THE EXAMINER:

A Weekly Journal of Politics, Literature, and News.

"This is true Liberty, when Freeborn Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free."---Euripides.

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LITERATURE.

FOR THE EXAMINER.

SPIRITUS SANCTUS.

In the sunshine—in the shadow,
Mingling in the voice of friends—
Mid the turmoil of the city,
And in still sequestered glens:

Present in my waking hours—
Still beside me in my dreams—
Glides an unseen heart that loves me—
Glows a love that on me beams.

Heard above the rush of waters,
In life's never-ending storm,
Whispered in the faintest echo,
That of loving words is born.

Comes a song of deep devotion,
From the voice I always bless—
Calming all the troubled sources
Of my weary heart's distress.

Earth withholds her sunshine from me—
Fate decrees that I shall bear
Gyves and fetters on me always,
Chaining life unto despair.

But this spirit that abideth
With me in my joy and pain,
Hides the darkness with her features—
With her smile lifts up my chain!

Ne'er so dark the night and lonely—
Ne'er so hidden be the stars,
But those eyes that love me only
Shine within my prison bars.

Sweet is rest from painful watching—
Sweet the calm that follows storm—
Sweet the reconciliation
After heart from heart is torn.

But unto my storm-tossed being
Sweeter far the bliss I know,
In this spirit's sacred service,
Loving me through weal or woe.

M. C. S.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

You cannot rob us of the rights we cherish,
Nor turn our thoughts away,
From the bright picture of a "woman's mission,"
Our hearts portray.

We claim to dwell in quiet and seclusion,
Beneath the household roof,
From the great world's harsh strife, and jarring voices,
To stand aloof;—

Not in a dreamy and innane abstraction
To sleep our life away,
But, gathering up the brightness of home sunshine,
To deck our way.

As humble plants by country hedgerows growing,
That tresure up the rain,
And yield in odours, ere the day's declining,
The gift again;

So let us, unobtrusive and unnoticed,
But happy none the less,
Be privileged to fill the air around us
With happiness;

To live, unknown beyond the cherished circle
Which we can bless and aid;
To die, and not a heart that does not love us,
Know where we're laid.

(From the North British Review.)

SCOTTISH HUMOUR.

Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character. By E. B. Ramsay, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S.E., Dean of Edinburgh. First and Second Series.

Familiar Illustrations of Scottish Character. By the Rev. Charles Rogers, LL.D., F.S.A. Scotland.

Though not yet admitted into the 'Society for obtaining Justice to Scotland,' and not very sensitive nor 'sudden and quick in quarrel' in regard to the precise heraldic position of the Scottish lion, we are nevertheless sincerely and profoundly attached to our native land. We are proud of Scotland—of her history, her scenery, her character, and her institutions. We relish the smack of the old Scottish tongue, and enjoy the dry pawkiness of the native Scottish humourist. Merged, yet not lost, in the union with her sister England, Scotland has distinct and peculiar claims on our memory, our convictions, and our affections, which we gladly and heartily recognise. It is, therefore, with much cordiality, though not in a spirit of narrow or illiberal nationality, that we welcome these illustrations of Scottish life and character, and express our admiration of the patriotic spirit which prompts and pervades them.

That the Rev. Dr. Edward Ramsay should have written a work on 'Scottish Life and Character,' which his countrymen eagerly read, and heartily admire, can be surprising to none who know him. No man is more highly, generally, and deservedly esteemed and beloved, than this rev. gentleman. In a city much affected by political and denominational differences, where conflicting opinions are strongly entertained and keenly expressed, he has passed a long, useful, and honourable life, without losing a friend or making an enemy; and in his personal character the venerable is so gracefully blended with the loveable, that all classes regard him with feelings at once respectful and affectionate.

The *Reminiscences* are very entertaining, and, whenever the views and sentiments of the author are expressed, they are full of his own good sense and benevolence. We do not mean to say that all the stories are good, or that, in every instance, the humour has been effectively brought out; it would be easy to point out some anecdotes that might well have been omitted, and others that might be somewhat improved in narration. But, generally, they are well selected and well told, and there is that about the author and the book which disarms criticism. We enjoy the stories, we feel the truth and aptness of the comments, we become more intensely, yet not less liberally Scottish, as we read; and we feel that the best illustration of 'Scottish Life and Character' is to be found in the sound sense in the quaint and simple Scottish humour and language, in the kindly and genial disposition, and the stedfast yet graceful and generous nationality of Dean Ramsay.

Dr. Rogers' *Familiar Illustrations of Scottish Character* is an amusing book, with some good stories, and much good intention, and breathing a kindly and pleasant spirit, though it is not, we think, equal in any respect to the *Reminiscences* by Dean Ramsay.

The object of both works is the same: the collection of anecdotes illustrative of the life, character and language of Scotland—more especially in its humorous aspect. The stories are, accordingly, all Scottish, generally characteristic, and frequently humorous; not always, however, for in some of them it is difficult to discover the humour. That, indeed, may be the fault of the reader, not of the writer; for humour is a strange and perverse spirit, prodigal to her favourites, yet veiling her treasures from those she favours not. The perceiving of humour is a gift, as well as the producing it; and sometimes it is as difficult of discernment as of production. Some persons are colour-blind, and cannot discriminate between red, green, and blue: and many persons are humour-blind, and cannot discern, or understand, or enjoy, a touch of fun or a stroke of humour. For our part, we think such persons are to be pitied. To them the spring of much hearty and innocent enjoyment is dried up, and they are not the better, though much the duller, for want of it.

The power of discovering a comic point, of appreciating a humorous hit, and enjoying the fun of a droll position, is a gift not to be despised. It is not a vain, silly, or unbecoming thing, as some moping owls and grave dullards suppose. It is, indeed, like all human faculties, liable to abuse, and capable of being perverted to evil; but it is essentially a good gift, and ought to be turned to the good account of which it is susceptible, and to manifest itself in the increase of the cheerfulness, the happiness, and the affection of social and family life. We might go further;—we might say, and adduce much evidence to support the proposition, that, as humour is discerned only by those who can, to some extent, catch the feeling and spirit of the humourist, so the sense or discernment of humour is one phase or department of sympathy, and thus the springs of mirthfulness and of kindness are not far distant: and many a home, amid the alternations of joy and sorrow, that darken or brighten the course of life, has found an ever fresh gladness in the comic vein and jocund humour of some merry and mirthful member of the family. Many of the best men we have ever known—the best in the highest sense of the term—with the best heads and the best hearts, have been men who thoroughly appreciated, and heartily enjoyed, true humour. There are, indeed, some men who, to the jocund and genial aspects of life, present a front so cold and hard as to be quite unimpressible; over whom the brightest flashes of merriment pass unheeded, 'as o'er th' impassive ice the lightnings play.' There are others, with small and narrow minds, self-seeking and self-complacent, who pass through life in the bondage and gloom of subservience to the opinion of some clique or coterie around them, and who, lest they should compromise their dignity or peril their reputation, will not descend from the grave dulness of their decorous walk, or permit themselves the pleasant relish of a wholesome jest, or the innocent enjoyment of a hearty laugh. In this they greatly err, as much so as those who, in the midst of bright scenes and sweet sounds, would close their eyes lest they should see evil, or their ears lest they should hear folly. That a sense of humour, and an appreciation of fun, is implanted in many of us by nature—that it is a source of great enjoyment, and that it is consistent with worth, and truth, and purity,—cannot be denied; and therefore the part of wisdom is, not to stifle, but to gude it.

Humour is described by Addison as the offspring of wit and mirth, descended from good sense, and closely allied to truth. It may also be added, that humour is the co-mate of liberty, and thrives only in a free soil. As Sir William Temple truly says, 'We have in our country originals, and more that appear what they are. We have more humour, because every man is free to follow his own humour, and takes a pleasure, perhaps a pride, to show it.' There may be humour amid poverty and rags—humour amid toils and dangers—humour even amid ignorance, and recklessness, and folly; but there can be no genuine humour in chains. The heart must be free before the springs of true humour can be opened, and then the stream will be free, full, and gushing, in proportion as wit and mirth abound. It is the peculiar quality of humour, that it cannot be forced, or bought, or artificially stimulated. More aptly and truly than of the poet, may it be said of the humourist, 'nascitur non fit.' As we have already said, it is a gift, to be recognized, developed, and guided,—not an art to be learned, or an accomplishment to be acquired.

There are many things within the reach of aim, attainable by effort and industry, or capable of being imparted by instruction. Distinction in many departments—wealth, power, learning, wisdom—are generally within the reach of these modes of acquisition; and even those accomplishments which imply somewhat of the *afflatus divinus*, which we call genius, and which Cicero declares to be indispensable to greatness—such as poetry, music, taste, eloquence—demand and require the aid of assiduous culture. But humour is beyond the reach of art, the sphere of aim, or the scope of acquisition. Not only is it impalpable to search, and unattainable by effort, mocking and eluding pursuit; but if, by some bold adventurer, it should seem to be seized and retained, it dies in the capture: its charm, its spirit, its very life, dissolves under the grasp;

'And every touch that wooed its stay,
Had brushed its brightest hues away.'

Of this humour —clothed in Scottish tongue, and illustrative of Scottish character—the volumes before us contain many specimens. But no collection of anecdotes, no repository of jokes, from the facetiæ of Hierocles to the reminiscences of Dean Ramsay, can adequately illustrate the humour of a country, or faithfully represent that delicate and subtle influence which, floating over a free and joyous society, awakes the wit and the mirth of which humour is the offspring. The humourous anecdotes of our country cannot be comprehended or even represented in a volume. Scattered amid all classes in all parts of Scotland, treasured in countless memories, and told by countless tongues, the good things of the Laird of M'Nab and the Laird of Logan, of Harry Erskine, and John Clerk, and Patrick Robertson, and many others, cannot be so gathered together as to be presented in a combined form. All that can be done, and all that is attempted in these volumes is to 'sample them;' and by no selection of samples can the spirit of the whole be adequately expressed. Those who remember Sir Walter Scott and Dr. Andrew Thomson—those who knew Lord Cockburn and Sir Thomas Dick Lauder—those who now enjoy the social privilege of a night with Mr. Daniel M'Nee, or our friend the author of the *Horæ Subsecivæ*,—know well how impossible it is so to catch the spirit of true humour as to do justice to it by narration at second hand. No one can repeat *their* stories with effect.

Whether it is the fact, that our countrymen are deficient in humour, while Englishmen excel in humour, may admit of doubt. We are by no means prepared to acknowledge that the fact is so, notwithstanding the high authority of Sydney Smith, who was himself a man of humour, rich and rare. But of this we are satisfied, that the attempts to explain and account for the deficiency assumed as a fact, have totally failed. No satisfactory or even intelligible reason has yet been suggested, why Scotsmen should be inferior in humour to Englishmen. Such an explanation as, that the Scottish people are poorer than the English, cannot be reasonably accepted. Riches do not create or even stimulate humour. The Irish peasantry are poorest of all; yet we are disposed to think, that in genuine humour, whether of the mirthful or the satirical order, they are superior to both English and Scotch. An Irishman is not, as is often supposed, a mere blunderer into fun. No man can seek occasions for humour. But when occasion comes, the poor Irishman is prompt and ready. There are some Irish anecdotes, the point and pith of which are generally supposed to be a blunder or bull, but which really turn on a stroke of fine natural humour.

An Irishman thus describes his cold reception by an old friend: 'I saw Pat Ryan t'other side of the way. I thought it was Pat, and Pat thought it was me; and when I came up it was neither of us.'

A lad was sent with a note, and a basket containing some living partridges. On his way, tempted by curiosity, he peeped into the basket, when the partridges flew away. Much perplexed was he: but after a little consideration he reclosed the basket, went on his way, and delivered the letter with his best bow. 'Well, my lad,' said the gentleman on reading it, 'I see there are some live partridges in this letter.' 'Oh, by the powers,' says Paddy, 'I'm glad of that, for they flew out of the basket.'

An English gentleman had an Irish servant, whom he took as his attendant to a Highland grouse-shooting. The expense of the sport to the Englishman had been very great: a large rent for the muir, new guns, and muniments of war on grouse, high-bred dogs, a fashionable shooting costume, and a countless number of incidental charges. Unfortunately, the sportsman was less expert than extravagant. Like a friend of our own, of whom we have heard old Willie M——— speak, 'he was grand at the shooting, but no very gude at the killing;' so, after the first week of the war, as the master and man were seated on a rock consoling themselves under the fatigue and disappointment of unsuccessful pursuit, the Englishman says, 'Well, Pat, this is expensive work. I've been calculating that every one of these birds cost me above £50.' 'Faith, your honour, says Pat, throwing a dash of humour into the sympathizing simplicity of his reply, 'I'm sorry for that, but it's lucky there's no more of them.'

A traveller in Ireland, having been inclined to deny that the peasantry were humourous, was told to ask any question of the first labouring man he met on the road. Accordingly, on seeing a sturdy fellow breaking stones, he says, 'Now, my man, if the devil were to come here just now, whether would he take you or me?' 'Me, to be sure,' says the man, 'for he's certain of your honour at any time.'

A poor Irish labourer had an impediment in his speech, and could not pronounce words beginning with the letter P without stammering. A neighbouring gentleman, seeing him digging potatoes, and wishing to make him ridiculous, said, 'What do you call these things you're digging?' 'Sir,' says poor Pat, 'I don't call them; when I want them I fetch them.'

A nobleman and his lady, walking through a magnificent avenue in one of the finest parts of Ireland, were accosted by a poor woman as follows: 'The Lord bless your noble lordship and your gracious ladyship. I dramed a drame about you both last night. I dramed your lordship gave me a pound of tobacco, and your ladyship a pound of tay.' 'Ah, my good woman,' says the peer, 'dreams go by contraries.' 'To be sure they do,' says the woman; 'so it will be your lordship will give me the tay, and her ladyship will give me the tobacco.'

A poor old Irish cripple sat begging at a bridge, urging his appeal to the charity of passengers with the eager and versatile eloquence of his country. A gentleman and lady—young, gay, and handsome, with that peculiar look of gratified and complacent consciousness which indicates the first few weeks of married life—crossed the bridge. They regarded not the petitions of the beggar; so, just as they passed him he exclaimed, 'May the blessing of the Lord, which brings love, and joy, and wealth, and a fine family, follow you all the days of your life:' a pause; the couple passed heedlessly on, and the beggar, with a fine touch of caustic humour, added, 'and never overtake you.'

Dean Ramsay tells us of a Scotsman whose tender toe was trodden on: the offender said, 'I'm very sorry, sir; I beg your pardon;' and the only acknowledgment was, 'and you've as muckle need, sir.' To our mind, there was some surliness and not much humour in this. The Irish beggar who, on being refused alms, swung his crutch on the toes of the gouty gentleman, whom his prayers moved not to charity, had more humour, when he said to the enraged owner of the suffering foot, 'Bless your honour, if your heart was as tender as your toes, you'd have given me the tenpenny.'

In all these anecdotes, we think that not a casual comic incongruity, or mere blundering into fun, but a vein of rare humour, can be discerned, the purer and rarer from its natural simplicity. Art is fatal, and premeditation is unfavourable to humour. Sheridan was a man of brilliant parts, and of sparkling wit; and the exquisite wit of the *School for Scandal* is scarcely equalled, and certainly not surpassed, by Cervantes or Moliere. That he was also a man of genuine humour cannot be doubted; but while, in some of his writings, his wit gained in terseness and polish from the elaborate care with which he was wont to prepare his favourite passages, the fresh and racy character of his humour is sometimes marred by the same careful preparation. The poor Irishman's comic hits, so simple and natural that they look like blunders, are perhaps the finest specimens of true humour, in which there is no greater charm than that of unsophisticated simplicity. This is the key to the peculiar kind of humour sometimes found in the remarks of persons of weak intellect, of which Shakespeare's clowns and fools, and Walter Scott's 'Wamba' and 'Davie Gallathie,' afford good illustrations. There are many specimens of such remarks in Dean Ramsay's book:—

'A miller, laughing at the witlessness of a poor weak lad, said he knew nothing. "Na," said the lad, "there's some things I ken, and some I dinna ken." On being asked what he knew, he said, "I ken a miller has aye a gay fat sow." "And what d'ye no ken?" said the miller. "Oh," said he, "I don't ken at wha's expense she is fed."

'The congregation of Lunan, in Forfarshire, had distressed the minister by their habit of sleeping in church. One day Jamie Fraser, an idiot, was sitting in the front gallery, when many were slumbering around him. "Look," said the minister, "you see even Jamie Fraser, the idiot, does not fall asleep, as so many of you are doing." Jamie, not liking to be thus designated, coolly replied, "An' I hadna been an idiot, I would have been sleeping too." '

The clergyman of a north country parish, on coming into church, found the pulpit occupied by the parish idiot. 'Come down, sir,' was the peremptory and indignant call. 'Na, na, minister,' says the idiot, with a confidential wink, 'just come ye up wi' me. This is a preverse generation, and faith they need us baith.'

The following anecdote of Rab Hamilton, 'the daftie of Ayr,' as he was called, is not, we think, quite as well given by Dean Ramsay as we remembered it in our youth. In the days of Rab, the Newtown Kirk in Ayr, under the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Peebles, was supposed to be attended by the most devout part of the population; and puir Rab followed the multitude of those who preferred the preaching of the good man whom Burns mentions as 'Peebles frae the Water-foot,' to that of the 'auld-town minister.' One day, however, Rab was induced to go to the 'Auld Kirk.' Behind the magistrates' seat in the gallery, opposite the pulpit, there were iron rails, between two of which Rab's head was inserted, and got fast jammed. The poor man called out at first rather quietly, then louder and louder on each successive appeal. 'Oh! my head! Eh, Provost Cowan, take my head out atween the rails; eh, Bailie M'Taggart, my lugs are bleeding—take my head out; eh, Deacon Convener, take out my head, afore it comes aff; eh, pious congregation, my head will be aff; eh, godly minister, help me, and take out my head.' Rab was at length relieved by the removing of a rail, when, rubbing his head, and looking mournfully around him, he groaned out, 'This is a judgment from the Lord for leaving gude Dr. Peebles.' Next Sunday, Rab was in his wonted place in the Newtown Kirk. He was asked how he liked the Auld Kirk, and replied, 'It's no the best, it's no gude ava: I'll never leave Dr. Peebles;' but, on being pressed to state what the sermon was about, or what was the text, he declined to speak, saying, with a knowing wink, 'I never tell in ae house what I hear in anither.'

This Rab Hamilton, though certainly daft, had a curious readiness of humour. Mr. William C———, of D———, who was a clever mimic, was once amusing some friends on the green of Ayr, by imitating Rab's feeble and rambling mode of speaking. Rab came up behind him, unseen, and, as the mimic concluded, clapped him on the back, saying, 'It's no me that; it's no me, Mr. William, it's yoursell.'

Rab was once met on the road by a stranger, who asked, 'How far is it to Ayr?' 'Ay,' says Rab, 'you'll be come from Kilmarnock?' 'What on earth is your business where I come from?' 'Very weel, sir, as little is it my business where ye gang to.'

Rab met the late Mr. Ramsay Maule (afterwards Lord Panmure) and Lord Belhaven, walking together on the race-course of Ayr. 'I'm a Hamilton, your honour; I'm a Hamilton,' says Rab, approaching his Lordship. 'Give him a shilling, Belhaven, he is a cousin of yours,' says Mr. Maule. 'My mither's name was Ramsay,' says Rab, slipping round to the other side, and getting another shilling as his reward.

In like manner, there is frequently humour in the observations of very young persons; and these derive the charm of their pleasantry from their artless simplicity. A very little girl at school, in the course of tuition by a particularly ugly teacher, was asked, 'What is the meaning of the word flattery?' Her reply was, 'Gin I were to say ye were bonnie, that would be flattery.'

(To be concluded in our next.)

THE DUTCH AND THEIR DYKES.

Most educated Englishmen are aware that the Dutch have to maintain an incessant fight with the sea, the stake being no less than the right of their country to exist, but they do not realize quite so fully that the same warfare, only differing in its degree, is carried on with a deadly internal foe. The sea, of course, is the Dutchman's most dangerous antagonist, and appeals to the imagination all the more strongly because science has demonstrated the precise extent of the peril. The local hydrographers, to facilitate inquiry, have invented, or rather defined, a water level, which they call the Amsterdam level, and at which the country may be described as safe. Whenever the wind blows from the north-west, the tendency of the water is to exceed this level, and during a storm the tide rises at the least exposed places ten feet six inches above all Holland. Those who know most of the power of water will best understand the result of precipitating ten feet of the German Ocean over an inhabited plain. But dangerous as the sea is, the rivers are not less menacing. The Meuse, the Scheldt, and the Rhine all alike present the features, not of those douce, temperate and somewhat sluggish streams which Englishmen call rivers, but of the torrents which in the tropics shift, change, and throw up new territories, as if they had a creative volition of their own. Nature left to herself would have made of Holland a swamp, through which the German rivers would have wandered slowly and sluggishly towards the sea, losing themselves *en route* in the sands, and sometimes fighting harmlessly with the storm-driven rush of salt water. The Dutchmen, however, not approving of an arrangement which involves among other things the life of a wild duck for themselves, have banked in the rivers, a work in itself of some magnitude, but a trifle to the work it produces. These rivers carry down silt, which in the natural course of things they would slowly deposit in their own beds. These rise, therefore, steadily every year, till at the present moment the traveller who ventures upon the trackboat finds himself crawling along on rivers suspended in air, and looking down on the plains as men look down over a precipice. Naturally, as the rivers rise, so do the dykes, which, as they rise, become weaker, and but that there is some compensating cause, man would one day be vanquished in this perpetual fight. M. Esquiros does not assign this cause; but, he says, the dykes as they rise undoubtedly hold the river in better than they did. The reason is sufficiently simple. The bed of the river is not rising through its whole length, but only through its length in the delta. Consequently every rise diminishes the difference of level between the great outflow through the Ardennes, and the outlet of the river, and the velocity of the waters, though not their volume, is lessened. It is quite possible that this process may go on till the rivers are in the delta almost as sluggish as canals, and man will not be called upon for that improvement in his faculties in which alone M. Esquiros, sees hope for the future. During the transition period, however, the danger is very great, and we cannot better illustrate its extent, or M. Esquiros's style, than by extracting his account of the inundation of 1855:

"It was in the month of March, after a hard winter, which had suspended the course of the Rhine and the Meuse. Spring arrived suddenly for that portion of these rivers to the south, while the northern part remained petrified beneath the ice. The solid surface of the Rhine being broken up, the thaw met in Holland a mass of the still frozen river. A motionless river and moving ice-blocks came in a fearful collision. The force of resistance being opposed to that of expansion must necessarily entail a catastrophe. There was a solemn and terrible moment, during which the river, contending with itself, uttered a hoarse roar. All at once the bed of ice rose and burst, and the tumultuous strength of the waters, exasperated by the heavy clashing ice-masses, no longer knew obstacles or restraint. The river roared and rose like a sea, and overflowed its banks. Though the dykes were so strong and tall they were carried away, cut asunder by the ice as by a razor-blade. The whole country became a sheet of water; it was no longer a breaking up of the ice but a deluge. The ice-lumps were hurled on ice-lumps; and these ruins of the thaw destroyed, tore away, and crushed everything they met on their passage. Lofty oaks fell shattered in the constantly rising waters. On all sides the floods rushed up like a pack of howling wolves. The Rhine had already seized upon one-fourth of Gelderman and the province of Utrecht, and a portion of North Brabant had disappeared beneath the waters of the Meuse. It was hopeless to search for the fat prairies, the smiling polders, and the splendidly cultivated Dutch farms; all that was beneath the level of the two rivers disappeared, and was covered by the angry, seething waters. In some places they rose above the roofs of the houses, and frail boats, surrounded by a belt of moving and floating rocks, alone struggled against this tempest of ice.

"The ramparts and bridges were swept away. From steeple to steeple the tocsin rang out, and the alarm guns were heard along the menaced line. An infinite desolation fell with night upon the villages and farms. The words 'The dyke is burst!' could be heard in all the tones of horror. Men were afraid for their homes, their rural riches, their winter stock, their cattle; they feared for themselves, but before all for their wives and children. Before the foe who advanced, stern, irresistible, and inevitable, the abodes were abandoned; the inhabitants sought shelter on the hills, and on buildings standing on an elevation, such as churches and mills. From these spots the terrified people surveyed the submerged fields, and the villages in which they had left firiends. Do you see down there that house in which a faint light is burning? A female shadow is designed on the window panes. That woman refused to take to flight. An enormous ice-mass dashes against the house and carries it away. Each moment roofs, furniture, corpses of domestic animals pass in a whirlpool of water and ice. Alas! do you not see an empty cradle floating along? What has become of the infant? What has become of the mother?"

M. Esquiros went himself to one scene of desolation:

"It was a sad and painful excursion, for, truth to tell, we went but to reconnoitre a village. The mere sight of the localities could furnish no idea of the ruin the villagers had sustained. At each instant along a deep ditch which had formerly been the highway, we met with roofs from which the tiles had been stripped, beaten-in doors, broken windows, and barns suspended sadly on the exposed piles, in a word, the skeletons of houses. Elsewhere, there was nought but fragments of masonry, heaps of ruins and bricks in a nameless medley. The further we advanced in the village, the greater grew our emotion at the sight of these habitations without inhabitants, this little church which have served as an ark amid the deluge, and these streets which were now a stream. Our boat stopped, and we entered a few houses in which the least badly treated of the poor people were busied in repairing what could still be saved of their furniture and instruments of labour. An undulating line marked on the inner walls the height to which the water had risen. We had everywhere before us desolation, destruction, and misery.

"The boat we had freighted started again, and proceeded toward the adjoining fields. It was one large sea, above which rose the crests of trees. A flock of ducks swam noisily round our boat, and by their joy insulted the melancholy character of the landscape. As far as the eye could see, water, nothing but water, was visible. A sunbeam spread like a smile of reconciliation or of irony over this valley, once dug up by the pick and the ploughshare, but now furrowed by the oar. Could we have forgotten man, we should have found pleasure in the contemplation of this lake, beneath which the crops and hopes of the year were buried, for nature is lovely even in her ravages. We had the curiosity to see the spot where the dyke of the Rhine burst; the wound through which the river had shed its waters was closed by temporary walls. The sight of this scar cicatrized in the flank of the giant was well adapted to inspire a grand idea, both of the works of man and the tumultuous strength of nature. As for the Rhine, it had returned to its bed, tranquil and slumbering like a lion in its den after a successful foray."

Man will win, nevertheless, as he wins everywhere, except in the tropics, where the energy of one generation is exhausted in the effort to repair the losses time has inflicted upon the works of the last.—*Review of Esquiros' "The Dutch at Home."*

THE CHAMBER OF MYSTERY.

An architect of Vienna having occasion to visit the country-house of a nobleman of that city, accepted the hospitable invitation he received and determined to remain as a guest for several days. The first day was passed in business and he retired exhausted, but his thoughts were still occupied with the improvements in the house that were contemplated. He could see, however, that the room allotted to him was handsome and commodious, though not large; and at length he suffered his head to sink upon the pillow with the sigh of satisfaction with which we take leave of the world for the night,

"And draw around a wearied breast
The curtain of repose."

But when he was just sinking to rest an uneasy sensation, he knew not of what nature, stole over him. He persuaded himself that the air was close—that he perceived a faint smell—and he lay for some time considering whether he was not suffering from fever. The question was speedily answered, for the bed began to move. Presently it was near the window—so near that he could look out, could see the trees in the garden below and could observe the out line of asummer-house which had attracted his attention by its classical proportions in the forenoon. He was of course surprised, nay terrified; but when he stretched toward the window in order to ascertain that all was real, the scene grew dimmer and dimmer and at length disappeared. And no wonder, for the bed was receding to its old position—and did not stop there. He was presently at the door—he might have touched the panels with his hand. He felt his breath come back and the air more confined; he would have got up to ring for assistance but persuaded himself that he was too weak and would fall down before reaching the bell

The bed again moved and this time it took up its position in the very middle of the fireplace. This was the sheer frenzy of fever, for the fireplace was of course not a fourth part of the size of the bed itself. Yet he saw distinctly the walls of the chimney surrounding him, and he even felt that one of the feet of the bed rested upon a dog iron so as to disturb its level. But he had no time for more minute observation, for presently the bed emerging from the chimney begun to rise with slow undulations towards the roof and there it continued to swing, as he imagined, for hours together, till his alarm sunk gradually into lassitude, and he fell into a deep though short and unfreshing slumber.

The next morning the visitor appeared at the breakfast table pale, wearied, and dispirited. He was not well. What was the matter? What could be done for him? "Nothing,' he replied to all their interrogatories. He had not slept but the air would revive him. He would take healthfull exercise during the day and that would be better than medicine. It turned out as expected. He recovered his spirits; he was delighted with his hosts and they with him; and he was thankful that he had been prevented by shame from mentioning the absurd fancies by which he had been beset during the night. At the usual hour he retired again to bed, comfortable in mind and body, but feeling the want of sleep, and looking forward gratefully by anticipation to at least eight hours of sound repose.

He did not enjoy one. The same fever, the same fancies, the same inexplicable movements of the bed—these were his portion during the night; and in the morning the same dead eyes, the same colorless cheeks, the same listless attitudes betrayed to his sympathizing friends that he had passed another wakeful and wretched night. But he still preserved silence as to the details. He was thoroughly ashamed of his absurdity. The impressions of the first night had doubtless remaind to scare him on the second. He had gone to bed thinking of his former suffering, and they had been renewed in his imagination. In this way he accounted for the continued illusions that bad perplexed him, and he determined at a third trial to grapple with them manfully, and compel repose by the aid of reason.

All was unavailing; and on the third morning his entertainer, alarmed by his ghastly looks, determined to bring him to explanation.

"You can no longer conceal it," said he; "you have found something disagreeable in the room, and I reproach myself with having allowed you to be put into an apartment which certainly bears a bad name in the house."

"What do you mean by a bad name?" asked the guest.

"I mean that it is famous for its sleepless lodgers, for its waking dreams and worse than that, there is not a servant in the house who would enter it alone after dark for a year's wages."

"That is all very well for the servants; but I know you laugh at these ignorant fancies; and you know me too well to suppose that I would treat them otherwise than with pity and contempt. Tell me at once what you believe, but first listen to my adventures," and the guest related to the host at full length the story of his three ill-omened nights.

"I cannot tell you what I believe," replied the latter, after musing for some time, "for in point of fact I do not know what to believe; but your experience tallies strangely with what I have heard on the subject before from more than one of my friends. I am now more preplexed than ever."

It was agreed, however, on the proposal of the Architect, that a minute examination of the premises should take place, and the whole family proceeded in a body to the chamber of mystery.

The first thing that struck the examiner was that the chimney was choked up with rubbish so that no current of air could take place through a channel on which so much depends. Proceeding to the window, he found it heavy and massive, and so completely bedded that no force could raise it. It appeared on inquiry that this was its original defect; that the servants had at length given up all attempts to move it, and that the wood work had swollen so much, through the effects of damp that the whole window, so far as the access of the external air was concerned merley prolongation of the wall. The door was in like manner found to be singularly and close fitting, and in addition it was heavy constructed so as to shut spontaneously the moment the person who entered removed his hand. In fact the room, however elegant in appearance and furpiture, was contrived throughout in the most elaborate manner so as to be as unwholesome as possible. Still this did not account for the illusions with which it was haunted, and the architect ascended to the roof of the house.

Here he found that the apartment in queswas covered with a massive work of tiles, wood and lime, so as to leave a small garret into which there was no opening either by door or window. This, in connection with the other circumstances we have described proved to be the solution of the mystery; for mephytic gas engendered in the garret, penetrating through the mouldy wood work of the antique ceiling into a place where it found no egress and, where it could mingle only with the foul air, was in reality the nocturnal spectre which haunted the room. The effect of this gas upon the brain in exciting a temporary delirium is well known; and in the present instance the result of what was done to remedy the evil left no doubt.

The door and window were opened, the chimney was cleared made and two openings were, in the roof. During the last mentioned operations it is worthy of note that when the tools of the workmen penetrated for the first time into the garret, the mephytic vapor which escaped had such an effect upon one of them that he must have fallen from the roof had he not been caught hold of by his comrades. After the alterations were made, the architect retired to bed for the fourth time and enjoyed an excellent sleep, together with a great part of the arrears of the preceding nights. From that moment the room lost its reputation as a Chamber of Mystery.

A VENTRILOQUIST AND CATS.

A ventriloquist travelling, put up over night at a country hotel, and getting into a room with a fidgety old fellow, he thought he'd get up a little fun by treating the old gent to a cat serenade. Valentine, the ventriloquist, on having his bed pointed out to him, darted between the sheets in the space of a minute; for, as Mr. Jones Beagle facetiously observed, he had but to shake himself and everything came off. He then turned the thing seriously over in his own mind, while Mr. Beagle was quietly undressing, being anxious for that gentleman to extinguish the light before he commenced operations.

'Now for a beautiful night's rest,' observed Mr. Jones Beagle to himself, as he put out the light with a tranquil mind, and turned in with a great degree of comfort.

'Mem--men!' cried Valentine softly, throwing his voice under the bed of Mr. Beagle.

'Hish! confound that cat!' cried Mr. Beagle, 'we must have you out at all events, my lady.' And Mr. Beagle at once slipped out of bed, and having opened the door, cried 'hish' again, emphatically, and threw his breeches towards the spot, as an additional inducement for the cat not to stand on the order of her going, when Mr. Valentine repeated to cry, and made it appear to proceed from the stairs. Mr. Beagle thanked heaven she was gone, closed the door, and very carefully groped his way into bed.

'Mew!—mew!—mew!' cried Mr. Valentine just as Mr. Beagle had again composed himself.

'What, are you still here, madam!' inquired that gentleman, in a high and sarcastic tone. 'I thought you had been turned out, madam. Do you hear this witch of a cat?' he continued, addressing Mr. V., who replied with a deep heavy snore, and began to mew again with additional emphasis.

'Well, I don't have a treat every day, it is true, but if this isn't one, why I am out of my reckoning—that's all,' observed Mr. Jones Beagle, as he slipped again out of bed; 'I don't like much to handle you, but if I do, I'll of course give you physic?'—and he 'hished' again with consummate violence, and continued to 'hish' until Valentine scratched the bedpost sharply—a feat which inspired Mr. Beagle with the conviction of its being the disturber of his peace in the act of decamping: then he threw the pillow towards the door, which he closed, and returned to his bed in triumph. The moment, however, he had comfortably tucked himself up again, he missed the pillow he had converted into an instrument of vengeance, and as that was an article without which he could not even hope to go asleep, he had of course to turn out again and fetch it.

'How many more times, I wonder,' he observed to himself, 'shall I have to get out of this blessed bed to night? Exercise is certainly a comfort, and very conducive to health, but such exercise as this—why, where have you got?' he added, addressing the pillow, which, with all the sweeping actions of his feet, he was for some time unable to find; 'Oh, here you are, sir, are you?' and he picked up the object of his search, and gave it several severe blows, when, having reinstated himself between the sheets, he exclaimed in a subdued tone, 'Well, let's try it again.'

Now Mr. Jones Beagle was a man who prided himself especially upon the evenness of his temper. His boast was, that nothing could put him in a passion.

He did, however, feel, when he violently smote the pillow, that the little ebullition partook somewhat of the nature of passion, and just commenced reproaching himself for having indulged in that ebullition, when Valentine cried, 'meyow! bit! meyow!'

'Hallo!' exclaimed Mr. Jones Beagle, 'here again?'

'Mew?' cried Valentine, in a somewhat higher key.

'What, another come to contribute to the harmony of the evening?'

'Meyow!—meyow!' cried Valentine in a key still higher.

'Well, how many more of you!' inquired Mr. B. 'You will be able to get up another concert by-and-by;' and Valentine began to spit and swear with great felicity.

'Swear away you beauties!' cried Mr. B., as he listened to this volley of feline oaths; 'I only wish I was not so much afraid of you, for your sakes. At it again! Well, this is a blessing. Don't you hear those cats?' he cried, anxious not to have all the fun himself; but Valentine continued snoring very loud.

'Well, this is particularly pleasant,' he continued as he sat up in bed. 'Don't you hear? What a comfort it is to be able to sleep soundly!' which remarkable observation was doubtless provoked by the no less remarkable fact that the spitting became more desperate. 'What's to be done? My breeches are right in the midst of them all. I can't get out now; they'd tear the very flesh off my legs—and that fellow sleeps like a top. Hallo! do you mean to say that you don't hear cats? now they're going it!'

Valentine certainly meant to say no such thing, for the whole time he was not mewing and spitting, he was diligently occupied in snoring, which a had very good effect, and served to fill up the intervals exceedingly well.

At length the patience of Mr. Jones Beagle began to evaporate—for the hostile forces continued to battle apparently with great desperation. He therefore threw a pillow with great violence into the bed of his companion, and shouted so loudly that Valentine feeling it would be perfect nonsense for him to pretend to sleep any longer, began to yawn very naturally and cried—'who's there?'

''Tis I?' shouted Jones Beagle, 'more like two and twenty, I've turned out a dozen myself. There's a swarm, a whole colony of them here, and I know no more about striking a light than a fool.'

'Oh, never mind,' said Valentine, 'let's go to sleep, they'll be quiet by-and-by.'

'It's all very fine to say let's go to sleep, who's to do it?' cried Beagle, emphatically. Blast the cats! I wish there warn't a cat under heaven—I do with all my soul. They're such a spiteful varmin, too, when they happen to be put out, and one of them is in a passion I know from her spitting, confound her! I wish from the bottom of my heart, it was the last spit in her.'

'Who's there? what's the matter?'—cried Valentine at length, in the coolest manner imaginable, although his exertions made him sweat like a tinker.

'For Heaven's sake, my dear young friend,' said Mr. Beagle, 'do assist me in turning out these cats.'

'Cats! where are they?' 'Hish!'—cried Valentine.

'Oh that's of no use whatever, I have tried the hissing business myself: All the hissing in the world won't do. They must be beaten out; you're afraid of them are you?'

'Afraid of a few cats!' exclaimed Valentine, with an assumption of some considerable magnanimity, 'where are they?'

'Under my bed,' replied Beagle. 'That's a brave fellow, break their necks!' and Valentine leaped out of bed, and after striking at the imaginary animals very furiously with the bolsters he hissed and scratched across the grain of the boards in humble imitation of those domestic creatures scampering out of a room, when he rushed to the door, and proceeded to make a very forlorn mewing die gradually away at the bottom of the stairs.

'Thank Heaven! they are all gone at last,' cried Beagle, 'we shall be able to get a little rest now, I suppose,' and after minutely surveying every corner in the room in which it was possible for one of them to linger, he bade Valentine good night.

Valentine assisted Beagle to make his bed; and when they had accomplished this important business with the skill and dexterity of two thorough bred chamber maids, the light was again extinguished, and Mr. Beagle very naturally made up his mind to have six hours uninterrupted sleep. He had, however, scarcely closed his eyes, when the mewing was renewed, and as he had not the slightest disposition to listen to sounds so familiar to his ear, he started up and exclaimed, 'I wish I may die if they are out now. Here's one of them left,' he added addressing Valentine; but Valentine having taken a deep inspiration answered only by respiring with a prolonged gurgling sound.

'He's off again!' continued Beagle.—'I never heard of one sleeping so sound. Hallo, my good fellow, ho! Fast as a four year old! Won't you be quiet you witch? Are you determined not to let me have a wink of sleep to night? She must be in the cupboard; I must have overlooked her; and I don't yet see how I could. Oh! keep the thing up, my dear! Don't let me rest,' and he fumbled about for his box, and having taken a hearty pinch of snuff, began to turn the thing seriously in his mind and to make a second person of himself, by way of having, under circumstances, a companion with whom he could advise, and if necessary remonstrate.

'What is to be done now?, inquired he of the second person thus established.

'What's to be the next step, Jones? It's of no use to go to sleep; we may just as well try to get a kick at the moon—nor must we again disturb—Hush you—Jones, Jones, keep your temper. Don't let a contemptible cat put you out'—and Mr. Beagle took another pinch of snuff, from which he apparently derived a great consolation. 'Ah! at it again!' he continued. I wish I had the ringing of your neck off, madam' You want to put me in a passion,—that you won't, you can't do it! therefore, don't lay the flattering unction to your soul! Well, Jones, how are we to act? Shall we sit here all night, or take up our bed and walk, Jones, eh?'

Jones was taken so much with the expediency of the latter course, that he apparently urged its immediate adoption; for Mr. Beagle in the first place half dressed himself in bed, and in the next, threw the counterpane, a blanket, and a sheet over his shoulder, when tucking a pillow and a bolster under his arm he said, we'll leave you and your conscience, madam; good night;' and left the room, with a view of seeking repose elsewhere.

MISCELLANEOUS.

IMPENDING BANKRUPTCY OF THE FEDERAL STATES.

The financial affairs of the Northern States have reached a point which cannot be passed without the danger of rendering the Federal Government bankrupt and helpless. That disagreeable pill "taxation," and that too of the heaviest and most offensive kind, must be swallowed at once, or there is no hope for the country, or its institutions. Upon this subject the Boston *Courier* has the following:—

TAXATION.

The word taxation is one of the most disagreeable words in the English language. And it is a disagreeable word, because it represents a disagreeable thing. There was never yet a man who paid his taxes cheerfully and with alacrity. Adjust your taxes as you will, they will surely light upon a sensitive place. And yet, with the single exception of death, there is nothing that is so universal as taxation. Every man must die; and every man must pay taxes; that is, every man in a civilized community. By taxes especially is a civilized state distinguished from a barbarian tribe. The Indian upon the prairie—the Bedouin in the desert, —do not pay taxes. Happy men! to that extent at least.

And the relation between war and taxes is just as close and as inevitable as the relation between a tavern dinner and the bill. When the bottle is circulating, and the wit is sparkling from fluent lips, no one thinks of that grim piece of paper. But it comes sooner or later, and it must be paid. And by some extraordinary fatality it always proves to be a great deal larger than we expected. "Surely," the guests say, "we didn't drink all that champagne: we didn't smoke all those cigars." But they did. The clerk who made the charges was perfectly sober all the time, and knew what he was about.

We are now at war. We have six hundred thousand men in arms; and every man of them costing much more than ever soldier did before. We have a considerable navy, and many thousands of sailors. Our expense is terrific. When all comes to be told, including State expenses for national objects which the government will assume, we shall be agreeably disappointed if it do not turn out that we are spending not far from three millions a day.

Thus far we have lived by borrowing; but this is a resource which can last but a short time. And in spite of all our lip-valor, our ink-valor, our speeches, our resolutions, our boasting, our menaces, our self-glorification, the people have taken not quite fifty millions of the loan contracted by the government; in other words, the people have thus far contributed not quite enough to pay three week's expenses of a war which we say is waged for the very existence of the government. So much bluster and swagger, and so little money! But one halfpenny worth of bread to all this intolerable deal of sack! In our judgment this is a humiliating fact; but it is a fact, and we must look it in the face.

But we needed not this experience to tell us that war cannot be carried on without taxation, and that a great war cannot be carried on without heavy taxation. And to this complexion we must come; and we must come to it at once. The resources to be derived from tariff on imported articles are