

THE PEARL.

HALIFAX, FRIDAY EVENING, JANUARY 4, 1839.

The last number of the Edinburgh Quarterly contains a very copious review of the tales of Mr. Charles Dickens. Pickwick—Nicholas Nickleby—Oliver Twist, and the Sketches by Boz—are daily noticed by the Reviewer. The writer prefers the tale of 'Oliver Twist' to any of the others which have as yet been produced by Mr. Dickens. Of it he says "there is more interest in the story, a plot better arranged, characters more skillfully and carefully drawn, without any diminution of spirit, and without that tone of humorous exaggeration which, however amusing, sometimes detracts too much from the truthfulness of many portions of the 'Pickwick Papers.'" Of the adventures of Nicholas Nickleby the reviewer observes that "if the author will relieve the painful sombreness of his scenes with a sufficient portion of sunshine, it will deserve to exceed the popularity of Pickwick." Of his works in general, the writer says, "They seem, at first sight, to be among the most evanescent of the literary ephemera of their day—mere humorous specimens of the lightest kind of light reading, expressly calculated to be much sought and soon forgotten—fit companions for the portfolio of caricatures—'good nonsense,'—and nothing more. This is the view which many persons will take of Mr. Dickens's writings—but this is not our deliberate view of them. We think him a very original writer—well entitled to his popularity—and not likely to lose it—and the truest and most spirited delineator of English life, amongst the middle and lower classes, since the days of Smollett and Fielding. He has remarkable powers of observation, and great skill in communicating what he has observed—a keen sense of the ludicrous—exuberant humour—and that mastery in the pathetic which, though it seems opposed to the gift of humour, is often found in conjunction with it. Add to these qualities, an unaffected style, fluent, easy, spirited and terse—a good deal of dramatic power—and great truthfulness and ability in description.

"One of the qualities we most admire in him is his comprehensive spirit of humanity. The tendency of his writings is to make us practically benevolent—to excite our sympathy in behalf of the aggrieved and suffering in all classes; and especially in those who are most removed from observation. He especially directs our attention to the helpless victims of untoward circumstances, or a vicious system—to the imprisoned debtor—the orphan pauper—the parish apprentice—the juvenile criminal, and to the tyranny, which, under the combination of parental neglect, with the mercenary brutality of a pedagogue, may be exercised with impunity in schools. His humanity is plain, practical, and manly. He never endeavours to mislead our sympathies—to pervert plain notions of right and wrong—to make vice interesting in our eyes—and shake our confidence in those whose conduct is irreproachable, by dwelling on the hollowness of seeming virtue. Good feeling and sound sense are shown in his application of ridicule. It is never levelled at poverty or misfortune; or at circumstances which can be rendered ludicrous only by their deviation from artificial forms; or by regarding them through the medium of a conventional standard. Residence in the regions of Bloomsbury, ill-dressed dinners, and ill-made liveries are crimes which he suffers to go unlashd; but follies or abuses, such as would be admitted alike in every sphere of society to be fit objects of his satire, are hit with remarkable vigour and precision. Nor does he confine himself to such as are obvious; but elicits and illustrates absurdities, which, though at once acknowledged when displayed, are plausible and comparatively unobserved." The reviewer seems to doubt whether Mr. Dickens could produce a good novel, but admits him to be a most brilliant sketcher of detached scenes.

The improved version of the national anthem on our first page we have copied from Chambers's Journal. The editors of that excellent periodical remark that "the national anthem was composed as an expression of indignant feeling temporarily entertained respecting the accidental and temporary policy of some neighbouring states. That policy being long amongst the things that were, the anthem has no longer any command over the national sympathies: on the contrary, as an outburst of resentful and destructive sentiment, it is positively unsuitable and opposite to the present state of the public mind, and only holds its place through the power of custom. We have much pleasure in lending publicity to the following improved version of the anthem, which appears in a musical collection entitled the *Singing Master*." In these sentiments we most heartily concur.

For the able paper on Primary punishments, R. R., though unknown to us, will please accept our thanks. We are indeed rejoiced to have a colleague, so well informed, on our side of the question. On the treatment of felons, we consider it our imperative duty to offer every practicable means to our fallen brethren for their reformation,—and that it is no less our duty not to inflict any wanton, or excessive, or vindictive punishment upon them. They are men like ourselves,—creatures of the same God who has expressly declared that 'Vengeance' is his prerogative, with

which it is His will that no human beings should interfere. The Judaical system of punishment, founded on the principle of retaliation, 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' was expressly abrogated by our Lord, when he laid down those principles of charity and kindness which should regulate our conduct towards each other, and which give even the abandoned criminal a claim upon our exertions in his behalf. The true and only justifiable objects of the punishment of an offender, are the security of society as effected in the deterring of others from following his vicious example, and the reformation of that offender himself, if possible. In the early stages of society, men have acted in imposing punishment upon a feeling of revenge, and have adopted sanguinary and cruel modes of inflicting it. This feeling has gradually given way before the softening influences of civilization,—but late indeed has the idea arisen of endeavouring to benefit and heal the criminal himself.

Amongst enlightened philanthropists the great question is, What is the best mode of discipline to be adopted in our prisons for the reformation of criminals? The solution of this question has led to an examination of the comparative merits of the 'Silent' and 'Separate' systems. All philosophic inquirers into the subject agree, that some degree of separation among prisoners should take place. The great evils of promiscuous communication between prisoners convicted of every variety of crime, are admitted on all hands to be such that no remedy can be effected but by an utter abolition of the practice. The mind of the inquirer is then brought to a consideration of the best means of separation. According to the silent system, prisoners are allowed to mingle together and to labour in companies, but are forbidden to speak to each other. So far as they can gain solace by the use of their eyes in beholding each of their fellow prisoners, they have free permission, but they must not contaminate each other by the use of their tongues. Vision is allowed them, but not speech. Such is the 'Silent' system. On this plan the celebrated Auburn Prison in the State of New York is founded. The principle of the Auburn system is that of separation during night, and of common labour by the prisoners during the day; but with total prevention (as far at least as is practicable) of any intercourse between them. By the 'Separate' system each prisoner has his own cell, and is not allowed on any occasion either to see or to converse with his fellow prisoners—he is not permitted to keep company with his guilty associates. Mistaken notions of the latter system have induced many persons to condemn it as equally cruel and mischievous—solitary confinement they have considered not as reformatory punishment, but absolute torture. The misapprehension under which such persons labour arises from their confounding the separate system with solitary confinement. Now although by the principle of separation the prisoner is secluded from the society of felons, yet he enjoys the privilege of seeing his friends,—he has every facility afforded him for consulting with his legal adviser,—he may send and receive letters,—he is permitted to have unobjectionable books,—he receives the daily and stated visits of the governor, chaplain, surgeon, and other prison officers,—and he has the option of any employment that can be conveniently furnished to him." This is in part the principle which obtains in the well known Pennsylvania prison, and it has acquired the name of the 'Separate System.' The silent system is most popular at present in the United States. On the other hand it appears that intelligent Europeans are favorable to the principle of separation. Dr. Julius, who was sent out by the Prussian government in 1834, to examine the merits of the different plans of Prison discipline in America, returned, a strong advocate for that system, although averse to it at his departure; and the Inspector General of the prisons in Belgium, has made a similar report in its favour to the Belgian government. Of five inspectors of prisons appointed by the Parliament of Great Britain, three are strong advocates of the 'Separate System.' In their reports they endeavour to show that the silent system fails in its great object, for that it is impossible to prevent communication—and that prisoners thrown together will, somehow or other, correspond. By dexterity in fraud and artifice the prisoners contrive to baffle the most vigilant monitors, and wardsmen. The last London Quarterly, in an article on the transportation of criminals, makes the following remark—"We are satisfied, as far as satisfaction is attainable on a subject on which experience is yet but imperfect, that the basis of punishment, for those grave offences which in modern time have been visited with transportation, should be the imprisonment of the offender at home with hard labour, wholly apart from his vicious companions, on the plan pursued in the Eastern Penitentiary at Philadelphia—which appears in the highest attainable degree to combine the advantages and exclude the defects of all the plans elsewhere essayed." Indeed, the separate system receives the united testimony of the most enlightened minds in Europe. We have thrown together these remarks for the benefit of such of our readers as might have failed to understand our correspondent on the subject of secret and solitary confinement. It is cheering to know that such praiseworthy efforts are being made in the civilized world for the benefit of criminals—'vindictiveness in punishments is going out, and Christlike views of human guilt and infirmity are beginning to prevail.' Some time hence, and 'the spectacle of a man dangling in the air,' will be thought of as one of the mistakes and absurdities of the past, and men will no lon-

ger dare to usurp the prerogative of the Supreme Being. "The philanthropy which has pulled down the pillory, will yet supersede the hangman, and convert every prison in the civilized world into an hospital for the cure of moral disease. The reform has begun; the spirit of Howard is on its pilgrimage; and barbarous as is still our treatment of the guilty, better days are in prospect."

NEWS BY PACKET.

The English Packet which arrived yesterday in 23 days from Falmouth, has furnished us with our file of London papers to Wednesday the 5th of December. A brief summary of the principal news we give below:—

An affray had taken place at Chatham between some marines and soldiers, in which two of the former had received wounds which caused their death. A serious accident occurred on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway—one of the engines of the Manchester baggage train exploded, and the engineer and fireman were blown into the fields on either side of the road full forty yards distant. A deputation of gentlemen in Suffolk have presented an address to the venerable Thomas Clarkson, congratulating him on the final overthrow of Negro Slavery in the West Indies. A meeting of the working classes had been held at Trowbridge by torch-light. A large number of persons, it is stated, were present—the procession a mile in length. The Chamber of Commerce of Manchester has required its president to call a general meeting of that body to consider the propriety of petitioning Parliament for the repeal of the Corn Laws. A company has been formed to construct a railway between Birmingham and Shrewsbury. A recruiting party have spent a month in Wakefield in unwearied exertions to enlist young men into the ranks of the army, but not a single young man could be found with a military inclination. Mr. Beaumont, late M. P. for Northumberland, has subscribed £10,000 towards the building of a new bridge across the Tyne, near Hexham. Mr. Wyse, M. P. is actively engaged in promoting the establishment of Provincial colleges in the South of Ireland. Recruiting for the Marines is proceeding with spirit and success. Notice has been given that Government will receive tenders for the supply of 100,000 32lb. balls. The walls of the City of London and its environs are covered with placards, advertising for able-bodied seamen, petty officers, and stout boys, to join her Majesty's naval service. A great number of inducements are held out to enter the service, but we do not find this one amongst the number, 'What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own life?' A Privy council was held on the 29th of November at which it was resolved to prorogue Parliament to the 5th of February; many of the papers incline to believe that ministers are afraid of meeting Parliament, and that they hope to profit by the delay to gain some additional strength. Lord Durham reached Plymouth Sound, in the Inconstant frigate, on the night of the 26th of November. Redschid Pacha, Ambassador from the Porte, was presented to the Queen, and delivered his credentials—he was the bearer of a "magnificent brilliant necklace" from the Sultan to her Majesty. The Common Council of the city of London have presented the freedom of the city in a gold box, value one hundred guineas, to the excellent Thomas Clarkson. A bust of Mr. Clarkson is also to be placed in the City Hall. The subscribers of Lloyd's have presented £20 to Grace Horsley Darling, for her heroic conduct at the wreck of the Forfarshire. Serious disturbances have occurred at Todmorden—a mob of 1000 men, armed with bludgeons, assembled, with the avowed design of destroying the property of persons favorable to the Poor Law—they sacked eleven houses, including the inn where the guardians assembled, and set fire to one of the houses. Military assistance was afterwards sent for, when the mob dispersed—the next day the military with special constables surrounded one of the mills where some of the rioters were, and arrested forty men and boys. There have been incendiary fires of farming stock and buildings in Lincolnshire, Wiltshire, and Berkshire. The effigy of the Bishop of Durham had been publicly burnt at Newcastle—the inscription on this piece of foolery was 'Unitarian Bishop.' A collision between two trains on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, occasioned serious injury to some passengers, and damage to the railway carriages. At a meeting of the Royal Society the Marquis of Northampton was unanimously elected President, in the room of the Duke of Sussex. The Hull Town Council have invited Lord Durham to a public dinner. In several parts of India, it has lately been ascertained, the tea-plant will thrive—the Morning Chronicle says of it that "one of the most important discoveries connected with our commerce in the East has recently been made; it may end in the entire liberation of this country from dependence upon China for tea." In the Russian army 600 arrests of officers have been made by order of the Emperor. Some of the papers state that Lord Durham will reside at Brussels until the opening of the Parliament. The commanding officer of a cavalry regiment has refused to receive into his corps any married officers. Lord Durham at his landing was received in the most enthusiastic manner by the inhabitants of Devonport and Stonehouse.

Important intelligence has been received from Constantinople. The Shah of Persia has actually retired from Herat; Mr. McNeil has returned to Teheran; and the Russian influence in