

GRIP.

EDITED BY MR. DEMOS MUDGE.

The greatest Beast is the Ass; the greatest Bird is the Owl;
The greatest Fish is the Oyster; the greatest Man is the Fool.

TORONTO, SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 1874.

To Correspondents and Contributors.

CHARLES AUGUSTUS.—Your last contribution is by no means without merit, but its slung and black-bottleism unfit it for publication in GRIP. Try again and go a peg higher.

Grip to his Patrons.

IN the opinion of GRIP himself and many of his intelligent and esteemed patrons, the wood-engraved cartoons introduced at the commencement of Volume Three, have been less satisfactory than those produced by the process followed originally. A return to that system has therefore been deemed advisable, and is carried into effect this week. At the same time the paper is reduced to its former size, pending the introduction of a new frontispiece and several other improvements. We hope to resume the eight pages in a few weeks.

Our Table.

THE LEGEND OF THE OYSTER.

BY G—E—E—I—T.

WE have observed during the last few weeks many critical notices of a work bearing a title somewhat similar to the above, and by a very distinguished author. That this author is identical with the G—E—E—I—T of the remarkable poem, a sketch of which we give below, no one who possesses the slightest critical knowledge can doubt. In the plot, the rhythm, the names even, a remarkable similarity exists, and if our surmise as to the author is incorrect, we can only say we are mistaken.

The Legend of the Oyster opens thus:—

"In the old time while yet the earth was young,
Ere legends were, to be set forth and sung,
In that far clime, by moderns called Cathay,
There lived a Patriarch who oft did say
That indigestion would to mortals bring
Worse pains, in distant time, than anything.
The power of heat was to his tribe unknown,
Save such as from the noonday sun outshone;
Flame had not yet by man been brought to pass,
To change the unripe apple into sass,
To furnish cooks with change of roast and boiled;—
And so on Nature's fruits uncooked they toiled.
The earth there furnished, from her liberal store,
All vegetables that we know, and more;
All fruits that grace the tables of the great
Were free of charge, and so were freely ate,—
So free that sometimes in a time of frolic
People devoured too much, and had the colic,
Or thoughtlessly too green from trees would take,
Would eat, would relish and have stomach ache.
As was the fashion in that ancient day,
The Patriarch I mention knew the way
To treat the centuries as we treat years,
And live and flourish through them, with his peers.
He lived, in fact, so long he doubted rather
Whether he was not his own great grandfather—
Until his seed had multiplied so greatly,
That BROOKER YOUNG had stared, if it were lately."

The poet then records in lofty language and with exquisite feeling, but in many lines, the sorrow that filled the heart of the Patriarch when a few hundred of his best loved children meet their death by a surfeit of green plums. He felt that duty called him to move his family to a distant land, and there introduce a system of Government by which all fruit and vegetables should, before being eaten, be submitted to him or to his councillors—the elders of the tribe—for approval. He accordingly acts upon his impulse:—

"He said, my happy offspring shall not know
The saddening gripe nor indigestion's woe."

His staff he planted where sweet waters ran
Down a steep cliff into the o-ce-an!"

We do not care to be hyper-critical over a poem displaying so much lofty thought, glowing description, and careful work, and therefore merely recommend that in future editions the last word of the above couplet be changed for another. But already we are sorry to find that, having quoted so liberally, our space compels us to condense many hundred lines into a few words.

In the new land, the system of inspection succeeds. Indigestion is unknown, and the summit of felicity seems to be reached—when the use of fire is discovered. Flesh-eating is introduced:—

"And tripe was known in all its tenderness,
The tripe that modern poets know and bless."

But strong Jamek discovers the secret of making flour and, moreover, slapjacks. These are savoury but heavy.

"In his joy
On the new dish he feeds his fairest boy,
Who soon begins to kick his legs and squirm,
Like modern child that feels the inward worm,
And utters loudly once and yet again,
Oh, Ma and Pa, I've got an awful pain!"

They bear him to the Patriarch who at once pronounces his agonies the result of indigestion, and reveals how his long-cherished hopes of the eradication of the complaint are now dashed to the ground.

"And a new spirit from that hour came o'er
The race that happiness had known before,
Suspicion hovered over every dish
To which the appetite still turned a wish,
Fear was now lord of life, and at his word
They trembled at their meals—'twas quite absurd."

Hence the result that it became the object of life to discover some edible, delicious and yet harmless; or some mode of life, that would keep away the dreaded disease.

But chief the sons of Jamek felt the stings,
The new ambition to eat wholesome things."

NABAL, the eldest, takes to sheep-raising and country life in the open air, and succeeds in being free from pain. SNOONAL thinks that hard work will insure health, and takes to blacksmithing.

"But STEWBAL had a frame
Fashioned to finer senses, and became
A constant wanderer on the ocean beach,
Longing for something still beyond his reach.
His was the palate that could separate
Into its parts the meats upon his plate.
Telling how much of each ingredient
Was in it used. And also he could scent,
With critic nostril, on a passing wind
The tale of how each family had dined.
His was a memory which all flavours knew
Of that rude time, and how to mix them too.
Greater than TOYER, with a sense more keen,
Free from all prejudice for what has been."

He displays the originality of all great minds. His brothers have formed no ambition beyond that of counteracting the effects of indigestible food; he wishes to discover new combinations.

"Thus he resolved, till, walking on the shore,
He struck a shell he ne'er had seen before.
And now some spirit prompted him to pry
Into its secrets with a keener eye.
He placed it on rock, and with a stone
Smote on its edge, and opened there alone."

That which was thus disclosed looked by no means inviting; but his subtle sense caught an unaccustomed and suggestive odour—an odour that spoke of a gastronomical delicacy.

"STEWBAL must dare as great beginners dare,
He bolts the morsel, uttering a prayer,
And straightway knew that raw, or stewed, or fried,
'Twould be delicious to the world beside."

He tries it in each of these ways before returning, and wading out, in company with his sons, whom he presses into the service, they bring home as many as they can carry.

"——— There amid the throng
He lit a fire, which did not take him long;
A mighty cauldron on the blaze he placed,
And filled it up that all might have a taste;
Milk he poured in, his work was at an end,
Till the blest odours heavenward ascend.
Then from the flame the cauldron he removed,
And oysters first by mortals thus were proved."

The tribe is delighted with the new delicacy, and, each family gathering more oysters, the feast is prolonged far into the night. No bad effects follow, and all are happy. STEWBAL is at once loaded with