

MR. SPROUTS: HIS OPINIONS

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Mr. Sprouts: His Opinions by Richard Whiteing

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RICHARD WHITEING

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BY

RICHARD WHITEING.

LONDON:
JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, PICCADILLY.

1867.

EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

TO ROBERT CONINGSBY, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,

Mr. Sprouts has commissioned me to dedicate this book to you, for it was you, he says, who first urged him to write it. At the beginning of the year 1866 the town was startled by Mr. Greenwood's account of his "Night in a Workhouse;" you then, it appears, suggested that as middle class had been to see low class, low class should return the visit—hence the "Night in Belgrave-square," the first of this series. The public having tolerated one of Mr. Sprouts's effusions, that gentleman easily persuaded himself that it would bear with a repetition of the offence—hence the remainder of the papers. Mr. Sprouts having been quite new to letters when he began to write, his spelling is, to say the least, eccentric, and its eccentricity has been much increased by the author's trick of spelling the same word in various ways, his object being, as he says, to give every method a fair chance. Practice, however, has done for Mr.

Sprouts's orthography what it does for every other improvable thing in the world, and the last of the "Opinions" will be found much easier reading than the first. Whether, the more the book becomes intelligible the less it will be found worthy of the reader's attention, neither you nor I can determine; but I am sure that its author has your best wishes, as you, dear sir, have mine.

Very truly yours,

RICHARD WHITEING

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MR. SPROUTS HIS OPINIONS.

A NIGHT IN BELGRAVE SQUARE.

IT was jest about half past seven as near as a toucher, last Toosday night, when a little barrer might ha' bin' seen a drivin' round the corner of a street leadin' into Belgrave-square.

The cove as druv it stops the donkey just afore they turned into the square, and another cove jumps down, as the sayin' is, in a twinklin'; he was togged for all the world like a head waiter in a music-hall; he'd got on a swaller-tailed coat, a slap-up pair of dark kickseys, and a hat with no shine on it as had been kivered with black cloth; likewise he wore gloves carried in his hand.

"How do I look, Jem?" says he.

"Slap up, old feller," says the other. "Good-bye; gee hup, Neddy," he says to the donkey, and druv off. The cove in the black garments was me; and I'll tell you how it all come about.

I'm a costermonger, I am, as can yarn a pound and pay his rent and things, with here-an'-there a one; but what signifies boastin'? Well, I give a bit of a party on Christmas Day, not half a bad 'un, though I say it. We'd done pretty well in greens and lighter wegetables durin' the week, tho' pertaters wasn't much account, howsumever, we wasn't hard up for a sov. There was just a nice lot on us. First there was me and the old woman and the seven children; then there was the old

lady's sister and her husband as is in trade, keepin' a green-grocer's shop; and a young feller my daughter's keepin' company with, and his second cousin what's under Government, bein' a lamplighter; and there was gran'-mother and Mrs. Beccles rentin' my back kitching, by the same token bein' three weeks behind in her rent, and never mind, says I, arsk her hup, and let bygones be bygones on Christmas Day.

Well, arter we'd had the goose and the pudden, the old lady puts the gin and chestnuts on the table and some more coke on the fire, and the young 'uns gits into the corner and has a game at lickin' the colour orff some pretty sojers and sailors I bought 'em at the sweetstuff-shop in the court, made artificial like; the two young people was a havin' a spell of talk together about goin' in a van to Hampton Court, and the rest on us was a sittin' round the fire a talkin' to one another.

"Well," ses I, liftin' o' my glass up, "here's God bless us all, them as is enjoyin' o' theirselves, and them as aint."

"Amen to that," says the lamplighter. "Lord," he ses, casual like, "it's hard to think there's many a poor creeter without so much as a old jacket to pawn for a toothful o' juniper this day."

"Ah! and many as has got a drop," says the old ooman, "can't enjoy it; what with natterin' and worritin' o' theirselves with this and that."

"Well, I fancy you're wrong there, old lady," I says. "Every cove as has brass enough to get a bit or a drop must be jolly in the natur' o' things."

"Not a bit of it," says Brockey, the greengrocer. "If you was to see the gentlefolks together," ses he—he's waited on 'em, with his hands kivered with white kid gloves, and pumps tied with ribbon, which is quite the gentleman hissself—"not a bit of it," ses he. "If you was to see 'em a moonin' and manderin' about at what they calls their parties, it 'ud give yer the neuralgy. The fust party I went to they all seemed so