

SONG.

THE WOODLAND WELL.

O the pleasant woodland well
Starred about with roses;
Sweetest spot in dale or dell,
Bright when evening closes;
Sparkling, gushing clearly:
There it was first love begun;
And, amidst eve's shadows dun,
There it was I wooed and won
Her I loved most dearly.

O the lovely woodland well!
Unto it is given
Fairest light that ever fell
Full of bliss from heaven.
Ever, late and early,
Lingering, there I love to be,
Through sad memory's tears to see,
Lost to love, and lost to me,
Her I loved most dearly.

RICHARD HOWITT.

Concluded.

SCENES AT EPSOM RACES.

The moment the winner of the races is declared, the Stand, as it is called, is broken up, and the dense mass of people disperse themselves sufficiently to enjoy elbow-room. Portable dinners and lunches are now produced by all who were wise enough to provide themselves with such useful affairs before leaving town. Sandwiches are as plentiful as the blackberries of Falstaff. Thousands of persons, without being at all ceremonious, convey these tit-bits, with an expedition quick as thought, to their mouths, and not less promptly are they disposed of. Here and there you see the wine and brandy bottle making its appearance, and without loss of time is it emptied of its contents. Ladies who, at home or at parties, would blush to do more than take two or three sips of the liquid extracted from the grateful juice, now quaff a full glass, and it may be a second, with as much despatch, and as little ceremony, as would an officer of the Tenth Hussars. Eating, in some shape or other, may be said to be everywhere the order of the day; for most of those who took no dinner with them, purchase a penny worth of bread, biscuit, or gingerbread. In the shape of vendible liquids, there are sundry articles, severally baptized porter, gin, and ginger-beer. If you have nothing drinkable of your own, you are glad to become purchasers; for what between the heat of the weather, the dust that is flying about, and the extreme pressure of the crowd, from which you have just partly escaped, you feel as thirsty as if you could drink up the Thames at one draught. Do you patronise the porter, the gin, or the ginger-beer? No matter which; you will soon discover that they are all the same in this one respect,—that the one-half, and the largest half too, consists of water; and as if to aggravate the evil, there is strong reason to suspect that it is not of the purest sort. The truth is, that the liquids vended at Epsom races are like the razors immortalised by Peter Pindar the younger—made to sell, not to drink.

The ground is again all in a hubbub. Everything around seems instinct with human life and motion. Your ears are almost rendered deaf by the Babel of sounds which salute, or rather grate upon them. Could you have before supposed that it was within the compass of possibility that any person, however 'gifted with the gab,' could have been so voluble, if not so eloquent, in praise of his ginger-beer, as that stentorian-voiced fellow who is bawling out the pretended good qualities of his wash? Hear, again, that rufian-looking person praising his ginger-bread to the skies. Don't you wonder that that young rascal without hat, cap, or napkin,—without anything indeed worthy the name of clothing, but with a face which has clearly not come in contact with water for the last eight days,—don't you wonder that he is not quite hoarse, if not speechless, from the very excess of his oratorical efforts to attract purchasers for his pies? To be sure, such exertions would kill any one else, but these fellows are inured to the thing: it has become a second nature to them—a mere matter-of-course affair.

The thimble-riggers are reaping a rich harvest from the cockney greenhorns, who fancy that they see the thimble which 'kivers' the pea. The thimble is lifted; there is no pea there; but the money of the simpleton finds an immediate passage to the pocket of the rogue who is playing at victims. Ah! but though mistaken this time, the greenhorn will not be so again. He watches the rapid motions of the thimble-rigger; he is quite certain where the pea is now. 'Half-a-crown! crown!—a sovereign!' as the case may be, 'that it's there!' pointing to a particular thimble. It is lifted. Where is the pea? Echo answers, Where? 'It is not there anyhow,' observes a clownish-looking country lad who is standing by, but has too much sense to throw his money away. 'This beats everything; this is passing strange,' ejaculates the victim. Still he determines not to be 'done': he tries again and again, and he is only 'done' the more. At last his money is 'done,' and therefore he must be 'done' playing the game of thimble-rigging.

Far more thriving still, because the stakes are much deeper, is the business which the blacklegs from London are driving within those tented or portable hells which encounter your eye in every

direction. See how rapidly the foolish persons who are there risking their sovereigns or fivepound notes, are plundered of their money. Scarcely more insane would be the act of going out, throwing open their pockets, and asking the first person they meet with to empty them of the last shilling they have, than is their conduct in going into one of these places for the purpose of playing with a gang of rogues and robbers. The only difference between the two cases is, that in the first, the process of cleaning out would be more expeditiously gone through than it is in the other.

The concluding race takes place. It is over! and there is a universal rush towards the road leading in the direction of home. Such a scene of bustle and confusion as is now presented has been but very rarely witnessed since the creation of the world. Vehicles come in collision, and, what is worse, pedestrians are often jammed between two or more of these vehicles. The sufferers shriek, the ladies scream, and the drivers of the vehicles swear at, and abuse, and blame each other. Horses become restive; legs are broken, and bones are fractured. Great injury is done to the limbs of her Majesty's subjects: it is fortunate if no lives be lost. The more tender-hearted of the myriads present feel for those who have already suffered, and are filled with fear and trembling lest other and still greater disasters should yet occur. Eventually the ground appears less densely peopled; the immense concourse assembled are now rapidly undergoing the process of dispersion. The majority of the tenants of the vehicles, and of the equestrians and pedestrians, have now forced their way to the road, and are earnestly bound in a homeward direction. Did you ever see such a road? Did you ever before witness such extensive lines—all as close as they can be, so as to be able to move—of carriages, cabriolets, carts, horses, and human beings? Never, I will answer for it. You fear there must yet be many accidents before they all get home. Your fears are but too well founded; for I believe there has never yet been a Derby day in which there has not been a greater or less number of accidents, many of them serious: it is well if none prove fatal.

Has the day been dry? Well, then, such a ludicrous spectacle as that presented by those who have been to Epsom, on their return, was never seen. Their throats, not even excepting the throats of the most fashionable and delicate ladies, are so many dust-holes on a small scale. Their eyes are embedded in dust; while their carriages, cabriolets, horses, and their own persons, are all coated over with the same commodity. They look, for all the world, like so many dusty millers. What a figure do the ladies appear, with the finery of which they were so proud in the morning, and the preparation of which had cost them so many anxious thoughts! Did it rain heavily?—and Derby day is always remarkable for being either very dry, or very wet,—then it is difficult to say which of the evils is the greatest. A heavy shower at Epsom inspires the multitude with perfect horror. It plays fearful havoc with the ladies' dresses, and gives the whole assemblage the most crest-fallen and melancholy appearance which it were possible to imagine. See how drenched and downcast they look on their way home! One can hardly persuade himself that these are the parties he saw going to Epsom in the morning, so full of life and gaiety in their countenances and demeanour. How sad are their visages now! They are heartily sick of horse-racing; and their only wonder is that they were silly enough to leave their comfortable beds and their happy homes—assuming them to be happy—in the morning, on such an errand as that on which they had gone. And yet, after all, the chance is that they will go again next year, should they be living and well, and have the necessary ways and means.

Such is an attempted description of a Derby day at Epsom. It falls short of the actual thing itself. It is a scene that is not to be described. To form a correct idea of it, it must be witnessed.

The Turf is on the decline. Every friend of morality, and every one who wishes well to his fellow-creatures, will rejoice at this. What are now the leading horse-races, but gambling transactions on an extensive scale? At what time gambling was first introduced on the Turf, I have not been able to ascertain, but it must have been at least nearly three centuries ago; it is distinctly mentioned as being to a certain extent prevalent in the reign of Elizabeth. In that reign George, Earl of Cumberland, as is well known, almost ruined himself by his gambling propensities on the Turf. Towards the close of the seventeenth century, gambling at horse-races appears to have become so general, that Burton, the author of the 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' who flourished at that time, emphatically though quaintly said, 'that many gentlemen by means of race-horses, galloped out of their fortunes.' What would Burton have thought if he had foreseen the extent to which the vice of gambling on the Turf is carried in our day? Thousands are yearly ruined by it.

There is a numerous gang of sharpers and black-legs, who make the plunder of simpletons who bet on horse-racing a part of their daily schemes and daily roguery. Their plans are secret, but they are deeply laid, and are carried out with a skill and artfulness which render their success almost a matter of moral certainty. And even where they are detected, it is not, unhappily, until they have fleeced their victims. What villainies have of late been brought to light, which have been practised at our leading horse-races! But in no instance have they been discovered in sufficient time to save

the unsuspecting simpletons whose money was at stake. And what care the unprincipled 'legs' for exposure, when it comes not until after they have pocketed the money of their victims? Nothing at all; for they have no character to lose. And they know the law cannot reach them. Who does not remember the disgraceful transactions which took place at the Doncaster races of 1832? And are not certain transactions of the most unprincipled kind, which occurred at a celebrated race a few months ago, and by which thousands have been ruined,—still the subject of animated and indignant remark in all the sporting circles? The affair of the horse Ludlow is still fresh in the recollection of all patrons of the Turf; and that of Harkaway, at a very recent race, is not likely to cease to be spoken about for some time to come. Is it not beyond all question, that horses, which otherwise would have won, are often prevented from winning by the most consummate roguery? In some cases they are drugged so as to make them sick; in others the jockeys are bribed to ride them in such a way as to prevent them coming in first. A very common expedient resorted to by the 'leg' fraternity, when they have made their arrangements to their entire satisfaction beforehand, is to withdraw the horse which was the greatest favourite, by either purchasing him from the proprietor, or pretending to have purchased him. In fact, there is no end to the tricks of the Turf. The ramifications of the roguery practised by the mendacious gamblers who are so largely mixed up with all Turf transactions, are so varied and extensive, that no calculation or foresight can guard against their effects. So cunningly and skillfully are their schemes for plundering her Majesty's subjects laid, that they often, with the view of gulling the public, bet to a certain extent in favour of the favourite horse, though they know he will lose. A little loss in this way is amply made up by secretly betting to a large amount the other way; or by some other private arrangement made among themselves. Another favourite expedient on the race-course is to invent all sorts of rumours respecting different horses,—rumours relative to the probability or otherwise of particular animals running; and thus raising the odds, or causing them to fall in particular cases, according as their own interests are affected. Scarcely less notorious for the invention of false rumours on the part of a gang of Black-legs is the race-course, than is the Stock Exchange itself. With regard again to the running of favourite horses, it is now so common a practice for the parties interested to manage matters in such a way as that they shall not win,—that it has of late become customary with the recently initiated, before betting for or against any favourite horse, to do everything he can to ascertain whether or not it really be meant or intended by the proprietor that the horse shall win.

The public, who know little or nothing of the tricks of the Turf, never contemplate the possibility of any person entering a favourite horse, far less of his starting him for the race, without being most desirous that he should win; and, consequently, are victimised without perhaps ever suspecting that there was aught else than perfect fairness in the matter. It is well known that many hundreds of pounds have been given to proprietors of favourite horses, to bribe them not to win the race; and it is equally well known that the jockeys destined to ride such horses have, when not directly bribed by the 'legs' to lose the race, often received through the proprietors two or three hundred pounds for riding in such a way as to cause the horse to make a respectable appearance on the race-course, and thus lull suspicion of any treachery without winning the prize.

When I mention that a number of Jewish black-legs,—for the Turf swarms with rogues of the Hebrew persuasion,—have severally, perhaps, betted from 10,000*l.* to 15,000*l.* that a particular horse shall not win, and when I add, that these are all leagued together for the purpose of plundering simpletons of their money, it will at once be seen to be natural that they should unite together, through the medium of one of their number, in offering the proprietor of a horse, where that proprietor is supposed to be accessible to bribery, such a sum as will cause him to guarantee that the horse shall not win the race.

In innumerable cases, in which the proprietors were men of too much honour and honesty to be parties to any such fraud, the leading men among the 'leg' fraternity have, through the intervention of some person on whom they could depend, attempted to bribe the individual entrusted with the training of the particular horse, to give him a particular pill the night before the race, so as to make him sick; and when this has failed, the inducement of some hundred pounds not to win, has been held out to the jockey booked to ride the animal. And where all efforts of the kind have failed, a sum twice the value of the horse has repeatedly been offered for him immediately before the races.

The late Mr. Mostyn was offered the unprecedented sum of seven thousand guineas, a few years since, for a horse of his which was the favourite for the St. Leger; but knowing that the offer was made for the purpose of enabling the parties to practise a fraud on the public, he, like an honourable man, scorned to accept it, though the probability was, he would have taken a third of the sum after the races were over. Had the swindling brotherhood got the horse, they would of course have withdrawn him from the field, all the parties who had betted that he would win being in that case equally losers as if he had contested the prize, but been unsuccessful.

The trickery which is practised on the Turf may be inferred