

CHAPTER IX.

BREAKFASTS WITH SAMUEL ROGERS.

No. I.

I FIRST made the acquaintance of Samuel Rogers in 1840, shortly after the publication of a poem entitled "The Hope of the World," of which he had previously expressed his high appreciation and approval. He was at that time in his seventy-eighth year, fifty-two years my senior. He was hale and hearty, and in the full possession of his mental faculties, with a remarkably tenacious and well-stored memory, as befitted the man who had sung so well of its "pleasures," and which he had not only enriched by a wide range of reading, but by an equally wide intercourse with society. He had been personally acquainted with all, or nearly all, the celebrated men and women in art, in arms, in science, in politics, and in literature who had flourished since his early manhood. He was in

possession of ample means, derived from his business as a London banker, the head of the firm, though he took but little part in its management. He was an excellent conversationalist; had great reputation as a wit, enhanced perhaps, as is common in the world, by the flavour of cynicism. He had, moreover, the reputation of being the ugliest man in England—some of his detractors said “in the world,” but was at the same time, in spite of his alleged ugliness, one of the most agreeable men of his day. He was a great favourite with the ladies, and a devoted admirer of the sex, though he never carried his admiration to the extent of proposing marriage, but once only, when he was in his eighty-fifth year. It was then too late, if either marriage or courtship were concerned, for young ladies or old ones to look upon him with any other personal feelings but those of ridicule or pity, though literary admiration was still open to them.

He was celebrated for the intellectual breakfasts to which, since the beginning of the century, he had been in the habit of inviting at least three, or most five or six, of the celebrities, male or female, of the day. The hour of breakfast was 10; and so agreeable and fascinating was the conversation of the host, that the repast seldom before noon, and sometimes extended so 1 o'clock. He insisted that breakfast was more social than dinner; that there

was less of ceremony and more of unrestrained intellectual intercourse in the morning than there could be in the evening; that the faculties were fresher, the memory clearer, the play of fancy more exuberant and spontaneous than at the later hours of the day, when mental labour, or perhaps care, had more or less dulled or cast a shade over the mind. He was a veritable "autocrat of the breakfast-table," and might have been so designated had my excellent friend Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes lived in London at the time and been acquainted with the habits and characteristics of Mr. Rogers. Before I had ever seen him, I had formed an image in my mind in accordance with the spiteful epigrams that Lord Byron and others had written upon him, and was agreeably disappointed with the reality of his personal presence and the kindly suavity of his manners. He was certainly not handsome, and never could have been so; but just as certainly he was not ugly in the disagreeable sense of the word, while his conversation differed in the pleasantest manner from that of many among his contemporaries, from not assuming the wearisome shape of a monologue. He not only talked, but allowed others to talk. On the first occasion that I enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. Rogers at his favourite meal, the only other guests were Thomas Campbell, the author of *The Pleasures of Hope*, and Mr. Thomas Gaspey, the author of *The Lol-*

lards, *The Monks of Leadenhall*, and nearly a score of other novels. The title of Mr. Campbell's poem had been suggested by that of Mr. Rogers, published some years previously, as that in its turn had been suggested by *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, by Mark Akenside, written in the reign of Queen Anne. It was no small gratification to me to meet two such poets as *The Pleasures of Memory* and *The Pleasures of Hope* at one time, and to interchange ideas with them. I carefully noted down ere the day had passed the points of the conversation that took place. The discourse was mainly literary, and turned principally upon the merits of Pope as a poet. They were rated very highly by both of the speakers—to my mind rather too highly—for though I could not but admire the finished grace, the wit, the wisdom, and the exquisite though somewhat monotonous music of his verse, I could not but deplore the want of imagination, even while admitting the abundant fancy of the writer. Rogers admired Pope for the terse epigrammatic form which his wit and his wisdom assumed in the *Essay on Man*, in his *Essay on Criticism*, and in the *Epistles*, as well as the pungent force of his satire in the *Dunciad*; while I admired him more particularly, as I continue to do, for the beautiful rhythm and melody of his versification, and still more enthusiastically for the *Dying Christian to his Soul*, which Mr. Campbell

agreed with me in considering a gem of unrivalled and unsurpassable beauty which had not its superior in any language, in any era of literature.

Mr. Gaspey was no poet, but a most pertinacious rhymer and manufacturer of facetiæ and epigrams in verse, and a punster of all but unrivalled facility and fertility, surpassing in that respect even Mr. Rogers himself, was not quite so enthusiastic in praise of Pope as Rogers and Campbell were. He took exceptions to the frequently prosaic nature of many of Pope's most admired passages, and to his more than occasional lapses into downright bathos. Among other passages which he cited, to prove that he did not take exception unjustly, was the couplet in praise of his particular friend Lord Mansfield, the celebrated Judge—

Graced as thou art with all the power of words,
So known, so honoured, in the House of Lords.

“Nothing,” he said, “could be more ‘bathetic.’”

“Bathetic!” interposed Mr. Campbell, “bathetic is a good word; like mobled queen, it is good, very good; did you invent it?”

“No,” replied Mr. Gaspey; “I wish I had the honour. It is not to be found in Johnson's Dictionary; neither is bathos, which is a singular omission, considering that the word was in common use in his time.”

“I think Coleridge uses *bathetic*,” said Mr.

Rogers. "There was a famous parody made on Pope's lines, I forget by whom—

'Persuasion tips his tongue whene'er he talks,
And he has chambers in the King's Bench Walks!'"

"The parody," I ventured to remark, "was admirable, and infinitely preferable to the thing parodied. I think, with Mr. Gaspey, that with all his beauties, Pope, though, like Homer, he sometimes nodded, nodded much more frequently than he ought to have done, if he claimed to be admitted among the real immortals. Can anything be poorer as verse, not to say poetry, than when he speaks of Hampton Court Palace as a place

'Where thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tea?'"

"It is easy to find flaws in a great writer," said Mr. Rogers; "and it requires no particular sagacity, and only a more than common fund of ill-nature, to be a critic. What I take to be the main fault of Pope is that he wrote too much, and did not take time to polish and to correct."

I may here observe that Mr. Rogers was not guilty of the fault of writing too much, for he wrote very little, and that not always of the best. He was fastidious to a fault, and wrote with great difficulty, correcting and re-correcting with painful elaboration whatever he wrote, either in prose or verse, sometimes spending a week or more in the

composition of a single sentence. He once showed me a note which he had written to Lord Melbourne—at that time Prime Minister—suggesting that he should grant a pension on the Civil List to the Rev. Mr. Carey, the translator of Dante. The note consisted but of a dozen lines, perhaps even less; but he assured me that it had occupied his time and care for a full fortnight, and that he hoped he had succeeded in rendering it so compact and so forcible, as well as so elegant, as to defy ingenuity to omit a word from, or add a word to it, or even to change a single word or phrase for a better one. He read it over to me as an example of what I and everyone else ought to aim at in epistolary, and, indeed, in all literary composition. I remember the concluding paragraph of this painfully-produced epistle, which was: “But perhaps your Lordship has already granted the pension. If so, I envy you!”

The conversation speedily diverged from the poetry of Pope to that of Byron, whom Mr. Rogers cited as a glaring offender in the sin of writing too much and too fast. “He died at less than half my age—only thirty-six, while I am seventy-eight; and he wrote ten times as much as I have done.”

I ventured, though timidly, to remark that it was a loss to literature that Byron had not lived to write a great deal more; that his genius, so far from being exhausted, was in its fruitful maturity

of power and splendour; and that many better things than any he had yet written might have been expected from his pen, had he not been cut off so prematurely. Mr. Rogers, by the expression on his face, did not seem to take my opinion very kindly; but he merely said in reply: "You are young, and consequently you incline to be enthusiastic. It is a pardonable fault in youth; but as you grow older, I think your opinion of Byron will tone down to a juster and calmer estimate of his genius."

It should be observed, in explanation of the feeling entertained by the elder to the younger poet, that, although they had once been on terms of intimacy and friendship, a coolness almost amounting to enmity had, from some cause or other never sufficiently explained, sprung up between them. Byron had dedicated to him, in 1813, his beautiful poem of "The Giaour," "in admiration of his genius, in respect for his character, and in gratitude for his friendship"; had written on a blank leaf of the *Pleasures of Memory*, and afterwards published, a short poem addressed to its author, of which the opening lines were:—

Absent and present, still to thee,
My friend, what magic spells belong!
As all can tell who share, like me,
In turn thy converse and thy song!

Byron had also, in the bitter but clever satire of "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," gone out of his way to praise his friend as "melodious Rogers," and to declare that the *Pleasures of Memory* was one "of the most beautiful didactic poems in the English language." But a change had come over the spirit of his dream before the year 1818, and he had libelled even more vigorously than he had formerly extolled, not only the poetry, but, what was worse and more offensive, the personal appearance and moral character of his former friend. It must be said that nothing could be in more execrably bad taste, or more venomously spiteful, than the lines, descriptive of the countenance of Rogers, which he had written, and allowed to be circulated in manuscript among his private friends.

* * * *

Mouth which marks the envious scorner,
 With a scorpion in each corner,
 Turning its quick tail to sting you
 In the place that most may wring you ;
 Eyes of lead-like hue, and gummy ;
 Carcass picked out from some mummy ;
 Bowels (but they were forgotten,
 Save the liver, and that 's rotten !)

* * * *

Vampire, ghost, or ghoul—what is it?—
 I would walk ten miles to miss it.

Rogers would indeed have been possessed of a temper approaching the angelic, if he had been able to entertain his former feelings of personal regard for a man who had been treacherous and changeable enough to write thus of him, without known cause of offence, the more especially as the injudicious admirers of Byron, after his death, in 1824, had given the lines to the world. To have been caricatured by such comparatively small fry as Theodore Hook, Horace Smith, and others of the like calibre, might have been borne with as much equanimity as that with which most people bear the stings of a mosquito; but the blow of a cudgel, wielded by such a literary giant as Lord Byron, was certain to cause a wound in a less sensitive organism than that of Samuel Rogers. Once, when I ventured to extol the fire of Lord Byron's poetry, Rogers replied: "Yes; he had fire, no doubt; but it was hell-fire!" On this occasion Mr. Campbell—who himself had written but very little, though that little was of the highest merit—agreed with Mr. Rogers that Byron was much too prolix, especially in *Don Juan*.

"But *Don Juan*," I said, "was of necessity prolix. No one can write a novel in verse, in short epigrammatic sentences. Undue condensity is fatal to the charm of any narrative, unless it be an episode in the main design—such, for instance, as the beautiful description of the two fathers and

their two sons in the shipwreck so finely described in *Don Juan*."

"Which Moore," said Mr. Rogers, "declares to have been taken almost verbatim from a prose narrative in a small book entitled *The Shipwreck of the Juno*, and which in his opinion was, in its plain grandeur, if not sublimity, far superior to Byron's poetry."

"It was written," I interposed, "by my grand-uncle, William Mackay, the second mate of the ship, published towards the close of the last century, and read by Lord Byron when he was a school-boy."

None of the company had ever seen the book, which has long been out of print. I subjoin the passage, that the admirers of Byron may compare it with the beautiful lines in *Don Juan*, and adjudge the palm, if they please to do so, either to the poet or the sailor, as their taste or judgment may dictate.

The survivors of the wreck of the *Juno*, off the coast of Africa, had, it may be premised, taken refuge on a raft, when the story commences:—

Mr. Wade's boy, a stout and healthy lad, died early, and almost without a groan; whilst another of the same age, but of less promising appearance, held out much longer. The fate of these unfortunate boys differed also in another respect, highly deserving of notice. Their fathers were both in the fore-top when the boys were taken ill. Mr. Wade, hearing of his son's illness, answered with indif-

ference that "he could do nothing for him," and left him to his fate. The other father, when the accounts reached him, hurried down, and, watching for a favourable moment, crawled on all-fours along the weather-gunwale to his son, who was in the mizzen rigging. By that time only three or four planks of the quarter-deck remained, just over the weather-quarter gallery, and to this spot the unhappy man led his son, making him fast to the rail to prevent his being washed away. Whenever the boy was seized with a fit of retching, the father lifted him up and wiped away the foam from his lips; and if a shower came, he made him open his mouth to receive the drops, or gently squeezed them into it from a rag. In this affecting situation both remained four or five days, till the boy expired. The unfortunate parent, as if unwilling to believe the fact, raised the body, gazed wistfully at it, and, when he could no longer entertain any doubt, watched it in silence till it was carried off by the sea; then, wrapping himself in a piece of canvas, sunk down and rose no more, though he must have lived two days longer, as we judged from the quivering of his limbs when a wave broke over him. This scene made an impression even on us, whose feelings were, in a manner, dead to the world, and almost to ourselves, and to whom the sight of misery was now become habitual.

A few days after our conversation on the subject I lent the book to Mr. Rogers, who returned it with a note expressive of his full concurrence in Moore's verdict.

A few words in reference to Mr. Gaspey, whose many novels are now completely forgotten—but which enjoyed a certain celebrity when they first appeared—may not be uninteresting. He is now principally remembered by a punning epitaph on

the leg of the Marquis of Anglesey, buried at Waterloo, at which famous battle he lost it. The epigram or epitaph bristled with puns, for the making of which Mr. Gaspey was notorious. I remember but two of them, turning upon the fact that it was not only a leg but a *calf* that was buried; not only a body but a sole (*soul*).

Mr. Gaspey, who was my colleague in the editorial department of the, at that time, leading journal, the *Morning Chronicle*, often had occasion to write to me, and almost invariably mistook my Christian name. He sometimes addressed me as William, or George, or Robert, or Henry, but never by any chance as Charles. I thought the mistake was not so much the result of carelessness as of design; and to cure him of it, whichever it might be, I played the same game with him, and, instead of addressing him as Thomas—his real name—wrote to him as Benjamin, or Peter, or Alexander, and once as Obadiah. But it was all in vain. At last I addressed him as Nebuchadnezzar Gaspey, Esq. The broad hint was taken, and I became "Charles" in all the letters that he subsequently addressed to me.

BREAKFASTS WITH SAMUEL ROGERS.

No. II.

It was always a literary treat to breakfast with Mr. Rogers. He had the happy art of knowing how to choose his "company" to introduce celebrities to celebrities, and to bring congenial people together, to keep them in good humour, and to send them away well pleased with their entertainer and with each other. To mix the company well at a small party, where you expect the conversation to flow pleasantly as well as intellectually, wisely as well as wittily, seriously as well as jocosely—the whole to form one homogeneous compound—is as difficult a task and as rarely accomplished as the confection of a salad sufficient to please the taste of an epicure. Mr. Rogers had this faculty in perfection, and had cultivated it from his youth upward with ever-increasing success. He had every advantage on his side—ample fortune, high position, brilliant reputation, and the entrance to the best society. He had a clear mind, an even temper, that nothing could seriously ruffle, and a wonderfully retentive memory, that took account of small things as well as great. His wit, which was unlaboured and spontaneous, was without the slightest taint of vulgarity, though it was not, it must be confessed, without the flavour of real or assumed cynicism.

On the occasion when I was invited to meet Lord Glenelg, Lord Robertson, Mr. Carruthers, and Mr. W. J. Fox, the conversation was mainly critical and literary. Lord Glenelg—a man who had long passed the prime of life, was a poet as well as a statesman; Mr. Robert Carruthers was the editor of the *Inverness Courier*, an acute and kindly critic, and one of the best *raconteurs* that ever enlivened society; Lord Robertson was also a poet, a quarterly reviewer, and one of the judges of the Court of Session in Edinburgh, and Mr. Fox was a member of Parliament, a writer of political articles for the *Morning Chronicle*, and a colleague of Messrs. Cobden and Bright in the then active agitation for the repeal of the Corn-Laws.

Lord Glenelg, who had recently been raised to the peerage, had been previously known in the British House of Commons as the Right Honourable Charles Grant, the member for the County of Inverness. He had some reputation as a poet, having published, in connection with his brother, Mr. Robert Grant, a collection of hymns and other sacred poems. But he was better known as a politician, and for his efforts in Parliament to modify the obnoxious Corn Laws at a time when the Anti-Corn Law League had never been heard of. Mr. Carruthers, as editor of the principal newspaper in the county, which Mr. Charles Grant had represented in Parliament, had often had occa-

sion to write of him in his public capacity, but had never met him since his elevation to the House of Lords. He, therefore, took care, by apostrophising him constantly as "My Lord," to let his Lordship know that he was fully aware of the rank to which he had attained. He had addressed him as "My Lord," and "Your Lordship" at least a dozen times, when Mr. Rogers, who appeared to be somewhat impatient at the unnecessary reiteration of a title, to which he attached little or no importance, addressing himself to Mr. Carruthers across the table, said suddenly, but very quietly, "Don't keep My Lording him, Mr. Carruthers. He's much better than a Lord. He's a very good fellow."

Mr. Carruthers appeared somewhat confused at the rebuff, and Lord Glenelg, coming to the rescue, adroitly turned the conversation to the new poem of Thomas Campbell, entitled "The Pilgrim of Glencoe," which had very recently made its appearance.

"I have the highest respect and admiration," he said, "for the genius of him who wrote such noble poems as 'Lochiel's Warning,' 'The Battle of the Baltic,' 'Ye Mariners of England,' and 'Hohenlinden,' to say nothing of the 'Pleasures of Hope'; but I cannot help regretting that he should have written the 'Pilgrim of Glencoe.'"

"Why regret that he should have written it," said Mr. Rogers, "if it gave him pleasure? Pleasures are not so plentiful in this world. Perhaps

it is to be regretted that he published it ; but why should anyone regret that he wrote it ? ”

“ Exactly so,” said Mr. Carruthers. “ Poets should write as the larks and the nightingales sing, because they cannot help it. But why, oh ! why, should they publish when all the divine afflatus has evaporated, and the fires of imagination burn dim, if they burn at all ? ”

“ I don’t like to criticise a brother poet, who has deserved so well of his contemporaries and of posterity,” interposed Mr. Rogers, “ lest I should be accused of professional jealousy. So I will say nothing. Besides, I have not read the poem.”

“ I have no fear on that score,” said Mr. Carruthers, “ and, moreover, I *have* read the poem, inclined, if I could, to form a favourable judgment upon it. I never wrote a line of verse in my life, except when I was a school-boy. I can, therefore, speak my mind freely, even with regard to so good a poet as Thomas Campbell, if I catch him nodding. Even Homer nods at times, and it is not surprising that Mr. Campbell, in his old age, should do so also. Where, for instance, can any poetry be found in such couplets as those that are scattered through the pages of the ‘ Pilgrim of Glencoe,’ in plenteous profusion, and that have dwelt in my memory ever since I read them ?

‘ At last a sheep dog’s bark informed his ear,
Some human habitation might be near.’

Surely, the prosaic and the commonplace in verse were never more flagrantly exhibited! Or in this equally egregious couplet:

‘The house, no common, sordid, shieling cot,
Spoke inmates of a comfortable lot.’

And this is, perhaps, the most intolerable example of what Douglas Jerrold calls ‘verse—and worse’:

‘And feeling interest in the veteran’s lot,
Created him a sergeant on the spot.’”

“Almost incredibly prosaic,” said Lord Glenelg. “If Byron were alive now, and had to write the ‘English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,’ he would not, after the perusal of such lines, call upon Campbell, as he did before, to come forth and give his talents scope, or ask who should aspire, if Campbell ceased to hope, but might vary the strain, and exclaim:

‘Desist, O Campbell! fold thy weary wing,
Talk if thou wilt; but cease, oh! cease to sing!’”

“I saw Mr. Campbell,” said Mr. Carruthers, “at his chambers in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, when I called upon him, by invitation, and walked with him to the Clarence Club, in Waterloo Place, which is his favourite haunt. He told me, as we went along, a good story of himself and a worthy old Scotch lady, whom he had met on a recent visit to Ayrshire. ‘I happened,’ he said, ‘to go into a bookseller’s shop in Kilmarnock, when the book-

seller, as I entered, whispered something over the counter to a portly and comely old lady, who was making a small purchase of sealing-wax and note-paper. "Lord save us!" she replied in an audible whisper. "Ye dinna mean it!" "It's true, I tell ye," said the bookseller, also in a whisper. The old lady turned toward me, and said, not without betraying a slight embarrassment: "An' sae ye're the great Thomas Campbell, are ye? I'm vera proud to meet ye, and did na think when I left hame in the mornin' that sic a great honor was to befa' me." I do not think that I blushed, though perhaps I ought to have done so, but I suppose I looked confused or flattered, or both. But confusion took entire possession, as the worthy old soul continued: "There's na' a man in Ayrshire that has the great skill ye hae, Mr. Campbell, and I shall be greatly obleeged to ye, if ye will come and see my coo, before ye leave this part o' the country, an' let me know if ye can do onything for her. She's a young beastie, and a guid beastie, and I should na like to lose her." It appears that there is an eminent veterinary surgeon, or cow doctor in the neighbouring county of Dumfries, whose name is also Thomas Campbell, and that she mistook me for this celebrated and doubtless highly respectable person!"

"Well," said Lord Glenelg, attempting a mild joke, "if the good woman had not read the 'Plea-

tures of Hope,' and knew nothing of the author, she had, at all events, experienced them with regard to her cow. She had the pleasure of hoping that Mr. Campbell would restore the animal to its accustomed health."

We none of us could laugh or even smile at this attempted pleasantry. Mr. Campbell, however, could afford to be amused. He was not always so unfortunate as to be unrecognised or unhonoured by his countrymen, though an old woman here and there might never have heard of him, and I narrated to the company that, not many days previous to this conversation, I had met him in the street, on his return from Woolwich, where he had been to witness the launch of a great man-of-war. "The authorities of the Dockyard," said he, "knew that I was coming, and had given orders that, as soon as I made my appearance, preparatory to mounting the side of the great vessel, the band on board should strike up the air of 'The Campbells are Coming,' the spirited march of the Clan Campbell. Guess my surprise and pleasure to receive such a compliment. I consider it was the greatest honour I ever received in my life!" And, as he said this, his usually pallid face was suffused with a roseate glow of satisfaction, and his usually bright eyes sparkled still brighter with delight.

"We are all of us more or less vain," said Lord Robertson. "My late colleague in the Court of

Session, and who was known to all Scotland as John Clark—afterwards Lord Eldin—was displeased to be mistaken for Lord Eldon, the once celebrated Lord High Chancellor of England, a man whom he considered to be very much his inferior, and against whom, moreover, he entertained a slight grudge for having snubbed him for speaking with a Scottish accent. John Clark's Scotch was peculiarly broad and racy, and he took no pains to correct it. Pleading in the House of Lords before the Lord Chancellor, on some water bill that excited considerable interest in Edinburgh, he several times spoke of the *watter* as running in a particular direction. 'Pray, Mr. Clark,' asked Lord Eldon, interrupting him, 'is it the custom in your country to spell water with two *ts*?' 'No, my Lord,' replied John, 'but it's the custom to spell *manners* wi' *twa ns*.' Mr. Clark, after his elevation to the Bench, when he had corrected the mistake of some one who had called him Lord Eldon instead of Lord Eldin, was asked what was the difference between him and the English Lord. He replied, 'Difference! There's nae difference. It's all my eye (*i*).'

Lord Robertson was a far more polished and accomplished man, though not so able a lawyer as Lord Eldin. He was more commonly called "Peter Robertson" than Lord Robertson (Peter is the familiar and affectionate synonym for Patrick), and was a universal favourite among the wits of

Edinburgh. At that time wits were more plentiful than they have since become in that intellectual and then convivial city. The aforesaid wits still retained their love for the old vernacular, and were not ashamed to speak in the broadest Scotch, as they have become in our day, when many young Edinburgh cockneys affect the lisp and the drawl of Londoners, and boast, as if it were a thing to be proud of, that they cannot read the poems of Robert Burns, or the romances of Walter Scott, with any degree of pleasure, on account of the difficulty they find in understanding the dialect.

In London, whither "Peter" was often summoned on legal business, he was as great a favourite in literary, legal, and social circles as he was in Edinburgh. He was particularly intimate with John Gibson Lockhart, the son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott, and for more than a quarter of a century the editor of the *Quarterly Review*. Their friendship was like that of two rollicking college students, as full of fun and mischief as it was of real regard. "Peter" had published a poem entitled "Italy," which was neither very good nor very bad, though it inclined to the shady side of mediocrity. Lockhart was asked to review or have it reviewed in the *Quarterly*. This, however, the great critic was unwilling to do. First, because if he had reviewed it conscientiously, on its merits, he might have lost his friend by his candour; or, if he had praised it up

to the author's expectations, he would have done injustice to the proprietor of the powerful journal which he conducted, and to his own high reputation as a critic. He made up his mind, therefore, that the wisest course to follow would be not to notice the book at all. But he, nevertheless, wrote an article full of cleverness and mischief, a scathing review in fact, exceeding in bitterness of denunciation the famous review which Lord Brougham was supposed to have written in the *Edinburgh* on Lord Byron's juvenile poems. This article was put into type, one copy only of it was struck off, and inserted as if it were a part of the next number of the *Quarterly*, and duly forwarded to "Peter" in Edinburgh. It was said to have contained the famous epigram or epitaph on his Lordship, which is still well remembered in Edinburgh, though seldom quoted correctly. I have heard it constantly repeated, and seen it as frequently printed :

Here lies the paper Lord and poet Peter
Who broke the laws of God and man and meter.

"Paper lord," it should be stated, is the epithet often employed to designate the judges of the Court of Session, who are only lords by courtesy. The epigram, as originally written by Lockhart, ran thus :

Here lies the Christian, Judge, and Poet Peter,
Who broke the laws of God, and man, and meter.

This version is far superior in terseness to its unauthorised substitute, in alleging that the Christian broke the laws of God, the Judge the laws of man, and the Poet the laws of meter.

How long poor "Peter" was suffered to remain under the impression that this article had been published in the usual way, has not been recorded. Perhaps he suspected all along that it was a hoax on the part of his friend Lockhart, and did not vex his soul on account of it. But, if he believed, for ever so short a time, that it was genuine, his feelings must have been anything but kindly toward the merciless reviewer. If that particular number of the *Quarterly* be still in existence, and should turn up at a book auction, some enthusiastic bibliophile and collector, with more money than wit, would doubtless give a fabulous sum for it.

Lord Robertson was a very stout and portly man, as full of good humour as he was of wit. He was at the same time a most enthusiastic ultra-Scotsman, and thought Scotland to be the grandest country, and Scotsmen the bravest, noblest, and cleverest people in the world. In this respect, his prejudices were sometimes thought to be assumed, so great was the intensity of their unreasonableness. An amusing instance is still recorded in the after-dinner gossip of Edinburgh society—when the toddy has begun to circulate—of Lord Peter's reckless assertion of the superiority of his countrymen

to the English, in every possible respect. It happened, during one of his periodical visits to the metropolis on legal business, after a visit to Covent Garden Theatre with a friend, that they both betook themselves for supper and refreshment to Offley's, a then noted tavern in the immediate neighbourhood. Offley's was almost as celebrated in its time as Will's and Button's coffee-houses had been in the days of Steele and Addison, as the resort of wits, authors, journalists, actors, and men about town. It was nearly the last of its class, and has long ceased to exist, having been superseded upwards of thirty years ago, by the palatial clubs of Pall Mall and St. James's.

A discussion arose among the company—by whom provoked it is needless to inquire—on the many eminent Scotchmen who, from the days of King James I. till now, had come to London in search of fame and fortune, and had succeeded in acquiring both, very often defeating in the race many English competitors who had started with far superior advantages. Many and indeed most of such Scotsmen had no other aids to climb than their own stout hearts, lofty ambition, and indomitable pluck, and yet had reached the summits of worldly advancement and public usefulness. "Peter" took part warmly in the discussion, and asserted his opinions in a very dictatorial style, and was particularly truculent towards one parti-

cularly meek and logical old gentleman, who did battle for the superiority of Englishmen in some respects to Scotsmen, which Peter would by no means allow, and for their equality in point of talent with Scotsmen generally, which Peter would not concede, even for the sake of argument. Driven from point to point, from position to position, by his overbearing adversary, the gentle Englishman at last ventured to say, "At least, Sir, if you will not allow any other merit to England or to Englishmen, you will admit that England is a *larger* country than Scotland?" "No, I won't," roared Peter, in a tone of triumph. "If all our magnificent mountains, the pride and glory of our country, were squeezed down into plains as flat as Lincolnshire, Scotland would be a much larger country than England." The Englishman gave up the contest, apparently consoling himself in his discomfiture by the reflection that his opponent was pot-valiant, and that wine or whisky supplied him alike with his words and his arguments, but was unable to supply him with facts, or the logical use of them. He thought possibly that, after all, his Scottish friend would not like to be taken *au serieux*, if he were quite sober, and that his opinions after breakfast-time on the morrow would not be quite in accordance with those that were uppermost in his mind after supper.

Of the four Scotsmen who were present, Lord

Glenelg, Mr. Carruthers, Lord Robertson, and myself, the only one who spoke with the slightest accent that could possibly betray him as having learned to speak on the north of the Tweed was Lord Robertson. He was highly pleased with the judgment of Mr. Fox, when the latter happened to remark that the Scottish "language," as his Lordship spoke it, was particularly agreeable to his ears. "You are quite right," said Peter, "in calling it a language, and not, as the English call it, a mere dialect or idiom. It is, in truth, the purest old English, as English was spoken by the people, and not by the literary class, in the days of Wiclif. The ancient and satirical poem of the 'Vision of Piers Ploughman,' written in the purest English of the pre-Chaucerian era, cannot now be understood by Englishmen without the aid of a glossary, but is perfectly intelligible to a Scottish peasant."

"I must confess," said Mr. Rogers, "that 'Piers Ploughman' is nearly unintelligible to me. It is not without difficulty that I can even read Chaucer, whose writings I am far from considering the well of English undefiled which it has become the fashion to call them. I find that some knowledge of French is a great aid to the comprehension of Chaucer."

"So do I," said Mr. Fox, "The fact is that the English language, as now spoken and written,

is the language of literature and of London, and that real old English, the language of 'Piers Ploughman,' of Wiclif's Bible, and the Bible of King James's translators, only remains among the common people, and in the provinces, from which it is fast disappearing."

"I think," said Lord Glenelg, "that the Bible and not Chaucer is 'the well of pure English undefiled,' and that English as now written and spoken by educated and literary people is one of the most modern languages of Europe. Shakespeare himself is becoming to a large extent obsolete, and if the men of his day could return to the world, it is very doubtful, I think, if they could thoroughly understand and appreciate the writings of Dr. Johnson or Lord Macaulay."

"The bulk of the people," said Mr. Fox, "manage to express all their wants and wishes, their hopes and fears, with less than a thousand words in the vocabulary. The English of our dictionaries contains at least fifty thousand, and is continually receiving accretions from Latin, Greek, and French. When the superfine ship-lieutenant, fresh from college, called out to a sailor, 'Extinguish the nocturnal luminary,' the sailor understood him no more than if he had spoken Hebrew or Cherokee; but when the boatswain, coming to the rescue, desired the man to 'douse the glim,' the immediate response was 'Aye! aye! Sir!' So,

in like manner, when the pedantic Dr. Johnson declared that he would indulge in a 'post-prandial promenade,' he failed to make himself understood, until he had translated the affected phrase into the plain English of 'an after-dinner walk.' The heart of the English multitude is not to be touched, nor its brain convinced, by the too exclusive use of the classical and modern elements of the language."

Upon this subject all the guests of Mr. Rogers, and Mr. Rogers himself, were thoroughly agreed.

Mr. Carruthers, who resided in the little town of Inverness, sometimes called by its inhabitants the "Capital of the Highlands," was often blamed by his intimate friends for hiding his great abilities in so small a sphere, and not launching boldly forth upon the great sea of London, which they considered a more suitable arena for the exercise of his talents and the acquirement of fame and fortune by the pursuits of literature. But he was not to be persuaded. He loved quiet; he loved the grand and solemn scenery of his beautiful native country; and perhaps, if all the truth be told, he preferred to be a great man in a provincial town to being a comparatively small one in a mighty metropolis. In Inverness he shone as a star of the first magnitude. In London, though his light might have been as great, it would have failed to attract equal recognition. In addition to all these considerations, the atmosphere of great cities did not agree with his

health; and the fine, free, fresh, invigorating air of the sea and the mountains was necessary to his physical well-being. This he enjoyed to the fullest extent in Inverness. The editing of the weekly journal, which supplied him with greater pecuniary results than were necessary to supply the moderate wants of himself and his household, left him abundant leisure for other and more congenial work. He soon made his mark in literature, and became noted, not only for the vigour and elegance of his style, but for his remarkable accuracy of statement, even in the minutest details of his literary and historical work.

He edited, with copious and accurate notes, an edition of Pope, and of Johnson's and Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*, and greatly added to the value of those interesting books by notes, descriptive and anecdotal, of all the places and persons mentioned in it. He also contributed largely to the valuable *Cyclopædia of English Literature*, edited by Messrs. Chambers of Edinburgh; besides contributing Essays and Criticisms to many popular journals and reviews published in London and Edinburgh. He was one of the most admirable story-tellers of his time, or, indeed, of any time, had a most retentive and abundantly furnished memory, and never missed the point of a joke, or overlaid it with inappropriate or unnecessary words or phrases. His fund of Scottish anecdotes, brimful of wit and

humour, was apparently inexhaustible, and his stories followed each other with such rapidity as to suggest to the mind of the listener the lines of Samuel Rogers—

Couched in the hidden chambers of the brain
 Our thoughts are linked by many a hidden chain.
 Awake but one, and lo, what myriads rise!
 Each stamps its image as the other flies.

The good things, for which Mr. Carruthers was famous, were not derived from books, but from actual intercourse with men; and, if collected, would have formed a more diverting repertory of Scottish wit and humour than has ever yet been given to the world. He was continually urged to prepare them for publication, and continually promised to undertake the work, but always postponed it until he had more leisure than he possessed at the time of promising. But that day, unfortunately, never came. If it had come, the now celebrated work of Dean Ramsay on the same subject might have been eclipsed or altogether superseded in the literary market.

His local knowledge and the fascination of his conversation were so great, that the notabilities of the literary or political world who visited Inverness usually came armed with letters of introduction to Mr. Carruthers, or made themselves known to him during their stay in the Highlands. The first time that I travelled so far north, through

the magnificent chain of fresh-water lochs that are connected with each other by the Caledonian Canal, a leading citizen of Inverness, who was a fellow-passenger on the trip, seeing I was a stranger, took the pains to point out to me all the objects of interest on the way, and to name the mountains, the straths, the glens, and the waterfalls on either side. On arrival at Inverness, he directed my attention to the mountains and eminences visible from the boat when nearing the pier.

“That,” said he, “is Ben Wyvis, the highest mountain in Ross-shire; that is *Tom-na-Hurich*, or ‘the Hill of the Fairies’; that is Craig Phadrig, once a vitrified fort of the original Celtic inhabitants; and that”—pointing to a gentleman in the foremost rank of the spectators on the landing-place—“is Mr. Carruthers, the editor of the *Courier*.”

Mr. Carruthers used to relate, with much glee, that he escorted the great Sir Robert Peel over the battle-field of Culloden, and pointed out to him the graves of the Highland warriors who had been slain in that fatal encounter. Seeing a shepherd watching his flocks, feeding on the scanty herbage of the moor, he stepped aside to inform the man of the celebrity of his companion. The information fell upon inattentive ears.

“Did you never hear of Sir Robert Peel?” inquired Mr. Carruthers.

“Never *dud* (did),” replied the shepherd.

“Is it possible you never heard of him? He was once Prime Minister of England.”

“Weel!” replied the shepherd, “he seems to be a very respectable man!”

On another occasion he escorted Mr. Serjeant Talfourd and his friend, Mr. John Forster—who was also the intimate friend of Mr. Charles Dickens—over the same scene, and was fond of telling the story that the same shepherd shouted suddenly to another at a short distance on the moor, “*Ian! Ian!*” Serjeant Talfourd, who was the author of the once celebrated tragedy of *Ion*, with a bland smile of triumph and satisfaction on his face, turned to Mr. Forster, laid his hand upon his breast, and said: “Forster, this *is* fame!” He did not know that *Ian* was the Gaelic for “John,” and that the man was merely calling to his distant friend by his Christian name.

Among the odd experiences of the little town in which he passed his days, Mr. Carruthers related that a gentleman who had made a large fortune in India retired to pass the evening of his days in his native town. Finding the time hang heavy on his hands, and being of an active mind, he established a newspaper, which he edited himself, and managed to incur much unpopularity by his personal attacks on prominent people. He grew tired of it, after two or three years, and discontinued it suddenly,

without a word of notice or explanation. With equal suddenness he resumed its publication, without any previous notice of his intention to do so, and addressed his readers, in his first editorial: "Since the publication of our last paper, nothing of importance has occurred in the political world." Nothing had occurred of more importance than a French Revolution, the dethronement and flight of a King, and convulsions in almost every country in Europe, Great Britain excepted.

Mr. Carruthers, who had previously received the degree of Doctor of Laws, died in 1878, full of years and honours, regretted and esteemed by all the North of Scotland, and by a wide circle of friends and admirers in every part of the world where English literature is appreciated, and Scotsmen retain a fond affection for their native country, and the men whose lives and genius reflect honour upon it.

BREAKFASTS WITH SAMUEL ROGERS.

No. III.

ON a subsequent occasion when I breakfasted with Mr. Rogers, the guests were the Rev. Sidney Smith, the celebrated wit and Canon of St. Paul's, Daniel O'Connell, the great Irish agitator, then in the plenitude of his political fame, Sir Augustus D'Este, the son of the Duke of Sussex, and consequently grandson of King George III., and Mr. Harrison Ainsworth, then in his early celebrity as a popular novelist.

The Rev. Sidney Smith was a particular friend and crony of Mr. Rogers, and a constant visitor at his hospitable board, to which he was attracted by a congeniality of sentiment in literature, in politics, and, it must be added, in brilliant cynicism of judgment on men, manners, and things in general. Many good stories were current in the clubs and in society of his witticisms and *bons mots*, most of which have by this time evaporated, and gone as hopelessly into empty space as the steam wreaths of the locomotive engines of the period. The reverend gentleman was certainly a wit; some people called him a wag—a very objectionable epithet to apply to anybody; so objectionable, in my estimation, that I ventured to tell Mr. Rogers, that morning, after the reverend gentleman had taken his depar-

ture (which he did rather early), that I had coined or invented a word which I thought more appropriate to the gentlemen who made it their business to provide amusement for the society which they frequented, than "wag," which had a flavour of vulgarity or coarseness about it. "Punster," I said, "is universally recognised as a permissible and legitimate word, and why not 'funster' ? A man may be the cause of 'fun' without being addicted to the weary vice of punning. Most puns," I added, "are altogether guiltless of 'fun,' and produce anything but merriment." Mr. Rogers agreed with me that 'funster' was a good word, and was pleased to say that I deserved credit for its invention, and to prophesy that it would, sooner or later, find its way into the dictionaries. The prophecy, however, has not yet been fulfilled, though more than a quarter of a century has passed over my head since its utterance.

Sir Augustus d'Este was a very quiet and accomplished gentleman, and, had the accidents of his birth been other than they were, would have been heir presumptive to the throne of Great Britain. His father, the Duke of Sussex, was the fifth of the six sons of King George III., and the senior of the Duke of Kent, whose daughter now sits upon the throne. The Duke married, without his father's consent, the Lady Augusta Murray, daughter of the British Earl of Dunmore. The law only partially

recognised the marriage, and held it to be invalid as far as any right of succession to the crown was involved, though in every other respect it was considered binding. The Duke of Sussex was next in succession to William IV., and, had he outlived that sovereign, would have inherited the throne, to the temporary exclusion of Queen Victoria. Sir Augustus D'Este had a sister who was known as Mademoiselle D'Este, though some people spoke of her as "Miss Guelph." But as D'Este is one of the patronymics of the royal family, to which they are as much entitled as the ancient kings of Scotland, afterwards kings of England, were to that of Stewart, it was ungracious to call the lady by any other name than that which she had a right to assume, to the exclusion of any other for which she had no fancy. At the time when I met Sir Augustus, the D'Este's were to some extent unpopular, especially among the literary class; for no fault of his, but on account of a disreputable piece of patronage on the part of the Crown, of which Mademoiselle D'Este was the beneficiary. The British Government has never been the patron or encourager of literature, art, or science; and literature more especially has been the profession which it has always seemed to consider it its duty to neglect and ignore; whether from jealousy of it, fear of it, or hatred of it, or perhaps from a combination of the three, it is difficult to

say. The utmost that British royalty or the Government did for it, until a comparatively recent time, was to appoint a poet—or one who was thought by his contemporaries to be worthy of that high name—to the office of Poet Laureate, and to endow him with a pension of £150 a year, and a certain eleemosynary allowance of wine from the royal cellars. The duties, if any, exacted from the holders of the office, were not to write epic, dramatic, or lyrical poetry, or to contribute in any fashion to the literary renown of their country, but to write verses in celebration of royal births and marriages, laments for royal deaths, or any other events peculiarly affecting the occupants of the throne and their families. It happened that some patriotic member of Parliament—and the Parliament itself were wiser in this respect than the Court and the Government—had, late in the eighteenth century, procured the passing of a law by which pensions on the Civil List, to the amount of twelve hundred pounds, were to be annually granted for the support or pecuniary assistance of the professors of art, science, and literature. The amount was but small, yet, small as it was, it was not always permitted to reach the persons for whose benefit it was intended. A coachman, a cook, a barber, a butler, a dancing-master, or some other servant of royalty, was occasionally foisted upon the pension, to the extent of fifty or a hundred pounds a

year, to the exclusion of the legitimate claimants ; but as these grants seldom exceeded a hundred pounds to any one person, literary men, knowing remonstrance to be useless, submitted, though not always in silence, to the robbery inflicted upon their class. The Duke of Sussex, though a King's son, died poor, without leaving any adequate provision for his family ; and Mademoiselle D'Este, granddaughter of George III., found herself in straitened circumstances, having royal needs but with only plebeian resources to supply them. The Ministers of the day objected to ask Parliament for a grant of money for her relief, and the royal family would not contribute towards her support out of their private resources. So they instructed the Minister to exercise his patronage in her behalf, and make her an allowance of £500 per annum out of the fund which ought to have been sacredly devoted to the objects for which it was established. This on all hands was considered to be a disgrace, and a faint storm of indignation rattled in the columns of the press. But it soon blew over, and in less than the usual nine days was no more heard of. But the next year the same game was played for Mademoiselle D'Este's benefit, and she received a second annuity of £500 from the same fund, and the professors of art, science, and literature, were left to suffer, or to die of neglect and penury, if it so pleased them, rather than that the daughter of a royal duke, and the

grand-daughter of a king, should not be irregularly and nefariously provided for at the public expense. What made the matter more disgraceful was that the lady, in the meantime, had married Lord Truro, the Lord High Chancellor of England, who was in the enjoyment of the handsome salary of £15,000 per annum, three times the amount of the salary paid at that time to the President of the United States, and was consequently well able to support a wife. The English public, however, cared no more for literature than the Court or the Parliament. What was literature to the public, provided it amused them, tickled their fancy, and made them laugh? And literary men, it was thought, would do that all the same—perhaps, all the more—if they had to work harder for their daily bread, in consequence of the paucity or uncertainty of their literary rewards. The case was brought under the notice of Parliament, and some useless displeasure was manifested against the Minister who was responsible for the malversation; but nothing further came of it.

Among the members who had been eloquent in denunciation of the wrong done was Daniel O'Connell, one of the guests of the morning, who had not previously met Sir Augustus D'Este, but who was well acquainted with the personal history of his father, the Duke, the only one of the family who had made himself conspicuous by his

Liberal politics, and had thereby incurred the displeasure of his royal father, perhaps to a greater extent than he had incurred it by his marriage.

Mr. O'Connell was a fine, burly man, with a beaming face, redolent of merriment and good humour; with a roguish twinkle in his eye, a winning and musical voice, and a smile as warm as the noonday sun. He spoke with a decided Irish brogue, which was highly piquant, and not at all offensive to the most susceptible English ear, but, on the contrary, agreeable and attractive, and added flavour to and sharpened the point of the good stories which he delighted to tell. During this morning he was particularly lively, and laid himself out to please; an object in which he succeeded without monopolising the attention of the company or making himself unduly conspicuous. He was one of the finest reciters of poetry to whom it was ever my privilege to listen, and brought out the latent and inherent beauties of the poems—unsuspected, perhaps, by the poets themselves—with such fire, tenderness, and pathos as the occult sense demanded, and to which it required a genius almost equal to that of a poet to do full justice.

One of the stories he told us was that of a Mr. Moreton Dyer—such was the name, if I remember rightly, of the gentleman who had so high an opinion of all mankind, and took such an optimist view of every possible event that happened, or

could possibly happen, in the world, as to find excuses and palliation, and even apologies, for the most atrocious crimes. He never was known to say an unkind word against anybody, and thought, or seemed to think, that even the Arch-fiend himself was more sinned against than sinning, was not nearly so black as he was painted, and that under more favourable circumstances, he might have become a credit, a benefit, and even an ornament, to the world of which he was at present the curse and the disgrace. The unkindest thing that he is ever reported to have said of a human being was in reference to the odious criminals Burke and Hare, who were convicted in Edinburgh of the murder of two poor Italian organ-boys, for the sake of their bodies, which they sold to the hospitals for the purpose of dissection. "What do you say, Mr. Dyer, of such fiendish crimes as were committed by these wretches?" was asked of him by a lady. "Well," he replied, "if you force me to speak out, I must say that their conduct was *rather eccentric!*"

Mr. Harrison Ainsworth, at this time in the heyday of his fame and popularity, was one of the four literary dandies of the period—all handsome men, and favourites of the ladies, as well for their personal graces as for their genius. These four were Mr. Benjamin Disraeli, Mr. Edward Lytton Bulwer, Mr. Charles Dickens, and Mr. Harrison Ainsworth.

None could deny that Mr. Ainsworth was unquestionably the best-looking man of the four—the very Antinous of literature, in the prime of his early manhood, and in the full flush of a popularity that continued unabated until a late period of his life. He was a nearer approach to Sir Walter Scott in the style and structure of his novels than any living competitor, though it must be confessed that opinions greatly differed as to the advisableness and morality of the uses to which he applied his genius. The whole town rang at this time with the story of the vulgar ruffian and highwayman, Jack Sheppard, whom he had glorified not only as one of the greatest scoundrels, but as one of the greatest heroes who ever lived. These words are sometimes held to be more or less synonymous; but the scoundrels of history, noted for the magnitude of their crimes against humanity, are, at all events, scoundrels of a higher class than the vulgar “cracksmen,” who break into the dwellings of citizens for the paltry plunder of silver spoons and the loose valuables of unprotected householders. Jack Sheppard, whom Harrison Ainsworth delighted to honour for his pluck, his energy, and his daring, became, during the happily short run of the popular favour with which the brilliant but most unwholesome novel was received, a model for the loose floating population of imperfectly or wrongly educated young men and boys,

who swarm in all great cities (in London and Paris more especially), who thought his rascally achievements worthy of admiration, and, what was worse, of imitation. The story was dramatized by those inferior dramatists who cared nothing for morality, but much for money, and appeared at no less than eight licensed—and, perhaps, at a score of unlicensed—theatres, or “penny gaffs,” frequented by boys and girls of the lowest class. The records of the police courts, and in due course of the prisons of the huge metropolis, told the tale of the mischievous influence of the too fascinating book.

But this influence, to use a phrase of the Rev. Sidney Smith, applied to a book of a very different kind, soon “blew over.” Unluckily, however, the appetite of the author, who had tasted the sweets of a very unwholesome applause and of a very profitable notoriety, longed for a repetition of the pabulum on which he had flourished, and found it in the adventures of Dick Turpin, the notorious highwayman, and the record of his marvellous ride between London and York. This narrative fairly took the town by storm. The applause created by the comparatively tame story of Jack Sheppard was as a gentle breeze compared with the tornado created by Dick Turpin’s ride, and, though Mr. Ainsworth shared with Mr. O’Connell the reputation of being the best abused man of his day, the abuse was lucrative, and put money in his pocket, without

breaking any bones, either physically or morally, in the personality of the author.

Mr. Ainsworth's heroes were of a kind to attract the admiration of the multitude, as was shown not only in the case of Jack Sheppard and Richard Turpin, but of Guy Fawkes, a criminal whose very name was as dear as it was familiar to all the boys of the London streets, who annually celebrated, on the fifth of November, the culmination of his treasonable career, because it afforded them the opportunity and the license of a display of fire-works in the streets. There is not, perhaps, a boy living, or who ever will live, or ever did live, by whom the letting off of squibs or crackers and other pyrotechnics was not considered, as Keats says of beauty, "a joy for ever." Guy Fawkes, however, it must be confessed, though a name to conjure with in the days of Mr. Ainsworth, is fast becoming obsolete in our own, and not even the London street boys, for the sake of the fire-works, succeed in keeping up an interest in him. But Mr. Ainsworth succeeded, in a literary point of view, in making the most of him. But what gave the *coup-de-grace* to Guy Fawkes as a popular hero and a subject of harmless fun and caricature was the fact that the celebration of the day devoted to his memory was taken out of the hands of the young boys of the streets and monopolized by the stalwart rogues and vagabonds of a larger

growth, who, by their coarse brutality and noisy demands for money of the householders in the streets through which they passed, and of the stray passengers on the pavements, rendered the day, and especially the night, hideous. The nuisance and the scandal, abhorred of all respectable people, required the strong arm of the police to abate. They were abated, accordingly, in the fulness of the time appointed.

Mr. Ainsworth was the author of several slang songs that were heard from morning to night in the streets, sung, whistled or ground on barrel-organs, to the sore discomfort of all quiet, studious folk, to say nothing of unhappy invalids. Among the most noted of these effusions was one entitled, "Nix, my dolly, pals, fake away." The first stanza, supposed to be sung originally by a highwayman in one of Mr. Ainsworth's novels, ran :

In a box of the stone jug I was born,
Of a hempen widow the kid forlorn,
And my old dad, as I've heard say,
Was a famous merchant in capers gay.
Nix, my dolly, pals, fake away!

Mr. O'Connell recited this to Mr. Ainsworth, and with great gusto; but expressed his inability to understand what was meant by "stone jug," and a "merchant in capers gay." Mr. Ainsworth explained that "stone jug" was the slang name

among the thieves of London for the prison of Newgate, and that a "merchant in capers" was another slang name, well understood by all the villains of London, for a man who had been executed, for the reason that a few moments after the noose had been fixed round his neck, and that his feet had lost their support on the solid ground, he "cut capers with his heels in the empty air."

"Grimly humorous, but far-fetched," said Mr. O'Connell. "'Hempen widow' is highly expressive of one made a widow by the rope, and 'kid forlorn' is almost pathetic. 'Nix, my dolly,' I don't understand; but I think 'fake' is a word of my country."

"How so?" inquired Mr. Ainsworth.

"It is an Irish Gaelic word, common enough in Dublin, and is from *faigh*, to get, to acquire, and thence to *steal*. There are many Gaelic words in the vernacular of the London streets, introduced, I suppose, by my countrymen."

"Very likely," said Mr. Sidney Smith. "But can you tell me, Mr. O'Connell, what is the true origin and meaning of the words 'Irish bull,' as applied to the blunders sometimes made by, but often attributed wrongfully to, Irishmen?"

"I scarcely know," replied Mr. O'Connell, "unless 'bull' be from *buille*, a stroke, which is, I suspect, the real word, and would thence mean

a stroke of wit, or humour, or stupidity, as the case might be."

"But whence 'Irish'?"

"'Irish,' I suspect," said Mr. O'Connell, "is either the Gaelic *aithris*, pronounced exactly like *Irish*, and which means mimicry, imitation, or repetition, or *air ais*, back or backward. Thus, bull-Irish, Irish bull, or *buille aithris*, would signify the repetition of a joke, or stroke of wit or humour, or else a backward stroke. If this be not the interpretation, I know of no other."

"I think the interpretation is very likely to be correct," remarked Mr. Rogers, "and that there are many more Gaelic words, both from Scotch and Irish sources, in common English use, than Englishmen are aware of."

And after this desultory but instructive philological discussion, which interested me exceedingly, and bore fruits in my mind at an after period of my life, the conversation ended and the party broke up.