

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

charcoal, sulphur, nor nitre. No matter; his stern volition was proof against all difficulties. Having once conveyed his design to the negroes, he found them eager to assist him, though, as difficulty after difficulty arose, it required all the confidence of courage and hopeful energy to control their savage impatience. The first batch was a failure, and it was only by pretending that it was yet unfinished he was enabled to try a second, in which he triumphed over all obstacles. When the negroes had really loaded their muskets with his powder, and fired them off in celebration of the event, they indeed revered the stranger as a superior and marvelous being. For nearly eighteen months the German remained on the coast. It was a port rarely visited, and the negroes would not allow him to make any attempt to travel to a more frequented place. Thus he continued to make gunpowder for his barbarous friends, and to live, according to their notions, "like a prince;" for to do King Bocca-Bocca justice, when he learned our friend's value, he treated him like a man and a brother. What might have been his fate had he awaited in idle despondency the arrival of a vessel? As it was, the negroes crowded the beach, and fired off repeated salvos at his departure. Doubtless his name will descend through many a dusky generation as the teacher of that art which they still practice, carrying on a lucrative commerce in gunpowder with the neighboring tribes. A small square chest of gold-dust, which the escaped victim of Jesuit fraud brought back to Europe, was no inappropriate proof of the policy of doing something "in the mean time," while waiting, however anxiously, to do something else.

We knew another case in point, also connected with the late king of the French. M. de G—— was, on the downfall of that monarch, in possession of a very handsome pension for past services. The revolution came, and his pension was suspended. His wife was a woman of energy: she saw that the pension might be recovered by making proper representations in the right quarters; but she, also, saw that ruinous embarrassment and debt might accrue in the interim. Her house was handsomely furnished—she had been brought up in the lap of wealth and luxury. She did not hesitate; she turned her house into a lodging-house, sank the pride of rank, attended to all the duties of such a station, and—what was the result? When, at the end of three years, M. de G—— recovered his pension, he owed nobody a farthing, and the arrears sufficed to dower one of his daughters about to marry a gentleman of large fortune, who had become acquainted with her by lodging in their house. Madame de G——'s fashionable friends thought her conduct very shocking. But what might have become of the family in three years of petitioning?

Again: one of our most intimate acquaintance was an English gentleman, who, having left the army at the instance of a rich father-in-law, had the misfortune subsequently to offend the irascible old gentleman so utterly, that the latter sud-

denly withdrew his allowance of £1000 per annum, and left our friend to shift for himself. His own means, never very great, were entirely exhausted. He knew too well the impracticable temper of his father-in-law to waste time in attempting to soften him. He also knew that by his wife's settlement he should be rich at the death of the old man, who had already passed his seventieth year. He could not borrow money, for he had been severely wounded in Syria, and the insurance-offices refused him: but he felt a spring of life and youth within him that mocked their calculations. He took things cheerfully, and resolved to work for his living. He answered unnumbered advertisements, and made incessant applications for all sorts of situations. At length matters came to a crisis: his money was nearly gone; time pressed; his wife and child must be supported. A seat—not in parliament, but on the box of an omnibus, was offered him. He accepted it. The pay was equivalent to three guineas a week. It was hard work, but he stuck to it manfully. Not unfrequently it was his lot to drive gentlemen who had dined at his table, and drunk his wine in former days. He never blushed at their recognition; he thought working easier than begging. For nearly ten years he endured all the ups and downs of omnibus life. At last, the tough old father-in-law, who during the whole interval had never relented, died; and our hero came into the possession of some £1500 a year, which he enjoys at this present moment. Suppose he had borrowed and drawn bills instead of working during those ten years, as many have done who had expectations before them, where would he have been on his exit from the Queen's Bench at the expiration of the period? In the hands of the Philistines, or of the Jews?

Our next specimen is that of a now successful author, who, owing to the peculiarity of his style, fell, notwithstanding a rather dashing *début*, into great difficulty and distress. His family withdrew all support, because he abandoned the more regular prospects of the legal profession for the more ambitious but less certain career of literature. He felt that he had the stuff in him to make a popular writer; but he was also compelled to admit that popularity was not in his case to be the work of a day. The *res angusta domi* grew closer and closer; and though not objecting to dispense with the supposed necessity of dining, he felt that bread and cheese, in the literal acceptance of the term, were really indispensable to existence. Hence, one day, he invested his solitary half-crown in the printing of a hundred cards, announcing that at the "Classical and Commercial Day-school of Mr. —, &c., Young Gentlemen were instructed in all the Branches, &c., for the moderate sum of Two Shillings weekly." These cards he distributed by the agency of the milkman in the suburban and somewhat poor neighborhood, in which he occupied a couple of rooms at the moderate rent of 7s. weekly. It was not long before a few pupils made, one by one, their appearance at the

would-be pedagogue's. As they were mostly the sons of petty tradesmen round about, he raised no objection to taking out their schooling in kind, and by this means earned at least a subsistence till more prosperous times arrived, and publishers discovered his latent merits. But for this device, he might not improbably have shared the fate of Chatterton and others, less unscrupulous as to a resource for the "mean time"—that rock on which so many an embryo genius founders.

The misfortune of our next case was, not that *he* abandoned the law, but that the law abandoned *him*. He was a solicitor in a country town, where the people were either so little inclined to litigation, or so happy in not finding cause for it, that he failed from sheer want of clients, and, as a natural consequence, betook himself to the metropolis—that Mecca *cum* Medina of all desperate pilgrims in search of fickle Fortune. There his only available friend was a pastry-cook in a large way of business. It so happened that the man of tarts and jellies was precisely at that epoch in want of a foreman and book-keeper, his last prime-minister having emigrated to America with a view to a more independent career. Our ex-lawyer, feeling the consumption of tarts to be more immediately certain than the demand for writs, proposed, to his friend's amazement, for the vacant post; and so well did he fill it, that in a few years he had saved enough of money to start again in his old profession. The pastry-cook and his friends became clients, and he is at present a thriving attorney in Lincoln's Inn, none the worse a lawyer for a practical knowledge of the *pâtés* filled by those oysters whose shells are the proverbial heritage of his patrons.

A still more singular resource was that of a young gentleman, of no particular profession, who, having disposed somehow or other in unprofitable speculations, of a very moderate inheritance, found himself what is technically termed "on his beam-ends;" so much so, indeed, that his condition gradually came to verge on positive destitution; and he sat disconsolately in a little garret one morning, quite at his wits' end for the means of contriving what Goethe facetiously called "the delightful habit of existing." Turning over his scanty remains of clothes and other possessions, in the vain hope of lighting upon something of a marketable character, he suddenly took up a sheet of card-board which in happier days he had destined for the sketches at which he was an indifferent adept. He had evidently formed a plan, however absurd: that was plain from the odd smile which irradiated his features. He descended the stairs to borrow of his landlady—what? A shilling?—By no means. A needle and thread, and a pair of scissors. Then he took out his box of water-colors and set to work. To design a picture!—Not a bit of it; to make dancing-dolls!—Yes, the man without a profession had found a trade. By the time it was dusk he had made several figures with movable legs and arms: one bore a rude resemblance to Napoleon; another, with scarcely excusable license, represented the Pope; a

third held the very devil up to ridicule; and a fourth bore a hideous resemblance to the grim King of Terrors himself! They were but rude productions as works of art; but there was a spirit and expression about them that toyshops rarely exhibit. The ingenious manufacturer then sallied forth with his merchandise. Within an hour afterward he might have been seen driving a bargain with a vagrant dealer in "odd notions," as the Yankees would call them. It is unnecessary to pursue our artist through all his industrial progress. Enough that he is now one of the most successful theatrical machinists, and in the possession of a wife, a house, and a comfortable income. He, too, had prospects, and he still has them—as far off as ever. Fortunately for him, he "prospected" on his own account, and found a "diggin'."

"There is always something to be done, if people will only set about finding it out, and the chances are ever in favor of activity. Whatever brings a man in contact with his fellows may lead to fortune. Every day brings new opportunities to the social worker; and no man, if he has once seriously considered the subject, need ever be at a loss as to what to do in the mean time. Volition is primitive motion, and where there is a will there is a way.

THE LOST AGES.

MY friends, have you read Elia? If so, follow me, walking in the shadow of his mild presence, while I recount to you my vision of the Lost Ages. I am neither single nor unblest with offspring, yet, like Charles Lamb, I have had my "dream children." Years have flown over me since I stood a bride at the altar. My eyes are dim and failing, and my hairs are silver-white. My real children of flesh and blood have become substantial men and women, carving their own fortunes, and catering for their own tastes in the matter of wives and husbands, leaving their old mother, as nature ordereth, to the stillness and repose fitted for her years. Understand, this is not meant to imply that the fosterer of their babyhood, the instructor of their childhood, the guide of their youth is forsaken or neglected by those who have sprung up to maturity beneath her eye. No; I am blessed in my children. Living apart, I yet see them often; their joys, their cares are mine. Not a Sabbath dawns but it finds me in the midst of them; not a holiday or a festival of any kind is noted in the calendar of their lives, but grand-mamma is the first to be sent for. Still, of necessity, I pass much of my time alone; and old age is given to reverie quite as much as youth. I can remember a time—long, long ago—when in the twilight of a summer evening it was a luxury to sit apart, with closed eyes; and, heedless of the talk that went on in the social circle from which I was withdrawn, indulge in all sorts of fanciful visions. Then my dream-people were all full-grown men and women. I do not recollect that I ever thought about children until I possessed some of my own. Those waking visions