

THE SIMPKINS CORRESPONDENCE.

No. 6.

Uncle John visits Montreal and, after some difficulty, succeeds in finding his nephew. He recounts his experiences in a letter to his sister.

TO MRS. SIMPKINS, Simpkinsville, Ontario.

MY DEAR SISTER:—I arrived in Montreal by the evening train having been detained twenty-four hours by the snow. I was cold, cross and hungry, and proceeded immediately to Jerry's boarding house. (It turns out to be the very one I lived in myself thirteen years ago, when it was kept by the widow C —.) I was shown up to Jerry's room. Over the door was a sign-board on which was painted in black letters on a light blue ground, "Straw bonnets cleaned." There were two bell-handles to the door and two brass knockers. I plied one of the latter vigorously. There was some movement inside and immediately afterwards the door opened, revealing to my astonished gaze, two young gentlemen,—evidently students,—playing a game called "Euchre," and puffing prodigious clouds from short clay pipes. They had before them two tumblers, a lemon and a bottle of Scotch whiskey, and seemed to be particularly jolly, under what I am bound to regard as discreditable circumstances. The walls were covered with pictures, delineating the human form divine, and here and there was hung an extraordinary number of bell-handles, brass knockers, signboards, and barbers' poles *et hoc genus omnia*. In a corner stood the stalwart figure of a Highlander, holding in one hand a bundle of cigars and in the other a snuff-box. It struck me at the time that I had seen that Highlander before, but I refrained from saying as much in the presence of the young gentlemen,—as yet perfect strangers to me. They informed me that Mr. Simpkins was not in—that, in fact, he had been, since eleven o'clock, attending a case at the Maternity Hospital. I thought there must be some mistake in this and enquired whether it was usual for first-year students to visit that institution, adding, that it was not the practice in my time. "Perhaps not" replied one of the young Sawbones, with a glance of intelligence at his neighbour, "but things have so improved of late that a sharp first-year student often knows more than an old school doctor." The young jackanapes was not far wrong as the sequel proves, but he angered me considerably. "Since the first-year students are so advanced," said I, "kindly tell me what the second-year men do?" "Oh!" said he, as cool as a cucumber "they perform all the principal operations in the Hospital—such as lithotomy, &c. The doctors there are all such a set of muffs that they could not get on without us!"

Not feeling altogether satisfied with the rejoinder and not wishing to enter into a discussion with boys, I left the room, went down stairs and enquired for the landlady, Mrs. O'Toole. She speedily made her appearance and informed me that Jerry never could be depended upon. He might not be in that night at all, as the students had just got over the University Lectures, and they would probably pay their respects to the Professors and others of their acquaintance. She informed me that Jerry was a very nice young man, but that, of late, he had not been regular in his payments, and she had been compelled to put him in a room with two others, similarly circumstanced. His board and lodging cost him just \$4 a week. After taking some refreshment I sallied forth and made the best of my way to the Maternity Hospital. Here the matron did not know Mr. Simpkins, even by name. Feeling somewhat disgusted, I determined on visiting the dissecting room, where I encountered half a dozen young scapegraces who assured me that "Simpkins had left early with the intention of sitting up all night with a sick student." They could not tell me where, however, and I began to have an idea that I was being systematically bamboozled. It was getting late and I determined on going back to Mrs. O'Toole's, and awaiting Jerry's return. On my way, I encountered a crowd standing in the middle of a street opposite to Mrs. — Seminary. (You know Mrs. —, the strong-minded lady who created such a hubbub because Parson — took such a warm interest in the cheeks and chins of the pupils.) In the middle of this crowd which I had no difficulty in discovering consisted entirely of students, each armed with a "femur," and shouting "jolly dogs" with all their might, I recognized your hopeful son. While I was regarding him with speechless astonishment, he led off an alphabetic ditty in twenty-six verses commencing "A was an Artery." This was followed by "Vive La Compagnie"

in extemporary verse containing no end of compliments to the young ladies of the school. While this was going on, two policemen who had been calmly regarding the scene, were accosted, apparently by a resident of the neighborhood, and asked why they did not interfere? They said they never meddled with students—that game had been tried and it did not answer. The only persons they had orders to arrest, after nightfall, for singing in the streets were the military officers. There was never much difficulty with them because they could not afford to resist. It was more than their Commissions were worth.

Judge of my astonishment on seeing Jerry, immediately after the serenading was over, walk up to the door of the Seminary, dexterously wrench off the knocker, ring the bell and, on the appearance of the servant, send in the compliments of the Dean of the Faculty! This was too much for me. I walked up to the door and caught the young reprobate by the shoulder. Probably deeming me a detective, he immediately planted his fist in my right eye, which has been discoloured ever since, necessitating the use of a green shade. As soon as I opened my lips in reproof, the young rascal recognised me. "What, Uncle John?" cried he. "Bless my soul! who would have thought of seeing you? How are you, and how did you leave mother and Jane?" (You see, even in the midst of that orgy his first thoughts turned to home and to you.) "Uncle John, Uncle John!" shouted the crowd. "Bully for Uncle John! Three cheers for Uncle John! Pass him up!" and forthwith I was hoisted on to the shoulders of half-a-dozen brawny youths who frantically declared that I was a jolly good fellow and insisted on "drinks" at the nearest tavern, after which it was arranged that we should sup at "The Terrapin,"—a hostelry with which Jerry seemed well acquainted. We had the supper but I do not exactly remember where. I have a sort of confused recollection of marble tables, fried oysters and champagne, and a host who would make a good Falstaff or Sir Toby Belch. But I will let you know more about it in my next. In the meantime I intend to have a serious talk with Jerry, who has evidently acquired extravagant habits and is not sufficiently attentive to his studies.

Believe me,

Your affectionate Brother,

JOHN SIMPKINS.

P. S.—An elderly individual has brought me a bill of \$20.50 for the supper last night. It appears Master Jerry declared I promised to pay for it! The messenger called me by my name and asked me if I did not remember him? On being answered in the negative he insisted that he had made my acquaintance many years ago, when he and two others, (policemen), had endeavoured to arrest some students who had carried a Highlander from a tobacco store in Great St. James' street. I had some difficulty in persuading him that I did *not* remember.

ONE FOR J. J.

Under the head of Dramatic Gossip, the London *Athenæum* announces that

"A new and very handsome theatre, to be called the Academy of Music, has been completed in Montreal. The exterior is Tuscan in architecture and the interior florid Renaissance. It is calculated to seat 1600 spectators."

DIOGENES considers the Academy of Music, so far as its present existence is concerned, to be of the order of architecture of "Les Chateaux en Espagne."

AN APPARENT LIBEL.

When Disraeli, during his Premiership, was vigorously defending him self in the House against the attacks of Gladstone, it is said that he sipped rather frequently from a glass in which the water was flavoured with — well, well, DIOGENES never believed the rumour, and will, therefore, say no more about it. At the same time he maintains, that no sensible man, who looks at Disraeli's head, can doubt for one moment that he is a Dizzy-pated man!

NOUS VERRONS.

Nova Scotia, according to Mr. Howe, has every reason to be perfectly satisfied. He must tell that to the Marines in Hants, and perhaps they won't believe him.