

LADY HESKETH AND "JOHNNY OF NORFOLK" 161

common friend, who, in spite of his poverty, always looked "neat and nice, clean as a silver penny, and well-powdered," she suddenly breaks off:

By the way, my good friend, as I have mentioned *dress*, let me *intreat* of you not to give way to the *blackguardism of the Times*, nor to suffer your pupils to do so. For heaven's sake, if not for mine, do not go without powder! nor wear checked shirts! nor a coloured handkerchief about your neck like a sailor out of employ, nor your hair dirty and ill combed, as if you had just come out of a dungeon. Many of the young men I see affect this abomination, and look like so many hang-dogs. One called the other day upon me just in this trim, and with the additional ornament of a beard, a week old I believe! As I knew him pretty well, I ventured to ask him what prison he had escaped from. Sure I am that he richly deserved to have been instantly committed to another, and certainly would, had I to judge him, for I should certainly have taken him for a pickpocket on the strength of his appearance; for nothing except Filch in the "Beggar's Opera" ever looked like him, and he was not half so dirty I am sure—if he had, he would have been hissed off the stage, as too ill-dressed even for the character.

The good lady was accustomed to speak her mind on most subjects, and she expected to have all her commands obeyed, as well as her letters promptly answered, so woe betide Johnny if by any chance he neglected his correspondent. On one such occasion she writes in half-whimsical displeasure:

Oh, thou vile Johnny! had I not long ago been fully convinced that you were dead and buried, I should certainly have had you assassinated. How could you—strange and unaccountable as you are—suffer so many weeks to elapse without sending one line in answer to a letter about which you must think that I was so anxious, and concerning which it was really necessary that I should receive information? Oh, you are a wicked little Levite! and I believe I must renounce all correspondence with you, that you may never have it in your power to serve me such a trick again! Day after day, and week after week have I expected to hear, but not a word! Certain it is, therefore, that I should, as I before said, have assassinated you, and set East Dereham on fire, had I not concluded that your doom was sealed without my assistance, and indeed that you had dyed before my letter reached East Dereham, because supposing you alive at the time, nothing could excuse your not saddling your Heirs, Exors and Assigns with a full and copious answer to all my queries.

The faithful Johnny's labours of love were gradually drawing to a close. The letters take a sadder tone as the poet's