

## Variety.

Mixing together profit and delight.

FROM THE MONTHLY AND EUROPEAN MAGAZINE.

### LUCK AND ILL-LUCK.

[CONCLUDED.]

As these good effects speedily followed my advice, the king transferred to me the marks of gratitude which he received from his people for these unexpected changes. He wished to associate me in his power; and the proposal, when he made it to the elders of the nation, was received with unanimous acclamations. Nothing remained but to proceed to my installation. From time immemorial, the consecration of the kings of Dahomay consists in marching them before the people and the army, mounted upon a superb white elephant, one of the fetiches of the country, according to the movements of which the priests prognosticate the brilliancy and duration of the commencing reign. I give this warning to legislators. I thought I should respect some ancient prejudices of the country: I raised my new laws on the foundation of the old, and when I was on the point of obtaining the object of all my cares and all my toils, the old bases shook under me, and afterwards the new edifice.

"An *insondo*, a miserable insect, about the size of one of our ants, but the most formidable enemy of the elephant, had insinuated itself in the proboscis of the animal on which I was mounted in triumph. Irritated by the stinging of the insect, my elephant at first showed great impatience, to the great astonishment of the populace; but the pain he suffered soon raised his fury to the highest pitch. Uttering the most dreadful cries, and rushing forward in rage, he dashed to pieces his forehead on a neighboring rock. I was saved; but another danger, of no less magnitude, awaited me. The priests declared me unworthy, not only of the throne, but of life: the prosperity of the state had been compromised; my innovations had raised against me the shade of Trudo Audati, and the mortal gods of Dahomay. The king was attached to me—he owed me his life; but the death of his fetiche had alarmed his superstition. He balanced for a while, but gratitude finally prevailed; and he commuted my punishment to exile, after ordering me a very tolerable *bastinado*, to quiet his conscience.

"An insect which bred on the shoals in the midst of the Adriatic exposed Venice, in the height of her power, to more danger than all the kings of Europe leagued against her; an insect flung me from a throne, and changed perhaps the destinies of an entire continent!

"I afterwards learnt that the people of Dahomay regretted me: they sent after me into the kingdom of Judah—but I had already left the coasts of Guinea. Their emissaries thought they could fill my place by any man of the same colour, and proposed to one of the Europeans, whom they met, to accompany them. He accepted it; my services to Dahomay were turned over to him; he was loaded with riches and honours. That man was..... Bernard! If I was fond of revenge, I should have rejoiced at the accident which placed my ungrateful subjects under the power of a mere intriguer, without any capacity.

"I have not much more to say. I returned to France, and turned author, in the hope of finding in literary labors that repose and happiness after which I had so long sighed. I thought I had only to write for posterity—but was soon disabused by my contemporaries. An interesting work which I composed, on the manners, customs, and politics of the barbarous kings of Africa, was regarded by the censors as a satire against the sovereigns of Europe. The work was forbidden, and the author was in no small danger of being sent to the Bicetre or the Bastille. I still, however, panted after glory; and not being able to be a great physician or a great general, I wished, at all events, to have my name inscribed on the list of the forty immortals—and I wrote a tragedy. By means of much care and trouble, I had it performed: but a wit of the paterne damned it in the third scene by a joke; a very good joke, I confess, but not at all conclusive as to the merits of the piece. In the mean time, Bernard having returned to Paris, modestly enjoyed the high reputation of a warrior, a lawgiver, and a philosophic traveller. Thinking to repair, as much as possible, my theatrical failure, I endeavoured to bring together some people of fashion, and many of the literati, to hear my play read. An opera dancer who was professed by Bernard, gave, on the same day, a grand *souper*; all the literati were engaged to it; and I had no other auditors but some young dandies, and some old rakes of the Regency, who

listened to me with affected graces, yawning, or dozing, and ratified the decree of the public by pronouncing unanimously my play detestable. I was not discouraged: and an epic poem was the fruit of this poetical resignation. No bookseller would print it: my reputation had preceded me; and, on going out of one of their shops, I learned that Bernard had just been named a member of the Academy—for admission into which illustrious body he offered no other title than that of having composed a *quatrain* in honor of that high and handsome lady, whom Maria Theresa had called her friend and good cousin (Madame de Pompadour.)

"After having exercised all employments with some talent, and much honesty, I began to think that intriguing mediocrity has the best chance of success. A man of this class has gathered the fruit of all his talents—all my toils in the four quarters of the globe. I was growing old, and felt the necessity of securing my future prospects. It was, however, with some pain that I decided on falling into the common track. Soliciting for place, I frequented the antichambers of the great; I wrote petitions to them, and *bouquets-a-Chloris* for their mistresses. I made friends in the newspapers, in the public offices—even in the king's *garde-robe*. Finally, I obtained zealous patrons, and all the necessary steps to obtain the employment which I solicited were made. The road to the court was opened, and I had nothing to do but present my petition to the king: it is only natural that the hand which was to have presented it should be struck powerless all at once. I foresaw my fate, and do not complain. The clashing of our vehicles has overturned with me, in the middle of the way, the result of all my assiduity with the great, and my verses to Chloris; but for once my ill-luck be praised! It would have been too painful a reflection, that the only blameable action of my life should be the only one attended with success. From every little check a great good results, when considered from a proper point of view. If my different catastrophes have hurt my fortune and my reputation—things in themselves frail and perishable—they have also developed my mind, and enlarged the sphere of my understanding, by compelling me to exercise my moral powers in different ways among different nations: they have taught me not to squander either esteem or disdain, without a profound knowledge of men and things, according to vain appearances; for many men of talent and merit must exist in the world whom unfavorable circumstances and unlucky chances have cast, like myself, into the obscure ranks of the poor and unknown. The *ecclat* of grand titles and great reputations do not now impose upon me. A trifle is sufficient to raise or destroy all human glories, as I have often experienced. The shape of Cleopatra's nose (as Pascal has observed with so much sagacity) caused the fortune of Augustus and the ruin of Antony, and deranged the face of the world. According to the academicians, Duclos, the vermin which torment the Roman conclaves have frequently triumphed over intrigues and seductions, and made popes of people, who but for them never would have attained the dignity. A child playing in the shop of a spectacle-maker is the cause of discovering myriads of suns and new worlds, and prepares, without thinking of it, the way for the reputation of Simon Marius, of Galileo, of twenty other great astronomers. A falling apple demonstrated to Newton the laws of the universe, and perhaps revealed to him the extent of his own genius. As for me, who seem to have been cast into the world to prove the influence which can be exercised over the destinies of man, the master of the earth, by the most subaltern and contemptible causes; such as an awkward gesture, a nick-name, a grape-stone, a worm, a blast of dust, a puppy-dog, an insect, or a censor: I say, as for me, have not these trifles closed before my footsteps twenty paths to glory or honor? I might have become a fatalist; but I will not. Mad, a thousand-fold mad, are they who refuse to believe that an Infinite Mind presided over the creation of these beings, so low in the scale of creation as to be almost imperceptible, yet all-important in the great proceedings of the universe. The harmony of the world is kept up only by apparent irregularities. I shall not cry out: All is right; but I will say, nothing is useless or contemptible. An atom acquires importance by its position, like a cypher [0] in arithmetical calculation.—Every thing has its power of action; every thing may become a lever in its turn; every thing has been produced to keep up that eternal re-action of good and evil which alone gives motion and life to the creation."

M. Pigafet concluded; and Comte de M—, after having heard in silence his long philosophical *tirade*, replied, "Your history has surprised and interested me more than you can imagine. Your profound understanding, however, M. Pigafet, does not appear to have yet made you comprehend that, if unmerited misfortunes may continually cling to a man without tarnishing him, fortune often smiles also on men, perhaps unworthy of her favors, from the weakness of their capacity, but who yet would not condescend to look for them by intrigue or baseness.—I am Bernard!—that Bernard who profited by your disasters without having caused them—who was sometimes your rival, never your enemy—who has obtained a great reputation without having looked for it, and arrived at honors without caring about them—and who has no more reason to blush for his prosperity than you for your misfortunes!" Here M. Pigafet attempted to interrupt the Comte, or Bernard, if you so please to call him; but the latter, having implored his silence by a gesture, went on thus:—"It is my turn to tell you the principal events of my life: I shall be brief—for my history is but the supplement of yours.

"It may be a good thing to follow one's vocation in the choice of a profession; but, as I had no particular vocation for one thing more than another, I only consulted the taste of my father, and became a lawyer to oblige him.—If, however, I wanted eloquence, I did not want common sense; and I soon felt that nature had denied me the gifts of oratory. Hence arose that timidity—that confusion—that feebleness of voice, which struck you so forcibly in my first pleading. The accident of your periwig made me share in the general laugh, in which I own I was wrong; but people cannot always contain themselves, and your appearance was really most comical. My unexpected success did not blind me as to my want of capacity for the bar; for, a few days afterwards, one of my uncles, a rich and fashionable physician, having proposed to make me his heir at law, provided that I was in a condition to inherit, at the same time, his fortune and his practice, I became a physician to oblige my uncle, as I had become a lawyer to oblige my father. In my new profession, I just knew as much as entitled me to put on the medical robe; I knew what I had learned—nothing more; and every innovation appeared to me a sacrilege. You should not wonder, then, that I was indignant on seeing you touch the very ark of our profession, and I darted my prediction of death against your patient as an anathema. The grape-stone gave me a triumph, but did not dazzle me nevertheless; for my uncle having died about this time, I inherited his fortune, gave up his practice, and resolved to pass the remainder of my life in that *dolce far niente*, which was the only object of my indolent ambition.

"My agent—a man honest enough, considering his situation—placed my capital in commerce, and made a very fair profit upon it for us both; I got my share, and did not complain of his.—Your unlucky worm might certainly have assisted me in getting off my commodities; but, as I cannot plead guilty to conspiring with it, I am not called on for my defence on this point. Years rolled on, and idleness was becoming burdensome, and I accordingly determined to travel. Veracious travellers and most peculiarly inspired poets had informed me, that the East was the empire of roses and beauty; and as I happened to like very much both pretty flowers and pretty women, I set out for Persia, after having read over again my travellers, my poets, and the Arabian Nights, that I might be quite informed on the manners and customs of the countries which I was to traverse. On getting there, however, I found few roses and no women—but, in their stead, general misery, terror in every face, and continual massacres between the Usbeeks and the Persians. Kouli Khan, otherwise called Nadir Shah, was then in the height of his renown; and I fled before his arms, which were ravaging every thing as they went along. I arrived among the independent Tartars, who at first determined on cutting off my nose and ears—but having perceived on my left cheek a wart, which they consider as a certain presage of good fortune, they changed their views, and appointed me commander-in-chief of the troops which they were assembling to second the efforts of Nadir against Russia.

"My dear Monsieur Pigafet, you know as well as I do the event of that campaign; but you do not know that I, who am not gifted with a very warlike disposition, thought of nothing from the beginning of the action but to save my-

self from all risk, and turned my back to run away. A part of my troops, filled with confidence in my wart, followed all my motions, and galloped after me into a little grove of palm-trees; where, by the greatest chance in the world, we surprised your fine ambuscade, who did not expect us. They had surrendered at the moment when that terrible cloud of dust drove us back again to the field of battle, where we found you in the greatest disorder, one part of your troops fighting against the other. We let you amuse yourselves in this way for some time, and then easily despatched you. I was brought back in triumph by my Tartars, loud in the praises of my valor and my wart.

"I got my share of the plunder; but tired with glory, as I had been with idleness; I left my Tartars, and visited the north of Europe. I married, as you know, a charming woman in Germany, who fell in love with me for no other reason but because I was a Frenchman. Your hasty quarrel with her had made a noise; slander was beginning to be busy with the affair, and she was getting frightened: but you had been only a short time in that part of the country. She lived solitary and retired; few people had been witnesses of your flirtation; and she thought that, in giving her hand to a countryman of yours, the adventure would blow over. All your cares and attentions reverted, therefore, to me. I was thus exempted from all the long trials to which she put you; and, having speedily replaced you in her affections, our marriage had all the air of a reconciliation. She is dead: I was sorry for her loss—for, in spite of her whims, she had an excellent heart.

"In the course of some years afterwards, I furnished a great part of the capital for that colonial company, the projects of which so splendidly deceived you. I felt a new desire for an active life; but this time I did not go in quest of the land of roses and beauty: I went to Africa, at the head of a large expedition, into Guinea. Our affairs prospered, and might have become still more successful; for we had certain intelligence that immense gold mines existed in the interior of the country.—But how could we penetrate among barbarous negroes, the most of whom were cannibals? I was thinking on the subject, when I was all at once met by the deputies of the great Dahomay, who, on examining my countenance, proposed to me to accompany them. Of course, I did not let so fair an opportunity slip; and the descendant of Trudo Audati received me with the most lively demonstrations of joy and friendship. He offered to sacrifice a thousand slaves to do me honor, and to present me with six hundred negroes for my seraglio. I thanked him for his kind offers, but told him I did not think bloodshed any honor; and, as for the ladies, I assured him that six hundred mistresses were by no means necessary for me. He replied, that my humanity and modesty pleased him, but that he himself had two thousand ladies, and contrived to manage them without much trouble. He then asked me my name, and when he heard it he was going to prostrate himself before me; for it seems that Berr-Nahr, in the language of the Algemis, which is commonly spoken in Dahomay, signifies the *most divine*. We became the best friends in the world: I found that he had the greatest affection for you, and he employed me to revise your laws, a little discredited by the accident of the *insondo*. I made scarcely any change; but it was necessary that I should show some proofs of capacity. Accordingly, I gathered your laws, and gave them the name of the *Code Bernard*, or rather *Berr-Nahr*—and this inspired the people with the highest opinion of my talents. Finally, having made use of my power to work the gold mines of Dahomay, I left Africa loaded with wealth, and accompanied by the blessings of all the population, to return to France.

"On my arrival at Paris, I became the object of general curiosity. I was the modern Cicero, or Hippocrates—the hero of the Volga—the Lyeurgus of Africa. The truth was, I was immensely rich. Of course, I had a great number of friends, who spoke of nothing but my wit and talent, and I swallowed the flattery without opposition. Patrons presented themselves in all directions, who told me that an *ex-king* of Dahomay ought at least to be a count in France, and I purchased the title which I bear. My friends assured me that fashion required that I should keep an opera-girl: fashion also required that the lady should receive the literati at her suppers; and these gentlemen persuaded me that fashion required that a great nobleman like me, should be a member of the Academy. I had written—God knows why—a *quatrain* on

the Marquise de P— and I was made an academicien.

"Thus, my dear Monsieur Pigafet, without intrigue or cabal—led by fortune or chance—guided by the subaltern causes which occasioned your misfortunes—seconded by my wart, my name, my country, the colour of my skin, the suppers of my dancing-girl—I have honestly arrived at this pitch of prosperity. I was always at your heels, to gather the fragments of your shipwrecks—and always disposed to aid and succour you, if I had known of your existence and misfortunes. You ran after glory and fortune—they ran after me. Henceforth let us hope that their favors will be more impartially distributed, and that, so far from being an injury to you, I shall be at the post, to keep you out of the ditch—and near the harbour, to warn you of the rock ahead."

On this they embraced, as if to reconcile their contrary destinies. M. Pigafet was ashamed of the unjust opinion which he had hitherto entertained of a man so honorable and compassionate. "What was it brought you to Versailles?" asked the Comte. "The Minister had promised me," said Pigafet, "the place of Counsellor of State, just vacant."

The Comte looked astonished. "The place of Counsellor of State!" cried he; "alas! the Minister himself gave it to me this very morning." And Monsieur Pigafet replied quite tranquilly, "I only expected as much—every thing is as it should be."

*Dr. Johnson and Jacob Bryant.*—My friend, the late Lord Grosvenor, had a house at Salt-hill, where I usually spent a part of the summer, and thus became a neighbour of that great and good man Jacob Bryant, who kindly encouraged me to visit him. Here the conversation turned one morning on a Greek criticism by Dr. Johnson, in some volume lying on the table, which I ventured (for I was then young) to deem incorrect; and pointed it out to him. I could not help thinking that he was somewhat of my opinion; but he was cautious and reserved. "But, Sir," said I, willing to overcome his scruples, "Dr. Johnson himself (a fact which Mr. Bryant well knew) admitted that he was not a good Greek scholar." "Sir," he replied with a serious and impressive air, "it is not easy for us to say what such a man as Johnson would call a good Greek scholar." I hope I profited by the lesson—certainly, I never forgot it; and if but one of my readers does the same, I shall not repent placing it upon record.

*Gifford's Preface to Ford's Dramatic Works.*

*Extensive Gaming Establishment.*—The paragraph which follows is from a late London paper. The proprietor of one of the largest gaming concerns in that city, was once an obscure fishmonger, but is now exceedingly wealthy, having amassed immense sums by ministering to the bad passions of the profligate. "Hell may again be literally said to be enlarging its borders," the fishmonger having purchased another house, next but one to the corner of Bennett street, the site of which he is about to add to the enormous Pandemonium already nearly erected. The cookery alone, independent of wine and other stimulants given away to the frequenters of the late Hell in St. James' street, amounted, we are creditably informed, to upwards of £6,000 a year."

*Runic Maxims.*—A faithful friend is he who will give me one loaf when he has but two.

Whilst we live, let us live well; for a man ever so rich when he lights his fire, death may, perhaps, enter his door before it be burnt out.

Flocks perish: relations die: friends are not immortal: you will die yourself; but I know one thing alone that is out of the reach of fate, and that is the judgment which is passed upon the dead.

Praise the fineness of the day when it is ended; praise a woman when you have known her; a sword when you have proved it; a maiden after she is married; the ice when once you have crossed it; and the liquor after it is drunk.

Know, that if you have a friend, you ought to visit him often. The road is grown over with grass, the bushes quickly spread over it, if it be not constantly travelled.

Be not the first to break with a friend. Sorrow gnaws the heart of him who hath none to advise with but himself.

*Matrimonial Maxims.*—If you intend marrying for love, pay your addresses to the lady herself; if for legacies, court those who are to leave them; and if for connexion, court her family.

If you marry young, your children will be your pleasures; if you marry old, they will be your masters in your decline.

If you do not know what to do with yourself, marry the handsomest lady you can, upon the shortest acquaintance; and if you do not find it out, she will teach you.