

His wife had entered, and silently confronted him. "Your threats, evil man," replied the woman quietly, "have no terrors for me now. My son is beyond your reach. Oh, Mrs. Arbuthnot," she added, turning toward and addressing that lady, "believe not—"

Her husband sprang at her with the bound of a panther. "Silence! Go home, or I'll strangle—" His own utterance was arrested by the fierce grasp of Mr. Arbuthnot, who seized him by the throat, and hurled him to the further end of the room. "Speak on, woman; and quick! quick! What have you to say?"

"That your son, dearest lady," she answered, throwing herself at Mrs. Arbuthnot's feet, "is as truly your own child as ever son born of woman!"

That shout of half-fearful triumph seems even now as I write to ring in my ears! I *felt* that the woman's words were words of truth, but I could not see distinctly: the room whirled round, and the lights danced before my eyes, but I could hear through all the choking ecstasy of the mother, and the fury of the baffled felon.

"The letter," continued Mrs. Danby, "which my husband found and opened, would have informed you, sir, of the swiftly approaching death of my child, and that yours had been carefully kept beyond the reach of contagion. The letter you received was written without my knowledge or consent. True it is that, terrified by my husband's threats, and in some measure reconciled to the wicked imposition by knowing that, after all, the right child would be in his right place, I afterward lent myself to Danby's evil purposes. But I chiefly feared for my son, whom I fully believed he would not have scrupled to make away with in revenge for my exposing his profitable fraud. I have sinned; I can hardly hope to be forgiven, but I have now told the sacred truth."

All this was uttered by the repentant woman, but at the time it was almost wholly unheard by those most interested in the statement. They only comprehended that they were saved—that the child was theirs in very truth. Great, abundant, but for the moment, bewildering joy! Mr. Arbuthnot—his beautiful young wife—her own true boy (how could she for a moment have doubted that he was her own true boy!—you might read that thought through all her tears, thickly as they fell)—the aged and half-stunned rector, while yet Mrs. Danby was speaking, were exclaiming, sobbing in each other's arms, ay, and praising God too, with broken voices and incoherent words it may be, but certainly with fervent, pious, grateful hearts.

When we had time to look about us, it was found that the felon had disappeared—escaped. It was well, perhaps, that he had; better, that he has not been heard of since.

PHILOSOPHY OF LAUGHTER.

FROM the time of King Solomon downward, laughter has been the subject of pretty general abuse. Even the laughers themselves some-

times vituperate the cachinnation they indulge in, and many of them

"Laugh in such a sort,
As if they mocked themselves, and scorned the spirit
That could be moved to laugh at any thing"

The general notion is, that laughter is childish, and unworthy the gravity of adult life. Grown men, we say, have more to do than to laugh; and the wiser sort of them leave such an unseemly contortion of the muscles to babes and blockheads.

We have a suspicion that there is something wrong here—that the world is mistaken not only in its reasonings, but its facts. To assign laughter to an early period of life, is to go contrary to observation and experience. There is not so grave an animal in this world as the human baby. It will weep, when it has got the length of tears, by the pailful; it will clench its fists, distort its face into a hideous expression of anguish, and scream itself into convulsions. It has not yet come up to a laugh. The little savage must be educated by circumstances, and tamed by the contact of civilization, before it rises to the greater functions of its being. Nay, we have sometimes received the idea from its choked and tuneless screams, that *they* were imperfect attempts at laughter. It feels enjoyment as well as pain, but has only one way of expressing both.

Then, look at the baby, when it has turned into a little boy or girl, and come up in some degree to the cachinnation. The laughter is still only rudimental: it is not genuine laughter. It expresses triumph, scorn, passion—any thing but a feeling of natural amusement. It is provoked by misfortune, by bodily infirmities, by the writhings of agonized animals; and it indicates either a sense of power or a selfish feeling of exemption from suffering. The "light-hearted laugh of children!" What a mistake! Observe the gravity of their sports. They are masters or mistresses, with the care of a family upon their hands; and they take especial delight in correcting their children with severity. They are washerwomen, housemaids, cooks, soldiers, policemen, postmen; coach, horsemen, and horses, by turns; and in all these characters they scour, sweep, fry, fight, pursue, carry, whirl, ride, and are ridden, without changing a muscle.

At the games of the young people there is much shouting, argument, vituperation—but no laughter. A game is a serious business with a boy, and he derives from it excitement, but no amusement. If he laughs at all, it is at something quite distinct from the purpose of the sport; for instance, when one of his comrades has his nose broken by the ball, or when the feet of another make off from him on the ice, and he comes down upon his back like a thunder-bolt. On such occasions, the laugh of a boy puts us in mind of the laugh of a hyæna: it is, in fact, the broken, asthmatic roar of a beast of prey.

It would thus appear that the common charge brought against laughter, of being something

babyish, or childish, or boyish—something properly appertaining to early life—is unfounded. But we of course must not be understood to speak of what is technically called giggling, which proceeds more from a looseness of the structures than from any sensation of amusement. Many young persons are continually on the giggle till their muscles strengthen; and indeed, when a company of them are met together, the affection aggravated by emulation, acquires the loudness of laughter, when it may be likened, in Scripture phrase, to the crackling of thorns. What we mean is a regular guffaw; that explosion of high spirits, and the feeling of joyous excitement, which is commonly written ha! ha! ha! This is altogether unknown in babyhood; in boyhood, it exists only in its rudiments; and it does not reach its full development till adolescence ripens into manhood.

This train of thought was suggested to us a few evenings ago, by the conduct of a party of eight or ten individuals, who meet periodically for the purpose of philosophical inquiry. Their subject is a very grave one. Their object is to mould into a science that which as yet is only a vague, formless, and obscure department of knowledge; and they proceed in the most cautious manner from point to point, from axiom to axiom—debating at every step, and coming to no decision without unanimous conviction. Some are professors of the university, devoted to abstruse studies; some are clergymen; and some authors and artists. Now, at the meeting in question—which we take merely as an example, for all are alike—when the hour struck which terminates their proceedings for the evening, the jaded philosophers retired to the refreshment-room; and here a scene of remarkable contrast occurred. Instead of a single deep, low, earnest voice, alternating with a profound silence, an absolute roar of merriment began, with the suddenness of an explosion of gunpowder. Jests, bon-mots, anecdotes, barbarous plays upon words—the more atrocious the betteo—flew round the table; and a joyous and almost continuous ha! ha! ha! made the ceiling ring. This, we venture to say it, *was* laughter—genuine, unmistakable laughter, proceeding from no sense of triumph, from no self-gratulation, and mingled with no bad feeling of any kind. It was a spontaneous effort of nature coming from the head as well as the heart; an unbending of the bow, a reaction from study, which study alone could occasion, and which could occur only in adult life.

There are some people who can not laugh, but these are not necessarily either morose or stupid. They may laugh in their heart, and with their eyes, although by some unlucky fatality, they have not the gift of oral cachinnation. Such persons are to be pitied; for laughter in grown people is a substitute devised by nature for the screams and shouts of boyhood, by which the lungs are strengthened and the health preserved. As the intellect ripens, that shouting ceases, and we learn to laugh as we learn to

reason. The society we have mentioned studied the harder the more they laughed, and they laughed the more the harder they studied. Each, of course, to be of use, must be in its own place. A laugh in the midst of the study would have been a profanation; a grave look in the midst of the merriment would have been an insult to the good sense of the company.

If there are some people who can not laugh, there are others who will not. It is not, however, that they are ashamed of being grown men, and want to go back to babyhood, for by some extraordinary perversity, they fancy unalterable gravity to be the distinguishing characteristic of wisdom. In a merry company, they present the appearance of a Red Indian whitewashed, and look on at the strange ways of their neighbors without betraying even the faintest spark of sympathy or intelligence. These are children of a larger growth, and have not yet acquired sense enough to laugh. Like the savage, they are afraid of compromising their dignity, or, to use their own words, of making fools of themselves. For our part, we never see a man afraid of making a fool of himself at the right season, without setting him down as a fool ready made.

A woman has no natural grace more bewitching than a sweet laugh. It is like the sound of flutes on the water. It leaps from her heart in a clear, sparkling rill; and the heart that hears it feels as if bathed in the cool, exhilarating spring. Have you ever pursued an unseen fugitive through the trees, led on by her fairy laugh; now here, now there—now lost, now found? We have. And we are pursuing that wandering voice to this day. Sometimes it comes to us in the midst of care, or sorrow, or irksome business; and then we turn away, and listen, and hear it ringing through the room like a silver bell, with power to scare away the ill-spirits of the mind. How much we owe to that sweet laugh! It turns the prose of our life into poetry; it flings showers of sunshine over the darksome wood in which we are traveling; it touches with light even our sleep, which is no more the image of death, but gemmed with dreams that are the shadows of immortality.

But our song, like Dibdin's, "means more than it says;" for a man, as we have stated, may laugh, and yet the cachinnation be wanting. His heart laughs, and his eyes are filled with that kindly, sympathetic smile which inspires friendship and confidence. On the sympathy within, these external phenomena depend; and this sympathy it is which keeps societies of men together, and is the true freemasonry of the good and wise. It is an imperfect sympathy that grants only sympathetic tears: we must join in the mirth as well as melancholy of our neighbors. If our countrymen laughed more, they would not only be happier, but better, and if philanthropists would provide amusements for the people, they would be saved the trouble and expense of their fruitless war against public-houses. This is an indisputable proposition. The French and Italians, with wine growing at

their doors, and spirits almost as cheap as beer in England, are sober nations. How comes this? The laugh will answer that leaps up from group after group—the dance on the village-green—the family dinner under the trees—the thousand merry-meetings that invigorate industry, by serving as a relief to the business of life. Without these, business is care; and it is from care, not from amusement, men fly to the bottle.

The common mistake is to associate the idea of amusement with error of every kind; and this piece of moral asceticism is given forth as true wisdom, and, from sheer want of examination, is very generally received as such. A place of amusement concentrates a crowd, and whatever excesses may be committed, being confined to a small space, stand more prominently forward than at other times. This is all. The excesses are really fewer—far fewer—in proportion to the number assembled, than if no gathering had taken place. How can it be otherwise? The

amusement is itself the excitement which the wearied heart longs for; it is the reaction which nature seeks; and in the comparatively few instances of a grosser intoxication being super-added, we see only the craving of depraved habit—a habit engendered, in all probability, by the want of amusement.

No, good friends, let us laugh sometimes, if you love us. A dangerous character is of another kidney, as Cæsar knew to his cost:

“He loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;
Seldom he laughs;”

and when he does, it is on the wrong side of his mouth.

Let us be wiser. Let us laugh in fitting time and place, silently or aloud, each after his nature. Let us enjoy an innocent reaction rather than a guilty one, since reaction there must be. The bow that is always bent loses its elasticity, and becomes useless.

Monthly Record of Current Events.

THE UNITED STATES.

THE past month has been one of unusual activity. The proceedings of Congress have not been without importance:—political Conventions have been held, shaping to a certain extent public movements for the coming season: and numerous religious and benevolent associations, as well as ecclesiastical assemblies for business purposes, have held their annual meetings.

In the United States Senate, the debate upon an amendment to the Deficiency Bill, by which it was proposed to grant a large increase of pay annually to the Collins line of Atlantic steamers, continued for several days. On the 30th of May, Senator Rusk spoke in favor of it, and on the 6th, Senator James made an argument upon the same side. Senator Jones, of Tennessee, opposed so large a grant as that suggested, though he declared himself desirous of sustaining the line. He moved to strike out \$33,000, and insert \$25,000, as the increase each trip. On the 7th, Mr. Cass spoke at length in favor of the appropriation. The amendment of Mr. Jones was then rejected, by a vote of 20 to 28. Senator Brooke moved an amendment, granting the whole amount of postages received in place of all other compensation: this was rejected by 9 to 38. Mr. Rusk moved that Congress shall have the power at any time after December, 1854, to discontinue the extra allowance, on giving six months' notice. This was agreed to. Mr. Mallory moved, that the contract be transferred from the Naval to the Post Office Department: this was lost, 18 to 19. On the 13th, Senator Borland spoke in opposition to the increased grant. On the 19th, the amendment, giving the line \$33,000 additional pay for each trip, was agreed to, by a vote of 23 ayes to 21 noes: and on the 21st, upon a motion to agree to this amendment, as reported by the Committee of the whole, it was decided in the affirmative by an increased vote.

In the House of Representatives the only action taken, worthy of special record, was the passage, on the 12th, of the Bill granting to each head of a fam-

ily, who may be a native citizen of the United States or naturalized previous to January, 1852, the right to enter upon and cultivate one quarter-section of the Public Lands, and directing the issue to him of a patent for such land after five years of actual residence and cultivation. The Bill was passed by a vote of 107 to 56.—The other debates of the House have turned so exclusively upon unimportant topics, or upon temporary matters relating to the approaching Presidential election, as to render further reference to them here unnecessary.

In reply to the call of the Senate, the closing correspondence of Chevalier Hulsemann, Austrian Chargé, with the State Department, has been published. Under date of April 29, Mr. H. writes to the Secretary, stating that the time had arrived for carrying into effect the intentions of his government in regard to his official connection with that of the United States. He complains that the Secretary had not answered his communication of December 13, in regard to the public reception given to Kossuth, and that, in spite of verbal encouragements given him to expect different treatment, his movements had been derisively commented on by the public journals. He had deemed it his duty on the 21st of November, to complain of these annoyances, and on the 28th the Secretary had thereupon notified him that no further communication would be held with him except in writing. On the 7th of January, the Secretary of State had seen fit to make a speech encouraging revolution in Hungary. This demonstration he considered so strange that he immediately inquired of the President whether it was to be considered an expression of the sentiments of the government of the United States. The Austrian government had expressed itself satisfied with the assurances given in return by the President on the 12th of April, and had instructed him no longer to continue official relations with the “principal promoter of the Kossuth episode.” He closed his letter by stating that Mr. A. Belmont, Consul-general of Austria at New York, would continue in the exercise of his