

## OUR UNDERLYING EXISTENCE.

## I.

O FOOL, that wisdom dost despise,  
Thou canst not know, thou dost not guess  
Another phase of thee is wise,  
And silent sees thy foolishness.

## II.

Yet, fool, how dare I pity thee  
Because my heart reveres the sages?  
The fool lies also deep in me:  
We twain are one, beneath the ages.

ALCHEMIST.

## TO A DEBUTANTE.

THOU who smilest in thy freshness,  
Bright as bud in morning dew,  
Keep this thought in thy heart's bower:  
"Ever turn, like sunward flower,  
To the Good, the Fair, the True."

W. DOUW LIGHTHALL.

## OLD TIMES.

THE age of Anne was richer, more compact, and lastly (which is no small matter) remoter than that section of the reign of the third George which Mr. John Ashton has chosen for illustration in "Old Times." His present period is the twelve years which lie between the appearance of the *Times* under its present name in 1788 and the end of the century. It is true that a good many things happened in this brief space. There was the French Revolution, for instance, bringing to this country its thousands of *émigrés*, real and spurious, to be supplemented as time went on by some five-and-twenty thousand prisoners of war; there was the illness of the king; there was the mutiny at the Nore; there was the Irish rebellion; there were the battles of St. Vincent, of Camperdown, of the Nile; there was even a fruitless and ridiculous French invasion.

This was the era of the spencer, of which Hood sang; and the Jean Debry, in whose "quilted lappelles and stuffed sleeves our emaciated beaux," says the *Times*, "are like a dry walnut in a great shell." "The items of a fashionable Taylor's bill," says a paragraph dated September 6, 1799, "are not a little curious at present: 'Ditto to pasteboard for your back; ditto to buckram for your cape; ditto, for wool for your shoulders, and cotton for your chest.' Shakespeare talks of Nature's Journeymen who make men indifferently, but our Journeymen Taylors make their customers of any form and dimensions they think proper."

Some of the court dresses, and especially the birthday suits, must have been of unusual magnificence. Here is the outer shell or husk of Mr. Skeffington, a famous dresser of those days:—

A brown spotted silk coat and breeches, with a white silk waistcoat richly embroidered with silver, stones, and shades of silk: the design was large baskets of silver and stones, filled with bouquets of roses, jonquilles, etc., the *ensemble* producing a beautiful and splendid effect.

Of the ladies' dress the leading characteristics appear to have been absence of waist, excess of feather, and general scantiness of clothing in other respects. All these peculiarities receive illustrations in the columns of the *Times*, which vacillates between austerity and humour in a manner quite inconceivable to its modern readers. "Amongst prudent papas," it says in 1794, "the favourite toast at this time is 'The present fashion of our wives and daughters,' viz., No waste." Then comes the following announcement:—

Corsettes about six inches long, and a slight *buffon* tucker of two inches high, are now the only defensive *paraphernalia* of our fashionable Belles, between the necklace and the apron-strings (*Times*, June 24, 1795.)

As regards feathers, we learn that doors had to be heightened and lustres raised to accommodate the towering head-dresses in vogue: "The Ladies now wear feathers exactly of their own length, so that a woman of fashion is twice as long upon her feet as in her bed." Upon the subject of scanty clothing the Thunderer of 1799 waxes severe: "The fashion of false bosoms has at least this utility, that it compels our fashionable fair to wear something."

Here is an account of a female sailor which should be interesting to the amateurs of "Mother Ross" and Hannah Snell:

There is at present in the Middlesex Hospital, a young, and delicate female, who calls herself Miss T—lb—t, and who is said to be related to some families of distinction; her story is very singular:—At an early period of her life, having been deprived by the villainy of a trustee, of a

sum of money bequeathed to her by a deceased relation of high rank, she followed the fortunes of a young Naval officer, to whom she was attached, and personated a common sailor before the mast, during a cruise in the North Seas. In consequence of a lovers' quarrel, she quitted the ship, and assumed for a time the military character; but her passion for the sea prevailing, she returned to her favourite element, did good service, and received a severe wound, on board Earl St. Vincent's ship, on the glorious 14th of February, and again bled in the cause of her country, in the engagement off Camperdown. On this last occasion her knee was shattered, and an amputation is likely to ensue. This spirited female, we understand, receives a pension of £20 from an illustrious Lady, which is about to be doubled (*Times*, November 4, 1799).

The extreme youth of the contemporary British officer seems to have afforded much food for satire:—

Over a Warehouse for fashionable dresses, in Fleet Street, is written up "Speculum modorum," or, the mirror of the fashions; and several young Gentlemen of the Guards are actually learning Latin in order to understand them. Others have sent for the Alphabet, in gingerbread, as preliminary education (*Times*, October 27, 1795).

Some of the sucking Colonels of the Guards have expressed their dislike of the short skirts. They say they feel as if they were going to be flogged (*Times*, November 21, 1797).

That there was really ground for this is clear from the fact that the Duke of York in 1795 ordered a return of the number of captains under twelve and lieutenant-colonels under eighteen.

Gaming, which Steele attacked at the beginning and Hogarth in the middle of the century, still seems to have been flourishing at the close. This was the era in which Lady Archer, Lady Buckinghamshire, and other women of fashion kept faro tables, at which their guests were plundered; and the caricaturists made merry over their iniquitous and semi-privileged proceedings. A clever but anonymous satirical artist published a pair of plates in which four titled ladies dividing their spoil were compared with an equal number of *bona robas* portioning out the petty booty filched from their paramours of St. Giles's. There were other squibs in which "Faro's Daughters" received more summary treatment. Some of the paragraphs under this head are significant enough:—

To such a height has the spirit of gambling arisen, that at some of the great Tables it is not uncommon to see the stake consist wholly of property *in kind*. A house of furniture was last week lost to a lady in the neighbourhood of Pall Mall. The successful party had played against it, the stock of a farm in the County of Essex (*Times*, September 25, 1797).

At some of our first Boarding Schools, the fair pupils are now taught to play whist, and cassino. Amongst their *winning* ways, this may not be the least agreeable to Papa and Mamma. It is calculated that a clever child, by its cards, and its novels, may pay for its own education (*Times*, November 2, 1797).

In a capital picture the Bishop of Durham is falling pell-mell with his crozier upon the short-skirted ballet-dancers; and, despite the wise proclamations of Queen Anne at the outset of the century, spectators still seem to have encumbered the stage:—

The Stage at the Opera is so crowded, that Madame Rose, in throwing up her fine muscular arm into a graceful attitude, inadvertently levelled three men of the first quality at a stroke (*Times*, May 9, 1796).

From the final cluster of "Varieties" we cull two paragraphs with which we close our extracts from this most readable book:—

Last Sunday, agreeable to his sentence in the Ecclesiastical Court, a Butcher of Newport Market did penance in St. Ann's Church, for scandalizing a neighbour's character (*Times*, December 2, 1796).

On Saturday evening last, John Lees, steel-burner, sold his wife for the small sum of 6d. to Samuel Hall, fellmonger, both of Sheffield. Lees gave Hall one guinea immediately, to have her taken off the day following by the coach; she was delivered up with a halter round her neck, and the clerk of the market received 4d. for toll. . . (*Times*, March 30, 1796).

Two cases of this kind, says Mr. Ashton, occurred as late as 1882.—From the *Athenæum*.

THE cattle trade in England shows no improvement. Since writing my last letter several of the Australian frozen meat companies have been wound up, and apparently there will be no great expansion of the frozen mutton trade from Australasia during the next twelve months. Here comes in the old advice over again—what Canadian farmers have to do is to study quality. If they produce a first-class article there is no doubt but that it will still pay the raisers of mutton in the Dominion to send such produce to the British markets. Anything "scrubby," however, not only of mutton, but of cattle, it appears, must in the future mean a dead loss to the Canadian producer. Under these circumstances it may be safely predicted that while the enterprising farmer who produces a really first-class article will be well remunerated, the enterprising yeomen in Canada who have kept pedigree and first-class stock must find their business vastly increased by the demand for superior breeding stock.—Liverpool correspondent of *The Farmers' Advocate*.