

STARTLING PARTICULARS!

A NIGHT

IN A

WORKHOUSE.

From the PALL MALL GAZETTE.

HOW THE POOR ARE TREATED IN LAMBETH!

THE CASUAL PAUPER!

"OLD DADDY," THE NURSE!

THE BATH!

The Conversation of the Casuals!

THE STRIPED SHIRT!

THE SWEARING CLUB!!

"Skilley" and "Toke" by Act of Parliament!

The Adventures of a Young Thief!

&c. &c. &c.

F. BOWERING, 211, BLACKFRIARS ROAD,
MANSELL & SON, King Street, Borough, and all Newsagents.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

6 DEC 1861
ST. MARTIN'S PARISH
D76.20.

A NIGHT IN A WORKHOUSE.

At 9 o'clock on the evening of Monday the 8th inst., a neat and unpretentious carriage might have been seen turning cautiously from the Kennington road into Princes road, Lambeth. Approaching a public house which retreated a little from the street, he pulled up; but not so close that the lights should fall upon the carriage door, not so distant as to unsettle the mind of any one who chose to imagine that he had halted to drink beer before proceeding to call for the children at a juvenile party. He did not dismount, nor did any one alight in the usual way; but any keen observer who happened to watch his intelligent countenance might have seen a furtive glance directed to the wrong door—that is to say, to the door of the carriage which opened into the dark and muddy road. From that door emerged a sly and ruffianly figure, marked with every signs of squalor. He was dressed in what had once been a snuff-brown coat, but which had faded to the hue of bricks imperfectly baked. It was not strictly a ragged coat, though it had lost its cuffs—a bereavement which obliged the wearer's arms to project through the sleeves two long inelegant inches. The coat altogether was too small, and was only made to meet over the chest by means of a bit of twine. This wretched garment was surmounted by a "bird's eye" pocket handkerchief of cotton, wisped about the throat in hangman fashion; above all was a battered billy-cock hat, with a dissolute drooping brim. Between the neckerchief and the lowering brim of the hat appeared part of a face, unshaven and not scrupulously clean. The man's hands were plunged in his pockets, and he shuffled hastily along in boots, which were the boots of a tramp indifferent to mire ways.

The mysterious figure was that of the present writer. He was bound for Lambeth Workhouse, there to learn by actual experience how casual paupers are lodged and fed, and what the "casual" is like, and what the porter who admits him, and the master who rules over him; and how the night passes with the outcasts whom we have all seen crowding about workhouse doors on cold and rainy nights. Much has been said on the subject—on behalf of the paupers—on behalf of the officials; but nothing by any one who, with no motive but to learn and make known the truth, had ventured

the experiment of passing a night in a workhouse and trying what it actually is to be a casual.

The day had been windy and chill—the night was cold; and therefore I fully expected to begin my experiences among a dozen of ragged wretches squatting about the steps and waiting for admission. But my only companion at the door was a decently dressed woman, whom, as I afterwards learnt, they declined to admit until she had recovered from a fit of intoxication from which she had the misfortune to be still suffering. I lifted the big knocker, and knocked; the door was promptly opened, and I entered. Just within a comfortable-looking clerk sat at a comfortable desk, ledger before him. Indeed the spacious hall in every way was as comfortable as cleanliness and great mats and plenty of gaslight could make it.

'What do you want?' asked the man who opened the door.

'I want a lodging.'

'Go and stand before the desk,' said the porter; and I obeyed.

'You are late,' said the clerk.

'Am I Sir?'

'Yes. If you come in you'll have a bath, and you'll have to sleep in the shed.'

'Very well, Sir.'

'What's your name?'

'Joshua Mason, Sir.'

'What are you?'

'An engraver.' (This taredaddle I invented to account for the lock of my hands.)

'Where did you sleep last night?'

'Hammersmith,' I answered—as I hope to be forgiven.

'How many times have you been here?'

'Never before, Sir.'

'Where do you mean to go to when you are turned out in the morning?'

'Back to Hammersmith, Sir.'

These humble answers being entered in a book, the clerk called to the porter, saying 'Take him through. You may as well take his bread with you.'

Near the clerk stood a basket containing some pieces of bread of equal size. Taking one of these, and unhooking a bunch of keys from the wall, the porter led me through some passages all so scrupulously clean that my most serious misgivings were laid to rest. Then we passed into a dismal yard. Crossing this, my guide led me to a door, calling out 'Hillo! Daddy, I've brought you another'

Whereupon Daddy opened unto us, and let a little of his gaslight stream into the yard where we stood.

'Come in,' said Daddy very hospitably. 'There's enough of you to night, anyhow! What made you so late?'

'I didn't like to come in earlier.'

'Ah! That's a pity, now, because you missed you skilly (gruel). It's the first night of skilly, don't you know under the new act?'

'Just like my luck' I muttered dolefully.

The porter went his way, and I followed Daddy into another apartment, where were ranged three great baths, each one containing a liquid so disgustingly like weak mutton broth that my worst apprehensions crowded back. 'Come on, there's a dry place to stand upon up at this end,' said Daddy kindly. 'Take off your clothes, tie 'em up in your hank'sher, and I'll lock 'em up till the morning.' Accordingly I took off my coat and waistcoat, and was about to tie them together, when Daddy cried 'That ain't enough, I mean everything.' 'Not my shirt, Sir, I suppose?' 'Yes shirt and all; but there, I'll lend you a shirt,' said Daddy. 'Whatever you take in of your own will be nailed, you know. You might take in your boots, though they'd be handy if you wanted to leave the shed for anything; but don't blame me if you lose 'em.'

With a fortitude for which I hope some day to be rewarded, I made up my bundle (boots and all), and the moment Daddy's face was turned away shnt my eyes and plunged desperately into the mutton broth. I wish from the bottom of my heart my courage had been less hasty, for hearing the splash, Daddy looked round and said 'Lor now! there was no occasion for that; you look a clean and decent sort of man. It's them filthy beggars that want washing. Don't use that towel—here's a clean one! That's the sort! and now here's your shirt' (handing me a blue striped one from a heap), 'and here's your ticket. No. 34 you are, and a ticket to match is tied to your bundle. Mind you don't lose it. They'll nail it from you if they get a chance. Put it under your head. This is your rug—take it with you.'

'Where am I to sleep, please, Sir?'

'I'll show you.'

And so he did. With no other rag but the checked shirt to cover me, and with my rug over my shoulder, he accompanied me to a door at which I entered, and, opening it, kept me standing with naked feet on the stone threshold, full in the draught of the frosty air, while he pointed out the way I should go. It was not a long way, but I would have given much not to have trodden it. It was

open as the highway—with the flag stones below and the stars overhead, and as I said before, and cannot help saying again, a frosty wind was blowing.

'Straight across,' said daddy, 'to where you see the light shining through. Go in there and turn to the left, and you'll find the beds in a heap. Take one of 'em and make yourself comfortable.' And straight across I went, my naked feet seeming to cling to the stones as though they were burning hot instead of icy cold (they had just stepped out of a bath you should remember), till I reached the space through which the light was shining, and I entered.

No language with which I am acquainted is capable of conveying an adequate conception of the spectacle I then encountered. Imagine a space of about 30ft. by 30ft. enclosed on three sides by a dingy whitewashed wall, and roofed with naked tiles which were furred with the damp and filth that reeked within. As for the fourth side of the shed, it was boarded in for (say) a third of its breadth; the remaining space being hung with flimsy canvas, in which was a gap 2ft. wide at top, widening to at least 4ft. at bottom. This far too airy shed was paved with stone, the flags so thickly incrustated with filth that I mistook it first for a floor of natural earth. Extending from one end of my bedroom to the other, in three rows, were certain iron 'cranks,' of which I subsequently learnt the use, with their many arms raised in various attitudes, as the stiffened arms of men are on a battlefield. My bedfellows lay among the cranks, distributed on the flagstones in a double row, on narrow bags scantily stuffed with hay. At one glance my appalled vision took in 30 of them—thirty men and boys stretched upon shallow pallets with but only six inches of comfortable hay between them and the stony floor. These beds were placed close together, every occupant being provided with a rug like that which I was fain to hug across my shoulders. In not a few cases two gentlemen had clubbed beds and rugs and slept together. In one case, to be further mentioned presently, four gentlemen had so clubbed together. Many of my fellow-casuals were awake,—others asleep or pretending to sleep; and, shocking as were the waking ones to look upon, they were quite pleasant when compared with the sleepers. For this reason the practised and well seasoned casual seems to have a peculiar way of putting himself to bed. He rolls himself in his rug, tucking himself in, head and feet, so that he is completely enveloped; and, lying quite still on his pallet, he looks precisely like a corpse covered because of its hideousness. Some were stretched out at full length; some lay nose and knees together; some with an arm or a leg showing crooked through

the coverlet. It was like the result of a railway accident; these ghastly figures were awaiting the coroner.

From the moral point of view, however, the wakeful ones were more dreadful still. Towled, dirty, villanous, they squatted up in their beds, and smoked foul pipes, and sang snatches of horrible songs, and bandied jokes so obscene as to be absolutely appalling. Eight or ten were so enjoying themselves—the majority with the check shirt on and the frowzy rug pulled about their legs; but two or three wore no shirts at all, squatting naked to the waist, their bodies fully exposed in the light of the single flaring jet of gas fixed high upon the wall.

My entrance excited very little attention. There was a horse-pail three parts full of water standing by a post in the middle of the shed, with a little tin pot beside it. Addressing me as 'old pal,' one of the naked ruffians begged me to 'hand him a swig,' as he was 'werry nigh garspin.' Such an appeal of course no 'old pal' could withstand, and I gave him a pot full of water. He showed himself grateful for the attention. 'I should lay over there if I was you,' he said, pointing to the left side of the shed; 'it's more out of the wind than this 'ere side is.' I took the good-natured advice and (by this time shivering with cold) stepped over the stones to where the beds of straw bags were heaped, and dragged one of them to the place suggested by my comrade. But I had no more idea of how to arrange it than of making an apple pudding, and a certain little discovery added much to my embarrassment. In the middle of the bed I had selected was a stain of blood bigger than a man's hand! I did not know what to do now. To lie on such a horrid thing seemed impossible; yet to carry back the bed and exchange it for another might betray a degree of fastidiousness repugnant to the feelings of my fellow lodgers, and possibly excite suspicion that I was not what I seemed. Just in the nick of time in came that good man Daddy.

"What! not pitched yet?" he exclaimed; "here, I'll show you, Hallo! somebody's been bleedin'! Never mind; let's turn him over. There you are you see! Now lay down, and cover your rug over you."

There was no help for it. It was too late to go back. Down I lay, and spread the rug over me. I should have mentioned that I brought in with me a cotton handkerchief, and this I tied round my head by way of a nightcap; but not daring to pull the rug as high as my face. Before I could in any way settle my mind to reflection, in came Daddy once more to do me a further kindness and point out a stupid blunder I had committed.

'Why, you are a rummy chap!' said Daddy. 'You forgot your bread! Lay hold. And look here, I've brought you another rug; it's perishing cold to-night.' So saying, he spread the rug over my legs and went away. I was very thankful for the extra covering, but I was in a dilemma about the bread. I couldn't possibly eat it; what then was to be done with it? I broke it, however, and in view of such of the company as might happen to be looking made a forcocious bite at a bit as large as a bean, and munched violently. By good luck, however, I presently got half-way over my difficulty very neatly. Just behind me, so close indeed that their feet came within half a yard of my head, three lads were sleeping together.

'Did you hear that, Punch?' one of them asked.

'Bar what?' answered Punch, sleepy and snappish.

'Why, a cove forgot his toke! Gordstruth! you wouldn't ketch me a forgettin mine.'

'You may have half of it, old pal, if you're hungry.' I observed leaning up on my elbows.

'Chuck it here, good luck to yer?' replied my young friend, starting up with an eager clap of his dirty hands.

I 'chucked it here,' and slipping the other half under the side of my bed, lay my head on my folded arms.

It was about half-past 9 when, having made myself as comfortable as circumstances permitted, I closed my eyes in the desperate hope that I might fall asleep, and so escape from the horrors with which I was surrounded. "At 7 tomorrow morning the bell will ring." Daddy had informed me. "and then you will give up your ticket and get back your bundle." Between that time and the present full nine long hours had to wear away.

But I was speedily convinced that, at least for the present, sleep was impossible. The young fellow (one of three who lay in one bed, with their feet to my head) whom my bread had refreshed, presently swore with frightful imprecations that he was now going to have a smoke; and immediately put his threat into execution. Thereupon his bedfellows sat up and lit their pipes too. But oh! if they had only smoked—if they had not taken such an unfortunate fancy to spit at the leg of a crank a few inches from my head, how much misery and apprehension would have been spared me. To make matters worse they united with this American practice an Eastern one; as they smoked they related little autobiographical anecdotes—so abominable, that three or four decent men who lay at the further end of the shed were so provoked they threatened that unless the talk abated in' filthiness, to get up and stop it by main

force. Instantly the voice of every blackguard in the room was raised against the decent ones. They were accused of loathsome afflictions, stigmatised as fighting men out of work (which must be something very humiliating I suppose) and invited to 'a round' by boys young enough to be their grandsons. For several minutes there was such a storm of oaths, threats, and taunts—such a deluge of foul words raged in the room—that I could not help thinking of the fate of Sodom; as, indeed I did, several times during the night. Little by little the riot died out, without any of the slightest interference on the part of the officers.

Soon afterwards the ruffian majority was strengthened by the arrival of a lanky boy of about 15, who evidently recognized many acquaintances, and was recognized by them as 'Kay,' or perhaps I should write it 'K.' He was a very remarkable looking lad, and his appearance pleased me much. Short as his hair was cropped, it still looked soft and silky; he had large blue eyes set wide apart, and a mouth that would have been faultless but for its great width; and his voice was as soft and sweet as any woman's. Lightly as a woman, too, he picked his way over the stoves towards the place where the beds lay, carefully hugging his cap beneath his arm.

'What cheer, Kay?' 'Out again, then, old son!' 'What yer got in yer cap, Kay?' cried his friends; to which the sweet voice replied 'Who'll give me part of his doss (bed)?—my eyes and limbs if I ain't perish! Who'll let me turn in with him for half my toke' (bread)? I feared how it would be. The hungry young fellow who had so readily availed himself of half my 'toke' snapped at Kay's offer, and after a little rearrangement and bed-making, four young fellows instead of three reposed upon the hay-bags at my head.

'You was too late for skilley, Kay. There's skilley, nights as well as mornins.'

'Don't you tell no bleeding lies, Kay answered incredulously. 'Blind me, it's true. Ain't it Punch?'

'Right you are,' said Punch, 'and spoons to eat it with, that's more. There used to be spoons at all the houses, one time. Poplar used to have 'em; but one at a time they was all nicked don't you know.'

'Well, I don't want no skilley, leaseways not to-night,' said Kay, 'I've had some rum. Two glasses of it, and a blow out of puddin' to regier Christmas plum puddin'. You don't know the cove as gave it me, but thinks I this mornin' when I comes out blessed if I don't don't go and see my old chum. Lordstruth, he was struck. 'Come along,' he ses, 'I saved you some puddin' from Christmas.'

'Whereabouts is it?' I ses. 'In that box under my bed,' he ses, 'and he forks it out. That's the sort of pal to have. And he stood a quaters, and half a ounce of hard up—tobacco. That wasn't all neither; when I come away, ses he, 'How about your breakfus?' 'Oh, I shall do,' ses I. 'You take some of my bread and butter, and he cuts me off four chunks buttered thick. I eat two on 'em comin' along.'

'What's in your cap, Kay?' repeated the devourer of 'toker.'

'Them two slices,' said Kay, generously adding, 'There, share 'em amongst yer, and somebody give us a whiff of bacca.'

Kay showed himself a pleasant companion; what in a higher grade of society is called 'quite an acquisition.' He told stories of thieving and thieving, and of a certain 'silver cup' he had, been 'put up to,' and that he meant to knick 'fore the end of the week, if he got seven stretch—seven years for it. The cup was worth ten quid—ten pounds, and he knew where to melt it within ten minutes of nicking it.' He made this statement without any moderation of his sweet voice, and the others received it as serious fact. Not was there any affectation of secrecy in another gentleman, who announced, with great applause that he had stolen a towel from the bath room; 'And s'help me, it's as good as new, never been washed more'n once.'

'Tell us a rummy story, Kay,' said somebody; and Kay did. He told stories of so rummy a character, that the decent men at the further end of the room (some of whom had their little boys sleeping with them) must have lain in a sweat of horror as they listened. Indeed, when Kay broke into a rummy song with a roaring chorus, one of the decent men rose in his bed, and swore he would smash Kay's head if he didn't desist. But Kay sang on till he and his admirers were tired of the entertainment. 'Now,' said he 'let's have a Swearing Club, you'll be in it.'

The principle of this game seemed to rest on the impossibility of either of the young gentlemen making half a dozen observations without introducing a blasphemous or obscene word; and either the basis is a very sound one, or for the sake of keeping the 'club' alive the members purposely made slips. The penalty for 'swearing' was a punch on any part of the body, except a few which the club rules protected. The game was highly successful. Warming with the sport, and indifferent to punches, the members vied with each other in audacity, and in a few minutes Bedlam in its prime could scarcely have produced such a spectacle as was to be seen on the beds behind me. One rule of the club was that any word to be found in the Bible might be used with impunity, and if one mem'

ber 'punched' another for using such a word, the error was to be visited upon him with a double punching all round. This naturally led to much argument, for in vindicating the Bible as his authority, a member became sometimes so much heated, as to launch into a flood of 'real swearing,' which brought the fists of the club upon his naked carcase as thick as hail.

These and other pastimes beguiled the time until, to my delight, the church chimes audibly tolled 12. After this the noise gradually subsided, and it seemed as though everybody was going to sleep at last.

Nearly one o'clock. Still quiet and no fresh arrival for an hour more. Then suddenly a loud noise of hobnailed boots kicking at a wooden gate, and soon after a tramping of feet, and a knocking at Daddy's door, which, it will be remembered, was only separated from our bedroom by an open paved court.

'Hallo!' cried Daddy.

'Here's some more of 'em for you—ten of 'em,' answered the porter, whose voice I recognised at once.

'They'll have to find beds, then,' Daddy grumbled, as he opened his door. 'I don't believe there are four beds empty. They must sleep double or something.'

This was terrible news for me.

As soon as these wrathful men had advanced to the middle of the shed, they made the discovery that there was an insufficient number of beds—only three beds, indeed, for ten competitors.

'Where's the beds? D'y'e hear, Daddy? You blessed, truth-telling old person, where's the beds?'

'You'll find 'em. Some of 'em is lying on two, or got 'em for pillows. You'll find 'em.'

With a sudden rush our new friends plunged among the sleepers, trampling over them, cursing their eyes and limbs, dragging away their rugs; and if by chance they found some poor wretch who had been tempted to take two beds, or bags, instead of one, they coolly hauled him out and took possession. There was no denying them and no use in remonstrating. They evidently knew that they were at liberty to do just as they liked, and then took full advantage of the privilege.

One of them came up to me, and shouting 'I want that, you —,' snatched at my bird's-eye nightcap, and carried it off. There was a bed close to mine which contained only one occupant, and into this one of the new comers slipped without a word of warning, driving its lawful owner against the wall to make room. Then he sat up in bed for a moment, savagely venting his disappoint-

ment as to 'toke,' and declaring that never before in his life had he felt the need of it so much. This was my opportunity. Slipping my hand under my bed, I withdrew that judiciously hoarded piece of bread, and respectfully offered it to him. He snapped at it with thanks.

By the time the churches were chiming 2 matters had once more adjusted themselves, and silence reigned, to be disturbed only by drinkers at the pail, or such as, otherwise prompted, stalked into the open yard. Kay, for one, visited it. I mention this unhappy young wretch particularly, because he went out without a single rag to his back. I looked out at the rent in the canvas, and saw the frosty moon shining on him. When he returned, and crept down between Punch and another, he mut'ered so himself 'Warm again. Oh, my G——! Warm again!'

Whether there is a rule which closes the casual wards after a certain hour I do not know; but before one o'clock our number was made up, the last comer signalizing his appearance with a *pat sent*. His rug over his shoulders, he waltzed into the shed, waving his hands, and singing in an affective voice as he sidled along—

"I like to be a swell, a-roaming down Pall-mall,

"Or anywhere—I don't much care, so I can be a swell."

—a couplet which had an intensely comical effect. This gentleman had just come from a pantomime (where he had learnt his song; probably). Too poor to pay for a lodging, he could only muster means for a seat in the gallery of 'the Vic,' where he was well entertained, judging from the flattering manner in which he spoke of the clown. The columbine was less fortunate in his opinion. 'She's werry dicky, ain't got what I call 'move' about her.' However, the wretched young woman was respited now from the scourge of his criticism; for the critic and his listeners were fast asleep; and yet I doubt whether any one of the company slept very soundly. Every moment some one shifted uneasily, and as the night wore on the silence was more and more irritated by the sound of coughing. This was one of the most distressing things in the whole adventure. The conversation was horrible, the tales that were told more horrible still, and worse than either (though not by any means the most infamous things to be heard—I dare not even hint at them) was that song, with its bestial chorus shouted from a dozen throats; at any rate they kept the blood warm with constant hot flushes of anger; while as for the coughing, to lie on the flagstones in what was nothing better than an open shed, and listen to that hour after hour chilled one's very heart with pity. Every variety of cough that ever I heard was to be heard there; the hollow cough, the short cough, the hysterical cough, the bark that comes at regular intervals, liketh quarter chime of a clock, as if to mark off the progress of decay; coughing from vast hollow chests, coughing from little narrow ones—now one, now another, now two or three together, and then a migute's interval of silence in which to think of it all and wonder who

would begin next. One of the young reprobates above me coughed so grotesquely like the chopping of wood that I named him in my mind the Woodcutter. Now and then I found myself coughing too, which may have added just a little to the poignant distress these awfully constant and various sounds occasioned me. They were good in one way, they made one forget what wretches they were, who, to all appearances, were so rapidly 'chopping' their way to a pauper's graveyard. I did not care about the more matured ruffians so much, but though the youngest, the boys like Kay, were unquestionably among the most infamous of my comrades, to hear what cold and hunger and vice had done for them at 15, was almost enough to make a man cry, and there were boys there even younger than these.

At half-past two, every one being asleep, or at least lying still, Daddy came in and counted us—one, two, three, four, and so on in a whisper. These, finding the pail empty (it was nearly full at half-past 9, when I entered) he considerably went and refilled it, and even took much trouble in searching for the tin pot which served as a drinking cup, and which the last comer had playfully thrown to the further end of the shed. I ought to have mentioned that the pail stood close to my head, so that I had peculiar opportunities of study, as one after another of my comrades came to the fountain to drink; just as the brutes do in those books of African travel. The pail refilled, Daddy returned and was seen no more till morning.

It still wanted four hours and a half to 7 o'clock—the hour of rising—and never before in my life did time appear to creep so slowly. I could hear the chimes of the parish church, and of the Parliament House, as well as those of a wretched tinkling Dutch clock somewhere on the premises. The parish church was the first to announce the hour (an act of kindness I feel bound to acknowledge). Westminster came next, the lazy Dutchman declining his consent to the time of day till fully sixty seconds afterwards. And I declare I thought that difference of sixty seconds an injury—if the officers of the house took their time from the Dutchman. It may seem a trifle, but a minute is something when a man is lying on a cold flagstone, and the wind of a winter night is blowing in your hair. 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock struck, and still there was nothing to beguile the time but observation, under the one flaring gaslight, of the little heaps of outcast humanity strewn about the floor, and after awhile, I find, one may even become accustomed to the sight of one's fellow creatures lying around you like covered corpses in a railway shed. For most of the company were now bundled under the rugs in the ghastly way I have already described—though here and there a cropped head appeared, surmounted by a billy-cock like my own or by a greasy cloth cap. Five o'clock, six o'clock chimed, and then I had news—most welcome of the world without, and one of the real beginnings of day. Half a dozen factory bells announced that it was time for working men to go to labour; but my companions were not working men, and so snored on. Out through the gap in the canvas the stars were still to be seen shining on the black sky, but that did not alter the fact that it was six o'clock in the

morning. I snapped my fingers at the Dutchman, with his sixty seconds slow, for in another hour I fondly hoped to be relieved from duty. A little while and doors were bound to open and shut, yet a little while, and the voice of Daddy was audible in conversation with another early bird; and then I distinctly caught the word 'bundles.' Blessed sound, I longed for my bundle, for my pleasing brown coat, for the warm, if unsightly jersey, which I adopted a judicious substitute for a waistcoat, for my corduroys and liberty.

'Clang!' went the workhouse clock. 'Now, then, wake 'em up!' cried Daddy. I was already up, sitting up; that is, being anxious to witness the resurrection of the ghastly figures rolled in the rugs. But nobody but myself arose at the summons. They knew what it means well enough, and in sleepy voices cursed the bell, and wished it in several dreadful places; but they did not move until there came in at the hole in the canvas, two of the pauper inhabitants of the house, bearing bundles. 'Thirty two,' 'Twenty eight!' they bawled, but not my number, which was thirty four. Neither thirty two nor thirty eight however, seemed eager to accept his good fortune in being first called, they were called upon three several times before they would answer, and then they replied with a savage 'Chuck it here, can't you!' Not before you chucks over your shirt and ticket, the bundle holder answered, whereon 'Twenty eight' sat up, and, divesting himself of his borrowed shirt, flung it, with his wooden ticket, and his bundle was flung back in return.

It was some time before bundle No. 34 turned up, so that I had fair opportunity of observing my neighbours. The decent men slipped into their rags as soon as they got them, but the blackguards were in no hurry. Some indulged in a morning pipe to prepare themselves for the fatigue of dressing, while others, loosening their bundles as they squatted naked, commenced an investigation for certain little animals which shall be nameless.

At last my turn came, and 'chucking over' my shirt and ticket, I quickly attired myself in clothes which, ragged as they were, were cleaner than they looked. In less than two minutes I was out of the shed and in the yard; where a few of the more decent poor fellows crowding round a pail of water, and scrambling after something that might pass for a wash. Finding their own soap, as far as I could observe, and drying their faces on any bit of rag they might happen to have about them, or upon the canvas curtain of the shed.

By this time it was about half past 7, and the majority of the casuals were up and dressed. I observed, however, that none of the younger boys were as yet up, and it presently appeared that there existed some rule against their dressing in the shed; for Daddy came out of the bath room, where the bundles were deposited, and called out 'New four boys!' and instantly four little wretches, some with their rugs trailing about their shoulders, and some quite bare, came shivering over the stones and across the bleak yard, and were admitted to the bath room to dress. 'Now four more boys,' cried Daddy; and so on.

When all were up and dressed, the boys carried the bed rugs into Daddy's room, and the pauper inmates made a heap of the 'beds,' stacking them against the wall. As before mentioned, the shed served the treble purpose of bedchamber, work-room, and breakfast room; it was impossible to get fairly at the cranks and set them going until the bedding was stowed away.

Breakfast, before work however, but it was a weary while to some of us before it made its appearance. For my own part I had little appetite, but about me were a dozen poor wretches who obviously had a very great one,—they had come in overnight too late for bread, and, perhaps may not have broken fast since the morning of the previous day. The decent ones suffered most. The blackguard majority were quite cheerful, smoking, swearing, and play their pretty horse play, the prime end of which was pain or discomfiture for somebody else. One casual there was with only one leg. When he came in overnight he wore a black hat, which added a 'certain look of respectability to a worn suit of black. All together his clothes had been delivered up to him by Daddy, but now he was seen hopping disconsolately about the place on his crutch, for the hat was missing. He was a timid man, with a mild voice, and whenever he asked some ruffian whether he had seen such a thing as a 'black hat,' and got his answer, he invariably said 'Thank you,' which was regarded as very amusing. At last one sidled up to him with a grin, and showing about three square inches of some fluffy substance, said 'Is this anything like wot you're lost, guvner?' The cripple inspected it. 'That's the rim of it!' he said. 'What a shame!' and hobbled off with tears in his eyes.

Full three quarters of an hour of loitering and [shivering, and then came the taskmaster, a soldierly looking man, over six feet high, with quick, gray eyes, in which 'No trifling' appeared as distinctly as a notice against trespassing on a wayside board. He came in among us, and the gray eyes made out our number in a moment. 'Out into the yard, all of you,' he cried, and we went out in a mob. There we shivered for some 20 minutes longer, and then a baker's man appeared with a great wooden tray piled up with such slices of bread as we had received overnight. The tray was consigned to an able-bodied casual who took his place with the task master at the shed door, and then in single file we re-entered the shed, each man and boy receiving a slice as he passed in. Pitying, as I suppose, my unaccustomed look, Mr Taskmaster gave me a slice and a large piece over.

The bread devoured, a clamour for 'skilly' began. The rumour had got abroad that this morning, and on all future mornings there would be skilley for breakfast, and 'Skilley, skilley' resounded through the shed. No one had hinted that it was not forthcoming, but skilley seems to be thought an extraordinary concession, and after waiting only a few minutes for it, they attacked the taskmaster in the fiercest manner. They called him thief, sneak, and 'crawler.' Little boys black-guarded him in gutter language, and looking him in the face, consigned him to hell without flinching. He never uttered a word in reply, or showed a sign of impatience, and whenever he was obliged to speak it was quite without temper.

There was a loud 'hooray!' when the longed for skilley appeared in two pails, in one of which floated a small tin saucepan, with a stick thrust into its handle by way of a ladle. Yellow pint basins were provided for our use, and large iron spoons. 'Range round the walls!' the taskmaster shouted. We obeyed with the utmost alacrity; and then what I should judge to be about three fourths of a pint of gruel was handed to each of us as we stood. I was glad to get mine, because the basin that contained it was warm and my hands were numb with cold. I tasted a spoonful, as in duty bound, and wondered more than ever at the esteem in which it was held by my *cofreres*. It was a weak decoction of oatmeal and water, bitter, and without even a pinch of salt or flavor in it—that I could discover. But it was hot, and on that account, perhaps, was so highly relished, that I had no difficulty in persuading one of the decent men to accept my share.

It was now past 8 o'clock, and, as I knew that a certain quantity of labour had to be performed by each man before he was allowed to go his way, I was anxious to begin. The labour was to be 'crank' labor. The 'cranks' are a series of iron bars extending across the width of the shed, penetrating through the wall, and working a flourmill on the other side. Turning the crank is like turning a windlass. The task is not a severe one. Four measures of corn—bushels they were called—but that is doubtful, have to be ground every morning by the night's batch of casuals. Close up to the ceiling hangs a bell, connected with the machinery, and as each measure is ground the bell rings, so that the grinders may know how they are going on. But the grinders are lazy as obscene. We were no sooner set to work than the taskmaster left us to our own sweet will, with nothing to restrain its exercise but an occasional yell from the miller, a weakly expostulating man. Once or twice he came in and said mildly, 'Now then, my men, why don't you stick to it?' and so went out again.

The result of this laxity of overseeing would have disgusted me at any time, and was intensely disgusting then.

The consequence of all this was that the cranks went round at a very slow rate, and now and then stopped altogether. Then the miller came in, the loungers rose from their couches, the tailors ceased stitching, the smokers dropped their pipes, and every fellow was at his post. The cranks spun round furiously again, the miller's expostulation being drowned amid a shout of 'Slap, bang, here we are again!' or 'this extemporised chorus—

- 'We'll hang up the miller on a sour apple tree,
- 'We'll hang up the miller on a sour apple tree,
- 'We'll hang up the miller on a sour apple tree,
- 'And then go grinding on.
- 'Glory, glory, Hallelujah, &c'

By such ditties the ruffians enlivened their short spell of work. Short indeed! The miller departed, and within a minute afterwards beds were reoccupied, pipes lit, and tailoring resumed. So the game

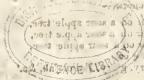
continued—the honest fellows sweating at the cranks, anxious to get the work done, and go out to look for more profitable labor, and the paupers by profession taking matters quite easy.

I had seen the show—gladly I escaped into the open streets. The sun shone brightly on my ragged, disreputable figure, and showed its squalor with startling distinctness, but within all was rejoicing. A few yards, and then I was blessed with the sight of that same vehicle—waiting for me in the spot where I had departed from it 14 weary hours before. Did you observe, Mr Editor, with what alacrity I jumped in? I have a vivid recollection of you, Sir, sitting there with an easy patience, lounging through your *Times*, and oh! so detestably clean to look at. But, though I resented your collar, I was grateful for the sight of a familiar face, and for that draught of sherry which you considerably brought for me, a welcome refreshment after so many weary hours of fasting.

And now I have come to the end, I remember many little anecdotes which escaped me in writing [the previous articles. I ought to have told you of two quiet elderly gentlemen who, amid all the blackguardism that went on around, held a discussion on the merits of the English language, one of the disputants showing [an especial admiration for the word 'kindle,' 'fine old Saxon word as ever was coined.' Then there were some childish games of 'first and last letters,' to vary such entertainments as that of the Swearing Club.

The moral of all this I leave to you. It seems necessary to say something about it, for the report which Mr Farnall made after visiting Lambeth Workhouse on Saturday seems meant to suggest an idea that what has been described here is merely an irregularity,

One word in conclusion. I have some horrors for Mr. Farnall's private ear (should he like to learn about them) infinitely more revolting than anything that appears in this pamphlet.



By order of the Trustees of the British Museum, the following is a list of the books deposited and within a minute afterwards done with the necessary paper, and taking receipt. So be aware