

THE MYSTERIOUS SPOTLEY.

BY BERNARD MCEVOY.

WE never could estimate how old, Spotley was. Sometimes he looked younger than he did at other times. For one thing, he shaved clean—wore neither moustaches nor “side-boards”—and whether his hair was dyed or not, we never could tell. He might be thirty, but sometimes we thought it possible for him to be forty-five. Once, when he caught sight of a rather dashing-looking woman, who came into the bank and transacted some business at the counter, he looked sixty. I looked across at him from my desk with astonishment, to see a haggard aspect come over his face. His countenance looked grey and old, and his cheeks seemed to drop into the senile semi-pendulousness of dotage.

He was a close, cautious-looking man, about 5 ft. 6 in. in height, and he weighed, perhaps, 150 pounds—the relevancy of which observations will appear later on. It was a mark of his character that while he was ready to hear information about other people, he was never communicative about himself. He had been in the bank for years, and we younger clerks had theories about him which successively held currency and then dropped. He was a man who had seen better days, and was highly connected. He had been a priest in some distant State, and for some reason or other had forsaken holy orders. He was the son of an officer high up in the British army. He was a distant off-shoot of the Bonaparte family—an hypothesis that held sway for several months, and which was somewhat supported by his appearance, which was distinctly Napoleonic. But all these theories sank one by one into disuse. There was no drawing him

into conversation about his past history. It may be imagined, therefore, that the effect of the lady episode before referred to was to increase the bank's general curiosity. We found out who she was when she next came in,—the daughter of a millionaire who had come to Washington with her father for the winter. I am speaking of a time just previous to the war. Lincoln was at the White House, and it was rumored that Miss Haughton's father was an old friend of his. The only apparent change that the presence of Miss Haughton in the capital made in Spotley was that he dressed even better than usual. But as he had always dressed superlatively well, this was not much.

One day a somewhat loudly-dressed, well-built young man came into the bank, and, as I happened to be standing at the counter, he asked me if Mr. Spotley was in. Answered in the affirmative, the newcomer asked if I would point him out. I did so.

“Well, he looks a game 'un,” he remarked, with a decidedly English accent “Don't he now? A regular game 'un, he do. Think he'd pass a word or two with me?”

“I've no doubt he would if you wish to speak to him,” I said.

“Why, he's the cleverest lightweight boxer in Ameriky, and he looks it, blood if he don't.”

“You don't say so?” I replied. Here was a new theory with a vengeance. We had never credited Spotley with anything of the kind. I summoned him to speak to his admirer, and from a distance I interpreted their interview.

The unknown, loudly-dressed young man, placed himself in a fighting attitude, delivered a left-hander at an