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MR. HOSEA BIGLOW'S SPEECH

IN

MARCH MEETING.

JAALAM, April 6, 1866.

MY DEAR SIR: (an' 'noticin' by your kiver thet you're some heavier than wut you wun,) I inclose the diffrence) I dunno ez I know jest how to interdroce this lea' perduction of my mews, ez Parson Wilbur allus called 'em, which is gein' to be the last an' way the last unless suthin' portikler ah'd interfeer which I don't expec' ner I wun't vissit in of it wuz ez pressin' ez a deppty Sheriff. Sence Mr. Wilbur's disease I hev n't had no one thet could dror out my talents. Hi sat to kind o' wine me up an' set the penderlum swein' an' then somehow I seemed to go on tick ez it wear tell I run down, but the noo minister ain't of the same brewin', nor I can't seem to git ahold of no kine of huming nater in him but sort of slide rite off'n you din on the edge of a mow. Minnysteeril natur is wal enough an' a site better's most other kines I know on, but the other sort seek as Welbor bed wuz of the Lord's makin' and naterally more wonderfle an' sweet taste' leastways to me so far as heard from. He used to interdoce 'em smooth exile athout sayin' nothin' in portickler an' I misdoubt he did n't set so much by the sec'nd Ceres as wut he done by the Fast, fact, he let on onet thet his mine misgive him of a sort of falkin' off in spots. He wuz as outspoken as a norwester ez wuz, but I tole him I hoped the fall wuz from so high up thet a feller could ketch a good many times fast afore comin' bust onto the ground as I see Jethro C. Swett from the meetin' house steeple up to th' old parrish, an' took up for dead but he's alive now an' spry as wut you be. Turnin' of it over I recollected how they 'tu to put wut they called Argymunce onto the fronts of paymes, like poorches afore houses where you corld rest yo a spell whilst you wuz considin' whether you'd go in or out especially were the wuz darters, though I most allus found it the best plan to go in fust an' think afterwards an' the gals likes it best tu. In no ez speeshis ever hes any argiments to 'em, I never see none thet hed an' I guess they never do but the must allus be a Rginann to everythin' athout it is Eternity so I'll begin rite away an' any body may put it afore me of his speeshes of it soots an' welcome. I don't claim no parteet.

THE ARGYMUNT.

Interdoceshin, which may be skipt. Begins by talkin' about himself: thet 'e jest natur an' most gin ally allus pleasin', I bleeve I 've notice, to one of the company, an' thet's more than wut you can say of most speeshes of talkin'. Nex' comes the gittin' the goodwill of the odjunce by letin' 'em gether from wut you kind of ex'sentially let drop thet they air about East. A one, an' no mistake, skare 'em up an' take 'em as they rise. Spring interdoced with a new appropm hoons. Speech finally begins witch nobuddy need n't feel obedgeated to read as I never read 'em an' never shall this one eg'in. Subjick stated; expanded; delayted; extended. Pump lively. Subjick stated eg'in so 's to avide all mistaks. Gimle remarks; continued; kerried on; pushed furder; kind o' gin out. Subjick retsished; dislocted; stirred up permiscoous. Pump eg'in. Gits back to where he set out. Can't seem to stay thair. Ketches into Mr. Seaward's hair. Breaks loose eg'in an' stalls his subjick; stretches it; turns it; folds it; enfolds it; folds it eg'in so 's t' no one can't find it. Argues with an imaginary loan thet ain't aloud to say nothin' in replyes. Gives him a real good dressin' an' is setteth he is rite. Gits into Johnson's hair. No see tryin' to git into his head. Gives it up. Hez to suit his subjick eg'in; does it back aside, sideways, endways, crisscross, bevelin', noways. Gits finally red on it. Concloods. Concloods more. Reads sum xtrax. Sees his subjick a-nostu' round arter him eg'in. Tries to avide it. Won't do. Misstates it. Can 't conjectur' no other plausible way of stayin' on it. Tries pump. No fx. Yeels the flore.

You kin spell an' punctooate thet as you please. I allus do. It kind of puts a noo sent of close onto a word, thisere funattick spelin' does an' takes 'em out of the prisen dress they wair in the Dicteonary. If I squeeze the cents out of 'em it's the main thing, an' wut they wuz made for; wut 's left 's jest pumnis.

Mistur Wilbur sez he to me onst, sez he, "Hosea," sez he, "in litteryture the only good thing is Natur. It 's smooth hard to come at," sez he, "but onst git it an' you're gut everythin'. Wut 's the sweetest smell on airth?" sez he, "Noo-mone hay," sez I, purty brisk for he wuz allus hankerin' round in bayrin'. "Nawthin' of the kind," sez he. "My leetle Holdy's breath," sez I eg'in. "You 're a good lad," sez he, his eyes sort of ripplin' like, for he lost a babe onet about high her age, —"You re a good lad; but 't ain't thet nuther," sez he. "Ef you want to know ez he, "open your winder of a mornin' at ary season, and you 'll larn thet the best of perfoome is jest fresh *air fresh air*," sez he, emphyseirin', "athout no mixtur. Then 's wut *I* call nature in written, and it bathes my lungs and watches 'em sweet whenever I git a whiff on 't," sez he. I offen think o' thet when I set down to write, but the winders air so cpt to git stuck, and breakin' a pane costs sumthin'

Yourn for the last time,

Not to be continued. HOSEA BIGLOW.

I don't much s'pose, howsever I should plan it
I could git boosted into th' House or Senuit,—
Nut while the twelegraed gab-machine's so plenty,
'Nabbin' one man to do the talk o' twenty;
I 'm one o' them thet finds it rather hard
To manufactur' wisdom by the yard,
An' maysure off, scantin' to demand,
The piece-goods ef 'twuz that I kept on hand,
The same ole pattern runnin' thru an' thru,
An' nothin' but the customer thet's new.
I sometimes think, the furder on I go
Thet it gits harder to feel sure I know,
An' when I've settled my ideas, I find
'T war n't I sheered most in makin' up my mind:
'T wuz this an' thet an' t'other thing thet done it,
Suthin' in th' air, I could n' seek nor shun it.
Mos' folks go off so quick now in discussion,
All th' ole flint locks seems altered to percussion,
Whilst I in agin' sometimes got a flint
Thet I'm percussion changin' back to flint;
Wal, of it's so, I ain't agoin' to worrit,
For th' ole Queen's-arm hez this pertickler merit—
It gives the mind a hahnsome width o' margin
To kin' o' make its will afore dischargin':
To kin' o' make out but jest one gimnle rule—
No man need go an' *make* himself a fool,
Nor jedgment ain't like mutton, thet can't bear
Cookin' tu long, nor be took up tu rare.

Ez I wuz say'n, I ha'n't no chance to speak
So 's t' all the country dreads me onet a week,
But I've consid'ble o' thet sort o' hend
Thet sets to home an' thinks wut *might* be said,
The sense thet grows an' werrits underneath,
Comin' belated like your wisdom-teeth,
An' git so el'kent, sometimes, to my gardin
Thet I don' vally public life a farthin'.
Our Parson Wilbur (blessin's on his head!)
'Mongst other stories of ole times he hed,
Talked of a feller thet rehearsed his spreads
Beforehan' to his rows o' kebbige-heads,
(Ef 'twam't Demosseenes, I guess 'twuz Siaro,)
Appealin' fust to thet an' then to this row,
Accordin' ez he thought thet his ideas
Their diff runt ev'ryages o' brains 'ould please;
"An'," sez the Parson, "to his hit right, you must
Git used to maysurin' your hearers fust;
For, take my word for 't when'all 's come an' past,
The kebbige-heads 'll cair the day et last;
Th' ain't ben a meetin' sense the worl' begun
But they made (raw or biled ones) ten to one."

I 've allus foun' 'em, I allow, sence then
About ez good for talkin' to ez men;
They'll take edvice, like other folks, to keep,
(To use it 'ould be holdin' on 't tu cheap,)
They listen wal, don' kick up when you scold 'em,
An' ef they 've tongues, hev sense enough to hold 'em;
Though th' ain't no danger we shall loose the breed,
I gin'lly keep a score or so forr seed,
An' when my sappiness gits spry in spring
So 's t' my tongue itches to run on full swing,
I tin' 'em ready-planted in March-meetin',
Warm ez a lyceum-audience in their greetin',
An' pleased to hear my spoutin' frum the fence,—
Comin', ez 't does, entirely free f' expense.
This year I made the follerin' observations
Extrump'ry, like most other tri'ls o' patience,
An', no reporters bein' sent express
To work their abstrac's up into a mess
Ez like the oridg'nal ez a wooden pictur'
Thet chokes the life out like a boy-constrictor,
I 've writ 'em out, an' so avide all jeal'sies
'Twixt nonsense o' my own an' some one's else's.

My feller kebbige-heads, who look so green,
I vow to gracious thet ef I could dreen
The world of all its hearers but jhst you,
'T would leave 'bout all tha' is wuth talkin' to,
An' you, my venerable frien's, thet show
Upon your crowns a sprinklin' o' March snow,
Ez of mild Time had christened every sense
For wisdom's church o' second innocence,
Nut Age's winter, no, no sech a thing,
But jest a kin' o' slippin' back o' Spring—
We've gathered here, ez nuhle to decide
Which is the Lord's an' which is Satan's side,
Coz all the good or evil thet can heppen
Is 'long o' which on 'em you choose for Gappen.

Aprul 's come back; the swellin' buds of oak
Dim the far hillsides with a purplish smoke;
The brooks are loose an', singing to be seen,
(Like gals), make all the hollers soft an' green;
The birds are here, for all the season 's late;
They take the sun's height an' don' never wait;
Soon 'z he officially declares it 's Spring
Their light hearts lift 'em on a north'ard wing,
An' th'ain't an acre, fur ez you can hear,
Can't by the music tell the time o' year;
But thet white dove Carliny scared away,
Five year ago, jes' sech an Aprul day;
Peace, thet we hoped 'ould come an' build last year
An' coo by every housedoor, is n't here—
No, nor won't never be, for all our jaw,
'Till we 're ez brave in pol'tics ez in war!
O Lord, of folks wuz made so 's t' they could see
The bagnet-pint there is to an idee!
Ten times the danger in 'em th' is in steel;
They run your soul thru an' you never feel,
But crawl about an' seem to think you 're livin',
Poor shells o' men, nut wuth the Lord's forgivin',
Till you come bunt agin a real live fact,
An' go to pieces when you'd ough' to act!
Thet kin' o' begnet's wut we're crossin' now,
An' no man, fit to nevvigate a scow,
'Ould stan' expectin' help from Kingdom Come
While t' other side druv their cold iron home.

My frien's, you never gathered from my mouth,
No, nut one word ag'in the South ez South,
Nor th' ain't a livin' man, white, brown, nor black,
Gladder 'n wut I should be to take 'em back;
But all I ask of Uncle Sam is fust
To write up on his door, "No goods on trust;"
Give us cash down in ekle laws for all,
An' they 'll be sung inside afore nex' fall.
Give wut they ask, an' we shell hev Jamaker,
Wuth minus someponsid'able an acre;
Give wut they need, an' we shell git 'fore long
A nation all one piece, rich, peaceful, strong;
Make 'em all Amerikin, an' they'll begin
To love their country ez they loved their sin;
Let 'em stay Southun, an' you've kep' a sore
Ready to fester ez it done afore.
No mortle man can boast of perfec' vision,
But the one moleblin' thing is Indecision,
An' th' ain't no futur' for the man nor state
Thet out of j-u-s-t can't spell great.
Some folks 'ould call thet riddikle; do you?
'T wuz commonsense afore the war wuz thru;
Thet loaded all our guns an' made 'em speak
"Thet Europe heared 'em clearn acrost the creek;
"Thet 'n' ... 'rivin' o' their spiles down now," sez she.
"To the hard grennit o' God's fust idee;
Ef they reach thet, Democ'cy need n't fear
The tallest airthquakes we can git up here."

Some call 't insultin' to ask *ary* pledge,
An' say 't will only set their teeth on edge,
But folks you 've jest licked, fur 'z I ever see,
Are bout ez mad ex they kney how to be;
It 's better than the Rebs themselves expected
'Fore they see Uncle Sam wit down hempected;
Be kind 'z you please, but really make things fast,
For plain truth 's ell the kindness thet 'll last;
Ef treason is a crime, ez *some* folks say,
How could we punish it a milder way
Than sayin' to 'em, "Brethren, lookee here,
We 'll jes' divide things with ye, sheer an' sheer,
An' sence both come o' pooty strongbacked daddies,
You take the Darkies, ez we 've took the Paddies;
Ign'ant an' poor we took 'em by the hand,
An' the 'ro the bones and sinners o' the land."
I ain't o' those thet fancy there's a loss on
Every inve'ment that don't start from Bos'on;
But I know this: our money 's safest trusted
In sunthin' come wut will, thet *can't* be busted,
An' thet 's the old Amerikin idea,
To make a man a Man an' let him be.

Ez for their loyalty, don't take a goad to 't,
But I do want to block their only road to 't
By lettin' 'em believe thet they can git
More 'n wut they lost, out of our little wit:
I tell ye wut, I'm 'fraid we 'll drif' to leeward
Thoun we can put more stiffenin' into Seward;
He seems to think Columby 'd better act
Like a scared widder with a boy stiff-necked
Thet stomps an' swears he wunt come in to supper;
She mus' set up for him, ez weak ez Tupper,
Keepin' the Constitootion on to warm,
Till he 'll accept her 'pologies in form:
The neighbors tell her he 's a cross-grained cuss
Thet needs a hidin' 'fore he comes to wus;
"No," sez Ma Seward, "he 's ez good 's the best,
All he wants now is sugar-plums an' rest;"
"He sassed my Pa," sez one; "He stoned my son,"
Another edds. "O, wal, 't wuz jest his fun."
"He tried to shoot our Uncle Sumwell dead."
"T wuz onty tryin' a noo gun he hed."
"Wal, all we ask 's to hev it understood
You'll take his gun away from him for good;
We don't, wal, nut exac'ly, like hiss play,
Seein' he allus kin' o' shoots our way.
You kill your fatted calves to no good end,
'Thout his fust sayin', 'Mother, I hev sinned!'"

The Pres'dunt *he* thinks thet the slickest plan
'Ould be t' allow thet he's our only man,
An' thet we fit thru all thet draffie war
Jes' for his private glory an' color;
"Nobody ain't a Union man," sez he,
"Thout he agrees, thru thick an' thin, with me;
War n't Andrew Jackson's initials jes' like mine?
An' ain't thet sunthin' like a right divine
To out up ez kentenkerous ez I please,
An' treat your Congress like a nest o' fleas?"
Wal, I expec' the People would n' care, if
The question now was techin' bank or tariff,
But I conclude they've 'bout made up their mind
This ain't the fittest time to go it blind,
Nor these ain't mettera thet with pol'tics swings,
But goes 'way down amongst the roots o' things;
Coz Sumner talked o' whitewashin' one day
They won't let four years' war be thrown away.
"Let the South hev her rights!" They say, "That's you!
But nut grab hold of other folks's tu."
Who owns this country, is it they or Andy?
Leastways it ough' to be the People *and* he;
Let him be senior partner, ef he's so,
But let them kin' o' smuggle in ez Co;
Did he dis'kiver it? Consid'ble numbers
Think thet the job wuz taken by Columbus.
Did he set tu an' make it wut it is?
Ef so, I guess the One-Man-power hesris.
Did he put thru' the robbles, clear the docket,
An' pay th' expenses out of his own pocket?
Ef thet's the case, then everythin' I exes
Is t' hev him come an' pay my ennooal texes.
Was't he that shov'dered all them million guns?
Did he lose all the fathers, brothers, sons?
Is this ere pop'lar gov'ment thet we run
A kin' o' salky, made to kerry one?
An' is the country goin' to knuckle down
To hev Smith sort their letters 'stid o' Brown?
Who wuz the 'Nited States 'fore Richmon fell?
Wuz the South needle their full name to spell?
An' can't we spell it in thet short-han' way
Till th' underpinnin' 's settled so 's to stay?
Who cares for the Resolves of '61,
Thet tried to coax an airthquake with a bun?
Hez ant'ly nothin' taken place sence then
To l'arn folks thet they must handle facts like men?
Ain't *this* the true p'int? Did the Rebs accep' 'em?
If nut, whose fault is 't that we hev n't kep' 'em?
War n't there *two* sides? and don't it stand to reason
Thet this week's 'Nited States ain't las' week's treason?
When all these sums is done, with nothin' missed,
An' nut afore, this school 'll be dismissed.

I knowed ez wal ez though I'd seen 't with eyes
That when the war wuz over copper'd rise,
An' thet we'd hev a rile-up in our kettle
'T would need Leviathan's whole skin to settle;
I thought 't would take about a generation
'Fore we could wall begin to be a nation,
But I allow I never did imagine
'T would be our Pres'dunt that 'ould drive a wedge in
To keep the split from closin' of it could,
An' heelin over with new wholesome wood;
For 'th ain't no chance o' healin' while they think
Thet law an' gov ment's only printer's ink;
I mus' confess I thank him for discoverin'
The curius way in which the States are sovereign;
They ain't nut *quite* enough so to rebel,
But, when they fin' it 's costly to raise h—,
Why, then, for jes' the same superl tive reason,
They 're most too much so to be fetched for treason;
They *can't* go out, but if they somehow *do*,
Their sovereignty don't noways go out tu;
The State goes out, the sovereignty don't stir,
But stays to keep the door ajar for her.
He thinks secession never took 'em out,
An' mebby he 's correc', but I misdoubt;
Ef they war n't out, then why, 'n the name o' sin,
Make all this row 'bout lettin' of 'em in?
In law, p'raps nut; but there 's a difference, ruthor,
Betwixt your brother-in-law an' reel brother,
An' I for one, shall wish they 'd all ben *som'ere*,
Long 'z U. S. Texas are sech reg lar comers.
But, O my patience! must we wriggle back
Into th' ole crooked, pettyforgin' track,
When our artil ry-wheels a road hev cut
Stret to our purpose of we keep the rut?
War 's jes' dead waste excep' to wipe the slate
Clean for the cyph'rin' of some nobler fate.

Ez for dependin' on their oaths an' thet,
'T wun't bind 'em more 'n the ribbin roun' my hat;
I heared a fable once from Othniel Starns,
Thet pints it slick ez weatherococks do barns:
Once on a time the wolves had certing rights
Inside the fold; they used to sleep there nights,
An', bein' cousins o' the dogs, they took
Their turns et watchin', reg'lar ez a book;
But somehow, when the dogs hed gut saleep,
Their love o' mutton beat their love o' sheep,
Till gradnlly the shepherds come to see
Things war n't agoin' ez they'd ough' to be;
So they sent off a deacon to remonstrate
Along 'th the wolves an' urge 'em to go on straight;
They did n' seem to set much by the deacon,
Nor preachin' did n' cow 'em, nut to speak on;
Fin'ly they swore thet thay'd go out an' stay,
An' hev their fill o' mutton every day:
Then dogs an' shepherds, arter much hard dammin',
Turned tu an' give 'em a tormented lammin',
An' sez, "Ye sha' n't go out, the murrain rot ye,
To keep us wastin' half our time to watch ye!"
But then the question come, How live together
'Thout losin' sleep, nor nary yew nor wether?
Now there wuz some dogs (noways wuth their keep)
That sheered their cousins' tastes an' sheered the sheep;
They sez, "Be gin'rous, let 'em swear right in,
An', ef they backslide, let 'em swear ag'in;
Jes' let 'em put on sheep-skins whilst they 're sweatin';
To ask for more 'ould be beyond all bearin'."
"Be gin'rous for yourselves, where *you're* to pay,
Thet's the best practice," sez a shepherd gray;
"Ez for their oaths they wun't be wuth a button,
Long 'z you don't care 'em o' their taste for mutton;
Th' ain't but one solid way, howe'er you puzzle:
Till they're convarted, let 'em wear a muzzle."

I've noticed that each half-baked scheme's abetters
Are in the hebbit o' producin' letters
Writ by all sorts o' never-heared-on fellers,
'Bout ez oridge'nal ez the wind in bellers;
I've noticed, tu; it 's the quack med'cines gits
(An' needs) the greatest heaps o' stiffykits;
Now, sence I lef' off creepin' on all fours,
I ha' n't ast no man to endorse my course;
It 's full ez cheap to be your own endorser,
An' ef I've made a cup, I'll fin' the saucer;
But I've some letters from t'other side,
An' them's the sort that helps me to decide;
Tell me for wut the copper-comp'nies hanker,
An' I'll tell you jest where it's safe to anchor.
Fus'ly the Hon'ble B. Onderdunk writes
Thet for a spell he could n' sleep o'nights,
Puzzlin' which side wuz prudentest to pin to,
Which wuz th' ole homestead, which the temp'ry leanto;
Et fust he jedged 't would right-side-up his pan
To come out ez a 'ridge'nal Union man,
"But now," he sez, "I ain't nut quite so fresh;
The winnin' horse is goin' to be Secesh;
You might, las' Spring, hev easly walked the course,
'Fore we contrived to doctor th' Union horse;
Now we 're the ones to walk aroun' the nex' track:
Jest you take hold an' read the follerin' extrac',
Out of a letter I received last week
From an ole frien' thet never sprung a leak,
A Nothun Dem'crat o' th' ole Jarsey blue,
Born copperheathed an' copperfastened tu."

"These four years past, it hez been tough
To say which side a feller west for;
Guideposts all gone, roads muddy 'n' rough,
An' noth' duin' wut 't wuz meant for;
Pickets afrin' left an' right,
Both sides a lettin' rip et sight—
Life war n't wuth hardly payin' rent for.

"Columby gut her back up so,
It war n't no use a tryin' to stop her—
War's emptin's riled her very dough
An' made it rise an' act improper;
'T wus full ez much ez I could da
To jes' lay low and worry thru',
'Thout hevin' to sell out my copper.

"Afore the war your mod'rit men
Could set an' sun 'em on the fences,
Cyph'rin' the chances up, an' then
Jump off which way bes' ... onses;
Sence, 't wuz so resky ary way,
I did n't hardly dares to say
I 'greed with Paley's Evidences.

"Ask Mac of trying to set the fence
War n't like bein' rid upon a rail on 't,
Headin' your party with a sense
O' bein' lippint in the tail on 't,
And tryin' to think thet, on the whole,
You kin' o' quasi own your soul
When Belmont's gut a bill o' sale on 't!

"Come peace, I spozed thet folks 'ould like
Their pol'tics done ar'in by proxy,
Give their noo loves the bag an' strike
A fresh trade with their reg'lar doxys
But the drag 's broke, now Slavery 's gone,
An' there 's gret resk they 'll blunder on,
Ef they ain't stopped, to real Democ'cy.

"We've gut an awful row to hoe
In this 'ere job o' reconstructin';
Folks dunno skurce which way to go,
Where th' ain't some hoghole to be ducked in;
But one thing 's clear; there is a crack,
Ef we fly hard, 'twixt white an' black,
Where the old makebate can be tucked in.

"No white man sets in airth's broad aisle
Thet I ain't willin' t' own ez brother,
An' ef he 's heppened to strike ile,
I dunno, fin'ly, but I'd rather;
An' Paddies, long 'z they vote all right,
Thet they ain't jest a nat'ral white,
I hold one on 'em good 'z another.

"Wut *is* there lef' I'd like to know,
Ef't ain't the difference o' color,
To keep up self-respec' an' show
The human natur' of a fellah?
Wut good in bein' white, onless
It's fixed by law, nut lef to guess,
Thet we are smarter an' they duller?

"Ef we're to hev our ole rights,
'T want do to 'low no competition;
Th' ole debt doo us for bein' whites
Ain't safe onless we stop th' emission
O' these noo notes, whose specie base
Is human natur', 'thout no trace
O' shape, nor color, nor condition.

"So fur I'd writ an' could n' jedge
Aboard wut boat I'd best take pessage,
My brains all mincemeat, 'thout no edge
Upon 'em more than to a sessige,
But now it seems ez though I see
Sunthin' resemblin' an idee,
Sence Johnson's speech an' veto message.

"I like the speech best, I confess,
The logic, prendence, an' good taste on 't,
An' it 's no mad, I rather guess
There 's some dependence to be placed on 't;
It 's narrer, but 'twixt you an' me,
Out o' the allies o' J. U.
A temp ry party can be based on 't.

"Jes' to hold on till Johnson's thru'
An' dug his Presidential grave is,
An' *then!*—who knows but we could slow
The country roun' to put in ——?
Wun't some folks rare up when we pull
Out o' their eyes our Union wool
An' larn 'em wut a pl'ut ole share is!

"O, did it seem 'z ef Providence
Could ever send a second Tyler?
To see the South all back to once,
Respin' the spites o' the Freesiler,
Is cute ez though an engineer
Should claim th' old iron for his sheer
Because 't wuz him that bust the biler?"

Thet tells the story! Thet 's wut we shall git
By tryin' squirtguns on the burnin' Pit;
For the day never comes when it 'll do
To kick off Dooty like a worn-out shoe.
I seem to hear a whisperin' in the air,
A sighin' like, of unconsoled despair,
Thot comes from nowhere an' from everywhere,
An' seems to say: "Why died we? war 'nt it, then,
To settle, once for all, thet man wuz men?
O, airth's sweet cup snatched from us barely tasted,
The grave's real chill is feelin' life wuz wasted!
O, you we lef', long-lingerin' at the door,
Lovin' you best, coz we loved Her the more,
Thet Death, not we, had conquered, we should feel
If she upon our memory turned her heel,
An' ungrateful threwed us all away
To flaunt it in a Blind Man's Holiday!"

My frien's, I've talked nigh on to long enough.
I hain't no call to bore yo coz ye're tough;
My lungs are sound, an' our own v'ice delights
Our ears, but even kebbige-heads hev rights.
It's the las' time thet I shell o'er address ye,
But you'll soon fin' some new tormentor: bless ye!

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

ANOTHER OF VICTOR HUGO'S PICTURES.

The following portraiture of a certain phase of modern social life is painted with the intense coloring which marks the style of the author. But we need not go far from home in this city to find proof that the terrible sketch is not entirely the work of the imagination.

LIFE IN A SLUM.

Forty years ago, St. Malo possessed an alley known by the name of the "Ruelle Coutanchez." This alley no longer exists, having been removed for the improvements of the town.

It was a double row of houses, leaning one toward the other, and leaving between them just room enough for a narrow rivulet, which was called the street. By stretching the legs it was possible to walk on both sides of the little stream, touching with head or elbows, as you went, the houses either on the right or the left. These old relics of mediæval Normandy have almost a human interest. Tumble-down houses and sorcerers always go together. Their leaning stories, their overhanging walls, their bowed peut-houses, and their old thick-set irons, seem like lips, chins, noses and eyebrows. The garret window is the blind eye. The wall is the wrinkled and blotchy cheek. The opposite houses lay their foreheads together as if they were plotting some malicious deed. All these words of ancient villainy—like cut-throat, sly-weazand, and the like—are closely connected with architecture of this kind.

One of these houses in the alley—the largest and the most famous or notorious—was known by the name of the Jacressade.

The Jacressade was a lodging-house for people who do not lodge. In all towns, and particularly in sea-ports, there is always found beneath the lowest stratum of society a sort of residuum: vagabonds who are more than a match for justice; rovers after adventures; chemists of the swindling order, who are always dropping their lives' gain into the melting-pot; people in rags of every shape, and in every style of wearing them; withered fruits of roguery; bankrupt existences; consciences that have filed their schedule; gentlemen who have failed in the house-breaking business (for the great masters of burglary move in a higher sphere); workmen and workwomen in the trade of working by oddities, male and female; men in costs out at the elbows; scoundrels reduced to indigence; rogues who have missed the wages of roguery; men who have been hit in the social duel; harpies who have no longer any prey; petty larceners; *gueux* in the double and unhappy meaning of that word. Such are the constituents of that living mass. Human intelligence is here reduced to something bestial. It is the refuse of the social state, heaped up in an obscure corner, where from time to time descends that dreaded broom which is known by the name of police. In St. Malo, Jacressade was the name of this corner.

It is not in dens of this sort that we find the high-class criminals—the robbers, forgers, and other great products of ignorance and poverty. If murder is represented here, it is generally in the person of some coarse drunkard; in the matter of robbery, the company rarely rise higher than the mere sharper. The vagrant is there, but not the highwayman. It would not, however, be safe to trust this distinction. This last stage of vagabondage may have its extremes of scoundrelism. It was on an occasion, when casting their nets into the Epi-scid—which was in Paris what the Jacressade was in St. Malo—that the police captured the notorious Lacenaire.

These lurking-places refuse nobody. To fall in the social scale has a tendency to bring men to one level. Sometimes honesty in tatters found itself there. Virtue and probity have been known before now to be brought to strange passes. We must not judge always by appearances, even in the palace or at the galleys. Public respect, as well as universal reprobation, require testing. Surprising results sometimes proceed from this principle. An angel may be discovered in the stews—a pearl in the dung-hill. Such sad and dazzling discoveries are not altogether unknown.

The Jacressade was rather a court-yard than a house; and more of a well than a court-yard. It had no stories looking on the street. Its façade was simply a high wall, with a low gateway. You raised the latch, pushed the gate, and were at once in the court-yard.

In the midst of this yard might be perceived a round hole, encircled with a margin of stones, and even with the ground. The yard was small, the well large. A broken pavement surrounded it.

The court-yard was square, and built round on three sides only. On the side of the street was only the wall, facing you as you entered the gateway stood the house, the two wings of which formed the sides to right and left.

Any one entering there after nightfall, at his own risk and peril, would have heard a confused murmur of voices; and, if there had been moonlight or starlight enough to give shape to the obscure forms before his eyes, this is what he would have seen.

The court-yard—the well. Around the court-yard, in front of the gate, a lean-to, or shed, in a sort of hore-shoe form, but with square corners; a rotten gallery, with a roof of joists supported by stone pillars at unequal distances. In the center, the well; around the well, upon a litter of straw, a kind of circular chaplet, formed of the soles of boots and shoes; some trodden down at heel, some showing the toes of the wearers, some the naked heels. The feet of men, women, and children, all sizes.

Beyond these feet, the eye might have distinguished, in the shadow of the shed, bodies, drooping heads, forms stretched out lazily, bundles of rags of both sexes, a promiscuous assemblage, a strange and revolting mass of life. The accommodation of this sleeping chamber was open to all, at the rate of two sous per week. On a stormy night the rain fell upon the feet, the whirling snow settled on the bodies of those wretched sleepers.

Who were these people? The unknown. They came there at night, and departed in the morning. Creatures of this kind form part of the social fabric. Some stole in during the darkness, and paid nothing. The greater part had scarcely eaten during the day. All kinds of vice and baseness, every sort of moral infection, every species of distress were there. The same sleep settled down upon all in this bed of filth. The dreams of all these companions in misery went on side by side. A dismal meeting-place, where misery and weakness, half-sobered debauchery, weariness from long walking to and fro, with evil thoughts, in quest of bread, pallor with closed eyelids, remorse, envy, lay mingled and festering in the same miasma, with faces that had the look of death, and disheveled hair mixed with the filth and sweepings of the streets. Such was the putrid heap of life fermenting in this dismal spot. An unlucky turn in the wheel of fortune, a ship arrived on the day before, a discharge from prison, or the dark night, or some other chance, had cast them here, to find a miserable shelter. Every day brought some new accumulation of such misery. Let him enter who would, sleep who could, speak who dared; for it was a place of whispers. The new-comers hastened to bury themselves in the mass, or tried to seek oblivion in sleep, since there was none in the darkness of the place. They snatched what little of themselves they could from the jaws of death. They closed their eyes in that confusion of horrors which every day renewed. They were the embodiment of misery, cast up from society, as the scum is from the sea.

It was not every one who could even get a share of the straw. More than one figure was stretched out naked upon the flags. They lay down worn out with weariness and awoke paralyzed. The well, without lid or parapet, and thirty feet in depth, gaped open night and day. Rain fell around it; filth accumulated about, and the gutters of the yard ran down and filtered through its sides. The pail for drawing the water stood by the side. Those who were thirsty drank there: some, disgusted with life, drowned themselves in it—slipped from their slumber in the filthy shed into this profounder sleep. In the year 1819, the body of a boy, fourteen years old, was taken up out of the well.

To be safe in this house, it was necessary to be of the "right sort," the uninitiated were regarded with suspicion.

So Did these miserable wretches, then, know each other? No. Yet they secreted out the genuine habitué of the Jacressade.

The mistress of the house was a young and rather pretty woman, wearing a cap trimmed with ribbons. She washed herself now and then with water from the well. She had a wooden leg.

At the break of day, the court-yard became empty. Its inmates dispersed.

An old cock and some other fowls were kept in the court-yard, where they raked among the filth of the place all day long. A long horizontal beam, supported by posts, traversed the yard, where a gibbet-shaped erection, not altogether out of keeping with the associations of the place. Sometimes, on the morrow of a rainy day, a silk dress, mudded and wet, would be seen hanging out to dry upon this beam. It belonged to the woman with the wooden leg.

Over the shed, and like it, surrounding the yard, was a story, and above this story a loft. A rotten wooden ladder, passing through a hole in the roof of the shed, conducted to this story; and up this ladder the woman would climb, sometimes staggering while its crazy rounds creaked beneath her.

The occasional lodgers, whether by the week or the night, slept in the court-yard; the regular inmates lived in the house.

Windows without a pane of glass, door-frames with no door, fire-places without stoves—such were the chief features of the interior. You might pass from one room to the other indifferently, by a long square aperture which had been the door, or by a triangular hole between the joists of the partition. The fallen plaster of the ceiling lay about the floor. It was difficult to say how the old house still stood erect. The high winds indeed shook it. The lodgers ascended as they could by the worn and slippery steps of the ladder. Everything was open to the air. The wintry atmosphere was absorbed into the house, like water into a sponge. The multitude of spiders seemed to guarantee the place against falling to pieces immediately. There was no sign of furniture. Two or three palliasses were in the corner, their ticking torn in parts, and showing more dust then straw within. Here and there were a water-pot and an earthen pipkin. A close, disagreeable odor haunted the rooms.

The windows looked out upon the square yard. The scene was like the interior of a scavenger's cart. The things, not to speak of the human beings, which lay rusting, moldering, and putrefying there, were indescribable. The fragments seemed to fraternize together. Some fell from the walls, others from the living tenants of the place. The débris was sown with their tatters.

Beside the floating population which bivouacked nightly in the square yard, the Jacressade had three permanent lodgers—a charcoal-man, a rag picker, and a "gold-maker." The charcoal-man and the rag-picker occupied two of the palliasses of the first story; the "gold-maker," a chemist, lodged in the loft, which was called, no one knew why, the garret. Nobody knew where the woman slept. The "gold-maker" was a poet in a small way. He inhabited a room in the roof, under the tiles—a chamber with a narrow window, and a large stove fireplace forming a gulf, in which the wind howled at will. The garret window having no frame, he had nailed across it a piece of iron sheathing, part of the wreck of a ship. This sheathing left little room for the entrance of light, and much for the entrance of cold. The charcoal-man paid rent from time to time in the shape of a sack of charcoal; the rag-picker paid with a bowl of grain for the fowls every week; the "gold-maker" did not pay at all. Meanwhile, the latter consumed the very house itself for fuel. He had pulled down the little wood-work which remained; and every now and then he took from the wall or the roof a lath or some scantling, to heat his crucible. Upon the partition, above the rag-picker's mattress, might have been seen two columns of figures, marked in chalk by the rag-picker himself from week to week—a column of threes, and a column of fives—according as the bowl of grain had cost him three liards or five centimes. The gold-pot of the "chemist" was an old fragment of a bomb-shell, promoted by him to the dignity of a crucible, in which he mixed his ingredients. The transmutation of metals absorbed all his thoughts. He was determined not to die until he had revenged himself by breaking the windows of orthodox science with the real philosopher's stone. His furnace consumed a good deal of wood. The hand-rails of the stairs had disappeared. The house was slowly burning away. The landlady said to him, "You will leave us nothing but the shell." He mollified her by addressing her in verses.

Such was the Jacressade.

A boy of twelve, or perhaps, sixteen—for he was like a dwarf with a large wen upon his neck, and always carrying a broom in his hand—was the domestic of the place.

The habitués entered by the gateway of the court-yard; the public entered by the shop.

What was this shop?

In the high wall, facing the street, and to the right of the entrance to the court-yard, was a square opening, serving at once as a door and a window. It had a shutter and a frame—the only shutter in all the house which had hinges and bolts. Behind this square aperture, which was open to the street, was a little room, a compartment obtained by curtailing the sleeping shed in the court-yard. Over the door, passers-by read the inscription in charcoal, "Curiosities sold here." On three boards, forming the shop front, were several pots without ears, a Chinese parasol made of gold-beater's skin, and ornamented with figures, torn here and there, and impossible to open or shut; fragments of iron, and shapeless pieces of old pottery, and dilapidated hats and bonnets; three or four shells, some packets of old bone and metal buttons, a tobacco-box with a portrait of Marie-Antoinette, a dog's-eared volume of Bezbarand's Algebra. Such was the stock of the shop; this assortment compared the "curiosities." The shop commentated by a back door with the yard in which was the well. It was furnished with a table and stool. The woman with a wooden leg presided at the counter.

New Publications.

CLOSE OF THE THIRTY-SECOND VOLUME.

HARPER'S
NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE
FOR MAY, 1866.

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