

Poetry.

THIS AND THAT—A BALLAD.

A certain master, greatly vexed
With union men, was sore perplexed,
And wondered what the dounce to do,
And how his work should be got through.

His men had asked a rise, as they
Considered they deserved more pay;
And also sought to work no more
Of hours a week than fifty-four.

The master raved, and tore his hair,
And swore they were not asking fair—
Before he'd give their terms he vowed
He'd see them—why, he'd see them—blowed.

What!—to work an hour less a day,
And yet demand an hour's more pay!
He never heard such want of sense—
He called it downright impudence!

But still the men were firm, and stood
On their demands, and as he would
Not grant them—why, they turned about—
As he "pitched" in, they all walked out.

This master then tried other ways;
He advertised for many days,
And stated he could give employ
To over fifty—*man and boy!*

And answers came from distant parts,
Each writer trying cunning arts
To make him stipulate a price;
But he declined—it wasn't nice!

In writing back, he said that "they
Might, if they pleased, have work next day;
And in reply to yours for terms,
I give a man what'er he earns!"

And notwithstanding this, there came
A rabble lot—the half-breed
And whole black-sheepish, rat-like race
Of miscalled men—to man's disgrace!

Who sell their birthright—liberty,
As Esau did, for paltry fee;
This done—still discontented—then
These men will sell their fellow-men!

Dragged up in slums, this scum each day—
Belongers honest labor's way?
Subsists on crumbs that scornfully
Are thrown aside by labor—*free!*

This master looked at them aghast
As up they trooped, so thick and fast;
And half-repentant, when too late—
But, still pig-headed, braved his fate.

He set them on—they did their best,
He strove to stimulate their zest!
He offered this, and promised that;
Tried all he could to make them pat.

But very soon this master saw
In every man some glaring flaw;
And many a fool, and many a sot,
He found among the rabble lot.

His place, before from vermin free,
Was now o'errun, and vainly he
Employed a few sagacious "cats,"
The premises still swarmed with rats.

They gnawed and nibbled here and there;
They poked their noses everywhere,
He couldn't call a thing his own,
Nor lay a mouldy morsel down.

He tried them oft, and tried again,
But all his efforts were in vain;
And—though to say it makes one sad—
This master finally went mad.

Another master took his place,
And drove away the outcast race—
Who went no one could mention where,
And truly no one seemed to care!

We ask not where sewage flows;
We know not where the refuse goes;
Nor will we track this human scum
Within its dreary, loathsome slum!

The former men were now recalled
And when they came, they stood appalled—
For dire confusion reigned supreme;
Such utter rout they ne'er had seen.

But with their wishes now in full
They set to work—together pull;
The place looks shapely by and by,
The business goes on merrily.

No moral surely's here required
But this—that labor loosely hired,
Will loosely act, and in the end
Its hirer may to Bedlam send!

Tales and Sketches.

HUNTED DOWN;

OR, THE

STORY OF THE INSURANCE BROKER.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CHAPTER III.

On the very next day but one, I was sitting behind my glass partition, as before, when he came into the outer office as before. The moment I saw him without hearing him, I hated him worse than ever.

It was only for a moment that I had this opportunity, for he waved his tight-fitting black glove the instant I looked at him, and came straight in.

"Mr. Sampson, good day! I presume, you see, upon your kind permission, to intrude

upon you. I don't keep my word in being justified by business, for my business here—it I may so abuse the word—is of the slightest nature."

I asked, was it anything I could assist him in?

"I thank you, no. I merely called to inquire outside, whether my dilatory friend has been so false to himself, or to be practical and sensible. But of course he has done nothing. I gave him your prayers with my own hand, and he was hot upon the intention, but of course he has done nothing. Apart from the general human disinclination to do anything that ought to be done, I dare say there is a speciality about assuring one's life? You find it like the will-making? People are so superstitious, and take it for granted they will die soon afterwards?"

Up here, if you please; straight up here, Mr. Sampson. Neither to the right nor to the left! I almost fancied I could hear him breathe the words as he sat smiling at me, with that intolerable parting exactly opposite the bridge of my nose.

"There is such a feeling sometimes, no doubt," I replied; "but I don't think it obtains to any great extent."

"Well," said he, with a shrug and a smile, "I wish some good angel would influence my friend in the right direction. I rashly promised his mother and sister in Norfolk to see it done, and he promised them he would do it. But I suppose he never will."

He spoke for a minute or two on different topics, and then went away.

I had scarcely unlocked the drawers of my writing-table next morning, when he re-appeared. I noticed that he came straight to the door in the glass partition, and did not pause a moment outside.

"Can you spare me two minutes, my dear Mr. Sampson?"

"By all means."

"Much obliged," laying his hat and umbrella on the table. "I came early, not to interrupt you. The fact is, I am taken by surprise in reference to this proposal my friend has made."

"Has he made one?" said I.

"Yes," he answered, deliberately looking at me; and then a bright idea seemed to strike him—"or he only tells me he has. Perhaps that may be a new way of evading the matter. By Jupiter, I never thought of that!"

Mr. Adams was opening the morning's letters in the outer office.

"What is the matter, Mr. Slinkton?" I asked.

"Beckwith."

I looked out to the door and requested Mr. Adams if there were a proposal in that name to bring it in. He had already laid it out of his hands on the counter. It was easily selected from among the rest, and he gave it me.

Alfred Beckwith. Proposal to effect a policy with us for two thousand pounds. Dated yesterday.

"From the Middle Temple, I see, Mr. Slinkton?"

"Yes; he lives on the same staircase with me; his door is opposite. I never thought he would make me his reference though."

"It seems natural enough that he should."

"Quite so, Mr. Sampson; but I never thought of it. Let me see." He took the printed paper from his pocket. "How am I to answer all these questions?"

"According to the truth, of course," said I.

"Oh! of course," he answered, looking up from the paper with a smile; "I meant they were so many. But you do right to be particular. It stands to reason that you must be particular. Will you allow me to use your pen and ink?"

"Certainly."

"And your desk?"

"Certainly."

He had been hovering about between his hat and his umbrella, for a place to write on. He now sat down on my chair, at my blotting paper and inkstand, with the long walk up his head in accurate perspective before me, as I stood with my back to the fire.

Before answering each question, he ran over it aloud and discussed it.—How long had he known Mr. Alfred Beckwith? That he had to calculate by years upon his fingers. What were his habits? No difficulty about them; temperate in the last degree, and took a little too much exercise, if anything. All the answers were satisfactory. When he had written them all, he looked them over, and finally signed them in a very pretty hand. He supposed he had now done with the business? I told him he was not likely to be troubled any further. Should he leave the papers there? If he pleased. Much obliged. Good morning!

I had had one other visitor before him; not at the office, but at my house. That visitor had come to my bedside when it was not yet daylight, and had been seen by no one else but my faithful confidential servant.

A second reference (for we required always two) was sent down to Norfolk, and was duly received back by post. This likewise was satisfactorily answered in every respect. Our forms were all complied with, we accepted the proposal, and the premium for one year was paid.

CHAPTER IV.

For six or seven months I saw no more of Mr. Slinkton. He called once at my house, but I was not at home; and he once asked me to dine with him in the Temple, but I was engaged. His friend's Assurance was effected in March. Late in September or early in Oc-

tober I was down at Scarborough for a breath of sea air, where I met him on the beach. It was a hot evening; he came towards me with his hat in his hand, and there was the walk I had felt so strongly disinclined to take, in perfect order again, exactly in front of the bridge of my nose.

He was not alone, but had a young lady on his arm. She was dressed in mourning, and I looked at her with great interest. She had the appearance of being extremely delicate, and her face was remarkably pale and melancholy, but she was very pretty. He introduced her as his niece, Miss Niner.

"Are you strolling Mr. Sampson? Is it possible you can be idle?"

"It was possible, and I was strolling."

"Shall we stroll together?"

"With pleasure."

The young lady walked between us, and we walked on the cool sea and in the direction of Filey.

"There have been wheels here," said Mr. Slinkton; "and now I look again, the wheels of a hand-carriage! Margaret, my love, your shadow, without doubt!"

"Miss Niner's shadow?" I repeated, looking down at it on the sand.

"Not that one," Mr. Slinkton returned, laughing. "Margaret, my dear, tell Mr. Sampson?"

"Indeed," said the young lady, turning to me, "there is nothing to tell—except that I constantly see the same invalid old gentleman, at all times, wherever I go. I have mentioned it to my uncle, and he calls the gentleman my shadow."

"Does he live in Scarborough?" I asked.

"He is staying here?"

"Do you live in Scarborough?"

"No, I am staying here. My uncle has placed me with a family here, for my health."

"And your shadow?" said I, smiling.

"My shadow," she answered, smiling too, "is—like myself—not very robust, I fear; for, I lose my shadow sometimes, as my shadow loses me at other times. We both seem liable to confinement to the house. I have not seen my shadow for days and days; but it does oddly happen, occasionally, that wherever I go, for many days together, this gentleman goes. We have come together in the most unfrequented nooks on this shore?"

"Is this he?" I said, pointing before us.

The wheels had swept down to the water's edge and described a great loop on the sand in turning. Bringing the loop back towards us, and spinning it out as it came, was a hand-carriage drawn by a man.

"Yes," said Miss Niner, "this really is my shadow, uncle!"

As the carriage approached us and we approached the carriage, I saw within it an old man, whose head was sunk on his breast, and who was enveloped in a variety of wrappers. He was drawn by a very quiet but very keen-looking man, with iron grey hair, who was slightly lame. They passed us, when the carriage stopped, and the old gentleman within, putting out his arm, called me by my name.

I went back, and was absent from Mr. Slinkton and his niece for about five minutes.

When I rejoined them, Mr. Slinkton was the first to speak. Indeed, he said to me in a raised voice before I came up to him: "It is well you have not been longer or my niece might have died of curiosity to know how her shadow is, Mr. Sampson."

"An old East India Director," said I. "An intimate friend of our friend's at whose house I first had the pleasure of meeting you. A certain Major Banks. You have heard of him?"

"Never."

"Very rich, Miss Niner; but very old, and very crippled. An amiable man, sensible; much interested in you. He has just been expiating on the affection that he has observed to exist between you and your uncle."

Mr. Slinkton was holding his hat again, and he passed his hand up the straight walk, as if he himself went up it serenely after me.

"Mr. Sampson," he said, tenderly pressing his niece's arm in his "our affection was always a strong one, for we have had but few near ties. We have still fewer now. We have associations to bring us together that are not of this world, Margaret."

"Dear uncle!" murmured the young lady, and turned her face aside to hide her tears.

"My niece and I have such remembrances and regrets in common, Mr. Sampson," he pursued, "that it would be strange indeed if the relations between us were cold or indifferent. If I remember a conversation we once had together, you will understand the reference I made. Cheer up, dear Margaret. Don't droop, don't droop. My Margaret! I cannot bear to see you droop!"

The poor young lady was very much affected, but controlled herself. His feelings, too, were very acute. In a word, he found himself under such great need of a restorative that he presently went to take a bath of sea-water, leaving the young lady and me sitting by a point of rock, and probably presuming—but that, you will say, was a pardonable indulgence in a luxury—that she would praise him with all her heart.

She died, poor thing. With all her confident heart she praised him to me for his care of her dead sister, and for his untiring devotion in my last illness. The sister had wasted away very slowly, and wild and terrible fantasies had come over her towards the end, but she had never been impatient with her, or at a loss; had always been gentle, watchful, and self-possessed. The sister had known him, as

she had known him, to be the best of men, the kindest of men, and yet a man of such admirable strength of character as to be a very weak tower for the support of their weak nature while their poor lives endured.

"I shall leave him, Mr. Sampson, very soon," said the young lady; "I know my life is drawing to an end; and when I am gone I hope he will marry and be happy. I am sure he has lived single so long only for my sake and for my poor, poor sister's."

The little hand-carriage had made another great loop on the damp sand, and was coming back again, gradually spinning out a slim figure of eight, half a mile long.

"Young lady," said I, looking round, laying my hand upon her arm, and speaking in a low voice: "time presses. You hear the gentle murmur of that sea?"

She looked at me with the utmost wonder and alarm, saying, "Yes."

"And you know what a voice is in it when the storm comes?"

"Yes."

"But if you had ever heard or seen it, or heard of it, in its cruelty, could you believe that it beats every inanimate thing in its way to pieces, without mercy, and destroys life without remorse?"

"You terrify me, sir, by these questions!"

"To save you, young lady, to save you! For God's sake, collect your strength and collect your firmness! If you were here alone, and hemmed in by the rising tide on the flow to fifty feet above your head, you could not be in greater danger than the danger you are now to be saved from."

The figure on the sand was spun out, and straggled off into a crooked little jerk that ended at the cliff very near us.

"As I am, before Heaven and the Judge of all mankind, your friend, and your dear sister's friend, I solemnly entreat, you Miss Niner, without one moment's loss, to come to this gentleman with me!"

If the little carriage had been less near to us I doubt if I could have got her away; but it was so near that we were there before she had recovered the hurry of being urged from the rock. I did not remain there with her two minutes. Certainly within five I had the inexpressible satisfaction of seeing her—*from the point we had sat on, and to which I had returned—half supported and half carried up some rude steps notched in the cliff by the figure of an active man. With the figure beside her I knew she was safe anywhere.*

I sat alone on the rock, awaiting Mr. Slinkton's return. The twilight was deepening and the shadows were heavy, when he came round the point, with his hat hanging at his button-hole, smoothing his wet hair with one of his hands, and picking out the old path with the other and a pocket-comb.

"My niece not here, Mr. Sampson!" he said, looking about.

"Miss Niner seemed to feel a chill in the air after the sun was down, and has gone home."

He looked surprised, as though she were not accustomed to do anything without him, even to originate so slight a proceeding. "I persuaded Miss Niner," I explained.

"Ah!" said he. "She is easily persuaded—for her good. Thank you, Mr. Sampson; she is better within doors. The bathing-place was farther than I thought, to tell the truth."

"Miss Niner is very delicate," I observed.

He shook his head and drew a deep sigh.

"Very, very, very. You may recollect my saying so. The time that has since intervened has not strengthened her. The gloomy shadow that fell upon her sister so early in life seems, in my anxious eye, to gather over her, ever darker, ever darker. Dear Margaret, dear Margaret! But we must hope."

The hand-carriage was spinning away before us at a most incredulous pace for an invalid vehicle, and was making most irregular curves upon the sand. Mr. Slinkton, noticing it after he had put his handkerchief to his eyes, said—

"If I may judge from appearances, your friend will be upset, Mr. Sampson."

"It looks probable, certainly," said I.

"The servant must be drunk."

"The servants of old gentlemen will get drunk, sometimes," said I.

"The major draws very light, Mr. Sampson."

"The major does draw light," said I.

By this time the carriage, much to my relief, was lost in the darkness. We walked on for a little, side by side over the sand in silence. After a short while, he said, in a voice still agitated by the emotion that his niece's state of health had awakened in him—

"Do you stay here long, Mr. Sampson?"

"Why, no, I'm going away to-night."

"So soon? But business always holds you in request. Men like Mr. Sampson are too important to others to be spared to their own need of relaxation and enjoyment."

"I don't know about that," said I. "However, I am going back."

"To London?"

"To London."

"I shall be there too, soon after you."

I knew that as well as he did. But I did not tell him so. Any more than I told him what defensive weapon my right hand rested on in my pocket as I walked by his side. Any more than I told him why I did not walk on the sea-side of him with the night closing in.

We left the beach, and our ways diverged. We exchanged "Good night," and had parted indeed, when he said, returning—

"Mr. Sampson, may I ask? Poor Meltham, whom we spoke of—Dead yet?"

"Not when I last heard of him; but too broken a man to live long, and hopelessly lost to his old calling."

"Dear, dear, dear!" said he with great feeling. "Sad, sad, sad! The world is a grave!" And so went his way.

It was not his fault if the world was not a grave; but I did not call this observation after him, any more than I had mentioned those other things just now enumerated. He went his way, and I went mine with all expedition. This happened, as I have said, either at the end of September or the beginning of October. The next time I saw him, and the last time, was late in November.

CHAPTER V.

I had a very particular engagement to breakfast in the Temple. It was a bitter northeastern morning, and the sleet and slush lay inches deep in the street. I could get no conveyance, and was soon wet to the knees; but, I should have been true to that appointment though I had had to wade it up to my neck in the same impediments.

The appointment took me to some chambers in the Temple. They were at the top of a lonely corner house overlooking the river. The name, Mr. Alfred Beckwith, was painted on the outer door. On the door opposite on the same landing, the name Mr. Julius Slinkton. The doors of both sets of chambers stood open, so that anything said aloud in one set could be heard in the other.

I had never been in those chambers before. They were dismal, close, unwholesome, and oppressive; the furniture, originally good, and not yet old, was faded and dirty—the rooms were in great disorder; there was a strong pervading smell of opium, brandy and tobacco; the grate and fire-irons were splashed all over with unsightly blotches of rust; and on a sofa by the fire, in the room where breakfast had been prepared, lay the host, Mr. Beckwith, a man with all the appearances of the worst kind of a drunkard, very far advanced upon his shameful way to death.

"Slinkton is not come yet," said this creature, staggering up when I went in; "I'll call him. Hallo! Julius Caesar! Come and drink!"

As he hoarsely roared this out, he beat the poker and tongs together in a mad way, as if that were his mad manner of summoning his associate.

The voice of Mr. Slinkton was heard through the clatter from the opposite side of the staircase, and he came in. He had not expected the pleasure of meeting me. I have seen several artful men brought to a stand, but I never saw a man so aghast as he was when his eyes rested on me.

"Julius Caesar!" cried Beckwith, staggering between us, "Miss Sampson! Miss Sampson, Julius Caesar! Julius, Miss Sampson, is the friend of my soul. Julius keeps me plied with liquor, morning, noon, and night. Julius is a real benefactor. Julius threw the tea and coffee out of the window when I used to have any. Julius empties all the water-jugs of their contents and fills 'em with spirits. Julius wrings me up and keeps me going. Boil the brandy Julius!"

There was a rusty and furred sauceman in the ashes—the ashes looked like the accumulation of weeks—and Beckwith rolling and staggering between us as if he was going to plunge headlong into the fire, got the sauceman out, and tried to force it into Slinkton's hand.

"Boil the brandy, Julius Caesar! Come! Do your usual office. Boil the brandy!"

He became so fierce in his gesticulations with the sauceman that I expected to see him lay open Slinkton's head with it. I therefore put up my head to check him. He recoiled back to the sofa, and sat there panting, shaking, and red-eyed, in his rags of dressing-gown, looking at us both. I noticed then that there was nothing to drink on the table but brandy, and nothing to eat but salted herrings and a hot, sickly, high-peppered stew.

"At all events, Mr. Sampson," said Slinkton, offering me the smooth gravel-path for the last time, "I thank you for interfering between me and this unfortunate man's violence. However you came here, Mr. Sampson, or with whatever motive you came here, at least I thank you for that."

"Boil the brandy," muttered Beckwith.

Without gratifying his desire to know how I came there, I said, quietly: "How is your niece, Mr. Slinkton?"

He looked hard at me, and I looked hard at him.

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Sampson, that my niece has proved treacherous and ungrateful to her best friend. She left me without a word of notice or explanation. She was misled, no doubt, by some designing rascal. Perhaps you may have heard of it?"

"I did hear that she was misled by a designing rascal. In fact, I have proof of it."

"Are you sure of that?" said he.

"Quite."

"Boil the brandy," muttered Beckwith.

"Company to breakfast, Julius Caesar? Do your usual office—provide the usual breakfast, dinner, tea and supper. Boil the brandy!"

The eyes of Slinkton looked from him to me, and he said, after a moment's consideration: "Mr. Sampson, you are a man of the world, and so am I. I will be plain with you."

"Oh, no, you won't," said I, shaking my head.

"I tell you, sir, I will be plain with you."