

CHAPTER VII.

OAK STAVES.

Let not the reader ridicule the title of this chapter. A greater writer than the Author once promised to give us "a chapter on buttons!"* And a great man's celebrity has come down to us enhanced by his "*Tale of a Tub*," and "*Meditation on a Broomstick*."† Neither the writers nor their subjects ought to be despised. "Buttons," "Tubs" and "Broomsticks" are among the essentials of civilization and domestic comfort. I pity the husband whose wife is ignorant of them.

*"Sic a wife as Willie had,
I wad na gie a button for her."*

Talk about quarantine, and preservatives against cholera! Give us tubs and broomsticks! The prosperity of a colony depends exactly upon the same principles of economy as of a household or mercantile establishment. A good economist has an eye to pence as well as pounds. Philosophy, with all its sublime associations, is but a hand-maid to economy. Our estimate of the ordinary means of wealth is founded on wrong principles. We come panting to the world's "*Giggin*," expecting to find nuggets. Let us look at the dust. The rule is "*Many a little makes a mickle*." Many ardent visioned men dream of bounty on the fisheries, splendid fields of agriculture laid out by the Government, and an extensive trade in ship-building, as the means of relief and prosperity. But these remedies will be slow, and accompanied by much disappointment and hardship. The oak-stave business is, apparently, a much smaller matter of business, but it may be made a means of great good, and is in our own hands for immediate adoption. Newfoundland exports, on an average, upwards of £300,000 worth of oil. One item of expense on this is at least £10,000 a year for oak-staves and iron hoops. Here is a wasteful expenditure! On the same coasts which produce our oil, fine forests of fir are

* Sterne.

† Swift.