

THE CHANGED TRUNK

A TRAVELER'S ADVENTURE.

(By S. Baring-Gould.)

I do not believe there exists a scene more distracting, and at the same time more farcical, than the inspection of the passengers' luggage at Charing Cross on the arrival of the 5.15 mail in the evening of every day except Sunday.

On the arrival of the train a barrier is erected—over which a policeman keeps guard—between a dense mass of passengers impatient to get at their personal belongings, and the counters arranged like an ancient Roman dining-table, on which a swarm of porters plant the portmanteaus, trunks, boxes and baskets.

When the policeman thinks fit he removes the barrier and the passengers boil about the counters, clamoring for their property, rattling their keys, and vowing that they have nothing to declare.

The confusion is heightened by the fact that some of the passengers have halted on their way at Brussels, or Amiens, or Lisle, or Boulogne, and their luggage has come on before them and is heaped up in the custom house—a sort of cabin in two compartments on the unoccupied side of the three-sided counter.

I was, on a certain occasion, in this situation. I had registered my portmanteau or trunk—it was a cross between them—at Cologne, and had tarried for a couple of days, en route at Brussels. When I arrived at Charing Cross I secured a young and active porter with a retaining fee of a shilling, and said to him, "Look here, my man, I have to catch a train at Waterloo. We are late, as usual, by half an hour. Unless I get out my trunk at once and on to a cab I shall miss my train. It is in the custom-house, as I sent it on from Cologne."

"All right, sir, you follow me." He led the way within the space round which the passengers were dancing and jostling one another, and were clamoring and holding out their keys, and together we entered the cabin designated "Custom House." It was choked up with baggage.

"Which is it, sir?" and he began to tumble the boxes and portmanteaus about unceremoniously. "There you are," I said, when I recognized mine, as I believed. "Out with it and on to a cab like a streak of lightning."

"Anything to declare?" asked a custom-house officer. "Nothing. I have a beastly two ounces of foreign tobacco in my pocket, to which you are welcome. Hang me if I smoke another pipeful of the filthy stuff!"

He let my baggage pass without trouble, and in three minutes I was spinning away to Waterloo. I just caught my train.

In the evening I sat down in my snug little box in the country to such a dinner as I had not tasted in foreign hotels; a leg of Welsh mutton, not baked, but roasted before a fire. Mutton! They do not know what mutton is in France or Germany. Mutton! We do not know what it is in England if we persist in having it baked.

And then I had out a bottle of my old port. I never even venture to ask for such a thing over the water. Not even in Oporto do they know what a good old port is like.

"I beg pardon, sir," said my servant, coming to me as I was engaged on my dessert, "I don't think, sir, that you have got your portmanteau."

"What? I brought it with me." "I am very sorry, sir, but I think not. Here you the key, sir?"

"Yes, here it is. It is all right; only knocked out of shape. That confounded Calais-Dover boat is death or disfigurement to all luggage."

could find was a letter, without envelope, in one of the yellow paper-covered novels. It was headed "Rusby Park, Swampham, Essex."

It began "My own dearest Freddy," and ended with "Ever, darling, yours, Mabel Hope-Rush."

It had been written ten days before I came upon it. I did not read the letter. It was doubtless from a wife to her husband who was from home, and such communications are sacred.

After turning over in my mind what to do, I resolved on enclosing the letter in a note to Mrs. Hope-Rush, stating how I had come by it, and requesting to be furnished with the address of the gentleman who probably had got my trunk in exchange for his own.

Rusby Park sounded well—too well to be congruous with the shabby clothes, but I supposed that it was an old park that had been broken up into building lots and studded with semi-georgian villas.

Two days later I received a reply that astonished me: "Rusby Park, Swampham."

"Sir—I am obliged to you for sending me a letter written—not by me—to a most objectionable personage, a personage whom we do not desire to know, and with whom we absolutely refuse to hold communication. I remain, yours truly, "Mary Hope-Rush."

Here was a pretty predicament into which I had stumbled. I had addressed the letter to Mrs. M. Hope-Rush, and it had fallen into the hands of a Mary instead of a Mabel.

Then it was vastly aggravating, for it left me as ignorant as before concerning the name and whereabouts of the individual who had my portmanteau.

I now regretted that I had not written to Mr. Hope-Rush, instead of to his wife. Men act on reason, and not on impulse.

I now wrote to Mr. Hope-Rush. "Sir—I regret that I am compelled to trouble you with a letter, but I am still without my portmanteau and without any information as to who 'Freddy' is, who, I believe, has by mistake taken mine, while I have his. As mine contains articles of clothing and objects of value, I am naturally anxious to recover it. May I ask you, most kindly, to favor me with the address of 'Freddy,' and so greatly to oblige yours faithfully, "Ernest Maltravers."

To this note I received a curt reply: "Mr. Hope-Rush is quite unable to comply with Mr. Maltravers' request to furnish him with the address of Mr. Frederick Jones, and it is his desire to hear nothing on such a very unpleasant subject."

So much was gained—I had learned the surname of the man who presumably had my trunk. But the gain was not much. Jones is a common enough name. Wales teems with Joneses.

The situation was puzzling; but I fancied I saw daylight. It appeared to me probable that there was a daughter of the Hope-Rush family called Mabel, who had become attached to and engaged herself to this Fred Jones, and the parents strongly disapproved of her conduct.

That they were justified in their disapproval, I was convinced; for in my trunk was my diary with my address in it, also a letter of credit which had accompanied a number of checks that I had cashed abroad, and my address was on the letter that contained the letter of introduction.

Now, if Mr. Fred Jones had been a gentleman he would at once have communicated with me and told me that he was in possession of my luggage. He had done no such thing, and I set him down as a "howling cad."

All the more necessary was it for me to get my property out of his hands. But how was I to do it? Very possibly Mr. and Mrs. Hope-Rush did not know the man's address and they were too proud and angry to ask their daughter for it, so as to oblige me.

The only way in which I could procure it would be by application to Miss Mabel herself, but I shrank from doing this by letter. I was driven to a course which was repugnant to my feelings; but the obstinacy or the pride of the parents obliged me to do it, and really I could not sacrifice my trunk and all its contents to humor them. After mature consideration resolved on paying a visit to the village of Rusbyford, by Swampham. It was probable that I might there gain what I desired, without having recourse to Miss Hope-Rush.

If I failed, I must trust to the chapter of accidents and endeavor to meet her and extract from her the address of "Freddy."

Accordingly, I took the train to town, and thence to the nearest station to Rusby. There I hired a trap and drove to the village, and was deposited at the little inn, the Rush Arms.

I engaged a bed, ordered dinner at half-past seven, and asked the landlord to do me the honor of sharing my dinner with me.

I found him a genial, consequential fellow. "That was a fine park I passed, and a good house in it, as far as I could judge from the road," I said.

"You may well say that," he remarked. "It belongs to the Hope-Rush family. They were Hopes—that is to say, a Mr. Hope married Miss Ruth, who was the heiress—and he pronounced Hope as 'Ope'—and now they call themselves Hope-Rush. He is a quiet, harmless sort of man who can't call his soul his own. She is the manager and wears the breeches."

from the sister than from Miss Mabel. "No, I can't say that I do," answered the landlord. "She's gone away visiting her relations and looking out for a new situation, and she said she'd write and give us her address when she was settled. She is a tidy sort of a person, and her only drawback was the brother. She well-nigh worshipped him, and he was no good for anything."

"But," said I, "how came this about—I mean this entanglement? The stations in life were so different and so disproportionate?"

"Well, sir, Cupid is a queer customer, and you can't say where his arrows will fall. The young lady was always very interested in the school, and accustomed to go there to see how the needlework was executed, and to take a class now and again. So I suppose she met Mr. Freddy there. He is a good-looking fellow, with a nice moustache and pleasant ways. But he has no work in him and sponges on his sister. I suppose that they met at the school and a liking came about that way. It went on for some months before it was suspected and then there was a fine kick-up. I can assure you, and Mr. Freddy had to walk his chalks. He gave out that he was going to Paris to be a tutor in a nobleman's family, and the sister, Miss Jones, had to give up the school. We were sorry to lose her, but she ought to have known better than to encourage these goings-on." I had learned sufficient.

It was clear that my only chance of obtaining the address of Mr. Fred Jones was through Miss Mabel, and I should encounter some difficulty in doing that. I made inquiries as to her habits, and learned that she was wont to go about a good deal on her bicycle.

I accordingly went to Swampham and hired one of these contrivances and spent some time in careering up and down the road before the park gates, but without result for three days. On the fourth, however, I was more successful. I saw her twirl out of the main entrance, where was the lodge, and spin along the highway in the direction of Swampham.

I put on pace sufficient to keep her in sight till a slight hill was reached and then I ran on and caught up with her.

We proceeded almost side by side for a little way, and then I came up quite level with her, and turning my head, said, "I have a message for Miss Hope-Rush."

"From mamma?" she asked, thinking at the moment that I had been sent after her from the Hall.

"No. It is a message for you to transmit to Mr. Frederick Jones." The color mounted to her temples and further relaxing her speed she got off her cycle.

"What do you mean?" she inquired. "It is as I say—a message to be conveyed to him, unless you wish to favor me with his address, in which case I will carry the communication to him myself personally."

"What is it?" she asked suspiciously. "It is a message from his portmanteau that has got into my hands and is clamoring to be restored to its rightful owner."

"Oh," she exclaimed and waxed angry, "you are the gentleman who thought it a proper thing to do to send my letter under cover to mamma."

"I did not read your letter. Seeing that it began and ended affectionately I somewhat carelessly concluded that it was a letter from a wife to her husband."

Miss Hope-Rush turned her head from me to conceal the crimson that suffused it. "I got into mamma's hands, and—she began, and stammered. I interrupted her. "I know. It led to very unpleasant scenes. But with them I have nothing to do. It is about Mr. Frederick's portmanteau or trunk—call it which you will—that I have come to speak. In fact, I act as the spokesman for this piece of luggage. It contains his garments, his razors, his toothbrush and comb and a little box of tooth powder, so that Mr. Jones must be in great distress for want of these necessary articles. In addition, there are his slippers in the trunk, so that the poor fellow has to wear his boots indoors as well as out. Conceive the discomfort to him!"

"Oh, dear! I am sorry," said Miss Hope-Rush. "What can I do?" "I want the address of Mr. Jones," said I, "so that I may restore to him his garments, slippers, toothbrush and sundry other articles forming the contents of the trunk."

"Did you write to mamma for the address?" "I did, and she did not send it to me."

"She does not know it. Freddy—I mean Mr. Jones—has been in Paris, but he is now in London. I—I think I have been very foolish, and now I wish that I had never met Freddy, but we became engaged, and I am tied—I cannot help myself; he can hold me to my promise. So I am in a cleft stick."

"Then you really regret this engagement?" "I—well, I think I was very indiscreet. If it were to come all over again I would act very differently."

"Give me his address, Miss Hope-Rush," said I, "and let me see what I can do with him."

She took out a pocket-book and wrote on a blank page the address that I required, and handed it to me. "Thank you," said I. "Now for the portmanteau, to send it flying to its true owner."

I had nothing further to detain me at Rusbyford and that same evening I paid my bill at the village inn and departed for town.

Next afternoon I betook myself to it. I found the house in a shabby back street and I rang the bell and rapped on the door. In response appeared a slatternly landlady. "Is Mr. Frederick Jones at home?" I asked.

"He is in his lodging," replied she; "upstairs, first floor, door on the right."

She did not ask for my card or vouch for lead the way. I ascended and tapped with my knuckles at the door indicated, and heard a shout, "Entrez!"

Mr. Jones was so fresh from France apparently that he had forgotten that he was on English soil. I entered and found myself in a small parlor, with Japanese fans stuck about the walls and cheap showy glass brackets in the corners.

Mr. Jones was seated with his feet in stocking soles, one on each jamb of the fireplace, in which no fire burned. His boots were thrown, one here, one there on the floor. On the table stood a pewter with stout in it. "Hallo!" was his salutation. "Who may you be?"

"My name," said I, "is Maltravers."

"Oh, blow it!" was his interjection. "I have come," I continued, "to reclaim my trunk, which, by an unfortunate accident, has got into your possession and yours has come into mine. If you will kindly allow me to remove mine I will send you yours directly I get back to my house in Hampshire. Here is my card."

Then I noticed, to my disgust, that Jones was habited in my garments. "Oh, the trunk! Hang it!—yes, the trunk is at your disposal."

"With its contents? I think you have on my coat and waistcoat and continuations."

"Yes. You see, I was left badly provided for, as most of my garments were in the trunk you seem to have got hold of. No offense; none meant. Necessity knows no law."

"There were other articles with my luggage. Would you favor me by letting me have my portmanteau and its contents, only minus what you are now wearing?"

"Oh, certainly! Awfully sorry; but I fear you will not find all you want in it just at this moment."

"What is missing?" "Some things," replied Mr. Jones airily.

"What articles are short, and how came they to be not in my trunk?" "Well, several articles—guss. Confound it all! Who did you not apply earlier?"

"I could not; I had not your address. But allow me to observe that my name and address were in my trunk."

"Ah, I dare say; but—Jemini! I did not look very close. Where did you lose it?"

"At Charing Cross. I came over in the boat from Calais."

"Ditto," said he. "What sort of a passage did you have?" "Never mind about that now," I remarked. "I want to have my goods returned."

"I give thee all—I can no more," said he, rising, entering the adjoining bedroom and dragging into the parlor my own portmanteau. "There you are," said he, "take it away. The old hag downstairs will summon a cab for you."

"Excuse me," said I. "I must just look at the contents. You have yourself laid the obligation on me by hinting that all my belongings are not in it."

"No more they are. Deucedly sorry, but facts are stubborn things."

Table with 4 columns: DAY OF MONTH, DAY OF WEEK, COLOR OF VESTMENTS, and the liturgical calendar for March 1905, including Quinquagesima Sunday, First Sunday of Lent, and Second Sunday of Lent.

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lady. Then I took the train to my little place in Hampshire, and was pleased to think that I had done a good deed in relieving a nice girl from her embarrassments. I supposed that this chapter of my life was concluded, but I was mistaken.

A few days later I received a letter from Mrs. Hope-Rush, couched in very different terms from that I had previously received from her. She informed me that her daughter had shown her the letter from Mr. Jones, and had told her of the interview she had with me, and that both were satisfied that they had to thank me for my intervention. The lady apologized for her previous curtness and trusted that I would testify to her and Mr. Hope-Rush that I pardoned it by giving them the pleasure of a visit at Rusby Park.

I could not refuse an invitation so graciously and so kindly meant, and a week later saw me a guest at the Hall. I found Miss Mabel greatly ashamed of herself, very pretty to her humiliation and feeling very much indebted to me—altogether remarkably agreeable, and I found myself, in time, installed in the place of "Freddy" and with a possibility in the future of having to burce myself with a triple surname: Maltravers-Hope-Rush—Chambers' Journal.

Prevent Disorder—At the first symptoms of internal disorder, Parmentier's Vegetable Pills should be resorted to immediately. Two or three of these salutary pellets, taken before going to bed, followed by doses of one or two pills for two or three nights in succession, will serve as a preventive of attacks of dyspepsia and all the discomforts which follow in the train of that fell disorder. The means are simple when the way is known. It is proposed to introduce at Rome the cause of canonization of Father Dominic, the Passionist, who received Cardinal Newman into the Catholic Church. It Will Prolong Life—De Sota, the Spaniard, lost his life in the wilds of Florida, whether he went for the purpose of discovering the legendary "Fountain of perpetual youth," said to exist in that then unknown country. While Dr. Thomas' Oil will not perpetuate youth, it will remove the bodily pains which make the young old before their time and harass the aged into untimely graves.

