

SUNDAY NIGHT SUPPER.

Mr. Editor from this time forth I am going to eschew Sunday night suppers, for in indulging in these luxuries, which by right belong solely to the bloated aristocrats, I am not acting fairly towards my digestion, nor to you. You will naturally ask, "How do these suppers effect me?" Well, the fact is, you ought to consider yourself shot as dead as the proverbial door nail, for last Sunday night by the aid of an unlimited supply of cold pork, cold vegetables, topped up with just a morsel of cold plum pudding, I, on retiring to what, in the language of the melo-dramist, is called "my virtuous couch," and on falling asleep—no very difficult task, considering the weighty business I had been attending to—dreamt a dream, wherein you took a prominent part. I think you will agree with me that you did deserve the punishment I meted out to my dream.

"Here's a note for you from the Editor," were the words uttered by a grinning, half-starved looking printer's devil, who in disappearing added, "and he said as you was to go at once, and not go wasting your time on the Wanderers Grounds." The contents of the note was to the effect, written in your most dictatorial tone, that I was to attend the hanging of a man found guilty of murder and report thereon. I did think on reading this, that at last you had gone too far, and the proverbial worm would have to kick, but yet I bethought myself. No I will not! Because why? Well, just because it is my editor's power to put me through even a more trying ordeal than this. "Fancy his taking it into his head to send me to write up a City Council meeting." No; I will do my duty like a man, and pray to the immortal Gods, that I may be spared an infliction such as I suggested. While packing my portmanteau preparatory to starting on my journey, I could not help thinking as to what suit of clothes I should wear for the occasion, whether it would not be a nice, delicate little attention to the one most concerned, if I wore my best Sunday-go-to-meeting suit of black, instead of that class of suit beloved of actors, which puts them in the category of walking chess boards. I finally decided upon wearing a coat of a cerulean, hue thinking by this to lead the poor wretch's thoughts heavenwards, and by wearing knickerbockers I thought it might be a gentle reminder of his short continuance on earth. My journey to the scene of execution was not what one would call a happy one. I wanted to settle down but could not; I wanted to write a true and particular account of the whole business, but no words would come. I felt that there must be something wrong, how often, I thought, I have written on what I have not seen, and now why can I not picture to myself and portray in words the hanging of a man? All this and more passed through my mind as the train carried me on to my destination, which I eventually reached, but in such a state as not to quite know whether I was to pose as the gentleman whose neck was to be elongated, the gentleman who was to elongate that neck, or the person who was to report for Our Society. On arriving at the hotel, the name of which I would not give if wild horses had me in tow, I unmissed myself and on rummaging my pockets found your note which made me certain that it was a fact I had something to do for Our Society, now knowing that you were not the high sheriff of the county in which I found myself, I was certain that you could not have deputed me to carry out the dread sentence of the law, so on carefully weighing the matter, I came to the conclusion it was only to give a report of the performance I was commissioned.

As in duty bound, on my arrival I had to identify myself as a reporter by interviewing the one most vitally concerned. I was ushered, or rather pushed, my way, as is the wont of really good reporters, into the presence of the person who was on the morrow to leave this sub-lunary sphere for better or for worse. (Considering the climatic influences under which I am writing, his destination could not be much worse.) Now, can you imagine anything more ghastly than having to talk to a man who has to be hanged next day? You not being a parson, and therefore not being fit to be hanged, could hardly talk to him in a goody-goody style. Common-place talk is rather debarred, for it would hardly do to say, "You don't look very bright to-day, but I see, it's only bile; take a bottle of Carter's little liver pills, and you'll be all right to-morrow!" Nor again, would it be consoling to say, "Well, of all the weather I ever saw in June, this is the most awful, and by Jove, old Cogswell says we've got another ten days of it, and then a lot of fine weather!" And then being led away with this happy thought, you add with a burst of enthusiastic good will to all men, "Come down to Halifax, old chappie, stay with us over at the Arm. Cricket at the Wanderers, quoits at Studley, introduce you to our president, Mr. Wythe, good sort, rum punch, good bizz; then go back

to Academy, see Harkins' company, and—why, old fellow, you look pale. Good God! Forgive me, I forgot!" Fancy being let in for a thing like that! No! interviewing under these circumstances is a mistake, and should, in the language of some editors, "degenerate" into one look, one firm grip of the hand, and one long-drawn sigh, and exit. This I did. On my return to the hotel I found an order from the sheriff giving me permission to witness the event. This, in my eyes, even though I have been the recipient of hundreds of writs, Victoria, by the grace of God, etc., being the most ghastly document I ever received.

I went to the theatre, in the first act of the play and even though the murderess was as pretty as Miss Haswell I fled. I picked up a novel in the first chapter a murder had been committed. I went to bed. Great Heavens, what a night, the poor wretch in his cell passed just as comfortable a one. I awoke with a gleam of hope that someone or something had intervened to prevent the carrying out of the sentence. But no! At six o'clock with an awful sinking at the heart, and a fearful lump in my throat, I entered the gaol and mixed with other members of the third estate, we all looking just as miserable as the condemned, but trying to pass it off in that nonchalant manner, by which bar-tenders always recognize the newspaper man, when he takes "free drinks." At eight the bell tolled, and then we poor devils were conducted to the scene of execution. A little place this, but in bitter irony it seemed, scrupulously clean. To see a man hanged is bad enough in all conscience, but for the spectators to have to be within touching distance of the criminal is a little too much. How well I remember that room, the cheery tones of the hangman as he said, "Good morning, Mr. B. Oh, all right; sorry he's not here." "Good Lord," thought I, "I wish he was!" Then came the man's last moments, the chaplain reading the burial service, the culprit walked steadily to the scaffold. It was fearful to stand in front of him while being plied. How he stared! His eyes seemed to have a mesmeric effect on all. The white cap was pulled down, the noose adjusted, the lever was pulled and the murderer passed from view.

"For weal or for woe
Is known but to One."

In departing with the saddest heart that ever beat in the bosom of man, I vowed I would shoot the man who had been the cause of my suffering. I bought a revolver, returned to Halifax, and shot my editor. The idea of the expected report awoke me. It will indeed be a long time before I partake again of a Sunday night supper.

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