

drunk. In an extraordinarily short space of time, the mixed argument was being punctuated by blows. Someone hit Barking, and he struck out wildly. Then there was a row in which the quiet-looking gentleman took more than his fair share. The attendants were called in, and in less than a minute Barking and two more men, who had taken a prominent part, found themselves in the street.

"You hit me when my back was turned to you," exclaimed the more irate of the two strangers; and Barking, whose head was confused with drink, sat down on the pavement, and tried to collect the threads of the argument. "This man was the cause of the row," replied the other.

The spectacle of him sitting on the ground caused the men to forget their dispute in a peal of laughter. They hailed a passing hansom, into which they deposited the unlucky and now helpless Barking, and giving the driver a fictitious address to Philbeach Gardens, told him to take the drunken fare there. Then, delighted with their joke, they adjourned to the nearest bar to celebrate it and a newly-formed friendship.

Directly the hansom started, the passenger fell asleep. When he awoke he was being roughly shaken by the driver: "Now then, sir. Wake up."

Barking opened his eyes sleepily and remonstrated.

"This is No. 5, Philbeach Gardens," bawled the man.

His sleepy fare grunted incoherently and showed no inclination to alight.

After further attempts the angry Jehu rang the bell of No. 5 Philbeach Gardens.

The reception he met with there from a powdered footman was not calculated to improve any man's temper. His requests that the dunkey should "come out and look at the gent" were met by a proposal to call a policeman.

Then the cabby indulged in some very strong language. He went back to his charge and shook him, but the man was

in a drunken sleep and incapable of giving any information as to who he was or where he wanted to go. A policeman came up to inquire, and be tried to get the desired information.

"Now, wot am I to do?" demanded the infuriated man, who began to have fears for his hire.

"Let me see whether he has any letters about him," and the representative of the law felt in his pockets. "Ere's something," he remarked quietly. "Ah, ere we are again," he said, pulling out another letter. "You want to be at the other side of London. You have made a mistake about the address," he added, passing the envelope to the driver to read.

"Wot the—who the—" the cabby was beginning, when he was cut short by the officer.

"None o' that. You have made a mistake. Anyone could see he was not a gentleman as would be likely to live in the West End. You are a muggins. 'Pon my word!"

"Two gents in evenin' dress put 'im in. S'help me they did." The policeman smiled.

"Well, you had better go and 'ear wot they've got to say," said the officer, "but take this man 'ome first."

With a prolonged curse, the discomfited driver mounted his perch and drove off.

"Twenty years, an' 'niver bin 'ad like this afore," he said, sadly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

When Barking awoke next morning the sun was streaming full into his window, and his watch gave the hour of half-past nine. His first act, as quick as the thought, was to jump out of bed and feel in his pockets. The result of the search was to make him whistle as loudly as the parched state of his mouth would admit of. His head was aching, and as heavy as lead. His first explanation of the difference between what he expected to have, and what he found

in his pockets, was robbery. He opened his bedroom door and shouted loudly for his landlady.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded, scrambling back into bed.

"Yes," said that person, folding her arms, and facing him. "That is what I was coming to ask you. A nice character you are givin' my house. You was brought 'ere in a 'ansom, and I 'ad to get out o' my bed at half-past one this mornin'. An' that's not all. You was unable to walk upstairs, an' me an' the cabman 'ad to fetch you up."

The events of the preceding night began to take definite form and shape.

"Did some gentlemen come here with me?"

"Gentlemen, indeed!" sniffed the woman. "You was brought 'ome by a regular blackguard, who demanded half a sovereign for so doin'."

"Half a sovereign!" repeated the confused Barking.

"Yes, he said as 'ow he 'ad been drivin' you all over London. That you tried to pass yourself off as a regular toff, and wanted to get into a 'ouse where a great friend of the Prince of Wales lived."

Barking's heart began to thump violently. He wondered whether in his drunken state he had gone to his master's house. The question now was a graver one than the loss of the money.

"What house was it?" he asked.

"I dunno," but the man said it was almost a lock-up job."

Barking groaned aloud.

"You 'ad no 'at on. We searched for it all over, and the cabman used a whole box of matches lookin'—"

"Oh, bother the matches and the hat, too," burst out the angry youth.

"There was nothing for it but searching your pockets. I mean for the money of course; fortunately I found plenty, and paid him his charge, and there are two five-pound notes between the mattress and the bed. I put 'em there for safety."

Before she had finished the sentence,

Barking had his hands feeling beneath the bedding, and he pulled out his pocket book.

"That's all right so far as it goes," he said, somewhat mollified. "You haven't got his number?" he asked.

"The cabman's number? Gosh! Wot evens no, I did not think you would want to employ 'im again with his extravagant charges."

"I wanted to know where I was last night."

"Well, sir. I should advise you to keep sober. I am older than you are, and I don't want to preach."

"Then don't try to," put in Barking. "I don't like amateur preachers. Get me some tea. Have you any ready?"

"I can soon get some, but of course that is not part of our agreement. You only took the rooms."

"I can pay for it, I suppose, and that's all that concerns you," he snarled.

"Yes; I know that. I 'ope you came by those Bank of England notes 'ome, ly!"

"Go out of this room," shouted theasperated youth, "before I throw something at your head."

In a few minutes she was back again with some tea and a few pieces of toast. "I 'ope you have counted the money to see whether it was right."

"There's some of it missing, and I am going to see the police about it."


This was an experiment on his part. He watched her face to see whether she finished, but she met his gaze calmly.

"Them as is dishonest themselves always suspects others. I am poor, but I am honest. I was left a widder twelve years ago. I have knowed what it was to be 'ungry many a time, but I never took a penny that was not mine."

"That is your account of yourself," he said, as he gulped the fragrant tea. "I don't believe it."

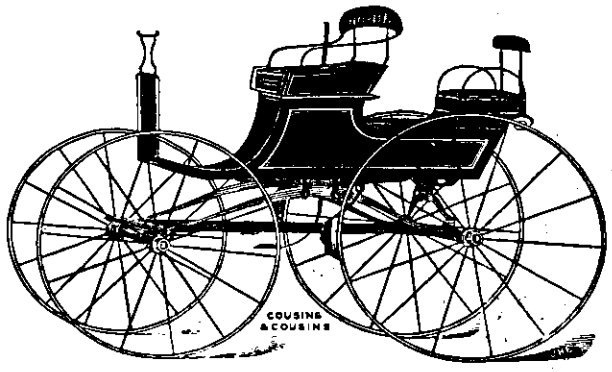
"That's true, as true a wot I says. I don't want you to believe it, and what's more, I don't want your patronage, and you can leave my lodgings as soon as you like. I always suspects men like you

FOR TABLE & KITCHEN.  
BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.

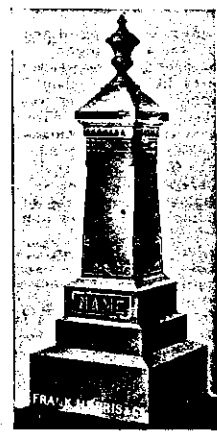


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