

quinze. Each gamester had a small neat stand by him, to hold their tea, or a wooden bowl with an edge of ormolu to hold their rouleaus. They borrowed great sums of Jews at exorbitant premiums. Charles Fox called his outward room, where those Jews waited till he rose, his Jerusalem Chamber."

The record of early irregularities affords a striking warning to the young. Taking only the lower ground of worldly policy, the lesson of early and more mature vices is a pitiable one for men of all ages and degrees; and we see the force of the biographer's softened allusion to "a fondness for the pleasures of unbridled youth, which in his after life marred the effect of his brilliant talents, and prevented his acquiring the entire confidence of the moral and sober part of the nation."

Had Charles Fox united weight of character to his great abilities and generous qualities, he might have swayed the destinies of the nation to a greater extent, and with more of popular attachment, than any minister that has existed since the days of Cardinal Wolsey.

THE CAB-STAND.

THE cab-stand, as an institution long established in London and in other large towns, must be familiar to most of our readers, though few of them, probably, regard it as an object of any peculiar interest. A string of cabs in single file, each with its "speculative" steed, drowsily resting his weary legs one at a time; a few drivers, some asleep on the box, others in straggling groups, exchanging rough compliments, or, with hands buried in their pockets, and coats buttoned to the chin, padding the sloppy ground, and peering wistfully about for customers; some fifty yards of macadam in solution, or of granite paving-stones ankle-deep in mud, on the surface of which lie fragmentary whisks of hay and patches of scattered chaff, with here and there a pewter pot and scraps of tobacco-pipe; such, and nothing more, is the cab-stand to the common eye. Perhaps, if we look at it a little nearer, we may see a little more. Let us try.

The cab-stand which is the subject of our contemplation stands a little way in the suburbs—it matters not in what direction—and its site runs parallel, not with a row of shops, of private houses, or even with a brick wall, but with the wooden palings which divide the garden-grounds of a nursery-man from the public road. The vehicles, in close rank, touch the kerb, and the long narrow avenue between that and the palings is, to all intents and purposes, cabbie's private domain and park; the "public in general" having by tacit consent made it over to him, and chosen the other side of the way for themselves. We have noticed, for years past, that this particular Stand is a favourite with the professors of the whip, and that, let the weather be what it will, and though the cabs may have vanished from all other Stands, you are pretty certain to meet with one there. There are, in truth, more reasons than one for this preference. In the first place, the spot is rural and pleasant; in the second place, it is situate at a point just over

the mile from the two great railway stations, and therefore is hardly liable to the abomination of a sixpenny fare; in the third place, the beer at the neighbouring "public" is of the kind for which cabmen have a predilection; and fourthly, the Stand is not plagued by a table of fares and distances stuck up on a board, which at other places is apt, by its gratuitous information, to mar the speculations of the members of the brotherhood. We might add, as another reason, that the site is almost clear of the omnibus routes, and thus the cab-drivers suffer little from the competition of conductors.

The above reasons may perhaps account for the partiality of the cabmen for this particular Stand. At any rate, here you will find them in considerable force all the day long, and, for the matter of that, all the night too. What they do in the pauses—and they are very long pauses sometimes—between the fares, it is not easy to declare. There is a good deal of barter going on at times; we have seen exchanges of a rather singular kind take place, which have quite puzzled our powers of valuation; such as two capes from a many-caped coat, in compensation for a dog-collar—a catch-em-alive rat-trap against a nose-bag—a pair of gaiters, rather shreddy from wear, for a curry-comb—and a razor, not by any means warranted to shave, in lieu of a tobacco-box. The occupations of an industrial kind are many, but are all pursued in an off-hand kind of way, as though it did not much matter if they were neglected *in toto*. There is polishing of plate harness, a little greasing of wheels, some dusting of cushions, ditto cleaning of panels and muddy spokes, with a show at least of sweeping out and ventilating their vehicles, which are, for the most part, sadly in want of renovation. Then there is the plaiting of whips, and the renewal of whip-ends, and much chaffering on the score of whip-handles. But the chief pastime of all is conversation, and exchange of ideas on matters public and private. We are of opinion that it would be extremely difficult for any other than a cabman to come at the real sentiments of the fraternity, even if he were admitted to these open-air but private conclaves; because the discussions are carried on in a phraseology so wonderfully abbreviated as to be intelligible only to themselves. Their utterances are the veriest samples of the *multum in parvo* ever met with. Take a specimen which we overheard accidentally the other day.

"Seen Brimble, Ned?"

"Reyther!"

"How about his old 'ooman?"

"All right—four o'clock 's mornin'."

"Bwoy?"

"Gal."

"That makes five on 'em?"

"Six."

"Wh-whew!"

Thus is the narrative of Mr. Brimble's domestic felicity shorn of its fair proportions on the cab-stand, and thus curtly is expressed the brotherly sympathy in his paternal embarrassments. There is a valid ground, however, for this brevity of speech, and it will be found in the peculiar cir-

circumstances of the man who drives a cab. He cannot dwell at any length upon details, or indulge in the luxury of exordium or peroration, for a very obvious reason: he is liable to be called off the Stand at any moment to take up a fare. The cry of "Cab—cab!" or the uplifted finger of a patron a furlong down the street, would cut short his argument, however long, and spoil his logic in an instant; so he steers clear of such contingencies by avoiding circumlocutions, and talking plump at the bull's eye. He deals much in monosyllables and in significant ejaculations, and will express himself at times in a kind of short-hand, which is partly speech and partly gesticulation, but all wonderfully comprehensible and perfectly intelligible to the initiated. When on duty at night, however, he can afford to relax a little, and wag his tongue at any length he likes. Truth to say, he is apt to do this rather too much on occasions, and to expatiate with a warmth inconvenient to the slumbering inmates of the genteel dwellings over the way; and the police have been more than once obliged to interfere to abate these nocturnal discussions.

Part and parcel of the Stand is the waterman, who, however, is anything but a fixture, and is given to sudden appearances and disappearances, and who has a scarecrow of a deputy in the shape of an unkempt lad, who makes a show of doing duty in his absence. Waterman, we suspect, is a pluralist, keeping this ragged curate as temporary *locum tenens*; we happen to know that the man of tubs has a connection in the carpet-beating line, and have, further, caught him in the act both of putting up and pulling down shutters in the long business street round the corner, which runs at right angles with the road. Then he is not above sweeping the crossing, or making his deputy do it, when foul weather renders it impassable to clean boots, and there is a chance of remuneration for the job. If you do see our waterman at the Stand, it is because there is something to be done there, though he is often unaccountably absent even at a busy time.

Far more of a fixture than the waterman is the Stand dog, Smut. Smut is an ill-looking mongrel, close-haired, and of a black-brown hue, whom the refinements of civilization have deprived of the best part of his tail, while the chances of war have rent his flap ears into shreds. He belongs to the Stand in general, and to nobody in particular. How he became naturalized there originally, we cannot say; probably a born vagabond, doomed to wander the world without a master, he found among the scraps and leavings of the cabmen, who are of necessity often diners-out, a solace for his hunger, and beneath the shelter of their wheels a substitute for what he had never yet possessed—a home. Be that as it may, Smut has long been free of the Stand, and a privileged favourite of the drivers. In fine weather he roams the neighbourhood on foraging expeditions, or starts on a hunt for vermin over the palings and into the nursery-ground. When the season is inclement, he is given to leaping up to the foot-board beneath the driver's seat, where, pillowing his ugly head on a nose-bag, he will doze away as much of the dreary

time as he may. One thing will rouse him from his lair, and bring him down like a tiger, and that is, the intrusion of any other vagabond dog on his peculiar domain: trim spaniels, genteel puppies, lapdogs, and promenading pets, he takes no notice of, knowing well enough that he needs expect no rivalry from them; but should any stray mongrel or unmastered cur come prowling that way, woe betide him if he want either pluck or power to defend himself, for Smut will descend upon him like an avalanche, and he must either fight or run. If Smut happens to be asleep when the cab in which he has taken shelter rolls off with a fare, the motion wakes him up, and then no blandishments will induce him to retain his position; down he leaps, and returns to the Stand, of which he has constituted himself the guardian.

On a close tropical day in July or August, the picture of our Stand is one of almost still life. Look down the long avenue, and you see the drowsy cabbies, with the doors of their vehicles opened on the shady side, each sitting on the step, (if he does not happen to be curled up asleep inside,) smoking his short pipe and spelling over the columns of a cheap newspaper. The waterman is absent, perhaps thrashing away at some dusty carpet; but there lies his tattered deputy, fast asleep and snoring, with his back against the rails. Smut, whose tongue has been hanging out to dry all day, comes lazily up to the water tubs, laps a mouthful or two, and, curling himself round, snores in his turn. But let that black cloud sail up from the horizon, and the big spattering thunder-drops come splashing on the pavement—and lo! what a sudden change. Up leaps Smut, shaking his remnants of ears and barking in triplets; up jumps the deputy, and begins detaching the nose-bags from the heads of the mumbling hacks; up jumps every cabman to his box, whip in hand; the whole rank is galvanized into sudden motion; there is a clattering of hoofs, a jarring of rusty axles, a creaking of panels from one end of the rank to the other, and a slow progressive motion of the vehicles forward and forward, as one moves away after the other, and the whole site is clear; the avenue has vanished, and all that is left of the Stand is three or four tubs of water, the ragged deputy counting his coppers over and over, and Smut wagging a forlorn stump of tail in the midst of his desolate home.

There is no power so effectual in the clearance of a cab-stand as a sudden and drenching shower. Other causes, such as the break-up of a popular assembly, or the advent of its hour of meeting, may diminish its numbers more or less; but a good tempest of rain is the grand blessing for the cabman, who laughs at the wetting of his skin that comes with the silver lining for his pocket.

Such are some of the aspects of our Stand. There are other aspects, however, presented by the Stand, wherever it may be, which may not be of so picturesque a character. When Brimble, for instance, with his "six young 'uns," dependent on his whip, "puts on" at the tail-end of the rank in the morning, only to move off after he has worked up to the head, the Stand can hardly appear so amusing to him as it does to us. What will Pro-

vidence send to-day for him and his little ones? After waiting an hour or two, when his time to move off *does* come, to what sort of a tune will he have to drive his cab? He may have to trot away for sixpence, or he may do business to the amount of as many shillings. Brimble, it is plain, must regard the Stand as very speculative ground; and it need not be wondered at if with him and his congeners there should be prejudices and predilections in regard to lucky and unlucky Stands, as we have good reason to know there are; nor need we marvel that, weary of the fortune of some unpropitious Stand, Brimble, recalling to mind his hungry family, dashes out of the Stand in despair, and, albeit it is contrary to the regulations, commences crawling the road for customers, and competing with the omnibuses along their routes.

Meanwhile, it is time we should pull up, and come to a stand ourselves.

CHIMES UPON THE BELLS.

Few more forcible pictures have been drawn than the one by Cowper, representing the solitariness of the shipwrecked Alexander Selkirk, cast on an uninhabited island:—

“But the sound of the church-going bell,
These valleys and rocks never heard;
Never sigh'd at the toll of a knell,
Or smiled when a Sabbath appear'd.”

Still, there may be a “church-going” people without a bell to summon them to its porch, being quite unable to procure one. This was the case for half a century or more with many of the Episcopalian emigrants to the Trans-Atlantic colonies, who provided themselves occasionally with odd or incongruous substitutes. In some parish accounts of the date of 1711, an entry occurs, which has at first sight a puzzling appearance. “For the minister £50; for *beating the drum* £1; for the clerk £1.” But the lines of a local rhymers of the time explain the discordance:—

“New England's Sabbath-day
Is heaven-like, still, and pure;
Then Israel walks the way
Up to the temple's door.
The time we tell,
When there to come,
By *beat of drum*,
Or *sounding shell*.”

But the most curious substitute for a bell, of which we ever heard, belongs to Old England, and originated with the inventive genius of a parish-clerk in Wensleydale, Yorkshire. That district, from which a recent peerage has its title, consists of wild moorlands and a thin sprinkling of population. Its condition was primitive in the extreme half a century ago. There was a small church, very solitary and very ruinous, to which a handful of peasantry gathered from miles round on Sundays. The breezes found ready entrance, likewise the rain and the snow, through broken panes of glass and gaping holes in the roof. A rotten door fell from its hinges, and a thorn bush was substituted for it to keep out the sheep. The bell dropped from its perch, and was hopelessly dis-

abled. But, not to be conquered by difficulties, the official in attendance hit upon the expedient of poking his own head out of the belfry window, at the appointed time, lustily bawling *ding-dong, ding-dong*, imitating the hushed voice of the charmer.

Pleasant and soothing is the sound of bells, heard at a distance in the still calm eventide. Moore, in some well-known lines, refers to the peal of Ashbourne Church, Derbyshire, to which he often listened with delight in his cottage garden, while residing at the neighbouring village of Mayfield.

“Those evening bells! these evening bells!
How many a tale their music tells,
Of youth, and home, and that sweet time
When last I heard their music chime.”

An evening bell, the curfew, or *couvre-feu*, is famous alike in the story of our social life and in our literature. It was rung at sunset in summer, and about eight o'clock in winter, as a signal for the people to put out their fires and go to bed, in order to diminish the risk of extensive conflagrations at a period when houses were almost entirely built of wood. It has been commonly asserted that William the Conqueror introduced the custom into England, with the view of more effectually enslaving his new subjects. But it was known before his time as a common police law in Europe, designed for the object stated, as well as to prevent nightly conspiracies; and the Norman sovereign only enforced its stricter observance. By a statute of Edward I. persons were forbidden to be in the streets after *couvre-feu*. Our poetry abounds with pleasing allusions to the usage. Thus Gray writes:—

“The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herds wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.”

Milton has a sonorous and musical couplet on the subject:—

“On a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging slow, with solemn roar.”

A suggestive poem also, by Longfellow, deserves notice:—

“Solemnly, mournfully,
Dealing its dole,
The curfew-bell
Is beginning to toll.
“Cover the embers,
And put out the light;
Toil comes with the morning,
And rest with the night.
“Dark grow the windows,
And quenched is the fire;
Sound fades into silence,
All footsteps retire.
“No voice in the chambers,
No sound in the hall!
Sleep and oblivion
Reign over all!”

Dante, in the “Purgatorio,” makes the curfew weep for the day that is dying. It is not known when the practice ceased as a legal observance; but at present “the knell of parting day” is rung wherever there are funds to pay the ringer. No law against nightly locomotion being now in force, it is common after dark, in the northern capitals, during the reign of King Frost, to hear