

Sera nunquam est ad
vires vires via. (Seneca)

Charles Beade

Margate June 27.
1857.

READE, Charles, D. C. L., *reed*, a novelist of great power and originality, who was called to the bar in 1843, after a successful career at Oxford, which culminated in his being made fellow of Magdalen College. His best work, perhaps, is "Never Too Late to Mend," while his latest "Put Yourself in his Place,"

His father seems to have been a commonplace country gentleman. His mother was a daughter of Major Scott, or Scott-Waring, the "jackal" of Warren Hastings. In some respects she was a devoted mother, but she was whimsical: when her children came home from school or college she loved them for a day, tolerated them for a week, and then devoutly wished they were out of the house. She was honey one moment and vinegar the next; and much as she loved the baby Charles, she loved her own whims and fancies more. She seems to have been a woman of some strength of character and originality—she "abominated the low wit of Dickens," but found "James, with his love-ladies, interesting"—and Charles Reade was no doubt right in boasting himself "his mother's son." She became an ardent Evangelical, was intimate with many distinguished clergymen of that school, and died at the age of ninety.

Charles Reade's first schoolmaster was the Rev. Mr. Slatter, of Ifley, a merciless martinet; his second was the amiable and indulgent Mr. Hearn, curate of Staines.

In 1831 he was elected to a Demy-ship at Magdalen College, Oxford. He read little (his tutor, by the way, was Robert Lowe, afterwards Lord Sherbrooke); but once a Demy, he could scarcely miss a Fellowship save by gross misconduct or stupidity. According to his report, it was his dependence on his Fellowship which prevented him from marrying.

He was called to the Bar in 1842, but never practised. An attempt to establish a trade in Italian violins was unsuccessful, and for some years, though his income of about £330 should have sufficed for a bachelor, he was in serious pecuniary straits.

So early as 1835 he had begun to make notes with a view to writing fiction, but he did not set to work seriously until 1850. Then "I wrote," he says, "about thirteen dramas which nobody would play."

One of these luckless works brought him into contact with Mrs. Seymour, then an actress at the Haymarket. He called to read her a play, and was mortally offended by her asking, "Why don't you write novels?" She mistook his wrath for the pride of poverty, and sent him a £5 note; and thus began a thirty years' intimacy of a purely Platonic character.

Soon afterwards Tom Taylor's collaboration enabled him to mould the idea of *Masks and Faces* into actable form. The play was produced at the Haymarket in 1852; and from this time forward the story of his career resolves itself into a list of his plays, novels, and controversies.

He became known to the reading public in 1852 as the author of "Peg Woffington." This was followed in the succeeding year by "Christie Johnstone." After these came the well-known work "It is Never too Late to Mend," "The Cloister and the Hearth," "Hard Cash," "Griffith Gaunt," "Put Yourself in His Place," and many others whose names are familiar to all readers of fiction.

A good deal might be said regarding Charles Reade's connection with the stage. Dramatic writing was his hobby; he loved it with all his heart and soul; and he loved it none the less because he was again and again defeated in his efforts to attain success. It was George Eliot's ambition to be recognised as a poet; it was Charles Reade's to triumph as a dramatist. In neither case was the wish completely granted. When the drama of *It is Never too Late to Mend* was first produced, it was a comparative failure; and it was only in