

The Bloomfield Times.

TERMS—PAYABLE IN ADVANCE,
(WITHIN THIS COUNTY.)
\$1.25 per Year; 75 Cts. 6 Months.

AN INDEPENDENT FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

TERMS—PAYABLE IN ADVANCE,
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Our Strange Lodger.

A DETECTIVE'S STORY.

THOUGH we could hardly hope to meet with a model lodger again, like the Rev. Mr. Adolphus, who had been with us ever since we began house-keeping, it was certainly desirable—so Annie and I concluded—to have a lodger of some kind, even if it were an inferior description of the article; for my salary at that time, as junior clerk in the respectable banking firm of Lawes and Fielding, was more prospective than real; sufficient, perhaps, for a bachelor of economic tastes, but sadly out of proportion with the needs of a married man.

It being decided, therefore, that a second lodger was a necessary evil, a card notifying that Apartments for a single Gentleman were to be let within, took its place in our window; but week after week passed away, winter faded into spring, spring lost itself in summer, and still we remained without a single applicant for our very genteel and commodious rooms.

The hot days of June were drawing to a close when, on reaching home one evening from the office, I saw by the sparkle in my wife's eye that she had something particular to tell me, and I was scarcely seated before the news burst out.

"Tom, dear, we have got a lodger at last!"

"Did you say a lodger?" I cried, starting up. "Another poor victim come to the net—to be cheated, worried, bullied, and fleeced unmercifully! What is the wretched individual's name?"

"Mr. James Twoshoes."

"A very ancient and honorable name, well known in nursery history. Describe him."

"There's not much about him to describe. He's like any other commonplace gentleman who is drawing on towards middle-age, with little in his appearance to distinguish him from any one else. He is about five-and-forty years old, as near as I can judge. Short black hair, with just a tinge of grey in it; no beard or whiskers; dressed in a new glossy suit of black clothes; wears black gloves, much too long in the fingers, and an old-fashioned black satin stock, fastened with a little pearl brooch. He has a good-tempered looking face, lighted up by two quick black eyes.—He is deaf to a very slight extent, and you have to elevate your voice when speaking to him. He has a habit of carrying his head forward a little, and partly on one side, which gives him the appearance of being continually listening for something which he is expecting every moment to hear."

"A description worthy of a passport.—When does he arrive?"

"About noon to-morrow. He sleeps at one of the hotels to-night. But I forgot to say that he will only be a temporary lodger. He has engaged the rooms by the week, as his stay in Markhollow will only be a short one. He may want the rooms for one month, two months, or three months, he said,—just as the fancy takes him, and dependent on how soon he grows tired of our little town."

"Ah, well! I suppose a temporary lodger is better than none. What references did he give?"

"References!" exclaimed Annie, in blank dismay. "Upon my word, I was so taken up with the idea of letting the rooms, that I forgot all about references."

"Through which forgetfulness," I said, severely, "you introduce into the house a person of whom we know absolutely nothing."

"Oh! he's thoroughly respectable, my dear; you may tell that at once from his appearance!"

"No doubt. Forgers and genteel pick-pockets are generally men of very respectable appearance. Their respectability is

part of their stock in trade. This fellow, for anything we know to the contrary, may be one of the two men who broke out of a London prison to other day, come down to this little place to hide till the affair has blown over." Seeing, however, that Annie was inclined to lapse into a "moist resentment," I added, with my usual good nature: "But don't distress yourself about it; it may turn out all right, you know; and I can ask him for his references when he comes to-morrow."

Punctual to appointment, Mr. Twoshoes arrived at noon the following day; and I may here say that my wife's description of him was so close and faithful, that I can find nothing to add to it. A portmanteau and a writing-case formed the whole of our new lodger's luggage.

"Mr. Starling, I suppose?" he said, with a pleasant smile, and a hearty shake of the hand. "I hope we shall suit one another; at least, I am sure it shall not be my fault if we don't. Fine old city this of yours," he went on, after we had introduced him into his rooms. "I am quite in love with it already. I flatter myself that I have always retained a dash of poetry in my composition, notwithstanding that my life has been a hard and practical one; and if anything could revive that sentiment within my breast, it would be the sight of your grand old cathedral; and I may tell you, in confidence, that when I, James Twoshoes, was rambling through its aisles this morning, I felt more than half-inclined to try my hand at a sonnet."

He sat down as he said this, and laughed in a hearty way that it did one good to listen to. Who would ask such a man for references? From that moment I gave up the idea as an absurdity.

"Your good lady," he went on, "has, I presume, told you that I am only here for a short time. My stay may be limited to three weeks, or it may extend over three months. For my part, I'm a fellow who always makes a point of giving way to my whims. So long as a place takes my fancy, there I stick, as fast as a barnacle,—till some fine morning a whim pops into my brain, and then, hey presto! I'm off by the first train—whither I know, at the time, no more than the man in the moon. Rather an uncomfortable, vagabond sort of existence, you probably think. So it is, I grant it. But what can a fellow do whose whims are the master of him? Give way to them, of course; and that's just what I do. Well, well," he went on, "I've seen many a more lively and populous place than Markhollow that hasn't pleased me half so well. I'll take a cutlet for dinner, if you please; and any little pastry you may have on hand."

I saw nothing more of Mr. Twoshoes that day, for when I reached home in the evening, he was seated upstairs in his own room, as my wife told me, smoking an immense meerschaum, in company with some gin-and-water and a newspaper. To say that my wife and I were prepossessed in favor of our new lodger, is merely to state the bare fact of the case. We were delighted with him, and felt sure that he would bear comparison with even such a model individual as the Rev. Mr. Adolphus.

Mr. Twoshoes went out in the course of the following forenoon, and shortly returned, bringing with him a canary and cage, which he proceeded to hang up in his room with evident delight; and on the bird turning out to be a famous whistler, he had Annie and me specially upstairs to listen to it, and give him our opinion as to its qualifications. In the course of this day, too, we discovered that our lodger was a performer on the flute. We heard him tootle-tootle-ing in his rooms in a wandering, aimless sort of way for some minutes before he settled down into any tune; but he seemed to get into the proper groove at last, and then went on with one tune after another, from tea-time till dusk. I cannot say that he impressed me as being a very good player; and all his tunes were of an old-fashioned, sentimental kind, such as had had their day, and gone out of vogue, a dozen years before; indeed, to hear him at dusk, tootle feebly through his open window, you would have taken him to be some love-sick swain of eighteen, rather than the hard-headed practical man of the world he laughingly declared himself to be.

At the end of a week, Annie and I were still as far as ever from being able to make out the profession of Mr. Twoshoes, though we considered the question in all its bearings, and gave due weight in our deliberations to the various vague hints thrown out at different times by our lodger. We concluded at last, in lack of all direct evidence,

that whatever he might formerly have been he could now be nothing more nor less than a gentleman living on his private means.

From the first day Mr. Twoshoes had bargained for the use of a latchkey, with free permission to come in and go out at whatever hours of the day and night he might think proper; and he was not long before he made frequent use of the privilege we had so readily conceded him. Not unfrequently he would leave the house at dusk, and not return till two or three o'clock next morning; at other times, he would set off early in the morning, and remain out the whole of the day. "When one of my whims lays hold of me," he laughingly observed to my wife on one occasion, "and whispers to me that I had better take a ramble, then must I obey, and call Shanks' mare into immediate requisition, whatever hour of the day or night it may be."

I confess, however, that it gave me "a turn," as my wife would say, when on reaching home one evening, just after dusk I encountered Mr. Twoshoes on the steps, as he was in the act of closing the door behind him, habited from head to foot in the garb of a groom. I could hardly believe in the reality of what I saw; but there he stood, benignantly smiling down upon me from the height of the steps, not disconcerted in the least, but calmly puffing away from the little black pipe between his lips. On his head he wore a Glangarry bonnet; round his neck a blue-and-white scarf, fastened with a horse-shoe pin; a waistcoat low down on the hips; a short cutaway coat, breeches and gaiters; decidedly "horsey." All these particulars I could make out by the light of the opposite lamp. He remarked that one of his whims had overtaken him, bade me a cheerful good-night, and walked off at a leisurely pace down the street. It was three o'clock next morning before Mr. Twoshoes returned, and having let himself quietly in, stole upstairs to his bedroom so gently that he would hardly have disturbed a mouse.

But worse was to follow.

Mr. Twoshoes had been with us about a month, when I was one day sent to R—, a neighboring town about thirteen miles away, on business for the firm. There being no railway between the two towns, I had to hire a horse and gig. I had finished my business at R—, and was setting out late in the afternoon on my return, when it began to rain heavily, for which reason I determined to take the shortest road home. The road in question was not a very pleasant one, running as it did through a wide tract of barren moorland, dreary and desolate, in the extreme, with not more than half a dozen houses on it in a distance of as many miles. The weather, however, decided me to adopt this route; and I had got half way across the moor on my return when my horse, which was but a poor innkeeper's hack, betrayed such unmistakable signs of distress, that I pulled up at a roadside inn, the only one within a distance of several miles, in order to have my horse baited before continuing my journey. While the ostler was busy outside, I entered the little taproom to obtain some refreshment for myself. On one side of the room sat two or three individuals in the dress of laboring men, while opposite to them, and quite alone, sat a man on whom the whole of my attention was immediately concentrated. If not Mr. Twoshoes himself, it was his living presentment! I started back in amazement, as though I had seen a ghost, when my eyes first fell on him; and the next moment was about to accost him familiarly, but some inward feeling made me hesitate just as the words were forming on my lips. The stranger, if stranger he were, gave me one long steady glance, and then resumed his perusal of a ragged country newspaper. Was I right or wrong in imagining that a faint gleam of surprise shot for a moment out of his eyes, to be immediately quenched in that dull, unrecognizable stare? As far as dress went, he certainly bore no resemblance to Mr. Twoshoes, for he was habited in a suit of blue cloth with gilt buttons, after the fashion of a mate or captain in the merchant service. He sat in silence during the whole time I was there, neither speaking to, nor being addressed by, any of the company. To make his likeness to the genuine Mr. Twoshoes still more startling, he had the very same slight stoop forward with his head and shoulders, and the same intent look about his eyes—as though he were listening to some imaginary conversation—which I knew so well. In about ten minutes the ostler announced that my horse was ready. As I quitted the room I cast

another long inquisitive glance at the seafaring man sitting so silent and grim; but he never looked up again, and I left him still intent over his newspaper. When I reached home I found that Mr. Twoshoes was out, and had been for several hours. At whatever hour he might return, I determined to be on the watch for him, and judge from his dress whether it was really he whom I had seen in the roadside inn. I sat up patiently till twelve o'clock, but as he had not then returned, I put out all the lights, and stationed myself in a bedroom upstairs; and after waiting there three more hours, my patience was rewarded by seeing Mr. Twoshoes come down the street. Thanks to a friendly lamp opposite, I had no difficulty in seeing how he was dressed. It was still raining a little; and the first thing I perceived was that he carried an umbrella; but when he put it down on nearing the door, all I could make out was that he wore his ordinary black hat, and a waterproof cape that reached nearly to his heels. He let himself in with his latchkey, and stole upstairs to bed in his usual stealthy manner.

These mysterious and suspicious proceedings on the part of our lodger naturally became a source of much disquiet both to Annie and myself; indeed my wife began to get quite nervous on the point, and to imagine all kinds of terrible and unlikely things as the results of our harboring such an unaccountable personage in our house. Mr. Twoshoes was, however, as I have said before, such a model lodger in every other respect, so kind and considerate in every way, such a punctual and liberal paymaster, that, debate the question as we would, we could by no means make up our minds to part with him. So we decided at last to keep our apprehensions and suspicions to ourselves, and mention them neither to Mr. Twoshoes nor to any prying neighbor, and to put down everything in our lodger's ways of life for which we could not find a natural solution to the score of eccentricity—a term of very wide application indeed.

"Mr. Twoshoes had been with us about five weeks, when Annie's brother, Mr. Dick Dereham, came down from London to spend his holidays with us, for the sake of the fishing for which the neighborhood of Markhollow is celebrated. He was in those days a tall raw-boned young fellow, with fair complexion, large blue eyes, cold and sceptical in expression, and a nose as sharp and inquisitive as that of a ferret; with, to crown all, a most excellent opinion of his own acuteness and general abilities, dashed with that slight superciliousness of tone and manner which, especially towards homely country-folks, in such a common characteristic of the middle-class Cockney. He had not been three hours in the house before he had wormed out of Annie everything that we knew, surmised, and imagined concerning Mr. Twoshoes. Here was a promising pie ready for an acute young Cockney to poke his finger into! No fishing to be done till it was disposed of to his satisfaction. Really the country was not such a dull place after all! He met me that afternoon at the bank door, and, linking his arm in mine, unburdened his mind as we walked home together.

"Nan has been opening her mind to me this afternoon about your lodger, Mr. Twoshoes," he began.

"Indeed," said I, dryly; "you were immensely interested, no doubt."

"Oh! you may jest about it if you like, but the question is a serious one. There's something bad about that fellow, you may depend upon it; and if I were you I'd either report him privately to the police or else give him a week's notice, and so get rid of him altogether."

"Thank you," I replied; "but as I have no particular fault to find with Mr. Twoshoes, I don't feel quite inclined to adopt either of your suggestions."

"But consider, my dear fellow; it's really not safe to have a man like that in your house—who frequently stays out all night who dresses one day as a groom, another day as a merchant seaman, and the next as a curate or private gentleman. It arises from no mere eccentricity, you may depend on it. There's some villainy afloat, and it will be well if you are not implicated in it when the *explosive* comes—as come it must, some of these fine days."

"Now, see you here, my pert young Cockney," I replied; "Mr. Twoshoes is my lodger, and a man whom I respect, so don't attempt to pull him to pieces in my presence. You always were a tolerable hand at discovering mares'-nests, but, please, don't try to find any in my house. Whatever may be the little eccentricities of Mr. Twoshoes, they are no business of

yours or mine. That he is a very worthy gentleman, and thoroughly honest and upright, I am fully convinced. My advice to you, therefore, is to go and look after the little fishes, and let my estimable lodger alone."

Dick was terribly buffed by my plain speaking, and did not fail to complain to my wife about it; but what annoyed me more was to find that he had contrived to affect her to some extent with his own absurd fears, so that when we went to bed that night she would insist on having the bed room door locked, a precaution she had never cared to exercise before, saying, in her circumlocutory, feminine way:

"There's no knowing what may happen with such mysterious people in the house."

A day or two after my conversation with Dick, our senior partner sent for me into the parlor, and informed me that he wanted me set out for France by the mail that evening, on business of importance which would probably occupy me about a week. Having received my instructions, I hurried home, dined, made my few preparations as speedily as possible, sent for my Aunt Barbara to come and stay with Annie during my absence, and then lingered a moment to give a parting injunction to my wife and Dick respecting Mr. Twoshoes. I would not go till I had received an assurance from both of them that matters should go on as usual during my absence—that Mr. Twoshoes should be allowed to come and go as he might think proper, without notice or comment. Dick's promise of neutrality was given too readily to satisfy me, and I thought I detected a malicious twinkle in his eye, as I shook his hand at parting, which boded no good to somebody. But there was no help for it—business called, and I must obey. Concluded next week.

Curious Wills.

A German, troubled how to dispose of his money, bequeathed it to a man whom he detested, upon the condition that he always wore thin, white linen clothes without any underclothing.

A Mr. Sargeant, of Leicester, England, sought to improve the habits of his bed-loving nephews by putting the following clause in his will: "As my nephews are fond of indulging themselves in bed in the morning, and as I wish them to prove to the satisfaction of my executors, that they have got out of bed in the morning, and either employed themselves in business or taking exercise in the open air from five to eight o'clock every morning from the second of April to the tenth of October—being three hours each day—and from 6 to 8 o'clock from the tenth of October to the fifth of April, being two hours every morning."

"This is to be done for seven years, to the satisfaction of my executors, who may excuse them in case of illness; the test must be made up when they are well, and if they will not do this, they shall not receive any share of my property." It was very hard on the poor nephews, but as the amount at stake was quite large they had to do it.

Witchcraft in West Virginia.

The Wheeling, West Virginia, *Intelligencer* contains the following remarkable story of superstition and ignorance: "On alley Sixteen, in East Wheeling, a peculiar disease recently appeared among the smaller children. Seven babies, in as many different families, suffered from the same mysterious complaint. One of the babies died, and it was thought the others would not survive long. No medical advice was called, as the children were believed to be bewitched. An old lady, however, who is known to possess much influence with Superstitious persons tried to drive out the evil spirits. She visited the different families and advised them to keep every door locked and stop up the keyholes.—Nothing was to be loaned from the house for fear some bold and adventurous spirit would accompany the article and make mischief in a neighbor's family. The stocking on each child's left foot was turned inside out to spoil the enchantment and many other ridiculous things were done. We have not learned what effect these prescriptions have had upon the little sufferers, but it seems horrible to think that innocent children are compelled to suffer because of the ignorance and superstition of their parents."

A man in Kennebec county, Me., cut off the roots on one side of a peach tree, last winter, and bending it over covered it up to protect it from the cold, which is too severe for peaches in Maine. Last spring he restored it to its old position and has raised a good crop from it.