

## THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER.

Some summers ago I spent several weeks at a pretty little watering place in one of the northern counties of Pennsylvania, about thirty-five miles by stage from old Fort le Beouf. The village during the period of my stay was filled with visitors of all classes and descriptions. Numbers of real or imaginary invalids from among the wealthier classes of society were spending there their usual term of summer residence, while many of a humbler rank were seeking relief from true illness by use of the medicinal springs in the neighborhood. Amongst all these various residents, for the time being, perfect equality reigned; and, indeed, this was in a measure inevitable, seeing that there was no alternative between absolute solitude and the adoption of such companions as *chance* was pleased to bring in the way.

For my part, I enjoyed this fortuitous associateship very much for the three or four weeks of my residence in the village. A great part of this enjoyment was owing to one individual, the only person of my chance co-lodgers who had anything remarkable about him; and only in that he was not an "ordinary" personage lay the distinction, for the rest were idle, gentlemanly fellows of an ordinary nature. The first remarkable thing about this individual was that no one knew his name, or who or what he was, though *he* knew everybody and all about everybody.

He was generally called "Mr. P.," or "the gentleman with the whiskers," his visage being decorated with an ample pair of those appendages commonly called "Cincinnatis." The hotel porter it was, I believe, who gave us this initial glimpse at his name, having observed the letters "J. P." on his traveling bag.

Genteel in his person, courteous even to excess in his manners; and scrupulously neat in his attire, "Mr. P." had that personal magnetism which gives to a certain man of men the bearing of a distinguished person.

Of the every-day small talk of society this individual was a first-rate master; he abounded in anecdotes of the most pleasing conversational kind, his stories generally relating to living persons of note and rank in the world; and, what was best of all, he almost always gave them exactly as they had fallen from the lips of the parties concerned in his presence. Everything that came from his mouth bore the stamp of freshness and novelty. You