

## THE MONEY DIGGERS AND OLD NICK.

ON the rough and rocky coast of Maine, about ten miles to the eastward of Portland harbour, lies Jewell's Island. It is a bright and beautiful gem on the ocean's breast, full of various and romantic scenery. It has its green pastures, its cultivated fields, and its dark shaggy forests. Its seaward shore is a high and precipitous mass of rock, rough, and ragged, and projecting in a thousand shapes into the chafing ocean, whose broken waves dash and roll into its deep fissures, and roar and growl like distant thunder. On the inland side of the island, there is a grassy slope down to the water's edge, and here is a little, round, quiet harbour, where boats can ride at anchor, or rest on the sandy beach in perfect security. The island has been inhabited by a few fishermen, probably for a century, and recently works have been erected upon it for the manufacture of copperas and alum, the mineral from which these articles are produced having been found there in great abundance.

This island has been renowned as a place for money-digging ever since the first settlements were planted along the coast; and wild and romantic are the legends related by the old dames, in the cottages of the fishermen, when some wind-bound passenger, who has left his vessel to spend the evening on shore, happens to make any inquiry about the money-diggers. But of all these wild legendary narratives, probably there is none more authentic, or supported by stronger or more undoubted testimony, than the veritable history herein recorded and preserved.

Soon after the close of the revolutionary war, when the country began to breathe somewhat freely again, after its long deathlike struggle, and the industry of the inhabitants was settling down into its accustomed channels, a sailor, who had wandered from Portland harbour some forty or fifty miles back into the country, called at the house of Jonathan Rider, and asked for some dinner. "But shiver my timbers," he added, "if I've got a stiver of money to pay for it with. The last shot I had in the locker went to pay for my breakfast."

"Well, never mind that," said Jonathan, "I never lets a fellow creetur go away hungry as long as I've got anything to eat myself. Come, haul up to the table here, and take a little of such pot-luck as we've got. Patty, hand on another plate, and dip up a little more soup."

The sailor threw his tarpaulin cap upon the floor, gave a hitch at his waistband, and took a seat at the table with the family, who had already nearly finished their repast.

"What may I call your name, sir, if I may be so bold?" said Jonathan, at the same time handing a bowl of soup to the sailor.

"My name is Bill Stanwood, the world over, fair weather or foul; I was born and brought up in old Marblehead, and followed fishing till I was twenty years old, and for the last ten years I've been foreign viges all over the world."

"And how happens you to get away so far from the sea now, jest as the times is growing better, and trade is increasing?"

"Oh, I had a bit of a notion," said Bill, "to take a land tack a few days up round in these parts."

"Maybe you've got some relations up this way," said Jonathan, "that you are going to visit?"

"Oh no," said Bill, "I haint got a relation on the face of the arth, as I know on. I never had any father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister. An old aunt, that I lived with when I was a little boy, was all the mother that ever I had; and she died when I was on my last fishing cruise; and there wasn't nobody left that I cared a stiver for, so I thought I might as well haul up line and be off. So I took

to foreign viges at once, and since that I have been all round the West Indies, and to England, and France, and Russia, and South America, and up the Mediterranean, and clear round the Cape of Good Hope to China, and the deuce knows where."

"But, you say you haint got no relations up this way?"

"No."

"Nor acquaintances nother?"

"No."

"Then, if I may be so bold, what sent you on a cruise so fur back in the country, afoot and alone, as the gal went to be married?"

"Oh, no boldness at all," said Bill; "ask again, if you like. Howsomever," he added, giving a knowing wink with one eye, "I come on a piece of business of a very particular kind, that I don't tell to everybody."

"I want to know!" said Jonathan, his eyes and mouth beginning to dilate a little. "Maybe, if you should tell me what 'tis, I might give you a lift about it."

"By the great hocus pocus!" said Bill, looking his host full in the face, "If I thought you could, I'd be your servant the longest day I live."

"You don't say so?" said Jonathan, with increasing interest; "it must be something pretty particular then. I should like mighty well to know what 'tis. Maybe I might help you about it."

"Well, then," said Bill, "I'll jest ask you one question. Do you know anything of an old school-master, about in these parts, by the name of Solomon Bradman?"

"No—why?"

"Never heard anything of him?" said Bill, with earnestness.

"Not a word," said Jonathan; "why, what about him?"

"It is deuced strange," said Bill, "that I never can hear a word of that man. I'd work like a slave a whole year for the sake of finding him only one hour. I was told, the last he was heard on, he was in some of these towns round here, keeping school."

"Well, I never heard of him before," said Jonathan; "but what makes you so mighty anxious to find him? Did you go to school to him once, and have you owed him a licking ever since? Or does he owe you some money?"

"No, I never set eyes on him in my life," said Bill; "but there's nobody in the world I'd give half so much to see. And now we've got along so fur, jest between you and me I'll ask you one more question; but I wouldn't have you name it to anybody for nothing."

"No, by jings," said Jonathan, "if you're a mind to tell me, I'll be as whist about it as a mouse."

"Well, then," said Bill, "I want to know, if you know of anybody, that knows how to work *brandy-way*?"

"Brandy-way? what's that?" said Jonathan. "If you mean anybody that can *drink* brandy-way, I guess I can show you one," he continued, turning to a stout, red-faced, blowzy-looking man, who sat at his right hand at table. "Here's my neighbour, Asa Sampson, I guess can do that are sort of business as fast as anybody you can find. Don't you think you can, Asa?"

Asa Sampson was a hard one. He was helping Mr. Rider do his haying. He had been swinging the scythe, through a field of stout clover, all the forenoon, during which time he had taken a full pint of strong brandy, and now had just finished a hearty hot dinner. Mr. Sampson's face, therefore, it may well be supposed, was already in rather a high glow. But at this sudden sally of Mr. Rider, the red in Asa's visage grew darker and deeper, till it seemed almost ready to burst out into a blue flame. He choked and stammered, and tried to speak. And at last he did speak; and says he:—