of one-half of the wonderfully beautiful old churches, palazzos, and other buildings, which we examined during this and the subsequent day. We were agreeably disappointed on the whole; for we had come with an idea that we should see only the shell of ancient Venice, and few of those works of art which used to be associated with its name; whereas the fact is, that all the most remarkable old buildings are entire, and in tolerable order; and scarcely a picture, or statue, or antique curiosity, has been lost during the political changes which the city has undergone. Doubtless, it is living Venice no more: it is Venice reduced to a museum—but what a museum! And here I must do the Austrian government the justice to say, that it appears to have a deep feeling of interest in the ancient monuments of the republic. It contributes handsomely for their maintenance; and no modern proprietor of an old palazzo can make any change in it, till he has satisfied a tribunal of taste, that the change will be in keeping with the antique and picturesque glories of the place.

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We went at an early hour one day to see the Pisani palace: one of those which are attractive on account of their containing good works of art. The Pisani are an illustrious family: and the representative still lives in this fine old mansion, or at least occasionally occupies it; but he is a broken-down old man, who has survived wife, children, and other relatives, and his death must speedily close the many-centuried history of his name. It was with melancholy feelings that we stepped into the hall or vestibule, whose broken plasters are still graced with coats-armorial and emblems of ancient dignity; amongst the rest, two standards wrapped up round their staves, probably memorials of the great Pisano—a naval commander of the fourteenth century. The housekeeper's little children were playing about the place, as children in an ordinary city would play in a street among the dogs and carriages. Mounting a wide side-staircase, we reached a handsome first floor, composed of a central *salle* and side-rooms, tolerably furnished; and here we found the two pictures for which the Pisani are famous—The Death of Darius, and his Queen supplicating Alexander, by Paul Veronese. They are beautiful paintings; and by their value, still give a sort of dignity to this decayed family.

Another palace we visited was that of the *Vendramini Colerghi*, now the property of the Duchesse de Berri, who makes it her ordinary winter-quarters. It is a large and elegant building, in a form approaching that of the letter Z, with a flower-garden in front of the receding part. The duchesse is understood to have purchased it for 120,000 zwanzigers—equivalent to about L.4000, and not the value of the stones of which it is built. With great good taste, she has made no alteration in the decoration or destination of the rooms, but has added modern furniture, family portraits, and many objects of *virtu*. The series of apartments on the first floor above the vestibule is extensive and superb; and though the *tout ensemble* is more characteristic of a modern French princess than of an ancient Venetian family, it was pleasant to see at least one of the palazzos of the ancient republic handsomely furnished, and having the appearance of cheerful occupation. Among the portraits are some that could scarcely have been expected to survive the Revolution of 1792—as Louis XIV.; Louis XV. when a boy; some of the princesses, aunts of Louis XVI.; also the dauphin, father of the latter monarch. There is likewise a beautiful cabinet of Marie Antoinette. Such articles, we presume, must have been obtained from the palaces at the downfall of royalty, and preserved by various accidents till the restoration, when the royal family would of course be eager to recover them at whatever expense. We saw here a portrait of the Duchesse, with her infant son, standing in widow's weeds, beside the bust of her assassinated husband; also portraits of the Due de Bourdeaux, his wife, the Duchesse's present husband, and her younger set of children. In a glass-case were the gilt spurs of Henri IV. The Duchesse gives gay parties in winter, when the full suite of rooms must have a fine effect.



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The churches of Venice are numerous—about a hundred in all, being one for every thousand souls, while I am told there is a priest for every hundred. We visited eight or ten of the most remarkable; and so bewildering was their magnificence, and so confounding the multitude of fine things shewn in them, that if I had not taken note of everything at the moment, I must have had only one confused idea of something supra-mundanelly fine. A great church in Venice is usually a structure of pure marble, with a dome or tower. The interior is one open space, with the usual double colonnade, a railed off altar-space at the upper end, and little chapels in the aisles on both sides. Generally, over the principal altar is some large scriptural picture—a Crucifixion, or a Taking Down from the Cross, or an Ascension; the production of Titian, or Tintoretto, or Paul Veronese, or some other artist of the Venetian school. Over the lateral altars are similar works of art. Sometimes one of these side-chapels is at the same time the tomb of a noble family, which assumes the duty of keeping it in order. In many of the churches, nothing can exceed the beauty of the sculpture which is lavished over the interior; and, while many features are common, each usually contrives to have some special beauty or some exclusive possession on which a peculiar fame rests. For example, the church of *San Georgia Maggiore* has some wooden carved-work by a Belgian artist, of surprising beauty. *Gli Scalzi* is a paragon of elaborate decoration. The church of the *Frari*, old and Gothic, is full of grand tombs, including those of several doges, that of Titian, and a monument to Canova. The *Santa Maria della Salute* has a fine collection of pictures over and above those in the church. This church was built in 1632, by a decree of the Senate, as an act of thanksgiving to the Virgin for putting an end to a pestilence by which 60,000 people had been carried off. It is a most beautiful structure, full of fine things; and altogether a curious monument of that delusion of ignorance and misdirected piety which made men assign to a chapter of priests the duty now committed to a Board of Health, and persuaded them that a church was of much greater efficacy for the cure of the pestilence than an hospital.

I have as yet said scarcely anything of the ducal palace and church of San Marco, which are the principal and central objects of Venice. The first is a quadrangular building, with a court in the centre; very peculiar antique architecture, with a double row of arcades both outside and in; the whole having a strikingly Oriental character. In front, and at one side, is a pavement, forming the principal open space in Venice; the haunt, of course, of many loungers of all characters; and distinguished by the two well-known pillars, one of which bears the lion of St Mark. The interior of the palace presents a succession of grand old halls, the scene of the court-glories of



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the ancient doges. One, called the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio*, is 154 feet long by 74 broad. It has a *dais* at one end, on which the throne must have been placed; and over this a picture of Paradise by Tintoretto, covering the entire end of the room—of course 74 feet long—being thus the largest picture ever painted on canvas. Around, under the ceiling, are the portraits of the series of doges. The *Sala del Senato* still exhibits the seats of the senators, each furnished with its candlestick for protracted discussions—a melancholy memorial of departed independence. We gazed, too, on the Hall of the Council of Ten, and the lesser room where the more terrible Council of Three held its sittings; all now reduced to mere show-places, but still strongly suggesting their original destination. The Lion's Mouth, in the outer gallery, to which any accusation could be committed, was not forgotten. After dwelling a due time upon the rooms, and the numerous pictures and other works of art presented in them, we descended into the dungeons or *pozzi*—narrow stone-chambers destitute of light, where Venetian justice formerly kept its victims—a terrific specimen of the reckless inhumanity of past times. Finally, we passed to the Bridge of Sighs, which is detected to be an afterthought structure, designed to connect the palace with the more modern prison in the rear, a canal intervening. I suspect, after all, that many of the stories told about the *pozzi* and the bridge are mere myths, the reflection of ideas which the appearance of the places suggests.

The church of San Marco, adjoining the palace, and forming one side of the Piazza or square, is like no other building I ever saw—decidedly Oriental in style—indeed such a building as Aladin might have evoked by his lamp; which reminds me, by the way, that there is a prevalent tinge of the East all over Venice, seen in the architecture particularly. The vaulting and arching of this church are all described as Byzantine in style, and are therefore round; but it has been a custom in Venice to fix up on such a building as this any reliques of antique sculpture which have been taken in the countries with which the Republic was at war: accordingly, the front of San Marco bristles all over with curious pillars and carvings, including, above all, the four celebrated bronze horses which Napoleon took to Paris, and which were restored after his downfall. Walking through one of the low-browed doors, we pass across a vestibule, where a stone is pointed out in the pavement as the spot on which the emperor Barbarossa laid his head beneath the foot of Pope Alexander III. Then proceeding into the interior, you find the dusky atmosphere dimly blazing with a peculiar glitter from the walls and ceilings, the whole being one mass of gold mosaic, on which scripture subjects are inserted in a darker colouring. Think of a huge church, the interior facing of which is composed of pieces of gilt stone,

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each no bigger than the point of your finger would cover! But this is not all. The wide-extending pavement is seen to be composed in like manner of small pieces of marble and precious stones, set so as to form regular figures, all most exact, and still wonderfully entire, though it has endured the feet of daily thousands for several centuries. Unfortunately, from some infirmity in the vaulting below, this singular floor is thrown into undulations, in some places so great as to require care in walking over them. I spent hours in wandering about and examining the many curious things which are to be seen in this church, including those of its famous treasury. It is truly surprising that, after so many revolutions, so many of these valuables have been preserved. The fidelity of the priesthood to their charge is surely deserving of some admiration, considering how many opportunities there must have been of making away with precious articles, after which no inquiry would probably have ever been made.

A campanile, or bell-tower, has been erected in the square near the church, and is one of the most conspicuous objects in Venice; rising, as it does, above every other building. It seems slender; but I was surprised to find, on a rough measurement, that the sides are not less than fifty feet wide. A paved way, instead of a staircase, conducts to an open *loggia* near the top, whence you can have a complete view of the city. I remarked that the tops of many of the houses are of use in the same way as gardens and summer-houses are in other countries. People go there to smoke, or to take their coffee—the chimneys being a very slight obstruction to such enjoyments in a country where little fire is used. We here also had a good view of the celebrated *orologio* of Venice; a tower containing an ancient clock of peculiar elaborateness of construction. On the top stand two metal giants, armed with ponderous hammers, with which to strike the hours and quarters on a huge bell, placed between them. There is something terrible in these automata; and the feeling is not allayed when you hear that one of them once committed a *murder*, having with his hammer knocked an incautious workman over the battlements! The campanile was begun in 902; and I felt interested in tracing its resemblance, both in architecture and relative situation, to the square tower of St Andrews, which is supposed to be of nearly the same age.

My limits leave me no room to dilate upon our visit to the Accademia. Indeed, in the visit itself, we could do little more than pause here and there as a Titian or Tintoretto cast up in the multitude of pictures, or when we came before some specimen of the very early masters, of whose works there are many dating so far back as the end of the fourteenth century. There were some pictures representing transactions in Venice, of not much later date, which I regarded with interest, as preserving to us the appearance of men and things in that age; particularly

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one depicting some miracle, in which several grave ecclesiastics are seen swimming about in the Grand Canal, while ladies look on from windows and balconies, which I convinced myself still exist there. I must be equally brief with that place which no countryman of Shakspeare can avoid visiting, though the present Rialto is, after all, later than his time. It is of a curious structure as a bridge; there being three rows of building along it, containing shops, with two roadways for passengers. One crosses backwards and forwards, muttering: 'On the Rialto thou hast rated me,' &c.; goes distractedly into a shop, to purchase a breastpin, as a memorial of the place; and then plunges down the stairs, to resume his place in the gondola. We took a couple of hours to pay a visit to the Armenian monastery, on the island of San Lazzaro—the place to which Byron resorted in order to study the Armenian language. It is a curious old establishment, with some modern activity about it in the diffusion of literature; the monks having a printing-office in tolerable briskness, whence they issue books in various languages. We were delighted with the flush of beautiful flowering, from the oleander bushes in the central court, and the vine-hung alleys in the garden behind. I must not forget, in this hurried close of my adventure, the two moonlight sails we had through those mysterious watery streets, where, the associations of day and of the active world being shut out, we felt as if each light in the old palazzi illumined some scene of mediæval romance. *That* was like no other thing in our lives. On the third evening, we left this dream-city by a means which we had studiously ignored all the time of our visit—namely, a *railway*, which crosses from Venice to the mainland. It was something of a waker to find ourselves at 'the station,' on the bank of one of the canals, and see a range of 'omnibus gondolas,' all duly labelled for their respective courses through the city, and ranked up in front like so many of the terrestrial machines which haunt the ordinary railway termini of this earth. However, we had the consolation of reserving this to the close of our visit, when, of course, we must have awaked out of our Venetian feelings at anyrate. The train brought us to Padua long before bedtime.

REALLY! INDEED! IMPOSSIBLE!

During a prolonged summer sojourn with kind friends resident in a quiet country town, we became quite interested in the tactics of the neighbours, and acquainted with their social condition.

'I think we have almost exhausted our visiting round,' said our hostess, Mrs Smith, one morning, as she replenished her card-case, 'with the exception of *Really*, *Indeed*, and *Impossible*, to whom we must introduce you. You look puzzled! but I mean the three Misses Bonderlay, who are usually distinguished by these interjectional names. We will forthwith send them an invitation to tea this very evening, and they shall be their own etymologists.'

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At the appointed hour, three ladies were ushered into the drawing-room, bearing so startling a resemblance to each other in person, manner, and costume, that we at once decided they must be *trins*. Not so, however; there was a year or two's difference in age between them, which rendered the strong resemblance more remarkable. They were tall, well-formed, plump ladies, of middle or uncertain age; with round, unmeaning faces, flaxen locks, and pale-blue eyes. There was not a perceptible thread or pucker different in their three dresses, which must have fitted all indiscriminately; the flaxen curls were arranged in precisely the same waves round each mealy countenance; and the neat caps, with bright-green ribbons, doubtless had the same exact quantity of tulle and gauze in their fashioning. Each sister owned a delicate work-basket—trinal baskets also; and in each receptacle reposed a similar square of worsted-work, the same to the last stitch. We heard the visitors named as Miss Bonderlay, Miss Paulina Bonderlay, and Miss Constantia Bonderlay; but that was of no use, since they were not ticketed, and our blunders became embarrassing and ludicrous. We addressed Miss Bonderlay as Miss Paulina, when the senior lady drew up with dignified composure, and pointing to a sister, said: 'I am Miss Bonderlay: *that* lady is Miss Paulina Bonderlay.' And so on with the other two, who explained that they were juniors, as they waved a lily hand towards their eldest sister, indicative of her supremacy. But as the evening advanced, we learned to distinguish them by a peculiarity of expression, which had gained for these amiable maidens the somewhat singular cognomens of Really! Indeed! and Impossible! for their conversation, if conversation it could be called, consisted almost wholly of these interjections, pronounced in an unvarying, monotonous voice, while no shadow of emotion was perceptible on the cloudless expanse of their unwrinkled physiognomies.

When they were addressed in the usual conversational appeal which demands a reply of some kind, Miss Bonderlay, sipping her tea, or bending over her work, softly ejaculated: 'Really!' If you turned to Miss Paulina for some more tangible announcement of her opinion, she responded, in precisely the same tone: 'Indeed!' And when, as a last resource, you looked towards Miss Constantia, the word 'Impossible!' and that word alone, fell in honeyed accents from her ruby lips. By this means they were easily distinguished; and their most intimate friends often failed to recognise which was which when apart, and sometimes even when they were together, until the talismanic syllables gave to each her individuality. The peculiarity gave rise to a little good-humoured ridicule; but for our part, we thought it quite wonderful how well they played their part in conversation with so small a stock of words. There is much pliability of meaning, however, in an interjection; and in company, where there are



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always several persons who are anxious to be heard, it is a positive virtue. In Miss Constantia's intonation of her favourite 'impossible!' it seemed to me that there mingled a dash of sadness, a kind of musical and melancholy cadence, which was followed by an unconscious absence of mind, evidencing the fact, that her thoughts were what is vulgarly termed 'wool-gathering.' On mentioning this impression to Mrs Smith, she complimented us on our keen observation, since, in truth, a tinge of the romantic *did* attach to the history of the fair Constantia; and she then sketched the following outline, leaving all details to be filled up by the imagination of the auditor:—

The Misses Bonderlay, it seems, had attained the age of womanhood, when, by the decease of their surviving parent, a man of high moral rectitude, but a stern disciplinarian, they were left in possession of a comfortable independence, fully equal to their moderate wants. They had been governed with such an iron rule, and treated as such absolute automata from their childhood, that when the hand of death released them from the despotic sway, its effects still continued apparent in the constraint which habit had rendered second nature. They continued to reside in their native town, only removing to a smaller house, and pursued undeviatingly the routine they had always been accustomed to—a routine which might well bear comparison, in its monotony and apathy, with that of monastic seclusion. Rumour, with her thousand tongues, had never singled out these vestal ladies as objects of matrimonial schemes; no suitors darkened their doors or disturbed their peace; they made no enemies, and, perhaps, no very enthusiastic friends. They listened to the gossip retailed by their neighbours, as in politeness bound, but the imperturbable 'Really!' 'Indeed!' and 'Impossible!' gave no encouragement to gossip: they never asked questions, never propagated reports, but listened and ejaculated, and ejaculated and listened, giving and receiving no offence. It never was positively ascertained whether the Misses Bonderlay conversed among themselves; but popular opinion maintained, that they did not, assigning the ill-natured reason, that they had nothing to say. Being neither oral inquirers nor readers, what could they have to talk about? Still, popular opinion is often wrong, and perhaps it was so in this instance. At anyrate, if they did not exchange confidential sentiments, quarrels were avoided; and smoothly the three fair sisters sailed down the troublous stream of time.

It was a great and stirring event in their tranquil lives, when a maternal uncle, as if to vindicate the fidelity of old romance, did actually return from India to his native land with a large fortune. Mr Elliston, a childless widower, took up his abode at a watering-place, and sent for his eldest niece, Miss Bonderlay. She promptly obeyed the summons, and of course it was generally reported, and with some



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colouring, that the bulk of the nabob's fortune would be hers if she 'played her cards well.' But she did not play her cards well, as the event turned out; for the old splenetic Indian tired very soon of the monotonous 'Really!'—the sole response to his wonderful narratives of tiger-hunting and Eastern marvels in general. At length, Mr Elliston bluntly gave his visitor to understand that he wished to see Miss Paulina; and poor, crestfallen Miss Bonderlay returned home, and Miss Paulina departed in her turn to fill the vacant place at the nabob's board. She remained a considerable time longer than her elder sister had done; and it was surmised that 'Indeed!' had proved more agreeable than 'Really!' But, alas! for human foresight and conjecture, the second Miss Bonderlay re-appeared in her native town for the purpose of despatching the third relief in the person of Miss Constantia. 'The young one will have a human tongue,' muttered the choleric Indian: 'I want a companion, not a parrot.' The poor gentleman never imagined that there could be three parrots in one family; and he naturally concluded, that his choice had fallen on the right niece at last.

When he found out his mistake—and we need hardly say that he was not long about that—his chagrin and consternation may be imagined. Indeed, had it not been for the presence of a certain Major George, there is no doubt that when he heard the sweet 'Impossible!' of Miss Constantia, he would instantly have consigned her to the banishment and oblivion of her sisters. But Major George's quiet influence restrained the threatened ebullition of wrath; though when his best stories and jokes after dinner were received with a gentle 'impossible!' which meant either 'really,' or 'indeed,' or anything else it might pass for, Uncle Elliston struck the table violently with his clenched hand, exclaiming in a passion: 'Impossible? madam—impossible? Do you mean to give me the lie? I tell you, the anecdote I have just related is perfectly possible, and, moreover, perfectly true. What do you mean by impossible? I hate impossibles. Nothing is impossible! Do you mean to insult me, madam—heigh?'

'Impossible, dear uncle—impossible!' meekly ejaculated the gentle fair, affrighted at such an unusual display of excitement; and it was fortunate that Major George called off her uncle's attention from poor Miss Constantia's unconscious delinquency.

Major George was an Indian crony of Uncle Elliston's; considerably younger, however, than the latter, and, as the spinsters remarked sententiously, only sallow enough to be interesting, and only old enough to be sedate! His purse was amply filled, and Major George was on the look-out for a wife; but being most painfully shy and sensitive, it seemed rather a doubtful case if he would succeed in his aspirings. With the nabob, Major George was an immense favourite; but except that they had hunted tigers together, there seemed no adequate reason for so strong a preference—the



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taciturnity of the one being as remarkable as the communicativeness of the other. Mr Elliston called George a 'good fellow,' and slapped his shoulder approvingly; and introduced him to Miss Constantia with sly and peculiar *empressement*. Major George's visit was prolonged, and Miss Constantia's visit was prolonged far beyond the period allotted to her sisters; and Uncle Elliston gradually ceased to rave at 'Impossible!' But a terrible climax approached, and how it came about no one ever knew: Major George set off for Paris early one fine morning, and Miss Constantia appeared at the breakfast-table with eyes red and swollen with weeping. The nabob insisted on knowing what was the matter, and why his favourite had taken flight so unceremoniously.

'You don't mean to say you've refused him, Niece Con?' cried her uncle, 'for I know he meant to make you an offer of his hand and heart.'

'O no, uncle, no!—impossible!' sobbed the weeping lady.

'Oh! deuce take your *impossibles*, Con Bonderlay. Tell me if the lad asked you to marry him, and what your answer was?'

She hesitated—looked up—looked down—looked startled; and then murmured, as if examining for the first time the word, as it slipped musically from between her lips, 'Impossible!'

'Well, Niece Con, I think you're said *impossible* once too often in your life, if this is to be the upshot. Come now, be candid and don't be a fool! Did you intend to refuse Major George?'

'Impossible!' was the reply; which, habitual as it was, burst forth this time in a passion of tears and blushes.

Mr Elliston always affirmed that he saw at a glance how the matter stood: that, in short, Major George had made a 'fool of himself.' The lady had not *intended* to reject him; but the major, from his shy, shamefaced nature, on hearing Miss Constantia's fatal 'impossible!' in reply to his love-suit, had flown from the scene of disappointment without an attempt at explanation. Acting on such a supposition (for mere supposition it remained, neither the lady nor gentleman making the slightest confession), Mr Elliston addressed his niece with more gentleness, a dash of pity mingling in his tone: 'Niece Constantia, I shall write to Major George, and bring him back again; but mind you don't say "impossible" a second time!'

However, Mr Elliston indulged in the fault of procrastination, which in him often led to results he did not anticipate: he rarely remembered that excellent maxim, which advises us never to postpone till to-morrow what can be performed as well to-day. To-



morrow came, indeed; but with it also came an attack of gout, which incapacitated him from exertion for weeks: and scarcely was he convalescent, when a letter was put into his hands from the absentee, announcing the marriage of Major George with a very pretty and charming young lady. Mr Elliston handed the missive to his niece: she

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perused it in silence; but her uncle told Mrs Smith, in strict confidence, that he felt almost sure a tear fell on the paper. Be that as it might, shortly afterwards, when Mr Elliston signified his intention of inviting Major George, Major George's young bride, and the young bride's elder sister, to pay him a visit, Miss Constantia expressed a desire to return home. Her uncle acquiesced with rather too much alacrity for conventional *politesse*, exclaiming as he did so: 'I only hope, Niece Con, that George's wife won't be a "Dear me!" or a "Well, I never!" but a hearty, comfortable, chattering woman, with a will and a way of her own!'

Nor were Mr Elliston's hopes in this instance doomed to disappointment; for Mrs Major George had not only an actual tongue, but a way and a will of her own so decided, that ere the expiration of their visit, she succeeded in bringing about a union between the nabob and her elder sister. Some folks affirmed, that Mr Elliston came speedily to endure the flat contradictions of his wife with the humility of a broken spirit, and to speak with tender regret of his meek and inoffensive nieces. They, quiet souls, heard of their uncle the nabob's marriage without surprise, and without expressing emotion of any kind, beyond the 'Really!' 'Indeed!' and 'Impossible!' appertaining to each, as her distinguishing characteristic or mark of identity. When we first met the Misses Bonderlay, with their trinal baskets and squares of worsted-work, they were preparing a beautiful hearth-rug as a present for their uncle's wife, to be formed of these identical squares, with numerous others of a similar construction, and surrounded by a corresponding handsome border. Since that period, we have been favoured with exquisite specimens of their united industry; for the greatest pleasure of their lives consists in bestowing such-like gifts of handiwork on their friends and acquaintance.

But we have derived another benefit from our intercourse with the sisters. Whenever we find ourselves at a loss for an inoffensive reply, or are unwilling to pursue a discussion, we find a safe refuge in copying their harmless peculiarity; for, after all, the meaning of words depends very much on intonation: and we have not unfrequently had confirmed, by our own experience, the theory we have ventured to promulgate—that there is much virtue in such interjections as Really! Indeed! and Impossible!

THE GREAT AFGHAN BLUNDER.

Every war is a blunder; every battle a blot of shame upon human nature; and the greatest wisdom a successful belligerent can shew, even when he has been forced into the fray by his beaten antagonist, is to get out of it as fast as he can. But some wars are viewed, not as they ought to be, as indications of the slow progress of the human race from barbarism, but through the medium of the lofty and chivalrous feelings of the resisting party, or the party which



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takes arms against oppression. Hence, war and glory have come to be associated in the vulgar mind; and hence the mere act of fighting is termed honourable, although it is obvious that, abstractedly, it should excite only feelings of shame. Even the late Afghan war is looked upon as a *calamity*, relieved throughout by flashes of heroism and gleams of success—a war which, rightly viewed, is either one of the greatest crimes, or one of the most stupendous blunders recorded in history!

This war, we observe, has already found a chronicler, and one peculiarly qualified, both by his knowledge and talent, to do justice to the subject.[1] Although possessing all the essentials of history, however, the book has something more, and is therefore not strictly a history, in the conventional sense of the term; the text as well as the margin being burdened with letters, diaries, and documents of all kinds—the crude materials which it is the province of the historian to digest. The author, notwithstanding, has a clear historical head; his narrative, when he permits it to flow uninterrupted, is animated; his reflections generally philosophical; his summaries of individual character acute and distinct; and so peculiar have been his sources of information, that henceforward no man will sit down to write upon this era of the history of India, or of Central Asia, before carefully consulting the volumes of Mr Kaye.

These volumes, however, comprise between thirteen and fourteen hundred octavo pages, filled with hard names and minute details, and rendered more difficult by the unpardonable want of an index. Although a necessity, therefore, for the more respectable libraries, and a thing to be hoarded by all collectors as a work of reference, the book has little chance of being known to the mass of the public; and we propose, therefore, to arrange the few extracts we are able to give, in such a way as, with the aid of our own filling up, may convey to the general reader—what, we suspect, he has never received before—some distinct idea of one of the most fantastic tricks that ever made the angels weep.

There is no country in the world more secure from external invasion than India; but on the west, more especially, nature has interposed between her and the more civilised powers of Europe and Asia a succession of rivers, mountains, and deserts, absolutely impassable by an army of any formidable magnitude. Notwithstanding this, there had been long an uneasy feeling connected with the idea of the territorial aggrandisement of Russia, and of late years, by the desire manifested by that power to interfere in the affairs of Persia. In 1837-38, therefore, when a Persian army was before Herat, with Russian officers busy in the camp, it is no wonder that, to previously excited imaginations, the danger should have seemed to assume a tangible form. The principality of Herat, although on the other side of intervening deserts, extending for many



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hundred miles, was in itself a fertile and beautiful oasis, where a numerous army might be refreshed and provisioned, and established as on a vantage-ground. From thence the Persians, strengthened and officered by the Russians, might roll on towards Cabool, and there prepare for a descent upon India. This magnificent but terrible idea was not examined in its details—it was taken for granted as a thing not only possible but probable; and the far-distant region of Hindostan, separated as it was by deserts, mountains, and rivers from the tumult that agitated Central Asia, was stirred by conflicting feelings of terror and exultation. British India, from the Himalaya to the sea, is dotted here and there with native states, which the inconsistent policy of the Company in Leadenhall Street has preserved in a kind of liberty, as relics and remembrancers of a past *régime*. But besides these uncertain protégés, we had to look to the natives in our own provinces, who seemed to *expect* that something would happen—they knew not what, any more than their rulers. ‘Among our Mussulman subjects,’ says Mr Kaye, ‘the feeling was somewhat akin to that which had unsettled their minds at the time when the rumoured advent of Zemaun Shah made them look for the speedy restoration of Mohammedan supremacy in Hindostan. In their eyes, indeed, the movement beyond the Afghan frontier took the shape of a Mohammedan invasion; and it was believed that countless thousands of true believers were about to pour themselves over the plains of the Punjab and Hindostan, and to wrest all the country between the Indus and the sea from the hands of the infidel usurpers. The Mohammedan journals, at this time, teemed with the utterances of undisguised sedition. There was a decline in the value of public securities; and it went openly from mouth to mouth, in the streets and the bazaars, that the Company’s Raj was nearly at an end.’

Under these circumstances, it seemed necessary to look to the intervening country, Afghanistan, which in this summary manner was to be made a ‘platform of observation’ for the Perso-Russian army to prepare for its descent upon Hindostan. The Afghans were tribes of hardy mountaineers, inhabiting a wild and thinly-peopled country. They consisted of soldiers, husbandmen, and shepherds, all convertible, at a moment’s notice, into thieves and bandits; and through their formidable defiles flowed an uncertain stream of commerce, connecting India with the distant provinces of Persia and Russia. So little was known of these mountaineers, that in the early part of this century, their prince, Shah Zemaun, was a formidable bugbear to the Indian Council, and nothing was thought of for a time but an invasion of the Afghans. In one of the sudden revolutions, however, so common in semi-barbarous states, this shah was taken captive, and his eyes punctured with a lancet—a summary act of deposition in the East, for a blind man cannot reign. Two of his brothers competed



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for the vacant throne; and notwithstanding the efforts of a famous king-making vizier, Futteh Khan, the prize fell for a time to the lot of him who is so well known to English readers by the name and style of Shah Soojah. But his incapacity was soon manifest. Sometimes a king, sometimes a bandit, and sometimes a fugitive subsisting by the sale of his jewels, his cause at length became altogether hopeless; and after being robbed of his last treasure, the Koh-i-Noor—as has already been detailed in this Journal[2]—he took refuge in the British territory.

Futteh Khan, the king-making vizier, had twenty brothers; but one of the younger fry he treated with especial neglect. 'The son of a woman of the Kuzzilbash tribe, looked down upon by the high-bred Douranee ladies of his father's household, the boy had begun life in the degrading office of a sweeper at the sacred cenotaph of Lamech. Permitted, at a later period, to hold a menial office about the person of the powerful Wuzeer, he served the great man with water, or bore his pipe; was very zealous in his ministrations; kept long and painful vigils; saw everything, heard everything in silence; bided his time patiently, and when the hour came, trod the stage of active life as no irresolute novice. A stripling of fourteen, in the crowded streets of Peshawur in broad day, as the buyers and the sellers thronged the thoroughfares of the city, he slew one of the enemies of Futteh Khan, and galloped home to report the achievement to the Wuzeer. From that time his rise was rapid. The neglected younger brother of Futteh Khan became the favourite of the powerful chief, and following the fortunes of the warlike minister, soon took his place among the chivalry of the Douranee Empire.'

The name of this youth is well known in the annals of our time: he was Dost Mahomed, a gay, bold, frank, daring character, who rose from the excesses of his early years into something resembling a hero of romance. One of these excesses was committed when he had taken by assault the Palace of Herat. It consisted in tearing the jewelled waistband from the person of the wife of one of the royal princes—a terrible outrage in the eyes of these *barbarous* soldiers of the farther East, who, even when covered with blood, and loaded with rapine, cast down their eyes before the females of their enemies' household. In this case, the profaned garment was sent by the lady to her brother, the son of the then Afghan king, and a bloody vengeance followed, not upon the author of the outrage, but on the king-making vizier, who, falling into the hands of the prince whom he had himself placed upon the throne, was literally hacked to pieces. Dost Mahomed now rose like a rocket. The base and feeble remains of legitimacy seemed to die away of its own weakness, and the despised younger son of the king-making vizier soon reigned supreme at Cabool. Let us note that this was in 1826. The new king, says Mr Kaye, 'had hitherto lived the life of

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a dissolute soldier. His education had been neglected, and in his very boyhood he had been thrown in the way of pollution of the foulest kind. From his youth, he had been greatly addicted to wine, and was often to be seen in public reeling along in a state of degrading intoxication, or scarcely able to keep his place in the saddle. All this was now to be reformed. He taught himself to read and to write, accomplishments which he had before, if at all, scantily possessed. He studied the Koran, abandoned the use of strong liquors, became scrupulously abstemious, plain in his attire, assiduous in his attention to business, urbane and courteous to all.' In 1833, Shah Soojah, issuing from the British territory, made an abortive attempt to recover his kingdom; but Runjeet Singh, the ruler of the Sikhs, was more successful in wresting from him Peshawur, a province of Afghanistan, and Dost Mahomed, both in rage and terror, began to look around him for a foreign alliance. His grand aim was to secure the friendship of the British; but this was scornfully refused. The governor-general, with exquisite irony, replied to his overture: 'My friend, you are aware that it is not the practice of the British government to interfere with the affairs of other independent states!' and a British envoy to Cabool, while refusing everything that was important for him to ask, kindly cautioned him to abstain from connecting himself with any other power.

Such was the position of affairs in Afghanistan when the government of India, in 1838, was roused to a sense of what seemed immediate danger by the movements in Central Asia. On the one hand, there was a *de facto* king, who had reigned twelve years, who was now struggling in the grasp of the ruler of the Punjab, and eagerly soliciting the alliance of the British; while the Russians and Persians, leagued before Herat, were already negotiating for a footing in his country. On the other hand, there was a deposed exile, who had tried repeatedly, and in vain, to recover his throne, whose whole life had been a tissue of misfortunes and feeblenesses, and who now lived on the charity of the Company in their own territory. The obvious policy was to secure the independence of Afghanistan and aid her resources. How to do this? To embrace the proffered alliance of Dost Mahomed, or force Shah Soojah upon the country, and prepare for the reception of the Persians and Russians, by kindling a civil war? The latter was the course determined on! A league was formed, known in the history of our time as the Tripartite Treaty—including Runjeet Singh, Shah Soojah, and the British government. By this document, it was agreed that certain large portions of the Afghan territory, including Peshawur, should belong for ever to Runjeet Singh; that the maharajah should likewise possess the passes both of the Sutlej and the Indus, with power to bar the way at his pleasure; that the Afghans and Sikhs should mutually exchange military assistance when required; and that the friends and enemies of any of the three high contracting parties should be the friends and enemies of all.

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There was not a word in this treaty, it will be seen, of a British war in Afghanistan; but the Indian government soon came to enlarge its views, and instead of merely patting Shah Soojah on the back, and setting him upon his countrymen, it determined to take the field in such force as would instantaneously settle the whole affair. The celebrated Simlah manifesto was accordingly drawn up, in which the governor-general gave 'his most exquisite reasons,' unpolitely stigmatised by a great portion of the Indian press as a tissue of falsehoods. With this, however, we have nothing to do; *our* business is with the fact, that before this proclamation had obtained general currency, information had been received that the siege of Herat was raised, and the Persian army on its retreat. This was awkward. The occasion of the intended British invasion of Afghanistan was at an end. No matter. A large and brilliant army was already assembled on the banks of the Indus, and the war must go on! Many persons from the first considered the result doubtful; and Shah Soojah himself had his misgivings, when he found that he was to be forced by Christian bayonets upon a nation of bigoted Mohammedans!

But although the change in the state of affairs in Central Asia made no change in the belligerent resolves of the Indian government, it determined them to reduce the size of the army, and so make a little war instead of a great one. Scarcely had the Army of the Indus, as it was called, begun its march through Scinde, when it was beset with difficulties. 'Between Sukkur and Shikarpoor the camels had dropped down dead by scores. But there was a worse tract of country in advance. The officers looked at their maps, and traced with dismay the vast expanse of sandy desert, where no green pasture met the eye, and no sound of water spoke to the ear. But the season was favourable. Escaping the arid and pestilential blasts of April and May, and the noxious exhalations of the four succeeding months, the column advanced into Cutch. The hard, salt-mixed sand crackled under their horses' feet, as the general and his staff crossed the desert, on a fine bright night of early March—so cool, that only when in a full gallop the riders ceased to long for the warmth of their cloaks. The distance from Shikarpoor to Dadur is a hundred and forty-six miles. It was accomplished by the Bengal column in sixteen painful marches. Water and forage were so scarce, that the cattle suffered terribly on the way. The camels fell dead by scores on the desert; and further on, the Beloochee robbers carried them off with appalling dexterity. When the column reached a cultivated tract of country, the green crops were used as forage for the horses. The *ryots* were liberally paid on the spot; but the agents of the Beloochee chiefs often plundered the unhappy cultivators of the money that had been paid to them, even in front of the British camp.' The Bolan Pass was more formidable. 'The stream of the Bolan

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river was tainted by the bodies of the camels that had sunk beneath their loads. The Beloochee freebooters were hovering about, cutting off our couriers, murdering stragglers, carrying off our baggage and our cattle. Among the rocks of this stupendous defile, our men pitched their tents, and toiled on again day after day, over a wretched road, covered with loose flint-stones, surmounting, at first by a scarcely perceptible ascent, and afterwards by a difficult acclivity, the great Brahoo chain of hills. The Bolan Pass is nearly sixty miles in length. The passage was accomplished in six days. They were days of drear discomfort, but not of danger. A resolute enemy might have wrought mighty havoc among Cotton's regiments: but the enemies with which now they had to contend were the sharp flint-stones, which lamed our cattle; the scanty pasturage, which destroyed them; and the marauding tribes, who carried them off. The way was strewn with baggage, with abandoned tents and stores; and luxuries, which a few weeks afterwards would have fetched their weight twice counted in rupees, were left to be trampled down by the cattle in the rear, or carried off by the plunderers about them.'

These disagreeables were surmounted; Soojah was installed at Candahar; Ghuznee was captured in gallant style—when fifty prisoners were hacked to pieces by orders of the shah; Dost Mahomed was beaten wherever he shewed himself; and, finally, our victorious army arrived at Cabool. Glorious victories are always highly appreciated in England. The chief actors in this expedition were rewarded with titles of earl, baron, baronet, and knight; and 'all went merry as a marriage-bell.' Not, however, but that there were moments of misgiving among the conquerors at Cabool. Dost Mahomed, though beaten, was not subdued, and his repeated small successes made him almost formidable. But even this was at an end, and the Dost surrendered himself prisoner.

The British force remained in Cabool two years, where officers and men alike misconducted themselves, as soldiers always do in a conquered country. The exasperation of the natives became more and more manifest: Akbar Khan, a son of Dost Mahomed, hovered about the country, the evil genius, as it is supposed, of the rising storm; and at length an insurrection broke out in the city. In this tissue of surprising blunders, perhaps none is more remarkable than the facts, that the general selected to command an army so critically placed was a poor old man, feeble in body and mind, and that the wives and children of many of the officers were present with their husbands and fathers, as if the causeless invasion of a country, and the massacre of thousands of its inhabitants, had been a party of pleasure! The moment of retreat at length came; snow covered the ground; the dreary passes of Khoord-Cabool were before them; and as they turned their backs upon the city, they were saluted with farewell volleys of musket-bullets.



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The story of this fatal retreat has been often told. The result was communicated in the following manner to the British troops shut up in Jelalabad: 'At last, on the 13th of January, when the garrison were busy on the works, toiling with axe and shovel, with their arms piled and their accoutrements laid out close at hand, a sentry on the ramparts, looking out towards the Cabool road, saw a solitary white-faced horseman struggling on towards the fort. The word was passed; the tidings spread. Presently the ramparts were lined with officers, looking out, with throbbing hearts, through unsteady telescopes, or with straining eyes tracing the road. Slowly and painfully, as though horse and rider both were in an extremity of mortal weakness, the solitary mounted man came reeling, tottering on. They saw that he was an Englishman. On a wretched, weary pony, clinging, as one sick or wounded, to its neck, he sat or rather leant forward; and there were those who, as they watched his progress, thought that he could never reach, unaided, the walls of Jelalabad. A shudder ran through the garrison. That solitary horseman looked like the messenger of death. Few doubted that he was the bearer of intelligence that would fill their souls with horror and dismay. Their worst forebodings seemed confirmed. There was the one man who was to tell the story of the massacre of a great army. A party of cavalry were sent out to succour him. They brought him in wounded, exhausted, half-dead. The messenger was Dr Brydon, and he now reported his belief that he was the sole survivor of an army of some 16,000 men!'^[3] From this wholesale butchery, which we are not disposed to detail, the women and children, the general, and the husbands of the ladies, were rescued by Akbar Khan. They were held for a time by the son of Dost Mahomed in a sort of captivity; where some of them had leisure to write narratives of their adventures, while others, with an inconsistency common and entertaining in melodramatic pieces, amused themselves with fun and frolic!

And what became of Shah Soojah? 'Rising early on the morning, he arrayed himself in royal apparel, and, accompanied by a small party of Hindostanees, proceeded under a salute, in a chair of state, towards his camp, which had been pitched at Seeah-Sungh. But Soojah-ool-dowlah, the son of the Newab, had gone out before him, and placed in ambush a party of Jezailchees. As the shah and his followers were making their way towards the regal tent, the marksmen fired upon them. The volley took murderous effect. Several of the bearers and of the escort were struck down, and the king himself killed on the spot. A ball had entered his brain. Soojah-ool-dowlah then rode up; and as he contemplated his bloody work, the body of the unhappy king, vain and pompous as he was to the very last, was stripped of all the jewels about it—the jewelled dagger, the jewelled girdle, the jewelled head-dress—and it was then cast into a ditch.'



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It was of course impossible for the Company to suffer the blot upon their arms to remain: indeed, their safety in India required that no tarnish of defeat should rest permanently upon their name. The British troops at Candahar and Jelalabad were ordered to march upon Cabool, where, as an enduring mark of the retributory visit, in addition to pillaging the shops, setting fire to the houses, and murdering the unresisting inhabitants, they destroyed—not the fortress—but the *bazaar*, the great commercial depôt of Central Asia!

The objects of the war were now accomplished. But Shah Soojah was dead. The king we had driven from the throne, however, was still alive: Dost Mahomed, therefore, was restored; and nothing remained to be done, since the grand drama had been brought to a conclusion, but to celebrate the happy *dénouement* by a fête. This, accordingly, came off at Ferozepore. 'Then there was feasting and festivity in the gigantic tents, hung with silken flags, on which, in polyglot emblazonments, were the names of the actions that had been fought; many complimentary effusions, in the shape of after-dinner harangues; and in the mornings grand field-days, more or less, according to the "skyey influences.'" The year—a most eventful one—was closed with a grand military display. The plain was covered with British and Sikh troops, and in the presence of Pertaub Singh, the heir-apparent of Lahore; Dhyan Singh, the minister; the governor-general, the commander-in-chief, and others of less note, some 40,000 men, with 100 guns, were man[oe]uvred on the great plain. On this grand tableau the curtain fell; and the year opportunely closed in gaiety and glitter—in prosperity and parade.'

We have now concluded our task, but without having been able to convey even a faint idea of the stores of information that are contained in these valuable volumes. They are destined, however, to retain a permanent place among the books of reference which enrich our national literature, and contribute to its advancement.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] *History of the War in Afghanistan*: from the unpublished Letters and Journals of Political and Military Officers employed in Afghanistan throughout the entire period of British Connection with that Country. By John William Kaye. 2 vols. London: Bentley. 1051.

[2] See No 291.

[3] A sketch of this famous retreat will appear in a forthcoming volume of *Chambers's Pocket Miscellany*.



OCCASIONAL NOTES.

TENACITY OF LIFE IN INSECTS.



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However useful insects may be in the general economy of nature, it is but too true that farmers and gardeners often find them a pest, and with each returning summer the pages of agricultural journals abound with remedies, offensive and defensive, against the obnoxious invaders. In such cases, it becomes desirable to know what remedial means are the most efficacious, and we are glad to find that the question has been taken up by persons competent to discuss it. Among these, Dr J. Davy has given the results of his inquiry in a paper, 'On the Effects of certain Agents on Insects,' which has just been published in the Transactions of the Entomological Society, and is well worth reproduction in a condensed form. The experiments were begun in the winter of 1850, the season, as will be remembered, being so mild that insects were readily met with. Their objects were threefold—to test the effects of temperature, of gases, and of vapours. In the former, recourse was had to extremes of heat and cold. A bee placed in a temperature of 32° became at first more active, but the next morning was found torpid, as if dead; a register-thermometer shewing that 25° had been the lowest temperature during the night. Transferred to a temperature of 52°, the bee revived in half an hour, and on the following day exhibited the same results under the same conditions. A fly which, on December 8, was lively on the wing, in a temperature of 52° indoors, was disinclined to move at 40°; and still more so, stirring only when touched, at 33°, but did not become torpid, as in the case of the bee, even at 23°, signs of life being distinctly visible. Several trials made with different species of flies all gave the same result—a remarkable power of sustaining life. The method adopted was to enclose the insects in a glass tube, and place them out of doors all night; and though the tube was frequently covered with frost, they soon revived in the warm temperature of a room. It is perhaps scarcely possible to estimate the degree of cold which insect life will bear without destruction, since many of these creatures survive the terrible winters of the arctic regions. Still, a knowledge of the effects of reduction of temperature will be valuable, as affording data by which to judge of the effects and probable duration of visitations of insects, and of the nature of the precautionary measures to be adopted. In an experiment of alternate temperature from 40° to 65° tried for five days on a bee, the creature at last 'ceased to give any sign of vitality.'

The influence of heat appears to be much more rapid than that of cold: a fly exposed to a temperature of 120°, died in two or three minutes; and 113° proved fatal to another; while a third, placed in a temperature increased gradually to 96°, remained alive for more than an hour. Others bore from 80° to 90° for two hours; and in one instance, a fly survived from 86° to 100° for several hours, but became uneasy with



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a slight rise, and died at 105°. A bee, taken on March 15, from a temperature of 45°, was exposed to 80° without any apparent diminution of activity; at 90° it ceased to buzz; and at 96°, ceased altogether to move, and did not revive. Although these results are too few to enable us to determine the laws with respect to the influence of temperature on insects, they may serve a purpose, in shewing that the effect is not that gradual one of hybernation, where activity and torpor succeed each other but slowly.

In the series of experiments with gas, it was found that flies placed in carbonic acid gas became instantly motionless, and died if left for any length of time. Some revived after an hour's immersion; others, after two or three hours—the revival being slow in proportion to the time of exposure to the gas. Somewhat similar results were obtained with flies and bees in hydrogen and azote. To try the effect of deprivation, a fly was shut up in a tube with but a small quantity of common air, on the 5th February, in a temperature varying from 52° to 60° during the whole time of the experiment. The insect manifested no uneasiness until the 25th day, and was found dead on the 28th. Another fly, enclosed in a similar tube, with a quantity of air not more than a few times its own volume, became languid on the second day, and motionless on the twelfth, but revived on being taken out.

Flies immersed in oxygen were found dead the second day, with a diminution of the quantity of the gas. Coal-gas produced almost immediate insensibility, with a few feeble attempts at revival, but in no case effectual. Sulphuretted hydrogen also proved especially fatal—an instant's immersion was sufficient to destroy life; though withdrawn at once, not one of the flies recovered. It was the same when the portion of gas diffused in the air of the tube was so minute as to be scarcely appreciable. On bees, too, the effect was similar; the deadly nature of the gas on their delicate organisation being invariably destructive. Like results were obtained with chlorine.

In the class of vapours, ammonia proved fatal in one case, and harmless in another; muriatic acid stupified in two, and killed in twenty-four hours. The vapour of nitric acid was equally fatal with sulphuretted hydrogen; and, in alcoholic vapour, at a temperature of 74°, 'for a few minutes the fly shewed increased activity; in a few more, it became nearly motionless; after about a quarter of an hour, it appeared to be torpid. Now, exposed to the air of the room, in a few minutes a slight motion of its feet was seen; after a couple of hours, it was nearly as active as before the experiment; two hours later, it was found dead.' The same effects, with slight variations, were produced on other flies. With ether, cessation of motion was almost instantaneous, followed, however, by revivification, except in one instance: brief immersion in chloroform did not prevent revival, but an exposure of eight minutes killed: camphor and turpentine were both fatal: with attar of roses, musk, or iodine, no ill effect was perceptible.



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The experiments with prussic acid are worthy the attention of entomologists, with whom it is often a matter of importance to kill an insect with the least possible amount of injury. In these instances, the plan pursued was to charge a small tube with the acid, and place it inside that containing the insects. The vapour of 1-16th of a grain was sufficient to destroy bees and flies; and that of seven grains proved fatal to large beetles, and the largest kind of bees. Although as yet the investigation has taken but a limited range, it will be seen that it opens a wide field of research: the next step will be to group or class those agents which appear to have produced similar effects. It is remarkable, as Dr Davy observes, 'that most of the substances which, even in minute portions mixed with common air, prevent the slow combustion of phosphorus, as indicated by its shining in the dark, have the effect, on the insects on which they were tried, of suspending animation.'

He says further: 'Some of the results may not be undeserving notice for practical purposes—as those in the instances of sulphuretted hydrogen, oil of turpentine, and camphor, in relation to the destruction of parasitical insects, whether infesting plants or minerals, or to the preservation of substances from the attacks of insects. To be applicable to the preservation of plants, of course it is necessary that the agents to be used should not exercise on them any materially injurious effects. This must be determined by experiments made expressly for the purpose. The few trials I have yet made on seeds seem to shew, that the steeping them in a solution in water of sulphuretted hydrogen has not prevented their germination. The seeds tried were mignonette, cress-seed, and that of a *Nemophila*: analogy—namely, that of steeping the seed of the cerealia in a solution of the white oxide of arsenic, is in favour of the same conclusion. Further, for the preservation of articles, whether of clothing or furniture, it is hardly less necessary that the substances to be employed should have no offensive odour. Judging from the effects of attar of roses, and from what we know of scented woods not being liable to be attacked by insects, the probability is, that any volatile oil of agreeable perfume will answer the purpose required, and prove a true instance of the *utile et dulce* combined.

'As carbonic acid gas, and some of the other agents mentioned, produce merely a temporary torpor, it may be a question whether this gas, or simple immersion in water, may not be advantageously substituted for the fumes of burning sulphur, destructive of life, at the yearly gathering of honey; the former, indeed, may be said to be in use in the Levant, where the smoke of the fire of leaves, in which the carbonic acid generated may be considered as chiefly operative, is employed to stupify the bees preparatory to the spoiling of their hives.'

CHILDREN SUCKLED BY WOLVES.



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This subject is one which will not be unwelcome to those whose faith in the myths of Roman history has been dissipated by Niebuhr and others: they may still believe the story of Romulus and Remus and the wolf. The Honourable Captain Egerton, in a communication from India, says: 'Colonel Sleeman told me one of the strangest stories I ever heard relating to some children, natives of this country (Oude), carried away and brought up by wolves. He is acquainted with five instances of this, in two of which he has both seen the children and knows the circumstances connected with their recapture from the animals. It seems that wolves are very numerous about Cawnpore and Lucknow, and that children are constantly carried off by them. Most of these have, of course, served as dinners for their captors, but some have been brought up and educated by them after their own fashion. Some time ago, two of the king of Oude's sowars (mounted gendarmes), riding along the banks of the Goomptje, saw three animals come down to drink. Two were evidently young wolves, but the third was as evidently some other animal. The sowars rushed in upon them, captured the three, and to their great surprise found that one was a small naked boy. He was on all-fours; like his companions; had callosities on his knees and elbows, evidently caused by the attitude in moving about; and bit and scratched violently in resisting the capture. The boy was brought up in Lucknow, where he lived some time, and may, for aught I know, be living still. He was quite unable to articulate words, but had a dog-like intellect—quick at understanding signs, and so on. Another *enfant trouvé*, under the same circumstances, lived with two English people for some time. He learned at last to pronounce the name of a lady who was kind to him, and for whom he shewed some affection; but his intellect was always clouded, and more like the instinct of a dog than the mind of a human being. There was another more wonderful, but hardly so well-authenticated, story of a boy who never could get rid of a strong wolfish smell, and who was seen, not long after his capture, to be visited by three wolves, which came evidently with hostile intentions, but which, after closely examining him—he seeming not the least alarmed—played with him, and some nights afterwards brought their relations, making the number of visitors amount to five—the number of cubs which composed the litter from which he had been taken. There is no account of any grown-up person having been found among the wolves. Probably, after a certain time, the captives may have got into a set of less scrupulous wolves, not acquainted with the family: the result is obvious.'

ELECTRO-MAGNETIC MACHINE.



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The electro-magnetic machine invented by Professor Page, has from time to time been noticed in our Journal, and we have now to give a further account of this interesting mechanism, as furnished by an American periodical. It appears that several of these machines have lately been submitted to critical examination by competent authority at Washington, and with very favourable conclusions. The principle has already been explained—namely, the alternate rising and falling of an iron rod within a helix through which an electro-magnetic current is made to pass: when the current is *on*, the rod rises, and remains, as it were, self-suspended, equidistant from all parts of the surrounding helix; and falls as soon as the current ceases by breaking contact with the battery. The 'rod' of one of the machines submitted to the examination weighs 350 lbs.: no sooner, however, was contact made, than it rose into its position. 'Dr Page then stood on the top of the rod, which not only sustained his weight, in addition to its own, but he pushed with his hands against the ceiling, increasing the downward pressure on the rod, which was only acted upon as a powerful spring would have been, but still maintaining its perpendicular position concentric to the inner surface of the helices. I held,' says the reporter, 'an iron rod in my hand, with the end of which I touched that of the suspended rod. I could not detach it by pulling or jerking, and could only alter its position so as to cause the annular space to become eccentric instead of concentric. The instant the battery was disconnected, the rod fell to the floor with its full force.'

By moving the wires from the battery up and down outside the pile of helices, it was clear that an upward and downward movement of the rod would follow, 'and that a shackle-bar attached from this oscillating rod, and to a crank, would convert this reciprocating motion into a continuous one.' To this contrivance the name of 'Jumper' was given, of which one was exhibited, the helices weighing 800 lbs., and the rod 526 lbs.; and by the means above mentioned, it has been converted into a working-engine, with a twelve-inch crank, and a fly-wheel of four and a half feet in diameter. 'On the outside of the helices,' to quote the description, 'was placed a line of pieces of metal, so arranged as to render the attachment with the battery and its necessary alternations performable by the engine itself. Before starting the engine, I tied an arm of the fly-wheel, at one-third greater distance from the centre than the length of the crank, to an upright beam of twelve inches diameter, which formed part of the frame of the engine. The cord used was the better kind of bed-cord, of great strength, nearly three-eighths of an inch thick. This was passed twice round the fly-wheel arm and post before being tied, and with pieces of sole-leather intervening, to prevent the cord being cut by the corners of the post. Such a fixture, I am confident, would have held a five



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horse-power steam-engine from starting, with full pressure of steam on the piston, and no previous motion. Not so, however, with this engine, for the breaking of the cord and contact with the battery occurred at the same instant of time, leaving an impression in the beam to the depth of the cord, despite the protection of the sole-leather.' The engine continued to work in the most satisfactory manner; and Dr Page attached a circular-saw, which was used in wood, to a depth of six inches, and at a speed such as could be anticipated from the power which we afterwards found the engine to possess.

Careful experiments made to test the power of the engine, shewed it to be equal to seven horse nearly; and the estimate for consumption of acid and use of zinc is twenty cents for each horse-power per day of twenty-four hours. The escape of acid vapours from the batteries is an evil that will have to be guarded against, to prevent the pernicious effects produced in several electro-plating establishments, where the health of the workmen has been seriously injured by the liberated gases. This defect being overcome, Professor Page's electro-magnetic engine may become highly valuable in engineering and manufacturing processes. To quote the conclusions of the report—'the cost will be less than that of a steam-engine of the same power: the weight will be but one quarter, if boilers and contents be taken into account: the expense of firemen and engineers is dispensed with: buildings, and stocks of goods, and vessels may be more cheaply insured than when steam-engines are used, as there could be no risk from explosion or fire: the expenses are only active while the machine is positively in action, whereas an ordinary steam-engine continues its expenses whenever the fire is burning.

'Dr Page's engine, if used ten times during the day, of six minutes each time, would have but one hour's expenses for the day; whereas a steam-engine, under similar circumstances, would be subject to nearly or quite the full expenses of fuel for twenty-four hours, or equal to the expenses of continuous work.'

THE SCIENCE OF COLOUR IN DRESS.

Unfortunately for our health and comfort, the teachings of science are too often disregarded, if they interfere with our habits. Science, when not practically applied, loses its value; it wants fixedness, stability. Its application is its embodiment; without it, it is a mere figment of the brain. Its business is to inform the mind, and remove erroneous impressions; and its highest aim is usefulness. The popular belief with respect to dress, that a black dress is warmer, both in winter and summer, than a white one, is erroneous. The truth is that, the material being the same, a black dress is cool in winter and warm in summer—while a white one is warm in winter and cool in summer; that is to say, the one is cool when we require warmth, and warm when we require to be cooled; while the other is warm when we are cool, and cool when we are

warm, and thus answers the purpose of dress, which is, to protect the body from the influence of the weather.



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Science teaches that dark colours absorb heat, and part with it much more rapidly than light ones; black and white being the two extremes. How strange that this knowledge has not been applied to dress! If the bowls of two spoons, the one polished, and the other smeared with soot, be held near a fire, it will be found that the blackened one becomes hot much sooner than the other; and if now they be both made hot by holding them against the bars of the grate, and then removed from the fire, and suspended in the air, it will be seen that the blackened one will get cool much sooner than the other. It is true that the difference in this case is chiefly due to the polish on one of the spoons, but it is not altogether due to it. Again: if hot water be poured into two vessels, the one white and the other black, the water in the latter will cool before the other. So likewise if two persons, one dressed in black and the other in white—all other conditions being the same—were to go from the cold external air into a heated room, the one in black would feel the heat sooner than the other, and on leaving the room would feel the cold sooner; consequently, would be more likely to take cold than the other. It is therefore evident that a light-coloured dress is more conducive to health and comfort than a dark one, since it prevents the external heat or cold from too suddenly reaching the body, and prevents the body from too suddenly parting with its heat; and thus, that it keeps it in a more equable temperature.

We may now understand the reason why animals in the polar regions are white—their whiteness preserves the heat of their bodies much better than any other colour. So likewise the earth, in consequence of the whiteness of snow, is prevented from parting with its heat. It is not so much by snow protecting the earth from the external cold, that it does such valuable service, as by its preventing the *radiation of the internal heat*. This whiteness of snow, and of the polar animals, must not be looked upon as the result of blind chance: it strikingly exemplifies the wisdom and goodness of the Creator.

The above observations are peculiarly applicable to the case of men engaging in arctic expeditions. I do not know what dress they usually wear, but it is quite clear that a white woollen one would be the most appropriate; and if it had a gloss upon it, it would be so much the better. This they might have learned from observing the animals in those regions.

DIBDIN'S SAILOR-SONGS.

In a recent article in this Journal,[4] we gave our opinion of practical sea-life, and incidentally alluded to the songs of Dibdin. The paper excited some interest; and we may, therefore, venture to say a little more about these celebrated songs, concerning which the public in general has always had, and still has, a very erroneous impression.



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We commence with an assertion which will startle many—namely, that Dibdin's songs never were, are not, and never can be, popular with sailors. About six years ago—if we recollect rightly as to date—the Lords of the Admiralty, considering that Dibdin's songs had always been 'worth a dozen pressgangs,' as the common saying is, ordered that twenty of the best songs should be printed on strong paper, and presented to every man and boy in the royal navy. This act, however, is not so much to be regarded as a strong evidence of the private opinion of the nautical magnates in question—but the chief of them is invariably a *landsmen*—as of their deference to the force of public estimation on the subject of the songs. Let it not be thought, from the tenor of our subsequent remarks, that we ourselves are at all prejudiced against Dibdin. So far is it the reverse, that we were brought up from childhood 'in belief' of that gifted lyricist: our father repeated to us in early life his finest songs, and we have never ceased to regard him with sincere admiration. He was a man of true genius in his peculiar walk, and it has been well and truly said of him, that, 'had he written merely to amuse, his reputation would have been great; but it stands the higher, because his writings always advocate the cause of virtue: charity, humanity, constancy, love of country, and courage, are the subjects of his song and of his praise.'

Dibdin himself was not a sailor, and his knowledge of sea-life, of seamen, and of sea-slang, is generally attributed to the instructions of his brother, the master of a ship. This brother was subsequently lost at sea, and Dibdin is said to have written *Poor Tom Bowling* as his elegy. Dibdin's sea-lore was, therefore, altogether second-hand and theoretical; and his songs, on the whole, present an idealised and exaggerated embodiment of the characteristics, life, and habits of seamen; but it is wonderful how accurately and skilfully he introduces allusions to sea-man[oe]uvres, and how very rarely he errs in nautical technicalities. They were written in war-time, when the nation was excited to a pitch of frenzied enthusiasm by a succession of unparalleled naval victories—when a prince of the blood trod the quarter-deck, and Nelson was 'Britannia's god of war.' Their popularity with *landsmen* was then incredible. Everybody sang Dibdin's sea-songs, deeming them a perfect mirror of sea-life and seamen's character. The truth is, he has exaggerated both the virtues and the follies of sailors to an absurd degree; and his blue-jacketed heroes are no more to be accepted as a fair type of sailors, than are Fenimore Cooper's Chingachgook and Leatherstocking as types of the Red Men and trappers of North America. Herein, we conceive, is the primary cause of Dibdin failing to enlist strongly the sympathies of real blue-water tars; and the very same reason, with some modifications, prevents all prose works, descriptive of sea-life,



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from being favourably received by practical mariners. We have heard the 'sailing' portions of the finest works of Cooper and others scoffed at by seamen; and the very best book on sea-life ever written, Dana's *Two Years before the Mast*, is held in no sort of esteem by the very men for whose benefit the author avows he wrote it, and whose life he has so vividly, and, as we think, faithfully described. Every sailor we have questioned concerning that book—and there are few sailors who have not read it—declared that he 'thought nothing of it;' and that all his messmates laughed at it as much as himself. They say that Dana 'makes too much' of everything, and that he gives false and exaggerated notions of life on shipboard. We personally deny this; but sailors, as a body, are such prosaic people, that they will make no allowance whatever for the least amplification of bald matter of fact. If the author dilates at all on his own feelings and impressions, they chuckle and sneer; and if he errs in the least—or the compositor for him—in his nautical details, they cry out that he is a know-nothing, a marine, a horse-jockey, a humbug. To please seamen, any book about their profession must be written precisely in the lucid and highly-imaginative style of a log-book—their sole standard of literary excellence.

Sailors are shrewd and sensitive, enough in some respects. They do not like to be flattered, and cannot bear to be caricatured; and they feel that Dibdin has—unconsciously—been guilty of both towards them. According to his songs, sailors lead a life of unalloyed fun and frolic. He tells us nothing about their slavery when afloat, nothing about the tyranny they are frequently subjected to; and in his days, a man-o'-war was too often literally a floating pandemonium. He makes landsmen believe that Jack is the happiest, most enviable fellow in the world: storms and battles are mere pastime; lopped limbs and wounds are nothing more than jokes; there is the flowing can to 'sweethearts and wives' every Saturday night; and whenever the ship comes to port, the crew have guineas galore to spend on lasses and fiddles. In fine, both at sea and ashore, according to his theory, jolly Jack has little to do but make love, sing, dance, and drink—grog being 'his sheet-anchor, his compass, his cable, his log;' and in the *True British Sailor*, we are told that 'Jack is always content.' Now, Jack knows very well this is all 'long-shore palaver, and he gives a shy hail to such palpable lime-twigs. 'Let the land-lubbers sing it!' thinks he; 'I'll none on't!'

Dibdin takes the first sip of his *Flowing Can* with the ominous line—

'A sailor's life's a life of wo!'

But what follows?—

'Why, then, he takes it cheerily!'

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A pleasant philosophy this; but we happen to know that sailors do *not* take cheerily to 'a life of wo'—they would be more than men if they did. He talks coolly about times at sea when 'no duty calls the gallant tars.' We should very much like to know on board what 'old barkey,' and in what latitude and longitude, this phenomenon happened, and would have no particular objection to sign articles for a voyage in such a Ph[oe]nix of a ship; for in all the vessels we ever were acquainted with, there was never such a thing heard of, as 'nothing to do.' As to 'Saturday nights' exclusively devoted to pledging 'sweethearts and wives' over a flowing can in the forecandle, we are sorry to say, we regard that as little better than a poetic myth.

Doubtless, at the time Dibdin's songs were written, sailors sang them to a considerable extent, for the public enthusiasm would in a way compel Jack to acquiesce in these eulogies on himself; but the said Jack never took them fairly to heart—how could he, when every voyage he made must have given the lie to many of these glowing pictures of life at sea? And from that time to the present, Dibdin's songs have gradually been forgotten among seamen, till, at this day, we question whether there is a foremast—Jack afloat who can sing half-a-dozen of them; and, probably, not many men aboard merchantmen know more than one or two songs of the hundred in question, although they may recollect fragments of several.

Dibdin's songs might be 'worth a dozen pressgangs' for manning the navy in war-time, and, for aught we can predicate to the contrary, they may be so again; but we reiterate our conviction, that they never caused sailors to ship aboard a man-o'-war. Landsmen might volunteer by scores through the influence of such stirring, patriotic ditties; but seamen, who 'knew the ropes,' would never be induced to ship through their agency.

Dibdin does ample justice to the bravery, the generosity, the good-humour, the kind-heartedness of sailors; and, as a class, they deserve his encomiums. His songs abound with just and noble sentiments, and manly virtues were never more constantly and strikingly enunciated by any author. We dearly love Charles Dibdin for this; and as a writer of popular lyrics, we class him as the very first England has ever produced. In this department of literature, we consider he holds the same place in England as Burns does in Scotland; Béranger, in France; Freiligrath, in Germany; and Hans Christian Andersen, in Denmark.

The reader will now ask: 'What songs *do* sailors sing?' We answer, that their favourite sea-songs[5] are the most dismal, droning doggerel it is possible to conceive; and yet they relish them mightily, because they are stern matter of fact, and in most instances are descriptive of a battle, a chase, a storm, or a shipwreck—subjects appealing powerfully to their sympathies. The following may be taken as a tolerably fair specimen of the style of the genuine 'sailors' songs:—



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'It was the seventeenth day of May, in the year 'ninety-six,
Our taut frigate the *Ajax*, she from Plymouth did set sail;
Eight days out, com'd a squall from north-east by north,
And then by four bells, morning-watch, it did freshen to a gale.'

Perhaps the most universally popular song among seamen is *Rule Britannia*; but in general they do little more than sing the chorus, and the way in which a crew of tars, when half-seas-over, will monotonously drawl out 'Britons never, never, never shall be slaves!'—repeating it over and over again, as if they never could have too much of a good thing—is highly amusing. We believe that a decided majority of the songs sang in the forecabin are not sea-songs at all, but purely land-songs; and, strange to say, the most popular of these are sentimental ditties, such as were, a score of years ago, drawing-room favourites! It is very rich to hear 'ancient mariners,' rough as bears, hoarsely quavering, *I'd be a butterfly!* or, *O no! we never mention her;* or, *The days we went a-gipsying, long time ago!* They are also very partial to songs about bandits and robbers.

Well, after all, we have often, when in a tight craft, tossing amid howling billows, complacently repeated—and perchance shall again—the closing lines of *The Sailor's Consolation*, which, we believe, but are not certain, Dibdin wrote—

'Then, Bill, let us thank Providence
That you and I are sailors!'

FOOTNOTES:

[4] See *The 'Romance' of Sea-Life*, No. 414 of the Journal.

[5] We must explain that the *working*-songs of seamen—or such as they sing when heaving at the pawl-windlass, cating the anchor, and other heavy pieces of work—are of a different class altogether, and consist chiefly of a variety of appropriate choruses to lively and inspiring tunes. These songs sound well, and are worth anything on shipboard, for they stimulate the men far more than grog would do with only a dead, silent heave or haul.

'SEWED MUSLINS.'

Under the above technical name is produced in Glasgow a manufacture little known beyond the sphere of those immediately engaged in the business, the importance of which, however, as a means of employment to the poorer Scotch and Irish peasantry, renders it deserving of more attention than it has hitherto received. Sewed muslins include all those articles which are composed of muslin with a pattern embroidered on it by the hand—such as collars, sleeves, chemisettes, &c. together with the long strips of

embroidery used, like laces, for trimming dresses, petticoats, &c. and called, technically, trimmings. The manufacture of these articles in the form in which they are now used was for a long period peculiar to France, and that country alone supplied all the rest of the world with the limited quantities which the high cost permitted

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to be consumed. An embroidered collar, thirty-five years ago, was an article of luxury only attainable by the rich, while the far greater part either dispensed with it altogether, or contented themselves with one of plain muslin or cheap net. Soon after that period, the rudiments of the manufacture began to be established at Glasgow, where for some time it made but moderate progress, and was confined to the production of a very low class of goods, leaving still to the French all the finer and more tasteful departments of the trade. During the last ten years, however, the progress has been very rapid; and now it supplies abundantly, with cheap and good embroidery, the whole British and American demand, to the almost total exclusion of both French and Swiss work.

The process by which a perfect piece of embroidery, delicately worked in a graceful pattern, and as white as snow, is produced, is far more complicated than might be imagined. The simple plan by which industrious ladies work a single collar on a traced pattern, with clean hands in a pure atmosphere, will not do when hundreds of thousands of collars are to be made, at the lowest rate, by poor children, in smoky hovels. In order to understand the matter clearly, it may be as well to transport ourselves to one of the large establishments in Glasgow, in whose extensive, well-lighted lofts the whole mechanism of the manufacture may be seen at work.

In the highest room, where the best light is obtained, we find a number of men, seated at small tables at the windows, engaged in drawing patterns. These are the designers, whose business it is to produce a constant and rapid succession of new patterns, either original or adapted from the French designs, which lie scattered on their tables. They are a very intelligent class, possessing considerable originality, and, what is even more important, thoroughly understanding the art of practical adaptation of costly designs to the necessities of the manufacture, without which the ingenious sketches of the French would be valueless. It is proper to add, that their powers of invention are steadily increasing year after year, and that the time is probably not remote when they will be independent of the Parisian designers.

The patterns sketched by them are transferred by the ordinary process to lithographic stones; and on entering the adjoining room, we find a large number of lithographic presses at work, some of great size. The unbleached muslin here receives the impression of the outline pattern, as paper is printed in the ordinary press; and the substitution of stones for the wooden blocks formerly used, has greatly cheapened and facilitated this process. The carved blocks were expensive to cut, and useless when the pattern was finished: the pattern is now put on the stone with great economy, and, the requisite number being struck off, is erased to make room for another.



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The printed webs are now carried from the press-room to the floor below, where the green warehouse is situated—the common receptacle of the unbleached muslin going out to the working, and of the sewed goods coming in. The former are now made up into parcels, and sent off to the agents who are employed in the working districts to give out the work to the sewers, from whom they are again returned into the same department when sewed. We see them lying heaped in every direction, so saturated with dirt, that the pattern is hardly distinguishable from the muslin, looking and smelling as if no purative process could ever render them clean and sweet. The interval which elapses between the goods leaving the green warehouse and returning to it varies, with the nature of the goods, from a fortnight to six months; although occasionally pieces remain out much longer, and sometimes drop in after the lapse of years; while a percentage are never returned at all, a loss which constitutes an item in the cost of the remainder. About three-quarters, at least, of all the embroidery is worked in Ireland; the remaining quarter being sewed in the south-western counties of Scotland. In Ireland, the sewing districts, at first confined to a very limited space in the neighbourhood of Donaghadee, have gradually spread, until the whole north, and even a portion of the western wilds of Connaught, have been covered with the agents of the Scotch and Irish manufacturers. There is every prospect that their extension will not stop here. It is requisite that the work should be performed at a very small cost; and from the position and habits of the Irish, they are able to work cheaper than the Scotch. The nature of the employment is also peculiarly fitted to them. It can be performed in their own cottages at leisure times, or by children, not otherwise useful. No cleanliness is required, as it matters not how dirty the piece is when finished; and the payments are prompt and in ready money. The remuneration is small, especially to children learning, and varies, according to the skill and industry of the worker, from 6d. to 5s. a week; but this is paid in cash immediately on the completion of the piece. It is easy to see what an important addition may thus be made to the means of a poor cotter, by the labour of the young children and girls, who would probably otherwise have no employment whatever.

The goods being fairly back in the green warehouse, the next process is to discharge the load of dirt contracted in the smoky mud-hovel, and restore the original snowy hue of the cotton. For this purpose they are sent out to what is termed a bleachfield, although those who should visit such a place in hopes of seeing a verdant lawn, strewn with the white folds of muslin waving in the summer breeze, would be grievously disappointed. A bleachfield is simply a huge steam wash-house, with red brick walls and a tall chimney vomiting smoke, with not a particle of turf about

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it. Here, amidst volumes of steam, and the unceasing splash of water, the mirky mass is subjected to repeated agitations in hot and cold solutions, by means of revolving hollow wheels, inside of which the embroidery is tossed and tumbled for many days. A little chlorine is at last used, with much care, to complete the bleaching; and after a term, varying from ten days to three weeks, the goods are once more returned to the manufacturer, of a pure white, starched and dressed as may be required. We shall find them by walking from the green warehouse into the darning and ironing rooms where the final process of examination and finishing goes on, and whence they are turned out in a complete state into the saleroom, on the lowest floor of the establishment, to be disposed on long mahogany polished counters for sale. The extreme economy and method of this long process may be imagined when we are shewn very pretty collars, the entire cost of which—designing, sewing, muslin, bleaching, and profit—only amounts to 3d., yet including a rather elaborate pattern; while a yard of good serviceable edging is produced for 2-1/4d.

The entire amount of the manufacture must of course be conjectural, but it has been estimated at about three-quarters of a million sterling a year. The principal part is sold in Glasgow, but a part of the Irish production is disposed of in Belfast. If we take, as the price of the work, two-thirds of the gross sum, the remaining third being cost of muslin, expenses, charges, and profit, we shall have L.500,000 as the sum annually distributed, in ready money, in small sums over the south of Scotland and the north of Ireland—a most important addition to the resources of the rural population of those districts. In addition to this, a large class of workers, male and female, are employed in Glasgow in the preparation and in the finishing of the goods—as designers, lithographers, weavers, clerks, darners, ironers, and patterners. These are all well paid—some very highly; and the young women composing the three latter classes are a remarkably well-to-do, prosperous class.

The growth of the manufacture has been much accelerated by the export-trade to the United States, where its superior cheapness and intrinsic excellence have induced a large consumption. Could we prevail on the French government to relax the prohibition which now bars its entrance into that country, a new and wide field would be opened for its extension, even at a pretty high duty; as the French manufacture, in its present state, is quite inadequate to supply the demand for cheap embroidery there. Even as it is, a good deal is smuggled in, and may be recognised by the experienced eye adorning the windows of the shops in Paris. An increased demand must tell immediately in favour of Ireland, the only place affording an increased supply of labour; and on this account, the prosperity and extension of the trade in sewed muslins must be an object of interest to all who desire the amelioration of the condition of the Irish peasant.



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AN AMERICAN CONFESSES A FAULT.

The Americans are said to be grievously addicted to ——: we would rather avoid the word. Travellers have spread the imputation; but travellers are known to speak from prejudice, and their report did not appear to be altogether trustworthy. At length, strange to say, the charge of being intolerable—must we say it?—*spitters* is made by one of themselves, and of course there can be no more said on the subject: the fact is confessed. This marvellously candid, but painful acknowledgment, occurs in the recently-published work, *Sketches of European Capitals*, by W. Ware, M.D., the well-known author of those charming historical romances, *Letters from Palmyra, Aurelian, &c.* We trust that Dr Ware will not be ostracised on the score of taste or patriotism by his countrymen, for his extraordinary audacity in telling them of a fault, and, what is more, in drawing an unfavourable comparison between them and Englishmen on this most delicate subject. The following are his remarks:—

'An Englishman, I believe, rarely chews, and, compared with the American, rarely smokes; but whether he does not secretly practise both these abominations, I am not prepared to say. But with both these provocatives, if it be so, one thing he never does—is to spit. That fact draws a line of demarcation between the Englishman and the American, broader and deeper a thousandfold than any other in politics, government, laws, language, religion. *The Englishman never spits*; or, if he does, he first goes home, shuts himself up in his room, locks his door, argues the necessity of the case; if necessary, performs the disagreeable duty, and returns to society with a clear conscience. The American spits always and everywhere; sometimes when it is necessary; always, when it is not. It is his occupation, his pastime, his business. Many do nothing else all their lives, and always indulge in that singular recreation when they *have* nothing else to do. Sometimes, in a state of momentary forgetfulness, he intermits; but then, as if he had neglected a sworn duty, returns to it again with conscience-smitten vigour. He spits at home and abroad, by night and by day, awake and asleep, in company and in solitude, for his own amusement and the edification of a spitting community; on the freshly-painted or scoured floor, on the clean deck of a ship or steam-boat, on parlour floors—covered whether with ingrained Brussels, Wilton, or Turkey—even there he voids his rheum; upon the unabsorbent canvas, so that one may see, where numbers congregate, the railway cars to run in more ways than one; the pulpits and pews of churches are not safe; the foot-pavement of the streets, the floors of all public places—of exchanges, hotels, of Congress halls—are foul with it; and in railway cars it must always be necessary for a lady to shorten her garments, as if about to walk in the deep mud of the street, or the



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snow and water of spring, if she would escape defilement to either her dress or her slippers. As the power of direction of these human missiles is by no means unerring, notwithstanding so much practice, one's own person, and all parts of his person, are exposed to the random shots of this universal foe of American civilised life; and often he finds, on different parts of his dress, proofs abundant of the company he has kept. The only single spot absolutely secure is a man's face—and that would not be, were it not for the fear of a duel. That there is not the shadow of exaggeration in this description, coarse as it is, and coarse as it has been my intention to make it, all Americans, and all travellers who have ever been within an American hotel, steam-boat, or rail-car—all will testify. And the result of it all is, I suppose, that we are the freest and most enlightened people on the face of the earth! But for one, republican as I am in principle, I think, on the whole, I would prefer the despotism of Austria, Russia, or Rome, to the freedom, if I must take with it the spit, of America. It is vice enough to tempt one to forswear home, country, kindred, friends, religion; it is ample cause for breaking acquaintance, friendship, for a divorce; in a word, it is our grand national distinction, if we did but know it. There are certainly parts of the country comparatively, but only comparatively, free from this vice. Here at the north, there is much less than at the west and the south, though here enough of it to disgust one with his race. In proportion as general refinement prevails, the custom abates. At the south, no carpets, no rooms, no presence, affords protection.[6] Here, in the best rooms, the best society, there is partial exemption, though not often enough from the presence of that ingenious, fearful patent—the brazen, china, or earthen *box*. Would that my country could be induced to pause in this its wonderful career! Pity some public effort could not be made by way of general convention, or otherwise, for the abatement of this national mischief—certainly as worthy of attention as very many of our political and moral reforms. The advice of the London surgeon, Abernethy, to an American sea-captain, was at anyrate useful to us all, and pregnant with good medical philosophy. “Keep your saliva in your mouth to help to digest your food with,” said he, “and do not spit it all over my carpet.” Very wholesome counsel. And, seriously, who can say how much the pallid face, the proverbial indigestion of our country, even consumption itself, may not be owing to this constant drain, which deprives the stomach of a secretion which nature provided for the most important purposes in the manufacture of the blood, and which she certainly did not provide to be wasted and thrown about in the manner of the Anglo-American?’



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There is so much frankness and sorrow in this confession of a national sin against good manners, that the least thing we can do is to assure Dr Ware, that he takes much too favourable a view of the habits of the English in the matter in question. That among the highly-educated, the refined, and in what is called 'good society' generally, no one is guilty of the crime he speaks of, is quite true; but we take leave to say that inferior grades of people—the bulk of those walking the street, for example—are about as guilty of it as are the Americans; and it must doubtless be from this source that our transatlantic brethren have been contaminated. This hint as to the origin of a bad practice may perhaps suggest amendment in those departments of our population where it is required. Might not something also be done in the way of school instruction?

FOOTNOTES:

[6] 'Let six such Americans meet round a stove, in a bar-room, or parlour, or hotel drawing-room, of a morning—of the six, four will spit before speaking a word; one will bid good-morning first, and spit afterwards; the sixth will make a remark somewhat at length upon the weather, and, by way of compensation for extraordinary retention, spit twice or thrice.'

'THE MAGNETOSCOPE.'

In No. 415 of this Journal, we printed a paper with the above title, merely as one likely to excite interest, but warning the reader that we did not ourselves vouch for its statements. This caution appears to have been very necessary; for Dr Madden—the substance of whose lecture was given in the article—now declares, that 'very shortly after its delivery, he, in common with many others, detected a serious fallacy in the whole series of experiments; and that, by prosecuting his inquiry in this new direction, he ascertained that not one of the hitherto recorded experiments can be looked upon as proving the existence of *magnetic currents* at all.' The pendulations, it seems, are caused solely by 'slight mechanical impulsions, unconsciously or half consciously conveyed to the instrument by the luckless experimentalist.'

VILLAGE CLEANING.

It is a serious mistake to suppose that sanitary arrangements are required only for London and other large cities. Few small towns or even villages are exactly what they should be as regards health. Villages, indeed, by having no jurisdiction, are in many cases far more unhealthy than populous towns. We could point out a village of a few hundred inhabitants—a pretty place to look at, at a distance—where there is much mortality among infants and others in consequence of foul gutters and bad drainage. In a small pamphlet, forming an appeal to the ratepayers of Keswick on this subject, there

occur the following observations respecting the state of a place called Braithwaite, which we candidly believe might apply



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to a hundred other villages in England, and more particularly Scotland:—'The village of Braithwaite, for example, contains, in proportion to its population, more dirt, disease, and death than any decent town. It is one of the most romantic and filthy villages in England, and yet it might easily be made one of the cleanest and neatest. There are lanes, alleys, and courts in almost all small towns and villages, in which the mortality is greater far than that of our great towns; nay, in hamlets, and isolated farmhouses in this, as in many other country districts, there is often more sickness in proportion to the population than in cities; and I could point out within a circuit of a few miles, localities in which, during the last few years, scrofula, small-pox, measles, and typhus fever have left their ravages; and which, with proper care and cleanliness, might, I firmly believe, have escaped. But that disease, and especially infectious disease, haunts all ill-drained, ill-cleansed, and ill-ventilated places in both town and country, there are now few intelligent persons that require to be convinced; and the question has come to be with the well-informed part of the public, as it has long been the question with medical men—has not the time now arrived to *compel* those who harbour the filth and the contagion that carry off one-half of mankind, to expel those enemies to the human race? The innumerable statistical inquiries of the last ten years on this subject, all go to prove that dirt, squalor, close air, and stagnant water, are the causes of one-half the mortality of mankind in civilised countries. The majority of thinking people of all classes—and these, though a small minority of mankind, are the directors of every great social movement—are coming to see that we must proceed with this sanitary business at once; and that, if not by mild means, then by a little wholesome compulsion, we must oblige the owners of property haunted by death and contagion, to yield to the demands of society. If a man may not harbour a ferocious bull-dog in his alley, is he to keep a noisome ditch running at large there?—and if he may not hold a main of fighting cocks, is he to keep cholera and typhus in his house? For my part, I cannot see, if a justice of the peace can stop a man from knocking me down with a bludgeon, why he should not be authorised to interfere to save me from a typhus fever; and if he can prevent boys from endangering the lives of passengers by firing guns on the high roads, why he should not also be enabled to forbid the open sewers and other nuisances, which, if not so noisy, are even more dangerous. A railway company pays heavily for the lives and limbs of passengers sacrificed by the neglect or rashness of its officials—should not a town be equally liable for the losses caused by a public violation of the laws of health? We move slowly in this neighbourhood, disliking changes, and hold strongly, while the rest of the world is advancing, to the old ideas; yet even Wordsworth's consecration of this sentiment to Cumberland—

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“Hail usages of pristine mould,
And ye that guard them, mountains old!”

can scarcely apply to bad drainage and ventilation.’ We should think not. There is a scandalous deficiency in the ordinary institutes of the country on this important subject of town and village cleaning!

NATIONAL CUSTOMS.

Sir C. Napier put down the practice of suttee, which, however, was rare in Scinde, by a process entirely characteristic; for, judging the real cause of these immolations to be the profit derived by the priests, and hearing of an intended burning, he made it known that he would stop the sacrifice. The priests said it was a religious rite which must not be meddled with—that all nations had customs which should be respected, and this was a very sacred one. The general, affecting to be struck with the argument, replied: ‘Be it so. This burning of widows is your custom: prepare the funeral pile. But my nation has also a custom: When men burn women alive, we hang them, and confiscate all their property. My carpenters shall therefore erect gibbets on which to hang all concerned when the widow is consumed. Let us all act according to national customs!’ No suttee took place then or afterwards.—*Sir C. Napier’s Administration of Scinde.*

BY THE SEA.

BY CALDER CAMPBELL.

When tired of towns, and pining sore
For change to healthful ground,
Thou turn’st from crowds—still at the core
Feeling thy heart’s worst wound—
When thou hast knocked at every door,
Yet no admittance found:
At every door where Pleasure in
Glides, with a sunny grace,
But which thine own bale barreth up
From thee—then seek a place
Where gates of stone and brass are none
To frown thee in the face!

The woods have walks, where thou mayst find
A balm to salve thy grief;
And in and out where waters wind,
Are sources of relief,



In which, if thou wilt bathe the mind,
Thou'lt have no comfort brief,
But peace—that falleth like the dew!
For everything that shews
God's sunshine speaketh marvels true
Of mercy and repose,
And joy, in rural scenes, beyond
All that the loud world knows!

Yet more, than wood or woodland rill
Can give of keen delight,
We glean from ocean-margins, till
The spirit—at the sight
Of all its range of changeful change—
Becometh, like it, bright!
Bright when the sunlight on it falls,
Or grave and grand when, dark,
The shadowy night lets down its pall
Upon each human ark;
And every surge seems but to urge
Extinction of life's spark!



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A change, an always active change,
An everness of grace,
Of grace and grandeur, takes its range
Over the ocean's face:
As in a book for thoughts men look,
Thoughts in it we can trace!
A thought to turn us from ourselves
And all our petty cares—
A thought to move the spirit's love
To God, and God's affairs;
And thereby give to all that live
The sympathy that spares—

That spares our brother man from blame,
And pities him when o'er
His nature come such clouds of shame
As menaced us before:
God only can the sea-swell tame,
The mental peace restore!
Look on the ocean, then, and feel
Its turmoil and its calm
Arouse or tranquillise thy mind—
A stimulant or balm;
A thundertone to make thee think,
Or, gently soothing psalm!

* * * * *

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