

THE FRIEND IN NEED.

IRVING'S STORY OF THE "BUSTED" ACTOR'S GOOD SAMARITAN.

A Reminiscence Which Seemed to Touch the Reader's Heart—Once He Was Very Poor and Unknown, but Now He Is Rich and Famous in All Lands.

The place was a cosy room in a cosy house in a quiet street off the Strand, London. The time was Saturday: the hour, midnight. A company of professional men, composed of some of the lawyers, doctors, newspaper men and actors whose names are famous on both sides of the Atlantic, was scattered in groups about the rooms smoking and chatting after the Saturday night supper, which had become a standard institution with them. In a sheltered corner over by the fireplace sat a small knot of men, every one of whom had reached the top, or at least the high rank of his profession. The talk, drifting in a smooth, desultory, half-drowsy way from phase to phase, had gradually assumed a retrospective hue. From one to another the story had passed, each telling the tale of an empty stomach, or an empty pocket, or a hopeless tramp of 30 miles or so in this show along a snowbound road in search of employment.

Henry Irving, thoughtfully smoking, with an air of deep attention, had not spoken and did not speak until the others, having exhausted their stock, turned to him. He had experienced harder luck than any of them, and they knew it. He looked up at them for a moment and then, after a pause, said: "The recollection uppermost in my mind just now, while you boys have been talking about tramping and winter roads and all that, is of a certain Christmas dinner at which I was present. I wonder whether any of you remember a poor fellow, long since dead—Joe Robin—who played small parts in London and outside it, and who made the one big mistake of his life when he engaged the profession. Joe had been in the men's underwear business and was doing well when an amateur performance for a charitable object was organized, and he was cast for the part of the clown in a burlesque of 'My Favourite'.

Joe belonged to one of the bohemian clubs, and on the night of the show his friends among the actors and journalists attended in a body to give him a 'send-off.' He played that part capably, and the mischief might have ended there, but some one compared him to Grimaldi. His fate was sealed. He sold his stock, went on the stage, and a few months later I came upon him playing a general utility on a small salary in a small theater in Manchester. One relic of his happy days still remained to him. He had retained shirts, collars and underwear sufficient to last him for a generation.

"But if Joe lacked ability as an actor he had a heart of gold. He would lend or give his last shilling to a friend, and piece by piece his stock of underwear had diminished until only a few shirts and underclothes remained to him.

"The Christmas of that year—the year in which we played together—was perhaps the bitterest I ever knew. Joe had a part in the pantomime. When the men with whom he dressed took of their street clothes, he saw with a pang at his heart how poorly some of them were clad. One poor fellow without an overcoat shivered and shook with every breath of the wind that whistled through the cracked door, and as he dressed there was disclosed a suit of the lightest summer gauze underwear which he was wearing in the depth of that dreadful winter. Poor as Joe was, he was determined to keep up his annual custom of giving his comrades a Christmas dinner. Perhaps all that remained of his stock of underclothing went to the pawnbroker, but that is neither here nor there. Joe raised the money somehow, and on the Christmas day was ready to meet his guests.

"Among the crowd that fled into the room was his friend with the gauze underclothing. Joe beckoned him into an adjoining bedroom, and pointing to a chair silently walked out. On that chair hung a suit of underwear. It was of a comfortable scarlet color; it was of silk and wool; it was thick and warm, and it clung around the actor as if it had been built for him. As the shirt fell over his head there was sufficed through his frame a gentle, delicious glow that thrilled every fiber of his body. His heart swelled almost to bursting. He seemed to be walking on air. He saw all things through a mist of tears. The faces around him, the voices in his ears, the familiar objects in his sight, the very snow falling gently outside the windows, seemed as the shadows of a dream with but one reality—the suit of underwear.

"His feelings seem to have entered your heart," said one of the listeners.

A BANKRUPT'S CLEVER SCHEME.

Startling Developments That Entitled a Bankrupt to Considerable Attention.

This story is going the rounds at Vienna: Among the prominent citizens of the capital of the Austrian empire is a gentleman called Fritz. He is the proprietor of a large factory and is, moreover, well known as a jovial, whole-souled fellow, who delights to give large dinner parties.

Not long since he sent out invitations to all his business friends to partake of his hospitality at a dinner party. At first, as is frequently the case at a dinner party at which there are gentlemen only, the proceedings were somewhat tedious. By degrees, however, the guests became more lively under the stimulating influences of the wine. Their tongues became loosened by the frequent lubrications, and there was a flow of geniality and wit such as is found only on such occasions.

Good humor prevailed to an almost alarming extent. Everybody present was in a hilarious mood. Just at this crisis Fritz stood up and intimated that he would like to make a few remarks.

"Bravo!" said a fat man with a red face, pounding on the table with the handle of his knife.

"Now we will hear something funny," remarked another guest, getting his mouth ready to laugh.

"Speech, speech!" exclaimed several of the guests who had contemplated the wine when it was red.

There was a solemnity about the host that almost convulsed the merry gentlemen present. "Gentlemen, I see around me all my creditors, and I have some important information to impart to you." And he paused. The fat man, to whom Fritz was owing 20,000 marks, turned a trifle pale and seemed to be unable to close his mouth, in which he had deposited a morsel of pate de foie gras. Several other creditors looked at each other.

AT EVEN-SONG.

If I could call you back for one brief hour, it is an even-song that hour should be.

When bells are chiming from an old gray tower across the meadow all day.

And where the starry Jasmine hides the wall, We two would stand together once again. I know your sadness—I would tell you all My tale of love and pain.

And you would listen, with your tender smile, Tracing the lines upon my forehead face, And finding even for a little while, Our earth a weary place.

Only one little hour. And then once more The bitter word, farewell, beset with fears And all my pathway darkened as before, With shades of lonely years.

Far better, dear, that you, unfeeling, unweaned, Should hover near me in the quiet air, Out a fight right then and there, forget that he has a head, pick out the second button of his vest and smash him on it as hard as you can.

How to Protect Yourself. If you get into a quarrel with a man and see that you can't get out of it without a fight right then and there, forget that he has a head, pick out the second button of his vest and smash him on it as hard as you can.

Not Easy to Interview. H. N. Higginbotham of World's fair fame is one of the most genial of Chicago's big men and one of its easiest to approach. But that does not mean that Mr. Higginbotham is an easy man to interview. Quite the reverse. Except on matters which his opinion is pertinent he will not talk for publication.

The Oldest Paris Library. M. Marchal, the assistant librarian of the Bibliotheque Nationale at Paris, has finished the general inventory of that library, on which he has been at work with a large staff of assistants, since 1875. The figures given out thus far show that the National Library of France contains 2,131,000 volumes.

Not a Good Substitutes. Guide—Ladies and gentlemen, right here among these cliffs is a wonderful echo. A pistol shot is repeated 15 times. Is there a gentleman here from the west. If so, will he please discharge his pistol?

Needs of Elephants. Sir Gerald Portal says that between the coast and Uganda the supply of elephants in Africa is "apparently almost inexhaustible." Enormous numbers of elephants are in the country still. One of the officers of his expedition, while exploring the country west of Mogo, saw more than 300 in one herd.

All Front. At Chancellorsville, while Jackson's corps was moving to the flank and the poor cavalryman appeared again, looking hopeless and distraught. He was met by another cavalryman, to whom he called out: "Hello! Wounded?"

How the Gets Along With Him. "There is one thing I like about your husband; he never hurries you when getting ready for a walk."

From Cambridge comes this definition of a popular game, "Football is the pursuit of blown leather by blown humanity."

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