

been pleased with the scenery about this quiet nook, and, being master of my time, and very comfortable, I made up my mind and said,

"I tell you what, my friend. I shall send for my things from Heidelberg, and stay here for a week or two."

The laughter again pealed out; but my host, who probably had seen quite enough of a guest who insisted upon drinking his best wine, put on a grave face. It looked like an innkeeper's face, when he is buckling himself up to strike a bargain. To save him trouble, I at once said that I would pay three florins a day for myself, and one for the accommodation of my horse.

"He thinks we keep an inn!" the little child screamed through her laughter. I instantly collapsed.

#### PUBLIC EXECUTIONS IN ENGLAND.

ONE Saturday morning toward the close of November or beginning of December, I have forgotten the precise date, a letter was put into my hand at the office. It was from my quondam friend and employer the cutler editor, as whose agent I occasionally acted, and who charged me with a commission to procure him certain "sorts" from the foundry and transmit them by coach, in time for his next impression. Not choosing to disappoint my wife and lose my dinner, I deferred the visit to the foundry until after work in the evening; when, upon arriving at Chiswell-street, I found the men in the act of leaving, but was informed I could have the materials I wanted as early as I chose on Monday. On Monday morning, accordingly, having risen rather earlier than usual and breakfasted by candle-light, I set forth to execute my commission before proceeding to work. Crossing Blackfriars-bridge, and barely noticing that there was an unusual concourse of foot-passengers of the laboring and lower sorts, I turned up Ludgate-hill, where I found the crowd still greater, less equivocally disrespectful, and all hurrying forward at a rapid walking-pace. Intent upon the object I had in view, I pushed forward as rapidly as the rest, and turning sharp round into the Old Bailey, came suddenly upon a spectacle which, of all others, was the farthest from my thoughts. It was the morning of an execution. A thick damp haze filled the air, not amounting to an actual fog, but sufficiently dense to confine the limits of vision to a few hundred yards. The beams of the level sun threw an almost supernatural light of a dim but fiery hue into the mist which they yet had not force enough to penetrate; and there, darkly looming with grim and shadow-like outline against a background of lurid vapor, rose the gallows upon which a wretched fellow-creature was about to be death-strangled and dangled in expiation of the crime of murder. In a moment the commission I had in hand vanished from my thoughts, and, impelled by a fearful and morbid curiosity, I suffered myself to be borne by the pressure behind, every moment aggravated by the arrival of trampling multitudes to the spot, toward the object of the general gaze. One minute afterward,

I saw that the attempt to retrace my steps would be not only vain but dangerous; and, compelled to make the best of what I could not now avoid, I was pressed onward as far as the outlet of Fleet-lane, when, contriving by main force to get my back against the end of a stout tressle upon which seven or eight fellows were mounted, I managed to maintain my position until the horrible ceremony was concluded. It wanted yet full twenty minutes to eight o'clock, when I stood fast-wedged within a few fathoms' length of the scaffold. As far as the eye could pierce through the misty glare, was one unbroken sea of human heads and faces; the outer masses reeling, staggering and driving in fitful currents against the firm, compact and solid centre, fixed and immovable as though charmed to stone by the horrible fascination of the gibbet. Far beyond and above all the tower of St. Sepulchre's, magnified by the morning haze, showed like a tall, transparent cloud, from which was soon to burst the thunder-peal of doom upon the miserable man who had shed his brother's blood. The subdued murmur of the immense mob rose and swelled like the hollow roar of a distant but angry sea. Here and there a tall and burly ruffian, pre-eminent above the crowd, signaled his fellow in the distance, or bellowed a ghastly witticism upon the coming horror across the heads of the throng. Women—if women they are to be called, who, like vultures to the carcass, flock to the spectacle of dying agonies—of all ages but of one indescribably vicious and repulsive class, had pushed, and struggled, and fought their way to an eligible point of view, where they awaited with masculine impatience the close of the fearful drama of which they formed so revolting a part. Children of tender age, who must have taken up their position ere the day had dawned, and before the arrival of the masses, made an unsightly addition to the scene. A boy of nine, borne aloft on the shoulders of a man of sixty, who stood by my side, expressed his uncontrollable delight at the tragedy he was about to witness. At every window in the houses opposite, the debtors' door, and indeed wherever a view of the gallows could be obtained, parties of pleasure were assembled for the recreation of the morning. The roofs, the parapets, the protruding eaves of the shops, all were populous with life; the very lamp-posts and projecting sign-boards were clung and clustered over with eager beings impatient to assist in the funeral obsequies of the victim of the law. And now a violent surging and commotion in the centre of the living mass gives token of a fierce quarrel which has ripened to a fight. Shrieks, yells, and cheers of encouragement issue from a hundred throats, while a crew of tall and powerful blackguards elbow and trample their way to the scene of action, and the glazed hats of the police are seen converging unerringly to the disturbed spot. Then there is the flourishing of gilded staves, the sound of sturdy blows followed by a roar of execration, and a gory-visaged culprit is dragged forth, defrauded of his expected banquet, and consigned to a cell in the nearest

station. The tumult has hardly subsided when another claims attention. A brace of pickpockets, taking advantage of the fight, are caught in the too confident exercise of their profession; and these, much easier captives than the fighting Irishman, are led off in their turn to the same vile durance.

By this time, weary and actually sore with the repeated violent collisions I had undergone in sustaining my post, I was glad to make a bargain with the man perched above me, who, for a bribe of a few pence, allowed me to effect a footing in his front. I had scarcely accomplished this when the church-clock in the distance rung out the quarters. The crowd, listening for this, had been comparatively silent for the last few minutes, and the note of the bell was acknowledged by a kind of shuddering deprecation for silence, by the instant uncovering of innumerable heads, and the involuntary direction of every eye toward the debtors' door. As the fatal hour at length pealed forth the door was slowly opened, and there came out upon the scaffold, not the mournful death-procession which all were awaiting with such intense interest, but its grim herald and precursor, the crime-honored aristarch of kill-craft, the great stage-manager of the law's last scene, whose performances are so much relished by the mob—the hangman, bearing the odious strand of new rope coiled upon his arm. He was received with a low but universal hum of recognition from the vast multitude now breathless with the exciting anticipation of what was so soon to follow. With an apparent perfect unconsciousness of the presence of a single spectator, he proceeded to mount to the cross-piece of the gibbet, to which, with an air of professional dexterity, he deliberately attached the loathsome cord, occasionally pausing and measuring with his eye the distance to the level of the platform. During this operation he was favored with a running fire of comments and counsels, garnished with infernal jokes and sallies of insane humor, from the mob who stood nearest. Having made the necessary preparations he withdrew for a few minutes, amidst the mock cheers and congratulations of some kindred spirits below. The awful pause which ensued was but of brief duration. Too soon a group of dark figures slowly emerged from the open door-way, among which I could discern the chaplain reading the burial-service, and then the quivering criminal, his hands clasped in prayer, yet bound together in front of his breast: he was supported by two assistants, and was already, to all appearance, more than half dead with mortal terror. These demonstrations of insupportable anguish on the part of the principal performer were received with evident and audible dissatisfaction by a large portion of the spectators of the drama. Derisive sneers on the want of "pluck" manifested by the poor, horror-stricken wretch were expressed in language which can not be repeated; and in many a female but unfeminine face, hardened by embreuting vice and callous to every feeling of humanity, I read a contemptuous scorn of the timorous sufferer and

a proud and fiend-like consciousness that they themselves would have dared the dark ordeal with less shrinking. The very boy mounted on the old man's shoulders at my side called his "grand-dad" to witness that "the cove as was to be hanged wasn't game;" a declaration which was received with a hoarse chuckle and a corroborative verdict by the standers-by, while the repulsive ceremony went on with fearful rapidity. In less than a minute the light of day was shut forever from his eyes, the last prayerful accents from human lips were dumb to his ears, and the body of the malefactor, sinking with a sudden fall until half concealed by the level platform, struggled in the final throes of agony for a few moments—mercifully abbreviated, as some well-experienced amateurs at my side plainly pointed out, by the coadjutors of the hangman pulling heavily at the feet in the inclosure below—and then swung senseless, veering slowly round upon the now deserted stage.

The very instant the "drop" fell, and while the short gasping cry from a thousand lips which hailed the close of the tragedy yet rung in the air, the scene assumed a new character: the elements of business were borne into the arena of pleasure. Three or four nondescript specimens of the street-orator, who were standing just beneath me, drew suddenly forth from the depths of their long-tailed greasy coats of serge each a bundle of damp paper, which they flourished into flags in a twinkling; and while the death-struggle was acting before their eyes, eager to turn it to account and to realize an honest penny, filled the air with their roaring intonations of "the last dying speech, confession, and behavior" of the murderer of the season. Their example was imitated by fifty others on different parts of the ground, and the chorus of their united voices formed but a beggarly requiem to the departing spirit. The tragedy ended, the farce, as a matter of course, came next. The body had to remain suspended for an hour, and during that hour amusement must be provided, at least for that portion of the spectators who can never have enough unless they have the whole of an entertainment. To swing a live cat from a side avenue into the middle of the crowd; to whirl a heavy truncheon from one broken head on a mission to another; to kick, maul, and worry some unfortunate stray cur that has unhappily wandered from his master; to get up a quarrel or a fight, if between women so much the better—such are some of the time-honored diversions chosen to recreate the hour which a sagacious legislature presumes to be spent in moral reflections upon the enormity of crime and the certainty of its bitter punishment, in the presence of the law-strangled dead.

I had never before seen a public execution in England, but I knew perfectly well—as who does not know!—the feeling with which such exhibitions are regarded by the lower orders, and I had often revolved in my mind the probable cause of that feeling. In now witnessing thus accidentally the whole ceremony, I thought

perceived one source of it, and that not a trifling one, in the ceremony itself. It struck me, and I have no doubt but others have received the same impression, that with all the actual horrors of the dismal process, in addition to a great deal that is disgusting, there is a great deal more that is essentially though horribly ridiculous in our national legal method of public killing. The idea of tying a man's hands, of drawing over his face a white night-cap, through which his features yet remain dimly legible, and then hanging him up in the air is manifestly a ridiculous idea—and connect it with what dreadful realities we may, the sense of the comic or absurd will predominate in the minds of the populace, ever alive to the appreciation of the preposterous or the discrepant, and never willingly disposed to serious reflection. The vagabond kennel-raker, the nomadic coster, the houseless thief, the man of the lowest order of intellect or of morals, sees the majesty of the law descending to the punch-and-judy level, and getting rid of its criminals by the same process as the hunch-backed worthy adopts to get rid of his tormentor—and being accustomed from his infancy to laugh heartily at the latter exhibition, he is not likely to retain for any length of time a grave demeanor in presence of the former one. A flogging in the army is allowed by all unfortunate enough to have witnessed it to be a far more impressive spectacle than a hanging at the Old Bailey. Strong men are known to faint at the sight of the one, while boys and women find amusement in the other. If the object of either exhibition be to deter the spectators from offending against the laws, why is the discrepancy between the effects of the two all on the wrong side? unless it be that the one exhibits the semblance at least of Justice vindicating her violated authority with a deserved though terrible measure of severity, while the other comes into view as a mere hasty and bungling business of killing, the vulgar and beggarly details of which it is impossible to connect in imagination with her divine attributes.

Some years before, I had witnessed in Paris the execution of two men for assassination. The crowd on that occasion, in the Place de Grève, was as great as now in the Old Bailey; but their decorum, I am bound to state, was infinitely greater. I can only account for this difference in favor of a population among whom human life is at a far greater discount than it is with us, from the fact that among the French a public execution is a much more impressive spectacle than it can be made to be in England. The guillotine bears a higher character, perhaps, because it wears a more serious and terrible aspect than the gallows; and the functionary who controls its avenging blade does not, as with us, bear a name the synonym of all that is loathsome and repulsive. It is the same class of men and the same order of minds that flock together to gaze at public executions wherever they take place; but I question whether, in any other country than England, a class of traders could be found corresponding with our hawkers and bawlers of

last dying speeches, who congregate with their lying wares around the foot of the gallows, watchfully waiting for the commencement of the death-struggle, to them the signal of commerce, and then at the precise moment of horror, unanimously exploding from their hoarse throats "a full, true, and particular account, for the small charge of one half-penny." The meanest mud-lark in all Gaul, the infamous and mal-odorous *chiffonier* of Paris, would recoil with disgust from such a species of traffic, the prevalence and prosperity of which at such a time among the lowest orders of London, testify perhaps more than any other single fact to the degraded state of the popular feeling in reference to death-punishment by the hands of the hangman.

Second, to the influence of the hangman, and the scene in which he figures in the production of a degrading and disgraceful estimate of the terrible solemnities of justice, is that of the press. What the Old Bailey or the Horsemonger-lane exhibition is to the uneducated spectator, the broad-sheet is to the uneducated reader; and it requires no great discrimination to recognize in the publication of every minute particular of deeds of violence and bloodshed, looking to the avidity with which such details are seized upon by the public, one of the most fruitful sources of demoralization and crime. The wretched criminal whose language, looks, and deportment are chronicled as matters of general importance, becomes first an object of interest, then an idol to those of his own class. If, as we know to be the case, men are led by the force of example to the commission of suicide, why not of any other species of crime? If a fashion may spring up, and prevail for a time, of leaping headlong from the top of a monument or the parapet of a bridge through the publicity given to such acts by means of the press, how shall the exploits of the felon or the assassin escape imitation when made the subjects of a far more extensive and pertinacious publicity, and paraded as they are before the world with all the importance they can be made to assume! There can be no question but that this practice of pandering to a morbid taste for a detestable species of excitement results largely in engendering the very crimes which certain public writers find it so profitable to detail at such length. The performer on the Old Bailey stage becomes a veritable hero in the eyes of the mob of readers for whose especial delectation his history is periodically dished up, and they gloat over the recital of his acts with a relish and a gusto which no other species of literature can awaken. So great, indeed, of late years, has grown the appetite for violence and villainy, of all kinds, that our romance-writers have generously stepped forward to supplement the exertions of the last-dying-speech patterer, as a pendant to whose simsy damp sheets they supply a still more "full, true, and particular account" in the form of three volumes post octavo. Thus, besides the certainty of being hanged in the presence of ten or twenty thousand admiring spectators, the daring and darling desperado who "dies

game" stands the enviable chance of becoming a literary property in the hands of one of those gentlemen, and of running a second course, in half-calf and lettered, to interest and instruct that very community whom it was his life-long occupation to rob, to plunder, or to slay.

Pondering such discursive philosophy as this in my mind, I stood still on my three-penny eminence until the crowd had sufficiently cleared away to allow me to retrace my steps as far as Ludgate-hill without inconvenience. Then, having no great relish for the cadaverous jocularities which generally characterizes the scene of an execution during the removal of the body of the malefactor, I descended and turned my back upon the ignominious spectacle, with a feeling of disgust for the multitude of my fellows who could find recreation in the elements of cruelty and horror, and with anger and vexation at myself for having added one to their number.

#### WHAT TO DO IN THE MEAN TIME!

IT has been frequently remarked by a philosopher of our acquaintance, whose only fault is impracticability, that in life there is but one real difficulty: this is simply—what to do in the mean time! The thesis requires no demonstration. It comes home to the experience of every man who hears it uttered. From the chimneys to the cellars of society, great and small, scholars and clowns, all classes of struggling humanity are painfully alive to its truth.

The men to whom the question is pre-eminently embarrassing are those who have either pecuniary expectancies, or possess talents of some particular kind, on whose recognition by others their material prosperity depends. It may be laid down as a general axiom in such cases, that the worst thing a man can do is to *wait*, and the best thing he can do is to *work*; that is to say, that in nine cases out of ten, doing something has a great advantage over doing nothing. Such an assertion would appear a mere obvious truism, and one requiring neither proof nor illustration, were it not grievously palpable to the student of the great book of life—the unwritten biographical dictionary of the world—that an opposite system is too often preferred and adopted by the unfortunate victims of this "condition-of-every-body question," so clearly proposed, and in countless instances so inefficiently and indefinitely answered.

To multiply dismal examples of such sad cases of people ruined, starved, and in a variety of ways fearfully embarrassed and tormented during the process of expectation, by the policy of cowardly sloth or feeble hesitation, might, indeed, "point a moral," but would scarcely "adorn a tale." It is doubtless an advantage to know how to avoid errors, but it is decidedly a much greater advantage to learn practical truth. We shall therefore leave the dark side of the argument with full confidence to the memories, experience, and imaginations of our readers, and dwell rather—as both a more salutary and interesting consideration—on the brighter side, in

cases of successful repartee to the grand query, which our limited personal observation has enabled us to collect. Besides, there is nothing attractive or exciting about intellectual inertia. The contrast between active resistance and passive endurance is that between a machine at rest and a machine in motion. Who that has visited the Great Exhibition can have failed to remark the difference of interest aroused in the two cases? What else causes the perambulating dealers in artificial spiders suspended from threads to command so great a patronage from the juvenile population of Paris and London? What else constitutes the superiority of an advertising-van over a stationary poster? What sells Alexandre Dumas's novels, and makes a balloon ascent such a favorite spectacle? "Work, man!" said the philosopher: "hast thou not all eternity to rest in?" And to *work*, according to Mill's "Political Economy," is to *move*; therefore perpetual motion is the great ideal problem of mechanicians.

The first case in our museum is that of a German officer. He was sent to the coast of Africa on an exploring expedition, through the agency of the *parti prêtre*, or Jesuit party in France, with whose machinations against Louis Philippe's government he had become accidentally acquainted. The Jesuits, finding him opposed to their plans, determined to remove him from the scene of action. In consequence of this determination, it so happened that the captain of the vessel in which he went out, set sail one fine morning, leaving our friend on shore to the society and care of the native negro population. His black acquaintances for some time treated him with marked civility; but as the return of the ship became more and more problematical, familiarity began to breed its usual progeny, and the unhappy German found himself in a most painful position. Hitherto he had not been treated with actual disrespect; but when King Bocca-Bocca one day cut him in the most unequivocal manner, he found himself so utterly neglected, that the sensation of being a nobody—a nobody, too, among niggers!—for the moment completely overcame him. A feeble ray of hope was excited shortly afterward in his despondent heart by a hint gathered from the signs made by the negro in whose hut he lived, that a project was entertained in high quarters of giving him a coat of lamp-black, and selling him as a slave; but this idea was abandoned by its originators, possibly for want of opportunity to carry it out. Now our adventurer had observed that so long as he had a charge of gunpowder left to give away, the black men had almost worshiped him as an incarnation of the Mumbo-Jumbo adored by their fathers. Reflecting on this, it occurred to him that if, by any possibility, he could contrive to manufacture a fresh supply of the valued commodity, his fortunes would be comparatively secure.

No sooner had this idea arisen in his brain, than, with prodigious perseverance, he proceeded to work toward its realization. The worst of it was, that he knew the native names neither of