

From Dickens's Household Words.

### NOBODY, SOMEBODY, AND EVERYBODY.

THE power of Nobody is becoming enormous in England, and he alone is responsible for so many proceedings, both in the way of commission and omission; he has so much to answer for, and is so constantly called to account, that a few remarks on him may not be ill-timed.

The hand which this surprising person had in the late war is amazing to consider. It was he who left the tents behind, who left the baggage behind, who chose the worse possible ground for encampments, who provided no means of transport who killed the horses, who paralysed the commissariat, who knew nothing of the business he professed to know and monopolized, who decimated the English army.—It was Nobody who gave out the famous unroasted coffee, it was Nobody who made the hospitals more horrible than language can describe, it was Nobody who occasioned all the dire confusion of Balaclava harbour, it was even Nobody who ordered the fatal Balaclava charge. The non-relief of Kars was the work of Nobody and Nobody has justly and severely suffered for this infamous transaction.

It is difficult for the mind to span the career of Nobody. The sphere of action opened to this wonderful person to enlarge every day, that the limited faculties of Anybody are too weak to compass it. Yet, the nature of the last tribunal expressly appointed for the detection and punishment of Nobody may, as a part of his stupendous history, be glanced at without winking.

At the Old Bailey, when a person under strong suspicion of malpractices is tried, it is the custom (the rather as the strong suspicion has been found by a previous inquiry to exist) to conduct the trial on stringent principles, and to confine it to impartial hands. It has not yet become the practice of the criminal, or even of the civil courts—but they, indeed, are constituted for the punishment of Somebody—to invite the prisoner's or defendant's friends to talk the matter over with him in a cosy tea and muffin sort of a way, and make out a verdict together, that shall be what a deposed iron king called making things pleasant. But, when Nobody was shown within these few weeks to have occasioned intolerable misery and loss in the late war, and to have incurred a vast amount of guilt in bringing to pass results which any morally sane persons can understand to be fraught with fatal consequences far beyond present calculation, this cosy course of proceeding was the course pursued. My Lord intent upon establishing the responsibility of Nobody, walked into court, as he would walk into a ball-room; and my Lord's friends and admirers toaded and fawned upon him in court, as they would toady him and fawn upon him in other assembly. My Lord carried his head very high, and took a mighty great tone with the common people; and there was no question as to anything My Lord did or said, and Nobody got triumphantly fixed. Ignorance enough and incompetency enough to bring any country that the world has ever seen to defeat or shame and to lay any head that ever was in it low, were proved beyond question; but my Lord cried, "On Nobody's eyes be it!" and My Lord's impanelled chorus cried, "There is no imposter but Nobody; on him be the shame and blame!"

Surely this is a rather wonderful state of things to be realizing itself so long after the Flood, in such a country as England. Surely, it suggests to us with some force, that whenever this ubiquitous Nobody is, there mischief is and their danger is. For, it is especially to be borne in mind that wherever failure is accomplished, there Nobody lurks. With success, he has nothing to do. That is Everybody's business, and all manner of improbable people will invariably be found at the bottom of it. But, it is the great feature of the present epoch that all public disaster in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland is assuredly, and to a dead certainty, Nobody's work.

We have, it is not to be denied, punished Nobody, with exemplary rigour. We have as a nation, allowed ourselves to be deluded by so influences or insolences of office or rank, but have dealt with Nobody in a spirit of equal and uncompromising justice that has moved the admiration of the world. I have had some opportunities of remarking, out of England, the impression made on other peoples by the stern Saxon spirit with which, the default proved and the wrong done, we have tracked down and punished the defaulter and wrong-doer. And I do here declare my solemn belief, founded on much I have seen, that the remembrance of our frightful failures within the last three years, and of our retaliation upon Nobody, will be more vivid and potent in Europe (mayhap in Asia, too, and in America) for years upon years to come than all our successes since the days of the Spanish Armada.

In civil matters we have Nobody equally active. When a civil office breaks down, the break-down is sure to be in Nobody's department. I entreat on my reader, dubious of this proposition, to wait until the next break down (the reader is certain not to have to wait long) and to observe, whether or no, it is in Nobody's

department. A despatch of the greatest moment is sent to a minister abroad, at a most important crisis; Nobody reads it. British subjects are affronted in a foreign territory; Nobody interferes. Our own loyal fellow subjects, a few thousand miles away, want to exchange political, commercial, and domestic intelligence with us; Nobody stops the mail. The Government with all its mighty means and appliances, is invariably beaten and outstripped by private enterprise which we all know to be Nobody's fault. Something will be the national death of us, some day; and who can doubt that Nobody will be brought in Guilty?

Now, might it not be well, if it were only for the novelty of the experiment, to try Somebody a little. Reserving Nobody for statues and stars and garters, and batons, and places and pensions without duties, what if we were to try Somebody for real work? More than that, what, if we were to punish Somebody with a most inflexibly and grim severity, when he caught him pompously undertaking in holiday-time to do work, and found him, when the working-time came, altogether unable to do it.

Where do I, as an Englishman, want somebody? Before high Heaven, I want him everywhere! I look round the whole dull horizon, and I want Somebody to do work while the Brazen Head, already hoarse with crying "Time is!" passes into the second warning, "Time was!" I don't want Somebody to let off Parliamentary penny crackers against evils that need to be stormed by the thunderbolts of Jove. I don't want Somebody to sustain, for Parliamentary and Club entertainment, and by the desire of several persons of distinction, the character of a light old gentleman, or a fast old gentleman, or a debating old gentleman, or a dandy old gentleman, or a free and easy old gentleman, or a capital old gentleman considering his years. I want Somebody to be clever in doing the business, not clever in evading it. The more clever he is in the latter quality (which has been the making of Nobody,) the worse I hold it to be for me and my children and for all men and their children. I want Somebody who shall be no fiction; but a capable, good, determined workman. For it seems to me that from the moment when I accept Anybody in a high place, whose function in that place is to exchange winks with me instead of doing the serious deeds that belong to it, I set afloat a system of false pretence and general swindling, the taint of which soon begins to manifest itself in every department of life, from Newgate to the Court of Bankruptcy, and thence to the highest Court of Appeal. For this reason, above all others, I want to see the working Somebody in every responsible position which the winking Somebody and Nobody now monopolize between them.

And this brings me back to Nobody: to the great irresponsible, guilty, wicked, blind giant of this time. O friends, countrymen, and lovers, look at that carcass smelling strong of prussic acid (drunk out of a silver milkpot, which was a part of the plunder, or as the less pernicious thieves call it, the swag), cumbering Hampstead Heath by London town! Think of the history of which that abomination is at once the beginning and the end; of the dark social scenes daguerrotyped in it; and of the Lordship of your Treasury to which Nobody, driving a shameful bargain, raised this creature when he was alive. Follow the whole story, and finish by listening to the parliamentary lawyers as they tell you that Nobody knows anything about it; that Nobody is entitled (from the attorney point of view) to believe that there ever was such a business at all; that Nobody can be allowed to demand, for decepsy's sake, the swift expulsion from the lawmaking body of the surviving instrument in the heap of crime; that such expulsion is, in a word, just Nobody's business, and must at present be constitutionally left to Nobody to do.

There is a great fire raging in the land, and—by all the polite precedents and prescriptions!—you shall leave it to Nobody to put out with a squirt, expected home in a year or so. There are inundations bursting on the valleys, and—by the same precedents and prescriptions!—you shall trust to Nobody to bale the water out with a bottomless tin kettle. Nobody being responsible to you for his perfect success in these little feats, and you confiding in him, you shall go to heaven. Ask for Somebody in his stead, and you shall go in quite a contrary direction.

And yet, for the sake of Everybody, give me Somebody. I raise my voice in the wilderness for Somebody. My heart, as the ballad says, is sore for Somebody. Nobody has done more harm in this single generation than Everybody can mend in ten generations. Come, responsible Somebody; accountable Blockhead, come!

THE WORD "ITS."—Through the whole of our authorized version of the Bible "its" does not once occur; the work which it now performs being accomplished by "his" or "her" applied as freely to inanimate things as to persons, or else by "thereof" or "of it." Trench remarks that "its" occurs but three times in all Shakespeare, and he doubts whether it is in Paradise Lost.

### NEW WORKS.

From English Traits. By R. W. Emerson. Routledge, Farringdon-street.

This work is by an American author, who, having made two visits to England, records his opinions of the country, its people, their manners, &c. It is written in a style highly complimentary to the nation; and as nearly all Mr Emerson observed is painted *couleur de rose*, we are inclined to think that he only obtained a superficial glance of English society during his visits. He divides his book into several heads, such as race, ability, manners, truth, &c, and then, as it were analyses and depicts our national characteristics. The second visit of Mr Emerson to England was in the year 1847, when, as he tells us, he was invited to read a series of Lectures at some mechanics' institutes in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Under the head of "Truth," Mr Emerson in his earlier edition, said that Englishmen dislike time-servers, or trimmers; but, in a subsequent note he thus comments upon the reception Englishmen, to their eternal shame and disgrace, gave to the arch-traitor, Louis Napoleon. Mr Emerson says:—It is an unlucky moment to remember these sparkles of solitary virtue in face of the honours lately paid in England to Louis Napoleon. I am sure that no Englishman whom I had the happiness to know consented, when the aristocracy and the commoners of London cringed like a Neapolitan rabble before a successful thief. We extract the following from under the different heads given to them below:—

#### ABILITY.

In war, the Englishman looks to his means. He is of the opinion of Civiis, his German ancestor, whom Tacitus records as holding that the gods are on the side of the strongest;—a sentence which Bonaparte unconsciously translated, when he said that he had noticed that Providence always favoured the heaviest battalion. Their military science propounds that if the weight of the advancing column is greater than that of the resisting, the latter is destroyed. Therefore, Wellington, when he came to the army in Spain, had every man weighed, first with accoutrements, and then without; believing that the force of an army depended on the weight and power of the individual soldiers, in spite of cannon. Lord Palmerston told the House of Commons, that more care is taken of the health and comfort of English troops than of any other troops in the world; and that, hence the English can put more men into the rank, on the day of action, on the field of battle, than any other armv. Before the bombardment of the Danish forts in the Baltic, Nelson spent day after day, himself in the boats, on the exhausting service of sounding the channel. Clerk of Eldin's celebrated manœuvre of breaking the line of sea-battle, and Nelson's feat of doubling, or stationing his ships, one on the outer bow, and another on the outer quarter of each of the enemy's were only translations into naval tactics of Bonaparte's rule of concentration. Lord Collingwood was accustomed to tell his men, that if they could fire three well-directed broadsides in five minutes, no vessel could resist them: and from constant practice, they came to do it in three minutes and a half.

#### TRUTH.

They have a horror of adventurers in or out of parliament. The ruling passion of Englishmen in these days is a terror of humbug. In the same proportion they value honesty, stoutness, and adherence to your own. They like a man committed to his objects. They hate the French, as frivolous: they hate the Irish, as aimless; they hate the Germans, as professors. In February, 1848, they said—"Look, the French king and his party fell for want of a shot; they had not conscience to shoot, so entirely was the pith and heart of monarchy eaten out." They attack their own politicians every day, on the same grounds, as adventurers.—They love stoutness in standing for your right, in declining money or promotion that costs any concession. The barrister refuses the silk gown of Queen's Counsel, if his junior have it one day earlier. Lord Collingwood would not accept his medal for victory on the 14th of February 1797, if he did not receive one for victory on the 1st of June, 1794; and the long withheld medal was accorded. When Castlereagh dissuaded Lord Wellington from going to the king's levee, until the unpopular Cintra business had been explained, he replied, "You furnish me a reason for going. I will go to this, or I will never go to a king's levee." The radical mob at Oxford cried after the tory, Lord Eldon, "There's old Eldon: cheer him; he never rattled." They have given the Parliamentary nickname of "Trimmers" to the time servers, whom English character does not love. They are very liable in their politics to extraordinary delusions; thus, to believe what stands recorded in the gravest books, that the movement of the 10th of April, 1848, was urged or assisted by foreigners; which, to be sure is paralleled by the democratic whimsy in this country, which I have noticed to be shared by men sane on other points, that the English are at the bottom of the agitation of slavery in American politics; and then, again, to the French popular legends on the subject of per-

fidious Albion. But suspicion will make fools of nations as of citizens.

#### ARISTOCRACY.

In evidence of the wealth amassed by ancient families, the traveller is shown the palaces in Piccadilly, Burlington-house, Devonshire House, Lansdowne House, in Berkely-square and, lower down in the city a few noble houses which still withstand in all their amplitude the encroachment of streets. The Duke of Bedford includes, or included, a mile square in the heart of London, where the British Museum, once Mantague House, now stands, and the land occupied by Woburn-square, Bedford-square, Russell-square. The Marquis of Westminster built within a few years the series of squares called Belgravia. Stafford House is the noblest palace in London. Northumberland House holds its place by Charing Cross.—Chesterfield House remains in Audley-street. Sion House and Holland House are in the suburbs. But most of the historical houses are masked or lost in the modern uses to which trade or charity has converted them. A multitude of town palaces contain inestimable galleries of art. In the country, the size of private estates is more impressive. From Barnard Castle I rode on the highway twenty-three miles from High Force, a fall of the Tees, towards Darlington, past Raby Castle, through the estate of the Duke of Cleveland. The Marquis of Bredablane rides out of his house a hundred miles in a straight line to the sea, on his own property. The Duke of Sutherland owns the county of Sutherland, stretching across Scotland from sea to sea. The Duke of Devonshire, besides his other estates, owns 96,000 acres in the county of Derby. The Duke of Richmond, has 40,000 acres at Goodwood, and 300,000 at Gerdon Castle. The Duke of Norfolk's park in Sussex is fifteen miles in circuit. An agriculturist bought lately the island of Lewis, in Hebrides, containing 500,000 acres the possessions of the Earl of Lonsdale gave him eight seats in parliament. This is the Heptarchy again: and before the Reform of 1838, one hundred and fifty four persons sent three hundred and seven members to parliament. The borough-mongers governed England. These large domains are growing larger. The great estates are absorbing the small freeholds. In 1786, the soil of England was owned by 250,000 corporations and proprietors; and in 1822, by 32,000. These broad estates find room in this narrow island. All over England, scattered at short intervals among ship-yards, mills, mines, and forges, are the paradises of the nobles, where the livelong repose and refinement are heightened by the contrast with the roar of industry and necessity, out of which you have stepped aside. I was surprised to observe the very small attendance usually in the House of Lords. Out of 573 peers, on ordinary days, only twenty or thirty. Where are they? I asked, at home on their estates, devoted by ennui, or in the Alps, or up the Rhine, in the Hartz Mountains, or in Egypt, or in India, on the Ghauts. But, with such interests at stake, how can these men afford to neglect them? O, replied my friend, why should they work for themselves, when every man in England works for them and will suffer before they come to harm? The hardest Radical instantly uncovers, and changes his tone to a lord. It was remarked on the 10th of April, 1848 (the day of the Chartist demonstration), that the upper classes were, for the first time, actively interesting themselves in their own defence, and men of rank were sworn special constables with the rest. Besides, why need they sit out the debate? Has not the Duke of Wellington, at this moment, their proxies,—the proxies of fifty peers in his pocket, to vote for him, if there be an emergency. It is, however, true, that the existence of the House of Peers as a branch of the Government entitles them to fill half the cabinet; and their weight of property and station give them a virtual nomination of the other half; whilst they have their share in the subordinate offices, as a school of training. The monopoly of political power has given them their intellectual and social eminence in Europe. A few law lords and a few political lords take the brunt of public business. In the army, the nobility fill a large part of the high commissions, and give to these a tone of expense and splendour, and also of exclusiveness. They have borne their full share of duty and danger in this service; and there are few noble families which have not paid in some of their members, the debt of life or limb, in the sacrifices of the Russian war. For the rest the nobility have the lead in matters of state, and of expense; in questions of taste, in usages, in convivial and domestic hospitalities. In general, all that is required of them is to sit securely, to preside at public meetings, to countenance charities, and to give the example of that decorum to the British heart.

#### POMP AND PRIDE OF THE ARISTOCRACY.

The Selwyn correspondence, in the reign of George III. discloses a rottenness in the aristocracy, which threatened to decompose the state. The sycophancy and sale of votes and honour, for place and title; lewdness, gaming, smuggling, bribery, and cheating; the sneer at the childish indiscretion of quarrelling with ten thousand a-year; the want of ideas; the splendour of the titles, and the apathy of the nation