

Enriching a Tramp

Two wealthy gentlemen of New York city have lately been making an experiment upon a very vile body and have worthily solved a very interesting if not important problem. What would become of a tramp if he were taken from his wanderings and excellently well provided for? was a question they discussed one evening, and so many more or less curious thoughts came to the surface that they concluded to try the experiment just for a lark. They found the man they were in search of and then employed a detective to watch him. All being arranged, the tramp, who was apparently about thirty years of age and very seedy, was drugged one night by the detective, placed in a carriage and driven to a hotel, the proprietor of which, after some demur, had agreed to the plan. The tramp was shaved and trimmed as to his hair, bathed and placed in bed in one of the most luxurious rooms in the house; his old clothes were taken away and a [brand] new and elegant suit was substituted for them. Everything was there, from the silk hat and boots to the watch and chain, the cane and the silk umbrella. In the breast pocket of the coat was a wallet containing \$250 in notes of large and small denominations. The tramp's name as he had given it when he was first treated by the detective to a drink—it may have been his and it may not, but at all events he would recognize it—was written in the hotel register, and the day clerk was put “fly” to the whole matter, and instructed to address him courteously in the morning when he came down stairs, to ask after his health, and to depart so far from the ordinary grandeur of the hotel clerk as to be even deferential in his deportment to the guest. The tramp was then left to himself, and woke not, it may be supposed, till the late morning, for he did not come down till afternoon. What his thoughts were on waking, in a condition analogous to that which set poor Abou Hassan crazy and made him believe himself commander of the faithful, must, of course be matters of conjecture.

He entered the office in gorgeous array but with a bewildered look, and would have bolted into the street without delay had he not been address by name by the clerk, who most courteously gave him the compliments of the day, and asked if he had any message to leave for two gentleman who had called to see him an hour before, but hearing he had not yet come from his room, merely left their cards, saying that they would return at 7 o'clock. To the clerk's surprise the whilom tramp took their cards, examined them, and told the clerk in very good English, though with the tramp's characteristic husky voice, that pressing business rendered it necessary for him to leave immediately for Chicago. He was very sorry, but would be obliged to leave a note for his friends, which he thereupon wrote with a fluent pen, sealed it, and directed the clerk to give it to either gentleman who might call for it. Upon being opened, it was found to be merely a collection of words put together hap-hazard, but all correctly spelled and written in a beautiful hand. It was evident that the tramp they had undertaken to examine was at least fairly well educated.

Followed by the detective, the *nouvea riche* went down Broadway as far as Tenth street, looking furtively to the right and left occasionally, and turning at Tenth, crossed over to the east side, and so onward down avenue A. till he came to a low restaurant, into which, notwithstanding his fine appearance and the deference which he must have known it would win for him, he slouched and shuffled in the true tramp manner. Addressing the bartender, he began with, “Wouldn't you give a poor”—but there he caught himself in time, and asked for a “little gin.” When he had poured the glass full to the brim, turning his back to the bar as he did so and enveloping the tumbler

completely with his hand he swallowed the whole at a draught, turned to the lunch of ragged sausage, and grabbing a handful of it, was about to leave the place, when he was reminded that he hadn't paid. Then he felt in all his pockets and said he hadn't a cent about him, but finally made shift to get at a \$1 bill, and having received the change, he walked out, and at the corner stood for a long time in a brown study, muttering to himself. Then he drew out the pocket book and emptied it, putting the roll of bills into his trousers pocket. With the wallet in his hand, he walked on till he came to an ash-barrel into which he dropped it and then hastened away.

About every fourth block he stopped at a restaurant, drinking and taking a bite at each, but his liquor seemed as yet to have no effect on him. Towards evening, however, he became not, indeed, top-heavy, but generally dissolved and soaked. Appearing to see the necessity of getting under cover, he entered a hotel in the Bowery—for thus far on his journey had he come—boozily registered his name, and then was shown to his room. He did not go to bed, but snoozed in his chair all night. In the morning he went at once to drinking the worst gin he could get, and presently entered a pawnbroker's shop, where he put up his watch and overcoat; so out again, and in a second-hand clothing store he bought the cheapest of all possible cheap suits, rolled his good clothes into a bundle, pawned them at another shop, and so, fully at ease, he went on his way.

The story told by the detective of his subsequent career speaks of how the tramp ended up in Baxter street, and was robbed while dead drunk. It was noticeable that at about that time the detective wore a swell watch and chain, and come out brightly with a diamond cluster, for which he long had yearned. As for the two extravagant truth-seekers, they had their expense for their pains.

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