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CROTCHETS IN THE AIR.

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CROTCHETS IN THE AIR;

OR,

AN (UN)SCIENTIFIC

ACCOUNT OF A BALLOON-TRIP,

IN

A FAMILIAR LETTER TO A FRIEND.

BY

✓
JOHN POOLE, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

“PAUL PRY,” “SIMPSON AND CO.,” “SKETCHES AND RECOLLECTIONS,”

&c. &c.

“Nearer to Heaven, than when I saw you last,
by the altitude of a Chopine.”

SHAKESPEARE.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

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1838.

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CROTCHETS IN THE AIR.

Planet, Earth ;

29th September, 1838.

MY DEAR TOM ;

I HAVE purposely postponed a reply to your impatient letter of the 16th instant. I am grateful to you for your kind anxieties upon my account, as evinced by your—“ P.S. Pray answer this *without the delay of a SINGLE MOMENT.*” (I give you your own emphatic markings.) Now, suppose—do but suppose—I had complied with your request, and answered your letter immediately upon its arrival, which occurred within only a couple of days after my return to this pen-ink-and-paper earth of

B

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ours,— why, I doubt whether you could have understood one sentence in twenty of all I might have written to you ; so inflated, so exalted was I, that my style must necessarily have been affected by my own feelings. You are aware of my detestation of that barbarous jargon which is compounded of Gallicisms, and Latinisms, and Italianisms, and all manner of *isms*, (with the single exception of good-English-isms,) and which is nick-named the modern fashionable style of writing : from all such *isms* my disgust of them would have kept me clear ; but how could I have avoided the perpetration of a few balloonicisms ? The moment I had “ pulled the liberating-iron of my sensations,” I should inevitably have “ thrown out every bag of the ballast of judgment,” and abandoned myself without opposition to “ the buoyant gas of enthu-

siasm." How should you have liked that? Only two pages of it?—one?—only half a page? No, no, Tom; rely upon it 'tis better as it is.

You ask me many questions. The first in order I will answer first, for the reason that it is the first.

“ Did you go up in a balloon on Friday, the fourteenth?” I may reply to you in the words of Hamlet, I have been “ nearer to heaven, than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine.” But the next time you speak of that particular travelling-carriage (the Great Nassau), pray speak of it with becoming respect, and call it *the* Balloon. All others, whether beneath the clouds, within or above them, are mere balloon-sprouts, chick-balloons, Balloonettes, in short. As is a peach to a pumpkin, so is the biggest of those to the Great

Nassau. You sit in a thing like a sauce-boat, and look up to a world floating above your head. Methinks I hear you say—“ Hold, there ! Let off a little of your gas.” I will ; but not much, Tom. And now, having replied to your first question, I will, for the present, float over—(I beg your pardon, but I could not help *that*.)—I will pass over all the intermediate ones, and notice your last. For this irregularity I have two motives : first, to get rid of a perplexing inquiry ; and, secondly, to let you understand at once the kind of account of a balloon-trip you must expect from me :—nothing about “ Here the barometer fell to —,” “ Here the thermometer rose to —,” “ Here the mercury stood at — ;” no balloon-jargon, but a plain, surface-of-earth description. So, on to your question.

“ According to your observations, in what

manner, and to what extent, are the interests of science likely to be advanced, and the state of society in general, *morally* and *physically* considered (dividing your answer to this portion of the question into two branches), likely to be improved by the use of balloons?— and within what probable period?”

This question is framed with such extraordinary precision, that, to one who could, there ought not to be the slightest difficulty in answering it. My observations, however, having been confined chiefly to the looking down on the chimney-tops, I am enabled to reply only, with anything approaching to certainty, first, that I do not know; secondly, that I cannot tell; and, thirdly, that it is hard to say. Yet are there points upon which I will venture to speak positively. One (and, perhaps, the most

important) result of an ascent in a balloon, is, in a scientific point of view, that you may be quite sure of coming down again—somehow ; the second, affecting the man morally, is, that it must, in a greater or a less degree, *elevate* his mind—for the time being ; the third affects the man physically, and is, that unless he order the clouds to be well aired for his reception, he is very likely to get a touch of rheumatism (as I have done) from being wrapped up in a damp one. For any much more positive and useful information you may require, I beg leave to refer you to aeronauts of greater experience, and (to use a phrase more popular than polite) — I wish you may get it. I now turn to some other of your questions.

“ Why did you go ? ”

I might put off this inquiry by pleading

the laudable ambition of rising in the world, but that I abhor a pun: Curiosity, then, was the leading motive, though not the only one. I wanted to go out of town ; and this *was* going out of town, or the deuce is in it. Then, the novel mode of travelling ! Be assured there is nothing like it *on earth*. One gets tired of being suffocated in coaches, choaked with coal-dust in steam-boats, rattled and rumbled on rail-roads. But, up yonder, the ineffable stillness, the progressing movement without the slightest sensation of motion ! whether up, down, forward, back, you seem to be suspended motionless in the air, whilst everything above, below, and around, is complaisantly taking the trouble of moving out of your way. The slight, though perceptible jerk you experience at each stroke of the oars in a Thames wherry at Twicken-

ham, is an electric shock compared with what (if I may so express it) you do *not* feel in a balloon. This is scarcely an exaggeration. As for Mac Adam—I now consider him but a bungler at the best. By the by, Tom, I wish those pavers, and un-pavers, and re-pavers of Oxford-street, would leave their eternal wrangling, and just step up stairs for a lesson.

Then, again, another amongst my motives was, a yearning after variety. It is idle to talk about going out of town for the sake of *change*, Tom. We quit London and go to Brighton, or Cheltenham, or Paris, or Vienna, or Constantinople. Houses, houses, houses! We weary of the ruralities of Wiltshire, and try Wales; tired of Wales, we fly to Savoy, or to Switzerland: it is the same thing. Trees, rivers, and fields; fields, trees, and rivers! with here

and there a hill some certain number of feet higher or lower than another! Then, everywhere, in all places, people, people, people! And this, forsooth, we call a change! You remember poor Charles——, who when tired, not absolutely of people, but of the every-day countenances he was in the habit of meeting about town, went to Thebes in the hope of seeing a variety in the “human face divine.” Almost the first man he encountered was his linen-draper, who was employed in taking the length of a fallen column with a yard measure. And what was his reason for being *there*? Change. Margate, he said, had become vulgar, and, which was worse, Ramsgate was trying to be genteel. No; believe me, Tom, that, for a positive change, there is nothing for it but, instead of going *down* into the country, to go *up*

out of town. Once above the clouds, adieu to houses, trees, fields, rivers, hills, and people. There might you be for a month with millions of chances to one against your balloon being jostled by another gentleman's. And such independent travelling too ! As our witty friend B——, who made an ascent some weeks ago, truly said, "No turnpikes to pay there." He might have added, no "What's the number?" no "That 'ere ticket dont clear this here gate ;" for positively, Tom, there are no gates to clear. The boundless regions of air are open to you ; not an acre is inclosed ; and for ever might you float there, unimpeded by a humane caution to beware of spring guns, or a friendly hint about prosecution for trespass, and the amiable rigours of the law. Then again, you escape the three main annoyances to which you are subjected

in *foreign* travelling elsewhere : passports are not required—nobody is there to ask who you are, where you come from, or what you may please to want in the clouds. There is no busy, prying, spying police to watch your movements, so that, were you dishonestly inclined, you might pocket a handful of little stars for brooches and breast-pins, if you could but reach them ; though let us hope no aerial traveller will ever compromise the character of the natives of the earth by so shabby an attempt. And, last of this category, there are no custom-house officers to search your car, and ask, “ What have you got in that bottle ? ” But, let me tell you, there is one set-off against these comforts : there are no inns in the whole of that country ; so that when what we had “ got in that bottle,” which was some sherry, was exhausted in

drinking to the health of our dear little Queen, we could not get our bottle replenished for love or money. So you see, Tom, things are not absolutely perfect even there.

And then, the noiselessness, the perfect quiet, which I have before alluded to! It is the sublime of stillness. They who have not heard it—do not add this expression to your collection of bulls—they who have not heard it (for the ear is affected by it) can form no idea of it. In the stillest night, on the quietest spot on earth, some sound is occasionally heard, how soft or slight soever it be—the ripple of water, the buzzing of an insect, the fall of a leaf. But up there, you might fancy yourself living in an age antecedent to the creation of sound. There might you indulge to the uttermost in the luxury of thought, reflection, meditation; there revel in all the delights of ima-

gination, with not the ruffling of a butterfly's wing to put your fancies to flight. And, then, for a certain society of architects of which you and I are members!—O Tom! such a place for building castles in the air!

Another of your questions (for I do not take them *seriatim*), is, “How high did you go?”

Balloonically speaking, not *very* high. We did not go high enough to hear the music of the spheres; or to have made out what sort of looking fellow was the man in the moon; even had that chaste lady condescended to make herself visible. Indeed, the old ballooners, who formed five of our party of nine,—that is to say, our admirable navigator Mr. Green, his lady, Mr. Spencer, and two of the Messrs. Hughes,—those old ballooners, I say, declared we went no height at all; and, in fact, our greatest elevation

did not much exceed four thousand feet (three-quarters of a mile), or, to make this vague statement somewhat more intelligible, only about twelve times the height of St. Paul's, measuring to the top of the cross. It was just high enough, however, for a tumble to have made us, the inexperienced in aeronautics, feel rather uncomfortable—and, perhaps, even the old ballooners themselves. Moreover, unlike a party which made a trip a few weeks ago, we had not taken the precaution of carrying up either a surgeon or a coroner in our company. But with GREEN for your guide (who is now nearly in the two-hundred-and-seventieth ascent of his balloonical age), as reasonably almost might you apprehend the accident of being driven up to the clouds in a Paddington omnibus, as that he should let you down from them with inconvenient velocity.

I next come to your "three single" questions all "rolled into one."

"At what time did you go up from Vauxhall Gardens; how long did you remain up; and at what time did you come down again?"

I do not despise you for talking about a balloon going up, for it is an error which you share in common with some millions of our fellow-creatures; and I, in the days of my ignorance, thought with the rest of you. I know better now, Tom. The fact is, we did not *go up* at all; but at about five minutes past six, on the evening of Friday, the 14th of September, 1838—(you want "particulars" so there they are for you)—at about that time, Vauxhall Gardens, with all the people in them, *went down!* Tom—Tom—I cannot have been deceived. I speak from the evidence of my senses,

founded upon repetition of the fact. Upon each of the three or four experimental trials of the powers of the balloon to enable the people to glide away from us with safety to themselves, down they all went about thirty feet—then, up they came again, and so on. There we sat quietly all the while in our wicker buck-basket, utterly unconscious of motion; till, at length, Mr. Green snapping a little iron, and thus letting loose the rope by which the earth was suspended to us—like Atropos cutting the connexion between us with a pair of shears—down it went with everything on it; and your poor, paltry, little Dutch toy of a town, (your Great Metropolis, as you insolently call it,) having been placed on casters for the occasion—I am satisfied of *that*—was gently rolled away from under us.

At once to satisfy you upon the two

other points of your triple (and pardon me for adding, your most unscientifically framed) question, *you remained down* during a little more than three hours; when, at about a quarter past nine, our able conductor, with an undeniable grappling-iron—an implement not made to take “No” for an answer—caught hold of the earth by the nape of its neck, as it were, on Wanstead Flats, and hauled it up to us with perfect ease. Four of our party, including Mrs. Green, stepped out of the cradle and returned to town. And here, on a dark night, on a lone heath—lone, do I say? No, by Jupiter! it was anything but lonely.

Wasn't it the first Lord Thurlow who longed for a day's shooting in an English mob? This may seem an odd, out-of-place question; but it shall presently be ac-

counted for, and, I trust, to your satisfaction. But, now, to another of your inquiries.

“Did you, when you were tolerably high, experience any extraordinary sensations?”

None whatever, Tom, but of admiration and delight. I apprehend that, judging from the common consequence of looking down from a point considerably elevated, you expect to be told that the sensation of dizziness was amongst the number. I remember meeting the younger B—, the surgeon, just after he had assisted at the opening of Porson’s skull. “Did you find anything extraordinary in it?” inquired I.—“I guess what you expect,” replied he, laughingly: “We found a little water, *but no Greek.*” Now, you are expecting to be told

“How fearful

And dizzy ’tis, to cast one’s eyes so low!”

Not so, however, from a balloon at *any* height. I do not know the exact elevation of the Shakspeare cliff: I believe though, it is not, by a great deal, so high as the cross of St. Paul's. I have lain down on the verge of it (the cliff, please to understand me) and looked over into the sea; but have been compelled to withdraw by an overpowering sensation of giddiness. It has been the same thing when looking over from the top of that place in the Regent's Park (stupidly misnamed the Colosseum) which is considerably lower. Nay, within three days after our *ascent*— (I will, through the remainder of this epistle, humour you in your delusion, Tom)— I was at a friend's chambers, *which are only on a second floor*; and, looking down from an open window into the garden (the sill of the window being rather low) I became

giddy, and was obliged to retire from it! At an elevation of twenty-seven hundred feet, I looked down upon St. Paul's—that is to say, from about eight times its own height—layers of smoke, like thin clouds, hanging just above the swell of the dome, and not the slightest inconvenience of the kind you expect did I, or any of my traveling companions, suffer from our exalted position! This is a curious fact; but a fact it is which, I doubt not, will be corroborated by every person who has made trial of it.

Now, how is this extraordinary circumstance to be accounted for? I have heard it explained thus:—In a balloon you are entirely detached from the earth: there are no intermediate points by which the eye can be *gradually* conducted downwards; so that the impression of height upon the

senses, that impression which causes dizziness, is indefinite, vague. From the parapet of a house, or from a column, or a tall cliff, the eye, on the contrary, is led by an intervening medium down to the base, and the elevation upon which you are placed being thus rendered palpable, dizziness (to such, I mean, as are liable to that affection) ensues. Amongst the many circumstances accumulated by Shakspeare to convey a terrifying notion of the height of the cliff at Dover, which is the one by which he mainly achieves his purpose? It is not, I humbly conceive, by

“The fishermen that walk upon the beach”

and who

“Appear like mice;”

nor by

“The tall anchoring bark diminished to her cock:”

it is not, indeed, by any of the objects which

he describes as seen in the extreme distance below. It is, I think, by the

“ Half way down

Hangs one that gathers samphire ; dreadful trade !
Methinks, he seems no bigger than his head.”

Setting aside the frightful picture of danger so powerfully *painted*, one may say, by the words “ *hangs one*,” and “ *dreadful trade*,” as having nothing to do with the present question ; that giddy and fearful “ half way down ” it is which, more than all the rest, impresses the imagination ; and which, *as a means of comparison*, enables, or, rather forces the mind to conceive the awful whole of the precipice. Now from a balloon there is no “ half way down : ” it is all (don't say *neck*) or nothing ; and from our aerial omnibus, when over the river, we looked down upon “ the tall anchoring barks ” (which appeared no larger than

Thames wherries) with an eye as steady as theirs on board who might have been looking up at us.

Now do not from this, Tom, take it into your head that I am about to open shop as a philosopher, and turn dealer in causes and effects: no such thing: the theory I offer you, right or wrong, good or bad, is none of my own; but, as it is the best I have been able to procure, I generously beg your acceptance of it.

A timely visit! At this moment, L-chf—d (no mean Shakspearian, and who has the poet's expounders and confounders at his finger ends) is with me. He reminds me that Johnson, in a note upon the passage which I have quoted, expresses an opinion at variance with the theory I offer you. Were the theory my own I would defend it against him were he twenty Johnsons; as it is, I

leave to its rightful owner the trouble of its defence. For my own part I think the doctor in the wrong, and, if I chose, could set him down within the compass of two commas, one semicolon, and a full stop. What was Johnson, indeed! He wrote the lives of some poets; a tolerable preface or two; a few passable essays; compiled, or composed, a dictionary; but was he ever up in a balloon? If he were, Boswell is culpably silent upon a point of such overwhelming importance. Time was, I entertained a slight respect for the leviathan of literature, as he was wont to be called; but since I have taken to read the lucubrations of Mr. Fee'dwell, the leading criticling of the Penny Dictator—for, now-a-days, literature and science, in all their respective branches, are made up and sold in packets price only one penny each—since then, I

have learnt to treat the blustering booby with becoming contempt. As for Pope—pooh! for Addison—psha! for Swift—pish! and all the Queen-Anne's-men tied together in a bunch—a fico for them! They were tame, twaddling, and understandable; “pretty fellows in their day;” but compared with the geniuses of our own, the high-soaring, deep-searching, soul-dissecting, heart-piercing pets of the criticlings——! Draw what conclusion you may please from the comparison, my faith in my Penny Dictator and his pets is unalterable. “I stand by my order;” and

“Nul n'aura de l'esprit hors nous et nos amis.”

So now to proceed.

“Where did you go?”

Where!—Set up your balloon, Tom. For ease and rapidity, there is no travelling like it. A balloon has performed

a mile in a minute for miles together! Only think of the conveniences and delights of that! You are sipping your wine at Windsor; a sudden fancy seizes you to go to the Opera; you order your balloon to be brought to your door at half-past seven; off you go, and before the clock strikes eight, there you are comfortably *installed* in time for the first bar of the overture! What a luxury! But suppose that, at the end of the half hour, you peep through your netting, and, instead of finding yourself just over the Haymarket, you discover that you are five-and-twenty miles on the way to Oxford, or Southampton, or Bristol? "*Where* did you go?" indeed! We went wherever our carriage, and its sworn confederate, the wind, chose to transport us. I admit that that most experienced, best, and safest balloon-driver in the world, the "Great Captain of the

Air," Mr. Green, has complete control over the "Here we go up, up, up, and there we go down, down, down;" but I believe it is not within the power of human ingenuity either to restrain or oppose the horizontal inclinations of the confederates, so as to command the "whereabout" with anything approaching to certainty, or precision—if at all. So much for one of the practical uses of the *science* of ballooning. This ought, perhaps, to have formed part of the answer to your concluding question, and which I have taken as the second—but it matters little.

Now, then, once more for the "*where?*" The balloon, which rose heavily—Now, don't be impatient, or angry, Tom; you shall have your answer in a minute or so: but if one may not digress in a familiar letter to a friend, where the deuce else is digression allowable?

I have been told that the wicked wag of one of the Sunday Newspapers said, the reason of that was, that a certain friend of yours, who was in the car, had got one of his heavy manuscripts in his pocket ; but that that being thrown over, the machine went up rapidly. Pleasant, this, for a professor of *light* literature, eh, Tom ? Never mind ; hard as it is, one must, as the sailors say, “ grin and bear it.” I wonder how poor Thomas Warton endured it, who received the joke direct at his head, which it was made expressly to fit—(*Vide* Probationary Odes)—when the joke was bran new, upwards of fifty years ago. Considering the terrible effects of it now, at twentieth-hand, the consequences to him, poor fellow ! must have been awful !

Once more, then, to—“ Where did you go ? ”

The balloon, which rose heavily, being

lightened of a bag of ballast—not bag and all, Tom, or mercy upon the most matter-of-fact skull to be found in all the Realms of Dulness that might have chanced to come in its way—not excepting even the cast-iron scone of a *critic* (?!) in a certain Dublin print, who, in his notice of a professed satire upon the *would-be* nautical novels of the day, and which is, for the purpose, an uninterrupted series of intentional blunders; he, poor innocence! taking the whole in sober seriousness, gravely complains that the writer of the satire knows no more about life at sea than a Highlander knows of knee-buckles! And here be some of your leaders of public opinion, eh, Tom? —But, as I was saying, the balloon being lightened of a bag of ballast, it became a little more nimble, and, from the direction it was taking, seemed inclined to start for a

race with the Birmingham train. Presently, however, it changed its mind and took a different course. *Mind* did I say? no, no; it has no mind. The truth must be told. It is a senseless, swaggering, inflated creature, which makes a figure in the world, but is supported by nothing intrinsically valuable:—gas, nought but gas. It can do little or nothing for itself; it is dependant for its ups and downs upon the will, or the caprice, of others. It cannot get on, it cannot get forward, it cannot move an inch if left to its own merits; but *raise the wind* for it, and it will rise and rise till, to the ken of mortal eye, it appears no bigger than a pea: exactly as it is with some poor, puffed-up, human thing whose real insignificance is not discovered till it is raised to an eminence which it is unqualified to maintain. And thus, Tom, some-

thing not unuseful, if properly considered, may be learnt even up in "the desert air."

But, methinks, I hear you exclaim, "But what has all this to do with my never-to-be-answered question," "Where did you go?"

Well, then; we went—Why, bless my soul! now I think of it, I told you an hour ago: we went all the way to Wanstead, the name of the precise spot where we descended being——. Now, I cannot for the life of me help it; for when I sit down to scribble a letter to a friend, the first thing that occurs to me, so it be at all to the purpose, must *out*. You are a collector of odd coincidences: here is a brace for you. Benson Hill (who can very well afford to spare a pleasant anecdote), travelling though I forget what county, upon coming to a

sharp declivity which opened to his view a beautiful prospect, halloed to the post-boy to tell him the name of the place: "Benson Hill, sir," said the boy. That's one. The other night, after bobbing in and out of wet clouds for more than an hour of our time, we came down, in the dark, on a damp, cold, comfortless heath. Upon touching ground, we heard shouted by a hundred voices, "*Wanstead Flats! Wanstead Flats!*"—the latter word being annoyingly well articulated. There's the other. But, for a gratifying compliment—! Yesterday, I met your sister Clara.—"So!" said she, "you have been up in a balloon?"—"Yes," replied I, in the tone and manner of one who thinks he has performed a marvellous exploit, and is prepared for a complimentary remark upon it.—"How *could* you be such a FOOL!" exclaimed she. And that, Tom, I

swear it by the Great Nassau! was all I took by my motion.

Now, again, to your letter; and I promise you I will no more digress—unless the temptation should prove an overmatch for my resolution.

“What did you see?” comes next.

Sights, oh! such sights! Gulliver not fabulous. Men and women six inches tall; and in proportion as we rose, they diminished—to five, four, three inches. I am glad I am down again, for I was imbibing a very contemptuous opinion of my species. I apprehend, however, this feeling is not peculiar to balloonists, but that it is common to very many who are placed but a little above their fellow-creatures: the height of a mere carriage-wheel will sometimes produce it. Strange! From an elevation of not more than four thousand feet

we could not distinguish who composed the swarms of moving mites beneath us. There were amongst them—and this is no wild assumption—peers of the realm, famous warriors, profound philosophers, fine poets, patriot orators whose voices are never raised but for their country's good—(count *them* upon your fingers) — orator-patriots who profess to be regardless of their own— (take Babbage's machine :)—there were the proud, the humble, the dignified, the lowly, yet, to us, the greatest amongst them was undistinguishable from the rest! Again I exclaim, Strange! But if from our paltry elevation, borne upwards and upwards on the wings of thought, till, wearied with the unbounded and interminable flight, we pause to reflect that from height unimaginable those living atoms are beheld ——. “ And thereby hangs a tale,” says Touchstone.

Go up in a balloon, Tom; when you come down again reflect upon what you have seen; but, chiefly, re-cogitate the thoughts which the novelty of the situation cannot fail to suggest to any but a mind of mud: and if you find yourself a harsher philosopher or a worse man than you went up—why, then, I shall only say you will not have deserved, as you will not have profited by, your ride in the region of birds.

Sights! There was all London at a grasp, made of baby-houses, and pepper-casters, and extinguishers, and chess-men, with, here and there, a dish-cover—things which you call domes, and spires, and steeples. Oh, the vanity of man! Then there were its squares and pleasant places, bedecked with gooseberry-bushes intersected by yellow strips, half a yard wide, in curves

and zig-zags. . Then there was the "broad bosom of old Father Thames." Broad! I looked down upon it at its broadest, excluding with my half-closed hand all other objects, and thought what a blockhead must be the architect of Waterloo Bridge to have built nine arches for it when one would have spanned it! Presently I looked at the bridge and wondered how the architect could be so stupid as to build so small a bridge for so wide a river! Had I been the architect, thought I, what a bridge you should have seen! It is astonishing, Tom, how wise we are, and how much better we understand things even than they do whose business it is to understand them, when we see them imperfectly and at a distance! Since my return amongst you I have taken a nearer view of both bridge and river, and think the architect knows more about

bridge-building than I gave him credit for. That reminded me that I have some few other trifling matters to reconsider in the same way—and perhaps, Tom, so have you.

We passed along the Blackfriars' Road (almost in a direct line), having hovered for a while over Bedlam. I wondered what the lunatics thought of the Bal-lunatics. Perhaps the most rational among them were of opinion that we ought to change places with the maddest of their companions.—At one end of the Blackfriars' Road stood a bodkin bolt upright, with four little dots of light about it—they were just beginning to light the town—and at the further end were two other bodkins, commemorative of two great men. One could not but admire those two bodkins, they seemed so admirably adapted to their purpose.

We were now blown westward, and saw

one of our Theatres-Royal. It was hardly possible but to mistake it for a *minor theatre*. This again may have been the effect of distance, which, when near it, *or in it*, would doubtless be dispelled.

And what is that with its sloping, black-slated roof, that seems no bigger than a dog-kennel? Oh, melancholy object! it is a mausoleum, the last resting-place of so many departed *Fortunes!* Enter its awful portals and RUIN welcomes you as her guest! Yet such are the calenturian fascinations of the place—(forgive me for writing *fine*)—that no sooner is one hapless victim engulfed in its fatal depths, than another and another and another rush eagerly to the brink, struggling against each other for the fearful precedence of destruction. It is, in plain English, *Le Théâtre de l'Opéra Italien*. Tom, I

have an odd crotchet. I have long been trying to be ruined and have not yet succeeded. Now, the first time you see advertised to be lessee'd "that most desirable property," such or such a theatre—but let it be a large one, for I have no desire to be ruined by halves, that I promise you—engage it for me. I shall be prepared to stake the usual sum required upon the adventure, namely, £00,000 ; nor would I haggle about an additional £0, or so. In consequence of my inexperience in management I may, the first season, be ruined for no more than three thousand, or four thousand pounds, and thereby be reduced to the necessity of taking nothing but a good house in town and *setting up* my cab. Next season I may have the misfortune to be ruined to the tune of five thousand or six, and thus be inhumanly compelled to add to my miseries a

snug box in the country and a *calèche*. On the third and fourth seasons, ruin increasing to a degree intolerable, I shall be rudely driven out of my snug box and forced to take refuge in a handsome villa, with nothing to console me for the inconveniences and sufferings attendant upon my unhappy change of condition, but an additional equipage, a few more horses, and a ———. Tom, I *will* be ruined.

In yonder little building, space is found for the repose of hundreds of illustrious men who have conferred glory upon their country, and hundreds more are therein commemorated. It is Westminster Abbey, wherein, as it is said, a monument to the memory of BYRON is *not* to be erected. Is there then no vacant nook remaining to receive it? I know what you will reply; but, after all, the question is a two-handled question, and (I willingly ad-

mit it) a delicate one. The right handle—I mean thereby merely the right-*handed* handle—is held by the Admissionists, the left by the Exclusionists. The cry of the latter is “ Irreligion ! Immorality ! ” of the former, “ Place for him whose genius has added glory to the glory of the poetical reputation of England ! ” Heaven forbid that the last and most sacred tribute that a grateful country can pay to the memory of departed worth, should *ever* be desecrated by its indiscriminate bestowal upon doubtful religion or questionable morality ! but ——. In short, Tom, I see but one satisfactory mode of settling the dispute : give us an *expurgated*, a *Family* edition of Westminster Abbey, in which not a Name shall remain that may not stand as a type of absolute perfection ; and *that*, by silencing the Admissionists, will at once put an end to

the controversy. How the holiday-folks might like this arrangement is a matter of minor importance; but it is probable they would not see *quite* so many monuments for their money.

Then we saw the statue of George the Third, in Pall Mall East. Why do people abuse it so? I assure you it did not look so much amiss:—to be sure, we could see nothing of the pig-tail or the cocked hat—and, indeed, but very little of the rider.

And the National Gallery. I dare say, now, you fancy one feels a more than common contempt for it when viewing it from so great a height. If so, you never were more mistaken in your life: one's contempt for it is not in the slightest degree increased. Perhaps you will explain this circumstance by the reason that it has been *looked down upon* from the first.

And now we were carried back again to where the Albion mills are *not* ; and thence, across the river, to the Tower, clearing St. Paul's in our flight.

A curious calculation was once made, having for its basis the relative sizes of the elephant and the flea : that, if an elephant were endued with the saltatory powers of its smaller fellow in the brute creation, it could leap from Hyde-Park corner to Greenwich Hospital at one bound, clearing St. Paul's by the way ! The intent of this calculation was, if I recollect rightly, to shew that, *if* Nature had bestowed on the elephant a portion of the flea's facilities for locomotion, how much more serviceable an animal it might be made than it actually is. I have lately been reading a great deal of Philosophy, Natural, Moral, and Political—principally the last—by which I have so far

profited that my head is crammed full with *Irs*. To what extent the world would be improved were all those doubtful *Irs* converted into positive *Is's*, I will not venture even to imagine: nor will I presume to doubt that if Nature would adopt the hint of the Improver upon the construction of elephants, and, for the future, make those unwieldy animals more like fleas, vast advantages therefrom might accrue to society; but I have a crotchet, that *if* fleas were more like elephants—the consequences to society would be exceedingly disagreeable. Upon the whole, therefore, I am of opinion that *this Ir—to say nothing of some few others—* had better be let alone.

St. Paul's! To be looking down upon that stupendous structure from many times its own height, produces a strange impression on the mind! I can describe or express

it but in one way, and am even forced to coin a word for the occasion : it seems like *possibilifying* an impossibility. Beyond this, one's sensations are not definable : but I envy not the dolt—if such a one there be—who has accomplished this, or can at any time afterwards reflect upon having accomplished it, with indifference. Now should you tease me for a month I can say no more about it ; but here—

[]

I leave a blank, which you are at liberty to get some one else to fill up upon the subject—if he can. And now, Tom, you are welcome to quiz my St.-Paulserism, if you please.

I have candidly confessed to you that *Possibilifying* is a word of my own coining ; *St.-Paulserism* issues from the same illicit manufactory. Now, neither of these

being current, I cannot compel you to take them ; so, if you choose, you may nail them down as counterfeits upon the back of your Dictionary, and prevent their getting into circulation to the detriment of the lawful English of the realm. Tom ; if all words of the same stamp put, and putting, forward, were to be treated in that manner, what a very ugly appearance our Johnsons would make ! Why do poor devils sometimes coin base shillings and sixpences ? It is because they *are* poor devils, destitute of real money. Why do certain writers interlard their pages with such chambermaid-isms as I have before alluded to ? It is (for a corresponding reason) because——. And that's another of my crotchets.

And here we are over the Tower. What would Julius Cæsar have said at seeing his

White Tower, with its four turrets, converted into a stand of cruets ! And here we saw some tiny red things placed all in a row : they moved first one way, then another ; now they formed a line, now a square, and so forth. At the Pantheon Bazaar you may see exactly a like toy, which, by merely pulling a bit of string, is made to perform similar evolutions. I wonder whether it be an expensive toy—one of much value—for it is the toy by which, or strictly speaking, *with* which, national disputes are settled. This may appear very absurd ; it is, nevertheless, true, and I'll tell you how the matter is managed, Tom. Suppose two great nations squabbling together as to which has the best right to a little bit of barren rock, lately thrown up by some convulsion of Nature, somewhere in the Pacific Ocean ; which little bit of rock is of no use to either

party, and to the possession of which neither has the smallest right in the world. Well ; this being “ a just quarrel upon the issue of which depends the very existence of this great nation,” says one ; and this being also a “ just quarrel upon the issue of which depends the very existence of *this* great nation,” says the other : instead of settling the dispute by a sincere appeal to reason, common sense, and the common principles of justice—for, mind you, they both, in the first instance, *make believe* to do so—instead of that, they set about knocking to pieces each other’s toys, and the party whose toys, “ by the aid of Divine Providence,” hold out the longest, takes rightful possession of the little bit of rock, and enjoys the invaluable privilege of blowing a horn and shouting “ Glorious Victory ! ” into the bargain. Now that is

it exactly ; and if ever you and I should have the misfortune to come to a dispute, we will each purchase one of those toys at the Pantheon Bazaar, and settle our misunderstanding in that very rational manner, Tom.

By the bye, here we heard the tiny band play a small "God save the Queen," in sounds not quite as powerful as those of an Eolian harp; and—touching our "hearings,"—at seven o'clock we heard the hour struck by the repeaters in half the pepper-casters and extinguishers of London; such of them as were provided with musical snuff-boxes, chiming the quarters.

Just over the Jewel Office, one could not help thinking of poor Colonel Blood, of crown-stealing memory. Unlucky dog! there were no balloons in his days.

Looking down again, there are six little boxes, detached from each other, all of which

might be placed in a moderately-sized room. They are the warehouses belonging to the St. Katherine's Docks! And there are hundreds of "tall anchoring barks"—(of which, when immediately over them, you see neither their masts nor rigging, nothing but their white decks)—which appear no bigger than Thames wherries! Pretty little things! When ultra-liberalism shall have done its best for free trade, and for the all-against-*us* reciprocity system: when all the negroes shall have been *white-mancipated*: when Sambo shall be Emperor of Jamaica, Alcibiades King of Barbadoes, and Ptolemy Viceroy of Antigua; what appropriate, what commodious things those diminutive ships and warehouses will be for the purposes of our Colonies and Commerce! Don't sail away, little ships—you may ere long be wanted.

The want of appropriateness—of adaptation to a purpose—is a greater fault, and is more sensibly felt, in Architecture, perhaps, than in any other—— Stop! I will not inflict a dissertation upon you, but merely tell you what put this thought into my head: it was looking from those warehouses to the new Hall of the Goldsmiths' Company. Those—vast, massive, substantial, standing in the naked simplicity of brick and mortar: the Hall a palace, in which are united splendour and elegance; which is ornamented with all that the richest fancy, tempered by the finest taste, could suggest. Yet each, in its way, is an admirable example of appropriateness—of exact adaptation to its particular purpose. It is not a little extraordinary that two things so dissimilar should have emanated from the same mind—for both are the works of one archi-

tect: and it may be asserted that Hardwick has displayed as correct a taste in his piles of plain brick and mortar as in his gorgeous palace. Another instance of this quality is under one's eye at the same moment, the noble Post-office; and not far from it, another—Vulliamy's Law Institution in Chancery Lane, an edifice which for appropriateness, and for integrity of design, is not surpassed by any in London. Contrasts, no less than comparisons, are odious: I, therefore, will not say anything about the —Wind! Wind! hold hard! Don't blow us back again to the National Gallery.

And that gloomy stone building is Newgate—a prison wherein are confined felons of different degrees in crime, from the petty pilferer to the deliberate assassin. Some are expiating their offences by a temporary loss of liberty, others awaiting their day of

banishment, haply some the hour of death. By Draco ! but this is intolerable ! What right has man to inflict such sufferings upon his fellow creatures ? How should *you* like to be caged for three months in a disagreeable room in Newgate and prevented the exercise of *your* usual avocations ? How would *you* endure the being torn from your family and friends and sent to a country not of your own choosing ? With what stomach for your breakfast would *you* get out of your bed at eight in the morning to be strangled at nine, in the open face of day, and in the presence of thousands of persons collected together to glut their eyes with the sight of a human being throttled with a rope—for such is the fashionable phrase—you call it the *cant*—for describing the execution of a murderer : how, I say, would *you* like that ? To this you will reply that you never

cut a purse, ruined a family by forging a will, or murdered a man in his sleep, because he happened to have five pounds in his waistcoat pocket for which you had a pressing occasion. I repeat it : it is intolerable that any of our fellow creatures should be treated in a manner which we ourselves should not relish. You are a kind-hearted fellow, Tom ; you feel acutely for the *unmerited* sufferings of your fellow creatures, and would to the utmost of your power relieve them : I will even go so far as to admit that you are not bloody-minded. But why will you persist in calling the new school of Humanity (of which I am an humble disciple) the “ Humanity-run-mad ? ” We require nothing more than that *there shall be no sort of punishment for any sort of crime* : and when through the exertions of the popular member for Dyot Street (who

is to be) this principle shall have become the law of the land, then shall Newgate and the Millbank Penitentiary be converted into sets of pleasant and commodious chambers for the retirement of thieves, forgers, and murderers, till the "affair," in their respective cases, has had time to "blow over."

On the opposite side of the river we saw a line of arches, nearly as large as those of a bagatelle-table, extending to the length of about three miles ; and on it were several little trunks, seemingly running away with each other : it was the Greenwich rail-road, with its train in progress—the prettiest play-thing imaginable. I wonder what is to become of all the horses ! Day by day is their utility diminishing. Some time ago, Mr. John Bull, who sometimes cries out before he is hurt, was in a prodigious pucker

at the bare idea of England selling to France, Russia, and America, some of her finest race-horses. Why not sell the whole of them, every beast that runs, draws, or carries, donkeys and all, and make rail-roads and steam-carriages for the money? It would bring those insolent quadrupeds to their senses, and teach them that we can do without them. As for horse-racing, that, even as things are, is said to be getting a little *out*, for reasons, if for any, which they may know who are more in the secret than I would pretend to be. Yet racing might still go on: we could have steam-carriage races. Then would there be Lord A's celebrated Smoke-jack beating Colonel B's famous Steam-away by the length of half a boiler; or it might be a boiler-and-boiler run for the whole distance; or Smoke-jack might win easy by three carriages. But this style

of racing would be liable to one serious evil : suppose some jockey—or some gentleman—were to play tricks with a rival's boiler—or his own—by clandestinely loosening a screw, or so ? Now we know very well that, with live animals for racing, *no trick ever is, or ever can be played.*

I have a crotchet, though, that should this rail-road and steam mania continue much longer, a balloon in the air will be the only safe thing to live in. Like Belvidera, the cry with everybody is, "I'll dig, dig, dig;" and we shall go on digging and digging till, one of these fine days, we shall have the upper crust of the earth breaking in. There'll be a catastrophe for you ! You think I am jesting ? Not a bit of it : I have seldom been more serious upon a grave subject since I first set foot upon this half-scooped-out globe of ours. Conceive, if

you can, the quantity of iron already taken, and daily taking, out to make posts of, and columns, and fences, and soft stuffing for chairs and for mattresses, and rail-ways, and bridges, and steam-boats, and cannon and shot, and thousands of other things conducive to the pleasure and benefit of mankind ! Then the millions on millions of bushels of coals ! Gilbert Gurney's friend, Hull himself, might cry " bushels " here ! Why, one-third of the world's solid inside has already been dug out, and let off in smoke.

“ Thus far into the bowels of the land,
Have we march'd on without impediment ; ”

but things can't go on in this way for ever, Tom ; and the end of it will be as I have predicted.

Then, as if the crisis were not being brought on with sufficient rapidity by great

means, it must be assisted by small ! There are your ante-diluvian-deluge people, the geologists—there they go about chipping and chipping ! they don't do much, certainly, (I mean, *in the way of mischief*,) but every little helps. Talking of Geology, how nearly she has put poor Botany's nose out of joint ! Every man, woman, and child you meet, have hammers and chisels in their pockets. But by Botany, I mean that science, or rather that part of the science, which teaches young ladies to call some of the prettiest things in nature by some of the ugliest of names, to say the best of them. By Geology, however, they are taught to use such words only as *quartz* and *silica*, and the like, from which they cannot derive an idea ; so that, in that respect, she is, perhaps, a safer instructress for them than her less civil-spoken sister.

Names! How oddly one thought leads on to another! How would you name the present age? The Iron Age, but that it lacks novelty. The Age of Smoke—or of Steam? No,—the Age of Vapour would be better, for not only are most things kept going by vapour, but also many men. They begin in vapour, they go on vapouring, and in vapour they end. In common parlance, this is called “keeping up appearances.” For instance:—A banker is in a tottering condition: he starts a new carriage, multiplies his “grand dinners,” and “princely entertainments,” (as they are described by the newspapers,) and common report adds a plum to his vast fortune. Matters become worse with him: he makes it known that he is treating for the purchase of a magnificent estate; he must now have turned a million: and the “house” is besieged by suitors for the

favour of being allowed to place their money in the hands of that richest and safest of all existing bankers. Next morning, the "house" is again besieged—but the doors are closed as fast as bolts and bars can make them. Accounts are examined; they shew that his vast fortune was from the beginning, and is now, £0,000,000; a dividend is declared of five-farthings in the pound, payable at the end of fifteen months, and the "suitors," thrusting their hands into their empty pockets, whisper to each other—"Vapour!" The next is a shopkeeper, who——. But one instance may stand for a thousand. An' you love me, Tom, let us call this the Age of Vapour.

It was now night—dark—and we had seen all the sights which day-light could shew us. And where think you we are now? Up amongst the raw materials of

which are made hail, rain, and snow—enveloped in the clouds. It was a fine situation for studying Meteorology, and you may be sure I did not miss the opportunity. I have nearly completed a Weather-Almanac which I will warrant to be *wrong* not more than nineteen times in every twenty:—so you see I have given Murphy the go-by, and with something to spare.

It was a very nice, clean cloud Mr. Green chose for us, perfectly white, but (as I believe I have already told you) rather damp. It was so beautifully white that a crotchet took me that it must be the very material of which angels' garments are made. If so, and one had to choose between a fleecy cloud and fleecy-hosiery, I should follow the counsel of my left elbow, which at this moment whispers me for which to decide. It would be an insult to

that pure cloud to think of a London fog at the same time with it : even the cleaner and less disreputable sea-fog must keep its distance. It was semi-opaque ; above, beneath, and round about us ; and, although it did not prevent our seeing each other with perfect distinctness, it seemed to be so tightly drawn round the netting that supported the car, that had one thrust his finger through the meshes I fancied he must have made a hole in it. Ha ! ha ! ha !— (That is how we *write* a laugh for the stage, Tom ; and I have known actors so correct in their study, so scrupulous in the delivery of their text, that they would not give the audience a ha ! more, or a ha ! less, than their author had furnished them with for the purpose. Care and attention in this respect are faults, however, which some actors I see are much less prone to commit than some I have seen. But lest you

should imagine it is *this* I was laughing at, —no, no—I will give you the laugh in its right place.)—Ha! ha! ha! It certainly did seem very odd to be perched up there, like birds in a wire cage with a white cambric handkerchief thrown over it, suspended from the ceiling, unconscious of the slightest motion, undisturbed by the slightest sound.

Well; after some time we descended a little, leaving our nebulous curtain above us.

“But *London* shewed another sight—!”

Now I am aware that this is mal-treating a line of one of Campbell's finest odes, but it has itself mainly to thank for it: why did it thrust itself so obtrusively and temptingly in one's way? Moral, for some young gentlemen, and here and there for a young lady—which they may deduce for themselves.

It was indeed a sight—one which has rarely, very rarely, been seen by, or “within the memory of, even the oldest Balloonists.” Mr. Green himself, in all his two hundred and seventy ascents, cannot number it more than (I think he said) four or five times. We certainly had been put upon short allowance of day-light for our observations, but here was a glorious compensation for that deficiency. *It was quite dark.* And now conceive yourself looking down on an enormous map of London, with its suburbs to the east, north, and south, as far as the eye could reach, DRAWN IN LINES OF FIRE! For anything beyond this I must leave you to your own powers of conceiving; for, to speak frankly, my powers of describing are here at a dead halt.

A few years ago it was calculated that

in moral London there were nearly twice as many gin-shops as in reprobate Paris there were coffee-houses, and half as many vendors of physic as of gin. How the account of Parisian coffee-houses may stand now, I know not; but—mark the March of *Gin-tellect!*—to the disgrace of our country, and of our legislature also, who if it possess the power of checking or diminishing the evil yet neglects to do so, gin-shops—(with equal regard to the refined habits of our lower and lowest classes, and to the insidious allurements concealed under pretty and palliative names, now designated *gin-palaces*) — gin-shops have more than doubled their number!—The increase of apothecaries'-shops (and they, too, are many of them nick-named “Medical Halls,” “Pharmacopœian Emporiums,” and so forth) seems to have maintained its fair

proportion. With Gin *versus* Jenner (leaving Physic to an equal balance of kill and cure at the year's end) Malthus need not have been so violently alarmed about an overwhelming increase of population.

“And what put *that* into your head?” you will ask.

It was looking down upon those lines of fire and observing the great number of little, brilliant spots of light, blue, green, purple, and crimson, with which they were variegated, each indicating a Temple of Æsculapius!—Now I should not wonder at seeing, in the course of a month, that name, in gilt letters, over the door of some dirty little physic-shop in St. Giles’.

To tell you now of two or three pretty, merely *pretty* things we saw besides this, such as Greenwich by gas-light (though I don't like to throw away such a sweet

alliteration) would be an anti-climax. The burning map, therefore, shall be the last scene of my pantomime. What a hint for *somebody!*

“ The whole to conclude with,
And has been in preparation for many
months,
A grand, novel, and truly-unprecedented
Exhibition,

TOTALLY REGARDLESS OF ALL EXPENSE,
AND AT AN IMMENSE OUTLAY,
resolved to gratify the public, and which
only the ample means of this establishment
can produce,

A MAP OF LONDON
upon an unrivalled scale of magnificence,
drawn from actual measurement by the first
Artists
IN BURNING FIRE!!!”

So now, Tom, we'll prepare for our descent.

But our cautious coachman had taken prudential measures for this not very long after we had cleared the chimney-tops, spires, steeples, and such-like impediments. Hands were set to work—his own being sufficiently occupied by the important care of the valve-lines—first, to unfix and take in the purple covering which, with its yellow fringes and festoons, conceals the white-wicker nakedness of the car, and gives it so snug an appearance. This being done, and the covering folded up and placed in a bag at the bottom of the carriage, the next order was to let go the grapnel, which was soon dangling at the end of a line of a hundred, or a hundred-and-twenty feet in length. Then, the ballast being arranged so as to be conveniently “served at the

shortest notice," we were ready to descend as soon as choice or necessity might require. And, when the final descent was determined upon,—“Now,” inquired Mr. Green; “how much ballast have we got remaining?”—“O, plenty,” replied some one.—“That answer won’t do: *howmuch?*”—“Why, five or six bags under this seat and four or five under the other.”—“That won’t do: how many bags *exactly*, and what are their *weights?*” These questions having been satisfactorily answered, “Now, Mr. —,” continued Green, “be ready with a bag of ballast on *your* side, and you, Mr. — with one on *your’s*; and when I call you by name—but be sure you wait till you hear your own name called!—please to throw out about four pounds of ballast.”—I give you these particulars, trifling though they be, first, in justice to Mr. Green, who,

you will thence gather, is not the man to neglect a chance of safety even of the value of a grain of sand ; and next, as letting you behind the scenes, as it were—an indulgence but seldom accorded to the spectators of the public performance, the ascent.

It was not, however, till nearly two hours after these preliminary measures had been completed that the descent was accomplished. There was little or no wind, as you will infer from the fact that at the end of a three hours' ride we found ourselves no farther than Wanstead. For nearly half an hour, the balloon, having crossed a serpentine thing about six yards long and two inches broad (the River Lee) remained almost stationary over a lime-kiln, near the junction of the Rumford and Chelmsford roads—quite high enough, though, to escape singeing. In vain did Mr. Green bob up

and down, and up again, in the hope of meeting with a current that would carry us *some* where, the further the better ; for a descent near London is never desirable (and the less so at night) as the balloon is generally followed by a numerous and mischievous rabble from the outskirts of the town. And so it happened with us. But up or down it was the same thing : there never was known a worse season for currents ; so that, at each descent, there was the eternal lime-kiln beneath us, and no one seemed inclined to make *that* the landing-point. In vain, also, did our captain endeavour to elude the pursuit of the rabble (whose shouts we distinctly heard) by hiding himself in the clouds : no sooner did we re-appear than again were we saluted with their "sweet voices." Well ; we could not remain up for ever ; so, a convenient spot

for the purpose being discovered, there we alighted in safety and with perfect ease—not the slightest rebound intimating to us that we had touched ground. Should Government ever establish a line of balloon-packets, I hope Mr. Green will be appointed to the command of the best that may be put in commission. But this they will do *as matter of course* :—there is no instance upon record of their having appointed to any post or employment an inefficient person.

It was about a quarter past nine and quite dark. Four of the party returned to town : five remained to take charge of the balloon. And here we had for companions nearly five hundred of as pleasant persons as ever made odds against five. They were composed chiefly of the veriest rabble that Stepney, Ratcliffe, Limehouse, Poplar, and the eastern outskirts of London, could disgorge.

“Never till now stood I in such a presence !” These disinterested gentry had followed us from their respective quarters with the amiable intention of rendering assistance, as they said ; but as their assistance had not been required, their claims for payment for their disinterestedness were rejected. Our captain then ordered all hands on board—that is, that we should resume our places in the car—whilst he, in the hope of inducing our kind friends to leave us, informed them that his intention was to remain on the heath all night, preparatory to a fresh start at day-light. To discharge his balloon in their presence he dared not, for they would undoubtedly have cut it to pieces :—not for the value of the silk and cordage, but, merely, as specimens for their scrap-books and albums :—just as other collectors do sometimes tear prints

out of books in libraries, public or private, as ornaments for their own portfolios. Then came their yells ; their savage imprecations, “ curses *both loud and deep* ;” their threats to destroy the balloon ; an intention which I am satisfied was only not fulfilled from a difference of opinion amongst them, touching the best mode of carrying it into execution. To us these divisions in the enemies’ camp (or cabinet, if you will) was a victory—for both in camps and cabinets divisions tend to the success of the opposite party. At length, wearied by unprofitable attendance upon us, by twos and fives and tens they dispersed ; till, at about eleven o’clock, we were left with some dozen or fifteen men belonging to the neighbourhood, who were useful and civil too. And now you may understand what it was that induced

my seemingly out-of-place question, touching the first Lord Thurlow.

By midnight the balloon was gathered in and packed up; and within half an hour afterwards we were seated at a comfortable deal table, at a road-side public-house—the “Eagle and Child”—(mercy upon eagle or child either that had happened at that moment to fall in the way of our hunger!)—and regaled with the best the larder and cellar afforded: such bread-and-cheese and ale, Tom!—Ude’s most exquisite achievements assisted by Brind’s best claret, might without dishonour have doffed caps to it.

Did you ever see the death, or rather, the killing, of a balloon? To be in at the death of the Great Nassau was a fine sight, and an ample compensation for the inconveniences and discomforts just preceding it.

Remember, the night was dark! Day-light would have marred the effect. There was the huge monster which, but a little while ago, had flown away with nine of us dangling at its tail, pinned down to the ground. Its grand and graceful form stood out in bold relief against the sombre sky. It had already been crippled by the expulsion of some quantity of its breath of life, but it was not a creature to surrender its existence at a blow. Its destruction was a work of time, and, as the work proceeded, it heaved and panted and groaned, till, its throes becoming fainter and fainter, it finally gave up the gas and lay stretched on the earth—as flat as a pancake! And there's a touch of the sublime for you.

And, now, that huge, swollen, and swaggering creature, which had lately astonished all beholders, was folded up and placed at

the bottom of its own little car, leaving still room above it sufficient to accommodate another of its own proportions! Yet in that there was nothing to wonder at. Had it been self-sustained? No! Gas—*puffery!*—had been its main support. Tom;—I quitted the ground with a moral lesson in my pocket; and it were to be wished that all travellers, whether by land, sea, or air, were as great gainers by their excursions.

I had nearly overlooked one of your questions, which is, whether I would advise you to try a balloon-trip. I would not dissuade you from it, because, with MR. GREEN *for your conductor*—I say this to you with “good emphasis” and, let me add, “sound discretion,”—the danger of the adventure is reduced to the lowest possible point; but I would not for any consideration incur the responsibility of *inducing* you to tempt a

region where, should an accident occur—and balloons are but silk, bal-lunatics but men—the consequences, beyond all human skill and prudence to avert or to remedy, must be fatal. Now, I can fancy the happy state of indecision in which this prudent counsel will have placed your mind. But here is something positive for you, just to give it an inclination. Do not go up in a parachute, nor with fireworks, nor with even the tamest tiger that, as yet, stands unconvicted of having made minced meat of a man.

We all know the fate of that poor simpleton, Cocking : so much for parachutes !

I was one of the thousands who saw (and I *heard* it too) the destruction of Madame Blanchard. On the evening of the 6th July, 1819, she ascended in a balloon from the Tivoli Gardens at Paris. At a certain elevation she was to discharge some fire-works

which were attached to her car. From my own windows I saw the ascent. For a few minutes the balloon was concealed by clouds. Presently it re-appeared, and there was seen a momentary sheet of flame. There was a dreadful pause. In a few seconds, the poor creature, enveloped and entangled in the netting of her machine, fell with a frightful crash upon the slanting roof of a house in the Rue de Provence (not a hundred yards from where I was standing), and thence into the street,—and Madame Blanchard was taken up a shattered corpse! It was supposed that the rockets which ought to have been made to point *downwards* were improperly managed; and thus the catastrophe was accounted for. So much for fire-work ascents!

Of tiger-ascents the results are yet unknown, though they may easily be guessed

at in the event of an accident either above or below. I have already enlightened you with my opinion as to the *utility* of ballooning: let that pass for just so little as it may be worth; but I entertain serious doubts as to whether parachutes, or even fire-work ascents can be rendered serviceable to science in any of its branches—unless coffin-making be reckoned of the number. Tigers, however, have not yet been put upon their trial; so, till they have, we will give them the benefit of the humane maxim of the English law.

Now, of these three exhibitions, two are both brutal and stupid; and the best that can be said of the squib-and-cracker affair is, that, childish as it is, you get in return for the endangering of human life, a pretty show to stare at. That is something, certainly. But don't you be induced to join any of those parties; and should your bro-

ther Dick, who is now in the commission of the peace, give the weight of his sanction to such mischievous fooleries, even by winking at them, he will deserve to be degraded from his trust.

But, to return—to the subject, and to town, at the same time. The “Eagle and Child” being by no means so well provided with lodging as with refreshments, only two of our party could be accommodated in the former respect ; and conveyances being nowhere procurable at that late hour, shortly after one o’clock, A. M., three of the “intrepid aeronauts” (*vide* Newspapers) marched to London, where we arrived, as well as could be expected, not long after four.

I should not have noticed this occurrence but that it led to an extraordinary result. Upon my return to town, fatigued by my walk, I threw myself into an easy chair and

fell into—what do you think?—a *reverie*! Now, though *reveries* were formerly much in vogue upon occasions like the present, I cannot recollect an instance of an accident of the kind befalling any writer within the present century.

Well ; I fell into a *reverie*, and (my head still full of the balloon) I fancied the balloon a Statesman, and its conductor Mr. Fee'dwell, a hireling, parasitical puff-writer, and *special Cad to a Literary Omnibus*. Fee'dwell inflated the Statesman with his puffs, and the Statesman presently swelled to the dimensions of a Chatham, a Pitt, a Fox—all three in one !

Next, a Secretary of State for the —— . But, hold ! I am looking out for a pension ; so upon this subject not a word more even to you, Tom.

Next, a Poet :—Milton, Pope, and Dryden

—Byron, Campbell, and Rogers, were each, and all together, his inferiors.

The balloon then became a Painter, and, by the aid of its gas diploma, it was presently swollen into a Rubens!—more gas, and it distended to a Titian!—more gas, and more—“And now,” cries the puffster, “up with you, my own-made modern Michael Angelo!” “What you have made me take me,” responds the painter-balloon; “but keep the gas up;* for if you allow me to sink but a foot, you’ll find short commons at your next visit to — Street.”

Next a Dramatist: and the parasite so be-Congreve’d and be-Massinger’d, so be-Sheridan’d and be-Shakspeare’d him, that I

* I need not inform you, Tom, that the substitution of the increase of gas for the diminishing of the quantity of ballast to produce the required effect, is one of those whimsical blunders to which, in dreams and reveries, we are subject.

really thought the poor balloon must have burst !

Next, a Novel-writer :—Up we go ; Goldsmith and Sterne are invisible ; Swift, Richardson and Fielding, dwindled into specks ! “ Higher still with me ! ” cries the Novel-writer ; “ more gas for me, my prince of parasites ! Pence or pudding, which you will ; but more gas for me, more gas ! ”— “ Up, up, up, my unparalleled balloon, ” cries the inflator : “ I ’ m doing it for you : another puff or two and you shall have left the whole world of novelists, romancers, and essayists, immeasurably below you. ”

Here methought the smell of the gas became offensive, almost beyond endurance, and I complained of it to Fee ’ dwell. “ Excuse the word, ” said I ; “ but it stinks ; it is so coarse and strong that the stomach

of a dray-horse would reject it : the whole town sickens at it."

"Not so with the balloons it is my business to inflate," replied he : "their stomachs are not so delicate : the stronger it is, the better they relish it. Besides, I do not pretend to the refined art of producing gas from myrrh, and frankincense, and aromatic herbs, nor would they relish it if I could : that would not elevate them a tenth part high enough to please them. No, no ; coarse coal-gas is the thing for our purpose, and the coarser the better."

The next and last metamorphosis of the balloon was into a whole company of actors ; and I own I wished myself safely out of it, for, now, there was considerable danger of an "awful calamity." Such a clamour ! such cries of "Gas ! gas ! more gas ! more !"

that an explosion seemed to be inevitable. I expressed my apprehensions upon the subject.

“There is less danger of such a catastrophe now than ever,” said the puffster: “this balloon will swallow more gas, or, in other words, has a greater capacity for distension than any of the others: cram it as you will, it never thinks itself sufficiently inflated.”

“Surely,” said I, “the machine is rising very sluggishly. What is its present altitude?”

Fee'dwell requested me to look at the **HISTRIONOMETER** which was hanging within the netting. I did so, and found it wavering between one degree below, and one degree above, the point of *Mediocrity*.

“Aye,” said Fee'dwell, (but rather muttering these words to himself than addressing them to me), “and, confound it! at

Mediocrity it will dangle till doomsday unless I give it a puff or two."

"How high am I, my dear Fee'dwell?" cried a voice, which I recognised to be that of Mr. Horsecollar, a second-rate comic actor.

"Between ourselves," replied the puffster, referring to the *Histrionometer*, "between ourselves, Mr. Horsecollar, you stand at about *Pleasant and Tolerable*."

"More gas, more gas, my good, kind puffster!" cried Horsecollar; at the same time thrusting a bundle of play-house orders into the hand of the "good, kind" person he was addressing.

The puffster, who dared not for his life leave hold of his valve-line, lest the gas should escape and tumble his whole cargo to the ground, requested me to throw over a bag of ballast, one of the smallest I could

find. I stooped down, and, at the bottom of the car, perceived a small number of tiny bags, varying in weight from a quarter of an ounce to an ounce, each labelled, "JUDGMENT." I emptied out a quarter of an ounce of this ballast, and the balloon shot upwards with amazing rapidity.

"Where am I now?" continued the same voice.

"Within two degrees of *Liston*," replied the puffster, watching the progress of the mercury and reporting accordingly. "You are now *at Liston* exactly—two—three—ten—twenty degrees above him."

"Bravo!" said Horsecollar; "but give me a little more gas, my dear boy."

Another little bag of ballast was discharged, the machine continued to rise, and the report was continued:—

"Fifty degrees—all to nothing above

him—and above *Fawcett*—and *Munden*—
and—and—everybody else.”

“More gas, more,” continued the cormorant.

But he was interrupted by other claimants, the first of whom was Miss Laura Leadenlegs, a dancer. Something was whispered about “a delateful leetle feet-shampeter to be given at Twitnim by Lord Gullborough (who was greatly interested in her *perffessional edvencemunt*), and at which she would be permitted to *interdoose* a *frind*:” and up went Miss Leadenlegs from *Detestable* to within two degrees of *Taglioni*!

Then came Mr. Ravenscroak, (a pupil just launched of Mr. Snacks', the singing-master.) I didn't hear what he said, but from *Passable*, up he was carried through *Templeton* — *Wilson* — *Phillips* — even to

Rubini-mark. But the cry was still for
“gas, more gas!”

Mr. Simper, the genteel, and lively-comedy-man, who stood at *Mediocrity*, was rapidly raised above *Richard Jones* and *Lewis*; and it is hard to say where he might have been carried had he not been thrust aside by Mr O’Shamrock, the Irishman of the company.

“My darling boy, my dear duck of a fellow, what’s my mark?” cried O’Shamrock.

“Your *true* mark, my dear Shammy, is *Vastly Pleasant*, but ——”

“And is it my true mark you’re after talking about? Up with me, you spalpane! Have you forgot to *remimber* where you’re engaged to dine next Sunday, at half-past nine?”

The puffster requested me to throw over

a whole ounce of ballast, and another, and another ; and the balloon being lightened of such a weight of JUDGMENT, rose till the Histrionometer indicated ten degrees above *Irish Johnstone*.

“ Johnstone be d—d ! ” cried O’Shamrock. “ But up with me, my Oracle ! Don’t forget Sunday, my unparalleled puffster ; so up with me, and say what I am for tipping an elegant audience, and the true *connyshures*, a touch of the *jontale*.”

Out went bag after bag, and at each rise the puffster answered, “ For elegant comedy you are now at *Jones*—and *Lewis*—and *Elliston*—”

“ Accept this little wooden snuff-box, my darling of the world. It’s ugly-looking enough, but it’s the greatest *curossyty* in all Europe : it belonged to St. Patrick himself ! If you doubt it, I’ll have it

engraved on the lid, for proof. So up with me again, my critic of critics."

"Now we are passing *John Palmer*—and now I have puffed you up, even to *Charles Kemble*. Are you satisfied?"

"And is it satisfied you're after *maning*?" said O'Shamrock. "Och! by my shillelagh! and if you are after going to come your 'satisfied' over me, so long as there is sky-room above us, hand me back St. Patrick's snuff-box; and please to do me the pleasure *not* to dine with me next Sunday at half-past nine, you niggardly spalpane."

Lastly came Mr. Daggerbowl, the tragedian. What was *his* standing-point I did not observe; but having discharged sundry of the little bags, the Histrionometer indicated first, *Charles Young*, then, JOHN

KEMBLE! I trembled for our safety, for this was a fearful height to tumble from!

“Higher, higher!” cried *Daggerbowl*.—

“What am I now, my profound?”

“And *Garrick*,” responded the parasite, referring to the indicator.

“That wont do for me, my deep-searching puffster: higher, more gas, higher!”

“Aye, aye, sir, up we go!”

“What am I *now*, my widely-grasping and all-embracing puffster?”

“And *Mossop*,” replied the parasite:—
up we go!—And *Barry*—up we go!—And *Betterton*. Now we are at *Surpassing!*—
now at *Transcendant!*—now at *Never-approached!*—and now at *Unapproachable-and-never-in-this-world-to-be-equalled!* Are you satisfied, O super-human, O Heaven-inspired *Daggerbowl*?”

“Higher, good puffster! Higher still, dear parasite!” cried Daggerbowl.

Here the whole company was seized with the mania of jealousy, each desiring to be carried as high (or, in the language of the earth, to be as unsparingly be-puffed) as Mr. Daggerbowl. Their cries of “Higher! higher!” “More gas for *me*,” “And *me*,” “And *me*,” were deafening. But the last tiny bag of JUDGMENT having been exhausted, it was impossible for the still willing parasite to comply with their demands. *Finding he could do no more for them*, from requests they proceeded to commands, from commands to threats: till at length the puffster, provoked by what he called “their surpassing ingratitude,” and warned of his own danger by the rocking of his unballasted and over-inflated balloon, drew his valve-line and, gradually emitting

the gas, gently let his whole cargo of Statesman, Poet, Dramatist, Painter, Novelist, and Player, each down to his safe and proper level.

And is it possible, thought I, that a high-minded balloon, whether in the form of Poet or Player, or any other of a polite or liberal occupation, can so degrade itself as to place its valve-line in the hands of one who, at the best, can give it but a temporary elevation, if unmerited ; as, at the worst, whether in caprice or malice, he can but for a time depress it ! O Balloon ! there stands one, your best reliance, whose name is PUBLIC ; who, though he may be made for a while to stare with wonder at your fantastic vagaries when placed too high in air, yet soon or later will reflection come to his aid, and remind him that there you are supported only by an overcharge of gas,

noisome gas. Then will he seize you by your grapnel, and, despite your parasitical inflater, place you at your just point of elevation—neither allowing you to rise much above, nor to sink much below it. Renounce, then, O Balloon! manfully and at once renounce a support not less degrading than insecure; upon which relying and of which to be bereft, you will fall, fall, fall, a thing for mockery and scorn.

Scarcely had I concluded this reflection, when MR. PUBLIC (with a smile of good-humoured contempt) just blowing upon the balloon, the monstrous bubble burst with so loud a report that, &c. &c.

And now, my dear Tom, having only to add that (with all proper regard for the revenue) this long, rambling epistle being

[not] “ *On Her Majesty’s Service,*” you will receive it, as such, under an official frank ;—
I conclude by subscribing myself

One of your most sincere friends
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P*.

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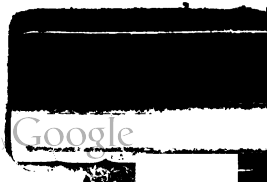
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