THE HUNDREDTH MAN.

[Flora Haines Apponyi in The Current.]

"Now see here, my friend," said John Proctor, his honest eyes looking gravely into the tramp's face as he balanced a dime on the tip of his finger, "I'm not going to read you a homily on the subject of labor, but I want to present for your consideration a little matter of statistics. You know, as well as I, that the territory is swarming with men of your class. No less than six, begging for money, have stopped me on the streets to-day; while down there at the yard"—indicating with his hand a row of tall lumber piles surrounding a small building in the distance—"we haven't had three applications for work in a month."

"Try me."

"Do you imagine you would work if you had the chance? I have had a little experience with fellows of your sort. You have such remarkable appetites." He addressed him generically, as the representative of a race. "You work half an hour, then come around with the plea that you can't labor on an empty stomach, draw an advance of half a dollar on your wages, and that is the last we ever see of you."

The man retorted so sharply that one could almost have fancied the poor remnant of spirit still abiding in him stirred to something resembling wrath.

"That's always the way," he muttered. "Say we won't work; then won't give us a show. I know we're a pretty low-down lot, but some of us start out square enough. If a man once gets down, there's no getting up again."

There was something almost pathetic in his very sullenness as he shuffled away, his rags flapping in the breeze, and ill-mated shoes clattering an accompaniment to his gait.

"Come back here, will you!"

John Proctor's voice was stern and decisive. The tramp halted, hesitated, looked away, then shuffled back again.

"Come down to the yard this afternoon and I'll give you a job. But take the half dollar and get filled up first."

He had exchanged the dime for a larger coin and held it in his outstretched palm. The man did not immediately extend his hand to take it. In the moment or two that elapsed the young lumberman thought that he detected a trace of something allied to resentful pride in his bearing. But the illusion vanished as a grimy hand closed greedily upon the silver, and the fellow disappeared without even troubling himself to make any formal expression of his gratitude.

John Proctor looked after him with a quizzical smile. Five minutes later he knew his own name would be the toast of a drunken crowd of loafers in the saloon around the corner. It was not his first experience of the kind. To be sure it wouldn't help to advance a certain Quixotic reputation which had attached itself to him since his first advent in this little new Mexican town. But he had steadily adhered to his creed: Granted that ninety-nine out of a hundred of this floating population were thieves and mendicants, he was wont to say he preferred to be victimized by the ninety and nine, rather than miss that hundredth man.

Arrived at the park, a strip of land running through the heart of the place, the title to which was in dispute between the railroad company, a handful of determined squatters, and the government, John brought down the wire fence this noon with one vigorous kick. Kicking down this wire fence was one of the legitimate pastimes of the inhabitants, who could not afford to make a detour of a mile or more to reach their places of business, nor yet hazard garments by scaling it. These encroachments on the part of the citizens had once been resisted with warlike demonstrations, but now as Proctor stepped through the gap, a patient looking, round-shouldered little man advanced, trundling a wheelbarrow laden with a huge coil of barb wire, and, politely greeting the trespasser, set about repairing the fence. Parsons was in the employ of the road and scrupulously obeyed his instructions, but a gleam of humor in his eye told that he sympathized with the transgressors.

As John Proctor took his way down through the park in the direction of his office, he seemed to throw off the unpleasant reflections which had been annoying him, with one shrug of his powerful shoulders. The young man's eyes fell cheerily upon the somewhat incongruous array of buildings which constituted the town. He gloried in the homely little gulches, squatting over the ground in various directions. Had not every foot of lumber been supplied from his own yard, and did not this avalanche of trade mean—Annie! Nothing could be mean or poor which brought these weary years of waiting to an end. He was a practical man, little given to enthusiasm of any sort, but for her sake he looked with glowing vision upon the turreted mountain tops in the distance, with their purple shadows and golden lights. How she would rejoice over them, that quiet little denizen of western prairies who had lived among the monotonous levels of central Illinois all her life.

The thought lent cheerful energy to his voice as he entered the yard and gave some directions to Maxon, his hard-worked bookkeeper and general factotum. Proctor was deeply engrossed in making out an order for several car-loads of finishing lumber, when a shadow darkened the door, and the tramp stood before him. He could not repress an exclamation of surprise. The vagabond observed it, and his face lowered as he asserted himself defiantly.

"Yes, I've come," he said. "What are you going to give me to do?"

John Proctor put on his hat and went with him into the yard, where an empty car was waiting to be filled on an order from a neighboring town. He showed the man a small slip of paper tacked upon the end, and was about to explain where he would find the material designated, when the fellow threw off his coat and deftly attacked a pile of scantling, which chanced to be the first item on the list.

"Hullo!" said Proctor, gazing at him in surprise. "You seem to know something about this business."

"A little," returned the man shortly.

The young lumberman took his way to the office. A little later the ruddy visage of Maxon looked in at the door as he returned from dinner.

"Oh, by the way, Maxon, I have a new man at work out in the yard. You might keep an eye on him."

"Now, Mr. Proctor!" exclaimed Maxon, in hopeless protest. "Is it another of them fellows?"

"Well, you see, he declared he was willing to work, and it seems only fair to give a man a chance."

The broad-shouldered young proprietor was avowedly on the defensive.

"So far as I'm concerned, of course its nothing to me," observed Maxon, dejectedly. "But it puts me out to have you made a laughing-stock all over town. It's a shame ——well, it's no use talking. Yes, you may depend upon me to keep an eye on him, sir. These fellows will bear watching. I say, though, Mr. Proctor, haven't you got mighty close up to that hundred?"

Half an hour later Maxon looked in again, his face lit up with a mischievous smile.

"Don't you want to take a look at your new hand now, Mr. Proctor? He's is just like the rest of them; sitting on a lumber pile all doubled up with a pain in—"

A flying Spanish conversation book checked further intelligence and Maxon dodged around the corner to escape other missiles. At 6 o'clock, when the hands came up to receive pay for their day's labor, John Proctor saw his protege standing off a little distance. The man made no demand for wages, and his employer took no notice of him. As the men filed out, the express agent of the Plumbago City train, a personal friend of Proctor's came running into the office with a package in his hand.

"Here, Proctor, run them over quickly and sign this receipt. It's the 5,000 from Juarez & Signor. I haven't a moment to spare."

The lumberman hastily counted the notes, signed his name to the receipt in a bold, dashing hand, and the agent hurried off. Left alone, Proctor drew from his pocket a long, Russia-leather pocket-book and laid the notes carefully inside. As he thrust this into his breast pocket, he chanced to glance toward the window, and encountered the hungry eyes of the tramp sharply following his movements from without. As the man saw that he was detected, he paused, seemed about to speak, then changed his mind and sauntered carelessly away. A vague anxiety assailed John Proctor. It was long after banking hours; there was no help for it, he must be custodian of his treasure until morning.

He sat up late that night. The payment of this sum was all that was necessary to make the eastern trip a definite and tangible matter. There was a pile of correspondence to be turned off and a letter to be dispatched to that little woman in Illinois, telling her to discharge her music pupils and make ready for his coming. When he had finished his letters he sat quietly for awhile in his big arm chair. It was very late when he rose, and, locking doors and windows, proceeded to the little inner room where he slept. He drew off his coat, and, folding it carefully, placed it beneath his pillow. Then he examined the barrels of an English bull-dog pistol, which hung upon a hook beside his bed. Reassured by this precaution he sank into a heavy sleep.

Several hours before a man had crawled upon a low pile of planks, flanked by two others of towering height. As he stretched himself at length, with a bundle of shakes for a pillow, he philosophically reflected that such a bed was not to be despised. He was not ill-qualified to judge, for his experience had been wide and diversified, and he had learned to weigh the most delicate points of variance with the fine discrimination of a connoisseur. He had traveled half way across the continent without once knowing the shelter of a civilized roof. He had tented beneath the fragrant shades of orange groves in southern California, and, in waving fields of golden grain, passed some terrible July nights on the Colorado desert, where the mercury marks 110 degrees at midnight, parching for water and choking with the hot dust of the arid waste, waking at daybreak to find the delusive mirage mocking him in the distance. He had sunk down exhausted on the barren plateaus of Arizona and roused to find himself stabbed in a thousand places by the minute cactus needles, cast upon him by the malicious breeze; ever lured on by the sweet face of a child who had smiled farewell through a mist of tears.

The quiet of the place, the gently stirring air, odorous with the fragrance of the pine woods, the sleepy twinkle of the stars overhead, and the weariness of muscles unaccustomed to labor, soon lulled him into slumber.

A little later, two glowing sparks of fire seemed to glide down the railroad track, stole around the office and disappeared within the long drying-shed at its rear. During their progress these sparks of fire occasionally described magnificent curves in the air, in the accentuation of certain rhythmical utterances in the corrupted Spanish of the Mexican tongue. The lowest Mexican peon, who all his life goes half clothed, half fed and unsheltered, handles his cigar or cigarette with the fine pomposity and careless grace of the proudest hidalgo.

John Proctor awoke that night to find himself assailed by a foe mightier than his feeble imagination had pictured. He tried to rise but found himself unable to move, oppressed by a terrible sense of suffocation from dense volumes of smoke which filled the air, through which vast sheets of flame darted their forked tongues toward him. Suddenly the wall of flame and smoke was parted, and the face of the tramp bent over him. He was roughly shaken, pulled off the bed, half dragged, half carried through the little private office and into the larger room beyond, where the fire had begun its work of devastation. Then voice and memory came back and he shouted: "My notes! In my coat pocket—under the pillow—let me go!"

For answer he was violently propelled forward into the arms of some men, eagerly crowding through the flaming doorway. He struggled to free himself from their vise-like grasp. He fought with them, cursed them, and finally broke down and cried like a child. Maxon's fierce tones recalled him to himself.

"Why, man, do you think we would let you go into that fiery furnace again? See! There goes the roof now."

With a gentle waving motion, the roof seemed to slowly vibrate to and fro, then sank down with a sudden crash, and a flying column of sparks celebrated its downfall.

With half-dazed senses John Proctor stared about him, and his gaze wandered to the sky above, where an angry crimson glow had blotted out the stars and rested upon the distant mountain chains weirdly reflecting from their seamed fronts and craggy peaks the glare of the unrighteous flames. Would she admire them now?

Surely it was a spectacle to enchant the eye of an unprejudiced spectator, whose whole possessions were not being sacrificed to the effect. He turned collectedly to the scene before him. There was still something to be done. The cream of the stock had been destroyed, but unless some piles of lumber to the right of the building were speedily removed, the fire would communicate with the whole outside stock, stretched for several hundred yards along the railroad track. He turned to the crowd of men who stood inactive, gazing upon the scene:

"Come on and help us save the lumber!"

A couple of dozen men came promptly forward. The lumberman saw, to his surprise, that the volunteers were almost exclusively composed of the so-called professional men of the town. The local officials of the railroad, a dapper, well dressed set of fellows, commonly viewed with contemptuous eyes by the hard-working portion of the population, presented themselves almost to a man. The tall form of Judge Cheeseman, a stiff and somewat aristocratic legal luminary, loomed up in their midst. A quiet-looking little real estate agent leaped upon a pile of shingles and began to fling the bunches down to a German chemist below. The two rival editors (for the least of New Mexican villages usually boasts its miniature newspaperdom), who had exchanged shots on Gold avenue the previous day, glared cordially at each other along the lengths of the timbers they undertook to transport to a place of safety. The laboring population offered scarcely a representative, save in the persons of a few contractors and mechanics, who had learned to know and like the pleasant young lumberman.

The men worked like heroes. Their energy never waned until a faint light in the east began to rival the red glare which the flames, through the medium of the high, rare atmosphere, cast over the desert plains for miles around, and every piece of lumber was removed to a safe distance.

Worn and wearied, John Proctor sat down to rest upon the wheel of his own copying press. A gradual change had taken place in the ranks of the loungers. Many of the spectators of the night had gone home to refresh themselves with a nap, and the remainder were reinforced by a straggling corps of men who had slept through all the turmoil and excitement. One of these, a stout fellow with a big diamond blazing in his shirt bosom and a mimic beer bottle suspended from his massive watch chain, was recounting his experience, as all people revel in detailing their individual impressions on the occasion of a fire.

"You see I was sleeping like a log when Lizzie caught hold of my shoulder and she says: 'Bob, Bob, wake up, I tell you. The sky is all afire and there must be an eclipse.' I reached up to see if my pocketbook was safe"——

The words brought back to John Proctor a sense of the loss he had sustained. At that moment Maxon strolled up, flushed with exertion. He had just administered a sound kicking to a couple of young Mexicans, whom he had detected making off with a keg of building hardware.

"Maxon," he said, abruptly, "did that fellow who got me out last night come out safely himself?"

"Now I think of it," returned Maxon, "he went back a minute; but he got out all right—just as the roof fell in. I thought at the moment a piece of falling timber hit him, but he scrambled off fast enough."

A dread suspicion assailed John Proctor's honest heart, but he repelled it sturdily. Yet all day long as he wandered dreamily about, answering a thousand idle questions, or fishing from the ruins various mementoes of the wreck, there would constantly intrude upon him the memory of two greedy, devouring eyes, peering through a window, a strange retreat into a burning building, and disappearance into the shadows. When night came it was necessary for some one to stay and guard the ruins, for if the wind should rise, some smouldering piles of lumber might be fanned into a blaze, and the remainder of the stock swept away. Maxon, weary and hollow-eyed, offered his services.

"Not a bit of it, Maxon. Go home to your wife and babies, I have engaged a man."

Proctor did not add that the watchman he had engaged was no other than himself, but when the rest had gone home, he remained there alone. Separated as it was from the rest of the town, by night the place was a dreary solitude. Once the call of a mocking-bird thrilled in the distance. A fiery spark miles away over the level plain, developed into the headlight of the locomotive of the evening train, which thundered past on its way to the depot below. The moon came up and threw into weird relief the blackened ruins.

John Proctor, who had been slowly pacing to and fro, sat down upon a bunch of shingles and buried his face in his hands. He knew, what not even Maxon had guessed, that this disaster had wrought his irreparable ruin. It would require every cent of the insurance money to settle his outstanding liabilities, for he had done business on the rushing western plan, and had carried a stock out of all proportion to his capital. If he could only have saved that $5,000, or if he had not been so ambitious. Annie had been ready—poor little girl! She had even proposed bringing her piano to this raw southern town, and eking out their income with the result of her own labors. On one point he was resolved. Whenever he got square with the world again, he would put his pride in his pocket, and humbly presenting himself before the little woman, ask her to share his fortunes, for better or worse. Oh God! how long would it be? A stifled groan escaped his lips.

Suddenly he rose and stood erect. His quick ear had caught the sound of some heavy body slowly moving over the ground.

"Who is there?"

A wavering voice replied.

"Only me. Is that you, boss?"

John Proctor bent forward and perceived a man slowly crawling along in the shadow of a pile of joists. As the figure emerged into the moonlight, he saw that the fellow dragged one leg helplessly after him. His suspicions melted away beneath his natural warmth of heart.

"Are you hurt."

"Only a falling timber, boss, but the fire got into my eyes and I can't see very well."

He had drawn himself to Proctor's feet and stopped, turning a little upon his side, his head propped up with his hand.

"You see when I come through the door something fell against me, and not seeing you, and not being able to get about very well, there were so many of them cussed Mexican thieves about, I was afraid they might make off with this"—holding out a flat leather book which John Proctor seized with a glad exclamation. The man went on, talking in an absent way.

"I wouldn't have liked to have you think ill of me. You're the first man who give me a chance since I got down. I wan't always a loafer, sir. You spoke of my knowing something about the business, and to be sure I ought, if fifteen years as a 'sorter' in the Wisconsin lumber regions can teach a man anything of lumber. But when my wife died I struck off out west. It's been hard luck ever sinces—and my little girl—back there with her grand-parents"——

His voice seemed to fail from weakness.

"What have you eaten to-day?" asked the other sharply.

The man answered reluctantly and almost in a tone of apology.

"You see, sir—down there among the lumber piles—how could I?"

John Proctor was a man more given to action than speech. He addressed the man now in clear, decided tones.

"Do you think you could hold on to my back while I carried you down to the hotel?"

"Why, sir! It wouldn't be fit."

"Shut up! Put your arms around my neck."

The office and bar-room of the hotel, a pretentious structure of Eastlake architecture, held its usual quota of respectable loafers, when John Proctor entered with the uncouth figure on his back. A gurgle of laughter ran through the crowd. The majority fancied the young lumberman's brain had been turned by his recent losses, and that his dementia had taken the form of a violent development of the weakness with which he had hitherto been accredited. Their laughter suddenly ceased when the young man went straight to the clerk, saying, in clear, ringing tones:

"Give me the best room you have. This man, who saved my life last night, is badly hurt. Some of you," turning to the idlers, "go at once for the surgeon of the Atchison road."

A dozen men sprang forward to relieve him of his burden, to help him carry the poor fellow to a comfortable room, where he was gently laid upon the bed. The sufferer received these attentions in silence. His dim eyes stared incredulously about the room, and into the kindly faces bending over him. That anything like this should happen to him! How long would it last? Would they let him have one good night's rest before turning him out again. When once more on the desolate plain, wandering through sage-brush, mesquite and soap-weed, it would seem like some strange dream. But what was this? The stalwart young lumberman, speaking huskily to the doctor:

"And mind, McLean, do your best. I owe him more than I can tell you. Put him in good trim to take the foremanship of my yard when I get stocked up."

The silly old vagrant buried his face in the pillow and wept.

A REPORTER'S STORY.

[New York Times.]

"The night is still young," said Ximines, the newspaper reporter, at midnight just about one year ago, glancing at the nickel-plated alarm clock which rested upon his mantelpiece, partly obscured by numerous tobacco jars, long-stemmed pipes, match boxes, ink bottles, and similar elegant bric-a brac. I will go down to Newspaper row and see if, perchance, the mails have brought me any checks along with the usual allowance of tradesmen's bills since the afternoon."

Ximines consequently attired himself in his hat and walking-stick, and fared forth into the lamp-lit streets of the great metropolis; and, deciding that a Third avenue street-car whose route lay through the Bowery, would prove the most interesting as well as the quickest method of reaching the city hall, he wended his steps toward that thoroughfare and took a rapidly moving downward-bound car. The vehicle was crowded with that variegated class of humanity which makes the Bowery and its locality lively by night, insomuch that there was no room inside. Ximines therefore stood on the back platform in company with two gentlemen who had stationed themselves on the steps for greater convenience in relieving outgoing and incoming passengers of their watches. On the platform stood two or three other night birds, the one who was nearest Ximines being a medium-sized man of powerful figure, who wore a long brown mustache.

At Fourteenth street the car stopped and the passengers who got on were of so unusual a description that even the light-fingered gentlemen stared. Three men got on to the car. Two of them were under 30, sleek and well dressed, and of a type which frequenters of the courts would recognize as being brought to trial almost weekly on charges that could never be proved against them. The third man was the one who attracted the attention. He was to all appearance more than 70 years of age. He was bareheaded, his hair was silvery white, and he was exceedingly drunk. His companions held him up by each arm, and the patriarch was so extremely full that he could scarcely lift his feet to the car step, whereupon one of the young men exclaimed savagely; "Blank you! Get up there!" and gave him a rough shake. The two younger men of the three new arrivals exchanged glances with "souper fakes," or watch thieves, on the car steps, but no word passed between them, and the ill-assorted trio went into the car, crowded their way forward, where some one gave up his seat to the inebriated patriarch, and he sank into it and relapsed into unconsciousness, closely guarded by his two companions. They had scarcely passed inside when the man who stood next to Ximines on the platform said to one of the other passengers:

"Well, by G—, I call that rough. The crooks are playing it pretty low down when they've got to work an old man with white hair."

There was a murmur of sympathy from those in the vicinity, and one of the souper fakes remarked threateningly:

"You want to be pretty careful how you're talking around here, young feller. Them's gentlemen, an' that's their old man they're a-takin' home."

"Who's going to make me careful how I talk?" demanded the brown-mustached stranger fiercely. "Don't you pay out any more slack. Those fellows are crooks, I say. If that was their father would they be wearing hats and let him go bareheaded? Would they be cursing their father to make him get up the steps? Would they be making a holy show of him, drunk, in a street car, when they might take him home in a cab if he was their father?"

"It's none o', your business, anyway," said the thief surlily.

"Well, I'll make it my business," said the stout stranger. "Just wait till we pass a policeman."

Of course there was no policeman in sight, and the two car-step thieves dropped off at the Cooper institute to take the next car back for their prey which goes up town from Fourteenth street early in the morning. The stout stranger glanced into the car at the old man sleeping in the forward end, and then remarked to a young mechanic in his best clothes, who was on his way home with his "girl" from a picnic at Jones' wood:

"It goes against my conscience to let those two crooks get away with an old man like that, even if he is drunk. Will you stand by me if I go in there and take him away from them? I wouldn't be afraid of the two if it wasn't that you can never tell how many pals they've got in the crowd, but we two are good for a whole carload of crooks!"

"I've got a woman on the car," said the young mechanic, "or I'd go in with you, but I don't want to git in no row while she's around."

The stout stranger turned from him contemptuously and put the question to another able-bodied passenger.

"I don't want to git cut to pieces in somebody else's fight," retorted this individual with frank cowardice.

Ximines had been an interested and admiring listener to the stout stranger's championship of the ancient inebriate, and when he asked next for his support, as he had for that of the other two passengers in righting the old man's wrongs, Ximines promptly agreed to second his efforts.

"Good!" said the stranger. "Now our best plan is to get on to the front platform and wait till they take him off the car. Then we'll tackle 'em in the street. If they refuse to give him up there'll be an ambulance call for one of 'em anyway."

The interior of the car was crowded with passengers clinging to the straps, and it took Ximines and the stout stranger several minutes to force their way to the front end, but when they got there the old man and his two companions were gone.

"We'll find him or else hunt all night," said the stranger. "Say," he asked of the driver, "did an old man and two young fellows get off the car only a few minutes ago?"

"Yes," returned the horseman. They got off at Broome street. Old fellow boiling full. Two crooks hanging on to him."

The car had then almost reached Grand street, but before the driver had finished the stranger had jumped from the steps, and was running back to Broome street, closely followed by Ximines. At the corner he stopped and gazed down the deserted and gloomy thoroughfare. There were no signs of the crooks or their victim, and the patriarch's companion exclaimed to Ximines:

"Take the left side of the street and open every doorway. Open 'em quick, and shut 'em quick, and look out for yourself. Those fellows are going to stand the old man up in some hallway. I'll go down the other side."

The two opened all the doors that were not locked between the Bowery and Mott street, but found no trace of their game. Two Italian rag-pickers just starting out for their morning's labor met them on this corner, and Ximines' new companion asked them if they had seen the trio of whom he was in pursuit. The Italians pointed to the south without a word and went on their way uninterested. The stranger and Ximines ran softly up Mott street to Spring, and peering up this thoroughfare, discerned the three men on the sidewalk. The old man had sufficiently recovered his senses to realize that every thing was not going right with him, and he was struggling feebly while his two companions were urging him on by threat and persuasion.

"They're steering him right down into one of the worst quarters of the city," muttered the stranger. "Now I don't believe those crooks have got the blood to fight, but if they do you use that walking stick. It's a heavy one. Ah! you've got a revolver, have you?" he exclaimed, still under his breath, as Ximines produced a seven-shooter. "We're all right, then. I'll knock one of them over, and if they fight, why, kill 'em, —— 'em! The police 'll thank you for it. All ready, come on!"

The champion walked slowly down the street. Ximines—feeling, it must be confessed, slightly nervous—at his side, and as they reached the trio, who had now come to a real struggle on the sidewalk, the stout stranger, without a second's warning, suddenly struck one of the blacklegs a frightful blow under the ear, which dropped him into the street, where his head cracked against the curbstone with a noise like the breaking of a pane of glass. Before the other had realized what had happened the righter of the old man's wrongs was upon him and showered a rain of such heavy blows upon his head and neck that he fled across the street with the utmost precipitation, while the rescued patriarch fell against a horse-post, threw his arm about it, and huskily shouted:

"Stand up to him, Dan! Into him, Joe! Down he goes! Hi, hi, hi!" under the evident hallucination that he was attending a prize fight.

The stranger lost not a moment, but seized one of the old man's arms, and shaking him roughly, asked: "Say, where do you live?" The old man muttered a number on Grand street, near the East river, and then having overcome the temporary effects of his excitement, he relapsed again into a comatose state. These entire transactions had all occurred in something like one minute, and by the time Ximines and the stranger had taken the patriarch's arms and were leading him toward the Bowery, the two crooks had regained their feet and their senses, and were following them with divers imprecations and threats, casting various stigmas upon their parentage and reflections upon their respectability, and not hesitating to hurl the bar sinister in their faces, with blasphemous and obscene variations. Finally they held a whispered consultation, and then made a rush, but the sight of Ximines' revolver cooled their ardor, and with a final batch of curses the curs slunk off toward their slums. Ximines and the stranger had the pleasure of taking the old man home and receiving a tongue-lashing from his daughter, who labored under the impression that they had been upon a debauch with her aged parent, and could scarcely be restrained from bestowing a pail of water upon them from an upper window. This their two considered a good joke, and they laughed heartily over the matter.

"The old man must have been quite a sport in his day," said the stranger. "Did you hear him talk of Dan and Joe when we were fighting?" He was thinking of the Mace and Coburn prize fight that occurred twenty years ago, I should think."

With his new friend Ximines exchanged cards, and the two told each other something of their past lives and present circumstances. Ximines' new friend, as he learned, had been a shipping clerk with a large dry goods establishment, at a comfortable salary until within the last two months, when he had been taken sick and his place had been filled by some one else. "But I've got plenty of friends," said he, "and I'll get something to do very soon again. The sooner it is the better, for I've got a wife and the finest little boy in the country to care for, and I never thought of putting much money in the bank, because I never thought I should be sick. I've always lived just about up to my means. The reason I happen to be here to-night is because I went up to see a friend about getting employment."

Two hours after they first met on the street car Ximixes and his new acquaintance parted.

Now all this story is strictly true down to the minutest detail, and it is only related to show that the hero of the tale is a deserving man. The rest of the story indicates how a deserving man may meet with misfortune and ill-success despite his utmost efforts against an implacable fate.

The facts already related occurred a year ago. About a week since Ximines had occasion, on a tour of observation, to visit late at night a Bowery dive. The occupants were for the most part of the commonplace of disreputability, and low street songs and drunken mirth resounded on every hand. Ximines, in looking over the room, thought he recognized a familiar figure in an unkempt individual who leaned against the wall in an attitude of the most abject despair.

"Who is that?" he asked of a waiter.

"Don't know his name," replied the menial. "He comes in most every night about this time. Never spends a cent. Never drinks anything. Never speaks to nobody. Seems to be kinder down on his luck, don't he?"

Ximines glanced at the man again and suddenly recognized him as the stout stranger who had rescued the inebriate patriarch from the two thieves a year before. He spoke to him, and upon recalling the circumstances the stranger remembered him. Ximines noticed a great change in his appearance. His hair was unkempt, he was unshaven, his clothes were badly worn, and his shoes were almost gone to pieces. The two entered into conversation and Ximines asked what he was doing for a living.

The stout stranger hesitated a moment and gulped down something very much like a sob. "So help me God," he said reverently, not profanely, "I have been trying ever since I first saw you to get work, and not a single day's labor have I had an opportunity to perform. I began looking for a clerkship, and when I had tried that without success for six weeks I came down a grade, and tried to get a job as a porter. I had the best recommendations from the firm whose employ I had been in before, but I couldn't get an opportunity anywhere. Every place I went to they were full. Some of them I got to only a day or an hour too late, but I always was too late. I stretched the little money I had put by, and my wife helped me, but it didn't last long, and, try my best, I couldn't get a place to earn a cent. At last I had to send my wife to live with her mother, and my boy to live with her sister, and I took a little room by myself and sold my furniture at a sacrifice to get money enough to buy myself bread. All this time I spent every spare hour in the day looking for work and never finding it. My clothes got so old and worn that I didn't present a decent appearance when I applied for a job, and that was against me. I even came down to try and get a position to drive a street-car, but I couldn't get a vacancy on any of the lines. I know a prominent politician who could get me something to do, and he promised to. I've been to his house twice a day for the past six weeks, and every time they've told me he was out. Night I look for him in the hotels, beginning at the Sinclair and going up, but I never find him.

"How I live I don't know, and how I am going to live I can't imagine. If it were for that boy of mine I believe I'd have committed suicide long ago, and I haven't seen the little fellow for six months. God found this light shining in my eyes! swallow 'em water. Say, could you lend me the trifle of money until I get to work? I'll on my honor I'll pay it back then; but I haven't broken my fast to-day, and I haven't had a square meal since I took dinner with an old friend almost five weeks ago, who didn't know how low down I'd gone. It seems hard that a man willing to work shouldn't be able to find something to do in a big city like this. Perhaps you think I don't try, but I give you my word that I have tried every way I know every day for the last year. Don't think hard of me because I come to this place. It is the only one I know of where they don't kick a man out if he don't spend money, and I have stayed up in my little room all alone I'd be driven to suicide. I've got to be where I can see people more wretched than I am to keep me from it. Don't think hard of me because I ask you for money. You'll never know how hard it is to have to ask it, and I'd die before I'd beg it in the streets or of any one I didn't know."

This is a truthful representation of many man's predicament—a man who was willing to risk his life to help a perfect stranger—able to earn bread enough to keep him alive though he is both willing and able, and has a guarantee of good character and fairness from one of the most influential firms in the city.

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

What London Journals Say—Some Biographical Notes.

[Naples Cor. American Register.]

I have been very much amused in seeing an item floating about the American press which has also crept into some of the London journals, concerning James Whitcomb Riley, the Indiana poet, "whose humorous and sentimental verses have made him famous." This quotation is only just, because there are few poets in America, except James Russell Lowell, who have taken up the dialect of a portion of the United States and made it as elastically subservient as a popular vehicle in a metrical way, and who at the same time have made their mark as true poets. Why I am amused at the floating item is because it pretends to give in all sincerity a brief biography of the poet, but nothing can be more erroneous.

Just look at this pen picture, quoted from the aforesaid brief biography: "He (Riley) was originally a hotel keeper. He was born in New Bedford, Mass., and there lived for many years. His father was the captain of a whaler, but the son never took to the sea. Capt. Riley gave the young man an ample fortune when he attained his majority, and James invested the bulk of it in a hotel, which he named the Ocean View house. Riley sold his hotel in the winter of 187[illegible] invested his money in Pennsylvania oil, lost everything and then moved to Indiana to try farming. Until within the last few years he never wrote a line of poetry."

If I could laugh out loud on paper I would do so in this letter. In the first place James Whitcomb Riley (named after the late governor and United States senator, James Whitcomb, of Indiana,) never saw New Bedford, Mass., but was born of Hoosier parents at Greenfield, Ind., twenty miles east of Indianapolis. So far from his father being a whaler and Riley being brought up within sight of the briny, he never saw the sea at all until he was a quarter of a century old. He never had any money left him; he never kept a hotel, and though a fellow of genius, he couldn't do it, even though he had a hotel. He never had any money to invest in oil, because he always struggled for a living, and did not have any money to invest in anything. From his boyhood he wrote verse, and good ones, too.

In 1877 (a year before our item biography makes him a hotel keeper) I made his acquaintance in Indianapolis. I do not think he was more than 25. His poetry had already struck my attention, whether it was in the grave or gay vein. In 1877 then I traveled all over the United States, and also in England, lines purporting to be from Indiana and from Tennyson. They traveled for a year unchallenged, until some litterateur seriously undertook to show that while the verses were like those of the two masters, yet they could not be found in their works. It turned out by his own confession that Riley, in banter, had written the lines without any intention of palming them off on the public, and was heartily sorry that they ever got into print. But his original poems are full of poetry, whether serious or funny, and he is equally strong in prose. In the dialect poems, where westernisms come in, he is as happy as James Russell Lowell in the Yankee dialect. He is as much to the point as Bret Harte or John Hay without the proclivities to profanity that mar some of their poems. Few persons are his equal in the recitation of funny poems.

From Ireland.

Says the Hon. Ignatius Donnelly, reported in The Pilot (Boston): "When in congress, a few members were joking me about my Irish; one of them a long fellow, some six feet three high, well named of nature Shanks, a clever fellow from Indiana. Turning to him I said, 'Where were you bred?' He commenced to laugh, and said, 'My father was an Irishman and my grandmother was an Irishwoman.' In the senate there was a man from Illinois, with aquiline nose and long black hair. Time and again he was thought to be descended from Logan, the Indian. Chatting familiarly with him one day on the street-car I said, 'Gen. Logan, what is your descent?' He hesitated. I said, 'Where was your father from?' 'From the County Monaghan in Ireland.' I thought this worthy Irishman had married a squaw, and asked: 'Where was your mother from?' 'From the County Monaghan, too,' he said, and there was my Indian with long black hair. I had read in the newspapers of the Scotch ancestry of Gen. Grant, so once on the Mississippi I asked his father, 'Where are you from?' He said, 'From Philadelphia.' 'Where are your people from?' 'From the north of Ireland.' I questioned him further, and found that his grandmother was a Kelly, which is not a Scotch name. Governor Ramsey, of Minnesota, was published over the country as a Scotchman, of Scotch and German decent. By accident I found that he was Swiss on his mother's side and his father from the County Monaghan, the same place my Indian came from."

A Resurrection Text.

[New York Mail and Express.]

The new Old Testament knocks the bottom out of at least one standard "proof-text"—viz: "In my flesh shall I see God." The revised version has it, "yet out of my flesh," etc. Those who believe in the resurrection of the identical body which is buried will have to look for a new buttress to their theory.