

## Literature, &amp;c.

## THE BRITISH MAGAZINES.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

## TWO KINDS OF HONESTY.

She was thinking of this on her way back when she observed Mr Benjamin on the opposite side of the street. The fact was, that he had not slept at the shop, but in one of the suburbs of the metropolis, and he was now proceeding from his residence to Long Acre. When he caught her eye, he was standing still on the pavement and looking, as it appeared at her, so she dropped him a courtesy, and walked forward; while the old man said to himself: "That's the girl that got the guinea in her meal yesterday. I wonder if she has been to return it!"

It was Mary's pure, innocent, but dejected countenance, that had induced him to make her the subject of one of his most costly experiments. He thought if there was such a thing as honesty in the world, it would find a fit refuge in that young bosom; and the early hour, and the direction in which she was coming led him to hope that he might sing *Eureka* at last. When he entered the shop, Leah stood behind the counter, as usual, looking very staid and demure; but all she said was, good-morning; and when he inquired if any body had been there, she quietly answered: "No; nobody."

Mr Benjamin was confirmed in his axiom; but he consoled himself with the idea, that as the girl was doubtless very poor, the guinea might be of some use to her. In the mean time, Mary was boiling the gruel for her father's breakfast, the only food she could afford him, till she got a few shillings that were owing to her for needle-work.

"Well, father, dear, how are you this morning?"

"I scarcely know, Mary. I've been dreaming; and it was so like reality, that I can hardly believe yet that it was a dream," and his eyes wandered over the room, as if looking for something.

"What is it, father? Do you want your breakfast? It will be ready in five minutes."

"I've been dreaming of a roast fowl and a glass of Scotch ale, Mary. I thought you came in with the fowl, and a bottle in your hand, and said: 'See, father, this is what I've bought with the guinea we found in the meal!'"

"But I couldn't do that, father, you know. It wouldn't have been honest to spend other people's money."

"Nonsense!" answered John. "Whose money is it, I should like to know? What belongs to no one, we may as well claim as any body else."

But John was very angry indeed. He was dreadfully disappointed at losing the delicacies that his sick appetite hungered for, and which, he fancied, would do more to restore him than all the doctors' stuff in London; and, so far, he was perhaps right. He bitterly reproached Mary for want of sympathy with his sufferings, and was peevish and cross all day. At night, however, his better nature regained the ascendant; and when he saw the poor girl wipe the tears from her eyes, as her nimble needle flew through the seams of a shirt she was making for a cheap warehouse in the Strand, his heart relented, and, holding out his hand he drew her fondly toward him.

"You're right, Mary," he said, "and I'm wrong; but I'm not myself with this long illness, and I often think if I had good food I should get well, and be able to do something for myself. It falls hard upon you, my girl; and often when I see you slaving to support my useless life, I wish I was dead and out of the way; and then you could do very well for yourself, and I think that pretty face of yours would get you a husband perhaps.—And Mary flung her arms about his neck, and told him how willing she was to work for him, and how forlorn she would be without him, and desired she might never hear any more of such wicked wishes. Still, she had an ardent desire to give him the fowl and the ale he had longed for, for his next Sunday's dinner; but, alas! she could not compass it. But on that very Sunday, the one that succeeded those little events, Leah Leet appeared with a smart new bonnet and gown, at a tea-party given by Mr Benjamin to three or four of his intimate friends. He was in the habit of giving such inexpensive entertainments, and he made it a point to invite Leah; partly because she made the tea for him, and partly because he wished to keep her out of other society, lest she should get married and leave him—a thing he much deprecated on all accounts. She was accustomed to his business, he was accustomed to her, and, above all, she was so honest!"

But there are various kinds of honesty.—Mary Glegg's was of the pure sort; it was such as nature and her mother had instilled into her; it was the honesty of high principle. But Leah was honest, because she had been taught that honesty is the best policy; and as she had her living to earn, it was extremely necessary that she should be guided by the axiom, or she might come to poverty and want bread like others she saw, who lost good situations from falling in this particular.

Now, after all, this is but a sandy foundation for honesty; because a person who is not actuated by a higher motive, will naturally have no objection to a little peculation in a safe way—that is, when they think there is

no possible chance of being found out. In short, such honesty is but a counterfeit, and, like all counterfeits, it will not stand the wear and tear of the genuine article. Such, however was Leah's, who had been bred up by worldly wise teachers, who neither taught nor knew any better. Entirely ignorant of Mr Benjamin's eccentric method of seeking what two thousand years ago, Diogenes thought it worth while to look for with a lantern, she considered that the money brought back by Mary was a wail, which might be appropriated without the smallest danger of being called to account for it. It had probably, she thought been dropped into the meal tub by some careless customer, who would not know how he had lost it; and even if it were her master's, he must also be quite ignorant of the accident that had placed it where it was found. The girl was a stranger in the shop; she had never been there till the day before, and might never be there again; and if she were it was not likely she would speak to Mr Benjamin. So there could be, no risk as far as she could see; and the money came just appropos to purchase some new attire that the change of season rendered desirable.

Many of us now alive can remember the beginning of what is called the sanitary movement, previous to which era, as nothing was said about the wretched dwellings of the poor, nobody thought of them, nor were the ill consequences of their dirty, crowded rooms, and bad ventilation at all appreciated. At length the idea struck somebody, who wrote a pamphlet about it, which the public did not read; but as the author sent it to the newspaper editors, they borrowed the hint, and took up the subject, the importance of which by slow degrees, penetrated the London mind. Now among the sources of wealth possessed by Mr Benjamin were a great many houses, which by having money at his command, he had bought cheap from those who could not afford to wait; and many of these were situated in squalid neighborhoods, and were inhabited by miserably poor people; but as these people did not fall under his eye, he had never thought of them—he had only thought of their rents, which he received with more or less regularity through the hands of his agent. The sums due, however, were very often deficient, for some were unable to pay them, because they were so sick they could not work; and sometimes they died, leaving nothing behind them to seize for their debts. Mr Benjamin had looked upon the evil as irremediable; but when he heard of the sanitary movement, it occurred to him that if he did something toward rendering his property more eligible and wholesome, he might let his rooms to a better class of tenants, and that greater certainty of payment, together with a little higher rent, would remunerate him for the expense of the cleaning and repairs.

The idea being agreeable both to his love of gain and his benevolence, he summoned his builder, and proposed that he should accompany him over these tenements, in order that they might agree as to what should be done, and calculate the outlay; and the house inhabited by Glegg and his daughter happening to be one of them, the old gentleman in the natural course of events, found himself paying an unexpected visit to the unconscious subject of his last experiment; for the last it was, and so it was likely to remain, though three months had elapsed since he made it; but its ill success had discouraged him.

There was something about Mary that so evidently distinguished her from his usual customers; she looked so innocent, so modest, and so pretty withal, that he thought if he failed with her he was not likely to succeed with anybody else.

"Who lives in the attics?" he enquired of Mr Harker, the builder as they were ascending the stairs.

"There's a widow and daughter and son-in-law, with three children in the back room," answered Mr Harker. "I believe the women go out charring and the man's a bricklayer. In front there's a man called Glegg and his daughter. I fancy they are people that have been better off at some time of their lives. He has been a tradesman—a cooper, he tells me; but things went badly with him; and since he came here his wife died of the fever, and he has been so weekly ever since he had it that he can earn nothing. His daughter lives by her needle."

Mary was out; she had gone to take home some work, in hopes of getting immediate payment for it. A couple of shillings would purchase them food and coal, and they were much in need of both.

John was sitting by the scanty fire, with his daughter's shawl over his shoulders, looking wan, wasted and desponding.

"Mr Benjamin, the landlord, Mr Glegg," said Harker.

John knew they owed a little rent, and was afraid they had come to demand it.

"I'm sorry my daughter is out, gentlemen," he said. "Will you be pleased to take a chair?"

Mr Benjamin is going round his property, said Harker. "He is proposing to make a few repairs, and do a little painting and white-washing to make the rooms more airy and comfortable."

"That will be a good thing, sir," answered Glegg—"a very good thing; for I believe it is the closeness of the air that makes us country folks ill when we come to London, I'm sure I never had a day's health since I came here."

"You've been very unlucky indeed, Mr Glegg," said Harker. "But you know if we lay out money we shall look for a return. We must raise your rent."

"Ah, sir, I suppose so," answered John, with a sigh; "and how we're to pay it I don't know. If I could only get well I shouldn't mind; for I'd rather break stones on the road, or sweep the crossing than see my poor girl slaving from morning till night after such a pittance."

"If we were to throw down this partition, and open another window here," said Harker to Mr Benjamin, "it would make a comfortable apartment of it. There would be room then for a bed in the recess."

Mr Benjamin, however, was at that moment engaged in the contemplation of an ill-painted portrait of a girl, that was attached by a pin over the mantle-piece. It was without a frame for the respectable gilt one that had formerly encircled it, had been taken off to buy bread. Nothing could be poorer or coarser than the execution of the thing; but as it is not unfrequently the case with such productions, the likeness was striking; and Mr Benjamin being now in the habit of seeing Mary, who bought their meal at his shop, recognised it at once.

"That's your daughter's likeness, is it?" he asked.

"Yes sir; she's often at your place for meal; and if it wasn't too great a liberty, I would ask you, sir, if you thought you could help her to some sort of employment that's better than sewing; for it's a hard life, sir, in this close place for a young creature that was brought up in the free country air: not that Mary minds work, but the worst is, there's little to be got by the needle, and it's such close confinement."

Mr Benjamin's mind, during this address of poor Glegg's, was running on his guinea. He felt a distrust of her honesty—or rather of the honesty of both father and daughter; and yet being far from a hard hearted person, their evident distress and the man's sickness disposed him to make allowance for them. "They couldn't know that the money belonged to me," thought he; adding aloud, "Have you no friends here in London?"

"None. I was unfortunate in business in the country, and came here hoping for better; but sickness overtook us, and we've never been able to do any good. But Mary doesn't want for education, sir, and a more honest girl never lived."

"Honest, is she?" said Mr Benjamin, looking Glegg in the face.

"I'll answer for her, sir," answered John, who thought the old gentleman was going to assist her to a situation. "You'll excuse me mentioning it, sir; but perhaps it isn't everybody, distressed as we are, that would have carried back that money she found in the meal; but Mary would do it even when I said that perhaps it wasn't yours, and that nobody might know whose it was; which was very wrong of me, no doubt; but one's mind gets weakened by illness and want, and I couldn't help thinking of the food it would buy us; but Mary wouldn't hear of it. I am sure you might trust Mary with untold gold, sir; and it would be a real charity to help her to a situation, if you could possibly do so."

Little deemed Leah that morning, as she handed Mary her quart of meal, and the change for her hard earned shilling, that she had spoiled her own fortunes, and that she would ere night, be called upon to abdicate the stool behind the counter in favor of that humble customer; and yet so it was.

Mr Benjamin could not forgive her dereliction from honesty; and the more he had trusted her the greater was the shock to his confidence. Moreover, his short-sighted views of human nature, and his incapacity for comprehending its infinite shades and varieties, caused him to extend his ill opinion a great deal further than the delinquent merited.

In spite of her protestations, he could not believe that this was her first misdemeanor; but concluded that, like many other people in the world, she had only been reputed honest because she had never been found out. Leah soon found herself in the very dilemma she had deprecated, and the apprehension of which had kept her so long practically honest—without a situation, and with a damaged character.

As Mary understood bookkeeping, the duties of her office were soon learned, and the only evil attending it was, that she could not take care of her father. But determined not to lose her, Mr Benjamin found means to reconcile the difficulty by giving them a room behind the shop, where they lived very comfortably till Glegg, recovering some portion of his health, was able to work a little at his trade.

In process of time, however, as infirmity began to disable Mr Benjamin for the daily walk from his residence to his shop, he left the whole management of the business to the father and daughter, receiving every shilling of the profits, except the moderate salaries he gave them, which were sufficient to furnish them with all the necessaries of life, though nothing beyond.

But when the old gentleman died and his will was opened, it was found that he had left everything he possessed to Mary Glegg, except one guinea, which, without alleging any reason, he bequeathed to Leah Leet.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

## THE POISON-EATERS.

A very interesting trial for murder took place lately in Austria. The prisoner, Anna Alexander, was acquitted by the jury, who, in the various questions put to the witnesses, in order to discover whether the murdered man, Lieutenant Mathew Wurzel, was a poi-

son eater or not, educed some very curious evidence relating to this class of persons.

As it is not generally known that eating poison is actually practised in more countries than one, the following account of the custom, given by a physician, Dr T. von Tschudi, will not be without interest.

In some districts of Lower Austria and in Styria, especially in those mountainous parts bordering on Hungary, there prevails the strange habit of eating arsenic. The peasantry in particular are given to it. They obtain it under the name of herdi from the travelling hucksters and gatherers of herbs, who on their side, get it from the glass blowers, or purchase it from the cow doctors, quacks, or mountebanks.

The poison eaters have a twofold aim in their dangerous enjoyment: one of which is to obtain a fresh, healthy appearance, and acquire a certain degree of *embonpoint*. On this account, therefore, gay village lads and lasses employ the dangerous agent, that they may become more attractive to each other; and it is really astonishing with what favourable results their endeavours are attended, for it is just the youthful poison eaters that are, generally speaking, distinguished by a blooming complexion, and an appearance of exuberant health. Out of many examples I select the following:—

A farm servant who worked in the Cow house belonging to—was thin and pale, but nevertheless well and healthy. This girl had a lover whom she wished to enchain still more firmly; and in order to obtain a more pleasing exterior she had recourse to the well known means, and swallowed every week several doses of arsenic. The desired result was obtained; and in a few months she was much fuller in the figure, rosy cheeked, and, in short, quite according to her lover's taste. In order to increase the effect, she was so rash as to increase the dose of arsenic, and fell a victim to her vanity: she was poisoned, and died an agonising death.

The number of deaths in consequence of the immoderate enjoyment of arsenic is not inconsiderable, especially among the young. Every priest who has the cure of souls in those districts where the abuse prevails could tell of such tragedies; and the inquiries I have myself made on the subject have opened out very singular details. Whether it arise from fear of the law, which forbids the unauthorised possession of arsenic, or whether it be that an inner voice proclaims to him his sin, the arsenic eater always conceals as much as possible, the employment of these dangerous means. Generally speaking, it is only the confessional or the deathbed that raises the veil from the terrible secret.

The second object the poison eaters have in view is to make them, as they express it, "better winded"—that is, to make their respiration easier when ascending the mountains. Whenever they have far to go and to mount a considerable height, they take a minute morsel of arsenic and allow it gradually to dissolve. The effect is surprising; and they ascend with ease heights which otherwise they could climb only with distress to the chest.

The dose of arsenic with which the poison eaters begin, consists, according to the confession of some of them, of a piece the size of a lentil, which in weight would be rather less than half a grain. To this quantity, which they take fasting several mornings in the week, they confine themselves for a considerable time; and then gradually, and very carefully, they increase the dose according to the effect produced. The peasant R—, living in the parish of A—g, a strong, hale man of upwards of sixty, takes at present at every dose a piece of about the weight of four grains. For more than forty years he has practised this habit, which he inherited from his father, and which he in his turn will bequeath to his children.

It is well to observe, that neither in these nor in other poison eaters there is the least trace of an arsenic cachexy discernible; that the symptoms of a chronic arsenical poisoning never shew themselves in individuals who adapt the dose to their constitution, even although that dose should be considerable. It is not less worthy of remark, however, that when, either from inability to obtain the acid, or from any other cause, the perilous indulgence is stopped, symptoms of illness are sure to appear, which have the closest resemblance to those produced by poisoning from arsenic. These symptoms consist principally in a feeling of general discomfort, attended by a perfect indifference to all surrounding persons and things, great personal anxiety, and various distressing sensations arising from the digestive organs, want of appetite, a constant feeling of the stomach being overloaded at early morning, an unusual degree of salivation, a burning from the pharynx, pains in the stomach, and especially difficulty of breathing. For all these symptoms there is but one remedy—a return to the enjoyment of arsenic.

According to inquiries made on the subject, it would seem that the habit of eating poison among the inhabitants of Lower Austria has not grown into a passion, as in the case with the opium eaters in the East, the chewers of the betel nut in India and Polynesia, and of the cocoa tree among the natives of Peru. When once commenced, however, it becomes a necessity.

In some districts sublimate of quicksilver is used in the same way. One case in particular is mentioned by Dr von Tschudi, a case authenticated by the English ambassadors at Constantinople, of a great opium eater at Brusa, who daily consumed the enormous quantity of forty grains of corrosive sublimate with his opium. In the mountainous parts of Peru the doctor met very frequently with