



THE POSTMAN.

EVERYBODY remembers, or if they don't they should, for there is nothing like it in the whole volume, that exquisite scene in the *Odyssey*, where Jupiter's postman, "swift-footed Mercury" enters the cave of "Calypso," with the dreaded message which parts her from the beloved "Ulysses." To my mind the masters of poetry have given us nothing so perfect in its way as that charming picture. The enchanted grotto, the sparkling fire of fragrant wood, the beautiful goddess, happy at her graceful toil, are so lovely in their sweet and unconscious repose as the messenger of evil tidings appears, that we must exert all the force of a correct mind to sympathise sufficiently with the distant and somewhat misused "Penelope," and enable us to forget the wrathful despair and passion of her rival.

But society changes its aspects, and we are become practically reconciled to the fact that beings of a different order traverse this "terrestrial ball" with the decrees of Fate. Very unlike, indeed, to Mr. Flaxman's beautiful God is that particular medium of intelligence in whose beat I at present reside. He is, to state the truth, a man of scarlet countenance, whose affable manners are quite untinged with dignity, and whose vicinity is sometimes redolent of the fumes of a more modern nectar than that supposed to have been distilled upon "Olympus."

But the nature of his business more closely resembles that of his classic predecessor, and ladies may receive as dire a sentence from his mahogany coloured fingers as that which reached the unforboding ear of the doomed "Calypso." It is even possible that the lordlier sex are not exempt from his occasional visitations in the capacity of a minister of justice.

With what hopes and terrors is he invested! What bits of tragedy, what pleasant little comedies from his moral atmosphere, shake our hearts with fear or joy, as we behold the approach of his luminous nose?

Nor is my friend of a careless or unsympathetic temper. He knows the postmarks which are welcome in my eyes, and is never unconcerned when a disappointment befalls me. He is even considerate enough to extend his interest to literature, and is well acquainted with the "magazines" and "pamphlets," in which I rejoice. Like many more of us, he takes the cover for a guarantee of the contents, and arrives at the result of wisdom by an easy process.

"Miss Margaret, Sir," he exclaims, with confidential cheerfulness, as once or twice in the week he comes up to the low open window, and hands in the usual epistles. But even in his public function, I am not vain enough to fancy myself the exclusive object of his regard. He is a man of expansive feelings, and not at all insensible to rival claims upon his sympathies. If I had been previously blind on this point, the interest he exhibits in our new neighbours would enlighten me. There is a tall, yellow-haired beauty in the family, with eyes as blue as this August sky, when its tone is deepened by the white cloud-mountains which tower in the west to-day, and it is evident that the grace and charm which pervades this nymph have roused

all the simple courtesy of his nature. He has already discovered a particular eagerness in the reception he obtains after the arrival of a certain mail, and is unselfishly glad of the pleasure in which he has so humble a share. She is always at hand at those times with a gracious word and smile for him, and he is quite willing to be one of her captives in the subordinate degree.

Nor is our kitchen maid, described upon the covers of the letters which arrive at long intervals, as "Miss Julia-Ann Murphy," and known to him thereby, beyond the range of his kindly observation. "Julia Ann" is a good girl, whose clean face and tidy young figure wins general approbation. She has withal a warm Irish heart, and eyes to match, and remembers a little hut still standing upon the borders of a peat bog in Ireland, with undiminished affection. The half-sovereigns, which she can ill spare, are regularly transmitted to the old mother, whom she left behind when she came to seek her fortune in America. Many an innocent pleasure and little bit of finery, natural and suitable to her age, does she forego to soothe the poverty of the old peat-cutter, whose lot is so much harder than her own; but is more than rewarded when some learned neighbour, who still has difficulties with the spelling-book, sends back an affectionate statement of the poor woman's gratitude and increased comfort.

My friend is of that class which has seen "better days." That peculiar condition seems always to demand a little extra kindness and consideration. He is one of the many who, falling out of their own little world, comparatively humble though it be, descend socially to a ruder sphere, and leaving behind them the old fellowships of more prosperous days, submit to a patronizing nod from their once-familiar companions, and comfort themselves under a trial which knows its own bitterness with an unconscious strength and wisdom very good to behold, and worthy the emulation of much greater men.

But the postman is threatened with extinction. He will vanish shortly from the highway of modern life, and become an historical figure, associated with his letter-bag as permanently as is the elder Mr. Weller with the stage-coach of departed time. He will walk to and fro in the pleasant twilight of tradition, the "Rip-Van-Winkle" of epistolary traffic, and make useful material for future novelists and poets. But as telegraphic wires intersect the land, and cables span the sea, and "to waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole," becomes a daily-fulfilled prophecy, his fate is certain to resemble that of the Lost Pleiad "seen no more below."

Halifax, N.S.

Io.

LONDON LETTER.

LONDON, September 18, 1866.

BY the same sort of fiction, Mr. Editor, which calls our court the "Court of St. James," when, as a fact, nothing official is done in that ugly brick pile, is this letter said to be a "Letter from London." The truth is, I am far away from that "great wen," down in the heart of rural England, with miles of meadow on either hand, miles of such verdure as would excite

your wonder, could you see them. In my last, I told you that I expected to address you this week from the capital of poor Ireland, but "*L'homme propose, et le Dieu dispose.*" The weather has been frightful in its inclemency, and hard work ill fitted me to face it; so here I am, enjoying the profound solemnity of a little town, whose population is about one thousand strong. I wish I could describe to you the atmosphere of peace and quiet in which I now find myself. Equally do I wish that I could set before you the real old English community, one of whose members I have become for a very little while; I should then have to tell of a grand old castle, ivy clad, and grey with age, standing "foursquare to every wind that blows," just as it did when, in the time of our Second Henry, its massive walls were thrown together. I should have to tell of an equally ancient church, on the edge of the castle moat; a building rich in traditions, and bearing still, on its battered oaken doors, the marks of Cromwell's cannon. I should also have to tell of a little town, successor to the cluster of retainers' huts that stood there in feudal times, built beneath the frowning old "keep," as if for protection; of a nobleman, whose authority is as that of a king, and of a population who simply obey his behests, as did their fathers those of his ancestors. So you see that I have lighted upon a relic of the patriarchal age of England. We, who live in busy cities, are apt to think that everywhere men are tearing up the ancient landmarks as much as ourselves. We imagine that all over the country the old reverence for position, wealth, and influence, the old unquestioning obedience and dependence are fast dying out. These are delusions. Here, in this little place, there is well nigh as much of the old feudal spirit as ever, though we are within two miles of a railway, and can sometimes hear the scream of the passing engine. You in Canada, with your comparatively new society, and your habits of equality, can understand but little of the state of things in which I now find myself, yet it must be interesting to you as the relic of a past age, and a different condition of society.

I have come here, appropriately enough, from an ancient cathedral town, where has been held a grand festival of music. As something unique in its way, I must dwell upon it for a little. One hundred and forty years ago, the three cathedral choirs of Gloucester, Hereford, and Worcester, determined to give an annual concert in aid of the widows and orphans of the diocesan clergy. For one hundred and forty years has that determination been adhered to, and the original concert has grown into a week-long festival, to which come the first performers of the day, and the chief of our musical connoisseurs. The performances are always held in the cathedral, and it is this which gives them a special value. Only in some such grand and solemn building, with its "long-drawn aisle and fretted roof," and with "storied window richly dight," can the full influence of sacred music be felt. There, while hearing

"The pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced choir below,"

can alone be estimated the grandeur and sublimity of the strains with which the genius of