

"I was too ill the next morning to go to business. Not so Owen, however, who was not only more seasoned than I was, but who had also been more cautious. He went to the counting-house; I sent (not by him, however) an excuse, pleading sudden illness.

"At night, when Owen returned, I was partially recovered, but had not returned to my own lodgings; he had requested me not to do so. I did not particularly remark upon his looks then, but they have haunted me since. I remembered afterwards that he was pale and stern, and that his whole manner towards me was altered; and when he spoke, his voice and tones were those of one who knew his power and meant to assert it.

"He told me, what you may have guessed, Mr. Keenedge, that on the previous evening, after leaving the tavern, I had played very high at the gambling table; he said that it was I who had insisted on going there, and that I had taken the cards and dice in hand against his warning advice; and this might be true; perhaps it was. At all events I had played, and had not only lost all the money I had about me—which was not much—but had given an I. O. U. to a large amount, to one of the players. I denied this; and then he took the paper from his pocket-book and held it before me. It was true; there was my name; and he—Owen—was the gambler to whom I had given it.

"My brain was dizzy; for I knew now that I was in the power of a merciless enemy; not that he could have enforced the claim, perhaps, in a court of law, but he could blast my character; and his looks told me that he would do this if I attempted to escape from him.

"Why should I tell you more?"

"No, don't John, please," said the little barber; "I can guess the rest. We see things like it in the paper every day a'most."

"It is enough," continued the poor clerk, "that that evening, before we parted, Owen had thrown off the mask of friendship, and I had become his slave; and that, together, we conspired to cheat and rob our employers, he showing me how. He had wanted a confederate, for one could not do it alone; but, by playing into each other's hands, we might do this without fear of detection, he said.

"Mr. Keenedge," continued the poor clerk, earnestly, "up to this time, I had been almost all that was bad and base; but I had never dreamt of being dishonest. But, let no one say, when giving way to one temptation, 'I will go thus far, and no farther.' Ah, friend, 'Facilis est descensus'—the downward step, you know—how easy! how naturally one follows the other! And so, from being a tavern haunter, a theatre lover, and a gambler, I became a thief and traitor.

"Six months after that evening," continued the poor clerk, "I stood in the prisoner's dock at the Old Bailey; Owen was by my side. Our employers, injured as they had been by us, were merciful—merciful to me. They appeared against me with reluctance; they said all they could in my favour; and they recommended me to mercy when the verdict of 'guilty' was returned.

"This recommendation had effect. Owen was

sentenced to a lengthened term of transportation; while on me fell the lighter doom of four years' imprisonment. You know my history now, thus far at least," said the poor clerk, averting his face, down which big tears were rolling; "you know my history now, Mr. Keenedge, and I will not ask you again to take my hand in friendship."

"You needn't ask it, John; no you needn't," sobbed the little barber, starting up and taking both of the solitary man's hands between his own, and pressing them with all fervour. "I arn't a preacher, John," continued he, never letting go his hold as he spoke; "far from it. But I read the Book, I do; and I know where 'tis writ, 'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.' There!" And saying this, Mr. Keenedge reverently withdrew, and might, any time within the next hour, have been detected weakly shedding many tears in his little room below.

MAHOGANY.

PERHAPS there is hardly a word in the English language which is more truly a household word than the one which stands at the head of this article. Under the domestic roof nearly all our surroundings are of mahogany; our book-cases, tables, chairs, desks, sideboards, sofas, musical instruments, and for the most part our bedsteads, are made of this material, and the use of it is so general that we can hardly conceive of a furnished house without the appliances of mahogany furniture. Yet, though the material is so common, there are comparatively few of us who have taken the trouble to inquire whence it is all derived, and to what sources and industrial agencies it is owing. It may not be unprofitable, therefore, and it will be far from uninteresting, to take a brief survey of the history of a mahogany trunk, from its growth in the untrodden forest, where its umbrageous limbs may yield a shelter to the panther and the wild boar, to its arrival in merry England, where, in polished state, it is of course expected to groan under the weight of John Bull's good cheer.

There are various sorts of mahogany, differing in an almost fabulous ratio in value. Thus, the African mahogany, which grows plentifully in the districts of Senegal, and is shipped to this country from Sierra Leone, is of comparatively small value, owing to its liability to warp into ungainly shapes; the wood is hard and of close texture, but, in consequence of its characteristic failing, it is never used for purposes of ornament, and is chiefly in demand for the construction of articles of small expense and great strength, such as engine-frames, gun-carriages, mangles, etc. Other kinds are found in the East Indies; but very little mahogany of oriental growth comes to this country, save in the shape of manufactured articles. Of the mahogany which is brought to these islands, by far the major portion is felled in the forests on the coast of Honduras, a province of Mexico, where it grows in vast quantities, rarely in groves or even in groups of trees, but mingled with other forest timber, and surrounded

with dense scrub and underwood utterly impenetrable by the ordinary traveller. The tree is a grand and magnificent object, having enormous branches of solid timber, and sometimes reaching to a great height; but, unlike most of the tropical trees, it seems to have no special partiality for any particular locality. The seeds are winged, and are carried in all directions by the wind, and it would seem that wherever they drop, they take kindly to the soil and flourish; thus they grow luxuriantly in low marshy grounds, or in a deep alluvial soil, and they are found also flourishing on rocks apparently bare of soil, and sending their roots deep into the stony fissures, which they widen and rend asunder by the slow force of their expansion.

It is a fact, however, that the different value of the wood is determined for the most part by the locality where it grows: that which takes root on a fat or wet soil is soft, even-grained, pale and porous, and is of the lowest value, while that which grows without moisture, save what it derives from the atmosphere, is hard, figured, knotty, and involuted in grain, and densely close in texture, as well as of a deep rich colour. The difference in value between the two kinds may be estimated by the fact, that for the best sort pianoforte-makers have been known to give as much as £200 per cubic yard, while the same quantity of the commoner kind would be well sold for ten or twelve pounds. The more valuable kind is, however, rarely used in the mass, but is cut up into veneers to form the polished surfaces of fine cabinet work. Of these finer sorts, known in the market under the name of Spanish mahogany, the larger portion comes from the mountainous districts of Cuba and St. Domingo. Formerly large quantities came to England from Jamaica, but the supply from thence has nearly ceased, owing to the exhaustion of the stock; the Jamaica mahogany was much prized, and is said still to command the highest biddings. No attempts have ever been made, so far as we are aware of, to establish mahogany plantations; as the tree takes two hundred years to grow before it is accounted fit for felling, we need not wonder if it has been neglected by the planter. The use of mahogany with us is comparatively recent; for although the beauty of the wood was recognised in Sir Walter Raleigh's time, by his ship carpenter while lying off Trinidad, in 1595, it was not brought into notice in England until the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Dr. Gibbons, an eminent physician, exhibited to his friends the first articles of English domestic furniture manufactured from it.

We will now proceed to get out our logs of mahogany from the depths of the Honduras forest. The work is done by gangs of men, who may be either slaves or free labourers, or the gang may consist of both working together. They are all under the control of a captain, and they number among them a mahogany huntsman, the nature of whose peculiar function will presently appear. The number of the whole gang can be hardly less than five-and-twenty, and sometimes amounts to as many as fifty. The work always commences in the month of August, and it is the huntsman who inaugurates the proceedings. It is his business to hunt out

trees, which must be growing in the neighbourhood of a river—the nearer the better—and which it will pay to cut down. The woods, as we have already remarked, being impenetrable to travellers, he sets out on his mission armed with a manchet, a kind of ponderous cutlass formed for delivering powerful blows; with this instrument he carves every step of his way through the bushy and tangled underwood, until he arrives at some elevated point. Here he ascends a tree and looks out for mahogany wood; he knows it instantly at sight, because in this month the leaves of the tree are of a brilliant orange colour, and he can trace the well-known hue over a large expanse of forest many miles in extent. He takes a very careful survey, and forms a scheme of operations, contriving to plan as much work, and no more, as can be accomplished during the season. Having marked down his prey, which will consist of a number of trees standing pretty nearly together, if he can so manage it—though he will not scruple to take in a promising trunk at a mile or two distant from the rest—his next course is to cut his way to them. While chopping away at this work, he sometimes discovers that the huntsman belonging to some rival gang has marked the same prey, and is hewing *his* way to it from some other point of observation. In this case, the race and the strife become desperate: Pompey, on this side, hews and chops, and toils and sweats, yelling at his labour like a madman; while Sambo, on that side, sweats and toils, and chops and hews, and responds with yells just as frantic and more defiant. It is a pretty pair of black babes in the wood, brandishing their gleaming weapons, not at each other, but at the stubborn bush which keeps them asunder. This energetic warfare, however, leads to no bloodshed—only to excessive perspiration. As, among whalers, the first harpoon into the blubber secures the whale, so, among mahogany hunters, the first manchet that severs the bark secures the trunk.

Having marked down his prey, and set his brand upon them, the huntsman returns to the captain and reports progress. The captain summons his gang, and, following in the tract made by the huntsman, the felling of the trees immediately commences. This is anything *but* a summary operation. In the first place, the tree is not cut down near the root, like a British oak, but is severed at the height of some ten or more feet from the ground; the reason of this being, probably, that the lower part of the trunk, having a coarse grain which is exceedingly porous and soft, is as likely to sink as to swim when it gets into the water, and is in other respects valueless. A stage has therefore to be erected round each tree, with an opening on one side for the fall. Though felling in this manner is evidently most perilous, yet a fatal accident rarely happens, and the trees are felled in less time than would be imagined possible. After the felling comes the lopping and clearing, which is done at more leisure by one section of the gang, while the others are differently employed; the branches, it may be observed, yield better timber than the trunk, their wood being of much closer grain and more richly figured, though the trunk, from its greater mass, is invariably of most value.

While the loppers are busy with their axes, the rest of the gang are engaged in the onerous labour of cutting an open and practicable road through the dense forest, for the transport of the logs to the river's brink. This forms by far the most wearisome part of their labour, and generally occupies them for several months. Before they begin, they build themselves comfortable habitations by the river side, and during the felling season the several mahogany works form so many villages on the banks of the stream, all of which are destined to disappear when the season comes to a close.

The main road, like the first track of the huntsman, has to be cut through the underwood with the machet; it must be wide enough to admit of the passage of the timber-wain or truck; but it is done marvellously quick, a single hand making progress at the rate of a hundred yards a-day. But when all the underwood is cut away and removed, the road is not half made: there still remain on the track a number of trees which are of no value in the market, and which, standing in the way, have to be got rid of. Some of these are so hard as to turn the edge of the axe, and will succumb to nothing short of fire. If it be necessary to build a bridge—and sometimes many strong bridges are needed, either to cross brooks or chasms—this waste timber is available for the purpose. After the road has been cleared of the wood, it has finally to be levelled for the passage of the wains; and this labour is even more trying and wearisome than the clearing. Further, it rarely or ever happens that a single road is sufficient; branch roads have generally to be made in different directions, and occasionally a mile or two will be levelled for the sake of a single tree.

Supposing all the requisite road-making to be finished by the middle of December, the captain of the gang will think himself well off. By this time the loppers have denuded the fallen trees of their waste, and the huge trunks and branches lie ready for further operations. There is still plenty of work to be done before the logs are ready to be carried. As it would be impossible to transport them over such uneven ground in a round form, the extemporized road being the worst imaginable causeway, they have all first to be squared: this is done solely by the axe; and where the logs are numerous, it may be readily conceived that the work is long and tedious. We should state that before squaring they are cross-cut into lengths, not according to length, but according to weight; the rule being, that each log or length should form a load for the wain, which is drawn by seven pairs of oxen. This cross-cutting, squaring, and trimming, with the final levelling of the road, occupies the gang up to the end of March. By this time, and not before, the ground has been dried by the sun to a sufficient degree of hardness for the transport, which generally begins the first week in April. This is by far the most exciting and the most picturesque part of the whole business. The gang is again divided into portions—the loaders, the drivers, and the men who cut food for the cattle. The loaders erect a cabin for their accommodation

among the logs, and remain on the spot while the others are journeying backward and forward. Owing to the fierce heat of the sun, the cattle cannot be got to work in the day-time, and the transport has consequently to be effected in the night.

About sundown the oxen are harnessed, and the teams set forth one after another; they may have from six to a dozen miles to travel, and they so time their departure that the first may arrive at the spot about an hour before midnight. The loaders, who have been sleeping since morning, are aroused by the shouts and whips of the drivers, and use all diligence in getting the logs on the wains, which they do by pushing them up an inclined plane with levers. At this they are employed for some hours, the trucks setting forth on their downward journey in sufficient time to arrive at the river before the heat of the day begins. The chief part of the route towards the river has to be performed during the night, by the light of torches, and presents one of the most picturesque spectacles afforded by the industrial labours of man. The glare of the torches gleaming on the pale foliage and on the swart spectral forms of the half-naked men; the crowd of struggling cattle, the cracking of long whips, the crashing of wheels through the withered bush, the clouds of dust and resinous smoke, amid which, under a quivering lurid light, men, oxen, and the huge unwieldy logs are hurrying and plunging forward with incessant shouts and cries—all together make up a picture whose parallel is hardly found elsewhere.

When the trucks or wains arrive at the river, the logs are severally marked with the owner's brand, and then are tumbled into the stream, which at this period is probably not deep enough to float them. The loading and carrying goes on until about the end of May, at which time, with a punctuality that rarely fails, down come the periodical rains, and in an hour or two the hard roads, transformed into deep sloughs of mud, are no longer practicable, and all the carrying throughout the forest ceases at once. The heavy flood continues to pour down without intermission until the middle of June or thereabouts, by which time the thirsty river has swollen to a prodigious volume, and the logs are afloat. When all is ready, they are loosed from their moorings, and the whole gang, getting on board canoes, accompany them down the stream, freeing them from any obstacles they may meet in their way, and guiding them to some convenient spot in the open water, where they are stopped by a boom stretched across the river. Here, perhaps, will be congregated in one broad floating mass, the harvests of twenty different mahogany gangs, all mingled together. The work of separation is, however, easy, by reason of the distinctive brands; and now each gang, collecting their own logs, bind them together in large rafts, and pilot them to the wharves of the several proprietors. Here they are craned out of the water on to the quays, and, as they have suffered much in their violent passage down—by dashing against rocks and by collision with each other—they are again trimmed with the axe, and reduced to a proper shape for the market. The buyers are soon

on the spot, and if the demand is brisk, the logs so lately the monarchs of the forest are confined in the hold of a ship, and on their way to Europe, where we need not follow them, as we all know their ultimate destiny.

It will be seen that the above species of industry must be necessarily speculative and expensive, and cannot be carried on without capital. It is calculated that the cost of a mahogany-cutting expedition amounts to about fourscore pounds per man employed, including all expenses of plant, cattle, etc. The profits, however, must be liberal, looking to the fact that there is generally a ready sale for the wood, and that the trees yield a large quantity. A single log has been known to weigh fifteen tons, and to yield over five thousand superficial feet. Latterly, the preference for walnut wood in articles of furniture has told injuriously on the value of the finer sorts of mahogany; this, however, is a mere freak of fashion, and, like other fashions, may be destined to but a brief existence.

VENICE.

VENICE, the Queen of the Adriatic, once the head of a flourishing republic, in possession of extensive home and foreign dominions, figured for more than a thousand years among the independent states of Europe, and was for a time the mistress of the seas, a grand centre of commerce, a splendid temple of art, envied for wealth, feared and courted for power, renowned for statesmanship and public spirit, whose alliance was sought alike by Mohammedan and Christian governments. But for upwards of half a century, with the exception of a very brief interval, it has been simply a humiliated and melancholy city, the enthralled capital of an equally enthralled province, roughly trampled on by the heel of the alien. It is now deserted by half its proper inhabitants, rich only in emblems of past political greatness, decayed monuments and desolate palaces, while filled with military, cannon, spies, and police, coercing the native remnant, who burn with impatience to join the colours of a rejoicing nationality, and raise the shout of "Down with the Austrians!" "Freedom for Italy!" "Viva Garibaldi!" "Viva Victor Emmanuel!"

The position of the place is very remarkable, and its entire character is not less unique.

There is a glorious city in the sea.
The sea is in the broad, the narrow streets,
Ebbing and flowing; and the salt sea-weed
Clings to the marble of her palaces.
No track of men, no footsteps to and fro,
Lead to her gates. The path lies o'er the sea,
Invincible; and from the land we went,
As to a floating city—steering in,
And gliding up her streets as in a dream,
So smoothly, silently—by many a dome,
Mosque-like, and many a stately portico,
The statues ranged along an azure sky;
By many a pile, in more than eastern pride,
Of old the residence of merchant-kings;
The fronts of some, though time had shattered them,
Still glowing with the richest hues of art,
As though the wealth within them had run o'er."

Rogers, the writer of this pleasing description, did not anticipate that it would be rendered inaccurate.

It is so in one point, for the services of the gondola have been superseded by a railway-bridge, in the conveyance of passengers across the lagoon between the mainland and the city. This truly great work, completed in the year 1845, consists of 222 arches, extending nearly two miles and a quarter in length. It consumed in its construction 80,000 larch trees, 21,000,000 of bricks, and 176,000 cubic feet of stone. Thus fastened by a material link to the mainland of Italy, while connected with its population by the strong ties of blood, language, historical associations, and political aspirations, it is to be hoped that Venice will share in the better fortunes which have apparently dawned upon the rest of the peninsula. Approaching the bridge on the land-side, at a little distance on the left, close to the lagoon, stands the strong fort of Malghera, the fall of which, after being held by the popular party in 1848-9, terminated the insurrection of that period.

In all other respects the poetical description is correct. The salt water penetrates every district of the strangely situated city, for its buildings cover no less than seventy-two islands or shoals, and rest upon substructions of wood or stone. These islets were formed by the detritus brought down by the river in bygone ages, which was here arrested by the sea and deposited, as well as along other parts of the coast. Their separating channels are now canals, of which there are 147, crossed by 306 steep bridges. The canals are the great thoroughfares of the place, and answer the purpose of streets, while gondolas are substitutes for our carriages and cabs. There are indeed streets, properly so called, and every dwelling may be reached on foot. But they are not wider than twelve feet from house to house, and mostly much narrower, so that locomotion is chiefly carried on by water. But little occasion has the sight-seer to use his legs, at least out of doors, being afloat as soon as he leaves his hotel, and floated back to it again. Hence it has been said, that to enter Venice is literally to "go on board," with this difference from ship-board, that there is no danger of sea-sickness. The change of level in the water-streets, from the ebb and flow, is very regular, and amounts to a fall and rise of from two to three feet. But now,

"In Venice Tasso's echoes are no more,
And silent rows the songless gondolier."

The well-known strain of the boatman, consisting of alternate stanzas from Tasso's "Jerusalem," passed away with the independence of the State; and though grand open-air music still daily salutes the ear, it finds no favour with the populace, proceeding from the military band of the dominant power.

The principal or grand canal, nearly 300 feet wide, lined with palaces, winds through the city in the form of the letter S, and divides it into two unequal portions. This is crossed by only one bridge, the steepest, largest, and finest, called the Rialto, from the name of the chief and first occupied island, on which it abuts. It is magnificently situated, and well seen from the front windows of adjoining hotels. The full style is *Ponte di Rialto*, just as

ILLUSTRATION ON PAGE 777.—1. The Bridge of Sighs. 2. The Grand Canal. 3. The Rialto. 4. Bird's-eye View of Venice. 5. The Ducal Palace. 6. The Cathedral of St. Mark.