

## Miscellany.

## "THE MAN WITH THE...."

A MYSTERY.

Concluded.

"You forget, sir, the nineteen shillings you borrowed last May day to distribute among the village girls," said the waiter.

"But didn't I give you a sovereign afterwards?"

"Yes, you *gived* me a sovereign, which, you say, says you, keep for yourself, Jem, says you; but that warn't *paying* me the nineteen shillings you owed me, you know."

"True," said the man in canvas, "I forgot that; I shan't be here again for some time, so I'll pay you at once." He then emptied his pockets of all the silver they contained, but found, on counting it, that he had only eighteen shillings. "Then I must break into gold," said he, "and since that is the case, let us adjourn to the parlor, and I'll stand a glass of wine." With that he threw a piece of gold upon the silver, and walked out of the room.

Whilst the wine was going round, the landlady came in, and abruptly inquired if there was "e'er a doctor among us?"

"Because," said she, "the daughter of a poor widow woman down the lane is dying, and our doctor can't attend without a fee."

Upon this, canvas jacket quickly popped on his hat, and turning to me, exclaimed, "Will you come old—?"

Had any one else so nicknamed me I should have knocked him down; but diving into his charitable motives with a thought, I at once signified my readiness, and we were proceeding arm-in-arm, when the coachman arrested our progress, and said that he could not possibly wait a moment longer.

"A few minutes," said canvas.

What a miserable spectacle met our gaze! In the centre of a room, utterly destitute of furniture, was spread a quantity of straw, covered with an old blanket; on this was prostrate, rather than lying, the form of an emaciated, black-haired girl of about nineteen, and apparently in the last stage of existence. Her only covering was a coarse rug, and the only pillow a bundle of rags! Across the room, on each side of this wretched bed or pallet, a cord was stretched from wall to wall, and a few worn out garments hung upon it, as some slight screen from a continued draft of air which found its way through the crevices. The poor object shivered incessantly with the cold. My own heart turned into a ball of ice as I looked upon her. There was no grate in the chimney—no fire—no appearance of fuel. The walls were decorated with tattered remains of handsome paper, and a few brass headed nails here and there furnished evidence of having served as supporters to pictures, and proved that the apartment had not always its present aspect. It was indeed a picture of desolation.

My companion took all in it at a glance, and a palid whiteness usurped the place of his healthy complexion.

"This is misery," said he, emphatically, as his vision dwelt upon the scene. "I can scarcely credit it now;" then turning to the widow, he said, "Woman, how came all this about? Don't be periphrastical."

Her tale was soon narrated. It was the old sad story—yet not a whit the less heart-breaking for that—her husband dead, poverty and distress ensuing.

My friend then bestowed his bounty and secured the aid of the physician.

"May your MASTER bless and acknowledge you," she said, in a peculiarly melodious tone of solemnity, and raising her lustrous eyes, now lambent with excited feelings, she added, "My father owed all his success to you; his daughter shall prove her gratitude."

"What a lot of howling is here about nothing," cried the man in canvas, rather impatiently. "Why don't you do as I bid you?" added he, addressing the widow.

"Shall I mention your name, sir?" inquired she, drying up her tears.

"No; merely say that you were sent by the man with the —. Or, stay, I cannot await your return, so I will order the things myself, and also give directions for a few articles of furniture to be sent you. God take ye both in his holy keeping!"

He raised his hat on uttering the sacred name, and while yet the music of their voices dwelt within our ears, we crossed the humble threshold elated by no common sensations.

We reached the inn, where the passengers were impatiently awaiting our appearance; accordingly "him of canvas" bustled in to perform his self-im-

posed commission, and as I was following rather more leisurely, the bar-maid crossed my path. Now, be it known that I have a warm heart towards a pretty bar-maid, so I lovingly chucked her under the chin in passing, whereat she reddened like the sun in a fog, and flouncing by, muttered—

"Humph!—I shouldn't have thought of the likes of that, indeed, from a scrubby outside passenger."

At this moment, my fellow 'outsider' returned, and, first nodding, he took her round the neck, and gave her a hearty buss, in return for which she simpered and dropped a low courtsey. He passed on, and I remarked—

"I see you have not an objection to all outside passengers."

"O, indeed! that's a very different thing—that's the gentleman 'with the—'"

"How dare you be gossiping there, you saucy minx," shrieked the landlady, "why don't you give a glass of ale to the gentleman with the —?" The guard sounded such an infernal peal with his horn at that moment, that I lost the sentence.

"Now, gentlemen, if you please," said coachy, "I can't wait another moment for the Hemperor of the Hingies."

The sun was then setting behind a long range of low hills; it was indeed a beautiful scene as we bounded over the road; I jocularly commented upon the extravagant imagery used by poets when speaking of sunset.

"Sir," said canvas, "were the brains of Milton, Shakspeare, and all the other poets that ever existed, made into one, it could not produce a figure of fancy worthy the subject; does it not remind us of God, and impart some idea of his glory? And what can equal or delineate our thoughts at such a moment! The glorious sun!—I have seen him in Persia sink like one of the scarlet lilies which spring from the soil, whilst in Greece he sets like the ball of St. Paul's newly gilded; in Arabia he looks like a copper tea-kettle, and at the North Pole like a globe of silver, with the new moon shining upon it. There I have looked up, all pale and cheerless as he shone, and fancied him a guardian spirit come to chase away the gloom that for months had kept all beneath cold and dark; but in other places, (Chimborazo's heights, for instance,) I've stood and laughed as he rolled like a ball of fire at my feet, and triumphantly told him that his presence was not needed until morning. I remember luxuriating in the most genuine sunset feelings, a few summers ago; it was at Genoa, and the scene still lingers before my mind's eye, with the freshness of an actually witnessed object.—Not a tree—not a leaf—not a blade of grass, but possessed a poetic charm, and conjured up images never to be forgotten. The lake lay calm and placid as a sleeping infant before me; mountain towered above mountain, until the very clouds were pierced with their heights, and I thought, while contemplating them, of the mighty structure which men in the olden time designed should reach heaven. Around me waved the foliage of many a noble tree, like plumed giants, blowing a courteous welcome. From afar, the breeze came laden with sweets as delicious as the perfumed gales that scent a Persian garden, and every fresh swell was accompanied by a faint note of music! In the distance, about a dozen peasants, male and female, were dancing; but the great space between us rendered their forms so indistinct, so aerial, that they appeared like a band of spirits wantoning through the air, to greet the evening. Beyond these, on the summit of a little hill, was defined the form of a young cavalier, in bold relief against the sky; whilst the slender, graceful form of a girl was bent with affectionate interest towards him; and above all this—this assemblage of the beautiful and grand, the gallant and the lovely—shone the setting sun, so large, so gorgeously brilliant, so magnificently sublime, that my soul filled with wild ideas; I thought myself in Paradise, with the *Eternal Eye gazing upon me!* But even this," he continued

"was inferior to what I felt, when, on returning to England, I saw the sun set beneath the billows which leave its shores—the shores of my own nativity!"

"And what mighty fine thing did you compare that to?" sourly and sarcastically inquired the man in sables.

"To a jolly, red faced old buck, who, having nearly worn out his jacket in one day's service was descending to renovate it in oil of tar against the morrow. There's poetry for you, my old raven," said canvas; "what think you of that, old dead-alive!"—and he gave him a slap on the back that made him groan again. A roar of laughter at the expense of the gentleman in black enlivened us for some time until our spirits waned as the evening closed in, and our eyelids felt heavy with sleep. The gentleman in black was the first to drop off,

and after him followed the ditto in canvas, comfortably reposing against the luggage, leaving the officer and myself to pursue our own reflections. Now, it struck me, was the time for learning who my friend in canvas was, and accordingly I anxiously asked the military gentleman by my side for solution of the enigma. He smiled and replied—

"It is very simple. From what you have no doubt already remarked—that is, from the circumstances—you see of—"

"Exactly; but that is what I want to see."

"Why, in consequence of which, you see, he is not unaptly designated on the road the *man with the —*." At this moment the coach deviated most ominously from the perpendicular, and at the next, crash, crash, went the axle-tree, and away flew the passengers in all directions like a flock of pigeons. I just remember myself with outstretched legs and pinions, essaying my first flight across a hedge, and alighting with singular dexterity on a heap of manure in an adjoining field.

"Every mother's son of you whose bones are broken, scream out for dear life," cried the man in canvas at the top of his voice, starting upon his feet, with a presence of mind that was surprising, considering he had been asleep the moment before. After a pause he added, "Then give three cheers for our escape!" With that he waved his hat to the time of "*hip, hip, hip,*" to which we all joined chorus, hurraing like school-boys at a breaking up, or rather in our case, a breaking down. Whilst yet the air vibrated with our acclamations, a sight at once supernatural and harrowing met our startled gaze. It was the spectral appearance of a figure rising slowly from the earth, and attired in white from top to toe; of the same chilling hue were likewise its hair, face and hands! It furnished no mean idea of Lot's wife when she became a pillar of salt.

"Angels and ministers of faith defend us!" exclaimed our facetious friend, though now somewhat shaken, as the palid specter approached—"Art thou a minister from heaven, or ghost from hell?"

"I am the 'gentleman in black,'" whined out the figure in a piteous tone.

"The devil you are!" exclaimed Canvas significantly; "then in future let no man say that two and two are five, or that black is not white?—but perceiving that the preacher was in some pain, having fallen down a shallow chalk pit by the way-side, he humanely proffered his assistance in supporting him to the nearest village."

As it was not more than eleven o'clock, the coachman proposed that we should endeavour to get the damage repaired that night, and then the half hour which had been previously wasted at the inn—such was the gentleman's idea of things—might be accounted for to the proprietor as being occasioned by the accident.

"With all my heart; you may be through a deal board if you like," said the man in canvas quickening his pace. We soon reached a cluster of houses, with a pretty grass lawn in front, and the whole animated by a sparkling moon. With very little trouble we soon gained the assistance of a carpenter and a blacksmith, and whilst the broken member of our vehicle received the benefit of their professional skill, the passengers made themselves as happy as possible with the material around them.

I shall merely observe here that during our short stay in the village the man in canvas prevented an elopement—reconciled a father to his daughter and her lover—turned a magistrate into a laughing-stock for all the bumpkins within a league of his residence—knocked down a constable, knocked up a person—paid the fees of a wedding—lit up a bonfire—and completely astonished the natives; sometimes drawing tears from all eyes by his pathos, and not infrequently using the epithets and performing the antics of a buffoon. However, I must hasten to my journey's end.

On reaching Dover I secured the only vacant bed-room at the inn where we put up, and then descended into the parlor to skim the papers. I had scarce read the first paragraph of a very interesting murder when "mine host" entered and with some confusion informed me that through the inadvertence of his waiter he had not been informed that I had taken a bed he had unfortunately let to a traveler.

"The traveler must vacate and go elsewhere," said I, leaning back and crossing my legs with all the complacency of a man that "pays his way," being satisfied of my indubitable right to the tenement.

"Not for the world, sir," said the landlord.

I stared at the fellow; and then rejoined, "Is he of such consequence to the prosperity of your establishment that you would thus refringe the laws of right?"

"I must own that he is, sir; why, 'tis the man with the—I meant to say—sir, I beg your pardon, the gentleman is your fellow passenger."

Down went the paper from my hold in a twinkling.

"The man with the what?" said I.

"Dear me, sir, is it possible?" Did you never notice his—?"

"Landlord, fill us another bottle; look sharp, and let it be of the right sort—d'ye hear?" hiccupped a young spark in a high key, seated amid a knot of officers.

This was another man of consequence, I suppose, for Boniface immediately left me to attend to him, at which my equanimity was so disturbed that I resolved to take possession of my room *soute qui route*, and bar it against all intruders whether in canvas jackets or the livery of Beelzebub.—Full of ire, I sprang up the stair-case, and on reaching the landing place I found my door open and the man of the tar coolly seated within. He had a huge purse before him, made of the same material as his dress, into which he was thrusting handfuls of Napoleons.

"Who's there? oh, come in," said the occupant of my apartment in a breath; "I was just balancing my accounts, and find that I owe you a shilling, (he had borrowed one for some purpose or other on the road,) there it is; now die where I may, no man can point to my grave and say I owe him a shilling, ha! ha! ha!" So saying he put a shilling into my hand.

"You are an irresistible person, be you who you may," said I, my mortified feelings brightening into good humor, "and you must know human nature well to make such use of it."

"I don't know that, my method is simpler than you suppose. Human nature seems to me to be very like a pack of cards, continually shifting positions and playing odd tricks; nevertheless, always having its share of trumps, which reconciles me to it. Yes, sir, there are hearts of gold everywhere; yet there is a lust after wealth that commits an infernal lot of mischief. When young, I was reckoned a virtuous youth; but was poor; so the noses of folks who passed me turned astrologers; you understand?—they gazed intently on the heavens whenever I was near. With that I damned them for a set of money-loving asses, and very consistently turned my own thoughts toward the scraping up of riches. In process of time I got me a sack of canvas, mind, and I crammed it with stores of gold, and when I told the world what I had done, good Lord! how the disinterested creatures flocked around me, and I laughed mightily in my sleeve. I was soon, however heartsick, and dropping the superfluity of a name, I set out upon my travels, taking with me the talisman of the hearts of all men—GOLD. Since then all climates have been familiar with me, and it is only the reflection that many fellow inheritors of my native soil are pining for what I have so liberally dispensed to foreigners, that I begin to think it my bounden duty to raise smiles in our own land before creating broad grins in another."

"And yet you are now going to France," observed I.

"Because I have important business there.—This metal, which can dry a widow's tear, and bend a proud man's neck, is now destined to work miracles with affairs in Gallia—I go to—"

"What?" said I, as he appeared to check himself.

"To look at the French pigs—they are elegant animals, aren't they?—and have smaller waists and thinner legs than our vulgar, home-bred swine.—Must be off at daybreak, though—so good-night." So saying this singular being bowed me very civilly out of my own room; but as I was at the door I determined on another struggle to gratify my curiosity, which had become little short of intense.

"Excuse me, sir," said I, "but since I have had the pleasure of your company I have witnessed so much happiness conferred, such joy has followed your footsteps, that perhaps you will do me the favor to say to whom I am indebted for so many hours of gratification."

The man of canvas placed both hands to enclose my ear, as though to ensure the secrecy of what he was about to unfold, and whispered, "the man with the — CANVAS BAG!"

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WHAT MEN THINK OF WOMEN.

(AN AMBITIOUS TITLE OF AN ESSAY)

Let no one doubt that it would be well for both men and women if each sex really knew more of the other; if women were less in the habit of wearing a smiling mask in their intercourse with men, and men showed more of their natural manly selves in the society of women. As it is, there is a sort of hypocrisy of sex on both sides, which is usually practised out of the family. It is curious to mark how far this goes, and in what