

'suppose that our friend takes upon himself the office of *vice*. He made the proposition.'

'That I shall do with pleasure; and beg to second the motion made by the chairman, that Mr. Fiff should now recite his lines.'

'Good again!' said the farrier, solemnly.

Troff nodded encouragingly to him, and Fiff rose up and was about to speak, when he suddenly recollected that he had left the words of his poem at home, and, would the company accept a recitation?"

Mr. Troff, as the mouthpiece of the company, would be glad to have the recitation. Troff was reckoning, however, without all his hosts.

The farrier, who was a moral man in the strictest sense of the word, objected to a recitation; and, in stating his objections in these words—'No; I'll have no play-ranting; we wont have that; that wont rub; something else.' He crossed his mouth with his sleeve, and looked at Troff through an opaque glaze which had gathered in his eyes within the last hour.

'Parkins, you're drunk! Hold your tongue.'

The little man looked at Parkins with some degree of interest; and Parkins looked at Troff, and said, 'You're another! And, what's more, you're a hum-bug! And—me if I doant raise your rent; singe me if I doant!'

The little man seized a layer of hair and rolled it round his little finger, puffing his cigar rapidly, and infusing a malicious twinkle into his eyes.

'You'll raise my rent, ha! Who the deuce are you, and when did you become my landlord?' said Troff, with supreme disdain.

'I am your landlord, and that's sufficient; and what's more, I'll turn you out. I wont have a stuck-up leather-merchant, who tries with fine words to ride over better men than himself, and men with more money, about my property. So you'll clear out, take notice. The property's mine. I bought it from the Marquis of Pennywhistle. Now, then, call me drunk again, and I'll throw this ale about you—now!'

'And who's the Marquis of Pennywhistle when he's at home?' said the little man, evidently making the question for the purpose of preventing further words between the farrier and Troff.

'Who is the Marquis of Pennywhistle? Don't you know?' said the farrier, with a look of calm astonishment.

'I do not. Who is he?'

A figure glided out from the shade of the bar—a tall figure dressed in a short shooting-jacket—a figure with a handsome face, and a deep scar over the left eye, a hunting-whip in his hand, and great leather riding-boots on his legs—a figure who blinked maudlingly about in the gas-light, evidently drunk, and with a look of supercilious contempt on the handsome face.

'I am the Marquis of Pennywhistle. Is there anybody here gainsays it? Who's got anything to say to me?'

A rattling at the shutter, a crashing of glass, and

an apparition remotely in the likeness of a man staggered into the room, and before the astonished company could interpose, rushed on the tall figure who had just spoken.

'I have something to say to you at last.'

The riding-whip was wrenched out of the tall figure's hand.

The butt end descended on his head with a hollow sound.

He gave a horrible cry, and fell to the ground.

The short figure was about to repeat the blow when another vault was made through the window, and another figure leaped into the room.

In an instant it had sprung upon the assailant of the Marquis.

'Fool!'

'Devil! you have robbed me of my revenge. Let me kill him.'

'Ass! imbecile!'

In an instant Duferny and Vavazour (the escaped convicts) were struggling wildly on the floor, over the prostrate form of the Marquis.

(To be continued fortnightly.)

NOTHING TO DO.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE printer's imp had just carried off the leading article I had been working at all the evening, and I had come to the conclusion that I had nothing to do; and a blissful conclusion it was, too; for during the last fortnight I had been slaving early and late, as only a hack-writer *can* slave. Indeed, it was so blissful that it was some time before I could realise it. However, when I did become satisfied that such was the case, I speedily set-to to make myself as comfortable as circumstances would permit; during the two hours that wanted to my usual bed-time. I threw aside my pen, locked up my paper in the desk, and put *that* into the darkest corner of my little room; resolved that, if putting things out of sight were best calculated to put them out of mind, I should not leave any available means untried for the attainment of that desirable end.

'Ah!' said I, stirring the fire into a cheering blaze, seating myself in the only chair in the room, and placing my feet on the fender, 'now for a glorious spell of dreamy, forgetful listlessness, during which my thoughts may rush after one another in a wild-goose chase, and play at hide-and-seek among the recesses of my relieved brain.

Write, write, write

Till my head and my wrist are aching;

Write, write, write

Till my hand and my pen are quaking—

Paper, and ink, and pen;

Pen, and ink, and paper—

Till each burning thought has burn'd itself out,

As well as the flickering taper!

'O all ye bards who are making for the pinnacle of

Parnassus! is there not one among ye who will deign to publish to the world the sorrows of the hack-writer, even as Hood did those of the needlewoman? But hold! I have actually spent a quarter of an hour in vain regrets. Away, gloomy thoughts!

It seemed as if my exorcism had taken effect, for I became gradually lulled into a state of calm, dreamy unconsciousness. But it was not long ere I was rudely roused from my ecstatic enjoyment by the rattling sound of footsteps on the stairs; and, presently, my door was thrown open by my younger brother.

'Now, Hal!' burst hurriedly from his lips, 'pray leave off that horrid writing, and—Halloa!' continued he, with surprise, and in a more subdued tone, 'what evil spirit has possessed you to cause you to sit before the fire in this way? Have you become a maniac this evening; or have you been mad these six years—which is more likely—and but just recovered?'

'Whichever way it is,' said I, 'be so good as to shut the door and come near the fire. Don't be afraid of me. If I am mad, it is a very harmless insanity.'

I gave my chair up to him, perched myself on my writing-stool, and looked at him by the blaze of the fire. There was some uneasiness in his manner.

'Well, John, what's the matter?'

'Have you heard—but of course you haven't. You are pent up in this close prison from one week's end to another, without seeing any face but that of the printer's boy.'

'Take pity on me then, John, and relieve my mind at once. What is it?'

'Why, old Uncle Goldworthy has just arrived in London. He has made his fortune in Australia, by dint of hard work; and intends to make up for it, by enjoying himself in Old England for the rest of his life.'

'He has brought his daughter with him, has he not?'

'Yes, I believe so—at least, I know he has,' responded John, looking very confused, and endeavouring to concentrate all his attention upon the fire.

'Have you seen her?'

'Yes. Niceish girl; but not so pretty as'—

'But pretty enough for you,' interrupted I. 'You must think me blind not to be able to see that; and I wish you success, with all my heart, John.'

'Ah!' said John, 'it's all very well to talk of success; but it is hardly likely that Uncle Goldworthy will give his daughter to a poor fellow like me. He seemed good-natured enough this morning, it is true; but I am afraid his good-nature will not extend so far as that.'

'Hope on, hope ever, John,' said I.

'I will, Hal,' said John. And he went away.

* * * * *

'There you are again, stuck on that high stool, and scratching away with that spluttering quill, as if for your bare life. How like a frenzied oracle you look, with your puckering beetle-brows and distended nostrils! Mad, hopelessly mad!'

Such was the compliment wherewith my brother chose to greet me one evening, about a week after his visit to my sanctum as related above.

'Do let me finish this article for the *Daily Surprise*, as I am expecting the printer's devil to be here in ten minutes' time, and it is but half done.'

It was late in the evening; but John waited very patiently for him, and began examining a very fanciful portrait of Joseph Addison, of *Spectator* celebrity. Presently the imp referred to made his appearance; but, by that time, I had finished my article, which that functionary bore away in triumph. As I had now done for the night (and it was near midnight), I drew my stool closer to the fire; and, for the first time, I observed that my brother's face was actually beaming with triumph and delight.

'Well, John,' exclaimed I, 'when are you to be married?'

'Oh, in six months' time. Uncle Goldworthy is infinitely kinder and more considerate than I expected. He even intends buying us a small house in the suburbs, within three miles of our office. What do you think of that?'

'But how did you succeed with'—

'Miss Goldworthy? Why, after my declaration, she confessed, or as much as confessed, that she fell in love with me the instant she saw me.'

'Ah, I see. You were evidently meant for each other. Permit me to congratulate you on the course of your true love having run very smooth. You must have me for a groomsman. I'll manage to make a holiday for once.'

'Thank you, Hal. You must forgive me for calling upon you so late in the evening, as my brain has been so completely turned of late that I have lost all notion of time, and forget that there is such a machine as a clock. So, good-night.'

CHAPTER II.

The six months had rolled quietly and uneventfully away. The small house in the suburbs had already been bought by Uncle Goldworthy, and the day arrived on which John and Miss Goldworthy were to take possession of it as a married couple.

I dressed myself carefully, put on the wedding-gloves sent me the day before, and went to join the party at Mr. Goldworthy's house. It was a glorious morning, and the sun set my eyes a-blinking and winking; for, shut up in that miserable second floor, what light could I catch but twilight? The sun never shone through my window,—for the very good reason that it faced the north. But to return.

The whole house was lively and busy. Uncle Goldworthy joked, the bride blushed, the party laughed; John blushed and laughed too; the servants giggled, the dog barked, and sometimes howled, by way of a change. At length the hour arrived when the party were to proceed to the church of St. Benedict, and off we went accordingly.

* * * * *

The company were assembled in the pretty little drawing-room that formed part of John's new home. From the window could be seen bright green meadows, ripe and ready for the mowers, while the hay-makers were already at work in one field, turning the hay, and tossing its fragrance right into our gladdened nostrils. The cuckoo breathed its farewell notes, the swallow greeted the fly with a 'how-d'ye-do' and a snap, the awakened summer fly crept out of his winter quarters, and paid long and protracted visits to the sugar-basin and the cream-jug. In fact, spring, like an old maid, was quietly and quickly fading away, while young and rosy summer was making her toilette by the side of whispering and fanning trees and mirror-like brooks and streams, that lay in the lap of her mother, that gay old dame—Nature.

One of the bridesmaids had been gazing on the scene before us in an ecstasy of delight. She was cousin to the bride, and the prettiest in the whole company. Her merry round face was set off by a profusion of rich light brown hair, and her laughing hazel eyes were kept very much in the shade by those provokingly long lashes, which seemed to strive to hide them as effectually as they could from my admiring gaze.

I soon managed to engage her in a lively and earnest conversation on literature; for I discovered that she knew almost as much about it, and appreciated it as much, as myself, and I was perfectly charmed with the originality as well as the modesty of her remarks. I soon contented myself with listening only, but as soon as she saw that I had left the active part of the discussion to herself, she ceased; upon which we went to a painting on the other side of the room, to which I had called her attention. It was a small painting, and a charming one; and I was glad to find that my new friend agreed with me there also. In the foreground was a startled rabbit; who, with one ear erect, and one paw upraised, seemed debating within itself whether or no it must leave that tempting sowthistle under its nose uncropped. Further back was given the cause of its alarm; a boy, probably a truant, swinging himself on the bough of a tree with all his might, and hallooing with glee—forgetful of the slenderness of the bough, which threatened every moment to snap, and bring the youngster to untimely grief. From that we got into a quiet talk on painting in general; and my fair companion began telling me of a certain Professor Singsong, who maintained that painting was not to be compared with music—that music was divine, and painting was not; and that there would be (as a grand *clincher* to the argument) plenty of music in heaven, but no painting.

'And why should we not have pictures in heaven just as much as music?' exclaimed she. 'One is quite as ennobling and refining as the other. Music is the pleasure of the ear and painting is the pleasure of the eye, and both influence the soul. Then is the bliss of the soul to come through the ear only, and not through the eye? I do not believe *that*, Professor

Singsong, though you do manage your arguments very cleverly.' She stopped, her face glowing with enthusiasm.

'Do you paint, may I ask?' inquired I.

'Yes.'

'Ah,' thought I to myself, 'she is an enthusiast in the art, I can see.' And I fell in love with her all the more for that; for I thoroughly sympathised with her.

It would be tedious to the very courteous reader to go through all the discussions of that (to me) eventful afternoon; suffice it to say, that we got on so well together that both of us thought neither of us could agree so well with any one else; and were so pleased with each other's intercourse that we were sorry when the time came to part that evening, and finally made an appointment to meet again for another very interesting discussion at the church of St. Benedict.

* * * * *

My wife and I sit quietly, industriously, and happily, in a pleasant room of our house, which is situate in the town of Exton. She is at her easel at one end of the room; at the other end I sit at my editorial table, superintending the production of the '*Exton Magazine*, a Journal of Fact, Fiction, Fashion, and Fancywork;' the last two divisions are edited by my very industrious and talented wife. To think us happy will be a natural and a true inference—happy in our work, and enough of it to make it often a pleasure to have NOTHING TO DO.

HENRY G. HUNT.

STANZAS FOR MUSIC.

I MAY have met smiling with many,
But even then thought I of thee;
And thy face is the fairest of any
That ever was seen by me.

Oh, stately yet musical beauty!
Oh, brow clothed with living light!
Oh, eyes fill'd with the sun of duty
That shall guide thy life aright!

And oft in the solemn splendour
Of heaven's glittering stars,
When the past makes my heart grow tender
And beat loudly 'gainst its bars,
Those eyes rise more clearly before me,
Replete with a light divine;
And a passion of grief comes o'er me
That thy paths may not be mine.

I think of thee waking and sleeping;
O'er every dream reignest thou;
I think of thee sometimes with weeping;
Joy sometimes flushes my brow.

I'm sad and I'm glad that I met thee—
Pain mingled with sweetest sweet;
Nor can I, if I would, forget thee
Till my heart shall cease to beat.

W. COOK SPENS.

* * * The right of translation reserved by the Authors. Contributions addressed to the Editor will receive attention; but, as a general rule, he cannot undertake to return MSS. considered unsuitable.

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