

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines.

From Hogg's Instructor.

THE WOODEN LEG.

'Monsieur, I shall be glad to see you to-morrow, at nine o'clock, A. M., with your scalp, tourniquet, and all the other instruments necessary for the amputation of a leg.' 'Well, that will do,' said M. Thevenet, as he glanced over the above note, and then turned it round and round, while a sardonic smile played upon his face. 'So I am a barber or a wood chopper, that this incognito will send a tatter-demalion for to-morrow,' continued M. Thevenet, as he threw the card in the fire, and flung himself into his arm-chair, and, lifting up a book, commenced to read in such a way as showed that he did not mean to pay the least attention to that anonymous note.

Louis Thevenet was the most celebrated surgeon in Calais. His fame, however, was not confined to his own city; it had travelled across the channel, and so had the great Louis Thevenet himself. When anything of a most grave and extraordinary nature in the art of surgery was to take place in London, his advice was looked upon as invaluable in consultation, and his assistance as almost essential to the success of the operation. He did not eclipse his fellow surgeons in Calais—he illumined them; for the halo of his surgical glory threw lustre upon his native city, and consequently upon all his professional brethren. He had been long attached to the army, and had embraced every opportunity to render himself perfect in his calling. He was not a man of many ideas. Sulphur was to him the chief of medicines; amputation his panacea for all cuts and bullet wounds upon practical places; so that he doubtless became a great surgeon, as the wooden legs of many soldiers like corporal Trim attested. Every body liked M. Thevenet however, even though he was somewhat blunt in his manner: for his open-handedness, and his more than common rectitude of character were proverbial. He was most attentive to his patients, who were generally of the noblesse and wealthy class; and as loyalty was also esteemed a great virtue in France in 1782, he did not want for a goodly supply of that either; so that, taking him, all in all, he was really a man of great consequence, and it is therefore no wonder that he felt a little piqued at the peremptory tone of the anonymous card. It had cost him a struggle, it must be confessed, to maintain that dignity which he esteemed to be proper on this occasion; for the idea of an amputation was one that possessed a powerful influence over him, and he vain would have been at that limb, had he seen that in the circumstances he was not derogating from the dignity of a famous surgeon. Three days after this, however, he received another card, mere pressing in its tone than the former, and couched in a more becoming style. He was besought to be ready on the morrow morning at nine o'clock, and informed that a carriage would come to conduct him to where the operation was to take place.

Nine o'clock had scarcely struck upon the great bell, when a splendid calech, drawn by two beautiful horses, drew up at the door of the surgeon. M. Thevenet did not now hesitate a moment, but mounted the steps of the vehicle; then, repping with his cane upon the golden epaulette of the coachman, he cried, as if impatient to be gone, 'Where shall we go now my good man?'

'Where I have orders to conduct you, Mr. Doctor,' replied the coachman, in surly English, as he cracked his whip and set off at a gallop.

'Yes, yes, 'tis an English affair, is it?' thought the doctor, as he shook his head. 'Well the impertinence of these people is unpassable.'

The vehicle quickly arrived at its destination, and the doctor was let out by a lacquey.

'Who is ill?' he asked, as he was conducted to the door. 'Is it a man or woman?'

'You shall soon see that sir,' replied the lacquey.

Thevenet was received at the door of the house by a handsome, fashionably dressed young man, between twenty five and thirty years of age, who forthwith led him up stairs to a large and richly furnished room.

'Is this the place to which I was invited?' said Thevenet, looking round with surprise upon the beautiful mahogany furniture, instead of a sick bed, as he expected.

'Yes sir, and I am happy that you have been pleased at last to respond to my anonymous invitation,' replied his conductor. 'Rest yourself, I pray you,' and he motioned the doctor to a seat. 'Have you brought everything necessary to commence this operation?'

'But hold, sir,' said the doctor firmly. 'Permit me to see and examine this limb, before I say a word on the subject. Perhaps amputation is unnecessary.'

'Amputation is necessary, Dr. Thevenet,' said the young man, turning quickly upon the surgeon, and looking fiercely at him.

'Suffer me, I pray you, to be the sole judge of that, and prepare yourself to commence, and that, too, immediately. The doctor sat down and stared half doubtingly in the face of this strange being. 'Listen to me, resumed the unknown, speaking slowly and emphatically. 'Whatever may be the result of this operation, here are one hundred guineas for you, whenever it is finished. But I am to be operated upon—operated upon immediately, too—mark me well!—and if you refuse to

obey me, you are in my power, and as sure as the sun shines, I shall blow your brains out in an instant.' While speaking, the stranger had taken a pistol from his pocket, which he held carelessly in his hand, looking at the same time full in the surgeon's face.

'Oh sir,' said Thevenet, coolly, 'you no doubt have it in your power to lay me flat upon my face just now, but your pistol won't bring the pallor of fear into it, let me tell you. But, come, explain to me frankly, and without any more ado about it, for what purpose did you bring me here?'

'Hearing you famed as an amputist, I sent for you to cut off my right leg,' replied the unknown, calmly.

'With all my heart, sir,' said the surgeon, smiling, and shrugging his shoulders, 'and your head also if you please; but if I don't mistake your leg seems perfectly whole. You have come bounding up these stairs with the agility of a rope dancer. What is the matter with you?'

'Nothing at all,' said the unknown, 'only I want to have it cut off.'

'Why sir, you are mad,' said the doctor looking at the cool Englishman from head to foot, and evidently becoming impressed with the belief that a straight waistcoat was necessary.

'That is just as you may imagine, sir,' replied the gentleman sharply.

'Ah! just so,' said Thevenet, in a careless tone; 'but it seems to me that I have a good right to demand of you wherefore you seek to part with a perfect and serviceable leg; for really, sir, you know we are strangers to each other, and I am desirous to have proof that you have all your reason about you.'

'M. Thevenet,' cried the unknown, in a menacing tone, 'will you comply with my desire?'

'Yes sir, when you give me a conclusive reason for beginning an operation which seems to be quite uncalled for.'

'I cannot at this moment discover to you the truth regarding this affair,' said the young man, calmly. 'Perhaps it will be a mortifying loss to me, I own to you, before a year has passed, but still I am not afraid of being a gainer before the expiration of that time; and then you shall judge yourself whether my resolution to deprive myself of my leg is not dictated by reason, and worthy even of your approbation.'

'I will engage in no such work of chance, then, before I know your name, your residence, your family, and your profession,' said the doctor firmly, and with much dignity.

'You shall know all, sir—but not at present,' said the unknown in an angry voice; 'and allow me to demand of you,' he continued, looking sternly on M. Thevenet, 'if you consider me to be a man of honour?'

'A man of honour, sir,' replied the doctor, bristling up also, and returning the angry look with interest, 'would never stand over a surgeon with a loaded pistol, in order to force him to cut off a leg. I have duties to perform,' continued the doctor, in a swelling tone, 'duties towards even you, sir, although you are altogether a stranger to me; and, unless it were absolutely necessary for your safety and health, would not on any account consent to your mutilation. Now sir, after this explanation, if you believe yourself obliged to become the murderer of the innocent father of a family, fire away.'

'It is well, doctor, your words are those of a brave and courageous man,' said the Englishman, lowering his pistol, and looking somewhat disconcerted. 'I have no wish to be your assassin, but I must, at all hazards have you to take off that leg; and you may be induced to do in pity, what neither fear nor a golden bait can force you to do.'

'How, that sir?' said M. Thevenet.

'I shall pierce the limb with a ball in your presence directly,' was the reply; and forthwith the mysterious stranger placed the muzzle of the pistol to his knee.

The doctor leaped towards him, in the hope of preventing the rash act.

'If you advance a single foot,' cried the Englishman, vehemently, 'I will draw the trigger. One word more,' he continued,—

'Will you spare me this useless trouble? Will you, by your refusal force me to augment the sufferings which I am determined to endure?'

'Monsieur, once more I tell you, you are a madman,' said the doctor, unable to explain this strange affair: 'you are a madman, sir; but I yield to your desire—I consent to free you from that unfortunate leg.'

The preparations were quickly got in order. The limb was stripped, banded, and laid out; and Dr. Thevenet, throwing off his coat and rolling up his shirt sleeves, soon showed that he was as active in the work as he had been averse to begin it. Before the first incision, the Englishman lighted his pipe as unconcernedly as if nothing serious was to be done, and with much apparent pleasure he continued to smoke until his limb tumbled on the floor.

M. Thevenet, of course, acquitted himself with his usual address: the operation was performed to admiration, and in a very short time the voluntary invalid was restored to health. He paid his surgeon generously, and contracted an esteem for him, which increased day by day. At last, after again thanking him of that wonderful limb, the unknown set out for England, with an excellent wooden substitute, for the member that used to occupy his right trouser leg.

Within eighteen months after his departure, the doctor received the following explanatory letter from his singular patient, then in England.

'M. THEVENET.—Enclosed is a cheque up-

on Quinat, the banker in Paris, for two hundred and fifty guineas, which I beg you will accept on my account. In depriving me of that member which was the only obstacle to my happiness here below, you rendered me the happiest of mortals; and now, thou best of men, thou shall know at last, the real motive which induced me to an action which, to you seemed replete with folly and caprice. You have declared that nothing in the world could induce you to persist in depriving yourself voluntarily of a member, and it was noble, I do confess, in you to refuse the reward which I offered you in order to impel you to cut off mine, but listen to the truth of the case. Shortly after my return from the East Indies, where I had been cruising for three years, I became acquainted with Emily Harley, a lovely girl, with whom I at once fell passionately in love. The wealth and nobility of her family sufficiently accounted to my parents for my ardour, and won their approval to my choice, but her beauty and angelic disposition were all in all to me. I cared not for birth or riches. I yielded myself with many others a willing slave to her beauty, and dragged the triumphal car of this my Goddess, because it was delightful so to do. Alas! my dear sir, I had the happiness to be the most unfortunate of all my rivals. This expression will astonish you: it is true, however, for when I declared my love, she indeed acknowledged that I was dear to her, but she refused my hand. It was in vain that I continued to pay my addresses to her—it was in vain that her parents and friends joined with me in trying to alter her strange determination—she was inexorable, and I was in despair. I was long in discovering the cause of her inexplicable but obstinate refusal. At last one of her sisters revealed the mystery to me. Miss Harley was a prodigy of beauty in face and form, but the dear girl had only one leg, and fearing that the discovery of this defect might cause an aversion in me towards her, she had determined to retain at least my esteem, at the expense of her own happiness. A wooden leg! was this all? O lovely girl to refuse me on such a plea! On being apprised of this, my resolution was at once taken. I determined to put an end to this disparity between us, and thanks to you, respected Thevenet, it no longer exists. I returned to London with my wooden leg, and immediately obtained Miss Harley's consent to our union: for thanks to a letter which I had taken care should herald my return, it was noised abroad that my leg had been broken by the kick of a horse, which accident had rendered amputation necessary. I therefore became the object of general pity, and returned with a happy prestige to the dear girl of my heart. On the morning of our marriage I avowed to Emily the sacrifice which I had made to obtain her hand, and the love of the dear girl was even increased for me when she heard that avowal. O! Doctor I would have lost six legs without the least regret, to have obtained my Emily. Death will alone be able to obliterate my kind remembrance of you, and to conceal the debt which I owe you. Come and see us in London, and when you know the angel of my life, if you have previously treated me as a fool, you will then envy me of my folly.'

This rhapsodical and whimsical epistle was signed, 'Charles Temple.' You may be sure the doctor often exhibited it to his friends, recounting the events which had preceded it, but he never did tell that story without bursting into laughter, and declaring, 'he is now a greater fool than ever.' At last the doctor took occasion to reply to the foregoing epistle in the following sage terms.

'I thank you for your truly royal and munificent gift. I cannot look upon it as in any way merited by the humble services I had the honor to render you. I wish you much joy upon your marriage with your delightful partner. Truly, I might once have been induced to regard it but a small sacrifice to loose the same leg in order to obtain the possession of a lovely and virtuous woman. The loss is nothing in the meantime, if in the long run one prove perfectly satisfied with a leg of wood. It cost Adam a rib to possess Eve, and many others of his male descendants have risked their bones for that sex, which is so fair and saucy, and many also their cheeks, headpieces and faces. But despite of your protestations, mark me well, I still maintain my former opinion. Very probably you have reason at present to speak as you do; for you are in the enchantment of the honeymoon. But I have reason also for my ideas, with this difference to you, that I have had time to justify my opinion, for it is not long before we are disposed to observe the stern realities which dispel the illusions of our early loves. Bear this in mind, and observe if my predictions be not fulfilled. I am much mistaken if in two years hence, you do not begin to wish the amputation had been below instead of above the knee. In three years you will strongly regret, that you did not see to having it taken off at the ankle. In four years you will wish that you had arranged to part with the foot only. In five years you will judge that your large toe would have been sufficient; and before six years have passed, you will regret the sacrifice of even your little toe. For all this however, I entertain not the least doubt of Mrs Temple's good qualities, nor do I undervalue them. Beauty and virtue are attributes not likely soon to fade in man's estimation. In my youth I would willingly have ventured my life for my beloved, although I never was required to sacrifice even a leg. I might not have repented the loss of one on the other hand, the likelihood is, that each day might have been one of deeper regret. If I had been brought to consent to such a sacrifice, I would have assuredly said, Thevenet, you

have been guilty of a folly which is utterly beyond naming.'

So close M. Thevenet's answer to his friend's epistle.

1793, Dr Thevenet was denounced by the envious revolutionary practioneers of Calais, and fled to London for fear of undergoing an operation on the guillotine of more serious nature than any he had ever performed. On his arrival in London, he was soon conducted to the residence of Sir Charles Temple, who immediately opened his door to receive him.

Upon a large armchair in his parlour, at the corner of a great fire, with a quantity of newspapers scattered around him, was seated the baronet without seeming to have the power of raising. 'You are welcome Monsieur Thevenet,' cried Sir Charles when he saw the Frenchman. 'Excuse me for keeping my seat, by my unbendable, abominable wooden leg fails to perform its functions well, and keeps me chained down to this corner. But doubtless you have come to see if I have repented of my ridiculous extravagances.'

'Alas! no,' said the doctor 'I come as a fugitive from my country to claim your protection.'

'Ah! well doctor, and that you shall have,' said Sir Charles heartily. 'I will give you a home in the best wing of my house, for you are a sage among the sages. But at this moment,' said the baronet, suddenly holding his wooden leg up in the air, and looking with a half savage—half sorrowful grin at it—'at this moment, my dear Sir, might have been rear admiral of the Blue if it had not been for this wooden knob stick substitute for my dear leg, the loss of which has excluded me from the service of my country. I read in these journals news of the greatest importance, I hear of nothing but stirring events, and I anathematise my unlucky stars that I am not able to take part in what is going on. 'Do you see, sir?' continued Sir Charles, waxing red in the face and flinging his wooden limb up in the air, until he lost his equilibrium, and fell back in his chair. 'Do you see Sir?' cried he, as he again recovered his balance and struck it down with great fury. 'This leg is like a bow or anchor attached to my body to keep me fastened through life to this fire side. It luckily happens that you have come to be a consolation to me, however, and he shook the doctor by the hand.

'But, Sir Charles,' interrupted the doctor, in a grave voice, 'that angel of your life—is she not also an angel of consolation?'

'Oh, the angel has taken wings and flown away now. Her wooden leg you know, prevented her from dancing, and so she has taken to cards and scandal as her chief occupations. For all that she is a very good sort of woman—in her own way, that is to say.'

'Ah, then, I was right in my predictions,' said the doctor smiling.

'Ay that you were, my dear doctor,' said the baronet, shaking his head and looking half-philosophically at his wooden leg. 'Do you know what I have adopted as my motto?' he asked suddenly. 'Never make for a woman an irreparable sacrifice.' Cut off, if it is agreeable to her, your hair, your beard, and your nails; that is all very well, for these will be restored to you before you have time to regret their loss, but never sacrifice for her either leg, or arm, be she fair as day and as gentle as a zephyr.'

M. Thevenet lived with Sir Charles Temple until order was restored, and an amnesty was granted to all who had been obnoxious to the new regime, but from the first hour of his admission to his asylum to his departure, he carefully refrained from referring in the least to that once cherished but now derided wooden leg.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.
SPRING TIME IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.

BY THOMAS MILLER.

Spring time comes peeping round the corners of the crowded streets and breathless alleys of busy London—twenty times a day do those industrious cootermongers, whose stock changes as the seasons change, pass my door exclaiming, 'All a-growing, all a-blowing.' And the goodwives who have a little backyard, in which the sunshine sometimes finds itself a prisoner, hurry out and buy wallflowers, daisies, hollyhocks, sweet-williams, &c. &c. at a penny a root; and these they plant in the two narrow square yards beyond the water butt, where they dwindle away in a week or two, if they are not broken by cats. A poor man's London garden measures about six paces, and besides the outhouse at the end, contains a dust-bin water-butt, coalshed, two posts that uphold the clothes-line, little square cinderspace in the centre, eight feet by six—the children's playground—and his flower-beds on each side the low, damp, sunless wall. His waving trees are stalks of chimneys, the pots of which are occasionally gilded by the sunlight. In some primitive neighbourhoods, were sewer was never yet sunk, a deep sluggish ditch yawns and stagnates and there is a stunted alder—a kind of living death—does, in its slow decay, now and then manage to make a sign, and lift up its few green leaves, amid, which smuts and blacks nestle in place of birds. Not that these London gardens are wholly without chorister, for there are plenty of sparrows, whose notes seemed to have been copied from the streets; made by the knife grinders in the streets; and sometimes these dirty fellows come out from under the smoky eaves, and hop about like a parcel of little sweeps. You never see them 'preen' themselves, like your decent country sparrows; for they seem to know that it would be but labour in vain; so they