

"Goodness me, sir! Who would have thought! If you had only sent me word round, sir, I would have slipped on my hat and apron. And to think of your being come back——"

"I didn't know that you lived here, Mr. Keenedge," said X. Y. Z., faintly; "and it is not you that I want now. Where is HE?"

"He, sir!"—(The man's mad, and got loose from his keepers, said the little barber to himself, breaking out into a cold perspiration. I must speak him fair, or else he'll be after doing for his-self with a razor.)—"He, sir; yes, sir. But, I beg your pardon humbly, who, sir?"

At that moment a groan or a cry from the room above smote upon the ears both of Mr. Keenedge and his untimely visitor. The effect was decisive. Without wasting another thought on X. Y. Z., and leaving the entire stock in trade, razors included, at his mercy, the little barber sprang backwards and hastened up the narrow staircase, surmounting two or three of the steep steps at every stride. But, rapid as were his movements, those of X. Y. Z. were equally prompt, so that they entered the poor clerk's chamber almost together.

The poor clerk had sunk on to his knees; his face was hidden in his hands; he was moaning as though in pain.

"See what you have done, Mr. Owen!" exclaimed the little barber, reproachfully (for it came into his mind then, that none but the wicked tempter could have sought his poor friend, or, finding him, could have so shaken his fortitude). "You had ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir," he added, as he stooped down, and was about to raise his friend and to cover him with his protection. But a gentle trembling hand was laid upon his arm. "A BROTHER'S hand must raise him now, and a BROTHER'S arm will support him." And, quietly putting the kind-hearted little man aside, the mysterious X. Y. Z., as he said this, knelt by the poor clerk; and presently their hands were clasped in each other; and when they rose from their lowly posture, the strong arm of the stranger was encircling his brother.

Ah, Crooked Sixpence! your histories are for this time ended. The poor clerk has other matters to think about now—other stories to hear and to tell.

It was soon known in Whirlpool Rents that Mr. Keenedge's lodger had been sought and found by a brother, the brother Sam, who left England so many, many years ago because he was crossed in love, and who had been supposed long dead. Where he had been in all those years no one could exactly say, but rumour ascribed to him untold wealth to a fabulous amount; and it was whispered that not only was the poor clerk to be released from his drudgery at Peggram's Wharf, and transferred to a home of luxury and profusion, but that Mr. Keenedge's fortune was also made. And, strange as it may seem, envy found but little to say on the subject; for the kind-hearted barber, and his quiet inoffensive lodger, were and always had been in good odour with their still poorer neighbours.

Whether all the rumours just mentioned were strictly correct or not we cannot affirm. We may

say, however, that, a few weeks after the eventful evening of which we have spoken, both the poor clerk and his landlord disappeared from Whirlpool Rents, Mr. Keenedge having disposed of the goodwill of his business and his small stock in trade. For a long time the Whirlpool Renters were profoundly ignorant of what had become of their old neighbour; but after a time it was currently reported that the little barber had been seen presiding over a hair-dressing *emporium* in a fashionable suburb some three or four miles from St. Paul's Cathedral, and that his name was over the door. It was reported, also, that the first and second floors of the large house over the *emporium* were occupied by two bachelor brothers, who were so completely strangers to all around them that their very names were a mystery, and they were known only by the familiar designation (it was their own whim) of brother Sam and brother John.

Of brother Sam it was believed that he had spent the greater part of his life abroad, where he had amassed considerable property, and that his leisure life, after returning home, was employed in works of benevolence. Especially was he known as a frequent visitor of prisons, and as the ready friend of such as had fallen into error and crime, but who professed repentance and a desire to redeem the future. Brother Sam was accustomed to vindicate himself from the sneers sometimes cast upon him on this account, by reminding the sneerer of the words of the Divine Master, "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

Of brother John, it was understood that he had engagements in the city, which occupied the greater part of his time. He usually returned home, however, before the evening set in; and in summer the two elderly bachelors were to be seen walking together in the neighbouring fields arm-in-arm, and in close converse. In winter their evenings were spent much together; but it was known that brother John had a little study or library of his own at the top of the house, to which he frequently resorted before retiring to rest; and it was reported that he was engaged in some literary work. We will not vouch for the truth of this; but it may be that, at the time this was said, the poor clerk (*poor clerk no longer*) was preparing for the press his Story of a Crooked Sixpence.

THE GREAT TOBACCO NUISANCE.

It is now about two centuries and a half ago since King James First (of England) wrote his famous "Counterblast against Tobacco." What was a new vice then—an imported appetite, injurious to health, and destructive of habits of industry—has now grown into the dimensions of a gigantic public nuisance. The smoker, unlike most other victims of excessive self-indulgence, is a pest to others as well as an enemy to himself. The opium-eater is a quiet, harmless, self-made idiot in a cellar; the noisy drunkard is generally kept in check by the law; and the glutton is soon rendered unobtrusive by heavy sleep; but the smoker sits in fumes that are agreeable to his laboriously-acquired taste, and

offensive to those who have not learned to defeat the laws of nature. The laws of society are paralyzed when their arm is stretched forth to strike him, because tobacco is all-powerful on the bench; and those who are appointed to carry out their empty orders have more sympathy with the offender than the offended. Who ever heard of smoking in railway carriages being more than "prohibited;" or of that select ground "abaft the funnel" being actually preserved from the encroachments of this nuisance? Who ever had the moral courage to stand up in a party of travellers, and refuse that sanction to be half choked, which is only asked for as a matter of form?

The inveterate smoker is the most selfish of men. He thinks of nothing but his beloved habit at all times, in all companies, and all seasons. Ladies, invalids, and tender infants, are no barrier to his indulgence, and he has the heart of an ogre if not the appetite. He leaves a trail behind him by which he can always be traced, and he will flavour a house, or a public building, as strongly as a broken sewer does. Wherever he sits for a few hours, he is sure to leave his mark by making the atmosphere heavy and poisonous, and filling the furniture with the rank smells of his idolized weed. Windows may be thrown open, and fancy perfumes may be introduced, but all in vain. The room once thoroughly impregnated with tobacco-smoke can never be cleansed. Its very tone will deepen and change in spite of all the resources of the decorator's art, and by degrees it will sink into the melancholy aspect of a liquorice-coloured den.

The conversation of the inveterate smoker is never brilliant, and his company is more exacting than amusing. He will sit in solemn silence, like one of those eastern fanatics whom we term *yogis*, receiving all you like to tell him with a self-satisfied, clouded, impassible face, and giving no speech in return. The social qualities of tobacco are always grossly over-rated, and no company was ever improved by its drowsy influence. Heavy stupor, in such assemblies, takes the place of wit, and a half-drunken slowness of delivery is the counterfeit presentment of wisdom.*

Tobacco smokers can command a large majority in most circles of society, and no one ever asks what substance is lighted and sucked into nothingness, as long as it is called "tobacco," and produces smoke. One man may puff a mild cigar that is costly and unadulterated; another may fill a black pipe with a coarse and nauseous mixture; and though the first may be comparatively inoffensive, while the second is poisonous and suffocating, the same liberty to become a nuisance is accorded to both. Nearly one half of all the tobacco sold, and all the cigars manufactured, is largely adulterated,

and with such noxious ingredients as nitrate of potash, sulphate of magnesia, ammonia, alum, and carbonate of lime! Knowing this—without regarding the warning heart-sickness which nature has set at the very threshold of this habit, how can we question the opinion of those numerous medical authorities who have told us that smoking, much or little, is injurious to bodily health?

It is hopeless for the persecuted minority who never smoke, to attempt to stop this nuisance by argument, appeals to reason, or the aid of the law; and only one course, as a humorous friend suggests, appears to be left open. This is to invent some retaliating odour, twice as offensive as tobacco smoke, and by using it unsparingly in opposition, so drive the disgusted and disgusting enemy out of the field!

ARTHUR AND THE ROUND TABLE.

How shall we treat him? Deferentially; as a true historic personage, the stamp of whose broad features was taken by the soft clay of the age in which he lived, and then hardened into irregular proportions by the slow lapse of time? Or shall he be treated as a splendid myth, a brilliant mirage, the portentous child of mist and sunlight? Most certainly we shall hold Arthur the Briton to be a fact in history; for one cannot bring one's self to believe that his name, which was owned for ages as the very talisman of chivalry, and was long acknowledged by the historian in the calm retirement of his laborious cell, is but an imaginative rumour, a wandering echo from the chord of some visionary bard. We are aware that we are *approaching* the "debateable ground" of romance, but will endeavour soberly to keep the beaten track of probability, and not indulge ourselves in a *détour* into the shadowy land of fable, through which the old chroniclers, led by Geoffry of Monmouth, or the old minstrels in the following of "Maister Wace," would be our ready guides.

Many writers of modern days, sorely discomfited by the bewildering mazes in which these questionable authorities have entangled them, have found it the easiest way to decide that such a hero of the marvellous as our Arthur never lived. But this is a pusillanimous way of escaping from a difficulty, unworthy of the courage of modern chivalry. It may be the shortest, but it is not the most sagacious mode, to take refuge in unbelief, merely because the outlines of an object are too large for our standard of measurement. Those who dwell in a mountainous region are aware that atmosphere, in its misty moments, sometimes plays strange freaks with sober realities, magnifying them into giants, distorting them into monsters, and making truth its very toy. Thus also, in arctic regions, ships are sometimes seen, and not phantom ones either, apparently sailing, keel upwards, through the clouds. Captain Scoresby saw his father's vessel thus inverted, when it was some fifty miles distant. A highly refracting state of the atmosphere accounts for the phenomenon. Let us then try to obtain a truthful view of the person of Arthur, although his propor-

* The pipe, with solemn interposing puff,
Makes half a sentence at a time enough;
The dozing sages drop the drowsy strain,
Then pause, and puff—and speak, and pause again.
Such often, like the tube they so admire,
Important triflers! have more smoke than fire.
Pernicious weed! whose scent the fair annoys,
Unfriendly to society's chief joys,
The worst effect is banishing for hours
The sex, whose presence civilizes ours," etc., etc.
Cooper's "Conversation."