VILLAGE LIFE IN THE OLDEN TIME.

By FREDERICK GALE.

With Illustrations by HUGH THOMSON.

AD I called this paper "'Tis Sixty Years Since" I should be encroaching on the ground sacred to Sir Walter Scott, who chose that name for the first of the "Waverley" novels. I am endeavouring to draw an accurate sketch of rural England as it was sixty years ago more or less, so the above title seems to me an appropriate heading. My memory runs back very readily to the year 1827, and I shall confine what I have to say to a period between 1827 and 1833, both years inclusive, being the last six years of my first decade of life; the whole of which was passed in country villages. When writing in the first person, about people and things of one's childhood, the difficulty is to keep the narrator in his proper place, which ought to be as a kind of chorus, similar to that in the Greek plays; and except when absolutely necessary, never to let him appear as a prominent figure. Memory is a gift like drawing and music, and can only be assayed by careful testing. And now deviating for the first and last time, I hope, from the good intentions which I have laid down of only "playing" Chorus, I must put myself forward as a puppet twice, as a fair proof that my memory is pretty accurate. Any one living as a child in a small isolated country village in a wild down country shut in by ridges of green hills on every side, as I did, has impressed on his or her mind a perfect recollection of every local landmark, and every eventful circumstance which has occurred, for the simple reason that daily life was monotonous, and treats and indulgences were very few in days when locomotion, and communication with the outward world, were in a primitive state. Hence possibly it is not to be wondered at, that in 1846, on the evening previous to my first visit to the village in which I was born, and which I left in 1829 when six years old, I was able to make a rough ground plan of the village, marking lanes, turnings, foot-paths, etc; and when I paid my first visit to and stood "on my native heath," or rather village green, I had no difficulty in leading my companion, a near relation who held a living in the country, to any point he named, and to give a pretty good history of events. It was so anyhow.

And again three or four years ago I was for the first time on the site of the old rectory of my childhood after an absence of fifty-eight years, and although I was prepared beforehand to find every vestige of the old house barns, fences, and walls, swept away and was shocked to find that the old village green had been absorbed in the new rectory garden, I could in my mind reproduce them pretty accurately. I was describing my original home to the present rector, and in walking round the garden I found one solitary landmark—an old pear tree, standing at the corner of a grand lawn-tennis ground—one of the "infamous" novelties, according to my way of thinking,

which have drawn honest young fellows away from the noble game of cricket ; and I pulled up the parson sharp, and found my bearings in a moment. To make a long story short I told him this : "That was the entrance to the old kitchen, with a small yard inclosed by palings in front ; there where the pear tree stands was the small orchard ; between the yard and orchard there was a ditch about three or four feet deep with a little plank-bridge across giving access to the orchard ; in that ditch, on 16th July, 1827, were lying a broken dish, willow pattern, and some lobster shells and rubbish, and I fell off that bridge amongst the rubbish." Facts of the case—July 16, 1827, was my fourth birthday and I was crowned king, crown consisting of white cardboard, latticed diamond fashion, and ornamented with coloured wafers and gold paper, and I had on a white muslin frock and trousers worked for me by a lady, who added thereto a pair of blue kid shoes—the first blue shoes I ever had. "His majesty" (myself) insisted on going alone, without a nurse, into the small inclosure—condition imposed by "his people" being that he should *not* go on the bridge. History : his majesty *did* go on the bridge, lost his balance and fell into the ditch. Conclusion of his majesty's reign, who was deposed and put to bed, although like Arabi he became a kind of state prisoner later on, and was allowed to get up again to eat some of his birthday cake, though on a kind of parole for good behaviour ever afterwards, and with a reminder that he did not deserve the cake. Every autumn now I spend a fortnight in that part of England where I was born, and I don't think my memory lies.

Now for a rural village of sixty years ago. The village was very similar to many others, scattered about at the foot of the downs in the neighbourhood—purely agricultural and very primitive in every way. The villages in the down country are still such as Maria Edgeworth, of blessed memory, painted in her charming stories. The special village which is now in the writer's eye was situated some eight miles from any turnpike road, and as many from the nearest town. The parson and the squire probably took in the county paper, and here and there might have been a decently educated farmer who did so too ; and beyond the scraps of London news contained therein, the outside world was comparatively a blank, especially as the art of reading was very limited, and the price of postage was almost prohibitory. When such a rare occurrence took place as a villager having a letter from some relative—a convict perhaps, as transportation was a common remedy—who had gone to a distant colony, it sometimes happened that a "whip-round" amongst the neighbours was necessary to pay the postage, as letters were not prepaid, and Government did not give trust. Let us take a survey of a rural village and of classes and manners and customs of old times—commencing with the squire. When some great luminary, such as a peer of the realm, or a baronet and M.P., who was a mighty landowner in the county, was resident, all smaller lights were extinguished. Remember we are talking of an ordinary village in which an old-fashioned English squire was the head, and largest landowner. Frequently the squire was a member of a very old family whose ancestors like himself were stay-at-home people, and as magistrates and leaders in county matters acquired considerable influence.

The farmers often were representatives of the third or fourth generation of the same family who had occupied the farms, which commonly were small holdings of about two hundred acres or so ; they wore smock frocks except on Sundays, and were out looking after the labourers at daybreak and lived in what was called the kitchen, where the "pot was swung" over the wood fire which blazed and crackled in the big chimney place, which was so wide that often there would be a seat on either side. The chimney itself, in the back of which was the bacon loft—a square recess where flitches were hung to be smoked, was so roomy that on a snowy or stormy night the logs of wood would split and crackle from the effects of the weather without. There was a brew-house and outer kitchen for general use, and a small state-room which was only open for Sundays and for grand visitors. The kitchen was the centre room and generally paved with red bricks or stone ; it was low pitched and from the massive beams of the ceiling would be seen mighty flitches of bacon, and hams or tongues, hanging up in brown paper covers. On the walls, there generally would be seen "samplers" the last remnants of the tapestry art—which were triumphs of needlework executed by some of the womenfolk in their youth ; a few rather exaggerated scriptural pictures, in which apostles appeared in blue and red bathing gowns ; and Moses always had a "cheese plate" at the back of his head. Occasionally the

last dying speeches and confessions of highwaymen who had "suffered" at Hang Fair helped to decorate the walls.

Then there was a strapping village girl as general servant; but the farmer's wife and daughter looked after the household work and the poultry, and the butter and the produce of the farmyard, and were not above going to market. It was a very busy age. The only general education available was the dame's school and the Sunday school, and many of the farmers even could do little more than write their names. If the squire had a couple of thousand a year—all told— he was looked on as a rich man, but there was very little extravagance in his establishment. His house and grounds were better than his neighbours', and there were means of enjoyment which others had not in the shape of large lawns for bowls and other garden games, a field kept for cricket where it existed, and other sports. He kept two or three horses and hunted sometimes, and was contented with a fair head of game which he shot over with dogs, and with a moderate mixed bag, which was filled by hard walking and good exercise, but he seldom made field-sports the business of life. Classes were more defined than now, and there was one prejudice which in course of time did much towards the extraordinary change which has taken place, in the shape of the new men and old acres of to-day, and that was horror of trade. The squire liked his sons to go to one of the public schools and afterwards to a University and to follow the Army, Bar, or Church as professions; and we all know how few are the prizes in any of these three as a general rule.

So as a matter of course, when great changes, especially free trade, sprang up in later years, the country gentlemen were the first sufferers—they became poorer and those in trade made fortunes. As a matter of history, it was a fact that some men of the advanced school of politics, who were in Parliament during the agitation about the Corn Laws, went somewhat out of their way to heap ridicule and abuse on the "lords of the soil" or "owners of the dirty clod," as the country gentlemen were derisively styled. No doubt that amongst the mass of county magistrates there were hard men and black sheep, but possibly the Lord Chief Justice Cockburn was not far wrong when he stated in Court, pending an appeal case against a bench of magistrates, that his experience was that amongst the "great unpaid" as county magistrates were styled, there was sometimes a little bad law but generally fair justice.

The parsons for the most part were well-bred gentlemen and almost without exception were university men. Here and there you would find a man of good fortune among them, but as a rule they led a useful life of hard work. The Church duty was light, as in many parishes one service on a Sunday morning or evening in alternate weeks sufficed, but there was a good deal of parish work, as the poor looked to the parson and the parson's wife in all their troubles. The parson was schoolmaster to his own children when young and often took a pupil or two. If born and bred in the country he was generally a good gardener and rough carpenter and mended his own fences and painted his palings, and with the aid of one of the old-fashioned out-of-door man-servants, who was "Jack of all trades," and who understood pigs and poultry, and would look after a horse and cow and garden, got through a good deal of work in a day, plus schoolmastering, with an off day sometimes for a turn with his gun or fishing rod. A good fruit and vegetable garden was of no small object to a man with a family, and it was a great thing in the winter to have a good store of apples in the loft and preserves and other home-grown and home made luxuries.

And be it remembered if the parson had the good fortune to possess a clever helpmate he was doubly blessed, as the parson's wife had quite enough on her hands to occupy her and her daughters too. Her great pride was in the store-room with its many shelves and cupboards, and the linen room which contained all the ordinary requisites for the house and a small assortment of superfine table-cloths and table linen for state occasions. And in proof of this let the "Chorus" who was staying in the country last Christmas bear testimony. He was at a dinner party at the house of a lady who was born in the rural district of which this article treats, and the hostess had passed, by five years, the allotted period of life named by the Psalmist. He could not help exclaiming with delight at the dinner table, "What a splendid table-cloth!" It was known as the "pheasant pattern," and was like satin to the touch and shone like satin. "This table-cloth," said the lady, "was a wedding present to my mother eighty years ago." Now it had happened on this wise. It was the custom at that

THE PARSON AND HIS WIFE.

period, and for many years afterwards before railways, for the linen manufacturers in Belfast to send their travellers all over England, and I can well remember the great strong North-of-Ireland men with light blue worsted stockings and corduroy breeches coming round, each one carrying on his head a basket like a very large washing basket full of Irish linen. The weight must have been very great. There was no devil's dust in those days, and ladies knew good stuff from bad. There was not much plate as a rule at the parson's beyond silver spoons and forks, but the lady of the house prided herself on the glass, china and table linen, and the master prided himself on his

mahogany dinner table—in days when the table cloth was removed after dinner—which was beautifully polished and shone like a looking glass.

A great deal seemed to be done with a very little money, but life was simple and every one worked. If there was a grown up sister, she taught the younger ones, and the daughters, when old enough, took it in turns to act as housekeeper, and the ladies worked regularly with the needle so many hours a day, and made their own dresses oftener than not. Boys were all taught to ride, and there was always a donkey or pony to begin on; and such things as stirrups were never allowed until a boy could canter without them: in fact boys learnt to ride in a soft meadow by tumbling off, and very soon picked up the art of sticking on. There were few games, as the parson's sons did not mix with the sons of farmers, nor did the sons of the latter mix with the labourers' sons, and boys worked in their gardens, or learnt a little carpentering, or went out with the shooters and marked and carried the bag, or sawed or chopped wood in wet weather, or gathered the fruit in summer, and so on. The discipline was very strict, and children were never allowed to come on to the hearth-rug, or sit in arm-chairs, or to run in and out and slam the doors, but somehow the early life passed very happily. The fact was that there was no idleness, and there was, to any one with intelligence, great interest and amusement in learning about all the birds and animals and insects and inhabitants of the woods. Here and there outlying covers were strictly preserved and boards were exhibited about "man traps," and "spring guns set here;" but I fancy there was more "bark" than "bite" about the threat. There were footpaths through the woods from village to village, open to all who would keep to them, and if boys trespassed in the wood a keeper would cut a switch and give him a wholesome reminder not to do it again. One of the worst features in the present age of the *nouveaux riches*, and of the reign of "new men and old acres" is the shocking way in which footpaths have been stopped, in very many instances most illegally. When country gentlemen were liberal in giving away their game and did not sell it, no one grudged it to them; and the occasional poacher who wired a hare or snared pheasants was a very different character from the gang of desperate men about now, who are utterly regardless of life or limb. The village poacher usually was an idle drunken fellow who would not work, and if incorrigible would be sent to prison occasionally, though he could compromise matters by joining the army or navy. No doubt some magistrates were hard on poachers occasionally, but doubtless the extreme school of politicians exaggerated the evils. One of the funniest things which the late Mr. John Bright said in the House of Commons was on the occasion of a County Rating Bill being before Parliament, and he congratulated the House that "a large number of county members and country gentlemen had spoken, and not a single one had alluded to the game laws." The old quaker, who was a keen fisherman, never could be drawn into an opinion about preservation of salmon rivers.

Two of the greatest evils of the old days were the overcrowding of cottages, and the wholesale neglect of education. Children were sent out very young "bird-keeping," and similar employments on the farms which taught them nothing, and they grew up mere animals and became oftentimes brutal and cruel. They made splendid soldiers as they were hardy and strong, and had nothing to unlearn; and recruiting sergeants always said that a country plough-boy was excellent raw material to work upon. Wages were in many parts very low, and bread was dear, but in the small villages where the parson and his family were of the right stamp, the poor had a great deal of help which they much needed, as, to tell the truth, I fancy farmers were rather grasping, and paid as little as they possibly could.

The "stocks" existed in every parish, but I fancy the use of them was almost entirely discontinued before my time. They were meant for the benefit of habitual drunkards and inveterate tramps. A lady who was staying at my father's house at a time before I can remember, told me that he ordered the constable to put an incorrigible tramp, who was a public nuisance, in the stocks the next time he came. The man did so, and told my father, who sent off to the nearest magistrate to have him taken out and brought before him. There was no magistrate at home and it came on to rain frightfully. "God bless my soul," said my father, "that poor fellow will be drowned!" So he took out a big umbrella, and sat by the culprit's side in the stocks, and sent for some bread and cheese for the man. "Do you think," said my father, "if I took off your boots you could slip your feet out?" "I'll try," said

the prisoner. It was a happy thought, and the man slipped out his bootless feet, my father holding the stocks up as high as he could. Out came the man's feet, into his boots he jumped and away he cut as he was advised. What a funny world! If the man had any sense he could have summoned the clergyman of the parish for aiding in an escape from justice.[1]

There were certain perquisites which the poor had. They had the windfalls after a heavy gale, and boughs of trees which were blown down, whether in the squire's park or by the wayside were theirs; in the haymaking and harvest-time whole familes were employed, and the poor had the gleaning in the harvest fields; milk, which is now all sent to London could be bought at a nominal price; "parish bags" of linen and bed clothing, which were made up at the vicarage, were always on hand in cases of sickness. In fact the poor were much looked after. Their amusements were not numerous, and the most was made of all local events, such as sheep-washing, sheep-shearing, throwing a big old tree, the village club-feast, harvest-home, and especially burning of a big bacon pig of twenty score—a noble art now almost extinct, but a great art of the past, when the village pig-burner would by the aid of layers of straw, singe all the hair off a pig directly after it was dead without scorching its hide and turn it out like a beautiful coloured meerschaum. Guy Fawkes's day was of course a great festival; and at Christmas we had the mummers who acted a traditional kind of play in which some were got up very much after the pictures in Mrs. Markham's *History of England*, and there always was St. George, with a real sword, the King of Egypt, whom he slays, and the Doctor who cured everything and everybody.

Many of these old villages are little altered in appearance externally, but the people are. The smock-frock has nearly disappeared, as have the red or grey duffel cloaks of the old women, who are now "Mrs." and not "Betty" or "Sukey" as they used to be. Agricultural labour is becoming scarce; steam threshing machines and other mechanical contrivances are commoner; old hedgerows and coppices have been swept away, and, to the great gain of the farmer, but to the ruin of the hunting, and to the danger of foot passengers on public roads and footpaths, barbed wire is now the common fence in many districts. Farmers now get farms at the lowest rent, and many hunt and shoot as much as they possibly can, and the tables are turned. In game counties now the keeper is king, and has done his utmost to destroy all living things which are inimical to game and (as Frank Buckland wrote) has destroyed "the balance of nature." Paths through the woods and fields are stopped everywhere and the covers are stocked with pheasants, hatched by steam from eggs bought anywhere; and are occasionally shot down by "sportsmen," who are accommodated with two guns and a shooting stool, and who break off in the early afternoon to join the home party at a hot lunch which is sent down. The keeper's hand has in many districts quite forgotten the touch of silver, and if one pound notes ever come in circulation and the keeper receives one of them from a very swell "gun" as he calls his patrons, he will think himself dishonestly done out of four pounds, as it should have been a "fiver" or gold. These changes I do not think are to the gain or enjoyment of any but a privileged few. Coursing was a great sport, and by a kind of general consent a gentleman who kept greyhounds was welcome anywhere.

We will now change the scene from a dreamy old down-country with its lazy sluggish canal picturesquely winding through the valleys to a country village of the most advanced state of civilization and enlightenment at a distance of a hundred miles and in a south-easterly direction from the old home, the era being 1830, exactly sixty years ago. Fancy what the difference must have been to a boy of between six and seven years old, who once only in his life had been to a country town for a day, and had never witnessed any traffic but the carts and waggons, and an occasional gig, and had heard nothing but the tramp, tramp, tramp, of "Colonel," "Captain," "Pilot," or "Daisy," which were, and still are, the hereditary names of the heavy old cart horses, to pass a fortnight in London on his way to a new home. How well I remember it all. I could hardly breathe for the close atmosphere and the horrible smell of the sewers—it was in the dog days. I could not eat the bread, which was sour, did not care about the meat, which was tough, or the green vegetables, which were uneatable, or the water which was filthy, or the milk which was "sky-blue"; and as to sleep

[1] The narrator of this story was the late Miss Matilda Crowe, daughter of old Mr. William Crowe, the Public Orator at Oxford. I remember the Public Orator when a very old man at his rectory or vicarage at Alton, Wilts. Jane Austen mentions the Crowe family in her Life.

it was impossible, owing to the animalcula which swarmed. We had lodgings over a chemist's in Regent-street, on the right-hand side. The noise of the streets frightened me and the only pleasurable reminiscences which I have were to watch the Household Cavalry pass down Regent-street every morning—many of the older soldiers wearing Waterloo medals—and seeing the parade at the Horse Guards or the trooping of the colour at St. James's, and I saw men who had really been in the battle of Waterloo. I remember one of the Guards' regiments, at any rate, had black men with white turbans on their heads who were drummers and cymbal bearers. I remember also the "Charlies," the old watchmen, calling the hours at night, and seeing them in their large great coats with lanthorns in their hands.

But the London church on Sunday astonished me most, my former experience having only been at a little country church where the blacksmith with a big bass viol, the barber with a clarionet, some one else with an instrument which was called a bassoon, and another with a flute accompanied the rustics to some of the Sternhold and Hopkins Old Version of the Psalms; and where the rustics touched their forelock if they passed the squire's pew, and a host of old men and women in the body of the church who could not read, and a lot of hobble-de-hoys of farm boys in the gallery, looked on in blank amazement at the whole performance. Probably the creed of many in my first home might have been summed up in a blind belief in the parson, the squire, the devil, the gallows, and ghosts. Hang fair when within reach was always popular, and bad boys and girls were taken to see men go by in the cart; and there never was a village in which some one's ghost had not appeared to many; and there were many corners bad to pass at night.

The church we went to in London was All Souls, Langham-place, and we sat in the gallery close to the organ. The thing which astonished me was seeing people coming to church in handsome carriages with servants in grand livery in attendance. The dresses of the ladies and the sound of the organ and the singing bewildered me, and I was constantly "hushed at" or a finger was pointed angrily at me for looking off my book, by a serious relation, who was always turning on the "Dr. Watts stop" morning, noon and night; and I was scolded on the way home, and cried a good deal, especially when the blinds were drawn down, that I might not see the wickedness of London, and I went to bed with the honest conviction that all the people who used their carriages on Sundays were booked for the very worst of Dr. Watts's termini. My old Noah's ark had been left at our old home and I could not take to a new one which had been given to me, and I began to lament my dear old Noah, and Shem, Ham and Japhet, and especially their wives who were straight down from head to foot but had no waists and were not symmetrical like my substituted Sunday toy.

How glad I was to get away to my new world and what a dazzling world it was—situated between London and Dover on the turnpike road. There must have been more money in the family somehow, as our new drawing-room was furnished throughout with rosewood, which was then the fashion; and that rosewood furniture is as good to-day as when it came from London, as I can vouch for, as I sit in some of the chairs and sofas every Christmas. Things were well made then, of seasoned wood and meant to last for ever.

My new village was a large scattered village with a flourishing population bounded on one side by the Medway. There were miles of corn-fields and hop-gardens and orchards laden with fruit, in such quantities that villagers who had had their "shoes wiped with a cherry bough" *i.e.* paid their first footing of sixpence, might pick and eat what they liked. The best native oysters were carried about and opened at the door at the price of three a penny. Farmers were rich men of capital who held fifteen hundred or two thousand acres and dressed like gentlemen and had good houses, and their wives and daughters came to church dressed as grand as the squire's wife. The road was alive all day with traffic, and coaches, carriages and four, and vans and vehicles of all kinds; the old broad-wheeled heavy waggons, with the lanthorn swinging in the tilts, and the tramp of the horses, which made a good accompaniment to the drowsy music of the bells made good music to my ear.

When Parliament met or rose, the road was like a perpetual Derby Day. Foreign potentates, Royalty very often, opera singers and dancers, peers and members of Parliament were posting away to or from the continent as fast as four horses could draw their carriages. Every country town on the route had its posting houses where

A VILLAGE CHOIR.

the coaches changed and post-horses were provided; commercial travellers drove good horses in their own traps and the inns all had a turn. Express boys—little feather-weight boys on broken-down thoroughbreds—in their smart uniform and livery, hat and cockades—for they were supposed to belong to the Crown—galloped by with despatches for Government, Rothschilds or the Press; smuggling by land or water was quite a fine art and money was flying about wholesale. And we had at various times crowds of itinerants;—"Buy a broom" girls, tramps, Punch and Judy men, distressed Poles, little men—jockeys—wrapped up in flannels and with their saddles strapped round them, "wasting" as they walked, leading race-horses; pedlars with jewellery, and vendors of fruit, fish or crockery-ware; which latter were carried in little carts drawn by dogs; and men with performing bears and monkeys. It was a very lively part of the world indeed and very advanced compared with the shires.

national schools had sprung up, and education grew rapidly. The quietest turn out on the road was the Duke of Wellington's light travelling carriage, never drawn by more than a pair of horses, and when on his way to or from Walmer Castle the Duke was saluted by every coachman on the road.

Many of the large farmers were radicals and dissenters or with Calvinistic tendencies and utterly indifferent to influence by the squire or parson; and just as now, tithes were the subject of much controversy. On the plea of the oppression of the tithes, the farmers and their labourers came to loggerheads. London agitators sent the fiery cross throughout the south and west of England. Violent and revolutionary tracts, signed "Captain Swing," were circulated wholesale, with recipes for making fire-balls and slow matches; and in the early winter of 1830, when the dark nights came, the sky was one blaze on all sides with burning ricks. Riotous mobs paraded the country breaking the threshing machines. The night coachmen brought reports of fires and rioting all along the road and times were bad. The magistrates and the yeomanry were constantly out, and the Riot Act was read and the yeomanry were pretty free with the use of their swords in many parts of England. Orders were issued by the government to the county magistrates not to yield to intimidation as regarded the equalizing of wages or employing machinery. It was a bad time, and a special winter commission was held in the Assize towns, and I remember as well as yesterday the rick burners being hanged at Pennenden Heath near Maidstone, and seeing the crowds going by in carts and on foot to Hang Fair just before Christmas, 1830. I read the particulars a short time since in the Kentish papers of that execution. A man, who was a desperate character and ringleader, and two boys, both under the age of twenty, were carried out in a waggon with their ropes round their waists, guarded by warders with loaded blunderbusses, and escorted by a troop of cavalry to Pennenden Heath; and I fully remember the account being told to me a day or two after the execution by a young artillery officer who was there. I heard his account and saw the last dying speech and confession which the cook bought of a hawker. There was a rough wood-cut of the gallows and the three rick-burners hanging, which kept me awake for many a night, especially as the young officer told me that the men "gave up the ghost." The execution of the two youngsters was a "murder." The boy who turned king's evidence was declared by the jury to have been the "putter up" and instigator of the arson, and was a fortnight at work inciting the boys to do it, and himself *brought the tinder box and brimstone matches* (lucifers not being invented) and lit the straw for them to put under the rick. "Look, brother," said one of the boys (according to the newspaper account) "the gallows is an awful looking thing—let us shake hands before we die." "Tell mother not to fret," said one of the boys to his sister, who came with the father—bringing their coffins in a cart to the gallows; and he said that he was glad that his father had leave to carry the bodies home, and directed how they should be placed in the cart. Six months later, or in July, 1831, a boy of fourteen was hanged at Maidstone for murder on the ground of *malicia supplet ætatem*. Mr. Justice Gaselee was the judge, and left him for execution without mercy. The boy and his brother and accomplice, *ætat* twelve, who was admitted as king's evidence, were two ignorant and neglected young savages—but it was a terrible murder. They waylaid a boy of nine years old who was coming home with a few shillings due to his father for pension, and they planned the murder in the morning on meeting the boy on his road to a neighbouring town for the money. They got him into a wood and cut his throat and hid the body under a heap of stones. The suspicion fell on them, as on the Sunday following the murder it was remembered that they changed half-a-crown to buy apples in a shop! I remember that murder and the crowd going to Hang Fair as well as yesterday, and I met an old cavalry officer last Christmas who was then a youngster quartered at Maidstone, who was riding by the gaol and saw the boy hanging. A late Governor of Newgate, Mr. Jonas, who was a great friend of mine, was commencing his career as a prison officer, and was at Maidstone with some prisoners on the day of execution, and told me thirty years afterwards that out of mercy the warders made a canvas jacket heavily weighted to put on the boy.

Then in 1832 came the Reform Bill Riots, and mobs pervaded the rural districts, and possibly some of the liveliest elections ever seen were at the first election after the Act passed. Probably Dickens took the Eatanswill election from Chatham and Rochester in which the first scenes of Pickwick were laid. An old servant took me into Chatham on my donkey, and the donkey and I were knocked about like two

shuttlecocks, hustled every way by the crowd. The drinking, fighting and row were tremendous. As I heard at the time, voters were hocussed and sent off in post chaises and kept away till the polling was over, and bribery was rampant.

There was much military and naval life also in this district as Chatham and Sheerness were in the neighbourhood. Young military officers were not allowed to go about in mufti within a certain distance from a garrison town and they made a good show in their uniform. The young officers had a knack of wearing their hair long, cultivating bushy whiskers, smoking a good many cigars and drinking a great deal of wine, and they flavoured their conversation with a good deal of fancy swearing. Duelling was still in existence and did not die out entirely until 1842, when Colonel Fawcett was shot by his brother-in-law, Lieutenant Munro of the Blues.

FROM *The Looking-Glass for the Mind.*

Now for the dress and manners and customs. I have before me old school-books, amusing books, music-books, and books of social life. With due deference to the learned men of to-day, I believe that the Eton Greek and Latin Grammars were the easiest ladders to learning those languages. Only test their value by the brilliant scholars of to-day—such men as Mr. Gladstone, Lord Selborne, Lord Cranbrook, the Bishop of Southwell, and the like. As regards our other books Maria Edgeworth's tales, to which Professor Ruskin gives the post of honour in his bookcase at Brantwood, which he showed to me there, was our favourite. Then there were wondrous moral tales with wonderful pictures, *The Looking Glass for the Mind*, illustrated by Bewick, especially has one of Adolphus and Dorinda walking in the greenhouse, the former holding his coat-tails, and the latter holding her skirts aside so as not to injure the flowers. In another, *The Adventures of a Pincushion*, there is a priceless picture of Earl Godwin choking himself with a crust of bread which a lady is describing to her children who have seen the picture at the Royal Academy. For the benefit of youth the picture is represented by illustrations, and Earl Godwin and his friends are attired in the costume of George II. Then as regards the ladies' dresses. Ladies who "dressed" dressed very expensively. Silks and satins were very dear and lace was a great feature. Before me now is a miniature of an old relative of the period who has an enormous cap in the shape of a butterfly and a collar and pelerine of splendid lace. Ladies wore preposterous bonnets and shortish dresses, and, in full dress, at dinners and balls, dowagers wore large broad-brimmed velvet hats with an ostrich feather and a loop of diamonds or other jewels. Young ladies wore enormous balloon sleeves, and their hair was worn in curls with a

FROM *The Adventures of a Pincushion.*

"COME, LET US GO FORTH INTO THE FIELDS."
(From Mrs. Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose.*)

"A CLEAR FIRE, A CLEAN HEARTH, AND THE RIGOUR OF THE GAME."

mass of hair on the crown kept in by a tortoiseshell shovel-like comb. Their dresses were worn short with a good display of foot and ankle. Old gentlemen and young men of the higher class too, in the country almost invariably wore breeches and boots, and the evening dress of elderly men was a blue coat and gold buttons, frilled shirt, white waistcoat, blue breeches and silk stockings and pumps with gold buckles. Many still wore powder. I can call to mind three "pigtails" only. Young dandies adopted the biue coat, gold buttons, black trousers and white waistcoats, and their

shirt fronts were of lace with small frills and ornamented with studs, and gold chains, black trousers, elaborate silk stockings ; and for dinner parties gorgeous cut velvet waistcoats, and jewelled buttons were in vogue, and instead of the frilled shirt they often wore a black satin "waterfall" neckcloth with expensive pins and chain. A few middle-aged bachelors still wore pantaloons tight at the ankles. Men danced all the figures in the quadrilles and knew the steps. Few but military men could waltz well, and comparatively few girls were allowed to waltz, it being considered "fast." A good deal of wine was drunk at and after dinner, port and sherry being almost the only drinks. Champagne and claret were little known. Beer was drunk at dinner as a matter of course as well as wine, which was placed on the table for guests to help themselves, and at dinner people had to ask some one to take wine with them. Except amongst military men there was very little smoking amongst the old school, and visitors on going away, if they did smoke, would never think of lighting a cigar in the hall. Cards were played a great deal. Old ladies, especially widows, and old single ladies looked forward to their rubber, as did many country parsons, and I have seen old ladies with their snuff-boxes beside them, a fashion set by old Queen Charlotte in days past. I fancy the stakes were small, silver threepenny or sixpenny points perhaps, as I never saw copper. In large country towns, card parties were common, but mostly amongst the local inhabitants, and round games were played at which people lost perhaps three or four pounds in an evening. Cards were the toys of children in the winter evenings, but never for money, and children learnt most games, beginning with "casino," "commerce," and "Pope Joan"; and it always did a deal of harm if some good-natured old boy at Christmas put down a shilling or two or a half-crown for the children to play "fright" for. It did harm, and sent many a child in tears to bed.

Music in general was not of the highest order. Young ladies touched the light guitar, and sang namby-pamby songs, or played some stock "music-master's" piece. I remember a terrible thing called *The Battle of Prague*—a military piece with a good deal of bass and heavy pedal for cries of the wounded, &c. Old music books are before me now. *Love's Ritornella* is the name of one, of 1830, with a picture of a benevolent bandit with guitar enchanting a coquettish maiden tripping on, with a castle and mountain in the background ; *The Bridesmaids' Rondo* is another with a picture of charming young ladies with Princess Charlotte waists singing to a young masher forester with a horn at his side, and a villainous old forester with a double squint ; then there is *Der Freyschutz Rondo*, with a picture of a party of impossible foresters with impossible guns, blowing impossible horns and drinking bumpers of nothing out of impossible stage goblets. How I delighted as a child when a dinner party was on and there was a little good music after dinner, to creep down out of my bed and sit on the stairs,—at which the servants thoroughly connived—and to listen to "*Good night, All's Well;*" or some of Locke's music of *Macbeth ;* "*The Chough and Crow*," and such like ; and time passed merrily, especially when one of the servants brought me some tipsy cake or macaroons. One portion of my life is not pleasant to look back to, and that is the reflection on miserable Sundays of the past. I think heads of families erred, on the right side perhaps, in a district where Sunday on a great post road was almost unknown as a day of rest to the floating population, as Sunday was the great travelling day for foreigners, and many of the London world also, and the public traffic was incessant. But our Sundays *were* sad. We began the day with much "Dr. Watts:" French collects and other lessons were laid on, to say nothing of two long services ; and in the winter much reading of books appropriate to the day—and some *were* "scorchers"—"*Death Bed Scenes*" for choice was the worst. I read the death bed of an infidel farmer in that book last Christmas. Upon my word it was as bad as the cries of the wounded in *The Battle of Prague*.

In many things we are much more civilized ; in many also we have much gone back. We do not hang men outside gaols now before the public gaze, but I much doubt whether the unblushing accounts of horrible murders, and verbatim accounts of sensation trials do not do more harm than public executions did. I am sure that our grandmothers, whose pride was to be "gentlewomen," would never have dreamt of going to hear a horrible trial and to witness sentence of death on one of their own sex. Men don't ruin themselves as they did at the gambling houses sixty years ago, but betting and playing for stakes which the players cannot afford seem to be the curse of the age.