

OUR SICK CONTRIBUTOR'S FELLOW-BOARDERS.

No. 4.—THE SCIENTIFIC BOARDER.

This gentleman occupies the largest room in the house. It is completely crammed full of cases, drawers and scientific apparatus. Were it not that our friend is the neatest man in the world, the room would be always in a state of litter. First and foremost is a huge *aquarium*. The old woman who "does" the rooms steadily refuses to "do" this one. She has observed in the *aquarium* two small fish with whiskers, like cat-fish. Nothing will persuade her that these are not imps of the Evil One. This idea was further confirmed by the fact of our boarder keeping for a long time a pet snake, which he nourished on milk and other delicacies. A mortality has recently taken place in the *aquarium*. Somebody surreptitiously introduced a horse-leech into it. The indignation of our naturalist has not yet subsided. He suspects the old woman.

Our friend, who is simply a clerk in the — Bank, once had a character for extreme dissipation. For several weeks he never came in till two in the morning. The old lady, in particular, determined to give him a lecture about his habits. Suddenly a vast halo of mystery surrounded him. It was observed that, on these occasions, he always took with him a dark lantern. Some thought that he was connected with "resurrection" doings, but, considering that the height of summer is not the season when medical students are attending lectures, this idea was abandoned. About this time, the papers contained accounts of various burglaries which were nightly taking place in the city. The mystery seemed completely solved! He was connected with this gang of villains! The young man was studiously shunned by every inmate in the house. The landlady abstained from giving him notice to quit, being fearful that he would afterwards return and break into the house some fine summer night. She, however, did her best to allay the alarm. She gave intimation to the Chief of Police and to the Manager of the Bank in which the young gentleman went through his daily avocations. A detective made his appearance, and carefully searched the room. He found no murderous weapons, except one old rusty pistol which our friend had bought during the Fenian excitement. No "jemmies," or other implements of burglars,—but, in the drawers, was an immense collection of newly-captured beetles, "walking twigs," and other curious insects not yet "set up." These, as it afterwards turned out, had been the objects of our friend's numerous midnight excursions with a dark lantern! We felt that we had been uncommonly foolish, and did our best to make all the amends in our power. The poet presented him with a rare specimen (as he thought) of a species of fly which he found on his window-sill. The naturalist immediately showed him thirty different varieties of the same insect, collected in various parts of the world. Our poet is now meditating a new effusion, to be entitled, "The Universality of the Fly."

On one occasion, our boarder brought home an unfortunate frog, to whom he administered chloroform, and then invited us all to a microscopic exhibition, shewing the circulation of blood in the frog's leg. The next morning, the frog, having recovered from the effects of the chloroform, and not feeling comfortable under confinement, took an airing on the landing, and entered the apartment of a lady who was engaged at her toilet. Hysterics were the result, and our boarder has been requested not to bring home any more frogs as room-companions.

Among other objects he has collected specimens of trichinae, which he kindly shewed us in his microscope. On the following day, our landlady was urgently requested never again to produce any pork at table.

But our boarder is not only a naturalist,—he is a chemist! I

do not think that he is a very delicate manipulator; at any rate, the smells that occasionally issue from his room are not agreeable. He is very fond of making "a little fresh sulphuretted hydrogen for analytical purposes." In the process of manufacture his apparatus has an unaccountable propensity for leaking. One day, he accidentally let loose a large volume of chlorine, which found its way through the whole house. The "old lady," who is somewhat asthmatic, threatened to leave if this ever occurred again. This is, however, a periodical threat of hers, and it was not much regarded.

Last Monday, matters came to a climax. We were all quietly sitting in the parlor, when a tremendous explosion took place up stairs, which made every window in the house rattle. On rushing up, we found the man of science extended on the carpet, *minus* his whiskers! He was surrounded by innumerable fragments of "retorts," "receivers" and other apparatus. He got up and rubbed himself, coolly remarking that "it was extraordinary how a little carelessness would sometimes cause the accidental generation of chloride of nitrogen."

After this, we rather tremble for our lives.

TO DANCE, OR NOT TO DANCE, THAT IS THE QUESTION.

Walter Scott tells us that some of the milder class of Cameronians made a distinction between the two sexes dancing separately, and allowed of it as a healthy, and not unlawful, exercise; but when men and women mingled in sport, it was then called *promiscuous dancing*, and considered as a scandalous enormity. The question of "promiscuous dancing" was lately discussed in full Synod by the Free Church Ministers of Argyleshire. The Cynic learns that they sat till four o'clock in the morning, and the report of their meeting is lugubrious in the extreme. "In all parts of Scotland," said one indignant witness, "the evil is raising its head. In Campbelltown, Lochgilphead, Inverary, *even in Rothesay itself*, midnight balls, revelry, and their consequences are greatly on the increase." Like old David Deans in the *Heart of Mid-Lothian*, the ministers reviled dancing as being "a dissolute, profane pastime, practised by the Israelites only at their base and brutal worship of the Golden Calf at Bethel, and by the unhappy lass who danced off the head of John the Baptist." They denounced it as a system of "meaningless antics," and defined it to be "a certain shuffling of the limbs, which, rationally considered, was unintelligible and savagely-uncouth." They, however, could not see their way to enforce total abstinence from the unhallowed pastime.

Quaint Robert Burton, who abominated all "lascivious and Pagan dances," and who lost no opportunity of inveighing against immorality, was more tolerant in expressing his opinions. "'Tis the abuse," said he, "that causeth such inconvenience, and I do well, therefore, not to condemn, or 'innocently to accuse the best and pleasantest thing (so Lucian calls it) that belongs to mortal men.' I hold it an honest disport, a lawful recreation, if it be opportune, moderately and soberly used. I am of Plutarch's mind, 'that which respects pleasure alone, honest recreation, or bodily exercise, ought not to be rejected and contemned.' I subscribe to Lucian, 'tis an elegant thing, which cheereth up the mind, exerciseth the body, delights the spectators, which teacheth many comely gestures, equally affecting the eyes and the soul itself.' I say of this, as of all other recreations, they are like fire,—good and bad."

The Cynic heartily agrees with the views thus expressed by "Democritus Junior."