

The Barbers

William Hutton

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The Barbers

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William Hutton

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The Preface.

Examine all your talents round,
See which are wanting, which abound,
If none of these attempt to speak,
Are blunt, or bend because they're weak,
Then never think of public strife—
Sit still and bite your nails for life.
You'll shine in this unenvied doom,
Much like a watch—light in a room;
Nor must you carry it about,
The very air will waft it out.
But if, like stars, your lights will soar,
And be conspicuous out of door;
Then place them in that public view
Where they'll shine best, and profit you.
If to the Law, your talents veer,
You rise a Sergeant, Judge, a Peer;
For, all allow, this beaten mode
To Peerage, is the Turnpike road.
Or, is the Church, most worth your striving,
Not for religion's sake, but thriving;
You'll spurn at Curates, and small cheer,
Condemn'd to fifty pounds a year.
You'll see but cast about your eyes,
Some theologic question rise;
You'll then your brightest talents shew,
And raise yourself, o'erwhelm your foe,
This brings you in a pulpit straight,
And in the Church you'll have some weight;
Then trammel through the Canon, Dean,
'Till with a mitre you are seen;
Here in your annual amount,
Ten thousand spirit'al guineas count;
The highest honours Church affords
Is nodding in the House of Lords.
Suppose a scarlet coat you wear,
You'll see three ways of climbing there:
By money, which you'll try to save;
By favour, which you'll try to have;
By valour which you'll try to spend:
These will completely gain your end;
With patience, and with judgment,
They'll any one procure a reg'ment.
Should authorship engage your skill,
The triumph of fame awaits your will,
Your essays, odes, our Pockets fleeces;
You cut the critics all to pieces,
Your pen, producing sterling pages,

The Barbers

Perpetuates your name for ages:
For writing gives you room to hope
To rise like Churchill, Pinder, Pope.
'Perhaps you turn your eyes to trade;
And then, my friend, your fortunes made!
You'll quickly trudge on foot no more,
But. sport it in a coach and four;
The mov'ments glib obey the summons;
To wheel you to the House of Commons;
Where for a while, you're satisfied
With a good slice of empty pride;
Like P—— for courts but drop a word,
You bye and bye become a Lord.

The Barbers.

Some writers forcibly maintain
That many evils we sustain
From our own want of prudence come
And we should Father what's our own;
Not falsely lay at fortune's door,
That we from blame may rest secure.
The word misfortune is deranged,
And to misconduct should be changed,
That our own good or ill success
Depend not on a random guess;
But in a penetration justly free,
Which into future time can see;
And from the past to draw comment,
To regulate each grand intent
This is by some, a foresight call'd,
Or seizing time where he's not bald
Who e'er the rules of prudence uses,
May rise to riches if he chooses.
These premises false or true,
Dear reader, judge, its left to you.
Much may be said both pro and con,
I'll follow neither but go on,
Two requisites must to him fall;
Or else he cannot rise at all;
Neither of which, in any state,
Can from himself originate;
Nature must find them, he's a mute,
And can't her sacred laws refute.
Talents! but let him not abuse them,
And strong propensity to use them,
He who has those is sure of pelf,
He holds a fortune in himself:
These able partners understand;
To play into each others hand;
Neither does one the other blame,
Being certain to secure the game.
Talents! are guides o'er life's tempestuous sea,
That fast rolls onward to eternity.
Talents are gifts by God bestowed on thee;
Abuse them not—'twere better not to be.
The man, short-sighted, travels long,
Then perceives his road was wrong;
While a true judgment had imparted
The right road, before he started;
The carpenter practically, knows
Whether the nail will bear his blows,
And if it will not hold its course,

The Barbers

His striking only makes bad worse.
As judgment points the clearest way,
So diligence won't let him stay;
Thus I solicited 'squire Salte
Awhile in Birmingham to halt;
Knowing his talents turned to trade,
Would very soon a fortune made;
But he the future could devine,
His eyes saw clearer far than mine:
He saw his pow'rs would meet disgrace,
If cut to fit this little place.
London! the the'tre of the world,
Where the first talents are unfurled;
This was the place in all the land,
For the mightiest powers to expand;
Where, in the draper's hacken'd trade,
A hundred thousand pounds he made.
Had my friend found the lowest station,
He would have rose to elevation;
Or if to law he had acceded.
In Westminster he would have pleaded;
Or had the church engaged his tongue,
The lawn had graced him e'er 'twas long;
If the sharp sword had been his trade,
A captiv'd enemy he'd made.
'Squire Taylor, fortune's son of late
Was blest with both these gifts of fate;
Through the clouds of chance could scan,
And penetrate the heart of man;
The spring of action he could tell,
And guide the subtle passions well;
The end once found, he ne'er withdrew
Till he had wound up all the clue.
Had fortune darted every frown,
She never could have kept him down;
No need of aid from friend or kin,
His vast resources lay within.
Had he, by adverse fate, been made
A village shoemaker by trade.
Let others struggle all they can,
He surely would have led the van:
The snobing craft had higher shone
Than e'er the gentle craft was known.
While in this narrow circle bound,
His eyes he'd quickly cast around
To find a way to set him clear,
And rise into a higher sphere;
Nor would be long those powers employed
The dirty feet of men to guide;
Adapted with a full effect,
The greatest problems to dissect.

The Barbers.

The Barbers

Two barber boys, 'prentices rather,
Who spent their servitude together
In Birmingham, found harmony,
Which many covet, few enjoy:
They oil the hone and sweep the shop,
As well as many blockheads crop;
Venture to chatter of Town News;
But never Christmas Box refuse:
That to a deadly sin would mount,
'Twas never charged to their account;
And there's no need to swell the tide,
When there appears enough beside,
For while the pliant hair they bend,
Can think of any absent friend;
If loitering at taw, or ball,
Can tell a fib, and cover all;
This to their crime but little adds,
Because reputed clever lads.
There's gentle advice and louder
"Never, to waste a dust of powder;"
Beside some hints, delivered clear,
"Soap and pomatum's very dear!"
Yet pretty well, if half what's said
Enters the inside of the head;
The other half may well abide,
Like wind and rain upon the outside;
And like those two, their pow'rs may strain
To enter, but they'll find it vain.
We all know well, that a skull
Aught never to be fill'd to full;
For if a vessel overflows,
We certainly the surplus lose;
And there's no wisdom understood
En wasting anything that's good.
If comb was broke, or oil was shed,
'Twas balanced by a rap o' the head;
A razor lost required a stick,
Or on another part a kick;
A wig that's botch'd its very clear,
Required a pinch o' the ear;
That prudently, the part oppress'd,
Should suffer for the part transgress'd.
Thus creditor and debtor too
Appear'd completely at one view;
And all accounts were fairly stated,
To praise or punishment related:
Thus balancing their cares and joys,
Call them a pair of happy boys.
If reader, for their names you look,
'Twas William Hearson, Abraham Cook.
They wield the razor with small graces,

The Barbers.

The Barbers

In fabricating Sunday faces.
Full many a time have I sat still
A bleeding victim of their skill;
Whilst they, like priests, in white disguise,
Offered my chin a sacrifice.
For seven long years they tarry, full,
In sharpening and in making dull,
Attacking beards of every size,
Whether on foolish heads or wise,
The bottom of the face to chop,
Or with pomatum grease the top.
Their master assisting now and then,
'Till he had taught them to be men;
They were, who could count them nought.
Extremely willing to be taught?
Their state of freedom now enlarged,
Their time and all their cares, discharged,
To see the world, were much inclined,
And leave their cares to lag behind;
For how can men excel in arts,
Except they visit foreign parts?
And, what can travelling make scant?
It gives us all—but what we want.
Now daily preparation's made
To carry on a foreign trade.
A razor and a strop were found
The world sufficient to go round;
A profit from these tools would flow,
As far as beards were known to grow;
Nay half these tools might do perhaps,
A razor without any strops,
For leather breeches, both could tell,
Would set a razor just as well.
And who'd submit to carry two,
When he was certain one would do;
Besides, more capital is gone,
In buying two things, than in one.
The razor then, and breeches, made,
Is all their load—and stock—in-trade;
Scissors, indeed, might add to stock
As useful, when they poll a block;
But what young man would be denied
The boon of any housemaid's side?
As tar as in our tale we're gone,
We've drawn our heroes both as one;
But now expands another view,
As men we're bound to make them two;
And in our smoothest numbers teach
The powers which actuated each.
From Hearson's eyes were darted hence
Much more good nature than good sense;

The Barbers.

The Barbers

And where good nature we espy,
It elevates its owner high.
This fine accomplishment, we own
One of the prettiest passports known;
Between his hands, his feet, his head,
Where done more good—things than were said.
His figure when expanded too,
Gave a fine picture to the view;
A straight young fellow might be seen,
Full six—feet high, whose limbs were clean;
To him the girls would give their charms
To be encircled in his arms;
A sergeant too, resign his all;
Straight as an halbert and as tall.
But Cook, whose talents lay within,
Was not so high, nor yet so clean;
Was rather runted; face was rough;
His stature too was short enough;
Besides, as knowing people own,
One evil seldom comes alone;
As if too exterminate his pride,
He was excessively blear eyed;
What handsome lass to Cook would fall!
The happy Hearson had them all,
What sergeant would bestow a look,
Upon the short and blear-eyed Cook!
However might those eyes be seen in
A tolerable share of meaning.
Thus have we led two barber's boys
Through infant scenes of rural joys;
Behold them shave a block of timber,
As learning to shave one more limber;
Their various servitude have seen,
'Till their own Masters they have been.
We'll leave them travelling the road,
While we bring up our episode.
The nation was to error prone,
In seventeen hundred eighty—one;
Forgetting neighbour, friend and brother,
One side resolved to fight the other;
What evils might have been avoided,
If one had with the other sided!
From out of America were then
The English driven by Englishmen.
Let the remark, stand on my page,
A lesson to a future age:
By one false step, 'mong many others,
We lost three millions of our brothers.
Besides, what streams of blood are shed,
When fifty thousand's knocked o' th' head!
A space of country too was lost,

The Barbers.

Which many hundred thousands cost;
It never can return again,
Then lost for ever must remain;
And nothing by it we could get,
But an increase of solid debt;
Amounting to, I'm within bounds,
More than a hundred million pounds;
Which if the curious ask me when
This sum will be repaid again,
I answer without hesitation,
And fearlessly to you will say
Whenever this successful nation
Recovers back America,
That sum, immense, she'll surely pay.
Another question is in hand,
Which I could never understand;
But in verse will now retain it;
And beg the learned to explain it;
I'll prize it more than plate with fish on;
'Twill make complete the next edition;
"Why we should wish, with all our might,
America might win this fight;
"Yet, on the French a curse imply,
"Who were their great and good ally!"
Whilst we endeavour to control,
The noblest passions that inspire the soul.
Thou sacred power whose law connects
The eternal chain of causes and effects,
Let not those ministers of rage,
Record their deeds on Albion's page,
How they refused reconciliation
To a great, suppliant nation.
How will the thought, of this career
Stand reconciled to Judge or Peer,
Such dire effects from avarice arise
When it is folly to be wise.

Suppose we quit our episode,
Lest durance vile reward our mode,
And seek the barbers on the road;
But this is difficult to do,
For they themselves ne'er rightly knew.
We can, however, easily tell
Their shoes upheld the razor well;
But soon the razor did refuse
To add assistance to the shoes.
Our heroes had not travelled far,
Before grim want began to stare;
Nor could the wanderers invent
One argument to give content;
For all allow, in rhetoric,
Its figures in the mouth will stick;

And not a trope, they boldly tell ye,
Ever descends to fill the belly;
Of the reverse instances are plenty,
They rather tend to make it empty.
Their hunger great, their money gone,
Their custom dwindled next to none;
In consultation, wisely thought,
That one could live where two could not.
They at the dreadful prospect started,
Shook hands, and then in friendship parted.
The one, lent his kind assistance,
To neighbours at some distance,
Which if we could but rightly scan;
Point out the good Samaritan.
Party, and Law, he laid aside,
And choose with the opprest to bide,
And in their cause take a part
With all his mind, hand an' heart.
The other soon it will appear,
Became an English Grenadier:
Whose prowess, might' well stand,
In guarding of his native land.
But if his country be transmuted,
No wonder if he be confuted;
Or that he is himself undone,
From being opposed by ten to one.
And now the muse is very loth,
But must comply to loose them both,
And be as strange to one, and t'other;
As they themselves were to each other;
A partnership is no more thought on,
Each hero stands on his own bottom.
What interesting adventures fell
To each, the humble muse can't tell;
Therefore from now, shall skip the time,
Lest she should fib, for that's a crime.
Only 'tis needful you should be
Informed they travelled land and sea;
As many anecdotes of them befall
That if collected, they would swell
Into two volumes of such size,
That publishers would deem a prize,
They'd find upon their shelves a place,
For this small literary grace;
There to stand in public' view,
For every sentence would be true.
The muse had sought them all day long,
That she might bring them into song;
Examined Europe, up and down,
In every city, every town;
But had her labour for her pain,

The Barbers

There's many a muse has wrought in vain!
But as the troubles of the day
Were centered in America,
She searched that continent around,
As there she sought so there she found;
Found there one shaver and his brother;
Although they could not find each other;
This single instance shews to view
What assiduity oft will do:
And proves most clear, half my text;
Have patience, for the annexed.
Hearson, a private grenadier,
Served in Virginia, full a year
Under Cornwallis has his lord,
At Gloucester, where he sheathed the sword:
While Cook, by merit, rose of course,
Ranked a captain, was of horse:
He drew the sword, put armour on;
Under that Fabius, Washington,
Thus talents always get the start,
And now I've proved the second part.
Our pair of shavers, soldiers made,
Could not completely change their trade;
For long accustomed blood to draw,
Which time has ratified a law,
Preserved, by making others feel,
Their art of cutting with sharp steel;
This difference from their former trade,
They gloried in the wounds they made;
Whereas before, the injured sat,
To have his wounds dressed with old hat;
While he the sorry razor blame,
A gentle blush denoting shame,
The forces of the British nation
At New York chiefly had their station;
The first commander, to be brief,
Omitting to send prompt relief,
For reasons to himself known best,
As brave Cornwallis might request,
Was thus exposed, and void of hope,
With one to ten he could not cope.
His little army and the day,
To Washington became a prey;
Assisted by the arms of France,
To stand against them, he'd no chance.
Hearson, the six foot grenadier,
With many of his comrades, were
Made prisoners by a single look
Of the short blear-ey'd captain Cook.
Thus we have stated, by the muse,
The want of talents and the use,

Turn back those leaves to which is seen in,
The captain's eyes express'd some meaning;
That keen eye had to Hearson flown,
Before our captain Cook was known,
But, ere three minutes time could tell,
They recognized each other well;
Where one enpassant then might view,
Astonishment had seiz'd the two;
Though each of diff'rent parties were,
Approached each other void of fear;
Which eas'ly will this truth imply.
Two enemies may meet with joy,
Enough to pierce a feeling heart,
That Fathers, Friends, and Brothers,
Are led to fight against each other.
Of all the mischief histories boast,
Our civil broils have done the most,
Lives by hundreds have been lost,
Tens of thousands they have cost.
The tender mother oft has breed,
Sons to be knock'd in the head,
For a white rose or a red;
By their own sires oftime led.
This land of peace, but little knew,
'Till Henry the Seventh Richard slew.
Yet G—— the Third was led astray,
Thinking to coerce America.
How will the people judge may I divine,
'Twixt natures laws and rights divine,
Their hardy sons of worth and toil,
Bow to the head bedew'd with oil.
And to the regal wim or pleasure,
Natures laws for ever sever.
Farewell to the prohibition,
Then I'll sport a new edition;
Court the muse and humbly try,
To set the *curse* before the eye.
I must change the subject here,
And introduce the Grenadier.

Grenadier.

By fortune is your honour grown
O'er heads much taller than your own;
You win the race obtain the prize,
From legs of far superior size.
Yet you are the same in every look,
My long lost friend, Abraham Cook;
At your rise, I feel great pleasure,
And only wish you still, more treasure;
Whilst I return to empty dishes,
May you enjoy the loaves and fishes..
And still succeed in every patriotic plan,
To grace the natal name of Birmingham.
Should fortune leave you in the lurch,
And bring to mind the old church,
She may receive you in the end,
As I hope she will me, so I intend.
My homeward race to her I'll run
Ready to greet you should you come.
If wars to me bring no more loss
Till I arrive at the Old Welch Cross.

Captain.

On English ground, we parted poor,
But now I see you rather lower;
Though much distressed, I knew you free,
But now a prisoner are to me;
Both you and yours are in my hand,
Nay even your life at my command;
But you shall see one trouble end,
You are the prisoner of a friend;
The iron bands which prisoners share,
Shall turn to silk for you to wear;
Come to my tent for there I live,
And take the beet which I can give.
A good repast to you I'll bring,
A dish of fish and water from the spring;
Long may'st thou live, and still be free,
And fortune smile on thee, like me,
To slaughter I no one condemn,
But sink the foe and call them men.
The foe subdued, I seek no more,
But friendship cherish as before.

Grenadier.

How could you contrary to law,
Your sword against your country draw,
Hazard a life, which is your all,
Against a shadow on a wall?
For if you win, you still remain
Just as you were, you nothing gain;
Repent before it is too late,
You've sin'd against both Church and State:
And still a greater civil evil
You've sent Excisemen to the Devil.
Your load of taxes you've refused,
And the King's authority abused,
How can you till, reap, or mow,
Without a King there's nought will grow;
'Twill be a barren waste of stubbles,
Without, Dukes, Lords and Nobles.
How can you French alliance choose,
They'll make you slaves in wooden shoes;
And nothing can for you prove worse,
For wooden shoes have England's curse.

Captain.

A nation when it once divides,
Immediately becomes two sides;
Which then's my country of the two,
That which I am fighting for, or you.
Perhaps it ne'er engaged your thought
You fight it for a daily groat
The world's my country, so I see,
I only fight for Liberty,
My creed's a pulse within a pod,
It's only Judge, the Righteous God.
He made and form'd me though unseen,
Without Him I should ne'er have been,
He alone is King of Kings;
Our vices gained us royal things.
To wrangling politics adieu
'Tis time to act the friend to you
For if the lucky minutes flies
It ne'er returns to cheer the eyes.
'Tis dangerous in this place to stay
You instantly must haste away

Take these ten dollars for your use
The best companions you can choose
You shall be told the countersign,
Which will convey you through the line:
Your greatest risk will then ensue,
And my best wishes can't save you.
For if the Provo' should you take,
An instant death will you await,
He'll hang you up in spite of fate;
Then report you as a cheat.
The Provo's law I'll not deride,
Though first he'll hang and then decide,
If it's proved that you did halt,
You'll suffer judgment by default.
He passed the lines in sober fear,
For enemies were always near;
And must for desperate is his case,
The savage Provo's Legions face.
His strength must teach his feet to fly,
And fear keen glances from each eye;
Forgetting through the dread of death
The want of strength the want of breath.
But now surveying matters round,
He veiued himself on natural ground;
Escaped he saw, as thoughts arise,
From twenty thousand enemies
Each coveting his life to end,

Captain.

The Barbers

And in that number but one friend.
The barbers, or soldiers rather,
Must now shake hands, and part for ever,
'Tis well our feeble eyes can't look,
Into the volume of fate's book,
For then our happiness must end,
To read of parting with a friend.
And yet that one prevents his fall
By skill he counteracted all.
Hearson by fortune now made tow
Knew not to what, or where to go;
A moving outcast in disgrace,
Was of no use and fill'd no place,
Assembled with the lowest class,
Their manners bad enough alas;
Whils't Cook attaining his desire,
Had risen high, was rising higher;
And with superiors could abide,
Whose talents half the globe could guide,
Poor Hearson, ragged, forc'd to roam,
His shoes and all his dollars gone.
All his adventures so ill sped
He wish'd he had been knocked i' the head;
Like Noah's dove he found no rest,
With hunger and fatigue opprest:
At length he reached his native shore,
From which he never ventured more;
In Birmingham appeared about,
And took his stand where he set out;
The razor he resumed once more
And shaved has he had done before.

April the 4th, 1793.