

**EPIISODES IN AN
OBSCURE LIFE, IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. III**

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Episodes in an obscure life, in three volumes, Vol. III by Richard Rowe

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RICHARD ROWE

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EPISODES IN AN OBSCURE LIFE

THREE VOLUMES.—III.



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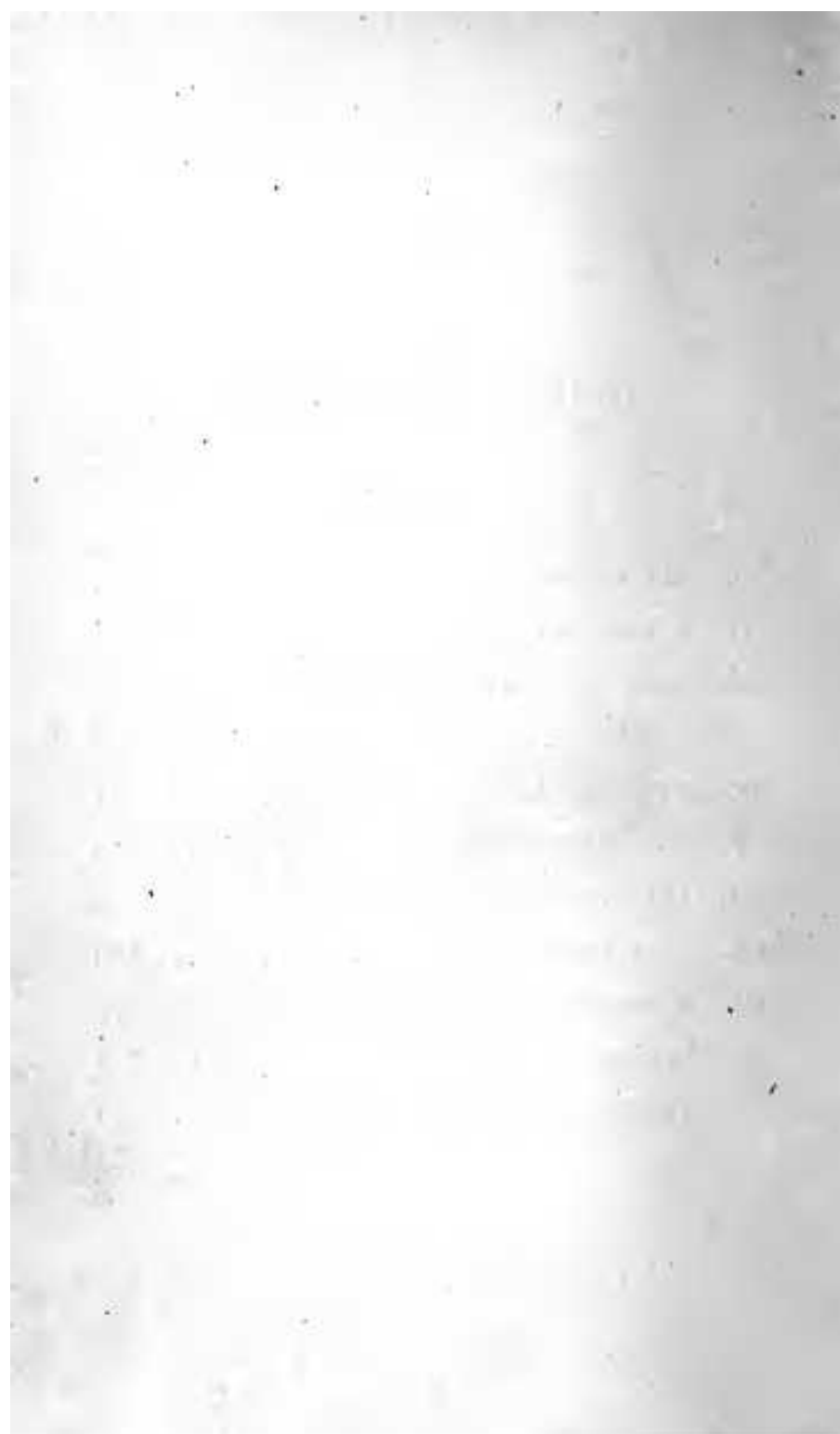
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I.

DAN THE DREDGER.

HOWEVER correct Mr Jones's opinion may have been of a good many of the people who availed themselves of Matthey's kindness, it was certainly wrong in reference to Matthey's landlord, Dredger Dan. Dan was in want of help sometimes, and then did not disdain to accept it from his good-natured lodger; but Dan was an independent little fellow in his way, and made a point of paying back any help he got as soon and as fully as he could. A

very worthy little man was Dan, hard-working, temperate, honest except in a point or two in which his moral sense had been warped by the traditions of his calling; God-fearing and God-loving, too, in a genuine, although not always a very enlightened, manner. A short, brown, shrivelled, silent little man, in antique, many-patched garments, making little fuss about his duty to his neighbour, but trying hard to do it, according to his lights, as well as earn a living for himself; that is the best general description I can give of Dan. His employment was of a kind that might have been supposed full of startling incidents, and in the course of my talks with him I found that he *had* had adventures, but I was obliged to pull the incidents out of him, one after another, by main force, as it were. A long life of which the greater part had been spent in

solitary toil—by night as well as day—a kind of toil which encouraged reticence, and in meditations on weather, tides, eddies, dead water, and holes and chinks in the river's bottom, had not qualified Dan to shine in conversation.

Of course, it was Matthey who introduced me to his landlord. Matthey had a very neat, snug little room in Dan's *not* very neat, snug little house. Dan's old wife had a small brood of orphan grandchildren to look after—the children of their eldest son. All *their* children were dead, and they had no one else to help them in looking after these youngsters. Nobody, but Matthey, that is, who would often lend the old woman a sailor's handy hand, when he happened to be at home—would help her in cooking, washing, carpentering, clothes-mending, nursing. Matthey could manage the children far better than poor