LIFE IS A POWDER MILL.

Dickens thus describes a visit to the powder mills of Hounslow, near London:

In this silent region, amid whose ninety-seven work-places no human voice ever breaks upon the ear, and where, indeed, no human form is seen, except in the isolated house is which his allotted task is performed, there are upwards of two hundred and fifty workmen employed. They are a peculiar race ; not, of course, by nature, in most cases, but by the habit of years. The circumstances of momentary destruction in which they live, added to the most stringent and necessary regulations, have subdued their minds and feelings to the condition of their hire. There is seldom any need to enforce these regulations. Some terrific explosion here, or in works of a similar kind elsewhere, leaves a fixed mark in their memories, and acts as a constant warning. Here no shadow of a practical joke or caper of animal spirits ever transpires—no witticism, no chaffing or slang.

A laugh is never heard; a smile seldom seen. Even the work is carried on by the men with as few words as possible, and these uttered in a low tone. Not that any body fancies that mere sound will awaken the spirit of combustion, or cause an explosion to take place, but that their feelings are always kept subdued. If one man wishes to communicate one thing to another, or ask for any thing at a short distance, he is never permitted to shout or call out. There is a particular reason for this last regulation. Amid all this silence, whenever a shout does occur, every body knows that some imminent danger is expected the next moment, and all rush away headlong from the direction of the shout. As to running toward it to offer any assistance, as common in all cases, it is thoroughly understood that none can be afforded. An accident here is immediate and beyond remedy.

If the shouting be continued for some time—for a man might be drowned in a river—that might cause one or two of the boldest to return; but this would be a very rare occurrence. It is by no means to be inferred that the men are selfish and insensible to the perils of each other; on the contrary, they have the highest consideration for each other, as well as for their employers, and think of the danger to the lives of others, and of property at stake, at all times and more especially in the more dangerous houses. The proprietors of the various gunpowder mills all display the same consideration for each other, and whenever any improvement tending to lessen danger is made by one, it is immediately communicated to all others. The wages of the men are good, and the hours very short. No artificial lights are ever used in the work. They leave the mills at half-past three in the afternoon, winter and summer.

FRANCISCAN COLLEGE.—The corner-stone of a Roman Catholic Collage was laid on Tuesday, at Alleghany, Cattaraugus county. New York; the institution to be under the charge of five Franciscans, three of whom have already arrived from Rome, and the first said to have emigrated to this country since the year 1618.

BEAR SHOT BY A LADY.—The *Portland Advertiser* says, that Miss Philbrick, a lady residing in Piscataquis country, having been annoyed by bears, set a trap for them. The morning after the trap was set, it had disappeared, and a trail was observed showing which way it had gone. Miss Philbrick procured her rifle and started in pursuit, and was not long in overtaking Bruin with all his paraphernalia. A shot from the rifle soon terminated his existence, and Miss Philbrick had the satisfaction of receiving a good price for the "pelt" in addition to the bounty allowed by the State.

ARITHMETIC.—An Irish journal, in an earnest article on the adulteration of whiskey, says:

"Poisonous adulteration of whiskey was never practised to such an extent as at present by the admixture of one-third spirits, one-third aquafortis, one-third vitriol, and one-third water! This is the sort generally vended in drams to the public."

So that Irish whiskey is composed of four-thirds.

MORMONS.—Several Mormons, men and women, numbering, it is said, nearly a hundred, are now in Paris. They profess to be there to make proselytes, but, wisely doubting their success in this mission, they apply themselves subsidiarily to commercial pursuits, and are buying Parisian nick-nacks against flour which they propose to ship from their colony.

PRESERVATION OF STONE.—Workmen are being employed to apply to all the exterior walls of the Houses of Parliament the solution suggested by Lord Lyndhurst for stopping the decay of the stone. For the Louvre and Notre Dame, at Paris, a preparation of silicate of potash has been used with success to prevent the decay of the stone-work ; its cost is about 30 cents the square yard.

THE POETICAL AND THE LITERAL.—Once in a wood, Mrs. Wordsworth and a lady were talking, when the stock-dove was cooing. A farmer's wife coming by, said to herself, "O, I do like stock-doves." Mrs. Wordsworth, in all her enthusiasm for Wordsworth's poetry, and remembering his own beautiful address to the stock-dove, took the old woman to her heart. "But," continued the woman, "some like 'em in a pie ; for my part, there's nothing like 'em stewed in onions."

BILL OF FARE.—A letter from St. Petersburg gives the following bill of fare of the grand dinner given by the Czar to 200,000 peasants at the gates of Moscow:—240 sheep roasted whole, 480 tarts, 28,800 litres of broth, 480 dishes of jelly, 7200 fowls, 1000 turkeys, 1000 ducks, 24,000 loaves of white bread, 9600 loaves of brown bread, 9600 hams, 46,000 apples, 46,000 pears, 46,000 plums, 4000 pails of beer, 4000 pails of mead, 2800 pails of white and red wine. At the head of every table there was a sheep roasted whole, the horns gilt, and the nose tipped with silver. All the fruits were hung upon Christmas trees.

THE FRENCH EMPEROR.—The Emperor and the Empress of the French, it appears, spent a late Sunday at Bayonne in a way that would not reconcile these two distinguished individuals to the applause of the religious classes of England. They went to a bull fight. Three bulls were slain, and they were tortured with heated weapons. They rushed from their den, they went bounding round the ring, they pawed the earth with great fury, the people cheered, and the Emperor and Empress remained to the last.

LARGE MILL.—The largest flouring establishment in the world, it is said, will be in Richmond, Va. It will be eleven stories high when completed.

THE PILL TRADE. Who could dream of the magnitude of such an undertaking as the manufacture of a Purgative Pill assumes when it comes into general use. And how painfully do the following numbers speak of the amount of human sickness and suffering, that that little morsel of a remedy goes forth to combat and subdue. DR. J. C. AYER of Lowell, manufactures in his laboratory forty gross per diem of his *Cathartic Pills*, throughout the year. This is eight boxes a minute or one dose a second. We thus find over 43,000 persons swallow this pill every day, or 1,296,000 a month! Physicians, think of that! 43,000 patients a day who seek relief from the medical skill of one man. Surely that man should be, as he is in this case one of the first intelligence and of the highest character.—*Painsville Courier.*

A MILITARY MATTRASS.—The ex-King Louis of Bavaria, who recently attained his 70th year, was, a few days ago, waited on at his chateau at Ludwighohe, in the Palatinate, by a deputation from Strasburg, in which place he was born, who paid their respects to him on the occasion. The King received them most kindly, promised to visit their city, and related to them a curious circumstance. At the time of his birth, in August 1786, his father, who was then only Prince des Deux Ponts, commanded the Alsace regiment in the service of France, which was in the Garrison at Strasburg ; and a few days after the birth, he was astonished to see that all his granadiers had cut off their beards and moustaches. On inquiry why they had done so, one of the men stepped forward and said they had determined to beg his acceptance of a velvet mattress for the newly born prince, and that they stuffed it with their beards and moustaches. "I have the mattress still," cried the King, "and will show it to you." The mattrass was produced, and the King added, "I do not think there is in the world a bed which can be called more strictly military than that."

THE LEGION OF HONOUR.

Our readers have not, perhaps, been able to form any precise idea of the nature of the honour recently conferred, with Her Majesty's sanction, by the Emperor of the French, upon certain officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates of the British army. We now, therefore, lay before them a brief account of the Gallic order of the Legion of Honour.

In the year 1802, Napoleon, then first Consul for life, contemplating his elevation to the Empire, bethought himself of creating a decoration which, by bespangling his adherents, would draw them more compactly round his triumphal car. Cambaceres was summoned ; the idea of the Legion of Honour was communicated to him, and the grand chamberlain of course acquiesced. A council was convened with all the due ceremony and promptitude, and the grand plan laid before the members, mostly all of whom, with the exception of Monge and one or two more civilians, were military men high up in grade, flushed with the success of the battle-field, and whose coffers were well garnished by booty and by the state. The Emperor's *preliminaire* or opening speech was short but, as usual, *ad hoc,* to the purpose, and may be given in substance thus: 'For more than two lustres, the French armies, following their generals and their eagles, have been victorious, covering themselves with honour, and exciting the admiration of the world. Promotion has been rapid in every rank, and the private soldier may now look forward to be one day a general. But all cannot become generals, although all may aspire to distinction. A distinction of honour is therefore become necessary, to be worn alike by the soldier and the civilian, thus comprising in one large family the whole French nation. This distinction is the one I propose—"THE LEGION OF HONOUR"—which is destined to far surpass, in exploits and glory, the by-gone decorations of France.' He ceased, and a general discussion followed, not wholly in favour of the project : for although many had been previously gained over by those little blandishments, and cajoleries of the soirces of the Tuileries, and their fascinating Josephine, still the great plan met with some opposition, and the for and against were bandying their opinions with each other, when Napoleon ordered Cambaceres to read the final clause of the Report, containing the emoluments—*traitement annuel*—attached to each grade. All was now silence ; the opposition at once ceased ; and a legislative decree soon proclaimed the adoption of the plan ; and speedily afterwards a gorgeous ceremony took place in the Champs de Mars, 'throwing,' as the historians of the times say, 'an aureola of glory over the inauguration of the first distribution of the decorations of the nobler order ;' but which aureola did not prevent Madame de Staël from thus addressing one of the decorated : 'Ah ! je vois—vous êtes un des honorés !'—pronounced *déshonorés*—for which *jeu de mots* she was ordered to leave France, and remained many, many years in exile.

The Legion of Honour was therefore founded as a distinction, not only for military services, but likewise for civil services rendered to science, literature, art and administration. Even when the Empire fell, the Bourbons preserved the decoration, but changed the mode of conferring it, and substituted the effigy of Henry IV. for Napoleon's. Since 1830, many changes have taken place in the manner of taking the oath on being decorated ; but as it now stands, it runs thus : 'I swear fidelity to the Emperor Napoleon III, and obedience to the constitutional charter, and to the laws of the kingdom.' The orders comprises the following grades:—Grand Cross, first called 'Grand Eagle ;' Grand Officer ; Commander, first named 'Commandant ;' Officer ; and Chevalier, first named 'Legionnaire.' The first distribution, in 1802, comprised 6772 military men and 951 civilians, making a total of 7723 on that memorable day. Were the statutes of the order strictly followed, it would require twenty years' good and loyal service for either a civilian or a military man—the latter in time of peace—to be admitted a chevalier ; but any extraordinary act performed by a civilian, any useful object invented by a superior mind, any *action d'eclat*—bold feat of arms—achieved by a soldier while campaigning, is instantly rewarded by the decoration, or promotion in the order, if the person be already decorated. In war time, therefore, no number of years is required to obtain the decoration ; and this implies a wise foresight, as it gives hopes to the recruit, and leads the officer on to great exploits.

The revenues of the order of the Legion of Honour amount to eight million frances, or L.320,000 sterling ; two-thirds of which are absorbed by the administration of the order, and the annual sums or *traitements* paid to its various members. Those sums are as follows : —The Grand Crosses and Grand Officers receive annually 5000 francs; Commanders, 2000; Officers, 1000 ; Chevaliers, 250 ; but such annual sums have been paid since the year 1815 only to such as have received the decoration while private soldiers or non-commissioned Officers.

A fine moral feature of the order is the many gratuitous *maisons d'education*—educational establishments—attached to and supported by it, for young ladies, daughters of officers or sub-officers : the private soldier never being allowed to marry during the term of his seven years' service, unless his wife occupies some employment in the regiment, such as laundress or *cantiniere*, or brings him a fortune of about L.12 a year. Those educational establishments, in which the instruction communicated is of a first-class order, are St. Denis, near Paris ; a branch in the Rue Barbette, at Paris ; and another branch at the Loges, near St. Germain. In all three there are about 900 or 1000 pupils; but out of the 690 contained in the Imperial House at St. Denis, 400 pay L.40 a year for board, education, &c.; but all the young pupils belonging to the other establishments are brought up therein gratuitously. The Imperial House at St. Denis is administered by a lady-superintendent, who has under her orders six ladies (*dignitaires*), twelve ladies of the first class, twenty novices, and many candidates for the noviciate. All these ladies, except the novices, wear the decoration of the Legion of Honour on the left breast ; and most becoming it is over their jet-black attire. The two branch-establishments are administered by religious ladies belonging to the spiritual order (*congrégation*) of the Mère-de-Dieu.

The Legion of Honour, as well as all the establishments depending upon it, is under the immediate control and administration of a marshal of France, who has the title of Grand Chancellor ; and the *bureaux*, or offices, are situated in one of the most beautiful parts of Paris, not far from the legislature chambers. The revenue of the order is kept up by the interest on its original endowment, and a small monthly percentage upon the pay of every officer in the army and navy. Altogether, it is an order which does honour to its great founder, and to the great nation for which it was founded.

There are two other orders of the kind in France : the Royal Military Order of St. Louis, founded by Louis XIV. in 1693 ; and the Order of Military Merit, created by Louis XV., in 1759, for the reward of officers professing the Protestant religion. These were suppressed during the great revolution, and re-established on the return of the Bourbons in 1815 ; but at the revolution of July 1830, they fell into desuetude, although not abolished by legislative enactment ; and the Legion of Honour, the decorations of which have been conferaed upon a portion of our army, is, practically, the only existing order.

Mr. Smith O'Brien had, by an honorable submission to the penalty adjudged him, gained the respect of many who severely censured his political career. If his colleauges in rebellion and companions in exile broke their permitted furlough, and violated plighted good faith, Smith O'Brien, at least, honourably kept his word, and, scorning to escape the punishment of his political inadvertence by a dishonorable flight, he bore his captivity with dignity and honour. He must either wear his chains until death, or cast them off at the indulgence of that clemency that sometimes sets the prisoner free. Accordingly, while from time to time we heard of one and another escape from the bounds of British jurisdiction, Smith O'Brien availed himself of no such dishonourable means to shuffle off the penalty of his offence. He endured his punishment, until the hand that imposed the satisfaction declared itself satisfied, and removed the burden from the prisoner.

And now Mr. Smith O'Brien once more revisits the scenes of his childhood,—his family fireside, his devoted people, the land that rocked itself convulsively at his hands. He revisits it, not as an agitator once more let loose ; not as the restored leader once more recognised and followed, and too ready to accept the recognition. In no such spirit does this exile revisit his fatherland. He returns a wiser and a better man ; he declines the overtures of a still mistaken people and clergy. He proposes to himself a career more beneficial to his country, to his family, and to himself; and settles down in sober earnest to more useful pursuits, addressing himself to the moral and social improvement of the people, and avoiding a too hasty interference in matters of a political nature

Very different, however, is the conduct of John Frost. The royal act of grace, in his behalf, meets with quite another kind of acknowledgment at his hands. He sails up the Avon amid the cheers of his former colleagues, and his first landing seems to revive the embers of the Chartist sedition. John Frost no sooner feels himself again free on British ground than he resumes his old practices, like a "Ticket-of-leave man," who, by instinct, returns to his former mode of life. He is welcomed and *feted;* and he feels himself flattered. The "Charter" again becomes a question, and John Frost, its hero, saint and martyr. Lengthened absence from home, and stern discipline abroad, have taught him nothing ; for at the earliest opportunity, he plunges again into the same vortex of political agitation, and is quite at home in his resumed labors.