

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Eliza Cook's Journal.

THE LOST SNUFF BOX.

It was a lovely morning in June—

The air, exulting in its freshness and perfume, as if just loosed from heaven's portals, played joyously around the hills of the Lowlands, entrancing all who felt its influence, from the noble invalid in his pillowed chariot to the sunburnt goatherd reclining on the heather, into a deeper love of nature than their physical compositions were apparently adapted to imbibe.

It was indeed a glorious, heavenly morning. The fleecy clouds seemed loath to glide across the blue infinity above, and joyously did the sun illumine the little enclosure (ye call it the garden) that lay before a white-washed cot, at the foot of one of the Lowland mountains.

It was the only habitation in sight, and so clean and white it looked as if it had been built only to make its appearance on such a day as this.

The two upper lattices of the cottage, thrown open to their utmost extent, let in the passing zephyr to fan the fever-stricken temples of two beautiful sisters, who were passing from the world ere their sun had reached its meridian, and who, drinking in the balmy air, prayed that heaven might be as sweet, and turned to to pain and misery again!

But to her who watched by her dying children's pillows, the sunniest day had no charm, nor brightness!

Oh! how gladly would she have exchanged the gifts of fortune that had raised her above her sphere, to see those children like what she herself once was!

But it is time to introduce the principal character of our tale.

On an old arm-chair, out side the cottage-door, an old man sat—not that years had made him old as much as toil and hardship, but his hair was grey, although he had scarcely numbered fifty summers, and as he doffed the forage-cap of the gallant—th Regiment—saying that they were white—his locks flowed thick as ever. On his knees rested a volume that even the reckless and dissolute atmosphere of a barrack-room had never separated him from. It was closed, for the morning's ne'er forgotten task of devotion was over, and every attention of the veteran seemed to be riveted on an urchin some eight or nine years old, who, having made himself master of his father's walking-stick, was going through the manual and platoon exercise under the old man's instructions; a duty that at times was sadly interrupted, to the utter extinction of all discipline, by some huge drone that intruded upon the 'parade-ground'; whereupon the juvenile musketeer, exclaiming, 'Oh! daddy; there's Boney!' would forthwith make a grand charge at the encroaching foe, beating the air with his wooden weapon until some chance and lucky blow sent the miserable interloper, humming, and buzzing, and kicking, on his back upon the ground.

It was during one of these charging exploits that the incipient hero, happening to look through the garden-gate, had his gaze attracted by an object that made him exclaim, with more alarm than pluck, 'Oh! po! here's Boney come, sure 'nough!' and alas! for poor puerile self-conceit, the old stick dropped suddenly and master Bobby might, the moment after, have been espied standing very still and very white, behind the cottage door with his thumb in his mouth.

Scarcely less astonished was the father of the boy, when he saw the splendid livery of the Castle approach his humble dwelling, (he had been there but a week,) and mentioning his name, deliver a letter sealed with such a profusion of wax as he had only witnessed once before; namely, on his being the bearer of a despatch on the occasion of the meeting of the Allied Armies in France.

The contents of the missive were, an invitation to the veteran to take a seat that evening at dinner at the table of the Castle, where its munificent owner—himself a Waterloo man—was giving a feast in humble imitation of the great Captain of the age, on the anniversary of the day that sealed the destiny of Europe, and witnessed the dethroning of the greatest curse incarnate ever let loose upon the world and man.

A verbal reply, humbly and thankfully accepting the honor, was the only means at hand of responding to the important document; for to have obtained writing materials would have entailed a three miles' walk to the nearest town, and a greater expenditure of capital than could with any propriety at the present time be afforded.

But who shall scrutinize the old man's dreams of happiness and grandeur as he read and re-read the flattering missive to the partner of his existence?

He had heard and read in fairy tales of beggars who had become princes—of Cinderellas who had, in a night, been transformed into queens; but this was bringing the romance home to his own fireside in stern reality.

How would it all end? was a self-proposed

question that almost made him giddy to contemplate.

The old regimentals of the—th regiment were slightly astonished, I promise you, on that day, at being so rubbed and scrubbed, and brushed, and mended, after they had quietly lapsed into the thought that, like their old master, they were worn out, and, after a long 'tour of duty,' they had been laid on the shelf for ever. In many places they even disdained the stitches of the busy wife, and mutinously broke out as soon as attempted to be set into anything like wearing order.

Master Bobby was discovered, after an hours hard search, sharpening the sword blade on the homely knife-board, to the utter destruction of that useful household article.

At last all was in readiness,—and having imprinted a kiss on the lips of each of his loved and only earthly treasures, the old adjutant set forth on his journey to the 'Castle.'

He had just attained the summit of the nearest hill, when the strokes of the town clock came booming over the plain upon his ear.—After all, it was but five, and he was an hour, at the very least, too early.

Alone in the drawing-room of the castle—for the heavy drops of the coming storm had driven him onwards before the appointed time—stood the hero of our story, lost in wonder of the wealth and luxuries that lay around him, the only feeling, save wonder, elicited by the display, being simply that the most trifling article there would keep his family in plenty for probably half their lives.

Oh! it is a bitter thing to stand surrounded by another's wealth, when you know not where to get a crust for your own starving home—full on the morrow! when even in your daily sacrifice of prayer, the words, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' tremble on your lips as you breathe them upwards!—for you think how vain they are.

But joy! joy! why think of sorrow?—the rooms are blazing in countless lights!—glittering trappings!—snowy plumes!—happy voices!—clear ringing tones of woman's laughter!—(down thoughts of the morrow!) congratulations, happy and heartfelt!—all these are seen and heard around!—and is the old man left alone?—Oh, no! bright eyes beam sweetly on him; noble lips pour forth praises upon his head. He, the almost sole survivor of his regiment on the field of Waterloo, may nearly be considered the hero of the feast.

Oh! but for one—the least—of the jewels that lavishly bedecked that fair and most enthusiastic interrogator of the veteran to save my darlings from starvation!

He cannot curb his thoughts: but this is all he thinks of.

The dinner, so unusual to English dinners in general, soon thawed into conviviality. How surely we always find, that the more inhospitable the appearance of a country, the more hospitable the dwellers therein, as if to compensate by a profusion of the one for the delinquency of the other.

The dinner ended and the toasts began.—The ladies had retired to the drawing-room and reminiscences of the eventful day were eagerly canvassed around. Pass round the ruby wine.

It was getting late.

Pass the snuff-box, if you please,' exclaimed the host, who at an early period after the removal of the dinner had produced an article of elaborate workmanship, studded with brilliants, presented to him by Marshal Blucher in person, as a token of admiration for his valor, and esteem for his friendship.

The snuff-box! 'The snuff-box!' echoed the guests, passing the word one to another; but no snuff-box.

In vain were the desert dishes pushed aside in vain was search made under the table and under the chairs; but the snuff-box had vanished, as if by magic! The attendants protested having brought it in at the beginning of the evening, and having left it on the table.

It is quite ridiculous,' exclaimed one of the company after awhile; 'some one must have pocketed it in error, and I'll be the first to try my own pockets.'

Matters were looking most unpleasantly serious, and each one at table began to feel as uncomfortable under the circumstances as men can be supposed to feel, when the noble host rising, addressed the company as follows.

Brother-soldiers and gentlemen, I have misread an article of unsurpassable value to me.—It strikes me that some one having got hold of the article, has, in error, put it into his pocket instead of his own box, and has not now the moral courage to produce it; so I will order in a box filled with sawdust, into which each of you can in turn place his hand; and the one having the box in their possession may thereby return it without its being known by whom it was deposited. Does any one object to this?

No one did, of course, so the box was brought, and each guest in turn left his seat and walked up to it, the others looking away, and thrust in his hand. All had completed the ordeal, and the sawdust was emptied out but still no box appeared.

There is no doubt but that some one present has the box,' said a noble general, the highest in rank at the table; 'and under the circumstances I propose that we each in turn

submit to undergo a personal investigation of our pockets, and I will set the example by being the first to submit to it.'

And I—and I—and I!' flew round the table.

The news had now flown to the drawing-room; and the party, that one hour before promised to be a reunion of deep and noble feeling, of cordiality and goodwill, became a scene of general disorder, suspicion, and confusion.

I wish the earl had not asked people nobody knows anything of!' exclaimed our fair guest.

Yes, indeed!' echoed another, 'people may be officers,—but honesty is never tested till a man is a beggar.'

(True! noble lady! true!—affluence can afford to be honest.)

Aye! search us!—search us all!' eagerly exclaimed all in turn.

All? no; not all!

One lip grew pallid, and one cheek blanched white as the damask cloth before it, when the word 'search' was uttered; but no one remarked it; a brimming bumper of wine, taken at a gulp, alone prevented one guest there from sinking sick and faint beneath the board.

One by one each guest underwent the self-imposed ordeal, until but one remained to undergo the investigation,—and it was the old adjutant.

The adjutant! the adjutant!—where is he?

Aye call away, obsequious guests!—search for him from room to room! and condemn him unbound. He's o'er the mountain, and awa,—and little hears your calling.

ALL'S WELL.

Twelve o'clock at night, and all's well!

False prophet! Still and statue like, at yonder window, stands the wife. The clock has told the small hours; yet her face is pressed close against the window-pane, striving in vain, with straining eye, to pierce the darkness. She sees nothing; she hears nothing but the beating of her own heart. Now she takes her seat, opens a small Bible and seeks from it what comfort she may, while tears blister the pages. Then she clasps her hands, and her lips are tremulous with mute supplication. Hist! there is an unsteady step in the hall. She knows it! Many a time and oft it has trod on her very heart-strings. She glides down gently to meet the wanderer. He falls heavily against her; and in maudlin tones, pronounces a name he had long since forgotten "to honour." Oh, all-enduring power of woman's love! No reproach, no upbraiding—the slight arm passed around that reeling figure once erect in God's own image." With tender words of entreaty, which he is powerless to resist, if he would, she leads him in. It is but a repetition of a thousand such vigils! It is the performance of a vow with a heroic and patient endurance too common and every-day to be chronicled on earth—too holy and heavenly to pass unnoticed by the "registering angel" above!

All's well! False prophet! In yonder luxurious room sits one whose curse it was to be fair as a dream of Eden. Time was when these clear eyes looked lovingly into a mother's face when a gray haired father laid his trembling hand, with a blessing, on the sunny head, when brothers' and sisters' voices blended with her own in heart-music around the happy hearth.—Oh, where are they now? Are there none to say to the repenting Magdalen, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more?" Must the gilded fetter continue to bind the soul that loathes it, because man is less merciful than God?

All's well! False prophet! There lies the dead orphan. In all the length and breadth of the green earth, there was found no sheltering nest where that lonely dove could fold its wings when the parent birds had flown. The brooding wing was gone that covered it from the winds of unkindness. Love was its life; and so it drooped.

All's well! False prophet! Sin walks the earth in purple and fine linnen; honesty poverty, with tear-bedewed face hungers, and shivers, and thirsts, "while the publican stands afar off!" The widow pleads in vain to the ermined judge for "justice;" and, unpunished of Heaven the human tiger crouches in his lair, and springs upon his helpless prey!

All's well! Ah, yes, all is well! for "He who seeth the end from the beginning" holds evenly the scales of justice. Dives shall yet beg of Lazarus. Every human tear is counted. They shall yet sparkle as gems in the crown of the patient and enduring disciple! When the clear, broad light of eternity shines upon life's crooked paths, we shall see the snares and pitfalls from which our hedge of thorns has fenced us in; and, in maturity of our full-grown faith, we shall exultingly say, "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt!"

Two loafers met upon the wharf yesterday and passed the compliments of the season.—'Jim,' said one, 'have you seen Hall, he's looking for you?'

Hall, what Hall? was Jim's answer.

Why, Alco-hall, you fool.

Pshaw,' responded Jim, 'that's a poor sell, and you wouldn't have caught me if I hadn't been hurt last night when John tripped me up.'

John who? said Jim.

Demi-John, you numskull!

INCIDENTS OF THE WAR.

Heights before Sebastopol, December 21.

The garrison of Sebastopol made two rather smart sorties this morning. The first was directed against the English to regain that much-contested place the "Ovens." Among these ruins a breastwork has been thrown. When we recommence our fire it will be here that the field-pieces and cohorts will be placed so as to destroy the chevaux de frize which surround the enemy's works. At present no ordnance of any kind has been mounted in the trench, though the Russians, no doubt, suspected from the breastwork that a breaching battery was concealed there. Accordingly, at about 5 this morning, a strong force of the Russians (from about 1,500 to 2,000), made a desperate rush to recapture the place, which was held by about 250 of the 50th Regiment. As I am informed, our most advanced sentry was, as usual fast asleep, and he was bayoneted in his blanket by the enemy.—They then pushed forward quietly, but with the utmost rapidity hoping to take the place by surprise. In this attempt they very nearly succeeded, and but for this vigilance of Major Moller would most assuredly have done so altogether. As it was, the enemy were close upon the breastwork before any alarm was given.—The majority of the picquet were asleep.—Those who were not instantly rose, and shouting to alarm the others, attacked the enemy, who were then scaling the parapet in all directions. Unfortunately owing to the damp, only a very few of our firelocks would go off, and this put together with our poor fellows waking up and finding themselves surrounded by Russians, produced a good deal of confusion at first, which almost amounted to a panic, as each man seized his firelock, and found it was almost useless. Not more than 20 shots were fired at the Russians, about 500 of whom had not entered the breastwork. They replied with a heavy volley, which, had it been better aimed, would have almost destroyed our little party.—As it was it did but little mischief. Major Moller then rallied his men, and charged the enemy at the point of the bayonet. The Russians seemed quite unprepared for this act of valour on the part of such a handful of men. They instantly fell into confusion; nearly 50 of them were bayoneted as they stood, and the rest began to scramble out of the battery. In the course of two or three minutes not a Russian remained within the work. Our fellows instantly jumped on the parapet to pursue the foe, but found that they had rallied, and, far from flying, were in the act of commencing another assault. The picquet, therefore, remained on the parapet, against which the enemy advanced with their whole force. A most desperate struggle ensued. Both parties fought with the bayonet, and the gallant 50th, though the enemy were six times their numbers, still held the work, though, not being able to fire, their number was rapidly thinning. The contest was still at its height, when fortunately another covering party from the 20th, as I am informed advanced to the assistance of our hard pressed little band. Their arrival decided the combat. A heavy volley checked the Russians, who stopped attacking, but still did not retire, though the 20th kept up a steady fire, which cut them down like grass. For a minute or two the Russian officers rallied them so far as to advance a few feet, but the fusillade was too steady and withering, and after a moments hesitation, they halted, wavered, broke, and fled in all directions. At this first symptom of unsteadiness the 50th closed up, sprang over the parapet, and dashed among the enemy with the bayonet. This completed their rout, and as I have said, they cast away their arms and fled like hares. In the pursuit the 50th made about 20 prisoners, and bayoneted 30 or 40 to death. I regret to say that the loss on our side was rather severe. Major Moller while in the very act of cheering on his men, was mortally wounded by a bullet through the spine. A captain of the 50th is said to have been killed; and Lieutenant Clarke of the same regiment is missing, with 17 men who were made prisoners by the Russians when they first entered the battery. We had also 48 men killed and wounded.—The bodies of two Russian officers, and about 150 men, remained in front of the breastwork. Between 30 and 40 wounded men who were left behind. Most of the enemy's wounded were carried off, except those who fell at the latter part of the attack. The Russian officer in command was shot, but whether mortally or not of course none can tell. Thus not 600 of our gallant troops defeated a force of the enemy three times their number, with all the advantages which could be derived from attacking us by surprise. No doubt the Russians counted upon finding a battery within the works; and if there had been, they would certainly have had sufficient time while they were in to have spiked and dismantled all the guns. As it happened, however they were not disappointed of their hopes, but signally defeated in their attempt to capture the place.

Latterly the Russians seem quite confident that they can surprise our picquet; and I am sorry to say that in many instances their hopes are well founded. It is not the fault of the men, but the fault of human nature, which overpowers every man with sleep, after 24 or 30 hours' incessant work. The men are over-