

a promise of ten pounds, to write a pamphlet in defence of his uncle Goodere, who was at that time in prison, previous to his trial for the inhuman murder of his brother, and for which he was afterwards executed. Perhaps some of the amiable prejudice called family pride aided in making him take up his pen in behalf of one who seems to have been as ruthless a monster as ever breathed. It must also be recollected that he was now only twenty. Whatever was the morality of the transaction—and indeed it is almost absurd to discuss such a point, considering the general nature of the man—it is related that when he went to receive the wages of his task, he was reduced so low as to be obliged to wear his boots to conceal that he wanted stockings. Having got the money, he bought a pair of stockings at a shop as he passed along. Immediately after, meeting a couple of boon companions, he was easily persuaded to go to dine with them at a tavern. While the wine was afterwards circulating, one of his friends exclaimed, "Why, hey, Foote, how is this? You seem to have no stockings on!" "No," replied the wit, with great presence of mind, "I never wear any at this time of the year, till I am going to dress for the evening; and you see (pulling out his recent purchase) I am always provided with a pair for the occasion." His mother succeeded by the death of her brother, Sir John D. Goodere, to five thousand per annum, but does not seem to have remained free from pecuniary embarrassments more than her son. The celebrated correspondence between her and Foote, given in the jest-books, is quite authentic, but rather too laconically expressed. An authentic copy is subjoined:—

"Dear Sam—I am in prison for debt; come and assist your loving mother,

E. FOOTE."

"Dear Mother—So am I; which prevents his duty being paid to his loving mother by her affectionate son,

SAM. FOOTE.

P. S.—I have sent my attorney to assist you; in the meantime, let us hope for better days."

It is not impossible that Mrs. Foote's imprisonment took place before her accession of fortune was realized, and when she was a widow, for her husband died

soon after Sam's marriage. This lady lived to eighty-four, and is said to have been much like her son, both in body and mind—witty, social, and fond of a pretty strong joke. From the character of her brothers, it seems not unlikely that, with the humour she gave her son, she also communicated a certain degree of insanity, the source of the many eccentricities which he displayed through life.

The necessities arising from pure prodigality drove Foote to the stage in 1744. He appeared at the Haymarket Theatre, as Othello, Macklin supporting him in Iago; but the performance was a failure.

But when I played Othello, thousands swore  
They never saw such tragedy before—

says a rival wit in a retributory burlesque of the mimic. He tried comedy, and made a hit in the character of "Fondlewife." His salary proving unequal to his expenditure, he again became embarrassed, but relieved himself by an expedient, of which we will not attempt to estimate the morality. A lady of great fortune, anxious to be married, consulted the wit as to what she should do. He, recollecting his boon companion Sir Francis Delaval, who was as embarrassed as himself, recommended the lady to go to the conjuror in the Old Bailey, whom he represented as a man of uncommon skill and penetration. He employed another friend to personate the wise man, who depicted Sir Francis at full length, and described the time when, the place where, and the dress in which she would see him. The lady was so struck with the coincidence of all the circumstances, as to marry the broken-down prodigal in a few days. An ample reward signalized the ingenuity of the adviser, and enabled him once more to face the world.

It was in spring 1747 that Foote commenced, in the Haymarket Theatre, his career as the sole entertainer of an audience, and thus was the originator of that kind of amusement which Dibdin, Mathews, and others, afterwards practised with success. The piece, written by himself, and styled the "Diversions of the Morning," consisted chiefly of a series of imitations of well-known living persons. It met with immense applause, and soon raised the jealousy of the two great theatres of the metropolis, through whose intervention his career was stopped by the