

THE GRAVE OF GOLDSMITH.

Mr. Charles Reade, the novelist, has been writing a series of letters in the *Pull Mall Gazette* on "The Rights and Wrongs of Authors." The twelfth letter, which runs as follows, contains some information in reference to Goldsmith's grave which, we think, will surprise most people.—

Sir—Permit me to head this short letter "The Impenitent Thief." This is a character disapproved in Jewish history. But he has it all his own way with us in Anglo-Saxony. One of his traits is to insult those whom he pillages. He puts one hand in our pockets, and shakes the other fist in our faces. As an example I note some sneers by a Mr. Pascoe, and other professors of moral and arithmetical fog, that authors, in asking for international copyright, show an excessive love of money. That remark applies more to those who covet the property of others than to those who only covet their own. It is a sneer that comes as ill from salaried writers, who cannot be pillaged, as it does from pensioned lawyers; and it is a heartless sneer; for they know by history—if they know anything—that authors have passed through centuries of pauperism, misery, and degradation, and have only arrived at modest competence and decent poverty. Popular authors are rare and even *their* income does not approach that of the prosperous lawyer, divine, physician, actor, or actress. There are two actors about, who have each made one hundred and fifty thousand pounds by playing a single part in two plays, for which the two authors have not received two thousand pounds. The painter has two great markets, his picture and his copyright. The author has but one. International copyright will merely give him two, and raise him to the painter's commercial level. No author has ever left a fortune made by writing. Dickens, the sole apparent exception, was a reader and a publisher. As a rule, when a respectable author dies, either he had independent means, or the hat goes round. If authors are to be respected in Anglo-Saxony they must not be poor; they must have better terms at home, or international copyright, to meet the tremendous advance of price in the necessaries of life. Three or four stray individuals, such as Milton and Spinoza, have been poor and dignified. But they were *rare aves*. Dignified poverty in a class is a chimera. It never existed. The character of a class is the character of the majority in that class; now no majority has ever resisted a strong temptation, and that is why all greatly tempted classes fall as classes. Johnson knew more than Camden, and he says, "Poverty is the worst of all temptations; it is incessant, and leads, soon or late, to loss of self-respect, and of the world's respect." The hypocrite Camden demanded an author

with aspiring genius and no eye to the main chance. The model he demanded crossed his path in Goldsmith; but the hypocrite Camden treated his beau-ideal with cold hauteur, because his beau-ideal was poor; the same hypocrite was to be seen arm-in-arm with Garrick, for he had lots of money.

Oliver Goldsmith, next to Voltaire, was the greatest genius in Europe; on the news of his death Burke burst into tears, and Reynolds laid down his brush and devoted the day to tender regrets.

I now cite a passage verbatim from the notice on Goldsmith, in the "Biographia Dramatica":—"It was at first intended to bury him in Westminster Abbey; and his pall was to have been supported by the Maquis of Lansdowne, Lord Louth, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Garrick. But a slight inspection of his affairs showed the impropriety of incurring so great an expense. He was privately interred in the Temple burial-ground, attended by Mr. Hugh Kelly, Mr. Hawes the Rev. Joseph Palmer, and a few coffee-house acquaintances."

If the deceased genius was poor, Reynolds, and Garrick, and the rest, were rich. They could have secured for him the place he deserved in the national temple. But no: he was poor; and observe, those who were ready to lay genius in Westminster Abbey had it been wealthy, would not even follow it to the Temple church when they found it was poor. The fact is, that great, immortal genius was flung into the earth like a dog, and to this day nobody knows where he lies.

I now cite verbatim from the "Life of Mrs. Oldfield":—"The corpse of Mrs. Anne Oldfield was carried from her house in Grosvenor street to the Jerusalem Chamber, where it lay in state, and afterwards to the Abbey, the pall being supported by the Lord Delaware, Lord Harvey, the Right Honorable Bubb Dodding-ton, and other men of ton."

This lady was a good actress, and had lived in open shame with Mr. Mynwaring and Brig Churchill, and had lots of money. Therefore this artist was buried in the Abbey, and the greater artist, Goldsmith, being pure, but poor, had the grave of a dog.

In these two extracts you see the world unmasked by its own hand, not mine. This, my Lord Camden, is that dirty world, of which you were a gilt lump. This is the real world at it is, and was, and always will be. Many authors are womanish; so they listen to the satteries that cost nothing, and, when they find it is all humbug, they sit down and whine for a world less hollow and less hard. But authors who are men take the world as they find it, see its good sense at the bottom of its brutality, and grind their teeth, and swear that the public weasel shall not swindle them into that unjust poverty which the public hog despises in an author, and would in an apostle.