It was a darkish night with a stiff breeze blowing as I picked my way through those quiet streets that lie between Islington and Dalston. Just as I came to the corner of a street a strong puff of wind whipped off my new shiny hat as neat as need be and dropped it in an area. This was certainly a nuisance, but not without remedy. I rang at the area bell, once, twice, thrice, but got no answer. I rapped the lion's head knocker, once, twice, thrice, and got no answer. Then looked up at the windows and saw a notice announcing "This House to Let," and noticed that the shutters were all tightly closed.

It was too dark to read the name of the agent and I was about to knock at the next door to learn where I could procure the key, when, to my astonishment, the door, as I happened to lean against it, moved slightly inwards. I gave a gentle push and walked boldly in. I groped my way down the kitchen stairs. I tried the kitchen door; it was locked and the key was gone. I felt about and found the back door leading to the area; it was locked and the key gone. My best plan seemed to be to pick the lock of the back door, if I could find an old nail or a bit of wire. So I crept upstairs to the back parlor and groped my hand along the mantel and window frames, but with no success. I had noticed under the kitchen door the shimmering of the light of a fire, and decided that the house must be inhabited. The next moment I stumbled against a wooden stretcher or bedstead. I put out my hand cautiously and laid it on a man's head. My tumble against the bedstead had disturbed the sleeper and he called out: "Kitty, Kitty, Kitty, I say, you ain't come back without him?" I stood perfectly still and held my breath. After considering a moment, I took a half-hearted step towards the door, when the man in bed called out in an excited voice: "That's a man's step! My Jack, is it you? Ah! I see, you wanted to surprise me. It is you, Jack, ain't it?" He said these last words in such a beseeching tone, that I could not help answering: "Yes, it is."

"Then where's Kitty?"

"I hope to see her presently," I said.

"Gone to the cook-shop to get something in honor of your arrival, Jack. I wonder what it will be. Maybe an eel pie with baked 'taters, or a plate of savory beef, or a dish of biled tripe and inions; ah-h."

"You seem to like good eating," I ventured to say.

"Why, Jack, my boy, it's one of the few pleasures I have left. Thank God my appetite's always good. And when I was lost the use of his limbs and couldn't see out of his eyes, he makes the best use of his stomach. I'd ask you to light a candle, Jack, but I'm half ashamed for you to see what a battered wreck I've become. Twelve years ago, when you emigrated, you understand me, Jack (he said this in a shy way), I was as handsome and well growed a man as you'd wish to see, wasn't I, Jack?"

"You were."

"And now I'm a useless cripple."

"How did it happen?"

"What! you never got Kitty's letter, directed to Hobart Town, Van Dieman's Land? And hasn't Kitty told you, coming along in the cab?"

"Not a word."

"Ah, poor girl, she didn't like to grieve you. Well, the powder mill in which I was working blew up—they mostly do every five years—and blew me along with it; blew me up a good-looking, active chap, Jack, and dropped me down a miserable blind cripple." As he said these last words his voice choked him and he shed tears.

"And how do you manage to live?"

"Well, Jack, the firm behaved very handsomely. They allowed me ten shillings a week and Kitty takes care of empty houses. We contrive to scratch along, somehow. But come, Jack, you've never offered your brother your hand yet. Let me shake your hand, even if you didn't care to light a candle."

I stepped forward and gave him my hand.

"Lawk, Jack, why your hand's almost like a gentleman's hand! It ain't so soft as a dressmaker's or a haberdasher's; it's about equal to a master-builder."

"You seem to know all about hands," I observed.

"Ah," he answered with a sigh, "that comes of want of eyes. When I had my sight I took no note of such things, but now I've a delicate touch. I wish Kitty would come back with that supper. I'm getting throat hungry."

"Are you afraid of thieves here?" I asked.

"Why?"

"Because you lock up your kitchen and back door. Can you tell me where the back door key hangs?"

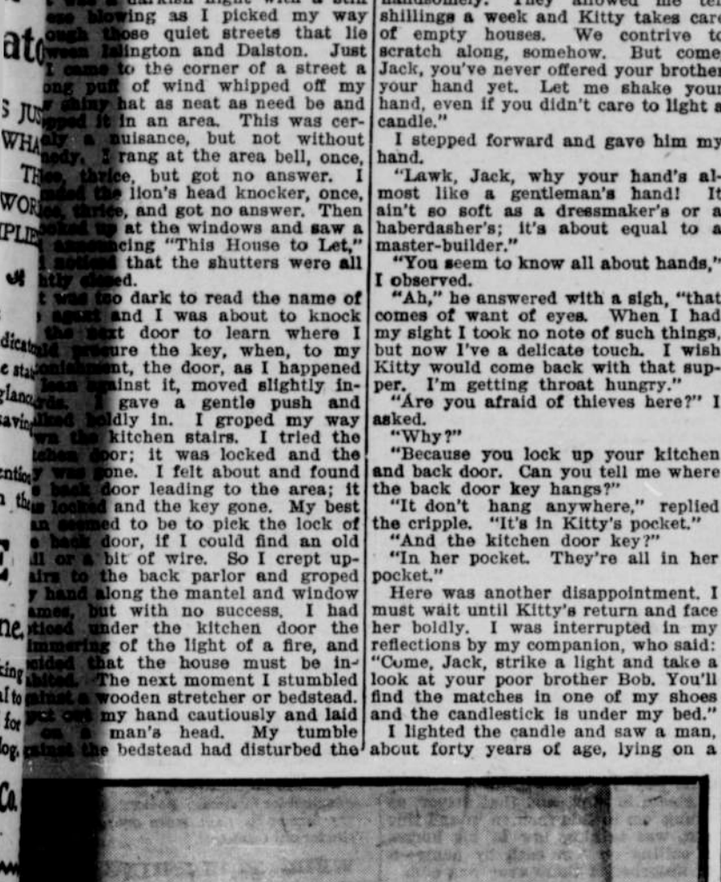
"It don't hang anywhere," replied the cripple. "It's in Kitty's pocket."

"And the kitchen door key?"

"In her pocket. They're all in her pocket."

Here was another disappointment. I must wait until Kitty's return and face her boldly. I was interrupted in my reflections by my companion, who said: "Come, Jack, strike a light and take a look at your poor brother Bob. You'll find the matches in one of my shoes and the candlestick is under my bed."

I lighted the candle and saw a man, about forty years of age, lying on a small stretcher bedstead in the middle of an empty room. His face had evidently once been comely, though now disfigured by scars. His eyes were closed, so if there was anything repulsive about their appearance I didn't see it.



"I SAW A MAN LYING ON A SMALL STRETCHER."

"You are able to wear shoes then, Bob?"

"Ay, but you may notice they're made of cloth and three sizes too big for me. I had a neat foot once, Jack, and I still wear a shoe when I can. I don't lie here like a mummy all day. I sit by the kitchen fire."

"How do you get up and down stairs?"

"Would you believe it, Jack, she carries me. I dare say you thought her a rough one to look at, but she's just the woman to suit me. She's as strong in the back as a brewer's horse. If I'd had the pick of the county of Middlesex, I couldn't have married a kinder hearted woman. And she married me for love. It was after the accident, you understand. Some said she married me for my pension, but I know better, Jack. Tell us about Van Dieman's Land, Jack, to pass away the time."

I hesitated, for I know about as much about Van Dieman's Land as I do of the moon.

"Ah, I see how it is, Jack," said the cripple. "You're ashamed, and no wonder. I like you the better for it. But you needn't mind now. You've served out your seven years and as I always said you was young and led away by Bill Hawkins. And, Jack," he added, confidentially, "we've always kept up the notion in the family that it was poaching. It sounds more respectable than, than—you know what.

"But I say, Jack," pursued the cripple, "transportation can't be as bad as it's represented. It has softened your voice, made you talk better and given you quite a touch of quality. You were a roughish young blade when I bid you good-bye at Milbank penitentiary. Do you recollect how Bill Hawkins jeered you because I gave you mother's little clasp Bible?"

Here was a pretty position for a respectable young fellow to occupy. For the sake of recovering a seventeen-sixpenny hat I was meanly pretending to be some one else and that somebody a returned convict. But I could not bear to tell this poor, helpless fellow of the trick I had played him. He had set his heart on seeing his prodigal brother and would be so grieved, should I undeceive him, that I determined to carry it through.

"What name do you suppose I've gone under, Bob, since I've got my freedom?" I asked.

"Not Slodden, Jack," answered the cripple anxiously; "never Slodden I should hope. Though you're a rich man now and I'm a poor one, still recollect the name of Slodden was an honest one 'till you went and tarnished it."

"No, Bob, I shouldn't dream of such a thing. I call myself Thompson."

"That's right, Jack, and a brother I shall always remain to you in feeling even if we go by different names. And say, Jack, what did you tell Kitty? She believes you was a bounty ticket. What did you say to her?"

"Bob, I'll tell you a little secret. I haven't seen Kitty."

"Why, you came home with her."

"No, I didn't."

"Then how did you find your way in?"

"The door was ajar."

"Why, Kitty never leaves the front door open."

"She did this once. I knocked and rang before I found it out, however."

"And I thought it was a run-away knock and ring. But where on earth is Kitty? Didn't you see her aboard the vessel?"

"No."

"Jack," he exclaimed suddenly, seizing my hand, "are you sure you are playing no trick on me? Remember I'm a poor helpless creature. Where is Kitty?"

"On my honor, I don't know."

"Hush," he said, "there's her footstep coming up to the door. I would know it among a hundred, and she's alone."

These last three words made me decide what to do. As a heavy masculine-sounding foot came to the front door, I overset the candle as if by accident.

"There," said I, "my awkwardness has left us in the dark."

"So much the better, Jack," replied the cripple. "She's missed you down at the ship. We'll give her an agreeable surprise."

Somebody opened the street door with a latch key and advanced along the passage, but I stood still and said nothing. Presently a rather gruff female voice exclaimed, "Bob, Bob, are you asleep?"

"Asleep? Not a bit of it, my dear Kitty," replied the cripple, cheerily, "but wide awake and hungry as a hunter."

"Strike a light then. A pretty dance you've given me, Bob," she exclaimed. "There was no such name as Slodden aboard the ship."

"He came over under the name of Thompson."

"How do you know?"

"Because I've seen him."

"Where?"

"Here," he said, as he struck a match and relighted the candle. "Brother Jack at your service. Look at him, Kitty, and tell me what you think of him."

"Why, Bob," answered Mrs. Slodden, "you've always told me your brother Jack was such a rough fellow. I think he looks quite the gentleman. Welcome to Old England, Mr. Jack. Ours is but a poor place, but such as it is you're welcome to it."

I felt like a miserable humbug as my supposed sister-in-law put her hard, honest hand in mine, but what could I do? After a little general conversation, I said: "Can I speak to you alone for a few moments, Mrs. Slodden?"

"Certainly," replied the unsuspecting woman, treating me with immense respect. "Step down stairs in the kitchen, which is the only comfortable room in the house. And so my poor husband made shift to get up and let you in."

"Here I am at any rate," said I with a smile.

"And now what may you be wanting, Mr. Jack?"

"I just want you to unlock the area back-door. My hat blew off as I was coming around the corner of the street and has fallen down there."

"Oh, is that all," said Mrs. Slodden, feeling for her key. She was just in the act of inserting the key into the keyhole, when the sound of wheels was heard outside, followed by a thundering rapping at the street door.

"Bless me, who can that be?" exclaimed Mrs. Slodden as she rushed upstairs, I following her with trembling steps, for I knew whose knock that arrival betokened.

"That's right," shouted a loud, jovial voice from the cab as the front door opened. "Give a haristocratic rapping, cabby, I'm a gentleman now, every inch of me."

"Name of Slodden," said the cabman, addressing my late sister-in-law.

I waited to hear no more, but bare-headed as I was darted down the steps into the street. A nut-brown face, ornamented with a great shaggy yellow beard, was thrust from the cab window and a jolly voice roared forth, "Hello, Brother Bob."

I made no answer, but ran as fast as my legs could carry me. When I had placed a good half mile between myself and Mrs. Slodden, I fell into a walk and tied a handkerchief over my head, called a cab and was driven to my rooms.

It was many months before I could pass that house without feeling the cold shivers run down my spine, although it looked more deserted than ever. I was only too happy to forego all search for my new silk hat and for all I know it may yet be reposing in the area.

Statues of Bismarck.

Bismarck has come to be about the most bestatued figure in nineteenth century hero worship. The monuments erected in Germany to the "man of blood and iron" are not less alarming in number than they are doubtlessly low in any real art quality. Up to the present the number unhappily completed is 204, and there are still 39 to be inflicted on an already much-Bismarcked people. The Kingdom of Saxony leads with 54 monuments. Germans dwelling in the wild continents are also in the race. One Bismarck statue confronts, in an attitude of becoming defiance, the savages of the South Seas, in the Bismarck Archipelago. (21)

HOUSE OF ROMANOFF.

How the Family of the Present Czar Got Its Power.

The recent turmoil in Russian affairs brings to mind that Russian supremacy, like that of many other countries in the past, has been founded on the sand. The history of its rise and fall is that of other dynasties, and once more we are brought face to face with the fact that "the worm will turn," for history is fast repeating itself.

Chief Ruric was the first Russian ruler of any importance. He founded in 862 what afterwards became the Russian Empire. Its chiefs were called Grand Dukes until 1100, when the title of Czar was adopted. A little more than two hundred years later, the Tartan invasion of the dreaded Gengis Kahn laid Russia almost in waste, but Ivan the Great, conquering these Mongols, again restored Russian integrity.

The Russian rulers, up to the time of Peter the Great, generally died violent deaths, and in our own days, and

PETER THE GREAT.

within our own recollection, more than one of Russia's great ones has laid down his life, the victim to Nihilistic hatred, the "Great White Czar" of autocratic power and strength, or the "Little Father," of implied love, guidance and protection, both names and names only, falling before the cruel dynamite bomb and laying down his scepter under the call of death, even as the lowliest peasant of his mighty Empire.

Peter the Great, founded the great city of St Petersburg, but the best thing he did for his Empire, was to open its doors to western civilization, his ideas and plans living after him to fulfilment through his people, whom he had infused with his magnetic spirit. Catherine II, while intellectual, comprehensive in her plans, strong in their execution, and a wonderful diplomat, adding much to Russia's territory, was utterly devoid of conscience. She was succeeded by her son, Paul, who advanced the country to the rank of a first-class power, and under Alexander I, Russia held the balance of dominion in Europe.

Alexander I was followed by his son, Nicholas I, a stern despot, with an inordinate faith in Russian prowess His over-confidence brought on the Crimean war, in which Russia was arrayed against Great Britain, France, Italy and Turkey, and which resulted in the success of the allied armies.

Alexander II liberated 23,000,000 serfs in 1861, but was assassinated by the Nihilists twenty years later, the present Czar, Nicholas II, coming to the throne November 1, 1894, and who can predict his successor. Who has the temerity to suggest that he shall have a successor to the absolute power, the autocratic dominion over his millions of people!

ROMANCE OF A COAT.

An Old Clothes Dealer Whose Kindly Act Netted Him Twenty-five Dollars.

The world is full of romance. There are persons who deny this, but there are persons who deny God and gravitation. Romance is not confined to novels and the hearts of girls. It crops out often in strange places and sometimes in austere natures. But it is not often that a romance is found in the pocket of a cast-off coat. However, this story proves it. The story comes from New York. A dealer in old clothes, assorting his collection of "has-been" raiment found in the pocket of a coat that had seen better days, a letter. It was sealed and addressed to a lady in an aristocratic part of the city far removed from the section of the city in which the old clothes man lived and worked. He laid the letter aside, thinking that some day when the spirit moved him and times were prosperous he would stamp and post it.

Perhaps it was several days later when he had occasion to call for a bundle of disowned apparel in a part of the town near the home of the addressee of the letter. He took the missive with him, called at the house, was brushed aside by the man at the door, but a lady emerging at that moment, he handed the letter to her. She tore it open in great haste and as she read it blushes reddened her face and a happy smile spread over her lips. She folded the letter, put it in her purse and handed the "old clo' man" a $5 note. He felt that he had not only done a good deed but had been rewarded.

A week passed and a dapper, well-groomed man entered his shop. He said he was the original owner of the coat from which the letter had been recovered. He said that in the letter he had proposed marriage to the girl he loved and thought he mailed it. Receiving no reply he believed that he had been rejected and left the city. He had recently received an adorable reply from the young lady with an explanation as to how the letter had been delivered and—the wedding day had been set. All this he thought was due to the "old clo' man." To the man who had rendered him such good service he handed a $20 note.

The moral of this romance is "do a kindly act when you can." Another moral might be drawn from the incident, and this is: When you write an offer of marriage to the girl you love, be sure she gets the letter.

As unto the bow the cord is
So unto the man is woman;
Though she bends him, she obeys him.
Though she draws him, yet she follows,
Useless each without the other.—Hiawatha.

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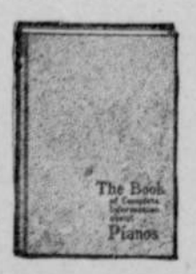

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