

gives its comment—she has not a lineament which is not honoured by a daily perusal from the public. She is the minister of justice—the great avenger—the receptacle into which crime is almost sure to fall, and as she conveys the prisoner to trial or bears him to the fulfilment of sentence, she is still the inspirer of terror.—There may be some, no doubt—perhaps there may be many—who have forebodings at her approach, and tremble as she passes, with an anticipation of such a ride for themselves.—Could upbraiding conscience come more fearfully than in this “Black Maria’s” shape, or could the sleeping sinner have compunctious visitings more terrible than the dream in which he imagines himself handed into this penitential omnibus, as an atonement for past offences? What, let us ask, can be more appalling than the “Black Maria” of a guilty mind?

It is a matter of regret that history must be the work of human hands—that the quill must be driven, to preserve a record of the past, and that inanimate objects—cold, passionless, and impartial witnesses—are not gifted with memory and speech. Much has been done—a long array of successive centuries have fidgeted and fumed; but, after all, it is little we know of the action of those who have gone before.—But if a jacket now were capable of talk, then there would be biography in earnest. We would all have our Boswells, better Boswells than Johnson’s Boswell. A dilapidated coat might be the most venerable and impressive of moralists. Much could it recount of frailty and the results of frailty, in those who have worn it; furnishing sermons more potent than the polished compositions of the closet. Could each house narrate what it has known of every occupant, human nature might be more thoroughly understood than it is at present.—What beacons might not every apartment set up, to warn us from the folly which made shipwreck of our predecessors! Even the mirror, while flattering vanity, could tell, and it would, how beauty, grown wild with its own excess, fell into premature decay. Ho! ho! how the old go! let me ring, as we drain the sparkling draught, to think of the many such scenes of roaring jollity it has witnessed, and of the multitude of just such jovial fellows as are now carousing, it has sent to rest before their time, under the pretence of making them merry!—Wine, ho! let the bottle speak. Your bottle speak. Your bottle has its experiences—a decanter has seen the world. Thou tattered robe—once fine, but now decayed—nobility in ruins—how sportily thou smil’st to discourse of

the fall from drawing-rooms to pawn-brokers’ recesses. What a history is thine—feeble art thou—very thin and threadbare; still thou hast seen more of weakness, ay, in men and women too, than is now displayed in thine own ruin. Yea, cobble those boots for sootierkin—they are agape, indeed; yet were once thought fit ornaments for the foot of fashion. Leathern patch-work, thou hast been in strange places in thy time, or we are much mistaken. Come, thy many months are open, and thy complexion scarce admits of blushing—tell us about thy fugitive wanderings.

Let then the “Black Maria” wag her tongue—for tongue she has, and something of the longest—and she would chatter fast enough, I warrant me. Let us regard her as a magazine of memoirs—a whole library of personal detail, and as her prisoners descend the steps, let us gather a leaf or two.

Here comes one—a woman—traces of comeliness still linger even amid the more enduring marks of sin, poverty, and sorrow. Her story has been told before, in thousands of instances, and it will be told again and again. There is not much that is new in the downward career of those who fall. It is an old routine. Giddiness, folly and deception, it may be, at the outset—tears, misery, and early death, at the close. Yes, yes—the old father was humble in his ploddings—the mother had no aspirations above her sphere, but she who now is weeping bitter tears, she longed for silks and satins and gay company. It was but a cracked and crooked looking-glass that told her she was beautiful, but its pleasing tale was easily believed—for perfumed youths endorsed its truth, and whispered Fanny that she was worthy of a higher lot than that of toiling the humble wife of dingy labour. Those secret meetings, those long walks by moonlight—those stories of soft affection, and those brilliant hopes! Day by day home grew more distasteful—its recurring cares more wearying—the slightest rebuke more harsh, and Fanny fled. That home is desolate now. The old father is dead, the mother dependent upon charity, and the daughter is here, the companion of felons, if not a felon herself.

Another!—that dogged look, man, scarcely hides the wretchedness within. You may, if it seems best before these idle stagers, assume the mask of sullen fierceness. “Who cares,” is all well enough, indeed, but still the thought travels back to days of innocence and happiness. You set out in the pursuit of pleasure and enjoyment, but it has come to this at last;