

tavern brawl, he coldly remarked, that "They did not deal in such articles."

"I perceive that you do not," said Robert politely; "but I should be glad if you could tell me who does?"

"Humph!" said the man, whose love of approbation happened to be very small, and his combativeness very great. "How did you contrive to get into such a miserable condition?"

There was nothing on earth Robert hated so much as being asked questions; he considered all such queries as personal affronts; and he answered coldly—"That he had been unfortunate, and his present plight was purely accidental."

"What a fruitful mother of mischief is that same dame Accident," said the genius of the counter. "I should have thought, by the color in your cheeks, and your dirty, ragged appearance, friend, that you could have named another cause for your present questionable condition."

"What do you mean?" said Robert, bending his flashing eye upon the stranger.

"New run."

"I never drink," returned Robert. "My misfortunes must have greatly altered me, if you could take me for a drunkard."

"I beg your pardon," returned he of the counter; "I perceive that you are in your right senses, which no drunkard ever is. If you want a suit of clothes, just round the corner of the street you will find what you seek. Enquire at the second door of that black looking pile of buildings," he continued, pointing with his measure to the location in question, "for one Benjamin Levi; he deals in ready made and second hand clothes; and you will be sure to suit yourself. He always buys of the hangman all cast suits that drop from the gallows."

How far Robert's indignation at this coarse, unfeeling joke, might have carried him, I know not, had not a mild, middle aged gentleman (who had been sitting behind a desk, and, unobserved, had listened to the whole conversation; and who, in spite of Robert's miserable appearance, had been greatly prepossessed in his favor,) stepped forward and addressed him—

"Do not mind my nephew, sir; he means no affront. He is a bitter, caustic fellow, who says ill-natured things to every body. I have lost a great many customers by this savage humor of his. You seem in distress, young man—are you a stranger in Jamaica?"

Encouraged by the old man's benevolent aspect, Robert took the seat politely proffered him, and recounted the tale of the wreck, to which Mr. Lawson, for so the merchant was called, listened with fixed attention.

"And what has become of your brother?"

This question Robert could not very readily answer. But, compelled by necessity to conceal the truth, he said, "that Richard had left him that morning to seek for employment in some mercantile counting house."

"He must cut a better figure than his brother," again responded the man behind the counter, "if he has obtained what he sought; the sooner you pay a visit to my little friend the Jew, the better."

This speech won no reply from him to whom it was addressed; whilst the old man continued with a smile—"You must mind that you are not taken in by his friend, the Jew."

"Benjamin Levi passes here for a Christian, for he visits our church about once a year, and eschews all connexion with the children of Israel. But he is a Jew by birth, and one at heart and in practice, and belongs to the very worst tribe of them. He will cheat you if he can; but the rogue is a pleasant rogue—a laughing rogue—who, between jokes and blarney, dexterously applied, contrives most effectually to pick your pocket. Take my advice and get your clothes of some respectable tailor."

"Time is precious," said Robert, "and my necessities brook no delay. I am not afraid of your Jew; his is a common character—he has a thousand counterparts in our great metropolis."

"But Levi is a very uncommon character," said the old merchant, "and so you will find before you have been one month in Jamaica. He is a man whom all men hate; and though they laugh at his absurdities, yet were he to die tomorrow every honest man in the place would rejoice at the event. There is a mystery about the man," continued the merchant, significantly; "something about him unlike other men."

"Perhaps he is the wandering Jew?" said Robert, with a smile, for he was greatly amused by the solemnity of the old man's manner.

"Perhaps he is," returned the other gravely. "He knows every thing and every body; has been to all parts of the world, and speaks half a dozen oriental languages; but the experience he has of the evil passions of mankind, could never have been acquired in half a century, and this man is not above forty years old. In short, sir, a more spiteful, wicked, malignant devil, never received a commission from Satan to trouble the earth."

"You excite my curiosity," said Robert. "How could a shop-seller, which at all times is but a mean trade, obtain such power and influence among you?"

"Any person may obtain power by daring to be wicked," said the merchant. "I have only shown you this man in one of the characters he assumes to impose upon his fellows."