

Literature, &c.

From the Metropolitan Magazine.

THE LAWYER'S TWO VISITS.

I PREPARED myself one morning to pay two professional visits. Sir William Mostyn was not expected to live through the day, and wished to make an immediate alteration in his will, and Zechariah Briggs, a wealthy money lender, was desirous to take the best steps to intimidate and confound a debtor to whom he had advanced two hundred pounds, and who now refused to pay the sum, for no better reason than because he did not possess money for the purpose. I did not anticipate any addition to my 'curiosities of legal experience' from these visits; neither of them offered the charm of originality, they were both tedious repetitions of an often told tale. Sir William Mostyn had been expected to die in the course of the day at least a dozen times in the last three years; in fact, whenever he had a slight attack of illness, he magnified it into a death warning, because it enabled him, with less glaring vanity and egotism than might be the case under other circumstances, to pronounce a flowery panegyric on his own virtues, which rivalled that of any tomb-stone in the kingdom in audacious and mendacious flattery. He had a charming wife, (by the bye, how is it that tyrannical, ill-tempered men so often possess charming wives?) and two beautiful daughters; he constantly assured them on these melancholy occasions, how unworthy they were of such a blessing as himself, and how bitterly they would lament him, when lamentation would be of no avail. He was then accustomed to digress to the lesser grievances of the loss of 'pride, pomp, and circumstance,' to which they would be exposed on his death, considerably reminding them that his large estates were annexed to the baronetcy, and would become the property of a brother, with whom he had not been on terms for six and twenty years, that it was only in his power to bequeath four hundred a year to his wife, and three thousand pounds to each of his daughters, and that therefore they must take leave of their splendid mansion in Cavendish square, and beautiful family seat at Woodlands, and resign themselves to choose between these three horrors of a limited income which he designated as 'cottage vegetation, watering-place degradation, and continental expatriation!' It was likewise a very common event for Sir Wm. Mostyn to wish to make an alteration in his will; he was extremely irritable; any one who gratified the first feeling had an excellent chance of being set down on parchment for nineteen guineas, or a morning ring, and if knowingly or unknowingly they offended the second, they had the dire necessity of being immediately scratched out again. As for Zechariah Briggs, his life was passed in cajoling and cheating half his borrowing friends, and threatening and imprisoning the other half; to the first part of his business he was quite equal in his own person, to the last he was frequently obliged to call in my unwilling assistance.

On reaching Cavendish square I found that for once I had wronged the baronet in my suspicions of dissimulation, that he was really and seriously ill. Lady Mostyn joined me in the drawing room with tearful eyes and as agitated manner, and I was surprised and grieved to hear from her that Sir William had sent to me for the purpose of adding a codicil to his will, disinherit his youngest daughter. I could not resist the impulse of inquiring what could be the offence of the meek and winning Alice Mostyn, and her mother, after a little hesitation, confided it to me. Sir William Mostyn had seen a family picture, executed by a young artist of great promise, and was forthwith inspired with the ambition of having a similar one taken of himself, his lady, and his two daughters. The artist was engaged to attend, and took excellent likenesses of Sir William, Lady, and Miss Mostyn; but Alice seemed completely to baffle his skill; and it was not till after repeated sittings and numerous trials that he succeeded in transferring an exquisite likeness to the canvas of the lovely girl whom he had faithfully traced and enshrined in his heart immediately after his introduction to her. The mansion in Cavendish square was haunted by one of those sycophantic, fawning beings who so frequently infest the dwellings of the rich. Miss Crawley was a sort of parrot charwoman, ready to obey any summons, and officiate in any capacity; she professed that her

greatest delight consisted in making herself useful to her friends, but in reality, she delighted in nothing so much as in making mischief among them. She had taken a violent aversion to the young artist, because he turned an indifferent eye to her soft glances, and a deaf ear to her hints of being perfectly willing to occupy a niche in the family picture, in which she, with some justice, observed, 'she had certainly as good a right to appear as the lapdog,' consequently she kept a rigid watch on his movements, and behind the sheltering covering of a large Indian screen, heard him declare his love for the sweet Alice, heard her murmur a few words of doubt, surprise, and confusion, but certainly not of displeasure, and then ran to impart all she had heard to Sir Wm. Mostyn, who was very ill and peevish at the time, and on whose system she was perhaps benevolently anxious to try the remedy of counter-irritation. The trembling Alice was summoned, and the bitterest fulminations heaped upon her. In vain did she express her contrition for having listened to the voice of love, in vain did she promise to relinquish her suitor—the crime of having voluntarily stood to hear the tender protestations of a poor artist was such as could only be adequately punished by the entire loss, to her and her heirs for ever, of the three thousand pounds once destined for her portion.

I felt extremely indignant with the selfish and cold-hearted baronet, but yet, to do all parties impartial justice, I could not but think that my favorite Lady Mostyn took her daughter's indiscretion rather too coolly, and did not appear so disconcerted at the idea of having a poor artist for a son in law as I should have thought consistent in the mother of a high-born beauty of eighteen. I reconciled myself, however, to her conduct, by surmising, that having felt the evils of splendid misery in her own person, she might possibly be disposed to look with a favorable light on love, even when walking hand in hand with poverty, and I accompanied her to the chamber of Sir William, as anxious as herself to do all in my power to conciliate and soften him. Sir William was propped up by pillows, and was dilating on the heinous conduct of the banished Alice to Louisa Mostyn, Miss Crawley, the portly housekeeper, and the nurse, who had recently been engaged to attend him. Lady Mostyn addressed him soothingly,—he replied by reproaches on the manner in which she had educated and over-indulged her daughters. I attempted to induce him to postpone the alteration of the will, but was silenced by a spirited recommendation to 'mind my business, and keep in my place,' he then directed me to 'revoke and rescind' the legacy to Alice Mostyn, and to make it over to some public charity, (alas! how often are public charities enriched by private resentments!) I took down the heads of his instructions in pencil, and then at his desire began to inscribe them on the will. While I was thus employed, Sir William, whose powers and fluency of speech were not in the remote degree affected by his illness or his anger, proceeded to address his auditory.

'It is exceedingly probable that before the close of the day I shall be taken from you; the loss to you will be irreparable; but I am most thankful to say that no one ever departed this world with a clearer conscience than myself, or with a more gratifying certainty of having performed all the duties and charities of life.'

Here Sir William paused, partly to take breath, and partly to listen to the corroborative 'certainly' and 'very true' of his hearers; but Miss Crawley had just been called out of the room to answer a note of inquiry, and none of the others were disposed to strain their own conscience with the guilt of vouching for the spotlessness of the conscience of Sir William. Silence ensued, not the silence which gives consent, but that which refrains from giving it. Sir William proceeded in rather a raised voice to enumerate the items of his excellencies.

'I have been a most devoted, affectionate and exemplary husband.'

Poor Lady Mostyn sighed, she had undergone for four and twenty years that system of minute domestic tyranny which is as much worse than actual ill usage, as the constant drooping of water on the head is more agonizing than a sudden and sharp blow.

'I have submitted,' proceeded Sir William, 'to the mortification and disappointment of having no one to inherit my titles and estates, and I have shown the most affectionate regard to the interests of my two daughters.'

Sir William had certainly submitted to the want of a son because he could not help it, but he had made it a constant subject of discontent and upbraiding; as to his regard for the interests of his daughters, the codicil that I was writing seemed so completely at variance with this assertion, that I could scarcely be surprised when I saw the beautiful eyes of Louisa Mostyn glittering rather through indignation than through tears.

'I have also,' said Sir William, 'been an indulgent and kind master to my numerous domestics; they will meet with very different treatment from my brother.'

The housekeeper who sat near me, here uttered a faint whisper which sounded to me like 'I hope they will.' In fact, Sir William never passed a week without either giving warnings, or having it given to him, and his servants would have succeeded each other as rapidly as the figures in a magic lantern, or the carriages on a railroad, had not Lady Mostyn followed him as Pitty followed Sorrow in the allegory, dropping balm into the wounds he inflicted, and by dint of gentleness, argument, and sometimes, it must be confessed, a little bribery, contrived to keep the threatened departures of the establishment tolerably within bounds.

'As for myself,' continued the baronet, 'the patience and resignation which I have displayed through life, adhere to me in the last stage of it. I look on death without a fear—I bear pain without a murmur.'

The nurse opened her eyes to their widest extent, as she recalled certain exclamations and interjections of her feeble patient which had struck her during the preceding night as 'perfectly awful.'

'I appeal to all present,' concluded Sir William, looking somewhat angrily and suspiciously around, 'whether I have not spoken justly of myself.'

Fortunately Miss Crawley had entered the room a little while before, and she hastened to assure Sir William that he could never be said to speak justly of himself, because his humility always made him undervalue his own excellencies, but that if he could only know what others said of him, he would be well aware that he was considered a pattern for admiration and imitation. The baronet, exhausted by his eloquence, threw himself back on the pillow; his eyes resting with a glance of approbation on the unblushing sycophant whose falsehoods even dared to profane the chamber of death. I had finished the codicil and seen it executed, and as the physician just then entered, I took my leave, but not before I had decided from the glance which he cast on me after looking at his patient, that he considered him in imminent danger. I was rejoiced to escape; it is gratifying to stand by the death bed of the meek and humble minded Christian, or even by that of the truly repentant and sorrowing criminal, but it is dreadful to listen to the vain self-satisfied boastings of one who rejects and slight the Saviour, without whose mediation the best of us could never hope for heaven, and who clings alone to those moral virtues and good works utterly insufficient in themselves for salvation, even where they really exist, but in which qualities the boaster in question was lamentably and notoriously deficient. I was occupied for some hours in attending the courts of law, and it was not till the close of the morning that I was able to wait on Mr. Elwyn, the refractory debtor of Zechariah Briggs. He was a man in the prime of life; his features were handsome, but his countenance bore the deep traces of sorrow and anxiety; and his well worn clothes, his meagrely furnished apartments, and the pale dejected looks of his fragile wife, all convinced me that Zechariah's hopes of his two hundred pounds rested on a very slender foundation. I had never before seen Elwyn in person, but I had often seen him in print; he had become known to the public as the author of some pleasing little poems about two years ago. I had a favourable opinion of his abilities, but was sorry to hear that he depended entirely on them for his subsistence,—literature is a good servant, but a bad master, it is a delightful recreation, and often affords a reasonable addition to a moderate income, but except in very splendid instances, it offers a miserable compensation to him who devotes his whole time to it—who, at the command of a fickle public sees himself compelled to waste his fondly nurtured talents on the most paltry and trifling subjects—who, under the pressure of adversity and embarrassment labours to produce brilliant ideas from his already overwrought and exhausted

brain, till even the drudgery of compilation and translation becomes a relief in the comparison—who repairs to his writing desk, not with the enthusiastic fire which the inspired minstrel snatches his harp, but with the cold mechanical reluctance with which the wearied manufacturer sits down to his loom, and who after all this saddening, mind sinking, soul subduing toil, too often has to say,

'Small prospects have those authors to be read.'

Whose daily writings earn their daily bread! About a year ago, Elwyn was dazzled by the Utopian prospect of a new magazine, which was to combine every thing that was excellent in all its predecessors and contemporaries, and to avoid everything that was exceptionable in them; two hundred pounds would admit him to be a partner in it,—he was advised to apply to Zechariah Briggs for the money. Zechariah questioned him about his expectations, (not from the Magazine, but from other sources,) and the answers were so satisfactory, that he immediately advanced him the sum in question. The magazine died a natural death—'older and abler' publications of the same kind drove it from the field. Elwyn's other expectations, whatever they might be, proved equally fallacious with his literary hopes, and nothing could be imagined more depressing and discouraging than his present situation.

'For myself,' said he, after briefly explaining his circumstances to me, 'I could bear any deprivation with fortitude but the failing health and exhausted spirit of my poor Joanna are more than I can endure. We married imprudently I allow, and against the consent of most of our relations, but a rich uncle of my wife's kindly allowed us an income, which amply sufficed for our moderate wishes, and we lived on the continent without our only son in peace and contentment till the last two years; when the sudden death of our benefactor betrayed that his circumstances were involved, and that he was unable to bequeath us the smallest legacy in lieu of the income which he had hitherto bestowed upon us. Thrown thus open our own resources, the talent of poetry in myself, and of painting in my son, which we had hitherto cultivated merely as accomplishments, became our sole source of dependence, and would have supplied our absolute wants had it not been for the unfortunate scheme which led me to apply to Zechariah Briggs for the loan of 200 pounds. Another misfortune had just fallen upon us,—my son was requested to paint a family picture for Sir William Mostyn, he consented to do this much against my inclination, for circumstances had happened which connected Sir William's name with very painful associations on my mind. Lady Mostyn, however, who is all kindness and benevolence, called upon us, and pressed us to comply; we agreed to do so, little foreseeing the sad termination of his engagement. Sir William had dismissed him in a fit of resentment at discovering his admiration for his youngest daughter, and we fear he will do all in his power to injure him; we are well acquainted with Sir William's stern and unfeeling nature.'

[To be concluded.]

INSECT FEEDERS.

Insects, like other animals, derive their nourishment from the vegetable and animal kingdoms; but a glance is sufficient to show that they possess a much wider field of operations than the others. While the other animals make use for their subsistence of only a portion of the inexhaustible treasures of the vegetable kingdom, and reject the rest as insipid or noxious, the insects leave perhaps no vegetable production untouched. From the majestic oak to the invisible fungus or the insignificant wall moss, the whole race of plants is a stupendous meal, to which the insects sit down as guests. Even those plants which are highly poisonous and nauseating to other animals are not refused by them. But this is not yet all. The large plant-consuming animals are usually limited to leaves, seeds, and stalks. Not so insects, to the various families of which every part of a plant yields suitable provender. Some, which live under the earth, attack roots, others choose the stem and branches—a third division live on the leaves—a fourth prefers the flower—while a fifth selects the fruit or seed.

From Burrow's Bird in Spain.
NEWSPAPER REPORTERS.
What most extraordinary men are these reporters of the English newspapers! Surely if there be any class of individuals who are