

# My Fellow-Passenger's Story.

**A** PECULIAR sound came from behind the newspaper in the corner of the railway carriage. It was a prolonged groan, followed by a string of adjectives, uttered in quick succession, like the reports from a six-chambered revolver fired against time. I shifted my seat a little further from the newspaper and let down the window, so as to be within reach of the communication cord should necessity arise. As I did so, the paper fell on to the fat, drab knees, disclosing a red, clean-shaven face and a pair of savage gray eyes.

The man in the corner appeared to have experienced a warm time of it behind the newspaper, for drops of perspiration stood like small glass beads on his high forehead, and his face was distorted by passion, which made him look anything but a desirable fellow passenger. I wished the train would reach a station; even a slight accident to stay its headlong speed would have been welcome to enable me to put a few carriages between me and the man in the corner. But nothing of the kind happened, only my fellow passenger, after staring fiercely at me a few seconds, blurted out:

"Them sales of great auks' eggs made me wild. I hate the very name of 'em. They say the blooming bird is extinct, and the sooner them eggs are, the better I shall like it."

I felt relieved that my fellow passenger wasn't a madman or in a fit, as I had been at first led to suppose. He was only laboring under a little excitement occasioned by reading an account of the recent sale of a couple of great auks' eggs.

I smiled, and remarked that he was not a lover of great auks' eggs.

"No; dash 'em!" returned the man, savagely; "I wish the whole seventy, which, they say, are knocking about the world, were burnt up, and the ashes scattered to the winds of heaven!"

I felt interested and longed to hear further particulars, so, taking out my cigar-case, I handed it to him, at the same time venturing to inquire if he had ever had any dealings in great auks' eggs. I thought by his manner he had.

He paused a moment before answering, while he bit off the end of his cigar. "Well, yes—or, more strictly speaking, no," he said slowly. "But there, it's a queer story." I looked interested, and after lighting up he began:

"It was one night some years ago I was accosted in the Commercial Road by a shabby fellow, who asked me to buy a queer-looking thing which he held in his arms. It looked something between a foot-ball and an Edam cheese, as hard as adamant, and the color of a walnut-peeler's hands. The man said he had just arrived in England from abroad, where many years of his life had been spent. The ball had been a present from some black king; he did tell me his name, but I forgot it now. I know it took ten minutes to say it, and you had to sneeze twice at the end to pronounce it properly. The man didn't know what the ball was, but the king had valued it highly. I told him it was no use to me, but he begged so hard for enough to get him a night's lodging that I at last gave him a trifle for it, and took the thing home, thinking it would do to keep the door open, if nothing else.

"For a long time the queer old thing was knocking about the house; it was useless for holding open the door. The only use it appeared to be for people to fall over. I fell over it first and injured the bridge of my nose and knocked a leg off a table. My mother-in-law followed me over it a few days after, and was laid up three weeks with a black eye and shock to the system. Then one of the kids let it fall on the cat's back, and though they say a cat's spine is made of India-rubber it couldn't stand that ball, and snapped. At last the baby made a desperate effort to rid the house of that dashed thing by eating it up, and injured the only two teeth it possessed. My wife grew very indignant at this, and said the injury to Obadiah's teeth was the last straw that made the load too heavy to bear, and she chucked the ball into the back-yard, where it lay for months behind some boxes, forgotten and uncared for.

"It was a couple of days before the Derby, and a friend of mine had dropped in to arrange about going, and how we were to raise the necessary funds, as we were at very low water. We were having a smoke together in the yard, while his little beggar of a dog was scrapping about for rats, which existed only in his imagination. In his search, among other things he laid bare was that old ball, which he sent rolling forward almost onto our toes.

"Why, Bob, what have you got here?" cried Joe, bending down to examine it.

"That's just what I want to know,"

I said. 'It's a ball of mystery altogether.'

"Joe began scraping the dirt off with his foot, and examining carefully. Then he began laughing for to kill himself. 'It ain't a great auk's egg, eh, Bob?' he said.

"No, I says; 'I wish to goodness it was.'

"If it don't happen to lay claim to that proud title, why don't you make it?"

"What's the good? I answered. I couldn't see what Joe was driving at. "Why," said Joe, "I was thinking it was just the article to suit that old fool, Billy Muster. Fake it up a bit and sell it to him as a great auk's egg. He'd never know the difference; at any rate, it wouldn't hurt him, and do us a great deal of good."

"I thought it a capital joke. We soon cleansed the old ball of the dirt, and set about at once converting it into a great auk's egg by a good polishing up. I have never seen a great auk's egg, and never want to; but I should think it was as near like one as you could make anything.

"Billy Muster was one of those fellows who would never, as the saying is, 'set the Thames afire.' He had been in business once, and just as he had been on the verge of bankruptcy an obliging relative died and left him sufficient to pay off his debts and retire gracefully from business. He wisely didn't venture again, but gathered together the remainder of his money, and was trying to do the independent gentleman in a tiny, gayly painted villa out Clapham way.

"The next morning we set out with the great auk's egg to pay Billy a visit. As we neared his abode we saw him doing the grand in his smoking-cap and slippers in his six feet of front garden. 'Just taking my usual morning walk in the garden,' he remarked, as we shook hands. We explained that we had got something special to show him, and he at once led the way into his pretty front parlor and bade us be seated.

"Joe placed the great auk's egg on the table, and began relieving it of the six newspapers which had enshrouded it. It is always well to give worthless things a good packing; it lends such an air of value to 'em. Billy watched the sheet after sheet of paper being pulled off with great interest. As the last bit was peeled off, and the shiny, round, mahogany-colored ball stood revealed, Muster rose from his chair and approached the ball. 'What did you say it was?' he asked.

"A great auk's egg,' chimed in Joe and I, together.

"A granorkseg,' repeated Billy; 'and what may that be used for?'

"An ornament which no gentleman's house is complete without," answered Joe.

"Bless my soul, you don't say so?" said Muster. 'What won't they invent next? Well, at any rate, they are showy-looking articles. What did you say the figure was?'

"Five guineas," answered Joe, 'and it's a bargain.'

"Dear, dear," said Billy, 'five guineas is a lot of money. Won't they make 'em cheaper? I could do with a couple of sizes smaller.'

"We laughed, and said it was the only size kept in stock, and further gave him to understand it was dirt cheap, several of them having been sold for over a hundred pounds each. 'Well, I never,' was all Muster could say. We could see he was greatly impressed with it, and was dying almost to call it his. But he wanted something to bring him to the buying point. So Joe rose, and began replacing the paper. 'I see, Mr. Muster,' he said, 'you ain't a buyer. If we go to any of the dealers we can get three times as much as we have, out of pure friendship, agreed to accept from you. I thought, as you are now classed among the gentry, it would have been your greatest ambition to own a great auk's egg, which, as I said before, no gentleman's house is complete without.'

"This fetched him. 'Stop a minute,' he cried, starting forward; 'you are in a blessed hurry. I'll tell you what I'll do—I will give you three pound ten.'

"No," said Joe; 'it's no good, I see, haggling over such a bargain.'

"Muster grew very serious, and came and took the parcel from Joe's hand, and unwrapped the ball, and gazed intently at it a few seconds. Then without a word he went to fetch the money.

"Joe," I said, in a whisper, 'you don't mean to let the old fellow pay over the money, do you?' for, to tell the truth, I didn't relish this kind of business.

"No," said Joe, 'of course I don't. What do you think? You know as is fair in business, love and war. Besides, it may, after all, be a valuable curiosity, as it belonged to a king, and worth the money.'

"Presently Muster reappeared, and counted the money into Joe's hand, and we took our departure.

"It shall be a good day for us tomorrow," said Joe, chuckling.

"Well, to make a long story short, we went to the Derby and blued every shilling of that five quid. We never experienced a worse run of luck in our lives. It was a sort of judgment on us, I thought at the time.

"A few days after Joe called round to see me. As he shook hands he laughed so much I thought he had gone a bit wrong under his hat. He said, by way of explanation, he had been to see old Muster and the great auk's egg. It appeared he had accidentally encountered Muster, who seemed delighted to see him, and insisted on his going indoors. "One of the first things Joe's eyes lit on as he entered the little front parlor was the great auk's egg. A big hole had been made in the side, disclosing the fact that it was hollow. 'Been getting the yoke out, eh! Mr. Muster?' said Joe, laughing. 'Yes,' returned the old man, in a pleasant tone. 'Was it yellow and fresh?' inquired Joe. 'Beautiful,' said Muster, beaming with pleasure all over his face. 'You don't regret your bargain?' queried Joe. 'No, no, that I don't,' returned the old man. And to show he didn't he went and got out some whisky and behaved like a brick.

"We both agreed the old fellow must be gone a bit wrong in the upper story. "Soon after Billy Muster moved from Clapham and took a large house up west, where he lived for some years in good style. When asked by his friends where the money came from, he said he had made a very successful speculation. It was only when he shuffled off this mortal coil that I learned that I had been fool enough to let a fortune slip through my fingers, for that blessed old great auk's egg was crammed with precious stones, which the curiosity of the old man had unexpectedly laid bare. It was supposed that a sailor coming off a long voyage had, in a drunken bout, lost a treasure which he brought from a foreign shore, and Billy Muster had luckily bought it."—Yankee Blade.

## LAW AS INTERPRETED.

The right to read medical books to the jury for the purpose of proving the symptoms of disease is denied in *Bixby vs. Omaha & C. B. R. & Co. (Iowa)*, 43 L. R. A. 533, although they are admitted to be standard books, where they have not been referred to by witnesses whose testimony is to be contradicted by them.

The rule that freedom from contributory negligence must affirmatively appear and is not presumed is adhered to in *McLean vs. Perkins (Me.)*, 43 L. R. A. 487, in case of the drowning of employes while going to their work in an old punt with a crack in one side calked with waste and a part of one end split off, when they were all drowned, and there is no evidence as to the cause or manner of such accident.

The acceptance by a defendant in a divorce suit, over whom no jurisdiction was obtained, of the decree rendered and his remarrying are held in *Hekking vs. Pfaff (C. C. A. 1st C.)*, 43 L. R. A. 618, insufficient to stop him from disputing the validity of a subsequent ex parte proceeding in the divorce suit by which the judgment is opened and a decree for alimony entered against him.

## Crushing of Jack Larkins.

More cruel treatment was never accorded to anybody than that meted out by Miss Jennie Smithkins to Jack Larkins. Mr. Larkins is the stenographer and corner-stone of a wholesale grocery house and Miss Smithkins is taking a course in oratory at the university. Both of them live on 57th street. Miss Smithkins has blonde hair and innocent blue eyes. Lessons in elocution and *Delsarte* have taught her to talk with her eyes and smile with her reddish hair. Larkins was captivated as he passed the Smithkins home on his way to the Illinois Central station. They had never spoken except with their eyes, and Larkins not being as well up in *Delsarte* as Miss Smithkins, may not have said all that he thought he did. When he judged the acquaintance was well established, he wrote Miss Smithkins a note. He received no answer. Another note met the same fate. The third was found pinned to a lamp post next day just in front of Larkins' boarding-house. Seventeen people in the house had read it before Larkins suspected what the fun was about. There, on violet-blue note paper, with Miss Smithkins' name cut out, was Larkins' touching epistle, in which he compared his auburn-haired lady to "a star," declared that she "had broken his heart," and wanted to know when, if ever, she intended to answer his note and fly with him from stern parental objections.

"I get a salary of \$18 and work for —, Your Jack Larkins," was the way the letter concluded.

Larkins has changed his boarding place. Miss Smithkins is still practicing *Delsarte*.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

## Voters in Belgium.

Under the Belgian law unmarried men over 25 have one vote, married men and widowers with families have two votes and priests and other persons of education have three votes. Severe penalties are imposed on those who fail to vote.

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As I have seen the Curative Power of "5 DROPS" and "5 Drop" Plasters, in a great many instances, I can Truly recommend them and also that the firm is perfectly honest and reliable to deal with. C. A. JACKSON, Physician and Surgeon, Kearney, Neb., Aug. 29, 1899.

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