ASPINALL JAMES

LIVERPOOL A FEW YEARS SINCE: BY AN OLD STAGER

James Aspinall

Liverpool a few years since: by an old stager

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James Aspinall
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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

This little volume has been twice published, and this issue of it is in ready response to the "third time of asking" by an appreciating public, largely, as we imagine, made up of families associated in some way or other with "Old Liverpool" as it appeared in the earlier part of the present century.

The traditions of the "Good Old Town" naturally have an interest to many of us who are also quite able and equally willing to estimate at their full value the modern development and rapid progress of the "New City."

"The inaudible and noiseless foot of time"

passes rapidly on, but even the days that are spent may

"As withered roses yield a late perfume,"

and so give us often very bright and happy retrospects.

Perhaps it may soon be a self-inspired and pleasurable task for someone to take up the thread of the "Old Stager's" story, and bring it down to the present time. Meanwhile, let us hope that the kindly enterprise of the publisher may be rewarded by a rapid demand for this little book, at once of real interest to old Liverpool families and at the same time so simple and sketchy in its style as to give it no place whatever in the "records" of the community.

CLARKE ASPINALL.
Liverpool, 1885.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In the year 1852, *Liverpool a Few Years Since*, by "An Old Stager," was republished in "a more abiding form" than it had previously assumed in the columns of the *Liverpool Albion*. The little book sold off rapidly, notwithstanding its being somewhat expensive, as compared with the wonderfully cheap publications of the day, and it is now out of print. It has many a time and oft been suggested that a further and cheaper issue would be acceptable to the Liverpool public, The publisher has, therefore, assumed the responsibility of the present issue; and, learning that such was his intention, I have ventured to "preface" the original preface by a word or two in explanation of the circumstances and surroundings under which the Author penned these sketches.

It is scarcely imparting information, to make known the simple truth that the "Old Stager" in question was none other than the late Rev. James Aspinall, M.A. Oxon, at one time Incumbent of St. Michael's Church, and more recently officiating at St. Luke's, and afterwards transferred to the Crown Rectory of Althorpe in Lincolnshire, where he continued to reside until his death in 1861. The "Old Stager" was always a man of great activity of mind and body, and could never be idle. Every moment of his time was turned to some account; and thus the very remote sphere of his parochial and magisterial duties in Lincolnshire never induced the slightest dulness or discontent. With a Church, and a Chapel of Ease three or four miles off, to serve, and with a tolerably large parish to care for, the "Old Stager" was not without considerable clerical duty; and, added to this, he most unwillingly undertook the responsibilities of the magisterial office. Notwithstanding the avocations thus indicated, time was always found for literary pursuits, for receiving and imparting knowledge, for refreshing and renewing his powers of mind, in order to the successful communication, either by voice or pen, of his thoughts and ideas to his neighbours and to the general public. Amid the many written utterances of the "Old Stager's" ready and comprehensive mind, we must enumerate these notes upon men and things in our good old town, penned with very considerable pleasure to their writer, as being the jottings down of his own personal experiences and recollections of a place and of a people very deeply rooted in the affections of this true son of Liverpool.

We well remember the bright and genial countenance of the "Old Stager," as he thought aloud upon his old and early associations. Liverpool was his home, as against all other homes. His father had been its chief magistrate so long ago as 1803. His sons, or some of them, had adopted it as their abiding place; and thus, for several generations, this thriving community seemed to the "Old Stager" to smile upon him and upon his belongings, and as a consequence, not at all unnatural, the "Old Stager" felt a devotion to the town, and towards its inhabitants, which kept it and them ever in his grateful remembrance.

C. A.
Liverpool, January, 1869.

PREFACE

The original intention of the Author was to amuse the younger readers of the *Albion*, by dashing off a few sketches of “men and things,” as he recollects them in Liverpool a few years since. For this purpose all that was worth telling, he thought, might be comprised in about two papers, or chapters. The public, however, like hungry Oliver Twist, revelling on the thin workhouse gruel, flatteringly asked for “more”; and with this request he, not being of a nature akin to that of Mr. Bumble, has willingly complied to the extent of his ability. Nor is this all for which the naughty public is to be held responsible. The chapters having been spun out to the length which they now occupy, greedy Oliver again cries out for “more,” and demands that, instead of being left to die out, and be forgotten, as the ephemeral occupants of the columns of a newspaper, they shall be collected, and re-published in a more abiding form; and once more our good nature triumphs over our prudence, and we comply. Under such circumstances, the writer of these sketches and reminiscences neither courts nor deprecates criticism; his only object in perpetrating these “trifles light as air” was, he repeats, to set before the rising generation a picture of the “good” old town, at the commencement of the present century, and to show them how “men and manners,” and customs and fashions, have changed since the times in which their grandfathers “ruled the roast,” and were the heroes of the day. In working out this design, the Author has had neither dates nor memoranda to refer to, but has trusted entirely to his own powers of recollection, even as far back as the period when he reached the mature age of six years! It is satisfactory, however, to add that, although he has painted wholly from memory, no one has yet disputed the accuracy of any of the characters which he has drawn, the events which he has related, or the anecdotes which he has revived. This may be fairly assumed as a testimony in favour of their correctness. For the rest, he has only once more to say, with Horace, “*Non meus hic sermo*,” etc.; that is, our re-appearance is no fault of our own. Oliver Twist “has done it all,” and must bear the blame.

Liverpool, October, 1852.

CHAPTER I

We are not great at statistics. We do not pretend to be accurate to an hour in dates, chronology, and so forth. We write, indeed, entirely from memory, and therefore may perhaps occasionally go wrong in fixing "the hour for the man, and the man for the hour," as we dot down a few of our recollections of the "good old town of Liverpool," from the time when we cast off our swaddling clothes, crept out of our cradle, opened our eyes, and began to exercise our reasoning powers on men and things as in those days they presented themselves to our view. We think that our memory has a faint glimmering of the illuminations which took place when peace was made with Napoleon, in 1801. We also remember being called out of our bed to gaze at the terrible flames when the Goree warehouses were burnt down, and how we crept out of the house at day dawn, and rushed to see the blazing mass and all its tottering ruins in dangerous proximity.

It might only have happened yesterday, so vividly is the scene impressed upon our mind. But what was Liverpool in those days of early hours, pigtails, routs and hair-powder?

The docks ended with George's at one extremity and the Queen's at the other. There was a battery near the latter and another near the former. Farther north was a large fort of some thirty guns, and halfway towards Bootle, a smaller one with nine. The town hardly on one side extended beyond Colquitt-street. The greater part of Upper Duke-street was unbuilt. Cornwallis-street, the large house which Mr. Morrall erected, the ground on which St. Michael's Church stands, all were fields at the time of which we speak. There was a picturesque-looking mill at the top of Duke-street, and behind Rodney-street we had a narrow lane, with a high bank overgrown with roses. Russell-street, Seymour-street, and all beyond were still free from bricks. Lime-street was bounded by a field, in which many a time we watched rough lads chasing cocks on Shrove Tuesday for a prize, the competitors having their hands tied behind them, and catching at the victims with their mouths. Edge-hill, Everton, and Kirkdale were villages, as yet untouched by the huge Colossus which has since absorbed them and transmuted them into suburbs. What pilgrimages we children used to achieve to the second of these places, the very Mecca of our affections, that we might expend our small cash upon genuine Molly Bushell's toffee. And what wonderful tales we heard from our nurses and companions about Prince Rupert's Cottage, – only lately demolished by some modern Goth, under the plea of improvement! And then we crept on to peep at the old beacon at San Domingo, thinking what a clever device it was to rouse and alarm the country, never dreaming in our young heads of telegraphs, and electric telegraphs, and other inventions, which have now superseded the rude makeshifts of our forefathers. And what a grand house we thought Mr. Harper's, at Everton, now turned into barracks. And Hope-street, now so central, then gave no hopes of existence. It was country altogether. At one end of it were two gentlemen's seats, inhabited by the families of Corrie and Thomas, and far removed from the smoke and bustle of the town.

But go we back to the docks. There were no steamers in those days to tow out our vessels. The wind ruled supreme, without a rival. The consequence was, that when, after a long stretch of contrary winds, a change took place, and a favourable breeze set in, a whole fleet of ships would at once be hauled out of dock, and start upon their several voyages. It was a glorious spectacle. It was the delight of our younger days to be present on all such occasions. How we used to fly about, sometimes watching the dashing American ships as they left the King's and Queen's Docks, and sometimes taking a peep at the coasters in the Salthouse Dock, or at the African traders in the Old Dock, since filled up, at the instigation of some goose anxious to emulate the fame of the man who set fire to the Temple at Ephesus. This fatal blunder it was which first gave a wrong direction to our docks, stretching them out northwards and southwards *in extenso*, instead of centralising and keeping them together. But we must not moralise. We are at the dock side, or on the pierhead. The tide is rising, the wind is favourable, "The sea, the sea, the open sea," is the word with all. What bustle and confusion! What making fast and casting off of ropes! How the captains shout! How the men swear! How the dock-masters rush about! What horrible “confusion worse confounded” seems to prevail! And yet there is method in all this seeming madness. Order will presently come out of all this apparent chaos. The vessels pass through the dockgates. Meat and bread are tossed on board of them at the last moment. Friends are bidding farewell! Wives tremble and look pale. There is a tear in the stout-hearted sailor’s eye as he waves his adieu. But, “Give way, give way there, my lads; heave away my hearties!” The vessel clears the dock, passes through the gut, and then pauses for a brief space at the pier, while the sails are set and trimmed. Then comes the final word, “Cast off that rope!” and many a time have we, at hearing it, tugged with our tiny hands until we have succeeded in effecting it, and then strutted away as proudly as if we had just won Waterloo or Trafalgar. And now the sails fill; she moves, she starts, there is a cheer, “Off she goes!” dashing the spray on either side of her as soon as ever she feels the breeze. And now all the river is alive. The heavy Baltic vessels are creeping away. The Americans, always the same, are cracking along with every stitch of canvas they can carry. The West Indiamen sail nobly along, like the very rulers of the ocean. There are the coasters, and the Irish traders, and packets, while the smart pilot-boat dashes along under easy sail, here, there, and everywhere almost at the same time. And so they go on, until, like a dissolving view, they are lost behind the Rock, and we retire from our post, with the determination to be there again when the same scene is repeated.

CHAPTER II

But the peace of which we spoke in our last chapter was nothing but a hollow and armed truce, which gave both parties time to breathe for a few months. England was suspicious. Napoleon was ambitious. The press galled him to the quick. At all events, “the dogs of war” were hardly tied up before they were again “let slip”; and then into what a bustle, and what a fever of excitement, do we remember old Liverpool to have been plunged. What cautions and precautions we used to take, both by land and water. We had a venerable guard ship in the river, the “Princess,” which we believe had originally been a Dutch man-of-war, and, if built to swim, was certainly never intended to sail. There she used to lie at her moorings, opposite the old George’s Dock pier, lazily swinging backwards and forwards, with the ebbing and flowing of the tide, and looking as if she had been built expressly for that very purpose and no other. Her very shadow seemed to grow into that part of the river on which she lay. But, besides her, we had generally some old-fashioned vessel of war, which had come round from Portsmouth or Plymouth to receive volunteers, or impressed men. A word about these last. Those who live in these “piping times of peace” have no idea of the means which were employed in the days of which we are speaking, to man our vessels of war. The sailors in our merchant service had to run the gauntlet, as it were, for their liberty, from one end of the world to the other. A ship of war, falling in with a merchant vessel in any part of the globe, would unceremoniously take from her the best seamen, leaving her just hands enough to bring her home. As they approached the English shore, our cruisers, hovering in all directions, would take their pick of the remainder. But the great terror of the sailor was the press gang. Such was the dread in which this force was held by the blue-jackets, that they would often take to their boats on the other side of the Black Rock, that they might conceal themselves in Cheshire; and many a vessel had to be brought into port by a lot of riggers and carpenters, sent round by the owner for that purpose. And, truly, according to our reminiscences, the press-gang was, even to look at, something calculated to strike fear into a stout man’s heart. They had what they called a “Rendezvous,” in different parts of the town. There was one we recollect, in Old Strand-street. From the upper window there was always a flag flying, to notify to volunteers what sort of business was transacted there. But look at the door, and at the people who are issuing from it. They are the Press-gang. At their head there was generally a rakish, dissipated, but determined looking officer, in a very seedy uniform and shabby hat. And what followers! Fierce, savage, stern, villainous-looking fellows were they, as ready to cut a throat as eat their breakfast. What an uproar their appearance always made in the streets! The men scowled at them as they passed; the women openly scoffed at them; the children screamed, and hid themselves behind doors or fled round the corners. And how rapidly the word was passed from mouth to mouth, that there were “hawks abroad,” so as to give time to any poor sailor who had incautiously ventured from his place of concealment to return to it. But woe unto him if there were no warning voice to tell him of the coming danger; he was seized upon as if he were a common felon, deprived of his liberty, torn from his home, his friends, his parents, wife or children, hurried to the rendezvous-house, examined, passed, and sent on board the tender, like a negro to a slave-ship. And so it went on, until the floating prison was filled with captives, when the living cargo was sent round to one of the outports, and the prisoners were divided among the vessels of war which were in want of men. Persons of the present generation have certainly heard of the press-gang, but they never attempt to realise the horrors by which it was accompanied. Nay, the generality seem to us to hardly believe in its existence, but rather to classify it with *Gulliver’s Travels*, *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, or the *Heathen Mythology*. But we can recollect its working. We have seen the strong man bent to tears, and reduced to woman’s weakness by it. We have seen parents made, as it were, childless, through its operation; the wife widowed, with a husband yet alive; children orphaned by the forcible abduction of their fathers. And yet, there were many in those days, not only naval men, but statesmen and legislators, who venerated the press-gang as one of the pillars and institutions of the country. In those days, indeed! We much fear that, if even now we could look into the heart of hearts of many a veteran admiral and captain, we should find that they have, in the event of a war, no other plan in their heads for manning the navy but a return to this dreadful and oppressive system. We would, however, recommend those in whose department it lies to be devising some other scheme, as we are strongly impressed with the conviction that public opinion will not in these days tolerate, under any plea or excuse of necessity, such an infringement upon the liberty of the subject. But we are not writing a political article, but only describing our old-world fashions. Pretty rows and riots, you may suppose, now and then occurred between the press-gang and the fighting part of the public; and not a few do we remember to have witnessed in our younger days. On more than one occasion we have seen a rendezvous-house gutted and levelled to the ground.

Sometimes the sailors and their friends would show fight, and, as the mob always joined them, the press-gang invariably got the worst of it in such battles. Sometimes, too, the press-gangers would "get into the wrong box," and "take the wrong sow by the ear," by seizing an American sailor or a carpenter, and then there was sure to be a squall. The bells from the shipbuilding yards would boom out their warning call in the latter case, and thousands would muster to set their companion at liberty. A press-gangman was occasionally tarred and feathered in those days, when caught alone. We remember, as if it were only yesterday, walking down South Castle Street (it was Pool Lane then), with the Old Dock, where the Custom-house now stands, before us. It was, for some reason or other, tolerably clear of ships at the time. We well remember, however, that there was one large vessel, or hulk, somewhere about the middle. Before we tell what happened, we must observe that, attached to the Strand Street press-gang, there was one most extra piratical-looking scoundrel, named Jack Something-or-other. Perhaps, as is often the case, "they gave the devil more than his due;" but, if one half of the things said against this Jack were true, he deserved to be far and away prince and potentate and prime minister in Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors. Well, as aforesaid, the Old Dock was in front of us, when all at once we heard a noise behind us, which told us that the game was up, and the hounds well laid on and in full cry.

At the same moment, Jack shot past us, like an arrow from a bow, while hundreds of men, women, and children, were howling, shouting, screaming, yelling, threatening close behind him. Every street sent forth its crowd to intercept him. There was no turning until he reached the dock-quay, but there the carters and porters rushed forward to stop him. What was to be done? How was he to escape? The dock, as we said before, was in front, and there was the vessel in the middle. Without a moment's hesitation, the terrified wretch took the water, dived, like Rob Roy, to baffle his pursuers, and soon gained the deck of the hulk. Some talked of boarding her, and dragging him from his concealment; but the majority of the mob decided that justice was better than vengeance, and, satisfied with Jack's fright and ducking, concluded that although he was a bad one, he was game, and would make them more sport another time, and so dispersed.

CHAPTER III

We spoke of the old guardship, the "Princess," in our last chapter. Many and many a time have we walked on her deck, until we thought that we ourselves might grow into a Nelson, a St. Vincent, or a Collingwood. Her captain, who used to take us on board with him, in the days of which we speak, was Colquitt – Captain Colquitt, of course, when afloat, but, on shore, among his friends, and he had many, Sam Colquitt, glorious Sam, pleasant Sam, clever Sam, up to anything, equal to anything, with a never-failing amount of fun and frolic, and an untiring fund of conversation, generally instructive, always agreeable, a giver and taker of a joke, full of anecdote, and the best teller of a good story we ever met with. We like to dwell upon his name. Much of the happiness of our boyhood sprung from our acquaintance with him. Beyond him, we recollect but the name of one of the crowd of faces which we used to see in the "Princess," the purser's clerk, named Vardy, a tall, fine looking fellow, some six feet two in height. And where are all the rest of them? How many survive? And where, and how, are those who do, supported?

Besides the "Princess," and the tubs of tenders which came round for the impressed men, we had occasionally a livelier and more interesting kind of craft in the Mersey. A dashing sloop of war would now and then look in, after a cruise in the Channel, and occasionally would act as convoy to any fleet of vessels bent upon a long voyage. It was interesting to see the start of one of these accumulations of ships, under the care of their watchful guardian. There they lay in the river, all prepared to make sail whenever she made the signal, with all sorts of noises and confusion going on among their crews. In the midst of them she was at anchor, with everything made snug on board, lying like a duck on the water, with silence and order prevailing from one end of her to the other. Spying glasses are turned towards her, but there is no appearance of hurry or anxiety. The wind chops round, and is favourable for outward-bound vessels. Still all is quiet and motionless in the man-of-war. We are not nautical, recollect, and only speak in landsman's phraseology. What we cannot accomplish we will not attempt. All eyes are now anxiously bent towards her, and the skippers of the merchantmen begin inwardly, and perhaps outwardly, some of them, to curse the caprice, or ignorance, or indolence of her captain; but, all in good time, gentlemen. Let him alone, if you please. He knows what he is about. He is only doubting whether the change of wind will hold. At last he is satisfied, and look! – a flash – a smoke – bang! It is the signal gun to make ready; another to weigh anchor – another to set sail – and away she goes, gracefully, like a hen followed by her chickens; or, to speak more appropriately, like a sheep-dog marshalling the flock. Sailing in convoy was certainly all equality and fraternity, but there was no liberty. The fast-sailing vessels were compelled to hoist no more canvass than would enable their slow companions to keep up with them. It was like the bed of Procrustes applied to sea affairs. And what fun it was to watch the crowd of vessels as they rounded the narrow channel by the Rock; such bumping and thumping, such fidgeting and signal-firing on the part of the guardian angel to check the fast ones, and stimulate the slow ones, and keep them all well together.

Nor must we forget here to mention another class of vessels, which made a very remarkable and prominent feature of the days which we are describing. We speak of the privateer. Liverpool was famous for this kind of craft. The fastest sailing vessels were, of course, selected for this service; and, as the men shipped on board of them were safe, in virtue of the letter of marque, from impressment, the most dashing and daring of the sailors came out of their hiding-holes to take service in them. On the day when such a vessel left the dock, the captain, or owner, generally gave a grand dinner to his friends, and it was a great treat to be of the party. While the good things were being discussed in the cabin, toasts given, speeches made, and all the rest of it, she continued to cruise in the river, with music playing, colours flying, the centre of attraction and admiration, "the observed of all observers," as she dashed like a flying-fish through the water. And then the crew? The captain was always some brave, daring man, who had fought his way to his position. The officers were selected for the same qualities;

and the men – what a reckless, dreadnaught, dare-devil collection of human beings, half-disciplined, but yet ready to obey every order, the more desperate the better. Your true privateer's-man was a sort of "half-horse, half-alligator, with a streak of lightning" in his composition – something like a man-of-war's man, but much more like a pirate – generally with a superabundance of whisker, as if he held, with Samson, that his strength was in the quantity of his hair. And how they would cheer, and be cheered, as we passed any other vessel in the river; and when the eating and drinking and speaking and toasting were over, and the boat was lowered, and the guests were in it, how they would cheer again, more lustily than ever, as the rope was cast off, and, as the landsmen were got rid of, put about their own vessel, with fortune and the world before them, and French West Indiamen and Spanish galleons in hope and prospect. Those were jolly days to some people, but we trust we may never see the like of them again. The dashing man-of-war, and the daring privateer, dazzled the eyes of the understanding, and kindled wild and fierce enthusiasm on all sides. The Park and Tower guns and the *Extraordinary Gazette* confirmed the madness, and kept up a constant fever of excitement. But count the cost. Lift up the veil, and peep at the hideous features of the demon of war. Look at the mouldering corruption beneath the whited sepulchre of glory! But no sermons, if you please.

And there were the old Dublin packets in those days, before steam had turned sailor. If you took a passage in one of them, and had a fair wind, and were lucky, you might hope to arrive in Dublin some time, but if the wind were against you, then, as the old coachman said of the railway smash, "Where were you?" You would be heard of eventually, when worn to a skeleton, and in a fit of indigestion from eating your shoe soles in the agony of starvation. And some of us used to get an annual voyage to Hilbre Island, an exploit which set us up as sailors for life. Occasionally visitors penetrated about as often to the one good house which was near the magazines. The Old Priory at Birkenhead was then "alone in its glory." All Cheshire, indeed, was in those days a kind of Africa, inviting and daring the young Bruces and Mungo Parks of Liverpool to explore it. We considered it to abound in deserts and Great Saharas. To penetrate to Wallasey, or to Upton, was to reach Timbuctoo. Bidston and the Lighthouse were our Cairo and the Pyramids; and as to Leasowe Castle, we cared not to approach it, under especial guardianship of so many fairies, ghosts, and hobgoblins was it supposed to be. These things sound like so many fables at the present day, when our steamboats, bridging the river, carry us across by thousands every hour. But in those times, an occasional ferry-boat was the only communication between the Lancashire and Cheshire shores of the Mersey. Few loved to cross from the one to the other, except under the pressure of business or necessity. Many persons, indeed, going from Liverpool to Chester, would travel round by Warrington, rather than chance a rough passage across the river in a small dangerous-looking boat. But *nous avons changé tout cela*. The things which we have been telling only live in the memory of a very few old fellows like ourselves.

CHAPTER IV

But when the war, at the beginning of the century, was renewed with Napoleon, the preparations against him were not confined to the water. We had not only our guardship in the river, but the town itself was stoutly garrisoned against any enemy. We had always several regiments of regular soldiers or militia quartered here. But, besides these, O! what drumming and fifing and bugling and trumpeting there used to be among the regiments of our own raising; for old Liverpool did her duty well and nobly in those days of threatened invasion. Young and old, gentle and simple, high and lowly were all alike seized with a military fever and a patriotic glow, and hastened to don red coats and cocked hats, carry muskets, or wear swords by their sides. And some famous soldiers we had amongst us, and plenty of them. Let us see. There was Colonel Bolton's regiment, consisting of as fine and well-disciplined a body of men as ever mounted guard in St. James's or Buckingham Palace. In what awe we used to stand of the tall, upright, somewhat prim, and starched old colonel, as, mounted on his favourite white charger, he marched, band playing, colours flying, at the head of his men, round and round Mosslake fields, looking, both he and they, defiance at all the world in general, and Napoleon, and Ney, and Soult, and Lannes, and Davoust, and Murat, and all the rest of the frog-eaters in particular. And then there was the fine old major, called Joe Greaves among his familiars, who lived at the top of Mount Pleasant, and kept a glorious house, and welcomed everybody, and was welcome everywhere. A fine fellow was the major as ever we set eyes upon, and he was the father of as fine a family as ever sprung up, like olive branches, round any man's table. He was always kind, affable, and good-natured, whenever we met him. Peace to his memory! And Sir Thomas Brancker, quiet citizen as he now looks, used to wear, to us, a most formidable aspect, when an officer in Bolton's Invincibles. Occasionally he would act as adjutant to the regiment, and, if our memory does not fail us at this distance of time, we once saw him – we certainly saw some one achieve the feat – ride at a troublesome boy, who would intrude within the line of sentinels, and leap his horse clear over the head of the terrified urchin. We also recollect a Hurry and an Aspinall, officers in this regiment. There was also Colonel Williams's regiment of volunteers, a fine body of men, and well ordered and officered. The colonel had seen some hard service, and heard real hostile bullets whistling abroad. He was a strict disciplinarian, and a good soldier. We need not attempt to describe him. He lived to so ripe an old age, and to the last took such an active part in our public affairs, that most of our readers must have his picture, in his white Russian ducks, fully impressed upon their memory. He was an ardent lover of his race and of his country, spared no labour in the cause of improvement and reform, and in earnestness, and sincerity, and integrity of purpose never was surpassed. Moreover, we had Colonel Earle's regiment of Fusiliers; a company of Artillery, commanded by Major Brancker, the father of Sir Thomas; a Custom-house Corps; a Rifle Corps, second to none in the country; and Major Faulkner's Light Horse, better mounted than any cavalry in the service. And the military infection spread so far that the very boys at the schools used to form themselves into regiments, and drum about the streets, with their little colours streaming in their front. And what reviews there were on the North Shore, and sham fights! And the waterside carts were all numbered, so as to be easily brought into use in case of an enemy appearing. Occasionally the soldiers were practised in them. Benches for seats were placed in them, and they would drive off as if for some distant place, to which a railway would now carry them like a flash of lightning. Once or twice there were sham alarms, raised in the night to try the activity and spirit of our volunteers; and O! what rattling of artillery, galloping of horsemen, beating of drums, and blowing of trumpets aroused the affrighted women and children from their beds, to look at the crowds of soldiers rushing through the streets to the several places of mustering for which they were bound. One of the most distinguished officers quartered amongst us in those bustling old times was Colonel Stuart, now the Marquis of Londonderry. A strange man is this said old marquis reported to be, and funny stories are told of him as ambassador at Vienna, and in various matters, political and diplomatic. But, nevertheless, a daring and gallant soldier was he in his youth; and, as a cavalry officer, in dash and skill, was reckoned, not only second, but almost equal, to Murat, the Marquis of Anglesea, and perhaps Jerome Buonaparte, whose desperate charges at Waterloo drew from his brother the exclamation, that if all had fought like him the day would have had a different issue. Well do we recollect Colonel Stuart, on his prancing Arabian horse, which he had brought with him from the Egyptian campaign; and a noble pair they looked as they dashed along. There was a rumour at the time, let us hope an idle one, that this steed of Araby was begged from him by a royal duke, and subsequently passed into a hackney coach. And how well do we recollect the encampment which was formed one summer, somewhere towards Litherland, and how the proud soldiers, living under tents, fancied that they were undergoing all the horrors and hardships of war in behalf of their beloved country. And what heroes we had in command of this military district. There was old General Benson, whose quarters were in Islington, a little of a martinet, and more of a prig, with a large slice of the pedant in things warlike – a regular old pig-tail, but reputed to be a good soldier. After him, we had a hero of another cut, figure, and appearance, General Fisher, whom it was glorious to behold. We will attempt to describe him. It was his custom to creep up Duke Street, where he was quartered, every morning before breakfast. He used to have on a pair of long, light blue pantaloons; slippers, down at the heels; a seedy coat, dear at three-halfpence for a scare-crow; a cocked hat to match, with much more grease than nap on it – we all hated Nap in those days – and a little feather, about two inches high, just peeping above it. And then the figure of fun arrayed in these habiliments. The general was a stout man, with rather a protuberant corporation. His cheeks bore the marks, it may be of many campaigns, but certainly of many vintages. He blushed port wine unceasingly. His nose, no small one, grew into something like a large bulbous root towards the extremity; and he wore a pig-tail, huge in its dimensions, both as to length, breadth, and thickness, even in those days of pig-tails. Such was the one-time champion of this district, as he might be seen creeping every morning through the streets, with his hands in his pantaloon pockets, not unlike an old pantaloon himself, and with a crowd of little boys admiring the war-like apparition, but strongly doubting whether it was St. George or the Dragon that stood before them.

CHAPTER V

We spoke, in our last chapter, of the false alarms by which the soldiers forming our garrison were once or twice called together in the night, to try their zeal and alacrity; and we said how terribly alarmed were the women and children on such occasions. But we can, as truly as proudly, add that their fears did not extend to our brave and gallant volunteers. They rushed to their gathering spots, wild and eager for the coming danger, and, we verily believe, were sorely disappointed when they found that the actual opportunity had not arrived for teaching the enemy how Englishmen could fight for their country, their king, their altars, hearths, and homes. Let us, however, be thankful that we were never subjected to the horrors of invasion, but that the bold front of our champions kept it and them at a distance. The worst of our military fever was, that, in imitation of the bad practice of real soldiers at that day, it led to several duels. One of them ended fatally, a member of one of the most respectable families in the town having fallen by the hand of another, with whom he had always previously been on the most intimate terms. It was supposed at the time that this sad affair was encouraged by some who should have made every exertion and used every effort to have prevented it, but did not.

We have already spoken of several of the general officers who commanded in this district at the time we speak of. There was one, however, who will occupy a larger space in our canvas than we can afford to give to any other. When our military enthusiasm was at its height, Prince William Frederick of Gloucester came down to take the command. It has always been said that "Liverpool loves a lord," and there is some truth in the sarcasm. You may fancy, then, into what a fever of loyalty we were all thrown, young as well as old, by the presence of a prince of the blood royal amongst us, the veritable nephew of "the good old king," George the Third. And then how that fever grew and inflamed into actual white heat when the Duke of Gloucester, the king's brother and the father of the prince, arrived on a visit to his son. We remember him as if it were but yesterday; a fine, benevolent-looking old man, who was all smiles and kindness as he spoke to you. The prince himself was a tall, handsome, noble-looking young man, not too clever, as some of his intimates whispered, as they profanely called him "Silly Billy," the name having been originally fastened upon him by his royal cousin, subsequently George the Fourth, of splendid and dissipated memory. But what of that? We did not want him to set the Mersey on fire, but to fight if fighting were to become necessary. And O! what gaieties, what parties, what festivities, what flirtations, we had in honour of his arrival and residence amongst us. Beauty was beauty in those days, and so the prince thought, and so did the train of gallant and glorious staff-officers who accompanied him. There was the magnificent Mrs. – , and the pretty Mrs. – , and the clever Mrs. – , and the splendid-looking Miss – . How other hearts beat, perhaps with jealousy, perhaps with spite, as the prince, at most of the gay parties, generally devoted himself, more or less, to one or other of these Lancashire witches. Occasionally, however, a fit of formality came over him, and then nothing could be so stupid as to have the honour of meeting him. The duke, his father, had not married a bit of German silver, but had followed the bent of his inclinations and united himself to an English lady of great beauty. This led to the passing of the Royal Marriage Act. To annoy the prince, under these circumstances, his cousins used to raise a question occasionally whether he should be called Highness or Royal Highness, although there was no doubt that the latter was his title. This made him ever and anon tenacious of the amount of honour and respect to be paid to him, and when the fit was upon him, he would push etiquette to the extreme, and keep the whole company standing in his presence, just as another prince does sometimes at the present day. But when he did relax, he could be a delightful companion. He possessed prodigious strength, and was very fond of displaying it at those times when he forgot his stiffness and starch. There was, however, one sad interruption to the worship and adoration with which he had hitherto been surrounded in Liverpool. The Prince of Wales (George the Fourth) and the Duke of Clarence (the sailor king) paid a visit to “the good old town.” As the stars twinkle not before the moon, and the moon herself pales before the brighter beams of the sun, so certain of our tuft-hunters here forgot the respect which was due and which they had long paid to the prince, in their anxiety to bow down and render homage to the new and passing visitors. We are not going to recount all the follies of the occasion. How the Duke of Clarence pushed a milk-pail from a poor girl’s head, in Water-street, and then astonished her with a guinea for her loss, and so forth. We shall hasten at once to a scene which took place at the Town Hall. A magnificent banquet was given there by the Mayor of the time being. The Prince of Wales, the Duke of Clarence, Prince William Frederick of Gloucester, the Earls of Derby and Sefton, with a crowd of military officers, were present. After dinner the usual toasts were proposed; then the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Clarence, each with three times three. At last it was Prince William’s turn, when, under the influence of some demon of mischief, the Mayor, instead of proposing his health, as usual, with all his titles and all the honours, foolishly consulted the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Clarence on the subject, asking in what form he should give the toast, and whether he should say Highness or Royal Highness. The answer of the Prince of Wales was said to be, “Certainly not Royal Highness, and without the honours,” while the Duke of Clarence more bluntly replied, “D – him, don’t give him at all.” The Mayor then rose and simply proposed, “The commander-in-chief of the District, Prince William Frederick of Gloucester.” It was drunk in solemn silence. The company all looked grave, as feeling that, under the influence of a higher idolatry, a gross insult had been offered to the late god of Liverpool adoration. Fierce glances were exchanged between the staff-officers and the other military men present. The prince himself writhed under the stroke, like a wounded tiger smarting under the lance of the hunter. Fire and brimstone and the devil himself flashed from his eyes, but he kept his seat. Presently the fearful and appalling silence was broken by the voice of the Mayor, calling out, as the next toast, “The lord-lieutenant of the county, with three times three,” the three times three omitted at the name of the commander-in-chief, being revived with that of the next toast. A thunderbolt falling into the midst of the party could not have caused more astonishment and excitement. There could be no mistake now. The insult was meant to be an insult, and nothing but an open, prominent, and most insulting insult. The words had hardly passed from the lips of the Mayor, when Prince William, glancing a signal to his staff, who had their eyes fixed upon him, rose from his seat and left the room, followed not only by them, but by the whole of the military officers of his command who were present, leaving the table almost deserted, the Mayor gaping in amazement, and the royal cousins astounded at the spirit which they had evoked, more, perhaps, in mischief than in wanton insolence. However that may have been, from that day forth there was an uncomfortable feeling between the people of Liverpool and Prince William. It is only just to the rest of the corporation and to the gentry of the place to state, that to a man they felt strongly that an unwarrantable insult had been offered to him. He was, we believe, persuaded of this, but he never could be cordial again. If he forgave, he could not forget, the slight and mortification to which he had been so publicly exposed.

CHAPTER VI

We have already said that, in the days of which we are speaking, the Cheshire side of the Mersey, now bridged to us by steam, was a *terra incognita* to the general inhabitants of Liverpool. Almost as little was known of Aigburth, Childwall, Knotty Ash, Walton, West Derby, and so forth. Our fashionables were then satisfied to live in their comfortable town residences, without looking upon a country house and garden, and hothouse, as necessary to their existence. And we question whether they were not as happy as, we are certain they were more sociable and hospitable than, their more refined and degenerate children. We had not so many sets, cliques, and coteries. Men were more sincere than flashy in those times, and their entertainments more solid than showy. But we must not omit to give a "local habitation and a name" to some of our old leaders. The Hollinsheads lived then, and for many a day after, in the big family house near the canal. Some few respectable families lingered in Oldhall-street, to which the venerable Mrs. Linacre, who lived through so many generations, stuck to the last. Mr. Drinkwater, the father of Sir George, inhabited a large house in Water-street. Jonas Bold lived splendidly at the lower end of Redcross-street. The market at that period was held round St. George's church, and chiefly in the space then contracted by a row of houses standing between it and the Crescent, in the rear of which stood a narrow, winding street, called Castle Ditch, communicating with Lord-street, then very narrow, and with no pretentions to attract admiration or even notice from the casual passenger, although the shops in it were always among the best in the town. In Church-street lived the old and respectable family of the Cases, now represented by Mr. J.D. Case, formerly a member of our town council, and at present a resident in Cheshire. His father, George Case, was for many years the leader of the Tory party in the ancient town council, and was, without exception, the best chairman of a public meeting whom we ever met with. Clayton-square was a strong resort of our leading and substantial merchants. Many a happy day have we spent in what was then the splendid mansion of the Rodie family. Kind, magnificent, and munificent in their hospitalities, but now, alas, without a representative of even the name surviving. Dr. Currie, so celebrated in his day, and so celebrated yet, lived in Basnett-street.

Bold-street had its Tobins, Aspinalls, Dawsons, etc. That kind-hearted man, Rector Renshaw, lived here in a corner house, with its door opening upon Newington-bridge. A little farther, on the opposite side, was the house of the famous John Foster, the most influential, as he assuredly was the cleverest, man of his day; the father of the generation who have lived and died amongst us, abused, every one of them, for their name, but admitted, all and each, to have been gifted men in their several callings and professions. Opposite to the house of Rector Renshaw was that of Harry Park, as we familiarly called him, the Abernethy or Astley Cooper of Liverpool; as a surgeon, we believe, second to no man of his day. At the very next door lived Dr. Brandreth, of whose eminence, or pre-eminence, as a physician, it is impossible to speak too highly. In all our wanderings over, and sojournings in, different parts of the world, we never remember to have met with a medical man whose standing was so thoroughly ascertained, admitted, and appreciated. And his position was as elevated in the social as in the medical world. There was no appeal against the fiats which Fashion issued from her seat in Bold-street. We now come to Slater-street, then only partially built upon. Here lived the Myers family, and here resided Mr. Tobin – at a much later period, Sir John.

In Seel-street was Mr. Perry, the first dentist of his day and locality; and next door to him lived the tremendous Mrs. Oates, the best instructress of small children in the rudiments of English whom the world has ever seen. She had the knack of measuring baby capacity, and of drawing out all that it contained, helped thereto, doubtless, by a concentrated essence of birch-rod-look which she constantly wore in school-hours, and which had "no mistake" written upon it in large letters. At all events, her name was celebrated at that day in all our public schools, as the best grounder and trainer of the young idea from whom they ever received recruits. But now we are in Duke-street, one of the most fashionable streets in the town at that remote period, and for some years afterwards. Here lived Mr. Whitehouse, and Mr. Peter Ellames. A little higher up resided a glorious old soul, Mr., afterwards Sir William Barton, as hearty a true Briton as ever walked on shoe-leather, and who had many experiences to tell of the West Indies in general, and Barbadoes in particular; and many also were the jokes tossed off at his expense. There used to be a nigger song quoted against him, extemporised by the black poets, it was said, on some occasion when he had lost a horse-race in Barbadoes. Some of the jingling rhymes we recollect ran thus:

"Massa Barton, Massa Barton, we are sorry for your loss;
But when you run again you must get a better oss!"

And then, as they rushed away at his supposed angry approach, came —

"Run boys, run, run for your life,
For here comes Massa Barton with his stick and knife."

At a later period, when Sir William was mayor, a very laughable occurrence took place at his own table. A gentleman, rising to propose his worship's health, thus commenced his speech, "Addressing myself to you, sir," etc., but it so happened that Sir William, who was no enemy to a jolly full bottle, or two if you like, was, by this time, in a tolerably muddy, misty, and oblivious state of mind, having no tangible recollections at the moment, save and except of his Barbadian experiences, where "you sir" was the term of contempt used by the master to the slave. Up jumped his worship, his eyes sparkling with wine and wrath, and with much hiccuping, exclaimed, "You sir, you sir, good heavens, you sir, that I should have lived to be called you sir!" Then down he bumped, looking like Mars, Bacchus, Apollo, rolled all into one, but continuing to start up and interjectionally to shout, "You sir!" until he fell asleep and slipped under the table. Nobody, however, laughed more heartily the next morning at the scene than did the mayor himself, who had returned from Barbadoes to Duke-street.

A few doors from Barton lived John Bridge Aspinall, a man much esteemed by all in his day, princely in his hospitalities, and with a heart and hand open to every call of charity. Then came Leather, Naylor, Black, Penkett, and a crowd of solid and substantial men, much looked up to and regarded at that time. But whose noble mansion have we here? Built by one of the Lake family, it was subsequently, for many years, the residence of a townsman whose name was identified with Liverpool, and who, comparatively speaking, but lately departed from amongst us. We talk of John Bolton, a man who worked his own way up from poverty to riches, and then lived in the most magnificent way, and in so becoming a manner that he might have been born to the magnificence in which he lived. No one knew the value of silence better than Mr. Bolton. He had not received much education, but he saved appearances by making it an invariable rule never to open his mouth on a subject he did not understand. But we must stop to-day in the catalogue of our worthies. It may sound to some of our young readers like a dry chronicle of names. But never mind them. There are still some old stagers, like ourselves, left, and they will be delighted with this flight back to the men and things of their youthful days. Like veterans, we still love the clash of arms, and to fight our battles over again; and we much mistake if Liverpool were not at least as remarkable then for its guiding and leading spirits as it is now.

CHAPTER VII

Alittle higher up than Colonel Bolton's, but on the same side of Duke-street, stood the noble palace mansion of Moses Benson, one of the merchant princes of the old times of which we are speaking, with its gardens and pleasure grounds, bounded on one side by Cornwallis-street, and on the other by Kent-street, and extending backwards to St. James-street. In Duke-street also lived his son, Ralph Benson, one of the pleasantest and most agreeable men we ever met with, but somewhat, indeed, too much of a Lothario. After his father's death he resided at Lutwyche, in Shropshire, became connected with the turf, and represented Stafford in several parliaments. His wife, Mrs. Ralph Benson, was an Irish lady, of good family, – a Ross Lewin, we believe, – a charming person, handsome, and accomplished, who gave delightful parties, where all the wits and fashionables of the day used to assemble. And here we must say that the beaux of those times were beaux indeed. There are none such to be met with at the Wellington-rooms now, or seen at the windows of the Palatine Club. The Littledales, Hamiltons, Duncans, Dawsons, Lakes, etc., of that generation, – where are they now? – were then a list of fine young fellows. And all the parties were so set off by the red jackets and blue jackets of our brave defenders, who made strange havoc among the ladies' hearts. Among the staff-officers who figured at them all, how well we remember the names and faces of Moultrie, Cox, Oisted, Higgins, and a host of others. And let us not forget the naval aid-de-camp of the Duke of Gloucester, Captain Browne, whose fine manly bearing and noble person must still be impressed upon the memories of many of our older readers. He was a true specimen of the British sailor, deeply respected by all who knew him, as well by landsmen as in naval circles. A generation later, if we may take such a jump, we had, among the staff-officers quartered here, Bainbrigge, now a general, and one of the ablest officers in the service, and one of the cleverest men out of it. There was Peddie, also, a delightful man among those with whom he was intimate. Nor must we forget William, we should say Major William, Brackenbury, a charming fellow, as the ladies said, and a rattling, pleasant, agreeable companion, as all admitted, the life and charm of every party, equal to a good song, and foremost in the dance. But what miracles does time work! Major Brackenbury, and his charger, and his dashing uniform, and his waving plume left Liverpool, and we lost sight of him for a long season. Years elapsed, when we went on a visit to a friend, who lived in a remote village in a far-off corner of the country. One day two strangers were announced. They were a deputation from some missionary society, and had come to invite our host to attend a meeting to be held that evening at the village schoolroom. They were grave looking persons; hair combed down, black coats, white ties, and all the rest of it. As they entered, we were sure that we had seen the countenance of one of them before. We looked at him, and he looked at us. The recognition was mutual, and at the same instant. "By Jove, Brackenbury," said we. "Ah, – !" exclaimed he, not less warmly, but less profanely; and in an instant, after a hearty hand-shaking, we went back at rattling railway pace to the old times, the old people, and the old memories, to the bewilderment of both of our friends, but clearly to the utter horror of his grave companion. But we could not stop till we had it all out, nor till then could we proceed to business. He died soon afterwards. Poor fellow! he was a good soldier in his soldier days. And his closing career was that of a good Christian. Peace to his memory! And when we go, may those who survive us be able to say the same of us.

But to return to our story. In Duke-street, from which he subsequently removed to Walton Hall, at that time likewise lived Thomas Leyland, the eminent banker, who, from small beginnings, worked his way, by energy, industry, and perseverance, to the possession of immense wealth. He was a man of amazing shrewdness, sagacity, and prudence. When the north countryman was asked for the receipt of his ale, which was always good, he answered, "There's just a way of doing it, man." And so it was with Mr. Leyland. He had "just the way of doing things." We will not compare him to the animals which are said "to see the wind," but, by some intuition, instinct, or presentiment, call it what you will, he seemed always to have a warning of any coming storm in the money market, and trimmed and steered the ship, and took in sail accordingly. He was a fine-looking man, with what some thought a stern and forbidding, but what we should call a firm and decided look. We remember him with favour and gratitude. We received many civilities, and not a few substantial kindnesses, from him in his day. We omitted to state that what is now the Waterloo hotel, [1] at the bottom of Ranelagh-street, was then the mansion of the Staniforth family. The son, Samuel, lived to be an old man amongst us, and was once the mayor of Liverpool, and afterwards sunk down into being the stamp distributor of the district. He was a gentlemanly kind of person in society, but of a strangely austere and forbidding aspect, the most vinegar-visaged man we ever beheld. And the index was a correct representative of the inner man. When the election poet wrote of him "Sulky Sam Staniforth," he drew his character in those three words. By his marriage with a most estimable lady, he was closely connected with the Case, Littledale, and Bolton families. His son came in for the great bulk of Colonel Bolton's wealth, to the exclusion of his own relations; one of the happily rare instances in which a north countryman forgets his own blood in the disposal of his property.

We now approach Colquitt-street, in which resided that shrewd, plodding merchant, Gilbert Henderson, the father of our respected and able Recorder. Here, also, lived Thomas Parr, who afterwards retired into Shropshire. His house was disposed of by a tontine, and, at a later day, became the Royal Institution, from which so many youths have gone forth to encounter the storms or pluck the honours of the world. Here, likewise, lived that true-hearted man of the old school, Peter Whitfield Brancker, one of the worthiest among the worthies of the days we write of. He was one who eschewed anything like nonsense, and was highly gifted with common sense. What he said he meant, and what he did he did with all his heart and soul. Few thought that he had so much kindness beneath his somewhat blunt and bluff bearing; and many called him selfish, when he laid up for his family what others threw away upon vanity and ostentation. We always looked upon him as one of the best men of the day; and, although he was a silent man in general company, he was far before most of our merchant princes in reading and intellectual attainments. In Rodney-street, then only partially built upon, lived Mr. Leicester, and also that "fine old English gentleman," Pudsey Dawson, who was the delight of our boyhood, as we listened to his powers of talking, and watched, with amazement, his capabilities for taking snuff. He was the father of, we may say, besides his other sons, a race of heroes. William, who was in the Royal Navy, distinguished himself greatly in the East Indies, by the capture, after a desperate action, of a French frigate, which had long been an annoyance and a thorn in the side of our trade in that quarter. Another fell, gloriously, in Spain. Charles, a lamb in society, a lion in battle, was killed at Waterloo. If our memory holds good, both of these last mentioned were then in the 52nd, a crack regiment in the famous fighting brigade of those gunpowder times. Noble old Pudsey Dawson! How he would talk by the hour, of wars and rumours of wars, to the circle which would gather round him at the Athenæum, until, as he turned from one to another, the whole ring in which he moved might be tracked by the overflow of his snuff-box. And what a horror he had of Napoleon and Frenchmen and everything French. It was well for them, as he used to say, that he was not at Blucher's elbow when he entered Paris, it being his firm belief that the earth would never be quiet, until that city of trouble and confusion was blotted from its face. But Liverpool society could not point to a man of whom it was prouder, or one more respected, esteemed, or honoured, than this same Pudsey Dawson. All men liked him, and we did not make an exception.

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[1] Since removed, with other premises, for the Central Station.

CHAPTER VIII

In Rodney-street, likewise, lived Fletcher Raincock, one of the most remarkable characters of his day. He had few equals in a legal capacity, and no superiors in literary attainments. He had a most gluttonous appetite for books, and read everything, old and new. He was a regular “curiosity shop” in the variety of his knowledge, and could produce all sorts of odds and ends at a moment’s notice, from all sorts of ancient authors, unknown to and never heard of by other people. This made him a most agreeable companion, his conversational powers being tremendous, and set off, rather than impaired, by a spice of originality and eccentricity, just enough to draw a line between him and the common herd of ordinary and every-day people by whom he was surrounded. Like Yorick, “he would set the table in a roar,” by the combined wit and wisdom which he had ever at command. And while speaking of lawyers, let us digress for a moment to mention another old giant of those times. We allude to Mr. Hargreaves, who was for some years the Recorder of Liverpool, a deep and profound lawyer, *haud ulli veterum virtute secundus*. He was succeeded by James Clarke, who lived to a much later date amongst us. Poor Clarke! We never thought him crushed down by the weight of legal lore which he carried. But he was a man given to books, and had learned much from them. A pleasant man in a party, too, he was, abounding in anecdote and the passing stories of the day. And, on one point, we must admit that he was unmatched. We never met with any one who possessed more shrewdness and knowledge of the world. He had thoroughly studied the volume of man as well as printed books, and we often point to his career as a proof of the usefulness of this knowledge. He had a remarkable coolness and calmness about his character, but we did once see him put into a regular “fix,” in his own court, by an obstreperous juryman, who would have a will of his own. A huge sailor and a small boy were being tried for stealing an immense piece of cable. The sailor threw it all upon the boy, and the Recorder, believing him, was charging the jury to the same effect, when one of them rising, and hitching up his trousers, commenced, “But, Mr. Recorder!” This was too much. Mr. Recorder, electrified with indignation at being so interrupted, looked his best thunderbolts at the remonstrant, who still, however, kept sturdily on his legs, muttering protests against the opinion of the bench. The spectators became excited and amused at such an unusual scene, and a titter went round the court. This only added fuel to the fire, and Mr. Recorder made another attempt to silence his persevering assailant. “I tell you,” he exclaimed, “that from the evidence, the boy must have been the culprit who carried off the cable; the law says so, and I say so.” But the obdurate juryman had not yet done. He instantly answered, “But, Mr. Recorder, I do not know what you and the law may tell me, but common sense tells me that that boy could not even lift that piece of cable from the ground, much less run away with it.” This was a poser with a vengeance. It was a new and original view of the case, which set all evidence at naught. The titter in the court grew into a regular burst of laughter, which nothing could check. The poor Recorder was fully nonplussed and nonsuited, and the jury acquitted the boy without a moment’s hesitation.

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