

RANDOM THOUGHTS.

A few months ago, I was sitting on a coach in Melbourne, previous to its starting for the country. As I had come early to secure the box seat, I had plenty of leisure to study the people as they passed to and fro; and an admirable vantage ground for anyone who takes a pleasure in studying the human physiognomy, and watching the manners, dresses, and habits of the crowd, is the box seat of a coach drawn up alongside the pavement. You can observe without, in many cases, being observed. You are placed high above the heads of the passing multitude, but not so high as to be beyond reach of seeing and noting the marked peculiarities of its members. A first floor window is generally too high, besides from this position you can have only a passing view, unless you choose to stick your head out of the window, a thing which no properly constituted person would, of course, think of doing. But on the coach it is different. There, no one, whose eye you may chance to catch, can look back an expression of "what business have you to be staring at me; it is very rude of you." Now, who is there who has ever been caught gazing with curiosity out of a window, but has not felt rather taken aback, as if he had been detected in the commission of some crime? Have you never noticed the demonstrative efforts made by such people to catch sight of some person or thing in the distance?—efforts which plainly say, "Don't be alarmed, Mr. Passer-by" (these remarks, I wish to observe, apply only to the male sex: how the members of the other half of the creation behave under such circumstances, or whether, indeed, they are ever actuated by curiosity to look out of windows, I don't pretend to give an opinion—certainly, I never find them studying character from the box seat of a coach), "I assure you, upon my honor, I was not staring at you." I believe it is to this feeling that we owe the origin of blinds. It is all nonsense to say that they are used to prevent people from staring into houses. That they are not so, is evidenced by the fact that you will see them on upstairs windows into which people cannot possibly look. I allude, of course, to the wire blind; that subtle contrivance by which the pedestrian is placed completely at the mercy of his housed brother. And it cannot be said that they shut out the view of your opposite neighbor, because you must remember they extend generally a few feet only up the window, leaving three-fourths for your neighbor's gaze. In fact, they are just sufficiently high, so as to allow the inquisitive watcher to carry on his nefarious practice whilst seated at his ease, and in case anything very startling should occur, permit him in a moment to raise his head beyond their limits and obtain a clearer view. You generally see these abominable inventions in the houses of medical men. Did any one ever see the houses of doctors who lived opposite to each other without them? By this means one member of the faculty can always keep count of another's patients. It is very flattering to the patient to be thus looked after, but certainly not always very pleasant. I remember once going to a dentist to have a tooth drawn. Unfortunately for me there was another of the same profession directly opposite—a new comr, as well as I remember, on the scene—and my gentleman was so engaged in looking after the patients of his young rival, that he screwed his forceps into the wrong tooth, which he had half-drawn before he found out his mistake. I may have a prejudice against blinds perhaps, but it is a fact that my teeth always ache when I allow my eyes to dwell upon them.

But to get on to the box seat again. From this position you can look down the street a hundred yards or so, and, picking out some one person, observe all his or her motions and actions along the pavement. You can contrast the dirty and the clean, the ill-dressed man and the dandy, the man full of business and importance with the easy, indifferent air of him on pleasure bent, and you can amuse yourself by observing how the youth who should be intent on his employer's business, but who will hang about to look at the coach and the horses, as soon as his eye, having taken in everything else, reaches yours, will, in many cases, immediately move off in a half guilty fashion. On the occasion I allude to the street was crowded, for it was bright and sunny weather and the busiest time of the day, and there were, therefore, many causes to interest and amuse an observer. But my eyes were constantly diverted from their interesting pursuit along the pavement to the contemplation of an object in the shape of a man, who remained patiently standing at the heads of the two leaders attached to the coach on which I was seated. He seemed to be in the lowest depths of poverty and degradation, and I was speculating, on the ground that "in the lowest depths there is a lower depth still," what worse state could there possibly be for this miserable specimen of humanity, whose swollen red face, bleary eyes, dirty matted hair and beard, and greasy, ragged coat, were sufficient of themselves to frighten the horses which he was placed to take care of. But as I afterwards learned it was the only work he ever performed, I suppose the horses had grown accustomed to him. He stood with his shoulders slouched forward, his feet bound by cords with pieces of dirty leather, which once were boots, but to make up, as it were, for the exposure of his feet, he kept his other extremities religiously in his pockets the entire time until we were just starting, when the driver threw him some small coin, then he released one of his hands, and it trembled so violently that he with difficulty picked the money out of the gutter. I asked the driver who he was. "He is a h' M' h' A of Hoxford," he replied. And so he was, and the wretched man was so utterly lost to all sense of shame and decency, that he never made any concealment of the fact. He would tell you his whole history, who his father had been, what a brilliant career he had been, both at Eton and Oxford, how he went on the turf, the thousands he had lost, the attempt to retrieve himself by one grand coup, and the result as in hundreds of other cases,—his utter ruin,—of his gradual declension through the positions of bookmaker, horse jockey, groom, coach driver, billiard marker, stable help, until drink had rendered him incapable of any exertion whatever. He would tell this story, and thus publish his disgrace and that of his family, to any one who he thought would stand him a glass of brandy. But amidst it all he never failed to impress upon you that he had never begged; that he had never been to the Immigrants' Home. The poor wretch! he had

never been there, because there was no brandy there; because if he had gone there he would have been compelled to observe some degree of cleanliness. If the saying "put a beggar on horseback and he will ride to the d—l" be true, it is no less true that the educated man when he gives way to evil courses, and falls down to degradation and poverty, very often becomes the meanest of beggars.

To what base uses we may return, Horatio, is as true of the living as of the dead.

In these new colonies, examples similar to the above are, sad to say, not uncommon. The ranks of the old shepherds were often recruited from them, and the gold fields also knew not a few of them. It was my duty once, at the request of a close friend, to ferret out the hiding place of one of these lost sheep, and the search brought me in contact with some choice specimens of humanity. The only information given to me was that he was living in some very low public-house in Melbourne. This did not aid me much in such a city as the capital of Victoria, and I was compelled to visit some strange habitations and see some curious characters before I ran my quarry to earth. A friendly detective at last intimated to me that there was a man bearing the name of the one I was in search of, living in a public-house in the very worst part of Little Burke street. Thither I repaired at about 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning, found the place closed, but managed to effect an entrance by a side door, left unlocked for the convenience of a thirsty neighborhood. I soon found myself in the bar, and immediately enquired from a decent enough looking man who was behind it, whether a "Mr. Charles ——" lived there. "Yes," replied a hoarse voice from behind me, "I am Charley ——" I turned and beheld what the thick clouds of tobacco smoke had prevented me from observing before: a row of men and women sitting on a form ranged along a black greasy wall, altho', good heavens! such men and women as they were. Drunken, filthy, horrible, indeed, to look upon. With some difficulty I induced "Charles ——" to come outside, as I wished to speak to him privately. He objected at first in a feeble sort of manner, and his companions protested, with many expletives, that I should say what I had to say there and then. The barman, however, came to my assistance, and in a few words directed me to accompany me. He quietly obeyed, and we walked into the yard attached to the hotel. As soon as he was under the light, and I was enabled to scrutinise his features more closely, I was struck with their great beauty, though now spoiled by dissipation and suffering. He was very thin and pale and nervous, and his large, dark, and luminous eyes shone with a strange light from under finely pencilled eyebrows. I had been told he had been a handsome man, but was not prepared for such striking features as now, after years of evil courses, presented themselves. He had set out in life with every advantage a man could desire; but one accomplishment which he possessed in an eminent degree proved his ruin. He had displayed early a great love for music, and it had been judiciously cultivated. He was eagerly sought for by society. No company was complete without him. Late hours developed a taste for drinking; and he sank gradually but surely from being the "spoiled darling" of society to the position I found him in, viz., the player of dance music for thieves and prostitutes in one of the worst parts of Little Burke street. After some conversation he softened somewhat, and talked a little about himself. He told me the landlady was very kind to him. I asked to see her, and found that, notwithstanding the position she occupied, she had a genuine feeling of pity for the poor musician. I learned that every penny he got went in drink, and as I had some money to spend on him in the best way I thought possible, it was arranged with the landlady that I should send him in some clothes. I was warned, however, not to send in a large quantity or he would pawn some of them. I saw him after this at intervals for a few months. His reserve and nervousness vanished when with me, and he related many of his past experiences; and how bitterly the poor fellow lamented his mis-spent life. One day I received a message from the landlady that she wished to see me. I went down, and she told me how the night before, "Charles ——" was at his post as usual playing the piano; how, when all the dances had gone home, she was going round, as was her wont, putting out the lights and fastening the windows and doors; how she observed "Charles ——" sitting at the piano with his head bent forward, and his hands at rest on the keyboard, that she paid no attention, as it was often a custom of his to sit in that manner whilst the lights were being put out, but remaining longer than usual she called out to him to go to bed. He made no response, so she, thinking he had fallen asleep, went up and shook him by the shoulder, and found to her horror that she was trying to awaken a corpse. The dancers had gone to their homes, and the poor musician had gone to his last home. The landlady told me of this sad ending with genuine sorrow. She was an old woman with, I remember, exceedingly white hair, and seemed to have had quite a motherly feeling for the "poor gentleman" as she called him. Nothing would satisfy her until I consented to see him in his coffin; to see how beautiful he looked, and how nicely she had laid him out. His funeral took place the next day, and the mourners consisted of the landlady, her son, and myself, and I believe that old woman, whose way of life was anything but reputable, offered up a sincere prayer for the repose of the soul of the "poor gentleman."

X.Y.Z.

In the chapel of the magnificent Convent of Trim, county of Meath, there has just been erected, over the high altar, a stained glass window, the munificent gift of Miss Gorey, of Trimleston. The central picture is the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, on crimson and amber clouds, and surrounded and upborne by a troupe of venerated angels. The figure on the left is that of St. Joseph, with the Divine Child in his arms, and on the right is St. Patrick, in bishop's robes, and with the mitre on his brow. This massive window, with its richness of colors so varied, and yet so harmoniously blended, is a great addition to the chapel, and mellow what might otherwise be deemed the cold effect of the marble altar erected some time ago. It is pleasant to record the charity of the lady who has thus contributed to the outward splendor of religion, and helped to make the new chapel of the good Sisters worthy of their splendid convent.