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[*From Heath's (London) Book of Beauty for* 1846.]

THE OLD BROWN COAT.

AN AMERICAN STORY.

BY CAPTAIN MARRYAT, R. N.

"I reckon you see nothing very particular in this, do you?" said an American acquaintance of mine, bringing out the cuff of an old coat, and holding it up before me, dangling it between his finger and thumb.

"I can't say that I do," replied I, "but I presume it has some secret merit which remains to be explained."

"Ex-act-*ly*," replied my acquaintance, pronouncing each syllable of the word apart; "yet the coat, of which this is the remaining cuff, was the occasion of my being just now pretty considerable well to do in the world; I guess I'm right, ain't I?' continued he, appealing to his wife, a very pretty young woman, who stood by him.

"So you seem to think," replied she, smiling; "but I am not convinced, as far as I am concerned in the business, that the coat had any thing to do with it."

"Well, then, I shall just tell my story and leave you to decide," said he, turning to me. "You must know that there was a time when I was rather hard up, and how to go ahead was the business. I had tried at mercantile speculation, and sunk an immensity of dollars. I had turned lawyer, but that would not answer in any way. I took to farming—no luck there. Went out supercargo; ship went on a reef and lost cargo. Returned to New York, speculated a long while upon nothing; didn't lose much, that's certain, but didn't realize; at last I gave up business and resolved to amuse myself a little, so I went South and joined Bolivar; I fought with him for three years, and a good officer he was, but he had one fault as a general, and that was, his army never got paid. I wanted my three years' pay, and finding that there was neither pay nor plunder, I got tired of it and made my way home to the States and at last arrived at the Capital with only one extra shirt, and not a cent in my pocket. I happened to meet with a tailor, whose customer I had once been, when I had money and paid my bills; and he observed that my coat was rather shabby, and that I could not appear in it. I knew that very well, and that all he wanted was an order for another; but as I had no chance of paying him, I thought it advisable not to take the hint.

"'I think,' said I, 'that with a new velvet collar and brass buttons, it might do very well for an evening party.'

"'I see,' says he, 'that's an old country custom, wearing an old coat to a ball; I guess you're going to Mr. T.'s to-morrow night. A regular flare-up, I am told. President there, and every body else. It's hardly worth it,' continued he, touching the thread-bare cuff.

"'Yes, it is,' replied I; 'there'll be a regular jam, and a new coat would be spoiled. I'll send it to you to-night, and you must let me have it in the morning, so good-bye.'

"Well, the coat came home the next day, not early in the morning, as I expected, but past meridian, and I walked up and down my bed-room in my trousers, thinking what I should do. At three o'clock I called upon Mrs. T., and left my card; went back again and waited two hours for the invitation—no invitation. Called again at five, and left another card, telling the nigger that I had not received an invitation, and that there must be some mistake; whereupon an invitation came about an hour after my return, just as I was putting my hat on to call again and leave another card, in a very fierce manner, I reckon. Well, I went early to the ball, and my coat looked remarkable gay. You could see that the velvet collar was new, and the buttons glittered famously; but you could not see that the cloth was not a little the worse for wear; in short, my brown coat looked very smart, and I was a considerable smart fellow myself just at that time.

"Well, I stood near the door, looking at the company coming in, hoping to know somebody; but I presume that I had grown out of all recollection, for nobody knew me; but as the company were announced I heard their names, and if they did not know who I was, at all events I found out who they were.

"This won't do," says I, as the rooms became quite full. I may stick against this wall till day-light, but I shall never go ahead; so at last, perceiving a young lady speaking to the daughter of the Secretary of the Navy, after they parted, I went up and bowed to her. Having heard her name, I pretended to be an old acquaintance, and accused her of having forgotten me. As I was very positive and very bold, she presumed it was the case, and when I gave her my name, which I refused to do till we had been talking for some minutes, as it happened to be a very good one, she considered that it was all right, and in another quarter of an hour we became very intimate. I then asked her if she knew Miss E——, the daughter of the Secretary of the Navy. She replied that she did, and I requested her to introduce me, and offering her my arm, we walked up to the young lady together, and I was introduced. Now, thought I, I am going ahead a little. After the introduction I commenced a conversation with Miss E——, and a gentleman fortunately relieved me of my first acquaintance, whose arm I had dropped. I continued my attentions to Miss E——, exerted myself to the utmost, and on the strength of my introduction and my agreeableness, I was soon intimate with her, and she accepted my arm. As I paced her up and down the room, I asked her if she knew the daughter of General S——, who was near us. She replied in the affirmative, and I requested an introduction, which was immediately complied with, and I offered Miss S—— my other arm, and paraded them both up and down the room, making them laugh not a little.

"Now I'm going ahead, thinks I, and my old brown coat looks remarkably well.

"'Here is the President coming up,' said Miss E——. 'Do you know him?'

"I did once, a little, but he must have forgotten me, since I have been in South America so long.'

"The President came right up to us and addressed the young ladies; I made a sort of half bow.

"'You don't recollect Mr.——?' said Miss S——.

"'I recollect the name well,' replied the President. 'You are well supported, Mr. ——; you have the Navy and Army on each side of you.'

"'And the Highest Officer of the State before me,' replied I, with a low bow. 'I ought, indeed, to feel proud. It makes amends for all the privation that I underwent in my last campaign with General Bolivar, for the general and his aid-de-camps fared no better than the meanest soldier.'

"That last was a hit. I did not say that I was aid-de-camp to Bolivar, but they thought proper to fancy so; the President made me a bow, and, as it appeared, he wanted to have some information from that quarter; and he asked me many questions, all of which I was able to answer with precision. After a quarter of an hour's conversation, during which the whole room were wondering who it was that was so intimate with the President, and many were trying to catch what was said, the President presuming, as Bolivar's aid-de-camp, that I could give him information upon a certain point, and not wishing to have the answer public, said to the young ladies, 'I am going to do a very rude thing; I wish to ask a question which Mr. —— would not like to reply to except in strict confidence; I must take him away from you a minute or two. I beg you pardon Mr. ——, but I feel and shall be truly grateful for the great sacrifice you will make in giving up for one moment such charming society.' I fear the loss will only be on my part,' said I to the young ladies, as I dropped their arms and followed the President to a vacant spot near to the orchestra. The question which the President put to me was one which I could not well answer, but he helped me out of the difficulty by answering it himself according to his own views, and then appealing to me if he was not correct. I replied that I certainly was not at liberty, although I had left the service of General Bolivar, to repeat all that I knew; 'fortunately,' continued I, bowing, 'where such clearsightedness is apparent, there is no occasion for the question being answered.' 'You are right, Mr. ——, I wish all those about me had your discretion and high sense of honour,' replied the President, who had one of my new brass buttons between his thumb and finger; 'and I perceive by your reply, that I was also right in my conjecture. I am such obliged to you, and trust I shall see you at Government House.' I bowed and retired.

"I am going ahead now, at all events, thought I, as every one was looking at me as I retreated. I had been walking arm-in-arm with the daughters of the two first officers of State; I had been in confidential communication with the President, and that before all the *elite* of Washington. I can now venture to order another suit of clothes, but never will forget you, my old brown coat.

"The next day the tailor came to me; he had heard what had taken place at the ball, and I amended my wardrobe. Everybody came to me for orders, and I ordered every thing. Cards were left in showers; I was received everywhere, the President was my friend, and from that moment, I went ahead faster and faster every day, till I am, as you now see, well off, well married, and well up in the world.

"Now I do pertinaciously declare that it was all owing to the old brown coat; and I have kept this cuff, which I show now and then to my wife, to prove I am grateful, for had it not been for the old brown coat, I should never have been blessed with her for a companion."

"But ——," said his wife, round whose waist he had gently encircled his arm, "the old brown coat would have done nothing without the velvet collar and new brass buttons."

"Certainly not, my dear."

"And they would not have effected much without they had been backed by——"

"What?"

"*Impudence*," replied the lady, giving him a slight slap on the cheek.

[CONCLUDED.]

From the Boston Weekly Messenger.

THE CUMBERLAND COAL REGION.

Extract of a letter dated
PHILADELPHIA, Nov. 2, 1845.

Our boat drawn by three horses, moved off at a good pace along the canal, which as you are aware, follows the Maryland shore of the Potomac, occupying the narrow space between the river and the precipitous ridge, which borders it very closely on the north, along very nearly its whole extent. The canal through nearly its whole course proceeds along the immediate bank of the river, deviating from it occasionally for short distance, and thereby shortening its course. We entered at once, on leaving Georgetown, into a mountainous and rocky region, wild and picturesque, almost entirely destitute of inhabitants. This general character of the route is continued almost unbroken until you pass the Blue Ridge, which is broken through by the Potomac at Harper's Ferry, distant 60 miles from Georgetown.

The falls in the river are most precipitous, and the locks in the canal most frequent in the very vicinity of the capital. Within the first twelve miles there are no less than 17 locks, averaging here about 10 feet lift. Within this distance on a bend in the river, which carries it to a distance of half a mile from the course of the canal, and secluded within the native forest, which is unbroken except by immense rocks, without the appearance of the slightest building, or any work of man, are to be found the Grand Falls of the Potomac.—They are not visible from any point on the canal, but you are notified by their continual roar of your approach to them, when at a distance of some miles. We of course made them a visit, leaving our bark at the nearest lock and passing over a winding path, slightly marked through the rocky forest, by the tread of a few foot travellers. It is a sight well worth being visited, even at the expense of a much more difficult journey. The great volume of the waters of the Potomac rushes over the immense irregular rocks, not in a single precipice, but in broken falls, which lash the whole river into a foam of uniform whiteness.—The whole fall exceeds, I believe, 60 feet, and it presents from various points, a great number of views of striking wildness, and even grandeur. I wonder much that it is not a place of greater resort, especially by visiters at the capital of the Union, which is at a distance of but a dozen miles.

I should far exceed the limits of a letter, if I were to attempt to describe the varied features of this interesting route along the bank of this vast and precipitous river, which is almost continually in view from the boat, as it passes along the canal.

I was at once struck with the excellence and permanent character of all the works on the canal. The locks, aqueducts, culverts, and piers, are all of a highly finished and substantial hammered stone masonry, laid in hydraulic cement, entirely unaffected by the time which they have already endured, and apparently imperishable.—The character of the masonry, both in the material and finish, is somewhat inferior on the lower and first constructed portion of the work, than on the upper and more recent portions. The banks and towpath are well formed, of an excellent material, impervious to water, & little affected by rain or frost. Nearly the whole tow-path appears to retain its original finish, and it has nearly the hardness and consistency of a perfect McAdamized road. This remark will apply equally to the finished portion of that section of the canal to which the water has not yet been admitted and which have remained in their present state without repairs for five years. This careful finish and particularly the excellence of the material which consists in a very large proportion, of the broken and disintegrated masses of slate rock, which are excavated for forming the bed of the canal, mixed and underlaid throughout, with a material which renders the bed of the canal, as well as its banks, impervious. The route of the canal is remarkable for being crossed by very few roads or bridges of any kind. If I mistake not there are not more than three bridges across the canal, with the exception of the two crossings of the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road, from one end of it to the other. This is owing to the small population along the course of the Potomac, and the few ferries which cross it.

The Canal is six feet in depth throughout its whole extent. Its width, for the distance of 60 miles from Georgetown to Harper's Ferry, is 60 feet at the water surface, and 42 feet at the bottom. From Harper's Ferry to Dam No. 5, a distance of 47 miles, the width at the top is 50 feet and at the bottom 32 feet. From the latter point to Cumberland, a distance of 77 1-2 miles, the top width is 54 feet, and the bottom 30 feet. The aggregate ascent from Georgetown to Cumberland, which is overcome by 75 locks of different lifts averaging a little more than eight feet, is 609 feet. The locks have each a chamber of 15 feet in width in the clear, and 100 feet in length, and as I before remarked, they appear to be built in the best and most durable style of masonry. They are planned with a view to the future construction of a double lockage should it ever become necessary from the amount of transportation at a future period. The canal and locks are adapted to the passage of boats of from 80 to 100 tons burden. It is fed by inlets from the Potomac, to which the water is diverted by means of dams, constructed across the whole width of the river. The river in its whole extent to Cumberland is of great capacity, and its waters are granted, I believe without reservation, by the Legislature of Maryland, which has jurisdiction of the river, and perhaps also by that of Virginia, to the uses of the Canal. A very small proportion of the numerous sites or water power, along the river, are appropriated for manufacturing purposes. The water in the river appears to be ample for all the future uses of the Canal, in the driest seasons, with the aid of some improvement in the dams, should the demand for the supply of the lockage become great.—The river is subject to very high freshets, but the Canal is guarded by being placed at a high level above the bed of the river.

The equipment for our excursion on the canal was not adapted to a high degree of speed. Our usual pace was from four to five miles an hour, with a delay of about five minutes at each lock—the actual period from the shutting to the opening of the lock, being from three to four minutes.—At a distance of some forty miles from our starting point, the mountainous enclosure on our right was broken by the valley of the river Monocacy, in which is situated the fine manor of the late Mr. Carroll, now inherited by his family. It consists of upwards of 12,000 acres of excellent land, a large part of it covered by a noble oak forest, and the residue under a good state of cultivation and affording excellent crops of wheat. It is occupied by farmers on lease. In this valley, at a distance of a dozen miles from the Potomac, is the city of Frederick, heretofore the second, now the third town in population of the State of Maryland.

At the western border of the valley of the Monocacy (which name must be accented of the second syllable) we meet the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road, which there for the first time strikes the river, at a distance of about 65 miles from Baltimore. From this point to Harper's Ferry, the construction of the canal was difficult and expensive, in consequence of the very narrow space which was forced between the bed of the river, and the precipitous rock of mountain which encloses it on the north. The difficulty was increased by the contest which arose between the canal and rail road companies, for the right of passage through this channel, it being far too narrow for either. The canal company claimed the right, on the ground of priority of grant, and the rail road on that of priority of possession and actual location of their route. The question was submitted to the judicial tribunals, and decided in favor of the former, but the contest was subsequently compromised, to the advantage of both parties, by an arrangement under which the canal company constructed their work in such manner as to furnish a graded bed for the railroad, on the payment of a large stipulated price for the work by the rail road company. The sum thus paid was $268,000. Passing over this interesting portion of the route after it was dark, (our regret for which was diminished by the fact that we had all previously enjoyed the opportunity of viewing it from the railroad,) we arrived at Harper's Ferry at 10 o'clock at night. We there found very comfortable quarters, at the large public house at which the travellers on the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road take their hasty dinner.

I cannot stop to describe to you this celebrated manufacturing town of the Old Dominion. It would be a superfluous labor, if I had time for it, as there are few places in the country more fully described in published works. It is chiefly remarkable for its striking natural features, the site of the town being formed by the breaking through of the mountain ridge, to afford a passage for the waters of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers which here unite. The town itself is crowded into the minute space which is spared by the waters of the two rivers, at the point of junction—the widest space which could be obtained, between the river and the overhanging rock, being occupied by the workshops of the U. S. Armory.

When the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road, which here crosses both the canal and the Potomac at a considerable elevation was built, it was found necessary to create a space for it, by building a massive wall into the river, on the outside of the armory. The Winchester Rail Road, which unites with the Baltimore and Ohio upon the bridge, also steals a passage in some way at the left along the precipitous bank of the Shenandoah, which passage had been previously occupied by the buildings of the town. The canal continues its course along the north bank of the river, under a rock which overhangs it, of some hundred feet in elevation, only less crowded than the rail road, which from this point occupies the Virginia bank, by not having been previously occupied by buildings. You will recollect that the canal follows the Maryland shore from beginning to end.

At an early hour on Tuesday morning we resumed our navigation, and in a short time entered that vast and rich valley between the Blue Ridge and North Mountain, which constitutes one of the finest and most productive agricultural portions of the United States. It extends far into Virginia, in a south westerly direction, and towards the north east across the State of Maryland, through Pennsylvania, crossing the Susquehannah and Schuylkill, and terminates, I believe, near Easton on the Delaware. It includes some of the finest wheat and corn lands of the three States. I have crossed it both in Virginia and Pennsylvania when covered with heavy crops of wheat and corn, and have rarely seen lands of equal and so uniform productiveness. The county of Jefferson on the south, and of Washington on the north of the river, are the richest agricultural counties of their respective States. Here the canal receives its first supplies of agricultural produce, for transportation to the District of Columbia. The first town of any importance whence this produce is received upon the canal is Shepherdstown in Virginia. The river is entered by a lock above the Feeder Dam at this place, and canal boats easily cross the river to the landing below the town.

Here I regret to be under the necessity of interrupting my narrative, which I shall resume at the first hour of leisure, for the purpose of giving you a short account of my travels along the unfinished portion of the canal, and of my visit to Cumberland, and to the Iron Works and Coal Mines above that place.

FOREIGN NEWS.

ARRIVAL OF THE BRITANNIA.

THIRTEEN DAYS LATER FROM EUROPE.

VERY IMPORTANT NEWS.

The steamship Britannia arrived at Boston on Thursday afternoon, having left Liverpool on the 4th inst. The London dates are to the 3d, and Paris to the 1st instant.

The Crops in Great Britain.—The condition of the public mind in England, growing out of the failure of the crops may be inferred from the annexed article, copied from the Liverpool Times of the 4th instant:

FAMINE EXPECTED IN ENGLAND.—Hitherto, the cycle of the seasons has befriended Sir Robert Peel. Four good harvests in succession have filled his exchequer—filled the stomachs of the liges—*made the nation prosperous*—the people contented. Alas! the scene is changed—the evil day has come upon him, and has found him unprepared to face it.—Famine—grim, horrible, destroying famine—seems impending. Fears have seized the public mind. In Ireland matters look appalling—in England gloomy. The granaries of the continent are exhausted. The corn fields of the Vistula, the Danube, and the Lake, are barely sufficient for the local wants of the inhabitants. The nation is in commotion; and the cry of "open the ports and let in corn, duty free!" is heard, on all sides, reverberated from every part of the empire. The "pressure from without" has made itself heard in Downing street; and faith in the sliding scale—Peel's sliding scale—is gone forever. A third of the potatoe crop in Ireland is destroyed.

The Government has sent scientific professors to the scene of the mischief, and the awful truth is out that this large portion of the people's food—the esculent that Cobbett abhorred—is unfit for use. What is to be done in this terrible, this unlooked for emergency?—"Open the ports!" is the exclamation; and there stands the shivering Premier, like a reed in the wind, paralysed between affection for his sliding scale and the horrors of public famine. There he is, balancing the *pros* and *cons*. But necessity is superior to consistency, superior even to law. The ports must be opened. O'Connell, who assumes to be the tribune of the Irish people, goes beyond this. He demands a grant of public money to the extent of a million and a half, to be expended in the purchase of food—he calls for a tax of fifty per cent. on the absentees, and a tax of ten per cent. on the residents—he asks for the prohibition of corn and provisions leaving the island—and the prevention of distilleries consuming grain. Large demands these, will they be conceded? A day or two will solve the question; and in the meantime speculation will find a wide margin for the exercise of its ingenuity.

The sliding scale—that cunning scheme to make food artificially dear—is in the crisis of its fate.—Swept away now, as it will be, its re-imposition, with the views which the public entertain, (and which conservative and even agricultural members have tardily adopted,) will be found impossible. It is gone forever. In future years a small fixed duty may be imposed—the sliding scale never. Every thing proclaims the speedy extinction of the sliding scale—the tone of the government organs, the language of the professed supporters of the ministry, the feeling in the public mind. It has long been seen and foretold that the first season of scarcity would fix its doom. So it has. Peel is a good actor; his "shivering" is probably stimulated, not real. Placed between cross fires, exposed on his flank and his rear, it is necessary that he should play his part so as not to appear to give a triumph to either party. This he has done, this he is doing.

Opening of the Ports.—A most important rumor circulates in select circles in the city, relative to the terms on which foreign grain and flour are to be admitted for home consumption by the order in Council expected out to-morrow. If we are correctly informed, the following will be the scale laid down—wheat 4s.; barley 2s.; oats 1s; beans and peas 2s. per qr., and flour 2s. per sack. This order will release about one million quarters of grain and flour in bond in the United Kingdom, 170,000 barrels of flour on the way from the United States, 150,000 barrels from Canada, and 60,000 quarters of wheat from the Baltic, besides other supplies, which may perhaps reach before the winter sets in. The duty to-day is returned at 16s.—*London Globe.*

Admission of Indian Corn.—The chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce, Liverpool, has received a letter from Lord Sandon, expressing his Lordship's approval of the memorial to the Privy Council in favor of admitting Indian corn. His Lordship thinks that such a course on the part of their government would greatly strengthen in America the hands of those who advocate the relaxation of the tariff.

The failure of the potatoe crop becomes more and more disastrous, and in Ireland especially it will cause a general and distressing misery. It will be seen that so pressing has the necessity for a remedy, and a supply of other food become, that Cabinet Councils have been held at which the proposition of opening the ports of the Kingdom for the admission of Breadstuffs DUTY FREE, has been discussed, and it is very probable that it will be carried into effect.

Trade, in the manufacturing districts, is prostrated. In Liverpool the Cotton market was quiet. American Cottons had not varied essentially in price. In American provision there were no important changes. Dealers were waiting the action of the government upon the duties. In American wool, however, there were some buyers, and the trade was apparently improving.

The news from China is unimportant.

Accounts from Copenhagen state that the disease in the potatoes is spreading more and more in Denmark, as in Lunen, Lolland, Falster, and likewise Sealand, especially in Amak, near Copenhagen. It has likewise appeared in the Duchie. It is stated that the distase is beginning to show itself in Sweden.

The London *Times* of the 3rd instant, contains the report of the Commissioners appointed by the Government to investigate the actual condition of the potato crop. They state that the best use to be made of the diseased potatoes is the extraction of *starch* from them, and express the opinion that starch, by being mixed with oatmeal, may be converted into an excellent and economical article of food. They recommend the preparation of establishments for its manufacture, and also the erection of *kilns*, to dry the potatoes, as in that way they may be preserved for a much longer time.

TERRIBLE RAILWAY REVULSION.—There has been a fearful revulsion in the Rail-road mania with which Great Britain has been pervaded for some time past. The Liverpool Times thus announces the event and its consequences:

The railway mania has received its *quietus*. Something like a panic has overtaken the speculators in iron highways. Now that the reaction has come, it brings in its train ruin and devastation, and bankruptcy to thousands. But the end is not yet. A more gigantic system of swindling has rarely been seen in these latter days, and the number of "respectable" persons who have lent their names to support bubble companies, make us blush for the cupidity of our common humanity. The *Times* has been foremost in this work of "flattering the Volcans."

It matters little what motives may have prompted the potentates of Printing house Square to sound the tocsin; whether jealousy of their contemporaries, or vexation that they did not participate equally in the spoil, or a determination to destroy the game of those who did—all this is beside the question. "We try the act, the motive Heaven can judge." The only regret is, that it was not done sooner.

The Bank of England, the critical state in which the food of the country has been placed by the harvest, and the state of the potato crop; above all, and beyond all, the ridiculous experiments which the projectors of the numberless moonshine companies made upon the common sense of mankind—these causes, irrespective of the diurnal monitor, have forced the declension to its present point. The wreck of fortune and of character which this temporary insanity has produced, will be felt long after the causes that produced it have passed away.

As a proof of the extent to which this huge system of swindling has been carried it may be mentioned that even ladies were not exempt from its influence. The female friends and relatives of those who pulled the wires of certain imposing puppet schemes, were in the daily habit of haunting the purlieus, and offices of the share-brokers in the Metropolis, to watch the market, in order to turn their letters of allotments to the best account! One of the railway papers mentions a certain batch of female speculators who contrived to realize, by this kind of chicanery, during the height of the mania, the astounding sum of £500,000.

Now that people have time to reflect and to analyze, they find that out of thirty three sets of provincial committees, the name of one party appears 23 times; the names of two others, 19 times; of three,

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