

For the Pearl.
TO A LADY.

1.

O sing again that olden strain,
That song of other days—
Of happier times and scenes, o'er which
My soul yet fondly strays.
I fain would think I still were young
And parted friends were near—
The friends with whom I smiled and wept
When life and hope were dear.

2.

I long have been a wearied thing,
Oppressed with silent grief,
And now perchance that olden strain
Will yield a blest relief.
I fain would weep, for tears have long
Their soothing aid denied,
And in my gloom it oft hath seemed
Their inmost founts were dried.

3.

Then wake—oh! sweetly wake for me
To loose the bands of pain,
That dream of youth and youthful love,
That old and touching strain.
I fain would prove the deep delight,
The magic power of Song,
And feel my lighted spirit borne
My native vales along.

Queen's County.

ANON.

ASTLEY, DUCROW, AND THEIR HORSES.

BY PHILO-HYPPUS.

We can all look back to the days of our childhood, when the "ne plus ultra" of our enjoyment was being conveyed by our doating parents to Astley's Royal Amphitheatre, Surrey side of Westminster Bridge. Many years have rolled over my head since I first visited this house: it was in the lifetime of old Philip Astley. I shall ever remember this extraordinary man—he was one of your right good-hearted Englishmen, a capital specimen of John Bull; and although he could not speak a half dozen words together grammatically, yet he was not a bad fellow for all that, possessing a large stock of natural politeness, with a flow of good feelings that did him good service in his professional character. Astley was doubtless a mountebank, but then he did the thing scientifically. It was mountebankery applied in a very remarkable way. The power he possessed of teaching horses to perform tricks as well as act in dramatic performances, was quite amazing. He developed the character of a horse to a greater degree than had ever been done by all the scientific men in the world. How he educated his horses I am unable to describe; yet it is well known, for he often mentioned the circumstance, that kindness was the foundation of equestrian discipline and education. He treated these docile and beautiful animals like children, and by rewarding them with a carrot, an apple, or a piece of bread, he had the address of impressing upon them the knowledge that they had done well, and what would again be required of them. Besides his power of training horses, he had a clever knack of cultivating a good Mr. Merriman, (my very sides ache at the recollection of the Mr. Merriman of my younger days); but, judging from the public exhibitions, the whip in the arena was the grand instrument of instruction. How well do I call to remembrance old Astley's exhibitions with his clown, who, poor fellow, had a sad time of it! In his best coat, silken hose, powdered hair, and long pig-tail, and whip with a still longer lash, he would enter the circle, strut formally to the centre, make his bow to the audience, and call for Mr. Merriman, who, approaching too familiarly, received a smart lash from his master's whip, at which he would howl with expanded jaws, and remonstrate with those who laughed in the gallery, by asking how they would like it, and offer to bet a guinea that not one of them would like to be thought a Fool.—Then cringing in the most abject manner before the dignity of his master, he would seize every opportunity to get behind him, assume threatening attitudes, and make hideous faces at him; but, on the turn of his master's head, he suddenly adopted a manner so diametrically opposite as to create a simultaneous burst of laughter, while the detection caused Mr. Merriman to bellow most piteously. Silence being restored, Mr. Astley would assure the fool it was all for his good, and he became reconciled. Approaching with boldness he would inquire of his master's *cleverosity*

'how far it was from Westminster bridge to Christmas day?' to which luminous question Mr. Astley would reply, "Mr. Merriman, none of your nonsense. I haven't no objection for to go for to instruct you consarning that there noble hanimal the 'oss. Do you know wot a 'oss is? Ah, I thought you didn't; well, then, I will tell you. He is a hanimal most useful to man. He is beautiful in a race and can win it! He can manœvre in a review, and he can be grand. He can charge in a battle, and can be hawful." The fool stares, and exclaims, "Lawk a daisy!" "Yes, Mr. Merriman, he is the most generous of hanimals, possesses the courage of a lion, the fleetness of a deer, the strength of a hoax, and the docility of a spaniel. What do you think of all that 'ere?" "Lawk a daisy!" said the clown. "Yes, Mr. Merriman, he is the friend of man under kind treatment. I will show you wot a 'oss is. Bring in that there war 'oss, and my sabre.—I will show you how he and I defend ourselves." The horse and sabre were brought. Mr. Astley mounted, and exhibited the various divisions of the sword exercise (for old Philip had been a dragoon in his younger days), which produced divers pauses and puffs, (for his great profits enabled him to live rather freely, and enjoy good living), during which intervals Mr. Merriman played all sorts of antics. To this exhibition succeeded a song or two from the stage; after which some excellent rope dancing. The rope dancing apparatus being removed, Mr. Astley again entered the circle, with his follower, Mr. Merriman at his heels, and a horse led by a groom. Mr. Astley usually began, "Now, Mr. Merriman, I will show you wot will produce astonishment; I 'avn't told you 'alf wot a 'oss can do. People runs away with the highdear that a 'oss must be hexposed to great barbarity to make him hoberdient. No such a thing, Mr. Merriman; you might as well think to make yourself a nobleman by eating cowkimbers and hignons. Do you see that 'ere 'oss? Now observe him, Mr. Merriman—Make your respects to the ladies, Sir." The horse knelt. "Now to the gentlemen." The horse bowed his head. "Now stand up for the king." The horse reared and walked on his hind legs. "Now rest yourself." The horse sat down like a dog on his haunches. "Now rest yourself." The horse brought in with a blazing fire, and a kettle of boiling water on it, and placed in the centre of the circle. Mr. Astley recommenced—"Now, Mr. Merriman, it has been believed that a 'oss will not go near a fire. No such a thing, Mr. Merriman; you might as well believe you wasn't a fool. Give me a goblet with a little drop of brandy in it,—werry vell. Now my good 'oss, if you have rested enough, fetch me that 'ot water to make my grog." The horse accordingly rose, took the kettle by his mouth from amid the flames, and filled up the goblet in Mr. Astley's hand. "Werry vell. What do you think of that, Mr. Merriman? if you could do it as vell, I will heat my 'at. Now, do you think that there can be produced by hill treatment? No such a thing, Mr. Merriman; you might as well try to make apple dumplings out o' sawdust. But that there 'oss can do more, as you shall see, Mr. Merriman. Tell the fiddlers to play some tune where the time is vell marked." The fool then inquired if the musicians could play Bob and Joan? "Yes." "Sir Roger de Coverley?" "Yes." "Foote's minuet?" "Yes." "Then play them all together." Mr. Astley having heard the order, gives the clown a taste of the whipcord, and cries, "None o' your nonsense, Mr. Merriman; one tune only, Sir, that the 'oss may hear it distinctly—and place the platform so that we may 'ear 'ow the 'oss keeps time." The orchestra struck up a country dance, the horse sprung on the temporary platform, and, by his tramping, marked the time with precision, at which the fool laughed immoderately loud, holding both his sides. On being asked why he is thus noisy, he said that it was not dancing, but trotting on a trencher—that he did not believe the horse could gallop upon it, and therefore was a stupid horse. The musicians changed the time; the horse immediately quitted the platform, proceeded to Mr. Astley, and thence to the orchestra. "There, Mr. Merriman, you see the 'oss complains that the fiddlers have not kept time." The fool acknowledged his mistake, and felt confident that the horse must have been kept at close practice on the harpsichord—(a loud laugh)—then wondered if he could say the multiplication table all through—(roars of laughter from the young folks)—but supposed, that, like many others, he was taught to dance before he was taught to read.—(tremendous applause)—still he was a very clever horse, and, when he came to examine him closely, found him a very smooth one—a very fine one—indeed, superfine, being both sides alike. (Immense applause from the journeymen tailors and apprentices in the gallery and pit)

Such was the ordinary run of the kind of exhibitions at Astley's in former days; at which, however, a superior sort of performance was nightly added, called a burletta—a play or pantomime in which one or more horses performed. One of the best burlettas in

these days was the "Story of the High-mettled Racer," which was represented with surprising fidelity. The appropriate verses of the old ballad were recited at each change of scene, accompanied by the jingling of a harpsichord, no dialogue at that time being permitted at a minor theatre. The docility of the horse in this series of his declining fortunes excited the admiration of all who witnessed it; he positively seemed to be impressed with a knowledge of the character and the circumstance of the story. He appeared in the first scene as a racer, in all the life and vigour common to that high bred animal, impatient of the rein, and champing the bit till he started. In the next scene he appeared as a hunter, expressing his eagerness by pawing the ground, erecting his ears, and snorting, till he was off to the full cry of the hounds. Next he appeared as a post-horse, aged and fatigued, standing with knees bent and lowered head; and when mounted he went off with all the truth of such a reduced state. He then appeared drawing a sand cart, in a situation of positive decrepitude, with his head down, his lips dropped, enduring the seeming harsh treatment of an unfeeling master, till he finally dropped and died. You saw him stretched out with sharp, angular, projecting bones, parts of his hide galled, and his bare ribs boldly pourtrayed on his miserable sides: he lies thus a most miserable spectacle to the pitying audience, and is about to be consigned to one of those men who purchase dying and dead horses for the sake of their skins. But by a "coup de theatre," the once high mettled racer is happily saved from this conclusion to his career. A magician enters, and, after some amusing jugglery, raises the animal to life and vigour. His skin instantaneously assumes its original gloss, his raws disappear, his bones cease to be visible, and he gallops off the stage amidst the plaudits of a thousand hands.

One of Mr. Astley's most pleasing exhibitions consisted for many years in that which attended his giving a prize of a wherry, in a boat-race on the Thames. This great "fete" took place invariably on the 12th of August, and the race was frequently admirably contested. But this public racing was merely an introduction to the show, no sooner was the victory over than the doors of the Amphitheatre (which, I need not say, are not far from the river) were opened, and, in a few minutes, a glorious house—an overflowing bumper—was accomplished; for the idea jumped with the humour of the populace, and consequently paid capitally. The house once filled, a procession forthwith entered, composed of persons belonging to the concern, bearing flags, numerous jolly young watermen in jackets and trowsers, and the victor seated in the prize boat, borne on the shoulders of his comrades. Having paraded the circle, they then formed a group of a nautical character on the stage, with a Union Jack waving overhead to the national airs in full chorus. This preliminary being over, Mr. Astley advanced with rotund appearance, and a smile on his elated countenance, amid deafening cheers. Now came the truly classical harangue from the old gentleman:—"Ladies and gentlemen, this here is the yearly anniversary of presenting my prize-wherry to the most successful vaterman in a boat-race; and there he is, ladies and gentlemen, seated in that there boat. (Applause.) I know he is a thanking of you all, ladies and gentlemen, and he has already thanked me enough; and I wish him 'ealth and prosperity in his calling. He is a clever fellow, and, ladies and gentlemen, I am proud to say he is a good man. His name is Bill Maynard, ladies and gentlemen; and more, ladies and gentlemen, he is a fectionate 'usband and fond father, ladies and gentlemen; besides all this, he is a virtuous son, and is kind to his old mother, ladies and gentlemen. But it is quite impossible for me, ladies and gentlemen, to tell all his good qualities; you see as 'ow he is all of a perspiration, and requires care to be taken of him; but I gives you my vord, ladies and gentlemen, that I shall see him put to bed, ladies and gentlemen:—and so with a hearty "hurrah" from the whole corps dramatique, old Astley marched off by the side of his protege, amid the waving of hats, and the thundering sounds of "Rule Britannia."

These—these were the days, Mr. Editor. Yet it is wrong to be so querulous; although worthy old Astley is dead and gone, he has found a superlative successor in Ducrow, who now carries on the business of the Royal Amphitheatre. Who has not heard of the astonishing feats of this the greatest horseman who ever existed, and, I might say, ever will exist?—Who has not seen him riding on four horses at once (bare backed) in his famous piece, "The Courier of St. Petersburg?"—Who that ever saw that grotesque but inimitable scene in the circle, "Gironio and his Wife," can forget it?

Ducrow's horses, however, are shown to the greatest advantage in burlettas—pieces in which they act a character—such as St. George and the Dragon. Their tractability in this respect