

## LITERATURE, &amp;c.

## The British Magazines.

From the London People's Journal.

## HOW TO SELL A CLOCK.

AN AMERICAN SKETCH.

'Madam, can I sell you a clock to day?' inquired a pedlar, as he was met by the woman of the house at which he had stopped.

'No,' replied the woman civilly, yet decidedly.

'I have several fine clocks, madam,' said the pedlar.

'Very likely,' said the woman, 'but we want none'—at the same time retreating a few paces from the door.

'May I ask,' inquired the pedlar, advancing within the door a little, but cautiously and civilly, as the woman retreated—'may I ask, madame, whether you have a clock?'

The woman cast, I will not say an indignant look at the clock man—but a look certainly not kind; at the same time saying with some spirit—'we want none of your clocks, sir.'

The pedlar took a seat. The scene which we have thus briefly described, occurred, some years since, in the 'Old Dominion'; but in what particular section we are not at liberty to say.

The house at which it occurred was a well looking habitation; old indeed, but kept in clever repair. It was owned and occupied by a farmer of some consideration in those parts, but singular and very set in his ways. Like some others in other quarters, he had a strong antipathy against Yankeeism and all its inhabitants. He fairly hated the sight of a pedlar; and, although disposed to treat his species with civility, he had not at all times been so fortunate as to do so. In several instances indeed he had dismissed with some severity these itinerant merchants, who had offered their commodities for sale within his precincts. Even his dog seemed to know when one of them drove up, and snarled and growled with more than ordinary spirit, to the evident satisfaction of his master. As to purchasing an article of any of the detestable fraternity—that he would never do—no not he, whatever were his necessities. And he was true to his word. For, more than once it happened that articles had been offered just at the time when he needed them, and which could not be obtained in the retired situation in which he lived—but he would not even look at them. The corn might remain unhoed, and the house never be swept, before he would purchase a hoe or a broom of a pedlar.

The sentiments of Mr M—, moreover, had obtained no small notoriety among the pedling fraternity. They all understood the matter; and although several, prompted by a more than ordinary share of confidence in their selling powers, had made a visit to the place, determined not to leave the game till they had run it down, they had all to a man been foiled. The Virginia farmer was proof against their strategy; and had urged his wife never in his absence to purchase any article, especially not a clock.

This day Mr M— had gone to a neighboring town to transact some business, expecting to return the same evening. Shortly after his departure the pedlar drove up.

Jasper Callam was no ordinary specimen of a Yankee. He had all the tact and shrewdness of the Codfish State, all the hardness and impenetrability of the Granite State—and all the determination of a Green Mountain boy. He was a Yankee—and one of the 'straightest sect'—a keen, sharp-eyed, ready-witted man, of some two or three and twenty. He was a great tactician at selling—no matter what was the article or commodity, he could always sell it; and he delighted in nothing more than to follow hard upon a brother pedlar, and to compare notes with him at the end of the tour. Generally, Jasper could show more dollars taken in a given time than any other pedlar who travelled in the 'Old Dominion.' Besides, his personal appearance was in his favor; he was well mannered and was seldom off his guard.

He had, as we have seen, made known his errand, and had received a denial. Most pedlars would have retired. He took a seat. There was a seeming rudeness in so doing, especially as the woman had given no such invitation; but the manner of his doing it divested it of all impropriety. It was taken hesitatingly and with an appearance of weariness; and he did that which is not always done by pedlars, he civilly removed his hat.

Minutes passed—or they seemed minutes to the pedlar—during which he sat in silence pondering upon the course most likely to ensure success—the woman, meantime, employing herself in brushing the hearth and adjusting the chairs, at length Jasper ventured to say, 'Madame, with your leave, I'll show you one of my clocks.'

'You may show as many as you please,' said the woman, 'but we want none of them—hav'nt I already told you?'

She had indeed so told him; but nevertheless he had gained an important point—the permission to show his clocks. In a short time, therefore he was again entering the door, bearing in his hand a handsome looking clock—brass wheels, mahogany case, gilt at various points, and withal a pretty landscape painted on a glass in front, below the face. In short, it was a fair specimen of Jerome's best Bristol make. Fortunately—so the pedlar thought—the mantle happened to be unoccupied, and

there, in the centre, the clock was duly installed. It was wound up and soon began its duty, click, click.

The pedlar resumed his seat. I said he had gained something. So he thought; but despite of all that he had done, the woman seemed as unmoved as a marble statue—she took not the slightest notice of him or his clock. This was strange. She left the room; and as the door closed, the pedlar noticed that she more than half turned round, and cast a momentary glance at the clock. And that look was voluntary. It cost her an effort—it betrayed curiosity—the pedlar did not quite despair.

But his hopes were ere long on the ebb. The woman seemed to have no disposition to return; at least she did not make her appearance; and with a good deal of reason the pedlar thought she did not intend to return. Probably she supposed that he had departed. Be this as it may the pedlar was giving up, and had actually risen, and was in progress towards the clock, with a view to deport it once more to his wagon, when the door creaked and she again entered.

She seemed inclined to pause—and, perhaps did pause—but what was more to the pedlar's purpose, he fancied that she was about to hazard some remark—he hoped a commendation of the clock—at least a word as to its good appearance. But he mistook. She did, indeed, speak a word or two only, however; but for the life of him the pedlar could not decide whether the drift was for or against him. 'I wish Mr M. was at home,' said the woman, 'he'—she paused.

'What was she going to add?' The pedlar would have given almost the price of a clock to have had his doubts resolved. 'He'—did she mean that her husband could decide for himself? So the pedlar wished to believe, while his better opinion, judging from her manner, was that she meant to intimate that her husband would be even more summary—more indifferent he could not appear—more set and determined was impossible. But putting the construction upon her words most favorable to his present interests, he ventured to supply what she had failed to say, 'Yes, indeed,' said he, 'I daresay if Mr M. were at home, I daresay he would not loose such a bargain.'

'Bargain!' the pedlar had unconsciously used a word of talismanic power all the world over. That word seemed to arrest the woman's attention—and for the first time she raised her eyes and fairly looked at the clock. And so it happened, that, at this critical moment in the history of that clock, and in the proceedings of the pedlar in relation to a sale of it, it struck one, two, three, up to eleven. Its tones were soft, musical and attractive. It ceased—and for a moment there was silence, but it was soon interrupted by the woman adding, 'It strikes very prettily.'

The ecstasy of the pedlar was near being betrayed; but it was for his interest to conceal his pleasure, and so rising, he moved towards the clock, saying, 'Its striking is good—better I think myself than is common;' at the same time opening the door, and pulling the striking wire, upon which its musical tones filled the room.

'It does sound well,' said the woman. 'Good!' whispered the pedlar to himself. 'Has not there been recently some improvements in clock making?' asked the woman.

'Better and better,' thought the pedlar—'Madame,' said he, rousing from his apparent reverie, 'you asked me about improvements? Oh yes, a great many improvements, clocks are now a days in great perfection, and very cheap; but I was about making a proposition in reference to that clock—but he was cut short in the very sentence.'

'I can save you all trouble of that sort,' said the woman, 'I may take none of your clocks.'

'There again,' thought the pedlar, 'all aback!' and how to retrieve lost ground he was quite at a loss. But a second thought came to his aid. The language of the woman was peculiar: 'I may take none.'

'Madame,' the pedlar resumed, and with some little more assurance, 'I was going to put this clock to you on such terms as that you may, or any other woman in the wide world might take it.'

The woman listened. She raised her hand to her forehead; she hesitated; she seemed inclined to ask a question, and at length she did inquire:

'How do you sell your clocks?'

The pedlar was too polite to betray his sense of the advantage he was gaining, and rather coolly remarked, 'you seem so reluctant, madame, to purchase a clock, that I'm at a loss how to reply. But if you will take one I will put it pretty much at your own price.'

'You will?' said she, her countenance brightening up into a sort of smile, mingled with incredulity. 'That's not a common way with you pedlars.'

'Oh no, he answered, 'we live by our trade, and must make a trifle at least now and then; but we must sell if we don't make much.'

While the pedlar was talking she had approached the clock, for the purpose of examining it—the pedlar hoped with reference to a purchase. And by way of helping on this decision, he opened the clock, displayed its machinery, and cautiously recommended it, by saying, 'Its a handsome piece of furniture, you see—useful; and with your leave, it occupies just the place for it.'

'It looks well,' rejoined the woman, 'but—'

she paused, 'I—' she begun and again stopped. At length, however, she added, 'I may not purchase it.'

She had laid more than ordinary emphasis, perhaps unconsciously, on the word purchase. 'What!' thought the pedlar, 'does she expect me to give her a clock?' No, he could not give the clock. That would deprive him of an anticipated and much desired triumph. But matters now stood in such a position as to demand prompt and decisive action. The pedlar, therefore, met the emergency like a tactician. 'Madame,' said he, 'I ask no money for the clock. I am willing to take such articles in payment as you have to spare, and at your own price.'

The woman fairly stared. The matter wore a new aspect.

'I mean just what I say, madame,' said the pedlar, observing her apparent surprise. 'Just what you have to spare, and at your own price.'

'But what do you ask for the clock?'

'Fifteen dollars—the small sum of fifteen dollars.'

The woman took a seat. For a few minutes she seemed to be abstracted and lost. But at length returning to the subject, she said, 'On the terms you propose I will take the clock.'

This was the decision which the pedlar had been looking for with all imaginable desire, and now no time was to be lost—and none indeed was lost.

'Follow me,' said the woman, rising and leading the way to an outer room, where was standing a cask with about a bushel of flax seed, which had been there time out of mind. Her husband had often wished it away, and now the pedlar might take it.'

'All right,' said the pedlar, 'and at what price?'

'Three dollars,' replied the woman—it was more than double the price of the clean fresh seed.

'Agreed,' said the pedlar, his mind running over the loss he must sustain on this basis; but loss or no loss, he was glad to sell a clock.

'Well, what next madame?' inquired the pedlar.

'Well,' said the woman, beginning fairly to exult at the good bargain she was making, and even luxuriating in the thought, as how her husband would himself be pleased at her skill in bargain making, 'we've got a calf you may take.'

'A what?' asked the pedlar, a cold shudder following hard on the announcement.

'A calf, sir,' repeated the woman. 'You said we would take anything we had to spare. Right, right,' said the pedlar, recovering himself as well as he could, 'a calf—oh yes, all the same, that is, nothing amiss by way of trade in this world; turn it to good account, I dare say.'

By this time the woman had conducted our hero to a small pen with a southern exposure adjoining the barn, and there lay—a skeleton.

'This is the calf,' said the woman.

The pedlar started back involuntarily; he bit his lips, and for the moment was on the point of demurring. What on earth was such a sickly looking creature worth? What could he do with it? How could he carry it? These and half a score of kindred questions flitted across his mind. The pedlar was perplexed, he was out-generated; but reinstalling his waning confidence with the thought that he could deposit the sorry looking brute under some hedge by the wayside, like a veteran soldier in the 'battles of life,' he marched up to the emergency, and with commendable good humor, said—

'Yes, yes—a calf, truly. But is it alive?' at the same time half spurning it with his foot.

'Yes, and alive 'tis surely. I thought it was dead. Here, you young ox, rouse up.'

The calf yawned.

'Well, it does breathe yet, pon my soul,' said the pedlar dryly; 'yonder old cart can't yawn.'

'Indeed,' said the woman, her countenance relaxing into a veritable smile; 'indeed, I thought myself, at the instant, that the creature was dead. It has been ailing for more than a week, and my husband said only yesterday, that he believed it would die; and he did not much care how soon it did. I think it looks better.'

Better! the pedlar could have cried with vexation. But there was no escaping from this dilemma. So with as good a grace as was possible, he inquired 'What price do you put upon it?'

'Ten dollars,' replied the woman.

The pedlar started. 'Ten dollars!' he exclaimed with surprise. 'Ten dollars! who ever heard of such a price for a calf just gasping. You are committed,' dryly observed the woman.

'I see I am—committed—out-generated, madame.'

'Is 'nt it fair?' asked the woman.

'Fair!' repeated the pedlar, 'fair as the day itself; all right—ten dollars—never mind, turn it to account, I daresay.'

This half-way controversy about the calf was thus summarily settled, and a few other matters added, the clock was paid for. But the pedlar did not feel to boast, as they say. He was vanquished, and yet the victor. He had made a *bona fide* sale of a clock where all had hitherto failed; and though for the present he could not show the shiners for his bargain, he hoped in some way to bring up arrears, and return to tell a fair story to his compeers.

The blood freshened his cheeks a good deal more than usual, it must be confessed, as he helped the helpless 'young ox' to mount. It

was quite a lug, as they say; and to tell the truth, he was right glad when his wagon, with its added contents of dying stock and dead stock, was fairly on the highway.

(To be concluded.)

From the same.

## POPULAR EDUCATION.

There was a maxim of Lord Camden's namely, that taxation and representation ought to go together. The whigs admitted the theory, but they repudiated the principle in practice, on account of the ignorance of the people. But who deserved the blame of this ignorance? Why, the rulers of the people. But then it was said, where is the remedy for this want of education? This is the *veraxio questio* of the present day. Captain Macconochie and Mr Charles Pearson were proposing plans for penal reform; but why not establish infant schools rather than model prisons? It is the duty of the nation to promote education in every possible way. Government ought to take care of the secular education of the people, and the religious portion of it ought to be left to the ministers of the various sects to which the people may happen to belong; a thoroughly good system of education might be adopted which would enable the nation to afford education to all the children in the country—a system that would do honor to the country and honor also to society. What are we paying for the punishment of crime at the present day? The expense of supporting pauperism and punishing crime is enormous. We lose, in the first instance, three millions in property stolen, and for the punishment of the offenders two additional millions are expended—five millions annually for corrupting the people.

The State purchases lands and railroads, erects parks and palaces and squares, and will it refuse to give food to the youthful mind when it most requires it, or decline an expenditure which would bring up the children of the poor to honor, usefulness and virtue, instead of the dreadful gulf into which they are now so unhappily plunged, by the circumstances which surround them? As to the plan of instruction most likely to be successful, the 'Working Men's Association' has promulgated one which might be advantageously followed:—There should be a managing body to have the selection of books, the appointment or dismissal of schoolmasters, the drawing up of rules, &c. &c., and the close of each year, at an examination of the children, a Government officer to be present—for it is only just that when money was advanced by the state, it should know how it had been expended. All the children in the district, whether educated in these proposed schools or not, would be allowed to attend, and if they showed a proper degree of propriety, a certificate to be given them, in common with all the others who deserved it, for thorough good conduct—that good conduct being a *sine qua non*. Religious dogmas should be excluded, and practical truths inculcated. They should, at the same time say to those of all religious denominations, instruct in your own way—instruct into them at the proper time habits of virtue, and shew them its beauty.

Now, when the scholars in such schools become entitled to a diploma, it was proposed to confer on them certain privileges. In the first place they would be entitled to fill all subordinate offices of the state; secondly, when they attained their majority, and if not convicted of crime, they would be entitled to the elective franchise, where they had resided for the last three months, and, if females, to a sum of money; and, thirdly, the holders of such diplomas should be entitled to a free passage to any of the colonies, or foreign possessions. The expense of this plan should not deter the Government. The plan is really an economical one. Then as to the schoolhouses, the site to be selected should be such as to conduce to the health of those who attended them. They should have good air, plenty of light, and a thorough drainage; they should have industrial schools in the towns, and model farms in the country, and the property chosen for such purposes should be purchased by the nation. Schools are generally kept in a very defective condition. As to the expense of doing all these things, what was gold when weighed the imperishable and immortal spirit of man, that shall survive all material things! Too long have the people of England worshipped the mammon of unrighteousness; too long have they bowed down before the golden calf; for, if they are asked who was the good of virtuous man, the answer in a great measure depends, not on his uprightness or integrity, but whether he has money. When the youth of this country unfortunately become corrupted, they are seized on by the law, and, after inhaling the pestilence of the prisons, ultimately transported to a penal settlement.

What right has the law to collect all the criminal and vicious, and send them abroad, sowing rotten seed to fructify hereafter, to the eternal disgrace, perhaps, of the country from which they came? In Australia, it is calculated that seventy thousand sheep are boiled down for lard, while hundreds and thousands of able bodied men are starving at home, or passing a wretched life in the poor houses. There they have fruitful lands and delightful prairies, while at home every ninth man is a pauper, the other eight being obliged to support him in idleness. If the system propounded were once established, no more complaints would be heard from the working men; justice would be done to them, and the prosperity of the nation advanced in proportion.