

groom, manifesting a most flattering impatience for the performance of the ceremony, came early to the house of his affianced, to accompany the family party to the magistrates, where the contract was to be drawn up. But even on that momentous day Madame L—— adhered to her custom of waiting for the post, to the evident rage and even agonized impatience of her destined son-in-law, who urged her with passionate eagerness to proceed at once to the magistrates. The delay proved most serviceable. The post came in due time, and brought a letter from Marseilles. The writer, struck by some slight personal peculiarities which her friend had described, had fancied it possible that the *promesso sposo* was no other than an *escaped galley-slave*, with whom, before his condemnation for a heinous crime, her family had been intimate. She had therefore, in some alarm, caused her husband to make inquiries into the matter, and a sufficient mass of evidence had been collected to justify her suspicion, and cause her to urge inquiry and delay on the part of M. and Madame L——. She suggested, moreover, that the truth might be easily discovered by a personal examination of the gentleman, who, if the same individual, had been branded on the right shoulder. The surprise, horror, and alarm of Madame L—— may be imagined. The contents of the letter were of course instantly communicated by her to her husband, and by him privately to the bridegroom, whom he requested to satisfy his wife's fears by showing him his right shoulder. The request was indignantly refused as an insult to his honor; and convinced of the fact by the agitation and dismay of the culprit, as well as by this refusal, the gentleman gave him at once into the hands of the police, who had no difficulty in finding the fatal mark of infamy. He was, indeed, an escaped convict, and the wealth with which he had dazzled the good provincials was the spoil of a recent robbery, undertaken by himself and some Parisian accomplices, and so cleverly managed as to have set at naught hitherto the best efforts of the police for its discovery.

We may be sure Madame L—— congratulated herself highly on having, as if by a providential instinct, "waited for the post."

CHEERFUL VIEWS OF HUMAN NATURE.

BY THE KING OF THE HEARTH.

"DO thee go on, Phil," said a miner, one of sixteen who sat about a tap-room fire, "Do thee go on, Phil Spruce; and, Mrs. Pittis, fetch us in some beer."

"And pipes," added a boy.

Mr. Spruce contemplated his young friend with a grim smile. "Well," said he, "it's a story profitable to be heard, and so—"

"Ay, so it be," said a lame man, who made himself a little more than quits with Nature, by working with his sound leg on the floor incessantly. "So it be," said Timothy Drum, "Phil's a philosopher."

"It always strucked me," said a dirty little man, that Phil has had a sort of nater in him ever since that night we lost old Tony Barker."

"What happened then?" inquired the squire's new gamekeeper.

"Did ever you see down the shaft of a pit?" asked Phil.

"No; and I'd rather not."

"A deep, deep well. Whatever they may do in other parts, we sing hymns, when we are pulled up, and if so be any of our butties at such times says a wicked word, he gets cursed finely when we be safe up at the top. We gon up and down different ways. In some old pits they have ladders, one under another, which reminds me—"

"Always the way with Phil."

"Mr. Spruce gazed sternly in the direction of the whisperer, and drank some beer. "Which reminds me that once—"

We must here announce the fact concerning Mr. Philip Spruce, that his method of telling a story ("Which reminds me," always meant a story with him) is very discursive. He may be said to resemble Jeremy Bentham, who, according to Hazlitt's criticism, fills his sentence with a row of pegs, and hangs a garment upon each of them. Let us omit some portion of his tediousness, and allow him to go on with his tale.

"It was in the year one thousand, eight, four, four; by token it was the same month, November, in which the block fell upon Tim Drum's leg, I was invited to a Christmas dinner by old Jabez Wilson. You are aware, gentlemen, that hereabouts there are a great number of deserted pits. The entrances to these are mostly covered with a board or two. There aren't many stiles in our pit-country; so we are drove to using these for firewood. The old pit mouths being left uncovered, and sometimes hidden in brushwood, it is a very common thing for sheep to tumble in, and if gentlemen go shooting thereabouts, they may chance to return home without a dog—your good health, Timothy. As I was saying, I love to ponder upon causes and compare effects. I pondered as I walked—"

"And the effect was, that you tumbled into a pit, Phil Spruce."

"The truth has been told, gentlemen, but it has been told too soon. And now I've forgotten where I was. Ay, pondering," here Phil hung up a long shred of philosophy on one of his pegs; and after the first ten minutes of his harangue, which was chiefly occupied in abusing human nature, a fierce-looking individual said,

"Go on, sir; you've brought things to that pass where they won't bear aggravation. The company expects you to fall down the pit directly."

"In the middle of my reflections—my natural Christmas thoughts," continued Phil, "I felt a severe bump on the back and a singular freedom about my legs, followed by a crash against the hinder part of my head—"

"To the bottom at once," said the fierce-looking man.

"I was at the bottom of a pit in two seconds. By what means my life was preserved I can not tell; certain it is that I sustained at that time no serious injury. Of course I was much stunned, and lay for a long time, I suppose, insensible. When I opened my eyes there was nothing to be seen more than a faint glimmer from the daylight far above, and a great many dancing stars which seemed like a swarm of gnats, ready to settle on my body. I now pondered how I should obtain rescue from my dangerous position, when an odd circumstance arrested my attention. I was evidently, unless my ears deceived me, not alone in my misfortune; for I heard, as distinctly as I now hear Mr. Drum's leg upon the fender, I heard a loud voice. It proceeded from a distant gallery. 'Who did you say?' inquired the voice in a hoarse tone; a softer voice replied, 'Phil Spruce, I think.' 'Very well,' answered the big sound; 'I'll come to him directly.'

"Here was a state of things. A gentleman resided here and was aware of my intrusion. Moreover, I was known. Was the acquaintance mutual? Well, gentlemen, that question was soon to be decided, for presently I heard a rustling and a crackling noise, like the approaching of a lady in a very stiff silk dress. But that gruff voice! I trembled. As the sound approached, a light gleamed over the dark, dirty walls, and glittered in the puddle upon which I was reposing. 'He or she has brought a candle, that is wise.' So I looked round. Mother of Miracles! He, she, or *it*. What do you think approached? A mass of cinder, glowing hot, shaped into head, body, arms, and legs; black coal on the crown of its head, red glow on the cheeks, and all the rest white hot, with here and there a little eruption of black bubbles, spirting out lighted gas. It was the shape of a huge man, who walked up with a most friendly expression in his face, evidently intending to give me a warm reception.

"And so he did, as I will tell you presently. It needed not the aid of his natural qualities to throw me into a great and sudden heat; his supernatural appearance was enough for that. Then I was seized with a great fear lest, in his friendliness, he should expect me to shake hands. That was as if I should have thrust my fingers into this tap-room grate. Well, ma'am (your good health, Mrs. Pittis), the strange thing came up to me quite pleasant, with a beaming face, and said, in something of a voice like a hoarse blast pipe, 'Glad to see you, Mr. Spruce. How did you come here?' 'O,' said I, 'Sir, not liking to be behind-hand in civility, I only just dropped in.' 'Cold, up above, Mr. Spruce? Will you walk in and take a little something warm?' A little something warm! What's that? thought I. 'O yes,' I said, 'with all my heart, sir.' 'Come along, then; you seem stiff in the bones, Mr. Spruce, allow me to help you up.' 'O Lord!' I cried, forgetting my manners. 'No, thank you, sir. Spruce is my name,

and spruce my nature. I can get up quite nimble.' And so I did, with a leap; although it made my joints ache, I can tell you. The thing bowed and seemed to be quite glowing double with delight to see me. Take a little something warm, I thought again. O, but I won't though! However, I must not seem eager to get away just yet; the beast seems to think I came down on purpose to see him. 'After you, sir!' said I, bowing and pulling my forelock. 'If you will be so good as to lead, I'll follow.' 'This way, then, Philip.'

"So we went along a gallery, and came to a vault which was lighted by the bodies of a great number of imps, all made of brisk live coal, like my conductor. 'I dare say you find the room close,' said the king—for I found afterward he was a real king, though he was so familiar. 'What will you take to drink?' I calculated there was nothing weaker than vitriol in his cellar, so I begged to be excused. 'It is not my habit, sir, to drink early mornings; and indeed I must not let my wife wait dinner. We will have a little gossip, if you please, and then you will let one of your servants light me out, perhaps. I merely dropped in, as you are aware, my dear sir,' 'Quite aware of that, my dear Phil. And very glad I am to get your company. Of course you are anxious to be up above in good time; and if you can stop here an hour, I shall be happy to accompany you.' Indeed, thought I to myself, Polly will stare. 'Most happy,' I replied. 'I fear you will take harm from that nasty puddle at my door,' observed the king. 'Wouldn't you wish to lie down and rest a bit, before we start out together?' I thought that a safe way of getting through the time. 'You are very good,' said I. 'Get a bed ready, Coffin and Purse!' Two bright little imps darted away, and the Thing turning round to me with a sulphurous yawn, said, 'I don't mind, Phil, if I lie down with you.' Surely he's roasting me, I thought.

"True as sorrow, Mr. Timothy, Coffin and Purse came back in no time to say the bed was ready; and I followed the king with as good courage as a Smithfield martyr. But I did not, I did *not* expect what followed. We went into a small vault, of which half the floor was covered by a blazing fire: all the coals had been raked level, and that was Coffin and Purse's bed-making. 'Well, I'll get in at once,' said the king; 'you see we've a nice light mattress.' 'Light, sir! why it's in vivid blazes. You don't suppose I can lie down on that.' 'Why not, Phil? You see I do. Here I am, snug and comfortable.' 'Yes, my dear sir, but you forget the difference there is between us?' 'And yes again, Mr. Spruce; but please to remember this is Christmas Day, a day on which all differences should be ended.'

"And now," said the monster, sitting up suddenly upon a corner of the bed, 'and now, Phil, I will urge you to nothing. You are a reasoning man, and count for a philosopher. Let's argue a bit, Mr. Spruce.' 'I'm favorable

to free discussion,' I replied; 'but I decide on principles of common sense.' 'Let common sense decide,' replied the king, crossing his knees and looking conversational. 'The point at issue is, whether with your views it would be better for you to remain a man or to become a cinder. What were your thoughts this morning, Philip Spruce?' 'This morning I was thinking about human nature, sir.' 'And how did you decide upon it, Philip?' 'Humbly asking pardon, sir, and meaning no offense, may I inquire whether in present company it is permitted to speak disrespectfully of the Devil?' 'I wouldn't have said that, Phil, to a man of his appearance.'

"Lord bless you, Tim Drum, he looked so mild disposed, and 'No offense,' he says; 'speak out without reserve.' 'Then, sir,' said I, 'this is what I think of human nature. I believe that it was full of every sort of goodness, and that men were naturally well disposed to one another, till the Devil got that great idea of his. Men are born to worship their Creator, and to supply the wants of their neighbors, but then comes in the deceiving fiery monster, with a pocketful of money, and says, quite disinterested, 'Gentlemen and Ladies, it's of no use asking you to venerate me; you don't do it, and you oughtn't to; but the most convenient and proper thing is for every individual to worship only just his self. You see the result of this,' says the old sinner; 'by paying sacrifice to your own images, you just change things from the right-hand pocket to the left, or if you go abroad, as you must do, in search of offerings, all the fish comes to your own net, and all the fat into your own belly. You smoke your own incense, and if you chance to be remiss in your devotions, you may make peace and atonement any way you please. Then,' says the great brimstone beast—I beg your pardon, sir, excuse my liberty of speech—if any body remark you are my servants, you can laugh, and tell them you are no such fools. As for any formulary of religion, follow in that the fashion of your country—'

"The cinder gentleman, Mrs. Pittis, my dear, rolled about in the fire, quite at his case, and said, 'Very good, Phil. And what else have you to say of human nature?' by which you will see that he had discrimination enough to perceive the value of my observations. 'The result is, sir,' I says to him then, 'that the whole human race is a-dancing and a-trumpeting in corners, every man singing hymns in honor of his self. And the old enemy capers up and down the country and the town, rejoicing at the outcry which he hears from every lip in his honor. A friend is rarer than a phoenix; for no man can serve two images, and each sticks firmly by his own.'

"'Have you no charity yourself this Christmas, Mr. Spruce?' inquired the king, after he had called to his two imps that they should put fresh coals upon the bed, and rake it up. 'When I was a young man, sir,' said I, 'no one could have started in the world with a

stronger faith in human goodness. But I've seen my error. All the ways of human nature are humbug, sir; as for my fellow-creatures, I've been very much deceived in 'em. That's all I know in answer to your question.'

"'I understand you, Phil,' the king said, lounging back upon the bed, and kindling the new coals into a blaze around him by the mere contact of his body. 'You are a philosopher out at elbows, and therefore a little out of temper with the world. You would like best to make your observations upon human nature without being jostled. You'd rather see the play from a snug little box, than be an actor in it, kicked about and worried.' 'Ah, sir,' said I, 'and where is such a seat provided?' 'Philip, I can answer that question,' said the king; 'and what is more, I can give you free admission to a snug private box.' 'How so, sir?' said I, quite eagerly. 'The coal-box, Phil,' replied the king. 'I'm puzzled, sir,' said I. 'In what way is my condition to be improved by the act of sitting in a coal-box?' 'That, my dear Phil, I will make as clear to you as a fire on a frosty night. Know, then, that I am King among the Coals.' I bowed, and was upon the point of kissing his extended hand, but drew back my nose suddenly. 'The cinder which I now have on I wear—because it is large and easy—in the manner of a dressing-gown, when here at home. I am, however, a spirit, and ruler over many other spirits similarly formed. Now, Phil, the business and amusement of myself and subjects is to transfer ourselves at will into the tenancy of any coal we please. The scuttles of the whole kingdom are our meeting-houses. Every coal cast upon the fire, Phil, is, by our means, animated with a living spirit. It is our amusement, then, to have a merry sport among ourselves; and it is our privilege to watch the scenes enacted round the hearths which we enliven. When the cinder becomes cold, the spirit is again set free, and flies, whither it pleases, to a new abode.'

"Isn't that the doctrine of metempsychosis?" asked the boy (a national scholar) tapping the ashes from his pipe-bowl.

"It's a thing I never heard on," said the gamekeeper. Mr. Spruce went on:

"'Did you never,' continued his majesty, 'when gazing into the fire, see a grotesque face glow before you? That face, Phil, has been mine. You have, then, seen the King among the Coals. If you become a cinder, Mr. Spruce, you may consider yourself made a judge.'

"'Well, sir,' says I, 'your reverence, it's firstly requisite to judge whether I will or won't sit down upon the fire. 'It's my opinion I won't. I'd like a little more discussion.' 'Talk away, Phil,' said the king. 'Well, sir,' says I, 'since you're always a-looking—least-ways in winter—through the bars of grates, it's possible you've seen a bit yourself of human nature. Don't it fidget you?' 'Why,' says

he, 'Phil,' a-stretching out his arms for a great yawn so suddenly as very nigh to set my coat on fire with his red fingers, 'I have been tolerably patient, haven't I?' 'If it's sarcasm you mean,' says I, a little nettled, 'I must say, it's a figure of speech I don't approve of.'

"I beg your pardon, sir," he says, "and here's an answer to your question. It's my opinion, Mr. Spruce, that as a cinder you will be agreeably surprised. I do see people sitting around me, now and then, whom I can't altogether get my coals to blaze for cheerfully. They sit and talk disparagement about all manner of folks their neighbors; they have a cupboard in their hearts for hoarding up the grievances they spend their lives in searching for; they hate the world, and could make scandal out of millstones, but if one hints that they are erring, they are up in arms, and don't approve of sarcasm." 'Sir,' says I, 'you are personal.' 'By no means, Mr. Spruce; you, and a number like you, are good people in the main, and deeply to be pitied for your foolish blunder. You're a philosopher, Phil,' he says, 'and did you never hear that your "I" is the only thing certainly existent, and that the world without may be a shadow or mere part of you, or, if external, of no certain form or tint, having the color of the medium through which you view it—your own nature.' Here I saw occasion for a joke. 'Sir,' I says, 'if my own "I" is the only thing certainly existing, then the external world is all my eye, which proves what I propounded.' His flames went dead all of a sudden, and he looked black from top to toe. 'I am sure I beg your pardon, sir,' says I, 'excuse my liberty.'

"He took no verbal notice of what I had said, but gave a tremendous shiver, and his flames began to play again. 'I'm of a warm and cheerful turn of mind,' says he, 'and I must say, that whenever I look out upon the men and women in the world, I see them warm and cheerful.' 'That's nothing wonderful,' said I; 'it's just because you see them sitting round your blaze.' 'Well,' says he, 'Mr. Spruce, I'm very glad you own so much; for my opinion is, that if you had shone out cheerfully when you were in the world, and warmed the folks that came within your influence—if you had put a little kindly glow into your countenance, you would have been surrounded always as I generally am.' 'You're young,' says I, 'and you have had no experience; leastways, your experience has not been human. You get stirred when you're low, and people tend you for their own sakes—you ain't preyed upon by disappointments.'

"Young!" said he; 'disappointments!' And, to my horror, he stood bolt upright, to be impressive. 'Look you, Mr. Spruce, the youngest is the wisest; the child remembers throughout years a happy day, and can forget his tears as fast as they evaporate. He grows up, and his budding youth imagines love. Two or three fancies commonly precede his love.

As each of these decays, he, in his inexperience, is eloquent about his blighted hopes, his dead first love, and so on. In the first blossom of his manhood, winds are keen to him—at his first plunge into the stream of active life, he finds the water cold. Who shall condemn his shiver? But if he is to be a healthy man, he will strike out right soon, and glow with cheerful exercise in buffeting the stream. Youth, Mr. Spruce, may be allowed to call the water of the world too cold, but so long only as its plunge is recent. It is a libel on maturity and age to say that we live longer to love less. Preyed upon by disappointments—'

"Yes," says I, 'preyed upon.'

"Say, rather, blessed with trial. Who'd care to swim in a cork jacket! Trouble is a privilege, believe me, friend, to those who know from whose hand, for what purpose, it is sent. I do not mean the trouble people cut out for themselves by curdling all the milk of kindness in their neighbors. But when a man will be a man, will labor with Truth, Charity, and Self-Reliance—always frank and open in his dealings—always giving credit to his neighbors for their good deeds, and humbly abstaining from a judgment of what looks like evil in their conduct—when he knows, under God, no helper but his own brave heart, and his own untiring hand—there is no disappointment in repulse. He learns the lesson Heaven teaches him, his Faith, and Hope, and Charity, by constant active effort became strong—gloriously strong—just as the blacksmith's right arm becomes mighty by the constant wielding of his hammer. Disappointment—let the coward pluck up courage—disappointment is a sheet-and-pumpkin phantom to the bold. Let him who has battled side by side with Trouble, say whether it was not an angel sent to be his help. Find a true-hearted man whose energies have brought him safe through years of difficulty; ask him whether he found the crowd to be base-natured through which he was called upon to force his way? Believe me, he will tell you "No." Having said this, his majesty broke out into a blaze, and lay down in his bed again. 'Well,' he said, 'Philip, will you come to bed with me?'

"Why, sir," said I, 'to say the best of it, you're under a misconception; but if it's in the nature of a coal to take such cheerful views of things as you appear to do, I'd rather be a coal than what I am. It's cold work living in the flesh, such as I find it—you seem jolly as a hot cinder, and for the matter of that, what am I now but dust and ashes? Coke is preferable.'

"Coffin and Purse, you're wanted," cried the king. And, indeed, Mrs. Pittis, and, indeed, gentlemen, I must turn aside one minute to remark the singularity of this king's body-guard, Coffin and Purse. 'Cash and Mortality,' said the king to me, 'make up, according to your theory, the aim and end of man. So with a couple of cinders you can twit him with his degradation. Sometimes Coffin, sometimes Purse, leaps out into his lap when he is cogita-

ting.' 'Yes,' said I, 'that will be extremely humorous. But, so please your majesty, I still have one objection to joining your honorable body.' 'What is that, Phil?' 'I suppose, if I sits down in them there flames, they'll burn me.' 'To be sure,' said the king, kicking up his heels, and scraping a furnace load of live coal over his body, just as you might pull up the blanket when you're in bed to-night, Mrs. Pittis. 'Well, your highness,' said I, 'how about the pain?' 'Pah!' says the king, 'where's your philosophy? Did you never see a fly jump into a lamp-flame?' 'Yes, sure,' I answered. 'And what happened then? A moment's crackle, and an end of it. You've no time to feel pain.' 'Well, then,' said I, 'if your majesty will make a hole for me as near the middle as is convenient to yourself, I will jump into the bed straightway.' The king made a great spatter among the coals, and in I jumped. You know, ma'am, that a great part of our bodies is composed of water.'

"'I don't know that of any gentleman in this room,' replied the landlady. 'But I do believe that you are two parts built out of strong beer.'

"There was a burst—a flash, gentlemen; the liquid part of me went off in instantaneous steam. I cried out with a sharp burn in my foot. The pot was boiling over furiously that contained our bit of dinner; and as I sat close in to the fire, I got considerably scalded. How I got back in the steam to my own fireside, I never rightly comprehended. Fill the can now, Mrs. Pittis."

"'Yes,' said the landlady, 'but let me tell you, Mr. Spruce, that king of the hearth is a gentleman, and if you really had gone with the coals and got acquainted with fire-sides, it would have done you a great deal of good. You'd have owned then that there is a mighty deal more love than hatred in the world. You'd have heard round almost any hearth you chose to play eavesdropper to, household words, any thing but hard or bitter. Some people do not pay their scores with me, but, on the whole, I live. Some of our human natures may run termagant; but, on the whole, we men and women love. Among the worst are those who won't bear quietly their share of work, who can't learn self-reliance, but run to and fro, squealing for help, and talking sentiment against their neighbors, who won't carry their burdens for them. It's all very well for a musty, discontented old bachelor to say there's no love in the world, but it's a falsehood. I know better.'

"'My pipe's out,' said the boy. 'Be smart there with the 'baccy.'"

[From Dickens's Household Words.]

THE MYSTERIES OF A TEA-KETTLE.

AT one of Mr. Bagges's small scientific tea-parties, Mr. Harry Wilkinson delivered to the worthy gentleman a lecture, based principally on reminiscences of the Royal Institution, and of a series of lectures delivered there by Professor Faraday, addressed to children and

young people. For it is not the least of the merits of that famous chemist and great man, Professor Faraday, that he delights to make the mightiest subject clear to the simplest capacity; and that he shows his mastery of Nature in nothing more than in being thoroughly imbued with the spirit of her goodness and simplicity.

This particular lecture was on Natural Philosophy in its bearings on a kettle. The entertainment of a "Night with Mr. Bagges" was usually extemporaneous. It was so on this occasion. The footman brought in the tea-kettle. "Does it boil?" demanded Mr. Bagges.

"It have biled, sir," answered the domestic.

"Have biled, sir!" repeated Mr. Bagges. "Have biled! And what if it has 'biled,' or boiled, as I desire you will say in future? What is that to the purpose? Water may be frozen, you simpleton, notwithstanding it *has* boiled. Was it boiling, sir, eh? when you took it off the fire? That is the question, sir."

"Yes, sir, that was what I mean to say, sir," replied Thomas.

"Mean to say, sir! Then why didn't you say it, sir? Eh? There—no, don't put it on, sir; hold it still. Harry, reach me the thermometer," said Mr. Bagges, putting on his spectacles. "Let me see. The boiling point of water is two hundred and—what?"

"Two hundred and twelve, Fahrenheit," answered Master Wilkinson, "if commonly pure, and boiled in a metallic vessel, and under a pressure of the atmosphere amounting to fifteen pounds on every square inch of surface, or when the barometer stands at thirty inches."

"Gracious, what a memory that boy has!" exclaimed his uncle. "Well; now this water in the kettle—eh?—why, this is not above one hundred and fifty degrees. There, sir, now set it on the fire, and don't bring me up cold water to make tea with again; or else," added Mr. Bagges, making a vague attempt at a joke, "or else—eh?—you will get yourself into hot water."

Mr. Thomas was seized with a convulsion in the chest, which he checked by suddenly applying his open hand to his mouth, the effort distending his cheeks, and causing his eyes to protrude in a very ridiculous manner, while Mr. Bagges disguised his enjoyment of the effects of his wit in a cough.

"Now let me see," said the old gentleman, musingly contemplating the vessel simmering on the fire; "how is it, eh, Harry, you said the other day that a kettle boils?"

"La!" interrupted Mrs. Wilkinson, who was of the party, "why, of course, by the heat of the coals, and by blowing the fire, if it is not hot enough."

"Aha!" cried her brother, "that's not the way we account for things, Harry, my boy, eh? Now, convince your mother; explain the boiling of a kettle to her: come."

"A kettle boils," said Harry, "by means of the action of currents."

"What are you talking about? Boiling a