

## SKETCHES IN LONDON.

NO VI.

Perhaps there are no places in the world, in which a more complete insight into human nature, in all its simplicity, extravagances, eccentricities, follies, and viciousness, may be had, than in the police offices of London. The cases which daily come before the magistrate, develop at one moment deep-laid schemes of unredeemed villainy; in the next, instances of such perfect simplicity or "greenness," as no one could have previously deemed of possible existence. I will give a few of the more interesting cases which have lately occurred in several of the offices, which will go far to confirm what I have just said about the complete exhibition of human nature, in all its aspects, which is to be seen at these establishments. For the sake of classification, it may be as well to give the cases of such headings as it is very likely they would have received, had they been written for the daily newspapers. It may perhaps be right to mention, that none of the cases have before appeared in print.

Here is a case which I shall give which smacks of matrimonial squabbles and of poetry, in pretty equal proportions. Perhaps the most appropriate heading of it would be,

## THE POETICAL COBBLER.

Sally Muggs, a little squat-looking woman, not very fair, and on the wrong side of forty, came bustling forward to the bar, and looking the sitting magistrate expressively in the face said, "Please your vorship," and then suddenly paused.

Magistrate—Well, ma'am, and what is your pleasure?

Mrs. Muggs—Vy, your vorship, it is— (Here the lady again abruptly paused, and buried her face, in quite a theatrical manner, in her handkerchief.)

Magistrate—Well, what is it? Let us hear it.

Mrs. Muggs—Please your vorship, this 'ere man at the bar is my husband.

Mrs. Muggs turned about, and emitted a disapproving glance at "the man at the bar."

Magistrate—Very well; go on.

Mrs. Muggs—And he is a mender of old shoes, your vorship.

Magistrate—Well, and what about it? Why don't you proceed?

Mrs. Muggs (with a deep sigh)—And I married him six months ago.

Magistrate—Really, my good woman, if you have any complaint to make to the bench, you must proceed to do it at once, otherwise I shall order you from the bar. You have, I understand, a charge to prefer against the prisoner; pray come to it without any further circumlocution.

Mrs. Muggs—I will, your vorship. Vell, as I was a sayin', I married this 'ere man six months ago, and—

Magistrate—What has your marriage six months ago to do with the present case?

Mrs. Muggs—I soon diskivered, your vorship, that I had married a—Oh, Sir! I cannot utter the word.

Here Mrs. Muggs held down her head, and appeared to breathe so rapidly as to threaten instant suffocation.

Magistrate—And pray, madam, whom or what did you marry?

Mrs. Muggs—A—a—a—a poet, your vorship.

The wife of the poetical cobbler pronounced the word "poet" with a most emphatic groan, as if she had, in her own mind, associated something horrible with it.

The court was convulsed with laughter, in which the worthy magistrate heartily joined.

Magistrate—But what has the circumstance of your husband being a poet to do with the present charge?

Mrs. Muggs—I'll tell you presently, your vorship. I had some money when I married him; and so long as it lasted, he always spoke to me in pleasant poetry; but ven the money was all gone, his poetry became very disagreeable.

Magistrate—You mean, I suppose, that he scolds and quarrels with you in poetry? (Laughter.)

Mrs. Muggs—He does both of them 'ere, your vorship; but he does something more.

Magistrate—Assaults you, perhaps?

Mrs. Muggs—Yes, your vorship: he beats me, and kicks me about most cruelly, and all the while keeps talking poetry. (Renewed laughter.)

Magistrate—But pray do come to the present charge.

Mrs. Muggs—I will, your vorship. He came home last night a little the worse for leekur, and axed me, in poetry, for half-a-crown to spend with some fellow-snoobs. I told him I had not a single penny in the house; on which he threatened, in poetry, to make gunpowder of me, if I did not give him what he wanted.

Magistrate—And was he as good as his word?

Mrs. Muggs—I'll tell you all about it. (Laughter.) I again told him I had not a farthing in the house; on which he took down my best green silk bonnet, which was hanging on a nail, and which cost me ten-and-sixpence a fortnight before, and which I bought from Mrs. —

Magistrate—Never mind what your bonnet cost you, or who you bought it from, but tell us about the assault.

Mrs. Muggs—Yes, your vorship. Vell, as I was a sayin', he

took down the bonnet, which was as handsome and fashionable a 'an as was ever a-made by any milliner in Lunnun, and which was—

Magistrate (with considerable warmth)—Pray do not expatiate any more on the good qualities of the bonnet, but come at once to the assault on yourself.

Mrs. Muggs—I beg your vorship's pardon; but I vas a comin' to that 'ere as fast as I could. Vell, ven he took down the bonnet, he dashed it on the floor, and stamped upon it with his feet, as if he would drive the werry life out on't. "Oh, my new bonnet!" said I; and the words was hardly out of my mouth, when he gave another stamp on it with both his feet. "My ten-and-sixpence bonnet!" said I; and with that, he gave it a kick which sent it right up to the ceiling, and down again. (Loud laughter.) I then tried to snatch it up, saying, "Oh, my green silk bonnet!" on which he again put both his ugly hoofs on it, and stood with it underneath, just as if it had been a mat to wipe one's feet with. That bonnet, your vorship, vos von of the best—

Magistrate—Really, madam, if you go on in this way, I must dismiss the case at once. You are speaking only of an assault on your bonnet; pray come to the assault on yourself.

Mrs. Muggs (curtseying gracefully)—Vell, I will, your vorship. As I vas a-going to say, I tried to get the bonnet from him, and then he began to have a regular dance upon it. I stood a ghost at the sight, your vor—

"Aghast, she means, your honour; but she has no intellect—not a morsel," growled the cobbler, who had hitherto not only looked sulky but remained silent.

Mrs. Muggs resumed—I did, indeed, your vorship; but he grinned in my face and spoke poetry. I tried to push him off the bonnet, ven he struck me so violently on the face, that the blood poured in rivers from my nose, and I fell down on the floor. I cried out "Murder!" and another 'ooman as lodges in the same house called a policeman, who took him into custody.

A black eye and swollen face bore ample testimony to the forcible nature of the blows which Mrs. Muggs had received from her poetical husband.

The policeman said, that when he took the defendant into custody, he also addressed him in poetry. When he asked him,

"Why did you knock this woman down?"

he answered,

"Because she refused me half-a-crown."

(Loud laughter). He then added—

"I'll go to the station-house with you,  
If you'll only wait a minute or two,  
Till I wash my face and comb my hair,  
A request which you must admit is fair."

The defendant, who was a short, thick-set, massy-headed personage with a most unpoetical expression of countenance, evinced, all this while, the utmost impatience to address the worthy magistrate. The latter having apostrophised the poetical cobbler with a "Now, Sir," he advanced a step or two farther up the bar, and putting both his hands behind his back, looked the presiding magistrate earnestly in the face.

Magistrate—Well, Sir, what have you got to say to this charge?

I admit that I was somewhat rude,  
But not until I had reason good:  
She call'd me a horrid ugly brute,  
Which sure enough did put me out:  
I then hit Mrs. Muggs two or three blows,  
As your vorship already very well knows.

(Loud laughter.)

Magistrate—You seem very anxious to be considered poetical. Do you call it poetry to commit an assault of this kind?

Mr. Muggs—Do I call it poetry to beat my wife?

I do: the deed with poetry is rife.

Magistrate—You do! will you be so obliging as to tell us (in plain prose if you please) what kind of poetry you call it?

Mr. Muggs—Most certainly: I'll tell you in a fraction

Of time—I call it, Sir, the poetry of action.

At this sally, the office was again convulsed with laughter, in which the bench heartily joined.

Magistrate—(to Mrs. Muggs)—Does he always speak in this way?

Mrs. Muggs—Not always, your vorship, but he is sure to do so when he has drunk too much, and also occasionally when he is perfectly sober. He is now and then seized with fits of speaking poetry as he calls it, and threatens at times to knock my "unpoetical soul" out of me. Mrs. Muggs, as she made the latter observation, tried to look wise, as if she had said something of surpassing cleverness.

Magistrate—(to Mr. Muggs)—I understand you mend shoes.

Mr. Muggs—(hesitatingly)—Why—yes—I believe I dooes. (Loud laughter.)

Magistrate—Don't you think you would be much better occupied in attending to your business, than in making a fool of yourself by affecting to be a poet.

Mr. Muggs—It may be so, Sir, but I don't know it.

Magistrate—Well, if you persist in making an ass of yourself in this way, you must be permitted to do so; but you shall not be allowed to assault your wife.

Mr. Muggs—I'll not do it again, Sir, upon my life. (Loud laughter.)

Magistrate—You are sentenced to—

"Pray," interrupted Mrs. Muggs, addressing herself to the worthy magistrate, her heart having relented as she beheld her poetical husband looking touchingly towards her, "pray, do, your honour, let him escape this time; I'll be bound he won't beat me again, nor destroy my bonnet."

Mrs. Muggs looked as well as spoke so imploringly on behalf of Mr. Muggs, that even the magisterial nature, proof as it is generally supposed to be against entreaties of the kind, could not withstand the earnest supplications of the cobbler's lady.

Magistrate—(to Mr. Muggs)—Sir, we shall allow you to get off this once at the request of your wife, but if the offence be repeated we shall deal with you in a very different way.

Mr. Muggs—I thank you, Sir, and wish you good day. (Laughter.)

Mr. and Mrs. Muggs then cordially embraced each other as if their mutual affections had been wondrously improved by what had happened.

"I'm sure, Dick," said Mrs. Muggs, looking up touchingly in her husband's face, as he clasped his arms around her, "I'm sure, Dick, you won't do it no more."

To which tender appeal, Mr. Muggs, as Milton would have said, answered thus:—

"No, Sally, dear, I will not do't again,  
Never, my angel. I will refrain,  
From this time forward, and for aye.  
Perish my hand, should ever the day  
Arrive, in which 'twill hit thee a blow!  
Oh, Sally, my love! oh, Sally, oh!  
Your kindness has me quite overcome:  
As I will prove whenever we get home.  
So let us hence, and leave this place;  
I'm thankful we quit it with such a good grace."

The parties then retired, with their arms most affectionately entwined around each other's neck, amidst peals of laughter from all present.—The Author of the Great Metropolis.

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LONGARD & HERBERT.

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I. & II.

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Halifax, Jan. 20, 1838.

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Halifax, Dec. 23, 1837.

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