

DUST;
OR UGLINESS REDEEMED.

ON a murky morning in November, wind north-east, a poor old woman with a wooden leg was seen struggling against the fitful gusts of the bitter breeze, along a stony zigzag road full of deep and irregular cart-ruts. Her ragged petticoat was blue, and so was her wretched nose. A stick was in her left hand, which assisted her to dig and hobble her way along; and in her other hand, supported also beneath her withered arm, was a large rusty iron sieve. Dust and fine ashes filled up all the wrinkles in her face; and of these there were a prodigious number, for she was eighty-three years old. Her name was Peg Dotting.

About a quarter of a mile distant, having a long ditch and a broken-down fence as a foreground, there rose against the muddled-grey sky, a huge Dust-heap of a dirty black colour, being, in fact, one of those immense mounds of cinders, ashes, and other emptyings from dust-holes and bins, which have conferred celebrity on certain suburban neighbourhoods of a great city. Towards this dusky mountain old Peg Dotting was now making her way.

Advancing towards the Dust-heap by an opposite path, very narrow and just reclaimed from the mud by a thick layer of freshly broken flints, there came at the same time Gaffer Doubleyear, with his bone-bag slung over his shoulder. The rags of his coat fluttered in the east-wind, which also whistled keenly round his almost rimless hat, and troubled his one eye. The other eye, having met with an accident, last week, he had covered neatly with an oyster-shell, which was kept in its place by a string at each side, fastened through a hole. He used no staff to help him along, though his body was nearly bent double, so that his face was constantly turned to the earth, like that of a four-footed creature. He was ninety-seven years of age.

As these two patriarchal labourers approached

the great Dust-heap, a discordant voice hallooed to them from the top of a broken wall. It was meant as a greeting of the morning, and proceeded from little Jem Clinker, a poor deformed lad whose back had been broken when a child. His nose and chin were much too large for the rest of his face, and he had lost nearly all his teeth from premature decay. But he had an eye gleaming with intelligence and life, and an expression at once patient and hopeful. He had balanced his misshapen frame on the top of the old wall, over which one shrivelled leg dangled, as if by the weight of a hob-nailed boot that covered a foot large enough for a ploughman.

In addition to his first morning's salutation of his two aged friends, he now shouted out in a tone of triumph and self-gratulation, in which he felt assured of their sympathy; "Two white skins, and a tor'shell-un."

It may be requisite to state that little Jem Clinker belonged to the dead-cat department of the Dust-heap, and now announced that a prize of three skins, in superior condition, had rewarded him for being first in the field. He was enjoying a seat on the wall in order to recover himself from the excitement of his good fortune.

At the base of the great Dust-heap the two old people now met their young friend—a sort of great-grandson by mutual adoption—and they at once joined the party who had by this time assembled as usual, and were already busy at their several occupations.

But besides all these, another individual, belonging to a very different class, formed a part of the scene, though appearing only on its outskirts. A canal ran along at the rear of the Dust-heap, and on the banks of its opposite side slowly wandered by, with hands clasped and hanging down in front of him, and eyes bent vacantly upon his hands; the forlorn figure of a man in a very shabby great-coat, which had evidently once belonged to one in the posi-



tion of a gentleman. And to a gentleman it still belonged; but in *what* a position? A scholar, a man of wit, of high sentiment, of refinement, and a good fortune withal; now by a sudden "turn of law" bereft of the last only, and finding that none of the rest, for which (having his fortune) he had been so much

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admired, enabled him to gain a livelihood. His title-deeds had been lost or stolen, and so he was bereft of everything he possessed. He had talents, and such as would have been profitably available had he known how to use them for this new purpose; but he did not; he was misdirected; he made fruitless efforts, in his want of experience; and he was now starving. As he passed the great Dust-heap, he gave one vague, melancholy gaze that way, and then looked wistfully into the canal. And he continued to look into the canal as he slowly moved along, till he was out of sight.

A Dust-heap of this kind is often worth thousands of pounds. The present one was very large and very valuable. It was in fact a large hill, and being in the vicinity of small suburb cottages, it rose above them like a great black mountain. Thistles, groundsel, and rank grass grew in knots on small parts which had remained for a long time undisturbed; crows often alighted on its top, and seemed to put on their spectacles and become very busy and serious; flocks of sparrows often made predatory descents upon it; an old goose and gander might sometimes be seen following each other up its side, nearly mid-way; pigs routed round its base; and, now and then, one bolder than the rest would venture some way up, attracted by the mixed odours of some hidden marrow-bone enveloped in a decayed cabbage-leaf—a rare event, both of these articles being unusual oversights of the Searchers below.

The principal ingredient of all these Dust-heaps is fine cinders and ashes; but as they are accumulated from the contents of all the dust-holes and bins of the vicinity, and as many more as possible, the fresh arrivals in their original state present very heterogeneous materials. We cannot better describe them, than by presenting a brief sketch of the different departments of the Searchers and Sorters, who are assembled below to busy themselves upon the mass of original matters which are shot out from the carts of the dustmen.

The bits of coal, the pretty numerous results of accident and servants' carelessness, are picked out, to be sold forthwith; the largest and best of the cinders are also selected, by another party, who sell them to laundresses, or to braziers (for whose purposes coke would not do so well); and the next sort of cinders, called the *breeze*, because it is left after the wind has blown the finer cinders through an upright sieve, is sold to the brick-makers.

Two other departments, called the "soft-ware" and the "hard-ware," are very important. The former includes all vegetable and animal matters; everything that will decompose. These are selected and bagged at once, and carried off as soon as possible, to be sold as manure for ploughed land, wheat, barley, &c. Under this head, also, the dead cats are comprised. They are, generally, the perquisites of the women searchers. Dealers come to the wharf, or dust-field, every evening; they give sixpence for a white cat, fourpence for a coloured cat, and for a black one according to her quality. The "hard-ware" includes all broken pottery; pans, crockery, earthenware, oyster-shells, &c., which are sold to make new roads.

"The bones" are selected with care, and sold to the soap-boiler. He boils out the fat and marrow first, for special use, and the bones are then crushed and sold for manure.

Of "rags," the woollen rags are bagged and



sent off for hop-manure; the white linen rags are washed, and sold to make paper, &c.

The "tin things" are collected and put into an oven with a grating at the bottom, so that the solder which unites the parts melts, and runs through into a receiver. This is sold separately; the detached pieces of tin are then sold to be melted up with old iron, &c.

Bits of old brass, lead, &c., are sold to be melted up separately, or in the mixture of ores.

All broken glass vessels, as cruets, mustard-pots, tumblers, wine-glasses, bottles, &c., are sold to the old-glass shops.

As for any articles of jewellery,—silver spoons, forks, thimbles, or other plate and valuables, they are pocketed off-hand by the first finder. Coins of gold and silver are often found, and many "coppers."

Meantime, everybody is hard at work near the base of the great Dust-heap. A certain number of cart-loads having been raked and searched for all the different things just described, the whole of it now undergoes the process of sifting. The men throw up the stuff, and the women sift it.

"When I was a young girl," said Peg Dotting&8211;&8211;

"That's a long while ago, Peggy," interrupted one of the sifters: but Peg did not hear her.

"When I was quite a young thing," continued she, addressing old John Doubleyear, who threw up the dust into her sieve, "it was the fashion to wear pink roses in the shoes, as bright as that morsel of ribbon Sally has just picked out of the dust; yes, and sometimes in the hair, too, on one side of the head, to set off the white powder and salve-stuff. I never wore one of these head-dresses myself&8211;&8211;don't throw up the dust so high, John&8211;&8211; but I lived only a few doors lower down from those as *did*. Don't throw up the dust so high, I tell 'ee—the wind takes it into my face."

"Ah! There! What's that?" suddenly exclaimed little Jem, running, as fast as his poor withered legs would allow him, towards

a fresh heap, which had just been shot down on the wharf from a dustman's cart. He made a dive and a search&8211;&8211;then another&8211;&8211; then one deeper still. "I'm *sure* I saw it!" cried he, and again made a dash with both

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hands into a fresh place, and began to distribute the ashes and dust and rubbish on every side, to the great merriment of all the rest.

"What did you see, Jemmy?" asked old Doubleyear, in a compassionate tone.

"Oh, I don't know," said the boy, "only it was like a bit of something made of real gold!"

A fresh burst of laughter from the company assembled followed this somewhat vague declaration, to which the dustmen added one or two elegant epithets, expressive of their contempt of the notion that *they* could have overlooked a bit of anything valuable in the process of emptying sundry dust-holes, and carting them away.

"Ah," said one of the sifters, "poor Jem's always a-fancying something or other good&8211;&8211; but it never comes."

"Didn't I find three cats this morning!" cried Jem, "two on 'em white 'uns! How you go on!"

"I meant something quite different from the like o' that," said the other; "I was a-thinking of the rare sights all you three there have had, one time and another."

The wind having changed and the day become bright, the party at work all seemed disposed to be more merry than usual. The foregoing remark excited the curiosity of several of the sifters, who had recently joined the "company," the parties alluded to were requested to favour them with the recital; and though the request was made with only a half-concealed irony, still it was all in good-natured pleasantry, and was immediately complied with. Old Doubleyear spoke first.

"I had a bad night of it with the rats some years ago—they run'd all over the floor, and



over the bed, and one on 'em come'd and guv a squeak close into my ear&8211;&8211;so I couldn't sleep comfortable. I wouldn't ha' minded a trifle of it; but this was too much of a good thing. So, I got up before sun-rise, and went out for a walk; and thinking I might as well be near our work-place, I slowly come'd down this way. I worked in a brickfield at that time, near the canal yonder. The sun was just a-rising up behind the Dust-heap as I got in sight of it; and soon it rose above, and was very bright; and though I had two eyes then, I was obligated to shut them both. When I opened them again, the sun was higher up; but in his haste to get over the Dust-heap, he had dropped something. You may laugh. I say he had dropped something. Well&8211;&8211;I can't say what it was, in course&8211;&8211;a bit of his-self, I suppose. It was just like him&8211;&8211;a bit on him, I mean&8211;&8211;quite as bright&8211;&8211;just the same&8211;&8211;only not so big. And not up in the sky, but a-lying and sparkling all on fire upon the Dust-heap. Thinks I&8211;&8211;I was a younger man then by some years than I am now—I 'll go and have a nearer look. Though you be a bit o'the sun, maybe you won't hurt a poor man. So, I walked towards the Dust-heap, and up I went, keeping the piece of sparkling fire in sight all the while. But before I got up to it, the sun went behind a cloud&8211;&8211;and as he went out-like, so the young 'un he had dropped, went out arter him. And I had my climb up the heap for nothing, though I had marked the place vere it lay very percizely. But there was no signs at all on him, and no morsel left of the light as had been there. I searched all about; but found nothing 'cept a bit o' broken glass as had got stuck in the heel of an old shoe. And that's my story. But if ever a man saw anything at all, I saw a bit o' the sun; and I thank God for it. It was a blessed sight for a poor ragged old man of three score and ten, which was my age at that time."

"Now, Peggy! " cried several voices, " tell us what you saw. Peg saw a bit o' the moon."

"No," said Mrs. Dotting, rather indignantly; " I 'm no moon-raker. Not a sign of the moon was there, nor a spark of a star&8211;&8211;the time I speak on."

"Well&8211;&8211;go on, Peggy&8211;&8211;go on."

"I don't know as I will," said Peggy.

But being pacified by a few good-tempered, though somewhat humorous, compliments, she thus favoured them with her little adventure.

"There was no moon, nor stars, nor comet, in the 'versal heavens, nor lamp nor lantern along the road, when I walked home one winter's night from the cottage of Widow Pin, where I had been to tea, with her and Mrs. Dry, as lived in the almshouses. They wanted Davy, the son of Bill Davy the milkman, to see me home with the lantern, but I wouldn't let him 'cause of his sore throat. Throat!— no, it wasn't his throat as was rare sore&8211;&8211; it was&8211;&8211;no, it wasn't—yes, it was—it was his toe as was sore. His big toe. A nail out of his boot had got into it. I *told* him he 'd be sure to have a bad toe, if he didn't go to church more regular, but he wouldn't listen; and so my words come'd true. But, as I was a-saying, I wouldn't let him light me with the lantern by reason of his sore throat&8211;&8211;toe, I mean—and as I went along, the night seemed to grow darker and darker. A straight road, though, and I was so used to it by day-time, it didn't matter for the darkness. Hows'ever, when I come'd near the bottom of the Dust- heap as I had to pass, the great dark heap was so zackly the same as the night, you couldn't tell one from t' other. So, thinks I to myself&8211;&8211;*what* was I thinking of at this moment?&8211;&8211;for the life o' me I can't call it to mind; but that's neither here nor there, only for this,—it was a something that led me to remember the story of how the devil goes about like a roaring lion. And while I was a- hoping he might not be



out a-roaring that night, what should I see rise out of one side of the Dust-heap, but a beautiful shining star of a violet colour. I stood as still&8211;&8211;as stock- still as any I don't-know-what! There it lay, as beautiful as a new-born babe, all a-shining

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in the dust! By degrees I got courage to go a little nearer&8211;&8211;and then a little nearer still&8211;&8211; for, says I to myself, I'm a sinful woman, I know, but I have repented, and do repent constantly of all the sins of my youth, and the backslidings of my age&8211;&8211;which have been numerous; and once I had a very heavy back- sliding&8211;&8211;but that's neither here nor there. So, as I was a-saying, having collected all my sinfulness of life, and humbleness before heaven, into a goodish bit of courage, forward I steps&8211;&8211;a little further&8211;&8211;and a leetle further more&8211;&8211;*un*-til I come'd just up to the beautiful shining star lying upon the dust. "Well, it was a long time I stood a-looking down at it, before I ventured to do, what I arterwards did. But *at* last I did stoop down with both hands slowly&8211;&8211;in case it might burn, or bite &8211;&8211;and gathering up a good scoop of ashes as my hands went along, I took it up, and began a-carrying it home, all shining before me, and with a soft blue mist rising up round about it. Heaven forgive me!&8211;&8211;I was punished for meddling with what Providence had sent for some better purpose than to be carried home by an old woman like me, whom it has pleased heaven to afflict with the loss of one leg, and the pain, ixpinse, and inconvenience of a wooden one. Well&8211;&8211;I *was* punished; covetousness had its reward; for, presently, the violet light got very pale, and then went out; and when I reached home, still holding in both hands all I had gathered up, and when I took it to the

candle, it had turned into the red shell of a lobster's head, and its two black eyes poked up at me with a long stare,&8211;&8211;and I may say, a strong smell, too,&8211;&8211;enough to knock a poor body down."

Great applause, and no little laughter, followed the conclusion of old Peggy's story, but she did not join in the merriment. She said it was all very well for young folks to laugh, but at her age she had enough to do to pray; and she had never said so many prayers, nor with so much fervency, as she had done since she received the blessed sight of the blue star on the Dust-heap, and the chastising rod of the lobster's head at home.

Little Jem's turn now came; the poor lad was, however, so excited by the recollection of what his companions called "Jem's Ghost," that he was unable to describe it in any coherent language. To his imagination it had been a lovely vision,&8211;&8211;the one "bright consummate flower" of his life, which he treasured up as the most sacred image in his heart. He endeavoured, in wild and hasty words, to set forth, how that he had been bred a chimney-sweep; that one Sunday afternoon he had left a set of companions, most on 'em sweeps, who were all playing at marbles in the church-yard, and he had wandered to the Dust- heap, where he had fallen asleep; that he was awoke by a sweet voice in the air, which said something about some one having lost her way!&8211;&8211;that he, being now wide awake, looked up, and saw with his own eyes a young Angel, with fair hair and rosy cheeks, and large white wings at her shoulders, floating about like bright clouds, rise out of the Dust! She had on a garment of shining crimson, which changed as he looked upon her to shining gold, then to purple and gold. She then exclaimed, with a joyful smile, "I see the right way! " and the next moment the Angel was gone!

As the sun was just now very bright and warm for the time of year, and shining full upon the



Dust-heap in its setting, one of the men endeavoured to raise a laugh at the deformed lad, by asking him if he didn't expect to see just such another angel at this minute, who had lost her way in the field on the other side of the heap; but his jest failed. The earnestness and devout emotion of the boy to the vision of reality which his imagination, aided by the hues of sunset, had thus exalted, were too much for the gross spirit of banter, and the speaker shrunk back into his dust-shovel, and affected to be very assiduous in his work as the day was drawing to a close.

Before the day's work was ended, however, little Jem again had a glimpse of the prize which had escaped him on the previous occasion. He instantly darted, hands and head foremost into the mass of cinders and rubbish, and brought up a black mash of half-burnt parchment, entwined with vegetable refuse, from which he speedily disengaged an oval frame of gold, containing a miniature, still protected by its glass, but half covered with mildew from the damp. He was in ecstasies at the prize. Even the white cat-skins paled before it. In all probability some of the men would have taken it from him "to try and find the owner," but for the presence and interference of his friends Peg Dotting and old Doubleyear, whose great age, even among the present company, gave them a certain position of respect and consideration. So all the rest now went their way, leaving the three to examine and speculate on the prize.

These Dust-heaps are a wonderful compound of things. A banker's cheque for a considerable sum was found in one of them. It was on Herries and Farquhar, in 1847. But banker's cheques, or gold and silver articles, are the least valuable of their ingredients. Among other things, a variety of useful chemicals are extracted. Their chief value, however, is for the making of bricks. The fine cinder-dust and ashes are used in the clay of the bricks, both for the red and grey stacks. Ashes are also used as fuel between

the layers of the clump of bricks, which could not be burned in that position without them. The ashes burn away, and keep the bricks open. Enormous quantities are used. In the brick-fields at Uxbridge, near the Drayton Station, one of the brickmakers alone will frequently contract for fifteen or sixteen thousand chaldron of this cinder-dust, in one order. Fine

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coke or coke-dust, affects the market at times as a rival; but fine coal, or coal-dust, never, because it would spoil the bricks.

As one of the heroes of our tale had been originally before his promotion a chimney-sweeper, it may be only appropriate to offer a passing word on the genial subject of soot. Without speculating on its origin and parentage, whether derived from the cooking of a Christmas dinner, or the production of the beautiful colours and odours of exotic plants in a conservatory, it can briefly be shown to possess many qualities both useful and ornamental.

When soot is first collected, it is called "rough soot," which, being sifted, is then called "fine soot," and is sold to farmers for manuring and preserving wheat and turnips. This is more especially used in Herefordshire, Bedfordshire, Essex, &c. It is rather a costly article, being fivepence per bushel. One contractor sells annually as much as three thousand bushels; and he gives it as his opinion, that there must be at least one hundred and fifty times this quantity (four hundred and fifty thousand bushels per annum) sold in London. Farmer Smutwise, of Bradford, distinctly asserts that the price of the soot he uses on his land is returned to him in the straw, with improvement also to the grain. And we believe him. Lime is used to dilute soot when employed as a manure. Using it pure will keep off snails, slugs, and caterpillars, from peas and various other vegetables, as also from dahlias just shooting up, and other flowers; but we re-



gret to add that we have sometimes known it kill, or burn up, the things it was intended to preserve from unlawful eating. In short, it is by no means so safe to use for any purpose of garden manure, as fine cinders and wood-ashes, which are good for almost any kind of produce, whether turnips or roses. Indeed, we should like to have one fourth or fifth part of our garden-beds composed of excellent stuff of this kind. From all that has been said, it will have become very intelligible why these Dust-heaps are so valuable. Their worth, however, varies not only with their magnitude (the quality of all of them is much the same), but with the demand. About the year 1820, the Marylebone Dust-heap produced between four thousand and five thousand pounds. In 1832, St. George's paid Mr. Stapleton five hundred pounds a year, not to leave the Heap standing, but to carry it away. Of course he was only too glad to be paid highly for selling his Dust.

But to return. The three friends having settled to their satisfaction the amount of money they should probably obtain by the sale of the golden miniature-frame, and finished the castles which they had built with it in the air, the frame was again enfolded in the sound part of the parchment, the rags and rottenness of the law were cast away, and up they rose to bend their steps homeward to the little hovel where Peggy lived, she having invited the others to tea that they might talk yet more fully over the wonderful good luck that had befallen them.

"Why, if there isn't a man's head in the canal! " suddenly cried little Jem. " Looky there!&8211;&8211;isn't that a man's head?&8211;&8211;Yes; it's a drowneded man?"

"A drowneded man, as I live! " ejaculated old Doubleyear.

"Let's get him out, and see!" cried Peggy. "Perhaps the poor soul's not quite gone."

Little Jem scuttled off to the edge of the canal, followed by the two old people. As soon as the body had floated nearer, Jem got down into

the water, and stood breast-high, vainly measuring his distance with one arm out, to see if he could reach some part of the body as it was passing. As the attempt was evidently without a chance, old Doubleyear managed to get down into the water behind him, and holding him by one hand, the boy was thus enabled to make a plunge forward as the body was floating by. He succeeded in reaching it; but the jerk was too much for the weakness of his aged companion, who was pulled forwards into the canal. A loud cry burst from both of them, which was yet more loudly echoed by Peggy on the bank. Doubleyear and the boy were now struggling almost in the middle of the canal with the body of the man swirling about between them. They would inevitably have been drowned, had not old Peggy caught up a long dust-rake that was close at hand—scrambled down up to her knees in the canal—clawed hold of the struggling group with the teeth of the rake, and fairly brought the whole to land. Jem was first up the bank, and helped up his two heroic companions; after which, with no small difficulty, they contrived to haul the body of the stranger out of the water. Jem at once recognised in him the forlorn figure of the man who had passed by in the morning, looking so sadly into the canal, as he walked along.

It is a fact well known to those who work in the vicinity of these great Dust-heaps, that when the ashes have been warmed by the sun, cats and kittens that have been taken out of the canal and buried a few inches beneath the surface, have usually revived; and the same has often occurred in the case of men. Accordingly the three, without a moment's hesitation, dragged the body along to the Dust-heap, where they made a deep trench, in which they placed it, covering it all over up to the neck.

"There now," ejaculated Peggy, sitting down with a long puff to recover her breath, " he 'll lie very comfortable, whether or no."

"Couldn't lie better," said old Doubleyear,



"even if he knew it."

The three now seated themselves close by, to await the result.

"I thought I'd a lost him," said Jem, "and

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myself too; and when I pulled Daddy in arter me, I guv us all three up for this world."

"Yes," said Doubleyear, "it must have gone queer with us if Peggy had not come in with the rake. How d'ye'e feel, old girl; for you've had a narrow escape too. I wonder we were not too heavy for you, and so pulled you in to go with us."

"The Lord be praised! " fervently ejaculated Peggy, pointing towards the pallid face that lay surrounded with ashes. A convulsive twitching passed over the features, the lips trembled, the ashes over the breast heaved, and a low moaning sound, which might have come from the bottom of the canal, was heard. Again the moaning sound, and then the eyes opened, but closed almost immediately. "Poor dear soul! " whispered Peggy, "how he suffers in surviving. Lift him up a little. Softly. Don't be afeared. We're only your good angels, like—only poor cindersifters— don'tee be afeared."

By various kindly attentions and manœuvres such as these poor people had been accustomed to practise on those who were taken out of the canal, the unfortunate gentleman was gradually brought to his senses. He gazed about him, as well he might—now looking in the anxious, though begrimed, faces of the three strange objects, all in their "weeds" and dust—and then up at the huge Dust-heap, over which the moon was now slowly rising.

"Land of quiet Death! " murmured he, faintly, "or land of Life, as dark and still—I have passed from one into the other; but which of ye I am now in, seems doubtful to my senses."

"Here we are, poor gentleman," cried Peggy, "here we are, all friends about you. How did 'ee tumble into the canal?"

"The Earth, then, once more! " said the stranger, with a deep sigh. "I know where I am, now. I remember this great dark hill of ashes—like Death's kingdom, full of all sorts of strange things, and put to many uses."

"Where do you live? " asked Old Doubleyear; "shall we try and take you home, Sir?"

The stranger shook his head mournfully. All this time, little Jem had been assiduously employed in rubbing his feet and then his hands; in doing which the piece of dirty parchment, with the miniature-frame, dropped out of his breast-pocket. A good thought instantly struck Peggy.

"Run, Jemmy dear—run with that golden thing to Mr. Spikechin, the pawnbroker's—get something upon it directly, and buy some nice brandy—and some Godfrey's cordial—and a blanket, Jemmy—and call a coach, and get up outside on it, and make the coachee drive back here as fast as you can."

But before Jemmy could attend to this, Mr. Waterhouse, the stranger whose life they had preserved, raised himself on one elbow, and extended his hand to the miniature-frame. Directly he looked at it, he raised himself higher up—turned it about once or twice—then caught up the piece of parchment, and uttering an ejaculation, which no one could have distinguished either as of joy or of pain, sank back fainting.

In brief, this parchment was a portion of the title-deeds he had lost; and though it did not prove sufficient to enable him to recover his fortune, it brought his opponent to a composition, which gave him an annuity for life. Small as this was, he determined that these poor people, who had so generously saved his life at the risk of their own, should be sharers in it. Finding that what they most desired was to have a cottage in the neighbourhood of the Dust-heap, built large enough for all three to live together, and keep a cow, Mr. Waterhouse paid a visit to Manchester Square, where the owner of the property resided. He told his story, as far as was needful, and proposed to purchase the field



in question.

The great Dust-Contractor was much amused, and his daughter—a very accomplished young lady—was extremely interested. So the matter was speedily arranged to the satisfaction and pleasure of all parties. The acquaintance, however, did not end here. Mr. Waterhouse renewed his visits very frequently, and finally made proposals for the young lady's hand, she having already expressed her hopes of a propitious answer from her father.

"Well, Sir," said the latter, " you wish to marry my daughter, and she wishes to marry you. You are a gentleman and a scholar, but you have no money. My daughter is what you see, and she has no money. But I have; and

therefore, as she likes you, and I like you, I'll make you both an offer. I will give my daughter twenty thousand pounds,—or you shall have the Dust-heap. Choose!"

Mr. Waterhouse was puzzled and amused, and referred the matter entirely to the young lady. But she was for having the money, and no trouble. She said the Dust- heap might be worth much, but they did not understand the business. " Very well," said her father, laughing, "then, there's the money."

This was the identical Dust-heap, as we know from authentic information, which was subsequently sold for forty thousand pounds, and was exported to Russia to rebuild Moscow.

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Author(s):

- Richard H. Horne

Author. Student at Royal Military College, Sandhurst: withdrawn at end of probationary year for having, according to official record, "failed to pass probation" (Blainey, *The Farthing Poet*, p. 9). Thereafter served some months in Mexican navy. Began literary career as periodical contributor and journalist; contributed to more than fifty periodicals—British, Australian, and American. Editor, 1836-1837, of *Monthly Repository*. In 1833 published his first book, *Exposition of the False Medium and Barriers Excluding Men of Genius from the Public*; later prose writings included *The Poor Artist*, 1850; *The Dreamer and the Worker*, 1851; some books for children. Wrote poetic dramas: *Cosmo de' Medici*, 1837; *The Death of Marlowe*, 1837; and others. Best known to his contemporaries as author of *Orion*, "the farthing epic", 1843. With assistance of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Bell, wrote *A New Spirit of the Age*, 1844. Thought his genius unappreciated in England; went to Australia, 1852. There obtained some Government employment; wrote *Australian Facts and Prospects* and a lyrical drama, *Prometheus, the Fire-Bringer*. Returned to England, 1869. In 1874 granted Civil List pension of £50 a year "In recognition of his contributions to literature"; pension later augmented to £100 (Colles, *Literature and the Pension List*).

Horne became acquainted with Dickens in the late 1830s; the two men were for some years good friends. Horne played a role in Dickens's presentation of *Not So Bad As We Seem*; he and his wife were at times Dickens's guests at Devonshire Terrace and at Broadstairs. Horne presented to Dickens a copy of his plays *The Death of Marlowe* and *Judas Iscariot*, and also of his *Ballad Romances* (Stonehouse, *Catalogue*). Dickens expressed generous admiration of some of Horne's prose writings and poems, gave Horne helpful advice on proposed publications, and attempted to interest publishers in bringing out some of his books. Horne contributed to *Bentley's Miscellany* under Dickens's editorship and was engaged by Dickens as reporter for the *Daily News*. In 1862 Dickens wrote a letter in strong support of Horne's application for aid from the Royal Literary Fund (Fielding, "Charles Dickens and R. H. Home", *English*, Spring 1952). When Horne returned from Australia, however, Dickens refused to see him or to correspond with him, indignant at Horne's having contributed little to the support of his wife during his Australian years. Horne, commenting later on the talk about him and his "self-divorced wife" stated that he had refrained from making a public pronouncement on the matter: "... I have never followed the bad example of Dickens in parading my private grievances" (draft of letter to Meredith, August 1 1875, *Letters from George Meredith*, pp. 10-11).

In *A New Spirit of the Age*, Horne devoted a long chapter to Dickens, analysing his strengths and weaknesses as a novelist. In later years, he wrote of Dickens in various periodical articles that recounted his recollections of famous contemporaries. His mentions of Dickens and his reference to Georgina Hogarth in "John Forster: His Early Life and Friendships", *Temple Bar*,



April 1876, incensed Miss Hogarth (Adrian, *Georgina Hogarth and the Dickens Circle*, pp. 231-33).

Horne was at work on articles for *H.W.* some weeks before the first number of the periodical appeared. On May 18 1850, he was engaged for a three-month period as assistant to Wills. His duties were the writing of original material and the revising of contributed items. In mid-August, when this engagement was about to terminate, a sharp disagreement arose between Dickens and Wills concerning Horne's work. Wills stated that Horne was not giving five guineas' worth of service for his five-guinea weekly salary (Lehmann, ed., *Charles Dickens As Editor*, pp. 35-36). Dickens took the attitude that the criticism emanated from Wills's dislike of Horne, and, after conferring with Horne by letter, assured Wills that Horne was "willing and anxious" to render him assistance "in any way in which you will allow yourself to be assisted" (August 27 1850). In March of the following year, Wills returned to the charge. Dickens's letter to Horne, March 18, 1851, is in reply to a letter in which Horne, obviously, had discussed the matter. Dickens's suggestion was that Horne "continue on the old terms, for at least another month". To mid-May of that year, the Office Book records no payment to Horne for individual items, indicating that to that date he continued a member of the staff.

Between that date and the date of his leaving for Australia (June 1852), Horne contributed to *H.W.* about as many items as he had written for the periodical during the year that he was a staff member; he continued his connection with *H.W.* also in other ways. It was through his agency that an occasional item not of his writing arrived at the editorial office, and it was to him that payment was made for several contributions not of his writing among them, some poems by Meredith and by Ollier. In addition, the record of his name in the Office Book jointly with that of Miss Tomkins for one poem, and jointly with that of Meredith for another, indicates that he revised the two poems. In what capacity he served as reviser whether as the friend of the two contributors or, at the request of Wills, as a former staff member—is not clear.

Before Horne left for Australia, Dickens entered on an engagement with him whereby Horne was to write for *H.W.* articles connected with his voyage and his gold mining experiences. The arrangement proved unsatisfactory.

Dickens valued Horne as a writer for *H.W.* He hoped that Horne, on ceasing to be a staff member, would continue as contributor, promising him that "the rate of remuneration shall be higher in your case" (March 18, 1851). (It was not). Of the four articles assigned in the Office Book jointly to Horne and Dickens, three Dickens merely revised or added material to. "One Man in a Dockyard", however, was an actual collaboration; the two writers made an excursion to Chatham to gather material for the article, and each wrote part of the article. Among Horne's articles that Dickens particularly liked was "The Hippopotamus" (to Wills, July 12 1850); Horne's suggestion of snails as the subject for a paper Dickens thought admirable (to Horne, April 6 1852). "Household Christmas Carols", "The Great Peace-Maker", and "The Camera Obscura" he called to F. M. Evans's attention (April 10 1852) as "remarkable poems".

Some of Horne's contributions Dickens did not care for, among them, apparently, "The New Zealand Zauberflöte", which seems to be the "New Zealand sketch" that he mentioned to Wills (August 10 1850) as weighing "frightfully" on his mind. In a letter to Wills, December 29 1852, Dickens dismissed one of Horne's poems as "very indifferent"; no poem assigned to Horne



appeared in *H.W* after the date of the letter. The tedious "Digger's Diary", which Horne sent from Australia, Dickens was obliged to cut "to shreds" to make usable to the periodical (to Horne, March 2 1853).

Dickens's reference, by title or otherwise, to some twelve *H.W* items as by Horne confirms the Office Book ascription of those items; Horne's comment (*Australian Facts and Prospects*, p. 89n) that he had undertaken for *H.W* "to go through the Dust-heaps, the Dead-meat Markets and Horse-slaughterers' Yard of Smithfield, and the Gunpowder Mills at Hounslow" confirms his authorship of another four: "Dust", "The Cattle-Road to Ruin" —by implication also "The Smithfield Bull"—and "Gunpowder". A diary entry recorded in *The Life of Richard Owen*, I, 61, mentions Horne as author of "the 'Zoological Meeting", i.e., "Zoological Sessions".

Ten of Horne's *H.W* contributions were reprinted in whole or part in *Harper's*, five of them acknowledged to *H.W*, and one—"London Sparrows"—credited to Dickens. Three of his contributions were included in the Putnam volumes of selections from *H.W.*: *Horne and Social Philosophy*, 1st and 2nd series. H. B. Forman, in 1871, printed for private distribution "The Great Peace-Maker", stating that it had not been publicly claimed by Horne, but that at the time of its appearance "there was no doubt in literary circles as to the authorship".

Author: Anne Lohrli; © University of Toronto Press, 1971.

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Genre(s):

- Prose: Report
A 'more or less detailed description of any event . . . intended for publication'; an 'account given . . . on some particular matter, esp. after investigation' (OED) involving e.g. fieldwork, first-hand experience, original research.
- Prose: Short Fiction
Fictional narrative published in a single instalment, e.g. a short story, 'with a fully developed theme' (OED), or which is simply self-contained.
- Cross-genre
A cross-genre or hybrid-genre article is one which is deemed to purposefully blend rhetorical and stylistic features and incorporate iconography from more than one pre-existent genres. Depending on the genres crossed, this can also be referred to as: creative non-fiction, witness literature, 'Gonzo' journalism, immersion journalism, narrative non-fiction. The blurring of boundaries is frequently defined as 'New' (hence the slightly puzzling recurrence of the term 'New Journalism' to describe approaches to periodical writing in the late 19th-century, mid-20th and early 21st centuries, as clearly it was alive and flourishing in Dickens's Wellington Street offices from 1850 onwards).

Subject(s):

- Great Britain—Social Conditions—Nineteenth Century
- Work; Work and Family; Occupations; Professions; Wages



Citation (MHRA): Horne, Richard H., 'Dust; or Ugliness Redeemed', *Household Words*, I, 13 July 1850, 379-384

N.B. The layout of prose articles exported to PDF follows the two-column format of the original, but does **NOT** preserve the original line breaks. The layout of poems exported to PDF follows the original line breaks, but does **NOT** attempt to replicate the original indentation or stanza structure. For all these features please refer to the facsimile pages on DJO.

