

Jerry Jarvis's Wig

(A Legend of the Weald of Kent)

By Richard Barham

"The wig's the thing! the wig! the wig."—Old Song.

"Joe," said old Jarvis, looking out of his window—it was on his ground-floor back—"Joe, you seem to be very hot, Joe, and you have got no wig!"

"Yes, sir," quoth Joseph, pausing and resting upon his spade, "it's as hot a day as ever I see; but the celery must be got in, or there'll be no autumn crop, and—"

"Well, but Joe, the sun's so hot, and it shines so on your bald head, it makes one wink to look at it. You'll have a *coup de soleil*, Joe."

"A *what*, sir?"

"No matter; it's very hot working; and if you'll step indoors I'll give you—"

"Thank ye, your honour, a drop of beer will be very acceptable."

Joe's countenance brightened amazingly.

"Joe, I'll give you—my old wig!"

The countenance of Joseph fell, his grey eye had glistened as a blest vision of double X flitted athwart his fancy; his glance faded again into the old, filmy, gooseberry-coloured hue, as he growled in a minor key, "A wig, sir!"

"Yes, Joe, a wig. The man who does not study the comfort of his dependants is an unfeeling scoundrel. You shall have my old worn-out wig."

"I hope, sir, you'll give me a drop o' beer to drink your honour's health in; it *is* very hot, and—"

"Come in, Joe, and Mrs. Witherspoon shall give it you."

"Heaven bless your honour!" said honest Joe, striking his spade perpendicularly into the earth, and walking with more than usual alacrity towards the close-cut, quickset hedge which separated Mr. Jarvis's garden from the high road.

From the quickset hedge aforesaid he now raised, with all due delicacy, a well-worn and somewhat dilapidated jacket, of a stuff by drapers most pseudonymously termed "everlasting." Alack! alack! what is there to which *tempus edax rerum* will accord that epithet? In its high and palmy days it had been all of a piece; but as its master's eye now fell upon it, the expression of his countenance seemed to say with Octavian,

Those days are gone, Floranthe!

It was now, from frequent patching, a coat not unlike that of the patriarch, one of many colours.

Joseph Washford inserted his wrists into the corresponding orifices of the tattered garment, and with a steadiness of circum-gyration, to be acquired only by long and sufficient practice, swung it horizontally over his ears and settled himself into it.

"Confound your old jacket!" cried a voice from the other side the hedge; "keep it down, you rascal! Don't you see my horse is frightened at it?"

"Sensible beast!" apostrophised Joseph, "I've been frightened at it myself every day for the last two years."

The gardener cast a rueful glance at its sleeve, and pursued his way to the door of the back kitchen.

“Joe,” said Mrs. Witherspoon, a fat, comely dame, of about five-and-forty—“Joe, your master is but too good to you; he is always kind and considerate. Joe, he has desired me to give you his old wig.”

“And the beer, Ma’am Witherspoon?” said Washford, taking the proffered caxon, and looking at it with an expression somewhat short of rapture; “and the beer, ma’am!”

“The beer, you guzzling wretch!—what beer? Master said nothing about no beer. You ungrateful fellow, has not he given you a wig?”

“Why, yes, Madam Witherspoon! but then, you see, his honour said it was very hot, and I’m very dry, and—”

“Go to the pump, sot!” said Mrs. Witherspoon, as she slammed the back-door in the face of the petitioner.

Mrs. Witherspoon was “of the Lady Huntingdon persuasion, and Honorary Assistant Secretary to the Appledore branch of the “Ladies’ Grand Junction Water-working Temperance Society.”

Joe remained for a few moments lost in mental abstraction he looked at the door, he looked at the wig; his first thought was to throw it into the pigsty,—his corruption rose, but he resisted the impulse; he got the better of Satan; the half-formed imprecation died before it reached his lips. He looked disdainfully at the wig; it had once been a comely jasey enough, of the colour of over-baked ginger-bread, one of the description commonly known during the latter half of the last century by the name of a “brown George.” The species, it is to be feared, is now extinct, but a few, a very few of the same description might, till very lately, be occasionally seen,—*rari nantes in gurgite vasto*—the glorious relics of a bygone day, crowning the *cerebellum* of some venerated and venerable provost, or judge of assize; but Mr. Jarvis’s wig had one peculiarity; unlike most of its fellows, it had a tail!—“cribbed and confined,” indeed, by a shabby piece of faded shalloon.

Washford looked at it again; he shook his bald head; the wig had certainly seen its best days; still it had about it somewhat of an air of faded gentility; it was “like ancient Rome, majestic in decay,”—and as the small ale was not to be forthcoming, why— after all, an old wig was better than nothing!

Mr. Jeremiah Jarvis, of Appledore, in the Weald of Kent, was a gentleman by act of parliament; one of that class of gentlemen who, disdaining the *bourgeoise*-sounding name of “attorney-at-law,” are, by a legal fiction, denominated solicitors. I say by a legal fiction, surely the general tenor of the intimation received by such as enjoy the advantage of their correspondence, has little in common with the idea usually attached to the term “solicitation.” “If you don’t pay my bill, and costs, I’ll send you to jail,” is a very energetic *entreaty*. There are, it is true, etymologists who derive their style and title from the Latin infinitive “*solicitare*,” to “make anxious,”—in all probability they are right.

If this be the true etymology of his title, as it was the main end of his calling, then was Jeremiah Jarvis a worthy exemplar of the *genus* to which he belonged. Few persons in his time had created greater solicitude among his Majesty’s lieges within the “Weald.” He was rich, of course. The best house in the country-town is always the lawyer’s, and it generally boasts a green door, stone steps, and a brass knocker. In neither of these appendages to opulence was Jeremiah deficient; but then he was so very *rich*; his reputed wealth, indeed, passed all the common modes of accounting for its increase. True, he was so universal a favourite that every man whose will he made was sure to leave him a legacy that he was a sort of general assignee to all the bankruptcies

within twenty miles of Appledore; was clerk to half the “trusts”; and treasurer to most of the “rates,” “funds,” and “subscriptions,” in that part of the country; that he was land-agent to Lord Mountrhino, and steward to the rich Miss Tabbytale of Smerrididdle Hall; that he had been guardian (?) to three young profligates who all ran through their property, which, somehow or another, came at last into his hands, “at an equitable valuation.” Still his possessions were so considerable, as not to be altogether accounted for, in vulgar esteem, even by these and other honour-able modes of accumulation; nor were there wanting those who conscientiously entertained a belief that a certain dark-coloured gentleman, of indifferent character, known principally by his predilection for appearing in perpetual mourning, had been through life his great friend and counsellor, and had mainly assisted in the acquirement of his revenues. That “old Jerry Jarvis had sold himself to the devil” was, indeed, a dogma which it was heresy to doubt in Appledore;—on this head, at least, there were few schismatics in the parish.

When the worthy “Solicitor” next looked out of his ground-floor back, he smiled with much complacency at beholding Joe Washford again hard at work—in his wig—the little tail aforesaid oscillating like a pendulum in the breeze. If it be asked what could induce a gentleman, whose leading principle seems to have been self-appropriation, to make so magnificent a present, the answer is, that Mr. Jarvis might perhaps have thought an occasional act of benevolence necessary or politic; he is not the only person, who, having stolen a quantity of leather, has given away a pair of shoes, *pour l’amour de Dieu*,—perhaps he had other motives.

Joe, meanwhile, worked away at the celery-bed; but truth obliges us to say, neither with the same degree of vigour or perseverance as had marked the earlier efforts of the morning. His pauses were more frequent; he rested longer on the handle of his spade; while ever and anon his eye would wander from the trench beneath him to an object not unworthy the contemplation of a natural philosopher. This was an apple-tree.

Fairer fruit never tempted Eve, or any of her daughters; the bending branches groaned beneath their luxuriant freight, and dropping to earth, seemed to ask the protecting aid of man either to support or to relieve them. The fine, rich glow of their sun-streaked clusters derived additional loveliness from the level beams of the descending day-star. An anchorite’s mouth had watered at the pippins.

On the precise graft of the espalier of Eden, “Sanchoniathon, Manetho, and Berosus” are undecided; the best-informed Talmudists, however, have, if we are to believe Dr. Pinner’s German Version, pronounced it a Ribstone pippin, and a Ribstone pippin-tree it was that now attracted the optics and discomposed the inner man of the thirsty, patient, but perspiring gardener. The heat was still oppressive; no beer had moistened his lip, though its very name, uttered as it was in the ungracious tones of a Witherspoon, had left behind a longing as intense as fruitless. His thirst seemed supernatural, when at this moment his left ear experienced a “slight and tickling sensation,” such as we are assured is occasion-ally produced by an infinitesimal dose in homœopathy; a still, small *voice*—it was as though a daddy long-legs were whispering in his *tympanum*—a small *voice* seemed to say, “Joe!—take an apple, Joe!”

Honest Joseph started at the suggestion; the rich crimson of his jolly nose deepened to a purple tint in the beams of the setting sun; his very forehead was incarnadine. He raised his hand to scratch his ear,—the little tortuous tail had worked its way into it,—he pulled it out by the bit of shalloon, and allayed the itching, then cast his eye wistfully towards the mansion where his master was sitting by the open window. Joe pursed tip his parched lips into an arid whistle, and with a desperate energy struck his spade once more into the celery-bed.

Alack! alack! what a piece of work is man!—how short his triumphs!—how frail his resolutions!

From this fine and very original moral reflection we turn reluctantly to record the sequel. The celery-bed, alluded to as the main scene of Mr. Washford's operations, was drawn in a rectilinear direction, nearly across the whole breadth of the parallelogram that comprised the "kitchen-garden." Its northern extremity abutted to the hedge before-mentioned, its southern one—woe is me that it should have been so!—was in fearful vicinity to the Ribstone pippin-tree. One branch, low bowed to earth, seemed ready to discharge its precious burden into the very trench. As Joseph stooped to insert the last plant with his dibble, an apple of more than ordinary beauty bobbed against his knuckles.—"He's taking snuff, Joe," whispered the same small *voice*;—the tail had twisted itself into its old position. "He is sneezing!—now, Joe!— now!" and, ere the agitated horticulturist could recover from his surprise and alarm, the fruit was severed, and—in his hand!

"He! he! He!" shrilly laughed, or seemed to laugh, that accursed little pigtail—Washford started at once to the perpendicular;—with an enfrenzied grasp he tore the jasey from his head, and, with that in one hand, and his ill-acquired spoil in the other, he rushed distractedly from the garden!

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All that night was the humble couch of the once-happy gardener haunted with the most fearful visions. Hhe was stealing apples,— he was robbing hen-roosts,—he was altering the chinks upon the milk-score,—he had purloined three *chemises* from a hedge, and he awoke in the very act of cutting the throat of one of Squire Hodge's sheep! A clammy dew stood upon his temples,—the cold perspiration burst from every pore,—he sprang in terror from the bed.

"Why, Joe, what ails thee, man?" cried the usually incurious Mrs. Washford; "what be the matter with thee? Thee hast done nothing but grunt and growl all t' night long, and now thee dost stare as if thee saw summut. What bees it, Joe?"

A long-drawn sigh was her husband's only answer; his eye fell upon the bed. "How the devil came *that* here?" quoth Joseph, with a sudden recoil "who put that thing on my pillow?"

"Why, I did. Joseph. Th' ould nightcap is in the wash, and thee didst toss and tumble so, and kick the clothes off, I thought thee mightest catch cold, so I clapt t' wig atop o' thee head."

And there it lay,—the little sinister-looking tail impudently perked up, like an infernal gnomon on a Satanic dial-plate—Larceny and Ovicide shone in every hair of it!

*The dawn was overcast, the morning lower'd,
And heavily in clouds brought on the day,*

When Joseph Washford once more repaired to the scene of his daily labours; a sort of unpleasant consciousness flushed his countenance, and gave him an uneasy feeling as lie opened the garden gate; for Joe, generally speaking, was honest as the skin between his brows; his hand faltered as it pressed the latch. "Pooh, pooh! 'twas but an apple, after all!" said Joseph. He pushed open the wicket, and found himself beneath the tempting tree.

But vain now were all its fascinations; like fairy gold seen by the morning light, its charms had faded into very nothingness. Worlds, to say nothing of apples, which in shape resemble them,

would not have bought him to stretch forth an unhallowed hand again he went steadily to his work.

The day continued cloudy; huge drops of rain fell at intervals, stamping his bald pate with spots as big as halfpence; but Joseph worked on. As the day advanced, showers fell thick and frequent the fresh-turned earth was itself fragrant as a *bouquet*.—Joseph worked on; and when at last *Jupiter Pluvius* descended in all his majesty, soaking the ground into the consistency of dingy pudding, he put on his party-coloured jacket, and strode towards his humble home, rejoicing in his renewed integrity. “’Twas but an apple, after all! Had it been an apple-pie, indeed!”—

“An apple-pie!” the thought was a dangerous one—too dangerous to dwell on. But Joseph’s better Genius was this time lord of the ascendant;—he dismissed it, and passed on.

On arriving at his cottage, an air of bustle and confusion prevailed within, much at variance with the peaceful serenity usually observable in its economy. Mrs. Washford was in high dudgeon! her heels clattered on the red-tiled floor, and she whisked about the house like a parched pea upon a drum-head; her voice, generally small and low—“an excellent thing in woman,”—was pitched at least an octave above its ordinary level; she was talking fast and furious. Something had evidently gone wrong. The mystery was soon explained. The “*cursed old twoad* of a cat” had got into the dairy, and licked off the cream from the only pan their single cow had filled that morning! And there she now lay, purring as in scorn. Tib, heretofore the meekest of mousers, the honestest, the least “*scaddle*” of the feline race,—a cat that one would have sworn might have been trusted with untold fish,—yes,—there was no denying it,—proofs were too strong against her,—yet there she lay, hardened in her iniquity, coolly licking her whiskers, and reposing quietly upon—what?—Jerry Jarvis’s old wig!!

The patience of a Stoic must have yielded; it had been too much for the temperament of the Man of Uz. Joseph Washford lifted his hand—that hand which had never yet been raised on Tibby, save to fondle and caress—it now descended on her devoted head in one tremendous “dowse.” Never was cat so astonished,—so enraged—all the tiger portion of her nature rose in her soul. Instead of galloping off, hissing and sputtering, with arched back, and tail erected, as any ordinary Grimalkin would unquestionably have done under similar circumstances, she paused a moment,—drew back on her haunches,—all her energies seemed concentrated for one prodigious spring, a demoniac fire gleamed in her green and yellow eyeballs, as, bounding upwards, she fixed her talons firmly in each of her assailant’s cheeks!—many and many a day after were sadly visible the marks of those envenomed claws—then dashing over his shoulder with an unearthly mew, she leaped through the open casement, and was seen no more.

“The Devil’s in the cat!” was the apostrophe of Mrs. Margaret Washford. Her husband said nothing, but thrust the old wig into his pocket, and went to bathe his scratches at the pump.

Day after day, night after night, ’twas all the same—Joe Washford’s life became a burden to him; his natural upright and honest mind struggled hard against the frailty of human nature. He was ever restless and uneasy; his frank, open, manly look, that blanched not from the gaze of the spectator, was no more: a sly and sinister expression had usurped the place of it.

Mr. Jeremiah Jarvis had little of what the world calls “Taste,” still less of Science. Ackerman would have called him a “Snob,” and Buckland a “Nincompoop.” Of the Horticultural Society, its *fêtes*, its fruits, and its fiddlings, he knew nothing. Little recked he of flowers—save cauliflowers—in these, indeed, he was a *connoisseur*! to their cultivation and cookery the respective talents of Joe and Madame Witherspoon had long been dedicated; but as for a *bouquet*!—Hardham’s 37 was “the only one fit for a gentleman’s nose.” And yet, after all, Jerry

Jarvis had a good-looking tulip-bed. A female friend of his had married a Dutch merchant; Jerry drew the settlements; the lady paid him by a cheque on "Child's," the gentleman by a present of a "box of roots." Jerry put the latter in his garden—he had rather they had been schalots.

Not so his neighbour, Jenkinson; he *was* a man of "Taste" and of "Science"; he was an F.R.C.E.B.S., which, as he told the Vicar, implied, "Fellow of the Royal Cathartico-Emetico-Botanical Society," and his autograph in Sir John Frostyface's album stood next to that of the Emperor of all the Russias. Neighbour Jenkinson fell in love with the pips and petals of "neighbour Jarvis's tulips." There were one or two among them of such brilliant, such surpassing beauty,—the "cups" so well formed,—the colours so defined. To be sure, Mr. Jenkinson had enough in his own garden; but then "Enough," says the philosopher, "always means a little more than a man has got."—Alas! alas! Jerry Jarvis was never known to *bestow*,—his neighbour dared not offer to *purchase* from so wealthy a man; and, worse than all, Joe, the gardener, was incorruptible—ay, but the wig?

Joseph Washford was working away again in the blaze of the midday sun; his head looked like a copper saucepan fresh from the brazier's.

"Why, where's your wig, Joseph?" said the voice of his master from the well-known window: "what have you done with your wig?" The question was embarrassing—its tail had tickled his ear till it had made it sore; Joseph had put the wig in his pocket.

Mr. Jeremiah Jarvis was indignant; he liked not that his benefits should be ill appreciated by the recipient. "Hark ye, Joseph Washford," said he, "either wear my wig, or let me have it again!"

There was no mistaking the meaning of his tones; they were resonant of indignation and disgust, of mingled grief and anger, the amalgamation of sentiment naturally produced by

*Friendship unreturn'd,
And unrequited love.*

Washford's heart smote him: he felt all that was implied in his master's appeal. "It's here, your Honour," said he; "I had only taken it off because we have had a smartish shower; but the sky is brightening now." The wig was replaced, and the little tortuous pigtail wriggled itself into its accustomed position.

At this moment neighbour Jenkinson peeped over the hedge.

"Joe Washford!" said neighbour Jenkinson.

"Sir to you," was the reply.

"How beautiful your tulips look after the rain!"

"Ah! sir, master sets no great store by them flowers," returned the gardener.

"Indeed! Then perhaps he would have no objection to part with a few?"

"Why, no!—I don't think master would like to *give* them—or anything else,—away, sir"; and Washford scratched his ear. If you can read this, this story was taken from H M where it was posted after many hours of hard work.

"Joe!!" said Mr. Jenkinson—"Joe!"

The Sublime, observes Longinus, is often embodied in a monosyllable—"Joe!!!"—Mr. Jenkinson said no more; but a half-crown shone from between his upraised fingers, and its "poor, poor dumb mouth" spoke for him.

How Joseph Washford's left ear *did* itch! He looked to the ground-floor back—Mr. Jarvis had left the window.

Mr. Jenkinson's ground-plot boasted, at daybreak next morning, a splendid *Semper Augustus*," which was not so before," and Joseph Washford was led home, much about the same time, in a most extraordinary state of "civilation," from "The Three Jolly Potboys."

From that hour he was the Fiend's!!

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"*Facilis descensus Averni!*" says Virgil. "It is only the first step that is attended with any difficulty," says—somebody else—when speaking of the decollated martyr, St. Dennis's walk with his head under his arm. "The First Step!"—Joseph Washford had taken that step!—he had taken two—three—four steps; and now, from a hesitating, creeping, cat-like mode of progression, he had got into a firmer tread—an amble—a positive trot! He took the family linen "to the wash":—one of Madame Witherspoon's best Holland *chemises* was never seen after.

"Lost!—impossible! How *could* it be lost?—where *could* it be gone to?—who *could* have got it? It was her best—her *very* best!—she should know it among a hundred—among a thousand!—it was marked with a great W in the corner!—Lost?—impossible— She would *see!*—Alas! she never *did* see—the *chemise—abiit, erupit, evasit!*—it was

Like the lost Pleiad, seen on earth no more,

—but Joseph Washford's Sunday shirt *was* seen, finer and fairer than ever—the pride and *dulce decus* of the Meeting.

The Meeting?—ay, the Meeting. Joe Washford never missed the Appledore Independent Meeting House, whether the service were in the morning or afternoon,—whether the Rev. Mr. Slyandry exhorted or made way for the Rev. Mr. Tearbrain. Let who would officiate, there was Joe. As I have said before, he never missed;—but other people missed—one missed an umbrella,—one a pair of clogs. Farmer Johnson missed his tobacco-box,—Farmer Jackson his greatcoat,—Miss Jackson missed her hymnbook,—a diamond edition, bound in maroon-coloured velvet with gilt corners and clasps. Everything, in short, was missed—but Joe Washford; there *he* sat, grave, sedate, and motionless—all save that restless, troublesome, fidgety little Pigtail attached to his wig, which nothing *could* keep quiet, or prevent from tickling and interfering with Miss Thompson's curls, as she sat back to back with Joe, in the adjoining pew. After the third Sunday, Nancy Thompson eloped with the tall recruiting sergeant of the Connaught Rangers.

The summer passed away,—autumn came and went,—and Christmas, jolly Christmas, that period of which we are accustomed to utter the mournful truism, it "comes but *once* a year," was at hand. It was a fine bracing morning; the sun was just beginning to throw a brighter tint upon the Quaker-coloured ravine of Orlestone-hill, when a medical gentleman, returning to the quiet little village of Ham Street, that lies at its foot, from a farm-house at Kingsnorth rode briskly down the declivity. If you can read this, this story was taken from H M where it was posted after many hours of hard work.

After several hours of patient attention, Mr. Moneyppenny had succeeded in introducing to the notice of seven little expectant brothers and sisters a "remarkably fine child," and was now hurrying home in the sweet hope of a comfortable "snooze" for a couple of hours before the announcement of tea and muffins should arouse him to fresh exertion. The road at this particular spot had, even then, been cut deep below the surface of the soil, for the purpose of diminishing the abruptness of the descent, and, as either side of the superincumbent banks was clothed with a

thick mantle of tangled copsewood, the passage, even by day, was sufficiently obscure, the level beams of the rising or setting sun, as they happened to enfilade the gorge, alone illuminating its recesses. A long stream of rosy light was just beginning to make its way through the vista, and Mr. Moneypenny's nose had scarcely caught and reflected its kindred ray, when the sturdiest and most active cob that ever rejoiced in the appellation of a "Suffolk Punch," brought herself up in mid career upon her haunches, and that with a suddenness which had almost induced her rider to describe that beautiful mathematical figure, the *parabola*, between her ears. Peggy—her name was Peggy—stood stock-still, snorting like a stranded grampus, and alike insensible to the gentle hints afforded her by hand and heel.

"Tch!—tch!—get along, Peggy!" half-exclaimed, half-whistled the equestrian. If ever steed said in its heart, "I'll be shot if I do!" it was Peggy at that moment. She planted her forelegs deep in the sandy soil, raised her stump of a tail to an elevation approaching the horizontal, protruded her nose like a pointer at a covey, and with expanded nostril continued to snuffle most egregiously.

Mr. Geoffrey Gambado, the illustrious "Master of the Horse to the Doge of Venice," tells us, in his far-famed treatise on the Art Equestrian, that the most embarrassing position in which a rider can be placed is, when *he* wishes to go one way, and his horse is determined to go another. There is, to be sure, a *tertium quid*, which, though it "splits the difference," scarcely obviates the inconvenience; this is when the parties compromise the matter by not going any way at all—to this compromise Peggy and her (*soi-disant*) master were now reduced; they had fairly joined issue. "Budge!" quoth the doctor—"Budge not!" quoth the fiend,—for nothing short of a fiend could, of a surety, inspire Peggy at such a time with such unwanted obstinacy—Moneypenny whipped and spurred—Peggy plunged, and reared, and kicked, and for several minutes to a superficial observer the termination of the contest might have appeared uncertain; but your profound thinker sees at a glance that, however the scales may appear to vibrate, when the question between the sexes is one of perseverance, it is quite a lost case for the masculine gender. Peggy beat the doctor "all to sticks," and when he was fairly tired of goading and thumping, maintained her position as firmly as ever.

It is of no great use, and not particularly agreeable, to sit still, on a cold frosty morning in January, upon the outside of a brute that will neither go forwards nor backwards—so Mr. Moneypenny got off, and muttering curses *both* "loud" *and* "deep" between his chattering teeth, "progressed" as near as the utmost extremity of the extended bridle would allow him, to peep among the weeds and brushwood that flanked the road, in order to discover, if possible, what it was that so exclusively attracted the instinctive attention of his Bucephalus.

His curiosity was not long at fault; the sunbeam glanced partially upon some object ruddier even than itself—it was a scarlet waistcoat, the wearer of which, overcome perchance by Christmas computation, seemed to have selected for his "thrice-driven bed of down" the thickest clump of the tallest and most imposing nettles, thereon to doze away the narcotic effects of superabundant juniper.

This, at least, was Mr. Moneypenny's belief, or he would scarcely have uttered, at the highest pitch of his *contralto*, "What are you doing there, you drunken rascal? frightening my horse!"—We have already hinted, if not absolutely asserted, that Peggy was a mare; but this was no time for verbal criticism.—"Get up, I say—get up, and go home, you scoundrel!"—But the "scoundrel" and "drunken rascal" answered not; he moved not, nor could the prolonged shouting of the appellant, aided by significant explosions from a double-thonged whip, succeed in

eliciting a reply. No motion indicated that the recumbent figure, whose outline alone was visible, was a living and a breathing man.

The clear, shrill tones of a ploughboy's whistle sounded at this moment from the bottom of the hill, where the broad and green expanse of Romney Marsh stretches away from its foot for many a mile, and now gleamed through the mists of morning, dotted and enamelled with its thousand flocks. In a few minutes his tiny figure was seen "slouching" up the ascent, casting a most disproportionate and ogre-like shadow before him.

"Come here, Jack" quoth the doctor,—“come here, boy; lay hold of this bridle, and mind that my horse does not run away.”

Peggy threw up her head, and snorted disdain of the insinuation,—she had not the slightest intention of doing any such thing.

Mr. Moneypenny meanwhile, disencumbered of his restive nag, proceeded, by manual application, to arouse the sleeper.

Alas! the Seven of Ephesus might sooner have been awakened from their century of somnolency. His was that "dreamless sleep that knows no waking"; his cares in this world were over. Vainly did Moneypenny practise his own constant precept, "To be well shaken!"—there lay before him the lifeless body of a MURDERED MAN!

The corpse lay stretched upon its back, partially concealed, as we have before said, by the nettles which had sprung up among the stumps of the half-grubbed underwood; the throat was fearfully lacerated, and the dark, deep, arterial dye of the coagulated blood showed that the carotid had been severed. There was little to denote the existence of any struggle but as the day brightened, the sandy soil of the road exhibited an impression as of a body that had fallen on its plastic surface, and had been dragged to its present position, while fresh horse-shoe prints seemed to intimate that either the assassin or his victim had been mounted. The pockets of the deceased were turned out, and empty; a hat and heavy-loaded whip lay at no great distance from the body.

"But what have we here?" quoth Dr. Moneypenny; "what is that the poor fellow holds so tightly in his hand?"

That hand had manifestly clutched some article with all the spasmodic energy of a dying grasp—IT WAS AN OLD WIG!

Those who are fortunate enough to have seen a Cinque Port court-house may possibly divine what that useful and most necessary edifice was some eighty years ago. Many of them seem to have undergone little alteration, and are in general of a composite order of architecture, a fanciful arrangement of brick and timber, with what Johnson would have styled "interstices, reticulated, and decussated" between "intersections" of lath and plaster. Its less euphonious designation in the "Weald" is a "noggin." One half the basement story is usually of the more solid material, the other, open to the street,—from which it is separated only by a row of dingy columns, supporting a portion of the superstructure,—is paved with tiles, and sometimes does duty as a market-place, while, in its centre, flanking the board staircase that leads to the sessions-house above, stands an ominous-looking machine, of heavy perforated wood, clasped within whose stern embrace "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep" off occasionally the drowsiness produced by convivial excess, in a most undignified position, an inconvenience much increased at times by some mischievous urchin, who, after abstracting the shoes of the helpless *detenu*, amuses himself by tickling the soles of his feet.

It was in such a place, or rather in the Court-room above, that in the year 1761 a hale, robust man, somewhat past the middle age, with a very bald pate, save where a continued tuft of coarse, wiry hair, stretching from above each ear, swelled out into a greyish-looking bush upon the occiput, held up his hand before a grave and enlightened assemblage of Dymchurch jurymen. He stood arraigned for that offence most heinous in the sight of God and man, the deliberate and cold-blooded butchery of an unoffending, unprepared, fellow-creature,—*homicidium quod nullo vidente, nullo auscultante, clam perpetratur*.

The victim was one Humphry Bourne, a reputable grazier of Ivychurch, worthy and well-to-do, though, perchance, a thought too apt to indulge on a market-day, when “a score of ewes” had brought in a reasonable profit. Some such cause had detained him longer than usual at an Ashford cattle-show; he had left the town late, and alone; early in the following morning his horse was found standing at his own stable-door, the saddle turned round beneath its belly, and much about the time that the corpse of its unfortunate master was discovered some four miles off, by our friend the pharmacopohist.

That poor Bourne had been robbed and murdered there could be no question.

Who, then, was the perpetrator of the atrocious deed?—The unwilling hand almost refuses to trace the name of—Joseph Washford.

Yet so it was. Mr. Jeremiah Jarvis was himself the coroner for that division of the county of Kent known by the name of “The Lath of Scraye.” He had not sat two minutes on the body before he recognised his *quondam* property, and started at beholding in the grasp of the victim, as torn in the death-struggle from the murderer’s head, his own OLD WIG!—his own perky little pigtail, tied up with a piece of shabby shalloon, now wriggling and quivering, as in salutation of its ancient master. The silver buckles of the murdered man were found in Joe Washford’s shoes,—broad pieces were found in Joe Washford’s pockets,—Joe Washford had himself been found, when the hue-and-cry was up, hid in a corn-rig at no great distance from the scene of slaughter, his pruning-knife red with the evidence of his crime—“the grey hairs yet stuck to the heft!”

For their humane administration of the laws, the lieges of this portion of the realm have long been celebrated. Here it was that merciful verdict was recorded in the case of the old lady accused of larceny, “We find her Not Guilty, and hope she will never do so any more!” Here it was that the more experienced culprit, when called upon to plead with the customary, though somewhat superfluous, inquiry, as to “how he would be tried?” substituted for the usual reply “By God and my country,” that of “By your worship and a Dymchurch Jury.”—Here it was—but enough!—not even a Dymchurch Jury could resist such evidence, even though the gallows (*i.e.* the expense of erecting one) stared them, as well as the criminal, in the face. The very pigtail alone!—ever at his ear!—a clearer case of *suadente Diabolo* never was made out. Had there been a doubt, its very conduct in the Court-house would have settled the question. The Rev. Joel Ingoldsby, umquhile chaplain to the Romney Bench, has left upon record that when exhibited in evidence, together with the blood-stained knife, its twistings, its caperings, its gleeful evolutions quite “flabbergasted” the jury, and threw all beholders into a consternation. It was remarked too, by many in the Court, that the Forensic Wig of the Recorder himself, was, on that trying occasion, palpably agitated, and that its three depending, learned-looking tails lost curl at once, and slunk beneath the obscurity of the powdered collar, just as the boldest dog recoils from a rabid animal of its own species, however small and insignificant.

Why prolong the painful scene?—Joe Washford was tried— Joe Washford was convicted— Joe Washford was hanged!

The fearful black gibbet, on which his body clanked in its chains to the midnight winds, frowns no more upon Orlestone Hill; it has sunk beneath the encroaching hand of civilisation; but there it might be seen late in the last century, an awful warning to all bald-paled gentlemen how they wear, or accept, the old wig of a Special Attorney,

Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes!

Such gifts, as we have seen, may lead to a “Morbid Delusion, the climax of which is Murder!”

The fate of the Wig itself is somewhat doubtful; nobody seems to have recollected, with any degree of precision, what became of it. Mr. Ingoldsby “had heard” that, when thrown into the fire by the Court-keeper, after whizzing, and fizzling, and performing all sorts of supernatural antics and contortions, it at length whirled up the chimney with a bang that was taken for the explosion of one of the Feversham powder-mills, twenty miles off; while others insinuate that in the “Great Storm” which took place on the night when Mr. Jeremiah Jarvis went to his “long home,”—wherever that may happen to be,—and the whole of “The Marsh” appeared as one broad sheet of flame, something that looked very like a Fiery Wig—perhaps a miniature Comet—it had unquestionably a tail—was seen careering in the blaze,—and seeming to “ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm.”