

"A SELECT COMMITTEE."

(After the picture in the Royal Academy by H. Stacy Marks, R.A.)

Illustrated Interviews.

No. II.—HENRY STACY MARKS, R.A.



From a Photo. by]

THE STUDIO.

[Messrs. Elliott & Fry.

MR. MARKS lives in one of the quietest corners of St. John's Wood, his house being in Hamilton-terrace—a place of abode which goes a long way to substantiate the maxim not to put trust in outward appearances. The exterior bears a positively solemn aspect, and in the winter, when all the bright green leaves have disappeared, must be even funereal. But what a transformation when you have once passed through the door! True, there is nothing that I am inclined to call extravagantly artistic. It is the home of a man who wants to work. There is not a room in the place that is not characteristic of the man who uses it. The studios are sensible painters' workshops. The drawing-room suggests excellent company and merry entertainment, while the dining-room has a distinctly family air about it. Mr. Marks has not obtained his present position—and who

does not know him as the most brilliant painter of bird life we have?—without many a struggle. Probably his own kind disposition to listen to the young aspirant seeking after glories with brush and palette has been wrought out of his own early troubles.

Mr. Marks has been referred to as the light comedian of the brush. He says himself that if he had not been an artist he would have been an actor. If you saw him holding forth in the studio occasionally, or heard him rattling off a good song, or telling an anecdote with all the point and crispness of experience, you would at once admit that the stage has lost a good man. However, our feathered friends have found a faithful chronicler of every feather they possess, from the tufts on their head to the tips of their tails. Mr. Marks has promised me to unburden himself of his past life. He has got a diary upstairs, and a little account-book with the most curious little

sketches one could possibly imagine—little sketches which have been made by the R.A. in embryo.

"You must not notice the carpet," said Mr. Marks. "I told my wife that she ought to see that something smarter was put down this morning, because I was afraid that it was a lady who was coming to see me. However, come along."

"What is that? Oh, I have all those arranged near the door. They are my diplomas. You see the Royal Academy one is signed by the Queen. There is another there from Melbourne; another there signed by Leighton. You see, when the tradespeople catch sight of those things, when the door is open, it inspires their confidence. Not a bad idea, is it?"

Mr. Marks' weakness for birds is everywhere visible. He has painted storks over the opening of the letter-box; birds of beautiful plumage on the door-plates; and birds worthy of being honoured by a better position in all kinds of out-of-the-way places; some of them almost hidden from view.

The first room I looked into was a dressing-room—remarkable for its washstand. It is most curiously made, with fish painted at the back of it on fluted glass, which gives the idea that they are swimming about in water. The bowl is made of copper, and would hold several gallons of water; while in order to match, the ewer is shaped like a huge spirit measure, similar to those used for measuring spirits. Here Mr. Marks comes every night for half an hour and reads before going to bed. His boys' bedroom is near; partly fitted up as a workshop, with a lathe and other things, for all his children have hobbies. Just outside this room is a little black frame containing six very realistic sketches by Mr. Marks done at an early age. Even then he had a weakness for birds—a weakness which was to become his very strength. Three of them were done as far

back as fifty-four years ago, and portray various representatives of the feathered creation; while the other three are the bear pit at the Zoo, with Bruin at the top of his ragged pole being fed by a keeper, to the great delight of the children gathered around; Mr. Pickwick on the ice—which the young artist was conscientious enough to add was "After Phiz"; and a representation of a certain gentleman generally associated with the Fifth of November.

Passing downstairs again and walking along the entrance hall in the direction of his dining-room, I noticed arranged along the walls reproductions in black and white of various pictures which have helped to make him famous. Here is "The Ornithologist"; here again that charming little work representing an old man with tape and skull in hand, taking a measurement of it, and called "Science is Measurement." This latter he painted when he was made R.A., it being customary on such occasions to present a picture to the Academy worth not less than £100. Here again is a study of his mother's head, and in close proximity a capital work entitled, "An Episcopal Visitation," which may be familiar to many.

The dining-room is a sort of family portrait gallery. Over the chiffonier is a portrait of Mr. Marks himself—probably the best one—painted by Oules. Also a pretty little picture of his eldest daughter when she was ten years old, painted by Calderon; and another—a highly prized one—by the same artist, showing Mr. Marks in the blouse he wore in Paris when he was studying with Calderon in the gay city. In the window of the dining-room is an elegant aviary containing some delightful specimens of Java sparrows frisking about in company with bullfinches and canaries. Russ, the dog, named after Ruskin, is running about; and the smallest of monkeys, a marmozet, nicknamed Jack, is extra frisky this morn-



MR. MARKS AT 21.
After the Painting by P. H. Calderon, R.A.

ing, and has just climbed up the lace curtains at the windows. Nothing will satisfy Jack until the artist has allowed him to perch for a few moments on his shoulder and put one of his arms around his neck.

In the morning-room are many artistic treasures. The furniture is all black, relieved with red, and there are some fine Chippendale chairs and an old Dutch cabinet; while in front of the fender is a huge Chinese umbrella, on which Mr. Marks has painted a number of great black fishes, apparently swimming round and round. The piano, too, is a curiosity, being beautifully painted by the artist to represent the orchestra of the Muses. The pictures here are exceedingly interesting. Here is a study of the back of Mr. Marks' head, done by his drawing-master in 1856. Here, too, is the only thing which the artist has ever had the luck to win in a raffle. It was in 1865, at which time a number of artists in St. John's Wood had formed themselves into a little society known as "The Gridiron," for the purpose of criticising one another's pictures. The little sketch—a pictorial skit—hits off very happily the members of the Gridiron Society. Mr. Fred Walker is taking a walk on a cliff, surrounded by numbers of ghosts. Mr. Yeames, who had just got married, is shown with a wedding ring in his hand. Mr. J. E. Hodson, eminent for his Elizabethan pictures, is shown with a huge ruff around his neck; and Mr. Marks is with his old friend, Mr. Calderon, floating

along together, each with a gridiron on his breast. The picture is signed "F. W., Torquay Asylum, 1865." It was raffled for at Mr. Walker's house, and Mr. Marks won the treasure.

There is just time to peep into the drawing-room, which is a very artistic apartment. It opens out on to the garden, and the walls are painted a delicate sage green, with a pale warm blue dado. Water-colours are plentiful, and some exquisite Chippendale furniture adds to the beauty of the room.

What strikes me as the curiosity of the room is a map worked on silk, showing the Eastern World and Africa, marked "Negroland." The artist frankly declared that he picked it up for five shillings in Wardour-street, though he believes it to be a hundred years old.

We are now in the principal studio—a fine, square, spacious room with three entrances. A bust of the artist by Ingram is over the mantel-board, while around the walls on great shelves are arranged many an artistic "prop," which has from time to time figured in his pictures—

among them an old drum of a hundred years ago; lanterns, goblets, and many other things. On the mantel-shelf is a perpetual calendar, on the back of which is written, "This is a copy of one that belonged to Charles Kean." Here also is his wardrobe, contained within a fine bit of furniture of massive oak, which Mr. Marks was fortunate enough to pick up for three guineas whilst going his rounds in search of curios. The various drawers



From a Photo. by

AT WORK.

[Messrs. Elliott & Fry.]

is with his old friend, Mr. Calderon, floating



From a photo. by

THE WARDROBE CABINET.

[Messrs Elliott & Fry.]

is owned by Mr. Arthur Severn, R.I., who made them; and the third is this of Mr. Marks. It is in the shape of a charm for a watch-chain, but, on opening it, it is found to contain all the necessary colours in miniature for painting a picture.

"Now sit down," said Mr. Marks, taking out a huge cherry-wood pipe, and commencing to light up. "Oh, yes, I am a big smoker, and generally enjoy the weed all the morning during painting. I have got quite a small collection of pipes. Now I will give you a few extracts from my diary."

While he is turning to the page I note down a little picture of himself.

He wears a brown velvet jacket; his hair is growing grey; he is stoutly built, full of energy, has a keen appreciation for a joke, and his eyes have ever a merry twinkle in them.

"Now are you ready?" said he. "Well, my father had a large carriage repository. It was on the site of the Langham Bazaar. He early set me my first lessons in drawing. You see, we needed to have a number of heraldic signs for the doors of the coaches. He would sketch these in a book, and give them to me to copy. I fear, however, I did not copy many in the book that he gave me. There's the book; just glance over it."

I did so, and found that he had copied a boar's head and a stag's head; a crown, and unicorn, and a lion; but the boar had a ring through the nose, which distinctly differed from his father's copy above. There were others which showed that the youthful artist had indulged his original fancy, for in turning over the pages I came across ships, fish, elephants, a dead donkey being carried home, a horse of somewhat lively temperament kicking out at its master, who had fallen from its back, with the suggestive words underneath, "Woe! woe!" Even at that early date Mr. Marks had given a rough sketch of the building where he was afterwards to study, and which is labelled, "Academy." There was also "John Gilpin on his ride to Edmonton," and a very

are labelled, "Jingle," "Sheridan," "Footman," "Dr. Johnson," "Robespierre," "Stockings," "Collars," "Shirts," &c. There are also a number of stilettoes and daggers, and an old umbrella, all huddled together. A ten-and-sixpenny old Dutch clock is in a corner, worth many pounds now, for the case has been decorated by Mr. Marks with many artistic designs. Stuffed birds, too, are hanging about. Here is one which Mr. Marks takes from a little case. It is a specimen sent to him by Mr. Fred Barnard—a little sparrow, labelled "A Common Gutter-percher." Mr. Marks has also a fine collection of old watches; and amongst his curios a brass tobacco-box, on putting a penny into which it opens, and you can take a pipe-full of the weed. It is similar to one which has written on it—

"A halfpenny drop into the till;
Turn the handle, you may fill;
When you have filled, without delay
Shut down the lid, or sixpence pay."

Not the least highly prized curio which the artist possesses is one stamped "J. R. to H. S. M., 1880." It is a little carving of a heron in opal intended for a breast-pin, given to him by Mr. Ruskin. Mr. Marks had it fitted up and placed in a little silver casket. He has also one of the tiniest paint boxes in existence. There were only three made. One is in the possession of the Princess Louise; another

fanciful idea of Sinbad the Sailor. The sea is shown, with Sinbad's vessel above, floating on the water; while down below two or three men are walking about engaged in pushing a tremendously big whale five times the size of the vessel above. "Jim Crow's Palace" is a very neat little drawing. One of the Knights of France, with the word "Brave" scratched out, is a sketch of a man with small moustache and a single small eyeball. Altogether, the book contains something like three hundred pencil sketches.

"Not bad, are they?" continued Mr. Marks. "Well, let me give you a few notes of my career. My mother was a great help to me in every way. She helped me to go to an evening school, to Leigh's Evening School of Art, although my father encouraged me very little. I remained there some time, going to the school before breakfast and again in the evening, filling up my time by making occasional diagrams for lectures and copying a picture now and again. In June, 1850, I was a rejected probationer at the Royal Academy. I was then twenty-one.* My father offered to allow me fifty guineas to start on my own account, but somehow I did not get them. In the fall of the year I got into the Royal Academy School, and my father allowed me three days a week to draw. I worked and worked away with all my heart, and determined to succeed in the position that I had chosen. I am afraid my father did not think much of my artistic capabilities, for he got me a position as check-taker to a panorama of the Ganges, painted by Dibdin, and exhibited in Regent-street. Dibdin is now over eighty years of age, and has lost his sight. It was not very hard work—four hours a day—for which I was to receive thirty shillings per week. The engagement, however proved a failure, for it ended in a week and I never got my wages.

"On the 30th January, 1852, at seven o'clock in the morning, I bade my mother good-bye, and Calderon and I started from London Bridge, bound for Paris.

It was a bitterly cold morning; the wind was enough to cut you in two. At Paris we got a room together; slept, worked, ate, drank, and thought together. After six months we found our money had gone, so we returned to England. Then I found that my father had gone to Australia, so I joined the School of Art again. Then my first bit of luck came. At the end of the year I finished a single figure of 'Dogberry Examining Conrade and Borachio.' This was accepted at the Academy in 1853. I have a very pretty story to tell you about this. I had made up my mind that after all my mother had done for me she should have the money that I realised for my first picture. I had an offer of £10 for my picture, but I wanted £25. My customer was willing to go as far as £15. I almost hesitated then, but I wanted the money, so I agreed to take it. I went off to Mr. Christie, stockbroker, of Copthall-chambers, drew the cheque, and got it cashed. He took me to lunch with him, afterwards to the Victoria Theatre, and then to supper at a well-known house. On reaching home that night I did not hesitate what to do. Although I could



FIRST EARNINGS.

* Portraits of Mr. Marks at different ages appeared in our last number.

have managed with the money very well, I slipped quietly into a room where I knew my mother would come, and, taking the fifteen golden sovereigns out of my pocket, I laid them on the edge of the table in such a position that when she entered the room she could not fail to see them. I never enjoyed a sale so much.

"I got married in 1856 on the strength of my picture, 'Toothache in the Middle Ages,' which, I suppose, was the first one which brought me into anything like notoriety. It was bought by Mr. Mudie, the librarian, who died recently, and who was a good friend to me. Landseer noticed this picture. I have a very funny anecdote to tell you about this. While I was painting this work in a small room, there was a dentist living a few doors off, who had outside his shop a head which used to open and shut and show teeth and no teeth. Well, I received a letter purporting to come from him, saying that he had heard that I was painting a picture which he thought was an exceedingly witty idea ;

he wanted it, and would pay for it. But I should have to paint a companion picture to it, entitled, 'No Toothache since M. Andrew Fresco has lived in Modern Times.' He would sit as the model. This letter was dated April 1. I replied that I was exceedingly flattered by his kind offer, but before sending in the picture, as it was nearly finished, I should like him to call and see it. To this I got a reply containing the simple words: 'M. Andrew Fresco knows nothing at all about the matter.' The whole thing was the hoax of a young cousin of mine, and, since he perpetrated it, I will give his name to the world. It was Dr. D. Buchanan.

"In 1859 I was doing a good bit of work on wood blocks, and also stained glass. It was in this year that I sold a picture for

150 guineas, 'Dogberry's Charge to the Watch'; I also decorated a church at Halifax. In 1860 Mr. Mudie took me and another artist for a trip up the Rhine. What I then saw of the glorious scenery settled my mind altogether. I would give up all the other odd work I was doing, and devote my whole time to painting ; nothing but starvation should stop it. That same year I painted a monk carving a model, which was accepted in 1861, and that

marked an epoch in my life. This was a commission from Col. Akroyd, and I asked 300 guineas. He said: Send it to the Academy, and he would be there at the private view and see what it was like. He was there, but it was bought during the first hour, previous to his arrival, for 300 guineas, by Mr. Agnew. With that money I opened an account at the London and Westminster Bank, Bloomsbury, and I have kept it there to this date.

"I was elected A.R.A. in 1871. I think that was principally owing to the painting of my picture, 'St. Francis Preaching to the

Birds.' I got £450 for that work ; it was accepted in 1870. Exactly ten years before I had asked Mr. Knight, the secretary, to put down my name ; so that I had waited ten years. On December 19, 1878, I was elected a full-blown R.A. in place of Sir Francis Grant, and I was the first Royal Academician made under the presidency of Sir Frederic Leighton. I have only been absent from the walls of the Royal Academy two years since 1853.

"I must tell you a little anecdote about my 'St. Francis.' It was sold some time afterwards for £1,155. I used to borrow from an old gentleman a number of stuffed birds. Soon after the sale he came to me, and I said to him, 'I want some bird skins, if you have got any.' And he said, 'Yes, I can let you have some. How many do you



SKETCH OF DOGBERRY EXAMINING CONRADE AND BORACHIO.
(Made specially for this article by Mr. Marks.)

want? I suppose you want them for a picture.' I replied, 'Yes, I do.' He said, 'I hope those I sent you for your last picture suited you?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'splendidly. It sold the other day for £1,155.' 'Good gracious!' he said. 'You might have come up to my place, and had the whole lot in my shop for a couple of hundred.'

"I do not know if I have anything more to say about myself," continued Mr. Marks; "but anything you say about me as to my personal weaknesses must include that I am a great lover of books. I make all my own book-marks, design them myself, and I do a little poetry. Years ago I used to be a Volunteer. There is something interesting about that, perhaps. I joined the Artists in 1862, and I did not leave until I had a son in the corps. On June 7, 1879, there was

an inspection at the Horse Guards, and the remarkable sight was presented, which has probably never been seen before, of an R.A. as a full private in the ranks, and his son as his rear rank man. After that I resigned.

"Models? Oh, yes, I have had some strange things in models—all sorts and conditions of models. There was a model whom we used to call Cumming. He was extraordinarily slight and thin. All my costumes were too long for him; all the pairs of tights I had were 'a world too wide for his shrunk shanks.' I am afraid I chaffed him unmercifully about his spareness. I remember showing him once some of my children's garments, and asking him, 'Do you think that would fit you?' He used to say he had been an officer in a cavalry

regiment; but this assertion, I found out afterwards, had no foundation in fact. One day, when sitting to a friend of mine, he was asked to go out and fetch some beer—not a very uncommon request among struggling artists. This he was nothing loth to do, but quickly accomplished his task, and placing the foaming pot of stout on the table, said, 'Things have come to

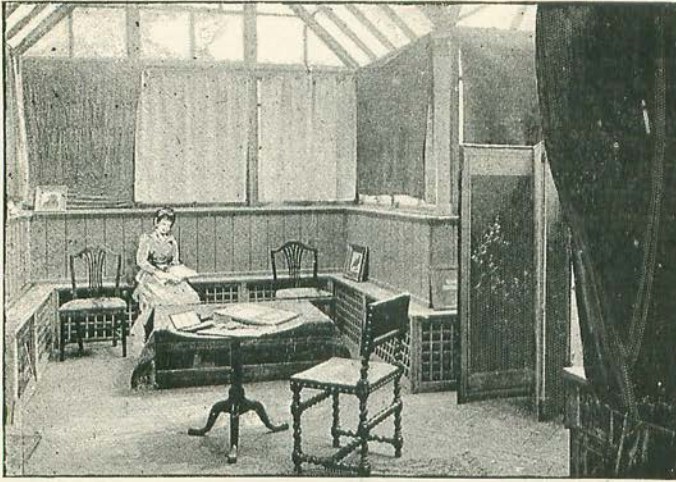
a pretty pass when an ex-officer of the 14th Light Dragoons has to fetch his own beer.' But the most unconsciously humorous and characteristic model I ever employed was one Campbell, whom I more than once painted as Dogberry. He had been a shoemaker. Almost the first occasion he came to me he told me the following story:—

"I took home a picture to the Dook of Wellington one day, and, as I was taking it up in the hall,

he comes by, and says, "Oh, you comes from Messrs. Bennett." "Yes, sir," I says. With that he passes on, and out comes at the front door a man dressed a'l in black, and comes up to me—his butler, I suppose. He says, "Do you know who you were a talking to just now?" "Yes, sir," I says, "Arthur Wellesley, better known as Dook of Wellington." "Then, why don't you say 'Your Grace' to him?" "Grace?" says I; "why should I say grace for? there's no meat here. Where's the viands? Why, I said sir to him—a common title of respect between man and man." "Well," says he, "you are a rum sort of customer, you are. What do you call the Duke?" "What do I call him?" I says; "a wholesale carcase butcher! Look at his career. He begins by going to France



ORIGINAL STUDY OF HEAD OF DOGBERRY.
(Reduced fac-simile.)



From a Photo. by]

THE SMALL STUDIO.

Messrs. Elliott & Fry.

I am more than a match for that desperate don.
Let him come, if he likes, I will never deceive him.
If he tries to get near, we will warmly receive him.
Let him talk as he likes; for his boasting who cares?
'Ere he gives us the skins, he must slaughter the bears."

"A good many models are addicted to drink, and, after sitting a while, will suddenly go to sleep. Then I have had what I call the 'super' model. You know the sort of man; he goes in for theatrical effect; always has an expression of 'Ha! ha! more blood I see wanted,' and that sort of thing."

to learn the art of war, and then he goes to India and kills thousands of natives who were only defending their own country, and at last turns his arms against the country where he first learned the art of war, and murders thousands more. A wholesale carcase butcher; that's what I call him."

"This man was a great poet, too," continued Mr. Marks. "Sometimes when I was giving him a little rest, he would say, 'Would you like a little verse or two, sir?' I often used to humour him, and he would recite some really good verses. Here is a specimen:—

'To grin at our snug little island of fame,
The despot of France when to Calais he came,
His glass from his pocket beginning to draw,
Was struck with amaze when old England he saw.
Britannia she sat on the white rocks herself,
But she needed no spy-glass to look at that elf.
"I wonder," she said, "what that simpleton's doing."
Replied Liberty, "Sister, he's plotting your ruin."
"Is he so?" said Britannia; "then let him plot on,

on his hat, and we pass through a smaller studio and glass-house, the former containing a very curious cabinet, which he painted some years ago, depicting a nursery tale, "Sing a Song of Sixpence"; and there is the king counting out his money, and the blackbird descending and pecking off the maid's nose, the Queen eating honey, the pie open before the King with the twenty-four blackbirds. This goes round the four sides of the cabinet, which is used for brushes, colours,

varnishes, &c. Passing into the garden there is the pet jay, in his cage by the tree; the fountain is playing; and Tommy, the tortoise, is crawling



From a Photo. by]

IN THE GARDEN.

[Messrs. Elliott & Fry



A merry Mynah bird am I,
 No parrot ever known can vie
 With me for speech distinct & clear,
 'Twill do you good my cough to hear.
 And as for whistling—that of boys
 Compared with mine, is odious
 noise.

THE MYNAH.

(Drawn specially for this article by Mr. Marks.)

produce with his permission as the frontispiece of this number. The chairman of the committee, by a long way the most important looking bird, has a beautiful blue plumage; and the artist spent some two or three months painting it. Then the military macaw, so called because of its tuft, is there, and at the word of command will bite his leg, and if you get too near will pull off your cap. Inside the parrot house is a glorious clock-bird, with its tail like a pendulum; the blue-eyed cockatoo which is in the picture, and the little green parrakeet which says, "Pretty Poll! steady!" Then here is a big grey parrot, the best talker of all, but who was so crushed by the continual noise of the others that she never speaks now.

quietly round the banks of a small lake in which gold fish are sporting themselves. In our illustration Jack, the marmozet, is to be seen sunning himself upon his master's shoulder.

We are now on our way to the Zoo, as Mr. Marks has promised to spend the remainder of the afternoon with me at a spot where he probably knows every bird in the place, and where many of them know him. As soon as we arrived there the artist took me into one of the houses where is a beautiful mynah, from Northern India. It seems that this bird has been here since 1883. Some time ago the keeper had a bad cough, and found that the bird imitated him. This gave him the idea of teaching it to talk; it will now say almost anything. A good story is told of an old gentleman who went up to the bird, and, quite innocently, said, "What a pretty bird!" "I should think I was," it replied. "Ha, ha!" laughed the old man. "Ha, ha!" laughed the bird in response, and there were the two laughing at one another for quite five minutes. This bird has been painted twice by Mr. Marks, to whom we are indebted for the accompanying sketch and verses.

Then Mr. Marks proceeded to point out his favourites; the vultures just getting their summer plumage, the cockatoos and parrots; and he showed me nearly all the parrots that had posed as models for his great picture in this year's Royal Academy, the "Select Committee," and which we re-

The two cockatoos in white are familiar friends of the artist. Mr. Marks kneels



IN THE ZOO.

down for a moment, and pretends to draw, and one of the cockatoos comes down and looks over his paper. Whatever part of the cage he goes to, they will follow him round. The eagles are just the same. When we reached the eagle cages the tawny eagle was attracted by the drawing-paper and pencil Mr. Marks carried, and came down to watch. One day the artist put his water bottle too near the cage, and the bird came down and knocked it over.

Then Mr. Marks sees a little ground penguin from New Zealand, which has not been there long. It is hard to get him away from this, but he departs at last, saying, "I must come again and make a sketch of him."

"Yes," said Mr. Marks, "I love the Zoo and the inhabitants thereof; some of my happiest hours have been spent here. I feel at home with the birds, and I am led to believe they feel at home with me. Sketching in the Zoo is very difficult. You start here at nine in the morning, and you can sketch up to eleven quite free from visitors. Then, I can tell you, I *do* have to pass through something. All the people

get round and watch you. For some time past I have tried to assume the character of the testy old gentleman, but it has been a failure. I had one man ask me once whether I hypnotised the birds; and a very inquisitive little girl who had bothered me for some days once approached me and asked, 'Do they always keep still?' That inquisitive little girl, I am afraid, was rather crushed when I turned to her and said, 'Do *you* always keep still?'"

Just then we got to the gates, and I was bidding good-bye to Mr. Marks, when he said, "I had a very nasty knock given me one morning in the Zoo. I must not mention in which house it was, as the old keeper is there still. I had been sketching there one Saturday, and was just packing up my various things thinking of going, when he turned to me, and said, 'You are not going to wait to do any more then, sir?' I said, 'No, I am going to town this afternoon, just for a little trip, you know!' 'Oh, yes, sir, of course. I have heard as most tradespeople like to take their half-holiday on Saturday.'"

HARRY HOW.



MR. MARKS' BOOKPLATE.