

A COUNTRY FAIR,
OR
OLD AUNT LETTY'S FANCIES.

BY LOUISA H. SHERIDAN.

I AM not fond of giving way to exclamations of "how this world is altered;" because instead of being respected as the opinion of experience, it is considered by young persons to be the querulous and complaining phrase of old age, only founded on the altered views of those who make use of it. I do not therefore, often utter these words, so disagreeable to young people, because all my feelings of pleasure during late years, have been derived from the society and affectionate care of a set of dear nephews and nieces, the eldest of whom has scarcely seen twenty summers.

My favourite among the group is my god-daugh-



Fair Weather.

ter, a sweet creature of fourteen, who does just as she likes with her old Aunt : and why should she not, dear child ! The family say she is like me, too : but foolish and vain as old maids are proverbially known to be, still I can see that this is kindly said only to please Aunt Letty. Even at the time when I was fortunate enough to captivate the heart of that noble young hero, who since—I must not indulge on this theme, however, because my child always weeps when she sees her Aunt has been in tears. Ye mercenary legacy hunters who only bestow attention in the hope of reaping a golden harvest, ye will laugh at the idea of a girl of fourteen being able to ‘*dupe*’ me so cleverly ; but before your laughter commences, allow me to inform you that Aunt Letty has nothing to bequeath except her blessing : had I been blessed with the gifts of fortune I should not have made the dear children wait for it until after my death.

A day or two ago one of the boys came into the breakfast-room with a countenance beaming with pleasure, saying, “Do you know, Mama, this is the day of our village fair : wont you take us ?”

“Do, dear Mama,” said little Letty, “and perhaps we shall be able to find some shaded silks for dear Aunt’s embroidery.”

My sister shook her head, and said that she expected a friend from London, therefore she must

stay at home. I looked up from my work-frame and encountered the bright eyes of little Letty, *looking* the request which she hesitated to *utter*, and I said, "You shall go with me, my dears, although I have not been to a fair during the last forty years."

"You're an extraordinarily capital person, Aunt Lett!" exclaimed our sailor-boy Charles, as he twirled his cap up in the air, and ran off with the others to dress. They returned long before I could put on my walking dress, and Charles, in his haste to put away my embroidering-silk, mixed all my shades together. Poor fellow! he did it for the best; I used to be impatient myself in former days; and two days' winding will put my silks all right again.

At length we arrived at the noisy scene; and here I cannot avoid saying how much altered fairs are since my youth, when they used to be markets for all kinds of useful and fashionable goods: I looked in vain for any thing useful or elegant for my little party; nothing but gingerbread-nuts and wax-dolls met my view.

We next looked at the pictures in front of the shows, which represented the most extraordinary and unnatural looking creatures possible; but instead of finding (as in *my* time) the living object exactly like the picture, we sometimes saw, outside

Freedom of the Press!



a painted figure seven feet high, radiant with various colours, and on entering the exhibition were shewn some wretched little starved animal, the size of a cat, and the colour of a tabby in the ashes.

The people pushed us about very rudely, too, and I felt rather frightened, though I did not express my alarm. I was most indignant, however, at the treatment a very pretty girl experienced, who was separated from her friends : a parcel of sweeps surrounded her, rubbing their black bags against her white dress, and one of them had the insolence to salute her ! I was thinking I would let him feel the weight of my long stick, but Charles, laughing, exclaimed, " Stop, stop, dear Aunt, you are too liberally minded to object to the *freedom of the press!*" Funny boy ! his nonsense always softens my anger. He unfortunately entered into a dispute on my account with a young man, who hearing him say to me " Aunt Lett, do lean on me," observed, " If I was sich a smart young man, 'stead of giving an arm to *Aunt Lett*, she should be *Aunt let alone!*" My boy instantly knocked him down, and a crowd collected round them : when Charles had conquered this ruffian, he came to a standing (where I had retreated) with his clothes torn, and all his pockets picked. " How unjustly those wretches have treated you at this horrid fair !" said I.

“No, no, Aunt, this is only *fair play*!” he replied. Dear boy! what a sweet temper he has!

As I am unfortunately a little deaf, my poor old head was dreadfully confused by the noise of drums, horns, trumpets, cymbals and gongs; therefore the descriptions of the shows inside, by the mountebanks in front seemed to me such arrant nonsense that I asked my Letty if I had heard correctly one of them say “Walk up, and see the wonderful dwarf only six inches high, who daily devours ten cart-loads of hay, besides what the company please to give him”?

She laughed heartily, saying “No, Aunt Letty, dear, the *first* part was uttered by the man who shews a dwarf, and the *latter* part by the keeper of the Elephant in the opposite caravan, and as all their hoarse voices are so much alike, I do not wonder at your confusing the two stories!”

I did not think, before, that I was grown so old and stupid, because at home I distinguish plainly the dear children’s voices one from the other; and Charles now assured me that *I* was right, and *Letty* had made the mistake; he said the showmen talked the same nonsense all the way up the fair, and he made me parade between the two lines of shows where, among the clatter of musical instruments, I heard the following, which on returning home I wrote down for my sister’s amusement, Charles

helping me, and prompting me whenever I forgot, besides giving the spelling as they pronounced the words. I cannot say that I made any sense out of it, but as I said before, the useful and sensible fairs of my day are completely altered.

I was rather vexed to find my sister (who ought to know me better) was of the same opinion as little Letty, viz. that in consequence of my deafness, and the strange mixture of sounds, I had mixed the speeches of the opposite showmen, as I walked down the fair, between their rows of caravans. My sister even put stops, to divide them according to her idea; and I let them remain, because I never contradict her. I allowed her also to shew my list to her London friend, and persuade him also of my deaf stupidity: but Charles has privately assured me that I heard correctly: and can I doubt any thing said by the kind boy who fought on my account?

WONDERFUL EXHIBITIONS AT A COUNTRY FAIR.

Walk up, walk up, han see the vunderful dwarf honly six hitches igh who—daily devours ten cart-loads of hay besides wot the comp'ny pleases to give un.

This way Maum, make way there for the ladies just to step upon the—fine strawberries and cream here, and hot mince-pies.

Here you will see for one penny the unappy

man as vas angd for murdering of—the vunderful diamond-beetle with three hundred pair of heyes and seven hundred pair of orns.

Hin this here hexhibition is the great Hirish giant measuring twenty feet in ite, weighing seven hundred weight and who—will dance a hornpipe in the palm of hany one's hand as likes.

This is the famous sapient pig Toby as can tell the pretty young vimen their sweathearts' names, and—though born vithout heither harms or legs, can write a beautiful hand with the mouth, and vurks chain-stitch and hembroid'ry.

A most helegantest Hingy parrot—who was hanged for the murder of his hunfortnet wife, and the rope breaking from his weight, he recovered after hanging a fortnight in the severe frost, and having one of his arms torn off by the ravenous Russiay Wolves.

Here you may see the deep and bloody tragedy of Romeo and—gingerbread nuts, gentlemen, nice spiced nuts, I assure ye.

Maum, I recommends this oyster knife to your notice, cause besides opening the oysters it—plays upon three instruments at once, balancing glasses of water on the nose, forehead, and both feet.

Come an see the vunderful fat Hox whose foreleg alone—can write the song of Rule Brittania on a silver-sixpins.

This is a view of the North Pole and the hicc mountains vere it halways freezes — all ot, all ot, all ot.

Try your hand in the lucky bag, Mam, and ye'l get summot o' wally, as it contains—hall the wene-mous sarpins of Haffricky with sentepees, crocodiles, scorpins and other beastis, too noomerus to menshin, all alive.

Them as would like to see the voracious and rav'nous hanimals fed, must come at ten o'clock hat night, ven ve gives um large buckets of—wax dolls a haypenny a piece and big uns at a penny.

Here is the clever calculating boy as never is wrong, and who has been known in the space of two hours to — tell the hour by looking at a watch and scraping with his fore-paw, without bridle or saddle hon him.

The beautiful and helegant white-haired Al-beenee, ladies and gentlemen, she has pink heyes—five horns and seven legs, with the head turned the wrong way.

Your new bonnet my dear would be improved if you'd stick on one side — the jaw-bone of a whale sixty feet long, an all 's teeth in the front, and a vunderful mermaid with a comb in her hand.

Here you may see the hactive young Chinee as jumps hover at once — the whole city of London, with the shopmen stannin' at their doors, and the smoke comin' from the chimneys all as naitral as life.

Here's a coorosity! the hextraonary Hameriky sarpint as daily devours — poison for rats, mole-traps, plated candlesticks, and cheap second-hand coal-skuttles.

Walk in here, ladies and gentlemen, and see the larned Canary-bird Dicky — who balances a cart-wheel on his nose, swallows ten real swords, and lastly will have a block of stone weighing three tons placed on his breast and broken with sixty sledge hammers.

Well I must indulge myself with *one* concluding observation ; they did not utter such nonsense in *my* day !



A country Fair !