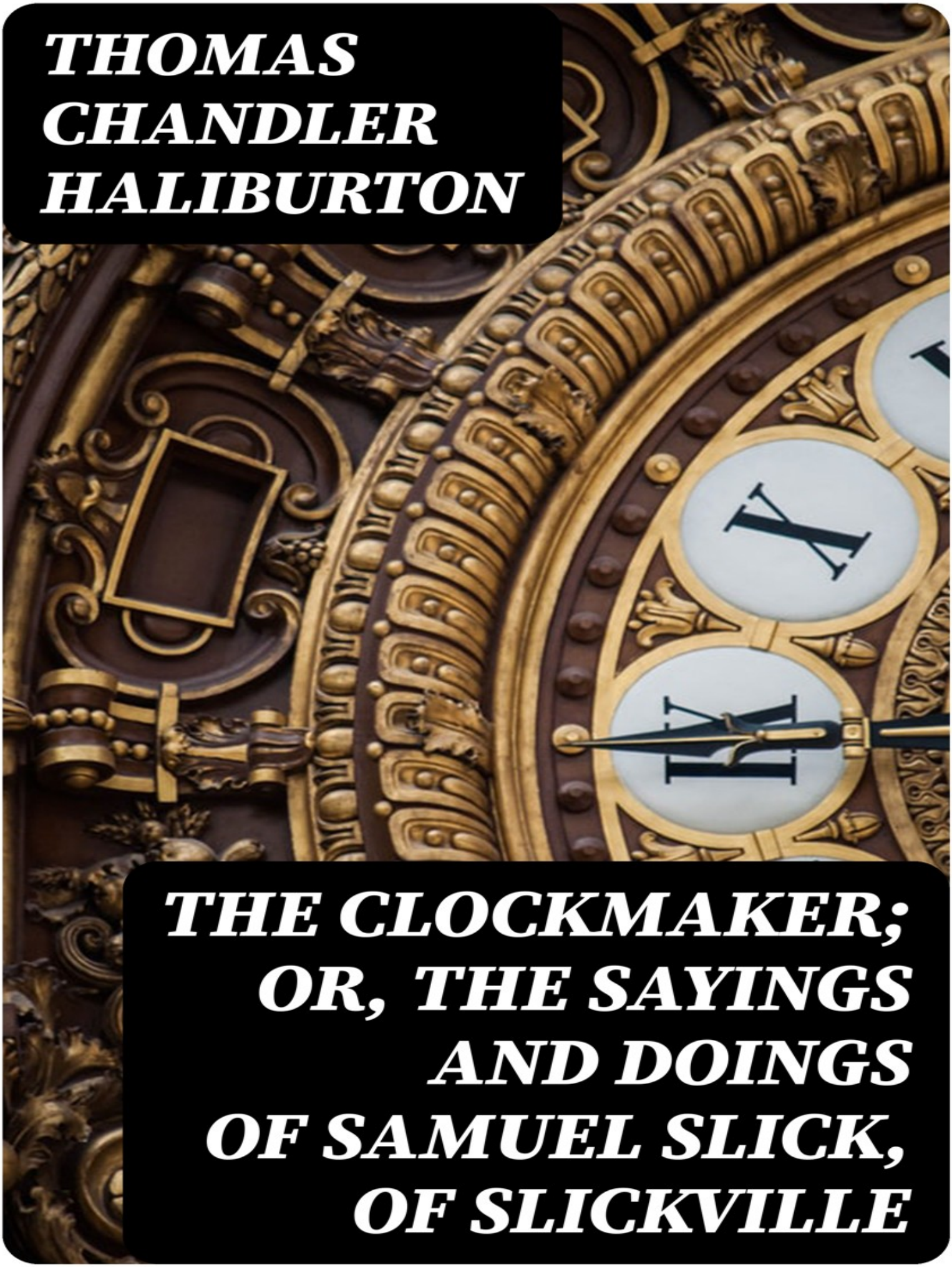
THOMAS CHANDLER HALIBURTON
THE CLOCKMAKER; OR, THE SAYINGS AND DOINGS OF SAMUEL SLICK, OF SLICKVILLE

Thomas Chandler Haliburton

The Clockmaker; Or, the Sayings and Doings of Samuel Slick, of Slickville

EAN 8596547351528

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

SLICK'S LETTER.

Table of Contents

[After these sketches had gone through the press, and were ready for the binder, we sent Mr. Slick a copy; and shortly afterwards received from him the following letter, which characteristic communication we give entire—EDITOR.]

To MR. HOWE,

Sir—I received your letter, and note its contents; I ain't over half pleased, I tell you; I think I have been used scandalous, that's a fact. It warn't the part of a gentleman for to go and pump me arter that fashion and then go right off and blart it out in print. It was a nasty dirty mean action, and I don't thank you nor the Squire a bit for it. It will be more nor a thousand dollars out of my pocket. There's an eend to the clock trade now, and a pretty kettle of fish I've made of it, havn't I? I shall never hear the last on it, and what am I to say when I go back to the States? I'll take my oath I never said one half the stuff he has set down there; and as for that long lochrum about Mr. Everett, and the Hon. Alden Gobble, and Minister, there ain't a word of truth in it from beginnin' to eend. If ever I come near hand to him agin, I'll larn him—but never mind, I say nothin'. Now there's one thing I don't cleverly understand. If this here book is my "Sayin's and Doin's," how comes it your'n or the Squire's either? If my thoughts and notions are my own, how can they be any other folks's? According to my idee you have no more right to take them, than you have to take my clocks without payin' for 'em. A man that would be guilty of such an action is no gentleman, that's flat, and if you don't like it, you may lump it—for I don't vally him, nor you neither, nor are a Bluenose that ever stepped in shoe leather the matter of a

pin's head. I don't know as ever I felt so ugly afore since I was raised; why didn't he put his name to it, as well as mine? When an article hain't the maker's name and factory on it, it shows it's a cheat, and he's ashamed to own it. If I'm to have the name I'll have the game, or I'll know the cause why, that's a fact. Now folks say you are a considerable of a candid man, and right up and down in your dealins, and do things above board, handsum—at least so I've hearn tell. That's what I like; I love to deal with such folks. Now spose you make me an offer? You'll find me not very difficult to trade with, and I don't know but I might put off more than half of the books myself, tu. I'll tell you how I'd work it. I'd say, "Here's a book they've namesaked arter me, Sam Slick the Clockmaker, but it ain't mine, and I can't altogether jist say rightly whose it is. Some say it's the General's, and some say it's the Bishop's, and some say it's Howe himself; but I ain't availed who it is. It's a wise child that knows its own father. It wipes up the Bluenoses considerable hard, and don't let off the Yankees so very easy neither, but it's generally allowed to be about the prettiest book ever writ in this country; and although it ain't altogether jist gospel what's in it, there's some pretty home truths in it, that's a fact. Whoever wrote it must be a funny feller, too, that's sartin; for there are some queer stories in it that no soul could help larfin' at, that's a fact. It's about the wittiest book I ever seed. It's nearly all sold off, but jist a few copies I've kept for my old customers. The price is just 5s. 6d. but I'll let you have it for 5s. because you'll not get another chance to have one." Always ax a sixpence more than the price, and then bate it, and when Bluenose hears that, he thinks he's got a bargain, and bites directly. I never see one on 'em yet that didn't fall right into the trap.

Yes, make me an offer, and you and I will trade, I think. But fair play's a jewel, and I must say I feel riled and kinder sore. I hain't been used handsum atween you two, and it don't

seem to me that I had ought to be made a fool on in that book, arter that fashion, for folks to laugh at, and then be sheered out of the spec. If I am, somebody had better look out for squalls, I tell you. I'm as easy as an old glove, but a glove ain't an old shoe to be trod on, and I think a certain person will find that out afore he is six months older, or else I'm mistakened, that's all. Hopin' to hear from you soon, I remain yours to command,

SAMUEL SLICK.

Pugnose's Inn, River Philip, Dec. 25, 1836.

P.S. I see in the last page it is writ, that the Squire is to take another journey round the Shore, and back to Halifax with me next Spring. Well, I did agree with him, to drive him round the coast, but don't you mind—we'll understand each other, I guess, afore we start. I consait he'll rise considerable airly in the mornin', afore he catches me asleep agin. I'll be wide awake for him next hitch, that's a fact. I'd a gin a thousand dollars if he had only used Campbell's name instead of mine; for he was a most an almighty villain, and cheated a proper raft of folks, and then shipped himself off to Botany Bay, for fear folks would transport him there; you couldn't rub out Slick, and put in Campbell, could you? that's a good feller; if you would I'd make it worth your while, you may depend.

THE CLOCKMAKER

Table of Contents

No. I

The Trotting Horse.

I was always well mounted; I am fond of a horse, and always piqued myself on having the fastest trotter in the Province. I have made no great progress in the world; I feel doubly, therefore, the pleasure of not being surpassed on the road. I never feel so well or so cheerful as on horseback, for there is something exhilirating in quick motion; and, old as I am, I feel a pleasure in making any person whom I meet on the way put his horse to the full gallop, to keep pace with my trotter. Poor Ethiope! you recollect him, how he was wont to lay back his ears on his arched neck, and push away from all competition. He is done, poor fellow! the spavin spoiled his speed, and he now roams at large upon "my farm at Truro." Mohawk never failed me till this summer.

I pride myself—you may laugh at such childish weakness in a man of my age—but still, I pride myself in taking the concert out of coxcombs I meet on the road, and on the ease with which I can leave a fool behind, whose nonsense disturbs my solitary musings.

On my last journey to Fort Lawrence, as the beautiful view of Colchester had just opened upon me, and as I was contemplating its richness and exquisite scenery, a tall, thin man, with hollow cheeks and bright, twinkling black eyes, on a good bay horse, somewhat out of condition, overtook me; and drawing up, said, "I guess you started early this morning, sir?"

"I did, sir," I replied.

"You did not come from Halifax, I presume, sir, did you?" in a dialect too rich to be mistaken as genuine Yankee. "And which way may you be travelling?" asked my inquisitive companion.

"To Fort Lawrence."

"Ah!" said he, "so am I; it is in my circuit."

The word CIRCUIT sounded so professional, I looked again at him, to ascertain whether I had ever seen him before, or whether I had met with one of those nameless, but innumerable limbs of the law, who now flourish in every district of the Province. There was a keenness about his eye, and an acuteness of expression, much in favour of the law; but the dress, and general bearing of the man, made against the supposition. His was not the coat of a man who can afford to wear an old coat, nor was it one of "Tempest and Moore's," that distinguish country lawyers from country boobies. His clothes were well made, and of good materials, but looked as if their owner had shrunk a little since they were made for him; they hung somewhat loose on him. A large brooch, and some superfluous seals and gold keys, which ornamented his outward man, looked "New England" like. A visit to the States, had perhaps, I thought, turned this Colchester beau into a Yankee fop. Of what consequence

was it to me who he was? In either case I had nothing to do with him, and I desired neither his acquaintance nor his company. Still I could not but ask myself, Who can this man be?

"I am not aware," said I, "that there is a court sitting at this time at Cumberland."

"Nor am I," said my friend. What, then, could he have to do with the circuit? It occurred to me he must be a Methodist preacher. I looked again, but his appearance again puzzled me. His attire might do—the colour might be suitable—the broad brim not out of place; but there was a want of that staidness of look, that seriousness of countenance, that expression, in short, so characteristic of the clergy.

I could not account for my idle curiosity—a curiosity which, in him, I had the moment before viewed both with suspicion and disgust; but so it was—I felt a desire to know who he could be who was neither lawyer nor preacher, and yet talked of his circuit with the gravity of both. How ridiculous, I thought to myself is this; I will leave him. Turning towards him, I said, I feared I should be late for breakfast, and must therefore bid him good morning. Mohawk felt the pressure of my knees, and away we went at a slapping pace. I congratulated myself on conquering my own curiosity, and on avoiding that of my travelling companion. This, I said to myself, this is the value of a good horse; I patted his neck; I felt proud of him. Presently I heard the steps of the unknown's horse—the clatter increased. Ah, my friend, thought I, it won't do; you should be well mounted if you desire my company; I pushed Mohawk faster, faster, faster —to his best. He outdid himself; he had never trotted so handsomely, so easily, so well.

"I guess that is a pretty considerable smart horse," said the stranger, as he came beside me, and apparently reined in, to prevent his horse passing me; "there is not, I reckon, so spry a one on my circuit."

Circuit or no circuit, one thing was settled in my mind; he was a Yankee, and a very impertinent Yankee too. I felt humbled, my pride was hurt, and Mohawk was beaten. To continue this trotting contest was humiliating; I yielded, therefore, before the victory was palpable, and pulled up.

"Yes," continued he, "a horse of pretty considerable good action, and a pretty fair trotter, too, I guess." Pride must have a fall—I confess mine was prostrate in the dust. These words cut me to the heart. What! is it come to this, poor Mohawk, that you, the admiration of all but the envious, the great Mohawk, the oracle horse, the standard by which all other horses are measured—trots next to Mohawk, only yields to Mohawk, looks like Mohawk—that you are, after all, only a counterfeit, and pronounced by a straggling Yankee to be merely "a pretty fair trotter!"

"If he was trained, I guess he might be made to do a little more. Excuse me, but if you divide your weight between the knee and the stirrup, rather most on the knee, and rise forward on the saddle, so as to leave a little daylight between you and it, I hope I may never ride this circuit again, if you don't get a mile more an hour out of him."

What! not enough, I mentally groaned, to have my horse beaten, but I must be told that I don't know how to ride him; and that, too, by a Yankee! Aye, there's the rub—a Yankee what? Perhaps a half-bred puppy, half Yankee, half Bluenose. As there is no escape, I'll try to make out my riding master. "Your circuit?" said I, my looks expressing all the surprise

they were capable of—"your circuit, pray what may that be?"

"Oh," said he, "the eastern circuit—I am on the eastern circuit, sir."

"I have heard," said I, feeling that I now had a lawyer to deal with, "that there is a great deal of business on this circuit. Pray, are there many cases of importance?"

"There is a pretty fair business to be done, at least there has been, but the cases are of no great value—we do not make much out of them, we get them up very easy, but they don't bring much profit." What a beast, thought I, is this! and what a curse to a country, to have such an unfeeling pettifogging rascal practising in it—a horse jockey, too—what a finished character! I'll try him on that branch of his business.

"That is a superior animal you are mounted on," said I; "I seldom meet one that can travel with mine."

"Yes," said he coolly, "a considerable fair traveller, and most particular good bottom." I hesitated; this man who talks with such unblushing effrontery of getting up cases, and making profit out of them, cannot be offended at the question—yes, I will put it to him.

"Do you feel an inclination to part with him?"

"I never part with a horse sir, that suits me," said he. "I am fond of a horse: I don't like to ride in the dust after every one I meet, and I allow no man to pass me but when I choose." Is it possible, I thought, that he can know me—that he has heard of my foible, and is quizzing me, or have I this feeling in common with him?

"But," continued I, "you might supply yourself again."

"Not on this circuit, I guess," said he, "nor yet in Campbell's circuit."

"Campbell's circuit—pray, sir, what is that?"

"That," said he, "is the western—and Lampton rides the shore circuit; and as for the people on the shore, they know so little of horses that, Lampton tells me, a man from Aylesford once sold a hornless ox there, whose tail he had cut and nicked for a horse of the goliah breed."

"I should think," said I, "that Mr. Lampton must have no lack of cases among such enlightened clients."

"Clients, sir!" said my friend, "Mr. Lampton is not a lawyer."

"I beg pardon, I thought you said he rode the circuit."

"We call it a circuit," said the stranger, who seemed by no means flattered by the mistake; "we divide the Province, as in the Almanac, into circuits, in each of which we separately carry on our business of manufacturing and selling clocks. There are few, I guess," said the Clockmaker, "who go upon TICK as much as we do, who have so little use for lawyers; if attornies could wind a man up again, after he has been fairly run down, I guess they'd be a pretty harmless sort of folks."

This explanation restored my good humour, and as I could not quit my companion, and he did not feel disposed to leave me, I made up my mind to travel with him to Fort Lawrence, the limit of his circuit.

No. II

The Clockmaker.

I had heard of Yankee clock peddlers, tin peddlers, and bible peddlers, especially of him who sold Polyglot Bibles (all in english) to the amount of sixteen thousand pounds. The house of every substantial farmer had three substantial ornaments: a wooden clock, a tin reflector, and a Polyglot Bible. How is it that an American can sell his wares, at whatever price he pleases, where a Bluenose would fail to make a sale at all? I will enquire of the Clockmaker the secret of his success.

"What a pity it is, Mr. Slick"—for such was his name—"what a pity it is," said I, "that you, who are so successful in teaching these people the value of clocks, could not also teach them the value of time."

"I guess," said he, "they have got that ring to grow on their horns yet, which every four-year-old has in our country. We reckon hours and minutes to be dollars and cents. They do nothing in these parts but eat, drink, smoke, sleep, ride about, lounge at taverns, make speeches at temperance meetings, and talk about 'House of Assembly.' If a man don't hoe his corn, and he don't get a crop, he says it is all owing to the Bank; and if he runs into debt and is sued, why he says the lawyers are a curse to the country. They are a most idle set of folks, I tell you."

"But how is it," said I, "that you manage to sell such an immense number of clocks (which certainly cannot be called necessary articles), among a people with whom there seems to be so great a scarcity of money?" Mr. Slick paused, as if considering the propriety of answering the question, and looking me in the face, said in a confidential tone—

"Why, I don't care if I do tell you, for the market is glutted, and I shall quit this circuit. It is done by a knowledge of SOFT SAWDER and HUMAN NATUR'. But here is Deacon Flint's," said he; "I have but one clock left, and I guess I will sell it to him."

At the gate of a most comfortable looking farm house stood Deacon Flint, a respectable old man, who had understood the value of time better than most of his neighbours, if one might judge from the appearance of everything about him. After the usual salutation, an invitation to "alight" was accepted by Mr. Slick, who said he wished to take leave of Mrs. Flint before he left Colchester.

We had hardly entered the house, before the Clockmaker pointed to the view from the window, and, addressing himself to me, said, "if I was to tell them in Connecticut, there was such a farm as this away down east here in Nova Scotia, they wouldn't believe me—why there ain't such a location in all New England. The deacon has a hundred acres of dyke—"

"Seventy, said the deacon, only seventy."

"Well, seventy; but then there is your fine deep bottom, why I could run a ramrod into it—"

"Interval, we call it," said the Deacon, who, though evidently pleased at this eulogium, seemed to wish the experiment of the ramrod to be tried in the right place.

"Well, interval, if you please (though Professor Eleazer Cumstick, in his work on Ohio, calls them bottoms), is just as good as dyke. Then there is that water privilege, worth three or four thousand dollars, twice as good as what Governor Cass paid fifteen thousand dollars for. I wonder, Deacon, you don't put up a carding mill on it; the same

works would carry a turning lathe, a shingle machine, a circular saw, grind bark, and—"

"Too old," said the Deacon, "too old for all those speculations—"

"Old," repeated the clockmaker, "not you; why you are worth half a dozen of the young men we see, nowadays; you are young enough to have—" Here he said something in a lower tone of voice, which I did not distinctly hear; but whatever it was, the Deacon was pleased, he smiled and said he did not think of such things now.

"But your beasts, dear me, your beasts must be put in and have a feed;" saying which, he went out to order them to be taken to the stable.

As the old gentleman closed the door after him, Mr. Slick drew near to me, and said in an undertone, "That is what I call 'SOFT SAWDER.' An Englishman would pass that man as a sheep passes a hog in a pasture, without looking at him; or," said he, looking rather archly, "if he was mounted on a pretty smart horse, I guess he'd trot away, if he could. Now I find—" Here his lecture on "SOFT SAWDER" was cut short by the entrance of Mrs. Flint.

"Jist come to say good-bye, Mrs. Flint."

"What, have you sold all your clocks?"

"Yes, and very low too, for money is scarce, and I wished to close the consarn; no, I am wrong in saying all, for I have just one left. Neighbour Steel's wife asked to have the refusal of it, but I guess I won't sell it; I had but two of them, this one and the feller of it, that I sold Governor Lincoln. General Green, the Secretary of State for Maine, said he'd give me forty dollars for this here one—it has composition

wheels and patent axles, it is a beautiful article, a real first chop, no mistake, genuine superfine—but I guess I'll take it back; and beside, Squire Hawk might think kinder hard, that I did not give him the offer."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Flint, "I should like to see it, where is it?"

"It is in a chest of mine over the way, at Tom Tape's store, I guess he can ship it on to Eastport."

"That's a good man," said Mrs. Flint, "jist let's look at it."

Mr. Slick, willing to oblige, yielded to these entreaties, and soon produced the clock—a gawdy, highly varnished, trumpery looking affair. He placed it on the chimney-piece, where its beauties were pointed out and duly appreciated by Mrs. Flint, whose admiration was about ending in a proposal when Mr. Flint returned from giving his directions about the care of the horses. The Deacon praised the clock, he too thought it a handsome one; but the Deacon was a prudent man, he had a watch, he was sorry, but he had no occasion for a clock.

"I guess you're in the wrong furrow this time, Deacon, it ain't for sale," said Mr. Slick; "and if it was, I reckon neighbour Steel's wife would have it, for she gives me no peace about it." Mrs. Flint said that Mr. Steel had enough to do, poor man, to pay his interest, without buying clocks for his wife.

"It's no consarn of mine," said Mr. Slick, "as long as he pays me, what he has to do; but I guess I don't want to sell it, and beside it comes too high; that clock can't be made at Rhode Island under forty dollars. Why it ain't possible," said the Clockmaker, in apparent surprise, looking at his watch, "why as I'm alive it is four o'clock, and if I havn't been two hours here—how on airth shall I reach River Philip tonight? I'll tell

you what, Mrs. Flint, I'll leave the clock in your care till I return on my way to the States—I'll set it a-goin' and put it to the right time."

As soon as this operation was performed, he delivered the key to the deacon with a sort of serio-comic injunction to wind up the clock every Saturday night, which Mrs. Flint said she would take care should be done, and promised to remind her husband of it, in case he should chance to forget it.

"That," said the Clockmaker as soon as we were mounted, "that I call 'HUMAN NATUR'!' Now that clock is sold for forty dollars—it cost me just six dollars and fifty cents. Mrs. Flint will never let Mrs. Steel have the refusal—nor will the deacon learn until I call for the clock, that having once indulged in the use of a superfluity, how difficult it is to give it up. We can do without any article of luxury we have never had, but when once obtained, it is not in 'HUMAN NATUR'' to surrender it voluntarily. Of fifteen thousand sold by myself and partners in this Province, twelve thousand were left in this manner, and only ten clocks were ever returned; when we called for them they invariably bought them. We trust to 'SOFT SAWDER' to get them into the house, and to 'HUMAN NATUR'' that they never come out of it."

No. III

The Silent Girls.

"Do you see them 'ere swallows," said the Clockmaker, "how low they fly? Well I presume we shall have rain right away; and them noisy critters, them gulls how close they keep to the water, down there in the Shubenacadie; well that's a

sure sign. If we study natur', we don't want no thermometer. But I guess we shall be in time to get under cover in a shingle-maker's shed about three miles ahead on us. We had just reached the deserted hovel when the rain fell in torrents.

"I reckon," said the Clockmaker, as he sat himself down on a bundle of shingles, "I reckon they are bad off for inns in this country. When a feller is too lazy to work here, he paints his name over his door, and calls it a tavern, and as like as not he makes the whole neighbourhood as lazy as himself—it is about as easy to find a good inn in Halifax, as it is to find wool on a goat's back. An inn, to be a good consarn, must be built a purpose, you can no more make a good tavern out of a common dwelling house, I expect, than a good coat out of an old pair of trousers. They are etarnal lazy, you may depend—now there might be a grand spec made there, in building a good inn and a good church."

"What a sacrilegious and unnatural union," said I, with most unaffected surprise.

"Not at all," said Mr. Slick; "we build both on speculation in the States, and make a good deal of profit out of 'em too, I tell you. We look out a good sightly place, in a town like Halifax, that is pretty considerably well peopled, with folks that are good marks; and if there is no real right down good preacher among them, we build a handsome Church, touched off like a New York liner, a real taking looking thing—and then we look out for a preacher, a crack man, a regular ten horse power chap—well, we hire him, and we have to give pretty high wages too, say twelve hundred or sixteen hundred dollars a year. We take him at first on trial for a Sabbath or two, to try his paces, and if he takes with the folks, if he goes down well, we clinch the bargain, and let and sell the pews; and, I tell you it pays well and makes

a real good investment. There were few better specs among us than inns and churches, until the railroads came on the carpet; as soon as the novelty of the new preacher wears off, we hire another, and that keeps up the steam."

"I trust it will be long, very long, my friend," said I, "ere the rage for speculation introduces 'the money-changers into the temple,' with us."

Mr. Slick looked at me with a most ineffable expression of pity and surprise. "Depend on it, sir," said he, with a most philosophical air, "this Province is much behind the intelligence of the age. But if it is behind us in that respect, it is a long chalk ahead on us in others. I never seed or heerd tell of a country that had so many natural privileges as this. Why, there are twice as many harbours and water-powers here, as we have all the way from Eastport to New OrLEENS. They have all they can ax, and more than they desarve. They have iron, coal, slate, grindstone, lime, firestone, gypsum, free-stone, and a list as long as an auctioneer's catalogue. But they are either asleep, or stone blind to them. Their shores are crowded with fish, and their lands covered with wood. A government that lays as light on 'em as a down counterp'in, and no taxes. Then look at their dykes. The Lord seems to have made 'em on purpose for such lazy folks. If you were to tell the citizens of our country that these dykes had been cropped for a hundred years without manure, they'd say, they guessed you had seen Col. Crockett, the greatest hand at a flam in our nation. You have heerd tell of a man who couldn't see London for the houses? I tell you, if we had this country, you couldn't see the harbours for the shipping. There'd be a rush of folks to it, as there is in one of our inns, to the dinner table, when they sometimes get jammed together in the door-way, and a man has to take a running leap over their heads, afore he can get in. A little nigger boy in New York found a diamond