"PINCHING SHOES."

From the Saturday Review.

There are two ways of dealing with pinching shoes. The one is to wear them until you get accustomed to the pressure, and so wear them easy; the other is to kick them off and have done with them altogether. The one is founded on the accommodating principle of human nature, by which it is enabled to fit itself to circumstances, the other is the high-handed masterfulness whereby the earth is subdued and obstacles removed; the one is emblematic of Christian patience, the other of Pagan power. Both are good in certain states, and neither is absolutely the best for all conditions. There are some shoes indeed which, do what we will, we can never wear easy. We may keep them well fixed on our feet all our life, loyally accepting the pressure which fate and misfortune have imposed on us; but we go lame and hobbled in consequence, and never know what it is to make a free step, or to walk on our way without discomfort. Examples abound: for among all the pilgrims toiling more or less painfully through life to death, there is not one whose shoes do not pinch him somewhere, how easy soever they may look, and how soft soever the material of which they may be made. Even those proverbial possessors of roomy shoes, the traditional King and Princess, have their own private little bedroom slippers, which pinch them undetected by the gaping multitude who measure happiness by lengths of velvet and weight of golden embroidery; and the pro-verbial owners of the treasure which all seek and none find, might better stand as instances of sorrow than of happiness-examples of how badly shod poor royalty is, and how, far more than meaner folk, it suffers from the pinching of its princely shoes.

The ungeniality of a profession into which a man may have been forced by the injudicious overruling of his friends or by the exigencies of family position and inherited rights, is one form of the pinching shoe by no means rare to find. And here again poor royalty comes in for a share of the grip on tender places and the consequent hobbling of its feet. For many an hereditary king was meant by nature to be nothing but a plain country gentleman at the best—perhaps even less. Many, like poor "Louis Capet," would have gone to the end quite happily and respectably if only they might have kicked off the shoes of sovereignty, and taken themselves to the highlows of the herd; if only they might have exchanged the sceptre for the turning-lathe, the pen or the fowling-piece. "Je déteste mon métier de roi," Victor Emmanuel is reported to have said to a republican friend who sympathized with the monorch's well-known tastes in other things beside his hatred of the kingly profession; and history repeats its frank avowal in every page. But the purple is almost as hard to be got rid of comfortably as Deinneira's robe; for the most part carrying the skin along with it, and trailed through a pool of blood in the act of transfer-which is scarcely what royalty, oppressed with its own greatness, and willing to rid itself of sceptre and shoes that it may enjoy itself in list slippers after a more bourgeois fashion, would find in accordance with its wishes. Lower down in the social scale we find that the same kind of misfit between nature and position is a very frequent occurrence-pinching shoes productive of innumerable corns and tender places. How often we see a natural "heavy" securely swathed in cassock and bands, and set up in the pulpit of the family church, simply because the tithes were large and the living lay in the family gift. But that stiff rectoral shoe of his will never wear easy. The man's secret soul goes out to the paradeground and the mess table. The glitter and jingle and theatrical display of a soldier's life seem to him the finest things in the whole round of professions, and the quiet, uneventful life of a village pastor is of all the most abhorrent. He wants to act, not to teach. Yet there he is, penned in beyond all. power of breaking loose on this side of the grave; bound to drone out muddled sermons half an hour long and eminently good for sleeping-draughts, instead of shouting terse and stirring words of command that set the blood on fire to hear; bound to rout the shadowy enemy of souls with weapons he can neither feel nor use, instead of prancing off at the head of his men; waving his drawn sword above his head in a whirlwind of excitement and martial glory, to rout the tangible enemies of his country's flag. He loves his wife, and takes a mild parsonic pleasure in his roses; he energizes his schools, and beats up recruits for his parish penny readings; he lends his pulpit to the missionary delegates, and takes the chair at the meeting for the conversion of Jews; he does his duty, poor man, so far as he knows how, and so far as nature gave him the power; but his feet are in pinching shoes all his life long, and no amount of walking on the cleri-cal highway can ever make them pleasant wearing. Or he may have a passionate love for the sea, and be mewed up in a lawyer's musty effice, where his large limbs have not half enough space for their natural activity, where he is perched for twelve hours out of the twenty-four on a high stool against a desk, instead of climbing cat-like up the ropes, and set to engross a long-winded deed of conveyance, or to make a fair copy of a bill of costs, instead of bearing a hand in a gale, and saving his ship by pluck and quickness. He could save a ship better than he can engross a deed; while, as for law, he cannot get as much of that into his heavy brain as would enable him to advise a client on the simplest case of assault; but he knows all the differences of rig, and the whole code of signals, and can tell you to a nicety about the flags of all nations, and the name and position of every spar and stay and sheet, and when to reef and when to set sail, with any other nautical information to be had from books and a chance cruise as far as the Nore. That pen behind his ear never ceases

life was worth the living. Another pinching shoe is to be found in climate and locality. A man hungering for the busy life of the city has to vegetate in the rural districts, where the days drop one after the other like leaden bullets, and time is only marked by an accession of dullness. Another, thirsting for the repose of the country, has to jostle daily through Cheapside. To one who thinks Canadian salmon-fishing the supreme of earthly happiness, fate gives the chance of chasing butterflies in Brazil; to another who holds "the common objects of the seashore" of more account than silver and gold, an ad-

to gall and fret, his shoe never ceases to pinch;

and to the last day of his life the high stool

in the lawyer's office will be a place of penance,

and the sailor's quarter-deck the very heaven

of his ambition. No doubt, by the time the

verse fortune assigns a station in the middle of a plain as arid as if the world had been made without water; and a third, who cares for nothing but the free breathing of the open moors, or the rugged beauty of the barren fells, is dropped down into the heart of a narrow valley where he cannot see the sun for the trees. At first this matter of locality seems to be but a very small grip on the feet, not worth a thought; but it is one of a certain cumulative power impossible to describe, though keen enough for him who suffers; and the pinching shoe of uncongenial place is quite as hard to bear as that of uncongenial work. Again, a man to whom intellectual companionship means more than it does to many, is thrown into a neighborhood where he cannot hope to meet with comprehension, still less with sympathy. He is a Free-thinker, and the neighborhood goes in for the strictest Methodism or the highest ultra-Ritualism; he is a radical, and he is in the focus of county Toryism, where the doctrine of equality and the rights of man is just so much seditious blasphemy, while the British Constitution is held as a direct emanation from divine wisdom second only to the Bible, or he is a Tory to the backbone-and his backbone is a pretty stiff one—and he is in the midst of that blatant kind of radicalism which thinks gentlehood a remnant of the dark ages, and confounds good breeding with servility, and loyalty to the crown with oppression of the people. Surrounded by his kind, he is as much alone as if in the middle of a desert; an Englishman among Englishmen, he has no more mental companionship than if he were in a foreign country, where he and his neighbors spoke different tongues, and had each a set of signs with not two agreeing. And this kind of solitude makes a pinching shoe to many minds, though to some of the more self-centred or defying kind it is bearable enough, perhaps even giving a sense of roominess which closer communion would

Of course one of the worst of our pinching shoes is matrimony, when marriage means bondage and not union. The mismated wife or husband never leaves off, willingly or unwillingly, squeezing the tender places; and the more the pressure is objected to the worse the pain becomes. And nothing can relieve it. A country gentleman hating the dust and noise of London, with all his interest in his country position and all his pleasure in his estate, and a wife whose love lies in Queen's balls and opera-boxes, and to whom the conntry is simply a slice out of Siberia wherever it may be; a healthy hospitable man, liking to see his table well filled, and a wife with a weak digestion, irritable nerves, and a morbid horror of society; a pushing and ambitious man, with a load voice and imposing presence, and a shrinking, fireside woman, who asks only to glide unnoticed through the crowd, and to creep noiselessly from her home to her grave-are not all these shod with pinching shoes, which, do what they will, go pinching to the end, and which nothing short of death or chance can remove ! These pinching shoes of matrimony pinch both sides equally—excepting, indeed, one chances to be specially phlegmatic or pachydermatons, and then the grip is harmless: but, as a rule, the ring-fence of marriage doubles all conditions, and when A walks hobbled B falls lame, and both suffer from the same misfit. However, the only thing to do is to bear and wear till the upper leather yields, or till the foot takes the required shape; but there is an eternity of pain to be gone through before either of these desirable ends comes about; and the instinct which dreads pain, and questions its necessity, is by no means a false one. For all that, we must wear our pinching shoes of matrimony till death or the divorce court pulls them from our feet, which points to the need of being more careful than we usually are about the fit beforehand.

Poverty has a whole rack full of pinching shoes very hard to get accustomed to, and bad to dance in lightly as were the flery slippers of the naughty little girl in the German fairy tale. Given a large heart, generous instincts and an empty hand, and we have the elements of a real tragedy, both individual and social. For poverty doss not mean only that animal want of food and clothing which we generally associate with its name. Poverty may have two thousand a year as well as only a mouldy crust and three shillings a week from the parish; and poverty cursing its sore feet in a brougham is quite as common as poverty, full of corns and callosities, wheeling a costermonger's barrow. The shoe may pluch horribly, though there is no question of hunger or the "two-pensy rope;" for it is a matter of relative degree, and the means wherewith to meet wants. But as poverty is not of those fixed conditions of human life which no human power can remove, we have not perhaps quite so much sympathy with its grips and pinches as in other things less remediable. For while there is work still undone in the world, there is gain still to be had; the man whose energies run now in a dry channel can, if he will, turn them into one more fertile; and if he is making a poor business out of meal, it is his own fault if he does not try to make a better one out of malt. Where the shoe pinches hardest is in places which we cannot protect and with a grip which we cannot prevent; but we cannot say this of poverty as a necessary and inalienable condition, and sympathy is so much waste when circumstances can be changed by energy or will.

Foreign Notes.

Says the London Spectator of October 24:-The Times has received a telegram from its American correspondent announcing that the Democrats have finally rejected a proposal to exchange Mr. Seymour for Mr. Chase. In other words, they are resolved not to give up State Sovereignty, the right to establish seridom or repudiation. Mr. Seymour has taken to the stump, but the party is described as much "demoralized," a word used, of course, in its American sense of frightened, and not in its English. As the party never had any morals, it could not lose them. The election of General Grant seems certain, and an intersoldier wrongly labelled as a parson, or the sailor painfully working the legal treadmill, comes to the end of his career, the old shoe which has pinched him so val of four years more is granted to the Republicans, during which we doubt not they will insist on equal justice in the South, and will, we hope, purify the party of corruption. But that their success involves so tremendous long will be worn comparatively easy. The an issue, they would almost deserve to lose, first, gradual decay of manly vigor, and the slow but sure destruction of strong desires, reduce for allowing so much pillage, and, secondly, for governing through "bogus" legislatures. one's feet at last to masses of accommodating pulp; but what sufferings we go through before We want to see a little sincerity in their action as well as their opinions, and perhaps General this result can be attained-what years of

fruitless yearning, of fierce despair, of pathetic Grant may supply the want. self-suppression, of jarring discord between work and fitness, must pound all the life out -The Investigation Committee appointed to inquire into the affairs of the Royal Bank of of us before our bones become like wax, and Liverpool have presented their report, and a pinching shoes are transformed to easy fitting most extraordinary document it is. All real power seems to have been monopolized by the two managing directors, Mr. Hutchison and slippers. For itself alone, not counting the beyond, it would scarcely seem that such a Mr. Shand, of whom one owed the bank when it stopped £103,477, of which £70,000 will be lost; and the other usually owed £20,000, which will, however, be paid. Only these two directors seem to have been cognizent of an astonishing agreement under which the Royal Bank contracted to "carry on" Messrs. Wilson & Co., shipdealers, who owed the concern £60,000. Rather than lose that money, or, to speak more plainly, rather than call attention to the accounts, these gentlemen bound the bank to pay Messrs. Wilson's debts and all other debts their business might incur in five years, and to release Messrs. Wilson from all

demands. Under this arrangement the total debt became £528,000, and another firm was similarly treated to the tune of nearly £100,000. All this while the bank was represented as most flourishing, and the board congratulated the shareholders on the flourishing character of the statement! And then we send betting sharpers to prison, and inflict the treadmill for petty larceny!

Base-Ball an English Institution. The London Athenaum contends that the American national game of base-ball is English in origin. It discourses as follows:—
"The English cricketers are reported to have taken to the 'American game' of basehall. This game was English before it was American. 'Multa renascentur (apud Unitedstatesienses) que jam cecidere (apud nos). Miss Austen, about the beginning of the century, writes of a young heroine, who preferred 'cricket, base-ball...' to dolls (see 'Northanger Abbey'). While on the subject we should like to raise a question which has been on our minds for many a year. When boys we played at 'prisoners' base,' as we always called it. But we afterwards found, in grave books, that the boy's game is 'prison bars.' Was this the original, afterwards corrupted? or is the second phrase what the learned call a conjectural restoration ?-a thing from which may Heaven guard all honest old idioms ! We see in the newspapers that the young son of Na-poleon the Third plays at 'prisoners' base.' "

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