

## BABY OF A CARAVAN.

It was a bitterly cold night with an icy wind blowing. And sitting by the fire smoking my nightly pipe before retiring, I congratulated myself that I had no urgent case on my list, and that I could go to bed, and reckon on undisturbed repose till morning. But violent ringing of the surgery bell quickly dispelled these comforting anticipations. Rising I unbarred the door.

"You are wanted at once, doctor," said a man who was unrecognisable in the black background of the night.

"Who wants me?" I gruffly demanded.

"My wife sir; we're on the border of the common by the fire-wood."

"Gipsies!" I thought. "I'll be hanged if I budge an inch."

In extension of which, ever since I had been at Haydock, where in an evil hour I had purchased a practice, I had been the victim of all the impecunious sick in the neighbourhood.

"I have a trap waiting. And not to mince matters, doctor, willy nilly you'll have to come. But I mean you no harm, I swear. Your professional services only are required. Here's your fee."

As the fellow strode forward and slipped a small packet into my hand I observed that he wore a broad-brimmed hat and was very closely muffled, so that his face was completely hidden.

"Come in," I said, by no means reassured.

But my mysterious visitor preferred to remain outside.

Payment in advance was new to me; and likewise was the amount of my fee. The packet contained twenty guineas. Rather more than I had earned at Haydock in three months, notwithstanding old Sanders's books and his glowing representations.

I put on my coat and hat, and was presently hustled into a hackney coach which the strange man drove. And, prepared for anything in the shape of horror or romance that might turn up, I gave the reins to my imagination.

"Stay here until I call you," ordered my conductor when we reached our destination. He vanished in the inky darkness. But guided by the sound of his swift tread on the crisp turf, my straining sight followed him; and he had not gone many yards before a sudden light through the open door revealed the outlines of a caravan of unusual size, the steps of which he mounted.

Entering sideways, off went his hat, and I caught a glimpse of his finely chiselled features silhouetted, as it were, on the dazzle from within. But momentary as was the view, they were ineffaceably imprinted on my memory, to be recalled years hence in another land.

In a couple of minutes or so he reappeared. "Hi, hi!" he shouted excitedly, "hurry up, doctor. Hark!" as an infant's cry saluted us, "that's the baby. Heaven grant that my darling is all right," he muttered with emotion.

My nocturnal summons had been calculated to inspire both distrust and curiosity. But my amazement at the interior arrangements of the caravan—amateur gipsying was at that date unknown—was such, that after glancing round, I felt inclined to ask myself if I were not dreaming.

Lit by shaded lamps, which shed a subdued rosy light, the outer compartment was furnished in oriental style, and the exquisitely wrought stuffs which draped the walls and covered the divans, with the softly yielding carpets, were the choicest products of Eastern looms. The small sleeping-room beyond, festooned with sky blue silk wreathed with roses, was a fitting frame, too, for the beautiful young mother, who looked scarcely eighteen, lying on the bed. With her unbound hair rippling in golden waves over the daintily laced pillows, and her large melting brown eyes—deadly pale though she was—no words of mine could paint her fair beauty.

The woman in attendance, who had the appearance of an upper servant, was evidently an efficient nurse. And, seeing that my presence was unnecessary, having given her a few directions, I descended the steps.

"You must not go yet," said the lady's husband, seemingly overjoyed at my favourable report of my patient, but whose face the starless night still veiled; "this doubtless strikes you as a very odd affair! But we are awkwardly placed at present. My wife's father is a beneficed clergyman, who augments his slender income by coaching young men for the universities. I was one of his pupils, and had the audacity to fall in love with his daughter. An unpardonable offence my high-born relations would say. And if our marriage were known, the consequences would be serious to all concerned. But up to now we have contrived to keep our secret. And I have ventured to hope, sir, that we may count on your silence."

His voice had a truthful ring. But I had no fancy for mysteries, and caution behoved me. "Unless occasion should arise when it might be my duty to speak," I said, "you may. I will visit my patient again to-morrow. Good-night."

"I've not finished. Until I can claim my wife openly we propose consigning our boy to the care of the nurse, who is devoted to us. But babies are as alike as two peas, and I am not going to run any risks. Some months ago I devised an instrument that, with gentle pressure, will answer the purposes of the most elaborate tattooing. But, simple as the operation would be that would serve to identify the young gentleman yonder—should Martha be unfaithful to her trust—I shrink from it; and if you would perform it, doctor, you would greatly aid me by your obligations to you."

"I have no objection," I said, laughing, "provided the instrument is over the better," he said; and handing me his invention, he insisted on my returning to his wife's room.

My patient evinced no surprise at my intrusion, and before I quitted the caravan the fore-arm of the newly-born babe bore the impress of a mythical beast of the griffin species, poised on outspread wings, which I inferred was his father's family crest.

"Please accept it as a souvenir of to-night, doctor," murmured the young mother, who had been anxiously watching me with her great shining eyes, as I replaced the instrument, which consisted of ingeniously enclosed needles like steel points, in its morocco case, on which was a trade mark. "But, believe me, we shall require no reminder of the service you have rendered us."

The father's confession of gratitude was equally warm.

I was re-entering the ramshackle vehicle which had conveyed me thither, when he abruptly informed me that it was imperative that the van should be on the road by daybreak.

"Have no apprehension on your patient's account," he said in answer to my remonstrances, "all possible precautions will be taken."

On setting me down at the surgery door his parting injunction was—

"Should you change your address acquaint Messrs. Telford, the bankers."

A request with which I complied on leaving Haydock. But twenty years had elapsed, during which I had indulged in a good deal of globe trotting, before I again communicated with the representatives of the famous banking house.

I was in the wilds of California, returning from visiting a mighty storn of my acquaintance, when a terrific storm of wind and rain overtook me; and what with falling trees, which groaned like wounded giants, snapping branches, the shrieking of the wind, and the pelting deluge, the din was appalling—progress difficult. At length, however, I espied a hollow tree in the midst of a noble group of red woods, and made for it. A youthful traveller had preceded me. In a recumbent position, with his head propped against the trunk, his white, worn face showing in profile on the dark wood, recalled an antique cameo, and strangely enough I seemed to dimly recognise it.

Staring up at me with his wistful brown eyes, he raised his hand to brush back the golden lock which trailed low on his forehead; and from his poor bony arm the ragged shirt sleeve fell away, displaying a curious blue mark. I seized his wrist, and swiftly the tide of memory rolled back to Haydock—to a midnight summons on a winter night, and my visit to the caravan on the bare, bleak common. But I might be mistaken after all.

"You are English," I said; "how came you to emigrate, and to be alone in this vast forest?"

"I was orphaned early, sir, and a woman, whose name was Martha Ellis, brought me up, and when she died—just six months ago—I was homeless and work scarce. But a gentleman—a stranger to me—befriended me, and offered to pay my passage to America, and directly I landed a man engaged me to go to the Rockies with him. But he treated me badly and I left him. I'm trying to get to the nearest settlement now, but I've missed the road, and I'm dead beat. I've a camp kettle," he hinted in faint, hungry tones.

I gave him a little brandy, and further revived by the simple meal I was able to supply him with, he grew more communicative.

I was presently convinced that the handsome young fellow was, indeed, identical with the baby of the caravan: that he was as ignorant as myself of his parentage, and that the man who had assisted him in the old country was a wolf in sheep's clothing interested in getting rid of him. I took him back to camp with me, and as an initial step towards solving the mystery which, at intervals, had puzzled me all these years, I wrote and apprised Messrs. Telford that I should ere long recross to England, and that if nothing unforeseen occurred I expected to be at a well-known hotel near Charing Cross on a given date.

My young forest friend, George Capel, accompanied me to London where, within an hour of our arrival, two venerable gentlemen—the elder Telford, and a Mr. Fleming, a clergyman—interviewed us. To them by-and-by I imparted the few particulars related of the romance in which I had figured: learning in return that I had more than probable that my companion was the missing heir of the Earl of Chesnut, for whom fruitless search had been made for years.

"My daughter's husband was his eldest son," explained Mr. Fleming, "and shortly after their visit Haydock he was killed by a fall from his horse. She never rallied from the shock, and before she expired we gathered little from her save the facts of the marriage and the birth of the child. And I owe it to Mr. Telford, in whom my son-in-law had partly confided, that the marriage certificate was forthcoming."

"From first to last however, the old earl was sceptical of the boy's existence; and all my efforts to trace the woman to whom my grandson had been committed were unavailing until quite recently, when I discovered that she was dead, and that the lad had emigrated. Notwithstanding this," he said, "I have defended the title; and the case, which his cousin is resolved to fight to the bitter end, comes on again to-morrow."

Owing to a slight misunderstanding as to the hour the court met George and I arrived late, and seats allotted to the general public were temporarily assigned to us.

"The late earl was pre-eminently a just man. Is it a credible, it was a righteous cause, that the young man passing under the name of George Capel would have been permitted to languish in obscurity from childhood?" asked a monotonous voice to which we were forced to listen.

"Is it not singular, too, that now that his supposed claims have been publicly urged, that he himself should be undiscoverable? Weeks have already been wasted in vain inquiries, and the request of my learned friend for further grace is unreasonable, and were it granted would be a grievous injustice to my client."

"However that may be," George said in clear manly tones, rising, "I beg leave to contradict your assertion, sir, that George Capel is undiscoverable. Here he stands; and had it not been for that person," pointing to a sleek-headed faultlessly-dressed individual who, at sound of his voice, had started to his feet, "whom I have learned to-day for the first time is my cousin, and who persuaded me to embark for America while our grandfather lay dying, furnishing me with funds for the voyage, the delay to which you so pathetically allude might have been avoided."

To his utter discomfiture we had swooped down upon the enemy unawares, and everybody in court was taken by surprise. But recovering himself the judge commanded silence. Nevertheless, George's statement had corroborated evidence of humble friends of his previously tendered.

And when, after some technicalities, I had been heard, my last letter to Messrs. Telford read, and the little instrument which George's father had designed, and which had done its work so effectually, produced and identified by the maker, whose attendance had meanwhile been secured, the case was brought to an abrupt conclusion. The false claimant made his exit rapidly, amid a storm, of hisses announcing his defeat, and the victory of the caravan baby—the title bestowed on the earl at the time, and by which he continues to be known to his intimates, among whom I have the honour to be numbered—was complete.

A good story is told of Senator Gorman, of Maryland. One day while dining in a hotel in Baltimore, he was presented to a gentleman who failed to catch his name.

"Your friend mentioned, I think, that you are from Howard county," said the stranger.

"And that, by the way, is the birthplace of that rascal Gorman. Do you happen to know him?"

"Oh yes," replied the Senator, "I know Mr. Gorman very well."

"I have never seen him," said his companion, "but I have a distinct picture in my mind of what he is like. I fancy that he is a burly Irishman over six feet in height with a fist like a sledge hammer. Am I right?"

"Why, no," said the senator, "I think not. In fact, Mr. Gorman has been thought very much like me—many persons, indeed, being unable to tell us apart."

The stranger expressed much surprise, and here the conversation ended. As Mr. Gorman was leaving the hotel that evening his companion at dinner rushed after him.

"Oh, Mr. Gorman," he cried, "I hope you will pardon my rudeness. I had no idea who you were. You are altogether different from what I had supposed you to be. Why—why, you are just as common looking a man as I am."

Rather Mixed.

At a school in Derbyshire the following story was set for composition the other day:—

"A ship was anchored off the coast of India and a portion of the crew went ashore to cut wood."

"One of the sailors got separated from the rest, and was much alarmed by a huge lioness creeping up to him, and crouching at his feet. The animal got him to follow her to a tree. Looking up he saw a big monkey hugging two lion cubs."

"This was the cause of the animal's trouble. The sailor chopped down the tree, and the angry mother sprang upon the monkey and destroyed it, and then showed her gratitude to the sailor by fawning upon him."

The following rendering was afterwards handed in:—

"A ship anchored off the coast of India, went to a tree to get some wood."

"A lioness was coming quietly up to him, not springing fifteen feet, they always do."

"The lioness kept looking up a tree, and the sailor did not know what it wanted."

"The lioness was very pleased and worried the monkey."

Tasting His Own Medicine.

A certain physician at sea made great use of sea water amongst his patients. Whenever disease came on, a dose of the nauseating liquid was thrown down.

In the fulness of time the doctor fell overboard.

A great bustle consequently ensued on board, in the midst of which the captain came up and inquired the cause.

"Oh, nothing, sir," answered the tar, "only the doctor has fallen into his medicine chest."—Cassell's Journal.

BORN.

Sydney, May 7, to the wife of J. A. Young, a son.

Parrsboro, May 1, to wife of C. J. Hartnett, a son.

Halifax, May 3, to the wife of J. J. Campbell, a son.

Lunenburg, April 29, to the wife of Willie Laugillie, a son.

Burlington, April 21, to the wife of Morton Card, a daughter.

Windsor, April 27, to the wife of J. A. B. Shaw, a daughter.

Halifax, May 1, to the wife of Michael Foley, a daughter.

Amherst, May 2, to the wife of A. P. McKinnon, a daughter.

St. John, May 6, to the wife of John W. Vanwart, a daughter.

St. John, May 8, to the wife of J. Fred Evans, a daughter.

Yarmouth, April 29, to the wife of Edgar Hilton, a daughter.

Amherst, May 1, to the wife of Edward Anderson, a daughter.

Parrsboro, April 30, to the wife of Alfred Nicholls, a daughter.

Petticoat, N. B., April 29, to the wife of W. A. Thompson, a son.

Canning, N. S., April 27, to the wife of Rev. Edwin Crowell, a daughter.

North Sydney, C. B., April 28, to the wife of Hon. G. H. Murray, a son.

Vernon, P. E. I., April 24, to the wife of Dr. Collins, a daughter.

Halifax, May 8, to the wife of E. B. Moore, Geo. W. Brison to Jane Gibson.

Clarendon, May 8, by Rev. W. Wass, James Blawn to Mary Euston.

Windsor, May 4, by Rev. Jos. S. Coffin, William Aker to Laura Bieckhorn.

Andover, May 1, by Rev. C. Henderson, Thomas O'Neil to Clara M. Ireland.

Woodstock, May 1, by Rev. J. N. Barnes, Miles Flinders to Hattie Nevers.

St. Stephen, May 2, by Rev. W. C. Goucher, Robert McNichol to Emily Hastay.

Halifax, May 9, by Rev. G. H. Haslem, Andrew King to Willa L. Zwickler.

Paradise, N. S., April 26, by Rev. J. B. Giles, S. Eagleson to Maud Durbin.

Bridgeport, April 29, by Rev. F. M. Young, Norris Ritchell to Armina Sabanas.

Falmouth, N. S., May 1, by Rev. Jos. Murray, Rupert Gray to Minnie Gola.

Tangier, May 2, by Rev. E. A. Ball, Robert Jennings to Margaret Hilleary.

St. John, May 1, by Rev. Dr. Macrae, Henry Nixon to Gertrude McAleer.

Mill Village, N. B., April 26, by S. R. Ackman, Wm. Wynd to Jane Gies.

Windsor, May 6, by Rev. E. B. Moore, Geo. W. Brison to Jane Gibson.

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