

BLUE DIRT AN' BED-ROCK A' PITCHIN'.

PART FIRST.

BLUE dirt an' bed-rock a' pitchin'?"

"Yes."

"No doubt the picture is artistic in all its details, but the name does not convey, to the uninitiated, a perceptible meaning."

"When the uninitiated shall have heard the story which explains the circumstances that gave rise to the conception of the picture, the meaning of the name will be apparent."

"And you can tell that story?"

"Yes, for I was one of the principal actors therein."

"Then you will tell it to me?"

"With much pleasure."

"Was not the design of the picture a strange one?"

"Possibly, but not stranger than the story you have asked me to tell, for they are intimately connected."

"When shall I have the pleasure of listening to this strange story?"

"Call to-morrow, at 2:00 p. m."

My friend, Mr. Arthur Penguin, lives at No. — East Park street. On the wall of his study—for he is a literary man—and fronting his writing desk, hangs a picture with the name which I have placed at the head of this not altogether fictitious story, and which was the cause of the foregoing conversation between Mr. Penguin and myself. Although the work of art in question does not exhibit the ear marks of a Rubens or an Angelo, yet its peculiar finish would, no doubt, do much credit to an Egyptian or Zulu artist.

It is not my design to describe this work of art; on the contrary I shall leave

it to the reader to form his own ideas of it after having perused my friend's interesting narrative.

Promptly at the appointed hour I entered my friend's study, and found him awaiting my arrival. Seated by his side was a very prepossessing, elderly female, who—but I must not anticipate, though the temptation to do so is great.

"I am glad that you are punctual," said my friend, motioning me to a seat, "for I have learned, during my eventful life, that those who are prompt in their social engagements, as well as in matters of business, are the most worthy of trust in other things; and as I am about to commit to your keeping the story of my life, in doing which I must divulge that which was my besetting sin—jealousy—but which, after my many years of bitter experience, I have forever renounced, I feel confident that you will not hold me in less esteem after you have heard it.

"As I told you, the story which I am about to tell is a strange one, and lest my part in it should appear incredible, I will say, before entering upon it, that my own mind rests firmly in the belief that the manner in which the later changes in my life were brought about is truly natural.

"I am confident that there is a vision given to some persons for present use, that transcends the present stage of advancement of the common herd of the human race, but which will, as the mind of man progresses toward perfection, be gradually impressed upon our race until the time will come when all men can plainly see and understand that which