

The remarkable life of John Elwes Esq., member in three successive Parliaments for Berkshire, with singular anecdotes, etc. Supposed to be the greatest instance of penury, that ever existed / [Edward Topham].

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THE REMARKABLE
L I F E
OF
JOHN ELWES Esq.

MEMBER IN THREE SUCCESSIVE PARLIAMENTS,
FOR BERKSHIRE,

WITH
SINGULAR ANECDOTES, &c.

Written by CAPTAIN TOPHAM.

SUPPOSED TO BE THE GREATEST INSTANCE OF
PENURY, THAT EVER EXISTED.

“A Miser is an enemy to mankind; for how can he feel for others who is ever cruel to himself: his breast is steeled against humanity: his heart knows no mirth, nor does the tear of sensibility bedew his cheek: gold, that’s a blessing to others, to him doth prove a curse: care torments him, and he has no comforter.”

O’KEEFFE.

A NEW EDITION.

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MDCCXCVII.





THE LIFE OF
JOHN ELWES, Esq.

MEGGOT was the family-name of Mr. Elwes; and his name being John, the conjunction of Jack Meggot, induced strangers to imagine sometimes that his friends were addressing him by an assumed appellation. The father of Mr. Elwes was an eminent brewer; and his dwelling-house and offices were situated in Southwark; which borough was formerly represented in parliament by his grand-father, Sir George Meggot. During his life, he purchased the estate now in the possession of the family of the Calverts, at Marcham, in Berkshire. The father died when the late Mr. Elwes was only four years old; so that little of the singular character of Mr. Elwes is to be attributed to him; but from the mother it may be traced with ease: she was left nearly one hundred thousand pounds by her husband,—and yet starved herself to death.

The only children from the above marriage, were Mr. Elwes, and a daughter, who married the father of the late Colonel Timms—and from thence came the intail of some part of the present estate.

Mr. Elwes, at an early period of life, was sent to Westminster School, where he remained ten or twelve years. He certainly, during that time, had not misapplied his talents—for he was a good

classical scholar to the last—and it is a circumstance very remarkable, yet well authenticated, that he never read afterwards. Never, at any period of his future life, was he seen with a book; nor has he, in all his different houses, left behind him two pounds worth of literary furniture. His knowledge in accounts was little—and in some measure may account for his total ignorance as to his own concerns.

The cotemporaries of Mr. Elwes, at Westminster, were Mr. Worsley, late Master of the Board of Works, and the late Lord Mansfield; who, at that time, borrowed all that young Elwes would lend. His Lordship, however, afterwards changed his disposition.

Mr. Elwes from Westminster-School, removed to Geneva, where he shortly after entered upon pursuits more congenial to his temper, than study. The riding-master of the academy had then three of the best horsemen in Europe; Mr. Worsley, Mr. Elwes, and Sir Sydney Meadows. Elwes, of the three, was accounted the most desperate: the young horses were put into his hands always; and he was, in fact, the rough rider to the other two.

He was introduced, during this period, to Voltaire, whom, in point of appearance, he somewhat resembled: but though he has often mentioned this circumstance, neither the genius, the fortune, nor the character of Voltaire, ever seemed to strike him as worthy of envy.

Returning to England, after an absence of two or three years, he was to be introduced to his uncle, the late Sir Harvey Elwes, who was then living at Stoke, in Suffolk, the most perfect picture of human penury perhaps, that ever existed. In
him

him, the attempts of saving money were so extraordinary, that Mr. Elwes never quite reached them, even at the most covetous period of his life.

To this Sir Harvey Elwes, he was to be the heir, and of course it was policy to please him. On this account it was necessary even in old Mr. Elwes, to masquerade a little; and as he was at that time in the world, and its affairs, he dressed like other people. This would not have done for Sir Harvey. The nephew, therefore, used to stop at a little inn, at Chelmsford, and begin to dress in character—a pair of small iron buckles, worsted stockings, darned, a worn-out old coat, and a tattered waistcoat, were put on; and forwards he rode to visit his uncle; who used to contemplate him with a kind of miserable satisfaction, and seemed pleased to find his heir bidding fair to rival him in the unaccountable pursuit of avarice. There they would sit—sparing souls!—with a single stick upon the fire, and with one glass of wine, occasionally, betwixt them, inveighing against the extravagance of the times; and when evening shut in, they would immediately retire to rest—as “going to bed saved candle-light.”

The nephew, however, had then, what indeed he never lost—a very extraordinary appetite—and this would have been an unpardonable offence in the eye of the uncle; Mr. Elwes was therefore obliged to partake of a dinner, first, with some country neighbour, and then return to his uncle with a little diminutive appetite, that quite engaged the heart of the old gentleman.

A partridge, a small pudding, and one potatoe, did the whole business! and the fire was even suffered to die away while Sir Harvey was at dinner, as eating was a sufficient exercise. Sir

Sir Harvey, in truth, was a most singular character—and the way in which he lived was no less so. His seclusion from the world nearly reached that of an hermit: and, extreme avarice excepted, a more blameless life was never led by mortal.

SKETCH OF SIR HARVEY ELWES.

SIR HARVEY ELWES succeeded SIR JERVAISE, a very worthy gentleman, that had involved, as far as they would go, all the estates he received and left behind him. Sir Harvey, on his death, found himself possessed, nominally, of some thousands a year, but really with an income of one hundred pounds per annum. On his arrival at Stoke, the family feat, he said, "that never would he leave it till he had entirely cleared the paternal estate;"—this he not only accomplished; but, besides, lived to realize above one hundred thousand pounds.

In his youth he had been given over for a consumption, so he had no constitution and no passions. He was timid, shy, and diffident in the extreme: of a thin spare habit of body, and without a friend upon earth. The hoarding up, and the counting his money, formed his greatest joy. Next to that was—partridge-setting: at which he was so great an adept, and game was then so plentiful—that he has been known to take five hundred brace of birds in one season. But he lived upon partridges—he and his whole little household, consisting of one man and two maids. What they could not eat he turned loose again, as he never gave any thing away to his neighbours.

Sir Harvey and his man never missed a day, during the partridge season, if the weather was tolerable

tolerable—and his breed of dogs being remarkably good, he seldom failed taking great quantities of game.

At all times, he wore a black velvet cap much over his face—a worn-out full-dressed suit of cloaths, an old great coat, with worsted stockings drawn up over his knees. He rode a thin thorough-bred horse, and “the horse and his rider” both looked as if a gust of wind would have blown them away together.

When the weather was not fine enough to tempt him abroad, he would walk backwards and forwards in his old hall, to save the expence of fire. If a farmer in his neighbourhood came in on business, he would strike a light in a tinder-box that he kept by him, and putting one single stick upon the grate, would not add another, until the first was nearly consumed.

Having little connection with London, he generally had three or four thousand pounds at a time in his house. A set of fellows, who were afterwards known by the appellation of the Thackstead Gang—and who were afterwards all hung—formed a plan to rob him. They were totally unsuspected at that time, each having some apparent occupation during the day, and went out only at night, upon very good intelligence.

It was Sir Harvey's custom to retire to his bed-chamber at eight o'clock; where, after taking a basin of water-gruel, by the light of a small fire, he went to bed—to save the unnecessary extravagance of a candle.

The gang, who perfectly knew the hour when his servant went to the stable, leaving their horses in a small grove on the Essex side of the river, walked across, and hid themselves in the church porch,

porch, till they saw the man come up to his horses, when they immediately fell upon him; and, after some little struggle, bound and gagged him; ran up towards the house; tied the two maids together; and going up to Sir Harvey, presented their pistols, and sternly demanded his money.

Never did Sir Harvey behave so well as in this transaction. When the villains asked for his money, he would give them no answer till they had assured him that his servant, a great favorite, was safe:—he then delivered them a key of a drawer in which was fifty guineas. But they well knew he had much more in the house, and again threatened his life, without he discovered where it was deposited. At length he reluctantly shewed them the place, and they turned out a large drawer, which contained seven and twenty hundred guineas. This they packed up in two large baskets, and actually carried off. A robbery which, for *Quantity of Specie* was perhaps never equalled. They told him before they went off, that they should leave a man behind, who would murder him if he even stirred for assistance. On which he very colly, and indeed with some simplicity, took out his watch, which they had not asked him for, and said, “Gentlemen, I do not want to take any advantage of you; therefore, upon my honour, I will give you twenty minutes for your escape: after that time, nothing shall prevent me from seeing my servant.” He was strictly as good as his word: when the time expired, he went and untied the man. Though search was made by the justice of the village, the robbers were not discovered: and when they were apprehended some years afterwards for other offences, and were known to be the men
who

who had robbed Sir Harvey, he would not appear against them. "No, no," said he, "I have lost my money; I will not lose my time also." So that, however culpable he may be considered on the score of penury, he must certainly be acquitted of the passion of revenge.

Of what temperance can affect, Sir Harvey was an instance. At an early period of life, he was given over for a consumption, and he lived till betwixt eighty and ninety years of age.

Amongst the few acquaintances he had—and they were few indeed—was an occasional club held at his own village of Stoke—and there were members of it, two baronets besides himself, Sir Cordwell Firebras, and Sir John Barnardiston. The reckoning to these congenial souls, was always an object of investigation. As they were one day settling his difficult point. an old fellow, who was a member, called out to a friend who was passing—"For heaven's sake, step up stairs, and assist the poor!" Here are three baronets, worth a million of money, quarrelling about a farthing!

After Sir Harvey's death, the only tear dropped upon his grave, fell from the eye of his servant, who had long and faithfully attended him. To that servant he bequeathed a farm of 50*l.* per annum. "to him and to his heirs."

In the chastity and abstinence of his life, Sir Harvey Elwes was a rival to Sir Isaac Newton—for he would have held it unpardonable to have given—even his affections: and, as he saw no lady whatever, he had but little chance of bartering matrimonially for money.

When he died, he lay in state, such as it was, at his seat at Stoke. Some of the tennants observed

ved, with more humour than decency, "that it was well Sir Harvey could not see it."

His fortune which had now become immense, fell to his nephew, Mr. Meggot; who, by will, was ordered to assume the name and arms of Elwes.

Thus lived, and thus died, the uncle to old Mr. Elwes, whose possessions, at the time of his death, were supposed to be, at least, two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, and whose annual expenditure was about one hundred and ten pounds! Though the robbery before mentioned probably did not accelerate his death, it yet lay heavy on his spirits; but more particularly when employed in the delightful task of counting his gold.

However incredible this may appear, it is yet strictly true: that his cloaths cost him nothing, for he took them out of an old chest, where they had lain since the gay days of Sir Jervaise.

He kept his household chiefly upon game and fish from his own pond: the cows which grazed before his own door, furnished milk, cheese, and butter, for the little economical household; and what fuel he did burn, his woods supplied.

To those who cannot exist out of the bustle of Society, and the fever of public scenes, it may be curious to know, that here was a man, who had the courage to live, as it were, nearly seventy years alone!

To the whole of his uncle's property, Mr. Elwes succeeded; and it was imagined, that of his own, was not at the time, very inferior. He got too, an additional feat—but he got it, as it had
been

been most religiously delivered down for ages past : the furniture was most sacredly antique ; not a room was painted, nor a window repaired ; the beds above stairs were all in canopy and state, where the worms and moths held undisturbed possession ; and the roof of the house was inimitable for the climate of Italy.

Mr. Elwes had now advanced beyond the fortieth year of his age ; and for fifteen years previous to this period it was, that he was known in the fashionable circles of London. He had always a turn for play, and it was only late in life, and from paying always, and not always being paid, that he conceived disgust at the inclination.

The acquaintances which he had formed at Westminster-School, and at Geneva, together with his own large fortune, all conspired to introduce him into whatever society he liked best. He was admitted a member of the club at Arthur's, and various other clubs of that period. And, as some proof of his notoriety at that time, as a man of deep play, Mr. Elwes, the late Lord Robert Bertie, and some others, are noticed in a scene in the Adventures of a Guinea, for the frequency of their midnight orgies. Few men, even from his own acknowledgment, had played deeper than himself ; and with success more various. He once played two days and a night without intermission ; and the room being a small one, the party were nearly up to the knees in cards. He lost some thousands at that sitting. The late Duke of Northumberland, who would never quit a table where any hope of winning remained—was of the party.

Had

Had Mr. Elwes received all he won, he would have been the richer by some thousands, for the mode in which he passed this part of his life; but the vowels of I, O, U, were then in use, and the sums that were owed him, even by very noble names, were not liquidated. The theory which he professed, "that it was impossible to ask a gentleman for money," he perfectly confirmed by the practice; and he never violated this peculiar feeling to the last hour.

His manners were gentle, so attentive, so gentlemanly, and so engaging, that rudeness could not ruffle them, nor strong ingratitude break their observance. He had the most gallant disregard of his own person, and all care about himself.

When seventy-three, he walked out a shooting with his friends, to see whether a pointer, one of them at that time valued much, was as good a dog as some he had had in the time of Sir Harvey. After walking for some hours, much unfatigued, he determined against the dog, but with all due ceremony. One of the gentlemen who was a very indifferent shot, by firing at random, lodged two pellets in the cheek of Mr. Elwes; the blood appeared, and the shot certainly gave him pain; but when the gentleman came to make his apology, and profess his sorrow—"My dear Sir," said the old man, "I give you joy on your improvement—I knew you would hit something by and by."

After sitting up a whole night at play, for thousands, with the most fashionable and profligate men of the time, amidst splendid rooms, gilt sofas, wax lights, and waiters attendant on his call, he would walk out about four in the morning, not towards home, but into Smithfield! to meet

meet his own cattle, which were coming to market from Thaydon-Hall, a farm of his in Essex. There would this same man, forgetful of the scenes he had just left, stand in the cold or rain, bartering with a carcass-butcher for a shilling! Sometimes he would walk on in the mire to meet them; and, more than once, has gone on foot the whole way to his farm without stopping, which was seventeen miles from London, after sitting up the whole night.

Had every man been of the mind of Mr. Elwes, the race of inn-keepers must have perished, and post-chaises have been turned back to those who made them; for it was the business of his life to avoid both. He always travelled on horseback. To see him setting out on a journey, was a matter truly curious: his first care was to put two or three eggs boiled hard, into his great-coat pocket, or any scraps of bread which he found—baggage he never took—then, mounting one of his hunters, his next attention was to get out of London, into that road where the turnpikes were the fewest. Then, stopping under any hedge where grass presented itself for his horse, and a little water for himself, he would sit down and refresh himself and his horse together—here presenting a new species of bramin, worth five hundred thousand pounds.

The chief residence of Mr. Elwes, at this period of his life, was in Berkshire, at his own seat at Marcham. Here it was he had two sons born, who now inherit the greatest part of his property, by a will made about the year 1785. He failed not, however, at this time, to pay very frequent visits, to Sir Harvey, his uncle, and used to attend him in his daily amusements of
B partridge-setting.

partridge-setting. Mr. Elwes was then supposed to have some of the best setting-dogs in the kingdom—their breed and colour were peculiar—they were of a black tan, and more resembled a hound than a setter.

Mr. Elwes, on the death of his uncle, came to reside at Stoke in Suffolk. Bad as was the mansion-house he found here, he left one still worse behind him at Marcham, of which the late Colonel Timms, his nephew, used to mention the following proof. A few days after he went thither, a great quantity of rain fell in the night; he had not been long in bed before he found himself wet through; and putting his hand out of the cloaths, found the rain was dropping through the ceiling upon the bed: he got up and moved the bed; but he had not lain long before he found the same inconveniency continued. He got up again, and again the rain came down. At length, after pushing the bed quite round the room, he retired into a corner where the ceiling was better secured, and there he slept till morning. When he met his uncle at breakfast, he told him what had happened—"Aye! aye!" said the old man, seriously, "I don't mind it myself; but to those who do, that's a nice corner, in the rain!"

Mr. Elwes, on coming into Suffolk, first began to keep fox hounds; and his stable of hunters, at that time, was said to be the best in the kingdom. Of the breed of his horses he was certain, because he bred them himself; and they were not broke in till they were six years old.

The keeping of fox-hounds was the only instance in the whole life of Mr. Elwes, of his ever sacrificing money to pleasure. But even here every thing was done in the most frugal manner.

ner. His huntsman had, by no means, an idle life of it. This famous lacquey might have fixed an epoch in the history of servants; for, in a morning, getting up at four o'clock, he milked the cows—he then prepared breakfast for his master, or any friends he might have with him: then, slipping on a green coat, he hurried into the stable, saddled the horses, got the hounds out of the kennel, and away they went into the field. After the fatigues of hunting, he refreshed himself by rubbing down two or three horses as quickly as possible; then running into the house to lay the cloth, and waited at dinner; then hurrying again into the stable to feed the horses—diversified with an interlude of the cows again to milk, the dogs to feed, and eight horses to litter down for the night. What may appear extraordinary, this man lived in this place for some years, though his master used often to call him “an idle dog!” and say, “the rascal wanted to be paid for doing nothing!”

Mr. Elwes, it has been already remarked, was one of the best gentlemen riders in the kingdom. Sir Sidney Meadows, who is the law upon this subject, always allowed it. His knowledge in horses was no way inferior; and, therefore, while he rode before the whole country of Suffolk, the horses he rode were the admiration of every body. As no bad proof of this, he had offered him for one of his hunters, the sum of three hundred guineas, and for another two hundred and fifty; a sum in those days almost incredible, when a very good horse might be bought for fifteen pounds.

As soon as his horses were perfectly dry after hunting, if the weather was clear he alway
turned

turned them out for two or three hours, let the cold be ever so intense. Thus they walked off the stiffness occasioned by fatigue, and preserved their feet—and to this he attributed their being able to carry him when one of them was twenty-two years old.

An inn upon the road, and an apothecary's bill, were equal objects of aversion to Mr. Elwes. The words "give," and "pay," were not found in his vocabulary; and therefore, when he once received a very dangerous kick from one of his horses, who fell in going over a leap, nothing could persuade him to have any assistance. He rode the chase through, with his leg cut to the bone; and it was only some days afterwards, when it was feared an amputation would be necessary, that he consented to go up to London, and, dismal day! part with some money for advice.

The whole fox-hunting establishment of Mr. Elwes, huntsmen, dogs, and horses, did not cost him three hundred pounds a year! In the summer, they always passed their lives with the different tenants, where they always had "more meat and less work;" and were collected together a few days before the season began.

While he kept hounds, and which consumed a period of nearly fourteen years, Mr. Elwes almost totally resided at Stoke, in Suffolk. He sometimes made excursions to New-market—but never engaged on the turf. A kindness, however, which he performed there, should not pass into oblivion.

Lord Abington, who was slightly known to Mr. Elwes in Berkshire, had made a match for seven thousand pounds, which, it was supposed he would be obliged to forfeit, from an inability

to produce the sum, though the odds were greatly in his favour. Unasked, unsolicited, Mr. Elwes made him an offer of the money, which he accepted, and won his engagement.

On the day when this match was to be run, a clergyman had agreed to accompany Mr. Elwes to see the fate of it. They were to go, as was his custom, on horseback, and were to set out at seven in the morning. Imagining they were to breakfast at New-market, the gentleman took no refreshment, and away they went. They reached New-market, about eleven; and Mr. Elwes began to busy himself in enquiries and conversation, till twelve, when the match was decided in favour of Lord Abington. He then thought they should move off to the town, to take some breakfast: but old Elwes still continued riding about, till three; and then four arrived. At which time the gentleman grew so impatient, that he mentioned something of the keen air of New-market heath, and the comforts of a good dinner—"Very true," said old Elwes, "very true—so here, do as I do!"—offering him at the same time, from his great-coat pocket, a piece of an old crushed pancake, "which," he said, "he had brought from his house at Marcham, two months before—but that it was as good as new."

The sequel of the story was, that they did not reach home till nine in the evening, when the gentleman was so tired that he gave up all refreshment but rest! and old Mr. Elwes, having hazarded seven thousand pounds in the morning, went happily to bed with the reflection—he had saved three shillings!

He had brought with him his two sons out of Berkshire; and certainly, if he liked any thing, it was these boys. But no money would he lavish

on their education; for he declared, that “putting things into people’s heads, was taking money out of their pockets.”

From this mean, and almost ludicrous desire of saving, no circumstance of tenderness or affection—no sentiment of sorrow or compassion—could turn him aside. The more diminutive the object seemed, his attention grew the greater; and it appeared as if Providence had formed him in a mould that was miraculous, purposely to exemplify that trite saying—Penny wise, and pound foolish.

Mr. Elwes was certainly not troubled with too much natural affection. One day he had put his eldest boy upon a ladder, to get some grapes for the table, when, by the ladder slipping, he fell down, and hurt his side against the end of it. The boy had the precaution to go up to the village to the barber and get booded; on his return, he was asked where he had been, and what was the matter with his arm? He told his father that he had got bled—“Bled! bled!” said the old gentleman; ‘but what did you give?’ “A shilling;” answered the boy.—“Psha!” returned the father, “you are a blockhead! never part with your blood!”

From the parsimonious manner in which Mr. Elwes now lived—for he was fast following the footsteps of Sir Harvey—and from the two large fortunes of which he was in possession—riches rolled in upon him like a torrent—But as he knew almost nothing of accounts and never reduced his affairs to writing—he was obliged, in the disposal of his money, to trust much to memory—to the suggestions of other people still more: hence every person who had a want or a
scheme,

scheme, with an apparent high interest—adventurer or honest, it signified not—all was prey to him; and he swam about like the *enormous pike*, which, ever voracious and unsatisfied, catches at every thing, till it is itself caught!—Hence are to be reckoned, visions of distant property in America; phantoms of annuities on lives that could never pay; and bureaux filled with bonds of *promising* peers and members, long *dismembered* of all property. Mr. Elwes lost in this manner full *one hundred and fifty thousand pounds!*

But what was got from him was only obtained from his want of knowledge—by knowledge that was superior; and knaves and sharpers might have lived upon him, while poverty and honesty would have starved.

Not to the offers of *high interest* alone, were his ears open: the making him trifling presents, or doing business for him without reward, were little snug allurements, which, in the hands of the needy, always drew him on to a loan of money. A small wine merchant who had these views—begged his acceptance of some very *fine wine*, and in a short time obtained the loan of seven hundred pounds. Old Elwes used, ever after, to say, “*It was, indeed, very fine wine, for it cost him twenty pounds a bottle!*”

Thus was there a reflux of some of that wealth, which he was gradually denying himself every comfort to amass. For in the penury of Mr. Elwes, there was something that seemed like a judgment from heaven. All earthly comforts he voluntarily denied himself: he would walk home in the rain, in London, sooner than pay a shilling for a coach, he would sit in wet clothes sooner than have a fire to dry them: he
would

would eat his provisions in the last stage of putrefaction, sooner than have a fresh joint from the butcher's: and he wore a wig for above a fortnight, which he picked up out of a rut in a lane. This was the last extremity of laudable œconomy! for, to all appearance, it was the cast-off wig of some beggar!—The day in which he first appeared in this ornament, exceeded all the power of farce; for he had torn a brown coat, which he generally wore, and had therefore been obliged to have recourse to the old chest of Sir Jervaise, from whence he had selected a full-dressed green velvet coat, with slash sleeves: and there he sat at dinner in boots, the aforesaid green velvet, his own white hair appearing round his face, and this black stray wig at the top of all.

When this inordinate passion for *saving* did not interfere, there are, upon record, some kind offices, and very active service undertaken by Mr. Elwes. He would go far and long to serve those who applied to him: and give—however strange the word from him—give himself great trouble to be of use. These instances are gratifying to select—it is plucking the sweet briar and the rose from the weeds that overspread the garden.

When Mr. Elwes was at Marcham, two very ancient maiden ladies, in his neighbourhood, had, for some neglect incurred the displeasure of the spiritual court, and were threatened with immediate "*excommunication!*"—The whole import of the word they did not perfectly understand, but they had heard something about standing in a church, and a penance; and their ideas immediately ran upon a *white sheet*. They concluded, if they once got into that, it was all
over

over with them; and as the excommunication was to take place the next day, away they hurried to Mr. Elwes, to know how they could make submission, and how the sentence might be prevented. No time was to be lost. Mr. Elwes, did that which, fairly speaking, not one man in five thousand would have done; he had his horse saddled, and putting, according to usual custom, a couple of hard eggs in his pocket, he set out for London that evening, and reached it early enough the next morning to notify the submission of the culprit damsels. Riding sixty miles in the night to confer a favor on two antiquated virgins, to whom he had no particular obligation, was really what not one man in five thousand would have done: but where personal fatigue could serve, Mr. Elwes never wanted alacrity.

The ladies were so overjoyed—so thankful; so much trouble and expence!—What returns could they make? An old Irish gentleman, their neighbour, who knew Mr. Elwes's mode of travelling, wrote these words to them by way of consolation—"My dears, is it *expence* you are talking of?—send him *sixpence*, and he then gains *twopence* by the journey!"

Mr. Elwes, while he resided in Berkshire, proved himself an upright and impartial magistrate; and it was almost totally owing to this best of recommendations, that an offer was made to him afterwards, of bringing him in as representative for the county. The prospect of a contested election, betwixt two most respectable families in Berkshire, first suggested the idea of proposing a *third person*, who might be unobjectionable to both parties. The *person thus* proposed, was Mr. Elwes; and the county were obliged to *Lord Craven*, for the proposition.

Mr. Elwes,

Mr. Elwes, at this period, was passing—amongst his horses and hounds, some rural occupations, and his country neighbours—the happiest hours of his life—where he forgot, for a time, at least, that strange *anxiety* and *continued irritation* about his money—which might be called the *insanity of saving!* But as his wealth was accumulating, many were kind enough to make applications to employ it for him. Some, very *obligingly*, would trouble him with nothing more than their *simple bond*—others offered him a scheme of great advantage, with “a small *risque* and a certain profit,” which as certainly turned out the reverse—and others proposed “tracts of lands in America, and plans that were sure of success.” But amidst these *kind offers*, the fruits of which Mr. Elwes long felt, and had to lament, some pecuniary accommodations, at a moderate interest, were not bestowed amiss, and enabled the borrowers to pursue *industry* into fortune, and form a settlement for life.

Mr. Elwes, from Mr. Meggot, his father, had inherited some property in London in houses; particularly about the Haymarket, not far from which old Mr. Elwes drew his first breath—being born in St. James’s parish. To this property he began now to add, by engagements with one of the Adams’s, about building, which he encreased from year to year to a very large extent. Great part of Marybone soon called him her founder. Portland Place and Portman Square, the riding houses and stables of the second troops of life guards, and buildings too numerous to name, all rose out of his *pocket*; and had not the fatal American war kindly put a stop to this rage of raising houses, much of the property he then possessed would have been laid out in bricks and mortar.

The

The extent of his property in this way soon grew so great, that he became, from judicious calculation, *his own insurer*: and he stood to all his losses by conflagrations. He soon, therefore, became a *philosopher upon fire*: and, on a public house belonging to him, being consumed, he said, with great composure—"Well, well, there is no great harm done: the *tenant* never paid me, and I should not have got quit of him so *quickly* in any other way."

It was the custom of Mr. Elwes, whenever he went to London, to occupy any of his premises which might happen to be then vacant: he travelled in this manner from street to street and whenever any body chose to take the house where he was, he was instantly ready to move into any other. He was frequently an itinerant for a *night's lodging*; and though master of above an hundred houses, he never wished to rest his head long in any he chose to call his own. A couple of beds, a couple of chairs, a table, and an old woman, comprised all his furniture; and he moved them about at a minute's warning. Of all these moveables, the old woman was the only one which gave him trouble, for she was afflicted with a lameness, that made it difficult to get her about quite so fast as he chose; and then the colds she took were amazing; for sometimes she was in a small house in the Haymarket; at another in a great house in Portland Place; sometimes in a little room and a coal fire; at other times with a few chips, which the carpenters had left, in rooms of most splendid, but frigid dimensions, and with a little *oiled paper* in the windows for glass. In truth, she perfectly realized the words of the Psalmist—for, though the old woman might

might not be wickered, she certainly was "here to-day, and gone to-morrow." The scene which terminated the life of this old woman, is not the least singular among the anecdotes that are recorded of Mr. Elwes. But it is too well authenticated to be doubted.

Mr. Elwes had come to town in his usual way and taken up his abode in one of his houses that were empty. Colonel Timms, who wished much to see him, by some accident was informed that his uncle was in London; but then how to find him was the difficulty. He enquired at all the usual places where it was probable he might be heard of: he went to Mr. Hoare's, his banker—to the Mount coffee-house—but no tidings were to be heard of him. Not many days afterwards, however, he learnt from a person whom he met accidentally, that they had seen Mr. Elwes going into an uninhabited house in Great Marlborough Street. This was some clue to Colonel Timms; and away he went thither. As the best mode of information, he got hold of a *chairman*—but no intelligence could he gain of a *gentleman* called Mr. Elwes. Colonel Timms then described his person—but *no gentleman* had been seen. A *pot boy*, however recollected, that he had seen a poor old man opening the door of the stable, and locking it after him: and from every description, it agreed with the person of old Mr. Elwes. Of course, Colonel Timms went to the house:—he knocked very loudly at the door—but no one answered. Some of the neighbours said they had seen such a man, but no answer could be obtained from the house. The Colonel, on this, resolved to have the stable-door opened; which being done, they entered the house

house together. In the lower parts of it, all was shut and silent; but, on ascending the staircase, they heard the moans of a person, seemingly in distress. They went to the chamber--and there, upon an old pallet-bed, lay stretched out, seemingly in death, *the figure* of old Mr. Elwes. For some time he seemed insensible that any body was near him; but on some cordials being administered by a neighbouring apothecary, who was sent for, he recovered enough to say:--"That he had, he believed, been ill for two or three days and that there was an old woman in the house, but for some reason or other she had not been near him. That she had been ill herself, but that she had got well, he supposed, and gone away."

They afterwards found the *old woman*—the companion of all his movements, and the partner of all his journies—stretched out lifeless on a rug upon the floor, in one of the garrets: she had been dead, to all appearances, about two days.

Thus died the servant; and thus would have died, but for the providential discovery of him by Colonel Timms, old Mr. Elwes, her master! His *mother*, Mrs. Meggot, who possessed *one hundred thousand pounds*, starved herself to death:—and her son, who certainly was then worth *half a million*, nearly died in his own house for absolute want!

Mr. Elwes, however, was not a hard landlord, and his tenants lived easily under him: but if they wanted any repairs, they were always at liberty to do them for themselves; for what may be stiled the *comforts of a house*, were unknown to him. What he allowed not to himself, it could scarcely be expected he would give to others.

He had resided about thirteen years in Suffolk, when the contest for Berkshire presented itself on the dissolution of the parliament; and when, to preserve the peace of that county, he was nominated by Lord Craven. To this, Mr. Elwes consented, but on the special agreement, that he was to be brought in for nothing. All he did was dining at the ordinary at Abingdon; and he got into parliament for the moderate sum of *eighteen-pence!*

He now left Suffolk, and went again to his seat at Marcham. His fox-hounds he took along with him; but finding his time would, in all probability, be much employed, he resolved to relinquish his hounds; and they were shortly after *given away* to some farmers in that neighbourhood!

Mr. Elwes was at this time nearly sixty years old; but was in possession of all his activity.—Preparatory to his appearance on the boards of St. Stephen's Chapel, he used to attend constantly, during the races and other public meetings, all the great towns where his voters resided; and at the different assemblies he would dance with agility amongst the youngest, to the last.

Mr. Elwes was chosen for Berkshire, in three successive parliaments: And he sat as member of the House of Commons about twelve years. It is to his honour—that, in every part of his conduct, and in every vote he gave, he proved himself to be an *independent* country gentleman.

Wishing for no post, desirous of no rank, wanting no emolument, and being most perfectly conscientious, he stood aloof from all those temptations which have led many good men astray from the paths of honour. All that a minister could have offered

offered to Mr. Elwes would have been of no avail; for posts or dignity would only have embarrassed him, by taking him away from the *privacy* he loved. As an instance of this, he was unhappy for some days on hearing that Lord North intended to apply to the King to make him a Peer. He never would have survived the being obliged to keep a carriage, and three or four servants—all, perhaps, better dressed than himself! For, thro' every period of his life, it was a prevalent feature in his character to be thought *poor*: that he could not afford to live as other people did: And that the reports of his being rich, were entirely erroneous.

When Mr. Elwes first took his seat, the Opposition of that time, headed by Mr. Fox, had great hopes that he would be of their party.---Mr. Fox had that knowledge of him, which has joined many to his politics. He had seen him at Newmarket, and knew that he was fond of *play*; and talked to him with that frankness, which, from abilities, and high political situation, is, and always must be, conciliating. These hopes however, were disappointed, in Mr. Elwes immediately joining the party of Lord North--and however it may now sound, it should be said, that let the public opinion of Lord North be now what it may, Mr. Elwes had no other motive for that union, than a fair and honest belief that the measures of Lord North were right. But Mr. Elwes was never of that decided and certain cast of men, that such a minister would best approve. He would frequently dissent, and really vote as his conscience led him. Hence, many members of opposition looked upon him as a man "off and on" or, as they stiled him, "*a*
Par-

Parliamentary coquette;" and it is somewhat remarkable, that both parties were equally fond of having him as a nominee on their contested elections; frequently he was the chairman; and he was remarkable for the patience with which he always heard the counsel. Of this quality, to get through life, few men (if any) have possessed a larger share; though in strict regard to truth, it may be added, he never had the good fortune to hear for one day—the *trial of Mr. Hastings*.

The *honour* of parliament made no alteration in the dress of Mr. Elwes: on the contrary, it seemed, at this time, to have attained additional meanness---and nearly to have reached that happy climax of poverty, which has, more than once, drawn on him the compassion of those who passed by him in the street. For the Speaker's dinners, he had indeed one suit---with which the Speaker, in the course of the session, became very familiar. The minister, likewise, was well acquainted with it---and at any dinner of opposition, still was his apparel the same. The wits of the minority used to say, "that they had full as much reason as the minister, to be satisfied with Mr. Elwes---as he had the *same habit* with every body!"

At this period of his life, Mr. Elwes wore a wig---Much about that time, when his parliamentary life ceased, that wig was worn out---so then, (being older and wiser as to expence) he wore his own hair---which, like his expences, was very small.

Shortly after Mr. Elwes first came into parliament, he went to reside with his nephew, Colonel Timms, who then had a house in Scotland Yard.

Old

Old Mr. Elwes still went on in his support of Lord North, and the madness of his American war, conducted as he conducted it, till the country grew tired of his administration. But the support given by Mr. Elwes was of the most disinterested kind, for no man was more materially a sufferer. The great property which he had in houses, and those chiefly amongst the new buildings of Marybone, was much injured by the war; and as no small proof of it, he had just then supplied the money to build a crescent at the end of Quebec Street, Portman Square, where he expended certainly not less than seven or eight thousand pounds, and which, from the want of inhabitants, at that time, was never finished.

Convinced, at length, of the ill conduct of Lord North, Mr. Elwes entered into a regular and systematic opposition to his measures, with the party of Mr. Fox; in which he continued till Lord North was driven from power, in March 1782. The debates at this period were very long and interesting, and generally continued till a late hour in the morning. Mr. Elwes, who never left any company, public or private, the first, always staid out the whole debate. After the division, Mr. Elwes, without a great coat, would immediately go out of the House of Commons into the cold air, and, merely to save the expence of a hackney-coach, walk to the Mount Coffee-house. Sir Joseph Mawbey, and Mr. Wood, of Lyttleton, who went the same way as Mr. Elwes did, often proposed a hackney-coach to him, but the reply always was, "he liked nothing so much as walking." However, when *their* hackney-coach used to overtake him, he had no objection to coming in to them; knowing that they must pay the fare.

A

A circumstance happened to him on one of his pedestrian returns, which gave him a whimsical opportunity of displaying a singular disregard of his own person. The night was very dark; and hurrying along, he went with such violence against the pole of a sedan chair, that he cut both his legs very deeply. As usual, he thought not of any assistance: but Colonel Timms, at whose house he then was, in Orchard Street, insisted upon some one being called in. He at length submitted; and an apothecary in consequence attended, who immediately began to expatiate on "the bad consequences of breaking the skin---the good fortune of his being sent for, and the peculiar bad appearance of Mr. Elwes's wound." "Very probably," said Mr. Elwes; "but, Mr.-----, I have one thing to say to you---" "In my opinion, my legs are not much hurt; now you think they are---so I will make this agreement: I will take one leg, and you shall take the other; you shall do what you please with your's, and I will do nothing to mine; and I will wager your bill that *my leg* gets well before *your's!*" He exultingly *beat* the apothecary by a *fortnight!*

The income of Mr. Elwes, all this time, was increasing hourly, and his present expenditure was next to nothing; for the little pleasures he had once engaged in, he had now given up. He kept no house, and only one old servant, and a couple of horses: He resided with his nephew; his two sons he had stationed in Suffolk and Berkshire to look after his respective estates; and his dress was certainly no expence to him.

When he left London, he went on horseback to his country seats, with his couple of *hard eggs*,
and

and without once stopping at any house upon the road. He always took the most unfrequented road--but Marcham was the seat he now chiefly visited; which had some reason to be flattered with preference, as his journey into Suffolk cost him only *two-pence halfpenny*, while that into Berkshire amounted to *four-pence*!

When this singular character thought he had got into the House of Commons for nothing he had not taken into the account the *inside* of the house--the *outside* only had entered into his calculation. In a short time, therefore, he found out, that members in Parliament could want money, and he had the misfortune to know *one member* who was inclined to lend them. Perhaps Fate ordained this retribution, and designed that *thus only*, some of the enormous wealth of Mr. Elwes should escape from his grasp. Be this as it may, there does however exist a *pile of bad debts* and *uncancelled bonds*, which, could they be laid on the table of the House of Commons, would strike dumb some orators on both sides of the House.

Time however, at length, conquered this passion of lending in Mr. Elwes; and an unfortunate proposal which was made him, of vesting *twenty-five thousand pounds* in some *iron works* in America, gave, at last, a fatal blow to his various speculations. The plan had been so very plausibly laid before him, that he had not the smallest doubt of its success; however, he had the disappointment never to hear more of his *iron*, or his *gold*.

He has often declared, that three contested elections would not have cost him more than he lost by his brother representatives. In 1780,
another

another distinguished *member* of the Senate, threatened him with a calamity not less likely to be afflictive. Lord George Gordon, his neighbour, at that time, in Welbeck Street, gave him a prospect of diminishing his income upon houses, and as Mr. Elwes was his own insurer, he passed his time very pleasantly during the fires. On a house adjoining to that where Mr. Elwes lived, being set on fire, Lord George Gordon very civilly offered to take the furniture of Mr. Elwes into his own house, by way of security. But Mr. Elwes full as civilly, replied—"I am much obliged to your Lordship; but, if you will give me leave, I will even take my chance!"

At this time, one of his Maid Servants was taken ill of the small Pox; it was thought necessary to send her out of the house; and Mr. Elwes paid Eighteen Shillings Weekly for her Lodging, Board, and Nursing, and took her home after her recovery.

Mr. Elwes, on the dismissal of Lord North, was left in the party of Mr. Fox—though he could not properly be said to belong to any set of men, for he had the very singular quality of not determining how he should vote, before he heard what was said on the subject. On this account, he was not reckoned an acquisition by either side.

When the Marquis of Landsdowne came into office, Mr. Elwes was found supporting, for a time, *his* administration; and not long after, he followed his conscience upon a question, and voted with Mr. Fox, against the Marquis of Landsdowne.

To *complete* the singularity of his political character, he next assisted, with his vote, the *greatest monster* in politics that ever disgraced any country

country since the beginning of time! This was the memorable and justly execrated coalition between those contending and rancorous *chieftains*, Lord North and Mr. Fox. Mr. Elwes's reasons for supporting this measure, were unknown to his most intimate friends; and, as he does not appear to have been susceptible of corruption, it is more than probable that he possessed no decided or cogent motives in his own mind.

When he quitted parliament, however, no man more reprobated this measure than he did: he has frequently declared since, and the declaration is curious and worth recording,—“That, after the experience he had of *public speakers*, and *members of parliament*, there was only one man, he thought, could now talk him out of his money, and that was *young Pitt!*”

The parliamentary life of Mr. Elwes ended with this coalition. The character, however, which he had long borne, in Berkshire, for integrity; might have made a re-election not improbable, notwithstanding the rage which had gone forth against all the abettors of the coalition and its principles. But here the private principles of Mr. Elwes stepped in, and prevented all thoughts of a contest. Such a thing would have been so contrary to the *saving* features, and very *countenance* of his character, that he would have expired at the first election dinner. The usual parade of colours and cockades, would have been to him a *death-warrant*, and open houses, at his expence, *immediate execution*.

He retired voluntarily from parliamentary life, and even took no leave of his constituents by an advertisement. But though Mr. Elwes was now no longer a Member of the House of Commons,

Commons, yet, not with the venal herd of expectant placemen and pensioners, whose eye too often views the House of Commons as another Royal Exchange, did Mr. Elwes retire into private life. No: he had fairly and honourably, attentively and long, done his duty there, and he had so done it without "fee or reward."— In all his parliamentary life he never asked or received a single favour; and he never gave a vote, but he could solemnly have laid his hand upon his breast, and said, "*So help me God! I believe I am doing what is for the best!*"

Thus, duly honoured, shall the memory of a good man go to his grave: for while it may be the painful duty of the Biographer to present to the public the pitiable follies which may deform a character, but which must be given to render perfect the resemblance---on those beauties which rise from the bad parts of the picture, who shall say, it is not a duty to expatiate?

The *model* which Mr. Elwes left to future members may, perhaps, be looked on rather as a work to wonder at than to follow, even under the most virtuous of administrations.

Mr. Elwes came into Parliament *without expence*, and he performed his duty as a member would have done in the *pure* days of our constitution. What he had not bought, he never attempted to sell---and he went forward in that straight and direct path, which can alone satisfy a reflecting and good mind.

In one word, Mr. Elwes, as a public man, voted and acted in the House of Commons as a man would do, who felt there were people to *live after him*;---who wished to deliver *unmortgaged* to his children, the *public estate of government*;

ment; and who felt, that if he suffered himself to become a *pensioner* on it, he thus far embarrassed his posterity, and injured the *inheritance*.

Some years after his retirement, mentioning his opinions of Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt, he said. "When I *started* in parliament, Mr. Pitt had not come into public life: but I am convinced he is the *minister* for the *property* of the country. In all he says, there is *pounds, shillings, and pence!*"

Mr. Elwes was once much pleased with a remark made by Sir Joseph Mawbey, who, with Sir Geo. Saville, were talking on that *notorious act* of union betwixt Lord North and Mr. Fox. Sir George confessed frankly, it was *expedient*; for the friends of Lord North were so numerous, that Mr. Fox and his party could not go on without them. "Very true," replied Sir Joseph Mawbey, "that may be; but there is a difference betwixt *getting in* and *staying in*:---to preserve your place, you must preserve your character."

The propriety of the observation was fully justified by the event:---for Mr. Fox has been politically ruined by the deed: and Lord North saved nothing by it---but an *impeachment*.

The probability that the abilities of Mr. Pitt would contribute to rescue this country from the odium which had attended it under Lord North and Mr. Fox, turned out Mr. Hartley, as well as Mr. Elwes, from the representation of Berkshire. Mr. Hartley resigned his hopes, not without reluctance; and Mr. Elwes was terrified at once by the expence. His unfortunate parsimony was certainly the chief cause of his quitting parliament; for such was the opinion
his

his constituents entertained of his integrity, that a very small expence would again have restored him to his seat.

Nearly at the same time that Mr. Elwes lost his seat, he lost *that famous servant* "of all work"---compared to whom, Scrub was indolence itself. He died, as he was following his master upon a hard trotting horse into Berkshire and he died empty and poor; for his yearly wages were not above five pounds; and he had fasted the whole day on which he expired. The life of this extraordinary domestic, certainly verified a saying which Mr. Elwes often used, which was this---"If you keep *one servant*, your work is done; if you keep *two*, it is half done; but if you keep *three* you may do it yourself." And as his master allowed him to wear the same liveries four or five years, he added five pounds a year instead of new liveries, and often had occasion to pay him *twenty* pounds at a time on this account. Thomas was Married; his Wife likewise lived with Mr. Elwes at Marcham; and the man's savings were such, from his wages and perquisites, that he left her enough to live upon comfortably out of service, after his death. That there were very few kinds of work which this servant could not do, may be estimated by what he did; but that his knowledge of how some things were done, was not very extensive, may be taken from the following circumstance.

When the Lower House carried up their address to the King, on the subject of the American war, old Thomas (for that was the name of the fellow) who had never seen his master do any thing but ride on his most important occasions, imagined

imagined he was to ride up to his Majesty at St. James's and speak to him on horseback: Accordingly he cleaned up the old saddles, gave the horses a feed of corn at his own expence, and at his own expence too, had a piece of *new ribband* in front, put upon one of the bridles; and all this that his master might do things handsomely, and like a "*parliament man!*" But when he found out how his master was to go; saw the carriage of Colonel Timms at the door, (who by borrowing for Mr. Elwes a bag-wig, lending him a shirt with laced ruffles, and new furbishing his *everlasting coat*, had made him look very differently from what he usually did, and in truth much *like a gentleman*) old Thomas returning all his own zeal and finery back into the stables, observed, with regret, that "mayhap, his master might look a *bit* of a *gentleman*---but he was so altered, nobody would know him!"

Amongst the memorials of the parliamentary life of Mr. Elwes, may be noted, that he did not follow the custom of members in general, by sitting on any particular side of the house, but sat as occasion presented itself, on either indiscriminately---and he voted much in the same manner.

No man ever retired from the House of Commons, leaving it more loaded with obligations than he did; and they were obligations that were never cancelled. From the *multitude of bonds* since seen, it should appear, that some members imagined he was a *great public money lender*, appointed by *government*, to come down into the House of Commons, and "oblige the gentlemen" who might be in want of pecuniary aid.

When

When application was made for the payment of these bonds—*on moving that question*, Mr. Elwes stood single; not a member said “*Aye!*” and Mr. Elwes died possessed of proofs most undeniable, that, somehow or other, every man *must pay* for coming into Parliament.

The temptation of *one per cent.* more than the funds, or landed property would give, was irresistible with Mr. Elwes. But, amongst the sums he thus injudiciously vested in other people's hands, some *stray, forlorn* instances of *feeling* may be remembered; of which the following is an instance. When his son was in the Guards, he was frequently in the habit of dining at the Officer's table there. The politeness of his manner rendered him generally agreeable, and in time he became acquainted with every Officer in the corps; amongst the rest, with a gentleman of the name of Tempest, whose good humour was almost proverbial. A vacancy happening in a *majority*, it fell to this gentleman to purchase; but as money is not always to be got upon landed property *immediately*, it was imagined some officer would have been obliged to purchase over his head. Old Mr. Elwes hearing of the circumstance, sent him the money the next morning, without asking any security; he had seen Captain Tempest, and liked his manners; and he never once afterwards talked to him about the payment of it. But on the death of Captain Tempest, which happened shortly after, the money was replaced.

This was an act of liberality in Mr. Elwes which ought to atone for many of his failings. But, behold the inequalities which so strongly marked this human being!

Mr.

Mr. Spurling, of Dynes Hall, a very active and intelligent magistrate for the County of Essex was once requested by Mr. Elwes to accompany him to Newmarket. It was a day in one of the spring meetings which was remarkably filled with races; and they were out from six in the morning till eight o'clock in the evening, before they again set out for home. Mr. Elwes, in the usual way, would eat nothing; but Mr. Spurling was somewhat wiser, and went down to Newmarket. When they began their journey home, the evening was grown very dark and cold, and Mr. Spurling rode on somewhat quicker; but on going through the turnpike by the *Devil's Ditch*, he heard Mr. Elwes calling to him with great eagerness. On returning before he had paid, Mr. Elwes said—"Here! here! follow me this is the best road!" In an instant he saw Mr. Elwes, as well as the night would permit, climbing his horse up the precipice of the ditch, "Sir," said Mr. Spurling, "I can never get up there." "No danger at all!" replied old Elwes; "but if your horse be not safe; lead him!" At length, with great difficulty, and with one of the horses falling, they mounted the ditch, and then, with not less toil, got down on the other side. When they were safely landed on the plain, Mr. Spurling thanked Heaven for their escape. "Aye," said old Elwes, "you mean from the *turnpike*." "Very right; never pay a *turnpike* if you can avoid it!" In proceeding on their journey, they came to a very narrow road; at which Mr. Elwes, notwithstanding the cold, went as slowly as possible. On Mr. Spurling wishing to quicken their pace, old Elwes observed that he was letting his horse

feed

feed on some hay that was hanging on the sides of the hedge—" Besides," added he, " it is nice hay, and you have it for *nothing!*"

Thus, while endangering his neck to save the payment of a Turpike, and starving his horse for a halfpenny-worth of *hay* was he risking the sum of *twenty-five thousand pounds* on some iron works across the Atlantic Ocean, and of which he knew nothing, either as to produce, prospect, or situation

When he retired from parliament, Mr. Elwes was nearly seventy-five years of age; and the expenditure of a few hundred pounds would certainly have continued him in the situation he loved: where he was respected, and had due honour; where he was amongst his *friends*; and where long habit had made every thing congenial to him. All this he gave up to his love of *money*.* That passion, which consuming all before it, as it hurried him along the few remaining years of his life, at length carried him to his grave twenty years sooner than the muscular vigour of his body might have given reason to expect; for when Doctor Wall, his last physician, was called in, and viewed him extended on that *squalid bed of poverty* from which he would not be relieved, he said to one of his sons, " Sir, your father might have lived these twenty years; but the irritations of his temper have made it impossible to hope for any thing; the body is yet strong, but the mind is gone entirely!

Mr. Elwes had, for some years, been a member of a card club at the Mount Coffee-house;

* This is a striking proof, that the loss of those large sums which he had lent his senatorial friends, did not afflict him much; otherwise his secession from parliament might as well be attributed to this cause, as the less expensive one of soliciting the freeholders,

and, by a constant attendance on this meeting, he, for a time consoled himself for the loss of his parliamentary seat. The play was moderate, and he had an opportunity of meeting many of his old acquaintances in the House of Commons; and he experienced a pleasure which however trivial it may appear, was not less satisfactory—that of enjoying *fire* and *candle* at a general expence. For however rejectful Mr. Elwes appeared of “the good things of this life,” when they were to come out of his own pocket---he by no means acted in the same manner when those things were at the expence of any other person. He had an admirable taste in French dishes, at the table of another---No man had more judgment in French wines, when they did not come from his own wine-merchant---and “he was very nice in his appetite,” on the day he dined from home.

He still retained some fondness for play, and imagined he had no small skill at picquet. It was his ill luck, however, one day, to meet with a gentleman at the Mount Coffee-House, who thought the same, and on much better grounds; for after a contest of two days and a night, in which Mr. Elwes continued with perseverance, he rose the loser of a sum which he always endeavoured to conceal-- though there is reason to think it was not less than *three thousand pounds*. Some part of it was paid by a large draft on Messrs. Hoares, and was received very early the next morning. Thus while, by every art of human mortification, he was saving *shillings*, *sixpences*, and even *pence*, he would kick down in one moment the heap he had raised.

At

At the close of the spring of 1785, he wished again to visit, which he had not done for some years, his seat at Stoke. But then the journey was a most serious object: the famous old servant was dead; all the horses that remained with him were a couple of worn-out brood mares; and he himself was not in that vigour of body, in which he could ride sixty or seventy miles on the sustenance of *two boiled eggs*. The mention of a post-chaise would have been a crime,---He afford a *post-chaise*, indeed! where was *he* to get the money!" would have been his exclamation.

At length he was *carried* into the country, as he was *carried* into parliament--free of expence, by a gentleman who was certainly *not quite so rich* as Mr. Elwes. When he reached his seat at Stoke---the seat of more active scenes, of somewhat *resembling hospitality*, and where his fox-hounds had spread somewhat like vivacity around ---he remarked, "he had expended a great deal of money once very foolishly; but that a man grew *wiser* by time."

The rooms at his seat at Stoke, that were now much out of repair, and would have all fallen in but for his son, John Elwes Esq. who had resided there, he thought too expensively furnished, as worse things might have done. If a window was broken, there was to be no repair but that of a little brown paper, or that of piecing in a bit of broken glass, which had at length been done so frequently, and in so many shapes, that it would have puzzled a mathematician to say "what figure they described." To save fire he would walk about the remains of an old greenhouse, or sit, with a servant, in the Kitchen. During the harvest, he would amuse himself
with

with going into the fields to glean the corn on the grounds of *his own tenants*; and they used to leave a little more than common to please the old gentleman, who was as eager after it as any pauper in the parish.

In the advance of the season, his morning employment was to pick up any stray chips, bones, or other things to carry to the fire, in his pocket---and he was one day surprised by a neighbouring gentleman in the act of pulling down, with some difficulty, a *crow's nest*, for this purpose. On the gentleman wondering why he gave himself this trouble---"Oh Sir," replied he, "it is really a shame that these creatures should do so. Do but see what waste they make!"

His insatiable desire of saving was now become uniform and systematic; he still rode about the country on one of these mares---but then he rode her very œconomically; on the soft turf adjoining the road, without putting himself to the expence of shoes--as he observed, "The turf was so pleasant to a horse's foot!" And when any gentleman called to pay him a visit, and the boy who attended in the stables was profuse enough to put a little hay before his horse, old Elwes would slyly steal back into the stable, and take away the hay very carefully.

To save, as he thought, the expence of going to a butcher, he would have a whole sheep killed and so eat mutton to the---*end of the chapter*. When he occasionally had his river drawn, though sometimes horse-loads of small fish were taken, not one would he suffer to be thrown in again, for he observed, "He should never see them more!" Game in the last state of putrefac-
tion

ion and meat that *walked about his plate*, would he continue to eat, rather than have new things killed before the old provision was exhausted.

With this diet the *charnel house of sustenance* ---his dress kept pace---equally in the last stage of *absolute dissolution*. Sometimes he would walk about in a tattered brown coloured hat; and sometimes in a red and white woollen cap.

When any friends who might occasionally be with him, were absent, he would carefully put out his own fire, and walk to the house of a neighbour; and thus make one fire serve both. His shoes he never would suffer to be cleaned, lest they should be worn out the sooner. But still, with all this *self-denial*---that penury of life to which the inhabitant of an *alms-house* is not doomed---still did he think he was profuse, and frequently say, "He must be a little more careful of his property." When he went to bed, he would put five or ten guineas into a bureau, and then, full of his money, after he had retired to rest, and sometimes in the middle of the night, he would come down to see if it was safe. The irritation of his mind was unceasing. He thought every body extravagant: and when a person was talking to him one day of the great wealth of old Mr. Jennings, (who is supposed to be worth a *million*) and that they had seen him that day in a new carriage---" Aye, aye," said old Elwes, " he will soon see the *end* of his money !"

Amongst traits so various, a *theatrical anecdote* may not be unamusing. It was during this period of his being in the country, that he first became acquainted with Mrs Wells. The gallantry peculiar to the manners of the old court, led him to be very attentive and very ceremonious to her ;
and

and to the last moment of his life, she remembered the civilities which at times so distinguished him, and paid him every attention to the latest day in which she saw him.

As was natural, he would frequently talk to her about theatres; and she as naturally made mention of those present talents which adorn the drama of our day. She concluded he had seen Mrs. Siddons? No.—Mrs. Jordan; No.—Perhaps Mr. Kemble? No; none of them. It was probable then that he must have seen the stage of his own times—and remembered Mr. Garrick? No:—he had never seen him. In short, he had *never been at a theatre at all!*

But when Mr. Elwes returned again into Suffolk, and exposed, to continued observation, all his penury—when his tenants saw in his appearance or style of living, every thing that was inferior to their own—when his neighbours, at best, could but smile at his infirmities—and his very servants grew ashamed of the meanness of their master—all that approached respect formerly, was now gone. And a gentleman, one day, enquiring which was the house of Mr. Elwes, was facetiously told, by one of the tenants “the *poor-house* of the parish!”

Mr. Elwes now denied himself every thing, except the common necessities of life: and indeed it might have admitted a doubt, whether or not, if his manors, his fish ponds, and grounds in his own hands, had not furnished a substance where he had not any thing *actually to buy*, he would not, rather than have *bought any thing*, have starved. He, one day, during this period, dined upon the remaining part of a moor-hen, which had been brought out of the River by a rat!

rat! and at another eat an undigested part of a pike, which the larger one had swallowed, but had not finished, and which were taken in this state in a net! At the time this last circumstance happened, he discovered a strange kind of satisfaction; for he said to Captain Topham, who happened to be present—"Aye! this is killing, two birds with one stone!" Mr. Elwes at this time, was perhaps worth nearly *eight hundred thousand pounds!* and at this period, he had not made his will, of course was not saving from any sentiment of affection for any person.

As he had now vested the enormous savings of his property in the funds, he felt no diminution of it.

Mr. Elwes passed the spring of 1786 alone, at his solitary house at Stoke; and, had it not been for some little daily scheme of avarice would have passed it without one consolatory moment. His temper began to give way apace: his thoughts unceasingly ran upon *money! money! money!*—and he saw no one but whom he imagined was deceiving and defrauding him.

As, in the day, he would not allow himself any fire, he went to bed as soon as day closed, to save candle; and had begun to deny himself even the pleasure of sleeping in *Sheets*. In short he had now nearly brought to a climax the moral of his whole life—*the perfect vanity of wealth!*

On removing from Stoke, he went to his farmhouse at Thaydon Hall; a scene of more ruin and desolation, if possible, than either of his houses in Suffolk or Berkshire. It stood alone, on the borders of Epping Forest; and an old man and woman, his tenants, were the only persons with whom he could hold any converse. Here he fell ill; and, as he would have no assistance, and had not even a servant, he lay, unattended

tended and almost forgotten, for nearly a fortnight---indulging, even in *death*, that avarice which *malady* could not subdue. It was at this period he began to think of making his will---feeling, perhaps, that his sons would not be entitled, by law, to any part of his property, should he die intestate---and, on coming to London, he made his last will and testament, of which the following is an attested copy:

“ *In the Name of GOD amen.*—I, JOHN ELWES, do make and declare this writing to be my last will and testament, in manner following: (that is to say) In the first place, I direct that all my just debts, funeral, and testamentary expences, be paid as soon as conveniently may be after my decease. And I do give, devise, and bequeath, all and every my real estates, messuages or tenements, farms, lands, tythes and hereditaments, situate, standing, lying, and being in the several parishes or places of Stoke, Thaydon, and Marcham, in the Counties of Suffolk, Essex, and Berks, with all and every the barns, stables, out-houses, buildings and appurtenances thereunto belonging: and all other my real estates whatsoever and wheresoever situate, standing, lying, or being, with their and every of their rights, members and appurtenances! and also all and every my personal estate, goods, chattels and effects whatsoever, and of what nature, kind, or quality soever, or wheresoever the same may be, unto my son, George Elwes, now living and residing at my mansion-house at Marcham, in the County of Berks, and my son, John Elwes, late a Lieutenant in his Majesty's Second Troop of Horse Guards, and usually residing

siding at my mansion-house at Stoke, in the County of Suffolk, equally to be divided between them, share and share alike; to have and to hold all and every my said real and personal estates whatsoever and wheresoever, with the rights, privileges, and appurtenances thereunto belonging or appertaining, unto them my said sons, George Elwes and John Elwes, and their heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns for evermore, equally to be divided between them as tenants in Common. And I do hereby direct, that the executors of this my will, do and shall, as soon as conveniently may be after my death, pay all and every such legacies or bequests as I may think fit to give to any person whomsoever, by any codicil, or paper writing in the nature of a codicil or testamentary schedule, to be written or signed by me, whether the same shall or shall not be attested by any subscribing witnesses. And I do nominate, constitute, and appoint my said sons, George Elwes and John Elwes, executors of this my last will and testament; and hereby revoking all former wills by me at any time heretofore made, do make and declare this writing only as and for my last will and testament. In witness whereof, I, the said John Elwes, have to this writing, contained in two sheets of paper, which I declare as and for my last will and testament, set my hand and seal, (that is to say) my hand to each of the said sheets, and my hand and seal to this last sheet, and to the label by which they are affixed together, the sixth day of August, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six. JOHN ELWES."

"Signed, sealed, published, and declared, by the said John Elwes, as and for his last will and testament, in the presence, of us, who in his presence,

JOHN ELWES, Esq.

presence, and in the presence of each other, and at his request, have subscribed our names as witnesses to the execution thereof.

FELIX BUCKLEY.

EDWARD TOPHAM.

THOMAS INGRAHAM."

The property here disposed of, may amount, perhaps, to *five hundred thousand pounds*. The *entailed estates* fall to Mr. Timms, son of the late Richard Timms, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Second Troop of Horse Guards.

The sons, named by Mr. Elwes in the will above, were his natural children, by Elizabeth Moren, formerly his housekeeper at Marcham in Berkshire.

Mr. Elwes, shortly after executing his will, gave, by letter of attorney, the power of managing and receiving, and paying all his monies, into the hands of Mr. Ingraham, his lawyer, and his youngest son John Elwes, Esq. who had been his chief agent for some time.

Nor was the act by any means improper. The *lapses of his memory* had now become frequent and glaring. All recent occurrences he forgot entirely; and as he never committed any thing to writing, the confusion he made was inexpressible. As an instance of this, the following anecdote may serve. He had one evening given a draft on Messrs. Hoares, his bankers, for twenty pounds; and having taken it into his head, during the night, that he had over-drawn his account, his anxiety was unceasing. He left his bed, and walking about his room with that *little feverish irritation* that always distinguished him, waited with the utmost impatience till morning came, when on going to his banker with an apology for the great liberty he had taken, he was assured there was no occasion for his apology, as he happened to have in their hands at that time the small sum of *fourteen thousand seven hundred pounds*!

However singular this act of forgetfulness may appear, it serves to mark, amidst all his anxiety about money, that *extreme conscientiousness*; which was to the honour of his character. If accident placed him in debt to any person, even in the most trivial manner, he was never easy till it was paid; and it should be noted, that never was he known on any occasion to *fail in what he said*. Of the punctuality of his *word*, he was so scrupulously tenacious, that no person ever requested better security; and he was so particular in every thing of promise, that in any appointment or meeting, or the hour of it, he exceeded even military exactness.

Mr. Elwes passed the Summer of 1788, at his house in Welbeck Street, London, without any other society than that of two maid-servants, for he had now given up the expence of keeping any male domestic. His chief employment used to be that of getting up early in the morning to visit his houses in Marybone, which during the summer, were repairing. As he was there generally at 4 o'clock in the morning, he was of course on the spot before the workmen; and he used contentedly to sit down on the steps before the door to scold them when they did come. The neighbours who used to see him appear thus regular every morning, and who concluded, from his apparel he was one of the workmen, observed, "there never was so punctual a man as the *old carpenter*." During the whole morning he would continue to run up and down stairs, to see the men were not idle for an instant, with the same anxiety as if his whole happiness in life had been centered in the finishing this house, regardless of the greater property he had at stake in various places, and for ever employed in the *minutiæ* only of affairs. Indeed such was his anxiety about this house, the rent of which was not above fifty

pounds a year, that it brought on a fever, which nearly cost him his life.

In the muscular and unincumbered frame of Mr. Elwes, there was every thing that promised extreme length of life: and he lived to above seventy years of age, without any natural disorder attacking him: but as Lord Bacon has well observed, "the minds of some men are a lamp that is continually burning;" and such was the mind of Mr. Elwes. Removed from those occasional public avocations which had once engaged his attention, *money* was now his only thought. He rose upon *money*—upon *money* he lay down to rest; and as his capacity sunk away from him by degrees, he dwindled from the real cares of his property, into the puerile concealment of a few guineas. This little store he would carefully, wrap up in various papers, and depositing them in different corners, would amuse himself with running from one to the other, to see whether they were all safe. Then forgetting, perhaps, where he had concealed some of them, he would become as seriously afflicted as a man might be who had lost all his property. Nor was *the day* alone thus spent—he would frequently rise in the middle of the night, and be heard walking about different parts of the house, looking after what he had thus hidden and forgotten.

It was at this period, and at seventy-six years old, or upwards, that Mr. Elwes began to feel, for the first time, some bodily infirmities from age. He now experienced occasional attacks from the gout; on which with his usual perseverance, and with all his accustomed antipathy to *apothecaries*, and their *bills*, he would set out to walk as far and as fast as he could. While he was engaged in this painful mode of cure, he frequently lost himself in the streets, the names of which he no longer remembered, and was so frequently brought home by some errand-boy, or stranger.

of whom he had enquired his way. On these occasions he would bow and thank them, at the door, with great civility: but never indulged them with a sight of the inside of the house.

During the winter of 1789, the last winter Mr. Elwes was fated to see, his memory visibly weakened every day; and from his unceasing wish to save money, he now began to apprehend he should die in want of it. Mr. Gibson had been appointed his builder, in the room of Mr. Adam; and one day, when this gentleman waited upon him, he said with apparent concern "Sir, pray consider in what a wretched state I am; you see in what a good house I am living—and here are five guineas, which is all I have at present; and how I shall go on with such a sum of money, puzzles me to death---I dare say you thought I was rich; now you see how it is?"

In the spring of this year, Mr. George Elwes his elder son, married a young lady, not less distinguished for her engaging manners than for her beauty. She was a Miss Alt, of Northamptonshire, and is the god-daughter of Mr. Hastings. She is indeed a lady of whom any father might be proud; but pride or even concern, in these matters, were not passions likely to affect Mr. Elwes, as a circumstance which happened a few years before, in a case not dissimilar, will prove.

Mr. George Elwes had, at that time, paid his addresses to a niece of Doctor Noel, of Oxford, who, of course, thought it proper to wait upon old Mr. Elwes, to apprize him of the circumstance, and to ask his consent. Old Mr. Elwes had not the least objection. Doctor Noel was very happy to hear it, as a marriage between the young people might be productive of happiness to both. Old Mr. Elwes had not the least objection to any body marrying whatever. "This ready acquiescence is so obliging!" said the Doctor---"but, doubtless, you feel for the

mutual wishes of the parties." "I dare say I do," replied the old gentleman. "Then, Sir," said Doctor Noel, "you have no objection to an immediate union? you see I talk freely on the subject." Old Mr. Elwes had no objection to any thing. "Now then, Sir," observed Doctor Noel, "we have only one thing to settle; and you are so kind, there can be no difficulty about the matter; as I shall behave liberally to my neice---What do you mean to give your son?"--- "Give!" said old Elwes, "sure I did not say any thing about giving; but if you wish it so much, I will give my consent.

The close of Mr. Elwes's life was still reserved for one singularity more, and which will not be held less singular than all that has passed before it, when his disposition and his advanced age are considered. He gave away his affections; he conceived the tender passion!---In plain terms, having been accustomed for some time to pass his hours, from œconomy, with the two maid-servants in the kitchen---one of them had the art to induce him to *fall in love* with her; and it is matter of doubt, had it not been discovered, whether she would not have had the power over him to have made him marry her.

But good fortune, and the attention of his friends, saved him from this last act of madness, ---in which, perhaps, the pitiable infirmity of nature, weakened and worn down by age and perpetual anxiety, is in some measure to be called to account. At those moments, when the cares of money left him somewhat of ease, he had no domestic scene of happiness to which he could fly---and therefore felt with more sensibility, any act of kindness that might come from any quarter: and thus when his sons were absent having no one near him whom principle made assiduous--those who might be interested, too frequently gained his attention.

Mr. George Elwes having settled by this time at his seat at Marcham, in Berkshire, he was naturally desirous, that in the assiduities of his wife, his father might at length find a comfortable home. In London he was certainly most uncomfortable: but still, with these temptations before and behind him, a journey, with any expence annexed to it, was insurmountable. This however, was luckily obviated by an offer from Mr. Partis, a gentleman of the law, to take him to his ancient seat in Berkshire, with his purse perfectly whole---a circumstance so pleasing, that the general intelligence which renders this gentleman so entertaining, was not adequate to it in the opinion of Mr. Elwes. But there was one circumstance still very distressing---the old gentleman had now nearly worn out his last coat, and he would not buy a new one; his son, therefore, with a pious fraud that did him honour, contrived to get Mr. Partis to buy him a coat, and make him a present of it. Thus, formerly having had a good coat, then a bad one, and at last no coat at all---he was kind enough to accept one from a neighbour.

On the day before Mr. Elwes took his gratuitous journey into Berkshire, he delivered to Mr. Partis that copy of his last will and testament, which he himself had kept, to be carried to Messrs. Hoares, his Bankers.

Mr. Elwes carried with him into Berkshire, five guineas and an half, and half a crown. Lest the mention of this sum may appear singular, it should be said, that, previous to his journey, he had carefully wrapped it up in various folds of paper that no part of it might be lost. On the arrival of the old gentleman, Mr. George Elwes and his wife, whose good temper might well be expected to charm away the irritations of avarice and age, did every thing they could to make the country a scene of quiet to him. But

“ he had that within” which baffled every effort of this kind. Of his heart it might be said, “ there was no peace in Israel.” His mind, cast away upon the vast and troubled ocean of his property, extending beyond the bounds of his calculation, returned to amuse itself with fetching and carrying about a *few guineas*, which, in that ocean, was indeed a drop.

His very singular appetite Mr. Elwes retained till within a few days of his dissolution, and walked on foot twelve miles but a fortnight before he died.

The first symptoms of more immediate decay, were his inability to enjoy his rest at night. Frequently would he be heard at midnight as if struggling with some one in his chamber, and crying out, “ I will keep my money, I will ; nobody shall rob me of my property ! ” On any one of the family going into his room, he would start from his fever of anxiety, and, as if waking from a troubled dream, again hurry into bed, and seem unconscious of what had happened.

At other times, when perfectly awake, he would walk to the spot where he had hidden his money, to see if it was safe. One night, while in his waking state, he missed his treasure—that great sum of five guineas and an half, and half a crown ! That great sum, which at times solaced and distracted the last moments of a man, whose property, nearly reaching to a million extended itself almost through every county in England.

The circumstances of the loss were these :—

Mr. Partis, who was then with him in Berkshire, was waked one morning about two o'clock by the noise of a naked foot, seemingly walking about his bed-chamber with great caution. Somewhat alarmed at the circumstance, he naturally asked, “ who is there ? ” on which a person coming up towards the bed, said with great civility—

“ Sir, my name is Elwes ; I have been unfortunate enough to be robbed in this house, which I believe is mine, of all the money I have in the world—of five guineas and an half, and half a crown ! ”—“ Dear Sir,” replied Mr. Partis, “ I hope you are mistaken ; do not make yourself uneasy.”—O ! no, no !” rejoined the old gentleman ; it’s all true ; and really, Sir, with such a sum—I should have liked to have seen the end of it.

This mighty sum was found, a few days after behind a window shutter.

In the autumn of 1789, his memory was gone entirely ; his perception of things was decreasing very rapidly ; and as the mind became unsettled, gusts of the most violent passion usurped the place of his former command of temper.

For six weeks previous to his death, he would go to rest in his clothes, as perfectly dressed as during the day. He was one morning found fast asleep betwixt the sheets, his shoes on his feet, his stick in his hand, and an old torn hat upon his head.

Mr. Elwes on the 18th of November, 1789, discovered signs of that utter and total weakness, which carried him to his grave in eight days. On the evening of the first day he was conveyed to bed---from which he rose no more. His appetite was gone---he had but a faint recollection of any thing about him ; and his last coherent words were addressed to his son, Mr. John Elwes, in hoping “ he had left him what he wished.” On the morning of the 26th of November, he expired without a sigh !

Thus died Mr. Elwes, the most perfect model of human penury, which has been presented to the Public for a long series of years.