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Up the Rhine

Hood, Thomas

London, 1840

To Peter Bagster, Esq., Solicitor, Canterbury

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hand at *repartee*, gave in; and at this present writing his passport is made out for Rotterdam. In common with most invalids, he likes to have womankind about him; so he has invited his sister, a widow, to be of the party, and she in turn has stipulated for the attendance of her favourite maid. Your humble servant will make the fourth hand in this Rhenish rubber; and for your sake, I intend to score with pen and pencil all the points of the game.

My kindest regards to Emily—and something more; remember, should I ever get beyond prosing, all verses belong to her from,

Dear Brooke, your's ever very truly,

FRANK SOMERVILLE.

TO PETER BAGSTER, ESQ., SOLICITOR,
CANTERBURY.

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,—Being about to leave England, and most likely for good, it's my wish to give you a parting shake of the hand, as far as can be done by letter before I go, time and circumstances forbidding my personally taking a last farewell. At present our destination is only Germany; but inward feelings tell me I am booked for a much longer journey, and from which no traveller returns. As such I have informed all parties concerned, that my will is lodged in your hands; and, regarding the rest of my worldly affairs,

you had full instructions in my leave-taking letter of a month back. I had another terrible warning on Wednesday week, which, I am convinced, would have proved fatal, but providentially Dr. Truby was in the house at the time. What is remarkable, up to my seizure I had been in an uncommon flow of spirits, for Morgan and Dowley, and a few more of the old set, had come over, and we rubbed up our old stories and old songs, and I was even able myself to comply with the honour of a call for the Maid of the Valley. But the moment the company was gone, I had an attack ;— which is convincing to my mind of the correctness of the old saying about a lightening before death. Such repeated shocks must break down the constitution of a horse ; and, mark my words, *the next will be my whoo-ooop !*

In course, you will be as much surprised as I am myself, at a man with my dispensation undertaking a visit to foreign parts. But, between one and another, I was fairly mobbed into it, and have been in twenty minds to call back my consent. But a man's word is his word ; and, besides, I wish my nephew to see a little of the world. Poor Kate will go along with us, in hopes the jaunting about a bit will make her forget the loss of her husband, or, as she calls him, " Poor George." I did want the Doctor to join, and made him a handsome offer to that effect, over and above his expenses ; but he declined, on the plea of not leaving his other patients, which, considering the terms we

have been on for so many years, I cannot help thinking is a little ungrateful, as well as hard-hearted, for he knows I ought not to go ten miles without medical help at my elbow. But I suppose the constant sight of death makes all physicians callous, or they could not feel the pulse of a dying man, much less of an old friend, with a broad grin on their faces. Talking of departing, I trust to you to regularly pay up the premium on my life assurance in the Pelican. I did hope the policy would be voided by going abroad, which would have put a spoke in our tour; but, unluckily, it gives me latitude to travel all over Europe. But whether on an English road, or a foreign one, for it will never be in my bed, is all one. So every place being alike, I have left the choice to my nephew, and he has fixed on the river Rhine. In course, he undertakes the lingo, for I can neither parly vous nor jabber High Dutch; and though it's not too soon, mayhap, to look out for a new set of teeth, it's too late in life for me to get a fresh set of tongues. Besides, all foreign languages are given to flattering; and, as a plain Englishman, I should never find complimentary ideas enough to match with the words. There is the French inventory of my person in the passport, which I made Frank translate to me. You know what an invalid I am; but what with high complexion, and robust figure, and so forth, Mounseur has painted me up like one of the healthiest and handsomest young fellows in the county of Kent!

So you see I am down in the way-bill; and, provided

I get to the end of the first stage, you will perhaps hear from me again. If not, you will know what has happened, and act accordingly. If I last out to Holland, it will be the utmost. I have betted old Truby two dozen of hock wine, against port and sherry, I shall never get to Cologne. Well, God bless you, my old friend, and all that belongs to you, from, dear Peter,

Your very faithful humble servant,

RICHARD ORCHARD.

P.S.—If I forward a few gallons of real Hollands to your London agents, Drinkwater and Maxwell, do you think they will send it down to Canterbury?

TO GERARD BROOKE, ESQ., LEMINGTON, HANTS.

DEAR GERARD,—You will stare at receiving another letter dated London; but we have been delayed a week beyond our time by my uncle, and a mysterious complaint in his luggage, which, for several days, would not pack up for want of a family medicine chest that had been ordered of the celebrated Butler and Co., of Cheapside. Moreover, it appeared that the invalid had applied for more last words of medical advice from Dr. Truby; but, instead of a letter, who should walk in yesterday evening but the Doctor himself! The fact is, he has a real regard for his Malade Imaginaire, though he sets his face against the fancy, and had made this sacrifice to friendship. My uncle's eyes glistened