

THE  
BRITISH COLONIAL MAGAZINE.

Conducted by W. H. SMITH, Author of the "Canadian Gazetteer," &c. &c.

NUMBER XVI.

PRICE 3d.; or 12s. 6d. per Annum.

STEPHEN LANE, THE BUTCHER.

The greatest man in these parts, (I use the word in the sense of Louis-le-Gros, not Louis-le-Grand,) the greatest man hereabout, by, at least, a stone, is our worthy neighbour Stephen Lane, the grazier, ex-butcher of Belford. Nothing so big hath been seen since Lambert the jailer, or the Durham ox.

When he walks, he overfills the pavement, and is more difficult to pass than a link of full-dressed misses, or a chain of becloaked dandies. Indeed, a malicious attorney, in drawing up a paving bill for the ancient borough of Belford Regis, once inserted a clause confining Mr. Lane to the middle of the road, together with wagons, vans, stage-coaches, and other heavy articles. Chairs crack under him, —coaches rock,—bolsters groan,—and floors tremble. He hath been stuck in a staircase and jammed in a doorway, and has only escaped being ejected from an omnibus by its being morally and physically impossible that he should get in. His passing the window has something such an effect as an eclipse, or as turning outward the opaque side of that ingenious engine of mischief, a dark lantern. He puts out the light, like Othello. A small wit of our town, by calling a supervisor, who dabbles in riddles, and cuts no inconsiderable figure in the poet's corner of a country newspaper, once perpetrated a conundrum on his person, which, as relating to so eminent and well-known an individual, (for almost every reader of the "H—shire Herald" hath, at some time or other, been a customer of our butcher,) had the honour of puzzling more people at the Sunday morning breakfast-table; and of engaging more general attention than had ever before happened to that respectable journal. A very horrible

murder, (and there was that week one of the first water,) two shipwrecks, an elevation, and an execution, were all passed over as trifles, compared with the interest excited by this literary squib and cracker. A trifling quirk it was to keep Mr. Stacy, the surveyor, a rival bard, fuming over his coffee until the said coffee grew cold; or to hold Miss Anna Maria Watkins, the mantuamaker, in pleasant though painful efforts at divination until the bell rang for church, and she had hardly time to undo her curl-papers and arrange her ringlets; a flimsy quirk of a surety, an inconsiderable quiddity! Yet, since the courteous readers of the "H—shire Herald" were amused with pondering over it, so, perchance, may be the no less courteous and far more courtly readers of these slight sketches. I insert it, therefore, for their edification, together with the answer, which was not published in the "Herald" until the H—shire public had remained an entire week in suspense:—*Query*—"Why is Mr. Stephen Lane like Rembrandt?" *Ans.*—Because he is famous for the breadth of his shadow."

The length of his shadow, although by no means in proportion to the width,—for that would have recalled the days when giants walked the land, and Jack, the famous Jack, who borrowed his surname from his occupation, slew them,—was yet of pretty fair dimensions. He stood six feet two inches without his shoes, and would have been accounted an exceedingly tall man, if his intolerable fatness had not swallowed up all minor distinctions. That magnificent *beau ideal* of a human mountain, "the fat woman of Brentford," for whom Sir John Falstaff passed not only undetected, but unsuspected, never crossed my mind's eye but as the feminine of Mr. Stephen Lane.