

the collector's face. Whether the envelope of hide did really contain a season-ticket for the Underground Railway, or whether it was a ruse on the part of the crafty Israelite, I'm not prepared to say; but he was one of that kind of people who seem to carry every possible thing of a documentary nature about with them—writing paper and envelopes, almanacs, bill, postage, and receipt stamps, writs, affidavits, post-cards, and forms for making wills and executing covenants. At all events the subterfuge, if subterfuge it was, had brilliant success. From a cunning cogen of esplan the jubilant ex-subaltern watched his Hebrew foe descend to the platform, and hurry into a carriage; the whistle sounded, and the train went roaring out of the station. The design of Mr. Moss Abrahams was evidently to alight from the train at the next station, Westminster-bridge, and search at his ease for his victim, who, he could have no doubt, was within a few carriages of the one in which he was sitting.

The hitherto-dejected Lieutenant watched with profound satisfaction the departure of his would-be captor.

"Shan't trouble the Underground any more to-day," he inwardly and jocosely remarked. "Give railways a wide berth. Try Greenwich in a steamer. Now I may as well go back to Gatti's, and have some breakfast; but first—well, the rag did wind me a little—I'll have a soda-and-b."

He walked to the refreshment-room, ordered a soda-and-b., that is to say, brandy, and swallowed it with much inward satisfaction, audibly complimenting meanwhile the tall young lady who served him on the altitude of her chignon and the general amenity of her demeanor.

The tall young lady did not seem very much flattered by these honeyed words, and uttered a by no means sotto-voce reference to "some people's impudence." She was a haughty young lady, and knew what was due to her. All Messrs. Ginger and Pop's young ladies are haughty, and resent rudeness with inexorable keenness.

"One shilling, sir, if you please," said the barmaid, in an accent rivaling in frigidity the lump of ice which she had placed in the soda-and-b.

"A jowly Robert," replied the abandoned prodigate; "tis yours, my charmer. Might I trouble you for change for a sovereign, fair one?"

The young lady addressed as "fair" tossed her head with more concentrated indignation. She fancied a covert insult in the epithet. For the damsel with the bright blonde chignon happened to have been born with dark-brown hair; and her golden locks were not a boon of nature, but a gift of art. 'Twas Dr. Botanky's celebrated Extract of Aureoline the which she used to tinge her tresses.

"A shilling," she repeated loftily.

Ex-Lieutenant Saxon sought in the pocket of his vest for his portemonnaie, in which he had placed not half an hour before the sum of twenty-two shillings and sixpence and a quadrangular piece of cardboard, the last being a mortgage-bond, or certificate of hypothecation, issued by the accommodating tradesman at the corner of Cecil-court, and having reference to three pairs of doeskin trousers and one black-dress coat with watered-silk facings, deposited that morning in the name of John Jinks, residing at 84 Clapham-rise.

Horror, the portemonnaie was gone! The distracted lieutenant searched pocket after pocket, but all in vain. He had evidently been robbed by some felonious member of the motley throng in Villiers-street.

He began to stammer out a series of more or less ridiculous apologies, but these were cut short by a stern command given by the tall young lady to a youth who was polishing the taps of a beer-engine to fetch a policeman.

"I thought as much," she resumed, tossing her head until her radiant chignon threatened to go through the ceiling of the refreshment-room. "Parties come here, and give themselves no end of airs, as if they were lords of the creation, and when they're asked to pay for what they've had, they talk about having their pockets picked."

"There was a case just like it last Toosday week," interposed a hony-looking man, who was drinking cold gin-and-water. "He wur all over beard and mustachys and gold chains as if he'd been a lord, and had three pork-pies and a plate of weal and 'am, let alone two bottles of stout and a point of Shabby, and then ses he, 'I ain't got no money, and you may dot vot you like with me.' Mr. Knox, vich was the beak a sittin' at Malborough-street, giv' him three months 'ard, and he turns around as bold as brass and ses as 'ow he would do that little lot on his head."

"But, good Heavens!" pleaded the unfortunate subaltern, "this is all a dreadful mistake. I've been robbed. I'm a gentleman."

"O yes," arose in a hoarse murmur from the crowd, which had by this time collected round the bar. "Ye dessey. A pretty gentleman! Gentlemen pays for what they've had to drink."

The wretched Charles Plantagenet had utterly given himself up for lost, and was expecting every moment the arrival of a police constable, with a pair of handcuffs, when there came pushing through the throng a little old gentleman, in a drab hat and a long green overcoat reaching nearly to his heels, and with a very high white neckcloth tied in a large bow with pendent ends. He had a curly brown wig and gold-rimmed spectacles, pushed high up on the bridge of his large flexible nose, so that two very bright little gray eyes could be seen peering beneath. He was very much marked with the

small-pox, wore false teeth, and might have been either on the shady side of fifty or the sunny side of seventy.

"What's this? what's this?" cried the new arrival, bustling to the bar. "Tush, tush! psha! I've seen it all. Quite a mistake. Gentleman's had his pocket picked evidently. I was robbed myself only the day before yesterday of a gold repeater, which cost me forty guineas, at the bottom of Villiers-street."

"Why doesn't he pay for his refreshments?" quavered the lofty barmaid, thinking perhaps that she had been a little too hasty.

"Why?" repeated the little old gentleman, "because he's been robbed. I know him perfectly well. Member of all the West-end clubs, and so forth. There's the money"—the little old gentleman threw down half-a-crown on the counter—"keep the change, my dear. Now, sir, this way; quite a mistake. Dear me! dear me! how much you have suffered!"

The little old gentleman led Charles, half stunned with amazement, out of the station. When they were on the Embankment and alone, he turned his little gray eyes, with an expression of infinite cunning, towards the gentleman he had rescued from such infinite peril, and remarked:

"Ah, ha! you won't readily forget those five minutes you spent at the Bar, will you?"

WHY THAT OLD GENTLEMAN PAID.

Messrs. Ginger and Pop, those estimable Refreshment Contractors, write to me (very civilly, I will admit, and with a case containing two dozen pints of Messrs. Wachter and Co.'s extra dry champagne—which I have sent to the Hyperborean Dispensary for diseases of the (Esophagus—accompanying their polite note) to say that they have no kind of buffet at the Charing-cross station of the underground Railway; and that consequently a young gentleman named Saxon, late of H. M. Hundred and Fiftieth Foot, could never have got into trouble at their non-existent refreshment-room for non-payment of a Soda-and-B. I beg Messrs. Ginger and Pop's pardon with all my heart. At the same time I may be permitted to observe that there are a great many modes open to me for explaining away the seeming blunder. That which might, perhaps, cause the least trouble would be the memorable reply of the consistent witness, who swore in a certain horse-stealing case that the animal forming the gravamen of the charge was sixteen hands high, and who was sharply reminded by the cross-examining counsel that, in his original deposition before the magistrate, he had taken his oath that the steed was sixteen feet in altitude. "Did I swear it?" asked the consistent witness. "Well, if I did, I'll stick to it." You might find it as difficult if you pushed me hard, and put me on my full dialectical mettle, to prove that there is no refreshment-room at the Charing-cross, or rather Embankment, station aforesaid, as to show that the earth is globular in form, or that such a person as Joan of Arc ever existed. Between ourselves I entertain grave doubts as to the historic truth of the Maid's tragedy, and am much more of opinion that she was an invention of Mr. Tom Taylor for the benefit of the Beautiful Mrs. Rousby. But I disdain to chop logic, or split casuistical straws in this regard. I plead the privilege of the penny-a-lining peerage, which is to be inaccurate whenever no special purpose is to be gained by being accurate. Besides, my Underground Railway may be in Imaginary London. Am I not the author of a Delusive Directory to the British Metropolis? When, however, I come to add that I have received several reams of penny-post letters, and about half a hundredweight of post-cards, all asking me in terms, now of anger and now of affection, now of bewilderment and now of derision, why that little old gentleman in the drab hat and the long green overcoat, and with the curly wig and the gold-rimmed spectacles, should have paid for Charley Saxon's refreshment at the Charing-cross buffet, and thus have rescued him from the dire dilemma in which he was placed, the matter becomes much more serious. There is a mystery, and I must explain it. The strangely impulsive generosity—as it seemed—of that old gentleman demands elucidation in a sequel to "At the Bar."

Of course, Charley was profuse in his expressions of gratitude towards the little old gentleman, who received these protestations with a mere "tut, tut!" adding that it was one of the most natural things in the world for a young gentleman such as he (our hero) evidently was to have his pocket picked. "And I daresay," he continued, his head on one side and with a very arch, not to say cunning, expression twinkling through his gold-rimmed spectacles, "that it isn't the first time in your life that you've been cleaned out, my young friend."

He looked, under these circumstances, so remarkably like an owl in an ivy bush—I grant the dissimilarity of costume, but it is the expression that does it—that Charley fancied for a moment that he must be not on the Thames Embankment, but in the keep of Arundel Castle, and an object of the contemplation of that very wise old owl (he regularly eats two tom-cats a day) who goes by the name of "Lord Eldon." It would have been rude, however, to tell the little old gentleman so; and as to the number of times he had been "cleaned out" in the course of his brief but eventful career, that was somewhat too sore a point with Charley to dilate upon just then. So he contented himself with asking his benefactor where and when he could call upon him for the purpose of repaying

the trifling but inestimably opportune loan, the advance of which had rescued him from so dire a predicament. "I shall have to pop something else before I can pay him," the ex-subaltern thought, ruefully enough, as he asked the question. "My uncle will get tired of taking in trousers next, I suppose; and then I shall have to spit my boots, and after that I shall have to hang myself in my braces."

There was, seemingly, no mysterious reticence about the little old gentleman, and he was prompt in his reply. "I live in Good-Gracious-street, just over the water," he said cheerily; "and we'll go there this very minute. Hi, hansom!" and with a green-silk umbrella of bulgy outline he hailed one of the "gondoliers of London," who was crawling with his vehicle along the Embankment in the direction of Westminster Bridge.

"But I haven't breakfasted!" quoth Charley, somewhat embarrassed.

"That's just it. Haven't breakfasted myself. Never can get up an appetite till I've taken a trot over from the Surrey side to see how many people get their pockets picked at Charing-cross. Bless you, the average is something tremendous!" Thus replied the little old gentleman.

"But I have not the honor—" the perplexed ex-subaltern murmured, drawing back a little. He was quite penniless, but still proud enough for a whole box of Lucifers. Had he been prosperous he would never certainly have thought of asking the little old gentleman, who did not look at all like a person moving in good society, to breakfast; and, desperate as were his present circumstances, he shrank from accepting his proffered hospitality.

"Tut, tut!" interposed the Samaritan in the curly brown wig. "Don't know me, eh? Never been introduced, and that kind of thing? Fiddle-de-dee! I know you quite well, Captain Saxon—you ought to have bought your captaincy by this time—late of the Hundred and Fiftieth. Bets, bills, Jews, Biddad and Shubite; gentleman in difficulties—I've been in difficulties myself; I'm always in 'em—fine handsome young fellow. Word all before you where to choose. Just a little hard up for the moment, eh? Executions out; keep it dark; make it all right. Know all about it. Now, pray, my dear sir, not another word. Jump in, Cabby, Good-Gracious-street. Look sharp, and I'll pay you. Dear, dear me, if he doesn't look sharp, we shall be late for breakfast!" And with such fragmentary discourse the little old gentleman had jostled the bewildered ex-subaltern into the cab; had poked his umbrella through the trap thereof to incite the "gondolier" to speed, and had pulled out and consulted at least a dozen times a massive gold watch—the twin brother, presumably, of the one worth forty guineas of which he had been robbed in Villiers-street; and with the gleaming glamor of his gold-rimmed spectacles had fascinated Charley Saxon, even as the Ancient Mariner fascinated the Wedding Guest; and all, so to speak, before you could say Jack Robinson.

"Name, eh? ah, quite forgot!" his companion suddenly observed, as the cab, having crossed the bridge, went rattling into the wilds of Kennington. "That's my name, Captain Saxon. Mustn't be offended. Ought to have been a captain long ago."

With which compliment he handed Charley a small oblong card, bearing this inscription:

"MR. T. BANTAM COX,
Happy Villa,
Good-Gracious-street, S."

"I was christened Thomas Bantam," he remarked; "but those who love me call me their Tommy. Bless you, you'll come to love your Tommy before you've half done breakfast."

"This is a monstrous queer sort of old file," the now thoroughly amused Charley thought, turning the card between his fingers. "I don't think he's half a bad sort of a fellow, though."

"I know what you're thinking of," Mr. Bantam Cox remarked, a whole shower of twinklings coruscating from the gold-rimmed spectacles. "You're thinking that your Tommy's an odd fish. So he is. He glories in it. And look you here, young man," he continued, with somewhat of solemnity in his manner, "if you want to know more about me, I'll tell you. Your Tommy lives on his means, and he's a man that likes to look on the Sunny Side of things."

The description left something, perhaps, to be desired, on the score of definiteness; but Charley was by this time quite prepared to pursue the adventure to its dénouement; and had Mr. T. Bantam Cox informed him that he was the Gentleman Gaoier of the Tower of London, or the husband of the Pig-faced Lady, or the Man in the Moon, he would have received the announcement in the same philosophical spirit.

A quarter of an hour's rattling over the stones brought them to Good-Gracious-street, which was a truly suburban locality—a kind of compromise between a street, a road, a grove, a crescent, a lane, and a double row of detached villas—embowered in trees, and with pretty lawns and flower-gardens in front. With all this, there was a public-house at the corner of Good-Gracious-street, and a public-house at the bottom. Pisgah Chapel—(Primitive Mumpers' connection) was in the middle of the street, flanked on one side by a mansion in the most florid style of suburban gothic architecture, and on the other by a charming little two-storied villa, the façade half smothered—it was summer time—with roses and eglantine. There was a delicious little garden in front, and on the iron rails of the gate was a very large and highly-

polished brass plate, on which were graven the words, "HAPPY VILLA."

"That's where I live," cried Mr. Bantam Cox merrily. "Jump out, my dear sir. Now, cabby, here's your fare. It's no use arguing. You know me well enough. Be off, will you, in a brace of shakes." And Mr. T. Bantam Cox pushed back the iron gate, and inducted Charley Saxon into the precincts of Happy Villa.

That which the hansom cabman subsequently said was unheard by his quondam fare; but it is the privilege of the romancer to be in the receipt of fern-seed, to walk invisible, and to listen to a variety of remarks, the utterers of which have not the slightest suspicion of being overheard. Thus did it come to pass with the "gondolier" who had brought the little old gentleman and his newly-found acquaintance from the Thames Embankment to Happy Villa.

"Yes," he growled, holding with scornfully bent arm, and in the palm of a remarkably grubby buckskin glove, the legal fare for the journey, which was one shilling and sixpence; "I know yer well enuff for the humbuggingest old skinflint, as 'ud ride half round the Postal Ragions for heightenpence. I know yer, yer hold himage. I wonder what's your game, now, with that swell out of luck, as looks as 'ungry as hif he'd been tied up for ten days in a cookshop with a muzzle on. No good, I'll go bail. A bad lot—a bad lot!" With which disparaging dismissal of his customer, the gondolier viciously flicked his horse over the left ear with his long whip, and sulkily departed. He met a nervous widow in a hurry (she was going to see her trustees), and charged her half-a-crown for conveying her from opposite the Blind School to the eastern extremity of Great George-street, Westminster! a transaction which somewhat poured oil on the troubled waters of that cabman's soul. *La vie n'est pas sans de grandes consolations.*

Meanwhile the little old gentleman had ushered Charley—the door of the villa being opened by a rosy-cheeked servant of smirking mien—into a dainty parlour, very prettily furnished, and the walls of which were hung with engraved portraits of the most distinguished equity and common-law judges of past and present times. Charley was somewhat staggered by this imposing array of ancient and sapient countenances, enshrined in full-bottomed wigs, and terminating in bands and robes.

"Ah, you wonder at my taste, I daresay," chuckled the little old gentleman, marking the attention with which his guest surveyed the portraits. "I'm very fond of Law. It's such a Noble Study." The little old gentleman appeared to have carried his fondness for the law to the extent of keeping a record of the sittings of the various legal tribunals of the land; for stuck on the looking-glass were divers printed notices relating to causes in the Queen's Bench, the Common Pleas, the Exchequer, and the Courts of Bankruptcy in Basinghall-street and Lincoln's-inn. "Never mind those odds and ends," he remarked, as he saw Charley's gaze directed towards these graffiti on blue foolscap. "Look at the pictures. Ain't they beautiful? That's Lord Eldon. Great man, Lord Eldon. Your Tommy's considered like him. There's Mansfield, Ellenborough, Lyndhurst, Brougham; and there's Sir Fitzroy Kelly, Knight, at Westminster."

"This is certainly the oddest old file I ever came across," mused Charley, pursuing his investigation of the ornaments of the apartment; "and, mercy on us, what can my Tommy want with all these clocks?" There were, indeed, a couple of rather handsome French clocks on the mantelpiece; and a skeleton of timepiece was making a painful exhibition of its internal arrangements on the chiffonier. One bracket supported an alabaster clock, surmounted by a figure of Hope leaning on an anchor; on another shelf was a Tyrolean horologe with an elaborately carved case; and in a corner was a huge old eight-day clock, rumbling and wheezing like a patient in the acute stage of chronic bronchitis.

"Clocks—yes, I've plenty of clocks," Mr. Cox—*he should have been Mr. Clocks*—explained, as he saw Charley's eye travelling from one timepiece to the other. "This is how it is. Your Tommy, you see, owns a goodish deal of house property hereabouts, and his tenants are so fond of him, that they often send him their clocks to take care of, especially when they're a little bit behindhand with their rent. You've no idea how fond of your Tommy his tenants are. It's quite affecting."

"I'll give it up," said Charley Saxon to himself. "My Tommy must be mad. Everybody is mad, so they say, over the water."

At this juncture breakfast was brought in; and the ex-subaltern, who was by this time hungry enough for several hunters, had something else besides portraits and clocks to think about. It was a capital breakfast. Ham and eggs, devilled kidneys, Strasburg pie, anchovy-toast, and other delicacies graced the festive board; and, in addition to the usual tea and coffee, a fascinated diluent to the solids appeared in a huge silver tankard full of Bass's bitter. Charley thought of his old feasts in the mess-room, and of the trifling balance in which he stood indebted to the messman of the Hundred and Fiftieth Foot. On the first he dwelt with fond regret. The last did not trouble him much. Messmen make large profits, no doubt, from their catering, and they must be prepared to put up with the risk of the balances.

"Your Tommy always takes Bass at breakfast," Mr. Saxon's host observed, as the victim of the Purchase System indulged in a hearty draught from the tankard; "in fact, he doesn't object sometimes to a glass of bitter before breakfast; and I was on my way to have one