

Literature, &c.

From Ainsworth's Magazine. THE PLEASURES AND ADVANTAGES OF PERSONAL UGLINESS.

Among the very doubtful 'portraits of gentlemen' which make their way by hundreds into our annual exhibitions—among the thousands yearly perpetrated but happily for the public never exhibited at all,—no mortal eye has yet rested on the portrait of 'Matthew Starke, Esq.' The fact is, it has never been painted. Artists of all degrees have concurred in experiencing one insuperable difficulty—they couldn't do it. Each portrait in succession was tolerably like its predecessor; but not one was like the Sitter. There was the picture; but the Original was omitted. Every R. A. committed the same fault—he left out Starke.

It is to be feared—and this is an instance of the fact—that the moral qualities are, in their high perfection, more rarely discovered than the intellectual. Talent is common enough, but where are we to look for sincerity? There are hosts of clever painters: but name the immortal one, possessed of the great daring, the unflinching love of truth, requisite to the realization on canvas of the unique countenance of Matthew? It was not from false education in art, from a want of genius that they failed. It was simply from a lack of moral courage. They quailed before the primitive, rigorous, conscious ugliness, at once unmasked and unmatched, of that superhuman face divine.

It was said of the fractious, quarrelsome old politician John Lilburne, that if he alone were left alive, John would be against Lilburne, and Lilburne would be against John. Adopting this hint, we may say that Matthew is extremely like Starke, and that Starke bears a strong resemblance to Matthew, but assuredly if the owner of these two names was the only man left living in the world, the human countenance would be out of print.

It is proper that it should remain unpainted, nay, even undescribed, Earle bears testimony to the grand virtue which lurks in the obscurity of Milton's terrific image—'What seemed his head.' The homage which the obscure can pay is due to the peculiar ugliness of Matthew's visage, 'what seems his face' requires no exact and literal portrait. Yet on the other hand, the obscure can have little to do with what is as extremely plain!

His features, perhaps, examined separately, might not seem eminently endowed with a property of hideousness beyond that which is borne with so much competency by numerous wearers of hats in this nether sphere. Each component part of it, no doubt, displays a decided tendency to deviate from the forms most commonly received as the beautiful; but it is not on this account that the snub noses of the world have any right to turn up to it disdainfully.

Meek feature, handsome or otherwise, often goes for nothing. Regularity in that respect no more, as a consequence, ensures beauty, than a general departure from it ensures ugliness. Who cares about the dimple in which no Cupid lurks—the blue eye, that affords not a glimpse of heaven! The arched brow, the small red mouth, and all the attractive items which connoisseurship can add, are no thing, as we know, of the soul of beauty—the something, that mere form and color alone can never convey, be left out of the catalogue. So with the real requisites for ugliness.

We hourly see people with some decided pretensions to it, in eyes, nose, or mouth, perhaps in all—in the form of the face, in the hair, or complexion—and yet they can make no thing of them, they totally fail in impressing the spectator with a sense of their unsightliness; and we take no more notice of their countenance than of the knocker at the street door.

Yet how they try to attract us!—for ugliness is ever vainer than beauty, and works much harder to win attention. How assiduously they play off their artillery of repulsion. Who ever saw a man with a nose cut out of a crabstick that did not perk it out or twist it to and fro, the better to shew it off. If he have an eye which looks best when the lids are closed, and which nature indeed seems to have given him but to sleep with, he is sure to ogle with it incessantly, and if his mouth be of the frog-fashion, it is widened with a perpetual smile. Still this mere plainness of feature, however shown off, moves us not—it is a common thing. Its owner is a mere pretender to pure ugliness.

The 'skin of a mummy with the beard of a Jew,' together with 'the one rolling, like the bull's in Cox's museum,' are sported in vain, if the nameless something, the essence of the hideous, be wanting.

It is upon this that Matthew rests claim to superiority. He regards the most irregular and ill-contrived features without an emotion of envy, without a fear of rivalry. He allows to this man his naturally frightful leer, and to that, his carefully cultivated grin, he permits some of his contemporaries to gaze admiringly at that point of their own faces where the port wine most brightly blushes; and others to elevate the point last alluded to, as if in eternal scorn of the eyes that goggle above, and then he turns to the mirror, and gazes with a calm, settled conviction, that these merely ordinary people can never stand in his way—that all such customary indications of plainness are contemptible as matters of competition—that he has but to shew his face and triumph.

He beholds there the one charm which the others want—he finds in it the Sentiment of Ugliness. Upon that repose. Other faces have but the show, the form, the outside, the rag-end, of what is in him, the fulness and the spirit. His little rivals, like shallow persons who fancy that the opposite of wrong must be right, conceive that they, being the opposites of beauty, must be frights. He laughs at them—and in this very act, which renders him doubly hideous, marvellously heightens his success. They may as well be handsome outright, and lack what he has—the *mens divinator*, the poetry of plainness.

As with his visage, so with the motions of his body and the management of his limbs. Other fellows, with shoulders higher and rounder than Matthew's contrive by some deficiency of bearing, to make no impression with them—their bumps have no weight, and cut but a small figure in men's eyes. He carries his quietly, as not seeking to fix attention, and men turn to look after him, as they would after Atlas. Again, there are pedestrians, who with legs ingeniously misshaped, strut through life without attracting a glance. Now Matthew Starke turns every duck like movement of his to a graceful account: he always puts his worst leg foremost, and with his splay foot steps at once into due estimation. He studies no awkwardness of gait. He can be ungracious with perfect ease. Such are the masterpieces of nature. His walk is a work of genius. In short, the ugliness of some men, like beauty universally, is but skin deep, but Matthew's is thoroughbred, deep rooted ugliness.

Like poetry, ugliness must be born with us, or we have it not; and it is needless to say that Matthew, from his very cradle, screamed out about the strongest promise of future eminence. His uncouth contortions of limbs and feature evinced a natural gift that way. For once, the standing order of the house, with respect to infants, that they are to be universally voted lovely, and singularly like both parents, was suspended. The most obliging and obsequious visitor, candle in hand, would have been choked in the attempt to say that the boy was beautiful. The most spiteful acquaintances, however secretly disposed to sneer at the good looks of the much esteemed mother, could not venture such a slight of malignity as to say the dear babe was like her. Double the nurse's wages, and still she never would have gone so far as that.

The mutely gazing father found, perhaps, some consolation—for in strange corners does consolation lurk—in the fact that he had not a friend or an acquaintance in the world to whom his son bore the remotest resemblance. And even had he, who detected in him no image of his own aspect, even had he, in the excess of his affection, been moved to trace in the little innocent's face some tokens of the maternal visage, it is probable that a maternal heart, put to such an extreme trial, would have received the kindness as a cruelty, with—'I don't see why the resemblance should be all on one side; he has as much right to be like you as me.'

But nothing of the kind was ever whispered; and so upon that particular occasion, for that night only, a creature was born into the world, of whom not a gossip high or low, partial relative, flattering caudle drinker, or bired handmaid angling for a new ribbon, could master impudence enough to say, 'What a sweet infant! What a lovely babe! Oh, do let me have him! What a beauty!' For once, the spirit of lying bit its tongue in a desperate effort to hold it; and even toadyism took its little holiday, having not a syllable to say.

Thus may ugliness in an infant be the parent of virtue in the elders.

But people, nevertheless, were not silent out of doors. The one exclamation that rang throughout the village was, 'Did you ever?' and everybody wanting words to describe to new comers, began to seek for any images which might offer a faint suggestion of resemblance to the unhandsome prodigy; some standing upon their doorsteps to investigate their knockers, others searching by their fire sides for horrid faces in the burning coals, or tracing likenesses on walls; wall many recalling the masks in the last pantomime, and a few remembering that Grimaldi contrived to put on a look of that sort now and then, in the happiest moments. But no speculator of them all ever dreamed of looking upon living shoulders for anything like a likeness 'done in that style;' and the infantine peculiarity was merely voted quite peculiar through the unanimous despair of finding his parallel.

What materially heightened the character of Master Matthew's ugliness, was an unfortunate contrast into which he was brought with the grace and beauty of his brother, Master Alfred, born two years before. It was Master Alfred's lot never to have been called a 'boy at all—but a little cherub; and he was not designated the son of his parents, but their precious pet. He was never allowed to cry, lest he should spoil his beautiful face: while Matt, having no face to spoil, was permitted to cry for whatever he wanted, without getting it. The consequence was, that everybody pronounced the elder to be a sweet tempered darling, and the younger to be a hideous, squalling little brute. Everybody declared that at the same time, that one would come to the bulks, while the other would, as high sheriff of the county, be riding in a coach and six.

But it so happens that the silver spoons which are supposed to be found in some mouths on their first appearance in this world, often turn out to be Sheffield ware: while the wooden ladles lurking in mouths of a different kind, prove to be *lignum vita*.

Let us see how this principle applies to the case of these two Starkes.

The scanty resources of the family were lavished upon the elder, and his education formed a large item in the account; but as he was such a handsome boy, he was kept half his time at home, and when at school small pains were bestowed upon him, because the master had never known a handsome boy turn out a scholar. Nor was he popular with his schoolfellows. Because he was so very goodlooking, they called him contented; and cowardly, because he once took a kick from a boy less than himself, rather than fight at the risk of getting a punch that might possibly damage the symmetry of his nose. They also charged him with meanness, inasmuch as he never gave away a crumb of the plum-cake which his aunt sent him weekly, with strict orders to eat every bit, as it was good for his complexion.

Just as the Adonis had entered his sixteenth year, his father died. Parental opinion of the external characteristics of the two sons was indicated in his last words. As the film came over his eyes, and he was asked, perhaps for the interests of science, by one of those obliging persons who will chatter to dying people, whether he could yet discern any earthly object? 'Yes,' he articulated, 'I can yet see—see my eldest son, beautifully! yes; and my younger—plain—very plain.'

The father dying poor, before he had succeeded in obtaining the premiership, or any other situation, for his favorite son his aunt became the pet's patron, and sent him to Cambridge. There however, the reliance which he placed on the favourable influences of a fine face led to a neglect of the due cultivation of the inside of his head; and he had the misfortune of missing the first honors of the honors of the university in consequence of being plucked.

When the time came for determining upon a profession an entrance into the navy was all but effected for him—only it so happened that a great naval authority declared at once that the lad hadn't the cut of a sailor's job but that such a face would make its fortune at the Horse Guards. His good aunt would have purchased him a commission in the army, but that she could never bear to see his nice face disfigured with nasty moustaches.

Then he might have been taken into partnership by his uncle, the rich corn factor; but unluckily it was discovered that a handsome face would not tell in the Corn Market—no such thing having ever been seen there. Moreover, his distant relation, the sporting baronet in

Berkshire, would have had him down there all the year, to help him at the proper season in riding after the hounds: only he was deucefully afraid, as the young fellow was so handsome, that one or two of his daughters would fall in love with him.

At last his generous patron, the good aunt, died, leaving all her property to another member of the family, in the conviction that nobody with such a face could be long without a fortune.

After waiting some time to afford various young heiresses proper opportunities of proposing an elopement with him, he in a fit of hunger, which if protracted might be injurious to his contour, accepted a situation at a magnificent silk and muslin emporium in the city, where the looking glass on every side is unexceptionably polished, and the cravats of the gazers are emaculately white.

[To be concluded.]

EXTRACTS FROM NEW WORKS.

From Pool's Phineas Quiddy or sheer Industry.

A COCKNEY IN THE COUNTRY.

'I'll tell you how it is, Mr. Q.' continued the other. 'A man who has passed a Lunnun life all his days has but a dull time of it when he comes to settle down in the country. I've tried it, and it won't do. No, no: habit's habit. After slaving in my shop six days of the week, it used to be a pleasure to me to go out two or three miles into the country on the Sunday. Then, when rambling about the fields, without seeing so much as a row of houses—ay, sometimes for as long as five minutes together—and drinking in the fresh air, as one may say, I used to think, that if ever I should get rid of the turmoil of business, a country life would be the life for me! Well, as soon as I was a freeman, I took a lodging at Islington; and what can be more rural? for there's Pockock's Field's, Barnsbury Park, and— Well I rambled about from morning till night, having nothing else to do, and thinking I should never be tired of it,—but after two or three weeks, I sighed to be among my busy haunts again.'

'I never knowed you'd got an aunt,' said Quiddy, innocently.

Without noticing the interruption, the other continued—

'And then when a rainy day happened to come. Oh, Mr Q. (with more of a groan than a sigh) a rainy day in the country to a Lunnuner. And then the Sunday. Formerly, when Sunday came it was my holiday,—I used to go some where into the country; now, I had nowhere to go—I was in the country. I declare to you, Mr Q., that one Sunday after dinner, I walked up to Shore-ditch, by way of change, and passed the whole afternoon in strolling about the empty streets in this neighborhood, and a great relief it was to me. Tarts are tarts, and very nice things they are in their way, and not a boy but likes them,—but 'prentice him to a pastry cook, and give him nothing but tarts from one week's end to another. So is the country to a thoroughbred Lunnuner, Mr Q.—a sort of heaven to visit, but a place quite the contrary to live in. I have tried it, I tell you, and know it.'

From Barrow's Bible in Spain.

LA GRANJA: REVOLUTION AT MADRID.

The Granja, or Grange, is a royal country seat, situated among pine forests, on the other side of the Guadarama hills, about twelve leagues distant from Madrid. To this place the Queen Regent Christina had retired, in order to be aloof from the discontent of the capital, and to enjoy rural air and amusements in this celebrated retreat, a monument of the taste and magnificence of the first Bourbon who ascended the throne of Spain. She was not, however, permitted to remain long in tranquility; her own guards were disaffected, and more inclined to the principles of the Constitution of 1812 than to those of absolute monarchy, which the Moderados were attempting to revive again in the Government of Spain. Early one morning, a party of these soldiers, headed by a certain sergeant Garcia, entered her apartment, and proposed that she should subscribe her hand to this Constitution, and swear solemnly to abide by it. Christina, however, who was a woman of considerable spirit, refused to comply with this proposal, and ordered them to withdraw. A scene of violence and tumult ensued,—but the sergeant still continuing firm, the soldiers at length led her down to one of the courts of the palace, where stood her well known paramour Munos, bound and blindfolded. 'Swear to the Constitution, you swarrogue!' vociferated the swarthy sergeant. 'Never,' said the spirited daughter of