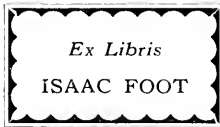


THE  
TRUE TRAVELLER

W. H. DAVIES



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THE TRUE TRAVELLER

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A WEAK WOMAN: A NOVEL

BEGGARS

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A  
SUPER-TRAMP

THE SOUL'S DESTROYER AND  
OTHER POEMS

NATURE POEMS, AND OTHERS

FAREWELL TO POESY

SONGS OF JOY, AND OTHERS



# THE TRUE TRAVELLER

By  
W. H. DAVIES

Author of "The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp"



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# THE TRUE TRAVELLER

## I

### First Adventures

I DON'T know what it is that has always attracted me to ill-dressed people and squalid places. The man that interests me is not the one dressed in the height of fashion, but the bearded man who is wearing three common, dirty sacks; one wrapped and tied around each foot, and the other used as a shawl around his neck.

The very first time that I left home, and went to work at Bristol, I soon found my way into the worst quarters of that city. At that time I had little knowledge of life, and I was served a nice little trick, which is so plain to me in these days, but which I was then too innocent to see through. I was in a place called "The Pity," perhaps the worst

slum in Bristol, and seeing a low, dirty-looking tavern, I made up my mind to see the inside of it. I had very little fear, but being too well dressed for that neighbourhood, I felt rather shy when I entered and found the place occupied by three slatternly women. However, I gave the landlord my order and was served with every politeness. While I stood at the bar, I could not help noticing that the three women began to whisper, and that the landlord had gone into a back room. In spite of his absence, I stood quite unconcerned until I became conscious that the three women were silent. This silence continued so long that I became unnerved, and could not help looking at them to see what they were doing. When I turned my head, I saw that the three of them were looking straight at me, and this made me more confused. At last the first woman said, looking from me to one of her friends, "The very image! I can see the likeness." And then the second woman said, with emphasis, "Mary Price, it is your son!" Hearing this the third woman struggled to her feet and made a rush towards me. Before I

could utter a word her two arms were around my neck, and she was crying in a shrill voice, "My son! my son! my son!" After much difficulty I got free, and then began to tell her that she was mistaken, and that my mother was not only alive, but that I had only just left her. I had much sympathy with the poor woman in her disappointment, and paid for a drink for her and her companions. But they still persisted in saying that I was so much like Mary Price that it was very strange if we were not mother and son. Hearing them continue in this way alarmed me; for in my innocence I thought she would call a policeman, and the latter would have power to make me go home with her. Thinking of this I prepared to leave, but had scarcely made one step before one of the women—the first that had spoken—stood between me and the door. "Ah," she said, "this poor woman is in trouble. If she fails to get five shillings before twelve o'clock, for her rent, she will be turned out, and have no home at all. We thought you were her son, who has been lost for eight years. Now, be a son to this poor woman, and God bless

you!" I lost no time in giving her the five shillings, and felt glad to escape at such a price. These women were more likely to be slum dwellers than wandering beggars—too poor to be able to buy drink, but full of artful tricks to get it.

It was at this time that I had my first experience of a common lodging-house. I met a strange man in the street, and inquired of him as to where I could get cheap lodgings. Now, I had a pound or more in my pocket, and seeing that I had work to go to on the following day, there was no necessity for going into very cheap lodgings. But knowing that the man was a complete stranger to me, I, after paying for a drink for him, came to the conclusion that he ought not to be trusted too much, and therefore told him that I had very little money. In this I did wrong, for, according to my after experience of him, he was an honest working-man, who was then out on strike and receiving strike pay. Naturally the man thought I was almost penniless, so, leading me farther into the slums, he entered a dark, dirty-looking old door, without knocking, and I then found



myself in a common lodging-house kitchen, where a number of ragged men and women were seated on forms. The landlady came forward at once, and my new friend had a few minutes' quiet conversation with her and then left, telling me that I would be all right. No doubt it was through his introduction that I was treated with great respect and no one tried to rob me. I stayed in that common lodging-house for over a week, and then the dock labourer, who lived near, asked me if I would like to lodge at his house, to which I moved that very night.

At this time I had no notion and no interest as to how my fellow-lodgers lived, but I was soon to be enlightened. For after I had settled with the old dock labourer, and had made a number of friends in young mechanics, whom I would meet at night in various taverns—it was then I would be confronted by the inmates of that lodging-house. While we would be seated, drinking and smoking, all well-dressed young mechanics, one of these ragged men would enter with laces or studs, sometimes with nothing, and beg of us. I need hardly say that they knew me at once, but

would show no recognition, except that they would approach me first to set an example in charity. One night an old man named Harrigan came into a place where I was, and seeing me there, came forward at once. So I took off my hat and made a collection for him, and he left, giving me a knowing wink. Of course, my companions had no idea that I knew the man. But this happened so often, for all these rascals remembered me, that I have often been surprised that my companions did not guess that I had some personal knowledge of these ragged men. It would never occur to them, seeing me there, looking so young and fresh and neatly dressed, that I had ever entered a common lodging-house and mixed with such men as those.

That common lodging-house had the usual strange characters, pathetic and humorous, although I was only there a few days and was too young to study them. But I remember well one man, who was a terrible drunkard, and yet every night saved one halfpenny for a clean paper collar. Before my arrival he was the only man in the house that wore a collar, all the others wore scarves. Although he

could not afford blacking for his boots, or a halfpenny for a pair of laces or a piece of soap to wash himself, he must have a clean paper collar every morning. This man was supposed to be a great scholar, and he made a few pennies every day by writing letters for people that could not read and write, or were poor at it. Every once now and then he used to be visited by a fine lady, and it was always noticed that he drank heavily for a week after, and was free with money. The landlady could get no information from him, but told me that she believed the lady was his mother, for they looked very much alike ; and that the son had been cast adrift by the father ; and that the mother, more forgiving, paid these visits without his knowledge. No doubt this was so, for I have known quite a number of cases of this kind ; of sisters or mothers quietly assisting brothers or sons that have gone wrong and been banished from the thoughts of the male part of a family.

## II

### Bourbon and Duke

**I**T was when I left my job at Bristol and, after a few weeks' idleness at home, went in my twenty-first year to London, where I soon became penniless—it was then that I began to meet with strange characters. The very first man that drew my attention, when I entered a common lodging-house kitchen, was one of the strangest characters I have ever met. He was one of those men—I have met quite a number in my day—who were quite justified in not slaving for other people ; whose spirits are too proud, with just cause, to call other men masters. I met him in a common lodging-house kitchen in Blackfriars Road, when he was toasting a red herring and drawing a comparison between the blood of our English nobility and that of the Bourbons, in favour of the latter, for he claimed to be one of them. He claimed to have in his

veins the best blood of the Bourbons, and to be descended from them in a direct line. He was a printer by trade, but of course he only did a few small odd jobs, two or three a week, so as to be able to get the common necessities of life. The man not only had this particular blood in his veins, but he *felt* it, and day and night it foamed and dashed against the hard rock of necessity, and was forced back into the tide of common humanity. Is it to be wondered at that such a man as this should object to steady work, and should show such disgust when he heard others talk of nothing else? Could a man like this be expected to work for a master? I remember him well, and will give an instance of another man that was in something like the same position.

One winter's night, when I was without money in London, I determined to enter a workhouse for the first time. So I got in line at the door, with some half a dozen other men in want, waiting for admittance. We did not know one another and had very little to say, each man being too much taken up with his own affairs. At last the door opened, and we were to be admitted one by one, an official taking

our names. I happened to be the last man in the row, for I had not even yet made up my mind to enter. The first man gave his name as John Smith—most likely assumed—and after a few more questions John Smith was allowed to pass in for the night. “Name?” asked the official of the second man. “The Duke of M——,” answered the man boldly. “Name?” cried the official again, speaking this time in a hard, clear voice. “The Duke of M——,” answered the man for the second time. “I ask you your name,” roared the official, losing his temper altogether. “I have told you twice,” answered the man, losing his temper also. “I am the Duke of M——.” The man had scarcely uttered this name for the third time, when I felt my balance lost in a struggle, for the irritated official was taking hold of the Duke and throwing him into the street. This he succeeded in doing, and returned to us with the remark that no Dukes were wanted there, and that it was not the first time for him to be pestered by this one in particular. It was at this stage that I made up my mind to walk about all night rather than enter a workhouse. So I walked away,

leaving the Duke in the open road, where he stood cursing all workhouses and invoking their guardians to appear and judge between him and their official. As I have said, each man was so taken up with his own affairs, that I should not be able to recognize the Duke if I met him again.

Some time after this, when the trees in London were beginning to leaf, and the sparrows were becoming more active and noisy in the spring sunshine, I made up my mind to leave London for the summer months and get the benefit of fresh air and green scenery, if little else. For spring sets our thoughts to wander, and it is often as much as men can do to prevent their limbs from following. I felt drawn towards the West of England, and it was not long before I was walking rapidly in that direction, and leaving the city behind me. I had several strange companions on the road at different times, who had branched off in other directions, leaving me to go on alone.

One day, on leaving the town of Swindon, I overtook a man who said he was going my way for the next eighty miles. In the course

of conversation he told me that he was the rightful heir to a large estate, and that he was then on his way to take possession of it. Once or twice it occurred to me that I had heard the man's voice before, but on a careful study of his features, I became thoroughly satisfied that we had never met. He was a short, thick-set man, apparently past middle life, but active and sturdy. He carried a rough stick cut from the hedge, which he did not use in walking, but carried like a club, as though in constant expectation of having to use it on someone's skull. We talked of London and many other things, and at last I so won his confidence that he began to relate his own private affairs. He had a very rambling and incredible story to tell: of how he was the lawful heir to a large estate in the West of England, and how he had been kidnapped in his youth and sent abroad; the great number of ups and downs he had had, until he landed in London, where he had managed to live somehow—he could not say exactly how—for a number of wretched years; but that he could no longer continue such a life, and was now going to claim his lawful rights. “Yes,”



he cried savagely, standing in the road and brandishing his stick. "Yes, it is I that am the true Duke of M——, and the other man is an impostor."

Sure enough this man was the Duke, who had not only been refused admittance to a common workhouse, but had been dismissed with force. The man looked so savage at this moment, as he stood in the road, clutching his heavy stick, that I felt uneasy at the thought of travelling with him. So I made my way towards a shady tree, telling him that I was tired and needed rest and sleep. "All right," he answered; "good-bye." Saying this he continued his journey alone, and never once turned his head either to the right or left.

I never saw this man again, but it was not long before I heard of him. Some time after, when I was settled in comfort for a week or two and was reading a daily paper, I came across a paragraph that deeply interested me. It gave an account of how a strange man was arrested for stealing an axe and cutting down some young trees on the Duke of M——'s estate. He claimed that he had a right to do

what he liked with his own property, and threatened death to anyone that interfered with his actions. However, after much trouble he had been disarmed—more by strategy than force—and arrested. That was the last I ever heard of the rightful Duke of M——.

Now, here were two men, one descended in a direct line from the Bourbons, and the other being the rightful owner to a great title and estate—could we expect men like these, with such proud blood in their veins, to give their minds and bodies to the service of a common master? As a rule masters are too overbearing, and men with proud spirits cannot put up with them. The worst masters are those who have been workmen themselves. They know far too much, and they have been heard to say that bread and cheese is good enough for any working-man, as they themselves had to be satisfied with in their own early days. Sometimes they go so far as to set an example with their own hands, and working-men never like that, much preferring a gentleman master who has no practical knowledge of work, and either walks past or stands as an interested spectator.

I once worked half an hour for a man in America, and was then compelled to discharge myself, owing to his greed for work. Something occurred to make me laugh, and, to my surprise, he came running into the room and said, "If I hear you laugh again I will discharge you." On hearing this I at once demanded my wages, which amounted to about seven cents, being threepence halfpenny in English money. He had no change, and being too mean to give me a ten-cent piece (fivepence), tried to discharge me with a five-cent piece (twopence halfpenny). After much strong language had passed between us, he managed to borrow two cents from the errand-boy, and I then left with my full wages. I was determined, after this experience, never to work for a master again unless he could give good references.

But I never knew that masters were so cunning and avaricious until I noticed a card in a shop-window. The place was London, and the day was Sunday. I noticed then a dozen or fifteen men looking into a shop-window, some of them laughing heartily. On crossing over to see what was the matter,

I then saw a card on which these words were written: "Wanted, a strong boy between the age of twenty-two and twenty-five." "When I was twenty-five," said an old man standing near, "I was the father of a family." "And so was I," said another. Just then two lovers passed, and stood to read the card. A painful expression crossed the young fellow's face when he had read that advertisement, for he was being called a boy in the presence of his sweetheart, whom he was probably on the point of marrying.

Yes, here was a master who wanted a man's work done, and yet wanted to pay only a boy's wages, and he had the impudence to advertise his wants in his own shop-window. Now, suppose the Duke of M—— had come this way, or the man who had in his veins the best blood of the Bourbons! These men would most certainly have broken the man's window, and perhaps their leadership would have caused a riot that would have been disastrous to themselves and others.

### III

## The Soup-kitchen

**J**UST after the World's Fair in Chicago there were thousands of men out of work, who were either begging at private houses or receiving charity soup at various places. One day a man called Sullivan, whom I knew well, came up to me and said, "Do you want a bowl of the best soup in the city?" "Yes," I answered, fiercely and frowning hard, so as to let him know that I wanted the real truth from him. "Yes," I answered, "show me the place." "Very well, then," he said, "follow me, for I am going there now." With these words he started off with quick steps. I at once took several steps, so as to get into his stride, and in a second or two was in full swing with him. Sullivan was not a sociable man, for he had very little to say as we walked along. He had only taken a generous notion to help another to a bowl of

good soup, and did not want to make a companion of him. For this reason he only acted as a guide on that particular occasion, and did not trouble much whether I followed him or not. Seeing this I made no attempt to be more substantial than a second shadow.

The first time I had met Sullivan was in Mrs. Flanagan's saloon, where I had gone to get a drink. Mrs. Flanagan, who was a pure woman in spite of her naughty tales, had just finished telling me one of her finest jokes when Sullivan had entered. The joke related to Paddy Maloney and his wife Bridget. One day Paddy reminded his wife that when he first went courting her she had no boots and stockings to her feet, and had little more than her bare legs and a Bible. To which Bridget retorted, "Ah, me foine fellow, if ye had paid as much attintion to me Bible as ye paid to moi bare legs, shure, ye'd be the Pope of Rome to-day." I was laughing heartily over this joke when Sullivan entered. "Good morning, Mrs. Flanagan," said Sullivan in his oiliest tone, for the landlady was a very outspoken woman, and he did not want to

offend her. "Good mawning be damned!" she snarled, turning on him fiercely. "Good mawning be damned, It's whisky ye're after." Of course Mrs. Flanagan knew well that Sullivan had, as usual, come to beg drink instead of to buy it.

I would not have followed Sullivan, had I not been impressed with his words, "The best bowl of soup in the city." For I knew where to get soup in several places, seeing that almost every creed and social body had started a soup-kitchen for the unemployed. Such poverty was quite a new thing in that city, and seeing how liberal Americans are in giving charity, you can imagine how good the soup was. At one place I was given soup made out of haricot beans, which was almost as solid as pudding. Since those days I have had soup in a Salvation Army lodging-house, where I had to pay for it. I considered myself robbed, and was too unforgiving to join the officers when they cried "Hallelujah!" It only cost a halfpenny a basin, it is true, but greasy water is dear and a fraud at a farthing a pint. A little meat had been boiled for the staff, and the greasy water had been

called soup and then sold to the poor lodgers, who were poor indeed.

It was not long before Sullivan led me into a narrow alley, which was the back of one of the main streets. Going half-way down this alley, he suddenly stopped at a door which I had seen a man just enter, pushed it open, and walked in, while I followed close at his heels. We were then in a small yard with the back door of a large house straight in front of us. Making his way to this second door, Sullivan, without knocking, opened it and walked in. We were then in a large kitchen, where I saw several men seated at tables, with piles of bread and bowls of soup set before them. Sullivan took not the least notice of these men, but went straight to another door, which was open, and stood waiting, while I did likewise, standing close behind him. We were hardly there a second when a woman, smiling good-naturedly, came forward with two large bowls of soup, which we took and carried to a table.

Now while I had been standing at the last door I had seen several women moving about, and what appeared to be strange was that



they all, as far as I could judge, were dressed of equal richness. Each one appeared to be the lady of the house, for I saw no sign of aprons or servants' caps. I could not pick out one and say, judging by dress or dignity, "This is a servant," or "That is the mistress." They all appeared to be women of leisure. The one that brought us the soup did not appear to do it as a duty, but because she had been the first to notice us.

After we had finished our soup and were leaving, I asked Sullivan what kind of house it was, with so many well-dressed women there, and each of a beauty peculiar to herself. "It is a sporting house," he answered. "How did you like the soup?" "Very much," I returned. "You can always rely on girls of that kind to do something good and substantial for the poor," he said. "They do not make the soup cold with hymns and prayers. I am glad you enjoyed it."

No doubt the majority of people will think that a house of this kind would have a selfish motive in giving charity: that these courtesans would do so with an idea to future profit; so as to get men to return their way under

better conditions, when those men would be in work and have money. I must confess that, at that time, when I did not know life as I know it now, such cruel thoughts entered my own mind. But since then I know that these women are kind-hearted in the extreme. In fact, not long after this experience, I was told by a mean, unprincipled beggar that the best people to beg from were women of that kind. He said that the first thing he did on entering a strange town was to inquire in what part they lived. For it must be remembered that in America they live in certain streets ; they do not go out looking for men, but men seek them at their houses. I will let you know in a future chapter how much the poor, broken, homeless man in London is beholden to this kind of woman for pennies to buy cups of hot tea at night and bowls of hot soup in the day.

After this visit to a sporting house I left Sullivan, but met him again a few hours after at a certain mission house where soup was to be had at the end of the meeting.

As I have said, Sullivan was not very sociable, but on this particular evening he

suddenly became inspired and made one of the most moving speeches I have ever heard. He made a public confession of his sins, which men of Sullivan's type often do, so as to enable them the better to get assistance. On this occasion Sullivan strode on to the platform and told the audience that he was not only the worst drunkard in the city, but that he was also a scoundrel and a very dangerous character. He not only said that he had served one long term in prison, but hinted that he had deserved many others for crimes he dared not mention. Of course these were all lies, for Sullivan was really no more than a common, harmless beggar. However, these confessions impressed the rich lady that supported the mission, who was a widow, and who was to be seen night after night on the platform.

I was very much surprised to see Sullivan, the night after his confession, sitting on the platform and wearing a white collar and a new black tie.

On the third night he was wearing a brand new pair of boots.

On the fourth night he was dressed in a new

suit of clothes, and had a white handkerchief and a pair of light gloves.

On the fifth night he was wearing a gold chain.

On the sixth night he opened the meeting with prayer and then sang a song, the words of which he claimed to have composed out of his own head, to fit an old familiar tune. This song he sang three times in succession, so that the audience should remember it.

On the seventh night Sullivan was understood to be engaged to the rich widow, who was the main support of the mission.

No doubt, if the truth had been known, that Sullivan had not been so great a drunkard ; that he was not so dangerous a man as he claimed to be ; that he had seldom used bad language ; that he had never served a long term in prison : no doubt, if these truths had been known, he would never have impressed a rich Christian widow, and been made her leading man at home and abroad. It seems strange how easily women are to be caught by lies. I could have picked out more than a score of men that had been

worse than Sullivan. This innocent, confiding woman, deceived by Sullivan's lies that he was a jail-bird and the greatest drunkard in the city, went so far as to offer him her hand and fortune.

## IV

### The Woman in the Woods

SOME time after leaving Chicago, I had a very strange meeting with a woman in the woods of Illinois, which ended much more pleasantly than it began. I had no money to pay my fare as a passenger, so I had jumped on a fast cattle train that was going west, with the intention of stealing a ride for a hundred miles or more. But unfortunately one of the brakemen discovered me, after I had travelled about fifty miles, and told me that I would have to get off at the first stop. I was quite satisfied to do this, after having ridden so far, and told him I would. Of course I expected the first stop would be at a town, where I could wait for another train on which to try my fortune for the second time. But when the train began to stop and I could see no sign of any house, I began to get alarmed. At last the train,

which was now going very slow, left the main track and went on to a side one, where it came to a stop. I got off at once and began to look around, and then saw that I was in the wilderness, with no idea of the distance to the next town. The next minute a fast passenger train came along, and it was to let that train pass which had caused the cattle train to go on a side track. As soon as the passenger train had passed the cattle train began to move, and it was not long before I was left there alone, amazed and looking after it. This was very annoying, for a dozen trains might pass and not one of them have to take the side track, so that I would have to walk to the next town, which was likely to be from six to ten miles away. While I was thinking of these things, I caught sight of a boy some distance away, who was coming down the railway track in my direction. As soon as I saw this boy I sat down on a sleeper at the side of the track and waited his approach, thinking he would be able to give me all the information I needed. He had something in his hand, which I at first thought was a stick, but when he drew

nearer I could see that it was a gun. No doubt he was going squirrel shooting, as boys do in that country, and was now making his way to the woods which were near me.

It was a considerable time before this boy reached my side, for he seemed to have his attention often drawn to sounds around him. However, at last he came, and I at once asked him how far it was to the next town. "It is only about half a mile from here," he answered. "Is it a large town?" I asked. "Oh yes," he answered without hesitation. Of course I knew that it was hardly likely that this boy had ever been very far away, and would therefore have little idea of a large town, so I asked him about how many houses were there. "More than twenty altogether," he said in a proud voice. I now knew that it was only a small village. However, what I wanted to know was whether any trains stopped there, so I asked him that question. "Yes," he said, "there is a coal-shute there, and a water-tank too." When I heard this I was quite satisfied, for I knew that trains would stop there for either coal or water, and that it would be no difficult matter to catch a train



there at almost any time. So I thanked the lad for his information, and he went his way.

At this spot, where I was now sitting, the railway track had been cut through a wood. Seeing this, I thought it a fine opportunity to retire out of sight for a few hours and sleep. I happened to have enough provisions on me for a couple of meals, and as I had had little sleep the night before, I made up my mind to take things easy for a few hours. It was now about noon, and time for dinner. I knew that there would be a tramps' camp somewhere near, seeing that trains came to a stop not far away. So I began to walk up the track towards the town, looking for a path into the woods. It was not long before I saw one and determined to follow it. I entered the woods, and in a little while came to a small open space, where I saw several tin cans in which tramps had made coffee. But I did not know whether they had carried the water all the way from the village, or whether there was a spring in the woods. However, I soon saw another path leading out of the camp, and guessed right that it led to a

spring. So I filled one of the cans with water and returned to the camp, where I at once lit a fire and prepared for dinner, after having which I intended to take a few hours' sleep.

It suddenly occurred to me that this would be a good opportunity to wash my shirt, which could be drying while I slept. The air was warm enough for that, even if I had no fire. So I stripped there and then, and in a pool made by the spring washed my shirt and socks, and soon had them stretched on sticks stuck in the earth within a few feet of the fire. After doing this I made my coffee, had dinner, and lay down to sleep. I made a pillow of my coat, and my arms were bare to the shoulder. However, that did not matter, for I was not likely to be disturbed by any other than a fellow-tramp. Even tramps had not been there lately, which I could tell by certain signs.

But I could not sleep after all, and was soon sat up in front of the fire, smoking my pipe and thinking of old acquaintances. I must have sat there for over two hours in that way, until about three o'clock, and was getting restless to be either on my travels or visited

by human company. However, I did not want to leave my camp-fire and the water-spring until I had had the last meal of the day, which would be about six o'clock, so I lay down to make another attempt to sleep. Whether I should have succeeded or not I cannot tell. All I know is that I suddenly heard dried twigs breaking under someone's feet, so I sat up at once, prepared to greet whoever should come. Of course I did not expect any other than a squirrel-hunting boy, or a beggar that knew the camp, or was looking for one, as I had done. The sound of an axe carries a long way in the quiet woods, and as I had not heard that sound, I knew that there was no woodman within a mile or more from where I was. I was in hopes it was another tramp, for I was in need of a companion, not having had one for several days. The last companion I had had was a Scotchman called Sandy, who had been arrested in Chicago. He had started an argument on religion with an Irishman. It was late at night, and the three of us were standing on a street corner. The argument had continued for more than an hour when a policeman came forward and

told us to go home. The Irishman wished us all good night and went his way, and Sandy and I started off in another direction. However, Sandy took a foolish notion to argue with the policeman, and turned back for that purpose. But the latter did not want to argue, and told Sandy to be gone. Sandy then wanted to know if we were not in a land of free thought and speech. The policeman could make no other answer to this question than by taking Sandy by the collar and making a prisoner of him. And that was the last I saw or heard of my friend Sandy.

As I have said, when I heard this sound I sat up ready to greet the new-comer, who I felt certain would be a fellow-tramp. But when I could see the new-comer through the trees, I saw, to my horror, that it was not a man, but a woman ! I at once made a grab for my coat, in haste to cover my nakedness. Unfortunately I had turned the sleeves inside out, so as to save the cloth when I lay on it, for the coat happened to be a good one. The consequence of this was that the woman walked into the camp before I could get it on, and while I was still nervously fumbling with

it. "Don't be alarmed, my good fellow," she cried, laughing with amusement; "don't be alarmed, for I am only come to gather a few sticks. But, seeing you here alone, I will now sit down and have a chat with you." Saying this she sat down at the other side of the fire, with her two hands in her lap. I began to get more nervous than ever now, for I saw that she was quite indifferent to arranging her dress, and sat there showing her two legs with the utmost unconcern. I could not help noticing that, although her clothes were of little account, yet, for all that, her boots were light and good, and she had on a fine pair of stockings, which fitted tight, and were worked in colours. I could also see that she was a fine stout woman of about thirty-five, and one that appeared accustomed to good living. Of course it did not surprise me in the least that such a woman had come to gather a few sticks. She had come not so much on account of economy, but because she had nothing else to do. But what alarmed me was to see her unconcern at the position in which she sat. It suddenly occurred to me that she must be crazy, and that someone

would soon come looking for her. This was a terrible thought, for I knew that men in that country never went looking for lost people without first arming themselves with guns. And I was very much afraid that, when I was found in this woman's company, they would shoot me without waiting for an explanation. They would think that I had met her wandering on the iron track and then decoyed her into the woods. Again, even if they were willing to hear me, there was no accounting for what a crazy woman might say. When I thought of this I got up at once and took hold of my shirt, which had been hanging there dry for a long time. Of course I could not put it on while she was there, so I threw it over my shoulder, with the intention of carrying it a little way until I had a chance to dress. The woman understood my last thoughts and intentions, for she began to laugh, and then said, "Don't be afraid of me, for I am not afraid of you. Have you just come from Chicago?" "Yes," I answered, lighting my pipe at the fire, for I had no intention of staying any longer, in spite of her cheerful assurance. She was silent for

a moment or two, and I was just on the point of saying good-bye, when she said in a clear, distinct voice, "Do you know where Carrie Watson's house is?" When I heard this question I was astonished and too interested to leave until she had told me more. However, in spite of my burning interest, I was very careful to show none, and answered quietly, "Yes, I know where Carrie Watson's house is." "If you do," she said, with a laugh, "we can get on very well together, for I lived in that house for over six months. Come and sit at my side as close as you like." This was a bold invitation indeed, and I felt somewhat confused in accepting it.

The woman she had named, Carrie Watson, was a well-known courtesan, who kept a house in South Clark Street, Chicago. It was a fashionable house, with a large number of women there, and it was not unusual to see a carriage waiting near. It was so well known that it was not necessary for its courtesans to stand in the doorway or look through its windows to attract notice, as they had to do in other houses of that class. It was a quiet looking building, and no

stranger would dream of the life inside, where a score of beautiful women were willing to sell their love to any strange man that had enough money. It was a very respectable sporting house, where a man was as safe from being robbed as at his own home. For that reason there were no disturbances there, and the police were never brought to its doors through a man's complaints. In that house the liquor could be drunk without fear of its being drugged, and the women trusted more to the generosity of their visitors than to their own greedy tongues. Knowing this, men who visited the house often would not keep away if they had not so much to spend as when they were there before.

When I heard this woman in the woods say that she had lived at Carrie Watson's house for over six months, I looked at her with a great deal of interest. I knew that a woman would have to be attractive indeed to hold a place in a fashionable sporting house of that kind. She would not only be chosen for beauty, but for her charm and manners as well. Thinking of this I looked at my fair companion with more interest,



and I could then see that she was a fine-looking woman indeed. If she had been dressed in good clothes, she would have looked far different from the common village woman that had come to gather sticks. She was a fine, magnificent looking creature, I could see that now.

I sat down at her side, with the intention of letting her have her own way, and to take no liberty of my own accord. However, there was no necessity for me to make the least advance, for I was no sooner within her reach than her arms were around me, and I was kissed and hugged until I could not help returning her passion. "I am not particular about gathering sticks to-day," she said at last; "to-morrow will do for that."

After a time I asked my strange companion to tell me something of her life, for I was wondering how an attractive woman that had led a gay life in a large city could be now settled in a small village which no doubt was quiet and dull. She only took a few minutes to tell her story, which was quite simple and clear. She was born in the village where she

now lived, which was about half a mile away, and where she lived until her twenty-fifth year. Then she married a poor man of the neighbourhood, but was sorry for it soon after. They had only been married twelve months when they began to quarrel seriously, and she threatened to leave him. However, they managed to live for three years in that way until one night he struck her. There were no children to grieve over, so she left the house the next morning and went to Chicago. As soon as she arrived there she went to a music-hall. While she was there she got into conversation with a woman she sat next to, and told her her history. This city woman had a good look at the fine-looking countrywoman at her side, and then made an offer to introduce her to a sporting house, which the countrywoman, having had several drinks, accepted with thanks. So they both left the music-hall together, and it was not long before the both of them were in Carrie Watson's house, where the city woman was a courtesan. This countrywoman stayed there over six months, and then, being tired of a fast life, and having

saved a little money, returned to her husband. He was very glad to see her again, so she settled down with him to a quiet life, without letting him know the life she had led while she was away from him.

When she had finished her story it must have been about five o'clock, and I told her that however much I enjoyed her company, she must leave, or someone would come looking for her. So she left, saying she would like to meet me again some day in the future.

It was a most extraordinary thing to meet a woman of that kind in the woods, far from any large town, and I often think of it now. For this woman was so loving that, although I was a complete stranger, she could not help making herself a sweet nuisance, and I was very sorry to see her go.

For over three weeks after this I worked on a fruit farm, and finished the job with fifty-three dollars in my pocket. With this sum I made my way towards St. Louis, determined to have a few days' pleasure. I was well accustomed to beating my way on the trains, so that it cost me nothing to reach

St. Louis, although that town was two hundred miles from where I had worked. I reached it in a couple of days, having spent only a dollar on the way, which was for food. I knew St. Louis fairly well, having been there several times before, and had no need to question strangers as to where to get what I wanted. The Levee, which was down at the waterside, being the Mississippi embankment, would be a fine place to see life and spend money. It was a free and easy place, where the police allowed more liberty than in any other part of the city—street fights were common.

At this time I was very careful of myself, only drinking enough to keep myself cheerful and to see the inside life of the different saloons. Some of the drinking-houses had white men and others had black, for no landlord could cater for both, seeing that his customers would not mix. It was a southern town, and the colour line was never allowed to go slack.

As I was walking along a woman came to the door of a house and, seeing me passing close, asked—"Have you come to have your

fortune told?" "I have," was my answer, wanting a new experience. "How much do you charge?" "Only half a dollar," she said. This was not much, and I was always a fool with money, so I followed her into the house. When we were inside a room, she motioned to a seat, and I sat down. As soon as I was seated she brought another chair and sat close to me. She was a fine-looking woman, with large dark eyes and small white teeth. Her skin was dark, and I judged her to be either Spanish or Italian. However, she spoke good English, and appeared to have no difficulty in finding words to express her thoughts. I could not help being affected at being so near a beautiful woman as that, in spite of her cold ease.

I was surprised more than once at the truth of her words. For it was not long before she had taken my hand and began commenting on its lines. After that she told my fortune by the cards, telling me, before they were cut, to wish for something. Now, what could I wish for? Here was a fine, beautiful woman sitting near me, with no one else in the house, that I knew of—what could I wish

for? I must confess that I stood in some awe of her, and yet I had the courage to make a certain wish.

After the cards had been spread she began to tell me something of my future, which could be believed or not, but not contradicted. However, she told me one thing that surprised me very much, which was that I would return to my own country and make a name for myself. If she had predicted wealth, as all fortune-tellers do, I would not have been surprised. This woman seemed to know that even that very day I had been indulging in ambitious dreams, in which common money played no part. After telling me this she rose, and I judged the interview to be over. I felt quite satisfied, especially as she had touched a part of my future that tallied with my ambition.

I had forgotten all about my wish, but before I had gone three steps it suddenly occurred to me. So I turned around and faced her again, where she stood standing in the middle of the room. "What about my wish?" I asked, laughing and turning red. I was in great confusion now, for I did not

want her to know my wish unless she was a woman to gratify it. And yet, for all that, it was necessary that she should know it, if I was to be gratified, for I dare not mention it openly. So I thought there would be no harm in risking that question, and asked the second time, seeing that she was slow to answer—"What about my wish?" "Oh, your wish," she said, looking at me sternly; "how dare you mention it, you wicked man! This is how I answer it"—the next instant she had a dagger pointed at my heart. When I saw this I was filled with confusion. However, in spite of the drawn dagger and the sparkling of her white teeth, she did not look evil in any way. In fact, I thought there was a good-natured smile in her eyes. I came to the conclusion that she forgave my wish because it flattered her fine beauty, but that she was not the kind of woman to gratify it. That she knew what I had wished I had not the least doubt. She had told me other things so remarkable, that I believe she could feel my thoughts without looking into my face.

"I am very sorry to be so wicked," I said,

as I was leaving ; “ but with such a woman so near him a man could not possibly have any other wish.” When she heard this she replaced the dagger in her bosom, smiled and bowed, and then said “ Good-bye.” “ Good-bye,” I answered, and left the house, disappointed that she had been too virtuous to gratify my wish, and pleased to think that she had not put so great a price on her virtue as to think I was a monster of sin, instead of a man of ordinary passion. She had proved that she was a broad-minded woman that understood and could forgive the desires of the flesh. I don't suppose I had been the first by a good number of men that had been tempted by her beauty, and the privacy around, to make a dangerous wish. However, she would have far more women than men as customers, for, it must be remembered, I did not go there of my own accord.



## The Nurse

AT this time I was young, in my twenty-fifth year, and full of animal life. I had never had any serious illness to remember, and had never heard anyone say that I had been weak and sickly in my early life. An aching tooth, and nothing else, had been the only thing to trouble me. Very well then ; being young and in this fine condition, I was well prepared to enjoy life. But since I had come to manhood, long spells of poverty, due to my own laziness, had saved me from ruining my health. Sometimes I was several weeks, aye, even months without a penny in my pocket, leading the life of a wandering vagrant. For that reason I could not get drink, however much I desired it ; and I could not go with women, however much I inclined to do so. In fact, I owe my present health to two things—innocence of women

in my early manhood and poverty after that knowledge came. This poverty has been a kind friend, for it has carried me over the most lusty years of my life to the time when I was able to govern my passions. This poverty has not only saved my body, but my mind also; for I am sure that indulgence has dulled more minds than poverty has.

Being in this fine state my readers will understand that when I had money, after being without it for some time, I indulged myself so freely that it did not last long. It was a blessing when it was gone and I was poor again. It was a blessing for this reason—I was so accustomed to poverty that it did not trouble me in the least. In fact, I slept on summer nights with more pleasure under a tree or in a freight car than in a soft bed in a boarding-house; and the plain food I begged at houses, when I had no money, and ate in the open air, was as much enjoyed as the hot meals I bought at restaurants.

In about a week my money was nearly all gone, for I only had two dollars (eight shillings) left. Thinking to make this sum

last as long as possible, I gave up drink and slept out. The nights were hot, so I slept on a lumber pile at the waterside. Owing to the hot season I drank freely of the Mississippi river. The consequence of this was that I soon had the malaria fever, which is very common in those parts. It must be remembered that I drank the river water as it was, whereas the citizens—whose water supply it was—had it filtered. So it is not to be wondered at that I soon had the malaria fever and began to fear the consequence. However, there was not much danger, for even some of the natives, who have lived in that part all their lives, have a few days' fever every summer, and take little notice of it. The negroes, who are too poor to pay for doctors, and are living far from hospitals, take it as a matter of course and recover without any help from medicine. It is a strange fever; one minute the sun almost suffocates you with heat, and soon after you are shaking with the cold, in spite of that sun's tremendous heat. The appetite is soon gone and you become weak; for the little solid food you eat becomes watery in the

body, and refuses to stay longer than twenty minutes or half an hour.

When I had had this fever for about three days and saw no sign of recovery, I began to think that something ought to be done. I was almost too weak to walk, but judged that I would have enough strength to reach the hospital. So I pulled myself together and made my way in that direction. After I had walked some distance, I became thirsty again, but I was away from the river and could see no fountain near. However, I still had ten cents (fivepence) left, and at once entered a public-house, which happened to be close by. Thinking of the ten cents, the last of my money, I tried to enjoy the humour of my position, saying to myself, "If I die in the hospital, I will leave no money to be quarrelled over, or to tempt thieves." This poor joke made me laugh aloud, but what made me shake was not laughter but fever, for I was now having another bad attack of the cold chills, and my mouth would not keep shut. I felt like lying down in the street, without a care of who picked me up or what was done with me.

When I got inside the public-house, I found the bar quite empty, not even the landlord to be seen. So I rapped on the bar, and the next moment the landlord came out of a room and stood waiting for my order, which was for a glass of whisky. After serving me he lit a cigar and leaned on the bar, and I could see that he wanted someone to talk with. He was a big stout man, with a very good-natured look and, judging by his jewelry and dress, was well to do, in spite of the lack of custom. It was now morning, just after breakfast, and very few public-houses would have customers just then. For at this hour tradesmen would be busy. Moreover, this public-house was not in a main street, although judging by its well-furnished bar, it appeared worthy to be in a better position. In fact, when I got inside I was surprised to see so fine a house situated in a side street. However, I was soon to find out that it had an attraction for certain men not on account of its good liquors, but for another reason which will be seen soon.

When I picked up the glass of whisky my hand trembled so much that I could

hardly convey it to my lips. Seeing this the landlord steadied my hand with his own, and said, "You are in a bad state." "I am," I answered, thinking he knew what was the matter with me. However, he did not, for after puffing a while at his cigar, he said, "Take my advice and don't drink so much. Although I am a landlord of a public-house, I don't like to see so young a man in such a bad condition after drink. Of course it is nothing to do with me, and please don't be offended at my words." I told him I was not offended, and then explained that my condition was not due to drink, but to the malaria fever, which had been on me for several days. When he heard this he apologized for his thoughts and called himself a fool that he had not suspected the truth. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "You are a stranger in the city, of course, or you would be home and attended to. I don't suppose you have much money either, have you?" "I need no money," I answered, "for I am now on my way to the hospital, where I hope to be cured in a few days."

While I was saying this the landlord filled my glass again and, filling one for himself, said—"Perhaps another drink will help you on the way, and I wish you good luck. It is a pity you are a stranger here, without friends or relatives to look after you."

Just at this moment, when we both had the glasses to our lips, a woman appeared in the doorway, facing me but behind the landlord's back. She looked at me for a moment or two and then called the landlord, who turned at once and followed her back into the room. I could see nothing in this relating to myself, and thought she was the landlord's wife wanting to speak to him on other matters. So I finished my whisky and, not wanting to disturb them, walked towards the door. The whisky had certainly given me some strength, which of course was only temporary, and I had no fear but what I could safely reach the hospital now.

But just as I reached the door the landlord reappeared and called me back. "The lady wants to speak to you," he said; "will you go into the room to her?" "Certainly," I answered, very much surprised to

hear these words. So I went around the bar and entered the room, where I saw the lady sitting in a chair, with a book on a table at her side. As soon as I entered she came forward, put her arm around me, and led me to an easy chair. I was astonished at this familiarity, for she was quite a young woman. If she had been old enough to have been my mother, it would not have surprised me. However, I took it outwardly as a matter of course, for I was too ill to turn red and look as shy as I felt.

As soon as I was seated she drew a chair to my side and, taking hold of my hand, said—"I have heard your story, that you are ill and have no friends or relatives near to help you. Will you let me be your friend? Will you stay here for a few days, until you are strong enough to go?" "It is very kind of you to make such an offer," I answered; "but why should I? I have no money to pay you, and no prospect of having any." "No matter for that," she said cheerfully; "you will be more comfortable here than in a hospital. All you require is a little medicine and rest."



Now I don't know whether this lady's words had any effect on me or not, but it is most certain that after she had uttered them I felt so weak that it was doubtful whether I could even rise from where I sat. In fact, I felt like falling across the floor at her feet, and making her responsible for whatever happened after. She must have noticed this change for the worse, for she called the landlord at once. When he came she was standing at my side and had forced my head to rest against her hip. The next moment they were both supporting me as I went upstairs, for I knew now that I was too weak to leave the house. In less than five minutes after this I was in bed, in a small, clean, nicely furnished room. In about an hour a doctor came who said that all I wanted was a little medicine and a few days' rest, and I would be all right again. When the medicine came I had not taken more than two doses when I knew that the fever had gone, and that I only had my weakness to recover from. If I had gone to a doctor in the first place, as soon as the fever came on me, and got a tonic, I would not have gone into such a weak condition.

That first night, when I lay asleep, I woke suddenly, for I felt something touch my brow. When I opened my eyes I saw at once who it was—it was my kind nurse. “Why do you come in the middle of the night?” I asked. “Why don’t you sleep? You have had enough trouble in the day.” “Well,” she answered, “I happened to wake and saw that the man I was with was fast asleep, so I thought I would come and see how you were.” Thinking she meant her husband, the landlord—although her words seemed strange—I said: “Your husband will be jealous, and I would much rather have gone to the hospital than that should happen, for both your sakes.” “I have no husband,” she answered; “I mean the man who is staying the night with me, as he has done several times before.” When I heard this I knew what I had not suspected before, that she was a courtesan and I was in a sporting house. I now remembered that I had heard the voices of other women, who had been out when I had come. I knew, of course, that no respectable women in that country go into public-houses for drink; but

I thought my nurse was the landlady, and the others her friends come to visit her. It made me feel ashamed of myself for being beholden to the kindness of a woman that earned her living by making a trade of love.

On the following morning she came into my room, and was accompanied by two other women. They were all young and good-looking, and the weather being hot, they had nothing on but a loose gown which reached to their ankles. After a few cheerful words the two strange women left, and the one that was my nurse sat at the side of my bed and began to read a book to me.

## VI

### Back in Baltimore

**I**N two or three days I was able to get up and move about the room. Sometimes my nurse was engaged with a man, and then one of the other women would sit in the room and talk to me. These women could not do enough for me, for they were always bringing in fruit and other tasty morsels. But I was determined to leave the place as soon as I had sufficient strength, for I was ashamed of receiving help in a house of that kind. I could see that the landlord was a good-natured man, and quite willing to allow the women to do as they liked. They were far from being rough women, and the men that came to see them were well dressed and gentle in their manners. So that there was never any loud disturbance, in spite of the men being often the worse for drink, and the women also. In fact, I often wondered

whether there was any one in the house at all, so quiet it was.

On the sixth morning I felt so well that I told them that I was quite fit to travel. They all, especially the one that had been my nurse, tried to persuade me to stay a few more days to make sure of my strength. But I told them no, saying that I would not take advantage of their kindness for one more hour. Seeing that I was determined, my nurse asked me what I was going to do. "I am going to Baltimore," I answered, "and from that port will take a cattle-ship to England." "That being the case, you must have a little money to start with, she said, "and you have none." "No matter," I answered; "I will get to Baltimore without money, in a very short time." "Yes, it is a good road to ride for nothing," interrupted the landlord; "the trainmen seldom put men off, so I have heard. But for all that, you must not leave here without a little money, so here is a dollar." Saying this he placed a dollar bill on the table before me. While I was thanking him, the women had also taken their purses from various

places, one from her stocking, and the other two from their bosoms, and added more. I looked at the money for a long time, not liking to take it. However, after they had persuaded me a little more, I took it—three dollar bills and one for two dollars, the latter being on top, and which I had noticed come from my nurse. Before I left, the landlord shook me heartily by the hand, and the women kissed me. My nurse was the last to do so, and gave me a gentle hug. After doing this she turned her back on me so suddenly that I knew she was affected at our parting. As for myself, I did not utter another word, for fear of breaking down, so affected was I at receiving so much kindness from people of that kind.

When I was in the street and began to think of what had happened to me, I felt very much touched. That a woman who was only a courtesan should pay for my board and lodging for a week, personally attend to every little want, and should behave like a mother to her sick child—that this should be so touched me to the heart. She had not taken any fancy to my person, for,

without seeing what I was like, she had made up her mind to befriend me on account of my troubled story. As far as I was concerned, she was a pure-minded woman with a heart full of kindness. It mattered nothing to her whether I was young or old, handsome or plain. The only thing that mattered was that I was a sick stranger in need of help. When I thought of that kind heart, and how, when she had lost her beauty and was too old to attract men, she would be without a friend, dying in some low quarter—when I thought of this, the tears came into my eyes. If I had been left a fortune at that moment, I would have returned and offered her a pure married life—so affected was I at the future that lay before her. She only had one other escape, and that was to die young. Most women that lead a life of that kind die while they still have power to attract men, and are saved a cruel old age. In one weak moment these women fell, and they never have the will power to rise again. In spite of this, I had faith in that woman for a better life, if I had had the power to offer her a home.

As I walked along I began to wonder what became of the few courtesans that reached old age. Some of them would have saved money and opened houses of their own, which they would fill with young and attractive girls. But others, who had no money saved, would have to die of starvation in some ill-furnished room. In England such women take to selling matches and other things, and begging, and sleeping out. But in America women are never seen doing anything like that. So that when an American courtesan becomes old, she must either open a house of her own and employ others, or go into some room and die of starvation. I hoped with all my heart that this woman, who had been so kind to me, would never be in want of a friend to help her. It filled me with pain to think she would become old and poor, and, when dying of starvation, think of those she had befriended in the past, and expect to hear one of them knocking at her door. Perhaps I would be in her mind. When I thought of this, I began to walk faster, thinking to rouse some more cheerful thoughts, for I was making



myself ill again. There was only one way to change this melancholy mood, and that was to have a drink. I could always rely on one drink to make me cheerful, but had to be careful to take no more, because that would have brought my melancholy back stronger than ever. So I entered the first public-house I came to.

After having had one drink I continued on my way, feeling much more cheerful than before. I now began to enjoy the open air, and every breath that went into my body appeared to give it strength. The sun was very hot, but I walked the shady side of the street and kept cool. It was not long before I was at the yards where the freight trains started from. Just as I arrived, I saw a train ready made up, waiting until the conductor returned with his orders. So I got into an empty car, without being seen by anyone, and in a few minutes the train whistled twice, which was the signal to go. As soon as the train started I felt satisfied in my mind, and sat in a corner of the car and smoked my pipe. However, my thoughts soon returned to the woman I had left, and

the house she was in, and it seemed like leaving home and my mother. I was sorry now, seeing how much my mind had been affected, that I had not gone to the hospital, which I could have left without regret, and forget, as I would be forgotten.

When I reached Baltimore, I went at once to the cattlemen's office, where I found several of my old acquaintances waiting for ship. I went to see the man in charge, who knew me, and asked him if there was much cattle being shipped. "There is not," he answered; "but if you like, I will let you sign articles on the *Concordia*, which sails for Glasgow in a week's time." "Very well, then," I said; "let me sail on the *Concordia*."

On the following morning, which was Sunday, I had breakfast at the office. They did not supply food at that place, only shelter, but I had taken some in the night before. After I had had breakfast I went out for a walk. Now, while I was standing on a street corner, two men came up to me and asked if I knew where they could get a drink, for all the public-houses were supposed

to be closed. Of course, any inhabitant of the town would have known of public-houses that opened their side or back doors on a Sunday, but strangers to the town would be too timid to inquire. When I heard this question I looked at the two men and saw that they were well dressed. I judged that they had come to Baltimore for a little gaiety, and to escape the ties of home. In fact, they told me almost at once that they had come from Washington, which was forty-seven miles away.

I hardly knew how to answer this question, for I did not know any respectable place to take them to. At last I said, "Are you particular what kind of house it is? It is likely to be rough and of a low class." "No, we are not much afraid of that," answered one of them. Saying this he smiled and touched his hip pocket, so as to let me know that he carried a revolver. "That being the case," I said, smiling in return—"that being the case, follow me, for I know the locality where a house can be found." Hearing this the two strangers followed my lead. They were both very well dressed,

and I was poor and shabby, so I preferred to keep ahead of them and pretend I was not in their company. They did not appear to be proud men, but no doubt they understood my feelings, and followed some distance behind.

The only place I could be certain where drinks could be had on a Sunday, was in a low quarter called the Mash Market, and in that direction I started to go. There were quite a number of low public-houses near the Mash Market, and I knew one that had a narrow alley at its side. I thought that to be a most likely house, although I had no certain knowledge of it. However, we were now in a respectable business street, and I knew it was useless to waste time there. If we could not get a drink in the Mash Market, or a street near it, we would not be able to get it anywhere, I felt sure of that. Knowing this I made direct for that quarter.

When we reached the Mash Market, I told the two strangers exactly how much I knew, and they appeared quite satisfied to wait patiently until I knew something for certain. So I asked them to wait a minute while

I went across the road. We were now facing the public-house that I had been thinking of, and I could see a man standing on the corner of the lane. Of course, I knew that this man had an object in standing there, and was not idling his time, so I went to him at once. Just before I reached him a man came out of a side-door in the lane, which belonged to the public-house. When I saw this I felt certain, so I winked at the man on the corner, nodded my head towards the side-door, and said, "Is it all right?" "Yes," he answered at once; "push the door open and walk straight in." Hearing this I returned to the strangers and told them that I had found a place where they could get a drink. However, I told them again that I did not know what kind of a house it was, and that they were not to blame me if anything went wrong. "I thought you had an honest look when I first spoke to you," answered one of them, "and now I am sure you are all right. But nothing will go wrong, for we are not quarrelsome, and we are not drunk. Moreover, we do not intend to stay in the house very long, whether it is good or bad." With this

understanding we crossed the road, entered the lane, pushed open the side-door and walked into the public-house.

When we were inside we saw another door, wide open, which led into the bar. Several men were there drinking, and they appeared to be tough customers. However, they had nothing to do with us, and it was not likely we would stay there long enough to get drunk and quarrel with them. As soon as the landlady saw us enter she came forward at once and waited for our order. She looked very much surprised to see two finely-dressed strangers come into her bar, and she knew very well where the money was. For that reason she took no more notice of me, after the first glance, for she understood well how matters were. However, the strangers were gentlemen, for they first turned to me and asked what I would like to drink. I told them that I would have lager beer, which I preferred to any more costly beverage. After I had been served they ordered a more expensive drink for themselves, which they drank at one pull, and then ordered more of the same kind.

Mine was far too large to drink in that hasty way, so I excused myself, saying that I would have another in a short while. The fact of the matter was that I began to fear for the strangers, and wanted to keep all my wits alive. In less than five minutes they had finished the second drink and were calling for another. This time I accompanied them, to their pleasure. But before I had drank one-third of my second glass of lager beer, their own glasses were empty again and the landlady was serving them with more. One of them began to be talkative now, and entered into conversation with one of the rough strangers there. The other, who seemed to be more quiet and careful, went near; not so much to join their talk, but to be ready to protect his friend, so it seemed to me, if anything should happen. However, the rough-looking stranger was not quarrelsome or uncivil—no doubt he saw that the strangers were not only rich enough to stand drinks, but were also generous enough to do so. In a few moments one of the strangers, who was tall and thin, and appeared more excitable than his companion,

who was much shorter and stout—in a few moments this well-dressed stranger threw a two-dollar bill on the bar and cried, “Drinks for the house.” By this he meant that everyone present should empty their glasses and have them filled again at his expense. This was my third glass of lager in less than twenty minutes, and I was determined it should be my last. Soon after this the place was full of noise, but it was all common talk, for no one appeared in any way angry or contradictory.

I was leaning on the bar, listening, and looking at the company, when I felt a pressure on my arm. Turning at once I saw the landlady’s hand there, and she was looking at me with her face smiling. The next instant she leaned over and whispered, “Bring them here this afternoon, and I will make things all right with you.” Of course I knew her meaning. She wanted to rob the two strangers, either by the help of drugged wine or a couple of courtesans imported from a neighbouring house. The house would be closed in the afternoon, and that would be a fine chance. I gave her a wink to say I



would, and then went straight to the side of the stout, quiet stranger, who stood at the side of his excitable and still talking companion. "Let us go somewhere else," I said in a low voice. When he heard this he seemed to know there was danger near, for he went straight to his glass, emptied it and started for the door, shouting, "Good morning." "Wait a minute or two," his companion called after him. The short stranger went back at once and whispered in his companion's ear. The latter nodded and asked with a laugh, "Does he know the way?" "Yes," answered the other, walking towards the door, where I stood waiting for them. But the tall stranger would not come until he had shaken hands with everyone present, and I took that for a sign that he could soon be made an easy victim if he was left to himself. However, he soon joined us, but I am afraid that another drink would have made him troublesome.

When we were in the street I told the both of them what the landlady had said, and advised them not to go back to that house after I had left them. After telling them

this I wished them good-bye, but they would not hear of me leaving them so soon. "Stay with us for the day," said the short stranger, "and you will not be sorry for it, for I can see plainly that you are on the rocks. Show us the way to Alice Ann Street." Saying this, he turned to his tall companion and said with a laugh, "If I had not mentioned Alice Ann Street, I could never have got you away from that house." "That is most certain," answered the other; "let us lose no time in going there now. I hope it is not far from here."

I gathered from the conversation of these two men that they were not entire strangers to Baltimore; that they had been there before and knew the names of several places, but had forgotten the way to them. Of course, I knew very well what they wanted, for the street they mentioned was full of sporting houses. The courtesans were of a superior class, the lowest class being at the other end of the town, where the sailors were. "All right," I answered, "if you want to go to Alice Ann Street, follow me; but be careful of yourselves, or you will be sorry for your

visit to Baltimore.” “Have no fear for us,” said the short stranger. “It is not the first time we have been to such places—we are not innocent farmers.” I made no comment on this, but led the way to Alice Ann Street, which was a mile or more from where we were at that moment.

In about half an hour we entered Alice Ann Street and began to walk down one side of it. It was not long before we saw its character, for almost every window we passed was tapped and, when we looked that way, women were to be seen smiling and beckoning us to come indoors. Most of the women were young and decidedly good-looking, all of them being bare from their heads to where their breasts began to rise. My companions lingered, but they had not the courage to return to any houses they had passed, and needed more encouragement than women’s smiles behind glass to make them knock at closed doors. As for myself, it was nothing to me, for I had no money and must leave them as soon as they had the companionship of women. I was only acting as a guide for my own pleasure,

having nothing else more exciting to do, and did not trouble about any reward.

At last we came to a door that suddenly opened, just as we came in front of it, and the three of us looked inside. When we did we saw a beautiful woman, who made a little cry of welcome, stepped back and invited us in. Of course she had only come to the door to look out, for she could not be going anywhere, seeing that she was in the same half-nude state as those we had seen in the windows. When the short stranger saw this woman, he boldly stepped into the passage, as though he knew her and the house well. His companion followed at once, and I followed him. But I did not intend to stay in the house long, for I had no money, not even enough to pay for one drink.

We were soon in a well-furnished back room that had mirrors and pictures on the walls; the floor had carpets and rugs, and there were two sofas and several arm-chairs, easy, soft and comfortable. In the midst of this splendour, and before such fine women, four in number, I felt uncomfortable in my shabby clothes and their empty

pockets. So I would not sit down, and told the two strangers that I was about to go. But the short stranger, who appeared to have taken a liking to me, barred my way, and said, "No, stay with us, and you will be all right in the end." To make matters worse, one of the women, thinking I must have money, pulled me towards a sofa, where she made me sit down and then sat at my side. The woman who had met us at the door, and who was the mistress of the house, took possession of the short stranger, another sat at the side of the tall one, and another sat with me on the sofa. The fourth woman at once made herself busy by going into another room and preparing drinks, which she brought in on a tray. The short stranger paid for these drinks with a dollar bill. After that the wine-bearer sat at a piano and played us music. When she had done, the tall stranger ordered more drinks. It was after having this second drink that I began to feel uncomfortable, for it was my turn to pay for the next, and I had not a penny in my pocket. So I spoke up boldly, telling the women how I came there without any intention on my

part, and that I must now go, for I had no money at all. When the women heard this they looked at me with some scorn, especially the mistress of the house, for they had expected me to have something in spite of my shabby appearance. "Show him the way out," said the mistress, speaking to the woman that had brought in the wine. "If he goes, so do I," said the short stranger; "I am willing to pay for all he has in this house." "How good you are!" cried she, putting her hand on his shoulder. "Of course he is welcome to stay as long as he likes." In spite of this speech, she gave me such a look of hate and spite that I was determined to leave in a minute or two. I could see how matters stood: the strangers wanted me at their side for my wits and were afraid to be left alone, whereas the mistress knew that she and her companions could not do what they liked with the strangers as long as I was there. What hateful glances that woman gave me, and how uncomfortable she made me feel.

In a little while the mistress of the house bared her leg, so as to show us a small

wound which had been caused by falling off a bicycle. Thinking this a good chance to get into her good graces, I said, "That's nothing, it is healing splendidly." Of course, I meant this as a compliment to her good health and fine condition. But I had no sooner uttered these words that she turned on me with her eyes blazing with fury. "Nothing!" she cried; "how would you like to have it, you damn Jew!" I tried to explain myself, and the short stranger came to my assistance, saying that he quite understood what I meant. She gave me another glance of hate, which was followed by a queer smile that I did not like. After seeing this I was determined to go soon.

Several more drinks had been brought in and paid for, and the strangers were beginning to show the effect of them. A melancholy mood had come over the tall one, and he was shaking his head, saying that he had once been a famous athlete, but was now dying of consumption and had not long to live. His companion was laughing falsely and trying to cheer him. While this was going on the mistress of the house was look-

ing at me with a nasty smile on her face. In a few moments she said to the short stranger, nodding towards me, "That man is a Jew." "What does that matter?" he answered with a laugh; "he has an open, honest look, and that is all I care about." I could now see this woman was trying to turn the stranger against me, and I knew that they were armed with revolvers, and were also getting the worse for drink. However, drink had taken effect on me too, so I only sat laughing and smoking my pipe, while the drinks kept coming in.

We had now been there several hours and it was night. A fresh lot of drinks had just been brought in, and we were all the worse for what we had had. The strangers picked up their glasses at once and emptied them. In a few moments after they began to shake themselves, fighting against sleep, which began to overpower them. It was then that the mistress of the house caught hold of the short stranger, and the other courtesan did the same with the tall one, and began to drag them out of the room. The next instant the four of them were going up the



stairs, leaving me in the room alone with the woman that had been near me all the time. This woman had not shown any objection to me, even when she had found out that I had no money. So she now held out her hand, saying, "You must wish me good night, for the mistress will not allow you to stay here without money." Of course I was somewhat the worse for drink, and began a long explanation, telling how I had met the strangers, how I had come to that house, and how sorry I was to have no money. I don't know how long I had been talking, when all at once I heard a woman's voice say, "Isn't he gone yet?" "I am going in in a minute or two," I answered, and began explaining again. But I had scarcely uttered a score of words when the mistress walked into the room. "Out you go at once," she cried, pointing a revolver at my head. When I looked at her face and saw the tight lips and the blazing eyes, I was sobered at once. It was the most murderous look I had ever seen on a human face. She had such a hard and determined look that I knew she would have shot me dead if I had made the least motion

towards her ; and instead of being able to write these experiences, I would be nothing but bones in a backyard or cellar.

The two strangers had been drugged, I felt sure of that ; and had no sooner reached their beds than they had fallen to sleep, even with their clothes on. That was why this woman was able to leave them so soon and attend to me. I had sense enough to know that she had been drinking too, and that she was desperate and hated me for not going away before. With a full knowledge of this and seeing the revolver pointed my way, I took care not to aggravate her in the least. In fact, I was afraid to give her another look, for fear she would see some bad meaning in it. So I picked up my cap and said, very politely indeed, " Good night," and made my way towards the door. But when I got to the door I could not open it, for I did not know how the latch or bolt worked. This put me in a terrible state, and my fumbling became more shaky and confused. " I'd like to give you a mark to remember me by, after all this trouble," cried the mistress, coming into the passage with the revolver still in her hand.

“Open the door for him, or I’ll blow his brains out.” I was not safe yet, apparently, so I said softly, “I am very sorry, madam.” The next moment the courtesan that had been at my side all the time, came to the door and opened it. She just had time to squeeze my hand in sympathy and then shut the door.

When I got outside I breathed freely, for I was now sober and thoughtful, and knew what a narrow escape I had had. No doubt the strangers, being armed, could look after themselves in a quarrel with men, but they had no power against a woman that used drugged wine. But what I considered the most remarkable thing was that the short stranger would not turn against me, although under the spell of a woman that openly insulted me, and in spite of the drink he had had. If he had, no doubt they would have killed me between them. That was the nearest I have ever been to receiving my death at the hands of a woman, and one angry word on my part would have been enough.

## VII

### In Glasgow

WHEN I went out the next morning, I saw the two strangers in the distance, coming towards me. They saw me too, before we had come near, and waved their hands. At last we met, and they were shaking me by the hand, at the same time laughing in a manner that was somewhat confused. "We have been robbed," began the short stranger, and they both started to laugh. However, their laughter was none too hearty, and I could see they were annoyed. After a little time they had told me all, how they had found that morning that their pockets were empty of all except a little small change and their watches and chains. They had mentioned this to the mistress of the house, and she had sworn they only paid for a few drinks and given the usual price to stay there all night. "If you have been robbed, it was by the man you were

with," she had said. "I did not like his looks at all, but you would not let me order him out of the house. But as soon as he saw you go to bed, he went fast enough." At this moment I enlightened them both by saying that she was quite right as to my hasty disappearance. When I told them the reason they laughed so heartily that they drew people's attention for some distance away. After they had done laughing—and I had joined them until I had to wipe the tears from my eyes—the short stranger explained to me that he knew exactly what had happened. He said that when they had met me in the morning, they each had about a hundred dollars (£20), and, seeing how little they had spent before we had gone to Alice Ann Street, seeing this, the woman in that house had not done very bad. But he was afraid to call the police and accuse them of robbery, because he did not want his name to appear in the papers and his friends know what had happened. So they had left the house without uttering one angry word, only annoyed at one thing—that they would now have to send home for more money, so as to be able to pay their fare back home.

At this moment we came to a post office, and the strangers entered, asking me if I would wait for them outside. In a moment after they were back at my side, telling me that they would have money sent before long, and asking me to stay with them until it came. "For," said the short stranger, "we owe you something for your kindness." "Nonsense," I answered, "it was a pity that I ever led you to Alice Ann Street." "We would have found it without your help," said his companion, "and the same thing would have happened." Of course, I could see that these two men were rich, and were not so much worried over the loss of a couple of hundred dollars as the inconvenience of having to wait for more. For that reason I made up my mind, seeing that I was on the rocks, to accept a small sum at their hands. So, when their money came, and the short stranger offered me a five dollar bill (£1), I took it without any false modesty. In a couple of hours after this I parted from them at the railway station, for they were going to Philadelphia for a day or two, before they returned to their home in Washington. I

judged them to be well-educated men and independent.

In a few days after this I set sail for Glasgow on the cattleship *Concordia*. Another cattleman, who was born in Scotland, but had lived in America since his childhood, asked me if I would like to stay at a certain common lodging-house, one of the best of its kind that he knew of. Of course, the small sum we received for the trip could not raise us above a common lodging-house, so I agreed to go with him to that house. As soon as we reached the lodging-house and had paid for our beds, Scottie, to my surprise, gave me a wink and a smile and left. Of course, it was not long before I guessed the meaning of this, that he had some private quest that would be ruined if he had a companion. So, after he had gone, I went out and bought a daily paper, and then returned to the house to read it. It was a warm and comfortable kitchen, and I could well spend a few hours sitting there, so long as I had reading matter and tobacco. But when it struck ten o'clock and Scottie had not come back, I began to think that he had fallen into bad hands ; and

when it struck eleven, and still no Scottie, I felt certain that such was the case, and went to bed without waiting any longer.

When I came downstairs the next morning, there was still no sign of Scottie. But I had not been in the kitchen more than twenty minutes when in he walked, having his coat on his arm and his shirt open at the collar, by which I judged he had come from his bed, and had not been out all night. "Where have you been?" I asked. "I thought you had got into trouble." "So I did," he answered, "but soon got out of it." "Tell me what has happened," I said, pouring him out a cup of tea, for I was just about to have breakfast. "Well," he began, "I have been with a Scotch lassie, and she got the best of me, all through a scoundrel she keeps in idleness. I met her in a public-house, late last night, and, after paying for several drinks, went home with her.

"She told me, as we went along, that she had a room in a private house, and did not live in a common lodging-house, as a number of other girls did. 'I am not one of those common lodging-house girls,' she said, with



a great deal of pride—‘such girls are not to be trusted.’ I did not know anything about that matter, so I made no answer. She was very quick on her feet, and made good use of them, and I had to increase my ordinary gait to keep up with her. Perhaps she wanted to get home as soon as possible, seeing that the neighbourhood was common and people were standing at their doors. It also occurred to me that the sooner I was indoors and out of sight, the more comfortable I would feel.

“At last she stopped in front of a dark house, which had the front door wide open, and a lighted lamp was suspended in the passage. ‘Follow me,’ she said, and walked in. Half-way down the passage I saw the stairs, which she began to climb, while I followed close at her heels. When we reached the top of the flight, I saw another, for the house was three stories high. But there was no lamp now, and I had to fumble in the dark. ‘Give me your hand,’ she whispered, ‘we have not far to go now, only a few steps.’ I could see nothing of my surroundings, but I heard a noise which told me at once the character of that house. I could hear the

heavy breathing of a number of men in rooms near me, and I knew it was a common lodging-house. Of course, I did not want to be in a house that was full of rough men, knowing that she, if dishonest, would then have courage to do as she liked. So I halted on the second flight of stairs and said with annoyance, 'This house is full of men.' 'It is only the landlady and her family,' answered the girl. I did not know what to do now, for I was ashamed to retreat, and still had fear of the consequences of staying there. While I was in this unsettled state the girl had opened a door, struck a match, and now came forward with a light. 'All right,' I said, 'I am with you, but if there is the least sign of dishonesty, it will be the worse for you.' Of course, this was only an idle threat, nothing more. Saying this I followed her into the room and shut the door, but there was no key, and that increased my suspicion at once to an alarming extent.

"The room was very poorly furnished, there being nothing but a bed and two chairs. I could not judge whether the bedclothes were clean or not, but there was sufficient light

to see that the quilt was torn, and yet covered with patches, to prove its rotten old age. In spite of this I sat down, determined to make the best of my surroundings. 'After all,' thought I, 'what can I expect? She is only a poor girl, too ill-dressed to court the attention of rich men, and I am only paying her a few shillings.' After coming to this conclusion I felt better satisfied with my lot.

"The girl now began to take off her shawl, which she hung up behind the door. She did not wear a hat. Then she came to business without loss of time, asking how much I intended to give her. 'I will give you ten shillings,' I answered, which was quite generous under those conditions. I may as well say here that I never went with a girl of this kind without paying her more than she could expect. 'I am quite satisfied,' she said, her face lighting up, and holding out her hand, in which I placed the money. 'You must excuse me a moment now,' she said, 'for I must go downstairs and pay my landlady before I go to bed.' 'You will not be long?' I asked. 'Not more than a couple of minutes,'

she answered, and left the room. I filled my pipe and began to smoke. I waited five minutes, ten, fifteen, but there was no sign of my Scotch lassie. At last, after I had been there about half an hour, I came to the conclusion that she had gone out and I would see no more of her. However, I was determined to stay a little longer, thinking that the landlady had offered her a drink, and that the two of them were gossiping over it. I could hear no voices, although I went out on the landing. There was no other sound than the heavy breathing and snores of a number of sleepers in various rooms on the different floors. I must have been there for nearly an hour, when I heard someone coming up the stairs. It could not have been the girl, for, as I have said, she was in her bare feet. Thinking of this I went to the door to see who it was. I had not been there a second when a big, hulking, ruffianly-looking fellow stood before me. He did not appear a bit surprised at seeing me there, and asked quietly, 'Where's Mary?' Of course, I knew at once that this man was living on the girl's immorality, but that was nothing to do with

me, however much I despised a wretch like that, so I answered him in his own quiet tones, saying, 'She has gone to pay the landlady, but has been gone a long time.' 'All right, laddie,' he said, 'I will look for her and send her up to you.' But I could not stay in that house now, seeing that the girl was connected with a man of that type, for I knew that I would lose what money I had left. So I said, 'Never mind looking for her, I am going back to my own lodgings.' Saying this I followed him down the stairs.

"When we reached the front door, which was now shut, the man opened it and stepped back to allow me to pass out. 'Thank you,' I said, and the next moment my right hand shot out and landed on his jaw. The blow was more successful than I expected, for the man fell and did not rise and follow me. I knew that the girl was doing these dishonest tricks for the sake of this low ruffian, whom she was keeping in idleness, and I hated with all my soul a man like that."

After Scottie had finished telling me this exciting adventure, we both went out together to see the sights of Glasgow.

## VIII

### A Night Out

**A**FTER this trip to Scotland, I returned to America on the same boat, the trip having lasted thirty days in all.

For several years I wandered North, South, East, and West, during which time I made a few trips with cattle to Liverpool and London. But after this strange life had been going on for over five years, I suddenly made up my mind to return to my native land for good. What brought this determination to a head was the knowledge of having a sum of money saved—over a hundred pounds—resulting from a small income that I had let stand. So one morning I set sail from Baltimore and landed in Liverpool on the twelfth day. On the afternoon of that day I took train for South Wales. However, being young and hardy, I found it impossible to settle after so much travel abroad. So I

soon grew tired of my native town, and made up my mind to leave it before my money was gone. There was still a considerable sum left, over sixty pounds, when I took train for London, arriving in that city some time about midnight.

Now while I was standing on a corner, leaning against a lamp-post and resting, I felt a touch on my shoulder, and turned to see who it was. To my surprise I saw a fine tall girl, richly dressed, standing there and holding out her right hand to give me something. Wondering what she meant, my own hand went forth mechanically, and the next instant two pennies were in it and the girl was going away at a great pace. However, I had seen in that short time that her face was painted, and I knew what kind of girl she was to be out alone at that hour. Of course, she had taken me for a poor homeless wretch that had to walk about all night and was penniless. No doubt my appearance had deceived her, for she could not see my white collar owing to my coat being turned up high ; and she could not tell the quality of my cloth owing to the bad light. I began to

go after her, but she appeared to be in a great hurry to get somewhere, and I did not like to shout, so I let her go her way. In a few moments after I saw a poor ragged woman sitting in a doorway, and I gave her the twopence, which I had kept in my hand for that purpose.

In about an hour after this, I happened to be passing one of those coffee-stands that open at night, when another woman, not nearly so well dressed as the other, came up to me and said, "Get yourself a cup of coffee," and slipped a penny into my hand. "No," I answered at once, giving her the penny back—"no, you shall not pay for me, but I will pay for you." She seemed greatly surprised at this, and said, "I thought you had no home and were out for the night." I made no answer to this, but invited her to follow me to the stand, which she did. While we were standing there drinking our coffee, she was very curious to know something of my affairs, for she had taken me to be homeless and poor. However, I did not satisfy her curiosity, but merely paid for a cup of coffee and a cake. After doing this, and drinking



a cup of coffee myself, I gave her sixpence, for she looked so wretchedly poor. I told her then that I had but little money, but could afford that amount for her very kind intention. After I had left her I could think of nothing else but these two women, and wondering at their extraordinary sympathy for the poor. Of course, if they had seen a white collar and a fashionable tie they would not have made such a mistake, and would have approached me with a different purpose. Since these two incidents I have never been able to be other than patient with women of that kind, even when I have heard their loud-mouthed abuse in public-houses.

Since those days my knowledge of life has increased, and I know well that whatever may be said of a woman of that kind, it must be confessed that her sympathy for the poor and the afflicted is most extraordinary. She is not blind or deaf to distress, in spite of the wild, careless frivolity with which she tries to attract strange men and keep them as long as they have money to spend, and perhaps rob them. No matter how well dressed she is, she never shrinks from dirt and rags, and

she never ridicules the odd and the afflicted, as so many respectable women do. If a poor man with a double nose passes by, or with his two eyes looking at each other instead of straight on—he will set all the respectable shop-girls tittering. But there is one who sees nothing to laugh at, and that is the woman who is an unfortunate. What draws her attention is his rags, his tired limp, and his troubled looks; and if she has a few pennies in her pocket, she will give him one. From the point of view of those poor homeless wretches in London, it is a pity that there are not more women of her class. The Salvation Army will shelter him for twopence, but who gives him the twopence? Other charitable institutions will give him bread and soup for a penny, but who gives him the penny? For it must be remembered that these very poor people are not beggars, and whatever they get is unsolicited. Then who is their support? The woman whose eyes never fail to see someone more unfortunate than herself, who cannot keep a penny in her pocket when she sees others in want.

How these women help one another is wonderful. The sacrifices they make look foolish in the eyes of respectability. These are the women whose hearts shed tears of blood when their eyes show no water and their lips utter no sympathy. Those ragged, wretched-looking old women whom we see so often in the streets of London, know very well who to appeal to. Not to the respectable lady, but to the girl who is so easily known by her roving glances. And many a homeless man knows that he is more likely to receive unsolicited charity at night, when only a few rakes and fast women are in the street, than by day, when it holds hundreds of respectable people. These are strange words, but the truth is in them, as I know well from my own experience of poverty.

As I was going along I saw a man coming towards me laughing, with a woman at his heels, who was scolding him. When they reached my side the man stopped and said to the woman, in a warning voice, "I am going down this street, and if you dare to follow me it will be the worse for you." Saying this he left Oxford Street and went

down a dark narrow street adjoining it. "I *will* follow you," screamed the woman. Then she turned to me, and said, "What do you think of this man; he has been with me and now refuses to pay the shilling he promised." "Oh, he'll pay you all right," I answered, thinking the man was teasing her. For I could never think there was a man in the whole world that would be base enough to take advantage of a woman of that kind. This was that very low class of unfortunates who had no homes and were nearly always out in the streets, night and day. But I was deceived in this, for the man turned and threatened to strike her. Then he altered his mind, for she shrank back. He then started down the street, as he had said he would. "Let us try him again," I said to the woman, beginning to follow after him. When the man turned and saw the both of us close behind him, he stood with his back to a wall, not knowing what to do. "Why don't you pay this poor woman?" I asked. "Surely you will?" "Yes, ——" screamed the woman in a voice so loud that I was afraid the police would hear her.

“Yes, you pay me before you go.” “Go away, you ——,” the stranger growled in a threatening voice, and made another motion to strike her.

I did not know what to do under these circumstances. First I thought to give the woman a shilling out of my own pocket, and persuade her to trouble about him no more. But after that I began to think it was a shame that a mean, unprincipled fellow like that should be allowed to have his own way. Of course, I dared not get mixed up in a fight and be arrested, for, as I have said, I had a considerable sum on me, and it would not be a very noble case to appear in. It suddenly occurred to me to risk the consequence of one attempt. As I have said, the man was standing with his back to a wall, so with one bound I sprang forward and with my open hand pushed his head back with all my force. There was a dull thud and then a groan, and the next moment the man fell to the hard pavement, where he lay without making another move. The woman no sooner saw the success of this than she was on her knees at his side, with her hands in his

pockets. "Come away," I said, "or the police will be here." While I was saying this she not only had the man's money in her hand, but his watch and chain also.

It was only a few steps to the corner and, when we reached it, I left her at once. As we parted I saw a policeman in the distance, and he was looking our way. But it was too late for him to know our business now, however much he might be interested. As a rule policemen have much sympathy for a girl of this kind. If she is not too bold, and is not drunk enough to make a nuisance of herself, very few policemen will interfere with her. Of course there is an occasional policeman of a different character, who will even suspect and arrest a respectable woman, when she stops a strange man to ask him a simple question—but such a policeman is one in a hundred. There have been a great number of poor men and women who have been assisted by policemen. Many a policeman, whose wages are less than thirty shillings a week, has given a poor man or woman as much as sixpence to get a bed with. The heart is big, indeed, when it does that.

There is a certain class of men that always take a delight in annoying these unfortunate girls, talking to them and wasting their time, and having no intention of going with them. Some of these are drunken married men. But the very worst men are those—like the one I have mentioned—who go with these women and then refuse to pay for their enjoyment ; or having paid for it, rob them of the money they have given. Such a man is the meanest and most despicable scoundrel in the world, and should never escape heavy punishment. He knows very well that he has nothing to fear from the law, and the only thing he has to put up with is the woman's tongue, which amuses the coward. And when her voice becomes too loud for his amusement, he takes to his heels.

## IX

### A Strong Woman

TWO or three nights after this I met a woman that was better able to take care of herself. This woman did not rely on her tongue, but on her right arm. I was in Waterloo Road, at the time, somewhere about half-past eleven at night. Seeing that I had not had a drink all day, I thought there was no danger now in having a glass or two of ale. I would not be able to get any the worse for drink, because the public-houses would close in an hour's time, and I did not know where to get drink during closed hours. It must be remembered that I had no friends in London, and it is very difficult for a man to walk about all day with money in his pocket and no one to speak to. It is only in a public-house that a stranger can dare to speak familiarly to another, and be answered in the same cheerful spirit. You can do that



over a glass of ale, but not over a cup of tea or chocolate. It is a cold life to be a stranger and a teetotaller in a large city, for the only men that will be friendly and talk are to be found in a public-house. However, in spite of this wish to be sociable with someone, I did not want to mix with many, so I went into a private bar. But when I got inside there was no one there, so I sat down, not doubting but what another customer would soon come in. I was quite right in this, for almost at my heels another man walked in and greeted me pleasantly, even before he ordered his drink. So I began a conversation with him and found him so sociable that I soon invited him to have another drink. But I had scarcely ordered this last drink when a woman walked into the bar, at which I was not surprised. In fact, I had begun to wonder where all the women were, for they were usually peeping into private bars, and if one had done so and saw two men without a woman, it is most certain that she would have entered. So I was not surprised when this woman walked in, nor was I surprised when she asked my companion to pay

for a drink for her, which he did willingly. I could see, however, that she had had some drink before, but she was nothing out of the way in her conduct. As I looked I saw that she was a fine, healthy-looking woman, of about thirty years of age, big-limbed but not tall. She had a clean, fresh look, but her clothes were not of the best. "Are you coming home with me to-night?" she asked, after a few moments, looking at my companion. "Not to-night, Poll," he answered; "I have no money to spare." "Will you?" she asked, looking at me. "I am in the same position," I answered; "but will give you sixpence to help you along." Saying this I gave her sixpence, which she took with a smile of thanks, after which she left as quickly as she had come. "That's an extraordinary woman," said my companion, after he had made sure that she was out of hearing. "In what way?" I asked. "The way she can use her hands," answered my companion. "Can she use them like a man?" I asked. "I have seen few men that could use them like her," answered the stranger. "I proved that the

first time I met her, which was about three weeks ago. I met her here, in this very bar, and, after paying for a drink or two, took a fancy to her." Saying this the stranger took another drink, and I saw that he was preparing to tell me his experience, so I remained silent. "When we got outside," he began, "we stood awhile on the corner, as though I intended to wish her good night. But the truth of the matter was that I wanted a little more persuasion to go home with her. She was not backward in coaxing, and her voice was gentle, but she did not put her hands on me. This proved that she had a woman's delicacy and reserve, which is not often found in a woman that has been with many men. 'Where do you live?' I asked at last, after we had stood there talking for some time. 'In Oakley Street,' she answered, 'which is only just across the road.' 'It is a very rough street,' I said. 'What does that matter,' she asked, 'as long as the house I live in is quiet?' 'Come on, then,' I said, suddenly making up my mind; 'I will take your word that the house is quiet.'

“ In a few moments we were in Oakley Street, and she explained that her house was at the far end. However, that did not matter, for the whole length of the street was not much. As we were walking along talking a man came staggering around a corner and stood in front of us. I saw that the man was drunk and prepared to make way for him. But the woman I was with stood, to my surprise, expecting him to make way for us. If she had not done this no doubt the man would have passed us quietly. But when he saw this woman so close to him, he put forth his hand to take hold of her. Perhaps he did not think I was with her, for, without expecting any trouble, I had walked past, thinking she was close behind me. It had never occurred to me that there was the least likelihood of trouble, for no sensible person would take notice of a drunken man. ‘ What’s the matter ? ’ I asked, returning at once, so as to show the man that the woman was my companion. ‘ It is all right,’ said the woman ; ‘ you are a respectable man, and I don’t want to get you into trouble. I can take care of myself.’ Saying

this she struck out with her two fists, and the next moment the man was sprawling on the ground. In spite of this sudden onslaught, she did not appear to be in the least passion, but stood there quietly looking at the man, who was soon sitting up and rubbing his face, no doubt wondering what had happened. 'Come on,' she said, after being satisfied that the man was not unconscious and had not broken any limbs; 'come on, he'll be all right in a few minutes.' But when I saw this I began to alter my mind about going home with her. For if she took it into her head that she had cause to quarrel with me, what might be the consequence, seeing that we would be shut up inside a small room? I did not like the idea of having to fight for my life against a woman, and it was clear that I would be forced to do so if she turned nasty. Thinking of this I stood, not knowing what to do. 'Surely you are not afraid?' she asked, with a laugh, seeing my troubled looks. 'You ought not to have done that,' I said quietly; 'he was only a poor drunkard, and he meant no serious harm.' 'I am sorry now,' she answered,

'but I cannot help doing these things at times. I thought he might attack you, and that's why I did it.' When I heard this I was amazed, and at last said, 'You appear to think I am a mere child and need a woman to fight my battles.' 'No, I don't,' she answered, laughing. 'You don't know what kind of woman I am. When you know something of my past life, you will understand that it is nothing for me to knock a man down, without using any other weapons than my bare hands.' I looked intently at her face, but I saw not the least sign of a vicious temper, only the same quiet and good-natured smile. So we again walked on together, and in less than three minutes she stood at the door of a house, saying, 'Here we are at last.' She took a key out of her pocket and opened the door, and when I saw a light in the passage, I had no fear of following her in. Of course, it must be understood that I did not want her to have the least idea that I was timid. It would have pleased me very much to think that she had a little fear of me, which was not likely to be the case.

“When we both stood on top of the first flight of stairs and turned towards the second flight, we were both in darkness, for the passage lamp had no power up there. So, to encourage me to have no fear, she said calmly, ‘Here is the door of my room; wait a second, until I light my lamp.’ I stood at the door waiting, but she was so long fumbling about in the darkness that I began to get nervous. She knew I would be in this state, for she said at once, ‘I don’t remember where I put the matches; will you strike one of yours?’ This I did, taking good care not to go near her, for I began to be afraid of a sudden blow. It was not so much the woman I feared, in spite of what I had seen her do, as the thought that others were there to help her. However, before I could strike a light, she cried from the far end of the room, ‘I have them,’ and the next instant a match was struck. I was now standing in the doorway, and I could see that she was alone in the room, so I walked in. But when I was once inside and the lamp was lit, I was determined to take every precaution, whether my suspicions offended her or not.

So I not only turned the key in the lock, to guard from the outside, but I also looked under the bed. 'Are you satisfied now?' she asked, with a merry little laugh. My only answer was to put my arms around her and give her a hug.

"Before long this woman told me her history, and, when I had heard it, I was not at all surprised at the way she had used her hands when insulted by a drunken man. Her husband had been a noted boxer, and she had often boxed with him. He had died about six months ago, and she had only been leading this kind of life for two months. It was from her husband that she had learnt the way to use her hands to that purpose, which was extraordinary for a woman. And it was owing to getting mixed up in disturbances, when with him, that she had had real practice, and trained her mind to keep cool, without the loss of her wits. For instance, at one time they had a travelling booth, and on several occasions rough men had broken into the ring when her husband was out-boxing a local man. These men would be half drunk and under the impres-



sion that their friend was dealt with too severely by her husband. On such occasions she had entered the ring and used her hands to such purpose in defending her husband, that in a few minutes the ring would be empty of all but their two selves. She explained, with some modesty, that the men were taken by surprise at being punched so scientifically by a woman, and that they did not strike back because of her sex. But in spite of that, she claimed that she was good enough for any two ordinary men, even if they were perfectly sober and gave her no more mercy than they would give a man. She had been in quite a number of affairs of this kind, and was none the worse for them.

“ Under these circumstances, I could quite understand this woman’s temptation to use her power against those drunken bullies who, thinking women are weak, are always insulting them. And what made her so sensitive on this subject was that she had only been leading a courtesan’s life for a short time, and had not yet begun to realize her fall. This made her very sensitive to insult,

and she could not resist the temptation to strike out according to her power and confidence."

After I had heard this account of her life, I told the stranger my experience a few nights before, with a man that had taken advantage of a woman that had no home at all. "And was the man sober?" he asked. "Yes," I answered, "and that made matters much worse." "I didn't think there could be such a man in the world," he said, after some thought. "Woe betide him if he meets Poll Sanders one of these nights, and tries the same thing on her!"

## Blackmail

SOME nights after this I went to the Oxford Music-hall, where I stood up at the back of the pit. There was a very fine lot of artists, worth paying to hear. But one artist, a lady, was not good. Her voice was no better than thousands and thousands of poor women that sing lullabies to their children, and who are leading quiet household lives. As we know, sometimes a woman marries a well-known man and takes advantage of his name to push her own ambition ; and sometimes a man marries a talented woman and acts in public with her—whichever it is, it is certain that there are quite a number of men and women that appear where they have no talent to be. Her voice was not naturally good, although cultivation had done its best. Of course, we often see the same cruel imposition in the sons of well-known

fathers, who can do more with a small amount of talent than another, having to make his way from obscurity, can do with a large amount of genius. The world is full of cruel cases of this kind. These thoughts annoyed me, for I knew that she was not a poor woman that sang for a living ; but that she was rich, and vain on nothing, and was helped by an accident. So, after I had heard her sing a few notes, I came to the conclusion that I could do much better by having a drink than listening to her, and went to the bar for that purpose.

When I got to the bar and told the waiter what I wanted, I saw a gentleman standing there with his right hand bandaged, and two fashionably dressed girls with him, one on each side. Turning to me, this gentleman said, " Do you mind putting your hand into this pocket and getting my purse for me ? I have spent all the change I had in my left pocket, and now I cannot get at my purse, owing to my right hand being bandaged." " No," I answered at once, " I do not care to put my hand into the pocket of a stranger—ask one of your friends." " Let

me get it for you," began one of the girls. "No, thank you," he answered, with a short laugh; "you are too clever for me." "Will you let me?" asked the other girl. "No, thank you," he answered, with another merry laugh, "you are birds of one feather." The girls appeared to be used to this kind of treatment, for they both laughed merrily, without being in the least offended. Of course, I could now see exactly how matters stood. He was quite willing to pay for drinks for these two girls, but they were strangers, and, knowing what they were, he was afraid to trust them. So when he turned towards me with a good-natured smile and asked the second time if I would do that kindness for him, I altered my mind. However, I was determined to be cautious, so I said, "Yes, I will put my hand into your pocket, but first I want you to make sure that the purse is there, for I don't care to run the least risk of suspicion." When he heard this, he said, "I quite understand your feeling, but whether it is there or not, it will make no difference in my attitude towards you." While he was saying this he felt outside the pocket with his

left hand, and cried at once, "Yes, here it is, I can feel it." Without any more talk I put my hand into his pocket and got his purse for him, which he thanked me for. He then offered to pay for a drink for me, which I declined, for my own glass stood untouched before me. I was very glad when it was done, and done to his satisfaction, for although it was not pleasant to put one's hand into a stranger's pocket, I could not very well refuse under the circumstances. If he had not been perfectly sober, I would not have done it, in spite of his helplessness with a bandaged hand.

After I had turned away from this man and his two gay companions, I saw another girl standing close to my side. She had come there without my knowledge, and I was quite surprised to see her. For she must have used her voice, seeing that there was a glass of liquor on the bar in front of her. "He did quite right," said this woman to me, in a familiar voice—"he did quite right not to trust those girls. I happen to know them, and no man has ever gone home with one of them without losing something. You were

lucky that they did not get hold of you.” When I heard this I, of course, knew what kind of woman was talking to me—she was one of the fast girls herself. I saw at once that she was quite as well dressed as the others were, and did not appear to be much over twenty years of age. However, in spite of her fine clothes, she did not strike me as being any other than an ordinary uneducated girl dressed above her station.

In a few moments she had drunk her glass of liquor and still stood at my side, without showing the least inclination to go. So I drank mine and then asked her if she would have another. She nodded yes, and began talking as though she had known me for years. But up to the present time she had not proposed any plans for our future action, and I did not dare throw out the least hint, for there was one chance in fifty that she was a respectable woman. With this idea I finished my drink, and then told her I was going to take a back seat and listen to the performance. As soon as I began to move away from the bar, she finished her liquor and followed me, and took a seat at my side

Of course, I knew now that she took it for granted that I would go home with her after the performance. But we had not been seated ten minutes when I heard a voice behind me say quietly, but distinctly, "You thief!" Turning my head at these words, I saw a man leaning over with his hand on my companion's shoulder. I looked at my fair companion and saw her turn rather pale, but her expression was hard and without fear. "Who are you, and what do you mean?" she asked boldly. "You have made a great mistake." "Have I?" said the stranger, with a short laugh. "If you don't leave this house at once, I will have you arrested, and we will see whether I have made a mistake or not." When the girl heard this she rose and, looking at me, said, "Come, let us go; this man has made a mistake, but we don't want any fuss made." "No," I answered, "I intend to see the end of the performance." When she heard this, she did not waste any time in trying to coax me, as I thought she would, but left without another word.

After she had gone the stranger, who had



followed her with his eyes, took the seat she had vacated, and said, "You ought to be thankful to me for saving you from bad company." "Do you know her?" I asked. "Yes," he answered, "she made a fool of me, about a week ago. I went home with her, and a big bully came into the bedroom and tried to blackmail me." "Let us go to the bar and have a drink," I said, "for I would like to hear more about it."

As we stood at the bar he began his story, which is not an uncommon one in London. "A week ago to-night," he began, "I met this same girl, and was persuaded to go home with her. So I called a cab, for she lived some distance away, and we drove off together. When the cabman stopped and we both got out, I looked at my surroundings, and I did not like the look of them. However, I had not expected much better, for girls of this kind cannot afford to live in very fine houses. Even if they could, they would not be allowed long to take men home with them, before their more respectable neighbours would complain. It is not so much the question of taking men home at night, when

it is dark and their neighbours asleep, as the next morning, when the men, who are strangers, are seen leaving the houses in a great hurry, and with their heads hanging down.

“ The place where we came to a halt was a kind of square that had narrow streets running into it. So when I had paid the cabman, my companion led the way down one of these streets, which was dark and narrow, with houses old and small. In a few moments she stopped in front of a house and, taking a key out of her pocket, opened the door. It was quite dark inside, but she struck a light almost immediately, and then I could see that she had had a candle and matches waiting ready at the bottom of the stairs. As soon as I saw this light, which she now had in her hand, I felt more at ease and followed her up the stairs, when we soon entered a room. After we were in, she at once lit a small lamp, which she then placed in a safe quarter and blew the candle out.

“ When we were in the room, and I had shut the door, my companion took off her hat and then sat in a chair, while I sat facing

her some distance away. 'Now,' she said, 'how much are you going to give me?' I was astonished when she asked this in a loud hard voice, as though we were in a busy street by day. And when I looked at her, I was more astonished than ever, for all her smiles had vanished, and she was now looking as sternly as it was possible for one so young, and of that sex too. In fact, it was the tone and the look of a bully, and I did not like the change at all. 'Is there anyone else living in the house?' I asked. 'What if there is?' she demanded in the same loud voice. 'Are you afraid?' 'No,' I am not afraid,' I answered, 'but I would not like to disturb anyone that sleeps.' It struck me at once that she wanted to intimidate me, to prepare me for something to follow. At this moment I heard something move in the next room, and she seemed to hear it too, for when she spoke again it was in a softer and more persuasive voice. 'It is late,' she said. 'Pay me now, and do not wait.' When I heard this I at once gave her a sovereign, which she took without any comment, as though she had not expected more or less.

However, she rang the coin on a table to test it. No, it was not to test it. The sound of money was a signal, for the next moment the door was opened and a big burly fellow walked into the room and stood before me in his shirt-sleeves. 'Hallo!' he cried, in the same loud voice as the woman had used—'Hallo! What are you doing here with my wife?' When I heard this I was at a loss for words. 'You'll have to pay for this,' continued the big fellow, walking up and down the room, and speaking in a voice of suppressed passion. 'What are you doing here?' 'Ask your wife,' I answered, stepping behind a chair. 'You'll have to pay for this before you go from here,' he continued, beginning to throw his arms about wildly.

"However, I was not to be intimidated, in spite of his size. In fact, I began to look at it as a romantic adventure, and to enjoy it. So I said, with a short laugh—'I have paid for it already. I paid for a couple of drinks for your wife, brought her home in a cab, and then gave her a sovereign. How much more do you want?' The man ap-

peared surprised at this kind of language, but thought he would make another attempt. So, putting on a fierce expression, he said, 'That won't do for me; I must have some compensation, or it will be the worse for you.' 'What can you do?' I asked, leaning on the back of the chair. 'You dare not call the police, for your own sake. If you don't let me leave this house quietly,' I said, putting on my cap, 'perhaps it will be the worse for *you*.' When he heard this bold talk he was clearly confounded. At last he said, 'Is that the kind of man you are?' He asked this in a threatening tone, as though my answer was all he wanted to make him do something desperate. I had no way of judging whether he was a coward or not, but I knew very well that his object was to blackmail me for money, and that a disturbance in the house would do him no good. Knowing this, I stepped from behind the chair and said, 'Yes, that's the kind of man I am. Don't make any attempt to follow me, but remain where you are.' Saying this I left the room and made my way down the dark stairs. As I was going I could hear the

man and woman whispering, but they both knew now that they had mistaken their man. They not only made no attempt to follow me, but neither of them jeered or laughed. No doubt they were glad to get rid of me, and considered themselves lucky at the little success they had had. I did not threaten them for the return of the sovereign, for, although I could see that they were both afraid to lay hands on me, yet, for all that, I knew they would rather be murdered than give up the advantage they had gained. I knew that for certain. Although they had not had the success they had hoped for, they had no reason to complain of how they had fared. No doubt the man had expected to blackmail me for several pounds, or all the money I had on me. He thought I would be an easy victim, fearing bodily injury, and disgracing my family, and perhaps losing a good position. If he had known the truth, that I was a stranger in London, that I had no fear of bodily injury, that I was then no more than an adventurer with no good position to lose—if he had known these things, he would not have been surprised at the result.

“ When I reached the front door I had to strike a match, so as to see how to open it. However, it was not locked ; there was only a latch to be lifted, and I was then out in the street. As I walked away, thinking of what had happened, I was very much annoyed, and almost felt angry that I had not come to blows. Even if I had received several marks, it would have been some satisfaction to know that I had left other marks behind me. In thinking of this case, I came to the conclusion that the woman had been to blame for misjudging me. No doubt her object was to find young fools or old men, who could be made easy victims. She had judged me to be a feather-bed young gentleman, who would have given her husband all he had rather than come to blows. I could never understand how she made this mistake, for, although I am small, I have often been taken for a prize-fighter owing to the size of my neck and jaws. This man and woman would not have much difficulty in finding victims, so long as she was careful not to take home rough men. As long as she could find gentlemen to go with her, it was all right. For

gentlemen, however much courage they may have, would rather be blackmailed than receive marks in a fight—marks that remain for some time and are a disgrace, whatever account is given of them.”

“Thank you for your kind intentions,” I said to the stranger, after he had told me this—“but I did not intend to have anything to do with that girl.” I then told him how I had become acquainted with her, and how she had sat at my side without the least encouragement.



## XI

### The Religious Beggar

AT this time I paid my passage to Canada, but when I got there I lost my right foot on a railway, which I left buried in Ontario and returned to England. I was very poor, after the expense of this, and was soon living in a low London slum. However, in spite of my accident, the old spirit to wander seized me, and it was not long before I made up my mind to tramp through England for a few weeks.

One fine morning I wished my companions good-bye and started on the road. It was not long before the City was behind me and I was walking between green hedges instead of stone walls. I was going along feeling happy, in spite of a little hunger, when I saw an old man sitting under a tree, with his back leaning against the trunk. A thick staff was lying at his side, and he was mum-

bling some strange words to himself. I could see very well that he was a beggar, so I began a conversation with him. We were going towards Guildford, so I said, "I wonder is Guildford any good?"—from a beggar's point of view, of course. "Put your trust in the Lord," answered the old man cheerfully; "He is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Thinking this a strange answer to make, I stared at him for a considerable time. He seemed to be very old, with a wrinkled face and a long white beard, but had a very cheerful expression. In fact, he looked much like a kind old grandfather surrounded by children. Being curious to know more of him, I asked if he was going that way—towards Guildford. "I am," he answered, rising at once with little difficulty; "I am, and if it is God's will we shall be there in two hours."

"How long have you been on the road?" I asked, as we trudged along together, he with an activity that surprised me. "I have been on the road all my life," he answered. "My father and my mother were on the road when I was born. They are

dead now, and in Heaven, I trust ; where I hope to join them some day, Amen. For I have always done my best to lead a straight life—I never steal anything, having too much faith in people's kindness. I have never used bad language against people that refuse to help me. I thank those that refuse as well as those that give. I have pity in my heart for the poor and forgive the haughty rich their cold abuse. But naturally, I feel a little indignation when they tell me—an old man of seventy—to work for my living. However, I do not answer them in a passion, and always leave them with more sorrow than anger in my heart."

When I heard the old man continue in this strain, I was greatly taken by surprise. It was quite clear to me that he had lived the life of a beggar so long, that he now began to regard it as a true and honest one. Thinking of this, I let him continue without making any comment. In fact, he was determined to have his say, and any questions that I put to him would, no doubt, have been passed over.

" Yes," he continued, " I always do the

right thing, as far as it lies in my power ; doing my best to assist others to get work if they want it. For that reason, no man can accuse me of being selfish. Every bit of information that relates to work, which I gather on my travels, is stored for the benefit of my fellow-man. So that, under these blue heavens above us ! I say that no man can accuse me of being selfish and unkind. I have begged for and fed scores of men during my life, knowing that a good deed will be rewarded at last, and that what I have done will come back a thousandfold. I have taken pity on many a new beginner and shown him the way to beg, so that I can die with a clean conscience on that score, having faith that these things will have been put to my account when the day of judgment comes. I have taken many a man in hand, and taught him the way to beg, who otherwise would have had a very hard time. The kindness I meet with on every side often brings tears to my eyes, and I often sit alone praying for the fine people I have met. Of course, I know very well that it is the duty of all Christian people to see that I want for

nothing, but still I cannot help feeling affected. Sometimes I meet with people whose conduct I cannot understand, and who are determined not to understand mine. Ah, well; never mind. Let God judge between us. We are all His lambs."

How long the old man would have continued talking in this manner I cannot say, but he had scarcely uttered the last few words when an accident happened which almost took his breath away. For at that instant a stranger who was riding a bicycle made a sudden swerve and fell almost at our feet. It may have been that the man was near-sighted or lost in thought, and was close to us before he was well aware, and then made a sudden swerve, so as not to ride into us; or perhaps it was owing to the slippery condition of the road. Whatever it was, we were suddenly brought to a silent halt by seeing a man lying in the mud at our feet. "I hope to God you are not hurt, master," said my old friend, assisting the man to his feet, whom we could now see was a well-dressed gentleman, and probably a man of great wealth. "You have had a very

narrow escape, by the Almighty's grace!" cried the old man, seeing the gentleman standing erect and, except for the mud on his clothes, looking nothing the worse for his fall. As the old man was saying the last few words he took out of his pocket a clean white handkerchief, which he placed in the gentleman's hand. The latter took it, wiped his hands as clean as possible, threw the handkerchief into the hedge, mounted his bicycle again and rode off without uttering one word of thanks. I looked at the old man and saw that the working of his face was hardly likely to lead to Scripture quotation. However, after a long pause, in which he seemed to struggle with his feelings, he said calmly, "The Lord forgive him! I will not curse this man nor utter threats; for I am in a Christian land and am not a heathen. But that is not the way to reward a kindness—a sixpence would have been little enough. This proves to us that we do not know, until it is too late, who to leave in the mud or who to assist out of it. However, I shall not want."

This incident had happened near a house, and the lady of it was now standing at the

door, and had probably seen all that had happened. The old man no sooner saw her standing there than he went to the hedge and, after getting the handkerchief again, made his way towards her. As I did not follow him I cannot say what words passed between them. All I know is that I saw him enter the house and, of course, walked on and sat under a tree to wait for him.

In about fifteen minutes I saw him coming, having in his hand a large slice of bread and butter, which he said the lady had been kind enough to send for me. "I told the lady all about it," he said; "and she—being a real Christian—rewarded me with a cup of tea, some bread and butter, cake and a penny. She also gave me another pocket-handkerchief. And while I was eating, her daughter played like a little angel on the piano. Put your trust in the Lord, young man, and thou shalt not want."

"I thought you were going to curse that gentleman," I ventured, "when he took your handkerchief and went off without a word of thanks. It was certainly a hard-hearted piece of conduct, for he could plainly

see that we were both on the road and in extreme want." "Yes, I had to fight the devil," the old man admitted, "and by God's power, I won. No person ever assisted me without having my blessing; and I also bless those with willing hearts and empty hands. The hearts of the uncharitable have often melted through hearing my blessing. My father and my mother—now in Heaven, I trust; where I hope to join them some day, Amen—always taught me to do this. 'For,' said they, 'people cannot give if they have not got it; and you may call at their houses again, when they are better off, and be rewarded. But if you abused them, they are apt to recognize and refuse you, though they have become much richer since the last meeting.' Such were my parents' instructions. I am an old man now, with my own experience, and have always tried to lead a pure, straightforward life. As long as I have a tongue to ask a lady for a piece of soap, I will not steal it from her back door. I have had my afflictions, to be sure, through bad trade and workmen's strikes, but have still managed by God's grace to keep my



body nourished and a contented mind. He who feeds the small sparrow will not be blind to the wants of one made in His own image. I have not wasted my time in riotous living, like many others, but have had a pure and simple life. I have asked and, by the grace of God, have received ; I have knocked, and the door has been opened unto me ; I have prayed, and my prayers have been answered. Even people in almshouses have fed me, and I have blest such kindness with tears in my eyes. The widow has given her mite, and I have comforted her ; so much so that she has often, through the power of the Holy Ghost, rewarded me with her dead husband's clothes. Aye, I have met with much kindness in this world—even the little orphan has parted with her farthing, for my sake ! The Lord is my Shepherd : I shall not want."

Now, there is a joke among tramps—" that they work for Johnny Walker, the road surveyor." With this joke in my mind, I said to the old man—" Johnny Walker, the road surveyor, has been a kind master to you, for you appear hardy enough." He looked hard at me for a few seconds after he had heard

this. He seemed to understand the joke, but not to appreciate it. At last he answered—scorning to give Johnny Walker the credit for his good health—“The Lord has been my Guide, and will be until I join my parents who are in Heaven, I trust, where I hope to join them some day, Amen.”

“Do you like this wandering life?” I asked. “Don’t you ever lose your appetite, your sleep, or feel ill?” “My appetite is always good,” he answered cheerfully. “I do not turn against bacon because it is fat. Thank God for bacon, I say in all sincerity, whether it be fat or lean. Fresh air gives me such an appetite that I could swallow mouthfuls of dry bread with almost as much ease as others drink soup. Of course, I do not have to do so, for the Lord provides me with better food. I hear of people getting fever through drinking bad water, but I have drunk, on a hot summer’s day, a bellyful of ditch-water, and felt no harm. As for my sleep, it is splendid indeed. I could and have slept comfortable with rats running over my face all the night. I can sleep in peace and comfort anywhere, under a tree, in a coke

oven or manger—the Son of God was born in a manger. I have slept on graves, without the least fear of ghosts. One night I slept on one near the roadside, behind a stone wall. Hearing some steps coming, I got up, looked over the wall just as a man came near, and said—‘ Master, can you tell me the time ? ’ The man gave one look and, without making the least answer, took to his heels and ran. Seeing this it dawned upon my mind that he had taken me for a ghost, for he disappeared so suddenly that I thought he must surely be one. Although this incident reminded me of ghosts, nevertheless, having a clean, honest conscience, and having said my prayers, I knew that the Lord would preserve me from all evil spirits. So I slept on that grave until daybreak, and no ghost ever crossed my innocent dreams. As for my body, it is like leather. I can put on a wet shirt and let it dry on my flesh, whereas a shirt merely damp has killed others. Others get wet through, and will die if they sit in their wet clothes ; but I, with only the clothes I am wearing, can get wet through and be saved, by the grace of God ! from all

harm. They take cold and their teeth ache ; but mine, few as they are now, can chatter with the cold, and I can still pity others in pain. Only one part of my body has ever suffered, and that is my poor feet. And yet, for all that, a nail in my boot can scratch my foot and not bring on blood-poisoning, as with others. I have been wearing other people's clothes all my life, and I am now, by God's grace ! in my seventieth year, yet I have never once caught any disease. All this comes of being hardened to the weather, much walking, seldom sitting near fires, and abounding faith in a better life to come."

By this time we were within the town's boundaries. In fact, we were so far into Guildford, and had passed so many houses, that I thought it about time to stop and beg the price of my bed, before I got into the business streets. With this intention I brought the old man to a halt and told him what I was going to do. I had taken out of my pocket a few pairs of laces, and when the old man saw them, he asked, " Have you got a license for selling ? " " Yes," I answered. " Well, you are quite safe, for which the Lord be

praised," he said. "And what are *you* going to do?" I asked. "I have nothing to sell," he answered; "but will call on the shopkeepers and ask them as they value their souls, to help an old man to the price of his bed." "You will be arrested," I said, with some alarm. "That has happened a good many times," answered the old man. "For in my long life on the road, I have been persecuted by the police and suffered martyrdom in prison more times than I can very well remember. However, here I am, an old man of seventy years, with his spirit still unbroken, and ready to serve more time—if it is His will."

However much I was interested in this old sinner, it was no time now for longer conversation. I did not know but what I would have great trouble in getting the price of my bed and enough to eat; and I did not like going to houses after it was dark. So I inquired of him as to where the lodging-houses were. He then mentioned one, where he intended to go himself, and which was called The Model Lodging-house. After being told that it was situated at the other end of the

town, I felt quite satisfied, for Guildford was not so large as to give me much trouble to find it.

I found Guildford to be a very good town. In spite of it being the end of the week, when the working-classes would not have much money, I still had little difficulty in getting tenpence-halfpenny and several parcels of food, which were ample to carry me on to the next day. I was told afterwards, when in the lodging-house kitchen, that I had been around the workhouse, and that that was really the best part of the town for begging. When I heard this it appeared strange to me that that part of the town should be the best. But on reflection I accounted for it in this way: the scores of tramps that went to the workhouse for their bed, would not dare to be seen begging near it. They would not go near the workhouse until they were ready to enter it, and the next morning they would leave that locality as soon as possible. For that reason the houses were not touched by workhouse tramps, which made them all the better for those true beggars that lived in lodging-houses.

After getting through with my business, I made my way towards the lodging-house, which I had no difficulty in finding. However, as good fortune would have it, I was the last man to pay for a bed ; for another beggar that followed close at my heels was told that the house was full, and had to go elsewhere. When I entered the kitchen, I saw my old friend seated and smoking a pipe. No doubt he knew a number of those present, but he did not seem to care to talk with them. But when he saw me his face brightened, and he motioned me to a seat at his side. " I was only just in time," I said, " for I have taken the last bed." " It was by God's favour," he answered in a low voice, and looking around, as though he did not wish to be heard. No doubt the old fellow had met with more scorn than encouragement, and was now reserved in the presence of more than one.

" Which way are you going ? " I asked, after I had made a pot of tea and offered him a cup. " I don't know yet," he answered ; " but whichever way I go, I have been that way before, for I am now in my seventieth year,

and have been on the road ever since I was born." As he did not appear in any way interested in my travels, I said rather indifferently, "I am going towards the West of England." "Devonshire?" he asked. "No," I said, "Gloucestershire." "What made you come this way," he asked, "instead of making direct for Maidenhead and Reading?" "Well," I answered, "I have only now made up my mind to go in that direction. Perhaps you can tell me how I can get on the Bath road from here." The old man at once began to instruct me, and it seemed that he not only knew every town, but every tiny little village in England. Among other interesting items he told me to beware of a certain small town in Gloucestershire, that only had one common lodging-house, which was kept by a sinner. On hearing the old man's explanation, I was astonished. It seemed that the lodging-house keeper had such decided political opinions that he questioned every traveller that came as to whether he was a Liberal or a Conservative. Every poor beggar that arrived would be greeted in this way: "Before I take your



money and let you have a bed, I must know whether you are a Liberal or a Conservative." If the beggar's answer did not please him, this strange landlord would refuse to take his fourpence and let him have a bed, and the poor fellow would have to walk miles to the next town that had a lodging-house, or lie down anywhere. Of course this did not happen very often, for when beggars meet on the road they always tell one another these things. The consequence was that forty-nine beggars out of fifty would know which to be. The landlord, as silly as he was, must have known this, seeing that he always had the same answer to his question—but he still inquired whether a would-be lodger was a Liberal or a Conservative.

How the poor are humbugged! Every man had to pay fourpence for his bed, whatever his political opinions were. This, no doubt, was one of those bad cases of a man keeping a common lodging-house just for a hobby, who had other property that made him indifferent as to whether his house was empty or full. He was like the rich landlady who will keep her house next door empty,

before she will let it to a woman who has a young child or a grown-up daughter that plays music, who keeps a dog, or who has a husband that weeds the garden on a Sabbath morn. Suppose rich people were asked whether they were Liberals or Conservatives when they went to hotels? God help the poor beggar!

When I heard this I could hardly believe it, and in fact expressed some doubt. "It is the truth, and nothing but the truth, as God is my judge," said the old man, turning up his eyes. "How did you manage about it?" I asked; "for I know that you are honest and would not be humbugged by a question of that kind." "The way I managed," said the old man, "caused me to sleep under a tree all night." Saying which he began to puff at his pipe, as though he did not wish to say any more on that particular subject. However, I persisted in asking him what had happened and, at last, taking the pipe out of his mouth, he began. "Well," he said, "I had heard about that lodging-house keeper, long before I went to his house. But seeing that the night was warm and God's Heaven looked beautiful,

I did not care much whether I had a bed or not. So when I saw him and asked if the house was full, he said no, it was not. 'But,' said he, 'before I take your money, I want to know whether you are a Liberal or a Conservative.' 'Master,' I answered, 'I am an honest man with a clean conscience, and in the Almighty's hands. It does not matter in the least whether I am a Liberal or a Conservative—I am one of God's lambs.' I had hardly uttered these words when he shouted, 'You're a damn old fool!' and slammed the door in my face. So I had to sleep under a tree all night. However, that did not matter much, for when I looked at the stars in Heaven, I felt as though I was God's proud shepherd in charge of all those flocks. Of course the man is no Christian, and it is only by the extraordinary mercy of God that he holds such a masterly position."

In the course of conversation he told me that he had worked for a little over a year in his early days. "When I was a young man," he said, "I went to church every Sabbath day, morning and evening, and in the afternoon conducted a Bible class. At

that time I earned my living as a shop-assistant. But one day I was standing behind the counter, lost in prayer, when the proprietor came up to me and said, “ ‘ What are you doing now, staring and working your mouth like that ; can’t you see there are customers waiting to be served ? ’ ‘ I am praying to the Lord,’ I answered quietly ; ‘ the Lord, whose doings are above the common demands of this world. My thoughts are in Heaven, and far away from your shop.’ But I had scarcely uttered this mild reproof than the proprietor broke out into the most fearful blasphemy. ‘ To hell with the Lord ! ’ he cried. ‘ Do a bit of work for me, you solemn-looking scoundrel. Do a bit of work for me, and to hell with the Lord ! You are paid to serve in this shop, and not to have thoughts in Heaven.’ When I heard this I was astounded. ‘ Pay me my wages,’ I said, at last ; ‘ the Lord is my Master, and Him, above all others, I serve.’ Saying this I put on my hat and coat, ready to leave at once. However, he would not pay me what was due, which was four shillings a day, that being the third day of the week. So I went

to the till and, taking out twelve shillings, said, ' I am now paid, and quit you for ever. May the Lord have mercy on your soul ! ' Ever since that day, more than forty years ago, I have had no human master."

" You have been a beggar ever since then ? " I asked. " I have served the Lord, and Him only, ever since then," the old man answered ; " and I have wanted for nothing, in His hands, though I am now in my seventieth year."

## XII

### My Disgrace

THE old man left Guildford the next morning, but I decided to stay there for a few more days. For not only was the town itself good, but there were several villages within two or three miles of it that were also good, two in particular—one on the road to Godalming, and the other on the road to Leatherhead. This information I gathered the night before, after the old man had gone to bed and left me sitting in the lodging-house kitchen. I happened to be sitting near two beggars, one of whom had a wooden leg and was called Peggy, and could hear all they said. They had both been in Guildford for over a week, and still made no mention of going elsewhere, so I thought that I could surely manage to live there for a few days.

At this lodging-house there were quite a

number of beggars that knew one another, although they did not travel together. There was Peggy with his wooden leg, and another called Cockney ; there was one called Yank and another called Darkey, owing to his dark complexion—and a number more. As far as I could learn none of these men were real downrighters, but all of them had some cheap trifle to sell. Perhaps the only real down-righter that had slept there the previous night was the old man whom I had just parted with.

It seems that nearly all beggars whom we meet with nowadays have taken to carrying trifles to sell, and in England the down-righter is passing away. In new countries every beggar is a down-righter, and it is a sure sign of a country's decline when beggars have to resort to carrying cheap laces, pins, needles, and self-made novelties. I could not help but notice this in America, when I was leaving that country, how good beggars were taking to other methods than straightforward begging—making fans out of pinewood, and other things. Nearly all our down-righters in England go into workhouses, and the beggars

that carry a few things in their hands live in lodging-houses. Therefore, a man that neither carries things to sell nor goes into a workhouse, but can beg the price of his bed every day, is the only true beggar. But he is very rare indeed ; for a common lodging-house in the provinces may contain twenty beggars, and only one of them be a downrighter. Of course, there may be some street-singers who are closely akin to downrighters—but all the others carry cheap things to sell. In the past all beggars were downrighters ; but in these days things can be bought so cheap, that even beggars can buy and sell at a large profit. Birmingham has, by her cheap goods, turned many a good downright beggar into a pedlar, which is a great pity. Still, it must be admitted that much good begging can be done under the cover of selling these cheap goods, which are no trouble to carry. There is no law to prevent us from offering to sell laces to a lady out walking, knowing that she will not take them, but can be coaxed into giving money. We can also offer to sell pins to a gentleman on horseback. Why does the



beggar woman offer to sell you a dozen pegs for a penny, when you—a fine lady—are out walking? She knows her business. She knows very well that she can do better on the country road and in the street, by accosting pedestrians, than by going to houses that would buy her pegs. Never be surprised when a man asks you to buy a pair of laces, takes your penny, thanks you, and then walks away without giving you the laces—never be surprised, I say, when this is done, for that man knows his business.

Although Peggy, Cockney, and Yank seemed to be quiet, unassuming fellows, I cannot say that I looked with any great favour on the man called Darkey. He seemed to be always boasting of what he had done or was going to do. For instance, he kept harping on the same subject for more than an hour, which was that he intended to beg himself a pair of socks. "Someone will have to give me a pair of socks to day," he said emphatically, more than once. Now, there was really no need for all this talk, for a real good beggar would have made less fuss of begging even a suit of clothes. Later in

the day this boaster was to gloat over my disgrace, which I will relate in due course.

It was Saturday morning and the clock struck ten when I left the lodging-house. I had left nearly all the beggars there, for they did not want to spoil good houses by going to them before dinner on pay-day. The fact of the matter was, that I did not go out for active business, but to take my bearings of the town. However, I got tired of walking about, and seeing three or four short streets of small houses, I thought I would try one or two houses just for curiosity. It was lucky for me that I did ; for it happened that these houses were inhabited by railway men that received their pay on a Friday night. The consequence was that I went from house to house and, at dinner-time, before other beggars had began work, I had something like two shillings in my pocket. So I returned at once to the lodging-house, made a cup of tea, and had a good dinner on some of the food that had been given me. I have often heard people say that they could have no appetite for food that came out of strange houses, but those people are home-dwellers,

and they can have no idea of the appetite that comes from being so much out in the open air. Darkey was just leaving as I entered, saying, "Someone has to give me a pair of socks before I return."

After having had a good dinner and paying for my bed, I went out again, but had great difficulty in starting to work, knowing that I had so much money in my pocket. I began to think that I had done a very foolish thing by stopping for dinner, and that I ought to have continued while in the mood, and finished early for tea. At last I summoned up enough courage to make another start ; after which I continued to go from house to house until I heard the town bell clock strike five. I had just then been to the last house in a street, so I went to the alley at the back and counted my earnings. To my surprise I had four shillings and elevenpence, and my pockets full of food. This is splendid, thought I, but I will make the amount five shillings exactly. But strangely enough, although I had done so well, with so much ease, I had so much difficulty in getting the last penny that I was almost afraid I would never

succeed, and thought to give up my attempts, several times. I don't know whether the street was bad, or that I had now put on a confidence that people did not like ; whatever it was, it was with great difficulty that I got that other penny. However, I succeeded at last, and then started with a contented mind towards the lodging-house, happy to think that I could now lie idle for two or three days.

It was now that I began to think of Darkey and his boast about begging a pair of socks. What is the matter with me not trying to beg a shirt, thought I—I need one sadly. I knew that it would not be wise to dally, or I would never make the attempt ; so, obeying the sudden impulse, I at once rang the bell and stood waiting at the door of a nice little house. In a few seconds the door was opened, and I was confronted by a fine comfortable-looking young woman with a very charming expression. Telling her that I was in great need of a shirt, I asked her if she would be so kind as to give me one of her husband's or brother's. " I have no brother here," she answered sweetly, " and my

husband's old shirts have already been given away." This young woman spoke so sweetly and she looked so charming and kind, that I could not possibly take no for an answer. However, she kept on saying—"No, I cannot find you a shirt to day." But I began talking and talking until at last she went in, leaving me in the middle of a very moving speech. Seeing that she had left the door wide open I, of course, took it for granted that I had succeeded in talking her out of one of her husband's shirts, and waited. After waiting for over three minutes, I became aware of a lot of tittering going on inside the house and, happening to look towards the window saw to my surprise a younger woman looking between the curtains and laughing. I must have stood there for over four minutes, when the first-mentioned young woman appeared with a bundle which she placed in my outstretched hands, saying, "There!" after which she closed the door before I had time to thank her. Thinking that the two young women were delighted with my perseverance as a beggar, and feeling flattered at their good opinion, I made all haste to the lodging-

house. On the way there, I could think of nothing else than that young woman's good-natured beauty, and how sweetly modest she appeared with it. For when she gave me the bundle she was blushing like a young girl, and she was too shy to wait and hear my thanks.

At last I reached the lodging-house and found quite a number of beggars present, among whom were Peggy, Cockney and Darkey. When I entered the kitchen, all eyes turned to see who I was ; and when I threw my bundle on the table, no doubt they were all curious to know what it contained. In fact, Peggy was so curious that he asked me point-blank. He seemed a nice little fellow, and I could not possibly be offended when he asked pleasantly, "What have you got there, Shorty? Glad to see that you have had luck of some kind." "Oh, I have only begged a common shirt," I said indifferently, so as to show Darkey that other men could beg clothes and make no fuss about it. Saying this I opened the bundle and, taking the shirt out, which was white, shook it with a wide sweep. The

material was rather thin, but what astonished me most, when I shook it out, was its length. All at once I heard a shrill laugh, as a parrot would make, and the next instant Cockney shrieked in a high voice, which drew the attention of every one present—"Look! Lord, if he ain't been and begged a woman's shift!"

Here was a disgrace for a beggar! Fool that I was; why did I not take no for an answer, when the young woman said that she had no shirt to give away? Why did I force her, by not going away from her door, to get rid of me by giving away one of her own shifts! It was a terrible disgrace, and I certainly deserved it through my own folly.

However, I am very pleased to say that Peggy did not belie my first estimation of his character. For instead of laughing me to ridicule, as the others seemed inclined to do, he began in a serious tone to suggest how necessary it was for all beggars to immediately examine all parcels that came into their hands. "It is not wise for him to carry for hours a pair of boots or trousers that may

be worse than his own, and which he can neither wear nor sell," said Peggy. "A beggar is likely to meet with a serious disappointment after he has been for hours congratulating himself on success, and it is only after he has experienced a great number of disappointments of this kind that he becomes wise. Sometimes a woman tells him that she has only bread in the house, but he would not be wise to throw away her parcel before he has examined it; for a number of women say this so as to make a man confess that he is hungry enough to eat anything. She is almost certain to not only butter the bread, but to find a small piece of cheese, meat or cake to go with it. When I was a new beginner in the town of Coventry, I called one day at a house and received a large paper-bag. Judging by its size, I thought there was no need to go elsewhere, seeing that I already had the price of my bed, and that that parcel would be more than enough for two meals. But when I returned to the lodging-house, I discovered to my disgust that the paper-bag consisted of nothing but twenty or thirty dry crusts



of bread. That experience not only taught me, what it teaches every other beggar, not to judge a parcel of food by its weight and size, but to examine each parcel as soon as possible, for there are such things as heavy bare bones. No man, however timid a beggar he might be, would have been satisfied with dry bread in a town as large as Coventry."

This little speech was quite interesting, and I was very pleased to hear Peggy continue. "One disappointment that often befalls a beggar is to find that a good house has changed tenants. I knew one house near Slough, where I had received threepence on three occasions. But on going to the house for the fourth time, after an interval of six months, I could not get an answer. It had never once occurred to me that the house could change in any way. For a full minute after I had knocked, I stood like one turned to stone, not knowing what to do. However, I recovered at last, but would not believe that the house was empty ; so I went looking into the outhouses, knocked again at the back door, then at the side door, and ended

by ringing the front door bell. At last I was forced to believe the truth, that no one was in the house, not even a caretaker, and had to go away. But I was so dissatisfied with this idea that the lady had really gone, that, after begging the rest of the village, I returned to that house and again went through the same manœuvres. It is strange the great amount of faith that beggars place in certain people and houses. I have known a beggar to idle the whole day in a lodging-house kitchen, until evening, because he knew of a certain house that was good for sixpence—twopence over the price of his bed. It would never once cross his mind that the lady or gentleman might be ill, or gone on a holiday, or changed their address for good. But confidence of this kind does not do a beggar much harm ; for if a servant tries to drive him away from a house that he knows has been good for money, giving him a little food instead, he will go straight from the back door to the front and ask to see the mistress or master. In fact, when a beggar knows from past experience that a house is good for money, he will not take no for an

answer. He is almost ready for anything—a long, moving speech, whines, sighs, tears, and even threats and abuse. He will fight hard for his rights, and will not cease though threatened with guns, dogs, or constables. Of course, this is very foolish in one way ; for a good beggar would do much better by going at once to strange houses, instead of wasting his time at one that has been good in the past, and has either changed tenants or turned hard-hearted.”

After uttering these wise sentences, Peggy made a pause. However, in a few moments he began to relate an experience of his own, to show how near he had been to being fooled by a woman ; an incident which made mine with the shift completely forgotten.

“ When I went to a house in Bedford,” he began, “ I only just saved myself from a disappointment that would have made me the laughing-stock of the whole lodging-house. Seeing a small, detached house, surrounded with trees, I opened the gate and knocked at the door. It was opened almost at once, as though I had been seen coming, and a middle-aged woman stood before me, shaking her head

and sighing. 'Ah,' said she, to my surprise — 'Ah, I heard your step, and it reminded me of my dear first husband.' Thinking this very strange, for I had a common wooden leg that made a noise on the stones, I stood looking at her, waiting for an explanation. However, she did not think it necessary to give me one but, without saying another word, put a penny into my hand. I thanked her and was on the point of leaving, when she said impulsively, 'Wait here a minute.' So I stood waiting, thinking she was gone to get me some food. In a little while she came back, carrying a very long paper parcel, which she put into my hands, saying, 'It will come useful when your own is broken or worn out. Take it, and God bless you! It is a gift from the departed.' Being much impressed by these words, which were uttered in a very solemn tone, I took hold of the parcel without the least suspicion of what it was. But, of course, I had scarcely had it in my hands and felt it, than I knew it to be her first husband's wooden leg. In a case of this kind a man has to be measured and fitted, which I explained to her, after which I

thanked her for her kind intention. I need hardly say what a great disappointment this was to me, for it occurred to me once that I was going to have her first husband's suit of clothes.

“ Yes,” continued Peggy, “ these incidents prove how necessary it is for a beggar to be very careful of what he receives. If he gets a good article that does not fit him, nor can be made to fit, he can easily sell it in the lodging-house, or to the poor people that live near it. But let him be careful not to encumber himself with things that he has to throw away at last, after carrying them about for half a day or more. Shorty's experience with this shift would not have been half so ridiculous as mine, if I had carried that leg to a lodging-house, thinking it was a suit of clothes. How the lodgers would have laughed ! I have now been on the road too long to be deceived in that manner.”

Hearing Peggy express himself in this way put me in a good humour again. However, what was a most agreeable surprise to me was to see that Darkey did not in any

way exult in my discomfiture. In fact, he seemed to take it as a matter of course, and my second impression of him was much better than my first.

There happened to be several women in the lodging-house, so I asked a very respectable-looking woman if she was in need of a shift, and she said "Yes." So I gave it to her, being very glad to get rid of it.

As I was now on tramp, I thought my adventures among women were at an end for some time. For most of the women were married; others, who were not particularly virtuous, were repulsive in appearance, and that was the reason why they were on tramp—they having no charms to make commerce of. So I had no thought of women when I was on the road, and travelled alone, with the exception of a male companion now and then, if one happened to be going my way for a few miles. Moreover, when a man is on the road he soon loses all sensual thoughts; plain food and lying on the earth will soon take away those unhealthy passions that are bred of rich hot meals and cushioned chairs. A man's thoughts are calmer and

more steady in the open air ; the sun does not breed so many voluptuous dreams as the fire indoors ; and the beauty of a living woman outdoors does not give him the same unhealthy passion as the picture of one in his room, when he is a bachelor and lives alone.

For these reasons I had no thought of women, but, for all that, I got into trouble with one of them without knowing it, and came near being stabbed by a jealous old man. At this house there was one couple that seemed a fixture. It was an old man of about seventy years, very thin and shaky, who seemed to be a farm labourer—and his wife Emma, an untidy woman of about thirty-five. When I heard her Christian name mentioned so often, by landlady and lodgers, I knew very well that she had been there for some time. She seemed to be a woman of very little thought, her tongue running all the time, from complaint to complaint. Of course, it was for this reason, that she was a thoughtless, foolish woman, that she had married a man so very much older than herself, and as poor. Her continual whines and complaints made her the

laughing-stock of the kitchen, but she had no more dignity to offend than sense of humour to save herself. As her husband only earned a few shillings a week, she had to assist his money by going out herself and selling watercresses, or other things in their season.

I was not long in the kitchen before I had this poor woman's character well understood. When I entered she was quarrelling with her husband, and he had not the gift of speech to contend with her. However, she was not using bad language, neither was there any sign that they would come to blows. She did nothing but snap and whine, much to the amusement of the other lodgers in the kitchen. After I had been there for over half an hour, she was still at it—in fact, she could not keep her tongue silent for one moment. But she appeared quite harmless, and I could not imagine the poor woman doing any other than talk. Seeing her simple character, I was not at all surprised when, later in the evening, she came and sat at my side, and began to chatter as though she had known me for years. The old man



was then sitting at the far end of the kitchen, and looking in our direction. I could not help noticing that he did not look very well pleased, and that he kept working his lips as though he were talking to himself. But I took it that he was cursing his wife for her past behaviour and was indifferent to her present position at my side. I never thought for one moment that he could be jealous, for his wife was so untidy, and unattractive in every way, that very few men would encourage her from her husband. I certainly did not take the least fancy to her, although I did not discourage her talk. In fact, I was under the impression that she was half-witted, and pitied her. When it was ten o'clock the old man went to bed, but she still sat talking at my side. However, I was getting tired now, so I left her and went to my own bed.

When I came downstairs the next morning and entered the kitchen, I saw several lodgers look my way and then begin to whisper. I saw at once that there was something the matter, and that I was the cause of it, but had no idea of what it was. But while I

was at my breakfast, a man and woman came and sat near me, and the woman at once began to address me. "We could not get any sleep last night," she said, "and it was all through you." "What do you mean?" I asked, very much surprised to hear these words. "Why," said the woman, "Emma has been telling her old man that she has taken a fancy to you, and that she is going away with you to-day. They have been quarrelling all night, and the people with beds near them could not get a wink of sleep. The old man is not going to work to-day, so as to keep his eye on her. It was very annoying to be kept awake all night by such a pair of fools, but we couldn't help laughing." After this I heard others complain of the same thing, that Emma and her husband had kept them awake.

In a few moments after this Emma walked into the kitchen, followed by her husband. They were quiet enough now, for no doubt they were conscious of having made themselves a nuisance during the night. I had my back turned to the both of them, and heard the old man's steps coming my way,

whereas Emma had come to a halt in front of the fire. "Here he is!" cried the old man. It occurred to my mind that I was the "he" that was spoken of, so I turned my head around to see if he was looking or pointing my way. But when I gave him a glance, I could see that his eyes were on Emma, and he was making no motion at all, so that I could not very well say anything. "When are you going to get the breakfast?" asked the old man. Up to this time Emma had not opened her mouth, but now she began to whine in her usual way: "Won't you give me a little peace? What a hurry you are in! Don't you think of anything but your guts?" Her tongue began going now to such a purpose that her voice was soon lost in the noise made by the lodgers, some of whom were annoyed, while others were amused. When all became quiet again, Emma was heard to say distinctly, "I will, you see if I don't." This, of course, was a threat, but I did not know what it meant. However, I soon understood the meaning—she was repeating the threat she had been making all night, which was to run away with

me. "I'll see that you don't," cried the old man, his voice shaking with passion. The next moment several voices uttered a serious cry of fear, and I turned around, thinking the old man was about to do something desperate. When I did I then saw that he held a knife in his hand, and two lodgers were struggling to take it from him. They soon succeeded, for the old man was weak and shaky. "You must have more sense than that," said one of the lodgers, "trying to stab that man in the back." As he said this he nodded my way, so that I knew then what had happened, and took care to keep my eye on the old man in future.

Some time after this I went to another house of the same kind and got into trouble again. There was a young woman there with a bastard baby, who began to show more interest in me than I cared for. She seemed a clean, quiet, inoffensive woman who, getting much pity through being a mother, made a fair living by selling embroidery and other things. It must not be thought that these women have any great desire for a man as a man. What they want a man for is the

greater convenience of getting lodgings, since women have to pay for rooms to themselves, and that is expensive ; so that they find it more convenient to travel with a man. There are other reasons too, which I will not go into. Very well, then. This poor woman had just been deserted, and was afraid to start her travels again without having the company of a man. Unfortunately she chose me, and showed her favour by offering to do several little kindnesses. But I was determined not to make use of this poor woman for a month or less and then desert her, for, of course, I could never make a life companion of a woman like that, especially as I did not expect to be a beggar much longer. So, rather than do this, I left the house and did not return. There happened to be another man in the house that had his eye on her, but she gave him no encouragement. This man called himself a translator, but was then a beggar. I gathered from his conversation that he was a cobbler by trade and translated old shoes into new. It was the first time that I had ever heard a cobbler call himself a translator. Perhaps when she had made sure

that I was really gone, she took more notice of the other man's attentions. But, as I have said, she could make a fair living herself, and had no need to hurry into an alliance with the first man that admired her. I never had so much pity for a woman in all my life, for she seemed as though she would have made a good wife for some honest man, and deserved a nice home of her own.

### XIII

## Yank

THERE was one man in this lodging-house at Guildford that interested me very much—it was the man called Yank. He had very little to say, and not only never once mentioned America, but did not talk like an American. This made me wonder how long he had lived in that country, and what he knew of it. But he seemed so solemn and quiet that I did not like to begin asking questions until he first said something to me.

While I was in this undecided state something suddenly happened which threatened to end with blood, and it was then that I saw Yank make a movement that gave me the idea that he was either an American or had lived in that country long enough to know its customs. There was a drunken grinder in the kitchen, who would not sit down, but kept walking up and down, in

everyone's way. He seemed to do this so that lodgers should swear at him, which would give him a chance to swear in return—for all grinders take a great delight in swearing. At last this drunken grinder happened to stumble against Yank, who was then in the act of carrying his teapot from the fire to a table. To the surprise of everyone, and the grinder especially, Yank recovered his balance and went on, without saying a word. However, after he had placed his teapot on the table, he put his hand into his pocket, took out a razor, opened it, and then returned and stood before the grinder. "Now," said he, speaking without the least passion, "now, you sit down quietly, or I will cut you into pieces." Of course, the grinder sat down at once, and there was no more trouble with him for the rest of the evening. It was this simple movement on Yank's part that gave me the idea that he knew how to use the razor as a *weapon*; a thing well known to American niggers, whose weapon it is—but known to very few white people outside of that country. When I saw Yank standing there, holding the razor as it should be held



as a weapon, I was delighted ; for I have met hundreds of men, even in America, who did not know that.

There is a certain way of holding the razor as a weapon far different from when used for the peaceful purpose of shaving. If my own razor is ready to hand, which I may say was never once used as a weapon, I am always happy to give a practical illustration before any men, women or children that may be present. But as a rule people, although interested, seldom wish for a practical illustration.

The razor is the American negro's weapon, and he makes an art of its use as white men make an art of boxing or fencing. The number of negroes I have seen with half ears, noses divided like pigs' trotters, and more mouths than one—in neck or cheek—can prove what weapon has been used. As the innocent-looking Chinaman often carries more arms than two in his big loose sleeves—sometimes a revolver, a dagger, or an extra ace or two—even so the negress in the slums of an American city will carry other things besides legs in her stockings. I have often

seen a negress that was about to pass some corner loafers who might interfere with her, stoop in a doorway and take a razor out of her stocking. Little would they think that this negress, sauntering leisurely past them, with her two hands in her sleeves, had a razor held ready to cut off the ear or nose of any man that provoked her.

Knowing these things, the reader can imagine my delight when I saw that Yank knew how to use the razor as a weapon. The way he held it made it impossible to inflict injury on his own hand, however much the grinder might struggle for his life. However, there was no fear of the grinder doing anything of the kind, for he had sat down, lit his pipe and was soon fast asleep. This was soon made known to us all, for we heard the pipe—which was made of clay—fall from his mouth and break on the floor.

However, it soon happened that Yank came and sat at my side, and the words that had been on my tongue for a long time had to come out at last. “You know the proper way to hold the razor as a weapon,” I said. “It is the only way, if a man does not want

to cut his own body," he answered. "I know that," said I; "but though the razor has no equal for drawing blood, what a poor miserable weapon it is after all. Where is its standing as a death-dealer? Where is the pleasure of so much slashing the surface of a man's body, when one stab with a knife or blow with a club can end the battle at once? I have seen a man cut with a razor in thirty different places, who still recovered. If such a man had been in a common fight with the knuckles, it is hardly likely that he would have recovered his health with so much ease." "What you say is quite true," answered Yank. "I have used all kinds of weapons, and would never think of using the razor if any other was at hand. I like the revolver best, which I was well used to when I was in America. Do you know the best place to carry a revolver?"

Now the usual place to carry a revolver is either in a hip pocket and concealed, or stuck in the front of a strong leather belt and exposed to every eye. The man of the latter style is less liable to insult than the former, and he certainly has the advantage

of quick drawing. But it was when I met Frisco Slim, a quiet, studious, gentlemanly-looking fellow who, in his calling as a gambler, had found it necessary to fill thirty or forty graves—it was when I met this interesting man that I received the most valuable information as to where a revolver should be carried. I was very poor at the time, and told Slim boldly, after receiving from him a dollar bill, that if he had an elder brother to the coat he was then wearing, I would not have the least objection to carrying such an one away with me on my back. “Come indoors,” said he at once, “and I’ll see what can be done.” Hearing this I entered and, just inside the door, Slim took down a coat that was hanging on a peg in the passage. “There,” said he, “this coat is almost new, with only a small hole in the right-hand pocket. “That’s nothing at all,” I answered at once; “did you burn the coat pocket with a hot pipe after smoking?” “Oh, no,” said Slim; “this hole was caused by shooting Denver Red.” Seeing my puzzled look, Slim went on to explain how Denver Red had been looking for him for several

days, with two revolvers stuck in his belt. "But," said Slim, "I walked the street with a revolver in this pocket, and my right hand always inside, with my finger on the trigger. Therefore, when I met Red and saw him make a motion to draw, I at once shot him through this pocket, for I really had no time to draw."

I was quite surprised to hear this—no fumbling at the belt ; no struggling at a hip pocket, and no exposure of weapons ; nothing at all to show what his intentions were. This man Slim could be standing at a bar laughing and joking and raising his glass with his left hand, while his right hand would be holding a revolver that would be levelled at another's heart, and no one would know anything about it.

When I was leaving him, thinking how Denver Red had been shot through that coat pocket, I said, "I am greatly obliged to you for so much kindness, and if I happen to be in the same poverty when I come this way again, I trust you will not be short of a coat or two ; for, really, the holes are nothing, of no account whatever." "I am ever ready

to do that kindness," answered the kind-hearted fellow, with deep feeling; "for I always have an order with the tailor for a new coat."

I thought of this incident when Yank asked me if I knew the best place to carry a revolver. So I told him at once, and gave Frisco Slim's reasons, much to Yank's satisfaction.

At this time I felt very unsettled in my mind, not knowing whether to go North, South, East, or West. It is not often that tramps get in this unsettled state, for they generally have some large town or city in view. Sometimes a tramp in the South of England will take a notion to go to Glasgow, and he keeps that port in mind until he gets there. He knows very well that he is not going there to look for work, or to be helped by friends or relatives, and yet he makes every effort to get there, sometimes making very long marches indeed. And nothing annoys him more than a heavy fall of snow, or steady rain, to make him stay more than one night in the same town. When he reaches Glasgow, he may not even

beg that town, but make up his mind almost immediately to visit Swansea. In fact, all he has done in Glasgow was to stand at a public fountain and drink a cup of cold water.

Although I was not likely to take a mad notion of this kind, yet, for all that, I was trying to think of some large town that I could reach by easy stages. Therefore, when Yank said that he thought of going to Oxford, I at once made up my mind that Oxford should be my destination also. But tramps as a rule are very independent of each other, and seldom invite each other's company. This being the case, I felt too independent to ask Yank if I should accompany him, and, when he heard that I was going in that direction, he was too shy to say that he would like my company. But in cases of this kind tramps usually fall into each other's company in an easy, natural manner. For instance, when the next morning Yank had finished breakfast and saw me sitting smoking—for I had already finished mine—he said, "Are you going my way?" "Yes," I answered, and we left the house

together. In less than twenty minutes we were on the country road, chatting as though we had known each other for a considerable time.

I found that although Yank was a very quiet man when a number of others were around, he was really sociable with one man for a companion. He was a clean-shaven, tall, bony man, not yet in the prime of life, and very active. But what alarmed me more than once was his bold curiosity. For he often left my side to look over a wall or inside a gate, and once he went boldly to a house and looked into the porch. I could not account for this, for I thought he had gone there with the intention of begging the house. The thought occurred to me, much to my alarm, that Yank was more of a thief than a beggar. However, an incident soon occurred that set my mind at ease on that score. We were passing a large house that had no other ground in front than the public road. As we were passing, we could hear a number of voices inside, chatting and laughing, for it seemed they had a party there, either for a wedding or a birthday. Of course



this was none of our business, but to my surprise I saw Yank stand and deliberately look through the window, with his nose flattened against the glass. "Come on," I said, in great alarm; "come on, for what will people think!" But Yank did not seem to care much what people would think, for he joined me very leisurely indeed. When he reached my side, and we had gone some distance, I looked back and was not surprised to see three gentlemen at the door, probably deliberating whether they would have us arrested or not.

Before we reached Oxford we were joined by another beggar whom we at once called "Ginger," because he had red hair.

## XIV

### House-Calling

WHEN we reached Oxford, Ginger left us, for he had not yet begged the price of his bed. But before he left he mentioned a certain lodging-house, kept by an Italian, where he always put up. "That's my house too," said Yank, "if it is not full." As I have said, Ginger was an industrious beggar, who wasted no time. So that I was not at all surprised to see him, after hearing Yank say this, knock at the first door he came to. The consequence was that we had not been seated in the lodging-house kitchen more than twenty minutes, when in walked our friend Ginger, and took a seat near us.

These common lodging-houses kept by Italians are far more kind and generous in their treatment of beggars than those that are in the hands of our own people. The reason is that most of these Italians were

very poor when they first came to England, and lived as travelling organ-grinders, until they saved enough to encourage them to borrow from their friends and open a common lodging-house. Scores of beggars remember the landlord of the Swindon lodging-house, who is comparatively rich now, when he was little better off than themselves, travelling through the country with an organ, and living at different common lodging-houses. In fact, at this house in Oxford there were, at the time I mention, several Italian organ-grinders. For that reason beggars are treated much better by Italians than by their own countrymen. These Italian lodging-house keepers do not forget their own past; and it is nothing unusual to see an Italian landlady sitting in the lodgers' kitchen and talking to them cheerfully, as though she were still a travelling organ-grinder and had to mix with them.

The next morning being Saturday, we left the house together, Yank, Ginger and myself, with the intention of begging the town. When we reached the main street we parted, each one going on his own business, with the

understanding that we would meet later on in the lodging-house, for we intended to remain in Oxford over Sunday.

A man who is house-calling gets many a strange experience, pathetic, humorous, or cruel ; for people are not always in the same condition or mood. So, on this particular morning, I was to be the unwilling witness of domestic strife. I had knocked at a door, which was almost immediately answered by a man, who, hearing my wants, sternly said no, and shut the door. However, before I could reach the next house, the door was again opened and a woman's voice cried, "Come back, and come in." Hearing this I went back, thinking that the man had repented, owing to his wife's kinder feeling, and never dreamt that it could be anything else. But when I got inside the house and saw that the man's face was very white, and that the woman's face was very red, I began to think that something was wrong. And when I took a seat and waited to hear the usual questions of curiosity, and no such questions came, I began to feel uncomfortable. But it was not long before I understood how

matters were. The woman began kicking and banging things about, and when she picked up the frying-pan, instead of putting it on the fire, she first held it high in the air, over the man's head. This action quite upset me, for I was very much afraid that they would come to blows. And I remembered my grandfather's account of interfering between man and wife; how, when he was holding the man down, the treacherous woman rushed forward and split my grandfather's head open with a small saucepan. I remembered well my grandfather's account of that, and I felt very nervous under the circumstances. My grandfather had said that he believed he lost more blood on that occasion than would have been required to make twenty black-puddings. But I am very pleased to say that this man at once saved me from all worry, for he opened the door and went out.

A beggar often meets with strange experiences of this kind. I have—not often, I am glad to say—had the door opened by a woman that was too drunk to understand a word I said, and who could not be made to understand.

Once or twice I have been asked in at a house where a dead body lay, and have wished those sad people had shown their charity outside the house, or refused me altogether. When I was asked into one small house, I was astonished on entering to see a fine large oil-painting of a youth, which must have cost more than all the furniture the house contained, for it was only a working-man's house. The boy had a beautiful face ; a clear, open brow, fine large eyes and smiling lips. Almost immediately the mother, a very poor woman, began to talk of him. He was her eldest son, who had been killed, and horribly mangled first. This painting was made from a photograph which he had had taken just before his death, and the mother had paid several pounds for it. What a sad effect this picture must have had on the family ! I could not imagine any laughter going on in that room, and the man and his wife would never have unkind words there. It seemed to be impossible to do any other than whisper in the presence of such a startling likeness, which was life-size, knowing that the boy was in a cold grave. As

soon as I entered the room the mother began to talk of him, and I could not help feeling a real interest, for the boy's face seemed to have genius. As I have said, the picture was so large, and the room was so small, that I could not help thinking how unwise it was to have it in that living room, under their eyes from morning till night.

On another occasion I had the door opened by a man with his throat cut. The razor was in his hand, when he appeared in the doorway, and it was covered with blood. Needless to say, I left at once, without telling him my errand, and went to look for a policeman. However, when I had reached the front of the house, I thought better of it; for if the man was dead when I entered with a police officer, no doubt the latter would have arrested me for his murder. I knew very well that I could not give a good account of my past life, and my present life would have not been very favourable to the law. For that reason, I did no more than to tell a little girl who happened to be playing in front of the house, to run and tell her mother that a man had cut his throat. She seemed quite old

enough to understand, and after I had shown her the house, ran to her own as fast as she could, which happened to be just across the road. I don't know whether the man died or lived. All I know is that I left that town at once, thinking the police would want to question me. And seeing that I could not reach another lodging-house that night, and had to sleep out, and it rained hard for twelve hours—having this experience, I hoped with all my heart that he was dead and his soul in hell.

To return to my experience in Oxford. I was very glad to see the man go out, for the lady was very charming after he had gone. She not only gave me a good meal, but, when I was leaving, put twopence in my hand. And, after leaving her house, I had other small successes, in the usual quiet way, without being made to feel uncomfortable. Being Saturday, I wanted to get enough to pay my way over Sunday, and for that reason continued to call at houses until five o'clock, when I returned to the lodging-house, being well satisfied with my day's work. Neither Yank nor Ginger had returned when I got



there, but in less than half an hour the latter walked into the kitchen.

Of course, he also had had one experience worth mentioning, as every beggar must have at the end of a long day's steady house-calling. He was just on the point of going to one house, when he heard a loud scream, and the next instant the door was opened with a loud bang, and then a woman rushed into the backyard. "What's the matter, Missis?" asked Ginger. "A mouse!" answered the woman, making haste to get behind Ginger's back. On hearing this, Ginger, without the least fear, entered the house and began a search. It seems that the mouse had no hole to escape in that room, for after Ginger had poked with a stick under a number of things, it was dislodged and ran across the floor. Ginger had not taken off his hat, which was a hard one, but did now, and threw it at the mouse with good effect. Holding it by the tail he came in triumph, and, before the woman's eyes, threw the terrible beast into an ash-bin. All this turned out well for Ginger; for after he had thoroughly explained his position, the woman gave him

fourpence, which was the full price of his bed. Ginger was very fortunate in getting fourpence with so little trouble.

After we had sat talking for a long time, I began to wonder what had become of Yank, and asked Ginger his opinion. "Arrested," said Ginger, decisively. "He is too wide awake for that," I answered. But it now suddenly occurred to me that Yank had mentioned more than once his experience in different jails.

When nine o'clock came, and still no sign of Yank, Ginger said, "He's arrested, you can be sure of that. For," he continued, "begging in the street is not so safe as going to houses. Begging on the fly is all right on country roads and going through small places, but when you come to do it in a town the size of Oxford, you run a great risk."

Ginger's opinion was that Yank had had good luck, and then went drinking. After getting into a muddled state he had lost all thought of the police, and became too bold; persisted too much and drew attention to his actions. Being in that muddled state he would probably delay a gentleman in the

middle of a street, when the latter would be hurrying across to get out of the way of the traffic. And if he did that, the police would not be blind to him for long. "If Yank escaped the police he could, in a town like this, get a couple of shillings in an hour, and it would take me more than half a day to get that amount at houses," said Ginger. "But for all that, my way and yours is the safest. No begging on the fly for me."

Ginger must have been right, for I remained in Oxford for several days, but saw no sign of Yank. I never met him again.

## XV

### Spring Cleaning

I DID not remain in Oxford as long as I intended, but left on the following Wednesday, making my way towards Abingdon. As I was walking along, having left Oxford several miles behind, I was overtaken by a man with a dog. Seeing that the man was not a beggar, I intended to let him pass without a greeting, but to my surprise he walked at my side and entered into conversation. "Are you on the road?" he asked. "Yes," I answered at once, thinking that his sympathy would be worth something. "Hunger is a terrible thing," he said, smiling faintly. "It's an awful feeling," I answered, seriously. There was a long pause after this, and then he said, "I have not broken my fast since yesterday morning." "Haven't you?" I asked, throwing the hypocrite aside and turning rather red, to

think that I had expected help from a man worse off than myself. For I could now see what kind of man he was—he had lost his job, his money also, and was now tramping home. Men of this kind are often met on the road, and it is no difficult matter to know them. Of course I could not keep food in my pocket under these circumstances, so I gave him what I had, keeping back one slice of bread so as to have the pleasure of feeding the dog with my own hands.

As we walked on the man told me what had occurred, which was nothing unusual. He had lost his job through slackness of trade, but instead of taking a train straight home to Reading, thought he would first have a day's enjoyment where he was. A day's enjoyment was—as with thousands of others—a day's drinking. The end of it was that he got into bad hands and was robbed of all his savings, which he had in his pockets.

After he had told me this he thanked me for my kindness, and then said that he would push on with all speed, as he did not intend to rest once until he had reached Reading. So I gave him a penny to buy

bread, knowing that that small amount would keep him from suffering hunger on his journey, even if he did not get help from someone else. As he was leaving, the poor dog kept on turning its head to see if I followed. At last, when the distance between his master and me was great, he stood motionless in the road, as though he did not know which to remain with. He seemed to know that I was the one that had power to feed him. However, after standing awhile in this position, he turned and followed his master, but still kept looking back. I was very glad to lose sight of him, for the dog's look touched me. In fact, the worse moments I have ever had on the road have been owing to lost dogs. It always cut my heart to pieces to have to drive away a homeless dog, which I have often had to do.

I had passed several people on the road, but I now met one that I was certain was a true beggar. So I spoke to him, asking if there were any villages between me and Abingdon. "There is one not far from here," he answered, "which you will see lying back off the road." "Is it any good?" I asked.

“ Well,” said the man, “ it always was good, but to-day the people are all gone mad.” I understood by these words that the village had been visited by a circus or wild beast show, and that the people were mad with excitement. In fact, I was so impressed with this idea that I said at once, “ Who does the show belong to ? ” “ Who said anything about a show ? ” answered the stranger, looking at me with some impatience. “ There is no show at all, but the women are all spring cleaning, and they won’t listen to reason ! ” I was very sorry to hear this, for I knew what women were when they took a mad notion of that kind.

I could never understand this fad of spring cleaning, which seems to drive women mad once a year. Why should rubbish be allowed to gather so as to be destroyed at this particular time ? Why should things that are cleaned often receive extra cleaning in the spring ? For my life I cannot see the necessity of cleaning windows so often—with the exception of shop-windows. This fad seems to be universal, for I have often seen spring cleaning going on in America. When

I have begged a house, I have often had a woman say, "I can only give you a cold lunch, because I am spring cleaning, and have no time to cook." However, a beggar has one advantage—that he gets more money at this time, because women are too busy to cut and put together a sandwich or buttered bread. And money is always welcome, for he will surely come at last to a house where spring cleaning is either done or not started, which will be good for food.

Women usually follow the leader in a case of this kind. No sooner does one start than neighbours follow, until the whole village is in commotion. When a woman is spring cleaning, a man ought to watch every movement she makes ; not so much for what she does with her own hands, but also because of the example she sets her children to break and burn. The children are always delighted at being told to break or burn things, and they are apt to destroy anything that comes into their hands. If he cannot do this, he ought to get together the things that he values most and put them under lock and key until his wife has done.



I remember the case of a friend of mine who, to his sorrow, went away for several days to escape spring cleaning. But when he returned, he found that his wife and daughters had destroyed his old books as rubbish, and saved others that were of little value. For instance, they burned an old classic, because it was old and dirty, but saved a new novel that he did not value in the least. Very few women have any reverence for a book. They bang a book about without thinking that it contains a human mind. I cannot imagine a woman having any love for books after they are once read. She gives them away, or lends them without caring if they are returned—she forgets who she has lent them to. But a man does not lend his books with a good heart, however much he may pretend to do so.

Perhaps it was in spring cleaning that my own first MS. was lost to the world for ever. I was fourteen years of age at the time, and had taken days and days in going through a dictionary to find three and four syllable words for a poem on death. That poem

was hardly finished before it disappeared, and I told my family that they would know some day what they had done. For several days I was like a little devil, shouting fiercely to the maid-servant, "Have you found it?" At last my grandfather, who was an old sea-captain, hearing this question so often, roared in a voice that rattled the cups and saucers, "Avast there, you aggravating young lubber! Have you lost a schooner of six hundred tons?" Making a dart for the door, I retorted, "Damn you all!" Saying this I gave the door a savage kick and ran into the street. I shall never forget the terrific roar that followed, and I was certainly lucky to escape my grandfather's hands. My grandfather was a very passionate man, full of sudden storms, and I knew that in a few moments he would be his good-natured self again, and would have clean forgotten my mutiny.

Thinking of these things I came to a place in the road where I could see a village lying a little way back. I will try my luck, said I to myself—whether the women are spring cleaning or not. With this determination I

left the main road and took a side one, which soon led me into the village.

It was very quiet at the first house I called, and I began to think that spring cleaning must have been confined to another part of the village. However, I was not allowed to think this long, for at the next house a woman was on her knees, scrubbing the threshold. Looking up and seeing me standing at the door, she cried firmly, "Not to-day," without ceasing to scrub, and without hearing a word of what I had to say. She was making so much noise that she would not have known I was there, if it had not been for seeing my shadow on the floor. I could see plainly that it was no use wasting my time on her, so I went to the next house. But when I got there, I saw to my confusion a woman standing on some high steps in the open doorway, who was showing a good part of her legs. Seeing this I dared not make my voice heard, for fear she in her sudden fright would fall off the steps and perhaps break one of her legs. Her head was above the doorway, and near the ceiling, so that I was enabled by moving

very quietly, to go away without being seen or heard.

At the next house I was successful, although I could see the same state of things going on. That woman looked so good-natured that I believed she would have been generous indeed if I had called on her at a more convenient time. As it was she not only gave me two thick slices of bread and butter, but a penny also. She was a big woman with a round body, and could have carried a rose on her breast without pinning it. She looked so good-natured that, if she had not been spring cleaning, I would have thought nothing of asking her to toast the bread before she buttered it.

After leaving that house, I was lucky enough to meet with several small successes. However, it was not long before I met another spring-cleaning woman, and she annoyed me much more than the others had. When I went to her house, I could not get an answer for a long time, but still persisted in knocking, because I heard a noise of someone upstairs. At last I got quite angry and knocked the door so hard, that I felt

repentance the instant after. She must have heard, for the noise upstairs ceased all at once, and I stood, expecting to hear her coming down the stairs to answer the door. But to my surprise she did nothing of the kind. For I heard, to my disgust, the bedroom window go up with a loud bang, and the next moment a head, that seemed to be all hair and no face, appeared outside. Soon after that a woman's voice shrieked, "What do you want?" as though she were Jezebel in fear of her life. I need hardly say that I was unsuccessful at that house. For one thing, a beggar must, to be successful, either whine or speak in a very quiet and gentle voice. If he has to shout his wants to the top of a house, or from a back door to the end of the garden, it is hardly likely that his voice will cause much sympathy. The most barefaced of beggars become nervous and confused when they are told to shout, after going to a house prepared to whine and coax. Nothing takes a beggar more by surprise than to have the door answered by a man or woman who says, "You must speak out loud, because I am deaf." A beggar is

so loath to shout that, not knowing the extent of the other's deafness, he is likely to still speak too low, and to be told several times to raise his voice, which adds to his confusion. He knows that his own voice will frighten himself if he has to use loud tones instead of quiet, soft ones ; and he is afraid that he will either frighten or offend his hearers. Of course the exertion, too, annoys him.

In spite of spring cleaning I earned enough in that village to keep me over the night, so I passed on towards Abingdon, without troubling to call at other houses on my way. Sometimes a beggar has to call at two and even three villages before he has enough for his wants, so that I had nothing to complain of. No doubt the other beggar, whom I had met, had been frightened to see so much cleaning going on, and had not given the village a fair trial. This must have been the case, for I was not told at any house that another beggar had been there before me, and people are not backward in telling this. In fact, they often say so when it is not the truth, so as to get rid of us. Nine beggars out of

ten must become silent and go away when they are told another beggar has just been there before them.

In a couple of hours I reached Abingdon. I had been told in Oxford that the lodging-house would be at the other end of the town from which I entered, so I made no inquiries until I was there. And it happened that when I did inquire, I was only a few yards from it.

The landlady of this lodging-house was an old gipsy, and no one could mistake the fact. She was sitting in the lodgers' kitchen when I entered, but did not appear to take any practical part in the house management. There were a couple of girls to do this, probably granddaughters. That night a man in a blue serge suit of clothes stood smoking a pipe at the door of the lodgers' kitchen. He looked like a farm labourer dressed in his Sunday clothes, and did not have the sharp look of a detective, as I first thought he was. However, he was a policeman and was courting one of the girls. He had a pleasant time indeed, for it was his duty to often enter the lodging-house and

look around, and of course love made him fond of doing his duty. None of the beggars tried to hide their faces from him, for they knew very well that he would be loath to do the lodging-house harm by arresting its lodgers. He was likely to be discharged from the force for not arresting a beggar, but he was also likely to lose his girl if he did arrest one.



## XVI

### Jack the Giant-Killer

TWO or three days after this I reached Maidenhead, where I intended to stay overnight. There happened to be a good lodging-house in that town, which I had been told of long before I got there. I reached Maidenhead about four o'clock in the afternoon and went at once to the lodging-house and paid for a bed.

When I entered the kitchen I was surprised that although there were between twenty and thirty beggars present, not one curious eye turned towards me. However, I soon saw the reason, for in the middle of the room I saw a very small man standing with his shirt-sleeves tucked up and glaring around at the various lodgers. He was a little bit of a fellow, about thirty years of age ; not only short, but as slight as any boy that sings treble in a church choir. Most of

the lodgers were laughing when I entered, and others were puffing silently at their pipes, leaning on the tables and regarding the little fellow with lazy interest. Before I could be seated this little man cried in a clear, high voice, "I could wipe the floor with any man in this house." Saying this he put himself in a fighting attitude and waited. Much laughter greeted these words, but of course no one took the little fellow seriously. At last, not succeeding in getting an opponent, he put on his waistcoat and coat and went out. As he did so it was clear to everyone that he was something the worse for drink.

After the little fellow had left there was, of course, much laughter, and I gathered from the talk of those around me that he had been amusing them in this way for a considerable time. However, the little man had not been gone five minutes when into the kitchen walked a very tall man, much over six feet in height. He at once began to look around, and then asked, addressing no one in particular, "Where's Jack the Giant-Killer?" "Gone out for another

drink," answered a man sitting at my side. The man had scarcely finished making this answer before the little man entered. The little man had no sooner set eyes on the big fellow, than he clenched his fist, rushed at him and struck him in the back with all his power. Of course the big fellow was not knocked down, he did not appear to be much shaken. Before he could turn his head he seemed to know who had struck him, for he began to say at once, "Why don't you be quiet; what's the matter with you?" "If you are a man," cried the little fellow, "take off your coat and let us see what you can do." Saying this he stripped again, throwing his coat and waistcoat on the kitchen floor and tucking up his shirt-sleeves. "I have told you to be quiet," said the big fellow, speaking in a warning voice. "You have told me what!" screamed the other, making a wild rush at his big companion. "You little idiot!" said the big man, catching the other in his arms; "you have asked for it, and you shall have it." The little fellow struggled, but it was of no use, for the big man carried him to a seat and spanked

him across his knee, in the same way as a mother would spank her child. Then he picked him up, still struggling, and carried him off to bed. Whether he used threats or coaxed when he got the little fellow to bed I cannot say, but it is certain that he came back to the kitchen alone, and that his small companion was seen no more that night. The big fellow did not seem to have lost the least patience, but said quietly, when he returned to the kitchen, "He's a nice little fellow when he's sober, but every time he tastes beer he carries on in that way, and I have to put him to bed. It does not happen often, or we would not have been travellers together for four years." It seemed a strange friendship, between men so dissimilar; one a very big, good-natured fellow, and the other so small, so excitable and quarrelsome. The next morning they appeared to be the best of friends, without any knowledge of the night before.

At this common lodging-house in Maidenhead I had my attention drawn to another strange couple that interested me deeply. It was a man and his wife, he of the un-

educated navvy type, and she apparently a lady of culture. I had met hundreds of women in different common lodging-houses, but I had never met one that impressed me so much as this woman. All the others seemed to have come from the housemaid class, but this woman appeared to be a well-bred lady. She moved about the kitchen with so much grace and with such sweet smiles, that some of the lodgers she spoke to must have felt as though they were being patronized. The other women present appeared to regard her as superior to themselves and did not seem in the least jealous of her better manners, which they could see were not affected. Her husband was dressed as a navvy, a big, simple fellow, with a good-natured expression, and who was very quiet. He only differed from the navvy in one thing—when he spoke he did not use bad language, which no doubt was through the influence of his superior wife. At this time the man was out of work, and she was supporting him by selling needlework of her own make. However, he did not seem to be the kind of man that would live on a woman's work, but

one that would work to keep her, whenever he had a chance. This man and woman were not proper roadsters—this could be seen by how clean and tidy she kept herself. After he had finished a job, they did not go drinking, but travelled from town to town, when her needlework would be a great help to his savings until he got work again. In fact, it was not unusual for them to take a train, or, to use a beggar's words, "take a rattler." I gathered these items from her own conversation, for I happened to sit at the same table with them, and she had a very easy, familiar way about her.

As we sat there her husband drew her attention to a paragraph in a daily newspaper, which she had no sooner read than she began to laugh. This drew the attention of a number of lodgers, so she got on her feet and read aloud. If I had had any doubts before as to what kind of woman she was, they vanished now, for her reading was so easy and correct, and without the least attempt to be dramatic. I believe that her strange hearers would remember her way of reading long after the subject was forgotten.

In the course of conversation she gave me the address of a good common lodging-house in Portsmouth, where I would be treated with every civility if I mentioned the name of Portsmouth Norah and her husband Navvy Jack. I thanked her, and said that if I ever went to that town I would go to that lodging-house and mention their names.

This couple, Portsmouth Norah and her husband Navvy Jack, is the only couple that I have ever met in a common lodging-house that I believe could be assisted without fear of them bringing disgrace on themselves and those that befriended them. They seemed to have been forced to the road owing to the husband's unsettled kind of work, for very few navvies can remain long in one place. However, what surprised me more than anything was the thought of how such a couple got together. Certainly he was a superior navvy, in that he did not swear or drink, and was gentle and quiet, but the commonest women would expect these traits in a man, much less a lady of education, as she appeared to be.

## XVII

### The Simple Life

THE next morning I left Maidenhead, making my way towards High Wycombe. When I reached Cookham, I had the unpleasant experience of having to pay a halfpenny toll to cross a bridge, which is heartrending to a beggar. In fact, no beggar would think of paying a halfpenny toll if there was the least chance of begging it. But this bridge had so few passengers that it would be folly to wait for them. However, I did well between Cookham and High Wycombe, and reached the latter place before night. The common lodging-houses in this town were all public-houses, so I went to one called the "Goat."

I had heard beggars speak well of Wycombe, because of the number of villages close to it, lying back in the hills and within an easy distance. The town itself was not



up to much, because chair-making, its chief industry, was in a bad state. This being the case I thought I would not trouble the town itself, but go to the surrounding villages. At this house there was a beggar called "Ferny," who had been there for a long time and knew the surrounding country well. Seeing that he was inclined to be friendly, I paid for a glass of beer for him, which turned out to be very wise on my part. For he began to tell me the names of the various villages, how to reach them, their distance, and what they were worth. He also told me how, after calling one village, I could without much trouble call another on my way back, which was well worth knowing. In fact, by following Ferny's instructions I could do well for several days. Ferny was not a downright beggar, or he could not have begged the same villages so many times. He had several ways of calling them, sometimes with ferns—hence his name—sometimes with artificial flowers, and sometimes as a rag-and-bone man. In fact, the latter was his chief support, for he always carried a bag in readiness for old clothes, bones, bottles, jars and

other things. But he was really a beggar, for he was never prepared to pay for anything. His first object was to find out if people had those things, after which he made it his business to get them for nothing. He was always very ragged himself, so that the poorest people could not very well regard him as a merchant.

Having Ferny's instructions, I started the next morning for a village two miles from the town, which he assured me was one of the best. There were very few houses on my way, with the exception of those in the town, so that I called at no houses until I was almost in the village. Judging from its scattered size, it would take me two or three hours to go to every house, as I intended to, and I knew that I would get enough in that time to satisfy me for that one day.

In about two hours and three-quarters I had worked the village thoroughly and was on my way back to Wycombe, having in my pockets one and elevenpence-halfpenny and several parcels of food.

Now it happened that on my way to the

village I had passed a nice little cottage that I thought to have called at, but did not, thinking to do so on my return. Therefore, on my way back, I knocked at the door of this cottage, which was soon answered by a man. I was rather taken back by the appearance of this man, for he was dressed in good cloth, whereas I had expected to see working people. However, I lost no time in letting him know my wants, telling him that I was trying to get the price of my bed. "Here are a few pennies for you," he answered at once, putting threepence in my hand, to my surprise.

As I was leaving, thanking him very much, he said, "Do you want something to eat as well?" Now I did not like to take advantage of this man's generosity, so I told him at once that although I had not yet had any dinner, I was not without it in my pockets, and had only been waiting a chance to eat it. "Keep that for your supper," he said, "and come in." So I went into the cottage. When I was seated at the table, he placed a large quantity of plain food before me, telling me to get rid of the whole lot if

I could, because he was "damn well sick of the simple life."

While I was eating, he was looking at me with curiosity, as though he were wondering whether I would understand him if he spoke the thoughts on his mind. At last he said, as though feeling his way, "Of course you know nothing about books. I don't suppose you ever heard of Thoreau?" "Oh, yes," I answered; "I know his name, but have not read his books. However, I not only know the name of one of them, but I also know the nature of it: it is called 'Walden,' and deals with a simple life in the woods."

When the man heard this his face brightened, for he began to think that he had a listener that would understand what he said. After a short pause he began, and I will give his conclusions without my own comments. What I said was not of much account, for it only echoed his own thoughts, so as to please him.

"This simple life has become unbearable," he began. "After having had a dinner of bread and cheese and nuts, I go out walking, and am then mocked and teased to distrac-

tion by the smell of savoury stews in one-roomed cottages. Can a man enjoy the charms of Nature when his body is in this state? I lie upon a straw mattress which breaks, and the loose straws stick into my flesh: can a man enjoy sleep under these conditions? I sit upon a wooden chair that, after half an hour's sitting, scrapes my very bones. No wonder I must throw myself flat on the grass every time I get a chance, which makes the children run for their lives, thinking I am a tramp. The simple life, indeed! It is madness, nothing else—except it is to break pleasant habits so as to return to them with a better appetite. I don't believe that any man would live the simple life from choice. We hear of men doing so from necessity, and telling in cold unimpassioned words how happy they live. As for myself, I would rather have the belly-ache after enjoying a rich meal than feel painless but dull after a plain meal I did not enjoy. Eat as much as you can, my friend, and when you have done take the rest with you, for I am sick of the look of it." "Have you anything to drink?" I asked. "Nothing

but water," he answered bitterly; "for I am trying to lead the simple life." "Water is better than nothing," I said—so he got me a large glass of water.

"My simple life in the country," he continued, "forces me about every three weeks to go to London with no other object than to eat; without the least desire to see pictures, statues and fine buildings. And please remember that I am considered to be a man of some culture. A good hot meal, ready-cooked for me, is a finer sight than painted canvas or carved stone. Certainly I like a glass of good fresh water, but I do not scorn wine and ale, and that's why I can no longer stand the simple life."

"Certainly," I said, interrupting him, "the simple life is madness, nothing else." "Of course it is," he answered, nodding approvingly. "Where is the pleasure and value of man's old age that he should prolong it for many years and sacrifice the pleasures of life to enable him to do so. Who wants his ten or twenty years after sixty that he should make such efforts to live them? It is damn selfishness, nothing else. It is

better for his family if he does not reach a great age, and it is certainly better for the world. Let me enjoy the pleasures of life until I am about sixty-five, and I am then well satisfied to go. As for living a hard, cold life—drinking water instead of wine, giving up tobacco, eating plain food until I ruin my appetite, keeping from theatres so as to go to bed early—to sacrifice these pleasures so as to live a few more years that have no enjoyment, is rot, my friend—utter rot, nonsense and the worst of madness. Let me enjoy the best things going, and I am quite satisfied to quit this life at sixty-five. I have no desire to be either a drunkard or a glutton, but I *will* have my share of life's luxuries. Let my life be like a silk thread, and not a piece of common elastic of the same length, which I endeavour to stretch to the utmost. Misers live long, by eating very plain food and very little of it—but what a wretched life it is! What! have you finished already? ” “ Yes, thank you,” I answered; “ but I will take what is left and enjoy it in the lodging-house, where I will make a pot of tea. To tell you the truth,

cold water chills my stomach, and it's a wonder for me to drink it." "Of course it does," he said with deep sympathy. "A beggar's life in this country is hard indeed," I continued; "for it is nothing but dry food from morning till night, and from day to day." "Have you been in other countries then?" he asked, beginning to show a new interest. "I have been in America," I answered. "People live better there than in England, don't they?" he asked. Now this question took me quite unawares, for before I knew what I was doing, I began to tell him some of my begging experiences in that country. "Yes," I said, warming to the subject; "in that country hundreds of houses in the suburbs of a city had meals ready cooked for me. And if I was too tired to walk beyond the public thoroughfares, all I had to do was to stand outside a restaurant and stop a customer as he was going in, saying, 'Any chance for a bit of dinner?' In nine cases out of ten he would answer yes. After which I would follow him inside, seat myself at a table, take up the bill of fare, read it deliberately, and then give



the waiter my order, which would be for a meal of courses. And it was not unusual for one of these customers to give me the price of my next meal before I left him."

While I was saying this the man was looking at me with what I thought to be amazement. At last he said, rather timidly, "Perhaps you would not care to be bothered with that?" pointing to half a loaf of brown bread and a bit of cheese. "Of course I care to take it," I answered at once; "I am in England now, not America." Hearing this he went to a corner of the room and found a large brown paper bag. Taking this bag, I placed the bread at the bottom and the cheese on the top of it. But just as I was about to close the mouth of the bag, he said, "Perhaps you would like a little more, for I am off to London to-night—to hell with the simple life!" Saying this he went to a cupboard, and then brought back three eggs and four large apples, which I placed in the bag. After thanking him again I left, well satisfied with my day's work.

When I reached the lodging-house I saw that Ferny had already arrived, not having

had much good luck. He appeared quite willing to share mine. I came to the conclusion that he would not have offered so much good information if he had not expected to profit in the end. No doubt the people were getting tired of his face, for he had been in that part of the country for a long time. I remember how he had said, that very morning, that he hardly knew where to go.

When I told him about the man leading the simple life, and my experience, he seemed astonished. In fact, he was considerably upset, saying that I had not taken the full advantage of a good thing, as he would have done. "What about his bottles, glasses, cups and saucers?" he demanded. "I did not ask him about them," I answered. "Good God!" cried Ferny, speaking in a voice of anguish. "Good God! What about his old clobber? Didn't you ask him?" he continued, looking at me wide-eyed, as though he began to doubt my sanity. "I believe I have done very well as it is," I said shortly, feeling piqued at these questions. "I must be at that house the first thing in

the morning," said Ferny, with emphasis. When I told him that it would be too late, he almost fainted and gasped for air.

During the evening Ferny said that he knew the cottage well, having called at it several times. But only once had he succeeded in seeing the simple liver, and on that occasion had received some assistance. On the other occasions the door had been locked, the man being out.

That Ferny was thoroughly upset there can be no doubt. For more than once during the evening he wondered where were the man's clothes, or, to use his own words—"Where's the man's clobber?" Not that he was accusing me of murdering the man and stealing his clothes, but that he—Ferny—was anxious to know whether the man had taken them with him or left them behind in the cottage. In fact, the last thing Ferny said to me that night was, "What has become of the man's old clobber—not to mention glasses, bottles and jars? Where's his old clobber? That's what I want to know."

## XVIII

### A Shock

THE life of a beggar is not without danger, even in a country like England. The danger of such a life in America is, of course, great, owing to travelling on the railroads and camping out in the woods. However, the American tramp gets hardened to fear, and he would not continue that life very long if he could not laugh at its dangers. I often think now of the nights when I went groping in the woods for fuel and, humming or whistling a tune, would overturn hollow logs and roll them to the fire. A tramp tries to do these things before dark, but sometimes he cannot find a good place to camp, and night takes him unaware. At that time I would never think of venomous snakes that were likely to be sheltered under a log or in its hollow. I often think of this now, which fortunately never occurred to me then,

or I would have been robbed of many a pleasant fire in the woods at night. One time, when I was gathering wood, and had overturned a large log, I suddenly heard a loud buzzing sound, and the next instant the air became so black that I could not see the blaze of my fire which was only a few feet away. And then thousands of hard things like small stones struck me so hard that I thought I would soon be beaten to the ground. However, in a short time the air cleared, and I could then see, by the light of my fire, thousands of beetles of some kind crawling over the earth. No doubt very great numbers of them had perished in the flames, which had attracted them after they had been disturbed ; for while I stood at the fire they continued to fall for some time after.

On another occasion, when I was gathering wood in the dark, with no other light than my fire, I caught hold of what appeared to be a broken bough hanging straight from the tree, which I expected to fall into my hand almost at a touch. But I had no sooner touched it than I jumped back three feet or more, and my heart almost stopped beating

—it was not hard, but soft. After I had thoroughly recovered from this shock, I made a torch of a roll of paper and cautiously approached it. It was then that I saw it was a dead snake, and I could see the marks across its back that had killed it. No doubt it had been killed that day, and then tossed over the limb of that tree. But whether the man's object had been to frighten others, or only pride to show his deed, the same as another would cut his name in the bark—whatever his object had been, I cannot say. The next morning I measured the snake by my own body, and judged it to be about seven feet long.

However, what I want to say is, that on my second day at Wycombe I had an experience that unnerved me as no other had ever done, which put all question of begging houses out of my mind for a long time to come. I had gone to a small village about a mile and a half out of the town, which Ferny had strongly recommended. As I was going from house to house, confident with success, I saw a fine large house standing in its own grounds, which had a long gravel

path to the front door. Opening the gate I took this path, and then took a smaller one that led to the back of the house. Now, fortunately for me, when I reached the end of the house and turned the corner suddenly, I stood still, so as to take a glance at my surroundings. In an instant my eyes settled on two large bulldogs gnawing some bones and with their backs turned. When I saw those dogs I stood like a man frozen, without power to either turn back or advance. I had often read in books about a man's hair standing on end through fear, but I did not think it possible until now. On this occasion I came by the truth, and knew that it was no exaggeration. I felt my cap rise, as my hair began to stand. In fact, I put up my hand to prevent the cap from falling, thinking that its motion would attract the notice of those two dogs. Of course it must be remembered that I knew what bulldogs were ; that they could not be kept at bay by kicks or threatening to throw stones ; that, if they once attacked me, they could not be called off by a mistress or master. Those dogs would have torn me to pieces, I felt

sure of that, for I had not even a stick to defend myself with. It must have taken me a full minute to recover myself sufficiently to turn around and creep away without making the least noise. When I began to move again, I hardly knew whether I was on my feet or on my head. And after I had got clear away from that house, my narrow escape gave me such a dumb stupor that I had to lean against a fence for about ten minutes. Those dogs would most certainly have attacked me, seeing that I was sneaking around the back way.



## XIX

### Back in London

ON the third day after my experience in the last chapter, money came to me from home. It was only a few pounds, not enough for any practical purpose, but still it made me independent. So I decided to return to London and live on my small income, visiting the various common lodging-houses in that city. The sight of those two large bulldogs had unnerved me, and I was determined to do no more house-calling. However, I made up my mind to walk to London, and not take a train, for I had no special object in reaching it.

That morning, after I had changed my postal orders, I returned to the lodging-house to cook breakfast, and to make up a lunch that would last me for the day. As I was doing this I got into conversation with another beggar, who had arrived there the

night before. He was a clean-looking man, looking very much like a labourer going to work on a Monday morning. In the course of conversation he told me that he was sick of travelling the country, and that he could do better by living in London and working the suburbs and outskirts, paying his train fare to and fro. He said that he wanted more houses, and that the country had too many trees to please his mind. He admitted that the small country towns were all right for begging, but complained bitterly of the great number of fields he had to pass to reach from one to another. He said that the country was too quiet, and he wanted to be where he could see and hear plenty of work going on. He said that he had now given the people of Deptford and Wandsworth a good spell of freedom, and that they would have no cause to complain of his coming back to them for a month or two.

While he was telling me these things I was all ready to leave, so I said, "I am going your way, are you ready?" "Yes," he answered, rising to his feet. So we left the lodging-house together. "What part of

London are you making for ? ” I asked, as we went along. “ Deptford,” he answered. “ Do you know of a good common lodging-house in that part of London ? ” I asked. “ The one I am going to,” he answered, “ used to be all right, but there are some crooked people there now, and it is not near so good as it used to be.” “ Then why are you going to it ? ” I questioned, surprised at his words, for I knew there were plenty of other lodging-houses in that locality. He did not answer this question, which, on reflection, did not surprise me. For I now saw that he looked on that particular lodging-house as a home.

I have seen the case of a common lodging-house going to wrack and ruin, the owner getting too mean or indifferent to keep good fires, replace broken crockeryware, and letting the beds go filthy—and still the old lodgers clung to that house instead of going to a better one that was as cheap and only a few steps away. They still clung to that house, grumbling and swearing every minute of the day ; and if they were asked why they did not go elsewhere, the question would have

surprised them, as mine had surprised my companion. The house had become a home to them, and they considered it their duty to live there still; much the same as sons and daughters cling to a house that has been made wretched by drunken parents. Even people that live in respectable private houses do the same thing. It is strange how much they will suffer, after they have been in a place for a few months. They become such slaves to their surroundings that the house next door would have to be turned into a menagerie of roaring lions, laughing hyænas, screaming parrots and chattering monkeys, before they would look for another house. When I considered these things, I was not surprised to hear that my companion was returning to a house that was worse than others of its kind and no cheaper for a poor man.

As we were walking through a small village, my companion went to several houses, but said, each time he rejoined me, that he was in bad luck. At last he saw a small house standing by itself, which he said looked a likely one for a sandwich or a penny. So

he left my side and I walked on with slow steps, so that he could overtake me soon. However, he was at that house so long that I turned my head to see if he was coming, thinking that perhaps he had been invited indoors. When I looked I saw him making all haste towards me, without turning his head either to the right or left, and walking in such a business way as surprised me. He had no sooner reached my side than he said in a quick, low voice, "Come on, or there will be trouble." He walked too fast to be questioned, for I could not keep up with him. In fact, I got very much annoyed at his haste, and let him go ahead, without making much effort to keep his company. He continued in this way until he was out of the village, and then he stopped and waited for me. "Why do you hurry?" I asked, when I had reached him. "I have had good cause," he answered, "for I was nearly arrested by a policeman." And then he went on to explain what had happened. When I heard what he said, I could not help laughing, for he had saved himself by his wit and nothing else. The door had been answered

by a policeman in full uniform, and, of course, the latter knew that my companion was a beggar that had fallen into a trap. However, my companion looked at the policeman, and said, "I have had nothing to eat since yesterday, and I have come to tell you that I don't want anything." When the policeman heard this strange sentence he was more confounded than my companion had been on seeing him. But at last he could see the artfulness of those words and began to laugh heartily. The end of it was that he gave my companion a large piece of bread with some cheese and also a penny. However, he told him to clear out of the village at once, or it would be the worse for him.

Hearing this and having formed a good opinion of my companion, I told him not to call at any more houses, that I had received a few shillings from home and would see that he wanted for nothing until we reached Deptford. "After that," I said, "you will have to shift for yourself." He seemed to be very well pleased to hear this, saying that he could always do well in London, and would not forget to see

that I wanted for nothing. With this understanding we continued our way. And as we went my companion told me something of his own life. How he had worked very hard for a number of years, but could save nothing because his wages were so small. At last he got out of work through slackness of trade, and soon had to depend on his friends; for a whole winter almost he was idle and depending on others. But when spring came he had the courage to leave them and seek work in other towns. However, try as much as he could, there was no work to be had. At last he began to see that it was foolish to worry about work, seeing that he was able to live without it. He had been doing without it now for a long time. It was the same tale as thousands of beggars could tell.

It was a warm morning, but a little wind was blowing, which made it impossible to enjoy smoking our pipes in comfort. So, when we came to a green bank lined with thick hedges, I proposed sitting for a while in the sun and out of the wind, so as to enjoy a pipe of tobacco. This was our only object in sitting down, for we felt no signs of being

tired, seeing that we had not yet travelled more than three miles.

While we sat there smoking and talking, we were approached by a man who, in spite of his rough looks, we judged to be an inhabitant of that district who was then out of work. This man wished us good morning, and was about to pass on; but he altered his mind and stood before us with his hands in his pockets. "How do you fellows manage on the road?" he asked bluntly; "do you get enough to eat and a bed every night?" I did not know how to answer this question, for it would not be wise for beggars to let a man of that kind know the truth. However, my companion at once took the responsibility on himself and answered with something of a groan, "It is a hard life, mate, indeed it is." Probably my companion thought the man was not too far down in the world to give a little help to others. "The reason I ask," said the stranger, after a long pause, "is that I am going on the road myself next week. I have been a hard-working man all my life, and worked like a slave; but I got out



of work a month ago, and it is only by the kindness of others that I now get a little to eat and a place to sleep. I am only an unskilled labourer, and when I am in steady work I can earn no more than enough to keep myself from week to week. The consequence is that when I get out of work I have nothing saved. So, if a beggar can get enough to eat and a bed at night, without being a slave, why should I be a working man any longer?" When my companion heard this his manner changed immediately, and he said in a straightforward way, "Take to the road, mate, and be a working slave no longer. I was in exactly the same position as you a few years ago, but I became wise; for I am just as well off now as when I was a hard-working man."

While we were talking a tall, fine-looking gentleman passed, smoking a cigarette, with a cap tilted jauntily on his head and carrying a light cane under his arm. When this gentleman was beyond hearing the stranger said, looking after him, "That's Mr. Swan." "What does he do?" I asked. "Nothing," answered the stranger; "he's a rich gentle-

man. He has just pensioned his old gardener off with five shillings a week. The gardener was old and unable to do any more work." "How old was he?" I asked. "About sixty-five," answered the stranger. "And how old is Mr. Swan?" asked my companion. "Oh, he is quite seventy," was the answer. When I heard this I looked at my companion, and he understood my meaning. That fine, straight, active old gentleman, with his springy walk, carrying a light cane instead of a strong walking-stick, smoking a cigarette, and with his cap jauntily on one side—this fine-looking old gentleman was years older than his worn-out servant. "Hard work," began my companion, as though in answer to my thoughts, "hard work *does* kill men, there is no doubt of that. The bus horse is a good instance of what hard work can do: in 1903 he is young, hardy, strong, and shies; in 1904 he is old, worn, shaky, and with no spirit; in 1905 he is cat's meat. Why, if donkeys were not stubborn, and did not refuse to hurry with heavy loads, they would not live very long."

While we were sitting there—for the

stranger had now sat down near us—talking of the ill-results of hard work, we saw an old man tottering towards us, holding in his hands a bunch of herbs. However, it would be a long time before he reached us, so I asked the stranger who he was. “That’s old Smith,” was the answer; “he is not quite right in his mind. But although he is bent double and hobbles along with a stick, for all that, he is not so old as Mr. Swan, the fine-looking gentleman who has just passed us. We can’t understand, in these parts, what has made old Smith what he is, for he seems to be ruined in both body and mind. He has always been a farm labourer, and never been able to afford any other than the plainest food, so that rich living has not done it. He has never been to London or any other large city, but has always breathed the pure country air. He has never had an accident or serious illness or great trouble—that his neighbours know of—and yet he is in that wretched state. To tell you the truth, some of the people around here seem to think that he is not near so bad as he makes out, for he is not yet seventy years of age. Mr. Swan, that

fine-looking gentleman who has just passed us, is that age, and look at the difference between them." "What makes the difference," said my companion, looking at the stranger and speaking with strong emphasis, "what makes the difference is hard work, and nothing else."

The old herb-gatherer had now drawn near, and I could see that he shook in every part of his body. As soon as he got close to us, he stood and began to laugh and chatter, and, feeling kindly towards old age, I nodded to him encouragingly. He began at once by saying that he had no sooner seen those wild herbs than it had suddenly occurred to his mind that his parents were very poor and used to gather them to make tea with. And that he had no sooner began to gather them than scores of long-forgotten things came to his memory, which was very strange. It brought to his mind how his mother had been a hard-working woman and his father a very contrary man.

We sat listening to the old man for a long time, for we did not like to interrupt him, though he talked and talked without showing

the least sign of going away. But after listening to him for fully ten minutes, we could not make the least sense out of what he had said—except that his mother had been a hard-working woman and his father a very contrary man, which he mentioned time after time. In vain I questioned him as to his age, who he was living with and where, and what kind of tea the herbs made. I don't know whether he was deaf or too eager to talk ; all I know is that he took not the least notice of my questions, but rambled on in his own strange manner. Only one thing he made clear—that his mother had been a hard-working woman and his father a very contrary man ; and that this knowledge suddenly came into his mind when he saw and began to gather his herbs.

It was clear right from the beginning that the old man was not himself. For instance, he treated the three of us in the same familiar way, without making any distinction. If he had been all right in his mind, he would, of course, have recognized the man that was with us, seeing that they both belonged to the same neighbourhood.

But he did not appear to notice him at all.

However, we could not remain there much longer, as we had already wasted more time than we meant to. So we wished the stranger and the old man good-bye and continued on our journey.

We reached Deptford in due course, having broken our journey overnight at Uxbridge. There was nothing of interest to relate in those two days' travel, for we were not calling at houses, but simply walking and talking of our own experiences. My companion's life had not furnished him with much strange matter, so that he preferred to listen to my own doings in America, which appeared to interest him deeply. It brought to his mind that he once had a chance to go there, and that he had never so much regretted not having gone as now, when he heard my account of how well beggars fared in that new country.

## Thieves in a Lodging-house

AS we were entering London my companion seemed to get as excited as a horse near fire. The sound of the traffic and the vast crowds of people seemed to rouse him into a state of activity. When we were on the country road his eyes had been always on the ground, but now they were here, there and everywhere. As for myself, I felt the same fascination as I had always done on entering that city, but which soon wears away. I knew that my feelings would soon change, and that I would soon be anxious to leave again.

When we reached Deptford my companion turned off the main street, going into a narrow one. In a few moments he stopped in front of a dark building, saying, "This is the lodging-house." Now, seeing that my companion must be known in this house I

had given him the money to pay for both our beds. I had also given him money to buy food, with the understanding that he would do the cooking, so that I could sit still in the kitchen, and none of the other lodgers would then know for sure whether I was strange to that lodging-house or not. If I had not done this it would have been necessary to ask questions, and, if there had been any thieves present, they would have soon taken advantage of a stranger. Of course, all common lodging-houses have a certain number of thieves.

A greenhorn is soon recognized by the number of questions he asks. For this reason men who are used to common lodging-houses seldom ask many questions when they go to a house that is strange to them. They simply take a seat, light their pipes, and then watch the other lodgers. In less than ten minutes they can then see for themselves where hot or cold water is, where to empty a pot of tea-leaves, where to wash, where the different cooking utensils are kept, which way leads to their beds, and other knowledge that is necessary to them. But the greenhorn uses



his tongue instead of his eyes, and the consequence is that he makes himself a mark for both beggars and thieves.

It is the greenhorn who is always marked for the egg-and-bacon trick—but this bare-faced trick is only done in a house that is really a den of thieves. The innocent greenhorn places his tea, sugar and bread on a table, where he leaves them to go and place a rasher of bacon on the fire. Leaving this rasher in the frying-pan for a moment or two, while he goes to arrange his tea things, he returns to find a fellow-lodger busy at the fire frying an egg and a rasher of bacon. “Where’s my bacon?” asks the greenhorn of a number of lodgers who have been all the time standing and gossiping near the fire. These men either take no notice of him or look a great deal surprised. “I haven’t seen it, lad,” answers the man who is cooking, at the same time as he peppers his egg or turns it over. The greenhorn does not know what to make of this, and the poor fellow will probably find his tea and sugar also gone when he gets back to his table. I once saw this trick served on a

fellow-cattleman, but it would have been folly on my part to have exposed it, as there were twenty men against us. He was more amused than angered when I afterwards explained to him how it was done; how one of the lodgers had quickly broken an egg into the frying-pan that contained his bacon. But it had never once occurred to his simple mind that the owner of the egg was not the owner of the bacon. I could soon see that this particular house, to which my companion had taken me, was full of thieves. In fact, my companion made me aware of it at once by his instructions to sit near the food and keep my eye on it while he was gathering together plates, cups and saucers. He not only gave me these instructions, but every time he had a chance, cast his own eyes in my direction. And when I began to study my surroundings, and saw the number of young loafers that were present, and how their eyes were continually shifting from each other to me and my companion—when I saw this, I came to the conclusion at once that we only had to leave the kitchen for half a minute and when we came back our

food would be gone. However, they did not have the least chance, and we were soon both seated and enjoying an excellent meal.

“I don't like the looks of some of these fellows,” I said to my companion, speaking in a low voice. “They soon pick up what does not belong to them,” he answered. “Have they ever taken anything of yours?” I asked. “No,” he laughed; “they have never had the chance—although I was in great difficulty one day.” “What happened then?” I asked, with deep interest. “Well,” began my companion, “I had already cooked my meal and was just about to begin eating, when I discovered that I had no sugar, and to drink tea without it would have spoilt my meal. Now, seeing that the shop was across the road, I would have to leave the house, and I know that something would be gone when I returned. There were several present, whom I knew well to be lodging-house loafers and thieves, so I did not know what to do. At last I thought of a plan. I went up to one of them, whom I knew to be the worst thief in the house, and told him in a quiet voice the difficulty I was in, and asked

him to keep his eye on my things while I was away. I could see at once that he did not like my request, but of course he could not very well excuse himself. So he gave me a reluctant promise that he would, and I went out feeling quite satisfied. This artful dodge saved me, for when I came back I found things exactly as I had left them. For his kindness I gave him a drink of tea and a pipeful of tobacco. After that I was always safe, as far as he was concerned."

When I thought of this trick I could not help admiring its artfulness. It was as though he told the worst thief that he was chosen for an honest, trustworthy face, and the wretch would feel flattered at the choice. How innocent he must have tried to look when my companion made that simple request!

After we had finished tea we sat in the kitchen for two or three hours, smoking and chatting. When the clock struck ten I told my companion that I would go to bed, and he said that he would do the same. Being a stranger it was necessary for me to go to the office, give the number of my bed and be

instructed where to find it. This I did, and the porter in charge was coming to show me my bed, when my companion said, "He is in the same room as I am, and I will show him his bed."

At last we reached the room, after climbing a long flight of stairs. The room was a very large one, having about twenty beds in it, and mine was at the door, while my companion's was at the far end. I wished him good night and was soon lying down, not feeling at all easy in my new position. For I did not like my bed to be so near to the door, seeing that every lodger could have a look at me before going to his own bed. The lodgers would then see that I was a stranger, and, of course, if there were any thieves in that room, a stranger would be their mark. However, I had not only put my waistcoat—which contained my money—under my pillow, but had drawn the latter down so far that the waistcoat was really under the weight of my shoulders and would be very difficult to withdraw. There was a gas jet in the room and, although the light was now turned low, it was quite sufficient to discourage thieves.

I don't know whether anyone was trying to get at my waistcoat and woke me, or that my eyes opened by accident—whatever it was, open they did, and I saw a face leaning over mine. "What's the matter?" I asked, moving, so as to sit up in bed. "Oh, it's all right," answered the intruder; "I made a mistake, thinking it was someone I knew." With these words he walked away to a bed at the other end of the room, where he began to undress. Of course I knew very well that he had made no mistake, and was determined to keep awake, thinking he would return when he thought I would be asleep.

However, I must have soon gone to sleep again, but don't know for how long. All I know is that I heard a loud voice, which made me sit up in bed. As soon as I opened my eyes I saw that the light was out and that the room was in total darkness. "Who has turned that light out?" demanded a loud voice. It must have been this man asking the question before that had wakened me. There was no answer to his question, except that other lodgers were now awake and began complaining as well. All at once there

was a small, sudden flash of light, due to one of the lodgers having struck a match. It was the worst thing he could have done, for another lodger leaped out of his bed, made a rush towards the light-maker and struck him a heavy blow in the face. This blow was the signal for a general rising. For I could hear men getting out of bed, and the next moment there was a fight going on in the dark. Men were falling against each other and striking out blindly, and their blows were followed by curses and groans. Some of them were using their fists, and others, as I was told after, used the heels of their heavy boots, and two or three were using the buckles of heavy belts. In a fight of this kind every man was for himself. Whoever he touched in the dark would be an enemy to strike, for he would not know his friends. Several men were on the floor, tearing and biting like wild animals.

Right at the beginning of this trouble I had had the presence of mind to put on my clothes. I was just ready to open the door and escape when several men, fighting and struggling, fell against it. In an instant

I got on my bed, slipped over the other side of it, and stood upright against the wall, with the bed between me and them. It was very fortunate that I did this, for others had now succeeded in fighting their way to the door, which of course they could not open owing to their own pressure being against it. I could hear the manager's voice outside, as he stood there powerless, for there must have been a dozen men fighting against the door.

I don't know what the end of this would have been, had it not been for the presence of mind of one man. He had not risen from his bed at all until now, when he heard all the others fighting at the far end of the room, trying to escape. Knowing that he was now safe to move with freedom, he got up, struck a match and lit the gas. This light was of course the signal for peace, except that two of the lodgers were lying across a bed trying to strangle each other. I found out after that these two men were thieves and great friends, and that they had mistaken each other in the dark. One of them was the man that had leaned over my bed, and no



doubt it was he that had put out the light, so as to make another attempt to search my clothes. I was very pleased to think that these two, who had probably arranged all this, should have stumbled against each other in the dark, and, without knowing it, pommelled each other's face until they were covered with blood.

This was my only experience, in all my association with rough men, where I have known men to fight like cats, to use their limbs like cats instead of men ; biting, tearing, choking and scratching, and using every advantage of tooth and nail. The only case I can think of, when men would do this, is when they fight under these conditions. In trying to escape they would soon be jammed against the door, where they would try to tear each other to pieces. Every man would be for himself, for he would not be able to tell a friend from an enemy. If they are not soon set free, from the outside, or discovered by light, they will be struggling in one heap on the floor, making the same sounds as common beasts. All thought of fair play and scientific fighting known to man would

be forgotten, and the coolest and most courageous would soon be acting in the same manner as fighting cats. This is the only case I can think of in which men would behave like cats, when they would have to fight for their lives—owing to not having a cat's advantage of seeing in the dark.

However, the fight was soon over, but it was horrible while it lasted. As soon as the gas was lit the men stopped fighting, and the manager had a chance to enter the room. When he had done so, he did not seem to be greatly concerned, so I suppose such fights had happened before. As long as there was no one dead, or injured to helplessness, it did not matter much, although it was very annoying, he said, "to have to leave his bed to see what was the matter."

For the rest of the night all was quiet, although every man that had received a blow said, before he went to sleep again, "I'd like to know the man that struck me first and tore my shirt to pieces." Each man was fortunate that he did not, or he would have had more fighting to do that night, without a question of trouble the next day

As it was, no man would feel ashamed at getting a beating, for the blows were all struck at random and the result was not due to one man being a better fighter than another. In a fight under these circumstances a prize-fighter would have been no better than another man.

When I questioned my companion, on the following morning, he said that the light had been put out by a thief who wanted a chance to do a little work. "It was very lucky that some one lit it again," I said, "or something serious would have happened." "That was my work," he answered; "I have been in the same position before and have done the same thing. Perhaps the thief had you for a mark, seeing that you were a stranger." I said nothing to this, but when I thought of the man who had leaned over me, I felt satisfied that all the trouble had been due to my presence in that room.

While I was at breakfast I saw the two men that had struggled together on a bed, afraid to let each other go—standing at the kitchen fire, and with their faces scratched and bruised. Of course, they were quite

friendly now, for they knew what a mistake they had made in attacking each other. I could not help noticing how often they looked sideways at me, as though they were curious to know if I had any suspicion of their intentions the night before. As far as I could do so with my looks, I let them know that I had, for it was not my intention to spend another night in that house. I could not understand why they made me their mark, for I had not shown any money, I was not drunk, neither was I well dressed. Perhaps they were in very low circumstances, so that even a paltry few pennies would have pleased them. However, they not only failed, but, to my delight, punished each other without knowing it.

That morning, when I was in the wash-house, a man stepped forward and deliberately picked up my piece of soap. He was walking away with it, when I called out to him, "Ha! where are you going with that soap?" "Does it belong to you?" he asked, quite innocently. "You see me standing here, preparing to wash," I said, surprised at his boldness; "now, who do you think it

belongs to?" Hearing this he looked considerably surprised himself, and at last said, "Why, mate, any man would take a piece of soap." This man was nothing abashed at being caught in the act of thieving.

Soon after breakfast my companion left me, saying that he was going to some streets where he had often done well before, and that he would see me later in the day. He was a good beggar, I knew that, and could very well do without my assistance, so that I did not feel any compunction at seeing the last of him, for I was now determined to seek fresh lodgings. No doubt he would not feel very sorry at not seeing me again, thinking that I might not be a very successful beggar, and, when my money was gone, would rely on him for help which he could not well refuse.

At this time I had no idea of making a home of a common lodging-house, so I made up my mind to find one in Whitechapel, at which I would spend a few nights. So, after my companion had left, it was not long before I was out and going in that direction. There was no hurry, seeing that I had the

whole day before me ; but I thought it would be wise to see the house by day, and the looks of the lodgers going in and out, before I applied for a bed. The looks of the lodgers would decide for me, whether the majority were old or young. If there were many young men, I would not apply for a bed, knowing that they would be bullies and thieves. But if the majority of the lodgers were old men, I knew that such would not only be harmless, but also interesting to study.

It was not long before I stood in front of a house which, judging by the few men I saw going in and out, would suit me well. Not only that, but I saw on a board that a mission-room was attached to it, and I knew that no riotous lodgers would be allowed to disturb hymn-singing and prayers. Whatever the lodgers' opinions might be, they would have to express them quietly or go elsewhere. In fact, every lodger that I had seen had a lazy contented look, and I did not see one with those shifting eyes that denote a thief. I was so impressed with all this, that I went to the office at once, paid

for a bed, and then walked into the lodgers' kitchen. And I had no sooner entered that kitchen than I felt at ease immediately, for when I sat down the lodgers took no notice of me at all. "These men are not thieves looking for a mark," thought I.

## XXI

### Mad Kitty

WHEN I had been at this lodging-house, which I found to be clean and comfortable, about a week, I made up my mind to have a night out. I always like to see the night-side of London, once now and then, providing I am rich enough to rest on the following day and recover some of my lost sleep. With this intention I made my way towards the West, and found myself in Westminster Bridge Road early in the evening.

As soon as it became dark I could see that the courtesans were not only increasing in number, but were also becoming bolder, and I knew that their hour had come. In less than ten minutes, when I stood on a street corner, I had been passed and spoken to by several. At last one came boldly up to me and asked if I would go home with her for a short



time. After I had told her no, she went away at once. I did not like the look of her much, for she did not appear to be very attractive. She was the very kind of girl that I would suspect of keeping a lazy man whom she foolishly loved or feared. These kind of girls can always be recognized, for they do not dress so smart nor look so cheerful as other girls that are free. A well-dressed courtesan never has a lazy, drunken scoundrel to live on her immorality, or she would have no money to spend on good clothes. And even if a rich admirer occasionally bought her clothes as an extra kindness, the man she keeps would soon have them in a pawnshop. I made no mistake in my opinion of this girl, for as soon as she had left me, I saw a common-looking fellow standing on the opposite corner, and he was watching her wherever she went. And when I saw her cross the road and speak to him, and then leave him to accost another man who took no heed of her, and then return to the corner loafer again—when I saw these things I knew for certain that I had judged right. After that I saw her speak to him several times, but he still remained standing

where he was, watching her while she tried to stop other men. How I hated a lazy scoundrel of that kind! There should be no mercy for him when he is tried for beating a girl he is not married to, and who keeps him by her immorality. The unfortunate part of it is that a man of this kind is a thorough bully and threatens to murder a girl if she leaves him, which she often feels inclined to do. She could do much better alone, for she could dress better and attract rich men, and have good rooms to take them to. Whereas, having a drunken, lazy bully to keep, she cannot dress well, and must live in the commonest rooms in the slums. However, when a courtesan has no man to keep her poor, she has another enemy to take advantage of her. This is her landlady, who knows the great difficulty these girls have in getting rooms. So this landlady not only charges a girl for one bed-sitting room almost as much as will pay the rent of the whole house, but also expects the poor girl to pay for drinks and take her to a place of amusement. I was with a girl one night who only had one room, which was below the level of the street, and

not very well furnished; this girl told me that her expenses ran to twenty-five shillings a week, for one room, the commonest board, washing, and attendance. And if she did not attend on herself and often do her own cooking, she would have often gone out hungry and returned to an unmade bed. The landlady was too proud to wait on a girl of that kind, but she demanded such money all the same. What could the girl do? It is so difficult for a courtesan to get rooms in a superior-looking street. And when she once succeeds she will put up with anything, and pay all she can, rather than explain to other landladies what she wants the rooms for, and the kind of living she makes. No wonder there are so many girls of this kind that will rob a man, when they are robbed so much themselves.

It was about twenty minutes past eleven, and I was standing at a bar, smoking my pipe, when all at once the barman—a serious-looking man who had not spoken one word all the time I was there—cried in a cheerful voice, “Hallo, Kitty!” “Hallo!” answered a girl’s voice, in the same cheerful

manner, and beginning to laugh. "A glass of stout, Kitty?" asked the barman, beginning to draw it at once, as though he knew what her answer would be. "Of course," answered the girl called Kitty, placing her money on the bar. I turned my head slowly, so as not to appear rude, to see what kind of girl stood at my side. "Good evening," she said, laughing, as soon as our eyes had met. "Good evening," I answered in her own pleasant way, for it was impossible to treat so friendly a girl in any other manner. When the barman heard this greeting he moved some distance off and did not speak again. He knew that she had business to do, and did not want to spoil it by idle talk, although he seemed disappointed in not being able to crack a few jokes with her. One look was quite enough, for I felt attracted to her at once, and asked if she would have another drink, which she did.

After she had had this drink she, of course, asked me if I would go home with her. "Not to-night," I answered, "for I have very little money." Hearing this she laughed cheerfully and said, "Never mind, perhaps we shall

meet again." In a few moments after this she left, waving her hand to the barman, who was standing some distance away. As soon as she was gone the barman came forward and said, "Do you know Mad Kitty?" "No," I answered, "this is the first time I have met her." "She's an extraordinary girl," said the barman; "I shall never forget the first time that *I* met her. I was not a barman here then, although it was in this house that I met her. In fact, I was standing there, where you are now, and the same thing happened to me as have happened to you, except that I went home with her and you have not." "Will you have a drink?" I asked, being interested in Mad Kitty, and wishing to know more about her. "Thank you," he answered, and drew himself a glass of beer, which I paid for. There happened to be very few customers there at the time, and there was another barman standing idle, so that I knew my barman would have time to tell a story. "What do you mean," I asked, "by saying she's an extraordinary girl? Did she rob you, or get you into trouble of some kind?" "Oh, no," he answered, "she is

quite honest, and you never need to be afraid of going home with Mad Kitty. As I have said, I met her in this bar and, after having a drink or two, we left the house together, just after midnight." Saying this he took another drink of his beer, and then, leaning his two arms on the bar, he prepared to tell the full story, which he began without loss of time.

"As we walked along this girl Kitty was continually laughing, although her words were mostly serious. She seemed to be a wild, erratic creature that would be capable of any kind of mischief at an impulse. 'I have never seen you before,' she said, looking at me with her face shining with pleasure. 'No,' I answered, 'neither have I seen you before.' 'You will always know where to find me now,' she continued, 'for I go into that house, where you met me, every night at about the same time. If you do not see me there, ask the barman if Mad Kitty has been in, and he will tell you. They all call me Mad Kitty.' Saying this she began to laugh heartily. For a moment or two I thought that the girl was really mad, and was almost afraid to go home

with her. But in a little while I came to the conclusion that she was only childishly wild and full of life. In spite of that, I began to wonder whether a girl like that would be safe; for those very merry girls are often apt to change suddenly, without sufficient cause. And when they do, they make so much noise over nothing that the whole neighbourhood must hear them. However, I thought I would risk it, so I walked quietly at her side, while she continued to talk and laugh.

“ In about ten minutes we came to a side street, down which she turned, and I followed. It was not a very respectable-looking street, but I was not surprised at that. For Mad Kitty was not so well dressed that she could live in a finer neighbourhood, although she was far from being an untidy sloven. What had attracted me was her high spirits, and not her clothes. So that I was not much surprised to see that she lived in a mean, narrow street. For one thing I felt quite safe in her company, wherever she might lead me. She had a reputation in the neighbourhood, as I could tell by the way in which the barman had

greeted her. Moreover, she had told me almost at once that she was called Mad Kitty, and that she was to be found or sought in that one particular public-house. If she had intended to rob me, or get me robbed, or lead me into trouble of some kind, she would not have been so foolish as to tell me these things, I felt sure of that.

“When we got some distance down the street she stopped in front of a house, took a key out of her pocket and opened the door. ‘Don’t make more noise than you can help,’ she whispered, as I followed her in. However, there was no light in the passage and, be as careful as I could, it was impossible for me to walk a strange place in the dark without stumbling now and then. In fact, when I was climbing the stairs, which had no carpet at all, I kicked it several times and made quite a noise. Each time I did so Kitty came to a halt and whispered ‘Sh!’ I was somewhat nervous at this, for I was under the impression that her landlady, and others in the house, knew what kind of girl she was, and would expect to hear a little noise when she brought a stranger home at night. And,



seeing that she was as careful as this, it entered my mind that they did not know what was going on. However, that fear soon vanished, for I knew that she could not keep her life a secret long, seeing that a man must be either seen or heard the next morning, when he leaves the house. And yet why was this wild, erratic, dare-devil girl so particular not to make the least sound? At last, after much care, we reached the top of the stairs and she opened a door that led into a room. It was dark in there too, so I stood waiting until she made a light. This was done almost immediately, and I then walked in, shut the door after me, and sat down.

“As soon as I was seated she came close to me and, placing her finger on her lips, whispered, ‘Don’t speak very loud, for there is a boy lying dead in the next room.’ When I heard this I was startled, as you may well believe. I looked at her face, which for one moment had a very serious expression; and I was startled to see the difference in her, for she now looked like a woman of middle age. When she smiled she did not appear to be much over twenty, but when she had this

serious look she appeared to be over forty. I had never before seen a smile make so much difference in a face. When she looked serious I could see that her face was full of lines, but when she smiled it was as smooth as a baby's. It was very fortunate for her that she was always smiling, for she would not be able to attract many men with her serious look. Judging these two expressions—how young she looked when she smiled, and how old she looked when she did not—I halted half-way and came to the conclusion that she was about thirty years of age. She told me, later in the night, that she was twenty-seven, which I had no doubt was right. However, this serious expression, which had surprised me by the difference it made in her, only lasted an instant, and I never saw it again.

“ ‘I am rather surprised,’ I said, after a while, ‘that you have been allowed to bring a strange man home with you when there is a dead child in the house.’ ‘That cannot be helped,’ she answered in a low voice—‘we must all live. My landlady is very poor, and must pay her rent to-morrow, and I must pay her my rent too. Business must go on, for

we have to pay our way, whatever happens.' I was sorry now that I had met her and accompanied her home, but it was too late to make other plans.

"When we settled for the night she began to tell me, as quietly as she could, what had happened, which I was surprised to hear. 'It all happened because he was jealous that I took more notice of a baby than of him,' she whispered, with a soft laugh. 'He was only seven years old,' she continued, 'and was my landlady's youngest son. I was very fond of him and, to tease him, I used to make much of a baby belonging to another lodger that lives in the top room. When he saw this he used to get furious and said he would kill himself. "Are you jealous," I used to ask him, "because I am making much of the baby?" "Yes," he said, "I am, and I will kill myself." After saying that he picked up a knife, which we had to wrench out of his hand. Then he got a rope and said he would hang himself, but his mother took it from him. But he still kept on saying that he would kill himself, and his mother had to put everything she thought would do him harm out of his way. But

yesterday he found a bottle with poison in it, which he drank. When he began to feel pain he told his mother what he had done. She called me at once and said, "Kitty, he has poisoned himself, run and fetch a doctor." Before I went, I said to him, "Were you jealous because I made much of the baby?" "Yes," he said, "and I have poisoned myself." That was the last time I heard his voice, for when I came back with a doctor—I could not find one for a very long time—he was dead in his mother's arms.'

"I was surprised in more ways than one when I heard this strange story. I could not help noticing, by the tone of her voice, that this simple, childlike, and mad-brained young woman took some pride that a life had been sacrificed for love of her—even though it was only a little boy of seven years of age. For she said again, after a pause—'He was jealous because I made more of the baby than of him, and when I asked him point-blank, he said, "Yes, I will kill myself."'

"After saying this she was silent, but I thought I would ask her a question before she went to sleep. 'Where did he get his know-

ledge from ?' I asked. 'Surely a child of that age would not be able to read papers and books and understand them.' 'Oh, that is easily explained,' she answered. 'You see, his mother used to take him to picture shows, where he would see such things done. He got his knowledge of stabbing, hanging, and taking poison in those places of amusement. He very often used to threaten to stab his mother, and one day he took a rope and hung the cat until it was almost dead.'

"I said no more after this, but I could not sleep for thinking of the strange things I had heard. I knew that these courtesans were very fond of children and made every effort to win their love. That is the reason why they are never scorned by respectable mothers who are very poor. A respectable mother, who is very poor, is not ashamed to be seen out with one of these courtesans, for she knows that cakes or sweets, aye, sometimes clothes or boots, will be bought for the children, which she cannot afford to pay for herself. A courtesan will be her most faithful and practical friend, if she will allow it. While I was thinking of this, I heard Mad Kitty say

distinctly in her sleep—‘ Jealous because I made much of the baby. Poor little devil ! ’ That was my experience with Mad Kitty the first time I met her.”

While the barman was relating this strange experience, he had to leave me several times, owing to customers coming in. In spite of that, I followed his continuations without much trouble. After he had done I paid for another drink for him and then left the house.

## XXII

### The Finder

THERE are hundreds of men walking the streets of London with their eyes fastened on the ground and their thoughts in the same place ; so that things are no sooner lost than they are found. But it is of no use to have sharp eyes if one's thoughts are apt to wander.

At this common lodging-house I became acquainted with a very strange man, one who could almost make a living by simply walking about from place to place. This man had a small income, and he must have guessed that I was in the same position, as he soon became very friendly. He thought that he could safely approach me in a familiar way without any risk that I would try to borrow from him. I suppose he had watched me, and saw that I had no special time for going out or coming in ; and also that I took

nothing out with me in the morning, nor returned with anything in the evening, as is the case with men that sell papers or toys. He also saw that my food was bought, not begged, and that I came in as clean as I went out. So he came to the conclusion that I was independent in a small way, the same as he was.

I had spoken to this man several times, but had not had a long conversation until one morning he came to me with a letter in his hand, which he had found, and which he told me to read. Rather surprised at this confidence, I took the letter and read it. But it was of no consequence whatever, being an ordinary friendly greeting from one woman to another, and whoever lost it would have not had much cause to be sorry. I told my new acquaintance this, and was surprised at his answer. "Whether it is of any value or not," he said, beginning to chuckle, "I intend to make something out of it. You may as well come that way for a walk, and we will return it to the owner." As a rule I took my walks alone, so as to be free to sit on seats and write or go into libraries to read.



However, on this occasion I decided to go walking with my new friend.

As we were going through St. James's Park, my new friend made a sudden dart forward and picked up a silver pin. I had already noticed that his eyes were always searching the ground, and I was now surprised that he should want my company at all, for he spoke very little and seemed quite indifferent to my voice.

At last we reached the West End, near Hyde Park, and, having found the letter's address—one of a row of very large houses—he went boldly to the front door and rang the bell. After enquiring for the lady of the house and seeing her, he returned the letter, which she said was of little account. However, she thanked him for his trouble and was about to close the door. But my new friend quickly explained to her that he had thought the letter might have been of great consequence, and that he had walked three miles to return it to its proper owner. Now what else could the lady do, under these circumstances, than to thank him with more feeling and make the poor man a present of money ?

These things my companion explained to me after he had delivered the letter. He also said that he had made quite a number of shillings in that way — by returning lost letters, and some that had actually been thrown away. In fact, he confessed with a laugh, that on several occasions he had taken empty envelopes to houses and received money for doing so. “This is only an envelope,” a lady would say, smiling; “I have the letter safe at home.” “I didn’t know but what a note was inside,” my artful friend would answer innocently, “and have walked until I am tired, so as to return it.” Whatever a lady might think of this, she could not very well refuse to reward him for his trouble.

When we were on our way back, after delivering this lost letter, it was not long before he startled me by making another sudden jump, and this time he picked up a silver sixpence. “What a lucky man you are!” I exclaimed. “I don’t believe that there is one man in this large city that has better eyesight than mine, and yet I never find anything.” He was in such a good humour

now that he became talkative, and that, I suppose, was the reason why he found nothing else.

When I became more intimate with this man, he called me one day to his locker, which he was in the act of cleaning. There were only three men in the kitchen at the time, and they were sitting at the far end. If there had been the least likelihood of one of these men coming near to see the contents of his locker, it is most certain that he would not have called me. It was then that he began to show me the various things that he had found during his five years in London. And when I saw the things he had, I was astonished, for I believe this man could have made a small living by merely walking about. He had several fountain pens, one gold-mounted, which must have cost thirty or forty shillings. He showed me a gold pencil-case and two silver ones ; also a silver match-box, finely embossed, which still contained the wax matches as it had been found. I saw several purses, all of which had contained money ; and there was a lady's silk parasol, which had been left on a seat in one of the

parks. And also a gentleman's costly cane, found in the same way. He had dozens of fine linen handkerchiefs, which had been dropped and, becoming dirty, would be passed by the poorest people; but which this very careful man had picked up and washed; fine, beautiful handkerchiefs, well worth picking up and washing. These he had saved, only using the common ones himself; for he could not tell what their quality was until they were washed. He showed me several articles of jewelry, such as rings, bracelets and brooches; and one pendant, which was a silver cross with a Christ crucified in gold, which he had found one Sunday morning in Hyde Park. Even books—popular novels that had been left on the seats; some of which may not have been forgotten, but read and thrown away—were to be seen in this man's locker.

When I saw all these dozens and dozens of various articles, I was surprised. "You must find something every time you go out," I said, "to have collected so many things as are here." "Oh, no," he answered at once; "I often go a whole day without find-

ing anything of the least value. But there are exceptional days when I am sure to find several things. For instance, after a holiday I go the next morning to some heath or common where a great number of people has been, and I am then almost certain to find something of value, not to mention a number of things of little account, but still worth the trouble of picking up and carrying home. Of course, I am always on the spot as soon as it is daylight, for there are others that do the same."

This man had stuff that must have cost the owners a hundred pounds and more—things of gold and silver ; things of silk, a fur muffler, and silk handkerchiefs ; briar pipes, gloves, knives, pocket-books and reading books ; purses which it must be remembered had contained money ; and scores of other things of more or less value. For nothing was too small or mean for him—he even picked up the ferrules of umbrellas and walking-sticks.

I was surprised to hear that a great number of these things had been found in the parks, either having been dropped while walking or

left by accident on the seats. I was surprised at this, because the parks were always full of vagrants. But after a while I considered the great advantage this man had over those poor fellows, being fresh and active; whereas the poor vagrants would be either lying asleep in the grass or awake but too tired to walk, seeing that they had been walking about sleepless all through the night.

When I was a very small boy, I had then the only good find of my life. I was walking in the middle of the road, kicking everything I saw, as boys often do. Seeing what seemed to be a small roll of dirty rags tied in a knot, I kicked it, and to my surprise heard something jingle. I at once picked it up, as dirty as it was, and opened it. Then I saw that it was a handkerchief with a large number of white coins large and small, and several little yellow ones. I was soon standing breathless before my grandmother. That good woman lost no time in taking hold of my treasure, in spite of the mud. "Where did you get this?" she asked in a strange voice. "I found it, grandmother," I answered, be-

ginning to feel some alarm. "Well, here's a penny for you, and be a good boy," she said; "but remember, if I ever hear you mention anything about this again, I'll skin you alive!" In spite of this threat I sulked and blubbered for a long time, for what I wanted was one of the yellow coins. But my grandmother would not part with a yellow one, and said that they could not be spent in shops, and whoever tried to do that would fall into the hands of a policeman. After a while she lost all patience, and said that if I made another sound she would murder me with a stick, which she held ready in her hand. All this was at that time unaccountable to me, for I had never before seen my grandmother in such a strange mood. For instance, she kept me indoors a prisoner all day, and at other times she was only too glad to get me out of the house. And yet, in spite of this, she not only petted me with cake, but even went out herself to buy me fruit and sweets. And while her left hand would be giving me sweets, her right hand would be threatening me with a stick.

Now probably that handkerchief would

have been lying in the mud for a long time, and be passed by thousands of people, until the wheels of a cart scattered the coins and brought them to light. But if a man like this, of whom I have spoken, happened to pass that way, he would have kicked the dirty rags, even as a boy would. For he kicked or picked up every common matchbox that came under his notice, to see if it was entirely empty.

What a strange man he was, for he never offered any of these things for sale, but kept them in his locker, and occasionally took pleasure in looking them over, taking great care that no other lodger was near enough to see them. His small income was enough to keep him, and, being indifferent to personal appearance, he therefore had little need of extra money. In fact, he purposely kept himself looking like the commonest beggar, so that people would take less notice when they saw him stooping to pick things up.

I only accompanied him twice on his rambles, for I felt ashamed to see him continually stooping, and people looking at him all the time. In Regent Street he stooped so



suddenly to pick up a halfpenny, that a very fine lady who was walking close behind fell across his back. This incident was quite enough for me, and I swore to myself that I would never go out with him again, and I kept my word.

I have often wondered at such a man as this, as to what kind of mind he had. He would have no thoughts of either the future or the past, for his mind must be concentrated on the present moment. If he indulged in the least inclination to dream, he could not be a successful finder. He would see no beauty in the trees—they would only be obstacles, like houses. He would hear no birds, and never turn his head to see what made children laugh. His eyes would not waste one second on a child's golden hair, for fear they would miss a brass pin on the ground.

## XXIII

### The End

I OUGHT not to finish these adventures without mentioning one strange girl that I met one day near the "Elephant and Castle" public-house. She was such an exception that I don't believe there was another courtesan like her in all London, big as that city is. I happened to be standing at a corner, when I had my attention drawn to a fine tall girl dressed in black, who was standing like a statue on the opposite side of the road. For a moment or two I thought she was a respectable girl waiting for a bus to take her home, or somewhere else. But when I looked around and saw several other men eyeing her with the same curiosity, I came to the conclusion that she was a courtesan, whose face was slightly known to them. Being very curious to look close into her face, I crossed the road, going towards her when

her eyes happened to be turned another way. But just as I got near her she turned her head and, catching my eye, nodded and smiled. Of course I could do no other than raise my hat, but I did not stop. However, I had not gone ten steps when she was at my side, asking me if I wanted her company. For a moment or two I stood perplexed, not knowing what to say or do. At last I said—“Will you come across the road and have a drink and a chat?” “Yes, thank you,” she answered. With this understanding we crossed the road and entered the best bar of the “Elephant and Castle,” for this girl appeared respectable enough to take her place anywhere. When she was seated and we began to talk, I was not deceived in my first impression, for her voice was gentle, her manners quiet, and her conversation like that of a fine lady.

After we had had one drink, I pressed her to have more, but she firmly declined, saying, “I drink very little, no more than I can help. I have not accepted your invitation for the sake of the drink, but in the belief that you will now come to my room.” This was

quite new, for, as a rule, these kind of women will drink as long as a man cares to pay for it. Being curious to see what kind of a place this interesting girl lived in, I accompanied her at once, for she lived in a side street that was only a short distance down the Old Kent Road. She told me that she was her own landlady, and only one other girl lived in the house, to whom she had let a room.

In a few moments we came to the house, which was very small and stood on a corner. This position was very convenient for her, seeing that she could use either the front or the side door at her discretion. On this occasion she turned the corner and used the side door, for several people happened to be coming up behind us. Not that it mattered much, for no one could tell but what we were man and wife. But it pleased her to be as careful as possible not to get too well known.

When I entered this girl's room and looked around it, I was amazed, for I saw books in every place. There was one book lying open on a small table near the window, which, no doubt, she had been reading that day. I

picked it up, being curious to know what it was, and found that it was an old copy of Burns. "Are you fond of reading?" she asked, seeing what I had done. "Yes," I answered shortly, for fear I would forget myself and tell her something that would make her inquisitive. "So am I," she said; "I am continually buying second-hand books. This copy of Burns was bought yesterday, and all I paid for it was threepence. In fact, very few of the books you see cost me more than fourpence, for they are all old and second-hand. I spend nearly all my time, when I am alone, in reading these fine works, instead of drinking in public-houses with other girls of my class. I go with as few men as I can possibly help. In buying and reading these books, I not only cultivate my mind, but also take better care of my body, which must be plain to you."

I was quite surprised at meeting a girl of this kind, and respected her as much as though she had been pure. When I looked at her books, I saw that they were nearly all classics and mostly poetry.

I was very curious to know if she knew

anything about the work of living authors, so I mentioned a few names, asking if she had read certain books by them. Although she had not, she not only knew the authors' names well, but also knew the names of their books and the nature of them, for she was a great reader of literary gossip and reviews. I asked her if she had ever heard of a certain book by a certain living author. "Yes," she answered, "I have heard about it, and have read several small poems by the same author when I have been reading magazines in a free library." I was very pleased to hear this, and began to wonder whether I should tell her that I was the author of that book and those poems, or not. I was just on the point of giving way to that vanity when a sudden idea made me alter my mind. It occurred to me that she would naturally think that such a famous man must have plenty of money, and I did not want her to make a mistake of that kind, which would have caused her cruel disappointment. However, before I left her I gave her enough money to allow her to remain with her books for two or three days, without being driven

by poverty to seek another strange man. She appeared to be quite surprised at this generosity, but I did not tell her anything about myself.

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## SOME PRESS OPINIONS.

# Beggars

By W. H. DAVIES

“It is unexpectedly good. A book of extraordinary talent. It records extraordinary experiences in an inimitable style, a style that cannot be excelled for purity and simplicity. He discriminates in an acute and humorous way. He brings an entirely new and personal light to bear upon life. His powers of reflection and criticism have increased, and we welcome them, not only because they have made this book a more various and subtle one than the ‘Autobiography,’ but because they imply growth, and promise other books.”

*Morning Post.*

“Mr. Davies’s revelations certainly are most amusing.”

*Daily Chronicle.*

“There has arisen in our day the real vagabond, whose books will live in spite of all criticisms of their form. ‘Beggars’ is not an epic narrative like the ‘Autobiography,’ but it is, unconsciously, a far more enlightening human document. In it stands revealed the soul of what the tramp calls ‘The True Traveller.’ This astonishing book tells a thousand curious facts. It deserves wide reading among thoughtful persons; it is one of the most remarkable books ever written.”

*Morning Leader.*

“‘Beggars’ is a curious and sympathetic study of begging by a successful practitioner of that art. Written in an excellent style. His reminiscences are vivid, and gain by a quaint simplicity which is delightful.”—*Athenæum.*

“This book contains an interesting and amusing account of the professional mendicant. A racy and, let us hope, a fairly accurate account of the beggar of to-day.”—*Standard.*

“Mr. Davies follows up his ‘Autobiography’ with actual experiences as a professional beggar. There is no pretence about it.”—*Daily News.*

“The book is thoroughly entertaining. Humour, human sympathy, and a perfectly individual outlook combine to make a book which is in some sort a human document.”—*World.*

SOME PRESS OPINIONS—Continued.

“An amazingly frank and quietly realistic record. He is not a man of education, but the simplicity, the absolute naturalness, and easy imaginative forcefulness of his prose are qualities in which no stylist, however accomplished, could hope to outrival him. Terse and vividly picturesque English. Surprising and oddly interesting. Mr. Davies has a shrewd sense of humour and a subtle feeling for the inner meaning of words, and has produced in ‘Beggars’ a frank and fascinating chronicle that will rank with the best picaresque literature in the language.”—*Bookman*.

“Mr. Davies speaks with an intimate knowledge of his subject. He has had a wide and varied experience, and it is a positive pleasure to have a presentment of the case from the beggar’s point of view.”

*Glasgow Herald.*

“Dealing picturesquely and vividly with many phases of a beggar’s life and experiences, the book provides entertaining reading, and is written in pleasing and clever style.”—*Scotsman*.

“‘Beggars’ is remarkable in many ways. The life is pictured in bright and cheerful colours. The author is possessed of a refreshing candour. ‘Darky,’ ‘Cinders,’ ‘Dodger,’ ‘Harry the Whistler,’ ‘Gentleman Bill,’ make strange but entertaining company.”

*Evening News.*

“His prose is simple and innocent. A brilliant mind. On the ways of beggars he is invariably entertaining.”—*Country Life*.

“Every subject he touches becomes alive and interesting. The irresponsible poetry of the life breaks through the record of grim things. This most engrossing record.”—*Westminster Gazette*.

“Mr. Davies has to be credited again with a unique achievement. There is nothing quite like this book of his. The volume abounds in good stories. It has a simple, unaffected candour hard to parallel in contemporary literature.”—*Birmingham Post*.

“Mr. Davies gives us first-hand information, and his well-written book will become a classic on the subject.”—*Irish Times*.

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## SOME PRESS OPINIONS.

# A Weak Woman

A NOVEL

By W. H. DAVIES

“ ‘A Weak Woman’ is most convincing. Its effectiveness is won through sincerity. It earns praise for its transparent lucidity of style, directness of language, and the sympathetic pictures it gives of men and women.”—*Daily Chronicle*.

“ It is impossible to read what Mr. Davies writes without thinking of the great masters of the style of simple narrative, of Swift and of Bunyan. By all the canons of fiction, his book belongs to a higher class than the majority of novels that are published.”—*Morning Post*.

“ Mr. Davies is certainly a most interesting writer. Quite unlike present-day fiction, and very refreshing. He writes in a way to stimulate the appetite of the most jaded reader, and his work is full of the humanity which appeals to all classes of readers. He strikes a new and sincere note. There is an absence of artificiality, and a style all through which raises the book to a very high level.”

*Daily Telegraph*.

“ It is not easy to induce cultivated people to take as much interest in the literature of the present as they profess to take in the literature of the past. Were they a little more far-sighted they would not let slip an opportunity of securing a ‘first edition’ of ‘A Weak Woman.’ For here we have a book of a kind that we shall scarcely get from any other living author. It has the quiet, incisive vigour of a fresh, unspoilt mind, almost childish in its simplicity, yet wise with much experience of poor and simple men.”—*Daily News*.

SOME PRESS OPINIONS—Continued.

“Mr. Davies’s prose and verse will live in our literature by virtue of the simplicity, directness, and purity of his style. Every comment our author makes is buttressed on a fact. Delicious in its flavour. Startlingly lucid. Admirable in its clarity.”—*The Nation*.

“The book has the flavour and richness of the best eighteenth-century prose. The merit of the book is the quiet and poignant protest it offers against the lack of proportion and the self-consciousness of most of the literature of the day.”—*Truth*.

“Mr. Davies has earned for himself a distinct place. As regards style and mental viewpoint he stands out quite distinctly from all his contemporaries, and he is a writer whom no lover of good writing can afford to leave unread.”—*Scotsman*.

“We are impressed by the charm and pathos and realism of the story. It marks its writer out for a career in fiction.”—*Outlook*.

“There is about Mr. Davies’s prose much of the charm that has made his poetry justly famous. That innate and admirable simplicity which makes Mr. Davies a great writer.”—*English Review*.

“There is a freshness and originality in the point of view which gives this book a character of its own.”—*Western Morning News*.

“Mr. Davies is a living personality, and his ‘Autobiography’ and ‘Beggars’ show that he has a remarkable gift for prose writing. He is not a literary man who has played at tramps, but a real tramp who is also a real poet. He maintains the curious purity and innocence of style which makes every sentence he writes interesting. ‘A Weak Woman’ can be heartily recommended to all who are interested in modern literature or in social questions, for it contains a great deal of real experience truly and feelingly expressed. One would not write about it so critically were it the work of a lesser man.”

*Contemporary Review.*

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