

(ORIGINAL.)

MUSINGS AND VAGARIES OF SQUIRE COCKLE.

BY A TYRO.

(Continued.)

CHILL December at length came puffing along with bloated cheeks; and in order not to be debarred by the inclemency of the season from benefitting by the Squire's instructions, I shifted my quarters into the same house with himself, where I secured a room, promising soon to rival his in *litter*, if not in literary appearance. As soon as I had got well settled and bolstered with every convenience, I prepared for my usual round of gaiety, which consisted in going out to one or two parties, and then, oyster-like, *modestly* retiring into my shell to enjoy a little selfish gratification. One evening I determined to risk the excitement of a first appearance on the boards; I therefore bedizened myself sprucely in a fashionable suit of black, a dashing waistcoat, stock to match, and paper-soled boots, admirably fitted to display the delicate proportions of my nether extremities. I was always, as you may judge from this description, over-fastidious in dress, and affected much *style* and a sort of easy carelessness, which passes current in the world for a trifle more than its actual worth.

When I had donned this finery, I gave a few finishing twirls to my ferocious whiskers, stretching from ear to ear in friendly rivalry with my grin—saw my consequential phiz reflected in leathers, as polished as “Warren’s best” could render them—and then, assisted by a square of tinned glass, technically styled “a mirror,” I surveyed myself, with infinite satisfaction, from the forelock to the tips of the toes. I am naturally an egotist, and have drawn upon your patience to show off a person of which I am not a little vain; and whist! I will tell you a secret—when no eye is near, I contrive to screw up into the aforesaid mirror such killing looks as I fancy none of the fair sex can possibly resist! This is the champ-de-mars where I review my leers, ogles, smiles, &c. &c.—and, oh, fortunate looking-glass! like your prototype, how much oftener are you not favoured with a sight of these deadly weapons than is any enemy, fair or foul! To tell the truth, since my person is my only recommendation, I keep aloof from society merely to give myself a nominal value.

To return from this digression. Having finished my “togger,” I looked at the watch, and finding that it was full half-hour before the requisite time of departure, it struck me that I might help yawning through this dreadful interval, by stepping into the Squire’s room, and getting him, if possible, to jape a few characters for amusement. Reader, I warn you that I am fond of having both boots and persons well blackened; be not surprised then, if you detect me occasionally throwing in malicious observations during Squire Cockle’s sage remarks. Let not anger attribute them to spite—but remember that they are

the offspring of a perverse disposition, for which, of course, I am not accountable.

On my entering the Squire’s apartment, he was, as usual, seated in that eternal arm-chair, roasting his feet near a blazing fire, and I just caught the dying sound of a low chuckle, denoting with him the evaporation of high spirits.

“Ah, my friend,” he almost shouted, on getting a glimpse of my figure, “a hearty welcome to jolly December! Long life to the old fellow for coming at last to cheer us up! You see, however, that I am determined to keep out sly Jack, who may be sure of a warm reception if he attempt to palm his ruby face upon us. But, bless me! what a stylish appearance you present! I can assure you that you are quite mistaken if you expect to meet any company here tonight, and you have been ornamenting yourself to no purpose. Ah! I see—you are going to a ‘flare up,’ and have only honoured me with a call ‘en passant.’ So you have really accepted an invitation! Why, I thought you too much of a bat ever to seek the light, but I am glad to find you on the move at last. Permit me to congratulate you on this change in your feelings.”

“If you knew me better,” I answered, “you would be aware that my feelings are the same as ever.”

“Well, if *they* are not changed, your dress is, and now-a-days one change is about as important as the other. Yet how happens such a mournful colour as black to be so much the vogue? were it not for your waistcoat, I should be tempted to take you for a lawyer or an undertaker. (Thank goodness—mutated I—no one else would, for I can pretend to neither.) When I was young and in the country, the beaux dressed themselves in the brightest colours, and we might have been aptly compared to a flock of blue jays, robins, and humming birds, all met for a *hop* and a frolic. Oh! how we enjoyed ourselves then! How we did reel round, stamping and tearing about! and those delightful long country dances too, to the end of whose vistas we could but peep, we kept gloriously agoing, though scarcely able to stand! They had no puzzling intricacies to vex one; a very simpleton could get through a figure he saw performed over and over again a hundred times—it was merely ‘cross hands, down the middle, and up again.’ So at least our wise dancing-masters informed us. Then we had the merry fiddlers to make us brisk. They were true magicians, by the potency of their spells forcing us to jig away with a single partner, when tired of other dances. Our boots, too, were not flimsy things like yours—we would have worn out such as these in a short time—but they were good serviceable ones, where-with we could, when necessary, stamp on a spade, or kick a dog, without injuring their texture. Those were the articles to make a noise with; and what if we did grind a few corns, it only increased the din and produced more fun.