

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines
FOR APRIL.

From Douglas Jerrold's Magazine.
"UNDER THE GREENWOOD
TREE."

Our host has spread beneath our tread
A 'broidered velvet woof;
Curtains of blue peep richly through
Our frotted palace roof:
Well-spent, say I, in forestry,
Were all summer days like this;
Till wood-lamps shine and owl-watchmen cry
Through our green metropolis.

Like those that made in Arden shade,
Their happy court, of old,
Let us 'fleet our time' as in the prime
Of the innocent age of gold:
Each made wild mayor in turn as 'twere,
O'er 'the forest burghers' here;
That will obey our gentle sway.
From love and not from fear.

For we will not take, for our pleasure's sake,
The life of bird or beast;
On herb and fruit, and wholesome root,
In guiltless state we'll feast.
All wearing crowns, that bring no frowns,—
Leaf-woven diadems;
And the jewels earth unmined gives forth,—
Her fragrant surface-gems.

O wood and stream! how fair a dream,—
How vain a dream is this!
We owe our life to thoughtful strife,
With woe and wickedness:
Man must not spare to spell with care,
And work out God's intent,—
And know! Thou wilt be charged with guilt,
Who art but innocent.

From Chambers' Miscellany.

KING ROBERT'S BOWL.

A SCOTTISH TRADITIONAL STORY.

ABOUT the year 1309, Robert Bruce, though invested three years before with the crown of Scotland, was only able to maintain a kind of outlaw's independence against the officers of the English king, and frequently roamed, with a small band of attendants, through the wilds of Galloway. In that remote corner of the kingdom, on the banks of the Urr, lived Mark Sprotte, a shepherd and a husbandman, but also, when occasion required it, a warrior. It was the good fortune of this obscure peasant to be united to a woman possessing an affectionate character, and no small share of good sense and activity. One morning Bruce, in the course of his wanderings, was attacked near Mark's cottage by one of the English intruders—Sir Walter Selby.

Bruce was not the man to yield to one or even more opponents. The contest was fierce and dubious; the followers on each side were reduced to three, and these three were sorely wounded. Many a battle has been begun by a woman—this was ended by one. The clashing of swords, a sound not unusual in those unsettled times, reached the ear of the wife of Sprotte, as, busied at the hearth fire, she prepared her husband's breakfast. She ran down to the banks of the Urr, and there saw several warriors lying wounded and bleeding on the grass, and two knights, with their visors closed, and with swords in their hands, contending for life or death. They were both tall and stalwart men; but she in vain sought for a mark by which she might know the kindly Scot from the southron. The fire sparkled from their shields and helmets, and the grass was dropped here and there with blood. At length one received a stroke upon the helmet, which made him stagger. Uttering a deep imprecation, he sprang upon his equally powerful and more deliberate adversary, and the combat grew fiercer than ever. 'Ah, thou false swearing southron!' exclaimed the wife of Mark Sprotte, 'I know ye now—I know ye now; and seizing Sir Walter Selby by a single lock of his hair which escaped from his helmet, she dragged him backwards to the ground, when he had no alternative but to yield himself a prisoner.

The two knights washed their hands in the Urr—and bloody hands they were—uttered short soldier-like acknowledgments to their squire for having protected them, and entering the cottage, seated themselves by the side of their humble hostess. 'Food,' said the Scottish knight, 'have I not tasted for two days, else Sir Walter Selby, renowned in arms as he is, had not resisted Robert de Bruce so long.' 'And have I then had the glory,' said the Englishman, 'of exchanging blows with the noble leader of the men of Scotland?' 'Leader of the men of Scotland!' exclaimed Dame Sprotte; 'be still ne'er be less than king in this house, and king too shall ye call him, sir, or else I will cast this boiling brose in your English face, well favoured though it be.' King Robert smiled, and said, 'My kind and loyal dame, waste not thy food on our unfortunate enemy, but allow the poor king of Scotland to taste of thy good cheer. And Sir Walter Selby too would gladly I see, do honour to the humility of a Scottish breakfast-table. So spoons to each, my heroine. I have still a golden coin

in my pocket for such a ready and effectual ally as thou art. And thou shalt also take thy seat beside me, this is not the first time that I have had the helping hand of a kindly Sprotte.' The dame refused to be seated; and said 'It was bad manners to sit beside a king, and such a king too—bless his merciful and noble face, soon may he enjoy his rightful inheritance and long may he bruike it.'

So saying, she placed a small oaken table before him, filled a large wooden bowl with the favourite breakfast of Caledonia, rich, hot, and savoury; then laying a silver spoon beside it, she retired to such a distance from the king as awe and admiration might be supposed to measure to a peasant.

'But say fair and kind subject,' said the king, 'let this gentle knight partake with me.' 'I should be no true subject,' answered she, 'if I feasted our mortal foe. Were I a man, hemp to his hands, the keep of Thrieve Castle for his mansion, and bread and water for his food, should be his doom; as a woman, I can only say I have vowed a vow that no southron shall feast within my door in my presence; and shall I be hospitable to the man who lately laid his steel sword with such right good will to my king's helmet?'

'I commend thy loyalty,' said de Bruce, 'and thus shall I reward it. This land, thou knowest, is mine; the hill behind thy house is green and fair; the vale before thy house is green and fertile; I make thee lady of as much as thou canst run round while I take my breakfast. The food is hot, the vessel large, so kilt thy coats and fly.' With right good will she shortened her skirts as desired, bound up her hair, and stood ready for flight on the threshold of her door. She looked back upon her guests with a comic expression, returned and locked fast all spoons save the one for the king, and then resumed her station at the door.

'Now,' said Robert, 'a woman's speed of foot against a king's hunger. Away!' And as he raised the spoon to his lips, she vanished from the door. The King's Mount, so green and beautiful now, was then rough with wild juniper and briars, and the path round the base was interrupted by shivered stones and thorn bushes. But the wife of Mark Sprotte loved her husband, and wished to become lady of the land. She had already encompassed one third of the hill, when she saw a fox run along with a goose she had fattened. 'May the huntsman find ye yet, for coming across me at this unsonsie time!' said the dame, 'but a rood of land is better than a fat goose;' and she augmented her speed till she approached the mill. The miller, wearied with grinding all night, lay sleeping on the Sheeling Hill, while the fire that dried his oats seized the ribs of the kiln, ran up the roof, and flashed red from between the rafters.

'Burn away,' said she; 'if I awake thee, thou wilt demand help; and a minute's work or explanation will scorch the green holm of Urr out of the inheritance which I hope to encompass before our king gains the bottom of the bowl.' So the flames increased, the miller slept, and she reached the place where the hill sloped into the vale. A small wicket in the gable of her house had a board suspended by a leather hinge; she flew for a moment to this rude casement; lifted it warily up, and there she beheld the monarch and his enemy seated side by side, their helmets on the floor, their swords laid aside, and with one spoon between them, smiling in each other's face as they took alternate spoonfuls of the hot and homely fare. She cried, 'Fair play, my liege, fair play,' and recommenced her race with renewed agility. 'I like the fare not amiss,' said Selby, 'and still better the hale and hearty dame who prepared it. I shall never forget with what right good will she twisted her hand into my hair, and pulled me to the ground. I'll tell thee what, de Bruce; if half the men in Scotland had hearts as heroic as hers, we might turn our bridles southward.'

'I am losing my land listening to thy eulogium,' said the king with a smile. 'See—the brook beside the willows, where we fought so long, and where so many of thy comrades and mine lie stark and bloody, she has passed it at one bound. The helmet of Lord Howard, whom with my own hand I slew there, is ornamented with silver and gold; she sees it glittering on the ground, but stoops not to unlace it. She knows she can strip the slain at her leisure, when she cannot win land. Seven English horses graze masterless among her corn; she stays not to touch their bridles, though they have silver housings and belts of silver and gold, and though she never mounted a fairer steed than an untrained Galloway. On my royal word, this is a prudent woman!'

She had now nearly run round the hill, nearly encompassed the holm; and when she approached her own threshold, it was thus the king and Selby heard her commune with her spirit as she ran: 'I shall be called the lady of the Mount, and my husband shall be called the lord on't. We shall nee doubt be called the Sprottes of the Mount of Urr, while Dalbeattie wood grows, and while Urr runs. Our sons and our daughters will be given in marriage to the mighty ones of the land, and to wed one of the Sprottes of Urr may be the toast of barons. We shall grow honoured and great, and the tennure by which our heritage shall be held, will be the presenting of butter brose in a lordly dish to the kings of Scotland when they happen to pass the Urr.'

'On thy own terms,' said King Robert, 'so loyally and characteristically spoken, my heroic dame of Galloway, shall the Sprottes of Urr hold this heritage. This mount shall be called the King's Mount; and when the kings of Scotland pass the Urr, they shall partake of brose from King Robert Bruce's bowl, and from so

other—presented by the fair and loyal hands of a Sprotte. Be wise, be valiant, be loyal and faithful, and possess this land, free of paying plack or penny, till the name of Bruce perish in tale, in song, and in history: and so I render it to thee.' And thus in one short morning did the ancestress of the Sprottes of Urr win the lands which have given sustenance and dignity to her descendants for more than five hundred years. King Robert's Bowl, as it is called, is still preserved in the family.

From Hogg's Instructor.

HINTS ON HAND-SHAKING.

WHAT a wonderful instrument is the human hand! How complete and admirable its machinery, how well adapted for every purpose of ordinary life! In man, strong yet flexible—in woman, soft and graceful. And what an effective auxiliary is it to speech! when upraised to pronounce a blessing, how benign! and how portentous when stretched forth to deliver a curse! How terrible to strike! how delightful to soothe and comfort!

But we do not intend to write either a moral or an anatomical treatise on the hand. We are only going to offer a few desultory remarks upon one of the most commonplace actions in which the hand is used, namely, the ordinary mode of friendly greeting throughout Europe—the act of hand-shaking.

The worthy Sancho Panza remarks, that he who first invented sleep must have been a most ingenious man, and was worthy of all honour; and we think that equally deserving of fame was he who conceived the excellent device of hand-shaking. Of all the modes of salutation we have ever heard of, it possesses by far the greatest number of recommendations. In the first place, it is of such a nature as to be convenient under almost any circumstances in which it is desirable. There cannot be a motion more easily performed than the outstretching of the hand to grasp that of a friend. The elaborate salutation of the east is stiff and ceremonious, while the close embrace of the warm south may often be disagreeable or even offensive. Or, if we were to take extreme cases, look at the practice of nose-rubbing which prevails among the frozen regions of the north, and which, to say the least of it, is awkward and ridiculous. To us remains the happy medium, the admirable mode of salutation which admits of every degree and modification, from a mark of cold civility to a ratification of firm friendship; from a mere formal acknowledgement of another's presence to a sign of the warmest welcome and gratulation. Truly it is worthy of the genius of Europe, from which it sprung, and of the acceptance it is attaining!

Indeed, one of the greatest advantages of the fashion of hand-shaking consists in the very fact that it admits of infinite variety as an expression of feeling. If you are desirous of expressing extreme gratification at having met a friend, how well can it be done by a cordial shake of his hand! And to go the opposite extreme, you may even signify your disapprobation of any person with whom, from constraining circumstances of politeness or other causes, you are under the necessity of shaking hands, by the manner in which you do so. How far it may be proper thus to act is quite another question. But if, in the presence of mutual friends, whose conduct in any particular instance you may consider very reprehensible, it would be a great breach of the minor laws of society to decline the acquaintance of the individual in question, because such a course would probably embarrass the whole party, and cause an unpleasant scene. At the same time, you may rightly consider that it would be an act of hypocrisy to welcome such a person with the kindness you would show to one towards whom you were favourably disposed or even indifferent. You may therefore perform the necessary act in such a manner as may show him that you are not desirous of cultivating his acquaintance, without either unnecessarily insulting him or inconveniencing the parties present.

Hand-shaking, like all other good things, may be abused. The proud and insolent may convert it into a piece of bitter practical irony by the manner in which they condescend to shake hands with those whom they may wish to humiliate or insult. It has been made subservient to purposes of far more wicked nature. We are told that the infamous Caesar Borgia (who carried the art of murdering by poison to a degree of certainty as to the end, and ingenuity as to the means, which argued the basest prostitution of inventive power to the service of the most malignant passions) is said to have had a ring, which was constructed in the form of a serpent, whose body encircled the finger, its tail returning towards its mouth and almost entering it. In the little space between, however, there was lodged a slight portion of the most subtle and destructive poison, and when the wearer wished to despatch any one that became obnoxious to him, he turned the open space in the ring inwards towards the palm of his own hand, and grasping the hand of the doomed individual, with an appearance of more than ordinary cordiality, contrived that the fatal fangs of the tiny serpent should slightly pierce his skin, and the deadly venom slowly dispersed throughout the veins of the unsuspecting victim, caused his death in a few days afterwards, in a way at once mysterious and appalling.

But it would be very absurd if we were to allow the knowledge that it has sometimes been used for purposes of evil to militate against our general good opinion of hand-shaking. Generally speaking, it is a fine manly and uncompromising action. In spite of the instance to the contrary we have just cited (and which indeed is a rare monstrous one), you can have no fear of treachery or of being taken undue ad-

vantage of in the frank, open, and generous act of hand-shaking. While a Turk is making his solemn obeisance to his friend, he may be incapacitated for ever again raising his head, from its being dexterously struck off by the sabre of an attendant, as has been done before now; or in the pretended warmth of a close embrace, one might have a dagger stuck into one's side, somewhat after the fashion in which Joab, under pretence of a friendly greeting, smote poor Abner under the fifth rib; but in shaking hands both parties are on perfectly open and equal ground, and hence the clasped hands have ever been adopted as the suggestive symbol of honourable friendship.

Mere friendship however, is not the highest feeling which the mutual grasping of hands can convey from one heart to another. Indeed, almost every sympathetic feeling of our nature may be so communicated. Thus a modern poet, in giving hints to a coquette in the gentle arts of winning the hearts of her admirers, truly and prettily says:

'Though thy parting words be bland,
Two small squeezes of the hand
He may better understand.'

The fancifully philosophic Jean Paul Richter declares that there is in reality no such thing as an embrace in this world, and this assertion he ingeniously supports by reasoning that an embrace properly belongs to the soul, and that as our souls are now imprisoned within walls of flesh, they cannot as it were amalgamate as we would wish them to do when we are prompted to embrace each other, and that, therefore, when we do so, it is merely knocking together the gratings of the cages in which we are imprisoned. This is a very pretty fancy, but practice ever has been, and ever will be, its reputation, for every one knows that soul does communicate with soul through the body; that thoughts and feelings fly with swift and invisible wings forth from the gratings of one prison-cage and in through those of the other, even though the said bars should not be touching. Not even proximity of time or place is required. A look or a word may make thousands who see or hear to tremble or rejoice, and writing or printing have equally potent effects upon others distant in place or distant even in futurity. And, if so, how potent likewise is actual touch. The history of years may sometimes be told in one touch of the hand. By it may a lover declare a passion which may decide the character of all his after life. How many gentle things may, like Bob Acre's courage, ooze through the finger-ends.

But enough has been said upon the general theory of the matter, and now a few practical hints as to how this important operation ought to be performed may not be unacceptable. Then, good reader, if you place yourself in our hands we shall endeavour to instruct you how to manage your own. Learn then that in hand-shaking, as in almost everything else, the golden medium is the true method. But, above all things avoid over-violent shaking. It is only another phase of a most disagreeable propensity which has received various names, and among others that of *back-slopping* which is thus alluded to by the acute and sensitive Cowper—

'The man who hails you Tom or Jack,
And proves by thumps upon your back
How he esteems your merit,
Is such a friend, that one had need
Be very much his friend indeed
To pardon or to bear it.'

We are quite alive to the probability that this violent shaking may arise from an excess of cordiality or good will, but it is neither a proper or a pleasant mode of manifesting it. Yet the opposite error is to be shunned with perhaps even greater care. We refer to the mere holding out of the hand without any attempt at oscillation. This is a pretty common trick with ladies, especially elderly ladies. Your hand is held out and another is put into it with a tacit request to shake it both yourself and the owner. And the said non-shakers have usually another bad habit of not withdrawing the hand after the proper shake has been given, so there you stand, as a friend of ours rather strongly phrases it, 'with a piece of fat beef in your hand.'

Again, it is dangerous to attempt to make fun in hand-shaking. Humorous hand-shaking is detestable, unless it be in the hand of a master. Thus, among other efforts after wit in this way, one will give you a cold, hard, iron-like squeeze, which makes the blood spring from fingers; another, after a short sharp shake, sends your arm spinning through the empty air as if it were attempting to catch a passing fly, a third makes your fist revolve like the handle of a barrel organ, and so on.

Formality in hand-shaking is almost to be shunned. Do not give either a perpendicular or horizontal shake. Some stiff old gentlemen, of the horizontal class, use your arm, from the wrist to the elbow, as if it were a hammer with which they wished to knock a little pin into your side. Others again in their extreme suavity of manner, cause your hand to oscillate with slow swings like the pendulum of an eight-day clock. A third class of formalists, who are still more obnoxious, are the cold, dignified, consequential gentlemen, who present to you only one or two fingers. Even these they give as if they grudged them; or as if they were conferring on you an invaluable favour; or as if they considered that such an act was beneath the moral dignity of man, and 'scorned their spirits' for giving themselves up to it. These might perhaps be called the Pecksniff of hand-shaking.

What then is the best mode of hand-shaking? This problem must in great measure be solved by each individual for himself. After receiving a few general hints, every one must trust to