

THE IMPERIALIST

rarer now than they used to be, etched upon the vague consciousness of small towns as in a way mysterious and uncanny ; some said that Mother Beggarlegs was connected with the aristocracy and some that she had been " let off " being hanged. The alternative was allowed full swing, but in any case it was clear that such persons contributed little to the common good, and, being reticent, were not entertaining. So you bought your gingerbread, concealing, as it were, your weapons, paying your copper coins with a neutral nervous eye, and made off to a safe distance, whence you turned to shout insultingly, if you were an untrounced young male of Elgin, " Old Mother Beggarlegs ! Old Mother Beggarlegs ! " And why " Beggarlegs " nobody in the world could tell you. It might have been a dateless waggery, or it might have been a corruption of some more dignified surname, but it was all she ever got. Serious meticulous persons called her " Mrs." Beggarlegs, slightly lowering their voices and slurring it, however, it must be admitted. The name invested her with a graceless, anatomical interest, it penetrated her wizened black and derisively exposed her ; her name went far indeed to make her dramatic. Lorne Murchison, when he was quite a little boy, was affected by this, and by the unfairness of the way it singled her out. Moved partly by the oppression of the feeling and partly by a