

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

## CLAUDE DUVAL.

Leaving out of sight Robin Hood, whose thievery has been so varnished over by time and romance, as to look now like a lawful mulcting of the rich and oppressive, there is no robber or highwayman in the annals of the English "road," who pursued his profession in so accomplished a manner, and threw so many graces over thievery, as Claude Duval. This personage was a real Macheath, one who eschewed all the coarser traits of the rogue's character, and there are some incidents in his history, which, we are sure, will amuse those of our readers to whom they are new.

Claude Duval was a Frenchman by birth, having first seen the light, in the year 1643, at Domfront in Normandy, where his father, Pierre Duval, a miller, resided. Claude was well brought up, and received a decent share of education. When a sprightly lad of thirteen or so, he either ran away from his parents, or was permitted by them to go and push his fortune in the world. Having reached Rouen, the Norman capital, Claude chanced to fall in with some post-horses returning to Paris, and was allowed to mount one of them, on condition of helping the conductor to dress them at night. The lad might still have been badly off for food by the way, had not some English gentlemen, who were also travelling to Paris, taken pity on him, and paid his expenses. On arriving in the French metropolis, Claude attached himself to these strangers, and by their intercession was admitted afterwards as errand-boy at a noted place of entertainment. In this condition he remained till the restoration of Charles II. in 1660, at which time multitudes of people from all nations came flocking to England. Duval also crossed the Channel, along with a person of quality, whose service he had entered in the capacity of footman.

The period of the restoration was well fitted for the development of such a character as that of Claude Duval. He speedily became a proficient in gaming, drunkenness, and all those other practices, which, under royal favour, were regarded as the highest accomplishments of a gallant of the time. It may be supposed that such pursuits were not long compatible with the duties of a peaceable occupation. In reality, Monsieur Duval took to the highway to find the means of supporting his irregularities, and rapidly acquired such celebrity by his doings on the roads and heaths around London, as to have the honour of being named first in a proclamation for the capture of several notorious malefactors. But it was less for the extent of his depredations—though their range was by no means limited—than for the manner in which he executed them, that Duval's name became famous in the land. He was the most insinuating of flenchers, contriving to steal with such a grace, that, so far from terrifying even the ladies, they were content to lose all they had for the pleasure of contemplating his courtesy, and to wish him good luck with what he had appropriated. One story which is told of him will exemplify his manner of going to work. We quote the words of a quaint and ironical notice of Claude Duval in the Harleian Miscellany. Having on one occasion received intelligence that a coach was about to pass along a certain road, with a booty of four hundred pounds in it, Duval and four associates took the field, and at the expected time beheld the object of their search. "In the coach was a knight, his lady, and only one serving-maid, who, perceiving five horsemen making up to them, presently imagined that they were beset; and they were confirmed in this apprehension, by seeing them whisper to one another, and ride backwards and forwards.

The lady, to show she was not afraid, takes a flageolet out of her pocket, and plays: Duval takes the hint, plays also, and excellently well, upon a flageolet of his own, and in this posture he rides up to the coach-side. "Sir," says he, to the person in the coach, "your lady plays excellently, and I doubt not but that she dances as well; will you please to walk out of the coach, and let me have the honour to dance one currant with her upon the heath?" "Sir," said the person in the coach, "I dare not deny anything to one of your quality and good mind; you seem a gentleman, and your request is very reasonable;" which said, the lacquey opens the door, out comes the knight, Duval leaps lightly off his horse, and hands the lady out of the coach. They danced, and here it was that Duval performed marvels; the best master in London, except those that are French, not being able to show such footing as he did in his great French riding-boots. The dancing being over, he waits on the lady to her coach. As the knight was going in, says Duval to him, "Sir, you have forgot to pay the music." "No, I have not," replies the knight; and putting his hand under the seat of the coach, pulls out a hundred pounds in a bag, and delivers it to him; which Duval took with a very good grace, and courteously answered, "Sir, you are liberal, and shall have no cause to repent your being so; this liberality of yours shall excuse you the other three hundred pounds;" and, giving him the word, that, if he met with any more of the crew, he might pass undisturbed, Duval civilly takes his leave of him.

The fame acquired by such an exploit as this, which (to use the words of Leigh Hunt) is an "eternal feather in the cap of highway gentility," was calculated to render Duval as much an object of admiration as of terror, and if we take into consideration

the loose morality of the times, we shall see some reason for crediting the stories which represent the genteel handsome highwayman as being a great favorite with the ladies. He always treated the fair sex, when he met them on the road, with the most winning politeness, and would restore a favourite trinket with the grace of a cavalier who had picked up a dropped glove. Once, when in company with several of his crew, Duval met a coach filled with ladies, and sent one of his friends forward to lay them under contribution. The fellow did his office rudely, taking away money, watches, rings, and even the gum-bottle of a baby that was present. The child naturally cried, and one of the ladies, the infant's mother, entreated the man only to return the sucking-bottle. But the surly thief refused, until Duval, observing him to stay longer than necessary, came up and discovered what had been done. Drawing forth a pistol, Duval levelled it at his associate's head, exclaiming at the same time, "Give back the bottle to the child, sirrah! Can't you behave like a gentleman, and raise a contribution without stripping people? But, perhaps, you had some occasion for the sucking-bottle yourself, and, indeed, by your actions one would imagine you were hardly weaned." The abused thief did as he was bid, and Duval departed, leaving the ladies in admiration of his courtesy.

Claude Duval is said to have exhibited much ingenuity occasionally in compassing such purposes as sheer courage alone could not carry him through. He once entered the Crown Inn, in Beaconsfield, where he heard singing, dancing, and fiddling in merry progress. On inquiry, he found that a sort of wake or fair was kept there that day, and that a large company were assembled. Partly from his natural liking for sport, and partly from the hope of doing business, Duval resolved to alight, and spend the evening there. He did so, entered the kitchen, and called for a pint of wine. By chance an old farmer was sitting by the fire with a companion, whom he told, in Duval's hearing, that he had a hundred pounds in his pockets, which he was anxious for the safety of. Our appropriative hero immediately set down this money as his own, more particularly when he heard the old countryman ask leave to enter the dancing-room, and see the diversion. Duval made the same request, and did it so courteously, that he was told he might stay as long as he pleased, and welcome. Thinking more of the hundred pounds than the fiddle or the dancing, the highway practitioner looked around him for some means of making the money change possessors. Clever as he was, he was no conjurer, and could not have what he wished by crying "Presto! pass." But he hit on another method of accomplishing his object. He saw that the only rational way of lightening the farmer of his burden, was to create confusion among the company, during which he might use his fingers unseen. A chimney in the room, with a large funnel, struck him as a proper means of executing his project. He went out, and, having told the ostler of his wish to have a bit of frolic with the good company, prevailed upon that personage, by a bribe of two guineas, to dress up the large mastiff-dog of the stable-yard in a raw cowhide with horns, which lay conveniently at hand, and then, by the help of a ladder and rope, to let the disguised animal down the fore-mentioned chimney. Having thus arranged matters with his confederate, Duval returned quietly to the dancers, who continued to foot it in the merriest manner. By and by, an alarming noise was heard in the chimney, and a most unearthly howling succeeded from the same quarter, followed by the thundering descent into the room of what appeared to be a black, yelling, horned demon. The whole company was thrown into confusion, and the question was, which should be first out of the room. The most active pushed down others, and the lights were overthrown, and trampled under foot. In this state of general consternation, Duval found it no difficult matter to empty the pocket of the farmer, whom he had kept a sharp hold of in the bustle. The dog, meanwhile, having broken the rope by its weight, bounded over the prostrate crowd, and made its way to the stable, where the ostler instantly uncased it, and rendered it impossible for the trick to be discovered. Whether it had been found out or not, Duval had taken care of himself. As soon as he had effected his purpose, he took horse, and spared neither whip nor spur till he found himself in London. The loss of the money was discovered after his departure, and search made for it everywhere; but, of course, it could not be found. It was thereupon settled by common consent that the devil had been permitted to take it away, in order to punish the old farmer, who was noted for his miserly covetousness.

When the proclamation, already alluded to, was promulgated, Duval, being then well provided with money, thought proper to decamp for France. He was not here long ere he had squandered all he possessed, and was compelled to resort to his old practices. It is recorded of him that he assumed the character of alchemist, ostensibly for the purpose, of extracting gold from lead, but in reality to squeeze it out of an avaricious Jesuit, confessor to the king of France. By putting some pieces of gold into the end of a stick, and then stirring with this stick a crucible filled with melting lead, Duval contrived to exhibit the seeming transmutation of a portion of the lead into gold, by the melting of the particles in the stick. By this means he insinuated himself into the Jesuit's confidence; and the result was, that one day his re-

verence, being alone with his philosophic friend, found himself suddenly bound and gagged, and had the satisfaction of seeing his strong-box rifled before his face, himself being all the while unable to utter a word of remonstrance.

This enabled Claude Duval to return to England, which, somehow or other, foreigners of his class have always chosen as the favourite field of their exertions, possibly from the patriotic wish to spare their own countrymen. How long Duval flourished after his return to England, it is difficult to say, as the dates of the principal events of his life have not been preserved. He did not confine himself entirely to highway practice, but preyed upon the world in various other ways. Dressed elegantly, after the fashion of a finished gallant of the time, he frequented gaming-tables, and laid under contribution knights, and squires, and lords of high degree, who little dreamed of the true character of their companion. Duval was a most dexterous cheat at cards—or, to speak in more measured language of such a man's qualifications, he could slip a card beautifully. He was mightily given to betting, and laid his wagers with such skill and prudence, that he often won large sums by the practice, and seldom lost even small ones.

The law, which has no respect of persons, at length laid its hands on this polished highwayman, whom it had described in a thousand bills and proclamations. He was not taken while attacking the king's lieges, but after having assaulted several bottles of wine. In plain language, he was arrested, while drunk, at the Hole in the Wall tavern, in Chandos-street. His capture excited a sensation proportioned to the repute he had gained in life. After being arraigned, convicted, and condemned, while he lay awaiting his doom in Newgate, he was visited by many ladies, among whom were several of rank, all anxious to see the man who, in his most lawless courses, ever preserved a degree of romantic and most unwonted courtesy to those of their sex. There rested on him, besides, we believe, no stain of blood, though, from the life he had led, this would be difficult to determine. The life of Duval was interceded for, but in vain. On the twenty first of January, 1669-70, when he had barely reached the age of twenty-seven, he was executed at Tyburn. His youth, comeliness, and extraordinary character, in which a vein of good ran through the bad, caused the tears, it is said, to dim many gentle eyes, when he suffered at the fatal tree. Thanks to the improved morals of society, and thanks to an improved system of police, the race of Duvals are now extinct in the land, never, it is hoped, to be revived.

DR. ADAM MARSHALL.—I cannot but remember with thankfulness the benefit I derived from the lectures of Dr. Adam Marshall on human anatomy. He was a man of strong mind, and had deeply studied the mathematical construction and laws of our bony fabric, and was never happier than when explaining them. In the course which I attended, he was particularly scientific and eloquent on this subject. I remember his devoting a whole lecture to display the profound science that was visible in the formation of the double hinges of our joints. Such was the effect of his demonstrations, that an inquisitive friend, who had accompanied me to his course with sceptical inclinations, suddenly exclaimed, with great emphasis, one day as we left his rooms, "A man must be a fool indeed, who, after duly studying his own body, can remain an atheist." I felt as he did, but had not been aware that his objecting mind was spontaneously working itself into so important a conviction.—*Sacred History of the World.*

He that enlarges his curiosity after the works of nature, demonstrably multiplies the inlets of happiness; therefore we should cherish ardour in the pursuit of useful knowledge, and remember that a blighted spring makes a barren year, and that the vernal flowers, however beautiful and gay, are only intended by nature as preparatives to autumnal fruits.—*Johnson.*

It is a shame for a man to desire honour because of his noble progenitors, and not to desire it by his own virtue.—*St. Chrysostom.*

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