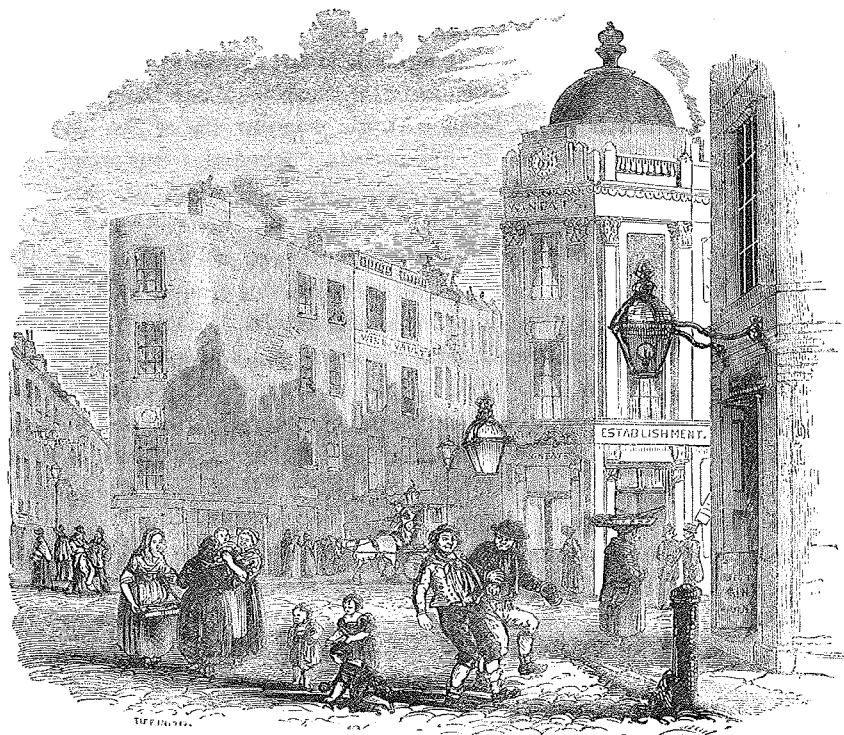


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[Seven Dials.]

LXVII.—ST. GILES'S, PAST AND PRESENT.

THE sententious Maitland says, of the Church of St. Giles in the Fields, that it "is denominated from St. Giles, a Grecian;" which may be the reason why so many "foolish Greeks" (*vide* Shakspeare's 'What you will') have both in ancient and modern times congregated around it. It is scarcely to be wondered at that, among so numerous a company as the Saints of the Roman Church (half-a-dozen for every day in the year, besides a numerous *corps de reserve* to supply any vacancies that might occur, packed away in the day of All Saints), some of them should occasionally fall into indifferent company. But there are one or two of them who, with every inclination to make allowance for human frailty even in Saints, have stretched their licence rather too far. St. Julian's connection with thieves is matter of notoriety; St. Nicholas's conduct has led to his name being conferred upon one whom, according to old saws, it is not very safe to mention; and as for St. Giles, if in any town possessed of more than three or four churches there be one set apart for him, it is odds but you find the most questionable characters in the town dwelling in its neighbourhood. Without going out of our own island to seek for examples, we may remark that in Edinburgh the "Heart of Mid Lothian" stood, and the Parliament House still stands, close to the shrine of

St. Giles; and here, in London, he is the central point of a population—"of whom more anon," as Baillie Nichol Jarvie said of the sons of Rob Roy.

St. Giles appears to have come in with the Conqueror, or soon after, which may account for his sympathy with marauders: "By the village of St. Giles's not appearing in 'Domesday Book,' I imagine it is not coeval with the Conquest," says Maitland; and here, for the information of those who, not being deeply read in this historian, may not be acquainted with his peculiar use of the English language, "not coeval with" means, in his mouth, "what did not exist before." 'The Beauties of Maitland' would be an interesting book, and one of them follows close in the wake of the piece of intelligence just cited: "That the parish is of great antiquity is manifest by the decretal sentence of Stephen, Archbishop of Canterbury, &c., anno 1222, in the great controversy between Eustace, Bishop of London, &c., and William, Abbot of Westminster, &c., in which sentence this parish is expressly mentioned; but I imagine it was not converted into a parish-church till the 20th of April, anno 1547." By what process a *parish* can be converted into a *parish-church* it is not very easy to conceive; but as, in the same breath, the soaring imagination ("I imagine") of the author leads him to decide that the parish prophetically mentioned in a judicial sentence of 1222 did not exist till 1547, this is a trifle.

The church and village of St. Giles are supposed to have sprung from an hospital for lepers founded there by Matilda, wife of Henry I., about the year 1117. As in the sentential award made by the Archbishop of Canterbury, already alluded to, the garden of the hospital appears to have been situated between St. Giles's High Street, the Pound, and Hog Lane (now dignified by the appellation of Crown Street, thereby plainly showing that in London, at least, men know how to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear), Maitland concludes that the hospital itself stood near the west end of the present church. In 1354 Edward III. granted this hospital to the master and brethren of the order of Burton St. Lazar of Jerusalem, in Leicestershire. When the gallows was removed from the Elms in Smithfield, about the year 1413, it was erected at the north end of the garden-wall of St. Giles, near the junction of St. Giles's High Street and Crown Street. When it was again removed, still in a western direction, which may have helped, along with other observations, to lead Bishop Berkeley to the conclusion, "westward the course of empire holds its way," St. Giles's became a sort of half-way house for the heroes who travelled that dark road. "The condemned criminals, in their way to the place of execution, usually stopped at this hospital, where they, as their last refreshment, were presented with a large bowl of ale."

It is probably owing to this combination of circumstances—to its being selected as a place of retreat for noisome and squalid outcasts, and associated in various ways with the careers of those who lived in hostility with the law—that the character which St. Giles's has retained from first to last during the whole period that anything is known of it has been so ineradicably burned into it. St. James's, which was also originally a lazar-house, has become a kingly residence, and Tyburn too has in its day been the shambles or sacrificial altar (which you will) of the law: all traces, however, of the disagreeable associations which clung to the one locality, and are still conjured up by the name of the other, have vanished. But St. Giles's combined within itself what was repulsive about both, and accordingly St. Giles remains true to itself, "unchanged, unchangeable."

It cannot be said that no attempt has been made to reclaim it. In the days of Charles II. the place subsequently denominated Seven Dials was erected, in the expectation that it would become the abode of the gay and the wealthy. Nor did the hope seem altogether groundless. Close at hand were Soho Square and Covent Garden, then aristocratical resorts, and on the other side were the mansions of the Bedford and other noble families, upon the ruins of which the seemly district of St. George's, Bloomsbury, has since arisen. There was good society enough to keep the Seven Dials from turning haggard. But the atmosphere of St. Giles's was too powerful for such counter-agents, and the Seven Dials soon became nearly, though not altogether, as bad as its neighbours in the Rookery.

During the ascendancy of the Puritans a stout effort was made to reform the morals of the denizens of St. Giles's, as well as other places; but it appears from the parish books that a stout resistance was made by these turbulent worthies. Mr. Brayley furnishes us with a few illustrative extracts:—

	£.	s.	d.
"1641. Received of the Vintner at the <i>Catt</i> in Queen Street, for permitting of tippling on the Lord's-day	1	10	0
1644. Received of three poor men for drinking on the Sabbath-day at Tottenham Court	0	4	0
1645. Received of John Seagood, constable, which he had of a Frenchman for swearing three oaths	0	3	0
„ Received of Mrs. <i>Thunder</i> , by the hands of Francis Potter, for her being drunk, and swearing seven oaths	0	12	0
1646. Received of Mr. Hooker, for brewing on a Fast-day	0	2	6
„ Paid and given to Lyn and two watchmen, in consideration of their pains, and the breaking of two halberts, in taking the two drunkards and swearers that paid	1	4	0
„ Received of four men travelling on the Fast-day	0	1	0
„ Received of Mr. Wetherill, headboro', which he had of one for an oath	0	3	4
1648. Received from the City Marshall, sent by the Lord Mayor, for one that was drunk at the Forts in our parish	0	5	0
„ Received from Isabel Johnson, at the Coal-yard, for drinking on the Sabbath-day	0	4	0
1652. Received of Mr. Huxley and Mr. Norris, who were riding out of town on a Fast-day	0	11	0
1654. Received of William Glover, in Queen Street, and of Isaac Thomas, a barber, for trimming of beard on the Lord's-day. (The sum is not stated.)			
1655. Received of a maid taken in Mrs. Jackson's ale-house on the Sabbath-day	0	5	0
„ Received of a Scotchman drinking at Robert Owen's on the Sabbath	0	2	0
1658. Received of Joseph Piers, for refusing to open his doors to have his house searched on the Lord's-day	0	10	0
1659. (An entry occurs of 'one Brooke's goods sold for breach of the Sabbath;' but the produce is not set down.)"			

"Think of that, Master Brook," as a congenial spirit would doubtless have exclaimed, had he not long ere this been "all cold as any stone." So, too, would his co-mates; but Bardolph and Nym were hanged "for pyx of little price;" Mrs. Pistol (the quondam Quickly) was dead; and Pistol himself had doubtless fired his last shot, for at our farewell interview with him he was complaining—

“ Old do I wax, and from my weary limbs
Honour is cudgelled.”

It was clear, from the subdued and despondent tone of his voice, that “his heart was fractured and corroborate,” and that he was soon to die the death of his old master. They had left, however, kindred souls behind them, who bade defiance alike to the Ironsides of Cromwell and the whole Assembly of Divines at Westminster. The vintner at the “Cat” kept his doors open on the sly, notwithstanding the fine of thirty good shillings imposed upon him; Mrs. Thunder (appropriate name) continued to tipple and swear, at the rate of five shillings for each jollification, and a shilling for every oath; the Frenchman kept spitting out “sacres” as fast as the sparks from a Catherine-wheel; and the worthies who broke the two halberts of Lyn’s watchmen (and, though the parish records gloss over the defeat of their officers, swung the watchmen), survived to lead a gallant troop down Drury Lane, and along the Strand, to assist in burning the rumps at Temple Bar. The only recusant was the Scotchman, who was reclaimed, by the outlay of two shillings English, from all such backslidings; though the maid taken in Mrs. Jackson’s alehouse, despite her five shillings, and Isabel Johnston, despite her four, continued rebellious “malignants” to the last.

Nor is this so much to be wondered at, when we consider that, as early as 1641, “the correcting Parliament” had excited the jealousy of the sellers and drinkers of ale by appearing to mete to the sellers of lordly wine, and to the sellers of yeomanly beer, with a different measure. The vintners were relieved from the pressure of the wine monopoly at the very time that the alehouse-keepers were subjected to a rigorous police; and the roisterers of St. Giles’s, not unnaturally, jumped at the conclusion that the rigid morality of the Parliament was like the sobriety of the vice-president of a Temperance Society whom we knew well in our younger and more foolish days—the office-bearers of such societies have since become more consistent. Worthy man!—Ardent spirits he would not allow to enter his house, except in homœopathic doses in an apothecary’s phials, but many a good bottle of Edinburgh ale have we shared with him when we chanced to drop in on him at his house for luncheon; and at one serious *tête-à-tête* did we finish three bottles of claret—he drinking glass for glass, while he urged upon us, with weighty arguments, the propriety of joining the Society. That this suspicion lent vigour to the resistance offered in St. Giles’s to all attempts on the part of the parish dignitaries to amerce them into sobriety, appears from a dialogue, the scene of which is laid in this neighbourhood, published in 1641, under the imposing title of ‘The Tapster’s Downfall and the Drunkard’s Joy; or, a Dialogue between *Leatherbeard*, the Tapster of the Sheaves, and *Rubynose*, one of his ancient acquaintance, who hath formerly eaten three stone of roast-beef on a Sunday morning, but now (being debarred that privilege) slights him, and resolves to drink wine altogether.’ The communing of these worthies begins as follows:—

“*Leatherbeard*. Whither away, Mr. Ruby? Will you not know your old friends, now they grow poor?”

“*Rubynose*. Now you grow poor, I hold it a gentle garb to be willing to forget you.

“*L*. What! not one cup more of our brisk beer, which hath set that tincture

in your well-dyed scarlet face? Are you resolved to leave us so? This is most discourteously done of you.

"*R.* I cannot stay, i' faith. More serious employments draw me away.

"*L.* What do you say?—Will you try a piece of beef, for all your haste?

"*R.* Yes: were it Sunday morning.

"*L.* Truly, Mr. Rubynose, you do not well to jeer your poor friends, now they are in misery. . . . With a most sorrowful heart I will relate to you the saddest news that ever befel unto us squires of the drawing society of the tap.

"*R.* Good Small-beer, proceed.

"*L.* Why, you know the benefit my poor master's widow got every Sunday morning by her thin-cut slices of roasted beef; how she made the gents to pay for the vinegar and pepper they ate with the roast-beef at prayer-time; and how I sold my ale and beer all that time at double prices.

"*R.* I am very sensible of it.

"*L.* I know likewise you are not ignorant of what innumerable numbers of mince-pies we sold every Sunday at dinner, and what benefit we made of the refuse of the slashed roast-beef.

"*R.* I know of all this very well.

"*L.* Nay, one of the chiefest matters is behind; how many great gross of plum-cakes and cheesc-cakes, what stewed prunes and custards, we have sold every Sunday at prayer-time in the afternoon, and what doings we have had all the day after—oh, in those days I was a man of great calling! I assure you we have taken more money on a Sunday than all the week after.

"*R.* Why, all this I confidently believe; therefore, I pray, what of it?

"*L.* Oh, sir, those days are done; we must now fall to our prayers on a Sunday, and keep our doors shut all the day long, and sing psalms if we please, but we have never a room to the street.

"*R.* Why, how cometh that about, you have not liberty to open your doors on a Sunday as formerly?

"*L.* The correcting Parliament, that hath a sight on all trades, hath made an order to the contrary, which is put in strict execution: we are now in more fear of the churchwarden than of all the back-clappers and clenching tenter-neck bailies of the town.

"*R.* Why, you may fee the churchwardens, and regain your privilege.

"*L.* No, Sir; they are not so mercenary as the promoting paritor is: six shillings a quarter and free access to a lusty chine of roast-beef will not give them content."

And thereupon Rubynose tells the complaining man that, if things remain in that way, he must break, and to render him still more malcontent, leaves him, after communicating the information that Parliament has extended the privileges of vintners, and thus rendered wine cheap, and that he, Rubynose, is resolved for the future to abjure both meat and malt potations, and spend every farthing he has or can get upon the juice of the grape. And by such means was St. Giles's and all its worshippers of John Barleycorn rendered ripe for revolt. They saw the wine-bibber favoured, and themselves, unaccused, untried, treated worse than the convicted felon who passed through their village on his way to Tyburn—stinted in their bowls of ale. Like one of the great men with whom

we have already paralleled them, they protested they had "operations in their head, which be humours of revenge;" and with another they swore "by welkin and her star" to have revenge with wit or steel. If it were but to spite the Parliament and churchwardens, they were resolute *not* to "purge and leave sack, and live cleanly as a noble man should do."

And most happily were they situated for carrying their resolves into effect. St. Giles's, situated neither in Westminster nor the liberties of the City, abuts upon both. In those days it communicated with the former through St. Martin's Lane, with the ganglion of courts, minor lanes, and houses of questionable character at its lower extremity; with the latter through Drury Lane and Wych Street, and sundry almost impervious defiles round or across St. Clement's Churchyard into Butcher Row. The situation is commanding; it overlooked Whitehall on the one side and the City on the other with a saucy complacency. In front it was only accessible through dangerous defiles, and all to the north of Holborn and the Oxford Road was in a manner open country. In those days it seemed marked out by the hand of nature as a city of refuge for the oppressed and persecuted tipplers and raggamuffins of London and Westminster, when they wanted to make merry in defiance of the churchwardens, whose empire was then more terrible than that of the thief-catchers. St. Giles's was at that time for the natives or naturalised of Alsatia and the Sanctuary what the hills in the south of Scotland were for the Presbyterian disciplinarians, when their turn came to be undermost, a central point where they could meet, and from the elevation of which they could timeously descry the approach of danger; and in whose channelled sides were rare dens for sculking, doubling, and throwing out their pursuers. It is a mistake to imagine that the stifling pressure of a densely peopled metropolis is most sensibly felt in its innermost recesses. The filth and squalor of its necessitous population are to be found squatting in out-of-the-way corners where town and country meet. The islands of social misery found in the interior of London or Paris have been surrounded and built in as these capitals extended themselves. Thus favoured by natural position, by the sturdy character of its inhabitants, the blackguardism of St. Giles's was only increased by harsh treatment: it was pounded into tougher consistency. It might even have protracted its resistance although the reign of Puritanism had been lengthened; but relief came to its inmates—as well as to the better-dressed and more cleanly blackguards—with the restoration of Charles II.—the anniversary of which ought nowhere to be celebrated with more fervent gratitude than in the quondam village of St. Giles's-in-the-Fields.

Not to insist upon other pieces of evidence to the unvarying character maintained by St. Giles's from the days of the Commonwealth to those we live in, it may suffice to mention, between the years 1740 and 1750, it was a resort of the celebrated Thurot—the commander of a French squadron which committed some depredations on the coasts of Ireland and the Hebrides in 1760—a native hero of France, much of the same class and calibre with the one of Scotch growth who commanded the 'Bon Homme Richard' some twenty years later. Thurot, though a Frenchman, had some Irish blood in his veins, and he began the world under the auspices of a relative of the name of O'Farrel, an eminent smuggler from Connaught. The education, commenced on board a smuggling lugger,

was advanced by the experience of two years' service as valet in a nobleman's family in Dublin. He and the lady's maid were dismissed rather abruptly and unceremoniously about the same time; and the girl being soon after received into the family of another nobleman who lived in the north of Ireland, Thurot followed her. "In this place he made himself acceptable," says his biographer, "to many gentlemen and to the Earl of A——, by his skill in sporting; but his situation being near the sea, and the opposite coast of Scotland favouring the trade of smuggling, in which he was a much greater master than in cocking and hunting, he soon got into a gang of these people." The chance of trade brought him to London; and from 1748 to 1752 he was constantly trading between France and this city. "Part of this time he lodged in a court in Carey Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and was then instructed in the mathematics by one Mr. Donnelly, an Irish gentleman famous for his knowledge and abilities in the mathematical studies." After 1752 his chief place of residence was Boulogne, "where he became king of the smugglers, and during his reign did not export and import less than 20,000*l.* worth a-year." In due time he was thrown into prison, from which the French government, being at that time sadly at a loss for a naval hero, took him, and gave him the command of a buccaneering expedition along the coasts of Britain, in the course of which he displayed skill, courage, and humanity. In short, though we are not aware that his parallel, Captain Paul Jones, ever went through the initiatory processes of smuggling and waiting at table, "barring these accidents," Thurot was infinitely the more genuine hero of the two: he was more of the gentleman, and never landed as commander of an alien and hostile force within sight of the house he was born in.

But what has Thurot to do with St. Giles's? He is a specimen of the company which, while he was studying mathematics and serving his time as journeyman to the trade of smuggler—before he had set up for himself on a large scale—used to frequent the more genteel streets of that district. "He used frequently to go to a club which was held every Monday night somewhere about the Seven Dials, and consisted wholly of foreigners, chiefly of Frenchmen. Some of these gentlemen took it in their heads one evening most grossly to abuse the English and Irish, calling them every contemptuous name which liquor and ill-manners could suggest. Thurot listened to them for some time with a great deal of patience; till at length, finding they intended to set no bounds to their insolence, he very calmly got up, and, seizing the two who sat next him, each by the nose, without saying a syllable, he led them to the door, and put them out and bolted it after them; then, returning to his seat—'Come, gentlemen,' he said, 'let us drink about and call another subject.'"^{*} The class of foreigners to which Thurot belonged has become too numerous or too ambitious to find proper accommodation at Seven Dials: now that they obtrude themselves upon a wider public, it is to be wished that they sometimes had a Thurot among them.

It is time, however, to come to the modern St. Giles's. This interesting district is bounded on the north by the great brewhouse in Bainbridge Street, and on the south by the great brewhouse in Castle Street; and extends from Hog Lane (now Crown Street) on the west, to Drury Lane on the east. The erection of Bloomsbury, which originally formed part of St. Giles's, into a separate

^{*} 'Annual Register,' 1760, p. 28 (of the Chronicle division of the volume).

parish, has given a greater homogeneity to the district. Leaving out of view, therefore, the scantling of Great Russell Street included in it, the parish of St. Giles's may be considered as the most thoroughly uniform and consistent in point of character and appearance of any in London. Slight shades of difference may be detected between its "west end" (which, by the way, is situated on its south side) about Seven Dials, and its "east end" which rejoices in the designation, redolent of woodland or cathedral associations, of "the Rookery."

The Seven Dials, we have had occasion to remark above, are an evidence of an attempt to civilise the neighbourhood by introducing respectable houses into it. The attempt was not altogether in vain: this part of the parish has ever since "worn its *dirt* with a difference." There is an air of shabby gentility about it, not unlike that which may be remarked about the native of such a district, who, after having been tried for a year or two as servant in a genteel family, has been returned in despair to his (or her) original rags and dirt. The air of the footman or waiting-maid can be recognised through the tatters, which are worn with more assumption than those of their unsophisticated neighbours—

"You may break, you may ruin the vase, if you will;
The scent of the roses will hang round it still."

The houses in this region, with their inmates and surrounding objects, always remind us irresistibly of Sophia Western's *sacque* worn by Molly Seagrim in her father's house.

It is here that the literature of St. Giles's has fixed its abode; and a literature the parish has of its own, and that, as times go, of a very respectable standing in point of antiquity. In a letter from Letitia Pilkington to the demure author of 'Sir Charles Grandison,' and published by the no less exemplary and irreproachable Mrs. Barbauld, the lady informs her correspondent that she has taken apartments in Great White Lion Street, and stuck up a bill intimating that all who had not found "reading and writing come by nature," and who had had no teacher to make up the defect by art, might have "letters written here." With the progress of education, printing-presses have found their way into St. Giles's, and it is now no exaggeration to say that, compared with the rest of the metropolis, the streets radiating from Seven Dials, and intersecting the diamond-shaped space included by Monmouth Street, West Street, Castle Street, and King Street, display more than the average allowance of booksellers' and stationers' shops, circulating libraries, and the like. It was here—in Monmouth Court, a thoroughfare connecting Monmouth Street with Little Earl Street—that the late eminent Mr. Catnach developed the resources of his genius and trade. It was he who first availed himself of greater mechanical skill and a larger capital than had previously been employed in that department of THE TRADE, to substitute for the execrable tea-paper, blotched with lamp-black and oil, which characterised the old broadside and ballad printing, tolerable white paper and real printer's ink. But more than that, it was he who first conceived and carried into effect the idea of publishing collections of songs by the yard, and giving to purchasers, for the small price of one penny (in former days the cost of a single ballad), strings of poetry, resembling in shape and length the list of Don Juan's mistresses, which Leporello unrolls on the stage before Donna Anna. He was no ordinary man, Catnach: he patronised original talents in many a bard of St.

Giles's, and is understood to have accumulated the largest store of broadsides, last-dying speeches, ballads, and other stock-in-trade of the flying stationers, upon record. We had flattered ourselves with the illusive hope of benefiting by his liberal assistance in compiling these annals of St. Giles's; but upon entering Monmouth Court, the first time for many years, we were *abîmé* by finding over one of his doors (for the great man filled two), "Paul and Riley, successors to late Catnach." We entertain not a doubt that his mantle has descended upon successors worthy of him, but to us they never can be what Catnach has been. His literary treasures will, in all probability, remain locked up until some St. Giles's George Robins does for them what the genuine Robins is doing for the collection of Strawberry Hill. Unless, indeed, the British Museum or the Bodleian contrive to secure them before they are offered to public competition.

The taste of St. Giles's is more literary than scientific, and modern seems preferred to ancient literature. At present there is, so far as we can ascertain, only one old book-shop in the district—the extensive and *recherché* collection, near the upper end of Broad Street, on the south side—second-hand books are sometimes indeed to be met with in the shops of other dealers, but they are in general the latest fashionable novels. Romantic serials appear to be greatly in demand: such as the 'The Grave of the Forsaken,' 'The Wreck of the Heart,' 'The Lion King,' 'Susan Hopley,' 'The Horrors of the Castle of Zeinzendorff,' 'The Miller's Maid,' &c. All these are of the Bulwer or Ainsworth schools, and illustrated by engravings in wood every way worthy of them. For works of humour, such as the 'Penny Satirist,' 'Cleave's Police Gazette,' there seems to be a considerable demand. The fact of all the works we have enumerated belonging to the illustrated class will have prepared the reader to expect other symptoms of a taste for art; and accordingly, in Monmouth Street, we find one of the great ateliers from which the milk-shops, ginger-beer stalls, green-groceries, and pot-houses of the suburbs are supplied with sign-boards. Theatrical amateurs appear to abound; at least the ample store of tin daggers, blunt cutlasses, banners, halberds, battle-axes, &c., constantly exposed for sale at a cellar in Monmouth Street, indicate a steady demand. Nor is this all: in no part of the town do we find singing-birds in greater numbers and variety, and as most of the houses, being of an old fashion, have broad ledges of lead over the shop windows, these are frequently converted into hanging gardens, not so extensive as those of Babylon, but possibly yielding as much pleasure to their occupants. In short, what with literature and a taste for flowers and birds, there is much of the "sweet south" about St. Giles's, harmonising with the out-of-door habits of its occupants; and one could almost fancy that, amid the groups so easily and picturesquely disposed round each of the seven angles which abut upon the central circle, Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer had there found many of those exquisite pictures which he has so felicitously introduced into his 'Last Days of Pompeii.' Flower (or vegetable) girls (sometimes blind of *one* eye) meet you at every corner, and the baths are to be found in Little Earl Street with the inscription, "A shave and a wash for 1*d.*" Pedants may fancy this a degradation from the merits of the great work referred to, but who ever complained because phrases of true English growth are to be found in the mouths of Shakspeare's "citizens?"

The bulk of the permanent population seems composed of Hebrews and the

natives of the Emerald Isle. The former preponderate in Monmouth Street (and this being the case, it is a favourable account of their practical tolerance that there is a flourishing pork and sausage shop near one end of the street, and an equally flourishing Roman Catholic bookseller's at the other); the Irish abound most in the lanes and courts. The association is not without its predisposing causes in the economical relations of the two parties. Whoever has passed along Monmouth Street must have been struck with the redundant drapery of the old-clothes' shop, intermingled with stores of second-hand boots and shoes, enough, it would seem, to fit out whole Spanish legions, were they again required. Doubtless good part of them finds a retail sale on the spot: it is not easy to escape the importunities of their eloquent vendors. But in addition to these, a large export trade is driven with Ireland. It is understood that Mr. O'Connell's patriotic attempt to promote the domestic manufactures of Ireland has failed mainly from the circumstance that nine-tenths of the population have contracted a habit of wearing in preference second and third-hand clothes, and that the remaining tenth cannot with their best will wear out their new clothes quick enough to provide the rest with a constant supply of their favourite wear.

The classical reader may possibly retain from his schoolboy days a recollection of a race of people called Troglodytes—dwellers in caves, an intermediate species between the man and the rabbit. Their descendants still flourish in great force in Monmouth Street. Cellars serving whole families for "kitchen and parlour and bed-room and all" are to be found in other streets of London, but not so numerous and near to each other. Here they cluster like cells in a convent of the order of La Trappe, or like onions on a rope. It is curious and interesting to watch the habits of these human moles when they emerge, or half emerge, from their cavities. Their infants seem exempt from the dangers which haunt those of other people: at an age when most babies are not trusted alone on a level floor, these urchins stand secure on the upmost round of a trap-ladder, studying the different conformations of the shoes of the passers-by. The mode of ingress of the adults is curious: they turn their backs to the entry, and, inserting first one foot and then another, disappear by degrees. The process is not unlike (were such a thing conceivable) a sword sheathing itself. They appear a short-winded generation, often coming, like the otter, to the surface to breathe. In the twilight which reigns at the bottom of their dens you can sometimes discern the male busily cobbling shoes on one side of the entrance, and the female repairing all sorts of rent garments on the other. They seem to be free feeders: at certain periods of the day tea-cups and saucers may be seen arranged on their boards; at others, plates and pewter pots. They have the appearance of being on the whole a contented race. At present, when the cold north-easter of the income-tax is about to sweep cuttingly across the face of the earth, we often feel tempted to envy those who, in their subterranean retreats, will hear it whistle innocuously far above their heads, with the feelings of the travellers in 'Mary the Maid of the Inn':

" 'Tis pleasant, says one, seated by the fireside,
To hear the wind whistle without."

There are some features common to both divisions of this region, which will be best understood and appreciated after we have introduced our readers to "the

Rookery." Here is the genuine unsophisticated St. Giles's. Its limits are not very precisely defined, its squalor fades into the cleanness of the more civilised districts in its vicinity, by insensible degrees, like the hues of the rainbow, but we shall not be far from the mark if we describe it as the triangular space bounded by Bainbridge Street, George Street, and High Street, St. Giles's. It is one dense mass of houses, "so olde they only seemen not to falle," through which narrow tortuous lanes curve and wind, from which again diverge close courts innumerable, all communicating with those nearest them. It is one great maze of narrow crooked paths crossing and intersecting in labyrinthine convolutions, as if the houses had been originally one great block of stone eaten by slugs into innumerable small chambers and connecting passages. There is no privacy here for any of the over-crowded population; every apartment in the place is accessible from every other by a dozen different approaches. Only at night, when they are asleep—and not always at night—can their redundant numbers find room; for so long as they are lively enough to turn and be aware that anything presses them, there is squeezing and jostling, and grumbling and cursing. Hence whoever ventures here finds the streets (by courtesy so called) thronged with loiterers, and sees through the half-glazed windows the rooms crowded to suffocation. The stagnant gutters in the middle of the lanes, the accumulated piles of garbage, the pools accumulated in the hollows of the disjointed pavement, the filth choking up the dark passages which open like rat-holes upon the highway—all these, with their indescribable sights and smells, leave scarcely so dispiriting an impression on the passenger as the condition of the houses. Walls of the colour of bleached soot—doors falling from their hinges—door-posts worm-eaten and greasily polished from being long the supports of the shoulders of ragged loungers—windows where shivered panes of dirty glass alternate with wisps of straw, old hats, and lumps of bed-ticken or brown paper—bespeak the last and frailest shelter that can be interposed between man and the elements. It is a land of utter idleness. Groups of women, with dirty rags hung round them, not put on, cover round the doors—the old with wrinkled parchment skins, the young with flushed swollen faces and heavy eyes. The men lean against the wall or lounge listlessly about, sometimes with pipes in their mouths. In this region there are no birds or flowers at window or on wall; the inmates can scarcely muster liveliness sufficient to exchange words, or perpetrate the practical joke of pushing each other into the kennel. Shops are almost unknown—in the interior of the district quite unknown. Half-way up Bainbridge Street is one in which a few withered vegetables are offered for sale; in George Street another, where any kind of rags, with all their dirt, are purchased; along Broad Street, St. Giles's, are some provision shops, one or two of those suspicious deposits of old rusty keys called marine stores, and opposite the church a gin-shop. Here a few miserable women may be seen attempting to help each other to arrange their faded shawls, when by any means they have procured liquor enough to stupify themselves—exhilaration is out of the question. Such is the aspect of this place by day. At night men speak of wild frantic revels, but these are not by the permanent inhabitants. In this desolate region many of the windows announce "Lodgings at 3*l.* a night," and the transient population is almost as numerous as the regular in-dwellers. What the attraction can be it is difficult to conceive:

perhaps in winter animal heat in over-crowded rooms may be a cheap substitute for fuel. It is the wild wanderers from town to town, whose blood circulates owing to their unsettled life, who keep up the revels spoken of; their hosts look on apathetically, or, if allowed to participate, moodily drink stupefaction.

The dull prosaic accounts given by policemen and constables of the intellectual and moral character of the inhabitants of this district some years back (and externally there is yet little show of amendment) was more appalling than anything a mere imaginative writer could conceive. Imagination falls short of reality on one hand ("Bill Sparkes could patter flash ten times faster and funnier than that cove," said an *élève* of the flash-house, tossing aside contemptuously one of those novels which attempts to be striking by imitating the language of thieves); and, on the other, there is a liveliness excited by the effort of describing incompatible with the representation of the utter apathy and moral deadness sometimes to be found in men. One gin-shop "was reported, from the multiplicity of business they carried on from six in the morning till church commenced on Sundays; and there have frequently a great many people come out quite intoxicated, not able to stand on their legs." "My opinion is," pursued the witness, "that, if there is a house that sells good spirits, if they go in and have a glass, they make a point of repeating that so often, that in my own mind they become stupefied and intoxicated sooner than they would by sitting down and drinking spirits in a public-house. You seldom find any of these people ask for beer in these houses; when they go into a public-house, they may take a glass and then sit down and have some beer. I have seen a woman myself go a dozen times into one shop, and I am sure that has been within two hours and a half."* These practices were not confined to adults:—"There is a number of *his* lodger's children who go round Russell Square and those places, sweeping the causeways, and I have seen a deal of abandoned conduct of these children. I have come round and heard their conversation one to another; after one of them has got fourpence, the others have been successful and got fourpence more: 'Well,' using a most dreadful expression, 'I will give you a fly for a quatern of gin.' They are children from eight to twelve; I do not think they exceed twelve." Is the reader curious to know who the *he* was whose lodger's children were such precocious adepts in drinking and gambling? He was "street-keeper of Russell Square." Nor was he the only public functionary who made a livelihood out of the vices of the inhabitants: one was mentioned who was the proprietor of no less than three disreputable houses, and clerk in Bedford Chapel.

The truth is, that you cannot touch pitch without being defiled; and this accounts for the peculiar morality of thief-catchers. "Do you think it necessary," was asked of a gentleman of this profession, by a member of the committee which made the report from which we have been quoting, "for respectable police-officers to associate with thieves and bad characters at flash-houses, in order to detect them?" "In the first place," was the sententious reply, "I do not think very

* Some comfortable philosopher says, "There never was a *bad*, but it had a worse;" and this seems to hold true of St. Giles's. Bad though it be, it is nothing to what it was. A magistrate of the county of Middlesex said in 1817:—"In the early part of my life (I remember almost the time which Hogarth has pictured), every house in St. Giles's, whatever else they sold, sold gin; every chandler's shop sold gin: the situation of the people was dreadful. I lived with a relation of mine then who employed a vast number of people, and observed the lower orders then in a terrible state."

respectable officers can long bear to be in the company of *the lower class of thieves*, on account of their conversation and their manners." This was an officer of delicate taste. As the bear-leader in 'She Stoops to Conquer' never allowed his bear to dance except to the "very genteelst of tunes," our hero could only associate with the very genteelst of thieves. Captain Macheath might have been his friend, but Nimming Ned must have in vain aspired to the honour of his acquaintance. This worthy (it was before the days of the new police) admitted that he "did a little in the coal-trade," and that he supplied public-houses. Then "came question like an A B C book:"—"Is that not a temptation for officers to pass over the conduct of certain houses, when they supply those houses with articles of consumption?"—"It is very natural to consider that it must on *all pure minds* be acknowledged that, *generally speaking*, it must be a temptation occasionally to show lenity; at the same time I must speak for myself, that it has given me an opportunity of looking into the houses backwards and forwards, where I have discovered several things that have been useful." One other trait, and we dismiss the subject. Mr. "senior police-officer," as he styled himself, having declared magisterially that "Sunday newspapers have a great tendency to corrupt the minds of the lower classes of society," and having previously stated that he served newspapers, the committee not unnaturally inquired whether he served Sunday newspapers? "Yes, I do; *I am very sorry for it.*"

We would not be misunderstood; every officer of justice does not bear his truncheon in vain, nor become, as Falstaff would say, "little better than one of the wicked." We read, in the same annals of disreputability from which we have been quoting, of a beadle who was so well known, and had so much influence even over the Irish, that he had been seen "leading up the Irishmen, one in one hand and one in another, with a mob of two or three hundred persons around him, and no person attempting to rescue any one from him, though they might do it if they would." The terrible man thus described unconsciously paints himself in one of his answers to the committee:—"There is generally somebody *looking out for my cocked hat* at the chamber-window, and the moment they see *my gold-laced hat*, they shut it up." Gold, like the magnet, operates differently according to the end of the instrument that is turned to the object: gold in the breeches-pocket attracts; gold "all round my hat," as the bard of St. Giles's sweetly sings, repels. But seriously, in St. Giles's, even more than in many other places, the pomp, pride, and circumstance of authority does a great deal. "I have never attempted," said Mr. John Smart in 1817, "to collect the rate but for the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields and St. George's, Bloomsbury, where they will not pay any person but the high constable." There is pride for you! The sturdy burghers of St. Giles's will not condescend to be taxed by deputy; the high constable must come in person and take it himself. It is as if the nobility should refuse to pay their income-tax to a common tax-gatherer, and insist upon the Premier's coming to receive it in person. Nor is this a solitary instance of the airs the denizens of St. Giles's (both in and out of office) give themselves, as witness:—"Samuel Furzeman called in and examined.—What are you? I am constable and *round-house keeper* of St. Giles-in-the-Fields and St. George's, Bloomsbury, the two united parishes." To say nothing of the

solemn specific nature of the description, the retention of the title "round-house keeper," long after a round-house had ceased to exist, reminds one of the Kings of England persisting in calling themselves Kings of France, although for centuries they had not owned a foot of land on the other side of the Channel.

Such are the regions close on either hand of the street which connects High Holborn with Oxford Street—an airy thoroughfare, along which no small portion of the ease and affluence of London is daily rolled in cab, 'bus, or in their own private vehicles, unobservant it may be, or merely remarking how shabby fly-blown provision-shops, old furniture repositories, and marine stores look, but little thinking of the squalid scenes that lurk behind them—in "the back settlements," as they are poetically named by the natives. The main difference between the north and the south sides of the great thoroughfare alluded to consists in this: that in the latter there is still thought, and hope, and exertion, while in the former all these seem dead in the human bodies which move mechanically about amid its pestilential effluvia. Isolated courts and lanes, resembling the Rookery, are found on the south side also, but not in one dense mass: they are broken up and ventilated by the busier streets, where men are still human. The feeblest eddy on the outer edge of the ever-foaming torrent of London life, it may be, with just enough of motion to enable us to distinguish between it and the dull moisture which keeps out the ooze alongshore as torpid as itself, but still there is life in it; and unspeakable is the difference between life, however faint, and utter apathy. In this eddy of Seven Dials is to be found the pilfering instinct of the native of its back-courts not utterly dead, mingling with the rusting honesty of the indolent and unfortunate sinking downward from the industrious classes. There is activity after its kind, as any one may be aware who has threaded Monmouth Street during the hours nearest on either side to noon; for later in the day its busy chaffers reward themselves for their activity by indulgence, and in the morning they crawl about opening their shops as if only half awake. But the incessant crowds of listless hangers-on at the doors of the gin-palaces in Seven Dials show by how thin a partition the anomalously industrious of the place are separated from the hopeless class whose only pleasure is sottishness.

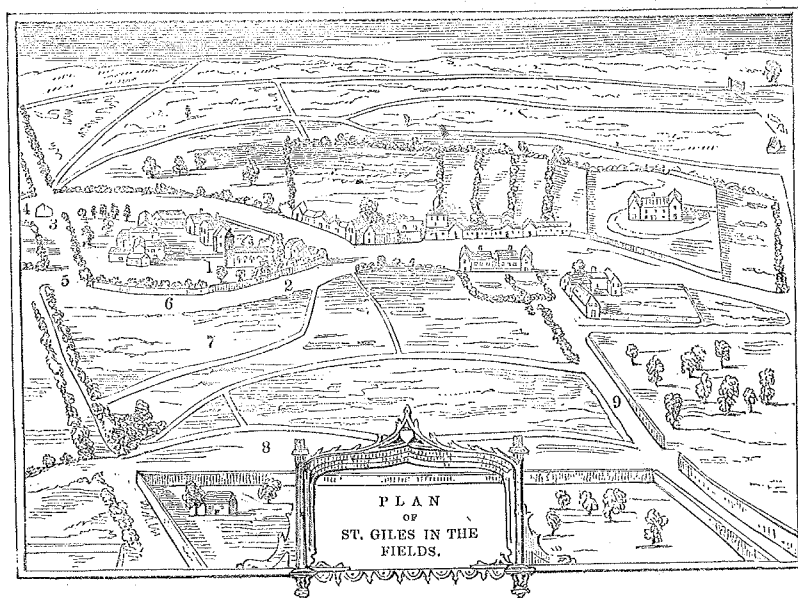
Let us not forget the education of St. Giles's; for however little is done in that sacred cause, the forms of it are now everywhere gone through with most edifying hypocrisy. In Compton Street is a sign-board, "Infants' School," but whether this inscription relates to what is or to what was, it were hard to say. At the lower end of Monmouth Street is a cellar into which a crowd of children are duly packed in the morning to keep them from amongst the horses' feet during the day; and at the upper end of George Street may be seen the firmly-bolted doors of "St. Giles's Irish Schools," confronting the "Catholic School of St. Francis," with its brown and torn hats stuck through the broken panes of glass in its windows. There is here just enough of the appearance of education to remind us that there is such a thing elsewhere, if it should for a moment escape our memory.

And this desolate region lies between the Inns of Court and the two great theatres, extends on one side to the busy traffic of the Strand, on the other to the equally busy traffic of Oxford Street and Holborn, and is separated from the

Court-end of the town only by the equivocal region of Soho and Leicester Squares. One step conveys us from a land of affluence and comfort to a land of hopelessness and squalid want. And what remedy is proposed? Men are beginning to suspect that spacious lines of streets, with rows of stately fronts of houses on each side, in which the decorations of Grecian temples are superinduced upon shops of all kinds, are of little avail, so long as close and noisome lanes and courts are allowed to remain in their rottenness behind, only hidden by these whitened sepulchres; and therefore it is proposed to apply, to "the Rookery" in particular, a more thorough-going cure. A street is to be driven through in a direct line from Oxford Street to Holborn, where the Rookery now stands, sweeping the offensive mass away bodily. As far as the houses merely are concerned, there can be no objection to this; but what is to become of their inhabitants? They have sought shelter there not because they prefer dirty and ill-ventilated abodes, but because there are no others to which they can betake them. Pulling down their old houses about their ears will not provide these miserables with new residences. Is it an amendment of their lot to drive them from their mouldy straw and crumbling roofs to the hard streets without any covering? There is a lamentable ignorance about that self-applauding humanity with which we deck ourselves in this age as with a glittering robe. It is the true counterpart of that of the French princess, who, when told that the people were starving for want of bread, asked why they did not eat buns? It is either that selfish reluctance to contemplate pain, which would assuage the pain of the sufferer so long as he is in view, heedless of the pangs he may endure as soon as he is removed from sight; or it is a dream that, by removing some of the consequences of poverty, the cause itself is removed. To the first class belong those who imagine that lavish poor-laws—abundant doles of alms—are all that is required; to the latter, those who persuade themselves that, by merely enforcing a medical police, improving drainage, opening up close and over-built districts, removing dilapidated buildings—in short, by rendering all parts of our towns and cities fit habitations for those who can afford to pay for comfort, and leaving none of those holes in which the very poor are accustomed to hide their heads—enough is done. Alas! man is not relieved by heaping food, clothing, and shelter upon him, so long as he remains unchanged within—unable to help himself—a pauper in soul! And it seems little likely that Lazarus will cease to be hungry merely because he sees the crumbs he used to pick up swept away and destroyed as they fall from the table.

Let the rich and the powerful lay these things to heart. We pause for a moment ere we quit the scene through which we have led our readers, to look around from this the highest part of it, on which the church is built. Most frequently the lazar refugees of the poor or the dishonest in great cities are to be found in hollows, into which they seem to have run down like the rain-water, carrying all impurities along with them. Here is one planted like a city on a hill, which cannot be hid. And, from the little care taken to amend it, one could almost fancy London was proud of this pimple on her fat smooth citizen visage. "Here lieth," so runs, or ran, a monumental inscription in this cemetery, "Richard Pendrill, Preserver and Conductor of his sacred Majesty King Charles II. of Great Britain, after his escape from Worcester Fight, in the year 1651, who died

February 8, 1671." Surely it was not altogether by accident that the body of this loyal yeoman came to be deposited here. There is a meaning and a moral in the arrangement. A devotional feeling is ennobling, if sincere, however erroneous its attachment. Whatever we may think of Charles, the faith and loyalty of Pendrill was pure. And fitting, therefore, is it that he be held in remembrance; yet the erecting of his monumental trophy amid a living condemnation of those who held the faith that rulers may blamelessly live for themselves, neglecting the discharge of their high functions, as a standing rebuke to all who, seeing honour paid to one who in ignorance served faithfully an undeserving master, seek their own honour by serving those who they know do not deserve it. Or, if the reader think, with Horatio, that it is "to consider too curiously to consider so," he may satisfy himself with the *quodlibet*, that honest Pendrill lies here, amid the living lumber of St. Giles's, like a fine picture by an old master deposited by accident among the rubbish of some of the neighbouring old-furniture shops.



1. The first St. Giles's Church. 2. Remains of the Walls anciently enclosing the Hospital precincts. 3. Site of the Gallows, and afterwards of the Pound. 4. Way to Uxbridge, now Oxford Street. 5. Elde Strate, since called Hog Lane. 6. Le Lane, now Monmouth Street. 7. Site of the Seven Dials, formerly called Cock and Pyc Fields. 8. Elm Close, since called Long Acre. 9. Drury Lane.