

HOURS WITH SOME WONDERFUL WORKERS.

THE CLOCK-MAKER.



HIS time we will ramble among the clock-makers, and learn what we can of the "how and why" of the useful friends they provide us with; for a clock *is* a friend to most folk, telling them what time to be astir, and off to school or business, and giving its cue to the whole household. Charles Dickens wrote about "my old cheerful companion the clock. How can I ever convey to others the idea of the comfort and consolation that this old clock has been for years to me? What other thing that has not life could cheer me as it does? How often I have sat in the long winter evenings, feeling society in its cricket voice! How often in the summer twilight, when my thoughts have wandered back to a melancholy past, has its regular whisperings recalled me to the calm and peaceful present! How often in the dead tranquillity of night has its bell broken the oppressive silence, and seemed to give me assurance that the old clock was still on guard at my chamber door!"

Clerkenwell was at one time the place we should have visited, yet no one man attempts to make all the different parts of a clock, or a watch either; for, after all, a clock and a watch are very near relations. Many a time if a person asks "What's o'clock?" meaning, "What is the hour?" you pull out your watch to answer; therefore a watch is a portable clock, and a very old invention too. The earliest were made in Nuremberg, and called "Nuremberg living eggs," because they were egg-shaped, and considered very wonderful—almost living things, and because they struck the time of their own accord. It has happened that thieves who stole these "eggs" were detected by their suddenly making themselves heard in the places where they were hidden, which must have been very awkward and astonishing. Then a clock was an unrealised wonder; but in these later days there are so many kinds of timepieces, that when we ask the clock-makers—they are quite distinct from watch-makers—to show us their work, they bring out such a variety that we are quite bewildered, and can scarcely believe that the difference, after all, lies a great deal in appearances. There is the good old-fashioned, wheezy Dutch clock for cottage and kitchen, chains, and weights, and big wheels, and all, worth just a few shillings; and there is the handsome regulator, worth ever so many pounds, and accurate enough

to set the often untrustworthy church clock by; then there is the noisy little cuckoo clock in the nursery, and the heavy, round-faced, sober, eight-day clock in the hall, that belonged to our ancestors, and goes as well as ever; there are bracket-clocks for the staircase, and fine silvery, chiming, slow-going gilt French clocks for the drawing-room; and even a little portable brass-cased thing for travelling, and tell-tale clocks for factories; besides which there are even magnetic clocks, with which, however, we have nothing to do here.

There are a good many "handy" schoolboys, who think they know all about works, and are fond of trying their skill on anything of the kind that goes wrong about the house. They set to the task gaily, and get the thing to pieces easily enough; but then comes the difficulty. The parts will not quite fit again somehow, even though it should have been one of those delightful "skeleton clocks," with every bit of its shining mechanism so plainly visible that it looked the easiest thing in the world to adjust it properly—and so it is to those who know how. But oh! for the troublesome muddle his inexperienced fingers get into; and no wonder.

It takes a good many workers to turn out a complete clock, for in it are sundry plates, pillars, and wheels. It employs a *brass-founder*, whose business it is to cast them and pass the wheels on to the *cutter*, who cuts the neat little teeth round them, while perhaps the *smith* is busy forging necessary iron and steel works; then there is a *bell-founder* casting bells, and a *dial-painter* painting the enamelled dial—or "face," as we call it—of our time-teller: and this, I need not remark, must be most accurately done, or it will contradict everything and everybody; then comes the *spinner of gut*, who makes the line for the weight, and the *finisher*, whose careful and practised fingers puts all these things together; and finally, the *case-maker* and moulder, who mounts the whole according to its purpose.

Our guide takes us round the big show-room, and points out the great variety of cases in which a clock may be fitted—ormolu, bronze, marble, stained wood, ebony: all are there; the case-maker will suit you, whether with "kitchen," or "library," or stately "public office"; out-of-door or turret clocks are not his concern.

But "what" *is* the difference between a watch and a clock? you ask. Well, the one great difference is that most clocks will not go unless they stand firmly

in an upright position, and a watch will tick away all right enough under your pillow, or upside down in your pocket, or flat on the table. "But why is this?" you want to know; and our guide, opening a clock and his watch, proceeds to point out and explain: showing us that the pendulum and weight in most clocks must hang straight down. "Why?" Why, because they are kept motive by "gravity," the strange force that draws everything earthward; but as the watch, which has to be tumbled about any way, cannot work with pendulum or weight, it has instead a fine chain attached to a brass cone and a large wheel—the *fusee*—the other end to a brass *barrel*, in which is coiled the long narrow steel *main-spring*, which regulates the wheels of a watch as the pendulum does those of a clock.

We have only visited the clock-makers of our own land, but we should find them busy at their useful work in France, and especially Germany. America turns out both clocks and watches at an exceedingly cheap rate. At one time a very great number came from Switzerland. Not ten years ago it was reckoned that over twelve thousand persons obtained their living by this industry in what was called the clock-making district of the Black Forest.

These workers excel in carving the pinewood frameworks of the pretty "cuckoo clocks," which they fashion out of hard logs with a hand-knife, ornamenting them with wonderfully artistic ornaments, foliage, or birds, and leaves and fir branches, generally inventing all sorts of pretty rustic designs as they go on. To some this artistic work seems to come quite naturally—a gift passing from father to son; others study it while young at the Government schools in the larger towns. No wonder there are wooden clocks in almost every house in this part of the world, and a constant popping out of tiny birds, and a slamming-to of small snapping doors, and a steady wagging of pendulums, the tick-tacking of which remind one of the old days when Galileo sat in the solemn Cathedral of Pisa, and watched with observant eyes the slow swinging of the little lamp above which suggested them: at least, so story tells, and I, for one, love to believe; for why should we not believe that so simple a thing suggested such a valuable idea? Fact or no, it may suggest to some of us to keep our eyes open and be awake to the simplest thing going on about us, for by so doing we may be serving generations yet to come, and leaving footprints on the sands of time.

C. L. MATÉAUX.

GOSSIPS.

IN neighbouring styes two gossips dwelt,
 And in the farmyard scandal dealt,
 Wasting the precious hours each day
 In foolish way.
 Though each had duties without end—
 Her litter of young pigs to tend—
 Yet each could find full time to chat
 Of this and that.

Domestic cares their vain pretence,
 They'd stand and gossip o'er the fence,
 Recounting all their neighbours' losses,
 And faults and crosses.

But while they talked they had no fears
 Of "little pitchers with long ears,"
 Or else they thought their idle chatter
 Would never matter.

But they were wrong, as they found out,
 When their small pigs could run about;

For each repeated every word
 That he had heard.

Imagine, then, the mischief done
 Throughout the yard, when every one
 Heard what the old pigs with their chatter
 Had dared to scatter.

Horses and dogs, poultry and cattle,
 All suffered through this tittle-tattle,
 And heard how they had been maligned
 With words unkind.

And the result was well deserved,
 For the two chattering pigs were served
 As gossips should be, you will own:
 Just left alone.

Left in their styes with none to hear them,
 With none to speak to or to cheer them,
 With not a friend to say "Good morning,"
 With nought but scorning,

'Tis said they very soon repented—
 (At the first signs their friends relented)—
 And now from them is never heard
 An unkind word.

G. W.