

Osmond, the robber chief, will prove that friend to it which its unnatural parents have not. I will take care of it."

As he spoke he took the infant in his arms, who awoke, and fixing its bright blue eyes upon the glittering mail which Osmond wore, smiled, as if in approbation of its future protector.

"In truth it is a fair babe," observed the robber, "and hard and inhuman must be the parent's heart who could abandon thee. The beast of the forest protect their young, but thy parents, poor little one, have left thee to the mercy of the world; to perish,—for what other fate could they expect would attend thee? It is well attired too—this is no beggar's brat. Ah! what is this? A purse, well laden too, and with good gold pieces; here is a letter also; this perhaps may throw some light upon the business."

Osmond hastily broke open the seal, and as well as the light of the moon would allow him, perused the contents, while his dark and savage-looking associates watched him with astonishment, as they perceived the emotion he evinced, while he read the letter. One moment he became ghastly pale, and then his cheeks would become flushed, and he walked backwards and forwards with extreme agitation. A second and a third time he perused the letter, and his agitation increased rather than abated.

"Can it be possible?" he ejaculated, after a pause;—"and this infant which has so miraculously fallen into my hands, is—Oh, revenge! revenge! Now, could I—" and he looked ferociously at the infant he had but a minute or two before caressed; "but no! It shall not be so; I will make this child the instrument of vengeance that shall bring misery upon the heads of mine enemies. Oh, Marian; what a hell of torment would thy mind be, if thou didst know into whose power thy child had fallen. Take care of it, Arnold, and on with thee to our retreat."

"But what are we to do with the brat?" demanded the latter; "a pretty thing forsooth, and a very fitting employment for a robber to turn nurse in his leisure hours."

"Hold thy peace, Arnold," said the Captain, "and do my bidding. Old Beatrice can attend to it, and if not, I can soon make some arrangements about the business."

Arnold said no more, but folding the mantle round the child, carried it with much care, proceeding by the side of Osmond, and followed by the others, who made various remarks upon the singularity of the evening's adventure, and forming a variety of conjectures upon the conduct of their captain, and the agitation he had evinced on perusing the letter.

It was near the midnight hour, and the guests had just departed from the snug hostelry of Master Hubert Clencham, the proprietor of "The Flagon," which stood at the entrance to a wood, and was much frequented by the inhabitants of the neighbouring town. We say that the guests had departed, and to judge from the display of empty horns, pitchers, and flagons, Master Hubert had had a very goodly amount of customers on that evening, and the rosy, well-fed gills, ruby tipped-nose, blinking eyes, and an occasional hic-cup, and other demonstrations equally conclusive, would have led an observer to the supposition, that he had made himself perfectly agreeable and sociable with his guests; which he was accustomed to do, as his wife, who had never known him to retire to rest sober for one night in the week for the last twenty years, could testify. Master Hubert was, perhaps, a little too prone to do ample justice to the juice of the grape, but then withal he was so good-tempered, and so merry, and so kind-hearted, that Maud, his better half, found it impossible to be cross with him long together. Moreover, his invariable argument was, that he admitted example was better than practice in most cases, consequently if he did not set the example of intoxication to his customers, they might not be inclined to drink, so that he should soon be ruined; whereas he was now enjoying himself in his own way, and saving a fortune by eschewing sobriety.

Of the force of these arguments, we cannot pretend to say much, but it is very evident they answered our host of "The Flagon's" purpose, inasmuch as he had saved a considerable sum of money, and had lately been able to purchase a valuable freehold, ground, &c., and the more he drank, the more did his business seem to increase.

Well, we have said that it was near midnight, and yet Master Hubert remained, seated in his old arm chair in the chimney corner, with a flagon of sack before him, and deaf to all the entreaties of Maud for him to retire to bed. He was insisting, for about the sixth time that evening, that he should sing his favourite song, which was almost as long as the ballad of Chavy Chace, and generally took him rather better than an hour and ten minutes to accomplish. In vain did Maud expostulate with him on the absurdity and debauchery of his conduct; his remonstrances fell without the least effect upon his ears, and her arguments only served him for ridicule.

"Plague on thee, Hubert," said Maud, wrathfully—"marry, an' thou get'st worse every day; here hast thou been at the flask since peep o' morn, and nothing, it seems, will persuade thee to leave it while there is a drop in the cellar."

"Thou sayest true, by the mass," returned Hubert, hiccupping, and taking a swig at the end of every half

dozen words; "thou sayest true, Maud; I will never desert an old friend, and where shall I find a better one than the flask has been to me. Get thee to thy bed, and leave me to my enjoyment; thou knowest it is useless to attempt to persuade me; so put another log on the fire, and close the shutters, for it is a rough night, and the wind blows keenly."

The night was indeed tempestuous, and the rain rattled violently against the casement; it was such a night when the bright blazing fire appears to have a double comfort, and Master Hubert seemed to think so, and it was a truly refreshing sight to see his jolly, rubicund countenance glittering like a new copper warming pan, in the reflection of the fire which burnt briskly on the hearth.

Finding all her persuasions were unavailable, Maud was about to retire to her chamber, when she was surprised and alarmed to hear a loud knocking at the door.

"Marry, good gracious! some one knocks!" said Maud, "who can it be at this unseasonable hour?"

"More sack, more sack, 'tis the best of all drink, More sack, more sack, let us drink till we blink;" sang Hubert, who had not heard the knocking.

"More sack, thou drunken idiot," said Maud, passionately, "will nothing bring thee to thy senses? Some one knocks, I tell thee, and there thou sittest, and takest no more notice than—there again!"

The knocks were repeated with more vehemence than before, and were followed by the voice of a man, but what he said I could not distinguish.

"By my troth, thou art right, Maud," said Hubert, staggering on his feet, "there certainly is some one knocking, as thou sayest, and it is rather an unseasonable hour for travellers. But I suppose it is somebody who has been benighted in the wood."

"More likely it is that terrible fellow Osmond, or some of his gang," said Maud; "and we shall perhaps be not only robbed, but murdered."

"Out upon thee for a silly one as thou art," returned Hubert; "what thinkest thou Osmond wants with such as us? he seeks higher game! besides, is he not always the friend of the poor?"

Once more was the knocking heard, and then the voice of a man imploring them to admit him from the inclemency of the weather.

"Aye, aye," said Hubert, aloud, "be not impatient, I must take the liberty of putting a few questions to thee first. Who art thou?"

"I am a traveller, and have walked far since the morning; I am wet and weary," was the answer, "and have one with me that requires the utmost care and attention. Pr'ythee admit me, I have the means to remunerate your kindness."

"Oh, as for that matter," replied Hubert, "we can talk about that afterwards. But art thou sure thou art not deceiving me?"

"I swear I am not," answered the man, "for the love of heaven do not keep me standing here any longer, for I am already drenched to the skin and perished with cold."

"Well, well, tarry till I unbolt the door," said Hubert, "I will even venture to admit thee."

"Oh, no, no, not for the world!" cried Maud, with a look of terror, and who suffered her fears for a moment to overcome her natural kindness of heart.

"Nonsense, Maud," observed her husband, "I feel certain that we have nothing to fear; and, besides, this is not a night fit for a dog to be out in."

With that, humming his favourite song, the burthen of which we have quoted above, he unfastened the bolts, and taking the lamp in his hand, opened the door, narrowly scrutinizing the person of the applicant without.

The man seemed to be very much fatigued, and was enveloped in a long dark mantle, folded in part of which he carried something with great care. He was a tall man, of commanding figure and handsome countenance, on which the lines of care and sorrow were strongly visible.

Hubert being satisfied, admitted him, and the stranger, with many expressions of thanks, took a seat in the chimney corner opposite to Hubert, and opening his mantle the worthy host of the "Flagon," and his wife, were completely thunderstruck to behold that he carried in his arms a lovely female child, apparently not more than eighteen months old, who stretched forth its little limbs in apparent enjoyment, as it felt the genial warmth of the fire.

"What a little beauty!" exclaimed Maud, whose fears had now vanished, as she gazed upon the interesting countenance of the infant; "and to be out on such a night as this, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather!"

"I see ye are surprised, my friends," quoth the stranger, as he observed the looks of curiosity with which Hubert and his wife were eyeing him, "and I do not marvel at it. Alas! you see in this smiling innocent, the victim of tyranny and cruelty, whom I am endeavouring to rescue from a dreadful fate. I have to travel some distance further yet before I shall reach the place of my destination, and where I can place the infant in security from her enemies. You see how exhausted I am, and I therefore beg of you to grant me a shelter for myself and my tender charge until the morning, and I will freely pay you what you may demand."

"Alas for that matter, master," replied Hubert, who was now getting quite sober again, "thou art welcome to all the accommodation I can give thee,

which is this warm fireside until morning, for my beds are occupied. And so sit thee down and take a cup of sack or two with me; and, I say, dame, get thee some milk, and warm it for this poor infant, who, doubtless, is hungry."

The stranger again expressed his thanks to Hubert and his wife, and she went readily to perform her husband's bidding, and, kissing the infant, declared "it was one of the sweetest little cherubs she had ever seen."

The stranger seemed to be labouring under some heavy mental affliction, and frequently sighed deeply, and covering his face with his mantle, as if he was endeavouring to conceal his emotion from observation. He did not appear to be disposed to talk, and as it was now very late, Hubert and Maud prepared to retire to their chamber.

"But," said the kind-hearted hostess, "the child, surely thou wilt not leave her here?—If thou art not afraid to entrust her to me, I will take care of the poor little thing till the morning."

The stranger seemed extremely grateful to her for this offer, but yet loath to part with his tender charge, but after some apparent struggle with his feelings he yielded, resigned the infant to Maud, and after bidding him good night, they retired to bed.

For a considerable time Hubert and his wife lay awake, and formed many speculations on the adventure of the night, and endeavouring to form some idea as to who the stranger could be, and in what manner he was related to the infant; but not being able to form any notion on the subject, they gave it up, and resigned themselves to the arms of Morpheus.

At an early hour on the following morning, (which was their invariable custom) Hubert and his wife arose. The infant had never cried during the night, and nestled in her nurse's bosom, slept calmly and soundly. Having descended to the parlour, they were surprised at the stillness which prevailed it, and opening the door, their astonishment was increased tenfold, when they discovered that the stranger was not in the room. In a minute afterwards, some object attracted Hubert's attention, lying on the table;—he approached and found it was a purse heavily laden, by the side of which was a letter addressed in an unknown hand, to him. Hastily he broke the seal, and to his infinite surprise, read as follows:—

(To be continued.)

SINGULAR DIALOGUE.

To the Editor of the Sun.

SIR,—Being an old bachelor, and consequently free from any real misfortunes of my own, I frequently visit the Victoria Theatre out of mere curiosity, to behold the fictitious troubles of the drama, and before I return from the city, invariably stop at a certain coffee-house in Pitt-street, to digest what I have seen, as well as a Welsh rabbit, and a cup of coffee. On Monday evening, after I had taken my usual corner seat, from which I gathered that its tenant, a cunning old fox, like myself, was detailing to his friend the advantages of a matrimonial scheme in which he was about to embark with a warm, though one-eyed widow, in whose name he had himself seen £30,000, three-and-half per cent stocks, standing in the bank books. From the snatches of his discourse, I concluded he was proceeding to discuss the dress in which he should be married, and his plans subsequent to that event. Immediately behind me, the landlady in the bar was alternately giving orders to her milliner for various articles of finery, and taking orders from the waiters for present and future feast. Portions of the dialogue occasionally falling on my ear, at the same moment formed such whimsical combinations, that, having pen and ink before me, I was induced to commit them to paper, and the following is the exact conversation my neighbour (whose name I found was Higgings,) unconsciously sustained with the bustling damsel in the inner room:—

MR. HIGGINGS—Let me see; I think I shall wear my brown bob wig.

LANDLADY—With a pink satin cap and amber earrings.

MR. H.—My snuff-coloured coat.

LANDLADY—A flowered petticoat and patent stays.

MR. H.—As to breeches—

LANDLADY—All the ladies wear them, you say?

MR. H.—I think I shall go to church in my jockey boots.

LANDLADY—With a poke bonnet and red parasol.

MR. H.—People will soon discover that I am possessed of something handsome.

LANDLADY—A calf's head and pig's face.

MR. H.—Should I have children, the first thing I shall do will be to see them.

LANDLADY—Skinned and cut into thin slices.

MR. H.—I shall take care to have them well-dressed.

LANDLADY—In the fish-kettle, over a charcoal fire.

MR. H.—What a pleasure to have them frisking before me.

LANDLADY—In the frying-pan.

MR. H.—And to hear their dear little tongues.

LANDLADY—Bubble and squeak.

MR. H.—My daughters shall be accomplished.

LANDLADY—With plenty of sauce.

MR. H.—Slim as an opera dancer.

LANDLADY—With a pudding in her belly.

MR. H.—I shall make a point of seeing the little darlings put carefully to bed.

LANDLADY—And smothered in onions.

MR. H.—And as to myself, I shall give up my mind and body to the reward so well earned.

LANDLADY—The heart to be peppered and devilled, and the sole to be fried.

I had no sooner written down this unlucky reply to Mr. Higgings's complacent exordium, than I burst into such a peal of laughter, that the parties of whose conversation I had thus caught the tops and bottoms, suddenly suspended their discourse to ascertain the cause of my merriment, and lest I should be called upon for an explanation, I hurried out of the room, determined to send you my manuscript the first opportunity.

Yours, &c. OLD QUIZ.

THE COCKNEY AND THE CAPTAIN.

FROM THE "LONDON POLICE GAZETTE."

Captain P. M.—, a gallant officer, who had lost an eye in the service of his country, and was residing with his family in the pleasant village of Mortlake, was brought before the magistrate, on a warrant, charging him with having assaulted and beaten one Simon Hopkins, who called himself "a London shop-keeper, in a small way, residing in Vitechappel."

Simon Hopkins, it appears, went out to ruralize one fine sunny day, and having strolled as far as Mortlake, he called upon a friend of his, a little fat man in a brown bob wig, who keeps a little shop in the neighbourhood of that village. It is a sweet little cottage with a little garden in front of it, well stored with pot herbs, "gilli-flowers gentle and rosemarie;" and has a little wicket gate opening to the road. His bob-wig'd friend was mighty glad to see him, and invited him to stay to dinner; an invitation which was gladly accepted, for Simon Hopkins was come out to make a day of it. They had a dish of very nice cabbage and bacon for dinner—and a regular prime cut of slap-up gammon; had having chatted an hour or two, and finished a couple of pots of mild porter, Simon Hopkins walked out into the little garden in front of the cottage, and leaned over the little wicket-gate, enjoying the beauties of the prospect and a lovely evening, whilst his bob-wig'd friend was busy with some little matters in his shop.

As Simon Hopkins was thus leaning over the gate—pondering, no doubt, on the possibility of getting back to Vitechappel, without paying coach-hire—he was aware of two ladies coming along the lane. One of these ladies was a considerable distance behind the other; and when the foremost of them came nearly opposite to the place where Simon Hopkins stood, she stooped—apparently without seeing him—and began rectifying the lace of one of her boots, which appeared to have got loose in walking. Now, whether Simon Hopkins is a man prone to gallantry, or whether the delightful evening, the cabbage and bacon, and the mild porter, opened his heart more than usual, we knew not—but so it was, that when he saw the lady stoop, and begin doing something at her foot, he suddenly called to her, "Shall I tie up your boot lace for you, ma'am?" Unlucky Simon Cooper! The words had scarcely passed his lips when the lady raised herself, looked round for a moment, gave a loud shriek, and ran off down the lane with the speed of an antelope—followed by the loitering lady whom Simon had seen in the distance. Simon Cooper looked after them as they ran, and smiled to think that woman should be so "timbersome." But he soon had cause to smile on the other side of his mouth, as it were; for in the next moment Captain P. M.— rushed into the garden, exclaiming, "You rascal! how dare you insult a lady?" and before the astonished Simon could reply he received the gallant Captain's clenched fist full on the centre of his nose, and down he went—all amongst his bob-wig'd friend's gilliflowers! The Captain then walked away; and the luckless Simon gathered himself up, leaned his head over the wicket-gate, and there he stood bleeding for more than half an hour, bemoaned both by himself and his bob-wig'd friend.

This was the violence he complained of. He assured his worship that he had not the most distant idea of insulting the lady, and he was utterly astonished at the consequences that ensued.

"Thou shalt be punished for thus frightening me, A woman, naturally born to fears; And though now confess thou didst but jest, With my vex'd spirits I cannot make a truce, But they will quake and tremble all this day!"—

said Lady Constance to William Longwood, Earl of Salisbury, when he merely told her there was a wedding in hand; and what would she have said had the noble Earl startled her with such an offer as Simon Cooper's? But, may be, honest Simon has tied up the boot-laces of many a buxom lass at Vitechappel, and he thought he might do the same kind service for the ladies at Mortlake. Ah! simple Simon Hopkins!

The whole of his statement, as far as the Captain is concerned, was fully substantiated by his bob-wig'd friend, whose gardens had been watered, as it were, with Simon's innocent blood; and then Captain P. M.—, was called upon for his defence.

The gallant Captain gave a rather different account of the affair: and took off something from Simon's veracity. The Captain said his wife and sister had gone to visit a friend at some distance on the afternoon in question of meeting and accompanying them home;—but a sudden shower coming on, he took shelter in the house of a brother officer on the road. Whilst he remained there, he saw his wife and sister pass by; and he was just preparing to follow them when he heard his wife shriek. Rushing instantly from the house, he