

THE  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
**Blind Beggar**  
OF BETHNAL GREEN.

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SHEWING,

*How he goes to the wars, loses his sight, and turns  
beggar at Bethnal Green.*

*He gets a light into the canting trade from an old ex-  
perienced beggar,—He goes to the beggars'  
gaily feast, and his entertainments  
there.*

*He is made happy by the birth of a beautiful daughter, who  
when she grew up, is courted by a young knight*

*Concluding with  
Her Marriage with the knight, and the discovery of  
the Beggar's famous pedigree.*

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Adorned with Cuts.

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THE

HISTORY

OF THE

Blind Beggars

OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND

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THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
THE BLIND BEGGAR.

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CHAP. I.

Monford and his Wife go to the Wars of France, where he loses his eye-sight, and they afterwards return to England.

**I**N former days when the rose of England eclipsed the French lillies, among other brave gallants who went to try their fortunes, was one Monford, a person who was well descended; and being greedy of fame, neither the entreaty of his friends, nor his marriage with a beautiful lady, could alter his purpose, but crossing the sea to Calais, he marched to the royal standard, accompanied by his wife. (in man's dress) became his inse-

companion in all dangers, and was  
 means of saving his life; for in an  
 counter between the English and French  
 young Monford being too hot in the pu  
 suit, was entrapped in an ambush; al  
 though he bravely defended himself, y  
 he was beat from his horse, and left  
 the field for dead; where he had sure  
 perished, had not his tender-hearted wi  
 Margaret, upon hearing what had passe  
 returned to the field, where, searching  
 mong the slain, by moon-light, she di  
 covered him stripped and struggling f  
 life, and by the help of a servant, broug  
 him to a shepherd's cottage, where sh  
 dressed his wounds and recovered hi  
 to their mutual joy; though this joy w  
 much abated when they found he had lo  
 his eyes; but love working in her hear  
 this misfortune could not alter her affe  
 tion, but comforting him in the best man  
 ner she could, brought him back to Eng  
 land, now unfit for service, and they se  
 tled at Bethnal Green, in the county  
 Middlesex.



## CHAP II.

Monford arrives in England; of his cold Entertainment from his friends; and his resolution to beg on Ethnal Green.

**M**ONFORD escaping the storm, on his return landed in Essex, where he had some rich relations, to whom he applied himself, but found a very cold entertainment, insomuch, that scorning to rely on their charity, he told the kind partner of his joy and sorrow, he intended early in the morning to hasten towards London, and that he had rather trust to Providence, than the ingratiude of those who, in his prosperity, had caressed him. His wife cherished him, saying she would not be idle, but do the utmost of her endeavours. And so, without taking leave of any, early in the morning they departed, and in two days travelling, having spent what little money they had, necessity so far humbled his high spirit, that he did not think it amiss to crave the charity of people, who, understanding he got his blindness in fighting for the honor of his

country, gave very liberally, insomuch  
that he resolved to be of good cheer, find-  
ing charity bestowed upon him faster than  
he expected; whereupon, arriving at  
place called Bethnal Green, with the little  
money good people had given him, he  
hired a small cottage for his wife and  
himself, and daily appeared publicly to  
beg alms.



Hence he was called the Blind Beggar  
of Bethnal Green; and in a short time he  
found a thriving trade, insomuch that his  
bed of straw was changed for one of  
down, and all his other utensils for those  
of a better sort.

## CHAP. III.

Monford meets with Snap, an old experienced Beggar, who gives him a Light into the mysteries of the Canting Trade.

**M**ONFORD, having had good success by the side of the road, resolved to spend the rest of his time in this manner. He was one day encountered by an old proficient in the trade, who began to talk to him in the beggars dialect, [which kind of speech is known to none but themselves] Monford being ignorant, could make him no answer; which the other, whose name was Snap, perceiving, and knowing him, by that, to be a young beginner, he invited him to their rendezvous in Whitechapel; whither he went, and between them they tippled off four pots of hum, and then parted for that time.



## CHAP. IV.

Monford goes to the Beggar's Feast—an  
of his Entertainment.

**M**ONFORD, on his coming home declared to his wife what a companion he had met with, and whither he had been invited to go; and she advised him to perform his promise, and led him further herself. Snap knew him at first sight, and taking him by the hand, presented him with a bell and a dog trained to the business, which had been the companion of an eyeless beggar deceased.

After having feasted both him and his spouse in a splendid manner, they dismissed them, on promise that he would not be wanting at their yearly feast. So being dismissed, he trudged home with his tractable guide, who, ever after, was most serviceable to him.



## CHAP. V.

of his Success, and having a Daughter,  
whom he named Elizabeth.

**T**HE Blind Beggar, by his fortunate adventures scorned to be confined to his former plying places; but, by the help of his dog, he often trudged to London, where he picked up so much money that he frequently used to chant the following song:

A Beggar lives a merry life,  
And hath both wealth and ease;  
His days are free from care and strife,  
He doth whate'er he please.  
Whilst others labour, sweat and toil,  
His tongue doth gain him pelf;  
He travels with his dog and bell,  
And brings home store of wealth.

He being at this time in easy circumstances, to compleat his satisfaction, had

a daughter born, who was very beautiful, which made him think himself the happiest man alive. An hundred times he kissed and dandled her in his arms, and at her christening, which was performed with decency and prudence, caused her to be named Elizabeth, from whence she was called pretty Bessy.

As she grew up, her beauty, wit, shape, and other perfections, were so extraordinary, that her praises were always spoken of, especially by the young men, which made the young maids seek all opportunities to affront her openly, frequently calling her Beggar's Brat, which she bore as long as she could, with a becoming patience, and strove by gentle persuasions to make them leave off their reflections; but all proving to no purpose, she desired her parents to let her go and seek her fortune, to which they both consented with tears in their eyes, though they long opposed it, using many arguments to persuade her to the contrary: but finding her reasons weighty and tending to her advantage, they left her to her own discretion.



## CHAP. VI.

The Beggar's daughter leaves her father's house to seek her fortune, and of her entertainment.

**T**HE day being now come that pretty Bessy should depart, being furnished with clothes, money, and other necessaries, she fell on her knees, craving her father's blessing, which granted, they took a sad farewell, and betook them to their several callings; Montford to his mumping, his wife to her wheel, and Bessy to seek her fortune.

Pretty Bessy having left her father's house, travelled along the road, until she came to Stratford, trusting to fortune and the good and guardian angel to direct her,



And so travelling all night, by sun-rising she got to Rumford, where finding herself faint, she betook herself to an inn; there sitting down, she called for something to refresh herself, looking pensive, and sighing at her hard fortune; which the mistress perceiving, asked her whence she came, and in what place she was born? She said, she was forced, contrary to her expectations, to seek her fortune, and tho' born near London, was now driven from it. Upon this, the good woman being taken with her carriage, demanded if she would stay with her, and she would use her as a daughter, and not as a servant? To this, after a while she consented, and discharged herself so well in whatever she undertook, that she gained the love and esteem of all around her. Insomuch, that her name for ingenuity, and beauty, began to spread, and abundance of young men resorted to the house, on purpose to see her, and they all liked her; for Nature had made her so charming, that she could not but be admired, insomuch that many of them, as they found an opportunity, began to put love stories in her ears to which she gave but little heed, till four suitors

of great worth beat off those little assailants, and laid close siege, as will appear in the next chapter.

## CHAP. VII.

Pretty Bessy, living at an inn in Rumford is courted by several persons of good birth and fortune.

**I**T being secretly whispered that pretty Bessy must be more than she seemed, made her reputation higher, insomuch, that the innkeeper's son, a London merchant, a gentleman of good estate, and a rich knight, all courted her favour; to whose importunities she urged the meanness of her birth, and inequality of her fortune, desiring them to desist from their undertakings. This modest objection of her's, excited further imaginations of the worth of her parentage, and added more fuel to the fire—So easy are men to believe the things they would have. Insomuch that they began to renew their addresses by offering her jewels, rings, &c. which she refused, on account of her character, and therefore, she resolved to discover her parents, and that way to try the sin-

cerity of their affections, and she accordingly did so.

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CHAP. VIII.

Pretty Bessy declares her parents,—and loses all her lovers but one.

**O**UR beautiful virgin being pressed for love and enjoyment, found herself obliged to take a course to get rid of her lovers, or allot one of them to her share. Therefore she told them that she was not at her own disposal, and if they all loved her as sincerely as they pretended, she was contented her father should choose one for her, and whose choice should be hers.

This made them eager to know to whose share she should fall, and therefore desired her to inform them where her father lived.

My parents, worthy sirs, says she, live on Bethnal Green; my father is led by a



og with a bell, living on the charity of  
 od people; my mother is a woman that  
 ins for her bread. These are my pa-  
 nts, and I will not marry without their  
 nsent.

This struck our gallants as mute as a  
 mouse; after which, they scrupled to be-  
 lieve that such homespun people could be  
 the parents of such a charming maid;  
 but when she gave them an account of  
 her leaving them, they began to scratch  
 their noddles, stamp on the ground, and  
 raw in their horns faster than they put  
 them out. The merchant, gentleman, and  
 innkeeper, declaring, if it was so, she was  
 no wife for them; but the knight, who  
 who had a good estate, and did not stand  
 so much for interest, as the pleasing of  
 his fancy, after he had paused a little,  
 took the little maid by the hand, and said,  
 You see, my dearest, how those who  
 courted you in hopes of a fortune, are  
 vanished, now they find their mistake;  
 will you yield to one more constant?  
 You shall, without delay, be sole mis-  
 tress of my heart. Which she answer-

ed with a sigh. Alas! sir, I cannot expect so great a happiness, though I confess I esteemed you more than the rest; yet I will not dispose of myself without the consent of my father and mother; for though they are poor, they are nevertheless my parents.

This modesty kindled his passion more and more. Wherefore, after much discourse, and many vows of constancy, it was agreed, that he should be ready with a horse and servants the next morning early, and she would come and ride with him to Bethnal Green, to require the old peoples' consent. Yet this was not carried on so secret, but the spies abroad discovered it, not only to the knight's uncle, who managed his estate, but likewise to most of the young men of Rumford, who were her admirers.

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## CHAP. IX.

Pretty Bessy rides behind the Knight to her father's house, where the beggar drops angels with the knight's uncle.

**O**UR beautiful virgin met her courteous knight at the appointed time, and relying on his fidelity, she got up behind him.



But scarce were they out of town, before the knight's uncle went to the inn, and missing them there, suspected to be true what had been told him, and followed them, to prevent the match; as did likewise the young men who were smitten with her, to take her from the



Knight, who they feared had carried her away by force.

Thus, there was great confusion and hurry; and the townsmen taking the nearest way got before them, ere they arrived at Bethnal Green, and fell upon him, without giving him leave to speak for himself, so there being a sharp contest, until such time as some persons coming by, parted them. When they being informed of the truth of the matter, asked his pardon, which he granted, and dismissing them, went on his way, till coming to the old man's house, they alighted, which made him start from the fire and put his head out of the window, not knowing the meaning of the horses trampling at the door. Presently the Knight's uncle came up, puffing and blowing at a strange rate: Why, how now nephew! what is this I hear of you? are you mad? to disgrace your family by marrying a beggar's brat!! O for shame! for shame! consider better than make yourself a laughing-stock to men, by such a match—How comes this about, you saucy baggage—But however, I say, nephew, leave her, and I will provide for you a

match, who shall be rich and suitable to your condition.

To this the young Knight would have replied, but the beggar growing angry to hear his daughter so abused, thus interrupted him.

I cannot see you at all Sir, but I hear you too much, and more than becomes a gentleman; nor do I count my daughter so mean to be railed on at my own door; therefore hold your prating, Sir, or I will feel for you with my cudgel. If your kinsman don't think my child a fit match for him, he is welcome to let her alone. I think in good breeding she is not wanting; and for money, be it known to you, her father is ready to drop angels with you, for his girl take notice of that.

The gentleman immediately sent his servant to fetch what gold he had, whilst the beggar, from under a heap of rags, pulled out a catskin or two, lined with gold, and each party being ready, they rained a golden shower so plentifully that the gentleman's stock failed him; and the beggar not hearing it clink, fell

into a laughter, saying, How now, sir, is your money done so soon? I thought, at first you had more words than money, and now I am convinced of it: Pray, for your credit's sake, try your friends; for I have three or four catskin's more with gold puddings in their bellies. Indeed, said the gentleman, I am content to own you have outdone me, and think you have the philosopher's stone. or keep a familiar spirit to bring the gold to you from the mines that produce that metal. But seeing the world goes so well with you, I shall no more go about to persuade my nephew from being your son-in-law, but beg pardon for what I have done. O, you do! said the beggar, then things may be better still. Then turning to the knight, he said, Gather up these loose corns I have scattered, and there is another catskin to make just a thousand pounds, besides a hundred more to buy her a gown. Take this as her present portion, and as you behave yourself, expect more hereafter. Remember I give her to you with my blessing. Go to church and be married, and may prosperity attend you.

Upon this, the two lovers fell upon their knees, thanked him and departed; while



those who had been her suitors, hearing what had happened, were ready to hang themselves through madness.



## CHAP. X

Pretty Bessy is married to the knight, and her true pedigree discovered at a grand festival.

**T**HINGS coming to this pass, great preparations were made for the wedding, to which resorted many worthy persons. No cost was spared in rich apparel, or sumptuous fare, while the lovely bride was led to the church by the worthy bridegroom; and when the sacred bands

were tied, they went back with the like splendor into the place of festivity.

Excellently did she become and grace what she wore, nature having made her an exact pattern of beauty.

Being arrived at home, and the table spread, the bride, now of a beggar's daughter made a Lady, took her place outshining the other beauties who were there, as far as the moon is outshone by the sun.

And now nothing was wanting but the old beggar and his wife, who soon came dressed in silk and velvet, embroidered with gold; so all things went on in mirth and great was the satisfaction the company received in the repast, but more so in the music, dancing, masquerading, &c. and in the conclusion, the old man sung the following song.

THE BLIND MAN'S SONG.

You gallants all that here are come,  
 To make this day more happy prove,  
 Know tho' I'm blind I am not dumb,  
 But wish you happiness in love.

The bride, tho' her birth seem but mean,  
 Descended of a worthy race,  
 Her ancestors they great have been,  
 If you her pedigree do trace.

Know she is Monford's daughter fair,  
 Who lost his sight in wars with France,  
 Who ever since in begging here,  
 Did take this happy thriving chance.

Consider, bridegroom, then her birth,  
 Which some do think but mean and  
 low,  
 I as much honor can bring forth,  
 As you have riches for to shew.



The name of Monford, which had been held so famous for virtue and valour in those days, did not a little cause wonder in the hearers, who, desiring him to explain himself, plainly told them his adventures in France and England, and how he took up the trade of begging, and the like; which caused a general joy, since those who had formerly known him by that name, supposed him to be dead. So the bridegroom found himself now more happy than ever. And old Monford promised, for the credit of his daughter, to leave off the begging trade, and to live on what money he had got. So the day was concluded to the joy and satisfaction of all parties.

FINIS.