

settled down with his uncle and aunt: the very man for the place—a young Hercules, with nerves of iron, I should say, and observation!—lor' bless you! he knew more about Biarritz and France generally, from the short time he spent there, than I do now."

"Dear pater, do tell us what has brought him to England. You are so very—discursive."

"All in good time, Mab. Well, your aunt Grace—no, by the way, she is not your aunt—Mrs. Duff died about a year ago. Don't you remember Paul's letter on the subject? And old Charlie sent for a widowed sister to come and keep house for him. As far as I can understand, this lady has revolutionised the whole establishment, and the consequence is, Paul has been seized with a desire to visit his relatives, and take a holiday. I will not say that Lord Bellairs' death has nothing to do with the matter. Now I put it to you, Cosby: don't you fancy that he will be something of a savage?"

"Won't give an opinion until I have seen the young man. By the way, what age is he?"

"What age is he? Let me see. Seven or eight and twenty, so he is too old to mend any ways or manners he may have formed. There are some decent people settled out there, he tells me, some

Manners, Walshes, and Lord Braithwaite, and he pretends they are all very exclusive together. Duff used to be a man of undeniable breeding; and as to Grace, she was a very pretty, charming girl; but, of course, in that solitary hard-working life, they have all sunk together."

Vere had been listening intently to every word that Mr. Tresidder said. Now she put her face close to Mabel's, and whispered—

"I am sure I shall like my fellow-savage."

"Of course you will," answered the girl aloud; "so we all shall. I am determined to love him, and I am glad he is big. Pater, was he really vulgar and common when you saw him at Biarritz?"

"Bless me, Mabel! Vulgar and common? No, not a bit of it. You would hardly expect my son to be anything of the kind. I say he was shy and rather loutish, but a very fine young man. Your poor mother was very pleased with him, and put him through his paces more than I did. But that was nine years ago. Since then I dare say he has not improved, for I suspect he has worked like a common labourer. However, we shall see. What—going, Cos? Come and have a cigar, and you two girls go to bed."

END OF CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

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## STREET ENTERTAINMENTS.



F the many distinct classes of nomads who form an outer fringe, as it were, on the commonplace warp and woof of civilised callings, that of the wandering caterer for the simple pleasures of the out-door crowd is perhaps the most popular.

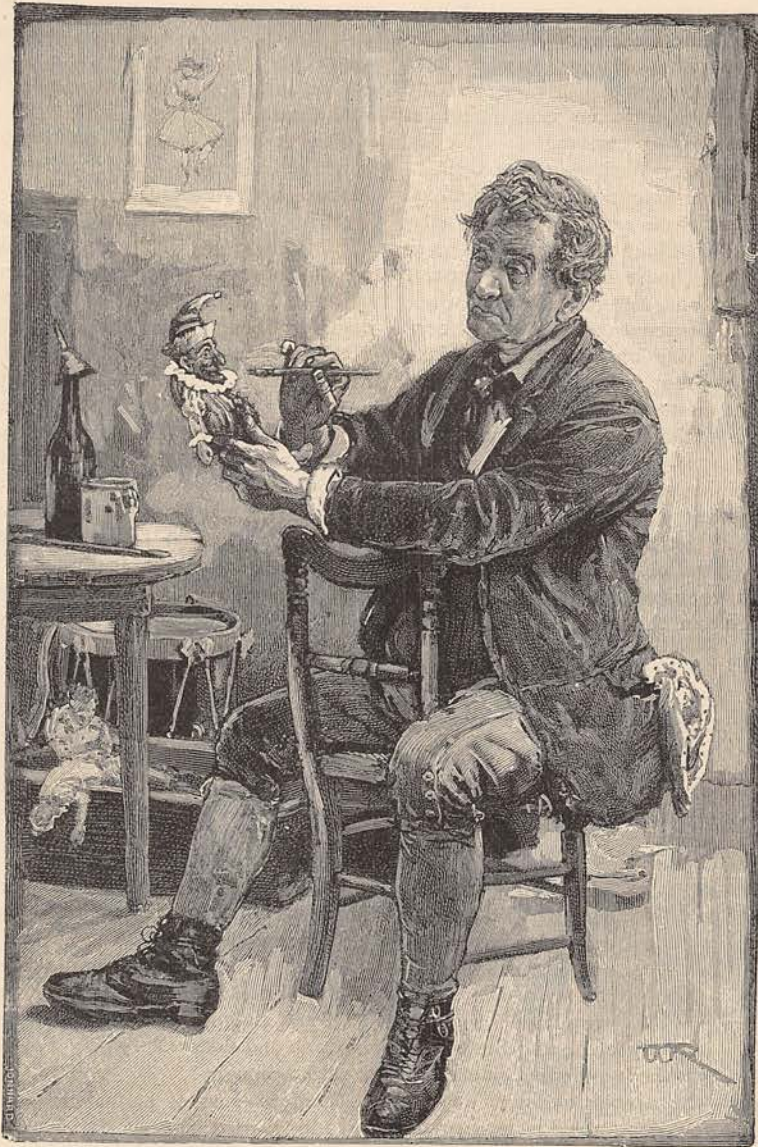
The travelling "artist" (in sound or in tableaux) has his enemies—in the over-tasked brain-worker jealous of peace and quiet, in the sick-nurse fearful for her patient, and in the radically unsympathetic. But his friends outnumber his foes. His appearance at a convenient street "pitch" is hailed with delight by the juveniles; and on the beach, or the village green, or in the neighbourhood of the race-meeting his appreciative audience is swollen by children of a larger growth. He is indubitably a native of Bohemia, and although we may dwell far from the frontier of that happy-go-lucky state and repudiate its laws, or lack of laws, we instinctively acknowledge subtle ties of affinity with even its lowliest inhabitants. Is it not with a comprehension of

this fact that Dickens in his pathetic story of "Little Nell" introduces his readers to the humours of Messrs. Codlin and Short?

But to the lives that these men live, the trials and disappointments from which they suffer, the chronic grief and gloom that may lurk beneath their mask of bravado and boisterous gaiety, how few cast more than a casual thought!

The purveyors of peripatetic amusements may be broadly divided into two classes: those whose appeal is made primarily to the eye, from the proprietor of Punch and Judy, to the clown on stilts, or the leader of the performing bear; and those who address the ear, comprising in their ranks the players upon almost every known species of musical instrument that it is possible to press into the service, and ranging in importance from born musicians whom only their own follies have brought into the streets, to the automatic "grinder" of the most blood-curdling barrel-organ tunes.

It is from South and East London—as winter quarters—that, with the advent of spring, the migratory professional will make his start. In a good season there will be much wear and tear of the stage properties, and the labour of renovation is one that makes demands upon both time and taste. A peep into more than one squalid interior on the morrow of the first really sunny day, might disclose a scene provocative of involuntary



PREPARING FOR A TOUR IN THE PROVINCES.

mirth, and yet affording likewise a lesson in patience; for the master of the mimic drama will bestow infinite pains in getting his puppets and accessories "ship-shape," as he styles it, for the coming wanderings. There will be the holes in the green baize to repair—rents sometimes made by over-curious youngsters anxious thus early to pry into the prompter's mysteries; Dog Toby's cue must again and again be recalled (by bribes rather than blows, let us hope) to that hapless animal's memory; and the complexion of the merry, hump-backed dwarf's countenance will certainly need revival by the friendly paint-brush. Wife or daughter may attend to the more delicate matter of the attire of the puppets.

Is the trade failing in any degree—suffering in its measure from the wide-spread depression which is so sad a fact? Here we fear it would be unwise to rely too implicitly on the statements of a worthy who is in an atmosphere of unreality and of good-humoured roguery day in, day out, and who moreover has at all times a keen eye to *backsheesh*. But of the increasing competition in this line as in others there seems at least some evidence, and—

"No, my friend, if you insist upon an answer I can't deny that times generally are hard."

Punch's proprietor growls that he, at least, has had reason enough to know it.

The hardships and vicissitudes of which these men

are at the mercy may stand as types of those endured by the entire body of these nomads. Bad weather—unless they have the good fortune to get an in-door connection—may annihilate business for days in succession, they may have to take speedy flight from a promising position owing to rigorous municipal by-laws, they are suspected of all kinds of misdemeanours and ordered on without rhyme or reason, they suffer disaster from storm, a run of bad luck empties their slender treasury at an inauspicious moment and even the doors of the cheap lodging-houses are closed against them, leaving only the refuge for aching, weary limbs, of the open hill-side.

And yet in the face of all these drawbacks to contentment, your true road professional, to the manner born, will be as jolly and careless as the proverbial sand-boy, a veritable Mark Tapley in his habit of extracting comfort from the most unpropitious surroundings.

Erratic as to a superficial observer may appear the roaming of individual members of the tribe, there is method in their wanderings. They compare notes by the roadside or in the rural inn, and it may chance that the strange hieroglyphics found by the puzzled householder on the gates of his domain, may, being interpreted, convey a warning by some cheery wayfarer to his fellows of the like branch—or, as he would phrase it, “lay”—against following in a track where the harvest of humble coins has already been reaped.

Travelling owners—or in some instances merely hirers—of performing animals, or birds, form a not inconsiderable section of the miscellaneous army we are discussing. There is the man who with respective cages of canaries and white mice, and the assistance of a philosophic cat who is above all ordinary feline temptations of appetite, will spread out his cloth in fair or market, and win both admiration and approbation (he trusts also a more exchangeable *solatium*) by the revelation of docility and cleverness on the part of the tiny creatures he has taught. And there is his comrade who upon the “boards” of a smaller and a circular table will conduct a most comical and assiduous “Jacko” through a succession of tricks suited to the undeveloped intellect of man’s mimic—the monkey. To these may be added—with others—the proprietors of “The Happy Family,” of performing dogs, and, at a wide interval, of the dancing bear.

It would be well if those who spend a spare ten minutes in watching these exhibitions would be at the pains to discriminate, and would patronise with their smiles and their silver only those amusements which there is reason to believe are free from the taint of cruelty. In several of the cases mentioned the conscience of the onlooker may be quite easy. The finer qualities of animal intelligence, like those of humanity, are called into play by kindness and patient training, not by harshness and coercion, and the very cleverness—all but reason—which is shown by the bird or the monkey or the mouse, is the best of evidence that a bond of something approaching affection exists between teacher and pupil. But with respect to the bears, led about the country mostly by foreigners, doubts may be entertained.

The suspicion of cruelty, past or present, is with difficulty divorced from yet another category of strolling amusements. The acrobats who in any thoroughfare are sure to draw a crowd, and, amongst the lads, stir up a spirit of surreptitious emulation, have an undeniably hard calling. The power of twisting and turning into postures which are flagrant defiances of nature is only obtained at the expense of pain and excessive weariness. And it is the children who, alas! are made to suffer.

“Aye, aye, Tim’s as lissome as an eel,” the master acrobat will say proudly. But he will sketch to no inquirer the inner history of the prolonged rehearsals that have conferred the vaunted agility. A few years back there was an Albino who added song to his accomplishments, and pathetically based his appeal for sympathy—and cash—on the laborious nature of the training he had undergone. Who could resist the plea that rose in the sad recital:—

“And many a weary hour I’ve passed  
Whilst standing on my head”?

In the case of the professor of the rope-tying trick it is, however, skill of a different quality that is essential. The management of bands and knots, and a knowledge of the fitness of means to ends (*i.e.* rope-ends), is the staple part of the professor’s equipment. There are times when the spectators of this kind of exhibition get the laugh on their side. The challenge to “tie up” the principal performer may be accepted by a Jack Tar, and his knots are very likely indeed to prove obdurate and to ultimately demand extraneous interposition. But sailors are a generous race, and a coin after the rollicking guffaw will go far to obliterate the memory of professional discomfiture.

One of the oldest of this particular type of peripatetic diversions is that, casually mentioned before, of the man on stilts. He usually affects the attire of the circus clown, and can at least distance any youthful pursuers whose attentions may be too enthusiastic. In an unsophisticated country town he will create as great a sensation as an Egyptian battle or the fall of a ministry. Huge will be the juvenile delight, and the bewilderment of their elders, as with giant strides this singular portent swings from side to side of a country street, executes an impromptu dance, or doubles himself up like an exaggerated Z within some shop doorway. It is a toilsome occupation, for on the supports fitted to the top of each stilt is a huge weight, serving as the necessary ballast; and one can but suppose that the reward gathered from the wondering crowd is small. Yet it is in its way a life of rollicking freedom, and men are found to follow it. Surely the persistency with which the career of the professional stroller is sometimes followed is akin to infatuation. In other and higher employments the same energy and ability would give infinitely more satisfactory results. But Bohemia insists on claiming its sons.

To the second group of these acquaintances of an hour we have no space to devote attention. But that which has been written of the lives of their brethren is in the main true of their own.