P. G. Mennell

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## SELECTED TALES.

### The Check-boys and the Facers.

BY JOSEPH C. NEAL.

ARE you ambitious? Would you for once enjoy the pleasures of power and place? Have you a desire to know what it is to be the dispenser of patronage, and to share in the distribution of the loaves and fishes? You envy those, perhaps, whose fortune it is to have courtiers crowding round them, open-mouthed, like fledglings in a nest, crying aloud for honours and for profits. If the case be so, your curiosity may be gratified by repairing to the theatres—any or either of them—when multitudes are there—when humour has its benefit, with "lots of fun"—when the tragic hero shakes his gory locks, or when the Arab steed—"Devildare," or whatever else may be his terrific name—caracoles in sawdust and clatters over the boards to the loud "hi, hi!" of a shilling pit. Then, if you can—this is a matter of taste—but if you can, resist the 'immense attraction,' and retire in the very middle of the performance, just as the agony is being piled to its topmost layer—with the check for re-admission playing negligently between your fingers, as if careless of the privilege it confers. Now, look ye, as we descend the steps. Have we not, at last, created a sensation—we, in all our humility? That crowd of juveniles is preparing to receive us as the most illustrious of statesmen and politicians are received, encircling our path with outstretched hands and upturned faces.

"Please, sir, won't you give me your check?"

Say, what is this but the great image of authority? Have we not here a *levee* equal in all the essentials of resemblance to any which waits in the executive ante-chamber—hoping, trembling, fearing, until the sought-for prize be dropped into the ragged hat of successful competition? Is there not the same jostling for precedence—the same readiness to trip up the heels of a rival—the same urgency lest our claims be unheeded; the same call to leave modesty at home, and to speak of ourselves as we often think of ourselves in the bright moments of self-contemplation?

"See here, good man—I'm a clever fellow—won't you give me your check?"

What a condensation is thus presented of the principle upon which humanity acts—what a syllabus of the means by which great results are accomplished?—"Good man!"—parry that if thou canst—does it not go straight to the heart, and cry "open sesame" to the most obdurate bosom? "Good man"—how does this urchin know that we are good? Can it be that our internal goodness beams from us with a ray as palpable as that which radiates from the tokens of good living on a Bardolphian nose? Be not harsh, then—it is something to be thought good, though it be only in the opinion of a check-boy; and it is cruel either to deny his request altogether, or to troll him along like a fish, before an answer is afforded. Rather take it for granted that the whole of his proposition is true, and that we are not only a "good man," but that he is likewise a "clever fellow."

It must be confessed, indeed, that these checks are used as a species of merchandize, and that, in the words of little Pickel, we are not "called good for nothing." It is a piece of mercantile flattery, whereby it is intended to turn a penny by selling our means of re-admission to the theatre, at a reduced price, to some straggling individual who, perhaps, cannot afford to invest the full cost of a ticket in an evening's entertainment, and who is willing to stand the hazard of rejection at the door, for the sake of the practice of economy.—But yet, let us not grieve over it that no one, not even the check-boy, loves us for ourselves alone, and that something of sordidness lies at the base of the commendation which we have received.—It would be unreasonable to expect more from him than from the world in general—like the world, he has his purposes in view—like other people, he has axes to grind, if not potatoes to dig, and these graces of address are his capital—his stock in trade. He flatters for a living, and cajoles for a subsistence.

It needs no argument to prove that the check-boy cannot well afford to stand out there on the cold bricks, with a hole in his hat and no soles to his shoes, merely to trumpet your praises or mine. It can be shown by slate and pencil, that it will not pay; and it is idle to imagine, great as our personal merits may be, that it would mend his trowsers, ragged as they are, to proclaim that we are virtuous. Can any boy—it is preposterous to suppose it—can the most ingenious of boys—supply himself with ginger pop or with boiled chestnuts—with hot corn or with oysters, stew'd, at a fip a bowl—by reflecting upon a man's admirable qualities? However excellent we may be, that excellence of ours cannot convert itself into a "long-nine" in his eloquent mouth, or enable him on holidays to smoke "half-Spanish." Besides this, your check-boy is a contraband—his calling is illegitimate—piratical. Theoretically—read the play bills—"checks are not transferable," whatever they may be in practice; and he who effects the proscribed transfer is the persecuted of managers.—Each night beholds him hunted from the ground by an inexorable constabulary. "Proper Police is provided" mainly with a view to his discomfiture; and switches—rattan or otherwise—are applied to his corporate capacity without remorse or dread. The very officer whose special duty it is "rigidly to enforce decorum," checks the check-boy by most indecorous kickings, as if decorum, in its very rigidity, were nothing but a kick. Who that ever passed a theatre has not seen the whole covey dispersed as if in a whirlwind, by some hard-hearted person in a white hat?—How they dash among the cabs—splash across the muddy streets, and crash among the tables of the remonstrating huckster. The check-boy, therefore, is to be judged of mildly—rough usage has hardened him; and there is nothing more antagonistic to sentiment than a constable's gripe and an alderman's frown. Swallow the lad's flattery and yield him your check. "Be kind to your father and give me your coat," says Nipperkin.

There are some, to be sure, who hang round the premises of Thespis, from an abstract love of the drama. There is a sufficiency of delight in the circumambient atmosphere of the stage; and if the state of the pocket shuts out all performance from view, it is yet something to read the staring placards, to gaze upon the lamps, and to hear the rumbling of the distant applause. The actor, to them, is a creature of superior mould—they have intense delight in his mere proximity. Even when the "first assassin" or a "second ruffian" passes in the street, he is looked after with reverence; but when the tragic star is seen, their emotions are replete with the deepest awe. And the funny man of the establishment—grave though he be in the interval of his comicalities—at the approach of him, the aperture of their faces goes on stretching from ear to ear, until physiognomy is lost in the vacuum; and as they run backward to sun themselves in the light of his radiance, they almost grin that drollery out of countenance, which, at night, can unmoved encounter whole acres of staring eyes, and an unlimited expanse of mouth.—It may be presumed that lads thus distinguished, have a future before them. Why may they not hereafter shine as the "Charleys" of the stage, rushing on at the prompter's whistle to dislodge the furniture? That very boy there will, perhaps, at a future day, be competent to the simultaneous transportation of two chairs and a table, without injuring a decanter or extinguishing a light, as he hears unmoved the sneering epithets of an ill-bred gallery and an unmannerly pit. Why not—who knows?—the soldier of a conquering army, six in all, with charcoal to his eyebrow and brick-dust on his cheek—fierce in hands long innocent of soap, and valiant in his boots that never felt a brush? Why should he not, as well as another, compel crooke'd Richard to "stand back," or have a leg all to himself when some lifeless hero is to be borne in sadness to the wing? There is, to speak in technical terms, an incipiency in a "supe" as in all other branches of human progression—one must begin at the beginning, whether he be destined to be either superior or supernumerary; and some of those who lounge about the door, may, if fortune favours, eventually arrive at the preferment of announcing on the stage that "the carriage waits."

But these are imaginative rather than practical. A lad of this profession, thoroughly trained, has no eye except for business, and his pockets are, for the most part, quite full of those mysterious bits of card entitled "checks," the fruit of his protracted solicitations. It is in vain that the people of the ticket office resort to different tokens on various evenings, to frustrate the operations of the check-boy. If the lad be not fortunate in his sales on this occasion, he keeps the check until it "comes good," and by comparing it with those that leave the house, he contrives to bring it properly in play, and defeats the machinations of his foe. His own roguishness is restrained also—for he might dispose of checks that are unavailable, to the manifest discomfort of the buyer—if it were not for the practice of depositing the price in indifferent hands until it be seen that he who purchases has passed the barrier. It is thus that the check trade is maintained in its integrity.

But there are those of late years, who triumph by their genius, even over the check-boy; and they are the "facers," who visit theatres, concerts, balls, and all other places of resort, without money and without price, by a peculiar strength of countenance alone, which to them, is quite equivalent to coined money or "relief notes." They "face" themselves in, to the perplexity and bamboozlement of door-keepers, who are but human after all, and are deluded very frequently. The "facer" strolls calmly by, humming an air, perhaps, with a placidity of countenance and an ease of manner, which one would think are not to be assumed under such trying circumstances. He looks indeed, so much at home, that he is taken as a matter of course—as something appurtenant to the occasion, and, therefore, not to be questioned. He nods probably in a patronizing way, to the perplexed janitor and lounges on; or, it may be, he scarce seems aware that such a functionary exists at all, floating forward without impediment. But should there be a challenge—peremptory—"your check, sir, if you please" with a tug admonitive at the skirt, then comes the test of genius—the assumed look of bewilderment—the backward glance of surprise, mingled with amazement and heightened by indignation. Now, then, for a histrionic effort to create the impression that in the hustling crowd no check was given. "Did you not promise to remember me; or did you not look as if you meant to say it?" What, me, so well known, though never seen before, am I to be thus questioned and impeded? The man of checks is puzzled and aghast under the operation of the unblushing "facer." How can he tell whom he may be offending? It is not easy to be sure of anything in the teeth of evidence so bold and so decided;—perhaps he yields the point against his better judgment; and the power of face in triumph "runs its countenance" past the barrier of authority, reserving its smiles and chuckles until the fitting moment, lest the look of joy, too soon indulged, might ruin all. But still, even a Napoleon in strategy may meet reverse. There is a sturdiness sometimes in office that will not be outfaced. It cannot argue, and it has no skill in words. According to its doctrine, "there is no use in talking," and the eloquence of Cicero might be poured forth in vain.—No, no—it will remember nothing at the suggestion of him whose interest it is that something should be remembered; and there is a determination in the shake of its head, as it announces that "this 'ere sort of thing won't do," as well as a significancy in the expression of its brawny fingers as they demonstrate towards the gentleman's collar, which speak volumes on the folly of persistence. Why risk the rough encounter, when it is so evident that all is lost?—But to retreat with grace in the presence of so many curious bystanders—to command their sympathy as an injured individual—to avoid looking flat when you are flat and when you feel flat—ay, there's the rub. An ordinary "face" grows red and redder—it droops its crest at the dread laugh—it sneaks—it runs; and there is confession in its very back. But with science—"well, it is no matter"—it looks calmly hurt and composedly indignant—it will have this business properly seen to at the proper moment; and Cerberus quakes for fear that after all he may have committed a capital error, wounding a friend, perhaps, or alienating a productive patron. Great as are the check-boys, greater still are the illustrious family of the "Facers"—A good face, says the proverb, is a letter of recommendation. But in our times it is more. It is a ticket to the pit and free admission to the boxes—it dances gratis at a ball, and it never fails to have an economical enjoyment of the second part at a concert. Even Lavater did not discover all the uses of the physiognomy, or ascertain the varied applications of the "countenance divine."

## HOME DEPARTMENT.

### FOR HOUSEWIVES.

*By the Author of the 'Book Embroidery.'*

We give a few receipts in various little matters of housewifery, which, tho' simple, often are forgotten, and cannot be found when wanted.

*To Cleanse Gloves without Wetting.*—Lay the gloves upon a clean board, make a mixture of dried fulling-earth and powdered alum, and pass them over on each side with a common stiff brush; then sweep it off, and sprinkle them well with dry bran and whiting, and dust them well; this, if they be not exceedingly greasy, will render them quite clean—but if they are much soiled, take out the grease with crumbs of toasted bread, and powder of burnt bone: then pass them over with a woollen cloth dipped in fulling earth or alum powder; and in this manner they can be cleansed without wetting, which frequently shrinks and spoils them.

*To Scour Clothes, Coats, Pelisses, &c.* If a black, blue or brown coat, dry two ounces of fuller's earth, and pour on it sufficient boiling water to dissolve it, and plaster with it the spots of grease: take a pennyworth of bullock's gall, mix with it half a pint of stale urine, and a little boiling water; with a hard brush dipped in this liquor, brush spotted places. Then dip the coat in a bucket of cold spring water. When nearly dry, lay the nap right, and pass a drop of oil of olives over the brush to finish it.

If grey, drab, fawns, or maroons, cut yellow soap into thin slices, and pour water upon it to moisten it. Rub the greasy and dirty spots of the coat. Let it dry a little, and then brush it with warm water, repeating if necessary, as at first, and use water a little hotter; rinse several times, in warmer water, and finish as before.

*To Extract Grease Spots from Silks and Colored Muslins.*—Scrape French chalk, put it on the grease spot, and hold it near the fire, or over a warm iron, or water plate, filled with boiling water. The grease will melt, and the French chalk absorb it, brush or rub it off. Repeat if necessary.

*To take Stains out of Silk.*—Mix together in a phial, two ounces of essence of lemon, one ounce of oil of turpentine. Grease and other spots in silks, are to be rubbed gently with a linen rag dipped in the above composition.

*To take Stains out of Mahogany.*—Mix six ounces of spirits of salts, and half an ounce of rock salt of lemons, (powdered) together. Drop a little on the stain, and rub it with a cork till it disappears. Wash off with cold water.

*To take Stains of Wine out of Linen.* Hold them in milk that is boiling on the fire, and they will soon disappear.

FOR THE BOUDOIR.—The following receipts will be found useful:

*Cold Cream for the Complexion.*—Take an ounce of oil of sweet almonds, and half a drachm of each, of white wax and spermaceti, with a little balm. Melt these ingredients in a glazed pipkin over hot ashes, and pour the solution into a marble mortar—stir it with the pestle until it becomes smooth and cold, then add gradually an ounce of rose or orange flower water; stir all the mixture till incorporated to resemble cream.—This pomatum renders the skin at once supple and smooth.

*Common Almond Paste.*—Take six pounds of fresh almonds. Blanch and beat in a stone martar, with a sufficient quantity of rose water; add a pound of finely drained honey, and mix the whole together. Exceedingly good for the hands

FOR THE KITCHEN.—We append a few receipts for the Kitchen:

*To Restore Bad Yeast.*—Mix with it a little flour, sugar, salt, brandy, and beer, and these will confer on it the qualities of good yeast. Good yeast may also be made by adding the same mixture to grounds of ale.

*Method of Preserving Grapes.*—Take a cask or barrel, inaccessible to the external air, and put into it a layer of bran, dried in an oven, or of ashes well dried and sifted. Upon this place a layer of grapes well cleaned, and gathered in the afternoon of a dry day, before they are perfectly ripe. Proceed thus with alternate layers of bran and grapes, till the barrel is full, taking care that the grapes touch each other, and to let the last layer be of bran; then close the barrel, so that the air may not be able to penetrate, which is an essential point. Grapes thus packed, will keep nine or even twelve months. To restore them to their freshness, cut the end of the stalk of each bunch of grapes, and put that of white grapes into red wine, as you would put flowers into water, to revive or keep them fresh.

*Preserving Vinegar for Domestic Purposes.*—Cork it up in glass bottles, set them on the fire with cold water, and as much hay or straw as will prevent them from knocking together; when the water nearly boils, take off the pan, and let the bottles remain in the ley a quarter of an hour. Vinegar thus prepared never loses its virtue, though kept many years, or occasionally left uncovered, and is peculiarly suitable for pickles.

THE NEW POST OFFICE LAW.—The following, from the Olive Branch printed at Doylestown, Pa., contains some information which may be generally useful:

"Having facilities for neat weighing, I have taken the pains to ascertain how much may be included in 'half an ounce,' which is the maximum for a single letter, and which may be sent within three hundred miles for five cents. I have weighed six varieties of writing paper, three of letter paper, and three of foolscap, and two kinds of envelopments, large and small. The result here to be stated is the weight of a single sheet, on an average of ten sheets, of each kind. The papers are all of good quality, and such as we are all used to, for size and weight:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Letter paper, | first variety, | 136 | grains. |
| Do | second do | 134 | do |
| Do | third do | 131 | do |
| Foolscap paper, | first do | 172 | do |
| Do | second do | 169 | do |
| Do | third do | 161 | do |
| Small envelope 42 grs. | large envel. | 62 grs. | |

Wafers, usual size, 1 grain; sealing-wax, usual quantity, 5 grains.

The ensuing deductions are based upon the heaviest paper to keep within the mark. An avoirdupois half ounce is 218¾ grains. We may, therefore, send as a single letter—

1. One and a half sheets of letter paper, sealed with wax or wafer.
2. One sheet of letter paper, with large or small envelope, wax or wafer.
3. One sheet of foolscap, with small envelope, sealed with wafer.
4. One sheet of letter paper, with a quarter eagle ($2 50) enclosed, and secured with wax, and the letter sealed with wax.
5. Half a sheet of letter paper or light foolscap, with a half eagle enclosed, secured and sealed with wafers.
6. A sheet of letter paper may contain a dime and a half, or a half sheet may contain a quarter dollar.
7. A sheet of letter paper may enclose seven bank notes, and be sealed with wax; or three bank notes, and the whole in an envelope."

SINGULAR AND FATAL FREAK OF LIGHTNING.—A man named Stevens, in the town of Kigo, near Rochester, who was ploughing in a field when a storm arose, was struck by the lightning and killed instantly. The fluid entered the top of the head and came out at the chin—making a hole about the size of an ordinary bullet. It then passed down his limbs and went through his foot, tearing off the sole of his boot. One of the horses, with which he was ploughing, was also killed.

WAGES OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR IN EUROPE.—The wages of laborers seem to be lower in France, even in proportion to the low price of provisions, than in England. The general council of the different departments fix tariffs for regulating the prices at which different services shall be convertible into money. By them, the prices of a day's work of a laboring man is rated generally at 10 pence, never higher than 12½ pence, and sometimes as low as 7½ pence; that of a horse or mule at from ten to 12½ pence; and the hire of a two-wheeled cart from 10 to 15 pence.

EXTRAORDINARY IMMIGRATION.—The New York Sun of Monday, says:—"Twelve hundred and seven immigrants arrived yesterday at the Quarantine ground, within twenty-four hours ending 6 o'clock, P. M."

DEATH OF A VENERABLE CLERGYMAN.—The Rev. Nicholas Snethen, of the Methodist Protestant Church, died at Princeton, Gibson county, Ia., on the 30th ult., aged 76 years. He was a clergyman of distinguished talents, and his death will be deeply regretted.

POSTMASTER.—We learn from the Odd Fellow, that Edward Davis has been appointed postmaster at Boonsboro, Md. in place of S. Stephens, removed.

Gaiter boots and short dresses are said to be all the rage with the Boston belles.

HEALTH OF MR. CLAY.—The Louisville Courier of the 6th instant says:—"Mr. Clay was slightly indisposed from the effects of a bad cold, when he arrived here last week, with the intention of visiting St. Louis. Exposure on the river at French Island bar, where he was detained several days, increased his cold and indisposition so much, that he deemed it prudent to return, and to postpone his visit to St. Louis for the present. We are happy to learn, that although not entirely recovered, his health has much improved. His general health was never better, we learn, than it has been for several months past, and he now looks and walks as firm, erect, and vigorous, as he did fourteen years ago, when we first saw him."

JAMES G. BIRNEY passed through Columbus on his way to Cincinnatti, to attend the Convention of anti-slavery men, to be held in that city in a few days.—We are not fully advised as to the character of the Convention to be held, but we have understood that it is not to be confined to liberty men, and that its deliberations are not to be of a party character exclusively. Mr. Birney received but few attentions in this city, although there are many who at one time would have been glad to take him by the hand as a philanthropist and a patriot. He has, they think, merged that character in the partisan, and by a course of most questionable propriety and consistency, has shaken their faith in his sincerity and purity of purpose. A thick cloud darkens his fame, and it will be some time before he can again hope to stand as he has stood in times past.—*Ohio State Journal.*

NOBLE SENTIMENT.—Some time since a meeting was held in Philadelphia, to discuss the expediency of opening a certain Reading-Room on the Sabbath.—After others had expressed their opinions, some on one side and some on the other, the late venerable Duponceau, one of the noblest of those sons of France, who, like La Fayette, came to our aid in the days of our peril, arose and said, that "of all we claimed as characteristic, our *observance of the Sabbath* was the only thing truly national and American; and for this cause, if for no other, he trusted it would never lose its hold on our affections and our patriotism." The effect was electrical, and the conclusion, with general consent, was, that the establishment should *not* be opened on the Sabbath.

THE SAILOR'S CHART.—"I want a chart," said an old sailor, as he entered a store, and addressed a young man behind the counter. "Yes, Sir, you shall have one. Will you have St. George's, or—" "Stay," said the old sailor;—"youth is always in a hurry. I want a chart that shall guide me to *Heaven;* for I have lost my old one. Do you now understand me?"

Multitudes of sailors, in this age of improvement, are thus seeking, and obtaining, and steering their course by the *true chart*—the only chart "by which the bark of man can navigate the sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss securely." Then give to every sailor the Bible; and it may not only protect him in life, but guide him safely to the port of endless peace.

NOT BAD.—A gentleman, staying late one night at the tavern, his wife sent his servant to say that it was twelve o'clock. "John," said he, "go home and tell your mistress it can be no more."

The man, by his mistress' order, returned at one. The answer then was—"It could be no less." "But, sir," said the man, "day has broke." "With all my heart," replied the master, "he owes me nothing." "But the sun is up, sir." "And so he ought to be, John, ought he not? He has farther to go than we have, I am sure."

A recent village debate in Vermont, upon the question "ought a man to foller a gal, after she gives him the mitten?" was duly argued pro and con—and then the president decided that "he hadn't ough'ter."

Conversing one day with a fashionable and pretty belle, the facetious Mr. L—— observed, that "ladies that lisp wished to be kissed." The young lady had before spoken unaffectedly, but replied, "*Tho* I've heard *thay.*"

A dandy observed that he had put a plate of brass on his boots to keep him upright. "Well balanced, by jing," said a Dutchman, "brass at both ends."

"Am I not a little *pale,*" inquired a lady who was rather short and corpulent, of a crusty old bachelor. "You look more like a big *tub,*" was the blunt rejoinder.

When you see a man trying to mend a pen with a hoe, you are at liberty to conclude either that the hoe is very sharp, or the man is very dull.

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