

CHOICE LITERATURE.

JEEMS THE DOOR-KEEPER.

BY JOHN BROWN, M.D.

When my father was in Broughton Place Church, we had a door-keeper called *Jeems*, and a formidable little man and door-keeper he was: of unknown age and name, for he existed to us, and indeed still exists to me—though he has been in his grave these sixteen years—as *Jeems*, absolute and *per se*, no more needing a surname than did or do Abraham or Isaac, Samson or Nebuchadnezzar. We young people of the congregation believed that he was out in the '45, and had his drum shot through and quenched at Culloden; and as for any indication on his huge and gray visage of his ever having been young, he might safely have been Bottom the Weaver in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," or that excellent ingenious and "wise-hearted" Bezaleel, the son of Uri, whom *Jeems* regarded as one the greatest of men and of weavers, and whose "ten curtains of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, each of them with fifty loops on the edge of the selvege in the coupling, with their fifty taches of gold," he, in confidential moments, gave it to be understood were the sacred triumphs of his craft; for as you may infer, my friend was a man of the treadles and the shuttle, as well as the more renowned grandson of Uri.

Jeems's face was so extensive and met you so fearfully and at once, that it mainly composed his whole; and such a face! Sydney Smith used to say of a certain quarrelsome man, "His very face is a breach of the peace." Had he seen our friend's he would have said he was the imperative mood on two (very small) legs, out on business in a blue great-coat. It was in the nose and the keen small eye that his strength lay. Such a nose of power, so undeniable, I never saw, except in what was said to be a bust from the antique of Rhadamanthus, the well-known justice clerk of the Pagan Court of Session! Indeed, when I was in the Rector's class and watched *Jeems* turning interlopers out of the church seats, by merely presenting before them this tremendous organ, it struck me that if Rhadamanthus had still been here, and out of employment, he would have taken kindly to *Jeems's* work—and that possibly he was that potentate in a U. P. disguise.

Nature having fashioned the huge face, and laid out much material and idea upon it, had finished off the rest of *Jeems* somewhat scrippily, as if she had run out of means; his legs especially were of the shortest, and as his usual dress was a very long blue great-coat, made for a much taller man, its tails resting upon the ground, and its large hind buttons in a totally preposterous position, gave him the look of being planted, or rather after the manner of Milton's beasts at the creation, in the act of emerging painfully from his mother earth.

Now, you may think this was a very ludicrous old object. If you had seen him, you would not have said so; and not only was he a man of weight and authority—he was likewise a genuine, indeed a deeply spiritual Christian, well read in his Bible, in his own heart, and in human nature and life, knowing both its warp and woof; more peremptory in making himself obey his Master, than in getting himself obeyed, and this is saying a good deal; and like all complete men, he had a genuine love and gift of humour* kindly and uncouth, lurking in his small, deep-set gray eyes, shrewd and keen, which, like two sharpest of shooters, enfiladed that massive and redoubtable bulwark, the nose.

One day two strangers made themselves over to *Jeems* to be furnished with seats. Motioning them to follow, he walked majestically to the furthest in-corner, where he had decreed they should sit. The couple found seats near the door, and stepped into them, leaving *Jeems* to march through the passages alone, the whole congregation watching him with some relish and alarm. He gets to his destination, opens the door, and stands aside; nobody appears. He looks sharply round and then gives a look of general wrath "at lairge." No one doubted his victory. His nose and eye fell, or seemed to fall on the two culprits, and pulled them out instantly, hurrying them to their appointed place: *Jeems* snibbed them slowly in, and gave them a parting look they were not likely to misunderstand or forget.

At that time the crowds and imperfect ventilation made fainting a common occurrence in Broughton Place, especially among "thae young hizzies," as *Jeems* called the servant girls. He generally came to me, "the young Doctor," on these occasions with a look of great relish. I had indoctrinated him in the philosophy of *synopses*, especially as to the propriety of laying the "hizzies," quite flat on the floor of the lobby, with the head as low as the rest of the body; and, as many of these cases were owing to what *Jeems* called "that bitter yerkin" of their boddices, he and I had much satisfaction in relieving them, and giving them a moral lesson, by cutting their stay-laces, which ran before the knife, and cracked "like a bow string," as my coadjutor said. One day a young lady was our care. She was lying out and slowly coming to. *Jeems*, with that huge, terrific visage came round to me with his open gully in his hand, whispering, "Wull oo ripp'er up noo?" It happened not to be a case for ripping up. The gully was a great sanitary institution, and made a decided inroad upon the *yerking* system—*Jeems* having, thanks to this and Dr. Combe, every year fewer opportunities of displaying and enjoying its powers.

He was sober in other things besides drink, could be generous on occasion, but was careful of his siller; sensitive to fierceness ("we're uncommon zealous the day," was a favourite phrase when any church matter was stirring) for the honour of his church and minister, and to his too often worthless neighbours a perpetual moral protest and lesson—

* On one occasion a descendant of Nabal having put a crown-piece into "the plate" instead of a penny, and starting at its white and precious face, asked to have it back, and was refused—"In once, in forever." "Aweel, aweel," grunted he, "I'll get credit for it in heaven." "Na, na," said *Jeems*, "ye'll get credit only for the penny!"

a living epistle. He dwelt at the head of Big Lochend's Close in the Canongate, at the top of a long stair—ninety-six steps, as I well know—where he had dwelt, all by himself, for five-and-thirty years, and where in the midst of all sorts of flittings and changes, not a day opened or closed without the well-known sound of *Jeems* at his prayers—his "exercise"—at "the Books." His clear, fearless, honest voice in psalm and chapter, and strong prayer came sounding through that wide "land" like that of one crying in the wilderness.

Jeems and I got great friends, he called me John, as if he was my grand-father; and though as plain in speech as in feature, he was never rude. I owe him much in many ways. His absolute down-rightness and *yaisfauldness*; his energetic unflinching fulfilment of his work; his rugged sudden tenderness; his look of sturdy age, as the thick silver-white hair lay on his serious and weather-worn face, like moonlight on a stout old tower; his quaint Old Testament exegesis; his lonely and contented life; his simple godliness—it was no small privilege to see much of all this.

But I must stop. I forgot that you didn't know him; that he is not your *Jeems*. If it had been so, you would not soon have wearied of telling or of being told of the life and conversation of this "fell body." He was not communicative about his early life. He would sometimes speak to me about "her," as if I knew who and where she was, and always with a gentleness and solemnity unlike his usual gruff ways. I found out that he had been married when young, and that "she" (he never named her) and their child had died on the same day—the day of its birth. The only indication of married life in his room was an old and strong cradle, which he had cut down so as to rock no more, and which he made the depository of his books—a queer collection.

I have said that he had what he called, with a grave smile, *family* worship, morning and evening, never failing. He not only sang his psalm, but gave out or chanted the line in great style; and on seeing me one morning surprised at this, he said, "Ye see John, oo," meaning himself and his wife, "began that way." He had a firm true voice and a genuine though roughish gift of singing and being methodical in all things, he did what I never heard of in any one else—he had seven fixed tunes, one of which he sang on its own set-day. Sabbath morning it was *French*, which he went through with great *birr*, Monday *Scarborough*, which he said was like my father cantering. Tuesday, *Coleshill*, that soft-exquisite air—monotonous and melancholy, soothing and vague, like the sea. This day, Tuesday, was the day of the week on which his wife and child died, and he always sang more verses than on any other. Wednesday was *Irish*; Thursday, *Old Hundred*; Friday, *Bangor*; and Saturday, *Blackburn*, that humdrummost of tunes, "as long and lank and lean, as is the ribbed sea-sand." He could not defend it, but had some secret reason for sticking to it. As to the evenings they were just the same tunes in reversed order, only that on Tuesday night he sang *Coleshill* again, thus dropping *Blackburn* for evening work. The children could tell the day of the week by *Jeems's* tune, and would have been as much astonished at hearing *Bangor* on Monday, as at finding St. Giles's half-way down the Canongate.

I frequently breakfasted with him. He made capital porridge, and I wish I could get such buttermilk, or at least have such a relish for it, as in those days. *Jeems* is away—gone over to the majority; and I hope I may never forget to be grateful to the dear and queer old man. I think I see and hear him saying his grace over our bickers with their brats on, then taking his two books out of the cradle and reading, not without a certain homely majesty, the first verse of the 99th psalm,

"The eternal Lord doth reign as king,
Let all the people quake;
He sits between the cherubim,
Let the earth be moved and shake."

Then launching out into the noble depths of *Irish*. His chapters were long, and his prayers short, very scriptural, but by no means stereotyped, and wonderfully real, *immediate*, as if he was near Him whom he addressed. Any one hearing the sound and not the words would say, "That man is speaking to some one who is with him—who is present,"—as he often said to me, "There's nae gude dune, John, till ye get to close groups."

Now, I dare say you are marvelling—first, why I brought this grim, old Rhadamanthus, Bezaleel U. P. Naso of a door-keeper up before you; and secondly how I am to get him down decorously in that ancient blue great-coat, and get at my own proper text.

And first of the first, I thought it would do you young men—the hope of the world—no harm to let your affections go out toward this dear old-world specimen of homespun worth. And as to the second, I am going to make it my excuse for what is to come. One day soon after I knew him, when I thought he was in a soft, confidential mood, I said "Jeems, what kind of weaver are you?" "I'm in the fancical line, maister John," said he somewhat stiffly. I like its leecence. So exit *Jeems*—impiger, iracundus, acer—torvus visu—placide quiescat.

(To be continued.)

VICTIMS OF MONACO.

The enormous gains of the Monte Carlo gaming tables are a direct incentive to play in all countries, and we are not surprised that no less than thirty-seven illicit tables were recently found open at night in and around Nice during a single police raid. For several years previous to the formation of the "International Association for the Suppression of the Gaming-tables at Monte Carlo," the clear profits of the Casino were over 25,000,000 francs per annum. The Prince of Monaco receives 250,000 francs yearly for the concession, besides a share in the profits, and considerable supplementary sums; and as the expenses of the Casino and entire principality are defrayed by the bank, the sum annually lost by players cannot have fallen below fifty million of francs! The receipts have fallen off considerably since 1881, but it is estimated that fully 30,000,000 francs have yearly

found their way over the green tables into the coffers of the bank. What losses and misery does this sum represent! How many, tempted to play in the hope of "luck" and sudden wealth, have gone on and on till ruin and disgrace have stared them in the face! How many dependent wives, children, and relatives have been reduced to absolute poverty in a day! And, alas! how many have committed self-murder to escape the shame caused by their own folly.

While desirous of avoiding anything approaching sensationalism, we venture to quote the following paragraph from the "Colonie Etrangère," a paper published in Nice: "An Englishman allowed a train to run over his neck; a Russian blew his brains out; a young Bavarian fired a couple of bullets into his chest; a Pole shot himself in the middle of the gaming saloon at Monte Carlo; a well-dressed stranger shot himself at the Hotel des Empereurs, Nice; a merchant poisoned himself at the Hotel de la Garde, Cannes; an Austrian of distinguished family blew out his brains in a shed at Segurance, Nice; a lawyer threw himself from the top of the rock Rauba Capen into the sea, Nice; a German officer shot himself in the ear; a Hollander poisoned himself; a Dutch nobleman shot himself in the garden of his villa, Monaco; and a widow fifty-five poisoned herself at the Hotel des Deux Mondes, Nice; she had sold her last jewel to try and recover her losses at Monaco. A German shot himself on a seat, a few steps from the Casino; an Englishman hung himself on the Ponroad; a gentleman shot himself before the Café de Paris, close to the Casino; and a young Russian shot himself at the Casino door."

The "Times" reports the circumstances of a young German of good family shooting himself the Thursday after losing at the gambling tables; and a young Englishman of good family, whose father held a high position in the House of Lords, told the writer last week that he had lost a fortune in Monaco, and was a beggar, on the world, and thus he seriously contemplated suicide as the only way of escaping misery and shame. The writer had a list of fifty more suicides before him, the direct results of gambling at Monte Carlo. What sorrow and distress these violent deaths have entailed upon helpless victims! Many of our readers visit the Riviera as a winter resort, and we entreat them to dissuade persons from going to Monaco "just to see the place." Though Monaco be "even as the garden of the Lord," the cry of it is greaa, and its sin very grievous, even as Sodom and Gomorrah.

It is gratifying to find that the International Association has succeeded in drawing the serious attention of the great Powers to the subject of public gaming at Monaco. Almost the entire press of the United Kingdom is in favour of the movement, and the leading Continental press lends hearty co-operation. The question has already occupied the consideration of the French Chamber of Deputies and Senate, and the Italian Parliament and German Reichstag have denounced in indignant terms the continuance of an institution so fruitful in crime, misery, and death. The subject will be brought before the English Parliament.—*The Christian*.

THE LONDON FLUNKY.

W. J. Stillman says in "Characteristics of London," in the October "Century": "In the intonation of the low-toned command is the highest expression of that incommunicable, undescribable, and, except by generations of cultivation, unattainable quality we call *high breeding*. In the reply to it that perfect antithesis in breeding, which we ought to call *low*—the profound, unquestioning, and unhesitating prostration of self of the traditional hereditary 'flunky,' disciplined like a soldier, who, as his master never permits himself to express a disturbing emotion, never allows himself an expression of surprise or a word of comment; whose self-command is as great as his master's, perhaps greater—a well appraised statue, save when an order is given; whose bows and deference for his master's guests are graduated by the distance at which they sit from the head of the table; a human creature that sees nothing, knows nothing, and believes nothing which his master does not expect him to see and know and believe; who, if he thinks of a heaven at all, never dreams that it can be the same thing, for his master and himself: he hopes to meet his father and grandfather and great-grandfather in the servants' hall of that celestial abode where his master and all the family for countless generations will dwell in their mundane state; his brains could no more take in the parable of Dives and Lazarus than the laws of Kepler, and the most insensate Chartist or Radical could never inspire in him an ambition to be anything beyond butler in his master's mansion."

CHINESE ASTRONOMY.

By the vast majority of the people of China the sun is regarded as the "yang," or male principle in nature; the name they give to it is *tai yang*, or "great male principle." The moon, being the weaker in light, is termed *tai ying*, or "great female principle." The two are supposed to be husband and wife, and the stars the numerous off-spring. Others think that sun and moon are both females. A tradition written in Chinese, the hieroglyphics of which I have recently been endeavouring to transmute as to idiom and character into our English, runs something on this wise:

All the stars are the children of the moon; in the beginning the sun also had many little ones, just as the moon. Afterwards the sun and moon met and considered, saying: "Our heat and light, combined with that of the stars, is too powerful; how can men endure it? Much better kill them" (the stars). They decided to eat up each other's children. The moon, being deceitful, concealed hers, but the upright sun, according to the contract, devoured her progeny. In the day, therefore, there are now no stars. The moon, seeing the sun devour her children, again caused her own to appear, seeing which the sun quickly became very angry, and pursued the moon with murderous intent. From that time to this she pursues her without ceasing, even to coming very near, desiring to bite and kill her. This is the cause of the eclipses.