

and when at length we do discover traces of the prodigal, she is in a worse plight even than before. In the interval we find that she had contracted a mysterious marriage. The second husband, like the first, is dead, and has left her saddled with the burden of his debts. An important change, too, has taken place in her way of life.

Harried, pursued, hunted by a whole pack in full cry, she has abandoned the costume of her sex, and henceforth will wear the trappings of a man.

Under the nickname of "Sir Charles" we catch a glimpse of the unhappy woman in a sponging-house, from which she is rescued by a subscription, raised through the compassion of the frail sisterhood of the Piazza. Pursued again as soon as free, she is protected by a soft-hearted bailiff, who, won by the occult fascination as most people were, changed hats with her—her own silver-faced one being only too well known—in order that she may take refuge in a deserted mansion in Great Queen street, where she will find her little daughter. The door had scarcely closed upon "Sir Charles," than, too much perturbed by sudden frenzy any longer to dread her tormentors, she rushes bareheaded into the road with flying hair and piteous cries for help.

What signify bailiffs now? The child is dying—dead perhaps—will no one fetch a loach?

The spectacle of this youthful gentleman, a boy almost, in such dire distress over the loss of a little child, moves the sympathies of the mob. They sway to and fro with words of pity, and are hesitating how to act, when one, venerable and kindly visaged, breaks through their ranks and leads the youth indoors.

He communes with the friendless boy, deplores his plight, takes him home to his own house along with the child (who was not dead as it turned out), and nurses the twain into convalescence. Good-natured Mrs. Woffington comes to the assistance of "Sir Charles," as do Garrick, Rich, Lacey, and other historians.

Charlotte is in clover for a while; safe from duns and debts, well fed, well clothed, well housed, and is content to lie for a month or two in the lap of luxury, without troubling herself as to who is paymaster, or worrying

her easy-going mind with the vexations of the future.

But a time comes when a restless devil within goads her once more to action. Charlotte Charke fully made up her mind to return to the stage. She never assumed her second husband's name, though her aliases were many and various. To return openly to the stage was impossible, as much on account of her angry father's influence as for fear of the army of creditors.

So night after night she (or rather he) stole with trembling limbs and aching heart to the self-same familiar tennis-court where the belles used to applaud the puppet-show, to ask if a character was wanting in one of the plays that were constantly being got up there. Queer things took place in that theatre.

Once, in the concluding act of a tragedy, a young hero beheld a mirmidon of the law awaiting his exit in the alleys to march him off to durance vile. Scarcely knowing what he did, he drew a busk from the stays of the heroine who reposed upon his breast, and plunged it into his heart, putting an end to his own useless life, as well as to his stage rant.

About the purlieu of this peculiar abiding-place of the Muses Charlotte elected to hang, in expectation of something turning up. One night there was tribulation there, since the Captain Plume of the evening had just arrived in his sedan, speechlessly and hopelessly intoxicated. Captain Plume is the chief part in the favorite play of "The Recruiting Officer." No more could "The Recruiting Officer" be enacted without Plume than could "Hamlet" without the Prince of Denmark. Where, at the last moment was a Plume to be found?

A modest youth, slipped and down at heel, stepped in from the miry courtyard. "If it should please your honors," he said, with a graceful bow, "I would play Plume. I know that part as well as most other parts in the accepted repertory, and have with me, by good fortune, a clean shirt and stockings."

In a trice the drunken captain was bereft of his stage glory, and the amiable youth implored to be quick in dressing. But the youth had an eye to the main chance. "I care not a fig for your art," he cried, in scorn, with lamentable downrightiness. "With me it is a matter of bread and cheese. Pay me a