

It is true that wedlock, when properly estimated, has pleasures and delights of a permanent character, though abundantly dashed with care; and that no married man, who lives as a married man ought to live, will ever have the gout unless he enjoys it as an inheritance: these may indeed excite a sigh in the bosom of the old Bachelor, when bed-ridden, and he sees every thing in confusion around him, and finds no soft hand to smooth his pillow, and no well-known tender voice to soothe his lagging hours.—What then?—it cannot last for ever; and he will have the satisfaction of caning his footman, dismissing his housekeeper, and again enjoying the brimming bowl, and well-spread feast, when the fiend has left him.

EXPERIENCES OF A SURGEON.

No. IV.—A DISSECTING-ROOM INCIDENT.

IN the fourth year of my apprenticeship, a medical school was established in the town in which I became a pupil: its affairs were conducted in a slovenly and unbusiness-like manner, and it did little good. There was no demonstrator—that is, no person to prepare parts for explanation, and to superintend the labours of the students. One day the anatomical lecturer, a man given to words and show, had invited a party of gentlemen to hear him describe the muscles of the face, and for this purpose a fresh subject was ordered to be in readiness. It somehow or other happened that no person in the habit of dissecting could be found to undertake the task of preparing these parts for exhibition; and in this dilemma the lecturer sent a very urgent note to me, begging that I would, as a particular favour, oblige him by having things in proper order. Not having as yet commenced a regular course of dissection, I demurred; but as he promised me a plate for my guidance, I at last consented, and gave very strict injunctions to the porter to be in waiting for me at eight o'clock in the evening at the rooms, with a fire and candles,—this time having been fixed by the resurrectionists for bringing the subject.

At that hour, therefore, I repaired to my post; the men had, however, not made their appearance, and I went home, promising to return at ten o'clock. With the stable-lantern in my hand, I again found myself in the narrow back street in which the rooms were situated: every thing was dark and silent, and a bitterly cold wind of the beginning of February was whistling about me. The place was shut up, and the porter absent, so that I had to admit myself by the help of a pass-key: I went up stairs, expecting to find the body ready arranged on the table: the place was, however, empty, excepting its usual tenants—the rats, which literally swarmed here, and

by dint of good feeding were large and fierce ; and as they served the same purpose as vultures and jackals in the east, namely, scavengers, we did not often disturb them. At times they became so bold and so impudently familiar, and withal so disgusting, that we waged a war of extermination against them. The place was, however, quickly re-colonised ; and as long as the new-comers kept their proper distance, they were unmolested. On entering the room, therefore, at that hour which is the holiday of rats as well as of love, I had an opportunity of seeing the entire family whisking away, of the size of half-grown kittens : I hate rats, and did then, and was by no means pleased with my immediate attendants.

I descended to the dissecting-room, mentally swearing at the negligence of both resurrectionists and porter, for having condemned me to visit a depository into which, alone, and at this hour, I felt unwilling to enter. My nose and my imagination alike anticipated disturbance ; the one, that the room was small and very imperfectly ventilated, and that during the last week it had been nearly closed ; the other, that I knew there were the fragments of three or four bodies lying festering in corruption, in all the confusion of dismemberment and mutilation. Bound by my promise, I opened the door reluctantly, and, averting my eyes as completely as possible from the mouldering relics of humanity before me, I sought out for the new tenant : none was to be found, and I concluded that the men, having been half-paid in advance, had neglected to complete their bargain—a very common trick ; and thanking my stars, I drew my cloak about me, and prepared to return to the open air and my pillow,—not a little pleased to have escaped remaining a solitary and half-starved inhabitant through the night, as a companion with dead bodies and rats.

I accordingly locked the doors ; but in turning round in the narrow passage to lift the lantern from the table, I was struck motionless, by seeing at its very extremity two white hands uplifted as if in an attitude of entreaty. The door was locked behind me, and there was not a single house within hail, so that I had nothing for it but to stand staring, expecting every moment to see something horrid in the shape of a resuscitation. As the hands, however, remained motionless, and as my wits returned, I ventured to bring the candle to bear more directly upon the startling objects. All that I could see still was a pair of deadly white hands projecting above a dark body, which might be a man's trunk for any thing I could tell. It then occurred to me, that it might be a mischievous prank of one of the resurrectionists, as the dark body was reared against the wall, and the hands might be supposed to be held up as a screen to hide his face. Full of this idea I advanced boldly, bent on making my foot and his ribs better acquainted : a few steps forward convinced me that my supposition was erroneous ; the dark part resolved itself into the shape and size of one of the wicker-baskets used by vitriol-dealers to hold carboys, and, on approaching more closely, I perceived that in this limited space was contained a human body, as a grizzled head and wrinkled brow showed themselves beneath the hands. On touching these, I at once was aware that they could not be held up in entreaty, as the man had evidently been dead some time ; but how

they had contrived to thrust an adult into so narrow a compass surprised me exceedingly,—and not only so, but, like the common puzzle of a reel in a bottle, I wondered how it was to be got out. It had been pressed into the basket evidently by great force, in a doubled posture, with the legs bent against the trunk; and though efforts had been made to dislocate the wrists, the parties had either had no time to complete that purpose, or had failed from other causes; as it was, they were jammed in between the knees and the head, and thus kept upright.

In this condition the rascals had left it, and my new-born hopes of spending the night at home were thus unpleasantly blighted. The next thing to be done was to disengage it,—and this proved a work of no small difficulty. In vain I tugged and toiled and fretted: it seemed to me as if the very face of the dead man was twisted in mockery at my pains, as, in the struggle to overcome the resistance, its stony eye-balls met my look of anger and impatience, and more than once I rolled it on the floor, determined to leave it as it was. At length, however, by a desperate effort I succeeded in extracting one arm; this made a little more room, and gave me a longer handle to work by, and, after nearly exhausting my strength, I had the satisfaction of getting it at liberty. At any other time I might have felt some repugnance to dragging a body in the dead of the night up-stairs, raising it in my arms and placing it on a table; but the exertion which had been required had fully excited me, and I did all this without the slightest compunction. I now raised the head, placed a block under it, stretched out the painting, opened a manual of dissection, trimmed my candle, and set to work. The body was that of an old man; I should presume that death had made but little change in the expression of the features: long white hair, excepting where soiled and matted with damp earth, hung from his head as it was laid back, and must during life have given him a venerable and patriarchal aspect. This was no time, however, for speculation: midnight was already tolling from numerous clocks, and I pursued my labour silently and steadily, undisturbed save by the incursions of the rats, the moaning and whistling of the night-wind, and the waving of the “silver hair” as it yielded to the currents of air in the room.

For upwards of an hour I continued at work, and had exposed the muscles of the forehead and eyes: I made slow progress, and soon saw a very unsatisfactory exhibition must be the result, which arose from the age of the subject. I now became excessively starved: the previous exertion had been enough to make me perspire profusely, and then sitting motionless in a cold room not very well guarded against wintry weather, I grew chilled; and in the end my teeth chattered, and my hand trembled as if I had been in an ague fit. I rose from my chair, clapped my hands *à la voiturier*, and chased a large tom-rat, which had been unusually pertinacious in locating himself rather too closely to my face.

Whilst thus engaged, a low groan sounded through the room: this at once cut short my career, and I cast a doubtful and anxious glance on the body lying on the table, expecting to see some motion

of eye or limb indicative of vitality. The sound had been so generally diffused, that I could fix upon no place from whence it might have proceeded. While thus standing with my looks fastened on the body, another low groan ran through the room, but clearly had not its origin in the deformed subject. I sat down, took the scalpel in my hand, and strove to believe the sound could have no connexion with the building, but must have been borne there on the night-wind. I re-commenced my task, when in a few seconds a groan louder and more distinct echoed through the room, and chained me with awe and fear: my fancy was at work, and had soon created a sort of Frankenstein from the mouldering remains in the room below. Hastily collecting my apparatus, and freeing myself from my dissecting dress, I determined, come what might, to abandon the place with all speed. The candle was burning low—I rose cautiously, with my cloak wrapped round one arm, and the key of the outward door in the other hand; and, advancing to the stair-head on tiptoe, listened in breathless silence for a repetition of the sound: it soon came with frightful distinctness, and, as it swept past me, I expected to see some horrible phantom; it died away, and step by step I descended, endeavouring vainly to keep my eye from resting on the interstices between the banisters, through which my tortured imagination was conjuring up a hideous and demoniac face. I had reached the landing, when another loud and prolonged groan issued from beneath my feet, and was followed by a faint rustling sound as if some one was turning painfully on the floor. I experienced at that moment one of the most singular and extraordinary feelings I have ever undergone—an universal creeping of the flesh, as if the entire muscles of the body were detaching themselves from their sheaths: my hair bristled, my knees knocked, and an inarticulate mutter took place of the exclamation, which I had intended should express my uncontrollable terror.

Desperation is the best cure for unseen causes of fear: imagination and superstition generally clothe these with something far too dreadful for reality, and hence reason has but little scope for exercise. In my present case the shuddering which had crept over me was the paroxysm of extreme fright; and when it had subsided, I looked more calmly and cautiously about me: I lowered the lantern so as to illuminate the lobby through which I had to pass to get to the door. The space from the bottom of the stairs to this point was hardly four yards across, yet it seemed as if the effort to accomplish it would be greater than would have been required to have surmounted the ascent of Mont Blanc or Chimborazo. I had one ground of comfort,—the door of the dissecting-room was fast locked, and the passage was clear of all impediment. I re-commenced my descent, treading as cautiously as if on the brink of a crater, when the same loud and deep groan sprung from beneath me, followed by the same rustling, and sounds of difficult and painful motion: I stood still, and satisfied that the being from whom these portentous sounds emanated was at least mortal, and apparently suffering great agony, my courage having something more tangible to grapple with, returned, and determined me to

unravel the mystery, in place of fleeing and abandoning probably some poor wretch to destruction. Thus manfully resolved, I laid my cloak on the stair-rail, stepped down carefully, but, no longer anxious to conceal my presence, made as much noise as possible. I was now in the lobby: all was silent and deserted,—when, after standing a moment irresolute, the groan again issued from beneath the stairs. I now remembered that there was a small closet under these, containing chips and coals; and beginning to hope it might, after all, be the porter who had crept in there, and was groaning in his sleep, I advanced, and opened the door leading into it slightly ajar, at the same time keeping a firm hold on the handle. No sooner had I done so, than a host of rats rushed through the narrow opening, alarmed by the light: when the swarm had dispersed, I pushed the door wider, but found I was opposed by a heavy body lying against it; sufficient room was, however, given to introduce the lantern. I thrust it in—another groan succeeded—a dark body moved itself, and, to my infinite terror, a bloody countenance stared at me with an air of bewilderment quite equal to my own. I hastily closed the door, and thinking some man must have been murdered by the resurrectionists, and deposited here for security, and was now struggling in the throes of dissolution, I resolved to call up the porter; and for this purpose I retreated to the outward door, and with no very steady hand tried to unlock it: the lock was old, and at all times troublesome to manage; and it may be well supposed that my present agitation was ill calculated to facilitate the attempt. I turned the key this way and that way, in all the earnestness of desperation, for I could plainly hear the cause of my anxiety making efforts to rise, with the intention, doubtless, of escaping from his hiding-place. After several heavy falls it succeeded on getting on its feet, and with some fumbling found the latch; and I had the exquisite misery to hear a heavy foot planted in the lobby.

I was now fairly at bay, and turned round to confront the “dread visitant.” A large and powerful man was staggering towards me, reeling and pitching from side to side, with matted hair, face covered with blood, his dress dabbled with the same, and whitened by sawdust, on which he had been lying—muttering unintelligibly, and staring with an expression of fear and surprise. On he came, till within a foot’s distance, when he stretched out his arms to seize me: I sprang aside—he lost his balante, and fell heavily against the door, and, after some vain struggles to save himself, he rolled on the floor. This shock roused him, and, uttering an oath or two, he prepared to rise again. I now spoke to him, and asked him, in the name of God, who or what he was! He looked at me a few seconds, and then answered, “Why, I’m Jack Scruff, to be sure; and who the devil are you?”—“Why, you infernal villain! how came you here, and what’s the matter with you?”—“Damme, is that you, Parfleur? why, you are as white as a ghost.”—“How came you here, you scoundrel! to frighten people out of their wits by groaning in the coal-hole at this hour of the night? why, the rats have eaten half your face, and served you right enough, though it has made you look like a spectre.” “Why, you see, Sir,” said the fellow, shaking himself and sitting up,

“Jem and me brought a subject in; and as I was drunk, why, I crept in there to have a snooze, and I suppose the d—d rats in worrying me, made me groan, else I should have slept as quiet as a mouse.”

And so it turned out: both the men had come in intoxicated, and Jack, more overcome than his fellow, had refused to budge a step, and had deposited himself under the stairs, where he had slept soundly, till the rats, taking advantage of his profound insensibility, had nibbled away at his face, and so disturbed him.

No. V.—A PHYSICIAN AND A CONSULTATION. *

DR. E— was at this time the fashionable physician in the town I resided in. Few people could reconcile themselves to the idea of dying, without first having his opinion on the subject; and he might have borne for his motto—“*Opiferque per urbem dicor,*” although this saying would have been more applicable, had the first word been of an opposite meaning. He was an old man of puffy figure and short stature, with a rosy face and good-humoured eye. His dress was black, and often seedy, though he neither took snuff nor wore powder. In winter he might be seen descending from his carriage clad in a ridiculously small plaid cloak, which had all the appearance of having served one or two of his sons when boys, as it was desperately shabby, and only reached just to his knees. His hat bore marks of service; and a pair of his wife’s old black kid gloves, wofully out of repair, covered his digital extremities. The Doctor was a saving man, and was now rich; yet his industry was unabated: he rose at six, began his visits at seven or eight o’clock, to the grievous annoyance of the modern Machaons and servants; got home at twelve—his hour for private patients; generally contrived to make a round of evening visits; and if he had a country journey to undertake, he did it during the night, shrewdly remarking that it saved daylight. He was a man of all work—nothing came amiss to him; and no hour was wrong, provided he was disengaged.

Thus qualified, the Doctor bore the bell; and, I verily believe, pocketed more fees than all the physicians in the town put together. He had practised there for nearly half a century; and as the town had enlarged rapidly, he had kept migrating from street to street, as wealth and fashion changed their localities. He had attended the mothers and fathers of half the respectable inhabitants; and his name had thus become identified with the place itself. Yet the Doctor was a grumbler, notwithstanding. “Times,” he said, “were changed, sadly changed: formerly he should have received twenty guineas, where he now received one.” This, however, was a figure of speech of the worthy man’s, and not literally true: what he meant was, that formerly, in the case where he received twenty guineas for so many successive attendances, he now paid but one visit, and so got but one guinea—forgetting to state that where he had been one consultation, he had now fifty. “Yes,” he would go on grumbling—“twenty years ago, things were different: I was called

in early, and attended till the termination of the case; but now I pay one or two visits, and am dismissed with the remark, either that the case is hopeless, or that Mr. So-and-so, they think, can manage very well—sad times! sad times!” Yet the man was pocketing from five to six thousand pounds a year. He was a terrible coddler; and I have known him spend half an hour in discussing the relative merits of rusks and tops-and-bottoms: these last formed a great part of his own diet; and, proceeding upon the principle of ‘what is good for the goose, is good for the gander,’ he never failed to laud their virtues in every case to which he was called. He was a noted adept in the composition of puddings, panado, and gruel, and would descant eloquently and learnedly on ass and cow milk, and give minute directions as to whether it should be boiled or plain; and, if boiled, whether with bread, flower, meal, or rice. He was a most patient scrutiniser into the contents of spittoons and other utensils; and would examine a tongue or an ulcerated throat for half an hour at a time: he felt the pulse at both wrists, and, in the end, would sit and tell his patient an amusing anecdote to crown his inquiries. He was thus an especial favourite of old ladies; whether male or female, an excellent gossip, and chronicler of past times.

He was, I believe, generally liked by the profession, though occasionally guilty of meannesses arising from his grasping disposition: to these most of the practitioners were obliged to submit without murmuring, as the Doctor was too decidedly and habitually popular to be sneered at.

Such was Doctor E—— at the age of seventy; and, such as he was, he was physician in ordinary to the town. Being what is termed a safe man, he was always preferred by the younger surgeons; and, by this means, his popularity was kept alive from generation to generation. As to his medical abilities, they were respectable: he had no pretensions to extraordinary skill: his views and recipes were common-place and unvarying; and he had a great contempt for the new-fangled remedies that were just becoming fashionable, though compelled now and then to prescribe them, in obedience to the fancy of the day. He prognosticated that they would soon sink into deserved oblivion; and that people would return to bark, opium, and burnt sponge, in place of quinine, morphine, and iodine. He was a stickler for long prescriptions, and seemed to think that in a multitude of remedies some one surely would hit the disease. I have no doubt he would gladly have returned to the days of the Mithridate and Theriaca, when it was customary to compound a mixture of fifty or sixty ingredients. After all, however, the Doctor was a worthy man, as Nicol Jarvie said of Rob Roy, ‘after a sort.’ There were, doubtless, cleverer and more disinterested men to be found; but he occupied a place in society which his demise has left vacant, and which can never be filled up.

I visited with him in consultation a lady labouring under ascites: no expectations were entertained of her recovery; but that was of course no argument against doing something for her. I had not seen her before, and the case had to me therefore the merit of novelty, and I hoped the Doctor would throw some light on its pathology.

We seated ourselves by the bed-side; and it was obvious to me, that her end was approaching, and that the chest was loaded with water. The Doctor first examined her tongue, then I did the same: he next pulled out his gold repeater, and very deliberately counted the pulse: he then handed the watch to me, and, putting on an air of gravity resembling his own, I counted it likewise: he next called for various utensils, and, inviting me to accompany him to the window, he turned them backwards and forwards till his curiosity was satisfied, and mine more than satisfied: then he called for a tape with which the patient was measured every morning, in order to ascertain whether increase or diminution had taken place in her size. On applying this to the yard-stick, the report was, increase one-twelfth of an inch. He shook his head; I did the same: then he asked to see the different articles of food and medicine she was taking: these he tasted *seriatim*; I did the same; and finally ordered her, next, stewed rice to have a very little salt added to it. We were shown with great ceremony into another room: chairs were placed for us; pens, ink, and paper laid on the table, and we were left to our consultation.

We seated ourselves; and the Doctor, to whom I was well known, opened thus: "You know Hopkins of the Vale, I think, Mr. Parfleur?"—"Yes, Doctor, we have reason to know something of him, for he owes us a very large bill, which he swears he won't pay."

"Ah! he's a sad scoundrel, to be sure; he has played me a dog's trick only yesterday."

"Indeed, Doctor! how so? I have heard him praise you to the skies, and you became his sole medical attendant on Mr. ——'s dismissal."

"Just so, and I really thought him a very worthy, pleasant man—his house, as you are aware, is delightfully situated in the midst of a splendid garden, and during the fine weather I used to enjoy the visit exceedingly: I made it the last in my round, in order to spend half an hour with him; he was so pleasant and agreeable, and had always a plate of strawberries with sugar and cream laid ready for me. Now newly-gathered strawberries with such additions, I am fond of, and I took it therefore as a mark of great civility."

"No wonder, Doctor; they would form, after a fatiguing morning's work on a warm summer's day, a very palatable refreshment. I have myself tasted his strawberries, and can bear witness to their excellence."

"Yes, they were really very good; and I looked forward with a schoolboy's longing for Hopkins's garden. Well, my attendance was long—he was dyspeptic, and in fact it continued till the fruit was getting out of season; and so last week I sent my bill, and what do you think was the consequence?"

"Nay, Doctor, it is impossible to say—something shabby, I should suppose."

"You shall judge: I received a note stating that Mr. Hopkins was surprised by the sight of my bill, as he had supposed that the strawberries and cream I had devoured would have been a very sufficient equivalent for my useless attendance; and at the foot was a counter bill of £14—think of that!"

“Hah, Hah, Doctor! I can imagine your surprise.”

“Surprise! why my own breakfast costs me just fivepence per day, and here I had been unconsciously, according to his statement, spending three and sixpence every morning, for what I had considered a mere *bonne bouche*—a most scandalous affair indeed!”

“A most modest and ingenious set-off truly, Doctor! but his charge seems very extravagant, Sir.”

“Extravagant! why, it is abominable! I have not spent three and sixpence in luxuries for the last dozen years: he has charged me at the rate of three quarts of strawberries and a quart of cream a-day! It is true I sometimes put a few into the carriage for dessert, and now and then he pressed upon me a few cucumbers, or asparagus, or a bunch or two of grapes, and once or twice a pine. I was really quite delighted with the man’s kindness, and Mrs. E—— was equally pleased, and she sometimes accompanied me to Hopkins’s house. It is a most shameful affair, and will be a lesson to me in future, neither to eat nor drink with patients—a thing I generally make a point of avoiding; but the temptation here was too great for my philosophy. Confound the fellow! he is as bad as his brother, who obliged me to receive a composition of three shillings in the pound on a bill of nearly £300, in common with the rest of the creditors:—was ever such a thing known before or since, till this shameful trick of the strawberries?”

The Doctor here rose to depart, when I mentioned the patient. “Oh! ay, to be sure!” said he; “I shall see her to-morrow at ten, and you may let her go on just as usual:” and so we left the house, both looking wondrous wise.

OUR COLONIES.*

WHEN the time comes, as come it will, in which the “Island Throne” of Great Britain will be mingled with the dust of other nations, we know of no portion of her history that will excite greater curiosity and surprise amongst future thinkers, than her Colonies. Herself a speck on the map of the world, with a limited population and small territorial power, she wields an empire which puts to shame that of ancient Rome, even when Rome was all the world. The question will naturally arise, how was this immense empire obtained? and by what means was it kept in subjection? embracing races of men of the most opposite character, having religions of the most militant kinds, and interest of the most diverse complexions.

* History of the British Colonies, vol. iv.—Possessions in Africa and Australasia. By R. M. Martin, Esq.—Cochrane and Co., London.