

who are familiar with country sounds, know the particular one to which I allude; it comes with the earliest spring—it is the voice of him whom, in this neighbourhood, by a strange perversion of words, they call the “bird-keeper,” for his duty is to frighten the birds from the seed, and prevent their destroying the young shoots. Some widow’s son, perhaps, who would rather her child should be exposed to the sharp winds and frosts of nature, than that he should, in the peopled dungeon of the parish workhouse, be exiled from the sunlight of that mother’s smile, and doomed to find, what ought to be the honourable refuge for distress, converted into the loathsome cells of degradation; or, our bird-keeper may be one of a large family, too little to work hard—too old to be altogether idle. Be that as it may, I love to hear his chaunt, and resolved to find him out—not so easy a task as may be supposed, for this neighbourhood is cut into innumerable fields and gardens, intersected with high-ways and by-ways—footpaths and bridle roads—cherry and apple orchards—acres of lettuce and asparagus—positive groves of peas and beans, and gooseberry and currant gardens of immense extent; these are divided and subdivided by hedges, now green, and budding with the promise of sweet hawthorn, the fresh white garland, which May casts as her voice offering into the lap of summer; these are pleasant to the eye and refreshing to the smell, and the sweet country sounds abound amongst them—the sharp chirrup of the sparrow—the whistle of the blackbird—the rich song of the thrush echos amongst the thickening leaves of the tall trees; and if the sound and its association are rudely disturbed by the town cry of “lobsters,” or by “had-dock and live sole,” passings along the neighbouring road, why it is but a line in the index to human life, where things common, if not vulgar, intrude into our holiest of holies. Here, however, is our little acquaintance; his voice I have long known. Let me look again; I have seen him before, and frequently. All this past summer he cried “water-cresses—fresh green water-cresses,” along our roads, and I rather think that in the winter he trafficked in muffins and crumpets! He was better clothed then than he is now; his little red legs were cased in stockings, and his shoes looked neat and jetty. Though the day is fine, his features have a thin and pinched expression—the pinch of poverty; his eyes are small and twinkling, and there is a determined cutting about his mouth—an almost defined firmness of purpose, which will one day make him remarkable either for good or bad; if he has not been instructed, why he will slave and endure to the end of his days—or slave and rebel; and yet some of the most distinguished in our land have been born to no better estate than Peter Finch, the little bird-keeper. Peter’s cap on this particular morning was decked with a long stem of hawthorn, that waved in the breeze, and the sally bough, which he whirled in measure to his chaunt, was garnished with shreds and patches of all colours and all lengths. He stood at the corner of the field, watching with one eye the apparently organized movements of a flock of sparrows, which were chirping and fluttering in an old cherry tree, ready to make a descent on a plot of ground lately sown with radishes, the moment his attention was withdrawn. In his right hand he held his standard, and in his left fluttered a long strip of those ballads which the itinerant vendors of song offer at the rate of three yards for one penny. His jacket was ragged; but childhood must be miserable indeed, to be uncheerful in the sunshine, and my little acquaintance had plenty of leisure to “be good and glad!” a privilege not always accorded to our poor children. I thought how much better the cold and chill of the morning was, with the heavens above and the teeming earth beneath, than the hot and crowded factory where can be no childhood. First conversation with nature, no matter how silent, nor how frequently repeated, are profitable to both soul and body, and a word or two of little Peter’s natural poetry convinced me that he had learnt something besides shouting his war chaunt to the birds of the air.

“I think I saw you crying water-cresses last summer?”

“Yes, lady,” in a strong Irish brogue.

“Oh, you are a Paddy, I perceive.”

“No, yer honor; my father was, but I’m Pether. The boys about call me Paddy Pether.”

“And your mother?”

“She’s not in it, my lady; she’s in heaven along with my father. The world was too troublesome entirely for them, yer honor, and they took sorrow greatly to heart, and died young.”

Here was a history eloquent in events, and told, with the pathos of true poetry, the troubles of the world; hearts too tender to endure them—an early marriage—an early death!

“And who has taken care of you, my little fellow?”

“The Almighty God, and my aunt Nelly!”

The reply was delivered with careless simplicity. The child was young, and yet I fancied that I could discern something of the subdued carefulness of the wiser country mixed with the warm free bearing of his father land. His small eye laughed, and he seemed rather fond of shouldering the trunk of a tree—that was Irish. But, notwithstanding the brogue, he was not so communicative as Irish children are—an Englishman always wonders why you should ask questions that do not concern you; an Irishman at once understands that you ask them “out of curiosity.”

“Is your aunt kind to you?”

“Sure she and my father war own sisters,” he answered, ra-

ther astonished at a question which happily he believed unnatural. “My mother was English, they say,” he added.

“You must have been very cold these dark mornings.”

“Ah, ma’am; but they’re gone, thank Heaven; and if it wasn’t for the sparrows, I’d be mighty pleasant now; but the devil’s in them entirely for cuteness: as long as I’m on the tramp they keep away, like those yonder, but the minute I sit down—yarra! it’s down they are like a shower of hail; I’ve no pace at all with them, my lady.”

We have no right to probe either poverty or sorrow, unless we intend to relieve. Peter’s aunt Nelly was easily discovered in a neighbouring lane; and it was pleasant to think that the “little bird-keeper” deserved his relation.

“I’m nothing but a widow now,” said Nelly, folding her arms, and looking as the Irish women of her class generally look—very much out of place in England—“and I have three of my own childer, that it’s my pride to keep out of the work-house; which I do, by the help of heaven’s blessing, my four bones and the clear-starching. But Peter is better to me than my own: in the chill of the night he’d steal from his bed, and after lighting my fire, off with him to the fields, and if one of my own didn’t take him share of the bit and the sup, when we have it, he’d come home at night with the father’s smile in his eyes, and the mother’s steadiness on his tongue, and sit down to read (for in all my misery I gave him a turn at the book), and then, after a few hours’ sleep on a lock of straw, away again to the fields. He turns his hand to any thing in season, but likes the birds best, because he has time for the reading. I often ax him what he gets out of the books, and he only turns his eyes on me and laughs.” A. M. H.—*Britannia*.

SLEEP.

I’ve mourn’d the dark long night away,
With bitter tears and vain regret,
Till, grief-sick, at the breaking day
I’ve left a pillow cold and wet.

I’ve risen from a restless bed,
Sad, trembling, spiritless and weak,
With all my brow’s young freshness fled,
With pallid lips and bloodless cheek.

Hard was the task for aching eyes
So long to wake, so long to weep;
But well it taught me how to prize
That precious, matchless blessing, sleep.

I’ve counted every chiming hour
While languishing ‘neath ceaseless pain,
While fever raged with demon power,
To drink my breath and scorch my brain.

And oh! what earnest words were given!
What wild imploring prayers arose!
How eagerly I asked of Heaven
A few brief moments of repose!

Oh! ye who drown each passing night
In peaceful slumber, calm and deep,
Fail not to kneel at morning’s light,
And thank thy God for health and sleep.

ELIZA COOK.

GREAT STORM ON THE SIMPLON.

Dossola, Sept. 19.—We had no sooner passed the village of Simplon than we found ourselves overtaken by a most violent storm of thunder, lightning, and rain, which it appears had been raging on the Italian side of the mountain for the whole day, without any appearance of it on the Swiss side, excepting a few heavy clouds and now and then a little drizzling rain. On reaching the pass of Gondo the appearance was most awful: rain such as I had never yet seen in England, and cascades from the tops of the perpendicular mountains, some thousands feet high, falling in all directions, crossing the road in various places with the force and volume of a mill-stream. In addition to which stones, some of them as large as a bushel basket, were continually falling near us from the tops of the mountains, and frequently we were obliged to get out of the carriage in the midst of this pelting rain to remove the obstructions. One of the galleries was broken through in two places, and our carriage was nearly overturned in passing through. To return was as dangerous as to proceed, and on we went expecting every moment to be our last. When we were passing the little village of Gondo a man came running out from a cottage imploring us not to proceed, for that a carriage (a German family) about half an hour before, in endeavouring to pass, was upset by the cascade which fell from above, and the carriages, horses and postillion carried into the torrent. The party were saved with a good ducking and a few bruises, but they lost nearly all their luggage. We now came to a stand-still, and took refuge in a miserable public house, where we spent three days. The landlord of the public house, with six or seven other persons, who assisted the Germans out of the river, were ultimately cut off by the falling of immense portions of the rocks on each side of them, so that they

could not move an hundred yards on either side, and were obliged to remain there (where we saw them) exposed to the pelting storm, till early the next morning, when the rain abating, the neighbours were enabled to draw them to the other side of the river by ropes, etc.

After remaining at Gondo for three days we resolved to try and get out of the miserable hole on foot, for as to move a carriage it could not be thought of. Having therefore taken five men as guides and to carry as much luggage as we could, we started off and arrived safely at Domo Dossola after a great deal of fatigue and a walk over mountains, where I think the foot of man never yet trod, of about sixteen miles.

This was nothing to the awful scene of destruction which we saw for miles below Isella. Here the road in many places for half a mile together was completely annihilated—not a vestige remained. The river had formed for itself a new bed, and a deep and mighty torrent swept by the naked base of the mountain where but a few hours before existed one of Napoleon’s greatest monuments. Bridges also were carried away without leaving a single stone to record where they once stood. A beautiful one of five arches in stone, newly erected, shared the same fate.

The melancholy intelligence has just come down here that a French Baron and his lady followed us over the mountains, the latter riding on a mule, when the mule slipped and went over the precipice with the lady on his back, and both were dashed to atoms with the guide. I have just spoken to a man who saw the bodies. Two diligences, which were about half an hour behind us, could get no further than the last refuge, which had been abandoned some years, so that they were obliged to break open the doors, and about twenty persons, wet through to the skin, passed the night without either fire or meat or drink.

HUMAN LIFE.

How truly does the journey of a single day, its changes and its hours, exhibit the history of human life! We rise up in a glorious freshness of a spring morning. The dews of night, those sweet tears of nature, are hanging from each bough and leaf, and reflecting the bright and myriad hues of the morning. Our hearts are beating with hope, our frames are buoyant with health. We see no cloud; we fear no storm; and with our chosen and beloved companions clustering around us, we commence our journey. Step by step, the scene becomes more lovely; hour after hour our hopes become brighter. A few of our companions have dropped away, but in the multitude remaining, and the beauty of the scenery, their loss is unfelt. Suddenly we have entered upon a new country. The dews of the morning are exhaled by the fervour of the noonday sun; the friends that started with us are disappearing. Some remain, but their looks are cold and estranged; others have become weary, and have laid down to their rest, but new faces are smiling upon us, and new hopes beckoning us on. Ambition and fame are before us, but youth and affection are behind us. The scene is more glorious and brilliant, but the beauty and freshness of the morning have faded, and forever. But still our steps fail not, our spirit fails not. Onward and onward we go; the horizon of fame and happiness recedes as we advance to it; the shadows begin to lengthen, and the chilly airs of evening are usurping the fervour of the noon day. Still we press onward: the goal is not yet won, the haven not yet reached. The bright orb of hope that has cheered us on, is sinking in the west; our limbs begin to grow faint, our hearts to grow sad: we turn to gaze upon the scenes that we have passed, but the shadows of twilight have interposed their veil between us; we look around for the old and familiar faces, the companions of our travel, but we gaze in vain to find them; we have outstripped them all in our race after pleasure, and the phantom yet uncaught, in a land of strangers, in a sterile and inhospitable country, the night time overtakes us, the dark and terrible night time of death, and weary and heavy laden we lie down to rest in the bed of the grave! Happy, thrice happy is he, who hath laid up treasures in himself, for the distant and unknown to-morrow!—*Charlton*.

A POSER.—A little lad who had just reached home for the holidays, was to the great delight of his mama and papa, reciting various magnificent passages from the poets, for the special wonderment of certain congregated guests. At length he essayed,—“My name is Norval; on the Grampian Hills, etc.” taking no thoughts of such minor things as commas or semi-colons. “Ah my little boy, said a venerable man, it’s a very bad thing to have an alias. I never heard of a person yet who had, that was not eventually transported. If your name is John Smith, when you’re at home, don’t be called Norval when you’re on the Grampian Hills, or anywhere else.”

POPULATION OF PARIS AND LONDON.—The population of Paris amounts 1,200,000 souls, and that of London to 1,700,000. Thus the two capitals of the civilized world contain a population of 2,000,000 inhabitants, a number exceeding the united population of all the other capitals of Europe. In 1814 the population of London was only 826,000 souls, and that of Paris 865,000.