

CHEAP TRACTS, No XV.

TEA, A POEM;

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
DUTCH TEA PARTIES;
ICHABOD CRANE;
SUPERSTITION,

&

THE FRENCHMEN.



NEWTON-STEWART:

Published and Sold Wholesale and Retail
by J. M'NAIRN.

TEA,
A P O E M.

*Earnestly recommended to the attention of
all maidens of certain age.*

Old time, my dear girls, is a knave who in
truth
From the fairest of beauties will pelfer
their youth;
Who by constant attention and wily deceit,
For ever is coaxing some grace to retreat;
And, like crafty seducer, with subtle ap-
proach,

The further indulged, will still further en-
croach.

Since this "thief of the world" has made
off with your bloom;

And left you some seore of stale years in
its room—

Has deprived you of all those gay dreams,
that would dance

In your brains at fifteen, and your bosoms
entranee;

And has forced you almost to renounce in
despair

The hope of a husband's affection and care:
Since such is the case, and a ease rather
hard!

Permit one who holds you in special regard
To furnish such hints in your loveless estate
As may shelter your names from detraction
and hate.

Too often our maidens, grown aged I ween,
Indulge to excess in the workings of spleen;
And at times when annoy'd by the slights
of mankind,

Work off their resentment—by speaking
their mind:

Assemble together in snuff-taking clan,
And hold round the tea-urn a solemn divan
A convention of tattling—a tea party hight,

Which, like meeting of witches, is brew'd
up at night ;

Where each matron arrives, fraught with
tales of surprise,
with knowing suspicion and doubtful sur-
mise ;

Like the broomstick whirl'd hags that ap-
pear in Macbeth,

Each bearing some relic of venom or
death,

“To stir up the toil and to double the
trouble,

That fire may burn, and that caldron may
bubble.”

When the party commences, all starch'd
and all glum,

They talk of the weather, their corns, or
sit hum :

They will tell you of cambric, of ribands,
of lace,

How cheap they were sold—and will name
you the place.

They discourse of their colds, and they
cough, and they cough

And complain of their servants to pass the
time off ;

Or list to the tale of some doting mamma
How her ten weeks' old baby will laugh

and say taa !

But tea, that enlivener of wit and of soul—
 More loquacious by far than the draughts
 of the bowl,
 Soon unloosens the tongue and enlivens
 the mind,
 And enlightens their eyes to the faults of
 mankind.

'Twas thus with the Pythia, who served
 at the fount
 That flow'd near the far-famed Parnassion
 mount,
 While the steam was inhaled of the sul-
 phuric spring
 Her vision expanded, her fancy took wing ;
 By its aid she pronounced the oracular will
 That Apollo commanded his sons to fulfil.
 But alas! the sad vestal, performing the rite,
 Appeared like a demon—terrific to sight.
 E'en the priests of Apollo averted their eyes,
 And the temple of Delphi reounded her
 cries.
 But quitting the nymph of the tripod of
 yore,
 We return to the dames of the tea-pot
 once more.

In harmless chit-chat an acquaintance

they roast,
 And serve up a friend, a they serve up
 a toast,
 Some gentle faux pas, or some female
 mistake,
 Is like sweetmeat delicious, or relished as
 cake;
 A bit of broad scandle is like a dry crust
 It would stick in the throat, so the butte
 it first
 With a little affected good nature, and cry
 "No body regrets the thing deeper than I."
 Our youngladies nibble a good name in play
 As for pastime they nibble a biscuit away
 While with shrugs and surmises the tooth
 less old dame,
 As she mumbles a crust she will mumble
 a name.
 And as the fell sisters astonished the Scot
 In predicting of banquo's descendants the
 lot,
 Making shadows of kings, amid flashes of
 light
 To appear in array and to frown in his
 sight,
 So they conjure up spectres all hideous in
 hue
 Which as shades of their neighbours, are
 pass'd in review.

The wives of our cits of inferior degree
 Will soak up repute in a little bohea ;
 The potion is vulgar, and vulgar the slang
 With which on their neighbour's deffects
 they harrangue ;

But the scandal improves, a refinement in
 wrong !

As our matrons are richer, and rise to
 souchong.

With hyson a beverage that's still more
 refined,

Our ladies of fashon enliven their mind,
 And by nods, innuendoes, and hints, and
 what not,

Reputations and tea send together to pot.
 While madam in laces and cambrics array'd
 With her plate and her livories in splended
 parade,

Will drink in imperial a friend at a sup,
 Or in gunpowder blow them in dozens
 all up.

Ah me ! how I groan when with full swell-
 ing sail

Wafted stately along by the favouring gale,
 A china ship proudly arrives in our bay,
 Displaying her streamers and blazing away.

Oh ! more fell to our port is the cargo she
 bears

Than grenadoes, torpedoes, or warlike
affairs.

Each chest is a boomshell thrown into our
town,

To shatter repute and bring character
down.

Ye Samquas, ye Chinquas, ye Chonquas,
so free,

Who discharge on our coasts your cursed
quantums of tea,

Oh! think as ye waft the sad weed from
your strand,

Of the plagues and vexations ye deal to
our land.

As the Upas' dread breath, o'er the plain
where it flies,

Empoisons and blasts each green blade
that may rise,

So wherever the leaves of your shrub find
their way,

The social affectations soon suffer decay:

Like Java's drear waste they embarran
the heart,

Till the blossoms of love and of friendsip
depart.

Ah, ladies, and was it by heaven design'd
That ye should be merciful, loving and kind

Did it form you like angels and send you
below

To propinecy peace—and bid charity flow!
And have you thus left your primeval state,
And wandred so widely—so strangely of
late?

Alas! the sad cause I too plainly can see—
These evils have all come upon you by tea!
Cursed weed, that can make our fair
spirits resign

The character mild of their mission
divine;

That can blot from their bosoms that
tenderness true,

Which from female to female for ever is
due!

O! how nice is the texture—how fragile
the frame

Of that delicate blossom, a female's fair
fame!

'Tis the sensitive plant, it recoils from the
breath;

And shrinks from the touch as if pregnant
with death.

How often, how often, has innocence sigh'd
Has beauty been reft of its honour—its
pride.

Has virtue, though pure as an angel
light,

Been painted as dark as a dem on o'night,
 All offered up victims, an *auto da fe*,
 At the gloomy cabals—the dark orgies of
 tea!

If I, in the remnant that's left me of
 life,
 Am to suffer the torment of slanderous
 strife,
 Let me fall I implore in the slang-whanger's
 claw,
 Where the evil is open and subject to law;
 Not nibbled, and mumbled, and put the
 rack,
 By the sly underminings of tea-party clack :
 Gonna me, ye gods to a newspaper
 roasting,
 But spare me! O spare me, a tea-table
 toasting!



DUTCH TEA PARTIES.

THESE fashionable parties were generally consigned to the higher classes, or noblesse, that is to say, such as kept their own cows, and drove their own waggons. The company commonly assembled at three o'clock, and went away about six, unless it was in

winter time, when the fashionable hours were a little earlier, that the ladies might get home before dark. I do not find that they ever treated their company to iced creams, jellies, or syllabubs; or regaled them with musty almonds, mouldy raisins, or sour oranges, as is often done in the present age of refinement. Our ancestors were fond of more sturdy, substantial fare. The tea table was crowned with a huge earthen dish, well stored with slices of fat pork, fried brown, cut up in morsels, and swimming in gravy. The company being seated around the genial board, and each furnished with a fork, evinced their dexterity in launching at the fattest pieces in this mighty dish, in much the same manner as sailors harpoon porpoises at sea, or our Indians spear salmon in the lakes. Sometimes the table was graced with immense apple pies, or saucers full of preserved peaches and pears; but it was always sure to boast an enormous dish of balls of sweetened dough, fried in hog's fat, and called dough nuts, or oly koeks: a delicious kind of cake, at present scarce known in this city, excepting in genuine Dutch families.

The tea was served out of a majestic

delft tea-pot, ornamented with paintings of fat little Dutch shepherds and shepherdesses tending pigs—with boats sailing in the air, and houses built in the clouds, and sundry other ingenious Dutch fantasies. The beaux distinguished themselves by their adroitness in replenishing this pot, from a huge copper tea-kettle, which would have made the pigmy macaronies of these degenerate days sweat, merely to look at it. To sweeten the beverage, a lump of sugar was laid beside each cup—and the company, alternately nibbled and sipped with the greatest decorum, until an improvement was introduced by a shrewd and economic old lady, which was, to suspend a large lump directly over the tea table, by a string from the ceiling, so that it could be swung from mouth to mouth,—an ingenious expedient, which is still kept up by some families in Albany; but which prevails without exception in Communipaw, Bergen, Flat-Bush, and all our uncontaminated Dutch villages.

At these primitive tea parties the utmost propriety and dignity of deportment prevailed. No flirting nor coquetting—no gamboling of old ladies, nor hoyden chattering and romping of young ones—no

self-satisfied struttings of wealthy gentlemen, with their brains in their pockets; nor amusing conceits, and monkey divertisements of smart young gentlemen with no brains at all. On the contrary, the young ladies seated themselves demurely in their rush bottomed chairs, and knit their own woollen stockings; nor ever opened their lips, excepting to say *yah Mynheer* or *yah ya Vrouw*, to any question that was asked them; behaving in all things, like decent well educated damsels. As to the gentlemen, each of them tranquilly smoked his pipe, and seemed lost in contemplation of the blue and white tiles, with which the fire places were decorated; wherein sundry passages of Scripture were piously portrayed: Tobet and his dog figured to great advantage; Haman swung conspicuously on his gibbet; and Jonah appeared most manfully bouncing out of the whale, like Harlequin through a barrel of fire.

The parties broke up without noise and without confusion. They were carried home by their own carriages, that is to say, by the vehicles nature had provided them, except such of the wealthy as could afford to keep a waggon. The gentlemen gallantly attended their fair ones to their res-

pective abodes, and took leave of them with a hearty smack at the door: which, as it was an established piece of etiquette, done in perfect simplicity and honesty of heart, occasioned no scandal at that time, nor should it at the present—if our great grandfathers approved of the custom, it would argue a great want of reverence in their descendants to say a word against it.

ICHABOD CRANE.

In this by place of nature there abode, in a remote period of American history, that is to say, some thirty years since, a worthy wight of the name of Ichabod Crane; who sojourned, or, as he expressed it, “tarried,” in Sleepy Hollow for the purpose of instructing the children of the vicinity. He wa a native of Connecticut: a state which suplies the Union with pioneers for the mind as well as for the forest, and sends forth yearly its legons of frontier woodmen and country schoolmasters. The cognomen of of Crane was not inapplicable to his person. He was tall but

exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weathercock, perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield.

His school-room was a low building of one large room, rudely constructed of logs; the windows partly glazed, and partly patched with leaves of old copy books. It was most ingeniously secured at vacant hours, by a withe twisted in the handle of the door, and stakes set against the window shutters; so that though a thief might get in with perfect ease, he would find some embarrassment in getting out; an idea most probably borrowed by the architect, Yost Van Houten, from the mystery of an cel-pot. The school-

house stood in a rather lonely but pleasant situation, just at the foot of a woody hill with brook running close by, and a formidable birch tree growing at one end of it. From hence the low murmur of his pupil's voices, conning over their lessons, might be heard in a drowsy summer's day, like the hum of a bee-hive; interrupted now and then by the authoritative voice of the master, in the the tone of menace or command; or, peradventure, by the appalling sound of the birch, as he urged some tardy loiterer along the flowery path of knowledge. Truth to say, he was a conscientious man, that ever bore in mind the golden maxim, "Spare the rod and the child."—Ichabod Crane's scholars certainly were not spoiled.

I would not have it imagined, however that he was one of these cruel potentates of the school, who joy in the smart of their subjects; on the contrary he administered justice with discrimination rather than severity; taking the burthen offbacks of the weak and laying it on those of the strong. Your mere puny stripling, that wined at the least flourish of the rod, was passed by with indulgence; but the claims of justice were satisfied, by inflicting a double portion.

on some little, tough, wrong-headed broad-skirted, Dutch urchin, who skulked, and swelled, and grew dogged, and sullen, beneath the birch. All this he called "doing his duty by their parents;" and he never inflicted a chastisement, without following it by the assurance, so consolatory to the smarting urchin, that "he would remember it and thank him for it the longest day he had to live."

When school hours were over he was even the companion and playmate of the larger boys; and on holiday afternoons would convoy some of the smaller ones home, who happened so have pretty sisters, or good housewives for mothers, noted for the comforts of the cupboard. Indeed it behoved him to keep on good terms with his pupils. The revenue arising from his school was small, and would have been scarcely sufficient to furnish him with daily bread, for he was a huge feeder, and though lank had the dilating powers of an Anaconda; but to help out his maintenance, he was, according to the country custom in those parts, boarded and lodged at the houses of the farmers, whose children he instructed. with these he lived successively a week at a time; thus going the rounds

of the neighbourhood, with all his worldly effects tied up in a cotton handkerchief.

That all this might not be too onerous on the purses of his rustic patrons, who are apt to consider the costs of schooling a greivous burden, and schoolmasters as mere drones, he had various ways of rendering himself both usefule and agreeable. He assisted the farmers occasionally in the lighter labours of their farms; helped to make hay; mended the fences; took the horses to water; drove the cows from pasture; and cut wood for the winter fire. He laid asside too all the dominant dignity and absolute sway with which he lorded it in his little empire, the school, and became wonderful gentile and ingratiating. He found favour in the eyes of the mothers, by petting the children, particularly the youngest; and like the lion bold, which whilom so magnimously the lamb did hold, he would sit with a child on one knee, and rock a cradle for whole hours together.

In addition to his other vocations, he was the siniging master of the neighbourhood, and picked up many bright shillings by instrusting the young folks in psalmody. It was a matter of no little vanity to him on Sundays, to take his station in front of

the church gallary, with a band of chosen singers; where, in his own mind, he completely carried away the palm from the parson. Certain it is, his voice resounded far above all the rest of the congregation; and there are peculiar quivers still to be heard in that church, and may still be heard half a mile off, quite to the opposite side of the mill-pond, on a still Sunday morning, which are said to be legitimately descended from the nose of Jobzod Crane. Thus by divers little makeshifts, in that ingenious way which is commonly denominated "by hook and by crook," the worthy pedagogue, got on tolerably enough, and was thought by all who understood nothing of the labour of head-work, to have a wonderful easy life of it.

Superstition.

But all these were nothing to the tales of ghosts and apparitions that succeeded. The neighbourhood is rich in legendary treasures of the kind. Local tales and superstitions thrive best in these sheltered long settled retreats; but are trampled under foot by the shifting throng that forms the popul-

ation of most of our country places. Besides there is no encouragement for ghosts in most of our villiages, for they have scarcely had time to finish their first nap, and turn themselves in their graves, before their surviving friends have travelled away from the neighbourhood; so that when they turn out at night to walk their rounds, they have no acquaintance left to call upon. This is perhaps the reason why we so seldom hear of ghosts except in our long established Dutch communities.

The immediate cause, however, of the prevalence of supernatural stories in these parts, was doubtless owing to the vicinity of Sleepy Hollow. There was a contagion in the very air that blew from that haunted reigon; it breathed forth an atmosphere of dreams and fancies infecting all the land. Several of the Sleepy Hollow people were present at Van Tassal's, and, as usual, were doling out their wild and wonderful legends. Many dismal tales were told about funeral trains, and mourning cries and wailings heard and seen about the great tree where the unfortunate Major Andre was taken, and which stood in the neighbourhood. Some mention was made also of the woman in white,

that haunted the dark glen at Raven Rock, and was often heard to shriek on winter nights before a storm, having perished there in the snow. The chief part of the stories, however turned upon the favorite spectre of Sleepy Hollow, the headless horseman, who had been heard several times of late, patrolling the country; and, it was said, tethered his horse nightly among the graves in the churchyard.

The sequestered situation of this church seems always to have made it a favourite haunt of troubled spirits. It stands on a knoll, surrounded by locust trees and lofty elms, from among which its decent white-washed walls shine modestly forth, like Christian purity, beaming through the shades of retirement. A gentle slope descends from it to a silver sheet of water, bordered by high trees, between which, peeps may be caught at the blue hills of the Hudson. To look upon its grass-grown yard, where the sunbeams seem to sleep so quietly, one would think that there at least the dead might rest in peace. On one side of the church extends a wide woody dell, along which raves a large brook among broken rocks and trunks of fallen trees. Over a deep black part of

the stream, not far from the church, was, formerly thrown a wooden bridge; the road that laid to it, and the bridge itself, were thickly shaded by overhanging trees which cast a gloom about it, even in the the day-time; but occasioned a fearful darkness at night. Such was one of the favourite haunts of the headless horseman, and the place where he was most frequently encountered. The tale was told of old Brouwer, a most heretical disbeliever in ghosts, how he met the horseman returning from his ferry into Sleepy Hollow, and was obliged to get up behind him; how they galloped over bush and brake, over hill and swamp, until they reached the bridge; when the horseman suddenly turned into a skeleton, threw old Brouwer into the brook, and sprang away over the tree tops with with a clap of thunder.

FRENCHMEN.

In my mind there is no position more positive and unexceptionable than that most Frenchmen, dead or alive, are born dancers. I came pounce upon

this discovery at the assembly, and I immediately noted it down in my register of indisputeable facts—the public shall know all about it. As I never dance cotillions, holding them to be monstrous distorters of the human frame, and tantamount in their operations to being broken and dislocated on the wheel, I generally take occasion, while they are going on, to make my remarks on the company. In the course of these observations I was struck with the energy and eloquence of sundry limbs, which seemed to be flourishing about without appertaining to any body. After much investigation and difficulty, I, at length, traced them to their respective owners, whom I found to be all Frenchmen to a man. Art may have meddled somewhat in these affairs, but nature certainly did more. I have since been considerably employed in calculations on this subject; and by the most accurate computation I have determined, that a Frenchman passes at least three fifths of his time between the heavens and the earth, and partakes eminently of the nature of a gossam or soap bubble. One of these jack-a-lantren heroes, in taking a figure, which neither Euclid nor Pythagoras himself could demonstrate

unfortunately wound himself—I mean his foot—his better part—into a lady's cobweb muslin robe; but preceiving it at the instant, he set himself a spinning the other way, like a top, unravelled his step, without omitting one angle or curve, and extricated himself without breaking one thread of the lady's dress! he then sprung up like a sturgeon, crossed his feet four times, and finished this wonderful evolution by quivering his left leg, as a cat does her paw, when she has accidentally dipped it in water. No man "of woman born," who was not a Frenchman, or a mountebank, could have done the like.

FINIS