An Adventure in London.

AN HONEST traveler is bound to relate all that befalls him, illustrative of the manners and morals of the people among whom he sojourns, even though he himself does not appear to the best advantage in the narrative; my conscience will not permit me to withhold from my reader the following bit of adventure, though the simplicity of John Bull, about which I have had something to say, may not be made so apparent by it as the credulity of Jonathan.

It was an attempt on the part of two sharpers to play upon me an old London confidence game which gave me my only chance to see John Bull as a rogue. In this character he proved no bungler, but a most consummate actor. Indeed, the circumstance proved to me more clearly than almost anything else, how much we have got to learn of this people, and how "mellow" and considerate John can be even in the character of a London highwayman.

For some reason or other, the confidence-men have always taken a shine to me. About the first time I went to New York, Peter Funk sold me a watch though I saw what he had done in a few moments afterward, and went into the next place where watches were being slaughtered, and advised the innocent bidders standing about (?) not to purchase, as things were not what they seemed, and privately showed some of them my own time-keeper. And in very recent years, during a half-hour's walk on Broadway, I have had at least three long-forgotten acquaintances rush up to me with extended hand and hearty exclamations of surprise and delight. But on these occasions I have always been able to command Bret Harte's famous smile, which I have found as effective as a policeman's badge.

The London confidence-man found me one night at a public place of amusement, and of course, knew me at a glance. He was a German (my visor always goes up when I see a German,) and was a curious spectator of things in and about London, like myself, and expected soon to visit America. I hardly knew how we got acquainted. I think some accident in the crowd, as we stood near each other in the area, caused us to exchange glances and then remarks. He evidently "took" me at once. Travelers are quick to know travelers, and always find themselves in sympathy; they are in one boat, while the stay-at-home world is in another. We were soon exchanging notes about London and other matters, and after the performance was over, walked out of the theatre together. We were a good deal jostled by the crowd, but an empty pocket is never afraid of being picked, and the frail creature who did her share of the jostling, and who declared we looked enough alike to be brothers, played her part well but to little purpose. We did not separate till we had exchanged cards, and my delightful German had made some inquiries about my hotel; he was not suited where he was, and was on the lookout for a chance to improve his quarters, and as he had an especial liking for Americans,—"they were so much more like Germans than the English were"—and had so many questions to ask about that country, he should be delighted to stop beneath the same roof with me, if the locality suited him, etc., etc.

Accordingly, next day, at 12 M., he called around. We had lunch together and much interesting conversaton. He proved extremely well-informed about England and the English, and was extremely entertaining. He had much to say about a London friend of his, a banker, who had lived in America, and whom I ought to know. After an hour spent in this way, he proposed a walk, and said, if I wished it, he would present me to his friend.

To this, after some hesitation, I assented, and we set out for King's Cross, a part of the town I had not yet visited. After walking about half an hour, during which time my companion beguiled the way with a very lively account of a steeple-chase he had recently taken part in through his friend the banker, at his suggestion we stopped at one of the numerous ale-houses for some refreshment. It was not a very inviting looking place and I felt disposed to take our ale standing at the bar, American fashion, and pass on; but my German was not going to be so coolly matter-of-fact as that, and led the way to the coffee-room, which, however, we found locked; but one of the bar maids handed him the key, and we went in. It was a dingy, unused-looking room, with leather-cushioned benches around the sides, and tables in front of them. It struck me that there was some incongruity in our being in such a place. It seemed better adapted to some secret nocturnal revel. The two windows were high, shutting out all view of the street, and admitting but a scanty light. I sat down on a chair near the door, feeling a little constrained; but my companion passed over to the further corner of the room, and sat down with such a hearty, masterly air, that I followed him, and had soon aimed a blow at my lamentable reserve in a bumper of ale. While I was engaged in looking over some admirable Berlin photographs which my friend handed me, he made an excuse to go out. Not long thereafter there entered the room a man who drew my attention by his bewildered, excited manner. He took off his hat, mopped his brow with his handkerchief, and rushing around the room, gave each of the three bell-handles a violent jerk.

"The worst part of the town I've been in yet," said he, seating himself on my side of the room. "Can't even get a little Scotch whiskey 'ere. I went into a place just below 'ere and, because I very naturally mistook the landlord for the waiter, I was insulted. 'Ow should I know?" said the unsophisticated Englishman. "I saw a man standing there with a hapron on, and says I, 'Waiter, bring me some Scotch whiskey and 'ot water,' and he swelled up and said, 'I'm not the waiter; I'll 'ave you to know I'm not the waiter; I'm the landlord.'"

"'All the same,' said I. 'I thought you was, and I want some whiskey.'

"'But you can 'ave no whiskey 'ere; I'll not be called a waiter in my own 'ouse.' So I told him to go to the devil and left the room;" and the ingenuous creature appealed to me if it was not a shame and an outrage, and I replied that it most assuredly was.

"I wonder if they know 'ow to treat strangers any better 'ere," he said, looking about the room.

Just then a waiter appeared, and the beloved "Scotch" was soon before him.

He was a fine specimen of a young Englishman, with a round, fresh face, bright eyes, full, rosy lips, a beard that had wanted the razor for three or four days, and withal, an expression singularly boyish and ingenuous. He was well-dressed in gray cheviot clothes, and wore the inevitable stove-pipe hat.

"It's the first time I've been up to London, and I 'ope it's the last," he continued. "I've seen enough of it."

Just here the German re-appeared, and was presently as interested as I was in the new arrival upon the scene, whom the Scotch whiskey was making more and more garrulous and confidential.

With the utmost naivete he went on to complain how queerly he had been treated in London.

"I did not get through my business till day before yesterday, when I thought before I left town, and as my case in court had come out so well that I could go out and 'ave a little jollification. Mr. So-and-so, our lawyer, made me give him the most of my money before I went out; but I kept back a few bank notes that he didn't know I 'ad. As I was walking on the Strand a lady came rushing up to me and said:

"'Ow hare you, Mr. Jones?'

"'Pretty near it,' said I. 'My name is not Jones, but it's Johnson. All the same; no harm done, Miss,' and was going on, when she said:

"'Is that the way you leave a lady?"

"Leave a lady?" said I, a deal surprised at her manner.

"'Yes,' said she, 'leave a lady; that is not the way Mr. Jones would do.'

"'Pray, how would Mr. Jones do?" said I.

"'Why, he would have taken me in and treated me to a bottle of wine.'

"'Oh; if that is all, you shall 'ave two bottles,' said I. 'Come on.'

"So we went into a place there, and blow me if she didn't drink nearly two bottles of wine. I was amazed; I never saw a lady drink so, and they charged me outrageously for the wine,—a guinea for the two bottles. Why, our wine at 'ome don't cost us half that.'

"Gentlemen," said the innocent creature, "you are strangers to me, but I trust you'll never mention what I have now told you; I wouldn't 'ave my sister Mary know it for a hundred pound."

"Here," said I to myself, "is a specimen of my unsophisticated Englishman of the very first water. He is as fresh as a new-blown rose, and never ought to let go the apron-string of his sister Mary."

My German said something about the danger of going about London with much money in one's pocket.

"I am not afraid," said the verdant, "and I always carry my money right here, too," taking out from the breast-pocket of his coat a loose package of Bank of England notes. "'Ow am I going to lose that with my coat buttoned so?"

But my friend assured him he might easily lose it; that he had better have left it with his lawyer or his banker; that he himself never carried but a few pounds about him, and no prudent traveler ever did, and, on appealing to me, I added my testimony to the same effect declaring that I seldom left my hotel with as much as a five-pound note in my pocket.

"But I 'ave enough more," said the complacent idiot, "if I lose this. You see, me and my sister have just come into a little property,—about £17,000,—that is what brought me up to London; it's an unpleasant subject, a family quarrel, but right is right, and what the law gives one, that he may call his own, mayn't he? Well the law case has just given me and me sister Mary me father's estate, which me elder brother George had held since me father's and mother's death. This is 'ow it 'appened. The old family nurse, when she came to die, let out that me brother George was born out of wedlock, and so was not the legal heir of the property. The old doctor was referred to, his dates were looked up and compared with the parish records, and the nurse's story was confirmed. So we went to law about it, and the case has just been decided in our favor in the Court of Queen's Bench. It makes bad blood, but I shall not treat me brother George as he has treated me and me sister Mary. After he has had time to cool off and think it over, I shall go to 'im and say, ''Ere, George, you are me brother, I cannot forget that,—'ere, take this sum and set yourself up in business.'"

We both applauded this good resolution, and urged him by all means to carry it into effect.

"But George did not do right with the property," he went on; "you see, part of it came from uncle William, and uncle William in his will provided that £500 of it should be disbursed among the poor, not the Hinglish poor only, but the poor of different nations. This brother George did not do. But this I shall do without delay, and to get this £500 well off my 'ands according to my huncle's will is now my chief concern. Hof course, I cannot go around looking up the poor—the needy cases—and must mostly depend upon others to do it for me. I shall spend £100 of it among the poor of my own town and neighborhood and shall 'ope to meet trustworthy gentlemen now and then, whom I can rely upon to distribute a portion of it among the poor of their countries. I gave £50 of it yesterday to a gentleman at my 'otel, from Glasgow, to spend among his poor."

"A stranger to you?" said I with reproof and astonishment in my look.

"Oh, yes; but then, he showed me that he had money of his own and did not need mine; that was all I required him to do."

The German and I exchanged glances as we finished our second ale, when the former said, speaking my own thought:

"Well, you'll have little trouble in finding people to take your money on such terms. I, myself, would very gladly be charitable at some one else's expense, and the late war has made many poor people in my country."

"Very well," said the confiding stranger, "show me that you have £100 of your own, and I will give you another hundred to disburse among your poor and take your receipt for it, requiring you only to insert an advertisement in 'The Times,' giving the names and dates, etc. All I want is to be able to show that my uncle's will has been complied with, and that I 'aven't spent money that didn't belong to me."

How the bait took! Whose benevolence would not have snapped at it? Is it in human nature in its travels to let such golden opportunities slip? And would it not instantly occur to one that if this fool and his money must part so soon, that it was the duty of an honest man to see to it that the money went into the proper channels?

"And I too," said I, not without a feeling of shame, as if I was about to be in some way a party to the robbery of this simpleton; "I, too, will bear your alms to some of the poor of my country, and see that they are judicially bestowed."

"What poor have you in your country?" said he.

"Plenty of them," said I,—"the freedmen, for instance, whom I see much of, and who are much in need of help."

"All right," said he. "Satisfy me that you have money of your own and do not need mine, and you shall have a hundred pounds."

"I carry no money with me," I replied, "and you will have to come around to my hotel."

"Neither have I a hundred pounds," said my companion," but I have some, I hardly know how much," and he proceeded to take out and unroll some Bank of England notes.

"Show him what you have," said he to me, significantly; "don't let him think you are penniless."

"Oh, I have a little change," I said "Not more than two guineas in all," and with embarrassment I produced it in my open palm.

"Put up your money, gentlemen," said the verdant. "I have no doubt you are both responsible men, and can easily satisfy me that you are fit persons to act as my agents in this matter."

"Come to my hotel," said the German, and I can show you five times the amount, or to my banker, whose place is near here."

"Yes," I joined in, "meet us this afternoon or this evening at my hotel and we will show you that we are all right."

"No, I must leave town to-night; me sister Mary will be expecting me."

"Then," suggested the German; "let's arrange it now. Where do you need to go," he inquired of me, "to get the money?"

"To my hotel and to my banker's both," I said.

"Where is your banker?"

"On Lombard street."

"Well, that will suit me, too, as I know a banker there, and can yet all the money I need."

The Englishman would pledge us in another glass before we started, though I barely tasted my ale, the two glasses I had already imbibed having had a very strange effect upon me.

"Here is a sovereign," he said, "to pay for the cab; this is to accommodate me, and I insist upon paying."

The German took the gold, called a cab, and we were off, being agreed that the Englishman should wait there till we returned.

"It is the most astonishing performance I ever heard of," said I. "Can it be possible that such a fool can be at large twenty-four hours in London without being robbed?"

"He runs a great risk," said my companion, "and we had better keep an eye on him till he starts for home, or else telegraph to Mary to come and look after him."

I found my banker, a man who had known me long and intimately in this country, in his private office, and I spread out my adventure before him in the most animated style. I felt it necessary to do this because I wanted to ask the loan of £50 for a few hours, but be- I had got to that point he said he could let me have the money if I did not happen to have it by me; it was by all means my duty to accept the offer the stranger had made, etc., etc. He called his partner, a native Londoner, and related the singular circumstance to him; he opened his eyes very wide, but said little. As I was leaving, my banker said:

"You don't suppose this is an attempt to rob you, do you?"

"Oh, no," said I, "that is out of the question."

When I regained the cab, my companion was not there; I supposed he had not returned from his banker's yet; but I presently saw him emerging from behind a near cab, whence it instantly occurred to me that he had been watching my movements. We got in and drove toward my hotel. Presently a feeling came over me precisely like a bucket of cold water, that here was a skillfully played game to rob me. But no, it, could not be; the thought was too ugly; I was not going to give up that hundred pounds so easily. But the feeling would come back in spite of me, and gradually the scales fell from my eyes. With what a rude shock I came down from the seventh heaven of delight, whither the drugged ale and the benevolent impulse had sent me, to the unpalatable reality! I suddenly noticed it was raining and that London was at its disagreeablest. I glanced at my companion, and quickly understood a peculiar look about the eyes he had had all that day—a sort of strained, furtive, half-excited look, such as one might have when playing a desperate game. I recalled, too, how he had approached from behind that cab, and remembered that I had seen his legs beneath it as I came out of the bank. I recalled, also, with what caution and skill the Englishman had played his part, and the many little touches, he had given it, such as only a real artist would think of. Well, said I to myself, this is my simple, pastoral Britisher, is it? But how well he works his business! What a master workman and how juicy and human!

My companion talked gayly, but evidently noticed a change in me. When we reached the hotel, he invited himself up to my room to see my quarters, etc. As I was moving about, under one pretense or another, I caught his eye in the glass intently watching me. Having taken the bank notes from my trunk, that I had come up for, we went down. I lingered in the hall long enough to tell the porter—a stout, soldierly looking fellow—that I wanted his services about an hour, and that I wished him to take a cab and follow us, and when we alighted to alight also and enter, but a few moments later. I was determined to see the play out, but I did not want to be alone in that room again with those two men.

As we rode along, my thoughts were busy. What should be done? I would give them a good hint, which I knew such artists would appreciate more than a kick; so, turning to my companion, I said:

"Do you know, I believe this is a plan to rob us?"

"It can't be, can it?" he replied, with an alarmed look.

"Yes," said I, "it is; that fellow has accomplices, and he means to get our money. Do you go armed?" I continued.

"No," said he, "do you?"

"Always; an American carries a pistol as much as he carries a jack-knife, and he isn't afraid to use it, either."

"So I have heard," said the German, looking wistfully out of the carriage.

"But *you* wouldn't shoot a man, would you?" he inquired.

"Let him try to rob me," said I, "and you will see whether I will or not."

Just then the cab stopped at our destination. As we got out, I saw another cab stop about half a square from us. My companion made an excuse to step across the street, and I passed into the hall. Our simpleton was still there, mellower than ever over his "'ot Scotch'" He asked where my friend was, and as he did not immediately appear, said he would step out and hurry him up. The porter had by this time entered the room, though the bar-maid had tried to stop him, and ordered some some ale. He glanced at me significantly as the Englishman went out, and I felt pretty sure the play was over. We sipped our ale and waited, but no one returned. I went out and looked, but could see nothing of either of them.

In about twenty minutes a large man opened the door, looked in as if he expected to find some one (I knew at a glance that it was the "banker" friend of the German, who had come to play his part,) and then hastily withdrew. We tarried some time longer, but it became apparent that my two confiding friends had unceremoniously deserted me, or had gone off and divided the poor fund between them.

CAUTION.—The subscriber hereby gives notice that his wife has left his bed and board without just provocation, and cautions the public not to trust her on his account as he will pay no debts of her contraction.
ADAM WITHEROW.
Penn township, May 1, 1877.