

Not that the Club can number any of them now on its existing roll-call: the Cheyne Row is for prospective celebrity only; accomplished facts transfer themselves at once to a statelier site in Pall Mall near the Duke of York's Column. Rising merit frequents the Tavern, as scoffers profanely term it: risen greatness basks rather on the lordly stuffed couches of Waterloo Place. No man, it has been acutely observed, remains a Bohemian when he has daughters to marry. The pure and blameless ratepayer avoids Prague. As soon as Smith becomes Chancellor of the Exchequer, as soon as Brown takes silk, as soon as Robinson is elected an Associate, as soon as Tompkins publishes his popular novel, they all incontinently with one accord desert the lesser institution in the Piccadilly byway, and pass on their names, their honours, their hats, and their subscriptions to the dignified repose of the Athenæum. For them, the favourite haunt of judge and bishop: for the young, the active, the struggling, and the incipient, the chop and claret of the less distinguished but more lively caravanseraï by the Green Park purlieus.

In the smoking-room of this eminent and unsuccessful Bohemian society, at the tag-end of a London season, one warm evening in a hot July, Hugh Massinger, of the Utter Bar, sat lazily by the big bow window, turning over the pages of the last number of the *Charing Cross Review*.

That he was truly great, nobody could deny. He was in very fact a divine bard, or, to be more strictly accurate, the author of a pleasing and melodious volume of minor poetry. Even away from the Cheyne Row Club, none but the most remote of country-cousins—say from the wilder parts of Cornwall or the crofter-clad recesses of the Isle of Skye—could have doubted for a moment the patent fact that Hugh Massinger was a distinguished (though unknown) poet of the antique school, so admirably did he fit his part in life as to features, dress, and general appearance. Indeed, malicious persons were wont at times unkindly to insinuate that Hugh was a poet, not because he found in himself any special aptitude for stringing verses or building the lofty rhyme, but because his face and bearing imperatively compelled him to adopt the thankless profession of bard in self-justification and self-defence. This was ill-natured, and it was also untrue; for Hugh Massinger had lisped in numbers—at least in penny ones—over since he was able to lisp in print at all. Elizabethan or nothing, he had taken to poetry almost from his very cradle; and had astonished his father at sixteen by a rhymed version of an ode of Horace, worthy the inspiration of the great Dr. Watts himself, and not, perhaps, far below the poetic standard of Mr. Martin Farquhar Tupper. At Oxford he had perpetrated a capital Newdigate;