

THE DODGE CLUB; OR, ITALY IN MDCCCLIX.



THE SPANIARDS!

X.

ON THE WATER, WHERE BUTTONS SEES A LOST IDEA AND GIVES CHASE TO IT, TOGETHER WITH THE HEART-SICKENING RESULTS THEREOF.

ON the following morning Buttons and Dick went a little way out of town, and down the steep cliff toward the shore.

It was a classic spot. Here was no less a place than the cave of Polyphemus, where Homer, at least, may have stood, if Ulysses didn't. And here is the identical stone with which the giant was wont to block up the entrance to his cavern.

The sea rolled before. Away down to the right was Vesuvius, starting from which the eye took in the whole wide sweep of the shore, lined with white cities, with a back-ground of mountains, till the land terminated in bold promontories.

Opposite was the Isle of Capri.

Myriads of white sails flashed across the sea.

One of these arrested the attention of Buttons, and so absorbed him that he stared fixedly at it for half an hour without moving.

At length an exclamation burst from him:

"By Jove! It is! It is!"

"What is? What is?"

"The Spaniards!"

"Where?"

"In that boat."

"Ah!" said Dick, coolly, looking at the object pointed out by Buttons.

It was an English sail-boat, with a small cab-

in and an immense sail. In the stern were a gentleman and two ladies. Buttons was confident that they were the Spaniards.

"Well," said Dick, "what's the use of getting so excited about it?"

"Why, I'm going back to Naples by water!"

"Are you? Then I'll go too. Shall we leave the others?"

"Certainly not, if they want to come with us."

Upon inquiry they found that the others had a strong objection to going by sea. Mr. Figgs preferred the ease of the carriage. The Doctor thought the sea air injurious. The Senator had the honesty to confess that he was afraid of sea-sickness. They would not listen to persuasion, but were all resolutely bent on keeping to the carriage.

Buttons exhibited a feverish haste in searching after a boat. There was but little to choose from among a crowd of odd-looking fishing-boats that crowded the shore. However, they selected the cleanest from among them, and soon the boat, with her broad sail spread, was darting over the sea.

The boat of which they went in pursuit was far away over near the other shore, taking long tacks across the bay. Buttons headed his boat so as to meet the other on its return tack.

It was a magnificent scene. After exhausting every shore view of Naples, there is nothing like taking to the water. Every thing then appears in a new light. The far, winding cities that surround the shore, the white villages, the purple Apennines, the rocky isles, the frowning volcano.

This is what makes Naples supreme in beauty. The peculiar combinations of scenery that are found there make rivalry impossible. For if you find elsewhere an equally beautiful bay, you will not have so liquid an atmosphere; if you have a shore with equal beauty of outline, and equal grace in its long sweep of towering headland and retreating slope, you will not have so deep a purple on the distant hills. Above all, nowhere else on earth has Nature placed in the very centre of so divine a scene the contrasted terrors of the black volcano.

Watching a chase is exciting; but taking part in it is much more so. Buttons had made the most scientific arrangements. He had calculated that at a certain point on the opposite shore the other boat would turn on a new tack, and that if he steered his boat to a point about half-way over, he would meet them, without appearing to be in pursuit. He accordingly felt so elated at the idea that he burst forth into song.

The other boat at length had passed well over under the shadow of the land. It did not turn. Farther and farther over, and still it did not change its course. Buttons still kept the course which he had first chosen; but finding that he

was getting far out of the way of the other boat, he was forced to turn the head of his boat closer to the wind, and sail slowly, watching the others.

There was an island immediately ahead of the other boat. What was his dismay at seeing it gracefully pass beyond the outer edge of the island, turn behind it, and vanish. He struck the taffrail furiously with his clenched hand. However, there was no help for it; so, changing his course, he steered in a straight line after the other, to where it had disappeared.

Now that the boat was out of sight Dick did not feel himself called on to watch. So he went forward into the bow, and made himself a snug berth, where he laid down; and lighting his pipe, looked dreamily out through a cloud of smoke upon the charming scene. The tossing of the boat and the lazy flapping of the sails had a soothing influence. His nerves owned the lulling power. His eyelids grew heavy and gently descended.

The wind and waves and islands and sea and sky, all mingled together in a confused mass, came before his mind. He was sailing on clouds, and chasing Spanish ladies through the sky. The drifting currents of the air bore them resistlessly along in wide and never-ending curves upward in spiral movements toward the zenith; and then off in ever-increasing speed, with ever-widening gyrations, toward the sunset, where the clouds grew red, and lazaroni grinned from behind—

A sudden bang of the huge sail struck by the wind, a wild creaking of the boom, and a smart

dash of spray over the bows and into his face waked him from his slumber. He started up, half blinded, to look around. Buttons sat gazing over the waters with an expression of bitter vexation. They had passed the outer point of the island, and had caught a swift current, a chopping sea, and a brisk breeze. The other boat was nowhere to be seen. Buttons had already headed back again.

"I don't see the other boat," said Dick.

Buttons without a word pointed to the left. There she was. She had gone quietly around the island, and had taken the channel between it and the shore. All the time that she had been hidden she was steadily increasing the distance between them.

"There's no help for it," said Dick, "but to keep straight after them."

Buttons did not reply, but leaned back with a sweet expression of patience. The two boats kept on in this way for a long time; but the one in which our friends had embarked was no match at all for the one they were pursuing. At every new tack this fact became more painfully evident. The only hope for Buttons was to regain by his superior nautical skill what he might lose. Those in the other boat had but little skill in sailing. These at length became aware that they were followed, and regarded their pursuers with earnest attention. It did not seem to have any effect.

"They know we are after them at last!" said Dick.

"I wonder if they can recognize us?"

"If they do they have sharp eyes. I'll be



"A THOUSAND PARDONS!"

hanged if I can recognize them! I don't see how you can."

"Instinct, Dick—instinct!" said Buttons, with animation.

"What's that flashing in their boat?"

"That?" said Buttons. "It's a spy-glass. I didn't notice it before."

"I've seen it for the last half-hour."

"Then they must recognize us. How strange that they don't slacken a little! Perhaps we are not in full view. I will sit a little more out of the shade of the sail, so that they can recognize me."

Accordingly Buttons moved out to a more conspicuous place, and Dick allowed himself to be more visible. Again the flashing brass was seen in the boat, and they could plainly perceive that it was passed from one to the other, while each took a long survey.

"They must be able to see us if they have any kind of a glass at all."

"I should think so," said Buttons, dolefully.

"Are you sure they are the Spaniards?"

"Oh! quite."

"Then I must say they might be a little more civil, and not keep us racing after them forever!"

"Oh, I don't know; I suppose they wouldn't like to sail close up to us."

"They needn't sail up to us, but they might give us a chance to hail them."

"I don't think the man they have with them looks like Señor Francia."

"Francia? Is that his name? He certainly looks larger. He is larger."

"Look!"

As Buttons spoke the boat ahead fell rapidly to leeward. The wind had fallen, and a current which they had struck upon bore them away. In the effort to escape from the current the boat headed toward Buttons, and when the wind again arose she continued to sail toward them. As they came nearer Buttons's face exhibited a strange variety of expressions.

They met.

In the other boat sat two English ladies and a tall gentleman, who eyed the two young men fixedly, with a "stony British stare."

"A thousand pardons!" said Buttons, rising and bowing. "I mistook you for some acquaintances."

Whereupon the others smiled in a friendly way, bowed, and said something. A few commonplaces were interchanged, and the boats drifted away out of hearing.

XI.

THE SENATOR HAS SUCH A FANCY FOR SEEKING USEFUL INFORMATION!—CURIOUS POSITION OF A WISE, AND WELL-KNOWN, AND DESERVEDLY-POPULAR LEGISLATOR, AND UNIDENTIFIED MODE OF HIS ESCAPE.

It was not much after ten in the morning when Buttons and Dick returned. On reaching the hotel they found Mr. Figgs and the

Doctor, who asked them if they had seen the Senator. To which they replied by putting the same question to their questioners.

He had not been seen since they had all been together last. Where was he?

Of course there was no anxiety felt about him, but still they all wished to have him near at hand, as it was about time for them to leave the town. The vetturino was already grumbling, and it required a pretty strong remonstrance from Buttons to silence him.

They had nothing to do but to wait patiently. Mr. Figgs and the Doctor lounged about the sofas. Buttons and Dick strolled about the town. Hearing strains of music as they passed the cathedral they turned in there to listen to the service. Why there should be service, and full service too, they could not imagine.

"Can it be Sunday, Dick?" said Buttons, gravely.

"Who can tell?" exclaimed Dick, lost in wonder.

The cathedral was a small one, with nave and transept as usual, and in the Italian Gothic style. At the end of the nave stood the high altar, which was now illuminated with wax-candles, while priests officiated before it. At the right extremity of the transept was the organ-loft, a somewhat unusual position; while at the opposite end of the transept was a smaller door. The church was moderately filled. Probably there was as many people there as it ever had. They knelt on the floor with their faces toward the altar. Finding the nave somewhat crowded, Buttons and Dick went around to the door at the end of the transept, and entered there. A large space was empty as far as the junction with the nave. Into this the two young men entered, very reverently, and on coming near to the place where the other worshippers were they knelt down in the midst of them.

While looking before him, with his mind full of thoughts called up by the occasion, and while the grand music of one of Mozart's masses was filling his soul, Buttons suddenly felt his arm twitched. He turned. It was Dick.

Buttons was horrified. In the midst of this solemn scene the young man was convulsed with laughter. His features were working, his lips moving, as he tried to whisper something which his laughter prevented him from saying, and tears were in his eyes. At last he stuck his handkerchief in his mouth and bowed down very low, while his whole frame shook. Some of the worshippers near by looked scandalized, others shocked, others angry. Buttons felt vexed. At last Dick raised his face and rolled his eyes toward the organ-loft, and instantly bowed his head again. Buttons looked up mechanically, following the direction of Dick's glance. The next instant he too fell forward, tore his handkerchief out of his pocket, while his whole frame shook with the most painful convulsion of laughter.

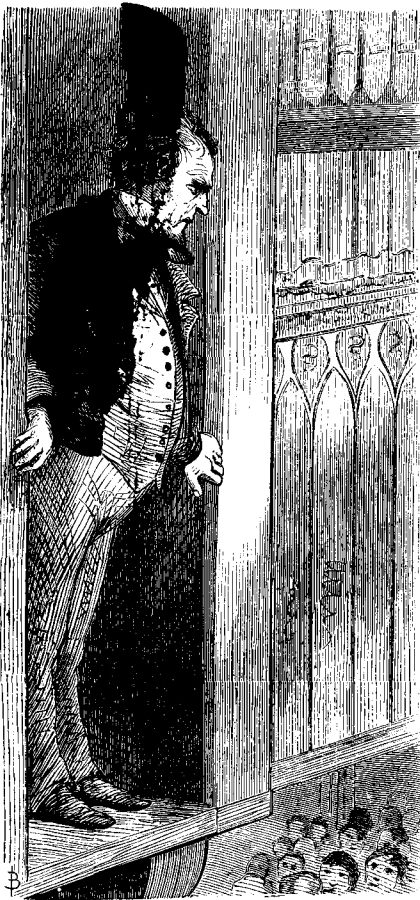
And how dreadful is such a convulsion in a solemn place! In a church, amidst worship-

ers; perhaps especially amidst worshipers of another creed, for then one is suspected of offering deliberate insult. So it was here. People near saw the two young men, and darted angry looks at them.

Now what was it that had so excited two young men, who were by no means inclined to offer insult to any one, especially in religious matters?

It was this: As they looked up to the organ-loft they saw a figure there.

The organ projected from the wall about six feet; on the left side was the handle worked by the man who blew it, and a space for the choir. On the right was a small narrow space not more than about three feet wide, and it was in this space that they saw the figure which produced such an effect on them.



THE SENATOR.

It was the Senator. He stood there erect, bareheaded of course, with confusion in his face and vexation and bewilderment. The sight of him was enough—the astonishing position of the man, in such a place at such a time. But the Senator was looking eagerly for help. And he had seen them enter, and all his soul

was in his eyes, and all his eyes were fixed on those two.

As Dick looked up startled and confounded at the sight the Senator projected his head as far forward as he dared, frowned, nodded, and then began working his lips violently as certain deaf and dumb people do, who converse by such movements, and can understand what words are said by the shape of the mouth in uttering them. But the effect was to make the Senator look like a man who was making grimaces for a wager, like those in Victor Hugo's "Nôtre Dame." As such the apparition was so overpowering that neither Buttons nor Dick dared to look up for some time. What made it worse, each was conscious that the other was laughing, so that self-control was all the more difficult. Worse still, each knew that this figure in the organ-loft was watching them with his hungry glance, ready the moment that they looked up to begin his grimaces once more.

"That poor Senator!" thought Buttons; "how did he get there? Oh, how did he get there?"

Yet how could he be rescued? Could he be? No. He must wait till the service should be over.

Meanwhile the young men mustered sufficient courage to look up again, and after a mighty struggle to gaze upon the Senator for a few seconds at a time at least. There he stood, projecting forward his anxious face, making faces as each one looked up.

Now the people in the immediate vicinity of the two young men had noticed their agitation as has already been stated, and, moreover, they had looked up to see the cause of it. They too saw the Senator. Others again, seeing their neighbors looking up, did the same, until at last all in the transept were staring up at the odd-looking stranger.

As Buttons and Dick looked up, which they could not help doing often, the Senator would repeat his mouthings, and nods, and becks, and looks of entreaty. The consequence was, that the people thought the stranger was making faces at them. Three hundred and forty-seven honest people of Sorrento thus found themselves shamefully insulted in their own church by a barbarous foreigner, probably an Englishman, no doubt a heretic. The other four hundred and thirty-six who knelt in the nave knew nothing about it. They could not see the organ-loft at all. The priests at the high altar could not see it, so that they were uninterrupted in their duties. The singers in the organ-loft saw nothing, for the Senator was concealed from their view. Those therefore who saw him were the people in the transept, who now kept staring fixedly, and with angry eyes, at the man in the loft.

There was no chance of getting him out of that before the service was over, and Buttons saw that there might be a serious tumult when the Senator came down among that wrathful crowd. Every moment made it worse. Those

in the nave saw the agitation of those in the transept, and got some idea of the cause.

At last the service was ended; the singers departed, the priests retired, but the congregation remained. Seven hundred and eighty-three human beings waiting to take vengeance on the miscreant who had thrown ridicule on the Holy Father by making faces at the faithful as they knelt in prayer. Already a murmur arose on every side.

"A heretic! A heretic! A blasphemer! He has insulted us!"

Buttons saw that a bold stroke alone could save them. He burst into the midst of the throng followed by Dick.

"Fly!" he cried. "Fly for your lives! *It is a madman! Fly! Fly!*"

A loud cry of terror arose. Instantaneous conviction flashed on the minds of all. A madman! Yes. He could be nothing else.

A panic arose. The people recoiled from before that terrible madman. Buttons sprang up to the loft. He seized the Senator's arm and dragged him down. The people fled in horror. As the Senator emerged he saw seven hundred and eighty-three good people of Sorrento scampering away like the wind across the square in front of the cathedral.

On reaching the hotel he told his story. He had been peering about in search of useful information, and had entered the cathedral. After going through every part he went up into the

organ-loft. Just then the singers came. Instead of going out like a man, he dodged them from some absurd cause or other, with a half idea that he would get into trouble for intruding. The longer he staid the worse it was for him. At last he saw Buttons and Dick enter, and tried to make signals.

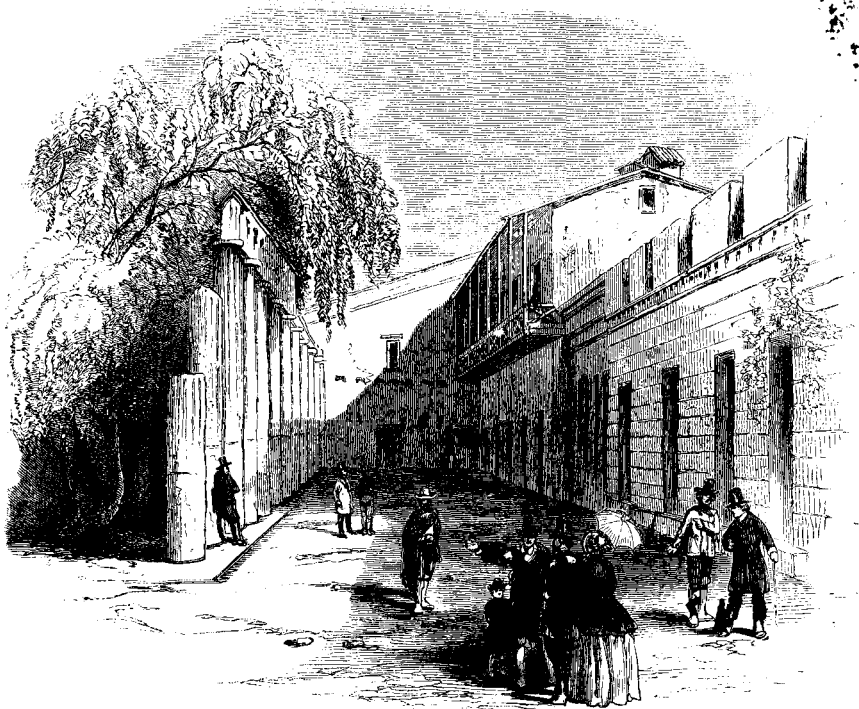
"Well," said Buttons, "we had better leave. The Sorrentonians will be around here soon to see the maniac. They will find out all about him, and make us acquainted with Lynch law."

In a quarter of an hour more they were on their way back to Naples.

XII.

HERCULANEUM AND POMPEII, AND ALL THAT THE SIGHT OF THOSE FAMOUS PLACES PRODUCED ON THE MINDS OF THE DODGE CLUB.

THEY had already visited Herculaneum, but the only feeling which had been awakened by the sight of that ill-fated city was one of unmitigated disgust. As honesty was the chief characteristic of the whole party they did not hesitate to express themselves with the utmost freedom on this subject. They hoped for better things from Pompeii. At any rate Pompeii was above ground, what might be there would be visible. No fuss with torches. No fumbling with lanterns. No wandering through



VILLA OF DIOMEDES.



PHLEW!

long black passages. No mountains bringing forth mice.

Their expectations were encouraged as they walked up the street of Tombs leading to the Herculaneum Gate. Tombs were all around, any quantity, all sizes, little black vaults full of pigeon-holes. These they narrowly examined, and when the guide wasn't looking they filled their pockets with the ashes of the dead.

"Strange," quoth the Senator, musingly, "that these ancient Pompey fellers should pick out this kind of a way of getting buried. This must be the reason why people speak of urns and ashes when they speak of dead people."

They walked through the Villa of Diomedes. They were somewhat disappointed. From guide-books, and especially from the remarkably well-got-up Pompeian court at Sydenham Palace, Buttons had been led to expect something far grander. But in this, the largest house in the city, what did he find? Mites of rooms, in fact closets, in which even a humble modern would find himself rather crowded. There was scarcely a decent-sized apartment in the whole establishment, as they all indignantly declared. The cellars were more striking. A number of earthen vessels of enormous size were in one corner.

"What are these?" asked the Senator.

"Wine jars."

"What?"

"Wine jars. They didn't use wooden casks."

"The more fools they. Now do you mean to say that wooden casks are not infinitely more

convenient than these things that can't stand up without they are leaned against the wall? Pho!"

At one corner the guide stopped, and pointing down, said something.

"What does he say?" asked the Senator.

"He says if you want to know how the Pompeians got choked, stoop down and smell that. Every body who comes here is expected to smell this particular spot, or he can't say that he has seen Pompeii."

So down went the five on their knees, and up again faster than they went down. With one universal shout of: "Phew-w-w-w-h-h-h!!!"

It was a torrent of sulphurous vapor that they inhaled.

"Now, I suppose," said the Senator, as soon as he could speak, "that that there comes direct in a bee-line through a subterranean tunnel right straight from old Vesuvius."

"Yes, and it was this that suggested the famous scheme for extinguishing the volcano."

"How? What famous scheme?"

"Why, an English stock-broker came here last year, and smelled this place, as every one must do. An idea struck him. He started up. He ran off without a word. He went straight to London. There he organized a company. They propose to dig a tunnel from the sea to the interior of the mountain. When all is ready they will let in the water. There will be a tremendous hiss. The volcano will belch out steam for about six weeks; but the result will be that the fires will be put out forever."

From the Villa of Diomedes they went to the gate where the guard-house is seen. Buttons told the story of the sentinel who died there on duty, embellishing it with a few new features of an original character.

"Now that may be all very well," said the Senator, "but don't ask me to admire that chap, or the Roman army, or the system. It was all hollow. Why, don't you see the man was a blockhead? He hadn't sense enough to see that when the whole place was going to the dogs, it was no good stopping to guard it. He'd much better have cleared out and saved his precious life for the good of his country. Do you suppose a Yankee would act that way?"

"I should suppose not."

"That man, Sir, was a machine, and nothing more. A soldier must know something else than merely obeying orders."

By this time they had passed through the gate and stood inside. The street opened before them for a considerable distance with houses on each side. Including the sidewalks it might have been almost twelve feet wide. As only the lower part of the walls of the houses was standing, the show that they made was not imposing. There was no splendor in the architecture or the material, for the style of the buildings was extremely simple, and they were made with brick covered with stucco.

After wandering silently through the streets the Senator at length burst forth:

"I say it's an enormous imposition!"

"What?" inquired Buttons, faintly.

"Why, the whole system of Cyclopedias, Panoramas, Books of Travel, Woodbridge's Geography, Sunday-school Books—"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the descriptions they give of this place. The fellows who write about it get into the heroics, and what with their descriptions, and pictures, and moralizing, you believe it is a second Babylon. It don't seem possible for

any of them to tell the truth. Why, there isn't a single decent-sized house in the place. Oh, it's small! it's small!"

"It certainly might be larger."

"I know," continued the Senator, with a majestic wave of his hand—"I know that I'm expected to find this here scene very impressive; but I'll be hanged if I'm satisfied. Why, in the name of Heaven, when they give us pictures of the place, can't they make things of the right size? Why, I've seen a hundred pictures of that gate. They make it look like a triumphant arch; and now that I'm here, darn me if I can't touch the top of it when I stand on tip-toe."

In all his walk the Senator found only one thing that pleased him. This was the celebrated Pompeian institution of a shop under the dwelling-house.

"Whenever I see any signs of any thing like trade among these ancients," said he, "I respect them. And what is more satisfactory than to see a bake-shop or an eating-saloon in the lower story of a palace?"

Their walk was terminated by the theatre



A STREET IN POMPEII.

and amphitheatre. The sight of these were more satisfactory to the Senator.

"Didn't these fellows come it uncommon strong though in the matter of shows?" he asked, with considerable enthusiasm. "Hey? Why, we haven't got a single traveling circus, menagerie, and all that could come any way near to this. After all, this town might have looked well enough when it was all bran-new and painted up. It might have looked so then; but, by thunder! it looks any thing but that now. What makes me mad is to see every traveler pretend to get into raptures about it now. Raptures be hanged! I ask you, as a sensible man, is there any thing here equal to any town of the same population in Massachusetts?"

Although the expectations which he had formed were not quite realized, yet Buttons found much to excite interest after the first disappointment had passed away. Dick excited the Senator's disgust by exhibiting those raptures which the latter had condemned.

The Doctor went by the Guide-book altogether, and regulated his emotions accordingly. Having seen the various places enumerated there, he wished no more. As Buttons and Dick wished to stroll farther among the houses the other three waited for them in the amphitheatre, where the Senator beguiled the time by giving his "idee" of an ancient show.

It was the close of day before the party left. At the outer barrier an official politely examined them. The result of the examination was that the party was compelled to disgorge a number of highly interesting souvenirs, consisting of lava, mosaic stones, ashes, plaster, marble chips, pebbles, bricks, a bronze hinge, a piece of bone, a small rag, a stick, etc.

The official apologized with touching politeness: "It was only a form," he said. "Yet he must do it. For look you, Signori," and here he shrugged up his shoulders, rolled his eyes, and puffed out his lips in a way that was possible to none but an Italian, "were it not thus the entire city would be carried away piecemeal!"

XIII.

VESUVIUS.—WONDERFUL ASCENT OF THE CONE.—WONDERFUL DESCENT INTO THE CRATER.—AND MOST WONDERFUL DISAPPEARANCE OF MR. FIGGS, AFTER WHOM ALL HIS FRIENDS GO, WITH THEIR LIVES IN THEIR HANDS.—GREAT SENSATION AMONG SPECTATORS.

To every visitor to Naples the most prominent object is Vesuvius. The huge form of the volcano forever stands before him. The long pennon of smoke from its crater forever floats out triumphantly in the air. Not in the landscape only, but in all the picture-shops. In these establishments they really seem to deal in nothing but prints and paintings of Vesuvius.

It was a lovely morning when a carriage, filled with Americans, drew up at an inn near the foot of the mountain. There were guides

without number waiting, like beasts of prey, to fall on them; and all the horses of the country—a wonderful lot—an amazing lot—a lean, cranky, raw-boned, ill-fed, wall-eyed, ill-natured, sneaking, ungainly, half-foundered, half-starved lot; afflicted with all the diseases that horse-flesh is heir to. There were no others, so but little time was wasted. All were on an equal footing. To have a preference was out of the question, so they amused themselves with picking out the ugliest.

When the horses were first brought out Mr. Figgs looked uneasy, and made some mysterious remarks about walking. He thought such nags were an imposition. He vowed they could go faster on foot. On foot! The others scouted the idea. Absurd! Perhaps he wasn't used to such beasts. Never mind. He mustn't be proud. Mr. Figgs, however, seemed to have reasons which were strictly private, and announced his intention of walking. But the others would not hear of such a thing. They insisted. They forced him to mount. This Mr. Figgs at length accomplished, though he got up on the wrong side, and nearly pulled his horse over backward by pulling at the curb-rein, shouting all the time, in tones of agony, "Who-a!"

At length they all set out, and, with few interruptions, arrived at a place half-way up the mountain called The Hermitage. Here they rested, and leaving their horses behind, walked on over a barren region to the foot of the cone. All around was the abomination of desolation. Craggy rocks, huge, disjointed masses of shattered lava-blocks, cooled off into the most grotesque shapes, mixed with ashes, scoria, and pumice-stones. The cone towered frowningly above their heads. Looking up, the aspect was not enticing. A steep slope ran up for an immense distance till it touched the smoky canopy. On one side it was covered with loose sand, but in other places it was all overlaid with masses of lava fragments. The undertaking seemed prodigious.

The Senator looked up with a weary smile, but did not falter; the Doctor thought they would not be able to get up to the top, and proposed returning; the others declined; whereupon the Doctor slowly sauntered back to the Hermitage. Mr. Figgs, whom the ride had considerably shaken, expressed a desire to ascend, but felt doubtful about his wind. Dick assured him that he would find plenty when he got to the top. The guides also came to his relief. Did he want to go? Behold them. They had chairs to carry him up or straps to pull him. Their straps were so made that they could envelop the traveler and allow him to be pulled comfortably up. So Mr. Figgs gracefully resigned himself to the guides, who in a short time had adjusted their straps, and led him to the foot of the cone.

Now for the ascent.

Buttons went first. Like a young chamois this youth bounded up, leaping from rock to

rock, and steering in a straight line for the summit. Next the Senator, who mounted slowly and perseveringly, as though he had a solemn duty to perform, and was determined to do it thoroughly. Then came Dick. More fitful. A few steps upward; then a rest; then a fresh start; followed by another rest. At length he sat down about one-third of the way up and took a smoke. Behind him Mr. Figgs toiled up, pulled by the panting guides. Three stout men in front—two others boosting from behind.



THE ASCENT OF VESUVIUS.

A long description might be given of this remarkable ascent. How Mr. Figgs aggravated the guides almost beyond endurance by mere force of inertia. Having committed himself to them he did it thoroughly, and not by one single act of exertion did he lessen their labor. They pulled, pushed, and shouted; then they rested; then they rose again to pull, to push, to shout, and to rest as before; then they implored him in the most moving terms to do something to help them, to put one foot before the other, to brace himself firmly—in short, to do any thing.

In vain. Mr. Figgs didn't understand a word. He was unmovable. Then they threatened to drop him and leave him half-way. The threat was disregarded. Mr. Figgs sat on a stone while they rested and smiled benignantly at them. At last, maddened by his impassibility, they screamed at him and at one another with furious gesticulations, and then tearing off the straps, they hurried up the slope, leaving him on the middle of the mount to take care of himself.

It might be told how the Senator toiled up slowly but surely, never stopping till he had gained the summit; or how Buttons, who arrived there first, spent the time in exploring the mysteries of this elevated region; or how Dick stopped every twenty paces to rest and smoke; how he consumed much time and much tobacco; and how he did not gain the summit until twenty minutes after the serene face of the Senator had confronted the terrors of the crater.

Before these three there was a wonderful scene. Below them lay the steep sides of the cone, a waste of hideous ruin—

*"Rocks, crags, and mounds confusedly hurled,
The fragments of a ruined world."*

Before them was the crater, a vast abyss, the bottom of which was hidden from sight by dense clouds of sulphurous smoke which forever ascended. Far away on the other side rose the opposite wall of the abyss—black, rocky cliffs that rose precipitously upward. The side on which they stood sloped down at a steep angle for a few hundred feet, and then went abruptly downward. A mighty wind was blowing and carried all the smoke away to the opposite side of the crater, so that by getting down into the shelter of a rock they were quite comfortable.

The view of the country that lay beneath was superb. There lay Naples with its suburbs, extending for miles along the shore, with Portici, Castellamare, and the vale of Sorrento. There rose the hills of Baia, the rock of Ischia, and the Isle of Capri. There lay countless vineyards, fields forever green, groves of orange and fig trees, clusters of palms and cypresses. Mountains ascended all around, with many heights crowned with castles or villages. There lay the glorious Bay of Naples, the type of perfect beauty. Hundreds of white sails dotted the intense blue of its surface. Ships were there at anchor, and in full sail. Over all was a sky such as is seen only in Italy, with a depth of blue, which, when seen in paintings, seems to the inexperienced eye like an exaggeration.

The guides drew their attention from all this beauty to a solid fact. This was the cooking of an egg by merely burying it in the hot sand for a few minutes.

Buttons now proposed to go down into the crater. The guides looked aghast.

"Why not?"

"Impossible, Signor. It's death."

"Death? Nonsense! come along and show us the way."

"The way? There is no way. No one ever dares to go down. Where can we go to? Do you not see that beyond that point where the rock projects it is all a precipice?"

"That point? Well, that is the very spot I wish to go to. Come along."

"Never, Signor."

"Then I'll go."

"Don't. For the sake of Heaven, and in the name of the most Holy Mother, of St.

Peter in chains, of all the blessed Apostles and Martyrs, the glorious Saints and—"

"Blessed Botheration," cried Buttons, abruptly turning his back and preparing to descend.

"Are you in earnest, Buttons?" asked Dick.

"Are you really going down?"

"Certainly."

"Oh, then I'll go too."

Upon this the others warned, rebuked, threatened, remonstrated, and begged. In vain. The Senator interposed the authority of years and wisdom. But to no purpose. With much anxiety he sat on the edge of the crater, looking for the result and expecting a tragedy.

The slope down which they ventured was covered with loose sand. At each step the treacherous soil slid beneath them. It was a mad and highly reprehensible undertaking. Nevertheless down they went—farther and farther. The kind heart of the Senator felt a pang at every step. His voice sounded mournfully through the rolling smoke that burst through a million crevices, and at times hid the adventurers from view. But down they went. Sometimes they slid fearfully. Then they would wait and cautiously look around, sometimes the vapors covered them with such dense folds that they had to cover their faces.

"If they ain't dashed to pieces they'll be suffocated—sure!" cried the Senator, starting up, and unable to control his feelings. "I can't stand this," he muttered, and he too stepped down.

The guides looked on in horror. "Your blood will be on your own heads!" they cried.

As the Senator descended the smoke entered his eyes, mouth, and nostrils, making him cough and sneeze fearfully. The sand slid; the heat under the surface pained his feet; every step made it worse. However, he kept on bravely. At length he reached the spot where the others were standing.

At the foot of the declivity was an angular rock which jutted out for about twelve feet. It was about six feet wide. Its sides went down precipitously. The Senator walk-

ed painfully to where they were standing. It was a fearful scene. All around arose the sides of the crater, black and rocky, perpendicular on all sides, except the small slope down which they had just descended—a vast and gloomy circumference. But the most terrific sight lay beneath.

The sides of the crater went sheer down to a great depth inclosing a black abyss which in the first excitement of the scene the startled fancy might well imagine extending to the bowels of the earth from which there came rolling up vast clouds dense black sulphurous which at times completely encircled them shutting out every thing from view filling eyes nose mouth with fumes of brimstone forcing them to hold the tails of their coats or the skirts it's all the same over their faces so as not to be altogether suffocated while again after a while a fierce blast of wind driving downward would hurl the smoke away and dashing it against the other side of the crater gather it up in dense volumes of blackest smoke in thick clouds which rolled up the flinty cliffs and reaching the summit bounded fiercely out into the sky to pass on and be seen from afar as that dread pennant of Ve-



THE DESCENT OF VESUVIUS

suivus which is the sign and symbol of its mastery over the earth around it and the inhabitants thereof ever changing and in all its changes watched with awe by fearful men who read in those changes their own fate now taking heart as they see it more tenuous in its consistency anon shuddering as they see it gathering in denser folds and finally awe-stricken and all overcome as they see the thick black cloud rise proudly up to heaven in a long straight column at whose upper termination the colossal pillar spreads itself out and shows to the startled gaze the dread symbol of the cypress tree the herald of earthquakes eruptions and——

—There—I flatter myself that in the way of description it would not be easy to beat the above. I just throw it off as my friend Titmarsh, poor fellow, once said, to show what I could do if I tried. I have decided not to put punctuation marks there, but rather to let each reader supply them for himself. They are often in the way, particularly to the writer, when he has to stop in the full flow of a description and insert them—

But—

We left our friends down in the crater of Vesuvius. Of course they hurried out as soon as they could, and mounting the treacherous steep they soon regained the summit, where the guides had stood bawling piteously all the time.

Then came the descent. It was not over the lava blocks, but in another place, which was covered with loose sliding sand. Away they started.

Buttons ahead, went with immense strides down the slope. At every step the sliding sand carried him about ten feet further, so that each step was equal to about twenty feet. It was like flying. But it was attended by so many falls that the descent of Buttons and Dick was accomplished as much by sliding and rolling as by walking.

The Senator was more cautious. Having fallen once or twice, he tried to correct this tendency by walking backward. Whenever he found himself falling he would let himself go, and thus, on his hands and knees, would let himself slide for a considerable distance. This plan gave him immense satisfaction.

"It's quite like coasting," said he, after he had reached the bottom; "only it does come a little hard on the trowsers."

On their arrival at the Hermitage to their surprise they saw nothing of Mr. Figgs. The Doctor had been sleeping all the time, but the landlord said he had not been that way. As they knew that the neighborhood of Vesuvius was not always the safest in the world, they all went back at once to search after him.

Arriving at the foot of the cone they went every where shouting his name. There was no response. They skirted the base of the cone. They walked up to where he had been. They saw nothing. The guides who had thus far been with them now said they had to go. So they received their pay and departed.



WHERE'S FIGGS?

"Of all the mean, useless, chicken-hearted dolts that ever I see," said the Senator, "they are the wust!"

But meanwhile there was no Figgs. They began to feel anxious. At last Buttons, who had been up to where Mr. Figgs was left, thought he saw traces of footsteps in the sand that was nearest. He followed these for some time, and at last shouted to the others. The others went to where he was. They saw an Italian with him—an ill-looking, low-browed rascal, with villain stamped on every feature.

"This fellow says he saw a man who answers the description of Figgs go over in that direction," said Buttons, pointing toward the part of the mountain which is farthest from the sea.

"There? What for?"

"I don't know."

"Is there any danger?"

"I think so—Figgs may have had to go—who knows?"

"Well," said the Senator, "we must go after him."

"What arms have you?" said the Doctor.

"Don't show it before this rascal."

"I have a bowie-knife," said Buttons.

"So have I," said Dick.

"And I," said the Senator, "am sorry to say that I have nothing at all."

"Well, I suppose we must go," said the Doctor. "My revolver is something. It is a double revolver, of peculiar shape."

Without any other thought they at once pre-

pared to venture into a district that for all they knew might swarm with robbers. They had only one thought, and that was to save Figgs.

"Can this man lead us?" asked Dick.

"He says he can take us along where he saw Figgs go, and perhaps we may see some people who can tell us about him."

"Perhaps we can," said the Senator, grimly.

They then started off with the Italian at their head. The sun was by this time within an hour's distance from the horizon, and they had no time to lose. So they walked rapidly. Soon they entered among hills and rocks of lava, where the desolation of the surrounding country began to be modified by vegetation. It was quite difficult to keep their reckoning, so as to know in what direction they were going, but they kept on nevertheless.

All of them knew that the errand was a dangerous one. All of them knew that it would be better if they were armed. But no one said anything of the kind. In fact, they felt such confidence in their own pluck and resolution that they had no doubt of success.

At length they came to a place where trees were on each side of the rough path. At an opening here three men stood. Buttons at once accosted them and told his errand. They looked at the Americans with a sinister smile.

"Don't be afraid of us," said Buttons, quietly. "We're armed with revolvers, but we won't hurt you. Just show us where our friend is, for we're afraid he has lost his way."

At this strange salutation the Italians looked puzzled. They looked at their guns, and then at the Americans. Two or three other men came out from the woods at the same time, and stood in their rear. At length as many as ten men stood around them.

"What are you staring at?" said Buttons again. "You needn't look so frightened. Americans only use their revolvers against thieves."

The Doctor at this, apparently by accident, took out his revolver. Standing a little on one side, he fired at a large crow on the top of a tree. The bird fell dead. He then fired five other shots just by way of amusement, laughing all the time with the Senator.

"You see," said he—"ha, ha—we're in a fix—ha, ha—and I want to show them what a revolver is?"

"But you're wasting all your shot."

"Not a bit of it. See!"

And saying this he drew a second chamber from his pocket, and taking the first out of the pistol inserted the other. He then fired another shot. All this was the work of a few moments. He then took some cartridges and filled the spare chamber once more.

The Italians looked on this display in great astonishment, exchanging significant glances, particularly when the Doctor changed the chambers. The Americans, on the contrary, took good care to manifest complete indifference.

The Italians evidently thought they were all armed like the Doctor. Naturally enough, too, for if not, why should they venture here and talk so loftily to them? So they were puzzled, and in doubt. After a time one who appeared to be their leader stepped aside with two or three of the men, and talked in a low voice, after which he came to Buttons and said: "Come, then, and we will show you."

"Go on."

The Captain beckoned to his men. Six of them went to the rear. Buttons saw the manoeuvre, and burst into roars of laughter. The Italians looked more puzzled than ever.

"Is that to keep us from getting away?" he cried—"ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Well, well!"

"He's putting a guard behind us. Laugh like fury, boys," said Buttons, in English.

Whereupon they all roared, the tremendous laughter of the Senator coming in with fearful effect.

"There's nothing to laugh at," said the man who appeared to be captain, very sulkily.

"It's evident that you Italians don't understand late improvements," said Buttons. "But come, hurry on."

The Captain turned and walked ahead sullenly.

"It's all very well to laugh," said the Doctor, in a cheerful tone; "but suppose those devils behind us shoot us."

"I think if they intended to do that the Captain would not walk in front. No, they want to take us alive, and make us pay a heavy ransom."

After this the Club kept up an incessant chatter. They talked over their situation, but could as yet decide upon nothing. It grew dark at length. The sun went down. The usual rapid twilight came on.

"Dick," said the Doctor, "when it gets dark enough I'll give you my pistol, so that you may show off with it as if it were yours."

"All right, my son," said Dick.

Shortly after, when it was quite dark, the Doctor slipped the pistol into the side-pocket of Dick's coat. At length a light appeared before them. It was an old ruin which stood upon an eminence. Where they were not a soul of them could tell. Dick declared that he smelt salt water.

The light which they saw came from the broken windows of a dilapidated hall belonging to the building. They went up some crumbling steps, and the Captain gave a peculiar knock at the door. A woman opened it. A bright light streamed out. Dick paused for a moment, and took the Doctor's pistol from his pocket. He held it up, and pretended to arrange the chamber. Then he carelessly put it in his pocket again.

"You haven't bound them?" said the woman who opened the door to the Captain.

"Meaning us, my joy?" said Buttons, in Italian. "Not just yet, I believe, and not for some time. But how do you all do?"



MR. FIGGS.

The woman stared hard at Buttons, and then at the Captain. There were eight or ten women here. It was a large hall, the roof still entire, but with the plaster all gone. A bright fire burned at one end. Torches burned around. On a stool near the fire was a familiar form—a portly, well-fed form—with a merry face—a twinkle in his eye—a pipe in his mouth—calmly smoking—apparently quite at home, though his feet were tied—in short, Mr. Figgs!

"Figgs, my boy!"

One universal shout and the Club surrounded their companion. In an instant Buttons cut his bonds.

"Bless you—bless you, my children!" cried Figgs. "But how the (Principle of Evil) did you get here? These are brigands. I've just been calculating how heavy a bill I would have to foot."

The brigands saw the release of Figgs, and stood looking gloomily at their singular prisoners, not quite knowing whether they were prisoners or not, not knowing what to do. Each member of the Club took the most comfortable seat he could find near the fire, and began talking vehemently. Suddenly Buttons jumped up.

"A thousand pardons—I really forgot that there were ladies present. Will you not sit here and give us the honor of your company?"

He made a profound bow and looked at several of them. They looked puzzled, then pleased; then they all began to titter.

"Signor makes himself very much at home," said one, at length.

"And where could there be a pleasanter place? This old hall, this jolly old fire, and this delightful company!"

Another bow. The Captain looked very sullen still. He was evidently in deep perplexity.

"Come, cheer up there!" said Buttons. "We won't do you any harm; we won't even complain to the authorities that we found our friend here. Cheer up! Have you any thing to eat, most noble Captain?"

The Captain turned away.

Meanwhile Figgs had told the story of his capture. After resting for a while on the slope he prepared to descend, but seeing sand farther away he went over toward it and descended there. Finding it very dangerous or difficult to go down straight he made the descent obliquely, so that when he reached the foot of the cone he was far away from the point at which he had started to make the ascent. Arriving there he sat down to rest after his exertions. Some men came toward him, but he did not think much about it. Suddenly, before he knew what was up, he found himself a prisoner. He had a weary march, and was just getting comfortable as they came in.

As they sat round the fire they found it very comfortable. Like many evenings in Italy, it was damp and quite chilly. They laughed and talked, and appeared to be any thing but captives in a robber's hold. The Captain had been out for some time, and at length returned. He was now very cheerful. He came laughingly up to the fire.



THE LADIES.

"Well, Signori Americani, what do you think of your accommodation?"

"Delightful! charming!" cried Buttons and Dick.

"If the ladies would only deign to smile on us—"

"Aha! You are a great man for the ladies!" said the Captain.

"Who is not?" said Buttons, sententiously.

After a few pleasant words the Captain left again.

"He has some scheme in his villainous head," said Buttons.

"To drug us," said the Doctor.

"To send for others," said Dick.

"To wait till we sleep, and then fall on us," said Mr. Figgs.

"Well, gentlemen," said the Senator, drawing himself up, "we're more than a match for them. Why, what are these brigands? Is there a man of them who isn't a poor, miserable, cowardly cuss? Not one. If we are captured by such as these we deserve to be captives all our lives."

"If we don't get off soon we'll have a good round sum to pay," said Mr. Figgs.

"And that I object to," said Buttons; "for I promised my Governor solemnly that I wouldn't spend more than a certain sum in Europe, and I won't."

"For my part," said the Doctor, "I can't afford it."

"And I would rather use the amount which they would ask in some other way," said Dick.

"That's it, boys! You're plucky. Go in! We'll fix their flints. The American eagle is soaring, gentlemen—let him ascend to the zenith. Go it! But mind now—don't be too hasty. Let's wait for a time to see further developments."

"Richard, my boy, will you occupy the time by singing a hymn?" continued the Senator. "I see a guitar there."

Dick quietly got up, took the guitar, and, tuning it, began to sing. The brigands were

still in a state of wonder. The women looked shy. Most of the spectators, however, were grinning at the eccentric Americans. Dick played and sang a great quantity of songs, all of a comic character.

The Italians were fond of music, of course. Dick had a good voice. Most of his songs had choruses, and the whole Club joined in. The Italians admired most the nigger songs. "Oh, Susannah!" was greeted with great applause. So was "Doo-dah;" and the Italians themselves joined energetically in the chorus. But the song that they loved best was "Ole Virginny Shore." This they called for over and over, and as they had quick ears they readily caught the tune; so that, finally, when Dick, at their earnest request, sang it for the seventh time, they whistled the air all through, and joined in with a thundering chorus. The Captain came in at the midst of it, and listened with great delight. After Dick had laid down his instrument he approached the Americans.

"Well, old hoss," said the Senator, "won't you take an arm-chair?"

"What is it?" said the Captain to Buttons.

"He wants to know if your Excellency will honor him by sitting near him."

The Captain's eye sparkled. Evidently it met his wishes. The Americans saw his delight.

"I should feel honored by sitting beside the illustrious stranger," said he. "It was what I came to ask. And will you allow the rest of these noble gentlemen to sit here and participate in your amusement?"

"The very thing," said Buttons, "which we have been trying to get them to do, but they won't. Now we are as anxious as ever, but still more anxious for the ladies."

"Oh, the ladies!" said the Captain; "they are timid."

Saying this he made a gesture, and five of his men came up. The whole six then sat with the five Americans. The Senator insisted that the Captain should sit by his side. Yet it was

singular. Each one of the men still kept his gun. No notice was taken of this, however. The policy of the Americans was to go in for utter jollity. They sat thus:

The Captain.

The Senator.

Bandit Number 1.

Mr. Figgs.

Bandit Number 2.

The Doctor.

Bandit Number 3.

Dick.

Bandit Number 4.

Buttons.

Bandit Number 5.

Five members of the Club. Six bandits. In addition to these, four others stood armed at the door. The women were at a distance.

But the sequel must be left to another chapter.

SUGAR-MAKING.

THE crocus rose from her snowy bed
As she felt the spring's caresses,
And the willow from her graceful head
Shook out her yellow tresses.

Through the crumbling walls of his icy cell
Stole the brook, a happy rover;
And he made a noise like a silver bell
In running under and over.

The earth was pushing the old dead grass
With lily hand from her bosom,
And the sweet brown buds of the sassafras
Could scarcely hide the blossom.

And breaking nature's solitude
Came the axe strokes clearly ringing,
For the chopper was busy in the wood
Ere the early birds were singing.

All day the hardy settler, now
At his tasks, was toiling steady;
His fields were cleared, and his shining plow
Was set by the furrow ready.

And down in the woods, where the sun appeared
Through the naked branches breaking,
His rustic cabin had been reared
For the time of sugar-making.

And now, as about it he came and went,
Cheerfully planning and toiling,
His good child sat there, with eyes intent
On the fire and the kettles boiling.

With the beauty Nature gave as her dower,
And the artless grace she taught her,
The woods could boast no fairer flower
Than Rose, the settler's daughter.

She watched the pleasant fire a-near,
And her father coming and going,
And her thoughts were all as sweet and clear
As the drops from his pail o'erflowing.

For she scarce had dreamed of earthly ills,
And love had never found her;
She lived shut in by the pleasant hills
That stood as a guard around her.

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And she might have lived the self-same way
Through all the springs to follow,
But for a youth, who came one day
Across her in the hollow.

He did not look like a wicked man,
And yet, when he saw that blossom,
He said, "I will steal this Rose if I can,
And hide it in my bosom."

That he could be tired you had not guessed
Had you seen him lightly walking;
But he must have been, for he stopped to rest
So long that they fell to talking.

Alas! he was athirst, he said,
Yet he feared there was no slaking
The deep and quenchless thirst he had
For a draught beyond his taking.

Then she filled the cup and gave to him,
The settler's blushing daughter;
And he looked at her across the brim
As he slowly drank the water.

And he sighed as he put the cup away,
For lips and soul were drinking;
But what he drew from her eyes that day
Was the sweetest, to his thinking.

I do not know if her love awoke
Before his words awoke it;
If she guessed at his before he spoke,
Or not till he had spoke it.

But howsoever she made it known,
And howsoever he told her,
Each unto each the heart had shown
When the year was little older.

For oft he came her voice to hear,
And to taste of the sugar-water;
And she was a settler's wife next year
Who had been the settler's daughter.

And now their days are fair and fleet
As the days of sugar weather,
While they drink the water, clear and sweet,
Of the cup of life together.