

A pretty and a diversified place was the Butter-market; for besides the commodities, dead and alive, brought by honest countrywomen, a few stalls were set out with straw hats, and caps and ribbons, and other feminine gear, to tempt them in return; and here and there an urchin of the more careful sort would bring *his* basket of tame rabbits, or wood-pigeons, or young ferrets, or squeaking guinea-pigs, or a nest of downy owls or gaping jackdaws, or cage of linnets and thrushes, to tempt the townfolk. Nay, in the season, some thoughtful little maid of eight or ten would bring nosegays of early primroses or sweet violets, or wall-flowers, or stocks, to add a few pence to the family store.

A pleasant sight was the Butter-market, with its comely country wives, its modest lasses and neat children—pleasant and cheerful, in spite of the din of so many women, buyers and sellers, all talking together, and the noise of the turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens and guinea-pigs;—but the pleasantest sight there was a young damsel famous for eggs and poultry, and modest beauty, known by the name of “pretty Bessy,”—but not a regular attendant of the market, her goods being in such request that she seldom had occasion to come, so far, the families round, ourselves among the rest, dealing constantly with her.

We are persons of great regularity in our small affairs of every class, from the petty dealings of housekeeping to the large commerce of acquaintanceship. The friends who have once planted us by their fireside, and made us feel as if at home there, can no more get rid of our occasional presence, than they could root out that other tenacious vegetable, the Jerusalem artichoke; even if they were to pull us up by the stalk and toss us over the wall (an experiment by they way, which, to do them justice, they have never tried,) I do verily believe that in course of a few months we should spring up again in the very same place: and our tradespeople, trifling as is the advantage to be derived from our custom, may yet reckon on it with equal certainty. They are, as it happens, civil, honest and respectable, the first people in their line in the good town of Belford: but, were they otherwise, the circumstances would

hardly affect our invincible constancy. The world is divided between the two great empires of habit and novelty; the young following pretty generally in the train of the new-fangled sovereign, whilst we of an elder generation adhere with similar fidelity to the *ancien régime*. I, especially, am the very bond-slave of habit—love old friends, old faces, old books, old scenery, old flowers, old associations of every sort and kind—nay, although a woman, and one not averse to that degree of decoration which belongs to the suitable and the becoming, I even love old fashion and old clothes, and can so little comprehend why we should tire of a thing because we have had it long, that, a favorite pelisse having become shabby, I this very day procured with some difficulty silk of the exact color and shade, and, having ordered it to be made in direct conformity with the old pattern, shall have the satisfaction next Sunday of donning a new dress, which my neighbours, the shoemaker’s wife and baker’s daughters, who have in their heads an absolute inventory of my apparel, will infallibly mistake for the old one.

After this striking instance, the courteous reader will have no difficulty in comprehending that the same “auld-lang-syne” feeling which leads me to think no violets so fragrant as those which grow on a certain sunny bank in Kibes Lane, and no cherries so sweet as those from the great mayduke, on the south wall of our old garden, should also induce me to prefer before all oranges those which come from Mrs. Hollin’s shop, at the corner of the churchyard—a shop which we have frequented ever since I knew what an orange was; and, for the same reason, to rank before all the biscuits which ever were invented a certain most seducing, thin, and crisp composition, as light as foam and as tasteless as spring-water, the handiwork of Mrs. Purdy, in the Market-place, in the good town of Belford; as well as to place above all other poultry that which cackles in the basket of “pretty Bessy.” The oranges and biscuits are good in themselves, and so are the ducks and chickens; but some of their superiority is undoubtedly to be ascribed to the partiality generated by habit.

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