

SAINT MONDAY;

Short Loan
Collection

OR,

SCENES

FROM LOW-LIFE:

A POEM

BY GEORGE DAVIS

Birmingham ~~MDCCXC~~
~~MDXXXC~~

TO
SIR BENJAMIN FAULKNER
PUISSANT PUGILIST!

iii

Though JOHNSON does a fame superior bear,
Yet HUMPHREYS and MENDOZA have their share;
At *Banbury* though PERRINS prov'd a cake,
With fear of him, the *Handsworth* people quake;
And many a black eye, and bloody nose,
Have been the consequence of FAULKNER's blows.
Most keen and *striking* arguments are they,
To full conviction opening the way.

If shuffling actions constitute a name,
Thou claim'st distinction in the lists of Fame;
Each weak pretender must before thee fall;
E'en JOHNSON's self shall own thee capital.

Then who, of all ST.MONDAY's num'rous throng
Of devotees, so well deserves the song?
To whom so proper, could my Muse appeal?
Who could do honour to the work so well? —
None doth our well-fill'd horizon enclose,
Upon whose name I could so well repose.

Accept my panegyric, — 'tis your due;
 For you, the most of all I ever knew,
 Have honour'd great ST. MONDAY's noisy cause;
 And gain'd the mob's unbounded, loud applause:
 Auspicious, on my labours, deign to smile,
 And sure success will wait upon my toil.
 Heedless who, in the fight, the dupe or knave is
 Peruse this trifle from your *friend*

GEORGE DAVIS

PREFACE

To those who chiefly sway the common mind,
 Entirely my relation is confin'd.

Anecdotes from low-life I relate.
 Yet, let not wealth, with splendour though alli'd,
 The humble subject of my verse deride;

[continued on p. vi, photocopy of printed version]

For low-life's paths, though menial they may be,
Have oft been trod by greater *Bards* than *me*:
In vulgar haunts did *CHURCHILL* spend his life,
And *PRIOR*'s *CHLOE* was—a *butcher's wife*.

First should the Muse, with elegance of stile,
Describe how *Sol* renews his daily toil;—
How (whilst, luxuriance wafting, Zephyrs play,)
Birds chaunt their anthems to the rising day;—
And how reviving vegetation's bloom,
The morning hails with Nature's best perfume:
But, hating ornaments so over-worn,
Suppose it *MONDAY*'s celebrated morn.

The *SCHOOL-BOY* now, for lesson unprepar'd,
Is, with the fear of flagelation, scar'd;
His task's unstudi'd, and the truant elf
A party forms, with others like himself;
Far from the precincts of the School to trip,
To rob an orchard, or a bird's-nest strip:
Or, with whatever sport may meet their way,
By means far wide of study spend the day.

Bus'ness on Monday being thus expell'd
Their thoughts in early life, and play instill'd;
More undisguis'd the same desire appears,
As the boy rises to maturer years.

His future progress let us now review;
And, as truth urges, give each deed it's due.

Preface - subject to be the scenes "Which chiefly away the common mind,"
- "anecdotes from low-life I relate."
- "Entirely my relation is 'Jargon'd'."

To those
Yes, but not wealth, with splendour though allid,
The humble subject of my verse denote.

SAINT MONDAY, &c.

FAR from the dazzling lustre of those scenes,
Where, lov'd by all, the fam'd Augustus reigns;
Where, from all parts, the good and great resort,
To view the splendour of Old Albion's court;—
From humbler situation will I rouse
The punctual guidance of a faithful Muse.
CLIO!—be thou the guardian of my lyre!
Historic truth is all that I require;—
And thou too, jolly BACCHUS! prince of sots!
Who dost preside o'er jugs and pewter pots,
As well as over the nectarious vine,
Grant thy assistance, for the cause is thine;—
Conduct my goose-quill, while I strive to paint
The vot'ries of my titular *Saint*.
For people of all ranks, at times, obey
The festive orgies* of this jocund day.

When, in due course, SAINT MONDAY wakes
the day,
Off to a *Purl-house* straight they haste away;
Or, at a *Gin-shop*, ruin's beaten road,
Offer libations to the tippling God:

* *Orgies*,—feasts of BACCHUS.

And, whilst the gen'rous liquor damps their clay
Form various plans for saunt'ring out the day.

If sickness racks the stomach and the brain,
The morning glass, sometimes, dispels the pain:
When accidents like this do come to pass,
I own—I've no objection to a glass.
But, when dram-drinking, bold and unreserv'd,
Each morning regularly is observ'd,
Becoming—habit irresistible,
I think the custom reprehensible,
That which, well-us'd, might serviceable be,
Grows useless by familiarity.

Perhaps at work they transitory peep,
But *vice* and *lathe* are soon consign'd to sleep;
The shop is left untenanted awhile,
And a cessation is proclaim'd from toil.

Yet not inactive, wholly, wears away
The copious remnant of the sportive day:
A *club-feast dinner* p'rhaps may intervene,
And step betwixt the tradesman and the spleen.
Here smoaking surloins deck the festive board,
And ev'ry cup with liquor is well stor'd;
Care hence is banish'd, and each sense of pain
Flies from the charms of *cut and come again*.
Harmonious awhile the moments pass,
And Friendship circulates the social glass;

Till, mad with liquor, and Reflection gone,
Loud Tumult claims the moment as his own;
Wide-spreading Chaos and Confusion rule,
Mad Uproar reigns, and Discord sways the whole.

In other parts, behold the sob'rer sort
Seek, in some *Marble-alley*, diff'rent sport;
And whilst, in rural scenes, th' unpolish'd clown,
At skittles, *tips the ruck*, as day goes down,—
The town blades truckle to the boyish play,
And, at the magic circle, plump away.

Hail, happy Childhood!—thee I still revere,
For faithful memory still paints thee fair;
Full oft with thee I've spent the thoughtless day
And, from my play-mates, borne the palm away;
And, careless of poetical renown,
Shouted—*backs-at-'em!*—as I knuckled down.

Both *Quoits* and *Five-balls* have undoubted claims
To rank the foremost of athletic games:
From the professors weaknesses recoil;
The nerves they brace, and fit a man for toil.

The setting Sun now paints the Western sky,
The clouds of darkness croud upon the eye;
All Nature fades to ev'ry human sense,
And humid mists succeed to heats intense:
'Tis, in plain English, night; and now they run,
Through various paths, to seek new source of fun.

B

To PLAY-HOUSE some, in Gallery or Pit
To croud the House—for *SUET*'s benefit.
Thro' all the comic scenes which Shakespere dre
And all the other Poets, old and new,
The humourist sure approbation draws,
And thund'ring *Gods** re-echo their applause.

But those who know the *Beings* may aver,—
That *Gods* like these are liable to err;
Each *Deity*'s sublimest pleasure lies
In giving way to uproar, shouts, and noise.
Oft, when a brilliant thought is being spoke,
Before they've got half way into the joke,
A loud horse-laugh or clap will intervene,
Destroying all the beauty of the scene:
Yet will they, with united voice, *encore*
The very song they would not hear before.

But, strange to tell, (nay, wonderfully so,)
The case will speedily be alter'd now:
A set of *OP'RA-SINGERS* now appear,
With foreign airs to charm the public ear;
To introduce refinement to the town,
And make the winter nights go tuneful down.
Sure *Gods* will, now, with more composure sit,
Nor mar each *quaver* with their awkward wit.

But those who have no relish in such things,
And feel no pleasure in the death of kings,

* A common Epithet for the *Gallery* part of the Audience



In *Romeo's* sighs, or tyrant *Richard's* rage,
 Or all the warbling syrens of the stage,—
 Seek for some ale-house fire-side to enjoy
 A pint or two, and sullen Care defy.
 Awhile—the weather is convers'd upon,
 Then—more important converse is begun;
 The state of Europe now assails the ear,
 The grand fleet's sailing, or the Spanish war.
 But soon their wives invade e'en this retreat,
 Settle the question, and unman the fleet;
 Pour in their *broadsides* with terrific din,
 And carry all before them, thick and thin.

—Doubtless you know the *Fox* in *Castle-street*;—
 There all the scum of the creation meet;
 For days together at the liquor stick,
 And keep *St. Monday* up for a whole week.
Hawkers and *Ballad-singers* here repair,
 Sworn foes to dull sobriety and care;
 And, yielding to tumultuous noise the sway,
 Guzzle an hundred gallons in a day.

All must have heard, and some have surely seen—
 A set of *Spouters* at their midnight scene.
 Here—the fair sem'stress as an actress moves;
 Like sad *Calista* weeps, like *Juliet* loves:
 And, tort'ring with theatric rage each joint,
 Changes the needle's for the dagger's point.

'Blow winds, and burst your cheeks!'—for mad
 brain'd *Lear*,
 Doth, in a *buckle-cutter's* form appear:
 In a shape similar see *Richard* comes,
 Without the noise of trumpets or of drums;
 At night, from *tickling buckles* all the day,
 His 'soul's in arms, and eager for the fray'.
 Behold *Macbeth*, with wild, distracted stare,
 Grasps at the fanci'd dagger in the air:
 See *Norval* from the *Grampion-hills* arrives;
 Though from a Northern clime he birth derives,
 A colour full as dismal he may boast,
 As if he'd come from *Afric's* dusky coast.
 Tann'd by the smoke of furnaces and stoves,
 He like the Scottish hero speaks and moves.
 Others, with insignificance of look
 And vacant phiz, speak prologues *out o' book*.
 Their tones, which, with variety, should strike,
 Are like a set of buttons,—all alike:
 And, 'stead of gliding pleasing from the tongue,
 Drag in a vile monotony along.
 Whenever youths like these think fit to rave,
 Though it's in pastime, yet I like to have,—
 Not actions of a dull, insipid cast,
 Or madly ranting into wild bombast;
 But—such as are adherent to the part,
 Spring from the head, and play before the heart.

Yet, 'ere they in the walk dramatic tread,
 Before they speak, first let them learn to read;
 First let them learn each letter's sound to know,
 And get, more perfectly, the *criss-cross-row*.
 For, often, I've heard youths pretend to *spout*,
 Who scarcely knew *great A* from a *bull's foot*.

The *Riding-school*, though almost out of use,
 Must not be quite forgotten by the Muse;
 There *horse* and *foot* did motley pow'rs unite,
 To give a scanty audience delight:
 E'en *grooms* and *ostlers* urg'd their best behaviour,
 And stood as candidates for public favour.

Among the rest, the drama to disgrace,
Carry and *Kean** brought second-hand grimace.
 Players themselves, I own, sometimes impart
 Good wholesome precepts to the human heart:
 Yet recollect what *GARRICK* was, and soon
 You'll find *HIM* dwindle to a mere *buffoon*.
 Then what must these be, who, with mimic airs,
 Presume to ridicule the best of play'rs?—
 Shadows of shadows!—why did *SWANN*† engage
 The very dirt and sweepings of the stage?
 E'en *jugglers*, ‡ big with expectation, ran
 Certain to get engagements with *TOM SWANN*.

* Two Theatrical Imitators. † The *quondam* Manager.
 ‡ Alluding to *Monsieur BOUVELARDE*, a juggler; who was
 engaged several nights by Mr. *SWANN*.

How was the eye of delicacy shock'd,
 And feminine decorum grossly mock'd,
 By seeing women, dress'd in men's attire,
 Vaulting on ropes, or dancing on the wire!—
 Where was the graceful dignity and love,*
 Which deck'd old Mother *EVE* in Eden's grove?
 'Tis fled from Earth, to some celestial region,
 And shuns her daughters, like a vile contagion.
 But hush'd be satire, life's last gasp is o'er,
 And *RICCARDINI*† vaults the rope no more:
 Now the loud uproar sleeps in peace, and now,
 No more *JOHANNOT* chants the loud *bow-wow*.‡

Spite of the consequence they did assume,
 The whole clan now have left the spacious dome
 Again to stroll, a scanty bread to earn,
 The ragged tenants of some cast-off barn;
 Again, with terror sweating at each pore,
 Must trembling cringe to ev'ry *thing* in pow'r.

Even the School may change of fortune bear;
 In time, the fate of *King-street play-house* share:
 Long-visag'd *saints* will there by dozens swarm,
 With holy groans, all *Liv'ry-street* t' alarm.

* 'Grace was in all her steps,—Heaven in her eye,—
 'In every gesture, dignity and love.' *MILTON*

† A celebrated *Rope-dancer*.

‡ *JOHANNOT*,—a comic dramatic performer, whose favour-
 able song was well-known by the title of—*The new bow-wow*.

Now—passing o'er the residence of peace,
 Where tradesmen club their two-pences a-piece,
 To spend an hour like reasonable men,
 And soberly retire to bed at ten.—
 Let us resort those joyous scenes among,
 Where, *free and easy*, meet the gay and young,
 If properly conducted, they impart
 A welcome relaxation to the heart;
 All avaricious motives here subside,
 Unbounded mirth and merriment preside;
 Here, the full-mantling tankard smiles divine,—
 There, the charg'd goblet sparkles high with wine;
 Fun and good-humour in high glee are found;
 And *song* and *sentiment* by turns go round.

By right, some jolly *Epicure* is, here,
 Appointed by the rest—to fill the chair;—
 To keep good order,—to observe that all
 Pay strict attention to the *toast* or *call*:—
 Sing the first song himself,—and sing for such
 As are, themselves, incapable;—drink much;—
 Yet never, by intoxication, be
 Render'd a nuisance to the company:
 If social conversation should prevail,
 And that, in point of entertainment, fail,—
 Fill up the void, with some smart repartee
 Or brief anecdote,—pointed let them be.
 A man in whom these qualities unite,
 Would well conduct the bus'ness of the night;

? next?

Each breast would be the residence of joy,
 And life's dull hours pass comfortably by.
 But those who often visit such a place,
 Must know that this but seldom is the case.

'Tis in convivial parties such as these,
 Youth's budding vices ripen by degrees;
 And being taught, in early life, to blow,
 By swift gradations to perfection grow.
 Amidst these scenes, while reason is expell'd,
 Are precepts of debauchery instill'd.
 Oft have I seen a 'prentice fill the chair,
 And knock down silence with a vet'ran's air;
 With brandish'd hammer regulate the throng.
 To due observance of the *toast* and *song*.
 'Tis here he learns licentiousness;—'tis here
 He's taught to drink pint-bumpers, and to swear
 To smoke,—to circulate the jest impure;—
 And, if a female servant ope the door
 Obedient to the bell,—that which was veil'd
 Before, in coarsest language is reveal'd.
 The curb of reason now the boy disdains,
 And lawless profligacy takes the reins:
 Now ripe for sport, each calm reflection gone,
 He sallies out, to seek—what he calls *fun*:
 First, with an holly-stick, a lamp is broke,
 To shew his taste, and prove himself a *buck*;
 And, if a *Watch-man* interrupt the deed,
 He beats him, if he can;—then flies, with speed,

By mad intoxication led away,
In a vile brothel to complete the day.

Here,—in her tawdry garb, most *filthy fine*,—
The sad remains of beauty dimly shine.
Here—the same girl, who, shook with terror, ran,
T' avoid the touch of that *vile creature*—*MAN*—
Feels that shy, backward bashfulness no more,
But courts th' embrace of him she shun'd before.

But, 'ere we rush, too far, upon this scene,
Let Decency her curtain drop between.

MARIA,—witty, elegant, and fair,—
Was rear'd beneath a haughty father's care:
The rose's blush did either cheek adorn;—
Her eye, the gem;—her breath, *May's* perfum'd
morn:—

And all the graceful nicities combin'd
That form th' accomplish'd fair-one. In her mind,
In early youth, fair Virtue took her seat;
And—her fine form was elegance complete.

As beauty ripen'd with encrease of years,
Flatt'ry, foul imp! from all assail'd her ears.
From *SEDLBY*'s tongue it formidable came,
Till fond *MARIA* doated on his name.
Soon did she all her loveliness forget;
In early life was—a complete coquette:

With wanton air, and loose, unbridled tongue,
She thought herself too perfect to do wrong.
On *SEDLBY*'s mild deportment,—artful wiles,—
His polish'd conduct, (prefac'd still with smiles,)—
She doated, with a constancy sincere,
And held his fond remembrance ever dear:
E'en to destruction lov'd; and, sad to tell,
She soon—the victim of *Seduction* fell.
The harshness of her father shut the door
Of chaste repentance, 'gainst the fair Impure.
Still on she rush'd, deceiving and deceiv'd,
Till Fame was sunk too low to be retriev'd.

Short was the transport, lasting was the pain,
That rent her heart and madden'd all her brain,
To rapid ruin did she haste away,
The wretched subject of a swift decay.

From hence, ye fair-ones! early learn to shun
A path, by which so many are undone:
For Modesty, most surely, will impart
Love's delicate emotion to the heart.
Full oft, too oft, the giddy, thoughtless fair,
Of self-perfection, too presumptuous are,

THE P O S C R I P T.

HERE, fully to make out my *bill of fare*,
Behold my Poem's *Epilogue* appear;
In which, with candour, 'tis my wish to seek—
Th' effect produc'd by MONDAY—thro' the week.

Tuesday, the School-boy, palsi'd o'er with fears,
Before his frowning *Pedagogue* appears.
In consequence array'd, the pedant sage,
The culprit views:—*superlative* in rage,
Threats and reproofs he plenteous does dispense;
Till *flagellation* is the consequence.

Teiz'd with the head-ache, the mechanic grouse,
On Tuesday morning, seek the greasy shop;
And, if *dead-horse* be not yet clear'd away,
But hangs on hand,—how heavy wears the day!—
Their pockets empty, and their cupboards too,
Their wardrobe goes (not knowing what to do,
By hunger urg'd, and deeply sunk in hope,)
To where grim Ruin keeps a retail shop;
Till all life's necessities oft are gone
To pledge for food—at FULLER'S *two-to-one*.
At night, though pinch'd by poverty's sad smart,
Each *straps* a pint or two to cheer his heart.
Wednesday arrives; but with no better sport:
Thursday a summons brings from *Conscience's court*.

* A PAWNBROKER'S SHOP.

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Friday the hearings, dreadful hearings, come
Before the *Bench* at the *Red-lion room*.
Thus, as the week wears out by sad degrees,
Roast-beef and pudding yield to bread and cheese;
Strong ALE, to meagre *Taplash* yields the sway,
And *Harry's box'd* by all — on Saturday.
Ah, des'prate *Taplash*! — keep far off: I vow —
E'en thy appearance sickens me, for thou
The younger brother art, of better stuff;
And like most younger brothers,— poor enough.

At length glad *reck'ning time* is forward brought
With *tripe*, *cow-heels*, and *greaty pudding* fraught.
Roast-beef, in gravy swimming, decks the scene,
And ALE, — strong ALE, — in tankards foams again.

Hail, potent ALE! — all men revere thy pow'rs:
Thou kind refresher of dull evening's hours! —
E'en *Bards* thy influence benign confess,

Whene'er thou deign'st their solitudes to bless:
Inspir'd by thee, their thoughts emboldened soar

To scenes unknown and paths untrod before.
Let but one glass the drooping spirits cheers,
Soon will the sprightly EPIGRAM appear;
Another bumper draw from its abode,
And straight the *Epigram* becomes an *Ode*:
Still deeper, drink, – still lower, care depress, –
And, with SAINT MONDAY, teems the burthen'd press.

THE END

['box Harry': to do without a meal, f. c. 1820:

Eric Partridge, *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*
(London, 1961; 1984)]

N. 113.—GEORGE DAVIS, A BIRMINGHAM POET.—I find in the *Christian Miscellany*, Vol. III., for 1848, p. 339, November No., the following notice of the above-named person. Can any reader of "Notes and Queries" give further information respecting him?—"Born in Wood Street, Birmingham, about 1768, of parents 'miserably poor,' and unable to give him 'even the rudiments of education,' but at ten years of age some respectable individual, who discovered in George a precocity of genius and some striking indications of talent, succeeded in placing him in the Free Grammar School, in New Street, where he found ample scope for the cultivation of his intellect. Left school at age of fourteen, and went apprentice to Swinney of the *Birmingham and Stafford Chronicle*, to learn the art of printing, and made rapid progress in his business, and occasionally contributed pieces of poetry to the paper, which were much admired. His mother died while he was apprentice, and his father about the close of his time. His marriage, fixed on at twenty-four, and day appointed, but 'the object of his early attachment was suddenly attacked by a fatal disease then prevalent (1792) in the town,' and she was buried on the day fixed upon for their marriage; after which he became dissipated and grasped with avidity the intoxicating cup which was to drown his melancholy reflections," till no one would employ him, in consequence of a growing lassitude that had imperceptibly enervated his mental energies; but he "was enabled by the fresh invocations of his Muse, to realise considerable pecuniary benefit." He wrote much, and most of his pieces were characterised by loftiness of thought and purity of language; so that in a short time his reputation as a poet became established in his native town. "Studied at last in the fields, and sold his poetry in public-houses. Died in the Workhouse, in the winter of 1819," in his fifty-first year, and was buried at St. Philip's.

G. J. A.

N. 123.—GEORGE DAVIS.—On looking over the "Local Notes and Queries," I find that further information is requested of the late George Davis, a Birmingham Poet. He was an acquaintance of mine, and

I attended his funeral in the year 1819. He was borne to his last resting place, at St. Philip's, by poor tottering old men from the workhouse, who seemed to have a firm belief that their turn was not far distant. He had an elevated tone in his poetic effusions, and was sought by many on account of his great talents, and one can only drop a tear over the infirmities of our common nature when we think that a man so gifted as he, and who might have attained to a higher position, was brought by his unfortunate propensity (which you describe) first to the workhouse, and then to an early grave. His playful writings at times were both interesting and amusing. As a man, he was of genial disposition, kind hearted, and one could never be in his society without feeling both pleasure and instruction on account of his great diversity of talent.

J. A.