On Murder, Considered as One of the Fine Arts

By

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TO THE EDITOR OF BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

SIR,—We have all heard of a Society for the Promotion of Vice, of the Hell-Fire Club, &c. At Brighton, I think it was, that a Society was formed for the Suppression of Virtue. That society was itself suppressed—but I am sorry to say that another exists in London, of a character still more atrocious. In tendency, it may be denominated a Society for the Encouragement of Murder; but, according to their own delicate, it is styled—The Society of Connoisseurs in Murder. They profess to be curious in homicide; amateurs and dilettanti in the various modes of bloodshed; and, in short, Murder-Fanciers. Every fresh atrocity of that class, which the police annals of Europe bring up, they meet and criticise as they would a picture, statue, or other work of art. But I need not trouble myself with any attempt to describe the spirit of their proceedings, as you will collect that much better from one of the Monthly Lectures read before the society last year. This has fallen into my hands accidentally, in spite of all the vigilance exercised to keep their transactions from the public eye. The publication of it will alarm them; and my purpose is that it should. For I would much rather put them down quietly, by an appeal to public opinion through you, than by such an exposure of names as would follow an appeal to Bow Street; which last appeal, however, if this should fail, I must positively resort to. For it is scandalous that such things should go on in a Christian land. Even in a heathen land, the toleration of murder was felt by a Christian writer to be the most crying reproach of the public morals. This writer was Lactantius; and with his words, as singularly applicable to the present occasion, I shall conclude: "Quid tam horribile," says he, "tam tetrum, quam hominis trucidatio? Ideo severissimis legibus vita nostra munitur; ideo bella execrabilia sunt. Invenit tamen consuetudo quatenus homicidium sine bello ac sine legibus faciat: et hoc sibi voluptas quod scelus vindicavit. Quod si interesse homicidio sceleris conscientia est,-et eidem facinori spectator obstrictus est cui et admissor; ergo et in his gladiatorum cædibus non minus cruore profunditur qui spectat, quam ille qui facit: nec potest esse immunis à sanguine qui voluit effundi; aut videri non interfecisse, qui interfectori et favit et proemium postulavit." "Human life," says he, "is guarded by laws of the uttermost rigor, yet custom has devised a mode of evading them in behalf of murder; and the demands of taste (voluptas) are now become the same as those of abandoned guilt." Let the Society of Gentlemen Amateurs consider this; and let me call their especial attention to the last sentence, which is so weighty, that I shall attempt to convey it in English: "Now, if merely to be present at a murder fastens on a man the character of an accomplice; if barely to be a spectator involves us in one common guilt with the perpetrator; it follows of necessity, that, in these murders of the amphitheatre, the hand which inflicts the fatal blow is not more deeply imbrued in blood than his who sits and looks on: neither can he be clear of blood who has countenanced its shedding; nor that man seem other than a participator in murder who gives his applause to the murderer, and calls for prizes in his behalf." The "præmia postulavit" I have not yet heard charged upon the Gentlemen Amateurs of London, though undoubtedly their proceedings tend to that; but the "interfectori favil" is implied in the very title of this association, and expressed in every line of the lecture which I send you.

I am, &c. X. Y. Z.

LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN,—I have had the honor to be appointed by your committee to the trying task of reading the Williams' Lecture on Murder, considered as one of the Fine Arts; a task which might be easy enough three or four centuries ago, when the art was little understood, and few great models had been exhibited; but in this age, when masterpieces of excellence have been executed by professional men, it must be evident, that in the style of criticism applied to them, the public will look for something of a corresponding improvement. Practice and theory must advance pari passu. People begin to see that something more goes to the composition of a fine murder than two blockheads to kill and be killed—a knife—a purse—and a dark lane. Design, gentlemen, grouping, light and shade, poetry, sentiment, are now deemed indispensable to attempts of this nature. Mr. Williams has exalted the ideal of murder to all of us; and to me, therefore, in particular, has deepened the arduousness of my task. Like Æschylus or Milton in poetry, like Michael Angelo in painting, he has carried his art to a point of colossal sublimity; and, as Mr. Wordsworth observes, has in a manner "created the taste by which he is to be enjoyed." To sketch the history of the art, and to examine its principles critically, now remains as a duty for the connoisseur, and for judges of quite another stamp from his Majesty's Judges of Assize.

Before I begin, let me say a word or two to certain prigs, who affect to speak of our society as if it were in some degree immoral in its tendency. Immoral! God bless my soul, gentlemen, what is it that people mean? I am for morality, and always shall be, and for virtue and all that; and I do affirm, and always shall, (let what will come of it,) that murder is an improper line of conduct, highly improper; and I do not stick to assert, that any man who deals in murder, must have very incorrect ways of thinking, and truly inaccurate principles; and so far from aiding and abetting him by pointing out his victim's

hiding-place, as a great moralist of Germany declared it to be every good man's duty to do, I would subscribe one shilling and sixpense to have him apprehended, which is more by eighteen-pence than the most eminent moralists have subscribed for that purpose. But what then? Everything in this world has two handles. Murder, for instance, may be laid hold of by its moral handle, (as it generally is in the pulpit, and at the Old Bailey;) and that, I confess, is its weak side; or it may also be treated æsthetically, as the Germans call it, that is, in relation to good taste.

To illustrate this, I will urge the authority of three eminent persons, viz., S.T. Coleridge, Aristotle, and Mr. Howship the surgeon. To begin with S.T.C. One night, many years ago, I was drinking tea with him in Berners' Street, (which, by the way, for a short street, has been uncommonly fruitful in men of genius.) Others were there besides myself; and amidst some carnal considerations of tea and toast, we were all imbibing a dissertation on Plotinus from the attic lips of S.T.C. Suddenly a cry arose of "Fire—fire!" upon which all of us, master and disciples, Plato and [Greek: hoi peri ton Platona], rushed out, eager for the spectacle. The fire was in Oxford Street, at a piano-forte maker's; and, as it promised to be a conflagration of merit, I was sorry that my engagements forced me away from Mr. Coleridge's party before matters were come to a crisis. Some days after, meeting with my Platonic host, I reminded him of the case, and begged to know how that very promising exhibition had terminated. "Oh, sir," said he, "it turned out so ill, that we damned it unanimously." Now, does any man suppose that Mr. Coleridge,—who, for all he is too fat to be a person of active virtue, is undoubtedly a worthy Christian, —that this good S. T. C., I say, was an incendiary, or capable of wishing any ill to the poor man and his piano-fortes (many of them, doubtless, with the additional keys)? On the contrary, I know him to be that sort of man, that I durst stake my life upon it he would have worked an engine in a case of necessity, although rather of the fattest for such fiery trials of his virtue. But how stood the case? Virtue was in no request. On the arrival of the fireengines, morality had devolved wholly on the insurance office. This being the case, he had a right to gratify his taste. He had left his tea. Was he to have nothing in return?

I contend that the most virtuous man, under the premises stated, was entitled to make a luxury of the fire, and to hiss it, as he would any other performance that raised expectations in the public mind, which afterwards it disappointed. Again, to cite another great authority, what says the Stagyrite? He (in the Fifth Book, I think it is, of his Metaphysics) describes what he calls [Greek: kleptaen teleion], i.e., a perfect thief; and, as to Mr. Howship, in a work of his on Indigestion, he makes no scruple to talk with admiration of a certain ulcer which he had seen, and which he styles "a beautiful ulcer." Now will any man pretend, that, abstractedly considered, a thief could appear to

Aristotle a perfect character, or that Mr. Howship could be enamored of an ulcer? Aristotle, it is well known, was himself so very moral a character, that, not content with writing his Nichomachean Ethics, in one volume octavo, he also wrote another system, called Magna Moralia, or Big Ethics. Now, it is impossible that a man who composes any ethics at all, big or little, should admire a thief per se, and, as to Mr. Howship, it is well known that he makes war upon all ulcers; and, without suffering himself to be seduced by their charms, endeavors to banish them from the county of Middlesex. But the truth is, that, however objectionable per se, yet, relatively to others of their class, both a thief and an ulcer may have infinite degrees of merit. They are both imperfections, it is true; but to be imperfect being their essence, the very greatness of their imperfection becomes their perfection. Spartam nactus es, hunc exorna. A thief like Autolycus or Mr. Barrington, and a grim phagedænic ulcer, superbly defined, and running regularly through all its natural stages, may no less justly be regarded as ideals after their kind, than the most faultless moss-rose amongst flowers, in its progress from bud to "bright consummate flower;" or, amongst human flowers, the most magnificent young female, apparelled in the pomp of womanhood. And thus not only the ideal of an inkstand may be imagined, (as Mr. Coleridge demonstrated in his celebrated correspondence with Mr. Blackwood,) in which, by the way, there is not so much, because an inkstand is a laudable sort of thing, and a valuable member of society; but even imperfection itself may have its ideal or perfect state.

Really, gentlemen, I beg pardon for so much philosophy at one time, and now let me apply it. When a murder is in the paulo-post-futurum tense, and a rumor of it comes to our ears, by all means let us treat it morally. But suppose it over and done, and that you can say of it,[Greek: Tetelesai], or (in that adamantine molossus of Medea) [Greek: eirzasai]; suppose the poor murdered man to be out of his pain, and the rascal that did it off like a shot, nobody knows whither; suppose, lastly, that we have done our best, by putting out our legs to trip up the fellow in his flight, but all to no purpose—"abiit, evasit," &c.—why, then, I say, what's the use of any more virtue? Enough has been given to morality; now comes the turn of Taste and the Fine Arts. A sad thing it was, no doubt, very sad; but we can't mend it. Therefore let us make the best of a bad matter; and, as it is impossible to hammer anything out of it for moral purposes, let us treat it æsthetically, and see if it will turn to account in that way. Such is the logic of a sensible man, and what follows? We dry up our tears, and have the satisfaction, perhaps, to discover that a transaction, which, morally considered, was shocking, and without a leg to stand upon, when tried by principles of Taste, turns out to be a very meritorious performance. Thus all the world is pleased; the old proverb is justified, that it is an ill wind which blows nobody good; the amateur, from looking bilious and sulky, by too close an attention to virtue, begins to pick up his crumbs, and general hilarity prevails. Virtue has had her day; and henceforward, Vertu and Connoisseurship have leave to provide for themselves. Upon this principle, gentlemen, I propose to guide your studies, from Cain to Mr. Thurtell. Through this great gallery of murder, therefore, together let us wander hand in hand, in delighted admiration, while I endeavor to point your attention to the objects of profitable criticism.

The first murder is familiar to you all. As the inventor of murder, and the father of the art, Cain must have been a man of first-rate genius. All the Cains were men of genius. Tubal Cain invented tubes, I think, or some such thing. But, whatever were the originality and genius of the artist, every art was then in its infancy, and the works must be criticised with a recollection of that fact. Even Tubal's work would probably be little approved at this day in Sheffield; and therefore of Cain (Cain senior, I mean,) it is no disparagement to say, that his performance was but so so. Milton, however, is supposed to have thought differently. By his way of relating the case, it should seem to have been rather a pet murder with him, for he retouches it with an apparent anxiety for its picturesque effect:

Whereat he inly raged; and, as they talk'd,

Smote him into the midriff with a stone

That beat out life: he fell; and, deadly pale,

Groan'd out his soul with gushing blood effus'd.

Par. Lost, B. XI.

Upon this, Richardson, the painter, who had an eye for effect, remarks as follows, in his Notes on Paradise Lost, p. 497: "It has been thought," says he, "that Cain beat (as the common saying is) the breath out of his brother's body with a great stone; Milton gives in to this, with the addition, however, of a large wound." In this place it was a judicious addition; for the rudeness of the weapon, unless raised and enriched by a warm, sanguinary coloring, has too much of the naked air of the savage school; as if the deed were perpetrated by a Polypheme without science, premeditation, or anything but a mutton bone. However, I am chiefly pleased with the improvement, as it implies that Milton was an amateur. As to Shakspeare, there never was a better; as his description of the murdered Duke of Gloucester, in Henry VI., of Duncan's, Banquo's, &c., sufficiently proves.

The foundation of the art having been once laid, it is pitiable to see how it slumbered without improvement for ages. In fact, I shall now be obliged to leap over all murders, sacred and profane, as utterly unworthy of notice, until long after the Christian era. Greece, even in the age of Pericles, produced no murder of the slightest merit; and Rome had too little originality of genius in

any of the arts to succeed, where her model failed her. In fact, the Latin language sinks under the very idea of murder. "The man was murdered;"—how will this sound in Latin? Interfectus est, interemptus est—which simply expresses a homicide; and hence the Christian Latinity of the middle ages was obliged to introduce a new word, such as the feebleness of classic conceptions never ascended to. Murdratus est, says the sublimer dialect of Gothic ages. Meantime, the Jewish, school of murder kept alive whatever was yet known in the art, and gradually transferred it to the Western World. Indeed the Jewish school was always respectable, even in the dark ages, as the case of Hugh of Lincoln shows, which was honored with the approbation of Chaucer, on occasion of another performance from the same school, which he puts into the mouth of the Lady Abbess.

Recurring, however, for one moment to classical antiquity, I cannot but think that Catiline, Clodius, and some of that coterie, would have made first-rate artists; and it is on all accounts to be regretted, that the priggism of Cicero robbed his country of the only chance she had for distinction in this line. As the subject of a murder, no person could have answered better than himself. Lord! how he would have howled with panic, if he had heard Cethegus under his bed. It would have been truly diverting to have listened to him; and satisfied I am, gentlemen, that he would have preferred the utile of creeping into a closet, or even into a cloaca, to the honestum of facing the bold artist.

To come now to the dark ages—(by which we, that speak with precision, mean, par excellence, the tenth century, and the times immediately before and after)—these ages ought naturally to be favorable to the art of murder, as they were to church architecture, to stained glass, &c.; and, accordingly, about the latter end of this period, there arose a great character in our art, I mean the Old Man of the Mountains. He was a shining light, indeed, and I need not tell you, that the very word "assassin" is deduced from him. So keen an amateur was he, that on one occasion, when his own life was attempted by a favorite assassin, he was so much pleased with the talent shown, that notwithstanding the failure of the artist, he created him a duke upon the spot, with remainder to the female line, and settled a pension on him for three lives. Assassination is a branch of the art which demands a separate notice; and I shall devote an entire lecture to it. Meantime, I shall only observe how odd it is, that this branch of the art has flourished by fits. It never rains, but it pours. Our own age can boast of some fine specimens; and, about two centuries ago, there was a most brilliant constellation of murders in this class. I need hardly say, that I allude especially to those five splendid works,—the assassinations of William I, of Orange, of Henry IV., of France, of the Duke of Buckingham, (which you will find excellently described in the letters published by Mr. Ellis, of the British Museum,) of Gustavus Adolphus, and of Wallenstein. The King of Sweden's assassination, by the by, is doubted by many writers, Harte amongst others; but they are wrong. He was murdered; and I consider his murder unique in its excellence; for he was murdered at noon-day, and on the field of battle,—a feature of original conception, which occurs in no other work of art that I remember. Indeed, all of these assassinations may be studied with profit by the advanced connoisseur. They are all of them exemplaria, of which one may say,

Nociurnâ versatâ manu, versate diurne;

Especially nocturnâ.

In these assassinations of princes and statesmen, there is nothing to excite our wonder; important changes often depend on their deaths; and, from the eminence on which they stand, they are peculiarly exposed to the aim of every artist who happens to be possessed by the craving for scenical effect. But there is another class of assassinations, which has prevailed from an early period of the seventeenth century, that really does surprise me; I mean the assassination of philosophers. For, gentlemen, it is a fact, that every philosopher of eminence for the two last centuries has either been murdered, or, at the least, been very near it; insomuch, that if a man calls himself a philosopher, and never had his life attempted, rest assured there is nothing in him; and against Locke's philosophy in particular, I think it an unanswerable objection (if we needed any), that, although he carried his throat about with him in this world for seventy-two years, no man ever condescended to cut it. As these cases of philosophers are not much known, and are generally good and well composed in their circumstances, I shall here read an excursus on that subject, chiefly by way of showing my own learning.

The first great philosopher of the seventeenth century (if we except Galileo) was Des Cartes; and if ever one could say of a man that he was all but murdered—murdered within an inch—one must say it of him. The case was this, as reported by Baillet in his Vie De M. Des Cartes, tom. I. p. 102-3. In the year 1621, when Des Cartes might be about twenty-six years old, he was touring about as usual, (for he was as restless as a hyæna,) and, coming to the Elbe, either at Gluckstadt or at Hamburgh, he took shipping for East Friezland: what he could want in East Friezland no man has ever discovered; and perhaps he took this into consideration himself; for, on reaching Embden, he resolved to sail instantly for West Friezland; and being very impatient of delay, he hired a bark, with a few mariners to navigate it. No sooner had he got out to sea than he made a pleasing discovery, viz. that he had shut himself up in a den of murderers. His crew, says M. Baillet, he soon found out to be "des scélérats,"—not amateurs, gentlemen, as we are, but professional men—the height of whose ambition at that moment was to cut his throat. But the story is too pleasing to be abridged; I shall give it, therefore, accurately, from the French of his biographer: "M. Des Cartes had no company but that of his servant, with whom he was conversing in French. The sailors, who took him for a foreign merchant, rather than a cavalier, concluded that he must have money about him. Accordingly they came to a resolution by no means advantageous to his purse. There is this difference, however, between searobbers and the robbers in forests, that the latter may, without hazard, spare the lives of their victims; whereas the other cannot put a passenger on shore in such a case without running the risk of being apprehended. The crew of M. Des Cartes arranged their measures with a view to evade any danger of that sort. They observed that he was a stranger from a distance, without acquaintance in the country, and that nobody would take any trouble to inquire about him, in case he should never come to hand, (quand il viendroit à manquer.") Think, gentlemen, of these Friezland dogs discussing a philosopher as if he were a puncheon of rum. "His temper, they remarked, was very mild and patient; and, judging from the gentleness of his deportment, and the courtesy with which he treated themselves, that he could be nothing more than some green young man, they concluded that they should have all the easier task in disposing of his life. They made no scruple to discuss the whole matter in his presence, as not supposing that he understood any other language than that in which he conversed with his servant; and the amount of their deliberation was—to murder him, then to throw him into the sea, and to divide his spoils."

Excuse my laughing, gentlemen, but the fact is, I always do laugh when I think of this case—two things about it seem so droll. One, is, the horrid panic or "funk," (as the men of Eton call it,) in which Des Cartes must have found himself upon hearing this regular drama sketched for his own death—funeral—succession and administration to his effects. But another thing, which seems to me still more funny about this affair is, that if these Friezland hounds had been "game," we should have no Cartesian philosophy; and how we could have done without that, considering the worlds of books it has produced, I leave to any respectable trunk-maker to declare.

However, to go on; spite of his enormous funk, Des Cartes showed fight, and by that means awed these Anti-Cartesian rascals. "Finding," says M. Baillet, "that the matter was no joke, M. Des Cartes leaped upon his feet in a trice, assumed a stern countenance that these cravens had never looked for, and addressing them in their own language, threatened to run them through on the spot if they dared to offer him any insult." Certainly, gentlemen, this would have been an honor far above the merits of such inconsiderable rascals—to be spitted like larks upon a Cartesian sword; and therefore I am glad M. Des Cartes did not rob the gallows by executing his threat, especially as he could not possibly have brought his vessel to port, after he had murdered his crew; so that he must have continued to cruise for ever in the Zuyder Zee, and would probably have been mistaken by sailors for the Flying Dutchman, homeward

bound. "The spirit which M. Des Cartes manifested," says his biographer, "had the effect of magic on these wretches. The suddenness of their consternation struck their minds with a confusion which blinded them to their advantage, and they conveyed him to his destination as peaceably as he could desire."

Possibly, gentlemen, you may fancy that, on the model of Cæsar's address to his poor ferryman,—"Cæsarem vehis et fortunas ejus"—M. Des Cartes needed only to have said,—"Dogs, you cannot cut my throat, for you carry Des Cartes and his philosophy," and might safely have defied them to do their worst. A German emperor had the same notion, when, being cautioned to keep out of the way of a cannonading, he replied, "Tut! man. Did you ever hear of a cannon-ball that killed an emperor?" As to an emperor I cannot say, but a less thing has sufficed to smash a philosoper; and the next great philosopher of Europe undoubtedly was murdered. This was Spinosa.

I know very well the common opinion about him is, that he died in his bed. Perhaps he did, but he was murdered for all that; and this I shall prove by a book published at Brussels, in the year 1731, entitled, La Via de Spinosa; Par M. Jean Colerus, with many additions, from a MS. life, by one of his friends. Spinosa died on the 21st February, 1677, being then little more than forty-four years old. This of itself looks suspicious; and M. Jean admits, that a certain expression in the MS. life of him would warrant the conclusion, "que sa mort n'a pas été tout-à-fait naturelle." Living in a damp country, and a sailor's country, like Holland, he may be thought to have indulged a good deal in grog, especially in punch, which was then newly discovered. Undoubtedly he might have done so; but the fact is that he did not. M. Jean calls him "extrêmement sobre en son boire et en son manger." And though some wild stories were afloat about his using the juice of mandragora (p. 140,) and opium, (p. 144,) yet neither of these articles appeared in his druggist's bill. Living, therefore, with such sobriety, how was it possible that he should die a natural death at forty-four? Hear his biographer's account:—"Sunday morning the 21st of February, before it was church time, Spinosa came down stairs and conversed with the master and mistress of the house." At this time, therefore, perhaps ten o'clock on Sunday morning, you see that Spinosa was alive, and pretty well. But it seems "he had summoned from Amsterdam a certain physician, whom," says the biographer, "I shall not otherwise point out to notice than by these two letters, L.M. This L.M. had directed the people of the house to purchase an ancient cock, and to have him boiled forthwith, in order that Spinosa might take some broth about noon, which in fact he did, and ate some of the old cock with a good appetite, after the landlord and his wife had returned from church.

"In the afternoon, L.M. staid alone with Spinosa, the people of the house having returned to church; on coming out from which they learnt, with much surprise, that Spinosa had died about three o'clock, in the presence of L.M.,

who took his departure for Amsterdam the same evening, by the night-boat, without paying the least attention to the deceased. No doubt he was the readier to dispense with these duties, as he had possessed himself of a ducatoon and a small quantity of silver, together with a silver-hafted knife, and had absconded with his pillage." Here you see, gentlemen, the murder is plain, and the manner of it. It was L.M. who murdered Spinosa for his money. Poor S. was an invalid, meagre, and weak: as no blood was observed, L.M., no doubt, threw him down and smothered him with pillows,—the poor man being already half suffocated by his infernal dinner. But who was L.M.? It surely never could be Lindley Murray; for I saw him at York in 1825; and besides, I do not think he Would do such a thing; at least, not to a brother grammarian: for you know, gentlemen, that Spinosa wrote a very respectable Hebrew grammar.

Hobbes, but why, or on what principle, I never could understand, was not murdered. This was a capital oversight of the professional men in the seventeenth century; because in every light he was a fine subject for murder, except, indeed, that he was lean and skinny; for I can prove that he had money, and (what is very funny,) he had no right to make the least resistance; for, according to himself, irresistible power creates the very highest species of right, so that it is rebellion of the blackest die to refuse to be murdered, when a competent force appears to murder you. However, gentlemen, though he was not murdered, I am happy to assure you that (by his own account) he was three times very near being murdered. The first time was in the spring of 1640, when he pretends to have circulated a little MS. on the king's behalf, against the Parliament; he never could produce this MS., by the by; but he says that, "Had not his Majesty dissolved the Parliament," (in May,) "it had brought him into danger of his life." Dissolving the Parliament, however, was of no use; for, in November of the same year, the Long Parliament assembled, and Hobbes, a second time, fearing he should be murdered, ran away to France. This looks like the madness of John Dennis, who thought that Louis XIV. would never make peace with Queen Anne, unless he were given up to his vengeance; and actually ran away from the sea-coast in that belief. In France, Hobbes managed to take care of his throat pretty well for ten years; but at the end of that time, by way of paying court to Cromwell, he published his Leviathan. The old coward now began to "funk" horribly for the third time; he fancied the swords of the cavaliers were constantly at his throat, recollecting how they had served the Parliament ambassadors at the Hague and Madrid. "Turn," says he, in his dog-Latin life of himself,

"Tum venit in mentem mihi Dorislaus et Ascham;

Tanquam proscripto terror ubique aderat."

And accordingly he ran home to England. Now, certainly, it is very true

that a man deserved a cudgelling for writing Leviathan; and two or three cudgellings for writing a pentameter ending so villanously as—"terror ubique aderat!" But no man ever thought him worthy of anything beyond cudgelling. And, in fact, the whole story is a bounce of his own. For, in a most abusive letter which he wrote "to a learned person," (meaning Wallis the mathematician,) he gives quite another account of the matter, and says (p. 8,) he ran home "because he would not trust his safety with the French clergy;" insinuating that he was likely to be murdered for his religion, which would have been a high joke indeed—Tom's being brought to the stake for religion.

Bounce or not bounce, however, certain it is, that Hobbes, to the end of his life, feared that somebody would murder him. This is proved by the story I am going to tell you: it is not from a manuscript, but, (as Mr. Coleridge says,) it is as good as manuscript; for it comes from a book now entirely forgotten, viz., "The Creed of Mr. Hobbes Examined; in a Conference between him and a Student in Divinity," (published about ten years before Hobbes's death.) The book is anonymous, but it was written by Tennison, the same who, about thirty years after, succeeded Tillotson as Archbishop of Canterbury. The introductory anecdote is as follows: "A certain divine, it seems, (no doubt Tennison himself,) took an annual tour of one month to different parts of the island. In one of these excursions (1670) he visited the Peak in Derbyshire, partly in consequence of Hobbes's description of it. Being in that neighborhood, he could not but pay a visit to Buxton; and at the very moment of his arrival, he was fortunate enough to find a party of gentlemen dismounting at the inn door, amongst whom was a long thin fellow, who turned out to be no less a person than Mr. Hobbes, who probably had ridden over from Chattsworth. Meeting so great a lion,—a tourist, in search of the picturesque, could do no less than present himself in the character of bore. And luckily for this scheme, two of Mr. Hobbes's companions were suddenly summoned away by express; so that, for the rest of his stay at Buxton, he had Leviathan entirely to himself, and had the honor of bowsing with him in the evening. Hobbes, it seems, at first showed a good deal of stiffness, for he was shy of divines; but this wore off, and he became very sociable and funny, and they agreed to go into the bath together. How Tennison could venture to gambol in the same water with Leviathan, I cannot explain; but so it was: they frolicked about like two dolphins, though Hobbes must have been as old as the hills; and "in those intervals wherein they abstained from swimming and plunging themselves," [i.e., diving,] "they discoursed of many things relating to the Baths of the Ancients, and the Origine of Springs. When they had in this manner passed away an hour, they stepped out of the bath; and, having dried and cloathed themselves, they sate down in expectation of such a supper as the place afforded; designing to refresh themselves like the Deipnosophilæ, and rather to reason than to drink profoundly. But in this innocent intention they were interrupted by the disturbance arising from a little quarrel, in which some of the ruder people in the house were for a short time engaged. At this Mr. Hobbes seemed much concerned, though he was at some distance from the persons." And why was he concerned, gentlemen? No doubt you fancy, from, some benign and disinterested love of peace and harmony, worthy of an old man and a philosopher. But listen—"For a while he was not composed, but related it once or twice as to himself, with a low and careful tone, how Sextus Roscius was murthered after supper by the Balneæ Palatinæ. Of such general extent is that remark of Cicero, in relation to Epicurus the Atheist, of whom he observed that he of all men dreaded most those things which he contemned— Death and the Gods." Merely because it was supper time, and in the neighborhood of a bath, Mr. Hobbes must have the fate of Sextus Roscius. What logic was there in this, unless to a man who was always dreaming of murder? Here was Leviathan, no longer afraid of the daggers of English cavaliers or French clergy, but "frightened from his propriety" by a row in an ale-house between some honest clod-hoppers of Derbyshire, whom his own gaunt scare-crow of a person that belonged to quite another century, would have frightened out of their wits.

Malebranche, it will give you pleasure to hear, was murdered. The man who murdered him is well known: it was Bishop Berkeley. The story is familiar, though hitherto not put in a proper light. Berkeley, when a young man, went to Paris and called on Père Malebranche. He found him in his cell cooking. Cooks have ever been a genus irritabile; authors still more so: Malebranche was both: a dispute arose; the old father, warm already, became warmer; culinary and metaphysical irritations united to derange his liver: he took to his bed, and died. Such is the common version of the story: "So the whole ear of Denmark is abused." The fact is, that the matter was hushed up, out of consideration for Berkeley, who (as Pope remarked) had "every virtue under heaven:" else it was well known that Berkeley, feeling himself nettled by the waspishness of the old Frenchman, squared at him; a turn-up was the consequence: Malebranche was floored in the first round; the conceit was wholly taken out of him; and he would perhaps have given in; but Berkeley's blood was now up, and he insisted on the old Frenchman's retracting his doctrine of Occasional Causes. The vanity of the man was too great for this; and he fell a sacrifice to the impetuosity of Irish youth, combined with his own absurd obstinacy.

Leibnitz, being every way superior to Malebranche, one might, a fortiori, have counted on his being murdered; which, however, was not the case. I believe he was nettled at this neglect, and felt himself insulted by the security in which he passed his days. In no other way can I explain his conduct at the latter end of his life, when he chose to grow very avaricious, and to hoard up large sums of gold, which he kept in his own house. This was at Vienna, where

he died; and letters are still in existence, describing the immeasurable anxiety which he entertained for his throat. Still his ambition, for being attempted at least, was so great, that he would not forego the danger. A late English pedagogue, of Birmingham manufacture, viz., Dr. Parr, took a more selfish course, under the same circumstances. He had amassed a considerable quantity of gold and silver plate, which was for some time deposited in his bed-room at his parsonage house, Hatton. But growing every day more afraid of being murdered, which he knew that he could not stand, (and to which, indeed, he never had the slightest pretension,) he transferred the whole to the Hatton blacksmith; conceiving, no doubt, that the murder of a blacksmith would fall more lightly on the salus reipublicæ, than that of a pedagogue. But I have heard this greatly disputed; and it seems now generally agreed, that one good horse-shoe is worth about 2 1/4 Spital sermons.

As Leibnitz, though not murdered, may be said to have died, partly of the fear that he should be murdered, and partly of vexation that he was not,— Kant, on the other hand—who had no ambition in that way—had a narrower escape from a murderer than any man we read of, except Des Cartes. So absurdly does fortune throw about her favors! The case is told, I think, in an anonymous life of this very great man. For health's sake, Kant imposed upon himself, at one time, a walk of six miles every day along a highroad. This fact becoming known to a man who had his private reasons for committing murder, at the third milestone from Königsberg, he waited for his "intended," who came up to time as duly as a mail-coach. But for an accident, Kant was a dead man. However, on considerations of "morality," it happened that the murderer preferred a little child, whom he saw playing in the road, to the old transcendentalist: this child he murdered; and thus it happened that Kant escaped. Such is the German account of the matter; but my opinion is—that the murderer was an amateur, who felt how little would be gained to the cause of good taste by murdering an old, arid, and adust metaphysician; there was no room for display, as the man could not possibly look more like a mummy when dead, than he had done alive.

Thus, gentlemen, I have traced the connection between philosophy and our art, until insensibly I find that I have wandered into our own era. This I shall not take any pains to characterize apart from that which preceded it, for, in fact, they have no distinct character. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, together with so much of the nineteenth as we have yet seen, jointly compose the Augustan age of murder. The finest work of the seventeenth century is, unquestionably, the murder of Sir Edmondbury Godfrey, which has my entire approbation. At the same time, it must be observed, that the quantity of murder was not great in this century, at least amongst our own artists; which, perhaps, is attributable to the want of enlightened patronage. Sint Mæcenates, non deerunt, Flacce, Marones. Consulting Grant's "Observations on the Bills of

Mortality," (4th edition, Oxford, 1665,) I find, that out of 229,250, who died in London during one period of twenty years in the seventeenth century, not more than eighty-six were murdered; that is, about four three-tenths per annum. A small number this, gentlemen, to found an academy upon; and certainly, where the quantity is so small, we have a right to expect that the quality should be first-rate. Perhaps it was; yet, still I am of opinion that the best artist in this century was not equal to the best in that which followed. For instance, however praiseworthy the case of Sir Edmondbury Godfrey may be (and nobody can be more sensible of its merits than I am), still I cannot consent to place it on a level with that of Mrs. Ruscombe of Bristol, either as to originality of design, or boldness and breadth of style. This good lady's murder took place early in the reign of George III., a reign which was notoriously favorable to the arts generally. She lived in College Green, with a single maid-servant, neither of them having any pretension to the notice of history but what they derived from the great artist whose workmanship I am recording. One fine morning, when all Bristol was alive and in motion, some suspicion arising, the neighbors forced an entrance into the house, and found Mrs. Ruscombe murdered in her bed-room, and the servant murdered on the stairs: this was at noon; and, not more than two hours before, both mistress and servant had been seen alive. To the best of my remembrance, this was in 1764; upwards of sixty years, therefore, have now elapsed, and yet the artist is still undiscovered. The suspicions of posterity have settled upon two pretenders—a baker and a chimney-sweeper. But posterity is wrong; no unpractised artist could have conceived so bold an idea as that of a noon-day murder in the heart of a great city. It was no obscure baker, gentlemen, or anonymous chimney-sweeper, be assured, that executed this work. I know who it was. (Here there was a general buzz, which at length broke out into open applause; upon which the lecturer blushed, and went on with much earnestness.) For Heaven's sake, gentlemen, do not mistake me; it was not I that did it. I have not the vanity to think myself equal to any such achievement; be assured that you greatly overrate my poor talents; Mrs. Ruscombe's affair was far beyond my slender abilities. But I came to know who the artist was, from a celebrated surgeon, who assisted at his dissection. This gentleman had a private museum in the way of his profession, one corner of which was occupied by a cast from a man of remarkably fine proportions.

"That," said the surgeon, "is a cast from the celebrated Lancashire highwayman, who concealed his profession for some time from his neighbors, by drawing woollen stockings over his horse's legs, and in that way muffling the clatter which he must else have made in riding up a flagged alley that led to his stable. At the time of his execution for highway robbery, I was studying under Cruickshank: and the man's figure was so uncommonly fine, that no money or exertion was spared to get into possession of him with the least

possible delay. By the connivance of the under-sheriff he was cut down within the legal time, and instantly put into a chaise and four; so that, when he reached Cruickshank's he was positively not dead. Mr. ——, a young student at that time, had the honor of giving him the coup de grâce, and finishing the sentence of the law." This remarkable anecdote, which seemed to imply that all the gentlemen in the dissecting-room were amateurs of our class, struck me a good deal; and I was repeating it one day to a Lancashire lady, who thereupon informed me, that she had herself lived in the neighborhood of that highwayman, and well remembered two circumstances, which combined, in the opinion of all his neighbors, to fix upon him the credit of Mrs. Ruscombe's affair. One was, the fact of his absence for a whole fortnight at the period of that murder: the other, that, within a very little time after, the neighborhood of this highwayman was deluged with dollars: now Mrs. Ruscombe was known to have hoarded about two thousand of that coin. Be the artist, however, who he might, the affair remains a durable monument of his genius; for such was the impression of awe, and the sense of power left behind, by the strength of conception manifested in this murder, that no tenant (as I was told in 1810) had been found up to that time for Mrs. Ruscombe's house.

But, whilst I thus eulogize the Ruscombian case, let me not be supposed to overlook the many other specimens of extraordinary merit spread over the face of this century. Such cases, indeed, as that of Miss Bland, or of Captain Donnellan, and Sir Theophilus Boughton, shall never have any countenance from me. Fie on these dealers in poison, say I: can they not keep to the old honest way of cutting throats, without introducing such abominable innovations from Italy? I consider all these poisoning cases, compared with the legitimate style, as no better than wax-work by the side of sculpture, or a lithographic print by the side of a fine Volpato. But, dismissing these, there remain many excellent works of art in a pure style, such as nobody need be ashamed to own, as every candid connoisseur will admit. Candid, observe, I say; for great allowances must be made in these cases; no artist can ever be sure of carrying through his own fine preconception. Awkward disturbances will arise; people will not submit to have their throats cut quietly; they will run, they will kick, they will bite; and whilst the portrait painter often has to complain of too much torpor in his subject, the artist, in our line, is generally embarrassed by too much animation. At the same time, however disagreeable to the artist, this tendency in murder to excite and irritate the subject, is certainly one of its advantages to the world in general, which we ought not to overlook, since it favors the development of latent talent. Jeremy Taylor notices with admiration, the extraordinary leaps which people will take under the influence of fear. There was a striking instance of this in the recent case of the M'Keands; the boy cleared a height, such as he will never clear again to his dying day. Talents also of the most brilliant description for thumping, and

indeed for all the gymnastic exercises, have sometimes been developed by the panic which accompanies our artists; talents else buried and hid under a bushel to the possessors, as much as to their friends. I remember an interesting illustration of this fact, in a case which I learned in Germany.

Riding one day in the neighborhood of Munich, I overtook a distinguished amateur of our society, whose name I shall conceal. This gentleman informed me that, finding himself wearied with the frigid pleasures (so he called them) of mere amateurship, he had quitted England for the continent—meaning to practise a little professionally. For this purpose he resorted to Germany, conceiving the police in that part of Europe to be more heavy and drowsy than elsewhere. His debut as a practitioner took place at Mannheim; and, knowing me to be a brother amateur, he freely communicated the whole of his maiden adventure. "Opposite to my lodging," said he, "lived a baker: he was somewhat of a miser, and lived quite alone. Whether it were his great expanse of chalky face, or what else, I know not—but the fact was, I 'fancied' him, and resolved to commence business upon his throat, which by the way he always carried bare—a fashion which is very irritating to my desires. Precisely at eight o'clock in the evening, I observed that he regularly shut up his windows. One night I watched him when thus engaged—bolted in after him—locked the door—and, addressing him with great suavity, acquainted him with the nature of my errand; at the same time advising him to make no resistance, which would be mutually unpleasant. So saying, I drew out my tools; and was proceeding to operate. But at this spectacle, the baker, who seemed to have been struck by catalepsy at my first announce, awoke into tremendous agitation. 'I will not be murdered!' he shrieked aloud; 'what for will I lose my precious throat?' 'What for?' said I; 'if for no other reason, for this—that you put alum into your bread. But no matter, alum or no alum, (for I was resolved to forestall any argument on that point,) know that I am a virtuoso in the art of murder—am desirous of improving myself in its details—and am enamored of your vast surface of throat, to which I am determined to be a customer.' 'Is it so?' said he, 'but I'll find you custom in another line;' and so saying, he threw himself into a boxing attitude. The very idea of his boxing struck me as ludicrous. It is true, a London baker had distinguished himself in the ring, and became known to fame under the title of the Master of the Rolls; but he was young and unspoiled: whereas this man was a monstrous feather-bed in person, fifty years old, and totally out of condition. Spite of all this, however, and contending against me, who am a master in the art, he made so desperate a defence, that many times I feared he might turn the tables upon me; and that I, an amateur, might be murdered by a rascally baker. What a situation! Minds of sensibility will sympathize with my anxiety. How severe it was, you may understand by this, that for the first thirteen rounds the baker had the advantage. Round the fourteenth, I received a blow on the right eye, which closed it up; in the end, I believe, this was my salvation: for the anger it roused in me was so great that, in this and every one of the three following rounds, I floored the baker.

"Round 18th. The baker came up piping, and manifestly the worse for wear.

His geometrical exploits in the four last rounds had done him no good.

However, he showed some skill in stopping a message which I was sending to

his cadaverous mug; in delivering which, my foot slipped, and I went down.

"Round 19th. Surveying the baker, I became ashamed of having been so much bothered by a shapeless mass of dough; and I went in fiercely, and administered some severe punishment. A rally took place—both went down—baker undermost—ten to three on amateur.

"Round 20th. The baker jumped up with surprising agility; indeed, he managed his pins capitally, and fought wonderfully, considering that he was drenched in perspiration; but the shine was now taken out of him, and his game was the mere effect of panic. It was now clear that he could not last much longer. In the course of this round we tried the weaving system, in which I had greatly the advantage, and hit him repeatedly on the conk. My reason for this was, that his conk was covered with carbuncles; and I thought I should vex him by taking such liberties with his conk, which in fact I did.

"The three next rounds, the master of the rolls staggered about like a cow on the ice. Seeing how matters stood, in round twenty-fourth I whispered something into his ear, which sent him down like a shot. It was nothing more than my private opinion of the value of his throat at an annuity office. This little confidential whisper affected him greatly; the very perspiration was frozen on his face, and for the next two rounds I had it all my own way. And when I called time for the twenty-seventh round, he lay like a log on the floor."

After which, said I to the amateur, "It may be presumed that you accomplished your purpose." "You are right," said he mildly, "I did; and a great satisfaction, you know, it was to my mind, for by this means I killed two birds with one stone;" meaning that he had both thumped the baker and murdered him. Now, for the life of me, I could not see that; for, on the contrary, to my mind it appeared that he had taken two stones to kill one bird, having been obliged to take the conceit out of him first with his fist, and then with his tools. But no matter for his logic. The moral of his story was good, for it showed what an astonishing stimulus to latent talent is contained in any

reasonable prospect of being murdered. A pursy, unwieldy, half cataleptic baker of Mannheim had absolutely fought six-and-twenty rounds with an accomplished English boxer merely upon this inspiration; so greatly was natural genius exalted and sublimed by the genial presence of his murderer.

Really, gentlemen, when one hears of such things as these, it becomes a duty, perhaps, a little to soften that extreme asperity with which most men speak of murder. To hear people talk, you would suppose that all the disadvantages and inconveniences were on the side of being murdered, and that there were none at all in not being murdered. But considerate men think otherwise. "Certainly," says Jeremy Taylor, "it is a less temporal evil to fall by the rudeness of a sword than the violence of a fever: and the axe" (to which he might have added the ship-carpenter's mallet and the crow-bar) "a much less affliction than a strangury." Very true; the bishop talks like a wise man and an amateur, as he is; and another great philosopher, Marcus Aurelius, was equally above the vulgar prejudices on this subject. He declares it to be one of "the noblest functions of reason to know whether it is time to walk out of the world or not." (Book III., Collers' Translation.) No sort of knowledge being rarer than this, surely that man must be a most philanthropic character, who undertakes to instruct people in this branch of knowledge gratis, and at no little hazard to himself. All this, however, I throw out only in the way of speculation to future moralists; declaring in the meantime my own private conviction, that very few men commit murder upon philanthropic or patriotic principles, and repeating what I have already said once at least—that, as to the majority of murderers, they are very incorrect characters.

With respect to Williams's murders, the sublimest and most entire in their excellence that ever were committed, I shall not allow myself to speak incidentally. Nothing less than an entire lecture, or even an entire course of lectures, would suffice to expound their merits. But one curious fact, connected with his case, I shall mention, because it seems to imply that the blaze of his genius absolutely dazzled the eye of criminal justice. You all remember, I doubt not, that the instruments with which he executed his first great work, (the murder of the Marrs,) were a ship-carpenter's mallet and a knife. Now the mallet belonged to an old Swede, one John Petersen, and bore his initials. This instrument Williams left behind him, in Marr's house, and it fell into the hands of the magistrates. Now, gentlemen, it is a fact that the publication of this circumstance of the initials led immediately to the apprehension of Williams, and, if made earlier, would have prevented his second great work, (the murder of the Williamsons,) which took place precisely twelve days after. But the magistrates kept back this fact from the public for the entire twelve days, and until that second work was accomplished. That finished, they published it, apparently feeling that Williams had now done enough for his fame, and that his glory was at length placed beyond the reach of accident.

As to Mr. Thurtell's case, I know not what to say. Naturally, I have every disposition to think highly of my predecessor in the chair of this society; and I acknowledge that his lectures were unexceptionable. ingenuously, I do really think that his principal performance, as an artist, has been much overrated. I admit that at first I was myself carried away by the general enthusiasm. On the morning when the murder was made known in London, there was the fullest meeting of amateurs that I have ever known since the days of Williams; old bed-ridden connoisseurs, who had got into a peevish way of sneering and complaining "that there was nothing doing," now hobbled down to our club-room: such hilarity, such benign expression of general satisfaction, I have rarely witnessed. On every side you saw people shaking hands, congratulating each other, and forming dinner parties for the evening; and nothing was to be heard but triumphant challenges of—"Well! will this do?" "Is this the right thing?" "Are you satisfied at last?" But, in the midst of this, I remember we all grew silent on hearing the old cynical amateur, L. S-, that laudator temporis acti, stumping along with his wooden leg; he entered the room with his usual scowl, and, as he advanced, he continued to growl and stutter the whole way—"Not an original idea in the whole piece—mere plagiarism,—base plagiarism from hints that I threw out! Besides, his style is as hard as Albert Durer, and as coarse as Fuseli." Many thought that this was mere jealousy, and general waspishness; but I confess that, when the first glow of enthusiasm had subsided, I have found most judicious critics to agree that there was something falsetto in the style of Thurtell. The fact is, he was a member of our society, which naturally gave a friendly bias to our judgments; and his person was universally familiar to the cockneys, which gave him, with the whole London public, a temporary popularity, that his pretensions are not capable of supporting; for opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat. There was, however, an unfinished design of Thurtell's for the murder of a man with a pair of dumbbells, which I admired greatly; it was a mere outline, that he never completed; but to my mind it seemed every way superior to his chief work. I remember that there was great regret expressed by some amateurs that this sketch should have been left in an unfinished state: but there I cannot agree with them; for the fragments and first bold outlines of original artists have often a felicity about them which is apt to vanish in the management of the details.

The case of the M'Keands I consider far beyond the vaunted performance of Thurtell,—indeed above all praise; and bearing that relation, in fact, to the immortal works of Williams, which the Æneid bears to the Iliad.

But it is now time that I should say a few words about the principles of murder, not with a view to regulate your practice, but your judgment: as to old women, and the mob of newspaper readers, they are pleased with anything, provided it is bloody enough. But the mind of sensibility requires something more. First, then, let us speak of the kind of person who is adapted to the purpose of the murderer; secondly, of the place where; thirdly, of the time when, and other little circumstances.

As to the person, I suppose it is evident that he ought to be a good man; because, if he were not, he might himself, by possibility, be contemplating murder at the very time; and such "diamond-cut-diamond" tussles, though pleasant enough where nothing better is stirring, are really not what a critic can allow himself to call murders. I could mention some people (I name no names) who have been murdered by other people in a dark lane; and so far all seemed correct enough; but, on looking farther into the matter, the public have become aware that the murdered party was himself, at the moment, planning to rob his murderer, at the least, and possibly to murder him, if he had been strong enough. Whenever that is the case, or may be thought to be the case, farewell to all the genuine effects of the art. For the final purpose of murder, considered as a fine art, is precisely the same as that of tragedy, in Aristotle's account of it, viz., "to cleanse the heart by means of pity and terror." Now, terror there may be, but how can there be any pity for one tiger destroyed by another tiger?

It is also evident that the person selected ought not to be a public character. For instance, no judicious artist would have attempted to murder Abraham Newland. For the case was this; everybody read so much about Abraham Newland, and so few people ever saw him, that there was a fixed belief that he was an abstract idea. And I remember that once, when I happened to mention that I had dined at a coffee-house in company with Abraham Newland, everybody looked scornfully at me, as though I had pretended to have played at billiards with Prester John, or to have had an affair of honor with the Pope. And, by the way, the Pope would be a very improper person to murder: for he has such a virtual ubiquity as the father of Christendom, and, like the cuckoo, is so often heard but never seen, that I suspect most people regard him also as an abstract idea. Where, indeed, a public character is in the habit of giving dinners, "with every delicacy of the season," the case is very different: every person is satisfied that he is no abstract idea; and, therefore, there can be no impropriety in murdering him; only that his murder will fall into the class of assassinations, which I have not yet treated.

Thirdly. The subject chosen ought to be in good health: for it is absolutely barbarous to murder a sick person, who is usually quite unable to bear it. On this principle, no cockney ought to be chosen who is above twenty-five, for after that age he is sure to be dyspeptic. Or at least, if a man will hunt in that warren, he ought to murder a couple at one time; if the cockneys chosen

should be tailors, he will of course think it his duty, on the old established equation, to murder eighteen. And, here, in this attention to the comfort of sick people, you will observe the usual effect of a fine art to soften and refine the feelings. The world in general, gentlemen, are very bloody-minded; and all they want in a murder is a copious effusion of blood; gaudy display in this point is enough for them. But the enlightened connoisseur is more refined in his taste; and from our art, as from all the other liberal arts when thoroughly cultivated, the result is—to improve and to humanize the heart; so true is it, that—

----"Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes,

Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros."

A philosophic friend, well known for his philanthropy and general benignity, suggests that the subject chosen ought also to have a family of young children wholly dependent on his exertions, by way of deepening the pathos. And, undoubtedly, this is a judicious caution. Yet I would not insist too keenly on this condition. Severe good taste unquestionably demands it; but still, where the man was otherwise unobjectionable in point of morals and health, I would not look with too curious a jealousy to a restriction which might have the effect of narrowing the artist's sphere.

So much for the person. As to the time, the place, and the tools, I have many things to say, which at present I have no room for. The good sense of the practitioner has usually directed him to night and privacy. Yet there have not been wanting cases where this rule was departed from with excellent effect. In respect to time, Mrs. Ruscombe's case is a beautiful exception, which I have already noticed; and in respect both to time and place, there is a fine exception in the annals of Edinburgh, (year 1805,) familiar to every child in Edinburgh, but which has unaccountably been defrauded of its due portion of fame amongst English amateurs. The case I mean is that of a porter to one of the banks, who was murdered whilst carrying a bag of money, in broad daylight, on turning out of the High Street, one of the most public streets in Europe, and the murderer is to this hour undiscovered.

"Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tcmpus,

Singula dum capti circumvectamur amore."

And now, gentlemen, in conclusion, let me again solemnly disclaim all pretensions on my own part to the character of a professional man. I never attempted any murder in my life, except in the year 1801, upon the body of a tom-cat; and that turned out differently from my intention. My purpose, I own, was downright murder. "Semper ego auditor tantum?" said I, "nunquamne reponam?" And I went down stairs in search of Tom at one o'clock on a dark

night, with the "animus," and no doubt with the fiendish looks, of a murderer. But when I found him, he was in the act of plundering the pantry of bread and other things. Now this gave a new turn to the affair; for the time being one of general scarcity, when even Christians were reduced to the use of potatobread, rice-bread, and all sorts of things, it was downright treason in a tom-cat to be wasting good wheaten-bread in the way he was doing. It instantly became a patriotic duty to put him to death; and as I raised aloft and shook the glittering steel, I fancied myself rising like Brutus, effulgent from a crowd of patriots, and, as I stabbed him, I

"called aloud on Tully's name, And bade the father of his country hail!"

Since then, what wandering thoughts I may have had of attempting the life of an ancient ewe, of a superannuated hen, and such "small deer," are locked up in the secrets of my own breast; but for the higher departments of the art, I confess myself to be utterly unfit. My ambition does not rise so high. No, gentlemen, in the words of Horace,

"—-fungos vice cotis, excutum Reddere ere quæ ferrum valet, exsors ipsa secandi."

SECOND PAPER ON MURDER, CONSIDERED AS ONE OF THE FINE ARTS.

DOCTOR NORTH: You are a liberal man: liberal in the true classical sense, not in the slang sense of modern politicians and education-mongers. Being so, I am sure that you will sympathize with my case. I am an ill-used man, Dr. North—particularly ill used; and, with your permission, I will briefly explain how. A black scene of calumny will be laid open; but you, Doctor, will make all things square again. One frown from you, directed to the proper quarter, or a warning shake of the crutch, will set me right in public opinion, which at present, I am sorry to say, is rather hostile to me and mine—all owing to the wicked arts of slanderers. But you shall hear.

A good many years ago you may remember that I came forward in the character of a dilettante in murder. Perhaps dilettante may be too strong a word. Connoisseur is better suited to the scruples and infirmity of public taste. I suppose there is no harm in that at least. A man is not bound to put his eyes, ears, and understanding into his breeches pocket when he meets with a murder. If he is not in a downright comatose state, I suppose he must see that one murder is better or worse than another in point of good taste. Murders have their little differences and shades of merit as well as statues, pictures,

oratorios, cameos, intaglios, or what not. You may be angry with the man for talking too much, or too publicly, (as to the too much, that I deny—a man can never cultivate his taste too highly;) but you must allow him to think, at any rate; and you, Doctor, you think, I am sure, both deeply and correctly on the subject. Well, would you believe it? all my neighbors came to hear of that little æsthetic essay which you had published; and, unfortunately, hearing at the very same time of a club that I as connected with, and a dinner at which I presided—both tending to the same little object as the essay, viz., the diffusion of a just taste among her majesty's subjects, they got up the most barbarous calumnies against me. In particular, they said that I, or that the club, which comes to the same thing, had offered bounties on well conducted homicides with a scale of drawbacks, in case of any one defect or flaw, according to a table issued to private friends. Now, Doctor, I'll tell you the whole truth about the dinner and the club, and you'll see how malicious the world is. But first let me tell you, confidentially, what my real principles are upon the matters in question.

As to murder, I never committed one in my life. It's a well known thing amongst all my friends. I can get a paper to certify as much, signed by lots of people. Indeed, if you come to that, I doubt whether many people could produce as strong a certificate. Mine would be as big as a table-cloth. There is indeed one member of the club, who pretends to say that he caught me once making too free with his throat on a club night, after every body else had retired. But, observe, he shuffles in his story according to his state of civilation. When not far gone, he contents himself with saying that he caught me ogling his throat; and that I was melancholy for some weeks after, and that my voice sounded in a way expressing, to the nice ear of a connoisseur, the sense of opportunities lost—but the club all know that he's a disappointed man himself, and that he speaks querulously at times about the fatal neglect of a man's coming abroad without his tools. Besides, all this is an affair between two amateurs, and every body makes allowances for little asperities and sorenesses in such a case. "But," say you, "If no murderer, my correspondent may have encouraged, or even have bespoke a murder." No, upon my honor nothing of the kind. And that was the very point I wished to argue for your satisfaction. The truth is, I am a very particular man in everything relating to murder; and perhaps I carry my delicacy too far. The Stagyrite most justly, and possibly with a view to my case, placed virtue in the [Greek: to meson] or middle point between two extremes. A golden mean is certainly what every man should aim at. But it is easier talking than doing; and, my infirmity being notoriously too much milkiness of heart, I find it difficult to maintain that steady equatorial line between the two poles of too much murder on the one hand, and too little on the other. I am too soft—Doctor, too soft; and people get excused through me—nay, go through life without an attempt made upon them, that ought not to be excused. I believe if I had the management of things, there would hardly be a murder from year's end to year's end. In fact I'm for virtue, and goodness, and all that sort of thing. And two instances I'll give you to what an extremity I carry my virtue. The first may seem a trifle; but not if you knew my nephew, who was certainly born to be hanged, and would have been so long ago, but for my restraining voice. He is horribly ambitious, and thinks himself a man of cultivated taste in most branches of murder, whereas, in fact, he has not one idea on the subject, but such as he has stolen from me. This is so well known, that the club has twice blackballed him, though every indulgence was shown to him as my relative. People came to me and said—"Now really, President, we would do much to serve a relative of yours. But still, what can be said? You know yourself that he'll disgrace us. If we were to elect him, why, the next thing we should hear of would be some vile butcherly murder, by way of justifying our choice. And what sort of a concern would it be? You know, as well as we do, that it would be a disgraceful affair, more worthy of the shambles than of an artist's attelier. He would fall upon some great big man, some huge farmer returning drunk from a fair. There would be plenty of blood, and that he would expect us to take in lieu of taste, finish, scenical grouping. Then, again, how would he tool? Why, most probably with a cleaver and a couple of paving stones: so that the whole coup d'oeil would remind you rather of some hideous ogre or cyclops, than of the delicate operator of the nineteenth century." The picture was drawn with the hand of truth; that I could not but allow, and, as to personal feelings in the matter, I dismissed them from the first. The next morning I spoke to my nephew—I was delicately situated, as you see, but I determined that no consideration should induce me to flinch from my duty. "John," said I, "you seem to me to have taken an erroneous view of life and its duties. Pushed on by ambition, you are dreaming rather of what it might be glorious to attempt, than what it would be possible for you to accomplish. Believe me, it is not necessary to a man's respectability that he should commit a murder. Many a man has passed through life most respectably, without attempting any species of homicide—good, bad, or indifferent. It is your first duty to ask yourself, quid valeant humeri, quid ferre recusent? we cannot all be brilliant men in this life. And it is for your interest to be contented rather with a humble station well filled, than to shock every body with failures, the more conspicuous by contrast with the ostentation of their promises." John made no answer, he looked very sulky at the moment, and I am in high hopes that I have saved a near relation from making a fool of himself by attempting what is as much beyond his capacity as an epic poem. Others, however, tell me that he is meditating a revenge upon me and the whole club. But let this be as it may, liberavi animam meam; and, as you see, have run some risk with a wish to diminish the amount of homicide. But the other case still more forcibly illustrates my virtue. A man came to me as a candidate for the place of my servant, just then vacant. He had the reputation of having dabbled a little in our art; some said not without merit. What startled me, however, was, that he supposed this art to be part of his regular duties in my service. Now that was a thing I would not allow; so I said at once, "Richard (or James, as the case might be,) you misunderstand my character. If a man will and must practise this difficult (and allow me to add, dangerous) branch of art—if he has an overruling genius for it, why, he might as well pursue his studies whilst living in my service as in another's. And also, I may observe, that it can do no harm either to himself or to the subject on whom he operates, that he should be guided by men of more taste than himself. Genius may do much, but long study of the art must always entitle a man to offer advice. So far I will go general principles I will suggest. But as to any particular case, once for all I will have nothing to do with it. Never tell me of any special work of art you are meditating—I set my face against it in toto. For if once a man indulges himself in murder, very soon he comes to think little of robbing; and from robbing he comes next to drinking and Sabbath-breaking, and from that to incivility and procrastination. Once begin upon this downward path, you never know where you are to stop. Many a man has dated his ruin from some murder or other that perhaps he thought little of at the time. Principiis obsta—that's my rule." Such was my speech, and I have always acted up to it; so if that is not being virtuous, I should be glad to know what is. But now about the dinner and the club. The club was not particularly of my creation; it arose pretty much as other similar associations, for the propagation of truth and the communication of new ideas, rather from the necessities of things than upon any one man's suggestion. As to the dinner, if any man more than another could be held responsible for that, it was a member known amongst us by the name of Toad-in-the-hole. He was so called from his gloomy misanthropical disposition, which led him into constant disparagements of all modern murders as vicious abortions, belonging to no authentic school of art. The finest performances of our own age he snarled at cynically; and at length this querulous humor grew upon him so much, and he became so notorious as a laudator tentporis acti, that few people cared to seek his society. This made him still more fierce and truculent. He went about muttering and growling; wherever you met him he was soliloquizing and saying, "despicable pretender —without grouping—without two ideas upon handling—without"—and there you lost him. At length existence seemed to be painful to him; he rarely spoke, he seemed conversing with phantoms in the air, his housekeeper informed us that his reading was nearly confined to God's Revenge upon Murder, by Reynolds, and a more ancient book of the same title, noticed by Sir Walter Scott in his Fortunes of Nigel. Sometimes, perhaps, he might read in the Newgate Calendar down to the year 1788, but he never looked into a book more recent. In fact, he had a theory with regard to the French Revolution, as having been the great cause of degeneration in murder. "Very soon, sir," he used to say, "men will have lost the art of killing poultry: the very rudiments of the art will have perished!" In the year 1811 he retired from general society. Toad-in-the-hole was no more seen in any public resort. We missed him from his wonted haunts—nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he. By the side of the main conduit his listless length at noontide he would stretch, and pore upon the filth that muddled by. "Even dogs are not what they were, sir—not what they should be. I remember in my grandfather's time that some dogs had an idea of murder. I have known a mastiff lie in ambush for a rival, sir, and murder him with pleasing circumstances of good taste. Yes, sir, I knew a tomcat that was an assassin. But now"—and then, the subject growing too painful, he dashed his hand to his forehead, and went off abruptly in a homeward direction towards his favorite conduit, where he was seen by an amateur in such a state that he thought it dangerous to address him. Soon after he shut himself entirely up; it was understood that he had resigned himself to melancholy; and at length the prevailing notion was, that Toad-in-the-hole had hanged himself.

The world was wrong there, as it has been on some other questions. Toadin-the-hole might be sleeping, but dead he was not; and of that we soon had ocular proof. One morning in 1812, an amateur surprised us with the news that he had seen Toad-in-the-hole brushing with hasty steps the dews away to meet the postman by the conduit side. Even that was something: how much more, to hear that he had shaved his beard—had laid aside his sad-colored clothes, and was adorned like a bridegroom of ancient days. What could be the meaning of all this? Was Toad-in-the-hole mad? or how? Soon after the secret was explained—in more than a figurative sense "the murder was out." For in came the London morning papers, by which it appeared that but three days before a murder, the most superb of the century by many degrees had occurred in the heart of London. I need hardly say, that this was the great exterminating chefd'oeuvre of Williams at Mr. Marr's, No. 29, Ratcliffe Highway. That was the début of the artist; at least for anything the public knew. What occurred at Mr. Williamson's twelve nights afterwards—the second work turned out from the same chisel—some people pronounced even superior. But Toad-in-the-hole always "reclaimed"—he was even angry at comparisons. "This vulgar gout de comparaison, as La Bruyère calls it," he would often remark, "will be our ruin; each work has its own separate characteristics—each in and for itself is incomparable. One, perhaps, might suggest the Iliad—the other the Odyssey: what do you get by such comparisons? Neither ever was, or will be surpassed; and when you've talked for hours, you must still come back to that." Vain, however, as all criticism might be, he often said that volumes might be written on each case for itself; and he even proposed to publish in quarto on the subject.

Meantime, how had Toad-in-the-hole happened to hear of this great work of art so early in the morning? He had received an account by express, dispatched by a correspondent in London, who watched the progress of art On Toady's behalf, with a general commission to send off a special express, at whatever cost, in the event of any estimable works appearing—how much more upon occasion of a ne plus ultra in art! The express arrived in the nighttime; Toad-in-the-hole was then gone to bed; he had been muttering and grumbling for hours, but of course he was called up. On reading the account, he threw his arms round the express, called him his brother and his preserver; settled a pension upon him for three lives, and expressed his regret at not having it in his power to knight him. We, on our part—we amateurs, I mean having heard that he was abroad, and therefore had not hanged himself, made sure of soon seeing him amongst us. Accordingly he soon arrived, knocked over the porter on his road to the reading-room; he seized every man's hand as he passed him—wrung it almost frantically, and kept ejaculating, "Why, now here's something like a murder!—this is the real thing—this is genuine—this is what you can approve, can recommend to a friend: this—says every man, on reflection—this is the thing that ought to be!" Then, looking at particular friends, he said—"Why, Jack, how are you? Why, Tom, how are you? Bless me, you look ten years younger than when I last saw you." "No, sir," I replied, "It is you who look ten years younger." "Do I? well, I should'nt wonder if I did; such works are enough to make us all young." And in fact the general opinion is, that Toad-in-the-hole would have died but for this regeneration of art, which he called a second age of Leo the Tenth; and it was our duty, he said solemnly, to commemorate it. At present, and en attendant—rather as an occasion for a public participation in public sympathy, than as in itself any commensurate testimony of our interest—he proposed that the club should meet and dine together. A splendid public dinner, therefore, was given by the club; to which all amateurs were invited from a distance of one hundred miles.

Of this dinner there are ample short-hand notes amongst the archives of the club. But they are not "extended," to speak diplomatically; and the reporter is missing—I believe, murdered. Meantime, in years long after that day, and on an occasion perhaps equally interesting, viz., the turning up of Thugs and Thuggism, another dinner was given. Of this I myself kept notes, for fear of another accident to the short-hand reporter. And I here subjoin them. Toad-in-the-hole, I must mention, was present at this dinner. In fact, it was one of its sentimental incidents. Being as old as the valleys at the dinner of 1812, naturally he was as old as the hills at the Thug dinner of 1838. He had taken to wearing his beard again; why, or with what view, it passes my persimmon to tell you. But so it was. And his appearance was most benign and venerable. Nothing could equal the angelic radiance of his smile as he inquired after the

unfortunate reporter, (whom, as a piece of private scandal, I should tell you that he was himself supposed to have murdered, in a rapture of creative art:) the answer was, with roars of laughter, from the under-sheriff of our county —"Non est inventus." Toad-in-the-hole laughed outrageously at this: in fact, we all thought he was choking; and, at the earnest request of the company, a musical composer furnished a most beautiful glee upon the occasion, which was sung five times after dinner, with universal applause and inextinguishable laughter, the words being these, (and the chorus so contrived, as most beautifully to mimic the peculiar laughter of Toad-in-the-hole:)—

"Et interrogatum est à Toad-in-the hole—Ubi est ille reporter?

Et responsum est cum cachinno—Non est inventus."

CHORUS.

"Deinde iteratum est ab omnibus, cum cachinnatione undulante— Non est inventus."

Toad-in-the-hole, I ought to mention, about nine years before, when an express from Edinburgh brought him the earliest intelligence of the Burke-and-Hare revolution in the art, went mad upon the spot; and, instead of a pension to the express for even one life, or a knighthood, endeavored to burke him; in consequence of which he was put into a strait waistcoat. And that was the reason we had no dinner then. But now all of us were alive and kicking, strait-waistcoaters and others; in fact, not one absentee was reported upon the entire roll. There were also many foreign amateurs present.

Dinner being over, and the cloth drawn, there was a general call made for the new glee of Non est inventus; but, as this would have interfered with the requisite gravity of the company during the earlier toasts, I overruled the call. After the national toasts had been given, the first official toast of the day was, The Old Man of the Mountains—drunk in solemn silence.

Toad-in-the-hole returned thanks in a neat speech. He likened himself to the Old Man of the Mountains, in a few brief allusions, that made the company absolutely yell with laughter; and he concluded with giving the health of

Mr. Von Hammer, with many thanks to him for his learned History of the Old Man and his subjects the assassins.

Upon this I rose and said, that doubtless most of the company were aware of the distinguished place assigned by orientalists to the very learned Turkish scholar Von Hammer the Austrian; that he had made the profoundest researches into our art as connected with those early and eminent artists the Syrian assassins in the period of the Crusaders; that his work had been for several years deposited, as a rare treasure of art, in the library of the club.

Even the author's name, gentlemen, pointed him out as the historian of our art —Von Hammer—

"Yes, yes," interrupted Toad-in-the-hole, who never can sit still—"Yes, yes, Von Hammer—he's the man for a malleus hæreticorum: think rightly of our art, or he's the man to tickle your catastrophes. You all know what consideration Williams bestowed on the hammer, or the ship carpenter's mallet, which is the same thing. Gentlemen, I give you another great hammer—Charles the Hammer, the Marteau, or, in old French, the Martel—he hammered the Saracens till they were all as dead as door-nails—he did, believe me."

"Charles Martel, with all the honors."

But the explosion of Toad-in-the-hole, together with the uproarious cheers for the grandpapa of Charlemagne, had now made the company unmanageable. The orchestra was again challenged with shouts the stormiest for the new glee. I made again a powerful effort to overrule the challenge. I might as well have talked to the winds. I foresaw a tempestuous evening; and I ordered myself to be strengthened with three waiters on each side; the vice-president with as many. Symptoms of unruly enthusiasm were beginning to show out; and I own that I myself was considerably excited as the orchestra opened with its storm of music, and the impassioned glee began—"Et interrogatum est à Toad-in-the-hole—Ubi est ille Reporter?" And the frenzy of the passion became absolutely convulsing, as the full chorus fell in—"Et iteratum est ab omnibus—Non est inventus"

By this time I saw how things were going: wine and music were making most of the amateurs wild. Particularly Toad-in-the-hole, though considerably above a hundred years old, was getting as vicious as a young leopard. It was a fixed impression with the company that he had murdered the reporter in the year 1812; since which time (viz. twenty-six years) "ille reporter" had been constantly reported "Non est inventus." Consequently, the glee about himself, which of itself was most tumultuous and jubilant, carried him off his feet. Like the famous choral songs amongst the citizens of Abdera, nobody could hear it without a contagious desire for falling back into the agitating music of "Et interrogatum est à Toad-in-the-hole," &c. I enjoined vigilance upon my assessors, and the business of the evening proceeded.

The next toast was—The Jewish Sicarii.

Upon which I made the following explanation to the company: —"Gentlemen, I am sure it will interest you all to hear that the assassins, ancient as they were, had a race of predecessors in the very same country. All over Syria, but particularly in Palestine, during the early years of the Emperor Nero, there was a band of murderers, who prosecuted their studies in a very

novel manner. They did not practise in the night-time, or in lonely places; but justly considering that great crowds are in themselves a sort of darkness by means of the dense pressure and the impossibility of finding out who it was that gave the blow, they mingled with mobs everywhere; particularly at the great paschal feast in Jerusalem; where they actually had the audacity, as Josephus assures us, to press into the temple,—and whom should they choose for operating upon but Jonathan himself, the Pontifex Maximus? They murdered him, gentlemen, as beautifully as if they had had him alone on a moonless night in a dark lane. And when it was asked, who was the murderer, and where he was"—

"Why, then, it was answered," interrupted Toad-in-the-hole, "Non est inventus." And then, in spite of all I could do or say, the orchestra opened, and the whole company began—"Et interrogatum est à Toad-in-the-hole—Ubi est ille Sicarius? Et responsum est ab omnibus—Non est inventus."

When the tempestuous chorus had subsided, I began again:—"Gentlemen, you will find a very circumstantial account of the Sicarii in at least three different parts of Josephus; once in Book XX. sect. v. c. 8, of his Antiquities; once in Book I. of his Wars: but in sect. 10 of the chapter first cited you will find a particular description of their tooling. This is what he says—"They tooled with small scymetars not much different from the Persian acinacæ, but more curved, and for all the world most like the Roman sickles or sicæ." It is perfectly magnificent, gentlemen, to hear the sequel of their history. Perhaps the only case on record where a regular army of murderers was assembled, a justus exercitus, was in the case of these Sicarii. They mustered in such strength in the wilderness, that Festus himself was obliged to march against them with the Roman legionary force."

Upon which Toad-in-the-hole, that cursed interrupter, broke out a-singing —"Et interrogatum est à Toad-in-the-hole—Ubi est ille exercitus? Et responsum est ab omnibus—Non est inventus."

"No, no, Toad—you are wrong for once: that army was found, and was all cut to pieces in the desert. Heavens, gentlemen, what a sublime picture! The Roman legions—the wilderness—Jerusalem in the distance—an army of murderers in the foreground!"

Mr. R., a member, now gave the next toast—"To the further improvement of

Tooling, and thanks to the Committee for their services."

Mr. L., on behalf of the committee who had reported on that subject, returned thanks. He made an interesting extract from the report, by which it appeared how very much stress had been laid formerly on the mode of tooling,

by the fathers, both Greek and Latin. In confirmation of this pleasing fact, he made a very striking statement in reference to the earliest work of antediluvian art. Father Mersenne, that learned Roman Catholic, in page one thousand four hundred and thirty-one of his operose Commentary on Genesis, mentions, on the authority of several rabbis, that the quarrel of Cain with Abel was about a young woman; that, by various accounts, Cain had tooled with his teeth, [Abelem fuisse morsibus dilaceratum à Cain;] by many others, with the jawbone of an ass; which is the tooling adopted by most painters. But it is pleasing to the mind of sensibility to know that, as science expanded, sounder views were adopted. One author contends for a pitchfork, St. Chrysostom for a sword, Irenæus for a scythe, and Prudentius for a hedging-bill. This last writer delivers his opinion thus:—

"Frater, probatæ sanctitatis æmulus,

Germana curvo colla frangit sarculo:"

i.e. his brother, jealous of his attested sanctity, fractures his brotherly throat with a curved hedging-bill. "All which is respectfully submitted by your committee, not so much as decisive of the question, (for it is not,) but in order to impress upon the youthful mind the importance which has ever been attached to the quality of the tooling by such men as Chrysostom and Irenæus."

"Dang Irenæus!" said Toad-in-the-hole, who now rose impatiently to give the next toast:—"Our Irish friends; and a speedy revolution in their mode of tooling, as well as everything else connected with the art!"

"Gentlemen, I'll tell you the plain truth. Every day of the year we take up a paper, we read the opening of a murder. We say, this is good, this is charming, this is excellent! But, behold you! scarcely have we read a little farther, before the word Tipperary or Ballina-something betrays the Irish manufacture. Instantly we loath it; we call to the waiter; we say, Waiter, take away this paper; send it out of the house; it is absolutely offensive to all just taste.' I appeal to every man whether, on finding a murder (otherwise perhaps promising enough) to be Irish, he does not feel himself as much insulted as when Madeira being ordered, he finds it to be Cape; or when, taking up what he takes to be a mushroom, it turns out what children call a toad-stool. Tithes, politics, or something wrong in principle, vitiate every Irish murder. Gentlemen, this must be reformed, or Ireland will not be a land to live in; at least, if we do live there, we must import all our murders, that's clear." Toad-in-the-hole sat down growling with suppressed wrath, and the universal "Hear, hear!" sufficiently showed that he spoke the general feeling.

The next toast was—"The sublime epoch of Burkism and Harism!"

This was drunk with enthusiasm; and one of the members, who spoke to the question, made a very curious communication to the company: —"Gentlemen, we fancy Burkism to be a pure invention of our own times: and in fact no Pancirollus has ever enumerated this branch of art when writing de rebus deperditis. Still I have ascertained that the essential principle of the art was known to the ancients, although like the art of painting upon glass, of making the myrrhine cups, &c., it was lost in the dark ages for want of encouragement. In the famous collection of Greek epigrams made by Planudes is one upon a very charming little case of Burkism: it is a perfect little gem of art. The epigram itself I cannot lay my hand upon at this moment, but the following is an abstract of it by Salmasius, as I find it in his notes on Vopiscus: 'Est et elegans epigramma Lucilii, (well he might call it "elegans!") ubi medicus et pollinctor de compacto sic egerunt, ut medicus ægros omnes curæ suæ commissos occideret:' this was the basis of the contract, you see, that on the one part the doctor, for himself and his assigns, doth undertake and contract duly and truly to murder all the patients committed to his charge: but why? There lies the beauty of the case—'Et ut pollinctori amico suo traderet pollingendos.' The pollinctor, you are aware, was a person whose business it was to dress and prepare dead bodies for burial. The original ground of the transaction appears to have been sentimental: 'He was my friend,' says the murderous doctor; 'he was dear to me,' in speaking of the pollinctor. But the law, gentlemen, is stern and harsh: the law will not hear of these tender motives: to sustain a contract of this nature in law, it is essential that a 'consideration' should be given. Now what was the consideration? For thus far all is on the side of the pollinctor: he will be well paid for his services; but, meantime, the generous, the noble-minded doctor gets nothing. What was the little consideration again, I ask, which the law would insist on the doctor's taking? You shall hear: 'Et ut pollinctor vicissim [Greek: telamonas] quos furabatur de pollinctione mortuorum medico mitteret doni ad alliganda vulnera eorurn quos curabat.' Now, the case is clear: the whole went on a principle of reciprocity which would have kept up the trade for ever. The doctor was also a surgeon: he could not murder all his patients: some of the surgical patients must be retained intact; re infectâ. For these he wanted linen bandages. But, unhappily, the Romans wore woollen, on which account they bathed so often. Meantime, there was linen to be had in Rome; but it was monstrously dear; and the [Greek: telamones] or linen swathing bandages, in which superstition obliged them to bind up corpses, would answer capitally for the surgeon. The doctor, therefore, contracts to furnish his friend with a constant succession of corpses, provided, and be it understood always, that his said friend in return should supply him with one half of the articles he would receive from the friends of the parties murdered or to be murdered. The doctor invariably recommended his invaluable friend the pollinctor, (whom let us call the undertaker;) the undertaker, with equal regard to the sacred rights of friendship, uniformly recommended the doctor. Like Pylades and Orestes, they were models of a perfect friendship: in their lives they were lovely, and on the gallows, it is to be hoped, they were not divided.

"Gentlemen, it makes me laugh horribly, when I think of those two friends drawing and redrawing on each other: 'Pollinctor in account with Doctor, debtor by sixteen corpses; creditor by forty-five bandages, two of which damaged.' Their names unfortunately are lost; but I conceive they must have been Quintus Burkius and Publius Harius. By the way, gentlemen, has anybody heard lately of Hare? I understand he is comfortably settled in Ireland, considerably to the west, and does a little business now and then; but, as he observes with a sigh, only as a retailer—nothing like the fine thriving wholesale concern so carelessly blown up at Edinburgh. 'You see what comes of neglecting business,'—is the chief moral, the [Greek: epimutheon], as Æsop would say, which he draws from his past experience."

At length came the toast of the day—Thugdom in all its branches.

The speeches attempted at this crisis of the dinner were past all counting. But the applause was so furious, the music so stormy, and the crashing of glasses so incessant, from the general resolution never again to drink an inferior toast from the same glass, that my power is not equal to the task of reporting. Besides which, Toad-in-the-hole now became quite ungovernable. He kept firing pistols in every direction; sent his servant for a blunderbuss, and talked of loading with ball-cartridge. We conceived that his former madness had returned at the mention of Burke and Hare; or that, being again weary of life, he had resolved to go off in a general massacre. This we could not think of allowing: it became indispensable, therefore, to kick him out, which we did with universal consent, the whole company lending their toes uno pede, as I may say, though pitying his gray hairs and his angelic smile. During the operation the orchestra poured in their old chorus. The universal company sang, and (what surprised us most of all) Toad-in-the-hole joined us furiously in singing—

"Et interrogatum est ab omnibus—Ubi est ille Toad-in-the-hole Et responsum est ab omnibus—Non est inventus."

