

over. He thought it was part of the play, and greeted me with, "That's better, Perkins; that's better!" and the company laughed as they hadn't laughed for a month or two. And I went away to the "Green Man" to read the Bible, and to sigh and sob and pray. That night I determined to make an end of it all, to quit the stage as soon as ever I could get the gov'nor to let me go, and to come and have a talk with you. What was that you said on Sunday night about the lamp of the Lord lighted in the soul? That's my condition just now; a clown with a conscience, that's what I am. I went home from the service with that text

here two hours. And we've a rehearsal at this very hour.' Then moving toward the door, he said: 'I'll come and see you again, if I may. Meanwhile, pray for me; and remember that there's no place on earth where a man has a tougher fight with the devil than on the boards of a twopenny theatre. If the devil can be beaten there, he can be beaten anywhere, for that's beating him on his own ground, with his own weapons.'—He then hastened away.

As soon as I entered the room, where my dramatic friend came for our second interview, he rose and said:

'It's done, sir. The die is cast. The Rubi-

'Oh, yes,' he said; 'he always comes in at the right time; not like the other, who sometimes bothers you when you don't want him. It used to be my boast to be independent of him. But I must rely on this One; and the oftener he speaks the better. And his is not a loud, but "a still, small Voice."

Then he went on to say: 'Gov'nor was awfully afraid of my farewell. "Now, Perkins," he said, "you're to leave quietly, you know. None o' your epilogues, or apologues, or monologues, or dialogues for me. I don't want this respectable theatre turned into a common meetin'-house. It's always been conducted respectable, and I mean to keep it so, and I'm not goin' to have no scene as would get into the papers and let me down with the profession all over the country. So just take my cue and hook it quietly." I don't know what he had expected me to do, I'm sure. I'd no thought of anything beyond a

#### GOOD-BYE AND THANKS

and a hint that I might meet some of my audience under very different circumstances elsewhere. And this I did manage to give when they recalled me after my final scene, in which I was the hero, and had to wind up the piece alone. I made a bow as the curtain fell. On the recall, it was clear to me that my intentions had got wind. The cheering was tremendous, but I could hear a few hisses. As soon as I began the gov'nor called "Silence!"—to me, you know. But the company thought it was for them. So I said my say, and wound up with a bit from Perkins and Milton:

"And now, my worthy friends, I say adieu, To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

After this we fell to talking about ways and means. 'I'm not afraid,' he said, cheerfully. 'I've begun to do something already to earn an honest living. Among other things I've done a good deal of scene-painting in my time. All the scenes they're using to-day are my work. I picked up the art at Nottingham years ago from a fellow we employed there, a drunken rascal, who took me to his workshop one day and showed me all the ins and out of the business. And this is how I'm going to turn my craft to account. Look at these,' he went on, after reaching out his hand and taking from a corner of the room a long roll of stuff wrapped up in a piece of brown paper. He unrolled two window-blinds made of stout holland and painted all over, first with a green ground, then adorned with a rich border of flowers—tiger and water lilies, sunflowers, peonies, and other rustic beauties,—and set off in the middle with a Swiss landscape or a sea-piece, bathed in the rosy hues of sunset or the pale light of a crescent moon turned the wrong way (we managed to turn it around with astronomical propriety in a week or two), and giving as much light from its crescent face as the harvest moon at the full.

'Look at these,' he said, with a modest pride;

#### I'VE EARNED MY FIRST POUND

as a decent member of society with 'em. I can do 'em for ten-and sixpence each, and turn out three or four a week easily, and live comfortably on the profits—if I can only get orders for 'em. These two are sold already. That's for the "Green Man" bar-parlor, and that's for a grocer's shop, where I've been dealing since we came to the town. And I've three more orders to-day. Don't mean to be beaten, sir! They told me I should starve; but I don't think I shall.



LET US PRAY, SAID THE EX-CLOWN QUIETLY.

and Othello's words jumbled up together in my head: "Put out the light, and then put out the light." "What does it all mean?" I asked myself when I got into my room alone. If God has lighted this lamp in the soul to show me what a miserable fool I've been,

#### I DARE NOT PUT IT OUT,

and I'll take care that nobody else shall do so. Othello put out the light in order to commit murder. And if I were to put out this light, it would only be to commit self-murder. No, the light shall not be "put out."

The man was writhing with mental pain. For a few moments he could say no more; and I found it hard, and thought it best not to attempt, to speak. At last he lifted his head, caught sight of the timepiece, and exclaimed, with a look of terror on his face:

'Look at the clock! I must have been

con is crossed. I'm no more the devil's dupe and slave;

#### I'M GOD'S FREE MAN.

Good-bye to "cap and bells"; good-bye to chalk and paint; good-bye to sock and buskin!

'Then you have actually left the stage for good and all?'—'Oh, yes,' he said, 'I've left that stage, 'tis true, but "all the world's a stage," you know, and now I go to act another part'; and here, altering his tone, he went on quite naturally, and with much seriousness: 'God help me to act it well. It will need a good deal of getting up, for it is almost entirely a new rôle, and I shall want a prompter pretty often, I fear. Thank God, I can pray over my part now, anyhow, and go on my new stage asking him to help me.'—I said something about our constant need of a Divine Prompter to guide us aright.