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OLD GARTH:

A STORY OF SICILY.

By Professor JAMES DE MILLE,

Author of "The Dodge Club," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE STRANGE MANUSCRIPT.

OLD GARTH sat in his room in Liverpool, smoking his pipe and reading a letter. It was a large, low apartment in the topmost story of a building that looked like a warehouse. From this a window opened out upon a narrow lane, on the other side of which and about six feet away rose the blank wall of another warehouse. There was but little furniture in the room: a narrow iron cot with mattress, two stout chairs, a small deal table, and finally a seaman's chest, which had been transformed into a couch by the simple means of a few gunny-bags.

The occupant of this room had not been in Liverpool more than six months, and yet had made himself known during that time throughout a pretty extensive circle of acquaintances, both by the eccentricity of his character, and the singularity of his business. These had impressed the public mind very strongly, and had produced that peculiar sentiment of good-natured toleration which is often felt toward any one who may be regarded as an "oddy."

Old Garth, as he stood in his humble apartment with the letter in his hand, presented rather a singular appearance. He was so tall that his bushy hair almost touched the low ceiling; his frame was gaunt, raw-boned, and sinewy, and his dress, though not exactly shabby, was yet coarse and ill fitting, giving a general air of slouchiness to his whole exterior. His face was bronzed, as though by long exposure to a tropical sun; he had his beard and mustache short cropped and of that length which is most popular with practical men, since it enables one to discard razors and yet gives no inconvenience; his nose was thin and long, his eyebrows shaggy, and over the whole face there was a certain griminess, arising from the grizzled hair which overspread it. There was, however, something in the face which attracted rather than repelled; the gray eyes were sad rather than stern; beneath the roughness of the features there were the signs of gentleness and kindly human feeling; while in the whole man there was the suggestion of a character in which the most pro-

found earnestness was blended with the most touching simplicity.

As Old Garth studied the letter which he held in his hands, the sound of footsteps, apparently ascending the stairs, came from below without attracting his attention. At length there came a rap at the door, after which the visitor, without waiting for any invitation, opened the door and entered the room.

The new-comer was one of those good-looking young fellows, who are so plentiful everywhere in this nineteenth century, both in fiction and in real life. He had a round, almost boyish face, clustering dark curls, open, frank expression, while his eyes were of that kind which look one full in the face, and compel a certain sort of interest if not regard. His first remark was the usual and natural one:

"Hallo, old boy, how are you?"
"Well, Henslowe, my son," said Old Garth, "I'm delighted to see you. Make yourself at home. Don't be bashful, and don't mind me. For my part, I'm in a confounded fix and about used up."

"Why, what's the matter?" said Henslowe, dropping into a seat upon the seaman's chest.

"Oh, everything's turned up," said the other, "that ought not to."

"Do you mean here in Liverpool, or in Sicily?" asked Henslowe. "Any news from the seat of war?"

"Well," said Garth, "that's about it. It is news from Sicily. It's that beggar Berengar. He's thrown up the cards. The game's up."

"Thrown up the cards? Why, what's that for?"

"Well, perhaps it couldn't be helped; but, you see, the fact is, he was expecting something from me, and that something wasn't forthcoming, and so—the game's up. It's hard, too. You see, it was this way with me: I'd been ten years or so in Sicily. They're a bad lot, but they've got some good points after all, and ought to have their rights. It's too infernally bad for those beggarly Bourbons to hold a magnificent country like a vegetable garden, and treat the population like a lot of slaves. Well, you know we've been working away for ten years or so

against the rascally Bourbons for the Sicilian Republic, and didn't make much progress, so I offered to come home and see if I couldn't do something; and that, as you know, is the reason why I came here."

"The very last place in the world to come to on such a business," said Henslowe; "that's what I've always told you. Now, if you'd tried France, you might have done something; but in England, there's no chance. We're the most matter-of-fact people in the world. We sympathize with revolutions everywhere, but we never dream of helping them; and in all England there's no such matter-of-fact place as Liverpool. I know that. Look at me. I'm an artist. An artist! and in Liverpool! Think of that! Now, an artist in Liverpool knows exactly the position of a patriot in Liverpool." But what does your friend Berengar say? Is that from him?"

"Yes. He don't say anything in particular, except that he's given up, and is going to make his peace with the Government. That means that the infernal scoundrel is going to be what we call Queen's evidence. He's going to play the Judas, betray his friends, tell all he knows about the revolution; hand in the names of the leaders, and all that. He means to save his own skin, and make enough by his treachery to get a start in life."

"How did this happen?"

"Oh, well—every traitor has an excuse, and Berengar has as good an excuse as any one. You see, the game had become desperate. When I left, I promised to seek for help here, and return in three months. But six months have passed, and I've done nothing. This is what Berengar tells me, and he adds that he must either do as he is doing, or hang. There's no doubt that the poor devil is in a fix. Here's his letter. You can see it for yourself."

"Thanks—but I don't know Italian."

"Well, it isn't hardly Italian, it's the Sicilian patois. Berengar boasts, or used to boast, about being a man of the people. After this he will probably be a man of the Government, for they will, no doubt, reward him for his treachery;—and in return for enabling them to hang a score or two of his most intimate friends, they will