

to commence, and the din and war of words got to be bewildering; whilst hundreds of pens were plunging madly into invisible ink-stands, and scratching imaginary sentences and figures upon myriads of catalogues.

Suddenly a cry burst upon my ear so dolefully and shrilly, that I fancied somebody had fallen down the old-fashioned staircase. It was only the "house-crier," proclaiming in a painful, distracted sort of voice, that the sales were "on." Every man to his place if he can find one! Old musty brokers, of the last century, with large watch-seals, white cravats, and double chins, grouped together in one dark corner; youthful brokers, with very new hats, zephyr ties, and well-trained whiskers, hovered about the front of the auctioneer's pulpit; rising brokers, with ink hands, upturned sleeves of dusty coats, and an infinity of papers protruding from every pocket, were in all parts of the room ready to bid for anything. Ranged against the walls on either side were scores of incipient brokers—the lads of the Lane. Hundreds of pens began to scratch upon catalogues; hundreds of voices were hushed to a low grumbling whisper. The first seller (every vendor is an auctioneer at Garraway's) mounted the tribune, and the curious work began. My former experience had shown salesmen to be anxious to make the most of everything, and strive, and puff, and coax, and dally, until they felt convinced the utmost farthing had been bid; and then, and not until then, did the "going, going," merge into the "gone," and the coquetting hammer fell. But those were evidently old-fashioned, disreputable sales. They don't stand any nonsense at Garraway's. There is no time to consider. The biddings fly about like lightning. Buying and selling at Garraway's is done like conjuring—the lots are disposed of by *hocus-pocus*. So rapidly does the little nubby hammer fall on the desk, that one might well imagine himself near an undertaker's shop with a very lively business.

I said that the first "seller" was one of the *rising* men, with dark bushy whiskers, a sharp twinkling eye that was everywhere at once, and a strong piercing voice. He let off his words in sharp cracks like detonating balls. By way of starting pleasantly, he flung himself into an attitude that looked like one of stark defiance, scowling with his dark eyes on the assembled buyers, as though they were plotting together to poison him with his own drugs. Up went the first lots: a pleasant assortment of nine hundred cases of castor-oil, two hundred chests of rhubarb, and three hundred and fifty "serons" of yellow bark. The rising broker stormed and raved, as bid followed bid, piercing the murmuring din with sharp expletives. One, two, three, four—the nine hundred cases were disposed of in no time by some miraculous process of short-hand

auctioneering, known only at Garraway's. I thought the broker would have gone absolutely mad, as the bids went rapidly on: some slow man, of inferior intellect, would have given the buyers time to overbid each other: he seemed to take delight in perplexing the whole room, and as quickly as a voice cried out "Hep!" (the bidding interjection of Garraway's) so instantaneously fell the everlasting little hammer; and as surely did the seller scowl harder than ever, as much as to say, "I should just like to catch any body else in time for that lot." In this fashion above three hundred lots were sold in less time than many people in the last century would have taken to count them up.

The "rising" broker was followed by one of the old school, a pleasant-looking, easy-going man, the very reverse of his predecessor. He consumed as much time in wiping and adjusting his spectacles, as had sufficed just before to knock down a score of lots. He couldn't find a pen that didn't splutter, and he couldn't make his catalogue lie flat on the desk; and at last the impatience of the "rising" men, and the Lane Lads—Young Mincing Lane—was manifested by a sharp rapping of boot-heels on the floor, which soon swelled to a storm. The quiet broker was not to be hurried; he looked mildly around over his glasses, and rebuked rebellion with "Boys, boys! no nonsense." The bids went smoothly along; patent drugs, rich dyes, and costly spices fell before the calculating hammer; but each time, ere it descended, the bland seller gazed inquiringly, and I almost fancied imploringly, at the bidder, lest he had made a mistake, and might wish to retract his rash "Hep!"

The broker who followed, dealt largely in flowing language, as well as drugs and dyes. He assured the company present—and looked very hard at me, as though I was perfectly aware of the fact, and was ready to back him—that he intended to give all his lots away; he was determined to get rid of them, and he really would not allow his friends to leave the room, without distributing his goods among them. Considering his liberal spirit, I thought his friends evinced very little thankfulness; for the lots moved as slowly as presents could be supposed to do. There was one nice little parcel—about twenty cases of alces—that he was determined on giving away to a very rusty old dealer, who, however, shook his ancient head, and declined the bitter bargain.

There were a few score tons of some mysterious article, with an unintelligible name, that hung somewhat heavily at two-pence three farthings per pound. It was amusing to see how politely anxious the broker was to work the figure up to threepence; not that he wanted the extra farthing; he'd rather have flung it all into the sea than have felt such a paltry desire; but he just wanted to see the thing go at even money; it would look so