

MY OLD LOVE.

A BRIDAL SOLILOQUY.

SO this is Janet's wedding-day !
 Strange that my heart should feel so gay
 And free from sorrow !
 For 'twas through her, a year ago,
 I cast me down in bitter woe,
 And prayed that I might never know
 Another morrow.
 Ah, well ! each day fresh knowledge brings,
 And hearts are very changeful things.

I loved her wildly once, I trow,
 And, foolish, thought I ne'er could go
 Through life without her.
 And now, although she's just as fair—
 The same bright eye and winning air—
 Yet really I don't seem to care
 A bit about her !
 "Ah ! truly hearts are changeful things !"
 A little voice within me sings.

So here's my old love once again,
 Surrounded by her bridal train—
 Bright blushing roses !
 And as I watch the dimples play
 On *one* soft cheek in that array,
 No sadd'ning thought this joyous day
 In me reposes.
 Ah ! every day new beauty brings ;
 Most truly hearts are changeful things !

So, Janet, I can wish you well ;
 For you may each glad wedding-bell
 Ring gaily ever !
 And as for me—to win *that* face,
 That's glowing there with sunny grace,
 To fill a bride's—not bridesmaid's—place,
 Is my endeavour.

"How well it is," a soft voice sings,
 "That hearts are made such changeful things !"
 G. WEATHERLY.

THE QUEEN'S TOBACCO-PIPE.



AMONG Custom-house officers and other frequenters of the docks along the Thames, it is considered to be a joke—and a capital one too—to say that Her Majesty Queen Victoria is the greatest smoker in the United Kingdom. It is a

good, serviceable old joke, and no doubt it is very funny ; but what is a great deal funnier, to one who strolls about and chats with different officers of the Revenue, in the manner in which one after another of them will tell it—sometimes with a knowing wink and a waggish dig with the thumb, and always with the air of a man who is conscious of being rather an original wit.

But though given as a joke, the assertion is perfectly true, the only qualification of it necessary being, of course, that Her Majesty does her smoking by deputy !

The "Queen's Tobacco-pipe" is a furnace or kiln for the consumption, not of tobacco only, as its popular name would seem to imply, but of anything and everything it is necessary to dispose of without removal from the docks. There were formerly three or four such furnaces on the banks of the Thames ; and when articles liable to duty were more numerous than they are now, the fuel with which these "Pipes" were fed was often of a singularly miscellaneous character. Goods such as Bandanna handkerchiefs, lace, gloves, hams, tobacco and cigars, tea and coffee, and innumerable other dutiable articles, were handed over to the representative of Her Majesty in the person of a Custom-house officer, and consigned to the flames.

The importation of Bandanna handkerchiefs was at one time of day entirely prohibited ; nevertheless they were smuggled into the country in such quantities, that at the very time they were under prohibition they found their way into general use. Vast numbers were, however, seized and destroyed. In the case of a similar seizure of other articles, such as lace or gloves—articles not prohibited, but merely subject to duty—they would be forfeited to the Crown, and if of any value, would be sold : otherwise they, too, would go to the furnace. It would sometimes happen that goods in transit would be so damaged as not to be worth the duty levied on them, and the consignee, therefore, would decline to redeem them. On one occasion 13,000 pairs of French gloves were thus abandoned, and were consequently mixed up with the tobacco in the Queen's Pipe. A still more curious consignment were 900 hams, which were kept in bond until unsaleable, and then similarly disposed of, several of the best of them affording Her Majesty—that is to say, Her Majesty's servants—many a hearty meal before finally disappearing. It has been stated that occasionally there have been broken up and thrown into these furnaces, articles in the manufacture of which metals of various kinds have been employed, and that among the ashes taken out molten gold and silver have been found. Among importations that have been thus treated, stories are told of large numbers of rank impostors in the guise of valuable gold watches, shipped from foreign ports apparently for the express purpose of imposing upon the unwary.

The truth of many such stories, however, appears to

be open to some question. Certainly nothing of the kind has taken place for very many years—indeed, the remission of one tax after another has gradually reduced the fuel of Her Majesty's Pipes, and at the present time all have gone out but one.

St. Katharine's Docks used to have one ; and in the adjoining London Docks was the largest of them all. It was this one which took in the 900 hams and 13,000 pairs of French gloves. It still stands, shut in within a small quadrangle, bricked off from a corner of what was formerly a huge tobacco warehouse, from which it drew the greater part of its supplies. In years gone by this kiln was always burning, both by night and day ; and every week tons upon tons of merchandise, brought from distant parts of the earth, or manufactured at enormous cost, were converted into ashes, to be sold by auction and employed as manure, or by chemical manufacturers. The gradual adoption of free trade, and the diversion of nearly the whole of the tobacco importations to the Victoria Docks, put out this furnace as well as the rest, and now the only Queen's Tobacco-pipe to be found in the Metropolitan dockyards is in this latter vicinity.

The journey down to it is not to be lightly undertaken. It stands perched on what in the docks is known as "the knuckle of the C jetty ;" and unless one sets out with a tolerably clear and distinct idea of the position of this "C jetty," he is very likely to find that his travels only fairly begin just where he expected they would terminate. In and out among forests of shipping and piles of merchandise, brought together from every point of the compass, hustled by natives of every climate, jabbering all sorts of unknown tongues, and at almost every step apparently incurring the risk of being run down by trucks and barrows, or unceremoniously hooked up into space by hydraulic cranes, or flattened into a pancake by some erratic hogshead or descending "lift," the explorer makes his way, until at length a whiff of very vile tobacco-smoke blows over with the thousand and one odours, good, bad, and indifferent, which always seem to constitute the atmosphere of shipping London ; and the adventurer knows that he has found the Queen's Tobacco-pipe, and that Her Majesty is still a great smoker, if not a very choice one.

Truth to tell, one's first impression of this unique little establishment—unique at least in London—is one of profound disappointment. It is a shabby-looking, insignificant little affair, altogether unworthy of its great name, and presenting nothing to the outside world but a chimney and a pair of gates, with a little loose lumber lying around. Nor are appearances very much more inviting when a vigorous kick at the gates calls forth the somewhat disputatious-looking head of a servant of Her Majesty, posted inside to see that nothing is brought out again when once it has been taken in as fuel for the Pipe, and who seems to think it altogether unreasonable in anybody to expect that he can get through his arduous and exhausting day's work if he is to be bothered with half-a-dozen questions from one and the same individual.

The place itself is merely a little enclosed yard, with

sheds on one side of it, in one of which is a huge furnace, with an iron door sliding up and down, and capable of holding a good cart-load of fuel. The whole concern is very little bigger than an ordinary village pound, yet in the shipping world it appears to be as well known as the Custom House. Many, indeed, outside the shipping world have good cause to know it, at least by repute ; for many a luckless *voyageur* has made an involuntary contribution to the flames that are pretty steadily kept up here all the year round.

The great bulk of the fuel is bad tobacco—tobacco which has come into port in such a condition that it is not worth the duty which must be paid upon it before it can be removed from the docks. To this are added the sweepings of the warehouses and other odd litter. Altogether, the quantities of combustibles which find their way into this capacious pipe-bowl in the course of the year are something very large. Merely the ashes carted off every week amount to several tons in weight. These have a considerable market value ; and ladies who occasionally take a peep into this out-of-the-way little nook are generally found to express great faith in their merits as a dentifrice, and often carry away little packets for their own use. One might have supposed, however, that in these days of manufacturing economy such great quantities of refuse materials would have undergone some transformation more profitable than the mere conversion of them into ashes.

Some such reflection as this is still more forcibly suggested by the contributions which passengers aboard vessels coming into the Thames are frequently called upon to make—often, no doubt, very much to their astonishment. Any book of which a copyright exists in England, but which has been printed abroad, is ruthlessly seized and committed to the flames in this little temple of destruction. Nor are there, in a general way, any means by which such a sacrifice may be averted, when once the book has fallen into the hands of Her Majesty's representatives, even though, over and above its intrinsic value, it may have a value as a keepsake or a birthday present. This of course is done not in the interest of the Revenue, as there is no important duty on books, but simply as a protection to the proprietor of the copyright, to whom an appeal may be made, and who may, if he thinks proper, forego his right to have the books destroyed. Some authors have been especially indulgent in this respect. To the late Charles Dickens, for instance, such an application was rarely made in vain ; and there are some living proprietors of copyrights who are equally generous in this respect. In a general way, however, the law takes its course, and hundreds of volumes that might enrich the bookshelves of hospitals and other places, into which they would never otherwise find their way, are flung into this omnivorous furnace on the "C jetty" of the Victoria Docks. Of course, there is much to be said against any such distribution of forfeited books ; but it cannot be denied that absolute waste of this kind is very much to be deplored.

G. F. MILLIN.