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A Strange Character.

One evening, during the progress of
the war of the Revolution in America,
an old woman, living in the suburbs of
Portsmouth, England, was summoned
to her door by a knock, and, on open-
ing it, found herself confronted with
an old man, poorly dressed, with a bun-
dle in his hand, such as travelers of his
class frequently carried on their pedes-
trian tours.

"Madam," he said, respectfully, "can
I get to lodge here to-night?"
"It aren't my business to take lodg-
ers," replied the mistress of the house,
scanning the applicant closely by the
light she held in her hand.

"I s'pose not, madam—but I'm a
poor man, and want shelter some-
where."

"Well, why don't you go to an inn?
there's plenty of them in the town."

"Just because I'm poor, and can't
afford to pay as much as they'd ask.
I've got a little money, only a little,
and I want to make it go as far as I
can. I'm willing to pay you what's
reasonable; and then I'd save some-
thing, I'm thinking."

"Who are you? where do you be-
long? and what's your business?"

"I'm called John the Painter, and
that explains my business, and I belong
anywhere where I happen to be. If
you're not satisfied with this answer,
why, good night to you, and I'll trudge
on to try my chance somewhere else."

The old woman, who was poor her-
self, and lived alone, in a small, crazy,
old house, thought she might as well
gather in a few pennies, by keeping
the traveler, as to let some of her
neighbor do it; and so, after a little
reflection, she rejoined:

"I s'pose I can keep you, if, as you
say, you'll pay me what's reasonable—
for, like you, I'm poor, too, and can't
afford to do it for nothing. Come in
and sit down—you look tired. I s'pose
you want supper?"

"Yes, if you please," said John the
Painter, as he walked in and took a
seat near the fire, upon which he fixed
his eyes somewhat abstractly, while he
carelessly threw his hat and bundle
down beside him.

For the half hour that the mistress
of the house was busied in preparing
his supper, the traveler seemed deeply
absorbed in matters of his own, and
scarcely once took his eyes from the
fire, or changed his position. At first
the old woman glanced at him furtive-
ly, with an air of ordinary curiosity,
and occasionally ventured some com-
mon-place remark; but finding he
made no reply, took no notice of her
presence, and even seemed not to hear
her, she became bolder in her manner,
and two or three times stopped near
him, staring directly into his face.

He appeared to be between sixty and
seventy years of age, had gray hair, a
stern, pinched face, a large nose, thin,
compressed lips, and cold, staring eyes,
the expression of which was far from
pleasing, and which was not redeemed
by anything else in his countenance.
In fact he seemed like a man not at
peace with himself or the world, and
who was either then brooding over
some committed crime or some contem-
plated revenge.

"There, sir, your supper's ready, if
you want it," at length spoke the mis-
tress, in a half querulous tone, as if of-
fended that none of her previous re-
marks had been noticed.

The strange traveler took no heed,
but still sat staring at the fire.
"I say your supper's ready man;
and, if you want it hot, you'd better
eat it before it gets cold; for I'll not
warm it again, this blessed night, for
you nor nobody else!" cried the host-
ess, in an angry tone.

Still no movement—no response—no
indication that her unmusical voice
was not even heard.

"I say!" she half screamed in his
ear, at the same time taking hold of his
arm rather rudely.

Like a ball he sprang from his seat
and confronted her, his eyes looking
wild and wicked.

"Good Lord, man, don't scare a
body so!" exclaimed the woman, tak-
ing two or three quick backward steps,
and turning pale with fright. "I'm
only trying to make you understand
your supper's ready."

The stranger glared at her for a mo-
ment, then at the table, and then seem-
ed to comprehend the true facts.

"Oh! ah! yes!" he replied, with a
grim smile. "I beg your pardon!—
it's like you've spoke to me before!"

"It's like I have, a half a dozen
times, just as I might have talked to a
post!"

"Yes, madam, I see—I thank you—I
beg your pardon! I was busy think-
ing, and forgot where I was."

He then took his seat at the table,
and, while eating his supper, tried to
make amends for his former impolite
abstraction, by making himself as
agreeable as possible. He succeeded so

well in his efforts to please, that the
mistress of the house became quite
charmed with his conversation, and be-
gan to think he might possibly be an
angel in disguise—or, in other words,
a rich and eccentric old gentleman,
whom good fortune had thrown in her
way for a future husband or possible
legacy.

But these bright hopes did not have
a long duration—for scarcely had the
stranger finished his meal, than he sud-
denly grew cold, taciturn and abstract-
ed, and presently asked to be shown to
his bed. If he slept soundly, the mis-
tress of the house did not—for after the
dispelling of the bright fancy of future
wealth, she began to fear that the
stranger might take a notion to shorten
her life before morning, and so lay a-
wake and listened, and trembled at ev-
ery unusual sound.

The night, however, passed off without
any disturbance; and at daylight the
old man rose and went out, leaving his
bundle behind. Scarcely was he out of
sight before the curiosity of his hostess
set her to work to see if she could gath-
er any new facts.

If he had left a trunk, instead of a
bundle, she would probably have found
a way to open and rummage it; but as
it was, she had only to untie an old,
dirty handkerchief; and there, before
her eyes, lay a shirt, a pair of stockings,
and a tin box—a curious-looking tin
box—for which, unfortunately for her
ease of mind, she could not imagine any
use. She held it up, turned it over,
shook it, and tried her best to see into
it, and conjecture for what purpose it
was made; but not being able to do
this, she at length resigned it with a
sigh, rolled it up as she had found it,
tied up the bundle, and went about her
usual business.

John the Painter came back to a late
breakfast, and then settled with the
curious widow for all he had of her, at
the same time remarking that he might
possibly remain in town another night,
in which case he hoped he would be
permitted to return and pass another
night under her hospitable roof.

To this she now readily gave consent,
again thinking him a man of some con-
sequence.

He then inquired where he could find
a tinman; and receiving the proper
direction to one, he bade her good-by
and started off, this time taking his
bundle with him.

Toward evening, however, he came
back, and said he had concluded to
stay another night in town, and wanted
supper, which the widow again prepar-
ed for him.

He ate this meal in silence, and soon
after made some excuse to go out.

He was absent some two or three
hours; and when he returned he re-
ported that there was quite a large fire,
which he understood to be in some gov-
ernment buildings that he feared would
be consumed.

"But blessed are the poor!" he added,
with a strange kind of a laugh, which
his hostess afterwards recalled; "for
they have nothing to lose."

He then went to bed, and appeared
to rest well through the night; but
rose at the first streak of day, paid his
reckoning, and took his departure,
saying he should not return.

On going out, an hour or two later,
the widow was surprised to see the usu-
ally quiet town of Portsmouth last night,
in great commotion—groups collected
here and there, as if discussing some
remarkable event—and mounted men,
both military and civil, dashing hither
and yon, all seeming hurried and an-
xious. On every blank wall, too, there
was a flaming placard, announcing the
startling fact that a hundred thousand
pounds worth of naval stores had been
destroyed by incendiarism, that secret
emissaries of the enemy were supposed
to be in their midst, offering large re-
wards for the arrest and conviction of
the guilty, and ordering all citizens to
report to the nearest magistrate the
names of all strangers who had lodged
in town during the last three days, and
more especially the last night.

As soon as the widow fairly under-
stood this matter, she hastened to give
in the name of John the Painter, with
a description of his person, manner,
conversation, and, withal, his curious
tin box and visit to the tinman. The
latter was immediately sent for,
and deposed that he had made a top for
the box, which seemed to be a curious
affair, the use of which he did not
know.

All this fully fixed suspicion upon
the eccentric old man; and as it was
supposed he had been dispatched from
town to some distant point by relays of
horses, horsemen were sent off in every
direction in hot pursuit, with orders to
arrest every mounted person they
might find.

Somewhere about mid-day John the
Painter was overtaken, on the regular
London road, by one of these mounted
parties, who stopped and inquired if any
one had passed him on horseback that
morning.

"Not a soul," replied the old man.
"How long have you been on this
road?"

"Since daylight. Why?"

"There was a great destruction of
naval stores in Portsmouth last night,
the work of some infernal incendiary,
and we want to catch the villain."

"Well, do you 'pose he fled on horse-
back?" said the old man, with a pecu-
liar twinkle of his eyes.

"Undoubtedly."

"Well, he didn't—he went on foot."

"Ha! how do you know?"

"Because I know the man who did
it."

"Who is he? Where is he?" de-
manded the leader, excitedly.

"He's called John the Painter, and
he's here. I'm the man."

"Take care how you jest, old fellow!"
returned the other, warningly; "I
might get you into trouble."

"If you can't understand plain Eng-
lish, you're as big a fool as your royal
master is a knave!" said the old man,
with an angry sneer. "I tell you I'm
the man that did it—and I'm the man
that glories in it—and if you don't be-
lieve me, ride on and hunt till you get
sense!"

The horsemen now thought the old
man was crazy; but, after what he
had said, they concluded to arrest him
and take him back to Portsmouth.
They did so, and there he was con-
fronted with the old woman and the
tinman, both of whom identified him
as the mysterious stranger they had de-
scribed.

He was then asked to make a con-
fession and name his accomplices.

"I never had any accomplices," said
the old man, indignantly. "What I
did, I did alone, and I glory in it. I
once lived peaceably and happily in the
quiet little town of Amboy, State of
New Jersey, far away over the great
waters; and I'd been living peaceably
there to-day, if the minions of King
George had let me alone; but they
came there, and insulted and abused
me, and burned down my dwelling, and
cast me adrift to shift for myself—and
then I took a solemn oath I'd be re-
venged. It was my first intention to kill
your vile king; and I'd have done it,
only for Mr. Deane, our secret minis-
ter at Paris, who convinced me it was
wrong to slay the Lord's Anointed; and
so, as the next best thing, I deter-
mined to burn as much of the king's
property as I could. I came direct
from Paris here, and you know what
I've done since I got here, and that's
enough. I know you'll hang me for it
—but I don't care for that. I'm a
poor, friendless, old man, made sick of
life by your accursed deeds; and now,
that I've got my revenge, I don't care
how soon I die."

They sent the old man, under guard,
to London, where he underwent a close
examination before the Privy Council
—but no new facts were elicited. He
strictly adhered to his first statement;
and, mainly on his own evidence, or
confession, he was tried, convicted,
sentenced, and hanged.

We have only to add, that the fore-
going may be relied on as strictly au-
thentic.

A FLYING TRIP.

Mrs. Acker, and yours, until my
funeral, expected to have gone to the
city last week, but we didn't get there
for the following pesky reasons:

We were somewhat late for the train,
owing, so says Mrs. N. Y. A., to my
inborn carelessness; but I claim I con-
tracted the habit about the time my
wife became the possessor of a marriage
certificate.

Mrs. Acker was hustling around, put-
ting on her duds, when she happened
to think that she wanted a pair of
gloves which had been left up-stairs,
and I must scot up-stairs and get the
desired hand-squeezers.

The going up was not as long in be-
ing accomplished as the construction
of the Washington monument, but the
downward motion! Scissors and
shears! Wasn't that expedited? But
I hardly think I came down easy. And
now that I come to reflect over the
matter, I know I did not. No, sirree, I
didn't. I came down hard, very, very
hard on the floor at the foot of the
stairs, and there I sat investigating
the lump on the rear of my cranium,
the abrasion on my elbow, and—and—
but I'll not enumerate. I received a
souvenir from each step of the stairs.

The final object upon which I bump-
ed was my hat, and it being what is
commonly designated as a stove-pipe,
of course it was ruined beyond a possi-
bility of resurrection.

Before serenely reigned again the
hackman had nearly worn out the clapper
of the door-bell, trying to make the
Acker family understand that it was
time to adjourn the debating society.

We shook things up lively, and ac-
companied by a hat out of the rag-bag,
tumbled into the hack and rattled away
to the depot, where we arrived just in

time to catch on the rear platform as
the train was moving out.

Mrs. Acker scrambled up first, and
took some seconds at it, and left me
grasping the rail, making frantic efforts
to keep up with the accelerated motion
of the car, while about every rod I
would slap one foot down upon the
ground with the seeming result of driv-
ing my heel up through the spinal col-
umn, and taken up lodgings in the
nape of my neck.

Thus I went bravely on emulating
the antics of the mythical flying-eater
of sauer-kraut.

"Hi! whoop! Go in, old flying-
machine, I'll bet on yer," shouted an
urchin, who was standing by the side
of the track, while a mongrel cur came
tearing, yelping out, thinking my coat
tails were a flock of geese, which he
was in duty bound to frighten off.

The cars at length gained such head-
way that my feet only touched the
ground once in every three and nine-
tenths rods, my hair was letting go of
the scalp, and I breathed by jerks,
when the brakeman came out and haul-
ed me upon the platform.

Just after I had succeeded in regain-
ing my breath, out rushed the conduc-
tor followed by Mrs. Acker.

The conductor shouted:

"Are you this woman's husband?"

"I'll be d-d s-l-i-v-e-r if I am not;
that is, what there is left of me."

"Well, then, gim'e your tickets."

"Haven't got any. I have just been
hauled on this gosh-slammed car, with-
out time to say Jack Robinson, let a-
lone buying tickets."

"Then I must have the money."

I shoved my hand in my pocket and
pulled out my—keys.

In my hurry I had left my purse at
home.

I jumped upon my feet, and stared
at Brassbuttons, who said:

"Come, come—tickets or money."

"Well darn my looks if I've got eit-
her!"

"Then you must get off at the next
station."

"What!" shrieked I, in amazement.

"You presume to pretend that you are
going to put me off this train—me,
Nimble Yankee Acker, Esq.?"

"Yes!"

"Great Scott! Why, sir, I'm a writ-
ter—an author, sir!"

"Don't know you. Come down with
the money or off you go."

"Whew but—"

"Come—the money. I haven't time
to be fooling with a hatless lunatic,"
cried Brassbuttons, as he slammed the
door, through which issued the titters
of the passengers.

"Hatless!" I clapped my hand on
my forehead. "Good heavens, I am
disgraced!"

I subsided.

We got off at the next station, and I
looked around for a conveyance to take
us home, but no one would let me have
one without the money.

Finally I came across a man who
compromised by driving us home, mak-
ing me promise to pay him immediat-
ly after arriving, and let him wear my
nickel-plated watch until he had the
lucre in his paw.

I didn't feel like pushing the experi-
ment further, and therefore did not try
to buy a hat, but made a turban of
Mrs. Acker's shawl.

We met several parties on the road,
and were often met with the excla-
mation:

"Gypsies, by hooky."

Mrs. Acker declares she will not be
good enough to go to church again un-
til after next communion Sunday.
I am now convalescing.

Pearls of Thought.

Lost time is never found again.
The future destiny of the child is al-
ways the work of the mother.

He is rich who is satisfied with what
he hath—whether it be little or much.
Sudden expectations, which kindle
the mind to a fever, sometimes chill the
heart to a frost.

How long, how slow, and how in-
scrutable may be one man's fate against
another's finding out!

Do nothing by halves. If a thing is
right, do it boldly and well; if it be
wrong, leave it undone.

Good resolutions are like horses. The
first cost is an item of less importance
than the keeping.

In judging of others, a man often er-
reth; but in examining himself, always
laboreth fruitfully.

Truth—the open, bold, honest truth—is
always the safest, for everyone, in any
and all circumstances.

A man in Terre Haute, who recent-
ly secured a divorce from his wife, now
employs her as his servant girl, and
she has more money and better clothes
than when she was his wife. If some
men would treat their wives as they
do their servant girls there would be
fewer divorces.—*Texas Siftings.*

"HACK, SIR!"

Last week I went to the city.
There is nothing in that assertion
than is very strange, nor anything
which would apparently make a founda-
tion for a novel; but, you see, it is not
so much the going or coming that is so
much on my mind, but the gosh-slivered
occurrences after I reached there that
are disturbing my equanimity.

I was there—that's sufficient—and
the doggoned hackmen seemed to know
it before I did, for about a thou—well
something less than a hundred of them,
pointed their long, dirty fingers at me,
as soon as I tumbled from the train,
and yelled, "Hack, hack, sir!" until I
wished some one had hacked their
tongues off.

One grabbed me by the shoulder and
another pulled my sleeve, while a third
tugged away at my valise, as I shouted:

"Scissors and shears! What do you
want, you swiveled-tongued donkeys?
If you don't let go of me, I'll thrash the
whole bundle of you."

I slung the back of my hand across
one ugly mug and kicked the shins of
the fellow who was clawing at my
shoulder, while the snoozer who clung
to my bag yelled:

"That's right; give it ter em'—oh,
ouch!"

And he doubled up and grabbed him-
self where his vitals are digested, for
that's where my number ten stopped.

I was in for it.

The whole crowd now rushed at me.
I caught my toe on the curb, tumbled
down, upset three hackmen, they
upset more of their ilk, legs, arms, hats,
shoes, fists, hair, cuss words, and so
forth, were in utter confusion.

The police rushed up, thinking a
bomb had exploded, and I sprang to
my feet and started on a run as though
I was a chicken thief, with a bob-tailed
bulldog after a taste of my pantaloons.

Some one cried:

"Stop thief!"