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Oct. 6, 1854. wtf

MISCELLANY.

Dickens' Christmas Story.

The Seven Poor Travellers.

[From Household Words.]

THE FIRST.

Strictly speaking, there were only six Poor Travellers—but, being a traveller myself, though an idle one, and being withal as poor as I hope to be, I brought the number up to seven. This word of explanation is due at once, for what says the inscription over the quaint old door?

Richard Watts, Esq.,
by his Will, dated 22 Aug. 1579,
founded this Charity
for Six poor Travellers,
who not being Rogues or Proctors
May receive gratis for one Night
Lodging, Entertainment,
and four-pence each.

It was in the ancient little city of Rochester, in Kent, of all the good days in the year upon a Christmas Eve, that I stood reading this inscription over the quaint old door in question. I had been wandering about the neighboring Cathedral, and had seen the tomb of Richard Watts, with the effigy of worthy Master Richard starting out of it like a ship's figure-head—and I had felt that I could do no less, as I gave the Verger his fee, than inquire the way to Watt's Charity. The way being short and very plain, I had come prosperously to the inscription and the quaint old door.

'Now,' said I to myself, as I looked at the knocker, 'I know I am not a Proctor; I wonder whether I am a Rogue?'

Upon the whole, though Conscience reproduced two or three pretty faces which might have had smaller attraction for a moral Goliath than they had had for me, who am but a Tom Thumb in that way, I came to the conclusion that I was not a rogue. So, beginning to regard the establishment as in some sort my property, bequeathed to me and divers co-legatees, share and share alike, by the Worshipful Master Richard Watts, I stepped backward into the road to survey my inheritance.

I found it to be a clean white house, of a staid and venerable air, with the quaint old door already three times mentioned, (an arched door,) choice little long low lattice windows, and a roof of three gables. The silent High street of Rochester is full of gables, with old beams and timbers carved into strange faces. It is oddly garnished with a queer old clock that projects over the pavement out of a grave red brick building, as if Time carried on business there, and hung out his sign. Sooth to say, he did an active stroke of work in Rochester, in the old days of the Romans, and the Saxons, and the Normans, and down to the times of King John, when the rugged castle—I will not undertake to say how many hundred years old then—was abandoned to the centuries of weather which have so defaced the dark apertures in its walls, that the ruin looks as if the rooks and daws had picked its eyes out.

I was very well pleased both with my property and its situation. While I was yet surveying it with a growing content, I espied at one of the upper lattices which stood open a decent body, of a wholesome matronly appearance, whose eyes I caught inquiringly addressed to mine. They said so plainly, 'Do you wish to see the house?' that I answered aloud, 'Yes, if you please.' And in a minute the old door opened, and I bent my head, and went down two steps into the entry.

'This,' said the matronly presence, ushering me into a low room on the right, 'is where the travellers sit by the fire and cook what bits of supper they buy with their four pences.'

'Oh! Then they have no Entertainment?' said I. For the inscription over the outer door was still running in my head, and I was mentally repeating in a kind of tune, 'Lodging, entertainment and fourpence each.'

'They have a fire provided for 'em,' returned the matron—a mighty civil person, not, as I could make out, overpaid; "and these cooking utensils. And this what is painted on a board, is the rules for their behavior.—They have their fourpences when they get their tickets from the steward over the way—for I don't admit 'em myself, they must get their tickets first—and sometimes one buys a rasher of bacon, and another a herring, and another a pound of potatoes, or what not.—Sometimes, two, or three of 'em will club their fourpences together, and make a supper that way. But, not much of anything is to be got for fourpence, at present, when provision is so dear.'

'True, indeed,' I remarked. I had been looking about the room, admiring its snug fire-side at the upper end, its glimpse of the street through the low mullioned window, and its beams overhead. 'It is very comfortable,' said I.

'Ill conwenient,' observed the matronly presence.

I liked to hear her say so: for it showed a commendable anxiety to execute in no niggard spirit the intentions of Master Richard Watts. But the room was really so well adapted to its purpose that I protested, quite enthusiastically, against her disparagement.

'Nay, ma'am,' said I, 'I am sure it is warm in winter and cool in summer. It has a look of homely welcome and soothing rest. It has a remarkably cosey fireside, the very blink of which, gleaming out into the street upon a winter night, is enough to warm all Rochester's heart. And as to the convenience of the six Poor Travellers——'

'I don't mean them,' returned the presence. 'I speak of its being an ill-conwenience to myself and my daughter, having no other room to sit in of a night.'

This was true enough, but there was another quaint room of corresponding dimensions on the opposite side of the entry; so, I stepped across to it, through the open doors of both rooms, and asked what this chamber was for?

'This,' returned the presence, 'is the Board Room. Where the gentlemen meet when they come here.'

Let me see. I had counted from the street six upper-windows besides these on the ground story. Making a perplexed calculation in my mind, I rejoined, 'Then the six Poor Travellers sleep up-stairs.'

My new friend shook her head. 'They sleep,' she answered, 'in two little outer galleries at the back, where their beds has always been, ever since the Charity was founded. It being so very ill-conwenient to me as things is at present, the gentlemen are going to take off a bit of the back yard and make a slip of a room for 'em there, to sit in before they go to bed.'

'And the six Poor Travellers,' said I, 'will be entirely out of the house?'

'Entirely out of the house,' assented the presence, comfortably smoothing her hands. 'Which is considered much better for all parties, and much more conwenient.'

I had been a little startled, in the cathedral, by the emphasis with which the effigy of Master Richard Watts was bursting out of his tomb; but I began to think, now, that it might be expected to come across the High Street some stormy night, and make a disturbance here.

Howbeit, I kept my thoughts to myself, and accompanied the presence to the little galleries at the back. I found them, on a tiny scale, like the galleries in old inn yards; and they were very clean. While I was looking at them, the matron gave me to understand that the prescribed number of Poor Travellers were forthcoming every night from year's end to year's end; and that the beds were always occupied. My questions upon this, and her replies, brought us back to the Board Room so essential to the dignity of 'the gentlemen' where she showed me the printed accounts of the Charity hanging up by the window.—From them I gathered that the greater part of the property bequeathed by the Worshipful Master Richard Watts for the maintenance of this foundation, was, at the period of his death, mere marsh-land; but that, in course of time, it had been reclaimed and built upon, and was very considerably increased in value. I found, too, that about a thirtieth part of the annual revenue was now expended on the purposes commemorated in the inscription over the door, the rest being handsomely laid out in Chancery, law expenses, collectorship, receivership, poundage, and other appendages of management, highly complimentary to the importance of the six Poor Travellers. In short, I made the not entirely new discovery that it may be said of an establishment like this, in dear Old England, as of the fat oyster in the American story, that it takes a good many men to swallow it whole.

'And pray, ma'am,' said I, sensible that the blankness of my face began to brighten as a thought occurred to me, 'could one see these Travellers?'

Well! she returned dubiously; no! 'Not to-night, for instance?' said I. Well! she returned more positively; no. Nobody ever asked to see them, and nobody ever did see them.

As I am not easily baulked in a design when I am set upon it, I urged to the good lady that this was Christmas Eve; and that Christmas comes but once a year—which is unhappily too true, for when it begins to stay with us the whole year round, we shall make this earth a very different place; that I was possessed by the desire to treat the Travellers to a supper and a temperate glass of hot Wassail; that the voice of Fame had been heard in the land, declaring my ability to make hot Wassail; that if I were permitted to hold the feast, I should be found conformable to reason, sobriety, and good hours; in a word, that I could be merry and wise myself, and had been even known at a pinch to keep others so, although I was decorated with no badge or medal, and was not a Brother, Orator, Apostle, Saint, or Prophet of any denomination whatever. In the end I prevailed, to my great joy. It was settled that at nine o'clock that night, a Turkey and a piece of Roast Beef should smoke upon the board;—and that I, faint and unworthy minister for once of Master Richard Watts, should preside as the Christmas-supper host of the six Poor Travellers.

I went back to my inn, to give the necessary directions for the Turkey and Roast Beef, and, during the remainder of the day, could settle to nothing for thinking of the Poor Travellers. When the wind blew hard against the windows—it was a cold day, with dark gusts of sleet alternating with periods of wild brightness, as if the year were dying fitfully—I pictured them advancing towards their resting-place along various cold roads, and felt delighted to think how little they foresaw the supper that awaited them. I painted their portraits in my mind, and indulged in little heigthening touches. I made them footsore; I made them weary; I made them carry packs and bundles; I made them stop by finger-posts and milestones, leaning on their bent sticks, and looking wistfully at what was written there; I made them lose their way, and filled their five wits with apprehensions of lying out all night, and being frozen to death. I took up my hat and went out, climbed to the top of the Old Castle, and looked over the windy hills that slope down to the Medway; almost believing that I could descry some of my Travellers in the distance. After it fell dark, and the Cathedral bell was heard in the invisible steeple—quite a bower of frosty rime when I had last seen it—striking five, six, seven; I became so full of my Travellers that I could eat no dinner, and felt constrained to watch them still, in the red coals of my fire. They were all arrived by this time, I thought, had got their tickets, and were gone in. There, my pleasure was dashed by the reflection that probably some Travellers had come too late and were shut out.

After the Cathedral bell had struck eight, I could smell a delicious savour of Turkey and Roast Beef rising to the window of my adjoining bed-room, which looked down into the inn-yard, just where the lights of the kitchen reddened a massive fragment of the Castle Wall. It was high time to make the Wassail now; therefore I laid up the materials (which, together with their proportions and combinations I must decline to impart as the only secret of my own I was ever known to keep.) and made a glorious jorum. Not in a bowl—for a bowl, anywhere but on a shelf, is a low superstition fraught with cooling and slopping—but, in a brown earthenware pitcher, tenderly suffocated when full, with a coarse cloth. It being now upon the stroke of nine, I set out for Watts's Charity, carrying my brown beauty in my arms. I would trust Ben the waiter, with untold gold—but, there are strings in the human heart which must never be sounded by another; and drinks that I make myself are those strings in mine.

The Travellers were all assembled; the cloth was laid, and Ben had brought a great billet of wood, and laid it artfully on the top of the fire, so that a touch or two of the poker after supper should make a roaring blaze.—Having deposited my brown beauty in a red nook of the hearth inside the fender, where she soon began to sing like an ethereal cricket, diffusing at the same time odors as of ripe vineyards, spice forests and orange groves—I say, having stationed my beauty in a place of security and improvement, I introduced myself to my guests by shaking hands all around, and giving them a hearty welcome.

I found the party to be thus composed.—Firstly, myself. Secondly, a very decent man indeed, with his right arm in a sling, who had a certain clean, agreeable smell of wood about him, from which I judged him to have something to do with ship building. Thirdly, a little sailor boy, a mere child, with a profusion of rich, dark brown hair, and deep womanly looking eyes. Fourthly, a shabby genteel personage in a threadbare black suit, and apparently in very bad cirumstances, with a dry, suspicious look; the absent buttons on his waistcoat eked out with red tape; and a bundle of extraordinarily tattered papers sticking out of an inner breast pocket. Fifthly, a foreigner by birth, but an Englishman in speech, who carried his pipe in the band of his hat, and lost no time in telling me, in an easy, simple, engaging way, that he was a watchmaker from Geneva, and travelled all about the continent, mostly on foot, working as a journeyman, and seeing new countries—possialy (I thought) also smuggling a watch or so, now and then. Sixthly, a little widow, who had been very pretty, and was still very young, but whose beauty had been wrecked in some great misfortune, and whose manner was remarkably timid, scared and solitary. Seventhly, and lastly, a Traveller of a kind familiar to my boyhood, but now almost obsolete—a Book Pedlar—who had a quantity of Pamphlets and Numbers with him, and who presently boasted that he could repeat more verses in an evening than he could sell in a twelvemonth.

All these I have mentioned, in the order in which they sat at table, I presided, and the matronly presence faced me. We were not long in taking our places, for the supper had arrived with me, in the following procession:

Myself with the pitcher.
Ben with Beer.
Inattentive Boy with hot plates. | Inattentive Boy with hot plates.
THE TURKEY,
Female carrying sauces to be heated on the spot.
THE BEEF,
Man with Tray on his head, containing Vegetables and sundries.
Volunteer hostler from Hotel, grinning, and rendering no assistance.

As we passed along the High-street, Comet like, we left a long tail of fragrance behind us which caused the public to stop, sniffling in wonder. We had previously left at the corner of the inn-yard, a wall-eyed young man connected with the Fly department, and well accustomed to the sound of a railway whistle, which Ben always carries in his pocket; whose instructions were, so soon as he should hear the whistle blown, to dash into the kitchen, seize the hot plum pudding and mince pies, and speed with them to Watts's Charity; where they would be received (he was further instructed) by the sauce-female, who would be provided with brandy in a blue state of combustion.

All these arrangements were executed in most exact and punctual manner. I never saw a finer turkey, finer beef, or greater prodigality of sauce and gravy; and my Travellers did wonderful justice to every thing set before them. It made my heart rejoice, to observe how their wind-and-frost hardened faces, softened in the clatter of plates and knives and forks, and mellowed in the fire and supper heat. While their hats and caps, and wrappers, hanging up; a few small bundles on the ground in a corner; and, in another corner, three or four old walking sticks, worn down at the end to mere fringe; linked this snug interior with the bleak outside in a golden chain.

When supper was done, and my brown

beauty had been elevated on the table, there was a general requisition to me, to 'take the corner;' which suggested to me comfortably enough, how much my friends here made of a fire—for when had I ever thought so highly of the corner, since the days when I connected it with Jack Horner! However, as I declined, Ben, whose touch on all convivial instruments is perfect, drew the table apart, and instructing my Travellers to open right and left on either side of me, and form round the fire, closed up the centre with myself and my chair, and preserved the order we had kept at table. He had already, in a tranquil manner, boxed the ears of the inattentive boys until they had been by imperceptible degrees boxed out of the room; and he now rapidly skirmished the sauce female into the High street, disappeared, and softly closed the door.

This was the time for bringing the poker to bear on the billet of wood. I tapped it three times, like an enchanted talisman, and a brilliant host of merry-makers burst out of it, and sported off by the chimney—rushing up the middle in a fiery country dance, and never coming down again. Meanwhile, by their sparkling light which threw our lamp into the shade, I filled the glasses, and gave my Travellers, CHRISTMAS!—CHRISTMAS EVE, my friends, when the Shepherds, who were Poor Travellers too in their way, heard the Angels sing, 'On earth, peace—Good will towards men!'

I do not know who was the first among us to think that we ought to take hands as we sat, in deference to the toast, or whether any one of us anticipated the others, but at any rate we all did it. We then drank to the memory of the good Master Richard Watts. And I wish his Ghost may never have had worse usage under that roof, than it had from us!

It was the witching time for Story telling. 'Our whole life, Travellers,' said I, 'is a story more or less intelligible—generally less—but we shall read it by a clearer light when it is ended. I for one, am so divided this night between fact and fiction, that I scarce know which is which. Shall we beguile the time by telling stories, in our order as we sit here?'

They all answered, 'Yes, provided I would begin. I had little to tell them, but I was bound by my own proposal. Therefore, after looking for a while at the spiral column of smoke wreathing up from my brown beauty, through which I could almost have sworn I saw the effigy of Master Richard Watts less startled than usual, I fired away:—

In the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, a relative of mine came limping down, on foot, to this town of Chatham. I call it this town, because if any body present knows to a nicety where Rochester ends and Chatham begins, it is more than I do. He was a poor traveller, with not a farthing in his pocket. He sat by the fire in this very room, and he slept one night in a bed that will be occupied to-night by some one here.

My relative came down to Chatham, to enlist in a cavalry regiment, if a cavalry regiment would have him; if not, to take King George's shilling from any corporal or sergeant who would put a bunch of ribbons in his hat. His object was to get shot; but he thought he might as well ride to death as be at the trouble of walking.

My relative's Christian name was Richard, but he was better known as Dick. He dropped his own surname on the road down, and took up that of Doubledick. He was passed as Richard Doubledick; aged twenty-two; hight, five feet ten; native place, Exmouth; which he had never been near in his life.—There was no cavalry in Chatham when he limped over the bridge here with half a shoe to his dirty foot, so he enlisted into a regiment of the line, and was glad to get drunk and forget all about it.

You are to know that this relative of mine had gone wrong and run wild. His heart was in the right place, but it was sealed up. He had been betrothed to a good and beautiful girl whom he had loved better than she—or perhaps even he—believed; but, in an evil hour, he had gived her cause to say to him, solemnly, 'Richard, I never will marry any other man. I will live single for your sake, but Mary Marshall's lips'—her name was Mary Marshall—'never address another word to you on earth. Go, Richard! Heaven forgive you!' This finished him. This brought him down to Chatham. This made him Private Richard Doubledick, with a determination to be shot.

There was not a more dissipated and reckless soldier in Chatham barracks, in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, than Private Richard Doubledick. He associated with the dregs of every regiment. He was as seldom sober as he could be, and was constantly under punishment. It became clear to the whole barracks that Private Richard Doubledick would very soon be flogged.

Now, the Captain of Richard Doubledick's company was a young gentleman not above five years his senior, whose eyes had an expression in them which affected Private Richard Doubledick in a very remarkable way. They were bright, handsome, dark eyes—what are called laughing eyes generally, and, when serious, rather steady than severe—but, they were the only eyes now left in his narrow world that Private Richard Doubledick could not stand. Unabashed by evil report and punishment, defiant of everything else and everybody else, he had but to know that those eyes looked at him for a moment, and he felt ashamed. He could not so much as salute Captain Taunton in the street, like any other officer. He was reproached and confused, troubled by the mere possibility of the Captain's looking at him. In his worst moments he would rather turn back and go any distance out of his way, than encounter those two handsome, dark, bright eyes.

One day, when Private Richard Doubledick came out of the Black Hole, where he had been passing the last eight-and-forty hours, and in which retreat he spent a good deal of his time, he was ordered to betake himself to Captain Taunton's quarters. In the stale and squalid state of a man just out of the Black hole, he had less fancy than ever for being seen by the captain; but he was not so mad yet as to disobey orders, and consequently went up to the terrace overlooking the parade-ground, where the officers' quarters were; twisting and breaking in his hands as he went along a bit of the straw that had formed the decorative furniture of the Black hole.

'Come in!' cried the Captain, when he knocked with his knuckles at the door.—Private Richard Doubledick pulled off his cap, took a stride forward, and felt very conscious that he stood in the light of the dark bright eyes.

There was a silent pause. Private Richard Doubledick had put the straw in his mouth, and was gradually doubling it up in his windpipe and choking himself.

'Doubledick,' said the Captain. 'Do you know where you are going to?'

'To the devil, sir!' faltered Doubledick.

'Yes,' returned the Captain, 'and very fast.'

Private Richard Doubledick turned the straw of the Black hole in his mouth, and made a miserable salute of acquiescence.

'Doubledick,' said the Captain, 'since I entered his Majesty's service, a boy of seventeen I have been pained to see many men of promise going that road; but I have never been so pained to see a man determined to make the shameful journey, as I have been, ever since you joined the regiment, to see you.'

Private Richard Doubledick began to find a film stealing over the floor at which he looked; also to find the legs of the Captain's breakfast table turning crooked, as if he saw them through water.

'I am only a common soldier, sir,' said he. 'It signifies very little what such a poor brute comes to.'

'You are a man,' returned the Captain with grave indignation, 'of education and superior advantages; and if you say that, meaning what you say, you have sunk lower than I had believed. How low that must be, I leave you to consider; knowing what I know of your disgrace, and seeing what I see.'

'I hope to get shot soon, sir,' said Private Richard Doubledick; 'and then the regiment, and the world together, will be rid of me.'

The legs of the table were becoming very crooked. Doubledick, looking up to steady his vision, met the eyes that had so strong an influence over him. He put his hand before his own eyes, and the breast of his disgrace-jacket swelled as if it would fly asunder.

'I would rather,' said the young Captain, 'see this in you, Doubledick, than I would see five thousand guineas counted out upon this table for a gift to my good mother. Have you a mother?'

'I am thankful to say she is dead, sir.'

'If your praises,' returned the Captain, 'were sounded from mouth to mouth through the whole regiment, through the whole army, through the whole country, you would wish she had lived, to say with pride and joy, 'He is my son!''

'Spare me, sir!' said Doubledick. 'She would never have heard any good of me. She would never have had any pride and joy in owning herself my mother. Love and compassion she might have had, and would have always had, I know; but not—Spare me, sir! I am a broken wretch, quite at your mercy!' And he turned his face to the wall, and stretched out his imploring hand.

'My friend ——' began the captain!

'God bless you, sir!' sobbed Private Richard Doubledick.

'You are at the crisis of your fate. Hold your course unchanged, a little longer, and you know what must happen. I know even better than you can imagine, that after that has happened, you are lost. No man who could shed those tears, could bear these marks.'

'I fully believe it, sir,' in a low, shivering, voice, said Private Richard Doubledick.

'But a man in any station can do his duty' said the young captain, 'and doing it, can earn his own respect, even if his case should be so very unfortunate and so very rare, that he can earn no other man's. A common soldier, poor brute though you called him just now, has this advantage in the stormy times we live in, that he always does his duty before a host of sympathising witnesses. Do you doubt that he may so do it as to be extolled through a whole regiment, through a whole army, through a whole country! Turn while you may yet retrieve the past, and try.'

'I will! I ask for only one witness sir!' cried Richard, with a bursting heart.

'I understand you. I will be a watchful and a faithful one.'

I have heard from Private Richard Doublestick's own lips, that he dropped down upon his knee, kissed that officer's hand, arose and went out of the light of the dark bright eyes, an altered man.

In that year, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine, the French were in Egypt, in Italy, in Germany, where not! Napoleon Bonaparte had likewise began to stir against us in India, and most men could read the signs of the great troubles that were coming on. In the very next year, when we formed an alliance with Austria against him, Capt. Taunton's regiment was on service in India.—And there was not a finer non-commissioned officer in it—no, nor in the whole line—than Corporal Richard Doubledick.

In eighteen hundred and one, the Indian army were on the coast of Egypt. Next year was the year of the proclamation of the short peace, and they were recalled. It had then become well known to thousands of men, that wherever Captain Taunton with the dark bright eyes, led, there, close to him, ever at his side, firm as a rock, true as the sun, and brave as Mars, would be certain to be found, while life beats in their hearts, that famous soldier, Sergeant Richard Doubledick.

Eighteen hundred and five, besides being the great year of Trafalgar, was a year of hard fighting in India. That year saw such wonders done by a Sergeant-Major, who cut his way single-handed through a solid mass of men, recovered [illegible] regiment which had been seized from the hand of a poor boy shot through the heart, and rescued his wounded captain, who was down, and in a very jungle of horses' hoofs and sabres—saw such wonders done, I say, by this brave Sergeant-Major, that he was specially made the bearer of the colors he had won—and Ensign Richard Doubledick had risen from the ranks.

Sorely cut up in every battle, but always reinforced by the bravest of men—for the fame of following the old colors shot through and through, which Ensign Richard Doubledick had saved, inspired all breasts—this regiment fought its way through the Peninsular War, up to the investment of Badajos in eighteen hundred and twelve. Again and again it had cheered through the British ranks until the tears had sprung into men's eyes at the mere hearing of the mighty British force so exultant in their valor—and there was not a drummer-boy but knew the legend, that wherever the two friends, Major Taunton, with the dark bright eyes, and Ensign Richard Doubledick, who was devoted to him, were seen to go, there the boldest spirits in the English army became wild to follow.

One day, at Badajos—not in the great storming, but in repelling a hot sally of the besieged upon our men at work in the trenches, who having given way, the two officers found themselves hurrying forward—face to face, aganist a party of French infantry who made a stand. There was an officer at their head, encouraging his men—a courageous, handsome, gallant officer of five and thirty—whom Doubledick saw hurriedly, almost momentarily, but saw well. He particularly noticed this officer waving his sword, and rallying his men with an eager and excited cry, when they fired in obedience to his gesture, and Major Taunton dropped.

It was over in ten minutes more, and Doubledick returned to the spot where he had laid the best friend man ever had, on a coat spread upon the wet clay. Major Taunton's uniform was opened at the breast, and on his shirt were three little spots of blood.

'Dear Doubledick,' said he, 'I am dying.'

'For the love of Heaven, no!' exclaimed the other, kneeling down beside him, and passing his arm round his neck to raise his head. 'Taunton! My preserver, my guardian angel, my witness! Dearest, truest, kindest of human beings! Taunton! for God's sake!'

The bright, dark eyes—so very, very dark now, the pale face—smiled upon him and the hand he had kissed thirteen years ago, laid itself fondly on his breast.

'Write to my mother. You will see Home again. Tell her how we became friends. It will comfort her, as it comforts me.'

He spoke no more, but faintly signed for a moment towards his hair as it fluttered in the wind. The Ensign understood him. He smiled again when he saw that, and gently turning his face over on the supporting arm as if for rest, died, with his hand upon the breast in which he had revived a soul.

No dry eye looked on Ensign Doubledick, that melancholy day. He buried his friend on the field, and became a lone, bereaved man. Beyond his duty he appeared to have but two remaining cares in life—one, to preserve the little packet of hair he was to give to Taunton's mother—the other, to encounter that French officer who had rallied the men under whose fire Taunton fell. A new legend now began to circulate among our troops—and it was, that when be and the French officer came face to face once more, there would be weeping in France.

The war went on—and through it went the exact picture of the French officer on the one side, and the bodily reality upon the other—until the Battle of Toulouse was fought. In the returns sent home appeared these words: 'severely wounded, but not dangerously, Lieutenant Richard Doubledick.'

At Midsummer time in the year eighteen hundred and fourteen, Lieutenant Richard Doubledick, now a browned soldier, seven and thirty years of age, came home to England, invalided. He brought the hair with him, near his heart. Many a French officer had he seen, since that day—many a dreadful night, in searching with men and lanterns for his wounded, had he relieved French officers lying disabled—but the mental picture and the reality had never come together.

Though he was weak and suffered pain, he lost not an hour, in getting down to Frome in Somersetshire, where Taunton's mother lived. In the sweet, compassionate words that naturally present themselves to the mind to-night, 'he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.'

It was a Sunday evening, and the lady sat at her quiet garden-window, reading the

Bible; reading to herself, in a trembling voice, that very passage in it, as I have heard him tell. He heard the words; 'Young man, I say unto thee, arise!'

He had to pass the window; and the bright dark eyes of his debased time seemed to look at him. Her heart told who he was; she came to the door, quickly, and fell upon his neck.

"He saved me from ruin, made me a human creature, won me from infamy and shame. O God, for ever bless him! As He will, He will!"

"He will!" the lady answered. "I know he is in heaven!" Then she piteously cried, "But, O, my darling boy, my darling boy!"

Never, from the hour when Private Richard Doubledick enlisted at Chatham, had the Private, Corporal, Sergeant-Major, Ensign or Lieutenant, breathed his right name, or the name of Mary Marshal, or a word of the story of his life, into any ear, except his reclaimer's. That previous scene in his existence was closed. He had firmly resolved that his expiation should be, to live unknown; to disturb no more the peace that had long grown over his old offences; to let it be revealed when he was dead, that he had striven and suffered and had never forgotten; and then, if they could forgive him and believe him—well, it would be time enough—time enough!

But, that night, remembering the words he had cherished for two years, 'Tell her how we became friends. It will comfort her as it comforts me,' he related everything. It gradually seemed to him, as if in his maturity he had recovered a mother; it gradually seemed to her, as if in her bereavement, she had found a son. During his stay in England, the quiet garden into which he had slowly and painfully crept, a stranger, became the boundary of his home; when he was able to rejoin his regiment in the spring, he left the garden, thinking, was this indeed the first time he had ever turned his face towards the old colors with a woman's blessing!

He followed them—so ragged, so scarred and pierced now, that they would scarcely hold together—to Quatre Bras, and Ligny.—He stood beside them, in an awful stillness of many men, shadowy through the mist and drizzle of a wet June forenoon, on the field of Waterloo. And down to that hour, the picture in his mind of the French officer had never been compared with the reality.

The famous regiment was in action early in the battle, and received its first check in many an eventful year, when he was seen to fall. But, it swept on to avenge him, and left behind it no such creature in the world of consciousness as Lieutenant Richard Doubledick.

Through pits of mire and pools of rain; along deep ditches, once roads, that were pounded to pieces by artillery, heavy wagons, tramp of men and horses, and the struggle of every wheeled thing that could carry wounded soldiers; jolted among the dying and the dead, so disfigured by blood and mud as to be hardly recognisable for humanity; undisturbed by the moaning of men and the shrieking of horses, which, newly taken from the peaceful pursuits of life, could not endure the sights of the strugglers lying by the wayside, never to resume their toilsome journey; dead, as to any sentient life that was in it, and yet alive; the form that had been Lieutenant Richard Doubledick, with whose praises England rang, was conveyed to Brussels. There it was tenderly laid down in hospital, and there it lay, week after week, through the long bright summer days, until the harvest, spared by war, had ripened and was gathered in.

Over and over again, the sun rose and set upon the crowded city; over and over again the moonlight nights were quiet on the plains of Waterloo; and all that time was a blank to what had been Lieutenant Richard Doubledick. Rejoicing troops marched into Brussels, and marched out; brothers and fathers, sisters, mothers and wives, come thronging thither, drew their lots of joy or agony, and departed; so many times a day, the bells rang; so many times the shadows of the great buildings changed; so many lights sprang up at dusk; so many feet passed here and there upon the pavements; so many hours of sleep and cooler air of night succeeded; indifferent to all, a marble face lay on a bed, like the face of a recumbent statue on the tomb of Lieutenant Richard Doubledick.

Slowly laboring, at last, through a long, heavy dream of confused time and place, presenting faint glimpses of army surgeons whom he knew, and of faces that had been familiar to his youth—dearest and kindest among them Mary Marshall's, with a solicitude upon it more like reality than anything he could discern—Lieutenant Richard Doubledick came back to life. To the beautiful life of a fresh quiet room with a large window standing open; a balcony, beyond, in which were moving leaves and sweet-smelling flowers; beyond again the clear sky, with the sun full in his sight, pouring its golden radience on his bed.

It was so tranquil and so lovely, that he thought he had passed into another world.—And he said in a faint voice, 'Taunton, are you near me?'

A face bent over him. Not his; his mother's.

'I came to nurse you. We have nursed you many weeks. You were moved here long ago. Do you remember nothing?'

'Nothing.'

The lady kissed his cheek, and held his hand, soothing him.

Where is the regiment? What has happened? Let me call you mother. What has happened, mother?'

'A great victory, dear. The war is over, and the regiment was the bravest in the field.'

His eyes kindled, his lips trembled, he sobbed, and tears ran down his face. He was very weak, too weak to move his hand.

'Was it dark just now?' he asked presently?

'No.'

"It was only dark to me! Somethig passed away, like a black shadow. But as it went, and the sun—O the blessed sun, how beautiful it is!—touched my face, I thouhgt I saw a light white cloud pass out a the door. Was there nothing that went out?"

She shook her head, and, in a little while, he fell asleep; she still holding his hand, and soothing him.

From that time he recovered. Slowly, for he had been desperately wounded in the head, and had been shot in the body; but, making some little advance every day. When he had gained sufficient strength to converse as he lay in bed, he soon began to remark that Mrs. Taunton always brought him back to his own history. Then, he recalled his preserver's dying words, and thought, "it comforts her."

One day, he awoke out of a sleep, refreshed, and asked her to read to him. But the curtain of the bed, softening the light, which she always drew back when he awoke, that she might see him from her table at the bedside where she sat at work, was held undrawn; and a woman's voice spoke which was not hers.

'Can you bear to see strangers?' it said softly. "Will you like to see a stranger?"

'Stranger!' he repeated. The voice awoke old memories, before the days of Private Richard Doubledick.

'A stranger now, but not a stranger once,' it said, in tones that thrilled him. 'Richard, dear Richard, lost through so many years, my name——'

He cried out her name, 'Mary!' and she held him in her arms, and his head lay on her bosom.

'I am not breaking a rash vow, Richard. These are not Mary Marshall's lips that speak. I have another name.'

She was married.

'I have another name, Richard. Did you ever hear it?'

'Never!'

He looked into her face, so pensively beautiful, and wondered at the smile upon it through her tears.

'Think again, Richard. Are you sure you never heard my altered name?'

'Never!'

'Do not move your head to look at me, dear Richard. Let it lie here while I tell my story. I loved a generous, noble man—loved him with my whole heart; loved him for years and years; loved him faithfully, devotedly; loved him with no hope of return; loved him knowing nothing of his highest qualities—not even knowing that he wa alive. He was a brave soldier. He wa honored and beloved by thousands of thousands, when the mother of his dear friend found me, and showed me that he had never forgotten me. He was brought, dying, here into Brussels, I came to watch and tend him, as I would have joyfully gone, with such a purpose, to the dreariest ends of the earth. When he knew no one else, he knew me.—When he suffered most, he bore his sufferings barely murmuring, content to rest his head where yours rests now. When he lay at the point of death, he married me, that he might call me wife before he died. And the name, my dear love, that I took on that forgotten night——'

'I know it now!' he sobbed. 'The shadowy remembrance strengthens. It is come back. I thank Heaven my mind is quite restored! My Mary, kiss me—lull this weary head to rest, or I shall die of gratitude. His parting words are fulfilled. I see Home again!'

Well! They were happy. It was a long recovery, but they were happy through it all. The snow had melted on the ground, and the birds were singing in the leafless thickets of the early spring, when those three were first able to ride out together, and when people flocked about the open carriage to cheer and congratulate Captain Richard Doubledick.

But, even then, it became necessary for the Captain, instead of returning to England, to complete his recovery in the climate of southern France. They found a spot upon the Rhone, within a ride of the old town of Avignon and within view of its broken bridge, which was all they could desire; they lived there, together, six months; then returned to England. Mrs Taunton growing old after three years—though not so old as that her bright eyes were dimmed—and remembering that her strength had been benefitted by the change, resolved to go back for a year to those parts. So, she went with a faithful servant, who had often carried her son in his arms; and she was to be rejoined and escorted home, at the year's end, by Captain Richard Doubledick.

She wrote regularly to her children (as she called them now), and they to her. She went to the neighborhood of Aix—and there, in their own chateau near the farmer's house she grew into intimacy with a family belonging to that part of France. The intimacy began, in her often meeting among the vineyards a pretty child; a girl with a compassionate heart, who was never tired of listening to the solitary English lady's stories of her poor son, and the cruel wars. The family were as gentle as the child, and at length she came to know them so well, that she accepted their invitation to pass the last month of her residence abroad, under their roof. All this intelligence she wrote home, piecemeal as it came about, from time to time; and, at last, enclosed a polite note from the head of the chateau, soliciting, on the occasion of his approaching mission to that neighborhood, the honor of the company of cet homme si justement celebre, Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick.

Captain Doubledick; now a hardy handsome man in the full vigor of life, broader across the chest and shoulders than he had ever been before, despatched a courteous reply, and followed it in person. Travelling through all that extent of country after three years of Peace, he blessed the better days on which the world had fallen. The corn was golden, not drenched in unnatural red; was bound in sheaves for food, not trodden under foot by men in mortal fight. The smoke rose up from the peaceful hearths, not blazing ruins. The carts were laden with the fair fruits of the earth, not with wounds and death. To him who had so often seen the terrible reverse, these things were beautiful indeed, and they brought him in a softened spirit to the old chateau near Aix, upon a deep blue evening.

It was a large chateau of the genuine old ghostly kind, with round towers, and extinguishers and a high leaden roof, and more windows than Aladdin's Palace. The lattice blinds were all thrown open, after the heat of the day, and there were glimpses of rambling walls and corridors within. Then, there were immense outbuildings fallen into partial decay, masses of dark trees, terrace gardens, balustrades; tanks of water, too weak to play and too dirty to work; statues, weeds, and thickets of iron railing that seemed to have overgrown themselves like the shrubberies, and to have branched out in all manner of wild shapes. The entrance doors stood open, as doors often do in that country when the heat of the day is passed; and the Captain saw no bell or knocker, and walked in.

He walked into a lofty stone hall, refreshingly cool and gloomy after the glare of a southern day's travel. Extending along the four sides of this hall was a gallery, leading to suites of rooms; and it was lighted from the top. Still, no bell was to be seen.

'Faith,' said the Captain, halting, ashamed of the clanking of his boots, 'this is a ghostly beginning!'

He started back and felt his face turn white. In the gallery, looking down at him, stood the French officer; the officer whose picture he had carried in his mind so long and so far. Compared with the original, at last—in every lineament how like it was!

He moved, and disappeared, and Captain Richard Doublestick heard his steps coming quickly down into the hall. He entered through an archway. There was a bright, sudden look upon his face. Much such a look as it had worn in that fatal moment.

Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick! Enchanted to receive him! A thousand apologies! The servants were all out in the air. There was a little fete among them in the garden. In effect, it was the fete day of my daughter, the little cherished and protected of Madame Taunton.

He was so gracious and so frank, that Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick could not withhold his hand. 'It is the hand of a brave Englishman,' said the French officer, retaining it while he spoke. 'I could respect a brave Englishman, even as my foe; how much more as my friend! I, also, am a soldier.'

'He has not remembered me, as I have remembered him; he did not take such note of my face, that day, as I took of his,' thought Captain Richard Doubledick. 'How shall I tell him!'

The French officer conducted his guest into a garden, and presented him to his wife; an engaging and beautiful woman, sitting with Mrs. Taunton in a whimsical old-fashioned pavillion. His daughter, her fair young face beaming with joy, came running to embrace him; and there was a boy-baby to tumble down among the orange trees on the broad steps, in making for his father's legs. A multitude of children visitors were dancing to sprightly music; and all the servants and peasants about the chateau were dancing too. It was a scene of innocent happiness that might have been invented for the climax of the scenes of Peace which had soothed the Captain's journey.

He looked on, greatly troubled in his mind, until a resounding bell rang, and the French officer begged to show him his rooms. They went upstairs into the gallery from which the officer had looked down; and Monsieur le Capitaine Richard Doubledick was cordially welcomed to a grand outer chamber, and a smaller one within, all clocks and draperies, and hearths, and brazen dogs, and tiles, and cool devices, and elegance, and vastness.

'You were at Waterloo,' said the French officer.

'I was,' said Captain Richard Doubledick. 'And at Badajos.'

Left alone with the sound of his own stern voice in his ears, he sat down to consider, What shall I do, and how shall I tell him? At that time, unhappily, many deplorable duels had been fought between English and French officers, arising out of the recent war; and these duels, and how to avoid this officer's hospitality, were the uppermost thought in Captain Richard Doubledick's mind.

He was thinking and letting the time run out in which he should have dressed for dinner, when Mrs Taunton spoke to him outside the door, asking if he could give her the letter he had brought from Mary. 'His mother, above all,' the Captain thought. 'How shall I tell *her?*'

'You will form a friendship with your host I hope,' said Mrs. Taunton, whom he hurriedly admitted, 'that will last for life. He is so true hearted and generous, Richard, that you can hardly fail to esteem one another. If he had been spared," she kissed (not without tears,) the locket in which she wore his hair, 'he would have appreciated him with his own magnanimity, and would have been truly happy that the evil days were past which made such a man his enemy.'

She left the room; and the Captain walked, first to one window, whence he could see the dancing in the garden, thence to another window, whence he could see the smiling prospect and the peaceful vineyards.

'Spirit of my departed friend,' said he, 'is it through thee these better thoughts are rising in my mind? Is it thou who hast shown me, all the way I have been drawn to meet this man, the blessings of the altered time? Is it thou who hast sent thy stricken mother to me, to stay my angry hand? Is it from thee the whisper comes, that this man did his duty as thou didst—and as I did, through thy guidance, which has wholly saved me here on earth—and that he did no more!'

He sat down, with his head buried in his hands, and when he rose up, made the second strong resolution of his life: That neither to the French officer, nor to the mother of his departed friend, nor to any soul while either of the two was living, would he breathe what only he knew. And when he touched that French officer's glass with his own, that day at dinner, he secretly forgave him in the name of the Divine Forgiver of injuries.

Here I ended my story as the first Poor Traveller. But if I had told it now, I could have added that the time has since come when the son of Major Richard Doubledick, and the son of that French officer, friends as their fathers were before them, fought side by side in one cause; with their respective nations, like long-divided brothers whom the better times have brought together, fast united.

The English Army in the Crimea.

The following gloomy picture of the condition of things in the English Army before Sebastopol, from the leading article of the London *Times*, of Dec. 23.

"There is no disguising the matter. We are not speaking from our own correspondence only. We are not saying what we think alone. We say, on the evidence of every letter that has been received in this country, and we echo the opinion of almost every experienced soldier or well-informed gentleman when we say *that the noblest army England ever sent from these shores has been sacrificed to the present mismanagement.* Incompetency, lethargy, aristocratic hauteur, official indifference, favor, routine, perverseness and stupidity reign, revel, and riot in the camp before Sebastopol, in the harbor of Balaklava, in the hospitals of Scutari, and how much nearer home we do not venture to say. We say it with extreme reluctance—no one sees or hears any thing of the Commander-in-Chief. Officers who landed on the 14th of September, and have been incessantly engaged in all the operations of the seige, are not even acquainted with the face of their commander.

Had the eye of a General fallen on the confusion in the harbor of Balaklava, on the impassable state of the road from that place to the camp on the miserable condition of the camp, on the state of the trenches, on the unprotected state of the right flank before the Battle of Inkermann, and before that, on the circumstances under which the fatal charge of Balaklava took place, we can hardly suppose that so able a man as Lord Raglan undoubtedly is, would have prevented such errors and neglects. We only echo the feeling of every letter from the seat of war. In the officer and the private alike we find a quiet, resigned, unimpassioned conviction that the whole affair is bungled in the most hopeless and horrible manner. Every body perceives it in his state, in the state of his comrades, in the condition of the camp and in the progress of the siege. Young gentlemen, bred in every luxury, and with an ample store of every military comfort, were still at the last date wearing day and night nothing but the threadbare clothes and worn-out boots in which they landed on the 14th of September. They had no means of getting up the things left behind in the transports. What becomes of everything sent to Balaklava nobody knows, but, while they are rotting thousands are perishing for want of them.—Everybody can point out something that should be done, but there is nobody to order it to be done—*and fifty thousand men, or what now remains of them, are drifting with their eyes open, but hand-bound, spell-bound, toward destruction.* Do any of the letters, or any of the regimental officers returned from the war, give a different account? On the contrary, does it not come within everybody's knowledge, as it does in ours, that the letters handed about in private circles, and not printed, lest they should prejudice the writer in the eyes of his superiors, give a far more gloomy account than any letters that we have ventured to publish!

The burden is forced upon us, and we must speak out. Good nature is a pleasant thing in its way, but if England is ever to be ruined, it will be by unseasonable good nature, by unlimited condonance, connivance, indulgence, and all the softer forms of virtue.—England has not become what it is by good nature, nor is good nature the one sole element of our social and commercial system.—The period for good nature is over in the Crimea, and sterner qualities must now be invoked into action, unless we would throw away the last chance that remains for redeeming the character of this country, now in fearful jeopardy. Send out men who will save the army—not from the Russians, though they are formidable enough, but from despair, which is weighing down the spirits of every one, and an utter distrust in the arrangement of the expedition. *It will be of little use to send out reinforcements by thousands unless we take steps for their better management. As it is, they march to their graves, and begin to perish by scores from the hour they land. Misrule receives them on the beach, and wearies them, worries them, drenches them, shivers them, and so destroys them, till a few spectral figures are all that remain.* The soldiers of the Peninsula, when they saw the Duke of Wellington after an absence, used to exclaim that his face did them more good than the arrival of ten regiments. Such a head, or coadjutors equivalent to it, is what we want for the Crimea.

The citizens of Louisville have erected a monument to W. H. G. Butler, the teacher shot by Matt. Ward. It is an elegant piece of workmanship, built of Italian marble, and about ten feet in height. The inscriptions on its sides are as follows: "William H. G. Butler, born in Jefferson county, Indiana, October 31, 1825, died at Louisville, Ky., Nov. 2d, 1853." On the reverse—"A man without fear and without reproach; of gentle and retiring disposition, of clear and vigorous mind; an accomplished scholar; a devoted and successful teacher; a meek and humble Christian." On the north side—"He fell by the hand of violence, in the presence of his loving pupils—a martyr to his fidelity in the discharge of duty." On the south side—"This monument is erected by his pupils and a bereaved community, to show their appreciation of his worth, and to perpetuate their horror at his murder."

"You are a Brick."—A college professor had assembled his class at the commencement of the term, and was reading over the list of names to see that all were present. It chanced that one of the number was unknown to the professor, having just entered the class.

"What is your name, sir?" asked the professor, looking through his spectacles.

'*You are a Brick!*' was the startling reply.

'Sir,' said the professor, half started out of his chair at the supposed impertinence, but not quite sure that he had understood him correctly, 'Sir, I did not exactly understand your answer."

'You are a brick,' was again the composed reply.

'This is intolerable!' said the professor, his face reddening. 'Beware, young man, how you attempt to insult me.'

'Insult you!' said the student, in turn astonished. 'How have I done it?'

'Did you not say I was a brick?' returned the professor with stifled indignation.

'No sir, you asked my name, and I answered your question. My name is U. R. A. Brick, Uriah Reynolds Arnold Brick.'

Ah!" murmured the professor, sinking back into his seat in confusion, 'it was a misconception on my part. Will you commence the lesson, Mr.—ahem—Brick?—*Yankee Blade*