

## THE GRIMINAL AND ARTIFIGIAL PRODUCTION OF DEFORMITIES AND MONSTROSITIES.

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THOSE fortunate enough to have been entertained by Captain Marryatt's "Japhet in Search of a Father," will readily recall the vicissitudes that fell to the lot of the irrepressible and mischievous Timothy Oldmixon; also the interesting experiences of this remarkable individual among the mumpers and in the practice of mumping or mumpery; \* the multitude of rogueries instituted to extract copper and small silver from the pockets of the credulous and unwary; the many simulations of cripplehood by means of artificially induced wounds and sores: the feigned loss of one or both eyes of an arm or leg; all of which are by no means uncommon practices in our own day, though the deceptions are more frequently known only to the police. Neither are such confined alone to the island of Great Britain, but are generally prevalent throughout the world wherever there is any pretence to forms of enlightenment and civilization. Indeed, in some countries, as France, Italy and Austria, mumping is a recognized calling, possessed of legitimate status, those following it being duly licensed by government authority.

As a natural sequence, mendicancy readily degenerates into actual crime, since its associations inevitably are of the lowest and most depraved; more, it is often an organization of unknown strength, embracing the most debased of the criminal classes, since these are usually mumpers in their so-called honest intervals. Both Vidocq and Victor Hugo depict the ramifications

of such organizations, and yet they hardly appreciated their extent or power. Such societies possess most efficient and binding oaths and obligations, along with secret signs, grips and passwords. It is doubtful if the most vigilant police, backed by all the resources of the spy system, is fully aware of the enormities thereof. It is recognized, however, that many nefarious practices prevail, and that such, in their development and progress, have even evoked the aid of some of the higher branches of art, and all with the sole view of enabling individuals to eke out a precarious existence in comparative idleness, and at the same time successfully indulge in the most vile and depraved of debaucheries. Indeed, it may be safely asserted regarding the majority of true mumpers, that the same energy that is manifested to secure a hand to mouth existence and the desired indulgences, if exerted in an honest cause—brought to bear on any of the legitimate walks of life—would result in handsome competencies. After all, it appears to be sheer love of and for crime, rather than necessity, that makes the criminal.

Most horrible tortures, too, are often invoked in the interests of mumpery. Not alone are the offspring of mumpers educated as mendicants and petty thieves, but children are frequently kidnapped from their homes for the same purposes, and perhaps deliberately mutilated and deformed in order to render them more successful in their future calling, and, of course, in ministering to the demands of their masters. Ulcers are procured by means of acids or caustic alkalis; wounds of dangerous appearance, but

\*These terms define the common mendicant and his practices as united with the life of the tramp and the impositions and trickeries of the latter day "fakir."