

RANDOM SKETCHES.

BY REV. ARTHUR MURSELL.

"P's AND Q's."

IT is interesting to consider the origin and derivation of old phrases. There are many people who use the caution "Mind your P's and Q's" who have no idea of how the phrase first gained currency. Everyone knows what it means. As generally applied, it is a caution to be wary and to keep your wits about you. It is tantamount in meaning to that other phrase of nautical derivation, "Look out for squalls." This expression, though first used at sea as a caution to careful navigation, has acquired a pretty universal application; and so with the phrase "Mind your P's and Q's." Doubtless our totally-abstaining friends employ the expression as frequently as others, but, according to its original derivation, it is quite a superfluous caution amongst them. In the days when my gentle reader and myself were younger than we are now, some half-a-century ago, it was customary for the landladies of country public-houses to keep a sort of running account against the regular frequenters of their taverns chalked up on the back of the bar door, which was often painted black for the purpose. "P" meant "pints," and "Q" meant "quarts," and under these respective letters the number of pints and quarts consumed by such customers as did not imbibe upon the ready-money system was duly chronicled. Hence it fell into a sort of proverbial caution amongst the cosy circle who used to assemble in the village taproom to "Mind their P's and Q's." I do not know whether this simple mode of drinking on credit is still adopted or preserved in any parts of the country, but I do know there is still a sadly emphatic need for the repetition of the caution.

P's and Q's are the mortar and cement which build our prisons and reformatories, and the motto to be written up over the doors of asylums, hospitals, police-offices, and night refuges might well be "Mind your P's and Q's." I believe the correct regulation "pewter"—the "native pewter," as Charles Dickens calls it—of porter and old ale is stamped with some hall-mark or other to attest its capacity; but there is another mark upon it which is not to be seen except by the eye of the heart. Too often, for every pint or quart which is emptied of its foaming draught at the taproom by a husband or a father, there is a corresponding vessel filled at home by the tears and even the blood of a wife or child. We cannot spend a day with our eyes open without seeing more and more clearly the fearful signs of drunkenness in this country. It fires every other impure passion. It forces other vices into energy and power. It sends poor wrecks into our streets to pitch and reel like ships distressed at sea. It crowds the low taprooms in our towns with fathers who have learned to hate their children, and husbands who have learned to curse their wives. It empties the heart of its affections and the home of its comforts. It fills our billiard rooms with gamblers and their dupes, and brothels with "gallants" and their victims. P's and Q's might well be engraved on every billiard-table, and stamped upon the pawnbroker's gilded balls. Drunkenness is the architect of every jail and work-house that stands upon the earth, and it shaped and rigged and manned every hulk and convict ship that swims upon the sea. It established and peopled all our penal colonies, reared the gibbet on which nearly every murderer has swung, and dug the grave in which ten thousand suicides have slept. As it goes abroad, women turn white at the approaching fact, and hold the infant closer in their fear. What need to elaborate? The story has been hammered out thin upon the anvil of philanthropy and appeal, till men are callous to its force. But it is a caution that needs still repeating, not merely to the poor, whom it robs of food, but to the rich whom it robs of faculty, "Mind your P's and Q's." For rich men get enslaved as well as poor ones, and quite as often and as disgracefully. They used to tell a story in whose grim humour there is much homely truth:—"If a prince were to take too much, he would be said to be *luted*; if a rich squire took too much, he would be *elevated*; if a respectable tradesman exceeded moderation, he would be *incubited*; if a ten-pound householder transgressed, he would be *intoxicated* d, but if a poor working-man makes a mistake, 'the nasty beast is as drunk as a pig.' We are unjust both to the poor man and to the poor pig. To say a man is as drunk as a beast or a pig, is to libel beast and pig. Let us be just and honest. Say he is as drunk as an alderman, or as drunk as a lord, for aldermen and lords do get drunk sometimes, beasts and pigs never. And remembering

this, let us offer to the lord and the labourer alike the counsel, "Mind your P's and Q's."

"EVEN ME!"

IN a praise meeting, during the revival services in Chicago, Mr. Saukey spoke as follows in regard to the power of this and other hymns:

"What I have to thank God especially for is the wonderful way He has used the power of song. I remember about five years ago coming to yonder depot one morning early. It was my first visit to this great city, and I knew none here save one man. I went along Madison-street, up State-street, to the North Side, and met my dear brother Moody. I had met him one year before in a distant State, while he was engaged in the work of the Master. As I went along those streets, I recollect how I wondered if God had a work here for me in my coming to this city, or whether I had come on my own volition, and how while thinking in this way I sent up a prayer to God to bless me in the service in which I was about to engage. With thankfulness I remember the very first day I spent in this city. Somewhere down here we came among the sick and lowly, and went from one house to another singing and praying with the people; and what a blessing we received!

"God led us into other fields. I remember when the Tabernacle was rebuilt how I used to enjoy gathering the little people in, and teaching them those sweet songs that are already encircling the globe. Yes, encircling the globe, for but a few days ago I received a copy of these Gospel hymns printed in the Chinese language. They are sung in Africa and Asia, and are heard in France and Germany, England, and America. I remember what peace and pleasure I had as I first taught these little hymns on the North Side. One day a lady called on me when I first had those classes, and said, 'There is a little singing girl belonging to one of your classes who is dying. She wants you to go and see her.' I went to her home—a little frame cottage—and there I found a little maid dying—one whom I had known so well in the Thursday evening meetings. I said, 'My dear child, how is it with you?' 'Will you pray for my father and mother as you pray for us?' was the reply. 'But how is it with yourself?' I again asked. 'Oh, sir,' she answered, 'they tell me I am about to die, but I have found the Lord Jesus Christ.' 'When did you become a Christian?' I inquired. 'Don't you remember one Thursday when you were teaching me to sing—

I am so glad that Jesus loves me,

Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me;

and don't you remember how you told us that if we only gave our hearts to Him, He would love us?—and I gave it to Him."

"What that little dying girl said to me helped to cheer me on more than anything I had heard before, because she was my first convert. Thank God, there have been many since."—*From Longley's "Memoir of P. P. Bliss."*

SEASONS OF RECREATION.

WAKE up from the monotony of everyday life, and go out and see something you never saw before, or hear something you never heard before. Seasons of recreation are a preparation for the hard work of life. Innocent amusement and honest toil are twin brothers. I never knew a man worth anything for Church or State who at the right time did not know how to play. Let parents not only provide their children with Christian instruction, but also with innocent amusement. That wide deep river that runs through the valley, with its shoulder pushing at the mill-wheel and tactory, urging its way out toward the sea amid the roar of machinery, and the click of shuttles, once had plenty of time to play, while it leaped on the rock, and danced in the shower, and trickled in dew from the mountain leaves, and sang over the waterfall, and laughed over the pebbles, and made all the rocks among which it pushes its way a-glitter and a-gleam. If that plain river, before it got to work with the mill-wheels and the factories, had time to be blithesome, why shall not our children have time to be glad and full of laughter before they come to the push and tug and jostle of tremendous and stupendous life? It is a good sign when you see children full of romp and play. I have noticed that a tree which has no blossoms in the spring has no apples in the fall.—*Dr. Fairbairn.*