

Literature. &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

MY WISH.

BY ALFRED KNOTT.

Oh! had I but as ample means
As is my heart—wide wish,
In every nook of misery
I'd plant a tree of bliss:
No mouth should need that I could feed;
Unclad no one should be,
And guant-eyed Want should cease within
My happy sphere to be.

No sun should ever set and leave
Behind a houseless head;
No mid-night streets should echo with
The homeless wanderer's tread;
The biting wintry winds might come,
And find no shivering prey,
For I would spread a couch to rest
The weary on their way.

No merry season, when it came,
Should share, with partial hand,
Its gush of joy unequally
Throughout the yearning land—
All sunshine for the rich and gay,
While Envy like a shroud,
Round Poverty's chill heart enwrapped
Her black and cheerless cloud.

Oh! had I but as ample means
As in my heart-deep wish,
In every nook of misery
I'd plant a tree of bliss;
I'd pour a stream o'er barren hearts,
Fresh from the springs of truth,
And germs that long had buried lain
Should burst in vernal youth.

I'd lift each darken'd soul above
This world of dull decay,
And bid it gaze, with eagle eye,
On God's eternal day;
I'd teach it how, strong in his might,
With Sin and Death to cope,
And cheer it on its living way
With everlasting hope.

The fetters of the mind should lie
In rust beneath her feet,
And Crime should be a spectre dark
We never more should meet;
A universal brotherhood
Should o'er the world prevail,
And heav'n's immortals, in their hymns,
The wondrous change should hail.

From Chamber's Journal.

CURIOSITIES OF OUR POST-OFFICE.

OUR post-office, in common with many other peaceful institutions, has been grievously disturbed and thrown off its equilibrium by the war. Ours is an Irish seaside village, and every man and boy of the operative classes therein, between the ages of twelve and sixty, was seized with an uncontrollable longing to join the fleet and fight the *Rossians*. The consequence is, that the culture of our pretty little gardens is left in the hands of an aged seaman, a sort of superannuated Caliban, who having turned his oar into a spade, has suddenly started up as a professor of horticulture. His ideas, however, savoring much more of his former than of his present profession, he calls violets *pilots*, and digs away at our luckless parterres as if he were literally ploughing the deep. If the wretch would only learn to do his spiring gently, it would be something; but as matters stand, we weebegone *Mirandas* are left to weep over lacerated hyacinths and uprooted geraniums, while our gardener coolly assures us, that 'tis well for us to get him, for there is n't a handier boy than himself in the whole place.

He is certainly useful in banishing insects from rose trees; for only give him an unlimited supply of tobacco, and pay him good wages, and he will sit beneath your bower of roses, and smoke all day long with a laudible perseverance and tranquil repose worthy of one of our Turkish allies.

To return to our post-office. One day lately, a sailor, belonging to a man-of-war lying in the harbour, stepped in, and addressing our postmaster, asked:

'Do you know Bill Jenkins, A. B. of the Racer?'

'Not I. Why do you ask?'

'Because I wanted to give you a letter to him,' rejoined the sailor, producing an oddly folded epistle.

'Very well,' said our functionary; 'the letter will be sent to him; but you must put a stamp on it.'

'How the ——,' responded the astonished seaman, 'can you send a letter to Bill Jenkins unless you know him?'

'O, no matter; I can send the letter; but it will cost you a penny for a stamp.'

'Stamp!' cried the sailor—'show me one.'

A stamp was accordingly shown to him. The honest tar turned it round, contemptuously between his finger and thumb, shook his head and exclaimed:

'No! shiver me if I put Bill Jenkins off with a penny, for he has often spent a crown

upon me. Haven't you anything handsome than this?'

A twopenny stamp was shown him. 'Well, this looks decenter; but haven't you got anything better?'

The postmaster produced a shilling stamp which Jack inspected with an expression of approval, saying: 'All right. Put five of them on the letter. I'll never send Bill Jenkins less than five shillings worth!'

So saying, he threw down two half-crowns on the counter, took up the five shilling-stamps and stuck them on the letter, which he then threw into the box, with expressions of satisfaction at having spent a crown's worth on his old friend Bill Jenkins.

Owing to the before-mentioned scarcity of boys, the present Mercury who distributes our correspondence is a bright-eyed ragged urchin of ten, wholly innocent of the art of reading. Although carrying an official looking bag, this receptacle is merely meant to give grace and dignity to his office: for if the letters were once consigned to its depths in a mingled heap, the process of abstracting any individual one required would be a very chance-medley affair indeed, considering that the majority of our servants, as well as our post-boy, might have been pre-Cadmusites for anything they know of the alphabetic mysteries. By an ingenious species of *memoria technica*, therefore, our postmistress puts the letters for our terrace into the dirty chubby right hand of one of her juvenile attache, and those for another in his left; while my letters, belonging to a third division, come in his mouth. Many is the editorial epistle I have myself extricated from this canine species of conveyance, and blessing the invention of envelopes, read the unscathed sheet of note paper while its cover bore the marks of Master Jerry Linchan's strong white incisors.

As to the mistakes in the delivery of the letters, they are really past counting. In fact, getting our neighbors' letters every morning has come to be regarded as quite the normal state of things in our village; and receiving our own rather an exceptional occurrence, for which we are bound to be thankful, but which we are not by any means entitled to expect. A nervous gentleman amongst us was certainly rather startled one day by receiving a demand for funeral expenses from an eminent undertaker; and an aristocratic one, by inadvertently opening an epistle designed for a government contractor, being 'My dear Henry [his own name] pigs are looking up,' &c.

As order, however, out of chaos sprang, so good sometimes comes of all this confusion.—There lives in our village, in a handsome detached house, a rich childless widow named Effingham. She was always a civil neighbour kind to the poor and liberal in her expenditure, yet somehow she was not very popular amongst us. People complained that they never got to know her any better than they did the first day they paid a visit to her nice'y furnished drawing-room. She lived alone; and, although, perfectly polite, she never seemed to manifest any interest in what was going on around. I believe the most intellectual, pious, or high-minded individual that ever breathed, if resident in a small village, can scarcely avoid having a tendency to small talk about her neighbors' affairs, to curiosity about their sayings and doings—in short, to occasional indulgence in harmless gossip. Mrs. Effingham was therefore looked on amongst us as a sort of phenomenon, when it was found that she took no interest whatever in the incipient flirtation between our Crimean hero—of whom we are very proud, although he did obtain leave of absence on 'urgent private affairs'—and Miss Ellard, our acknowledged belle. Once indeed, when a runaway match—which, however, did not take place—was spoken of as likely to be the denouement of an engagement between two penniless lovers, Mrs. Effingham was heard to sigh deeply and remark: 'They are bad things; the happiness of many a family has been wrecked by a runaway match; and then another sigh and a faint flush on the still handsome cheek, followed by a chill paleness. This rare evidence of emotion could not have been caused by any personal experience; for Mrs. Effingham, we all knew, was the childless widow of a rich and highly respectable merchant, whom she had married with the full approbation of every one concerned.

By degrees, however, the truth came out—an old story! Her only sister had made a most imprudent clandestine marriage with a young ensign; and Mrs. Effingham in her first access of indignation, had made a vow never to see her sister or inquire about her again. Time rolled on, and the newspapers brought the intelligence of the delinquent. First appeared among the births in the army in India the arrival of a niece. The next mail brought an account of the mother's death; and a few months after came a like announcement respecting the young husband. He died of jungle-fever, when on the eve of promotion. Often, in spite of herself, did Mrs. Effingham's heart turn to the little orphan left desolate in a foreign land, and now the only surviving member of her near kindred. Yet it was only by chance she learned that a kind stranger, the childless wife of a captain in his father's regiment, had taken the little creature to her home and heart, and was bringing it up as her own.

Years passed on. The girl, if alive, must be nearly twenty; and often in the silence of night, or in the cheerful sunshine, when we were commenting on Mrs. Effingham's cold, absent, indifferent manner, was the sore self-stricken heart of the gray-haired woman yearning for the sound of a kindred voice, for the touch of a kindred hand.

She made diligent inquiries; but they were fruitless: Captain Ellis and his wife were both dead; and what had become of their adopted daughter no one could tell.

It happened one morning that our postmistress was sorely puzzled by the arrival of a letter legibly directed to 'Miss Greenham.'

'Where on the face of the earth can she be stopping?' was Mrs. Callaghan's despairing inquiry. 'I'm sure I know the name of every one living or visiting in the whole place, and the never a Greenham, nor anything like it, is there in it. Here, Jerry,' she continued—'take this letter, and ax every-where for somebody to own it. You're learning to read very fast, I'll say that for you; and here's the name Greenham plain enough. I'll put it in the bottom of the bag, and you'll be sure to find it.'

Away trudged Jerry on his mission, and delivered our correspondence after his usual fashion, not failing to ask at every house; 'was there one Miss Greenham stopping there?' The reply was always in the negative, and Jerry was almost at his wits' end, when a bright thought suddenly struck him. Mrs. Effingham received very few letters, and consequently seldom ever came into contact with our young postman. As he was now, however, passing her door, he turned into her pleasant violet-scented little garden, and, his hands being at liberty, he gave a very tolerable imitation of the official knock at the hall-door. The grave, neat, parlor maid appeared.

'Ax the mistress could I see her for a minute,' quoth Master Jerry.

'What do you want? I can give her any message.'

'Oh, 'tis herself I must see, about something very particklar,' was the rejoinder of our pertinacious postboy.

And the damsel at length consented to summon her mistress, who came in a state of considerable wonder to learn what Master Linchan's 'particklar business' could be.

'Would your honour be after seeing if this letter is for you?' said Jerry with his best bow, handing the unfortunate epistle to the lady.

'No, by boy; certainly it is not. My name is Mrs. Effingham, and this letter is quite plainly directed to Miss Greenham.'

'Oh, but, ma'am, good luck to you, and open it, and try if 'tis for you, for my heart's broken carrying it about everywhere, and no one will take it from me.'

'But I can't open it; it is not for me.' And the lady, turning away decidedly, was entering the parlour, when Jerry exclaimed: 'Ah, thin, ma'am, who else would it be for, if n't for you, sure it ends in *h. a. m. ham*—all as for your own name. *Effingham, Greenham*—'tis mighty little differ there's between 'em, I am thinking.'

Master Linchan's system of orthographical mutation certainly rivalled in bold originality that of any modern philologist. His rhetoric, it would seem, was not without effect; for Mrs. Effingham (she afterwards said she could not account for the impulse which led her to do so) at length consented to open the letter.

A strange effect the reading of the first few lines produced on her—her face grew deadly pale, her lips quivered, and hastily desiring the boy to wait, she went into the parlour and shut the door. In about a quarter of an hour, she came out, her features wearing a softened expression, and the trace of many tears. Bidding the boy tell his mistress that 'it was all right about the letter,' she gave him a bright coin, and sent him away the happiest of postboys.

That evening the village mail-bag went out freighted with a letter directed to 'Miss Aylmer, care of Miss Greenham,' &c.

By one of those accidents which are called improbable in novels, but which do occur in real life, Mrs. Effingham's niece was living in a village in the north of Ireland, which, bearing the same name as that of our southern one, frequently has its correspondence exchanged for ours. The girl, on the death of the friends who had adopted her, but who had nothing to bequeath, came over from India, and knowing no relative, save a poor and distant cousin of her father's, a Miss Greenham, residing in our northern namesake village, she naturally, in the first instance, took up her abode with her. The letter was one produced by an advertisement which the young lady had inserted in a Dublin newspaper, offering her services as a governess. A correspondence, always directed under cover to Miss Greenham, ensued between the young Anglo-Indian and a lady of high respectability who wished to engage her. This letter, the third of the series, contained sufficient to identify Miss Aylmer as the relative for whose presence Mrs. Effingham had so long pined.

No Governessing now—no going forth into the wide bleak world. In a few days, Miss Aylmer, accompanied by her friend, made her appearance in our village. A lively gentle girl she was, so agreeable, that very few people

ever thought of asking whether she was pretty. Under her auspices, her aunt's sometime melancholy mansion became filled with gaiety, and the number of consequent tea-parties and picnics was quite wonderful for our quiet village.

'Ye see,' said Jerry, when telling me the story confidentially for at least the tenth time—'ye see, ma'am, the good of the larning; for only that I knew that *h. a. m.* spells *ham*, that letter would still have been going a 'wandering about,' and that purty young lady would n't be to the fore, and I'd be without the fine new cloth-jacket and corderoys that the ould mistress promised agen next Sunday.'

From Chamber's Journal for July.

THE TWO FESTIVALS IN THE PEOPLE'S PALACE.

TWICE within the brief space of thirteen months has the Crystal Palace been the theatre of scenes which will live in the memory of the present, and perchance of future generations, as pictorial illustrations of two great historic epochs which will long be remembered in the annals of Great Britain.

In April 1855, when the demon of war was still raging with unabated fury, when hearts were beating high with alternate hope and fear, and 'tidings from Sebastopol' formed the absorbing subject of thought in every English breast, for one short week England turned from the awful drama which was being enacted in the Crimea, in order to welcome with heart and soul the imperial ally whose troops were so gallantly sharing with our own the burden and heat of the day. On this occasion it was that in the Crystal Palace the Queen of Great Britain presented her imperial guests to twenty-thousand of her subjects, and in this, the most critical moment of the war, the French alliance, thus embodied, met with cordial adherence from the assembled multitude.

Thirteen months passed on—Sebastopol had fallen, peace, dearly purchased by the life-blood of her heroes, had been restored to Europe, and once more the Crystal Palace is thronged with an eager crowd—for there, as the *Times* observes, and not by the herald in the streets of London, was made the true Proclamation of Peace.

A brilliant and imposing pageant was that presented to our gaze on the 20th of April 1855. During two hours, an expectant and gaily-dressed multitude thronged the terrace in front of the Palace, and happy were those who could find a resting-place on the stone-steps leading from one ascending platform to another. At length, the cry, 'They are coming! they are coming!' passed from mouth to mouth; and every eye was bent with anxious and longing gaze upon the balcony, draped with crimson cloth, which had been erected for the Queen and her august visitors. There was a few moments' hush amongst the dense masses upon the terrace; but when Queen Victoria, led by Napoleon III., and the Empress Eugénie, leaning on Prince Albert, stepped forth upon the balcony, an overwhelming burst of joy and applause burst from the twenty thousand spectators of this great historic scene. Again and again was the air rent with acclamations of welcome, mingled with cries of 'Vive l'Empereur—vive l'Impératrice!'

The last occasion, probably, on which Louis Napoleon had appeared amidst an English crowd, was on the 10th of April 1848, when as special constable, he helped to maintain the cause of order—a cause so dear to the heart of every true Briton. Now as emperor of the French, as ally of our gracious Queen, and though last, perchance not least, as a self-made man, was Napoleon welcomed by the English nation; whilst his lovely and graceful empress shared with our own beloved Queen the plaudits of the people.

No sooner had the august party retired from the balcony, then there was a general rush towards the Palace gates; and on finding they were not yet opened many a threat, no loud but deep, was uttered, of breaking them open—threats which were met with imperturbable sang-froid by the police. At last the desired moment came; the barriers were removed, and on swept the multitude like a resistless tide.— Bearing in mind an obliging suggestion from Mr. Grove, the secretary of the company, that 'those who ran the fastest would have the best seats,' we hastened onwards to the best of our ability, and were fortunate in obtaining an advantageous position near the dais, which was shortly afterwards occupied by the royal and imperial party. Even the usually imperturbable countenance of Louis Napoleon lighted up with satisfaction as he courteously acknowledged the enthusiastic reception of the crowd; and never shall we forget the graceful and gracious movements with which Queen Victoria led forward her sister sovereign, as if presenting her to the brilliant assemblage; or the gentle charm of manner with which the Empress Eugénie responded to the admiring plaudits of the multitude.

This was celebrated in the People's Palace the festival of our alliance with France—one which, in the midst of war, was felt to be the augur of better and surer triumphs than can be achieved by the sword of the warriors or the skill of the successful general.