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George Manville Fenn

"Original Penny Readings"

"A Series of Short Sketches"

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## Chapter One.

### Paying the Footing.

Now, it don't matter a bit what sort of clay a pot's made of, if when it's been tried in the fire it turns out sound and rings well when it's struck. If I'm only common red ware, without even a bit of glaze on me, and yet answer the purpose well for which I'm made, why I'm a good pot, ain't I, even if I only hold water? But what I hate is this—to see the pots that we come against every day of our lives all on the grumble and murmur system, and never satisfied. The pot of common clay wishes he was glazed, and the glazed pot wishes he was blue crockery, and the blue crock pot wishes he was gilt, and the gilt pot ain't satisfied because he ain't china; and one and all are regularly blind to the good they have themselves, and think their neighbours have all the pleasures of this world. They're so blind that they can't see the flaws in some of the china. "Oh! if I had only been that beautiful vase!" says the common yellow basin that the missus washes the tea-things up in—"Oh! if I had only been that beautiful vase!" says the basin, alluding to a piece of china as stands on our mantel-piece—a vase that I picked up cheap at a sale. Why, the jolly old useful basin can't see the cracks, and flaws, and chips in our aristocratic friend; he can't see the vein-like marks, where he has been put together with diamond cement, nor that half-dozen brass rivets let into him with plaster of Paris. There, go to, brother yellow basin; and look alive, and learn that old saying about all not being gold that glitters. Aristocratic china is very pretty to look at—very ornamental; but if we put some hot water into the mended vase, and tried to wash up in it, where would it be, eh? Tell me that; while you, brother yellow basin, can bear any amount of hard or hot usage; and then, after a wipe out, stand on your side, dry, and with the consciousness of being of some use in this world; while the bit of china—well, it is werry pretty to look at, certainly. It's werry nice to look at your heavy swell—the idle man of large means, who gives the whole of his mind to his tie or his looking-glass; the man with such beautiful whiskers, and such nice white hands; and when you've done looking at him you can say he's werry ornamental, werry chinaish, but he ain't much good after all. But there; instead of grumbling about having to work for your living, just thank God for it. Look at your dirty, black, horny fists: stretch 'em out and feel proud of them, and then moisten 'em, and lay hold of whatever tool you work with, and go at it with the thought strong on you that man had mind, hands, and power given him to work with; and though toil be hard sometimes, why, the rest after 's all the sweeter; while over even such poor fare as bread and cheese and an onion there's greater relish and enjoyment than the china vase gets over his *entrées*, which often want spice and *sauce-piquante* to help them down. Man wasn't meant to be only ornamental; so don't grumble any more about being a yellow basin.

But don't mistake me in what I mean; don't think I turn up my nose at china: it's right enough in it's way, and at times vastly superior to your common crockery. I honour and feel proud of the china pots which, having no occasion to work, throw aside idleness, and with the advantages of power and position, work, and work hard—work with their heads, and do great things—men who live not to eat, but eat to live and benefit their fellows in some way. Don't mistake my meaning, for I don't want to make a man look with contempt on those above him; but learn to see how that, whatever his position in life, he can do some good, and that he is of service; and above all things, learn to see that your yellow basin—your working man—is of quite as much value in this world of ours as the china ornaments of society, whose aim and end is often to—there I'm almost ashamed to say it—to kill time.

"Thou saidst they was good crows, Tommy; and they was nobbut booblines," says the old Lincolnshire man who wanted a rook pie, and bought his rooks without seeing them, when they proved poor half-fledged birds; and what lots of us believes what others say,—takes things for granted; and after all only gets "booblines" for our dinner. If men would only judge for themselves—look before they leap—turn the china ornament up and look at the cracks and rivets, or, even if it is sound, consider how frail, fragile, and useless it is—they would be a little more satisfied with their own lot in life, and not be so given to grumbling. Things are precious hard sometimes, but that's no reason why

we should make them harder by our own folly. We see and know enough of the misery of our great towns, and I mean to say that we have ourselves to thank for a good—no, I mean a bad—half of it. Now, just take away—I wish we could—just take away out of London all the dirt, all the drunkenness, and all the other vice, and how do you think it would look then, eh? You can't tell me; but I can tell you something: it would ruin half the doctors, half the undertakers, and three parts of the brewers, and gin-spinners, and publicans; and that being rather a strong dose for any man to digest at one sitting, I'll let you think it over without putting any more on that subject. I won't go on preaching about the everlasting pipe that men make a common tunnel or chimney to carry off all the sense in their heads through the abuse of tobacco; nor yet say anything about drowning the good feelings of his heart by the abuse of beer; for I want to get to the way in which yellow basins get jarring together, as if they were never happy till the fresh one that comes amongst them is cracked, and on the way to join the rest of the potsherd over whose dust we walk during our journey of life.

I want to talk about "paying your footing;" for there was a paragraph in a paper only a few days ago that brought up a good many old thoughts on old subjects. Now, this paragraph gave an account of a poor chap—at Sheffield, I think—being ill-used by his fellow-workmen for not paying his footing.

Now, I'll just ask any decent, honest, hard-working man, whether he can imagine anything that comes nearer to dead robbery than making a poor fellow, just took on at any trade, pull out perhaps his last coin to find beer for a pack of thoughtless fellows who don't want it, and who would be better without it. I've opened my mouth on this subject before, but it will bear touching again; for I think it a disgrace to the British workman to keep up such dirty, mean old practices. I'm not preaching total abstinence or anything of the kind; let every man take his own road. I for one love a good glass of ale at proper time and place; but sooner than drink at the expense of a poor, hard-up fellow-worker, I'd drink water to the death.

I've seen it all again and again—in busy London, and in the sweet country, where you can draw a hearty breath laden with vigour between every stroke of hammer, or trowel, or brush—and I say that the sooner the custom is kicked out of the workshop the better. If it must be kept up, and men won't turn it out, why, then, let them put the boot on the other foot, and treat the new comer.

Nice young fellow comes into our shop once, fresh out of the country. Times had been very flat, and he looked terribly seedy. He'd come out of one of your little offices where a man's printer, and bookbinder, and all; and he was one of your fellows as would take a book, paste end leaves on, and then leather away with a twelve-pound hammer at the beating stone till the impression was all gone, and it was solid as a board, take and nip it in the press, then sew the back, fit up his bands in the sewing frame, and stitch the whole book; end leaves again, and a bit o' paste in your first section; then glue your back, round him, ravel out your bands, lace on your boards, and then sharpen up the plough-knife, and cut all the edges smooth as glass; sprinkle or marble, red edge or gilt and burnish—what you will; and then, how's it to be, cloth? Well, then, cut out, and glue on. Half-calf? Cut up your leather, pare and trim your corners and back bit; and then, when the open cartridge paper back is dry, and the head bands firm, pop on your leather, then again your marble paper; paste down the end leaves; nip the book in the plough press, and there you are, ready for gilding the back and lettering to taste; or you may paste down your end leaves when you've done.

But that ain't our way in town; ours is mostly cheap publication work, done in fancy cloth; and a country hand might well feel strange to see gals doing all the folding and stitching; one set of men at the glue-pot, another set trimming edges with a great carving-knife, another set rounding backs, another set cutting millboards, others making the fancy cloth covers, others lettering and gilding with a machine, and so on—division of labour, you know—when there the books are, stacks of them—big stacks too; while if it wasn't for this scheming and working the oracle the binding would never be done.

Well, this young fellow was working aside me; and he was put on at the trimming—which is the cutting the edges of new books to be bound in cloth; for if they were pressed too hard the ink would set off on to the opposite sides; while this being considered as only the first binding till they get thoroughly dry, only the front and bottom of the book is cut. You do the rest with your paper-knives. Well, we're paid piecework—fair money, you know—so much a dozen or score, so that a man has what he earns; and with my hands all corny and hard, I was letting go at a good rate, while my poor mate aside me was fresh at that work, and doing precious little good beyond blistering his hands and making his fingers sore; and I could see with half an eye as his bill would only be a small one o' Saturday.

Now, the rule in most shops in London is, take care of yourself, and let others look out o' their own side; but I never found myself any the worse off for helping a lame dog over a stile: so I kept on giving my mate a lift in the shape of a word here or there, so that he got on a little better, but very slowly; for a man can't fall into the knack of it all at once. But he'd a good heart, and that "will do it" sorter stuff that makes men get on in the world and rise above their fellows; and he stuck at it till I saw him tear a strip off his handkerchief and bind it round his chafed finger, so that the blood shouldn't soil the books; and though he didn't say much, I could see by his looks as he thanked me.

Towards afternoon, while the foreman was out of the way, one of the men comes up for this new chap's footing; and being a big shop, where good wages were made, it was five shillings. I didn't take much notice, for it warn't my business; but I saw the young fellow colour up and hesitate, and stammer, as he says,—

"You must let me off till wages are paid;" but my gentleman begins to bluster, and he says,—

"That comes o' working aside Tom Hodson, a scaly humbug as never paid his own footings; but we ain't a-going to stand any more o' that sort o' thing; and if you can't come the reg'lar, you'll soon find the place too hot to hold you."

I felt as if I should have liked to give my man one for his nob, but went on with my work; and after a bit more rowing, they left the young chap alone; for I could see how the wind lay—he hadn't got the money, and no wonder; but all that afternoon and next morning the chaps were pitching sneers and jeers about from one to another; about the workus, and a lot more of it, till, being quite a young chap, I could see more than once the tears in his eyes.

Everybody cut him, and when he asked a civil question no one would answer; and after tea the second night, when I got back, there was a regular chorus of laughter, for the young chap was standing red and angry by his lot of books, where some one had been shying a lot o' dirty water over them, so as would spoil perhaps four shillings' worth of sheets, and get the poor chap into a row as well as having to pay for them.

Now, when we went to tea that night, I'd on the quiet asked him how he stood, and lent him the money, thinking it would be better paid, for they'd always have had a spite against him else; and now seeing this I felt quite mad and spoke up:—

“Looks like one of that cowardly hound Bill Smith's tricks,” I says; and Bill, being a great hairy, six-foot-two fellow, puts on the bully, and comes across the shop to me as if he was going to punch my head.

“If you can't pay *your* footing,” he says to me, “don't think as we're a-goin' to take it in mouth; so just shut up,” he says, “and mind your own business;” and then, afore I knew what was up, that slight little fellow with cheeks flaming, and eyes flashing, had got hold of Bill, big as he was, and with his fingers inside his handkerchief, shook away at him like a terrier does a rat—shook him till his teeth chattered; and the great cowardly bounceable chap roared for mercy, and at last went down upon his knees, while, with his teeth set, that young fellow shook him till the whole shop roared again with laughter.

“Give it him, little 'un,” says one; “Stick to him, young 'un,” says another; while big Bill Smith looked as if he was being murdered, till the young chap sent him over against a plough-tub, where he knocked against a glue-kettle, and the half-warm stuff came trickling over his doughy white face, and he lay afraid to move.

“There's your beggarly footing,” says the young chap, shying down two half-crowns on the big bench; and then, without another word, he walked to his place and tried to go on with his work.

I never did see a set of men look more foolish in my life than ours did that night; and first one and then another slipped into his work, till all were busy; while them two half-crowns lay on the table winking and shining in the gaslight, and not a man had the face to come forward to pick them up and send for the beer.

Last of all, it was getting towards seven, when, now quite cool, the young chap beckons one of the boys and sends him out for two gallons and a half of sixpenny; and when it came, goes himself and pours for the whole shop, even offering the pot to Bill Smith; but he wouldn't take it, but growled out something, when the whole shop laughed at him again, and the rest of that evening he got chaffed awfully.

Next morning I'd been thinking how to get some fresh sheets stitched in the young chap's books, so as to be as little expense as possible, and when I got to the shop he was there looking at his heap, when I found that though working men do wrong sometimes, there's the real English grit in them; and here, before we came, if the chaps hadn't walked off the damaged copies, shared them amongst 'em, and put fresh ones from their own heaps, so as it never cost my young mate a shilling.

But it's a bad system, men. Have your beer if you like, but don't ask a poor hard-up fellow to rob self, wife, and child to pay his footing.

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## Chapter Two.

### Aboard a Light-Ship.

Goes in for salvage, sir; and when a ship's going on to the sands, where she must be knocked to pieces in no time, and a party of our company goes off and saves her, why we deserves it, don't we? That's our place, you see; and them's old names of ships and bits o' wreck nailed up again it. We keeps oars, and masts, and sails in there; ropes, and anchors, and things as don't want to be lying out on the beach; and then, too, it serves for a shelter and lookout place. Them's our boats—them two—yawls we call 'em; and I mean to say that, lifeboat, or other boat, you'll never find aught to come anigh 'em for seaworthiness. There's a build! there's fine lines! Why, she goes over the water like a duck; and when we've a lot of our chaps in, some o' them sand-bags and irons at the bottom for ballast, the two masts, and a couple o' lug sails up, it'll be such a storm as I ain't seen yet as'll keep us from going out. Why, we've gone out, when in five minutes—ah! less than that—you couldn't see the shore—nought but wild sea and spray all round; but there, we're used to it, you see; and when we get to a ship in trouble, and save her, why, there's some satisfaction in it. And, after all, 'tain't half so bad as being in a light-ship.

Light-ship? yes, there's one out yonder. No, not that—that's one o' the harbour lights. Out more to sea. There, you can't see her now; but if you take a look you'll see her directly. Not the ship, o' course, but the light. There; that's her, bo. Don't you see her? That's a revolving light. Goes round and round, you know, so that sometimes you see it, and sometimes you don't; and that's on the top of a mast aboard a light-ship, moored head and stern on the sands, two mile out; and sooner than spend a night aboard her when there's a storm on, I'd go out to fifty wrecks.

Pretty sight that, ain't it? Surprises many people as comes to the sea-side. Seems as if the sea's on fire, don't it? There now, watch that boat as the oars dip—quite gives flashes o' light. But that ain't nothing, that ain't, to what I've seen abroad. I was in one of the Queen's frigates out in the Pacific, and when we lay in the harbour at Callao one night, the officers had a ball on board, and we chaps had plenty to do taking the ladies backwards and forwards. Well, when it was over we in the first cutter were taking a party ashore—officers and ladies—when they were singing, and so on, and they made us pull slowly, for it was just as if the whole bay was afire, and when we dipped the flash was enough to light up all our faces with the soft pale light.

But you should be out in the light-ship there for a night when there's a heavy sea on and the waves makes a clean

breach over you. It's a dull life out there at any time, for there's not much to do—only the light to keep trimmed and the glass and reflectors well polished. When I was there we used to pass the time away making models of ships and rigging them, or doing any little nick-nack jobs as took our fancies. Four of us used to be there at a time; and when the dark winter's night was setting in, and the wind and sea getting up, you couldn't help feeling melancholy and low. The place we were in, you see, was a dangerous one, and one where there had been no end of wrecks; while in more than one place you could see the timbers of a half-broke-up ship, lying stuck in the sands. Then, as it got dark, and you stood on deck, you could almost fancy the tall white waves were the ghosts of them as had gone down and been lost there—hundreds upon hundreds of them; and that puts me in mind of one night when a full-rigged ship came on the sands.

It was a horribly rough afternoon, with a heavy gale blowing; cold, and dark, and dismal it looked all round, and there we were watching this here ship trying hard to give the sands a wide berth, but all to no good, for there she was slowly drifting down nearer and nearer—now lost to sight almost in the fog and spray, and now when it lifted, plain again before us, till she seemed close in amongst the heavy surf.

At times our light-ship, heavily moored and strong-built as she was, pitched and strained dreadful, so that it seemed as she must drag or break away, while every now and then a wave would come with such a shock that the heavy timbers quivered again; and of us four men there, every one would have gladly been ashore, and out of those fierce roaring breakers. But no one showed the white feather, and there we were, as I said, watching the big ship, till just as the gloomy winter's night set in, and the gale came shouting by as though the storm meant to make a night of it, we saw the ship for a moment, lost sight of her again, and then, just as there was a bit of an opening in the fog, there she came with a regular leap starn on to the sands, and "snap, snap," two of her masts went overboard in an instant.

We had to hold on pretty tightly ourselves, I can tell you, and the water that came aboard at times almost choked us; but with such a scene as that before us, not a man could have gone below, and we stood straining our eyes and trying to make out what was going on.

She was too far off for us to make out anything very plainly; but as we looked, up went a rocket, rush into the air, and, leaving its fiery train behind, broke into a shower of sparks. Then there was another and another sent up, and in the flashes of light we could make out as one mast crowded with people still stood, while a regular shudder went through one to think what it would be if that fell.

What seemed so cruel was that though we were only a quarter of a mile off we couldn't help the poor creatures; all the good we were was to keep our light burning brightly to warn ships off, but once they were on the sands, with a heavy sea running, the stoutest shoremen shook their heads, and when the lifeboat was run out knew well enough that the chances were ever so much against the lives being all saved.

"Hooray!" says Bob Gunnis all at once; "here they come."

"Where?" I says; "and who's coming?"

Looking where he pointed, for the wind swept his words away, I held on my tarpaulin hat, and peered out to leeward, where every now and then I could just see the white and blue sides of the lifeboat with her sail up, and seeming to dance like a gull on the top of the water. Now she'd be quite hid in the dim misty clouds that kept flying across, half rain, half spray. Now she'd be seen plainer and nearer, coming on between us and the wreck; and then it would come over so dark again we could make nothing out. But the lightly-painted boat and her white sail soon showed again quite pale and ghost-like, now getting fast on towards the vessel; though I couldn't help giving my head a shake as I held on and looked.

"What water is there where she lies?" I says to Bob Gunnis—for, you see, he was a chap as knew to a foot what water there was anywhere for far enough round.

"Let's see," he says, "it's about low water now, or should be if there warn't this gale on, but she won't go down no lower anyhow. Let's see, there'll be just enough to float the lifeboat over, and that's all; while if they give a scrape or a bump once it won't be no wonder."

And now we could just make out the lifeboat lay out for a bit, and then let go her kedge and drop down towards the ship, as seemed at times to be completely buried under water. It made your eyes ache to watch, for the spray came dashing into your face, while the lanthorn looked quite dull and dripping, with the water splashing and beating against it.

All at once we had a grand view of the lifeboat, for she lay just where the light from our lanthorn fell. All four of us saw her as we hung together by the bulwarks, and then there seemed something wrong, for she was lifted on a great wave; and then one's heart seemed to come in one's mouth, for she capsized.

I remember it all so well—the white frothy water, with the strong light from our lanthorn upon it, and the pale, ghostly-looking boat capsizing, while we held our breath to see her come right again; but she didn't, but lay tossing in the water, for there was not depth enough for the mast to pass under, or else the boat, being made self-righting, would have come up again all right.

Just then, the light turning round, all was darkness again, and whether it was fancy, or only the wind rushing by, there came one of the wildest and most awful shrieks I ever heard in my life. Then the light worked round again, and shone down towards where the lifeboat and the ship lay; but we could see nothing but the tremendous sea beating upon the sands, boiling up and rising like mountains of foam, whilst our light-ship rolled and plunged and tugged at her moorings, so that we could not keep our feet.

Bound come the light again, and we strained our eyes to look, but there was nothing but the tumbling sea in one

great froth; and then darkness, and light once more as the lantern revolved; and we then fancied that in the dark part, between where the light fell and our ship, we could make out the lifeboat drifting along on one side, with here and there something dark clinging to it; but we couldn't be sure, and even if they had floated close by us, we could have done nothing to help them, for the sea on was something fearful.

There wasn't a man of us that night as didn't feel sure as the old light-ship would be dragging her anchors and going ashore somewhere, when, "Lord ha' mussy upon us," I says. Of course, it was watch and watch of a night; but, there, who could go and turn in with the sea thundering on deck, and washing over you—the chain cables groaning and creaking; the wind shrieking by, and the mast, atop of which stood the lantern, quivering and jarring and shaking, as though it would snap off by the deck? Sleep! No, not much of that; for we all stayed on deck, talking when there was a lull, and holding on so as to keep from being swept overboard.

Ah! it's a nice berth—tenter of a light-ship, moored at the end of the dangerous sands—a place too bad for other vessels to come; so, fair weather or foul, there you are, to keep your light bright and trimmed so that you may warn other folks off.

We could see the lights ashore now and then, and knew how the folks would be looking out for the lifeboat, and the very thought of it all gave one a shudder, for it seemed that they were all lost—ship's crew and lifeboat's crew—while we four had been looking idly on.

I'd crept along to the bows of the ship, and was trying to peer out into the thick haze ahead, when all at once I gave a start, for I seemed to hear a cry like some one hailing very faintly.

I looked out again and again on both sides, and then settled as it was fancy, for the noise of the wind and water was deafening; but just as I'd made up my mind that it was nothing I hears the cry again, and this time it made me shiver, for I knew that any one of the ship's crew, or the lifeboat's crew, must have been swept away half an hour before. So, as I said, I gave quite a shiver and crept back to where my mates stood, and shouts in Bob Gunnis's ear, "There's some one a hailing of us!"

"Don't be a fool," he says, quite crusty; but I stuck out as there was, and then he crept forward too, and stood listening. "Now then," he says, "where's your hailin' now? Why, it was the—"

"Help!" came a faint cry from somewhere ahead, and Bob stopped short with his mouth open, and his hand over his eyes, gazing out to sea.

"Say, mate," he says, ketching hold of my arm, and whispering in my ear, with his mouth quite close—"say, mate, let's get back; 'taint nat'ral."

Well, feeling a bit queer after hearing that wild cry from somewhere off the water, and knowing that nothing could live in the sea then on, we thought it was what Alick Frazer, another of our chaps, called "No canny," and we crept back along the bulwarks to where t'other two stood, and "I say, bo," says Bob to Alick, "you can hear 'em drowning out there now;" and Bob was obliged to shout it all.

"Ah!" says Alick, "and so we shall every storm night as comes, laddie; and I'll no stay in the ship if we do."

"Help!" came the cry again off the water—such a long low cry, heard in the lull, that it seemed to go through us all, and we stood there trembling and afraid to move.

"'Tain't human," says Alick—"it's a sperrit;" but somehow or other we all went up to the ship's head again, and stood trying to make something out as the light turned round. All just in front of us was dark, for it was some little way out before the light struck the water; but we could see nothing; and shaking our heads, we were about going back again, when a sea came aboard with a rush, and made us hold on for dear life; and then directly after came very faintly the cry, "Help!" so close at hand that it seemed on board.

"Why, there's a chap on the chain?" cried Bob Gunnis excitedly. "Look here, mates," he cried; and there right below, and evidently lashed on to the big mooring cable, we could make out a figure, sometimes clear of the water, and sometimes with it washing clean over him.

"Ahoy!" I sings out; but there was no answer, and during the next minute as we stood there no cry for help came, for it seemed the poor fellow was beat out.

"Well," I says, "we must fetch him aboard somehow."

"Ah!" says Bob Gunnis, "that's werry easy said, mate; p'raps you'll go down the cable and do it."

That was home certainly, for with the sea, as we kept shipping, it was hard enough to hold your own in the shelter of the bulwarks, without going over the bows, where you would have to hang on, and get the full rush. "Well, but," I say, "some one must go;" and I shouted it out, and looked at the other two. But they wouldn't see it, and Bob Gunnis only said it was bad enough there as we were; so I goes down below, feeling all of a shiver as if something was going to happen, and they shouted at me, but I came up again, and shoved the hatch on, and then crept forward with some inch rope in my hand; makes one end fast round my waist, and gives them the rest to pay out; and then gets ready to go over the bows and slip down the cable.

I waited till a sea had struck us, and then climbed over and began to swarm down the cold, slippery iron links; and not being far, I soon got hold of the poor fellow hanging there; then the sea came right over us, and it seemed as if I was going to be torn away; but I held on, and then as it went down I got lower, and held tight hold of the poor chap—both arms round him, and fancying how it would be if my knot wasn't fast, or the rope parted. I shouted for them to

haul us aboard; but they couldn't have heard me, for while I was watching the black bows of the ship, another wave come over us, and I was almost drowned before it sank. But now they began to haul on tight, and dragged so that the rope cut awfully, for I found that the poor chap didn't move; and loosing one hand as they slackened a moment, I could feel as he had lashed himself to the cable, and then the rope tightened again, and before I could shout I was being dragged away, and the next moment they had me over the side.

But I was a bit up now, and, opening my knife, I tried the knot, got my breath, and went over again, slid down the chain, and getting where I was afore, managed to cut through the poor fellow's lashings; and then holding on tightly, shouted to them to haul; but as I shouted, the sea washed right over us, and dashed us bang up against the ship's bows, so that I was half stunned; but I held on, and then as the wave was sucking us back, and I felt that it was all over, the rope tightened, the fellows hauled in fast, and once more I was aboard, and this time not alone—though, mind you, it was no easy task to get us over the side, for I couldn't help them a bit.

After a bit I was able to crawl down the hatchway, and as they were trying to pour rum into the poor fellow's mouth, I lay down in the cabin, for my head felt heavy and stupid, and there I was watching them as by the light of the swinging lanthorn they did what they could for the poor fellow; and at last, lying there listening to the sea beating up against the side, I fell into a half-stupid sort of sleep—part owing to the way my head was struck, and partly from being worn-out.

Next morning when I woke, wet and shivering, the dull light through the skylight showed me as the poor fellow lay on the other side, and there was no one else in the cabin. Close aside him was a life-belt; so I knew that he had been one of the lifeboat crew, and, not wanting to disturb him, I was going to creep out, when I thought I'd have a look to see who it was I'd saved, and so I crept back a bit, and stooped down, when my heart seemed to stop, for I saw as it was my own brother—and he was dead!

Can't help feeling a bit soft about it, sir, though it's years ago now. Poor chap! he volunteered, as the crew were short-handed, and was one of the many lost, for only two or three got ashore.

Plucky young chap, he was; but the sea was too much for him; and, Lord, sir, you'd be surprised how many the sea takes every year.

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## Chapter Three.

### K9—A Queer Dog.

Ideas for new sketches are like mushrooms in the London fields—scarce articles, and difficult to find unless you force them in a bed. But then the forced article will not bear comparison with that of spontaneous growth, while you find that, as you have made your bed, so on it you must lie. So you lie, on the strength of your forced article, and the natural consequence is that the public will not believe you when you tell them a story. We have had specimens lately of what the earnest will dare in search of the novel, but in spite of Longfellow's imperative words, we can't all be heroes. Be that as it may, though, after a long search, I found this mental mushroom in the field of adventure. It was nearly hidden by the surrounding growth, but peeped forth white and shiny like a bald-crowned head, with the side crop brushed carefully across in streaks. It was a reverse of circumstances certainly, but the idea was new, so I took a policeman into custody; while as a proof of the daring contained in the apparently simple act, think of a man to whom reputation is dear, and read the following.

I had long had my eye upon the policeman, for no one could gaze upon his face without feeling that those impressive features had a large fund of interesting matter concealed behind. "There must be something more than whiskers," I said, and then I considered what a sensation novelist he would make if but of a literary bent. Truth is stranger than fiction; and what truths we should get from the man so often sworn to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." However, failing the policeman's turning *littérateur*, I thought a little of his experience might be made available, and therefore the above-named custodian act was performed.

Now the public—that is to say, the reading public—cannot guess at a tithe of the difficulties to be encountered in making the policeman speak; he looks upon every question as though it were, with entrapping ideas, put to him by a sharp cross-examining counsel, and is reticent to a degree. He is a regular Quaker—he only speaks when the spirit moveth him; and the only effective spirit for moving him is Kinahan's LL, which seems to soothe the perturbed current of his thoughts, makes him cease to regard the administering hand as that of prosecutor, prisoner, or witness in an important case, and altogether it reduces him to one's own level, if he will allow the expression.

Bobby sat one evening in my study—as my wife insists upon calling the little shabby room over the back kitchen—and for awhile he seemed such a Tartar that I regretted having caught him. I almost shrank beneath his hard stare, and began to wonder whether I had done anything that would necessitate the use of the "darbies" he was fidgeting about in his pocket, especially when his eyes were so intently fixed upon my wrists, which lay upon the table before me in rather an exposed state, from the fact of the tweed jacket I wore not being one of the "warranted shrunk." It was enough to make any one shudder and draw the sleeves lower down, and my performance of this act appeared to make my visitor so suspicious that I verily believe he would have interposed to prevent my exit any time during the course of his call.

My friend partook of my hospitality, and then began to speak, when I opened a book and seized a pencil, but,—

"No, thanky, sir," he cried; "not if I knows it. The regular reporters is bad enough; only what can't be cured must be endoored. But none o' that, thanky. P'raps you'll put that book away."

Of course I did so, and felt that I must imitate the special correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and trust to my

memory.

“Now yer see, sir, I could say a deal; but then I says to myself—‘It’s my dooty to tell you as anything you now says may be used in evidence agen you at yer trial.’ Wherefore, don’t you see, I takes notice of the caution?”

I’d give something to be able to transfer to paper the solemn wink he gave me, but that is impossible, and we both talked on indifferent subjects until my visitor had had another mix, when thoughtfully poking at the sugar, he said,—

“You see, sir, we do sometimes have cases on hand as makes a feller quite savage; and then people as looks on will make it ten times wuss for the pleeceman by siding with them as is took. Here we gets kicked and butted, knocked down and trod upon; clothes tore, hats once, ‘elmets now, crushed; hair pulled out by the roots, and all sorts o’ nice delicate attentions o’ that sort, which naterally puts a feller out, and makes him cut up rough; then the crowd round cries out ‘shame,’ or, ‘oh, poor feller,’ or what not, and makes the poor feller as has half killed a couple o’ pleecemen wuss than he was afore. Pleecemen oughter to keep their tempers says the papers, arter what they calls a ‘police outrage,’ jest as if the force was recruited out of all that’s amiable. *We ain’t angels, sir, not a bit of it; and it’s a wonder we don’t get more outer temper than we does. Jest you go to take a chap inter custody and advise him to come quietly; and then offer to take him all decent and orderly. Jest you go and do that, and let him turn round and give you a spank in the mouth, as cuts yer lip open and knocks a tooth loose—jest see how angelified you’ll feel then; and try what a job it is not to pull yer staff out and half knock his blessed head off. Why, if Lord Shaftesbury hisself had on the bracelet that night I know he’d give my gentleman one or two ugly twists. Wun knows wun oughter keep cool, but yer see a feller ain’t made o’ cast iron, which would be a blessin’ to some of our fellers’ legs—being a hard material. After taking a rough sometimes I’ve seen our chaps with legs black, blue, and bleeding with kicks, while ‘ceptin’ a little touzlin’ and sech, the prisoner hasn’t had a spot on him. Yes, it’s all werry fine, ‘Keep yer temper,—‘Don’t be put out,—‘Take it all coolly,—be pitched outer winder and then ‘come up smilin’,’ as *Bell’s Life* says. Get kicked in the stummick, and then make a bow; but that you’d be sure to do, for you’d get reg’larly doubled up. Never mind havin’ yer whiskers pulled, and bein’ skretched a bit, it’s all included in yer eighteen bob or pound a week; and, above all—keep yer temper.*

“A niste job two on us had in Oxford-street, I think it was, one day. It was over a horinge chap as had been making an obstruction in the busiest part o’ the thoroughfare. We’d been at him for about a week, arstin’ him civilly to drop it; for the vestry had been laying the case before the magistrate, and we had our orders. You see it was a good pitch; and this chap used to do a roaring bit o’ business, and of course it warn’t pleasant to give it up; but then he’d no call to be there, yer know, for he was interfering with the traffic; so in course we had to put a stop to it.

“Well, yer know, it had come to that pitch at last that if he wouldn’t go why we was to take him, and Dick Smith was the one that was in for it along with me. We neither on us liked it, for this was a civil-spoken chap in a suit o’ cords, a bird’s-eye handkercher, and a fur cap. He’d got a smart way, too, o’ doing his hair, which was black and turned under at the two sides afore his ears; and besides he was only trying to get a honest living; but dooty’s dooty, yer know, sir, and we ain’t got much chance o’ pickin’ and choosin’. So I says to Dick, as we goes along—

“‘Now, then, Dick,’ I says, ‘which is it to be, the cove or his barrer?’

“‘Oh!’ says Dick, ‘I’m blest if I’m a-goin’ to wheel the barrer through the public streets. Look well for a pleece-constable in uniform, wouldn’t it?’

“‘Well,’ I says, rather chuff, ‘some one’s got it to do, and I ain’t a-goin’ to have it shoved on to me. Tell yer what we’ll do—we’ll toss up.’

“‘All right,’ says Dick, ‘so we will.’

“So I fetches out a copper, the on’y one we could furridge out between us, and to Dick I says, ‘Now, then, sudden death?’

“‘Not a bit of it,’ says he, ‘I’ll go off lingerin’—best two out o’ three.’

“‘Werry well,’ I says, ‘anything for peace and quietness.’ And so we tossed.

“‘Heads,’ says Dick.

“‘Woman it is,’ says I. ‘One to me;’ and then I passes the brown over to Dick, and he spins up.

“‘Lovely woman,’ says I, and lovely woman it was.

“‘Blowed if here ain’t two Bobbies a tossin’,’ says one o’ them niste boys as yer meets with in London.

“Didn’t I feel savage, though I had won; and for a moment I almost wished it had been that werry young gentleman as we had to take. But my boy gives a grin and a hop, skip, and a jump, and then cuts behind a gentleman’s carriage as was passing, when the Johnny put out his foot and gave him a push, and down he goes into the mud”; which was, of course, pleasant to our outraged feelings, though it would have taken a great deal of mud to spoil that boy’s clothes.

“‘Now then, Dick,’ I says, ‘let’s be off.’

“‘Wot’s the hurry?’ says Dick, who was a thinking of the barrer, I could see.

“‘Oh, come on,’ I says; for, thinks I to myself, ‘you’re on the right hand side of the way, my boy.’

“So off we goes, till we comes to the well-known spot, and there stood my chap, a-doing a raging trade.

“Now then, young feller,’ I says, ‘you must move on.’

“‘What for?’ says he.

“‘Obstructing the thoroughfare,’ says I.

“‘Taste ’em,’ he says, ‘they’re fust-rate to-day. Shove two or three in yer pocket for the young Bobbies.’

“‘Won’t do,’ I says; ‘we’ve got our orders, and off yer goes.’

“‘Get out,’ he says, ‘you’re chaffin’.

“‘Not a bit of it,’ I says; ‘so stow nonsense and go on quietly, there’s a good feller.’

“‘All right,’ he says, seeing as we was serious, ‘all right.’ And then he sells a horinge to this one, and a horinge to that one, and sixpenn’orth to another one; but not a hinch would he move. So we waits a bit, and then I gives him another gentle hint or two.

“‘All right,’ he says agin, ‘wait a bit.’

“Well, yer knows, sir, this went on for about half an hour, and a crowd gets collected, and every time as I speaks to him, ‘All right,’ he says, ‘wait a bit,’ and then the crowd laughed and the boys hoorayed.

“I thinks to myself ‘This here won’t do,’ but neither Dick nor me wanted to begin, so I has one last try, and I says quietly,—

“‘Now, are you a-goin’ or not? Becos if you ain’t we must make yer.’

“‘All right,’ he says, ‘wait a bit,’ and the people bust out a laughin’ again, and the crowd gets bigger than ever.

“‘Now, then, Dick,’ I says to my mate, ‘come on,’ for I see as it was no use to be played with any longer.

“So Dick goes to the barrer, and I collars the chap, and the row began. Dick lays hold o’ the barrer handles quite savagely, and shoots a dozen o’ horinges off inter the road, when, of course, there was a regular scramble, and somebody calls out ‘Shame!’ Then my chap takes and throws hissself down, and gives my wrist such a screw as a’most sprained it, and then somebody else calls out ‘Shame!’

“‘Now you’d better come on quietly,’ I says to my chap. ‘You’ll do no good by making a row.’ And then I tries to get him up on his legs, when some one calls out ‘Shame!’ agin.

“‘What’s a shame?’ I says, which I didn’t oughter have done, for I knew my dooty better than they could tell me. Howsoever I says it, ‘What’s a shame?’ I says.

“‘Ill usin’ a honest man,’ says the crowd.

“I sees as it was no use to talk, so I gets well hold o’ my chap, and seeing, as he did, as his barrer was a moving off with Dick in the sharps, and the boys a hoorayin’, he gets up, and we was goin’ on all right, when some on ’em calls out ‘Shame!’ again, and that sets the chap off, and he throws hissself down, and, wuss luck, throws me down too, when off goes my box, and in the scuffle my gent jumps up, puts his foot on it, and nearly gets away.

“Now this made me a bit warm, for I was hurt, and I didn’t mean to let him go at no price now. So, jest as he’d shook me off and was going to bolt, I gets hold of his leg as I lays on the ground, when he gives me the savagest kick right aside o’ the head, and nobody didn’t cry ‘shame’ then.

“Well, I wasn’t stunned, but I felt precious giddy. I jumps up, though, and lays hold of him—sticks to him, too, and sometimes we was down and sometimes up, and I know we rolled over in the mud half a dozen times.

“Last of all, in one of the struggles in all of which the crowd hindered me as much as it could, my chap goes down, spang, with his head on the pavement, and me atop of him, and there he lay stunned.

“‘Shame, shame!’ cries the crowd, ‘you’ve killed the poor fellow.’ And then they begins a shovin’ and a hustlin’ of me about, and I don’t know how it would have ended if one of our chaps hadn’t ha’ come up; and then Dick came back after gettin’ rid o’ the barrer. Then we had the stretcher fetched, and the end of it was Horinges got seven days for assaultin’ the police, and I got seven days, too—only mine was in the infirmary.

“You wouldn’t have ketched me tossin’ if I’d known.

“You see, people will be so precious fond o’ takin’ what they calls the weak side. They never stops to ask themselves whether it’s right or whether it’s wrong; but they goes at it like a bull at a gate, and it’s us as suffers. Many’s the chap as has got away when the pleece has jest nicely put a finger on him. In comes Public. ‘Let that poor chap alone,’ says he, ‘what are you draggin’ him off in chains like that for?’ And so on to that tune till every one begins to feel for the chap, who puts on a cantin’ phisog, and turns his eyes about like them coves as chawks on the pavement for a livin’. Perhaps he’s a burglar, or a smasher, or swell-mobsmen, or a nice tender-hearted critter as has been beatin’ his wife with a poker, or knocked her head agin the wall, or some nice trick o’ that kind. And then everybody takes part agin the police, and what can they do?

“‘Their dooty,’ says you.

“Well, in course, but it don’t come werry pleasant, mind yer.



"People don't side with us; they don't like us a bit. And of course you'll say we don't like the people. Well, we'll drop that part of the business. It's only natural for us to like a good murder, or burglary, or forgery. You swells likes your huntin', and fishin' and shootin'; and we enjoys our sport as much as you does your little games. There's a sorter relish about taking a fellow for anything exciting just when my gentleman fancies he's got clean off—hopped his twig, as he thinks; when in we goes at my gaol-bird, and pops salt on his tail. Bless yer, we claps the darbies on his wrists, and has him walked off before he knows what's up. He's like a orspital patient; we chloroforms him with the bracelets, and before he comes to hissself we've cut off his liberty, and he wakes up in a cell."

"Yer see, sir," said my friend, rising, "yer see, we've a knack o' doin' it. Spose, now, it's you as is wanted. I've held you in play, say for half an hour, to make sure as you're the man as I wants, for I've got yer phortygruff pinned in my hat; and at last I walks up to yer just so, and 'You're my pris'ner,' says I. Whereupon you ups with yer hands—just so, that's the way—and tries to shove me off, when—"

"*Click, Click...*"

"There I has yer snug with your bracelets on; and werry proud I feels of yer."

And in effect my visitor had carried out his illustration to the fullest extent, so that I sat before him handcuffed, and he resumed his seat smiling with triumph and LL. I suggested the removal of my bonds; but my captor, as he seemed to consider himself, merely smiled again, helped himself to a cigar, lighted it, and began to smoke.

This was as bad as being a Lambeth casual. Anybody, even Mrs Scribe might come in, and the thought was more powerful than any sudorific in the pharmacopoeia. It was no use to appeal to K9, for he seemed to consider Brag was a good dog, but Holdfast a better; and he did nothing but smile and smoke. Getting an idea for an article was all very well, but at what a cost! It would not do at all. Why the special correspondent of the *PMG* would not have rested upon his hay-bag if a committee to whom he was well-known had entered the place to inspect him. He would have fled without his bundle. Ay, and so would I, but there was some one coming up the stairs, and I should have run right into some one's arms. A last appeal to the fellow before me only produced another smile; so, as a *dernier ressort*, I drew my chair towards the table, and thrust my manacled hands out of sight.

I was just in time, for the handle turned, and in walked an artist friend, who always makes a point of considering himself as much at home in my room as I do myself in his.

"How are you, old boy?" said he, which was hardly the thing, considering the company I was in.

I muttered something about being very well, and Chrayonne seated himself by the fire.

"Pass the cigar-box, old fellow," said he. But I couldn't hear him, and tried to appear as if sitting at my ease—of course, a very simple thing with one's hands pinioned.

"Pass the cigars, Scribe," said Chrayonne, again, in a louder key; while the policeman wagged his head, and smiled knowingly.

"He can't," said the wretch, grinning outright.

"Can't?" said Chrayonne, with a puzzled look. "Can't? But, I say," he exclaimed, jumping up, "I beg your pardon, old fellow, I never thought about your being engaged. I'm off. *Excusez.*"

"Pris'ner," said K9, grinning.

"I am not," I exclaimed, indignantly; but it was of no avail, for the wretch pulled the table-cover on one side, and pointed to my manacled hands.

Chrayonne blew out his cheeky opened his eyes widely, and then whistled very softly. Then, after a pause—

"Very sorry, old fellow. Can I do anything? Bail—friends—solicitors—"

"Yes," I exclaimed, furiously. "Knock that scoundrel down, and take the key of these confounded handcuffs from him. It's a rascally piece of humbug—it's a trick."

Chrayonne looked at the constable, who winked at him in reply, and, to my intense disgust, I could see that for the moment he was more disposed to place faith in the impassive demeanour of the myrmidon of the law than in my indignant protestations.

Just then, however, by a desperate effort, and at the cost of some skin, I dragged one hand from its durance vile, and rushed at my captor, as he dubbed himself; but he coolly rose, took out the key, and released my other hand. Then pocketing the handcuffs, and winking at us both in turn, he opened the door, and the room knew him no longer. While, as a specimen of the advantage or disadvantage of first impressions, I may add that it took two cigars and words innumerable to make Chrayonne believe that my visitor had not departed with the expectation of a heavy bribe as payment for my release.

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## Chapter Four.

### Waiting for 'Arry.

Well, sir, yes; perhaps it was his own fault, a good deal of it, and yet I thinks sometimes as those big folks above us

might do something for us to make things better. But that's neither here nor there; we was hungry, both on us, and he took it and got nabbed, and he's a taking it out in here; and I allus takes a walk round every morning before going out for the day with my basket. Seems like to do me good, though I can't see him; for I know he's there. And then I count up the days as well as I can so as to know when he'll come out, and 'tain't surprising as sometimes they seems so long, that I get my cheek up again the wall and has a good cry.

But that don't do no good, you know—only makes one feel a bit lighter; and then I'm up and off, so as to save all I can again my chap comes out; and then, good luck to us, I hope times 'll mend.

Down the Dials we live. Not in the main street, you know, but just off in a court, and right up atop in the garret. You see, 'Arry gets his living by birds, and we can keep 'em alive up there better. Poor little things! they dies fast enough now; but when we lived on the ground-floor back it was awful. I s'pose it was the closeness and bad smells, for the little things would turn rough all over, and wouldn't eat, and then next morning there they'd be with their pretty little bright eyes half closed, and looking so pitiful that I used to cry about it, and then 'Arry used to call me a fool; but I know he didn't mind, for he allus put his arm round me and give me a kiss.

Pore little soft, downy things; it used to be sad enough to have 'em shut up behind them bars, beating their little soft breasts, and seeming to say, "Let me out! let me out!" but when they died it was ever so much worse. Sometimes of a night I've woke up to hear a little scratching noise and a rustling in one of the cages; and then I've known what it meant, for it's one of the pore thing's little spirits flown away from this weary life.

'Arry used to be soft over it too, for he's werry fond of his birds, and when one went away from us like that, he used to roll the little body up in a bit of stiff paper, and take it down in the country with him and bury it.

"Seems hard to ketch the poor things," he used to say; "but we must get a living somehow."

When we got up atop of the house there was more light, and a bit of sun sometimes, so that the birds lived better, and used to sing more, and we sold a-many.

You see 'Arry had his nets, and traps, and call-birds, and in the fine weather we used to go down in the country together ketching linnets, and goldfinches, and redpoles. Sometimes we'd bring home a lark's or a nightingale's nest, and I used to help him all I could—cutting turves, and getting chickweed, and groundsel, and plantain, moss and wool for canary nests, and mosses and sprays for the bird-stuffers to ornament with, besides grasses of all kinds. There's allus sale for them sorter things, you know, and it's a honest living.

Why, it was like getting into heaven to run down with 'Arry into the bright country—away from the dirt, and noise, and smoke; and I used to make him laugh to hear me shout and sing, and to see me running along a bank here to pick flowers, or stopping there to listen to the larks, and even running arter the butterflies; but he used to like it, I think, and allus took me with him when he could, for his mother lives with us and feeds the birds when we're out. Spring, and summer, and autumn, it was allus beautiful: flowers and fruit, and bright sunshine, and soft, gentle rain, and the sweet, sweet scent of the earth after. Oh, sir, shut yourself up for a month in a dirty room in a close court, where you can hardly breathe—live from hand to mouth, and p'raps not have enough—and then go out into the bright sunshine and on the breezy hills, with the green, shady woods there, and the sparkling stream there—the bees humming about on the heath bells, and all pure, and bright, and golden with the furze and broom—and then feel how it all comes over you, choking like, as if you were so happy you must cry, for it's all too sweet and beautiful to bear!

'Arry allus laughed at me, but I know him and his ways, and what it means when his eyes look so bright, and there's a twitching about the corners of his mouth: and the more wild and happy I seemed, the quieter he'd grow, poor boy, and then he'd take my basket away and carry it hisself atop of his cages and sticks and nets, and "Go along, my gal," he'd say, so that I should be free and light. For he's a good fellow is 'Arry, and never lifted his hand again me once in all the six years we've been married, not even when he came home a bit on.

He used to like me to be fond of the country, and we'd go hopping in the autumn time down there in Surrey amongst the lovely hills, where the place is all sandy; and there's the big fir woods where you go walking between the tall, straight trunks, with the sweet scent meeting you at every step, as you walk over a thick bed of spines. Then out again, where the heath is all purple, and the whortleberries grow; while every hedge is loaded with the great ripe blackberries—miles and miles away from the smoke, but we never thought of the distance till we were going home. Ah! it was enough to make one grudge the people as had money, allus out there in the clear, bright air; and yet I don't know as they was happier than we when we made our bit o' fire under a sandy bank, and sat there and had our bit of bread and cheese or a drop o' tea.

Hopping used to set us up well for some time; and how I used to love it! but the worst of it was when we went back again into the court—so dull and dark, when somehow or other, it allus seemed to come in wet and miserable when we went back home, though the old woman was allus glad to see us, and did all she could to cheer us up; for she never goes out because of her rheumatics. But it was of no use to be low, and we soon settled down again.

All sorts we had in our place: finches, and canaries, and larks, and squirrels sometimes. In the spring-time we used to put pairs of canaries in a big cage, and give 'em stuff to build their pretty little nests; and there was one pair one year as I used to watch, and seem to pity so, for there was the nest and the beautiful eggs, and the little soft, downy, yellow-breasted thing sitting week after week, and no little ones came; and then again and again the same. And I couldn't help it, you know; but it allus hurt me, and made me have a good cry; for it made me think of three times when, after begging very hard, 'Arry's mother had let me see a tiny, soft little babe, so delicate and beautiful, with its little hands and lovely pink nails; so pale, and still; there were the little blue veins in the white forehead, and the dimples in the cheeks, while the head was covered with soft golden hair; and the eyes—ah! the eyes were allus the same, closed—closed, and they never looked in mine; while when I put my cheek up against it 'twas allus the same too—cold, cold, cold. Three times; and I shall never have two little lips say "Mother" to me.

'Arry used to say it was just as well, for poor people like us was best without 'em; but it did seem so hard for the little, tiny, soft things never to look upon the daylight, though it was only in a garret up a court.

He'll be out in another month, 'Arry will, and we've kep' all together as well as we could. You see, I've done a great deal in creases of a morning, for they allus sells somehow; then, too, I've had a turn at flowers, for people will allus buy them too; young chaps to stick in their button-holes, and gals going to work to put in a jug of water, so as to get the sweet scent of the pretty bright things, that it seems almost as cruel to bring into the City as it does birds. Moss roses, and pinks, and carnations sells best, and I don't know who loves 'em most, your work-gal from the country or the poor London-bred one. At times I've had a fruit-basket, and done pretty well that way; for, you see, I've been a bit lucky; and allus had a bit more than we wanted to keep us; though more'n once I thought we must sell the things outer the room.

Poor boy! he'll be surprised when he comes out, for it was along of hard times that he got his six months. He'd been down on his luck for some weeks, and, though he tried hard, things went again him. I tried to cheer him up, but he got a bit wild and savage, and there's allus plenty to get a chap like him to join in a plant—robbery, you know, sir; and what with not havin' enough to eat, and the drink they give him, he got worse and worse; and not being used to it, the other fellows got off, and poor 'Arry was taken.

He wouldn't peach, bless you; though some of his mates in the job was afraid, and got outer the way. One way and another we got money enough to get him a lawyer, and his case came on; and while I was a-sitting there, trying to keep all the trouble down, I heard the magistrate talk to him, and give him six months' hard labour, poor lad, when he'd only done it to get food.

He saw me there, and give me a good long look, trying to smile all the time; but I know'd that bright look in his eyes, and the working at the corners of his mouth, and what he was feeling; but I never flinched a bit, but met his look true and steady, for I knew he wanted all the comfort I could give him.

I couldn't get near him to touch his hand, or I would; and while I was looking hard at the spot where he stood, he was gone; and then the place seemed to be swimming round, and I felt as though I wanted to cry out, and then I came to and found myself sitting on the stones outside, with 'Arry's mother, and we got away as fast as we could.

Yes; up early, and round here every morning, wet or dry, for I shouldn't seem to get on well if I didn't; and long tramps I has: now it's Farringdon Market for creases; now Common Garding for flowers; or Spitalfields or the Boro' for fruit—'cept oranges, and them we gets o' the Jews; and you may say what you like, but I never finds them worse to deal with than some as calls theirselves Christians.

Then it's off with your load, and get rid of it as fast as you can; for its heavy carrying miles after miles through the long streets; and it's a-many faces you look into before there's one to buy. And last of all, when I get back I can sit and think about 'Arry, and how pleased he'll be to find as the nets, and cages, and calls, ain't none of 'em sold. Yes, you can't help thinking about him, for outside the window there's the pigeon trap as he was a-making with laths and nails; inside there's his birds, and the one he was trying to stuff; for he says that's a good living for a chap, if he's at all clever; and he used to think that after seeing so many birds alive he could do it right off. So at odd times he used to practise; and there was his scissors and wires, and tow, and files and nippers, and two or three little finches he'd done, perched up on sprigs of wood, with their feathers wound over and over with cotton, and pins stuck in 'em to keep the wings in their places.

But he allus was clever, was 'Arry; and if he'd had a chance, would have got on.

When the sun's a-going down I gets to the open window, if I'm home time enough; and while the birds are all twittering about me, I get looking right out far away over roofs and chimneys—right out towards where there's the beautiful country, and then I even seem to see it all bright and clear: trees waving, and grass golden green; and through the noise and roar of the streets I seem to hear the cows lowing as they go slowly through the meadows, and the tinkle of the sheep-bell; while all the clouds are golden, orange, and red. Then, too, the bright stars seem to come peeping out one at a time; and the sky pales, while there's a soft mist over the brook, and a sweet, cool, freshness after the hot, close, burning day; now, from where I seem to be on a hill-side, there can be seen a bright light here and there from the cottages, and then about me the bats go darting and fluttering silently along; there's the beautiful white ghost-moths flitting about the bushes, and flapping along, high up, a great owl; and, again, round and round, and hawking about along the wood-side, there's a large night-jar after the moths; for 'Arry taught me all their names. And at last, in the deep silence, tears seem to come up in my eyes, as I hear the beautiful gushing song of the nightingales, answering one another from grove to grove—pure, bright, and sparkling song that goes through one, and sends one's thoughts far away from the present.

And those tears coming into one's eyes seem to shut out all the bright scene, and it goes again; and though there's the twinkling stars overhead, and the birds nestling around me, yet, instead of the peace and silence, there's the roar of the court and the streets, the chimneys and tiles all round, the light shining up from the gas, and I know I'm only in the Dials; but it's sweet to fancy it all, and get away from the life about you for a few minutes; and when 'Arry's mother sees me like that, she never disturbs me to complain of her aches and pains.

No; never in the country since my boy was taken; but the bright days are coming soon.

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## Chapter Five.

### A Rogue in Grain.

"Oh, no; ain't nothing like such tools as I've been used to," he says. "At my last shop everything was first class, and

the place beautifully fitted-up—gas on, new benches, fine joiners' chest o' tools, full of beading and moulding planes, and stocks, and bits, and everything first class."

"Well," says the gov'nor, "I don't want to be unreasonable: anything really necessary for the job you shall have; but of course I can't help my workshop not being equal to your last; but I 'spose it won't make much difference if you get your wages reg'lar?"

"Oh, no;" he says; it didn't matter to him; he could work with any tools, he could; ony he did like to see things a bit to rights, and so on to that tune; and then my gentleman gets to work.

"Pity you didn't stop where you was so jolly well off," I thinks to myself; and then I goes on whistling, and priming some shutters as the gov'nor had made for a new shop front as he had to put in. You see, 'tain't many years since our gov'nor was ony a working man like me, ony he managed to scrape a few pounds together, and then very pluckily started for hisself out in one of the new outskirts, where there was a deal of new building going on by the big London contractors, and a deal of altering and patching, which used to be done by the little jobbing men same as our gov'nor. Often and often he's talked to me about it when working aside me pleasant and sociable as could be; how at times he'd be all of a shake and tremble for fear of going wrong, not knowing how to pay his man or two on Saturday, and obliged to be civil as could be to them, for fear they'd go off and leave him in the lurch over some job or other. Then people didn't pay up, and he'd have to wait; and then there was the ironmonger and the timber merchant wouldn't give him credit, being only a small beginner; and one way and another he led such a life of it for the first three years as made him wish again and again as he'd been content to be journeyman and stopped on the reg'lar. But there; he warn't meant for a journeyman, he was too good a scholar, and had too much in his brains, and, besides, had got such a stock of that "will do it" in his head as made him get on. He knowed well enough that you can't drive a nail up to the head at one blow, or cover a piece of flatting with one touch of the brush; and so he acted accordingly, tapping gently at first till he'd got his nail a little way in, and then letting go at it till it was chock up to the head, reg'lar fixture; and so on, nail after nail, till he got his house up firm and strong. He didn't turn master for the sake of walking about with his hands in his pockets; for, as he said to me often, "In my small way, Sam," he says, "master's a harder job than journeyman's." And so it was; for, come tea-time and the men knocked off, I've seen him keep on hard at it, hour after hour, right up to twelve o'clock; while the chaps as left the shop would wink at one another, for some men ain't got any respect for a hard-toiling master: they'll a deal sooner slave for some foul-mouthed bully who gives them no peace of their lives.

Sometimes, when he's been hard pushed with a job, I've known him ask 'em to stay and work a bit of overtime, same as he did my gentleman as had been at such fine shops; but "Oh, no," he says, "couldn't do it, thanky," and away he goes.

Well, now, that ain't the sort of thing, you know; for one good turn deserves another; and my gentleman wouldn't have much liked it if he'd been refused a day when he wanted it. But, there, he was a poor sort; and one of those fellows as must have everything exact to pattern, and can't be put out in the least—chaps what runs in one groove all their lifetime and can't do anything out of it; and then, when they're outer work, why, they're like so many big babies and quite as helpless. But he didn't stay long; he was too fine, and talked too much. The gov'nor soon saw through him, and paid him off; and, according to my experience in such things, those men as have so much to say, and are so very particular to let the gov'nor know how particular they are not to waste a bit of time, generally turn out the most given to miking—skulking, you know.

I ain't much of a workman, you know; being only a sort of odd man on the place, doing anything—painting or what not; but me and the gov'nor gets on well together, for I make a point of helping him when he's hard pushed; and I will say that of him, he's always been as liberal after as a man could be. Say a job's wanted quick, what's the good of niggling about one's hours exactly, and running off for fear of doing a stroke too much. Go at it, I says, and work with the master as if you take an interest in the job and feel a bit of pride in it. Why, bless your heart, 'tain't only the three or six-and-thirty shillings a week a man ought to work for, but the sense of doing things well, so as he can stand up aside his fellow-man, and look at his work and say, "I did that, and I ain't ashamed of it." Why, I've known fellows that bowky about their jobs that they wouldn't own to 'em afterwards. Sashes all knock-kneed, panelling out of the square, or painters with their paint all blistering and peeling off. No; 'tain't only for the week's wage a man ought to work, but for a sense of duty, and so on,

Gov'nor and me gets on very well together, for I was with him in his worst times, when he used to work in his shirt-sleeves aside me; and many's the time I've gone into little contract jobs with him, to calculate the expense, when from being over-anxious to get work he'd take the jobs a deal too low, and so I used to tell him. But we always got on together, and I'll tell you how it was I got along with him.

I always could carpenter a bit, but most of my time's been spent as a painter—'prenticed to it, you know, and spent seven years with a drunken master to learn 'most nothing, 'cept what I picked up myself. Well, I couldn't get a job in town, so I was on the look-out round the outside, when I came to our gov'nor's place, where he was at work with two men, and him doing about as much as both of 'em. No use to try on for carpentering, I thinks, so I sets up the painting sign and goes in.

"Well," says the gov'nor, "I can give you a job if you can grain."

Now that was a rum 'un, for I was only a plain painter, and no grainer; but after three weeks' hard lines, wife and family at home, and work awful, it did seem tantalising to a willing man to have a week's wages shown him if he could only do one particular thing. Of course I had dodged it a bit before, but I wasn't a grainer, and I knowed it well enough; but I thinks to myself, "Well, this is outside London, where people ain't so very artis-like in their ideas, and perhaps I can manage it—so here goes. I can but try, and if I misses, why, it ain't a hanging matter." So I says, "Well; I wouldn't undertake none of your superfine walnuts, and bird's-eye maples, and marbles; but if it's a bit of plain oak I'm your man."

"Well," he says, "that'll do; it's only plain oak; and, if you like, you can begin priming and going on at once. There's paints and brushes, but you must find your own graining tools."

At it I goes like a savage, and then I found as there was a week's work for me before I need touch the graining; for there was priming, and first and second coats; and so I went on, but thinking precious hard about the bit of graining I should have to do. "Nothing venture, nothing gain," I says; and that night I was hard at it after work—ah! and right up to four o'clock in the morning—trying to put a bit of oak grain on to a piece of smooth deal. I'd got a brush or two, and some colour, and a couple of them comb-like things we uses; and there I was, with the missus trying to keep her eyes open and pretending to sew, while I painted and streaked, and then smudged it about with a bit of rag; and I'm blest if I didn't put some grain on that piece of wood as would have made Mother Nature stare—knots, and twists, and coarse grain, and shadings as I could have laughed at if I hadn't been so anxious. You see, the nuisance of it was, it looked so easy when another man did it: touches over with his colour, streaks it down with his comb, and then with a rag gives a smudge here and there, and all so lightly, and there it is done. But I couldn't, though I tried till the missus nodded, so I was obliged to send her to bed for fear she'd set her cap afire; and then I goes to the pump and has a reg'lar good sloosh, and touches my face over with the cold water, when after a good rub I goes at it again quite fresh.

I can't think now how many times I rubbed the paint off with the dirty rag, but a good many I know, and the clock had gone three when I was still at it, with every try seeming to be worse than the last; but still I kept on till I seemed to hear it strike four in a muffled sort of way, and then the next thing I heard was the wife calling me, for it was five o'clock, and I had a long way to walk to get to my work.

As soon as I could get my head off the table, and pull myself together, the first thing I did was to look at my graining; and some how or other it didn't look so very much amiss; but still it warn't anything like what it ought to be, as I knowed well enough. All that day I was thinking it over, and best part of that dinner-hour I stopped in the shop trying it on again.

Just as I was going to smudge a piece over, and finish my bit of bread and meat, not feeling at all satisfied, I gives a jump, for some one behind me says,—

"Very neat, indeed. Bit of old oak, I suppose. You'd better do them shutters that style of grain."

Well, do you know, if I didn't look at the guv'nor—for him it was—to see whether he warn't a joking me; but, bless you, no; he was as serious as a judge: so feeling all the while like a great humbug, as I was, I says, "Werry well, sir," finished my dinner, and then got to work again.

It turned out as I expected, just a whole week before I had to begin graining; and what with about an hour a day, and four more every night, I got on pretty well, especially after giving a chap two pots of ale to put me up to a wrinkle or two; and now I sometimes pass by that very bit of graining, and though of course I could do it a deal better now, I don't feel so very much ashamed of it.

But along of my guv'nor. What a fight that man did have surely; and how well I used to know when he was running short on Saturdays: he'd look ten years older those times; and over and over again I've felt ashamed to take the money; but one couldn't do without it, you know, on account of the little ones and wife. Last of all, though, we got to understand one another—the guv'nor and me; and this was how it was: he'd been worse nor usual, and was terribly hard-up, for he'd been buying wood and paying for it; for though he could have plenty of credit now as he don't want it, in those days not a bit of stuff could he get without putting the money down. Well, having next to no capital, this bothered him terribly; and after paying two men on Saturday, I felt pretty sure as he was run close, and stood hanging about in the shop, not knowing whether to go in to the house or be off home; and at last I did go home and told the wife about it, and she said we could hold out two or three weeks very well, if I thought the guv'nor would pay by-and-by. But I soon settled that, for I knew my man, and so I set down quietly to my tea, and was sticking a bit of bread-and-butter in one little open beak and a bit in another, when there comes a knock at the door, and I turned red all over, for I felt it was the guv'nor; and so it was, and he'd brought my wages, when, as he stood in my bit of a kitchen holding out the three-and-thirty shillings, I couldn't for the life of me help looking at where his watch-chain hung, and it warn't there.

I meant to do it neatly, and without hurting his feelings, for him and his wife had been very kind to us when we had the sickness in the house; but, you see, it warn't a bit of graining, and I regularly muffed the job when I told him to let it stand for two or three weeks, as we could do till then. Next moment he had hold of my hand, shaking it heartily, and then next after that he broke down in a humbled, mortified sort of a way; and when the wife hurried the children up the staircase, out of sight, poor chap! he sat down, laid his head on his hand, and groaned.

"Cheer up," I says, "it'll be all right soon."

"Right! yes," he says, jumping up. "But it ain't that," he says; "it's meeting a friend where I didn't expect one;" and then he was gone.

I was sitting at breakfast next morning (Sunday) when the garden gate rattles, and there was the guv'nor coming in such a hurry. Never stops to knock, but in he comes and shakes hands hearty; and then, without speaking, stuffs a letter into my hand. "Head it," he says, "last post, last night," and I did; but what I took most notice of was a long strip of paper with "197 pounds 10 shillings 6 pence" written on it, just under the name of one of the London bankers.

Yes, we had a pleasant dinner, a comfortable cup of tea, and a cosy supper with the guv'nor that day; and uncommon good friends we've been ever since. I do all sorts at the shop, so that there's always a job, and though people say "Jack of all trades—master of none," I think a man might follow French suit and know two trades and master them both, so as when work falls one way he has a chance the other. Poor folks often get hunted by the wolf Poverty, and it would not be amiss to take a lesson from the burrowing animals, and have two holes—to get out of

one when t'other happened to be stopped.

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## Chapter Six.

### A Cabman's Story.

"Hope I see you well, sir. Thanky, sir, I ain't had such a cigar since as you give me that day. You'll often find me on this stand, sir, and happy to drive yer at any time, either on the box or inside. But I say, you know, sir, how about putting a feller in print? Fine game some of our chaps made on it, because they said as they knew it all by heart. You see I don't like to wherit people with my old stories; but when I can get any one to listen I du like to talk a bit. You can't form no idea of the things as we hears and sees; and I believe it would do any man good to drive a keb for a twelvemonth; it's both wonderful what you'd pick up, and how you'd git picked up. Here's your poets writing about green banks and flowers, and shepherds and shepherdesses, and love and stuff; why I've had no end of love-making in my keb here. Young ladies and young swells, whose pars and mars ain't agreeable like, makes assignations and hires a keb by the hour, to be drove up and down, and the driver often looking as innocent as you please. I don't dislike them sorter jobs, for you see, when he says 'How much, kebbey?' one can lay it on a bit, for he won't look shabby by disputing the fare before the young lady. But, Lor' bless you, they'd pay anything just at them times, for money seems no object—everythink's sweet, and when it rains I think they fancies as it's all sugar and water.

"There was one old chap as I drove regular; he used to come to my stand twice a week, and after the first time I always knew what to do. Ah! he was a fine old chap, and had been a orficer or somethin' of that sort. Big mustarsh, yer know, and whiskers white as snow, and a hye! Ah, his was a hye, his were! Talk about tellin' soldiers to charge! why, they couldn't do no other with him a lookin' at 'em; though if he hadn't been a good sort I don't think as I could have done much in charging my fashion, you know. It was a pleasure to see him walk—as upright as his old gold-headed cane. Seven bob a week he was to me reg'lar, and I used to look out for his old white head a-coming round the corner about three o'clock in the arternoon, and then I used to drive him right off to Kensal-green Cemetery, where he'd get down, and I always waited for him half an hour, when out he'd come, looking as fierce and stiff as ever, get into the keb, 'Home,' he'd say, giving his stick a bit of a flourish, just as if it were a sword; and home it was.

"About the seccun time we went, I walks permiscus up to the gatekeeper—stiff-looking chap, too, with only one eye, and a touch o' the k'mishionaire about him, only he hadn't got no empty sleeve hanging to his button and didn't wear no mustarchers; but all the same, I sets him down as having handled the musket some time, and so he had. Well, I walks up to him slowly and 'spectfully, showin' him all the time as I know'd as I was only a kebbman, and had learned to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters, you know; and this iled him a bit, so as he went easy, and we got into conversation. I draws him on by degrees; for these gatekeepers is werry great swells in their way, as any one may see for hissself by getting a haporth o' curds and whey at one of the parks, and studying the infloouence of a gold band round a man's hat. 'Taint everybody as notices it, but it's wonderful how that ere yaller metal stiffens a feller's neck. Look at flunkeys, for instance—decent chaps enough, some on 'em, till they gets a bit o' lace on their hats, and then they're as proud on it as a fresh-moulted cockatoo. Never wore no lace on my hat; but shouldn't mind wearing a little more nap.

"Let's see where had I got to? Ah, I know. Most extinguished myself with them gold-band hats. You see, I was a saying as them gatekeepers is big swells, and wants careful handling. They're the sort of chaps that wun would like to buy at wun's own wallyation and sell at theirs. Payin' spec that to anybody; only I'm 'fraid as the market would soon get choked. Well, fust thing I does is to fall werry much in love with the flowers in his windy, and quite 'spectfully arsts the name of 'em; when, bein' a bit of a gardener, he comes out with some thunderin' great furrin word, as I knows jolly well he didn't know the meanin' on; and I says, 'Oh!' as if I was werry much obliged, and takes hold o' one werry gently, and has a smell, and then thinks a great deal o' the size of the blossoms, and so on; till, as if it was takin' a great liberty, I arsts if he couldn't cut me just one. Jest what he wanted, yer know; and making a terrible fuss over it, and explaining the wally of the plant, he snips me off a bit, and I sticks it in my button-hole, while he looked as pleased as some o' those old buffers in white weskets as puts shillings in plates when there's a k'lection, and then thinks as they've been patrons: for some folks do love to be arskt favours, and then comes the grandee as they grants 'em.

"So then I goes on a fishin' and a fishin', and calls him 'sir,' and arsts his opinion of Common Garden, and so on, till at last I hooks him, and—

"Coo-o-ome orn! What are yer up to, Nosey? Never was such a 'oss as you for lookin' arter the main chance. That wasn't a sixpence, stoopid, and if it was I'd a got off and picked it up without yer going down on yer knees. Never was such a 'oss as this here, sir. He's a Paddy—come out of a Roman Catholic country, yer know; and blest if he ain't allus a tryin' to go down on his knees. Fancies every crossin'-sweeper he sees is a holy father, and wants to confess, I suppose. It's a natteral weakness of his, and it's taken all the hair off his knees. I paints 'em up a bit so as to hide the worst of it, but he's allus a tryin' it on. Get along, do.

"Well, I hooks him, you know—the gatekeeper, I means—and arter playin' him a bit he was as civil as you please; gets down off his stilts, and was ready to tell me anything. So then I gets to know as my gentleman was an old colonel as had buried a daughter there two months afore, and had allus come twice a week ever since to have a look at the place. 'An',' says Mr Crusp—that was the gatekeeper's name—'an', as you may find out yourself if you go, I've got geranums an' stocks, an' werbenas, quite a show on 'em, for the old gentleman said he should like to see some flowers there.' And just then out comes the old orficer, and I drives off.

"Well, sir, things goes on like this here for a matter o' months, and—

"Just look at that, now. Coome orn, stoopid. Blest if ever there was sich a 'oss. It's pounds outer my pocket; but the

guv'nor don't care, bless yer, as long as I take in my reg'lar dose every day. Jest look at that, now; pulling up short right in the middle of the road, cos them Jarmans was blowin' up a row. Likes music, I spose; so do I, when I can get it good, and so does everybody, it seems to me. I was a talking to a gentleman only t'other day, jest as I may be to you, and he says, says he, 'It's my opinion that if you give the working classes good music, joined to good words, they wouldn't notice them rubbishing music-hall things, as only goes down because they're tacked on to a pretty tune.' And he's right, yer know, and he's a man as has done a good deal towards improving the working people. Why, only see if a pretty tune comes up if it isn't whistled and sung all over the town—ah, and the country too—in no time; and what's more, it ain't forgotten neither. Yer see, to like yer fine books and poetry a man wants eddication; but it comes nateral to him to love a pretty tune. I ain't up to much, yer know, but I can't stand the rubbish as folks goes and wags their heads to—and what for? only because they can't get anything better. Who says common folks don't love music! Just take 'em and show 'em the crowds arter the soldiers' and volunteer bands, and in the parks, and then, perhaps, they'll alter their tune; and—look at that, now, if I ain't gone right away from the story. Shouldn't do for a speaker, I shouldn't, for it seems to me as I'm like my old 'oss, Nosey—allus wants to turn down the fust turning as comes. There he goes. Coo-o-me orn.

"Well, things goes on for a matter o' months, and twiste a week I pockets my three-and-six; but I keeps thinking as it couldn't last much longer. 'So the old gentleman got tired,' says you. Right you are! He did get tired at last, but not as you might think. He allus came same time, and stopped same time, and then I drove him back to his own door. Summer went by. The gals had cried the lavendy up and down the streets, and the swells had all gone outer town to the sea-side and the furrin waterin' places; and for long enough, whenever a decent job had come, it had been luggage on the roof, and a bundle of sticks and umbrellys inside, and then off to some railway station or another. Kensington Gardings was a rainin' yaller leaves all day long, while the robins was tunin' up their melancholy little pipes, just as if there was no one else left to sing, and they was werry miserable becos the cold weather was a-comin'; while there was no sing left in me, for my asthmy was a beginning to tickle me up a bit, as it allus does in autumn time; but still my old gentleman comes as reg'lar as clockwork.

"One afternoon, as I was sitting on my box, rather cold and chilly, for the fog was a-comin' creepin' on earlier nor usual, I was amusin' myself a pickin' ov a few walnuts—eight a penny, you know, without the port wine and salt. It was a dull sort of time, when you could hear the muffin bell a-going down the side streets; and the fires shining through the window-blinds looked warm and cosy. I was a pickin' and growlin' away at my nuts—for they didn't skin easy, besides being werry dry, when who should I see a-comin' but my reg'lar fare. Up he comes along the street, straight and stiff as a drill-sergeant, and though half a dozen whips runs up touting for the job, he never takes no notice of 'em, and I draws up to the kerb, jumps down to let him in, and opens the door, when he stops with one leg in the keb.

"Yer see, this wasn't a reg'lar thing, for arter the first time I allus knew what he wanted, and we understood one another, so that it was all done this way: jump in—set down—take up agin—set down agin—pay up—touch yer 'at—jump on the box—and nary word spoken. Sooted him, yer know; and it sooted me; so what more did you want? But now on this day it was diffurnt, for, as I said afore, he stops with one leg in the keb, and begins to speak, quite pleasant, and quiet, and civil, as a gentleman could speak, and he says, 'Kebman, I thank you for your attention. Here's a suffrin for you. Drive on.'

"In course, I thanked him; but he didn't seem to want to be talked to, and I drives on, thinking it was a rum start paying aforehand. Not as I'd got anything to grumble about, for a suffrin warn't to be sneezed at, as the sayin' is. So I drives up to the cemetery gates; sets him down; puts the nose-bag on the mare I drove then; an' lights my pipe.

"One pipe allus used to do for me while he went in and came out; so I used to smoke it, and then put it away. But this time he didn't come back so soon as usual, or else, being a bit outer sorts in stummick and pocket, I'd smoked faster; so I pulls it out and lights up agen, and a good deal o' bother I had, I remember, for the matches was damp, and there was I a-rubbin' one arter the other again the pipe bowl for long enough, inside my hat.

"Well, I finished that pipe, and then another, for it seemed to me as he was having a long stay on the strength of the suffrin. 'And welcome,' I says; for, of course, being a good sort, I wasn't going to grudge him an hour. But it got to be more than an hour, and dusky, and foggy, and damp; and that blessed rheumatic shoulder o' mine began a-going it orful. It was just for all the world as though some one had made a hole right through the blade-bone, and then, shovin' a piece of clothes-line through, was a sawin' of it backards and furards. Then it began to rain a little—mizzly, yer know—and the mare havin' tossed her old nose-bag about till she couldn't get not anuther taste o' chaff, let alone a hoat or a bean, stands hanging all together like, same as those fiery steeds as they used to send up under a balloon, Cremorne way, years ago, and lookin' for all the world like a hannimal cut out for the knackers.

"Last of all out comes Mr Crusp, all hot tea and buttered toast, shining beautiful, and looking as though he'd been going on to the tune o' four cups and three rounds. Then he begins to fasten up; and 'Ulloa!' says he, 'what are you a-waitin' for?' 'Colonel,' says I. 'Out long ago,' says he. 'No,' says I; 'he's been in more'n two hours.' Well, he looks gallus hard at me, and then he says, 'He must ha' gone out without you seein' of him. He's give you the slip.' 'Then he must ha' come away inside that there black ombibus with plumes on it, then,' I says, for I knowed as I must ha' seen him if he had come out; and then I tells him about the suffrin.

"'Why didn't you say that afore,' says Crusp. 'You see if he ain't been and committed hisself, or fell a wictim to his sorrow.' And then he turns short round, and goes puffin' along one o' the side walks; while, knowin' as my old mare wouldn't run away to save her life, I follered.

"First we goes down a long gravel path where the 'santhemums was a hanging their heads, and seeming as if they was a crying; but then all the trees I could see in the dim light was covered with tears. Then Crusp leads off across a flower garding like, all covered with graves and stones; and somehow, stumbling along in a big old box coat, I manages to fall right over one of 'em; but when I pulled myself together agen, and gets up to the gatekeeper, I finds him standing aside my reg'lar fare, who was lying down there in the wet grass with his cheek agin a grave, and one

arm stretched right over it: while in t'other was a long lock of dark hair. His hat had rolled off, and his own long white hair lay loose among the dead flowers and damp grass; and turning all of a tremble, I stoops down beside him, and Crusp whispers, so quiet and solemn, 'He's gone to her!'

"For a moment or two I couldn't believe it, for there in the dusk it seemed as though he was only crying over the restin'-place of his poor child. I didn't like to speak, for it all seemed so strange and solemn: there was the 'drip—drip—drip' from the trees, and now and then a sad mournful sort of sigh as the wind swept by; and I don't know how it was, but sad times seemed to come up again and take hold of a fellow's heart; so that dim as it all was before, it turned worse, till one could hardly see at all, and though the rain came slowly down, it seemed right and nateral to take off one's hat; and we both did, and then stole away on tiptoe to fetch more help.

"That allus comes back in the autumn time, when the leaves are falling, and the rain drips slowly down; and then, feeling quite melancholy-like, I can see again as plain as can be that fine old man restin' his head upon the grave, with his silver hair all spread out upon the grass, and him taking his rest from his troubles.

"Here we are, sir,—'Tannic Gardings; and, if it's all the same to you, I'll just give that old 'oss a feed and a rub down, while you and the ladies look through the green'ouses. Eases his jints a bit, yer see, and they runs werry stiff sometimes."

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## Chapter Seven.

### J. Weltus.

Reformations, and improvements, and setrer, are all very well; but, mind yer, if your drink's been four ale all your life you won't take kindly to porter, "threepence a pot in your own jugs," if some one tells you all at once as it's better for you, and your ale's pison. Rome warn't built in a day, you know, and arter sitting for five-and-twenty year on my bench and using the lapstone and sterrup-leather, you ain't a-going to make me take nat'rally to a hupright bench.

Here I am, yer see; allus at home—airy spot; good light, and never no sun; pleasant prospect o' four foot in front, none to the right, and chock down into Fleet-street on the left. What more would you have? Every convenience for carrying on a large and lucrative trade without moving from yer seat. Here's one's stool, and, altogether, close to one's hand, everything as a artis' in leather work could want. Now see here: paste? there you are; stuffin'? there you are; tub for soakin'? there you are; and so on with every think—whether it's lapstone, foot, hemp, ball, wax, bristles, dubbin, grease, or ink. There's one's knives and stone all in a row; there's one's divisions with all one's nails and pegs—brass, iron, and wood; there's one's hammers; and—there, what more would you have for soleing and heeling a boot or a shoe right off without leaving yer seat? And all done in a regular business way, yer know; none o' yer new-fangled rivet and clinch and sewing-machine rubbish; but straightforward laid-in stitches, put in with a sharp awl and a fine pair of ends, laid into and drawn tight with plenty of elbow grease, and the sole stoned and hammered as solid as a board, and more too.

Rivets indeed! Why, how can a boot be decent as is nailed together just as a chip would make a box? 'Tain't natural, no more nor gutta-percha was, nor india-rubber was. Course I had to take to gutta-percha soles, as it was the fashun, else yer lose yer trade; but there you were, sticking the things on with a lot o' grease tar stuff, and then as soon as they got warm, off they comes again, and serve 'em right too for not being sewed, and then touched round the wearing Darts with a few rows o' springs neatly put in, or a facing o' sparrables.

And here's yer everlasting soles and yer machinery and clat! Don't tell me: why, they can't answer any more than indy-rubber goloshes can, as raises your corns, an' draws yer feet, an' makes a man miserable, as of course every one is as ain't got a decent shoe to his foot. It's all very fine having yer new fangles, and one introdoosing cork, and another iron, and another copper and copper toes. You may have yer grand warerusses over Southwark way; but my 'pinion is as it must come down to us at last, as only stands to reason.

Now here you are; you've bought yer pair o' ready-mades and worn 'em a bit, and then where are you? why, a-looking out for "J. Weltus, shoemaker, repairs neatly executed"—as it says on the board over the stall, as cost me a soleing and heeling for a painter chap outer work as did it for me, and put no dryers in his colour, so as the boys give it that pitted-with-the-small-pox look by aimin' at it with their popguns. Well, you looks for J. Weltus, and finds him sittin' in his stall in the court, and shows him what's up, and very naterally he laughs at yer, as he does at all as runs away from your fine old conservative wax-end and leather, for your improved, reform, upright bench, and machine-made understandings.

But J. Weltus takes pity on you, and soon has yer boots in hand; and, as the swell says, he "analyses" 'em. And then where are yer? Here's your sole good for nought—the welt gone, heel sunk, and a whole regiment of pegs sticking up inside fit to rasp every bit o' skin off yer foot.

Well, of course he grins; but you wants 'em to-morrow? Werry good; and he grins again to find that with all yer machine-making and sewing, yer obliged to come back to the old mender after all; so he takes off his glasses, gets Kidney Joe to cast a hye on his stall, and runs round to the grindery shop in Drury Lane, and comes back in ten minutes with a few real Archangel bristles, a ball of hemp, a set of first-class leather, some stuffin'; and of course, just as if to insult him, the counter's chock full o' ready-closed uppers, with all sorts o' jigamaree, fiddle-faddle stitching about 'em, as ain't no good only to let the water in. Then off he sets again—only he has to go back for his wax, which is, as one may say, the mainspring of a boot—the mortar of the edifice, as holds all together and as it should be.

Nex' day you comes for the boots, and there they are. Well, they ain't done; but J.W.'s a-ripping into 'em. One's been touched over with a bit o' glass, as has smoothed the new half-sole wonderful, and another's being sprigged; then



the edges'll be waxed up a bit with the dubbin', and then there's yer boots—a tighter and a better pair than they was afore, and all for three shillings, or three-and-six, according to your customer.

I never puts any toe-pieces on, punched full o' holes to make 'em look 'ansum; but does my work in the good old style, and if I was in Parliament every man as didn't wear Wellingtons should be taxed.

But along o' them cards in the winders. Well, a chap come to me one day, and wanted me to be agent, and I stares up at him at first to see as he wasn't joking, "Loans of from 5 pounds to 100 pounds upon personal security," says the card he showed me, just as you can see 'em in hundreds o' back courts and slums—places where you may be sure people wants heaps o' money.

"Do a wonderful stroke o' business," I says, looking at my chap. "Find plenty o' customers down here; but p'raps they might object to the smell o' the leather, and so keep away."

"Bless yer, no," says the chap—"not at all. Many of our agents is marine-store dealers and groshers. Good commission for you if you like to take it."

But I wouldn't; and there hung the card in the little red herring and sweet shop till last week, when they had to turn out because the place is all coming down to make way for the new law courts, and setrer.

Do! of course it's a do; same as those 'wertisements in the papers is from distressed tradesmen who'll give five pound for the loan of ten for a week, and deposit fifty pounds wally of stuff for security—pawn tickets, yer know—cards got from folks' uncle when they've been on a wisit—"Frock-coat and satin wesket, fifteen and nine, John Smith, 999, Snooks-street"—and all on to that tune. Traps—traps—traps, every one on 'em, as the poor fellows know as has had any dealings with the moneylenders.

Now, just look here; about the only honest one there is, is your uncle. Fixed interest, certain time, and he wants security. Saturday night and a hard week, and rent due, and the chap as the boots was made for not come to fetch 'em; the pair as was mended not paid for—and all the stuff required cost money, you see—so off you goes to your uncle with two flat irons and the missus's ring. Then you does your bit of negotiation, and the job's done; and out you come from the little court where the door flaps to, and all's right and square, and no odds to nobody; but just try same as Jinks did to get a loan from the Cosmopolitan and Jint-Stock Adwance and Discount Company, and see how you like it. So many stamps for application; so much for inquiry fee; so much for this, and so much for that, and so on.

Jinks comes in, as maybe you, and he says, "I shall be wantin' a pair o' boots nex' week," he says, "and you may as well take the measure now," he says; "save time when I gives the order."

"All right," I says, getting hold o' my rule and a strip o' paper.

"But I dunno yet what sort I'll have," he says. "I've a sorter leaning towards 'lasticks; but I dunno," he says, "but what I'd best stick to the old sort—laceups."

"Say the word," I says, and he said it—"Lasticks!" and I took his measure, and brought out a pen, dips in my ink-bottle, and makes marks; and all the time he was precious busy rattling some printed paper about and pretending to be reading.

"Oh, Weltus," he says all at once, just as if it struck him all at the moment, "I'm a-going to have an advance from the 'ciety."

"Are you?" I says—"inches and a harf—'lasticks—kid tops."

"What?" he says.

"Only my measuring," I says, with the pen in my mouth.

"Oh!" he says, "jusso." And then he goes on—"Bliged to get a couple of tradesmen—'spectable tradesmen—to sign their names to the papers—just to show, you know, as I'm some one decent. You'll be one, won't yer?"

"One what?" I says—"bondsman?"

"Oh, no," he says, "nothing o' the kind; only just sign yer name. It's me as is bound; and if anything went wrong, why, they'd come upon me, and so on, yer know. Don't yer see?"

"No!" I says, taking off my glasses, and rubbin' 'em on my leather apron—"No," I says, "I can't quite."

"Why," he says, "it's five pound as I'm going to borrow; and they lends it me on my own pussonal security; but just to show as I'm the right sort, I get two 'spectable tradesmen to put down their names. Don't yer see? I could get plenty to do it, only I don't want every one to know. You see now, don't you?"

"No," I says, "I can't somehow."

"Why," he says, "it's all right, man," and he gives me a slap on the shoulder. "I'm going to pay it back by 'stalments, and I shall pay yer cash for them boots when I gets the money, and it'll be doing us both a good turn. There's the line—just along there—'J. Weltus, Pull-Down Court.' Don't you be in a stew; there's nothing to be 'feard on. It's me as they'd come on, I tell you. Your signing yer name along that line is only a form, and it's me they'd sell up. Now don't you see? I shall give you the order for them boots o' Monday."

But, do you know, I'm blest if I could see it then; and though he tried a bit more, he couldn't make me see it. Long course o' roughing it in the world's made my eyes dull, yer know; and, last of all, Jinks doubles up his papers, and goes out quite huffy; while I gets ready a fresh pair of ends and goes on with a job I had in hand, when every time I pulls the threads home I gives a good hard grunt, and goes on analysing Bob Jinks, and wondering what it would all come to. "Holiday now and then's all werry well," I says, "but Rye House, 'Ampton Court, and Gravesend on Mondays won't do even if a man does make six-and-thirty bob a week. Masters don't like their hands to be allus going out, and besides, it don't look well to take a soot o' clothes out on Saturday night, and stuff 'em up the spout again on Toosdays or Wensdays;" and arter analysing a good deal, I couldn't help finding as Bob Jinks was one of them chaps as helped pay for Mrs Shortnip's satin dress at the Rising Sun. "Hal, a pint o' beer's good," I says to myself, "and I don't object to a pipe with it; but have the work done first. That's my motter."

"Don't begin them boots till I gives yer the order," says Jinks, as he goes out.

"No," I says, "I shan't;" nor I didn't neither, for I couldn't see the Jos Miller of it, and somehow or another Jinks never come inside my place again.

I was on the look-out, though, and I suppose he did make some one see all about it, and got him to sign; for two months arter there was a snuffy-looking old foggy-eyed chap a-stopping in his lodgings, and a little while arter two o' Levy Haman's men was fetching the furnitur down, and I saw sev'ral things as must ha' been his at the broker's shop at the corner; for they do say as these loan 'cieties are precious hard on any one as gets behind with the payments, and 'll eat you outer house and home. But, bless yer, it's no 'ciety in most cases, but some precious hook-beaked knowing one as is company, directors, and sekketary all in himself and lives on the interest and sellings up of them as gets into his claws. 'Taint often as they do lend anything, but when they do they makes theirselves safe enough by getting about three names and a plugging rate of interest; and then, good luck to yer if yer don't pay up. Gettin' things on tick's all werry well, but though they call it so, 'taint no credit to nobody; and that's what I say; and if I ain't right, my name ain't J. Weltus.

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## Chapter Eight.

### My Fare.

Don't you make a mistake, now, and think I'm not a working man, because I am. Don't you run away with the idea that because I go of a morning and find my horse and cab waiting ready cleaned for me, and I jumps up and drives off, as I don't work as hard as any mechanic, because I do; and I used to work harder, for it used to be Sunday and week days, till the missus and me laid our heads together, and said, if we couldn't live on six days' work a week at cabbng we'd try something else; so now I am only a six days' man—Hansom cab, VR, licensed to carry two persons.

None o' your poor, broken-kneed knackers for me. I takes my money in to the governor regular, and told him flat that if I couldn't have a decent horse, I wouldn't drive; and I spoke a bit sharp, having worked for him ten years.

"Take your chice, Steve Wilkins," he says; and I took it, and drove Kangaroo, the wall-eyed horse with a rat tail.

I had a call one day off the stand by the Foundling, and has to go into New Ormond Street, close by; and I takes up an old widow lady and her daughter—as beautiful a girl of seventeen or eighteen as ever I set eyes on, but so weak that I had to go and help her down to the cab, when she thanked me so sweetly that I couldn't help looking again and again, for it was a thing I wasn't used to.

"Drive out towards the country, cabman, the nearest way," says the old lady; "and when we want to turn back, I'll speak."

"Poor gal!" I says, "she's an invalid. She's just such a one as my Fan would have been if she'd lived;" and I says this to myself as I gets on to my box, feeling quite soft; for though I knew my gal wouldn't have been handsome, what did that matter? I didn't like to lose her.

"Let's see," I says again, "she wants fresh air. We'll go up the hill, and through Hampstead;" and I touches Kangaroo on the flank, and away we goes, and I picks out all the nicest bits I could, and when I comes across a pretty bit of view I pulls up, and pretends as there's a strap wanted tightening, or a hoof picking, or a fresh knot at the end of the whip, and so on. Then I goes pretty quickly along the streety bits, and walks very slowly along the green lanes; and so we goes on for a good hour, when the old lady pushes the lid open with her parasol, and tells me to turn back.

"All right, mum," I says; and takes 'em back another way, allers following the same plan; and at last pulls up at the house where I supposed they was lodgers, for that's a rare place for lodgings about there.

I has the young lady leaning on my arm when she gets out, and when she was at the door she says, "Thank you" again, so sweetly and sadly that it almost upset me. But the old lady directly after asked me the fare, and I tells her, and she gives me sixpence too much, and though I wanted to pocket it, I wouldn't, but hands it back.

"Thank you, cabman," she says; "that's for being so kind and attentive to my poor child."

"God bless her, mum," I says, "I don't want paying for that."

Then she smiles quite pleasant, and asks me if it would be worth my while to call again the next afternoon if it was fine, and I says it would; and next day, just in the same way, I goes right off past Primrose Hill, and seeing as what they wanted was the fresh air, I makes the best o' my way right out, and then, when we was amongst the green trees, Kangaroo and me takes it easy, and just saunters along. Going up hill I walks by his head, and picks at the

hedges, while them two, seeing as I took no notice of 'em, took no notice o' me. I mean, you know, treated me as if we was old friends, and asked me questions about the different places we passed, and so on.

Bimeby I drives 'em back, and the old lady again wanted to give me something extra for what she called my kind consideration; but "No, Stevey," I says to myself; "if you can't do a bit o' kindness without being paid for it, you'd better put up the shutters, and take to some other trade." So I wouldn't have it, and the old lady thought I was offended; but I laughed, and told her as the young lady had paid me; and so she had, with one of her sad smiles, and I said I'd be there again nex' day if it was fine.

And so I was; and so we went on, day after day, and week after week; and I could see that, though the sight of the country and the fresh air brightened the poor girl up a bit, yet he was getting weaker and weaker, so that, at last, I half carried her to the cab, and back again after the ride. One day, while I was waiting, the servant tells me that they wouldn't stay in town, only on account of a great doctor, as they went to see at first, but who came to them now; and, last of all, when I went to the house, I used always to be in a fidget for fear the poor gal should be too ill to come out. But no, month after month she kep' on; and when I helped her, used to smile so sweetly, and talk so about the trouble she gave me, that one day, feeling a bit low, I turned quite silly, and happening to look at her poor mother a-standing there with the tears in her eyes, I had to hurry her in, trod get up on to my seat as quick as I could, to keep from breaking down myself.

Poor gal! always so loving and kind to all about her—always thanking one so sweetly, and looking all the while so much like what one would think an angel would look—it did seem so pitiful to feel her get lighter and lighter, week by week—so feeble, that, at last, I used to go upstairs to fetch her, and always carried her down like a child.

Then she used to laugh, and say, "Don't let me fall, Stephen,"—for they got to call me by my name, and to know the missus, by her coming in to help a bit; for the old lady asked me to recommend 'em an honest woman, and I knowed none honester than my wife. And so it was with everybody—it didn't matter who it was—they all loved the poor gal; and I've had the wife come home and sit and talk about her, and about our Fanny as died, till she's been that upset she's cried terribly.

Autumn came in werry wet and cold, and there was an end to my jobs there. Winter was werry severe, but I kep' on hearing from the missus how the poor gal was—sometimes better, sometimes worse; and the missus allus shook her head werry sadly when she talked about her.

Jennywerry and Feberwerry went by terribly cold, and then March came in quite warm and fine, so that things got so forrard, you could buy radishes wonderful cheap in April; and one night the wife comes home and tells me that if it was as fine nex' day as it had been, I was to call, and take the old lady and her daughter out.

Nex' day was splendid. It was as fine a spring day as ever I did see, and I sticks a daffy-down-dilly in on each side of Kangaroo's head, and then spends twopence in a couple o' bunches o' wilets, and pins 'em in on the side where the poor gal used to sit, puts clean straw in the boot, and then drives to the place with the top lid open, so as to sweeten the inside, because swells had been smoking there that morning.

"Jest run yer sponge and leather over the apron a bit, Buddy," I says to our waterman, afore I left the stand.

"Got a wedding on?" he says, seeing how pertickler I was.

"There, look alive!" I says, quite snappish; for I didn't feel in a humour to joke; and then, when I'd got all as I thought right, I drives up, keeping the lid open, as I said afore.

When I draws up, I puts the nose-bag on the old horse, for him to amuse himself with, and so as I could leave him, for he wouldn't stir an inch with that bag on, to please all the pleacemen in London. Then I rings, and waits, and at last gets my orders to go and help the young lady down.

I takes off my hat, wipes my shoes well, and goes up; and there she was waiting, and smiled so pleasantly again, and held out her hand to me, as though I'd been a friend, instead of a rough, weather-battered street cabman. And do you know what I did, as I went in there, with my eyes all dim at seeing her so, so changed? Why, I felt as if I ought to do it, and I knelt down and took her beautiful white hand in mine, and kissed it, and left a big tear on it; for something seemed to say so plainly that she'd soon be where I hoped my own poor gal was, whom I always say we lost; but my wife says, "No, not lost, for she is ours still."

She was so light now, that I carried her down in a minute; and when she was in the cab and saw the wilets, she took 'em down, and held 'em in her hand, and nodded and smiled again at me, as though she thanked me for them.

"Go the same way as you went first time, Stephen," she says.

And I pushed over all the quieter bits, and took her out beyond Hampstead; and there, in the greenest and prettiest spot I could find, I pulls up, and sits there listening to the soft whispers of her voice, and feeling, somehow, that it was for the last time.

After a bit I goes gently on again, more and more towards the country, where the hedges were turning beautiful and green, and all looked so bright and gay.

Bimeby I stops again, for there was a pretty view, and you could see miles away. Of course, I didn't look at them if I could help it, for the real secret of people enjoying a ride is being with a driver who seems no more to 'em than the horse—a man, you see, who knows his place. But I couldn't help just stealing one or two looks at the inside where that poor gal lay back in the corner, looking out at the bright spring-time, and holding them two bunches o' wilets close to her face. I was walking backwards and forwards then, patting the horse and straightening his harness, when I

just catches the old lady's eye, and saw she looked rather frightened, and she leans over to her daughter and calls her by name quickly; but the poor girl did not move, only stared straight out at the blue sky, and smiled so softly and sweetly.

I didn't want no telling what to do, for I was in my seat and the old horse flying amost before you could have counted ten; and away we went, full pace, till I come up to a doctor's, dragged at the bell, and had him up to the cab in no time; and then he rode on the footboard of the cab, in front of the apron, with the shutters let down; and he whispered to me to drive back softly, and I did.

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The old lady has lodged with us ever since, for I took a better place on purpose, and my missus always attends on her. She's werry fond o' talking with my wife about their two gals who have gone before; but though I often, take her for a drive over the old spots, she never says a word to me about such things; while soon after the funeral she told Sarah to tell me as the willets were not taken from the poor gal's hand, same time sending me a fi-pun note to buy a suit o' mourning.

Of course, I couldn't wear that every day, but there was a bit o' rusty crape on my old shiny hat not such a werry long time ago; and I never buy willets now, for as they lie in the baskets in spring-time, sprinkled with the drops o' bright water, they seem to me to have tears upon 'em, and make me feel sad and upset, for they start me off thinking about "My Fare."

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## Chapter Nine.

### Spots on Life's Sun.

In educating myself a bit, it seems to me like getting up a high mountain; and after going on at it for years and years, I've come to the idea that there never is any getting up atop, for no sooner do I get up one place than there's another; and so it is always the same, and you've never done. It's being thick-headed, I suppose; but somehow or another I can't get to understand lots of things, and I know I never shall. Now just look here: suppose I, as a working man, go into my neighbour Frank Brown's garden, cuts his cabbages, digs up his potatoes, and takes 'em home—"annexes" 'em, you know; then larrups Frank till he's obliged to cut and run; then I takes a werry loving fancy to all his furniture, clothes, and chaney, and moves 'em into my premises. "Don't do that," says his wife. "There, hold *your* tongue," I says, "I'm 'annexing' 'em; and you may be off after your husband;" and then I turns her out and locks the door.

"That's a rum game," you'll say. Very good; so it is; and when the thing's showed up, where am I? stole the vegetables, assaulted Frank Brown, insulted and abused his wife, and plundered his house. What would Mr Payne, or Mr Bodkin, or Mr Knox say to me, eh? Why, of course, I must serve my time in gaol to make amends. But that's what I can't understand, and I want to know why I mayn't do it retail, when my betters do it wholesale. Here we are: here's the King of Prussia turned out the King of Hanover and his wife, and, I s'pose, some more of 'em; and I mean to say it's precious hard; and then again he's been thrashing the Austrians, as perhaps deserved it, and perhaps didn't, while no end of homes have been made desolate, and thousands upon thousands of God's creatures slaughtered, let alone the tens of thousands as have been mutilated and will bear the marks of the battles to their graves. Ah! I've sat aside a man as was on the battle-fields, and heard him describe the "glory" of the war, the anguish of the wounded, the fearful distortion of the dead, the smashed horses, and, above all, that horrible slaughterhouse stench of blood that fouled the air with its sickening, disease-bringing, cholera-sowing taint. And then the King says "Hurray," and they sing the "Te Deum."

There, I suppose I'm very ignorant, but I can't understand it at all; and in my simple fancy it seems blasphemous. Say we had an invading army coming against us—same as in the days of good Queen Bess—and we drive 'em off. Those who fall do it in defence of their country, and die like heroes; well, then, let's sing the "Te Deum," and thank Him for letting us gain the victory. Say we go to help an oppressed country fairly and honestly. Good again—let's return thanks; but when it's for the sake of getting land, and for more conquest, why, then, if it must be done, the less that is said afterwards the better. And besides they must be having a grand festival, and bring fifty of the prettiest maidens in the city to meet the King and present him with laurel wreaths. Better have taken him crape bands for the hats of all his party, and to distribute amongst the fatherless! Some pictures there were in the 'lustrated papers, too, of the laurel-crowned damsels, and the grand religious festival with panoply and priests; but the artist gave one grim rub to the whole thing—one as tells, too—for here and there, in undress uniform, he sketched out wan-looking men with their arms in slings, or limping with sticks, crippled perhaps for life; and then no doubt they'll give you some of their ideas of glorious war. Illuminations, too, under the Lindens at Berlin; grand enough, no doubt; but it seems as though the heavens wept to see it, for the rain's streaming down at a fine rate.

But, there, I suppose I don't understand these sort of things, and like a good many more get talking about what I should hold my tongue on; but somehow or another, whenever I hear the word *war*, I can't see regiments of gay soldiers, and bands of music, and prancing horses, but trampled, muddy, and blood-stained fields, with shattered bodies lying about; or dim rooms turned into hospitals, with men lying groaning in their great agony—hopeless, perhaps, of ever rising from the rough pallet where they lie.

But, there, let's get on to another kind of war—war *with* the knife—knife and fork, you know—the battle of life for a living; for there's no mistake about it, there is a regular battle going on for the daily bread, and if a man hasn't been well drilled to it in his apprenticeship, it's rather a poor figure he'll cut in amongst the rest. Ah, you come across some rum fellow soldiers, too, in the course of your life; here's one chap is asked to do a little extra job, and, as he does it, goes on like our old sexton used down in the country when he put up the Christmas holly in the church. "Ah!" he says to me—"Ah! you see, I don't get nothing for doing this—*only my salary*." Men are so precious frightened of making

work scarce. Why, I remember soon after I came up to London going into Saint Paul's for a gape round, when they were going to fit up the seats for the Charity Children's Festival; and do what I would I couldn't help having a hearty laugh to see how the fellows were going it. Perhaps it was a scaffold pole wanted lifting; when about a score of chaps would go crawling up to it, and have a look; then one would touch it with his foot, and then another; then one would stoop down and take hold on it, and give a groan, and then let go again; next another would have his groan over it; then they'd look round, as if they thought being in a grand church a miracle was going to happen, and that the pole would get up of itself and go to its place.

It didn't though: so at last, groaning and grunting, they managed to get it on their shoulders—the whole score of 'em trying to have a hand in it; but puzzled sometimes how to manage it, for the short 'uns couldn't hitch their shoulders up high enough to reach, and had to be content with walking under it like honest British workmen as had made up their minds to earn every penny of their money; while the tall chaps carried the pole, and it didn't seem to hurt them much as they took it to its place and groaned it down again; when they was all so faint that they had to knock off for some beer.

I have heard an old workman say how many bricks he'd lay in a day in his best times, and it was a precious many; and I've seen old Johnny Mawley lay 'em too, and he'd have been just the chap to suit some of our London men, who look sour at you if you lay into the work tight. Old Johnny used to build little walls and pigsties down in Lincolnshire, and had his boy, young Johnny, with him. There the old chap would be tapping and pottering about over his work, with no necessity for him to stand still till the mortar set at the bottom, for fear of the building giving way or growing top-heavy—there he'd be, with the work getting well set as he went on; for after getting one brick in its place and the mortar cleared off, he'd drawl out very slowly, as he stood looking at his job—"Johnny, lad, wilt thou bring me another brick?" And Johnny used to bring him another brick; and old Johnny would lay it; and work never got scarce through him.

Men are so precious frightened of interfering with one another. I s'pose it's all right; but it seems so queer for the plasterer to knock off because a bit of beading wants nailing on or taking off, and the carpenter has to be fetched to do it, when half a dozen taps of the hammer would have set all right. Bricklayer's setting a stove, and he can't turn a screw, but must have the smith; whilst the carpenter knocks off because a bit of brick wants chipping out of the wall; and so they go on; and so I go on grumbling at it, and fault-finding. But the most I grumble at is this—the number of public-houses there is about London waiting with their easily-swinging doors to trap men. There's no occasion to knock; just lean against the door, and open it comes; and there's the grandly fitted-up place, and a smart barman or barmaid to wait on you, and all so nice, and attractive, and sticky, that there's no getting away again; so that it seems like one of those catch-'em-alives as the fellows used to sell about the streets—and we poor people the flies.

Nice trade that must be, and paying; to see the glitter and gloss they puts on, and the showy places they build in the most miserable spots—gilt, and paint, and gas, and all in style. And then the boards and notices! "Double brown stout, 3 pence per pot in your own jugs; sparkling champagne ales; Devonshire cider; cordial gin, and compounds; Jamaica rum;" while at one place there was a chap had up in his window "Cwrw o' Cymru," which must be an uncommon nice drink, I should think; but I never had any of it, whatever it is. But how one fellow does tempt another into these places, and how the money does go there—money that ought to be taken home; and it isn't like any other kind of business: say you want a coffee-shop, or a baker's, you'll have two or three streets, perhaps, to go down to find one; but there's always a public at the corner all ready. And, you see, with some men it is like it was with a mate of mine—Fred Brown—easy-going, good-hearted chap.

"Come and have half a pint, Fred," one'd say to him; and then Fred would shake his head, and be going on, till they began to banter him a bit, when he'd go in and have his half-pint same as lots of us do, and no great harm neither; but then this beer used to make him thirsty for more, and then more, and more, when the end of it used to be that what with treating, and one thing and another, Fred used to go home less seven or eight shillings in his pocket, and all of a stagger, to make his wife miserable, and the little things of children stare to see him look such a brute.

I lost sight of the poor chap for about five years; and then, when we met, I shouldn't have known him if he hadn't spoken in a rough, husky voice, while his face looked bloated and pasty.

"Can't help it, mate," he'd say. "Can't eat now, and if it warn't for the drop o' drink I couldn't live."

Strange words them for a young man of five-and-thirty; but I believe they were true, and he almost lived upon beer and gin. But I thought it couldn't last long, and living as I did close by him, and often dropping into his miserable room, I knew how matters went with him; and at last he was down and unable to go to work.

Fortunately for him, in spite of all trouble, his wife had kept the club money paid up, or they would have been in a queer fix, for they were proper badly off, as you could see at a glance when you went in: ragged scrap or two of carpet, half worn-out chairs, ricketty table, and very dirty-looking old bedstead in the same room, while where his poor wife and children managed to creep of nights I don't know. Second floor back room it was, and when I got up there his wife made me a sign not to make a noise, for he was asleep; and she was doing all she could to hush the baby in her arms.

Poor woman! only a few years ago healthy, bright-eyed, and good-looking; but now only half-dressed, sunken-cheeked, and pale, as numbers of other poor neglected wives we see every day in the streets. Two more children were playing on the floor, while another lay with arms round its father's neck, and there, just peeping at me above Fred's rough black whiskers, were the two bright eyes.

I hadn't been there long before he woke; and then in that half-hour that followed I saw sorrow, misery, and horrors enough to make any man thoughtful for the rest of his life. A strong, able workman, with his mind completely overthrown by drink, imagining all sorts of strange creatures were in the room and thronging about his bed, while every time he recognised those about him came the constant demand for drink—for the stuff that had brought him

down to what he was. His poor wife was that beat out, that I promised to come back and sit up with him that night, so that she could go and lie down at a neighbour's; and about half-past nine I went back, and soon after there I was alone with poor Fred, and him lying in a sort of dose.

It's not a nice thing to do, sitting up, in any case, for you get creepy, and nervous, and fidgetty; but when it's with a man who is off his mind, why, it's ten times worse; and there I sat with my eyes fixed upon the bed, hour after hour, half afraid lest the poor fellow should get out, or be up to any mad tricks.

I suppose it was about two o'clock, and when all was about still in the streets—not even the rumble of a cab to be heard—when somehow or another things seemed to get misty and dim; the bed seemed to be rising and falling, while poor Fred's head was as if it had swelled up, and kept coming closer to me, and then went back; and then I could see nothing at all.

I woke up with a start, and a horrible feeling on me that there was something wrong; then came the sound of trampling overhead, while at the same moment the light gave a flickering leap, and went out.

I knew the matches were on the table, and after knocking over something I found them lying open; but it was the barley-water jug I had upset, and the matches were dripping wet. Trembling and confused, I stood for a moment not knowing what to do, and then felt my way towards the bed, with the horrid dread upon me that poor Fred might spring at me and strangle me in the dark. Something seemed to tell me that he wasn't in the bed, and therefore I expected he would be crouching down and waiting to spring at me; and in my fancy I thought I could see it all—the struggle for the mastery, and him getting me down, so that I could not cry for help.

The confusion must have had something to do with it; but at all events there was I quite unnerved and shaken, as I lightly touched the bed and found all the clothes in a heap; while further search showed me that there was no one there. Then I heard again the trampling noise overhead and hurried towards the door, with both hands stretched out; when, in the dark, one went on either side of the open door, and I struck my forehead a violent blow. There was no time, though, to mind that, for I knew something was wrong upstairs, and that Fred must be at the bottom of it; so, hurrying up, I was soon at the door of the back attic, where, though it was shut, I heard enough to make me shove it open with my shoulder and dash in; for a sound came out as of two savage beasts worrying each other, and then, by the dim light from the open window, I could see two men scuffling upon the floor, while a woman sat on the bed crouched up, and holding a baby to her breast—evidently too frightened to move.

As I dashed in, one of the men leaped up, and was through the window in a moment; and then, on going quickly up and leaning out, I could see it was Fred, standing right upon the parapet above the lead gutter, when my heart seemed to quite stand still, as I leaned there, expecting every moment to see the poor fellow fall on to the flags beneath—four stories; for he would have gone right into the basement yard at the back.

Just then some one touched me; and looking sharp round, there was the scared face of the lodger, and he whispered, "He was a-trying to get out, when I woke up and seized him. He's a'most choked me."

That was a strange, wild time, as I stood there wondering what was best to be done; and do what I would I could hardly summon up the courage to go after him, though I knew it was only through my neglect that he had escaped from his room, and therefore I was bound to do something.

I tried calling him at first; but the only effect that had was to make him begin muttering and walking backwards and forwards upon that giddy parapet, so that it quite chilled one's blood; for, though used enough to scaffolds at proper time and place, there was something horrid in engaging in a struggle with one who was no better than a madman, on such a roof as this.

But I did not stop thinking, or I should never have done what I did, which was to get out into the gutter and walk cautiously up to the poor fellow.

There—it took only a moment or two—not more, and then he bounded on to me, and we too were struggling together and rocking backwards and forwards all those feet above the ground, with certain death on one side if I slipped, or he proved too strong for me. Now we swayed this way, now that, and wet with the sweat of terror, I could feel myself weaker every moment; and the very thought of what would come at last was too horrid to bear. Once I got him back against the sloping roof, and my spirits revived; but the next moment he leaped up, as though of watch-spring, and had me down on my back upon the stone parapet, and head and shoulders over the horrid pit beneath.

I could not cry out, but felt tongue and lips parched, while, with the strength of despair, I clutched his neck, and gazed with startled looks into his wild, glowering, half-shut eyes. He was muttering and talking the whole time, and every moment as I grew weaker, I could feel that I was being forced over the parapet. How many seconds it took I can't say, but it seemed to me like an hour till the time when I felt that all hope was past, and I shut my eyes that I might not see myself fall. There seemed no hope—nothing but death before me, as I lay there, with my flesh seeming to creep, and me unable to give a cry for help.

All at once, though, the clutch upon me grew feeble; then it ceased altogether; and I saw poor Fred dragged away backwards; but it was some few moments before I dared try to move, when, shivering in every limb, I rolled myself off the stone parapet, and lay in a half swoon in the gutter.

But the danger was over now; for two of the lodgers had dragged the poor fellow back into the attic by his legs, and after a sharp struggle he was securely tied down to the bed; but it was some time before I could work on the top of a house again without getting nervous and upset.

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## Chapter Ten.

## Dining with Cabby.

"Where to dine at any time," says the advertisement, as though such a thing as money was quite out of the question, and so many men did not depend upon the hospitality of their old friend Duke Humphrey. Spite of cattle disease and trichine terrors, the human stomach—be it beneath an educated brain, or appertaining to Bill Sykes, of the Somers Town Brill—the human stomach will act upon the mind, and cause it to long after the flesh-pots. *Il faut manger*—as a matter of course, the more moderately the better! and as the Spartans held up the drunken Helot for their youth to shun, why do we not have a double-barrelled statue of Banting erected in our streets—a "look on this picture and on this" style of article, showing the beauties of temperance and moderation—the keeping a tight rein upon gastronomic desires, as opposed to gluttony and feasting.

When you *can* dine, how many temptations are offered, as, urged on by the vacuum which, above all, fond Nature abhors, you stand chinking your coin and considering. You are in London, say; and you stand and ponder. Club? No. Invites? Not one. Where shall it be—at the first-class hotel or the shilling ordinary? Fish with Simpson? Whitebait with Lovegrove? With Bibra? With Rudkin? A steak at the Cock? A snack at the Rainbow? Sawyer! Sawyer! Suggestive of snags and America, and tremendous gorges? Shall it be the London? Shall we mount above the great stationer's—the Partridge and Cozens—suggestive names for a hungry man—impulsive as to the first, and making him think of a cozy dinner after a long tramp in the stubble—checking as to the second. "Call me cousin, but do not cozen me," says somebody somewhere, and most likely the quotation is not correct, but then we hunger and are athirst. No; we will dine in London, but not in "The London." Westward, ho! Strand, Circus, Quadrant, up the great street where rent is said to swallow the tradesman's profit; where the throng is great in the season, while out of the season the dog-fancier pockets his pups, and migrates to the far east. Now down this street to the left.

The student of human nature is like the proverbial traveller—he sees strange things; and, what is more, he gets into queer company. To study human nature in its happiest moments, study it over its dinner—be it the three courses and a dessert, preceded by removes, partaken of in Belgravia, Berkleyria, or Transgibbetia; the public feed at a great tavern, with a real MP in the chair, and all the delicacies of the season upon the table, with toasts, speeches, cheers, reporters, and a long and particular account to follow in the morning paper; the dinner at the club, *à la* Sprouts—a nubbly potato from a can, peppered with gingery dust; the meal brought in a basin, "kivered" with a plate, tied up in a blue cotton "wipe," and partaken of perchance upon the bricks waiting for piling in father's hod when he has had his "wittles"; or the three-halfpenny saveloy and "penny buster," forming in combination the delicacy popularly known as a "dustman's sandwich," and said, in connection with porter, to form a large portion of that gentleman's sustenance; each, every, either of these dinners gives a certain glow to the countenance of the recipient and undoubtedly it will be found that human nature will be at its best about feeding-time.

Listen, then, and know all ye of the softer sex; and if you want anything out of this same human nature, wait till the corn is planted, and then look out for your harvest.

Knowing all this, and how mollifying is the influence of food, we should prefer the interval following his last anthropophagia in our visit to the cannibal; and, therefore, urged by a desire to see our enemy of the badge at his best, we walk down "this street to the left," and somewhere about half-way down we find a perennial fountain in the shape of an iron post with a hole in its side by which to wind it up. There are some squat, tubby-looking little pails in a row; while close by stands a shiny-hatted straw-bit besprinkled Triton blowing his pipe. The water looks cool and limpid, but hard by is the gin—a trap within an open door. Gin and water—a potent mixture; but in this case the master takes the gin, and the horse the water. The horses look hot and stuffy this sunshiny day, as they stand with their cabs in a row down the long street, nose-bagged and contemplative, but they evidently find considerable enjoyment in banging their chaff-holding receptacles against the back of the cab in front, or resting them upon spring or wheel.

But where are the drivers—the supplanters of the Jehu, the jarvey of hackney-coach days—the men who place a bit in the mouths of their steeds, but prefer a sup in their own—the men who guide and rein them in their course and check the prancings of their hoofs—where are they? At their best. Cabby dineth! Dine we with him.

Up this shady little street, and into this shady shop—none the cooler for it though; while phew! the steam! Six, ten, fifteen hams in the window; legs, loins, shoulders, all sorts of mutton; beef joints by the dozen; and all hanging ready for to-morrow's consumption. And to-day's?

"This way, sir; room in that box to the left."

We enter that box to the left, and find the "room" very small, and also that we are elbowed by the people "Pegging away" at their dinner; while, if we closed our eyes for a moment, we should be ready to take oath that we were neither in the shop of Rimmel, Hendrie, nor Atkinson. But, sinking the sentimental, and setting aside the too great smell of kitchen when a hot cinder has quenched its glow in the dripping-pan, the odour is not so very bad, and we prepare to eat.

Now, we have eaten in a variety of places in our time, and with the eating we have drunk—quaffing the regal wine of Champagne in an ex-palace—that is to say, emptied glasses of what was said to be genuine Clicquot; but we dare not venture to assert that it was not gooseberry. Reversing Mr Hullah's legend, "per scalam ascendimus," we have dined off an Abernethy biscuit and a "penn'orth" of shrimps in a recess of Waterloo Bridge—a redbait dinner in a granite hall, with a view of the river both ways, equalling or excelling that from Lovegrove's; and, therefore, we were not above asking the opinion of friends right and left as to the quality of the joints on cut.

"Try the beef, guv'ner," says a gentleman in the style of head-dress known as a "deerstalker," which he wore while he trowelled his dinner into his mouth with the blade of a very wide knife. "Try the beef, guv'ner—the weal and 'am won't do. Somethin's turned, either the weal or my stummick."

A gentleman in a great-coat on my right suggests "line o' mutton," while a very red-nosed man in front—red-nosed, but the very antithesis of the holy Stiggins—quotes beefsteak pudding; but we like the look of the beef proposer, and the sound of the dish; so, forgetful of *rinder* and every other pest, we seek to gain the attention of the hot nymph in waiting. No easy task, though, for the maiden, evidently own sister of the Polly who captivated Smallweed, junior, is in all directions in the space of a few seconds.

In luck though at last, and we announce that we will take a plate of beef—roast.

"And taters?"

"And taters."

"And brockylow?"

"And brockylow."

"Stout?"

"Stout's hard," hints our beefy friend, and we decide upon "half-and-half."

Five minutes after we are served with a prime plate off some prime ribs of beef, three fine potatoes in their brown jackets, grinning all over, and looking temptingly mealy-mouthed; a tolerably fine head of broccoli that would suggest "cathoppers and grasspillars" were the season more advanced, while even now one cannot help shuddering and thinking of Fenianism and slugs; "a bread;" and, lastly, the beer supposed to be soft, or rather not hard.

Now, if the place had been ventilated, twenty degrees cooler, free from steam, smell, and tobacco smoke; if the knives had been what the cloth should have been, and what the salt was not; if my neighbours had not picked their teeth with their forks; if the mustard-pot had had no pipe ashes in its jaundiced throat; if the pint pots had not made the tables quite so gum-ringed; and lastly, and very briefly, if Cabby himself had been a little less demonstrative in his eating, and a little more guarded in his conversation: why, we could have made a very satisfactory dinner. But as the few above-mentioned trifles, and a mangy dog at our feet, militated against our getting a comfortable meal, why, the result was not quite so well as might be expected.

The trade going on was fast and furious. Cabbies went out and Cabbies came in; joint after joint was devoured, and the naked bones lay on the steaming pewter desert like those of the vulture-torn camel in far Araby. Cabby was certainly here at his best—the bow was unstrung, and he seemed to be enjoying himself. He seemed rather Indian—Red Indian—in his eating; laying in a good store, as though doubtful when time or money would again be propitious for a hearty meal; while jokes flew about—many at the expense of unwary fares and swells, for whom, as a rule, Cabby seemed to entertain a profound contempt.

We were not there long, but the topics of the day were settled again and again in the most satisfactory of ways, though probably not in accordance with the ideas of our statesmen. Mr Sothern was pitied; and gin, rum, whisky, and brandy declared the only table spirits. Fenianism was stigmatised as "rowdy"; Jamaica turned inside out; and the Parliamentary campaign mapped down. We noted what we could while finishing our "toke"; but we were upon enemies' ground; and who knows the fate of spies discovered amid the freemasonry of Cabland. We thought of all this, and did not so much as point a pencil within the sacred precincts; but we recollected what we could—not much, though, for after dinner the digestive organs form a combination against those devoted to thinking. We came, however, to the conclusion that Cabby loves good living—bodily, if not morally; and we fear that he possesses the amiable weakness that exists to so large an extent amongst the London poor—namely, that of living well to-day, and letting to-morrow take care of itself. To-morrow may be a bad day, and then he goes not to his club; but contents himself with a "small German" upon his box; or a kidney-pie at the corner; or lower still, perhaps, he may have but a mealy potato from a can, or a "penn'orth" of peas-pudding on a scrap of a newspaper, the aroma of whose ink imparts no improved flavour. But so it is throughout the world, Earth's creatures remembering that on the blackest day there is another side to the cloud, and that sooner or later the sun will shine again for rich and poor alike.

Cabby says luck's sure to turn sometime; so he munches his potato on or in his cab; goes "tic" for a screw of tobacco, for which he seldom finds the screw on too tightly, and then smokes and waits patiently for a fare. When he is down on his luck, and has nothing else to live upon, he exists upon Hope; and she deals as gently with the rough-clothed, battle-scarred veteran of the streets as with the Hon Charley Fitzgauntlet of the Blues, when Fortune frowns and he has gambled away half his patrimony at the Derby. But if Cabby makes himself comfortable at times, surely he is not much to be blamed, for this world is not peopled with abstemious Dr Franklins, and when Cabby has the money in his pocket, and smells a good dinner, who can blame him that he eats, pays, and then waits for the next? Perhaps it comes punctually, perhaps it does not; still he waits, as Trotty Veck did, for his jobs; the bells cried, "Job coming soon, Toby;" and it always did come sooner or later. And so, like Toby's, Cabby's job comes sooner or later, and then he does as wiser men do—eats, drinks, and is merry, "quaffing amber draughts from the pearly pewter's foam"—draughts that make glad his heart, and sometimes unsteady his hand. But cab-horses are not given to run away—we have sometimes wished they were—that is, if they would keep in the right direction. Still it is very rarely that Cabby meets with a mishap through careless driving. Accidents he does have, 'tis true; but, considered in relation to the thousands of miles traversed, their paucity is wonderful.

"But they're a shocking set, my dear; lazy, good-for-nothing creatures—cheating, story-telling fellows. Whatever you do, take the man's number before you enter his cab."

So says Mrs British Matron. But this is not all true. Cabby can cheat, lie, and be good for nothing; but he has his honest phase; and, poor fellow, he has a hard time of it.

The wind whistles down the street on a dark night; the rain or sleet drives in cutting clouds round the corners; and



Dives' son and daughter, to return from dinner or party, send for a cab. The first Cabby has been sitting for a couple of hours fareless upon his box, and as his half-frozen Rosinante is drawn up at the door of the well-lit house, Cabby stiffly descends, and begins to dance upon the pavement, and beat warmth into his breast after the popular mode of "Two thieves whopping a rascal."

All this while there is a round of "good-byeing," and "dearing," shawling, wrapping, and goloshing; and then the thoughtful head of the house hopes that the cabman is a member of the Bonded Brotherhood of Bottle Scorners, and thinks Thomas had better take a hand candlestick and look at the man's number.

The hand candlestick goes out, and so does the candle; for directly the white-stockinged legs of Thomas are outside the hall door the light is extinct, and the bearer fares like poor Mr Winkle on the windy night at Bath, for he is banged out of the house.

"Vot odds vot a cove's number is?" says Cabby. "Tell 'em to make 'aste out."

Now Cabby is not a member of the Bonded Brotherhood, for he has had two "goes" of gin since eight o'clock, and would have liked another—"only it runs away with the brass"; and if this were known he would probably lose his fare, although he has been sitting so long in the driving sleet or rain, and Dives, jun, has imbibed two or three glasses of sherry, three of champagne, and as many of port, during dinner and dessert.

The ricketty door of the vehicle is opened; the glass let down; dragged up again; and then, with a bang which threatens to dislocate every joint in the old cab's body, the door is closed, the box mounted, when rattling and jangling, off goes the licensed carriage to deposit its freight.

Distance two miles, barely, time nearly midnight; what wonder that after a bad day our dinner companion pockets his "bob" with a growl, and sullenly mounts his box to seek a fairer fare?

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## Chapter Eleven.

### K9's Adventure.

One of the great peculiarities of the policeman is his head. Now, I do not mean that his head differs from the small or large capital at the head of most articles; but I allude to the use he makes of that important appendage to the human body. A nod is said to be as good as a wink to a blind horse; but leaving blind horses out of the question, the policeman's nod is a great deal better than his wink. There is a majesty about one of his wags of the head that is sun-like in its powers; for as the snow dissolves, so melts away the crowd before that simple act. It would be a matter of no small difficulty to reduce the workings of his head to rule, on account of the vast number of exceptions which would intrude; but in spite of the attendant difficulties, I have learned something from my friend of the bracelet. What most men would do by a wave of the hand, Bobby does waggishly—that is to say, by means of his head. What one would do in a pointed manner with one's finger, again, K9 performs with his head. If any ordinary being wished to eject an intruder from his premises he would give tongue—that is to say, not snarl or bark, but tell him to go in a very fierce tone of voice; but again, a wag of our friend's head does the duty, and far more effectually. In short, the nod of emperor or king is not one half so potent in the upper regions of society as that of K9 with the people.

What awe there is amongst the small boys of the metropolis, and how they skim and scuffle off when the policeman wags his head; and yet, as they round a corner, how that never-to-be-beaten Briton peeps forth from their small natures as they yell defiance when out of reach. But in spite of his alacrity in fleeing, our friend holds the London *gamin* somewhat in dread. There is something very humiliating for a noble swell of a policeman to have to march off four feet six inches of puerile mischief—powerful in its very weakness—a morsel which acts as a barbed and stinging thorn in Bobby's side all the way to the station. We can easily imagine the grim smile of satisfaction which would ripple over the countenance of our hero if, in traversing that part of Holborn called High, like Tom Hood, he came into contact with a mother bewailing the loss of her beloved child. We can easily believe that Bobby would fervently hope that the loss would prove his gain, that the child would be, like the old woman's son Jerry in the ancient rhyme, lost and never found; that the young dog would never turn up again to plague his life, as he would be pretty sure to do at some future time, banding himself with birds of a similar feather, chalking the pavements, bowling hoops amongst the horses' legs, dropping caps down areas, altering butter-shop tickets, running howling in troops out of courts, and disturbing the equanimity of foot passengers, cutting behind cabs, yelling inside shop doors, climbing lamp-posts and performing perilous acrobatic tricks on the ladder bar, giving runaway knocks and rings, casting themselves beneath horses' hoofs and miraculously escaping death at every tick of the clock, making slides on the pave—ice in winter, mud in autumn or spring, and of the slippery stones in summer; in short, proving a most thorough plague, torment, and curse to our friend, who shuns the persecution, as beasts do gad-flies or hornets, from their painful insignificance.

A youthful pickpocket is a sad trial to him; in fact so is a small offender of any description; for the sharp boys of London are all gifted with tongues keen as the adder's teeth, and slightly artful in their small way. They are powerful at snivelling and appealing to the tender feelings of the bystanders for aid and assistance against the bitter tyranny of their captor; and now shines forth that peculiarity of the British public against which our friend declaims, for the removal of a boy of tender years, but tough experience, generally calls forth a large amount of sympathy, which is loudly evinced in a manner most trying to the nerves of K9.

In due course I received proper apology for the rather rough treatment I had received, and then listened with considerable attention to further recitals, many of which are lost to posterity from the jealousy evinced by the street hero when an attempt was made at noting.

"No thanky, sir," said he, "as I said afore, that sorter thing's bad enough in open court; but then we says what we are

obliged. No private notin', thanky. P'raps you'll put that flimsy away, as it might cause futur' unpleasantry through bein' used as information again your umbel servant. I was a-goin' to say a word or two about a hupset as I had one night going to take a fellow for forgery. It warn't a very partic'lar affair, for we knowed where my gentleman could be found, and there warn't any need of a detective. I was detective that time, and only took one chap with me, as I went quietly about my job.

"From information I received I knowed my customer was somewhere out Soho way, in one o' them big old houses as is all let out in lodgings, and full of Frenchies, and Hightalians, and sich. Reg'lar furren colony, you know, all the way towards Leicester-square. My customer had been a clerk in a City firm, and had been hard at work makin' hisself a fortun at bettin'. He used to work hard at it, too, allus making his book so that he'd bet on the safe side, whatever 'oss won; and I don't know what he warn't going to make out of it.

"On the strength of what was a-comin', and to pay some little expenses as he used to come in for through a werry smart sort o' lady as he courted, he used to borrow money of his gov'nor, just on the quiet-like, without bothering of him when he knowed he was busy. So he used to sign his gov'nor's name for him on bits o' cheques, and get what tin he wanted from the bank; but allus meant to pay it back again when he got in his heavy amounts as he was to win at Epsom, or Ascot, S'Leger, or Newmarket.

"Well, you see this sweetheart of his was jest sech another as that Miss Millwood as did for George Barnwell, and she was a regular dragon at spending money. Consequently my young friend was allus a borrowin' of his gov'nor, as I telled you jest now; and at last of all he wouldn't stand it any longer, for it was bleeding him precious heavy. Besides which, he wanted to know who was being so kind to him and savin' him so much trouble about his ortygruff, as he called it. So with a little bit o' dodgin', in which I assisted, my customer was treed; and then, watchin' his chance, he runs, and I has to find him. In fact, yer know, he was what we calls 'wanted.'

"But I could tell pretty well where my gentleman would be, so when I'd got my instructions I goes off to look arter him.

"Jest as a matter of form I goes to his lodgin's; but, jest as I expected, he wasn't there; so then I goes on to Soho, where his lady had apartments. I was in plain clothes, so when I asked for her the people let me in at once, and said I should find her in the first-floor front. I left my mate on the other side o' the street, for I didn't expect any opposition, so I walks upstairs to the door, turned the handle quietly, and walks in—when I gave a bit of a start, for the place was nearly dark, and would have been quite, if it hadn't been for the gas shining up out of the street, and making patches of light on the wall; while, as the lamps ain't werry close together in that part, it wasn't such a great deal o' light as got in that ways. If I'd been in uniform I should have had my bull's-eye; but, as I warn't, why, I hadn't; so I looks round the room, and, as far as I could see, it was nicely furnished, but there was nobody there; so I gives a kick under the table, but there was no one there neither; but on it I could just make out as there was a decanter and two glasses and some biscuits.

"Well, only naterally, I takes 'old o' the decanter with one hand, pulls out the stopper with the other, and has a smell. No mistake about it—sherry.

"There was the glasses all ready, and there was my mouth all ready; so I pours out a glassful all ready too, and I was just a-goin' to raise the glass to my lips, when a thought struck me, and I says to myself:

"'You air a niste promisin' young officer, you air. You're aspiring to be a detective, you air; and jest in the midst o' business you're a-goin' to commit yourself like that. How do you know it ain't a trap?'

"Well, you see, that was rather a settler; so I leaves the glass alone, though it was rather hard work, and then I has another look, and sees as there was foldin' doors leading into the back room, and one o' them doors was not close shut.

"My finger goes up to the side o' my nose, and I gives myself a wink, and slips out again to see if there warn't a door outer the back room on to the landing. As a matter o' course there it was, so that any one might slip out o' that hole while I went in at t'other. So I slips in again and feels as there was one o' them little turning bolts on the folding door; so I claps the door to, turns the bolt, and was out again on to the landing in a jiffy.

"I needn't have hurried myself, though, for all was as quiet as could be; and I thought as there was no one there, but of course I has to make sure. All at once I thinks that perhaps the landing door would be locked in side, and as I'd shut the folding door that would be locked too, so that I should be obliged to have 'em broken open, and this was the sort of house where you wouldn't have a row if you could help it.

"How-so-be, sir, I tries the landing door, and finds it open easy enough, and then I was inside the room, but what sort of a place it was I couldn't tell, for it was as dark as Ejup. Of course I expect it was a bedroom, and thinks as I should soon feel the bedstead, as would fill up a good bit o' the place. But fust of all I drops down upon my hands and knees; so as if anybody hit at me, or shot at me, or tried any o' them little games in the dark, as they'd most likely do it at the height of a man, why it would go over one, and only hit the furniture, which can be replaced, when you can't replace active and enterprising officers—leave alone being cut off in the flower of one's youth, you know.

"Then I listens. All as still and as dark as could be. But still as it was, I could hear my heart go 'beat, beat,' wonderful loud.

"'Wish I'd a light,' I says to myself, but then it warn't no use wishing; and I didn't want to go to the people downstairs, so I begins feeling about as slow and as quiet as I could.

"I soon finds out as it's a bedroom, for I rubs my knuckles up against the bed-post, and soon was close up alongside o' the ticking, when I thinks as I heered a noise, and darts back to the door in a moment; but all was still again, and I

turns back, and then in a manner I got lost, and confused, and could not tell which way I was going, nor yet where was the door.

“Now, I daresay that all sounds werry queer; but perhaps you don’t know how easy it is to be lost in a dark room as you’ve never been in before, even if it is a little ‘un; and if so be as you thinks werry little of it, jest you get a handkercher tied tight over yer eyes, and do as you does at Christmas time—‘turn round three times and ketch who you may,’ and then see where you are in two twinklings.

“Well, first of all I hits my hand again a chair; then I butts my head again the corner of as hard a chest o’ drawers as ever I did feel in my life; and then I kicks up such a clatter with the washstand as would have a’most alarmed the house; but I keeps down on my hands and knees, being suspicious of an ambushment, till last of all I feels my way round to the bedside again, and when I was far enough I reaches my hand lightly over, and lays it on the bed, and then I jumps as though I was shot, for I felt somebody’s leg under the clothes.

“Then I snatches my hand back and turns all over in a wet, cold state as if I’d been dipped, for I feels precious uncomfortable, and didn’t know what was best to be done next. One moment I expected to hear the ‘whish’ of a heavy stick, or the sharp crack of a pistol; for arter the noise I made it was quite impossible for whoever was in the bed to be asleep. Then I thinks as I would call for help, or run out, for I don’t mind telling you I felt regularly scared with the silence. How-so-be, I gets the better of my bit o’ failing; and, rousing up, I puts my hand over once more close up to where the pillow should be, and lays it upon a cold face, and there it seemed to stick, for a shudder went up my arm right to my head, and I couldn’t neither move nor speak, while my mouth felt as dry and hot inside as though it was full o’ dust.

“Cold! I never felt anything so cold; and I fell a shivering awful, till with a regular drag I rouses myself up and snatches my hand away; and as fast as ever I could I got out on to the landing and into the front room, and all the while trembling and feeling as if something was after me to pull me back. I got to the window, smashes out a pane, and gives a whistle as brings my mate to the door, and then I hears a ring, and some voices, and he was up to my side in a moment or two, with some o’ the people o’ the house arter him.

“‘Turn on your light,’ I says, as soon as he stood by me on the landing, and then, feeling as white as a sheet, and my hair wet with persperation, but more plucky now there was light and a companion, I goes back towards the room.

“‘Here, give us one o’ them candles,’ I says to a woman as came upstairs with one in each hand; and then from upstairs and down comes the people, all talking together, while as soon as some on ‘em sees as it was the police they shuffles off again, so as it was all women as stayed about us.

“First glance I take I sees what was up, and I says to my mate:—

“‘Keep them all out;’ and he goes and stands at the door and closes it after him, when I’m blest if I didn’t let the candle fall, and it was out in a moment. But I felt better now there was help if I wanted it, and I goes up to the bedside and lays my hand on that face as I touched before, but it was cold as ice. Then I slips my hand down to the breast, but there wasn’t a beat there, so I then says to myself, ‘Gone,’ says I; and in spite o’ my shiverin’ and tremblin’ I tried to get the better of it, and reaches over again and lays my hand on the back of a head as felt cold, too; and then, after a good hard tussel with number one, I feels down to the breast of this one, and there wasn’t a beat there. Then I gets to the door again, just as a man comes with a candle in his hand.

“I gives him my empty candlestick, and takes his light, and I says:—

“‘I’m a policeman,’ I says, ‘and you go out and fetch the nighest doctor; and if you meets another constable tell him to come here.’

“‘What for, young man?’ he says, werry bounceable.

“‘Never you mind what for,’ I says; but you do as you’re told; and seeing me look as though I meant it, he starts off like a shot, and we two stood there till the doctor came, and then we goes in, followed by ever so many women, all looking white, and talking in whispers.

“Lord, sir, it was a sight! There was the room well-furnished, and on the bed lay as pretty a girl as ever you see, search through all London; her face, and neck looking as white as so much marble, while all her long black hair lay loose and scattered over the pillow. Her hands were under her head, and she looked for all the world as though she was asleep; while by the flickering candles I almost thought I could see her smile. And there, with one arm across her, his head close to her side, his face buried in the clothes, half-lying on the bed, with his feet on the ground by the bedside, was him as I took to be my customer as I wanted; and both him and the girl dead and stiff.

“The doctor examined ‘em, and only said what every one could see plain enough, but he says as well that they’d been gone hours; and that we didn’t know.

“Then he gives a sniff or two, and says as there’s a strong smell of acid about. ‘Is there any cup or bottle anywhere?’ he says.

“I gives a sorter jump, and felt my skin creep, for I recollects the bottle and glasses in the next room, and a cold shiver goes all down my back.

“How-so-be, I goes round and opens the folding doors, and shows the doctor the sherry decanter, which had about three glasses at the bottom.

“‘Ah!’ says he, taking the glassful as I poured out, holding it up to the light, and then sniffing it. ‘Ah,’ says he, ‘there’s

more than enough for one in that glassful; and that seems to be the same,' he says, smelling at the decanter. 'Pour it in, pleeceman, and tie the stopper down, and seal it.'

"I takes up the glass and tries to pour it back, but if my hand didn't shake to that degree that the glass chattered against the neck of the decanter, and I spilt half the stuff on the cloth, I was so scared at the escape I'd had.

"Well, sir, you see some one as won't take no refusal had been beforehand with his warrant, and took both the forger and his lady, and I know I thought it a most awful affair, for I was rather new to such things then. But whether he poisoned her, or whether they'd agreed to it aforehand, nobody knew, not even the Coroner; but all I know is that never before, nor since, have I met with anything as upset me so much as finding them two poor things lying there in the dark—dead, and stiff, and stark; it upset me wonderful—at least, that and the sherry together."

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## Chapter Twelve.

### A Vulgar Tongue.

Unfortunately, one cannot always get one's own particular cabman—the favoured one of the civil tongue; and on more than one occasion I have been on the box with as surly a specimen of humanity as ever drove a horse. Now, decidedly the real way to enjoy a cab-ride—rather a difficult matter—is, providing the weather be fine, to mount beside the driver. You thus avoid musty smells, stifling symptoms, and that hideous noise of jangling windows, a sound harsh enough to jar the nerves of a bull. Yes; decidedly the best way to enjoy a cab-ride is to sink the bloated aristocrat, mount beside the driver, and fraternise.

But my surly driver would not fraternise, for he was of the class known as crusty. He was a sort of moral hedgehog, and, but for his forming a study, I should decidedly have abdicated.

"Ah! He's got his gruel," said my cynical friend as he drove past a fallen horse belonging to the General Omnibus Company. "There's another fall in the kump'ny's shares. Sarve 'em right. No bisniss to have such bad cattle."

Now, the beast I sat behind was about as ill-favoured and lean-fleshed an animal as his master. Evidently given to wind-gall, spavin, and splint, he—the horse, not the driver—was to an unpractised eye decidedly a jibber; while even a female ear would have detected that he was a roarer. It was evident, though, that my friend could not detect the faults of his own steed, and therefore he lavished all his abuse upon the horses of his contemporaries, whether of cab or 'bus.

But this driver seemed to have a spite against the world at large; seeming to ooze all over until he broke out into quite a satirical perspiration, while his lips acted as a safety-valve to let off an explosive compound most rapidly formed in his interior. He had a snarl for everything and everybody, and could he have run over some unfortunate crossing-sweeper, he would probably have been in ecstasies. Whenever opportunity offered he snarled often and cruelly at the misfortunes of his fellow-creatures. Where the scavengers had left the scraped-up mud beside the road—and where don't they?—he would drive right through, noisily and rapidly, forming a large mud firework—to the great increase of his after labour, certainly; but this seemed of no account; he was so amply recompensed by the intense gratification he enjoyed in besmirching as many passers-by as happened to be within range; while when he succeeded in producing a currant-dumpling appearance upon a footman's calves, he was almost apoplectic, and rumbled with delight. Woe to the wandering dog that came within reach of his whip! It would have been better for him had he ne'er been pupped, for here there was no mercy shown. As to the passing salutations of brother cabs, they, though apparently pungent, glanced off our friend's case-hardened composition, and the assailant would depart with a stinging sarcasm tingling and buzzing in his ears.

It was enough to make one ruminate upon the vast amount of the gall of bitterness in the man's mind, and ask how much the cab-riding world had to do with the sharpening of the thorns with which this modern Jehu bristled—Jehu, indeed, for he drove most furiously—spiny, hooked, venomous, lacerating, clinging, tearing points that would have at you and be in your skin whether you would or no; for upon asking the fare when about to alight, having previously formed the determination not to dispute a sixpence, I was told "Two shillings," and then, tendering a florin, was greeted with—

"Ho! wun o' them blessed pieces. Should ha' thought as a swell as purfessed to be so interested in kebs would ha' been ashamed to horfer less than 'arf a bull."

But there are amiable and advice-giving cabbies, who seem to take an interest in the welfare of their customers.

I once agreed in times gone by to "conwoy" Mrs Scribe and her sister, Miss Bellefille, as far as Richmond. 'Twas summer time, and our imaginations were full of sparkling rivers, green eyots, silver swans, and—well, yes, I'll own it, the carnal delights of a Star and Garter dinner, with the following cigar. There was the rail, certainly, but in preference thereto I hired one of her Majesty's carriages, VR 123,456. Our buttons had not come up in those days, so I fetched the vehicle from the stand, and rode back beside the driver. Upon reaching Miranda Villas, I lightly leaped down and rang the bell. Wonderful to relate, the ladies waited ready in the passage, and after handing them into the cab, I again mounted to the box, for the purpose of smoking upon the way down.

We were moving off when a voice was heard from the interior of the cab—"George, I've left my handkerchief upon the dressing-table; ask Harriet to fetch it down."

I arrested the driver, who seemed to be regarding me rather superciliously, which I attributed to insignificance of appearance, when he exclaimed:—

"Now, Jarge, fetch the missus's wipe, and look alive."

"Confound his impudence," I muttered, "he takes me for the attendant;" and then, with what must have been a decidedly melodramatic, tyrannical-baron-like scowl upon my brow, I resummoned the abigail, and obtained the required piece of cambric.

The feeling of indignation had fled as I reseated myself, and during the drive down I omitted the smoke, and suffered the driver to discourse fancy free.

He had an agreeable voice, had this Cabby—husky and wheezy; and but for an unpleasant habit of expectorating at the flies which settled upon the shafts, he might have proved an agreeable companion. Curiosity, however, seemed to be one of his failings, for addressing me in a mock provincial style as "Jarge," and at the same time forcing his voice somewhere down into the cavernous recesses beneath his waistcoat, he began to catechise me after an approved method of his own.

"New hand?"—I nodded.

"Measured for your livery?"

"What?" I said.

"Measured for your harness—togs, you know?"

"Not yet," I replied mildly—a martyr to information.

"Nice time on it, you fellers has: plenty ter eat, plenty ter drink, nothing ter do, and plenty o' niste gals in the house. Got any guv'nor?"

I replied in the negative.

"Vell, then, young feller, you've put your foot into a good thing, and if you plays your cards right, you'll make a swell of yourself in just no time. Reg'lar swell, you know; keep yer own wally, private barber, and shoeblack brigade, yer know, to keep you all square—some one to swear at when yer outer sorts. Ony think; have yer chockely brought to you in bed; and then come down arterwards in a red dressin'-gownd with gold flowers on it, and a fancy cap with a big torsel! And there yer sits, big as a Lord Mayor, and has yer breakfass outer chany. Ah, it's a fine thing to be a swell, my lad! Arterwards yer goes out, fust chalk—all noo clothes—and when wun o' us pore chaps says, 'Keb, sir!' 'Yes!' sez you, and you goes down to yer club and reads the papers, and drinks champagne all day till dinner-time, when yer goes back to dinner with the missus, and finishes off every night by going to the oper. Swell's life's a first-rate 'un, my lad.

"Niste gals them missuses o' yourn. I should stick up ter the little 'un if I was you." (Mrs Scribe.) "I likes the looks on her. Can't say much for t'other. She's rayther too scraggy for my taste." (Miss Bellefille.) "Howsumever, it depends a good deal on which has most ochre. Though, mind yer, I wouldn't marry a gal altogether for her tin; I'd rayther hev a good-tempered fat 'un with six thousan' than wun o' yer thin, razor-backed, sour-tempered 'uns with twistes as much. Tain't no use havin heaps o' tin if yer can't enjoy it and do what yer likes. There's some chaps as I knows as is spliced and dursent say as their soul's their own; and no more durst send out for a pot o' porter than fly. Lor' bless you, every drop o' drink they swallers is 'lowanced out to 'em. Ony let the missus ketch 'em with the long clay and the backer, and then see how soon all the fat's in the fire. Gets told as they makes the parly curtains smell wuss nor a tap-room, and keeps a buzzin' about their ears till the pipe's reg'lar put out, and them too, werry often.

"You take my advice, young man, and don't you go and throw yourself away. Don't you go and make a martyr o' yourself, and get a ring o' bitter haloes round your head—sure sign o' rain, you know, and the wife's eyes a runnin' over. I rather takes to that little 'un inside, though; she looks good-tempered. I s'pose she ain't above five-and-twenty, is she?"

I said I believed that was her age.

"Good-tempered?" said Cabby; "don't shy the bread about if it's stale, or bully the gals, or any o' them sorter games?"

"Oh, no!" I said.

"Vell, then; mind what you're arter, and yer fortun's made. You've got your hand crossed with the right bit o' silver. I squinted over my left shoulder, and seed her a smilin' at yer when yer brought her the handkercher. Eh? Ah! it's all werry fine, yer know; but I'm up to yer, young feller. We see some life our way, you know. Nice artful card, you are, you know, now ain't yer?"

Under the circumstances it seemed best to own to the soft impeachment, which I did, and removed my ribs from Cabby's rather angular elbow.

"I say, yer know, bimeby, if yer look out, 'stead of 'Jarge,' it'll be 'Jarge, dear:' ony don't you be in too big a hurry—don't you get a building a castle in the hair without putting any bricks under it, or else some fine morning down it comes atop of yer, and yer finds yerself flat on yer back with all the wind knocked out of yer corpus."

Then came another facetious nudge of the elbow, almost forcible enough to produce the effect so graphically described.

"Play your cards well, my lad, and you're a made man; but whatever you do, don't be rash. Allus make a pint o'

cleanin' yerself fust thing, and never show yourself to her with yer hair touzled and rough; and, what's more, allus have a clean shave every morning, for there's nothin' a woman hates wus than a man with a rough chin—nayther one thing nor t'other. Arter a bit, some day, when she's werry civil, and when she's a-sayin' 'Jarge' this or 'Jarge' that, you might, just by accident like, say 'Yes, dear,' or 'No, dear,' as the case may be; ony mind and see how she takes it; and, as I said afore, don't be rash. Whatever you do, don't touch her without she begins fust, or else it's all dickey with yer. There's many a good game been spoilt by young fellers like you bein' too fast, and not havin' nous enough to wait till the proper time.

"There's another way, too, you might spoil yerself if yer don't look out. Like all houses o' your sort, there's some niste gals downstairs, and noises allus goes upparda a deal easier than they goes down'ards. Don't you never let nobody upstairs hear anybody downstairs a-saying, 'Don't Jarge!' or 'Do a' done now!' or 'Such imperance!'—you know, my lad, ony mind what I say: if them words downstairs is heered by any one upstairs, there won't be a mossil o' chance o' them words upstairs bein' heered downstairs. But there, I ain't talkin' to a flat. When we gets down ter Richmond, and your folks is gone into the Star and Garter, you'll be standin' a glass or two, and I can put you up to two or three wrinkles, every word of which you'll be saving is worth five shillings to yer. Ah! I ony wish I'd half your chance; I'd be riding in a keb of my own before many months was over.

"The missuses a-goin' to a dinner, of course? Ah, and a niste day for a dinner down there, and a row on the river arterwards. Goin' to meet some gents, I s'pose? But never you mind that. Play your cards well, and you'll be right, and can come down to Richmond once a week on your own hook. Don't you be a-standin' no nonsense, though, from some o' them big swells all mustarsh and beard, with rings on their fingers. You'll have some on 'em callin' at your house and tryin' it on, and wanting to cut you out: but you can dodge 'em by running up in the room when the bell didn't ring, and a-going up with coals, and letters, and sich like; and if that don't do—don't let 'em go upstairs at all. The missus'll thank yer for it arterwards, as it's all for her good. And them young things is as ignorant as can be as to what's best for them. I hain't lived five-and-forty years in this world to learn nothing, I can tell yer. Let's see, now, you're about eight-and-twenty, you are, and don't seem a bad sorter chap; but you're too tame and quiet-like—looks as if you wus just come outer the country, don't you see? But there, that'll all come right in time I dersay.

"I say, you knows, send us a slice o' cake when it comes off, my lad."

Upon reaching the Star and Garter I told my Mentor to await our return; gave him a shilling to obtain the glass or two of which he had spoken; and after handing out the ladies, walked off with them to the tune of a low, but long-drawn whistle of astonishment from my self-constituted adviser.

I rode home inside, for the evening was damp and chilly; and upon paying the required tribute to my husky-voiced friend, he favoured me with a long serio-comic look beneath the lamp-post, and then upon placing one foot upon the wheel to reach his perch, he turned his head, winked solemnly and with a peculiar wisdom in his eye, and then Minerva Road knew him no more.

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## Chapter Thirteen.

### From Real Life.

"Co-o-o-me orn," said Cabby, as we sat by his side on the box—"Co-o-o-me orn. Nice sorter day this here, sir. Thanky, sir; I do draw a bit, and never sez 'no' to a cigar. Arter you with the light, sir. 'Queer fares,' sir? Ah! I gets some queer sorter fares sometimes—rum 'uns. All sorts and sizes, as the sayin' is. Taking a poor gal to Bedlam ain't pleasant—they do screech so. Blest if I couldn't ha' pitched into the keeper sometimes when I've heerd the poor creetur crying out as she wasn't mad, and beggin' and praying of him to let her go. It all seems agin natur, 'ticklar when a fellow's a bit soft-like. It's now a year come Martlemas as one night a flunkey comes up to the stand and picks me out, and werry glad I was, for I'd had a awful bad day. I used to drive a mare then as I called 'Bagged Sal,' cos of her tail; for she hadn't got no tail—leastwise, none to speak on. She'd been a 'tillery 'oss out in the Crimee—one of them as stood in the front rank and got all the hair nibbled off, and the roots gnawed so as to spile the cemetery for the future. But she could go, she could, and get over the ground differun to this. Coome orn, will yer; that ain't nothing! That's one of her games, sir. She pulls up short every now and then, if I ain't watchin' her, jest as if she wanted to pick up suthin' in the road. Well, sir, as I was a-saying, flunkey seems to know a horse as could go, or else he wouldn't ha' choosed mine, for she worn't at all ansum as you may suppose, besides bein' a wherritty beast, allus twitchin' her stump of a tail outer the crupper, and laying her ears back and biting. Flunkey hails me, and I pulls outer the rank and picks him up.

"'Drive to Cavendish Square,' sez he.

"Now, he wasn't a reg'lar thoroughbred flunkey, all white gloves, stockings and powder, with a long cane and crestys on his buttons, but one o' yer pepper-an'-salt doctor's men, all white choker and cheek, and not arf so affable as a real footman. He was one of them chaps as keeps the patients waiting in the back parly till they tips him, and then he finds out all of a sudden as the doctor ain't engaged. Lord, sir, I've waited hours in Saville-Row for poor innercent creeturs as didn't know the wally of a trifle, and so spent a hextry five shillings in cab fare.

"'Drive to Cavendish Square,' sez he, as big as yer please and then he begins a-whistling, and a-staring at all the gals as we passes. My lord hadn't a word to say to me, yer know, being only a kebby, and not up to his social spear in society; but I begins to pump him a little—movin' the handle quite gentle like at first, for he wouldn't suck a bit; but bimeby I works him round, and out flows such a bright stream of eloquence, and he begins to tell me where we was a-going to and who we was a-going to take; and then I finds as it was a young lady to a private asylum, for she was allus a-trying to kill herself, and all through love.

"Well, we pulls up at a door with a werry large brass plate, and the doctor's name on it in big letters, and there I

waited for half an hour; when the door opens and I hears a screech as goes through me like a knife, and then they carries out a young gal with a face a'most like an angel, only all drawn and frightened looking.

"The poor thing stares quite wild, first this way and then that way; calls out 'Hernest—Hernest—help!' and skreeked again as they pulled up the glasses of the keb, and then Pepper-and-salt jumps up alongside me, as it might be you, sir, and 'Drive on fast,' he says, 'along 'Ammersmith Road to Chiswick'—through Kensington, you know.

"Now, you know, sir, I'm blest if I know how I drove that arternoon. You see, sir, one gets knocked about here, and shoved there, and goes through lots o' strange things to get a living; but I can't help thinking as we're all on us, gentle and simple, made alike, and outer the same stuff. Some on us, too, gets more than our share o' temper, and softness, and fust one thing, and then another, and you see that's how it is with me. I'm a rum-looking cove to look at, reg'lar rough one, you know, but then I've got a lot o' softness stowed away about my heart as I ain't no business with. Now I just ask you now, sir, as a fair judge, what business has a kebman with softness? It ain't natural. Be as rough as you like, I says, but none o' that. And yet my stoopid old woman at home she likes it, and says it's natur. P'rhaps it is, and p'rhaps it ain't. But then, you see, we don't live in a state of natur now. Quartern loaves, pots o' porter, and Dutch cheeses don't grow on the hedges; and people has to look out precious sharp for enough to fill out their weskits, and I've known the time when mine's been precious slack about the buttons. 'Pon my soul, sir—beggin' your pardon for being a bit strong—you upper crusters ain't no idea what shifts we're put to sometimes for a living, and what hard work it is. I ain't a grumbling, for only having the missus, and no children, things ain't so hard as they might be. We gets along right enough, for the wife can scheme wonderfully, and toss you up a sixpenny dinner as would surprise yer. She's up to a thing or two, an' can go to first-class butchers and get her threepen'orth o' pieces—topping meat, you know; twopen'orth o' taters and some carrots and turnips; and, Lor' bless you, you'd be surprised as I said afore. Did yer ever go down Leather Lane, sir, or past the Brill at Somers Town, or some parts of Clare and Newport Markets? Perhaps you didn't. But jest you wait for a stinging hot day, and then go and see what the poor folks is a buying of; and then don't you wonder no more about fevers, and choleras, and all them sort o' troubles. There ain't no wonder in the gin palaces going ahead, when so many poor creetur's flies to 'em to drown their sorrows. It's this sorter thing as cheers me up; and makes me say a moral bit as I learnt—'A contented mind's a continual feast,' I says to the wife; and really, sir, if you'll believe me, sooner than I'd live as some of our poor things does I'd try and peg on along with my old mare here. We'd make a subdivision: she should have the chaff, and I'd go in for the oats and beans.

"Now, where had I got to? Oh! I know, sir—about that there poor gal. I don't know how I drove down that day for softness. It did seem so sad, so pitiful for that fine young creetur to be dragged off in that way. I quite hated mysen, for it was as though I was to do with it, and it was my fault; and at last, when we'd got up to that place where the chap used to hatch his young cocks and hens by steam—Cantelo, I think he called hisself—Pepper-and-Salt says, 'Turn down here,' and I turned down, and mighty glad I was when we got to the big old house, where they took the poor girl in, and I thinks to myself, 'Ah! next time as you comes out, my lass, I'm afraid as it will be screwed down, and with the black welwet a hanging over you!'

"I got werry good pay for that job; but somehow it did not seem to lit, for the soft feeling as I told you of. Every bit o' money seemed gritty, and I felt gritty, and as I drove Pepper-and-Salt back it was me as wouldn't talk.

"I bought a haddick and took home to the old ooman for supper, and I toasted it myself, so as it shouldn't be burnt; and then we had a pint o' porter made hot, with some ginger and sugar in it; and as I was a-smoking my pipe and watching the haddick, I tells Betsy all about it. But, p'raps you mightn't believe it, we didn't enjoy that supper: I felt kinder lonesome like, and I see a big drop go off the missus's nose more than once into the porter mug, as she sat a-rocking herself backwards and forwards.

"Ah! there's some rum games a-going on in this here world, sir!"

We jogged on in silence for some little time, when "Hi!" roared Cabby at an old lady crossing the road—producing the excellent effect of making her stand still in the middle.

"I know some o' them old women 'll be the death o' me some day," said Cabby. "They allus waits till a keb's a-coming afore they cross the road, and then when they gets knocked down there's a fuss and a inquest, and a reglar bother, of course.

"Did you ever see one o' them patent kebs as come up about five-and-twenty years ago?—I mean them with a door opening behind, and a box up in front for the driver. Niste things they was for swindling a poor cove out of his hard-earned suffrins. More nor wunst I've had people a-slipping out without stopping on me, and, of course, when I pulls up, if the keb wasn't empty. Begging of your pardon, sir, it was enough to make a saint swear.

"Coomo orn, will yer? Arter you, sir, with the light agen; talking let's one's weed out more nor anything. Rum fellows them sailors, sir; there goes two with the name of their ship on their hats, like dogs with their master's name on their collar. Rum dogs, too—British bulldogs. They ain't no notion at all o' what money's worth; they seem to fancy as it's only meant to spend—never thinks a bit about saving of it. I took one up wunst at London Bridge, and I opens the door for him, and touches my hat quite civil, for I allus does that to a fare, whosumever he be. Mighty pleased he seemed, too, for he pulls out a tanner—what you calls a tizzy, you know, sir—and he hands it over, and he says—

"'Give's hold o' the rudder-lines, mate, and fetch a glass o' grog to drink afore sailing.' And then he gets hold of the reins, and I fetches a glass of rum-and-water, and we drinks it fair atween us; and when I holds the door open agen, he pitches his bundle inside. 'Clap on the hatches,' he says, and he bangs to the door, and then, while I was a-staring, up he goes, and put hisself plop atop o' the roof, for all the world like a tailor, and there he began a-chewing his bacca. 'Deck's clear, mate,' he says, 'clap on sail;' and away we goes along Cheapside, and the boys a-cheering and hooraying like all that.

"We hadn't gone werry far before he 'ails me to stop, and then we has another glass o' rum-and-water. And so we goes on and on, making no end o' calls, till at last we must both have been in a werry reprehensible state, sir; for all I remembers is waking up at four o'clock in the morning in our mews, with the horse's head as far into the stable as he could get it, and the sailor a-sitting fast asleep on the t'other cushion inside the keb just opposite to me. But then, you see, sailors is such rum chaps!

"Law, sir, it's wonderful the dodges as I've seen in my time. People's beginning to find out as there's some romance in a keb now, since that chap pisoned his wife and two children in one of our vehicles 'licensed to carry four persons'—and then went and did for hissenn. He was a bad 'un, reg'lar. I wunst had a case of that sort myself. I remember it as well as if it was only yesterday, and it's many a year ago now. That was a night, surety—all rain and sleet mixed up, and the roads churned into a pudge—City batter, I calls it. I was on night-work, a-sitting on my box, driving about anyveres, noveres like, for it was too cold for the hoss to stand still. P'raps I shouldn't ha' got him on again, for he'd ha' turned stiff. I'd been a-growling to myself like that I should have to be out on such a night, and was then twisting of an old red 'ankercher round the brim o' my hat, to keep the rain from running down, when a street door opens, and a woman comes running out with a man arter her.

"'Come in,' he says, a-trying to drag her back; but she hangs away, calling out 'Help!' and says suthin' about 'willain,' and 'baseness,' and 'never.' I couldn't 'ear all she says 'acause of the wind, though I pulls up short in front of the house: a large one it was, with a light in the hall, and I could see as the man was quite a swell, in a bobtail coat and open wesket—same as they wears to go to the Hoprer. Well, when she acts like that he makes no more ado but fetches her a wipe across the mouth with his hand, quite savage—I mean hits her—and then runs in and bangs the door arter him, leaving that poor thing out in the bitter night, in a low dress, and without a bit of bonnet.

"She gives a sort of ketch or sob like, and then says to me, in an ordering sorter way—

"'Open the door, man!'

"I jumps down in a minute, and she gets in and tells me to drive to a street near Eaton Square. So I shuts the door and drives off, wondering what it all meant, and feeling uncommonly as if I should have liked to give that feller one for hissself, for it was a thing I never could bear to see, any one strike a woman.

"Well, we gets to the street, and then I turns round to arst her the number, when just as we passed a lamp-post I could see in at the window as she was down on the floor. You might have knocked me off the box with a wisp.

"I pulls short up, jumps down, and opens the door; and there she was with her hair down, and all of a heap like at the bottom of the keb. The light shined well in, and as I lifted her on to the seat I could see as she was young, and good-looking, and well dressed, and with a thick gold chain round her neck.

"Just then up comes a p'leeceman, as big as you please, and 'What's up?' he says. 'Why, she's fainted,' I says.

"'Looks suspicious,' he says, a-hying me sideways.

"'P'raps it does,' I says, for I began to feel nasty at his aggrawating suspicions. Howsomever, I tells him then where I'd picked her lip, and all the rest of it, and he looked 'nation knowing for a minute, and then he says—

"'Jump up and drive to the nearest doctor's; and I'll get in and hold her up.' 'But what's this here?' he says, laying hold of her hand—such a little white 'un, with rings on, and with the fingers tight round a little bottle. 'Drive on,' he shouts, quite fierce, an' I bangs to the door, and forgot all about the wet.

"I soon comes across one o' them red brandy balls a-sticking in a lamp, and I says to myself, 'That's English for salts and senny,' I says; and then I pulls up, ketches hold of surgery and night bell, and drags away like fun.

"Then the door was opened, and we carried her in—no weight, bless you—and lays her on the sofy. Doctor comes in his dressing-gown, takes hold of her hand, holds it a minute, and then lets it fall again. Then he holds his watch-case to her mouth, and you could hear the thing go 'tic-tic' quite loud, for there wasn't another sound in the room; and then he lifts up one of her eyelids, and you could see her great black eye a-staring all wild and awful like, as if she was seeing something in the other world. Then all at once she gave a sort of shivering sigh, and I could see that it was all over.

"Doctor takes the bottle from the p'leeceman, smells it, shakes his head, and gives it back again. Then they two has a talk together, and it ends in us lifting the poor thing back into the keb, and me driving back to where we started from; p'leeceman taking care to ride on the box this time. And what a set out there was when we got there! Fust comes the suvvant, after we'd been ringing a'most half an hour. She looked as if just shook out of bed; and there she stood, with her eyes half-shut, a-shiverin' and starin', with the door-chain up. As soon as we made her understand what was the matter, off she cuts; and then down comes the swell in his dressen-gownd. Fust he runs out and looks in the keb; then he rushes upstairs again; then there was a dreadful skreeching, and a lady comes a-tearing down in her night-gownd, and with her hair all a-flying. We'd carried the poor thing into the hall then, and she throws herself on her, shrieking out, 'I've killed her! I've killed her!' kissing her frantic-like all the time. The swell had come down after her, looking as white as a sheet; and he gets the lady away, while p'leeceman and me carries my fare into a bedroom.

"P'leeceman took my number, and where I lived; and swell comes and gives me two half-crowns; and then I took off and left 'em, feeling quite sick and upset, and glad enough to get away.

"There was an inquest after, of course, and I had to go and give evidence; but somehow or other precious little came out, for they kep it all as snug as they could, and the jury brought it in 'Temporary Insanity.'



"Pull up here, sir? Yes, sir. *Star* office, sir? Phew! didn't know as you was in the noosepaper way, sir, or shouldn't have opened my mouth so wide. Eighteenpens, sir; thanky, sir."

"Co-o-o-me orn, will yer?" were the words which faded away in the Fleet-street roar.

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## Chapter Fourteen.

### A Wheel of Misfortune.

That's our vessel out there, moored fore and aft—that one with her stern so low down, and her nose right up outer the water. You see, that's all owing to her make. Being a screw boat, all her machinery is far aft, as you can see by her funnel; and now the cargo's all out, she looks awkward in the water. Fine boat, though, ain't she? There's lines! there's a clipper-look about her! She seems as if she'd cut through anything. My old boat was a fine one, but nothing like so fast, though I liked her, after all, far better than this; for when you get out in the warm parts the engine-room's awful, and enough to kill a fellow; and I don't know, after all, that I don't like a paddle-boat best, same as my old 'un was. I've never seen such engines since, nor such cylinders—oscillators, you know—and one to each paddle separate, so that you could go ahead with one and turn astern with t'other, just like the chaps in a boat rowing and backing water, so that the old steamer would almost spin round upon herself if you liked. There was some credit in keeping that machinery bright, for you could see it all from the deck, and when the sun shone, and the pistons, and beams, and cylinders were all on the work, it was a pretty sight as would pay any one for looking at.

It's only a short journey, you know—London and Hull—but it takes a deal of care, and precious rough the weather is sometimes; for our east coast ain't a nice one, any more than it's easy working going up the Humber, or making your way into the Thames; and then, amongst all the shipping most as far as London Bridge, there's so many small boats about, and so much in-and-out work and bother, that at times one gets sick of going ahead, and turning astern, and easing her, and stopping her, and the rest of it; but then, you know, if we didn't look sharp we should soon be into something, or over it, just as it happened.

I remember once we were in the Humber. It was winter time, when the great river was covered with floating ice; and as we went along slowly to get in midstream, you could hear the paddle-wheels battering and shattering the small pieces, so that one expected the floats to be knocked all to pieces; while the ragged, jaggy fragments of ice were driven far enough under water, and then rose up amongst the foam to go rushing and bumping along the side of the ship, tearing and grinding one another as they went. It was terribly slow work, for we were obliged to work at quarter speed, and now and then we'd come with a tremendous shock against some floating block, which then went grating along till the chaps in front of the paddles caught it at the end of their hitchers, and so turned it off, or the paddles must have been smashed.

You see, the tide was coming up, and all this floating ice that had come down, out of the Ouse and Trent, was being brought back again from Humber's mouth. Pretty nigh high water it was, but we started a little sooner, so as to see our way through the ice before night came on; and as I stood on deck, having come up for a moment or two, of all the dreary sights I ever saw that was the worst. Far as eye could reach there was ice-covered water, mist, and the heavy clouds seeming to settle down upon the distant banks.

It was getting fast on towards evening, and seeing me up, the captain began to talk a bit about the state of the river, and whether we hadn't better anchor, while I could hardly hear him from the clattering noise made by the paddle-floats upon the ice.

"Cold place to anchor," I says, as I looked round the deck; and then I says, "Be clearer as soon as we gets nearer Grimsby." So we kept on, and I went down to join my stoker giving an eye to the engine, and after a few words I went up again and took a look about me. And what a wretched lookout the deck of a Hull boat is. You see it's a cheap way of getting up to London, and parliamentary trains ain't nowhere in comparison for cheapness, so that you have rather a poor lot of passengers; and then, what with the cargo, and one thing and another, always including the poor folks as is sick, and them as is trying to make themselves so, why, you may find much pleasanter places than the deck of a Hull steamer. But, there, the deck's bad enough, so what do you suppose the fore-cabin is? It's enough to make your heart bleed sometimes to see the poor miserable-looking objects we have on board, some half-clothed and looking less than half-fed as they crouch about the deck or huddle down in the cabin. Then there's always a lot of children, and the poor, tired, cold, hungry little things soon let you know as they're on board, and very loudly, too, making every one else miserable and wretched into the bargain.

I'd been giving an eye to all this, and thinking how very much pleasanter everything would have been if we had had a fine summer's evening for our voyage, when all at once, above the rattle and clatter of the ice amongst the paddles, I heard a horrible wild shriek from just over the side of the ship. Like half a dozen more, I ran to the side directly, and looked over, when just at the same moment I saw two men standing up in a little boat—one a sailor chap or boatman, and the other evidently a passenger; for in the glance I took I could see a bag and a box in the boat.

No doubt they had been hailing, but the noise of the paddles stopped any one from hearing, while the coming evening prevented any one from seeing them till they were close on to us, and the little boat gliding along the ship's side in company with the ice.

The boatman seemed to have lost his nerve, or else he would have tried to hook on with a hitcher; but he stood quite still, and as we all looked, one of the men who had been keeping off the ice made a dash at the boat with his hook, but missed her; and the next instant there was a loud shriek and a crash, and the little boat and the two men were out of sight under the great paddle-wheel of the steamer.

I dashed to the skylight, and shouted "Stop her!" to my mate, and the paddle-wheels ceased going round; when I

followed all on deck to the side abaft the paddle-box, and in the dim light I could just see the swamped boat come up and pass astern of us, floating amongst the ice.

"Here, get out a boat!" cried the captain, and directly after four of us were rowing about amongst the ice, trying to find the two poor fellows who had been beaten down. Now we tried one way, and now another, and always with the great thick sheets of ice grinding against us, and forcing the boat about; while I could not help thinking what a poor chance the best of swimmers would have had in the icy water, amongst the sharp, ragged-edged floes that were sweeping by.

It had got to be almost dark now, and the steamer lay some distance off, so that we could only see her by the lights hung out; when just as we had made up our minds that nothing more could be done, and were turning the boat's head, there came a hail from the steamer for us to return.

And that returning was not an easy job in the darkness, with the ice making the little boat shiver at every stroke of the oars, for it seemed to grow thicker and heavier all round us, so that we had to row carefully to keep from being overset. Till I saw it, I could hardly believe in such huge lumps of ice being anywhere out of the Polar seas; for here in England one would not expect to see pieces of ice lying stranded on the shore—pieces eight or ten feet high. But there, in the Humber, in a severe winter, a great quantity of sheet ice comes down with the tide, and being washed one piece over the other, they mount up and up, and freeze together till they get quite a height, while I have often seen small schooners and billy-boys froze in, and even raised right out of the water, so that they stood on a little hill of ice, which supported the middle, while you could walk under the keel of the fore part.

After a good deal of pushing and warding off blows, we got aside the steamer at last, when the captain shouted to us to row all along, for he thought once he had heard some one shout for help. So we put her gently alongside, round the paddle-box, and were going forward a bit, when I heard a shout close by me as made my blood turn cold.

But I was myself again next moment, and I got hold of a boat-hook and hitched on alongside.

"Throw us a rope," I says; and they let down the tackle, when we hooked on, and directly after they had us hauled up to the davits, when I jumped on deck.

"Lend a hand here with a lantern," I says, running up to the paddle-box.

"Easy ahead," says the captain, shouting down the skylight.

"No, no!" I shrieked, turning all wet with horror; and then, as the paddle-wheels made about half a revolution, there came such a horrid, stifling, muffled scream as nearly froze us, and then another, but this time a plain one, for I was up atop of the paddle-box and had opened the trap.

"Help, help!" came the wild cry from just beneath me, and I called out again for a light, which some one brought, and I lowered it down between two of the floats, when I could see both of the poor fellows—one astride of the wheel axle, and the other half in the water, holding on to one of the spokes; while, by the glimmering of the lantern, I could see their horror-stricken countenances, and the peril of their position.

Just then one of them tried to say something, but it was only a sort of groan, and to my great horror I saw him throw up his hands wildly, and fall off the axle right down splash into the water, where the bottom floats were underneath, and I made sure he was gone. But there was no time for thinking, if anything was going to be done; and, giving the lantern to another man to hold, I got through the trap, and then, climbing about like a squirrel in a cage, I got down to the bottom, and then got hold of the poor fellow who had fallen, and managed to hold his head up, while I shouted for some one to bring a rope.

Nobody seemed in a hurry to come down, and I must say as it looked a horrible place, while the water kept dripping from the icy wet floats, and I couldn't help thinking where we should be if the wheels went round. But directly after I saw some one drop through the hole, and then the captain began to climb down with the end of a rope, and we soon made it fast to the poor fellow, and had him up. As for the other chap, he seemed mad with fright, for when we got to him his eyes were fixed and his arms clinging that tightly round one of the spokes that we could not move them. So we had to make the rope as was sent down again fast round him, and at last we got him up through the floats and out of the trap.

Now, I have heard of captains setting their men good examples, and wanting to stay in places of danger till the last, but our captain didn't, for he took the lead precious eagerly, and was soon out; but, as he got up, bang down went the lantern, when I had a taste of the creepy feeling those two poor fellows must have had as I hung on there in the darkness, fancying all sorts of terrible things—that they would forget I was there and give the order "Go on ahead," when I should be leaping from float to float in the horrible darkness, to keep myself above water, till I was exhausted, when with a dying clutch I should cling to one of the spokes of the wheel and be dashed round and round till life was beaten out of me; when so strong was the imaginary horror that I could see myself turning up in the white foam behind the wheel and then floating away far astern.

It was so pitchy dark, and I felt so unnerved, that I dared not try to climb up the slimy iron-work, though I was quite familiar with its shape: and, though I dare say the time was only a minute before the light appeared again, it seemed to me an hour, and it was only by the exercise of great self-control that I could keep from shrieking aloud.

But the light came at last; and, pale, wet and trembling, I managed to climb out on to the paddle-box, and had almost to be helped down on to the deck, when I pretended that I was suffering from cold, and made the best of my way down into the engine-room, where I stood in front of the fire till a bit recovered, and then changed my things.

"How did we get up there?" says the boatman next day, when I was asking him about the accident—"how did we get

up there? Goodness only knows; for, when the paddle beat our boat under, I didn't seem to know anything more till we were down in the cabin."

And so the passenger that he was bringing aboard said when he came down and thanked me for what he called my gallantry; just as if it was anything to go and help a poor fellow in distress. And so it always seems to be that, in the great peril of an accident itself, there is not so much horror and dread as in the expectation and waiting for it to happen; but I know that I suffered enough hanging there in the dark on that paddle-wheel, and thought enough to have driven me out of my senses in another half-hour.

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## Chapter Fifteen.

### A Sea Breeze.

"Man killed saluting her Majesty," as we read in the papers t'other day: poor fellow, told off at the rammer he was, and for want of proper sponging out; when he drove in the great cartridge, it exploded before he could leap back, and in a moment he was gone. How it brought up all my old sea life, and the days on board the fifty-gun frigate that I'll call here the *Lysander*, so as to say nothing about names that might be unsavoury in some people's nostrils. There I was again at gun drill, or ball practice, down on the main-deck. Now I was numbered to ram, or sponge; now at the lanyard to fire; now one thing and now another; and I could see it all so plainly: the big cartridge, the twisted wheel of a wad, the shot in the racks, and the little quills full of powder for the touch-hole. Why, I could even fancy my ears ringing and singing again after the heavy report; and as I sat at my window, there was I fancying it was a port-hole, and shading my eyes to look out and see the shot go skipping and ricocheting along from wave to wave. Now, again, it was examining day for the shells, and there we were, two of us, slung outside the ship on a platform, and the shells in their little wood boxes handed over the side and down to us; for it was a very dangerous job, and the officers kindly arranged that if in unscrewing the fuse one of the shells exploded, why only us two would be in for it. I didn't half like the job for my part, but the old master at arms had done it so often that he thought no more of it than going down to mess, and more than once I've heard him wish for a pipe, while I believe he would have smoked it.

Four years out in the Pacific we were, and more than one brush we had with the Rooshians up there at Petropaulovski, but mostly it was very dull cruising about. True, we used to get a change now and then; once or twice we had a turn in Vancouver's Island, and had a shooting party or two after the pretty little quails, handsome little birds with a crest, and prime eating. Then, one night, we sailed into the beautiful harbour at Nukuheva, in the Marquesas, as lovely a spot as it is possible to imagine; and as I saw it then by moonlight, such a sight as I can never forget—all moonlight on the beautiful trees, with cascades falling from the larger rocks; just in front the belt of white sand, and the sea gently wash-wash and curling over in creamy breakers. Another time it would be the Sandwich Islands, and when some of us were ashore there, I'm blest if it wasn't as good as a play, and you couldn't hardly believe it. Why, there was a regular civilised town, with the names of the streets up in their lingo; and as to the shops, they were as right as could be, 'specially where they sold prog; while the chemist's was quite the thing, all glass, and varnish, and coloured bottles; and Charley Gordon, my mate, actually went in and bought two ounces of Epsom salts, and the man asked him if he didn't want any senny.

It quite knocked a man over, you know, for you went there expecting to meet with nothing but savages of the same breed as killed Captain Cook; but though he was killed there, let me tell you it's a precious sore subject with them, and they won't talk about it if they can help it; and I believe, after all, it was through a mistake that the poor fellow was killed.

Now again we'd go to Callao, or Valparaiso, or Juan Fernandez, and lying idle off one of the ports, see them bring out their convicts and chaps to punish. One dodge they had was to put so many of 'em into a leaky boat right out in the harbour, and there they'd have to keep on pump—pump—pump—and work hard, too, to keep themselves afloat; for if they hadn't kept at it, down they must have gone, and as my mate said—"Life was sweet, even to a convict." Sometimes we've seen them punish men by lashing 'em to a spar, and then sousing 'em overboard till they're half drowned, when up they'd come again, choking and sputtering to get their breath; then down again once more, and then up, till one of our chaps began to swear, and be as savage as could be, at what he called such cowardly humbugging ways.

"Why," says he—"Why can't they give a fellow his four dozen and done with it? But it's just like them beggarly chattermonkey furreneering coves. I should just like ter—"

And here he began squaring about, Tom Sayers fashion, as if he'd have liked to have a set to with some of 'em.

Now just about that time we used to have a wonderful sight of flogging on board our ship. For two years I don't believe there was a chap had up; and for why? because our captain was one of the right sort, and I believe loved his men. He was a Tartar, too, and he'd have everything right up to the mark, and done like lightning, stamping up and down there with a trumpet under his arm; but then he'd a way with him which the men liked, and they'd do anything for him. Why, I don't believe there was a smarter ship and crew in the service; and though we never had a regular set to with a Russian, except boat service on shore, I'm thinking we should have shown what the *Lysander* could do if called upon. There was no flogging then, for a bit of grog stopping did nearly always, and the men used to take a pride in themselves and their ship, as is the case everywhere when the officers are gentlemen.

When I say a gentleman, I don't mean a silver-spoon man, but one who, having men under him, treats them as they should be treated, and though strict and stern, knows when a kind word's right, and after making them work like trumps, sees that they're comfortable and well-fed. Why, I've known our captain and first lieutenant do anything sooner than get the men wet if it rained—keeping sail on till it was really obliged to be taken in.

Capital prime beef and biscuit we always had, and first-class old rum, and what dodges we used to have to get a drop

extra sometimes. Charley, my mate, used to be generally pretty wide-awake; and taking notice how the rum used to be pumped out of the cask by the purser's steward with a bright brass pump, he says to him one day—

“Why don't you save a drop of rum, Tom, in the pump?”

“How can I?” he says, “when it all runs out.”

Charley says something to him, though, and very next day, while the purser was looking on, Tom pumps out the regular quantity into the grog tub, and then forgets to push the handle of the pump down, but pulls it out of the tub, and runs down below with it, and when he pushed the handle down again, out came about a pint of strong rum.

That was one way; but another dodge was this. The grog used to be mixed in a tub, and then there was the serving out, when nearly always there'd be a lot left, perhaps a gallon, or a gallon and a half, after the ship's company had been all served. Now, I don't know why this wasn't saved; but after every man had had his “tot” under the officer's eye, this “plush,” as we used to call it, was poured down one of the scuppers, the officer always seeing it done.

“That's thundering wasteful, mate,” says Charley; and I nodded and wished my mouth was under the scupper; for a little extra grog to a sailor's a great treat, 'specially as he can't do like another man ashore—go and buy a drop whenever he likes. So, half an hour after, we were down along with the armourer, and what with a bit of nous, a couple of tin-canisters, and a lanyard, we soon had a long tin affair that we could let down the scupper, where we tied it with the lanyard and left it.

Now, perhaps, every one don't know that what we call the scupper is a sort of sink, or gulley-hole, by the ship's side, to let off the water when the decks are washed, or a wave comes aboard; and though it may sound queer to catch rum and water that is sent down a sink-hole, you must understand that well out at sea the deck of a man-of-war is as clean and white as washing and scrubbing can make it—a drop of salt water being the foulest thing that passes down a scupper.

Well, our machine answered first-rate, and though it didn't catch only half of the stuff thrown down, yet we often got a quart of good grog, and had a pleasant half-hour down the main-deck drinking it.

But things soon turned unpleasant; we had a fresh captain, whom I'll call Captain Strangeways, and very soon the cat began to be at work. Times were, of course, that men would buy each other's grog, and have a little more than they should, and then, instead of a mild punishment, and a trial at reforming such men, it was flogging; and instead of this doing any good, it made the men worse, and drunkenness more frequent, till the floggings used to be constant, and instead of our ship being about the smartest afloat, I believe she grew to be one of the most slovenly, and the men took a delight in annoying the captain and officers.

In the very low latitudes, where the heat is sometimes terribly hard to bear, it is the custom to have what we call a windsail, that is a regular great canvas pipe, hung so that one end goes down the hatchways, while the other is tied up to the rigging; and of a hot night the cool current that came down would be delightful. But down on the main-deck, with perhaps four hundred men sleeping, even this would not be enough, and we used to sleep with the ports open. But this displeased the captain; for in other latitudes the custom was to shut the ports down at eight o'clock at night, and he, accordingly, gave orders that this should be kept up; so at eight o'clock one night, watch was set, and all the ports were closed.

Phew! I can almost feel it now. Why, it was stifling. We could hardly breathe; and first one and then another jumped out of his hammock, and opened a port, and then we had no end of palavering, for the men were regularly unanimous over it, that we could not bear the heat; and the consequence was, that we made our arrangements for a bit of a breeze next night.

Eight o'clock came, and we were lying at anchor off Callao. Gun-fire—and then at the order down went the ports, and then all was darkness; but at the next moment, there was the chirping of the whistles of the boatswain's mates; and so well had the men worked together, and made their plans, that up flew all the ports again directly.

Then the row began; the officers got alongside the captain, the marines were called aft, and then lanterns ranged along the quarter deck, and the men summoned and ranged across in a gang several deep. The captain raged and stormed. He'd flog every man on board, and—

“Crash!” There was a lantern down; some one out of the tops had thrown a big ball of spunyarn of the size of a Dutch cheese, and knocked the light over.

—He'd have the man in irons that threw that ball.

“Crash—crash—crash!” there came a regular volley, and every lantern was knocked off and rolled about the deck.

“Marines! up the rigging, there, into the mizen and main tops!” shouted the captain, “and bring those men down.” When up went the Johnnies, of course, very slowly, for they couldn't climb a bit, while the men were down the sheets in an instant, and behind the others on deck.

Then the captain had a few words with the first lieutenant, and the men were piped down; and the ports not being touched, all seemed to be pretty quiet, when the officers collected together in the gun-room, and began talking the matter over—some at chess, and some at their grog; but the game was not quite over, for the men were just ripe for a bit of mischief, and fast working themselves up into that state when mutinies take place. All at once, when everything seemed at its quietest, there was a shrill chirrup; and then a number of the biggest shot were set rolling out of their racks right along the deck, as it sloped down towards the gun-room door.

"Rumble—rumble—rumble; bang—crash—crash!" they went, dashing open the door where the officers in dismay were sitting in all positions: with their legs drawn up, or sticking out at right angles, and then came another volley, but this time it was one of laughter, and by the time the sentries had called up the relief, and had the shots replaced in the racks, all was still and quiet, while the next night the captain left the ports untouched.

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## Chapter Sixteen.

### Told in the Dusk.

Of broken hearts, Minnie, though the doctor's certificates told another tale. But then doctors deal with the body, and I am speaking of the mind. 'Tis twenty years since; and, as you saw this evening, there were the little grey and golden patches of lichen spreading over the grave-stone, while their story is about forgotten.

Twenty years since poor brother Fred was the second clerk in Ranee Brothers' counting-house, and I a boy of fifteen just promoted to a desk in the same office. And how proud I was of my brother, and how worthy I thought him of cousin Annie's love, even though after my boyish fashion I loved her myself, and, when Fred took me with him to my aunt's, I used to sit and gaze upon her sweet, grave countenance till I felt to hate myself for being such a boy, and turned quite miserable and despairing. But directly after I would think of how she watched for every glance of his bright grey eye, and how dependent and trusting she seemed, and then a blush came for my unbrotherly feelings.

All went on as might have been expected: the day was fixed; the cottage taken—a pretty little place just outside the town, with a garden teeming with roses; furniture was bought, and the time slipped imperceptibly away until the wedding morning, when we assembled at my aunt's house before proceeding to church.

Frank stood well with our employers; and *you* know something of their generosity. And not only had they made him a handsome present towards housekeeping, but Mr Ranee, senior, came to give Annie away, taking for the time the place of her dead father. Mr French was there, too, the head clerk, a tall, handsome man, but one whom I always instinctively disliked, and spent the sixpences he gave me grudgingly and with a certain want of enjoyment in the proceeds—but I used to spend them.

Well, the wedding went off as most weddings do: the school-children scattered field-flowers in the path of the teacher who had won their hearts on the quiet Sabbath afternoons; and then we returned to my aunt's and partook of the wedding breakfast. Everything was conducted in the orthodox manner, and Messrs Ranee and French made speeches, to which Fred responded. Then dresses were changed, the fly came to the door; and, after a few adieus in the passage, the happy couple—than whom a handsomer or more loving the sun never shone on—drove off to the station on their way to the Lakes.

I shut the fly-door myself, and then stood alone, not knowing whether to be happy or sorry; but I was soon aroused by the parting of our visitors; and then, entering the house with my aunt and my tiny bridesmaid cousin, I caught the infection from them, and, forgetting my fifteen years' old manliness, sat down and had a hearty cry.

Time slipped by. The trip was over, and the couple returned; the cottage occupied, and things shaken down into the regular country-town routine. After the first Sunday or two no one turned to gaze at Fred and Annie—much to my annoyance—and the young couple ceased to form the theme of conversation.

I was very proud of my post in the office, having just been emancipated from school, and always felt very manly and important whenever I could feel that Mr French had not his eye upon me—the effect of that eye being to make me turn to a boy in an instant. Fred and he were very intimate, and French often went up to the cottage to have a cigar and game of chess; and, somehow, I always used to feel jealous of his smooth, oily civilities, and could see that they were anything but agreeable to Annie. On more than one occasion I found him lolling upon the sofa when I went in, at times when I had left Fred busy over correspondence which French had asked him to finish for that night's post. At such times I always found Annie sitting close to the window, and apparently much relieved by my entrance; while French greeted me with a mocking, strained civility, which almost drove me away. But the knowledge that he wanted to be rid of me always determined me to stay, for I felt that I was acting as a protector to my brother's wife.

After a while Fred would stroll in, and French and he take to the chess-board; Annie to her work; while I in a corner with a book would alternately read and watch the stealthy glances French kept casting towards his friend's wife.

At the end of six months an unspoken feud had sprung up between French and myself. I could see that Annie was pained at the fellow's presence, but she evidently forbore to speak to Fred, who held him in high estimation; and in the nobleness of his heart was beyond suspicion. But one autumn evening, when the winter seemed to be sending monitory warnings of his coming in the wailing winds and cutting blasts which began to strip the trees, I saw a figure pass the office window that I made sure was French. It was about six o'clock, and we had been detained later than usual, while even then Fred had several more letters to write. French had left the office about a quarter of an hour before, telling Fred he should look him up in the evening; to which a cheery "all right" was returned.

Upon seeing him hurry past the window, I rose to go; but Fred kept me fully another quarter of an hour; and then, telling me to call on my way to my lodging and tell Annie he would be home in a quarter of an hour, he settled down again quietly to his writing.

An unpleasant feeling that all was not right made me quicken my steps; and, going round by the back, I entered the cottage, and had reached the parlour door when the sound of a voice somewhat raised in pitch arrested me. Then followed the low muttering of a deep masculine voice saying something with great earnestness; and, thinking nothing of honour or being unmanly, I quietly turned the handle of the back parlour door, and entered. A pair of folding doors separated it from the front room; and, as I had hoped, they were ajar, so that, unobserved, I could see and hear all

that passed.

French had his back to me, and was standing with Annie in the centre of the room; he holding her hand with both his, and she gazing with a scared, half-angry, half-frightened look in his face.

As I stood trembling there, he drew her towards him, and tried to pass one of his arms round her waist, but with a sharp cry, with eyes sparkling, and rage in every feature, she struck him sharply across the cheek with her disengaged hand, and I believe in his rage he would have returned the blow had I not sprung into the room and caught his arm.

Not a word was spoken; but, shaking me off, he looked at Annie with a malevolent glance in his eye; and then, holding up his finger in a threatening way, which seemed to say, "Speak of it if you dare!" he strode out of the house as Annie sank sobbing and hysterical into a chair.

I stayed until Fred came in, and then left them together, and I believe that my brother afterwards sought French at his lodgings, where he had a stormy interview; but I never knew for certain, as Fred silenced me the moment I entered upon the subject, and told me to forget it.

French never entered the cottage again, while a marked coolness ever after existed between him and my brother—just sufficient passing between them for the transaction of business routine, and that was all. For my part, I was immensely pleased with the change, and cared but little for any display of rancour upon the part of French. However, instead of showing enmity he always after seemed disposed to be civil; but I always avoided him as much as possible.

Fred had been married ten months, and appeared to idolise his wife. Poor fellow! his few months of wedded life seemed to pass away like a dream: he lived his day unsuspectingly, seeing not the canker that was slowly eating its way and so soon to blight his existence.

One morning, upon going down to the office, I found that something unusual had taken place. French was there in close conversation with our employers, and a policeman was in waiting in the outer office. In reply to a query, I said that my brother would be there in a few minutes—in fact, before the words were well spoken Fred walked in.

Mr Ranee, senior, motioned to him to walk into the private office; and, seeing that something was wrong, and oppressed by an undefined dread, I followed him, for no attempt was made to exclude me.

"Mr Gordon," said our employer, "I wish to be frank and straightforward with you, and if in any way I hurt your feelings this morning, prove your innocence, and I will ask your forgiveness. We find that two hundred and fifty pounds are missing from the safe, all in notes."

I started, and looked at Fred, who seemed confounded; for, like myself, he was aware of there being a heavy sum deposited in the safe ready for banking that morning, the greater part having been received on the previous evening after banking hours.

"I know nothing of it, Mr Ranee," said Fred, recovering himself, and speaking in a haughty tone.

"You see, Mr Gordon," said our employer, "my brother and I are compelled to make diligent search for the culprit, whoever he may be, and I sincerely trust that it may not be one who has enjoyed our confidence."

"I trust not, sir," said Fred, shortly, and in the glance which he directed at French I saw he suspected that a trap had been laid for him; but the senior clerk would not meet his gaze, for he kept his eyes fixed upon Mr Ranee.

"Did you exchange a five-pound note last night?" said Mr Ranee.

"I did," said Fred, "in a payment I made to Mr Wilson."

"Ask Mr Wilson to step in," said our employer.

It was evident that the matter had been gone into before; for Mr Wilson, a draper in the town, was in the partners' room, and made his appearance directly.

"You received a five-pound note of Mr Frederick Gordon last night?" said Mr Ranee.

Mr Wilson nodded acquiescence, and then stood wiping his hands upon his pocket-handkerchief.

"Certain?—are you certain? and have you the note, Mr Wilson?"

That gentleman nodded again, and tapped his breast pocket, as much as to say, "here it is."

"Pray where did you obtain that note, Mr Gordon?" said our employer.

"It was a part of my salary paid to me a fortnight since."

Mr Ranee turned and asked the draper to produce the note.

"Is that the note, Mr Gordon?"

"Yes, that's it," said Fred, "there's my name upon the back."

Mr Ranee then fetched his private cash-book, and showed him that it was one of the notes received the day before;

for there was the number, in company with that of all the other notes, duly entered.

Fred immediately pulled out his pocket-book from the breast of his coat, which he had not yet had time to change, though his custom was to wear an old coat in the office, and leave the other hanging upon a peg against the wall.

"I have here another of the notes you paid me, sir," he said, passing it over to his employer, who took it, examined it, and then compared the number with one of those in his book. He then shook his head ominously.

"This is not one of the notes that I paid you, Mr Gordon; this is one of those missing from the safe. I am grieved, deeply grieved, Mr French, to find that your suspicions are so far verified; and therefore a search must be made."

"Search! what? where?" exclaimed Fred, turning pale. "Not my home—my place—think, Mr Ranee—my wife—the shock—"

Fred stopped short, for just then he caught the eye of French, and, setting his teeth, he remained silent.

I went up to him and took his hand, but he did not speak, for I could see that he was trying to concentrate his thoughts upon the matter, and endeavouring to solve the mystery. We both felt that we knew the hand that was dealing the blow, but the question was how to parry the assault.

Just then French and the policeman left the office together, and Fred would have followed, but was told that he must not leave the house.

"But you will at least follow and see that the feelings of my wife are not outraged, Mr Ranee," cried Fred.

Mr Ranee made a sign to his brother, who followed the policeman and French, and then we sat together in silence for quite two hours, listening to the ticking of the great office clock.

But the party returned at length with the policeman, carrying Annie's rosewood desk beneath his arm; while close behind came Annie herself, looking dreadfully agitated; and Mr Ranee, junior, with a pitying expression of countenance, supported her upon his arm.

Fred started as he saw the desk, which was a present he had made to Annie before their marriage. It was placed upon the table amidst an ominous silence, and then the policeman turned the key, the lock flying open with a sharp, loud snap, which made all present start; and then with his clumsy fingers the man opened one compartment, fumbled at a spring for a while, but could make nothing of it till French leaned over and pressed it with his hand, when one of those so-called concealed drawers flew out, and there lay a bundle of clean, white-looking bank notes, which, upon being compared with the numbers in the ledger, proved to be those stolen, minus the two already produced.

For a few moments there was silence, for Fred sat perfectly astounded; but he was recalled to himself by the nod Mr Ranee gave to the constable, who motioned to my brother to follow him.

Fred turned towards French, and in that one brief glance there was combined such contempt, scorn, and penetration of the device, that the senior clerk's look of gratified malice sank before it, and he turned pale.

But I had no time to observe more; for, stretching out her hands towards her husband, Annie uttered a wild cry of despair, and would have fallen if I had not caught her in my arms.

As poor Annie tottered towards her husband, French darted forward to catch her; but all the calm disdain seemed to leave my brother in an instant, as with one bound he leaped across the office, and had his enemy by the throat, and before the constable or the astonished partners could interpose, French was lying stunned and bleeding upon the floor, with a gash upon his forehead caused by its striking against the heavy iron fender.

"Take her home, Harry," Fred whispered to me in a hoarse voice. "I'd have his life sooner than he should lay a finger upon her." Then giving one fond look at the inanimate form I held, he walked to the office door, and accompanied the constable to the station.

While efforts were being made to revive French, I obtained the assistance of one of the porters, who fetched a fly, and I soon had the poor distracted girl at home, and then darted off to the station, where, after conferring with my poor brother, I made arrangements with a couple of relatives to be bail for him. This done, I found that one of the magistrates was coming down to hear the case and remand it till the petty sessions on the following Wednesday; but upon fully understanding the magnitude of the charge, he declined to accept bail upon his own responsibility, and poor Fred had to remain in one of the station cells.

"Cheer up, Harry," he cried, on parting from me; "be a man. The truth will out, my boy. Don't let my poor girl despair."

Poor Annie! It was a sad shock for her; and in spite of my determination to support her in her trouble, I felt helpless as a child. The platitudes I whispered fell upon heedless ears, and for hours she would lie with her head upon my aunt's shoulder, often sobbing hysterically, while her work lay neglected upon the table, and I, with boyish curiosity, gazed upon the preparations she had been making.

But it was a time for action with me, and my brain felt almost in a whirl of excitement. Fred now took me fully into his confidence, and kind as he had always been, yet now he treated me as though I were a man and his peer; and in spite of the trouble we were in, there was a certain charm in all this, and I could not but feel pleased with the importance that now attached to me. First there was conferring with our friends, then visiting poor Annie, then taking notes or messages from Fred to his solicitor; so that for me—and I fear for me only—the time passed rapidly.

Early on the following morning I received a note from the office, requesting that I would abstain from attending during the examinations then in progress,—a *congé* I was only too glad to receive, for the time, though I felt convinced that before long we should both return in triumph.

Upon comparing notes with my brother, I found that we were both of the same way of thinking, that it was a plot hatched by French; but the difficulty was to prove this to our employers, who knew nothing of the coldness previously existing between their clerks.

At last the petty sessions were held. The evidence given was of a most conclusive character, and in spite of his previous life, and the enmity proved to have existed between French and my brother, he was committed for trial— heavy bail being taken.

I walked home with Fred that afternoon, but soon left him, for Annie was in sore need of consolation. She blamed herself as the sole cause of all the trouble, through perhaps inadvertently giving some pretext for the advances of French. But, poor girl! she was as pure in thought as her blest spirit; and yet she could not be made to think herself blameless. I can almost see her now, pale, weeping, and anxious, with every nerve unstrung; and it was only by a great effort of mind that Fred was able at such a time to speak cheerfully.

The interval between the day of committal and the assize was but short, and I could see how anxiously Fred looked forward to a termination of the suspense. I could not get him to look upon the bright side of the question, but he talked long and earnestly as to my duties and prospects if he should be found guilty—telling me that he left to me the sacred charge of caring for his wife.

“And, Harry,” he whispered, “beware of that villain.”

We talked over again and again the circumstances of the case; the notes in his pocket could easily have been changed; but we could detect no means by which access had been obtained to the desk, which always stood locked, upon the drawers in their bedroom. Once only a shade seemed to cross Fred’s mind—a horrible suspicion—but a glance at his wife dispelled it, and I left him directly after kneeling at her feet.

He told me of it the next day that for a moment he had suspected Annie, “But it must have been a demon that prompted the thought, Harry, for she is as pure as the angels in heaven. It is a base plot—a diabolical plot—to ruin me and my happiness at the same time; to send me to the hulks with a vile jealousy gnawing at my heart, or he would never have chosen her desk to hide them there.”

Wearied out with conjecturing, we always arrived at the same conclusion—that it was a mystery; and one that time alone would reveal. Every preparation was made for the defence, and a barrister, well-known for his ability, was retained.

But it was all in vain. The trial came on with many others—sheep-stealing, poaching, assaults, and petty thefts; and at last, in spite of a most able defence by our counsel, the jury almost immediately returned a verdict of guilty. Then came a long homily from the judge respecting breach of confidence, advantages of education, ingratitude to indulgent masters, concluding with the sentence to fourteen years transportation.

Fred did not move a muscle, but stood as he had stood throughout the trial, erect, and with the proud consciousness of innocence written upon his brow. He beckoned to his solicitor, and begged of him to thank the barrister for his able defence; and then turned to leave the dock, returning the malicious look of French with one of calm scorn.

Just then I saw a piece of paper handed to Fred, who read it, smiled contemptuously, and crushed it in his hand; but directly after he smoothed it out, and it was passed to me.

The words upon the paper were in a disguised hand—

“Perhaps Annie will be kinder now.”

I read it by the fast fading light, and knew well enough whose hand had dealt the dastardly stab; but when I looked up, both Fred and French were gone.

Mine was to be a bitter task that night, and I stayed for quite an hour before I could summon resolution for my journey home. I had some miles to go, for our place lay at a distance from the county town; and I started at length, having quite given up the idea of breaking the news to Annie. I felt that I dared not; and on reaching my lodgings I sent a note; but a message came back that I must go on directly.

I went on to the cottage, and then found that the news had been less tardy than myself, for the servant girl had heard it in the town an hour before, and told them upon her return.

Upon hearing the fatal tidings poor Annie had gently slipped from her chair, and remained insensible for some time, but the doctor was then with her.

One, two, three sad days passed, and on the fourth I stood on one side of her bed with my knees trembling beneath me; for young and inexperienced as I then was, I knew that an awful change was taking place. It was evening, and the setting sun sent a glow of unearthly brightness to her sweet calm face as I stood there half blind with tears, while my poor aunt sobbed audibly.

But why prolong the sad tale? Once the dying girl opened her eyes and smiled upon her mother, and then turned them towards me, when her pale lips formed themselves to kiss me, even as would those of a child. I leant over her, and pressed my lips to hers, and as I did so, there was a faint sigh, and I felt myself drawn away.



Five days after I again stood to take a farewell look of poor Annie as she lay in the dim shadowy room in her narrow coffin, with her crossed arms folding a tiny form to her breast. Cold—cold—cold! Mother and child. The breast that should have warmed the little bud, icy—pulseless; and as I stood there with a strange awe upon me, I could but whisper, for they seemed to sleep.

We laid them where you stood to-night, love; and on returning, sad and broken-hearted, to the little parlour—now so lonely and deserted, we found that Ellen the servant had suddenly left; and that, too, without assigning any reason. But we had too much to think of then to pay attention to a domestic inconvenience, though often afterwards it was recalled.

I dared not trust myself to convey the sad news to my brother, for as yet he was in ignorance of poor Annie's death. We had kept it back, hesitating whether to tell him at all at such a time, when sorrow had bowed him down; but at length I wrote to him, and with a letter from my aunt, inclosed it to the chaplain of the county gaol, begging of him to try and prepare my poor brother for the dreadful shock.

I felt now that we had all drained the cup of bitterness; and in the incidents of the past month, years upon years seemed to have been added to my life. But the dregs of the cup had yet to be partaken of; for on the second day after sending my letter, I was summoned to see my brother, and I went with foreboding at my heart, and a voice seeming to whisper to me—"Thank God that you are orphans!"

Upon reaching the prison I was shown into the chaplain's private room, and his looks told me what his first words confirmed. He spoke long and earnestly, and with a tender sympathy I could not have expected. But at last I begged that I might see my poor brother, and he led me to his cell.

Coming from the bright glare of a sunlit room, it was some time before my eyes became accustomed to the half twilight of the bar-windowed cell; and then, half blind with tears, but with my eyes hot and burning, I looked upon the pallid bloodless form of poor Fred, for he was found on the previous night just as he breathed his last sigh in the words, "Annie—pardon!"—having forestalled the will of God by his own hand.

The grass had not had time to send forth its first shoot upon Annie's grave ere it was disturbed, and again I stood by the sad opening, heard that hollow rattle of the earth, and then, as chief mourner, walked sadly away wondering what new calamity could fall upon me.

I entered the cottage once more, and was not surprised to hear wild and bitter sobs in the little parlour, and for a while I forbore to enter; but a wild cry, almost a shriek of woe, startled me, and I went in.

There at my aunt's feet—crushed and hopeless—lay a figure, tearing her dishevelled hair, weeping, moaning, and praying for forgiveness; asking whether it were possible that such a wretch could ever obtain pardon.

At first I hardly recognised the wild, bloodshot-eyed face that appealed now to me, now to my aunt, and then called wildly upon the dead to forgive her; and then I saw it was my brother's servant.

By degrees I learned that the poor wretch had yielded to the persuasions, and bribes, and cajolery of French; and then from the power he had over her, she had obtained for him that fatal desk, and then at his command replaced it. He had made her swear by the most fearful oaths not to betray the secret, and then the poor wretch had been compelled to watch step by step the dreadful progress of the tragedy, till at last half crazed with terror at the misery she had by her weakness caused, she fled from the house. Then came the news of my brother's death, when she could bear no more, and after once again seeing French and telling him her intention, she had thrown herself at my aunt's feet and confessed all.

Too late—too late—to bring back life and happiness; but not too late to thrust dishonour from my brother's grave. I rushed frantically to the office to denounce French; and, boy as I was, I should have taken him by the throat, but he was not there. Breathlessly I told the brothers all; but, for awhile, the narrative seemed so extravagant, that they looked upon me as mad. But upon knowing the truth of my statement, they were prompt in their endeavours to obtain justice upon the base villain who had brought those young hearts to a premature grave.

Too late—too late. French had fled, whither no one knew; but if a man—if a human heart beat within his breast, he must have carried a fearful punishment with him.

Twenty years since then I have served Ranee Brothers; and you can tell a little of the kindness and consideration they have always shown me; while I suppose I begin the new year as a member of the firm.

And do you wonder now that I should have grown into a staid and quiet man—that people should call me reserved—and that grey hairs should already have appeared in my head?

But what are these, Minnie? Tears, love? Come, light the candles; we must have no more tales told in the dusk.

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## Chapter Seventeen.

### Mephitic Fumes.

I don't believe that old well of ours would ever have been cleaned out if it had not been for the magpie, which, by the way, in its tame state is most decidedly as ill-conditioned, dishonest a bird as was ever fledged. Now of course a magpie does not seem to have much to do with a well; but as great oaks grow from little acorns, so do large matters grow out of very small causes.

Our magpie was kept under the impression that he would some day talk; but he never got any further than the monosyllable "Chark," which with him meant as much as the Italian's "Altro." He could say the word plainly when he was six months old; and he could say no more when he was five years, and had achieved to a perpetual moult about the poll, which had the effect of making him look ten times more weird and artful than ever. He would say "chark" for everything, merely varying the key higher or lower according to the exigencies of the case. Goblin came into my possession in exchange for that piece of current money of the merchant called sixpence, which was given to a little, consequential, undersized, under-gardener at a neighbouring seat. This personage, who was known in the place as "my lord," had early one morning scaled an elm-tree to take a magpie's nest, but he was so unsuccessful as to secure only one bird—the Goblin in question.

He was a beauty was Goblin; if I believed in the doctrine of metempsychosis, I should say that his little body had been the receptacle of the immortal part of Jack Sheppard—Harrison Ainsworth's Jack Sheppard; for a more mischievous, thieving scamp never held head on one side, leaped out of reach, after any amount of threatening, stared at you with a keen black eye, and cried "chark." He was a bird that was always in a state of voracity, or pretended to be so, and dearly loved to hide scraps of meat in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, where he would punch them in, and then forget them; although they smelt loud enough to cause no end of complaints. He was a cleanly bird, too, in his habits, and always took advantage of Newfoundland Nero's trough being filled with clean water to have a wash, sully the fount, and then hop shivering off to dry the plumage which stuck down to his sides.

So much for the magpie. The well was beneath the walnut-tree, and so close to it that from time to time large pieces of chalk had been pushed in by the roots that forced their way through the sides as if in search of moisture. It was an old, old well, sunk no one knew how many centuries before; but probably dug down out of the chalk, when the monks held the old priory which we tenanted in its modernised form. The old well was always an object of dread to me in childhood; and often have I stealthily crept up to the old green wood cover, dropped a pebble through the rope hole, and listened shudderingly to the hollow, echoing, vibrating sound that came quivering up after the plash. Even in maturer years the old well was one that would obtrude itself into dreams and offer suggestions of the horrors to be found within its depths, and the consequences of a fall to the bottom.

We only used the water for the garden, and hard work it used to be to turn the moss-covered windlass, and drag up the heavy bucket at the end of a hundred feet of rope, when up it came full of greeny-looking water, with some times a frog for passenger. To look down and listen to the hollow drip of the water was enough to make any one shudder, so profound seemed the depth to where a ring of light could be seen, and in spite of its depth, carved as it was right out of the solid chalk, there was never more than some seven or eight feet of water at the bottom, and that none of the cleanest.

Uncle Tom said it would be better filled up; a remark which found a most enthusiastic backer in the old gardener; but water even if green and discoloured was costly in those parts, and therefore the well was not filled up. While as to my uncle's suggestion, to have it cleaned out, although most excellent, I was too deeply imbued with the Toryish ideas of letting things be as heretofore; and, therefore, the old gardener ground and ground at the old windlass, and the water still came up green; while, contrary to direct orders, the lid of the dangerous place was often left off.

Now, as before said, I don't believe that old well of ours would ever have been cleaned out if it had not been for the magpie.

One day in summer I had been sitting dreamily trying to follow out some of the rather knotty thoughts in "Festus," when on raising my eyes I caught sight of Goblin perched upon the little table in the bay window, and before I could move I had the pleasure of seeing him nimbly hook up my wife's diminutive watch off the little stand, and then hop on to the window-sill, where I made a rush at him and nearly secured his spoil, for the thin chain caught in the Westeria twining round the window. In an instant, however, it had given way, and I had the satisfaction of seeing the little black and white miscreant alight on the gravel walk; and then after fixing the fragile timekeeper with his foot, began to peck vigorously at the glass, which was shattered directly.

I hurried downstairs, for the window was too high for a jump; and as soon as I rushed to the door, Goblin gave utterance to his one syllable address, seized the watch, and went hopping along the path till he reached the well, where he perched upon the open lid; and as I stopped, half paralysed, and stooped to pick up a stone, Goblin made me a bow, raised his tail with a flick, and then to my horror he left hold of the watch, and I just reached the well in time to hear it, not say "tick," but "splash," while the thief hopped into the walnut-tree overhead.

This settled the matter; and two mornings after, a cart stopped at the gate, and Thomas Bore, well-sinker, arrived, accompanied by two labourers, for the purpose of nominally cleaning out the well, but really recovering the watch.

"Now, yer see, sir," said Thomas Bore, leaning on the windlass and spitting down the well, of course, from habit, "yer see, sir, when we've done, this here water 'll be clear as crischial. But all this here wood-wuck's old-fashioned. Now I could fit yer up a fust-rate, double action, wheel crank forcer, as 'ud send the water a-flying up like a steam-engine."

"Rather expensive," I hinted.

"Mere trifle, sir. Fifty pun, at the outside."

"Well, suppose we have the cleaning done first," I said; and being rather timid over such matters, for fear of being persuaded, I turned upon my heel and fled to my breakfast.

Being of a fidgetty turn of mind, and liking to have my money's worth for my money, I kept an eye upon the proceedings beneath the walnut-tree; and I found that the first two hours were taken up with sitting down, Indian fashion, for a palaver or consultation, during which, in a way of speaking, the trio felt the patient's pulse—Goblin fitting in the walnut-tree to see how matters progressed.

The rest of the day was taken up with the removal of the old green windlass, and the fixing of one brought over for the purpose; and then two buckets having been flung, the windlass began to turn, and, very slowly, bucket after bucket of water was drawn up; and so eagerly did the men work, that at the end of three days the well was pronounced dry.

Now I had been reckoning that a couple of days would have sufficed for the job; and, therefore, felt disposed to stare when, on going out upon the fourth morning, I found the men still groaning over the task, so as to get out the water that had come in during the night. By noon, however, this was accomplished; when there followed another consultation, the theme being that the well was not safe.

I felt that I was in for it, and muttered to myself "Let well alone;" but it was too late now, so I grinned and bore my troubles—to wit, the very calm proceedings of the men whose united energies, tools, tackling, etc, were costing me at least a guinea per diem, while the well was as dirty as ever.

At last a candle was lit and attached to a piece of wire, the wire to a string, and then it was lowered so fast that before it had attained to two-thirds of the depth it was out.

"Ah," said Mr Bore, wagging his head sagely; "werry foul indeed, sir; werry foul. We shall have to burn it out."

This, I found, was accomplished by throwing down a quantity of straw, which was afterwards ignited by sending after it shovelfuls of hot cinders from the kitchen fire, and so making a blaze and a great deal of smoke; while this day passed over and no further progress was made.

The next morning I was out in good time, to the great disgust of Mr Bore, and by ten o'clock I had the satisfaction of seeing the water out once more.

"I 'spose one o' my men can get a candle in the kitchen, sir," said Mr Bore.

I signified assent, and then had the satisfaction of seeing the testing process gone through: the light going out before it reached the bottom, which I could not believe was from mephitic gas, though sworn to by Mr Bore, who proceeded to make another bonfire on the top of my wife's watch, when I was called away, and did not go out again till half-past two, when I found that a man armed with a shovel had just stepped into one of the buckets, and the other man, who had a very red face, began, with the assistance of his master, to let him down.

"Is it all right, Dick?" said Mr Bore, when the man was about half down.

"Ah!" was the response, in a hollow voice; and then he was lowered, further and further, till he must have been near the bottom, when the rope shook; there was an evident loss of the load at the end; and I must confess to a shudder of horror going through me, as a dull, plashing thud came from the depths of the well.

Bore looked at me, and I at him, for a few seconds in silence, when the other man spun round the now light windlass till the other bucket rose.

"Here, lay hold o' this here," he cried to me; and from the readiness to obey felt by all in an emergency, I seized the windlass and assisted his master to let him down, as he thrust one leg through the pail-handle and was soon out of sight, for we lowered him down as fast as was possible.

"I'm blowed if there won't be a coroner's inquest over this job," panted Mr Bore, as he turned away at his handle; "I know'd it warn't safe, only he would go."

"For goodness sake, turn quicker man," I cried; and at last, after what seemed ten minutes at least, the empty bucket rose.

"Now, then," I shouted down the well, "tie the rope round him, quick, and then hang on."

No answer.

"Do you hear there?" I cried again, with a horrid dread coming over me that the catastrophe was to be doubled; but at last a dull, "All right," came echoing up.

As for Bore, he sat there upon his handle looking the colour of dough. I saw at once there was no help to be expected from him, so I shouted to one of the maids, and in a few minutes my wife and half a dozen neighbours, male and female, were standing, pale and horror-stricken, around the well.

In the mean time I had tried again and again to rouse the last man down, but could get nothing but a sort of half-stifled "All right;" while at last even that was not forthcoming, nothing but a hollow stertorous groan at intervals.

Brown, a stout young fellow, wanted to go down; but I stopped him, and in a few seconds had our own well-rope secured round my waist, after giving it a twist on the windlass; and then having seen the handles in the hands of trusty men, I stepped into the bucket and prepared to descend, feeling compelled to go, but all the while in a state of the most horrible fear imaginable, for I always was from a boy a sad coward.

"Oh! don't; pray don't go, Fred," whispered my wife, as she clung to me.

"I must, I must, darling," I whispered again. "It would be worse than murder to let the poor fellows lie there when a little exertion would save them."

"Oh! for my sake, don't, pray;" and then the poor little woman staggered, and would have fallen down the well if I

had not caught her in my arms; when we should both have fallen but for the rope round my waist, which fortunately stood the strain, but cut into my ribs fearfully.

There were plenty of hands, though, ready to assist, and the poor fainting girl was borne into the house.

“Now then,” I cried, “lower gently; and the moment I stop crying out ‘Right’ haul up again, for there will be something wrong.”

The windlass creaked and groaned, and then all at once the people round the well seemed to give a jump upwards, and then were gone, while the green, slimy sides of the pit were running up past me as I seemed to stand still in the well-sinker’s broad oak bucket. For a moment I clung to the rope with my eyes shut, when all at once there was a bump, and I opened them to see that I was ascending.

“Right, right,” I shouted, when there was another jerk, and I began to descend again, at intervals crying out the word of safety—‘Right’; and so I went down and down, with my flesh creeping, and a strange sensation, as though I was falling rapidly through space.

I have no doubt there are plenty of men who would be heroes at proper time and place; but there is no heroic stuff in my composition, for I here boldly assert that I never felt so horribly frightened before in my life, as I went gliding down lower and lower past the green slimy chalk, with the bucket swinging terribly from side to side; for the well was of very large diameter. I kept on giving the signal, and have no idea how it sounded above, but it seemed to me as though it left my lips in the shape of a gasping sob.

Still down, down, with the horrid feeling of falling, and a holding of the breath. The depth seemed awful; and now, though doubly secured, I trembled for the safety of the ropes, and turned giddy and closed my eyes.

“Is it all right?” shouted a voice from above, and my descent stopped.

“Yes, yes,” I shouted, recovering myself; but I could not say “Go on”; for, to my shame I say it, I hoped they would have drawn me up.

But, no; down, down, lower and lower. And now I began to smell the burnt, smoky air, but could still breathe freely, and tried to nerve myself to be on the watch for the strata of foul gas into which I felt I must be descending.

“Right, right,” I kept shouting; and still down, lower and lower, till it seemed that there could be no bottom; while the bucket kept turning round till it was impossible to keep from feeling giddy. And now in one swing from side to side, the bucket struck the wall, which gave me a new cause for alarm, and when nearing it again, I put out my hand and touched the cold slippery side, when I shuddered more than ever.

It did not seem dark: but of a peculiar gloomy aspect, a good deal of which was due, no doubt, to the smoke of the burnt straw.

“Right, right,” I shouted, still breathing freely, till the bucket reached the bottom, when I stepped hastily out, and, looking up the well, untwined the two ropes, and grasped the man nearest to me, who was sitting upon the half-burnt straw with which the bottom was covered; while the other stood staring at me as he leaned up against the wall, over his knees in the slime of the bottom.

I could feel no holding of the breath; no stifling or sleepy sensation; nothing but horrible fear; as I hastily slipped the rope over my head and secured it with a noose round the poor fellow, whose arm I grasped. I trembled as I did so, for it seemed like throwing away my own safeguard. But in a moment more I stepped in the bucket and yelled out—“Up, up, quickly.”

The rope tightened, and we began to rise; and as we did so I shouted to the poor fellow we were leaving—“Back for you directly.”

He stared at me with, glassy eyes, but remained immovable; and I felt my courage rise as we grew less and less distant from the light of heaven. The ropes twisted and turned, but we rose rapidly, and as the windlass creaked and groaned I could hear the voices above cheering, and I responded with a faint “hurrah.” But directly after the fear came upon me again—“Suppose the rope should break!” It did not, though; but I nearly left go of the stout hemp with the effects of the tremor which seized me. But now the cheers grew louder, and at last our heads rose above the sides, when a dozen hands laid hold of us, and we were on *terra firma* once more.

“Here, drink this,” cried a voice; and a glass of brandy was pushed into my hand. It was nectar indeed.

“Now,” cried young Brown, “I’ll fetch this one up.”

“No,” said I, sternly, “I’ll go; for I can stand the foul air.”

The ropes were arranged, and directly after I was again descending; and this time the dread did not seem so oppressive, for I did not feel such horror of the mephitic gas at the bottom, since it seemed to me that the excitement—the state of my nerves—sustained me, and I shouted to them to lower faster.

On reaching the bottom, the man had not moved his position, and without leaving the bucket, to whose rope I had bound myself with a silk handkerchief I slipped off the noose again, and secured it round the other’s body.

The same glassy, dull stare—the same immobility of countenance—the same corpse-like aspect as seen in the gloom, and then, with a cry of wild joy, I shrieked—“Up; up;” but it seemed as though we should never reach the surface as we swung and spun about, and once, to my horror, I saw the rope was slipping over the man’s shoulders; and it was

only by clasping him tightly in my arms I saved him from falling.

Daylight and willing hands at length; and then I staggered as I was unfastened, and all seemed to swim round as I fainted away.

On coming to I found myself on the grass by the side of the two men, who were alive, as I could hear by their stertorous breathing. Kneeling by me was old Dr Scott, looking up at Brown, who had evidently just spoken.

“Mephitic air, sir,” said the doctor, “pooh; as drunk as Pharaoh’s sow!”

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The well was finally cleaned out, and the recovered watch as well; while, by way of consolation for my misapplied energy, I could congratulate myself upon the discovery of a hidden vein of philanthropy in my constitution.

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## **Chapter Eighteen.**

### **On the Great Deep.**

The creaking and groaning of the timbers, the tossing and plunging of the ship, and the heavy beating of the waves upon her sides, tended to drive away sleep, without the accessories of pale and anxious faces, wringing hands, and here and there a kneeling form and supplicating murmur. Now and then came a heavy crash, and the good ship shook and quivered beneath the tons of water poured sweeping along the deck; and once the news was somehow circulated among the helpless passengers, that three of the sailors had been swept overboard, and that the life-buoy, with its blazing light, had been cut adrift, when as it floated away, a man was seen clinging to it, with the glare shining upon his pale and agonised face. And we knew that it was but to prolong his torture, for in such a storm no boat could go to his aid—that he would cling there for a while, and then would come the end.

It was a fearful night, and, one and all, we thought of the words of the Psalmist. We who had come down to the sea were seeing His wonders; and now we thought of the utter insignificance—the littleness—the helplessness of man in the grand strife of the elements. With all man’s skill, with all his ingenuity in building, our barque seemed frail, and but a few slight planks to save us from death—from being cast away upon the further shore; and but for the knowledge of One mighty to save, who held the seas in the hollow of His hand, at such a time despair would have swept over us as a flood. Homeward bound, we had left the sunny shores of the Austral land, with a fair wind, and for the past fortnight the thoughts of the old country had grown stronger in us day by day. I saw again the sweet old hills of Surrey, and looked in fancy, as I had in reality, half a score years before, over many a rounded knoll glowing with the golden blossoms of the furze; then at the hill-side and hollow, brown and purple with the heath; and then again at fir-crowned sandy heights, relieved by verdant patches of cultivated land.

Home, sweet home; dearer than ever when distant, and in spite of success, and the prodigality of my adopted land, it was with swelling heart, and even tear-dimmed eyes, that I thought of the old country that I had left in poverty, but was returning to in wealth.

Over the bright dancing waters we sped, night and day, ever onward across the trackless waste. Seeing the watch set night by night, and then seeking my cot with the feeling stronger and stronger upon me of how completely we are in the hands of our Maker, and how slight a barrier is all our care and watchfulness against the power of the elements.

Farther south we sailed, and the weather grew colder, and at last, one night, with a howl and a roar, as if raging at us for daring to intrude upon its domains, the storm came down and shrieked in the rigging. But we had a staunch man for captain, and he had made his arrangements in time, for he had seen the enemy coming, and prepared to battle with him. I stood holding on by the bulwarks, and watched the masts bend, and the shrouds upon one side tighten as upon the other they bellied out beneath the fury of the gale. There was not a cloud to be seen overhead, but all keen and bright starlight; while instead of burning brightly and clearly, the various orbs seemed to quiver and tremble as the tremendously agitated atmosphere swept between earth and sky. As for the waves, they were changed in a moment from inky blackness to white churned foam, as the gale swept over them, tearing away the spray, and drenching all upon deck.

“Are we in danger?” I said to the captain, as he came and stood close by me.

“Well,” he said, almost shouting, so great was the force of the wind, “I always consider we’re in danger from the day we leave port till we cast anchor again, but I do my best, and hope for the best.”

Then the thought came upon me as I listened to the tremendous din around, that we should never see land again; and a dreadful feeling of despair seemed to take possession of my spirit, for standing there helpless and inactive was so oppressive at such a time. If I could have been busy, and toiled hard, it would have been different; for then the feeling that I was of some service would have cheered me on, while the thought of standing still and drowning, without an effort to save life, was fearful.

And now it was the second night, and the piercing gale blowing harder than ever. Three men lost, and the rest worn-out, anxious, and numbed with the cold. I could not stay below, for the scene was awful, and at last gladly crawled on deck at the risk of being swept overboard. There were two poor fellows lashed to the wheel, and every few minutes I could see the captain there, evidently whispering words of encouragement, and truly they were needed at such a time. All around, the waves seemed to be rising about us as if to overwhelm the ship and bear her down, and in spite of every care upon the captain’s part, now and then down came a huge volume of water upon the deck, over which it seemed to curl, and then rushed along, sweeping everything before it. Two boats had gone, and a great piece of the

bulwark been swept away as though of cardboard; and yet, in spite of all, the captain appeared to be as cool and quiet as if we were in a calm.

Once only did he seem moved, and that was when one of the sailors came up from below and whispered to him, but he was himself again in an instant; the hatches were already secured with tarpaulins over them, but I soon understood the new danger; for the pumps were rigged, and turn and turn, sailors and passengers, we worked at them to lighten the ship of the water, which was creeping snakelike in at many a strained seam.

But few of us knew, as the gale slowly abated, how narrow an escape we had had, but the shrunken crew, and the torn bulwarks showed but too plainly how sharp had been the tussle; and yet before long all seemed forgotten, and we were gently parting the waters with a light breeze astern bearing us homeward.

Young people form very romantic notions as to the wonders to be seen in travelling; and all such castle-builders must be sadly disappointed in the incidents and sights presented by a long sea voyage. The deep blue sea is certainly beautiful, and it is interesting to watch the fish playing below the ship's keel, far down in the clear water; the sunrise and sunset, too, are very glorious, when ship and rigging seem to be turned to gold, and the sea, far as the eye can reach, one mass of glorious molten metal, gently heaving, or here and there broken by a ripple. But day after day the same monotony: no change; nothing but sea and sky, far as the eye could reach, and in the deep silence of the mighty ocean there is something awe-imposing and oppressive to the spirit. I had seen it in its wildest mood, and when the waves lightly danced and sparkled; and now, one day, when the voyage was about half over, came a calm, with the sun beating down day by day with a fervent heat that rendered the iron-work of the ship too hot to be touched, while the pitch grew soft in every seam. The sea just gently heaved, but there was not the slightest breath of air to fan our cheeks, and sailors and captain walked impatiently about waiting for the coming breeze, which should take us farther upon our way.

We were about four hundred miles, I suppose, from the nearest land, and for days the only thing that had taken our attention was the occasional ripple made by a shoal of fish, or the slow, sailing, gliding flight of a huge albatross, seeming in its sluggish way to float up and down in the air, as though upon a series of inclined planes.

I was standing one afternoon beneath the awning, talking to the captain, when one of the men aloft announced a boat on the lee bow.

"What is she?" said the captain.

"Boat or canoe, sir," said the man.

"Any one in her?" said the captain.

"Can't see a soul, sir," said the man.

Well, this was a change, to break the monotony. A boat was soon manned and put off, with both the captain and myself in the sternsheets; and then the men bent to their oars and rowed in the direction pointed out.

Before long we could see the canoe, for such it proved to be, lightly rising and falling upon the gentle swell; but it seemed unoccupied, and we rowed on till we were close up, but still no one showed.

At last the bow-man stood up with his boat-hook; and, as we closed up, laid hold of the light bark canoe, and drew it alongside. But it was not unoccupied.

There in the bottom, with fish that he had caught lying by him, in company with a spear and several fishing-lines and roughly-made hooks, was the owner of the canoe—a fine-looking, dusky-hued, half-clad savage, lying as though asleep, but quite dead—evidently from want of water; for there were fish enough in the canoe to have sustained life for some days.

To judge from appearances, it seemed that the poor fellow had either been borne out by some powerful current, or blown off the shore by one of the gales which sweep down from the coast; and in imagination I could paint the despair of the poor wretch toiling with his paddle to regain the land which held all that was dear to him. Toiling in his frail skiff beneath the fervour of the tropic sun, and toiling in vain till faint with the heat and parched with thirst, with the bright and sparkling water leaping murmuringly round, till exhausted he fell back, with the dull film of despair gathering on his eyes, and sank into a dreamy stupor filled with visions of home, green trees waving, and the gurgling of a stream through a cocoa-grove. Then to wake once more with renewed energy—to paddle frantically for the dim coastline; but still to find that his unaided efforts were useless, and that every minute he was farther away from the wished-for goal. Only a savage—untutored, unlettered; but yet a man made in God's own image, and with the same passions as ourselves. Only a savage—and yet in his calm, deep sleep, noble, and lordly of aspect; and there he lay, with all around him placed orderly and neatly, and it seemed that, after that wild struggle for life, when nature prompts, and every pulse beats anxiously to preserve that great gift of the Creator—it seemed that he had quietly, calmly, let us say, too, hopefully—for dark is the savage mind indeed that has not some rays of light and belief in a great overruling Spirit—hopefully lain him down in the bottom of the canoe and gone to sleep.

There was not a man there, from the captain to the roughest sailor, but spoke in an under-tone in the presence of the remains of that poor savage; for now they were by the sacred dead—far away upon the mighty ocean, solemn in its calm, with the sun sinking to his rest, and sending a path of glory across the otherwise trackless waters—the sky glowing with his farewell rays, and everywhere silence, not even the sigh of the gale or the gentle lapping of the water against the boat.

I started as the captain gave the order to give way; and then found that the canoe was made fast, and slowly towed back to the ship, where it was hoisted on board.

An hour afterwards we were all assembled on deck, and bareheaded. The unclouded moon was nearly at the full, and shone brightly upon the scene, for in the latitudes where we then were night follows quickly upon sunset. Sewn up in a piece of sailcloth, and resting upon a plank, was the body of the poor savage; while taking their cue from the captain, sailors and passengers stood grouped around, silent and grave, as though the calm sleeping form had been that of a dear companion and friend.

Not another sound was heard, as in a deep, impressive voice the captain commenced reading the service for the burial of the dead. Solemn and touching at all times, but doubly so now, far out in the midst of the great wilderness of waters; and, besides, there was something mournful in the poor fellow's fate, which made its way to the hearts of even the rudest seaman present.

And still the captain read on till the appointed time, when one end of the plank was raised, and the form slowly glided from the ship, and plunged heavily beneath the wave; the waters circled and sparkled in the moonlight for a few moments, lapping against the ship's side, and then all was still again but the deep, solemn voice of the captain as he read on to the end, when the men silently dispersed and talked in whispers, while the canoe which lay upon the deck reminded us at every turn of the sad incident we had witnessed.

The next day down came a fair wind: sails were shaken out, the cordage tightened, the vessel heeled over, and once more we were cleaving our way through the dancing waters; but the recollection of the dead savage floating alone upon the great ocean clung to us all for the remainder of the voyage.

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## Chapter Nineteen.

### Martha Jinks's Egperiences.

A short time since we were about to change our residence, and my wife, having need for a fresh lady to cook our chops and manufacture apple-dumplings, answered two or three of the advertisements which appeared in the "*Thunderer*," under the heading, "Want Places. All letters to be post-paid." When after the lapse of a couple of days, Mistress Martha Jinks called in Whole Jorum Street, and was shown into the room. Mrs Scribe thought it better that I should be present, to act as support in case of need, since she is rather nervous over such matters. Consequently, I sat busy scribbling at a side-table, ready if wanted—really and truly writing, and lamenting greatly the want of stenography, so that my report of Mrs Jinks's visit might have been *verbatim*. A tall, stout, elderly lady, in a snuff-hued front, with a perpetual smile upon her countenance, a warm colour, and a figure bearing a strong resemblance to one of those rolled mattresses in a furnishing warehouse—one of those tied round the middle with a cord, and labelled "all wool." She was a lady who would undoubtedly have ruled the roast in her kitchen, and knowing my partner's foibles I should most decidedly have contrived that Mrs Jinks did not take possession of our new suburban residence. But my fears were needless, for after a few exchanges touching wages, privileges, number of servants, and numerous other little matters, interesting only to those whom they may concern, my wife mentioned our proximate removal, when Mrs Martha Jinks, with the evident intention of keeping the ball rolling, gave her head a most vigorous shake, smiled patronisingly, and then, after bridling up, unto her did say—

"No, mum, not if I knows it; thank you all the same. I likes the sound of the place, mum, and I ain't a-finding fault with the wages, nor the tea and sugar, nor the perquisites, but I'll never bemean myself, mum, to going to a new house agen. I've been cook in the respectablest of families, mum, for three-and-thirty years, and after my egperience in new houses, I'll never go to one no more.

"Now, of course I ain't a-saying but what old houses has their doorbacks, sech as crickets, as is allus a-going fuzz, and flying by night into the candle and into the sugar-basin; and then, agen, black beatles, as isn't pleasant to walk over if you come down in the dark, and then a-going pop to that degree that the mess on the floor nex morning is enough to worry a tylin' and mylin' woman out of her seven senses.

"You see, mum, I don't dislike the looks of you; for you don't look mean, and as if you'd allus be a-pottering about in my kidgin, which is a thing I can't abear; for, as I says to Mary in my last place—Mary, you know, as married the green-grocer, and sells coals at the little shop a-corner of the mews,—'Mary,' I says, 'a missus oughter be in her drorrng-room—a-drorring, or a-receiving of wisitors, or a-making of herself agreeable at the winder, not a-poking and a-poll-prying about my kidgin, with her nose in the dresser-drors, a-smelling and a-peeping about. What is it to her, I should like to know, if there is a bottle in the corner of the cupboard next door to the cruets, and if it don't smell of winegar but of g—, you know? Why, if a missus was troubled with spazzums to the degree as I've suffered 'em, she'd go and live in a distillery and never be happy out.' The things as I've put up with in some places, mum, would give you the creeps, and make yer 'air stand on end. Me, you know, a cook as has lived in the best of families, to be told as the brandy-sauce had not got half the brandy in; and when the tipsy-cake come on the table, for the missus to come downstairs in a towering fury, and go on like Billingsgate. I'm sure she did for all her pretence about being a lady; and to say as she did with them brazen lips of her's, and all the time trembling with passion—

"'Cook,' she says, 'Cook, it ain't the cake as is tipsy-cake, it's summit else;' and me a-sitting in that blessed chair, aside of the fire, feeling as if all the use was took outter my legs, when I only just put my lips to the sherry, just to see if it was good enough for the sponge-cake, as I took so much pains to make, tho' it did get burnt at the bakehouse to that degree that I was obleeged to cut quite a lunch off all round. But I wouldn't bemean myself to speak; for 'Martha,' I says to myself, 'Martha Jinks,' I says, 'if you are a cook, you are a sooperior woman, and with your egperiences, you needn't take sauce from any one.' So I sat looking at her that disdainful that it quite brought on a sort of sterrical hiccups, and then, I couldn't help it, she went on so cruelly, I melted into tears, and there they was a-dripping—dripping—dripping all over the kidgin, and the missus a-going on still at that rate that I couldn't abear it, and fainted away so that they had to carry me upstairs to bed, and bumped my pore head agen the ballisters, so that it ached fearful next morning, and I was obliged to have the least sup of g—, you know, in a wine-glass, took

medicinally, you know, for if there is any mortal thing in this life as *is* disgusting it's a woman as takes to sperrits.

"But, there, I wouldn't stay. I couldn't, bless you; for, as I says to Mary, 'Mary,' I says, 'you may lead me with a bit o' darning-cotton, but clothes-line wouldn't pull me.' Oh, no, I couldn't have put up with it if missus had gone down on her bended knees in the sand on my beautiful white kidgin floor, and begged of me to stay. Oh, no—I give warning there and then. 'A month's wages or a month's warning,' I says, and she give me the month's wages, and said I was to get out of the cruel house.

"And then I went to live with some common people, who had just built themselves a new house out by the Crischial Pallus, and there I stoped three months, till I was a'most worn to skin and bone, with the worry, and bother, and want of rest.

"First night I goes there, and takes my trunk, and a bundle, and a bonnet-box, and a basket, I might have known as all would go wrong, for the cabman sauced me to that degree it was orful; but I got rid of him at last, with my boxes a-standing outside the willa gate, out in the rain; and then no lights in the house, and no gash laid on, and no one to help me in with my things, and me a-going mosh—posh, pudge—mudge up the the soft gravel, and losing my gloses a-sticking in the wet muddy stuff, and the wind a-blowing to that degree as my umbrelly—a bran new alpakky—was bust right down one of its ribs, and caught in the iron railings; while all the while I knowed as the rain was a-getting in to my best bonnet, and a man a-tumbling over my big box, as stood out in the roadway-path, and me without strength in my lines to pull it in the gate.

"'Never mind your shins, my good man,' I says, 'help me in with my things, and I'll find you a bit of cold meat,' and then I recklets myself as there might be no cold meat in the house, and I turns it into a pint of beer, being a stranger to the place.

"'And what's your name, young woman,' I says to a fine doll of a housemaid, a-darning stockings in the noo kidgin, as smelt of paint to that degree that you might have been lodging in a ile-shop, while the man stood a-turning over his happince on the mat—I mean on his hands, and him on the door-mat, and not satisfied till I give him twopence more, which not having enough I give him a sixpence, to go and get it, and him never a-coming back, and keeping the whole sixpence and the two pence, too, as would have tried any woman's temper, if even she hadn't been a cook, which is the mildest and quietest beings as ever dished a jynt.

"'And what's your name, young woman?' I says to my fine madam, as she sat there and didn't seem to know the proper respect to years, though she did prick her finger till the blood come, and serve her right, too, and if I did not expect from her looks as she'd be that vulgar to answer me disrespectful and say, when I said 'What's your name?' 'Pudding and Tame,' like the gals did when I went to school, which wasn't yesterday, you know; but she didn't, but says, quite huffy, 'Jane,' she says.

"'Ho!' I says, werry distant, as I took off my bonnet and shawl, and laid 'em on the dresser. 'Ho!' I says, and then I sits me down afore the fire, and puts my feet on the fender; for as I had my gloses on to come in I wouldn't wear my best boots, but left 'em in my box, and there, through there being a crack in the side, if the water hadn't soaked right through, and wetten'd my feet, so that they steamed again.

"At last, seeing as my fine lady meant to be uppish, I says to her, I says, in a tone o' wyce as showed I didn't mean to be trifled with, and if she meant to sit in my kidgin she must know who was missus. 'Jane,' I says, 'you'd best put some more coals on the fire.'

"'You'd best not,' she says. 'It smokes.'

"I didn't say nothing to her then, but I says to myself, 'Martha,' I says, 'Martha Jinks, you've made a mistake; for if there is one mortal thing as I can't abear, it's smoke.'

"At last I says, 'Jane,' I says, 'I can't abear this smell of the paint any longer.'

"'Oh!' she says, 'this is nothing; the place is noo, and it's worse upstairs in our bedroom, which was done last.'

"'Worse?' I says. 'Young woman,' I says, in a whisper, 'it makes me feel faint. If you've the heart that can feel for another inside your stays,' I says, 'get me a wee drop of g—.'

"And she wouldn't!

"Oh, mum, the sufferins as I went through in that noo willa was dreadful. The kidgin fire smoked to that degree that the blacks used to be a-flying about all over the kidgin, and a-settling on everything, though if there's one place as a black will settle on it's your nose, when fust time you give it a rub there you are not fit to be seen; while the water was that hard it was no use to rub or wash. Soap was nowhere; and I declare to you, mum, sollumly, as I've often washed the smuts off one side of my face on to the other, and took to black caps outer self-defence.

"If it hadn't ha' been for the least drop o' g— took inwardly now and then, I should ha' been a blackened corpse over and over again, for that fire nearly drove me mad. Cinders will come out into your pan sometimes, and frizzle and make a smell of hot fat all over the house, and it's no use for ladies to make a fuss about it, for where cooking's going on you must smell it sometimes if you wants to taste it, and you'd be hard-up without your cook. But when the wind sets right down the chimbley and blows all the smoke wrong way into your face, and making you sneeze, filling your eyes up, and driving the blacks into custard or veal cutlets, or whatever you're a-making of, who can help it? And then they says upstairs as the things tastes bitter.

"'You must have it stoped, mum,' I says to the missus, but she says as the place has cost 'em five hundred pound now more than the contrack, and so I says to myself, 'As it's for your good, and you won't be led, you must be drove.'



So only outer self-defence I kep a black fire, and left the kidgin door open, when the blacks all went up the stairs, and a man came down nex week to take my measure for a patent prize kidginer.

“But then, mum, if you’ll believe me, it wasn’t only in the kidgin, it was all over the house, which was designed by the artchyteck to hold so much wind that it went wentilating about the place and banging the doors to that degree that if you didn’t make haste you were hit on the back and nearly sent flat. Jane had such a stiff neck—not as that was anything new, for the baker said she was the stuckuppist gal he ever did see; but this was a cold stiff neck, and had to be rubbed with ’deldoc, and slep in flannel every night, so as she was a good half-hour undressing, and then got into bed with such cold feet as would have made a saint swear.

“‘Jane,’ says I, one night, ‘if you don’t sleep in your stockings I shall be obliged to have a bottle.’

“‘Of g—,’ she says, in her nasty, aggravating, spiteful way.

“‘No imperance;’ I says, ‘a bottle of hot water, wrapped up in a flannel—a-hem—or I shall be having spazzums to that degree as I must have a drop of g— took inward, to save me from sufferin’ as would make any one shudder.’

“Then the cold, and damp, and draughts give me the face-ache so that I had to have a tooth out, and he took the wrong one out, and said I told him that one, when it hadn’t a speck in it, and the other was a regular shell; when what I suffered no one knows but Jane, with my face swelled upon one side like a bladder of lard squeezed, and Jane all the time going on because I would sit up in bed and rock myself to and fro, with a shawl over my shoulders, and the nasty stiff-necked thing grumbling and declaring it was like somebody playing with a pair of bellows in the bed, when it was only the nasty draughty house as she could feel, and me a-dying amost for a drop of g— took inwardly, on a bit of sugar.

“There was hardly a door that would shut, and when they did they stuck to that degree that you couldn’t get ’em open again till you turned cross, when they’d fly open savagely and half knock you down, and I declare to goodness, for a whole month, mum, everything I put in my mouth tasted of paint.

“‘Oh, you beauties!’ I says, when after banging and ringing at the gate for near an hour, I was obliged to go down and let in the workmen as came battering in the middle of the night amost, for it had only just gone six. And there they were, smiths, and bricklayers, and plasterers, a-trampling all over my beautiful clean kitchen till they’d took out the range and scattered the bricks and mortar all over the floor, as trampled about all upstairs and got into the carpets. And the time those men wasted a-poking and pottering about till they’d got in the patent kidginet, when one stuck-up-nosed fellow begins to light it, and show me how it would draw.

“‘You must keep the boiler full,’ he says.

“‘Young man,’ I says, ‘have I been in the best of families for thirty years, and do you think I don’t know as a boiler without any water would bust?’ And then I went out of the kidgin, and would not stop to be insulted by a jumped-up ironmonger’s boy.

“And there the nex day, if the thing didn’t smoke wuss than ever, not a bit going up the chimbley, but regularly blinding you, till master and missus come down, choking and sneezing, and—

“‘Oh, cook,’ says the missus, ‘what have you been doing?’

“‘No, mum,’ I says, ‘it’s not me as has been a-doing anything; it’s your patent kidginer and your noo house, as I’d never have set a foot in if I’d knowed—no, mum, not for double wages and everything found.’

“‘Well, but cook,’ says the master, ‘it’s the damper.’

“‘Well, sir,’ I says, ‘I could have told you that; but it’s my impression,’ I says, ‘that, when it’s the dryer, it won’t go a bit better, and the sooner you soot yourself the better.’ And then, instead of taking the hint to go out of my kidgin, as he would have done if he’d had the sperret of a man, he actelly went patting and poking about the things, and opening this and shutting that, till I hadn’t patience; when, because the thing left off smoking, he wanted to make out as I hadn’t pulled out one of the little drawer things in the flue.

“But there never was sich a thing as that kidginer, and nobody never knowed how to take it; sometimes it would go a-running away and making itself red-hot, and burning all the blacklead off, and sometimes it wouldn’t go at all, but stopped all black and sulky; when your bit of fowl, or whatever you were baking—roasting they called it, but if it ain’t baking a thing as is shut up inside a oven, what is it?—p’raps you’ll tell me—and, there now, it would be raw as raw, or else dry, burnt up to a cinder, while of a night there was no fire to sit by and make yourself comfortable—nothing at all but a nasty black patent thing as never looked sociable, and sent all the smell of the cooking upstairs, specially cabbage.

“No, mum, I’m much obliged, mum; and if you had been going to stop here, mum, I should have been happy to give you a trial, when you’d no doubt have found out my wally, for you look a sweet-tempered creetur; but go to a noo house, mum, I won’t—not under no consideration; and so I wish you good day, mum.”

And Mrs Martha Jinks went.

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## Chapter Twenty.

### A Struggle for Life.

If there is any one thing in which I like to see a boy excel, it is in swimming. Now, we upright walking animals seem to be naturally the worst swimmers, and the higher and more nobly proportioned our forehead, the worse for us if in the disagreeable predicament of "a man overboard." Horses, oxen, dogs, cats, pigs, all take to the water readily, or unreadily, and swim with ease, keeping those conveniently placed nostrils just out of water; while poor we, with all our sense and reason, unless we go through a pretty long course of preparation, paddle, splash, flounder, and most likely get drowned. Of course the principal reason for this is the large weight of head above the nostrils, this weight keeping our breathing-apertures beneath the water; while as for Sir Walter Scott, with that tremendously high forehead of his, in spite of all his knowledge he must have been one of the worst of watermen. People well acquainted with such matters tell us that to float, all we have to do is to put our hands behind us, throw back our head, and point our nose impudently at the sky; the mobile fluid will then be just round our face, and we shall float in smooth water.

Now, that all sounds very pretty, and so easy; but though perhaps quite possible of accomplishment to some people, I, for one, must confess that it is out of my reach. Perhaps if I had persevered I might have succeeded, for perseverance is a fine thing; but a stifling snort, a choking cough, the sensation of fluid lead in my brain, thunder in my ears, and a great difficulty in getting upon my legs again in shallow water, proved quite sufficient for me, and I have not since tried the experiment.

But after all there is something delightful in a good bathe; and I look back with brightened eye at the old bathing-place down the meadows where we used to take headers into the clear stream, and dive, and float, and go dogs' paddle, and porpoise fashion, on many a sunny half-holiday. Those were pleasant days, and the light from them often shines into middle-aged life. I often call to mind the troop of paddling and splashing young rascals standing in the shallows, and more than once I have stood on the Serpentine bridge to look at similar groups.

Now, of course, I do not mean in the depth of winter; though there is always a board up, telling the public that they may bathe there before eight o'clock am, very few respond to the gracious permission of the ranger; for only fancy, dressing on the gravelly shore when the keen north wind blows. I am more eagleish in my aspirations and shun such gooseskinism.

But of all things I think that a boy should learn to be a tolerably proficient swimmer; though, while learning, let him have courage tempered with prudence. I remember having a very narrow escape myself through listening to the persuasion of my schoolfellows, and trying to swim across our river before I possessed either the strength, skill, or courage. Fortunately I was saved; but not before I was nearly insensible, and far out of my depth. But the incident I am about to relate occurred in that well-known piece of water in Hyde Park, and made such an impression upon, my mind, as will, I am sure, never be effaced; for even now, twenty-five years since, it is as fresh as if of yesterday.

I was standing on the bridge watching the splashing youngsters on a fine evening in July, when my attention was suddenly attracted by a boy, apparently of fifteen or sixteen, who had left the shallow parts, and was boldly striking out as if to swim across. He could not have been above forty yards from the bridge, and just above him, as I was, I could gaze admiringly upon his bold young limbs in their rapid strokes, as he manfully clove his way through the clear water. It was a lovely evening, and the water looked beautifully transparent, so that every motion was perfectly plain.

I kept up with him and took quite an interest in his proceedings, for it soon became apparent that he did not mean to turn back, but to go right across; and I remember thinking what a tremendous distance it seemed for so young a swimmer. However, on he went, striking boldly out, and sending the glittering water bubbling, beading, and sparkling away, right and left, as he struggled on "like a stout-hearted swimmer, the spray at his lip—"

On he went, slowly and apparently surely; first a quarter, then a third, then half the distance; and, being so near the bridge, the balustrade soon formed a leaning-place for a good many interested spectators; for it is not every boy who can take so long a swim—the swim across generally entailing the necessity for return to the warm clothes waiting upon the bank, in company with that agreeable producer of glow and reaction called a towel.

It soon, however, became evident that the lad beneath us would not take the return swim, and I felt the hot blood flush up into my face as the truth forced itself upon my mind that he was fast growing tired.

Yes, it was soon unmistakable: he was getting tired, and, with his fatigue, losing nerve; for his strokes began to be taken more and more rapidly; he made less way; and now he was but little beyond half-way over, and there were many feet of water beneath him.

I was but a youth then, but I remember well the horror of the moment: the feeling that a fellow-creature was about to lose his life just beneath me, and I powerless to save. There were the Royal Humane Society's boats, but far enough off. Help from the shore was impossible; and now, above the murmured agitation of the crowd upon the bridge, came at intervals the poor boy's faint cry—

"Help—help—boat!"

Those were awful moments; and more than one turned hurriedly away. I could not, though, for my eyes were fixed on the swimmer—nay, struggler now, as at last, rapidly beating the water and crying wildly for aid, he slowly went down with his white form visible beneath the clear water, now agitated and forming concentric rings where he sank.

The cries from the bridge had attracted the notice of one of the Society's men, and he was now rowing up fast; but it was plain to all that he must be too late, when from just by where I stood there was a slight movement and clambering; and then, like an arrow from a bow, with hands pointed above his head, down with a mighty rush right into the spray-splashing water, went a figure accompanied by a ringing cheer from those around.

Up rose the water, and then closed like a boiling cauldron above the gallant swimmer's head. Then followed moments

of intense excitement, as nothing but agitated water was visible till the daring one's head rose above the surface for an instant, when he shook the water from his face, dived again, and in a few seconds rose to the surface, with the drowning boy clinging to him.

But now there was fresh help at hand, and in another instant the gallant young man and the boy were in the boat that came up; while with a sobbing sigh of relief I went home, thinking to myself that I would sooner have been that brave man than the greatest hero of yore.

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## Chapter Twenty One.

### The Evils of a Wig.

Now it's all very well to say that truth is strange—stranger than fiction; but the saying won't wash, it isn't fast colours, but partakes of the nature of those carried by certain Austrian regiments—it runs; for there is no rule without an exception, and no person in the full enjoyment of his mental faculties will pretend to say that truth was stranger than fiction in the case of Mr Smith's wig, for the fiction—the wig—was, to all intents and purposes, stranger than the truth—the genuine head of hair.

Mr Smith—Mr Artaxerxes Smith—in his younger days had often visited the hairdresser's, to sit in state with a flowing print robe tucked in all round his neck, but not so close but the tiny snips and chips from his Hyperion curls would get down within his shirt-collar, and tickle and tease for hours after; he had listened while the oily-tongued—scented oily-tongued—hairdresser had snipped away and told him that his hair was turning a little grey, or that it was growing thin at the crown, or very dry, or full of dandruff, or coming off, or suffering from one of those inevitable failings which are never discoverable save when having one's hair cut. "Our Philo-homo-coma Brushitinius would remove the symptoms in a few days, sir," the hairdresser would say; "remove the dandruff, clarify the scalp, soften the hair, and bring up a fine soft down that would soon strengthen into flowing locks." But though in the glass before him Mr Smith could see the noble hair and brilliant whiskers of his operator, he would not listen, he only growled out, "Make haste," or "Never mind," or something else very rude, and the consequence was that he suffered for his neglect of the good hairdresser's advice, so that at last Mr Smith couldn't have given any one a lock of his hair to save his life. He was bald—completely bald—his head looked like vegetable ivory, and in despair he consulted a Saville-row physician.

"Nature, sir, nature," said the great man; "a peculiarity of constitution, a failing in the absorbents and dessicating, wasting in the structural development of the cuticle and sub-cuticle—the hair being a small filament issuing from the surface of the scalp from a bulbous radix, and forming a capillary covering; which covering, in your case, has failed, sir, failed."

Mr Smith knew that before he made up his mind to invest a guinea, but he only said—

"And what course should you pursue in my case?"

"Well, yes—er—er—um, ah! I should—er—that is to say, I should wear a wig."

That was just what Mr Smith's hairdresser had told him for nothing, though, certainly, with sundry ideas *in petto* that it might fall to his task to make this wig; but Mr Smith had expected something else from a man who put MD at the end of his name.

"Too big for his profession," said Mr Smith, and he bought a pot of the Count de Caput Medusae's Golden Balm, prepared from the original recipe given by that inventive Count to the aunt's cousin's uncle of the proprietor.

"Try another pot, sir," said the vendor, examining the bare head with a powerful magnifying glass. "Perfect down on the surface, sir, though not plain to the naked eye. I should advise the large twenty-two shilling pots, sir, and the vigorous rubbing in, to be continued night and morning."

But if there had been any down it knew better than to stop and suffer the scrubbing inflicted by Mr Smith upon his bare poll, and a month only found him with the scalp turned from waxy-white to pinky-red, while his head was sore to a degree.

"Jackal's formula produces hair, beard, or whiskers upon the smoothest skin."

But, perhaps, Mr Smith's was not the smoothest skin, but not for want of rubbing and polishing, and the formula did not produce anything but a great many naughty words, while "Brimstone Degenerator," "The Capillary Attraction," and a score of other things, only made holes in several five-pound notes, while Mr Smith, unable to discover any more filaments issuing from the surface of his scalp from bulbous radices, came to the conclusion that he really must have a wig.

He had it; and found it light and warm, and tried to make himself believe that it could not be told from the real thing. He would brush it before the glass, or run his hands through the curls when any one was looking, and pretend to scratch his head, but the brute of a thing would slip on one side, or get down over his forehead, or go back, or do something stupid, as if of impish tendencies and exclaiming to the world at large, "I'm a wig, I am!"

Brushed up carefully was that wig every now and then by the maker, who would send it back glossed and pomatumed to a wonderful degree of perfection; when again Mr Smith would try and persuade himself that with such a skin parting no one could fail to be deceived, but the people found him out when he lost his hat from a puff of wind, which jumped it off and sent it rolling along the pavement.

We have most of us chased our hats upon a windy day, now getting close up, now being left behind, and have tried,

as is the correct thing, to smile; but who could smile if the pomatum had adhered to the lining of the hat, and he was scudding under a bare pole in chase of hat and wig.

After that episode in his life, Mr Smith brushed up his wig himself, and always used oil; while he found his wig decidedly economical, for it never wanted cutting.

Being a bachelor with plenty of time on his hands, Mr Smith used to spend it as seemed good in his own eyes, and a very favourite pursuit of his was visit-paying to the various cathedral towns, for the purpose of studying what he termed the "architectural points." The consequence was, that after spending an afternoon examining nave and chancel; chapel, window, pillar, arch, and groin; frowning at corbels, and grinning at the grotesque gutter-bearers; Mr Smith found himself seated at dinner in that far-famed hostelry known as the "Golden Bull," in the cathedral town of Surridge.

The dinner was good, the wine might have been worse, the linen and plate were clean, and at length, seated in front of the comfortable fire, sipping his port, Mr Smith mused upon the visit he had paid to the cathedral. After a while, from habit, he scratched his head and drew the wig aside, which necessitated his rising to adjust the covering by the glass, after which Mr Smith sighed and filled his glass again.

At length the bell brought the waiter, and the waiter brought the boots, and the boots brought the boot-jack and the slippers, and then the chambermaid brought the hand candlestick, and the maiden ushered the visitor up to Number 25 in the great balcony which surrounded the large yard, where even now a broken-winded old stagecoach drew up once a week, as if determined to go till it dropped, in spite of all the railways in the kingdom.

But Mr Smith had not been five minutes in his bedroom, and divested himself of only one or two articles of his dress, when he remembered that he had given no orders for an early breakfast, so as to meet the first up-train.

The bell soon brought the chambermaid, who looked rather open-mouthed as Mr Smith gave his orders. He then prepared himself for bed, wherein, with a comfortable cotton nightcap pulled over his head, he soon wandered into the land of dreams.

About an hour had passed, and Mr Smith was mentally busy making a drawing of a grim old corbel—a most grotesque head in the cathedral close, when he was terribly bothered because the moss-covered, time-eaten old stony face would not keep still: now it winked, now it screwed up its face, now it thrust its tongue first into one cheek and then into the other, making wrinkles here, there, and everywhere, till he put down his pencil, and asked what it meant. But instead of answering, the face nodded and came down nearer and nearer, backing him further and further away, till he was shut up in one of the cloisters, and hammering at the door to get out.

"Open the door!" he roared again and again; till he woke to find that it was somebody outside knocking at his door and thundering to get in.

"Here, open the door now, or it'll be the wuss for yer!" growled a hoarse voice, whereupon tearing off his cap, Mr Smith leaped out of bed, and into some garments, and then stood shivering and wondering whether the place was on fire.

"What's all the noise?" cried some one in the gallery.

"Madman, sir, outer the 'sylum, and keepers want to ketch him."

"Poor fellow," was the response; and then came the demand for admittance, and the thundering again.

"Go away!" cried Mr Smith, in an agitated and very cracked voice. "Go away, there's no one here!"

"Ho! ain't there," said the gruff voice; and then there was a suppressed titter. "You're sure it's him?" said another voice.

"Oh, yes," said some one in a high treble; "he's got his head shaved."

"Right you are," said the same gruff voice, and then Mr Smith turned all of a cold perspiration.

"But my good man," he gasped out at last through the keyhole, as he shivered in the dark, "it's all a mistake: I'm not the man."

"Now, are you a-going to stash that ere gammon, or am I to come through the door?—that's what I wants to know," growled the voice.

"Good heavens! what a position," gasped Mr Smith. "My good man," he cried again, "I'm not mad at all."

"Oh, no, of course not; nobody never said you was," said the voice. "It's all right; open the door; it's only me, Grouser, yer know."

But Mr Smith *didn't* know Grouser; neither did he wish to; for he wanted a quiet night's rest, and to go off by the first train; but he resolved to try another appeal.

"M-m-m-m-my good man, will you go away, please?"

Bump! came a heavy body against the door, making the lock chatter, and the inner partition vibrate.

"Go away, please," gasped Mr Smith; "or I'll call the landlord."

Bump! came the noise, and then the gruff voice, "Now, you'd best open, my tulip."

"Landlord!" screamed Mr Smith.

"Yes, sir, I'm here!" cried a fresh voice. "Now, why don't you come quietly, sir; the gentleman only means it for your good, and if you have any money, I hope you'll pay your bill."

"He ain't got a blessed halfpenny, bless you," growled the voice of the man Mr Smith took to be the keeper, but he was so confused by waking up from a heavy sleep, that he began to pass his hand over his head, and to wonder whether he really was sane.

Bump! came the noise again, and then there was a whispering, and the gruff voice cried, "Don't you go away!" And then, to his great horror, through the thin wood partition, Mr Smith heard people moving in the next room, and a clattering noise as if a washstand was being moved from before the door that he had tried that night and found fast, but piled the chairs up against for safety sake. Directly after came the rattling of a key, and the cracking of the paint-stuck door, as if it were years since it had been opened; but Mr Smith could stop to hear no more. Hurriedly turning his key, he dashed open his door, gave a yell of terror, and charging out, scattered half a score of the inn-tenants standing in the gallery, candle in hand. There was a wild shrieking, the overturning of candlesticks, and women fainting, and then, as two or three made very doubtful efforts to stop the bald-headed figure, it leaped over a prostrate chambermaid, and dashed along the balcony.

"Hie! stop him, hie!" was the shout that rang behind; but Mr Smith ran on, then along the other side, closely followed by him of the gruff voice, while two more went the other way.

"Look out," roared the keeper, "or he'll do you a mischief!" and so, as Mr Smith came along the fourth side of the yard balcony, the landlord and helper allowed themselves to be dashed aside, and this time with force; while with shrieking women in front of him, Mr Smith rushed on.

Screams and yells, and cries, as the fugitive panted on reaching the second turn of the gallery, when hearing the gruff-voiced one close behind, he stole a look over his shoulder, and shuddered at the faint glimpse he obtained of a huge, burly figure, whose aspect made him tear on more frightened than ever, as the gruff voice roared to him to stop.

But there was no stop in Mr Smith, for as the moonbeams shone through the glass at his side, he could just make out that some one was holding a door in front ajar and peeping out, when, without thinking of anything else but getting somewhere to parley with his pursuer, Mr Smith dashed at the door, sent some one staggering backwards, while he had the door banged to and locked in an instant.

"For Heaven's sake, save me," gasped Mr Smith; "and excuse this intrusion, Sir."

"Oh, to be sure," said a voice from the corner, where it was quite dark; "but you need not have knocked at the door so loud. You are from the moon, of course, and how did you leave Plutina and the Bluegobs?"

"Wh, wh-wh-wh-what?" gasped Mr Smith.

"Come to the window, Sir, and we'll enlighten the present generation; I'm the grand Porkendillo, Sir, and—"

"Now, then, open this here door," growled a savage voice in the gallery.

"Begone, slave," cried the voice from out of the dark, and then to Mr Smith's horror, a short figure crossed to the window, and he could see the outline of a smooth bald head upon the blind, which was directly afterwards dragged down and wrapped round the person into whose room the fugitive had run.

A light now broke upon Mr Smith; here was the real Simon Pure; but what a position to be in, locked in the same room with a madman—a shaven-headed lunatic, escaped from some private asylum.

"My Lord; Most Grand one, open the door and admit your slave," came in a hoarse whisper through the keyhole.

"Is the banquet prepared?" said the madman.

"Yes, my lord," croaked the keeper.

"Is Bootes there? Have Arcturus, Aldebaran, Orion, and Beta Pi assembled?"

"Yes, my lord, and it's done to a touch," growled the keeper.

"Prostrate thyself, then, slaves, and let the winds all blow and boom. I come. Ha! a spy," cried the madman, rushing at Mr Smith, who in his great horror leaped upon the bed, and buried himself beneath the clothes in which he enveloped himself so closely, that his adversary could not drag him forth.

"Come forth, thou traitor," shrieked the madman, tearing at the clothes so fiercely, that a huge bundle rolled off the bed on to the floor, wherein, half-smothered, lay poor Mr Smith, in a most profuse state of perspiration.

All at once there was a cessation of the kicks and thumps, but a threatening of an increased state of suffocation, for there seemed to the covered man to be a struggle going on, and two or three people fell upon him. Then there came the buzz of voices, and he found himself gently unrolled from the mass of clothing, to sit up, staring around with white head and flushed face at the room full of people, while in one corner closely guarded by his keeper stood the Grand Porkendillo, sucking his thumb, and leering at every one in turn. For this gentleman having made his escape

from the neighbouring establishment of a famous doctor, had taken refuge in the Golden Bull, whose landlord was most profuse in his apologies to Mr Smith, for the mistake that had been made.

But, as the chambermaid said when Mr Smith had taken his departure:—

“Lor’, Sir, as soon as they said the poor man’s head was shaved, I made sure it was him.”

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## Chapter Twenty Two.

### To be Sold by Auction.

“Sale now on,” was stuck upon the door-posts of a good-sized house that I was passing the other day—a house that an agent would call “a genteel family mansion;” for the agent, taught by his trade, knows that it is not always expedient to call a spade a spade, so he tickles the taste of his customers by talking of “villas, cottages ornées, snug boxes, delightful residences,” etcetera; in short, anything but what a plain, matter-of-fact person would bring forth to dub the home wherein he passed his hours of rest. “Sale now on,” in black letters six inches high. There were bills in the windows bearing the name of a well-known auctioneer, which was in itself sufficient to guarantee that it was a genuine sale; a large hearthrug was swung, banner fashion, out of the first-floor window, bearing also a bill, enumerating the valuable household furniture, and about the door were several snuffy-looking men in carpet caps, some with very Israelitish aspects, but all looking very fleecy and fluffy, and wearing the appearance of buying a secondhand suit of clothes once in a year, putting it on, and keeping it on until it dropped off of its own accord.

Being something of a saunterer, auction sales very frequently come under my notice, and possess something of an attraction for me; not that I go as a bargain hunter, for it is only on very, very rare occasions that I make a purchase; but I like to see how my fellow-man and woman buy their bargains, and also to moralise, in my own small way, upon the changes that may have taken place in the house before the “whole of the valuable and modern household furniture” was placed in the hands of the “going, going, gone” man, to dispose of without reserve. I have been in some strange places in my travels, and seen some strange auctions, especially those in the electro-plate line at a shop in a leading thoroughfare; but the touter at the door never asks me in now, and the gentleman in the rostrum never seeks to catch my eye for another bid. My impression is that they do not want me, but look upon me as a rogue towards them; and verily I believe that I am, if they occupy the standard position of honest men. I could fill some pages with the reflections I have made upon different auctions at which I have been present—of the struggling, failing tradesman, turned out of house and home, watching with bitterness his household gods sacrificed upon the altar of Mammon—of the recklessly furnished house of the bankrupt speculator—of the little four-roomed house in the suburbs—all have their own especial history; but upon this occasion I am writing of the buyers more especially, and of the especial house spoken of at the head of this paper.

“Sale now on; fuss floor, sir,” said one of the grubby individuals before referred to; and as I ascended the stairs, which showed plainly where the rich velvet pile carpet, lot 94 in the catalogue, had lain, I was attacked on both flanks by a couple of gentlemen of very seedy, but decidedly not ripened appearance, who were very desirous of executing any little commissions for me. “Was there anything I had marked in the catalogue?” One of these gents soon gave me up, but the other seemed determined that if he failed in hooking a gudgeon, it should not be for want of perseverance; so he followed me up most pertinaciously, and on reaching the sale room—the three drawing-rooms thrown into one—began to expatiate upon everything which seemed to have attracted my eye. The pianoforte was the very one that would suit me, and he could tell me the figure to a T that I ought to give for it, which was not the strict letter of the truth.

It was of no avail that I tried to get rid of him, so I sat down in a corner near the auctioneer, and watched the progress of the sale and the countenances of the buyers.

“*Going* at three ten; going at three ten; *going* at three *ten*—”

“Tap” went the hammer, and a Mr Cohen became the owner of a rosewood loo table.

Several more lots were disposed of, when a large feather-bed was placed by the porters upon the table. It might have been stuffed with feathers of gold from the way in which it was immediately attacked and punched. I was almost knocked over in the rush; and for a moment it appeared as though the twelve tribes of Israel had resolved, to a man, upon thrusting their arms right up to the elbow in the soft and yielding bed.

“Bargain at a fi-pun note, sir; let me bid for you. Be a sin to let such a chance go. Better let me bid, or them Jews ’ll run it up.”

In spite of myself I could not refrain from turning round and gazing upon my tormentor’s profile, which was as thoroughly Israelitish as ever spoke of race or told of Eastern origin. But for a very peremptory negative I should undoubtedly have become the possessor of the capital feather-bed; which, however, became the property of a Mr Moss.

In fact, the richly historical names that were given in after almost every purchase showed how very little there was of the Christian element in the sale: Lazarus, Abrahams, Marks, Levy, Solomon, and the refined Sloman—Moss, a capital name for a money grubber, and far preferable, no doubt, to the more familiar Moses—such names as these seemed of the most familiar, while Brown, Jones, Robinson, or Smith only occurred at long intervals.

I stayed some two hours, and watched the greed and avarice displayed by the bidders; and came away with the full determination not to buy at sales, for I could see one thing very plainly, and that was, that there was no fear of an article being sold for less than its value, as there were plenty of experienced men waiting to close at once upon a

bargain; and therefore these brokers would, amongst them, run every lot up to nearly its full worth; the consequence being, that if you did not give the real value for an article that you were almost buying in the dark as to its quality, you would give for it perhaps considerably more than it was worth—buying blindly—every lot being knocked down to the buyer with all its defects and failings.

I am not going to say that bargains are not to be picked up at sales, for no doubt many are to be come at in this way; but it seems to me to be absolutely necessary that the purchaser should possess a shrewd business perception and keen business capabilities, or the chances are that he will be greatly disappointed when he pays his money and has his goods delivered to him. And this is what I thought as I watched the different little “dodges” employed by the initiated to give the auctioneer notice when they bid. One man scratched his head; another winked his right eye; another winked his left; one thrust his tongue into his cheek; another raised his eyebrows; others rubbed their noses, tapped their teeth, coughed, pulled their whiskers; while the most expert seemed to do it with a look.

“Said I then to myself, here’s a lesson for me,” though I do not know with what favour Dr Watts would have looked upon such a misappropriation of his ode, and I then rose to leave the room, closely followed by my broker friend, who was strongly of opinion, when we reached the staircase, that he ought to drink my health. However, I did not agree with him, being so unimaginative as to consider that my health would not be in the slightest degree improved by being drunk, while that of my companion would decidedly suffer by potations such as are supplied in our London public-houses.

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## Chapter Twenty Three.

### A Placard.

Now, you know, it wouldn’t matter a bit if it was only the publicans who gave short measure. Most of us know what their gin-glasses are—regular little humbugs of things—werry broad at the top, and werry solid at the bottom, and holding precious little in ’em; bad as the old-fashioned wine bottles, that have had such a kick as has sent the bottom right up inside ever so far, like a glass mountain, so that when you think the bottle’s half full, it’s three-parts empty. But it isn’t the publican so much as the street-sellers, who one way and the other do drop most terribly on to the poor man in what he buys; and yet that ain’t the worst of it, for there’s someone else as drops on to the poor man worse than anybody; cheats him; gives him short measure; and one way and another knocks twenty-five per cent, off his wages and the good they would do him; and I’m going to show you how; while “Who is it?” says you; “Why, himself!” says I. And now I’m going to prove it.

Now, I don’t know what you are as is reading this; but we’ll say you’re a working man, for once in a way, and say you and I settled down in London. You makes your three-and-thirty shillings a week at your trade! and I, being a bill-sticker, makes what I can—sometimes more, sometimes less—finds my own paste—makes it myself, you know; and though I says it as shouldn’t say it, you never see my bills a-going flip-flap in the wind, like some people’s as I knows, which ain’t neither here nor there, in a manner of speaking; though as regards a wall or hoarding, they are here and there. I allus make good paste, and though sometimes when I has one of them big posters to stick up a letter at a time, I do get a bit bothered with the spelling, it ain’t often. I ain’t ashamed of my faults, and having made myself a scholard off bills on walls, why, ’tain’t surprising as I blunders a bit sometimes, even if one’s reading has been a bit diversified. As I said before, it ain’t surprising, and I ain’t ashamed if, when I stuck them *Star* bills, I did putt the cart afore the horse, and instead of saying “War Correspondence” put it up as “Raw Correspondence,” which, seeing as it related to cutting up and butchering, warn’t so werry much out of place. But it warn’t me as stuck the Prince o’ Wales’s feathers upside down, and if I do have to put a letter up at a time I always makes them meet at the edges, and don’t put ’em over other folkses.

But this ain’t proving how pore men cheats and measures themselves out short; so, as I said before, we’ll suppose you and me to be working men settled in London. Well, rent we can’t say nothing about; but if we goes on as some people do, living from hand to mouth and back again, why, where are we? Now, this is what I always noticed—the poorer a man is, the dearer he buys his things.

“Get out,” says you; “how can that be?”

“Why, so,” says I, and in imagination, you know, I holds the bill up against the wall with one hand, stirs the brush round in my paste with the other, and then well lathers or lubricates the back of the paper, then turns him, claps him in his place, and touches him over with the brush so as he fits into all the crevices tight. “And now,” says I, “read,” and you read, or is s’posed to read, as follers, though of course it’s me speaking:—

“The poor man allus goes to the cheap shop.”

“Right enough too,” says you.

“Gammon,” says I, for that cheap’s a word as ain’t to be found in reality; it’s a word as my philosophic friend Josef Sprouts would call “a beautiful illoosion.” It’s a ignis something—I don’t quite know what—as cheats men on to follow it, and then bogs them as tight as my brush is bogged in dry weather in the crusty paste. Don’t you never buy nothing cheap. Now, this is the way. You goes and buys cheap butter at fourteen-pence when you might have had it as honest dripping, afore the tater flour and yaller colour was put in, for ninepence. You buys penny candles one at a time, and so gives eight pence a pound when you might have had ’em for seven-pence. You buys: cheap tea at two shillings, when one spoonful of three-shilling goes twice as fur. Working men’s stout bluchers, all brown paper and bosh. Cheap clothes, as falls all to pieces, and shrinks anyhow, till the bottoms of the trousers seem to have made up their minds to be tight knickerbockers. Cheap calico, as is all facing till it’s washed, when it turns out canvas or fine net. Coffee, as is—well, perhaps what I heard about burnt liver ain’t true, after all; but you may depend upon one thing, and that is, that the man as buys the best of everything in a plain way lives the cheapest. Look at flour. Well,

say the best is a penny a quarter more—and the wife seems so satisfied because she thinks she is saving. Why, it's a mistake altogether, and if you feed yourself with so much husk amongst your corn, mustn't you have more corn to supply the nutriment? Don't tell me! I haven't made paste so many years without being a good judge of flour.

Cheap things is nasty. At least that's wrong, for cheap things is good, and the real cheap things is the best of everything; and what you've got to do is this—have a little, but have it good. I've watched the dodges long enough to know; I've stuck up the cheap advertising bills, and then looked into it, and blowed the missus up for being so took in: cheap soap as is kept wet and runs all to a mosh in the water; cheap rice full of grit; cheap bacon as shrinks in the pot; cheap currants with plenty of stones; cheap meat—there, if there is a cruel thing perpetrated on the poor people of London streets, it's that sending up diseased beasts, sheep, and pigs, to be sold cheap; and if I were the Lord Mayor of London, or either of the other magistrates (which ain't likely to be the case this year, because the election's over, and there ain't a bench at liberty) I'd just tar the gentlemen as sells the stuff with their own brush, I'd—I would, and no mistake—I'd feed 'em with their own meat—now then!

I've stuck so much poetry about cheap clothes for the tailors, and strong tea for the groshers, that I'm sick of it; but I know one piece right off by heart, and at the end of a verse it says:—

“Oh, God, that bread should be so dear,  
And flesh and blood so cheap!”

You know! “Song of the shirt.” Cheap shirts for cheap people, who make fortunes out of the poor.

“Oh,” you'll say, “that was only a made-up thing.”

What! here, save up your pence and go down Bethnal Green, or amongst the tottering old houses in Spitalfields, places where I can find heaps of spots for sticking bills, and you can hunt 'em out for yourself; women sewing their shrouds, hard at work at 'em, doing a little bit every day till they get 'em done, and then the parish sends a cheap coffin, supplied by the lowest bidder, the undertaker as does these things by contract on the cheap fetches the rough black case; and then “rattle his bones over the stones,” and off to the cemetery; and you and I will buy the cheap shirt, and find as the calico's thin, and the buttons come off, and the stitches fall out almost from our bargain.

“Just come here, will you?” says a p'leeceman to me one day as I was a-sticking an “Alarming Sacrifice” against the wall, and a thinking to myself it was like the way we used to gammon the old hens at home, shamming to throw down barley, so that they'd come running and clucking like fun to find nought; while here was these rogues a-using me to scatter their barley about to bring all the old London hens a-clucking over their bargains in calicoes and dresses, bought at unheard-of prices, “in bankruptcy.” “Just come in here a minute,” says the policeman, and I leaves off at “Alarming Sac—;” and I daresay there was an alarming sack made out of the noodles, for that bill never got finished, but stopped there till another sticker went and stuck the “Christy's” over it. I follows my chap in, carrying my bills and crutches and paste, on account of the boys, and follows him right upstairs—up stairs as wern't safe—to a miserable attic, where there was a poor thing lying on a bed—at least on a few rags, and she dressed in rags herself. There was the rain pelting against the broken windows and making a puddle on the floor; the wind whistling down the chimney, where there was no grate, only a few bits or iron hoop resting on some bricks, but no fire; whilst the rest of the furniture, after the ricketty bedstead, was a little table, and a chair with the bottom sticking down like part of a fish basket.

“Stop with her while I goes for help,” says the p'leeceman, and I nodded, staring all the while at the poor thing on the bed; and as soon as he had gone, I goes a tiptoe to the winder, pulls a little bill out of my bag, lays on the paste, and pops it over one of the broken panes; and then does the same by two more, which was some improvement, you know, only when I looks on the first, if it wasn't in big letters, “Coffin!” for the “Dr” was tucked round outer sight one side, and the “s” and the “Pills” the other.

“That won't do,” I says, and I fetches out another bill from another parcel. Nice thing that for a sick woman to see as a transparency—“Coffin!” so I pastes the other bill and sets up, but snatches it down again directly, for it was “The Dead Letter,” and there was only “The Dead” to be seen. But the next one did service, for it was “Good Words.”

“Ah!” I says, she wants some bad enough, and then I spoke and said something or another, but there was no answer; so thinking it best, I waited quietly till the p'leeceman came back, when he whispered to me as they were going to take her in a cab to the House.

“House? What house?” somebody cries all at once in a horrid cracked, hoarse voice, “No—no—no—no!” And there, sitting up in the bed, with her blue bony fingers stretched out, and her dull eyes straining, the poor thing kept motioning the p'leeceman away, and no one tried to touch her.

“Little bread—little water—that's all;” she says again so pitifully; “Let me stay here till I'm gone, and I shan't be long now;” and then sinking back on the bed, she closed her eyes and lay muttering, with her poor thin, bony arms stretched across her breast.

I looked at the p'leecemen, and they looked at me, and not being men much given to softness, they were about to lift the poor thing up and carry her down, only I stopped 'em, for there was something about the poor soul then as made me hold up my hand; and when they saw what I did, one of them went down to send away the cab and fetch a doctor, while me and t'other stood looking on to see the look of horror and fear go off her face, while the hands kept their place across her poor breast—to see her eyes stopping shut, then open widely for a minute, and then close again, as she lay quiet and still—gone to sleep to wake elsewhere.

P'leeceman went out werry quietly and stopped at the door, beckoning me to come, but I couldn't see him, for I was seeing that poor woman sitting on that broken chair, close to the broken window, in the early morning, and through the long day, and right into the night, by the light of a cheap candle, stitching away at tailor's slopwork hour after



hour, to make at first 7 shillings 6 pence a week, then, as her eyes grew feebler, and the stitches less regular, six shillings—five shillings—four shillings—*two shillings*—nothing! for flesh and blood is cheap in London, and when one bone and gristle machine wears out, there are plenty more to take its place. Sitting there in the bitter cold wet autumn of this year, sick at heart, sick in body, weak, old, and helpless—too feeble to work, too proud to tell of her sufferings; and with the horror of the poor against the tender mercies of the parish, where the feeble sink amidst the horrors of the infirmary. Working on till she could work no more, and then, with bloodless limbs and pallid face, when work and food were given, and she took both, the strength failed, and the stomach unused to sustenance could not bear it—the lamp was going out, the flame trembling, and the oil for which it was sinking drowned out the last flickering ray.

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No fiction—no tale of imagination—but true! true! true! Not in the past times, before there were visitations, and poor-law boards, and plenty of missionary enterprise, but now—now, within the past few days—in Christian England, whose wealth makes the fabled greatness of the East turn pale and shine with diminished lustre. Here—at home—in our great city—lying down to die, listening to the hurrying tramp of thousands; with help ready to come when it was too late; with coroner and jury ready to sit, and wag their sapient heads, and the twelve to smoke it in their pipes in the evening, saying, “How dreadful!” The coroner saying, too, that such things came before him weekly. And what is done to amend the misery? Where is the plaister for this hideous boil? There was no canting whine here for aid, but the act of the stricken one who knew full well that she would be told to go to the House,—than enter which she would sooner die.

“I’d have taken her a drop of brandy if I’d known how bad she was; but, poor soul, she always kep herself to herself.” God bless you for it, woman! You told me with an earnestness and truthful air that none could doubt: it was the fruition of that loving sympathy that prompts the poor to give of their little to aid distress. Where does the beggar make his harvest? Where do the canting hypocrites who trade upon sympathy fatten? Amidst the thronging streets of East and South London, finding the heart that has felt the pinchings of poverty ever ready to open in their favour. But such sad tales need veiling, ’neath the medium of fiction, and one seeks again to soften the tale.

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I see it all, as I said, and at last, seeing it less and less plain for something as came in my eyes, I picked up my paste-tin and my brush, and then made towards the door; but I was obliged to go back and have another look, for the thought come as it might have been a sister, or a mother, or—or—or—I broke down there; for I said to myself as it might have been a widder, and that widder might have been mine. But the thoughts of that made me start again and hurry out of the place, with a will and a spirit in me to have posted up all London, if I could have got the job; and short work I made of what else I had to do. But there in my pipe that night was that worn-out seamstress, whose calm, sleeping face cried out so appealingly—crying in a way that should make all London shudder:

“Brother, I was starved to death!”

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## Chapter Twenty Four.

### Cast Ashore.

But a few hours before I had been lying in a nook amidst the huge rocks, high above the sands, gazing down at the sea, which curled over with a long ripple upon the yellow sands. The sun poured down with all his rich mellow autumn glory, and far as eye could reach the bosom of the sea was one shimmering surface of glittering silver—here tinged with the palest of greens, there passing into a lovely blue, while almost motionless, ship after ship, with every stitch of sail spread in a perfect cloud of canvas, added to the beauty of the scene.

Where I lay, sheltered by a large overhanging rock, a tiny stream slowly trickled out of a cavern whose mouth was beautifully fringed by many varieties of fern, while other growths, nurtured by the cool freshness of the never-failing water, added their velvety beauty to the favoured spot.

But now how different! I stood in an opening in the rocks where the village was built, and the great jetty ran down into the sea. The wind tore by me so that I could hardly stand against its fury, while down by the pier and the rocks, the waves came tumbling in ten or twelve feet high, curling over and over, as if to scoop out the shore; and wherever they encountered rock or pier there seemed a momentary halt, as if they gathered strength, when with a mighty leap up flew tons of water in a fountain of foam, which was again swept against the face of the long line of rocks behind the sand, or dashed over them and carried in a storm of spray inland.

The noise was deafening, for the shingle and huge stones were being churned over and over, and, as it were, pounded by the waves, while wherever there was a cavern the water rushed in with a bellowing roar that was at times deepened into thunder, while the concussion and force of the hissing water seemed enough to rend the rocks asunder, and plough up the earth beyond, till the current forced its way through, to tear on as a devastating river, and drown all that came in its path.

“What?” I shouted to a fisherman whose lips I had seen move, while his words were swept away.

“Three ships ashore,” he shouted back, in the sing-song tone peculiar to the men of Cornwall, who draw their harvest from the sea,—the sturdy, sober, honest fellows, who seem gentlemen in comparison with the general run of fishermen at our ports and fishing stations,—men whom I had sat upon the rocks to listen to night after night, when a knot would get together and sing in capital tune and time—and with every part in the harmony carefully preserved—some melodious air, which, floating out to sea, sounded sweet beyond conception, and made me think what little need there was for people to go abroad to find scenery and national peculiarity. But it always was a failing among us to be far-sighted that the beauties of home were overlooked.

"Three ships ashore," he shouted, pointing in three different directions; but I had already made them out, and now we went down as close to the pier as the waves would permit, for but some fifty yards from the end lay a small schooner with the waves washing over her—one by one the men who had clung to her rigging and sides being beaten off, washed towards the shore, and then drawn back by the under-tow again and again.

Every minute the pier would be left clear out of the water, which poured off its sides, and in one of these intervals a sailor was seen swimming strongly close alongside, riding up and down the huge billows, but fighting hardly for his life.

All at once I saw a man seize a life-buoy, one of those large yellow cork rings; and as the last wave left the stone pier free from water right to where the lighthouse rose, he dashed along it, running swiftly towards where the swimmer was striving to reach the shore.

In a few moments he was beside him, and threw the buoy so that the poor fellow reached it, when the men around me began to shout to the gallant fellow to return. But every shout seemed beaten back instantly; and amidst a violent commotion—men running and seizing ropes, women shrieking and clutching one another—I saw a large wave come tearing in, rise like a huge beast at a leap, and curl right over the pier, sweeping it from end to end, and deluging it with many feet of water. This was succeeded by another and another, and then once more the water was streaming off the stones, and one could see the fisherman who ran to his brother man's rescue struggling for his own life on the other side of the pier, against which he was at length violently dashed. But there were kinsmen and friends at hand in plenty, and one with a rope round him ran down the pier, plunged in, swam to the poor fellow, clutched him, and then they were drawn ashore together insensible, but locked in a tight embrace.

All this time the sailor who clung to the buoy seemed wild and confused, and ignorant of its purpose, for, all at once a groan rose from the crowd assembled, when loosing his hold, the drowning man threw up his arms and disappeared in the boiling surge.

In rushed the waves again and again, while more than once the yellow life-buoy could be seen; but as the waves receded they dragged it back, and now every eye was directed to the little schooner, which seemed to lift with the waves, and then tremble in every beam as it was dashed down again, till the masts went over the side.

About a hundred yards lower down I could see a crowd of people assembled facing a large brig which had struck amongst the rocks, and whose crew seemed doomed to meet with a watery grave.

But preparations were being made to afford succour here, for as I reached the crowd I found them busy with the rocket apparatus. There were the rocket and the long line carefully laid in and out, round peg after peg, in its case, so that it might run forth swiftly and easily; and just then the stand was directed right, the rocket aimed, the fire applied, and after a loud rushing sound, off darted the fiery messenger on its errand of mercy, forming an arc in the air and falling upon the other side of the doomed ship, which lay about sixty yards from the shore.

An exultant chorus followed this successful attempt to connect the vessel with the shore by means of a cord, for the rocket line ran easily and perfectly out, and the cable at hand being now attached, the sailors on board began to haul, when, like a snake, the great rope slowly ran down the beach, plunged into the boiling surf, and still kept on uncoiling and running down till those on the cliff signalled down that the end was hauled on board and made it fast to the mast.

And now so far successful, the cable and a line being on board, the cable hauled tight by those on shore, and secured to a capstan used for hauling up fishing-boats, the rest of the arrangements were concluded, and those on board drew the tarpauling and rope seat which run by a ring along the cable, and into which a person coming ashore slipped his legs, and then swung beneath the tightened rope as the apparatus was hauled by those on shore, and the shipwrecked one rode over the boiling waves, and was perhaps only once immersed where the rope bellied down in the middle.

All seemed ready, the men by me began to haul, and it was then seen that a woman was swinging beneath the rope, which rose and fell with the weight upon it, till for a few seconds the poor creature disappeared from sight in the tossing waves. But the men worked well, and the next minute, with a loud hurrah, she was ashore, and a dozen hands ready to free the drenched sufferer, when the joy was turned into sorrow, for it was seen that in the hurry of passing the poor woman over the ship's side the rope had become entangled round her neck, and she had been strangled just in those brief minutes when there was life and safety before her.

But there were other lives to save, and as the body of the fair, delicate woman was borne with tender, loving hands up the sands, through the opening, and then to the large inn, the sling was drawn back by the crew of the ship, and another tried the perilous passage.

How the angry waves leaped up, and darted again and again, as if to tear the men being rescued from the rope of safety, and how those ashore cheered again and again as each poor drenched and dripping wretch, half choked with the brine, was hauled ashore, and then stood trembling and tottering, sometimes not even able to stand from being so exhausted! Some shouted for joy, some burst into fits of crying, others stood stolidly gazing at their saviours, while one or two went down on their knees devoutly to offer thanks for the life saved.

To five-and-twenty souls did that thin line, shot over the wreck by means of a rocket, carry life and hope, and heartily their fellow-men worked to save them from the sea that fought hard to take them for its prey; and when, at last, nearly every man had come ashore upon the frail bridge of hemp, the waves seemed to tear at the wreck with redoubled fury, piling mountains of foaming water upon it, leaping upon the deck, or lifting the hull to dash it again upon the cruel rocks that were gnawing their way through the bottom.

"Only the captain left now," said the last poor fellow who came ashore, and then he staggered and fell—quite

insensible from the revulsion of feeling. And on hearing these words the men set the slings free, but they were dragged back only slowly, and as if the poor captain was about exhausted. Every now and then we could make him out clinging to the rigging where the end of the cable had been secured, but all at once a regular mountain of a wave came coursing in faster and faster, leaped up, seemed hanging in mid-air for a few moments, and then poured down with resistless fury upon the doomed vessel. There was a wild confused cry from those on shore, which was heard above the howling of the storm; men and women clasped their hands and ran hither and thither, as if agonised at their helplessness to render aid, and then, as I looked out seaward, I could only see the clean-swept deck at intervals, for the rigging was gone, while the cable, that bridge of safety to so many, now hung slack in the water.

“Haul!” shouted the man who managed the rocket apparatus—one of the old Coast Guardsmen,—and a score of willing hands crowded down to get a clutch at the cable, when at a given signal they started inshore to run it up, but checked directly, for they found that there was a large tangle of wreck attached, which came up slowly, with the huge waves tearing at it as though to drag it back; but as more and more of the dripping cable appeared from the water more willing hands seized upon it, so that at last it came faster and faster, and part of a mast, with a confusion of blocks, ropes, and shrouds, appeared at the edge of the sands where the water boiled so furiously, and the next minute was high upon the sands.

I hurried down to be one of the knot of people who crowded round, when my heart sank, for it was as I feared: the captain, a fine, calm, stern-browed man, lay there amongst the cordage, one leg in the slings, as if about to venture, when that cruel wave poured ruin on the deck of the ship, and tore away his last chance for life.

Twisted, tangled, and confused, the ropes lay together, and it was only by means of a free use of their clasp-knives that the beachmen and sailors set the poor fellow free.

Slowly and sadly we stood round, looking down upon the pale features of the brave man who had clung to his ship till the last of his crew was ashore; but there was no weeping and wailing wife to cast herself upon the cold, drenched form, and sweep the hair from his broad forehead; so slowly, and with the crowd following in silence, we bore the corpse to the inn, to lay it side by side with that of the wife he had tried to save.

A young, noble-looking pair, with faces calm and pale, seeming but to sleep as they lay there hushed in death—in that great mystery, for the sea had conquered.

“Sixty years have I lived down here, man and boy,” said a fisherman, in his pleasant sing-song tone, “and if I were to try and count up the lives of men as the great sea has taken, I could hardly believe it. I’ve seen the sea-shore strewn with wreck, and I’ve known the waves cast up the dead day after day for weeks after a storm; some calm and pale-faced, some beaten, torn, and not to be looked upon without a shudder. Seems, sir, as if the sea kept ‘em as long as it could, and then cast them up and busily tried to hide ‘em, throwing up sand and shells—sand and shells, so that I’ve found them, sometimes half-hidden, and the water lapping melancholy-like around. Now it’s some poor fisherman—now a sailor, or a gentleman been a-yachting, or a foreigner from some fine vessel. Every year hundreds taken, and every dead body with such a tale of sorrow, and misery, and wretchedness attached as would make your heart ache could you but read it. Ah, the sea is a great thing, and I as live by it knows it well. To-day you see it quiet and still—to-morrow it’s tearing at the shore with fury, and it’s only God who can still its rage.”

But still, year after year, in their calm dependence upon His great arm, our fishers and sailors put forth to tempt the perils of the vast deep for their livelihood. Right and left of them others are taken; but still the busy toilers thrust forth from the shore and make their voyage easily, or in an agony of fear are overtaken by the storm, and at length, “being exceedingly tossed with the tempest... lighten the ship.” And, again, when run ashore, cling terror-stricken to the vessel and its rigging, till beaten off before succour arrives when they are cast ashore.

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## Chapter Twenty Five.

### The First Stray Hair.

What is a Wife? Well, that seems a question easily answered. But still the answer depends upon circumstances; in fact, there seem to be no end of replies to that little query, and answering the question, as one who has taken a little notice of wives in general, I’ll tell you what a wife is sometimes. It is a something to be kicked and sworn at, and beaten, knocked down and trampled upon, used in brutal ways that the vilest barrow-man would hesitate about applying to his donkey for fear of killing it, while when the poor woman is forced to appear before a magistrate and prosecute, why—well, he is her husband after all, and for lack of evidence the brute gets off. A wife is something to have her hair dragged down and her head beaten against the wall; to be neglected, half-starved, or made to work for the noble specimen of creation who hulks about in front of public-houses, and scowls at every decent-looking working man who passes him. She is the something who sits up for him and puts his drunken highness to bed; nurses his children; slaves for him worse than any drudge—ten times—no a hundred times, for money would not buy a soul to slave as some women do for their husbands. What is a wife? Why, often and often a poor, trusting, simple-hearted woman, toiling in hard bondage till there’s a place dug for her in one of the cemeteries and she goes to rest.

But what is a wife? Is she not the God-given blessing to cheer a working man’s home? and while working with her husband to make that home happy, is she not the sharer of his joys and sorrows,—the heart that he can trust and confide in, though all the world turn their backs upon him? Yes, this, and much more, *if her husband will.*

And now a word for those who have dissension and discomfort at the cottage or lodgings, for it’s hardly fair to disgrace that most holy of names by calling some places I know *home*. And first just a word about some of these miserable spots, and let’s try and find a few causes for there being one-roomed places, badly furnished or not furnished at all, for the rickety chairs and beggarly bed and odds and ends are not worthy the name; children with no shoes, dirty clothes, dirty faces, dirtier hands, and dirtiest noses. The wife—oh, desecration of the sacred name!—a

sour-faced, thinly-clad, mean-looking, untidy-haired, sorrowful woman, dividing her time between scolding the children and “rubbing out,” not washing, some odds and ends of clothes in a brown pan—the wash-tub leaked, so it was split up and burned—and then hanging the rags upon strings stretched from one side of the room to the other, just as if put there on purpose to catch “the master’s” hat and knock it off when he comes home from work.

Well, there are two sides to every question, and one reason for there being such wretched places is this:—Young folks get wed after the good old fashion invented some six thousand years ago, when Eve must have blushed and turned away her head and let her hand stay in Adam’s; and while the days are young all goes well, but sometimes Betsy—that’s the wife, you know—thinks there’s no call to be so particular about her hair now as she used to be before Tom married her, and so puts in the thin end of a wedge that blasts the happiness of her future life.

What strong language, isn’t it? Betsy does not make her hair so smooth as she used to, and so puts in the thin end of a wedge that blasts the happiness of her future life. Strong words, sweeping words, but true as any that were ever written, for that simple act of neglect, that wanting of pride in her appearance and innocent coquetry to please her husband, is deadly, ruinous, to love and esteem, and altogether a something that should be shuddered at by every woman in England.

The unbrushed hair leads to other little acts of neglect which creep in slowly, but so surely; shoes get down at heel, dresses torn and unhooked, and then the disorder slowly spreads to the children, then to the furniture, and so on, step by step, till Tom stands leaning against the wall looking upon the wreck before him, and wondering how it is possible that the slovenly, half-dirty woman before him can have grown out of that smart, bright-eyed servant lass he once wed.

But there it is—there’s the fact before him; that’s Betsy sure enough—at least that’s the present Betsy, not the Betsy of old—and, somehow or another, Tom puts his hands in his pockets, sighs very deeply, and then goes out and loiters about the streets.

“Just arf a pint, Tom,” says a mate he meets, whose wife is suffering from the same disease; and Tom says he will, and they go in where there’s a clean sanded floor, no noisy children, a bright fire, and some dressed up and doctored decoction sold to the poor fellows as beer.

Next time it’s Tom says to the other—“Just arf a pint, Sam;” and Sam says he will. But the mischief is they don’t have “arf a pint,” but a good many half-pints; and at last every Saturday night there’s an ugly score up that gets paid out of the wages before any money goes home; while Betsy says Tom has got to be so fond of the public-house that he never sits at home now, while the money he spends is shameful.

“Bet, Bet, Bet—and whose fault is it?”

“Not mine, I’m sure,” says Betsy in a very shrill voice, as she bridles up.

“Wrong, Betsy; for it is your fault, and yours alone.”

“There,” cries Betsy; “the cruel injustice of the thing!” And then she would go on for nearly half-an-hour, and tell all the neighbours what we have said. But we must stop her. So, go to, Betsy, thou wife of the British working man, for in hundreds, nay, thousands of cases, it is your fault, and yours alone; and, where it is not, I say, may the great God help and pity you! for yours is indeed a pitiful case.

Come, now, listen to a few words, and don’t frown. There’s the trace as yet of that bonny face that won poor Tom. He’ll come back cross and surly to-night. Never mind: try and bring back that same old smile that used to greet him. Smooth that tangled hair and drive some of the wrinkles out of your forehead—all will not go; make the best of the common cotton dress—in short, as of old, “clean yourself” of an afternoon; and, if you’ve a trace, a spark of love for your husband and yourself, hide away and stuff into a corner—under the bed—anywhere—that household demon, the wash-tub or pan; while, as to the rubbed-out clothes, bundle them up anywhere till he is out of sight again. Think of the old times, and start with new rules. It will be hard work, but you will reap such a smiling, God-blessed harvest that tears of thanksgiving will some day come to your eyes, and you will weep and bless the change. You have children; well, thank God for them. You were a child once yourself; you are a child now in the hands of a great and patient Father who bears with your complaining. Well; those children; they are dirty and noisy, but there are cures—simple remedies for both evils. If their precious little fasts are only broken on bread and treacle, let them be broken at regular hours decently and in order, and don’t have them crumbling the sticky bread all over the floor, running about the room, or up and down the stairs, or in the street. Get them to bed at regular times, and manage them kindly, firmly; and don’t snarl and strike one day, and spoil and indulge the next. Make the best of your home, however beggarly; but, in spite of all, in your efforts to have it clean, don’t let Tom see you cleaning.

Now, don’t think after years of neglect, that because you have now made no end of improvement all is going to be as it used. Don’t think it. You let in the thin end of the wedge over that stray hair, and things have gone gradually wrong. Just so: and you must by slow, painful degrees, get that wedge gradually worked back a little bit and a little bit, while all your patience and perseverance will be so sorely tried, that in sheer despair you’ll often say, “There: it’s of no use!” But it is of use, and of the greatest of use, and even though he may not show it, Tom can see the difference and feel those household spirits tugging at his heart-strings, and saying, when at public-house, “Come away!” in tones that he finds it hard to resist. Brutal men there are in plenty, we know, but, God be thanked for it! how many of our men have the heart in the right place, and you women of England can touch it if you will.

Say your home, through long neglect, has become bare and beggarly. Never mind; make the best of it. It’s wonderful what a ha’porth of hearthstone, a ha’porth of blacklead, and a good heart will do. And that isn’t all, you foolish woman; for there’s a bright and glorious light that can shine out of a loving woman’s face and make the humblest home a palace with its happy radiance. Say your room is bare. What then? Does Tom go to a well-furnished place to spend his money? No; but to a room of hard, bare forms and settles, and common tables sticky and gum-ringed,

while the floor, well sanded, grits beneath his feet. Go to, Betsy, never mind the bareness, for you have a glorifying sun within you, whose radiance can brighten the roughest, thorniest way.

Look out here at this bare court, dull, dingy, filthy, frowsy, misery stricken. The sun comes from behind yon cloud, and lo! the place is altered so that even your very heart leaps at the change, and your next breath is a sigh of pleasure. And have you not for years been shrouding your face in clouds and keeping them lingering about your home? Thousands of you have: take heart, and let the sun appear everywhere that Tom will cast his eye. Why, the reflection shall so gladden your own spirit that it shall leap for joy, while you know within yourself that you have done your duty.

Young wives, beware—take heed of the first stray hair and jealously prison it again, for by that single frail filament perhaps hangs yours, your husband's, your children's future welfare; so never let Tom be less proud of you than in the days of old.

What is a wife? The prop or stay of a man, the balance that shall steady him through life, and make him—the weaker vessel—give forth when struck a sonorous, honest, clear tone. *He* is the weaker vessel, and yours are the hands to hold him fast.

But it cannot always be so, for in spite of all a loving heart can do there are brutes—we won't call them men—we won't own them as belonging to our ranks, but drum them out—brutes, before whom the jewel of a true wife's love is as the pearl cast before swine. But, there; leave we them to their wallow, for it is defiling paper to quote their evil ways.

What is a wife? A burden? a care? Oh no, she is what we choose to make her: a constant spring of bright refreshing water, ready for us at all times during our journey through life—a confidant—one we can turn to for help when stricken down by some disease, or the wounds met with in the battle of life, ready to smooth our pillow, and cool the weary, aching head. There; when looking upon some of the poor, dejected, neglected, half-forsaken women we see around, it is enough to make a man's heart swell with indignation and scorn for those who have cast aside so great a treasure, and made of it a slave.

There are faults enough on both sides, but many a happy home, many a simple domestic hearth, has been opened out or swept and garnished ready for the reception of a demon of discord, whose web once spun over the place, can perhaps never be torn away. But turn we again to the hopeful side of the question. Let the sun of your love shine forth, oh woman, brightly upon your home, however bare, and fight out the good fight with undying faith. And young wife, you of a few days, weeks, months, remember the first stray hair.

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## Chapter Twenty Six.

### A Piece of Assurance.

Being only a quiet, country-bumpkin sort of personage, it seems but reasonable that I should ask what can there be in me that people should take such intense interest in my life being insured. If such eagerness were shown by, say one's wife, or any very near relative, one might turn suspicious, and fancy they had leanings towards the tea-spoons, sugar-tongs, and silver watch, and any other personal property that, like Captain Cuttle, one might feel disposed to make over "jintly" in some other direction. Consequently, one would be afterwards on the look-out for modern Borgiaism, and take homoeopathic doses of Veratria, Brucine, etc, etc, by way of antidote for any unpleasant symptoms likely to manifest themselves in the system. But then it is not from near relatives that such earnestness proceeds, but from utter strangers. It is hard to say how many attempts I have had made upon my life insurance—I will not use the word assurance, though it exists to a dreadful extent in the myrmidons of the pushing offices—at home, abroad, in the retirement of one's study, in the lecture-hall of a town, always the same.

Fancy being inveigled into attending a lecture, and sitting for an hour and a half while a huge, big-whiskered man verbally attacks you, seizes you with his eye, metaphorically hooks you with his finger, and then holds you up to the scorn of the assembled hundreds, while he reproaches you for your neglect of the dear ones at home; calls up horrors to make you nervous; relates anecdotes full of widows in shabby mourning; ragged children and hard-hearted landlords; cold relations, bitter sufferings, and misery unspeakable; all of which troubles, calamities, and cares, will be sure to fall upon those you leave behind, if you do not immediately insure in the Certain Dissolution and Inevitable Collapse Assurance Company, world-famed for its prompt and liberal settlement, and the grand bonuses it gives to its supporters.

I have nerves, and consequently did not want to know exactly how many people leave this world per cent, per annum. I dislike statistics of every kind, and never felt disposed to serve tables since I was kept in at school to learn them. I did not want to be sent home to dream of a dreadful dance of death funereally performed by undertakers' men in scarfs, with brass-tipped staves and bunches of black ostrich-plumes in their hands. We do certainly read of people who prepare their own mausoleums, and who, doubtless, take great comfort and delight in the contemplation of their future earthly abode; but to a man without any such proclivities this style of lecture—this metaphorical holding of one's head by force over the big black pit, was jarring and dreadfully discordant in its effect upon the resonant strings of the human instrument.

I have very strange ways and ideas of my own, and have no hesitation in saying that I like to do as I please, and as seems me best. If what seems to me best is wrong, of course I do not own to it. Who does? and if I prefer insuring my furniture and house to my life, and this system is wrong, I'm not going to be convinced of its wrongness by a tall, gentlemanly-looking man who wishes to see me on particular business, and whom I have shown into the room I call my study, but which should be termed workshop.

Now, just at the time of the said tall, gentlemanly man's arrival, I am in the agony of composition; I have written nearly half of a paper for a magazine, one which the editor will be as sure to reject as I in my then state of inflation think he will hug it to his breast as a gem. I am laboriously climbing the climax, and find the ascent so slippery, and the glides back so frequent, that the question arises in one's breast whether, like the Irish schoolboy, it would not be better to try backwards. I have just come to where the awe-stricken Count exclaims—

"Please sir, you're wanted," says Mary, opening the door upon her repeated knocks gaining no attention; and then, after an angry parley, I am caught—regularly limed, trapped, netted by the words "particular business."

A tall gentlemanly man wanting to see me on particular business. What can it be? Perhaps it is to edit *The Times*; perhaps to send Dr Russell home, after taking his pencil and note-book out of his war-correspondent hands; or maybe to put out the GAS of the *Daily Telegraph*. Is it to elevate the *Standard*, distribute the *Daily News*, act as astronomer-royal to the *Morning and Evening Stars*, to roll the *Globe*, or be its *Atlas*, take the spots from the face of the *Sun*, blow the great trumpet of the *Morning Herald*, literary field-marshal in some review, rebuild some damaged or exploded magazine? What can the business be? Not stage business, certainly, for that is not my branch. Law? perhaps so. A legacy—large, of course, or one of the principals would not have come down instead of writing. It must be so: I am next of kin to somebody, and I shall buy *that* estate after all.

Enter tall gentlemanly man upon his particular business of a private nature; and then, being a quiet, retiring person, to whom it is painful to speak rudely or without that glaze which is commonly called politeness, I suffer a severe cross-examination as to age, wife's ditto, number of children, and so on. I am told of the uncertainty of life—the liability of the thread to snap, without the aid of the scissors of Atropos—how strengthening the knowledge of having made provision for my ewe and lambs would be if I were ill; how small the amount would be; how large a bonus would be added if I assured at once; how mine would be sure to be a first-class life—he had not seen the phials and pill-boxes in the bedroom cupboard—how nothing should be put off until to-morrow which could be done to-day, which I already knew; how a friend of his had written twelve reasons why people should assure, which reasons he kindly showed to me; and told me an abundance of things which he said I ought to know. He had answer pat for every possible or impossible objection that I could make, having thoroughly crammed himself for his task; and he knocked me down, bowled me over, got me up in corners, over the ropes, in Chancery, fell upon me heavily; in fact, as the professors of the "noble art" would say—the noble art of self-defence and offence to the world—had it all his own way.

I had no idea what a poor debater I was, or that I could be so severely handled. My ignorance was surprising; and I should have been melancholy afterwards instead of angry, if I had not consoled myself with the idea that I was not in training for a life assurance fight.

I recalled the answer made by a friend to a strong appeal from a class office, and that was, that he was neither a medical nor a general, and therefore not eligible; at the same time holding the door open for his visitor's exit. But then I did not feel myself equal to such a task, and however importunate and troublesome a visitor might be, I somehow felt constrained to treat him in a gentlemanly manner. I tried all the gentle hints I could, and then used more forcible ones; but the gentlemanly man seemed cased in armour of proof, from which my feeble shafts glanced and went anywhere; while, whenever he saw that I was about to make a fresh attack, he was at me like Mr Branestrong, QC, and beat down my guard in a moment. It took a long time to eradicate the bland, but it went at last, and a faint flush seemed to make its way into my face, while to proceed to extremities, there was a peculiar nervous twitching in one toe, originating in its debility caused by a table once falling upon it, but now the twitches seemed of a growing or expanding nature, and as if they were struggling hard to become kicks. It was pain unutterable, especially when the moral law asserted its rights, and an aspect of suavity was ruled by reason to be the order of the day—if allied with firmness.

"If allied with firmness." Ah! but there was the rub, for firmness had turned craven and vanished at the first appearance of my visitor.

"No; I would rather not assure then; I would think it over; I would make up my mind shortly; I felt undecided as to the office I should choose," were my replies, *et hoc genus omne*; but all was of no avail, and at last I acknowledged to myself that I could not hold my own, and must speak very strongly to get rid of my unwelcome friend, who solved my problem himself by asking whether I admired poetry.

Presuming that this was to change the conversation, preparatory to taking his leave, I replied, "Yes."

"Then he would read me a short poem on the subject in question," and drawing from his pocket a piece of paper, he began in a most forced declamatory style to read some doggerel concerning a gentleman who was taken to heaven, but who left a wife and seven—rhyme to heaven—and whose affairs would have been most unsatisfactory if he had not assured his life.

But my friend did not finish, being apparently startled by some look or movement upon my part, which caused him to hurriedly say "Good morning," and to promise to call again, as I seemed busy.

Perhaps he may call again; but he will have to call again, and again, and again, and very loudly too, before he gets in to talk upon particular business.

Now, it may seem strange that after this I should express great admiration for the system of assurance; but I do admire it, and consider it the duty of every poor man to try and make some provision for the future of those he may leave behind. But one cannot help feeling suspicious of offices that are in the habit of forcing themselves so unpleasantly upon your notice, and sinking their professional respectability in the dodges and advertising and canvassing tricks of the cheap "to be continued in monthly parts" book-hawker, or the broken down tradesman, who leaves goods for your inspection. One has learned to look upon the quiet, flowing stream as the deepest and safest to

bear the bark; for the rough, bubbling water speaks of shoals, rocks, and quicksands, with perchance "snags and sawyers," ready to pierce the frail bottom.

Once more alone, I referred to the circular left upon my table, where beneath my age and the sum per cent, that I should have to pay, was a broad pencil-mark, emanating from the eminently gentlemanly gold pencil-case of my visitor. But in spite of unheard-of advantages, liberal treatment, large bonus distribution every five years, with a great deal more duly set forth in the paper, I shall not assure in that office, for I made my mind up then in the half-hour of anger, when I could not get the Count to exclaim anything, although I tried so hard. He was awe-stricken, certainly; but as I had painted him, he would keep changing into a gentlemanly man, charged with life assurance principles. So I read what I had written, saw the error of my ways, and knowing too well that a certain conductor would reject it after the first page, I sighed, tore off a portion, and used it to illumine a cigar; and then took for my hero the morning's visitor—writing this paper, which I trust may have a better fate.

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## Chapter Twenty Seven.

### The Decline of the Drama.

'Tain't no use, sir; times is altered and the people too. What with yer railways, and telegraphs, and steam, and penny noosepapers, people knows too much by half, and it's about all dickey with our profession. People won't stop and look: they thinks it's beneath 'em; and 'tain't no good to get a good pitch, for the coppers won't come in nohow. Why what's innocenter or moraller than a Punch and Judy? "Nothing," says you, and of course there ain't. Isn't it the showing up of how wice is punished and wirtue triumphant in a pleasant and instructive manner. Ov course it is. But no, it won't do now. Punches is wore out; and so's Fantysheenys and tumbling; for people's always wanting a something noo, just as if anything ought to be noo 'cept togs and tommy. Ain't old things the best all the world over? You won't have noo paintings, nor noo wine, and you allus thinks most o' old books and old fiddles; so what do you want with a noo sort o' Punch?

Here I am a-sitting up in the old spot; there's the theayter in the back-yard, with the green baize and the front up here on account o' the rain. There you are you see, turn him round. There's a given up to the calls o' the time. "Temple of Arts" you see on the top, in a ribbon, with Punch holdin' on wun side and comical Joey holding on t'other. There's the strap and box, if you'll open it, and there's the pipes on the chimbly-piece. There's everything complete but the drum, and that we was obliged to lend to the 'Lastic Brothers, for theirs is lent, uncle you know, and Jem Brown, one on 'em, says he lost the ticket, though it looks werry suspicious.

But, now, just open that box, and lay 'em out one at a time on the table, and you'll just see as it ain't our fault as we don't get on. An' take that ere fust. 'Tain't no business there, but it's got atop somehow. That's the gallus that is, and I allus would have as galluses ought to be twiste as big, but Bill Bowke, my pardner, he says as it's right enough, and so I wouldn't alter. Now there you are! Look at that, now! There's a Punch! Why, it's enough to bring tears in yer eyes to see how public taste's fell off. There was four coats o' paint put on him, besides the touchins up and finishins, and at a time, too, when browns were that scarce it was dreadful. There, pull 'em out, sir; I ain't ashamed o' the set, and hard-up as I am at this werry moment, I wouldn't take two pound for 'em. There, now. Pull 'em out. That's Joe, and he's got his legs somehow in the beadle's pocket. Quite nat'ral, ain't it? just as if he was a rum 'un 'stead of only being a doll, you know. That's the kid as you've dropped. That ain't much account, that ain't; for you see babies never does have any 'spression on their faces, and anything does to be chucked outer window; and the crowd often treads on it, bless you. There's a Judy, too; only wants a new frill a-tacking on her head for a cap, and she's about the best on the boards, I'll bet. You see I cared 'em myself, and give the whole of my mind to it, so as the faces might look nat'ral and taking. Mind his wig, sir. Ah! that wants a bit o' glue, that does, and a touch o' black paint. You see that's the furrin gentleman as says nothin' but "Shallabala," and a good deal o' the back of his head's knocked off. There you are, you see, bright colours, good wigs, and nicely dressed. That's the ghost. Looks thin? well, in course, sperrets ain't 'sposed to be fat. Head shrunk? Well, 'nuff to make it. That's Jack Ketch; and that's the coffin; and that's the devil. We don't allus bring him out, and keeps the ghost in the box sometimes, according to the company as we gets in. Out in the streets the people likes to see it all; not as they often do, for we generally gets about half through, and then drops it, pretending we can't get coppers enough to play it out, when the real thing is as the people's sucked dry, and won't tip any more, or we'd keep it up; but in the squares and gentlemen's gardings it ain't considered right for the children, so we gives the play in a mutilated form, don't you see.

Now that's the lot, don't you see, sir, and if you wouldn't mind putting the box on this chair by the bedside, and shoving the table up close, I'll put 'em all back careful myself, for lying sick here one don't get much amusement. Ain't got even Toby here, which being a dawg warn't much company, yet he was some, though his name warn't Toby but Spice. Nice dawg he was, though any training warn't no good; he was a free child o' natur, and when his time came for the play he would bite the wrong noses and at the wrong times. The wust of it was too, that he would bolt, I don't mean swaller, but go a-running off arter other dawgs, and getting his frill torn as bad as his ears, and I never did see a raggeder pair o' ears than he had nowhere's—torn amost to ribbons they was. We lost him at last, though I never knowed how, but a 'spicion crossed my mind one day when Bill my pardner was eating a small German, and it was close by the factory as we missed him; and though Bill said I was a duffer and spoilt his dinner, I allus stuck to it, and allus will, as there was the smell of Spice in that ere sassage.

There you are, yer see sir, all packed clost and neat, and as I said afore I wouldn't take two pounds for 'em, bad as I am inside and out. Trade's bad, profession's bad, and I'm bad; but bless yer heart we shall have a revival yet, and when the drum comes back, and I get wind enough again to do the business, we shall go ahead like all that.

There if I ain't boxed all the figgers up, and left the coffin out. Good job my old woman ain't here, or she'd say it was a sign or something o' that sort, and try to make one uncomfortable; but there you are, you see, sir, all snug now, and it does seem rather a low spiriting thing to have in a house, sir, and putting aside Punch and Judy stuff, the

smaller they are the less you like it.

Going, sir? well, you'll come again, I hope, and if I *do* get better, why, I'll go through the lot in front of your house, if you let me have your card.

Beg pardon, sir, thought you were going; not as I wants you to, for company's werry pleasant when you're stretched on your back and can't help yourself. Since I've been a-lying here I've been reckoning things up, and I've come to the conclusion as the world's got too full. People lives too fast, and do what you will, puff and blow and race after 'em, ten to one you gets beat. Everything wants to be noo and superior, says the people, and nothing old goes down. Look at them happy times, when one could take the missus in the barrer with a sackful o' cokynuts and pincushions, and them apples and lemons as the more you opened the more come out; then there'd be the sticks, and a tin kettle, and just a few odds and ends, and all drawn by the donkey; when off we'd go down to some country fair or the races; dig the holes or have bags of earth, stick up the things—cokynuts or cushions; the wife sees to the fire and kittle, and you shouts out—leastways, I don't mean you, I mean me, you know—shouts out, "Three throws a penny," when the chuckle-headed bumpkins would go on throwing away like winkin' till they knocked something down, and then go off all on the smile to think how clever they'd been. But now they must have their Aunt Sallys and stuff, and country fairs has all gone to the bow-wows.

If I gets better I'm a-goin' to turn Punch from a mellowdramy into a opera—make 'em sing everything, you know. I'd have tried it on afore only my mate gets so orrid short-winded with the pipes, and often when you're a-expectin' the high notes of a toone he drops it off altogether, and fills in with larrups of the drum, and that wouldn't do you know in the sollum parts.

Them music-halls has done us as much harm as any-think, and pretty places they is; why if it warn't for the pretty toons as they fits on the songs, nobody wouldn't stop to hear the rubbidge as is let off. Punch *is* stoopid sometimes, we know, but then look at the moral. And there ain't no moral at all in music-hall songs.

Sometimes I think as I shall have to knock off the national drammy in consequence of want of funds, for you know times may turn so hard that I shall have to sell all off, and the drum mayn't come back, though I was thinking one time of me and pardner taking a hinstrument each and practisin' up some good dooets—me taking the drum and him the pipes, allus allowing, of course, as the drum do come back. But then you see as his short-windedness would be agen us, and it wouldn't do to be allus drowning the high parts with so much leathering.

Heigho, sir. It makes me sigh to lie here so long waiting to get well, till in the dusky evening time, when the gas lamps are shining up and the stars are peeping down, one gets thinking that it's time to think of that little thing as I left out of the box; and then lying all alone one seems to have all the long years fall away from one, and get back into the old, old times, and often I have been fishing, and wandering, and bird's-nesting again all over and over as it used to be. I see it all so plainly, and then get calling up all the old mates I had, and reckoning 'em up, and one's out in Indy, and another was killed in the Crimee, and another's in Australy for poaching, and among the whole lot I only knows one now, and that's me—what there is left. I don't talk like this before the old woman, but I think so much of our old churchyard, and the green graves, and yew trees; and somehow as I remember the old sunny corners and green spots, I fancy as I should like to go to sleep there far away from these courts and alleys. It seems like dying here, and being hurried away afterwards, with every one glad to get rid of you; but down in the old quiet parts it seems to me like watching the sun go down behind the hill, when the still, quiet evening comes on so soft and pleasant, and then you grow tired and worn-out and lie down to rest, taking a long, long sleep under the bright green turf.

But there, I ain't in the country, I'm here in the thick of London, where I came up to seek my fortun, and never looked in the right place. We poor folks are like the children playing at "Hot boiled beans and werry good butter," and though while you're hunting for what's hid, you may get werry near sometimes, getting warmer and hotter till you're burning, yet somehow it isn't often that one finds. Some does, but there's werry few of 'em, and in the great scramble when one gets hold of anything it's a chansh if it ain't snatched out of your hand.

But there, I shan't give up, for there's nothing like a bit o' pluck to carry you through your troubles, and I'm a-going to scheme a noo sorter public Shakespearian dramatic entertainment, one as will be patronised by all the nobility and gentry, when in consequence of the unparalleled success, we shall stop all the press orders and free list, and come out arterwards with a new drum, and get presented with a set o' silver-mounted pipes by a grateful nation. Leastwise I mean it to be a success if I can, but if it don't turn out all right, through me and my pardner being so touched in the wind, Bill's a-going to get up a subscription to buy a barrel-organ and a four-wheel thing as 'll take us both—me and the organ; when I shall sit there with a tin plate to take the coppers, and Bill will grind away like that Italian chap as drew round the gentleman wot had been operated on. I don't want to come down to that, though, for one can't help 'sociating barrel-orgins with monkeys, and pitying the poor little chattering beggars as is chained up to an eight-toon box, played slow, as if it was wrong in its inside. And that makes me rather shrink a bit from it, for thinking as I might get tired of the organ-grinder.

Steps, steps, steps. Here's the missus coming, and there'll be the physic to take, and then, after a bit of a nap, I mean to sit up and put my theaytrical company to rights.

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## Chapter Twenty Eight.

### In the Hooghly.

You people here in England don't know what a river is; the Thames and Severn are only ditches, while the Humber is precious little better than a creek of the sea. Just think of such rivers as the Amazon, and the Plate, and the Mississippi, where you can sail up miles, and miles, and miles, and on the two first can't make out the shore on either



side; while after a flood down comes little islands covered with trees washed out of the banks, some with pretty little snakes on 'em twenty feet long, p'raps, while on every flat bit of shore you see the alligators a-lying by wholesale. Then there's them big African rivers with the alligator's first cousins—crockydiles, you know, same as there is up in that big river in Indy—the Ganges, as I've sailed up right through the Sunderbunds, covered in some places with jungle, where the great striped tigers lie, and as one o' my poor mates used to say, it's dangerous to be safe.

I've been up to Calcutta, I have, after sailing right across the roaring main to Adelaide, and dropping our cargo. My; how hot it is going up that river, a regular hot stifly sort of heat, as seems to get hold of you and say, "Hold hard, my boy, you can't work here!" and we never used to do any more than we could help. Sailing up, day after day, we got anchored at last up at the grand place, and I don't know which you takes most notice of, the grandness or the misery, for there's a wonderful sight of both.

"What's that?" I says to Bob Davies, as we was a-leaning over the side, looking at the native boats floating here and there, and seeing how the great muddy stream flowed swiftly down.

"That?" says Bob. "Ah, you'll see lots of that sort of thing about. That's a corpus, that is, and that's how they buries 'em here. Waits till a poor fellow's werry sick, and then takes and puts him at low tide on the bottom of the steps of the landing-places,—ghauts they calls 'em, and then, if he's got strength enough in him, he crawls away, but if he ain't, why the tide carries him off, and then he goes washing up and down the river till Dicky Todd lays hold on him, and pulls him under for his next meal."

"Who's Dicky Todd?" I says.

"Why," says Bob, a-chuckling, "there he goes, that's him," and then he stood a-pinting out into the stream where there was what seemed to me to be a bit of rough bark of a tree floating slowly down towards the sea.

"Why, that's a tree, I says, ain't it?"

"Ho! ho! ho! what ignorance," says Bob, "that's a crorkodile, or a haligator, if you likes to call it so. Dicky Todd, that is, as don't like his meals fresh, but keeps his game till it gets high, and then enjoys himself with a feast."

'Nough to make one shudder that was, but it was true enough, for, before the body I had seen floating down had gone much further, there was a bit of a swirl in the water, and both crocodile and body disappeared, while my face felt as if it was turning white, and I knew I felt sick.

We chaps didn't work very hard though, for there were plenty of black fellows there, ready to do anything for you, and lots of 'em were employed lading the ship, while we were busy touching her up, bending on new sheets, here and there mending sails, painting and scraping, and making right a spar or two that had sprung, for you know there's always something amiss after a long voyage, and it's no short distance from Liverpool to Port Adelaide, and then up to Calcutta. Rum chaps some of those blacks was, not werry decent in their ideas of dress, and all seeming to suffer from a famine in stockings. Precious particular too about what they call their caste, which you know is a complaint as exists in the old country too. Why, in our old village it was werry bad, and was like this you know: the squire's people wouldn't mix with the doctor's, and the doctor's wouldn't visit the maltster's, and the maltster's didn't know the people at the shop, who didn't call on the clerk's wife, who said her gal shouldn't go to tea at Brown's, who said Smith's folks was low; and so on. That's caste—that is, and they has it werry bad out in Indy. Mussulmans some on 'em, and Brahmins, and all sorts, and lots on 'em you'll meet with a bit o' paint on their forehead, to show what caste they belong to, I s'pose, while they're as proud as Lucifer.

One old chap used to come to work and bring his gang with him to go on with the lading, and one day when he came some of our fellows began to chaff him, for he'd got his head shaved, and what for do you think, but because he was in mourning, and had put away his wife? Not as that seemed to me anything to go in mourning for, since some of our chaps would have been a wonderful deal better without their wives as they left behind in Liverpool. But this chap had divorced his wife because she had let the child die, so he said, and there was the poor woman in double trouble.

"S'pose she couldn't help the little 'un going," says Bob to him.

"Ah! yes, Sahib," says this old chap, Jamsy Jam, as he called himself, "oh yes, Sahib, she let child die—mosh trouble." But I'm blest if I don't think it was him wanted to get rid of his wife, and so made this an excuse.

Bob Davis and me one day stood looking over the side o' the ship, same as we often did, and he says to me, he says:  
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"Last time as I was here, we was lying a hundred yards further up the stream, and one day when I was in the bows, I could see something hitched on to the chain as moored us to the buoy, and if it wasn't one of them poor fellows as had come down with the stream from perhaps hundreds of miles up the country, and there wasn't one of our chaps as would get him off, so it came to my share to do it, and I undertook it out of a bit of bounce because the others wouldn't, for I felt proper scared and frightened over it. They often gets hitched in the mooring chains of ships, and p'raps we shall come in for one before we goes."

About an hour after I goes and looks down at the chain, when if I didn't turn all shivering, for there was something dusky hitched on sure enough, and I ran and called Bob Davis up to have a look, and see if it wasn't what he'd been a talking about.

"So it is," he says; and he went and told the captain and mate, and they came and had a look, when the dinghy was ordered down, and Bob and me in her, to set the body free.

Now I didn't like the job a bit, and I pulled a long face at Bob, just same time as he was pulling a long face at me; but

our captain was a man who would stand no nonsense, so we were soon down in the boat, and I put her along the side, while Bob got hold of the boat-hook, and reached out at the body.

But it warn't a body of a poor black at all, but a god as was dressed up, and had been sent sailing down from one of their grand feasts somewhere up the river, one of those set-outs where there's so much dancing and beating of tom-toms and singing in their benighted, un-Christian-like, dreary fashion, all Ea-la-ba-sha-la-ma-ca-la-fa; for it sounds like nothing else to a sailor chap as don't understand Hindostanee.

Well, we brings this great idol on board, and the captain has it dried and stood on deck; but I'm blest if the black chaps didn't all turn huffy about it, and kicked up a shine, and then took and went off, leaving all their work. They came back, though, next morning reg'lar as could be, and I says to Bob Davis, "Bob," I says, "that's just for all the world like coves at home: cuts off in a passion, and then comes back when they're cool again."

"Ah," says Bob, with a bit of a chuckle; "p'raps it is, but not quite; for they was afraid to work with one o' their gods a-looking at 'em."

"Then what made 'em come back now?" I say.

"Because he's gone again bobbing about among the Dicky Todds and corpuses; and it's my belief," he says, "that our watch didn't keep much of a look-out, or they'd have seen some of the swarthy beggars come aboard and heave it overboard, for it's gone sure enough."

Gone it was, and no mistake; and I suppose Bob must have been right; and, though the cap went on a good 'un about losing his curiosity, it warn't no good at all.

"Some of you knows something of it," says the cap to old Jam, as we called him for short.

"Captain Sahib no got god of his own at home that he want black fellow's," says old Jam very grandly, but making a great salaam a'most down to the deck.

But the cap only grumbled out something, and went off, for he didn't want to offend the men.

One day we had a sad upset—one as gave our chaps the horrors, and made them restless to get out of the place, and worse, for after that the men were always looking out for the crocodiles, and bodies, and things that came down the great stream, while now everything they saw floating, if it was only a lump of rotten rushes or a bit of tree-trunk, got to be called something horrid. Then the chaps got tired of its being so hot, and discontented at having not enough to do, I s'pose, for a ship's crew never seems so happy as when the men are full swing an' at the work.

Well, it so happened that in two places the cap had had little swing stages slung over the side for the men who were touching up the ship's ribs with a new streak of paint; and there the chaps were dabbing away very coolly as to the way they worked, but very hotly as to the weather, for the sun comes down there a scorcher when there's no breeze on. I was very busy myself trying to find a cool place somewhere; and not getting it, when the man over the bulwarks gives a hail, and I goes to see what he wanted, which it was more paint, because he didn't want to come up the side, and get it himself. So I takes the pot from him, and gets it half filled with colour, and goes back to the side all on the dawdle-and-crawl system just like the other chaps on deck.

"Now then," I says, "lay hold;" but my gentleman didn't move, for there he was, squatted down and smoking his pipe; when, finding it comforting, he wouldn't move.

"I say," he says, looking up, "just see if them lashings is all right; for, if I was to go down here, it's my idee as I shouldn't come up again for the crockydiles, and I don't kear about giving up the number of my mess jest yet; so look out."

"Well, lay hold of this pot," says I, reaching down to him as far as I could.

"Wait a minute," he says, when he began to groan himself up, and next moment he would have reached what I was holding to him, when I heard something give, a sort of crack; then there was a shriek and a loud splash, and I saw the poor fellow's horror-stricken face for an instant as he disappeared beneath the water.

"Man overboard!" I shouted, dropping the paint, and running to the rope which held the dinghy; when sliding down I was in her in a moment, and shoving along towards where the poor chap went down. First I looked one way, then another, and kept paddling about expecting that I should see his head come up, while now at the sides half the crew were looking over, for they had forgotten all about feeling tired or lazy in their anxiety to be of use.

"There, look out," cried Bob Davis; "he'll come up there where that eddy is, and then I watched there and leaned over the sides ready to catch hold of the poor chap when he came up."

"Let her float down with the stream," shouted the captain, excitedly; "he must come to the top directly," and so I let her float down; kneeling there as I did, ready to snatch at anything which appeared. The river was running down muddy and strong, so that you could see nothing but the swirling about of the current, as it came rushing round by the ships and boats moored there, and I began to think that the poor fellow would soon be sucked under one of the big hulls, when it seemed to me that there was more swirling and rushing about of the water than usual, for my little boat began to rock a little and some bubbles of air came rising up and floating atop of the water.

Here he is now, I thinks, getting hold of the boat-hook, and holding it just a little in the water, when all at once I turned quite sick and queer, for there was a great patchy stream of blood came up, and floated on the surface, slowly spreading out, and floating down the stream, when in a sort of mad fit I made a thrust down as far as I could reach with the hook to bring something up, and sure enough I caught against something, but the next moment there was a

snatch and a jerk, and I had to let go of the hook, to save being pulled overboard, when I clung shuddering to the thwarts, and saw the long shaft disappear under water.

The chaps on board our ship roused me up, or I think I should have turned quite dizzy, and rolled out of the boat; but now I jumped up, and setting an oar out of the stern, paddled a little further down, trying hard to make myself believe that the poor chap would come up again. But no, nothing more was seen of him but the bubbles on the top of the water, and that horrid red patch which came directly after.

I paddled here and paddled there, trembling all over the whole time, but it was of no use, and at last when I was some distance off, and they began shouting for me, I put out both sculls, and rowed back, when mine wasn't the only pale, sickly looking face aboard, for there were the men talking in whispers, and the other chap that had been painting came off of his stage, while if the captain had persisted in trying to get that bit of painting finished, I believe the men would have all mutinied and left the ship. But he didn't, for though he couldn't have liked to see the ship half done, he said nothing about it, for there was no one to blame, since that poor lost man rigged up his own stage; and all the rest of the time as we stopped there in the Hooghly—Ugly as we call it—the cap and the mate used to spend hours every day practising rifle shooting at the crocodiles, as must have been the end of my poor ship-mate.

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## Chapter Twenty Nine.

### A Tale of the Great Passion.

In the good old times—the very good old times, before trade, competition, and the spreading of knowledge, had upset and spoiled everything—sending people off in a mad hurry, here, there, and everywhere; by road, rail, and river; sea, sky, and last, but not least, blown through tubes to their journey's end; in the good old times, before people thought about Atlantic cables, or understood the meaning of the words *cheap* and *clear*, chivalry used to flourish throughout our land: everybody who did not happen to have been born a vassal, serf, or villein, was a knight, and used to wear a first-class suit of mail—rather uncomfortable suits, by the way, that took no end of emery powder and Bath brick to keep them clean; besides which they were terribly cold in winter, and horribly hot in summer, and had the unpleasant propensity of rubbing the skin off the corners of the person. But then it all appertained to knighthood, and it was very glorious to go pricking over the plain as a gallant upon a Barclay and Perkins style of horse, and shining like an ironmonger's shop on a market day; excepting such times as it rained, when the lordly gallant would most probably ride rusty while his waving plumes would hang streaky and straight. But those were the days. Every man was his own lawyer then, and if any base varlet offended his knighthood, he exclaimed —“Grammercy!”

“By my halidame,” or something of that kind, and most probably ended by having the aforesaid base varlet pitched neck and crop into the lowest dungeon beneath the castle to amuse himself after the fashion of the gentleman who stayed so many years in Chillon's dungeon, deep and old. “Reading, Riting, and Rithmetic,” were then of no account; for the knights of old, when they had anything to do with a deed, made their marks with their swords.

Well, in these good old times, when knights, troubadours, damsels in distress, tourneys, tyrannical barons, and all those most romantic accessories for keeping up the aforesaid good old times, flourished upon our soil, there stood a goodly castle at Stanstead, of the same breed as those at Bishop Stortford, and Saffron Walden, and a great many other places that don't concern the thread of our story the slightest bit in the world; and in this said flint and mortar, thick-walled, uncomfortable building, where there was neither gas, glass, nor china, dwelt one Sir Aylmer de Mountfitchett, a tremendous swell in his way, one who conceived that he had only to look to conquer, like the Roman barbarian he had once heard tell of as having visited this isle. Now Sir Aylmer had come in for his property early in life, from the fact of his father, who was own brother to the celebrated Red Cross Knight, who came home and put the warder into such a ferment, making him blow his horn so loudly, and call till he was hoarse, at a time when a voice lozenge, or a “haporth” of Spanish liquorice could not have been had for love nor money—well! from the fact of his father having rubbed his head so sharply against the edge of a pagan's scimitar that it—that is to say, Sir Aylmer's father's head—fell off, and was lost, so that his brother came home from the holy wars without him; and young Sir Aylmer went into mourning by stepping into his father's shoes, and doing a bill with the Jew of the neighbourhood—payable at sight, fifty per cent, interest; and he took a third in cash, a third in pictures, and the remainder in Bass's pale ale and best French kid gloves.

Now as soon as the young knight could have it all his own way, he had the best suit of armour well rubbed up; the best horse in the stable well rubbed down; put an extra quantity of bears' grease upon his hair—the hair of his head, for the mirrors of those days were so imperfect that he could not discover his beard; and lastly he sallied forth like a true knight in search of adventure.

Now if I were to write the whole of the adventures of this gallant knight, I should require the entire space of the *Times* every day, and have to keep on writing “to be continued in our next” until there was enough to form a respectable library; but as either the reader or the writer *might* be fatigued, I content myself with relating the influence that the great passion first had upon the gallant young knight.

There was one Geoffrey de Mandeville in those days; and a regular man devil he was, but he had a redeeming feature in the shape of the prettiest niece that ever set a number of thick-headed fellows breaking lances, or knocking their iron-pot covered skulls together in a tournament in her honour. Her eyes were so bright that they gave young Aylmer de Mountfitchett a *coup de lodestars* and so turned his brain that he went home and determined to make an end of himself. But he did not know how to do it; for, as he very reasonably said—it he cut his head off with his sword, he would be making two ends to himself. So he tried running upon the point of his lance, but it was so blunt that it hurt dreadfully; when all at once a bright thought struck him:—He would take an antidote for his trouble, and follow the advice of his friend, the Scotch knight, Sir Ben Nevis: he would take a hair of the dog that bit him, by

trying whether the eyes that wounded so sharply would not cure.

That very night he took a mandoline—which was the kind of banjo popular in those days,—and walked over to the castle at Stortford where the damsel dwelt, and after trying very hard to tune his instrument in the dark—not an easy task when a young man is nervous and keeps catching hold of the wrong peg—he tried a song—a light thing, written by one Alfred de Tennyson, beginning—“Come into ye garden, Maude.” Well, the young man sang the song pretty well, considering that he was in one key, and the mandoline in another; while he had no voice at all, and several of the strings of the instrument were really and truly string; so that altogether, though he struck the light guitar and its strings, the effect was not striking, neither were the chords good.

He sang it once as he stood upon the edge of the moat, getting his feet very wet. He sang it twice as he stood there getting his clothes wet, too, for the dew was very heavy. He sang it three times and was beginning to think that a flagon of Rhenish, or one of his bottles of Bass would be very acceptable when—

The lattice was illumined—there was a slight noise, and the casement was opened. Aylmer’s heart beat violently, and he was about to speak, only he was tongue-tied; and, sinking upon his knees in the wet mud, and so spoiling his trunk hose, he awaited the result—his hand involuntarily breaking the silence that his tongue could not break:

“Tumple, tump!; tump!; tump!; turn, turn, turn,” went the mandoline.

Then there was the sound of two bodies falling close by his side, and he sought for them—the pale moon lending her light—and he found—

One of the clumsy coppers they used in those days for half-pence, and a wedge of cold venison pasty, wrapped in a piece of *Bell’s Life*.

Sir Aylmer de Mountfitchett then heard the casement closed, when from the force of habit he spun the copper in the air, caught it, put it in his pocket; opened the paper, smelt the pasty,—which by the way was not sweet,—pitched it into the moat, and went home in dudgeon; which is the ancient form for expressing that he went back to his castle saying all the bad words that he had picked up through playing skittles and billiards with the fast men of his day.

But the maiden did not always take Sir Aylmer for an Ethiopian serenader, or a Christy’s Minstrel; for at last, instead of throwing him out coppers and wedges of pasty, she used to blow him kisses across the moat. But after a twelvemonth spent at that sort of fun, without success, for not one of the kisses ever reached the mark, the lovers hit upon a plan by which they might enjoy one another’s society, and cease wasting the salutes which they had been sending “out upon the night winds” every evening as soon as it grew dusk.

It was a warm dark night in Autumn and there was high revelry in the castle upon the mound, for Sir Geoffrey had been giving a rent dinner, and according to custom, he had made himself slightly inebriated by drinking sack—a celebrated old beverage famous for enveloping the intellects. The warders of the castle walls had watched whether it was likely that the knight would come out again that night, and then gone to sleep in the room by the portcullis. The moon was not up, and all was still but the croaking of the frogs in the moat, when Sir Aylmer crept up to the edge, and putting his fingers in his mouth gave a long whistle. Directly after there was a slight cough above his head, and the noise of something falling.

After a good deal of fumbling Sir Aylmer’s hands came in contact with a pair of scissors, to which was attached a thread. All had been previously arranged, and at a given signal the thread was drawn up again, having with it, in addition to the scissors, a thin cord—then followed a thick cord—then followed a rope—and then followed a rope ladder—and, lastly, when the ladder was made tight, followed Sir Aylmer de Mountfitchett.

“Hist,” said the lady.

“Hist,” said Sir Aylmer, as he climbed like a very Blondin, the rope that would keep spinning round like a jack, till the young knight felt that he should soon be done brown if it did not stop.

“Hist,” said the lady again.

“Hist,” said the knight, as he reached the window-sill.

“Hist,” said the lady again to her panting lover, who felt rather sick and giddy.

“How is the rope fastened?” said the knight.

“To the bed-post,” said the lady modestly.

“Your hand a moment, fair dame,” said the knight, trying to climb on the window-sill.

“Oh! dear me, *No!*” said the lady, “I could not think of such a thing.”

“But I can’t stay here,” said the knight, “this rope cuts like fury.”

“Oh! but I could not think for a moment of admitting you,” said the lady, “But, hist! speak low, or the Lady Maude will hear.”

“Eh? who?” said the knight.

“The Lady Maude,” said the maiden again.

“And you then are?—”

“Her hand—”

What she would have said will never be known, for Sir Aylmer himself said something so startling that the maiden, who had only twisted the rope several times round the post, and retained the end in her hand, suddenly let go. There was a whistling of rope,—a loud scream,—a loud splash,—a great deal of floundering,—and then Sir Aylmer de Mountfitchett hastened home, this time also in dudgeon, and had to be grueled and nose-tallowed for a violent cold which he had somehow caught; while in the archives of the castle might at one time have been seen the following curious manuscript written in a clerkly hand by one Friar Malvoisey, for whom the good dame named therein used to wash.

“Sir Aylmer Mountfitchett  
To Sarah Brown.  
Balance.....1 merck 11 groates.  
Washing doublet and hose clean from ye black mud 111 groates.”

There may be some sceptical people who will doubt the truth of this legend; and to such, as the writer is unable to produce the ancient manuscript, he says in the language of the good old times, “I crave your mercy!”

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## Chapter Thirty.

### Found in the Street.

Yes, all sorts, sir, and we takes the innercent and the guilty too sometimes, no doubt on it. Yer see we're men as generally has everybody's ill word, and nobody ever has a good word for us unless there's somebody as wants us, when it's “Oh, my good man, and ah, my good man,” and at other times they won't look at us.

I remember once taking a poor chap for stealing bread, and if there's anything a poor fellow might be forgive it might be that. Well, sir, as I was a-sayin', I was on my beat one day, or more properly speaking, it was evening, for it was just gettin' dusk, one November arternoon, and a bitter cold, raw arternoon it was, with the smoky fog givin' yer the chokes, and gettin' into yer eyes, and makin' yer feel all on edge like, and as gritty as if yer was in a bed where someone had been a eatin' of bread. Folks was lighting up their shops, and I was a-growling to myself and wishin' it was time to go off duty when I sees a crowd on in front, and there in the middle of it was a floury baker, goin' on like anything and shakin' away like any savage at a miserable-looking hollow-faced chap in a wesket and trousers, and his bare arms all a showin' through his ragged shirt. He hadn't got no hat, and his skin looked as blue and pinched as if he'd been frozen or just taken out of the river.

“Well,” I says, “what's up?”

“Take him into custody, p'leeceman,” says the baker.

“No, no, no,” says the crowd. “Now, none of that,” says I.

“Take him into custody, p'leeceman,” says the baker; “he stole a quartern loaf. Comes into my shop a-beggin', and because I would not give him anythin' he whips up a quartern loaf and bolts with it, but I ran after him and ketched him.”

Well, I looks at the baker and I looks at the man, and I thinks to myself, “Here's a case.” But there was nothin' else for it, so I takes the loaf under my arm, and gets hold of the poor shiverin' crittur, and away we goes with a long train of boys and sech a follerin of us; but what with the bad night and the long ways as we had to go, they soon all drops off, and we goes along together, me and the poor chap, with only the people a lookin' at us as we passed 'em.

“P'leeceman,” says my prisoner all at once, and it was the first word he had spoken. “P'leeceman,” he says, “are you a man?”

Well, yer see, sir, I didn't like my job that evenin', for it raly did seem as if the poor chap took the bread because he was a starvin', and he wasn't a common chap neither, and we knows pretty well what sort a feller is by his looks, I can tell yer. So when he says them words in such an appealin' way like, I ain't werry soft, but I didn't like my job half so much as I did afore. However, it don't do for us to be soft, so I says quite chuffy, as if I'd cut up rough—

“What d'yer mean?” I says. “Were you ever hungry—ever famishing?”

“Well,” I says, “I can't say I ever was, but I've been precious dry.”

“Ah!” he says, with a sigh as went right through me, for I could see there was no sham in him, and then he hangs down his head and walks on without sayin' a word.

He didn't say no more, so I thinks perhaps as he was hungry, and I says, you may as well carry this here loaf, and if it is picked why it don't much matter.

Lord, sir, it was a precious good job we weren't in a busy street, for I'm blessed if he didn't ketch hold of my hand with both his and bust out a cryin' just like a child.

“Hold up, old chap,” I says, “I don't want to be rough with you. Are yer hungry?”

"It's those at home," he says, "those at home; but I can't help it, I'm weak—weak—weak."

And I'm blessed if he wasn't, sir, so weak that he tottered in his walk, and I could see there was no dodge in him, poor chap. Jest then we comes up to an "All hot" can, "Two or none for a penny," yer knows. Beefsteaks and hot kidney; so I pulls up, makin' believe as I should like one myself, and we has some half-a-dozen I think I bought, and makes him have best part of 'em; but, Lord bless yer, he wouldn't touch 'em, but begs of me to take 'em to Number 99, King's Court.

"For God's sake," he says, "take 'em, and I'll bless yer."

"Now come," I says, "none o' that ere; you're in custody, you know, so you'll jest eat them kidney or beefsteak pies, or whatsomever they is, and then come along; and if so be as you wants half-a-dozen hot kidney, or a few taters, or what not, took to number 99, King's Court, why I knows the man as'll take 'em, so peg away."

To ha' seen him stare you might ha' thought he'd never had a good word said to him in his life; and when he had had his stare out, if he didn't lay hold o' them pies and eat 'em in a way as made one uncomfortable, it seemed so un-Christian like and wolfish.

Well, sir, I never did like my job a takin' him, but now I hated myself, and s'elp me, sir, if he'd ha' cut and run if I wouldn't ha' gone after him down the wrong street.

When he'd done he looked as if another half-dozen would ha' been welcome; but I know'd what was what, so I takes him into the first public we passes and orders a pint o' dog's-nose, what we calls purl, yer know, and then I does my half pull o' that, for I knows in his state he couldn't stand much; and then we goes on towards the station; while the stuff made him open his lips, and he begs on me to go as I had said, and if I could, take half the loaf too. For, says he

—  
"They're nearly starved."

"Who is?" says I.

"My wife and the little ones," he says.

"More shame for you to let 'em," says I.

"Man, man," says he, and he looks me so savage in the face that I thought he meant to hit me. "Man, man," he says, "I've tried all, everything that a husband and father could do; I've fought for, prayed for, begged for work; I've tramped the great city through day after day; I've sought work till I've turned home heartsick and weary, to sell, piece by piece, everything we could sell, till look at me," he says, "look at me; who'd give me work? Who'd believe me honest? Who wouldn't drive me away as a vagabond if I asked for work? And what did I do to-night? I took what no man would give me—bread for my starving wife and children, and now—God help them, for I can't!"

He'd been speaking as fierce as a lion at first, and now he broke down all at wunst, and seemed as though he was a-goin' to bust out a crying again; but he didn't. And so we walks on, and I breaks the loaf in two pieces, pulls it apart, yer know, sir, crummy way, and when the charge was made, for I found the baker a-waitin' at the station, for he got there first, I waited to see my prisoner into a cell, and afore he was locked up, I shoves the half-loaf under his arm, and a great-coat as lay over a bench as we went along. Then off I goes arter the baker, who was one o' your red-faced, chuffy little chaps, one o' them coves as has sech a precious good opinion o' themselves. He'd only jest got round the corner when I hails him, and he stops short.

"Well, governor," I says, "what'll yer take to drink? give it a name."

"Oh," says he, with a bit of a sneer, "you mean what am I a-goin' to stand?"

"No I don't," I says, "for I've jest had plenty."

"What d'yer mean?" sez he.

"Why, that there poor chap as we've jest locked up."

"Why, I never knowed you p'leecemen could come the soft like that," sez he; "but what d'yer mean about 'poor chap?'"

"Well, come in here," I says, "and I'll tell yer."

So we goes in, and as it was cold we has two fours o' gin hot, with sugar, and as I was now up, I begins to tell him about what took place comin' to the station, and I says as I was a-goin' to take something to Number 99, King's Court, and see if all he'd said was true.

"Here," says baker to the barman, "fill these here glasses again, Charles," and then turnin' to me, says he:—

"Governor, if I'd ha' known all this when that pore chap come in to my shop to-day I'd ha' give him a dozen loaves; I'm hanged if I wouldn't."

Which was rather hot of him, yer know, sir, and I hope you'll excuse me a-sayin' it, but them was his very words, and if he didn't look as excited as if he didn't know what to do with hisself.

"Tip that glass off, p'leeceman," he says, "and let's be off."

"Well, good night," I says, "and if I was you, I don't think I should press the charge agin him to-morrow."

"May I never rise another batch if I do," he says; "but come on."

"Well, once more good night," I says.

"Wait a bit," says he, "I'm goin' with you."

"Are yer?" I says.

"I just am," says he.

"Then come on," says I; and away we went.

On the way I gets a sixpenny Watling at a public, and then at a tater-can a dozen hot mealies, which I shoves in my coat pockets, and the pie in my hat; while the baker he slips into the fust shop we comes to, and picks out a couple of the best crusted cottages as he could find.

Well, sir, we gets at last to Number 99, King's Court, and afore we goes in I says to the baker, says I—

"Now if this is a do, we'll just have a friendly supper off what we've bought, and a drop of hot."

"Agreed," says life.

And we went up the stairs, and knocked at the fust floor front.

"Mrs Graham lodge here?" says I.

"Three pair back," says the lodger, a-slammng the door in our faces.

"You'd better go fust," says I to baker; "they don't like the looks o' my hat." That was afore we took to 'elmets, yer know, sir.

So baker goes up fust, and I follows—up the dirty old staircase, till we stood on the landing, opposite to the door, where we could hear a young 'un a whimperin'. So baker knocks, and some one says, "Come in," and in we goes; and Lord, sir, it was a heart-breaking sight, sure-ly. I'm a rough 'un, sir, and used to all sorts of things, and it takes a good deal to get a rise out o' me; but I was done this time, and so was baker. I never see nought as upset me like that did, and I hopes I never shall again. No light—no fire—and pretty nigh no furniture, as far as we could see from the light as shined up into the room from a court at the back, where there was a gas lamp, and that warn't much, as you may suppose, sir. And jest then the lodger in the front room opens the door and offers her candle. I steps back and takes it, and then comes back and shuts the door arter me. Good Lord—Good Lord, what they must ha' suffered. There was a thin, half-dressed, pinched-faced woman, huddling up three little children together; and though they didn't know it, sir, I do. They didn't know as death had knocked at their doors, and was only a-waiting a bit before he came in. Think, sir, a cold November night in a bare garret-like room, and no fire, and no proper coverin', and no proper food, but the mother and children, close up together on a straw mattress, with some rags and an old blanket to cover 'em.

"Oh, my God!" said baker. You see, sir, he was rayther strong in what he said, and he pulls off his coat and claps it over the poor wife's shoulders. "Here, pull out them hot taters," he says, and he hurries me so I could hardly get 'em out, but he soon has a hot 'un in each o' the child's hands, and tellin' me to keep 'em goin', he cuts down stairs as hard as he could pelt, and afore you could think it possible, back he comes again, with his arms full o' bundles o' wood, an' he sticks a couple all loose and sets light to 'em, and soon makes a cheerful blaze as made the poor things creep up to, and so close as I was almost obliged to keep the two littlest back, or they would ha' singed baker's coat. Away goes baker agen, and very soon back he comes with one o' them little sacks o' coals—half hundreds yer know, such as they sells poor folks coals in, and then he rams these coals on like fury while the poor woman looks on quite stupid like.

"God forgive me," says baker; looking ready to bust, "what could I ha' been thinking of? Here, Bobby," he says, holdin' out a shilling, "go down and get a pot of hot ale and some gin in; a drop'll do even them kids good."

I goes down in such a hurry that I forgets all about his shilling, and when they'd all had a taste round, it was wonderful how much better they looked; and then baker says, says he—

"Now you jest stop here half an hour till I gets back."

And stop I did, sir, a talkin' to the poor woman, an' I told her all about the loaf, and made her sob and cry to hear where her husband was. But she brightened up when I told her as he'd had a good feed and was well wrapped up; and how baker wouldn't prosecute, I was sure. And then back comes baker, and his wife with him, and they'd got a couple o' blankets and a rug, and at last, sir, there was such goin's on that I'm blest if I warn't obliged to go out on the landin', for the poor woman wanted to kiss me; and if I'd ha' stayed in the room a minute longer I knows I should have disgraced the force by acting like a soft.

Soon afterwards baker and his wife comes out, and we all goes off, but not till it was settled that I was to go and have dinner with 'em on the next Sunday, which I did, and I'm blowed—which I hope you'll excuse, sir—if I knew Mr Graham, which was the poor fellow I took, for baker had rigged him out, and got him a place to go to; and since then I've often seen—Well, if it ain't half-past ten, sir, and—Not a drop more, thank ye, or I shall have the key of the street.

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## Chapter Thirty One.

## A Weird Place.

Wondering whether Molly told the truth when she declared that she had never been false since the last parting at Wapping Old Stairs, and forming our own opinion upon the matter in a way decidedly unfavourable towards the trowsers washing, grog-making lady, in consequence of comparisons made with the feline damsels lurking at the corners of the courts, I came to an open door. Then without pausing to think that comparisons are odious, I confronted a pluffy-looking old gentleman busily engaged in building leaning Towers of Pisa with the bronze coinage of our realm. He was a gentleman of a subdued jovial expression of countenance, evidently not overburdened with toil, from the jaunty way in which he shifted from his left to his right foot, took my penny and allowed the turnstile to give its "click, click;" when passing through a pair of swing doors, I stood in a sort of dirty-looking whispering gallery, gazing down upon what appeared to be a sham chalet, minus the stones upon the roof. Right, left, and in front were painted views of sea-ports and landscapes, all looking like the dark half of that portrait exhibited by the gentleman who cleans and restores paintings; while assailing the nostrils was a peculiar odour something like the essence of stale theatre bottled and buried for many years in a damp cellar.

But there were stairs innumerable to descend before I could enter the famed tunnel of the Thames; and then, after a rat like progress, re-appear in Rotherhithe.

Lower, lower, lower, with a sense of depression attacking one at every step, I persevered till I reached the bottom, to be assailed by a loud man sitting in the gas-lit chalet, which displayed the well-known lens of the popular penny peep-show of our youth. And 'twas even so, for in a wild *crescendo*, which rose to a roar when refusing to listen to the voice of the charmer I passed on, the land man called upon me to come and see "all these beautiful views" for the low charge of one penny.

And I wouldn't.

No; though his appeal ended with a regular snap, and came after me like the voice of the giant from his cave when longing for John Bunyan's pilgrims—I would not; but entered the cellar-like tunnel, and stood gazing along the gloomy, doleful vista, made doubly depressing by the stringent order that no smoking was allowed. Why it would have been a blessing to the place; and done a little at all events to take off the cellary flavour which greeted the palate. For the place was decidedly cellary, and looked as if a poor tenant had just quitted the house above, leaving nothing but a cleanly-swept place without vestige of wine or coal.

Dull, echoing, and gloomy, a place where the suction power of a pneumatic engine would be a blessing, it was melancholy to peer through arch after arch at the side tunnel, now turned into a large lumber room; while at about every second or third arch there was a gas-lit stall, where melancholy, saddened people presided over divers subfluvial ornaments, ranged in rows with a few dreary toys—evidently things which nobody ever bought, for their aspect was enough to startle any well-regulated child. They seemed the buried remains of playthings and chimney ornaments of the past—the very fossils of a Camberwell fair stall. Upon one gloomy pillar was inscribed "Temple of Amusement;" but no amusement was there; while, if the words had announced that it was the chamber of torture, less surprise would have been excited. Amusement! in a place that actually smelt of racks, thumbscrews, and scavenger's daughters; ay! and of the parent scavenger as well.

At every gas-lit spot one expected to see coffins, from the crypt-like pillars and smells; but, no; where there was not a dreary, whitewashed blank, appeared another stall. On one appeared the notice, "*Hier spricht man Deutsche.*" Yes, it was a fact, "*Deutsche,*" and not a ventriloquistal tongue, a bowels of the earth speech, as gnomish.

On still, till there was a cellar vista front and rear, and a sensation upon one of having been in a railway accident, and escaped into the tunnel, while with a shiver one listened for the noise of the approaching trains, and paused to see whether of the lines, up or down, 'twas on. And now an oasis in the great desert. "Refreshments!" a real refreshment room in the long cellar. The first refreshment was for the eye, and that organ rested upon funereal yew decorating the vault-like aisle, while paper roses starred its gloomy green. And the refreshments for the internal economy? There were cards with names of wines upon them, and a melancholy person, most un-Ganymedeian of aspect; but who could eat or drink in so depressing a spot, without forced in such a nether region to partake of a diabolical dish presented hot by a tailed imp, and consisting of brimstone, *sans* treacle?

Again onward, and more refreshments: a coffee room where coffee was not, and the place savouring of mushroom spawn. And again onward, to be startled by an apparition, back from his arch, a very gnome, busy at some fiery task—of what? Glassblowing, and spinning strange silky skeins from his glowing light.

More stalls, more Tunbridge and alabaster fossils, more echoes, more commands not to smoke, more gas light, and more desolate-looking people. Had I an enemy I would delude him into speculating in a stall below there; and then laugh in triumph at the wreck he would soon become, for this must be the home of melancholy mania. And now I stood at last in the southern approach, almost a fac-simile of its Wapping brother: the same smell, the same staircases, the same pictures, but no chalet. So back I turned to make my escape at the other end, which I reached in safety, passed the giant in his cave, a monster who lives upon the bronze extracted from unwary passers-by; and then reaching the top of the many stairs I stood once more gazing at the mouldy pictures, and the foul, fungus-furred wall. Fancy the pictures of the four seasons facing you in an atmosphere which resembled the whole four boiled down, and then served up skimmed, while the pot has boiled over furiously, so as to mingle hydrogen in excess with the smell.

Then with the shout of the chalet giant lingering in my ears, and a sensation as though I were an English Tam O' Shanter on foot, with the ghosts of all the poor wretches drowned while making the ghastly bore in full pursuit, I passed through the moving doors which said "way out;" composed myself; and walked calmly through the egress turnstile, though the pluffy man looked at me as if he thought I had burglarious intentions, and ought to be searched for fossil pincushions; and then I stood once more in the full light of day.



Of course if ever I travel by East London Line in days to come, I must resign myself to fate, and allow my person to be whistled and shrieked through; but saving such an occasion as that, in the words of Jerry Cruncher, I say—"Never no more—never no more," will I venture through the melancholy cellar; while in my own I say, that I'll wager that no man dare walk through at the stilly midnight hour, with the gas extinguished, and none to hear him while he hurries his echoing steps—at least I'm sure that I would not.

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## Chapter Thirty Two.

### A Common Object.

Move on, oh pen! and in words whose hue is murky as his oilskin cape, tell with thy silent gall-dipped nibs of the tyrant of our streets—the Hyde Park hero—the helmet-crowned truncheon bearer—preserver of peace—marshal of erring vehicles—custodian of crime—the great numbered one—the unknown X—the Mayne force regulator—offspring of Peel, but never candid—myrmidon of a mighty law—confiscator of coster mongers' barrows—dark man dressed in blue—hero of a hundred names and hundred fights. Tell to the great washed and wiped, of this mighty conqueror, who, by a motion of his Berlin glove, sweeps from the muddy face of the street the noisy crowd. Put down naught in malice or extenuation; hide not his faults, his failings, or his fancies; chronicle not the smashing of a glossy Lincoln and Bennett, nor the splitting up the back of a Poole's surtout, when streets were thronged and Alexandra came; hint not at bribery; but tell of the man and his acts—acts explained in beloved old Carpenter as "substantive; deeds, exploits." Paint the aspect of the man in tunic blue and headpiece of hardened felt, praised by the custodian of our streets as light. How can we cavil at the Minerva or Britannia-like aspect when the wearer sails down the streets, looking as though he ruled the waves of population, a people who never, never, never, will be slaves. Romanised in mien, he wants but the flowing toga and sandalled shoon to shine as a centurion. What is it to him that small boys scoff? In the full comprehension of his powers he walks erect—gorgeous. Has he not, from earliest times, been object and aim of scurrilous shafts meant for wit, but launched with telling force? Has he not been styled the great absentee, and have not rumours touching mutton been circulated to his disadvantage? What though on wintry night, when bitter blows the boist'rous wind, the wand'rer spies a cheering light behind the area window blind. Who, if a whistle known of old should rouse the culinary maid to beckon down the warrior bold to have his empty stomach stayed, who then would grudge the meal—the kiss—the small beer draught—the smile—embrace? They're loved by others well, I wis, as him who wears the cotton lace—whose rolling eye—whose nostril wide, and towering form attractive draw, to inward thought—the fire's warm side—the bliss of love—the chill of law. He has before now descended and been wanted—ascended and been too late. So have generals often; and is there perfection to be found upon this earth? "Nary bit of it." Palliate, then, the policeman's weak points, and as none but the brave deserve the fair, let the brave have his desert.

Is he not a part of our very being as a nation, the common object of our crowd? Who knows this better than the playwright, who sends him across the stage in a long string, like the soldiers or geese of our childhood's day upon the scissor-working framework; who puts him into every imaginable difficulty, and bruises, batters, and beats him in a way most insufferable? But K9 in the gallery sees it all, smiles with disdain, and looks down upon the get up of his fictitious representative, who is as true to life as the Franco-Anglais of the Parisian stage; and seated in plain clothes beside Mary, cook from Number 34, Eating-street, he nudges that lady, and as the broad hint is reciprocated, they smile with contempt at the "Guy Fawkes" thing presented to them.

From whatever point of view the policeman is taken, the first thing which strikes the observer is the dress; and once more, glancing at his helmet, is it not everything that it should not be? Perhaps it is useful, as none other is provided, but it is decidedly not ornamental, for it is grotesque, hideous, unsightly, and contemptible. It wants the grandeur of the old Roman, the graceful curve of the Grecian, the stiffness of the Prussian, the weight of the dragoon's, and the gloss of the fireman's, while as for comfort—who will put it to the test?

Take his appearance in a street scuffle, an affair in which the police have, ere now, been engaged; half his time is taken up in endeavouring—generally unsuccessfully—to keep his helmet in its place, but, as a rule, it rolls into the gutter, to be crushed by trampling feet.

Feet! Yes, that brings us to his feet, though t'were almost bootless to name them, since they are often nearly in that condition. The "strong, serviceable bluchers" supplied by Government contractors always seem to be made upon the principle of "small profits and quick returns," which being interpreted means small profit to the wearer and quick return to elementary constituents.

Did not some great man—a city fortifier—once declare that there was nothing like leather? How true: how striking! But how much more so is the increased significance given to the adage when we say there is nothing like contractor's leather? There is nothing like it anywhere, and considering its wondrous durability, why should not some firm commence making papier maché boots? They would be equally durable, far cheaper, while, as to fit, that does not matter, since Government contractors evidently believe that police bunions have no existence, while corns never crop out from legal toes.

Then, again, his tunic and trousers. Shoddy should not be named in connexion with the material, since the invisible blue is decidedly a degree more durable, for there is in it an elasticity, doubtless owing to its canvas-like—sampler canvas-like structure. To many this airy fabrication may look like deceit, but that is but a harsh construction to place upon such openness; while as to the strength of the cloth, the giving nature is intentional, for opposed as the police so often are to numbers, they need the activity and unholdability of the savage, who oils his body to elude inimical grasps. Hence, then, the weakness of police cloth, which gives way to the slightest drag. Here may the ignorant exclaim—"What a pity!" Not at all, for the offending party pays the damage, since it is a most heinous crime to damage a policeman's uniform. As to the cut of the suit, and the coolness or warmth, they are the arrangements of the same wise and paternal government, who so justly and equitably arrange the promotion in the army. If the

policeman shivers he can put on his great-coat, and if it rains, over that his oilskin cape; and what more can he want? Ignorance may again interpose, and say, why not give him a thoroughly good warm suit for winter, and a lighter one for summer? But then, ignorance was always prone to make strange remarks, and our subject remains buttoned—stuffy—tight.

Touching his truncheon, description is needless, since ample knowledge is gained of that instrument in street troubles.

Taking the policeman, then, from external points of view, he is not in appearance imposing, though by nature very. He is belted, buttoned, and laced; numbered like an auction lot; and, as a rule, powerfully whiskered; but he looks made up; there is a bastard military tournure about him, evidently the introduction of some official martinet. The drilling does not seem to fit our civil (?) friend, for there is either too much or not enough. But we don't want him formed into squares, or three deep, or in line for a charge, for he always seems to act best "upon his own hook," as Vulgus has it, he being rather given to passing judgment upon his sworn foe—passing judgment and remarks too, for is not the man in blue contemned? But why, when his nod suffices to disperse a crowd—he, the man so opposed in appearance to the fiercely moustached and cocked-hatted gendarme of the Gallic shore? Is it because he is unarmed save by the power of the law, and that ashen staff that will make mistakes! And yet the majesty of the law accompanies him everywhere, and emanates from his person at every movement—a visible invisibility—a halo threatening a storm to evil doers. But he is contemned and made the sieve to catch the flying chaff of our streets.

From whence comes the bitter hatred between the powers civil and military, if it does not proceed from the coquetries of the fair sex? It might be supposed that "Mars would always be in the ascendant" (Zadkiel), but it is not so; "law, civil power, and exeketive" is far ahead, but never in conjunction with the fiery planet. "Them solgers ain't good for much," says civil law, and he holds them in profound contempt—a contempt evidently engendered by rivalry. Go to the opera in the Haymarket, and behold both warriors at the entrance. Mars, all pipeclay, belts, buttons, and bayonets, rifles, ramrods, and regulation, standing like an image to do nothing, and doing it most effectually, while Bobby, all bustle, beatitude, and blueness, is hurrying about amongst rival charioteers and gorgeous footmen, keeping order most sublime, and making perfection out of chaos. But for the numbered one, somebody's carriage would stop the way all night from the fierce block that would ensue; though no one seems to see all this, while looks from all quarters indicate that our subject is an enemy to society at large.

Again, compare the civil and military powers upon a grand occasion, when royalty visits the city; when every pinnacle, post, pale, rail, corner, crevice, or coign of vantage is seized by the many headed, surging and swaying backwards and forwards to catch a glimpse of the expected pageant. Here, perhaps, we have squadrons of horse artillery—troopers braided, busbied, and plumed, with jingling arms and accoutrements, sent to keep the way, while the civil power watches them backing their horses, making them prance and curvet and thrust back the crowd, which only closes in as they pass, while the policeman looks down in contempt upon their evolutions.

But then comes the order: onward goes the fat inspector, and in goose step come his followers. Truncheons are drawn, men posted, and order reigns, for the crowd falls back—sometimes—but always loudly "chaffs." The policeman heeds not this though, for he knows the reward of merit, that is the common reward, and remembering all this at other times, he moves on the muffin boy, who revenges himself by yelling his wares with renewed energy as soon as he has turned the corner, while again law smiles contemptuously, and directs his attention to the orange girl and moves her off the pavement. Reward: a queer name; a grimace; and as soon as his back is turned, a handful of orange-peel scattered upon the slabs for the benefit of the passengers.

Watch the policeman on duty in one of the parks, and see with what jealous eye he looks after each nursemaid and her little flock, and how closely he follows when Mary or Hann wander by accident amidst the trees with Mars. The constable has no business to keep on passing and repassing with austere mien, robbing the lovers of their sweets, but he does so not from a personal hatred, but from an instinctive dislike—a class-like jealousy. He gazes upon the soldier as any game-loving squire would cast his eye upon a poacher even though encountered a hundred miles from his estate, for were the constable in power, Mars would be doomed to a life of celibacy. He forgives the maidens whom he knows to be attracted by the garish uniform, and he pities them for their weakness, but decides in his own mind that they require protection—such protection as a policeman could give them. Sometimes the soldier is encountered when promenading the pave with an eye upon some especial house in the policeman's beat. Now he may not have personal friends at more than half-a-dozen houses on his beat, but he holds every house as being under his surveillance, and his jealous eye follows the guard's every movement. He hunts him step by step as though a burglary were imminent, and so thoroughly disarranges the plans of the parties interested, that at last Mars slinks off with lowered crest, while the man in blue beats together his Berlin gloves, and crows internally over his discomfited adversary.

Who has not admired the mounted policeman? But is it not taking him at a disadvantage, and seeing him suffering under untoward circumstances over which he has no control, not even being able to control his horse? But he was never meant to be upon a horse. What is he there for? And of what use can he be? He looks most thoroughly out of place, and, to do him justice, quite ashamed of himself. Like the soldier of the ballad, he presents himself in public "with a helmet on his brow, and a sabre at his thigh;" but, sinking the helmet, what does he want with a sword—a policeman with a sword? But we are not sure that it is a sword. May it not be a Quaker or theatrical representation of the military sabre? We never knew any one yet who had seen it out of its sheath, or who had been blinded by its flash, so that after all it may be but a sham. If one takes a trip across the channel, emulating the daring of a Josef Sprouts, and then making the best of one's way to "Paris in France," there is no surprise felt at the sight of cocked hats, cocked—very fiercely cocked—moustachios, and swords belted upon *gendarme* or *sergent de ville*. The sword there seems appropriate—suited to the national character—the staff for thick-headed boss-frontal Bull, and the skewer or spit for the Gallic frog or cock. If John Bull, as a mob, gets excited, the powers that be consider him to be all the better for a little hammering about the head, while prick of sword or cut of sabre would goad him to madness. In *La France, au contraire*, blows cause the madness. Jean or Pierre, if "nobbled" upon the sconce, would rave about the affront put upon his honour. Men ready to cry *Mourir pour la Patrie*, can pocket no blows. Here, then, is shown the

wisdom of supplying the French man of order with a sword; a cut or thrust acts not as a goad, but surgically, for it lets out the mad revolutionary blood, and Jean or Pierre goes home the better for his lancing.

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