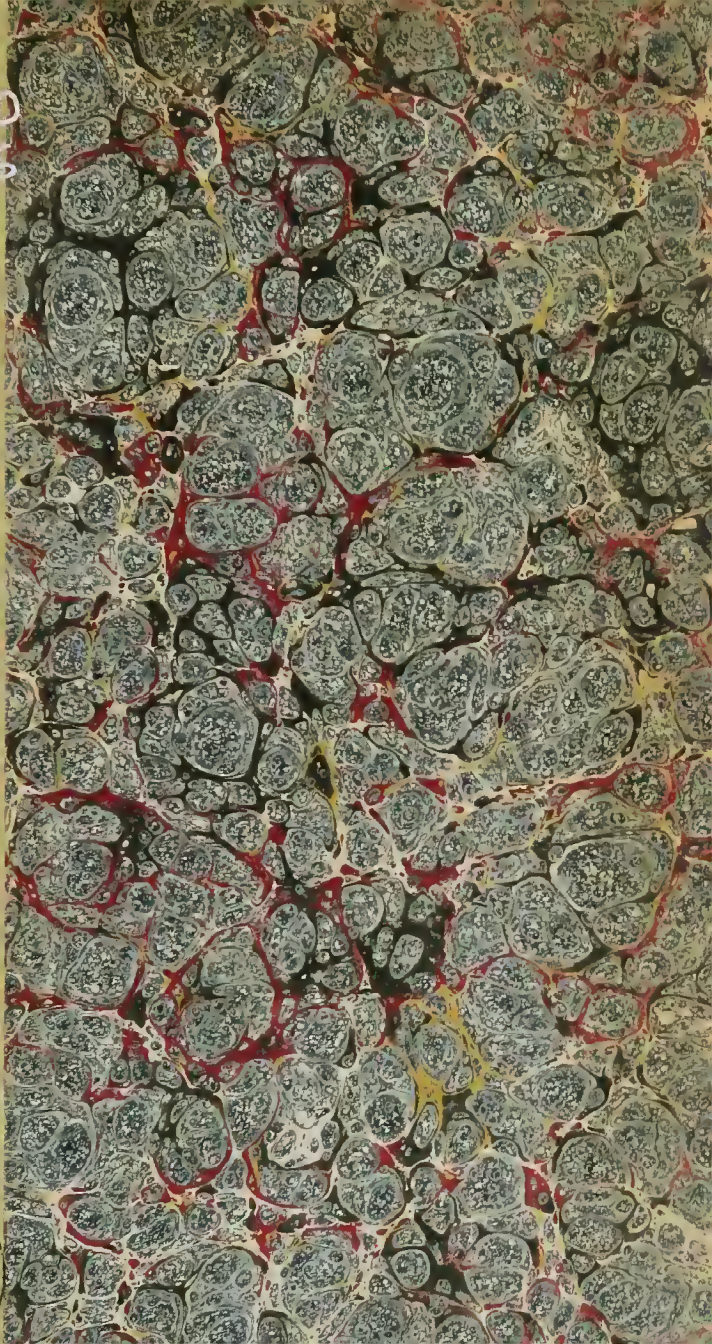
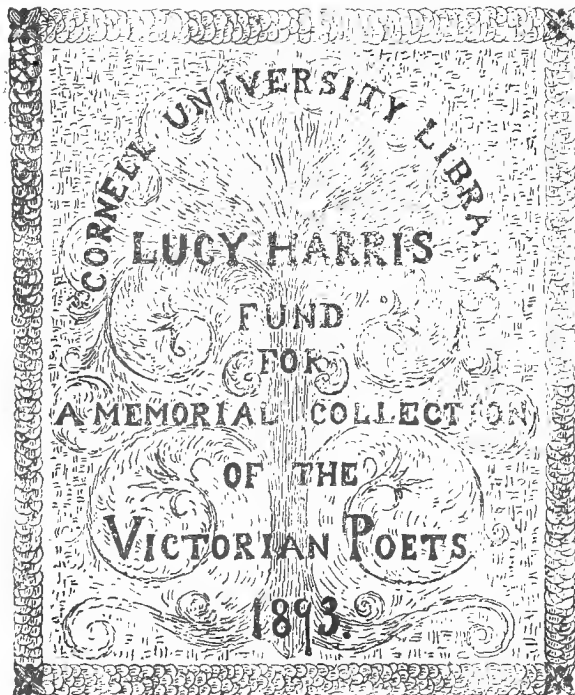


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LAYS * *

OF THE

* * PEOPLE.

BY

JOHN F. NICHOLLS.

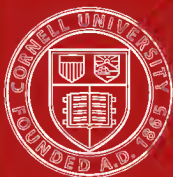
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LONDON:

BURT & SONS, 58, PORCHESTER ROAD,
BAYSWATER, W.

1885.





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LAYS OF THE PEOPLE.

LAYS
OF
THE PEOPLE.

(CHIEFLY FROM THE "PEOPLE.")

BY
JOHN F. NICHOLLS.



LONDON:
BURT & SONS, 58, PORCHESTER ROAD,
BAYSWATER, W.

1885.

R
CB

TO MY WIFE

I dedicate all that is good in this my first book.

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LAYS OF THE PEOPLE.

TOMMY'S PRAYER.

IN a dark and dismal alley where the sunshine
never came,
Dwelt a little lad named Tommy, sickly,
delicate, and lame:
He had never yet been healthy, but had lain since he was
born
Dragging out his weak existence well nigh hopeless and
forlorn.

He was six, was little Tommy, 'twas just five years ago
Since his drunken mother dropped him, and the babe was
crippled so.

He had never known the comfort of a mother's tender care,
But her cruel blows and curses made his pain still worse to
bear.

There he lay within the cellar, from the morning till the
night,
Starved, neglected, cursed, ill-treated, nought to make his
dull life bright ;
Not a single friend to love him, not a living thing to love—
For he knew not of a Saviour, or a heaven up above.

'Twas a quiet, summer evening, and the alley too was
still,
Tommy's little heart was sinking, and he felt so
lonely, till
Floating up the quiet alley, wafted inwards from the
street,
Came the sound of some one singing, sounding, oh ! so clear
and sweet.

Eagerly did Tommy listen as the singing nearer
came—
Oh ! that he could see the singer ! How he wished he
wasn't lame,
Then he called and shouted loudly, till the singer heard
the sound,
And on noting whence it issued, soon the little cripple
found.

'Twas a maiden rough and rugged, hair unkempt, and
naked feet,

All her garments torn and ragged, her appearance far
from neat—

“So yer called me,” said the maiden, “wonder wot yer
wants o’ me ;”

“Most folks call me Singing Jessie ; wot may your name
chance to be ?”

“My name’s Tommy ; I’m a cripple, and I want to hear
you sing,

For it makes me feel so happy—Sing me something,
anything.”

Jessie laughed, and answered smiling ‘I can’t stay here
very long,

But I’ll sing a hymn to please you, wot I calls the ‘Glory
Song.’”

Then she sang to him of heaven, pearly gates, and streets
of gold,

Where the happy angel children are not starved or
nipped with cold ;

But where happiness and gladness never can decrease or
end,

And where kind and loving Jesus is their Sovereign and
their Friend.

Oh! how Tommy's eyes did glisten as he drank in every word

As it fell from "Singing Jessie"—was it true, what he had heard?

And so anxiously he asked her; "Is there really such a place?"

And a tear began to trickle down his pallid little face.

"Tommy, you're a little heathen! Why, its up beyond the sky,

And if yer will love the Saviour, yer shall go there when yer die."

"Then," said Tommy; "tell me, Jessie, how can I the Saviour love,

When I'm down in this 'ere cellar, and He's up in heaven above?"

So the little ragged maiden who had heard at Sunday School,

All about the way to heaven, and the Christian's golden rule,

Taught the little cripple Tommy how to love, and how to pray,

Then she sang a "Song of Jesus," kissed his cheek and went away.

Tommy lay within the cellar which had grown so dark and
cold,
Thinking all about the children in the streets of shining
gold;
And he heeded not the darkness of that damp and chilly
room,
For the joy in Tommy's bosom could disperse the deepest
gloom.

“Oh! if I could only see it,” thought the cripple, as
he lay,
Jessie said that Jesus listens and I think I'll try and
pray;
So he put his hands together, and he closed his little
eyes,
And in accents weak, yet earnest, sent this message to the
skies:—

“Gentle Jesus, please forgive me as I didn't know
afore,
That yer cared for little cripples who is weak and very
poor,
And I never heard of heaven till that Jessie came
to-day
And told me all about it, so I wants to try and pray.

“Yer can see me, can’t yer, Jesus? Jessie told me that
yer could,
And I somehow must believe it, for it seems so prime and
good ;
And she told me if I loved you, I should see yer when
I die,
In the bright and happy heaven that is up beyond the
sky.

“Lord, I’m only just a cripple, and I’m no use here
below,
For I heard my mother whisper, she’d be glad if I could
go ;
And I’m cold and hungry sometimes ; and I feel so lonely
too—
Can’t yer take me, gentle Jesus, up to heaven along
o’ you?

“Oh! I’d be so good and patient, and I’d never cry
or fret,
And your kindness to me, Jesus, I would surely not
forget ;
I would love you all I know of, and would never make a
noise—
Can’t you find me just a corner, where I’ll watch the other
boys?

“Oh ! I think yer’ll do it, Jesus, something seems to tell
me so,
For I feel so glad and happy, and I do so want to go,
How I long to see yer Jesus ! and the children all so
bright,
Come and fetch me, won’t yer, Jesus ? Come and fetch
me home to-night !”

Tommy ceased his supplication, he had told his soul’s
desire,
And he waited for the answer till his head began to
tire :
Then he turned towards his corner and lay huddled in a
heap
Closed his little eyes so gently, and was quickly fast
asleep.

Oh ! I wish that every scoffer could have seen that
Tommy’s face,
As he lay there in the corner, in that damp and noisome
place ;
For his countenance was shining like an angel’s, fair and
bright,
And it seemed to fill the cellar with a holy heavenly
light.

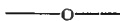
He had only heard of Jesus, from a ragged singing
girl,
He might well have wondered, pondered, till his brain
began to whirl;
But he took it as she told it, and believed it then and
there,
Simply trusting in the Saviour, and His kind and tender
care.

In the morning, when the mother came to wake her
crippled boy
She discovered that his features wore a look of sweetest
joy,
And she shook him somewhat roughly, but the cripple's
face was cold—
He had gone to join the children in the streets of shining
gold.

Tommy's prayer had soon been answered, and the Angel
Death had come
To remove him from his cellar, to his bright and heavenly
home
Where sweet comfort, joy, and gladness, never can
decrease or end,
And where Jesus reigns eternally, his Sovereign and his
Friend.



A PAUPER'S REVENGE.



QUENE moment, oh, stay one moment, and give me a coin for bread,
You're the first I've ever asked, sir, for
begging's a thing I dread ;
But I only left the workhouse a few short hours ago,
And I hav'n't a friend to help me—for God's sake, don't
say 'No.'

I know that I'm presuming, but I'm suffering want and
pain,
And I'll never ask the Guardians to take me back
again—
'The same old story !' Nay, sir ; my story is fresh and true,
Will you linger just a moment while I tell my tale
to you?

Five long, long years ago, sir, I was happy and
well-to-do,
Not a thin and wasted creature, but as tall and strong as
you ;
With a wife as fair as sunlight, and a home like heaven
below ;
While, better than these, my name, sir, was pure as the
glistening snow.

I'd worked my business well, sir, then, thinking 'twould be
for the best,
I took in a working partner, intending to take some
rest,
And I did, till I found the money was melting fast
away,
When I searched the books and found, sir, that the busi-
ness had gone astray.

That partner of mine soon vanished with all the available
cash ;
He had ruined the firm in bills, sir, and naught could avert
a smash :
'Twas a blow that simply crushed me ; my ruin was
so complete,
That within a month from then, sir, we had scarcely food
to eat.

Ah ! many a time I've cursed him, the villain who spoiled
my life,
I prayed for vengeance once, sir, as I stood by my poor
dead wife,
For he, and he only, caused me the whole of my awful
woe,
And I prayed that God's wrath would follow wherever
the wretch should go.

Alone in the world, I glided down, down in the social
scale ;
Unable to find employment, my courage began to fail,
And weary of life and its burden, impelled by the hand of
Fate,
I flew to my only shelter inside of the workhouse gate.

Why did I leave it ? I'll tell you. The reason is strange
though true.
I hope you'll not think I am trying to hatch up a story for
you,
And pray do not think for a moment, I'm wanting to brag
of my acts,
I'll tell you the tale quite simply, confining it strictly to
facts.

'Twas only to-day it happened, though it seems a month
ago,
I was just outside of the gate, sir, a-sweeping away the
snow,
When a tattered, shivering stranger, with an air of fallen
pride,
Came up and asked me softly: 'Was there room for him
inside?'

I started, and eyed the speaker, for I thought that voice
I knew,
And he seemed to quail before me as I looked him
through and through ;
'Twas a mutual recognition, and there for a minute's
space
We two old City partners, stood silently face to
face.

My blood grew hot, and I shouted, as I clutched and held
him fast :
'You villain! till now you've 'scaped me, but my time ha
come at last,
I've a few old scores to settle before I can let you
go!
And with that I raised my fist, sir, to strike him a crushing
blow.

But just as the blow was falling, I fancied that I could
trace
A mute appeal for mercy in his thin and careworn
face,
And my blow went wide and harmless, for, bad as he once
had been,
I couldn't resist his glances, 'whatever the man might
mean.

With an effort, I curbed my temper, and instantly let him
go,
When he fell right down before me, on his knees in the
pure-white snow,
And he sobbed: "I crave forgiveness, the way has been
sharp and rough ;
'For God's sake spare your anger, my punishment's hard
enough !"

'Twas a struggle, but I forgave him, and showed him the
the way inside,
Though I knew he couldn't stay there, however much he
tried.
The wards were full, they told him, there wasn't a vacant
place,
And it went to my heart, that look, sir, on his pale and
shrunken face.

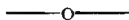
Then straight from the spot I darted, right into the Master's
room,
Took my discharge and went, sir, away from the place of
gloom,
Into a gloomier, maybe. You say, 'twas a foolish
whim!
Nay, sir, I left that workhouse to give up my place to
him.

That's all the revenge I've had, sir, a poor one you think,
no doubt ;
But I hope I shall never regret, sir, the morning that I came
out.
Even now, I am proudly conscious that I did what I
thought was right—
I thank you, kind sir ! God bless you ! A happy new year !
Good night !





CRIPPLED FOR LIFE:
A POLICEMAN'S STORY.



DO we have any accidents here, sir? Any children run over, you say?

Well, yes, but scarce any to speak of, and only just once in a way.

It's a wonder? You're right, that it is, sir, the crowds that are running about;

Lor' bless you, they don't care a button so long as they only get out.

There's just one case that I witnessed, the story's not often been told,

But I'll never forget it, sir, never, though I live to a hundred years old.

If you care just to listen a minute I'll tell that same story to you;

It's touching and sounds like a novel, but nevertheless it is true.

'Twas a Saturday afternoon, sir, on a beautiful summer's
day,
And dozens of bright little youngsters were out in this
street at play ;
And lor', they looked happy and healthy, 'twas the
pleasantest sight to see
The way they were running and jumping and clapping
their hands with glee.

They were some of 'em playing at hopscotch—a-hopping
and kicking a stone,
Whilst others, more witty and clever were making up
games of their own ;
The youngest of all in the gutters were mixing up mortar
and pies,
Whilst looks of enjoyment and pleasure shone out from
their bright little eyes.

The brightest and prettiest baby it was ever my lot to
see—
Just over a twelvemonth her age was, and some distant
relation to me—
Had crawled from the side of her sister, who ought to
have kept her in sight,
And was sitting out there in the road, sir, a-crowing with
all her might.

I wasn't on duty just then, sir, and it never struck me
there was harm,
Till, chancing to glance up the roadway, I started and
roared with alarm ;
For there, dashing swift round the corner, a fire-engine
tore up the street,
And the baby was left in the middle, in the track of the
horses' feet.

The men saw the child, and endeavoured to stop their
mad horses' career,
When out in the road dashed a youngster—I couldn't
help giving a cheer—
And he caught up the babe in an instant, then swiftly he
took to his heels,
But the engine was on him—he stumbled—and fell 'neath
the wild whirling wheels.

The baby was safe, Dick had saved her, by pushing her
out of the way ;
He had risked his own life, little hero, I'll always remem-
ber that day.
How they picked him up, just like a dead thing, and took
him directly to Guy's,
The thought of that scene makes me foolish, and brings
up the tears to my eyes.

But they found that he wasn't quite killed, sir, and after a
bit he got round ;
Though one of his legs was quite crippled, and couldn't
be put to the ground.
'Twas dreadfully hard on the youngster, he wasn't much
older than six,
For instead of his running and leaping, he could only just
hobble on sticks.

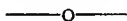
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Well, the baby grew up, so did Dick, sir, and just like the
people in plays,
They determined to love one another the rest of their
natural days ;
For Dick, he adored little Mary, and Mary, she wor-
shipped him,
And the least bit of extra devotion made up for the loss
of his limb.

The end of this story is strange, sir, you may not believe
it is true,
But it is, I can prove it, if need be, and will just to satisfy
you ;
If you'll just knock at No. 15, sir, you will see this same
Dick and his wife,
And he'll tell you he's never regretted the day he was
"crippled for life."



A BROKER'S DEVICE.



YES, you're right, sir ; we have to be artful, or else we should never get on ;
And as for the landlords, it's certain they'd only be trampled upon.
No ; it isn't the poor that give trouble ; they usually pay up the best ;
It's the shabby-genteel sort of people that put our astuteness to test.

Well, look here, sir, I'll spin you the story of one little case that I had ;
The house was just out in the suburbs, and the tenant was regular bad ;
Don't pity the chap—he's not worth it ; you know some like him, I dare say,
Who live all their lives upon others, yet are awful big swells in their way.

Well, the landlord he sent me the warrant for a "couple
of quarters" or so,
And I went in the usual manner, but discovered that it
was "no go."
He was rather too old to be caught, sir, and I saw with
professional eye
That I'd some little trouble before me, for my bird was
too wary and shy.

For a week I laid siege to the villa, but not a good chance
did I see,
They answered all calls by the window, and bolted the
door against me;
And the worst of it was, after sunset, he used to come out
and begin
To chaff in his bantering manner, and swear I should
never get in.

Then I dressed as a milkman one morning, determining
not to be bilked,
But he came to the window, and, smiling, said, "No, I
don't want to be *milked*."
And again with a parcel I tried him, but no, all my
tricks, big and small,
Were always found out by the rascal, and I could'nt get
access at all.

I made myself scarce for a week, sir, and carefully
thought of a plan,
For I didn't intend to be beaten, and vowed to get over
the man.
So I got my young fellow to help me, and, together we
started again,
In a way that looked silly enough, sir, but which happily
wasn't in vain.

We borrowed some measuring tapes, sir, and some other
surveyor's affairs,
And dressing up spicy and natty, proceeded to give our-
selves airs.
We stuck up our posts and looked over, in quite a pro-
fessional way,
And measured the road near the villa the whole of the
livelong day.

We appeared next morning again, sir, a-walking and
spying about,
The tenant was there at his window, a-watching our
movements, no doubt ;
But we never looked up at the villa, we seemed to have
plenty to do,
Though we knew not the use of our tools, sir, and no more
of surveying than you.

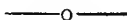
Then we measured the fence of his garden, and presently
out the man came ;
He wished us a very good morning, and of course, sir, we
wished him the same.
And he chatted and asked us our business, and we trumped
up a plausible tale
About land being wanted directly for a new branch line of
the rail.

Well, we grew so pleasant and friendly that he let us go
over his ground,
And we measured and then surveyed it, till all of a sudden
we found
That we'd have to just take the dimensions of the house
from the front to back,
And he granted permission " with pleasure," so we entered
the house " in a crack."

His face was study, I tell you, when on getting inside I
explained
That, according to landlord's instructions, for two quarters'
rent I distrained.
He was perfectly struck with amazement ; then, raving
and stamping, he swore
That from that day forth he would never trust " measuring
men " any more.



A NEGLECTED HERO.



IN a cold and dismal garret in a filthy London slum,
Where the cheering beams of sunlight very,
very rarely come.
Lay an aged man—a cripple—on an old and tattered
bed;
While beside him stood a lady—'twas to her the cripple
said:

“What’s the matter, did you ask, Miss? Well, I feel so
weak and queer;
And my heart beats fast and heavy, it’s a fever, Miss,
I fear.
You should not have ventured near me; you, perhaps
may catch it, too.
Not afraid? You’re awful plucky, and it’s very kind of
you.

“No, don’t go and fetch the doctor, I’ve no coin to pay
his bill;
Folks like us must take our chance, Miss, when we
happen to be ill.
And I’m not afraid of sickness, I can bear it like a
man;
As I bore it years ago, Miss, when the Russian war
began.

“Been a soldier? I believe you! why I served for fifteen
years,
And was once a smart young private in the grand old
Grenadiers.
Look you, Miss, I’ve got three medals, showing plainly
how I fought
For the honour of old England, when her voice was
set at nought.

I have braved two Russian winters, badly clothed and
badly fed;
Twice have I been wounded sorely, and been reckoned
with the dead.
Why, I lost my foot at Alma, when we stormed and took
the heights;
‘Twas a glorious battle, lady, and the best of all my
fights.

“I can picture it just now, Miss, and I fight it once
again,

Why I seem to hear the bullets, as they pelt like heavy
rain.

Hark! the stirring ‘Charge’ is sounding; up the moun-
tain’s side we go,

Caring nothing for our safety, so that we can meet
the foe.

“But those days are gone for ever; youth, and health,
and strength, all fled,

Here I lie in this cold garret, well-nigh starved for want
of bread.

Crippled in my country’s service, then discharged a
shattered man,

With a mean and paltry pension—that’s a grateful
country’s plan!

“I am bitter? Well I may be. Why should England
still forget

That she owes to her old soldiers an incalculable
debt?

She will spend her millions often, in a way that’s
indiscreet,

While some scores of her old vet’rans have not food
enough to eat.

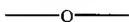
“ Don't excite myself ? I must, Miss, when I think upon
the past ;
Still, I'll have to keep more quiet, for my pulse beats very
fast ;
And I think I'm getting weaker, and its hard to get my
breath.
Oh, that on the heights of Alma, I had met a soldier's
death ! ”

Ere there dawned another morning, this old soldier passed
away ;
Quitting life's stern field of battle for the realms of
brightest day.
His true story makes us wonder. England ! 'tis a crying
shame,
That ye so neglect the heroes who have won you power
and fame !





CABBY'S ADVENTURE.



DID I tell you my adventure? Very well, old chap, I will.

(Only come inside the shelter, for it's cosy there, and still).

It is not a lengthy story, and, of course, I vouch it's true,

For it happened to myself, mate, so I know 'twill int'rest you.

I'd been plying all last Monday, from the morn till ten at night,

And had taken nought to speak of, so my temper wasn't bright ;

I was standing on the rank here, hoping soon to get a fare,

When I heard a voice call "Hansom!" from the other corner there.

I was over in a second, glad to get the smallest
job,
Even though I'd have to travel full two miles to earn a
"bob."
And I saw upon the pavement quite a seedy-looking
chap,
Clad in shabby, threadbare garments, and a slouched hat
minus nap.

He was in an awful hurry, whilst his face was pale as
death,
And he told his destination like a person out of
breath.
In he jumped, and off I started wondering what the man
could be,
For to tell the sober truth, mate, he had rather puzzled
me.

I was growing quite suspicious as I quickly drove
along,
For his manner seemed to tell me he was up to something
wrong ;
So, to satisfy my longing for a little extra proof,
I undid my little trap, mate, and I eyed him through the
roof.

He was sitting like on thorns, mate, and was fidgetting
about,
Then he suddenly, from somewhere, brought a pair of
pistols out.
I am not a nervous fellow, but it nearly "raised my
hair,"
When I saw him eye the weapons with a sort of loving
air.

It was risky thus to watch him, so I drew my eye
away,
But before I closed the trap, mate, I distinctly heard him
say,
In a voice of pent-up passion, like the villian at the
Vic,
"Gracious heaven, grant that I may yet have time to do
the trick!"

I was puzzled most completely, and I frankly own to
you
That I couldn't really settle what was best or right to
do;
Anyhow, 'twas my intention not to let the fellow
slip,
But to track him if I could, mate, or to give the police the
tip.

Well, we reached our destination; out he jumped and
paid his fare,

Then he darted round a turning just as hard as he could
tear.

I was after him directly (left my cab to take its
chance),

Vowing vengeance on the fellow who was "leading me a
dance."

I could see him on before me, running at an awful
rate,

While I tried my best to follow, though it wasn't easy,
mate.

All the shops had closed their shutters, barring one upon
the right,

And I staggered when I saw him make for this with all
his might.

"Now," thought I, "the end's approaching," as I saw
him rush inside;

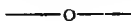
Quick as thought your humble servant followed with
avenging stride.

Mate, we'd gone into a pawnshop! I was done completely
brown!

For he just produced his pistols, and he *pawned them for a
crown.*



A NOBLE COSTER.



HERE you are, sir—that's Pincher, the coster,
the chap I was talking about ;
That's him with his donkey and barrer,
family out ;
He's nothink uncommon to look at, he lives like the rest
of us do,
And yet he's the best-hearted feller of any that ever I
knew.

It's four year ago, I should reckon, since Pincher and I
became chums.

When we lived at Whitechapel together in one of the
best of the slums ;

For Pincher was in the same business, and went to the
market with me,

So, of course, we got thick with each other, and at length
became partners, d'ye see.

Well, we worked up a donkey and barrer, and was
getting on swimmingly when
My partner fell slap into love, sir (like the rest of the soft-
hearted men),
With a pretty young girl in her teens, sir, and one that
seemed rather too smart
For a steady old file like my Pincher—howsomdever, she
captured his heart.

They were married in less than a month, sir, from the
time that their courting began,
And directly the two were united my chum seemed a
different man ;
For the new partner cut out the old 'un, so I very soon
left them alone,
And bought up a sturdy old donkey, and a neat little stock
o' my own.

Well, I lost sight of Pincher for weeks, sir, in the usual
struggle of life,
But I heard from a pal that poor Pincher had had a bad
time with his wife,
And that finally Jennie had left him, appearing to care not
a rap
For the husband who faithfully loved her, but eloped with
a sporting young chap.

Then I met Pincher up at the market, and I hardly believed
it were him,
He was altered so much through his trouble, and his eyes
had got sunken and dim,
And he said, as he "tipped me his flipper," "Old pal,
I've been left in the lurch,
But I know as you'll stick to old Pincher, and give me
your help in the search."

We went, and for days we were searching, but of Jennie
we found not a trace,
While the gloomy expression grew deeper on the sorrow-
ing Pincher's face.
I know if some men lost a wife, sir, they'd consider her
not worth a rap,
But my chum was a different feller—a regular fidgetty
chap.

We were sitting one night up at Pincher's and having a
bit of a chat,
When we heard a strange sound on the staircase, a sort
of a low pit-a-pat.
And then some one opened the door, sir, I was never so
struck in my life
As I was when I saw in the doorway the form of the run-
away wife!

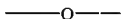
She fell on her knees before Pincher, "Oh! husband,
forgive me!" she cried,
"Don't curse me, I know I deserve it; but I'm sick of the
glitter outside!"
Then Pincher he went to her calmly, and I saw the salt
tears in his eyes,
As he kissed her on both of her cheeks, sir, and tenderly
helped her to rise.

He never reproached her, nor scolded, but spoke in his
calm, loving way,
And so touched the heart of his Jennie, that she hadn't
a sentence to say.
She'd expected, no doubt, to be beaten, and driven with
oaths from the door,
And warned by a furious husband not to get in his way
any more.

He took her back there on the instant, and they've lived a
bright life ever since,
They've a couple of fine little youngsters, and Pincher's
as proud as a prince.
Lots o' folks have called Pincher a fool, sir, but I'm fully
convinced that he ain't,
For in my estimation his action was worthy a Biblical
saint.



A MOTHER'S DARING.



DON'T you talk to me about women, as though they were timid and weak ;
You've not seen so many as I have, or that's not the way you would speak.

Why, bless you, there's some of the females have twice as much pluck as we men ;

You doubt it? Well, listen a moment, I'll tell you an anecdote then.

'Tis twelve months ago, mate, or nearly, since what I shall tell you occurred.

But I've never forgotten the story—'tis true, mate, not just what I heard.

And the subject's a female, a poor one, and not very lovely, I own,

But as noble and plucky a woman as any that I've ever known.

Nell Blake was an artisan's wife, mate, and she'd one
little maiden of three,
Whose manner was winning and pretty, and full of sweet
innocent glee.
And the mother was proud of her daughter (and her pride
was but natural too),
In fact she just cherished the maiden, as good mothers
usually do.

One day a menagerie came, mate, and halted quite
close to their street,
And Nell thought she'd take little Jessie, and give her a
bit of a treat.
So, dressing themselves in their neatest, they went on
the opening night,
Together with scores of the neighbours, all bent on
enjoying the sight.

They entered, and Jess was delighted, the scene was so
new to her eyes,
And now and again she would utter a word to express
her surprise ;
The tricks of the monkeys amused her, and she couldn't
refrain from a laugh,
When she noticed the neck of the creature Nell told her
was called the giraffe.

Well, all of a sudden the people came rushing along in a crowd,
With terror writ plain on their faces, while some of them
shouted aloud—
“The tiger’s broke loose, he is coming!” Nell heard and
was struck with dismay,
Then she turned to clasp hands with her daughter, and
hurry her out of the way.

But Jessie had gone; she had wandered to look at some
curious thing,
Not thinking what trouble and sorrow to a fond mother’s
heart it would bring.
Nell sought for her, called her in vain, mate, and her
fears and misgivings were such
That she felt her wee maiden was surely in the blood-
thirsty animal’s clutch.

Then her sensitive ear was smitten by the sound of her
daughter’s cry,
And frantic and breathless she darted to rescue her child
or to die.
In a moment she saw little Jessie, with staring eyes,
holding her breath,
While the tiger was crouching before her ere springing
to deal swift death.

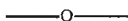
Nell Blake never halted a moment, but straight to her
child did she go,
Rushed in between her and the tiger, forgetting the
strength of her foe ;
She watched him for several seconds, then just as he
sprang at his prey,
She snatched up her child in an instant, and tried to get
out of his way.

She eluded his spring and she dodged him, but he caught
her a blow on the arm,
That caused her to reel in a swoon, mate, and made Jessie
shriek with alarm ;
Then quickly the mother recovered, and her joy surely no
one can tell,
When she heard the sharp crack of a rifle, and the
animal staggered and fell.

That's the anecdote ; how did you like it ? D'ye see you
were quite in the wrong,
And some women can beat the men, mate, although
they're not nearly as strong.
Don't you talk against women again, mate, for I think
everybody will own,
That if you cannot praise 'em a little, you'd far better
leave them alone.



BROUGHT BACK.



SHE wandered alone at midnight, through alley
and court and street,
Through the heart of the wealthy city, yet
starving for food to eat ;
Still on, though her feet were weary, and the wintry wind
blew keen,
Whilst her heart was nearly breaking at thought of the
“ might have been.”

Through her mind old scenes are passing, so vivid and
quick and clear ;
She can see the stile where Harold first met her and
called her “ dear : ”
And the old, sweet country village, where she lived in the
days gone by,
And where not a pang of sorrow e'er caused her a tear
or sigh.

Then again does her fancy paint her a picture of that gay scene,

When the wedding bells rang sweetly, and she was a sailor's queen.

But the vision melts, and quickly there flits through her haunted mind

The sight of her love departing, and leaving her sad behind.

He had gone to his duty bravely, away o'er the salt blue sea.

"Oh, God!" she prayed when he left her, "bring Harold again to me."

But months went by and he came not, and now two years had fled,

She had lost all hope, and mourned him as one who was surely dead.

She had wed against parents' wishes, they'd renounced her long ago,

And poverty's strong hand forced her to take to the needle and sew;

But she who had loved the country, and thrived in its pure, fresh air,

Soon pined in the crowded city, penned up in a workroom there.

Still on did she wander slowly, till, weary and well-nigh
spent,
Into one of the broad recesses on London Bridge she
went,
And peering just over the coping, she strains her eyes to
scan
The place beneath where swiftly the cold, black river
ran.

What horrible thoughts are coming! They tell her a
leap in there
Will ease her of all life's burdens, its pain and want and
care.
"Only one leap," she murmurs; "no more to be starved,
oppressed;
May be I shall meet my Harold in the far-off land of
rest."

She sprang on the bridge's coping, and gave just a glance
around.
No one in sight! 'Twas lucky! But her sharp ear
caught a sound.
'Twas a footstep coming quickly. Should she wait till it
passed her by?
No, she would plunge that instant. What matter who
saw her die?

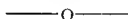
But a voice cries, "Hold! for God's sake!" She starts,
and falls from the ridge,
Not into the rushing river—not on to the hard, stone
bridge;
But a man's strong arms have caught her, she is gently
raised to her feet;
She turns, and they both are startled as soon as their
glances meet.

"Harold!" "Why, Bess, my darling!" The husband
and wife have met.
What pen can describe the gladness such meetings as
these beget?
Bess hardly believed her senses; she felt so supremely
blest,
As her weary head lay pillowed on her sailor husband's
breast.

He told how his ship had foundered, how he managed to
reach a shore,
Where he eked out an existence for eighteen months or
more,
Till rescued, he came to England to search for his poor
young wife,
And how he at last had found her, and brought her back
to life.



A CLERK'S RUSE.



YOU admire my gallant conduct? I am glad;
but still I fear
That my actions weren't so gallant and so brave
as they appear.

Ah! you haven't heard the details, and you want the
story through?

Well, I am not very busy, so I'll try and tell it you.

First of all, I'd like to mention, that we menials of the
pen

Often do not leave the City till the clocks are striking
ten.

I am used to this infliction, and, besides, I've extra pay;
But some firms will give you nothing, though you slave
the night away.

I was working late one evening in this little cosy
room,
All the clerks had left the building, which was quiet as the
tomb.
I was so absorbed in business that the time flew swiftly
by,
Till I found, all of a sudden, that eleven o'clock was
nigh.

Well, I thought I'd done enough, sir, so I put my books
away,
Locked my room, then down the staircase I with caution
took my way.
I had nearly reached the bottom, when I thought I heard
a sound ;
So I stopped awhile and listened, peering anxiously
around.

Yes ; I heard the noise again, sir, and I'd not the slightest
doubt
That somewhere within the building there were trespassers
about.
Then the question came before me, " Should I leave them
to their work ?"
But 'twas plain I had a duty that it wasn't right to
shirk.

So I crept back up the staircase, wond'ring how the case
would end,

When I thought I heard a footstep just beginning to
descend.

Was it real, or was it fancy? If 'tis true, how can I
act?

Then I saw a man was coming, and the footstep was a
fact.

Oh! that I had just a weapon; but I hadn't such a
thing;

I had nothing but a pipe case, and some keys upon a
ring.

Do you wonder I grew nervous?—in a moment we should
meet;

And I felt that it was certain I should get a sore
defeat.

Somehow, I betrayed my presence, and the fellow darted
back.

“Now,” thought I, “it's ‘neck or nothing,’” and I followed
on his track;

While I held my precious pipe-case like a pistol in my
hand,

And in very tragic accents I commanded him to
“Stand!”

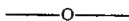
I was playing most high-handed, but it was my only
chance ;
So, as slowly he retreated, I continued to advance.
Vowing, in most boastful language, that if he attempted
flight,
I would pull my pistol's trigger, and would settle him
outright.

Then we got on to the landing, where a door stood open
wide,
Through this door the burglar vanished, slamming it
when safe inside ;
And I heard him give a chuckle, but I think it stopped
his grin
When I got my bunch of keys, sir, and securely locked
him in.

How I ended my adventure, you, of course, already
guess,
For a pair of City "bobbies" moved him to a "new
address."
As you heard the story through, sir, I am sure you must
have thought
There was nothing brave or gallant in the way the man
was caught.



THE LITTLE FIREMAN.



WHAT do you think o' my youngster—he's a likely lad, sir, eh ?

You would n't think he was a hero in the amateur-fireman way.

But he is. I can tell you a story that'll make you look and stare ;

How he brought down a lad at a fire, sir, from the top of that building there.

It's a hospital, that's what it is, sir ; and it's nearly a fortnight ago

Since a chum o' my Willy's went in, sir, on account of his health bein' low.

And my Will he got anxious and worried, for he missed his young playfellow bad,

And he went about gloomy and grumpy, and always looked lonely and sad.

He was constantly watching that window (the top one, up there to the right).

And I'm certain, if I would a-let him, he'd a-looked at it all through the night ;

For his playfellow's bed lay near it, and my Willy knew that quite well,

And to look at that window was pleasure, far more than we can tell.

Well, he kept like that for some days, sir ; he was always a-watching that place,

When he rushed in to me one evening, with a look of alarm on his face.

"It's on fire!" he shouted ; "oh ! father ; the hospital's all in a blaze !"

And he looked at me with such eyes, sir, that I shrank from his terrified gaze.

"Oh, father !" he cried in his terror, and he seemed nigh ready to drop,

"How can they get at poor Tommy ? he's right at the very tip-top,

It'll burn him right up to a cinder if he is obliged to stay ;

I'll run out and tell them to fetch him," and he instantly darted away.

I told him to stop, but he did'nt ; so I followed him, sir,
like mad,
But he went on ahead like an engine, and the crush was
fearfully bad ;
The hospital, sir, was a-burning, and the flames getting
fiercer and higher,
While the fireman were working their hardest to get some
control o' the fire.

They were fetching the patients out, too, sir, as quickly
as ever they could,
And the fire-escape men were all busy and doing a great
deal of good,
But the friends of the patients were watching to see that
they all were got out,
And above all the roar of the flames, sir, we presently
heard a shout—

“There's a boy at the top forgotten,” and I thought
o' my Will's little chum ;
And my eyes grew heavy and dim, sir, for the great salt
tears would come.
The fireman seemed well nigh distracted—the escape was
on fire at the top ;
And they said it was death to ascend it, for the ladder
would certainly drop.

But a lad dashed up that escape, sir, as it seemed to his certain death ;
While the crowd stood speechless and silent, and ev'ry one held his breath.
That boy was my Will, I could see him, by the light from the great red fire,
And I felt—well, I can't tell how, sir, as I saw him mount higher and higher.

For the ladder seemed all of a totter, but that boy of mine was so light
That he got to the window in safety ; and we saw him get in all right ;
But he came out again in a second, and he carried a small white pack ;
That boy had gone after his Tommy, and was bringing him down on his back.

Such a cheer rent the heavens just then, sir, as I never shall hear again ;
And the crowd got as mad as hatters, and shouted with might and main.
But the lads got down safe to the ground, sir, and both of 'em fainted away ;
For after that dreadful excitement, 'twas no wonder at all, I say.

What do you think of him now, sir? a likely lad, sir,
eh!

There's not many youngsters a-going as could act in that
sort of a way;

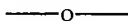
For he risked his own life for his playmate, and he's ready
to do it still,

So I hope there's no harm in my saying I'm proud of my
Fireman Will.





BOB'S MEDAL.
A BARGEE'S STORY.



THAT boy is a treasure—he is, sir, and wuth
his full weight in pure gold.
He don't look much like it, I own, sir, with his
garments so dirty and old!

His face would'nt hurt for a washin' and his hair wants a
touch with the comb,

But you won't find a pluckier chap, sir, I don't care
wherever yer roam.

He's not werry 'andsome, I reckon, his features is rather
too large,

But good looks ain't specially wanted aboard of an old
river barge.

I look at the actions o' youngsters, for that seems to me
a good test,

An' if they've got smartness and courage, I allers forgive
'em the rest.

Wot's he done? Why, he's allers a-doing; he bangs
all the boys that I know,
He's not up to much at his lessons, an', he's got no school
prizes to show;
But he holds something better than these, sir—a medal
he gallantly won
By saving the life of a baby—but I'll tell you just 'ow it
were done.

Our craft is a river barge really, but we do the canals
now and then;
I don't like it much, for my own part, though its pleasant
to see some o' the men.
It doesn't suit Bob, I can tell you; he likes to sail fast
with a breeze,
And not to be towed up a ditch, sir, by a horse that's
gone wrong at the knees.

We were bound up the Regent's Canal, sir, one morning
in last July;
We had been for a trip up the Mersey, and the end of
our journey was nigh;
So we took it quite easy, as usual, and left Master Bobby
to steer,
For we knew if young Bobby was helmsman that we should
have nothing to fear.

We journeyed on slowly, of course, sir, till we came to a
neat-looking bridge,
And a nurse-girl was standing upon it, a-holding a child
on the ridge.
I thought 'twas a foolhardy action, but still, 'twas no
business of mine,
To trouble with other folk's matters is not werry much in
my line.

We were just passing under the bridge, sir, when I heard
a loud shriek of alarm,
And it instantly struck me the baby had suddenly come to
some harm.
I saw something fall in the water, and I shouted to Bobby,
"Look there!"
He looked, and then darted slap over, with his heels right
up in the air.

He went for the child like a hero the moment he heard
the splash,
No stopping to ponder the question—he didn't consider
it rash ;
He saw that the child was in danger of filling an early
grave,
So over he went in an instant, to do what he could to
save.

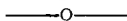
I jumped in the barge's old punt, sir, and pulled like mad
to the scene,
In time to haul in Master Bobby and the poor little babe
all serene.
It was just "touch and go" with the baby, 'twas some
time ere she came round,
And had Bob but delayed for two seconds, she certainly
would 'a been drowned,

Our Bob was a sort of a hero, at least for a couple of
days,
But he never got "uppish" about it—he cared very little
for praise.
It's that makes me like him the better, for the chap as I
hates the most
Is the one who can't do a brave action without he must
make it a boast.

The friends of the child came down 'andsome, and Bobby
got plenty of cash.
But he cared most of all for his medal, though even with
that he's not flash.
He keeps it inside of his jacket, done up in its black
leather case,
For he doesn't want that to prove pluck, sir; his certifi-
cate's there, in his face.



A WATCHMAN'S STORY.



RATHER monotonous life, sir? Well, yes, I just reckon you're right;

It isn't the liveliest calling to watch in a warehouse all night;

For solitude's all werry well, sir, for poets to praise and uphold,

But it's not werry nice for a watchman when the nights are so bitterly cold.

Do I mind it? Well, not on the whole, sir; you see I've got used to it now;

But when I first joined the perfession I couldn't get on anyhow.

For, you know, I was dreadfully startled the werry first night I began,

And that seemed to damp all my courage, and make me a fidgetty man.

'Twas a big "fancy firm" that engaged me, when some
of their workman were sacked ;
Their warehouse was simply gigantic, with all sorts of
valuables packed.
My duties were easy, though strict, sir, the place was put
under my care,
And I was responsible solely for all of the articles there.

Well, I started my watch about ten, sir ; of course, I
had nothing to do ;
But in walking about the warehouse, I spent a good hour
or two,
The silence was awful impressive—there wasn't the
sound of a mouse ;
And I sat down to rest for a moment, up there at the top
of the house.

Crash! I sprang to my feet in an instant, as I wondered
what noise it could be ;
The sound seemed to come from the basement—I would
travel down quickly and see.
So, taking my lantern in hand, sir, I made a most diligent
search.
But saw nothing strange or uncommon, and all was as
still as a church.

I turned and ascended the staircase, when I felt myself
forced to the ground,
And a man whispered, "Hist ! or I'll kill you ; don't utter
a single sound !"
Then he whistled a low, long whistle, and I heard the
quick shuffle of feet,
As three men came gliding in, sir, from out of the silent
street.

I can't tell exactly my feelings as I lay expecting death ;
I felt that I dared not move, sir ; scarce dared to take a
breath.
And my heart stood almost still, sir, and my blood seemed
turned to ice,
When the men produced some lashing, and bound me
up in a trice.

They suddenly left me, lying as helpless as man could
be,
While horrible thoughts came taunting, oppressing, and
worrying me.
I struggled to burst my bonds, sir, but a prisoner fast I
lay,
And I knew no help could reach me till the morn of the
coming day.

Then I fancied that something a-burning attracted my
sense of smell,
And a horrible dread possessed me, I seemed to be under
a spell.
For stronger and stronger the odour seemed rising from
under the floor ;
The place was on fire! I could feel it ; I swooned, and I
knew no more.

When I came to myself I was lying in a snow-white
hospital bed,
I was bandaged with wool all over, from the soles of my
feet to my head.
A fireman had rescued my life, sir, and not one minute
too soon,
For had he not stumbled upon me, I had never recovered
my swoon.

The villains who served me so badly were some of the
men who were sacked ;
They did it just out of revenge, sir, but I'm happy to say
they were tracked.
You wonder I keep to the business ? Well, p'r'aps it is
funny to you,
But, you see, I've a living to get, sir, and I've nothing
else better to do.



LOST AND FOUND:
A COMMISSIONAIRE'S STORY.



HAVE I an uncommon story that I can relate
to you?

Well, no doubt if I reflected I could think of
one or two.

Stay, I've one, maybe 'twould suit you, it is true although
'tis queer,
And 'twill pain me, but I'll tell it if you think you'd care
to hear.

You must know that I've a daughter who is very dear
to me,
She is pretty, though I say it, and as winsome as
can be;
I have no one else to care for, so as you may well
infer,
I became extremely careful who I let come courting her.

But with all my jealous watching I was foiled a month
ago,
For a dashing, handsome fellow that my Rose had got to
know,
Used to call when I was absent, and by means of
flattery's art
Led her to desert her father and to blight her own young
heart.

Well, I searched all London over, but my trouble was
in vain,
And, heart-broken, I concluded we should never meet
again ;
Maybe but for chance we shouldn't—"chance," I said,
but who can say
But that when my means were failing Providence sup-
plied a way ?

I was waiting here one morning, business being rather
slow,
When a stranger came and asked me if I were engaged
or no,
And when he had heard my answer, he a letter gave
to me,
With instructions where to take it, and a pretty decent
fee.

Off I started with the missive, which I noticed was
addressed
To a lady who was staying at a boarding-house up
West,
And I felt somewhat elated, for as near as I could
tell
Mine was quite an easy errand, and would pay me fairly
well.

I was thinking of my Rosie as I neared the quiet
street,
Wondering whether, if I found her, she would be as fair
and sweet
As she was before she left me—wond'ring if she'd ever
be
Just the same true-hearted daughter and as deeply fond
of me.

I had reached my destination, and I gave a postman's
knock ;
Quick as thought the door was opened—back I started
with the shock,
For I saw upon the threshold—ah! I doubt not you have
guessed—
Twas my Rose, and in a second she was folded to my
breast.

She was quivering like an aspen ; though she tried she
could not speak,
I could see that she had suffered and repented of her
freak.

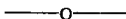
“ Rose,” I said, “ thank God your father loves and trusts
you just the same ;
Let him help you in the future to redeem a tarnished
name.”

Then she told her story sadly ; how that she'd been led
away
By the villain's flattering promise that he'd marry her
one day ;
How at first she trusted in him, and the way seemed
bright and fair,
How at length she saw her folly and was seized with
grim despair.

'Twas her letter I was bringing, written by the wretch
himself ;
He, like children, tired of playthings, and would throw
them “ on the shelf.”
I trampled on his vile excuses, looked with grateful eyes
above,
And murmured, “ God be thanked ! my Rose is sheltered
by a father's love.”



A BRAVE WOMAN.



TALKED with a stalwart young seaman last week on Ratcliffe Highway ;
He belonged to the crew of a steamer that was wrecked in Aberdour Bay.

And I asked him if he would mind telling the way he was saved from the sea ?

Then (excepting the rhyme) he narrated the following story to me :—

“ Well, you see, we had started for home, sir, and were anxious to get on our way ;

When it came on to blow big guns, sir, as we stood off Aberdour Bay.

But our craft was so sturdy a steamer, that we laughed and thought light of the gale,

For no matter how angry the weather, we never had known her to fail.

“ But accidents weaken the strongest, and our skipper’s
brown face grew long,
When a message came up from below, sir, ‘that the
engines had all gone wrong,’
Then we set to and hoisted what canvas we thought that
the vessel would bear,
And tried to beat clear of the bay, sir, for the gale was
driving in there. .

“ But, no ; it was useless our trying, for the wind blew so
frightfully hard,
That on to the shore, to leeward, the ship drifted yard
after yard.
The skipper roared, ‘ Let go the anchor ! ’ We did so, our
drifting was checked ;
But we knew if the cable should snap, sir, the ship would
be certainly wrecked.

“ The billows dashed over, around us, as though mad that
we held our own ;
Then ‘ crack ! ’ ’twas the cable parting, and our hearts seemed
turned into stone.
Once more we were driven shorewards, this time at a
furious rate ;
There was nothing could possibly check us, so the steamer
rushed on to her fate.

“ Then we felt her quiver and shudder, as she struck on
the pebbly beach,
And we looked with despair at the shore, sir, that, living,
we could not reach ;
For the surf was boiling and hissing, and dashing with all
its force,
And no man could have swum to the land, sir, not if
he'd the strength of a horse.

“ There was only one woman ashore there, and we'd
hardly a glimmer of hope,
Yet I managed to screw up my spirits, and determined to
throw her a rope ;
I tried, but too great was the distance ; and, despairing, I
saw it fall short ;
But that woman, dashed into the surf, sir, and the next
time I threw it 'twas caught.

“ God bless her ! she caught up that rope, sir, and in
spite of the boisterous sea,
She wound it three times round her body, and up from the
water went she ;
And she beckoned us each to come quickly, but we thought
that 'twould be but in vain ;
For no woman alive, we murmured, ' can stand such a
terrible strain !'

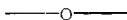
“But yet we would try, for 'twas certain delay meant a
terrible death ;
So we started a man on the voyage, whilst the rest of the
crew held their breath.
There, ‘hand over hand’ he travelled, whilst as firm as a
rock stood she,
Till at length the seamen was saved, sir, from the clutch
of the merciless sea.

“Then one after the other we followed, till the whole of
the crew were on land.
Oh ! you ought to have seen us struggling for a grasp of
that brave woman’s hand !
It may seem very foolish to you, sir, but I felt almost ready
to cry ;
And there wasn’t a sailor amongst us but what had a tear
in his eye.

“I know ev’ry true-hearted Briton will praise this true
heroine’s act ;
It isn’t a jumble of fiction, but a plain, undeniable fact.
I declare she’s as plucky a woman as any of which I have
read ;
Quite fit to take rank with Grace Darling and the Women
of Mumbles Head.



AN IDIOT'S GALLANTRY.



D'YE see that peculiar object there, standing
against the lamp ;
That one with gawky limbs, sir, and face of an
idiot stamp ?

That's Jerry, as brave a young fellow as ever I wish to
know,
I'll tell you a story about him, if you're in no hurry
to go.

You know he's a little bit silly, his head-piece has always
been wrong ;
But though he is weak in the brain, sir, his limbs are
amazingly strong.
He's simple and quiet enough, sir, unless he is bustled
about,
And then without any exertion he puts his tormentors
to rout.

You've heard how they often take fancies—peculiar fancies, you know?

Well, Jerry was taken with one, sir, ten days or a fortnight ago.

For a sweet little golden-haired lassie had met him one morning and smiled,

So from then he conceived it his duty to guard and watch over the child.

He found where she lived, in the square, sir, and every day he'd be there,

And watch her go out in the morning with her nurse in a carriage and pair.

The horses were capital "steppers," but Jerry could run like the wind,

And just like a dog he would follow at some little distance behind.

If she didn't go out, he would watch, sir, for hours and would never stir;

'Twas well that her friend and protector became so devoted to her;

For the time soon came when she needed his strength and devotion most,

And lucky for her that young Jerry was found at his favourite post.

She went for her drive one morning, with Jerry
a-trotting behind,
The pace of the horses was rapid, but he didn't seem
for to mind.
When, just as they got to the Park, sir, the horses were
seized with a fright,
And, in spite of the coachman, they turned, sir, and
bolted with all their might.

Their iron-shod hoofs struck fire, sir, as they dashed
towards Jerry like mad,
And I shivered and muttered a prayer for the simple,
idiot lad.
But still as a statue he stood, sir, till he almost felt their
breath,
When he swerved, then clutched their bridles, and stuck
to them like grim death.

Full many a yard they dragged him, but his sinews
began to tell,
As he tugged at their bits his hardest, and struck at
their heads as well.
They tried, but they couldn't resist him, his blows were
far worse than the whip,
And finally they gave in, sir, to his powerful, vice-like
grip.

Jerry took to his heels and ran, sir, when he knew that
the child was saved ;

'Twas only for her he had acted, and a horrible death
had braved.

They offered him money ; he laughed, sir, and refused
in his simple style,

For the only reward he cared for was the little one's
grateful smile.

Folks say it was purely his madness that caused him to
seize the reins ;

I think that a gleam of reason shot into his clouded
brains.

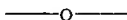
He might have got out of the way, sir, but he stood like a
lump of stone,

Then struggled to save *her* life, sir, at the risk of losing
his own.





HUNTING A MADMAN.



DON'T say that you think me courageous, for
that's an assertion I doubt,
I did what I thought was my duty, and it's
nought to go boasting about.

I will tell you the truth of the story, and I think you will
easily see

There is nothing about the achievement to give any
honour to me.

I was up at my station one morning, attending to trains
as they came,

And as I was crossing the line, sir, I heard some one call
me by name ;

I turned and beheld an old schoolmate, who was up on
the platform behind,

Who said he was going to London with a gent who was
out of his mind.

The madman was standing beside him, as quiet and
meek as could be,
He looked quite as sane as his keeper, as he courteously
nodded to me ;
And my friend said at times he *was* harmless, whilst
at others his fury was such
That a person unused to such people would be just like
a child in his clutch.

Then a down train ran into the station, and I had to cross
over the line,
But when it had gone I returned, sir, when I saw that
old schoolmate of mine
Fall, struck by the hand of the madman. I took in the
scene at a glance,
As the madman leaped on to the rails, sir, to make the
best use of his chance.

I thought it was right to pursue him, so I went for him
just like a shot,
For I feared what would happen to him, sir, if into the
tunnel he got.
On he went, without halting an instant, right into the
darkness and gloom,
While I ran like the wind, sir, to save him from meeting
a horrible doom.

The up train was due in a minute—how I hoped I might reach him ere then!

Then the thought of his strength burst upon me, for I'm not the strongest of men;

Still, I wouldn't go back, I would risk it, and put up with a bit of a strife,

If I could but reach him and keep him from foolishly losing his life.

Directly I entered the tunnel I was caught in a terrible grip,

And I lost all hope as my captor clutched my throat in a vice-like nip.

Yet I struggled as well as I could, sir, and I managed to loosen his clasp,

But he flew at me then like a tiger, and again I was tight in his grasp.

I heard the loud screech of the engine as the up train came dashing along,

And I fought with my foe like a trooper, but the madman was terribly strong.

Down, down, I was forced to the ground, sir, and my heart was beginning to quail,

While the lunatic grinned as he held me on the dangerous up line of rail.

I could see the red light of the engine as it shone through
the thick, murky gloom ;

Along came the train, and I shuddered as I thought of
our terrible doom.

All at once the man noticed the light, sir, and I fancied
his grasp grew slack ;

So, exerting myself, I sprang upwards, and sent him
right on to his back.

I had thrown him quite clear of the metals, and I quickly
avoided the train,

Ere it swiftly rushed over the spot, sir, where a moment
ago I had lain.

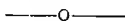
How thankful I felt you may guess, sir, my peril had not
been in vain,

For in less than two minutes the madman was safe with
his keeper again.





AT THE WORKHOUSE GATE.



MOLLY, my lass, I'm a coward, for the very first
time in my life,

For I haven't the pluck to enter, and be parted
from you, old wife.

Long years we've been linked together, and come foul
weather or fair,

We've never lost sight of each other, but we shall if we
go in there.

D'ye think of the years gone by, dear, since the time
that I courted you,

When down the lanes in the country like the birds
we'd bill and coo ;

And the night when I said I loved yer, and yer promised
to be my wife,

And when both of us vowed we'd never be parted in this
'ere life ?

D'ye mind when we came to London, with hopes that
were full and bright,
And how hard we laboured together from morning till
late at night?
The money came rolling in quickly, and we carefully put
it away,
But'twas swamped in that rascally failure, and we have n't
a farthing to-day!

Then I met with my accident, Molly, and quite lost the
use of my arm,
I shall never forget, my old darling, how you nursed me
so tender and calm;
Why, I couldn't feel pain with your nursing, your ways
were so cheery like,
Though you were sorely tried, lass, by your restless,
fidgetty Mike.

Ah! since that unlucky tumble we've been kept on a
downward course;
It seems as though we've been crushed, lass, by some
hidden, powerful force.
Till now, though we've fought and struggled, and every
move we've tried,
Yet, we're close to the workhouse threshold—one step,
and we stand inside.

They tell me it's warm in there, wife, and they gives yer
some food to eat,
There's a snug little bed to sleep in, and togs that are
clean and neat.
Maybe its the truth that they tell me; but, still, it would
break my heart.
Though the place were a heavenly mansion, if you, dear,
and I must part.

Tis strange in a place like England, that people should so
forget,
That human love gets stronger, the nearer the grave
we get;
And they ought to allow an old couple, who are used to
each other's ways,
To be happy in sight of each other the rest o' their
natural days.

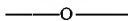
Come, wife, it is getting so chilly; shall we venture inside
or no?
'Twill be hard for me, but for your sake, if you say the
word we'll go.
Maybe they'll let me see you on a proper visiting
day—
I leave it with you, old Molly, 'tis for you to say yea or
nay.

No! Do you mean it, Molly? You would sooner stay
outside,
And, living, or starving, you'd rather keep close to your
old Mike's side?
God bless you, old dear! then together we'll live, and
together we'll die;
And we'll meet in the land of plenty I've heard of beyond
the sky.





THE VICTORIA CROSS.



WHO is that gent in the carriage, and why did he nod to me ?

He once was a comrade of mine, sir, and fought by my side, d'ye see,

He's a noble young fellow, and handsome, with none of your paltry pride ;

I'll tell you a bit of his story, if you care just to step inside.

Soon after he entered the regiment a lady was sweet on our Jack ;

She was pretty, and young, with money, and he couldn't help loving her back.

But he suffered for this, his presumption, for the adjutant worshipped her, too,

And, of course, he came down on the private and worried him all he knew.

However, Jack bore it all bravely, and courted the lady
the while,
While we who were up to the story, would oft at the
adjutant smile,
For he couldn't conceal his displeasure, and his every look
seemed to say—
“ All right, my fine, tender young fellow, I'll be even with
you some day.”

Then a war broke out and the regiment was sent to a
different clime,
To the lady, our Jack, and his rival, no doubt 'twas a
serious time.
But affairs of the heart have to wait, sir, when soldiers
are ordered to fight,
Still the strongest of love gets stronger when its objects is
out of sight.

We'd been out for just over a month, sir, when the enemy,
thousands strong,
Showed over the heights in front, sir, and harassed us all
day long.
We shelled them and tried many dodges, but all were of
little avail,
And we lay down to sleep that evening exposed to the
foe's leaden hail.

Next morning the foeman descended and charged us with
sword and spear,
While we mowed them down with our rifles to the tune of
a rattling cheer.
But the rest came on like a whirlwind to crush our
compact little band,
And with courage that couldn't be slighted they fought
with us hand to hand.

Jack and I stood shoulder to shoulder—we were right in
the thick of the fight,
And the adjutant, too, was quite near us, a slashing out
left and right.
But he suddenly fell—Jack saw him, and uttered a loud,
sharp cry ;
Then he rushed from my side, in an instant, to succour
his rival or die.

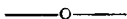
As he dashed to the crowd I shuddered, but his arms
were brawny and strong,
And back from his prostrate rival he scattered the dusky
throng.
He was bleeding from many a wound, sir, but still he
kept fighting away,
Till his comrades came up to assist him, and speedily
settled the fray.

He gained the Victoria Cross, sir ; none ever deserved it
more,
But it wasn't by this distinction that our hero set much
store ;
For he won, when he nobly darted to the wounded
officer's side,
The friendship of all the regiment, and a wealthy, fair,
young bride.





A MOTHER'S CRY.



WHAT a struggle 'tis to live,
In this grasping, harassing age ;
Though I'm stitching away through the live
long day

I can earn but a paltry wage.
Stitching, stitching—two children have I,
To be clothed, and warmed, and fed,
So in sorrow and pain, with a reeling brain,
I stitch for my children's bread.

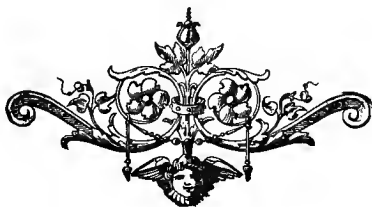
To the poorhouse I cannot go—
I should die of a broken heart,
So I'll turn my face from that pitiless place
Where my children and I must part.
Stitching—stitching—together we'll stay,
And live by the needle and thread ;
For as long as I've breath, I'll fight grim death,
And stitch for my children's bread.

It's my health and strength I need ;
Had I these I would never complain,
But I'm tired, and faint, through an old complaint,
And I seldom am free from pain.
Stitching—stitching—from dawn of day,
Till the midnight hours have sped,
With an aching heart, and fingers that smart,
I stitch for my children's bread.

Hark ! my babies with hunger cry—
Help me, God ! to struggle on still,
As I stitch, stitch, stitch, to make men rich,
Whilst I'm starving, and cold, and ill.
Stitching—stitching—while eyelids droop,
And while burning tears I shed,
Far into the night, by a candle's light,
I stitch for my children's bread.

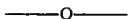
Oh, that I might rest awhile
From this wearing, worrying work !
But this fact I dread : no work, no bread,
And my stitching I dare not shirk.
Stitching—stitching—the night begins,
The long cold nights I dread ;
And half in the grave, I work, and slave,
And stitch for my children's bread.

I feel as if death were near,
So exhausted and chilled am I ;
And I shudder and shrink, as I strive to think
How the babes will fare when I die,
Stitching — dying — my work not done —
If to-morrow should find me dead,
God help the rich, when I cannot stitch
To provide for my children bread.





THE MODERN SCHOOLBOY.



HE sits in the great big school,
With a face so thin and pale,
Striving to cram for the next exam.,
For he knows he must not fail.

He is hungry, and cold, and faint,
He would be a scholar, but can't ;
Yet he toils to earn for his teacher stern,
A larger Government grant.

No breakfast again to-day
(For father is out of work) ;
His clothes are old and the day is cold,
But lessons he dare not shirk.
Grammar, and science, and sums,
Botany, Latin, and Greek ;
Over these and more he must sit and pore,
Though his brain be dizzy and weak.

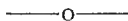
How hard he strives to learn !
But flesh and blood are weak,
And the tear-drops chase down his careworn face
As he looks at the difficult Greek.
Oh, what a banquet is there
For the scholar of classical lore !
But to this poor lad so hungry and sad,
A crust would be worth far more.

He knows he is not too wise,
And he dare not get behind ;
So with might and main he strives again
To feast on the food for mind.
But his eyes grow heavy and dim,
And his face wears a hopeless look,
While with aching head, and longing for bread,
He scans the perplexing book.

Scarce ten years old is he,
Yet he seems a stunted man,
For his face, once fair, is worn with care,
On the mighty School Board plan.
His blue eyes, once so bright,
Are heavy, and dull, and dim,
While his heart, once gay, is seared to-day,
And all through a Parliament whim.



HOPE ON!



HOPE on! though gloomy clouds are gath'ring
o'er thee,
And all above, around, is dark and chill,
Thou know'st not what bright paths are yet before
thee ;
Dismiss thy fears! press onward, hoping still.

Hope on! when life seems dreary, dull, and cheerless—
Hope on! for happy days will come again ;
We cannot wish our lives for ever tearless,
For brightest sunshine follows after rain.

Hope on! when storms of fierce vindictive rancour
Strive hard to cast thee on the dread lee-shore;
Hope on! and let go Hope's strong trusty anchor,
Then wait with patience till the storms blow o'er

Hope on ! when thou thy fragile bark art steering
 'Mid rocks, and shallows, and in currents swift—
Hope on ! and let this thought be sweet and cheering:
 With Hope for helmsman thou wilt never drift.

Hope on ! though men are cold and unforgiving,
 Think not the world no sympathy contains ;
Warm, loving hearts there are among the living,
 That throb with pity for a neighbour's pains.

Hope on ! when life seems hardly worth defending,
 When hope is drooping and when love has fled ;
Hope on ! the darkest day must have an ending,
 Revive the joy that sleeps, but is not dead !

Hope on ! dispel each gloomy, vague repining,
 Look upward ! full of faith, and hope, and love ;
Then through the cloud-rifts where the sun is shining,
 Thou'lt catch a glimpse of glorious Hope above.



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