

(The following very racy sketch, though not just new, is from a recently published volume, and is well worthy a place in our miscellany. The writer is a native (we believe) of Nottingham, England, and has written himself up to a respectable rank among the literary men of his country.)

THE COUNTRY JUSTICE.

BY THOMAS MILLER THE BASKET MAKER.

Dear old Justice B—, what a pleasure it was to be summoned before thee! to look on thy rubicund face and Bardolphian nose—that blazing beacon which was toasted through drinking Tory toasts, and had flamed through fifty elections for town or county. To see thee red with passion, whilst exclaiming 'Silence, sirrah!' and ere thou hadst had a couple of pinches from that old silver snuff box, turn round and exclaim, 'What case next? You may go home sirrah.'

Ah, well did we know the mood that thou wert in by watching the ponderous pigtail that hung half way down thy back! It was the barometer that told the temperature of thy temper; when it was still, it denoted 'changeable,' in which state it was quite uncertain what weather might next prevail; when it moved rapidly, or was tossed without cessation from shoulder to shoulder, then it was stormy indeed—a complete hurricane—that even shook the powder from the venerable head; when it rose and fell gently, and seemed quite in a good humour with itself, like a kitten playing with its own tail, then it was fair, clear and sunny; poacher and trespasser were then liberated.

A choleric old fellow wert thou at times; but thy passion was soon over—it never lasted long enough to take hold of thy heart. A staunch pillar wert thou of the church, but thy guinea was ever ready to assist the dissenters; witness that old Sunday-school to which I went when a boy.

Terrible threats wert thou wont to thunder forth before the poor beggars that hung around thy gates; but rarely did they ever retire beyond the garden hedge, before thy old grey-headed serving man John was sent after them with a huge lump of cold meat, a loaf of bread, and a shilling.

Strict wert thou in protecting the preserves and warrens of thy neighbours, while we plundered thine own in the open daylight; and had much ado to keep the young rabbits from squeaking in our pockets while we drank the horn of beer before thine own hall door. Thou wouldst ride ten miles at midnight to prevent thy old neighbours from going to law, whilst thou thyself had some trial or other at every assize, and wert never known to win a cause. Fond wert thou of committing a man for trespass, but ere he had eaten his fill in thy huge ancient kitchen, thou wouldst step in, often ordering him another jug of ale, then bid him 'go home,' and see that he let the game alone as he went through the park. Ever ready wert thou to take our own recognizance for fifty pounds, when all we were masters of were the ugly lurchers at our heels, a hand-net with which we plundered thy own fish-ponds, and a few wire snares, in which almost as many of our own mongrels had been hung as we had caught hares on thine own estate; but thou wouldst then take our own word for fifty readier than another would take our bond. If thou ever hadst a dislike to any it was to the radical tailor in the village; still he made all thy garments, and charged thee double the price that another would. 'The rascal has a family, and they must live,' was thy exclamation; and so he did, although he had been caught pelting thee at more than one election, and had at the 'polling booth' told thee to thy face that he was independent, and needed not the work of any Tory.

Thou wert the very personification of John Bull—the embodiment of the true old English gentleman; body and soul wert thou a Tory, but such a one as even we ragged Radicals loved; thou hadst every body's good word,—ten thousand eyes shed tears for thee when thou wert dead. Brimful wert thou of harmless prejudices and stubborn notions, but they were all English; even in thy very faults there was something to love—in thy greatest absurdities much to admire—in thy errors many a charm. Many a time hast thou been grumbling in thy throat, whilst thy heart has been planning some kindness; often censuring the culprit with thy tongue when thy hand was grasping his with a friendly clutch that sank to the very soul.

Such men as the old Justice live nowhere but in England—such hearts beat but rarely in other climes—such bodies are only moulded in British pastures.

Heaven bless thee, my dear country! thy green hills and old woods will be found imprinted on my heart when I am dead.

A great dislike had the worthy Justice of matters being carried to the session or the assizes, and it was truly wonderful to see the tact that he displayed in reconciling parties who had set out with a determination of carrying matters to the very extremity of the law. Nor had they ever cause to grumble if the affair was left to his own arbitration, for where he had doubts he would generally consult some able and experienced neighbour, and unless the case was one of uncommon difficulty, generally succeeded in the end in satisfying both parties.

Often might he be seen in the mornings of spring and summer stripped in his shirt sleeves, and busied in his garden, raking,

hoeing, or attending to his choicest flower beds, accompanied by some party who had 'come over to arrange matters,' or perhaps some cause that had been put off on the preceding day at the hall. Then would the honest magistrate pause every now and then, and leaning on the handle of his rake, listen or reply to their arguments; and if he could not succeed in bringing them to his own views, he would commence raking or working at a most furious rate, tearing up both weeds and flowers together. If, on the contrary, they followed his advice, and shewed a disposition to come to reasonable terms, then down went his garden tools, and a right welcome was given them to partake of the best his house afforded—rich or poor, it made but little difference, so long as they bore an honest name.

His lovely daughter, too, to use the country phrase, 'was worth her weight in gold,' and many a time had her sweet and lady-like manners succeeded in repairing the breaches which her father's irritability sometimes made. Then she could plead so eloquently for any poor culprit who was about to be committed. Her sweet imploring eyes, too, outdid all language; and if her plea was seconded by the vagabond's wife standing weeping beside her husband, why, twenty to one he was released on his own bond, and perhaps a few nights after might be found stifling pheasants with brimstone on their roosts in the woods, or again planting his snares in the magistrate's park.

Many said he was too easy by half; they told the truth, but then it was not in his nature to deal harshly with any one, no, not even if he had injured him. But, oh! it was something to be loved like the old Justice—to have almost every body's good word—to be greeted with smiles wherever he went—to find every ragged urchin ready to run the shoes off his feet to open the gates for him, and to see all the grey-headed men salute him with a reverential bow, and bless him in their hearts as he passed on. Plundered and imposed upon he was almost every day of his life; he seemed to find a pleasure in forgiving the offenders; it was a kind of race between himself and them, as if to see which should first become weary, the offender or the forgiver. Dear old man! he has thrown a penny for the apple which he accepted, and which, but an hour before the urchin had plundered from his own orchard.

From Downing's "Fanqui in China."

A CHINESE FIGHT WITH A SMUGGLER.

SMUGGLER'S BOATS.—A large mandarin-boat was seen one afternoon passing down the river beyond the first bar, and then entering and taking up its station in one of the numerous little inlets which abound in the neighbourhood. In a few minutes it was perfectly at rest; the yellow sails were taken in and furled, and all that was then to be seen of it over the paddy, were the slender sticks with little balls on the top, and which were hardly to be distinguished from the tall reeds which were growing at the edge of the water.

It had scarcely taken up its position, before the faint creaking sound of an approaching smuggler was to be heard in the distance. By the time it approached the open entrance of the little inlet, the mandarins were ready to receive it, and issued forth just at the moment it was passing. The centipede must at that moment have had the other firmly hooked on to it, if the spare hands on board of it had not used the long bamboos, and by their means prevented the two boats coming in contact. These long spears were pushed out at their full length, and then applied to the bows of the other vessel, while, at the same time, all the other men worked with desperation at the oars; so that in a few minutes, notwithstanding the most violent exertions of the mandarin's party, the smugglers kept clear, and were soon a boat's length ahead of their enemies.

Then the chase began. The screams and yells of the smugglers were mixed with the rickety sound of their vessel, and the orders and cries of the mandarins behind them. Every now and then the long-ornamented gun was turned upon its swivel, and the loud report reverberated across the country as it was discharged against the chase, but with little effect; the shot was generally seen dancing along the water wide of the mark.

Although the most violent efforts were made by the other party, it was soon evident that the smuggler was walking away from his pursuer. The brown machine with its hundred feet, was seen ahead, while the gaudy boat with its white oars, followed, fulminating forth its ineffective missiles.

After leading the way through many intricate channels, and dodging in and out to cut off a corner, the smuggler appeared as if he would very soon be out of all danger; when, suddenly, another mandarin boat was seen issuing from a little creek right ahead, and thus completely cutting off all hopes of getting away without a scuffle.

Thus completely blockaded, the smuggler determined to stand at bay, and make a vigorous resistance. All the oars were thrown aside, but placed ready for instant use, and every man seized a bamboo pike and awaited the attack with great determination. They then resembled a nest of demons, chattering and yelling out their notes of defiance. As the mandarins cautiously approached, the white oars were laid back, and the spears were taken up, and

the savage features on the shields were displayed in the faces of the resisting vagabonds. In a short time the boat had its two enemies on its quarters—and the whole multitude were engaged in a desperate struggle.

It appeared to be the object of the mandarins to board, and thus fight hand to hand, while the object the others wished to attain was to keep their enemies' boat off with their spears, until they could have a fair opportunity to get another run for their lives. The different manner of engaging by each party was very apparent during this conflict, and showed the decision and vigour which fighting for a good cause will give to the weakest combatant, while the arm of the strongest man is paralyzed, and its power withheld by the still, small voice of conscience. The mandarins rushed to the attack without hesitation, and laid about them in right good earnest with their swords and pikes, frequently cutting and wounding in a dreadful manner; but the smugglers appeared to act merely on the defensive, and, although slight wounds were inflicted with their spears, yet it was evident, that the great aim was to keep the mandarin boats at a distance.

The gaudy vessels were soon alongside, and the gay caps of the mandarins were seen intermixed with the bald heads of the illicit traders. The struggle was then over, many of the defeated jumped overboard, and as they struggled in the waters to gain the shore, formed excellent marks for the spears and javelins of the conquerors. The great mass of them were seized before they could try this doubtful chance of escape. The long pigtail served instead of the coat collar of our part of the world, and when twisted two or three times round the hand, formed a handle with which the owner could be moved with pleasure.

The men were thrown down at the bottom of the boat, and there securely lashed and fastened. In a short time the din and hubbub of so many voices were over, and the mandarin boats were seen leading away in triumph their silent and crest-fallen captives.

ADVENTURE IN A CAVE.

Four or five miles from the Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, is a cave known as the Pit Cave, though sometimes called Wright's Cave, after the name of the person who first attempted to explore it. This man was a speculator, who having reason to believe the cave a valuable one, resolved to examine it; but possessing little knowledge of caves, and less of the business of the nitre maker, applied to the proprietor of the works at the Mammoth Cave. A day was accordingly appointed, on which Mr. Gatewood agreed to meet him at the cave, and conduct the exploration in person. But on that day, as it happened, there arose a furious storm of rain and thunder, and Mr. Gatewood not supposing that even Wright himself would, under such circumstances, keep the appointment, remained at his work. In the meantime, Wright had reached the cave, in company with another man, a miner, though of no experience in cave hunting; and with him, finding that Mr. Gatewood did not come, and having made his preparations, he resolved to undertake the exploration himself.—The two men commenced, and pursued for several hours without accident and without fear, seeing indeed, nothing to excite alarm, except a cluster of very dangerous pits, which they passed while engaged in the search. By and by, having consumed much time in rambling about, they discovered they had left their store of candles at the mouth of the cave, having brought with them only those they carried in their hands, which were now burning low. They horror of their situation at once flashed on their minds; they were at a great distance from the entrance, which there was little hope they could reach with what remained of their candles, and the terrible pits were directly in their path.

It was thought, however, that if they could succeed in passing these, it might be possible to grope their way from the cave in the dark, as the portion beyond the pits offered no unusual interruptions, and was without branches. The attempt was made; and as desperation gave speed to their feet, they had at last the inexpressible satisfaction to reach the pits, and to pass them in safety, leaving them several hundred feet behind ere their lights entirely failed. But now began their difficulties. In the confusion and agitation of mind which beset them at the moment when the last candle expired, they neglected to set their faces firmly towards the entrance; and in consequence, when darkness at last surrounded them, they were bewildered and at variance; Wright vehemently insisting that they should proceed in one direction, the miner contending with equal warmth that the other was the right one.

The violence of Wright prevailed over the doubts of his follower, who allowed himself to be governed by the former, especially when the desperate man offered to lead the way, so as to be first to encounter the pits supposing he should be wrong. An expedient for testing the safety of the path, which Wright hit upon, had also its effect on his companion's mind; he proposed, as he crawled along on his hands and feet, the only way they dared attempt to proceed, to throw stones before him, by means of which it would be easy to tell when a pit lay in the way. The miner, accordingly, though with many misgivings, suffered himself to be ruled, and followed at Wright's heels, the latter every moment hurling a stone before him; and at every throw uttering some hurried exclamation, now a prayer, now a word of counsel.