

Literature, &c.

From Ainsworth's Magazine.
PEOPLE WHO 'HAVENT' TIME.
BY LEMAN BLANCHARD.

EPITAPHS read in country churchyards are, if less poetical, sometimes as instructive as Elegies written therein. It is recorded upon rough stone, in deeply chiselled verse, of a certain Leicestershire lady thus:—
'At eighty three she perished in her prime:
More good she would have done BUT HADN'T TIME!

Here is a picture of human life!—except that human life is generally taken off sooner—before it has time to sit for a portrait at all, upon any other principle than the photographic. The lady who hadn't time might have been the mother of the whole race of mortals. We all bear a strong family resemblance to her. How much good she would have done if she had had more time! What paragons would some of us become!—if we had time.

There's Snaggs junior for example; ask him why he does not sit down, and write off, at a heat, a new history of the World, or an epic like Milton's. Nobody supposes that he wants genius; for, having attempted nothing yet, every body gives him credit for great capacity. It is that he lacks ambition? No; for he is quite resolved to write his way, through stone walls, into Westminster Abbey. But perhaps he is indolent? On the contrary, he is as busy as a new pair of bellows in a place that is nameless. Why, then, does he fail to write epic poems and histories of the world. Ask him, and he will give you the sole, sufficing reason—'He hasn't time.'

Behold Fitzgrub! Would you know why, with his theoretic philanthropy, he lives solely for himself, and renders not a jot of service to any human being in the known world,—why, with his charitable sentiments, he never inquired into this or that cause of distress,—why with his ample means and boundless benevolence of soul, he does not assist this plan of enlightenment, or foster that humanizing institution,—why, in short, he fails to circulate some of the wealth he has collected, and to put in action some of the exalted ideas he entertains! Ask,—and his answer will be prefaced with a long drawn sigh, over the shortness of life—'Ah! my dear sir, I haven't time for these things. The span of life is all too narrow—the day is gone, before one can see how to do any good in it.—I haven't time!'

Inquire of Mr Soho, why he has been stationary all his days. He was free to go and to return—free as the air itself. The spirit of enterprise and enquiry seemed ever to possess him. He panteth for the far off, as a bard panteth for the sublime—wings of his shoulders seem to play, Wordsworth fashion. Why has he worn a strait waistcoat over them! Why, with his thirst for the Nile and the Niger, has he been crawling ever beside the Thames! How is it that, while his life has been one long dream of speculation, concerning hidden sources of streams, ruins of cities supposed to have been built by Chaos, caves unfashionable and inaccessible mountain tops, he should never have advanced a mile and a half beyond Hyde Park Corner! The world was all before him where to choose. True; and 'True' would be his answer—'I have constantly been promising myself a start; I have had my hat on to go to the Pyramids once or twice; but somehow—I don't know how it is—I haven't had time.'

It is the fate of many people in this perverse world—when they do come to a right point—to come to it by wrong conclusions. We are apt to set down each other's excess and deficiencies to some cause which, being uppermost, seems likeliest, although perhaps, it is the last which should be selected. The good deed left undone, the great duty left undischarged,—does not always denote a want of virtue—we daily see that a want of time is at the root of the evil.

People would be virtuous, no doubt, but they haven't time; it will sometimes take half an hour to perform a promise which may be neglected with perfect ease in a moment,—recollect that! They would be considerably more clever, more learned, more wise, also, but for the same reason: while they can prove themselves blockheads in half a minute, or make fools of themselves in no time. These points should be thought of, and allowance made accordingly. Life may be quite long enough, it thus appears, for faithlessness and folly,—and yet

many persons may find it much too short for integrity and wisdom.

Watches are no invention of the greatest possible convenience—to pick-pockets in a crowd. Parish clocks, also may have their merits of another kind; each differing with the other so consistently as to insure a regular discordance of opinion among their various followers, highly congenial to clock going humanity. But for any other virtues these inventions possess, for any other services they render, a sun dial in November would be of about the same use and value. What can people want with such ridiculous superfluities, who are continually telling us 'they haven't time.' It must be like exhibiting tales of the different rates of interest on foreign loans, to a beggar. Yet the persons who haven't time are always seeing how it goes, and they take out their watches sixty times in the hour to convince themselves that they have not a single minute they can call their own. By frequent looking at time, they fancy that they are gaining, instead of losing it.

'Some men's watches,' said Talleyrand, 'always go a few minutes faster than those of other men. Not having time, they borrow a few minutes, and contrive to keep a small stock surreptitiously on hand. But borrowing, the minutes become years, and the spendthrift sees himself ruinously in advance. Other men's watches have the knack of going too slow; not having time enough, they think to board their precious moments, until they are awakened too late to the conviction that they have always been behind time.'

These, indeed, are types of the two great classes into which society is divided—people who live in a hurry, and people who hardly seem to live at all—the railway carriages and the low coaches of the community.

Neither of these classes has 'time.' The insect that is begotten, born, and dead in one day, is not more pressed for time than the tortoise that lives for centuries; for he, whenever he moves forward, at the rate of a mile a week, fancies himself in a terrible bustle, and thinks he has not a moment to spare. The flowers, that just open at an appointed moment to close again for ever, must feel themselves, during their little hour of blushing, in a prodigious hurry, wondering what time it is by St. Paul's, and trembling lest they should be too late for the sunset; but so, also, beyond a doubt, in the aloof in haste, and if asked whether it could not contrive to blossom in less than a hundred years, it would answer, (if it could speak English,) 'How impatient is man—there isn't time!'

Of the two classes, the fast and the slow movers, two familiar instances occur to us.

Hairbrain is always in a hurry, and always too late. He has never yet found sufficient time to complete anything he undertook to do. Life is just long enough to allow of a beginning; and to break off in the middle is his destiny. He never seems to lose a minute; he would turn every moment to account, yet he never has a single instant at his command. Leisure to him is a luxury peculiar to fairy land; the privilege of idle poets, who

Under the shade of melancholy boughs
Love and neglect the creeping hours of time,
Life has no pauses for him; he talks, reads in breathless haste, without the slightest reference to punctuation, and would not stay while he could count 'one,' even at a full stop. He has no patience with the rests in music, and would have called out from the pit, to Garrick delivering the soliloquy, to 'get on.' His stop watch would have told him that the nominative case ought to be run right into the verb, never stopping for repairs. He is the most honest fellow in the world, but he once borrowed fifty pounds, and has never had time to return it. Existence is too short, he argues, to allow any man to promise and to perform too. The utmost you can accomplish, according to his theory, is to be just to succeed,—and so lively, so active he is in all his movements—his brain is ever so bustling, his very soul seems to be in such a hurry—that it is almost a wonder, sometimes, that he does not succeed in something. Every year seems leap year where he is concerned—or, rather, it is the odd day, without the three hundred and odd. Directly he has settled what o'clock it is, he discovers that there is not time to do anything that morning: upon which, he immediately sets to work on a dozen matters at once. He is for ever running between pillar and post, and never touches either—he hasn't time!

It is long since we heard from Hairbrain; but well do we remember a letter

of his, announce very acceptable 'herewith.' 'Herewith you will receive a noble haunch'—and then followed some particulars of the pedigree of the buck, an admirable dissertation on fat, a picture of somebody's magnificent park, and a lively account of an excellent day's sport; the whole concluding with a 'P. S. I find I haven't time to send you the haunch at present—excuse haste.'

This 'Excuse Haste' is his family motto—as it might have been Adam's. His coat of arms, indeed, may be thought to convey no impertinent or undefying representation of human life, if inspected with a serious eye; it presents the view of a highway being drawn in a cart to Tyburn at a gallop, through a heavy shower of rain, with the motto, as already mentioned, 'Excuse haste!'

The last time we saw him, was in a state approaching to exhaustion. He was puffing and blowing, as though bent on running a match with a steam carriage. It turned out, that he had been racing and chasing to get to the Bank by four o'clock, from Charing Cross, and had only eight minutes to do the distance in. Of course he was 'too late,' as usual. 'But why, on earth,' asked a listener, 'didn't you call a cab!' 'Call a cab!' echoed Hairbrain, after considerable fanning, and a preliminary phrrl-phurrll-fl; how foolishly—you talk—I hadn't time! And here he fell into much meditation upon the shortness of life.

To Comfort himself, and recruit after this misadventure, he drank bumpers at dinner, and became decidedly Bacchanalian soon after the cloth was removed. It was always his maxim, that a great deal of time was lost while the bottles were passing round. When reproached with this excess, next day, to the question why he had not kept sober, he is understood to have given the old reply—'I couldn't—there wasn't time.—I got drunk so very soon after dinner!'

Grave must be the offence which he would hesitate to justify or to palliate, on that great and all-sufficing score—the want of time.

Our excellent friend, Halt—(he is the other promised example, the companion picture)—meets him on this ground, and concurs in all his conclusions, though he arrives at them by different premises. Halt was never in a hurry in his life. Halt, in his own person, knows not what haste means. He maintained a certain marching step from years and to year's end, borrowed as some conjecture, from the practice of soldiers on drill, who seem to be moving forward, although they stir not an inch from the spot. He upholds the theory of the extreme shortness of life, to vindicate his practice of slow movements.

'Why hurry—why drive?' he reasons.—'What does it all signify?—what does it all amount to, haste, worry as you will! Life is too delicate to bear this jerking and jolting. It is not long enough to stand all this wear and tear. And what time do you save by hard gallop? Just five minutes now, three by and by, and one to-morrow. It's of no use—you may push on—but it's of no use. You'll be too late after all. You'll never reach the goal, urge as you may. And if you did, what of it? No sooner done, than you are gone. Suppose you were allowed a whole century afterwards to spend the fortune you have built up, to enjoy the fame you have won. What's a century! To a man who contemplates eternity, and feels himself destined to undertake that journey, what is a course of centuries. Merely a little trip to Bath—not so much, only to Ramsgate. Why push along at such a preposterous rate! I never hurry myself—never go either faster or slower—its not worth while—I haven't time to make haste.'

It may be conjectured from the above, that Halt has no particular objection to making speeches upon occasion. The surmise is just, Halt, it must be confessed, does like to consume his life in long disquisitions on its brevity. When we say 'making speeches,' we mean, of course, long speeches—for there are no such things as short ones. 'We always know what Halt means, when he rises to make a few brief observations.' He spoke very well—very effectively—the other evening, for the first hour and a half; the rest was a failure.

'What a pity,' said a friend, 'that you did not sit down when you had made your point; that you did not leave off when you had created so favorable an impression.'

'All the fault,' was the reply, 'of being so sadly pressed for time. I consumed but three hours and a quarter. I hadn't time to leave off. A peroration can't be done properly under fifty

minutes. It takes twenty, after the last 'and to conclude.'

When the servant who robbed him was transported for fourteen years, Halt considerably petitioned for the mitigation of the sentence, on the ground that, in all probability, the man 'would not have time' to be transported for more than seven. The convict escaped, and returned before his term ended, only to find the same principle working in his excuse:—'Life's very short; the poor fellow hadn't time to stop in such a climate. Besides, he had only nine years more to serve—what's nine years!'

Halt is seventy years, has lived in assemblies of his fellow mortals all his days, and has learned but one lesson, retains but one positive conviction—that 'life is short.' He talks without saying anything, hears without nothing, even sleeps without dreaming, and yet complains that 'life is short.' He devotes a long evening to an argument which he has gone over twenty times before, with the same obstinate man, to the same endless end—yet he never had an hour to spare in all his life. He appropriated ten years to the study and practice of the German flute, but never had time to master it thoroughly. He bought a lottery ticket in his youth, waited patiently for the day of drawing, but hadn't time to get it examined, or to ascertain whether it were a prize or not. He meant to have married only never had time to 'pop' the question. He plays at cribbage, and talks politics, even now, during eight hours of the twenty four, and yet grumbles grievously about the want of time. He invented a new life insurance plan, but hadn't time to reduce it to figures. He will die some day—when he has time. He does not want heart—and he has an old head on his shoulders, as we have seen—time is what he wants. He intends to do something yet, he tells us—we must give him time.

The world is but a bubble. Men and daffodils, as the poet informs us, are the same things:—

'We have short time to stay as you,
We have as short a spring,
As quick a growth to meet decay
As you or anything.'

There's plenty more verses in that poem of Herrick's, but one hasn't time to quote them. Another poet, however, boasts of his life of leisure, and makes short work of his business in this world, when thus he sings—

'To live and die is all I have to do.'

Very right; but so scanty was his allotted time, that even these two things—all he had to do—he was obliged to do both at once,—for while he was living he was dying!

From the Foreign Quarterly Review.
PERILOUS POSITION OF SAINT PETERSBURG.

It is melancholy to contemplate the constant danger in which this brilliant capital is placed. If Mr. Loh's picture is not overcharged the occurrences of a strong westerly wind and high water at the breaking up of the ice, would at any time suffice to occasion an inundation sufficient to drown the whole population and to convert the entire city with all its sumptuous palaces into a chaotic mass of ruins. The Gulf of Finland runs to a point as it approaches the mouth of the Neva, where the most violent gales are always those from the west, so that mass of waters, on such occasions, is always forcibly impelled towards the city. The island forming the delta of the Neva, on which St. Petersburg stands, is extremely low and flat, and the highest point in the city is probably not more than twelve or fourteen feet above the level of the sea. A rise of fifteen feet is, therefore, enough to place St. Petersburg under water, and a rise of thirty feet is enough to drown almost every human being in the place. The poor inhabitants are, therefore, in constant danger of destruction and can never be certain that the whole 600,000 of them may not, within the next twenty-four hours, be washed out of their houses like so many drowned rats.

To say the truth, the subject ought hardly to be spoken of with levity, for the danger is too eminent and the reflection makes many hearts quake in St. Petersburg. The only hope of this apparently doomed city, is that the three circumstances may never occur simultaneously, viz: high water, the breaking up of the ice, and a gale of wind from the west. There are so many points of the compass for the wind to choose among, that it would seem perverse in the extreme to select the west at so critical a moment; nevertheless, the wind does blow very often from the west during spring, and the ice floating in the Neva, and the Gulf of Finland is of a