

"A MAN FOR A' THAT."

BY JAMES M. LUDLOW.

"Wud yer riv'rince come an' see a mon what's dyin'?"

The speaker, who had come to the basement door of a city minister's house, was one of the worst bedraggled women off Blackwell's Island. Her voice was as husky and weak in tone as it was strong with the smell of whiskey. Her face was a cold and villainous one—only that at first glance; but a second discovered the slightest trace of anxiety, just enough to suggest that her woman's nature was not entirely burned out, and that some sparks of sympathy, maybe of love, for somebody, still glowed among its ashes. Her address led into a section of the city which is almost as complete terra incognita to our worthy and even philanthropic metropolitans, as is the land of King Mtesa. In the back basement of a filthy tenement house, the old hag, who had preceded the visitor, welcomed him to what only the evident fact would warrant calling a human habitation. What had once been a kitchen pantry was now converted into a chamber, where there lay a man, about sixty years of age, of hard, yet rather intelligent, countenance, and the shrunk remnant of a once powerful body. Starvation was evidently accelerating the work of hasty consumption.

An inquiry if he had no friends brought the response,

"Plinties on 'em whin ye can go till 'em, an' there's a bit in yer pocky for a drink. All the b'ys longshore knows ole John; but missin's not mindin', an' no one but yersil' an' the ole woman's acrost the doorsill for four days an' nights. They says till thimsil's, 'May's how the ole cove's shipped ag'in, 'though it's knowin' they are

that me hulk's aground agin the graveyard."

Daily visits to him while he "kept afloat" and the little comforts which were brought him, soon established the utmost familiarity between John and "his riv'rince." Perhaps both felt that the difference was slight between the real humanity which buttoned itself in broadcloth and that which was wrapped in the pauper's blanket.

Of his early life John could give no clear account. Of his ancestors he said: "They niver took no 'sponsibility for me, an' I niver felt no 'sponsibility for askin' afther thim." To the best of his belief, in his voyage into this world, he "made port" in England. Being fit for nothing on land, he took to the sea. For nearly half a century he had drifted about the world, seeing only the lowest forms of civilization, among that morally amphibious population along the wharves of seaports, which may be said to live half the time in this world and half in hell. Ship law, under shadow of the yard-arm and cat-o'-nine-tails, was his highest code of morals, and dread of death his highest attainment in religion.

He knew almost nothing of the doctrines of the Bible, and said, honestly, "I'm no praste's mon, an' no Protistant naither—I'm jist a poor soul what's a-dying'."

John's interest in "the Book" was first caught by the reading of David's description of a storm at sea.

"The man what wrote that, sir, follerd' the sea. Was he a cap-tin'?"

Upon being assured that the Psalmist was first a shepherd boy, then a soldier and a king, but never a sailor, he declared, "Ah !