

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY. No. 1.

BY BOZ.

THE MONEY LENDER AT SCHOOL.—Not confining himself to theory, or permitting his faculties to rust even at that early age in mere abstract speculations, this promising lad (Ralph Nickleby) commenced usurer on a limited scale at school, putting out at good interest, a small capital of slate-pencil and marbles, and gradually extending his operations until they aspired to the copper coinage of this realm, in which he speculated to considerable advantage. Nor did he trouble his borrowers with abstract calculations of figures, or references to ready-reckoners; his simple rule of interest being all comprised in the one golden sentence, "two-pence for every half-penny," which greatly simplified the accounts, and which, as a familiar precept, more easily acquired and retained in the memory than any known rule of arithmetic, cannot be too strongly recommended to the notice of capitalists, both large and small, and more especially of money-brokers and bill-discounters. Indeed, to do these gentlemen justice, many of them are to this day in the frequent habit of adopting it with eminent success.

In like manner, did young Ralph Nickleby avoid all those minute and intricate calculations of odd days, which nobody who has ever worked sums in simple-interest can fail to have found most embarrassing, by establishing the one general rule that all sums of principal and interest should be paid on pocket-money day, that, is to say on Saturday; and that whether a loan were contracted on the Monday or on the Friday, the amount of interest should be in both cases the same. Indeed he argued, and with great show of reason, that it ought to be rather more for one day than for five, inasmuch as the borrower might in the former case be very fairly presumed to be in great extremity, otherwise he would not borrow at all with such odds against him. This fact is interesting, as illustrating the secret connexion and sympathy which always exists between great minds. Though master Ralph Nickleby was not at that time aware of it, the class of gentlemen before alluded to, proceed on just the same principle in all their transactions.

GOLDEN SQUARE.—Although a few members of the graver professions live about Golden Square, it is not exactly in anybody's way to or from any where. It is one of the squares that have been; a quarter of the town that has gone down in the world, and taken to letting lodgings. Many of its first and second floors are let furnished to single gentlemen, and it takes boarders besides. It is a great resort of foreigners. The dark-complexioned men, who wear large rings, and heavy watch-guards and bushy whiskers, and who congregate under the Opera colonnade, and about the box-office in the season, between four and five in Golden Square, or within a street of it. Two or three violins and a wind instrument from the Opera band reside within its precincts. Its boarding-houses are musical, and the notes of pianos and harps float in the evening time, round the head of the mournful statue, the guardian genius of a little wilderness of shrubs in the centre of the square. On a summer's night, windows are thrown open, and groups of swarthy mustachioed men are seen by the passer-by lounging at the casements, and smoking fearfully. Sounds of gruff voices practising vocal music invade the evening's silence, and the fumes of choice tobacco scent the air. There, snuff and cigars, and German pipes and flutes, and violins, and violoncellos, divide the supremacy between them. It is the region of song and smoke. Street bands are on their mettle in Golden Square, and itinerant glee-singers quaver involuntarily as they raise their voices within its boundaries.

LONDON GARDENS.—Some London houses have a melancholy little plot of ground behind them, usually fenced in by four high, whitewashed walls, and frowned upon by stacks of chimneys, in which there withers on from year to year a crippled tree, that makes a show of putting forth a few leaves late in autumn, when other trees shed theirs, and drooping in the effort, lingers on, all crackled and smoke-dried till the following season, when it repeats the same process, and perhaps if the weather be particularly genial, even tempts some rheumatic sparrow to chirrup in its branches. People sometimes call these dark yards "gardens;" it is not supposed that they were ever planted, but rather that they are pieces of unreclaimed land, with the withered vegetation of the original brick-field. No man thinks of walking in this desolate place, or of turning it to any account. A few hampers, half a dozen broken bottles, and such-like rubbish, may be thrown there when the tenant first moves in, but nothing more; and there they remain till he goes away again, the damp straw taking just as long to moulder as it thinks proper, and mingling with the scanty box, and stunted evergreens, and broken flower-pots, that are scattered mournfully about—a prey to "blacks" and dirt.

MR. RALPH NICKLEBY AND HIS CLERK.—In obedience to a summons the clerk got off the high stool (to which he had communicated a high polish, by countless gettings off and on.) He was a tall man of middle-age, with two goggle eyes, whereof one was a fixture, a rubicund nose, a cadaverous face, and a suit of

clothes (if the term be allowable when they suited him not at all) much the worse for wear, very much too small, and placed upon such a short allowance of buttons that it was quite marvellous how he contrived to keep them on.

"Was that half-past twelve, Noggs?" said Mr. Nickleby, in a sharp and grating voice.

"Not more than five-and-twenty minutes by the—" Noggs was going to add public-house clock, but recollecting himself, he substituted "regular time."

"My watch has stopped," said Mr. Nickleby; "I don't know from what cause."

"Not wound up," said Noggs.

"Yes, it is," said Mr. Nickleby.

"Over-wound, then," rejoined Noggs.

"That can't very well be," observed Mr. Nickleby.

"Must be," said Noggs.

"Well!" said Mr. Nickleby, putting the repeater back in his pocket; "perhaps it is."

Noggs gave a peculiar grunt as was his custom at the end of all disputes with his master, to imply that he (Noggs) triumphed, and (as he rarely spoke to any body unless somebody spoke to him) fell into a grim silence, and rubbed his hands slowly over each other, cracking the joints of his fingers, and squeezing them into all possible distortions. The incessant performance of this routine on every occasion, and the communication of a fixed and rigid look to his unaffected eye, so as to make it uniform with the other, and to render it impossible for any body to determine where or at what he was looking, were two among the numerous peculiarities of Mr. Noggs, which struck an inexperienced observer at first sight.

THE THREE M.M.P.—"I have seen two of them safely out of bed; and the third who was at Crookford's all night, has just gone home to put a clean shirt on, and take a bottle or two of soda-water, and will certainly be with us in time to address the meeting. He is a little excited by last night, but never mind that; he always speaks the stronger for it."

A DISSIDENT.—Only one man in the crowd cried "No!" and he was promptly taken into custody, and straightway borne off.

EXCITEMENT.—The men shouted, the ladies wept into their pocket-handkerchiefs till they were moist, and waved them till they were dry.

COMPANY DIRECTORS.—The petition in favour of the bill was agreed upon, and the meeting adjourned with acclamations, and Mr. Nickleby and the other directors went to the office to lunch, as they did every day at half-past one o'clock; and to remunerate themselves for which trouble, (as the Company was yet in its infancy,) they only charged three guineas each man for every such attendance.

THE MINIATURE BOARD.—A miniature painter lived there, for there was a large gilt frame screwed upon the street-door, in which were displayed, upon a black velvet ground, two portraits of naval dress coats, with faces looking out of them, and telescopes attached; one of a young gentleman in a very vermilion uniform, flourishing a sabre; and one of a literary character with a high forehead, a pen and ink, six books, and a curtain. There was, moreover, a touching representation of a young lady reading a manuscript in an unfathomable forest, and a charming whole length of a large-headed little boy, sitting on a stool with his legs foreshortened to the size of salt-spoons. Besides these works of art, there were a great many heads of old ladies and gentleman smirking at each other out of blue and brown skies, and an elegantly written card of terms with an embossed border.

THE MONEY-LENDER'S SYMPATHY.—"I can understand a man's dying of a broken neck, or suffering from a broken arm, or a broken head, or a broken leg, or a broken nose; but a broken heart—nonsense, it's the cant of the day. If a man can't pay his debts, he dies of a broken heart, and his widow a martyr."

IRISH DESCRIPTION OF LUCK.—"It's a poor case," said one of the fellows to the other, "to be here doing nothing; we made a bad hand of the job last night; and troth I'd rather be with the Whiteboys, or light boys, or any boys that would show us fun; or at the Cove of Cork, or anywhere. Do you know, Davy, it's meself thinks there's no luck with the O'Sullivan's, at all, at all. What a quare thing luck is!"

"So it is," observed the other, who was lazily hammering some rusty nails on a piece of something that served as an anvil; "luck's mighty quare intirely, and a thing there's no turning either for good or bad; take my word for it, Ulick's luck is turned."

"So it is; for sure the little thing last night was as nately planned as any thing I iver heard tell of. When Murphy Donohue ran off with Ally Greveling, he did it, and her mother and two sisters in the screeches, it wasn't (to all appearance) half as certain as this; only I wonder it never came into Ulick's head before—"

"'Twasn't his luck."

"Did you ever think," said Davy, lowering his voice, "that Cat's claws had an evil eye? because, it's mighty quare, I niver

knew her gather much to a house that didn't grow uncomfortable in itself afther a time."

"'Twas their luck turned maybe."

"Maybe so. See what a purty slip of a girl Gracey Conway was till she got so thick with Mabel; and now *the sun never shines on the path she walks.*"

"She's grown bitter-hearted, as most girls do when they meet a misfortune; but 'twas her luck."

"No doubt; but, take my word for it, the grass is all the greener and the butter the more plenty where her shadow niver comes. I don't over much like knowing women—somehow they're not like women; see Shawn Gow, how he's done up out of the country; and they say it was *she sould the pass on him.*"

"Well, 'twas his luck and that's all about it."—*Lights and Shadows of Irish Life.*

BENEFITS OF WALKING.—"Were I a gentleman" said Dr. Abernethy, "I would never get into my carriage."

"Dr. Unwin in his book on Mental Diseases says: "Last week I conversed with a veteran in literature and years, whose powers of mind no one can question, however they may differ from him in speculative points. The gentleman has preserved the health of his body and the soundness of his mind through a long course of multifarious and often depressing circumstances, by a steady perseverance in the practice of walking every day. He has survived, for a very long period, almost all the literary characters that were his contemporaries at the period in which his own writings excited so much public attention; almost all of them have dropped into the grave one after the other, while he has continued on in an uninterrupted course, where men of far less regular habits, and, have failed, of much less equanimity of mind; but the preservation of his equanimity has, I verily believe, been ensured by the unvaried practice to which I have referred, and which to others would prove equally available, if steadily and perseveringly pursued."

THE RULING PASSION.—Bonaparte died in his military garb, his Field Marshal's uniform and his boots, which he had ordered to be put on a short time previous to his dissolution.

Augustus Cesar chose to die in a standing position, and was careful in arranging his person and dress for the occasion.

Seward, Earl of Northumberland, when at the point of death, quitted his bed and put on his armour, saying—"that it became not a man to die like a beast."

A more remarkable instance is that of Maria Theresa, of Austria, who, a short time before she breathed her last, having fallen into a slight slumber, one of the ladies in attendance remarked that her Majesty seemed to be asleep. "No," said she, "I could sleep if I would indulge in repose, but I am sensible of the near reproach of death, and I will not allow myself to be surprised by him in my sleep. I wish to meet my dissolution awake."

Such are the efforts of poor expiring mortality—still clinging to earth—still labouring for the breath of posterity, and exhausting itself in efforts to rise with 'gracefulness at the last.'

MICROSCOPIC VIEW OF THE FLY.—The eye of the common house-fly is fixed so as to enable its prominent organs of vision to view accurately the objects around in every direction; it is furnished with 8000 hexagonal faces, all calculated to convey perfect images to the optic nerve—all slightly convex—all acting as so many cornea—8000 included within a space no larger than the head of a pin!—all hexagonal—all of the best possible form to prevent a waste of space! This is so wonderful that it would stagger belief if not vouched for by being the result of the microscopical researches of such men as Lewenhowel, and others equally eminent.

ANECDOTE OF A FOX.—An English paper tells a droll story of a fox that was some years ago kept at an inn in Shrewsbury, and employed in a wheel to turn the juck. After a while Reynard, getting weary of an employment so unsuited to his genius and habits, gave his keeper the slip, and once more regained his native fields, where he had not remained many days before he was pursued by the hounds; but running into the town, he sprang over a half-door which opened into his old wheel, resumed his former occupation, and thus saved his life!

FOSSIL FOREST.—At more than 100 feet below the surface, a species of forest has been found at St. Valery; in it are vines, the bones of oxen, and antlers of deer. It is in such good preservation, that the walnuts are on the branches of the trees.

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