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978-1-108-04440-0 - The Book of Wonderful Characters: Memoirs and Anecdotes of Remarkable and Eccentric Persons in All Ages and Countries

Henry Wilson and James Caulfield

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The Book of Wonderful Characters

Printmaker James Caulfield (1764–1826) spent much of his career publishing illustrated books about ‘remarkable persons’. He began his first series around 1788 and continued it sporadically from 1790 to 1795, with books on a similar theme continuing to appear in the first decades of the nineteenth century. More than forty years after his death, this collection of biographies (produced in collaboration with Henry Wilson (*fl.* 1820–30)) was republished in 1869. The edition’s introduction explains that the renewed interest in these characters comes from the fact that ‘we have nearly lost all, and are daily losing what little remains of, our individuality’. The vignettes, accompanied by engravings of each individual, describe a wide-ranging group – from the man who died aged 152 to a ‘remarkable glutton’, and a woman who lived on the smell of flowers – their only common factor being that they were in some way ‘wonderful’.

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The Book of Wonderful Characters

*Memoirs and Anecdotes of Remarkable and
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HENRY WILSON
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THE WONDERFUL MISS ATKINSON

Born in Ireland, has £20,000 fortune, and is fed out of a Silver Trough

GEORGE MORLAND

This account is verbatim from the handwriting of the late George Morland on the back of the original drawing now in the possession of his Nephew

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OF
REMARKABLE AND ECCENTRIC PERSONS IN
ALL AGES AND COUNTRIES.

CHIEFLY FROM THE TEXT OF
HENRY WILSON AND JAMES CAULFIELD.



MATTHEW BUCHINGER,
The wonderful little man of Nuremberg.

ILLUSTRATED WITH SIXTY-ONE FULL PAGE ENGRAVINGS.

LONDON:
JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, PICCADILLY.

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PRELIMINARY,

With a few Words upon Pig-faced Ladies.

THE BIOGRAPHIES of men who have essentially differed from the rest of the human race, either by their having been born with some peculiar congenital defect, or possessing an eccentricity of character, which inevitably impels them to overleap and trespass from the boundaries of the beaten highway of conventional life, have been in all times eagerly sought after by the curious inquirer into human nature. Indeed, it is probable that the fables attributed to Æsop have maintained their long popularity, in all the languages of the globe, from the simple fact that their author was said to be extremely deformed from his birth—that he passed through life in the servile condition of a slave, and met his tragical end at last by the unjust cruelty of the mistaken inhabitants of Delphi.

There is a great change, too, in the manners and customs of the people of England, that renders a book like this still more interesting at the present time. We have nearly lost all, and are daily losing what little remains of, our individuality; all people and all places seem now to be alike; and the railways are, no doubt, the principal cause of this change. For railway stations, all over the world, seem to have a strong, we might almost call it a family, resemblance to each other; while there

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was a great deal of difference, both in the localities and in the originality of the people you met with, at the old roadside or village inns where the coach stopped to change horses. In the old coaching times of England, there was scarcely a village in which the mail-coach changed its horses but had its eccentric oddity of some kind or another, and this oddity was as certain to be at the inn-yard, to see and be seen by the travelling strangers, as the master of the house himself. But now, when we go to a country town, there is nothing to be seen but a railway station, with its usual complement of guards, porters, policemen, &c., as like as two peas are to the one we left miles away. The life-like although fictitious description of the railway station and refreshment rooms at Mugby Junction, may be applied to every other station in England.

Indeed, the tendency of the present day, in England, is directly opposed to the spirit of individual exclusiveness which, as the great encourager of eccentricity of character, once prevailed over all the country. Science is no longer locked up in a few colleges, royal societies, or inaccessible volumes. Through the public press, discoveries and theories, once the monopoly of a few philosophers, have become the common property of the multitude; and what is true of science is still more true of literature. Genius now sends its light into cottages; for works that were once too costly for even the opulent are now so cheap as to be found on the labourer's shelf. With the fine arts it is just the same. If, as it is said, the spirit of the great artists has died out, yet the taste for their works is still with us. By the improvements of engraving, and the invention of casts, the genius of the great artists is spreading everywhere abroad. Their conceptions are no longer pent up in galleries, open to but a few, but meet us in our houses, and are the refined household treasures of millions. Works designed for the halls and eyes of emperors, popes, and nobles, find their way, in no poor representations, into humble dwellings, and sometimes give a consciousness of kindred powers to

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the child of poverty. The art of drawing, which lies at the foundation of most of the fine arts, and is the best education of the eye for nature, is becoming a branch of common education, and in many countries is now taught in schools to which all classes are admitted.

And a work such as this does much more than merely satisfy the curiosity of its readers. To take only one instance, it plainly tells us of the miserably wretched lives invariably led by those who avariciously and profanely make money to be their Deity, the be-all and end-all of the life of man. Byron's usual intelligence seems to have forsaken him when he wrote the following lines :—

“Oh, gold ! why call we misers miserable ?
 Theirs is the pleasure that can never pall ;
 Theirs is the best bower-anchor o' the chain-cable,
 Which holds fast other pleasures, great and small.
 Ye who but see the saving man at table,
 And scorn his temperate board, as none at all,
 And wonder how the wealthy can be sparing,
 Know not what visions spring from each cheese-paring.

“Perhaps he hath great projects in his mind—
 To build a college, or to found a race,
 A hospital, a church—and leave behind
 Some dome surmounted by his meagre face ;
 Perhaps he fain would liberate mankind,
 Even with the very ore that makes them base ;
 Perhaps he would be wealthiest of his nation,
 Or revel in the joys of calculation.”

But this poetical view of the subject does not, in any instance, prove true to nature. It is not the benefits his money can buy, which he invariably denies to himself, that ever afford satisfaction to the pinching muckworm ; it is the mere possession of the wealth alone, the adding of coin to coin, many times rapaciously gained, the satisfaction of his itching palm, that forms the miser's whole desire and happiness.—Dr. John-

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son, with more justice, said to Boswell, "A man who both spends and saves money is the happiest man, because he has both enjoyments."

A good story, relating to our subject, is told of the famous Prince of Conde. He on one occasion, when leaving his country house, left his son, then just nine years of age, the large sum of fifty louis-d'or to spend, while he himself was absent in Paris. On his return, the boy came to him triumphantly, saying, "Papa, here is all the money safe ; I never touched it once." The Prince, without making any reply, took his son to the window, and quietly emptied all the money out of the purse. Then he said, "If you have neither virtue enough to give away your money, nor spirit enough to spend it, always do this for the future, that the poor may have a chance of getting some of it." History tells us that this lesson, so different from what he anticipated, was not lost on the youth ; and when he grew to be a man, no one was so prudent in turning his wealth to so good an account as the son of the renowned Prince of Conde. And we verily believe that this book, displaying such characters as Elwes, Cooke, Dancer, and D'Aguilar, in all their naked deformity, is likely to do more good than a thousand homilies against the avaricious sin of hoarding up treasures upon earth, "where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal."

ANOTHER lesson to mankind is found in the life of Count Boruwlaski, whose portrait, with a short biography, are given elsewhere in the present work. Though a dwarf and a foreigner, his prospects ruined in his own country, and unacquainted with the language spoken here, yet, by his tranquil, contented disposition, his unstained character, and his true politeness, he made himself hosts of friends, who tenderly solaced the long life of the *petit* Count ; for he reached the great age of ninety-eight years. And when his last scene was over—when grim death at length claimed his own in the per-

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son of the little man, at Banks Cottage, Durham, in 1837—his remains were buried close to those of Stephen Kemble, in the Nine Altars of Durham ; while in the parish church of St. Mary-the-Less a neat mural tablet of white stone, erected by his friends, bears an inscription to his memory ; and so well was he beloved by the inhabitants of Durham, that a bend in the river Were, which almost surrounds the city, is still called the Count's Corner.

It was not only by the poor inhabitants of Durham that the Count was esteemed ; he was treated with all the respect due to his unsullied reputation by George IV., then the greatest man in the empire. It is not often, now a-days, that we hear the Fourth George well spoken of, and we feel happy in having to do so now. It is a great mistake to suppose that, because a man is a voluptuary, and much more remarkable for his good manners than for his good morals, that he is therefore a person wholly bad. There really is no such being as one wholly bad, or wholly good either. Every human being is a mixture of various, and often apparently incongruous, elements, one relieving and redeeming the other, sometimes one assuming a predominance, and sometimes another—very much as the accidental provocations of external circumstances may determine. And there is no doubt that it was so with this monarch, as well as it was with the humblest of his subjects.

Boruwłaski wished to present his book to the King, to whom he had been known many years previously, and through the exertions of Mathews, the famous comedian, the interview took place at Carlton House, in July, 1821, when the approaching coronation was greatly occupying the royal mind. The two visitors, the old Polish dwarf and the player, were treated by the King with great tenderness—and, even more than that, with great considerate delicacy. On being introduced into the apartment, the King raised the dwarf up into his arms in a kind embrace, saying, "My dear old friend, how delighted I am to see you !" and then placed the little man on a sofa beside him.

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But, Boruwlaski's loyalty not being so satisfied, he descended with the agility of a schoolboy, and threw himself at the King's feet, who, however, would not suffer him to remain in that position for a minute, and again raised him to the sofa. The King, in accepting the book which the Count wished to present to him, turned to the Marchioness of Conyngham, and took from her a little case containing a beautiful miniature watch and seals, attached by a superb chain, the watch exquisitely ornamented with jewels. This the King begged Boruwlaski to accept, saying, as he held the book in his other hand, "My dear friend, I shall read and preserve this as long as I live, for your sake; and in return I request you will wear this for mine." His Majesty then said, out of hearing of the Count, "If I had a dozen sons, I could not point out to them a more perfect model of good breeding and elegance than the Count. He is really a most accomplished and charming person."

While the Count and the King were for a little time apart together, the King took the opportunity to inquire if the little Count required any pecuniary help to make his latter days more comfortable, avowing his desire to supply whatever was necessary. The King also offered to show his coronation robes to the dwarf, and further asked him if he retained any recollection of a favourite valet of his, whom he named. The Count professing a perfect remembrance of the man, the King said—"He is now on his death-bed. I saw him this morning, and mentioned your expected visit. He expressed a great desire to see you, which I ventured to promise you should do; for I have such a regard for him, that I would gratify his last hours as much as possible. Will you, Count, do me the favour of paying my poor faithful servant a short visit? He is even now expecting you. I hope you will not refuse to indulge a poor, suffering, dying creature." The Count, of course, expressed his readiness to obey the King's wishes.

Boruwlaski was first shewn the robes, and then conducted

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to the chamber of the sick man, which was fitted up with every comfort and care ; a nurse and another attendant being in waiting upon the sufferer. When the Count was announced the poor invalid desired to be propped up in his bed. He was so changed by time and sickness, that the Count no longer recognised the face with which his memory was familiar. The nurse and attendant having retired into an adjoining room, the dying man (for such he was, and felt himself to be) expressed the great obligation he felt at such a visit, and spoke most gratefully of him whom he designated as the *best of masters* ; told the Count of all the King's goodness to him, and, indeed, of his uniform benevolence to all that depended on him ; mentioned that his majesty, during the long course of his poor servant's illness, notwithstanding the circumstances that had agitated himself so long, his numerous duties and cares, his present anxieties and forthcoming ceremonies, had never omitted to visit his bedside *twice every day*, not for a moment merely, but long enough to soothe and comfort him, and to see that he had everything necessary and desirable, telling him all particulars of himself that were interesting to an old and attached servant and humble friend. This account was so genuine in its style, and so affecting in its relation, that it deeply touched the heart of the listener. The dying man, feeling exhaustion, put an end to the interview by telling the Count that he only prayed to live long enough to greet his dear master after the *coronation*—to hear that the ceremony had been performed with due honour, and without any interruption to his dignity—and that then he was ready to die in peace.

Poor Boruwlaski returned to the royal presence, utterly subdued by the foregoing scene ; upon which every feeling heart will, we are persuaded, make its own comment, unmixed with party spirit or prejudice. At any rate, Boruwlaski came away from Carlton House in tears at the kindness that George IV. had manifested towards him.

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THE MYSTERIOUS, indeed we may say, epicene character of the Chevalier D'Eon has caused him to this very day to be enveloped in a cloud of inexplicable mystification: and a very curious circumstance, relating thereto, has occurred in France, which exposing, as it does, the system under which Frenchmen make up books for the public, is well worthy of being set forth here. A. M. Gaillardet published at Paris a *Mémoire* of the Chevalier, in two octavo volumes, as far back as the year 1836. He was aided by many family papers and documents calculated to throw a new light on the character of the Chevalier, which he liberally obtained from members of his family; and the Duke of Broglie, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, and M. Mignet, Director of the Chancelleries of France, gave him full permission to ransack the Archives for the whole period of the Chevalier's diplomatic career. With such advantages in his favour, we might have expected a truthful history of the remarkable man; but that was not the way that our French friend worked, as he afterwards disclosed, and the way in which it was discovered that this *Mémoire* was falsely written, is not the least interesting portion of our story.

Some few years after the *Mémoire* was published, another book appeared at Paris on the same mysterious theme, entitled *Un Hermaphrodite*, written by M. Jourdan, the editor of the *Siècle*. This book fell under the notice of M. Gaillardet, who was surprised to find it no other than a complete reproduction of his *Mémoire*; not only in the parts authentic, but also in those fictitious. Of the 301 pages of which *Un Hermaphrodite* is composed, no less than 222 are taken word for word from M. Gaillardet's *Mémoire*. The latter seeing this, at once let the cat out of the bag, and in the preface to a second edition, of which the title was altered to *Vérité sur la Chevalier D'Eon*, he, under the heading of "An Act of Contrition and an Act of Accusation," tells us how his *Mémoire* was composed.

He was, as he says, a young man about twenty-five years of age when he wrote that book; a friend of Alexander Dumas,

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and fond of the theatre, and stories of complicated intrigues, tragical amours, and mysterious secrets. The life of the Chevalier D'Eon, which he met with at first by mere accident struck him with surprise. He immediately saw how it ought to be told. The Chevalier dressed himself as a woman, so as to carry on his many amorous intrigues, without fear of detection, like another Faublas. He said to himself that a man (for the Chevalier was a man) who had filled many important diplomatic missions, in the disguise of a woman—for he had officially to take this costume—had necessarily many piquant if not terrible adventures in the course of his career. He thought, at the same time in good faith, that he had discovered a clue to the whole in the letters of nocturnal audiences granted to him by the young queen of England, after the peace of 1763—a peace as necessary, as it was shameful for France; and as the cause of it, the English press accused their minister of being corrupted by French diplomacy. His imagination revelled in this idea, and the result of this work was, that the *Mémoire* was written partly authentic and partly fictitious. In spite of that, he concludes, it sold well, and is now out of print.

Probably it was the last consideration that had most power in causing Gaillardet to write this most scandalous and untruthful work. How purely French was the idea of thus making D'Eon a second Faublas. And how truly French was the system of plagiarism of Jordan, which at last compelled Gaillardet to tell the truth, and to denounce him in the following words:

“The same benignity of spirit has caused my plagiarist to adopt also all that I have thought and said of the amours of the Chevalier D'Eon, and Charlotte, Duchess of Mecklenburg, and Queen of England. He even reproduced, word for word, the reflections which I had put into the mouth of my hero on the subject—“A Queen to be devoured was, as it appeared to me, a morsel too appetising to be regarded with any scruples.”

And M. Gaillardet tells us, minutely, this atrocious fiction

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of an intrigue between the Chevalier and Queen Charlotte over and over again. Their stolen interviews are all disclosed by this prurient Frenchman. George IV. is again and again spoken of as the son of the Chevalier and not of George III. Of course, the jealousy of George III. is minutely dwelt upon, and we have details of his discovering the Queen and D'Eon together at an assignation, at the hour of two o'clock in the morning. All the love passages, and all the jealous recriminations of the lovers, are fully detailed ; and neither in authentic nor fictitious history have we ever found such words as M. Gaillardet puts into the mouth of his hero, so applicable to any men as himself—"A Queen to be devoured was, as it appeared to me, a morsel too appetising to be regarded with any scruples."

Poor Queen Charlotte, that not a painter of the day could flatter enough, so as to make her have a beautiful appearance, but always seems to us to resemble a cat dressed up, and strange to say, that something of the feline character really seems to display itself in her history. She surely may put in, "Nae temptation," as Burns says, as a plea in her favour. But what are we to say of the original inventor of such an atrocious scandal, who now in the new edition of his work, totally disavows it? Truly it may be said that the story is too absurd, the book in which it is propagated is so little known. But a ridiculously mean calumny, such as this is, should always be denounced and exposed ; and more especially as it has been put in print in a book, which professes to be founded upon historical materials. In the latter case, the wrong is indefinitely increased ; for it is liable to be quoted without suspicion, and received as true without question. And this very scandal has been so received as recently as 1858, and printed in the *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*. It is true that the editor of that work doubts the truth of the story ; but nevertheless in his work of recognised authority, M. Gaillardet's unworthy figment is treated, not as the gross libel which it is, but as the deliberate statement of

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one, who had made the life of the alleged partner of Queen Charlotte's misconduct his special study.

ANOTHER STORY of world-wide fame deserves to be related in this Book of Wonderful Characters. There can be few persons who have not heard of the celebrated Pig-Faced Lady, whose history, whether mythical or not, is common to several European languages, and is generally related in the following manner. A newly married lady of rank and fashion, being annoyed by the importunities of a wretched beggar-woman, accompanied by a dirty, squalling child, exclaimed—"Take away your nasty pig, I shall not give you anything!" Whereupon the enraged mendicant, with a bitter imprecation related—"May your own child, when it is born, be more like a pig than mine!" And, accordingly, shortly afterwards the lady gave birth to a child, in which the beggar's unfortunate malediction was impartially fulfilled. It was a girl perfectly, nay, beautifully formed in every respect, save that its face, some say its whole head, exactly resembled that of a pig. This strange child thrived apace, and in course of time grew to be a woman, giving the unhappy parents great trouble and affliction; not only by its disgusting features alone, but also by its hoggish manners in general, much easier, at the present day, to be imagined than minutely described. The fond and wealthy parents, however, paid every attention to this hideous creature, their only child. Its voracious and indelicate appetite was appeased by the coarsest food of a hog, however, placed in a silver trough. To the waiting maid, who attended on the creature, risking the savage snaps of its beastly jaws, and enduring the horrible grunts and squeaks of its discordant voice, a small fortune had to be paid in annual wages, yet seldom could a person be obtained to fill the disagreeable situation longer than a month. A still greater perplexity ever troubled the unfortunate parents, namely, as to what would become of the wretched creature after their decease. Counsel learned in

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the law were consulted, who advised that the Pig-Faced Lady should be immediately married, the father, besides giving a handsome dowry in hand to the happy, or perhaps unhappy, bridegroom, he should be termed, settling a handsome annuity on the intrepid husband, for as long as she should live. But experience proving that after the first introduction, the boldest fortune-hunters declined any further acquaintance with her, another course was suggested. This was for the parents to found an hospital, the trustees of which were to be bound to protect and cherish the Pig-Faced damsel, until her death relieved them from the unpleasing guardianship. And thus it is that, after long and careful researches on the printed and legendary histories of Pig-Faced ladies, the writer has always found them wanting either a husband, or a waiting maid, or connected with the founding of an hospital.

But as there are exceptions to all general rules, so there is an exceptional story of a Pig-Faced lady ; according to which, it appears that a gentleman, whose religious ideas were greatly confused by the many jarring sects that sprang into existence during the time of the Commonwealth, ended his perplexity by embracing the Jewish faith, vainly considering that what was once the religion that the Almighty had planted on the earth, could not be altogether wrong in his time. But he soon found that he had fearfully reckoned without his host. The very first child born to him after this change of religion was a Pig-Faced girl. Years passed, and the girl grew to womanhood, without ever receiving an embrace or a kiss from her wretched father, for how could a Jew touch the head of an unclean beast? Did not Wamba, the son of Witless, the grandson of Weatherbrain, discomfit Isaac, the Jew of York, at the tournament of Ashby, with a shield of brawn, and turn him out of the gallery by merely presenting it? However, the gentleman had to travel on some business to the Netherlands where he met with an aged monk, to whom he happened to tell the grievous story of his Pig-Faced daughter. The monk

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asked him what he could expect otherwise, and told him that his daughter's hideous countenance was a divine punishment inflicted on him for his grievous apostacy. The father, now seeing his error, caused himself to be reconverted to Christianity; and on the Pig-Faced being baptised, a holy miracle occurred—a copious ablution of holy water changing the beastly features to the divine human face. This remarkable story is said to be recorded by a choice piece of monumental sculpture erected in one of the grand old cathedrals in Belgium. It may, however, be better to take the story as we do our wives, “for better, for worse,” rather than go so far on so uncertain a direction, to look for evidence.

There are several old works that were considered sound scientific treatises in their day, filled with the wildest and most extravagant stories of monsters of all descriptions, but not one of them, at least as far as our researches extend, mention a pig-faced man or woman. St. Hilaire, the celebrated physiologist, in his remarkable work on the anomalies of organisation, though he ransacks all nature, both ancient and modern, for his illustrations, never notices such a being. What, then, it may be asked, has caused this very prevalent story? No doubt it was some unhappy malformation, exaggerated as all such things are by vulgar report, which gave origin to the tale, subsequently enlarged and disseminated by catch-penny publications of the chap-book kind. There was exhibited in London, a few years ago, a female, who, at an earlier period, might readily have passed for a pig-faced lady; though the lower part of her countenance resembled that of a dog, much more than a pig. This unfortunate creature, called Julia Pastorana, was said to be of Spanish-American birth. After being exhibited in London, she was taken to the Continent, where she died; and such is the indecent cupidity of showmen, so great is the morbid curiosity of sight-seers, that her embalmed remains were again exhibited in the metropolis in 1863. The last time, however, that her remains were exhibited, few went to see them, and the

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speculation was so far a failure ; but no doubt she has at last found her way into the possession of some Barnum, and now forms the *pièce de résistance* of an American museum.

The earliest account of a pig-faced lady that the writer has met with, was published in London, in 1641, and entitled, *A certain relation of the Hog-Faced Gentlewoman*. From this production we learn that her name was Tanakin Skinker, and that she was born at Wirkham on the Rhine, in 1618. As might be expected, in a contemporary Dutch work, which is either a translation, or mayhap the original of the English one, she is said to have been born at Windsor on the Thames. Miss Skinker is described as having :—

“All the limbs and lineaments of her body well-featured and proportioned, only her face, which is the ornament and beauty of all the rest, has the nose of a hog or swine, which is not only a stain and blemish, but a deformed ugliness, making all the rest loathsome, contemptible, and odious to all that look on her.”

Her language, we are further informed, is only the hoggish Dutch *ough, ough !* or the French *owee, owee !* Forty thousand pounds, we are told, was the sum offered to the man who would consent to marry her, and the author says :—

“This was a bait sufficient to make every fish bite at, for no sooner was this publicly divulged, but there came suitors of all sorts, every one hoped to carry away the great prize, for it was not the person but the prize they aimed at.”

Gallants, we are told, came from Italy, France, Scotland, England, and Ireland, of the last we may be sure, to carry away the prize, but when they saw the lady, they one and all refused to marry her. There is a very characteristic wood-cut on the title page of this work, representing a gallant, gaily attired, bashfully addressing her ; while bowing, his hat in his hand, with the words—“God save you, sweet mistress.” She, on the other hand, is most magnificently dressed, and coming forward to meet him with the greatest cordiality, can only reply with the words—“Ough, ough.”

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In the earlier part of this century, there was a kind of publication much in vogue, somewhat resembling the more ancient broadsides, but better printed, and mostly adorned with a pretentious coloured engraving. One of these, painted by Morland, and published by Palmer, forms the frontispiece to the present work. And another, published by Fairburn, also gives us an exact portrait of her, and her silver trough placed on the table by her side. It is a curious circumstance, that both these engravings were published in February 1815. And it was a general belief then, that a pig-faced lady resided in London, from facts which we are just going to relate. How the belief arose it is impossible for us to say, there was no person exhibited at that time to have caused it. But at the illuminations for the battle of Waterloo, which took place but a few months previous, a carriage was observed, and in it a magnificently dressed female with a pig's head. She was subsequently seen driving about in different parts of London, but there were no police then, and the driver of the carriage always succeeded in eluding the curiosity of the crowd. Many persons said that it was some one wearing a theatrical mask, even some of the newspapers mentioned his name, and we may conclude that it was one of the hoaxes so commonly played off in those days.

However, Fairburn's portrait is accompanied with a considerable portion of letterpress, from which we learn that she was then unmarried, and only twenty years of age. She lived, we are told, in Manchester Square, and had been born in Ireland of a high and wealthy family, and on her life and issue by marriage, a very large property depended.

"This prodigy of nature," says the author, "is the general topic of conversation in the metropolis. In almost every company you may join the Pig-Faced lady is introduced; and her existence is firmly believed in by thousands, particularly those in the west end of the town. Her person is most delicately formed, and of the greatest symmetry; her hands and arms are delicately modelled in the happiest mould of nature; and the carriage of her body, indicative

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of superior birth. Her manners are, in general, simple and unoffending ; but when she is in want of food she articulates, certainly, something like the sound of pigs when eating, and which, to those who are not acquainted with her, may perhaps be a little disagreeable."

She seems, however, to have been disagreeable enough to the servant who attended upon her and slept with her ; for this attendant, though receiving one thousand pounds per annum, as wages, left the situation, and gave the foregoing particulars to the publisher. And there can be little doubt that this absurd publication of Fairburn, caused a poor simpleton to pay for the following advertisement, which appeared in the *Times* of Thursday the 9th of February, 1815 :—

"FOR THE ATTENTION OF GENTLEMEN AND
LADIES.

A YOUNG GENTLEWOMAN HAVING HEARD OF AN Advertisement for a Person to undertake the care of a Lady, who is heavily afflicted in the Face, whose Friends have offered a handsome Income yearly, and a Premium for residing with her seven Years, would do all in her power to render her Life most Comfortable ; an undeniable Character can be obtained from a respectable Circle of Friends. An Answer to this Advertisement is requested, as the Advertiser will keep herself disengaged. *Address, post paid, to X. Y., at Mr. Ford's, Baker, 12, Judd Street, Brunswick Square."*

Another male simpleton, probably misled in a similar manner, but aspiring to a nearer connection with the Pig-Faced lady, thus advertised in the *Morning Herald* of February 16, 1815 :—

"SECRECY.

A SINGLE GENTLEMAN, AGED THIRTY-ONE, OF a respectable Family, and in whom the utmost Confidence may be reposed, is desirous of explaining his Mind to the Friends of a Person who has a Misfortune in her Face, but is prevented for want of an Introduction. Being

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perfectly aware of the principal Particulars, and understanding that a final Settlement would be preferred to a temporary one, presumes he would be found to answer the full extent of their wishes. His intentions are sincere, honourable, and firmly resolved. References of great respectability can be given. *Address to M.D., at Mr. Spencer's, 22, Great Ormond Street, Queen's Square."*

For oral relations of the Pig-Faced lady, we must go to Dublin. If we make enquiries there respecting her, we shall be shown the hospital founded and endowed on her sole account. We will be told that her picture and silver trough are to be seen in the building, and that she was christened *Grisly*, on account of her hideous appearance. Any further doubts exhibited after receiving this information, will be considered as insults to common sense. Now, the history of Steevens' Hospital, the institution referred to, is simply this. In 1710, Dr. Steevens, a benevolent physician, bequeathed his real estate, producing then £600 per annum, to his only sister Griselda, during her life, and after her death vested it into trustees for the erection and endowment of a hospital. Miss Steevens being a lady of practical benevolence, determined that the hospital should be built in her lifetime, and devoting £450 a year of her income to the purpose, she collected subscriptions and donations from every possible quarter, and by dint of her unceasing exertions, in a few years succeeded in opening a part of the building equal to the accommodation of forty patients. Whether it was the uncommon name of Griselda, or the then uncommon benevolence of this lady that gave rise to the vulgar notion respecting her head, will probably never be satisfactorily explained. But her portrait hangs in the library of the hospital, proving her to have been a very pleasant-looking lady, with a peculiarly benevolent cast of countenance.

The idea that Miss Steevens was a pig-faced lady still prevails among the vulgar in Dublin; but when the writer was a boy, some fifty years ago, everybody believed it. It was cus-

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tomary then, even in genteel society, for parties to be made up to go to the hospital, to see the silver trough and the pig-faced picture. The matron, or housekeeper, that shewed the establishment, never denied the existence of those curiosities, but always alleged that she could not show them, implying, by her mode of saying it, that she dared not, that to do so would be contrary to the stringent orders she had received. The matron, no doubt, obtained many a shilling by this mode of keeping up the delusion. Besides, many persons who had gone to the hospital with the express purpose of seeing the trough and picture, did not like to acknowledge that they had not seen them. And thus as one fool makes many, there were plenty of persons in Dublin ready to swear that these curiosities were preserved in the hospital.

Another instance of the dissemination of this idea, that fell strictly within the writer's notice, occurred in the north of Ireland. In a certain house there, about fifty years ago, there happened to be a large silver punch-bowl, much bruised and battered from its long and active service in the cause of Bacchus. The crest of a former proprietor, representing a boar's head, was engraved upon it. Now, we are sure that but few of our readers will recollect the use of the punch-bowl in private houses, so we must tell them that, altogether apart from its well-known inebriating qualities, or rather disqualities, it was the dirtiest, sloppiest piece of household stuff ever placed upon a table. Even when it was first brought to table, when the hands of the dispenser were as steady as punch drinker's hands usually are, it was impossible to fill the glasses without slopping some of the punch on the table. But when the bowl had been replenished half-a-dozen of times or more, the table was completely wet, and we have even seen the carpet underneath it in a similar state after a night's hard drinking. So we think it was more from that circumstance than from the disgraceful conduct that the punch-bowl generally led to, for it is a fact, at that time and place, it was considered a rather

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jolly, manly act for a gentleman to be frequently intoxicated ; that the lady of the house used to give the name of the pig's-trough to the silver punch-bowl. The servants, hearing this, immediately took up the idea that the mistress's punch-bowl had been the pig-faced lady's silver trough, there was no disabusing their minds of this absurd idea. "Is there not her head engraved upon it?" they used to say, in allusion to the crest ; and often and often it has been shown to eager kitchen visitors, with sentiments of pride and pleasure that there was so great a curiosity in the house.

The pig-faced lady used to be not unfrequently exhibited in travelling caravans at fairs, races, and places of general resort. To a quarrel that occurred between a dwarf and a proprietor of one of these shows, which led to a magisterial investigation at Plymouth some years ago, we are indebted for knowing how the deception was made up. The lady was nothing but a bear, its face and neck carefully shaved, while the back and top of its head was covered by a wig, ringlets, cap, and artificial flowers all in the latest fashion. The animal was then securely tied in an upright position into a large arm-chair, the cords being concealed by the shawl, gown, and other parts of a lady's fashionable dress.

THE WONDERFUL Characters of England, however, are quite eclipsed by those generally exhibited by our transatlantic cousins. If Europe has a burning mountain called Vesuvius, has not America a Falls of Niagara, which could put the former out in five minutes? We shall close this Introduction with the latest advertisement of an exhibition taken from an American newspaper :—

THE WONDERFUL TWO-HEADED GIRL IS STILL on Exhibition in New England. She sings duets by herself. She has a great advantage over the rest of her sex, for she never has to stop talking to eat, and when she is not eating she keeps both tongues going at once.

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She has a lover, and the lover is in a quandary, because at one and the same moment she accepted him with one mouth and rejected him with the other. He does not know which to believe. He wishes to sue for a breach of promise, but this is a hopeless experiment, because only half of the girl has been guilty of the breach. This girl has two heads, four arms, and four legs, but only one body, and she (or they) is (or are) seventeen years old.

Now is she her own sister?

Is she twins?

Or having but one body (and consequently but one heart), is she strictly but one person?

If the above-named young man marries her will he be guilty of bigamy?

The double girl has only one name, and passes for one girl—but when she talks back and forth with herself with her two mouths is she soliloquising?

Does she expect to have one vote or two?

Has she the same opinions as herself on all subjects, or does she differ sometimes?

Would she feel insulted if she were to spit in her own face?

Just at this point we feel compelled to drop this investigation, for it is rather too tangled for us.

P. P.—G. H.

NOVEMBER 9, 1869.

It is proper to state that the several biographies in this work have not been modernized in any way, but are given in very nearly the exact words of the original narratives. There is a piquancy about the old narrations which seems to harmonize with the subject of "Wonderful Characters" far better than the cold modern treatment of such a theme.

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