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HEARTS RESOLVED AND HANDS PREPARED, THE BLESSINGS THEY ENJOY TO GURD.—SMOLLET.

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BEATLEY'S MISCELLANY.

AUNT FANNY; OR, A TALE OF A SHIRT.

BY THOMAS INGOLDSBY, ESQ.

Virginibus, Puerisque canto.—HOR.
Old Maids and Bachelors I chaunt to!—T. I.

I sing of a Shirt that never was new!—
In the course of the year eighteen hundred and two,
Aunt Fanny began,
Upon Grandmamma's plan,
To make it for me, then her "dear little man."
At the epoch I speak about, I was between
A man and a boy,
A hobbie-de-hoy,
A fat little punchy concern of sixteen,
Just beginning to flirt
And ogle,—so pert,
I'd been whipt every day had I had my desert,
—And Aunt Fan volunteer'd to make me a Shirt.

I've said she began it,—
Some unlucky planet
No doubt interfered,—for, before she and Janet,
Completed the "cutting-out," "hemming," and "stitching,"
A tall Irish footman appear'd in the kitchen;—
This took off the maid,
And, I'm sadly afraid,
My respected Aunt Fanny's attention, too, straggl'd;
For, about the same period, a gay son of Mars,
Cornet Jones of the Tenth (then the Prince's) Hussars,
With his fine dark eyelashes,
And finer moustaches,
And the ostrich plume work'd on the corps' sabre taches.
(I say nought of the gold-and-red cord of the sashes,
Or the boots, far above the Guard's vile spatterdashies),
So eyed, and so sigh'd and so lovingly tried
To engage her whole ear as he lounged by her side,
Looking down on the rest with such dignified pride,
That she made up her mind
She should certainly find
Cornet Jones at her feet, whispering,
"Fan, be my bride!"
She had even resolved to say "Yes" should he ask it,
—And I and my Shirt were both left in the basket.

To her grief and dismay
She discovered one day
Cornet Jones of the Tenth was a little too gay;
For, besides that she saw him—he could not say nay—
Wink at one of the actresses capering away
In a Spanish bolero, one night at the play,
She found he'd already a wife at Cambridge;
One at Paris, a nymph of the corps de ballet;
And a third down in Kent, at a place called Foot's Cray.
He was "viler than dirt."—
Fanny vow'd to exert
All her powers to forget him, and finish my Shirt.

But, oh! lack-a-day!
How time slips away!
Who'd have thought that while Cupid was playing these tricks,
Ten years had elapsed, and I'd turn'd twenty-six?
"I care not a whit,
—He's not grown a bit,"
Says my Aunt, "it will still be a very good fit."
So Janet and she,

Now about thirty-three,
(The maid had been jilted by Mr. Magee),
Each taking one end of the Shirt on her knee,
Again began working with hearty good will,
"Felling the Seams," and "whipping the Frill,"
For, twenty years since, though the Ruffle had vanish'd,
A Frill like a fan had by no means been banish'd;
People wore them at playhouses, parties, and churches,
Like overgrown fins of overgrown perches.—

Now, then, by these two thus laying their caps,
Together, my Shirt had been finish'd perhaps,
But for one of those queer little three-corner'd straps,
Which the ladies call "Side-bits," that sever the "Flaps;"
Here unlucky Janet
Took her needle, and ran it
Right into her thumb, and cried loudly,
"Ads cuss it!
I've spoil'd myself now by that 'ere nasty Gusset!"

For a month to come
Poor dear Janet's thumb
Was in that sort of state vulgar people call "rum."

At the end of that time,
A youth still in his prime,
The Doctor's fat Errand-boy, just such a dolt as is
Kept to mix draughts, and spread plasters and poultices,
Who a bread cataplasm each morning had carried her,
Sigh'd, ogled, proposed, was accepted, and married her!
Much did Aunt Fan
Disapprove of the plan;
She turn'd up her dear little snub at the man.

She "could not believe it"—
"Could scarcely conceive it
Was possible—What! such a place! and then leave it!
And all for a shrimp not as high as my hat—
A little contemptible shaver like that!!
With a broad pancake face, and eyes buried in fat!!"

For her part, "she was sure
She could never endure
A lad with a lip, and a leg like a skewer—
Such a name too!—(twas Potts!)—and so nasty a trade—
No, no,—she would much rather die an old maid.
He a husband, indeed!—Well—mine, come what may come,
Shan't look like a blister, or small of Guaiacum!"
But there!
She'd "declare,
It was Janet's affair—
Chacun a son gout—
As she baked she might brew—
She could not prevent her—'twas no use in trying it—
They 'repent at leisure who may at random.
No matter—De gustibus non disputandum!"

Consoling herself with this choice bit of Latin,
Aunt Fanny resignedly bought some white satin,
And as the Soubrette
Was a very great pet
After all,—she resolved to forgive and forget,
And sat down to make her a bridal rosette,
With magnificent bits of some white-looking metal
Stuck in here and there, each forming a petal.
—On such an occasion one couldn't feel hurt,

Of course, that she ceased to remember—my shirt!

Ten years, or nigh,
Had again gone by,
When Fan, accidentally casting her eye
On a dirty old work-basket, hung up on high
In the store-closet where herbs were put by to dry,
Took it down to explore it—she did not know why,—
Within a pea-soup colour'd fragment she spied,
Of the bus of a November fog in Cheap-side,
Or a bad piece of gingerbread spoilt in the baking.—
—I still hear her cry
"I wish I may die
If here isn't Tom's Shirt, that's been so long a-making!—
My gracious me!
Well,—only to see!

I declare it's as yellow as yellow can be!
Why, it looks just as though't had been soak'd in green tea!
Dear me!—Did you ever?
But come—'twill be clever
To bring matters round; so I'll do my endeavour—
'Better Late,' says an excellent proverb,
'than Never!
It is stand'd, to be sure; but grass-bleaching' will bring it
To rights 'in a jiffy.' We'll wash it, and wring it;
Or, stay, 'Hudson's Liquor'
Will do it still quicker,
And—' Here the new maid chimed in,
'Ma'am, Salt of Lemon
Will make it in no time quite fit for the gemman.
So they "set in the gathers,"—the large round the collar,
While those at the wrist-bands of course were much smaller,—
The button-holes now were at length "overcast;"
Then a button itself was sewn on,—'twas the last!

All's done!
All's won!
Never under the sun
Was shirt so late finish'd—so early begun!
The work would defy
The most critical eye,
It was "oleach'd,"—it was wash'd—
It was hung out to dry,—
It was mark'd on the tail with a T, and an I!

On the back of a chair it
Was placed, just to air it,
In front of the fire. "Tom to-morrow shall wear it!"
Oceca mens hominum! Fanny, good soul,
Left her charge for one moment—but one—
—a vile coal
Bounced out from the grate, and set fire to the whole!

Had it been Dr. Arnott's new stove—not a grate;
Had the coal been a "Lord Mayor's coal,"—viz.: a slate;
What a different tale I had had to relate!
And Aunt Fan and my shirt been superior to fate!
One moment!—no more!
Fan open'd the door!
The draught made the blaze ten times worse than before;
And Aunt Fanny sank down—in despair—
—on the floor!

You may fancy, perhaps, Agrippina's amazement,
When, looking one fine moonlight night from her casement,
She saw, while thus gazing,
All Rome a-blazing,
And, losing at once all restraint on her temper, or

Feelings, exclaimed, "Hang that scamp of an Emperor,
Although he's my son!—
He thinks it prime fun,
No doubt!—While the flames are demolishing Rome
There's my Nero a-fiddling, and singing 'Sweet Home!'
—Stay—I'm really, not sure 'twas that lady who said
The words I've put down, as she stepp'd into bed,—
On reflection I rather believe she was dead;—
But e'en when at College, I
Fairly acknowledge I
Never was very precise in chronology;
So, if there's an error, pray set down as mine a
Mistake of no very great moment—in fine, a
Mere slip—'twas some Pleb's wife, if not Agrippina.

You may fancy that warrior so stern and so stony,
Whom thirty years since we all used to call Boney,
When, engaged in what he styled "fulfilling his destinies,"
He had led his rascallions across the Borystheneas,
And had made up his mind
Snug quarters to find
In Moscow, against the cartarrhs and the coughs

Which are apt to prevail 'mongst the "Owskis" and "Ofts,"
At a time of the year
When your nose and your ear
Are by no means so safe there as people's are here,
Inasmuch as Jack Frost, that most fearful of Bogles,
Makes folks leave their carriages out in their "fogles."
You may fancy, I say,
That same Boney's dismay,
When Count Rostopchin
At once made him drop chin,
And turn up his eyes, as his rappee he took,
With a sort of a mort-de-ma-vie kind of look,

On perceiving that "Swing,"
And "all that sort of think,"
Was at work,—that he'd just lost the game without knowing it—
That the Kremlin was blazing—the Russians "a-going it,"—
Every plug in the place frozen hard as the ground,
And the deuce of a turn-cock at all to be found!

You may fancy King Charles at some Court Fancy-Ball,
(The date we may fix
In sixteen sixty-six),
In the room built by Inigo Jones at Whitehall,
Whence his father, the Martyr,—(as such mourn'd by all
Who in his wept the Law's and the Monarchy's fall.)—
Stept out to exchange regal robes for a pall—

You may fancy King Charles, I say, stopping the brawl,*
As bursts on his sight the old church of St. Paul,
By the light of its flames now beginning to crawl
From basement to buttress, and topping its wall—
You may fancy old, Clarendon making a call,
And standing, in cold, slow, monotonous drawl,
"Sire, from Pudding-lane's-end, close by Fishmonger's Hell,
To Pye Corner, in Smithfield, there is not a stall
There, in market, or street, not a house great or small,
In which Knight wields his faulchion or Cobbler hisawl,
But's on fire!"—You may fancy the general squall,