

**W. H. Davies**



**The Autobiography  
of a Super-Tramp**

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# **The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp**

**(The life of William Henry Davies)**

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# Chapter 1

## Childhood

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I WAS born thirty-five years ago, in a public house called the Church House, in the town of Newport, in the county of Monmouthshire. It was kept by my grandfather, native of Cornwall, a retired sea captain, whose pride it was, drunk or sober, to inform all strangers that he had been master of his own ship, the said ship being a small schooner. In those days there was a steam packet, called the *Welsh Prince*, trading regularly between Newport and Bristol, and in the latter town we had relatives on my grandmother's side. The fact of the matter was that my grandmother belonged to Somerset, and she often paid a visit to three maiden sisters, first cousins of hers, living, I believe, near Glastonbury, who had a young relative that had gone on the stage, and was causing some stir under a different name from his own, which was Brodrib. My grandmother held very strong opinions about the stage, and when these first cousins met, no doubt the young man, in those early days, was most severely discussed, and, had he not been a blood relation, would have been considered a sinner too far advanced for prayer.

My earliest recollection is of being taken as a small boy with an elder brother to Bristol on the *Welsh Prince* by my grandfather. I believe the frequency of these trips was mainly owing to the friendship existing between the two captains, as my grandfather seldom left the bridge, taking a practical part in the navigation of the ship and channel —

except at times to visit the saloon cabin for a little refreshment.

On one trip we had a very stormy passage, and on that occasion the winds and the waves made such a fool of the *Welsh Prince* that she — to use the feminine gender, as is the custom of every true mariner, of one of whom I am a proud descendant — often threatened to dive into the bowels of the deep for peace. It was on this occasion that my grandfather assisted the captain of the *Welsh Prince* to such purpose that people aboard acclaimed him as the saviour of their lives, and blessed him for the safety of the ship. It is not therefore to be wondered at when the old man ashore, returning at midnight from this rough voyage with me and my brother, would frequently pause and startle the silent hour with a stentorian voice addressed to indifferent sleepers — “Do you know who I am? Captain Davies, master of his own ship.” Whether the police were awed by this announcement, or knew him to be an honest, respectable man with a few idiosyncrasies, I cannot say; but it was apparent to me in those young days that they assisted him home with much gentleness, and he was passed on carefully from beat to beat, as though he were a case of new laid eggs.

Alas! the *Welsh Prince* became childish in her old age. She would often loiter so long in the channel as to deceive the tide that expected her, and to disappoint a hundred people who assembled on the bridge — under which she moored — to welcome her. What with her missing of tides, her wandering into strange courses, her sudden appearance in the river after rumours of loss, her name soon became the common talk of the town. Her erratic behaviour became at last so usual that people lost all interest as to her whereabouts, or whither she had wandered, and were contented to know that she arrived safe, though late. They were not curious to know if she had been dozing in a fog or had rested for a day or two on a bank of mud; whatever she



had done, she had been too wary to collide, and, being too slow to dash through the waves, had allowed them to roll her over with very little power of resistance. These things happened until she was condemned and sold, and her mooring place to this day is unoccupied by a successor. When I now cross the bridge and look down on her accustomed place, I think with tender emotion of the past. After the *Welsh Prince* had been deposed in her old age, accused of disobeying captain and crew, charged with being indifferent to her duties, and forgetful of her responsibilities — her captain, losing his beloved ship, idled a few months ashore and died. No doubt he had grown to love her, but she had gone beyond the control of living man, and a score of the best seamen breathing could not have made her punctual to her duties; therefore he could not reasonably answer the charges made against her. Some other company, it was rumoured, had chartered her for the Mediterranean, which would certainly be much better for her time of life; the Mediterranean being so large a body of water as compared with the Bristol Channel, would allow her more scope for manœuvres. But all this was idle talk, probably a profane sneer at her old age, for it was told me by an eye-witness, that she was run ashore in an isolated pool at the mouth of the river, stripped unceremoniously of her iron, and her wood-work burned. It is only a few years ago since the river was hers, but her name is seldom mentioned at the present day.

It was through being born in a public house that I became acquainted with the taste of drink at a very early age, receiving sups of mulled beer at bed time, in lieu of cocoa or tea, as is the custom in more domestic houses. So that, after my school days were over, I required but very little inducement to drink.

At last the old people, being tired of business and having a little property, retired into private life; my father, whom I cannot remember, being dead, and my mother marrying the

second time, much to the old folks' annoyance. Their own children having all died, they kindly offered to adopt us three children, the only grandchildren they had; and mother, knowing that such would be to our future benefit, at once agreed. When we were settled in private life our home consisted of grandfather, grandmother, an imbecile brother, a sister, myself, a maidservant, a dog, a cat, a parrot, a dove, and a canary bird. I remember those happy days, and often wish I could speak into the ears of the dead the gratitude which was due to them in life, and so ill returned.

My school days began, but I played truant day after day, and the maidservant had to lead me as a prisoner to school. Although small of figure I was a good athlete, and so often fighting that some of my relatives thought that prize fighting was of a certainty to be my future vocation. Mother's father and brothers all took great interest in pugilism, and they knew the game well from much practice of their own. They were never so much delighted as when I visited them with a black eye or a bloody nose, at which time they would be at the trouble to give cunning points as to how to meet an opponent according to his weight and height. "He certainly has the one thing essential," they affirm, one to the other, "and that is the heart. Without that experience would be of no account, but with that it will be the making of him." If I took off my coat to battle in the streets, the shirt itself came off in the lanes and fields. When attending school I would accompany a dozen or more boys "following the leader." Needless to say, I was the leader; and, being a good jumper, would leap over ditches that would try every nerve in my body. Two or three would follow a little less successfully, and then we would bully and threaten the less active to make the attempt. Often we had to drag them out by the hair of the head, and it was in this condition that they were led back to school late — always late. The dirtiest boy, who had had the most pressure put upon him, and was truly the most gentle and least guilty of



us all — would be punished the most severely for these escapades, owing to his dirtier condition; and most likely receive more punishment afterwards at home. Strange that I was not a bad scholar, and that I passed all my standards with ease. In the last year of my school days I became captain of the school's football team, and was honoured and trusted by being allowed to take charge of the ball, but owing to making private use of the same, and practising in secret with boys of other schools, I was requested by the Committee to forfeit my trust, although I might still continue captain as aforesaid. If I had been contented with these innocent honours, and had not been so ambitious to excel in other and more infamous parts, all would have been well, and my schooldays would have been something of a credit to me. But unfortunately, at this time, I organised a band of robbers, six in number, and all of good families and comfortable homes. It was our wont to enter busy stores, knowing that small boys would not be attended to until the grown people had finished their purchases. Then we would slyly take things up for a curious examination, at the same time watching a favourable opportunity to surreptitiously appropriate them. When accosted by the shopman as to our wants we would innocently ask the price of some article we had agreed on, and receiving answer, would quietly leave the premises. This went on for some time, and I had nefariously profited by a large assortment of miscellaneous articles, such as paints, brushes, books, bottles of scent and various other items that could not be preserved, such as sweets and confectionery. How this continued for six weeks speaks well for our well laid plans, and our dexterity in the performance of them. My girl, Maggie, who had, during our early acquaintance, received only presents of wild flowers and birds' eggs, and occasionally a handful of nuts, was now the happy possessor of valuable presents in the shape of purses, pocket books, bottles of scents, pencils of silver, not to mention having received a hundred different sorts of

sweets and cake that was superior to her mother's. Time after time she promised not to betray me; or any of my confederates. The latter often warned me against reposing confidence in the other sex. One produced a book, at that very moment, which told how a woman betrayed a gang of robbers; and it was his firm opinion that the other sex could not be trusted farther than they could be seen.

At home I was cured of thieving by what I thought at that time to be a very remarkable incident — no more or less than the result of witchcraft. One day my grandmother happened to be standing before the fire cooking, and above the fireplace was a large mirror, towards which her eyes were turned. Thinking this a favourable opportunity to rifle the sugar basin, I lost no time in making the attempt; but my fingers had scarcely closed on a large lump when the old lady, without in the least turning her head, cried in a shrill voice, "You dare!" For my life I could not account for this discovery, and it sent such a shock through me that I never again attempted in the old lady's presence to be other than honest. She could close her eyes in the arm chair and even breathe audibly, but I never had the confidence to make another attempt. But this incident at home had no detrimental effect on my courage abroad.

One day I and my lieutenant played truant from school, and making our way up town, began to execute various little plans that had been concocted the night before. After several desperate sorties on confectionery, with our usual success, we began to meditate on higher game. We blundered at a cigar case in a chemist shop, and had to leave our spoils behind. Although fearful, we entered a large grocery store, and were having great success, when my lieutenant dropped a bottle of scent, and not having the presence of mind to stand his ground and make it appear an accident, made a guilty rush through the open door. I followed him at once, and catching him up, got clear ahead. But the hue and cry was out, and every one shouted, "Stop

thieves!" This terrible cry, taken up by one and another, took all the strength out of our legs, and our own sheer terror brought us to a halt. In five minutes we were captured and crying over our ill luck in a prison cell. We made a confession of everything, and the rest of the gang were soon under arrest. Our houses were visited by detectives and searched, and different articles found in cupboards, drawers, desks, and chests which were soon identified by the shopkeepers. Maggie, at the instigation of her mother, gave several articles to the police, with information, proving to me, even in those early days, how little her sex was to be trusted. The unfortunate part of this was that we all had good homes. My grandfather would most certainly have paid a fine of twenty or thirty pounds to save me from punishment, and offered, I believe, to do the same. Alas! the magistrates were inexorable, and I and my lieutenant were sentenced each to twelve strokes with the birch rod, whilst the other four, not being caught red-handed, received six strokes each. I do not at present feel much remorse for those desperate times, but often think of the disgrace to parents. The kindly admonishment of my schoolmaster made me shed the real tears of repentance, not being forced from me by any thought of punishment. This ended my schooldays; and after the breaking up of our gang, I was not allowed much liberty, our elders being afraid of a reorganisation. When I was allowed out for an hour's play, strict injunctions were given me not to leave our own door, and this was not much to my liking. In the dark winter evenings I would sit with my grandfather, my brother and sister, painting ships or reading before a large fire that was never allowed to burn below its highest bar. My grandfather, with his old habits, would pace slowly up and down the half dark passage, shutting himself out in the cold. Every now and then he would open the front door to look at the stars or to inform himself from what latitude the wind blew. The wind never changed without his knowledge; for this wary mariner

invariably surprised it in the act of doing so. Three or four times in the evening he would open the kitchen door to see that his family were comfortable, as though he had just made his way from the hurricane deck to enquire after the welfare of passengers in the cabin. When this was done, the old lady would sometimes say, rather peevishly, "Francis, do sit down for a minute or two." Then he would answer gruffly, but not unkindly — "Avast there, Lydia," closing the door to begin again his steady pacing to and fro.

At this time I had a boy companion, named Dave, who was a great reader, had enough self-confidence to recite in public, and was a wonderful raconteur of tales. Great things were expected of him in after years. I have heard since that intemperance prevented their fulfilment, but we were too innocent in those days to think that such would be the case. Through him I became a reader, in the first place with an idea of emulating his cleverness, which led to a love of literature for its own self. Of course I began with the common penny novel of the worst type, but acquired a taste for better work in a shorter time than boys usually do.

# Chapter 2

## Youth

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LIFE was very irksome to me at this period, being led to chapel morning and evening on Sundays, and led back; having the mortification of seeing other boys of the same age enjoying their liberty. The only way to alter these conditions was to apply for work. This was soon done, hiring myself out to an ironmonger, at a weekly wage of five shillings. The old people now began to take a pride in me, advising me to study my master's interests, and without doubt succeed to his business at his decease. My brother, two years my senior, who, as I have said before, was odd in his behaviour, took example by me, and succeeded in being employed at a large clothing establishment. It was there and then that he began and finished his life's work in half a day. Having been sent to the dock with a large parcel valued at two pounds ten shillings, he found on arrival that the *Betsy Jane* was moored in the middle of the dock. My brother, seeing this, and not being blessed with inventive faculties, placed the parcel on the quay and returned to his master. Naturally the shopkeeper thought it was safely delivered, until the captain of the *Betsy Jane*, coming straight from his ship, entered the shop to make enquiries about his goods. My brother, having a clear conscience, explained matters in his simple way to the open eyed astonishment of his hearers. The result was a summary dismissal, and a letter to my grandfather requesting him to make good the loss of the parcel; which was duly done, my grandfather being extremely afraid of the law. The old

people would never admit that my brother was different from other boys, although it was apparent not only to grown folk, but to the smallest child in the street. Some days before the affair just mentioned my grandmother, having to answer the door, ordered my brother to watch some fish, which was being prepared for dinner. When she returned, the cat was enjoying a good meal under the sofa. To the old lady's cry of "Francis, did I not tell you to watch the fish," my brother answered truthfully: for he always told the truth and did what he was told — "So I did, grandmother, and the cat took it." If she had explained to him properly why she wanted the fish watched, at the same time making special mention of a cat's partiality for fish, no doubt he would have watched to better purpose.

Nothing could have happened better than this instance of the loss of the ship's goods to undeceive my grandfather as to my brother's state of mind. A sudden blaze of intelligence broke in on the old man's mind, which was not of the most brilliant kind. "Lydia," said he to his wife, "there's something wrong with the boy; to think he did not have sense enough to shout, Ship ahoy." I ventured to say, to show my cleverness, that there might have been several ships in the middle of the dock, and they would have all answered to Ship ahoy. Would it not have been better to cry, *Betsy Jane*, ahoy? The old man paused thunderstruck. "Avast there," he cried, "drop anchor: will ye have more pudding?"

In our street almost every woman had someone connected with the sea, and it was my grandfather's pleasure by day to parade the street and inform the women as to what winds and tides were favourable to their husbands or sons. One woman had a husband that had sailed away in a barque, which was never sighted or hailed after leaving port, and was now three months overdue. My grandfather feared to meet this sailor's wife, and would often peep around his door, trying to escape consultation

from her, knowing well his own forebodings as to the fate of the barque and her crew.

I have mentioned Dave, who was a very studious lad, and who became my one companion and the sharer of my dreams. He had received an old copy of Byron, and we both became fascinated by the personality of that poet. His influence on Dave was so great that it was publicly shown to all the boys and girls in the chapel's schoolroom, where we had gathered for childish games, under the supervision of the elders. While we were playing kiss in the ring, singing and laughing, dancing with merriment, when small white teeth, red lips and bright eyes were all the rage — Dave would lean his figure (not so tall as he would like it) against a pillar, biting his lips and frowning at our merry-making. None but myself knew that his troubles and sorrows were purely imaginary, but they certainly succeeded in causing some sensation, even the notice of the elders being drawn to him. Some time after this we had more trouble with Dave, when we went for a day's trip to the sea-side. On this occasion he took his own path across the sands, a solitary figure, with his head bowed, and when we called him he would not heed us. That night, when it was time to return Dave stood perilously near the edge of the pier, gazing with melancholy eyes on the water. Several women hastened towards him, and drawing him gently away, enquired as to his trouble. On which Dave stood erect, was motionless, frowned, bit his lip, and stalked away into the darkness, without uttering a word. He came back in time to catch the boat. Dave soon got tired of these doings, but the influence of Byron was more lasting on me. It was the first time for me to read verse with enjoyment. I read Shelley, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, indifferent to Wordsworth, but giving him since the attention of wiser days.

My grandmother had only read one novel in her life, called "The Children of the Abbey," and had been severely punished by her mother for doing so. She therefore



continually warned me against reading such works, but strongly recommended Milton's "Paradise Lost" and Young's "Night Thoughts"; her favourite quotation being from the latter — "Procrastination is the thief of time." It pleased her to tears when a friend saw a likeness between John Bunyan and myself, and she regretted that she saw no prospect of ever tracing a resemblance between our hearts.

I was now bound apprentice to the picture frame trade, but owing to my passion for reading, could not apply myself sufficiently to that business so as to become a good workman. The fact of the matter was that I was reading deep into the night and, having to be up early for work, was encroaching on Nature's allowance of sleep. Owing to being young and conceited and not being satisfied at having knowledge concealed, I showed at this time some parts that made older and wiser people of both sexes prophesy good results in manhood. Having no knowledge of metre and very little of harmony, I composed and caused to be printed a poem describing a storm at night, which a young friend recited at a mutual improvement class, making after mention of the author's name, when I was publicly congratulated. Some time after this I — having surreptitiously visited the playhouse on more than one occasion — boldly read out an article to the same class entitled — "In defence of the Stage." This daring performance caused some commotion among the full grown sheep, who thought they detected a wolf in lamb's clothing; but the young lamb — my companions — bleated for pride and joy. My grandmother was told of this, and as she did not take the trouble to enquire the subject of my address, and it was not told unto her, she was satisfied to know I had surprised several members of the congregation and in particular a deacon, for whom she had great respect.

It has always been a wonder to me where my conversational power has gone: at the present time I cannot impress the most ordinary men. It must be through

associating so many years with companions uncongenial to my taste, a preference for indulging in my own thoughts, and forcing myself to comment on subjects uninteresting to me. I remember at one time being in a lodging house where one man stood out as an authority on books, disease, politics, military tactics, and more especially the meaning and right pronunciation of words. Several times different men have said to me, "That man is a scholar; he is not an ignoramus, as the likes of you and me." It was a secret satisfaction to know that this gentleman to whom they referred, often paid the compliment of knowing more than himself by asking information, which, on my part, was imparted with much secrecy, as I did not wish to appear in any way superior to those with whom I was forced by circumstances to associate. Yet, in those happy days of my apprenticeship, I rarely visited a house but what a second invitation was assured, although a painful shyness marred the beginning. We enjoyed ourselves so much one evening at a friend's house, where the lady had been all day indisposed, that her husband said, on leaving, "My wife has been laughed out of her sickness, and you have certainly saved me an item on the doctor's bill." Instead of this giving more confidence and overcoming my shyness, when I received from them an invitation for a second party I became so overpowered at the thought of what would be expected of me, that for the life of me I could not accept it, knowing I would have made an ass of myself. It is not altogether shyness that now makes me unsuccessful in company. Sometimes it is a state of mind that is three parts meditation that will not free the thoughts until their attendant trains are prepared to follow them. Again, having heard so much slang my thoughts often clothe themselves in that stuff from their first nakedness. That being the case, shame and confusion in good company make me take so long to undress and clothe them better, in more seemly garments, that other people grow tired of waiting and take

upon themselves the honour of entertainers. It was in the second year of my apprenticeship that I met a young woman living in a small village adjoining this town of my birth, who was very clever, a great reader of fine literature; and it was to her hands, after I had enjoyed her conversation on several occasions, that I submitted a small composition of my own. Her encouragement at that early time has been the star on which these eyes have seldom closed, by which I have successfully navigated the deeps of misery, pushing aside Drink, my first officer, who many a day and many a night endeavoured to founder me. She was the first to recognise in my spirit something different from mere cleverness, something she had seen and recognised in her books, but had never before met in a living person. I had known her only six months when she died, but her words of encouragement have been ringing in my ears ever since they were uttered.

My grandfather had also died; a straightforward, honest, simple man, with a mortal dread of being in debt, and always well prepared to pay his rates and taxes. He had a horror of being a principal in the police courts, but appeared there three times for no offence of his own. Called upon once to examine a rope supposed to be stolen from a ship he proved the rope was of the land, and different from a ship's rope — discharge of the prisoner. On another occasion, Sunday morning, and grandfather being in bed, a detective, disguised as a poor working man that was almost dying for a drink, wheedled the old man's daughter to sell him some liquor over the back wall — the result being a summons for supplying drink during closed hours, followed by a heavy fine, which was at once paid. The third time was at my trial with five other desperadoes, as described in the preceding chapter. There was nothing false about this man, and he had the heart of a lion. He claimed to have beaten the champion of Portsmouth, but undoubtedly this was some drunken fellow who had taken on himself this much

coveted title. Grandfather's pet yarn, which I have heard him recount a hundred times, took place in a public house, where a thin partition divided him from another person who was loudly extolling himself to the admiration of others. Grandfather allowed this man to continue for some time, but at last, losing patience, he looked around the partition and cried in a stern voice, "Avast there. Captain Jones: I knew thee when thou wert glad to eat barley bread without butter." Captain Jones looked disconcerted at this remark and then, quickly putting his own head around the partition, whispered: "Hush, hush, Captain Davies; there's nothing like making one's self look big in a strange place."

I was now in the last year of my apprenticeship, and was running a bit wild, taking no interest in my trade, and determined in a few months to throw off all restraint. When my time had expired, my master wanted me to continue working for him, which I did for a short time; and, for one who had not yet reached his twenty-first year, received a very fair wage. In three or four months I found some excuse for leaving. I was eager to start for the new world; but my grandmother would not, on any account, supply money for that purpose; so I applied for work at Bristol, was accepted, and worked there six months, being then called home through the death of the good old lady. The licence indulged in during these six months, being in a strange town and unknown, was sufficient to wreck the brains and health of any man beyond recovery, and for the time being deadened all literary ambition. It could not have continued this way much longer, and no doubt, it was her death that prevented the collapse of my life, by a change of circumstances. Her estate was in the hands of a trustee, and its profits were to be divided weekly among her three grandchildren. She was a good old soul, and I have lived long enough to cherish every hair of her head. She was a Baptist, stoutly opposed to other creeds — called the stage the Devil's Playground — abhorred second marriages — and thought as much of me in

life as I think of her in death. Many of the little kindnesses that were given to her in life were done more out of a sense of duty than from the gratitude of which she was so worthy. But the good old soul died without suspecting any other than gratitude. Mine is the shame and sorrow that she did not receive it, as I am even now, thirteen years after her death, living on her bounty. When my grandmother died, I joined home with mother and her second family, but after a month or two of restlessness, I sought the trustee, got an advance from him of some fifteen pounds, and full of hope and expectation embarked for America.

# Chapter 3

## Manhood

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ON arriving at Liverpool, I made the acquaintance of a man who had been in America some years previously, and not having his hopes realised at that time, had returned desperate to England, taken in a fresh cargo of hopes, and was now making a second attempt with as much enthusiasm, if not more, than others in making their first. In him I placed implicit confidence, and received such an extraordinary description of that country, the number of stories of some of its highest buildings which were called skyscrapers; the houses of wood which could be moved from one street to another without in any way interfering with the comfort of the people within, cooking, sweeping and washing going on without hindrance; the loneliness of its prairies and deserts; engineering triumphs over high mountains; and how the glorious South was flushed with roses what time the North could not save a blade of green from the snow; all this happening under the one wide spreading flag: this made such an impression on me that I at once went to the steerage cabin and wrote a full description of the country, that very first evening aboard; telling of my arrival in America, and the difference between the old and the new world. This letter was given to the steward at Queenstown, and was written to save me the trouble of writing on my arrival, so that I might have more time to enjoy myself. Several years elapsed before it occurred to me how foolish and thoughtless I had been. The postmark itself would prove that I had not landed in America, and they

would also receive the letter several days before it would be due from those distant shores. I can certainly not boast a large amount of common sense.

It was in the month of June, when we made this voyage, and the great Atlantic was as smooth as an inland river. Every one sought to escape the thoughts of home, and to do so, we often worked ourselves into a frenzy of singing and dancing. Sometimes our attention would be drawn to an iceberg on the port side, very innocent and beautiful to the eyes of passengers, but feared by mariners, who saw into its depths. And then a ship full sail; or another great Atlantic liner on the starboard bow. There was a total lack of ceremony aboard, strangers familiar with strangers, and the sexes doing each other little kindnesses, who had never met before and probably would never meet again, parting without even enquiring or giving each other a name. As we neared the coast we had a thunderstorm, and I was surprised and somewhat awed at the sound of its peals, and at the slower and larger flashes of lightning. Nature, it seemed, used a freer and more powerful hand in this country of great things than is her wont among our pretty little dales, and our small green hills. I thought the world was coming to an end, and in no way felt reassured when an American, noting my expression, said that it was nothing to what I would see and hear if I remained long in God's own country of free and law abiding citizens.

My impression of Americans from the beginning is of the best, and I have never since had cause to alter my mind. They are a kind, sympathetic race of people and naturally proud of their country. The Irish-American is inclined to be the most bitter, remembering from his youth the complaints of his parents, who were driven through unjust laws from their own beloved land; and such a man is not to be idly aggravated, for life is a serious subject to him. This man is not to be aggravated, especially under the consideration that our conscience is not too clean in this respect, and that



we are apt to be very slow in making that open confession which is good for the soul. The most pleasing trait in Americans, which cannot for long escape us, is their respect for women and the way in which the latter do their utmost to deserve it. No sight of a woman behind the saloon bar listening to the ribald jests of drunken men, and no woman at the bar's front drinking glass for glass with her associates. However weak in this respect a woman may be in private, she is certainly too strong to make a public exhibition of her weakness. Husband and wife may be unhappy, but you seldom hear of a woman carrying the marks of a man's brutality as witnesses against him which is so common in the police courts of old England. A man in a fit of ungovernable passion may kill his wife; and better so, I should say, than to leave her half killed at the foot of the stairs every Saturday night and holidays for twenty or thirty years, and blacken her eyes before they can recover their natural colour, the brutality that shamed me so much in after years in the slums of London, hearing it so often recorded as a jest.

I was so anxious to see the different states of America that I did not stay long in New York before I succumbed to the persuasion of my Liverpool acquaintance to visit with him some friends in a small town in the state of Connecticut, at which place we soon arrived, with something like ten dollars between us. America, at this time, was suffering from a depression in trade, and people were daily returning to the old country, most of them with the intention of returning again to America at a more favourable time. Not being able to get employment at once, and resolved to be independent of the bounty of strangers, I walked out alone, and sat on a seat in the park, trying to conceive some plans for the future. My box, full of clothes, books, brushes, etc., would amply compensate, I thought, for the week's lodging which I had had. Yes, I would see Chicago: and, suddenly becoming aware of a man

occupying the other end of the seat, I enquired of him the way to Chicago, as though the distance was a paltry ten miles, instead of a hundred times greater. This man looked at me in astonishment, and at last asked me if I intended to beat my way. Seeing my lack of understanding, he enquired as to my financial resources. On shaking my head in the negative, implying that I had no money, he said. "No more have I: and if you are agreeable, we will both beat our way to Chicago."

This was Brum, a notorious beggar, who made himself at home in all parts of the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast, and from the northern provinces of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The easy and sumptuous way of his catering made me indifferent to all manual labour. In that country, where food was to be had for the asking, where it often went begging to be received, and people were not likely to suffer for their generosity, I became, under Brum's tutorage, a lazy wretch with but little inclination for work. Cockneys make good beggars. They are held in high esteem by the fraternity in America. Their resources, originality and invention, and a never faltering tongue, enable them to often attain their ends where others fail, and they succeed where the natives starve. But my friend Brum held them in great scorn, for their methods were not his methods. Brum was a genuine beggar, who did not make flashes in the dark, having one day plenty and nothing on the next day. What he required he proceeded to beg, every morning making an inventory of his wants. Rather than wash a good handkerchief he would beg an old one that was clean, and he would without compunction discard a good shirt altogether rather than sew a button on — thus keeping up the dignity of his profession to the extreme. He scorned to carry soap, but went to a house like a Christian, and asked to be allowed to wash, with a request for warm water if the morning was cold. Begging was to him a fine art, indeed, and a delight of which he never seemed to tire. I have

known him, when surfeited with an abundance of common food, such as steak, chops, etc. — to beg lozenges and sweets, complaining I suppose, of throat troubles. Even in a new country like America, there are quite a number of hostile towns, owing to their lying on the main roads between large cities that are not far apart; but Brum never seemed to fail, and would certainly never lower his dignity by complaining of difficulty. In every street, he said, there lived a good Samaritan, and seeing that a good beggar knocks at every door, he must ultimately succeed. She may live in the last house, and therefore the unsuccessful beggar, having no patience and perseverance, fails in his calling. Brum was a slow man in action and went about his business in a dogged way. And that reminds me of how this slowness of action once saved his life. We had built a camp fire in the woods, within a mile or more of a small town. Now, it was Brum's habit, before lying down for the night, to wind his handkerchief around his neck, and this he had done. Next morning I was the first to rise, and Brum, deliberately following my example, began in his own easy way to slowly unwind this handkerchief, when to my horror a large tarantula fell from its folds. Now, had Brum been an impulsive man, no doubt the spider would have been squeezed, and would have then fastened on his neck and poisoned his blood mortally.

I was soon initiated into the mysteries of beating my way by train, which is so necessary in parts of that country, seeing the great distances between towns. Sometimes we were fortunate enough to get an empty car; sometimes we had to ride the bumpers; and often, when travelling through a hostile country, we rode on the roof of a car, so as not to give the brakesman an opportunity of striking us off the bumpers unawares. It is nothing unusual in some parts to find a man, always a stranger, lying dead on the track, often cut in many pieces. At the inquest they invariably bring in a verdict of accidental death, but we know different. Therefore