

JERRY, THE MISER.

BY R. P.

It was a cobbler's shop, breaking the row of small private houses in a shabby suburban street.

Near the door on this particular afternoon, were two females, the one stately, the other graceful and young; both in the deepest mourning. In front of it were two street Arabas, as ragged as misanthropes; before it stood the oddest being imaginable—a little old man, about four feet high, with a not overclean face, iron-gray hair, on which rested a worn skin cap, shaggy brows, rather bow legs, and a dirty leather apron. In irate tones, he was addressing the boys.

"Off with you, you young rascals! If you come playing your hopscotch and Sally-cum-ups before my window again, I'll say you alive!"

Before the muscular fat boys fled, hurling back derision, "Well done, Jerry—old Jerry, the miser! Yah!"

The cobbler—for he hardly merited the more emphatic title of shoemaker—paid no heed, but glancing sharply up from his bent brows at the two women, asked, "and what may you want?"

"We—we see," began the younger, looking timidly toward the square card in the window, "you have apartments to let."

"No, I've rooms—rooms. I don't know nothing of 'apartments.' I ain't up to them—not the rooms ain't neither. Do you want to see 'em?"

"We did wish."

"All right; come along!—and the little man swung round on his heel.

Following the cobbler through the shop, he led them upstairs to the rooms. There were two, communicating by a door with each other; they were poorly furnished, but clean. As the women looked at them, the cobbler stared at them silently.

"Well," he asked, "what do you think of them?"

"They will do very well," answered the widow.

"It's—only—the price?"

"Six shillings a-week—in advance."

"About references—"

"Don't want any—you pay in advance; and as, whenever you leave the house, it must be through the shop, you can't well take the furniture without my knowing. Is it settled?"

"If you please; here is the first week's rent."

The cobbler's lodgers proved very quiet. They did not interfere with their landlord, and he, apparently, did not interfere with them. His rent was paid to the day.

They rarely spoke, save exchanging the ordinary morning and evening salutations when the daughter went through the shop. The mother never left the house. But Jerry, like most cobblers, was a man of observation and he made such comments as the following.

"She's a beauty, she is; but awful white and sad. It's my opinion it's hard times with the upstairs."

One evening, a few weeks after Mrs. Weston and her daughter rented the cobbler's apartments, the latter entered the shop later than usual.

The yellow lamp was flaring dimly, and Jerry, a boot on his knee, was hard at work.

After the usual customary salutation, the girl was passing on, when the cobbler's voice arrested her.

"I say, your mother's ill, ain't she?" he asked, nursing his knee with both arms.

"Yes, Mr. Grayshaw, I am sorry to say she has been for some while ailing. She—she—" and the young voice trembled with tears—"is very weak."

"Then you must give her lots to eat responded Jerry, staring out of the window, "the best thing for weak people is a nice roast fowl and a bottle of wine. Why don't you give it to her?"

"I wish I were able, or even to provide her less expensive dainties; but—but—" and the tears fell fast—"I can't."

"Is that you, Clare?" inquired the widow's feeble voice.

"Yes, mother."

"Come to me my child."

Clare pressed her white hands to her bosom, made an effort and passed in to the bed room. But her mother's first words beat down all her noble-souled, heroic self-repression.

"Clare, dear, have you had better success to-day?"

"No mother," she sobbed, hysterically. "It's the same old story; I can get nothing. What shall we do? I feel heart broken."

"Ah, me—ah me! to look around at this place, and remember the pleasant home which once was ours! Now we are alone with not a single friend in the world!"

"Not one! Oh, yes, mother, believe me, one! cried the girl, quickly. "He—(Gilbert)—will be true—trust me he will."

The widow, touched by the pleading countenance, was about to reply, when, interrupting herself, she said—

"Clare, I hear some one in the parlor. See who it is dear."

The girl obeyed, and started at the weird scene she beheld.

Seated before the grate on a three-legged stool, was the cobbler, yet in leather apron and cap. On his knees were a bellows, which he was working with consummate skill, evidently master of the art, sending the coals into bright blazes that threw flashes of lurid color over the quaint figure and the room.

Clare looked at the table; upon it was a new loaf, butter, eggs and a neat packet of tea. "Oh, Mr. Grayshaw—" she began. "Are you going to refuse me?" he snapped. "Mayn't I have tea?"

"How could I refuse—" she began, when he interrupted by—

"Then don't loose time. See to the kettle. I'll boil the eggs."

Well, the two bustled about, the cobbler certainly the brisker, until finally, they were seated at a very comfortable tea. During the meal Mrs. Weston deemed it right to inform their new friend something of their history.

In her husband's lifetime they had been well to-do. At his death they yet could have lived comfortably, had not Mr. John Burgo suddenly bought heavy claims on the dead man's property.

"I never could quite understand what it was—I only know he must have been paid," said the widow dolorously. "But we hadn't some papers we ought to have had to prove it. So he took from us every penny, and left us as you now see?"

"A confounded villain!" exclaimed Jerry, cracking his egg with the point of a spoon, as if it had been Mr. John Burgo's bald head he had got under it.

"Then all our friends deserted us—"

"Except one," broke in Clare, with heightened color, which was not unnoticed by the cobbler. "But one as yet," added the widow. "He is a gentleman, Mr. Crayshaw, who—who was once a great friend of my daughter's. He was in Australia at the time of our trouble, and though we wrote to tell him, we have not heard a syllable since. You know the world Mr. Crayshaw."

"I do, ma'am," answered Jerry, emphatically, "and know that it's a sight better than people would try to make it."

"Ah!" cried Clare, gratefully, her face radiant, as involuntarily she extended her hand; "you think he may be true."

"He'd be the greatest villain under the sun if he were not my dear," said the man, cheerily; adding to himself, "Poor child—poor child! she then had to learn that levers' vows are easier broken than shootings, and thought about as little."

After protesting that it was cheaper for him as a miser to supply Mrs. Weston's fire, than burn one of his own, he frequently passed his evenings with them. He also procured Clare some shoe-binding to do, which, though hard and difficult work, was something.

At the end of the week, he was grimacing at a boy, through the boots in the window, when Clare came to pay the rent.

"Take it away," he said; "let it stand over." "Oh, we could not think of that," began the girl. "We were going to ask if you would not mind a portion of it being left for next week."

"Take it away!" reiterated Jerry, getting into a fury; "I won't touch a farthing! I like being a creditor—for I can charge interest."

"Bless your generous heart, which no assuming roughness can hide!" exclaimed Clare, gratefully, as she hurried from the shop.

"Poor thing—poor thing!" he murmured; "she's yet to learn that vows are broken easier than shoe-strings, and—"

He was interrupted by the shop door opening. Looking up, he found before him, a tall, well-dressed man, with a bronzed face and thick beard and mustache. Jerry started.

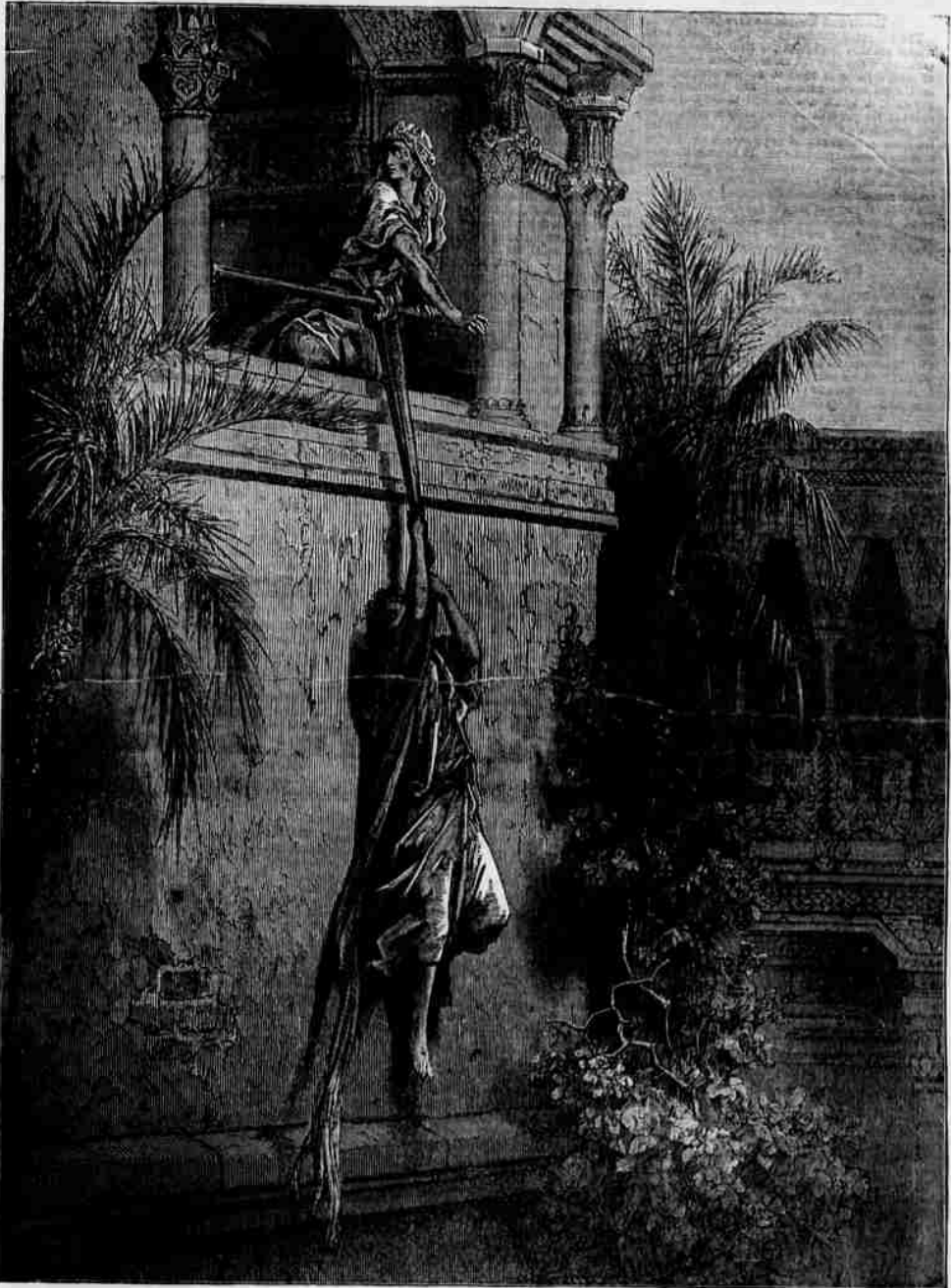
"Pardon my intruding," said the stranger; "but can you give me the address of Mrs. Weston and her daughter; I heard they were living somewhere in this street."

"No," said Jerry. "What do you want of 'em? They are friends of mine."

"Swells like you don't often, I should think, have friends in this neighborhood."

"In the land I come from, friend, the rank is not the gunea's stamp. But I'll seek elsewhere."

"Stay a moment; I'll inquire."



THE ESCAPE OF DAVID.—By GUSTAV DORE. (See Page 4.)

Jerry, carefully closed the door behind him, sat down on the stairs and enjoyed a mute chuckle, fearfully apoplectic in character.

On the landing he repeated it, with much movement of the legs. Then he entered his lodger's parlor.

Dropping into a chair placed ready for him near the fire, rubbing his knees, his face one beaming smile, he cried,

"Does any one believe in man? I don't! Does any one believe in Australian gold-diggers? I don't! Does any one believe in lovers keeping their vows? Lor' bless you, I don't—not a syllable!"

Then turning abruptly to the astonished woman, he proceeded,

"Look here, I'll give you a riddle. Supposing a certain Australian should come; suppose he should come to me; suppose he should come into this room; how would a certain party behave? Would she laugh. Would she faint?"

"Oh, mother!" cried Clare, starting up; "I know what he means. It is Gilbert."

"Yes, she is right!" exclaimed Jerry, with a caper. "It's Gilbert—Gilbert!"

Flying to the door, almost precipitating himself over the balustrade, he shouted,

"You Australian, come up! You nugget of fidelity, come here!"

There was a bang of the door, a firm, rapid tread on the stairs, and the bearded stranger shot past Jerry into the room.

"Clare—my poor poor Clare!" he cried.

"Gilbert!" she ejaculated, rushing into his arms.

"The cobbler, after another caper, discreetly retired to the shop, where he left off his superfluous oration by a charge at the boys in the street.

Gilbert Farnside, a rich Australian cattle owner, proved indeed a nugget of fidelity.

There was a grand wedding, to which Jerry was invited, but he answered that he was too wise a man to make himself uncomfortable. Instead he sent the bride a pretty gold bracelet as a wedding gift—a present affectionately treasured by Clare.

Years after, the young wife, in her home at the antipodes, received the following characteristic letter—

"MY DEAR,—

Without it. No; it's going to a hospital for children, to which I have long been an unknown subscriber. Good bye! Bless you—bless you all.

Your old friend,

"JERRY, COBBLER AND MISER."

The letter, too, was treasured; and in the heart of the bright, cheerful home, in the wealthy land, "Jerry, the Miser," was ever held in cheerful memory.

A copy of THE WEST SHORE sent to friends abroad will give them a better idea about the Pacific-Northwest than any other publication on the Coast.

On his recent trip to New York, Mr. J. K. GILL bought one of the largest and most magnificent stocks of Books and Stationery ever brought to this coast, and having selected everything he required, is enabled to offer special inducements.

The Wisconsin farmer who left a candle burning in the barn so as to scare thieves away has no barn to watch now.