

John Vavasour was a wealthy banker, very fond and proud of his beautiful daughter, but surmised that he would one day have to resign her, or at any rate, content himself with claiming merely "a divided duty," and from what he had seen and heard, he knew of no one to whom he would less reluctantly hand over his charge, than to Tom Birtle.

So Tom came to the sensible conclusion that "all was not barren from Dan to Bersheebah," and vowed he had never really loved until he had met Edith Vavasour. He looked upon that first affair as altogether a mistake, which was now (thank heaven) buried fathoms deep. Thus the troth of those two was plighted, and there being no known impediment "why they should not be joined together," the wedding was fixed to take place early in November. Everything was arranged, and the presents nearly all sent in, when the night but one before the eventful day, Tom engaged a box at the Academy, taking Mr. Vavasour and Edith to see the play of "Leah the Forsaken."

A good deal of amusement was caused by Tom having been under the impression that the piece was a farce or a parody, and on discovering his error, he utterly declined to accept the tragedy in the proper spirit, but laughed and made fun of the whole thing to Edith. He asked her whether on the day after tomorrow, when a ceremony,—in which he was to act a leading part—was being performed, if he would be allowed to walk round outside the church, interviewing some other young woman, without apparently being missed or sought after? Edith blushed and begged of him not to make himself ridiculous, but she laughed and enjoyed her lover's satire on the play notwithstanding.

"By Jove it is too absurd!" exclaimed Tom, "what are they all doing inside the church without the bridegroom?"

"Oh it is only a play, you goose," was the rejoinder.

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women are merely players," quoted Tom.

"One man in his turn playing many parts" added Edith. "Pray what part are you playing sir? Don't sigh 'like a furnace, please,' for the theatre is hot enough already."

"What can you two find to laugh at in this stupid piece?" asked John Vavasour, and then immediately reproached himself, remembering a time when he too had been amused without much reason, because he was so happy.

"It is all Tom, Papa" said Edith.

"No, Mr. Vavasour, I assure you it is all Edith," protested Tom,— "I mean," he added, as the girl seemed about to remonstrate, "that everything is all Edith at present. I am like David Copperfield, literally steeped in Edith, as he was in Dora."

John Vavasour was a sensible man, and on such an occasion both metaphorically and actually "took a back seat."

Then it was that Tom, with the beautiful girl he had won, seated by his side, looked up, and across the theatre, in the opposite box, he saw what made his heart stand still. A woman pale and thin, but bearing the marks of having possessed good looks—a face risen from the dead!—Impossible! It must be a delusion; one of those extraordinary likenesses which occasionally occur. It could not be—yet, oh, horror, when their eyes met all hope vanished, for not only did he know her, but he saw that she also knew him. He seemed to choke, a dull heavy pain began to grow over all his limbs, and he could not quite suppress a deep dreadful groan.

Edith turned a startled gaze upon him, and cried out in broken accents, "Oh Tom, dear, what is the matter? You are as pale as a ghost."

"I do-not-feel-well" stammered Tom in a stifled voice, "can we—would you mind—going home?"

How they reached Mr. Vavasour's house Tom never knew, but he had some slight recollection of swallowing a glass of brandy, and pulling himself together, saying something about the heat. He added that he should be all right again presently, and promised Edith that he would otherwise call in a doctor. Indeed he wondered whether he had not had a dream, a nightmare, and as he took leave of Edith, could not believe that his cup of happiness was to be snatched from him just as he was putting it to his lips.

(To be Concluded in our Next.)

CHARACTER SKETCHES

No. 2.

OUR MILITARY.

WHEN we write about our military we do not mean the rank and file or even those officers belonging to the various corps, who have other occupations, and merely devote a portion of their time to the service of their country. No, we refer to the small number who have risen (?) to be soldiers pure and simple, and who have no other duties except to lead and inspect our regiments. Of these there are a few who parade the streets and hang about the hotels either in mufti or uniform, according to whether they are on or off duty, and remind us of certain characters—though perhaps a long way after—we have had pictured to us by great authors.

Imitation has been held up both as vulgar and "the sincerest flattery," and we are inclined to think both verdicts are correct in their way. A good imitation is surely better than a bad original, while a poor imitation is simply nauseous. Again some imitations are so natural as to partake of reproductions like a child of its parent, as an instance of which we may mention that many touches in the writings of Miss Thackeray (Mrs. Ritchie) recall vividly her illustrious father. Other imitations are not so pleasant, because they only show a monkey aping the man, in the foolish belief that they are safe from detection. Thus in some of the American magazines the explanatory writings to beautiful illustrations of European scenes and travels are often clippings or adaptations from guide books and cyclopædias. Lastly there are imitations, some intentional and some unconscious. Of the former we may name Thackeray's "Prize Novelists" and Bret Harte's "Imitations of Novels by Eminent Authors," which are quite legitimate since they are merely what they profess to be. Of unconscious imitations, it is sometimes as impossible for style (as for history) to help repeating itself, and thus several of the Ingoldsby Legends remind us of the humorous rhymes of Tom Moore.

What has all this to do with our military? you exclaim. Only this: that if one or two of our Colonels or Majors appear to resemble Joseph Bagstock, "rough and tough old Joe, sir!" the imitation is theirs, not ours.

In these "piping times of peace" our military roam about St. James and St. Francois Xavier Streets, and saunter into the St. Lawrence Hall to smile *at* and *with* their friends, their jolly rubicund faces and their somewhat consequential gaits putting one in mind of full fledged gobblers. In the afternoons they may be met upon St. Catherine Street ogling the fair ones when "Josh is wide awake and staring sir," and later on you may "bet your bottom dollar" you may see them in the Rotunda of the Windsor. They are good tempered, harmless, and perfectly contented with the world and themselves. They are several grades above our poor Costigan, but theirs can scarcely be called a high-toned existence, and we fear that when they join the majority, our friend Koko might sing "they never will be missed." Perhaps however, that may be said of most of us when our place becomes vacant, and that butterflies as well as bees have their parts to play in our city life; so without bitterness we will bid adieu to the Colonel and the Major, and hope that they may rest in peace when the grass waves over their once stout old bodies.