

number of pipers playing, and a company of the 92nd Highlanders, also in kilts. The firing of the guns, the cheering of the great crowd, the picturesqueness of the dresses, the beauty of the surrounding country, with its rich background of wooded hills, altogether formed one of the finest scenes imaginable. It seemed as if a great chieftain in olden feudal times was receiving his sovereign. It was princely and romantic. Lord and Lady Breadalbane took us upstairs, the hall and stairs being lined with Highlanders."

The mention of the arrival at Taymouth leads to the introduction of the following simple and touching note:—

"I revisited Taymouth last autumn, on the 3rd of October, from Dunkeld (*incognita*), with Louise, the Dowager Duchess of Athole, and Miss MacGregor. As we could not have driven through the grounds without asking permission, and as we did not wish to be known, we decided upon not attempting to do so, and contented ourselves with getting out at a gate close to a small fort, into which we were led by a woman from the gardener's house, near to which we had stopped, and who had no idea who we were.

"We got out and looked from this height down upon the house below, the mist having cleared away sufficiently to show us everything; and there, unknown, quite in private, I gazed—not without emotion—on the scene of our reception twenty years ago by dear Lord Breadalbane, in a princely style not to be equalled in grandeur and poetic effect.

"Albert and I were only twenty-three, young and happy. How many are gone that were with us then!

"I was very thankful to have seen it again.

"It seemed unaltered.—1866."

WHAT I SAW OF THE AMBER TRADE.

ANY one wishing, from motives of curiosity, to live awhile in a bygone age, or rather, to learn from actual observation the way some people lived one hundred years ago, should visit the city of Königsberg, on the Prengal, in the eastern part of Prussia.

The people of that city move about as though they had not the slightest fear of being harmed by time or anything else, except by a little activity. The only thing new to be seen there is occasionally a new moon. Everything in the place looks antique. The children look as though they had been children for many years, and would be so for many years to come. The people, however, must have changed a little within the last three or four hundred years, for the present generation do not seem to have energy enough to accomplish the work man has at some time performed in completing so respectable an old city. The magnificent cathedral, containing the remarkable organ with 5000 pipes, and many other public buildings, show that its inhabitants were once young, energetic, and ambitious.

Only three days are required for "doing" Königsberg. To a person fond of travelling, a longer residence in the city will become somewhat wearisome—especially should he be in want of money. Being in the latter predicament, and also desirous of moving on, I did not find myself much in a fix at Königsberg. I am a seaman—one who follows that occupation as the most convenient way of travelling on an income limited to the wages of manual labour. Not wishing at the moment to leave that part of Europe, I joined a small vessel that was to be employed near the mouth of the Dange, in gathering amber.

A large and deep deposit of mud or soft clay, containing much amber, had lately been found not far from Memel, and we were employed to work upon it. Between Königsberg and the Frische-Haff we saw several places where people had been, or were digging for amber, although the work does not appear to be very profitable. The amber obtained in that way on those "diggings" only amounts to about 500 pounds per annum, and too much work is required in obtaining that amount to make the labour remunerative.

Two of my companions told me that they had spent several months in digging for amber, and had worked hard for a miserable living, until they had reluctantly been compelled to give up the business.

I asked, "Why reluctantly?" and learnt that the business could be followed only with the same infatuation that enslaves the gambler—the hope of making as much in an hour as can be made by saving the wages of some ordinary employment for years.

The day after leaving Königsberg we were anchored over that part of the mud-bank where the company had purchased the right of dredging, and were making preparations for work. We commenced business in a more extensive or scientific manner than dredging for amber had usually been performed. The dredging machinery was worked by a steam-engine, and the contents of the buckets were emptied into a barge alongside. Four men were stationed in the barge, employed in turning over the clay and other substances brought up in the buckets, searching for the amber.

I had an opportunity of seeing the result of our first day's work. It consisted of one piece of an inferior quality, weighing about three ounces, and worth about as many shillings. Several other smaller pieces were found, but were of little value, as they could only (I was told) be used for dissolving and making into a varnish principally used by photographers.

The price of amber varies according to size and quality of the pieces. A piece weighing but half an ounce, and worth two shillings, would probably be worth three or four times that sum if only double the weight. Some amber is so discoloured by substances that have adhered to and become mixed with it before being hardened, that it will not bring in the market more than four or five shillings per pound. Other pieces that are clear, or that can be used as specimens, containing insects preserved in perfect shape, are worth from £16 to £17 per pound.

The largest piece of which I heard, and which is said to be the largest ever found, was owned by a firm of amber merchants in Dantzic, who have long kept it in their possession; it weighs twelve pounds. The largest piece found in recent years near Memel weighs about five pounds, and it was said to be worth over 400 Prussian dollars.

The right of gathering amber on the east coast of Prussia was once monopolised by a company. This monopoly was extinguished in 1847, and since then the owners of land on the shores can confer the right of collecting it, although I believe a small fee has to be paid to the government. Dantzic was once the principal port for the trade in amber, but the business is now mostly centred at Memel. The trade in amber between England and Prussia is fast increasing. A few years ago, nearly all the amber reached us in a manufactured state, but now we receive the most of it as it is found on the coasts.

It is estimated that more than 74,000 pounds were procured by dredging in 1866. The amount last year was undoubtedly much larger. A good deal of amber is

obtained along the shore of the Frische-Haff by hand-dredging with small nets, and many people earn a living in this manner. They are always most successful after a violent storm, which has disturbed the bottom of the bay along the shore and exposed the pieces of amber to the action of the dredges.

While at work attending the dredge, I was enabled to obtain a little practical experience of the business of gathering amber. I learnt that it was hard, wet, and dirty work, for which those employed on wages were but poorly paid. At this, however, I could not complain, for it was no more than was expected when entering into the business. On the third day we were at work we were very successful. Nearly every bucket of dirt emptied into the barge contained several pieces of amber. We had found a part of the bank where a large quantity had been deposited, and that day we must have obtained nearly two hundred pounds. Many of the pieces were very clear and valuable. This was much the best day's work we had while I was on the dredge.

Had I been a rich man, I could have afforded to remain in that employment during the season, but being poor, I could not. The most to be gained in the business was a little experience with men and mud by day, and a knowledge of the game of "lansquet" in the evening. These things were not worth suffering much and long to learn, and I determined to leave.

One day we were visited by the skipper of an English ship lying about a mile away, waiting for the turn of the tide. I prevailed on the skipper to give me a passage to Dantzie, and as but little objection was made to my leaving, I bade my gambling companions "goot tay," and left them.*

I believe that learned men have disputed much about the origin of amber. From the foreign substances contained in it, and from its occurring in connection with lignite or fossil wood, it appears to be a resinous exudation from ancient forests. As to its uses in commerce, I believe it is used in medicine, and in art for preparing varnish; and also for necklaces and other ornaments, of which the most known to me are mouthpieces of pipes.

Original Fables.

BY MRS. PROSSER.

EXCITEMENT.

PUFF, puff, went the bellows.

Up went the flame.

Puff, puff, puff, went the bellows.

The flame rose stronger and higher.

"Am I not bright, noble, genial?" cried the Fire.

"Burn away," said the Bellows, and stopped blowing.

The flame faded, and the ruddy light grew pale.

"So," said the Bellows, "I don't think much of *your* brightness; you can only burn while I blow. Give me the steady flame, that keeps strong and clear without the help of puffing."

* The annexed paragraph I have cut out of an English newspaper since my return:—The little fishing village of Schwarzort, situated on the shores of the Baltic, between Memel and Dantzie, about two leagues to the south of the former place, has within the last three years acquired a certain importance, owing to the discovery of a large bed of amber. This bed is situated near the Cape Korning, and is believed to be extensive. Four steam dredges are employed for the collection of the amber, as well as a considerable number of dredges worked by hand. The amber is found almost uniformly in separate nodules, with lignite, disseminated in the sands at a depth of from ten feet to twelve feet. The dredging is carried on day and night, by shifts of eight hours each. About 400 persons are employed at this work, and their wages are, on the average, 22 silver groschen (2s. 2d.) per shift. The quantity of amber collected is considerable, amounting to about 288 lbs. per shift, and for six days' work 5,184 lbs. The sand is sent on shore, when it is washed in order to find the amber.

ABOUT CRITICS.

"HOLD that poor, thin twitter of yours, Bob!" said the Raven to the Robin.

Bob generally took a good deal to be daunted; but he stood now half ashamed, till, recovering himself, he said, "Beg pardon, sir, I have been thought to sing like the nightingale here, by very good judges."

"Nightingale! A melancholy, woe-begone ditty she gives. Keep me from nightingales!" said the Raven.

"Ah, I see; you like something cheerful, sir—like this lark who has just come down, for instance."

"Lark! Insufferably monotonous," said the Raven.

"Oh, variety, then, is what you require; and here is the thrush; *she* is the songster for you!" said Bob.

"The thrush has good notes and variety, and is cheerful, I admit; but oh! so intensely *rustic* and familiar—absolutely vulgar!" said the Raven.

"Sir," said Bobby, with a waggish look, "I wish *you* would give us a song, that we might know what good singing really is."

The Raven sidled off, provoked and offended.

"He put us down when he never could do anything but *croak*! No, no, my friends, we won't stand *that*," said Bobby; and he set up one of his loudest twitters immediately.

PROVE YOUR PRINCIPLES.

"I WISH I could open your eyes to the true misery of our condition: injustice, tyranny, and oppression!" said a discontented Hack to a weary-looking Cob, as they stood side by side in unhired cabs.

"I'd rather have them opened to something pleasant, thank you," replied the Cob.

"I am sorry for you. If you could enter into the noble aspirations——" the Hack began.

"Talk plain. What would you have?" said the Cob, interrupting him.

"What would I have? Why, equality, and share and share alike all over the world," said the Hack.

"You *mean* that?" said the Cob.

"Of course I do. What right have those sleek pampered hunters and racers to their warm stables and high feed, their grooms and jockeys? It is really heart-sickening to think of it," replied the Hack.

"I don't know but you may be right," said the Cob, "and to show I'm in earnest, as no doubt you are, let me have half the good beans you have in your bag, and you shall have half the musty oats and chaff I have in mine. There's nothing like proving one's principles."

REASON IS REASON, THOUGH NOT SEEN.

"WHY shouldn't we go abroad for the winter, like the swallows, and lots besides?" asked the House Sparrow.

"Can't say, indeed," replied his friend.

"We are quite as numerous," said the Sparrow. "See what flocks we make."

"Quite," said his friend.

"And we have good wings, and we don't like cold weather and starvation any more than they do," said the Sparrow.

"True," said his friend.

"Then why *don't* we go abroad?" said the Sparrow.

"That's beyond me to explain," said the other; "but indeed, brother, though not very old, I have lived long enough in the world to see there are many things I can't account for; and when I meet with one like this, I make up my mind that the fault doesn't lie in its unreasonableness, but in my incapability of understanding it. By this rule, no doubt, the swallows satisfy themselves that it is right they should have to go abroad while we stop at home."

WHY THE LARK IS A FAVOURITE.

"I CAN'T think what makes the Lark such a favourite," said the Robin to the Thrush; "he hasn't a feather that isn't dull or dingy. He's not to be compared with *me* that way."

"His feathers are well enough," said the Thrush, rather resenting the reflection on sober colours; "but I can't say I think his song worth the fuss they make about it. I should be sorry to change my notes for his."