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THE

MONIKINS.

BY

J. FENIMORE COOPER.

1898

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"Then thou knewest her?" said the Knight.

"Not I," answered the Squire; "but the person who told me the story said it was so true and certain, that if ever I should chance to tell it again, I might affirm upon oath that I had seen it with my own eyes."—*Sancho Panza.*  
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COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

NEW EDITION.

NEW YORK:
STRINGER AND TOWNSEND.

1856

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MONIKINS.

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1835, by

CAREY, LEA, AND BLANCHARD,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for
the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

INTRODUCTION.

It is not improbable that some of those who read this book, may feel a wish to know in what manner I became possessed of the manuscript. Such a desire is too just and natural to be thwarted, and the tale shall be told as briefly as possible.

During the summer of 1828, while travelling among those valleys of Switzerland which lie between the two great ranges of the Alps, and in which both the Rhone and the Rhine take their rise, I had passed from the sources of the latter to those of the former river, and had reached that basin in the mountains that is so celebrated for containing the *glacier* of the Rhone, when chance gave me one of those rare moments of sublimity and solitude, which are the more precious in the other hemisphere from their infrequency. On every side the view was bounded by high and ragged mountains, their peaks glittering near the sun, while directly before me, and on a level with the eye, lay that miraculous frozen sea, out of whose drippings the Rhone starts a foaming river, to glance away to the distant Mediterranean. For the first time, during a pilgrimage of years, I felt alone with nature in Europe. Alas! the enjoyment, as all such enjoyments necessarily are amid the throngs of the old world, was short and treacherous. A party

came round the angle of a rock, along the narrow bridle-path, in single files; two ladies on horseback, followed by as many gentlemen on foot, and preceded by the usual guide. It was but small courtesy to rise and salute the dove-like eyes and blooming cheeks of the former, as they passed. They were English, and the gentlemen appeared to recognize me as a countryman. One of the latter stopped, and politely inquired if the passage of the Furca was obstructed by snow. He was told not, and in return for the information, said that I would find the Grimsel a little ticklish; "but," he added, smiling, "the ladies succeeded in crossing, and you will scarcely hesitate." I thought I might get over a difficulty that his fair companions had conquered. He then told me Sir Herbert Taylor was made adjutant-general, and wished me good morning.

I sat reflecting on the character, hopes, pursuits and interests of man, for an hour, concluding that the stranger was a soldier, who let some of the ordinary workings of his thoughts overflow in this brief and casual interview. To resume my solitary journey, cross the Rhone, and toil my way up the rugged side of the Grimsel, consumed two more hours; and glad was I to come in view of the little chill-looking sheet of water on its summit, which is called the Lake of the Dead. The path was filled with snow, at a most critical point, where, indeed, a misplaced footstep might betray the incautious to their destruction. A large party on the other side appeared fully aware of the difficulty, for it had

halted, and was in earnest discussion with the guide, touching the practicability of passing. It was decided to attempt the enterprise. First came a female of one of the sweetest, serenest countenances I had ever seen. She, too, was English; and though she trembled, and blushed, and laughed at herself, she came on with spirit, and would have reached my side in safety, had not an unlucky stone turned beneath a foot that was much too pretty for those wild hills. I sprang forward, and was so happy as to save her from destruction. She felt the extent of the obligation, and expressed her thanks modestly but with fervor. In a minute we were joined by her husband, who grasped my hand with warm feeling, or rather with the emotion one ought to feel who had witnessed the risk he had just run of losing an angel. The lady seemed satisfied at leaving us together.

“You are an Englishman?” said the stranger.

“An American.”

“An American! This is singular——will you pardon a question?—You have more than saved my life—you have probably saved my reason——will you pardon a question?——Can money serve you?”

I smiled, and told him, odd as it might appear to him, that though an American, I was a gentleman. He appeared embarrassed, and his fine face worked, until I began to pity him; for it was evident he wished to show me in some way, how much he felt

ne was my debtor, and yet he did not know exactly what to propose.

"We may meet again," I said, squeezing his hand.

"Will you receive my card?"

"Most willingly."

He put "Viscount Householder" into my hand, and in return I gave him my own humble appellation.

He looked from the card to me, and from me to the card, and some agreeable idea appeared to flash upon his mind.

"Shall you visit Geneva this summer?" he asked, earnestly.

"Within a month."

"Your address——"

"Hotel de l'Ecu."

"You shall hear from me.—Adieu."

We parted, he, his lovely wife and his guides descending to the Rhone, while I pursued my way to the Hospice of the Grimsel. Within the month, I received a large packet at l'Ecu. It contained a valuable diamond ring, with a request that I would wear it, as a memorial of Lady Householder, and a fairly written manuscript. The following short note explained the wishes of the writer.

"Providence brought us together for more purposes than were, at first, apparent. I have long hesitated about publishing the accompanying narrative, for in England there is a disposition to cavil at extraordinary facts, but the distance of America from my place of residence will completely save

me from ridicule. The world must have the truth, and I see no better means than by resorting to your agency. All I ask is that you will have the book fairly printed, and that you will send one copy to my address, Householder-hall, Dorsetshire, England, and another to Capt. Noah Poke, Stonington, Connecticut, in your own country. My Anna prays for you, and is ever your friend. Do not forget us.

Yours, most faithfully,

HOUSEHOLDER."

I have rigidly complied with this request, and having sent the two copies according to direction, the rest of the edition is at the disposal of any one who may feel an inclination to pay for it. In return for the copy sent to Stonington, I received the following letter.

"On board the Debby and Dolly, Stunnin'tun,
April 1st, 1835.

AUTHOR OF THE SPY, Esquire,

Dear Sir,—Your favour is come to hand, and found me in good health, as I hope these few lines will have the same advantage with you. I have read the book, and must say there is some truth in it, which, I suppose, is as much as befalls any book, the Bible, the Almanac, and the State Laws, excepted. I remember Sir John well, and shall gainsay nothing he testifies to, for the reason that friends should not contradict each other. I was also acquainted with the four Monikins he speaks of, though I knew them by different names. Miss Poke says she wonders if it's all true, which I wunt tell her, seeing that a little unsartainty makes a woman rational. As to my navigating without geometry, that's a matter that was'n't worth booking, for it's no cur'osity in these parts, bating a look at the compass once or twice a day, and so I take my leave of you, with offers to do any commission for

you among the Sealing Islands, for which I sail to-morrow
wind and weather permitting.

Yours to sarve,

NOAH POKE.

To the Author of the Spy, Esquire,

— town, — County, York State.

P. S. I always told Sir John to steer clear of too much
journalizing, but he did nothing but write, night and day, for
a week; and as you brew, so you must bake. The wind has
chopped, and we shall take our anchor this tide; so no more
at present.

N. B. Sir John is a little out about my eating the mon-
key, which I did, four years before I fell in with him, down
on the Spanish Main. It was not bad food to the taste, but
it was wonderful narvous to the eye. I r'ally thought I
had got hold of Miss Poke's youngest born."

THE MONIKINS

CHAPTER I.

The Author's pedigree—also, that of his Father.

THE philosopher who broaches a new theory is bound to furnish, at least, some elementary proofs of the reasonableness of his positions, and the historian who ventures to record marvels that have hitherto been hid from human knowledge, owes it to a decent regard to the opinions of others, to produce some credible testimony in favor of his veracity. I am peculiarly placed in regard to these two great essentials, having little more than its plausibility to offer in favor of my philosophy, and no other witness than myself to establish the important facts that are now about to be laid before the reading world, for the first time. In this dilemma, I fully feel the weight of responsibility under which I stand; for there are truths of so little apparent probability as to appear fictions, and fictions so like the truth that the ordinary observer is very apt to affirm that he was an eye-witness to their existence: two facts that all our historians would do well to bear in mind, since a knowledge of the circumstances might spare them the mortification of having testimony that cost a deal of trouble, discredited in the one case, and save a vast deal of painful and unnecessary labor, in the other. Thrown upon myself, therefore, for what the French call *les pièces justificatives* of my theories, as well as of

my facts, I see no better way to prepare the reader to believe me, than by giving an unvarnished narrative of my descent, birth, education and life, up to the time I became a spectator of those wonderful facts it is my happiness to record, and with which it is now his to be made acquainted.

I shall begin with my descent, or pedigree, both because it is in the natural order of events, and because, in order to turn this portion of my narrative to a proper account, in the way of giving credibility to the rest of it, it may be of use in helping to trace effects to their causes.

I have generally considered myself on a level with the most ancient gentlemen of Europe, on the score of descent, few families being more clearly and directly traced into the mist of time, than that of which I am a member. My descent from my father is undeniably established by the parish register, as well as by the will of that person himself, and I believe no man could more directly prove the truth of the whole career of his family, than it is in my power to show that of my ancestor up to the hour when he was found, in the second year of his age, crying with cold and hunger, in the parish of St. Giles, in the city of Westminster, and in the United Kingdom of Great Britain. An orange-woman had pity on his sufferings. She fed him with a crust, warmed him with purl, and then humanely led him to an individual with whom she was in the habit of having frequent but angry interviews—the parish officer. The case of my ancestor was so obscure as to be clear. No one could tell to whom he belonged, whence he came, or what was likely to become of him; and as the law did not admit of the starvation of children in the street, under circumstances like these, the parish officer, after making all proper efforts to induce

some of the childless and benevolent of his acquaintance, to believe that an infant thus abandoned was intended as an especial boon from Providence to each of them in particular; was obliged to commit my father to the keeping of one of the regular nurses of the parish. It was fortunate for the authenticity of this pedigree, that such was the result of the orange-woman's application; for, had my worthy ancestor been subjected to the happy accidents and generous caprices of voluntary charity, it is more than probable I should be driven to throw a veil over those important years of his life that were notoriously passed in the work-house, but which, in consequence of that occurrence, are now easily authenticated by valid minutes and documentary evidence. Thus it is that there exists no void in the annals of our family, even that period which is usually remembered through gossiping and idle tales in the lives of most men, being matter of legal record in that of my progenitor, and so continued to be down to the day of his presumed majority, since he was indented to a careful master the moment the parish could with any legality, putting decency quite out of the question, get rid of him. I ought to have said, that the orange-woman, taking a hint from the sign of a butcher opposite to whose door my ancestor was found, had very cleverly given him the name of Thomas Goldencalf.

This second important transition in the affairs of my father, might be deemed a presage of his future fortunes. He was bound apprentice to a trader in fancy articles, or a shopkeeper who dealt in such objects as are usually purchased by those who do not well know what to do with their money. This trade was of immense advantage to the future prosperity of the young adventurer; for, in addition to the known fact that they who amuse are much bet-

ter paid than they who instruct their fellow-creatures, his situation enabled him to study those caprices of men, which, properly improved, are of themselves a mine of wealth, as well as to gain a knowledge of the important truth that the greatest events of this life are much oftener the result of impulse than of calculation.

I have it by a direct tradition, orally conveyed from the lips of my ancestor, that no one could have been more lucky than himself in the character of his master. This personage, who came, in time, to be my maternal grandfather, was one of those wary traders who encourage others in their follies, with a view to his own advantage, and the experience of fifty years had rendered him so expert in the practices of his calling, that it was seldom he struck out a new vein in his mine, without finding himself rewarded for the enterprise, by a success that was fully equal to his expectations.

“Tom,” he said one day to his apprentice, when time had produced confidence and awakened sympathies between them, “thou art a lucky youth, or the parish officer would never have brought thee to my door. Thou little knowest the wealth that is in store for thee, or the treasures that are at thy command, if thou provest diligent, and in particular faithful to my interests.”—My provident grandfather never missed an occasion to throw in a useful moral, notwithstanding the general character of veracity that distinguished his commerce.—“Now, what dost think, lad, may be the amount of my capital?”

My ancestor in the male line hesitated to reply, for, hitherto, his ideas had been confined to the profits; never having dared to lift his thoughts as high as that source from which he could not but see they flowed in a very ample stream; but thrown

upon himself by so unexpected a question, and being quick at figures, after adding ten per cent. to the sum which he knew the last year had given as the nett avails of their joint ingenuity, he named the amount, in answer to the interrogatory.

My maternal grandfather laughed in the face of my direct lineal ancestor.

“Thou judgest, Tom,” he said, when his mirth was a little abated, “by what thou thinkest is the cost of the actual stock before thine eyes, when thou should’st take into the account that which I term our *floating capital*.”

Tom pondered a moment, for while he knew that his master had money in the funds, he did not account that as any portion of the available means connected with his ordinary business; and as for a floating capital, he did not well see how it could be of much account, since the disproportion between the cost and the selling prices of the different articles in which they dealt was so great, that there was no particular use in such an investment. As his master, however, rarely paid for any thing until he was in possession of returns from it that exceeded the debt some seven-fold, he began to think the old man was alluding to the advantages he obtained in the way of credit, and after a little more cogitation, he ventured to say as much.

Again my maternal grandfather indulged in a hearty fit of laughter.

“Thou art clever in thy way, Tom,” he said, “and I like the minuteness of thy calculations, for they show an aptitude for trade; but there is genius in our calling as well as cleverness. Come hither, boy,” he added, drawing Tom to a window whence they could see the neighbors on their way to church, for it was on a Sunday that my two provident progenitors indulged in this moral view of humanity,

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