

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From the London People's Journal.

'TIS BUT WINTER WEATHER.
MEN!

BY THOMAS RUSSELL.

'Tis but winter-weather, men,
Only winter-weather,
Darkens earth a little while,
Robs the gardens of their smile,
Calls the clouds together!

Blow the east winds cold and keen?
Is the snow long lying?
Ah! but see, the crocus springs,
Golden gorse and such-like things,
Saying, "winter's dying!"

Very soon the spring will come,
Birds and flowers bringing;
Very soon the trees be clad
In the vestments that they had
When the birds were singing.

Every day hath more of light,
Each eve less of darkness;
Soon will come upon the trees,
Standing naked in the breeze,
Leaves to hide their starkness.

And our hearts, shall they be sad
When the care-cloud loometh?
Banish hope to wed despair,
Turn from gladness ev'rywhere,
That the storm-wind cometh?

'Tis but winter-weather, men,
Only winter-weather!
Winter for the heart and earth,
Hope and spring will soon have birth,—
Blossoms then we'll gather!

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A POLICE OFFICER.

LEGAL METAMORPHOSES.

M. Levasseur descended at the end of the Quadrant, Regent Street, and took his way to Vine Street, leading out of that celebrated thoroughfare. I followed; and observing him entering a public-house, unhesitatingly did the same. It was a house of call and general rendezvous for foreign servants out of place. Valets, couriers, cooks, of many varieties of shade, nation, and respectability, were assembled there, smoking, drinking, and playing at an insufferably noisy game, unknown, I believe, to Englishmen, and which must, I think, have been invented in sheer despair of cards, dice, or other implements of gambling. The sole instruments of play were the gamblers' fingers, of which the two persons playing suddenly and simultaneously uplifted as many, or as few, as they pleased, each player alternately calling a number; and if he named precisely how many fingers were held up by himself and opponent, he marked a point. The hubbub of cries—'cinq,' 'neuf,' 'dix,' &c.—was deafening. The players—almost everybody in the large room—were too much occupied to notice our entrance; and M. Levasseur and myself seated ourselves, and called for something to drink, without, I was glad to see, exciting the slightest observation. M. Levasseur, I soon perceived, was an intimate acquaintance of many there; and somewhat to my surprise, for he spoke French very well, I found he was a Swiss. His name was, I therefore concluded, assumed. Nothing positive rewarded my watchfulness that evening; but I felt quite sure Levasseur had come there with the expectation of meeting some one, as he did not play, and went away about half past 11 o'clock, with an obviously discontented air. The following night it was the same; but the next, who should peer into the room about half-past ten, and look cautiously round, but M. Alexandre le Breton! The instant the eyes of the friends met, Levasseur rose and went out. I hesitated to follow, lest such a movement might excite suspicion; and it was well I did not, as they both presently returned, and seated themselves close by my side. The haggard, anxious countenance of Le Breton—who had, I should have before stated, been privately pointed out to me by one of the force early on the morning I visited Oak Cottage—struck me forcibly, especially in contrast with that of Levasseur, which wore only an expression of malignant and ferocious triumph, slightly dashed by temporary disappointment. Le Breton stayed but a short time; and the only whispered words I caught were—'He has, I fear, some suspicion.'

The anxiety and impatience of M. Bellebon whilst this was going on, became extreme, and he sent me many notes—the only mode of communication I would permit—expressive of his consternation at the near approach of the time when the engagements of his house would arrive at maturity, without anything having in the meantime been accomplished. I pitied him greatly, and after some thought and hesitation, resolved upon a new and bolder game. By affecting to drink a great deal, occasionally playing, and in other ways exhibiting a reckless, devil-may-care demeanour, I had striven to insinuate myself into the confidence and companionship of Levasseur, but hitherto without much effect; and although once I could see, startled by a casual hint, I dropped to another person—one of ours—just sufficiently loud for him to hear—that I knew a sure and safe market for stopped Bank of England notes, the cautious scoundrel quickly subsided into his usual guarded reserve.

He evidently doubted me, and it was imperatively necessary to remove those doubts. This was at last effectually, and, I am vain enough to think, cleverly done. One evening a rakish-looking man, who ostentatiously and repeatedly declared himself to be Mr Trelawny of Conduit street, seated himself directly in front of us, and with much braggart impudence boasted of his money, at the same time displaying a pocket-book, which seemed pretty full of Bank-of-England notes. There were only a few persons present in the room besides us, and they were at the other end of the room. Levasseur, I saw, noticed with considerable interest, the look of greed and covetousness which I fixed on that same pocket-book. At length the stranger rose to depart. I also hurried up and slipped after him, and was quickly and slyly followed by Levasseur. After proceeding about a dozen paces, I looked furtively about but not behind; robbed Mr Trelawny of his pocket-book, which he had placed in one of the tails of his coat; crossed over the street and walked hurriedly away, still, I could hear, followed by Levasseur. He looked triumphant as Lucifer, as he clapped me on the shoulder and said in a low exulting voice, 'I saw that pretty trick, Williams, and can transport you if I like.'

My consternation was naturally extreme, and Levasseur laughed immensely at the terror he had excited.

'Soyez tranquille,' he said at last, at the same time ringing the bell; 'I shall not hurt you.' He ordered some wine, and after the waiter had fulfilled the order and left the room, said, 'These notes of Mr Trelawny's will of course be stopped in the morning, but I think I once heard you say you knew of a market for such articles?'

I hesitated, coyly unwilling to further commit myself. 'Come, come,' resumed Levasseur, in a still low but menacing tone, 'no nonsense. I have you now; you are, in fact, entirely in my power; but be candid and you are quite safe. Tell me, who is your friend?'

'He is not in town just now,' I stammered.

'Stuff—humbug! I have myself some notes to change. There, now we understand, each other perfectly. How much does he give, and how does he dispose of them?'

'He gives about a third generally, and gets rid of them abroad. They reach the Bank bona fide and innocent holders, and in that case the Bank is, of course, bound to pay.'

'Is that the law also with respect to bills of exchange?'

'Yes, to be sure it is.'

'And is amount of any consequence to your friend?'

'None, I believe.'

'Well, then, you must introduce me to him.'

'No that I cant; he wont deal with strangers.'

'You must, I tell you, or I will call an officer.'

Terrified by this threat, I muttered that his name was Levi Samuel.

'And where does Levi Samuel live? he asked.'

'That,' I replied, 'I cannot tell; but I know how to communicate with him.'

Finally, it was settled by Levasseur that I should dine at Oak Cottage the next day at one, and that I should arrange with Samuel to meet us there immediately afterwards. The notes and bills he had to dispose of, I was to inform Samuel, amounted to nearly twelve thousand pounds, and I was promised £500 for effecting the bargain.

'Five hundred pounds, remember, Williams,' said Levasseur as we parted; 'or, if you deceive me, transportation! You can prove nothing regarding me, whereas I could settle you off hand.'

The superintendent and I had a long and rather anxious conference the next day. We agreed that, situate as Oak Cottage was, in an open space, away from any other building, it would not be advisable that any officer except myself and the pretended Samuel should approach the place. We also agreed as to the probability of such clever rogues having so placed the notes and bills that they could be consumed or otherwise destroyed on the slightest alarm, and that an open arrest of Levasseur and a search of Oak Cottage, would in all likelihood prove fruitless.

'There will be only two of them,' I said in reply to a remark of the superintendent as to the somewhat dangerous game I was risking with powerful and desperate men, 'even should Le Breton be there; and surely Jackson and myself, aided by surprise and our pistols will be too many for them.' Little more was said, the superintendent wished us luck, and I sought out and instructed my friend Jackson.

I will confess that on setting out the next day to keep my appointment, I felt considerable anxiety. Levasseur might have discovered my vocation, and set this trap for my destruction. Yet that was hardly possible. At all events, whatever the danger, it was necessary to face it; and having cleaned my pistols with unusual care, and bid my wife a more than usually earnest farewell, which, by the way rather startled her, I set off, determined, as we used to say in Yorkshire, 'to win the horse or loose the saddle.'

I arrived in good time at Oak Cottage, and found my host in the highest possible spirits. Dinner was ready, he said, but it would be necessary to wait a few minutes for the two friends he expected.

'Two friends!' I exclaimed, really start-

led. 'You told me last evening there was to be only one, a Monsieur Le Breton.'

'True,' rejoined Levasseur carelessly; 'but I had forgotten that another party as much interested as ourselves would like to be present and invite himself, if I did not. But there will be enough for all, never fear,' he added with a coarse laugh, 'especially as Madame Levasseur does not dine with us.'

At this moment a loud knock was heard at the door.

'Here they are exclaimed Levasseur!' and hastened out to meet them. I peeped through the blind, and to my great alarm saw that Le Breton was accompanied by the clerk Dubarle. My first impulse was to seize my pistols and rush out of the house; but calmer thoughts soon succeeded, and the probability that a plan had been laid to entrap me recurred forcibly. Still, should the clerk recognise me? The situation was undoubtedly a critical one; but I was in for it, and must therefore bravely meet the matter out in the best way I could.

Presently a conversation, carried on in a loud menacing tone in the next room between Levasseur and the new comers, arrested my attention, and I softly approached the door to listen. Le Breton I found was but half a villain, and was extremely anxious that the property should not be disposed of till at least another effort had been made at negotiation. The others, now that a market for the notes and securities had been obtained, were determined to avail themselves of it and immediately leave the country. The almost agonised entreaties of Le Breton that they would not utterly ruin the house he had betrayed, were treated with scornful contempt, and he was at length silenced by their brutal menaces. Le Breton, I afterwards learned, was a cousin of Madame Levasseur, whose husband had first pillaged him at play, and then suggested the crime which had been committed as the sole means of concealing the defalcations of which Levasseur had been the promoter.

After a brief delay, all three entered the dining room, and a slight but significant start which the clerk Dubarle gave, as Levasseur with a mock ceremony introduced me, made my heart leap into my mouth. His half-formed suspicions seemed, however, to be dissipated for the moment by the humorous account Levasseur gave him of the robbery of Mr Trelawny, and we sat down to a very handsome dinner.

A more uncomfortable one, albeit, I never assisted at. The furtive looks of Dubarle, who had been only partially reassured, grew more and more inquisitive and earnest. Fortunately Levasseur was in rollicking spirits and humor, and did not heed the unquiet glances of the young man; and as for Le Breton he took little notice of anybody. At last this terrible dinner was over, and the wine was pushed briskly round. I drank much more freely than usual, partly with a view to calm my nerves, and partly to avoid remark. It was nearly the time for the Jew's appearance, when Dubarle, after a scrutinizing and somewhat imperious look at my face said abruptly, 'I think, Monsieur Williams I have seen you somewhere before.'

'Very likely,' I replied, with as much indifference as I could, under the circumstances, assume. 'Many persons have seen me before—some of them once or twice too often.'

'True!' exclaimed Levasseur, 'Trelawny for instance.'

Dubarle did not persist, but it was plain enough that some dim remembrance of my features continued to haunt and perplex him.

At length, and the relief was unspeakable, a knock at the outer door announced Jackson, Levi Samuel I mean. We all jumped up and ran to the window. It was the Jew sure enough, and admirably he had dressed and now looked the part. Levasseur went out, and in a minute or two returned, introducing him. Jackson could not suppress a start as he caught sight of the tall moustached addition to the expected company; and although he turned it off very well, it drove the Jewish dialect in which he had been practising completely out of his thoughts and speech, as he said, 'You have more company than my friend led me to expect.'

'A friend—one friend extra, Mr Samuel,' replied Levasseur; 'that's all. Come, sit down, sir, and allow me to help you to a glass of wine. You are an English Jew, I believe?'

'Yes.'

A short silence succeeded, and Levasseur said, 'You are of course prepared for business?'

'Yes,' said Samuel—'that is if you are reasonable.'

'Reasonable! the most reasonable men in the world,' rejoined Levasseur with a laugh. 'But pray where is the gold you mean to pay us with?'

'If we agree I will fetch it in half an hour. I do not carry bags of Sovereigns about with me into all companies,' replied Jackson with much readiness.

'That's right enough. How much discount do you charge?'

'I will tell you when you show me the securities.'

Levasseur rose without another word, and left the apartment. He was gone about ten minutes, and on his return deliberately counted out the stolen Bank of England notes and Bills of Exchange. Jackson got up from his chair, peered close to them, and began noting down the amounts in his pocket book. I also rose and pretended to be looking at a picture by the fire place. The moment was a

nervous one, as a signal had been agreed upon, and could not now be changed or deferred. The clerk Dubarle, also hastily rose, and eyed Jackson with flaming but indecisive looks. The examination of the securities was at length terminated, and Jackson began counting the Bank of England notes aloud—'One—two—three—four—five! As the signal words passed his lips he threw himself upon Le Breton, who sat next to him; and at the same moment I passed one of my feet between Dubarle's, and with a dexterous twist hurled him violently on the floor; another instant and my grasp was on the throat of Levasseur, and my pistol at his ear. 'Hurrah!' we both shouted with eager excitement; and before either of the villains could recover from his surprise, or indeed perfectly comprehend what had happened, Levasseur and Le Breton were handcuffed and resistance was out of the question. Dubarle was next easily secured.

Levasseur, the instant he recovered the use of his faculties, which the completeness and suddenness of the surprise and attack had paralysed, yelled like a madman with rage and anger, and but for us would, I verily believe, have dashed his brains out against the walls of the room. The other two were calmer, and having at last thoroughly pinioned and secured them, and carefully gathered up the recovered plunder, we left Oak Cottage in triumph, letting ourselves out, for the woman servant had gone off, doubtless, to acquaint her mistress with the disastrous turn affairs had taken. No enquiry was made after either of them.

An hour afterwards the prisoners were locked up securely, and I hurried to acquaint Monsieur Bellebon with the fortunate issue of our enterprise. His exultation, it will be readily believed, was unbounded; and I left him busy with letters to the firm, and doubtless one to 'cette chère et amiable Louise,' announcing the joyful news.

The prisoners, after a brief trial, which many readers of this narrative may perhaps remember, were convicted of felonious conspiracy, and were all sentenced to ten years' transportation. Le Breton's sentence, the judge told him, would have been for life, but for the contrition he had exhibited shortly before his apprehension.

As Levasseur passed me on leaving the dock, he exclaimed in French, and in a desperately savage tone, 'I will repay you for this, and that infernal Trelawny too, when I return.'

I am too much accustomed to threats of this kind to be any way moved by them, and I therefore contented myself by smiling, and a civil 'Au revoir—allons!'

From a new work, entitled 'White Jacket, or Life in a man-of-war.'

WHITE JACKET OVERBOARD.

We give our readers the following thrilling adventure of the author in which he lost his White Jacket, after its faithful services in sunshine and storm for nearly three years.

Just then the ship gave another sudden jerk, and, head foremost, I pitched from the yard. I knew where I was from the rush of air by my ears, but all else was a nightmare. A bloody film was before my eyes, through which, ghost-like, passed and repassed my father, and sister. An unutterable nausea oppressed me; I was conscious of gasping; there seemed no breath in my body. It was over one hundred feet that I fell—down, down with lungs collapsed as in death. Ten thousand pounds of shot seemed tied to my head, as the irresistible law of gravitation dragged me, head foremost and straight as a die, towards the infallible centre of this terraqueous globe. All I had seen, and read, and heard, and all I had thought and felt in my life, seemed intensified in one fixed idea in my soul. But dense as this idea was, it was made up of atoms. Having fallen from the projecting yard arm end, I was conscious of a collected satisfaction in feeling, that I should not fall on the deck, but would sink into the speechless profound of the sea.

With the bloody, blind film before my eyes, there was a still stronger hum in my head, as if a hornet was there; and I thought to myself, Great God! this is death! Yet these thoughts were unmixt with alarm. Like frost-work that flashes and shifts its sacred hues in the sun, all my braided blended emotions were in themselves icy cold and calm.

So protracted did my fall seem, that I can even now recall the feeling of wondering how much longer it would be, ere all was over and I struck. Time seemed to stand still, and all the worlds seemed poised on their poles, as I fell, soul-becalmed, through the eddying whirl and twirl of the Maelstrom.

At first, as I have said, I must have been precipitated head foremost; but I was conscious at length of a swift, flinging motion of my limbs, which involuntarily threw themselves out, so that at last I must have fallen in a heap. This is more likely from the circumstance, that when I struck the sea, I felt as if some one had smote me slanting across the shoulder and along part of my right side.

As I gushed into the sea, a thunder boom sounded in my ear; my soul seemed flying from my mouth. The feeling of death flooded over me with the billows. The blow from the sea must have stunned me, so that I sank almost; feet foremost through a soft, seething, foamy lull. Some current seemed hurrying me away; in a trance I yielded, and sank deeper down with the glide. Purple and pathless was the deep calm now around me, flecked by summer lightnings in an azure air.