

PARISH PERSONAGES.*

OUR BEADLE AND HIS FRIENDS.

BY ERASMUS OLDSTYLE, ESQUIRE.

CHAPTER II.

THERE is, it is said, a class of readers who refuse to peruse a book until they are informed whether the complexion of the writer be white or black; whether in his person he be fat or thin; whether his eyes be blue or hazel, his forehead high or low, his hair light or dark, and his stature tall or short. If such then is the propensity of the world with respect to authors, of how much more consequence is it that their curiosity should be gratified in regard to heroes.

Lest Mr. Crummy's most intimate friend, the Parish Clerk, should be slighted in consequence of our neglect, we beg to inform all whom it may concern, that Mr. Audible was in his person, judging from all the specimens which have come down from a remote antiquity, precisely the cut and figure of the extraordinary genus to which he belonged. He was what a Parish Clerk ought to be, short and spare; his face, which was a very lean one, had also a very hungry expression; his eyes were small and black; his forehead, which had never been either high or broad, was wonderfully contracted in consequence of a deep culvert which was furrowed over his nose, but which had been honestly acquired by hard staring at his time-honored Prayer-book; his hair, too, was as black and shining as a boot made brilliant by the vivifying application of Warren's Jet; in fact, the question is still an open one, whether the "coronal region" of the worthy Clerk's head, supposing his body to have been placed in a horizontal position, would not by its mirror-like qualities, have been equally efficacious in arousing the belligerent propensities of the cock and the cat, as a boot well blackened by the unrivalled jet above mentioned, and the doubt hinges upon the saying which had become trite in the parish, that Mr. Audible's "head was as shiny as his shoes." To confess the truth, the Parish Clerk was on the whole very well contented with his figure and appearance.

It is true that he had two small complaints to allege against his legs. In size they were what is termed spindle, and in shape they were what

is termed bandy; these objectionable formations were sadly prejudicial to the set of his stockings, and seriously interrupted the happiness of their possessor. The two-fold blemish operated as a daily trial, from which Mr. Audible found relief in the reflection that Nature (a lady of whose intentions Parish Clerks like other people entertain opinions of their own) in disqualifying him by physical weakness for the laborious occupation of a private station, had evidently "from the first" intended that his spare and shrivelled pins should be shrouded in the mantle of parochial office, and that in bestowing upon him a loud and sonorous voice she had afforded ample compensation for the lack of muscle to his arms, and of make to his legs.

In an age when the absence of learning appeared to have been essential to the performance of the duties of Parish Clerk—when these functionaries appeared to have been selected more for their comic qualities than their Christian attainments, it is due to Mr. Audible as well as to the Rector, by whom he was appointed to say, that the Clerk of Allhallows was a much better instructed man than most of his order; he could do more than read out of his own book; he could decypher writing as well as peruse print, and he had upon more than one occasion, written letters for his less educated friends, as well as for himself.

Such then is a feeble description of the individual, whom our readers are aware had retired with a dejected step to encase himself in his Sunday clothes. An occasion like the present had never occurred before, and for this reason he had taken some pains, and bestowed some study upon his apparel. But the only alterations he was enabled to make in his attire, were the addition of plated buckles, with wide margins, to his shoes, and the substitution of silk stockings and a black velvet waistcoat, which had been given to him by the Rector, for similar articles of cloth and worsted.

His toilet was at length complete. His lantern was lighted, and with his umbrella in his hand, and his wife's pattens on his feet, for the streets were very muddy, he wished a good night