

OUR SICK CONTRIBUTOR CONTINUES HIS DESCRIPTION OF HIS FELLOW-BOARDERS.

NO. 3.—THE OLD LADY BOARDER.

This is a dear old lady; I should not know the house without her. She has been here, I believe, for seven years. Her acknowledged place is the post of honor at the table, by the side of our landlady. Woe be to the boarder who should venture to appropriate her accustomed seat! The "poet" once attempted it, but was threatened with summary ejection by force. That snow-white widow's cap, those two bands of silver hair, and that black silk dress are, with us, recognised institutions. We all feel a sort of chivalrous devotion to them.

What her age may be, is a doubtful question. She always declines to tell. She is as active as a girl of eighteen. Although reputed to be rich, she makes all her own clothing and is rather severe on young ladies who do not; for our dear old friend can be severe occasionally. She has no patience with young men who lie abed in the morning. On these occasions she goes around the passages, after breakfast, and hammers at the doors with most youthful energy. But her special anathemas are reserved for any depraved individuals, who happen to be late for church on Sunday. These are reminded of their delinquencies during the whole of the next week, and never dare to repeat the offence on the ensuing Sunday. She has always some young-lady boarder whom she takes, as it were, under her wing,—with whom she walks out, and to whom she gives excellent advice, which is not always attended to. The old lady has a grand-daughter at a fashionable "finishing" school in the city. This poor girl generally spends her holidays with her, and by no means enjoys herself. But the young lady is worthy of a paper to herself and shall have one.

It must be confessed, that if our old lady has a fault, it is that she is rather fond of minding other people's business. I do not think that my landlady much likes being publicly instructed by her at table how to cook macaroni. In fact, she has a way of managing everybody in the house. Some do not like it, but they are always obliged to submit. She manages the servants who rebel furiously at times, but it is of no use. I know she manages me; I, myself, have not the slightest idea how, and of course, nobody else can have.

On certain, rather rare occasions, the boarders give an evening party, which, by common consent, is always placed under the direction of the old lady. The landlady is, then, not even consulted. She is only an invited guest in her own house,—a mere nonentity for the time being. Our old friend directs the carpets to be taken up and the rooms cleaned. She orders all the refreshments and supervises the arrangement of the supper-table. Nobody can be invited without her consent. In fact, our assemblies are rather exclusive. On one occasion, some young men, without her permission, arranged a sort of concealed side-table in the hall behind the stove. On this were placed bottles of a suspicious appearance. The old lady spied them out, found out their contents by her nose, and then retreating to the back window, quickly emptied them into the yard, taking care to replace the empty bottles in their position. Some of the young boarders and their guests were rather "sold" on this occasion and the attempt was never repeated.

It is worth something to see her on the eventful night; she always dances the first quadrille with the youngest boarder, and perfectly over-awes him. Her style of dancing is of the old-fashioned school. She does her *steps* elaborately. She has one peculiar step which she calls, I believe, *Pas de Basque*. This consists of two successive leaps, first to one

side of the room and then to the other, and of a subsequent retreat almost on tip toe with surprising rapidity. The performance of this Terpsichorean feat always extorts loud approbation from the "athlete" who is practising it at present over my head, on a "fantastic toe," that is anything but "light." There is a legend in the house that an adventurous boarder once essayed a galop with the old lady, but came to ignominious grief during the very first round. This wants confirmation. Our old friend has the good sense to know that her dancing days are over. She never attempts more than one quadrille, and then makes herself generally useful. She plays dance-music, old fashioned, but good,—not immortal opera-airs, distorted into dance time. She arranges little nooks in recesses of windows, called by herself, "flirtation bowers," but she always takes care to see that the right people are flirting therein. I rather pity that young lady who, when asked to sing at these parties, presumes to have a cold. Our old lady then becomes positively sarcastic.

There is one other phase in the old lady's character which is known to hundreds in the city, both rich and poor. There never was such a nurse in a sick-room. Blessings on you! old friend! I am not the only one who can speak of your value there. Never tired of watching, never seeming to need sleep, moving with a noiseless step, always knowing what the sick man wants without disturbing him by asking, and always wearing the same genial smile, which is, of itself, enough to make a sick man better. On these occasions she sometimes tries to manage the doctor and even gives him a little advice; but the medical men of Montreal are too well acquainted with her real worth, to do more than smile at this.

"JUST ENOUGH OF LEARNING TO MISQUOTE."



writer who trusts to his memory for his jokes, is frequently indebted to his imagination for his facts. An editorial article in the *Daily News* of June 14, contains the following passage: "*Sidney Smith's remedy for railroad disasters, was to place a director on the engine buffer.*" We wish we could compel the Road Trustee Commissioners, who chiefly live

at ease in the city, to endure the ordeal of a daily dusing.

The man whose memory is too short to permit of his spelling *Sydney* correctly, can hardly be expected to quote *Sydney* correctly. The witty Dean of St. Paul's never suggested that "a director should be placed on the engine buffer." But in a letter, written in 1842, to the Editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, on "*Locking-in*" on Railways, he said: "The first person of rank who is killed, will put everything in order, and produce a code of the most careful rules. I hope it will not be one of the Bench of Bishops; but should it be so destined, let the burned Bishop—the unwilling *Latimer*—remember that, however painful, gradual concoction by fire may be, his death will produce unspeakable comfort to the public. Even Sodor and Man will be better than nothing."

The burning of a bishop is a far funnier idea for a Dean to suggest than the placing of a director on the engine buffer; and the burning is mentioned, because a railway train had recently caught fire on the Paris railway, and more than a hundred persons had been burnt alive, in consequence of the carriage-doors being locked.