

The Author

Theodore S. Fay

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Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
What, were ye born to be
 An hour or half's delight,
 And so to bid good night?
 Your date is not so past,
But you may stay yet here awhile,
 To blush and gently smile,
 Nor fade at last

Herrick

THE INTRODUCTION.

"Prudence, whose glass presents the approaching jail,
Poetic justice, with her lifted scale,
Where in nice balance truth with gold she weighs,
And solid pudding against empty praise."

I WALKED out one summer afternoon, to amuse myself after the troubles of a long and toilsome day, spent in poring over musty volumes of the law. As I rose from my fatiguing studies, and breathed the fresh, free air of heaven, I enjoyed that natural cheerfulness which is always felt when the elastic mind soars from the object to which it has been bound down, and sports away at pleasure through the regions of fancy. After having groped among the shadowy labyrinths of ambiguous science, wearied and bewildered in its mazy path, I rejoiced to be in a lighter sphere, amid merriment and bustling adventure where the brilliant confusion of Broadway gave a livelier character to my meditations, and the rosy-cheeked, bright-eyed girls who passed by me imparted a sweeter sensation to my mind.

It had been extremely warm and sultry, but now a light breeze cooled the air; the pigeons pecked and cooed and sported about in the shade; a privileged dog might now and then be observed trotting along behind his master, panting and tired, with his tongue hanging from his unclosed mouth, and those unpoetical animals in the records of our Common Council, denominated hogs, grunted through their long and dreamless slumber, in all the glory of independence and mud.

It is an old maxim that something may be learned in whatever situation we are placed. The darkness of a solitary

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dungeon improves the contemplative disposition, and the mid-day splendor of the city is replete with instruction.

The vast and wonderful variety of face and figure which on every side met my view, afforded an amusement for my ramble, of which I did not fail to take advantage.

Sometimes brushed by me the smart beau, ready dressed, and polished for his lady's eye; his new, shining hat, upon a head each particular hair of which possessed its assigned station, like well disciplined soldiers at a military post. In *dark* contrast behind him dragged the lazy sweep wrapping his dusky mantle around his gloomy form, the personification of a moonless night. The man of broad dimensions waddled before the thin, consumptive, meagre wretch poverty and plenty, emblematic of the rapid vicissitudes of life. Bullies, thinking of thunder and lightning Dandies, thinking of nothing but themselves and fools, thinking of nothing at all, went one after another before my observing sight. Editors, composing extemporaneous editorial articles Players, conning over their half-learned parts Lawyers, calculating what no one but lawyers could calculate and Doctors in rueful, but resigned anticipation of their patient's demise, passed by, and disappeared like Macbeth's visions in the regions of Hecate. Now came a crowd of "Noisy children, just let loose from school," in high glee at having escaped from the vicissitudes of their mimic world some from the troubles of incomprehensible ancient languages, and lines terrible to scan and other young literary Bonapartes, who "had fought and conquered" whole troops of mathematical problems, who had surmounted obstacles seemingly insurmountable, and labored far up the rugged hill of science in spite of the brambles and shadows with which it so plentifully abounds. Then I beheld the philosopher, in his ordinary habiliments, scrupulously plain, careful to owe no portion of his celebrity to the vanities of dress his brow clouded with a sublime frown, which spoke of crucibles, air-pumps, powerful acids, and electrical machines pacing his steady way, with measured strides all science and severity from head to foot. After him came the poet, in a poetical dress, with short sleeves to his coat, short legs to his pantaloons, and short allowances for his hunger his hat was put back from his forehead in negligent grace there was no awkwardness in his moving attitudes no rose upon his thoughtful cheek and no cravat around his neck; but bewildered, Byronlike, and brimfull of imagination, and wrapped up in splendid visions, invisible to all but himself through the various multitude he pursued his unerring career "In lofty madness, meditating song," The richly dressed, fashionable belle dashed by me like a blazing meteor, sparkling and flashing in transitory brightness and in bashful beauty, like some softly-passing dream, followed the sylph-like figure of a charming girl, with eyes cast down in the modesty of merit, and cheeks blushing at the earnest gaze which their loveliness attracted. It passed away from before me like the evanescent hopes of youth, and gave place to a person who monopolized all my attention. It was the short, prim form of a middle-aged, negligently dressed man, who wore an air of drollery, entirely irresistible. As he passed, maiden purity and philosophic sternness lent the tribute of a smile, and the little boys paused from the fascinations of their hoops and marbles to look and laugh. The clouded visage of misfortune, by his ludicrous appearance, was cheated into a temporary illumination, and in the wildness of my disenthralled fancy, methought the very birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, or, in plain English, the pigeons and the pigs, gave a glance of merry astonishment upon the object of my notice.

His coat (for although he was an author he had a coat) had once been of handsome black cloth, but its charms had vanished "like fairy gifts fading away" many winters had scattered their snows upon the shoulder-blades and elbows, from the pinnacles of the latter of which peeped something not *very* white, concerning which I had my own peculiar calculation. The collar, I mean of his coat, for that of his shirt had long since retired to the dignity of private life, beneath the complicated folds of his slovenly cravat by the by, it would be well if some of our political *dirty shirt collars* would follow its examples I say, the collar of his coat, by long acquaintance with the rim of a hat, venerable on account of its antiquity, had assumed a gloss which was by no means the gloss of novelty, and a dark brown waistcoat was buttoned carelessly around a body that seemed emptier than the head upon which it had depended for support. His pantaloons, "Weak, but intrepid sad, but unsubdued," were shrivelled tightly over a brace of spindleshanks, withered, weary, and forlorn, that would have put Daddy Longlegs to the blush. Uncleaned pumps covered every part of his feet but the toes, which came forth to enjoy the fresh summer breezes, shoes and stockings to the contrary notwithstanding. A pair of tattered kid gloves, "neat but not gaudy," fluttered about his hands, so that it would be difficult immediately to discover whether the glove held

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the hand or the hand the glove.

But it was not the dress which gained him so many broad stares and oblique glances, for our city annually receives a great increase of literary inhabitants, but the air the "*Je ne sais quoi*" the nameless something dignity in rags, and self-importance with holes at the elbow. It was the quintessence of drollery which sat upon his thin, smirking lip which was visible on his crooked, copper-tinged, and snuff-bedaubed organ of smelling, and existed in the small eyes of piercing gray.

As I love to study human nature in person, and have always believed the world was the best book to read, I formed a determination to become acquainted with him of the laughable aspect, and proceeded to act in conformity thereto. I was striving to hit upon some plausible method of entering into conversation with him, when fate being in a singularly good humor, took it into her whimsical head to favor my design. As I walked by him near the end of the pavement, when the multitude were by no means so numerous, and their place was supplied by the warbling birds, the bleating lambs, and all those sounds which constitute the melody of country breezes, with a slight inclination of his pericranium he turned towards me and spoke.

"Pray, sir, can you favor me with the hour?"

"It is four o'clock," answered I, "I believe but am not sure; walk on with me, and we will inquire of yonder gentleman."

"You are excessively good," said he, with a smile, which gave much more expression to his face "I am afraid I give you an infinite degree of trouble; you are enjoying rural felicity, poetically correct pray, do not let me interrupt you."

As he spoke the clock struck.

"Fortune favors the deserving," I remarked, as a continuation of the converse so happily commenced.

He spoke with more familiarity "Upon my honor, sir, you are very complimentary: if every body thought of me as you do, or at least, if they thought as much of my productions, I flatter myself I should have had a watch for myself."

"I'll warrant me," I replied, "many have the means of ascertaining time better than yourself, who know not how to use it half so well."

"Sir," said he with a bow, "if you will buckle fortune to my back but you don't flatter me no, no. My excellent, good friend, you have much more penetration than people in general. Sir, I have been abused vilely, wretchedly, da , but I won't swear I don't follow the fashions so much as to make a fool of myself; but on the honor of a perfect gentleman, I do assure you, sir, I have been very strangely used, and abused, too."

"I have no doubt, sir," observed I, "but that your biography would be interesting."

"My biography you've hit the mark; I wish I had a biographer a Dunlap, a Boswell, a Virgil, or a Homer he should begin his book with the line "*Multum ille et terris, jactatus et alto, Vi superum* ." I have been a very football, sir, for the gods to play with." "*Tantæne animis coelestibus iræ,*" said I, willing to humor the pedantry which I already began to discover, "but the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

"Aha! sir," he exclaimed with a gentle squeeze of my hand, "I know what you are some kindred spirit one of those kind, high beings who come upon this world `like angel visits, few and far between. ' I see it, sir, in your eye," continued he, with a gesture that might have spurred even Miss Kemble to new exertions. "I see it in your

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eye charity, benevolence, affection, philosophy, and science. Ah! my dear sir, I know you are better than the rest of mankind; you've done a great deal of good in the world, and will do a great deal more

"You portioned maids apprenticed orphans blest

The old who labor, and the young who rest:

Is there a contest? enter but your door,

Balked are the courts, and contest is no more;

Despairing quacks with curses fled the place,

And vile attorneys, now a useless race."

"Sir?" ejaculated I, not very well pleased with this last slash at my beloved profession

"Or, perhaps," continued he with increasing rapidity of speech, "you are a lawyer, my dear sir, the grand path to political glory sweet occupation; to put out the strong arm, and save drowning innocence; to hurl the thunderbolt of eloquence against proud and wealthy oppression; to weave a charm of safety around defenceless beauty; and catch clumsy, and otherwise unconquerable power in your mazy net of law Pray, sir, can you lend me a shilling?"

I handed him the money, and he turned to be off, when I seized him by the arm, and asked him where he was going? He laid one hand upon his receptacle for food, and with the other pointed to a tavern, before which hung the sign "Entertainment for Man and Horse."

"My dinner my dinner my dinner!" said he, "I haven't eaten a particle these three weeks; poverty and poetry, sir, go arm and arm, sworn friends and companions, through this vale of tears; one starves the body and the other rarefies the soul my way has been rough and rugged as the Rock-away turnpike road, and misfortune jerks me along as if life went upon badly made cog-wheels. Will you be so kind as to lend me another shilling? I want a dinner for once in my life beefsteaks and onions, butter, gravy, and potatoes

"*Hæc olim meminisse juvabit.*" It will be a grand era in my poetical career."

There was something so exquisitely whimsical in the fellow's demeanor, that I determined to spend the afternoon in his company. I never shall forget the look and squeeze which he bestowed upon me when I proposed that we should adjourn to the inn, and dine together at my expense. He seized hold of my hand, and drew himself up erect in all the enthusiasm of poetic madness

"Sir," said he, informing me that he could not speak, with a rapidity of pronunciation, which reminded me of a horse running away "Sir, Mr. a-a-a my dear, dear friend my tongue falters I can't speak I'm dumb gratitude has shut up the sluices of my heart; and the cataract of my oratorical powers is dried up *pro tem*. But it will come directly Stop till I get in the house "*Arma virumque cano.*" that is to say, I'll tell you my history; but just at this moment," continued he, smacking his lips, and his little eyes dilating with the eager anticipation of epicurean delights, yet to come "just at this crisis,

"Oh! guide me from this horrid scene,

These high arched walks, and alleys green." then with a slight pause and smile,

"Let's run the race he be the winner,

Who gets there first, and eats his dinner."

As he spoke, he pulled me forcibly by the arm, and I found myself in a neat, clean room, with the hungry poet fastened close to my side. The conversation which occurred between us, and the history of his literary vicissitudes, must be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER II. THE NOVEL.

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"Now mayors and shrieves all hushed and satiate lay,
Yet eat in dreams the custard of the day,
While pensive poets painful vigils keep,
Sleepless themselves, to give their readers sleep."

Though no spirit is so lofty but that starvation can bend it, yet in the tranquillity of our replenished bodies we are always wicked enough to enjoy the extravagant emotions which agitate authors and other hungry individuals, when by any strange variety of life they happen to get a good dinner.

My friend, who had delighted me with his volubility of speech, no sooner perceived that the preparations were ended, than he fell upon his defenceless prize like a lion on his prey. Poetry and prose, fanciful quotations and lofty ideas, for a time were banished from his busy brain. Our conversation, the whole burthen of which had at first been borne by him, was now lost in the superior fascinations of beefsteak and onions; and a few unintelligible monosyllables, uttered from a mouth crammed full of various articles, were the only attempts made toward an interchange of soul.

The enthusiasm of his attack began at length to abate, and the fire of anticipated delight to give way to an expression less anxious and fluctuating. The discomfited steak lay before him mangled and in ruins. The onions shed a fainter perfume from the half-cleared dish and the potatoes were done in the strictest sense of the word. The sated author threw himself back in his chair, and exclaimed, "The deed is done the dinner is eaten *Fidus Achatas* my beloved friend I feel I know not how a strange combination of various sensations gives me a new confidence to brave the storms of life, or to look back upon the dangers already passed. And now, that I am comparatively composed, and have time to think, you will do me the favor to answer me, what in the name of all that's beautiful in prose, poetry, or real life, induced you to give this strange conclusion to a hungry day?"

"Because," I replied, "your face pleased me more than all the others which I saw there was talent and taste in your very dress."

"Ah come," said he, casting a slight glance upon his well-worn garments, "that won't do I am perfectly aware that my external appearance is by no means prepossessing, but what of that? `she must marry *me* and not my clothes.' I cannot help it, if fate, in her unequal distribution of mutual effects, gives you a pair of breeches whose use is to come and me one whose value has passed

I don't feel ashamed of what a superior power has done for me. It is the mark of merit to be poor. Homer was poor Johnson was poor and I am poor. Besides, a rich man cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven that's flat."

"If poverty," said I, "is a passport through the happy gates, then "

"Then," interrupted he, "I should have been there as soon as I commenced my literary life; for though self-praise is no recommendation, I flatter myself I am as poor as any man in New-York, and what's more, I confess it I'm proud of it"

"After dinner," said I.

"Oh, you're a wag but rich or poor, I've had my hopes and disappointments as well as the rest of mankind. Sunshine and shadow have chased each other over my path and now, by your kindness, I am warming myself in the rays of benevolence and friendship. Ah, it is a treat for me, I do assure you, to find the true feeling of generosity the real, genuine virtue, cleansed from the ore of vanity and ostentation, and so unlike the pompous charity of the common world,
"Not to the skies in useless columns tost,
Or in proud falls magnificently lost,

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But clear and artless pouring through the plain,
Health to the sick and solace to the swain."

"You are the man of my mind, and to you I will speak my sorrows, although my parched lips almost refuse them utterance" and he cast a sidelong glance at an empty bottle which stood near us on a table. I took the hint, and called for some wine. He swallowed a glass full, smacked his lips, and assuming a serious and important air, thus commenced the narrative of his literary horrors:

"Sir, my name is William Lackwit, Esquire. I am an author, whose greatest failure has been in not getting his works into notice, but a fatal oblivion seemed always to engulf my productions in its lethean stream and fate, I do sincerely believe, has been trying upon me some philosophical experiment, to see how many privations human nature could bear. I have been tossed about, sir, like a juggler's ball and in all the poetical labyrinths in which I have been lost, memory cannot behold
One solitary resting place,
Nor bring me back one branch of grace.

"I was cast upon the world when about seventeen years of age, and possessing a vast share of vanity, which, by the by, is the staff of an author's life, I determined to write for a living. Animated by the fame of great men who had lived before me, I plunged deeply into literary madness, and fell a victim to the present prevailing epidemic, the *cacoethes scribendi*, which is now sweeping many young gentlemen from professional existence. I wrote for the newspapers, but made no noise heard no approbation and 'last but not least,' received no pay. Sometimes, perchance, a very particularly complaisant friend would laud the little offsprings of my pen; but it did not gain me bread and butter, and could not satisfy the cravings of hungry nature. With a full heart and an empty stomach, I relinquished my attempt, and bade farewell to my sweet lyre, in a manner that, I thought, could not fail of attracting universal sympathy. I walked out the next morning, expecting to meet many a softened heart and friendly hand, but the bell-man heaved his unaltered cry as he did the day before; the carts rattled along with their usual thundering rapidity; the busy crowd shuffled by me as if I was not in existence; and the sun shone upon the earth, and the changing clouds floated through the air, exactly as they were wont to do before I determined to shed no more music upon an unfeeling world.

"At length I recovered from my disappointment, and issued a little paper of my own; but it dropped dead from the press, as silently as falls the unnoticed flake of snow: no buzz of admiration followed me as I went; no pretty black-eyed girl whispered '*that's he*' as I passed; and if any applause was elicited by my effort, it was so still, and so slyly managed, that one would scarcely have supposed it was there.

"Something must be done, thought I while the great reward of literary fame played far off before my imagination, a glorious prize, to reach which no exertion would be too great I walked to my little room, where a remnant of my family's possessions enabled me to keep my chin above the ocean of life. In the solitary silence of my tattered and ill-furnished apartment, I sat me down upon a broken bench, and lost myself in 'rumination sad' as to what course I should next pursue. Suddenly, and like a flash of lightning, an idea struck me with almost force enough to knock me down I'll write a novel I'll take the public whether they will or not '*fortuna favet integros*,' and if fame won't come to me, I'll go to fame. I don't wonder that I did not succeed before. The public want something sublime, and I'll give it to them wholesale. I'll come upon them by surprise; I'll combine the beauties of Addison with the satire of Swift, Goldsmith's sweetness and Pope's fire. I'll have darkness and storm, battle, treachery, murder, thunder, and lightning: it *must* take. The author of a novel like this will make an immense fortune. Old ivy-grown castles, moonlight landscapes, Spanish feathers, and Italian serenades, floated in brilliant confusion through my enamoured fancy. Daggers and despair, eloquence, passion, and fire, mingled in a delightful cloud of imagination, and heaved and changed in the dim and dreary distance like a magnificent vision of enchantment, which only wanted the breath of my genius to fan it into shape and exquisite beauty.

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"At it I went, `tooth and nail,' and watched over my young offspring with as much fondness as the mother bends over the cradle that contains her only boy. Already I began to hold up my head, and think how differently people would look at me if they only knew who I was, and what I was about to do. The splendid dresses, the ten dollar beaver hats turned upside in a basin of water, the handsome canes, and polished Wellington boots, which daily obtruded themselves upon my eager eye, as if in mockery of my miserable apparel, I began to look upon as objects already my own. Was I thirsty and hungry while musing on the variety of macaronies and cream-tarts, cocoanut-cakes and coffee, in a confectioner's shop? `Only wait,' thought I to myself, `only wait till I get out my new novel.' Was my coat threadbare and my hat old, only wait for my new novel. Did a coach and four dash by me, footman taking his ease behind, and driver with new hat and white top boots? Drive away, coachee, thought I, drive away, but only wait for my new novel. Extreme impatience kept me on pins and needles till my work was done. 'Twas indeed `a consummation devoutly to be wished.' A kind of restless anticipation kept me in continual excitement till the development of my greatness, or what was the same thing, the publication of my work.

"At length it was finished, and off it went, two volumes duodecimo, with a modest blue cover, and its name on the back. Long enough, thought I, have I labored in obscurity, but now I pulled up my collar (it was a long time ago) and walked majestically along in all the pride of greatness incog.

"Alas! alas! 'twas but a dagger of the mind. It dazzled for a moment before my enraptured sight, and left me again to descend into the nothingness from which, in fancy, I had risen. Although it was printed and published, with a preface artfully acknowledging it to be unworthy public patronage; although I wrote a puff myself do you know what a puff is?"

"An author's opinion of his own works, expressed in a daily paper, by himself or his friends," I answered.

"Right," continued he, "although I wrote a puff myself, informing the public that rumors were afloat that the new novel, which created such a sensation both abroad and at home, was from the well-known pen of the celebrated William Lackwit, Esq., poet, editor, orator, and author in general although I paid the editor of one of our most fashionable evening papers six shillings for reading it himself, and six and sixpence for recommending it to the perusal of his subscribers, `*credat Judoeus appellas*' it `went dead,' as the Irishman says; a newspaper squib, a little pop-gun of a thing, first brought it into disrepute, and a few would-be critics ridiculed it to death. Herbert and Rogers, merchant tailors, lost a customer and I a fortune, and my unhappy book was used to carry greasy sausages and bad butter to the illiterate herd, who took more care of their stomachs than of their heads, and liked meat better than mind. Oh! that ever I was an author: oh! that ever I panted after literary fame. I have chased the rainbow reputation over crag and cliff. I have waded through rivers of distress, and braved storms of poverty and scorn, to get one grasp at the beautiful vision; and though I see it yet, as lovely and as bright as ever, yet still it is as cheating, and still as far from my reach. My next trial was of a higher nature, which, after we have again partaken of your excellent Madeira, I will relate to you"

And he proceeded to describe that which I shall lay before the indulgent reader in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III. THE PLAY.

"Fierce champion, Fortitude, that knows no fears
Of hisses, blows, or want, or loss of ears;
Calm Temperance, whose blessings those partake,
Who hunger and who thirst for scribbling's sake."

My eccentric companion proceeded in his story, gathering new animation as he recapitulated the battles which he had fought, and the victories which he might have won.

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"For a long time, sir, after the melancholy catastrophe of my novel, I was completely discouraged. I felt an indifference towards the world. I had soared so high upon the wings of hope that the fall almost broke my heart; but soon the disappointment began to lose its bitterness, and I received a consolation (which, wicked as it was, I could not repress) in discovering that hundreds of unsuccessful authors were exactly in my condition: then I remembered that as great fame, once acquired, would be everlasting, I could not expect to acquire it without immense trouble and assiduous application. Gradually I shook off the hateful fetters of gloomy despair, and, like some deluded slave, to a false woman's charms, I allowed cheating hope to lead me captive again. My brain began to effervesce with exuberance of imagination, and gave promise of something more exquisite still. Novelwriting was out of the question: I had manufactured one, and if the public did not like it, they might let it alone; and so they did the more shame for them.

"I felt as proud as Lucifer in my defeat, and was resolved never to compliment with another the world who had used my last so villainously. No, thought I, I'll write a play, and give Shakspeare and Otway a little rest. If I cannot get in the great temple one way, I'll try another; and, with increasing avidity, I went at it again. It was not long before I began to entertain the idea that my mind was peculiarly adapted for dramatic writing. I was not formed to wade through the dull drudgery of novel descriptions to expatiate upon little rivulets, tinkling among big rocks and amorous breezes making love to sentimental green trees. In my present avocation, the azure heavens, the frowning mountain, the broad ocean, the shadowy forest, and `all that sort of thing,' would fall beneath the painter's care: skies would be manufactured to give light to my heroes, and cities would sprout up, in which they could act their adventures. My play would present a great field for triumph, and `young, blushing Merit, and neglected Worth,' must be seen, and consequently admired. Now would the embodied visions of my fancy go to the hearts of the public through their ears, as well as their eyes, and genius would wing its sparkling way amid the thundering acclamations of thousands of admiring spectators. `Now,' said I to myself, `I have the eel of glory by the tail, and it shall not escape me, slippery as it is.'

"With a perseverance which elicited praise from myself, if from nobody else, I mounted my Pegasus, and jogged along this newly discovered road to immortality. The external and common world melted from my mind when I sat down to my task, and, although it was evanescent as poets' pleasures generally are, few men enjoyed more happiness than I as the tattered trappings of my poor garret seemed dipped in the enchanting magnificence of my dreams, and I rioted in visions of white paper snow—storms, and dramatic thunder and lightning. I sought every opportunity for stage effect to have trap—doors and dungeons, unexpected assassinations, and resurrections more unexpected still.

"My undertaking seemed very easy at first, but I soon found myself bewildered amid difficulties seriously alarming. At one time I brought a whole army of soldiers on the stage, and made them fight a prodigious battle, without discovering, till half the poor fellows were slain, that the whole affair had taken place in a lady's chamber! This was easily remedied, but I experienced infinitely more trouble with the next. I had formed a hero, in whom were concentrated all the virtues, beauties, and accomplishments of human kind: a real Sir William Wallace gigantic in person and mind who never opened his lips but to speak blank verse who did not know that there was such a person as Fear on the face of the globe, and could put a whole army to flight by just offering to draw his sword. It was my design artfully to lead him into the greatest extremes of danger, and then artfully to lead him out again; but, in the paroxysm of my enthusiasm, I at length got him into a scrape from which no human power could possibly extricate him.

"His enemies, determined not to give so terrible a fellow the slightest chance of escape, had confined him in a tremendous dungeon, deep, and walled around on all sides, by lofty rocks and mountains totally impenetrable. To this dreadful abode there was only one little entrance, which was strictly guarded by a band of soldiers, who were ordered never to take their eyes off the door, and always to keep their guns cocked. Now here was a predicament, and I knew not what to do. The whole of the preceding was so beautifully managed, that to cut it out would be impossible. Yet there he was, poor youth, without the slenderest hope of freedom, cooped up among everlasting mountains, beneath which Atlas himself might have groaned in vain. What was I to do? He must be released. The

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audience would expect it, as a common civility, that I would not murder him before their eyes. It would have been ungentle to a degree. At length I hit it, after having conceived almost inconceivable plans, and vainly attempted to manage ponderous ideas which were too heavy for my use. I proposed to introduce a ghost a spirit, which would at once please the pit, and be a powerful friend to the imprisoned soldier.

"At the dead of the night, when he sat ruminating on the vicissitudes of life, and spouting extemporaneous blank-verse soliloquies, (at which I had spent many midnight hours,) the genius of the mountain comes down in a thunder cloud, and thus addresses the pensive hero. You will be pleased to observe the rude and natural dignity of language, which it was a great point with me to preserve.

Genius.

Hero of earth, thine eyes look red with weeping.

Hero,

(*laying his hand upon his sword.*) Who says he e'er saw Bamaloosa weep?

Gen.

Nay, hold thy tongue, and shut thy wide-oped jaw: I come to save thee, if thou wilt be saved.

Hero.

I will not perish, if I help it can; But who will cleave these cursed rocks apart, And give me leave to leave this cursed place, Where lizards crawl athwart my sinking flesh, And bullfrogs jump, and toads do leap about?

Gen.

I I can do whate'er I have a mind: I am the genius of this lonesome place, And I do think you might more manners have, Than thus to speak to him that is your host.

Hero.

If thou art really what thou seem'st to be, Just let me out of this infernal hole. Oh! my dear fellow, take me hence away `My soul's in arms, impatient for the fray!' Take me from deeds I've often thought upon, Down deep in dreadful dungeons darkly done!

"The alliteration in the last line melts the tender heart of the genius: he waves his hand in the air; his cloudy throne streams thunder and lightning from every side; instantaneously a convulsion ensues; the stage becomes the scene of general conflagration; a number of small imps, and little devils, fiery-breathed dragons, and red-nosed salamanders, are seen sporting about in the confusion, till the whole explodes, and out walks my man through a prodigious crack in the mountain, which heals up after him as he goes along. The consternation of the guards may be imagined, but unless I had the MS. here, I could not attempt to describe it.

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"At length it was written, rehearsed, and advertised, and its name, in great capitals, stared from every brick wall and wooden fence in the city.

"Delightful anticipations of immortality began to throng upon my mind, and I could almost hear the various theatre cries of `bravo,' `encore,' and `author.' With some trouble, I had prepared a very handsome speech, to be spoken when I should be called out, and practised bowing before a looking-glass with great success. Indeed, by the time the evening of representation arrived, I was prepared for every triumph which fate could have in store for me; and I had vowed an unalterable determination not to lose my firmness of mind in the heaviest flood of prosperity that could possibly pour in upon me.

"The evening arrived a fine, cool, moonlight night. The stars twinkled upon me as I hastened to the theatre, as if congratulating me from their lofty stations in the sky, and the most refreshing breezes played around my head, methought, whispering soft nonsense in my ear. I walked with a proud step to the door, entered majestically, and took my seat modestly.

"The house was already thronged with ladies and gentlemen, with their various appendages of quizzing-glasses and bamboo canes; and frequent murmurs of impatience buzzed around, by which I felt extremely flattered. The end of my troubles seemed already at hand, and I thought Fame, on her adamantine tablet, had already written `William Lackwit, Esquire, Author in general,' in letters too indelible for time itself to erase. Fear faded away in the dazzling brilliancy of that smiling multitude, and my soul floated about in its delicious element of triumphant hope, with a sensation such as arises after a good dose of exhilarating gas.

"Alas! `twas but a dream!" I soon perceived that fortune frowned on my efforts, and had taken the most undisguised method of blasting my hopes. A most diabolical influenza had for some time raged in the city, which on this very evening seemed at its height. A convulsion of coughing kept the whole audience in incessant confusion; and with the most harrowing apprehensions, I listened to noises of every description, from the faint, sneeze-like effusion of some little girl's throat, to the deeptoned and far-sounding bellow of the portly alderman. Besides this, I had the pleasure to observe some of my most devoted enemies scattered, as if intentionally, through the critical pit, scowling in tenfold blackness upon the scene, and apparently waiting in composed hatred, an opportunity to give me `the goose.' Meditation raged high, as I observed these significant and threatening appearances, and I could scarcely have been in greater trepidation if I had been attacked with hydrophobia itself.

"The curtain rose soon, and my first characters appeared; but, fire and fury! I did not recognize them myself!

"The play proceeded, and a scene ensued which gentlest moderation might denominate `murder, most foul.' My dear sir, you can have no idea of it. They had cut out my most beautiful sentiments. The very identical remarks which I had intended should bring the house down, were gone, and `left not a trace behind.' One recited a speech which was intended to have been spoken by another, and he spouted one that should not have been spoken at all. My finest specimens of rhetoric failed, from their clumsy manner of delivery, and all my wit missed fire. Oh! if you could have seen them, like a pack of wild bulls in a garden of flowers, breaking rudely over all those delicate bushes of poetry, and trampling down the sweetest roses in the field of literature. The prettily turned expressions, which should have been carefully breathed upon the audience, with a softened voice and pensive eye, were bawled out in an unvaried, monotonous tone of voice, and a face as passionless as a barber's block. The whole play was destroyed.

"`There was nip, and snip, and cut, and slish, and slash,' till the first act ended, and then was a slight hiss. `Cold drops of sweat stood on my trembling flesh;' but I pulled my hat fiercely over my beating brow, and, angry and desperate, prepared for the brooding storm. On my mountain scene I laid my principal dependence; and if that failed me, `then welcome despair.' At last it came: there was the dungeon and a man in it, with a wig, which covered the greatest part of his real hair, and a face sublimely cut and slashed over with a piece of coal. Instead of the beautiful countenance which had gleamed upon me in my poetic vision, there was a thin, hump-backed little

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fellow, with a tremendous pair of red whiskers, and a pug nose! My fac-simile of Sir William Wallace with red whiskers and a pug nose!! Sir, it threw me into one of the most violent fevers I ever had. Besides all these, `his face was dirty, and his hands unwashed; ' and he proceeded to give such a bombastic flourish of his arm, and his voice rose to such a high pitch, that he was hailed with loud laughter, and shouts of `Make a bow, Johnny make a bow,' till my head reeled in delirious despair.

"But the language and stage effect might redeem the errors of the actor, and I remained in a delightful agony for the result. Lazy time at length brought it upon the stage; but oh, ye gods! what a fall was there! As the thunder-cloud and genius were floating gracefully down, one of the ropes cracked, and the enchanter of the cavern hurt his nose against the floor, notwithstanding a huge pair of gilt pasteboard wings, which spread themselves at his shoulders. He got up, however, and went on till the explosion was to have taken place: then he waved his wand, with an air which was not intended to have been resisted; but, *miserabile dictu!* the crack would not open, and Bamaloosa trotted off by one of the side-scenes, amidst hoots of derision from every part of the house.

"The green curtain fell. A universal hiss, from `the many-headed monster of the pit,' rung heavily in my ears. I had seen my poor play murdered and damned in one night, and it was enough to quench all future hopes of literary eminence. I rushed, desperate, from the spot, not choosing to stay for the farce; and, in the confusion of unsuccessful genius, I kicked two little red-headed fellows into the gutter for asking of me a check.

"In the anguish of my disappointment, I dreamed a combination of every thing horrible, to tantalize and terrify my poor, tired brain; and I arose with a head-ach and a heart-ach, and no very great opinion of any one in the world, but myself.

"You have convinced me that generosity has not taken French leave of every bosom, and I shall always look back upon the moments I have spent with you as bright exceptions to those of my past life. And, now," continued he, pocketing the remaining bone, putting a couple of potatoes in his bosom, and taking a long draught of wine "and now, I trust, we are square: you have provided me a dinner, and I have treated you to `a feast of reason and a flow of soul.' If I see you again, `I shall remember you were bountiful;' if not, God bless you and yours."

He gave me a hearty shake by the hand, and darted from the room. I caught a glimpse of his figure as he passed the window and saw the poor author no more.