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Some Roundabout Papers

by W. M. Thackeray

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Some Roundabout Papers

ON SOME CARP AT SANS SOUCI

We have lately made the acquaintance of an old lady of ninety, who has passed the last twenty-five years of her old life in a great metropolitan establishment, the workhouse, namely, of the parish of Saint Lazarus. Stay -- twenty-three or four years ago, she came out once, and thought to earn a little money by hop-picking; but being overworked, and having to lie out at night, she got a palsy which has incapacitated her from all further labour, and has caused her poor old limbs to shake ever since.

An illustration of that dismal proverb which tells us how poverty makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows, this poor old shaking body has to lay herself down every night in her workhouse bed by the side of some other old woman with whom she may or may not agree. She herself can't be a very pleasant bed-fellow, poor thing! with her shaking old limbs and cold feet. She lies awake a deal of the night, to be sure, not thinking of happy old times, for hers never were happy; but sleepless with aches, and agues, and rheumatism of old age. "The gentleman gave me brandy-and-water," she said, her old voice shaking with rapture at the thought. I never had a great love for Queen Charlotte, but I like her better now from what this old lady told me. The Queen, who loved snuff herself, has left a legacy of snuff to certain poorhouses; and, in her watchful nights, this old woman takes a pinch of Queen Charlotte's snuff, "and it do comfort me, sir, that it do!" *Pulveris exigui munus*. Here is a forlorn aged creature, shaking with palsy, with no soul among the great struggling multitude of mankind to care for her, not quite trampled out of life, but past and forgotten in the rush, made a little happy, and soothed in her hours of unrest by this penny legacy. Let me think as I write. (The next month's sermon, thank goodness! is safe to press.) This discourse will appear at the season when I have read that wassail-bowls make their appearance; at the season of pantomime, turkey and sausages, plum-puddings, jollifications for schoolboys; Christmas bills, and reminiscences more or less sad and sweet for elders. If we oldsters are not merry, we shall be having a semblance of merriment. We shall see the young folks laughing round the holly-bush. We shall pass the bottle round cosily as we sit by the fire. That old thing will have a sort of festival too.

Beef, beer, and pudding will be served to her for that day also. Christmas falls on a Thursday. Friday is the workhouse day for coming out. Mary, remember that old Goody Twoshoes has her invitation for Friday, 26th December! Ninety is she, poor old soul? Ah! what a bonny face to catch under a mistletoe! "Yes, ninety, sir," she says, "and my mother was a hundred, and my grandmother was a hundred and two."

Herself ninety, her mother a hundred, her grandmother a hundred and two? What a queer calculation!

Ninety! Very good, granny: you were born, then, in 1772.

Your mother, we will say, was twenty-seven when you were born, and was born therefore in 1745.

Your grandmother was thirty-five when her daughter was born, and was born therefore in 1710.

We will begin with the present granny first. My good old creature, you can't of course remember, but that little gentleman for whom your mother was laundress in the Temple was the ingenious Mr Goldsmith, author of a "History of England," the "Vicar of Wakefield," and many diverting pieces. You were brought almost an infant to his chambers in Brick Court, and he gave you some sugar-candy, for the doctor was always good to children. That gentleman who well-nigh smothered you by sitting down on you as you lay in a chair asleep was the learned Mr S. Johnson, whose history of "Rasselas" you have never read, my poor soul; and whose tragedy of "Irene" I don't believe any man in these kingdoms ever perused. That tipsy Scotch gentleman who used to come to the chambers sometimes, and at whom everybody laughed, wrote a more amusing book than any of the scholars, your Mr Burke and your Mr Johnson, and your Dr Goldsmith. Your father often took him home in a chair to his lodgings; and has done as much for Parson Sterne in Bond Street, the famous wit. Of course, my good creature, you remember the Gordon Riots, and crying No Popery before Mr Langdale's house, the Popish distiller's, and that bonny fire of my Lord Mansfield's books in Bloomsbury Square? Bless us, what a heap of illuminations you have seen! For the glorious victory over the Americans at Breed's Hill; for the peace in 1814, and the beautiful Chinese bridge in St James's Park; for the coronation of his Majesty, whom you recollect as Prince of Wales, Goody, don't you? Yes; and you went in a procession of laundresses to pay your respects to his good lady, the injured Queen of England, at Brandenburg House; and you remember your mother told you how she was taken to see the Scotch lords executed at the Tower. And as for your grandmother, she was born five months after the battle of Malplaquet, she was; where her poor father was killed, fighting like a bold Briton for the Queen. With the help of a "Wade's Chronology," I can make out ever so queer a history for you, my poor old body, and a pedigree as authentic as many in the peerage-books.

Peerage-books and pedigrees? What does she know about them? Battles and victories, treasons, kings, and beheadings, literary gentlemen, and the like, what have they ever been to her? Granny, did you ever hear of General Wolfe? Your mother may have seen him embark, and your father may have carried a musket under him. Your grandmother may have cried huzza for Marlborough; but what is the Prince Duke to you, and did you ever so much as hear tell of his name? How many hundred or thousand of years had that toad lived who was in the coal at the defunct exhibition? -- and yet he was not a bit better informed than toads seven or eight hundred years younger.

"Don't talk to me your nonsense about Exhibitions, and Prince Dukes, and toads in coals, or coals in toads, or what is it?" says granny. "I know there was a good Queen Charlotte, for she left me snuff; and it comforts me of a night when I lie awake."

To me there is something very touching in the notion of that little pinch of comfort doled out to granny, and gratefully inhaled by her in the darkness. Don't you remember what traditions there used to be of chests of plate, bulses of diamonds, laces of inestimable value, sent out of the country privately by the old Queen, to enrich certain relatives in M-ckl-nb-rg Str-l-tz? Not all the treasure went. Non omnis moritur. A poor old palsied thing at midnight is made happy sometimes as she lifts her shaking old hand to her nose. Gliding noiselessly among the beds where lie the poor creatures huddled in their cheerless dormitory, I fancy an old ghost with a snuff-box that does not creak. "There, Goody, take of my rappee. You will not sneeze, and I shall not say 'God bless you.' But you will think kindly of old Queen Charlotte, won't you? Ah! I had a many troubles, a many troubles. I was a prisoner almost so much as you are. I had to eat boiled mutton every day: entre nous, I abominated it. But I never complained. I swallowed it. I made the best of a hard life. We have all our burdens to bear. But hark! I hear the cock-crow, and snuff the morning air." And with this the royal ghost vanishes up the chimney -- if there be a chimney in that dismal harem, where poor old Twoshoes and her companions pass their nights -- their dreary nights, their restless nights, their cold long nights, shared in what glum companionship, illumined by what a feeble taper!

"Did I understand you, my good Twoshoes, to say that your mother was seven-and-twenty years old when you were born, and that she married your esteemed father when she herself was twenty-five? 1745, then, was the date of your dear mother's birth. I daresay her father was absent in the Low Countries, with his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland, under whom he had the honour of carrying a halberd at the famous engagement of Fontenoy -- or if not there, he may have been at Preston Pans, under General Sir John Cope, when the wild Highlanders broke through all the laws of discipline and the English lines; and, being on the spot, did

he see the famous ghost which didn't appear to Colonel Gardner of the Dragoons? My good creature, is it possible you don't remember that Doctor Swift, Sir Robert Walpole (my Lord Orford, as you justly say), old Sarah Marlborough, and little Mr Pope, of Twitnam, died in the year of your birth? What a wretched memory you have! What? haven't they a library, and the commonest books of reference at the old convent of Saint Lazarus, where you dwell?"

"Convent of Saint Lazarus, Prince William, Dr Swift, Atossa, and Mr Pope, of Twitnam! What is the gentleman talking about?" says old goody, with a "Ho! ho!" and a laugh like a old parrot -- you know they live to be as old as Methuselah, parrots do, and a parrot of a hundred is comparatively young (ho! ho! ho!). Yes, and likewise carps live to an immense old age. Some which Frederick the Great fed at Sans Souci are there now, with great humps of blue mould on their old backs; and they could tell all sorts of queer stories, if they chose to speak -- but they are very silent, carps are -- of their nature peu communicatives. Oh! what has been thy long life, old goody, but a dole of bread and water and a perch on a cage; a dreary swim round and round a Lethe of a pond? What are Rossbach or Jena to those mouldy ones, and do they know it is a grandchild of England who brings bread to feed them?

No! Those Sans Souci carps may live to be a thousand years old and have nothing to tell but that one day is like another; and the history of friend Goody Twoshoes has not much more variety than theirs. Hard labour, hard fare, hard bed, numbing cold all night, and gnawing hunger most days. That is her lot. Is it lawful in my prayers to say, "Thank heaven, I am not as one of these"? If I were eighty, would I like to feel the hunger always gnawing, gnawing? to have to get up and make a bow when Mr Bumble the beadle entered the common room? to have to listen to Miss Prim, who came to give me her ideas of the next world? If I were eighty, I own I should not like to have to sleep with another gentleman of my own age, gouty, a bad sleeper, kicking in his old dreams, and snoring; to march down my vale of years at word of command, accommodating my tottering old steps to those of the other prisoners in my dingy, hopeless old gang; to hold out a trembling hand for a sickly pittance of gruel, and say, "Thank you, ma'am," to Miss Prim, when she has done reading her sermon. John! when Goody Twoshoes comes next Friday, I desire she may not be disturbed by theological controversies. You have a fair voice, and I heard you and the maids singing a hymn very sweetly the other night, and was thankful that our humble household should be in such harmony. Poor old Twoshoes is so old and toothless and quaky, that she can't sing a bit; but don't be giving yourself airs over her, because she can't sing and you can. Make her comfortable at our kitchen hearth. Set that old kettle to sing by our hob. Warm her old stomach with nut-brown ale and a toast laid in the fire. Be kind to the poor old school-girl of ninety, who has had leave to come out for a day of

Christmas holiday. Shall there be many more Christmases for thee? Think of the ninety she has seen already; the fourscore and ten cold, cheerless, nipping New Years!

If you were in her place, would you like to have a remembrance of better early days, when you were young and happy, and loving, perhaps; or would you prefer to have no past on which your mind could rest? About the year 1788, Goody, were your cheeks rosy, and your eyes bright, and did some young fellow in powder and a pigtail look in them? We may grow old, but to us some stories never are old. On a sudden they rise up, not dead, but living -- not forgotten, but freshly remembered. The eyes gleam on us as they used to do. The dear voice thrills in our hearts. The rapture of the meeting, the terrible, terrible parting, again and again the tragedy is acted over. Yesterday, in the street, I saw a pair of eyes so like two which used to brighten at my coming once, that the whole past came back as I walked lonely, in the rush of the Strand, and I was young again in the midst of joys and sorrows, alike sweet and sad, alike sacred and fondly remembered.

If I tell a tale out of school, will any harm come to my old school-girl? Once, a lady gave her a half-sovereign, which was a source of great pain and anxiety to Goody Twoshoes. She sewed it away in her old stays somewhere, thinking here at least was a safe investment -- (vestis -- a vest -- an investment, -- pardon me, thou poor old thing, but I cannot help the pleasantry). And what do you think? Another pensionnaire of the establishment cut the coin out of Goody's stays -- an old woman who went upon two crutches! Faugh, the old witch! What? Violence amongst these toothless, tottering, trembling, feeble ones? Robbery amongst the penniless? Dogs coming and snatching Lazarus's crumbs out of his lap? Ah, how indignant Goody was as she told the story! To that pond at Potsdam where the carps live for hundreds of hundreds of years, with hunches of blue mould on their back, I daresay the little Prince and Princess of Preussen-Britannien come sometimes with crumbs and cakes to feed the mouldy ones. Those eyes may have goggled from beneath the weeds at Napoleon's jack-boots: they have seen Frederick's lean shanks reflected in their pool; and perhaps Monsieur de Voltaire has fed them, and now for a crumb of biscuit they will fight, push, hustle, rob, squabble, gobble, relapsing into their tranquillity when the ignoble struggle is over. Sans souci, indeed! It is mighty well writing "Sans souci" over the gate; but where is the gate through which Care has not slipped? She perches on the shoulders of the sentry in the sentry-box: she whispers the porter sleeping in his arm-chair: she glides up the staircase, and lies down between the king and queen in their bed-royal: this very night I daresay she will perch upon poor old Goody Twoshoes' meagre bolster, and whisper, "Will the gentleman and those ladies ask me again! No, no; they will forget poor old Twoshoes." Goody! For shame of yourself! Do not be cynical. Do not mistrust your fellow-creatures. What? Has the Christmas morning

dawned upon thee ninety times? For four-score and ten years has it been thy lot to totter on this earth, hungry and obscure? Peace and goodwill to thee, let us say at this Christmas season. Come, drink, eat, rest awhile at our hearth, thou poor old pilgrim! And of the bread which God's bounty gives us, I pray, brother reader, we may not forget to set aside a part for those noble and silent poor, from whose innocent hands war has torn the means of labour. Enough! As I hope for beef at Christmas, I vow a note shall be sent to Saint Lazarus Union House, in which Mr Roundabout requests the honour of Mrs Twoshoes' company on Friday, 26th December.

DE JUVENTUTE

We who lived before railways, and survive out of the ancient world, are like Father Noah and his family out of the Ark. The children will gather round and say to us patriarchs, "Tell us, grandpapa, about the old world." And we shall mumble our old stories; and we shall drop off one by one; and there will be fewer and fewer of us, and these very old and feeble. There will be but ten prae-railroadites left: then three -- then two -- then one -- then 0! If the hippopotamus had the least sensibility (of which I cannot trace any signs either in his hide or his face), I think he would go down to the bottom of his tank, and never come up again. Does he not see that he belongs to bygone ages, and that his great hulking barrel of a body is out of place in these times? What has he in common with the brisk young life surrounding him? In the watches of the night, when the keepers are asleep, when the birds are on one leg, when even the little armadillo is quiet, and the monkeys have ceased their chatter, he -- I mean the hippopotamus -- and the elephant, and the long-necked giraffe, perhaps may lay their heads together and have a colloquy about the great silent antediluvian world which they remember, where mighty monsters floundered through the ooze, crocodiles basked on the banks, and dragons darted out of the caves and waters before men were made to slay them. We who lived before railways are antediluvians -- we must pass away. We are growing scarcer every day; and old -- old -- very old relicts of the times when George was still fighting the Dragon.

Not long since, a company of horseriders paid a visit to our watering-place. We went to see them, and I bethought me that young Walter Juvenis, who was in the place, might like also to witness the performance. A pantomime is not always amusing to persons who have attained a certain age; but a boy at a pantomime is always amused and amusing, and to see his pleasure is good for most hypochondriacs.

We sent to Walter's mother, requesting that he might join us, and

the kind lady replied that the boy had already been at the morning performance of the equestrians, but was most eager to go in the evening likewise. And go he did; and laughed at all Mr Merryman's remarks, though he remembered them with remarkable accuracy, and insisted upon waiting to the very end of the fun, and was only induced to retire just before its conclusion by representations that the ladies of the party would be incommoded if they were to wait and undergo the rush and trample of the crowd round about. When this fact was pointed out to him, he yielded at once, though with a heavy heart, his eyes looking longingly towards the ring as we retreated out of the booth. We were scarcely clear of the place, when we heard "God save the Queen," played by the equestrian band, the signal that all was over. Our companion entertained us with scraps of the dialogue on our way home -- precious crumbs of wit which he had brought away from that feast. He laughed over them again as he walked under the stars. He has them now, and takes them out of the pocket of his memory, and crunches a bit, and relishes it with a sentimental tenderness, too, for he is, no doubt, back at school by this time; the holidays are over; and Doctor Birch's young friends have reassembled.

Queer jokes, which caused a thousand simple mouths to grin! As the jaded Merryman uttered them to the old gentleman with the whip, some of the old folks in the audience, I daresay, indulged in reflections of their own. There was one joke -- I utterly forget it -- but it began with Merryman saying what he had for dinner. He had mutton for dinner, at one o'clock, after which "he had to come to business." And then came the point. Walter Juvenis, Esq., Rev. Doctor Birch's, Market Rodborough, if you read this, will you please send me a line, and let me know what was the joke Mr Merryman made about having his dinner? You remember well enough. But do I want to know? Suppose a boy takes a favourite, long-cherished lump of cake out of his pocket, and offers you a bit? Merci! The fact is, I don't care much about knowing that joke of Mr Merryman's.

But whilst he was talking about his dinner, and his mutton, and his landlord, and his business, I felt a great interest about Mr M. in private life -- about his wife, lodgings, earnings, and general history, and I daresay was forming a picture of those in my mind: -- wife cooking the mutton; children waiting for it; Merryman in his plain clothes, and so forth; during which contemplation the joke was uttered and laughed at, and Mr M., resuming his professional duties, was tumbling over head and heels. Do not suppose I am going, sicut est mos, to indulge in moralities about buffoons, paint, motley, and mountebanking. Nay, Prime Ministers rehearse their jokes; Opposition leaders prepare and polish them: Tabernacle preachers must arrange them in their minds before they utter them. All I mean is, that I would like to know any one of these performers thoroughly, and out of his uniform: that preacher, and why in his travels this and that point struck him; wherein lies his power of pathos,

humour, eloquence; -- that Minister of State, and what moves him, and how his private heart is working; -- I would only say that, at a certain time of life certain things cease to interest: but about some things when we cease to care, what will be the use of life, sight, hearing? Poems are written, and we cease to admire. Lady Jones invites us, and we yawn; she ceases to invite us, and we are resigned. The last time I saw a ballet at the opera -- oh! it is many years ago -- I fell asleep in the stalls, wagging my head in insane dreams, and I hope affording amusement to the company, while the feet of five hundred nymphs were cutting flicflacs on the stage at a few paces distant. Ah, I remember a different state of things! *Credite posteri*. To see these nymphs -- gracious powers, how beautiful they were! That leering, painted, shrivelled, thin-armed, thick-ankled old thing, cutting dreary capers, coming thumping down on her board out of time -- that an opera-dancer? Pooh! My dear Walter, the great difference between my time and yours, who will enter life some two or three years hence, is that, now, the dancing women and singing women are ludicrously old, out of time, and out of tune; the paint is so visible, and the dinge and wrinkles of their wretched old cotton stockings, that I am surprised how anybody can like to look at them. And as for laughing at me for falling asleep, I can't understand a man of sense doing otherwise. In my time, *a la bonne heure*. In the reign of George IV., I give you my honour, all the dancers at the opera were as beautiful as *Houris*. Even in William IV.'s time, when I think of *Duvernay* prancing in as the *Bayadere*, -- I say it was a vision of loveliness such as mortal eyes can't see nowadays. How well I remember the tune to which she used to appear! *Kaled* used to say to the Sultan, "My lord, a troop of those dancing and singing gurls called *Bayaderes* approaches," and, to the clash of cymbals, and the thumping of my heart, in she used to dance! There has never been anything like it -- never. There never will be -- I laugh to scorn old people who tell me about your *Noblet*, your *Montessu*, your *Vistris*, your *Parisot* -- pshaw, the senile twaddlers! And the impudence of the young men, with their music and their dancers of to-day! I tell you the women are dreary old creatures. I tell you one air in an opera is just like another, and they send all rational creatures to sleep. Ah, *Ronzi de Begnis*, thou lovely one! Ah, *Caradori*, thou smiling angel! Ah, *Malibrán*! Nay, I will come to modern times, and acknowledge that *Lablache* was a very good singer thirty years ago (though *Porto* was the boy for me): and they we had *Ambrogetti*, and *Curioni*, and *Donzelli*, a rising young singer.

But what is most certain and lamentable is the decay of stage beauty since the days of George IV. Think of *Sontag*! I remember her in *Otello* and the *Donna del Lago* in '28. I remember being behind the scenes at the opera (where numbers of us young fellows of fashion used to go), and seeing *Sontag* let her hair fall down over her shoulders previous to her murder by *Donzelli*. Young fellows have never seen beauty like that, heard such a voice, seen such hair, such eyes. Don't tell me! A man who has been

about town since the reign of George IV., ought he not to know better than you young lads who have seen nothing? The deterioration of women is lamentable; and the conceit of the young fellows more lamentable still, that they won't see this fact, but persist in thinking their time as good as ours.

Bless me! when I was a lad, the stage was covered with angels, who sang, acted, and danced. When I remember the Adelphi, and the actresses there: when I think of Miss Chester, and Miss Love, and Mrs Serle at Sadler's Wells, and her forty glorious pupils -- of the Opera and Noblet, and the exquisite young Taglioni, and Pauline Leroux, and a host more! One much-admired being of those days I confess I never cared for, and that was the chief male dancer -- a very important personage then, with a bare neck, bare arms, a tunic, and a hat and feathers, who used to divide the applause with the ladies, and who has now sunk down a trap-door for ever. And this frank admission ought to show that I am not your mere twaddling laudator temporis acti -- your old fogey who can see no good except in his own time.

They say that claret is better nowadays, and cookery much improved since the days of my monarch -- of George IV. Pastry Cookery is certainly not so good. I have often eaten half-a-crown's worth (including, I trust, ginger-beer) at our school pastrycook's, and that is a proof that the pastry must have been very good, for could I do as much now? I passed by the pastrycook's shop lately, having occasion to visit my old school. It looked a very dingy old baker's; misfortunes may have come over him -- those penny tarts certainly did not look so nice as I remember them: but he may have grown careless as he has grown old (I should judge him to be now about ninety-six years of age), and his hand may have lost its cunning.

Not that we were not great epicures. I remember how we constantly grumbled at the quantity of the food in our master's house -- which on my conscience I believe was excellent and plentiful -- and how we tried once or twice to eat him out of house and home. At the pastrycook's we may have over-eaten ourselves (I have admitted half-a-crown's worth for my own part, but I don't like to mention the real figure for fear of perverting the present generation of boys by my monstrous confession) -- we may have eaten too much, I say. We did; but what then? The school apothecary was sent for: a couple of small globules at night, a trifling preparation of senna in the morning, and we had not to go to school, so that the draught was an actual pleasure.

For our amusements, besides the games in vogue, which were pretty much in old times as they are now (except cricket par exemple -- and I wish the present youth joy of their bowling, and suppose Armstrong and Whitworth will bowl at them with light field-pieces next), there were novels -- ah! I trouble you to find such novels in the present day! O Scottish Chiefs, didn't we weep over you!

O Mysteries of Udolpho, didn't I and Briggs Minor draw pictures out of you, as I have said? Efforts, feeble indeed, but still giving pleasure to us and our friends. "I say, old boy, draw us Vivaldi tortured in the Inquisition," or, "Draw us Don Quixote and the windmills, you know," amateurs would say, to boys who had a love of drawing. "Peregrine Pickle" we liked, our fathers admiring it, and telling us (the sly old boys) it was capital fun; but I think I was rather bewildered by it, though "Roderick Random" was and remains delightful. I don't remember having Sterne in the school library, no doubt because the works of that divine were not considered decent for young people. Ah! not against thy genius, O father of Uncle Toby and Trim, would I say a word in disrespect. But I am thankful to live in times when men no longer have the temptation to write so as to call blushes on women's cheeks, and would shame to whisper wicked allusions to honest boys. Then, above all, we had Walter Scott, the kindly, the generous, the pure -- the companion of what countless delightful hours; the purveyor of how much happiness; the friend whom we recall as the constant benefactor of our youth! How well I remember the type and the brownish paper of the old duodecimo "Tales of My Landlord!" I have never dared to read the "Pirate," and the "Bride of Lammermoor," or "Kenilworth," from that day to this, because the finale is unhappy, and people die, and are murdered at the end. But "Ivanhoe," and "Quentin Durward"! Oh! for a half-holiday, and a quiet corner, and one of those books again! Those books, and perhaps those eyes with which we read them; and, it may be, the brains behind the eyes! It may be the tart was good; but how fresh the appetite was! If the gods would give me the desire of my heart, I should be able to write a story which boys would relish for the next few dozen of centuries. The boy-critic loves the story: grown up, he loves the author who wrote the story. Hence the kindly tie is established between writer and reader, and lasts pretty nearly for life. I meet people now who don't care of Walter Scott, or the "Arabian Nights"; I am sorry for them, unless they in their time have found their romancer -- their charming Scheherazade. By the way, Walter, when you are writing, tell me who is the favourite novelist in the fourth form now? Have you got anything so good and kindly as dear Miss Edgeworth's Frank? It used to belong to a fellow's sisters generally; but though he pretended to despise it, and said, "Oh, stuff for girls!" he read it; and I think there were one or two passages which would try my eyes now, were I to meet with the little book.

As for Thomas and Jeremiah (it is only my witty way of calling Tom and Jerry), I went to the British Museum the other day on purpose to get it; but somehow, if you will press the question so closely, on re-perusal, Tom and Jerry is not so brilliant as I had supposed it to be. The pictures are just as fine as ever; and I shook hands with broad-backed Jerry Hawthorn and Corinthian Tom with delight, after many year's absence. But the style of the writing, I own, was not pleasing to me; I even thought it a little vulgar -- well! well! other writers have been considered

vulgar -- and as a description of the sports and amusements of London in the ancient times, more curious than amusing.

But the pictures! -- oh! the pictures are noble still! First, there is Jerry arriving from the country, in a green coat and leather gaiters, and being measured for a fashionable suit at Corinthian House, by Corinthian Tom's tailor. Then away for the career of pleasure and fashion. The park! delicious excitement! The theatre! the saloon!! the green-room!!! Rapturous bliss -- the opera itself! and then perhaps to Temple Bar, to knock down a Charley there! There are Jerry and Tom, with their tights and little cocked hats, coming from the opera -- very much as gentlemen in waiting on royalty are habited now. There they are at Almack's itself, amidst a crowd of high-bred personages, with the Duke of Clarence himself looking at them dancing. Now, strange change, they are in Tom Cribb's parlour, where they don't seem to be a whit less at home than in fashion's gilded halls; and now they are at Newgate, seeing the irons knocked off the malefactors' legs previous to execution. What hardened ferocity in the countenance of the desperado in yellow breeches! What compunction in the face of the gentleman in black (who, I suppose, has been forging), and who clasps his hands, and listens to the chaplain! Now we haste away to merrier scenes: to Tattersall's (ah gracious powers! what a funny fellow that actor was who performed Dicky Green in that scene in the play!); and now we are at a private party, at which Corinthian Tom is waltzing (and very gracefully too, as you must confess) with Corinthian Kate, whilst Bob Logic, the Oxonian, is playing on the piano!

"After," the text says, "the Oxonian had played several pieces of lively music, he requested as a favour that Kate and his friend Tom would perform a waltz. Kate without any hesitation immediately stood up. Tom offered his hand to his fascinating partner, and the dance took place. The plate conveys a correct representation of the 'gay scene' at that precise moment. The anxiety of the Oxonian to witness the attitudes of the elegant pair had nearly put a stop to their movements. On turning round from the pianoforte and presenting his comical mug, Kate could scarcely suppress a laugh."

And no wonder; just look at it now (as I have copied it to the best of my humble ability), and compare Master Logic's countenance and attitude with the splendid elegance of Tom! Now every London man is weary and blase. There is an enjoyment of life in these young bucks of 1823 which contrasts strangely with our feelings of 1860. Here, for instance, is a specimen of their talk and walk, "If," says LOGIC -- 'if enjoyment is your motto, you may make the most of an evening at Vauxhall, more than at any other place in the metropolis. It is all free and easy. Stay as long as you like, and depart when you think proper.' -- 'Your description is so flattering,' replied JERRY, 'that I do not care how soon the time arrives for us to start.' LOGIC proposed a

'bit of a stroll' in order to get rid of an hour or two, which was immediately accepted by Tom and Jerry. A turn or two in Bond Street, a stroll through Piccadilly, a look in at TATTERSALL's, a ramble through Pall Mall, and a strut on the Corinthian path, fully occupied the time of our heroes until the hour for dinner arrived, when a few glasses of TOM's rich wines soon put them on the qui vive. VAUXHALL was then the object in view, and the TRIO started, bent upon enjoying the pleasures which this place so amply affords."

How nobly those inverted commas, those italics, those capitals, bring out the writer's wit and relieve the eye! They are as good as jokes, though you mayn't quite perceive the point. Mark the varieties of lounge in which the young men indulge -- now a stroll, then a look in, then a ramble, and presently a strut. When George, Prince of Wales, was twenty, I have read in an old Magazine, "the Prince's lounge" was a peculiar manner of walking which the young bucks imitated. At Windsor George III. had a cat's path -- a sly early walk which the good old king took in the grey morning before his household was astir. What was the Corinthian path here recorded? Does any antiquary know? And what were the rich wines which our friends took, and which enable them to enjoy Vauxhall? Vauxhall is gone, but the wines which could occasion such a delightful perversion of the intellect as to enable it to enjoy ample pleasures there, what were they?

So the game of life proceeds, until Jerry Hawthorn, the rustic, is fairly knocked up by all this excitement and is forced to go home, and the last picture represents him getting into the coach at the "White Horse Cellar," he being one of six inside; whilst his friends shake him by the hand; whilst the sailor mounts on the roof; whilst the Jews hang round with oranges, knives, and sealing-wax: whilst the guard is closing the door. Where are they now, those sealing-wax vendors? where are the guards? where are the jolly teams? where are the coaches? and where the youth that climbed inside and out of them; that heard the merry horn which sounds no more; that saw the sun rise over Stonehenge; that rubbed away the bitter tears at night after parting as the coach sped on the journey to school and London; that looked out with beating heart as the milestones flew by, for the welcome corner where began home and holidays.

It is night now: and here is home. Gathered under the quiet roof elders and children lie alike at rest. In the midst of a great peace and calm, the stars look out from the heavens. The silence is peopled with the past; sorrowful remorse for sins and shortcomings -- memories of passionate joys and griefs rise out of their graves, both now alike calm and sad. Eyes, as I shut mine, look at me, that have long ceased to shine. The town and the fair landscape sleep under the starlight, wreathed in the autumn mists. Twinkling among the houses a light keeps watch here and there, in what may be a sick chamber or two. The clock tolls sweetly in the silent air. Here is night and rest. An

awful sense of thanks makes the heart swell, and the head bow, as I pass to my room through the sleeping house, and feel as though a hushed blessing were upon it.

ROUND ABOUT THE CHRISTMAS TREE

The kindly Christmas tree, from which I trust every gentle reader has pulled out a bonbon or two, is yet all aflame whilst I am writing, and sparkles with the sweet fruits of its season. You young ladies, may you have plucked pretty giftlings from it; and out of the cracker sugar-plum which you have split with the captain or the sweet young curate may you have read one of those delicious conundrums which the confectioners introduce into the sweetmeats, and which apply to the cunning passion of love. Those riddles are to be read at your age, when I daresay they are amusing. As for Dolly, Merry, and Bell, who are standing at the tree, they don't care about the love-riddle part, but understand the sweet-almoned portion very well. They are four, five, six years old. Patience, little people! A dozen merry Christmases more, and you will be reading those wonderful love-conundrums, too. As for us elderly folks, we watch the babies at their sport, and the young people pulling at the branches: and instead of finding bonbons or sweeties in the packets which we pluck off the boughs, we find enclosed Mr Carnifex's review of the quarter's meat; Mr Sartor's compliments, and little statement for self and the young gentlemen; and Madame de Sainte-Crinoline's respects to the young ladies, who encloses her account, and will sent on Saturday, please; or we stretch our hand out to the educational branch of the Christmas tree, and there find a lively and amusing article from the Rev. Henry Holyshade, containing our dear Tommy's exceedingly moderate account for the last term's school expenses.

The tree yet sparkles, I say. I am writing on the day before Twelfth Day, if you must know; but already ever so many of the fruits have been pulled, and the Christmas lights have gone out. Bobby Miseltow, who has been staying with us for a week (and who has been sleeping mysteriously in the bath-room), comes to say he is going away to spend the rest of the holidays with his grandmother -- and I brush away the manly tear of regret as I part with the dear child. "Well, Bob, good-bye, since you will go. Compliments to grandmamma. Thank her for the turkey. Here's ----" (A slight pecuniary transaction takes place at this juncture, and Bob nods and winks, and puts his hand in his waistcoat pocket.) "You have had a pleasant week?"

Bob. -- "Haven't I!" (And exit, anxious to know the amount of the coin which has just changed hands.)

He is gone, and as the dear boy vanishes through the door (behind which I see him perfectly), I too cast up a little account of our past Christmas week. When Bob's holidays are over, and the printer has sent me back this manuscript, I know Christmas will be an old story. All the fruit will be off the Christmas tree then; the crackers will have cracked off; the almonds will have been crunched; and the sweet-bitter riddles will have been read; the lights will have perished off the dark green boughs; the toys growing on them will have been distributed, fought for, cherished, neglected, broken. Ferdinand and Fidelia will each keep out of it (be still, my gushing heart!) the remembrance of a riddle read together, of a double almond munched together, and of the moiety of an exploded cracker.... The maids, I say, will have taken down all that holly stuff and nonsense about the clocks, lamps, and looking-glasses, the dear boys will be back at school, fondly thinking of the pantomime fairies whom they have seen; whose gaudy gossamer wings are battered by this time; and whose pink cotton (or silk is it?) lower extremities are all dingy and dusty. Yet but a few days, Bob, and flakes of paint will have cracked off the fairy flower-bowers, and the revolving temples of adamantine lustre will be as shabby as the city of Peking. When you read this, will Clown still be going on lolling his tongue out of his mouth, and saying, "How are you to-morrow?" To-morrow, indeed! He must be almost ashamed of himself (if that cheek is still capable of the blush of shame) for asking the absurd question. To-morrow, indeed! To-morrow the diffugient snows will give place to spring; the snowdrops will lift their heads; Ladyday may be expected, and the pecuniary duties peculiar to that feast; in place of bonbons, trees will have an eruption of light green knobs; the whitebait season will bloom ... as if one need go on describing these vernal phenomena, when Christmas is still here, though ending, and the subject of my discourse!

We have all admired the illustrated papers, and noted how boisterously jolly they become at Christmas time. What wassail-bowls, robin-redbreasts, waits, snow landscapes, bursts of Christmas song! And then to think that these festivities are prepared months before -- that these Christmas pieces are prophetic! How kind of artists and poets to devise the festivities beforehand, and serve them pat at the proper time! We ought to be grateful to them, as to the cook who gets up at midnight and sets the pudding a-boiling, which is to feast us at six o'clock. I often think with gratitude of the famous Mr Nelson Lee -- the author of I don't know how many hundred glorious pantomimes -- walking by the summer wave at Margate, or Brighton perhaps, revolving in his mind the idea of some new gorgeous spectacle of faery, which the winter shall see complete. He is like cook at midnight (*si parva licet*). He watches and thinks. He pounds the sparkling sugar of benevolence, the plums of fancy, the sweetmeats of fun, the figs of -- well, the figs of fairy fiction, let us say, and pops the whole in the seething cauldron of imagination, and at due season serves up the

Pantomime.

Very few men in the course of nature can expect to see all the pantomimes in one season, but I hope to the end of my life I shall never forego reading about them in that delicious sheet of The Times which appears on the morning after Boxing-day. Perhaps reading is even better than seeing. The best way, I think, is to say you are ill, lie in bed, and have the paper for two hours, reading all the way down from Drury Lane to the Britannia at Hoxton. Bob and I went to two pantomimes. One was at the Theatre of Fancy, and the other at the Fairy Opera, and I don't know which we liked the best.

At the Fancy, we saw "Harlequin Hamlet, or Daddy's Ghost and Nunky's Pison," which is all very well -- but, gentlemen, if you don't respect Shakspeare, to whom will you be civil? The palace and ramparts of Elsinore by moon and snowlight is one of Louthembourg's finest efforts. The banqueting hall of the palace is illuminated: the peaks and gables glitter with the snow: the sentinels march blowing their fingers with the cold -- the freezing of the nose of one of them is very neatly and dexterously arranged: the snow storm rises: the winds howl awfully along the battlements: the waves come curling, leaping, foaming to shore. Hamlet's umbrella is whirled away in the storm. He and his two friends stamp on each other's toes to keep them warm. The storm-spirits rise in the air, and are whirled howling round the palace and the rocks. My eyes! what tiles and chimney-pots fly hurtling through the air! As the storm reaches its height (here the wind instruments come in with prodigious effect, and I compliment Mr Brumby and the violoncellos) -- as the snow storm rises (queek, queek, queek, go the fiddles, and then thrumpty thrump comes a pizzicato movement in Bob Major, which sends a shiver into your very boot-soles), the thunder-clouds deepen (bong, bong, bong, from the violoncellos). The forked lightning quivers through the clouds in a zig-zag scream of violins -- and look, look, look! as the frothing, roaring waves come rushing up the battlements, and over the reeling parapet, each hissing wave becomes a ghost, sends the gun-carriages rolling over the platform, and plunges into the water again.

Hamlet's mother comes on to the battlements to look for her son. The storm whips her umbrella out of her hands, and she retires screaming in pattens.

The cabs on the stand in the great market-place at Elsinore are seen to drive off, and several people are drowned. The gas-lamps along the street are wrenched from their foundations, and shoot through the troubled air. Whist, rush, hish! how the rain roars and pours! The darkness becomes awful, always deepened by the power of the music -- and see -- in the midst of a rush, and whirl, and scream of spirits of air and wave -- what is that ghastly figure moving hither? It becomes bigger, bigger, as it

advances down the platform -- more ghastly, more horrible, enormous! It is as tall as the whole stage. It seems to be advancing on the stalls and pit, and the whole house screams with terror, as the Ghost of the Late Hamlet comes in, and begins to speak. Several people faint, and the light-fingered gentry pick pockets furiously in the darkness.

In the pitchy darkness, this awful figure throwing his eyes about, the gas in the boxes shuddering out of sight, and the wind-instruments bugling the most horrible wails, the boldest spectator must have felt frightened. But hark! what is that silver shimmer of the fiddles? Is it -- can it be -- the grey dawn peeping in the stormy east? The ghost's eyes look blankly towards it, and roll a ghastly agony. Quicker, quicker ply the violins of Phoebus Apollo. Redder, redder grow the orient clouds. Cockadoodledoo! crows that great cock which has just come out on the roof of the palace. And now the round sun himself pops up from behind the waves of night. Where is the ghost? He is gone! Purple shadows of morn "slant o'er the snowy sward," the city wakes up in life and sunshine, and we confess we are very much relieved at the disappearance of the ghost. We don't like those dark scenes in pantomimes.

After the usual business, that Ophelia should be turned into Columbine was to be expected; but I confess I was a little shocked when Hamlet's mother became Pantaloon, and was instantly knocked down by Clown Claudius. Grimaldi is getting a little old now, but for real humour there are few clowns like him. Mr Shuter, as the gravedigger, was chaste and comic, as he always is, and the scene-painters surpassed themselves.

"Harlequin Conqueror and the Field of Hastings," at the other house, is very pleasant too. The irascible William is acted with great vigour by Snoxall, and the battle of Hastings is a good piece of burlesque. Some trifling liberties are taken with history, but what liberties will not the merry genius of pantomime permit himself? At the battle of Hastings, William is on the point of being defeated by the Sussex volunteers, very elegantly led by the always pretty Miss Waddy (as Haco Sharpshooter), when a shot from the Normans kills Harold. The Fairy Edith hereupon comes forward, and finds his body, which straightway leaps up a live harlequin, whilst the Conqueror makes an excellent clown, and the Archbishop of Bayeux a diverting pantaloon, &c. &c. &c.

Perhaps these are not the pantomimes we really saw; but one description will do as well as another. The plots, you see, are a little intricate and difficult to understand in pantomimes; and I may have mixed up one with another. That I was at the theatre on Boxing-night is certain -- but the pit was so full that I could only see fairy legs glittering in the distance, as I stood at the door. And if I was badly off, I think there was a young gentleman behind me worse off still. I own that he has

good reason (though others have not) to speak ill of me behind my back, and hereby beg his pardon.

Likewise to the gentleman who picked up a party in Piccadilly, who had slipped and fallen in the snow, and was there on his back, uttering energetic expressions: that party begs to offer thanks, and compliments of the season.

Bob's behaviour on New Year's day, I can assure Dr Holyshade, was highly creditable to the boy. He had expressed a determination to partake of every dish which was put on the table; but after soup, fish, roast-beef, and roast-goose, he retired from active business until the pudding and mince-pies made their appearance, of which he partook liberally, but not too freely. And he greatly advanced in my good opinion by praising the punch, which was of my own manufacture, and which some gentlemen present (Mr O'M-g--n, amongst others) pronounced to be too weak. Too weak! A bottle of rum, a bottle of Madeira, half a bottle of brandy, and two bottles and a half of water -- can this mixture be said to be too weak for any mortal? Our young friend amused the company during the evening, by exhibiting a two-shilling magic-lantern, which he had purchased, and likewise by singing "Sally, come up!" a quaint, but rather monotonous melody, which I am told is sung by the poor negro on the banks of the broad Mississippi.

What other enjoyments did we proffer for the child's amusement during the Christmas week? A great philosopher was giving a lecture to young folks at the British Institution. But when this diversion was proposed to our young friend Bob, he said, "Lecture? No, thank you. Not as I knows on," and made sarcastic signals on his nose. Perhaps he is of Dr Johnson's opinion about lectures: "Lectures, sir! what man would go to hear that imperfectly at a lecture, which he can read at leisure in a book?" I never went, of my own choice, to a lecture; that I can vow. As for sermons, they are different; I delight in them, and they cannot, of course, be too long.

Well, we partook of yet other Christmas delights besides pantomime, pudding, and pie. One glorious, one delightful, one most unlucky and pleasant day, we drove in a brougham, with a famous horse, which carried us more quickly and briskly than any of your vulgar railways, over Battersea Bridge, on which the horse's hoofs rung as if it had been iron; through suburban villages, plum-caked with snow; under a leaden sky, in which the sun hung like a red-hot warming-pan; by pond after pond, where not only men and boys, but scores after scores of women and girls, were sliding, and roaring, and clapping their lean old sides with laughter, as they tumbled down, and their hobnailed shoes flew up in the air; the air frosty with a lilac haze, through which villas, and commons, and churches, and plantations glimmered. We drive up the hill, Bob and I; we make the last two miles in eleven minutes; we pass that poor, armless man who sits there in the cold, following you with his eyes. I don't

give anything, and Bob looks disappointed. We are set down neatly at the gate, and a horse-holder opens the brougham door. I don't give anything; again disappointment on Bob's part. I pay a shilling apiece, and we enter into the glorious building, which is decorated for Christmas, and straightway forgetfulness on Bob's part of everything but that magnificent scene. The enormous edifice is all decorated for Bob and Christmas. The stalls, the columns, the fountains, courts, statues, splendours, are all crowned for Christmas. The delicious negro is singing his Alabama choruses for Christmas and Bob. He has scarcely done, when, Tootarootatoo! Mr Punch is performing his surprising actions, and hanging the beadle. The stalls are decorated. The refreshment-tables are piled with good things; at many fountains "Mulled Claret" is written up in appetizing capitals. "Mulled Claret -- oh, jolly! How cold it is!" says Bob; I pass on. "It's only three o'clock," says Bob. "No, only three," I say meekly. "We dine at seven," sighs Bob, "and it's so-o-o cool." I still would take no hints. No claret, no refreshment, no sandwiches, no sausage-rolls for Bob. At last I am obliged to tell him all. Just before we left home, a little Christmas bill popped in at the door and emptied my purse at the threshold. I forgot all about the transaction, and had to borrow half-a-crown from John Coachman to pay for our entrance into the palace of delight. Now you see, Bob, why I could not treat you on that second of January when we drove to the palace together; when the girls and boys were sliding on the ponds at Dulwich; when the darkling river was full of floating ice, and the sun was like a warming-pan in the leaden sky.

One more Christmas sight we had, of course; and that sight I think I like as well as Bob himself at Christmas, and at all seasons. We went to a certain garden of delight, where, whatever your cares are, I think you can manage to forget some of them, and muse, and be not unhappy; to a garden beginning with a Z, which is as lively as Noah's ark; where the fox has brought his brush, and the cock has brought his comb, and the elephant has brought his trunk, and the kangaroo has brought his bag, and the condor his old white wig and black satin hood. On this day it was so cold that the white bears winked their pink eyes, as they plapped up and down by their pool, and seemed to say, "Aha, this weather reminds us of dear home!" "Cold! bah! I have got such a warm coat," says brother Bruin, "I don't mind"; and he laughs on his pole, and clucks down a bun. The squealing hyaenas gnashed their teeth and laughed at us quite refreshingly at their window; and, cold as it was, Tiger, Tiger, burning bright, glared at us red-hot through his bars, and snorted blasts of hell. The woolly camel leered at us quite kindly as he paced round his ring on his silent pads. We went to our favourite places. Our dear wambat came up, and had himself scratched very affably. Our fellow-creatures in the monkey room held out their little black hands, and piteously asked us for Christmas alms. Those darling alligators on their rock winked at us in the most friendly way. The solemn eagles sat alone, and scowled at us from their peaks;

whilst little Tom Ratel tumbled over head and heels for us in his usual diverting manner. If I have cares in my mind, I come to the Zoo, and fancy they don't pass the gate. I recognise my friends, my enemies, in countless cages. I entertained the eagle, the vulture, the old billy-goat, and the black-pated, crimson-necked, blear-eyed, baggy, hook-beaked old marabou stork yesterday at dinner; and when Bob's aunt came to tea in the evening, and asked him what he had seen, he stepped up to her gravely, and said --

"First I saw the white bear, then I saw the black,
Then I saw the camel with a hump upon his back.

Chorus of Children

Then I saw the camel with a HUMP upon his back!

Then I saw the grey wolf, with mutton in his maw;
Then I saw the wambat waddle in the straw;
Then I saw the elephant with his waving trunk,
Then I saw the monkeys -- mercy, how unpleasantly they -- smelt!"

There. No one can beat that piece of wit, can he Bob? And so it is over; but we had a jolly time, whilst you were with us, hadn't we? Present my respects to the doctor; and I hope, my boy, we may spend another merry Christmas next year.

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