

Selected Story.

THE DROVER'S STORY.

Many years ago, before the era of railroads, and when the highwaymen abounded along the great route from Calais to Paris, a noted drover, who had been to Boulogne with a large drove of horses, which he had sold for cash, was overtaken by night on his return, near Marquise. He remembered that a little distance ahead was a quiet inn he had never stopped at, and he determined to spend the night there.

As he rode up to the house, the landlord, a respectable looking person, received his horse and lead him away to the stable, while he invited the drover to enter the public sitting-room.

Here he found two young men, one of whom, from his resemblance to the landlord, he recognized as his son; the other, somewhat older, from his manners, appeared also to belong to the family. Immediately after supper (during which the drover stated where he had been and what good luck he had met with), the son mounted a horse, and stating that he was going to Marquise to stay all night, rode off. The drover, having looked after the comfort of his horse, soon after requested the landlord to show him to his room.

As the traveller slipped off his garments, he felt for the leathern belt about his waist, to see that it was secure. This contained his gold, while his paper money was in a large wallet, carried in a pocket made for the purpose, in the inside of his vest. Depositing these articles beneath his pillow, he extinguished the light and threw himself upon the bed, when, overcome by weariness, he soon fell asleep.

How long he had been in this state of forgetfulness he could not tell, when he was aroused to wakefulness by the sound of some person endeavoring to open the window near the head of his bed. At the same time he heard suppressed voices without, as of several persons in whispered consultation.

Startled by this suspicious appearance of things, the drover reached toward the chair on which he had thrown his clothes, for his weapons; but, to his dismay, he remembered that on his arrival, when preparing to wash off the dust of his journey, he had laid them aside, within the bar, and had neglected to resume them.

Scarcely conscious of what he was doing, the defenceless drover slipped from the foot of the bed, and hid himself in the darkness behind a lot of women's dresses suspended from the wall, and watched the motions of a man who was now slowly and cautiously entering the room. He even fancied he could detect the reflections of the dim light upon an upraised knife as the man approached the bed with staggering and uncertain steps. But great was his relief when, instead of an attempt at murder, the intruder carelessly shuffled off his clothes, and throwing himself into the bed he had just vacated, was soon in a sound sleep.

Not knowing what to make of this strange affair, the drover determined to dress himself, call up the landlord, and have this singular intrusion explained. He had reached his clothes, and slipped on his trousers, and was moving toward the door, when steps were heard cautiously crossing the outer room. Once more he sought the shelter of the dresses, which completely screened his person, and awaited the entrance of the persons, whoever they might be. Presently the door of the room was silently opened, and two men made their appearance. It was not so dark but that the drover could readily distinguish them to be the innkeeper and the man he had seen at the supper table.

'Step lightly, I tell you,' whispered the landlord, 'or you'll wake him up, and then we'll have a pretty mess on hands.'

'Nonsense!' replied the other, with an oath. 'You are scared, old man! Scared!' repeated the first speaker. 'No man ever told Jean Garnier before he was scared! Here give me the knife! I'll show you who is scared! You secure the money—it's under the pillow—I saw him put it there, and I'll do the rest.'

The old man was in advance, and as he stood between the window and the drover, the latter could see his form bent over the bed, while his hand seemed to be searching beneath the pillow.

Here, Henri—take it. Here's the wallet, and here's the belt. How heavy it is!—and he passed the money to his companion before the other had yet reached the bedside.

The old man then put his hand to his bosom, and the trembling drover saw him draw forth the long blade the other had given him. For an instant the murderous weapon was poised over his head, and then descended upon the person of the poor wretch in bed.

To be Continued.

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Wednesday, the 13th March,
AT THREE O'CLOCK,

for the election of Directors for the ensuing year and the transaction of other business.

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February 23, 1877—2i

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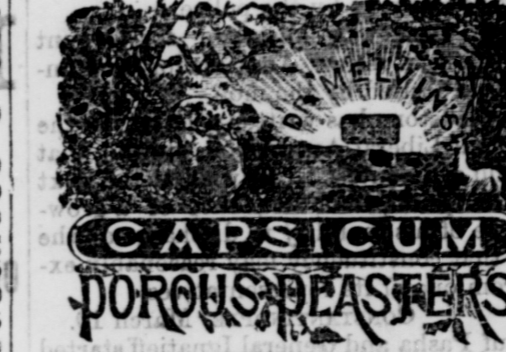
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