

THE  
VILLAGE COQUETTE;  
A NOVEL,  
IN THREE VOLUMES.

*BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUCH IS THE WORLD."*

VOL. II.

Women, like princes, find no real friends:  
All who approach them their own ends pursue:  
Lovers and ministers are never true.  
Hence oft from reason heedless beauty strays,  
And the most trusted guide the most betrays:  
Hence by fond dreams of fancy'd pow'r amus'd,  
When most you tyrannize, you're most abus'd.—LITTLETON.

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THE  
VILLAGE COQUETTE.

CHAPTER I.

“Yes, Sir,” reply’d the flattering dame,  
“This form confesses whence it came;  
But dear variety, you know,  
Can make us pomp and pride forego.  
My name is VANITY; I sway  
The utmost islands of the sea;  
Within my court all honour centres;  
I raise the meanest soul that enters;  
Endow with latent gifts and graces,  
And model fools for posts and places.  
As VANITY appoints at pleasure,  
The world receives its weight and measure;  
Hence all the grand concerns of life,  
Joys, care, plagues, passions, peace, and strife.”

FABLE OF LOVE AND VANITY.

COLONEL Ednor, during his journey to London, was a prey to disappointment and rage. That a little village rustic should refuse his splendid offer, was mortifying beyond endurance. He had even ventured a bet upon his success with Mary. As to the old hag, Judy, as he called her, he was astonished at the power she had displayed in dismissing him from her hut. Once or twice he thought of returning to Silvershoe; but he at length resolved on consoling himself with Susan Cowslip, instead of Mary. She, he thought, would gladly embrace an opportunity of seeing London.

To her, therefore, he wrote one of those unmeaning tinsel epistles, which he so well knew how to pen, and by means of which he had captivated more than one female heart.

Susan very willingly obeyed his summons, for the life she had lately led at home was enough to wear out a more placid spirit than hers; besides, she liked Colonel Ednor, and had flattered herself he was equally attached to her. The discovery, therefore, of his plans with regard to Mary, and the assistance she gave, which was indeed but small, being confined to mere verbal communications as to Mary’s flirtation, arose from jealousy, and the disappointment of her own hopes in that quarter.

To London, therefore, she went immediately on the eve of Mary’s wedding, and for a time she revelled it bravely as the best; but Colonel Ednor was inconstancy itself. Before one year had elapsed he began to devise means of getting rid of her *genteelly*. Of all the amusements in which Susan found most delight, a play was the first in her estimation. Colonel Ednor had indulged this propensity, and taken her to one or other of the theatres three or four times a-week, till at last poor Susan, who had a susceptible

heart, became quite enamoured of plays and actors, and she often declared that she thought a player's life must be one of the happiest in existence.

Her conversation and reading were now entirely devoted to dramatic subjects, and Colonel Ednor seconded this inclination and taste upon all occasions, more particularly as he observed a growing attachment in his mistress, which she by no means attempted to conceal, for one of the principal performers, who then nightly trod the boards of Drury.

The performer in question being a bachelor, Susan's love for him was not singular, as many boarding-school and other misses had often been heard to speak of him with rapture, and to protest "they would give the world to be his wife;" and this gentleman, not entirely unconscious of his wonderful attractions, performed a principal part in the sleeping and waking dreams of at least a hundred love-sick damsels.

Colonel Ednor listened with pleasure to Susan's unqualified praises of the personal beauty and professional excellence of this theatrical hero, as he thereby thought she might by some means be induced to change her protector, and an opportunity soon occurred, which appeared to favour his unworthy intentions.

One morning at breakfast, after Susan had lavished her usual praises on the favoured performer, she suddenly broke out in the following lines of a song, which her Thespian Adonis, as Inkle, had sung the night before, in company with the fond and unsuspecting Yarico:

I'll journey with thee, love, to where the land  
narrows,  
And fling all my cares at my back with my  
arrows.

As she sung these beautiful lines with considerable pathos, Ednor thought he had now an opportunity of sounding the state of her mind as to future prospects, and this opportunity he did not neglect.

"Susan, my dear," said he, "you sing well, and seem to have a great *penchant* for the stage; how would you like to be a performer?"

Susan blushed at the compliment, but answered, "I should like it of all things."

"Well," replied Ednor, "you have talents, and I doubt not but I shall be able to introduce you to one of the managers; what do you think of it?"

Susan's heart went pit-a-pat at the idea of being "caressed, fondled, and admired" by her Drury enamorado, and she quickly answered, "If you do apply, I hope it will be at Drury-Lane; I should so like to come out in the character of Juliet to Mr. Rock's Romeo, he is such a charming man."

"Don't trot so fast, my dear," said Ednor, "you must first learn to walk before you attempt to run; it will never do to think of performing so high a character, until you are accustomed to the stage."

Ednor's opinion of Susan's abilities was a damper to her feelings; but after a considerable pause, during which she sadly surveyed the ruin of her air-built castle, so suddenly blown to atoms by the breath of her lover, she recovered her serenity, and was still cheered by the idea of sitting in the same green-room, and breathing the same air with the new object of her adoration.

She was at length conscious of the justice of the Colonel's remarks, though rather displeased at his depreciation of her talents, and she mournfully replied, "Well, do as you please, but be sure to apply at Drury-lane."

"I will, my dear," said Ednor, quite delighted at the prospect of so honourably disposing of poor Susan; "and as soon as my curricule is ready, I will drive thither. I shall not dine at home today, but Thomas shall bring you a note of my success. You can amuse yourself till the evening in turning over some of those plays, and when I return you can inform me how far you think yourself capable of supporting some of your favourite characters."

We shall leave Susan to her studies, or rather meditations, on the new scenes she was about to enter. During the day many of the best dramatic works were opened, and almost as soon shut, for her mind was too intent on the dazzling figure she should cut on her first appearance, to overburthen her memory with love speeches, ever so pathetic or moving on other occasions. Accordingly the whole day was spent alternately at her toilette, and hastily glancing over lists of *Dramatis Personæ*.

Meantime Colonel Ednor drove to that spot which a certain *Dramatic Buffettière* has celebrated as the "luxuriant garden, where flourish abundance of cabbages and comedians."

Having alighted at the stage-door of one of those unwieldy buildings whose clumsy exterior reminds the foreigner of high-walled nunneries, rather than the magnificent temples of Apollo and the Muses, Colonel Ednor told a messenger to carry his card and compliments to Mr. Flexible, the manager, desiring to be admitted immediately.

The manager, who was busily engaged in the rehearsal of one of those *instructive* lessons which are prepared with so much cost and skill for the amusement of holiday urchins,—a Christmas pantomime,—was not in the best humour at being disturbed in his occupation; but having some recollection of seeing the name on the card presented to him in the annals of box visitors, he thought it probable that an application for a private box, for the remainder of the season, might be the cause of the Colonel's visit.

With this idea, having smoothed the wrinkles of his displeasure, and put on "the copy of a countenance," he entered the ante-room where Ednor sat, bowing and smirking as he advanced. After exchanging mutual compliments of health and opinions regarding the state of the weather, Ednor opened his business to the theatrical autocrat, whose countenance now became for a moment unmasked; when he perceived that, instead of increasing the company before the curtain, Ednor was disposed to add to the already too numerous one behind it.

Flexible was, however, too much a man of the world, to be long in doubt as to his future mode of conduct: the muscles of his face soon regained their usual placidity, and he smirked as before. Having heard his visiter to an end, he professed his "extreme readiness to oblige, by instantly enlisting in his corps a lady of Colonel Ednor's recommendation, but he was exceedingly sorry to say that, at the present moment, his company was so entirely full that he really had it not in his power to avail himself of talents which, he was sure, from the quarter whence they were recommended, must, in the highest degree, prove lucrative to whatever establishment had the honour of exhibiting them. However, during the next recess, if Colonel Ednor would do him the honour of communicating on the subject, he had no doubt of being able to provide some

opening for the fair debutante; in the mean time, it was absolutely impossible to do honour to one half of the recommendations which he was daily in the habit of receiving from *many of his friends among the nobility and gentry.*”

Colonel Ednor’s countenance now fell in its turn, and he began to reflect, like the dairy-maid who had counted her chickens before they were hatched; with an air of chagrin he therefore rose to depart, when Mr. Flexible, unwilling to disoblige a gentleman who might at some future time oblige in return, asked him, whether he had applied at the other house.

On receiving an answer in the negative, he replied, bowing at the same time, “I feel myself greatly honoured by the preference you have been pleased to give our establishment, but I would certainly advise you to make an application at the other house; they are not so full as we are, and I think the young lady would stand a great chance of an engagement.”

Ednor expressed his thanks for Mr. Flexible’s politeness, and took his leave.

No sooner had Colonel Ednor disappeared than the suppressed rage of the manager broke forth upon the unfortunate messenger, for permitting him to be at home to Colonel Ednor, threatening, in the most abusive language, to dismiss him from the theatre if he again admitted a stranger during the hours of rehearsal.

Colonel Ednor, in the mean time, soon introduced himself to the manager of the other house. He found him seated in his armed chair on the stage, listening with deep attention to the actors, who were then rehearsing the fourth act of a new tragedy.

When this was over Colonel Ednor announced his business, hinting at the same time, as he had done to Mr. Flexible, that “Miss Susan Cowslip, whose person and talents were far beyond mediocrity, was at present *under his protection*, and that he wished to dispose of her as genteelly as possible.”

Mr. Sternhold patiently heard him to an end; and then pushing back his chair, in order to have a proper survey of Ednor’s person; he looked him full in the face, and mildly said—“And so, Sir, you wish her to come upon the stage?”

“I do, Sir,” replied the Colonel, “and as her inclination is so bent upon it, I think she would succeed.”

“You do,” resumed Sternhold, “then tell Miss Susan Cowslip, from me, that she is a fool, and *her protector*, as you call yourself, a scoundrel. Prompter! begin the fifth act.”

Colonel Ednor was thunderstruck at this abrupt and apparently rude termination of the conference; but having recovered himself a little, and being unwilling to put up with so glaring an affront before so many spectators as were there present, and who must have overheard the epithets which Sternhold had applied to himself and his mistress, asked for an explanation of the manager’s words.

Sternhold replied—“Sir, you are not the first villain whom I have known, to seduce from her parents’ roof a foolish unsuspecting girl; and when your diabolical passion has been satiated, to abandon her to complete ruin: for that you are amenable to God and the laws, and to them I leave you, hoping they will do you ample justice. But for insulting me, in requiring my connivance to disgrace the profession to which I belong, by admitting a cast-off-mistress among its members, the only apology you can make is to betake yourself instantly to the street. Holla, two of you, scene-shifters, descend and show this gentleman the door.”

Colonel Ednor now offered to exchange cards, saying, "I must have some *further* explanation on this subject, Sir, and you will repent this insulting rudeness to a gentleman, depend upon't."

"What! you mean to challenge me, do you? Ladies and gentlemen, I call you all to witness; and you, John, run to Bow-street, and give my compliments to the sitting magistrate, tell him to send two of his stoutest thief-catchers here directly. You will find, Sir," continued Sternhold, turning to Colonel Ednor, "that I always fight duels by deputy."

Ednor now saw that it was time for him to make his exit; accordingly, bowing to the performers, who had crowded round, he said to the manager, "I will save you any further trouble, Sir, *for the present.*"

Overcome with chagrin and vexation, not so much on being disappointed in disposing of Susan, as enraged at Sternhold's reception of him; he muttered vengeance as he traversed the corridors; and, on his arrival in the open air, he bounded at one spring from the pavement, and seated himself in his curricule.

His groom, who saw the flush of rage and disappointment mantle on his master's cheek, humbly ventured to ask if any thing were the matter, as he shrunk to one side to make room for him. "Silence, rascal!" said Colonel Ednor, "give me the reins."

Thomas, in silence, handed the whip and reins to his master, who instantly began flogging the poor horses at such a rate as to excite the indignation of the passengers. The noble animals, who were thus abused, became restive; and, at last, they darted forwards with such velocity as to render it impossible to curb them. Ednor now saw that he had too far tried the dangerous experiment of wreaking the rage due to a fellow mortal upon animals naturally gentle, but which, when treated with cruelty, take the only method of revenge in their power, that of breaking their driver's neck.

Colonel Ednor's efforts to check them did but accelerate their speed, and they continued their course as if they had been borne on the wings of the wind. The danger every instant became greater, and, in despair, the Colonel threw up the reins, and gave himself up to the contemplation of inevitable destruction.

Meantime the high-blooded animals, reckless of the feelings of their master, still continued to dash along on their portentous course, till arriving at the corner of a narrow street, they, as if by previous consent, suddenly rushed against one of those metallic posts, which are every where seen in London, to imitate cannon placed perpendicularly on the verge of the pavements. The curricule was splintered into atoms, and its contents thrown by the shock to a distance of several yards. The horses, as if they were conscious of having sufficiently punished their tyrant, now stopped, and quietly suffered themselves to be unharnessed.

The populace crowded round Colonel Ednor and his groom; and though many of them had witnessed the cruelty of the unfortunate Ednor, yet, with that national humanity which is always ready to assist even the greatest malefactors in distress, they eagerly pressed forward to raise the senseless victim of his own ungovernable passions. The groom was at first stunned by his fall, but, except a sprain, his limbs were sound, for his master fell under him. Colonel Ednor, however, presented a most melancholy spectacle, for he bled profusely, and was to all appearance lifeless. He was placed upon a shutter belonging to an adjoining shop-window, and in that state was conveyed to his home.

Susan's feelings may be more easily imagined than described; her grief was, indeed, most clamorous, and the surgeon was obliged to compel her to quit the room, before he commenced those painful operations which the mangled state of his patient required.

Susan being obliged to withdraw, like many other mortals, whose feelings are strongly excited by the sudden exhibition of distress, gradually became calm, when she was removed from a contemplation of the cause of her affliction; and when she retired to rest, she sunk into a slumber, in which the cares and delights of this world were equally forgotten. It was not till the following morning that she was again roused, when the catastrophe of the preceding day presented itself to her imagination; but the extent of her misfortune (if the loss of Colonel Ednor could be called a misfortune) she had yet to learn.

The woman servant who waited on poor Susan had a most dismal tale to relate, in doing which she worked on the unfortunate girl's feelings till she became delirious at the recital. The sum total of it was this: Colonel Ednor was dangerously ill, and had been removed in a chair from his furnished lodgings, (for such was the residence he occupied with Susan), to the house of his brother, in another part of London. Thither Susan was told she could not follow him; but she might keep herself perfectly at ease, as the gentleman would certainly provide for her. Next day the brother called, and having summoned the Colonel's servants to his presence, paid them what arrears of wages were due; adding, "that as the Colonel would in future live with him their services were unnecessary."

Susan being also summoned, obeyed, and appeared in great affliction; she was speedily told, she must depart like the others; but this dreadful mandate was softened by a present of twenty guineas, and permission to take with her whatever property she possessed, with a promise of protection till she was comfortably settled.

Accordingly poor Susan prepared her baggage with all speed, and removed to a lodging in her neighbourhood, which her maid had prepared for her.

On the third day after this interview, as Susan sat musing on her present and future life, the past fraught with acts of disobedience towards her afflicted parents, and the future loaded with unknown ills, Colonel Ednor's brother was announced. Having made inquiries concerning her health and future views, he apologized for being unable to advance them further, than by presenting her with fifty guineas. He told her, that he was sorry his brother's affairs were in great disorder, and many of his creditors clamorous in consequence of the injury he had done them; and, therefore, that she must consider the sum he now presented her with, as the last she must expect to receive.

There was a time when the possession of fifty guineas would have appeared, in Susan's eyes, an inexhaustible fund; but her ideas had been greatly enlarged, since she accepted Colonel Ednor's splendid offering of a guinea to buy her a gown.

She sighed deeply as she contemplated her future destiny, and then ventured to mention her predilection for a theatrical life.

Mr. Ednor shook his head, but he said it would not be his business to discourage her; he would always be glad to hear of her welfare; and then, after some remarks irrelevant to the subject of the stage, he took his leave.

Susan's reflections after his departure were not of the most agreeable cast; she saw her hopes of fame suddenly nipped in the bud, and her air-built theatrical castles

vanish into airy nothing. She still held the money in her hand, at which ever and anon she looked, when apprehensions of another kind assailed her.

What would become of her when that should fail? Cowslip-farm presented itself to her imagination. But dared she return to her native village? A tear accompanied the fervent wish that she had never listened to the unfortunate Ednor.

To return to Silvershoe was impossible; her father was a stern man, and her mother a punctilious advocate for *honest* women. And wo betide the luckless wight who came within her jurisdiction, that had forfeited that title, in her acceptance of the words, *honest woman*.

Susan in a moment glanced the reception she would experience, and, with a shudder, resolved to remain in London, and try to procure an engagement at one of the theatres. In short, any alternative was better than braving the wrath of her parents, and the contempt of her former companions.

Again she looked at her money, and, with another sigh, calculated on the length of time it would provide for her wants. Her present abode was expensive, and she prudently resolved on seeking a more humble dwelling. There was also another curtailment she deemed necessary, in order to complete her plan of economy, namely, the dismissal of her maid-servant. With much frankness, therefore, she acquainted the girl, that she must in future dispense with her services; and having made her a small present, in addition to her wages, they parted with mutual regret, the girl at quitting so kind a mistress, and Susan at being now left by the only person in London to whom she could open her heart.

This important affair being settled, Susan's next thought was the choice of a name, under which to appear at her new lodging; and, after ransacking the *Dramatis Personæ* of all the popular plays of the day, she fixed upon that of Beverley; and that very evening removed to a second floor, on the Surrey side of Westminster Bridge, under the assumed name of Miss Susan Amelia Beverley.

## CHAPTER II.

'Tis a strange species of madness;  
Probably she's play mad.

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE.

IN the first floor of Susan's new abode lived a gentleman and his wife, who were employed at one of the minor theatres in the metropolis. Susan now fancied that she was in a fair way to gratify the first wish of her heart, namely, that of commencing a theatrical life; and soon after her arrival, through the medium of the landlady, she invited Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap to dine and sup with her, on the following Sunday,

For Sunday shone no sabbath-day to her.

Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap were pleased with *Miss Beverley's* conversation, and they encouraged her in her favourite pursuit. This circumstance won poor Susan's heart, and her expressions of friendship and cordiality towards her new friends, were warm and sincere. They, on their part, were no less friendly in their protestations, and in the course of *half an hour* they vowed reciprocal attachment and perpetual amity.

During the evening Mrs. Claptrap sung a few songs, which, however agreeably executed, Susan wished at an end, that she herself might have an opportunity of *shewing off*. But unconscious of Miss Beverley's desire to shine, Mrs. Claptrap contrived to keep up the *harmony* of the evening by a succession of songs, and Susan's efforts to put a stop to this unceasing melody did but prolong it; for when, by way of interruption, she asked if the gentlewoman knew such a song, Mrs. Claptrap replied, "Oh, yes! I was encored in it last Monday night, by such an audience. Let me see,—La, la, la—Ah! I have it now." And off she went for another quarter of an hour in grand style.

This was exceedingly provoking, more particularly as Mrs. Claptrap did not seem the least fatigued by her exertions to please the company, but returned to the charge with renewed vigour and spirits.

At length Mr. Claptrap interposed, and entreated Miss Beverley would, in her turn, favour them with a song. Mrs. Claptrap could do no less than second this request; but Susan, who had longed for this opportunity of displaying her musical talents, was now so agitated, that before she reached the end of the first line of

Is there a heart that never lov'd?

she stopped, and blushed, overwhelmed with confusion. In vain she looked towards Mrs. Claptrap for assistance; that lady had a most profound contempt for all who were not professional singers, and indeed for many who were so. She therefore, was not in the humour to sympathize with the timidity of Susan, or to dispel her tremors by one look of encouragement.

Her husband, however, possessing less envy, and more of the milk of human kindness, gave Susan the next word, and by a little well-timed flattery, restored her fluttering spirits to their usual tone. Her voice was exceedingly sweet, and in her native

village, next to Mary Woodbine, she had been esteemed the best singer; but she found from many of Mr. Claptrap's observations, that much was still to be learned. He, however, assured her, that with a little practice she would undoubtedly excel, and he encouraged her to cultivate that peculiar talent with diligence. His praises of her execution excited the envy of Mrs. Claptrap, though she apparently joined in the encomiums her husband so lavishly bestowed on the silly country girl, who was so anxious to become a stage-struck heroine.

Mr. Claptrap now asked Susan, if she had studied any of the tragic characters, and received an answer in the affirmative.

"Juliet," she said, "was her favourite," and Mr. Claptrap offered to stand up for Romeo, if she would recite the pensive speeches of the passionate Juliet in the garden scene.

With a beating heart Susan obeyed, and acquitted herself far beyond his expectation; but his wife, his *better* half, and better judge, saw many points which could be improved—many attitudes which were not theatrical, and many looks that were not sufficiently expressive.

"If, Miss Beverley, you will do me the favour to become a spectator," she added, "you will better perceive where you are defective; besides, I shall be very happy to assist you in this, or in any other character; for, from my experience and success, I consider myself bound to assist those who are beginning their theatrical career. Juliet, too, was always my favourite character. The attitudes and intonations of that lovely Italian have been my peculiar study."

Susan thanked Mrs. Claptrap for her disinterested offer, and prepared to listen with profound attention to the intonations of the lovely and delicate Juliet, personated by a veteran performer of five-and-forty. The lady Juliet was anxious to give the character of the Italian nymph every possible advantage, which a

Chair-lumber'd closet full six feet by nine,

could bestow; and, to heighten the *tout ensemble*, she placed a high chair upon a table, behind an old fashioned folding screen, which was to serve as a balcony. She then mounted the chair, and leaning her elbow upon the edge of the screen, and her cheek upon her elbow,

Sighed and look'd unutterable things.

Claptrap could not help smiling at his wife's vanity, but paid his address, and expressed his affections with all possible decorum to so antiquated a representative of the impassioned Juliet.

The reader, who doubtless considers the garden scene in the play as one of the *chef d'œuvres* of Shakespeare's powerful pen, will not be surprised that Mrs. Claptrap should be so far inspired by the sentiments of the author as to forget her years, and imagine that she was performing a part in one of those waking dreams peculiar to blooming youth.

The scene proceeded with considerable effect, and silence reigned around; save and except the simmering of the tea-kettle in the chimney-corner, and the snoring of Mrs. Claptrap's lap-dog, which was basking on the hearth-rug before the fire.

Susan was all attention, though she saw many things to be blamed, and few to be praised, in her instructress's enaction of Juliet; yet she contrived to compose her risible muscles, and for a length of time she chased the smile of criticism, by biting her lips most unmercifully. But, alas! the short cough, the averted eye, and the never-failing resort to a handkerchief, were of no avail, when Juliet, with much pains, contorted her features into what she deemed a pantomimic or dumb show expression of responsive sympathy to Romeo's tender passion. To Susan's imagination, however, the pathetic was supplanted by the ridiculous, and she construed Mrs. Claptrap's tender glance into a preparation for a hearty sneeze. At this eventful moment big with the fate and reputation of the inimitable Mrs. Claptrap, Susan's eyes met those of the kneeling Romeo. They spoke what he dared not further evince, through fear of certain connubial consequences; but the effect of this short visual communication between him and Susan was electric, the long suppressed titter burst forth, and Mr. Claptrap in vain endeavoured to avoid the same appalling misfortune. Like death, "it would come when it would come," and for one instant he allowed himself the indulgence of a smile.

This transitory pleasure was, indeed, *but* transitory, for again fixing his eyes on his *cara sposa*, he there saw the angry flash of indignation, that was a sort of "I promise to pay," which Romeo knew by experience would be "amply honoured" at a future opportunity.

On Susan Mrs. Claptrap cast a look of disdain, while she proceeded to enact her part with the utmost coolness, resolving to convince her audience that she was equally insensible to their applause and ridicule.

She soon, however, became absorbed in the character, and with increasing *energy* and *force*, recited the *tender* lines of Shakespeare, endeavouring to follow the rules of her great master, of "suiting the action to the word" in so marvellous a degree, that, as she repeated the following lines,

And all my fortunes at *thy foot* I'll lay,  
And follow thee, my love, throughout the world,

the screen gave way, and Juliet still leaning on it, tumbled down upon the tea-table, with a most tremendous crash.

The uproar occasioned by this *fracas* was general: for Susan shrieked, Juliet screamed, Romeo groaned, and the lap-dog being par-boiled by the contents of the tea-kettle, (by the skreen coming into contact with its spout) ran round the room, howling in the most piteous *counter tenor*.

Poor Romeo, who lay buried under the ruins of the balcony, the tea-table, and the fortunes of his wife, which she had thus laid at his feet, entreated in piteous accents that she would relieve him, by lightening his load, and removing her beauteous person from the screen, upon which she lay for a few seconds, astounded by her fall.

The room was soon filled by all the other inmates of the house, who were drawn to the scene of action, and gave such assistance as the exigencies of the circumstances demanded; but in vain they made inquiries as to the cause of the disaster, until the

prostrate Romeo, rescued from his premature tomb, whaggishly replied, looking archly at his wife, "It is only my Juliet, who, in her raptures, has taken a lover's leap from the balcony."

All things being restored to their former state (except the crockery), the remainder of the evening was spent in mutual accusation, apology, and forgiveness, whilst all contributed their assistance to alleviate the pain of the poor scalded *Pizarro's* sufferings, by alternately applying oil and vinegar, and scraped potatoes.

Mrs. Claptrap, whose bosom was too much filled with vanity, to leave room for the nourishment of almost any other passion, beyond the short period of its excitement, was soon reconciled to Susan, who appeased her wrath by listening with deference to her opinion about plays and players.

In short, this happy company separated at night with good humour, and Susan's heart bounded with joy when she received an invitation to accompany Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap to a rehearsal, on the following morning.

Early was she up, and with indescribable sensations entered the precincts of the Circus or theatre, with her Thespian neighbours; but what words can paint her awe, when she entered on the stage just before rehearsal. She felt as if she was treading upon sacred ground, and was almost afraid to direct her eyes towards the vacant expanse appropriated to the audience.

"If," thought she to herself, "I feel thus when there is nobody present, how could I endure to act before an audience?"

The *reality* of acting appeared tremendous, and her courage almost failed as she rapidly considered the difficulties, anxieties, and terrors of a theatrical life.

From this reverie she was suddenly roused by the prompter's whistle, which summoned the performers, who were to begin the rehearsal.

The piece rehearsed was a grand melo-drama, but the enchantment of scenery and dresses being absent, the show appeared trivial in Susan's eyes, and her heart ached when three sisters came forward to dance a *pas de trois*, one of whom was enveloped in a thick shawl, in consequence of a violent cold she had caught the night before, from being overheated by dancing.

This poor girl had a stiff neck, and with her utmost exertions could not give her head the variety and ease of motion which, as Euphrosyne, she was bound to represent. Her failure drew forth many intemperate reproofs from the stage-manager, who, insensible to the misery she appeared to endure, accused her unfeelingly of inattention to her duty. The tears rose to her eyes, and when her part was over she quickly left the stage, drew her shawl over her head, and wept in silence.

Ah! thought Susan, could I but regain my own home; could I but recall the last two years. But the wish was soon repressed. The impossibility of returning to Cowslip-farm struck as cold on her heart, as did the wind by which she was assailed from all quarters of the theatre upon her shivering frame.

It was a sharp frosty morning, and, during four hours, she was compelled to wait patiently while Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap enacted their several parts, which were to be repeated on the same evening. Yet still Susan looked forward to futurity. If she was obliged to endure the cold, fatigue, and tyranny of a theatrical life, in the course of a little time all would be well; many of the London performers kept their carriages, visited and were visited;—why not *she* as well as *they*? Vanity led her on, and in the bright prospect

of future years Susan saw a reward for all the probationary trials she might be doomed to undergo, forgetting that a fair name and unsullied reputation were necessary to what she most desired,—admission into *great* company.

Yet when the manager approached her in the train of Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap, her heart beat quickly, and the dread of what was to follow deprived her of speech.

When therefore Mr. Playwright, after his first salutation of a bow, asked what characters she had been accustomed to perform, she wished herself any where, but where she was; for the expression of the great man's countenance, on hearing that she had not entered her novitiate, convinced her that she should not like Mr. Playwright for a *master*.

He told her that a *debutante* could not commit a greater error, than to think of attempting the London boards, before she was well schooled by country practice. "I would advise you," he continued, "to attach yourself to some provincial company, to be *industrious*, economical, and prudent. I shall rejoice to hear of your success, and at some future time I may perhaps admit you into *my* company. Time, however, and practice are required for the attainment of excellence; and you must study hard if you wish to acquire reputation in the theatrical line. You look young enough to give five or six years at least to provincial performance, before you make your appearance among the performers in a London theatre."

Mrs. Claptrap secretly rejoiced that Susan was not be admitted into the dramatic corps to which she belonged; for she was aware that a young, pretty, and new performer, though not in fact so competent an actress as herself, might be excused some errors, for the sake of those qualifications which are so pre-eminently valuable in the eyes of all the admirers of the votaries of Thespis. She, therefore, seconded Mr. Playwright's observations, and proposed that Mr. Claptrap should accompany Susan to Mr. Vendible, a *Theatrical Agent*, who lived in the vicinity of both the Theatres Royal.

When they arrived at Mr. Vendible's lodgings, they were shewn into a front room up two pairs of stairs, where the great man, with spectacles on his nose, was listening with a supercilious air to a male petitioner, who was earnestly entreating to be recommended as a tragic performer.

The Thespian aspirant was the prototype of Murphy's celebrated Dick the Apprentice, and with breathless impatience he listened to Mr. Vendible's directions to his clerk of the closet to write a letter to a provincial manager, respecting the qualifications of the young man in question. The letter was neither more nor less than a *bill of parcels* for goods (*viz.* the said Dick,) to be sent by the coach to South Wales (not *New South Wales*) on the following morning. Whether the profits of poor Dick's expedition amounted to half the sum necessary to discharge the expenses of his *transportation*; or the air on the Welch mountains afforded to his stomach the consolation and relief, which his slender salary of *seven shillings a-week* (and find himself in *jewels* and *wardrobe*,) denied him, the author not knowing cannot depone, the folio of Mr. Vendible's Thespian ledger containing these matters not being exposed to vulgar eyes.

The youth, however, seemed fired, as he heard himself announced as "an actor of merit, who was likely to prove a great acquisition to the company which he was about to join." Starting into a theatrical attitude, he exclaimed, "Thanks, most mighty Vendible, thanks."

But a look from Mr. Vendible convinced him his rhapsody was ill-timed, and with a look of profound humility he left the room.

Whilst Mr. Vendible's attention was occupied by other crack-brained applicants to personate the parts of Othello, Richard, and Hamlet (for to these altitudes all stage-struck heroes aspire the outset,) Susan occupied herself in turning over several files of play-bills which lay upon the table.

These files were so many journals of the persevering folly of many infatuated strolling players, who are in love with poverty and wretchedness all day, in order to have the pleasure of caricaturing Shakespeare in a cold barn at night; for, as Lord Gardestone observes,

Some give their nights, and wish to give their days,  
To hear unletter'd vagrants mangle plays;  
Deform the scene pathetic Otway drew,  
And spout in Shakespeare's name the trash he  
    never knew;  
From galleries and pit applause is roar'd,  
While common sense turns pale at every word.

Having despatched *Dick*, Mr. Vendible was accosted by Claptrap, who, after a word in the agent's ear, beckoned Susan to advance. Vendible bowed, lifted his spectacles upon his brow, eyed the young woman for the space of a few seconds, then turned to his friend, Claptrap, and exclaimed, "A matchless fine figure!" But with that dexterity which his avocation had taught him, he as suddenly accosted Susan, saying, "And so, Miss, you wish to have an engagement?"

Susan replied in the affirmative, and Vendible then, with an air of much friendship, interrogated her as to the plays she had studied, and the parts she would like to take, assigning as his reasons for this minute inquiry, "the diversity of talent to be encountered among provincial companies, and the great desire he felt in forming a judgment of the young *lady's* abilities, so as to discharge, by an act of friendship towards Miss Beverley, a portion of that debt of gratitude he owed to Mr. Claptrap."

Ignorant of Vendible's motives in this unmerited profession of friendship, and unsuspecting of Claptrap's design in coming all the way from Lambeth-marsh to Bridges-street, Covent-garden, Susan very readily paid "seven shillings and sixpence for entering her name in the *ledger*," and descended the stairs covered with prayer upon prayer for "God's blessing," and with promise upon promise of a situation from Vendible. Claptrap handed her into a hackney-coach at the street-door.

On her return home, Susan spread all her theatrical library before her on the table, dipped into one play, then into another; and finally, brought from her trunks several dresses, which she threw over the backs of the chairs in her room, with a view of preparing a wardrobe for those characters which she had resolved on undertaking.

In the midst of all this preparation, she was agreeably interrupted by Mrs. Claptrap, who, having learned the reception her protégée had met with, augured well of Susan's future fame.

Among the trinkets displayed on the table was a set of handsome cornelians, which Mrs. Claptrap greatly admired, and Susan immediately felt a strong impulse to present them to that lady. Accordingly, after depreciating the envied baubles, she insisted on Mrs. Claptrap's acceptance of them.

The veteran Juliet, on her part, as highly extolled them, adding, "They will indeed be a keepsake, which shall always remind me of your first step in the walks of Thespis."

Susan's heart swelled with pride at this speech, and by way of evincing her profound respect for Mrs. Claptrap's judgment, she begged that lady "would advise her how to proceed in the affair with Vendible, for she had a shrewd suspicion that it might be greatly accelerated by a present to him."

To this proposition Mrs. Claptrap made strong and weighty objections, alleging that "Vendible could not create vacancies among the provincial companies, though he was certainly the man to fill them up." But there was one thing *Miss Beverley* should do, "Study hard, and prepare your dresses;" besides, added Mrs. Claptrap, "I will instruct you in the intonations and the graces of delivery and action."

Delighted with this evening's conversation, Susan laid her head on her pillow, but not to rest. With all her passion for the stage, the "amiable Ednor" appeared to her fancy. She reflected and wept alternately on "his past kindness towards her, and the unfortunate accident which had befallen him, out of love for her prosperity in life;" for it had not occurred to her thoughtless mind that Ednor was her ruin, and that her present pursuit was the consequence of her own folly.

Next morning she arose with renewed zeal for the stage, and learning from Mrs. Claptrap, at breakfast, that there was a "famous shop for cheap plays in Russell-court, Drury-lane," she repaired thither, and purchased above two hundred wretchedly printed cheap plays, at the rate of four-pence a piece. On her return home with this ponderous library for a strolling player, she received the praises of Mrs. Claptrap, for being so provident in securing "the tools of her trade before she commenced her apprenticeship," and several pretty compliments on her "taste in making the selection," which Mr. Claptrap acknowledged to have been done "with much skill."

In about a week's time a letter arrived for *Miss Beverley*, by the two-penny post, from old Vendible, requesting "her attendance at *his office*, as soon as she could make it convenient, as there was an engagement open, which he was persuaded she could fill with eclat."

Next morning, accompanied by Mr. Claptrap, Susan set off for Vendible's "office," and was told that "she must prepare to go to Coventry."

"This letter," said Vendible, "will introduce you to the manager, Mr. Tramp, who is my particular friend. There is a pound to pay for the agency, *Miss Beverley*."

Susan, with that promptitude which honour and honesty alike dictate, pulled out her purse, and presented Vendible with a guinea, instead of twenty shillings. The venerable agent made her a low bow, wished her much success, and bidding her a good morning, opened the door of his sanctum for Claptrap and Susan to find their way down stairs.

As soon as Susan and Claptrap had gained the pavement, the latter proposed they should go to the Bull and Mouth Inn, and secure a place in the coach for Coventry for the next day. This was easily done, and they returned home just in time for Claptrap to eat a hasty dinner, and run away to dress for the character he was that evening to perform. Mrs. Claptrap, who was to appear in the afterpiece only that night, had of course full two hours to devote to Susan in making preparations for her journey.

On the return of Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap from the performance, which was late in the evening, they were agreeably surprised to find that Susan had, during their absence,

prepared a very costly supper at her own expense. The table was set out with cold fowl, cold tongue, oysters in various preparations, a very fine jelly, fruit, and a couple of bottles of wine. "This was indeed a feast of good things," and the Claptraps did ample honour to the whole range of the dishes, and especially to the liquids. Songs were sung, the diversions of provincial actors told over and over again, and numerous toasts given in honour of the profession.

### CHAPTER III.

She has a daughter too, that deals in lace,  
And sings "O Ponder Well," and "Chevy Chase."  
And fain would fill the fair Ophelia's place.  
And in her cock'd-up hat, and gown of camlet,  
Presumes on something—touching the Lord Hamlet.  
EPILOGUE TO THE APPRENTICE.

NEXT morning Susan, after taking leave of Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap, was carefully deposited in a hackney-coach, with all her luggage, for the Angel Inn, at Islington, where she awaited the Coventry stage-coach, in which she at length took her seat. The day was cold and the road appeared dreary, after the coach had passed through Highgate; but the horrors, which the chilliness of the weather, and the loneliness of the way, were so well calculated to occasion, were dispelled by the vivacity and good humour of a gentleman passenger, who very openly told both his lineage and occupation to the company, he was travelling with. This man, whether out of sheer wit or affectation, pretended to trace his descent from Peeping Tom, and in confirmation thereof, he mentioned his craft, which was that of a ribbon-weaver; but he afterwards changed the epithet into "manufacturer," to regain that consequence, of which his frankness had bereft him.

The conversation of this man, who was the life and soul of the passengers, turned alternately on politics and religion. But he evinced, in the judgment of Susan, some taste for the fine arts, by an elaborate critique on a new tragedy, which the author had very wisely printed and published, because neither Flexible nor Sternhold would bring it out at either of the "Theatres Royal."

This was the key, which, without being aware of its virtues, he accidentally stumbled on to unlock all the secrets of poor Susan's heart.

Before the coach had reached St. Alban's, the "manufacturer" and *Miss Beverley*, for by that name Susan was booked, were friends in all that constitutes friendship, formed without a knowledge of character, but upon that more noble basis, an agreement in opinion, where the most opposite difference could prove no disadvantage. Without going into the details of this journey, we briefly inform the reader, that "Peeping Tom's" descendant, having ascertained the object of Susan's travels, promised very generously "to patronise her, as far as the influence of a freeman, and member of the corporation, could patronise a young person of Miss Beverley's intelligence;" and, in testimony of his good intentions, he would not allow her to pay one farthing for refreshments during the journey. Besides, before their arrival in Coventry, he recommended Susan to a lodging, in which, to her great joy, she learned her favourite Inkle had taken up his abode, when, about nine months before that time, he figured as a star of the first magnitude in Tramp's company.

About eight o'clock at night the coach arrived at its destination, and Susan was conducted to her new residence, where she soon experienced all that friendship and concern for her comfort, which the landlady of a common lodging-house never fails to shew her guests on their first entrance into her caravansary.

Next morning Susan made inquiries for the manager, but he was no where to be found; a circumstance which was very likely, as the company had not yet arrived in Coventry, and Tramp, like all other actors on this stage of existence, "could only be in one place at a time." This was a disappointment, with which Susan was rather pleased than chagrined; as it gave her time to study several characters, which Mrs. Claptrap assured her, "she would infallibly have to support, if Mr. Tramp had sense enough to cast performances to his advantage."

In a few days the company were announced, and Susan waited on the manager with her letter of introduction. Tramp took the letter, broke open the seal, and immediately expressed the utmost surprise at this accession to his company, using, at the same time, certain expressions, which indicated that "old Vendible had acted rather by his own discretion than from any order for a fresh supply at that time."

Susan was struck dumb by this observation, and knew not what to say; but she was soon relieved from her embarrassment, by Tramp inviting her "to stop, if she chose, and share like the rest."

With this invitation the unfortunate girl complied very promptly, and soon forgot the momentary anxiety she had felt, by a request from Mrs. Tramp "to take tea with them that evening." During tea Mrs. Tramp and Susan entered into a long dialogue on fashions and dress. Poor Susan, whose habits had never taught her one idea of economy or foresight, with great simplicity revealed the contents of her wardrobe to Mrs. Tramp. This was precisely what that wily dame was aiming at.

Her next subject of discourse was jewels, that is to say, such jewels as are usually worn by the itinerant sons and daughters of Thespis. In these too she supposed that Susan was rich, "if she might judge from the handsome brooch which *Miss* Beverly wore in her bosom."

Susan made no mystery of her jewels, and to show how little she valued them, begged Mrs. Tramp's acceptance of the brooch, which she had admired. After a faint attempt at a refusal, the covetous actress condescended to accept the bauble, which without further ceremony she placed in her own dress.

Tramp, who appeared to be about fifty years of age, at length commenced operations on a play-bill for next Monday evening. As soon as he had written it out, he handed it over to Susan, who found her name set down for the part of Desdemona, in the tragedy of Othello. She blushed deeply at seeing herself extolled "as a young lady of great personal and mental accomplishments, who should on that night make her first appearance on any stage."

Next morning she received a visit from all the Tramps, comprising the father, mother, and a son and daughter. At the moment, when they were announced by her landlady, Susan was engaged in preparing some part of her dress, and the contents of her wardrobe were displayed on the bed and chairs of the apartment.

Mrs. Tramp now censured Susan for undervaluing her dresses, one of which she took up, observing, as she extended her arm with it, that it would just suit her daughter.

"Dear me!" ejaculated Susan, "I'm so glad of that! and I beg you will allow me to present it to Miss Tramp."

Mrs. Tramp said, that "Miss Beverly could, of course, do with her own whatever she liked;" adding, as she handed the dress to her daughter, "My dear, make your best curtsy to the young lady for her kindness."

Miss Tramp did so, wondering, as the expression of gratitude died on her lips, "what Miss Beverley could do with so many winter clothes?"

"That I myself wonder at," said Tramp; "four shawls, two pelisses, a muff, and tippet."

"You've reckoned enough," interrupted Mrs. Tramp; "as you're n't able at present, my dear, to buy me a shawl like any of these, nor your daughter a pelisse, don't set our teeth on edge by counting as many as might keep all the ladies of the company warm at rehearsal in these cold frosty mornings."

The simple idea of enjoying comforts herself, whilst her companions were destitute of them, was quite enough for Susan. She took up one of her very best shawls, and threw it over Mrs. Tramp's shoulders, saying, "If you, Ma'am, put it off again, I will go naked myself all my days sooner than wear it."

"That would, indeed, be a pity," rejoined Mrs. Tramp, "and rather than you should do so, I'll wear it to my grave."

This declaration was made with much apparent sincerity, which Mrs. Tramp further vouched for, by swearing "eternal gratitude and friendship to the fair donor."

The Tramps shortly after took their leave, enjoining Susan to study hard till next morning, when the company was to meet for rehearsal.

Susan, who had felt excessively fatigued, threw herself upon the bed, where she fell asleep, with the tragedy of Othello in her hand. As misfortune would have it, the curtains caught fire, and poor Susan was roused just in time to escape the most terrible death; for the conflagration was extinguished with great difficulty. The landlady, whose property was not insured, next day insisted on Susan making good the loss of the bed-furniture, and other damage which the room had sustained, by her lodger's neglect. To this Susan very reluctantly agreed, and the Tramps, who declared "she had been shamefully imposed on, invited her to board and lodge with them, at the rate of twenty-five shillings a week."

With this invitation Susan very readily complied, for under an air of simplicity, which we have of late observed in her conduct, she hoped to create a favourable impression as to her character. Her mode of life with Colonel Ednor had bereft her of that lovely quality which she displayed in Silvershoe; and being once more left to the exercise of her wits, she found it necessary to borrow the externals of modesty, even if she could not recover its innate habitude.

She, therefore resolved, for the sake of eventually succeeding in her new profession, to make what sacrifices she could, with a firm resolution to be even with the Tramps for the part which they had acted the night before. As to the Claptraps, there was no chance of ever encountering them again, and she bit her lip as she reflected on the manner she had been taken in by them; but she consoled herself under this chagrin, that what she had wasted on them must have been otherwise expended to have placed her in her present situation.

Accordingly, on her arrival at the lodgings of the Tramps, she offered to pay her first week's board in advance, which was readily accepted. Next morning, being Saturday, Susan went to rehearsal, but was surprised to find the theatre an old malt-house, in which the seats were ranged one above another, those in the front being denominated the boxes, while the more remote were called the gallery. But before the rehearsal commenced, the actresses were invited to assist in the reparation of the scenes,

some of which required darning, and some painting. When the rehearsal began, Susan felt much difficulty to recollect her part, but was greatly assisted by a young man who had lately joined the company, and who added to a goodly person more of the *gentleman* than was observable in the other men. The attentions of this young man, whose name was Bounce, made a sensible impression on Susan's heart, and in return for his kindness she had the pleasure of making tea for him that evening at Tramp's lodgings. On the following day, which was Sunday, this company of strollers assembled again at the old malt-house, and in the evening Mr. Bounce again drank tea at the Tramps'.

After the equipage of this scothing beverage had been removed, Bounce became talkative, and Susan very soon learned the following particulars of his apprenticeship in the profession of an actor.

#### CHAPTER IV.

My hero is a youth, by fate design'd,  
For culling simples,—but whose stage-struck mind  
No fate could rule, nor his indentures bind.  
A place there is, where such young quixottes meet,  
'Tis called the Spouting Club—a glorious treat!  
Where 'prentic'd kings alarm the gaping street;  
There Brutus starts and stares by midnight taper,  
Who all the day enacts—a woollen-drapeer  
There Hamlet's ghost stalks forth, with doubled fist,  
Cries out with hollow voice, "List, list, O list!"  
And frightens Denmark's prince,—a young tobacconist.  
The spirit, too, clear'd from his deadly white,  
Rises—a haberdasher to the sight!  
Not young attorneys have this rage withstood,  
But chang'd their pens for truncheons;—ink for blood,  
And (strange reverse) died for—their country's good.

#### PROLOGUE TO THE APPRENTICE.

BOUNCE was the son of respectable parents, who resided in Lincolnshire, who had apprenticed him to an attorney in Serjeants' Inn, Fleet-street. Here he studied hard for three years, but at the expiration of that period he became a frequenter of a billiard-room in Chancery-lane; and there he met with some young men of his own age, who divided their leisure alternately between the billiard-table and a private theatre in Bury-street, Bloomsbury.

From repeatedly visiting both these recreations, young Bounce conceived an excessive desire to shine as a man of fashion and an actor; but the latter predominated, and he soon improved so much in Thespian tactics, as to merit the approbation of his friends, who never let slip an opportunity of applauding the several beauties which he nightly elicited.

One of his friends having presented a ticket of admission to a "Star" of Covent Garden, Mr. Bounce was one evening agreeably surprised, after the performance of Hamlet, by the appearance of this gentleman behind the scenes, and was no less delighted by the compliments bestowed on the occasion. Much gratified by the approbation of a brother, young Bounce ruminated during the remaining part of the night on his present and future prospects. He had experienced the tedium of quill-driving, and foresaw, or fancied he foresaw, the difficulties and delays attendant on the precarious practice of the law.

"Besides," thought Jack, for that was the abbreviation of his Christian name, "I shall be forty years of age before I can obtain even a decent livelihood, and ten more before I can presume to marry; and I shall by that time be an old man, and must still drag on in business, when I should think of retiring to enjoy the harvest of my fortune. Whereas, if I prosecute the bent of my genius, I shall at all events pass a merry life, and doubtless, if I succeed, I shall be able at an early period to enjoy the vacation of old age

with a competent fortune to make my society worth courting; Garrick did this, and why not Jack Bounce? Parchments, bonds, writs, and testaments vanish! Come hither, Shakspeare, thou soul of human nature! Let me hug thee to my bosom, as the future arbiter of my fate! To thee do I feel inspired to devote my life, to dedicate my days and nights! If there is a destiny in the lives of mortals, thy sublime sentiments are prophetic of my future success.

There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the full, lead on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyages of their lives  
Are bound in shallows and in miseries.

With this exclamation Jack jumped out of bed, struck a light, and commenced a hard study of the character he had that evening personated.

The pleasure which Jack Bounce felt in his favourite pursuit, became a spur to his ardour, and was reciprocally augmented by the augmentation of the former. The best proof of this may be gathered from the fact, that during the remaining period of the time he was articled, his master's business was often neglected for the study of Shakspeare.

Mr. Capias, who was totally ignorant of Jack's passion for the drama, could with difficulty account for the particular object which divided his young man's attention; but he resolved on counselling by times, and an opportunity soon offered itself for putting in practice this determination.

One day when Mr. Capias returned home from Westminster-hall sooner than usual, with his blue bag under his arm, he was surprised at hearing a remarkable noise, as he ascended the stairs of the building in which his chambers were situated. Like a prudent man, he paused, and could distinctly hear some one in high debate. Astonished at this extraordinary circumstance, he rushed into his office, and there beheld Jack Bounce equipped as Hamlet the Dane, after the costume of the immortal Kemble, while by his side sat the daughter of the laundress, as the Queen. No language can paint the dismay of the actors, and no artist can depict the passion of rage, so strongly as it was shewn in the countenance and attitude of Mr. Capias. The wench fell on her knees, Jack stood like a criminal about to receive sentence of death, and the enraged attorney denounced the one as a fool, and the other as a rogue.

But this was only one part of the affair; in the inner chamber of the house Mr. Capias found a volume of Shakspeare on the desk of Mr. Bounce, in place of a brief which it was expedient should be copied before the Court of King's Bench met the next morning, when an important cause, in which Capias was solicitor for the defendant, stood in the preemptory paper of the Lord Chief Justice.

This neglect of his business drew from Mr. Capias a lecture, which Jack either did not listen to, or which he contemned as beneath his notice. Be that as it may, Mr. Capias insisted forcibly on the following heads:

"In the first place," said the worthy man, "my dear young friend, though I have been in a shocking passion, I have your interest too much at heart to neglect it, and forfeit my title to responsibility. Life is a lottery, I grant you, but the prizes are often at our own disposal. In no profession is this more obvious than our own. Consider the expense you have cost your father, and what you have cost him I cost my father. Well then, in a

profession where twenty fail for one that succeeds, I have been successful, and I now reap the whole that might have been gained by the unsuccessful twenty. So will you, if you follow my example; for do not our clients trust their fortunes, and sometimes their lives, to us? Such confidence can only be placed in steady and honourable men. Their reward must, therefore, be such as to give that rank in society which so important a trust requires. Besides, the length of time consumed in our education does, for a period of years, make our annual gains bear but small proportion to our annual expense; but then, my dear Jack, at forty years of age you will begin to make something by your profession.”

“The conclusion to which I came myself,” said Jack, laughing. “The lottery of law is far from being a fair lottery.”

“Very true, Jack, very true, I grant you; but you are not such a dunce as not to know that we must, and will be, paid by our clients. Here in our practice of the King’s Bench and Common Pleas, does not the plaintiff pretend that the defendant is not doing him justice, has been guilty of some trespass or misdemeanor? Well then, we are defendants to-morrow, and say, ‘No, we’ve been guilty of no trespass or misdemeanor;’ and if it should go against us, and the plaintiff gets a verdict, our expenses are as sure of being paid as the damages. Now, to-day we were plaintiff, and got our verdict, with damages and costs. In either case we must be paid. We have always the body of our client.”

At this moment, to Jack’s great pleasure, the “defendant” of “to-morrow” knocked at Mr. Capias’s exterior chamber-door, and our amateur of the sock and buskin, who had disrobed the habiliments of Hamlet during his master’s lecture, went to open it. The discourse of Mr. Capias was cut short, and Jack pursued his favourite pastime, neglecting alike *Blackstone’s Commentaries* and Mr. Capias’s business.

The plodding attorney foresaw the ruin in which his clerk would involve himself, if he suffered him to go on the stage, and, with the best intention, he wrote to Jack’s father on the subject. Like a prudent man, Mr. Bounce, senior, came to town from Lincolnshire, on pretence of business, and, having sounded Jack, learned to his mortification that the young man was “play mad.”

After repeated exhortations, the fond father and faithful master believed they had wrought a reformation on Jack, who gave his honour not to quit Mr. Capias’s service till his clerkship was expired, of which only nine months remained.

Jack had two motives in making this promise; in the first place, to use his own language, he wanted “to bleed the old boy,” in order to procure, with the “life-drops of his heart,” or, in other words, the guineas he could draw from his father’s purse, an entire equipment of dress for the characters of Macbeth and Brutus; and, in the second place, he was resolved “to punish Capias for his meddling disposition.” But punishment was with Jack an equivocal term, for in this acceptation it meant no more than that he would fulfil the term of his clerkship, so that Capias might not come on his sureties for the penalty expressed in his indenture, if, by running away, he should forfeit that penalty.

His father, seeing, as he thought, amendment in Jack, gave him twenty guineas as pocket-money, an order upon a tailor for two new suits of clothes; and on his return home set his wife and daughters to work, “to make the lad two dozen of new shirts,” which, with an equal number of pairs of stockings and neckerchiefs, were forwarded by the Boston coach.

From the tailor Jack had one of the suits of clothes, and, in lieu of the other, the dress of a Roman patrician, making an agreement with the worthy man who supplied him, that the difference should be charged under the name of "a great coat," which, though not specified in the order, the parties were certain would not be disputed by the paymaster, seeing the "winter of our days" was fast approaching, for such were the identical words Jack used when, by letter, he informed his "honoured father" that he had "exceeded his paternal order."

In the mean time Jack's clerkship drew to a close, and no prisoner ever sighed more to escape from the hands of justice, than our hero did to throw off the trammels of law. When the eventful day arrived, Jack wrote to his father the following epistle:

*Sergeants' Inn, Fleet-street.*

"MY DEAR AND HONOURED FATHER.—As you no doubt know that on this day my clerkship with Mr. Capias expires, I have great pleasure in informing you that I am truly rejoiced at it, for I really do not like the profession. My medical attendant (a person, by-the-by, of whom the father had never heard before,) has assured me that it is injurious to my health; indeed I have long felt it so myself.

"But there is another circumstance, which has contributed more than the preceding to this change in my sentiments,—a circumstance which, I dare say you anticipate,—that is, my love for the profession of the stage, and which has been much strengthened by the approbation of my friends, and frequent successful trials on the boards of a private theatre.

"Though you perhaps anticipated this news, you may nevertheless be surprised at it, after the assurance I gave you when you was in London.

"But, my dear father, if you will only charge your memory with the promise I then made, you will recollect that it did not extend beyond the term of my apprenticeship, as I did not choose to saddle my sureties with the penalty of my indenture, to benefit old Capias, and rob you.

"I hope, when you consider the difficulties I should have to encounter, before I could possibly succeed as an attorney, and the advantages which my genius for the stage holds forth, you will be pleased to contribute that consent and support which you have never withheld from me in any reasonable request.

"With best love to my mother and sisters, I am, my honoured father, your dutiful and affectionate son,

"JOHN WELDON."

And here it may not be improper to observe, that Mr. Weldon, junior, who sought to rise on the boards of a provincial stage, like most other young folks who put into the lottery of Thespis, changed his name the moment he embarked on this sea of troubles; and having assumed the extraordinary designation of "Jack Bounce," we have copied the original most literally. But to return to the letter addressed to his worthy father, we have briefly to notice that, in the course of the next post, Jack received the following answer:

*"Boston, Lincolnshire.*

“DEAR JACK,—Your letter has thrown me into a passion, and brought on a fit of the gout; it has also thrown your poor mother into fits, and your sisters have cried their eyes out.

“A fine confusion you have caused, you dog! Leave law, the making of you, and go a gipsying through the country, like a ragamuffin, as you are! What do you mean? What’s to become of my 300 guineas of premium to old Capias? Tell me that.

“A fine use you have been making of the many pounds I have sent you, and the many presents which your foolish mother made to you, though she thinks I know nothing of it. I suppose all is gone in play-books and whirligig dresses. Very well,—go on and prosper; be a beggar if you like, when I wished to make a gentleman of you. No matter, I shall have one satisfaction,—I shall cut you off with a shilling, you villain! This is then to be the comfort of my grey hairs. But take care you don’t shew your face in Lincolnshire, you rascal. If you do, I shall lay you, you rogue and vagabond, by the heels, and keep you in quod for a twelvemonth, as by law authorized so to do. I’m not to be bamboozled by such a jackanapes as you.

“Dear Jack, take the advice of a kind father,—stick to law; your business lies in that direction, and in no other. Get qualified as soon as possible, and leave the stage. Hoping that you will mend your ways, and return to your duty, I am, your affectionate father,

J. WELDON.

“P.S.—Your mother and sisters send their kind love to you, and they are very angry with you for bringing the gout into both my feet.

N.B.—Be so good as to send me, since you are about to turn player, all the volumes of my handsome copy of the *Statutes at Large*, that I may consult them whenever I may have occasion to commit to the county gaol all vagrants and other strollers that may come in my way\*.

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\* Mr. Weldon’s opinion is that of many an honest and good man; but the stage will have supporters as long as vice and folly are found on earth. I am happy in being able, however, in confirmation of the moral I would inculcate in this volume, to subjoin the following extract from Dr. Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. The author, it is true, is speaking of the lighter pieces of the drama, and those principally which conduce to the correction of manners. “Farce,” says the Doctor, “which has for its peculiar object *manners*, in the limited and distinctive sense of that word, may, with propriety, admit many things which directly conduce to the advancement of morals, and ought never to admit any thing which has a contrary tendency. Virtue is of primary importance, both for the happiness of individuals, and for the well-being of society; an external polish is at best but a secondary accomplishment, ornamental indeed when it adds a lustre to virtue, pernicious when it serves only to embellish profligacy, and in itself comparatively of but little consequence, either to private or to public felicity.”

In a note, which this very judicious writer makes on his own language, occurs the observations that I meant chiefly to direct the reader to. They are these: “Whether this attention has been always given to morals, particularly in comedy, must be left to the determination of those who are most conversant in that species of scenic representations. One may, however, venture to prognosticate, that if in any period it shall become fashionable to show no regard to virtue in such entertainments; if the hero of the piece, a fine gentleman to be sure, adorned as usual with all the superficial and exterior graces which the poet can confer, and crowned with success in the end, shall be an unprincipled libertine, a man of more spirit, forsooth, than to be checked in his pursuits by the restraints of religion, by a regard to the common rights of mankind, or by the laws of hospitality and private friendship, which were accounted sacred among pagans and those whom we denominate barbarians; then, indeed, the stage will become merely the school of gallantry and intrigue; thither the youth of both sexes will

To this affectionate letter young Weldon, *alias* Bounce, returned a most dutiful reply, in which he lamented that his father's ideas of Thespian pursuits were not congenial with his own; still as genius and fortune called him, although he was sorry to commit a breach of filial duty, he believed that fame and riches were not to be spurned; adding, that Garrick and others had acquired both.

As for the copy of the "Statutes at large," he had truly to regret that his father had not advised him sooner, seeing that only two months before, he had exchanged them with a fellow student for a copy of Boydell's Shakspeare.

However, if his dear father wished much to have this book, he would undertake to buy it very cheap for him, that is to say, for forty guineas, at a Bookseller's in High Holborn.

He concluded with begging pardon for the step he was about to take, but hoped his father would think more favourably of the affair at a future period; when, as he had been assured would be the case, he should have attained the envied eminence of leading tragedian in a metropolitan theatre royal.

Hoping that Heaven would shower down on all the family every earthly blessing, he bade them farewell for a season, as he was about to take his departure for York, where he had determined to commence his theatrical career.

We shall, therefore, leave the Lincolnshire magistrate to nurse the gout and chew the cud of paternal disappointment, at the turn which his son's fortune was about to take, and follow our stage-struck hero in his dramatic progress. This necessarily brings us back a few days in his history, for the scenes in which he is presently to appear were antecedent to the close of his clerkship, but they approximated so nearly to it as to hasten his departure for York, agreeably to the information which he had communicated to his father. And another reason which induced us to transpose these matters is our wish to have but one object in view at one time, and Jack being the chief subject of our consideration at present, we have despatched the father to wait upon the son.

We return, therefore, to that notable scene of action, known already to the reader, as the private theatre in Bury-street, Bloomsbury, where our friend Jack formed an acquaintance with several young men, who were ambitious that the public should have an opportunity of appreciating their abilities, in contradistinction to the "monotony of performers," by whom the public were nightly bored at the "patent theatres."

These young gentlemen were so satisfied that their powers far eclipsed all that shone in any furnace of thunder, ycleped a "minor theatre," that they formed the laudable plan of entering into a subscription to exhibit immediately at the old theatre in the Haymarket. A night was accordingly fixed, a play and farce selected, and the parts were appropriated to the several performers.

The play was Richard the Third, and the house was respectably filled. Jack enacted Richard, and really acquitted himself well. Many of his friends discovered sparks

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resort, and will not resort in vain, in order to get rid of that troublesome companion, modesty, intended by Providence as a guard to virtue, and a check against licentiousness; there vice will soon learn to provide herself in a proper stock of effrontery, and a suitable address for effecting her designs, and triumphing over innocence; then, in fine, if religion, virtue, principle, equity, gratitude, and good faith, are not empty sounds, the stage will prove the greatest of nuisances, and deserve to be styled the principal corrupter of the age. Whether such an era hath ever happened in the history of the theatre, in this or any other country, or is likely to happen, I do not take upon me to decide."

of genius, which promised, one day, to burst forth in cometic blaze upon the admiring world.

At the end of the third act, where there is a change of dress, a ludicrous circumstance occurred, which considerably damped the spirits of the performers, and nearly robbed them of the laurels they had won. This was no less than a forcible detention of Richard's second dress, until the rent, and other expenses of the house for the evening, should be paid. This was particularly galling to the amateurs, who had conscientiously paid the inexorable proprietor every shilling taken at the doors; and who did not, consequently, anticipate the mortification to which their dignity was to be subjected, by laying down the sword and truncheon in so awkward a manner. The audience became very noisy, as is usual when their pleasures are delayed. In vain the musicians continued between the acts to strive to amuse; they were repeatedly hissed, and Richard was called to appear.

Jack, at last, came forward to claim the protection of the house.

Cries of "shame! shame!" immediately resounded on all sides; for an English audience is never backward to protect an injured actor.

Some even threatened to demolish the seats, if the gentlemen were not allowed to go on; and the proprietor, who became alarmed, gave up the key of the wardrobe, on condition that Jack should make up the deficit of six pounds and odd shillings sterling, on the following day.

In the hurry and agitation of the moment Jack consented, and in a few seconds

Richard was himself again.

The applause he now received, in some measure, compensated for the responsibility he had taken. But his spirits were so much discomposed by the unexpected insolence of the proprietor, that he found it exceedingly difficult to finish the representation of his character in the same style as his efforts in the former acts had promised.

To retrieve the reputation he had so nearly lost, Jack gratified the audience by the personation of the *Three Singles* in the *Three and the Deuce*.

But here also an unlucky accident befel him. For in the rapid changes which an actor, in this master-piece, is obliged to make from the fool to the fop, and from the fop to the gentleman, and *vice versâ*, it is really surprising how he can always preserve each so distinct, and so individual, as not to allow one character to run into another; and nothing, we believe, in the whole compass of the drama is so difficult.

Poor Jack found it so; for in coming in as the studious brother, and being addressed by Mac Floggan as Percival, he lost sight of Pertinax, and drivelled as the simpleton through several sentences.

The audience laughed immoderately, and some more ignorant hissed, while a few, who had wit enough to enjoy the mistake, shouted "Go on, go on!"

Mac Floggan was disconcerted, and Jack discovering his mistake, attempted an apology, but stopping short at "Ladies and Gentlemen," clapped his hand passionately to his forehead, cursed his ill luck, and hastily made his exit.

Notwithstanding the clapping of the audience, and their encouraging cries of "Go on! go on!" from every quarter, the unlucky Jack, who began to think that law was

exempt from such disagreeables, could not, for a length of time, be prevailed on to resume the *Singles*.

At last, however, by the repeated invitations of the audience, and the persuasion of his brother actors, he went on, and supported the characters he had undertaken, with the respectability of an experienced performer.

Jack was waited upon next day by Mr. Fleeceall, the proprietor, for the money, which, now that he had time for reflection, he deemed his brethren to be answerable for as well as himself.

Accordingly he offered to consult his brother heroes of Bosworth Field, and to give Mr. Fleeceall an answer on the morrow.

The proprietor, who was not to be so easily put off, insisted on the immediate payment of the money, and even threatened to expose Jack to his master, Capias.

Of all the disputes on earth which Jack wished to avoid, was that with the attorney, and he, therefore, endeavoured to pacify his angry and clamorous creditor as well as he could. Words, however, had no effect on Fleeceall, who added, to his other warnings, that of an action for the debt.

Jack was secure on this score, for he was not of age; but he consented, at length, to give the proprietor his note, at ten days, for the six pounds.

In the mean time his clerkship expired, and perfectly aware of his inability to honour his signature, but by depriving himself of the means of prosecuting his new profession, Jack applied at several of the theatres in the metropolis for an engagement.

In these applications he was unsuccessful, and turned his thoughts towards the provinces. To reach these in his new character, he bent his steps to old Vendible's, and was fortunate enough to meet with an engagement that very day.

The intermediate part of his progress is of little importance, as his engagement was for the company in which we find him at tea with Susan Cowslip. But we have been thus circumstantial, as it is one of the greatest privileges of society to pry into the history of every new comer.

Now, however, being perfectly acquainted with the life of our friend Jack Bounce, before he came into our neighbourhood, we will pay our respects to poor Susan.

## CHAPTER V.

“The play was performed much better than was expected, and their company soon became more numerous, being joined by others that looked more to profit than pleasure; for *these* lovers of the drama could play heroes, and heroines without eating. Love for the sublime was enough for them.

### CHETWOOD’S HISTORY OF THE STAGE.

ON the day of that eventful evening, when Tramp was to exhibit his “Desdemona by a young lady, being her first appearance on any stage,” Susan swallowed a hasty dinner, and sipped her tea with a palpitating heart.

As she walked from her lodging to the malt-house now consecrated to the muses, many qualms crossed her breast, and her tremour was excessive during the short space allowed her to dress; but as soon as the two fiddles, a hautboy, and a French horn, commenced to please the palate of the audience with a preparatory meal of music, her heart sunk within her; however, being equipped, she received much comfort from “Squire Bounce,” for that was the designation of our friend Jack among his strolling companions.

At length the prompter’s bell rang, the curtain slowly rose, and discovered the Venetian Senators.

Poor Susan was quite bewildered, she heard a rustling, saw nobody; and as Iago came to fetch her, her knees tottered as if she was palsied in both limbs. The reception of the audience banished for a moment her fears, but when she should have spoken, silence ensued; and though she caught the first word from the prompter and actually pronounced it, she was instantly again at fault.

In this dilemma Jack was her friend, and having summoned up all her resolution she enacted her part to the entire approbation of her critical judges. She then sat down to collect herself, and thought all was not so bad.

When it came to her turn to appear on the stage again, she succeeded much better, and continued to improve during the remainder of the performance. The play went off with great eclat, and Susan received the compliments of her companions, upon her great and unparalleled success.

Calista was the next character in which Susan appeared, and the play of the *Fair Penitent*, (than which there cannot be one more improperly misnamed,) went off with considerable applause, till the middle of the fifth act, when the following circumstance quickly transformed the *sighs* and *tears* of the *audience* into shouts of laughter.

Jack had played Lothario, but after his death, he had transferred his part of the dead Lothario, to Master Roger Alonzo Augustus Tramp. The said Alonzo had as yet, attained no further pre-eminence in the theatrical line, than that which he had acquired by repeating “Yes, Sir” or “Very well, Sir,” in the character of a foot-boy. But his ambitious and aspiring genius led him to more daring deeds; and as he had heard Squire Bounce say, that he wished his part was over, for he felt tired, the boy earnestly entreated he might personate *Lothario dead*, promising to do his utmost; and that he would indeed act dead to the best advantage, only entreating his father might not be informed of his presumption, lest he should foolishly suppose him incapable of playing his arduous part with proper effect.

Having therefore received his instructions from Mr. Bounce who went home, he got Susan to engage his father in *deep* conversation during his installation to the funeral honours of Lothario.

So far all went on very well, and Susan, who with a pathos, which drew tears from the spectators, was rending their hearts as well as their ears, proceeded to repeat the passionate speeches of the mis-named heroine, when Mr. Tramp's voice was heard calling for, "Roger Alonzo Augustus."

The youthful Lothario made a slight start at these particular sounds, but soon again was still; but when Mr. Tramp repeated his call, he half-raised himself, exclaiming, "Here, father."

"Here, father," replied Tramp, "Why don't you come when I call you, you young dog, do you come hither directly, or I'll break every bone in your skin."

Master Roger Alonzo Augustus Tramp well knew his father was not more prompt to threaten, than to perform; he therefore without further reply, jumped up with all his sables about him; these were, however, unfortunately fast tied to the handles of the bier, and completely impeded all his movements.

But this was not all; the laugh and roar of the audience frightened Lothario so much, that dragging the bier after him he threw down poor Susan, and overwhelmed her with the table, the lamp, book, bones, &c. &c. &c.

By indefatigable efforts to free himself, he at length got rid of his own trammels and made his escape, leaving the ill-fated Calista to extricate herself from her dilemma as well as she could, amidst the cries of bravo, and reiterated shouts of laughter, in which she herself very heartily joined, and procured more real applause by her good humour under such mortifying circumstances, than by her performance, *excellent* as it was, of the stormy heroine.

When she made her exit, she saved poor Roger from the up-lifted hand of his enraged father, by stepping between them, taking much of the blame to herself and Mr. Bounce. And in order to put him in good humour, she promised to go on the stage with the servants in the farce, which was, the "Devil to Pay." Peeping Tom recognised her, and having set the *house* a clapping, her spirits began to recover their usual buoyancy, and she returned home pleased with her *entré*.

Next morning she took a long walk in the fields with Jack, where they studied hard their respective characters for "Blue Beard," on Wednesday evening. As Fatima, Susan sung well, and was much applauded. In the after-piece too, which was the "Miller and his Men," she played the part of Claudine, to the entire satisfaction of the audience.

On Saturday morning, old Tramp assembled his company to pay them their salaries, or rather their "shares" of the profits of the week.

Susan's share amounted to twenty-three shillings; Jack's was the same, and the rest, averaged a guinea a piece.

The manager fared better, for he enjoyed seven shares; two shares for himself, one for the scenery, one for the wardrobe, one for his trouble, one for his wife, one for his daughter, Miss Cora Angela Clementina, and one for his son, Master Roger Augustus Alonzo Tramp, who was a boy about nine years old, but a strong lumping lad of his age.

Susan seemed cast into a revery, by this amazing disparity in the division of the spoil, and Mrs. Tramp guessing what was the matter, gave many cogent reasons for the seven shares, which amounted to ten pounds, one shilling.

Susan then appeared satisfied, but she had secret motives for seeming pleased with what all the world would have pronounced an imposition.

Next day she walked abroad with Jack. In this promenade they were met by the young ribbon weaver, who accosted her with the air of an old acquaintance, to the surprise and discomposure of Squire Bounce, who, to his paramount folly of becoming an actor, superadded that of a profound veneration for Susan's person. He was, therefore not much pleased when Susan took the offered arm of her stage-coach beau, and with a tolerable share of coquetry, flirted away the time, which should, in fact, have been devoted to study. His spirit, however, prevented his making any observation, save that his attentions to his fair companion of the buskin, relaxed into the ordinary formalities of life.

Susan saw this, and she resolved to be more watchful for the future, for she also professed a profound veneration for Squire Bounce. Indeed, she flattered herself that by a little dexterous management, she should secure one or other of her two admirers, and that she should wind up her journey to Coventry with a matrimonial trip to the hymeneal altar.

She therefore endeavoured by the most skilful *acting*, to convince Mr. Bounce, that he had been mistaken, when he supposed she lent a favourable ear to the soft speeches of Mr. Silk, the ribbon weaver, while on the following morning, she contrived to impress upon the latter, how deeply she was flattered by his condescension, in noticing so humble a being, as a provincial actress.

Mr. Silk saw Susan's drift, but it flattered his vanity, and he made many professions of kindness to "the young lady, who had never appeared on any stage before."

In the evening, there was a chamber rehearsal, of the "Honey Moon," to ascertain Susan's capability to support the character of Juliana.

It happened, however, that there was but one copy of the play in Tramp's library, and Susan, of course, brought forth hers, to select the play for her own use.

The sight of her immense store of dramas, compelled Mrs. Tramp, to break the tenth commandment.

Susan took the hint, and offered this disinterested woman whatever she liked.

To this proposal, the covetous wretch barely replied, "Certainly, if Miss Beverly would be so good as to spare a few plays, Mr. Tramp would feel greatly obliged."

On the Friday, an amateur, who had that week joined the company from Warwickshire, made his debut. The play was the "Castle Spectre," and the after-piece, "High life below stairs." Susan played Angela, and the amateur undertook the part of Osmond.

This "Warwickshire blade" had managed a ribbon warehouse for his father, and his dialect was pure *Warwick*. The audience were so greatly delighted, that they laughed outright, to the great annoyance of the amateur, who, though chagrined, was by no means intimidated.

His delivery of the celebrated dream, was truly ridiculous, particularly the following passage.

"Methowt I weandered through the low breawed keavurns where repose the relics ov my eancestors, &c." And it is almost unnecessary to inform the reader, that the piece went off with much merriment before the curtain; but when Osmond delivered himself as follows:

“Beest thou theare Hassan, and Seab too heare?” The whole company, Tramp, Jack, Susan and all, joined the audience in a loud burst of laughter.

Osmond, indignant at this affront offered to his endeavours to please, walked forward, and addressed the audience something after the fashion of Homer, who, in the opinion of certain pugnacious critics, has adopted a very ragamuffin way of putting challenges into the mouths of his heroes.

Osmond, who seems to have been as primitive a champion as any of those blustering knights, who figured before the walls of Troy, said to the people, “What do yeau me-an by laughing so? Be ye laughing at I? be ye laughing at I? if ye be, tuarn eaut an’ I’ll give it ‘e.” And they only cried “off, off.” Whereupon he said to them again, “What dost me-an by hoff, hoff? can eany o’ ye skeamps hact better nor I? if ye kean, whay doant ye try?”

But the audience now hissed, and Peeping Tom called his Warwickshire neighbour “Stupid the fifth,” which set the house in a roar, till some one’s voice drowned all the rest with the unceremonious command, “Turn him out.”

Osmond, who kept his ground, in his turn spoke, calling aloud, “Whoa says tuarn eaut?”

And old Tramp now made his appearance, entreating Osmond would come off.

“Noa, I woant, I’ll ha justice done afore I go. Who says tuarn out? I say tuarn yeau eaut; an if any o’ yeau think he can tuarn me out, I’ll fight him and the best o’ yeau for a farden a piece.”

The curtain at this instant dropped, and put an end to the scuffle; but Osmond (who ever after went by that name) was in high dudgeon, and rushing among the gentlemen in the pit, he was very soon taken neck and heels, and laid down in the street.

On Saturday the company shared fifteen shillings and sixpence a piece, Tramp reserving as before, seven shares for himself.

On Monday they played the “Provoked Husband,” and the “Turnpike Gate;” and as *Lady Townley*, Susan was highly complimented by Mrs. Tramp, who swore by all the powers of acting, that she would soon rival the first London actresses. And after declaring that the young woman looked like an angel, Mrs. Tramp launched forth in rapturous praises of an elegant plume of feathers, which Susan wore in her head-dress. “But heaven forbid she should covet such a thing; only it would be the very thing for her dress next evening, when she was to enact the part of *Lady Teazle*.”

Susan, who was by this attack diverted from her necessary contemplation between the acts, in her confusion happened to say, that “After the play, the feathers would be very much at Mrs. Tramp’s service.”

And Mrs. Tramp, chuckling with joy, begged of Susan to wear a (paste) ring for her sake.

Susan now saw that Mrs. Tramp, by this manœuvre, had resolved to be quits with her for the feathers; but the prompter’s bell rang, and she was obliged to quit the corner of the malt-house, ycleped the green-room, and appear on the stage. Susan had many admirers in Coventry, and she seldom left her lodgings without being met by some one of those beaux who were favoured by being admitted behind the scenes. Still, however, no one proposed the trip she was so anxious to take; and the ribbon weaver who overwhelmed her with fine speeches and occasionally presented her with a piece of

ribbon, made no further advances, although Susan sighed and looked, and sighed and looked again.

Osmond indeed, often talked of the advantage of a married life in their mode of existing; he often poured forth his tender vows in broad Warwickshire dialect, but he never asked Susan to take him “for better, for worse.”

As to Squire Bounce, his judgment which had failed him upon the most material crisis of his life, did save him at least, from completely ruining his future hopes, by finally uniting himself to the coquetting Susan. Yet he still offered her every assistance which lay in his power, and had given her some useful hints as to her conduct towards the rapacious Tramps: and Susan, who saw her hopes from this quarter gradually decay, would frequently lament in solitude, her journey to London, and the villany of Colonel Ednor, which had deprived her of home, of friends, of comfort.

She was, however, *successful* in her theatrical attempts, and where few would approach mediocrity, she shone like a bright star. Her person was attractive, and her voice very sweet, though it possessed little power, and laboured under the disadvantage of uncultivation by a master.

These were passing qualifications, and Susan, with all her provincial success, was not likely to attain that excellence, which would introduce her to the favour of a London audience. But we must proceed with her present successful appearance, among the citizens of Coventry.

On Tuesday, our heroes of the sock and buskin, entertained the good people of Coventry, with “Jane Shore,” and “Peeping Tom.” The former of these plays, always excites a large share of the sympathies of human nature in a polished audience; how much more it operates on one in the country, we may guess from the following circumstance.

When poor Jane Shore was turned from Alicia’s door, a little boy in an upper seat rose, and with streaming eyes and violent gesture, blubbered out, “Doant thee turn her out; now doant thee, doant, I say; what harm has she done thee? Han’t the got all the poor thing’s money, and what has she to do?”

The audience who had felt sufficiently for Jane Shore, discovered they had no feeling for the poor boy, for they became convulsed with laughter, and even the representative of the unfortunate citizen’s wife, ran laughing off the stage.

One person hissed, and the audience, who looked upon this expression of displeasure as directed at themselves, rather than at the provincial actress, set upon him most furiously in his own way. But their hissing was soon again changed into laughter, on Peeping Tom pronouncing the object of vengeance to be a methodist parson, who had been railing at the poor players in his tabernacle every week since their arrival in Coventry.

The unfortunate preacher now wished to make a speedy and secret retreat, but the rogues around him blocked up the exit, and he was doomed to endure the most unmerciful bantering that was ever exercised in punishing a needless curiosity. For it seems that this good man went to see the players, not from any desire to share in the heinous crime of his townsmen, but “from a principle of curiosity, to gain a knowledge of the pastime in which so many thoughtless beings amused themselves, when they might be more profitably employed in devotional duties.” Such was the apology he made to his friends, and as such we record it; but they considered him from that time incapable of

exercising the pastoral functions, and as a warning to others, cut him off from the body of the church militant, as do we also from ever appearing among Tramp's audience at Coventry.

## CHAPTER VI.

As some poor squire, to country quarters sent,  
His credit gone, and all his money spent;  
A swarm of duns, each morn attend his door,  
Crying out, MONEY! *faith we're very poor.*  
“*Why ay!*” *the squire replies; “But pray have patience,*  
Six months' arrears comes with my next acquaintance,  
Just so I've told my duns, this many a day,  
They'd all have money when I got my play.

CHETWOOD'S HISTORY OF THE STAGE.

SHORTLY after this eventful night, the “Benefits” of the company were advertised, and Coventry becoming a bare field for our heroes, who had gone over their best performances, Tramp and his assistants prepared to journey towards Sollihull.

Susan had very regularly paid the Tramps twenty-five shillings a week for her board, though her shares never amounted to more than ten shillings, after the last reckoning which we have recorded; the consequence was, that her funds became low. Of this circumstance the Tramps were well aware, but so long as Susan had a shilling, she was doomed to be the prey of these harpies. Accordingly when “Note of preparation” sounded on Susan's ear, Mrs. Tramp invited her “to ride in the flying landau, (the scene-cart,) with the family and properties.”

After six weeks' performance at Sollihull, Susan's benefit was announced, and our old friend Jack Bounce in his zeal to “make a house,” headed the play-bill as follows:—

“Let none be afraid from the country to come,  
For the moon is engaged to light them all home.  
Doors open at six, begin about seven,  
At home safe in bed, between ten and eleven.”

And this doggrel had a wonderful effect on the country-folks, who crowded into the town to see the performance of Miss Beverley. But when we say the town, we speak topographically, for a batch of houses and an immense barn about half a mile from Sollihull, were also within its jurisdiction, and hence arises the correctness of our expression.

The barn was the theatre, and it was crammed on Susan's benefit; the “receipts of the house” amounted to eleven pounds sterling, but the expenses came to four pounds; and Tramp as is usual in strolling companies, had half the remainder, so that poor Susan's share netted three pounds ten shillings. Her finances were now nearly exhausted, and she had been obliged for some weeks past to run a little in Mrs. Tramp's debt. Out of the *balance* of her benefit, she paid the veteran stroller a small bill of one pound seventeen shillings, and the necessities of Squire Bounce induced her to divide with him the remaining pound and odd shillings, till his benefit should take place.



Jack had not observed that there was any one in the shop besides himself and the owner, but behind him had stood a gentleman who lived a few miles from the town. Struck with the air of dejection which immediately suffused the face of the Thespian votary, at the bookseller's refusal to take the books, he resolved on purchasing them, if they were perfect and in tolerable repair. They were in high condition, for Jack had concealed them from vulgar eyes with the most scrupulous care, and only opened them, when he was quite sure of being alone. The gentleman was surprised to see so handsome and valuable an edition in the hands of a strolling player; but having offered Jack thirty guineas, the bargain was soon struck, though not without a pang from the heart of poor Squire Bounce.

He had no sooner obtained the money, than he hastened to acquit himself of his debt to Tramp, and then repaired to Susan upon the same errand, presenting her with two pounds, assuring her, that by the sale of a few books he had raised a sum which was more than adequate to supply his present wants.

Susan and Jack were upon excellent terms, for although he condemned her coquetry, yet he with good nature placed it to the score of her anxiety to get an establishment, which would relieve her from her present uncomfortable and precarious subsistence: he had never questioned her of her family, and she had as studiously avoided the subject, and her conduct was in other respects correct, for she never allowed any one to take any undue liberties.

Jack therefore felt much commiseration for her situation, and acted towards her in all respects as a brother; frequently giving her advice, and cautioning her against the designs of many, who professed a great admiration for her personal charms.

Susan had suffered much, and was doomed to suffer more, from her first false step in life; and not the least of her troubles, was, her anxiety lest any unforeseen event should disclose her former connexion with Colonel Ednor. The caution and advice Mr. Bounce was so repeatedly giving, convinced her that such an exposure would prove most injurious both to her peace and her credit.

But to return to the strollers at large.

On the Sunday following, the company struck their tents, and the flying landau was again put in requisition.

Susan, who began to be heartily tired of Tramp and his wife, demurred to proceed with them.

Mrs. Tramp, "could not comprehend why Miss Beverley should hesitate:—the flying-landau was at her service, and Mr. Tramp himself, had been out of pocket in Sollihull, but it would not be so at Walsal, whither they were going."

Susan, by means of this, and many other weighty arguments, at length, consented to accompany "her friends;" but on her arrival at Walsal, she hired a room for herself, separately from the Tramps.

The theatre was the club-room of a public house; and the actors averaged *seven shillings!* Susan's cash was all gone, and the scanty pittance, of a shilling a day, preyed on her body as well as her mind.

Squire Bounce, who had ere this time, expended either in the discharge of debts, the procurement of a more suitable wardrobe, or a few of the pleasures of this life, the greater part of his thirty pounds, now shut his hand, and held fast what yet remained of the price of Shakspeare. He was not, therefore, in a better condition than the rest of the

gentlemen; and as their finances were not splendid, they contracted the greatest intimacy, and actually commenced a species of Spartan fellowship.

To save the expense of lodging, Bounce and other two, agreed to live together, and by occupying only one apartment, which served the multifarious purposes of bed-chamber, dressing room, study and parlour, they had ample opportunity to mourn over the sad destiny, which compelled them to labour so hard for the wretched pittance which the insatiate manager distributed to them.

Still they were better circumstanced than others of the company, because, in clubbing their mites together, though on the nights when there was no performance, they endured a sort of purgatory in alternately studying and transcribing their appropriated parts, they contrived to make both ends meet, for they were too high-minded to spend their time in the tap-room.

But at length, they became tired of the inconstancy of fortune; who seemed dealing by them, as the Frenchman dealt with his horse, which in the end, could live on a straw a day.

The whole company, therefore, came to the resolution of “remonstrating stoutly with their tyrant,” on the impossibility of existing on seven shillings a week, while they had, at the same time to find their own wardrobe; and it was proposed to ask him for an advance of five shillings a week, with which, if he complied, they would continue in his service, till fortune smiled more kindly on them; if not, they were determined to strike at once, and depart on foot for the metropolis.

At rehearsal next day, Jack, who was appointed spokesman, presented a petition, or rather memorial, to the manager, communicating their grievances, and praying for redress.

Tramp, who belonged to the long-headed family, did not much relish this mode of procedure, and seeing that this “turn out,” as he termed it, would ruin his benefit, which was approaching, he resolved to smother his resentment for the present, and have his revenge at a more convenient season. In the mean time, he agreed to the demand, and contented himself with verbal abuse, which included the simple denunciation of a “pack of rebellious rascals.”

Matters were now mended, and cheerfulness prevailed both in the theatre and the stroller’s lodgings; but its continuance was certified by no security, and they soon found that co-partnership, was, as the civilians say, the mother of discord. Tramp, who, since his arrival in the town, had been using all his endeavours to make his benefit, at length announced it in a broadside, a placard headed by another effusion from the muse of Squire Bounce, saying:

To gain your favour for this night,  
To us would be a grateful sight;  
And if the ladies please to come,  
The gentlemen won’t stay at home.  
On public favour we depend;  
Your bounty is our only friend;  
Your patronage dispos’d this night,  
Will either make or mar us quite.

The play was "Othello," and the after-piece "The Miller and his Men." Susan played Desdemona remarkably well; our expression of praise or censure of these performers, being always by comparison of their equals; and she had great hopes of softening the displeasure of Mrs. Tramp, who, since the unfortunate girl had ceased to board with them, had become her enemy, and opposed her wishes on every occasion.

But what was the surprise, not only of Susan, but of the whole company, nay, even of the audience, who had hoped to spend a few more shillings among these "R.V.S.," when Tramp at the conclusion of the piece, stepped forward to thank the audience, in his own and the company's names, for the patronage and indulgence they had met with. Then, after making this dutiful and appropriate speech, he informed the ladies and gentlemen present, "that this was the last night of the company's performance in that town."

The whole company were thunderstruck when they heard this speech, and as soon as Tramp came off the stage, they pressed him closely for an explanation of conduct so extraordinary. His only reply was, "I'll teach you to rebel, you rascals; you forced me to give you five shillings a piece last week, but now we are even. I expect my friend, Mr. Claptrap, here to-morrow, to purchase my *properties*, and so you may all go to old Harry if you like."

While all stood dumb, one of the performers, experienced in these matters, saw that no time was to be lost, and stepped before the curtain to deliver a counter address to those of the audience, who still remained in the theatre. In a speech which was equally remarkable for its brevity and perspicuity he pathetically set forth the "grievances of the company, and the villany of their ruler."

Those in the front seats immediately set up a shout of "Manager, Manager;" but Tramp deigned not to listen, and appear before his patrons of Walsal.

During the performance, his spouse had collected all the cash, and having with the assistance of Miss Clementina, and Master Alonzo, packed into the flying-landau, whatever moveables could be spared from the after-piece, the whole family of the Tramps bade "good night to all," and bent their steps for the Metropolis, that hiding place of virtue and vice, of genius and ignorance.

As neither the reader nor ourselves belong to that family, but make part and parcel of the performers and audience of Walsal, we hear the incessant cries of "Manager, Manager!"

The Manager was no where to be found, and when the curtain was raised the audience accordingly joined in close debate with the "Venetian Senators."

If Hogarth had formed one of the audience, he would doubtless have pulled out his pencil, for never was there such an assemblage of figures as on the present occasion; and we, who are compelled to do in words what the painter could so effectually do in colours, can give less expression to the interior of Walsal theatre. The imagination of the reader must fill up our outline.

The audience, who were on the eve of departure, and who, of course had closely wrapped themselves up in cloaks and shawls and tippets, to protect their delicate persons from the coldness of the night air, unanimously stepped on the stage, and mingled with the motley group, who there exhibited the most grotesque, but pitiable pictures of despair and passion.

Behind, lay the mill in ruins, and before, stood the poor actors, lamenting their misery, and upbraiding Tramp's name and their own simplicity. The millers, whom the manager's address had awakened from the dead, and whose shattered limbs had been restored and united by the pressing necessity of putting them in action, were still clad, or partly so, in their robbers' garbs; but some of them who had been preparing for home, wore a part of their costume, and still retained symptoms of ferocity in the magnitude of their mustachios, and the uncouthness of the lower part of their dress. These poor fellows finding they had ground their corn to little purpose, loudly exclaimed against Tramp's treachery, and individually explained its cause to the numerous spectators who surrounded them.

It was now evident to all, that the wily manager had built his own temporary prosperity, on the ruins of twelve "meritorious performers." But the general hub-bub being in some measure appeased, a being more attractive by the oddity of his appearance, as far as regarded the outward man, than all the other actors put together, stepped forward to address the assembly. This was no other than the sable general of the Venetian troops. The gentleman who personated Othello, was rather advanced in years, and had lost that covering of the pate, which serves in a great degree to give ornament and grace to the human figure. Whilst in acting the Moorish chief, he had worn a black frizzled wig belonging to the manager, but which being a *property*, the said manager had sent for, when about to pack up. During the day economy had accustomed Othello to perfect nakedness of scalp, and, on the present occasion, it was no wonder, that the juvenile and female part of the auditory should be rather terrified at beholding the anomalous coincidence of a bald head, white as "unsunned snow," and a face and neck black as soot. In addition to this, to give perfection to the character, Othello had tied up his upper lip by a black horsehair, so as completely to resemble that African feature; and this being the first night of his performing the character, he (not playing in the after-piece) had been so satisfied with his performance as to permit its characteristics to remain in their original appearance and form during the remainder of the evening. To the terror of the ladies, succeeded their hearty laughter, as they, on every side, made way for the cork-stained spokesman.

Othello recapitulated the circumstances which had been given piecemeal by the "Venetian Senators," and the resuscitated millers. He then begged the support of those who had been witnesses of their disaster; and pledged himself, that if the good people of Walsal would but patronise the company for a few nights, their finances would be so recruited that they should be able thereby to join some standard more propitious to their profession.

In the mean time he would take possession of the key of the theatre, with the landlord's leave, for the benefit of the company, and thus would the biter find himself bit, when he came next day to remove the scenery.

This last observation, which was made in total ignorance of Tramp's rapid flight, was quite unnecessary. But the orator with much eloquence, insisted that "necessity was the first law of nature," and they were fully justified in this measure by the fraudulent conduct of Tramp.

These various parcels of a speech and resolutions, propounded for acceptance or rejection, were received with acclamation, and one of Susan's admirers, a Mr. Amberly, stepped forward to offer the company not only protection, but every assistance which his

influence in the town could exert in their favour. He further advised the performers not to separate till, in full council, they had settled a plan for their future conduct; and the performances which he should take care would be abundantly patronised.

This however was but the beginning of his favour, for with much of that feeling which our religion recommends, as to be exercised towards *all* mankind, but which a hard-hearted world bids us cast to the dogs, he invited the whole company to dine with him next day, when they might communicate the result of their deliberations. Others of the audience now also promised their patronage, and the actors and their “best friends,” separated for the night, in high satisfaction with each other.

On the following day, dressed in their best bibs and tuckers, the children of Thespis paid their respects to Mr. Amberly, and were most hospitably entertained.

After the cloth was removed and the company had drunk one glass of wine to the health of their hostess and another to that of their host, Mr. Amberly picked out two of the best scribes from among the actors, and while the others cracked their nuts, or peeled and eat their apples, he, and these men of learning, manufactured, without much expense, a sufficient number of admission tickets for the rest of the season.

These Mr. Amberly sealed in all due form, and with his own hand, impressed upon them, a very beautiful likeness of Shakspeare, that our host had purchased at Stratford-upon-Avon, as he passed through that noted town, some years before.

The price of each ticket was fixed at half-a-crown, and Mr. Amberly advanced the amount of eight tickets to each of the performers before they left his house that evening.

The disinterested hospitality of this generous man, roused the dormant energies of the actors, and as their tickets were sought after, to a larger number than the club-room could rightly accommodate, they soon found themselves “living in clover,” under the united management of “Othello,” and Squire Bounce.

In the mean time, Claptrap, who had been informed by Susan of Tramp’s “moon-light flitting,” and of the extraordinary success which the “forsaken covey” had met with, resolved to take them under his special care, and he accordingly visited Walsal, on the very day the “birds were to take their flight.” Some of the performers very willingly closed with Claptrap’s terms, but a few stood out, determined to become an “independent company,” for their late gains, which left them in possession of fifteen pounds a piece, clear of all expenses, seemed to be so inexhaustible a fund, that they cared neither for Shakspeare, nor his executioner, Mr. Claptrap.

## CHAPTER VII.

With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,  
When idly, first ambitious of the town,  
She left her wheel and robes of country brown.

### DESERTED VILLAGE.

AMONG the more sober and rational part of the community, were the sable Othello, Squire Bounce and Susan, the principal performers of Mr. Tramp's quondam company.

The rest were a long miscellaneous row  
Of creatures; plebeians, whom one does not know,

who, flushed with their late success, dared each to aspire to the exalted situation of manager of an independent company.

In vain did Squire Bounce urge them to listen to reason;—in vain did he point out what a different kind of man Mr. Claptrap was, to their late tyrannous manager, Tramp. They were intoxicated at the idea of possessing fifteen pounds a-piece, and they magnanimously resolved to be independent. Of their peregrination, the particulars have never reached us, though we have ascertained that the magnanimous independence they professed, conducted many of the unhappy wanderers to a state of duration vile, where they languished months; nay some of them years in misery and want.

On the day following that which had attached Squire Bounce, Othello and Susan to the suite of Mr. Claptrap, the company removed to Sutton-coldfield, soon after which Susan received a letter from a gentleman of large fortune in the neighbourhood, who offered to make a handsome settlement upon her, provided she would consent to live with him as his mistress. The perusal of this epistle threw Susan into a violent agitation.

She reflected on the prospect of being comfortably sheltered, fed, and clothed, without the fatigue of providing by labour for the means of satisfying the cravings of nature. She thought it charming to be again flattered and admired—again to move in splendour, and to have servants at command. These were great and strong temptations to one who had so lately felt the necessity of making seven shillings a week provide for all her wants, yet, under her present circumstances, no one knew that she had lived formerly with Colonel Ednor; no one knew she had forsaken a home and parents, and therefore, among the companions with whom she was compelled to associate, she was treated with marked respect.

On the contrary, in her days of splendour, she had sensibly felt the humiliation of her situation, from those whom she considered her inferiors;—for two servant maids whom she had hired, on learning that she was not Colonel Ednor's wife, left her house without even condescending to ask for their wages.

While she was quickly scanning with an agitated mind all these circumstances, Squire Bounce knocked at her chamber-door. He was surprised at her flurried manner: the letter was still in her hand: in haste she hid it, but her feelings were too much for her, and she burst into tears.

Bounce stopped at the door, as if not knowing whether he should retreat or advance; but she pointed to a chair, and he sat down.

Susan wept for some time, and Bounce who really possessed some degree of feeling, (although he had not evinced much by his conduct towards his family,) and more affection for Susan than he chose to allow, begged to know if he could assist her in her present distress.

After some hesitation she shewed him the letter, which he read attentively, but made no comment on its contents, till Susan said, "Oh, Mr. Bounce, what will become of me? What would you advise me to do?"

"Do!" said Bounce, astonished at the question, "why let me send an answer to the gentleman; and tell him that Miss Susan Beverley has chosen a situation in life which exposes her indeed to many trials and difficulties, and worse than all, to many insults; but, that she is resolved in surmounting the one, and rejecting with disdain the other."

Susan's colour rose as she gave Squire Bounce permission to answer this impertinent letter; he immediately, however, penned an epistle to this effect, and encouraging Susan to hope they should in time both figure away on the London boards, he left her to send back her answer by the bearer of the gentleman's gentlemanly offer, who was waiting at the door for that purpose. He then proposed they should visit Mr. Claptrap, when he kindly set forth Susan's conduct on the present occasion in the most flattering light.

That very evening Susan played Southern's pathetic Isabella; but, in the middle of that scene, when she receives the ring, and repeats these thrilling words:

I have view'd him all:  
And let me, let me say it to myself,  
I'll live again, and rise but from the tomb,

some other object than Villeroy seemed to arrest her attention. Her eyes were fixed beyond the stage. Her agitation became extreme, and she was sinking to the ground before Villeroy had said,

"Have you forgot me quite?"

Squire Bounce looked surprise; for according to the play, she was not to fall till he had thrown off his cloak and discovered himself. He however, hastened to support her, but her agitation he perceived to be real; confused, he knew not what to do, till at length the audience called out to him, to go on. Still however, Susan made no reply, and rising suddenly from the ground, he turned towards the audience, and said that Miss Beverley had fainted in earnest.

The curtain then fell, and Susan was raised from the ground, and placed in a chair. By the usual applications she was restored to sensibility, and her first words expressed a wish to be conveyed to her lodging.

"I cannot," she continued, "go on the stage again to night, pray make an apology for me, I must go home."

Here poor Susan's feelings found relief in tears, and when she was left alone, she threw herself on the bed, and wept bitterly.

The object which had caused so much terror and agitation to Miss Beverley, was none other than Colonel Ednor in the boxes. And he was no less surprised, to find in Miss Beverley, his former companion, Susan Cowslip.

The gentleman with whom he was in company, had persuaded him to go to the *theatre*, to see a very pretty little actress.

“She is so pretty,” he continued, “that I sent her the other day a very handsome offer of a settlement, to which the little fool returned me this indignant answer.”

Mr. Faulkland at the same time drew from his pocket Squire Bounce’s epistle to the amusement of Colonel Ednor, who quizzed his friend most unmercifully on the rejection of his suit.

“I should like,” he added, “to see this primitive strolling player, and to night we will go to the play and behold poor Isabella murdered.”

“By heavens!” said the Colonel, “It is Susan Cowslip;” but this moment Susan recognised her betrayer, and overcome by his sudden appearance, she fainted.

On the following morning a note was delivered to her, addressed to Miss Beverley, of which the following is a copy:

My dear Susan,

My surprise at seeing you last night, was little less than your own. You have done wisely to change your name; I am however surprised to find that you have been so silly, as to refuse the very liberal offer of Mr. Faulkland: why, my dear Susan, it is an opportunity you can never expect to have repeated of settling yourself in the world. Allow me the pleasure of calling on you to-morrow morning, and then we can talk over this matter—till then adieu. Ever your sincere friend,

EDNOR.

Susan burst into a passion of tears on reading this epistle, which she tore into a hundred pieces. In the midst of her agitation Mrs. Claptrap knocked at her door.

Susan did not immediately answer, and Mrs. Claptrap opened it, “expecting,” as she said, “to find Miss Beverley ill in bed.”

Susan was however, very busily employed in picking up the torn letter; her eyes were swoln with weeping, and her whole person was in a tremour.

Mrs. Claptrap halted at the door, surprised at Susan’s agitation; but the hapless girl bade her come in and placed a chair for her. The veteran actress eyed Susan with a scrutinizing glance; then looked at the torn letter, then again fixed her keen dark eye on the novice in acting.

Susan could not stand this—she rose from her seat and went to the window. “I am sorry, Miss Beverley,” at length began Mrs. Claptrap, “to see you thus distressed. Can I do any thing to relieve you from your affliction, or at least lighten your grief?”

“No,” replied Susan, bursting again into tears, “No! Mrs. Claptrap, no, nobody can release me from my affliction—Oh what will now become of me?” “Indeed, Miss Beverley,” said Mrs. Claptrap, “I am greatly surprised at your agitation, it seems very strange not only to me, but to all the company; what could cause your fainting fit last night? I fear, Miss Beverley, that some love affair is at the bottom of this. Perhaps you would do well to make me your friend.”

Poor Susan thought she should *not* do well by making Mrs. Claptrap her friend, and therefore instead of replying to this *friendly* good woman, she preserved an absolute silence.

The manager's lady was exceedingly indignant at this behaviour, and rising with the air she assumed when enacting Queen Catherine, she said:—

“Deserve we no more reverence?”

You may repent this want of confidence, Miss Beverley; a young person, like you, should make friends of those who are older and wiser than themselves—but I shall not intrude on you; I wish you a good day.” So saying the tragedy queen left the apartment.

Scarcely had Mrs. Claptrap made her exit, when Mr. Bounce appeared; he was really grieved at Susan's apparent distress, and began to offer her every possible consolation, when Colonel Ednor's voice was heard upon the stairs.

Susan started from her seat; then again sunk into it, where she remained pale and breathless, heedless of all Jack's tender speeches.

Upon the entrance of the Colonel, Squire Bounce rose from his seat by Susan, and advancing towards Ednor, he asked him “what he meant by intruding upon Miss Beverley, without first knocking at her door.”

The Colonel eyed Jack from head to foot with a look of the most sovereign contempt: then without deigning to make any reply, he advanced towards Susan, calling her familiarly by her christian name.

Susan started from her seat and clinging to Jack, entreated he would not forsake her.

“Oh begone, Colonel Ednor,” she exclaimed, “Oh begone.”

“Why, my dear Susan,” he replied, “this folly is beyond my utmost expectations.” Then addressing himself to Squire Bounce, he proceeded thus, making a low bow, “May I beg, young gentleman, that you would leave us awhile?”

“Oh no,” rejoined Susan; “do not leave me, Mr. Bounce.”

Jack was every minute more and more puzzled as to what this meeting could mean, but he had not enacted heroes to so little purpose as to quit a lady in distress. Besides he was interested in Susan's welfare, and he very coolly replied, that, “he should remain with Miss Beverley, so long as his presence was not disagreeable to her.”

“Upon my word, Susan,” replied the Colonel, “you seem to have secured a champion—but I would have you to know, Sir, that I am not to be insulted by a strolling player. and an R.V. a rogue and a vagabond, Sir.”

Jack was about to reply, when Susan entreated he would be silent. “For my sake, she added; “Oh, Mr. Bounce, for my sake take no notice of what he may say.”

Poor Susan shook in every limb, as the Colonel advanced towards them; lifting his arm at the same time in a threatening posture, saying to Jack, “Do you choose, Sir, to leave us alone, or not?”

“No,” was the firm reply of Jack.

“Then I shall make you,” was the Colonel's answer, giving the Thespian hero a smart cut across the shoulders.

Jack's arm was instantly raised to return the compliment, when Susan's voice again arrested him, though his blood rushed through every vein impelled by indignation and revenge.

"In the presence of a lady you are safe, Colonel Ednor," at length said Jack; "there are other means to get redress, and I shall teach you, that though a strolling player, and a vagabond, the laws of England protect all her subjects.

"In the presence of a *lady*," repeated the Colonel, with a look of the most sovereign contempt: "I am safe; and that *lady* a strolling player, and my cat-off mistress! I thank you, Sir, for your *gentlemanly* conduct."

This cruel sarcasm struck cold upon Susan's heart; her hold of Mr. Bounce's arm relaxed, and she would have fallen, but his helping hand was still extended to support her; his colour, however, went and came, and in considerable agitation he placed her in a chair. Colonel Ednor walked backwards and forwards, occasionally stopping before the silly, vain victim, of his barbarous duplicity: as she again became animated he approached her, but she rose from her chair, and in low, but firm accents, bade him never come near her more.

"This last act of cruelty," she continued, bursting into tears, "this last act of cruelty, has wrecked all my hopes of future happiness. By following one steady line of conduct, I had regained some little respectability;—and you, oh cruel Colonel Ednor, you, a second time, have blighted all my hopes!—Leave me; do not insult me any longer by your presence.—Alas, in your countenance, Mr. Bounce, I see that all is over;—yet, as a man, I entreat you will not leave me to the mercy of that depraved wretch."

"No," said Mr. Bounce, "I will not leave you, Miss Beverley;—and so, Sir," he continued, addressing the Colonel, "you are welcome to stay here as long as you please, but we shall remain here together." Colonel Ednor, in a great passion, "swore that Mr. Bounce should repent his insolence," and then left the room.

A silence of some minutes followed his departure, which Susan was the first to break, and thus began: "I cannot tell you, Mr. Bounce, how much I am obliged to you; but I must leave the company; for I know the Colonel, in revenge will betray the secret, which I have so carefully preserved. Oh, Mr. Bounce, you shall know all my sad story; but now, dare I ask you to stay longer with me? yet I am afraid to remain here without you; what shall I do?"

Jack considered for some time, and then advised that she should immediately quit her present lodging, and said that he would send for Mr. Claptrap to remain with her, while he went to procure an apartment for her.

Mr. Claptrap obeyed the summons, and while Squire Bounce went to look for lodgings, Susan, with many sighs, disclosed to Mr. Claptrap, that Beverley was not her real name.

Mr. Claptrap listened with great attention to her story, and promised to conceal from Mrs. Claptrap the particulars he had just heard.

Susan then begged he would communicate to Mr. Bounce, all she had just told him. Her feelings were so poignant, and her frame so exhausted, that she could scarcely express her thanks to Mr. Claptrap, for his assurances, that while she conducted herself with propriety, he would be her friend.

When Mr. Bounce returned, he proposed that Susan should leave her present habitation, about the time the London coach set off for the metropolis, that the woman of

the house, might suppose she was gone thither. These arrangements being made, and carried into effect, Susan took possession of a small room in an obscure cottage, in the very heart of the town.

Mrs. Claptrap was told, that it was necessary Susan should conceal herself, in order to elude the troublesome impertinence of a gentleman who had, at a former period of *her* life, endeavoured to persuade her to live under his protection, and who under the pretence of much kindness, had teased her by impertinent questions and insinuations.

To this relation Mrs. Claptrap did not give much credence, yet, just for the present, the lady manager had no wish to fall out with Susan, for in losing her, she feared to lose Mr. Bounce, one of their chief performers.

In this retirement, we shall leave Susan to the bitter reflections of her conscience, and the contemplation of future toil and trouble.

When Colonel Ednor returned to his friend's house, he broke forth in ungentlemanly threats and imprecations against Mr. Bounce in the following terms:

"He shall suffer for it, I am resolved. Really I was quite surprised when I saw Susan the other night. She is much prettier than I thought she was, at least, than she appeared to me when I gave her up. I have half an inclination to take her again; but that meddling fool, will, I suppose, interfere: but let him if he dare."

Mr. Faulkland endeavoured to pacify him, telling him it was not worth while to trouble himself about either of them.

"You know," he added, "we leave this place, to-morrow afternoon; and after all, I think, Ednor, this Thespian hero only did what every honest man should do, under the same circumstances. I do assure you, that I would not repeat *my* offer to *Miss Beverley*. I admire her resolution; a resolution and a virtue I did not expect to find in a strolling actress; and which is, in my sentiment, doubly commendable, since she has tasted the sweets of luxury and idleness. Come, come, give up this pursuit, and let us talk on some other subject."

Ednor pretended to be convinced, and Susan was named no more; but early on the following morning, he went to her former lodging, and was hastening up stairs, as soon as the door was opened, but the landlady called to him to stop, asking him if he wanted to see Miss Beverley? adding, "She is gone to London, I believe; she left my house last night, when the stage set off, and she did 'nt act last night; and my lodgings are let to another person."

"The deuce she is!" ejaculated the Colonel, "but this may be some trick." So he hastily went on, and opened the door of the apartment he had been in the day before. There sat Othello and another performer. They both started up, and advancing towards the door; the Colonel by a hasty retrograde movement, made a false step, and fell backwards down the stairs. He broke no limbs, but cut his lip and forehead, which bled profusely. Othello hastened to offer his assistance, but the Colonel, whose chagrin at the accident, taught him to refuse haughtily the proffered assistance, and putting his handkerchief to his face, he rushed out of the house, in a rage. On reaching his friend's house, he gave some sort of explanation for his wounds, which satisfied Mr. Faulkland, and on that same afternoon, they left that neighbourhood for the metropolis.

As Mr. Claptrap's company were about moving from their present place of abode, Susan did not again appear on the stage, the short time of their stay at Sutton-Colefield.

Indeed, she was so out of spirits, that it required her utmost exertion, to enable her to attend the first rehearsal, on their arrival at Cheltenham.

Mrs. Claptrap had relaxed a little in her attention to the poor girl, and Susan felt keenly this alteration; but what affected her more than all, was the gradual coolness of Squire Bounce.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Can I, young Hamlet once, to nature lost,  
Behold, O horrible! my father's ghost,  
With grisly beard, pale cheek—stalk up and down,  
And he the royal Dane—want—half-a-crown?  
Forbid it, ladies! gentlemen, forbid it!  
Give joy to age, and let us say—you did it.  
To you, ye gods, I make my last appeal,  
You have a right to judge, as well as feel;  
Will your high wisdoms to our schemes incline,  
That kings, queens, heroes, gods, and ghosts may dine?  
Olympus shakes! that omen all secures,  
May every joy you give, be tenfold yours.

### GARRICK'S EPILOGUE ON QUITTING THE STAGE.

MR. Bounce had in fact been induced to pay Susan many attentions when she first joined the company, from a natural wish to befriend a pretty unprotected girl; in the course of time, something like affection had mingled with this feeling of urbanity; and he had even questioned himself once or twice on the possibility of her making a good wife.

There were however, moments, when his naturally good understanding befriended him, yet he was wavering, when the communication of Mr. Claptrap about her former connexion with Colonel Ednor completely decided his future mode of conduct. Having made up his mind on this important point, he deemed it ungenerous any longer to pay her those attentions, which had induced her to believe that his attachment would terminate in matrimony.

After some little consideration on this subject, and the uncomfortable life he had led for these last two years, he resolved on writing a penitential letter to his father, whom the reader has already recognised by the name of Mr. Weldon, soliciting his forgiveness, and promising if he would extend the hand of mercy, that he, the said Jack, would endeavour to obliterate the folly of his former conduct by a double diligence in any plan of life his father should be pleased to point out.

Mr. Weldon, senior, read this letter twice: the first time with feelings of indignation: the second perusal, however, softened his heart, and with the open letter he repaired to his wife, who fanned the slumbering spark of forgiveness in the worthy man's breast. She pointed out that we were commanded to forgive even our enemies; how much more, those who were so nearly allied to us, and who by their repentance and contrition, laid themselves open to our reproof as well as our mercy. Jack's sister too, with tears in her eyes interceded for him, and before a week had elapsed Squire Bounce received the following letter:

“Dear Jack,—

“So you have at last come to your senses; thanks to the buffetings and trials you have experienced in the respectable way of life you chose to adopt. Mercy on us, that a man, who could have been comfortably settled in his own native town, and

enjoying all the comforts of life, should choose to be strolling about in barns and tap-rooms! But I suppose by this time you are heartily sick of mumming away before a gaping audience. Well, as your mother and sister have taken it on themselves to answer for your good behaviour, I will permit you to return; but bring none of your play-books home with you, throw them to the dogs, and never let me hear the name of Shakspeare drop from your lips, or wo betide you.

I send you a ten-pound note, as your cash may be low, and as you tell me you have never exposed your real name, come back, you young rogue, but mind; let us have none of your fool's tricks here, no starts and fine tragedy airs: leave them behind you in the barn, where, I suppose, you and your companions are glad to shelter yourselves from the cold. Ah, well! the more I think of you, the more I am puzzled; and I must hasten to conclude my letter, lest I should change my mind.

Your mother and sister desire their love, and so good-bye to you for the present Mr. Jack; and according as you behave, so you will find me, your loving father, or the reverse.

JOHN WELDON.

The receipt of this epistle gave Jack unfeigned pleasure; he immediately hastened to Mr. Claptrap, and presented him with the best part of his superb wardrobe, viz., Richard's robe, a suit of pasteboard armour belonging to the ghost of Hamlet's father, the fools-cap in which he had been wont to personate the fool in King Lear, two or three vandyked ruffs, nicely cut in paper, a pair of tawny boots, a helmet à la Giovanni, three pair of whiskers, a black, a white, and a red curly wig, a Spanish hat, Penrudduck's walking-stick, a robber's hat, a box of rouge, a Jew's garbardine made of brown calico, sometimes converted into a Dutch merchant's polonaise, by studding it with bell buttons; it also occasionally had represented a monk's habit, when a hood was attached to it; a miller's hat, and many other valuables too numerous to specify.

He then told that gentleman he had received a letter from his father, requesting he would return to his family; "and," continued Squire Bounce, "as I find my abilities are not of that cast as to sanction my hopes of an engagement at one of the London theatres, I am anxious to acquire distinction in some other way. I have to express my acknowledgements for your liberal conduct towards me, and I beg you will do me the favour to accept of the few trifles that bundle contains, as a tribute of my gratitude."

Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap were vociferous in their expressions of regret, at parting with so accomplished a performer, using every argument in their power to induce him to alter his resolution; but Jack had conjured up the comfortable fire-side of his father's house, and he was impatient to make one in the family circle, which now surrounded it.

Mr. Bounce, having made known his intentions to Mr. Claptrap, went to Susan's lodging, and communicated the same intelligence to the unfortunate girl, who was diligently studying some of the long speeches of Lady Randolph, and at the same time as diligently employed with her needle.

When he announced his departure for the morrow, the hand which had so rapidly passed the needle through the splendid robe of queen's stuff adorned with yellow trimming to imitate gold lace, remained suspended; the yellow silk was drawn so completely to its utmost extent, that had it been jarred it would have twanged like a harp string.

“Going!” she exclaimed, her hand falling like a lump of lead, in her lap. “Going, Mr. Bounce,” she added in faltering accents, and pallid cheek; “what then will become of *me*?”

Squire Bounce was not prepared for this powerful appeal to his feelings, and he was silent. Susan having composed herself a little, entreated to know the cause of his sudden resolution to leave the company. Jack then told her that he was reconciled to his father, as we have already detailed; but when he said that he was going *home*, Susan burst into tears, and said, “I have no home to go to, no living soul who cares what may become of poor Susan. Oh, Mr. Bounce, I would give any thing to quit this strolling life, but who would receive a stroller into their family even as a servant?” “Oh,” she continued, “I thought it a fine thing to be an actress, but I find myself exposed to want, misery, and contempt, where I expected to find fame, wealth, and adoration.”

“Not contempt, Miss Beverley,” replied Bounce; “while you conduct yourself with propriety, for where the temptations to error are so numerous, there is the greater honour in repelling them.”

Susan shook her head, as she replied, “Yes, to contempt, Mr. Bounce, for when we left Sutton-Colefield, for this place I heard a chimney-sweeper say to his boy, who was pointing and laughing at me, when I was in the scene cart, ‘Hold your tongue, boy; what do you laugh at? can’t you be quiet? there’s no knowing what any of *us* may come to at last!’”

Here Mr. Bounce’s gravity and feeling were overpowered at Susan’s serious description of so ludicrous a circumstance, and he burst into a fit of laughter, to the great discomposure of the poor girl, who thought it no laughing matter. He begged pardon for his involuntary mirth, but said, “that he really hoped Miss Beverley would pardon him, for if that were the only mark of contempt she ever met with, she would indeed be fortunate.”

Susan’s spirits, however, were depressed at parting with Mr. Bounce, who was the only gentleman of the company, to whom she could at all times communicate her sorrows, and she in vain endeavoured to rally her spirits. Squire Bounce gave her encouragement to hope for an engagement at some of the London theatres, and having again and again exhorted her to persevere in the same prudent line of conduct she had hitherto adopted, he put into her hand a five pound-note, entreating she would do him the favour to accept that, as a mark of his friendship.

He also presented her with a plume of feathers, with which he was wont to adorn his hat when he enacted Richard the third; a paste loop and button, two pair of silk stockings not *much* darned, and the splendid garter which graced his knee, when he personated any of the royal blood of England.

These donations were gratefully received by Susan, and she ventured to ask Mr. Bounce to write to her.

Jack was extremely sorry to say “*that* was quite impossible, for his father had positively declared, that if he did not completely break off all connexion with persons in a theatrical line, he would cut him off with a shilling.”

“If however,” he added, “you should ever come to Boston, I will, if possible, call on you; in the mean time, believe me I shall never forget the days we have passed together in buffeting the world, and the pleasure I have experienced in sometimes benefiting you by my advice.”

Susan now wept aloud; she felt that in losing Mr. Bounce, she was losing a brother, and a few minutes elapsed before she could reply to his friendly language.

He had promised to play Norval that night for her benefit; and he assured her, that the last time he appeared in public, as a performer, should, as he hoped, be for her benefit indeed.

Squire Bounce now took his leave, and disposed of the rest of his wardrobe to his brothers, of the sock and buskin. Jack however could not relinquish that vanity, which had first induced him to lead the life of a strolling player, and in the play-bill, it was announced, that the part of Norval would be enacted by Mr. Bounce, *being his last appearance on the stage.*

He further added, that he would, between the play and the farce, repeat Shakspeare's seven ages as an appropriate speech on the occasion, to which he would add, "A farewell address," written by himself.

Susan expressed the warmest acknowledgements to Mr. Bounce for his intended kindness, which she, poor silly girl, wholly attributed to his friendship for her. Mr. Bounce did not undeceive her, but, secretly exulted in that transitory fame, which, as Mr. Bounce he should that night acquire; he exerted himself to the utmost, and was received with much applause.

When the play was over, and sufficient time had been allowed him to rise from the dead, and then equip himself in the habit of a gentleman, he stepped forward and recited the "Seven Ages."

After a short pause which was necessary for him to make, that the public might have an opportunity of expressing their approbation before he began his address, he spoke as follows. We cannot help however, observing, that this poetic effusion of Mr. Bounce's genius, had been highly applauded in the green room. "It was," as he himself observed, "rather to be classed under that species of composition, commonly called an ode, than any other, from its irregularity; but as it contained some expressions *novel* and *striking*, and not generally found in poetry, he hoped it would do.

"If however," he continued, "it should not draw on me those plaudits which from its merits I have every reason to expect; I shall but share the fate of many other original geniuses, whose works have been neglected during their author's life, but who have acquired by posthumous fame, an honour more to be envied than the most flattering praises of contemporaries. My epilogue will live, when I shall be dead."

Othello ventured to say, that he should much rather for his part enjoy his fame while living, as he might then hope to fill his pockets, a circumstance of far more importance to him, than posthumous fame, but Othello had no father to go to; Mr. Bounce had: and it is very much to be questioned whether this trifling circumstance might not operate in some degree upon the young man, who thus sublimely preferred posthumous fame, to present renown. But we beg pardon for this digression, and proceed to give the lines which called forth Squire Bounce's magnanimous preference, and Othello's more humble, yet, more sensible choice, of bread and cheese, to posthumous renown.

In love with fame, I trod these magic boards;  
In love with wealth, great and unbounded hoards,  
In my mind's eye—in distant prospect I beheld.

But now my fame must to the ground be fell'd:  
 My father's voice, in tones of deep despair,  
 Calls *me* from hence, ME his only hope, his  
     heir:—  
 So farewell, gentles all, while time shall last,  
 Your favours, in my bosom lock'd up fast,  
 Shall live—when I am far, ah! far away.—  
 When hills between us rise, when woods be-  
     tween us lay,  
 Then, oh! then my panting heart shall lean to  
     thee,  
 And my warm'st wish and sanguin'st hope shall be,  
 That odious want may never stare thee in the face.  
 That plenty, peace, and love, may still inhabit  
     in this place,  
 That you may all live long, and never meet  
     disgrace,  
 Nor lack of *filthy lucre* cramp your generous  
     breasts,  
 When such as me entreat your aid to help them  
     in distress.

Here Mr. Bounce made a low bow; and some one in the boxes having said, "I am sorry, Mr. Bounce, you are going to quit us," this speech was repeated from various parts of the house, and the Thespian hero quitted the stage deeply affected at the marks of sympathy which his farewell address had elicited from the hearts of his auditors.

If Mr. Bounce felt satisfied with his exit from the stage, Susan Cowslip had reason to rejoice as heartily in his success as himself, for after having paid all the expenses of the house, she netted seven pounds!

On the following morning Mr. Bounce took his leave of Mr. and Mrs. Claptrap and company, and set off for Boston in Lincolnshire. As he proceeded on his way, he could not but rejoice in his expectations, nor could he sufficiently appreciate his father's indulgence, in offering him an asylum under the parental roof, after his disobedient conduct.

As he drew near home, his heart began to be agitated, and the first sight of his native town, brought the tear to his eye; but ashamed of this weakness he walked on faster, having performed part of the journey on foot; for when he had given five pounds to Susan, and one other pound to Othello; when he had paid Mr. Claptrap a small sum he owed to him, and satisfied his landlady for a fortnight's lodging and board, his ten pounds began to look rather small; the balance of the thirty pounds had gone long ago. But the *filthy lucre* occupied little of his thoughts at the present moment; he was going home where his wants would be supplied, and where plenty and smiling faces awaited him.

When he knocked at his father's door, he trembled, but without ceremony entered the passage, but the servant, prevented his advance, and asked his name; he impatiently replied Mr. Bounce; but just as the maid had opened the parlour-door, he recollected

himself, and exclaiming “Stop, stop, girl, for mercy’s sake—stop—not Bounce—did I say Bounce?—Mr. Weldon I mean.”

Fortunately, there was no one in the apartment, but hearing his mother’s voice above stairs, he sprang towards her, and clasping her in his arms, he repeated, “My dear mother, my dearest mother; do you not know me? do you not recollect poor Jack Bou—Weldon, I mean?”

Poor Mrs. Weldon, was, at first, alarmed at the unexpected seizure made by her son, whom she did not immediately recollect; but in a few seconds, his voice, which strongly resembled that of his father, struck upon her ear, and though time had considerably altered his appearance since he left Boston, a long lanky boy of fourteen; yet she soon discovered traces of her wandering son.

His sister attracted by the noise, came to see what was the matter. Jack was so altered, that she had not the slightest recollection of him, and therefore called loudly for assistance, supposing that the young man was a robber.

The old gentleman, who, from the garden heard the uproar created by his undutiful son’s arrival, hastened into the parlour, and giving Jack a hearty squeeze of the hand, welcomed him home, by “Prodigal dog,—so you’ve cut with Punch’s mockers.—Well, it is a long lane that has no turning, as your poor mother always says.” And with many such expressions did the fond father greet “his naughty boy.” That was the most severe epithet Mrs. Weldon bestowed on Jack, of whom we now take leave for a season.

## CHAPTER IX.

Methinks 'tis pitiful to see her try,  
For strength of arms, and energy of eye;  
With vigour lost, and spirits worn away,  
Her pomp and pride she labours to display,  
And when awhile she's tried her part to act,  
To find her thoughts arrested by some fact;  
When struggles more and more severe are seen,  
In the plain actress than the Danish queen,  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Sad and in doubt she to her purse applies  
For cause of comfort, where no comfort lies;  
Then to her task, she sighing turns again,  
"Oh Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain."

CRABBE'S BOROUGH.

THE departure of Squire Bounce, was the beginning of fresh trouble to Susan. Mrs. Claptrap, unawed by the presence of her defender, threw out many hints, that she was well informed of the particulars of Susan's story; and with all the acrimony of a vulgar mind, she relaxed in those attentions she had been accustomed to pay the hapless girl. She, however, acted only on her own surmises, for Claptrap honourably kept the secret intrusted to him; exhorting Susan to persevere in her good conduct, and to be diligent in studying those characters she most liked; that she might, at some future time, obtain an engagement at one of the London theatres.

Encouraged by this hope of figuring in the capital, Susan bore Mrs. Claptrap's caprice and ill humour, for some time; but at length, her tyranny became so overbearing, that Claptrap himself advised her to quit the company, saying, what was indeed a fact, "that he could not bear to see her so ill used;" but, at the same time, he sensibly observed, "Mrs. Claptrap is my wife, and if I were to take your part openly and decidedly, I should never know a moment's peace, and you would fare worse than ever. I will give you a letter to Mr. Playright, and strongly recommend you to him, and you may, perhaps, get an engagement at his theatre." Susan thanked Mr. Claptrap for his advice, and immediately prepared for her journey to London.

In the evening, however, she played "Jane Shore," with more than her usual success, and one of the audience was clamorous in his applause. His conduct was so singular, that he very much amused some of his neighbours; for Susan no sooner appeared on the stage, than he stretched his neck forwards, then rubbed his eyes, again looked at the provincial actress, saying:

"What a likeness! bless me, I never saw so strong a likeness in my life." But when Susan began to speak, he exclaimed in an under tone, "It is she herself! I declare she plays very well."

As the tragedy proceeded, his observations continued. "Ah, poor thing!—well, who would have thought!" Regardless of the attention his manners excited, he followed the woe-worn heroine to her last stage of misery, with the most profound feeling,

frequently applying his handkerchief to his eyes, and ejaculating short speeches, indicative of the sympathy he felt now for the misfortunes of Jane Shore, and occasionally for her representative Susan Cowslip. When the curtain fell, he heaved a deep sigh, and he continued for some minutes motionless, till he was roused by the approach of a little boy, who gave him a note, with these words written on it.

“Do not betray me!”—but I will see you to-morrow morning, if you will call at the first cottage by the road-side, leading out of the town. Ask for *Miss Beverley*.—Susan.

“Dear me!” said Mr. Grigs, for that was the auditor who had admired and pitied Miss Beverley, “this is quite an adventure.”

“A pleasant one, I hope,” replied one of the by-standers. This observation, recalled Mr. Grigs to himself, who looking at the person who had thus addressed him, for one minute, then turned short upon his heel, and addressed the boy, who was standing staring at the apothecary, saying: “Very well, boy, very well;—that’s all;—but stop here,—here’s two-pence for you.”

The boy’s countenance relaxed into an expression of profound respect, and pulling down his head, by a curl which wantoned on his fair front, and scraping his heel at the same time, he departed, saying: “Thank you, Sir.

As Susan lay dead on the stage, she caught sight of Mr. Grigs, and fearful of a second exposure, she scarcely waited for the curtain to fall, before she jumped up, and ran off the stage, and wrote the note in question. Calling the prompter’s boy to her, with whom she was a great favourite, she bade him give that note to the little gentleman in black, with a white wig, who was standing by the *orchestra*, leaning his chin upon both hands, which were supported by a substantial gold-headed cane.

The boy obeyed; and the result of this note was the following interview next morning between Mr. Grigs and Miss Beverley.

The apothecary mused over his breakfast, upon his approaching interview with Susan, and then set off for the cottage by the road-side. His step was measured, and holding his gold-headed cane with both hands, the top supporting his chin, a very usual manner of carrying a walking stick, his small cocked hat shading strongly his face, the protuberance of his wig preventing its resting equally on all parts of his head, he at length reached Susan’s door.

His appearance was respectable, and the cottager’s wife dropped him a low curtsy, and said “She would call Miss Beverley down to him. “When Susan appeared, she asked the dame if she could spare her kitchen for five minutes?

“Yes, sure,” was the reply, “and welcome.”

“I have but little time,” said Susan, addressing Mr. Grigs, “for we rehearse at ten, to tell you all my troubles; but to say how much I am obliged to you for this condescension is impossible.”

She then, in as few words as possible, gave the story of her life, not forgetting Colonel Ednor’s discovery of her. Her recital, which was accompanied by many tears, excited Mr. Grigs’s sympathy; and he advised her to return to her own village; but Susan had not strength of mind enough for such an attempt; she could not bear to encounter

All the reproaches, infamies and scorns,  
That every tongue and finger would find for *her*.

“No, Mr. Grigs,” she replied, “I can’t, indeed, I can’t return to Silvershoe; but I will endeavour to merit the pity you have kindly expressed for me.” She then inquired after the Woodbine family, and upon hearing that Mary had got a lovely boy, she burst into tears, exclaiming, “Happy Mary!—Oh, Mr. Grigs, tell her, from me, she cannot possibly value her own happiness enough. Happy Mary.”

“Hem!” said Mr. Grigs, “yes, certainly, she is happy; but, Susan, as the Spanish proverb says, ‘every body has their skeleton in the closet,’ and Mary might be happier: but, then, Susan, in *her* case, and *your* case, I believe we may trace your sorrows to your own selves. I don’t mean to distress you, Susan, but merely to say that we often accuse others, ay, even Providence itself, for the miseries, which are the result of our own folly. But, be assured, Susan, that while you conduct yourself properly, you shall always find a friend in me.”

Susan’s tears flowed gently as Mr. Grigs proceeded.

She felt the truth of his observations, but entreated he would believe, that it should be the study of her life, to merit the friendship he so kindly offered. “And now,” said Susan, “tell me about my father and mother? are they well? do they ever mention me?”

“Yes,” replied Mr. Grigs, “they are well, quite well; I see them sometimes, but I cannot say they ever mentioned you to me; but that is not surprising, you know, Susan, all things considered. But I am afraid I am intruding upon you; it is just upon the stroke of ten. God bless you, Susan; and be a good girl, and remember what I have said to you; I will always befriend you, while you conduct yourself with propriety.”

Mr. Grigs then took his leave, giving her a guinea; he shook her cordially by the hand, and departed, while Susan bent her steps to a large barn, in which the company were, that night, to enact Richard the Third.

After the rehearsal, Susan made known her intentions of quitting the company to the lady manager, whose surprise at her resolution, was as great, as her disappointment was unfeigned; for Susan was the best actress of the company, always excepting Mrs. Claptrap, and would therefore, be a loss.

The latter made use of some arguments to induce Miss Beverley to remain in her present advantageous situation, but finding her oratory ineffectual, she changed her tone; adding, “That Miss Beverley might go farther, and fare worse.”

Susan’s departure was regretted by many of the company, and by none more than by Othello; who, finding her really serious, made up his mind, and at once, upon a point which had hitherto puzzled him, namely: that of offering himself and his *fortunes* to the fair actress, to whose personal attractions he was not insensible, but whose theatrical abilities were more substantial reasons for his resolution to sacrifice his liberty. He could not, however, have preferred his suit at a more unpropitious moment, for London and its golden harvest were within the grasp of Susan, and without any deliberation, she rejected the suit of the tawny Othello. The next morning, with a light heart, and that pliability of mind, generally characteristic of her sex, she entered into the stage coach. With great rapidity of thought and many a sigh, she glanced her past life, but with the goal in view, (a London theatre) she looked for better times. Yet Susan was heartily sick of the stage, and would gladly have adopted some other mode of life: but all access was closed to a more comfortable employment; for who would engage her as a servant, without a character? Not a day passed, but she sighed for the peace and quiet of her native village; and often, with bitter tears, lamented her credulity in listening to the artful tales of

Colonel Ednor, who had seduced her from the path of virtue; and who, regardless of the miseries he had heaped on so many aching hearts, still, as Susan thought, lived on, caressed and courted by the gay and thoughtless, as the most agreeable and captivating companion.

Susan had often enacted Jane Shore, and, perhaps, Mrs. Siddons herself, had seldom repeated the following lines with more pathos than did poor Susan Cowslip:

Mark by what partial justice we are judged:  
Such is the fate unhappy women find,  
And such the curse entailed upon our kind,  
That man, the lawless libertine, may rove  
Free and unquestioned through the wilds of love;  
While woman, sense and nature's easy fool,  
If poor weak woman swerve from virtue's rule,  
If strongly charm'd, she leave the thorny way,  
And in the softer paths of pleasure stray,  
Ruin ensues, reproach, and endless shame,  
And one false step, for ever damns her fame:  
In vain with tears the loss she may deplore,  
In vain look back to what she was before;  
She sets, like stars that fall, to rise no more.

Yet Susan wanted not good sense enough to own the justice of this severe, but wholesome law, which had driven her from her home and all her former connexions; but she nevertheless could not avoid thinking it hard that such disgrace should attach solely to the weaker vessel; and that while she was shut out of society, her betrayer, was, by many persons, even of her own sex, better received than men of a less pleasing exterior, but of unquestionable worth. As far as related to Colonel Ednor, Susan was not quite correct, as the sequel of our tale will shew.

Mr. Playright, on whom she waited immediately on her arriving in London, very willingly engaged her; and, for some years, Susan figured away as the principal performer of the establishment which had the honour of exhibiting her talents; but time passed, and with its flight, fled also the graces of youth and loveliness: her voice, too, lost its sweetness, and after having spent her prime in this same theatre, she was told, she was now only fit for second-rate characters, and therefore must not expect so large a salary. Indignant at this ungenerous conduct, she relinquished her situation, and again repaired to the mart in the vicinity of the larger theatres, where she learnt that a company in the north, was in want of a tragedy queen.

Thither she bent her wandering steps, and was well received.

In one of her perambulations she played at Boston, and though time had laid his hand heavily on her fading figure, she was recognised by Jack Weldon, now a steady character in his native town, where he acted a principal part as an attorney of considerable eminence.

His father being dead, he indulged so far in his old *penchant* for the stage, as to shew much kindness to the itinerant companies who stopped at Boston; and without making himself personally known to Susan, he beat up volunteers for her benefit, and

enclosed her a two pound note, merely saying in the envelope, "That it came from an old acquaintance."

Susan immediately puzzled herself by ineffectual attempts to discover the generous donor; but at last Squire Bounce presented himself to her imagination; she accordingly inquired at the post-office, as the most likely place where she could gain any intelligence whether such a person was to be found in the town; but young Weldon had prudently concealed his real name, even from Claptrap, and thus successfully eluded all Susan's attempts at discovering him. Thus year after year of Susan's life rolled unprofitably away, till at last, the stage-struck *heroine*, who had, in beauty's bloom, figured away as the principal performer of several companies of comedians, could scarcely find breath enough to repeat the long speeches to which she still endeavoured to give strength and energy.

## CHAPTER X.

Yet, yet endure, nor murmur, O my soul,  
For are not thy transgressions great and numberless?  
Do they not cover thee like rising floods,  
And press thee like a weight of waters down?  
Does not the hand of righteousness afflict thee,  
And who shall plead against it, who shall say  
To Power almighty, thou hast done enough:  
Or bid his dreadful rod of vengeance stay?  
Wait then with patience, till the circling hours  
Shall bring the time of thy appointed rest,  
And lay thee down in death. JANE SHORE.

SUSAN'S services were however still acceptable, for in characters not requiring youthful beauty, she to the last played with some degree of success, and at Market Deeping, she distinguished herself by enacting some of the principal characters of Shakspeare.

But the theatre was a barn; she caught a violent cold one evening after leaving the stage, from the draughts which assailed her on every side. When she went to her home, the upper room of a poor cottage, she felt exceedingly ill, and in the morning was unable to rise. This was unfortunate, for the company were to strike their tents on the following day, and Susan was this night to have played Constance in King John for her benefit.

An apothecary was called in, and he declared that Miss Beverley must not think of quitting her bed; that her fever was great, and he must entreat she would take the medicine he had brought and compose herself. This was no easy task to one whose finances were low, and who had depended on this night's performance for the means of supporting a precarious existence.

Susan had now been nearly thirty years a wanderer, yet she had never, been able to put by a little store to support her in old age. Seldom or ever had she made more money than would meet her daily wants. Sometimes she and her companions might perchance reap a golden harvest, but this would be certainly followed by autumns of scarcity. During her engagement in London, her expenses had very nearly absorbed her salary. Her lodging, her food, and particularly her apparel, had been beyond what they should have been: but the stage is no school for economy; actors even of the first rate, are seldom wealthy. It was no wonder then that Susan who had occasionally received only seven shillings a week, should be without a provision at that period of her life when her strength failed, and when she sighed for peace and repose.

The apothecary's orders, therefore, that she would remain quietly in bed, were received by Susan with impatience. How could she remain in bed? she must get up, and in the evening she did so, and crawled to the cold barn.

By that exertion, which imperious necessity imposes, she went through her part, but she fainted as soon as she left the stage, and was carried home in a state of insensibility.

The following morning she was in a high fever, and in this state was left at Market Deeping, while the rest of the company went on to Lincoln.

The apothecary was in the room, when the manager and his wife entered the poor creature's apartment, and having expressed much sorrow for her indisposition, they gave her folded up in a piece of paper the profits of her benefit, and placing a small bundle on the bed, containing some of her wearing apparel which they had in pawn for a trifle, that the receipts of the benefit redeemed, they wished her a good morning, and took their leave. Susan was unable to make any reply to their *kind condolence*, and the medical man having again and again cautioned her against any exertion mental or bodily, he left her, promising to call again in the evening.

The apothecary paid Susan every attention, and at his entreaty the owner of the cottage waited on her, but she grumbled excessively, saying, "indeed she had something else to do than to throw away her time on mummers and morrice dancers."

After three days of complete inertion, Susan raised herself in her bed, and wept over her hapless fate. "What will now become of me! Alas, my cash is low, and I shall never be able to defray all the expenses, which I have incurred through this indisposition."

She took from under her pillow her little purse; it contained fifteen shillings, and her benefit profits amounted to one pound sixteen and sixpence. Her wardrobe was no longer such as to excite her companions' envy, and she could expect to raise but little from that, even if she were compelled to part with it. While she was thus ruminating, her landlady entered.

"Oh, Miss, you be up, be ye? I began to be afeard as you would never get up again; howsomever, I am glad to see you be better; and as I can let my room for eighteen-pence a week more nor you gives me, I wishes you to provide yourself with another lodging. I suppose your purse can't stand eighteen-pence a week more; now you be out of employ. The players are playing away at Lincoln finely."

Susan sighed deeply, and the woman proceeded, "But you can't be distressed neither, because you had your benefit; and there is your bill for last week and this week up to to-day, Thursday; and I should be obliged to you to pay it, because we are poor folks, and can't do without our money."

Susan begged she would leave the bill with her; saying, at the same time, that she should not quit her present abode till Saturday, when her week would be up.

The landlady insisted that Susan should quit her lodgings on that very day, and also begged Miss Beverley would be pleased to know, that she should be paid immediately. "If not," she added, "you must take the consequences: that's all!"

Susan looked at the bill, the two weeks' lodging amounted to five shillings: nursing and attendance, five more: then, there was so much for groats, for barley, and many other articles made use of in illness, which amounted to five more. Susan stared with astonishment, at this exorbitant charge, and was resolved to dispute the payment of it; but second thoughts induced her to relinquish the idea, and she determined, if it was possible, to quit the cottage on the morrow. The apothecary called in the course of an hour and found her fever increased, the natural consequence of her late irritation of spirits: but she assured him she was better, and asked him for his bill.

"It is a mere trifle," he replied, "not worth mentioning, a few shillings only, I beg you will not name it, till you are quite well. In another week we will talk about the bill."

The sound of another week terrified Susan, and she again begged he would allow her to settle her account. The apothecary reluctantly consented; but Miss Beverley was so

pressing, that he went home on purpose for it. Twelve and six-pence was the amount; without any observation from the poor invalid, the bill was paid, and she begged that as he went through the kitchen, he would send up her landlady.

“Poor thing!” said the apothecary, to the owner of the cottage, “I never saw any one so anxious to be out of debt in my life; she has just paid me, I did not wish it, but she insisted on it.”

The cottager looked astonished as she ejaculated “Indeed! why them sort of people are not often so fond of paying their way. I began to be afraid, for my part, that I shouldn’t get my money; but I’ll go up to her directly, mayhap she may want summut.”

The mercenary creature entered Susan’s apartment with a smile and a curtsy; and as she drew back the bed curtains, she expressed a hope that Miss Beverley was better.

She was most obsequiously attentive, and Susan was at a loss to account for this change of her conduct, but she soon found out the source from whence it sprung, and she profited by the discovery.

“I shall pay you to-morrow, good woman,” said she, “and I shall quit your lodgings to make room for a richer tenant.”

The landlady who stood by the bedside was now vehement in her protestations of sorrow and good will. Of sorrow, that Miss Beverley should imagine that she meant to turn her out for a new lodger, however much he might pay; and of good will towards the exhausted Susan, for whom she professed quite love and affection.

Susan was not to be deceived by her protestations, and complaining of fatigue, desired to be left alone.

When the woman went below, she accused her husband of having lost a good lodger. “I never will believe you again, John; you said you was sure she could’nt find salt to her porridge; and now our room may be empty, till another tramping party come this here way. She says, ‘She will go to-morrow,’ and it’s all your doings.”

The husband was violent in his reply, and their altercation was so great, that Susan could partly discover the cause of it, from the words she heard. This made her more anxious to quit the roof, and having made up her mind to the decrees of

The stern rugged nurse,

Adversity, she endeavoured to compose herself to sleep; it was morning, however, before she closed her weary eyes, and when she awaked, the sun was shining brightly through her casement window. She was, however, refreshed by the kindly influence of the drowsy god. Rising, she opened the window, and inhaled the pure breezes of the morning, but the air was too chilling for an invalid, and she closed it. Collecting the general articles of her wardrobe, she tied them up in a bundle, and then with a sigh and a tear she took fifteen shillings out of her purse, and with her money in one hand and her bundle in the other, she descended the cottage stairs, at the foot of which, she was met by her hostess, who could but ill disguise her chagrin, at losing a lodger, who promised to pay them well, and who had given them little, or no trouble, except during her illness.

No feelings of remorse were mingled with these calculations of the landlady’s for driving the poor feeble victim to seek a home in her present debilitated condition; and when Susan gave her the money, she took it rudely, saying, “Miss Beverley, you need’nt be in such a hurry to go, I should’nt have turned you out.”

Susan made no reply to this polite speech, but with feeble steps reached the door, and went out. Then entering the town, she passed through its principal street, and in an obscure corner, took a lodging for the night, with only one pound five in her pocket.

She had been refused admittance into several houses because she looked ill; the owners of some recognised her as one of the actor folks, and objected to accommodate "any of them there sort of people." One family, more avaricious than humane, at length admitted her into their cottage; but in the wretched abode that sheltered her, Susan met with little sympathy, and it was only by paying before hand, that she could obtain this lodging.

A roll and a draught of milk was her only refreshment during the day; she had slept some part of it, and in the evening, she wrapped herself up, and seated herself at the window. The back of the cottage looked to that part of the country, through which flowed the Welland. The night was clear and frosty, the moon shone resplendently, and threw her silvery light all around, while the translucent wave reflected in tremulous lustre a long line of silvery white. There is something soothing in the witching hour of eventide; the stillness which attends it, adds to its solemnity; and in contemplating the wide expanse of deep blue ether, few are the hearts which can resist its magic sweetness. Susan's heart was dissolved in softness.

Though she had attained that period of life when the feelings are blunted by their contests with an unfeeling world, yet there were moments when the days of her youth flitted before her fancy, in all the loveliness of health and innocence. Then Mary Woodbine, Betsy, and the friends of her childhood, would rush on her recollection, and Colonel Ednor would close the picture. Heavy sighs and tears, and as she advanced in life, feelings of a more bitter nature would attend this retrospective view. Never, perhaps, had Susan felt the loneliness of her situation, so much as at the moment when she placed herself at the casement, yet, by degrees, she yielded imperceptibly, to the effect of the calm scene before her. She wept, indeed, but her tears flowed gently down her harassed cheek. Long did she sit musing on her fate, and at length, wearied, and in some degree composed, she retired to her humble bed.

But little refreshed by heavy sleep, she found herself unable to proceed to Lincoln on the following day; in fact, the privations to which her scanty purse compelled her to submit, were ill calculated to renew her reduced frame. Day after day she lingered at this obscure spot, paying every night for her lodging till her small fund being exhausted, she was compelled to say "She would pay on the following morning." Unwillingly her host consented to this short delay, muttering as he went down stairs, that "he should trust her no longer than the morrow; and then, if she could not pay, she must trudge."

The morrow came, and Susan, in an agony, parted with her last sixpence to her unfeeling landlord.

"'Tis all I have in the world," she said in despair, as the man took it.

"If that's the case, mistress," he replied, "you must ev'n provide yourself with another lodging; I can't afford to keep those who can't keep themselves."

"But I have here what will satisfy you," resumed Susan, "for a day or two longer, and then Heaven knows what will become of me. I am too ill to be removed, good man, at the present moment: do not turn me into the street; I shall not live long, and the parish," she added with a groan, "the parish will bury me."

“Well, for the matter of that,” replied the man, as he glanced at the bundle containing Susan’s wardrobe, “You may stay another day or so—but don’t you want something to eat?”

“No,” sighed out poor Susan, “I have no appetite; I only wish to be alone.”

“Your wants are easily gratified then,” resumed her host, “for I am going directly.”

As soon as he arrived in his kitchen, he told his wife all that had passed, and she very willingly allowed they were on the right side of the hedge.

“She can’t live long, I’m sure,” added her husband, “and then you may get all her gear.”

A week however passed, and though Susan gradually got weaker, she did not die, and her host and hostess became clamorous for money. Having seized on the bundle, the woman took the greater part of its contents, and then rudely bade poor Susan begone.

In vain the broken down-daughter of misfortune supplicated for pity. Pity had never found entrance into the flinty bosom of this man and his wife; and in despair Susan put on her bonnet and shawl, and taking the few things their rapacity had left, she tottered down stairs. This exertion was however, too much for her, and she sunk into a chair that stood at the entrance of the kitchen.

“Ah well,” said the man, “you may sit if you like, but it shall be in the open air. Open the door, dame.”

This command was immediately obeyed, and the unfeeling monster lifted the chair with the terrified Susan in it, and placed her in the lane, regardless of her earnest but feeble entreaties, “that he would be merciful.”

“Charity begins at home,” said his wife, “and we can’t afford to keep folks for nothing; you must go to the infirmary, or get passed to your own parish. I shan’t let you die in my house—I shall have the crowner come, and who knows from your maciated looks, he may think you’ve been starved to death under my roof, and the jury may bring me in as a complice to your death.”

“Yes, to be sure,” said a little sharp-nosed cobbler, “you’re right, neighbour, and I thinks you do much to let her sit in your chair.”

Susan’s situation became every instant more agonizing; the children collected round her and made all sorts of remarks, as to what would be done with her.

Among the motley group collected, was her former hostess, whose taunts were past endurance, and Susan made a great effort and rose. But the idlers followed her, and overcome by this weight of misery she sunk to the ground.

All at once her persecutors withdrew apparently without a cause, and left her resting her beating head against a post; and life seemed ebbing fast away, when the voice of kindness recalled her fleeting spirit. Her eyes gently unclosed and fixed themselves on those of benevolence itself. An elderly gentleman in a clerical habit stooped to raise her; and in the tenderest accents inquired the cause of her misery? But Susan could pronounce only two words, they were comprehensive, “Poverty—Sickness.”

The clergyman now called for assistance, and the first person who answered his call, was her late host. He was despatched for a chair, and Susan being lifted into it, was by the clergyman’s order conveyed to the infirmary; whither he accompanied her.

As he went along, he expressed his surprise at the unfeeling conduct of the persons who had surrounded her, and who had fled at his approach: "Did you know any thing of her?" he continued addressing the wretch who had turned her out of his house.

"She lodged in my house," he replied in a surly manner, "but she could not pay her way; and I can't afford to keep others, I can't keep myself without parish relief during two months of the year."

The clergyman reprimanded him, and having given particular orders respecting her at the infirmary, he departed.

Good nursing and good food did wonders for Susan: in the course of one week, she was restored almost to health. The clergyman however advised her not to remove till another week had passed; and then having learnt who she was, and finding her anxious to return to her native village, he gave her two guineas and paid her fare to London, where she could procure a ready conveyance to Silvershoe.

Susan gratefully accepted this offer, for she found herself incapable of pursuing her former mode of life. Her voice was gone, and her worn-out frame exhausted, rather from care and sorrow, than age, was no longer adequate to the arduous characters she had hitherto played. Peace and repose, were now the summit of her desires; fame, wealth itself, had lost its charms. Her only aim was to die in her own native village, to revisit once more scenes endeared by the only days of happiness that had gilded her fateful existence.

To obliterate by days of penitence and prayer, the errors of her former life was the ardent longing of her soul. Joyfully, therefore, she took her seat on the top of the stage, which was to convey her to London, and on the very same day, upon which she arrived in the metropolis, she mounted the Amptill coach.

Few villages so exactly resemble the description of Goldsmith's *Auburn* as Silvershoe: it is perhaps one of the most picturesque in England. It was evening when Susan entered it. The setting sun glowed with refulgence—the lengthened shadows fell across the road—on every side were objects familiar to her view: repeatedly she recognised the countenance of some old acquaintance: but no one recollected her.

"Do you go on to Amptill?" said the coachman to her, as she sat unmoved on the coach-box at the George inn door, overcome by indescribable sensations. How different from that gay season when Susan with Colonel Ednor coquetted on May-day evening.

The question roused her, "No," she replied, "I will get down here." She was now surrounded by faces which, though altered by time, still retained so much of their former expression, as to be remembered. She was assisted to alight by the hostler, whose round face was indeed enlarged, but time had made no deep furrows in his full rosy cheeks. At the door stood Elkanah Hodge, talking to a big lad of about seventeen or eighteen, who called him *father*. Hodge, however, did not recognise his former sweet-heart; but turning to the landlady, he said, "What a poor sickly looking creature that be!"

Susan's spirits could no longer support this scrutiny, and she hastily bent her trembling steps towards Underwood farm.

Betsy Underwood was by this time a grandmother, and at the moment when poor Susan entered the farm yard, the former was walking about nursing her little grandson; but seeing a pale looking woman in a shabby travelling dress, a stranger too, enter the premises, she went to meet her, and inquired her business.

“Betsy,” said Susan, bursting into tears, and grasping Mrs. Underwood’s hand, “do you not recollect your old school-fellow, Susan Cowslip?”

Mrs. Underwood started, looked earnestly in the invalid’s face, and soon discovered traces of the prettiest girl that had been in the village, except Mary Woodbine.

Betsy’s feelings were raised to a painful degree, and in silence she pressed the wanderer’s hand, and led Susan into the kitchen. There, in interesting conversation they passed the evening, and when George Underwood came home, his welcome seconded that of his wife.

Strange, and melancholy changes had taken place, since Susan’s departure from Silvershoe; the bare mention of which will anticipate some part of our tale, but having at once reverted to them, we shall be saved their repetition at a future and advanced stage of our journey.

Farmer Cowslip and his wife were both dead, and the farm was let to strangers. Mr. Grigs too had paid the debt of nature. Mrs. Underwood had never mentioned Mary, and Susan was fearful of inquiring about her. But before we proceed to give an account of the melancholy events to which we have alluded, it will be necessary to observe that Susan found an asylum in Underwood farm, where she endeavoured to render herself useful. She lived, however, only two years after her return to her native village, and then died in peace.

To comment upon her suffering melancholy fate would be superfluous, it is in itself sufficiently eloquent as a beacon to those

Who fancy all that glitters is gold.

END OF VOL. II.

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