

OLD BOOTS AND NEW BOOTS.

One of the writers of the JOURNAL was recently beguiled into a lecture-room where the proceedings were somewhat of the dullest, and as sometimes happens his reflections slipped away entirely from the theme which occupied the lecturer and the more attentive portion of the audience. Gradually sinking into a posture in which his eyes became focused in a downward gaze, it suddenly occurred to the wool-gathering wits of this person that he had rarely seen a finer pair of boots than those which now intercepted his vision. They were solid and substantial yet flexible withal, the outline of the sole and every curve about the instep, heel and ankle were graceful and artistic, and the polish was immaculate. Glancing furtively at the corresponding extremities of his neighbours on each side, this opinion was confirmed, and as the sonorous dullness of the lecture encouraged rather than interrupted such reflections the fancies of this well-shod person wandered back to other days when his feet were hardly so genteel as at the present. A long procession of spectral boots went gliding past his vision almost from the time of infancy, each pair in its time playing many parts. There were the stout thick boots of boyhood with mended laces and toes that might have battered down a wall without much injury, or steered the prone form of their owner on a sleigh down icy hill-sides. Another school-day pair came up in the procession, one size larger than their predecessors, with patches, round, triangular and square, the heels and soles fortified with heavy nails or tacketts, as they are called in Scotland. The writer remembered almost with a tear being

once refused admission at a show of the Prince of Wales' Indian presents because of the noisy steps of these very boots so strangely silent now. High boots, low boots, broad boots, narrow boots follow in the train, sometimes shining for the Sunday morning walk to church, oftener white with mud and scarred and torn from rambles in the woods. Here is a pair with outlines somewhat daintier than the rest, made as they were by an old craftsman who boasted a noble pedigree in his art. At twelve years of age in London, as he said, no one could surpass him at his trade, and old experienced journeymen came to look on while he worked. He had made boots for Queen Victoria, the Empress Eugenie, and all the crowned heads of Europe, to say nothing of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield. The same old braggart told of having sued the Prince of Wales for the payment of the boots worn on his wedding-day; poor Edward. Boots for walking in, boots for running in, and dancing shoes withal rise next in the fluid fancy of their wearer, each bringing with it an episode of other days, each in its own time having worn its way into the owner's consciousness, and become as like him as one boot is like another. With all the earlier pairs arose the gloomy recollection of the Saturday nights when all boots had to be polished for the Sunday, and when the owners were often sent back with blinking eyes to give them one more rub. With the later ones the task has grown more lightsome for it is now self-imposed and an honest pride is taken in having one's extremities shining and well-dressed, and at least as respectable as those of one's neighbours in the lecture room.