

beer. Joe handed me the morning paper before drawing the beer, and I glanced idly at its columns, while I waited, like Mr. Micawber, "for something to turn up." Nothing turned up for at least a quarter of an hour. Joe remarked that the strikers were holding an open-air meeting, and would soon be coming in to dinner. He was naturally on the side of the strikers, and spoke contemptuously of "rats," remarking that "They were only fit to be poisoned." I trembled with excitement when he began to speak, and took a sip of beer to hide my emotion. The name of Brown as a "rat" was on the tip of my tongue, when another customer entered the hotel and asked for some "square gin." With an eye to business I invited the man to drink at my expense, and he at once grinned assent. "A thing of beauty," the poet tells us, "is a joy forever." My guest was certainly not "a thing of beauty," and could never possibly be "a joy forever" to any one on this planet. He was of about five feet eight inches in height, thick-set in figure and bullet-headed. His nose had lately been broken in some rough and tumble scrimmage; but his eyes were his worst feature, on account of a hideous squint which made the blood of a spectator run cold. It was impossible to tell whether he was looking at you, or not; and yet you felt at the same time that he saw through you so clearly that he could count the buttons on the back of your coat, even when you were facing him. I am unable to say under what particular category of strabismus his visual distortion could be ranked; but an uncanny feeling began to creep over me, and some instinct warned me that I was threatened with misfortune by those evil eyes. Though the day was fearfully hot, he wore an ancient and weather-stained fur cap, corduroy breeches, and heavy hob-nailed boots. But it was his coat which fascinated my gaze, almost as much as his diabolical squint. Of what material it had originally been composed I can form no theory. As I looked at it dreamily, fragments of Shakespearean phraseology involuntarily occurred to my memory. The coat was a thing of "shreds and patches"—it was a "muddy vesture of decay"—it was "looped and windowed raggedness," etc., etc.. But it was more than this. It had evidently wallowed in many gutters in the obscene company of its temporary proprietor, for these loathsome garments for different reasons often change owners. It was bespattered with grimy stains of beer dregs and pea soap, and tainted the air around for yards, as though some attempt had been lately made to wash it in bilge-water. But I will say no more on this subject.

The man was called Bill by the landlord, and, to my horror, I soon found him seated confidentially alongside of me.

True to my mission, however, I did not flinch, but lured him on to speak of the strike, and more especially of "rats." He mentioned the names of some of the leading "rats," but made no reference to Brown, or the punishment he had received. Meanwhile, I had been compelled, in carrying out my programme to order, against my will, a second glass of beer; and, to borrow the words of Byron, "A change came o'er the spirit of my dream." The day, as I said before, was fearfully hot, and, as I looked at the St. Lawrence through the open door, it seemed to be simmering in a suffocating haze. My temples throbbed wildly, my heart palpitated irregularly, and I felt as though I had been smoking two or three pipes of opium, or had taken an overdose of the most acrid Hashceeh. There is nothing that goes more against the grain of my nature than to entertain evil suspicions, without ample grounds for so doing. Far be it, therefore, from me to say, or even to insinuate, that the late, lamented Joe Beef had used artificial means to strengthen the watery beer which I consumed that day on his premises. But I may, at any rate, be permitted to hazard the remark, without prejudice or malice, that the two glasses of beer, which I drank unwittingly to further the interests of justice, contained an undue proportion of copperas, cocculus Indicus, or possibly strychnine. And still all the time Bill was talking to me, and my ears tingled and tinkled, and buzzed unceasingly, as though I had a hive of bees in my head. The last words of Bill that I can accurately remember ran somewhat in this wise: "Well, sir, this chap as I am speaking of was just about the size of you or me, for you and me, you know, are about 'the same size.'" I protested in a polite manner that I was shorter and slighter in build than Bill, but he proceeded: "That ain't so; you and me can wear just the same clothes to a 't,'" we'll just change coats, and then you'll see." What horrid infatuation induced me to rise, and to allow Bill to divest me of my frock coat, I shall never have the chance of learning from any source! Suffice it to say, that when I awoke from a sudden fit of irresistible stupor, I found myself still seated on the same stool in the sweltering hot canteen, but Bill and my new frock coat were gone. There I sat, a wiser and sadder man, clothed in his oleaginous and evil-smelling upper garment. My head ached and my heart seemed broken. Something had to be done at once. "Mr. Beef," I exclaimed deprecatingly, in tones that would have melted a stone, "our mutual friend has gone, and has taken my coat with him and left me his. Look here." And I held out my arms before Joe, silently drawing his attention to the tattered state of my greasy apparel. He answered in a voice that might have par-

alyzed Achilles: "Young man, take care of what you're saying. Bill'll be back in a minute. Do you think my friend's a thief? Say it again, and I'll knock your blooming head off your shoulders." I had heard before of a few of Joe's achievements, and I believed most devoutly that he was quite capable of performing the feat that involved serious damage to my "blooming head." So I made no answer, except to murmur feebly that I had full faith in Bill's integrity, and that he would no doubt return promptly. Nevertheless, I moved slowly and sadly to the door, and bowing to the famous artilleryman, I looked out into the street. All seemed quiet, except that from the west I saw a crowd of men marching along a hot cloud of dust. They were the strikers coming to their dinner. They must not see me in my unwonted apparel. I must be off without delay. At this moment, providentially, I heard a cab rumbling over the stones. I hailed the driver promptly, and after a wondering gaze at my attire, he admitted me into his vehicle and conveyed me to my lodgings. Of course, I gave him double fare, in my thankfulness for his services; and, looking around cautiously to see that no one was watching me, I sprang from the cab, opened the house-door with my latch-key, and mounted the stairs to my bedroom in "double-quick" time.

But all was not over yet. I had still a task to perform. With a trembling hand I tore from my shoulders Bill's polluted rags, and nervously wrapped them in the Saturday edition of an evening paper. As my room fortunately looked on the back yard, I saw at a glance that the coast was clear, and, with my unsavory bundle, descended to the coach-house. There stood an ash barrel, and there, also, I found a spade. It was the work of a moment, only. I removed a few shovelfuls of ashes, and buried from my sight forever, though alas! not from my memory, the abominable togger of Bill.

I then took a warm bath at my leisure, and after I had eaten the most meagre of dinners, for my appetite seemed as dull as my intellect, I went down to my work at the office. Of course, everybody noticed that I was out of "kilter," and asked what had happened. "My own familiar friend," who sat in the same room with me, remarked sarcastically that "I looked as if I had been paying the funeral expenses of all my poor relations." I bore it all bravely, patiently, humbly. I had brought it on myself by my pig-headed conceit, and I suffered in silence all the gibes, flouts and jeers, which fell to my lot that day. At the close of the day, when the staff had all gone, I wrote the following short paragraph: With respect to the cowardly assault on the un-