

Blennor's. Well, she couldn't be positive he had asked for her master, but she thought he had, and she was quite certain she had left him standing in the hall when she came up. The description, so far as it went, answered so exactly to my friend's son, that he now felt sure it must be himself, although unexpected; and that, with a youngster's love of frolic, he had hidden himself somewhere in the house. So again a search, even calling him by name; not a room, not a cupboard, not a curtain left unransacked. It was impossible he could be in the house; he must have slipped out. Going to the door to look, some one called attention to the snow lying heaped up there. It was one smooth undisturbed surface. Since that had fallen, to a moral certainty, no foot had stood upon it. Besides, no one had heard the knock. The girl's story in itself was improbable, and, taken in conjunction with circumstantial evidence, impossible; but what her motive could have been in telling it, no one could conjecture. She had not been sufficiently long in the family to have any confidence already established in her, and the whole statement was treated as pure fabrication, although she persisted in its truth, even with tears. So passed the circumstance, scarcely recalled till months after, when there came home news of the young man. It had been his watch one dark night, and he had been seen by several, only remaining unaccounted for about half an hour; at the end of that time, was missed—sought for—never found. The ship was running before the wind, which was stiff, and it was presumed he must have fallen overboard. One forecastle hand had thought he heard a cry, but supposed it was only some of the young gentlemen larking. That was all ever learned of the poor fellow; and, allowing for difference of time, the accident must have happened at the very hour of the mysterious visit. Now, this may be only a strange coincidence—more extraordinary ones have been unravelled before now—but occasioning so distressful an impression on my friends as to produce the perfect silence on the subject, which is the culminating-point of pain, and, for myself, helping out, in its own uncomfortable manner, the remark I am dealing with.

But I have so many instances to help it out that the difficulty lies in the selection—of scenes in which I have been but an onlooker; as at a yacht-match—champagne and pigeon-pies at the meridian—when the message came down the cabin-stairs to a splendid fellow, who had been the envy and admiration of us all. He sent down word presently to beg one would take the vacant chair, as his mother was ill; but did we not catch a glimpse of him, through the port-hole, going ashore, sitting in the boat with a white face, beside Justice in plain clothes? Or, as in the case of a handsome clergyman, doing Folgate's occasional duty, who, so surely as he yielded to temptation, and stepped in after service, was always wanted by some one who wouldn't come in, but would wait outside. It was invariably a street-boy who delivered the message at the door, so that we had no clue to the mystery but through the pew-opener, who, coming in from the church with the robes and keys, used to encounter a little old woman, in a black bonnet, and with an umbrella, hovering about the parsonage, who used to bear him off triumphantly. Or, as in my own case, when hastening home to dress to accompany my adorable Georgiana to the pit of Her Majesty's, I found that I was waited for and wanted by an individual in the parlour, who handed me a slip of paper headed 'Victoria greeting,' and acquainting me that my appearance was particularly requested at Westminster, &c., &c. The half-crown which I presented him with on the occasion I have never ceased to remember. Or, as in the instance of a lawyer of my acquaintance—But halt! Every one has ample stock of such experiences—not, perhaps, of the precise character of the foregoing, but, at least, referring to practical repetitions of every-day life. For, who does not know at the dinner-party, when, before the serving up, the lady is summoned from her drawing-room circle, that it is to receive tidings of some frightful catastrophe to the fish or the kitchen-chimney? Who has not been sent for into the hall to find a seedy man, buttoned up to the chin, with determined purpose in his eye, and packets of polishing-paste, or bottles of marking-ink? Breathes there a man who has not been now and again wanted down stairs to face inflexible tradespeople with accounts to make up by Saturday? Even on the wide lone sea, where only the winds come and go, do they not bear the mysterious message, and do we not know that all's not well when the captain is wanted above?

Going to the window of the room in which I write but a few moments since, and seeing the closed blinds in the house of my long-sick neighbour opposite, I could but think of the hour in which I too should be wanted, and for the last time. No, not the last! For, as I looked, I saw two dark visitors to him, bearing a solemn burden—could trace them being lighted slowly up through the darkened house—could trace their busy shadows on the blinds.

#### OUR CHALYBEATE WELL.

As there is a probability, or, as some say, even a certainty, that Buttercombe Parva will almost immediately take rank among the great watering-places of England, it is as well that some account should be given of that fount of its greatness, its Miraculous Well, before the thousand footsteps of Fashion shall have trodden out the traces of old romance about its brink; which happened, as we all know, to the baths of Prince Bladud, whose memory was quite forgotten, until rescued by Mr. Pickwick, in the more modern splendours of the court of King Nash. We hasten to write of Buttercombe Parva, then, as it still is—holding ourselves irresponsible for any change of cloud-topped pinnacle or gorgeous dome it may undergo while these few pages are passing through the press—with its Pump, but without its Pump-room; with its village Inn, but without its Royal Victoria Hotel for All Nations; with its shops for the sale of miscellaneous articles, but without its *Emporia*; with the donkeys luxuriating on its common land, but without those scarlet trappings and Lilliputian panniers which proclaim their dedication to visitors; with the fine open space in its centre, adapted, indeed, for the erection of anything, but without that equestrian statue of Farmer Kennun (in brass) who discovered Buttercombe Well.

Early, however, as we had taken the field—we don't mean the field where the well is, for that is not to be had under a guinea the cubic foot—we found it a task by no means easy to find out for certain who *did* first discover it. Many benefactors of their species have had a delicacy about declaring themselves to a grateful public—we don't know who wrote the old Scotch ballads, and no man can lay his hand upon the original inventor of sherry-cobbler—and it may be that Farmer Kennun's modesty, which has blushed hitherto unseen through a pro-

tracted existence, may have waited for this opportunity to exhibit itself; but certain it is he never confessed to having found out the virtues of this wonderful well in the first instance. On the contrary, we have heard him, with much admiration, assign this honour, on several different occasions, to as many different individuals.

Dame Durden, for instance, had discovered it years ago, and had got entirely cured of her paralysis by its miraculous qualities; only, with the selfishness peculiar to extreme old age, she had kept the secret to herself, and only revealed it upon what she had every reason to believe was her death-bed.

Gaffer Grey, too, who had been lame for a score of years, had happened, on one occasion, to tumble into the well—a circumstance which, to those who were acquainted with that venerable rustic, did not enhance the immediate value of the water as an article of consumption—and had walked straight ever afterwards to the end of his life.

But, upon inquiry being strictly made, all that was corroborated concerning Dame Durden was, that she had used the well, because it happened to be handy, for culinary purposes; had drunk its water when she could get nothing better; and on some few occasions had washed herself in it—but this last allegation was doubted by those who knew her best. She had had a stiffness of the arm, which sometimes was better, and sometimes was worse; and it was certainly worse in winter, when she didn't much use the water, than in summer, when she did. With regard to the well being of a chalybeate character, Dame Durden observed, that 'she had never heard nothink of that; no, nothink *agen the well* at all, from no-body.'

The case of Mr. Grey would hold even still less water (and of water of a miraculous character, absolutely none at all). It was true that he had not been seen to walk straight for a period of twenty years; but that was not so much through constitutional lameness as through constitutional attachment to drink. It was true that he had strayed, upon one occasion, into the field which contained this treasure of a well, and had managed to tumble into it; but it was no less a fact that he had been taken out thoroughly sobered, to his bed, whereon he died, in a fortnight afterwards, of the rheumatics.

All those to whom Farmer Kennun had attributed the first discovery of the virtues of Our Chalybeate Well being eliminated by similar investigation, we could not but come to the conclusion that the honour was due, after all, to Farmer Kennun himself, to whom, by a singular coincidence, the field in question also happened to belong.

This fact becoming at last incontrovertibly established, that gentleman accepted his position, and is now the recognised founder of Buttercombe Spa. It was vouchsafed to him, and to him alone, to hear 'strange explosions,' when at a short distance from our (and his) miraculous well; the which, in his intelligent perception of chemical phenomena, he attributes to 'the escape of the gas.' Certain it is, indeed, that the gas, or whatever else is the peculiar property of Our Well, has a curious predilection for escaping from it and then returning to it again, quite unexpectedly, and sometimes in a wholly different form. Of three bottles full of it, selected at short intervals, and carried off with our own hands for analytical investigation, No. 1 was found to contain as good and tasteless water as a Christian needs to drink; No. 2 had iodine in it; and No. 3 was very strongly impregnated with Epsom salts. Now, these very striking natural characteristics—however singular and interesting they may be, and are, in a scientific point of way—appear to us to militate strongly against the value of Our Well as a medicinal agent. There is no knowing what changes may be in preparation in that wonderful spring, nor what are the laws which govern their periodical occurrences. Some noble lord who visits Buttercombe Parva Spa for gout, may, for all we can tell, get a draught of cod-liver oil some morning; or his lady, with a pulmonary complaint, may, on the other hand, toss off a glass of colchicum. We should scarcely be surprised if a quantity of some patent medicine even should be thrown up during one of these throes of nature, to which, like the Icelandic geysers, Our Well appears to be subject, and to find its Protean surface covered with floating boxes of Holloway's Pills.

Our Chalybeate Well has, we believe it is confessed on all hands, no iron in it whatever—but that, of course, only increases its singularity. What its advocates mainly rely upon (and we must allow that there is now no little truth in their assertion) is, that the water that comes out of it 'has a very nasty taste.' This, and the fact that the rector of the parish has been heard to say that it 'did him good,' are the foundations upon which the fame of Buttercombe Parva is about to be built. Small beginnings, indeed; but how interesting will it be in time to come to be able to trace the origin of our gigantic and palatial city down to them! We dare say Cheltenham herself had nothing better to boast of at one time; it is possible that the savage tribes who formerly inhabited Bath may have considered its bubbling springs very filthy drinking; the Abbot of Leamington may have once inadvertently remarked that its waters—mixed perhaps in a little sack—had 'done him good.' It is both strange and rare to read of the infancy of something that is fated to be great, before the greatness happens to it; biographies of that sort being almost without exception retrospective. Buttercombe Parva is, as we have already written, as yet a mere village. Farmer Kennun's field is still frequented by kine only, principally of a brown colour—doubtless in consequence of the ferruginous—But, no; we were forgetting the peculiar idiosyncrasy of Our Chalybeate Well. The whole space, consisting of several acres, is divided, however—upon a very accurate red and blue 'plan' at least—into spacious public edifices. The News-room, where the people of fashion will retire after bathing, and where coffee will be procurable, is to be on the left-hand side of the gate as you enter, where the dung-heap now stands. The Assembly Hall, comprehending a Pump-room, Hot and Cold Bath-rooms, and a Ball-room with a small adjoining Apartment expressly adapted for whist-players, is, of course, to surround the miraculous spring. An ecclesiastical establishment—it has been expressly stipulated by the rector—is to be erected opposite the News-room; and Farmer Kennun (quite unknown to the rector) is said to have already fixed his eye upon a fashionable preacher of Evangelical principles and tried watering-place attractions. The capabilities of Buttercombe Parva in the way of accommodation are at present rather confined—when we have mentioned the bay-window over the butcher's shop, and the second room in the turnpike toll-house, indeed, we come to the end of them—but, in design, they are absolutely without limit. Kennun Crescent, consisting of two

hundred and forty mansions (the three centre ones with pilasters, and considerably larger than the rest), is to have a western aspect, towards Buttercombe Regis. Kennun Terrace, with its back to this palatial pile, and intended less for titled persons than for the richer sort of landed gentry, will command an uninterrupted view (save for a few isolated houses to be called Kennun Villas) of the parish workhouse. The principal street, with its magnificent commercial establishments, will, it is rumoured, in return for his valuable corroboration of the virtues of Our Chalybeate Well, be named after our rector. Durden Square will immortalise, as far as bricks and mortar and the best Portland stone can do it, the memory of her whose deep obligation to its waters has been already described; and similarly, Gaffer Grey Parade is the area fixed upon for the two brass bands—one native, and the other German—to play on alternative afternoons to the distinguished visitors. 'There,' says the prospectus, at present in Mr. Kennun's desk, receiving its finishing-touches from his imaginative pen, but shortly to be circulated in print through the length and breadth (as he has been heard to say himself) of the Old and the New Worlds—'There will the soothing strains of the latest music charm away what lingering remnants of disease the healing waters of Our Chalybeate Well may have failed to eliminate. There will Rheumatism forget its pangs, and Consumption omit its but too customary cough. Age—titled Age—will there renew its youth in the contemplation of the young and the lovely; and the domestic affections be evoked by the spectacle of perambulators full of the most high-born children.'

We decline, from motives of delicacy, as well as on account of the laws relating to copyright, to quote further; and merely remark, that the whole document is conceived in the same lofty style of glowing eloquence. We believe, although we have no authority to make the offer, that if any needy nobleman in want of a couple of thousand pounds, would come down at once to Our Chalybeate Well and be cured of any physical malady, that the money would not be wanting to refit him in other respects. The quarter of that sum might be paid perhaps even for a *bonâ-fide* admission—to be publicly made use of—that it did his Lordship good. But he had better make haste about it, for 'the Season' of Buttercombe Parva Spa is positively to commence next spring.

In the meantime, a beginning—humble enough, it is true, but still a beginning—has been made. A subscription list for building purposes is at this moment going the round of the parish, headed with quite a munificent sum by Farmer Kennun. There are certain miserable detractors who hint that such generosity is not altogether unreasonable, since the commencement will be made on his land. A diminutive pony is also already conveying over the district, in a peculiarly shaped cart, the water from Our Chalybeate Well for sale. The rector buys two gallons *per diem* of it; as Mr. Kennun asserts, for his private drinking, but as the aforesaid detractors contend, for manuring his asparagus bed.

Thus far, then, things have progressed at present towards making Buttercombe Parva famous, and in glorification of Our Chalybeate Well. But as impartial chroniclers, we feel it right, before concluding our narration, to give Mrs. Deborah Giles's account of the matter, who has lived in the parish rather over eighty years, and is therefore entitled to be heard upon all local topics.

She is a little hard of hearing—hard of conviction, and even 'obstinate as a mule,' says Farmer Kennun—and perhaps inclined to cling to ancient legend rather than to modern chemical discoveries; but she has her senses about her nevertheless, and when she entertains an opinion, has no sort of hesitation in delivering it. The following are Mrs. Deborah Giles's very own words.

'Killibit Well,' says she, 'd'wont tell I nothink about your Killibit Wells, for it's all a pack of nonsense. A nasty taste has it? Ah! it's loikely to be nasty; d'wont I know? Tinker's jackass was a-coming whoam, years ago, with a load of salt, and dropped down dead there; that eh did; and they buried him, salt and all, in Kennun's Well. Nasty! Why, o'course it's nasty; well it may be. Jackass and salt be at the bottom o' it. That's why.'

And that, according to its oldest inhabitant, is how we make Chalybeate Wells at Buttercombe Parva.

An autograph letter of Goethe, written in 1793, has been lately found among the old correspondence of the well-known publishing house, Vieweg at Brunswick; it consists of but two sentences, and is as follows: "Accompanying this letter I send you a manuscript in a sealed envelope. If Herr Vieweg declines to purchase it for 200 Friedrichs d'or, he will please return me the packet without breaking the seal." The publisher, who was a prudent man, did not like the idea of buying a pig in a poke, and took a few days to reflect; after which he tore open the envelope and found the poem of "Herman and Dorothea." We need not say that his 200 Friedrichs d'or could not have been better invested.

"A Chef-d'Œuvre."—From the *Court Journal* we have the following amusing paragraph. An unknown author, who had unsuccessfully attempted to get his works represented at the theatres, at last obtained an interview with M. Camille Doucet, of the Théâtre Français. He was armed with a formidable manuscript, which proved to be a tragedy in verse in eight acts! M. Doucet good-naturedly assented to hear some of it read, but after listening to three verses, he stopped the author and stated that he really could not spare any more time. Seeing, however, that the writer was in a needy condition, he presented him with 100 francs. The next day M. Doucet found him at another theatre engaged in an animated conversation with the manager. "Yes, monsieur, my piece is a *chef-d'œuvre*. M. Camille Doucet gave me a hundred francs after hearing but three verses; judge, then, what is the value of the whole eight acts!"

Baboo Rajendralala Mitra, who was deputed by the Bengal government to make a tour of Orissa for the purpose of archaeological research, has discovered that the chignon is a very old ornament for the head. Among the ancient Uriahs, the style of hair-dressing was very striking. "The chignon," we read, "was common, and some specimens bore the closest resemblance to the Parisian coiffure of the present day, and were in some instances one-third larger than the head." It is thus established that the chignon is the original Uriah heap.

Demidoff was frequently splendid. He once gave a boy a napoleon for getting out of his way and touching his cap, but he got ten napoleons' worth of wit in return, for the joke lasted him for frequent repetition. The boy, delighted at the generosity, exclaimed, "You a Demi-doff?—no, you are an entire Doff!"