

The colonel was much gratified by this intelligence. Now he would find out Mrs. Van Steen's maiden name and have an opportunity of judging of the stock from which she came.

"I hope I shall make your brother's acquaintance before long," he said politely.

"Aaron will be very pleased," answered Mrs. Van Steen.

"Is Aaron your brother's name?" asked the colonel, with a look of such irrepressible dismay that Mrs. Van Steen laughed outright.

"Yes; his name is Aaron; I hope that is not improper. Scriptural names are not uncommon with us, as perhaps you are aware."

The colonel murmured that he had understood as much; but he was depressed and absent during the remainder of the interview. His imagination could not rise to the conception of a gentleman named Aaron. He took his departure before very long, leaving a card for the absent brother, who, it appeared, had gone out to inspect Westminster Abbey and the House of Parliament.

On the following afternoon Colonel Randolph, hurrying in rather late to dress for dinner, found lying upon his table a card which, on being held up to the light, exhibited the name of Aaron P. Muggeridge. When the colonel read this appalling inscription he literally staggered back as if he had received a blow, and subsided into the nearest arm-chair, where he remained motionless for some minutes, holding the dreadful card at arm's-length before him. It was, indeed, a dreadful card! Dreadful not only on account of the name which it bore, but also by reason of its size and glaziness, and of the flourishes which surrounded its Italian characters. Mr. Muggeridge no doubt had had dealings with a Parisian stationer, as an American residing in the capital of the gay world might very naturally do; but the colonel knew little more of Parisians and their usages than he did of New Yorkers, and it seemed to him impossible that any human being of even moderate refinement or sense of decency could make use of such a preposterous bit of pasteboard. He cast it away from him, at length, with a tragic groan. "My brother-in-law, Mr. Aaron P. Muggeridge!" Oh, horrible, horrible thought!

The lady who sat next to Colonel Randolph at dinner that night set her neighbour down as an incipient lunatic. He met her attempts at conversation with totally irrelevant rejoinders; he lapsed into long intervals of gloomy silence; and the only spontaneous observation that he volunteered was towards the end of the evening, when he turned upon her suddenly and asked, with great earnestness, "If your name were Muggeridge, what should you do?"

"I should change it as soon as possible," she answered promptly.

"Ah, yes; but you are a woman; you could marry and get rid of it in that way. For a man it is not so easy. He must bear it, I suppose."

"But you don't bear the name of Muggeridge!" said the lady, in some surprise.

"Oh, no," answered the colonel, in a low, sad voice; "but I know a man who does."

Our poor hero, like many other excellent men, had his little weaknesses. He did not share Juliet's opinion as to the unimportance of names, and was by no means sure that what we call a rose would smell as sweet if known as an onion. Mr. Aaron P. Muggeridge might be a polished, cultured, and fascinating member of society; but not the less, according to the colonel's lights, did he start heavily handicapped in the race of life. One thing was certain; the matter must be looked into, and the unlucky individual inspected without loss of time. At the earliest opportunity, therefore, Colonel Randolph betook himself to Dover Street, making his visit in the forenoon, so as to be the more sure of finding the object of his search at home. "I will know the worst," he said to himself with decision.

Alas! "the worst" did not seem too strong a term to apply to Mrs. Van Steen's brother. He was a tall, rather stout man of about thirty; he wore a heavy mustache with waxed tips, and an imperial, also waxed; his trousers were of French cut, and brilliant in pattern; his shoes had very square toes; beneath his chin was an enormous blue bow, the ends of which floated over his coat; a diamond ring adorned his little finger; and, that nothing might be wanting to complete the atrocity of his appearance, he had struck a *pince nez* upon the bridge of his nose, and was contemplating his sister's English friend through it with a mixture of languid curiosity and affability.

"A positive caricature, by George!" was the colonel's inward comment upon the stranger, who was now being introduced to him by Mrs. Van Steen, and who shook hands with him, saying, in drawling and rather patronizing accents, "How do you do, Colonel Randolph? I am glad to make your acquaintance, sir."

"I hope," said the colonel, with a desperate effort to conceal his feelings, "that you mean to make some stay in London."

"Well," answered Mr. Muggeridge, "it's uncertain. I shall have to be guided by circumstances. I have come here to attend to a matter of business."

He spoke in a singsong, nasal voice, ending each of his sentences on a high note. To think that a brother and sister could differ so sadly!

"I suppose that, like all Americans, you are engaged in business of some kind," the colonel observed.

Mr. Muggeridge nodded. "We don't have so many idle men in our country as you have here," he was obliging enough to explain.

"And do you often manage to get away for a holiday?" asked the colonel. He was thinking to himself, "I hope to the Lord you don't! If the Atlantic were between us I might perhaps contrive to forget your existence sometimes."

"Aaron has a partner," put in Mrs. Van Steen, in her soft, quiet voice. "When one of them is in America, the other can amuse himself in Europe."

(To be continued).



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