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THE YOUNG MARKET-WOMAN.

Belford is so populous a place, and the country round so thickly inhabited, that the Saturday's market is almost as well attended as an ordinary fair. So early as three or four o'clock in the morning, the heavy waggons (one with a capital set of bells) begin to pass our house, and increase in number—to say nothing of the admixture of other vehicles, from the humble donkey-cart to the smart gig, and hosts of horsemen and footpeople—until nine or ten, when there is some pause in the affluence of market folks till about one, when the lightened wains, laden, not with corn, but with rosy-cheeked country lasses, begin to show signs of travelling homeward, and continue passing at no distant intervals until twilight. There is more traffic on our road in one single Saturday than on all the other days of the week put together. And if we feel the stirring moment of "market-day" so strongly in the country,* it may be imagined how much it must enliven the town.

Saturday at noon is indeed the very time to see Belford, which in general has the fault, not uncommon in provincial towns, of wanting bustle. The old market-place, always picturesque from its shape (an unequal triangle), its size, the diversified outline and irregular architecture of the houses, and the beautiful Gothic church by which it is terminated, is then all alive with the busy hum of traffic, the agricultural wealth and the agricultural population of the district.

*My dog Dash, who regularly attends his master to the Bench, where he is the only dog admitted, and a great pet, knows Saturday as well as I do; follows my father as closely as his shadow from the moment that he comes down stairs; and would probably break through the door or jump through a closed window, rather than suffer the phaeton to set off without him.

From the poor farmer with his load of corn, up to the rich mealman and the great proprietor, all the "landed interest" is there, mixed with the jobbers and chapmen of every description, cattle-dealers, millers' brewers, maltsters, justices going to the Bench, constables and overseers following to be sworn, carriers, carters, errand-boys, tradesmen, shopmen, apprentices, gentlemen's servants, and gentlemen in their own persons, mixed with all the riff-raff of the town, and all the sturdy beggars of the country, and all the noisy urchins of both.

Noise indeed is the prime characteristic of the Belford market-day—noise of every sort, from the heavy rumbling of so many loaded waggons over the paved market-place, to the crash of the crockery-ware in the narrow passage of Princes' Street, as the stall is knocked down by the impetus of a cart full of turnips, or the squall of the passengers of the southern caravan, upset by the irresistible momentum of the Hadley mill team.

But the noisiest, and perhaps the prettiest places, were the Piazza at the end of St. Nicholas' church, appropriated by long usage to female venders of fruit and vegetables, where certain old women, as well known to the *habitués*, of the market as the church-tower, were wont to *flyte* at each other, and at their customers, with the genius of vituperation for which ladies of their profession have long been celebrated; and a detached spot called the Butter-market, at the back of the Market-place proper, where the more respectable basket women, the daughters and wives of farmers, and the better order of the female peasantry, used to bring eggs, butter and poultry for sale on Wednesdays and Saturdays.