VOL. X. NEW SERIES--VOL. I.

Cambridge Chronicle.

"THE END OF EVERY GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE."

NO. 663.

CAMBRIDGE, Md.---Saturday Morning, March 11, 1837.

NUMBER 25.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY MORNING, BY

JAS. M. NEWTON.

Terms.

The CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE is published at *Two Dollars and Fifty Cents* per annum, payable half yearly, in advance.—Subscriptions will not be taken for less than six months: No paper will be discontinued until all arrears are paid unless at the option of the publisher; and the failure to order a discontinuance previously to the expiration of the time already subscribed for, will be considered as a new engagement.

ADVERTISEMENTS not exceeding a square will be published three times for one dollar; and twenty five cents for each subsequent insertion. Larger ones in proportion. ☞In cases where the number of insertions is not limited, advertisements will be continued until direction to omit them is received, and charged accordingly.

Miscellaneous.

COUNSELLOR CURRAN & JUDGE ROBINSON.

Mr. Curran having observed in some cause before this Judge, that he had never met the law as laid down by his lordship, in any book in his library—"That may be, sir," said the Judge in an acrid, contemptuous tone, "but I suspect that your library is very small." His lordship, who, like too many of that time, was a party zealot, was known to be the author of several anonymous political pamphlets, which were chiefly conspicuous for their despotic principles and excessive violence. The young barrister, roused by the sneer at his circumstances, replied, "true it was, that his library might be small, but he thanked heaven that among his books, there were none of the wretched productions of the frantic pampheteers of the day. I find it more instructive, my lord, to study good works than to compose bad ones; my books may be few, but the title pages give me the writer's names; my shelf is not disgraced by any such rank absurdity that their very authors are ashamed to own them." He was here interrupted by the Judge, who said, "Sir, you are forgetting the respect which you owe to the dignity of the judicial character." "Dignity!" exclaimed Mr. Curran, "my lord, upon that point I shall cite you a case from a book of some authority, with which you are, perhaps, not unacquainted.—A poor Scotchman, upon his arrival in London, thinking himself insulted by a stranger, and imagining that he was the stronger man, resolved to resent the affront, and taking off his coat, delivered it to a bystander to hold, but having lost the battle, he turned to resume his garment, when he discovered that he had unfortunately lost that also, the trustee of his habiliments having decamped during the affray. So, my lord, when the person who is invested with the dignity of the judgment seat, lays it aside for a moment, to enter into a disgraceful personal contest, it is in vain, when he has been worsted in the encounter, that he seeks to resume it—it is in vain that he endeavors to shelter himself from behind an authority which he has abandoned."

"If, sir," said the Judge, "you say another word, I'll commit you."

"Then, my lord," replied Mr. Curran, "it will be the best thing you'll have committed this term."

A DUCHESS'S REVENGE.

Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, had still, at an advanced age, considerable remains of beauty; most expressive eyes, and the finest hair imaginable, the color of which she said she had preserved unchanged by the constant use of honey-water—hardly such as perfumers now sell, for that has an unlucky aptitude to turn the hair grey. By this superb head of hair hung a tale, an instance of her waywardness and violence, which (strange to say) she took particular pleasure in telling. None of her charms, when they were at their proudest height, had been so fondly prized by the poor Duke, her husband. Therefore, one day, upon his offending her by some act of disobedience to her *"strong sovereign will,"* the bright thought occurred, as she sat considering how she could plague him most, that it would be a heavy vexation to see his favorite tresses cut off. Instantly the deed was done; she cropped them short and laid them in an ante-chamber he must pass through to enter her apartment. But, to her cruel disappointment, he pass ed, entered, and repassed, calm enough to provoke a saint; neither angry nor sorrowful; seemingly quite unconscious both of his crime and of his punishment. Concluding he must have overlooked the hair, she ran to secure it. Lo! it had vanished,—and she remained in great perplexity the rest of the day. The next, as he continued silent, and her looking glass spoke the change, a rueful one, she began for once to think she had done rather a foolish thing. Nothing more ever transpired upon the subject until after the Duke's death, when she found her beautiful ringlets carefully laid by in a cabinet, where he kept whatever he held most precious: and at this point of the story she regularly fell a crying.—*Lord Wharncliffe's Correspondence of Lady Mary W. Montague.*

A good word is an easy obligation, but not to speak ill, requires only our silence, which costs us nothing.—*Tillotson.*

WHALING.

A WHALE CHASE ON THE COAST OF AFRICA.

"Flooks—flooks!" was the welcome salutation from aloft. The half eaten meal was broken off,—and the rush to the boats was tumultuous. It was like that of an army of practised gladiators, in the arena of the Coliseum. The alarm was heard by the crews of other vessels, and the intelligence spread like wildfire that a whale was entering the bay. Four boats were lowered—manned—and put off from the Grampus in less than half a minute after the cry was uttered aloft. A hundred other boats were instantly in motion, and bearing down upon the animal.—Some, however, took the precaution to separate from the rest, and this divided the chances of capture. None could count with certainty upon striking the prey, for his course was irregular while in pursuit of his food. The whale is not a vicious animal, unless wounded; and, if not frightened, will move off sluggishly from his pursuers, and appear and disappear at regular intervals;—so that if the direction is well observed when he sinks, (or shows his flooks, or forked tail, as he dives) pretty accurate calculation may be made as to the place of his reappearance.

The whalers in the boats that had scattered, had their share of excitement in turn; while those who had headed the whale, when he sunk from their sight for the first time, saw with mortification by the indication of his flooks, that he had already deviated largely from his first course. As a score of others were already near the spot where he would next rise to blow, the first pursuers naturally laid upon their oars: but they were watchful of the event of the chase.

Macy, with his two mates, and an approved boat-steerer, had each command of a separate boat. The selection of the crews for these boats, is in fact a matter of taste and favoritism with the officers of the ship. The captain has his first pick of the whole crew; and, if his judgment is good, he chooses those of the most powerful limb and muscle, quickness of apprehension, and readiness of execution. The next choice falls to the first mate;—the second officer's turn comes next; and the siftings of the crew fall to the boat-steerers. It may readily be believed that Macy, who was an experienced whaler, was altogether discreet in his choice, and had a crew of oarsmen who might be pitted against any other crew of the whole fleet. To say that they were Americans, and experienced whale fishermen, is sufficient assurance, of itself, that they were competitors for all whaling honors, against the whole world. It is still, as it was eminently then, altogether un American to admit of superiority in this business. It was, therefore, with deep chagrin that Macy saw the game escape him; for thus far he had led the van of the attack; while the whalers in some fifty boats in the rear, if not altogether content that he should be their leader, were at least satisfied, that to be beaten by *him* was no dishonor.

The Englishman, the Dane, the Dutchman, the Swede, as also representatives of other European nations, were Macy's ambitious competitors, for the honor of killing the first whale of the season;—the long and the strong pull was exerted to carry off the prize, and fair words of encouragement were offered, and enforced in the blandest and most persuasive manner, by those who controlled the boats. Some, uselessly enough, where so many were engaged, pulled after the animal in his devious course after food; while others rested on their oars to watch the result, and to take advantage of his wanderings. The scene was most animating—and but a few minutes served to scatter the boats in every direction; to sprinkle the bay with dark moving spots; to people it with life—sinewy life; in short, it was an exhibition of the noblest of God's creation, both animal and human, waging a war of extermination, and threatening death and destruction by collision.

The noble animal—for it was a right-whale of the largest class—held on its course up the bay, scooping its food from time to time, and annihilating its thousands of small fish at a dive; leaving the boats far in the rear, and darting off in new directions, until those who were most on the alert, or rather those who pulled the most constantly, wereain to give up the chase and lie on their oars. The whale approached the anchorage ground of the ships, and its speed was increased as it shoaled the water, in proportion to its eagerness after its flying victims. The small fish driven before their huge devourer, clubbed together and concentrated in shoals of such magnitude, that the ships were surrounded, as it were, with a dense mass of animal matter, huddling together, for common safety, or flying in swarms, before their common enemy like the multitudinous and periodical flowings of the herring from the Greenland seas.

Intent upon his prey, the whale appeared unconscious of the dangerous vicinage of the ships and played among them with a temerity that evinced a tameness, or perhaps an ignorance of its danger, that plainly showed he had never been chased by the whaler, nor hurt by the harpoon. His eager pursuit after food may, however, account for his recklessness, for generally speaking, the instinct of the whale is sufficient, upon all occasions, to avoid an unusual object floating upon the water; and at such times the nicest stratagem of the art of the whaler is required to capture him.

The persecuted tribes have been chased so often—pursued so relentlessly, from haunt to haunt, that they must not be unnecessarily scared; for, if they are, the pursuit may as well be abandoned first as last.—No crew can row a boat, for any length of time, to keep pace with a frightened and fugitive whale.

The animal, gorged with its fishy meal, at last commenced its retreat from the bay; and the boats manœuvered to head him off as he retired. Obeying the instinct of his nature, he now showed his flooks and vanished from the sight, before the boats could get within striking distance. A calculation being made where he would next appear, (for beneath the water the whale does not deviate from a direct line in his horizontal progress) a general race ensued, and each strove, as if life were on the issue, to arrive first upon the spot. Some twenty minutes steady and vigorous pulling found the foremost boats a full mile behind the whale when he arose again to breathe. Several boats were unluckily ahead of Seth in the chase, as their position at starting enabled them to take the lead, when the animal began to push for deeper water. But Seth's men had been resting on their oars, while nearly all the others had exhausted their strength, in following the whale among the ships; and the captain judged rightly, that in darting after this finny prey, he would lead them all a bootless dance. He had determined to wait for the retreat; and then to hang upon the rear of the enemy. There were others, however, acquainted with the soundings of the bay, whose tactics were scarce inferior to Seth's, and the advantages gained over him by several boats was proof of this, or at least of the superior accuracy of their calculations. It was a long time since Seth had given chase to an animal of the right whale breed; he had grappled of late, only with the spermaceti—and, therefore, it was not to be wondered at, at this time, and under the circumstances, that some of those around him should beat him manœuvering in the bay. But in the steady chase, he knew that he could count upon the speed and bottom of his boat's crew; and he was now resolved to contest for the victory.

"We have a clear field now my boys—give way steadily—we gain upon them—give the long pull—the strong pull—and the pull altogether:—keep her to it—heave ahead my hearties!" Such were the words of Seth, as with eye steadily fixed upon a certain point, and with his steering oar slightly dipping at times, he guided the light whale boat unerringly towards the place where he expected the whale to reappear. One by one he had dropped his antagonists, until there only remained three boats manfully struggling between him and the prize. The whale again breathed at the surface, and the distance between the headmost boat and he animal was found to be diminished to half a mile—while the ships in the bay were run "hull down." The pursuers were now out upon the broad ocean. Those who had abandoned the chase in despair, were slowly returning to their ships. The rigging of the vessels was manned by anxious spectators, watching the motions of the tiny specks out at sea, with beating hearts. The whale again cast his flooks into the air, and sank from the view of his pursuers. Now came the tug of war.

"You must beat those foreigners ahead," said Seth, to his men, "or crack your oars; they are of good American ash, and will bear pulling," continued he:—"Give way with a will:—Pull—pull, my lads; that whale will not sink again without a harpoon in his body:—and I will never do to tell of at home, that we allowed men of other nations to beat us. Keep your eyes steadily on your oars:—mark the stroke of the after oar, men—and give way for the credit of the Grampus!"

Here Seth braced himself in the sternsheets—seized the steering oar with his left hand, and placed his right foot against the after oar, just below the hand of the oarsman.

"Now pull for your lives!" said he "while I add the strength of my leg to the oar.—Once more!—Again, my boys!—There—we pass the Spaniard!"

"Diabolo!" exclaimed the mortified native of Spain.

The additional momentum of Seth's foot applied to the stroke oar, had done the job; but two more boats were to be passed,—an quickly too,—or all the labor would be lost.

"At it again, my boys! steady—steady—give way! give way for the honor of the Grampus. One pull for old Nantucket! and—there—we have shown a clean pair of heels to the Dutchman!"

"Hagel!—Donder and Blixem!" said the Hollander.

"There is but one boat ahead," said Seth; —"It is the Englishman!—We must beat *him* too, or we have gained nothing! Away with her, down upon him like men!—One pull for the Grampus, my boys!—another for old Nantuck——"

The American now shot up alongside of the English boat:—but the honor of the nation, too, was at stake; and they bent to their oars with fresh vigor. Five athletic Englishmen, each with a chest that would have served for the model of Hercules, with arms of brawn and sinew, swayed their oars with a precision and an earnestness that, for a minute, left the contest doubtful. The English commander, seeing how effectually Seth managed the stroke oar with his foot, braced himself in a similar attitude of exertion;—and his boat evidently gained upon the Nantucketer! Seth saw the increase of speed of his rival with dismay. The whale, too, was just rising ahead. The bubbles of his blowing, and of his efforts at rising, were beginning to ascend! It was a moment of intense anxiety. The rushing train or vortex of water, told that he was near the surface. Both commanders encouraged their men anew by a single word, and then, as if by mutual consent, all was silent, except the long, measured, and vigorous stroke of the oars.

"For old England, my lad!" shouted the one.

"Remember old Nantucket, my boys!" was the war cry of the other.

Both plied their oars with apparently equal skill; but the hot Englishman lost his temper as the boat of Seth shot up again, head and head with him—and he surged his foot so heavily upon it after oar, that it broke off short in the rowlock! The blade of the broken oar became entangled with the others on the same side, while the after oarsman lost his balance, and fell backward upon his leader.

"I bid thee good bye!" said Seth, as he shot ahead.

"Way enough—peak your oars!" said Seth to his men. The oars bristled apeak, after the fashion of the whale-fisherman. The harpooner immediately seized and balanced his weapon over his head, and planted himself firmly in the bow of the boat. At that instant the huge body of the whale rose above the surface; and Seth, with a single turn of his steering bar, brought the bow dead upon the monster, a few feet back of the fin.—Simultaneously with the striking of the boat, the well poised harpoon was launched deep into the flesh of the animal.

"Starn all!" shouted Seth.

The boat was backed off in an instant; and the whale, feeling the sting of the barb darted on like the wind. The well-coiled line flew through the grove of the bow-post with incomparable swiftness, and it presently began to smoke and then to blaze with the rapidity of the friction. Seth now took the bow with his lance, exchanging places with the harpooner, and quietly poured water upon the smoking grove, until it was cooled. The oars were again *peaked*, and the handles inserted in brackets fixed on the ceiling of the boat, beneath the thwarts—the blades projecting over the water like wings; and the men, immovable, rested from their long, but successful pull:—and much need did they have of the relief,—for a more arduous, or a better contested chase, they had never experienced.

The line in the tub was now well nigh run out, and the boat-steerer, with a thick buckskin mitten or nipper, as it is called, for the protection of his hand, seized hold of the line, and, in a twinkling, caught a turn round the loggerhead, to enable the man at the tub-oar to bend on another line.

The rapidity of the animal's flight the while was inconceivable. The boat now ploughed deeply and laboriously, leaving banks of water on each side, as she parted the wave that overtopped the men's heads, and effectually obscured the sight of every object on the surface. The swell of the closing water came after them in a heavy and angry rush. The second line was now allowed to run slowly from the loggerhead, and a drag, or plank about eighteen inches square, with a line proceeding from each corner, and meeting at a point like a pyramid, was fastened to it, and thrown over to deaden the speed of the whale. Another and another drag were added, until the animal feeling the strong backward pull, began to slack his effort—and presently he suddenly descended, though not to the full extent of the slackened line.

It now became necessary to haul in the slack of the line, and to coil it away in the tub carefully, while the men pulled with their oars, to come up with the whale when he should rise to the surface. All things were soon ready again for the deadly attack.

The ripple of the whale, as he ascended, was carefully marked; and when he again saw the light of the day, a deep wound, close to the barbed harpoon, was instantly inflicted by the hand of Seth. It was the death blow.

"Starn all!" was the cry once more—and the boat was again quickly backed off by the oarsman.

The infuriated animal roared in agony, and lashed the ocean into foam. The blood gushed from his spout holes, falling in torrents upon the men in the boat, and coloring the sea. The whale, in his last agony, is a fearfully creature. He rose perpendicularly in the water, head downwards, and again writhed and lashed the sea with such force, that the people in the retreating boats, though ten miles distant, heard the thunder of the sound distinctly. The exertion was too violent to last long:—it was the signal of his dissolution. His blood ceased to flow, and he turned his belly to the sun! The waif of the Grampus floated triumphantly above the body of the slaughtered Leviathan of the deep—and the peril of the hardy crew was over.

A CHAPTER ON BALLS

Nothing appears a more easy exercise of human will and human ingenuity, than to give a ball. Not a damsel that wanders night after night, through the illuminated vestibules of the West end, tripping over the well waxed floor, looking through her glass at the well-spread board, while she sups on a strawberry and a wafer, but believes herself fully capable of achieving a similar entertainment, so soon as the plain gold ring and five thousand a year confer the privilege of being hospitable. To their unsophisticated minds the thing seems as easily arranged as the transformations effected by Cinderella's godmother. The result is so harmonious, the 'three hundred fashionables' appear so unanimous, and the so sand scenes so smoothly consecutive, that the whole effort appears to consist in living a sufficient cheque upon a sufficient banker.

The initiated know better. Every proficient in London life is aware that nothing is more difficult than to give a judicious ball,—not hing more troublesome than to give ball of any descriptio . The apparent ease of the transaction, like the facility of Pope's numbers, arises solely from the pains and labour bestowed. A steam engine moves with facility; but the means employed to procure its motion are prodigious. It may be only used to punch the eye of a needle, or affix a head to a pin,—but the powers indispensable to that puny effort would have shaped a four-and twenty pounder. Many a fashionable host and hostess have bestowed as much pains in the organization of a single ball, as would have placed the husband in parliament, and made a bed-chamber woman of his wife.

It is the admission of this fact which consecrates so m of the best mansions of the metropolis to the dulness of dinner-parties, and the common-place crush of routs. Several "new women," inheritors of Eastern fortunes and Western fastidiousness, have been occupied for years past in the task of forming an acquaintance sufficiently distinguished to venture on the ostensibilities of a ball; deferring from season to season so hazardous a step, so strong a measure.

A *bal manque* amounts to ostracism in the commonwealth of *ton*—to be blackballed at White's or the Traveller's is to die an easy death, by comparison with the sentence of "failure" pronounced upon your ball.

Yet after all, how many, and how various and how inevitable, are the accidents likely to insure an unfavourable verdict, even on the best! In the commencement of April you prepare for a frosty atmosphere, and a sudden glow of unnatural summer heat sets the metropolis into a fever. Your windows are hermetically sealed; your supper smokes with hot soups and entrees; and your lady receives her guests in a robe of crimson velvet. Warned by the "failure" attendant on these acts of inadventure, your particular friend arranges her *fete* on the following week, on a wholly different system. Every door, every window in her splendid mansion is removed, and the interstices filled up with canvass or gauze, or flowers. Free draughts of air are admitted on every side; the whole buffet is laid in ice; and no heavier viand than a plover's egg is admitted into the delicate repast. Scarcely has the sun of that fatal day gone down, when a chilling frost, a biting east wind, or a close heavy rain makes war against her preparation. The Ball Room is filled with a cold damp fog;—the sneezings of many an incipient catarrh are heard around; the Dowagers call for their shawls; the word influenza is whispered through the room; the music is required to strike up a brisker measure; iced champaigne is shudderingly rejected, and interest made with Rawlins for a bottle of sherry or Madeira. The Ball is a failure. Another luckless dame sends forth her invitations, at thirty days sight, for some evening unappropriated by any of the great monopolists of fashion; and, lo! the preceding week cards are issued from Devonshire House, and exquisites showered upon her table; or, on the very night before, when she feels as secure of her Duchesses, Marchionesses, and Countesses, as if they were already running through her suite of apartments, under a table cloth, like a pack of beagles, her Grace of St. Albans decides on an impromptu *fete*, and, having spoken the word—the fatal "Sesama,"—not a musician, orange tree, pine-apple, or dancing dandy, is to be bribed way from Piccadilly. The efforts of the victim are displayed to empty benches, and the sneers of half a dozen guests piqued into ill nature by exclusion from the rival entertainment! Another failure!

Yet, with all these signs and wonders and warnings, Lady Culminate was persuaded, last season, by her daughters, into the rash act of giving a ball. In the country, indeed, (in the country represented in Parliament by Sir Geoffrey Culminate,) her ladyship has frequently and successfully laid popularity-traps of this description, and obtained immortal honour by her white soups and chalked floors. Every Christmas, a ball as noisy as the hustings, and as busy as a cottonfactory, with healths after supper, and the boulanger and hot negus to crown the pleasure of the night, has augmented the strength of the Culminate poll. But here ended that ambition. "By that sin fell the angels;" the angels Lady A. B. C. and D., her neighbours; and she no more dreamed of the presumption of making an *expose* of her London visiting list, than of inserting in it the name of her Majesty. Her daughters at length prevailed over her scruples. She was informed that the offspring of ball giving parents are pre. assured of a sort of free-list of partners; and, after much hesitation, she at last applied for Sir Geoffrey's sanction to the scheme. He was, of course, assured, as husbands always are, that the thing would cost nothing; that it was to be done in the simplest way; that it would embrace their whole acquaintance, and evade innumerable dinners and tea-parties. But the sanction of the head of the family once obtained, new perplexities arose on every side like the imps in a pantomime. There appeared great difficulty in steering between the Charybdis of Devonshire House, and the Scylla of Ashburnham House:—the announcements of the Ladies Londonderry, Fansdowne, Salisbury, and Tankerville:—Every night was appropriated, and Lady Culminate was, at length, reluctantly compelled to fix on a certain Tuesday night, for which the Post and Herald had already announced two balls, three parties, and a concert; and for which, on the following morning, it promised the first representation of a new ballet, which had already produced an epidemic mania in Paris! Captain Culminate, after a long oration on the ill effect produced in a ball-room by indifferent music succeeded in persuading his mother to engage the French band; when lo! they discovered that the wrong half, (the tail of the cod, the head of the salmon,) the moiety-lacking Collinet, was all that remained at their disposal; and Miss Culminate having proved to her ladyship that Michau and Gunter are as inseparable as tongue and chicken, lobster and sallad,—a note was dispatched to Berkeley square, and the aid of "glorious Joan" bespoken for the occasion. So far, so good!—two thirds of a good ball were thus secured; the only remaining difficulty regarded the guests!

Now, Lady Culminate boasted as tolerable a set of acquaintance as any Baronet's wife of her own standing. She had the honor of visiting some five and twenty families of indisputable rank; she had the pleasure of visiting about twice as many of indisputable fashion; and for the rest, about three hundred had the happiness of visiting her of neither rank nor fashion; but who, when the seventy were away, formed an extremely respectable section of the middle classes. Besides these, there was an odd hundred of indescribables; people who deserved to be weeded, but who, like other weeds, annually started up in her visiting list, by leaving cards at her door, in spite of every effort made for their extirpation. All these were of course blackballed without compunction; nay! without regard to Captain Culminate's plea in favor of one or two, where there was a pretty daughter or neice. But with regard to the decimation of the three hundred, great circumspection and delicacy were to be observed. While the thing was to cost nothing, and the supper remained in the hands of the old family housekeeper, the magnets were of course uninvited. But with Michau and Gunter, Miss Culminate suggested that a Ladyship or two might be added, till at length the half hundred fashionables were gradually invited. Miss Maria next observed, that since Lady A. had promised to come, there could be no objection to ask Lady B., and if was plain to Lady Culminate herself, that among the fifty secondary stars, the twenty five of the first magnitude could have no objection to shine. Stealing on from Viscountess to Countess, from Countess to Marchioness, she at length ventured on a card to the Duchess of ——, a stern dignitary, whom she never presumed to address in person, without catching a slight cold or a fit of the rheumatism. And now, since they had actually invited all there Queens of Sheba, even the three hundred began to wax questionable! There was Lady Laidner—her face was red as an October sun and as to Lady Grace, she actually was

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