

Variety.

Mixing together profit and delight.

From Blackwood's Magazine.

COLONEL O'SHAUGHNESSY.

I was two-and-twenty years of age before I made up my mind as to what business I should follow for life. My father wished me to pursue his calling of a lawyer, but I hated law. My mother proposed bringing me up to the church; this I disliked also. It was then suggested, but with no better success, that I should study physic. Law was too sedentary for my disposition. I could not think of it without bringing to mind dusty papers, equivocations, and endless chicanery. I had imbibed the common and absurd notion that all lawyers were rogues. I remembered the sharp, meagre, sallow figures who haunted our legal courts at Dublin, and if I saw a man unusually crafty, or expert at overreaching his neighbour, I set him straightway down as a lawyer. It was strange that I should possess such notions, for my father was one of the honestest men in existence, and one of the fattest.

The church. This was something better, but it would not do. Parsons were associated in my mind with fat paunches, and unmeaning indolence. The life of a parish priest, confined to one spot on earth, and having no associates but country bumpkins and old maids, was intolerable. I knew several clergy men, and they were fat, pious, heavy-headed fellows. The parson of our parish, moreover, was a blockhead—at least, so I, in my wisdom, thought proper to consider him. This knocked on the head all hopes of turning my attention to the church.

Physic. I loathed the idea. Surgeons, physicians, apothecaries, men-midwives, were my dislike. Pills, potions, and pectorals, might be very well in their way, but to me, the very thought of them was abomination. My father's patience was at an end. "Tom," said he, "you are now a man, and it is high time you should think of doing something for yourself. Suppose you follow my profession?" I begged to be excused.

"Suppose you become a parson?"

"Never. Parsons are fat, stupid, and gormandizing."

"Or a physician?"

"Worse than all." My father could contain himself no longer. His plump face, for he was very choleric, was flushed to a deep crimson. "Tom, I shall give you two days to consider of it. You have befooled your mother and me long enough. What the devil, sir! do you mean to do nothing for yourself in this life? Before I was a year older than you, I was married, and in the receipt of two hundred a-year. If you are not prepared to give me a decisive answer by the day after tomorrow, by the heavens, I will—"

He did not finish the sentence; so much the worse. It was his anger which prevented him, and I knew that something serious was in the wind. I did not sleep well that night. How could I? Things were come to a bearing. I knew my father's temper too well to think that he would wait any longer. By one means and another I had procrastinated and put off for more than a twelvemonth, and a greater delay it was impossible to expect. Next day I was unusually dull, and so were my father and mother. I saw that I had offended them, but in what manner to recover their good graces, without doing injustice to my own inclinations, I was at a loss to perceive. Lawyer—parson—doctor, floated alternately like notes through my brain. I must be one of the three; so my worthy parents had determined. Never, in the course of my life, did I make so many wry faces: the more I considered the matter, the more intolerable did it seem.

How things might have ended it is difficult to say, when my mother's eldest brother, Colonel O'Shaughnessy, arrived at our house. He had just reached England, from India, with his regiment, after an absence of ten years. Perhaps the whole army could not furnish such an admirable illustration of the ludicrous, both in person and manner. In stature he rose to six feet two inches, and was without exception, the thinnest man, to be in good health, I ever saw. His legs were like spindle-shafts, and his long lank arms dangled from his shoulders, as if stuck there artificially, instead of being natural members. His nose and chin were both inordinately peaked; his mouth was large, and his cheeks hollow, and marked with strong lines. In addition to this, he squinted oddly with both eyes. His complexion was of a brownish yellow. The fore and lateral parts of his head were quite bald, but the hair, which still clung to

his head, was gathered into a queue, which descended a foot down his back. This strange caricature of the human form was dressed in a long military coat, with an epaulette on each shoulder. On his head he wore a cocked-hat, surmounted by a white feather a couple of feet high. His lower limbs, were cased in immense Hessian boots, reaching above the knee, and tight buckskin small scathe—while a sword, sheathed in a steel case, and hilted with silver and shagreen, dangled at his side. Such was the exterior of Col. O'Shaughnessy.

I had always been a favourite with this military relative. I was called after him, and, during my boyhood, he showed me many marks of kindness. I remember the very day on which he left us twelve years before—I was then ten—he filled my pockets with pence, because I had beaten a boy bigger than myself. He swore it was what he had done when of that age. To him I communicated the awkward situation in which I was placed, and begged his advice.

"So they propose," said he, "to make a parson of you boy? No, blood and wounds, that will never do. We have got plenty of them in the army. As for a doctor, every regiment has a brace of them: there is no need for you to add to the number. A lawyer do they talk of making you?—here my uncle squinted horribly, and grasped the handle of his sword—"I tell you, Tom, if you become a lawyer, you are no nephew of mine. Thunder and lightning, did I not once lose a hundred pounds by a rascally attorney! I tell you, Tom, there is no such commission in the service as that of a lawyer. No, boy; they are going to spoil your fine genius. You must enter the army. That is the only place for a lad of spirit."

I caught without a moment's delay, at this suggestion, and expressed my willingness to follow his advice. In truth, I had always a *penchant* towards a military life, & was glad to adopt any scheme which promised to rid me of the detestable professions for which I was destined by my parents. But would they accede to my wish? I expressed my doubts to my uncle: he squinted at me a look of anger, as much as to say, "So you question my influence with your father and mother?" In a trice he was closeted with the former, and laid the proposal before him—no more anticipating a refusal, than to be disobeyed by his own corporal on parade. He did not know the old lawyer, who point-blank objected to the scheme. I know not how my uncle looked on this occasion: I have no doubt it was very grim. High words, it is certain, ensued between them. The Colonel's notions of military discipline were too strict to enable him to digest any opposition to his wishes. I was in the next room trembling for the result, and I heard him bestow the appellations of ass—blockhead—ninny, very profusely upon my father, who retorted, by threatening him with an action at law for an assault. Thereafter the door opened, then was dashed fiercely to by some one who passed out. It was my uncle. I heard his sword rattling, and his heavy Hessians trampling loudly as he descended the stair. He betook himself straightway to my mother, with whom he had an interview of half an hour. Whether his eloquence prevailed more with her than with her husband, is unknown. Certain it is, that he left the house in high dudgeon. I saw his tall gaunt form, surmounted by his gigantic feather, pass out at the front door. His servant carried his travelling-bag, boot-jack, and portmanteau behind him—and he sojourned to the next inn, there, as he said, to take up his quarters during the remainder of his stay in the city.

In a short time a military gentleman waited upon my father, with a challenge from the Colonel. The worthy lawyer got alarmed,—so did my mother,—so did I. I was even more than alarmed: I was irritated against my uncle, whom, notwithstanding all his well-intended kindness, I could not but deeply censure for such an outrage on my own flesh and blood.—No danger however ensued. My father could fight any man with a law-paper, but he had a mortal aversion to powder and shot. The consequence was, that he made a humble apology to his brother-in-law—promised to let me have my own way—and begged of the Colonel to return to his house. The whole business was settled within an hour. My uncle came back to dinner and shook hands with his relation, congratulating me at the same time upon my approaching change of life. I have reason to believe that a reconciliation would not have ensued so easily, but for the circumstance of the Colonel having upwards of eight thousand pounds in the stocks. My father knew this; and like a true philosopher, thought

it a pity that he or his wife should run any risk of losing his future prospects in the same for the sake of a quarrel. He therefore wisely pocketed the affront, and sacrificed his own feelings to a sense of personal interest.

I got a commission in my uncle's regiment. I found that he was both laughed at, and loved and respected, by his brother officers. It may be wondered how such opposite feelings could exist with regard to one man; but so it was.—They all liked him for his good nature; they laughed at him for his oddities; and esteemed him for his courage and integrity. By the men he was called the Squinting Colonel; but this was done from sheer good humour, and not, as is too often the case, from malice or spleen. My pay did not permit me to indulge in wine at the mess dinners; but he placed me along-side of himself, and filled my glass from his own bottle. The only fault which he had was that of shooting with the long bow. Day after day he regaled us with stories of his exploits in India, and elsewhere. The mess-table was kept in a roar of laughter with his extravagancies. His face, always a perfect fiddle, was at these times irresistibly comic in its expression.—his nose and chin approached each other like nut cracker—and his long mouth was drawn up into a grim smile of delight. He told the same story dozens of times over, and every time it was different. The humour, however, never evaporated; it was always fresh and racy; and, when he had concluded any of his extraordinary recitals, the whole mess rubbed their hands, and "Excellent!—Devilish good, Colonel!" resounded from one end of the table to the other. My uncle was one of the very few bouncers whom I have ever known to be, at bottom, brave men.

About a year after I joined the regiment, we were ordered to the continent. Bonaparte had broke loose from Elba, and was organizing his armies to try once more the fate of war with the congregated powers of Europe. Our voyage affords nothing worth relating. Suffice it to say, we marched to Brussels, and enjoyed for a time the luxuries and amusements of that pleasant city. My uncle had here occasion to fight a duel with a French officer, who thought fit to cast some practical jokes on the obliquity of his vision. The Frenchman insisted on fighting with the small-sword, and the Colonel gratified his desire. The result was singular enough. *Alonso* lost an eye,—his adversary's foil having penetrated nearly an inch into that valuable organ. My uncle, with his usual philosophy, imputed the whole as a punishment from Heaven upon his presumptuous enemy, for insulting the optics of his neighbor.

This pleasant life could not last forever. The storm was gathering around us, and we daily expected to commence "war's bloody game." However, we thought of it as little as possible, and drank the rich wines of Belgium, and sang merry catches, with as much apparent unconcern as if we had been in quarters at home. I believe there was not a mess like ours, for humour and brotherly feeling, in the whole army.

I remember the particular time when all this gay scene was changed into bustle and lamentation. My uncle had invited the officers to supper, and placed before them the firstlings of a large supply of capital Volnay and champagne, which he had purchased from a French *marchant de vin*. Never did I behold him in better spirits. He related, with infinite humour, his exploits in India against serpents, tigers, and Pindarces; and varied the tales, which he had often told before, with such consummate ingenuity, that they no longer seemed the same things. The whole mess was convulsed with laughter. His wine, which they laid in proper style, they pronounced to be "devilish good;" but his stories were "a d—d deal better." Pity that such delightful moments, should be broken in upon—but so it was. In the midst of one of his most interesting adventures he stopped short, as if something caught his ear. He listened, and heard the distant report of firing. In a moment after, the bugles were sounded through the streets, callings to arms. "Gentlemen," said he, "we must move;—the enemy is at hand.—I will finish my story at some other time." Alas! we never all met together again. Many gallant fellows, who that evening laughed at the eccentricities of their worthy Colonel, were in a few hours stretched out cold and lifeless upon the field of honour.

I shall not attempt to describe the appearance which Brussels presented on this memorable night. All was deafening noise and confusion. We were taken unawares:—the French, with their characteristic promptness of movement,

had come upon us sooner than we expected, and we cursed their unmannerly intrusion from the bottom of our souls. We did not mind fighting; but to be taken away from our wine was more than could be easily endured—and we swore sundry deadly oaths to be straightway revenged upon them for their impertinence. Let no one blame my uncle for being off his guard; if he was so, so was every one else. The Duke of Wellington was quadrilling it at a ball, and the Colonel was amusing his friends with wine and mirth at his own supper-table.

We were marched to Waterloo. I must candidly confess, my sensations were far from being of a pleasant kind, and I believe those of my comrades were not much more agreeable. We knew that a doubtful battle had been fought at Quatre Bras, and were assured that the Prussians had sustained a signal defeat at Ligny. The knowledge did not contribute much to raise our spirits; and when we observed the remnants of the gallant Scotch regiments, which were almost annihilated at the former place, and the number of wounded brought in, we became convinced that we had our work cut out for us, and that the French were not easily beaten as we expected. However, no one had said a word. Each moved on in dubious silence, resolved to do his best; but inwardly cursing the ill luck which brought him there and wishing himself at Dan or Beersheba.

We were placed, as ill luck would have it, in the very front of the battle. Our regiment was known to be a good one, and the Colonel steel to the backbone; and in truth, we needed all our qualities, for we were drawn out opposite to a formidable artillery, backed by a strong body of foot and cuirassiers. My uncle rode up to me. "Tom, you dog, mind your colours."—"I wish you and the colours were at the devil," said I to myself—I could not help it, for I began to feel confoundedly uncomfortable. The battle, a considerable time before this, had commenced in various parts of the line: the rest was joining in it rapidly; and it now became our turn to take part, as the enemy opposite was advancing his iron front to the attack. At last his artillery, succeeded by showers of musquetry, opened upon us. We returned these compliments in the same style, and doubtless with good effect. I shall never forget my feelings on the first discharge of the French guns. In every quarter of our line an opening was made, and a number of men seen to drop, some killed outright, and some desperately wounded. The gaps were instantly filled by others, who stepped forward from the rear ranks. It was the first of my battles, and I felt, in spite of all my efforts, the trepidation and anxiety of a novice. The noise, smoke, confusion, and destruction, were horrible. "Keep steady, my brave boys—fire away," was heard on all sides from the officers encouraging their men: they fought like lions. Not a man thought of flinching: the same indomitable British spirit animated them all.

During the whole of this time I stood in the heart of the fight, the King's colours waving over my head. The men were dropping fast around me. I heard the balls whizzing like hail past my ears. In a little longer I was so stupefied that I hardly knew what I did, or where I was. At last I heard the voice of my uncle calling out, "Well done, Tom—that's a brave boy. Take care of your colours, and stand fast." His words roused me, and I looked up, and saw him in the act of leading on his men to a charge. At this moment the ensign who bore the *regimental* colours fell dead about ten yards from my side. The standard was raised by a sergeant, who was almost instantly killed. "Five encouragement," thought I, "for flag-bearers; I suppose my turn will be next." I now began to reflect how much better I should have been at home, following after some pacific profession, than standing here to be pinked by any rascally Frenchman who fancied me for a shot. Honour is a very pretty thing to talk of on the peace establishment, but during war it is one of the ugliest things in the world: and so little of a soldier am I, that I would rather, any day, die like a Christian on my bed, than be killed in battle in any manner, however honourable. But this is a digression.

(Concluded next week.)

NURSERY DISEASES.

Practical Observations on the Convulsions of Infants by John North, Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, &c.

We do not very often review Medical Works, but Mr. North's Book is one of such obvious utility, that we can feel no hesitation in recommending it to general perusal. Possessing all that scientific knowledge which is requisite

to give his observations value, this gentleman has, further, the happy talent of conveying them to his readers with such clearness, that the most ignorant nurse can have no difficulty in comprehending him, and this, as the work especially tends to the instruction of those who undertake that lowly, but not unimportant office, constitutes no slight recommendation in its favour. We cannot follow him through his details. A useful hint or two, by way of specimen, will suffice, to shew the value of Mr. North's observations.

"Many nurses and mothers are in the habit of suddenly rousing children from their sleep, and carrying them from a room comparatively dark into a glare of light. Such a custom is decidedly improper. A child should be gradually and gently awakened. Much momentary excitement is produced even in the adult by being roused suddenly from sleep; and there can be no doubt, that children become in consequence of such imprudence, more liable to convulsive affections. Montaigne, we are told, always contrived to break the slumbers of his infant son by the gradual sound of a soft musical instrument. The idea was happy, although its general adoption would be attended with some difficulty."

The importance of temperance in a nurse he strongly insists upon.

"A predisposition to convulsive affections in children may be originally produced in consequence of their being suckled by a nurse addicted to the frequent use of spirituous liquors. In several instances I have known children rapidly recover their health when the nurse was changed, who had exhibited most of the premonitory symptoms of convulsions, while they were suckled by a woman who indulged in the common vice of gin-drinking."

"Violent emotions of mind, or excessive bodily fatigue, should be avoided by nurses. Mr. Gilbert relates the case of a child, who died of convulsions after having sucked a nurse, who had been exposed to hard labour under a burning sun. Boerhaave knew some instances in which epilepsy was produced in children, in consequence of their nurses having had violent fits of passion. Beasmes remarks, that he was informed by one of his professional brethren, that his child died suddenly of convulsions after having been suckled by a woman who had been violently exasperated.

London Courier.

The Phrase of "Blue Stocking."

—Many of the orders whose histories fill the pages of works on knighthood have no claims to their places, without either royal or pontifical authority, and wearing no badge or cross except in the imagination of the writer. The society de la Calza [of the stocking] was formed in Venice in the year 1400, to the honor of the inauguration of the Doge, Michele Steno. The employment of the members was conversation and festivity; and so splendid were the entertainments of music and dancing, that the gay spirit of other parts of Italy anxiously solicited the honor of seats in the society. All their statutes regarded only the ceremonies of the ball and theatre; and the members being resolved in the religious performance, took an oath in a church to that tendency. They had banners and seal like an authorized order of knighthood. Their dress was as splendid and elegant as Venetian luxury and taste could fashion it; and, consistently with the singular custom of marking academics and other intellectual associations by external signs of folly, the members, when they met in literary discussion, were distinguished by the colors of their stockings.—The colors were sometimes fantastically blended, and at other times one prevailed. The Society de la Calza lasted till the year 1590, when the foppery of Italian literature took some other symbol.—The rejected title then crossed the Alps, and found a congenial soil in the Biscayan and literary trifling of Parisian society, and particularly branded female pedantry as strongest feature in the character of French pretension. It diverged from France to England, and for a while marked the vanity of the small advance in literature of our female celebrities. But the propriety of its application is now gradually ceasing; for we see in every circle that attainments in literature can be accomplished with no loss of womanly modesty. It is in his country, above all others, that knowledge asserts her right of general dominion, or contends if she be the sustaining energy of one sex, she forms the lighter charm, the graceful drapery of the other.

Mill's Chivalry.

Mrs. G. B. Miller, Water-st. New York, advertises a kind of snuff called the American Gentleman. Her American Gentleman, she says, has become the most popular snuff in the United States.