

LAIRD.—Fill your bags, Bauldie, and mind and keep guid time, or sorrow anither horn wets your craig this night!

MAJOR.—Here goes then :—

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Now thrice-welcome Christmas,
Which brings us good cheer,
Mincee pies and plum-pudding,
Good ale and strong beer;

With pig, goose, and capon
The best that may be,
So well doth the weather
And our stomachs agree.

Observe how the chimneys
Do smoke all about,
The cooks are providing
For dinner, no doubt.

But those on whose tables
No victuals appear,
O may they keep Lent
All the rest of the year.

With holly and ivy
So green and so gay,
We deck up our houses
As fresh as the day.

With bays and rosemary,
And laurel complete,
And every one now
Is a king in conceit.

But as for curmudgeons
Who will not be free,
I wish they may die
On the three-legged tree!

LAIRD.—Mony thanks, Major, for your canticle, which has a' the genuine smack o' antiquity. Wha' may be its author, think ye?

MAJOR.—That is more than I can answer. I picked it up from Poor Robin's Almanack for 1695.

LAIRD.—What a pity it is that our neighbour Tummas did na' gie us some sangs like that in his "chronological compendium," as the dominie would say! Hech sirs! but lists o' fairs, and members o' Parliament, and huxters o' marriage leeshences, mak' unco wersh reading, when there is naething else! It is as bad as a haggis, or a mutton pie, without saut and pepper!

DOCTOR.—What racy jocosities the final page of the Belfast Almanack, used to present, in my green and salad days. Confound the prim stuck-up utilitarianism which superseded these *bon mots* by pedantic squads of facts, facts, facts!

MAJOR.—Spoken like a good, honest, sound-hearted Tory! We shall have you on the right side of the political blanket, before all is over!

LAIRD.—I am no enemy to mechanics' insti-

tutes, and debating clubs, and penny encyclo-pædias.

MAJOR.—Mere churns for the engenderation of froth and flatulence!

LAIRD.—But—as I was ganging to say, why should we not be merry as weel as wise? Is the world to be made happier or mair virtuous by banishing therefrom every thing that canna' be converted to the production o' pounds, shillings, and pence?

MAJOR.—Confound railroads! From the bottom of my soul I believe that these abominations constitute the root of the whole evil!

DOCTOR.—Hear the fossil!

MAJOR.—Fossil or no fossil, you never will laugh me out of my conviction! The preposterous speed with which they hurry men over the fettered surface of the globe, tends pestilently to degrade Adam's children into mere calculating machines! All the romance and sociality of travelling are over and gone. I never think without a mournful fondness upon the kindly dinners which prevailed during the stage coach dynasty. When the journey was long the pilgrims were allowed a good hour to discuss the joints and pastry provided for their sustentation, and a methodical man had always sufficient time to dispose of his sober pint of port or sherry, as the case might be.

LAIRD.—Vera true, and hoo dismal and dreary the state o' things which prevails in oor ain age! Three minutes and a-half is the longest furlough ye get between cock crow and sun-set, at the refreshment station. Mahoun flee awa' wi' sic' refreshment, say I! Hardly hae ye swallowed a spoonfu' o' soup, saut as brine, and desperately strong o' the water, than presto! oot comes the whistle wi' its diabolical skirl, the bell rings as if the lift were on fire, and throwing doon your twa shillings ye rin yoursel' into a fever or an apoplexy to catch the snortin', pechin' monster!

DOCTOR.—In your complaints of travelling by rail, you forget the scalding dinners brought up in times of yore for unfortunate travellers, and that a regular agreement existed between the innkeeper and the stage driver to hurry the travellers, so as to prevent their consuming too much provender. You also strangely forget, Major, that when you speak of an hour as allowed, that half an hour or twenty minutes was the maximum.

MAJOR.—Small wonder that under the operation of such a state of matters every thing is becoming tainted with the most degrading