

[For the Home Journal.]
THE CHOPPER.

O the chopper bold, through the biting cold,
Hies off to his labor early,
And the sounding axe, with fast-urged whacks,
Sets the trees a quaking rarely.

The wind may blow, and the driving snow
Sweep wild over hill and valley;
But he heeds not the blast, as fierce and fast
The blows from his keen blade sally.

The sturdy oak quick bows at his stroke,
And the pine makes obeisance lowly—
The maple and beech, their grim lengths stretch
At his feet, lying vanquished wholly.

And the startled woods, at his sounding thuds,
Retreat and vanish affrighted,
And when spring comes again, to clothe wood and plain,
She'll be half of her labor lighted.

Then loud let us cheer the brave pioneer—
May his axe ne'er be rusty by sorrow,
And for long years to come, in his forest-won home,
From his life all its joys may he borrow.

J. McL.

A VOLUNTEER CENSUS-TAKER.

I was not paid for it, or I would be the very last man to complain of it. I did my duty for the first time in my life (being a lawyer) without a fee; and I at least have the right to speak about it. I can't have been bound over to secrecy, because I never committed myself in writing: as to being restrained from feelings of honor and so forth, there was not one word about that in the Census paper from beginning to end.

The Artesian Rifle Volunteer Company in our town were in distress for knickerbockers. They had no money to buy them with, and it was plain that they could not defend their hearths and homes in mere trousers. We lawyers, therefore, agreed to deliver and call for the Census papers without pecuniary recompense, in order that the money allowed by Government for that purpose should be set aside for procuring the indispensable patriotic equipments. Thus it was that I became an enumerator of the people.

On Friday, the 5th of April, the day preceding the commencement of this duty, I began to feel somewhat too overwhelmingly impressed with the sense of its importance. Upon the result of the Census, we had been officially informed, would depend the figure which Great Britain would make for the next seven years in the eyes of the world. Napoleon III. would be decided by it as to whether it would be expedient to make a dash at the British metropolis or not. The Emperor of the French, in fact, was waiting with hand on hilt for me! If the return I sent up should be inaccurate, there was no knowing what dire effects might not spring from it. If under the mark, the very knickerbockers might not be turned out from the tailors' hands in time to repel invasion; if above the mark, the government of my country might be induced to take some presumptuous step which our numerical strength did not in reality warrant. I could do compound addition—pounds, shillings, and pence—pretty well; but as to enumerating people—men, women, and children—I had never tried my fingers at it, and distrusted my powers. Punch (the liquid) restored my self-confidence, but at night I had a tremendous nightmare. I dreamed that I was one of Mr. Babbage's calculating-machines, with a pebble in my interior, putting all the machinery out of order.

There were some hundreds of houses included in my particular beat, and several of them were very queer ones. A "sporting public" was one of them, where the money for approaching prize-fights was always advertised to be "ready" in disrespectable newspapers, and in the backyard of which all sorts of iniquities were said to go on. Skittles, with a glass of spirits placed between each couple of pins, was, by comparison, a drawing-room amusement there; while dog-fighting was a daily practice. It was a place, in short, which, if I had my own way, should have been levelled to the earth, and the site of it sown with gunpowder; one which the military should have been called in to clear with bayonets fixed, and without regard to sex or age.

Yet the *Three-legged Duck*, I, as a number of the people, was bound to enter that morning; I, who at the same matutinal hour was usually up at the Court-house, in a white cravat, pleading—with an artificial head of

hair—the purest interests of justice and civilisation. I had once, too, been personally instrumental in getting Mr. Hookey Barnes, the landlord, convicted of some offence, which confined him to a year's retirement—combined with healthful but compulsory exercise—from public life; and an interview with that gentleman was therefore fraught with peculiar embarrassment. He was standing at his own door, smoking a coal-black pipe, and with one of his eyes, as usual, in mourning, and watched me as I came up the street, performing my official duties, with a sardonic leer. I did not waste my time upon him with any reference to the beauty of the day, or the general mildness of the season, but at once presented the document with which I was charged.

"No," said he, waving me away with a gesture of disgust; "not if I know it. I never takes papers from anybody's—not I. How do I know as it mayn't be a writ?"

"It is the Census paper, Mr. Barnes."

"How do I know whether that aint a lie, now?" replied that gentleman. "Why, your very trade is lying"—it was thus he spoke of the honourable profession of barrister-at-law—"and you know it is; no one better. I say, Sambo."

At these words, an enormous negro—the darkness of whose visage was much intensified by a huge strip of white plaster, sanguineous at the edges, which crossed it diagonally—came out of the passage, bringing with him (in addition to the aroma peculiar to his race) a gush of perfume from the house, the combined fragrance of many ends of bad cigars, and of remains of flat, but doubtless not unprofitable beer.

"Tracks be blowed!" was his observation upon catching sight of the Census paper. "A man and a brother," he had doubtless often been the object of misplaced missionary effort.

"It is the Census paper, my good friends," said I, in a tone of conciliation; although, I confess, my heart was not exactly yearning towards either of them. The black man sheathed his teeth as he spoke, and as the knuckles of the boiler had spared. The landlord expectorated contemptuously.

"And suppose," said he, "I don't choose to take in the paper?"

"You will be fined five pounds," returned I, with some little warmth.

"And suppose I don't pay it?" inquired he, with increased insolence.

"Then you'll go to jail, as you did before," answered I in a rage.

I never shall forget the demoniacal change that came over that man's countenance—and he had not been pretty before. His black eye in particular seemed to be shot with a malicious green.

"Very well," remarked he with calm ferocity; "you know him now, Sambo. You'll not forget him. All right. You'll know what to do with him, I think, when opportunity offers. Good. I don't think you'll ever come round with another Census paper, Mr. Counsel."

It was evident that the ruffian was darkly hinting that I should meet with a violent death within the next ten years; but I smiled contemptuously upon him and his myrmidon as he took the paper, and proceeded with my duty elsewhere, although perhaps in a somewhat lower stratum of animal spirits. I should have been still more desponding, if I had foreseen my reputation as well as my life was to be endangered through that interview. It has since been averred that I delight in low company, and have become a habitual drunkard; for I was seen on a Saturday morning, before eleven, "coming out of the *Three-legged Duck*," nor was the circumstance wanting to the falsehood, for it is added, "and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand."

Again, but a few doors further on, my moral character was exposed to another shock of a different but not less distressing nature. I was endeavoring to impress the importance of my official mission upon the unintelligent domestic of Miss Macstinger—a lady of uncertain age, but unmistakably from the north—when her mistress, leaning over the balusters of the stairs, informed me

(in the Aberdeen tongue) that no followers were allowed in her house, and least of all at that time in the morning, to the hindrance of work. She added that I had better be off, since the policeman had already got his orders to keep an eye on me, this not being the first time, by many, that she had watched me lurking about the house with amatory intentions. Even when I had explained to this dreadful woman the real circumstances of the case, she was by no means to be driven from her first position. "It's all verra weel, young man; but I dinna fa' under this heading"—and she pointed to a column of the Census paper—"I am neither deaf nor blind; and I'll thank you to leave our Jeanie alone for the future."

She talked so loud, and seemed so thoroughly to believe in her own scandalous suspicions, that the perspiration stood upon my forehead ere I left her door. Having a strip of garden at the back of her house, and engaging a boy to weed it once a fortnight, she set those circumstances (as I afterwards discovered) down in her Return, as the statement of her position in life as an employer of labor. Also, there being plenty of room in the document, after she had described therein herself and Jeanie, she occupied it with some severe strictures upon the government for supposing it possible (as it did by the terms of the paper) that anybody belonging to her should be either travelling or out at work upon a Sabbath evening.

This lady's Return was, however lucid and practical, compared with that of some householders of her sex; one of whom had the temerity to put "Engaged," and another "interesting," under the head of Condition. Like Miss Macstinger, the majority of them seemed to be averse to leave any unoccupied space in the record, and filled it up with domestic intelligence that was by no means required; or furnished us with voluntary contributions to these *Household Words*, in portions of their past biographies, as, "Formerly in good circumstances," or "now in England for educational purposes."

The babies were set down as "scholars," because they had learned to say Pap-pap, "in the course of regular tuition at home."

It is certain that the gentle sex took no little pride in the matter, and enjoyed making the Return—with the exception of one particular column—more than householders male. At one house, in particular, I had a great deal of difficulty in persuading a female that it was her husband's duty, and not hers, to comply with the government requisitions; at last, she sent for her inferior half from somewhere below stairs, where I fancy she generally kept him, and informed him of the honor that had been thrust upon him. He took me into his "study"—which was painfully neat and orderly, except that it had some female garments airing before the fire—and there received my instructions as to how he was to proceed. To him, poor creature, the filling up of the Return was as a problem paper. Years of tyranny, I think, had softened the martial brain. He chuckled, however, at having to style himself Head of the Family. It was a privilege, he said, that had not befallen him for the last ten years—that is, since the last numbering of the people.

"There's she," said he, pointing towards the door (behind which it is my belief that she was listening), "and there's my mother-in-law!" He meant, poor fellow, that there were two at least in that household who exceeded him in dignity.

I beheld other domestic scenes of an almost equally distressing character; but I forbear to disclose them. The memory of them, indeed, is obliterated, or at least much impaired by a misfortune that overtook myself. The enumerators of the people are not exempt from the terrific operations of the Census in their own homes. There is an old, a middle-aged lady residing in my house, who is a Fundholder of suspicious temperament. We have expectations from her; and it is of course most important that she shall never be put out of humor. She was, 64, at the last Census—I mean she returned herself at that age—and therefore it was almost, as a matter of form that I said playfully, with-

pen in hand, "Well, my dear Miss Nugget, and what was your age last birthday?"

"Sixty-six!" said she.

I knew her pretty well, I flattered myself, but I did not give her credit for such audacity. It was really going a little too far—or rather not far enough by at least ten years.

"Why, you must have been born in leap-year, then, Miss Nugget, and only had a birthday once in four years," said I, in my cheerful humorous manner. "Sixty-six! my good lady—is that seriously your Return?"

"Is this your return, sir," cried she in a fury, "for all that I have done, and all that I have intended to do for you and yours? I will let you know, sir, that I am not a person—although I may not be perhaps what you may choose to consider young—to be insulted with impunity."

With that she flounced out of the room, and into her own chamber—where she keeps her will, I know—and there she has remained for the last eight-and-forty hours. How it will all end, goodness knows. I returned her at 56, and hallooed through her keyhole that I had done so; but she answered nothing, and has made no sign of reconciliation up to this date. If the worst comes to the worst—that is to say, if she leaves her money to my brother's children—it will be £5,000 lost to me and mine on account of a Census paper. Poor satisfaction will it be to me then to know that I helped to procure knickerbockers for a rifle company. I had not the heart to collect the papers myself upon Monday morning, but accompanied my clerk upon that duty. For my part, I had had quite enough of counting people.—*Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.*

ADOBE HOUSES.

In the western new world men have adopted the kind of building used in the earliest Orient. The children of Israel rebelled because they were not only set to building adobe houses and pyramids, but because they were to make their labor painful to them.

No cheaper houses can be made than the adobe. When the season is favorable, the builder takes good stiff clay and kneading into it straw—or omitting it if none can be had—makes large blocks, rather than bricks, which he dries in the sun. In a tropical climate these soon become very hard. They are then built together with a clay mortaring, and the outside is thickly whitewashed.

It is worth while to call the attention of farmers and others to this style of building. Different combinations of clay, lime and gravel have been used with great success of late years to form blocks of solid mortar or of artificial stone. We have heard of a farmer who, with the assistance of one man, by devoting a single half hour every morning to the work, found himself in two or three months in possession of sufficient hardened blocks to build a goodly house. For the sills, facings and ornaments, blocks can be made of a combination of blood clay and lime with sand, which becomes very hard. The material is poured into common board boxes of the size required, and suffered to harden.

In ancient times this cheap and effective adobe building was very extensively practised, and may be again when men discover that country-houses may be better and more cheaply made by it than from any other material. The walls can be made of any thickness, keeping out cold in winter and heat in summer, as no brick or wooden houses could do. The vast cities of the East—Babylon, Nineveh and others—were all, we believe, adobe built. Bitumen was, however, used for cement in those edifices.

Bashfulness is not so much the effect of an ill education, as the proper gift and provision of a wise nature. Every state of life has its own set of manners, that is suited to it and best becomes it. Each is beautiful to its season; and you might, as well quarrel with the child's rattle, and advance him directly to the boy's top and marbles, as expect from a diffident youth the manly confidence of riper age.