

RANDOM REVERIES.

Past And Present.

(Continued from last week.)

About the painters of the Past! Why, the last time he was in Rome, he was in the Church of St. John Lateran, and somewhat purported to be a painting of St. Peter and St. Paul—a "masterpiece" of the 14th century; and it was a beauty. St. Peter was decked out most ludicrously in all the paraphernalia of a Pope, with a lofty tiara on his head, a richly embroidered and costly ornamented robe on his shoulders, a mass of jewelled rings on the fingers of one hand, and the two traditional keys in the other;—while St. Paul, in scarcely less gorgeous attire and magnificent trappings, sported also a profusion of gemmed rings on his lily-white flipper. One could hardly fancy old Peter, in this masquerading guise, rowing his crazy old boat across the Sea of Galilee, or Paul, in this calathumpian toggery, industriously mending his nets at Corinth. The grand old masters! "Av course." Tintoretto, an Italian painter of high repute (See Appleton's Journal) in a picture of the Children of Israel, gathering manna in the wilderness, armed the men with muskets. Another genius of the brush, Cigoli painted the aged Simeon, at the circumcision of the infant, Jesus, with a pair of spectacles on his venerable nose—ages before spectacles were invented. How was that for high? In a picture by Verrio, of Christ healing the sick, the lookers-on were sketched with full bottomed periwigs on their reverend heads. Were there wig-guilds in our Lord's days? To match this last outrageous violation of the proprieties of Art, Durer, an artist of the 16th century, painted a graphic representation of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, and dressed up the angel, who was giving them the "Counce," in an elegant sweeping skirt, elaborately trimmed with fringed flounces, and projected a posteriori, by a magnificent bustle; and in his scene (a masterpiece too by the way,) of Peter denying Christ, why, hang it, he painted a Roman soldier in the midst of the hubbub, quietly smoking a pipe of tobacco. Shade of Sir Walter Raleigh! When he was travelling through Holland, he had the pleasure of looking on some of Mynheer's conceits. He saw a picture by one of the old Dutch masters, representing the wise men worshipping the Holy Child; and, (would his friend believe it?) one of these same wise men was dressed up in a white surplice, with boots and spurs, in the act of presenting the "wee wean" with a pretty little model of a Dutch man-of-war its rigging strung with miniature cabbages, Mynheer's favourite prog. On another Dutch painting of Abraham offering up Isaac, the Father of the Faithful was limned presenting a blunderbuss, full cocked, at the head of the child of promise. What fine illustrations of the fitness of things. Berlin, another old master, painted the Virgin and Child listening to a New Jerusalem strathspey, on the fiddle, and in another of his masterpieces—but this almost "cows a"—actually introduced King David, or his ghost, playing the harp at the marriage of our Lord with St. Catherine Somebody or other. After that, anything! An old French artist of the Past, with characteristic French taste, executed a beautiful painting of the Lord's Supper, in which the table was adorned with glass tumblers, well filled with cigar lighters. And, to cap the list of these ridiculous anachronisms, he would just tell his friend that not very long ago he had seen a very old painting of the Garden of Eden, in which Adam and Eve were sketched in all their primitive simplicity—Oh! but it was ravishing—and, near them in full Scottish Highland costume—kilt, ostrich feathers and dirk—stood a "hunter bold"—with shot-bag, powder, horn and fowling piece, shooting ducks, which seemed to be very numerous, round head waters of the Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel and Euphrates. But, then, of course these were in the grand old masters—

These, the men sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo,
Down the corridors of time."

Music! Could the ancients ever trot out anything like one of our modern screeching, screaming brass bands, like the fierce stogon of the Scotch bag-pipes, like the thundering rub-a-dub of the big drum and balleulah jingling of the tambourine of the Salvation Army? Why, his neighbour had a little hopeful, who could twang off Ancient Century or Old long Since Ago on his Jew's harp in a way that would have astonished old Nebuchadnezzar's fiddlers, &c., with all their cornets, flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries, dulcimers, and hurdy-gurdies. Yes, Sir, Talk about eloquence. He would take his friend to a political meeting, a revival preaching, or mob gathering, where he would hear more really true eloquence than ever thundered in the Roman Forum, or Hall of the Areopagus—than ever bamboozled Conscript Fathers, or hoodwinked sly Athenians. Why, we had political demagogues, and mob-orators now-a-days, to whom a Brutus, a Mark Antony, a Cassias, or a Cataline could not have held the candle, in humbugging the people, or in exasperating all the fiercer passions of humanity—men who could wheedle and inflame by turns, and, in their political

tantrums especially, he as fast as look at you. We had preachers who could paint "kingdom come" and the "undiscovered country" in such glowing or appalling colors that you almost fancied you heard the twanging of harps in Elysian fields, or were almost suffocated with the fumes of brimstone—pulpit slapping-bangers, whose transmigrifying rhetoric would draw tears from marble eyes, and kindle burning emotions in bosoms of ice—great Armstrong gospel guns, loaded to the very muzzle with the grape and cannister of fierce denunciation—spiritual mortars, charged with bombshells of fearful wrath, whose terrible cannonading would almost blow the "ruff" off a meeting house, and whose sweeping raking broadsides would so appal men, as almost to make them jump out of their skins and squat down on their bones. Then look at our modern physicians, surgeons and dentists. Not only had they discarded many of the old remedies and modes of treatment, not a few of which were often rather dangerous to life; they had adopted new cures and new methods to alleviate suffering by anodynes, and fight the battles of disease successfully and speedily. Indeed, no sooner did a new disease or a new type of an old disease make its appearance than it was immediately handicapped by the wonderful resources of modern medical science, resources of which the medical practitioner of the Past knew absolutely nothing. It might be said that the whole *Materia Medica* and *Pharmacopoeia* had been revolutionised. Surgeons of the Present, could take a poor devil, who had been half flayed, and plaster him up with an entirely new skin, stripped off from another poor devil—biped or quadruped. They could mend a broken back by rooting out the native bone and filling up the broken socket with vertebrae from their private chest of spinal columns. They could move a bedevilled lung, and put a fresh one in its place, taken from a healthy pulpit roarer, who could get along with one. They could manufacture a proboscis or a limb on demand for any unfortunate, who by accident, or otherwise was minus such a prominent corporeal feature. If your "oesophagus should kink your deliquation," they could straighten out the tube in the twinkling of an eye, and re-upholster it. They could hang up a new epiglottis in your throat, furnish the dyspeptic with a bran new stomach of enduring pattern, pad the diaphragm with an anti-hiccough bandage, trot out gutta percha jaws, silver craniums and platinum noses to the disfigured and even inject a liberal supply of loss brains into the vacant garret of a numbskull; while their first cousins, the dentists, could furnish the toothless with a splendid new set—ivory, mineral or hardened papier mache—of A 1 nippers tusks or wisdoms. Could Esculapius, Galen or Hippocrates hold the candle to such glorious burning and shining light? No, by thunder, not by a long chalk. Again, we had barristers and attorneys now, than whom humanity presented no higher, no nobler images—than whom the pages of philosopher unfolded no purer realities. "Talk of power in the "Hercules" and gracefulness in the "Apollo." Look at our modern barrister, uniting the indelible stamp and magnificent expression of all legal and moral beauties—the incarnation of the spirit of chivalry, "riding on a roll of foolscap as wick never did on a broomstick"—the inspired advocate of the highest holiest rights of man—the indefatigable uncompromising assertion of justice—the champion of the oppressed—the shield of the downtrodden—the redressers of

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wrongs—the vindicator of "the innocent accused"—the warrior against windmills—even at the call of weakness, and magnanimous enough to take part with power for "a liberal consideration" of course, nobly courageous at the back of Indigence, and fawningly sycophantic to the machinations of wealth, in chambers, welcoming his clients with a fine come-walk-into-my-parlor-said-the-spider-to-the-fly air; and in court, admitting nothing and denying everything, with all his legal professional non-committal dignity, while learnedly descending with all his legal farfaronade and most "damnable iteration," on the "presumption of innocence" the "reasonable doubt" and the "burden of proof" although what in thunder these expressive phrases actually meant, God alone knew. Yes, to realize the greatest glory of the barrister of the Present, you had to see him in the form, on his legs, in full canonical costume of gown and bands, pathetically sobbing, theatrically gesticulating, tearfully pleading, piously remonstrating, conscientiously appealing, solemnly vowing, legally "arguifying" learnedly quoting, legally quibbling, slyly wheedling, cunningly wrangling, pertinaciously bullragging, implacably denouncing, fiercely storming, furiously threatening, soft soaping and brow-beating the judge by turns, buttering and bullying witnesses, cajoling and obtusating juries, and practising every trick in trade to carry his point. Wasn't he a daisy? Nothing like him in the days of yore. Then as to the most of our farmers being on the brink of ruin from heavy mortgages, that was all hosh. He could point to hundreds of them by intelligence and industry who enjoyed not only the comforts, but also many of the luxuries of life and were slowly but surely accumulating property and money. It was true that now, as in all ages of the world we had dishonest store-keepers, tricky fellows, dealers in all kinds of shoddy, adulteration retailers, slippery scaly "cusses" trading Jews; but, on the other hand, to the honor of humanity, there were hundreds on hundreds of our merchants, great and small, whose word was as good as their bond and whose goods were all that dealers professed them to be. Besides his friend should remember that in this age of feverish competition it would scarcely pay a store-keeper to play the rogue very long. And so on to the end of the chapter. But the fact was his friend was nothing but an antiquated old "fogie" and it was no use arguing with him it was only casting pearls before swine. Here, however, the old went for him, right between the eyes. In attempting to separate the belligerents I tumbled from my chair, "and" as old John Bunyan would have said "I awoke, and behold it was a dream."
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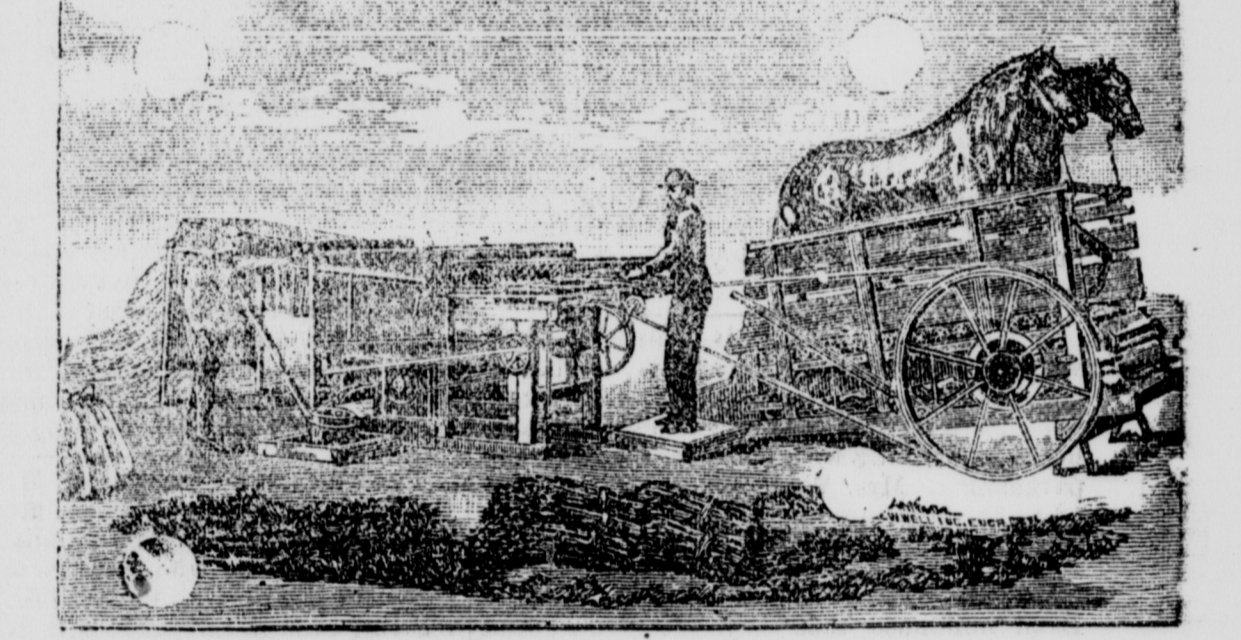
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