

wealth, force the barred doors of aristocratic society. Therefore the London actor scorns the London "pros" as he would a tramp. Not only will he have none of him as a companion, but he will drink no liquor, eat no food, transact no business, and frequent no haunt or thoroughfare where the latter is permitted to come.

These observations have marked illustration in the close lines drawn in the daily haunts of the two classes. The actors chiefly retire behind the inviolable protection of their clubs—like the Garrick, the Green Room, Savage, Arundel, Lyric, and Beefsteak clubs—and their cozy suburban homes, of which they are inordinately fond and proud. Should they occasionally stroll from one city resort to another, they would be found at noted places like The Wellington, Darmstatter's and perhaps Romano's Gatti's, known in local parlance as "La Gorgonzola;" but would retire permanently from the "profession" before they would be seen at Miss Barnes', a former barmaid of the Criterion bar, or at the Gaiety bar, which is christened "Prossers' avenue."

So, for many years, indeed for a greater part of the present century, these ostracised music-hall performers have gradually merged their business and social interests in one large and interesting resort, known by theatrical people throughout the world as "London Poverty Junction." No one knows how long it has been "Poverty Junction." This it now is and will ever remain. It is outside the old city borough, and the actors are glad of it. If you were wandering in the strand and came to a region, along by Waterloo Bridge approach, of old book-stores, your haunting of these would lead you almost to the bridge itself. Then the Thames and its picturesque scenes would bring you upon the great structure; and your vagrant fancy, playing about the sunny lavender fields of Surrey and the hopfields of fruitful Kent, would lead you southward to the Surrey side of London. Should it happen to be of a Monday morning, about eleven o'clock, you would have scarcely passed the Surrey approach to the bridge when, at the corner of York and Waterloo roads—each a great city street—you will have come upon as curious a scene and study as may be found by travel in any land.

In olden times this was a region of resort for the ruddy farmers of Surrey and Kent; of yards where wagons, carts and drivers belongings of the farm were picturesquely bestowed before, during or after, Covent Garden market hours; of rough shops which dealt in goods to the liking of the yeomanry; and of quaint old inns and public houses where all the long day and throughout the night were the bustle and clatter of incoming and departing coaches; and where still lingers a perennial flavor of brave drinking, hearty eating and rough but unctious good cheer.

But one of these ancient inns remains. This is the York Tavern. While prim, new public houses have crowded close, seeking to lessen its prestige and divert its patronage, it is still, as of old, the center of all the busy scene. At both sides of each intersecting street, and reaching for more than a square away, are single and double rows of hansoms, dog-carts and broughams. Many of the latter have liveried coachmen and footmen. They are the equipages of rich

music-hall managers bejeweled and foxy "theatrical" agents who control the booking of all music-hall and variety engagements, and of those favorites among performers, like Cherwin, Leno, Godfrey, Colburn, Beauchamp, Chevalier, Bessie Bonehill and Jenny Hill, whose specialties and popularity command earnings of from £40 to £150 per week.

Between these and the street facades, and quite often extending into the middle of York and Waterloo roads, will be gathered on any pleasant Monday morning from 1,000 to 3,000 music-hall and variety "prossers." A special detail of police is always required to keep passage-ways open to other pedestrians. Of all this strange medley of folk perhaps not more than one half will belong in London. Among the remainder will be found every manner of variety performer and "eccentric specialist" from every land beneath the sun.

Hundreds of variety performers, good and bad, from America are here. Cowboy and pugilistic "actors" are here. Provincial talent, down at the heels but clipper, chery and hopeful, is here seeking engagement. The strong man of Patagonia meanders past you, arm in arm with the boneless contortionist. Hindoo jugglers are engaged in rallery with the gentle Eskimo dwarf who recently sadly hoodooed the American religious world. Algerian, Egyptian and Persian snake-charmers, sword-swallowers, fire-eaters and barefoot glass-breakers consort with Cuban machete-throwers, wild western female dead shots, Devon record-breaking jumpers, Greek wrestlers and American genuine negro minstrels. The renowned Signorina Splittavocce, Spaghettia Siren to the Italian Court, the Climax Cloggers, the Nell Nellwoods. Delicious Delineators of Ducal Dialogues, the Slug Brothers, the Salacious Sisters, the King Knockabouts, the Miles. Paddishanki, Queen of Aspiring Heels, are all here, along with all the unnameable "human warious" of superlatively megatherian freaks, who scale the dizzy heights of fame in the bewildering borderland of the vast amusement world.

All those of the motley throng having real business at this weekly Poverty Junction assemblage are here for the purpose of either securing new engagements or for paying the "dramatic" agents their stipulated regular weekly commissions on current engagements. These agents, some forty in number, occupy all accessible ground apartments or fully half a square on either angle of each of the four corners of York and Waterloo roads. No "prosser" dare secure an engagement, and no manager dare engage a "prosser" without the booking is done by them. They first charge a large booking fee, and subsequently receive ten per cent. of every performer's contract money, which is sent weekly, by mail, or paid in person every Monday morning. They are held in deadly hatred, and treated with pitiable servility, by all music-hall folk. London, provincial and all foreign music-hall and variety managers come here in person to secure their ever-varying attractions. A halo of awe surrounds them as they pass from one agency to another, but Billingsgate porters could not equal the lively remarks upon their persons and character that mingle with sturdy calls for "blitter" and "four ale," the moment they have disappeared from view.

Secondarily, those here on necessary business take kindly to this form of Poverty Junction weekly reunion or symposium. They are thus enabled to exchange gossip and greetings, coster oaths and choice Billingsgate, and to keep informed as to the movements of rivals, and city, provincial or foreign managers. All the others comprise a great horde of unemployed unreliaables who, in Poverty Junction vernacular, are here to "wait for captains," that is, drink and manner of pickings; a vaster horde of budding "prossers," endearingly called "Tommy Rots;" and a still greater and more pitiable number of broken down and utterly helpless old-time favorites who,—and blessed be the tender humanity of the prosser at large—here secure in ungrudged alms every penny on earth that keeps them from the workhouse or a pauper's grave.

The business and social conversation of a Poverty Junction symposium is the most graceless that ever fell from the tongues of mortal men and women. The latter are here in equal numbers with the men. Both drink on equal footing at the York Tavern's first, second and third class compartments. All are relieved by their lurid denunciations of star favorites, managers and agents. They are a kindly-hearted lot, but their language is simply untellable. This, of companion prossers leaving an agent's office, is as chaste as lilies by comparison.

"Ah, cull, h'i've made a shop (contract) in the country, an' four turns (nightly engagements at different music-hall) to open Bank 'olidays. Gawd's truth, cull. The bleedin' keaffir kneows H'i'm in demand, eree wouldest a give me th' shops. Go'n to th' country fur on'y fifteen quid (sovereigns.) Get the town fur seven a turn. H'i' cud a 'ad more, but w'at's th' bloody use a stand-in' on ceremonies!"

He probably was to receive five pounds per week for his provincial engagement, and perhaps eight pounds altogether for his London "turns."

"W'y didn' ye get yer wife on for a small part?" sympathetically inquires his companion.

"W'at's the b— use? Th' cow aint got no bloomin' grammar in'er!"

With a "Gor bli me, ol' chap, we'll 'ave a wet!" and a "look sharp eere!" to the waiter, they drown their professional pride in York Tavern four ale, when the lucky prosser is off with all haste to the registry office to get his precious contract stamped, lest the "bloomin' h'agent tries to throw 'im down."

The symposium is at its height of confusion and "cheeriness" by one o'clock; but, an hour later, save for the brave managers and foxy agents still lingering over their wine in the rooms of the York Tavern, and a half score of the God-forsaken riffraff, lingering for a possible h'apenny from some belated reveler, all the region roundabout this London Poverty Junction is as silent as a shadowy, hawthorn-spangled English land.

EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

#### DEATHS.

OHARON.—In the Twelfth ward, this city, April 6, William Farington Oharon; aged about 79 years.

NEWSON.—In this city, April 5, Louella Wau-nita, daughter of L. J. and R. H. Newson; aged 7 years, 10 months and 7 days.

GWYNNE.—At Bountiful, April 3rd, 1893, of consumption, Mary Ida Gwynne; born Feb. 15th, 1872, in Wales.