

## Literature, &amp;c.

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From Hogg's Instructor.

## LIMNINGS OF SOCIAL LIFE.

'She speaks daggers, and every word stabs if her breath were as terrible as her terminations there was no living near her; she would infect the north star.'—*Much ado about Nothing*.

'BETTY, Betty,' screamed the shrill sharp voice of Mrs Munn over the bannister, 'do you hear me?'

'Yes mem, comin,' jist comin', echoed another voice from the area, and directly the peculiar clatter of a pair of loose slippers was heard ascending the stairs.

'Look smart can't you, and not crawl along like a snail that way,' urged again Mrs Munn, retreating into a room.

Betty came clambering along, panting and perspiring, and tugging with her huge scuttle of coals. Coming into sight, she seemed the very genius *loci* of the area. A cap of questionable hue stuck on her crown, with two strings fluttering behind; her hair, in little fuzzy patches and elflocks, sticking out and twisting together all round a visage of that peculiar colour recognised by artists as neutral tint; her red arms bare to the elbows, and her half hooked gown revealing at the shoulders and back a considerable mass of stays and no trifle of cordage, completed the *tout ensemble* of Betty. She reached the landing with her load, and staggered into the room after her mistress, who immediately turned round, exclaiming.

'Do you see that, you careless slut you? The second time this morning, I declare, that fire's been kindled, and it's clean black out! My goodness, I wonder what's the use of you in a house at all! I might just as well have no servant; two rooms not cleaned out yet, breakfast dishes not washed; knives not scoured; and the fire not kindled; and yourself as dirty as a blackamore.'

'I'll get it done mem in two or three minutes; the kitchen fire's been carried away for kiln in' for the ither rooms, but when'er it breaks up—'

'Hold your peace, will you, and not speak back to me. It's your own business to see that the kitchen fire does not go out, and its no excuse at all if it does. You've been up since four o'clock this morning, and I wonder what you've had to do that you're so far behind. But it's not this morning alone but every morning. You just trifle and idle away your time in the kitchen, and gossip and talk with other servants. Don't contradict me, I heard you; and you're work's never done, never half done. I declare I never was so plagued with any servant in all my life.'

This last assertion was hardly true, or if true, Mrs Munn must have been awfully plagued indeed; for, married ten years, she had told the same thing to upwards of twenty servants during that period. Pausing to recover wind, she continued: 'My very life's worried and worn out of me with your continual negligence. The whole day get doing nothing but following at your heels mending your blunders. But I'm not going to put up with it any longer. Don't think it. I give you notice to look out for another place as soon as you please, miss.' Mrs Munn tossed her head, and frowning towards the fire-place seized the poker and sent it into the heart of the black heap with a great crash. Then turning quickly round to the subject of her morning homily, exclaimed anew: 'What do you stand gaping there for like a stupid? Can't you go and get a kindling for the fire? I suppose you don't see it's out, don't you?'

As you have seen a man leap aside to avoid a suspicious-looking dog coming careering down the street, or an unpopular actor or hustings orator perform the same evolution when a rotten turnip or apple was shied at him, so did Betty make an extraordinary bolt towards the door, leaving one of her big slippers behind her in her haste to be out of the way, and was directly heard shuffling with the other foot down stairs.

Mrs Munn's vision, sharpened by long keen practice, like an attorney's wit, immediately detected the slipper, and catching it up indignantly with the tongs she pitched it down stairs after its proprietor, accompanied with the desire that Betty would take her dirty shoes with her.

'Really, my dear,' said a dapper little man, previously unnoticed, who was sitting by the window perusing the morning paper, 'you are too hard upon the poor creature; just consider—'

'Don't my dear me, Mr. Munn,' retorted the lady; 'I know what you're going to say, and I needn't. It's all very well, let me tell you for you to speak that knows nothing about it, and can't tell what I do.'

'I do know something about it though, and I see that you are extremely unreasonable, and unnecessarily harsh towards that girl. You should remember that gentle treatment will gain you the good will and ready obedience of your servants, while harshness can alone—'

'I wonder to hear you talk, Mr. M. Harshness! Goodness! I've treated that Betty like a mother more than like a mistress; but what does she care, what can she feel filthy, dirty, negligent creature as she is? I might as well take a viper into my room, I might, as show kindness to her and expect my return. So

don't preach to me again, who knows a great deal better, Mr. Munn.'

'Very well,' replied her lesser half, quietly; 'all I can say is, you'll never get a servant in the world who'll do your work well, till you try another mode of treating them.'

'A deal you know about what I've suffered and endured with these wretches, and how they should be managed. I haven't been ten years your wife, Mr. Munn, without learning something, let me tell you. Oh, you needn't sneer now! I would like to know, too, Mr. M., what business of yours it is how I manage my servants? I suppose you're become mistress of the house; are you? But's just like you. You come in here, day after day, and have everything comfortable, and to your mind.'

Mr Munn was about to say 'if that ever happened it was only when his wife was from home,' but he checked himself and continued reading.

'Yes, and you care no more about me than that,' said she, snapping her thumb and middle finger together.

'I beg your pardon, Mrs Munn, but this is quite unbearable on you part, as well as false in the extreme,' said the helpmate, rising off his seat angrily. 'You have not even a shadow of a reason for supposing that I act selfishly towards you.'

'I wish I hadn't, that's all,' urged Mrs M., with the air of an injured female.

'Pray explain your self; be a little explicit, if you please.'

'Not for you, sir. I don't please. So just go about your business.'

'Whenever I'm ready, Mrs Munn,' retorted he.

'Oh, just so; all of a piece! It's a pity, since you're so fond of meddling, I can't get something for you to do in the house. I'm going to wash to day. Perhaps you'd count the clothes and take a note of them before they go out,' pursued the good woman, unwilling to give up. 'Or may be, you'd prefer being down stairs looking after Betty, whom you take so much interest in.'

'Go on! anything else ma'am?'

'I'll get an apron for you, and a duster, and Betty will show you where the broom lies.'

'Madame,' shouted he, rising up and pitching the paper to the other end of the room, 'is this language to a husband? I'll not put up with it. Unless you alter your tone of speaking to me, you or I must shift quarters. Remember that I'm not to be insulted in my own house, and especially by you.'

Mrs Munn did not flinch. True to her woman's nature she retorted. Language to a husband! you a husband! You're a tyrant sir!—a mean, low, paltry, pitiful, contemptible tyrant you are; and would be more if you could, but you can't. Heaven knows how you've used me since I became your wife. It was a black day I married you on. You're nothing but a persecutor, you; you're nor worth the name of husband. Ah, sneer away you worthless creature you! A pretty husband you've made; and going to shift quarters to, separate you mean, I suppose. The sooner the better then, I say, for there's no peace or pleasure in the house with you, you nasty, abominable, jealous, meddling tyrant. Oh! it's enough to drive one mad the way you go on! If people just know how you treated your wife; but they shall know, I'm determined. I'll have my revenge, I will. I'm not going to be trampled on longer. My—oh—wretch—oh! and Mrs M. was sprawling back in a chair in a fit of hysterics.

Most unchristianlike, Mathew bolted out of the room so soon as he saw the result, clapped on his hat, and made off for his counting house. But perhaps, as intimacy with vice sears the sensibilities of the virtuous, on the same principal might Mathew's callousness be accounted for. Such scenes were by no means rareties, nor their results uncommon. Mathew had undergone a moral martyrdom, dating as far back as three months after marriage, nine years previously. Eels may get used with skinning, according to a popular tradition, not so Mathew. He winced under each new infliction of his fleshy thorn, and albeit he had originally been a quiet and pacifically inclined member of society; his daily sufferings had changed considerably his nature; the daily dropping of gall into his cup had embittered his spirit. An iron often heated becomes brittle, so had Mathew Munn's temper, exposed to the fire of his wife's tongue, lost its flexibility. He had originally loved his wife, and it was hard to say he did not still love her, or that he would have done so if she had allowed of it. But this was out of the question. The magnetic influence was wanting to attract his heart towards her. Mrs M. though not hating her husband, we believe beyond an average extent, and otherwise a prudent economical wife enough, was quite unlovable, and was becoming so much of a virago that poor Mathew had seriously resolved upon the disagreeable alternative of a separation—a decision cemented by that morning's chaffing.

In office and alone, Mathew moodily paced up and down his room. Aught but pleasant were his thoughts, or rather his commanings, with the spirit of bitterness, his yet unopened letters, lying on the desk, betrayed how much his mind was engrossed with other business, and the contraction of his brows how disagreeable it was.

'I'm determined on it,' said he seating himself, 'a separation must and shall take place. There's no living with that woman. She'd rout the patience of a very Job. Day after day these nine years (and Mathew heaved a sigh), it's been getting worse and worse

I cannot call my house my home now, and I dare hardly lift my breath in it without being snubbed and scolded. A man's house is called his castle. It's always been my prison, I know. Nor is it of any use revolting. I have tried it repeatedly. I've got no authority, and my attempts to obtain it are futile; completely ruled and kept down by that woman. But thank heaven, it won't be so long. I'll go down to my friend, Lettuce, the attorney, and order him to prepare a deed of separation at once.'

Though so firm in his resolution, Mathew did not experience that comfort flowing from it which might have been expected. A weight of woeful perplexity still harassed him and kept him hesitating. The subject was a painful as well as a difficult one to manage, and like an intricate metaphysical question, the longer Mathew revolved it in his own mind, the more dense and indistinct did the truth appear and the more difficult of adoption. All forenoon he was nervous and irritable; reviled the clerks, called them good-for-nothing fellows; ran out and in; turned over papers in heaps and piled them up again; gave orders and immediately contradicted them; wound himself up into a fit of downright anger, and at four o'clock took a cab to Mr Lettuce's chambers.

Lawyer Lettuce was a shrewd keen witted man of the world, whom the Scotch call pawky. His philosophy was of a practical cast, and perhaps therefore, a profitable one. Yet though versed in Coke and Littleton, and more so in the quips, cranks, bully and bluster of his craft, he was not deficient in kindly feeling and a gentle palliation of and sufferance for the sins and weakness of mankind. He had studied in the school of the world, but studied it in both lights; did not believe it all wickedness nor all good, but an admixture of the two. And he furthermore believed that

'Evil was wrought from want of thought  
As well as from want of heart;'

and that in six cases out of ten the miseries of human life arose from misconduct, ill advised practice, more than from downright wickedness.

When Mathew entered he found Lettuce alone, seated amid a heap of titles, which he was carefully plodding through, taking notes of their contents on a slip of paper lying before him. The lawyer looked up, shook hands with him, and making a few remarks, led him to a seat.

'I'm come to you on rather a disagreeable errand, Mr. Lettuce, one which I willingly would have avoided if possible,' said Mathew, approaching the '*questio vecala*' by a by-path.

'Sorry to hear that, my friend,' said Lettuce, taking a pinch and surveying his box; 'but I hope you come to be helped out of it.'

'Yes; but the remedy, the only one, is almost as bad as the disease; like cutting a limb off to get rid of a troublesome foot,' and Mathew smiled wanly at his simile.

'Ah! indeed! but perhaps there may be a difference of opinion as to the cure. Doctors disagree, you know. Let me hear the case.'

'Shortly, then, I wish you to prepare a deed of separation betwixt Mrs Munn and self. We're agreed on that, and the sooner done the better. You can allow her a hundred a year. I take the children.'

Lettuce uttered a low 'whew!' then checking himself, looked queerly at his friend and client a moment. 'My dear sir,' said he, 'I'm really sorry to hear this. I do not wish to intrude on family matters, but my long acquaintance may warrant my asking in the reason of you taking such a step. Is Mrs Munn faithless?'

'No,' said Mathew, sullenly.

'Is she—um—addicted to any particular—um—vice—fond of the bottle?'

Mathew shook his head.

'What then?'

'Her temper—her temper—the evil lies there. I've endured it ten years nearly now, growing worse every day, but I'll bear no longer. She's a very—a very——. I can't express it.'

'Xantippe,' suggested Lettuce.

'Worse,' sighed Mathew, far worse. 'Fury rather say.'

'And you have tried every means of curing her disposition.'

'Endured, rather, always in hope of amendment what could I try?'

'True,' said Lettuce, thoughtfully; and this is Mrs Munn's only fault.'

'Only fault!' echoed Mathew. 'It's the worst, if possible, of faults; no virtues can shine through it.'

'Sit down a minute, and listen to me patiently,' said the attorney. 'I wish to counsel you as a friend not as a lawyer.' He paused a moment took a pinch, and resumed. 'You know, our old alchemists spent their fortunes and wasted their lives often in search of the fabled philosopher's stone, with what result need not tell you. They discovered, however in the course of their toiling and research, that two metals could mingle together, so as to form and apparently new one. This they termed an amalgam, and conceived, in their ignorance of natural laws, that ingredients thus once fairly fused into each other could not be separated. You could not take the silver from the tin, without destroying one or both. We know now that every amalgamation can be restored to its first condition—the ingredients separated; the brass and gold, though combined, may be disunited, the pure metal retained, and the alloy disunited if you choose.'

'But what is the moral of all this?' inquired Mathew, testily.

'The analogy may hold good betwixt mind and matter,' perused Lettuce, unobservant of the remark. 'Human passions, chiefly errors of judgment, do not form any indissoluble link with the mind's constitution. They are the result of habit, of education, of circumstance, or rather their tendencies are. Evil cannot be removed out of the heart, but may be suppressed, may be modified; and the end is to be best gained by an influence of an opposite character, as for instance, in a simple way, to stroy an acid we would employ an alkali.'

'You may stop, Lettuce, I see you drift now.'

'Your judgment sees it, I hope, aright,' said Lettuce, smiling. 'You have owned, Mathew, you have never done more towards reforming Mrs M. than endure; that you have tried no remedy. In your own conscience, my friend, can you find justification than for taking the course you propose. You cannot. I speak seriously. I ask you, with a view of your duties before you, of your responsibilities of your position in society, of your own peace and welfare, if you can lay your hand on your heart and say, I have done all I could to make my domestic hearth a happy one. Do not be offended.'

'I am not offended, my dear sir,' said Mathew, almost awed by the solemn tone of the lawyer, 'but what could I do; what can I do?'

'Anything, everything, if you have the will. Is Mrs Munn sulky, be good humoured. Is she bitter, be gentle. Is she abusive love her. Is she unruly, speak calmly, kindly to her. Is she turbulent drop oil upon strife with bonied words. Do all to humour to please her. Show yourself willing to sacrifice for her sake. Do everything manly and firmly. Let her heart feel the efforts you make. In a word use the milk of human kindness, and shame her out of ill nature.'

'Easily advised,' said Mathew shaking his head.

'As easily done,' replied the other. 'Take the plan, try it perseveringly for a month or two. If it don't succeed then separate. There now go home and practise it to day. You have my best advice. Good by.'

'Good day,' echoed Mathew, as with a sigh he left the office.

[To be concluded.]

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.  
BELIEF AND CONVICTION.

BETWEEN these two there is all the difference in the world. Perhaps there are scarcely ten thieves or dishonest tradesmen in England who do not believe that 'honesty is the best policy;' but the actual conduct of each shows clearly enough that they are not convinced of this. Men scarcely ever act from opinions to which they have given merely theoretical assent. Unless the mind has been compelled into conviction by the reasons and grounds of assent having been repeated over and over again, brought before their eyes, and forced into their attention by instances and examples constantly renewed and impressed indelibly by the frequency with which they are presented—unless, I say, this be the way in which opinions are formed, they have not the slightest influence over man's actions.

Just as in the material world, the unceasing operation of some force, such as gravitation, is necessary to carry on and keep up with constancy the movements of the universe, where no mean casual impulse would suffice to produce aught beyond a momentary start, so in the world of thought, and moral action, it is no bare and momentary sight of the truth which can effect anything practical. The wisdom of age and experience is precisely this—conviction from long familiarity with the proofs of those truths which the young and inexperienced have merely read in books or heard from others. If you tell a young and vigorous man that he will injure his health by this or that practice, he will probably give his verbal assent, but no impression is made on the mind, and proceeds to do that which the older man has so strongly associated with the feelings of pain and disease consequent on it, that even if he were as young and healthy, he would not, and could not neglect the danger. The statements of science are believed by the great mass of people of course on trust. If you tell one who is totally ignorant of astronomy, that on such a day a hundred years to come there will be an eclipse, he will believe it; but if any great stake depended upon it, such as his fortune or his life, he would immediately become restless and unsatisfied, showing clearly that his belief was not conviction whilst the astronomer, who had gone carefully through every step of the investigation, would be perfectly at ease.

No one can ever become a man of decided character, whose opinions are not thus founded on conviction, as opposed to mere belief. For some excellent remarks on this point, the reader is referred to that admirable work *Foster's Essays*. For, without firm grounds for belief, he will 'waver about with every wind of doctrine.' If we examine the daily conduct of all classes of society, we see in every one this want of convictions. If a set of propositions were made up, on which half a million of people agreed, by nine-tenths of them would the greater portion be violated in their conduct. Take for instance a set of such assertions at those relating to the preservation of health. Fresh air is necessary, exercise is necessary, moderation in eating and drinking, &c. Now if people really were convinced of these facts, their conduct would show it. But they are not convinced or any-