

# THE GROTESQUE REMOVAL LAWS.

## A TALE OF TO-DAY:

BY MR. H. R. G. GOGAY, GUARDIAN OF ST.  
SAVIOUR'S UNION.

The chimes of St. John the Divine were striking midnight when a man, tired of foot, and weary of mind, knocked at the door of No. 13, Brighthope Street, Sobertown, Hanwellshire. The door was soon opened by a woman whose eyes, and the eager, expectant look upon her features, asked the question her tongue felt incapable of uttering, for her lips moved not.

"No, lass; no luck!" replied the man to his wife's dumb query.

The man was a well-built, bright,

### INTELLIGENT-LOOKING FELLOW,

about thirty. His wife called him, "Jack, dear"; his children spoke of him as "Dad"; his neighbours termed him, "John, the Wheelwright." So, for the purposes of this story, we will call him John Wheelwright. It matters not, to any person, what his real name was, for he has now passed away into the land of shadows.

"Then Mr. Blank couldn't take you on, Jack, dear?" asked his wife, as soon as they were seated in their clean and—yes!—cosy little kitchen.

"No, Lillie; it seems a relative from Australia is coming back, and will arrive the day after to-morrow, so Mr. Blank is reserving the crib for him. Hard lines, old girl, isn't it?" queried her husband.

Lillie again looked the answer she felt unable to make.

At half-past seven, next morning, the postman's rat-tat was answerable for two things. It made Mrs. Jack start, and drop the plate she was about to put upon the breakfast-table. Jack Wheelwright was soon opening the letter which contained good and welcome news. It was an offer from an old playmate, in the same line of business, for Jack to take a foreman's berth at Helpall, in Northshire, nearly 280 miles away from Sobertown. As may be imagined, he and his wife lost no time in settling their affairs for their departure, the day of which soon arrived.

On a beautiful autumn evening, Jack and his family reached Helpall. He was welcomed most cordially by his quondam friend and playmate, and on the morrow duly

### INSTALLED IN HIS POSITION

as foreman. The business was a thriving one, and the position was a lucrative one to Jack, who, like a thrifty individual, lost no opportunity in saving all he could.

But, save his money as he might in Helpall, he was fast losing what the Poor Laws called his "settlement" in Sobertown, which he eventually did. Jack was never conscious of this; nor, indeed, poor fellow, did he ever realise his loss. Indeed, he never knew what a "settlement" was,

nor probably do a great many more Jacks. However, his wife and little ones felt the effects of this "loss" as we shall presently see.

Jack prospered as all men do, or should, who work hard and live right. His friend and employer, about two years after Jack's engagement, contracted cancer, and, in spite of the surgeon's skill, was informed his death was only a question of a few weeks. Having no relations, he left Jack the business, and a sufficiency of ready cash; the rest he left to various charities, most of which, alas! benefited the officials more than those it was intended for.

Presumably, he had never heard of the Darkest England Scheme, for, being in his right mind, it is more than probable he would have left his fortune for its development.

This Scheme is doing what

### **THE POOR LAWS WERE INTENDED TO DO,**

but what they have never done nor ever will, administered as they have been, and are, and probably will be, by the official sharks, who shamelessly swallow three-fifths of the now eleven millions which the ratepayers have to pay for the "administration" of these "laws"! This is a digression which I hope my readers will pardon.

Jack and his wife thrived, and what is of more importance, were happy in thriving. Trouble, however, was soon coming to this worthy pair in the shape of a brother of Jack's. This individual was the managing clerk of a firm of "outside" stockbrokers; entering the office as office-lad, he had worked himself up to his present position by his industry and ability. Hearing from his brother of his good fortune, and being saturated with the spirit of the rotten commercialism in which he daily mixed, he thought it a good opportunity to make his own and his brother's fortune by a large purchase of the Clear-'em-all-out and Gobble-'em-all-up Mining Company.

"Everyone in 'the know' says they must go up cent. per cent.," said he to his brother, who, hesitating at first, was lost at last.

The bait took. The unholy desire to grow speedily rich without labour took possession of his mind, and left him no rest, night or day. All his ready money in the bank, and every farthing he could raise by mortgage on his property and his business, went into the insatiable maws of a few

### **JABEZ SPENCER BALFOURS.**

Lo! the shares, instead of rising at the appointed time, fell down so low as to be almost out of sight. This happened just three years and two weeks after Jack came to Helpall. The disappointment proved too much for Jack, who took to drink, and drink soon took him, for, failing in his payments to his creditors, he was soon left without house or home.

*(To be continued.)*



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### CHAPTER II.—"THE JOLLY WAGONERS."

"Jack, don't go to-night!" pleaded his wife; "if they are in earnest," continued she, "in desiring to give you 'a fresh start,' not one of your friends will like to see you running into temptation; for, Jack dear, you cannot attend the meeting at the 'Wagoners' without drinking; and you know what you promised me, Jack—me, and the children," and at the mention of the children, the slightest suspicion of a tear might have been discerned glistening in the corner of one of Mrs. Jack's eyes.

"But, Lil," answered her husband, "it is necessary I should be at this concert; it has been got up for our benefit, and if I am there to meet 'em, there will probably be a 'bigger plate'—that is, there will be more money for my Lil. Eh?" queried Jack.

But his wife shook her head. "If your so-called friends, Jack, want to give you 'a fresh start,' why couldn't they have given you the money here, at your house, away from the hateful 'Wagoners,' which, as much almost as anything, has contributed to our miserable state?"

"Never fear, old girl; I'll come back all right, with the money, too, that'll take us back to Sobertown."

Those of my readers who, at some period of their lives, have visited a country town, and very few people have not, will know "The Jolly Wagoners." This hostelry stands in a central part of the town, mostly in the market-place. It was in "The Jolly Wagoners," Market Place, Helpall, that "a friendly lead, for the benefit of Jack Wheelwright and family, recently ruined by unfortunate speculation in the Clear-'em-all-out and Gobble-'em-all-up Mining Company"—so ran the invitation card—was taking place to-night.

Let us go inside! Can we see Jack? Yes; at the table beside the chairman, who is a big, burly, prosperous-looking cheesemonger, surrounded by many brother-tradesmen and others, who had come to give poor Jack "a fresh start." It is near eleven. The ribaldry and nonsense which the singers called "songs" were at their height. A large sum, by this time, had been spent in drinks and cigars, which would have been more useful to Jack and his family than to mine host of "The Jolly Wagoners." But your average Briton can do nothing without either eating or drinking. Let us go! We have had enough of the stupid "harmony," the smoke and the drinks. Let us seek the fresh air, but before we go, look at Jack! Poor Jack! Poor indeed! Poor in pocket, in heart, in will! A glance suffices to show us he is drunk. Who is this we meet as we pass out? Not Mrs. Jack? We look again. Yes; it is Lillie, with her youngest-born, wrapped in an old shawl, pressed closely to her, as if she wished her baby—Jack's baby—to remain uncontaminated by the sounds which came from the smoke-room within. What can surpass the devotion of a pure and good woman to the man of her choice? Next to her baby, he comes first in every relation of life. And this service is given freely and without apparent effort, often in suffering, mental and bodily. Mrs. Jack had come to see her husband home, for, womanlike, she divined the condition Jack would be in at the ending of the concert, and had come to take care of him and the proceeds of "the friendly lead."

"Well, lass, it won't happen again," pleaded her husband next morning; "we've got £35 and we'll toddle back to Sobertown, and try our luck there. We shall be near the old folks, and our other relations who, if poor themselves, may, if not in money, render us services valuable in themselves, but which we cannot ask of strangers."

### A BITTER MARCH NIGHT.

March had come in like a lion that year, and it was acting very much like an infuriated beast of that name in Sobertown, when Jack and his family returned to their native town very late in the evening. For, be it remembered, Helpall was 280 miles away. Jack was poor when he left Sobertown; he was poorer still now. Alas! we should have to say it! Poor in spirit, pocket and will, self-respect and manhood; he was still poorer—he had lost his "settlement." But Jack was not conscious of this part of his misfortunes. He had never thought of the Poor Laws. Poor Laws were not for such as he when he lived in Sobertown. To

hint to Jack that he should seek the tender mercies of the stone-yard to obtain the necessities of life for his wife and children would probably have obtained for his interrogator a settlement in the gutter.

"Well, Lil," Old Grampus has promised to take me on next week; so we shall yet do well, old girl."

"Ah, Jack, if you would only leave the drink—the cursed drink—alone, and be your old dear self! Where was there a better, kinder, the dearest of dear old Jacks?" throwing her arms around her husband's neck, said his wife, "before you took to the drink to drown your thoughts as you said? What did it matter, dear, that you had lost the money, you still had your health and strength to work for us? Promise me, Jack, you will put your trust in God and touch the drink no more, Jack, for my sake, for your own sake, for the sake of the children," and poor Mrs. Jack broke down here and would have fallen to the ground in a fit of hysterical sobbing had not her husband's arms supported her.

Jack was almost unmanned. It flashed across his mind that he had been utterly selfish in his grief at his ruin; that his noble wife had had to bear a double load of sorrow.

*(To be continued.)*



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"But soon a loud and hasty summons calls,  
Shakes the thin roof, and echoes round the walls;  
Anon, a figure enters, quaintly neat,  
All pride and business, bustle and conceit."

—Crabbe.

### CHAPTER III.—DR. POMPUSNOAWL—THE RE- MOVAL "LAWS" IN ACTION:

"I am afraid, my dear Mrs. Wheelwright, we must prepare ourselves for the worst; of course, Nature, you know, my dear madam, is a funny thing—a very funny thing is Nature! When medical men have done their very best for a patient, used for him all the resources of their skill and the contents of the dispensary—when, I say, my dear madam, we have done all this and much more, and when our patient, in spite of treatment, drugs and theory, has pulled through, really, in such a case, and we have many such, it is incumbent upon me to repeat that Nature is—a very—funny—thing."

"Then, doctor, you give some hope?"

"On the contrary, my dear madam, your husband, most probably, will not live through the night; but then, you see, Nature does play us such awkward tricks that really, you know, one does not like—well, upon my word, my dear Mrs. Wheelwright, I must, indeed, now take my leave. Follow all my directions, give him his physic regularly, and we may pull him through; but it is very, very doubtful."

Dr. Pompusnoawl was a very tall, thin and learned individual; in addition to his professional qualifications, he could add to them Dr. Pangloss's suffixes, viz., LL.D. and A.S.S. In his private capacity, he was a pleasant companion and a good friend; but in his professional, he was a true medico.

The doctor's opinion, as may be imagined, set up in poor Mrs. Wheelwright's mind a whirlwind of doubt and hope, fear and uncertainty. Just what the worthy man intended, for not knowing how the case might turn out, he had, by his "opinion," placed himself upon the fence, ready to drop down on whichever side his "opinion" should tally with.

Grief, disappointment and drink had worked their will upon poor Jack. He was dying. The path to the grave was not smoothed by the reflection that he was leaving his noble-hearted wife penniless.

Alas! Jack, it might not have been thus with you, had you resisted the voice of the tempter, crushed out with your manly strength the unholy and wicked aspirations for attaining to riches that you could never earn, and to obtain which by such means is nothing but legalised robbery! And when your ruin, as you termed it, had come upon you, had you made the best use of the strength and skill which God had so bountifully bestowed upon you, instead of wrecking your mind and body and endangering your soul with drink to drown your thoughts, you might be now standing between a cruel world and your devoted wife and your little ones, too.

Of what avail, oh, Jack! is the drink to you now, lying there, awaiting the dread summons of death? Does it drown your thoughts now? Do they not crowd upon your memory, coming and going incessantly, in spite of yourself; and the drink which "drowned" them once is now powerless? Has it not, in fact, increased the sum total of your "thoughts"?

However, if drink had no effect in calming the

storm of regrets in poor Jack's mind, something else had. Somebody was reading by his bedside: "And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

"Learn to live in peace and love,  
Like the perfect ones above;  
Learn to die without a fear,  
Feeling Thee, my Father, near."

"I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, from henceforth, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours."

An uncontrollable burst of grief on the part of Mrs. Wheelwright announced here that Jack had obeyed the dread summons. Poor Jack was dead!

His noble wife lay for many weeks betwixt life and death. The strain of the past two years had been too much even for her. She slowly recovered, and was now face to face with a stern and cruel world.

It is necessary here we should understand how it was that Jack lost what the Poor Laws called his settlement in Sobertown. It will be remembered, he left Sobertown to better his position in Helpall. Was away three years and a few months. Having thus lived in Helpall three years, he gained a settlement in that place, and lost his settlement in Sobertown where he was born, and where he had lived for so many years. Returning to Sobertown, and living there again for a complete year, he had gained "a status of irremovability," the value of this we shall see presently. The widow, be it remembered, always takes her husband's settlement. So, for Poor Law purposes, Jack's settlement was his wife's.

Jack's funeral and sickness expenses, and her own illness left Mrs. Wheelwright nearly penniless, and almost homeless. It was necessary she should do something now to support herself and her children.

Oh, ye learned, parliamentary individuals who talk and talk and talk till the very benches creak and groan with the infliction, why is it ye do not make the home, with its holy and blessed influences, inalienable? Why is it when any man dies, his widow and children are soon, in thousands of instances, homeless, or possessing only a miserable fragment of what was once "the home"?

Would this be so if the people were encouraged to be thrifty throughout life by Government's guaranteeing them their savings whether in their dwelling-house or home, or in any other provision against death or sickness or old age?

Mrs. Wheelwright, hearing of a caretaker's position in Goodville, a suburb of Sobertown, accepted the situation. By removing into Goodville, Mrs. Wheelwright had lost her late husband's "status of irremovability" in Sobertown. This, however, she was quite ignorant of. Poor people are expected to be as learned in the Poor Laws as the lawyers themselves.

*(To be continued.)*



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But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment, and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.—LUKE xi., 42.

### CHAPTER IV.—THE REV. A. A. N. TORKAN- NODO, M.A. — RELIEVING-OFFICER SCARA- MOUCH—POOR LAWS IN ACTION.

"I am sorry to hear this, Lillie, because from what I heard from Mrs. Butler, the situation would have been a permanent one."

"I am sorry, too, father," replied Mrs. Wheelwright, "but I have not the strength to continue the work. There is a deal of cleaning to be done every day, and the stairs try me very much. You know it is a four-storey building."

"Well, Lillie," replied Mr. Blank, "what do you propose doing?"

"I thought, father, if you could help me to purchase a machine, I might do something with the mantle work again. I am sure Newtons would give me the work again! Before I married poor Jack, as you know, I worked for them, and they were always satisfied with me."

"Well, Lillie, my dear, I'll see what I can spare you; you know it is not much I have. But, perhaps, some of our friends will help also?"

The shock of her husband's death, and her previous trials, had left Mrs. Wheelwright shorn of much of her former physical strength; her will power, however, was as strong as ever.

She was obliged to give up her situation as caretaker and office-cleaner, and go back to her former employment of mantle work.

Her father, with the help of some of the family, got her the machine, and, applying to Messrs. Newton's, her old firm, she was taken on. The hard and heavy nature of the work soon began to tell upon poor Mrs. Wheelwright's enfeebled frame. She became very debilitated, and had a bad attack of bronchitis.

At this juncture, to increase her troubles, her father died, thus leaving her with no relatives but some cousins, who were not disposed, being the way of the world, to be too generously-inclined towards the widow and the fatherless.

When Jack and his wife removed to Helpall, they left behind them a favourite grandchild of Mrs. Jack's father. This little fellow, named Albert, remaining behind, did not lose his settlement in Sobertown as the other members of the family did. The effect of this will be seen by-and-by.

Mr. Blank only possessed a small pension from his old firm—a very rare proceeding on the part of commercial men—which, of course, died with him, so that, after his debts and funeral expenses were paid, very little, indeed, was left for his daughter. As she had not been able to earn anything for some time, and having now another child to keep, Mrs. Wheelwright did what she had never done before, went to the clergyman of the parish, and begged assistance.

The Rev. Adolphus Alexander Nonus Torkandnodo, Master of Arts, Vicar of St. Love, Mercy and Charity, was not in when Mrs. Wheelwright called, but she left her name and address, the servant stating when he came in he would call round and see her. He was not only a very Godlike man, the servant stated, but a very charitable one also. It was not charity, Mrs. Wheelwright explained, that she wanted, but assistance in obtaining some light needlework.

"That will be all right!" answered the servant; "the vicar knows lots of ladies who give out such work."

A sweet and gentle knock next morning announced the Rev. Adolphus. The Vicar of St. Love, Mercy and Charity was a man well on into the fifties. Tall and slim; in fact, very much resembling "the sleek, meek, weak gent, who subsists on cold water," that we read of in the "Ingoldsby Legends."

"Good morning, Mrs. Wheelwright," remarked the Rev. Adolphus; "what is it I can do for you?"

Poor Mrs. Wheelwright, not being very strong, was at first a little nervous, which the rev. gentleman seeing, at once attributed to his highly-clerical appearance. The man of God was proud of his ecclesiastical aspect, and the effect it wrought upon the poor and ignorant of his flock.

"Compose yourself, my dear lady, we will help you, you know, if we can." Another peculiarity of the vicar, that of speaking in the first person

plural. It not only sounded full in the mouth and gave the rev. gentleman apparently much pleasure to utter it, but, being self-denying, it gave his hearers to understand that he was not alone in his good deeds; and those, indeed, of his poor parishioners even went so far as to assert that the vicar numbered among his committee a few archangels.

After a short pause, "Now, what is it we can do for you, Mrs. Wheelwright?"

"Well, sir, if you could get me some regular employment in light sewing, I should be very thankful to you."

"Just the very thing! You see, my good woman, money that is not earned is the root of all evil (the rev. gentleman doubtless appreciated the distinction in his own case), and when people come to me and expect me to give them money which they are not willing to earn (he might have added, "or unable"), I always tell them, 'the labourer is always worthy of his hire.' I am sure you follow me? Precisely! that is it! Well, now, let me see? How many children have you? Oh, four! And you have these two very nice—ah!—small rooms, for which you tell me you pay 4s. 6d. rent. A deal of money, Mrs. Wheelwright, to pay for rent! But then, you say, a relative allows you two shillings. Well, that certainly makes a difference! Now, let me see! You are standing at, then, 2s. 6d. rent yourself. I think, mind, I do not commit myself to a definite promise (oh, cautious cleric!) that a clergyman, a very old friend of mine, and a good friend to the poor, is a member of the Board of Guardians, and I am sure—well, yes, I think I may venture so far—that, if I write him that we are going to supply you with the means of living, he, good man, will help you to get the half-crown from the Poor Laws!"

"I would much rather not, sir!" ejaculated Mrs. Jack. "I do not think my late husband would like to know I threw myself upon the parish!"

"Tut, tut! come, we must not be proud! It is a sin, a deadly sin! I shall tell Mr. Scaramouch, the relieving officer, to call upon you in the course of to-day or to-morrow, and you must make no objection."

Lillie was wondering how much she would be able to earn at the work the man of God was going to provide her with. She mustered up courage, at last, and put the query.

"Ah, yes, very important! Well, I think, in your case, considering the number of your children, I shall be able to prevail upon my committee to allow you a little more per day. I think I may venture to say they—yes, they will be willing, on my recommendation, to allow you—er, er—another threepence per day. That is to say, for about twelve hours' work, light work, you know, per day they will pay you at the rate of 1s. 3d. That will make 7s. 6d. per week for six days' work. Sunday is a holy day, you know, Mrs. Wheelwright, and you must come to church on that day; but if you attend regularly, we will allow you to clean or assist in cleaning the church, for which we allow another shilling. That will make 8s. 6d. per week. A very nice little income, for you, with which, as oatmeal and rice are, thanks be to God, very cheap, you will be able to feed yourself and family on good, nourishing food. Luxuries, my good woman, are carnal, and must not be indulged in." The rev. gentleman might have completed the sentence thus: "By poor widows with orphan children, and other poor persons, but some parsons of the church may spend even thirty shillings, exclusive of wines, on one dinner!"

The rev. gentleman, after this, took his departure, feeling so light of heart and joyous of mind, at the truly charitable and Christlike work he had been engaged in, that his feet scarcely seemed to touch the pavement on his road home to the vicarage, where the rooms were not "nice," and where they were not "small."

*(To be continued.)*



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"Our Home is still home, be it ever so humble."—C. DIBDIN

### CHAPTER V.—RELIEVING-OFFICER SCARAMOUCHE THE INCONSISTENCY AND BRUTALITY OF THE POOR "LAWS."

Mr. Scaramouch, Relieving Officer to the Put 'em-all-down Board of Guardians, Goodville, Harwellshire, sat in his office the morning after the visit of the Rev. Torkandnodo to Mrs. Wheelwright. It is no use disguising the fact, Mr. Scaramouch was in a very bad temper; his enemies assert it was usually so with him.

I am not able to describe this gentleman's appearance. It is of no moment whether he was thin or stout, short or tall, fair or dark, or even what his age was. I can assert, however, he was something under a century, and decidedly over seven.

"Blank!—I am afraid this was not exactly the word he used; it will, however, serve our purpose—whenever I have made arrangements for an evening's outing, there will come cropping up things that could have been seen to yesterday, or even last week, but now, must be attended to. There's that lunatic to take to the asylum; Mrs. A. and B., C. and D. to pay quarterly visits; those two new cases to see—all this I could have done very comfortably, but here's that blank old idiot, Torkandnodo, writes me to visit a case, the other end of my district, that will——" Here our gentleman was interrupted by his old "pauper" messenger.

"Well, you blank, blank, old scoundrel, didn't I tell you I was out? O—U—T! What does that spell?"

"I am very sorry, sir, but here's a man here who says he knows you are in, and won't go away unless he sees you. He says his child's dying of hunger, and he can't stand it any longer."

"Stand what, you blear-eyed old swell? What do you mean? Can't you speak plain English?"

"I suppose he means he does not like to see his child wanting food any longer."

"There, that'll do. Show him in; but by—using an oath—you let anybody else in, you old lump of shoddy, and I'll let something into you."

A man, about thirty, here made his appearance. He looked haggard and worn, prematurely old. His hair was thickly streaked with grey, giving him the appearance, at first sight, of being much older than he really was.

"Don't you think it's like your infernal impudence to tell my messenger you knew I was in, and that you would not go away till I had seen you? Do you think I am paid to be at the beck and call of such as you, morning, noon and night? Eh, eh? Why don't you speak now you are here, and not stand staring at me speechless? What do yer want? £2 a week, and a new home, with carriage exercise every day and a brand new——"

"My child is dying of hunger," the man calmly answered, looking Mr. Scaramouch full in the face. "I want relief for it."

"You want relief for your child! You, a strong, lusty young fellow like you! Go and work for your child, you lazy vagabond. It's the likes of you that's dragging Society down, down to——"

Mr. Scaramouch hesitated, not apparently knowing where, or was undecided as to the exact place where Society was being dragged to by such as the applicant before him.

"I am willing to work, if I could get it. I have been out of work for nine months. I was a carman for Messrs. Tightfist and Co., and, injuring my foot with a crate, one day, I had to go into the hospital. I have applied to be taken back, but they refuse to take me, saying they don't want careless men in their employ."

"Quite right, too! Serve you jolly well right! How do you think employers are going to keep a lot of incompetent vagabonds like you?"

"Look here, Scaramouch, I didn't come here to be lectured. It is the first time I have been here, but I have heard of you before. I want relief for my dying child. Do ye hear?"

"Don't bully me, you blackguard, or I'll put you outside in a jiffy!"

"I don't stir till I get a doctor's order!"

At this, the Put 'em-all-down Board of Guardians' Relieving Officer became livid in the face. Ringing his bell, he shouted for Snooks, his pauper messenger, who soon came, for, indeed, he was not far off, having heard the altercation going on in the office, and was outside, listening and chuckling with another old pauper messenger at the "roasting," as they termed it—these poor,

demoralised old men—Scaramouch was giving the applicant.

When Snooks opened the door, Scaramouch yelled, "Go for the police to turn this fellow out. I am being obstructed in the execution of my duty!"

"Will you not give me the order?"

"No! You shall have no order from me. Go before the Committee for it. They meet next week."

"Next week, you monster! My child may die."

"Good job, too; there will be one pauper the ———"

But our worthy friend was not allowed to finish his sentence, for, taking up the inkstand, the applicant threw it with all his force at Scaramouch, who, ducking his head, escaped the stand which struck the wall behind with terrific force, but received the contents full upon his face and shirt-front, dyeing them a splendid blue-black. The man fled.

To describe the rage and mortification of our Relieving Officer is beyond my ability, but to make matters worse, poor old Snooks was unable to conceal his mirth at the ludicrous appearance of his master, seeing which, Mr. Scaramouch seized him and shook him till the poor old fellow gasped and gasped again for breath. Throwing him from him with all his force, "There, you old blank, you'll laugh at me again, will you? Get up, blank you, and go for some hot water and a new shirt!"

Poor old Snooks picked himself up with some difficulty, and trotted off to obey the mandate of his imperious master.

Having cleaned away the traces of his late encounter with the inkstand, Mr. Scaramouch returned to Mr. Torkandnode's letter—"Will you be good enough to visit a case at No. 3, Helpmyself Cottages, and recommend the Committee to allow 2s. 6d. per week to a widow with four children."

"Oh, yes, my reverend sir, whatever you and your reverend brethren require shall be done! Oh, yes! half your congregation shall have outdoor relief, whether they actually stand in need of it or not; that is to say, so long as they are members of your church. This is why you give your valuable time upon Boards of Guardians, is it not?"

"I remember, not so very long ago," soliloquised our friend, "the case of an old woman who cleaned a certain church, and who was sent by her clerical employer to another black-coated confrere upon a certain Board to get outdoor relief. She obtained three shillings per week, which sum was most religiously deducted from her wages of seven shillings by her saint-like employer. I think it is about time that the gymnastic performances of certain clerics upon Boards of Guardians were stopped, and they would soon be stopped if the public knew as much as I do." But I think our friend might have added, "and the tricks of certain Relieving Officers also would be stopped, if the public knew what I know."

*(To be continued.)*



# THE GROTESQUE REMOVAL LAWS.

## A TALE OF TO-DAY.

BY MR. H. R. GOGAY, GUARDIAN OF ST.  
SAVIOUR'S UNION.

### CHAPTER V. (*Continued.*)

"So this is Helpmyself Cottages, is it? First time I've seen the place." Mr. Scaramouch seized the knocker as he would like to have done the nose of his late opponent, and knocked at the door viciously. His "evening's outing" was, in his own choice language, "gone to the devil," and, in consequence, his temper was, in no particular, improved thereby.

The door was opened by an elderly woman who, in answer to the enquiry was Mrs. Wheelwright at home, answered in the affirmative, and bade the enquirer walk upstairs.

"Is your name Wheelwright?" questioned Mr. Scaramouch of Mrs. Jack, who opened her room door in answer to the Relieving Officer's noisy thumping with his knuckles.

"Yes, my name is Wheelwright," replied Lillie. "What is your business?"

Mr. Scaramouch informed her he had come, at the request of the Rev. A. A. N. Torkandnodo, M. A., Vicar of St. Love, Charity and Mercy to support, by his recommendation, his clerical confrere on the Board of Guardians, when the latter moved at the Relief Committee that Mrs. Wheelwright be allowed 2s. 6d. outdoor relief.

After he had been invited in, and requested to take a seat, "Zounds! you know, this is a bit too hot! What can old Torkandnodo be thinking of? You are sure," he asked of Mrs. Jack, "that the vicar came here himself?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Wheelwright, "he was here yesterday, and said he would send you to-day."

"Hightityti! this is all right! Why, my good woman, you are not destitute! Don't you know the Poor Laws distinctly lay it down that no one may be relieved unless that person be destitute? How then can you say you are destitute? Look at that sewing-machine; that carpet; those warm blankets! Woman, you are an impostor! What do you mean by it? No, no! my beauty, first sell that machine, this carpet, some of those blankets, and some other things I see around me, then I will talk to you."

He was on the point of departure when he seemed struck with an idea which had just then been suggested to him, and made a pause. Mrs. Wheelwright, as may be imagined, during our friend's virtuous indignation at the attempt to rob the ratepayers of 2s. 6d. per week, made no attempt to justify herself. Indeed, the whole proceeding was shrouded in so much mystery, so absolutely inexplicable to her, that had she had the least desire to exculpate herself from the charge of fraud which the Relieving Officer desired to fix upon her, she would not have known how to go about it. She was as ignorant of the Poor Laws and their administrative effects upon the community at large as were her little fatherless children, who stood in open-mouthed astonishment around her.

"Well, now, let us see, Mrs. Wheelwright. You know, my good lady, I have not the power to advise the Board to grant you this money."

"I am very sorry," answered Lillie.

"Don't interrupt me, for I was going to say," taking his chair, and placing it next that of Mrs. Jack's, "it seems a pity a young and good-looking woman like you"—here Mrs. Jack moved her chair a little farther away, but Scaramouch shifted his towards hers also—"should have to apply to the Poor Law at all. Is there no other way by which I could grant you, not this paltry sum, but one ten times that amount," placing his arm around Mrs. Wheelwright's waist.

It was there but a moment of time, for Lillie, divining the villain's intentions, rose indignantly, and bade him leave her apartments. This only seemed to incite him to a fresh insult, for, rising, too, from his chair, he attempted to place his arms around her neck, upon which she struck him in the face with her clenched fist, and called aloud for help.

This was the second time that day, our gentleman had been assaulted in "the execution of his duty."

"So, so, my fine madam, don't make that row, but listen to me. You want relief? You shall have it! Your settlement, my pretty one, is in Helpall, I understand, and as you have not resided a twelvemonth in Goodville, when you take the relief, I'll have the pleasure, the greatest pleasure in life, of carting you and your brats down to Helpall."

Lillie replied by pointing to the door.

Crestfallen, and burning with impotent rage,

he thundered down the stairs, and so on into the street. To a small boy, inadvertently coming against him in his passage from the house, he administered a vicious kick, for the purpose of letting off a little of the rage that was burning within him, and which required vent in some direction, for the perfect peace of mind and happiness of this inestimable administrator of the Poor Laws.

*(To be continued.)*



# THE GROTESQUE REMOVAL LAWS.

## A TALE OF TO-DAY.

BY MR. H. R. GOGAY, GUARDIAN OF ST.  
SAVIOUR'S UNION.

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."—Matthew xxv. 40.

### CHAPTER VI.—THE PUT-EM-ALL-DOWN BOARD OF GUARDIANS.

"Dear me! I am exceedingly pained and surprised to hear this," remarked the Rev. Tork-andnodo, seated in his half-library, half-study, the morning after the visit of Mr. Scaramouch to Mrs. Jack. "How we may be imposed upon! Here's Mr. Scaramouch, a most estimable man, a zealous and humane officer, and a good Christian, writes me that he visited the case in Helpmyself Cottages and found the woman a most abandoned character, inasmuch as she threatened to charge him with a criminal assault unless he made it worth her while to be silent. Really, the depth of depravity in human nature must be very great! I could have vouched for that woman's honesty and virtue anywhere. Dear, dear me; of course, after this, I can have nothing further to do with her. It is quite out of the question. I cannot allow my committee to be imposed upon by such a creature! I must, however, visit her again, and administer a little spiritual correction, warning her of the consequences of a persistence in her evil courses!"

Oh, man of love, charity and mercy, why hasten ye to judge the untried—to condemn on what the lawyers call an ex parte statement simply? And why did ye not, ere passing judgment on this fellow-creature, enquire, not only into the facts of this matter, but into the antecedents of this woman—this widowed mother of orphan children? It would have meant trouble and bother, oh, reverend sir, two very "nasty" words to have anything to do with!

Putting away Mr. Scaramouch's letter and the rest of his morning's correspondence, he departed on his errand of "spiritual correction."

He soon arrived at Helpmyself Cottages. Mrs. Wheelwright was at home, the landlady said, would he step upstairs?

With a gracious "Thank you!" and a beatific smile, the Rev. Adolphus walked upstairs and knocked at Mrs. Jack's door, as only parsons of his order know how. In answer to Mrs. Wheelwright's somewhat doleful "Come in," he opened the door and entered.

Poor Mrs. Wheelwright was hastily brushing away some tears that were gathering in her eyes, as the reverend gentleman approached her. She rose on his coming towards her.

"I am glad to see this chastened spirit, Mrs. Wheelwright; it augurs well for you. I was afraid I had to meet a hardened sinner whom nothing was able to soften or to lead into paths of morality and honesty."

Mrs. Wheelwright opened her eyes very wide at this, and asked the worthy vicar what he meant.

"Now, my good woman, you know very well to what I refer, and I am exceedingly sorry I was

mistaken in you when I just now saw you removing the traces of what I thought was remorse and repentance!"

"I still do not know to what you are alluding. What you are pleased to call 'the traces of remorse and repentance' were called forth by the memory of my late husband, who, had he been alive, would not have suffered any man to insult or degrade me."

"This woman is a very artful and designing creature, and I must be careful. Gracious!" as a thought glanced across his mind, "suppose she were to fix her evil eyes upon me! What would be said? How very indiscreet to come alone! Would that I had brought Miss Primsour with me; she would have been a veritable breastplate to shield me from the poisoned arrows of this Jezebel!"

"Woman, I have come here in virtue of my holy office to warn you to flee from the wrath to come! Yesterday, when that good man, Mr. Scaramouch, came here on his errand of mercy and charity, you took advantage of your sex, prompted by an evil mind, to attempt to blackmail him, and threatened to ruin him unless he complied with your infamous proposal."

"Monstrous!" exclaimed Lillie. "The villain most grossly insulted me with his odious proposals and attempted to assault me, and would have succeeded had I not called for help."

"Fie for shame! fie for shame! How can you? How—can—you be so very wicked? I must not stop to have my ears polluted with so much that is horrible. I have come here, as I have said, in discharge of my duty, and it is to tell you that after your evil conduct of yesterday, I am not able to recommend you to the ladies of my committee. They have never come in contact with such as you; they are pure and good, and must not be defiled. You must seek elsewhere for the assistance you say you want. Good morning!"

Mrs. Wheelwright turned sick at heart. A dizziness came over her; she reeled and fell heavily to the floor, seeing which the reverend gentleman hurried downstairs and out of the house, fearing this was some new development in evil on the part of Mrs. Wheelwright.

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. . . . . But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him."

Mrs. Wheelwright's health was fast giving way under the accumulations of trials which she had had to bear during the last few years. This last trouble was almost too much for her. What had she done that such treatment on the part of these two men should be meted out to her by them? The one she only asked for work; the other's assistance she did not even seek or desire.

"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have."—Luke viii. 18. The words of Scripture would, indeed, seem to be verified in this case.

Day after day, she went forth into the world to seek that work which refused to be found. Her health was made an excuse in one place, whilst in another, references were required before the work could be entrusted to her. As a last resource, she went back to the mantle work, feeling it must be this, or she and her children must starve. She went and saw the manager of her old firm, and obtained some work.

It was apparent to all who saw her that she could not continue at this heavy work, and unless she obtained some light employment, her little children would soon be motherless.

(To be continued.)



# THE GROTESQUE REMOVAL LAWS.

## A TALE OF TO-DAY.

BY MR. H. R. GOGAY, GUARDIAN OF ST.  
SAVIOUR'S UNION.

### CHAPTER VI.—(Continued.)

One day, she fainted at her machine, the children, seeing which, screamed and soon brought the landlady, who put her to bed, and fetched Dr. Pompusnoawl. The doctor came, asked some questions, felt her pulse, shook his head, and took his departure, promising to send some physic. Some few weeks elapsed ere Mrs. Wheelwright was "out of the doctor's hands," and, by the time she had paid him, and with the expenses of her illness, very little was left her of her home but the bed upon which she and her children slept. She was now reduced to one room, the rent for which was now much in arrears. No work and nothing to sell, sent her into the clutches of Mr. Scaramouch once more.

"I tell you as I have told you before, if you want relief, you must come into the House. I refuse to give you outdoor help! There, you can see the committee if you like; they meet to-morrow. But I can tell you, my fine madam, before you go, you'll get nothing from us. You see, your husband lost his settlement in Sobertown by removing to Helpall. Coming back, and living again in Sobertown a complete year, had you not moved out of Sobertown into Goodville, our Board of Guardians would have been obliged to help you, in or out of the House; but moving into Goodville, you lost what the law calls your 'status of irremovability.' So, if you want our help, we shall give it you in the House, and transfer you and your kids at once to Helpall in Northshire."

"But I do not wish to leave Goodville, which is near my own and my late husband's birth-place. If I went back to Sobertown, and applied to the Crush-'em-all-out Board of Guardians, would they help me there?"

"No, I am pleased to tell you! They would do exactly what we shall do. What is the use of talking to you? Did I not just tell you you lost your 'status of irremovability' in Sobertown by removing into here? Well then, what more do you want?"

"Can't you help me to retain what little I have left of my home, and allow me a sufficiency to bring my children up? You know they attend the Board School regularly!"

"Come and see the Committee!"

So before the august Board of Guardians went poor Lillie, the following day. Very imposing some of these gentlemen looked. Others looked very learned.

"Next case," cried the chairman. "Look alive, Scaramouch, we shall never get away to-night! How many cases have you?"

"I have just twenty, sir!" replied Mr. Scaramouch. "The first case is that of Lillie Wheelwright, a widow and a bad lot. She insists upon seeing you, although I told her you could do nothing for her beyond taking her into the House and removing her to her settlement."

"Quite right! Have her in!"

The pauper doorkeeper called, "Wheelwright!" and in came Mrs. Jack.

"Well, woman, what is it you want?"

"A little assistance, sir, if you please."

"Now, has not the officer told you what we shall do with you, if you take our assistance?"

"He told me that I must be removed to Helpall, where my late husband lived for three years, but that place is 280 miles away, and I do not want to go back there. There are too many unhappy memories connected with that place for me."

"Sentimental nonsense," replied the chairman. "Helpall Work'us is as good, or better even, than ours."

"But, sir," pleaded Mrs. Wheelwright, "cannot you make me a small weekly allowance to enable me to bring my children up—they all go to the Board School?"

"Well, if we did, you would still be removed, and the Helpall Union would most probably not thank us for doing so, or even agree to our action at all. So, how would you be benefited? There, I can't stop here all night wrangling with you—what's that you say?" as Mr. Scaramouch whispered something in his ear. "Oh, yes! Besides, the officer tells me your character is not good."

and—yes, what is it?" as Mr. Scaramouch again leant forward and whispered. "Oh, one of your children, I am informed, did not go to Helpall with you and your husband; so, if you come in, he will be sent to Sobertown Workhouse, while you and the rest of you will go to Helpall, 280 miles away."

Very sadly Mrs. Wheelwright turned her steps towards Helpmyself Cottages.

*(To be continued.)*



# ANOMALIES OF THE POOR LAWS.

## THE GROTESQUE REMOVAL LAWS: A TALE OF TO-DAY.

BY MR. H. R. G. GOGAY, GUARDIAN OF ST.  
SAVIOUR'S UNION.

"Who will not mercie unto others show,  
How can he mercy ever hope to have?"

FABRIZIO QUERENI

### CHAPTER VII.—THE CORONER'S INQUEST.

Those of my readers who have followed me thus far will be able to appreciate the kind efforts of a thoughtful legislature on behalf of the unfortunate in life's struggle.

Why should this woman, ere receiving assistance from the poor Poor Laws, have been compelled to go to the other end of England to accept the same? Because her late husband, to better his position, left his and her native town for the North, where he resided for three years; then, coming back to his native town, and residing in it again for a complete year, it gave him a "status of irremovability"; i.e., although it was not his settlement, the law would relieve him and allow him to gain a settlement by continuing to live uninterruptedly for two more years; but if he removed only, it may be, a few yards into the next Union or Poor Law parish, he loses, at once, his status of irremovability, and should he or his widow require the demoralising assistance of these grotesque laws, he or she with her family would be sent willy-nilly down to the North, or wherever he resided for the last three years.

Now, we have seen that this is what happened to Mrs. Wheelwright. Her late husband gained a status of irremovability by removing back to Sobertown, and residing there again for a complete year, after which, as we have seen, he died. His widow lost this "status" by removing, to better her position, into Goodville, a suburb of Sobertown, but in another Union, and if she had received only so much as a half-crown from the Put-'em-all-down Board of Guardians in Goodville, she would have been sent to Helpall with all her children except Albert, who remained, as we know, with his grandfather in Sobertown, when his parents went to Helpall. Therefore, Albert's settlement was in Sobertown, and to Sobertown Workhouse he would have been sent to receive the tender consideration of the Crush-'em-all-out Board.

It will readily be seen how easy it is for Unions to get into litigation in their anxiety to take advantage of the "three-year settlement" and one-year "status of irremovability" business. It will also just as readily be seen what splendid "business" it is for the lawyers when the Unions fall out and disagree as to the settlement of the "paupers." There can be no doubt, the lawyers take no inconsiderable portion from the now £11,000,000, which that patient ass, the British Public, pays annually for the supposed relief of the poor, who really only get about one-third, the officials and the lawyers swallowing up the remaining two-thirds.

"Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers."—Luke xi. 46.

In the name of reason, let me ask why should there be any need for the Removal Laws at all? The "settlement," like stone-breaking and oakum-picking, is a survival of an old, bad past. We read, "In 1530, after being whipped, a vagrant was to take an oath to return to the place where was born, or had last dwelt for three years. In 1535, a vagrant, convicted for the second time, was to lose the upper part of the gristle of his right ear; a third time, death." This latter must have been very welcome to these miseries, just as it would be to-day to thousands but for the practical Christianity of the Salvation Army and its officers. Again, "In 1547, a vagabond was to be branded with a 'V' on his breast, and be a slave for two years. If he ran away, he was to be branded on his cheek with the letter 'S,' and be a slave for life; for the third time, death. And yet, in spite of all this repression, pauperism and vagrancy have not only survived, but have so increased that, at the time I write (1894), one in thirty-seven of the population is a pauper, or, in other words, every ten adult males have a 'pauper' to keep!"

If we are not a nation of idiots, let us then, as speedily as possible, adopt other measures for dealing with the unfortunate. But before that time arrives, let us, at once, abolish the Removal Laws, and make England and Wales one Union for Poor Law purposes.

"Can't be done!" asserts the official.

"Impossible!" cries the lawyer.

"It is not!" says the sensible ratepayer.

(To be continued.)

# THE GROTESQUE REMOVAL LAWS: A TALE OF TO-DAY.

BY MR. H. R. G. GOGAY, GUARDIAN OF ST.  
SAVIOUR'S UNION.

## CHAPTER VII.—THE CORONER'S INQUEST.

*(Continued.)*

I am of opinion that the latter is right; for which learned opinion I hope the ratepayer will forward not less than fifty guineas to the Social Scheme Fund of the Salvation Army; or to the Farthing Breakfast Fund; for, as a learned lawyer, it would do me good to know people were breaking their fast to the tune of a farthing apiece. In support of my opinion, I say again, the ratepayer is right; for it should be an easy matter while we have a Poor Rate—for the relief of the poor only—to levy an equal rate all over the kingdom.

What does it matter how many paupers are in one particular Union, so long as the cost is spread out all over the kingdom for all and every pauper?

Many unfortunate inmates of workhouses would like to be transferred to their native town, but cannot be, owing to their "settlements" being somewhere else.

The abolition of the Removal Laws would work well for both paupers and ratepayers, but in official and legal circles, would be heard weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. So be it!

I must now return to my story. Mrs. Wheelwright reached home, tired bodily and mentally. What was she to do? If she got a little work, and was able to do it, it would not suffice to provide all the necessaries of life. The Poor Laws would not help her at all in Goodville, until she had resided there a complete year, and then what hope had she from Scaramouch and his Guardians of the Put-'em-all-down Union?

A few weeks after her application to the Guardians, her eldest boy of ten burst into the room, one day.

"Oh, mother! I've got a half-crown, a silver half-crown! Yes; I held a gentleman's horse outside the bank, and he looked so kindly at me, mother, and asked whether I had a father, and I told him father was dead. (The tears here came into Mrs. Wheelwright's eyes, although she tried to keep them back.) Don't cry, mother, dear!" putting his arms affectionately around his mother's neck. "He looked so kindly at me, and patted me on the head, and gave me this bright half-crown. He asked me my name and address, and I told him, mother. Wasn't it kind of him? He said I was to go home and get something to eat, for the love of God! Do I look so hungry, mother? I am sure you do! Don't cry, Lottie, dear, we are going to have some dinner now," he said. "Mother, I was



almost forgetting it, he would come round and see you in the course of to-morrow."

Alas! to-morrow never comes! Before day-break, next morning, the soul of Mrs. Wheelwright had gone to those realms of peace and love where, we are told, is the resting-place of those who, while on earth, love the good and reject the evil.

Dying silently in the night amongst her unconscious children, with whom she slept upon the only bed the family possessed, the grief and consternation of her elder children may be imagined. The doctor was fetched and, as usual, remarked that the woman was dead, he should say from insufficient food, but he could not tell positively unless he made a post-mortem. The police were fetched, and the sergeant came and sent for the coroner's officer, who examined the room and its contents for the purpose of evidence, and was about to lock the room and take the children to the workhouse, when a tall, well-to-do-looking man stepped forward, and said,

"Stay! Are these the children of that unfortunate woman who died here of starvation?"

"I don't know about starvation, guv'nor; you are more learned than our coroner. You wait till the inquest has been held and then see what he calls it!"

"Oh, well, my man, we won't split straws; are these the children of the woman who was found dead in bed this morning?"

"Yes; you've guessed right this time!"

Turning to the eldest boy, "Weren't you the boy who held my horse outside the bank yesterday?"

At the mention of the words "horse" and "bank," Mr. Jowl, the coroner's officer, took off his hat, and assumed a most virtuous expression of countenance which was, however, fearfully unsuccessful.

"Yes, sir!" replied Ernest; "I did, and you gave me——"

"Yes, yes, I thought it was the same; I wished I had followed you home, my boy; but, probably, I could have been of no more assistance to your poor mother then than I can be to-day!"

"Look here, Mr. Jowl, here's my card!"

On looking at the name, the coroner's officer went all colours, as the saying goes, and stammered,

"Why didn't your lordship say at first, you was a real live lord, and I——"

"Nonsense, man; kindly understand, I pay, and am responsible, for all the arrangements of this poor woman's funeral; and, if you please, the children will come along with me. Will you be so good as to call a cab?"

"Will I be so good as to call a cab?" repeated mechanically Mr. Jowl, who was greatly troubled in his mind at having called a lord, "guv'nor," and not knowing whether it was a hanging matter or not, or what was the equivalent to him, "the sack," if it came to the coroner's ears.

He, nevertheless, had just sufficient presence of mind left to call the cab, into which the gentleman, whom we will call Ernest's friend, and the children soon entered and drove off.

"Well, I never!" soliloquised Mr. Jowl, "of all the rum starts, this beats all! I ought to have taken them kids to the workus, you know! I have been defrauded of my rights! Never

mind, let me see the next bloke, no matter who he is, under the condition of a lord, who shall undertake to interfere with me again, in the execution of my dooty. I say, Kickemup," appealing to the sergeant, "I suppose it is all legal letting these kids go like this? Suppose it's all a git-up, and he aint a lord at all?" upon which supposition, great drops of perspiration might have been observed racing each other down his manly features.

"Don't put yourself out, Jowl," replied Sergeant Kickemup, "I know him; it's Lord ——"  
*(To be concluded.)*



# ANOMALIES OF THE POOR LAWS.

## THE GROTESQUE REMOVAL LAWS. A TALE OF TO-DAY.

BY MR. H. R. G. GOGAY, GUARDIAN OF ST. SAVIOUR'S UNION.

### CHAPTER VII.—THE CORONER'S INQUEST.

(Continued.)

Early in the next week, Coroner Hushitup held his enquiry into the death of Lillie Wheelwright, before a jury of Goodville citizens.

Uriah Æsculapius Draco Hushitup, Esquire, one of Her Majesty's coroners, was a short, choleric, swarthy-looking gentleman, of uncertain age, and also of uncertain temper. He would quarrel with the bed-clothes, ere he retired at night, and, in the morning, would wrangle with his attire, whilst adjusting it upon his pugnacious little body.

The jury, having been sworn, and having chosen a foreman, Squire Hushitup detailed the particulars of the case, and called Mrs. Goody, the landlady of Mrs. Wheelwright. She had known the deceased for some time as a lodger, and always found her a very respectable, sober and industrious woman; "but I am afraid," added the witness, "she had had very little to eat of late, or the children either."

"Stop!" thundered the coroner; "how do you know that?"

"Very well, indeed, sir; for had it not been for me, the children would have had nothing to eat for days together the last few weeks."

"Oh, gentleman, you will please observe this is an *ex parte* statement only, you know; I don't believe in these deaths of starvation."

"But surely, sir," mildly remonstrated the foreman, "the children would be able to corroborate the witness?"

"True, true! Where are the children, Jowl?" Poor Jowl was a pitiful sight.

"I—I," stammered he; "the children, your worship?"

"Yes, yes; what do you mean prevaricating like this? Let the children be produced!"

"If you please, your honour's worship, Lord — came and took them away as I was going to take them to the work'us."

To describe the language of Coroner Hushitup, when he found his officer had been interfered with by one of the public, would not gain me any credence, so we will pass on.

"You say, woman," snapped the coroner, "the deceased had nothing much to eat for some weeks. Why didn't she apply to the parish?"

"She did, sir; but they would only take her in the workhouse; and then, as Goodville wasn't her settlement, they would have sent her and the children away down into Northshire. And she did not wish to leave her native town."

"Bosh! Then it is clearly no fault of the parish authorities."

"But, sir, could they not have given her a little outdoor relief?" asked the foreman.

"Outdoor relief, sir, is a very bad thing. A curse, in fact." Murmurs of disapproval from the jury, whereupon the coroner threatened to adjourn the inquiry.

"The poor lady, sir, told me," continued the witness, "that had she been given out-door relief she would still have been removed, as she was not chargeable to this parish, until she had resided a complete year."

"Do you mean to tell us the authorities would give her nothing unless she consented to be removed to Helpall, until she had been here a twelvemonth?"

"Yes, sir."

"Gracious heavens!" ejaculated the foreman.

"Sir!" shouted the coroner, "I want no profane bullies here!"

The doctor's evidence was so clear and unmistakable, in spite of the coroner's badgering, that the jury came to the unanimous decision, that "Lillie Wheelwright came by her death from starvation," and wished to add the following rider: "In the opinion of the jury, the death of this unfortunate woman was directly caused by the administration of brutal and inhuman 'laws,' which cry aloud for reform, in the interests, alike, of the indigent as well as the ratepayers, and that a copy of this be sent to the Secretary of State, the President of the Local Government Board, and to every Board of Guardians in the kingdom."

[THE END.]