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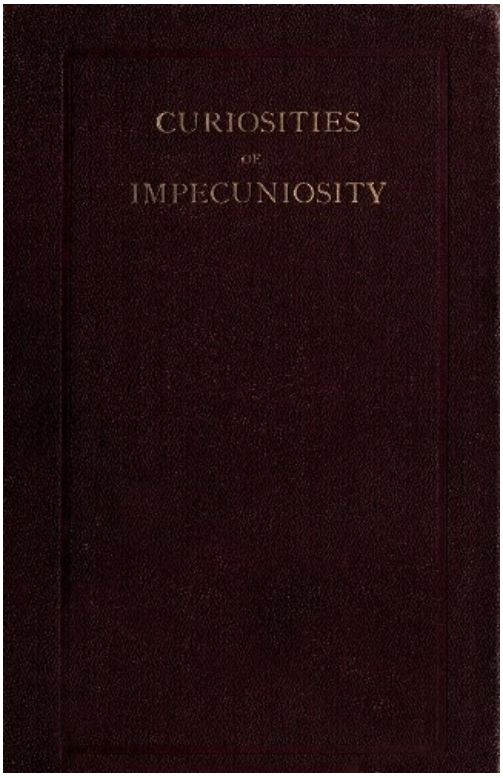

CURIOSITIES
OF
IMPECUNIOSITY.

BY
H. G. SOMERVILLE,
AUTHOR OF
"NOT YET," "SELF AND SELF-SACRIFICE," ETC.

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PREFACE.

It is customary for the proprietor when starting a newspaper or periodical to issue a notice to the public explaining—or purporting to explain—the *raison d'être* of the new venture, which notices, with very trifling exceptions, are to the effect that the projected journal "will supply a want long felt."

I might, in sending forth the following pages, state something similar with perfect truth, since if the little work be as successful as (I say it with all modesty) it ought to be, it will unquestionably *supply* a want long felt—by the author.

It is frequently averred nowadays that much that is written bears evidence of being of a non-practical character, and under these circumstances, I felt I should take a pardonable pride in being able to point to one volume in the English language to which this stigma could not be applied; for I flatter myself the subject of Impecuniosity is one with which I have long—too long—been practically familiar.

H. G. Somerville.

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CHAPTER I.

THE MORAL AND IMMORAL EFFECTS OF IMPECUNIOSITY.

“I wish the good old times would come again, when we were not quite so rich,” says Bridget Elia. “I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase now that you have money enough. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury, we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the for and against, and think what we might spare it out of, and what savings we could hit upon that would be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money we paid for it. Do you remember the brown suit which you made to hang upon you, it grew so threadbare, and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher which you dragged home late at night from Barker’s in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o’clock on the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late; and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper lighted out the relic from his dusty treasure-house, and when you lugged it home wishing it were twice as cumbersome, and when you presented it to me, and when we were exploring the perfection of it, and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak, was there no pleasure in being a poor man? Do you remember our pleasant walks to Enfield, and Potter’s Bar, and Waltham, when we had a holiday? Holidays and all other fun are gone now we are rich,—and the little hand-basket in which I used to deposit our day’s fare of savoury cold lamb, and how [Pg 2] you would pry about at noontide for some decent house where we might go in and produce our store, only paying for the ale that you must call for, and speculate upon the looks of the landlady. We had cheerful looks for one another, and would eat our plain food savourily. You are too proud to see a play anywhere now but in the pit. Do you remember where it was we sat when we saw the ‘Battle of Hexham,’ and ‘The Surrender of Calais,’ and Bannister and Mrs. Bland in ‘The Children of the Wood,’ when we squeezed out our shillings apiece to sit three or four times in a season in the one shilling gallery? You used to say that the gallery was the best place for seeing, and was the best place of all for enjoying a play socially, that the company we met there, not being in general readers of plays, were obliged to attend the more. I appeal to you whether, as a woman, I met generally with less attention and accommodation than I have since in more expensive situations in the house. You cannot see, you say, in the gallery now. I am sure we saw—and heard too—well enough then; but sight and all, I think, is gone with our poverty.”

But this is not the experience of every one. “Moralists,” Sydney Smith remarks, “tell you of the evils of wealth and station, and the happiness of poverty. I have been very poor the greater part of my life and have borne it, I believe, as well as most people; but I can safely say I have been happier for every guinea I have earned.”

Doctor Johnson, in addition to alleging that “Poverty is a great enemy to human happiness; it certainly destroys liberty, and it makes some virtues impracticable and others extremely difficult,” maintains that “poverty takes away so many means of doing good, and produces so much inability to resist evil, both natural and moral, that it is by all virtuous means to be avoided.” Burns is stronger still in his denunciation, exclaiming, “Poverty, thou half-sister of death, thou cousin-german of hell, where shall I find force of execration equal to the amplitude of thy demerits?” But in striking contrast to these, is that remarkable passage in George Sand’s ‘Consuelo,’ in which every known blessing and virtue is attributed to “the goddess—the good goddess—of poverty.”

Samuel Smiles is of opinion that “nothing sharpens a man’s wits like poverty. Hence many of the greatest men have originally been poor men. Poverty often purifies and braces a man’s morals. To spirited people difficult tasks are usually the most delightful ones. If we may rely upon the testimony of history, men are brave, truthful, and magnanimous, not in proportion [Pg 3] to their wealth, but in proportion to the smallness of their means.”

With this I agree to a certain extent; but I claim for impecuniosity certain charms and characteristics not associated with poverty. To me the former conveys the idea of a temporary shortness of funds; the latter of a chronic state of want.

I should also have preferred to say, “Nothing sharpens a man’s wits like impecuniosity,” for to many minds poverty, *pur et simple*, has been simply crushing.

A volume might be filled with the different opinions that have been expressed on this subject, and as there is abundant proof that many who have become great in science, literature, and art, have found insufficient means a stimulus to exertion, it must be conceded that poverty is a splendid thing for those who are equal to fighting against it.

Although impecuniosity has been most extensively experienced by actors, authors, and artists, many of the mighty in law, medicine, and the army and navy, have furnished instances of its universality, but comparatively few cases are to be found connected with commerce. Of course it may be urged that the struggles of business men are, with few exceptions, unrecorded; but still I think their experience on this subject is rather of "the trials of poverty."

The history of George Moore furnishes an interesting instance of the early struggles of a literally "commercial" man. When he came to London in 1825, he was possessed of a most modest amount of money; and on the day following his arrival in London he made application after application for employment without success, being sometimes received with laughter on account of his country-cut clothes and Cumberland dialect. At the establishment of Messrs. Meeking in Holborn, he was asked if he wanted a porter's situation. So broken-hearted was he at his many rebuffs, that he could not send a letter home, it was so blotted with tears.

At last he was engaged by Mr. Ray, of Soho Square, at a salary of £30 a year, and bargained with a man driving a pony-cart to convey the box containing all his personal effects. They had not proceeded far when Moore missed the man: pony, cart, and trunk had vanished.

The poor fellow sat down on a doorstep almost broken-hearted at his misfortune.

After waiting for two hours, not knowing what to do for the best, he beheld a pony-cart approaching, and his joy may be imagined when he recognised the identical man with his identical trunk. [Pg 4]

The carrier, who had called somewhere in a bye-street and so missed Moore, did not scruple to laugh at him for his "greenness" in trusting a stranger. In gratitude, young Moore proffered the man his whole capital, consisting of nine shillings, which the driver declined, saying "he had agreed for five, and five was all he wanted," an instance of honesty which Mr. Moore, the merchant, never forgot.

Want of money does not always demoralise. Andrew Marvell, the son of a Yorkshire minister and schoolmaster, entered Trinity College, Cambridge, at the early age of thirteen. Decoyed from home by the Jesuits, he was discovered by his father in a bookseller's in London, and induced to return to college, where he took his B.A. degree in 1628. He then appears to have travelled considerably in France and Italy, while from 1663 to 1665 he was secretary to the Embassy to Muscovy, Sweden, and Denmark. In 1660 he was chosen to represent his native town, Kingston-on-Hull, in Parliament. Here he made himself so obnoxious to the governing party, that his life was threatened, and he was forced to go into hiding. His conspicuous ability and marvellous wit were acknowledged by all, and appreciated by Charles II., who took pleasure in his company, and on one occasion instructed his Lord Treasurer to ferret him out, and ascertain in what way he could help him. At this time Marvell was living in a court off the Strand, up two pair of stairs, and there Lord Danby, abruptly opening the door, discovered him writing. He suggested that the Treasurer had mistaken his way; but his lordship replied, "Not now I have found Mr. Marvell;" adding that "His Majesty wished to know what he could do to serve him." Marvell replied that "it was not in His Majesty's power to serve him;" adding that "he knew full well the nature of Courts, having been in many; and that whosoever is distinguished by the favour of the prince, is expected to vote in his interest." Lord Danby told him that "His Majesty, from the just sense he had of his merit alone, desired to know whether there was any place at Court he could be pleased with." The answer to this was that "he could not with honour accept the offer, since if he did he must either be ungrateful to the king in voting against him, or false to his country in giving in to the measures of the Court. The only favour therefore which he begged of His Majesty was, that he would esteem him as faithful a subject as any he had, and more truly in his interest by refusing his offers, than he could have been by embracing them." After this Lord Danby said that "the king had ordered Mr. Marvell £1000, which he hoped he would receive till he could think of something farther to ask His Majesty;" whereupon Marvell called to his serving-boy,— [Pg 5]

"Jack, what had I for dinner yesterday?"

"The little shoulder of mutton."

"Right! What shall I have to-day?"

"The blade bone boiled."

"Right! You see, my lord, my dinner is provided, and I do not want the piece of paper."

The Lord Treasurer departed, finding his mission vain; and, shortly afterwards, Marvell sent his boy out to borrow a guinea from a friend. The incorruptible integrity he had displayed was by no means due to affluence.

Another historical case where poverty and patriotism have been blended is that of Admiral

Rodney. At the general election in 1768 he was returned for Northampton, after a violent contest, the expense of which, combined with a fatal passion for gaming, compelled him to fly from the importunities of his creditors.

While residing in Paris he is said to have been occasionally in want of the veriest trifle for necessaries, which fact becoming known, the French Government, through the Duc de Biron, offered him high rank in their navy. His reply was worthy of a sailor and a gentleman. “Monsieur le Duc,” said he, “my distresses have driven me from my country, but no temptation can estrange me from her service; had this offer been voluntary on your part, I should have considered it an insult; but it proceeds from a source that can do no wrong.”

The foregoing illustrations of the inability of impecuniosity to drag certain characters from off their high pedestal of honour, are unfortunately counterbalanced by the considerably too numerous instances of those who have not been proof against its degrading effects. The characteristics of such as have succumbed are naturally the antitheses of those just referred to; instead of strong, healthy, moral minds, their natures are found to be more or less weak, selfish, and in every case wanting, to some extent, in self-respect. The last-named attribute undoubtedly supplying the chief cause of defection.

In this category may be placed Desiderius Erasmus, one of the most remarkable scholars of the 15th and 16th centuries, if not, as is considered by some, one of the most illustrious men [Pg 6] that ever lived. The benefits that he conferred on the world at large by his profound and extensive erudition are so priceless that it seems a shame to pillory one so revered; but “necessity has no law,” and as he was chronically necessitous his weakness on one occasion must be laid bare.

Independently of his failing to rise superior to the want of money, which will be referred to directly, it will be seen that his character lacked nobility, by his own confession. He was at the time of Luther pre-eminent in the world of letters, his fame as a student of the deepest research was world-wide, acknowledged not only by the sovereigns and popes of Europe, but by our own monarch, Henry VIII., and by all the men of learning of that age. Thus his power and influence were immense, and it is deeply to be regretted that his cowardice should have prevented him from espousing the doctrines of Luther, since there is no doubt he believed in them.

> “Many loved truth and lavished life’s best oil
> Amid the dust of books to find her,
> Content at last for guerdon of their toil
> With the cast mantle she had left behind her.
> Many in sad faith sought for her,
> Many with crossed hands sighed for her,
> But these our brothers fought for her,
> At life’s dear peril wrought for her,
> So loved her that they died for her.”

Erasmus was not one of those who died for the love of truth, but rather one who “with crossed hands, sighed for her,” since in one of his letters he says,—

“Wherein could I have assisted Luther if I had declared myself for him, and shared the danger along with him? Only thus far, that, instead of one man, two would have perished. I cannot conceive what he means by writing with such a spirit (so fearlessly); one thing I know too well, that he hath brought a great odium upon the lovers of literature. It is true that he hath given us many wholesome doctrines and many good counsels, and I wish he had not defeated the effect of them by his intolerable faults. But if he had written everything in the most unexceptionable manner I had no inclination to die for the sake of truth. Every man has not the courage requisite to make a martyr; and I am afraid, that if I were put to the trial, I should imitate St. Peter.”

Deliciously truthful this, is it not? The practical way in which he reveals his creed, “self- [Pg 7] preservation is the first law of nature,” is particularly interesting, more especially as it is so thoroughly in keeping with the sentiments displayed on the occasion when from want of money he penned the following letter to his friend James Battus, beseeching him to dun the Marchioness of Vere, in the following terms:

“You must go to her and excuse my shyness on the ground that I cannot tolerate explaining my difficulties in person. Tell her the need I am in. That Italy is the place to get a degree; explain to her how much more honour I am likely to do her than those theologians she keeps about her. They give forth mere commonplaces. I write what will last for ever. Tell her that fellows like them are to be met with everywhere—the like of me only appears in the course of many ages—*i.e.* if you don’t mind drawing the long-bow in the cause of friendship. What a discredit it would be to her should St. Jerome”—whose works he was preparing—“appear with discredit for the want of a few gold pieces.”

That the opinions expressed were perfectly truthful there is no gainsaying; but the taste, or rather, want of it, that dictated such an epistle is pitiable, and materially mars the character of one who as far as learning is concerned was indisputably great.

If culture could avail against the deteriorating effects of impecuniosity the career of Orator Henley would have been a different one. The son of a Leicestershire vicar, and educated at

St. John’s, Cambridge, he attained considerable eminence as a linguist, and while keeping a school in his native place compiled his ‘Universal Grammar,’ which was written in ten languages. He afterwards came to be regarded as a sort of ecclesiastical outlaw, having a room in Newport Market, Leicester Square, where he started as a quack divine and public lecturer, Sundays being devoted to divinity, Wednesdays and Thursdays to secular orations, the charge for admission one shilling. He afterwards migrated to Clare Market, and became a favourite among the butchers; but though gifted with much oratorical power, he obtained but a precarious subsistence. When at his pecuniary worst he seems to have been at his inventive best, and in proportion to the lowness of his funds his audacity rose. On one occasion when particularly pressed he advertised a meeting for shoemakers to witness a new invention for making shoes, undertaking to make a pair in presence of the audience in an incredibly short space. When the evening arrived, and the room was filled with the [Pg 8] followers of Crispin, Mr. Henley simply cut the tops off a pair of old boots, and thereby illustrating the motto to his advertisement, “Omne majus continent in se minus” (“The greater includes the less”).[1]

Dr. Howard, the Rector of St. George’s, Southwark, and Chaplain to the Dowager Princess of Wales, towards the close of the last century, was invariably short of money, a fact pretty well known to his tradesmen. On one occasion he ordered a canonical wig from a peruke-maker’s in Leicester Fields, and the porter had instructions not to leave it till the bill was paid.

Arrived at the rectory, the man asked for the doctor.

“I’ve brought your wig home, sir.”

“Oh, ah,” replied the doctor; “quite right—you can leave it. Just put it down there.”

“No, I can’t leave it, sir—that is, without the money.”

“Oh, very well, then. I’ll try it on.”

The man handed him the wig, and as soon as the doctor put it on, he said to the messenger, —

“This article has been bought and delivered; if you dare to touch it, I will prosecute you for robbery.”

Dr. Howard once preached from the text, “Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all”—a passage gratifying to the feelings of an audience including many of his creditors. He dwelt at considerable length on the blessings and duty of patience, till it was time to close, and then said, “Now, brethren, I am come to the second part of my discourse, which is, ‘And I will pay ye all,’ *but that I shall defer to a future opportunity*.”

Colton, the author of ‘Lacon,’ who became vicar of the poor living of Kew and Petersham, must likewise be included in the list of those who have succumbed to circumstances. Finding [Pg 9] himself unable to pay the price of apartments in the neighbourhood of his living, he transported his gun, fishing-rod, and few books (one of which was De Foe’s ‘History of the Devil’) to Soho, where he rented a couple of rooms in a small house overlooking St. Anne’s burial-ground. There he wrote his book of ‘Aphorisms,’ a broken phial placed in a saucer serving him as an inkstand. His copy was written on scraps of paper and blank sides of letters, and he dined at an eating-house, or cooked a chop for himself. At one time he opened a wine-cellar in another person’s name under a Methodist chapel in Dean Street, Soho, a position for a spiritual adviser which would scarcely be tolerated even in these days of considerable religious liberty.

Many amusing stories are told of Joe Haines, a comedian of the time of Charles II., sometimes called “Count” Haines. It is said that he was arrested one morning by two bailiffs for a debt of £20, when he saw a bishop, to whom he was related, passing along in his coach. With ready resource he immediately saw a loophole for escape, and, turning to the men he said, “Let me speak to his lordship, to whom I am well known, and he will pay the debt and your charges into the bargain.”

The bailiffs thought they might venture this, as they were within two or three yards of the coach, and acceded to his request. Joe boldly advanced and took his hat off to the bishop. His lordship ordered the coach to stop, when Joe whispered to the divine that the two men were suffering from such scruples of conscience that he feared they would hang themselves, suggesting that his lordship should invite them to his house, and promise to satisfy them. The bishop agreed, and calling to the bailiffs, he said, “You two men come to me to-morrow morning, and I will satisfy you.”

The men bowed and went away pleased, and early the next day waited on his lordship, who, when they were ushered in, said, “Well, my men, what are these scruples of conscience?”

“Scruples?” replied one of them, “we have no scruples! We are bailiffs, my lord, who yesterday arrested your cousin, Joe Haines, for a debt of £20, and your lordship kindly promised to satisfy us.”

The trick was strange, but the result was stranger, for his lordship, either appreciating its cleverness, or considering himself bound by the promise he had unintentionally given, there and then settled with the men in full.

John Rich, manager of the Lincoln's Inn Fields and Covent Garden Theatres, 1681-1761, was another dramatic delinquent. It was owing to his marvellous ability as harlequin that pantomime achieved its popularity. His gesticulation is said to have been so perfectly expressive of his meaning that every motion of his hand or head was a kind of dumb eloquence, readily understood by the audience. One evening, when returning from the theatre in a cab, having ordered the coachman to drive to the "Sun," a tavern in Clare Market, he threw himself out of the coach window and through the open window of the tavern parlour, just as the driver was about to draw up. The man then descended from the box, touched his hat, and stood waiting for his passenger to alight. Finding at length there was no one visible he besought a few blessings on the scoundrel who had imposed upon him, remounted his box, and was about to drive off, when Rich, who had been watching, vaulted back into the vehicle, and, putting his head out, asked, "where the devil he was driving to?" Almost paralyzed with fear the driver got down again, but could not be persuaded to take his fare, though he was offered a shilling for himself, exclaiming, "No no, that won't do. I know you too well for all your shoes; and so Mr. Devil, for once you're outwitted." In addition to his successful pantomimes, his production of the 'Beggar's Opera' was a wonderful hit; but he seems never to have been well off, and was at one time in such difficulties that he hit upon the clever expedient of taking a house situated in three different counties in order to free himself from the attentions of sheriffs' officers. [Pg 10]

One name must not be omitted from this section of the subject, that of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. His adroitness in profiting by his very practical jokes commenced soon after his leaving Harrow, when spending a few days at Bristol. He wanted a new pair of boots, but, not having money to pay for them, ordered a pair from two bootmakers, to be sent home on the morning of his departure, payment being promised on delivery. When the first tradesman arrived he complained of the fit of one boot, and when the second came he objected to his make of the boot for the other foot. Each bootmaker took a boot back to be stretched. When the dupes called next day, each displaying a boot, they found that Sheridan had departed in the fellow pieces of their property.

Later in life his difficulties became chronic, but his ingenuity was generally equal to them. Having arranged to give a banquet to the leaders of the Opposition, he found himself on the morning of the event without port or sherry, his wine-merchant having positively refused to supply any more without payment. In this dilemma he sent for Chalier, and told him he wished to settle his account. The wine-merchant, much delighted, proposed running home for it, when Sheridan stopped him with "What do you say to dining with me to-day? Lord This, and Sir So-and-so That" (mentioning several celebrities), "will be here." The offer was accepted with enthusiasm, the merchant leaving his office early in order to dress for the occasion. As soon as he made his appearance Sheridan despatched a messenger to the clerk at the office, to the effect that Mr. Chalier desired so many dozen of different kinds of wine sent at once, which instructions were promptly executed, the Burgundy, hock, &c., &c. arriving just in time for the dinner. [Pg 11]

One Friday evening at Drury Lane, just after the half-price money had been taken, Sheridan was informed by his treasurer that unless a certain amount could be raised there was not sufficient to pay the salaries of even the subordinates, and the house would have to close the following Monday. After making certain suggestions which were voted useless by his business-man, Sherry took a look at the meagrely-filled house, and calling a servant, said to him, "You see that stout, goodtempered-looking man in such and such a box?" "Yes, sir." "Immediately the act-drop is down go to him; have a boy who can bow gracefully precede you with a pair of wax candles. Open the box-door, and in a voice loud enough to be heard by everyone, say, 'Mr. Sheridan requests the pleasure of a private interview with you, sir.' Treat him with the greatest attention, and see that a bottle of the best port and a couple of wine-glasses are placed in my study." These directions were all carried out, and when the manager was alone with his visitor, after expressing the great pleasure he always experienced in seeing any one from Staffordshire, he said, "I think you told me you came to London twice a year." "Yes," was the reply, "January and June, to receive my dividends. I have been to the bank to-day and got my £600." "Ah you are in Consols, whilst I, alas, am Reduced and can get nothing till April, when you know the interest is paid, and till then I shall be in great distress." "Oh," said his constituent, "let not that make you uneasy; if you give me the power of attorney to receive the money for you, I can let you have £300, which I shall not want till then." "Only a real friend," said Sheridan, "could have made such a proposition." The £300 duly changed hands, and when April came the power of attorney was handed to Sheridan to sign, "I never spoke of Consols in Reduced," said he, "I only spoke of my Consols being reduced. Unhappy is the man who cannot understand the weight of prepositions." The Stafford man went to Sheridan in a fearful rage, but the latter was as cool as a cucumber. He made a clean breast of it, and told all. "But," he said, "my dear sir, I am now commanded to go to the Prince Regent, to whom I shall narrate your noble conduct. My carriage is waiting, and I can take you to Carlton House." The creditor was delighted. He shook Sherry by the hand, exclaiming, "I forgive you, never mention the debt again," to which Sheridan readily assented, and we may be sure kept his word for once. The carriage came, into which both entered, but when it arrived at Carlton House Sheridan alighted, closed the door, and told the coachman to drive the gentleman to his hotel. The Stafford man expostulated that he understood he was going into Carlton House, when Sheridan calmly told him, "That's another mistake of yours," and of course, though his statement inferred as much, he only said he would take his constituent *to* Carlton House. It goes [Pg 12]

without saying that at the next election the Staffordshire elector voted on the other side.

There is no doubt that at last Sheridan was so desperately involved that his life became, “not to put too fine a point on it,” that of a schemer. He lived in an atmosphere of duns, but such a thorough master was he of the subject that it was the tradesmen who eventually were “done” by him. It was customary for them to assemble early in the morning to catch him before he went out, and when informed “Mr. Sheridan is not down yet, sir,” they were shown into the rooms on each side of the entrance-hall. When he had finished his breakfast he would say, “Are those doors all shut, John?” and on being informed that they were, would deliberately walk out as pleased as though he had obtained a great moral victory.

CHAPTER II.

[Pg 13]

IMPECUNIOSITY OF THE GREAT.

It must be admitted that impecuniosity is impartial, the peer and the peasant being equally open to its visits, and the Sovereign, under certain conditions, as liable to its influence as the subject. Edward the Third was compelled to pawn his jewels, and his imperial crown three times, once abroad, and twice to Sir John Wosenham, his banker, in whose custody the crown remained eight years. Henry the Fifth was also under the necessity of pawning his crown and the silver table and stools which he had from Spain. The Black Prince made the same use of his plate, and Queen Elizabeth was obliged to part with some of her jewels.

More than two centuries ago when Clerkenwell was a sort of Court quarter of London, and could boast amongst other distinguished residents the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle, this couple, both of whom are remembered by their literary eccentricities, had more than once to patronise the pawnbroker. The duke, who was a devoted Royalist, after his defeat at Marston Moor, retired with his wife to the Continent, and with many privations owing to pecuniary embarrassments suffered an exile of eighteen years, chiefly in Antwerp, in a house which belonged to the widow of Rubens.

Many of our most illustrious families have been indebted to the exertions or the genius of some humble ancestor. The case of Charles Abbot, afterwards Lord Tenterden, is a typical one. He was the son of a Canterbury barber, and at the age of seven was admitted on the foundation of the King’s School in that town, where he soon attracted attention by his industry and intelligence. At an early age he much wished to become a chorister, and was so disappointed when he failed that in after years, when visiting the Cathedral with Mr. Justice Richards, who commended the voice of a singer in the choir, his lordship exclaimed, “Ah, that is the only man I ever envied. When at school in this town, we were candidates for a [Pg 14] chorister’s place and he obtained it.” When seventeen, there was no prospect for the clever youth but the drudgery of trade, and on this becoming known in the school there was a general wish expressed that his perseverance and ability should be rewarded. To private generosity he was indebted for his outfit, the trustees conferring a small exhibition upon him, and adding a pittance which enabled him to live, with rigid economy, until he took his B.A. degree. When asked by Mr. Lamont, the father of the lady to whom he was engaged, what means he had to maintain a wife, he replied, “The books in this room and two pupils in the next.”

Sir Peter Laurie, when Lord Mayor of London, said at a dinner given to the judges: “What a country is this we live in! In other parts of the world there is no chance except for men of high birth and aristocratic connections, but here genius and industry are sure to be rewarded. You see before you the example of myself, the chief magistrate of the metropolis of this great empire, with the Chief Justice of England sitting at my right hand, both now in the highest offices of the State, and both sprung from the very dregs of the people.” There are many men who would have been anything but pleased at this reference to their humble extraction; but it was not distasteful to his lordship.

Macready, in recounting a visit to Canterbury Cathedral, says he was shown by the verger the spot where a little shop once stood, and was informed that when Lord Tenterden last visited the Cathedral, he said to his son, “Charles, you see this little shop. I have brought you here on purpose to show it you. In that shop your grandfather used to shave for a penny. That is the proudest reflection of my life. While you live never forget that, my dear Charles,” an injunction which, coming from a Chief Justice of England who died worth £120,000, ought to have a salutary effect on upstarts.

The equally famous Lord Erskine, though a man of gentle birth, was nevertheless indebted, to a certain extent, to impecuniosity for the greatness he achieved, since that impelled him to the spirited defence of Captain Baillie, which attracted the attention of all England. Called to the bar on the 3rd July, 1778, Erskine made his first appearance in public on the 24th November. Previous to this time he had been unknown. His first brief fell to his lot in this

way: A certain Captain Baillie, who, for gallant services, had been appointed to a post in Greenwich Hospital, discovered the gravest abuses there, and brought the state of things to [Pg 15] the notice of those in power, but being unable to get them remedied, determined to publish the facts of the case. His statement implicated Lord Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who, to serve his political purposes, had filled the vacant posts at the Hospital with certain landsmen. The Board of Admiralty immediately suspended the captain, and a criminal information for libel was lodged against him, the case exciting the greatest public interest. During the vacation Erskine had met Captain Baillie at the house of a mutual friend, and, utterly unconscious of his presence, had, after dinner, so strongly censured the shameful practices ascribed to Lord Sandwich that the captain immediately inquired who the young fellow was, and on being told that Erskine had formerly been in the navy, but had recently been called to the bar, he exclaimed with warmth, "Then that's the man I'll have for my counsel!"

In due course this now historic trial came on, when the young barrister's marvellous speech created an impression called by Lord Campbell, "the most wonderful forensic effort of which we have any account in our annals. It was the *début* of a barrister just called, and wholly unpractised in public speaking, before a court crowded with men of the greatest distinction, belonging to all parties of the State. He came after four eminent counsel, who might have been supposed to have exhausted the subject. He was called to order by a venerable judge, whose word had been law in that hall above a quarter of a century. His exclamation, 'I will *bring* him' (Lord Sandwich) 'before the Court!' and the crushing denunciation of Lord Sandwich, in which he was enabled to persevere, from the sympathy of the bystanders, and even of the judges, who, in strictness, ought to have checked his irregularity, are as soul-stirring as anything in this species of eloquence presented to us by ancient or modern times." As Erskine walked along the hall after the rising of the judges, attorneys flocked around him with their briefs. When asked how he had the courage to stand up so boldly against Lord Mansfield, he replied that he fancied he could feel his little children plucking at his robe, and that he heard them saying, "*Now, father, is the time to get us bread!*"

Lord Eldon's life furnishes abundant proof that he was perfectly familiar with adversity. The son of a "fitter" employed in conveying coals in barges from the pits to the different ports on the Tyne, John Scott was born at Newcastle on the 4th June, 1751, and after being educated [Pg 16] at the Grammar School in the town would have been apprenticed to his father's business but for the remonstrances of his brother William (afterwards Lord Stowell), who had obtained an Oxford scholarship, and subsequently a fellowship at the University. The success of the one son induced the father to send John also to college, where he at first studied for the church. While at Oxford he made a runaway match with Miss Bessy Surtees, the daughter of a Newcastle banker. The young couple went to the Queen's Head, at Morpeth, but on the third morning of their married life their funds were exhausted, and they had no home to go to. Mrs. Scott was naturally very much upset at the predicament in which they were placed, but while lamenting it she suddenly caught sight of a fine wolf-dog belonging to the family, called Loup, whose presence at Morpeth was to her the joyous sign that help was at hand. In a few moments Mr. Henry Scott, her husband's brother, entered the room. John Scott had written a repentant letter from Morpeth to his father, which had the desired effect, and the younger brother had been sent to announce pardon to the offending couple, and to invite them to take up their abode under the parental roof. The year of grace allowed for retaining a fellowship after marriage having elapsed, Mr. Scott abandoned the thought of taking holy orders and studied law. He was called to the bar in 1776, when he says, "Bessy and I thought all our troubles were over, and we were to be rich almost immediately." This golden dream was however speedily dissipated, for during the first year the total amount of his professional income was ten shillings and sixpence. But when Lord Chancellor, and living in a magnificent mansion in the vicinity of Hyde Park, he often referred to this period of poverty as the happiest time of his life, for then, he maintained, his wife, to whom he was always passionately attached, was able to show him attentions never so freely bestowed when Society asserted its claims on them. Like Lord Tenterden he gloried in the obstacles he had overcome, and used to point to a small house in Cursitor Street, saying "There was my first perch; many a time have I run down to Fleet Market to buy sixpennyworth of sprats for supper."

Edward Lord Thurlow, who rose to the woolsack in 1778, was not always affluent. After being called to the bar in 1758 he seldom had the means of going on circuit, and it is asserted that on one occasion he reached the assizes on a horse that *he had taken out on trial from London*. Lord Chief Justice Kenyon is found guilty of having been poor on the evidence of Horne Tooke, his constant companion when they were students, who, with a [Pg 17] friend named Dunning, used to dine with him in vacation-time at a small eating-house in Chancery Lane, for 7½*d.* a head. Says Tooke, "Dunning and myself were generous for we gave the girl who waited on us a penny a piece, but Kenyon rewarded her with a halfpenny, and sometimes with only a promise."

Sir Samuel Romilly also says, "At a later period of my life—after a success at the bar which my wildest and most sanguine dreams had never painted to me—when I was gaining an income of £8000 or £9000 a year—I have often reflected how all that prosperity had arisen out of the pecuniary difficulties and confined circumstances of my father."

Lord Campbell, before he was Lord Chief Justice and Lord Chancellor of England, often

knew the inconvenience of want of money. The son of the Rev. Dr. Geo. Campbell, second minister of Cupar, Fifeshire, he was educated at the local Grammar School and the University of St. Andrew's, and though intended originally for the ministry, after spending some years at college gave up the idea of the church, and went up to London to try some more congenial occupation. His first appointment was as tutor to a Mr. Webster, and while engaged in that capacity he penned the following letter:

"My dear brother,—I live very economically; I dine at home for a shilling, go to the coffee-house once a day, 4*d.*, to the theatre once a week, 3*s.* 6*d.* My pen will keep me in pocket-money. I this day begin a job which I must finish in a fortnight, and for which I am promised two guineas, but alas! Willy Thompson paymaster. He owes me divers yellow-boys already. I go no farther than write the history of the last war in India for him till he pays me all."

After this he obtained the post of reporter and dramatic critic to the *Morning Chronicle*, but in 1800 he determined to try the law, and entered himself a student of Lincoln's Inn. At this time, however, there was a strong feeling against one of their set having anything to do with journalism, so that his position was uncomfortable and mortifying, and his reporting prevented him from forming any acquaintance with his fellow-students. He entered a special pleader's office in 1804, and in June 1805, was able exultingly to announce that "he was no longer a newspaper man." Called to the bar in 1806, he became a bencher in 1827; member of Parliament for Stafford in 1830; Solicitor-General in 1832; Attorney-General in 1834; Lord Chancellor of Ireland in 1841; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1846 (in which year [Pg 18] he produced his celebrated work 'The Lives of the Chancellors'); Lord Chief Justice in 1850, and Lord Chancellor in 1859.

Sir Rowland Hill, to whom we are indebted for the penny postage system, was the son of a Birmingham schoolmaster, a man of simple, but high character. An outbuilding attached to their house contained benches, blacksmith's forge, and a vice. Here Rowland and his brother spent much spare time and cash, which latter he remarks was very scanty. "Ever since I can remember," he writes, "I have had a taste for mechanics, but the best mechanician wants materials and materials cost money," and this want caused his brother and himself on Good Friday morning to turn tradesmen. They had been sent with a basket to buy a quantity of hot cross buns for the family and as they went along were much amused by the itinerant vendors, who were calling out, as was the custom in Birmingham then,

> "Hot cross buns! Hot cross buns! One a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns,
> Sugar 'em, and butter 'em, and clap 'em in your muns, one a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns."

On their way home the boys in the pure spirit of fun began to repeat the cry, Matthew, the elder, being a capable mimic; and to their surprise they found the public respond to their offers, the result being that the youngsters soon "sold out," and had to return for more to the wholesale establishment, the difference in this case between buying and selling being, as is usual, very well worth the trouble. When the family lived at Hill Top, his mother presented Rowland with a portion of the garden for his own use, covered with horehound, which he was about to root out to make way for his flowers, when he was given to understand that the horehound possessed a monetary value. Immediately on discovering this, he cut it up carefully, tied it in bundles, and borrowing a basket from his mother started off to the market-place, where he took up his position with all the air of a regular trader, but was saved the bother of retail dealing by disposing of his entire stock for eightpence to a woman standing near, who he presumed made a hundred per cent. by the transaction, though with true business tact she complained of her purchase, and told him to tell his mother, "she must tie up bigger bunches next time." The proceeds of the sale went to purchase some tools and materials for the mechanical contrivances spoken of.

The early years of Benjamin Franklin (one of a family of seventeen) were uncongenially [Pg 19] spent with his father, a soap-boiler and tallow-chandler, and his brother, a printer. When seventeen years old he sold his books and took a passage from Boston to New York, whence he was advised to proceed to Philadelphia in search of work. On arriving there he tells us that he was "fatigued with walking, rowing, and the want of sleep, and very hungry: my whole stock of cash consisted in a single dollar, and about a shilling in copper coin, which I gave to the boatmen for my passage. At first they refused it, on account of my having rowed: but I insisted on their taking it. Man is sometimes more generous when he has little money than when he has plenty, perhaps to prevent his being thought to have but little. I walked towards the top of the street, gazing about till near Market Street, where I met a boy with bread. I had often made a meal of dry bread, and inquiring where he had bought it, I went immediately to the baker's he directed me to. I asked for biscuits, meaning such as we had in Boston. That sort it seems was not made in Philadelphia. I then asked for a threepenny loaf, and was told they had none. Not knowing the different prices, nor the names of the different sorts of bread, I told him to give me three pennyworth of any sort. He gave me accordingly, three great puffy rolls. I was surprised at the quantity, but took it; and having no room in my pockets, walked off with a roll under each arm, and eating the other. Thus I went up Market Street, as far as Fourth Street, passing by the door of Mr. Read, my future wife's father, when she, standing at the door, saw me, and thought I made, as I certainly did, a most awkward, ridiculous appearance. Then I turned and went down Chestnut Street, and part of Walnut Street, eating my roll all the way, and coming round, found myself again at Market Street Wharf, near the boat I came in, to which I went for a draught of the river

water; gave my other rolls to a woman and her child that came down the river in the boat with us, and were waiting to go farther. Thus refreshed, I walked again up the street, which by this time had many clean-dressed people in it, who were all walking the same way. I joined them, and thereby was led into the great Meeting House of the Quakers, near the market. I sat down among them, and after looking round awhile and hearing nothing said, being very drowsy through labour and want of rest the preceding night, I fell fast asleep, and continued so till the meeting broke up, when some one was kind enough to rouse me. [Pg 20] This, therefore, was the first house I was in, or slept in, in Philadelphia."

A strange beginning to the career of one who, in addition to his valuable discoveries in electricity, lived to attain the highest honours his country could bestow, and to be the ambassador to foreign countries; whose marvellous intelligence carried out diplomatic undertakings which undoubtedly affected the destinies of nations. It is interesting to note, now that electricity plays such a leading part in the inventions of the day, that when Franklin made his discovery of the identity of lightning and electricity, it was sneered at, and people asked, "Of what use is it?" To which he replied, "What is the use of a child? It may become a man."

William Cobbett is another example of the wonderful results to be attained by temperance, frugality, and unflagging industry, who, originally an uninteresting yokel, rose to be a power in the land, to edit political papers, to write political pamphlets (one of which had a circulation of 100,000), and to pen, amongst other most important matter, a volume of 'Advice to Young Men,' which, if followed by the rising generation, could not fail to make them more worthy the name of Englishmen. At the time referred to, when he was eleven years old, he was employed in the Bishop of Winchester's garden at Farnham Castle, and happening to hear of the royal gardens at Kew, he thought that he should like to be employed there, started off next morning with only the clothes he was wearing, and sixpence halfpenny in his pocket, he arrived at Richmond towards evening, having expended threepence halfpenny on bread and cheese and small beer and as he jogged along tired and weary with his walk of thirty miles he was attracted to a bookseller's window, in which was displayed a second-hand copy of Swift's 'Tale of a Tub,' price 3*d.* He expended his remaining coppers on its purchase, sat down in an adjoining field, read till he could see no longer, then putting the book into his pocket he dropped off to sleep by the side of a haystack. In the morning, roused by the birds, he continued his journey to Kew Gardens, where he succeeded in getting engaged by an old Scotch gardener. A year, or two after this, when he was working again in his native town of Farnham, the old idea of getting into a larger field of action came back to him, and while waiting one day for some young women whom he had arranged to escort to Guildford fair, he was tempted by the sight of the London coach, secured the one vacant place, and before he had time to realise the importance of the step, was being whirled away in the direction of the metropolis. When he arrived the next [Pg 21] morning at the Saracen's Head on Ludgate Hill, his possessions amounted to two shillings and sixpence, but fortunately he had managed to interest a hop merchant, one of his fellow-passengers, who took him home, and in the course of a day or two managed to obtain a situation for him in a lawyer's office. Here he soon discovered that he had made a "miserable exchange," for his want of skill as a penman made his duties exceptionally irksome, and his close, confined lodging was very wretched to one coming fresh from fields musical with the sweet songsters of the spring.

Eight months later, he enlisted in the 54th regiment of foot, and was ordered to Nova Scotia in twelve months. Here in five years, by temperance and industry, he managed (doing clerical work for the quarter-master and pay-sergeant) to save £150, and it was while serving with this regiment that he acquired a knowledge of Lindley Murray. "I learned grammar," he says, "when I was a private soldier on the pay of sixpence a day. The edge of my berth was my seat to study in; my knapsack was my book-case; a bit of board lying on my lap was my writing-table, and the task did not demand anything like a year of my life. I had no money to purchase candle or oil; in winter time I could rarely get any evening light but that of the fire, and only my turn even of that. And if I, under such circumstances, and without parent or friend to advise or encourage me, accomplished this undertaking, what excuse can there be for any youth, however poor, however pressed with business, or however circumstanced as to room or other conveniences? To buy a pen or a sheet of paper, I was compelled to forego some portion of food, though in a state of half-starvation; I had no moment of time that I could call my own, and I had to read and to write amidst the talking, laughing, singing, whistling, and brawling of at least half a score of the most thoughtless of men, and that, too, in the hours of their freedom from all control. Think not lightly of the farthing that I had to give now and then, for pen, ink, or paper! That farthing was, alas! a great sum to me! I was tall as I am now; I had great health and great exercise. The whole of the money not expended for us at market was twopence a week for each man. I remember, and well I may, that on one occasion, I, after all necessary expenses, had on a Friday made shifts to have a halfpenny in reserve, which I had destined for the purchase of a red herring in the morning; but when I pulled off my clothes at night, so hungry then as to be hardly able to endure life, I found that I had lost my halfpenny! I buried my head under the [Pg 22] miserable sheet and rug, and cried like a child!"

Wonderful, however, as were the achievements of Franklin and Cobbett in self-education, they were both eclipsed by Elihu Burritt. The son of a shoemaker, he was at the age of sixteen apprenticed to the "village blacksmith," and from that time applied himself to the

study of languages with such success, that he mastered French, German, Italian, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, Bohemian, Polish, Danish, Syriac, Samaritan, Turkish, Ethiopic and Persian. To understand how he accomplished this, we take a glance at his diary.

"*Monday, June 18*: Headache; forty pages Cuvier's 'Theory of the Earth,' sixty-four pages French, eleven hours' forging. *Tuesday*: sixty-five lines of Hebrew, thirty pages of French, ten pages Cuvier's 'Theory,' eight lines Syriac, ten ditto Danish, ten ditto Bohemian, nine ditto Polish, fifteen names of stars, ten hours' forging. *Wednesday*: twenty-five lines Hebrew, fifty pages of astronomy, seven hours' forging. *Thursday*: fifty-five lines Hebrew, eight ditto Syriac, eleven hours' forging. *Friday*: unwell; twelve hours' forging. *Saturday*: unwell; fifty pages of Natural History, ten hours' forging. *Sunday*: lessons for Bible class."

There were times when, for a short season, he abandoned the anvil, and devoted his whole time to study; but after a few months' absence from the forge he would return to earn money for his support, and for the purchase of books. Hearing one day of an Antiquarian Library at Worcester, U.S., he determined to go there to work as a journeyman, for the sake of obtaining access to such rare books, and started off to walk. It was a long journey, and when he reached Boston Bridge, footsore and weary, he encountered a waggon being driven by a boy, who was going to Worcester, forty miles distant. All his valuables consisted of a dollar and an old silver watch. He availed himself of the chance of a lift, but felt reluctant to part with his single dollar, and suggested that the waggoner should take his watch, which, if properly repaired, would be worth a great deal more than his indebtedness, also suggesting that, in the event of the boy having the watch mended, he should give Burritt the difference in money if they met again in Worcester.

The young blacksmith obtained work on his arrival, and some short time after received a visit from the waggon lad, who honourably brought him a few dollars, the estimated difference. Some years afterwards Burritt happened to be travelling from Worcester to New [Pg 23]
Britain by railway, when he was accosted by a handsome, well-dressed fellow-traveller.

"You have forgotten me, Mr. Burritt?"

Burritt was obliged to confess that he had.

"Oh," said he, "I'm the boy to whom you gave the watch. I'm now a student of Harvard College."

After chatting for a bit, Burritt said,—

"I should like to have that watch back again."

"You shall," said the student. "I sold it, but I know where it is."

In a few days he received the watch, which hung for many years in his printing-office as a memento of early vicissitudes.

Michael Faraday, unquestionably one of the greatest English chemists and natural philosophers, had few educational advantages before he was apprenticed to a bookbinder in Blandford Street, Manchester Square, and while working at his trade he constructed an electrical machine and other scientific apparatus. These having been seen by his master, Mr. Riebau, he called the attention of Mr. Dance to them, and he took the boy with him to hear the last four lectures delivered by Sir Humphry Davy at the Royal Institution. Faraday took copious notes of the lectures, and afterwards wrote them out fairly in a quarto volume, and sent it to Sir Humphry, begging him for employment, that he might quit the trade he hated, and follow science, which he loved. The answer is a model of kindness and courtesy:

"*December 24th, 1812.*

"SIR,

"I am far from displeased with the proof you have given me of your confidence, and which displays great zeal, power of memory, and attention. I am obliged to go out of town, and shall not be settled in town till the end of January. I will then see you at any time you wish. It would gratify me to be of any service to you. I wish it may be in my power.

"I am, sir,
"Your obedient, humble servant,
"H. DAVY."

Through Sir Humphry's interest, Faraday obtained the post of assistant in the laboratory of the Royal Institution, where he remained ever afterwards, eventually becoming its first professor. Tyndall says of Faraday, "His work excites admiration, but contact with him warms and elevates the heart. Here, surely, is a strong man. I love strength, but let me not forget its union with modesty, tenderness, and sweetness in the character of Faraday.... [Pg 24]
Taking the duration of his life into account, this son of a blacksmith and apprentice to a bookbinder had to decide between a fortune of £150,000 on the one side, and his unendowed science on the other. He chose the latter, and died a poor man. But his was the glory of holding aloft among the nations the scientific name of England for a period of forty years." In 1835, when Sir Robert Peel retired from office, he recommended Faraday to

William IV. for a pension of £300. The minute was placed in the hands of Lord Melbourne, Peel's successor, who saw Faraday, and involved him in religious and political discussion, wanting to entrap the philosopher into a promise to support the Government. Failing in this, Lord Melbourne said, "I look upon the whole system of giving pensions to literary and scientific people as a piece of gross humbug." To which Faraday replied, "After this, my lord, I see that my business with you is ended. I wish you good morning." The next day Lord Melbourne received the following letter:

> "My Lord,
>
> "After the pithy manner in which your Lordship was pleased to express your sentiments on the subject of pensions that have been granted to literary and scientific persons, it only remains for me to relieve you, as far as I am concerned, from all further uneasiness. I will not accept any favour at your hands nor at the hands of any Cabinet of which you are a member.
>
> "M. Faraday."

It is said that for some years Faraday's income never exceeded £22 a year, and it is a fact that when a youth he was much exercised about the purchase of an electrical machine which he had seen in an optician's window, price 4*s.* 6*d.* He had no money, but out of his dinner allowance he saved the requisite sum, and this machine was the one he used in all those early experiments which led to some of his great discoveries.

CHAPTER III.

[Pg 25]

THE SHIFTS OF IMPECUNIOSITY.

In 1748 there resided in the wilds of Connaught a lady named Gunning, of whom little is known but that before her marriage she was the Hon. Bridget Bourke, and that after it she became the mother of two exquisitely beautiful daughters, destined to make such a stir in Society, as was unknown before, and has been unequalled since. Before they left Dublin they were invited to some brilliant festivities at the Castle, which were on a scale of magnificence unequalled, it is said, in the memory of the oldest courtier. To such an entertainment Mrs. Gunning was anxious to introduce her daughters, for their faces were literally their fortunes; but the overwhelming difficulty of dress presented itself. They had nothing that by any amount of manipulation could be transformed into Court costumes, so in her difficulty Mrs. Gunning obtained an introduction to Tom Sheridan, who was then managing the Dublin Theatre. He was struck by the beauty and grace of the girls, placed the wardrobe of the theatre at their disposal; and by lending them the dresses of Lady Macbeth and Juliet, in which they appeared most lovely, enabled them to obtain the *entrée* to that aristocratic circle in which they afterwards shone so brilliantly. In addition to providing the necessary garments for the great event Tom Sheridan is credited with superintending the finishing touches of their toilets, for which it is said he claimed a kiss from each as his reward. These beautiful creatures were at one time in even greater straits for funds.

Miss Bellamy, the actress, asserts that she once found Mrs. Gunning and her children in the greatest distress, with bailiffs in the house and the family threatened with immediate eviction. With the assistance of her man-servant, who stood under the windows of the house at night, after the bailiffs were admitted, everything that could be carried away, was [Pg 26] removed. But for this and other help the Gunnings were not grateful. Indeed, in the case of the Countess of Coventry who had borrowed money from Miss Bellamy, presumably for her wedding *trousseau*, the monetary obligation was repaid by unpardonable insult. One night when this actress was playing Juliet, and had just arrived at the most impressive part of the tragedy, the countess, who occupied the stage-box, uttered a loud laugh. Miss Bellamy was so overcome by the interruption that she was obliged to leave the stage, and when Lady Coventry was remonstrated with, she replied that "since she had seen Mrs. Cibber act Juliet she could not *endure* Miss Bellamy." When they came to London in the autumn of 1751 the fashionable world went mad after "the beautiful Miss Gunnings," who were positively mobbed in the Park and elsewhere, and were compelled on one occasion to obtain the protection of a file of the Guards. When they travelled in the country the roads were lined with people anxious to catch a glimpse of their lovely faces; and hundreds of people were known to remain all night outside an inn at which they were staying, in order to behold them in the morning.

Not many months after their *début* in London, the Duke of Hamilton, owner of three dukedoms in Scotland, England, and France, and regarded as the haughtiest man in the kingdom, became deeply enamoured of the younger sister, and was married to her at Mayfair Chapel one night at half-past twelve o'clock, the suddenness of the ceremony compelling the divine who performed the service to make use of a ring from a bed-curtain.

The elder sister, became Countess of Coventry in the following March, and was then acknowledged as leader of fashion in the metropolis, although from the seclusion in which the early part of her life had been spent in Ireland, she was little fitted, so far as accomplishments were concerned, to hold that post. Her reign was brief as it was brilliant. In 1759 her health completely broke down, and she died in October 1760, of consumption, the result of artificial aids to beauty, which in her case were utterly unnecessary.

Curran, the advocate and wit, experienced vicissitudes almost as startling. He was born at Newmarket, County Cork, in 1750, and describes himself as "a little ragged apprentice to every kind of idleness and mischief, all day studying whatever was eccentric in those older, [Pg 27] and half the night practising it for the amusement of those who were younger than myself. One morning I was playing at marbles in the village ball alley, with a light heart and a lighter pocket. The gibe, and the jest, and the plunder, went gaily round. Those who won laughed, and those who lost cheated, when suddenly there appeared amongst us a stranger of a very venerable and cheerful aspect. His intrusion was not the least restraint upon our merry little assemblage; he was a benevolent creature, and the days of infancy (after all, the happiest we shall ever see) perhaps rose upon his memory. God bless him! I see his fine form, at the distance of half a century, just as he stood before me in the little ball alley in the days of my childhood. His name was Boyse; he was the rector of Newmarket. To me he took a particular fancy.... Some sweetmeats easily bribed me home with him. I learned from poor Boyse my alphabet, and my grammar, and the rudiments of the classics: he taught me all he could, and then he sent me to the school at Middleton—in short, *he made a man of me*. I recollect it was about five-and-thirty years afterwards when I had risen to some eminence at the bar, and when I had a seat in Parliament, and a good house in Ely Place, on my return one day from Court, I found an old gentleman seated alone in the drawing-room, his feet familiarly placed on each side of the Italian marble chimney-piece, and his whole air bespeaking the consciousness of one quite at home. He turned round—it was *my friend of the ball alley*. I rushed instinctively into his arms. I could not help bursting into tears. Words cannot describe the scene that followed. 'You are right, sir—you are right; the chimney-piece is yours, the pictures are yours, the house is yours; you gave me all I have—my friend—my father!'"[2]

After leaving school at Middleton, Curran passed to Trinity College, Dublin, which he entered as a sizar when nineteen years of age. He does not appear to have distinguished himself at the University, from whence he proceeded to London, and contrived, *quodcunque modo*, to enter his name on the books of the Middle Temple. At that time, he says, he read "ten hours every day; seven at law, and three at history and the general principles of politics, and that I may have time enough"—it is believed he wrote for the magazines, etc., [Pg 28] as a means of support—"I rise at half-past four. I have contrived a machine after the manner of an hour-glass, which wakens me regularly at that hour. Exactly over my head I have suspended two vessels of tin, one above the other. When I go to bed, which is always at ten, I pour a bottle of water into the upper vessel, in the bottom of which is a hole of such a size as to let the water pass through so as to make the inferior reservoir overflow in six hours and a half;" so that if he wished to remain in bed after daylight, he could only do so by consenting to a cold shower-bath.

He was called to the bar in 1775, and for some time had a tremendously uphill fight, wearing, according to his own account, his teeth to the stumps at the Cork Sessions without any adequate recompense. He then removed to Dublin, and for a time fared no better. "I then lived" said he, "upon Hog Hill: my wife and children were the chief furniture of my apartments, and as to my rent it stood pretty much the same chance of liquidation with the National Debt. Mrs. Curran, however, was a barrister's lady, and what she wanted in wealth she was determined should be supplied by dignity. The landlady, on the other hand, had no idea of any gradation except that of pounds, shillings, and pence. I walked out one morning to avoid the perpetual altercations on the subject, in no very enviable mood. I fell into the gloom, to which from my infancy I had been occasionally subject. I had a family for whom I had no dinner, and a landlady for whom I had no rent. I had gone abroad in despondence, I returned home almost in desperation. When I opened the door of my study, where *Lavater* alone could have found a library, the first object which presented itself was an immense folio of a brief, twenty gold guineas wrapped up beside it, and the name of *Old Bob Lyons* marked upon the back of it. I paid my landlady, bought a good dinner, gave Bob Lyons a share of it, and that dinner was the date of my prosperity." From this time he rapidly rose to the top of his profession, and his services were eagerly sought for. Wonderfully eloquent, with a highly imaginative and powerfully poetic mind, his sway was something marvellous, for, added to these gifts, his wit and power of mimicry were unapproachable.

In the case of Valentine Jamerai Duval, who ultimately became Professor of Antiquities and Ancient and Modern Geography in the Academy of Luneville, youthful hardships occasioned extraordinary expedients. The son of labouring people, at the age of fourteen he was [Pg 29] ignorant of the alphabet. His occupation was that of turkey-keeper, but after an attack of small-pox, which nearly killed him, he wandered through certain parts of Champagne, then in a condition of famine, in search of employment. When he reached the Duchy of Lorraine, he obtained a situation as shepherd, and became acquainted with the hermit, Brother Palimon, whom he helped in his rural labours. In return for these services the hermit gave him instruction, and subsequently he lived as a labourer with the four hermits of St. Anne, studying arithmetic and geography in his leisure moments. His one object then was to obtain

books, impossible without money, which, situated as he was, seemed equally unattainable. Finding out, however, that a furrier at Luneville purchased skins, he set snares for wild animals, and by this means realised enough money to procure the books he coveted.

But beyond the self-denial of Curran with his primitive invention for early rising, and the contrivance of Duval for obtaining the needful, is the interesting career of Bernard Palissy, the Potter, who, in addition to his fame as an artist in pottery, was celebrated as a glass painter, naturalist, philosopher, and for his devotion to the Protestant cause in the sixteenth century. Born in 1510, at Chapelle Biron, a poor hamlet near the small town of Perigord, he was brought up as a worker in painted glass, in pursuit of which occupation he travelled considerably, devoting all the spare time of his wanderings to the study of natural history, in which he delighted. Though an ardent student of nature, he yet found opportunity to make himself acquainted with the teaching of Paracelsus, of the alchemists and of the reformers of the Church. He did not settle down till nearly thirty years of age, when he established himself at Saintes as a painter on glass, and surveyor, and then turned his attention to the making of pottery and the production of white enamel, which latter was useless excepting as a covering for ornamental pottery, and at this time Palissy was not sufficiently skilled to make a rough pipkin. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that his wife took exception to the money expended in the purchase of drugs, the buying of pots, and the building of a furnace, as the loss of time told heavily on his limited resources; and it would be perfectly truthful to say that the first things Bernard Palissy produced in the way of [Pg 30] pottery were family jars. Mrs. Palissy was undoubtedly very wroth at his going on in this way, more especially because, as is so frequently the case, his family increased as his income decreased, and she succeeded at last in stopping his experiments for a time. He then obtained an appointment as Surveyor to the Government, in which profession he was remarkably proficient, but before very long the old craving for experimenting returned with redoubled vigour, and he again set to work in search of white enamel. The expense incurred was so great that his wife and children became ragged and hungry: nothing daunted, he broke up twelve new earthen pots, hired a glass furnace, and for months continued watching, burning, and baking. At last his eager eyes were gladdened by the sight of a piece of white enamel amidst the bakings. Urged on by this, he felt he must have another furnace; he succeeded in obtaining the bricks on credit, became his own bricklayer’s boy and mason, and built the structure himself. On one occasion he spent six days and nights watching his baking clay, sleeping only a few minutes at a time near his fire, but disappointment was all the result. The vessels were spoilt. In desperation he borrowed more money for his experiments, which was consumed in like manner, until at last he was without fuel for the furnace. Insensible to everything but the project on which he was bent, he tore up the palings from the garden, and when these were exhausted he broke up the chairs and tables. His wife and children rushed about frantic, thinking that he had lost his senses, and well they might when they saw the demolition of the furniture followed by the tearing up of the floor. Success ultimately crowned his praiseworthy perseverance, but not until he had devoted sixteen years of unremunerated labour, enduring unexampled fatigue and discouragements. When at length he succeeded in obtaining a pure white enamel he was enabled to produce works in which natural objects were represented with remarkable skill, his fame spread rapidly, his sculptures in clay and his enamelled pottery being at once accepted as works of art of the highest order. His career, however, was destined to be remarkable at every stage, for no sooner had he acquired renown and riches than he was subjected to religious persecution, which would have ended in death had it not been for the Duke de Montmorency, one of his patrons, who succeeded in rescuing him from prison. [Pg 31] When established in Paris, assisted by his sons, he continued to produce most remarkable specimens of ornamental pottery, and in addition to his artistic labours instituted a series of conferences which were attended by the most distinguished doctors and scientific *savants*, where he set forth his views on fountains, stones, metals, etc., desirous of knowing whether the great philosophers of antiquity interpreted nature as he did. Although in the ordinary sense an unlettered man, his theories were never once controverted, and for ten years his lectures were delivered before the most enlightened of that age, but his teaching once more arousing the animosity of his religious opponents, he was thrown into the Bastille, where he died after being incarcerated for two years.

After such a “shift” as having to tear up the floor of a dwelling, most other instances might be expected to appear more or less tame; but the experiences of William Thom, the Inverary poet, are scarcely inferior in intensity. This untutored, but extremely sweet songster, whose first poem, ‘Blind Boys’ Pranks,’ appeared in the *Edinburgh Herald*, was a hand-loom weaver, who was deprived of his occupation by the failure of certain American firms, and compelled to tramp the country as a pedlar. Before resorting to that line of life, and when in the receipt of the sum of five shillings weekly, he relates how on a memorable spring morning, he anxiously awaited the arrival of this small amount: and though the clock had struck eleven, the windows of the room were still curtained, in order that the four sleeping children, who were bound to be hungry when awake, might be deluded into believing that it was still night, for the only food in their parents’ possession was one handful of meal saved from the previous day. The mother with the tenderest anxiety sat by the babes’ bedside lulling them off to sleep as soon as they exhibited the least sign of wakefulness, and speaking to her husband in whispers as to the cooking of the little meal remaining, for the youngest child could no longer be kept asleep, and by its whimpering woke the others. Face after face sprang up, each little one exclaiming, “Oh, mither, mither, give me a piece;” and

says the poor fellow, “The word sorrow was too weak to apply to the feelings of myself and wife during the remainder of that long and dreary forenoon.” When compelled to leave the humble dwelling which, poverty-stricken though it was, had all the endearing influences of home, he made up a pack consisting of second-hand books and some trifling articles of merchandise, and sadly started with wife and bairns through mountain paths and rugged roads, often sleeping at night in barns and outhouses. The precarious nature of a pedlar’s life must have been terribly trying to one so sensitive, especially when, as in his case, it ended in his having to have recourse to the profession of musical beggar. Before entering Methven he sold a book to a stone-breaker on the road, the proceeds of which (fivepence halfpenny) was all the money he possessed. The purchaser when making the bargain had noticed Thom’s flute which he carried with him, and had offered such a good price for the instrument that the poet had been much tempted to part with it, though it had been his solace and companion on many and many an occasion. Thinking that possibly it might be the means of his earning a few pence, he resisted the temptation to part with it, and soon after took up his post outside a genteel-looking house, and played ‘The Flowers of the Forest’ with such exquisite expression that window after window was raised, and in ten minutes after he found himself possessed of three and ninepence, which sum was increased to five shillings before he reached his lodging.

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It would hardly be possible to conceive anything more truly touching than the shift of William Thom, when he practised the pardonable deception upon his hungry children of turning day into night, though for downright deprivation the experience of John Ledyard, the traveller, may be said to excel it. This celebrated discoverer, who came into Europe from the United States in 1776, when making a tour of the world with Captain Cook, as corporal of a troop of Marines, arrived in England in 1780. He then formed the design of penetrating from the North West to the East Coast of America, for which purpose Sir Joseph Banks furnished him with some money. He bought sea stores with the intention of sailing to Nootka Sound, but altered his mind, and determined to travel overland to Kamschkatka, from whence the passage is short to the opposite shore of the American continent. Towards the close of the year 1786, he started with ten guineas in his pocket, went to and from Stockholm, because the Gulf of Bothnia was frozen; proceeding north he walked to the Arctic Circle, passed round the head of the Gulf of Bothnia, and descended on its east side to St. Petersburg, where he arrived in March 1787, without shoes or stockings. He proceeded to the house of the Portuguese Ambassador, who gave him a good dinner, and obtained for him twenty guineas on a bill drawn in the name of Sir Joseph Banks, with which sum he proceeded to Yakutz, accompanying a convoy of provisions, and there met Captain Cook. He says in his Journal, “I have known both hunger and nakedness to the utmost extremity of human endurance. I have known what it is to have food given me as charity to a madman, and I have at times been obliged to shelter myself under the miseries of that character to avoid a heavier calamity. My distresses have been greater than I have ever owned, or will own to any man. Such evils are terrible to bear, but they never yet had power to turn me from my purpose.”

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To have to submit to be thought a lunatic to escape starvation must certainly have been rather trying, though from the fact of part of the journey being performed without shoes or stockings it would certainly look as if John Ledyard were anything but particular; and it is well for us that he and other glorious pioneers were not, otherwise we should not be living in such an age of marvellous enlightenment as is our present privilege. Round the world in eighty days, facilitated by Cook’s tourist coupons would hardly have been practicable, had not men like Ledyard been martyrs in the cause of exploration.

Apropos of travelling in days gone by, an incident in the life of the Rev. Henry Tevuge presents a somewhat strange shift; at any rate, strange for a clergyman. This eccentric clerical was Rector of Alcester in 1670, and afterwards Incumbent of Spernall, which he appears to have left in 1675, for on May 20th in that year he writes, “This day I began my voyage from my house at Spernall, in the county of Warwick, with small accoutrements, saving what I carried under me in an old sack. My steed like that of Hudibras, for mettle, courage, and colour (though not of the same bigness), and for flesh, one of Pharaoh’s lean mares ready to seize (for hunger) on those that went before her, had she not been short-winged, or rather leaden-heeled. My stock of moneys was also proportionable to the rest; being little more than what brought me to London in an old coat and breeches of the same, an old pair of hose, and shoes, and a leathern doublet of nine years old and upwards. Indeed, by reason of the suddenness of my journey, I had nothing but what I was ashamed of, save only

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> “An old fox broad sword, and a good black gown,
> And thus old Henry came to London Town.”

At that time chaplains were not provided with bed or bedding, and the divine, having no money, and wishing to redeem a cloak which had been long in pawn for 10*s.*, he sold his lean mare, saddle and bridle for 26*s.*, released the cloak, but only to re-pledge it for £2. A writer, alluding to that period, says “it must have been a rare time for cavaliers, clerical and secular, when the cloak that had been pawned for 10*s.* acquired a fourfold value when offered as a new pledge.” It must have been a rare time for clergymen of the Church of England when a navy chaplain is found on such intimate terms with “No. 1 round the corner,” but that circumstance is accounted for by the fact that the Rev. Mr. Tevuge is

spoken of as having “contracted convivial and expensive habits.”

The literary, musical, and dramatic professions are the most prolific in furnishing curious cases of impecuniosity; and separate chapters will be devoted to those three branches of art, but there are a few instances more directly of the nature of “shifts” which I have included in the present portion of the subject; amongst others being the incident of Dr. Johnson dining with his publisher, and being so shabby that, as there was a third person present, he hid behind a screen. This happened soon after the publication of the lexicographer’s ‘Life of Savage,’ which was written anonymously, and though the circumstance of the hiding must have been rather humiliating to the mighty Samuel, yet the attendant consequences were pleasant. The visitor who was dining with Harte, the publisher, was Cave, who, in course of conversation, referred to ‘Savage’s Life,’ and spoke of the work in the most flattering terms. The next day, when they met again, Harte said, “You made a man very happy yesterday by your encomiums on a certain book.” “I did?” replied Cave. “Why, how could that be; there was no one present but you and I?” “You might have observed,” explained Harte, “that I sent a plate of meat behind a screen. There skulked the biographer, one Johnson, whose dress was so shabby that he durst not make his appearance. He overheard our conversation, and your applause of his performance delighted him exceedingly.” It is also recorded that so [Pg 35] indigent was the doctor on another occasion that he had not money sufficient for a bed, and had to make shift by walking round and round St. James’ Square with Savage; when, according to Boswell, they were not at all depressed by their situation, but in high spirits, and brimful of patriotism; inveighing against the ministry, and resolving that they would *stand* by their country.

Being thus intimately associated, it is only natural that the doctor in his ‘Life of Savage’ should thoroughly believe that individual’s version of his own birth and parentage, which was that he was the illegitimate son of the Countess of Macclesfield, and that his father was Lord Rivers; the birth of Richard Savage giving his mother an excuse for obtaining a divorce from her husband, whom she hated. It is stated that “he was born in 1696, in Fox Court, a low alley leading out of Holborn, whither his mother had repaired under the name of Mrs. Smith—her features concealed in a mask, which she wore throughout her confinement. Discovery was embarrassed by a complication of witnesses; the child was handed from one woman to another until, like a story bandied from mouth to mouth, it seemed to lose its paternity.” Lord Rivers, it is alleged, looked on the boy as his own, but his mother seems always to have disliked him; and the fact that Lady Mason, the mother of the countess, looked after the child’s education, and had him put to a Grammar School at St. Albans, certainly favours the view of his aristocratic parentage. He was subsequently apprenticed to a shoemaker, but discovering the secret, or the supposed secret, of his birth, for not a few discredit his story, he cut leather for literature, and appealed to his mother for assistance. His habit was to walk of an evening before her door in the hope of seeing her, and making an appeal; but his efforts were in vain, he could neither open her heart nor her purse. He was befriended by many, notably by Steele, Wilks the actor, and Mrs. Oldfield, a “beautiful” actress, who allowed him an annuity of £50 during her life; but in spite of all the assistance he received, his state was one of chronic impecuniosity. No sooner was he helped out of one difficulty than he managed to get into another, and though he is described by some biographers as a literary genius, his genius seemed principally a knack of getting into debt. Rambling about like a vagabond, with scarcely a shirt to his back, he was in such a plight when he composed his tragedy (without a lodging, and often, without a dinner) that he used [Pg 36] to write it on scraps of paper picked up by accident, or begged in the shops which he occasionally stepped into, as thoughts occurred to him, craving the favour of pen and ink as if it were just to make a memorandum.

The able author of ‘The Road to Ruin’ was likewise one who had travelled some distance on that thorny path, for at one time he found himself in the streets of London without money, without a home, or a friend to whom his shame or pride would permit his making known his necessity. Wandering along he knew not whither, plunged in the deepest despondency, his eye caught sight of a printed placard, “To Young Men,” inviting all spirited young fellows to make their fortunes as common soldiers in the East India Company’s Service. After reading it over a second time he determined without hesitation to hasten off and enroll himself in that honourable corps, when he met with a person he had known at a sporting club he had been in the habit of frequenting. His companion seeing his bundle and rueful face, asked him where he was going, to which Holcroft replied that had he enquired five minutes before he could not have told him, but that now he was “for the wars.” At this his friend appeared greatly surprised, and told him he thought he could put him up to something better than that. Macklin, the famous London actor, was going over to play in Dublin, and had asked him if he happened to be acquainted with a young fellow who had a turn for the stage, and, said his friend, “I should be happy to introduce you.” The offer was gladly accepted, and when the introduction had been managed Holcroft was asked by Macklin “what had put it into his head to turn actor?” to which he replied, “He had taken it into his head to suppose it was genius, but that it was very possible he might be mistaken.”

Holcroft was engaged for the tour, became an actor, and though he does not appear to have shone particularly strong on the stage, acquired considerable celebrity as a dramatic author, his play before mentioned being one of the few works of the old dramatists that has not become out of date with the playgoing public.

More than one literary man of note, has been compelled by poverty to accept the Queen's shilling. Coleridge, according to one of his biographers, left Cambridge partly through the loss of his friend Middleton, and partly on account of college debts. Vexed and fretted by the [Pg 37] latter, he was overtaken by that inward grief which in after life he described in his 'Ode to Dejection.'

> "A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
> A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
> Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
> In word, or sigh, or tear."

In this state of mind he came to London, strolled about the streets till night, and then rested on the steps of a house in Chancery Lane. Beggars importuned him for alms and to them he gave the little money he had left. Next morning he noticed a bill to the effect that a few smart lads were wanted for the 15th Elliot's Light Dragoons. Thinking to himself "I have all my life had a violent antipathy to soldiers and horses, and the sooner I can cure myself of such absurd prejudices the better," he went to the enlisting-station, where the sergeant finding that Coleridge had not been in bed all night, made him have some breakfast and rest himself. Afterwards, he told him to cheer up, to well consider the step he was about to take, and suggested that he had better have half-a-guinea, go to the play, shake off his melancholy and not return. Coleridge went to the theatre, but afterwards resought the sergeant, who was extremely sorry to see him, and saying with evident emotion, "Then it must be so," enrolled him. In the morning he was marched to Reading with his new comrades, and there inspected by the general of the district. Looking at Coleridge, that officer said,—

"What's your name?"

"Comberback!"

"What do you come here for, sir?"

"For what most other persons come, to be made a soldier!"

"Do you think you can run a Frenchman through the body, sir?"

"I do not know," said Coleridge, "as I never tried, but I'll let a Frenchman run me through the body, before I'll run away."

"That will do," said the general; and Coleridge was turned into the ranks.

Alexander Somerville, author of 'Cobdenic Policy,' 'Conservative Science of Nations,' &c., &c., was also driven to the extremity of enlisting under circumstances more or less humorous. Unlike Coleridge, Alexander Somerville was not of gentle birth, being, as he styles himself in 'The Autobiography of a Working Man,' "One who has whistled at the [Pg 38] plough." He received as a boy but scant education, being sent to a common day school where cruel discipline and unnecessary severity preponderated over learning. Though put to farm-work, where he was by turns carter, mower, stable-boy, thresher, wood-sawyer and excavator, his natural intelligence and love of books made him anxious to turn his face from the parish of Oldhamstocks, where he was brought up, in a westerly direction towards Edinburgh. When about eighteen years of age he was much interested in the Reform Bill of 1830, and gave evidence then of his enthusiasm for politics, became canvasser for a weekly newspaper, but does not appear to have succeeded in this vocation, for his circumstances were such that he wandered about moneyless; and meeting with an old chum they agreed to go and have a chat at any rate with the recruiting corporal of the dragoon regiment popularly known as the Scots Greys.

"My companion," he says, "had seen the Greys in Dublin, and having a natural disposition to be charmed with the picturesque, was charmed with them. He knew where to enquire for the corporal, and having enquired, we found him in his lodging up a great many pairs of stairs, I do not know how many, stretched in his military cloak, on his bed. He said he was glad to see anybody upstairs in his little place, now that the regimental order had come out against moustachios; for since he had been ordered to shave his off, his wife had sat moping at the fireside, refusing all consolation to herself and all peace to him. 'I ha'e had a weary life o't,' he said plaintively 'since the order came out to shave the upper lip. She grat there. I'm sure she grat as if her heart would ha'e broken when she saw me the first day without the moustachios.' Having listened to this and heard a confirmation of it from the lady herself, as also a hint that the corporal had been lying in bed half the day, when he should have been out looking for recruits, for each of whom he had a payment of ten shillings, we told him that we had come looking for him to offer ourselves as recruits. He looked at us for a few moments, and said if we 'meant' it he saw nothing about us to object to; and as neither seemed to have any beard from which moustachios could grow, he could only congratulate us on the order that had come out against them as we should not have to be at the expense of getting burnt corks to blacken our upper lips, to make us look uniform with those who [Pg 39] wore hair. We assured the corporal that we were in earnest, and that we did mean to enlist, whereupon he began by putting the formal question, 'Are you free, able and willing to serve his Majesty King William the Fourth?'

"But there was a hitch, two shillings were requisite to enlist two recruits, and there was only one shilling. We proposed that he should enlist one of us with it, and that this one should

then lend it to him to enlist the other. But his wife would not have the enlistment done in that way. She said 'That would not be *law*: and a bonny thing it would be to do it without it being law. Na na,' she continued, 'it maun be done as the law directs.' The corporal made a movement as if he would take us out with him to some place where he could get another shilling but she thought it possible that another of the recruiting party might share the prize with him—take one of us or both: so she detained him, shut the door on us, locked it, took the key with her and went in search of the King's requisite coin. Meanwhile as my friend was impatient I allowed him to take precedence of me, and have the ceremony performed with the shilling then present. On the return of the corporal's wife, who though younger than he in years seemed to be an 'older soldier,' I also became the King's man."

In connection with music the name of Loder, the clever composer (author of the 'Night Dancers' and other charming musical compositions), recalls an interesting episode in his life revealing a remarkable shift to which he was put. One evening when leaving his lodgings with a friend named Jay for the purpose of enjoying a quiet little dinner at Simpson's, he received an ominous tap on the shoulder from one of those individuals whose attentions are not appetising, since without you can settle the little amount, they require your immediate company. Loder was by no means able to satisfy the law's demands, and the sheriff's officer refused to lose sight of his man, even though "he had a most particular appointment;" so the only thing to be done was to invite the bailiff to join them at dinner. After the repast was concluded the party repaired to Sloman's, a notorious spunging-house in Cursitor Street, Chancery Lane, when just as Jay was taking leave of Loder the latter remembered having something in his pocket which might be turned to account. It was a song by Samuel Lover. "Goodbye, old fellow," said Loder. "Come to-morrow morning, and see what I shall have ready." As soon as his friend had gone he set to work and set Lover's words of 'The Three Stages of Love' to music, which was a most successful and satisfactory way of composing himself to sleep, for when Jay called in the morning he received a manuscript which, when taken to Chappell's, realised £30. The proceeds enabled Loder to pay the debt, and dine with his friend at Simpson's in the afternoon, without the unwelcome guest of the preceding day. [Pg 40]

John Palmer, the original Joseph Surface, in which character he was considered unapproachable, was a man evidently of the greatest plausibility. When complimented by a friend upon the ease of his address, he said, "No, I really don't give myself the credit of being so irresistible as you have fancied me. There is one thing, though, which I think I *am* able to do. Whenever I am arrested I can always persuade the sheriff's officer to bail me."

Contemporary with John Palmer was another celebrated comedian, also addicted to more extravagant tastes than his income warranted—Charles Bannister, who made his first appearance in London with Palmer in a piece called the "Orators" in May 1762. In this he gave musical imitations, but the performances taking place in the mornings, his convivial habits over night precluded him from shining as he might have done; a fact which was noticed by Foote, the manager. To this Bannister replied, "I knew it would be so; I am all right at night, but neither I, nor my voice, can *get up* in the morning." He was invariably in difficulties: on the death of Sir Theodosius Boughton, the topic of the hour in 1781, as he was said to have been poisoned by laurel water, Bannister, said "Pooh! Don't tell me of your laurel leaves; I fear none but a bay-leaf" (bailiff). Once when returning from Epsom to town in a gig, accompanied by a friend, they were unable to pay the toll at Kennington Gate, and the man would not let them pass. Bannister immediately offered to sing a song, and struck up 'The Tempest of War.' His voice was heard afar, the gate being soon thronged by voters returning from Brentford, who encored his effort, and the turnpike-man, calling him a noble fellow, expressed his willingness to pay "fifty tolls for him at any gate."

John Joseph Winckelmann, who became one of the most famous of German writers on classical antiquities, was the son of a poor cobbler, who not only had to struggle with poverty, but with disease which, while his boy was yet young, compelled him to avail himself of the hospital. When placed at the burgh seminary there, the rector was struck with young Winckelmann's dawning genius, and by accepting less than the usual fee, and getting him placed in the choir, contrived that the boy should receive all the advantages the school afforded. The rector continued to take the greatest interest in his apt pupil, made him usher, and when seventeen years of age, sent him to Berlin with a letter of introduction to the rector of a gymnasium, with whom he remained twelve months. While there Winckelmann heard that the library of the celebrated Fabricius was about to be sold at Hamburgh, and he determined to proceed there on foot and be present at the sale. He set out accordingly, asking charity (a practice not considered derogatory to struggling students in Germany) of the clergymen whose houses he passed; and, having collected in this way sufficient to purchase some of his darling poets at the sale, returned to Berlin in great glee. After studying at Halle and elsewhere for six years, his early passion for wandering revived, and fascinated with a fresh perusal of Cæsar's 'Commentaries,' he began in the summer of 1740 a pedestrian journey to France, to visit the scene of the great Roman's military exploits. His funds, however, soon became exhausted, and when close to Frankfort-on-the-Maine, he was obliged to return. [Pg 41]

When he arrived at the bridge of Fulda, he remarked his own dishevelled, travel-stained appearance, and believing himself alone, began to effect an alteration. He had pulled out a razor, and was about to operate on his chin, when he was disturbed by shrieks from a party

of ladies, who, imagining that he was about to make away with himself, cried loudly for help. The facts were soon explained, and the fair ones insisted on his accepting a monetary gift that enabled him to return without inconvenience.

It was not until the year 1755, when Winckelmann was thirty-eight years of age, and had published his first book, the 'Reflections on Imitation of the Greeks in Painting and Statuary,' that he freed himself from penury.

Flaxman, who throughout his honourable life seems to have entertained a most modest view of his own talents, married before he had acquired distinction, though regarded as a skilful and exceedingly promising pupil; and when Sir Joshua Reynolds heard of the indiscretion of which he had been guilty, he exclaimed, "Flaxman is ruined for an artist!" But his mistake [Pg 42] was soon made manifest. When Mrs. Flaxman heard of the remark, she said, "Let us work and economize. It shall never be said that Ann Denham ruined John Flaxman as an artist;" and they economised accordingly, her husband undertaking amongst other things to collect the local rates in Soho.

It is to a "shift" of this nature that we are to a certain extent indebted for the writings of Bishop Jeremy Taylor. After the death of Charles I., Dr. Taylor's living of Uppingham, in Rutlandshire, was sequestered, and the gifted ecclesiastic repaired to Golden Grove, Carmarthenshire, and taught a school for the subsistence of his children and himself. While thus employed, he produced some of those copious and fervent discourses, whose fertility of composition, eloquence of expression and comprehensiveness of thought, have enabled him to rank as one of the first writers in the English language.

Beau Brummell, the autocrat of fashion when in his zenith, was in the days of his decline particularly shifty. After George IV. had cut him, and when he was about to depart for France to undertake the consulate of Caen, he made a desperate effort to raise money, and, amongst other people, he wrote to Scrope Davies for a couple of hundred pounds, which he promised to repay on the following morning, giving as a reason for his request, that the banks were shut for the day, and all his money was in the Three per Cents. To this Davies, who happened to know how hard up Brummell was, sent the following laconic reply:—

"My dear George,

"'Tis very unfortunate, but all *my* money is in the Three per Cents.

"Yours,
"S. Davies."

Brummell's appointment at Caen, owing to the representations of Madame la Marquise de Seran, and others who had known him in London, was known in that place some time before he arrived, which had the effect of making all the young Frenchmen of the Carlist party anxious to become acquainted with him. Soon after he was settled down, three of them paid him a morning visit, and, though late in the day, found him deep in the mysteries of his toilet. They naturally wished to retire, but Brummell insisted on their remaining. "Pray stay," said he, as he laid down the silver tweezers with which he had just removed a straggling [Pg 43] hair, "pray remain; I have not yet breakfasted—no excuses. There is a *pâté de foie gras*, a game pie," and many other dainties that he enumerated with becoming gastronomic fervour, but which failed to overcome the scruples of the young men, who went away enchanted with Brummell's politeness and hospitality, one of the trio afterwards remarking that "he must live very well."

There is not the slightest doubt that the beau was pretty sure his visitors had breakfasted, and it was only the extreme improbability of their accepting his invitation that made him give it. Had they taken him at his word, instead of the magnificent repast which he offered them, his guests would have sat down to an uncommonly plain breakfast, for the polite and hospitable host had nothing but a penny roll and the coffee simmering by his bedroom fire. On another occasion a visitor called on him, and in course of conversation said he was going to dine with a certain Mr. Jones, a retired soap-boiler, who had radically opposed the appointment of a man like Brummell to superintend the British interests at Caen.

"Well I think I shall dine there too," said Brummell.

"But you haven't an invitation, have you?"

"No," was the reply; "but I think I shall dine there all the same."

As soon as the caller left, Brummell sent a *pâté de foie gras*, which he had received from Paris, with a grand message to Jones. The courtesy seemed so disinterested, that the Radical sent a pressing invitation by return; and when Brummell's visitor of the morning joined the party, he saw the beau installed in the seat of honour at the hostess's right. Brummell told his friend next day how he had managed. The gentleman said, "But I did not see the pie on the table."

"True," explained Brummell; "I know it never made its appearance. It was a splendid pie—a *chef-d'œuvre*, and I felt deeply interested in its fate. When going away I inquired what had been done with the pie. The cook said, 'Master had kept it for Master Harry's birthday.' To be the 'cut and come again' of a nursery dinner. To be the prey of the little Joneses and their nurses was atrocious. It was an insult to me and my pie! 'Go,' I said, 'to your kitchen; I

particularly want to see the *pâté de foie gras*.' Feeling that it would have been a sin to leave it with such people, I took it away. It was not honest, but as I cut into it this morning I almost felt justified, for I never inserted a knife into such another." [Pg 44]

It certainly was anything but honest, and it would have been well had Brummell remembered the childish saying about "give a thing and take a thing," but where a person's *amour-propre* is touched on such an important matter as a game pie it would not be right of course to judge the action by the ordinary standard. The idea of taking the pie back for the reasons alleged was really funny, though the fact of the beau being extremely "hard up" very possibly had a good deal to do with his conduct. *Apropos* of this condition it may be news to some to know that there once existed an institution called the "Hard Up Club" the formation of which is alluded to by "Baron" Nicholson in his autobiography. He says "just before I left the Queen's Bench I had a visit from Pellatt (a well-known man about town in that day, who had formerly been clerk and solicitor to the Ironmongers' Company), with the news that he and another jolly old friend of mine had made a discovery of a place of rest suitable to our condition in life, which I must say was seedy in every respect. Pellatt had been in the habit of coming over to the Bench almost daily to dine with me and others, who were delighted with his amusing qualities. He gave excellent imitations of the past and present London actors, and his genius for entertaining was brought into active operation in our prison circle. The history of the discovery of 'The Nest,' or tranquil house of entertainment, was this: Pellatt and a friend of his, 'Old Beans' (whose right name was Bennett, yclept 'Old Beans' for shortness), were strolling about the Strand one foggy November night, their habiliments were uncomfortably ventilated, their crab-shells of the order hydraulic; snow was on the ground, and their castors 'shocking bad hats.' Not liking to enter any very public places they strayed round the back streets on the river side of the Strand, and turning from Norfolk Street into Howard Street, *vis-à-vis* they perceived a tavern, a dull, unlighted (save by a dim lamp), small, old-fashioned public-house in Arundel Street, with the sign of 'The Swan.' '"The Swan,"' said Pellatt, as he read the sign, 'will never sink! Beans, old fellow, we'll go into the 'Never Sink!'

"The house was better known for years afterwards by this name than by its real sign. The two wayfarers entered. Old Charles Mathews in his 'At Home' used to tell a story of pulling up at a road-side inn, and interrogating the waiter as to what he could have for dinner. [Pg 45]

"'Any hot joint?' said the traveller.

"'No, sir; no hot joint, sir.'

"'Any cold one?'

"'Cold one, sir? No, sir; no cold one, sir.'

"'Can you broil me a fowl?'

"'Fowl, sir? No, sir; no fowl, sir.'

"'No fowl, and in a country inn!' exclaimed Mathews. 'Let me have some eggs and bacon then.'

"'Eggs and bacon, sir?' said the waiter. 'No eggs and bacon, sir.'

"'Confound it,' at length said the traveller. 'What have you got in the house?'

"'An execution, sir,' was the prompt response of the doleful waiter.

"And so it was at 'The Swan.' When Pellatt and his friend entered the parlour there was but a glimmer of light, and no fire. A most civil man, whose name turned out to be Mathews, informed his guests that he would instantly light a fire and make them comfortable.

"'Not worth while,' said Pellatt, 'We only want a glass of gin and water, and a pipe.'

"The host would not be denied. In a few minutes there was a blazing fire, the hot grog was upon the table, and Pellatt and Old Beans were smoking away like steam. The supposed landlord was invited to take a seat with them, and during the conversation informed them that he was the man in possession, and that he was allowed to provide a little spirits, and a cask of beer, and reap the profits himself just to keep the house open until a purchaser could be found for it, and he further stated how glad he should be if the gentlemen would come again. Being told by Pellatt all about the 'Never Sink,' when I again left the Queen's Bench Prison, and visited the outer world, I aided them in establishing what we dignified by the title of 'The Hard Up Club.' Its institution commenced by Old Beans being appointed steward, and in that capacity began his campaign by buying a pound of cold boiled beef at Cautis's, Temple Bar, and four pennyworth of hot roasted potatoes from the man who stood with the baked 'tatur' can in front of Clement's Inn. As the club increased in number so did our commissariat in supplies and importance, and the office of 'Old Beans' became no sinecure. His duty, and it was performed *con amore*, was to be in attendance early in the day at the club to provide the dinner. The money to pay for this was invariably collected over night; and I have known the funds to be so short that 'Old Beans's' ingenuity has been frequently and greatly taxed to meet the necessary requirements and expenditure. A shoulder of mutton was a familiar dish, Beans preparing heaps of potatoes, and with a skilful culinary nicety, for which he was eminent, making the onion sauce himself. A bullock's heart [Pg 46]

was also a favourite with us, provided always that Old Beans made the gravy and stuffing. I said to our gracious and economical steward the first day we had the ox heart, 'Beany, you'll want some gravy beef.'

"'The deaf ears' (the hard, gristly substance attached to the top of a bullock's heart), said he, 'will make excellent gravy. The 'Hard Ups' can't afford beef. No, no, we'll make the deaf ears do.' It may be imagined that Old Beans's place was a difficult one. One Kay, a large, seedy lawyer, who wore shabby black and white stockings, and shoes, was always behindhand with his share of cash. If a shilling were required, Kay would pay into the hands of the steward about nine pence halfpenny, vowing that he had no more, and Beans always declared himself out of pocket by Kay. We had, however, a visitor who added lustre to our association, but he was not a dining member—he could not be—his means were too limited even for our humble carousings. This member was a very old man, Colonel Curry, formerly a member of the Irish Parliament. He lodged in one room in Arundel Street, therefore the 'Never Sink' was to him a convenient hostelry, and he could do as he liked. He did so. On a small shelf over the parlour-door the colonel kept his own table-napkin, mustard, pepper, and salt. He also had a small gravy-tight tin case, and in that he brought with him every day four pennyworth of hot meat, generally bought at the corner of Angel Inn Yard, Clement's Inn. All he spent at the 'Never Sink' was three halfpence for a glass of rum, which he diluted from six o'clock in the evening till eleven o'clock at night: in the last mixing the rum was unrecognisable, the water colourless. Curry was a proud Irishman, never accepting the oft-proffered hospitality of others. His conversation was delightful, amusing, instructive. He [Pg 47] never complained, and we were left to doubt whether his economy proceeded from parsimony or poverty; but from his highly honourable sentiments I should conclude the latter. It was a rule with the club that all the good sort of fellows with whom the members might be acquainted should be pressed into the general service of the club: thus any member who in better days had been a good customer to a thriving publican (and there was scarcely one exception in the whole society) should use his best endeavour to introduce that publican to the 'Never Sink,' and get him to stand treat. The number of dinners and liquors obtained by such endeavours were prodigious. The club included several members of the republic of letters, who, to quote Tom Hood, had not a sovereign amongst them. Indeed, they had but one passable crown. One hat served nine; their shirts were latent; their dinners intermittent, and their grog often eleemosynary. Nothing sparkled about them but their wit, which was as keen as their appetites. The man of genius crouches in social poverty in a commonwealth of mutual privation.

> "'There wit, subdued by poverty's sharp thorn,
> Was joined by wisdom equally forlorn;
> And stinted genius took a draught of malt
> On baked potatoes mixed with attic salt.'"

CHAPTER IV. [Pg 48]

THE LUCK AND ILL LUCK OF IMPECUNIOSITY.

Shakespeare, though he says "There's a divinity doth shape our ends, rough-hew them how we will," admits that "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune," which certainly looks as if we had something to do with the matter. "Man," it has been said, "is the architect of his own fortune," but it is equally a fact that some individuals have many more chances than others of making that fortune, especially those who are apparently undeserving. In the same way, impecuniosity has with some been the very means of introducing them to the road to success, while it has only plunged others in suffering.

Amongst the former may be ranked Benjamin Charles Incledon, who flourished in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and in the beginning of the nineteenth. He was born at Callington, in Cornwall, and at a very early age was a choir-boy in Exeter Cathedral, in which city he received his musical education from Jackson, the composer. At sixteen he entered the navy, and in the course of the two years that he remained in the service was in several engagements. When the *Formidable* was paid off at Chatham, in 1784, the young sailor turned his steps towards Cornwall, but when he reached Hitchen Ferry, near Southampton, he had got rid of whatever money he started with, and had to ask assistance of a recruiting sergeant, who not only gave him the means to get ferried over, but invited him to a public-house in the town, where they made merry over bread and cheese, and ale. The company became convivial, and Incledon, in his turn, sang a ballad which delighted everybody, but especially the prompter of the Southampton Theatre, who happened to be sitting in the bar-parlour smoking his pipe, and who rushed out to his manager before the [Pg 49] song was finished to tell him of the *rara avis* he had found. Collins, the manager, returned forthwith, and was so delighted with the sailor's vocal abilities that he offered him an

engagement at *half-a-guinea a week*, there and then, which offer was accepted, Incledon making his first appearance as Alphonso in 'The Castle of Andalusia.' His career was most successful, and he is spoken of by more than one authority as the first English singer on the stage of his day.

Under the circumstances it must surely be conceded, that the impecuniosity which caused him to sing that song at that particular time, was particularly lucky, and Incledon is not the only individual who has been blessed with good fortune through the same means. In 'The Life of a Showman,' by D. G. Miller, that gentleman relates that one winter's afternoon he arrived with his family at a Cumberland village in a most pitiable plight, for though he had several "children he had but one sixpence." The journey, effected with a horse and cart, had been extremely trying, because across the road they had travelled ran a small rivulet, which was frozen, and a passage through which had to be made for the horse, the driver standing upon the shafts across the back of the horse, while the showman waded through the water nearly up to his waist, a state of discomfort enhanced by the plunging of the horse and the shrieks of the children. When the party arrived at the public-house (where there was a large room which was occasionally let for entertainments, &c.), they were nearly frozen, and proceeded to warm themselves by the kitchen fire. After calling for a quart of ale, and paying for it with the solitary sixpence in his possession, the showman proceeded to look after his properties, and found that the man with the cart, being anxious to get back, had unloaded the luggage at the door. Enquiring of the landlady if he could engage the large room for a few nights for a very superior exhibition, the itinerant performer was informed by her, "I can't tell, but I think not. The last people who were here didn't pay the rent. However, the landlord is not at home, and I can say nothing about it."

After this he asked if they could be supplied with some tea, and on being replied to in the affirmative, says, "The expression on my wife's face seemed to say, 'Are you mad—where will you get the money to pay for it?' I paid no attention, however, to her look: the tea was got ready, and we sat down and made a hearty meal—at least, the children and I did. As to [Pg 50] my wife, she was alarmed at my conduct, and was too frightened to eat, although she had tasted nothing since breakfast."

After tea he asked if they could be accommodated with beds, but was refused by the landlord, who showed his suspicions. The showman pointed to the snow, which was falling heavily, and asked permission for his wife and children to remain by the fire all night, professing to be able to pay, and at last the landlord sulkily agreed to let them have beds. After the wife and children retired, a good number of customers came in, and a raffle was started for a watch, thirty members at a shilling. While this was being arranged the visitors joked and sang, and presently the showman was asked if he would oblige with a song; he readily complied, and was voted a jolly good fellow by all present, including the landlord, who apologised then for having demurred about the accommodation. When the raffle began, it was found there was one more subscriber wanted, and the showman was asked to join, which he said he would gladly do, but his wife kept the purse and she had gone to bed, and being very tired he did not like to disturb her. The landlord at once said, "Certainly not, here's a shilling; pay me in the morning." He accepted the proffered coin, threw the dice, and won the watch, which he sold for a sovereign. He then gave an exhibition of his skill with sleight of hand tricks, to the great delight of the customers, and was informed by the landlord before he went to bed that he could have the big room for a night or two. To this he replied, "I will think it over," and joined his wife, whom he found in a state of the greatest trepidation at the thought of their not having the money to pay for their board and lodging. He set her fears literally at rest, by showing her the proceeds of the watch he had sold. The next and two following evenings he gave three most successful performances in the big room, and finally left the village with flying colours, *en route* for Carlisle. His good fortune, as in the case of Incledon, being fairly attributable to the singing of a song; which savours strongly to my mind of what is generally understood by the term "lucky."

Though somewhat different in detail, the impecuniosity of the late distinguished journalist, G. A. Sala, when a young man, was equally felicitous. Born in 1827 of not over-wealthy parents (Mrs. Sala was an operatic singer and teacher of music), he from an early age [Pg 51] suffered with bad eyes, which prevented him learning to read until he was nine years old. When fourteen he began to earn his own living, and from that time till he was four-and-twenty, his mode of existence seems to have been more or less precarious. At one time engaged in copying plans of projected railways, then acting as assistant scene-painter at fifteen shillings a week, afterwards designing the cheapest and least elegant description of valentines, and subsequently drawing woodcuts for those inferior periodicals pretty generally known as "penny dreadfuls." In the year 1851 his health gave way while he was pursuing the avocation of an engraver. The acids used in engraving so affecting his eyes that for a time he was quite blind, and loss of eyesight meant loss of work, and loss of work involved loss of income. The poverty he suffered at this time must have been of the direst; but though he had lost almost everything else, he never apparently quite lost heart, and when his sight improved he dashed off an article called "The Key of the Street," descriptive of a night spent by a poor wanderer in London, which he sent in to Dickens, who had not long started *Household Words*. The feelings of the homeless man were described in a manner that shows the writer *felt* his subject, although it is hinted that the experiences related may have been the result of caprice.

He says, “I have no bed to-night. Why, it matters not. Perhaps I have lost my latch-key—perhaps I never had one; yet am fearful of knocking up my landlady after midnight. Perhaps I have a caprice—a fancy—for stopping up all night. At all events, I have no bed; and, saving ninepence (sixpence in silver, and threepence in coppers), no money. I must walk the streets all night; for I cannot, look you, get anything in the shape of a bed for less than a shilling. Coffee-houses, into which—seduced by their cheap appearance—I have entered, and where I have humbly sought a lodging, laugh my ninepence to scorn. They demand impossible eighteenpences—unattainable shillings. There is clearly no bed for me.

“It is midnight—so the clanging tongue of St. Dunstan’s tells me—as I stand thus bedless at Temple Bar. I have walked a good deal during the day, and have an uncomfortable sensation in my feet, suggesting the idea that the soles of my boots are made of roasted brickbats. I am thirsty too (it is July and sultry), and just as the last chime of St. Dunstan’s is heard, I have half-a-pint of porter, and a ninth part of my ninepence is gone from me for ever. The [Pg 52] public-house where I have it (or rather the beer-shop, for it is an establishment of ‘the glass of ale and sandwich’ description) is an early closing one, and the proprietor, as he serves me, yawningly orders the potboy to put the shutters up, for he is ‘off to bed.’ Happy proprietor! There is a bristly-bearded tailor too, very beery, having his last pint, who utters a similar somniferous intention. He calls it ‘Bedfordshire.’ Thrice happy tailor!

“I envy him fiercely, as he goes out, though, God wot, his bedchamber may be but a squalid attic, and his bed a tattered hop-sack, with a slop great-coat from the emporium of Messrs. Melchisedek & Son, and which he had been working at all day, for a coverlid. I envy his children (I am sure he has a frouzy, ragged brood of them) *for they have at least somewhere to sleep. I haven’t.*”

Then follows a most graphic account of the persons encountered during the eight hours’ enforced prowl (including a flying visit to a fourpenny lodging-house, which was not a “model” of cleanliness), all the personages met with, and the occurrences witnessed being described with a freshness and fidelity that stamped the author as a descriptive writer of uncommon power. Charles Dickens at once forwarded a cheque for the contribution named, and, in the words of Oliver Twist, “asked for more;” and the late George Augustus Sala has for years been regarded as the journalist *par excellence* of the day.

In like manner the needy circumstances of Charlotte Cushman had much to do with her obtaining an engagement at the Princess’s Theatre, and making the great reputation she achieved in England. When first introduced to Mr. Maddox, the then lessee and manager of the house in Oxford Street, she did not impress him favourably. She had no pretensions to beauty, and Mr. Maddox considered she had not the qualities essential to a stage heroine. From London she went to Paris, in the hope of getting engaged by an English company performing there, but failing, and having obtained a letter of introduction from some one supposed to have great influence with the lessee, she again sought Mr. Maddox, with no better result. Stung to the quick by this second repulse, and made desperate by her critical situation, she turned when she had almost reached the door, exclaiming, “I know I have [Pg 53] enemies in this country, but” (here she cast herself on her knees, raising her clenched hand aloft), “so help me Heaven, I’ll defeat them!” Mr. Maddox was at once satisfied with the tragic power of his visitor, and offered her an engagement forthwith.

If there is any doubt as to Charlotte Cushman’s success being attributable to impecuniosity the case of O’Brien, the celebrated Irish giant, is most clear.

This lengthy individual, whose height was 8ft. 7in., was born at Kinsale, where, with his father, he laboured as a bricklayer. His extraordinary size soon attracted the attention of a travelling showman, who, on payment of £50 per annum, acquired the right of exhibiting him for three years in England.

Not satisfied with this extremely good bargain, his master tried to sublet him to another person in the show business, a proceeding which Cotter (the giant’s real name) objected to, and for which objection he was saddled with a fictitious debt, and thrown into Bristol Jail. This apparent misfortune was, in the end, one of the luckiest things that could have happened to him. While in prison he was visited by a gentleman who took compassion on his distress, and believing him to be unjustly detained, very generously became his bail, ultimately investigating the affair so successfully as to obtain for him not only his liberty but his freedom to discontinue serving his taskmaster any longer. It happened to be September when he was liberated, and by the further assistance of his benefactor he was enabled to set up for himself in the fair then held in St. James’s, and such an attraction did he prove that in three days he realised the considerable sum of £30. From that time he continued to exhibit himself for twenty-six years, when, having realised a fortune sufficient to enable him to keep a carriage and live in luxury, he retired into private life.

A practical joke led to the ultimate success of Edward Knight, a popular comedian of last century. While with Mr. Nunns, manager of the Stafford company, he received a message from a stranger desiring his presence at a certain inn. On repairing thither he was courteously received by a gentleman who desired to show his gratification at Knight’s performance by giving him permission to use his name (Phillips) to Mr. Tate Wilkinson, the manager of the York Theatre, who, the stranger felt sure, on account of his intimacy with [Pg 54] him would be sure to give Knight a good engagement. Next morning a letter was sent by the elated actor, who in due course received the following reply:

> "Sir,—I am not acquainted with any Mr. Phillips, except a rigid Quaker, and he is the last man in the world to recommend an actor to my theatre. I don't want you.
>
> "TATE WILKINSON."

This rebuff was so unexpected, and so mortifying, that the recipient sent a short and sharp answer:

> "Sir,—I should as soon think of applying to a Methodist parson to preach for my benefit as to a Quaker to recommend me to Mr. Wilkinson. I don't want to come.
>
> "E. KNIGHT."

After an interval of twelve months, when the elder Mathews seceded from his company, he wrote to Knight as follows:

> "Mr. Methodist Parson,—I have a living that produces twenty-five shillings per week. Will you hold forth?
>
> "TATE WILKINSON."

The invitation was gladly accepted, and for seven years he continued at York with unvarying success; at the end of which time he obtained an engagement at Drury Lane, and became a metropolitan favourite.

Though perhaps not so striking an example as any of the foregoing, an episode in the life of William Dobson (called by Charles the First "the English Tintoret") is more or less of the same fortunate nature. Dobson, who always betrayed in his best efforts the want of proper training, was, as a boy, apprenticed to a Mr. Peake, who was more of a dealer in, than a painter of, pictures, and who consequently was anything but a competent teacher. Nevertheless, his collection of paintings, which included some by Titian and Van Dyck, was most valuable to the youngster, who copied both those masters with such wonderful correctness that none but an *expert* could detect the difference. When very young, and very poor, he managed to get one of his copies of a Van Dyck exhibited in a shop window on Snow Hill, which, strangely enough, was seen by no less a person than the author of the original, who immediately sought out the individual who had reproduced his work with such fidelity, and finding him toiling away in a miserable garret, took him by the hand, and brought him to the notice of King Charles. [Pg 55]

Another instance of luck not dissociated with impecuniosity is found in the case of Perry, of *The Morning Chronicle*. Educated at Marischal College, Aberdeen, which he entered in 1771, he was first employed in that town as a lawyer's clerk; but full of literary ambition, and possessed of much literary culture, he made his way to Edinburgh, where he almost starved, not being able to find employment of any kind. From Edinburgh he went to Manchester, where he just managed to eke out an existence; but believing London was the El Dorado for men of letters, he was not content till he had started for the great city. Amongst others who had promised him work was Urquart, the bookseller, to whom he wrote without success. One morning he called upon that gentleman, and was leaving the shop after a fruitless interview, when the bookseller said he had just experienced great pleasure in reading an article in *The General Advertiser*, and, said he, "If you could write like that, I could soon find you an engagement." It so happened that Perry had sent in an article to that paper, and his joy may be imagined when he was able to claim the lauded production as his own; bringing out of his pocket another of the same sort, which he was about to drop into the editor's box as before. He was immediately engaged as a paid contributor to *The General Advertiser* and *Evening Post*, and ultimately became editor and proprietor of *The Morning Chronicle*.

One of the most remarkable of the lucky illustrations, however, is that of Hogarth, when he was a struggling artist. At the time referred to, when studying at St. Martin's Lane Academy, he was oftentimes reduced to the lowest possible water-mark; and while laying the foundation of his future celebrity, he was exposed to all the humiliating inconveniences too frequently associated with penury, not the least of such annoyances being the contemptuous insolence of an ignorant letter of lodgings. The story goes that on one of these occasions when he was unmercifully dunned by his landlady for the small sum of a sovereign, he was so exasperated that, with a view to being revenged upon her, he made a sketch of her face so excruciatingly ugly, that it revealed at once his marvellous power as a caricaturist.

Turning to the opposite side of the subject—the unlucky, there is, it must be admitted, a dearth of similarly appropriate examples. It is not that there is any scarcity of cases of great misfortune in connection with impecuniosity, but the circumstances connected with such cases are not so apparently the result of accident. In the lucky instances enumerated the chance element was conspicuous, but the same cannot be said of the adverse anecdotes; for they, or rather those that have come under my notice, are unfortunate cases rather than unlucky. For instance, the impecuniosity that introduced the Irish giant to some one he would not otherwise have met, who put him in the way of realising a competency, was [Pg 56]

manifestly lucky; but the impecuniosity that attended Stow, the antiquary, in his latest years, could not in the same sense be called *un*lucky, inasmuch as it was owing to no particular act or chance circumstance that he continued poor. The kind of cases that I consider would more properly illustrate this phase of the subject would be those of persons who, from, say, missing an appointment with some patron of eminence owing to being hard up, lost an opportunity of advancement, which never occurred again; or by not having some small amount of ready money were unable to avail themselves of an advantageous offer, which would have resulted in a fortune. That such mishaps have occurred in the long list of unrecorded lives there is little doubt; but I cannot call any to remembrance at the present time. The only instances I have met with in my research being those of unfortunate persons, whose histories of hardship would be more fittingly recounted as the sad side of impecuniosity.

The individual just referred to, John Stow, the antiquary, is a most melancholy case in point. A profound scholar in every sense, he devoted his life and substance to the study of English antiquities; oftentimes travelling tremendous distances on foot to save monuments, and rescue rare works from the dispersed libraries of monasteries. His enthusiasm for study was unbounded, and at his death he left stupendous excerpts in his own handwriting. At an advanced age, when worn out by study and travel, and the cares and anxieties of poverty—for he was utterly neglected by the pretended patrons of learning—his other troubles were increased by most acute pains in the feet, which he good-humouredly referred to by saying "his affliction lay in that part which formerly he had made so much use of." At last he became so necessitous that he petitioned James the First for a licence to collect alms for himself, "as a recompense for his labour and travel of forty-five years, in setting forth the [Pg 57] Chronicles of England, and eight years taken up in the Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster, towards his relief now in his old age: having left his former means of living, and only employing himself for the service and good of his country"—which petition was granted by letters patent under the Great Seal, permitting him to seek assistance from all well-disposed people within this realm of England. The terms in which this permit was set forth ("to ask, gather, and take the alms of all our loving subjects") were scarcely correct; that is to say, "to ask, gather, and take the alms of all our loving subjects—who will give" would have been more complete; for though the letters patent were published by the clergy from their pulpits, the result was so trifling that they had to be renewed for another twelvemonth; one entire parish in the city subscribing but seven and sixpence to the poor scholar's appeal.

Learning in Stow's time, and for a long time after, was evidently but poorly patronised, for his is by no means an isolated experience. Myles Davies, author of 'Athenæ Britannicæ,' &c., published in 1716, suffered similar neglect; his mind, it is alleged, becoming quite confused amidst the loud cries of penury and despair.

Alluding to those who were supposed to support such as himself, he scathingly says, "Some parsons would halloo enough to raise the whole house and home of the domestics to raise a poor crown; at last all that flutter ends in sending Jack or Tom out to change a guinea, and then 'tis reckoned over half-a-dozen times before the fatal crown can be picked out, which must be taken as it is given, with all the parade of almsgiving [Davies, be it remembered, was a Welsh divine], and so to be received with all the active and passive ceremonial of mendication and alms-receiving, as if the books, printing, and paper were worth nothing at all, and as if it were the greatest charity for them to touch them, or let them be in the house. 'For I shall never read them,' says one of the five-shilling chaps. 'I have no time to look into them,' says a third. ''Tis so much money lost,' says a grave dean. 'My eyes being so bad,' said a bishop, 'that I can scarce read at all.' 'What do you want with me?' said another. 'Sir, I presented you the other day with my 'Athenæ Britannicæ,' being the last part published.' 'I don't want books, take them again; I don't understand what they mean.' 'The title is very [Pg 58] plain,' said I, 'and they are writ mostly in English.' 'I'll give you a crown for both the volumes.' 'They stand me, sir, in more than that, and 'tis for a bare subsistence I present or sell them; how shall I live?' 'I care not a farthing for that—live or die, 'tis all one to me.' 'Damn my master,' said Jack, ''twas but last night he was commending your books and your learning to the skies, and now he would not care if you were starving before his eyes; nay, he often makes game at your clothes, though he thinks you the greatest scholar in England.'"

So much for the way literature was encouraged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and that it was little better in the eighteenth century is only too well-known a fact; for "in those days, a large proportion of working literary men were little better than outcasts;—persons exiled from decent society, partly by their own vices, partly by the fact of their following a profession which had hardly acquired a recognised standing in the world, or found for itself a definite and indisputable sphere of usefulness. The reading public was not sufficient to maintain an extensive fraternity of writers, and the writers consequently often starved, and broke their hearts in wretched garrets, or earned a despicable living by flattering the great."

These animadversions are especially meant to apply to that class of *littérateurs* known as "Grub Street pamphleteers," but not a few notable names in the world of letters can be found to verify the gloomy picture. Nathaniel, or "Nat" Lee, as he is more often called, was one of those who failed to find fortune, but it must be admitted his "own vices" are

answerable for his indigence. The son of a clergyman, he was educated at Westminster School, and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took his B.A.; and, at a very early age, manifested conspicuous ability for dramatic writing; his first effort, 'Nero, Emperor of Rome,' produced in 1675, being received with marked success. From that time until his death, which occurred fifteen years later, he brought out eleven plays, not one of which was a failure, but he was so rakishly extravagant as to be frequently plunged into the lowest depths of misery. In November 1684, his excesses, coupled with a naturally excitable temperament, succeeded in fitting him to be an inmate of Bedlam, where he was confined for four years. On his release in April 1688, he resumed his occupation of dramatist, producing 'The Princess of Cleve' in 1689, and 'The Massacre of Paris' the following year. [Pg 59] Notwithstanding the considerable profits arising from these performances he was reduced to so low an ebb, that a weekly stipend of 10*s.* from the Theatre Royal was his chief dependence. He died the same year, 1690, the result of a drunken frolic in the street; and although the author of eleven plays, all acted with applause, and dedicated, when printed, to the Earls of Dorset, Mulgrave, and Pembroke, and the Duchesses of Portsmouth and Richmond, who were numbered among his patrons, *he was buried by the Parish* of St. Clement Danes, Strand.

The vicissitudes of Spenser, in contrast to those of the author just referred to, were undoubtedly due to a want of appreciation on the part of those in power; for none of his biographers even hint at want of rectitude in his past life. Created Poet Laureate by Queen Elizabeth, he, for some time, only wore the barren laurel, and possessed the place without the pension; for Lord Treasurer Burleigh, for some motive or other, intercepted the Queen's intended bounty to him. It is said that Her Majesty, upon Spenser presenting some poems to her, ordered him £100, but that her Lord Treasurer, objecting to it, said with considerable scorn, "What! all this for a song?" Whereupon the Queen replied, "Then give him what is reason." Some time after, the poet, not having received the promised gift, penned the following poetic petition—

> "I was promised on a time,
> To have reason for my rime; (*sic*)
> From that time unto this season
> I received nor rime nor reason"—

which, when sent to his sovereign, had the desired effect of producing the monetary reward, and also obtained for Lord Burleigh the reprimand he so well deserved. That Spenser felt keenly the neglect to which he was subsequently subjected is pretty clearly shown in the following lines—

> "Full little knowest thou, that hast not try'd
> What hell it is in suing long to bide:
> To lose good days that might be better spent,
> To wast long nights in pensive discontent:
> To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,
> To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow: [Pg 60]
> To have thy Prince's grace, yet want her peers,
> To have thy asking, yet wait many years:
> To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares,
> To eat thy heart with comfortless despairs:
> To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
> To spend, to give, to want, to be undone"—

which is but one of many bemoanings of hard and undeserved treatment; and though there be some who have accused him of lacking philosophy in thus making known his poverty, I should think it very much too literally *poor* philosophy that would suffer in silence when it comes to a matter of bread and cheese. There were times, of course, in Spenser's history, when his genius was fully acknowledged, both before and after the neglect recorded, when, for instance, he made the acquaintance of that chivalrous poet soldier, Sir Philip Sidney—the historically self-denying Sir Philip, who when mortally wounded at the battle of Zutphen, and about to revel in a draught of water that he had called for, denied himself the coveted drink, and gave it away to a poor comrade. He it was who was the first to recognise Spenser's great claim as a poet. It is stated that when a perfect stranger to Sir Philip, Spenser went to Leicester House, and introduced himself by sending in the ninth canto of 'The Fairy Queen,' which he had just completed.

The young nobleman was much surprised with the description of "Despair" in that canto, and betrayed an unusual kind of transport on the discovery of so new and uncommon a genius. After he had read some verses he called his steward, and bade him give the person who brought those verses £50; but upon reading the next stanza, he ordered the sum to be doubled. The steward was as much surprised as his master, and thought it his duty to make some delay in executing so sudden and lavish a bounty; but upon reading one stanza more, Sir Philip raised his gratuity to £200, and commanded the steward to give it immediately, lest, as he read farther, he might be tempted to give away his whole estate. Unfortunately this generous patron was killed at the early age of thirty-two, and it was after his decease that Spenser for a time was under a cloud. Subsequently he was befriended by the Earl of Leicester, and upon the appointment of Lord Grey of Wilton to be Lord Deputy of Ireland, the poet became his secretary, and was rewarded by a grant from the Queen of three [Pg 61]

thousand acres. This he was not destined to enjoy very long, for in the rebellion of Tyrone he was plundered, and deprived of his estate, and when he arrived in England he was heart-broken by his misfortunes. He died in the greatest distress on the 16th January, 1599, and though interred in Westminster Abbey at the expense of the Earl of Essex, his death according to Ben Jonson was actually occasioned by “lack of bread.”

It is difficult to determine which is the more pitiable, the want and misery produced by the neglect of others, or the destitution resulting from evil courses; both demand our commiseration, though some of the stern moralists affect to have “no pity” for those whose troubles are the outcome of self-indulgence and dissipation. “A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind,” and only those who have been the victims of that enslaving mania for drink, which has blasted so many bright lives will have compassion for such a man as Samuel Boyce. This misguided mortal, the son of a dissenting minister, was born at Dublin in the year 1708, and when eighteen was sent to the Glasgow University, his father having designed him for the ministry. He married when he had been at college little more than a year, and soon developed habits of indulgence and extravagance, which effectually ruined him, in spite of much assistance received from the nobility and others. In the year 1731 he published a volume of poems, to which is subjoined the “Tablature of Cebes,” and a letter upon liberty, which appeared originally in the *Dublin Journal* five years previously. These productions gained him considerable reputation and substantial patronage from the Countess of Eglinton, to whom they were dedicated.

His next successful effort was an elegy upon the death of the Viscountess Stormont (a woman of the most refined taste, well versed in science, and a great admirer of poetry), entitled, ‘The Tears of the Muses,’ which so pleased Lord Stormont, the deceased lady’s husband, that he advertised for the author in one of the weekly papers, and caused his attorney to make him a very handsome present. In addition to the favour of Lady Eglinton and Lord Stormont, he was also befriended by the Duchess of Gordon, who gave him most material assistance while he continued in Scotland; and when he went to London, gave him a letter of introduction to Pope, and obtained another for him to Sir Peter King, Lord Chancellor of England. He had many other most valuable recommendations when he arrived [Pg 62] in the metropolis, and possessing as he did ability of no common order, his opportunities were exceptionally fine; but nothing can withstand the devastating influences of the demon of drink; and at the age of thirty-two he is described as reduced to such an extremity of human wretchedness that he had not a shirt, a coat, or any kind of apparel to put on. The sheets in which he lay were carried to the pawnbroker’s, and he was obliged to be confined to his bed with no other covering than a blanket, and in this condition, thrusting his arm through a hole, he scribbled a quantity of verse for the *Gentleman’s Magazine*.

His genius was not confined to poetry, for he was skilled in painting, music, and heraldry; but by his pen alone, had he chosen to live decently, he could have commanded a very good living. His translations from the French were admittedly excellent; but the drawback to employing him at this work was that when he had copied a page or two he would pawn the original and re-pawn it as often he could induce his acquaintances to “get it out” for him. On one occasion Dr. Johnson managed to get up a sixpenny subscription for him in order to redeem his clothes, but the effort to help him was useless, for within two days he pawned them again, and the last state was at any rate no better than the first. He seems to have been so demoralised by drink that he was dead to every sense of honour and humanity; for, whenever he obtained half-a-guinea, whether by writing poetry or a begging letter, he would sit squandering it in a tavern while his wife and child starved at home. He got from bad to worse, and in 1742, when locked up in a spunging-house, sent the following appeal to Cave:

“I am every moment threatened to be turned out here, because I have not money to pay for my bed two nights past, which is usually paid beforehand; and I am loth to go into the Compter, till I can see if my affairs can possibly be made up. I hope, therefore, you will have the humanity to send me half-a-guinea for support till I finish your papers in my hands. I humbly entreat your answer, not having tasted anything since Tuesday evening I came here; and my coat will be taken off my back for the charge of the bed, so that I must go into prison naked, which is too shocking for me to think of.”

There are several accounts given of his death, which occurred when he was but forty-one [Pg 63] years of age; and, though they vary as to the precise nature of his end, there is no doubt that it was accelerated by the habit he indulged in—of drinking hot beer to excess, which at last obscured and confused his intellectual faculties.

The sad side of impecuniosity is, unfortunately, so vast a subject that it would require an entire volume, instead of part of a chapter, to properly record the miseries of mind and body endured by those in past ages, who, not unknown to fame, have been permitted to pine and die in despair. The poets alone, so prolific are they in this respect, would furnish material sufficient; but the neglect of genius is anything but an uncommon thing, and therefore commonplace sufferings might not be regarded as “*Curiosities* of impecuniosity,” though in one sense it certainly is curious that their wants should not have been recognised. Men like Henry Carey or Cary, the author of ‘Sally in our Alley,’ and said by some to be the composer of the National Anthem, who was considered by all authorities to be a true son of the Muses, have been driven to desperation through want. It is said, “At the time that this poet could neither walk the streets nor be seated at the convivial board without listening to his own songs and his own music—for in truth the whole nation was echoing his verse, and crowded

theatres were applauding his wit and humour; while this very man himself, urged by his strong humanity, founded a 'Fund for Decayed Musicians'—he was so broken-hearted, and his own common comforts so utterly neglected, that in despair, not waiting for nature to relieve him from the burden of existence, he laid violent hands on himself; and when found dead *had only a halfpenny in his pocket*."

The following lines written some time before his melancholy end show that he was no stranger to the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and that his self-destruction was not the result of momentary madness, but rather induced by the humiliating torture of ills long borne.

> "Far, far away then chase the harlot Muse,
> Nor let her thus thy noon of life abuse;
> Mix with the common crowd, unheard, unseen,
> And if again thou tempt'st the vulgar praise,
> May'st thou be crown'd with birch instead of bays!"

The untimely end of Chatterton is a companion picture to that of Cary, but the circumstances of his early death, his being without food for two days, and his poisoning himself with arsenic and water, when lodging at Mrs. Angel's, a sack-maker in Brook Street, Holborn, are so well known that it is only necessary to mention his melancholy fate, which if it stood alone in the history of literature would be sufficient to show there is a very pathetic side to impecuniosity. Although this rash act is attributed to the state of starvation to which the poet was reduced, there is little doubt that Horace Walpole by his unsympathising, though strictly correct, reproof had much to do with the disordered condition of the poor fellow's mind. When living at Bristol, Chatterton became possessed of some parchments which had been extracted from the coffin of a Mr. Canynge, and upon these he produced some poetry, which he described as a production of Thomas Canynge, and of his friend, one Thomas Rowley, a priest; sent them to Walpole and asked for assistance to enable him to quit his uncongenial occupation, and pursue one more poetic. The poems were submitted to competent antiquaries, and pronounced forgeries, whereupon Horace Walpole refused the boy's application for help, at the same time reproving the attempted fraud in the most cold and cutting terms. For this treatment the great wit and prince of letter-writers has been severely censured; one writer remarking, "Just or unjust, the world has never forgiven Horace Walpole for Chatterton's misery. His indifference has been contrasted with the generosity of Edmund Burke to Crabbe, a generosity to which we owe 'The Village,' 'The Borough,' and to which Crabbe owed his peaceful old age, and almost his existance. The cases were different, but Crabbe had his faults, and Chatterton was worth saving. It is well for genius that there are souls in the world more sympathising, less worldly, and more indulgent, than those of such men as Horace Walpole." [Pg 64]

Another most melancholy, and equally tragical record connected with impecuniosity is furnished in the life of Dr. Dodd, a literary divine, and one of the most popular preachers of the last century; though *his* troubles were not the outcome of actual want, but rather the result of want of self-control and principle. He commenced as a writer for the press, published 'The Beauties of Shakespeare,' obtained several lectureships, which he held with great success, and subsequently became Chaplain to the King. The list of his different appointments is most numerous, and most of them not only important, but highly remunerative, but his extravagance was such that no income would have been sufficient to keep him out of debt. Owing to his excesses he lost the royal favour, and though he was in the receipt of a large income from his preaching, it was not enough to satisfy his expensive habits, and he foolishly sent an anonymous letter to Lady Apsley offering her £3000 if she would prevail on her husband, the Lord Chancellor, to appoint him to the rectory of St. George's, Hanover Square. The letter was traced to the doctor, and in consequence his name was struck off the list of royal chaplains. After a sojourn abroad he returned to this country, obtained from Lord Chesterfield a living in Buckinghamshire, but could not forsake his old habits; he still plunged into debt, and *from being pressed for money* forged the name of his patron to a bill for £4200, was tried, found guilty, and executed at the Old Bailey, in 1777. [Pg 65]

The career of Thomas Otway, the dramatist, though short, for he was but thirty-four years of age when he died, was one continued course of monetary difficulty, the result of irregular living. The son of a Sussex rector and educated at Winchester and Christ Church, Oxford, he betrayed no anxiety to follow his father's footsteps, but at the age of twenty-three manifested a most practical preference for Thespis rather than theology, though he does not seem to have possessed any great genius for acting. He subsequently became a cornet in a regiment, which was sent to Flanders, but distinguished himself most as a dramatic writer, for which profession he was eminently suited, many of his plays meeting with exceptional success, particularly 'Venice Preserved,' which has held possession of the stage for about two hundred years. His circumstances, never good, gradually went from bad to worse, owing to his dissolute proclivities, and he died at last on the 14th April, 1685, in a wretched state of penury, at a public-house called 'The Bull,' on Tower Hill, whither he had gone to avoid the too pressing attention of his creditors. It is generally believed that the actual cause of his death was choking, which occurred through his having been without food for some time, and then too eagerly devouring a piece of bread which, through the generosity of a friend, he had been able to purchase. That Otway should have excelled in tragedy is not surprising,

the power that he displayed in depicting domestic suffering being easily accounted for by the fact that he must have been constantly experiencing distress in private life, for when his tragic end was brought about he was hiding from sheriff's officers, his misery terminating only with death. [Pg 66]

It is terribly sad to see such men as these, blessed with natural gifts far beyond the common, yet in spite of these endowments sinking to a lower level than their inferiors in intellect; and unfortunately the literary list of these erring ones is a long one, for since the days of Robert Greene, said to be the first Englishman who wrote for a living, and who died in the house of a poor shoemaker, who took pity upon him when he was destitute, there have always been men unable to withstand the seductions of vicious courses, and who have consequently paid the penalty of intemperance, and immorality, by death-beds of misery, and remorse, to say nothing of the life-long inconveniences of impecuniosity. Lamentable as is the contemplation of these lost lives, there is yet a sadder picture still, for pitiable as it is to think of men, indifferent alike to their well-being in this world and in that which is to come, the sadness is intensified when the object of pity is a woman, one who has been referred to as "a sort of female Otway, without his genius."

The individual in question was Colley Cibber's younger daughter, Charlotte, whose education from her earliest years was eminently masculine, which resulted in the girl becoming proficient in manly sports and pastimes, such as shooting, hunting, riding, &c. When very young she married Mr. Richard Clarke, a celebrated violinist, with whom she soon disagreed, and from whom she speedily separated, and she then devoted herself to the stage, and commenced a career, which for strange and harrowing vicissitudes is unequalled in the annals of British biography—one day courted, admired and affluent; the next an outcast, uncared for, and despised. Singularly enough, the first character she assumed on the stage after the quarrel with her husband was Mademoiselle in 'The Provoked Wife,' in which character, and several subsequent assumptions at the Haymarket Theatre, she was highly successful, and obtained an uncommonly good salary. Her temper however, like herself, was eccentric, and it was not long before she quarrelled with Fleetwood, the manager, and left the theatre at a moment's notice. From being a regular performer, she then took to travelling about the country with strollers, and shared with them the starvation fate that is so often associated with their nomadic existence. Tiring of this, she set up as a grocer, in Long Acre, but failed in that business, as well as at puppet-show keeping, at which she tried her hand in a street near the Haymarket. On the death of her husband, she was thrown into prison for debt, but released by the subscriptions of ladies of questionable repute, whose charity is proverbially more conspicuous than their virtue. After remarrying, and again becoming a widow, Charlotte Clarke (for by that name she has always been known) assumed male attire, and obtained occasional engagements at the theatres, and, though she suffered most distressing deprivations was able to present so good an appearance, that an heiress became madly attached to her, and was inconsolable when the wretched woman revealed her sex. The next adventure she claims to have participated in is her becoming valet to an Irish nobleman, which situation she did not retain for any length of time; and then she attempted to earn her living as a sausage-maker, but was unsuccessful. Twice she became a tavern proprietor, and for a time was in the most flourishing circumstances, but her prosperity was excessively ephemeral, and amongst the other occupations that she is credited with having undertaken are those of waiter at the King's Head, Marylebone; worker of a set of puppets, and authoress of her extraordinary biography, which she published in 1755. It was with the proceeds of this book that she was enabled to open one of the public-houses mentioned; but the amount realised by its sale was not of much benefit to the poor misguided creature, for within five years (she died in 1760), she was discovered in a more wretched, forlorn condition than ever, according to the account of two gentlemen who visited her. The widow, who, petted and pampered by her parents, had, as a child been brought up in luxury, was then domiciled in a wretched, thatched hovel in the purlieus of Clerkenwell Bridewell, at that time a wild suburb, where the scavengers used to throw the cleansings of the streets. The house and its scanty furniture sufficiently indicated the extreme poverty of the inmates. [Pg 67]

"Mrs. Clarke sat on a broken chair by a little scrap of fire, and the visitors were accommodated with a rickety deal board. A half-starved dog lay at the authoress's feet; a cat sat on one hob, and a monkey on the other; while a magpie perched on the back of its mistress's chair. A worn-out pair of bellows served for a writing-desk, and a broken cup for an inkstand; these were matched by the pen, which was worn down to the stump, and was the only one on the premises. The lady asked thirty guineas for the copyright. The bookseller offered five, but was at length induced by his friend to give ten, on condition that Mr. Whyte (the friend) would pay a moiety and take half the risk of the novel." [Pg 68]

In the year 1759 she played Marplot, in 'The Busybody,' for her own benefit at the Haymarket, when the following advertisement appeared.

"As I am entirely dependent on chance for a subsistence, and am desirous of getting into business, I hope the town will favour me on the occasion, which, added to the rest of their indulgence, will ever be gratefully acknowledged by their truly obliged, and obedient servant, Charlotte Clarke."

This was shortly before her death, which took place on the 6th April, 1760.

It would be extremely difficult to find a more sorrowful story in connection with impecuniosity than that of Colley Cibber's daughter; and though the degraded character of the greater part of her life has robbed her misfortunes of much of the sympathy that would otherwise have been freely accorded, it would have been well if some who have animadverted so severely upon her shortcomings had remembered that much in her life that was so unwomanly was undoubtedly due to her masculine and defective training.

The celebrated actress Mrs. Jordan—whose acting, according to Hazlitt—"gave more pleasure than that of any other actress, because she had the greatest spirit of enjoyment in herself"—was so unfortunate in her last days, that she is fully entitled to a place with those whose monetary embarrassments have been particularly sad. For years she had lived in uninterrupted domestic harmony with the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William the Fourth; but when the connection was suddenly severed in 1811, a yearly allowance of £4400, was settled upon her for the maintenance of herself and daughters; with a provision that, if Mrs. Jordan should resume her profession, the care of the duke's daughters, together with £1500 per annum allowed for them, should revert to his Royal Highness. Within a few months of this arrangement she did return to the stage, but through having incautiously given blank notes of hand to a friend in difficulties on the understanding that the amounts to be filled in were but small, she awoke one morning to find herself called upon to pay amounts utterly beyond her power. In her terror and dismay she fled to France, but her peace of mind was [Pg 69] gone. Separated from her children, and racked by the torturing thought of the liability she was unable to discharge, she gradually pined away, and died in terrible distress of mind at St. Cloud in June 1816.

Contrasted with its brilliant beginning the close of Mrs. Jordan's life is painfully sad, and it might be urged that the sorrowful end was but an instance of retributive justice on account of the fair and frail one's social sin. Experience, however, proves that the breaking of the moral law does not always involve punishment in this life, and even if this were not so, many instances could be cited of misfortunes as heavy, and far heavier, falling to the lot of those who to all intents and purposes have led blameless lives.

Foremost among such cases would be the crushing blow that befell the noble and greatly gifted novelist and poet, Sir Walter Scott, at the age of fifty-five years, when, having given to the world the greater part of those glorious works that have placed his name pre-eminent in the world of literature, and being, as was supposed, the happy enjoyer of a handsome fortune and splendid estate, it transpired that he was a ruined man. So successful had been his literary labours for thirty years that it was generally and naturally supposed that the enormous sums spent on Abbotsford were the proceeds of his novels and poems, but it seems he had for a long time been a partner in the printing firm of Ballantyne & Co., who were closely connected with Messrs. Constable, the publishers. These firms had engaged in transactions of a speculative character, and in the commercial crisis of 1825 both failed, Sir Walter's immense private fortune being swallowed up in the crash, while as a partner in the house of Ballantyne he was responsible for the enormous amount of £147,000. At the time of this calamity his health had already been considerably shattered, the slightly grey hair had in the year 1819 been turned to snowy white by an attack of jaundice, and his frame further enfeebled four years later by an attack of apoplexy, so that it would not have been surprising if this frightful crash had proved his death-blow. Far from it; with a heroism unparalleled, and a high sense of honour, that adds more lustre to his name than the most brilliant effusion of his pen, he determined manfully to face this overwhelming catastrophe, refusing all proffered aid, and merely asking for time. "Gentlemen," said he to the creditors, "time and I against any two. Let me take this good ally into my company, and I believe I shall be [Pg 70] able to pay you every farthing. It is very hard thus to lose all the labours of a lifetime and to be made a poor man at last when I ought to have been otherwise, but, if God grant me life and strength for a few years longer, I have no doubt I shall redeem it all." The redemption referred to his property, all of which he gave up, retiring into modest lodgings, where he zealously set to work to accomplish the Herculean task of writing off the gigantic sum named. 'Woodstock,' which realised £8228, was the first novel after his misfortune, and that occupied him only three months; but it was as, he said, "very hard" at his time of life to every day perform the allotted task of producing thirty pages of printed matter, for the work on which he was then occupied was not that fiction which he wrote with such facility, but a voluminous 'Life of Napoleon Buonaparte,' necessitating reference to no end of books and papers; and day after day for many a month might he have been seen, slowly and sorrowfully, wading through work after work in order to verify each date and fact. The nine volumes were finished in 1827, and these were followed by 'The Chronicles of the Canongate,' 'Tales of a Grandfather,' 'The Fair Maid of Perth,' 'Count Robert,' and 'Castle Dangerous'—the last named published in 1831—a year before his death, which may be fairly attributed to the undue strain of mind and body; the *raison-d'être* of this overtaxing of his strength being simply and solely impecuniosity.

The picture of this truly great man being obliged to wear out the last years of his life by unceasing labour when he should have been enjoying a well-earned rest, is excessively sad and touching—but the sadness is to some extent relieved by the heroic nature of the act. The melancholy end of the man is swallowed up in the imperishable name he has left behind, which name, for generations to come, will serve as the synonym of honour. Sad, far more sad, were the closing days of Sheridan, whose last moments were also darkened by impecuniosity, but utterly unrelieved by any acts of self-sacrifice; and made far more

melancholy by the fact that the monetary misery was caused by unnecessary extravagance.

Alas, poor Sheridan! If ever man in his declining days had good reason to say with the preacher, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,” thou hadst! for thou wert bitterly punished at the last, by the desertion and neglect of those who should have succoured and solaced thee. [Pg 71] True thy shortcomings were many, but only one blessed with such brilliant gifts could possibly realise thy temptation; and the sorrow thou didst endure must silence detraction. Says one of his biographers, “For six years after the burning of the old theatre, he continued to go down and down. Disease now attacked him fiercely. In the spring of 1816 he was fast waning towards extinction. His day was past, he had outlived his fame as a wit and social light; he was forgotten by many, if not by most, of his old associates. He wrote to Rogers, ‘I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted.’ Poor Sheridan! in spite of all thy faults, who is he whose morality is so stern that he cannot shed one tear over thy latter days! God forgive us, we are all sinners; and if we weep not for this man’s deficiency, how shall we ask tears when our day comes? Even as I write, I feel my hand tremble and my eyes moisten over the sad end of one whom I love, though he died before I was born. ‘They are going to put the carpets out of window,’ he wrote to Rogers, ‘and break into Mrs. S.’s room and *take me*. For God’s sake let me see you!’ See him! see one friend who could and would help him in his misery! Oh, happy man may that man count himself who has never wanted that one friend, and felt the utter helplessness of that want. Poor Sheridan! had he ever asked, or hoped, or looked for that Friend out of *this* world it had been better; for ‘the Lord thy God is a jealous God,’ and we go on seeking human friendship and neglecting the divine till it is too late. He found one hearty friend in his physician, Dr. Bain, when all others had forsaken him. The spirit of White’s and Brookes’, the companion of a prince and a score of noblemen, the enlivener of every fashionable table, was forgotten by all but this one doctor. Let us read Moore’s description. ‘A sheriff’s officer at length arrested the dying man *in his bed*, and was about to carry him off in his blankets to a spunging-house, when Dr. Bain interfered?’ Who would live the life of revelry that Sheridan lived to have such an end? A few days after, on the 7th July, 1816, in his sixty-fifth year, he died. Of his last hours the late Professor Smythe wrote an admirable and most touching account, a copy of which was circulated in manuscript. The professor, hearing of Sheridan’s condition asked to see him, with a view not only of alleviating present distress, but of calling the dying man to repentance. From his hands the unhappy Sheridan received the Holy Communion; his face during that solemn rite —doubly solemn when it is performed in the chamber of death—‘expressed,’ Smythe relates, [Pg 72] ‘*the deepest awe*.’ That phrase conveys to the mind impressions not easy to be defined, not easy to be forgotten.

“Peace! There was not peace even in death, and the creditor pursued him even into the ‘waste wide,’ even to the coffin. He was lying in state, when a gentleman in the deepest mourning called, it is said, at the house, and introducing himself as an old and much-attached friend of the deceased, begged to be allowed to look upon his face. The tears which rose in his eyes, the tremulousness of his quiet voice, the pallor of his mournful face, deceived the unsuspecting servant, who accompanied him to the chamber of death, removed the lid of the coffin, turned down the shroud, and revealed features which had once been handsome, but long since rendered almost hideous by drinking. The stranger gazed with profound emotion, while he quietly drew from his pocket a bailiff’s wand, and touching the corpse’s face with it, suddenly altered his manner to one of considerable glee, and informed the servant that he had arrested the corpse in the King’s name for a debt of £500. It was the morning of the funeral, which was to be attended by half the grandees of England, and in a few minutes the mourners began to arrive. But the corpse was the bailiff’s property till his claim was paid, and nought but the money would soften the iron capturer. Canning and Lord Sidmouth agreed to settle the matter, and over the coffin the debt was paid.”

The pall-bearers were the Duke of Bedford, the Earl of Lauderdale, Earl Mulgrave, Lord Holland, Lord Spencer, and the Bishop of London, and the body was followed by two Royal Highnesses—the Dukes of York and Sussex—by two Marquises, seven Earls, three Viscounts, five Lords, and a perfect army of honourables and right honourables. This *show* of respect and homage after death, when nothing had been done to assuage his last sufferings in life, was regarded by those who loved him as a bitter mockery, and Moore’s lines justly denounced it.

“Oh, it sickens the heart to see bosoms so hollow,
  And friendship so false in the great and high-born,
To think what a long line of titles may follow,
  The relics of him who died friendless and lorn!
How proud they can press to the funeral array
  Of him whom they shunned in his sickness and sorrow,
How bailiffs may seize his last blanket to-day,
  Whose pall shall be held up by nobles to-morrow!”

CHAPTER V.

[Pg 73]

THE INGENUITY OF IMPECUNIOSITY.

In the opening chapter, several instances of considerable ingenuity were referred to; but as the conduct of the individuals in question was not *sans peur et sans reproche*, the cases came under the head of the immoral effects of the want of money, and were necessarily not illustrations of ingenuity proper, but ingenuity slightly improper.

In the present chapter, the majority of the reminiscences related are innocent of the unscrupulous characteristics, and are intended to be examples of the theory that "nothing sharpens a man's wits like poverty," which assertion can be supported by the accepted axiom "necessity is the mother of invention;" for it stands to reason that people are more or less stimulated to exercise their faculties of contrivance in proportion to their need. Hence it is that the very needy become exceptionally sharp in more senses than one.

The men who have made their mark in any department of knowledge, or have achieved positions of eminence, are for the most part, those who have wanted to be clever, or those who have wanted to attain certain celebrity. It is the *want* of the thing that has enabled them to devote their whole lives to study, or given them the power to persevere; and so it is with regard to impecuniosity. The want of money—that is an anxious desire for it on account of its being needed—has caused men to cudgel their brains to extricate themselves from their difficulties, has made them plot and plan, scheme and contrive, or, in other words, has greatly developed the gift of ingenuity.

Charles Phillips, the barrister, who, when first he practised at the Old Bailey bar, was remarkably hard up, was wont to relate, with great glee, how he succeeded with one of his early briefs, which he had from an Israelite attorney, in what might be termed "Jewing" the Jew. The case involved an indictment brought by one omnibus company against another for [Pg 74] "nursing" (that is, too closely following one another for the purpose of driving the rival off the road), and the trial lasted over three days. For this brief, which was an important one, he had received a disgracefully small fee, which he could not decline on account of his necessitous condition; but he determined, if he could get a chance, to be equal with his parsimonious employer, and on the last day of the trial the opportunity came. The attorney was most anxious that Phillips himself should examine a noted Paddington driver, who was a most important witness, and early on the morning he accosted the barrister, saying: "What an interesting day this will be in Court. You have to examine the Paddington coachman. The Court is crowded with conductors and drivers from all parts."

"Indeed," said Phillips, "I feel no interest in it. The trial has lasted three days, and look at my miserable fee. Now you *must* give me ten guineas, or I won't examine him."

The Jew was thunderstruck, and white with fear for the issue of his cause, declared he had not such a sum with him, but said he would leave the amount at Phillips' chambers after the trial. The counsel knowing his man, and what his promise was worth, declined the proposition, whereupon the other produced his cheque-book, and forthwith wrote out a cheque for the sum demanded. As soon as the barrister received it, he asked to be excused for a few moments, on the plea that he would have to hand over another brief which he had to a brother counsel. He then privately gave the cheque to one of the attendants, telling him to run as hard as he could, or take a cab, and get the cheque cashed as quickly as possible. On his return, he managed to keep his victim engaged in conversation till he thought the messenger had obtained a sufficient start, feeling sure that the Jew, although so much interested in the trial, would rush off to the bank and stop payment. It was as Phillips anticipated; but the attorney was not quite quick enough, for, as he rushed into the bank, the man with the money came out, and the state of perspiration and cursing in which the baffled Israelite regained the Old Bailey can be understood without detailing.

There is no doubt in Phillips' case that impecuniosity sharpened his wits; for the transaction was nothing more nor less than a piece of *sharp practice*, indefensible on strictly moral grounds, but hardly blameable when the character and conduct of the grinding attorney are remembered.

The name of Phillips is associated with another record of ingenuity; but in the second [Pg 75] instance it was Harlequin Phillips—no relation whatever of the legal luminary, though from his aptitude in taking advantage of an adversary he was worthy to be related, or at any rate his anecdote is.

This celebrated pantomimist, who was contemporaneous with Garrick, and was regarded as one of the cleverest men in his profession at that time, was not clever enough to keep himself out of debt and the spunging-house, though he proved himself equal to making his escape from custody by an admirably-conceived plan. After treating the bailiff very freely, he pretended that he had a dozen of particularly choice wine at home, already packed, which he begged permission to send for, to drink while he was detained, offering to pay sixpence a bottle for the privilege.

His custodian acceded to the request, and Phillips wrote a letter giving particulars of what he wanted, which letter was duly despatched to his residence. Some time after, a sturdy

porter presented himself with the load, and the turnkey called to his master that a porter with a hamper for Mr. Phillips had come. “All right,” replied the bailiff; “then let nothing but the porter and hamper out.” The messenger, who was an actor thoroughly accustomed to “heavy business,” came in, apparently loaded with a weighty hamper, and went out as lightly as if he were carrying an empty package, though in reality it contained Mr. Phillips inside.

This was indeed *carrying out the character of harlequin* (who is always supposed to be invisible) “to the letter;” and shows that the pantomimist of the past was an inventive genius, in addition to being an agile acrobat, and more or less up to tricks. *A propos* of tricks, the life of Philippe, the conjuror, introduces a legitimate illustration of a man poor in pocket, but rich in resource. Though he appeared at the St. James’ and Strand Theatres in 1845, under the name of Philippe, his real cognomen was Talon-Philippe Talon.

Born at Alais, near Nismes, where he carried on the trade of confectioner, he came to London, and subsequently went to Aberdeen, in the hope of succeeding as a manufacturer of Scotch sweets; but found himself unable to compete with the native makers, and in possession at last of nothing but a quantity of unsaleable confectionery. In utter despair of being ever able to get rid of his stock, he bethought him of turning conjuror, having always had a great *penchant* for sleight-of-hand performances, and being, he believed, equal to giving an exhibition in public. Certain apparatus, was, however, necessary, which, of course, [Pg 76] in his insolvent condition, he was unable to purchase. He made a visit to the theatre, and found that—fortunately for him—the entertainment being given was anything but successful; the bill, theatrically speaking, was “a frost,” and the manager consequently open to discuss any scheme for pulling up the business. In a moment Philippe saw his opportunity, and suggested that two or three special performances should be given, at which every person paying for admission should have with his check a packet of confectionery given to him, and a ticket entitling the holder to a chance in a prize of the value of £15. The suggestion was acted upon, the bait took, and the result was a succession of crowded houses, whereby Talon cleared off all his stock of sweets, netting a sufficient sum to enable him to purchase conjuring apparatus, which enabled him to give a series of entertainments with great success; the same that were subsequently represented with such profit in England, France, Austria, and elsewhere. Talon, or Philippe, as he was known to the entertaining public, was the first to perform with bare arms, and was one of the first to introduce the “globes of fish” trick in this country.

Another of the “legitimate” description of examples is found connected with the theatrical experience of Mr. C. W. Montague, who for years was a very well-known circus-manager, having been connected at one time or another with the equestrian establishments of Messrs. Sanger, Bell, F. Ginnetts, Myers, Newsome, and George Ginnett. Some years ago, when he joined the circus owned by the last-named at Greenwich, he found that business was in a most melancholy condition; the show, although a very good one, failed to fetch the people in, and the receipts, not sufficient to pay expenses, were getting worse and worse. This dismal state of things was most disheartening to Montague, who was at his wits’ end to know what to do, when one day, while he was being shaved, the barber noticing some one who had just passed the shop, said: “There goes poor Townsend.” “And who might he be?” asked the manager; being told in reply that the gentleman referred to had originally represented Greenwich in Parliament, but owing to great pecuniary difficulties had been obliged to resign. It also transpired that the late M.P. was a most excellent actor, the barber having seen him enact Richard III. “quite as good as any right down reg’ler perfeshional.” In addition, Mr. Townsend had been deservedly popular in the district, and especially in [Pg 77] Deptford; for he had been the means, when in the House of Commons, of getting dockyard labourers’ wages considerably advanced. These two facts, combined with the broken-down appearance of the gentleman spoken of, immediately presented themselves to Mr. Montague in a business light. What a capital idea it would be if he could manage to get the ex-M.P. to appear in the circus! So popular a man would be a tremendous draw! With this object in view, he waited upon Mr. Townsend the next morning, and put the proposition to him, but without success. The unfortunate gentleman admitted that his circumstances were such that the prospect of making money by the venture was most tempting; but his pride would not admit of his accepting the offer. The idea of appearing as a paid performer in a circus in the very place where he had been regarded with such respect was repugnant to his feelings, and he felt that he could not consent to the sacrifice of dignity. Away from Greenwich he would not have minded; but this arrangement of course would have been no good to Mr. Montague. Nothing daunted by the refusal, the theatrical man of business determined not to give up the idea, but on several subsequent occasions pressed him hard, using such powerful arguments in favour of the scheme that at last Mr. Townsend consented to appear as Richard “for twelve nights only,” on sharing terms. As soon as this was arranged, another and by no means unimportant difficulty presented itself. With the exception of Mr. Ginnett and his manager, there was no one in the company capable of supporting the tragedian; but stimulated by the seriousness of the situation, Mr. Montague set to work, cut down the tragedy with unsparing energy, and so arranged a version that enabled Mr. Ginnett and himself to double the parts of Richmond, Catesby, Norfolk, Ratcliffe, Stanley, and the ghosts. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the production (which would never have been thought of or undertaken but for the impecunious state of affairs) proved a palpable hit, Townsend’s share being so considerable that he insisted on treating the company to a supper, shortly after which he went to America.

The mention of America, and connected with circus managing, naturally suggests to the mind the name of that arch-humbug, but most successful showman, P. T. Barnum, who was not always the wealthy caterer he now is. On the contrary, his early life was associated with such poverty-stricken surroundings, that the want of money had undoubtedly much to do [Pg 78] with that smartness for which his name has become famous. His father died leaving the family very badly off, the mother being put to all sorts of straits to keep the home together; and when Barnum—who was first of all a farmer's boy—commenced his career, he, according to his own account, "began the world with nothing, and was barefooted at that." His first berth of any consequence was a clerkship in a general store, at which time he was "dreadfully poor;" but, says he, "I determined to have some money." Consequently, impelled by impecuniosity, he speedily became ingenious. One day, when left in charge of the business, a pedlar called with a waggon full of common green glass bottles, varying in size from half a pint to half a gallon. The store was what was called a barter store. A number of hat manufacturers traded there, paying in hats, and giving store orders to many of their *employés*, and other firms did likewise, so that the business boasted an immense number of small customers. The pedlar was anxious to do business, and Barnum knew that his employers had a quantity of goods that were regarded as unsaleable stock. Upon these he put inordinately high prices, and then expressed his willingness to barter some goods for the whole lot of bottles. The pedlar was only too glad, never dreaming of disposing of all his load, and the exchange was effected. Shortly after, Mr. Keeler, one of the firm, returned, and, on beholding the place crowded with the bottles, asked in amazement, "What *have* you been doing?" "Trading goods for bottles," replied Barnum; to which his employer made the unpalatable rejoinder, "You are a fool;" adding, "You have bottles enough for twenty years."

Barnum took the reproof very meekly, only saying that he hoped to get rid of them in less than three months, and then explained what goods he had given in exchange. The master was very pleased when he found that his assistant had got rid of what was regarded as little better than lumber, but still was dubious as to how on earth he would be able to find customers for the glass, more especially as there was a quantity of old tinware, dirty and flyblown, about which Barnum was equally sanguine. In a few days the secret was out. His *modus operandi* was this: a gigantic lottery—1000 tickets at 50 cents each. The highest prize 25 dollars, payable in goods; any that the customers desired to that amount. Fifty prizes of five dollars each, the goods to that amount being mentioned, and consisting as a rule of one pair cotton hose, one cotton handkerchief, two tin cups, four pint glass bottles, [Pg 79] three tin skimmers, one quart glass bottle, six nutmeg graters, and eleven half-pint glass bottles. There were 100 prizes of one dollar each, and 100 prizes of fifty cents each, and 300 prizes of twenty-five cents each, glass and tinware forming the greater part of each prize. Headed in glaring capitals "Twenty-five dollars for fifty cents; over 500 prizes." The thousand tickets sold like wild-fire, the customers never stopping to consider the nature of the prizes. Journeyman hatters, boss hatters, apprentice boys, hat-trimmers, people of every class and kind bought chances in the lottery, and in less than ten days all the tickets were sold.

This was Barnum's first stroke of business, the success of it no doubt having much to do with his subsequent enterprises; and as, according to his own showing, the scheme was the result of needy circumstances, and a determination to have money, it is impossible to say how much his present prosperity is due to that early expedient.

To give a less modern instance of the power of impecuniosity to render people ingenious, there is an anecdote of this nature recorded of Captain William Winde, a celebrated architect, the dates of some of whose designs are 1663-1665. Amongst many other of his achievements is included Buckingham House, in St. James's Park, which he designed for the Duke of Buckingham, but the money for which he could not obtain. The edifice was nearly finished when the arrears of payment were so considerable that the architect felt he could not continue unless he obtained a settlement; but how to do it? That was the thing. Asking was perfectly useless, and writing to his grace was equally ineffectual. At last a brilliant idea occurred to him. He requested the duke to mount the leads, to behold the wonderful view that could be obtained therefrom, and when the noble owner complied, he locked the trap-door, and threw the key away.

"Now," said Winde, "I am a ruined man, and unless I have your word of honour that the debts shall be paid, I will instantly throw myself over."

"What is to become of me?" asked the duke.

"*You shall come along with me!*" replied Winde; whereat his grace immediately promised to pay, and the trap was opened at a given signal by a workman who was in the plot.

There is a similar kind of story told of Sir Richard Steele and a carpenter who had built a theatre for him, but who was unable to get his money. Finding all ordinary means of no [Pg 80] avail, the carpenter took the opportunity when Sir Richard had some friends present, who had assembled for the purpose of testing the capabilities of the building, of going to the other end of the theatre; and when told to speak out something pretty loudly, to test the acoustic properties, roared as loud as ever he could that he wished to goodness Sir Richard Steele would settle his account. This is the same individual who gave a splendid entertainment to all the leading people of the time, and had them waited upon by a number of liveried servants. After dinner Steele was asked how such an expensive retinue could be

kept upon his fortune, when he replied he should be only too glad to dispense with his servants' services, but he found it impossible to get rid of them.

"Impossible to get rid of them?" asked his friends. "What do you mean?"

"Why, simply that these lordly retainers are bailiffs with an execution," replied Steele, adding that "he thought it but right that while they remained they should do him credit."

It is said that his friends were so amused by the humorous ingenuity displayed, that they paid the debt, which is not unlikely, considering how popular he was. As a literary man, Steele was always regarded with the highest esteem, and his personal merits were equally recognised, since his want of economy was considered his only sin, it having been said of him that "he was the most innocent rake that ever entered the rounds of dissipation."

The same could not be said of Sheridan unfortunately, whose ingenuity under monetary pressure (and when wasn't he pressed for money?) was remarkable. One of the least harmless of the many incidents recorded of this character is the circumstance of his obtaining a handsome watch from Harris the proprietor of Covent Garden Theatre. He had made innumerable appointments with Harris, none of which had ever been kept, and at last the manager sent word through a friend that if Sherry failed to be with him at one o'clock as arranged, he would positively have nothing more to do with him. Notwithstanding the importance of the interview, at three o'clock Sheridan was at Tregent's, a famous watchmaker's, and in course of conversation he told Tregent that he was on his way to see Harris.

"Ah!" said the watchmaker, "I was at the theatre a little while ago, and he was in a terrible rage with you—said he had been waiting for you since one."

"Indeed," said Sheridan; "and what took you to Covent Garden?" [Pg 81]

"Harris is going to present Bate Dudley with a gold watch," was the reply; "and I took him a dozen to choose from."

Sheridan left on hearing this, and went straight to the theatre, where he found Harris exceedingly wroth at having, as he said "had to wait over two hours."

"My dear Harris," began the incorrigible one, "these things occur more from my misfortune than my faults, I assure you. I thought it was but one o'clock. It happens I have no watch, and am too poor to buy one. When I have one, I shall be as punctual as any one else."

"Well," replied the manager, "you shall not want one long. Here are half-a-dozen of Tregent's best—choose whichever you like."

Sheridan did not hesitate to avail himself of the offer; nor did he, as it will be understood, select the least expensive one of the number.

A propos of watchmakers, there is the story of Theodore Hook dining with one with whom he was utterly unacquainted save by name, which ingenious plan was evolved through lack of funds. Driving out one afternoon with a friend in the neighbourhood of Uxbridge, Hook remembered that he had not the means wherewith to procure dinner, and turning to his companion said, "By the way, I suppose you have some money with you?" But he had reckoned without his host. "Not a sixpence—not a sou," was the reply, the last turnpike having taken his friend's last coin. Both were considerably crestfallen, for it was getting late, and the drive had made them remarkably hungry. What was to be done? Presently they passed an exceedingly pretty residence. "Stay," said Hook, "do you see that house—pretty villa, isn't it? Cool and comfortable—lawn like a billiard-table. Suppose we dine there?" "Do you know the owner?" asked the friend. "Not the least in the world," laughed Hook. "I know his name. He is the celebrated chronometer-maker. The man who got £10,000 premium from Government, and then wound up his affairs and his watches." Without another word they drove up to the door, asked for the proprietor, and were ushered into the worthy tradesman's presence. "Oh, sir," said Hook, "happening to pass through your neighbourhood, I could not deny myself the pleasure and honour of paying my respects to you. I am conscious it may seem impertinent, but your celebrity overcame my regard for the [Pg 82] common forms of society, and I, and my friend here, were resolved, come what might, to have it in our power to say that we had seen you, and enjoyed for a few minutes, the company of an individual famous throughout the civilised world." The old man blushed, shook hands, and after conversing for a few minutes, asked them if they would remain to dinner, and partake of his hospitality? Hook gravely consulted with his friend, and then replied that he feared it would be impossible for them to remain. This only increased the watchmaker's desire for their society, and made him invite them more pressingly, till, at length the pretended scruples were overcome, the pair sitting down to a most excellent repast, to which they both did more than justice.

On another occasion, when Hook was very much worried for money, he went as a *dernier ressort* to a publisher who knew him, in the hope that he would help him; but unfortunately the man knew him "too well," and refused, unless he had something to show that he would get his money's worth, or at any rate a portion of it. Thereupon Hook went home, sat up all night, wrote an introduction to a novel "on a new plan," appended a hurried chapter, which he took the next day to the publisher, asserting that he had had a most liberal offer for it

elsewhere, and so persuaded the man to advance the required sum.

Amusing as are many of the anecdotes quoted, there is one which may be called “divinely” funny, being connected with a once well-known theologian—Dr. John Brown of Haddington. This famous Biblical commentator, who flourished from 1784 to 1858, was anything but rich in this world’s goods; and so poor when staying at Dunse, that he went into a shop and asked to be accommodated with a halfpennyworth of cheese. The shopman, awfully disgusted with the meanness of the order, remarked haughtily, that “they did not make” such small quantities; upon which the doctor asked, “Then what’s the least you can sell?” “A penn’orth,” was the reply. On the divine saying “Very well,” the man proceeded to weigh that quantity, and then placed it on the counter, anticipating to be paid for it. “Now,” said Dr. Brown, “I will show you how to sell a halfpennyworth of cheese;” upon which, in the coolest manner conceivable, he cut the modicum into two pieces, and appropriating one half, put down his coin and departed.

Impecuniosity in addition to sharpening men’s wits, by which expression is understood the sharpening of the inventive faculties, has also the power of making sharp man’s wit, as instanced in the case of the beggar who accosted Marivaux, the well-known French writer of romance. This mendicant, who appears to have been what we were wont to call a “sturdy rogue,” looked so unlike what one soliciting alms should, that the man of letters said to him, “My good friend, strong and stout as you are, it is a great shame that you do not go to work;” when he was met with the reply, “Ah, master, if you did but know how lazy I am!” for which amazing audacity, he was rewarded by Marivaux, who said, “Well, I see thou are an honest fellow. Here’s a piece of money for you.” [Pg 83]

Though, perhaps not strictly witty, the man’s remark was excessively comic, and for aught I know, it may have been his conduct that gave rise to the now well-known expression —“funny beggar.”

For impromptu wit connected with impecuniosity, there is the case of Ben Jonson, who was invited to dinner at the Falcon Tavern, by a vintner, to whom he was much in debt, and then told that if he could give an immediate answer to four questions, his debt should be forgiven him. The interrogatories put to him by the vintner were these, “What is God best pleased with? What is the Devil best pleased with? What is the World best pleased with? and what am I best pleased with?” To which Ben replied:

> “God is best pleased when men forsake their sin.
> The devil is best pleased when they persist therein.
> The world’s best pleased when thou dost sell good wine,
> And thou’rt best pleased when I do pay for mine.”

To return to the instances of ingenuity, the late Charles Mathews must be remembered; for he claims the credit of having been successful in extracting money from Jew bailiffs, which, incredible as it may seem at first, would really appear to have been the case. He says, “I might relate a thousand stories of my hair-breadth ’scapes and adventures, with a class of persons wholly unknown, happily, to a large portion of the population, and whose names inspire terror to those who do not know them;—officers of the Jewish persuasion, who are supposed to represent the majesty of the law in its most forbidding aspect, but to whom I have been indebted for so many acts of kindness, that I have frequently blessed my stars that they were interposed between me and the tomahawking Christians by whom they were employed, and from whom no mercy could have been extracted. I have had two of those functionaries in adjacent rooms, and *have borrowed the money from one to pay out the other*, with many such like incidents.” [Pg 84]

There is no doubt that on the subject of bailiffs this most popular light comedian was an authority; for his experience of them was considerable, and it is therefore gratifying to find him bearing testimony to the good qualities of the much-maligned individual, who, as “the man in possession,” is so often provocative of anger, malice, and all uncharitableness in the breasts of those who have to entertain him. It would be unwise, however, for any one to be so led away by the eulogistic remarks of Charles Mathews as to expect to be able to go and do likewise, in the matter of borrowing money from them; for it must be remembered, that without exception he was the most entertaining man in existence, and blest with persuasive powers unparalleled. At the same time, it is perfectly true that they are nothing like as formidable as they are supposed to be (this is reliable—for a distant relation of mine once knew a person, who had a friend that was sold up—Ahem!), and if it were not for their partiality for wearing an extra number of coats and waistcoats, and invariably carrying a stout stick, which characteristics render them unmistakable to the practised eye, they would not be so objectionable, as they are by no means devoid of sympathy, and are always open to reason in the shape of gin and water.

Though not of so pronounced a type as some that have been quoted, there is an anecdote illustrative of ingenuity, recorded of Samuel Foote, who, in the days of his youth, and hard-upishness, wrote ‘The Genuine Memoirs of the Life of Sir John Dinely Goodere, Bart., who was murdered by the contrivance of his own brother.’ The author was nephew to the murdered man, and the assassin; but so poor was he, that on the day he took his MS. to the publishers he was actually without stockings. On receiving his pay for the book (£10), he stopped at a hosier’s in Fleet Street, to replenish his wardrobe, but just as he issued from the shop, he met two old Oxford associates, lately arrived in London for a frolic, and they

bore him off to a dinner at the “Bedford:” where, as the wine began to take effect, his unclad condition began to be perceivable, and he was questioned as to “what the deuce had become of his stockings?” “Why,” said Foote—the stockingless Foote—“I never wear any at this time of the year, till I am going to dress for the evening, and you see”—pulling his purchase out of his pocket, and silencing the laugh and suspicion of his friends—“I am always provided with a pair for the occasion.” [Pg 85]

Equally humorous is the story told of the Honourable George Talbot, the brother of the Earl of Shrewsbury, a man well known about town during the time of the Peninsular War. He was a reckless spendthrift, and in Paris, where he had spent thousands, he was reduced to absolute want. Though a man of decidedly bad principles, he was what is termed a good Roman Catholic; that is to say, a regular attendant at Mass, and when he found it impossible to raise money anywhere else he bethought him of the clergy, and repaired to confession. He revealed everything to the priest, at least with regard to his penniless condition, and after much interrogation, and deliberation, was told to “trust in Providence.” Seemingly much struck by the advice, he said he would come again, and on his second visit, retold his story, with the addition that nothing at the time of the interview had turned up; when he was met with the same counsel as before, and enjoined to “trust in Providence.” Somewhat chapfallen at the failure of his visit, he went away, but after a few days again presented himself to the abbé, whom he thanked effusively for his good advice on the two previous occasions, and then begged the pleasure of his company to dinner at a well-known fashionable restaurant. The invitation was accepted, and the two sat down to a most sumptuous repast, the delicacy of the viands being only surpassed by the choiceness of the wine. When the meal was concluded the bill was handed to Talbot, who said that his purse was quite empty, and had been so for a long time, but that he thought he could not do better than follow his confessor’s advice and “trust in Providence.” The Abbé Pecheron (the confessor) saw the joke, paid for the dinner, and so interested himself in Talbot’s case, that he obtained from the spendthrift’s friends in England sufficient to enable him to return to this country.

Not the least ingenious of the many instances to be met with, however, is one attributed to a widow, who, in the days of Whitecross Street and the Bench, was arrested for debt. This lady, who is described as of fair and dashing appearance, with great powers of fascination, soon began to pine for her liberty, and petitioned for leave “to live within the rules,” which request was granted. She then took a house in Nelson Square, and became a reigning queen of pleasure, her Thursday evening *réunions* being deemed so delightful, that invitations for them were most eagerly sought for. Her admirers were legion (that is of the male sex), one at last being successful in obtaining her coveted hand, and the marriage took place in due course. When the happy pair returned to Nelson Square after the ceremony, the tipstaves, who had become acquainted with the affair, put in an appearance as the newly married couple were about to start on their honeymoon, informing the lady that they would arrest her, and take her to the Bench, if she attempted to leave “the rules.” Nothing disconcerted by this apparent stopper to her happiness, she calmly, but majestically exclaimed, “Indeed! You forget there is no such person as the lady named in your warrant. I am no longer Mrs. A., but Mrs. B. There is my husband, and he is responsible for my debts.” [Pg 86]

“Then, sir,” said the tipstaff, “I must arrest you.”

The lady smiled sarcastically, saying, “I think it will be time enough to arrest my husband when you have served him with a writ. If you have one, produce it; if not, kindly stand aside, and allow us to enter the coach.” The officers could but comply, for they saw they had been outwitted, and were compelled to stand meekly by, while the clever widow, observing “Now, my love, let us be off,” jumped into the carriage, and drove away with her husband.

CHAPTER VI. [Pg 87]

THE IMPECUNIOSITY OF ACTORS.

There is a letter extant, written to Sir Francis Walsingham in 1586, in which the writer speaks “with pious indignation of overcrowded playhouses and deserted churches;” and says “it was a wofull sight to see two hundred proude players jett in their silks where fyve hundred pore people sterve in the streetes.” From this and many similar allusions we glean that actors were not in the infancy of our English dramatic art the shabby impecunious class they afterwards became. They were on the whole well to do, and highly respectable men of college education, who were in most cases poets as well as players, patronised and encouraged by all classes, except those who were so bitterly jealous of their extraordinary influence—the clergy. A special Act of Parliament was passed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth for their encouragement and protection, and they had that which many of the well-born and wealthy envied them—the right of wearing the badges of royal and noble families,

ensuring them respect, hospitality, and protection, wherever they went. The profession of the player was not then open to all comers, and those who dared to adopt it without licence from “any baron, or person of high rank, or two justices of the peace,” were “deemed and treated as rogues and vagabonds;” prison and the whipping-post, or cart-tail, stocks, and the pillory, being but the milder forms of that treatment promised them in the often quoted, commonly misrepresented, Act of “good Queen Bess.”

Some of the dramatic poets and players, plunging headlong into dissipation and debauchery, were at length abandoned by their fellows, and sank into the depths of misery and extreme poverty; but the majority prospered, and went about in their silks and velvets, with roses in their shoes, and swords by their sides, no longer the poor scholars they had been in their [Pg 88] college days—the licensed beggars, who, when they came into a town, set all the dogs barking—but prosperous gentlemen of fair repute, such as were Shakespeare, and Edward Alleyn, the founder of the Hospital and College at Dulwich.

But a great change was at hand when the rebellion broke out, and civil war gave the Puritans dominant power. Their stage-plays and interludes were abolished, and the players’ occupation was gone. Worse still, the very Act of Parliament which had been created for their protection was turned against them, and they were classed with the rogues and vagabonds against whom it had formerly protected them. Then the whipping and imprisonment, and even selling into slavery, became the poor players’ miserable ill-fortune, and the reign of impecuniosity began in all its rigorous severity and terror. The London playhouses, which, between the years 1570 and 1629, had grown from one (the Theatre in Shoreditch) to seventeen, were shut up, and had all their stages, chambers (boxes, we call them), and galleries pulled down. Small wonder was it, therefore, that the players, almost to a man, drew their swords for the King, and fought stoutly under the royal banner. In the ‘Historia Histrionica,’ printed in 1699, we read the following dialogue:

“Lovewit. ‘Prythee, Trueman, what became of these players when the stage was put down, and the rebellion raised?’

“Trueman. ‘Most of ’em, except Lown, Taylor, and Pollard, who were superannuated, went into the King’s army, and, like good men and true, served their old master, though in a different, yet more honourable, capacity. Robinson was killed at the taking of a place (I think Basing House) by Harrison (he that was after hanged at Charing Cross), who refused him quarter, and shot him in the head after he had laid down his arms, abusing Scripture at the same time in saying, “Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently.” Mohun was a captain (and after the wars were ended here served in Flanders, where he received pay as a major); Hart was a lieutenant of horse under Sir Thomas Dathson, in Prince Rupert’s regiment; Burt was cornet in the same troop, and Shatterd, quarter-master. Allen, of the Cockpit, was a major, and quarter-master-general at Oxford. I have not heard of one of these players of note who sided with the other party, but only Swanston, and he professed himself a Presbyterian, took up the trade of a jeweller, and lived in Aldermanbury, within the [Pg 89] territory of Father Calamy: the rest either lost, or exposed, their lives for their King. When the wars were over, and the Royalists wholly subdued, most of ’em who were left alive gathered to London, and for a subsistence endeavoured to revive their old trade privately. They made up one company out of all the scattered members of several; and in the winter before the King’s murder, 1648, they ventured to act some plays, with as much caution and privity as could be, at the Cockpit (now Drury Lane Theatre). They continued undisturbed for three or four days; but at last, as they were representing the tragedy of ‘The Bloody Brother’ (in which Lowin acted Aubrey; Taylor, Rolla; Pollard, the cook; Burt, Latorch; and, I think, Hart, Otto), a party of foot-soldiers beset the house, surprised ’em about the middle of the play, and carried them away in their habits, not permitting them to shift, to Hatton House, then a prison, where, having detained them some time, they plundered them of their clothes and let ’em loose again. Afterwards, in Oliver’s time, they used to act privately, three or four miles, or more, out of town, now here, now there, sometimes in noblemen’s houses, in particular Holland House, at Kensington, where the nobility and gentry who met—but in no great numbers—used to make up a sum for them—each giving a broad piece, or the like—and Alexander Goffe (the woman-actor at Blackfriars) used to be jackall, and give notice of the time and place. At Christmas and Bartholomew Fair they used to bribe the officer who commanded at Whitehall, and were thereupon connived at, to act, for a few days, at the “Red Bull,” but were sometimes, notwithstanding, disturbed by soldiers. Some picked up a little money by publishing the copies of plays never before printed, but kept up in MS.; for instance, in the year 1652, Beaumont and Fletcher’s ‘Wild Goose Chase’ was printed in folio, for the public use of all the ingenious, as the title-page says, and the private benefit of Jown Lowin and Joseph Taylor, servants to his late Majesty; and by them dedicated to the honoured few lovers of dramatic poetry: wherein they modestly intimate their wants, and with sufficient cause; whatever they were before the wars, they were afterwards reduced to a necessitous condition.’”

Hard times these for the poor wandering players.

It is curious to note that a reputed natural son of Oliver Cromwell became an actor. This was [Pg 90] Joe Trefusis, nicknamed “Honest Joe,” described as a person of “infinite humour and shrewd conceits.” On one occasion, driven, we presume, by impecuniosity, Joe volunteered as a seaman, and served under the Duke of York. This was just before the memorable sea-fight between the duke and the Dutch admiral, Van Tromp, in which Joe took part, as he

confessed, with great fear, which was not, you may be sure, decreased when one of the sailors, grimly preparing for the strife, said to him “Now, master play-actor, you’re a-going to take part in one of the deepest and bloodiest tragedies you ever heard of.”

Another player of Puritan descent was the famous American actress, Charlotte Cushman, the name of her ancestor, Robert Cushman, being one that figures honourably and prominently as a leader amongst the Pilgrim Fathers. She tells us many anecdotes of the impecuniosity which afflicted her in the early days of her career. It was decided that she should abandon singing, and commence acting, and her first essay was to be in—of all parts—“Lady Macbeth”! She was then a tall, thin, fair-skinned, country girl, and being unable to procure a suitable costume, Madame Closel, a short, fat, dark-complexioned French woman, was applied to, and laughed heartily at the ludicrous idea of her clothes being worn by Miss Cushman, who says,—

“By dint of piecing out the skirt of one dress it was made to answer for an under-skirt, and then another dress was taken in in every direction to do duty as an over-dress, and so make up the costume. And thus I essayed for the first time the part of Lady Macbeth.”

At that time her only place for study was an empty garret in the house in which she lodged, and her practice was to shut herself up in it alone, and sitting on the floor commit her “lines” to memory.

Miss Cushman was not the only actress whom impecuniosity and consequent vocal efforts led to the stage. The famous Kitty Clive, whose maiden name was Rafter, was originally maid-of-all-work to Miss Knowles, who lodged at Mrs. Snells, a well-known fan-painter, in Church Row, Hounsditch. The Bell Tavern immediately opposite this house, was kept by a Drury Lane box-keeper, named Watson, at which house an actor’s beef-steak club was held. One morning, when Harry Woodward, Dunstall, and other well-known London actors were in [Pg 91] their club-room, they heard a girl singing very sweetly and prettily in the street outside, and going to the window found that the cheerful notes emanated from the throat of a charming little maid-servant, who was scrubbing the street-door step at Mrs. Snell’s house. The actors looked at each other and smiled, as they crowded the open window to listen, and the final result was, in 1728, the introduction of the poor singer to the stage. She afterwards married Counsellor Clive, and being not a little of the shrew, it is said, quarrelled with him so seriously, that before the honeymoon was fairly out, the “happy pair” agreed to separate. It must not, however, be supposed that Kitty Clive was born to a menial position: she was the daughter of an Irish gentleman, ruined, as so many Irish gentlemen were, by their adherence to the cause of James II.

Amongst those so ruined was the father of the illustrious actor and dramatic author, Charles Macklin, who on one occasion, when about to insure some property, was asked, “How the clerk should designate him?”

“Call me,” replied the actor, “Charles Macklin, a vagabond by Act of Parliament”—the old law of Queen Elizabeth, which the Puritans had extended to all players, being then unrepealed.

There was doubtless a tinge of bitterness in the joke; for Macklin’s early experience had been a severe and trying one, in the gaunt school of poverty and hardship.

When in his twenty-sixth year, being ashamed of depending upon his poor old mother for his living, he left home, and travelling as a steerage passenger from Dublin to Bristol, arrived in that opulent city when a third-class company of players were performing there. He took lodgings over a mean little snuff and tobacco shop, next door but one to the theatre, and there became acquainted with a couple of the players, a man and a woman, who introduced him behind the scenes. To this he owed his introduction to the stage; for the manager detecting signs of histrionic taste and ambition in the young Irishman, engaged him, despite his strongly pronounced brogue, to play Richmond in Shakespeare’s ‘Richard III.’

James Kirkman, said to have been a natural son of Macklin’s, writing of his *début*, said, “Considering the strong vernacular accent with which Mr. Macklin (then MacLaughlin) spoke, the reader would be at a loss to account for the applause which he met with on his [Pg 92] first appearance, if he was not told that Bristol has always been so much inhabited by the Irish that their tones in speaking have become familiar there.”

The young Irish enthusiast afterwards travelled with this little company, making himself generally useful, by writing the playbills and distributing them—printing was too costly for poor strollers in those days—by carpentery when the stage had to be set up in some barn or inn-yard, by writing on occasions prologue or epilogue, without which no play was then considered complete, by composing and singing topical songs, “complimentary and adulatory to the village in which they happen to play,” to use his fist, which he did with great skill and strength, when the vulgar rustic audiences were disturbed by the quarrelsome, or were rude and coarsely offensive to his professional sisters and brethren. Kirkman says, “His circle of acting was more enlarged than Garrick’s; for in one night he played Antonia, and Belvidera in ‘Venice Preserved,’ harlequin in the interlude, or entertainment, sang three comic songs between the acts, and between the play and the entertainment indulged the audience with an Irish jig”; often doing this when his share of the profits (for the original sharing system of Shakespeare’s day then prevailed among strollers) was not more than four

or five pence per night, to which was usually added a share of the candle-ends, candles being in use for lighting the stage, affixed round hoops to form chandeliers for the auditorium, in the making of which Macklin displayed peculiar skill.

There is a good story told by Kirkman of a time when Macklin was with a company of strollers in Wales. One night they had the misfortune to arrive in Llangadoc, a little place in Carmarthenshire, so late that neither shelter, beds, nor food enough for all could be obtained, and Macklin, who, "from the high rank he held in the company was entitled to the first choice," resigned his claim in favour of a member of the corps who was too sick and weak to pass the night in the open air.

Kirkman, telling the story, says: "After supping with 'Lady Hawley,' Macklin made his bow and retired to the room where the luggage was stored. Here he undressed himself and adopted the following humorous expedient: He instantly arrayed himself in the dress of Emilia in the 'Moor of Venice' (a part he occasionally played), tied up a small bundle in a [Pg 93] handkerchief and slipped out of the house unperceived. In about a quarter of an hour he returned, apparently much fatigued, and addressing the landlady in the most piteous terms, recounted a variety of misfortunes that had befallen 'her,' and concluded the speech with a heart-moving request that 'she' might have shelter for the night, as 'she' was a total stranger in that part of the country. The supposed young woman was informed by the unsuspecting landlady that all her beds were full, but that in pity for her distressed condition some contrivance would be made to let her have part of a bed. Charles now hugged himself at the success of his scheme, and, after he had partaken of some refreshment, was, to his great astonishment, conducted by the servant to the bedroom of the landlady herself, where he was left alone to undress. In this dilemma he scarcely knew how to act. To retreat he knew not how without risking discovery. However, into bed he went, convulsed with silent laughter. He had not been in bed many minutes before Mrs. 'Boniface,' who was upwards of sixty years, but completely the character in size and shape, made her appearance. Charles struggled hard with himself for some moments, but the comic scene had such an effect on him at last that he could contain himself no longer, and at the instant the old lady got into bed burst into a fit of laughter."

Mrs. Boniface, believing "the poor young girl was in a fit," got up as fast as she could, and roared out so loudly and effectually for help that everybody in the house was alarmed, and the itinerant actresses coming into the chamber discovered, to their intense astonishment, who it was that the landlady had given half of her bed to. The laughter spread, was taken up on the stairs, and echoed from room to room, until the whole house rang with it. The anger of the landlady was appeased. This occurred in 1730 or 1731.

An old friend of mine, who in his time has been actor, artist, journalist, dramatist, and novelist, and is now a well-known London editor, once told me the following story of his first connection with the stage.

He was a feeble, consumptive lad of sixteen, when the drunkenness and cruelty of a worthless step-father drove him penniless from home. All through one long, wretched, and utterly hopeless day he had been wandering through the streets of London seeking [Pg 94] employment. Naturally shy, reserved, and timid, his awkward mode of addressing a stranger while perplexed what account to give of himself, together with the hesitation, stammering, and blushing which accompanied it, had brought upon him nothing but scornful treatment, insulting suspicions, and failure after failure. He found himself at the close of a long, hot day, with burning feet and aching limbs, hungry, faint, and plunged into the very lowest depths of despair, on the banks of the New River, where he had often been before to fish. His desire was to escape observation, and he dragged himself along, passed fishermen and boys, until, finding their line stretched out from one to another still far ahead, he sat down in the long grass completely exhausted, and turning on his face, wept silently.

Now it so happened that a tall, lank, sallow-faced young fisherman, with a beard of a fortnight's growth, and clothes of a once fashionable cut, but then threadbare, discoloured, ill-fitting, and very greasy at the cuffs and collar, particularly noted the tall, thin boy, and presently strolled up to, and sat down beside him.

"Hallo, guv'nor," said he; "what's up?"

The poor boy had no voice and no heart to reply, so he pretended to be asleep.

"Wat's yer been a doin' on? Run away from home?"

After a pause, and without moving, the poor lad said,—

"I've got no home now."

"Where do you come from?"

"Not very far."

"Where are you going to?"

"Don't know."

"Have you got any money?"

“None.”

“Where’s your father and mother?”

“Father’s dead.”

“And yer mother? Can’t she keep yer? Ain’t she got no home neither?”

The boy felt that any attempt to reply would betray his violent emotion. He got up silently and walked away.

The stranger followed, overtook him, and walked beside him.

“You’ve come from a long way off, young un—ain’t yer?”

The runaway nodded, although he was really within about a mile and a half of his starting-point.

“Yer seems awfully tired. Why I do b’lieve as yer a crying. Wot’s the matter?” [Pg 95]

There was an expression of sincere sympathy in the man’s face, and my young friend answered in a low faint voice, broken with sobs,—

“I’ve no home, and no relatives or friends to go to; and I don’t know what to do.”

The man eyed him very curiously before he replied,—

“My lodgin’s in Clerkenwell, not so very far from here; the bed ’ull ’old two. Come home and sleep with me; and we’ll take in a couple of black puddin’s, or a faggot, or something nice an’ ’ot for supper. Come along.”

The stranger was a poor mender of shoes, who lived in a squalid garret, at the top of an old house, overcrowded with lodgers; a foolish lazy fellow enough, without a principle of honesty, or a care for respectability or cleanliness in his entire composition, but withal a kindly one. Necessity drives sternly. The boy looked at his companion’s dirty linen and unwashed face and neck, and with a glance at the river, a longing, despairing look, which did not escape the stranger’s quick observation, turned and reluctantly went with him.

When they were in bed he began to tell his mournful story, and fell asleep at the beginning of it. In the morning the dirty son of St. Crispin explained that he was a supernumerary at the theatres, as well as a snob, and that he was engaged for the Princess’s Theatre, where Macready was then playing.

“If you like,” said he, “I’ll take you to the super-master; he lives close by in Hatton Garden, all amongst the Italians on the Hill.”

He did so, and an engagement followed. This piece of luck filled the unfortunate lad’s heart with delight. The pay was only a shilling a night, but he could live on it; and it was the first step in a profession of which he had dreamed as the summit of human ambition and felicity ever since he first saw a play performed “with real water” on the boards of old Sadler’s Wells. With what tremulous eagerness and delight he went to rehearsal with his dirty friend and benefactor! With what wonder and curiosity he inspected the stage-door, the wings and the dressing-room under the stage, and with what awe he eyed the mighty magician who lorded it above his fellows with such undemonstratively quiet and yet most impressive dignity!

The play was Shakespeare’s ‘King Lear,’ and in the combat scene the lists were formed on [Pg 96] the stage by short battle-axes and long spears, the former being stuck upright in holes arranged for their reception, two of the latter placed crossways, and one on the top of them horizontally between each axe. Macready was particularly anxious that this should be done rapidly, and without hesitation; and the efforts of the supers to carry out his instructions were simply ludicrous. The men with the battle-axes couldn’t hit upon the holes, and some absolutely went down upon their knees to feel for them, while the spearmen either were awfully slow and nervously careful, or they missed the supports and created a clatter and confusion, which appeared to plunge Macready into a furious state of anger and disgust. The new super, all eyes and ears, shared the great tragedian’s feelings; he saw at once that the entire effect depended upon the dash and spirit of the soldier’s action in eagerly and readily extemporising these warlike barriers; and he devised a plan by which his axe was thrust as it were at once into the earth, with scarcely a downward glance. He was pointing out how readily this was done, to his neighbours on either side, and telling them to pass the hint along, when he was startled by the deep strong voice of the tragedian, who had come up to him, and said abruptly, “What’s your name, my man?”

“My friend did, what I am not going to do (not having his permission), he told Macready his name, and he, after a grunt, and a quick, keen glance from under his knitted brows, repeated it aloud, saying,—

“I shall not forget it. It’s the name of the first super I ever saw with brains.”

On the night of the first performance some few days after, my friend was taken out of his ordinary soldier costume, and arrayed more carefully and picturesquely in a more costly fashion to play the part of a knight in special attendance upon the king, from whom he had

the honour of receiving a message. Alas! that honour cost him a friend—the jealousy of the shoemaker broke out in spite and bitterness which accumulated and intensified to such an extent that at the end of the week he was caught in the act of hiding in the dark behind one of the beams of wood supporting the stage, for the purpose of throwing a big stone at the poor fellow with whom, under the influence of pity, he had shared his food and lodging. It [Pg 97] was impossible to conceive a more cowardly or malignant rascal than this fellow had become under the influence of envy and jealousy.

The class of theatrical people employed as supernumeraries (commonly called “supers”) form the background figures of stage pictures, soldiers, sailors, peasants, citizens, mobs, &c., playing the dumb accessory parts; and they are as a rule neither too respectable nor too intelligent. To train and teach them is a task which sorely tries the patience of the super-master, and their lazy, poverty-stricken, and generally not too cleanly aspect is provocative of contempt and dislike amongst the actors. Their pay is not extravagant, being usually a shilling a night, but their histrionic pride is great, and their reverence for the actors profound, while for one to stand a little closer to the footlights than his fellows do, and consequently nearer the audience, or to be selected to go on alone to deliver a letter or receive a message, is the very summit of his ambition; a dangerous elevation, too, for from the time that he is so gloriously distinguished he is regarded with envy, spite, and malice, by his fellows, who try their best to oust him and take his place. This, my friend, above mentioned, soon experienced, for his life became a succession of bitter annoyances and coarse insults, varied when necessity compelled with an occasional fight, in which, despite his feeble health he generally contrived to give a fair account of his adversary, inheriting some of his father’s skill as a boxer, and having been a constant student of that art when at school. At the termination of the Macready performances he was engaged at one of the old tavern theatres of those days, now known as the Britannia Theatre, then as the Britannia Saloon, where the stage-manager, a gentle and kindly old man (Mr. Wilton) was particularly good to him, and at last, after hearing him read a Shakespearian speech, entrusted him with small parts, contrary to the conviction of Mrs. Lane, the clever wife of the then proprietor, in whose place she now reigns. She, finding that the boy blushed and stammered when she spoke to him, pronounced him unfit for the experiment.

“He has an impediment in his speech,” said she.

Some years after, my friend having in the meantime abandoned the stage for art (of which he was for years an ardent, indefatigable student), under the pressure of severe impecuniosity, became a country scene-painter and afterwards an actor, playing in the [Pg 98] course of his theatrical career a wide range of second and third-rate parts, sometimes doubling as many as three or four in a single piece, and often both playing and painting scenery. Once, while Miss Mary Glover was manageress of the Cheltenham and Bath theatres, in consequence of the non-arrival of about half the expected company, he doubled tremendously, playing four characters in the burlesque and two in the farce, with the most rapid changes of “make up” and costume, one being a comic nigger with songs. Miss Glover had taken the theatre under the pressure of impecuniosity, trusting to the chance of success for the payment of her company. At the end of the first week she paid half salaries, at the end of the second and third weeks no salaries, or, in the parlance of the initiated, “the ghost did not walk,” and great doubtless was the trouble and suffering consequently endured. My friend was reduced to bread and butter for meals, and found even those materials none too plentiful, when one evening he was summoned into the dressing-room of Miss Glover. The lady was in tears, but they were tears of indignant rage.

“Sir!” said she, “I was never so insulted in all my life!”

“What’s wrong, madam? Who has insulted you?”

“Who has insulted me, sir! Why you have!” cried she, with a look of astonishment.

“I, madam! How?” he exclaimed with a similar expression.

“Look at your gloves, sir!”

“Well, madam, they are clean, I washed them myself.”

“But, sir! Berlin gloves! It’s monstrous! I was never so treated before in all my life! Paltry cotton. You ought to be ashamed of yourself—a leading character too. I never played with a gentleman before in your part who did not wear new white kids!”

“I laughed,” said my friend. “It was rude, I know, but for the life of me I couldn’t help it. Here was my employer living in comparative luxury at first-class lodgings in a fashionable town, abusing a poor devil whom she had cheated and half-starved, because, in a back-street garret with scarcely a penny in his pocket, he did not wear nightly, as he otherwise would have done, a new pair of white kid gloves!”

The late Miss Oliver, who stood by at the time, called the fellow who dared to laugh at a [Pg 99] manageress in such dire distress, “a brute.”

On another occasion Mr. Huntley May Macarthy, a once well-known and very eccentric provincial manager, abruptly closed the theatre at Bury St. Edmunds, after keeping it open a week or ten days, leaving the unfortunate company to escape from the dilemma of debt and

difficulty into which so many of them were deeply plunged. Some had drawn a fortnight's salary in advance, to pay their travelling expenses to Bury St. Edmunds, and they had all been gathered from far and near by the London agent. In that case my friend the editor found his ark of safety in falling back upon his old profession. He painted the portrait of a local celebrity, which, being exhibited in the town, soon brought him sitters enough to enable him to help himself and spare something for one or two of his less happily situated brothers and sisters in misfortune. I remember my friend remarked as curious on each of these occasions the quietude with which the histrionics submitted to be so unfairly treated. Neither in the case of Miss Glover nor that of Mr. Macarthy were there any attacks made upon them to the face, heartily as they were cursed and abused behind their backs.

In explanation of this I may recall what Mrs. Mathews said of her husband, the elder Mathews, when he suffered under the same infliction, which in the old days of "circuits" and "strolling companies" was a very common one and is still by no means unknown. She said,—

"I have heard Mr. Mathews say that he has gone to the theatre at night without having tasted anything since a meagre breakfast, determined to refuse to go on the stage unless some portion of his arrears was first paid. When, however, he entered the green-room his spirits were so cheered by the attention of his brethren, and the *éclat* of his reception that his fainting resolution was restored, all his discontent utterly banished for the time, and he was again reconciled to starvation: nay, he even felt afraid of offending the unfeeling manager, and returned home silent upon the subject of his claims."

No actor was ever better acquainted with poverty than that extraordinary man Edmund Kean. Endowed with rare genius, and a potency of will, that impelled him to surmount any obstacle lying in the pathway leading towards fame, this player's fate was yet infelicitous. [Pg 100] Maternal solicitude, moral training, and those circumstantial influences which induce regular habits, were alike denied him. All the regularities, vicissitudes, vexations, disappointments, sorrows, trials and romance common to the lives of strolling players, characterized the early career of Edmund Kean. Through his mother he was related to George Saville, Marquis of Halifax. That mother was Ann Carey, grand-daughter of Henry Carey, the reputed author of our National Anthem. The father of Edmund Kean was Aaron Kean, generally described as an architect, but described by some as a stage carpenter, and by others as a tailor. In a melancholy and miserable chamber of a house, situated at no great distance from Holborn, Edmund Kean first saw the light, on November 4th, 1787. It is stated by Miss Tidswell, the actress, that "about half-past three in the morning Aaron Kean, the father, came to me, and said, 'Nance Carey is with child, and begs you to go to her at her lodgings in Chancery Lane.' Accordingly my aunt and I went with him and found Nance Carey near her time. We asked her if she had proper necessaries, and she replied, 'No—nothing'; whereupon Mrs. Byrne begged the loan of some baby-clothes, and Nance Carey was removed to the chambers in Gray's Inn, which her father then occupied, and it was there that the future tragedian was born." Ann Carey had been under the protection of Aaron Kean, and he afterwards abandoned her. She came of an unfortunate stock, for Henry Carey, as I have stated, notwithstanding his talents was always in difficulties, which only forsook him when he committed self-destruction; and his son, George Saville Carey—printer, mimic, scientific lecturer, and occasional poetaster and dramatist—would have been without a decent burial, but for the charity of a few friends. His daughter when only fifteen years old, quitted her home and became a strolling actress; but when out of an engagement she would return to London, and pick up a scanty home in its streets as a hawker. It was in such occupation that Aaron Kean first saw the woman.

In addition to her irregular habits, Edmund Kean's mother was selfish, calculating, and cruel. It was not long after his birth that the child, with his strangely beautiful dark eyes and winning ways, was actually abandoned by his unnatural parent. Ann Carey quitted the metropolis to join a wandering troupe of Thespians, and when she next saw her child, he was three years old, and living under the protection of a poor man and his wife, in Soho. It is [Pg 101] said that these worthy people had found little Edmund hungry and forlorn, and left in a doorway, one winter's night.

Of the boy's history, after the mother had abandoned him to the period when he found succour from the kind couple in Soho, nothing is known. Ann Carey demanded her child, and quickly turned her offspring to profit; getting him engaged to appear as a reposing Cupid in one of the Opera House ballets, and subsequently to appear in a Drury Lane pantomime—the boy was little more than three years old. When in 1794 at Drury Lane, John Kemble produced 'Macbeth' with exceedingly novel stage business, Edmund Kean was one of the goblin troupe, introduced for the purpose of giving additional impressiveness to the incantation scene. It was not long afterwards that he played the part of a page in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor.' His education was of the slightest, and intermittent; he was a pupil at a small school in Orange Court, Leicester Square, and at another place of instruction in Chapel Street, Soho; and the expenses for such education were defrayed by a few generously disposed people, who were impressed by the boy's beauty and intelligence. Ann Carey, almost destitute, went away from Castle Street, Leicester Fields, and, with her boy found a lodging in Ewer Street, Southwark. Young Edmund, restive and adventurous, determined to run away from home, and with a few necessaries tied up in a bundle slung on a stick, made his way to Portsmouth, and engaged himself in the capacity of cabin boy for a ship bound to Madeira. Not sufficiently robust to do some of the work incidental to his

duties, he resolved to be again free; which he accomplished by feigning deafness. Discharged at the end of the return voyage, he walked from Portsmouth to London, and hungry, footsore and heart-weary, made his way to the old lodging in Southwark. He found that his mother had left her shabby tenement for a place in Richardson's show troupe, then perambulating the country.

He bethought him that he might find a shelter under the roof of his uncle, Moses Kean, who lived in Lisle Street, Leicester Square. This uncle, who was a mimic, ventriloquist, and general entertainer, received young Edmund Kean kindly, gave him a home, and became his preceptor in many of the mysteries belonging to the histrionic art. Miss Tidswell, the [Pg 102] acquaintance of his mother, and an actress of respectable position at Drury Lane, also showed great interest in the welfare of the boy. He made progress in the arts of dancing, singing, declamation, and fencing, and even in those days he became familiar with the creations of Shakespeare. Through the influence of Miss Tidswell, he obtained an engagement for some parts at Drury Lane, Prince Arthur in 'King John' being one. The boy excited notice, as the following anecdote related by Mrs. Charles Kemble shows.

"One morning before the rehearsal commenced, I was crossing the stage, when my attention was attracted by the sounds of loud applause issuing from the direction of the green-room. I enquired the cause, and was told that it was only little Kean reciting 'Richard III.' My informant said that he was very clever. I went into the green-room and saw the little fellow facing an admiring group, and reciting lustily."

On the death of Moses Kean, his nephew's only real friend was Miss Tidswell. Under her he studied Shakespearian characters, and while residing with her joined the company of Saunders, Bartholomew Fair. There he gave imitations of the nightingale and monkey, of the form and movement of the snake; and at Bartholomew Fair he acted the part of Tom Thumb. Soon afterwards, hearing that his mother was acting at Portsmouth, he set out from London for the seaport named; but on reaching it discovered that the information given him concerning Anna Carey was incorrect. His situation was trying, for he was destitute and friendless. Young Kean, however, had a bold heart, and a brain full of resources. He hired, on credit, a room in one of the Portsmouth taverns, and announced an entertainment consisting of "Selections from 'Hamlet,' 'Richard III.,' and 'Jane Shore,' with a series of acrobatic performances, and some exquisite singing, and all by Master Carey, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane." The entertainment was sufficiently successful for it to be repeated, and having paid all expenses, the entertainer found himself three pounds in pocket. Edmund Kean at this time was fourteen years old.

Reciting Rolla's "address to the Peruvians" one evening before an audience at Sadler's Wells, a country manager, then present, was so much impressed by the declamation of the lad, that young Kean received an offer to play leading characters for twenty nights at the [Pg 103] York Theatre. The offer was accepted, he was highly successful, and for many years from the time of that York engagement, the future tragedian of Drury Lane underwent the vicissitudes peculiar to the life of the old-fashioned stroller. It was not long ere he encountered the famous showman, Richardson, who speedily made terms with the precocious and versatile youth. It turned out that Anne Carey was in the company. She proposed that her son should join with her in her labours, and that she should receive his earnings. But they did not long labour together, and parted, not to meet again till Kean made his great success in 1814 at Drury Lane. While with a manager named Butler, at Northampton, Kean played walking gentlemen, Harlequin, and sang comic songs for a salary of fifteen shillings a week. While attached to Butler's company, he enacted the character of Octavian, in the 'Mountaineers' with such ability, that a gentleman connected with the Haymarket, who saw the performance, undertook to procure the young tragedian an engagement, provided that he could reach London to appear at a specified time. Kean, being without money, could only have travelled on foot, and the journey to London by such means would have taken up so much time, that he despairingly saw that the engagement must remain unfulfilled. Butler, with the greatest good nature, said "that he would defray the expenses of a stage-coach journey." Kean, overcome with emotion, exclaimed, "If ever fortune smiles upon my efforts, I will not forget you."

The Haymarket engagement proved humiliating, the young actor being cast for very insignificant parts. However, in one character, Ganem, in the 'Mountaineers,' by the admirable manner in which he spoke certain words, he drew forth such unmistakable applause, that he availed himself of a recommendation addressed to John Kemble. In an interview with that celebrity, Kean found the eminent tragedian so chilling and unsympathetic in manner, that the poor fellow hurried from the theatre stung to the quick by his inauspicious reception. He again visited the provinces, and again experienced many privations, disappointments, humiliations, and rebuffs. Fate appeared to frown upon him; but it must be remembered that Kean was young, exceedingly small of stature, unconventional in his style of acting, and thoroughly original in every assumption that he [Pg 104] undertook. Moreover, his temper was violent, haughty, and sensitive.

It was during those days, when Edmund Kean, as a strolling player, was learning his art, and was making acquaintance with poverty in its most bitter forms, that he acquired those habits of intemperance which afterwards effected his ruin. After the engagement at the Haymarket, he acted at Tunbridge Wells, Portsmouth, Haddesden, Birmingham, and Edinburgh. More than once in these journeyings he exhibited at fairs and public houses; and

for a short time he earned a scanty income in the capacity of usher at a school in Hertfordshire. In 1807 at Belfast, he played with Mrs. Siddons; and as Jaffier in ‘Venice Preserved’ made a strong impression. But the tragedienne’s opinion of him was not flattering; for on first seeing him, she remarked, “he was a horrid little man,” and criticising his enaction in Otway’s pathetic drama said, “He plays the part very, very well, but there is too little of him wherewith to make a great actor.” Notwithstanding taunts, impecuniosity, heart-burnings, and neglect, the young aspirant studied laboriously, and allowed no opportunity to slip by which he might gain increased knowledge of stage art, and of human nature; but during his hard apprenticeship, he was forced to have recourse to many shifts, and to endure much suffering. After playing an engagement in Kent, he accepted another for a single night at Braintree, in Essex.

On the day that the performance was to take place at Braintree, the actor stood, without a farthing in his pocket, on the Kent bank of the Thames. Bound to fulfil his engagement, it was necessary for him to cross the river; and his impecunious condition precluded all possibility of hiring a boat. The strong-willed stroller was not to be daunted. He threw off his clothes, tied them into a bundle, which he held in his teeth, plunged into the river, and speedily reached the shore. With his clothes saturated with water, half-famished, and tired in every limb, he yet went on for “Rolla,” before the Braintree audience. While performing he fainted, and an illness of fever and ague was the consequence of his swimming expedition. On recovering he tramped all the way to Swansea, and played in that town. He was then in his twentieth year. Proceeding to Gloucester, he became a member of Beverley’s company, and was advertised to play Young Rapid. The usual means had been taken to [Pg 105] attract an audience, but at the time for the rising of the curtain there were only two persons in the auditorium; so the eighteenpence taken at the doors were returned to the couple of playgoers, and the theatre lights extinguished. A few nights Kean performed with a lady who had left the scholastic profession for that of the stage, and this lady, Miss Chambers, afterwards became Mrs. Kean. When at Stroud, Master Betty was announced to perform Hamlet and Norval; Kean found himself cast for Laertes and Glenalvon. The actor could not brook what he deemed an indignity,—that of playing secondary characters to a mere boy; and for three days and three nights, he was away from the theatre, every individual connected with it being ignorant of his whereabouts. On reappearing he said, “I have been in the fields, in the woods, I am starved; I have eaten nothing but turnips and cabbages since I’ve been out; but I’ll go again, and as often as I see myself put in such characters. I won’t play second to any man living, except to John Kemble.” In the summer of 1808, Kean married Mary Chambers, the wife being nine years older than the husband. Soon after the marriage, Beverley told them that he intended dispensing with their services, and they soon had to drain the cup of poverty to its dregs. To the honour of the woman he had taken to his heart, she cheered and soothed him in his tremendous struggle. He suffered not only the pangs of poverty, but too often the stings of hostile criticisms from provincial scribes, utterly unable to appreciate his passionate and original renderings of dramatic characterization. At Birmingham he thought himself and his wife well paid, when during an engagement they each received a pound for their weekly services. So ably did he act that Stephen Kemble made proposals to negotiate a London engagement; but Kean deemed that further experience was necessary before he should attempt a metropolitan appearance in leading characters. Terrible toil and terrible suffering had to be undergone ere he was to reach the pinnacle of success.

Closing his performances at Birmingham, he made terms with Andrew Cherry to appear at Swansea. So indigent was the actor, that he was necessitated to undertake the journey on foot, a journey of 200 miles; and his wife, who accompanied him, was likely soon to become a mother. Mr. and Mrs. Kean owed money in Birmingham, or possibly the wife might have remained in the town; and from it—early one summer morning—they departed on their long [Pg 106] and wearisome way, adding to their miserable store of money some additions as they proceeded, by giving recitations at the residences of the gentry. In a fortnight they reached Bristol, were ferried over to Newport, and at last reached Swansea, where they obtained lodgings. Kean’s acting was not warmly received; and referring to one of his impersonations in the town, he remarked, “I played the part finely, and yet they would not applaud me!” The actor grew moody, splenetic, and gave way to insobriety. A son born to him at this period he named Howard; and it was soon after the birth of the child that the Keans left Swansea, with Cherry, for other towns in the principality, and subsequently they crossed over to Ireland. At Waterford, Kean played tragedy, and in addition for his benefit, gave an exhibition of pugilism, tight-rope dancing, singing, and wound up by playing the Chimpanzee in the piece called ‘La Perouse.’ It was at Waterford that Edmund Kean’s second son, Charles, was born. Beaching Scotland, so exhausted were the funds of the actor, that at Dumfries he got up an entertainment at a tavern, and the only patron was a shoe-maker, who paid sixpence for admission. At Carlisle Kean appealed to the barristers on Assize, asking for their presence, when he would deliver a series of recitations, his reward to be at their discretion; but the appeal was made in vain. In the autumn of 1811, the family in the most miserable condition arrived in York, and from the ball-room, Minster Yard, Kean issued a circular announcing, “for one night only,” an entertainment comprising recitals, dramatic selections, imitations of actors, and singing by himself, assisted by his wife; but the scheme ended with anything but a prosperous result. Under their struggles, husband and wife broke into a wail of grief, as they contemplated their innocent and unfortunate babes. The mother on her knees, supplicated for spiritual influence to annihilate their sufferings by death, but the fiery-willed

player still kept courage, “I will go on, I will hope against hope!!” They got to London, where, at Sadler’s Wells, Kean had a short engagement at two pounds a week, and then he had engagements at Weymouth and Exeter; in which latter place he played for a salary of one pound a week. Through the influence of an old friend, Dr. Drury, Kean at length obtained an engagement at Drury Lane. But ere his triumph on the London boards was effected, the child, Howard, died, an event to which the actor never alluded without feelings [Pg 107] of grief. While Kean was concluding his Exeter performances, his wife and child were desolate in the garret of a house in Cecil Street, Strand; and they would have starved, but that the liberality of Dr. Drury succoured them. Even on the eve of his Drury Lane success, Kean underwent many trials and sufferings. Save Dr. Drury he was without a friend. On his *début*, that memorable evening at Drury Lane, 26th January, 1814, the directors of the establishment denied him everything calculated to awaken hope and courage. Kean went to the dressing-room, and from the dressing-room to the stage, conscious that he had been treated with superciliousness, apathy, and injustice. Under such treatment, and with all his previous trials, it was only a perfect knowledge of his own transcendent powers, that carried him through the ordeal. The effect of his triumph in Shylock, may best be described in the words of his late biographer. “In an almost phrenzied ecstasy he rushed through the wet to his humble lodging, sprang up the stairs, and threw open the door. His wife ran to meet him; no words were required, his radiant countenance told all—and they mingled together the first tears of true happiness they had as yet experienced. He told her of his proud achievement, and in a burst of exultation exclaimed, ‘Mary, you shall ride in your carriage, and, Charley my boy,’ taking the child from the cradle and kissing him, ‘you shall go to Eton, and’—a sad reminiscence crossed his mind, his joy was overshadowed, and he murmured in broken accents, ‘Oh that Howard had lived to see it! But he is better where he is.’” Pity that so fine a nature as Edmund Kean’s, with his genius, and generous sympathies, should have struck on the rock of self-indulgence. But in any estimate of his moral shortcomings, the evil influence around his early life, and the effect of his early privation, should be steadfastly, and charitably, borne in mind. When we remember the conditions under which the actor pursues his calling, it is scarcely surprising that the term “poor players,” should have become proverbial. The victims of a social ban, originating in the bigotry of church and conventicle; following a profession, perhaps of all professions the most scouted by smooth, smug respectability, and certainly of all professions the most liable to fluctuations of success from the caprices, whims and “breeches-pocket” condition of its patrons; it seems but natural that the history of the stage should yield numerous illustrations of man impecunious. [Pg 108]

Then, too, it must be borne in mind, that the greater number of men and women who have recruited the ranks of the histrionics have been people of romantic and “happy-go-lucky” temperament; light-hearted, generous to a fault, unworldly in the money-making sense, and frequently of the most irregular and unbusiness-like habits. Such characteristics had Theophilus Cibber, Shuter, George Frederick Cooke, Edmund Kean, Ward, and John Reeve; and though the precarious nature of the profession, the necessarily unsettled habits of its followers, and the unreality of the life, may be conducive in a degree to impecuniosity, it seems to me—and I have strutted several fretful hours—the only real cause of players being poorer than other people is due to extravagance and irregularity. Frugal, steady, trustworthy habits invariably increase a man’s well-being, in any calling; and the theatrical profession is no exception to the rule.

Richardson, the showman, was born in a workhouse, and was in his early years a mere little social arab, cast upon the world without friends or education; and he began his social career by exhibiting a little child with spotted skin, calling him the “spotted boy.” The first venture was profitable, and the showman went on making money, and saved it. He then set up a show theatre, succeeded so well that year after year he had to enlarge it, and at last it became the largest in the kingdom. Richardson likewise established a character for honesty, and all that is summed up in the words “manly conduct.”

John Quick—George the Third’s favourite comedian—had, too, in his time been poor enough. He was the son of a Whitechapel brewer, and when only fourteen years old ran away from home, with the idea of taking to the stage for a profession. Without any money in his pocket he started on his romantic journey, and managed to find a booth company at Fulham, where he was allowed to enact Altamont in the ‘Fair Penitent.’

Having played to the satisfaction of the manager, that worthy commanded his wife to set the *débutant* down for a whole share of the night’s receipts, which at the close of the last piece amounted to three shillings. Quick rose in his profession, and by forethought and prudence amassed a fortune of £10,000.

Braham’s boyhood was surrounded with hardships and privations. Early left an orphan, he [Pg 109] was obliged to walk the streets of London as a vendor of pencils. In that situation he was befriended by Leoni, a vocalist at the synagogue in Duke’s Place, Covent Garden, who trained the lad’s voice, so remarkable for its peculiar sweetness of tone and expression. For Leoni’s benefit, in 1787, at the Royalty Theatre, Wellclose Square, young Braham made his *début*. His genius, of its kind, was unsurpassable; but it was the prudence added to it which laid the foundation of his fortune, which would have remained in the possessor’s hands but that the vocalist entered unwittingly on theatrical management.

Even in the more humble departments of theatrical life may be found thrifty examples of people, who, versed in the somewhat difficult part of making both ends meet, at length

found themselves in a reputable and flourishing position. Such an instance is that of Bennett, a theatrical manager once well known in the Midlands. Bennett possessed a gift for doing things himself—his only assistant being an old lady, one Mrs. Gamage. He began his career with a puppet-show, was thrifty on its poor proceeds, and eventually became proprietor of a theatre. Bennett was successful as an actor at Worcester, Coventry, Shrewsbury, and towns adjacent. His travelling-cases, boxes, and chests, had their surfaces touched up by the scenic artist, and in the theatre did duty for castle walls, palace terraces, and palatial furniture; his helmets, and other stage properties, were of canvas, easy to fold up for packing, and many of his properties combined several utilities. He would arrange with his friends to take money at the doors, and Mrs. Gamage combined the offices of candle-snuffer and constable, and during the day she cooked and cleaned up at home. Bennett has been known to seek out musical young men in a town, and allow them the privilege of singing on his stage; or, if they were at all proficient on an instrument, allow them to play in his orchestra. He dressed as a fine gentleman by day, and like a mechanic in the evening. He died prosperous, and, above all, a churchwarden.

Old Philip Astley, Davidge, John Douglas, and Samuel Phelps, all poor men at the outset of life, entered on theatrical management, carried it on with care, tact and probity, and all of them died reputable, and in comfort. Garrick, the Kembles, Charles Mayne Young, Munden, [Pg 110] Richard Jones, William Farren, Liston, Macready, and a host of other gifted actors, died rich, having lived amidst the respect of the highest social circles; but it will be found in each particular case, that they were men of high character, and prudent habits.

In some other instances the impecuniosity of actors has resulted from short-sightedness to their own interests, imprudence, and utter incompetence in business matters, but unfortunately extravagance, and other irregular habits of life, have been the frequent cause of poverty.

Nicholson, once lessee of the Newcastle Theatre, by want of business habits gradually became a poor man, so poor that he became money-taker at Drury Lane, and subsequently died in the workhouse of the town where he had been theatrical manager; and Faucit-Saville, formerly lessee and manager at Gravesend, Margate, Deal and other theatres, died while engaged as money-taker at the City of London Theatre.

Some who saw ‘Manfred,’ when revived at Drury Lane by Mr. Chatterton, with Phelps as the hero of Byron’s sombre, but impressive, dramatic poem, may possibly, when leaving the house between the acts, have noticed one of the checktakers, an old gentleman of stagy deportment, enveloped in an old, faded cloak. That individual was no other than the once famous tragedian, Mr. Denvil, who was the original Manfred when Bunn produced the tragedy at Covent Garden, long ere Mr. Phelps made his *début* at the Haymarket. In the character of Manfred, Denvil made an intense and abiding impression, became lessee of theatres in town and country, but from want of *nous*, and from want of prudence, dwindled in the social scale, and sank to the menial capacity in which he was to be seen at Drury Lane.

Another specimen of an unsuccessful manager was Huntley May, who had been lessee of nearly all the small provincial theatres in the kingdom. This man had but a very imperfect sense of honour, part of his business being to issue as large bills as he could possibly get printed, announcing the most splendid dramatic productions, which, when the evening arrived, were never presented. Often his audience grew riotous and pugnacious. One night, an assemblage threatened to pull up his benches; but Mr. May, not unaccustomed to such scenes, appeared before the footlights and exclaimed,—

“What’s up now, boys?” [Pg 111]

“Money, money. It’s a swindle!”

“Hark at ’em now. Murder and Moses! there’s broths of boys for yer. Money’s just what I want myself. Think of your Cathedral ground; who lies in it? My sainted wife, Norah; poor soul! she loved Exeter so that she would come here to be buried among ye. We all love ye! myself and little Pat. Aisy now, I’ll give you a thrate. To-morrow night’s my benefit, make me a thumping house; Norah won’t forget you in heaven. Behave like gentlemen, come early to-morrow night. Good luck to ye!” which audacious address seems by all accounts to have satisfied his easily satisfied audience.

But even when the old country managers, and there were many, got their living honestly, and by fair means, the profession frequently had the hardest of lots. The strolling players were a merry-headed and easily contented race; but it would be difficult to name any class of people that have known greater oppression. Regarded by a large section of English people as rogues and vagabonds, they were often at the mercy of common informers and petty-minded magistrates.

A circumstance in the career of Moss, a clever actor, and respectable manager, well illustrates such petty persecution. He opened the Whitehaven Theatre for a night or two with some success, but in less than a week the manager and his troupe were put in “durance vile.” Arrested on a Saturday night, they had to remain in the “lock-up” throughout Sunday. On Monday morning they were taken up before the magistrates, and arraigned upon a somewhat extraordinary charge. An inhabitant of Whitehaven, a person to whom credit was

given by his acquaintances for sanity and truthfulness, appeared in open court to denounce the strollers, not only as a curse to society generally, but to his town in particular. It was declared by this individual that “before the theatre opened there was an immense haul of herrings; but since the players had entered the place, the fish had all fled, and that in consequence the fishermen were suffering. Misfortune always followed the wake of actors; wherever they appeared, they carried a curse.” In spite of reference to sundry tomes of jurisprudence, and notwithstanding consultation with the town-clerk, the magistrates could not pronounce a verdict. However they prohibited the reopening of the theatre, and the sons of the “wicked one” had to pack about their business in the best way they could. [Pg 112]

Edward Stirling applying to a local magistrate at Romford in Essex, for permission to perform for a few nights in the Town Hall, received but sorry treatment from the bigoted official.

“What, sir! Bring your beggarly actors into this town to demoralize the people? No, sir. I’ll have no such profligacy in Romford; poor people shall not be wheedled out of their money by your tomfooleries. The first player that comes here I’ll clap in the stocks as a rogue and a vagabond. Good morning, sir.”

Even in fair seasons the pay of the strollers was wretched in the extreme. In 1826, Mrs. John Noel, desirous of getting her two daughters into practical training for the stage, applied to a wandering manager—Black Beverley—as to whether he could find room for the young ladies in his company. Mrs. Noel was informed that his troupe was about visiting Highgate, and that her daughters could join, on condition that they would put up with the sharing system, and find their own costumes. The engagement was accepted, the elder of the two girls (afterwards Mrs. George Hodson) being cast for Juliana, and the younger (afterwards Mrs. Henry Marston) for Volante in Tobin’s comedy of ‘The Honeymoon.’ Black Beverley was to be the Duke Aranza, and the performance was to take place at the White Lion Tavern. The young ladies *débuted*, and their remuneration was one shilling and sixpence each. The men and women were homely, respectable people, and the leading actors eagerly accepted Mrs. John Noel’s invitation to a substantial supper she had packed in a hamper, and of which the poor players gratefully partook, eating as if they had been without food for days.

A well-known actor remembers playing the Stranger, Philip, in ‘Luke the Labourer,’ and a farce character at a small theatre in Chelsea, and receiving twopence for his services, and then having to walk to the Mile End Road!

Phelps, when attached to Huggins’ company, has tramped with his bag on his shoulders, more than once a distance of five-and-twenty miles, being without coach-money; and his wife and child at Preston had, in the early time of Phelps’ career, for nearly a week to subsist on a rather small meat-pie. It was a terrible thing some fifty years ago, for some stage-stricken swain, or maiden, to depart hundreds of miles, perchance so far as Scotland, and find themselves in some poorly-paid company. Twenty shillings a week would be considered a fair salary. There would be scores of miles to travel, certain dresses to find, and upon the residue of the scant income the player had to live. When things failed it was sometimes literally tragic; for the tyros had little chance of escape, railways and cheap steamers being unknown. [Pg 113]

What a *bizarre* picture is that drawn by Edmund Stirling of Ben Smithson’s Agency for Actors, at the “White Hart” in Drury Lane!

“Kind-hearted considerate Ben,” writes his remembrancer, “a real Samaritan, ever ready with food and kindly words to cheer and encourage the poor stroller. Ben, strongly impregnated with the ‘Mysteries of Udolpho’ school, was wont to use grandiloquent words for every day purposes. His hostel became a ‘castle’; back parlours, smelling strongly of ‘baccy,’ tapestry chambers; dilapidated staircases, lumber closets, and dark landings, ‘galleries, crow’s-nests, and eagle towers;’ his beer-cellars were known as ‘dungeon keeps;’ ‘Barclay’s entire’ at fourpence per pot became ‘nectar,’ like Mr. Dick Swiveller’s ‘rosy wine;’ and his two serving-men, plain Bob and Dick, were transformed into ‘Robarto’ and ‘Ricardo.’ Every poor player that arrived, footsore and hungered, was styled according to his robe, Kemble, Kean, Munden, or Siddons; Smithson knowing full well how pleasantly a little flattery would tickle the palate. There was always a bed, supper, and breakfast, money or not, in that Mecca for wanderers. Such liberality brought failure in its train, and the ‘White Hart’s’ doors speedily closed on Ben and his ‘good intentions.’”

Not less amusing, too, is Mr. Stirling’s description of the Brothers Strickland and their lesseeship of the Oddfellows’ lodge-room, at the Chiswick “Red Cow,” where they announced “A London company for two nights, with ‘Pizarro,’ as played at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane; elaborate scenery and heart-rending effects. Pit, one shilling; boxes, two; and standing room, sixpence. Seats booked at the ‘Red Cow’ daily from 10 till 4. Schools and children half-price.”

Stirling tried to get employment under the Stricklands, and having wended his way to the tavern, was shown into the kitchen, and there found the company dressed for the evening’s performance of ‘Pizarro.’ At a table, superintending the tea, Elvira sat in faded black robes, wielding a tea-pot, and ever and anon scowling at her base destroyer, Pizarro. He sat aloof, encased in rusty tin armour, a ferocious wig and locks to match, in his hand a long pipe, and by his side an empty glass. Cora, the lovely Peruvian maid, employed her soft hands in [Pg 114]

toasting muffins, assisted by her husband, the Spanish Alonzo. Such was the heat of the climate, combined with the effects of something short, that Peruvians and Spaniards sat socially together, doing their pipes and beer. Strickland engaged Stirling to play Richmond on the following Monday, but he wasn't to have anything for it.

Perhaps there is no more pertinent illustration of a chequered career—a career with indigence at one end and splendid wealth at the other—than that furnished by the life of Harriet Mellon, afterwards Mrs. Coutts, and subsequently Duchess of St. Alban's. She was not the only actress who made a fortunate marriage. Anastasia Robinson married the Earl of Peterborough; Lavinia Fenton, the original Polly Peachem, in the 'Beggar's Opera,' gave her hand to the Duke of Bolton; Louisa Brunton became Countess of Craven, and Elizabeth Farren exchanged her name for that of Countess of Derby. But not one of those enumerated had known the privations and hardships suffered by Harriet Mellon. When raised to affluence as Mrs. Coutts, and when coroneted as a duchess, she sometimes with mirth and sometimes with pathos referred to those old days of her life, when she was downcast by harsh treatment and impecuniosity, and was never ashamed of the time when she was nothing more than a poor strolling actress.

In 1789 Harriet Mellon, with her mother and Entwisle, her step-father, joined the theatrical company of Stanton. In the city of Lichfield the tenement is still pointed out where the Entwisles lodged in a couple of rooms, each ten feet by four and three-quarters across, with windows two feet square; the rent for the lodgings being two shillings a week. Stanton on one occasion obtained a bespeak from a squire, who requested a performance of the 'Country Girl.' The manager was only too glad to play anything, so low had been the ebb of his fortunes. No copy of the comedy being in the manager's possession, an actor was despatched to a town not many miles distant for the necessary volume. Extra delay took place, the needy *commissionnaire* having gone on foot, putting the coach-money in his [Pg 115] pocket. When he returned the play-book was cut up leaf by leaf and distributed to the company to transcribe; at least to those acquainted with the art of penmanship. It is stated that the copyists were few. Harriet Mellon, though of junior rank in the company, was cast for Peggy. She had the part given her in virtue of her ready and trustworthy memory. The girl's heart filled with enthusiasm when she learned that she was to perform the title *rôle*. But her heart filled with sorrow an hour or two afterwards when she inspected the square-cut and dingy, snuff-coloured coat, held aloft by the manager, as the garment in which Peggy should appear as the boy, the character assumed in the park scene by the country girl. Being made acquainted with Harriet's disgust at the costume furnished by the manager, Mrs. Entwisle bethought her of acquaintances who might help her daughter out of the trouble. A lady housekeeper to whom the mother applied, suggested the loan of a fashionable suit from one of her young masters. The proposition was declined. The housekeeper then stated that an idea crossed her: she might be enabled to procure a small and well-cut suit of clothes elsewhere.

Mother and daughter spent an anxious afternoon, and about four o'clock, at their lodgings, a lad made his appearance with a parcel, and not long afterwards the friendly housekeeper appeared too. The old lady said she had called on another old lady in a similar capacity to herself, and by her kind offices had procured not the clothes of any young gentleman, but the wedding-dress of her old master, and as he was only a "dwarfy" when young, probably the clothes would fit Harriet. A pang smote the breast of Miss Mellon as she thought the garments must be at least thirty years old; but the parcel was unfastened, and it was found to contain a light amber-coloured silk coat, silver trimmed white satin waistcoat and smalls; pale blue silk stockings, shoes laced, stock buckles, and ruffles.

Harriet Mellon was in raptures. Half-past six o'clock came, the barn was crowded, and the one musician, Entwisle, led off with 'Rule Britannia,' 'Britons, strike Home,' and 'The Bonny Pitman.' Up went the curtain, and the comedy began. The family whose bespeak proved so attractive were delighted with the performance, and especially with the acting of Miss Harriet. In the park scene the baronet and lady grew particularly grave of countenance as [Pg 116] they surveyed Peggy in the boy's clothes, which gravity continued during the remaining part of the entertainment.

Next morning as Harriet was at breakfast, a groom rode up to the door of the house where she lodged, and a letter was left for Miss Mellon, which proved a formal and frigid communication, requesting information respecting the means by which she had acquired the male attire worn by her on the previous evening.

The truth soon afterwards came out. The housekeeper to whom Mrs. Entwisle applied, not knowing when or for what the dress was wanted, went to the housekeeper of the very gentleman who bespoke the play; and his servant lent his wedding-dress that had been stowed away since the occasion of his nuptials. The young actress was cleared of all imputation, and on leaving the neighbourhood received from the baronet's lady a present in the shape of a handsome frock. Before that time, Harriet's mother would not allow, on account of shabby attire, the girl's attendance at Stafford church, but used to send her to Ingestre for Sunday morning worship, because at that place she was unknown.

Harriet's salary for some years was only fifteen shillings a week. Sheridan and the Hon. Mr. Monckton were appointed stewards of the Stafford races in 1794, and at the theatre in the town those gentlemen witnessed the acting of Miss Mellon as Letitia Hardy and Priscilla

Tomboy. On Sheridan, the arbiter of London theatricals, affording hope to her that she might obtain an engagement at Drury Lane, the Entwisles with their daughter left for the metropolis. At a humble lodging in Walworth the family subsisted by means of a small sum of money, the proceeds from Harriet's farewell benefit in the country. Sheridan, a careless and procrastinating man, kept Mrs. Entwisle in cruel suspense concerning her daughter's *début* at Drury Lane, mother and daughter being continually put off by the manager with excuses; but at last the opportunity came.

Drury Lane opened for the season 1795-1796 on the evening of September 16th, and on that occasion Miss Mellon went on as one of the vocalists, to join in the National Anthem. On September 17th the bill of the night announced a performance of 'The Rivals,' "Lydia Languish by a young lady, her first appearance." The young lady was the daughter of Mrs. Entwisle. She was very nervous at her *début*, and Sheridan thought it desirable that some time should elapse for her to become acquainted with the size and extent of the house, by [Pg 117] joining in choruses before she again tried a prominent character. She remained in the background till October. The Michaelmas day before the family were exceedingly depressed, the girl's prospects being uncertain, and her salary only thirty shillings a week. Old-fashioned people, and exceedingly superstitious, the Entwisles and Harriet bewailed the absence of the luck-bringing goose on the 29th September. Through a gift, or by pinching, when strollers, they had usually managed to get Christmas mince pies, Shrove Tuesday pancakes, Easter tansy pudding, and the Michaelmas goose. It was a matter of sorrow to poor Harriet, that her finances would not allow her to purchase a goose, for the sake of tasting a bit for good-luck. When informed that she could at a Drury Lane cook-shop buy a quarter of the much-honoured bird the girl's delight knew no bounds. The purchase was made, and she was happy.

It came to pass that her fortunes brightened at Drury Lane, where she remained twenty years. When Tobin's comedy of 'The Honeymoon' was produced, Harriet Mellon made a great hit in the character of Volante. Through drawing a prize in the Lottery she was enabled to purchase Holly Lodge, Highgate. The *Times* of March the 2nd announced the marriage of "Thomas Coutts, Esq., to Miss Harriet Mellon, of Holly Lodge, Highgate." Her husband was a man of enormous wealth. Mrs. Coutts subsequently married the Duke of St. Albans, and at her death, in addition to other magnificent bequests, left to the lady now known as the Baroness Burdett Coutts, a fortune of £1,800,000.

One of the most gifted men that ever trod the stage was George Frederick Cooke. Indeed the splendour of his genius is said to have been almost as exceptional as the fierceness of his passions, and the recklessness of his habits. Drink, gambling, licentiousness, and prodigality, ruined his fortunes, and cut short his life. It may be urged in mitigation of his excesses, that like Kean he had indifferent home training, and that at a very early age he was left to the exercise of his own wilful and sensual nature. His father had been a soldier who left his widow in unprosperous circumstances. She quitted London, and settled at Berwick-upon-Tweed, where her son received an indifferent education, and where on several occasions he saw part of the Edinburgh Company perform. Cooke states, "that from that time plays and playing were never absent from his thoughts, that he pinched his belly to [Pg 118] procure play-books, and actually studied one particular character,—Horatio, in the 'Fair Penitent.'" His mania to get into the play-house has amusing proof in a story, which, in after years, Cooke used to relate with gusto, and comicality. He much wished to see 'Douglas,' as did some companions, but all of them were without a farthing. They contrived to get into the theatre by a private entrance, and secreted themselves under the stage. Hope told them the flattering tale that they might steal out during the performance, and join the audience, by means of an aperture they had discovered in a passage leading to the pit. In carrying out the enterprise they were discovered by one of the company, and after a trying interrogatory shamefully turned out at the stage-door. Young Cooke, reckless, and persistent, urged his companions to go in and conquer notwithstanding an ignominious defeat; so they were constantly on the alert, and found by observation that a back door was left unguarded, which one evening they entered unperceived. Fairly in, the next consideration was, how they could conceal themselves until the rising of the curtain; their hope being that amidst the confusion and preparation behind the scenes, they might escape notice, and enjoy the magic show. Cooke saw a barrel, took advantage of the safe and snug retreat, creeping in like the hero of the famous melodrama 'Tekeli,'—in those days the admiration of the polished playgoing populace of the British metropolis. Unfortunately however there was danger in the lurking place; he had for companions two large cannon-balls, but the youth not being initiated into the mysteries of the scene, did not suspect that cannon-balls helped to make thunder in a barrel as well as in a twenty-four pounder, and little did poor George Frederick imagine where he was. The play was 'Macbeth,' and in the first scene the thunder was required to give due effect to the situation of the crouching witches, as the ascending baize revealed those beldames about to depart on their mission to meet Macbeth.

It was not long ere the Jupiter Tonans of the theatre, *alias* the property-man, approached and seized the barrel, and the horror of the concealed boy may be imagined as the man proceeded to cover the open end with a piece of old carpet, and tie it carefully, to prevent the thunder from being spilt. Cooke was profoundly and heroically silent. The machine was lifted by the brawny stage servitor and carried carefully to the side-scene, lest in rolling, the [Pg 119] thunder should rumble before its cue. All was made ready, the witches took their places amidst flames of resin, the thunder-bell rang, the barrel received its impetus with young

Cooke and the cannon-balls,—the stage-stricken lad roaring lustily to the amazement of the thunderer, who neglected to stop the rolling machine, which entered on the stage, and Cooke, bursting off the carpet head of the barrel, appeared before the audience to the horror of the weird sisters, and to the hilarity of the spectators.

In Stukely, Sir Pertinax, Kitely, Iago, and Richard III., George Frederick Cooke was allowed to be unrivalled. But his social position was lowered and his fine talents deteriorated by intemperance and debauchery. He was in constant debt and difficulties, in spite of excellent emoluments. After much trouble, he on one occasion obtained a suit of clothes from a tailor indisposed to give credit. Cooke explained to him that there would be no doubt about the price being ready on his benefit, which was at hand. The tailor, a stage-struck swain, said that if he were allowed to appear on the benefit night, in addition to stage tuition from Cooke, the garments should be forthcoming. The tragedian agreed to give the instruction, and cast him for the post of Catesby, Cooke of course playing Richard. The night came, and the "snip" ranted and strutted, and in the tent scene, after, "Richard's himself again," on the entrance of Catesby, the tailor in answer to Richard's "Who's there?" halted, and stuttered "'Tis I, my lord, the early village cock." The audience roared; but after silence came, the tailor merely repeated the words just as before; upon which Cooke unable to keep his gravity or restrain his temper, roared out, "Then why the devil don't you crow?"

Another good story in connection with impecuniosity and a stage performance, is that told of Mossop, who, when at the Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin, found himself in a peculiar predicament (the result of irregular payments) one night when he was playing Lear. His Kent was a creditor, who, as he personated the faithful nobleman supporting his aged master, whispered, "If you don't give me your honour, sir, that you'll pay me the arrears this night before I go home, I'll let you drop about the boards." Mossop alarmed said, "Don't talk to me now." "I will," said Kent, "I will;" adding, "Down you go." The manager was obliged to [Pg 120] give the promise, and the actor before leaving the theatre received his wages.

John O'Keefe the author of 'Wild Oats,' relates a similar curious, and humorous anecdote concerning the "silver tongued" Spranger Barry. "The first character I saw Barry in was Jaffier, Mossop Pierre, and Mrs. Dancer the Belvidera. According to the usual compliment of assisting a dead tragic hero to get upon his legs, after the dropping of the curtain, two very curt persons walked on the stage to where Barry (the Jaffier) lay dead, and, stooping over him with great politeness and attention, helped him to rise. All three thus standing one of them said: 'I have an action, sir, against you,' and touched him on the shoulder. 'Indeed' replied Barry. 'This is rather a piece of treachery; at whose suit?' The plaintiff was named and Barry had no alternative but to walk off the stage, and was going out of the theatre in their custody. At that moment some scene-shifters and carpenters who had been observing the proceedings, and knew the situation of Barry, went off and returned almost immediately, dragging with them a huge piece of wood, in the rear of which was a bold and ferocious looking property-man who grasped a hatchet. Barry said, 'What are you about?' 'Sir,' said one, 'we are only preparing the altar of Merope, for we are going to make a sacrifice.' The speaker having concluded, grasped his hatchet and sternly eyed the bailiffs. 'Be quiet, you foolish fellows,' remonstrated the tragedian, who began to think the business serious. The minions of the law also grew apprehensive as the sacrificators looked on with fixed and stony eyes. Barry noticing the bailiffs beckon, went to them, and drawing him aside they said they would quit him if he would give his word of honour that the debt should be settled next day." The actor was gratefully complimentary to his supporters, not forgetting the altar of Merope. The circumstance occurred at the Dublin Theatre in 1778.

The narrator of this story has one equally amusing of Mahon and Macklin. "Bob," on one occasion said Macklin, "I intend to have you arrested for the debt you owe me, but I am considering whether I shall arrest you before or after your benefit." "Oh," said Mahon, "don't arrest me at all." "Yes, yes, Bob, you know I must; to prison you will have to go." "There's no occasion." "Oh yes, there is." "Well then, sir, if you must, wait till my benefit is [Pg 121] over." "No! Bob, then you take the money and knock it about no one knows how nor where, and I shall never get a shilling of it; but if I arrest you before your benefit, some of those lords that you sing for in clubs and taverns and jovial bouts may come forward and pay this money for you. No, no, I'll have you touched on the shoulder before your benefit."

King, one of the finest comedians of the eighteenth century, and the original Sir Peter Teazle, made a large fortune; but lost it at the gambling-table. On one occasion he borrowed five guineas for a last stake, and he then won two hundred pounds. Escaping from the chamber, he fell on his knees, and in answer to a request from a companion, made oath on a Bible that he would relinquish his gamester's mania. But he became a member of the Miles Club, in St. James', and at the tables soon lost everything, and died in extreme poverty.

Bayle Bernard's father—John Bernard, a clever comedian, and, in his after years, a well-known manager of American theatres, went through many adventures during the period of his novitiate. After playing at Poole in Dorsetshire, and having spent the money he had earned, he thought he should return home, according to a promise made to his mother; but his success at Poole in playing the character of Major Oakley in the comedy of 'The Jealous Wife,' suppressed the dramatic tyro's notion about duty. A mania for the stage again seized him, and hearing that his old manager, Taylor, was playing at Shaftesbury, Bernard actually determined to join him in defiance of any privations that might arise from his being without a shilling in his pocket. Having given his mother assurance that he would not act again upon

closing his engagement at Poole, writing home for supplies was out of the question; and though on paying his bill at an inn, he discovered that all his coppers at command did not amount to six, Bernard persisted in going on to Shaftesbury, a distance of thirty-six miles. Entrusting his trunk to a waggoner, he ate his breakfast, scribbled a note to his mother, making apology for his delay; tied up his linen in a bundle, and took a path across the fields to the high road, in order to escape notice from acquaintances who had known him in seemingly dashing circumstances. After having proceeded a few miles, he heard the horn of the guard from the stage-coach, and fearing it might contain some of his old companions, he jumped over a hedge for concealment, and in so doing alighted in a ditch, and sank up to his [Pg 122] knees. On extricating his legs, a shoe was left behind, and its loser was compelled to take off his coat, roll up his shirt sleeves, and thrust his arm down the deep aperture, to recover what had been lost. But it was necessary to support himself by planting one foot against the hedge, and by grasping the roots of a holly bush, and while so doing his hold gave way at the most critical moment, and he was precipitated headlong into the mire. In consequence of the disaster he had to delay his journey two hours on the sunny side of a hayrick, for the purpose of putting his apparel in something like decent order. Arriving at Blandford, fear, fatigue, and vexation, continued to exhaust him, and he considered in what way he could most effectually lay out the threepence in his pocket. He determined on a glass of brandy, and going into an inn, called for the first that he had ever tasted. About to depart, having thrown down his coppers, the landlady informed him that two of them were bad. Bernard states that a feather might have felled him to the ground, and that he seemed to be without sense or motion, while the brandy seemed to congeal within him. The landlady looked in his face, and noticing his agitation, surmised doubtless the cause; for she good-naturedly told him not to mind it, but that should he ever again get within easy distance of the place not to forget her. Nearly twenty years afterwards, Bernard in company with Incledon, the vocalist, put up at the identical place, and related the adventure. Incledon thought on hearing the story, that it was Bernard’s duty to give the house a good turn, and so he very generously assisted Bernard to run up a bill in five days to twenty pounds.

Ben Webster possessed a budget of amusing stories, involving ludicrous and startling incidents, connected with his ups and downs as a poor player. He began his professional career as a teacher of music and dancing, and having a passion for the stage, was undaunted in his fight with fortune, notwithstanding defeats and even humiliation. Hearing that Beverley, of the old Tottenham Street theatre, was about opening the Croydon theatre for a short season, Webster applied to that manager for the situation of walking gentleman.

“Full,” said Beverley.

“Can I get in for ‘little business,’ and utility?” pleaded Webster.

“Full.” [Pg 123]

“Is there any chance for harlequin, and dancing?”

“I don’t do pantomime or ballets; besides, I don’t like male dancers; their legs are no draw.”

“Could you give me a berth in the orchestra?”

“Well,” said Beverley, in his peculiar manner, and with a strong word, which need not be repeated, “Why, just now you were a walking gentleman!”

“So I am, sir; but I have had a musical education, and necessity sometimes compels me to turn it to account.”

“Well! what’s your instrument?”

“Violin, tenor, violoncello, double bass, and double drum.”

“Well! by Nero! (he played the fiddle you know) here, Harry (calling his son), bring the double—no, I mean a violin out of the orchestra.”

Harry Beverley appeared with the instrument, and Webster was requested to give a taste of his quality. He began Tartini’s ‘Devil’s Solo,’ and had not gone far when the manager said that the specimen was sufficient, offering the soloist an engagement for the orchestral leadership at a guinea a week. Webster affirms, “That had a storm of gold fallen on him it could not have delighted Semele more than it did himself. He felt himself plucked out of the slough of despond.” Webster had others to support, had to board himself, and in addition he resolved to get out of debt. To successfully carry out such arrangements the young professional had to practise considerable self-denial, walking to Croydon, ten miles every day, for rehearsal, and back to Shoreditch, on twopence—one penny for oatmeal, and the other for milk; and he did it for six weeks, Sundays excepted, when he luxuriated on shin of beef and cheek. While Webster was at Croydon, the gallery used to pelt the gentlemen of the orchestra with mutton pies. Indignation at first was uppermost, but on reflection, the assailed musicians made a virtue of necessity, collecting the fragments of not over-light pastry, ate them under the stage, and whatever might have been their composition, considered them as “ambrosia.”

To be glad to eat the mutton pies with which the gods pelted the orchestra is undoubtedly a realisation of “out of evil cometh good,” and is a curiosity of impecuniosity; but of all the curious curiosities commend me to an arithmetical calculation made by a modern actor, who [Pg 124]

entered on a five nights' engagement at Swansea, at the termination of which he had from the treasurer the sum of twenty-five shillings. Mr. Edward Atkins, who had to find his own wardrobe, upon entering into an arithmetical calculation, discovered that after deducting six shillings for coach fares, and five shillings for lodgings, there remained fourteen for professional work, being within a fraction of two shillings and ninepence halfpenny per evening's labour. The following is the list of parts played by the comedian, and the amount received for each:—

"Monday: 'Widow of Palermo'—Jeremy (with a handful of snuff and a glass of water thrown in his face), 10½*d.*; 'Is he Jealous?'—Belmour, 9½*d.*; 'Young Widow'—Splash, 1*s.* 1½*d.* Tuesday: 'Englishman in France; or, Why Didn't I Kill Myself Yesterday?'—James, 9½*d.*; 'Mrs. White'—Peter White (with a medley duet, and mock gavotte, that caused a stiffness in the joints for three days), 1*s.* 1½*d.*; 'Secret' (without a panel in the scene)—Thomas, 10½*d.* Wednesday: 'Carlitz and Christine'—Carlitz, very cheap, 7½*d.*; 'Two Gregories'—Gregory, without goose or ship, 10*d.*; song, 'What's a Woman like?' 1¾*d.*; 'Fortune's Frolic'—Robin, the talk of the town, 1*s.* 2¼*d.* Thursday: fully prepared with tools and syllables for three pieces, but the theatre was closed, 2*s.* 9½*d.* Friday: 'Review'—Caleb Quotem, with two songs, 10¾*d.*; 'Our Mary Ann'—Jonathan Junks, 9½*d.*; 'Loan Me a Crown'—Lightfoot, fifteen lengths, 7¼*d.*; 'Captain's not Amiss'—John Stock, with clean shirt, the part requiring the actor to take off coat and waistcoat, 6*d.*; walking over to next town on managerial business, ½*d.* Total, 14*s.*"

For years the name of Charles Mathews was continually bandied about in connection with the subject of impecuniosity. Yet the harassing and unpleasant circumstances in which the comedian too often found himself through want of money were not produced by causes which in many instances have brought players into straits, insolvency, and sometimes even destitution. The parentage of Mathews was most reputable, his moral and intellectual training was all that could be desired, while his business habits must have been respectable, holding as he did for some time, with credit and capability, an appointment as a district surveyor. His social position too was excellent. But he married a very extravagant lady, and in conjunction with her entered on theatrical speculations, which his tastes and nature ill- [Pg 125]
fitted him to successfully promote; and not possessing adequate capital to legitimately advance his various theatrical schemes, he became the prey of money-lenders, and bill-discounters. Charles Mathews married Madame Vestris on July 18th, 1838, the lady being at that period the lessee of the Olympic Theatre, where her management had been characterised by exceptional taste and enterprise. But her expenditure, whether in relation to her theatre, or private life, had been lavish even to recklessness. After playing the seasons in the metropolis and making a provincial tour, Mr. and Mrs. Mathews accepted an offer from Stephen Price, manager of the Park Theatre, New York, to perform upon secured engagements of £20,000, with power at option to prolong their stay. However, Price's speculation proved a failure, Mathews' scheme of making a speedy fortune "melted into thin air," and then, affirms the disappointed comedian, "began the series of troubles which were destined to clog a great portion of my life." During the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Mathews for their American engagement the Olympic was kept open under the direction of a manager appointed by them, and on their return they found the finances in a very crippled state; a large amount of debt having been incurred, despite the large sums of money Mathews had transmitted across the Atlantic. In the hope of extricating himself from his great liabilities he took Covent Garden, never calculating the dangers of the perilous and uncertain sea on which he was about floating the bark of his fortunes. "Money," he says, "had to be procured at all hazards, and by every means, to prop up the concern till this new mine could be worked; and I was initiated for the first time in my life into all the mysteries of the money-lending art, and the concoction of those fatal instruments of destruction called Bills of Exchange.... Brokers and sheriff's officers soon entered on the scene, and I, who had never known what pecuniary difficulty meant, and had never had a debt in my life before, was gradually drawn into the inextricable vortex of involvement, a web which once thrown over a man can seldom be thrown off again. The consequence was not conceived at the time. It was a great speculation, and great difficulties appeared the legitimate consequences. Every Saturday was looked forward to with terror, for on every Saturday I had to pay, including the company, authors, band, carpenters, and workmen, employed before and behind the [Pg 126]
curtain, six hundred and eighty-four souls, with their wives and families all dependent upon my exertions." His liabilities were so numerous and heavy, that Mathews conceived that the best plan for him to pursue was without delay to wind up the speculation. Pity for him that he did not carry out the resolution. But the great success attending revivals of the 'Beggar's Opera,' the 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' and other pieces, added to the subsequent still greater success of Boucicault's 'London Assurance,' induced the lessee to continue the management.

Everything looked brilliant and prosperous, but he found his position more intolerable as the sun of prosperity rose higher over his theatre. He states that when he paid no one, no one seemed to care, but the moment Jenkins got his money Jones became rampant.

"Why pay Jenkins? Why not pay me? You've used me shamefully, and you must take the consequences."

Writs and executions poured in, and in every direction Mathews beheld the harpies of the law waiting to spring upon him, and the thousands he paid were partially swallowed up in

legal expenses and interest. The hydra-headed monster, sixty per cent. was always about his legs. His shifts and escapades during this period read like passages from one of those comedies to which he used to impart such amusement by his animal spirits and humours. Some of the stories told by Mathews of his impecunious day, smack of a grim humour. Borrowing money at sixty per cent., he informs us, is not the facile operation some imagine, and, he adds, is attended by risk and worry even worse than the fearful percentage. He well remembered, after a fortnight of very hot weather and thinly attended seats at his theatre, having occasion to borrow two hundred pounds to patch up the Saturday's treasury, and making application to a bill-discounter three days before wanting the money.

"Ah, Mr. Mathews! how d'ye do? Glad to see you. Have a glass of sherry."

"No, thank you. I want a couple of hundred pounds to-morrow."

"Certainly, with pleasure. How long do you want it for? Have a glass of sherry?"

"Say three months."

"What security?" [Pg 127]

"None."

"Very good—I must have a warrant of attorney."

"Of course."

"All right, Mr. Mathews; look in at twelve o'clock to-morrow, and I'll have it ready. Do have a glass of sherry!"

Mathews had no belief that the money would be ready at the time named, though the impecunious actor kept the appointment. He knew that the money-lender was gratified by the frequent appearance of a brougham at the door.

"Well, Mr. Mathews, I find I can't manage the £200. I can only let you have £150. I had no idea I was so short at my bankers. Amount actually overdrawn. But I've got a friend to do it for you; it's all the same. He'll be here directly. Bless me, how long he is. Have a glass of sherry? Are you going back to the theatre? I'll bring him with me in half-an-hour."

Neither money-lender nor his friend appeared at the theatre. On Friday Mathews again made application for the money.

"Didn't come till too late; but all right—you don't want it till to-morrow, you know. What's your treasury hour?"

"Two."

"Be here at twelve and it shall be ready."

The actor was there, punctual to the moment.

"All right. Have a glass of sherry? My nephew Dick has gone to the city for the cheque."

"But the time is getting on."

"Never mind. I'll be with you as the clock strikes two."

Four o'clock arrived, and neither usurer nor money was forthcoming, the salaries of the company of course remaining unpaid. A note forwarded announced that the money-lender would be with Mathews at six to the moment. At seven the long-expected gentleman rushed in breathless.

"Such a job Dick's had for you, Mr. Matthews! But here I am with the money. My friend disappointed me, but I managed without him. My nephew will read over the warrant of attorney."

"But I'm just going on the stage; there's no time now."

"Won't take five minutes. Dick, read the warrant. Now, here is the money. Let's see, £15 left off the old account."

"Oh, pray don't deduct that now." [Pg 128]

"Better, Mr. Mathews, keeps all square. That's £15, then the interest three months, £17 10*s.*, and £15, £32 10*s.* Warrant of Attorney £7 10*s.*, that's £40. Then my nephew's fee, £1 1*s.*, and my trouble, say £1, £42 10*s.* Here's 15*s.*, that's £42 16*s.* Dick, have you got 4*s.*?"

"I've got 3*s.* 6*d.*"

"That will do; I've got 6*d.*, that's £43; and £7 cash makes the £50."

"Yes; but I only get £7 odd."

"Never mind, keeps all square. Now the £100. Here is a cheque of Gribble and Co. on Lloyd's for £25 10*s.*"

"What's the use of a cheque at this time of night?"

“Good as the bank, good as the money; you can pay it as money. Fifty sovereigns makes £75 10*s.*, and a ten-pound note makes £85 10*s.*—stay, it ought to be £95 10*s.* Here’s another ten pound note. I forgot—there you are, £95 10*s.*—only wants £4 10*s.* to make up the £100. You haven’t got £4 10*s.* about you, have you Mr. Mathews, you could lend me till the morning, just to get it straight, you know.”

“I believe I have; there are four sovereigns and ten shillings in silver.”

“That’s all right; £4 makes £99 10*s.* and 10*s.*—stop, let’s count them—count after your own father, as the saying is—four and five’s nine, and three fourpenny pieces; all right. Stop—one’s a threepenny. Got a penny, or a post-office stamp? Never mind, I won’t be hard upon you for the penny. There you are, all comfortable. Good evening.”

Mathews paid away the cheque “as money.” Two days afterwards he got an indignant note, stating that the cheque was dishonoured. Out of temper, Mathews sent for the discounter, and he appeared with alacrity.

“Not paid! Gribble’s cheque not paid—some mistake—it’s as good as the Bank. Here, give it to me, I’ll get it for you in five minutes. How long shall you be here?”

“An hour.”

“I’ll be back in twenty minutes.”

Mathews saw no more of the discounter or the cheque, the scoundrel entirely disappearing with the only proof in his pocket. But sometimes biters were bit, for an entry in one of the actor’s diaries, dated January 1843, states, “called on Lawrence Levy to pay him £30, but borrowed £20 of him instead.” [Pg 129]

On one occasion a very gentlemanly man waited on Mathews.

“I’m sorry to trouble you,” he quietly said, “but I’ve a duty to perform, and I am sure you are too much a man of the world to quarrel with me. I have a writ against you for a hundred pounds, and must request immediate payment, or the pleasure of your company elsewhere.”

“Quite impossible,” said Mathews, “at this moment to meet it; but I will consult with my treasurer, and see what can be done.”

“Excuse me,” said the sheriff’s officer, “but I cannot lose sight of you; and whatever is to be done, must be done here. Come, pay the money, and there’s an end.”

“It can’t be done,” said Mathews.

“Why didn’t you get him to renew the bill?” replied the other.

“He wouldn’t renew it; nothing would induce him.”

“Nonsense,” said he, “accept this bill for the same amount, and put your own time for payment, and I undertake to get you his receipt.”

“Agreed,” answered the actor, accepting the bill, which, without another word the sheriff’s officer took up, threw down the receipt, and walked towards the door.

“Stop,” said Mathews, “you said you couldn’t leave me without the money. What does all this mean?”

“It means that I paid your debt as I knew you couldn’t, and now you owe it me instead. Be punctual, and I’ll do as much again.”

The sheriff’s officer just described was not the only one who befriended the luckless manager. A kindred functionary of the law, having been struck by the cruel conduct of a vindictive tradesman, actually paying the bill himself, and receiving the money back from Mathews in instalments of ten pounds.

Instances grave and gay might be multiplied of the actor’s unfortunate position and the financial entanglements that, like heavy fetters, constrained him at every step. He said that the results of the Covent Garden speculation were for the first season *sowing*, for the second *hoeing*, and for the third *owing*. On his debts being called in, to his dismay he found that including rent the responsibilities amounted to the sum of £30,000. Mathews when he learned the fact was aghast, and his only remedy was the Insolvent Debtors’ Court. Things were made easy for him, and he passed a week in an elegantly fitted chamber above the Porters’ Lodge of the Queen’s Bench Prison. He was not unacquainted with that prison, having had residence there soon after his first notorious American trip, and during that imprisonment he took advantage of the old rules pertaining to the liberties of the Bench, and played an engagement at the Surrey Theatre. The theatre being a few yards beyond the boundaries of the Queen’s Bench liberties, Davidge, the Surrey lessee, and Cross, lessee of the Surrey Zoological Gardens, gave extra bail to enable Charles Mathews to have the day rule extended through the evening. A tipstaff was stationed at his dressing-room door and at each wing of the stage, to watch the actor, who, though out of the Bench, was in custody. When absolutely free from his Covent Garden liabilities he with a sense of honour that did him credit gave securities for what he considered purely personal debts, making himself still liable to the amount of about £4000, anticipating that the creditors would treat him with [Pg 130]

consideration and thoughtfulness. He was mistaken, and for years he still had the millstone round his neck. During his lesseeship of the Lyceum he was in the same straits as he was in the Old Covent Garden days. Accumulated interest, law expenses for raising money, grew year after year and Mathews was still in his miserable plight of impecuniosity. At length in July 1856, while about to play at the Preston Theatre, he was arrested and imprisoned in Lancaster Gaol. He chafed under the incarceration, and he has left a touching account of the misery he felt on being separated from his wife, and of the melancholy influences of his prison-house. His imprisonment created much gossip, and ere he left "durance vile" a somewhat singular recognition of his circumstances took place. His fellow-prisoners in Lancaster Gaol communicated with him as follows:

Letter addressed to Charles J. Mathews, in Lancaster Castle, July 1856:—

> "Illustrious Sir,
>
> "Permit us to address you as a brother-debtor surrounded by oppressive circumstances akin to our own, which are rendered the more striking to one who like yourself has acquired a world-wide reputation as an artist and elocutionist; and whose uniform kindness and manly conduct has excited the admiration of those who now respectfully, through this medium, tender you what they consider to be a just meed of approbation.
>
> "With the newspaper gossip relative to your alleged state of affairs, which has been extensively circulated we have nothing to do and we know not whether you are fiercely opposed or otherwise; we seek not to elicit any facts connected with your position, but we beg most earnestly and respectfully to compassionate you as one of the most ingenious amongst our common manhood; and having for the most part felt the pangs attendant upon the day and hour of tribulation, allow us to express the strength of our sympathetic feeling by stating that we heartily wish you a signal, complete, and honourable release from that load of embarrassment which so unhappily depresses us all, but which, by reason of your refined sensibility must necessarily press with great force upon your mental organization; and this feeling compels us to say, 'Go on and conquer.'
>
> "Signed on behalf of the members of the Long Room,
>
> "John Harridge,
> "*Chairman*."

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Mathews thought that there was an odd flavour of Mr. Micawber about the foregoing epistle. Subsequently he did what he should have done years before, sought freedom from his liabilities under legal protection. Many droll scenes took place when the comedian was under Bankruptcy examination. On one occasion Mr. Commissioner Law asked him why he had kept a brougham, instead of taking a cab to and fro between his residence and the theatre; and the lawyer was told thereupon by the debtor, that the brougham was hired from the purest motives of economy.

"In a word," said Mathews, "I really could not afford the price of cabs."

"I should have thought that cabs were more economical than a private carriage," replied Law.

"Not at all," said Mathews. "Cabs take ready money, a precious article, to be carefully treasured and only parted with under absolute necessity, but a brougham can always be hired on credit."

Mathews, free of his liabilities, became prosperous, and his latter days were marked by success and happiness.

Of his attractiveness on the stage it is almost superfluous to speak; it may be said with truth, "We shall not look upon his like again;" for though not a great actor, he was unapproachable in those light comedy parts that require dash and go. I remember seeing him play Dazzle in 'London Assurance,' at Melbourne, exactly thirty years, to the very day, from the date of its first performance; and though he was the oldest member of the company on the stage that night, he was in manner and appearance by far the youngest.

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CHAPTER VII.

IMPECUNIOSITY OF ARTISTS.

If there be two things on earth that may be said to have a more direct affinity for each other

than aught else, those two things are Painting and Poverty. The artistic records of the past literally teem with sorrowful instances of their close relationship; and unfortunately the alliterative connection is by no means unknown in the present day.

Ruskin, who upholds contempt for poverty as a characteristic of our age which is both “just and wholesome,” complains that we starve our great men for the first half of their lives by way of revenge, because they quarrel with us, and adds,—

> “Precisely in the degree in which any painter possesses original genius, is at present the increase of moral certainty that during his early years he will have a hard battle to fight: and that just at the time when his conceptions ought to be full and happy, his temper gentle, and his hopes enthusiastic—just at that most critical period, his heart is full of anxieties and household cares: he is chilled by disappointments, and vexed by injustice, he becomes obstinate in his errors, no less than in his virtues, and the arrows of his aim are blunted, as the reeds of his trust are broken.... You may be fed with the fruit and fulness of his old age, but you were as the nipping blight in his blossoming, and your praise is only as the warm winds of autumn to the dying branches.... You feed him in his tender youth with ashes and dishonour: and then you come to him, obsequious but too late, with your sharp laurel crown, the dew all dried from off its leaves: and you thrust it into his languid hand, and he looks at you wistfully. What shall he do with it? What can he do, but go and lay it on his mother’s grave.”

In another part of the same work from which I have quoted, he says, with exquisite pathos,—

> “You cannot consider, for you cannot conceive, the sickness of heart with which a young painter of deep feeling toils through his first obscurity—his [Pg 133] sense of the strong voice within him which you will not hear, his vain, fond, wondering witness to the things you will not see—his far-away perception of things that he could accomplish if he had but peace and time, all unapproachable and vanishing from him, because no one will leave him peace or grant him time: all his friends falling back from him: those whom he would most reverently obey rebuking and paralyzing him: and last and worst of all, those who believe in him most faithfully, suffering by him the most bitterly. The wife’s eyes, in their sweet ambition, shining brighter as the cheek wastes away: and the little lips at his side parched and pale, which one day, he knows, although he may never see it, will quiver so proudly when they name his name, calling him ‘Our father.’”

But if these pictures are now drawn from artist life, what must that life have been fifty or a hundred years ago? Art was always a plant of slow growth in England, and the great masters who were cherished in the Old World trade guilds, and flourished so grandly in Italy, Flanders, and Holland, had not a single native representative in this country. And when at last the land that had so long since produced a Shakespeare, could boast its Hogarth, native artists were still few and far between, and their chief means of living was found in painting signs. Neglected and scornfully humiliated by all classes, isolated from refined society—such as it was—they suffered the extremes of poverty, with cheerful bravery, endured with a light heart, paid back scorn with scorn, and were linked together by sympathy and pity in such a bond of brotherly fellowship as is now utterly unknown. The taverns were their clubs, bread and cheese their fare: and if the rent of their garret homes were not forthcoming, they slept in the streets, and, careless Bohemians that they were, laughed together over the strangeness, or the dangers, of their nocturnal exposures. That their lives often found tragic endings may readily be known. Many a terrible story is extant of their heart-sickness and despair, of last awful struggles silently, heroically continued against overwhelming odds, and of lingering sufferings endured with martyr-like patience.

The earliest exhibitions of pictures—they were mainly street signs and portraits—were organized by the artists themselves for charitable purposes, as may be seen by the catalogue of one opened in Spring Gardens, in 1761; which contained a design by Samuel Wale, one of the founders of the Royal Academy, engraved by Charles Grignion, representing “The genius of painting, sculpture, and architecture relieving the distressed;” and these exhibitions were [Pg 134] first established in the reign of George II.

The Samuel Wale here mentioned, afterwards R.A., was himself a sign-painter; and for many years a whole-length figure of Shakespeare, painted by him in the zenith of his powers, figured as the sign of a public-house at the north-west corner of Little Russell Street, in Drury Lane: while Charles Grignion, when an old man, suffered the then usual fate of artists old and young; and an appeal made for him by his brethren in 1808, now before me, speaks of him in his ninetieth year in the deepest distress, unable to work, with a wife entirely, and a nearly blind daughter partially, dependent upon him for support, saying, “Behold, reader, the united claims of virtue, old age, and professional merit, and filial and parental suffering.” It also expressed a not unreasonable hope that “the claims of, a man who had done so much, and done so well, would be speedily attended to.” Grignion died four years afterwards, his latest days made smooth by the personal contributions of a few artists and some of their patrons, so that the general appeal quoted from above seems to have fallen flatly; as well it might when the public regarded English artists with contempt, and their brethren were so

meanly, miserably poor.

The first native artist whose fame extended beyond his birthplace was William Hogarth; but poverty, the bitter badge of all his tribe, he too wore. His father, a north-country schoolmaster, settled in London as an author and press-reader in the Old Bailey, where on the 10th November, 1697, the great painter to be was born. Everybody knows how the child's taste for art found its earliest expression in the eagerness with which he watched some poor artist at his work, and not less well known is the fact that he was the apprentice of a "silver plate engraver," and afterwards devoted himself to engraving on copper coats of arms and ornamental headings for shop bills, creeping upwards from such "small beginnings" to more ambitious efforts, until at last he made a hit by illustrating 'Hudibras,' the commission for which, it is said, he owed to that successful caricature of his landlady to which I have previously referred. There were then in all London but two print-shops, and they dealt principally in foreign productions; so that it can be easily understood how, to eke out the shortcomings of his graver, Hogarth taught himself painting. Speaking long afterwards of this portion of his career, he said, "I could do little more than maintain myself [Pg 135] till I was near thirty;" and added, "I remember the time when I have gone moping into the city with scarce a shilling, but as soon as I had obtained ten guineas there for a plate, I have returned home, put on my sword, and sallied forth again, with all the confidence of a man who had thousands in his pocket."

At another time he sold to the print-seller, W. Bowles, some plates he had just finished, by weight at half-a-crown a pound avoirdupois; but even when Hogarth was a famous man, and, compared with his former state, a prosperous one, we find such pictures as "The Harlot's Progress" and "The Rake's Progress" selling at from fourteen to twenty-two guineas each picture, and "The Strolling Players" bought by Francis Beckford, Esq., for £27 6*s.*: but as he afterwards complained of that price as much too high, Hogarth took it back, and resold it for the same amount. "Marriage à la Mode," after the artist had published engravings from the set of six paintings so called, realised £19 6*s.* In 1797 they were sold for £1381, and now form part of our national collection through the bequest of Mr. Angerstein. Another of his famous works, "March of the Guards to Finchley," was more satisfactorily disposed of by lottery, and it was this fact that Hogarth referred to when he said, "A lottery is the only chance a living painter has of being paid for his time." From that lottery sprang our modern art unions. It was of this picture, in a spirit of bitterness provoked by the poverty of his dear friend, its painter, that David Garrick wrote in a letter to Henry Fielding:—

> "Its first and great fault is its being too new, and having too great a resemblance to the objects it represents; if this appears a paradox, you ought to take particular care in confessing it. This picture has too much of the lustre, of that despicable freshness which we discover in nature, and which is never seen in the cabinets of the curious. Time has not obscured it with that venerable smoke, that sacred cloud which will one day conceal it from the profane eye of the vulgar, so that its beauties may only be seen by those who are initiated into the mysteries of art: these are almost its only faults."

To the last Hogarth seems to have been a needy, struggling man. That unfrocked clergyman and satirical poet, Churchill, after quarrelling with the painter "over a rubber of shilling whist," at the Bedford Arms, near Covent Garden, attacked him with the bitterest scorn and hatred. Hogarth was then growing old and feeble, his health was bad, and he was [Pg 136] melancholy and depressed by the fact that Sir Robert Grosvenor, having commissioned him to paint a picture ("Sigismunda"), had refused to pay for it when finished. At this juncture the mistress of Churchill told the poet that he had given Hogarth his death-blow; whereupon he unfeelingly remarked, "How sweet is flattery from the woman we love," adding, "He has broken into the pale of my private life, and has set the example of illiberality, *which I wanted*, and as he is dying from the effects of my former chastisement I will hasten his death by writing his elegy." The painter's death followed soon after, and all he had to leave his wife were his unsold plates, the copyrights of which were secured to her for twenty years by an Act of Parliament.

Amongst Hogarth's foreign predecessors John Mabuse, or Mabegius, an historical and portrait painter, born in 1499, may be mentioned, for the sake of telling a story about an ingenious way in which he contrived to avoid what might have been the very serious consequences of his impecuniosity. While he was in the service of the Emperor Charles V. (many of his finest works were painted in this country, he was employed by Henry VIII. to paint some of the royal children, and he had among his admirers no less a judge of art than Albert Durer), a lord of the court making special preparations to receive the Emperor, commanded the whole of the royal household to be dressed in rich damask brocade. When the painter was measured for his suit he persuaded the tailor to let him have the material, and wanting money for a drinking-bout sold it to a tavern-keeper, having first made a suit of white paper, which he painted in imitation of the damask, and appeared in it before the Emperor, who afterwards said the painter's costume was of all he saw the handsomest and richest. The trick was discovered, but as the Emperor enjoyed the joke and laughed heartily, no ill came of it. Some similar freak, however, soon after threw him into prison, where he continued to paint.

The mention of art work done in a prison recalls the name of William Ryland, an English artist, who was born in London in 1732, studied under Francis Boucher in Paris, and soon

after his return was appointed engraver to the King. He was the first who engraved in the dotted style, and his works won him more fame than money. Angelo, the fencing-master, who knew Ryland from his boyhood, says he lived in a house in which John Gwynn, the [Pg 137] painter, whose 'Essay on Design,' published in 1749, is still known amongst students, also occupied apartments. Ryland had a wife and children to support, and in the year 1783, to relieve the pressure of his creditors (he was then in receipt of a small pension from the King), he forged a bond for three thousand pounds, to escape probably by its aid from his pecuniary difficulties and his country. The document forged was a most extraordinary specimen of imitative art, having thirty or more distinctive signatures in every variety of handwriting; some bold and large, some cramped, some small, written in various kinds of inks. When it was presented for payment at the India House, the cashier after carefully examining it and referring to the ledger said, "Here is a mistake, sir; the bond as entered does not become due until to-morrow." Ryland begged permission to look at the book, and after leisurely and coolly inspecting it, said, "There must be an error in your entry of one day," and quietly offered to leave the bond. The cashier, however, believing the entry to be an erroneous one, paid the money, with which Ryland departed. On the following day the true bond was presented, and the crime detected; large placards were soon posted all over London, offering a reward of £500 for his apprehension.

Ryland's first hiding-place was in the Minories, where he remained concealed for some days. One evening after dusk he stole out for a walk, disguised in a seaman's dreadnaught. On Little Tower Hill, one of the officers in search of him eyed him very earnestly, passed, repassed him, and then advancing said abruptly and confidentially, "So you are the very man I am seeking." The artist said so calmly, "I think you are mistaken, I don't remember you," that the "runner" apologised and wished him "good night."

He was taken, however, tried and condemned to death, amidst universal expressions of sorrow and regret. Interest was made to obtain mercy on the ground of his previous excellent character, and his extraordinary talent as an artist and engraver. The King's reply was: "No! a man with such talent could not have been unable to provide amply for all his wants." Angelo said, "Had a Shakespeare or a Milton committed a similar act of fraud in those iron days of jurisprudence, their fate had doubtless been the same." Ryland petitioned for a respite, on the ground that he was then engraving the last of a series of plates from the [Pg 138] paintings of Signora Angelica Kauffman, and was anxious to complete it to enable his wife after his execution to support herself and his children. His request was granted, and it is stated, "he laboured incessantly at this his last work, and when he received from his printer, Haddril, who was the first in his line, the finished proof impression, he calmly said, 'Mr. Haddril, I thank you; my task is now accomplished.'"

Having just mentioned Angelica Kauffman, I may pause to note that the greatest misfortune of her life has been traced to the poverty of her father, Johann Kauffman, for though the story, which is as follows, is discredited by some, it has many believers. She was travelling with him in her early girlhood through Switzerland, and being very poor they went on foot, sleeping at night after each long day's journey in some humble wayside tavern. On one occasion they were refused admission on the ground that two grand English seigneurs had bespoken all the accommodation. The poor artist, anxious not to overtax his young daughter's failing strength, pleaded and protested in vain; and the dispute between him and the landlord waxing loud and warm, the attention of one of the Englishmen was attracted, and coming forward he politely invited them to become the guests of himself and friend. Not quite concealed by the polished courtesy of his manner lurked that which secretly alarmed and offended the pale-faced, weary girl, and while her unsuspecting father was full of grateful thanks, and glad to avail himself of the stranger's apparent kindness, she whisperingly entreated him to come away. Too anxious on her account to risk the chance of a night in the open air, her father accepted the invitation, and at table the nobleman, forgetting the respect due to her innocence and youth, attempted some liberty, which being repeated, caused her to rise suddenly and leave the room. Her father followed, and was induced to go with her out of the house. Some years after, when Angelica Kauffman had become famous, and was living in England, welcomed with pride and enthusiasm in the highest society, and sought after by the noblest and most gifted, she met this peer in one of the most brilliant circles of the fashionable world, who with great amazement recognised in the elegant woman and famous artist the humble pedestrian of the Swiss mountains. Seeking an opportunity he passionately entreated her to forgive him, pleaded that he had [Pg 139] never forgotten her, and never could, and begged that she would at least accept his most respectful friendship. She believed him, trusted him, was again insulted, and refused thenceforth to admit him to her society. To induce her to restore him to her favour, he offered her marriage, and was calmly and resolutely refused; and on his rejection forced himself into her presence, and strove even to win by violence that which no other means could give him, but was again baffled. To humble and disgrace her he devised a plan, which most probably suggested to Lord Lytton the story of his play, *The Lady of Lyons*. He secured the aid of a low-born adventurer, who assumed the name of Count Frederic de Horn, introduced him in some way to fashionable society, where, approaching Angelica Kauffman, then twenty-six, and in the full bloom of womanhood, he rendered the most flattering homage to her genius, with an air of the most profound respect and admiration, and gradually became familiar and dear to her; and at last told some strange romantic story of a terrible misfortune from which she could save him by at once, and secretly, becoming his wife. The snare caught her; the marriage was performed by a Catholic priest without

writings or witnesses. One day while painting a portrait of the Queen at Buckingham Palace, in the course of conversation the young artist confided to her royal friend the secret of her recent mysterious wedding, which resulted in the Count de Horn being invited to court. This invitation was, however, not accepted, the impostor fearing detection. Her father's suspicions being aroused, and the facts of the marriage explained to him, he made inquiries and induced others to pursue them, which ended in the appearance of the real Count de Horn, and the unmasking of the impostor, who only laughed at his dupe, and commanded her to follow him, claiming that entire control over her person and property to which the poor woman believed he was entitled, until further inquiries brought to light the fact that the man had been previously married, when the false marriage was formally declared null and void.

For my next anecdote I turn to Elizabeth le Brun, the favourite court painter of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette, who, when her husband's reckless and heartless extravagance had reduced her to comparative poverty, found herself unable to terminate the once grand receptions at which she had received the *crème de la crème* of her [Pg 140] contemporaries. They crowded her smaller house as they had crowded her larger one, and for lack of chairs seated themselves upon the floor, and she herself tells the embarrassment of the Duc de Noailles, who was so old and so excessively fat, that as he could neither get down so low, nor rise without assistance, was therefore obliged to endure the terrible fatigue of standing.

The early years of a more modern, but equally famous, lady-artist, Rosa Bonheur, were embittered by her father's want of money. As a school-girl she felt severely the contrast between the silk dresses, silver mugs, spoons, and forks, with a plentiful supply of pocket-money, which her companions possessed, and her calico frocks, iron spoon, tin mug, coarse shoes, and empty pockets; and her earliest ideas of art, as a means of escaping such humiliating conditions, were thereby developed, strengthened, and intensified into a restless craving and feverish anxiety. Hence she soon began to draw and model in imitation of her father, with a passionate eagerness that kept her constantly at work from early morning until late at night, and at last startling her father (who had long and despairingly considered her too indolent, self-willed, and stupid, ever to be in any way useful) by the progress she made, he took her through a serious course of preparatory study, and so made her an artist. The director of the Louvre, M. Jousselin, declared that while she was there forming her judgment, and training eye and hand, he had never before witnessed such untiring eagerness and ardour. In her case, the impecuniosity which Ruskin regards as so often fatal to the aspirations of young and ambitious artists, appears to have been the strongest incentive. Surrounded and stimulated by the glorious creations of great artists, the first to enter the gallery, and the last to leave it, her strongest desire was to aid her artist father in his weary struggle for the support of his family; to which she soon began to contribute by the sale of her copies, making up for the extreme smallness of the sums they commanded by the rapidity with which she produced them. In her seventeenth year she achieved such success in making a study from a goat, that she determined to turn her attention to the painting of animals from life. Too poor to pay for models, she went out daily into the country to study them in the fields and lanes. Laden with clay, or canvas, brushes, and colours, she [Pg 141] would set out in the grey dawn, with nothing but a piece of bread in her pocket for the day's food, and finding a subject, work on it until the light had faded, and then, soaked by rain, or struggling in the rude wind, she would make her way, sometimes ten or a dozen miles, through the darkness, a sun-browned, hardy, peasant-looking girl, to reach home cheerful, and contented with the day's work, although hungry and exhausted by fatigue. Another way in which she contrived to get models cheaply was by passing days amongst the lowing and bleating victims of one of the great Parisian slaughter-houses, the *Abattoir du Roule*, where, seated on a bundle of hay, with her colour-box beside her, she painted on from morning until dusk, frequently so absorbed that she forgot to eat the piece of bread in her pocket. She also studied from the animals when they were under the influence of terror and agony, just before they received the death-stroke; forcing herself to endure a woman's natural repugnance to such scenes of blood and torture, rendered doubly painful to her by the loving sympathy with which she regarded all the brute creation. In the evening she would return home from such studies with her face and clothes thickly marked by the flies which in such places congregate so thickly. With equal perseverance she also studied in the stables of the Veterinary School of Alfort, in the *Jardin des Plantes*, and in all the horse and cattle fairs held in the neighbourhood of Paris; always in the latter case wearing male attire, to avoid certain dangers and annoyances to which a woman would be subjected if dressed in the clothing of her sex. She was regarded as a good-natured, merry boy, and a clever little fellow, by the rough characters who visited the fairs, and sympathising with her apparent poverty, the graziers and horse-dealers whose animals she drew constantly insisted upon standing treat. Occasionally, too, a village dairy-maid would make amorous overtures to the handsome "lad." So she gallantly wrought, and fought, and paved her upward way to fame and prosperity, her father and nature her only teachers, the former's impecuniosity her constant incentive.

I am reminded here of Sir Thomas Lawrence, P.R.A., for whom also the first stimulants to activity in the pursuit of art were the poverty and necessities of his father, an exciseman, actor, and innkeeper, who had achieved no lasting success in either calling. At one time despairing of pecuniary success in the profession he began to excel in when but five years [Pg 142] old, he resolved to take to the stage, despite the anxious opposition of his father, who was

then looking forward to his son's artistic efforts for support, having failed as an actor, failed in business at Devizes, where he kept "The Black Bear," and having previously failed as landlord of "The White Lion," at Bath. Bernard in his 'Retrospections,' speaks of "Young Lawrence the painter," then about seventeen, as "receiving professional instructions from Mr. Hoare of Bath," and some little time after, with a view to his adopting the stage as a profession, Tom Lawrence recited before Bernard and John Palmer the actor, when the latter strove to enforce his father's opinion, and convince him that his prospects as a painter were superior to those he would have as an actor. It was some time before he could realize this, and when he did he said with a sigh, "If I could go upon the stage, I thought I might be able to help my family much sooner than I can in my present employment." The earnestness and the regret he expressed in the tone of these words deeply affected all who were present. It was many years before Thomas Lawrence escaped from the fangs of impecuniosity, so absorbing were the drafts made upon his purse by the wants of his parents. His father used to hawk his son's crayon drawings about London at half a guinea each. One of his contemporary biographers, says, "Sir Thomas, though he sometimes confidentially accounted for his straitened circumstances through life by referring to his early burdens, never regretted them, nor murmured at their reminiscence."

But the early practice of a painter is seldom profitable, and Nicholas Poussin asserts that at the commencement of *his* career his landscapes sold for less than the cost of canvas, oil, and pigments.

Still more remarkable as an instance of artistic success snatched from the depths of impecuniosity, is that furnished by the early history of Isaac Ware, the famous architect. One day while sitting to Roubillac for his bust, he told him the story of himself as a thin, sickly child, who had been apprenticed to a chimney-sweep, enduring a life of pain and hardship at an age when happier children were in the nursery, and winter or summer, in storm or darkness, out in the streets, wailing forth his pitiful "s-w-eee-p," before the day broke; chalking on the walls wherever he went drawings of the buildings he met with in his travels through the streets. One day a gentleman passing Whitehall on horseback saw the feeble- [Pg 143]
looking, sooty child tip-toeing to draw the outlines of the street front of that building upon its own basement wall; now running into the middle of the street to look up at the building, now back to continue his drawing. After watching him some little time the gentleman rode up and called to him, when the startled boy dropped his chalk in terror, and came forward with downcast eyes full of fear. To restore confidence the equestrian threw him a shilling, and after inquiring his name, and that of his master, &c., he went instantly to the latter, who said the little fellow was of very little use to him, being so weak, and, complaining of his chalking propensity, showed his visitor what a state his walls were in through the young sweep's having drawn upon them various views of St. Martin's Church. The gentleman concluded his visit by purchasing the remainder of the boy's time, and taking him away. It was to this noble benefactor that Ware owed not only his education, which was an excellent one, but the means which enabled him afterwards to pursue his art studies in Italy, and upon his return his introduction to commissions as an architect. It is said that Ware retained the stain of soot in his skin to the day of his death.

This story of Ware's boyhood we owe to Nathaniel Smith, the engraver, who heard the architect tell it; and speaking of Smith reminds me of a story told by his son, who was called in his time "Rainy-day Smith." It is a tale of Alderman Boydell, who at twenty-one years of age walked to London, because he had no money to come by the waggon, and apprenticed himself to Mr. Thorns, an engraver and artist, attending whenever possible, an academy opened in St. Martin's Lane for poor art students by a group of well-known artists, whose subscriptions paid for its support, and to which Hogarth contributed his father-in-law's casts and models, learning perspective at the same time in his own humble lodging after his return at night. Boydell being out of his time, and unable to obtain regular employment, used to engrave small plates—views of London and landscapes—print them himself, make them up into little books, and sell them to keepers of toyshops to re-sell at sixpence a set of six, or a penny each. These shops he visited regularly every Saturday to see if any had been sold, and leave others to replace those that had happily been disposed of. His best customer was found at the sign of "The Cricket Bat" (all shops then had signs) in Duke's Court, St. [Pg 144]
Martin's Lane. On one occasion his delight was so excessive on finding so many had been sold there as realized five-and-sixpence, that in an outburst of gratitude to the shopkeeper he laid out the entire amount with him in the purchase of a silver pencil case, which he preserved as a memento of the great event all through the rest of his life.

Of a kindred nature to Boydell's vicissitudes were the earliest experiences of John Opie. As a lad in Cornwall he was so wretchedly poor that Dr. Walcot, then practising as a physician at Foy, out of compassion employed him to clean knives and forks, and to save him from the ill-usage of his father took him into his own house. John going to the slaughter-house for paunches to feed the doctor's dog with, made a portrait of the butcher, which so delighted his employer that he also sat for a portrait to the errand boy, which production was equally astonishing. The portraits being shown amongst the doctor's friends and neighbours, one named Phillips sent to London for a complete set of artist's materials, which he presented to Opie, who painted with them the portrait of a parrot so naturally that it spread his fame far and near, and started him fairly in art as a portrait painter, his fee for a likeness being seven-and-sixpence. The doctor once asked the lad how he liked painting, to which question Opie replied enthusiastically, "Better than my bread and meat." He was soon afterwards in

London, where Sir Joshua Reynolds befriended him, and he became known and popular as “the wonderful Cornish genius.”

George Morland must have found impecuniosity a sharp spur, when his father, hopelessly weary of his indolence and bad conduct, turned him from home, saying, “I am determined to no longer encourage your idleness; there is a guinea, take it and go about your business.” George succeeded in supporting himself, and lived a life of the most degrading dissipation, his favourite companions being jockeys, ostlers, carters, money-lenders, gipsies, and women of abandoned character. He so cruelly ill-used his wife—a sister of James Ward, R.A.—that although strongly attached to him, she dared not live with him. “He died,” as Smith says, “drunk, in a sponging-house in Eyre Street Hill, near Hatton Garden.” Such a career could not but be fruitful of the troubles, cares, dangers, and difficulties arising from impecuniosity. [Pg 145] At one time, when on an excursion to the coast of Kent with one of his favourite companions, a brother artist, probably to escape duns, they spent their money so freely on the road, that long before they reached their destination they were penniless and hungry. When nearing Canterbury they espied a homely roadside alehouse called “The Black Bull,” and hailing it with delight they entered, and soon made alarming havoc amongst the lowly edibles and potables set before them; smuggled full-proof spirits being ordered and disposed of in the most astonishing manner. When the bill was produced Morland frankly confessed they were a couple of poor itinerant artists in search of employment, and without a penny in the world. “But,” said he, “your sign is in a most shameful condition for so respectable a house; let me repaint it in settlement of the bill”—which amounted to twelve shillings and sixpence. The landlord had long wanted a new sign; he agreed to the proposition. Morland began the work, and as it could not be finished on that day, the host supplied him and his friend with lodging for the night. On the following day the new sign was so much to the satisfaction of the innkeeper that he furnished the friends with gin to the amount of two guineas, together with some food, and when it was finished added a few shillings to help them on their way. Many similar stories are extant of this celebrated painter. “The Goat and Boots” in the Fulham Road received a new sign from him in the same way; and to pay another tavern score he did a like service for “The Cricketers” near Chelsea.

Mr. E. V. Rippingale, the painter, used to tell with what despondency, when he was a tall, thin, pale, self-taught youth eagerly studying art, he was taken one bright morning to see Sir David Wilkie, then residing in Kensington. He had just previously been introduced to a Scotch landscape painter of some eminence, who, when he asked him what materials were used in landscape painting, had eyed him with grim suspicion, and grunted—

“Sur, there are sacreets in the art, whuch whun a mon hae foound oot, he mun keep to himsel.”

Consequently Sir David’s kindly reception made a deep impression upon him. After inquiring what subject the youth was painting, and what branch of art his inclinations led him to adopt? if he had studied from the antique and from life? whether he was instructed or self-taught? &c., the talented Scotchman, then a tall, bony young man, with reddish hair, grey eyes, high cheek bones, and a broad Scotch accent, said,— [Pg 146]

“I shall be very happy to tell you anything I know. You need not fear to ask me; the art of a painter is unlike that of a juggler, it does not depend upon a trick. In art we have no secrets, and all painters are always glad to tell what they know to young fellow-students.”

The rest of the interview was devoted to the giving of sound practical advice, the inspection of Wilkie’s paintings and studies, and in the end the lanky lad from the country was pressed to come again and bring his drawings with him.

Rippingale’s first visit to Wilkie was paid in 1815, and Haydon has told how, after the closing of the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1805, he went to breakfast with Wilkie, and reaching his apartment—he then had but one—a little before the appointed time, found him stark naked on that chilly autumnal morning, making a study from himself by the aid of a looking-glass. On another occasion the enthusiastic young Scotchman was found in a fireless room, shivering with cold, drawing from his own naked leg. Wilkie’s employment was of a very humble and precarious kind at that time, and he was then copying the pictures of Barry, in the great room of the Society of Arts, for an engraver.

When the painter of those world-famous productions was no more, and his body lay in state in the very room which contained them, Wilkie was anxious to be present at the funeral, but alas! he had not a black coat, and could not afford to buy one. However Haydon had two, and was quite willing to lend one, and did so; but unfortunately he was short and slight, and Wilkie was tall and big-boned. The effect of the former’s coat upon the latter’s figure was consequently intensely ludicrous; the sleeves terminated far above his wrists, his broad shoulders stretched the seams to the very verge of cracking, and the waist buttons had “gone aloft” half-way up his back. When Haydon met him thus oddly attired, not even the solemnity of the occasion could quite suppress his merriment, and the piteous entreaty of the young Scotchman’s looks, and significantly upheld finger, increased rather than decreased the tendency, so that the English painter afterwards said he once thought the desperate effort he made to suppress his laughter would have killed him.

When Wilkie was hawking his pictures from one shop to another, and returning home heart-sick, weary, and hungry, evening after evening, he received in nearly every case but one [Pg 147]

reply, “We don’t purchase modern pictures.” Happily this is altered now to some extent, though the reception awarded a novice in the present day is not very encouraging if all aspirants are treated in a like manner to an extremely clever young friend of mine, who, I doubt not, will be heard of some day. When he presented his canvas, or sketch, he was told, “We don’t buy the paintings of unknown men.” One of Wilkie’s pictures thus rejected was a little one of a subject afterwards re-painted on a larger scale, “The Blind Fiddler.”

Haydon tells how he first saw a notice of Wilkie in a newspaper, and hurried to him with huge delight. “Wilkie,” he says, “was breakfasting. ‘Wilkie,’ said I, ‘here’s your name in the paper.’ ‘Where, where?’ said Wilkie, ceasing to drink his tea. I then read it aloud to him. Wilkie stood up and huzzaed, in which we joined. We then took hands, and danced round the table, and sallying forth, spent the day in wandering about in a sort of ecstasy in the fields. We supped with Wilkie on red herrings, and he took down his little kit, and played us Scotch airs till the dreary hour of separation—these were delightful feelings! The novelty of a thing first felt, the freshness of youth, all contributed to render them intense and exciting.”

It was said by some one that Wilkie never painted better than when he used to take his penny roll and moisten it at the pump. But this statement was indignantly contradicted by his friend Haydon in his lectures, and he certainly was an authority on the difficulty of painting under difficulties.

Another illustration of success preceded by disappointment is to be found in the case of Sontagg, who, according to Mr. Robert Kemp, before he found his true vocation in landscape painting, aspired to the glory of historical and high art. Environed by the bitter poverty of an art student, he painted his ideal. It was a Madonna, and as he afterwards said, “one of the worst ever painted.” When it was finished, he pawned his only decent coat to raise $7.50 for a frame in which it was sent to an art mart. “Then he spent the day walking around, and calculating what he would do with the thousand the great work would bring him in. Then he called at the auction room to collect. ‘Had the picture been sold?’ ‘It had,’ said the clerk. [Pg 148] ‘How much?’ ‘Five dollars and a half.’” Sontagg dined on a “free lunch,” and went to bed in the dark. I may remark for the benefit of those uninitiated in Colonial and American drinking customs, the “free lunch” here spoken of means a meal which is provided gratis by many tavern-keepers in America, Australia, and elsewhere. It consists of bread and meat, or bread and cheese, placed on the counter, and to which all patronising the establishment are welcome. It is said that years after this occurrence, when Sontagg became famous, he found this painting over the chimney-piece of a little wayside inn in the Wabash County where it was a standing jest, and valued as a source of the laughter which kept a quarrelsome man and wife from desperate extremes. When their violence was at its worst a glance at Sontagg’s Madonna was sure to provoke such merriment that after it they invariably became friendly.

The early life of John Philip, whose glorious pictures of Spanish life won him such wide-spread fame, presents an instance of greatness won despite extreme poverty, with its attendant drawbacks, and the friendlessness of utter obscurity. He began his career as a painter when a mere boy; though not upon canvas, millboard nor panel, but upon watering-cans. When seventeen years of age he worked his passage from Scotland to London on board a coasting-vessel, for the purpose of seeing the exhibition of the Royal Academy, and on his return, with a mind richly stored by close investigation of the pictures he saw there and in the National Galleries—of which those by Wilkie were the most fascinating and instructive—he painted a picture which attracted the attention of Lord Panmure, who generously sent him to study in London, and supplied him with the means of support while so engaged. Philip died, as so many sadly remember, on Feb. 27th, 1867. One of his earliest attempts was long visible outside an old tavern, in the village of Dyce, near his native town Aberdeen, where he was born in 1817. At Dyce he was employed as herd-boy, and a story is told of his having at that time but two shirts, and when one of these was stolen, Johnny said cheerfully to his relative, Mrs. Allardyce, “Never min, ye can mak a shift, wash the ane I hae on, and I’ll gang to my bed till it’s dry. My puir mither hae often to do that.” Inconvenient as such circumstances must have been, John Philip in the days of his prosperity often spoke of [Pg 149] the happy days he knew when he was a poor little herd-laddie in the pretty little village of Dyce.

Somewhat similar in its start was the life of Henry Dawson, who died in 1878. Born at Hull in 1811, he commenced the world as a factory-lad at Nottingham, in which position he began to paint pictures, which he sold at prices ranging from two to twenty shillings; but it was long before he achieved the grand success the latter price implied, not indeed before 1835, and the munificent patron to whose liberality he owed the advance was a hairdresser, who for many years remained his best customer. So slowly came the fame and prosperity he sought so laboriously and patiently, and at last so honourably won, that when he was in his fortieth year he actually contemplated opening a small-ware shop to aid him in bringing up and educating his family. Indeed had it not been for John Ruskin, to whom he applied for advice as to whether he should reluctantly abandon his beloved art or persevere in its practice, the profession would have lost one of the most powerful of our modern masters in landscape.

He was for many years known only to dealers, who made a glorious harvest by reaping where he sowed amidst the cares, anxieties, and inconveniences of impecuniosity.

A further proof of what genius and industry can accomplish, be the difficulties never so great, is shown by the ultimate success of G. M. Kemp, the architect who designed the Scott monument at Edinburgh. He was originally a journeyman millwright, and while working at his trade contrived, not only to teach himself to draw, but to visit and make studies from all the principal ecclesiastical edifices in Scotland, and afterwards in England. His plan was to find work in the different places he desired to visit; and by this means he acquired such a knowledge of architecture that when a prize was offered in open competition for the Scott monument, his design was the one unanimously selected, notwithstanding the fact that amongst his rivals were many of the leading professional architects.

Success unfortunately does not always attend those who work hard and deserve substantial recognition; for when some one congratulated William Behnes, the sculptor, on his triumphs, and the prosperity that was presumed to have followed in their wake, he replied, “When I die, be that event when it may, there will not be two penny pieces left to close my eyes.” He died in the Middlesex Hospital, in January, 1864, realising his prediction to the very letter, so few were his sitters, so small the sums they paid. [Pg 150]

While Behnes began life as a pianoforte-maker, the great sculptor Chantrey commenced his career as a journeyman carpenter, in connection with which fact there is an odd story told. One day while inspecting a costly vase in the house of the wealthy poet Rogers, he asked with a smile who made the table on which the curio stood. “Curiously enough,” said Rogers, “it was not made by a cabinet-maker, but by a common carpenter.” Chantrey asked, “Did you see it made?” and Rogers, supposing the query to be one of incredulity, replied positively, “Certainly! I was in the room while the man finished it with the chisel, and I gave him instructions in placing it.” Chantrey laughed, and said, “You did. I remember that, and all the circumstances perfectly well.” “You!” exclaimed the poet. “Yes,” said Chantrey quietly. “I was the carpenter.”

When speaking of signs I omitted to mention George Henry Harlow, an artist of considerable eminence, who, like Morland and others, was glad on occasions to paint signs to liquidate liquor scores. Harlow, who was born in 1787, and died in 1819, quarrelled in the plenitude of his conceit with his master, Sir Thomas Lawrence, left his house, and went to live at “The Queen’s Head,” in Epsom, where, living extravagantly, his expenses outran his means, and he was glad to escape the penalty of his folly by repainting the landlord’s sign. In doing so, with a view to the annoyance of Sir Thomas, who had found in Queen Caroline a kind friend and patron, he very cleverly caricatured at once Her Majesty, and his late master’s style of portraiture, even putting underneath it his initials and address—T. L., Greek St., Soho. One of the funny ideas of this sign was that of painting on one side the face of the Queen, and on the other Her Majesty’s royal back.

There was a sign long displayed at Mole, in North Wales, which was painted in the same way by Richard Wilson, “The English Claude.” It belonged to a tavern called “The Three Loggerheads;” only two appeared on the sign, the third was to be he who read the sign, as many did, aloud.

This same Richard Wilson, R.A., was a Welshman, the son of the Rector of Pineges, where he was born in 1714; and after unsuccessfully working for a long time as a painter of portraits, landscapes, and historical subjects, he at last achieved eminence, and forthwith enjoyed, with so many of his talented *confrères*, glory and—poverty. The incident of his first commission from the King will illustrate the kind of remuneration even royalty gave for the works of men who had attained the highest rank in their arduous profession. [Pg 151]

Dalton, the artist, having been appointed keeper of the King’s pictures, suggested that a landscape by Richard Wilson should be included in His Majesty’s collection; and the monarch reposing great faith in his judgment, sent poor Dick a commission for a landscape of a given size to fit a vacant space in the gallery. In due time the work was finished and placed before the King, who exclaimed indignantly,—

“Hey! what! Do *you* call this painting, Dalton? Take it away! I call it daubing, hey! What! It’s a mere daub.”

Poor Dalton, who was one of Wilson’s friends and admirers, bowed, looked sheepish, and was silent.

Presently his, on this occasion, not over gracious Majesty peevishly inquired, “What does he ask for this daub?” And when Dalton replied “One hundred guineas,” the King’s astonishment was immense.

“One hundred guineas! Hey! What, Dalton! Then you may tell Mr. Wilson it’s the dearest picture I ever saw. Too much—too much—tell him I say so.”

A few days after, the artist, being as usual in need of cash, called upon Dalton, and in his bluff manner said,—

“Well, Dicky Dalton, what says his Majesty?”

Dalton replied hesitatingly, and with confusion, “Why—a—with—a—regard to the picture—a—As for my—a—own opinion—why—a—you know, Mr. Wilson, that—a—indeed—–”

Wilson interrupted him with an oath. He saw his friend’s perplexity, and said at once, “His

Majesty don’t approve—but I know your friendly zeal—go on.”

“Why in truth, my dear friend, I venture to think the a—the finishing is—not altogether answerable to His Majesty’s anticipations.”

“Humph! Not every leaf made out, hey?—not every blade of grass? What else? Out with it, man.”

“Why then—a—His—His Majesty thinks—a—that the price is—is—is a great deal of money.”

Wilson took him by the button-hole, looked cautiously round, and in a comical whisper said, —

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“Tell His Majesty I do not wish to distress him, I will take it by instalments—say a guinea a week.”

Neglect and disappointment soured Wilson’s temper, and made him a very surly, irritable man, sometimes quite misanthropical; as well they might, considering his great talents and his extreme poverty. It is said that one of his most famous historical paintings, on which he had expended many months of thought and labour, was sold under the influence of absolute necessity for a pot of beer, and the remains of a Stilton cheese!

Mortimer, an artist who used to sometimes occupy an armchair by Wilson’s fireside, and there hear him in splenetic humour moralise like another melancholy Jaques, making cynical strictures upon that scoundrel man, would say, “Come, come, my old Trojan—come, old boy —I wish I could set you purring like old puss there.”

Angelo tells how a friend of Dr. Johnson’s, hearing of Wilson’s distress, said to Mr. Taylor, the artist, “I wish I knew how to send him ten pounds in some delicate way which could not give him offence. Do you think he has some very trifling sketch I could buy for that sum? I have no taste for pictures, but I would give him a commission if my income were not too slender. I am so distressed that so great a genius should be entirely without means.” Taylor told this story delicately to Wilson, who was much touched by it, and said, “I have no scrap such as your friend desires to have, but if the thing were not bruited about I would be happy to send him one of my easel pictures, which you know I never sell for less than sixteen guineas.” The result was that Wilson received the ten pounds, Dr. Johnson’s friend the sixteen-guinea picture, which it is said he gave away the same evening to one of the waiters at Vauxhall.

At the close of his life, when worn out by indifference and neglect, he was reduced to solicit the office of librarian to the Royal Academy, of which he was acknowledged to be one of the brightest ornaments. He died in May 1782, his death accelerated, if not produced, by want; and, sad to state, just previous to his decease, help came to him, when it was, alas, too late!

As is well known, William Hazlitt, the critic, began life as an artist, and was indeed an artist in taste, judgment, and knowledge, all his life. He speaks of his painter’s experience with enthusiasm in one of his papers, saying, “One of the most delightful parts of my life was one fine summer, when I used to walk out of an evening to catch the last light of the sun, gemming the green slopes of the russet lawns, and gilding tower or tree, while the blue sky, gradually turning to purple and gold, or skirted with dusky grey, flung its broad mantle over all, as we see it in the great master of Italian landscape.” Hazlitt abandoned the brush for the pen when he found that he could not realize his own conceptions, nor satisfy his own critical judgment; but it is evident from the following extract that his early art-life was not free from the imputation of being impecunious. He says, after receiving the money for a portrait he had finished in great haste for the sake of getting the cash, “I went to market myself and dined on sausages and mashed potatoes; and, while they were getting ready, and I could hear them frying in the pan, read a volume of ‘Gil Blas’ containing the account of the fair Aurora. This was in the days of my youth. Do not smile, gentle reader. Neither M. de Verry nor Louis XVIII. over an oyster *pâte*, nor Apicius himself, ever understood the meaning of the word luxury better than I did at that moment.”

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Daniel Maclise—the son of a Scotch cobbler, who had been a soldier and had settled in Ireland—was sent adrift in the world at a very early age, and became a bank clerk. In 1828 he came to London, where he succeeded in getting a studentship in the Royal Academy. The money which enabled him to do this was earned by a portrait-sketch he made stealthily from Sir Walter Scott, while the great Wizard of the North was in the shop of a bookseller, named Bolster. Bolster afterwards saw the sketch, and showed it to Sir Walter, who, pleased with the lad’s talent, attached his autograph to it. The drawing was lithographed, sold in Bolster’s shop, and with his share of the profit Maclise started himself in his art career.

Poor Benjamin Haydon—odd compound of greatness and littleness, bravery and cowardice, genius and folly, now patient, now despairing, now bitterly envious and jealous, and anon sympathetically gleeful over a brother’s triumph—sipped many a cup of bitterness through his constant state of impecuniosity; which chronic condition, he sorrowfully admits in his diary, was the result of borrowing, as shown by this extract. “Here began debt and obligation, out of which I have never been, and never shall be, extricated as long as I live.” Haydon, as I said, was a strange mixture, and though possessed of a nature truly poetical, he was in some things wondrously practical; for the bailiffs put into his house he utilized as models. One sat, he tells us in his diary, “for Cassandra’s head, and put on a Persian

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bracelet. When the broker came for his money, he burst out laughing. There was the fellow, an old soldier, pointing in the attitude of Cassandra, upright, and steady as if on guard. Lazarus's head was painted just after an arrest: Eucles finished from a man in possession: the beautiful face in Xenophon in the afternoon after a morning spent in begging mercy of lawyers: and Cassandra's head was finished in agony not to be described, and her hand completed from a broker's man."

Sculptors, like artists, have frequently found art a very hard school; and amongst others of whom this is true may be mentioned Peter Scheemakers, the master Nollekens studied under. When a youth, so fervent was his desire to study in Rome, that he actually endured the fatigue of travelling from Antwerp into Italy on foot. Unfortunately in Denmark he fell sick, and when again fit for the road, he was compelled to sell his shirts from his knapsack to procure food; but he was none the less joyous when, footsore, haggard, and hungry, he at last entered the Eternal City. This was in 1700. The fine figure of King Edward VI., which used to stand in the courtyard of St. Thomas's Hospital, was the production of Scheemakers.

Another sculptor whose history furnishes something curious in connection with impecuniosity is John Bacon, who, born in 1740, commenced life as an ordinary workman in a Lambeth pottery, where he taught himself to paint on china. Afterwards he went as modeller to Mrs. Coade's artificial stone manufactory, and when he began to display remarkable talent as a sculptor, Johnson, who built Berners Street, was very kind to him. He took premises for him in Newman Street, and told him to start at once in business for himself. Young Bacon was astonished, and frightened. "How could you do so?" he exclaimed. "I am not fit for anything of the kind. How can I ever hope to pay you the money back?" Johnson, however, insisted upon the trial being made, and said he was quite willing to lose the money if Bacon were never able to repay him. The result was that Bacon flourished so [Pg 155] well that when his first great benefactor had become a banker in Bond Street, and feared a serious run upon his house, the sculptor came forward eagerly to his aid with a loan of forty thousand pounds!

This was truly a freak of fortune, and as a companion picture may be mentioned a freak of misfortune, which is attributed to Capitsoldi, a talented sculptor, who came from Italy to this country in the last century. It is asserted that when he was living in a garret in Warwick Street, Golden Square, he had no furniture beyond a table and two chairs; but he painted on the walls a suite of furniture with window curtains, pictures, and statuary in such excellent perspective, and with such an aspect of relief and solidity, that the mean apartment actually appeared to be most handsomely and completely furnished.

To return to our subject—the impecuniosity of artists. The experience of John Zoffany, R.A., may be cited. He came to England from Frankfort in 1735, and about that time there was a celebrated maker of musical clocks, named Rimbault, living in Great St. Andrew's Street, who was asked one day by some one he employed if he could find work for a poor starving artist who occupied a garret in the same house. Rimbault desired the man to send him, and Zoffany was ultimately engaged to paint clock faces. A portrait he painted of Rimbault won him a better engagement of £40 a year as assistant to a portrait painter named Benjamin Wilson, who was employed by Garrick, the actor. Garrick, being struck by the sudden and remarkable improvement which immediately ensued, suspected the truth, and, causing enquiries to be made, discovered Zoffany, employed him direct, introduced him to his wealthy friends, and gave him that new start in life which brought him fame and honour, and made Sir Joshua Reynolds his friend. Zoffany is now chiefly known in connection with his excellent character-portraits of famous old actors and actresses.

The last, but by no means the least celebrated of the artists I shall mention, whose fortunes, or the reverse, have been curiously associated with lack of means, is James Barry—at whose state funeral in St. Paul's Churchyard poor Wilkie cut such a queer figure in Haydon's coat. Barry was as eccentric as he was poor. Unlike Richard Wilson, to display his poverty was a matter of pride rather than pain; open reproach to those who neglected his talent, and [Pg 156] embittered his life, rather than shame to him. His house at 36, Castle Street, Oxford Market, was a standing disgrace to the thoroughfare, every window in it was either cracked or broken, and part of the roof had fallen in. The iron railing before it was rusty for want of paint, broken, and sloping partly inward and partly outward; the doorsteps were cracked and broken, the door thickly coated with mud and dirt. The room in which he painted had been a carpenter's shop, and the dust-covered shavings were still in it, while cobwebs hung like thick dust-coloured drapery from beams and rafter, and were suspended in festoons from every corner, while here and there the daylight shot long rays into its dingy, dust-laden atmosphere, through holes where the tiles had been broken, or had slipped aside. It had a small fireplace just large enough for the glue-pot it was constructed for, and boasted one three-legged old deal table, hardly large enough to eat a meal from. Here he painted, and etched, and printed his own proofs from a little old printing press; and here he received the Right Honourable Edmund Burke on that memorable occasion when he was, at his own particular request, invited to dine with the painter, and take "pot luck."

Barry owed much to the generosity of Burke, who had been one of his earliest friends and patrons. It is said that he once quarrelled with the great statesman for attacking the then anonymous work 'An Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful,' every line of which the young Irish painter, being unable to buy the book, had copied, and he would entirely have lost control of his temper if Burke had not with a laugh transformed his rage into a whirlwind of

delight and passionate admiration, by confessing himself its author.

When Burke arrived, on the evening appointed, at the ruinous, dirty, shabby house in Castle Street, Barry had altogether forgotten the appointment. However he ushered him into his studio-wilderness of dust and cobwebs, gave him a seat, made up the fire, which was smoking, and while it burnt up, went out to purchase some steak, and brought it in wrapped in a cabbage leaf. Placing the meat on a gridiron, he spread a towel over the little round table, and on it placed a couple of plates, a salt-cellar, a little roll of bread, and a dish, which nearly filled it; then, putting the tongs into his visitor's hands, bade him turn the steak while he went out to fetch the beer. He came back quickly, swearing and grumbling at the wind [Pg 157] because it had blown off the frothy head of the stout as he was crossing Titchfield Street, and produced from his pocket a couple of bottles of port. The meal was enjoyed, the evening passed merrily; and Burke afterwards confessed that he had never enjoyed himself more, nor eaten more heartily, even at the most sumptuous feast.

Owing to his impecunious circumstances, Barry had been accustomed to take his meals in cookshops and coffee-houses of the cheaper kind; and Angelo notes as one of his eccentricities his always insisting upon paying for his meal at coffee or cookshop rate wherever he might chance to feed. On one occasion he was invited to dine with Sir William Beechy and some noble guests, and rose at nine o'clock to depart, having as usual placed two shillings upon the table where he had been sitting. The lively knight, who knew "his customer," followed him from the dining-room into the hall, leaving the door of the former open that his friends might hear.

"What are these for?" asked Sir William, presenting the coins.

"How can you put so preposterous a question? For my dinner to be sure, man."

"But two shillings is not fair compensation, Barry. Surely it was worth a crown."

"Baw-baw, man! You know I never pay more."

"But you have not paid for your wine."

"Shu-shu! If you can't afford it, why do you give it? Painters have no business with wine."

"Barry," says Angelo, "who boasted of making his dinner on a biscuit and an apple, had no mercy for those who lessened their means by self-indulgence. He was once highly indignant with a lord, who when dining at 'Old Slaughter's' in St. Martin's Lane—a famous resort of artists and their patrons—had straw laid down before the house to deaden the noise of passing vehicles."

He used to say, as he may have said on the memorable evening with Burke, "Half the common dishes would supersede turtle and venison, if your old, pampered peers and mighty patricians were to peep and peer into their own cook's pot."

CHAPTER VIII. [Pg 158]

IMPECUNIOSITY OF AUTHORS.

That memory of William Makepeace Thackeray upon which I care least to dwell is the low estimate he had of men of genius in his own profession. It may be that this was with him, as it was with Doctor Johnson, a species of mock modesty; but it is none the less unpleasant for one to remember who so enthusiastically admires his great works. Men of letters have never lacked more than enough to slander them and magnify their peccadilloes, to sneer at their pride, and lower their social status, without finding such enemies in their own camp. You may remember how, in his lectures on the English humourists of the last century, Thackeray denied that there was any lack of goodwill and kindness towards men of genius in this country, or that they often failed to meet with generous and helping hands in the time of their necessity. Ignoring all but men of one class (whose follies and vices were after all those of their age), and painting these in his darkest colours and most repulsive forms, he asked,—

> "What claim had one of these of whom I have been speaking but genius? What return of gratitude, fame, affection, did it not bring to all? What punishment befell those who were unfortunate among them but that which follows reckless habits and careless lives? For these faults a wit must suffer like the dullest prodigal that ever ran in debt. He must pay the tailor if he wears the coat; his children must go in rags if he spends his money at the tavern; he can't come to London and be made Lord Chancellor if he stops on the road and gambles away his last shilling at Dublin, and he must pay the social penalty of these follies, too, and expect that the world will shun the man of bad habits; that women will avoid the man of loose life; that prudent folks will close their doors

> as a precaution, and before a demand should be made on their pockets by the needy prodigal."

There is no gainsaying all this, it is so highly respectable, and I would endorse its application as heartily as those did who once so loudly applauded it, if (and there is, you know, *much* virtue in an "if") the discouragement spoken of had really been awarded to the vices and follies and not to the genius; whereas it must be patent to all who have studied the social life of the last century, as Thackeray did, that the direct reverse of this was the case—that such bad habits and such loose lives were absolutely the chief conditions upon which the wits of society were patronised and encouraged. Therefore a degree of hardness and cruelty in the rigid and virtuous superiority of this great writer, who, happily, born in a more refined and purer time, so magnifies the vices of the unfortunate dead, in order to lessen the pity and respect which their greatness won for them. It is this which I do not like to associate with the memory of our great novelist. [Pg 159]

Poor, half-starved Robert Burns, chained to the oar of impecuniosity, toiling like a galley-slave, as he said, for the means of supporting his parents and seizing every spare moment for such intellectual improvement as was within his reach, had written most of his finest works before the patronage of the great introduced him to their bacchanalian revels, and carried him as a wonder, and an extraordinary novelty (a peasant poet), into the very best Edinburgh society for a season; during which, by dining out with the noble and great, he ran a serious risk of dying at home through starvation.

It can hardly be said that eighteenth-century patronage and appreciation did much for him, or for us. It won him perhaps the dangerous and trying occupation of exciseman, at a salary of £70 a year: it matured, if it did not absolutely create, the bad habits which plunged him into pecuniary cares and difficulties, weakened his intellectual stamina, and destroyed his self-respect. He was witty, eloquent, amusing, a genius, and a wonder; but when he ceased to be a novelty, the idol of society was ruthlessly cast aside, to live or die, any how he could, and we find him copying music to procure food for himself and those dear to him. Dissipation and trouble carried him off in the prime of his manhood, and the full maturity of his genius, when without such patronage as Thackeray believed in, seemingly, he might have achieved triumphs loftier than those in the full pride of which every patriot has a share.

An extract from a letter written by Burns to Thomson on the 19th of July, 1796, says: [Pg 160]

> "After all my boasted independence, cursed necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel scoundrel of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process and will infallibly put me in jail. Do for God's sake send me that sum, and by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness; but the horrors of a jail have made me half disheartened; I do not ask all this gratuitously; for upon returning health I promise, and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen."

Robert Bloomfield did not find those generous and helpful friends of genius whom the imagination of Thackeray created to people the eighteenth century. He, like Burns, was a farmer's boy, who afterward became a shoemaker's errand-boy, living in a garret at 7, Fisher's Court, Coleman Street, in which he and four others, one being his brother, worked, and slept on "turn-up" beds. There he fetched the dinners from the cookshop, did the inferior part of the work, and ran errands; taught himself to read by the aid of borrowed newspapers and a little dictionary, bought for him at a second-hand stall, for fourpence, by one of his fellow-workers, and by listening to an eloquent dissenting minister named Fawcett, acquired the proper pronunciation of words. He began verse-writing at sixteen, and at that age also began to instruct his brother and his partners in the Fisher's Court garret (for which they paid five shillings a week), and in another "parlour next the sky" in Blue Hart Court, Bell Alley, where a fellow-lodger made him inexpressibly happy by the loan of Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and Thomson's 'Seasons.' When he fell in love with a young woman named Church, daughter of a boat-builder in the Government Yard at Woolwich, he sold his most precious possession (to purchase which he had practised much self-denial), his fiddle, on which he had taught himself to play. Writing to his brother, he said, "I have sold my fiddle and got a wife."

His brother says, "Like most poor men, he got a wife first, and had to get household stuff afterwards." It took him some years to get out of ready furnished lodgings. At length, by hard working, etc., he acquired a bed of his own, and hired the room up one pair of stairs at 14, Bell Alley, Coleman Street; and there, as he worked unaided by costly writing materials, [Pg 161] amongst the noise and bustle of seven other workmen who, conjointly with himself, had hired a garret in the same house as their work-room, he composed his famous poem 'The Farmer's Boy,' the latter portion of his 'Autumn,' and the whole of his 'Winter.' Not a line of either was committed to paper before each was corrected, altered, improved, and finally completed.

The poet Crabbe was another eighteenth-century genius who failed to find the generous, ever-ready patronage and friendship, whereof Thackeray said, "It would hardly be grateful to alter my old opinion that we (men of letters) do meet with good will and kindness, with generous and helping hands, in the time of our necessity; with cordial and friendly recognition." Having failed in his medical practice at Aldborough, in Suffolk, where, in 1789

he was born, Crabbe borrowed five pounds, and with that sum came to London. Taking lodgings near the Exchange, he began his literary career full of hope and vigour. But the booksellers, Dodsley and Becket, civilly declined his productions; and when he published some poems cheaply at his own expense his publisher failed; and the poor poet's little, carefully husbanded money being exhausted, he applied to Lord North for assistance,—in vain. Then he addressed verses to Lord Chancellor Thurlow, who said in reply, "his avocations did not leave him leisure to read verse." For a time he lived by selling his clothes, and pawning his watch and surgical instruments; then his books were reluctantly sold, and then debt came, and he was threatened with imprisonment. In the midst of these anxious cares, fears, and sufferings, with starvation staring him in the face, he bade the muse a sorrowful adieu, and sought work as a druggist's assistant. He had but eightpence in the world when he wrote to Edmund Burke, and himself left the letter at that eminent statesman's house in Charles Street. Begging letters from starving poets and literary men were familiar enough in those days, and Burke received more than his fair share of them. Crabbe has himself told us how, weary, penniless, and hungry, being afraid to go back to his lodging, he traversed Westminster Bridge all throughout the night following the delivery of that letter until daybreak. The letter itself, a memorable curiosity of impecuniosity, I here append:

"*To Edmund Burke, Esq.* [Pg 162]

"SIR,—I am sensible that I need even your talents to apologize for the freedom I now take, but I have a plea which, however simply urged, will with a mind like yours, sir, procure me pardon. I am one of those outcasts on the world who are without a friend, without employment, without bread.

"Pardon me a short preface. I had a partial father who gave me a better education than his broken fortune would have allowed, and a better than was necessary, as he could give me that only. I was designed for the profession of Physic; but not having the wherewithal to complete the necessary studies, the design but served to convince me of a parent's affection and the error it had occasioned. In April last I came to London with three pounds, and flattered myself this would be sufficient to supply me with the common necessaries of life till my abilities should procure me more; of these I had the highest opinion, and a poetical vanity contributed to my delusion. I knew little of the world and had read books only. I wrote, and fancied perfection in my compositions; when I wanted bread they promised me affluence and soothed me with dreams of reputation, whilst my appearance subjected me to contempt. In time reflection and want have shown me my mistake. I see my trifles in that which I think the true light, and whilst I deem them such have yet the opinion that holds them superior to the common run of poetical publications.

"I had some knowledge of the late Mr. Nassau, the brother of Lord Rochford; in consequence of which I asked his lordship's permission to inscribe my little work to him, knowing it to be free from all political allusions and personal abuse. It was no material point to me to whom it was dedicated, his lordship thought it none to him, and obligingly consented to my request.

"I was told a subscription would be the more profitable method for me, and therefore endeavoured to circulate copies of the enclosed proposals.

"I am afraid, sir, I disgust you with this very drill narration, but believe me punished in the misery that occasions it. You will conclude that during this time I must have been at more expense than I could afford—indeed, the most parsimonious could not have avoided it. The printer deceived me, and my little business has had every delay. The people with whom I live perceive my situation and find me to be indigent and without friends. About ten days since I was compelled to give a note for seven pounds to avoid an arrest for about double that sum which I owe. I wrote to every friend I had, but my friends are poor likewise; the time of payment approached, and I ventured to represent my case to Lord Rochford. I begged to be credited for this sum till I received it of my subscribers, which I believe will be within one month: but to this letter I had no reply, and I have probably offended by my importunity. Having used every honest means in vain, I yesterday confessed my inability, and obtained with much entreaty and as the greatest favour a week's forbearance, when I [Pg 163] am positively told that I must pay the money or prepare for a prison.

"You will guess the purpose of so long an introduction. I appeal to you, sir, as a good, and let me add, a great man. I have no other pretensions to your favour than that I am an unhappy one. It is not easy to support the thought of confinement, and I am coward enough to dread such an end to my suspense.

"Can you, sir, in any degree aid me with propriety?

"Will you ask any demonstration of my veracity?

"I have imposed upon myself, but I have been guilty of no other imposition. Let me, if possible, interest your compassion. I know those of rank and fashion are

teased with frequent petitions, and are compelled to refuse the requests even of those whom they know to be in distress; it is therefore with a distant hope I ventured to solicit such favour, but you will forgive me, sir, if you do not think proper to relieve. It is impossible that sentiments like yours can proceed from any but a humane and generous heart.

"I will call upon you, sir, to-morrow, and if I have not the happiness to obtain credit with you I must submit to my fate. My existence is a pain to myself, and every one near and dear to me are distressed in my distress. My connections, once the source of happiness, embitter the reverse of my fortune, and I have only to hope a speedy end to a life so unpromisingly begun, in which (though it ought not to be boasted of) I can reap some consolation from looking to the end of it.

"I am, sir, with the greatest respect,
"Your obedient and most humble servant,
"GEORGE CRABBE."

Burke replied immediately, appointing an interview, from which dated the change in Crabbe's fortune. Money was given to him, apartments provided for him at Beaconsfield, where he was treated as if he belonged to the generous statesman's own family,—the very publisher who had refused his poems was ready enough to publish them when Edmund Burke suggested his doing so, and even Lord Thurlow gave him a hundred-pound note. Through his patron's influence the surgeon afterwards became a clergyman and chaplain to the Duke of Rutland. In 1807 the copyright of Crabbe's poems was sold for three thousand pounds.

Another article in Thackeray's belief was, that "without necessity," as he said in *Fraser's Magazine* (1846), "men of genius would not work at all, or very little. It does not follow," said he, "that a man would produce a great work even if he had leisure. Squire Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon with his land, and his rents, and his arms over the porch, was not the working Shakespeare; and indolence, or contemplation if you like, is no unusual quality in literary men." [Pg 164]

The reader will find, in my chapter on the "Impecuniosity of Artists," a curious contrast to this opinion in that expressed by Ruskin, in his 'Political Economy of Art.' Our great art critic draws a touching picture of the man of genius, toiling painfully through his early years of obscurity and neglect, yearning vainly for the peace and time requisite for producing great works. And Sir Bulwer Lytton, writing pathetically of poor Leman Blanchard, whom Thackeray knew personally, said,—

"Few men had experienced more to sour them, or had gone through the author's hardening ordeal of narrow circumstances, of daily labour, and of that disappointment in the higher aims of ambition, which must almost inevitably befall those who retain ideal standards of excellence *to be reached but by time and leisure*, and who are yet compelled to draw hourly upon immatured resources for the practical wants of life."

Blanchard's father was a painter and glazier in Southwark, who doubtless practised no little self-denial to give his son a good education, which could not but, as Sir Bulwer Lytton said, with a faint tinge of an old-world prejudice in his words, "unfit young Leman for the calling of his father;" "for it developed the abilities and bestowed the learning which may be said to lift a youth morally out of trade, and to refine him at once into a gentleman." He began life at the desk as a clerk in the office of Mr. Charles Pearson, a proctor in Doctors' Commons, and soon began to contribute some promising characteristic sketches to a publication called *The Drama*. As a clerk, he was not satisfactory nor satisfied; and his father was about to take him from it, and teach him his own trade, to avoid which Blanchard tried through the influence of the actor, Mr. Henry Johnston, to find an opening on the stage. The histrionic friend, however, painted the miseries and uncertainties of his profession in such gloomy and terrible colours, that the poor boy's heart sank within him, and he had turned with despair to obscurity and trade when the manager of the Margate Theatre offered him an engagement, which he accepted. "A week," says Mr. Buckstone, who was then on intimate terms with him, "was sufficient to disgust him with the beggary and drudgery of the country player's life, and as there was no 'Harlequin' steaming it from Margate to London Bridge at that day, he performed his journey back on foot, having on reaching Rochester but his last shilling—the poet's veritable last shilling—in his pocket." [Pg 165]

Buckstone also wrote:

"At that time a circumstance occurred which my poor friend's fate has naturally brought to my recollection. He came to me late one evening in a state of great excitement, informed me that his father had turned him out of doors, that he was utterly hopeless and wretched, and was resolved to destroy himself. I used my best endeavours to console him, to lead his thoughts to the future, and hope in what chance and perseverance might effect for him. Our discourse took a livelier turn, and after making up a bed on a sofa in my own room I retired to rest. I soon slept soundly, but was awakened by hearing a footstep descending the stairs. I looked towards the sofa and discovered he

had left it. I heard the street-door close. I instantly hurried on my clothes and followed him. I called to him, but received no answer. I ran till I saw him in the distance, also running. I again called his name, I implored him to stop, but he would not answer me. Still continuing his pace, I became alarmed, and doubled my speed. I came up to him near Westminster Bridge; he was hurrying to the steps leading to the river. I seized him, he threatened to strike me if I did not release him. I called for the watch, I entreated him to return; he became more pacified, but still seemed anxious to escape from me. By entreaties, by every means of persuasion I could think of, by threats to call for help, I succeeded in taking him back."

After that desperate attempt, Blanchard obtained work as a printer's reader with Messrs. Bayliss, of Fleet Street.

Thackeray summed up his poor friend's condition at this time thus briefly:

"The young fellow, forced to the proctor's desk, quite angry with the drudgery, theatre-stricken, poetry-stricken, writing dramatic sketches in Barry Cornwall's manner, spouting 'Leonidas' before a manager, driven away starving from home, penniless and full of romance, courting his beautiful young wife.... Then there comes that pathetic little outbreak of despair, when the poor young fellow is nearly giving up, his father banishes him, no one will buy his poetry, he has no chance on his darling theatre, no chance of the wife that he is longing for. Why not finish life at once? He has read 'Werter,' and can understand suicide. 'None,' he says in a sonnet,

'None, not the hoariest sage, may tell of all
The strong heart struggles, wills, before it fall.'

If respectability wanted to point a moral, isn't there one here? Eschew poetry—avoid the theatre—stick to your business—do not read German novels—do not marry at twenty: and yet the young poet marries at twenty in the teeth of poverty and experience, labours away not unsuccessfully, puts Pegasus into harness, rises in social rank and public estimation, brings up happily an affectionate family, gets for himself a circle of the warmest friends, and thus carries on for twenty years, when a providential calamity visits him and the poor wife almost together, and removes them both." [Pg 166]

The "providential calamity" came in the beginning of 1844, when Mrs. Blanchard, the most tenderly-loving of wives, and a devoted mother, was attacked by paralysis, which affected the brain, and terminated in madness, speedily followed by death. Partial paralysis seized her husband, and in a burst of delirium, "having his little boy in bed by his side, and having said the Lord's prayer but a short time before, he sprang out of bed in the absence of his nurse (whom he had besought not to leave him), and made away with himself with a razor.... At the very moment of his death his friends were making the kindest and most generous exertions on his behalf." Thackeray, whom I have quoted, adds: "Such a noble, loving, and generous creature is never without such. The world, it is pleasant to think, is always a good and gentle world to the gentle and good, and reflects the benevolence with which they regard it." This is comfortable doctrine, and I would I were sure of its truthfulness. I wonder what poor Gerald Griffin would have said of it in the year 1825, when he was residing at 15, Paddington Street, Regent's Park, London, and, writing to his mother in Ireland, said:

"Until within a short time back I have not had, since I left Ireland, a single moment's peace of mind; constantly running backwards and forwards, and trying a thousand expedients, only to meet disappointments everywhere I turned.... I never will think or talk upon the subject again. It was such a year that I did not think it possible I could have outlived, and the very recollection of it puts me into the horrors.... When I first came to London my own self-conceit, backed by the opinion of one of the most original geniuses of the age, induced me to set about revolutionising the dramatic taste of the time by writing for the stage. Indeed, the design was formed and the first step taken (a couple of pieces written) in Ireland. I cannot with my present experience conceive anything more comical than my own views and measures at that time. A young gentleman totally unknown even to a single family in London coming into town with a few pounds in one pocket, and a brace of tragedies in the other, supposing that the one will set him up before the others are exhausted, is not a very novel, but a very laughable delusion. I would weary you, or I would carry you through a number of curious scenes into which it led me. Only imagine the model young Munsterman spouting his tragedy to a roomful of literary ladies and gentlemen; some of high consideration. The applause, however, of that circle on that night was sweeter, far sweeter, to me then than would be the bravos of a whole theatre at present, being united at the time to the confident anticipation of it." [Pg 167]

The result was his introduction to a manager—all the actors were eager to introduce him to their managers, and to one he went.

"He," continues poor Griffin, "let down the pegs that made my music.... He

was very polite, talked, and chatted about himself, and Shiel, and my excellent friend Banim. He kept my play four months, wrote me some nonsensical apologies about keeping it so long, and cut off to Ireland, leaving orders to have it sent to my lodgings without any opinion. I was quite surprised at this, and the more so that Banim, who is one of the most successful dramatic writers, at the same time saying, what indeed I found every person who had the least theatric knowledge join in, that I acted most unwisely in putting a play into an actor's hands. It was then that I set about writing for those weekly publications, all of which, except the *Literary Gazette*, cheated me most abominably. Then finding this to be the case, I wrote for the great magazines. My articles were generally inserted, but on calling for payment, seeing that I was but a poor inexperienced devil, there was so much shuffling and shabby work, that it disgusted me, and I gave up the idea of making money that way. I now lost heart for everything, got into the cheapest lodging I could make out, and there worked on, rather to divert my mind from the horrible gloom that I felt growing on me, in spite of myself, than with any hope of being remunerated. This, and the recollection of the expense I had put William to, and the fears that every moment became conviction that I should never be able to fulfil his hopes, or my own expectations, all came pressing together upon my mind and made me miserable. A thousand and a thousand times I wished that I could lie down quietly and die at once, and be forgotten for ever. I can describe to you my state of mind at this time. It was not an indolent despondency, for I was working hard as I am now, and it is only receiving money for the labour of those dreadful hours. I used not to see a face that I knew, and after sitting writing all day, when I walked in the streets in the evening, it actually seemed to me as if I was a different species altogether from the people about me. The fact was, from pure anxiety alone, I was more than half dead, and would most certainly have given up the ghost, I believe, were it not that by the merest accident on earth the library friend (Mr. Forster), who had procured me the unfortunate introduction a year before, dropped in one evening to have a talk with me. I had not seen him, nor anybody else that I knew, for some months, and he frightened me by saying I looked like a ghost. In a few days, however, a publisher of his acquaintance had got me some things to do, works to arrange, regulate, and revise, so he asked me if I would devote a few hours in the middle of every day to the purpose for £50 a year. I did so, and among other things which I got to revise was a weekly fashionable journal."

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In this letter to his mother he said nothing of being without the commonest necessaries of life, of being ashamed to go out by daylight because his clothes were so shabby, of passing entire days without food—on one occasion no less than three.

There was in poor old Gerald Griffin no signs of that "indolence, or contemplation if you like," which Thackeray considered "no unusual quality in the literary man." With despair in his heart he still wrote on, simply because the labour in which he had delight physicked the pains of impecuniosity. But it was not under such conditions that even Griffin did his best work.

Mr. R. P. Gillies, in his 'Memoirs of a Literary Veteran,' tells how, when he was contemplating work of a higher and more ambitious character than he had then attempted, "in consequence of domestic anxieties little or nothing was accomplished." He merely built some grand literary castles in the air (for which he was ridiculed in the 'Noctes Ambrosianæ,' under the name of "Kempferhausen"); but he says: "There were some awkward conditions attached to the basis of my aerial structures; for example, I must have unbroken tranquillity like that of an anchoret. There must be no shadow on the mind of worldly cares and perturbation, otherwise the spells would be broken." Bread was his incentive to work, but it was the hack work of which Scott so bitterly complained, not the great work he yearned to accomplish, and could not for want of "peace and time."

The above allusion is to Sir Walter in the zenith of his fame when, through "long-winded" publishers' money being in immediate demand, he contemplated abandoning original fiction for the more rapid work of compilation. He wanted that to secure not only bread, but the peace and time which in common with Ruskin he thought essential to the production of great work; and he wrote in his diary, under the date December 18th, 1825: "The general knowledge that an author must write for bread, at least for improving his pittance, degrades him and his productions in the public eye. He falls into the second rank of estimation,

> "'When the harness sore galls, and the spurs his sides goad,
> And the high-mettled racer's a hack on the road.'

It is a bitter thought, but, if tears start, let them flow."

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Thackeray, despite his self-satisfying opinion about the world's being always "so good and gentle" to the "gentle and good," here held Sir Walter's opinion, for under the signature of Michael Angelo Titmarsh, Esq., he wrote:

> "Our calling is only sneered at because it is not well paid. The world has no other criterion for respectability. In Heaven's name, what made the people

> talk of setting up a statue to Sir William Follet? What had he done? He had made thirty thousand pounds!... Directly the men of letters get rich they will come in for their share of honour too; and a future writer in this miscellany (Fraser's) may be getting his guineas where we get one, and dining at Buckingham Palace while you and your humble servant, dear Padre Francisco, are glad to smoke our pipes over the sanded floor of the little D——."

Sir Walter Scott's opinion of writing under peaceful and under troublous circumstances was also shown in the following entry, under the same date as the above. It runs as follows:

> "Poor T. S. called again yesterday. Through his incoherent miserable tale I could see that he had exhausted each access to credit, and yet fondly imagines that, bereft of all his accustomed indulgences, he can work with a literary zeal unknown to his happier days. I hope he may labour enough to gain the mere support of his family."

Poverty is not, however, always fatal to the highest efforts of genius, even if it be not essential as an incentive to work; and there is often found in "the labour we delight in" that which "physics pain" (as Shakespeare said), even the pains of impecuniosity. Goldoni, speaking of his dramatic writings and consequent poverty, says, "Though in any other situation I might have been in easier circumstances, I should never have been so happy;" and who can doubt the happiness of the illustrious Linnæus when he was wandering a-foot with his stylus, magnifying-glass and baskets of plants, sharing the peasants' rustic meals and homely shelter, when he gave his own name to the little Lapland flower now called the Linnæus Borealis, because it reminded him of his own position, being "a little northern plant, flowering early, depressed, abject, and long overlooked"?

Rousseau, writing of his works and life, says:

> "It was in a small garret in the new street of St. Etienne du Mont, where I resided four years in the midst of physical suffering and domestic trouble, that I enjoyed the most exquisite pleasure of my life, that of writing and publishing my 'Studies of Nature.'"

The *Quarterly Review* (vol. viii.), comparing the writer who goes to his work in a spirit of love for it, and pride in it, with him who labours at it merely for the money it produces, says: "The one is like a thirsty hart that comes joyously to refresh itself at the water-brooks, and the other to the same beast panting and jaded with the dogs of hunger and necessity behind." [Pg 170]

When Olivet presented his elaborate edition of Cicero to the public, he said the glory and pleasure he had received in producing it were all he required by way of remuneration; money he refused. Pieresc, one of the most liberal and generous of men, although his fortune was a small one, loved learning only for its own sweet sake, and was never so happy as he was when shut up in his study amongst his books and MSS. "A literary man's true wealth," said he, "consists in works of art, the treasures of a library, and the affections of his fellow-students." Lord Wodehouse, when re-writing his 'Lectures on History,' said: "The task rewarded him with that peculiar delight which has often been observed in the latter years of literary men, the delight of returning again to the studies of their youth and of feeling under the snows of age the cheerful memories of their spring." Petrarch, writing of himself to a friend, said, "I read, I write, I think; such is my life and my pleasures as they were in my youth."

Beranger, when he was living on the fifth story in the Boulevard St. Martin, "without money and with no certain prospect for the future," as he himself said, had installed himself in his garret "with inexpressible satisfaction" because, as he wrote, "To live alone and to compose verses at my leisure appeared to me the very summit of felicity." Speaking in the spirit of his "sky parlour," he said: "What a beautiful prospect I enjoyed from its window! What delight I had to sit there in the evening hovering as it were over the immense city, from which a loud, hoarse murmur incessantly ascended, especially when there blended with it the noise and tumult of some great storm." But there were two sides to this life, and time revealed both. With peace and time, bread and cheese and dreams of glory, the poet was content and happy, even when thin and pale; he grew every day so weak that his father used to say frequently, "I shall soon bury you." But he was not dismayed, but starved and wrote on placidly enough until the fear of the conscription fell upon him. But even then, as he tells us, Providence befriended him and out of evil brought good. He says: "I was bald at twenty-three in consequence, as I suppose, of continuous headaches. When the gendarmes came in search for conscripts I removed my hat. They looked at my bald head and were satisfied. They went away without me." [Pg 171]

Again he writes in his fragmentary autobiography:

> "Fortune at last suffered herself to be touched by my sorrows. Three years had I been vainly seeking some humble form of employment, when, urged by a terrible necessity in the beginning of 1804, I sent a letter and verses to M. Lucien Bonaparte. My gold watch had been long where I left it pledged at the Mont de Piété. My wardrobe had dwindled to three old patched and often mended shirts, a threadbare overcoat also carefully adorned with patches,

> with one pair of trousers with a newly discovered hole in the knee, and a pair of boots which filled me with despair whenever I cleaned them, they grew so rapidly worse. I had posted to M. Bonaparte four or five hundred verses, and had told no one that I had done so, so many applications had been fruitless."

One day, while sitting in his garret, needle in hand, eyeing lugubriously the rent in his trousers, and thinking over some bitter misanthropical verses which he was then writing, a letter was brought to him. It seemed a letter of consequence—the handwriting was strange. Trembling with excitement, he broke the seal. Joy! joy! joy! The Senator Bonaparte desired to see him!

"It was not," he wrote, "my fortune that I first thought of, but Glory! My eyes were full of tears, and I thanked God, whom in my moments of prosperity I never forgot."

And yet of such men as these Thackeray wrote: "Bread is the main incentive. Do not let us try to blink this fact or imagine that the men of the press are working for their honour and glory or go onward impelled by the inevitable afflatus of genius."

The elder Disraeli, who said, "Great authors sustain their own genius by a sense of their own glory," when Dr. Johnson expressed views on this subject according to some extent with Thackeray's, called them "commercial, agricultural, and manufacturing views of human nature," and complained that they lowered genius to the level of a machine, only to be set in action by a force exterior to itself.

But doctors disagree, and opinions on every subject always differ. As mentioned by me [Pg 172] elsewhere, one of the first poets who tried to live by his pen was Robert Greene, whose melancholy story is one of the most degrading and painful passages in literary biography. He lived in the days of good Queen Bess, and has left his own records of forlorn and miserable experience. Isaac Disraeli calls him "the great patriarch and primeval dealer in English literature, the most facetious, profligate, and indefatigable of the Scribleri family." Quaint Anthony Wood, sneering at him and his entire fraternity, as he often did, said, "He wrote to maintain his wife and that high, loose course of living which poets generally follow;" one accusation being about as true as the other, for so far from maintaining his wife, he shamefully deserted both her and her child, leaving her foodless; and the Elizabethan poets are said on the whole to have been thrifty, god-fearing men, leading sober and steady lives. Charles Knight wrote of him as one who was made desperate and reckless by wrongs and neglect, but the pamphlet he wrote called 'The Repentance of Robert Greene, Master of Arts,' taken with his other confession, shows him to have been, as Mr. A. H. Wall said (in his 'Poets and Players of Shakespeare's Time'), "an entirely bad and worthless fellow, who disgusted his fellow-poets of the Bankside, and plunged into such disgraceful excesses that he became shunned and contemned by them, finding a welcome nowhere but in the lowest haunts of vice and profligacy." This was the man who fell foul of his fellow-players and the player-poets, calling them "apes," "rude grooms," "buckram gentlemen," and "painted monsters," who attacked young Shakespeare when he was dressing up, improving, and re-writing old plays, "as an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers," and aroused our great bard's many friends to anger and indignation by saying he had "a tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide, and was a bad actor, conceited enough to suppose himself as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best, one who was vain enough to imagine himself an absolute Johannes Factotum, the only Shakespeare in the country:" accusations which even Henry Cheetle, who was concerned in their publication, afterwards denounced as slanderous and spiteful, saying, "I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself hath seen his (Shakespeare's) demeanour no less civil than he is excellent in the quality he professes, besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues [Pg 173] his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that approves his art."

Greene spent his time now in debauchery and drunkenness, now homeless, penniless, and starving, one extreme following the other with fearful frequency and rapidity. A contemporary poet, Gabriel Harvey, wrote of him as follows:

> "Who in London hath not heard of his (Greene's) dissolute and licentious living, his fond disguisinge of a Master of Arts with ruffianly hair, unseemly apparel, and more unseemly company, of his vaine glorious and Thrasonicall brassinge; his piperly extemporising and Tarletonizing; his apeish counterfeiting of every ridiculous and absurd toy ... hys villainous cogging and foisting, his monstrous swearinge and horrible forswearing, his impious profaning of sacred textes; his other scandalous and blasphemous ravinge: his riotous and outrageous surfeitinge: his continual shifting of lodgings; his plausable musteringe and banquettynge of roysterly acquaintance at his first comminge; his beggarly departing in every hostesses debt; his infamous resorting to the Banckside, Shoreditch, Southwarke, and other filthy haunts; his obscure lurkinge in basest corners; his pawning of his sword, cloake, and what not, when money came short?" etc.

a catalogue of monstrous crimes, vices, and follies (which fills page after page) fully borne out by Greene's own confessions.

He wrote of himself,

"In prime of youth a rose, in age a weed,
That for a minute's joy payes endless meed."

His last letter to the poor Lincolnshire lady whom he married, ill-used, and cruelly abandoned, was dated from a squalid lodging in Dowgate, where he died of want and disease. It ran as follows:

> "Doll, I charge thee by the love of our youth and by my soules rest that thou wilt see this man (the shoemaker) paide; for if hee and his wife had not succoured me I had died in the streetes.
>
> "Robert Greene."

Doll was the amiable and worthy woman to whom he had previously written:

> "The remembrance of many wrongs offered thee and thy unreproved virtues add greater sorrow to my miserable state than I can utter or thou conceive, neither is it lessened by consideration of thy absence (though shame would hardly let me behold thy face) but exceedingly aggravated."

Akin in character to Greene was John Skelton, a popular poet in the reign of the seventh Henry, and King Henry the Eighth's poet laureate, who wrote of himself: [Pg 174]

"A King to me mine habit gave
At Oxford the University,
Advanced I was to that degree:
By whole consent of their Senate,
I was made Poet Laureate."

The title being then a university degree, and the habit a robe of white and green, embroidered in silk and gold. He took holy orders in 1498, and, as old Anthony Wood said, "having been guilty of many crimes, as most poets are," Bishop Wykke suspended him from his benefice. In 1501 he was in prison for marrying and keeping a mistress, "a crime amongst the clergy of the Romish persuasion both in those days and these," says Cibber, "more subjected to punishment than adultery." He was a fierce and bitter assailant of the clergy, the Dominicans, and Cardinal Wolsey. Many of his productions were never printed, but were chanted at markets and fairs, in village ale-houses, and in the streets by itinerant ballad-singers, who learned them by heart and sent them abroad like floating seeds borne hither and thither by the vagrant winds. The author of the 'Lives of the Laureates' said of this poet: "The brief glance we have of him, the scholar and the buffoon, a priest with his married concubine and bastardized children, mocking, half in anger half in jest, or it might be in the wantonness of sorrow, at the falsehoods by which he was surrounded, may justly awaken our sympathy nor fail to suggest a moral."

The misfortunes of poor Spenser I have referred to in dealing with the sad side of the subject, but another of the laureates who tasted the full bitterness of poverty was Ben Jonson, who began life as a bricklayer, became a soldier, and a brave one too, abandoned arms to tread the stage, and strolled about the country, trudging beside the waggon containing the players' scenes, and "properties," many a weary mile. From acting plays he took to writing plays, the two arts being then more intimately and nobly associated than they ever have been since, for the stage has fallen out of the hands of poets and players into those of showmen and buffoons. He was married and had a son, to whom some of the players stood sponsors. Shakespeare, it is traditionally said, was one of them, and what his [Pg 175] necessities were may be readily guessed from the entry in Henslowe's diary preserved at Dulwich College, in which small sums are entered as advanced to Ben Jonson for work he was then doing. A story is related of how he came, after many other vain efforts, to the Globe Theatre on the Bankside with his play of *Every Man in His Humour*, which after the manager had superficially glanced at he coldly returned as unsuitable. Shakespeare, it is said, stood by, and noting, we presume, the melancholy and despairing way in which his future dear friend and rival turned to leave the theatre, spoke to him, begging leave to read his play, with which he was so well pleased that he brought about its acceptance. Poverty haunted Ben with more or less closeness all through his career (often it must be confessed through the extravagance of his hospitality to brother poets) and was, it is said, sadly too intimate with him when he died. When sick in 1629, Charles I., who had been generous to him, being supplicated in his favour, sent him ten guineas, of which mean gift Smollett says, Jonson spoke as follows to the messenger of whom he received it:

"His Majesty has sent me ten guineas because I am poor and live in an alley. Go and tell him his soul lives in an alley."

Jonson died on the 6th August, 1637, having long outlived his wife and all his children.

It is curious still to note how many of our literary lions began to make their way in the world, as Jonson did, on the stage. It was so with William Leman Rede, who, starting as an actor at Margate (the Margate boards formed indeed the porch through which a very large number of histrionic aspirants entered the theatrical profession), became an itinerant actor, at one time playing Hamlet in a barn and at another Rover on a billiard-table; sometimes foodless and hungry, travelling on foot and sometimes luxuriating in a waggon, but always light-hearted and gay. Once when he was laughing merrily at the plight he was in on a "treasury

day," when, in the phraseology of the profession, "the ghost didn't walk," that is to say when there was no money in hand to pay the actors' salaries, some one asked how he continued to be jolly under such miserably depressing circumstances. He replied, "I drink spring water and dance." Rede was always a sober, abstemious man. Coming to London in 1825, he published his first novel, 'The Wedded Wanderer,' which was followed by a second, 'The [Pg 176] White Tower,' each in three volumes. This was followed by his 'Crimes and Criminals in Yorkshire,' and his connection with a weekly publication belonging to his brother Thomas, called *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography*—Thomas having married the widow of Oxberry the comedian, by whom the serial had been started.

As actor, magazine writer, dramatist, journalist and novelist Rede acquired fame but not wealth. One evening he was arrested for debt while acting on the stage, by a sheriff's officer, who sprang from the pit over the orchestra and footlights to secure his prisoner. Rede originated the Dramatic Authors' Society.

Sheridan, to whom I have previously alluded, was another famous literary man familiar with the boards and—need I say?—with impecuniosity. He was, according to Haydon, "in debt all round to milkman, grocer, baker, and butcher. Sometimes his wife would be kept waiting for an hour or more while the servants were beating up the neighbourhood for coffee, butter, eggs and rolls. While Sheridan was Paymaster of the Navy, a butcher one day brought a leg of mutton; the cook took it and clapped it in the pot to boil and went upstairs for the money, but the cook not returning, the butcher removed the pot-lid, took out the mutton, and walked away with it." On another occasion Michael Kelly, the musical celebrity, was complaining to him of a wine merchant at Hochheim who instead of six dozen of wine had sent him sixteen. Sheridan said he would take some off his hands if he were not quite able to pay for it, but, said he, "you can get rid of it easily, put up a sign over your door and write on it, 'Michael Kelly, Composer of Wines and Importer of Music;'" a sly rub which the composer received with a laugh, wittily retorting that there was one wine so poisonous and intoxicating that he would neither compose nor import, and that was "Old Sherry" (Sheridan's nickname).

One night when Sheridan was at home in a cottage he had about a mile from Hounslow Heath, his son Tom asked him for some cash. "Money, I have none," was the reply.

"But let the consequences be what they may, money I must have," said Tom fiercely.

"In that case, my dear Tom," said the father, "you will find a case of loaded pistols upstairs and a horse ready saddled in the stable, the night is dark and you are within half a mile of [Pg 177] Hounslow Heath"—a place of terrible repute for highway robbers.

"I understand," said Tom, "but I tried that before I came to you. Unluckily the man I stopped was Peake, your treasurer, and he told me that you had been beforehand with him and robbed him of every sixpence he had in the world."

Kelly saw many instances of Sheridan raising money, but one instance in particular astonished him. Sheridan was £3000 in arrear with the Italian Opera performance; there were continual postponements, and at last the singers resolved to strike. Kelly, as manager, received a note that on the evening of a certain day they would not sing unless paid, and hurried off to Morlands, the bankers in Pall Mall, for advances. The bankers were inexorable; like the singers, they were worn out. The manager then flew off to Sheridan at his residence in Hertford Street, Mayfair, where he was kept waiting two hours. Sheridan was told that if he could not raise £3000 the theatre must be closed. "£3000, Kelly," he said; "there is no such sum in nature. Are you an admirer of Shakespeare?"

"To be sure I am," said Kelly, "but what has Shakespeare to do with £3000 or the Italian singers?"

"There is one passage in Shakespeare," said Sherry, "which I have always admired particularly, and it is where Falstaff says, 'Master Robert Shallow, I owe you £1000.' 'Yes, Sir John,' says Shallow, 'which I beg you will let me take home with me.' 'That may not so easily be, Master Robert Shallow,' replies Falstaff. And so say I unto thee, Master Michael Kelly, to get £3000 may not so easy be."

Kelly answered that there was no alternative then but to close the theatre. Sheridan made Kelly ring the bell and have a Hackney coach called, then sat down quite at his ease and read the newspaper. Kelly was in an agony. The coach arrived, Sheridan requested Kelly to get into it, and went with him. The coach was driven to Morlands' banking-house—Kelly remained in the coach bewildered. In a quarter of an hour Sherry came out of the bank with the required sum in bank notes. Kelly never knew how it was obtained. Sherry told Kelly to take the money to the theatre, but to save enough out of it for a barrel of oysters, which he, Sheridan, would partake of that night at Kelly's lodgings in Suffolk Street.

On another occasion Kelly and Sheridan were one day in conversation close to the gate of [Pg 178] the path which was then open to the public, leading across the churchyard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, from King Street to Henrietta Street. Holloway, a creditor of Sherry's, went by on horseback. He spoke to Sherry in loud and angry tones, complaining that he could never get admittance at Sheridan's house, and vowed vengeance on François, Sherry's valet, if he did not let him in next time he called in Hertford Street. Holloway was in a passion; Sherry, who knew he was vain of his judgment of horseflesh, took no notice of the angry

boast of Holloway, and burst into exclamations of rapture on Holloway's steed. Holloway was softened, and said his horse was one of the prettiest of creatures. Would not Mrs. Sheridan like to have one like it?

"She would if he could canter well," said Sheridan.

"Beautifully," said Holloway.

"Perhaps I should not mind stretching a point for such a one. Will you have the kindness to let me see his paces?"

"To be sure," said the lawyer.

The action was suited to the word, and Sherry cut off through the churchyard, where no horse could follow. In spite of his many faults, his utter unscrupulousness in money-matters being not the least, it is particularly pleasant to refer to one of the incidents at the close of his career which reveals a delightful little bit of sentiment and good feeling, of which many of his detractors would have us think he was incapable. When his goods were taken in execution in Hertford Street, Mayfair, Paston, the sheriff's officer, said that if there was any particular article upon which he set affectionate value, he might secrete or carry it off from the premises.

"Thank you, my generous fellow," said Sheridan. "No, let all go—affection and sentiment in my situation are quite out of the question. But," said he, recollecting himself, "there is one thing which I wish to have."

"What is it?" said Paston, expecting him to name some cabinet or piece of plate.

"Don't be alarmed," said Sheridan, "it is only this old book, worth all others in the world, and to me of special value, because it belonged to my father, and was the favourite of my first wife."

Paston looked into it, and it was a dogs'-eared edition of Shakespeare. [Pg 179]

Another great man in the literary and histrionic professions, the novelist, Fielding, although of an aristocratic stock, and liberally educated, began life almost without pecuniary resources. He came before the public first in 1725, and in succession was a showman at Bartholomew and other fairs, the owner of a booth for theatrical performances, at one time set up in George Yard, from which he found his way to the regular boards. In spite of being the son of a general, and the great grandson of an earl, his impecuniosity was often great, although he met his difficulties with the light-hearted gaiety of a Sheridan, and the careless imprudence of a Goldsmith.

Once, when in Ireland, he got into disgrace through giving a dancing-party at his rooms; sold his books the next day, ran away from college, loafed about Dublin till only a shilling was left, and then went to Cork. There he lived three days on the shilling, and said afterwards the most delicious meal he ever tasted was a handful of grey peas, given him by a girl at a wake, after twenty-four hours' fasting.

Poor Oliver Goldsmith must, of course, have his place in this chapter, for from the time when he wrote street ballads to save himself from starving, and was delighted to hear them sung, to when he started on "the grand tour," alone and friendless, with one spare shirt, a flute, and a guinea in his pocket, to the last scene of hopeless insolvency in which he died, his life was one long, hard struggle against pecuniary difficulties. When his relatives raised £50 to send him to London to study, he spent and gambled all away, and got no farther than Dublin. The result of his wildly rash act of going abroad so ill provided he has himself described. In a foreign land, when without money, he turned to his flute as a last resource, and whenever he approached a peasant's cottage towards nightfall, he played one of his merriest tunes, and so generally contrived to win a shelter for the night, and some food for his next day's journey. In this way he passed through Flanders, parts of France, Germany and Switzerland, reaching Padua at last; remaining there six months to secure his medical degree. Returning in 1756, and failing to find employment, he was at last taken in by a chemist by way of charity, and to preserve him from starvation. His friend, Dr. Sleigh, next befriended him, [Pg 180] and then he became usher to Dr. Milner's school in Peckham. Soon after he found literary employment, and took a lodging at No. 12, Green Arbour Court, in the Old Bailey—a miserable, dirty room, with but one chair. He did not emerge from this squalid, dismal abode until 1760, when improved circumstances enabled him to lodge in Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, where he received his friends with a freedom and hospitality which soon reduced his means to the level of impecuniosity. Here he first met Dr. Johnson, who became his dearest friend and best adviser.

Johnson has described how he received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith, to the effect that he was in great distress, and as it was not in his power to go to the Doctor, begging that the Doctor would come to him as soon as possible.

> "I sent him a guinea," says Johnson, "and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began

to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it and saw its merits, and told the landlady I should soon return, and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for £60. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady for having used him so ill."

The novel thus sold was the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' and its purchaser, Francis Newberry, the bookseller, who kept it unprinted for two years, when its author's 'Traveller,' having appeared and proved successful, the novel was published (in March 1766) and in a month reached a second edition.

In Forster's 'Life of Goldsmith,' the following account of his earliest state of penury has no little romantic interest:—

"It was," says the author of that famous work, "a year and a half after he had entered college, at the commencement of 1747, his father suddenly died. The scanty sums required for his support had often been intercepted; but this stopped them altogether. It may have been the least and most trifling loss connected with that sorrow; but 'squalid poverty,' relieved by occasional gifts, according to his small means, from Uncle Contarine, by petty loans from Bryanton or Beatty, or by desperate pawning of his books of study, was [Pg 181] Goldsmith's lot henceforward. Yet even in the depths of that despair arose the consciousness of faculties reserved for better fortune than continual contempt and failure. He would write street ballads to save himself from actual starving; sell them at the Reindeer repository in Mountrath Court for five shillings apiece, and steal out of the college at night to hear them sung.

"Happy night, to him worth all the dreary days! Hidden by some dusky wall, or creeping within darkling shadows of the ill-lighted streets, this poor neglected sizar watched, waited, lingered, listened there, for the only effort of his life which had not wholly failed. Few and dull perhaps the beggar's audience at first, but more thronging, eager, and delighted as he shouted forth his newly-gotten ware; cracked enough, I doubt not, were those ballad singing tunes; nay, harsh, extremely discordant, and passing from loud to low without meaning or melody; but not the less did the sweetest music which this earth affords fall with them on the ear of Goldsmith. Gentle faces, pleased old men, stopping by the way; young lads, venturing a purchase with their last remaining farthing; why here was a world in little with its fame at the sizar's feet! 'The greater world will be listening one day,' perhaps he muttered as he turned with a lighter heart to his dull home."

Johnson's sympathy with Goldsmith was, no doubt, warmed and quickened by the remembrance of his own early struggles with the foul fiend impecuniosity. He remembered well enough his first London lodging in Exeter Street, Strand, when, as he said, "I dined very well for eightpence, with very good company, at the Pine Apple in New Street fast by. Several of them had travelled, they expected to meet every day; but they did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing."

Johnson used to relate of an Irish painter, that he, the painter, practically realised a theory that £30 a year was enough to enable a man to live there without being contemptible. He allowed £10 for clothes and linen. He said, "A man might live in a garret at eighteen pence a week. Few people would inquire where he lodged; and if they did it was easy to say, 'Sir, I am to be found at such a place.' By spending threepence in a coffee-house, he might be for some hours in very good company; he might dine for sixpence, breakfast on bread and milk for a penny, and do without supper. On clean shirt day he could go abroad and pay visits."

I have already quoted the Doctor's views on the subject of impecuniosity, and this reminds [Pg 182] me of a very suggestive incident of his life, which perhaps will prove better than anything else the non-desirability of want of means. It is unquestionable that in his marvellous dictionary, there are parts that are much superior to others, which has been accounted for by the fact that he was paid for the work as it progressed—the publisher paying him as his "copy" was delivered. Consequently, when his purse was full, he worked away *con amore*, and produced the best result; but on the purse growing empty, as those mercenary creditors will do, the Doctor worked hurriedly, aiming at making as much "copy" as possible, so as to replenish his failing treasury.

Thomas Cooper, author of the 'Purgatory of Suicides,' who also found out by severe experience the cheapest way of living in London, tells in his autobiography how, after having been at Lincoln as reporter, journalist, and miscellaneous literary man, he with his wife left that city for London. He says:

"On the 1st of June, 1839, we got on the stage-coach with our boxes of books at Stamford, and away I went to make my first venture in London. We lodged in Elliott's Row, Southwark; I earned five pounds by contributing reviews and prose sketches to some papers having but an ephemeral existence. I had other ventures and adventures in a small way; but it would weary any mortal man to

recite; and the recital would only be one which has been often told already, by poor literary adventurers. The very little I could bring to London was soon gone, and then I had to sell my books. I happily turned into Chancery Lane and asked Mr. Lumley to buy my beautifully-bound 'Tasso' and 'Don Belleanis of Greece,' a small quarto black-letter romance, which I had bought of an auctioneer in Gainsboro', who knew nothing of its value. Mr. Lumley gave me liberal prices, wished I could bring him more such books, and conversed with me very kindly. We were often at 'low-water mark' now in our fortunes; but my dear wife and I never suffered ourselves to sink into low spirits. Our experience, we cheerily said, was a part of London adventure, and who did not know that adventurers in London often underwent great trials before success was reached? We strolled out together in the evenings all over London, making ourselves acquainted with its highways and byways, and always finding something to interest us in its streets and shop-windows. Every book I brought from Lincolnshire, and I had had about 500 volumes great and small, had been sold by degrees, and at last I was obliged to enter a pawnshop. Spare articles of clothing, and my father's old silver watch, 'went up the spout,' as the experience goes of those who most sorrowfully know what it means. Travelling-cloak, large box, hat-box, and every box or movable that could be spared in any possible way, had 'gone to our uncle's,' and we saw ourselves on the very verge of being reduced to threadbare suits when [Pg 183] deliverance came. I had been in London from the evening of 11th June, 1839, until near the end of March, 1840, when I answered an advertisement respecting the editorship of a country paper printed in London. I went to the printing office in Great Windmill Street, Haymarket, and was engaged at a salary of £3 per week; the paper was the *Kentish Mercury*."

Very similar was the experience of Robert Southey, who, disowned by friends, and without money, came to London seeking literary employment, in which alone he found content and happiness.

"For it," say his biographers, Messrs. Austin and Ralph, "he sacrificed proffered rank and power; and joyfully devoted to its service a toiling life of unexampled industry. Yet this man so wedded to his absorbing vocation, in the social capacity of husband, father, relative, and friend, stands above reproach.

"His life is one emphatic denial of the daring falsehood, that genius and virtue are incompatible.

"England knew not a happier circle than that which for years assembled by the humble hearthstone at Greta Hall. It is refreshing to turn aside from the world and contemplate that peaceful home, nestling amid the Cumberland Mountains."

Such an opinion again hardly fits in with that of Thackeray already quoted.

"On Friday, October 18th, 1794, his aunt, Miss Tyler, turned him out of doors on a stormy night, and without a penny in his pocket. He made his way on foot, through wind and driving rain, along the dark country roads to Bath. Without any visible resource he was thrown upon the world, and as he paced the streets, weary, footsore, and sick at heart, he dreamed of the lofty things in literature he would strive to accomplish, now that he was his own master, with a will unfettered by a care for wishes other than his own, and of the pride that would glow within the swelling bosom of the fair Edith of his love, for whose dear sake he had submitted to be thus cast adrift. An uncle from Portugal wished to take him back with him to that country. 'My Edith persuades me to go,' said he, 'and yet weeps at my going.' And we are told how sadly after their secret marriage in Redcliffe Church, his maiden wife watched his departure with the wedding-ring she was afraid to wear suspended round her neck."

In Southey's life by his son, we read that he had recourse under the pressure of impecuniosity to delivering lectures at Bristol, and the following prospectus is quoted:—

"Robert Southey, of Balliol College, Oxford, proposes to read a course of Historical Lectures in the following order:—1st. Introductory on the Origin and [Pg 184] Progress of Society; 2nd. Legislation of Solon and Lycurgus; 3rd. State of Greece from the Persian War to the Dissolution of the Achaian League; 4th. Rise, Progress, and Decay of the Roman Empire; 5th. Progress of Christianity; 6th. Manners and Irruptions of the Northern Nations; Growth of the European States; Feudal System, and other equally abstruse subjects."

The lectures were given in 1795, tickets for the course, 10*s.* 6*d.*, sold at Cottle's, bookseller, High Street.

Southey stated about this time that if he and Coleridge could get £150 a year between them, they would marry and retire into the country.

Another of these friendless dreamers who came to London, seeking literary employment and reputation, was George Borrow, the famous author of 'Romany Rye,' 'The Bible in Spain,'

'Wild Wales,' etc., the son of a military officer. He was born in Norfolk, early in the present century, and began life at the desk of a solicitor at Norwich. Becoming disgusted with that life, he started off with his stick and bundle to walk to London, where with his knowledge of languages he hoped to have no difficulty in earning a living. Reaching the great metropolis, he found out Sir Richard Phillips, editor and proprietor of the *Monthly Magazine*, who suggested that the young literary adventurer should devote himself to the writing of Newgate lives and trials. Having spent his loose cash in buying books on the subject, he went carefully to work. Sir Richard Phillips wanted less care and more expedition.

Borrow sent in his copy too slowly to please his exacting and overbearing employer, whose parsimony was only equalled by his greediness. He was paid in bills subject to discount, and led altogether a very wretched life. One morning he awoke with the disagreeable conviction that his plight had grown desperate, only half-a-crown remaining in his purse. Wandering out disconsolately, he saw a bill in the shop window of a bookseller, giving notice that a "novel or tale was much wanted," went to his garret, and after a meal of bread and water, began to write a fictitious biography of 'Joseph Tell.' At this he continued to work unceasingly, day after day, eating nothing but bread, drinking only water, until on the fifth day the story was finished. And none too soon, for after he had laid aside the pen, want of rest and nourishment had so exhausted him that he swooned away. He had threepence left, and to reinvigorate him after he had left his MS., he spent the whole of that sum at one fell [Pg 185] swoop on bread and milk, and went to bed penniless. When he called, the bookseller was willing to buy the novel, and after some haggling over the price, gave him twenty pounds for it, a sum which was as veritable a godsend to him as the price of the 'Vicar of Wakefield' was to Oliver Goldsmith.

Borrow's incessant writing reminds me of the incessant reading of the poet, Gerald Massey, who was born in 1828, near Tring, in Herts, in a little stone hovel, the rent of which was one shilling per week. His father was a poor canal boatman, who supported himself and family on ten shillings per week, and could not of course afford to give Gerald any opportunities of educating himself. As soon as he had attained his eighth year, he was set to work at a silk-mill, beginning work at five in the morning, and quitting it at half-past six in the evening, for a weekly wage of 1*s.* 9*d.* He was fifteen years of age when he came to London and obtained employment as an errand-boy, and having taught himself to read, eagerly devoured every book, paper, and magazine that was within his reach.

Says Massey himself:

> "Now I began to think that the course of all desire and the sum of all existence was to read and get knowledge. Read, read, read. I used to read at all possible times and all possible places; up in bed till two or three in the morning, nothing daunted by once setting the bed on fire. Greatly indebted was I to the bookstalls, where I have read a great deal, often folding a leaf in a book, and returning the next day to continue the subject; but sometimes the book was gone, and then great was my grief. When out of a situation I have often gone without a meal to purchase a book."

Another English poet who sprang from as low an origin, and who as a boy was as uneducated as Massey, was John Clare, known as the Northamptonshire poet. He was born at Helpston, a village near Peterboro', in 1793. His father was a poverty-stricken farm labourer, a cripple, unable to exist without occasional help from the parish, and whose struggle to keep the most wretched of homes, and supply potatoes and water gruel for food, was a ceaseless and desperate one. For all that, when the sickly little fellow Jack was old enough for school, the few pence requisite for sending him there were squeezed out of the poor father's weekly pittance, and when the boy's own paltry earnings in the fields began to [Pg 186] come in, merely a few pence a week, he was sent to an evening school, the master of which allowed him the run of his little library, a privilege of which John enthusiastically and gratefully availed himself.

Often his parents returning from work found the boy, after being at school till late, crouching down by the fire, and tracing in the faint glimmer of a burning log, incomprehensible signs upon bits of paper and even wood, too poor to buy paper of the coarsest kind. John was in the habit of picking up shreds of the same material, such as used by grocers and other tradesmen, and of scratching thereon signs and figures, sometimes with pencil, oftener with charcoal. Never were there more ungracious and unfavourable conditions for the study of arithmetic and algebra.

A maternal uncle, footman to a lawyer at Wisbech, called one day at Helpston, and told the family there was a vacancy for a clerk in his master's office. John was to apply. The mother ransacked her scanty wardrobe, to try and give her son a decent appearance, made him a pair of breeches out of an old dress, and a waistcoat out of a shawl, and begged from village crones an old white necktie and a pair of old black woollen gloves. What he wore was very large and also ancient. His costume excited amazement as he went his way. He reached Wisbech by canal boat, saw his uncle, was taken to Mr. Councillor Bellamy, who, after inspecting the nephew, said, "Well, I may see him again." John, after staying a day or two with his uncle, then went back home and became serving lad at the Blue Bell, where he was treated well, and was able to pursue his beloved studies. There, too, he fell in love with Mary Joyce, daughter of a farmer, who forbade his daughter to have anything to do with the

beggar boy, so he carved her name on every tree.

At this time occurred a great event in the poet's life, one ever to be remembered with a quickening pulse and a sense of mighty triumph. He had read Thomson's 'Seasons,' which had been described to him as only a trumpery book which could be bought for 1*s.* 6*d.* at Stamford. John had only sixpence, and his wages were not due. He went to his father for a shilling. Hopeless chance! His mother was also tried for that amount, and by superhuman exertion she raised sevenpence; the fraction remaining and required was raised at the Blue Bell. The day of the purchase came. Unable to sleep through excitement, he was up before [Pg 187] daybreak, and started off for Stamford in hot haste. A six or seven mile walk was as nothing to the ardent lad, and he arrived before the bookseller's shop he was seeking had its shutters down. He waited and waited, and you can imagine his dismay when at last he found that the shop never opened at all that day. So he went back to Helpston. By the way a bright thought occurred. By making a tremendous effort he obtained twopence more—proposed to a cowherd boy that for one penny he should look after the cattle, and for another penny keep the secret that he was going away for a few hours. Monday morning arrived, and his confederate. John soon walked the eight miles to Stamford. Bookseller's shop closed. John sat on the doorstep and waited. Directly the door opened, the poor, thin, haggard country boy, with wild gleaming eyes, rushed to him for a copy of the 'Seasons.' The tradesman asked questions. John told his story in hurried words, and the bookseller said that he would let him have a copy for a shilling. "Keep the sixpence, my boy," said the man, and away went John. In Barnack Park, amidst some thick shrubs, John Clare read the book. He did not know how to give vent to his happiness, but he had a pencil and a piece of coarse crumpled paper in his pocket, and on that he wrote his poem the 'Morning Walk.'

The remainder of Clare's life presents nothing specially remarkable beyond the fact that he was throughout it curiously unlucky; and though from time to time he met with good friends, misfortune had marked him for her own, and eventually, through brooding over some unsuccessful commercial enterprises, his mind gave way.

From John Clare to George Gordon Noel, Lord Byron, is a far cry; the former being purely a small pastoral poet, the latter impurely a great genius. *A propos* of being involved and being indebted to the children of Israel for supplies, his lordship wrote:

> "In my young days they lent me cash that way,
> Which I found very troublesome to pay."

Tom Moore says that Byron's marriage with the daughter of Sir Ralph Milbank was contracted in the hope that her dowry would extricate him from his monetary difficulties, but it apparently only increased his misery, and, notwithstanding the serious reason for their separation, as given by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, there is no doubt debt had a considerable share [Pg 188] in bringing it about, for "during the first year of his marriage his house was nine times in the possession of bailiffs, his door almost daily beset by duns, and he was only saved from gaol by the privileges of his rank."

Coming down to the more modern school of writers, it is especially noticeable that the circumstances connected with their impecuniosity are much less sombre in character than those of the like previous age. Douglas Jerrold, the novelist, dramatist and essayist, contributes an amusing reminiscence in connection with the first money he earned, a story which he himself was wont to relate with great delight in after years. At the time of the incident the young fellow's home was far from cheerful; his mother and sister were away (in all probability acting in the provinces), and he and his father were the sole occupants of the lodgings. Old Mr. Jerrold was weak and ailing, and anything but good company for the high-spirited, happy-natured boy, who eventually developed into one of the most witty and satirical authors of his time. The picture of the poor old gentleman sitting helplessly in the corner, when the wants of the family so needed a strong arm to work for them, was undoubtedly depressing; but the dreary monotony was broken on the day when Douglas Jerrold returned home excitedly jubilant with his first earnings as an apprentice. A thorough Englishman, he naturally thought the occasion must be celebrated by a dinner and at once proceeded to purchase the ingredients of a beef-steak pie. When he returned, amply repaid for the money he had expended by the proud satisfaction visible on his father's face, he was met by rather a serious difficulty. It was true the materials for the dish were all there, but who was to make the delicacy? Mr. Jerrold, senior, was incapable, and there was, therefore, nothing for it but for the boy to turn to and try his hand at a crust. He did so, and amidst much merriment the pie was made, taken to the baker's, and eaten by the happy pair (at any rate, happy on that occasion), with a relish and pleasure no doubt far in excess of that experienced at many of those grander banquets which he afterwards graced by his presence. It is said by his son that "the memory of this day always remained vivid to him. There was an odd kind of humour about it that tickled him. It so thoroughly illustrated his notions on independence that he could not forbear from dwelling again and again on it [Pg 189] among his friends."

There is no doubt that Douglas Jerrold cherished the memory of this honourable impecuniosity as he did everything else that was noble and pure, for in his slashing satire levelled against those meaningless decorations or orders of the wealthy he clearly shows his lasting sympathy for poverty with honour. He says: "The Order of Poverty—how many sub-orders might it embrace! As the spirit of Gothic chivalry has its fraternities, so might the

Order of Poverty have its distinct devices." He then goes on to enumerate the nobility and dignity of labour exemplified in the cases of the peasant, the shepherd, the weaver, the potter, and other callings, not neglecting even the pauper, of whom he writes:—

> "And here is a pauper, missioned from the workhouse to break stones at the roadside. How he strikes and strikes at that unyielding bit of flint! Is it not the stony heart of the world's injustice knocked at by poverty? What haggardness is in his face! What a blight hangs about him! There are more years in his looks than in his bones. Time has marked him with an iron pen. He wailed as a babe for bread his father was not allowed to earn. He can recollect every dinner—they were so few—of his childhood. He grew up, and want was with him, even as his shadow. He has shivered with cold, fainted with hunger. His every-day life has been set about by goading wretchedness.
>
> "Around him, too, were the stores of plenty. Food, raiment, and money mocked the man half-mad—mad with destitution. Yet, with a valorous heart, a proud conquest of the shuddering spirit, he walked with honesty and starved. His long journey of life has been through stormy places, and now he sits upon a pile of stones on the wayside, breaking them for workhouse bread. Could loftiest chivalry show greater heroism, nobler self-control, than this old man—this weary breaker of flints? Shall he not be of the Order of Poverty? Is not penury to him even as a robe of honour? His grey workhouse coat braver than purple and miniver? He shall be Knight of the Granite if you will. A workhouse gem, indeed—a wretched highway jewel—yet, to the eye of truth, finer than many a ducal diamond.... And so, indeed, in the mind of wisdom, is poverty ennobled. And for the Knights of the Golden Calf, how are they outnumbered! Let us then revive the Order of Poverty. Ponder, reader, on its antiquity! For was not Christ Himself Chancellor of the Order, and the Apostles Knight Companions?"

Although Douglas Jerrold may be best remembered by the many for his felicitous epigrams and wondrous wit, it should be borne in mind that he contributed materially to the high tone [Pg 190] that now prevails in our literature. The fine spirit was touched to fine issues, and the influences which he aided by his life will be his enduring bequest to the future. He was, like Dickens, constantly at war with abuses, ever writing with a purpose, and always aiming to crush tyranny, injustice, or some kindred social monster. Like Dickens, he delighted in assisting the cause of the poor and weak, which characteristic, so conspicuous in both, may be accounted for by the impecunious surroundings in which they were both reared.

With regard to Charles Dickens, undeniably the most popular novelist of this century, and generally considered to be one of the greatest humourists we have ever had, it would seem as if we had to thank impecuniosity for much of his marvellous characterisation; and though he bitterly deplored the want of early education and proper home-training, it is possible that but for the hardness of his youthful lot he might never have developed the faculty of observation to the extent he did. From the needy circumstances of his parents he was compelled from very early years to think for himself; and this is, according to John Forster, what he thought of his father:—

> "He was proud of me in his way, and had a great admiration of the comic singing. But in the ease of his temper and the straitness of his means he appeared to have utterly lost at this time the idea of educating me at all, and to have put from him the notion that I had any claim upon him in that regard whatever. So I degenerated into cleaning his boots of a morning and my own, and making myself useful in the work of the little house, and looking after my younger brothers and sisters (we were now six in all), and going on such poor errands as arose out of our poor way of living."

After his father's arrest for debt and his incarceration in the Marshalsea (particulars of which are so graphically described in 'David Copperfield'), Charles Dickens, when little more than ten years of age, was placed at a blacking manufactory, where he earned the sum of six shillings per week, and which is thus described by him:—

> "The blacking warehouse was the last house on the left hand side of the way, at old Hungerford Stairs. It was a crazy tumble-down old house abutting, of course, on the river, and literally overrun with rats. The wainscotted rooms and its rotten floors and staircase and the old grey rats swarming down in the cellars, and the sound of their squeaking and scuffling coming up the stairs at [Pg 191] all times, and the dirt and decay of the place, rise up visibly before me as if I were there again. My work was to cover the pots of paste blacking first with a piece of oil paper and then with a piece of blue paper, to tie them round with a string, and then to clip the paper close and neat all round, until it looked as smart as a pot of ointment from an apothecary's shop. When a certain number of grosses of pots had attained this pitch of perfection, I was to paste on each a printed label, and then go on again with more pots."

With regard to the way he lived at this time, he says:

> "Usually I either carried my dinner with me or went and bought it at some

neighbouring shop. In the latter case it was commonly a saveloy and a penny loaf, and sometimes a fourpenny plate of beef from a cookshop, sometimes a plate of bread and cheese and a glass of beer from a miserable old public-house over the way—the 'Swan,' if I remember right, or the Swan and something else that I have forgotten. Once I remember tucking my own bread (which I had brought from home in the morning) under my arm, wrapped up in a piece of paper like a book, and going into the best dining-room in Johnson's Alamode Beef House in Charles' Court, Drury Lane, and magnificently ordering a small plate of Alamode beef to eat with it. What the waiter thought of such a strange little apparition coming in all alone, I don't know, but I can see him now staring at me as I ate my dinner, and bringing up the other waiter to look. I gave him a halfpenny, and I wish now that he had not taken it."

Soon after Dickens entered upon his engagement at the uncongenial blacking establishment, his mother's home was broken up and she joined his father in the debtors' prison, and Master Charles was then placed with a Mrs. Roylance at Camden Town, with whom he lodged for some time, boarding himself on his six shillings a week, which he apparently found by no means an easy job, as his appetite seems to have troubled him considerably by this.

"I was so young and childish and so little qualified—how could I be otherwise?—to undertake the whole charge of my own existence, that in going to Hungerford Stairs of a morning I could not resist the stale pastry put out at half price on trays at the confectioner's doors in Tottenham Court Road. I often spent in that the money I should have kept for my dinner. Then I went without my dinner, or bought a roll or a slice of pudding. There were two pudding shops between which I was divided according to my finances. One was in a court close to St. Martin's Church (at the back of the church), which is now removed altogether. The pudding at that shop was made with currants, and was rather a special pudding, but was dear: two penn'orth not being larger than a penn'orth of more ordinary pudding. A good shop for the latter was in the Strand, somewhere near where the Lowther Arcade is now. It was a [Pg 192] stout, hale pudding, heavy and flabby, with great raisins in it stuck in whole, at great distances apart. It came up hot, at about noon every day, and many and many a day did I dine off it. I know I do not exaggerate, unconsciously and unintentionally, the scantiness of my resources and the difficulties of my life. I know that if a shilling or so were given me by any one I spent it in a dinner or a tea. I know that I worked from morning to night with common men and boys, a shabby child. I know that I tried, but ineffectually, not to anticipate my money, and to make it last the week through, by putting it away in a drawer I had in the counting-house, wrapped into six little parcels, each parcel containing the same amount, and labelled with a different day. I know that I have lounged about the streets insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed. I know that, but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond."

Contemporary with Dickens figured another popular writer of light fiction, who, though perhaps a trifle jollier and more genial in his fun, cannot claim to be placed in the same category with the immortal author of 'Nicholas Nickleby,' 'A Tale of Two Cities,' etc. etc. I allude to Albert Smith, who whether detailing on paper "The Adventures of Mr. Ledbury" or recounting to an audience at the Egyptian Hall his "Ascent of Mont Blanc," was always extremely amusing.

Owing to a slight similarity in the style of their writing it sometimes happened that unfortunate comparisons were made between the two men, when naturally poor Albert Smith suffered. For instance, when a friend speaking of the two authors to Douglas Jerrold said, that as humourists Charles Dickens and Albert Smith "rowed in the same boat," Jerrold replied with more or less warmth, "True, they do row in the same boat, but with very different skulls." Unlike Dickens, Albert Smith was not practically acquainted with absolute poverty, though at times as a student there is no doubt he was familiar with that condition known as "rather short of funds," and his account of an Alpine journey made on the most economical principles may be cited as curious and not unconnected with impecuniosity.

In September 1838 he started from Paris for Chamounix with another equally humbly appointed traveller, who like himself intended to do the grand Alpine tour with £12, which was to pay for travelling expenses and board and lodging for five weeks. They carried their money in five-franc pieces, stuffed in leathern belts round their waists, bought two old military knapsacks at three francs each, and two pairs of hobnailed shoes at five and a half [Pg 193] francs each. Before starting they made a good breakfast at a *café* and obtained from the cook a dozen hard-boiled eggs for the journey, supplying themselves also with a *litre* of *vin ordinaire*, a flat bottle of brandy, and a leathern cup that folded up. Opposition *diligences* were running on the road from Paris to Geneva, and for two pounds they secured seats on one which took seventy-eight successive hours—*i.e.*, from 8 o'clock on Friday morning till 2 P.M. on the following Monday. On arriving at the place where the other passengers lunched at a cost of three francs, Smith and his friend regaled themselves on their eggs, with the addition of some bread and pears bought in the town, which place they inspected while their

fellow-travellers were luxuriating over their *déjeûner*. When dinner-time came, instead of patronising the hotel, they repaired to a more humble restaurant, and for 24 sous each obtained all that they required. At night they crept under the tarpaulin roof of the *diligence*, stacked all the luggage on each side, and collecting some straw, on which they reclined, slept tolerably well. In the morning they walked on before the conveyance started, bathed in the river, and after breakfast (managed in the same inexpensive way), were picked up by the diligence. In this manner they travelled for the three days, observing pretty much the same routine (except on the Sunday, when they washed at the fountain in the market-place at Dole, to the great delight and amusement of a party of girls, who lent them towels and a huge piece of soap), their expenses for the journey to Geneva being £2 12*s.* 6*d.* each. As a specimen of how they managed to do and see so much on so very little: at Arpenay, where a cannon is fired to produce a certain marvellous echo, they simply waited until a party more capable of paying for such a luxury arrived, and then availed themselves of the opportunity.

On the same principle, when starting for the Mer de Glace they followed a party at some little distance, and by this means dispensed with the services of a guide. They bathed on the top of the Foxlay, and there in the springs, washed their linen, spreading their things on the stones afterwards to dry; and in such way the Alpine tour was made by the two friends completely, safely, and without exceeding the amount of funds they possessed.

Scarcely so honourable, though a trifle more exciting, is a reminiscence related of the late Robert Brough, more generally known to those who were acquainted with him and loved him dearly as Bob Brough. Unfortunately he was a man who was unable to make his income and expenditure balance: whether it was that the former was too small, or the latter too large, it matters not; but as a natural consequence, debt and difficulty were his constant companions. At one time when things had been going very badly (that is, in all probability to mine uncle's) he found it necessary to seek a more congenial clime. England was found to be unpleasantly hot, owing to the warm attention of a money-lending creditor, and foreign travel was known to be absolutely imperative. The proprietor of the *Sunday Times* being made acquainted with the circumstances commissioned him to write a series of articles, to be entitled "Brussels Sprouts." Desirous of executing the commission, and longing for a dip in the sea, he started off to Ostend, and on arriving there, was not long in going through the preliminaries of taking "a header." He took it, but to his horror on coming to the surface he met with what is slangily termed a "facer," for he found himself face to face with the identical creditor from whom he was fleeing. "Oh, this is the way my money goes, is it! I'll lock you up, you——" began the money-lender, but before the sentence was finished Brough dived again, swam to shore, secured his luggage, started for Paris, and left the "Brussels Sprouts" to take care of themselves. [Pg 194]

As I commenced this chapter by quoting the somewhat ungenerous strictures of Thackeray on his unhappy brethren, it will be a fitting termination to close with an incident of impecuniosity connected with his life, which circumstance, by the way, was caused by no fault of his. How could it have been? He was so terribly correct and proper! However, when sojourning on one occasion in France, he had the misfortune to be robbed of his purse, and immediately wrote off to a relative for fresh supplies. In the meantime he borrowed a ten-pound note, which he spent in little more than a week, thinking he should by that time be in possession of a remittance from his aunt. But no remittance came. He then humorously describes the horrors that arose in his mind as day after day passed on and there was no response from England. His intense desire for a frothy pot of beer, ungratified of course from his impecunious state, his alarm lest the landlord should present his bill, and his forebodings when passing a prison-house, with his elation of spirits when the long-delayed cheque at length arrived, are presented with all the charm of comedy and the interest of romance, and playfully alluded to in these four lines:— [Pg 195]

"My heart is weary, my peace is gone,
  How shall I e'er my woes reveal?
I have no money, I lie in pawn,
  A stranger in the town of Lille."

CHAPTER IX. [Pg 196]

THE ROMANCE OF IMPECUNIOSITY.

Although at first sight the condition of impecuniosity seems more calculated to produce practicality, and render persons matter-of-fact, in the foregoing chapters there have not been wanting illustrations to prove that impecuniosity has been responsible for some romance. The case of Angelica Kauffman may be taken as an example. Owing to the poverty of her father she was compelled to accept the hospitality of an English peer in Switzerland, who insulted her, and afterwards, when unable to obtain a favourable reception of his suit,

in revenge induced a married adventurer to make love to and marry her. This was romantic, without question, and undoubtedly attributable to want of money, as but for that she would never have been brought in contact with the disgraceful nobleman in question.

When we remember, however, how impecuniosity has been produced, how that it has been brought about by misfortune, extravagance, heroism, want of principle, want of foresight, inadequacies of justice, eccentricity of character, extreme benevolence of disposition, and by other equally varied causes, it is not surprising that there should be found considerable connection between it and romance, more especially as the consequences of the condition have been crime of every description, from comparatively venial offences against society to the universally reprobated sins of forgery and murder. Again, the strange and unexpected means by which people have been delivered from their impecuniosity savours strongly of the unreal, of the world of fiction rather than of the world of fact. But that real life is prolific of romance has long been acknowledged by all but those whose knowledge of human life is [Pg 197] small, and whose ignorance of history is entire. As the poet pithily puts it—

> "Truth is always strange,
> Stranger than fiction: if it could be told,
> How much would novels gain by the exchange."

Admitting this, and judging from the facts that we are possessed of, what marvellously romantic deeds must impecuniosity have been connected with that will never be recorded!—devoted deeds of self-sacrifice that will never be known to any save the sufferers! Not long since I read in a popular periodical of something suggestively similar. A girl on the way to join her husband, to whom she has been only married by the Scotch law, learns by accident that her marriage alone stands between her husband and a fortune. Circumstances so happening that she can make it appear credible that she was on board a vessel that was lost, she does so, believing that by her renunciation she is giving up "all for him." "Truth is stranger than fiction," and it follows, therefore, that such instances of self-abnegation induced by impecuniosity have been and will be found. But to facts.

I have included in the list of the causes of impecuniosity the want of foresight, and this is painfully instanced by the story of a poor old woman at Plymouth, who did not like the formality, or could not afford the expense, of having a will prepared. Being exceedingly ill, she thought she would like to leave her little property—furniture, a small amount of money, and household movables—to her neighbours and acquaintances. This wish *vivâ voce* she practically carried out. Of her own proper authority she gave and willed away chairs and tables to one, her bed to this friend, her cloak to that, money, utensils, nicknacks, to others. Crones, housewives, and young women gathered sympathetically around her, and soon carried away the various things bequeathed to them. It was not long after they had departed that she unexpectedly recovered from her illness, and sent to have her things back again, but not one of them could she get, and she was left without a rag to cover her or a friend to give her a kind word.

Strange as was this circumstance, here is something surpassing strange, being the romantic record of one who was literally "a funny beggar."

Less than half a century since there used to be seen on the Quai des Celestines in Paris a [Pg 198] mendicant holding in one hand some lucifer-matches. Wan, self-possessed, scantily but neatly attired, there were in the beggar's visage traces of refinement and good breeding. Round his neck was a loop of black silk ribbon, to which was suspended a piece of pasteboard having an inscription to the effect that the wearer was a poor man, and craved relief on the plea that "*he had lived longer than he should*."

The petitioner's history was a singular one. Jules André Gueret, when twenty-five years old, became the possessor of a large fortune. He remained a bachelor, and turned his estate into hard cash. An epicurean, a man of some taste, and a bit of a philosopher, he began a calculation to ascertain how he could best enjoy himself. Making no investments, he kept his cash at home. Gueret came to the conclusion that a sober man's life averaged seventy years, but that a pleasure-seeking, gay man's life might only last fifty-five or sixty years. He then divided his finances into so many equal portions. Each portion was to be an annual allowance, the pleasure-seeker arranging that the money should last five-and-thirty years. Gueret, in conclusion, made a compact with himself that if he lived beyond sixty years of age, suicide would prevent his suffering ills at the hands of poverty. But when turned sixty years of age, and when his money was exhausted, either love of life or fear of death prevented the once gay and opulent Gueret from committing self-destruction. It will be seen that it was a terribly true inscription on the bit of pasteboard hanging from the neck of the beggar haunting the Quai des Celestines.

The vicissitudes of Gueret were obviously self-created, and *à propos* of a man's idiosyncrasy impelling him on to impecuniosity, there is hardly a more curious illustration to be found than that contained in the biography of Combe, the author of the 'Adventures of Dr. Syntax.' This man was a born eccentric, perverse, whimsical, and humorous. Possessing natural gifts, and the heir to a large fortune, he frittered away his mental resources, wasted his patrimony, and often committed acts worthy of the simpleton or lunatic. He went through the curriculum of Eton and Oxford, and by the refinements of his taste and the elegance of his manners won the title of "Duke Combe." In a comparatively short period, by his prodigality and reckless expenditure he was reduced to penury, and finding no means of

subsistence, enlisted as a private in the army. While in the ranks he was reading one day, when an officer passing him managed to see the book, which was a copy of Horace. “My friend,” said the officer, “is it possible that you can read Horace in the original?” “If I cannot,” said Combe, “a great deal of money has been thrown away on my education.” [Pg 199]

Escaping from the English army, he joined the French service, and again fleeing, he entered a French monastery, remaining there until he had passed his noviciate. He subsequently left the Continent and became a waiter in South Wales. On several occasions, while in that capacity, he met with acquaintances whom he had known in college days, but he was never embarrassed even when seen tripping along with a napkin under his arm.

Combe afterwards married an amiable and devoted woman, and settled down for a time as an author. Some of his writings contained questionable morality, and others were of scurrilous and venal character. ‘Letters from a Nobleman to his Son,’ said to be by Lord Lyttelton, and ‘Letters from an Italian Nun to an English Nobleman,’ said to be by Rousseau, were both from the pen of “Duke Combe.” At last he became an inmate of the King’s Bench Prison, and he remained there several years. When a friend offered to make an arrangement with his creditors, he replied: “If I compounded with those to whom I owe money I should be obliged to give up the little I possess, and on which I can manage to live in prison. These rooms in the Bench are mine at a very few shillings a week in right of my seniority as a prisoner. My habits have become so sedentary, that if I lived in the airiest square of West-End London, I should not walk round it once a month. I am quite content with my cheap quarters.”

It was in the King’s Bench Prison that Combe wrote for the publisher Ackerman, ‘The Adventures of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque,’ ‘The Dance of Life,’ and ‘The Dance of Death.’

At one period of Combe’s career Roger Kemble gave him a theatrical benefit, and Combe promised to speak an address on the occasion. There had been much gossip and many conjectures concerning his real name, history, and condition. To such gossip and conjectures he referred when he stood before the curtain, and in the presence of a crowded auditory. Then he added, “But now, ladies and gentlemen, I shall tell you who and what I am.” There was an eager and expectant expression on the countenances before him. Combe paused—all present leaning forward to hear him—gathered himself up, as if for a great effort, and then said, “I am, ladies and gentlemen—your most obedient, humble servant.” [Pg 200]

It is evident Combe’s peculiar disposition was the cause of his peculiar circumstances. He was a perverse, whimsical man, rather than an unfortunate one, and it was much the same with the son of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, the Hon. Mr. Wortley Montague, notorious for his roving and adventurous disposition. When a boy he ran away from home, and became a chimney sweep. It is true that young Montague’s father was cold in his manners and severe in his discipline to the lad, who in addition chafed under the somewhat stringent arrangements of the Westminster masters, for enforcing law and order amongst their pupils. At Westminster School, however, where the lad was placed in 1729, he at once showed himself brilliant and precocious, but vain, impatient of control, and of truant disposition. Reckless and petulant, he resolved to see the world, and without a single confidant, one day quitted the seminary, roamed the streets, and at night made his way into the fields about Chelsea, and there slept till morning. After a few days his stock of money became low, and while reading the newspapers over his tavern breakfast, he noticed in an advertisement an accurate description of his face, figure, and costume, with the notification that a handsome reward would be paid by his parents to recover their lost child. Hastily paying his bill, he made his way from the tavern, perambulated the streets, utterly at a loss how to act in order to shun the humiliation of meeting his father and mother, and of again having to undergo the restrictions of domestic and scholastic routine. Meeting a chimney-sweeper’s apprentice, Montague entered into conversation with him and agreed to exchange clothes, which transformation was accomplished in an empty house. The truant was not satisfied yet, and actually accompanied the apprentice to his master’s house for the purpose of trying to become a chimney-sweep himself. From motives of benevolence or cupidity the master sweep agreed to induct young Montague into the mysteries of cleansing flues, and the lad remained in his employment for some months.

During the period of his connection with the “sooty trade” the aristocratic young truant went through many adventures and played many pranks. His roaming disposition, however, caused him to run away from his master, which he did without warning, and he soon found himself again walking about the streets of the metropolis, his money exhausted. He had but one thing left, a carefully-preserved watch, by which he could obtain the necessaries of life; driven to desperation, he walked into a jeweller’s shop and offered the watch for sale. The proprietor was courteous but wary, and being suspicious that the lad had become possessed of the valuable article in a dishonest manner, took the opportunity of sending for a constable. Montague was arrested and conveyed to Bow Street, where the magistrate closely questioned the culprit. Young Montague, with the utmost frankness, gave an account of his strange and romantic adventures from the moment when he had quitted Westminster School. It was not long ere his parents were made acquainted with the particulars of their son’s flight and safety, and the foolish wanderer was speedily taken back with caresses and delight. All was forgotten and forgiven, and in a few weeks Montague was reinstated in his old place at Westminster. [Pg 201]

It is said that what is bred in the bone comes out in the flesh, and it was not long before the crack-brained scholar again became unsettled. Through an older companion, young Montague sought the good offices of a knavish money-lender, who, making himself acquainted with the lad's position and prospects, advanced him a sum of money. With the loan he felt free to make another flight, and away he went to Newmarket. He was amused and delighted with the spectacle of horses, jockeys, and bruisers. Enjoying himself at an inn, he fell into the company of card-sharpers, who soon eased him of the guineas he had brought down from London. His position was unfortunate and perilous, but wandering out through the town, he encountered a friend of the family, who resolutely conveyed him back to his parents, who, as before, after due admonition, forgave him. The debt to the money-lender was paid, and the youngster again found himself surrounded by all the luxuries of an aristocratic home. But his restless spirit could not endure the harness of conventional life.

Once more he sought the office of the usurer, who made the required advances, and he then made up his mind to taste the joys of sea voyages and the novelties of foreign travel. Making his way to Wapping, he struck up a friendship with the captain of a trading-vessel bound for Cadiz. Montague agreed to visit Cadiz with him, making the commander acquainted with the [Pg 202] particulars of his history. The youth prepared for the journey, and thought that his last night in England should be a convivial one, and consequently ordered at one of the Wapping taverns a sumptuous supper. The landlord during the evening introduced some card-sharping rogues who proposed play, and in the course of an hour or two the son of Lady Mary had lost heavily. He was made drunk and taken away senseless to bed.

When he came to himself in the morning he found that he had been robbed of everything, including his watch, and that he was utterly impotent to pay the heavy bill for the previous night's banquet. The landlord affected much indignation, and went out of the house under the pretence of procuring a constable. Young Montague was at his wit's end, when the hostess advised him to quit the tavern. Taking the hint, he hurried to the captain and told his story, and the captain intimated that he would seek the landlord. Captain James being a rogue, came to an understanding with the Wapping host, who agreed to hand over part of the spoil. James returned to the young dupe, and informed him that no redress could be afforded, but that if he liked he might work his way out to Cadiz. So Montague was the victim of both landlord and captain. During the voyage to Cadiz the youth underwent numerous trials and hardships. On landing at Cadiz he at once left Captain James and found himself in a foreign town without money and without friends. However, he found the Wapping card-sharpers had left him a pair of Mocoa sleeve-buttons set in gold, and having sold them he lived on the money for a few weeks. When that money was exhausted he happened to make the acquaintance of a muleteer, who, wanting a helper, found a ready and active one in the adventurous youth. All his subsequent adventures were of like irrational character, and he died of a fever contracted during foreign travel when a comparatively young man.

I now turn to a pathetic story of poverty, in which the victim, but for the cruel deeds of a crafty and malignant woman, might have been surrounded by the auxiliaries of wealth and feudal splendour. Fortune occasionally plays strange pranks, and in the instance I am about to quote it will be seen that her caprices sometimes fall on unoffending and worthy men with pitiless and tremendous severity. More than two hundred and fifty years since a miserable [Pg 203] bowed man might have been seen working about the fields and roads outside Leicester, doing that slavish and drudging work which falls to the lot of the English peasant. But for an unhappy episode connected with his ancestors he might have been summoned to dinner by sound of horn and taken his food from burnished silver. He was the heir of the famous Sir Robert Scott of Thirlestane, a cadet of the House of Buccleuch. Sir Robert Scott lived in the time of the sixth James of Scotland, and was a man of noble character, though of iron will and fiery blood, and little knew the awful cloud that gathered over his house when he married his second wife. Scott of Thirlestane had a son by his first marriage, and the heir was loved by the father with all the intensity and tenderness of a strong man's nature.

From the time the second wife bore children to Sir Robert, she hated the stepson with unceasing and sleepless malignity. She saw that as long as he lived the future possessions of her own children would be but little. She was cruel, crafty, and unscrupulous: and her worst feelings were excited when she learned that Sir Robert proposed building a tower at Gamescleugh in honour of the young laird's majority. The father had also arranged a marriage for his son. The stepmother then entered upon plans to murder him on the occasion of the opening of the new castle, when a great festival was to take place. Her agent in the crime was John Lally, the family piper, who obtained three adders, from which he abstracted poison, and conveyed it to Lady Thirlestane, who mixed it with a bottle of wine. On the day of festivity the young laird inspected the tower and received from Lally's hand the poisoned wine in a silver flagon, and drank a hearty draught. In an hour the heir of the house of Thirlestane was dead, and Lally had fled no one knew whither. News of the heir's death soon reached the ears of the father, who had the alarm bugle sounded to call together his retainers. On the earl calling out to his assemblage, "Are we all here?" a voice answered, "Yes, all but John Lally, the piper." It was ominous, for the husband knew the confidence his wife placed in that retainer, and Sir Robert swooned. Strange was it that Sir Robert could not be induced to make a public example of his wife; but he announced to his friends that [Pg 204] the estate belonged to his murdered son, who, if he could not enjoy it living, should enjoy it dead. The body of the heir was embalmed with drugs and spices, and laid out in state for a

year and a day. For twelve months the unhappy father kept up one continuous round of costly and magnificent revels. Wine flowed like a river, and the scenes of carousal were of unprecedented extravagance. Soon after the funeral Sir Robert was borne to the grave and the family reduced to utter beggary. The stepmother wandered about an outcast and pauper, and in after years the heir of the Thirlestane family worked as a common ditcher, as I have described.

A similar strange and pathetic story, in which it is shown that the innocent suffered for the guilty, is that of Sir John Dinely, who, at the beginning of the century, was one of the Poor Knights of Windsor. Dinely was a singularly eccentric and unfortunate man. He was often to be seen mysteriously creeping by the first light of a winter's morning through the great gate of the lower ward of Windsor Castle into the narrow back streets of the town. He used to wear a roquelaure, beneath which appeared a pair of thin legs encased in dirty silk stockings. In wet weather he carried a large umbrella and walked on pattens. He lived in one of the houses of the military knights, then called Poor Knights, to which body he belonged. Except the eccentric possessor, no human being entered his abode, and he dispensed with all domestic service. Dinely in the morning went forth to make his frugal purchases for the day—a faggot, a candle, a small loaf, and perhaps a herring. The Poor Knight of Windsor might have fared better, but every penny except those laid out for absolute necessaries of life was capitalised in the promotion of an absorbing and quixotic scheme. Regular attendance at St. George's Chapel was Dinely's duty; and the long blue mantle which the Poor Knights wore covered his shabby habiliments, as the dingy morning cloak hid red herrings and farthing candles.

Such were some of the phases—sombre, squalid phases—of Sir John's existence. But there were periods when the Poor Knight assumed the externals of aristocratic opulence. The poor hunchback lover in the introduction to the pantomime, who, by the enchanter's wand in the transformation-scene, becomes the gay and spangled harlequin, typifies Dinely dressed for his marketing, and Dinely dressed for the promenade. Any circumstances drawing together [Pg 205] a crowd at Windsor, whether the presence of royalty, the attractions of the military parade, or of the promenade, did not fail to draw forth Dinely from his poverty-stricken home. When he appeared on festive occasions, his cloak was cast aside, and he might have sat to any painter desiring to reproduce on canvas a gentleman of the time of George II. An embroidered coat, silk flowered waistcoat, nether garments of velvet, carefully meeting silk stockings, which surmounted shoes and silver buckles, in addition to a lace-edged cocked hat, and powdered wig, set off the attenuated figure of the Poor Knight of Windsor. His object in so presenting himself was to attract the notice of some rich lady for matrimonial ends, matrimony being the medium through which he imagined he could transform his splendid dreams into no less splendid realities—the reason for his eccentric economy being explained by his history.

In January, 1741, there were two brothers living at Bristol who had become enemies on account of an entail of property. The elder of these brothers was Sir John Dinely Goodyere, Baronet, the other Samuel Dinely Goodyere, a captain in the navy. Estrangement had taken place, but a common friend, at Samuel's request, brought them together. They dined, had pleasant hours, and fraternal words were exchanged. On parting Sir John went his way across College Green, and while there was met by his brother and six other sailors. Sir John was brutally treated, carried away to a ship, and on it he was strangled. Retribution followed swiftly, and in two months Samuel Dinely Goodyere had expiated his crime on the gallows.

The Poor Knight of Windsor was the son of the murderer, and it is generally believed that the family estates which might have come to Captain Goodyere were forfeited to the Crown. To recover the family estates was the day dream of Sir John. Not having sufficient money to obtain the requisite legal help to regain the lost inheritance, the poor old man resorted to the matrimonial scheme. His proceedings were perfectly serious, dignified, and earnest. Frequently has he been seen on the terrace at Windsor presenting to some county widow or elegantly attired gentlewoman a printed paper which with the utmost gravity he would take from his pocket. Should the lady accept the paper, Sir John Dinely would make her the most [Pg 206] profound of bows, and then withdraw.

The following is an extract from one of the documents:—

"*For a Wife.*"

> "As the prospect of my marriage has much increased lately, I am determined to take the best means to discover the lady most liberal in her esteem by giving her fourteen days more to make her quickest steps towards matrimony: from the date of this paper until eleven o'clock the next morning: and as the contest evidently will be superb, honourable, sacred, and lawfully affectionate, pray do not let false delicacy interrupt you. An eminent attorney here is lately returned from a view of my superb gates, built in the form of the Queen's house. I have ordered him, as the next attorney here, who can satisfy you of my possession in my estate, and every desirable particular concerning it, to make you the most liberal settlement you can desire, to the vast extent of three thousand pounds."

Some verses conclude, the words being—

"A beautiful page shall hold,
Your ladyship's train surrounded with gold."

The advertiser alludes to the forfeiture of the estates in another paper: "Pray, my young charmers, give me a fair hearing; do not let your avaricious guardians unjustly fright you into a false account of a forfeiture." Sir John did not scatter his papers broadcast. It was only to those whom he deemed suitable ladies that he distributed his precious and grandiloquent invitations. Notwithstanding the seeming allurements of his circulars, Sir John Dinely found no nibblers for his bait. One morning the accustomed seat in St. George's Chapel knew him no more. He was missing. The door of his lodging was forced, and in his room he was found ill and helpless. Everything about him was of the poorest and most squalid character. There was little furniture—a table and a chair or two. The room was strewed with printing type, for he printed his own bills; and in a few days Sir John Dinely was borne to the grave.

"Wise judges are we of each other," said Claude Melnotte contemptuously to Colonel Damar when that officer remarked that he "envied" the pretended Prince of Como, and it would be well for many of us were we to remember the rebuke in forming our judgment of our fellows in connection with their pecuniary position. A very pitiful story illustrating the argument is [Pg 207] narrated by Charles Lamb in his essay, "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago." Referring to some cartoons connected with his old school, the author writes:—

> "L—— has recorded his repugnance of the school to 'gags,' or the fat of fresh boiled beef, and sets it down to some superstition; but these unctuous morsels are never grateful to young palates (children are universal fat-haters), and in strong, coarse, boiled meats, unsalted, are detestable. A gag-eater in our time was equivalent to a ghoul, and held in equal detestation. There was a lad who suffered under this imputation.
>
> 'It was said
> He ate strange flesh.'
>
> "He was observed, after dinner, carefully to gather up the remnants left at the table (not many nor very choice fragments, you may credit me), and in an especial manner these disreputable morsels he would convey, and secretly stow, in the settle that stood at his bedside. None saw when he ate them. It was rumoured that he privately devoured them in the night. He was watched, but no traces of them, of such midnight practices were discoverable. Some reported that on leave-days he had been seen to carry out of the bounds a large blue check handkerchief, full of something. This, then, must be the accursed thing. Conjecture next was at work to imagine how he could dispose of it. Some said he sold it to the beggars. This belief generally prevailed. He went about moping—none spake to him. No one would play with him. He was excommunicated—put out of the pale of the school. He was too powerful a boy to be beaten, but he underwent every mode of that negative punishment which is more grievous than many stripes. Still he persevered. At length he was observed by two of his schoolfellows, who were determined to get at the secret, and had traced him one leave day for the purpose, to enter a large worn-out building, such as there exists specimens of in Chancery Lane, which are let out to various scales of pauperism, with open door and a common staircase. After him they silently slunk in, and followed by stealth up four flights of stairs, and saw him tap at a poor wicket, which was opened by a poor woman meanly clad. Suspicion was now ripened into certainty. The informers had secured their victim. Accusation was formally preferred, and retribution most signal was looked for. Mr. Hatherway investigated the matter. The supposed mendicants, the receivers of the mysterious scraps, turned out to be the parents of the boy. This young stork, at the expense of his own good name, had all this while been feeding the old birds."

A striking story of the unknown resources and trials of the poverty-stricken is the following, a favourite one with that capital *raconteur*, the late Julian Young.

A certain diplomatist was many years ago despatched by the English Government on an [Pg 208] embassy extraordinary to one of the continental courts, where his handsome person and the urbanity of his manners made him a general favourite. On his departure the sovereign to whom he was accredited presented him with a small box of unusual value as a mark of his esteem. It had on its lid a miniature of the king set in brilliants of great beauty. When he had retired from public life and happened to give a dinner to any of his friends, he was fond of producing it at the dessert, as it afforded him an opportunity of descanting on the king's appreciation of his services. On one of these occasions the box was brought forth, handed by the butler to the master, and passed round. The last person into whose hands it went was an old general, who, from some failure in investments, was known to be in embarrassed circumstances.

In due course all rose to join the ladies, and in so doing the owner of the snuff-box looked round for it in order that it might be replaced in the cabinet. Not seeing the box, the owner immediately made inquiries concerning it, and asked the gentlemen to make search for it, suggesting that it was possible that some one in a fit of absence might have placed it in his pocket. Everybody denied having any knowledge of it, though one or two present declared

that the old general was the last person in whose hands they remembered to have seen it. “Having seen it before,” the old general said, “he had but bestowed a cursory glance upon it and then placed it in the centre.” The strictest search about the room was then made, but only with fruitless results. The owner of the box assumed much gravity of manner, and having referred to the seriousness of the loss, said, “I suspect no one, and that I may have no cause to do so, I must ask you to let me search you all without distinction.” Two or three rose to depart, but they were anticipated by their entertainer, who put his back against the door and refused egress to any one. The old general stepped forward and said, “Sir, do you mean to insult us because we have drunk your wine? If any one dares to oppose my exit from this room, I shall call him to account.” The old grizzled warrior strode out with a firm and defiant air. Known to be poor, and from his determined departure on the occasion of the proposed search, the general was coldly and shyly regarded by those who knew the circumstances, and by those who afterwards heard of them.

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Some time later, at the same host’s table, the butler, hearing the story of the lost snuff-box, informed his master that on the occasion alluded to be had taken it up and deposited it in a little drawer at the end of a sideboard, where it had been occasionally kept, and the butler went to the drawer and found the lost treasure.

As quickly as possible the next morning the owner of the snuff-box sought the old general, told him everything, and made him an ample apology. They were at once friendly as of old. After some conversation, the owner of the snuff-box said, “But may I ask you why you so resolutely refused to be searched?” “Alas!” said the soldier, “I refused to be searched because, though I had not stolen your snuff-box, I had stolen your food. I blush to own, sir, that the greater part of every morsel put upon my plate was transferred to a pocket-handkerchief (spread upon my knee beneath the table), and taken home to a starving wife and family.”

Equally, if not more romantic is another military story, also related by Julian Young, which, were it not for the unquestionable *bona fides* of that gentleman, might well be questioned, so suggestive is it of a page from a novel.

An aristocratic lady residing on the family estate in Ireland advertised for a governess for her daughters. The successful candidate was a young French lady of talent and fascinating manners. She had not long taken up her residence with the lady and her daughters when she inspired the nephew of her mistress with a tender passion. A gentleman of principle, and only possessing slender means, he resolved to control his sentiment and in no way reveal it.

Some months elapsed, and one morning while the family were at breakfast, they were surprised by the entrance of a servant, who inquired of the lady of the house if she could see visitors. Asking who they were, she was informed that the party consisted of two gentlemen, who had travelled there in a coach-and-four, attended by a livery servant, evidently a foreigner. Thinking that visitors at such an early hour must have important business, the servant was told by his mistress that she would at once see them. She remained with the visitors some little time, and then returned, informing the governess that her presence was immediately required by the two gentlemen, who had come on important business.

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The governess was absent more than half an hour, and on her return to the breakfast-room appeared to be labouring under strong excitement. She then begged Lady E—— to be kind enough to step into the library to speak to two friends of hers, who had something of great importance to communicate. The mistress of the establishment complied, and the governess, left with her pupils, was interrogated with much amusing curiosity by them on the strange visit of two gentlemen at such an early hour in the day. The governess, in a tremor of nervousness, answered nothing, left her pupils, and going to her own apartment, locked herself in.

The interview between Lady E—— and the strangers was exceedingly interesting. One of the visitors spoke to her in French, and at great length. Having prefaced what he had to say by apologising for the seeming intrusion, Lady E—— was informed that he was delegated by the governess to perform a duty which rightly devolved upon herself, but which she had not the moral courage to discharge. It was also stated by the speaker that Mademoiselle H—— acknowledged gratefully the extraordinary kindness with which she had been treated. Lady E—— was then told that in pretending to be dependent on her own exertions for bread, the governess had imposed on her mistress. She was, it was said, as well born as Lady E——, and almost as opulent. It was at the request of the visitors that Mademoiselle H—— had answered the advertisement, for the reason that perhaps under such a roof as Lady E——’s the young lady would be spared the persecution of an unscrupulous kinsman, who conceived that his cousin was endeavouring to supplant him in the good graces of a relative whose favours he had forfeited solely by misconduct. The older kinsman alluded to had just died, and had bequeathed his sole possessions to the governess. She was mistress of a château in Southern France, in addition to an unencumbered rent-roll of £7000 a year. In conclusion, the gentleman in his own name and that of his fellow trustee begged to state that in a month’s time the presence of Mademoiselle H—— would be imperative, for the purpose of hearing the will read, and to meet the avocat, the executors, and certain other persons interested. Complimenting the mistress of the Irish mansion upon her urbanity, the visitors withdrew, jumped into their carriage, and were driven away as rapidly as they came.

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The daughters of Lady E—— and her nephew were made acquainted with the good fortune

of the French governess. She had won the affections of her pupils, and they regretted parting with her. However, they rejoiced at her prosperity. The nephew's heart glowed with hope and affection. Had he been richer he would before have declared his passion. On hearing his aunt's recital of the governess's actual position he at once resolved to press his suit. When Mademoiselle H—— had listened to his declaration of love, she met it with haughty demeanour and frigid words, stating that she suspected her money had more attraction for him than her person, assigning as her reason for such impression that he had shunned her while he thought her poor, but had sought her as soon as he had found her to be rich. He assured her that he had loved her at first sight, but had been deterred by honourable motives and the smallness of his fortune from thinking of matrimony; that he had purposely kept out of danger's way, but that as to wishing to marry her for the sake of her money, it was a cruel imputation, and stung him to the quick. He then quitted her soon afterwards, mounted a horse, rode away and found a notary public. When he again saw Mademoiselle H—— he put into her hands a document by which he conveyed to her unconditionally and absolutely every farthing he had in the world. In return for it he asked for the lady's hand and heart. He added that if he proved unworthy of her, her money would be in her own power, and that if he lived to deserve her love, he was sure she would never let him want. She yielded to his solicitations, and they eloped.

Scarcely had the honeymoon run its course when the husband discovered that he was united to a penniless woman. In spite of his reserve the governess had detected his passion, and by the aid of confederates and her own adroitness had made herself possessor of his patrimony. The victim sought to repair his fortune at the sword's point in the Crimean war, where he obtained considerable distinction.

Incredible as this narrative may seem, there is a yet more marvellous one which must be true, since "it was in the papers."

In the autumn of 1827 two men were examined at the Marylebone police-court under circumstances of a peculiar and suspicious nature. The night previously a patrol in the New [Pg 212] Road watched the men, and subsequently saw them deep in conversation by a lamp-post, and soon afterwards one man deliberately began to tie his companion up to the lamp-post, the suspended man offering no resistance to the labours of the improvised Jack Ketch. The patrol interfered, and both men proceeded to beat him with great violence. Some watchmen of the district hearing the cries of the assailed constable hastened to the spot, and the constable's assailants were secured. While being examined before the magistrate, the men stated that they had been gambling by the light from the lamp, and that one of them had lost all his money to the other, and had then staked his clothes. The winner demurred to continue playing for the reason that if he again won he should not care to strip the loser of his habiliments. His enthusiastic companion rejoined that should he again lose, life would be worthless to him. A bargain was made to again play, it being understood that the unsuccessful gambler if again unlucky should be hung by his companion, who should strip him when dead. The fellow lost, and informed the magistrate that he was only submitting to the terms of the treaty when the patrol came up and interfered with himself and his companion. The magistrate concluding they had been intoxicated, discharged them with a caution.

A remarkably grim passage this in a gambler's life, and unfortunately most of the selections in this section of the subject are more or less sombre, for romance is naturally more associated with tragedy than comedy. "Pitiful, wondrous pitiful," is my next illustration, which is related by Sir Walter Scott, who when attending Dugald Stewart's lectures on Moral Philosophy used to sit by the side of an amiable youth, in whose society he afterwards took great interest. They became companions, and frequently used to stroll out beyond the city, enjoying the charms of road and stream. One day during the perambulation they met a singularly venerable "Blue Gown," a beggar of the Edie Ochiltree stamp, clean and ruddy. The beggar had three or four times previously encountered Scott, who with his usual good-heartedness had relieved him in answer to solicitation. When Mr. Scott and his fellow-student passed the old man, the companion of Scott exhibited peculiar restlessness and confusion. The beggar again had something dropped into his hand by Scott, who said soon afterwards to his companion, "Do you know anything to the dishonour of the old beggar?" [Pg 213] "God forbid!" said the youth, and bursting into tears added, "I am ashamed to speak to him; he is my father! He has laid by for himself, but he stands bleaching his head in the wind, that he may get means to pay for my education." Scott spoke words of tenderness and sympathy to the mendicant's son, and kept his secret.

Some time afterwards he again met the hale "Blue Gown." "God bless you!" said the old man; "you have been kind to Willie. He has often spoken of it. Come to our roof, for my boy has been ill. It will strengthen him, if you will go and see him." At 2 o'clock on the following Saturday, Willie's old fellow-student found the old man and his son waiting to receive him at their little cottage outside the city. It was a modest little tenement, and Willie sat on a bench before the door to enjoy the sunshine. The son of the voluntary mendicant looked wan and emaciated. He had been very ill. There was a dinner of mutton, potatoes and whisky. They all enjoyed themselves, and during their conversation the old man said, "Please God I may live to see my bairn wag his head in a pulpit yet." Scott left them with tokens of good will and friendship. He communicated the story to his mother, who informed her husband, and it was at no distant time that Dr. Erskine's influence (through the good offices of Mr. and Mrs.

Scott) obtained the old man's son a tutorship in the north of Scotland.

To quit the pathetic for a moment, it would scarcely be thought likely that that necessary but extremely practical article—blacking—has ever been associated with romance; but Mr. Smiles tells the story of a poor soldier having one day called at the shop of a hairdresser who was busy with his customers and asked relief, stating that he had stayed beyond his leave of absence, and unless he could get a lift on the coach, fatigue and severe punishment awaited him. The hairdresser listened to his story respectfully, and gave him a guinea. "God bless you, sir!" exclaimed the soldier, astonished at the amount. "How can I repay you? I have nothing in the world but this," pulling out a dirty piece of paper from his pocket; "it is a receipt for making blacking—it is the best that was ever seen; many a half-guinea I have had for it from the officers, and many bottles I have sold. May you be able to get something for it to repay you for your kindness to the poor soldier!" Oddly enough that dirty piece of paper proved worth half a million of money to the hairdresser. It was no less than a receipt for the [Pg 214] famous Day and Martin's blacking, the hairdresser being the late Mr. Day.

The picture of little ones asking for bread and the parents finding none in the cupboard is a very old story. Domestic affection, struggling amidst difficulties and distress, has produced heroes and martyrs innumerable, but few more interesting than Peter Stokes, famous in years gone by as the "Flying Pieman." Every day at the beginning of the present century (excepting when it rained) the familiar figure of that now historic personage might have been seen in the steep thoroughfare between Staple's Inn and Field Lane. Peter obtained the *sobriquet* of "Flying Pieman" from the celerity of his movements. There was some slight mistake concerning his nickname, for Peter Stokes sold baked plum pudding, not pies. Stokes was one of the celebrated old-fashioned London characters, as well known to cockneys of that period as Billy Waters or the negro crossing-sweeper at the foot of Ludgate Hill.

Soon after the clock of St. Andrew's Church struck twelve, Stokes used to turn out of Fetter Lane with a tray of smoking hot plum pudding, the pudding cut into twelve slices, the price of each being a penny. Peter carried his tray in one hand and a bright silver scapula in the other. The customer received his slice of pudding from the scapula after a penny had been deposited upon the tray (Peter never gave change), the "Flying Pieman," as he perambulated or as he stopped, never being known to utter any other word than "Buy, buy, buy." He always wore a black vest, swallow-tailed coat, stout silk stockings, and shoes with bright silver buckles, while a snowy white apron and faultlessly frilled shirt completed a modish and impressive costume. No hat or cap adorned his head, the hair of which was close cropped and powdered.

Peter Stokes was sometimes known to have disposed of fifty rounds of pudding *per diem*. His customers have often included aldermen, ladies of quality, and blue blood bucks, but they received no more attention than did rougher and humbler patrons. The "Flying Pieman" was attentive to everybody, but he never turned back for anybody. Making his way deftly through crowds of pedestrians, hackney coaches or waggons, the "Flying Pieman" went straight on, calling out "Buy," and only stopped for the proffered penny; but his real history [Pg 215] was indeed a curious one. Contemporary with him was a portrait painter in Rathbone Place. The artist painted with great assiduity in the morning, and his evening parties though homely, were pleasant and refined. A devoted wife and affectionate children cheered the life of the amiable and industrious artist. He was a genial-faced man, with dark brown hair. This artist and Peter Stokes were identical. When young, Stokes made a love-match, married upon next to nothing, and in a few years found himself the father of several children. A modest, industrious, painstaking artist, he found but few to sit to him for a portrait. Things grew exceedingly bad with him.

One day he heard one of his boys crying for something to eat, and the artist found that his wife had no bread to give the hungry child. Peter Stokes hurried from his home with an almost wet picture, which he deposited at a neighbouring pawnbroker's. Returning, the needy artist saw at a street-corner a boy selling baked potatoes, and moreover the artist observed that the boy was doing a busy trade. Crushing pride, and taking his faithful and devoted wife into close confidence, Peter unfolded a plan by which he too might sell something profitable in the street. Mrs. Stokes seconded the suggestion, and Peter soon commenced his career as a vendor of baked plum pudding. He threw a desperate card, but it turned up trumps. Stokes's portraits have gone to the limbo of oblivion, but the peculiar method by which he impressed the crowd with his tray of baked plum pudding shows at any rate that its vendor had a good eye for artistic effect.

If it were, as some will doubtless say, "a sin and shame" that an artist of Peter Stokes's ability should have to turn itinerant vendor of pennyworths of pudding, the old adage "Be sure your sin will find you out" was at fault for once; but to make up for the omission in his case, how wonderfully true was the proverb in the romantic history of Lord Chief Justice Holt, whose impecuniosity caused him to commit an act that resulted in a truly tragic *finale*.

Sir John Holt, famous for his integrity, firmness, and great legal knowledge, who filled the office of Recorder of London for a year and a half, losing it in consequence of his uncompromising opposition to the abolition of the "Test" Act, and whose upright discharge of the important duties of Lord Chief Justice gained him the highest honour and esteem, was [Pg 216] as a youth wilful and dissipated. In some respects his deeds at that period bore likeness to

those of the madcap Prince Hal, when that personage was the associate of Falstaff. He was a roysterer, gambler and, according to some, highwayman. To use Lord Campbell's words, "They even relate, many years after that, when he was going the circuit as Chief Justice, he recognised a man convicted capitally before him as one of his own accomplices in a robbery, and that having visited him in gaol, and inquired after the rest of the gang, he received this answer: 'Ah! my lord, they are all hanged but myself and your lordship.'"

On one occasion, Holt, with a band of dissolute and reckless companions, found himself participator in the perplexing results of a common bankruptcy. They were without the prospect of obtaining a supper. It was then agreed that they should make their way singly, each individual to do the best he could for himself. The band of roysterers separated, Holt finding himself on a lonely and cheerless road. He was intrepid, nimble witted, and full of self-possession. Spurring his horse, he set off at a gallop. Arriving in front of a little hostelry, he alighted from his steed, handed it over to the care of an ostler, and without more ado went into the house and ordered the best entertainment that it could afford.

Whatever hardships he had undergone, Holt had now the pleasing expectation of a savoury supper and comfortable lodgment. Waiting for a smoking dish, the odour from which pleasantly saluted his nostrils, he carelessly strolled from the chamber where he had been sitting into the kitchen. There the hostess was busy in her culinary labours, while near the blazing fire sat a girl about thirteen years old, pale, haggard, and shivering in an ague fit. John Holt, though a "ne'er do weel," and a wild impetuous fellow was not without the instinct of a compassionate heart. He asked many questions concerning the malady of the young girl as she moaned and rocked herself in the warmth of the ruddy embers. The mother replied that for a year her daughter had been stricken by the ague, that the labour of the doctors trying to cure her had been in vain, and that their charges had nearly brought the fortunes of the house to ruin.

The young student having listened to the story of the mother's misfortune, then spoke in contemptuous terms of doctors all round, bade her take courage and be of good cheer, for [Pg 217] he was acquainted with a specific that would speedily take away her daughter's ague. "Indeed," said Holt, "you need be under no further concern, for you may assure yourself the girl shall never have another fit." Taking a piece of parchment from his breast pocket, he with much gravity and deliberation proceeded to inscribe some Greek characters on the scrap, and having concluded his work, charged the mother to bind the parchment upon her daughter's wrist, allowing it to remain there until the ague departed. By some strange coincidence, or by the effects wrought upon the sympathies of the girl at the appearance and touch of the supposed charm, her ague did depart, and returned no more, at least not during the week John Holt remained the guest of mine hostess.

When he deemed it prudent or convenient to depart, he asked for his bill with that confidence so often masking the demeanour of the bold adventurer reduced to impecuniosity. But the hostess, smiling and embarrassed, said she could make no demand for payment, and further added that she rather felt in the position of one owing something, than as one having something to receive. Indeed, she expressed sorrowfully that she could in no way compensate her guest for the miraculous cure which he had wrought, and that had she but known him sooner the expense of forty pounds would not have been swallowed up by the *posse* of useless doctors. Overcome by the profuse thanks and grateful acknowledgments of his hostess John Holt condescended to waive paying his week's bill, and departed with much hilarity on his journey.

As months and years rolled away, the incidents of a busy life and the assiduous practice of his profession crowded out of John Holt's memory the recollection of his strange and facetious adventure at the hostelry on the Oxford road. Holt's habits changed. He became the wise and impartial judge, so admirable and so competent, that even his stern Tory father (spite of the son's Liberal politics) grew proud of the man who in his youthful career at Oxford had been the wildest of the wild, and the most erring of the erring. The years have gone on, and when we turn again to John Holt, he is approaching his sixtieth year. The scene is still in the county of Oxford, but this time in one of the principal towns. The Summer Assizes are being held, and the judges are sitting in all wonted solemnity and state. In the [Pg 218] Criminal Court a cause of unusual interest is being heard.

At the bar there stands a poor, miserable and decrepit old woman. As she looks at the grave and dignified judge she shakes with terror. The causes of her fear are solemn and significant, for she is about to be tried for her life, on the charge of being a witch. In those days of which I am writing, there existed a terrible superstition in the popular mind concerning witchcraft, believed as it was to be the crime of all others the most destructive to man and the most impious in the sight of God. The comely, dignified and shrewd-eyed judge excites the keenest interest in the crowded court, for he is one of the "men of mark" of his age, the profound lawyer, the incorruptible dispenser of justice, and the champion of truth and freedom.

Witnesses are called. They give their evidence in a plain unpretentious manner, and it is certain that they possess a firm faith in what they allege against the miserable prisoner. The principal accusation against her is that she holds in her possession a potent and mysterious charm. It enables her to spread disease, or to cure it, and it is further stated that she has lately been detected using it. "Has anybody seen it?" inquires the judge. "Yes, please you,

my lord, and it is now here ready to be produced." His lordship directs that it shall be handed to him, and his order is obeyed. Behold! nothing but a dirty ball wrapped round with rag and pack-thread. Removing these, he discovers a scrap of stained and time-worn parchment inscribed with characters in his own handwriting. Chief Justice Holt, after the lapse of forty years, recognises the Greek letters which he had scrawled in the inn kitchen situate on the Oxford road.

Deep silence reigns in the crowded court-house, and every eye is turned on the judge. Lifting his head from his hands, in which it had been buried for a few moments, he says to the jury,—

"Gentlemen, I must now relate an incident of my life which ill-suits my position. To conceal that incident would be to increase the awful folly which I must atone. Did I conceal that folly of which I was guilty, I should endanger innocence and countenance superstition. This so-called charm which these poor ignorant people suppose to have the power of life and death is a senseless piece of parchment, on which with my own hand I wrote and gave the poor [Pg 219] woman. This poor woman for no other reason stands before me accused of witchcraft." Chief Justice Holt then narrated the whole story of his adventure in his early years at the woman's hostelry on the Oxford road, and the recital produced such an effect upon the minds of the jury that his old hostess was not only acquitted, but was one of the last persons tried for the crime of witchcraft in this country.

I turn to another country and to incidents enveloped in a brighter and pleasanter atmosphere. Readers of the older French literature are familiar with the notes, verses, and dramas of Alexis Piron. The Burgundian *bon-vivant* knew many adventures and much impecuniosity; but notwithstanding Fortune's buffets he retained "a revenue of good spirits," and when turned fifty years of age he participated in a bit of romance.

One evening after supper he went to the shop of a grocer, Gallet, a song-writer and boon companion. A female entered the shop and asked for some coffee and matches. Gallet was away, so the poet undertook to serve the lady, saying to her, "Is that all you want?" The grocer entering added, "Mademoiselle ought to have a husband in the bargain." "Excellent," said Piron, "if the damsel will take up with any kind of wood for her arrow." A blush suffused the lady's cheeks, and she departed without making rejoinder.

Next morning she visited the poet. "Monsieur," said she with trepidation, "we are two children of Burgundy. I have long wanted to see a man of so much wit, and having learned yesterday that it was you with whom I had to do in M. Gallet's shop, I have come to-day without ceremony to pay you a visit. How weary you must grow here! I was very much afraid of finding some handsome lady from the theatre, but, heaven be praised!"—with a glance at the extreme poverty of his surroundings—"you live like a Trappist. Have you never thought of making an end of this?" Said Piron: "I leave the care of that to la Camarde; but if you please, what do you mean?" "I wish to say, have you ever thought of marriage?" "Not much. Mademoiselle, pray sit down while I light the fire." "You don't know, Monsieur Piron! it will make you laugh." "So much the worse." "I shall speak plainly. If your heart, has the same sentiment as mine"—the poet was wonder-stricken, and looked at the lady in silence—"in a word, Monsieur Piron, I come to offer you my hand and heart, not forgetting my life-annuity [Pg 220] of two thousand livres."

The poet controlled his merry temper, and was touched when he thought what a compassionate friend had been vouchsafed to him. He saw the woman's eyes moist with tears, and he embraced her. "I leave to you," said he, "all the preparations for the wedding. Gallet will write the epithalamium." "You will make me, Monsieur Piron, the happiest person in the world I did not hope for so happy a conclusion, for—I do not wish to conceal anything from you—I am *fifty-five*!" "Well," said Piron, with a slight shrug, "we have over a hundred years between us. We would have done well to have met sooner."

This marriage took place amid festivity. The old maid had a good heart and an amiable temper. She proved a faithful sister, friend, and servant to Piron. He had aromatic coffee in the morning, the beverage being all the more palatable, as it was accompanied by the maker's cheerful gossip in the chimney-corner. Madame Piron expressed herself enthusiastically about her husband's writings, and Piron felt no longer alone, was able to refuse going out to dinner in bad weather, and had a crown in his pocket when he sauntered in the sunshine. He was well off enough to occasionally give alms, and at last he could receive friends at his hearth. This episode in the life of Piron is one of the brightest romances of impecuniosity.

Scarcely less happy is an anecdote of Quin the actor, who, if he said many spiteful things, was not incapable of a generous action. James Thomson, another of the brotherhood of genius, found himself immured in a sponging-house. In his dolorous and solitary condition he was one evening surprised by a visit from Quin. They cracked a bottle, and as the night wore away a choice supper was served by one of the attendants of the prison. Thomson, a sensitive nervous man, partook of the dishes with indifferent appetite, for his thoughts wandered to the payment of the bill. Another bottle of claret was drunk, and the visitor rose to depart. "Mr. Thomson," said Quin, "before I go, let me say that there is an account between us." Thomson was alarmed, and stammered out that he was unaware of any obligations. "They are mine," replied Quin. "I have received so much delight from the writings of James Thomson, that I consider myself his debtor at least for a hundred pounds."

Saying this, he placed a note for that amount on the table, shook the astonished poet by the hand, and bowed himself out. [Pg 221]

I will conclude the selections of romantic impecuniosity with the case of Thomas De Quincey, who, according to some authorities, being afraid of an oral examination at Oxford College, left the university by stealth and wandered away, his stock of money being scant and his whereabouts quite unknown to his friends. He wandered about Denbighshire, Merionethshire, and Carnarvonshire. Lodging at some place, De Quincey took affront at something said by a landlady, and abruptly left his quarters. In his “Confessions of an Opium Eater” he says,—

> “This leaving the lodgings turned out a very unfortunate occurrence for me, because living henceforward at inns, I was drained of my money very rapidly. In a fortnight I was reduced to short allowance, that is I could allow myself only one meal a day. From the keen appetite produced by constant exercise and mountain air acting on a youthful stomach I soon began to suffer greatly on this slender regimen, for the single meal which I could venture to order was coffee or tea. This, however, was at length withdrawn, and afterwards so long as I remained in Wales I subsisted either on blackberries, hips, haws, etc., or on the usual hospitalities which I now and then received for such little services as I had an opportunity of rendering. Sometimes I wrote letters of business for cottagers who happened to have relations in Liverpool or London. More often I wrote love-letters to their sweethearts for young women who had lived as servants in Shrewsbury or any other towns on the English border. On all such occasions I gave great satisfaction to my humble friends, and was generally treated with hospitality; and once in particular near the village of Llan-y-styndw (or some such name), in a sequestered part of Merionethshire, I was entertained for upwards of three days by a family of young people with an affectionate and fraternal kindness that left an impression upon my heart not yet impaired. The family consisted at that time of four sisters and three brothers, all grown up, and all remarkable for elegance and delicacy of manners. So much beauty and so much native good breeding and refinement I do not remember to have seen before or since, in any cottage, except once or twice in Westmoreland and Devonshire. They spoke English, an accomplishment not often met with in so many members of one family, especially in villages remote from the high road. There I wrote, in my first introduction, a letter about prize-money for one of the brothers, who had served on board an English man-of-war, and more privately, two love-letters for two of the sisters. They were both interesting-looking girls, and one of uncommon loveliness. In the midst of their confusion and blushes whilst dictating, or rather giving me general instructions, it did not require any great penetration to discover that what they wished was “that their letters should be as kind as was consistent with proper maidenly pride.” I continued so to temper my expressions as to reconcile the gratification of both feelings, and [Pg 222] they were as much pleased with the way in which I expressed their thoughts as, in their simplicity, they were astonished at my having so readily discovered them. The reception one meets with from the women of a family generally determines the tenor of one’s whole entertainment. In this case I had discharged my confidential duties as secretary so much to the general satisfaction, perhaps also amusing them with my conversation, that I was pressed to stay with a cordiality which I had little inclination to resist. I slept with the brothers, the only unoccupied bed standing in the apartment of the young women; but in all other points they treated me with a respect not usually paid to purses as light as mine, as if my scholarship were sufficient evidence that I was of gentle blood.”

Farther on he says,—

> “The only friend I had in this strange poverty of mine on first coming to London was a young woman. She was one of that unhappy class who belong to the outcasts and pariahs of our female population. For many weeks I had walked at night with this poor friendless girl up and down Oxford Street, or had rested with her on steps, or under the shelter of porticoes. One night when we were pacing slowly along Oxford Street, and after a day when I had felt unusually ill and faint, I requested her to turn off with me into Soho Square. Thither we went, and we sat down on the steps of a house which to this hour I never pass without a pang of grief and an inner act of homage to the spirit of the unhappy girl in memory of the noble act she performed. Suddenly as we sat I grew much worse: I had been leaning my head against her bosom. I sank from her arms and fell backwards on the steps. Uttering a cry of terror, but without a moment’s delay, she ran off into Oxford Street, and in less time than could be imagined returned to me with a glass of port wine and spices that acted upon my empty stomach, which at that time would have rejected all solid food, with an instantaneous power of restoration, and for this glass the generous girl without a murmur paid out of her own humble purse, at a time, be it remembered, when she had scarcely wherewithal to purchase

the bare necessaries of life, and when she could have no reason to expect that I should ever be able to reimburse her."

I will conclude this chapter with two most truly remarkable stories. The first is one which Sir Walter Scott used to relate with his own inimitable powers of story-telling, and which, as the victim was his own cousin, the narrative on the lips of the novelist ever excited profound interest in the minds of listeners. It would seem that as a midshipman his cousin Watty was extremely popular on ship-board and on shore. He was a bit of a rip, but generous to a fault, handsome, merry and reckless. After one memorable long voyage he put in with others at Portsmouth, and enjoyed those roysterings, love passages, tavern pleasures, and adventures [Pg 223] so dear to the heart of "Jack ashore." With a couple of companions Watty Scott was in the unenviable position of being left high and dry on the strand of impecuniosity. Moreover the three jolly sailors had run up an immense bill at a tavern on the Point, the settlement of which haunted them by day and by night. In their recklessness, almost amounting to despair, they still went on living high, and steeping recollection of their liabilities in the fumes of baccy and the odours of the flowing bowl.

At last came the fatal and imperative orders from official quarters that they must "ship off." Summoning up their best graces and most insinuating powers of expression in the way of eloquence, they sought an interview with their hostess, and acquainted her with their foolish but unfortunate position; to which account she listened with attention and deep interest. She was informed not only of their perfect inability to meet the bill, but that in a short period they were bound to be on board ship. Their caterer turned a deaf ear to the revelation of their poverty, and in the most virago-like manner fiercely informed them "that they could not budge an inch." The sailors pleaded in earnest tones for her mercy, but in the course of an hour they found themselves guarded by bailiffs, and in one of the parlours of the hostelry the three youths, for they were nothing more, sat in moody contemplation of their impending disgrace.

Towards evening their creditor sought them with a less fierce aspect and uttered words less bitter and explosive than those of which she had delivered herself in the morning. She told her debtors she would give them a chance, and proposed a plan by which her claim could be cancelled. The sailors were told by her that she was a lone woman and had long wanted a marriage certificate "to give her a respectable position in her calling," that one of them must marry her—which one she didn't care a curse—but by all that was holy if she didn't marry one of them, all three should be packed off to gaol, and the ship must go without them. Remonstrance, promises to pay in a few months, the unreasonableness of the request, in fact everything said by the discomfited sailors was in vain. It was impossible to pacify her, and the victims of impecuniosity saw that the woman's proposal was the only means of escaping from disgrace and humiliation. After taking counsel among themselves, the three sailors drew lots for the hymeneal martyrdom, and the ill-luck fell on Watty Scott. Next morning the [Pg 224] midshipman and the landlady were spliced, and returned to the tavern, where a rich and liberal dinner awaited the newly married couple and the two fortunate companions of the bridegroom; and in the afternoon the three sailors were tumbled into a wherry, and were soon aboard ship. The marriage was kept a secret, and the first to reveal it was Watty Scott, who one day at a town in Jamaica, reading a newspaper, saw an account of a trial for murder and robbery in connection with a Portsmouth tavern, and having read all particulars, exclaimed, "Thank God, my wife's hanged!"

The other anecdote is more appalling in detail than anything I can remember, and is recorded of a German nobleman who was a contemporary of the first Napoleon.

The story opens in the solitary chamber of a dilapidated château situated on the skirts of the Black Forest in Germany. In a corner of the chamber sits a young man of aristocratic mien and military garb, his face buried in his hands, and his whole demeanour indicating the most intense hopelessness and sorrow. The courtyard and gardens of the château, as they may be seen from the windows of the room in which the young man has sunk upon a seat, are everywhere pervaded by an air of desolation. Tokens of past opulence and taste may be observed in dismantled and untended flower-beds, fallen vases and statues, and in the unhinged and rusting iron gates. Forlorn as is the appearance of the interior and exterior of the once beautiful château, it is not more forlorn and desolate than the heart of the young soldier, sole tenant of the silent and deserted chamber. The young man's history had been most melancholy. His mother, harshly used by the man who at the altar had sworn to love and cherish her, had died when he was only nineteen years of age. Her death was caused by a broken heart, and the son, finding that he held no place in the esteem or affections of the surviving parent, gladly accepted the offer of a commission in an Austrian company of hussars.

After five years of hard and active service, respite and tranquil leisure fell to the lot of the young soldier, and with the instincts of a loyal and affectionate heart, he set out in the direction of his father's residence on horseback, attended by his ordinary military servant.

On the second day's journey while going in the direction of the parental home he found [Pg 225] himself benighted in the midst of the Black Forest. It was a perilous and wearisome journey, which, however, found relief by the appearance of lights in what seemed to be some kind of human habitation.

It proved to be a rough and isolated inn, where the officer and his orderly were soon housed,

after accommodation had been found for their horses. Everything about the cabaret was rough, uncomfortable, and unprepossessing. The only man in attendance was of ruffianly and sinister aspect. The orderly after supper was requested by his master to sleep (ready for call) near the horses under the manger in the stable, and afterwards the officer (carefully concealing a pair of pistols under his cloak) requested to be shown to his sleeping apartment, which proved to be little better than a loft. He placed the oil lamp on a chair, laid his sword by it, and threw himself down on the rude pallet-bed without taking off his clothes. Not feeling sleepy he turned his pillow, and found that it was stained with blood recently shed, and which strengthening the apprehensions formed on his entrance into the house, at once impelled him to cock his pistols and draw his sword.

For an hour or two the house seemed to be wrapped in profound silence, and just as the wearied guest found that drowsiness was stealing over him he cast his eyes across the room and noticed that a portion of the flooring heaved and rose. The officer crept from the bed and stood sword in hand watching a trap-door which had been quietly raised by a hand. With all the strength he could command and with all the quickness he could exercise he smote the hand, when the trap closed, and beneath it he heard a smothered cry. Hurrying down stairs, he reached the front door, unbarred it, made his way to the stable, and roused the servant. In a short time master and man were galloping away on the road, and the rest of their journey was secure and without adventure. On the third day he reached the château of his father. It was the soldier’s birthplace, and his heart filled with grief when he saw that his once-loved home was deserted and seemingly tenantless. Decay seemed to have invaded everything. No summons awaited their thundering knocks at the hall-door, but at one of the windows could be seen the pallid, ghastly visage of a man watching. Master and man made a forcible entry into the house, and sought the room at the window of which had peered the [Pg 226] strange and repulsive face. On entering the room the young soldier recognised his father, haggard and scowling, who when he saw his son’s extended hand held up a mutilated stump and said, “That’s your answer.” The father, ruined by reckless living, had, owing to his impecuniosity, joined a lawless gang frequenting the cabaret, and had sought to rob and murder his own son.

THE END

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Footnotes:

[1] The elder D’Israeli in summing up the character of this extraordinary man, who left behind him more than 6000 MSS., says, “A scholar of great acquirements and of no mean genius; hardy and inventive, eloquent and witty; he might have been an ornament to literature, which he made ridiculous; and the pride of the pulpit which he so egregiously disgraced; but having blunted and worn out that interior feeling which is the instinct of the good man, and the wisdom of the wise, there was no balance in his passions, and the decorum of life was sacrificed to its selfishness. He condescended to live on the follies of the people, and his sordid nature had changed him till he crept, ‘licking the dust with the serpent.’”

[2] Many struggles had to be endured, however, before this pinnacle of prosperity was attained.

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