

CHAPTER III.

THE "STAR AND GARTER."—LITTLE DINNERS
AT RICHMOND.

MANY pleasant memories dwell in my mind of the old "Star and Garter" at Richmond in the days when it was in the occupation of Mr. Ellis, the father of Mr. Joseph Ellis, afterwards of the Bedford Hotel at Brighton. In that favourite hostelry, renowned in its day for choice dinners, choice wines, and choice company, the Marquis Wellesley, the brother of the great Duke of Wellington, took up his residence for many months. When the dethroned King Louis Philippe, running away from Paris, in February 1848, to escape the fury of the mob, which would not, perhaps, have harmed him had he stayed, landed at Newhaven, near Brighton, under the name of Mr. William Smith, he took refuge with the amiable Queen Amelie at the "Star and Garter," and made it his home until Queen Victoria, and his son-in-law, Leopold I., King of the Belgians, placed the palace of Claremont at his

disposal. The house was the favourite Sunday resort of rich Londoners, and of rich foreigners, who enjoyed a good dinner in beautiful scenery, as its modern successor, built shortly after the original building was unfortunately destroyed by fire, continues to be.

Of the many dinners I have partaken of and enjoyed in the ancient house, I have a particular remembrance of two; of one more especially, to which I was invited by Mr. Ellis. The guests whom I had the pleasure of meeting on the occasion were John Braham, the celebrated vocalist; Thomas Hood, the equally or still more celebrated poet; John Britton, the antiquary; William Tooke, also an antiquary, and a member of the Council of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge; George Cruikshank, the artist, not then so well-known to fame as he afterwards became; John Payne Collier, the Shakspearean commentator and editor, with all of whom I was already acquainted, and several other gentlemen, whom I met for the first time. The dinner and the wines provided by Mr. Ellis were of first-rate excellence, but, as often happens when celebrated and brilliant people are assembled, and expect too much of each other, the conversation languished, and but few flashes of wit illuminated the intellectual atmosphere of the table. But when the dessert arrived and the Chateau Margaux began to circu-

late, a change supervened in consequence of the happy audacity of Mr. Tooke, a very old friend of Mr. Braham, who took the liberty of asking that gentleman for a song. Mr. Braham, without any hums or ha's, or any hesitation whatever, refreshed his mouth and throat with a glass of water, and sang in fine voice, with all his usual well-known grace of expression—

From the white blossom'd sloe, my dear Chloe requested
A sprig her fair breast to adorn.

The applause was great and long continued, and was renewed with double force a few minutes afterwards when Mr. Braham asked us if we should like to hear him sing *The Bay of Biscay*. There could be but one response to such an inquiry, and he sang the song in his very best style. Great was our pleasure, and loud was our applause, only hushed for a moment as George Cruikshank rose to his feet, a full glass in his hand (he had not then, I believe, joined the valiant army of the teetotallers), and with the evident intention of making a speech and proposing a toast. In few but felicitous words, he expressed the gratitude of the company at the pleasure which the accomplished singer had so liberally and spontaneously afforded us all, and ended by proposing the "Health of Mr. Braham and the British Drama." The applause was renewed even more loudly than before, but was suddenly interrupted by the rising of another of the

guests, the pale, the frail, the most melancholy-looking but merry-hearted Thomas Hood, who, in broken sentences, scarcely audible, objected to the toast. "Do not imagine," he said, "that I will not drink to John Braham, with the greatest pleasure, and the most fervent good wishes for his health and happiness. On the contrary, and I know you will all join in the toast with enthusiasm, not only with three times three, but with nine times nine if necessary. But I object to coupling his name with the 'British Drama'!"

The surprise of the assembly was somewhat lessened when he added immediately, "If the toast had been the health of John Braham only, without any addition whatever, I should have been better pleased." Here were signs of assent and renewed applause. "But as an addition has been deemed necessary, I propose that the toast should be 'John Braham and the British Army!'"

Everyone seemed bewildered and curious to know what whim or oddity had taken possession of the mind of the author of *Whims and Oddities*, and John Britton, who sat next to me, said, in a low whisper, "What *can* he be after?"

"Yes," continued Hood, "I repeat it, John Braham and the British Army! Do we not know—does not all the world know—that one of the bravest and gallantest soldiers that ever shed lustre on the history of his country, died after scaling, with un-

exampléd heroism, the heights of A-Braham ? and that our Braham still lives to scale the still higher heights of song ? Long may he continue to do so ! ”

I have heard many bad puns, and listened to many futile attempts at fun in my life-time, but I never listened to a more flagrant attempt to pump water out of a dry well than this was ; but coming from an acknowledged and celebrated wit, delivered as the joke was with the most lugubrious expression of countenance, it excited shouts of laughter.

“Extremes meet,” said John Payne Collier, *sotto voce*. “The joke is so uncommonly bad, as almost to merit to be called a ‘good one.’ ”

“I can’t attempt to rival the illustrious author of ‘Hood’s own’ in wit,” said John Braham, in acknowledging the toast, “but if you will accept another song instead of a speech, I shall be glad to sing you the *Death of Nelson*.”

And the genial old man sang the famous song with as much apparent ease as the lark under the blue sky sings its first hymn to the morning.

The second little dinner which I remember at the “Star and Garter” was when Shirley Brooks (whose real name was William Charles Brooks, as he himself informed me when he requested me to be a witness to his will), accepted the invitation I gave him to meet Mr. Bayard Taylor, the American author and traveller. We three dined alone, in one of the small rooms on the Garden

Terrace, commanding the beautiful view of the Thames and its wooded banks, which was the main attraction of the place. Shirley Brooks and I naturally expected that Mr. Taylor would admire it, as all the world did. But he appeared to look upon the scene with the eyes of an American backwoodsman, rather than with those of a cosmopolitan traveller, and remarked with listless nonchalance, after I had endeavoured to draw his attention to what I considered the most salient points of the lovely landscape: "Very handsome, indeed; but it strikes me that there is too much timber; and that the landscape would be vastly improved by judicious *clearing*."

"To make it look more like an American prairie," said Mr. Shirley Brooks, "is that what you mean?"

"Not exactly!" replied the traveller. "I don't object to trees in moderation, but there are too many trees in England. They spoil the view."

I thought that perhaps Mr. Taylor was a joker of jokes, and did not mean what he said to be taken seriously, and resolved to leave him alone in his heterodoxy, whether it were real or simulated.

We found Mr. Taylor a pleasant companion, with a mind overflowing with literary and general information; a man who had not travelled without observation and consequent profit. His reminiscences of Nubia, which it was not then the fashion

to call the Soudan, from which he had but recently returned, were particularly interesting. He had travelled round the world as the correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, and had contributed many valuable letters to that journal, then running a race of competition with the *New York Herald*—a race which it was not destined to win—though in point of literary merit and high political character it was far in advance of that journal. He was liberally paid, and travelled with a considerable retinue, as, indeed, was necessary in some regions to insure proper deference and respect, if not safety. On arriving at one particular Nubian village, the name of which I have forgotten, the "Sultan" or chief of the district, hearing of his arrival, came out to meet him. A friendly palaver, through the medium of an interpreter, was the result.

"The black Sultan," said Mr. Taylor, "and all the chiefs are called Sultans, struck with admiration at the number of my retainers, as well as at the variety of the presents I offered him, took it into his head that I also must be a Sultan, and asked me the number of subjects that I had in my own country. That I might not fall in his estimation by owning that I was not a Sultan at all, I be-thought myself that the *Tribune* had a daily circulation of at least a hundred thousand copies, that every copy had an average of at least three

readers, and that my letters as they severally appeared were read by three hundred thousand persons. I therefore told him, with all the dignity I could assume, that I had three hundred thousand subjects! The Sultan was duly impressed by the splendour of my position, told the interpreter that I was a very great Sultan indeed, and treated me with marked courtesy and deference. He afterwards offered me one of his daughters in marriage, either temporarily during my stay in his dominions, or during the term of her natural life. I respectfully declined the offer; but the Sultan was not offended, though somewhat surprised at my want of taste. We, however, got on very well together, and he never once seemed to forget during the short period of our intercourse, the to him important fact that I had more 'subjects' than he had himself."

After dinner we took a stroll in the Park, and paused before the inscription prominently fixed on a tree near the entrance-gate, which all visitors, if they have any taste for literature, linger to peruse. Mr. Taylor copied the lines into his note-book, and was greatly impressed by their beauty and appropriateness.

From the Park we proceeded down the hill into the town, in order to visit the grave of James Thomson, the author of the once celebrated poem of the *Seasons*, little read in the present day.

but destined, nevertheless, to hold its place among the English classics. We had some difficulty in finding the pew-opener to admit us into the church. That functionary expressed some surprise when she learned the object of our visit, and scarcely seemed to know who James Thomson was, though she was tolerably well acquainted with the names of other more recent celebrities, whose memorial tablets were to be found either in the interior or exterior of the sacred edifice under her charge. We managed, however, to find the tablet of which we were in search, which, perhaps, we should not have done had I not known where to look for it, a knowledge which I had acquired in a visit to the spot several years previously.

The tablet to the memory of Thomson was of copper, about eighteen inches square, placed high up on the wall, with a long inscription, quite illegible from the pew above which it is placed, unless the visitor mounts upon the seat for the purpose, and has good eyes to pierce through the crust of rust and verdigris which is spread over it. It records that it was erected at the expense of the Earl of Buchan in 1792 (thirty-five years after the poet's death), unwilling that the place of interment of so good a man and so sweet a poet "should remain without a memorial for the satisfaction of his admirers."

The poet was not buried within the church, or

under the tablet, as visitors might be led to suppose, but immediately outside, under the church wall. At a later period it was found necessary to enlarge the church slightly, to admit of a new organ, and the old wall was pulled down and re-erected about a yard distant. Nobody thought of the poet's grave at the time, and the consequence was that the venerated remains—if *there were any*—were divided into two portions, one outside and one inside of the church, or under the newer wall.

“What a vile shame!” said Bayard Taylor.

“What does it signify?” said Shirley Brooks.

“Little he recks, they have let him sleep on
In the grave where a Briton has laid him.”

“True,” replied Bayard Taylor; “but I wish, nevertheless, that the bricklayers—or perhaps it was the parson who was to blame—had had more reverence.”

THE SECOND DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

WHEN the great Duke of Wellington died at Walmer Castle in 1852, the proprietors and conductors of the *Illustrated London News* were naturally anxious to gratify the public curiosity excited by the event, and to present to the numerous readers of their

widely-circulated journal such incidents of the life and personal surroundings of the departed hero as were capable of pictorial illustration. Views of Apsley House, his town residence ; of Strathfield-saye, his country seat, presented to him by the nation, and of Walmer Castle, which he inhabited as a sea-side resort by virtue of his office as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, were published in rapid succession. The late Samuel Read, an artist whose graphic pencil often, but nevertheless too seldom, enriched the pages of that popular journal, produced a moonlight view of Walmer Castle, where the body of the dead warrior lay preparatory to its removal to London ; and Sir John Gilbert, a still greater artist than Samuel Read, who since the first establishment of the *Illustrated London News* had been its principal support in the main department on which it relied for success, put forth all his power to produce an imaginary picture, based upon such facts as were procurable, which was entitled "The Last Moments of the Duke of Wellington," and represented the venerable soldier, patriot, and statesman in his arm-chair, in the position in which he died.

Desirous of making a few sketches of the interior of Apsley House, an artist duly authorised by the proprietors of the paper, applied to the new Duke for the necessary permission. He received a reply to the effect that the Duke desired to see the

editor, and requested the pleasure of that gentleman's company to breakfast on the second day then ensuing. Nothing loth, but, on the contrary, feeling honoured by the invitation, I duly presented myself at the Duke's house in Belgrave Square at ten o'clock on the morning appointed. I found the Duke in the company of Lord Hardinge, and received a polite, though I thought a somewhat stiff reception.

The Duke forthwith proceeded to business, and in a brusque if not ungracious manner said :

"You want permission for your artist to make sketches in my father's house?"

"Yes," I replied, "if you have no objection."

"I have a very great objection," the Duke answered, "and I decidedly refuse the permission you ask for. I do not approve of such publicity as the *Illustrated London News* seems to delight in."

"Has the *Illustrated London News* offended your Grace in any way?" I asked deferentially.

"It has offended me very much," he replied.

"I am sorry for it; but may I ask in what way?"

"By publishing a picture representing the death of my father. Such a thing was formerly unheard of—and is an outrage. How would you like a picture made of the death of *your* father?"

"If my father were the Duke of Wellington," I replied, "I should consider the picture to be meant

in his honour, and at the very worst a penalty paid by extreme greatness to the laudable interest taken in him by the grateful public."

"It's all very fine," replied the Duke, "to talk in that manner. But *I* don't like it; and besides, such a thing was never done before."

"I beg your pardon. The Death of Chatham is a famous picture with which your Grace must be familiar. The Death of Nelson is still better known; and I might cite others, though at the moment I cannot remember them."

"The cases are not parallel," said the Duke in reply. "Anyhow, I do not like it, and I cannot, for that reason, give your artist permission to make sketches in Apsley House. If I did, the public would be sure to know of the fact—the public knows everything now-a-days—and, knowing that I gave your artist permission to make sketches in Apsley House, it would think I gave him permission to make a sketch of the death of my father." And, turning to Lord Hardinge, who had taken no part in the conversation, he added, "Don't you think I am right, Hardinge?"

Lord Hardinge agreed that the Duke was right—said ditto to him, in fact.

"I have spoken my mind," said the Duke, again turning to me, "and I'll drop the subject. We will now, if you please, go to breakfast."

As I did not feel disposed to accept the Duke's

hospitality, after the ungracious reception I had so unexpectedly experienced, and as I would have assuredly felt constrained and ill at ease in any conversation that might afterwards have taken place, I declined the invitation, and retired discomfited. But not without a strong impression on my mind that the Duke had done wrong in not refusing by letter the request that had been made to him, and in taking, or rather making, the opportunity to subject a stranger, who claimed to be a gentleman as much as he himself did, to personal rudeness, if not exactly to insult. He could not have treated me much worse if I had been an offending butler, or even a flunkey encased in his livery.

CHARLES KEAN.

I FIRST made the acquaintance of the distinguished couple, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, in 1858. They were ornaments of their profession in public, and exemplary and highly esteemed in private life. The acquaintance soon ripened into friendship, and continued unabated until the death of Mr. Kean, in January 1867, and of his devoted wife a few years later. It was during the heyday of his brilliant and successful management of the Princess's Theatre, and his gorgeous revivals of the masterpieces of Shakspeare, that he called upon me at the office of the *Illustrated London News*.

The object of his visit was to enlist my personal sympathies in his courageous attempts to bring the eye of the public to the aid of its mind in the appreciation of Shakspeare—to supplement noble poetry, not only by good acting, but by the physical and easily-understood attractions of rich costumes, beautiful scenery, and all means that were at command for the innocent and wholesome excitement of the imagination. Charles Kean was of opinion that the great majority of the critics employed on the daily and weekly press of the metropolis, being writers of plays which they wished to be performed on the stage, though all professed and enthusiastic

lovers of Shakspeare, would rather confine, except on the rarest occasions, his noble tragedies and graceful comedies to the library and the study, than see them performed at the theatre, to the exclusion of their own productions.

He thought that the personal influence of the proprietors and editors of powerful journals might be beneficially excrcised to counteract the jealous hostility or lazy indifference of the professional critics. He informed me that more than one of these gentlemen, whom he named, were inimical to him, and lost no opportunity to condemn him, to sneer at him, or "damn him with faint praise," because he had been unable to produce their farces, their burlettas, their comedies, and their tragedies at the Princess's, though he had accepted and paid for some of their pieces, without the least hope or prospect of being able to present them to the public within any reasonable time, if ever.

I speedily convinced him that my sympathies were already with him, and that I had long watched with much interest his zealous efforts to maintain the high character of the drama, even if he did not succeed in making it as popular as Punch and Judy, which was too much to hope for.

"But I never see you at the Princess's," he said, "and I want you to come at least once to every one of my revivals. I shall be happy to place a private box at your disposal any night—or every

night, if you like—if you would only do me the favour to come.”

A few weeks after this interview, I happened to meet, near Charing Cross, one of the professional critics whom Mr. Kean had named as being more or less inclined to disparage his genius as an actor, and to disapprove his judgment as a manager. I asked him if he had been to the Princess's to witness the splendid manner in which Mr. Kean had brought out the seldom-acted tragedy of *King John*. He replied that he had not, and that he did not care to see the display of Mr. Kean's "upholstery," or approve of his reckless extravagance in lavishing £3,000 upon the mere accessories to a play of Shakspeare, when he might, for the same outlay, have purchased at least six original tragedies by living authors.

In less than ten minutes after parting with this gentleman in the street, I met Mr. Kean himself, as he was entering the Athenæum Club-house, where I had just called to leave my card for a member. I told him of the conversation I had just held, without mentioning the name of the critic.

“You need not tell me who your friend is,” he replied. “I know him! It is Mr. —— of the ——.” (And he mentioned rightly the name of the person, and of the journal for which he wrote.) “No doubt he would like me to buy a play of him,

either a tragedy or a comedy, for £600. But I know my business too well to indulge in such foolish extravagance. His play might possibly be well written ; but, if I were to bring it out, it might not hit the popular taste. It might prove to be too pretentiously poetical for this prosaic age, that has no love for poetry unless it has been approved by our ancestors, or that only affects to love the great Shakspeare, because it is not the fashion to disparage him. Besides, his play might possess literary without dramatic merit, and be without any effective plot or good situations to afford scope for good actors, who are quite as ambitious as good or even inferior authors can be. In short, it might have every possible merit, and yet fail to please the public. New plays are always new dangers for managers ; so I say, ' Shakspeare for ever ! ' The public know him, and think themselves bound to like him, even when they don't quite understand him. And, besides, he never comes to rehearsals to bully the actors, ask the managers for money, or complain to them of any real or fancied grievance. Shakspeare for ever ! "

Charles Kean, like most people whose bread depends upon the favour of the public, whether they be actors, authors, painters, or musicians, was particularly, even morbidly, sensitive to the praise or blame of newspapers. I remember, on one occasion, that he was more than usually dis-

pleased at a notice of his acting in the part of Louis XI., a character that perfectly suited his genius, his idiosyncrasies, and his physique, and that he played in a manner which no contemporary actor could have surpassed, or even equalled. The critic had published in a weekly review, commonly known at the time as the "Scorpion," his opinion that, upon the whole, the performers, both male and female, had done their parts well, and adequately and impressively rendered the meaning of the author, winding up his feeble commendation by the statement that "*Mr. Charles Kean was a judicious actor.*"

It is said that the British army "swore terribly in Flanders"; but the most blatant trooper that served under Marlborough, could not have sworn with a more copious and emphatic flow of objurgatory epithets than Mr. Kean employed when he vented his scorn and wrath against the writer.

"A *judicious actor!*" he repeated several times, with a constantly-increasing fervour of indignation, "a *judicious actor!* Curse his impudence, the spiteful, malignant, dunder-headed ass and fool!"

Venturing to interrupt him in the very height and torrent of his passion, I said to him: "I suppose you would not have been so greatly offended if he had called you *injudicious?*"

He smiled in spite of himself, as he replied: "I would not have cared at all. I should merely have

considered it a proof of his ignorance and inability to form a correct judgment. But when the fellow has the audacity to call me a 'judicious' actor, he shows malice, and a wicked desire to do me an injury if he can."

The injustice—if not exactly the injustice, the scanty and unwilling justice—which he fancied he had all his life received from the press, was always a sore point with Charles Kean. No praise that could be bestowed upon him, unless it were enthusiastic and unqualified, seemed to his mind to be worth having. Of such praise he had a tolerably fair share during his life, though never in doses of such frequency as to satisfy the intense desire of appreciation which possessed him. His enemies and opponents discovered this weakness, and traded upon it, whenever they thought it would serve their purpose, very greatly to his annoyance, and to the morbid increase of his infirmity.

But he had his compensation in his own mind, as most people have that live upon popular applause, and cannot always obtain it, except from a small and friendly minority. They invariably consider the majority to be fools, and the appreciative minority to be wise, and always trust that, in the long run, the wise men will grow into a majority, and that the fools will be silenced, if they be not converted to the true faith. Nor was the compensation quite ideal in the case of

Charles Kean. The longer he lived, the greater grew the number of his friends and admirers, and the more substantial became the pecuniary results of his fame and popularity.

He paid three visits to the United States, the last time in 1865, when I was resident in New York, acting as special correspondent for the *Times* during the Civil War. He was accompanied on this occasion by his wife and by his niece, Miss Chapman, to whom he had acted the part of a father, and who returned his care and kindness with all the affection of a daughter. His reception by the New York press was as cordial as even he, with all his love of praise, could have wished, and a golden harvest seemed to be awaiting him, for his performance, with unabated powers and increased prestige, of all the principal parts which he had assumed with such success during his management of the *Princess's*. A tragic and historical catastrophe occurred on the morning of the day, when he was to take a benefit at New York, before proceeding to make a tour through the principal cities of Canada.

I cannot recall to my my memory the name of the play which he had selected for the occasion, but I remember well that he had sent me an admission to a private box, with a very earnest request that I would not fail to be present. The benefit was fixed for the 16th of April. On the morning of that

day, news was received in New York of the cruel and unprovoked murder of the good, harmless President Abraham Lincoln, by the crazy fanatic Wilkes Booth, the son of a once famous English actor, who madly thought to avenge the wrongs—such he thought them—of the Southern States, by the cowardly assassination of the best friend of the South in all the Northern States, and who was inclined to pardon the leaders of the defeated cause when all the fanatics of the North, with the sole exception of Mr. Horace Greeley, were vociferating for their condign punishment. That night the theatres of New York, and of all the cities of the North, were closed, and so remained for a week, in sign of the national grief, and the benefit of Charles Kean was consequently postponed.

The next time we met was in the beautiful city of Montreal, where we stayed in the same hotel for three weeks, and dined every day in our appointed corner of the table d'hôte.

Mr. Kean was cordially received, as all Englishman of note are, by the warm-hearted Canadians, and made a successful tour through the principal cities. He thoroughly approved and sympathised with my object in visiting Canada, which was a mission from the *Times*, after the close of the Civil War in the United States, to write a series of letters for that journal, descriptive of the scenery, the resources, and the aspirations of the

Canadian people, as well as of those of the outlying provinces and colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island—a mission of which I shall have more to say hereafter.

Mrs. Charles Kean was as eminent in her vocation as her husband, and, under her maiden name of Ellen Tree, achieved an enviable reputation as one of the brightest ornaments of the modern stage. This reputation during her married life she maintained and increased, not only by her genius as an actress, but by her exemplary conduct as a woman and a wife, and the silent rebuke which her unsullied reputation enabled her to give to the cynical or parrot-like repetition of the old and not yet exploded prejudice, that strict morality is not to be looked for among the ladies who, either in the highest or the lowest capacities, permit themselves to appear on the stage.

It was the desire of Charles Kean, perhaps it was a weakness—perhaps it was a calculation that it would be of advantage to him in his professional career, that he should receive the honour, or at all events the distinction, of knighthood. He thought he had a claim upon Her Majesty and the Prince Consort, which justified him in expecting this cheap reward for the services he had rendered in superintending, by royal command, at some inconvenience to himself, the Christmas theatricals at Windsor Castle. These performances commenced in 1849,

and were continued for ten years, during which the Christmas performances at the Princess's Theatre were either suspended or were deprived of his personal management and that of his wife. The only recompense he received for his time and trouble was a diamond ring presented by Her Majesty. No doubt he valued the gift, but he would have been better pleased if it had been supplemented by the title he coveted, so that the play-bills of the Princess's might have borne the names of "Sir Charles" and "Lady Kean" as the managers and leading performers. But the Prince Consort, it was surmised, objected. Whether the surmise was well or ill founded, is unknown; but it is certain that for some reason, possibly without any reason at all except caprice, the knighthood was not bestowed; and the names of Sir Charles and Lady Kean never appeared on the play-bills. The authorities, whoever they were, the gold-sticks, the silver-sticks, the "sticks" pure and simple, whose opinions controlled the action of the Prince and the Court on this matter, could find no precedent for the knighting of an actor. Musicians had often received the cheap honour, and shopkeepers, if they happened to be mayors or aldermen of any town, and had presented an address to the Sovereign, had received the coveted title, as had barristers, solicitors. Even authors in rare cases, who had written immortal works, had been allowed to place their

feet on the lowest rung of the long ladder of title ; but actors—oh no ! the thing was not to be thought of. It would have been a revolutionary innovation, which no friend of the British monarchy could recommend. And so Charles Kean was forced, much against his will, to remain plain Mr., or at most Esquire. Possibly it was better so. David Garrick, John Kemble, Charles Kemble, and others, are quite as well known to, and esteemed by, successive generations without the aristocratic prefix, as they could have been, even if in an addition to the little syllable “ Sir ” they had been privileged to append Baronet, to their names. But Charles Kean did not think so. He had, however, the solid satisfaction of knowing that he and his wife had made a considerable fortune by the exercise of their profession, and that they stood high in the estimation of all who knew them personally, and of all their cultivated contemporaries.

Charles Kean died in January 1868, and I had the satisfaction of endeavouring to do justice to his merits and his memory, in an article in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Mrs. Kean survived him for several years.

A FORTUNATE LEAP IN THE DARK.

WHEN Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, afterwards Lord Lytton, published the first collected edition of his poems sometime between 1852 and 1854, he sent a copy for review to the *Morning Post*. The editor entrusted the task of reviewing it to an Irish gentleman named Miles Gerald Keon, who had a floating and unstable connection with the press, and was a frequent contributor of literary articles to the *Illustrated London News*, as well as to the *Morning Post*. Mr. Keon did not know, for the secret was jealously guarded at that time in Sir Edward's own bosom, that the author of *Pelham* and a score of other equally popular and far better novels, valued his fame as a novelist at a far lower rate than his fame as a poet. The world was not of this opinion. It thought highly of him as a novelist, but did not consider him to have any valid claims to the rank of a poet, though it grudgingly allowed him to be a clever versifier. Mr. Keon, who was personally unacquainted with Sir Edward, and had never heard of this particular idiosyncrasy, did not agree with the majority of the reading public, but with the small minority which included Sir Edward himself, and conscientiously believed him to be indeed a poet of a very high, if not of the highest order. Imbued with

this idea, he wrote a highly eulogistic, and, in fact, enthusiastic estimate of the "poet," in the *Morning Post*. Sir Edward was highly gratified at the tardy recognition of his genius, and drove down to the office of the clear-sighted journal, as he doubtless considered it to be, and asked the editor, whom he knew personally, if he would kindly let him know the name of the critic who had formed so favourable, and, as he thought, so accurate an estimate of his powers. The name was given to him. Sir Edward forthwith wrote a letter to the friendly critic, expressing his gratitude, and desiring the honour of his personal acquaintance. Mr. Keon, as may be supposed, was both flattered and gratified, and lost no time in calling upon the popular and influential author. The acquaintance thus formed speedily ripened into friendship, and for two or three years Mr. Keon was a constant and favourite guest at Sir Edward's house in Park Lane, and at his country seat at Knebworth.

During the period of this intimacy an advertisement appeared in several of the London newspapers, setting forth that an editor was required for a Bombay journal, who would receive a considerable salary, with contingent advantages, and that application, accompanied by testimonials of the candidate's experience, character, and efficiency, were to be addressed, on or before a certain day, to the authorised London agent of the journal in

question. Mr. Keon, among many others, applied for the vacant appointment, and, after an interval of ten days or a fortnight, received an invitation to call upon the agent. He called accordingly at an office in the city, was informed that there had been at least a hundred applicants for the place, amongst whom it had been difficult to decide; but that morning, in consequence of the cordial recommendation of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton and the editor of the *Morning Post*, he had decided, after careful consideration, to recommend Mr. Keon to his principals at Bombay, that his recommendation was virtually an appointment to the place, as his powers were absolute, that the salary would be a thousand pounds per annum, together with a fourth share of the profits, and that his, the agent's, fee would be one hundred guineas. Poor Mr. Keon had not one hundred shillings to spare, and was in sore perplexity what to do, lest he should lose the lucrative appointment, and knew not whither to turn for assistance in the shape of a loan on the security of the anticipated salary. After much cogitation he resolved to take Sir Edward into his confidence, and tell him frankly that, unless he could raise the hundred guineas, and the amount of the passage-money for himself and wife to Bombay, together with a necessary outfit, and a small sum for other preliminary and unavoidable expenses, the glittering prize would

escape from his grasp. Sir Edward, who occasionally was heard to declare, when a fit of parsimony came upon him, that he was descended in some way or other from Elwes, the celebrated miser, did not prove himself a niggard, or unreasonably scrupulous on this occasion, but generously advanced to Mr. Keon, on his personal security, the whole sum which he needed.

In due course Mr. Keon took passage for Bombay, but found on arrival that he had been made the victim of a cruel swindle. No such paper as that which had been named to him was in existence! There was nothing to be done in Bombay, and the only course open to him was to return to England. But he was without funds for the purpose, and utterly powerless to help himself, except by an appeal to the sympathy of some of the leading English houses in Bombay, to whom he revealed unreservedly the whole circumstances of his unhappy case, and the production of the various documents that proved the authenticity of his story, and made known the names of his influential friends in London. By their recommendation and pecuniary aid a passage home was secured for Mr. Keon and his wife, who, "nursing his wrath to keep it warm," vowed vengeance, it may well be supposed, against the heartless scoundrel who had so vilely defrauded and so cruelly used him.

On arrival in London, he lost not a day in pro-

ceeding to the "office" of the pretended "agent," but the office knew him no more. He had disappeared long previously and had left no address. He was lost in the great Maelstrom of London—a straw in its whirling waters—and had probably changed his name as well as his residence, as is the custom with such wild beasts who infest all the great centres of civilisation, and make their prey of the credulous and unwary.

He next called upon his kind-hearted friend Sir Edward, to whom he faithfully disclosed all the unhappy circumstances, at the same time threatening dire vengeance upon the swindler, whom he still hoped to discover and punish. Sir Edward had a cool, sagacious head, and though, doubtless, as much annoyed as Mr. Keon, dissuaded him from making an attempt to prosecute, even should he succeed in finding the evil-doer. He did not consider it to be at all likely that he would do so, whatever pains or expense he might incur in the attempt, and recommended that they should put up with the loss and give the facts no publicity.

"Publicity," said Sir Edward, "would not bring back the money or recompense you for your loss of time, though it might be a salve to your wounded feelings. It would exhibit at the same time what a couple of fools we had been: you to believe the story he told, and I as great a fool to advance you the money."

The money lay heavy on poor Keon's conscience ; but Sir Edward put him at his ease with respect to it.

"I shall never ask you for it," he said ; "but should you make a lucky hit in the literary market and take the town by storm by a brilliant work of genius, and make a publisher pay for it, then and not till then you may think of what you owe me !"

About this time [1858], the Conservative administration of Lord Derby was formed, and Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton became Secretary of State for the Colonies. One of the earliest appointments which he was enabled to make in the exercise of his patronage was to nominate his friend and protégé, Mr. Keon, who admired his poetry so wisely and so well, to the post of Secretary of the island of Bermuda, worth £700 per annum. Thus Mr. Keon's "leap in the dark" in the critical columns of the *Morning Post* turned out more fortunately than he could have anticipated or even dreamed of. It not only gratified one of the most distinguished literary men of his time, but was the means of securing for himself a responsible and honourable as well as lucrative post in the service of his country, and rescuing him from the unsatisfactory, uncertain, and ill-paid drudgery of a newspaper hack, writing for journals with which he had no certain or permanent connection. Mr. Keon held the

situation until his death, with credit to himself and with satisfaction to Lord Lytton and the Colonial Office. He found time in Bermuda to write a novel, of which, if I recollect rightly, the scene was laid in Jerusalem in the time of Pontius Pilate.
