

The Adventures
OF A
HALFPENNY;
COMMONLY CALLED A
Birmingham Halfpenny.



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Here's something new,
Dear Child, for you,
'Twill please you in a trice ;
A Halfp'ny chuse,
Now don't refuse,
A penny is the price.

Tho' basely born,
Pray do not scorn,
A tale not worse than many ;
For I'm afraid,
More say in trade,
A Halfp'ny's made a penny.



RUSHER'S EDITION.



I was transported from Birmingham, with many of my brethren, of different dates, characters, and configurations, to a Jew Pedlar, in Dukes-place, who paid for us scarce a fifth part of our nominal value.

See the 8th Page.

THE ADVENTURES

OF A

HALFPENNY;

COMMONLY CALLED A

Birmingham Halfpenny,

OR

COUNTERFEIT;

AS RELATED BY ITSELF.



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INTRODUCTION.

The adulteration of the copper-coin, as it is highly pernicious to trade in general, so it more immediately affects the itinerate branches of it. Among these, at present, are to be found the only circulators of base metal; and, perhaps, the only dealers who are obliged to take such counterfeits, as will find a currency no where else; yet are not allowed to raise the price of their commodities.

A Tyburn execution, a duel, a most terrible fire, or a horrid, barbarous, bloody, cruel, and inhuman murder, was wont to bring in vast revenues to the lower class of pamphleteers, who get their livelihood by vending these diurnal records publicly in the streets: but since half-pence have been valued at no more than nine-pence the pound weight, these occasional pieces hardly answer the expences of printing and paper; and the servant maid, who used to indulge her taste for polite literature, by purchasing

fifty new play-house songs, or a whole poetical sheet of the Yorkshire garland, or Gloucestershire tragedy, for a half-penny, can now scarcely procure more than one single slip of I love Sue, or the Lover's complaint.

It is also observable, that the public walks no longer echo with the shrill cry of "Toothpicks! Take you six, your honour, for a half-penny," as it did when half-pence were half-pence worth.

But the greatest sufferers are undoubtedly the numerous fraternity of beggars; for, as things are circumstanced, it would be almost as profitable to work as to beg, were it not that many of the uncharitable are now induced to deal out their charity in what is of no other use to themselves, in the hope of receiving seven-fold in return. Indeed, since the usual donation has been so much lessened in its value, the beggars have been observed to be more vociferous and importunate. One of these orators, who takes his station at Vauxhall-Gardens, now en-



forces his piteous complaint, with “ Good Christians, one good half-penny to the stone blind ;” and another, who tells you he has lost the use of his precious limbs, addresses your compassion by shewing a bad half-penny, and declaring that he is ready to perish with hunger, having tried it in vain at twenty-three places to buy a bit of bread. Farthings, we are told, were formerly called in by the beggars, as they threatened the ruin of their community ; I should not wonder, therefore, if this public-spirited people were also to put a stop to the circulation of bad half-pence, by melting them down from

time to time as they come into their hands. The experiment is worth making; and I am assured, that, for some end or other, orders will be issued out from the king of the beggars, to bring all their adulterated copper to their mint in the Borough, or their foundery in Moorfields.

I was led to the consideration of this subject by some half-pence I had just received in change; among which, one in particular attracted my regard, that seemed once to have borne the profile of King William, now scarcely visible, as it was very much battered, and besides other marks of ill usage had a hole through the middle. As it happened to be the evening of a day of some fatigue, my reflections did not much interrupt my propensity to sleep, and I insensibly fell into a kind of half-slumber; when to imagination the half-penny, which then lay before me upon the table, erected itself upon its rim, and from the royal lips stamped on its surface, articulately uttered the following narration.

Adventures of a Halfpenny.

“ SIR,

“ I SHALL not pretend to conceal from you the illegitimacy of my birth, or the baseness of my extraction: and though I seem to bear the marks of old age, I received my being at Birmingham not six months ago. From thence I was transported, with many of my brethren, of different dates, characters, and configurations, to a Jew-pedlar* in Dukes-place, who paid for us scarce a fifth part of our nominal value. We were soon after separately disposed of, at a more moderate profit, to coffee-houses, chop-houses, chandler-shops, and gin-shops.

“ I had not been long in the world, before an ingenious transmuter of

* See the Frontispiece.

metals laid violent hands on me ; and observing my thin shape and flat surface, by the help of a little quick-silver exalted me into a shilling. Use, however, soon degraded me again to my native low station ; and I unfortunately fell into the possession of an



urchin just breeched, who received me as a Christmas-box of his god-mother.

“ I now lost the very essence of my being, in the custody of this hopeful disciple of avarice and folly ; and was kept only to be looked at and ad-

mired : but a bigger boy, after a while, snatched me from him, and released me from my confinement.

“ I now underwent various hardships among his play-fellows, and was kicked about, hustled, tossed up, and chucked into holes ; which very much battered and impared me : but I suffered most by the pegging of



tops, the marks of which I have borne about me to this day. I was in this state the unwitting cause of strife, envy, and revenge. At length I was dismissed from their service, by a throw with a barrow-woman for an orange.

Counterfeit Halfpenny. 11

“ From her it is natural to conclude, I posted to the gin-shop; where, indeed, it is probable I should have immediately gone, if her hus-



band, had not wrested me from her, at the expence of a bloody nose, black eye, scratched face, and torn clothes. By him I was carried to the Mall in St. James's Park; where — I am ashamed to tell how I parted from him — Let it suffice, that I was soon after safely deposited in a night-cellar.

“ From hence I got into the coat-pocket of a BLOOD, and remained



there with several of my brethren for some days unnoticed. But one evening, as he was reeling home from the tavern, he jirked a whole handful of us through a sash-window, into the dining-room of a tradesman, who he remembered had been so unmannerly to him the day before, as to desire payment of his bill. We reposed in soft ease on a fine Turkey carpet, till the next morning, when the maid swept us up; and some of us were allotted to purchase tea, some to buy

snuff, and I myself was immediately trucked away at the door for the Sweetheart's Delight.

“ It is not my design to enumerate every little accident that has befallen me, or to dwell upon trivial and indifferent circumstances, as is the practice of those important egotists, who write narratives, memoirs, and travels. The king, God bless him, has many



worse subjects than I, for as useless to the community as my single self may appear to be, I have been the instru-

ment of much good and evil in the intercourse of mankind : I have contributed no small sum to the revenues of the crown, by my share in each newspaper, and in the consumption of tobacco, spirituous liquors, and other taxable commodities. If I have encouraged debauchery, or supported extravagance ; I have also rewarded the labours of industry, and relieved the necessities of indigence. The poor acknowledge me as their constant friend ; and the rich, though they affect to slight me, and treat me with contempt, are often reduced by their follies to distresses which it is even in my power to relieve.

“ The present exact scrutiny into our constitution has, indeed, very much obstructed and embarrassed my travels ; though I could not but rejoice in my condition last Shrove Tuesday, as I was debarred having

any share in maiming, bruising, and destroying the innocent victims of vulgar barbarity; I was happy in being confined to the mock-encounters with feathers and stuffed leather; a childish sport, badly calculated to initiate tender minds in arts of cruelty, and prepare them for the exercise of inhumanity on helpless animals!

“ I shall conclude, Sir, with informing you by what means I came to you in the condition you see. A CHOICE SPIRIT, a member of the Kill-Care Club, broke a link-boy's pate with me last night, as a reward for lighting him across the kennel. The lad wasted half his tar-flambeau in looking for me; but I escaped his search, being lodged snugly against a post. This morning a parish girl picked me up, and carried me with raptures to the next baker's shop to purchase a roll. The master ex-

16 Counterfeit Halfpenny.

amined me with great attention, and then, gruffly threatening her with Bridewell for putting off bad-money, knocked a nail through my middle, and fastened me to the counter: but the moment the poor hungry child was gone, he whipt me up again, and sending me away with others, in 'change to the next customer, gave me this opportunity of relating my adventures to you."

When I awaked, I found myself so much invigorated by my nap, that I immediately wrote down the strange story which I had just heard; and as it is not totally destitute of use and entertainment, I have consented to permit that by this means it may be communicated to the public.

I am, Sir,

Your humble Servant,

Tim. Turnpenny.

FINIS.

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Pity the plaint of lame and blind,
Who oft your charity implore,
Who cannot work their food to find,
Nor else than beg from door to door.



Thus this blind man, with dog and string,
Most piteous cries, Your alms bestow,
His tale of grief does say or sing,
A Halp'nny give, relieve my woe.