

The St. Andrews Standard.

E gravis sumendum est optimum.—Cic.

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POETRY.

A Visit to the Printing Office.

Oh, have you been down to the Printer's
And seen them 'ar' devils at work?
I'll be blest if they don't beat to flinters
Mother's fuss when we kill all our pork.

They fellows they stand right up straight,
And pick up little pieces of lead,
Stick in little chubby holes, thicker I bet,
Than seeds in our big parsnip bed.

Then they keep such a duckin' and bobbin'
I saw like Aunt Peggy's old drake,
When he's gollin' up corn, or a robin,
When he stands on one leg on a stake.

They have got there a curious press,
It beats father's for cider or cheese;
Its tarnation had work I should guess,
And it gives a confounded tight squeeze.

They've a thumping great roller I saw,
They keep pushin' they know best for what,
Their paper would cover our mow,
Such a whoppin' great sheet they have got.

How they fill it all up, is a wonder,
Where the juice do they get so much news,
As thick as pop-blossoms in summer,
What a ration of ink they do use!

THE BACHELOR'S LAST OFFER.

A LEAF FROM THE DIARY OF A TRAVELLER.

BY HANNAH D. BURDS.

This being my first appearance before the public, I would most willingly introduce myself to the reader; but as both ancient and modern have agreed to consider self-knowledge the highest attainment of wisdom, and I am a peculiar modest acquaintance, and have no pretensions to such an acquaintance, and waive the ceremony; only venturing to say that I am now sixty, and wear spectacles.

Of my own history, and certain little peculiarities of taste, I imagine I may speak less conceitedly, though I should never have ventured on the topic, had it not been to account for my translating the strange papers of which the bulk of this volume is composed. I have travelled—I think I may say I have travelled a great deal; but I am fond of flying over Europe like a passenger in a balloon, who sees everything, distinguishes nothing, and takes a geographical glance at the nation he visits, which adds little to his stock of knowledge as if he turned over the leaves of an old road-book whilst sitting quietly at his own fireside. I did so in my youth, and perhaps it is useful at that age to master the outline of all studies, that they may be ready to be filled up when the mind is more tranquil, and better fitted for laborious investigation.

I started with eager anticipations of perfect happiness on the grand tour when I was scarcely twenty; I underwent the ordinary trials of fatigue, dirt, and disappointment, without murmuring; for the charm of variety and the moments of exquisite enjoyment with which they were chequered, sufficed to make them endurable when present, and almost obliterated their remembrance when I returned to the monotonous dullness of a London winter. I strove to think a fog the most healthy atmosphere in the world, and a muddy pavement the most agreeable of promenades; but as I patiently wiped certain sooty little flakes from the projecting parts of my countenance, I sighed for the spotless purity of an Italian sky, and the flowery terraces of the Lake of Geneva.

It was in vain that I listened with due submission to the charitable friends who assured me that the puddle in St. James Park was exquisitely picturesque, and the long avenue in Kensington Gardens the most romantic solitude for whispering a tender declaration in the ear of beauty. I had unfortunately read Rousseau, and sentimentalized on the rock of Meillerie; I was but twenty, and my Julia's were very different from the smart young ladies who, attired in the last Paris fashions, were to be met with in that Elysium.

I am old bachelor now, and remember with no small regret the high-flown fancies which haunted my young imagination, and made me thus fastidious; for I have spent the best part of my life in looking for an angel of perfection, till my wrinkles and gray hairs became so conspicuous that I felt no respectable woman would have anything to say to me, and I am fain to confess myself one of those unfortunate beings, whom Franklin designates as half a pair of scissors, only fit to scrape a trencher with.

My solitude when young was all well enough. I had my certain expectations, and moreover, a certain income in possession, so old maids, and young maids, and mamma's especially, overwhelmed me with civilities. I was invited to every party I was

universally pestered to sing; and when it was discovered I strummed a little upon the guitar, it was marvellous how suddenly the assistance of my practiced fingers to arrange their strings, and how exceedingly musical the whole circle of my female admirers became as if by common consent.

But I soon tired both of smiles and guitars, and the excessive flattery I received, instead of engaging me in matrimony, only made me set a higher value on myself. I had no idea of being encumbered by a wife and half a dozen children; and when the London season was over, I hurried to the Continent to escape the bore of races, race balls, and country visiting, and the yet more intolerable nuisance of quarter sessions.

I lounged away several years in the best society of Paris, Rome, and Vienna; and after admiring good pictures and good music till I was heartily weary of both, I transferred my affections to good dinners and good wines; but in spite of such consolations, I began at length to feel my solitude rather uncomfortable. I was no longer courted by the fair sex; my figure was too portly for me to handle a guitar with propriety—I had no more strings to repair; I had lost my voice, the gout had put an end to my walking, and I could no longer be blind to the fact that I was an old man.

Unfortunately for myself, I had no profession to employ me, I had nothing but a restless love of motion, and a sort of dilettant taste for literature, such as belongs to most classically-educated elderly gentlemen. But the last was very feeble, and when in England, I hated the very sight of the last Quarterly, which for the sake of maintaining my dining out reputation as a good talker, I felt myself called upon to get up, and I studiously avoided all the thick little volumes with cloth backs, where cheap knowledge is condensed for the benefit of the rising generation. Abroad my case was scarcely less pitiable; and no language can convey an adequate idea of the melancholy of my summer residence, in some Swiss valley or German spa, where all around were engaged by their own plans, and I was left to beguile my solitude of its misery, by hunting butterflies, or sipping obnoxious waters.

The delight with which I hailed a stray acquaintance, or contrived to tack myself to some gay young party of exploring travellers, was quite ecstatic. I had mounted Mount Blanc seven times, though I nearly lost my nose by the frost in the first ascent; I had crossed the Jung Frau more than twice as often; the guides to the Right were quite weary of carrying me up in their chaises a porteurs, and I was as well known at every spa in Germany as the medicinal pump. I was sick of the very name of a table d'hôte, and everybody was sick of me; so I resolved as a last resource from ennui, to change my course entirely, and instead of lingering in the usual resorts of travellers, to explore the less frequented routes, that I might enjoy the double advantage of being able to astonish my London acquaintance by an account of my extraordinary discoveries, and of escaping the society of my travelled and contemptuous countrymen.

This scheme, nevertheless, had serious drawbacks. No human being can imagine the abominations of French inns as soon as you desert the high roads. An English stable is comparatively a palace. Yawning chimneys, half-choaked with the ashes of the last year's fires; floors, whose original material is so completely encrusted with dirt as to render it invisible, with the scent of the stables and the odor of apples, are mere trifles when compared with the grin horror of the kitchen, where a frightful old hog, for two sous a day, sits turning, on a spit before the fire, a couple of newly killed chickens for your dinner, which saluted you in the inn-yard not half an hour before.

But nevertheless, in justice I must admit, the dinners are rarely to be complained of, and when you get accustomed to the society of the conductor of the diligence, couriers, black-smiths, and so forth, you may dine very comfortably, though somewhat dirtily, at a country table d'hôte. Let it be remembered that I am not speaking of the splendid ordinaries prepared for the accommodation of wealthy Englishmen; but of the humble inns of the interior, where strangers seldom think it worth their while to penetrate.

Nevertheless, if a man has any love for the picturesque, or any taste for antiquity, he is frequently richly repaid for the temporary inconvenience of such excursions, and the simple and kind-hearted manners of the people greatly compensate for want of luxury. If he would know France as it is, let him not confine his excursions to Paris, but visit the lovely scenery around Arras and Mortain; let him penetrate the dungeons of Mont St. Michael, and explore the ruins of Carnac; let him traverse the volcanic districts of Auvergne, and the mountains of Dauphine; and, above all, let him turn from the high roads, and follow the

rocky paths, and the course of rivers, into those pastoral valleys where the simple manners of a primitive people are still to be found, amidst the most sublime scenery of nature.

I once delighted in such adventures, but as my limbs have become too stiff of late years to bear jolting in a cart, (the only mode of conveyance through these regions, and, moreover, being somewhat fastidious as to cookery, and unwilling to have my linen damped to shreds on the stones round the village pump, I have lately been compelled to limit my travels to more frequented districts, and to direct my steps once more to Germany, where the accommodations for travellers are usually far superior to those of France. Nevertheless, I have a lingering horror of its watering-places; and since the establishment of steamboats on the Rhine, and Dutch and English swam like bees around the Brunners, I have studiously avoided them.

There were times, however, when it did not suit my health or my convenience to travel as far as Dresden or Berlin, and I have more than once spent a summer most agreeably at one of the small towns near the Rhine, from whence I could make excursions into the valleys, which ascend like fissures between its rocky banks, and enjoy all the auburn and wildness of their seclusion, without being obliged to pass the night in a strange lodging.

It is now two summers ago, since I took up my quarters for an indefinite time at the excellent hotel at Andernach, well known to travellers by the name of the Sun, which, scarcely less bright than that glorious luminary, figures in large golden characters over its yawning door-way.

The landlady, a large portly dame about my own age, was so much delighted by my proficiency in the German language, as to only to favor me with her company at every meal, but to regale me with her best Arr wine at five francs a bottle. My bed-room and my dinners were equally good; and when my hostess found I was likely to remain some time under her roof, she redoubled her endeavors to make it agreeable, treating me like one of her own family, whose little circle I was invited at all times to join.

To this arrangement I had no sort of objection, for I like society from my heart, and she had several charming, well-behaved daughters, who, when the labors of the house were done, wrought worsted work with marvellous perseverance, and had no objection to a gentle flirtation with a rich Englishman, even though he might be visiting in his grand chamber.

I soon selected Miss Sophy as my especial favorite, and she might have been any man's favorite, for she was a plump, obliging, simple-hearted creature, with the sweetest voice that ever warbled a German ballad; and though her hands were certainly neither very small, nor very white, she knit the warmest stockings, and made the best coffee in Andernach.

By the help of my dictionary, I contrived to give her some pretty broad hints of my admiration. I saw evident symptoms of jealousy in the elder sisters, which flattered me not a little, and the smiles of my landlady were most enchantingly propitious.

Yet my vanity had certain misgivings, which were far from agreeable. None of the numerous love affairs which had amused my imagination for five and forty years before, ever caused such a flutter at my heart, as the coquetry of the interesting Sophy excited there. For the first time in my life, I was somehow doubtful of success; I was withal in ecstasies and agonies; I thought of wearing stays; I made many vain attempts to extract the gray hairs from my whiskers, and endeavored to persuade myself that my wig and my teeth were too natural to excite any suspicion of art.

But my landlady was a skilful matron, and by those little gentle encouragements which an experienced mother, on these occasions, knows so well how to administer to a wealthy suitor, she adroitly allayed the agitation of my nerves, till at length distracted between my hopes and my fears, and half maddened by the agonies of love and the gout, resolved to put an end to suspense by asking the important question, on the answer to which, I persuaded myself, the future happiness of my life depended.

But how to accomplish it, was a matter requiring important consideration. The young lady understood no language but German, and of German, though I had picked up a few current phrases, my whole stock was put to flight by the mere idea of the tender declaration I wished to arrange in the most touching phraseology. In fact, a little reflection convinced me, that to make an offer of my hand in person, was utterly out of the question, I might as well have attempted it in Hebrew. Reluctantly I was compelled to resign the most interesting moment in a man's existence, and as a sad alternative to write a letter.

To work I accordingly went. Dictionaries and grammars, and tourists' manuals, were put in immediate requisition, and for two days I labored with such persevering industry, that at the end of the time, a composition was completed, which I flattered myself must move the most flinty heart in Christendom, and after reading it twenty times over, retired to bed in an ecstasy, to dream of my Dulcinea, convinced that I was the most accomplished linguist in Europe.

In the morning I had little appetite for breakfast, and after bestowing infinite care on my toilette, and swallowing one cup of coffee, was sitting admiring the beauty of my German characters, and the graceful turns of my inverted sentences, when I was provoked beyond measure by the entrance of a young lawyer, from whom, since my residence in Andernach, I had taken lessons in German. Aware that nothing in my epistle betrayed the name of the object to whom it was addressed, and eager for the admiration I was convinced my composition deserved, I placed it in his hands with blushing vanity.

But scarcely had Herr Hoffman glanced over the lines, with a very inauspicious twinkling about the corners of his eyes, when, to my utter consternation, he burst into a loud and ungovernable fit of laughter. I blushed and stammered; I eagerly demanded the meaning of his mirth, but he made no reply; he only laughed louder and louder, every sentence he perused, till the tears streamed down his cheeks, and I, starting from my chair in a passion, snatched the unfortunate manuscript from his hands, and tore it into a thousand pieces.

Recalled by this act to a remembrance of his rudeness, my instructor, with as much gravity as he could assume, made a thousand apologies; but the fact of his laughter was undeniable, and I was reluctantly convinced by the first effects of my laboured epistle, of the truth of his unwilling confession, that it had never been his fortune to peruse a more extraordinary composition. A great part of it was utterly unintelligible, and all that was intelligible, was ridiculous; whilst, to crown the whole, I had signed myself the lady's faithful friend and domestic, instead of humble servant.

Deeply humbled, I could not reject the young man's offer to initiate a second letter for me; and when this was finished and folded, and sealed though I greatly regretted that it was not in my own language, it was some little consolation to know, that it was in such a dialect as the lady of my love could at least read and understand; and dismissing my tutor with as much civility as I could command, I was left to direct and chaperon it at my leisure.

With a palpitating heart, I awaited the answer of the lovely Sophy, and in less than an hour it was brought to my room by the tall youth in blue linen habiliments, who acted the joint parts of waiter and chambermaid. I tore it eagerly open. It was written in that detestable German character which is a disgrace to a literary nation. Again I had recourse to my key and my manual, and with such success, that after an hour's labor, I had made out about one word in ten. I was in ecstasies!—I was accepted.

"Ya" figured more than once in letters not to be mistaken on the charming page. Then came love and pleasure, and I don't know what beside; but I kissed the signature of my enchantress with the ardent rapture of a youth in his teens.

Well brushing my coat, and giving a finishing touch to my fingers with a sharp-pointed pen-knife, I resolved to go down stairs and throw myself at the lady's feet without further delay; but as it resolved that day to drive me to distraction, ere I reached my door, my provoking tutor again entered with a low bow.

"Well, good sir," he said, "I hope you had a favorable answer."

Had I received a refusal, I resolved to keep the mortification to myself, but this opportunity of exhibiting my triumph was too tempting to be lost, and anxious to have an exact translation of the precious epistle, without betraying my ignorance, with a calm smile of exulting vanity I took it from my pocket, and assuring him that my lady love, having herein fully signified her acceptance of my hand, I hoped soon to see him dance at my wedding. I begged him to read it aloud, as I never could be weary of hearing its precious contents.

I saw with surprise, that Herr Hoffman turned as pale as death when his eyes fell on the direction, and faintly murmuring the words, "Accepted, did you say, sir?"—he tottered towards a seat.

"Yes, accepted readily and frankly," I returned; "but, indeed, considering my pretensions, it could scarcely be otherwise."

The young man made no reply; he unfolded the letter, he looked eagerly at the signature, and then covering his face with his hands, he sunk back in his chair, overpowered by strong emotion.

"Ha! ha! here is a rival, thought I—

"Odd enough to be sure, that the post-fellow should be the means of sealing his own doom!" But, conscious that I had the best of it, I resolved in my triumph to be charitable and indulgent. But still I was anxious to know the exact contents of my charmer's letter, and after comforting my distracted companion by the assurance, that there was no accounting for women's taste, I again requested him to read it.

After a brief pause, he started from his seat, brushed the tears from his eyes, and proceeded to pace the room with hurried strides, till I was fidgetted to death, by the creaking of his heavy-soled shoes.

"My dear sir, what can be the matter?" said I, at length, losing all patience.

"The matter!" cried he, and strode across the room still faster than before.

"Yes, the matter!" returned I, for my German had so deserted me in my agitation, that I was fain to echo his words.

"Is it possible the girl has given you any encouragement?" demanded the lawyer, in a hurried voice, as he stopped full before me.

"I don't know what you call encouragement," I returned, fidgetting most uncomfortably on my chair;—"the idea of Werter, and his pair of pistols, and his blue and yellow habiliments, came so strongly before me, that, for the life of me, I knew not what else to say."

The lawyer was in a towering passion. I had not conceived it possible that a German, with all his phlegm, and all his sentiment, could have been in such a passion, and convinced that, most unfortunately, I had chosen a wrong Secretary. I was anxious to get out of the scrape as fast as I could.

"Encouragement!" I repeated, as soon as I thought he was in a state to listen, to me.

"Aye, encouragement, sir! Has the jilt ever dared to give you encouragement, when she is the affianced bride of another man?" retorted my guest, without allowing me time to add a second word.

I lifted up my spectacles, and closed my throat, with as much modesty as I could assume, and again requested him to read the letter, and without previous encouragement, you would not have dared to address her in the language of love?" he exclaimed.

"I never presumed at all, sir," was my answer; "for, if you remember, you wrote the letter to her yourself."

He struck his forehead in despair.

"But what emboldened you?" he exclaimed.

"Nothing, my good sir!" I interposed.

"To think of seducing the affections?"

"I never seduced any affections," said I; and the idea of a little corpulent elderly gentleman, with a brown wig, and a pair of silver spectacles, seducing the affections of a lovely girl of eighteen, was too much for my gravity, and with a half-suppressed smile, I requested him to read the letter, and he would know better what he was talking about.

With an air as distracted as if he was perusing his own sentence of death, he raised the fatal paper, and began:—"Most well-born gentleman! but there his courage failed him, and an agitating pause ensued, ere he thus continued—

"I am truly distressed by your letter, but I am convinced that a noble Englishman, as you are, will not take advantage of his favor with a poor girl's mother, to drive her to distraction. Yes, kind sir, I will frankly confess I love another, and have long been secretly engaged to a man from whom poverty alone divides me. I am certain you are too good, too kind, to find any pleasure in adding to the sorrows of the unfortunate. Yes, I know you will pardon me, and be the friend, though never the husband of—

"Sorry,"

I leave you, gentle reader, to imagine the effects of these words upon the lawyer and myself, as they fell upon my dismayed ears, and the eyes of the astonished lover deposed them with ecstasy. Death or an earthquake could not more completely have altered our positions. I felt the full measure of my folly, and I looked the fool I felt!

To persist in my addresses was now of course out of the question; and as in truth, I was long past the age for playing the part of a despairing lover, my pride induced me to make the best of a bad business.

The first time I met the pretty Sophy, she pleaded her own and her lover's cause so irresistibly, that, feeling more like her father than her suitor, I at once undertook to be her advocate with her mother. I knew that money can effect a world of wonders in these cases, and speedily reconciled the old lady to her daughter's match with Herr Hoffman, by bestowing a small portion of my ample wealth upon the young lawyer, so as to enable him to live in comfort, and independent with his bride, in return for the useful lesson he had given me.

Nor was I ashamed, at the end of a month, to dance at the young pet's wedding; and whilst whirling round the bride, in a waltz, I formed a resolution I have since faithfully kept—never to make another attempt at matrimony.

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