

by on his donkey. He salutes us, and perceiving that we are strangers, and that the hour of noon is at hand, begs us to accept of his hospitality. We gladly avail ourselves of the invitation, and a few yards brings us to an exceedingly shabby old door, let, to all appearance, into a dead wall. No sooner is the owner's voice heard than "open sesame," and we find ourselves ushered into an elegant court-yard, redolent of sweet flowers, abounding with fountains and bird-cages, whilst at the further end is a beautifully tessellated alcove, where, on each divan, are seated madame his wife, and his two very pretty daughters, who receive us with ease and elegance. Ten minutes afterwards, diminutive tables are introduced, and the meal is served, consisting chiefly of preserved apricots stewed in milk, than which a more delicious dish for a warm climate could not be contrived.

After leaving Jedidah, we visit the ruins of the fortress on the mound in the centre of the city. The whole place is overrun with brushwood, and is difficult of ascent. Many snakes glide rapidly away from the dilapidated old walls, where they have been basking in the sun. Under these circumstances, and as the view is limited, we content ourselves with picking up a few antique old arrows, which the inhabitants declare are some of the identical ones used by the Islam invaders; and, beating a hasty retreat, we pass rapidly out of the city again, and make the best of our way to Kitab, which is at the exactly opposite extremity of the city to Jedidah. On our way thither, we pass through some of the vast gardens of which the Aleppines are so exceedingly proud, and whither daily during the fine weather pic-nic parties resort. The gardens have not much to boast of in the shape of flowers. There is no lack of shady trees, however, and pleasant rivulets intersect the whole. Under almost every tree we find some pleasure party bivouacked, their chief amusement seeming to be the chanting of doleful ditties with a horribly nasal twang.

Kitab has arisen, as it were, out of the dust and fragments of the earthquake of 1821. It is exclusively occupied by European families, who have built themselves elegant light residences surrounded with tasty flower gardens, and in the immediate proximity of large open plains. There are no streets, each house being detached, and surrounded by extensive grounds. The founders of this place had before their eyes with vivid terror the disastrous results of being cooped up in narrow stone thoroughfares, and have endeavoured to provide some outlet against any like calamity in the future. This brings our visit to Aleppo to an end.

PASSING THE BOTTLE.

HALF the intemperance in England is due not so much to a love of drink, as to a listless, unthinking, mechanical compliance with forms and usages. In private society, the absurd custom of health-drinking and head-bobbing has been judiciously got rid of, after an existence extending over half a century. Excessive indulgence in wine is no longer

encouraged and stimulated by the "good manners" of the dinner-table, and those who enter the drawing-room, after the banquet is over, with flushed faces and filmy eyes, must proclaim themselves drunkards, pure and simple. At public dinners, the enduring monotonous system of "toasts" is still an incentive to intemperance. No matter what fiery poison is put before you under the names of "port" and "sherry," you must empty your glass to the Queen, the Prince Consort, Albert Prince of Wales, and the rest of the royal family; to the army and navy, the chief object of the meeting (whatever that may be), and the chairman and vice-chairman. If you happen to sit amongst a temperate knot of men, amongst the reporters, for example, who have work to do, you may go through these "toasts" with comparatively little drinking; but if your seat happens to be in a prominent part of the room, and some would-be loyal maniac thinks proper to shout out "bumpers," you may have to consume a pint or two of trash in obedience to custom.

Twenty years ago, Mr. Dunlop published a book upon the artificial and compulsory drinking usages in Great Britain and Ireland; and though many of the empty and injurious customs he censures have been driven out since 1840, by the slightly improved habits of all classes, too many yet remain as supporters of intemperance. He was able to enumerate at least three hundred of these drinking usages, spread over about ninety-eight trades and occupations; and we shall only be giving publicity to the contents of a very useful though half forgotten book, if we describe a few of these convivial laws of society.

We pass over Scotland and Ireland, and turn to England, properly so called.

Amongst shipwrights, the apprentice is drunk into his trade and drunk out of it. He has to find two pounds for his "footing," to be expended in drink, and from one to five pounds for the same purpose on his "loosing," or termination of his apprenticeship. Launching is always a great drinking festival for the men, and every tradesman interested in the rise and progress of the vessel—block-maker, painter, plumber, glazier, joiner, and others—has to pay drink fees to the "shop" at one period or another. There is "caulking-footing" and "keel money" given by the owners and employers; "chip-money," about three shillings, extracted from every pair of sawyers in the yard; besides other drink-tributes exacted when the lower deck beams are got in. A workman pays ten shillings on his marriage, and is fined one shilling for drink if he comes to his "yard" on a Monday morning unshaved, or with dirty shoes, or a dirty shirt. The non-payment of most of these penalties is met by various punishments. Sometimes the jacket of the offender is nailed to the board with large nails, or his hat is mopped with tar.

In foundries the practice is very similar. "Footings" and "loosings" cost just as much, and the money collected is spent in the same manner. Shifting vice, or lathe, moving to a better situation in the work, birthdays, national saints' days, and orders given to brass, iron, coal, timber, and tin merchants, are all marked with a certain amount of

compulsory drinking. When a workman goes abroad he has to pay twenty shillings, and ten shillings when he returns. An operative being made a foreman incurs a fine of ten shillings for drink money.

One great evil of this system is, that when these fines are not paid, either from poverty or upon principle, many acts of tyranny and injustice are committed. Tools are hidden or destroyed; personal injury is inflicted on the offending workman, or his work is damaged so as to be valueless. Masters and merchants suffer from this system as much as the operatives; and it has been no uncommon thing to burst steam-boilers by over-pressure, in order to revenge the want of due treating!

Amongst whitesmiths, the apprentice "footing" ranges from ten shillings to a guinea, according to the circumstances of the parent. If not paid, the boy is "knocked here, shoved there, and kicked about." Amongst blacksmiths, a journeyman (sledge-hammerman) pays for "footing" two shillings and sixpence, and a smith, five shillings. Chain cable manufacturers, curriers, joiners and carpenters, and sail-makers, are all burdened with similar drink usages. Every stage in each trade is marked with a particular fine, and the custom of "backing," or adding to the amount of these fines by a compulsory subscription amongst the men, only makes matters worse. Tribunals are formed for the purpose of trying all questions relating to drink fines, and a man is said, under these circumstances, to be tried under the strong beer act. Coopers, sawyers, rope-makers, turpentine distillers, stone-masons, tailors, blockmakers, coachmakers, coach-spring makers, skimmers, and watchmakers, are all victims to the same senseless customs. Amongst sawyers there are drink fines for men falling into the pit, for a log of wood falling into the pit, for changing pit, and for dirty shoes on Monday. The smallest fine often causes a general subscription for the purpose of "starting a drink." Wetting a new saw, or opening the first log of mahogany, have each their particular fines; and not only in this, but in most other mechanical trades, the work is so surrounded by such drink rules and regulations, that scarcely a day passes without a "spree."

To go through a list of the trades where these drink usages prevail would fill a volume. The system is the same in nearly all cases—drink fines upon entering or leaving a workshop, or on the same at every stage or mishap in the trade, or on every occasion that can be strained into an excuse for extortion. Riggers, painters, carvers and gilders, saddlers, gunmakers, brass-founders, plane-makers, weavers, shoemakers, hatters, bricklayers, upholsterers, printers, cotton-spinners, millwrights, glassmakers, paper-stainers, and a hundred other bodies of intelligent workmen, are content to labour under and support such a baneful and tyrannical drinking system. Festivity and good fellowship amongst workmen are pleasant, proper, and profitable things in their way, but they are not to be cultivated by such a forcing process. There is no real enjoyment in being forced into compliance with an absurd and pernicious custom; in forcing others; in drinking at all hours and all seasons; in taking

liquors which are absolutely nauseous, until an artificial taste is acquired for them; in listening to dull comic songs, and applauding them mechanically; in responding to "toasts," without feeling any sympathy for them; and in pretending to enjoy long rambling speeches that have neither beginning, middle, nor end. All these things are merely excuses for drinking and killing time, and nothing more. There is a senseless hypocrisy about them, which ought to be repulsive to thinking, straightforward men. It would be less odious, were no desire for rational, voluntary, and harmless recreation exists, if the time-killer would sit down openly with a piece of salt and a pitcher of drink, that he might prick up his thirst with one hand, and pacify it with the other. The nuisance would also be less if the sot would get drunk in bed, because a vast deal of trouble, expense, and mischief would be saved by such a proceeding!

THE BLACK COUNTRY.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE CHURCH IN THE BLACK COUNTRY.

WHAT a lachrymose set we ought to be, if, as some people hold, climate affects character! We might be a race of Niobes—our life a protracted sob. I think, indeed, we rather falsify the assertion, inasmuch as we appear to indulge ordinarily in grunts and groans rather than in tears; and it is certain that John Bull can disburden his mind drily enough when so inclined. But, truly, our skies hold to the melting mood. We are growing moister every year. Look at July of this present year! What sort of a month does it call itself for the height of summer? I spent seven Sundays in the Black Country on my first visit there. Of these, one, the last one too, really did deserve the title which we bestowed upon it on every convenient opportunity, of "a beautiful day," "a lovely day." One other we made the best of; the rest made the worst of themselves and of us.

I think the first Sunday after our arrival was that on which the clouds seemed most thoroughly bent on giving us a damp benefit; and, alas! it was that on which were announced, in tremendous characters, "TWO SERMONS" to be preached in the church of L. R., in aid of some society to which the parish was deeply indebted.

The distance between church and vicarage was what in Scotland would be called "half a mile and a bittock;" that is to say, the "bittock" was the longest part of the two; and, in this instance, it led up a very steep, and, too often, a very muddy and slippery ascent. The church stood nearly alone on its eminence. Some twenty or thirty cottages clustered beneath, but the rest of the habitations straggled widely off, the most populous part of the parish being in the direction of our friend's house. Altogether, it appeared as ill-adapted a spot for a parish church as could well have been devised.

We took our seats in the "vicarage pew," and the service commenced. Singing first, of course—an anthem louder than ever, in honour of the occasion; but *where* were the congregation? Could it