

**ILLUSTRATIONS OF POLITICAL
ECONOMY. BRIERY
CREEK; THE THREE AGES. IN
NINE VOLUMES. - VOL. VIII**

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Illustrations of Political Economy. Briery Creek; The Three Ages. In Nine Volumes. - Vol. VIII
by Harriet Martineau

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HARRIET MARTINEAU

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ILLUSTRATIONS
OF
POLITICAL ECONOMY.

BY
HARRIET MMARTINEAU.

BRIERY CREEK.
THE THREE AGES.

IN NINE VOLUMES.—VOL. VIII.

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5.

BRIERY CREEK.

CHAPTER I.

THE PHILOSOPHER AT HOME.

THE sun,—the bright sun of May in the western world,—was going down on the village of Briery Creek, and there was scarcely a soul left within its bounds to observe how the shadows lengthened on the prairie, except Dr. Sneyd; and Dr. Sneyd was too busy to do justice to the spectacle. It was very long since letters and newspapers had been received from England; the rains had interfered with the post; and nothing had been heard at the settlement for a month of what the minister was planning in London, and what the populace was doing in Paris. Dr. Sneyd had learned, in this time, much that was taking place among the worlds overhead; and he now began to be very impatient for tidings respecting the Old World, on which he had been compelled to turn his back, at the moment when its political circumstances began to be the most interesting to him. There had been glimpses of starlight in the intervals of the shifting spring storms, and he had betaken himself, not in vain, to his observatory; but no messenger, with precious leathern bag, had appeared on the partial cessation of the

rains to open, beyond the clouds of the political hemisphere, views of the silent rise or sure progress of bright moral truths behind the veil of prejudice and passion which was for a season obscuring their lustre. Day after day had anxious eyes been fixed on the ford of the creek; night after night had the doctor risen, and looked abroad in starlight and in gloom, when the dogs were restless in the court, or a fancied horse-tread was heard in the grassy road before the house.

This evening Dr. Sneyd was taking resolution to file the last newspapers he had received, and to endorse and put away the letters which, having been read till not an atom more of meaning could be extracted from them, might now be kept in some place where they would be safer from friction than in a philosopher's pocket. The filing the newspapers was done with his usual method and alacrity, but his hand shook while endorsing the last of his letters; and he slowly opened the sheet, to look once more at the signature,—not from sentiment, and because it was the signature (for Dr. Sneyd was not a man of sentiment),—but in order to observe once again whether there had been any such tremulousness in the hand that wrote it as might affect the chance of the two old friends meeting again in this world: the chance which he was unwilling to believe so slight as it appeared to Mrs. Sneyd, and his son Arthur, and every body else. Nothing more was discoverable from the writing, and the key was resolutely turned upon the letter. The next glance fell upon the materials of a valuable tele-

scope, which lay along one side of the room, useless till some glasses should arrive to replace those which had been broken during the rough journey to this remote settlement. Piece by piece was handled, fitted, and laid down again. Then a smile passed over the philosopher's countenance as his eye settled on the filmy orb of the moon, already showing itself, though the sun had not yet touched the western verge of the prairie. It was something to have the same moon to look at through the same telescopes as when he was not alone in science, in the depths of a strange continent. The face of the land had changed; he had become but too well acquainted with the sea; a part of the heavens themselves had passed away, and new worlds of light come before him in their stead; but the same sun shone in at the south window of his study; the same moon waxed and waned above his observatory; and he was eager to be once more recognising her volcanoes and plains through the instrument which he had succeeded in perfecting for use. This reminded him to note down in their proper places the results of his last observations; and in a single minute, no symptom remained of Dr. Sneyd having old friends whom he longed to see on the other side of the world; or of his having suffered from the deferred hope of tidings; or of his feeling impatient about his large telescope; or of any thing but his being engrossed in his occupation.

Yet he heard the first gentle tap at the south window, and, looking over his spectacles at the little boy who stood outside, found time to bid