

A Visitor from Kentucky

by Joseph Alexander Altsheler, 1862-1919

Published: 1896
in »The Hartford Courant«
Re-published: 2016
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There was a stir in Wilkesburg when the Pearsons arrived from New York. Wilkesburg was a small town on a branch railroad in the hilly region of Kentucky, and time was never a very important commodity there. The people grew to be very large and lived to be very old. The representative of their district in congress was the greatest man they knew, though they heard of New York, and their notions of it were vague. These dim impressions they derived chiefly from their country newspaper, that fearless and vigorous opponent of the trusts and monopolists, of which New York was the home, it is said, and from their congressman, who delivered valiant and terrible blows at the plutocrats of the east when he spoke in the little courthouse square at Wilkesburg.

So, without any direct attempt at an analysis of their feelings, they thought of New York as a great but distant shadow, a place where most of the people were entirely given over to unholy greed and to all phases of wickedness. The idea was firmly imbedded in the minds of every man and woman in Wilkesburg that Wilkesburg and the thousands of other little places like it scattered between the Atlantic and the Pacific were the true salvation of the country and its rock of hope in a muddy sea. But the one name that conjured up horrors for them was Wall Street. It was the abode of burnt-in sin, a kind of witch's pot in which were brewed all the evil plans against the peace and welfare of the honest rural population. They were convinced that New York was rich and magnificent at their expense, and the subject was often discussed, though not in a very bitter way, but as a thing that it seemed must be, at the regular Saturday afternoon half holiday when the men gathered around the stove in the general store.

But their indefinable feeling of hostility toward New York did not blunt their appreciation of Jim Pearson. Jim was one of themselves, a venturesome Kentuckian who had gone to New York twenty years before, and had shown that he was as good and as smart as the best of the Yankees themselves. At intervals in those long twenty years reports of Jim's success would come back. No one else in Wilkesburg or the surrounding country had ever gone as far as New York, and at the caucuses around the stove expressions of admiration of Jim's daring were given with warmth and without reserve. It was a matter of personal pride to everyone that a Kentuckian and a native of their own Wilkesburg should invade New York and do so well. They heard that Jim had married in New York a few years after his arrival there, and they wondered how many children he had and what he intended to make of them. They did not suppose he would ever condescend to visit Kentucky again.

But when Tom Crockett, who was Jim's first cousin on his mother's side, received a letter from Jim saying that he and his wife were coming to pay him a visit, the news was known all over Wilkesburg in less than three hours. Mr. Crockett was a bachelor, but he kept house, or rather, an able colored woman kept it for him. In a low but roomy old place that his grandfather, who was one of the first settlers, had built. Mr. Crockett was somewhat „flustrated,“ as he described it, at the unexpected honor, but the ties of kinship and hospitality are very strong in Kentucky. The Kentuckian in the true blood would rather be a host than a guest, in order that he may do for the others, and Mr. Crockett was delighted. There was a mighty bustle in his house, and it was soon in fit condition to receive a kinsman who, a victor in a distant clime, was returning after many years to visit his birthplace and the friends of his youth. At least that was the way it was put by Jeremiah Brooks, who taught the public school and had poetical ideas.

The circle around the stove had a new topic. The silver question, the chances of the next presidency, and the relative bravery of the northern and southern troops in the civil war were retired temporarily in the presence of Jim Pearson. There were many opinions as to the effect of New York upon Jim. Young Sol Haselrigg, who was clerk in the store and has aspirations of his own, „reckoned that Mr. Pearson would be stuck up“ and would think himself too good for the Wilkesburg people. As for himself, young Mr. Haselrigg declared he would not take airs from

any man, even if he did live in New York. But Mr. Crockett, who was a chivalric man, stood up stoutly for Cousin Jim. He remembered him well. He was a „right peart“ boy, but he was genuine Kentucky stock and he didn't think New York would corrupt him.

Mr. Pearson and his wife arrived one sunshiny Saturday afternoon and Mr. Crockett was at the train to meet them. He recognized Cousin Jim at once, despite his New York clothes and the twenty years that had passed. Mr. and Mrs. Pearson were in travelling garb, and Wilkesburg did not have much chance to pass judgement on them just then, for Mr. Crockett bore them off hastily to his house. He „reckoned they might be right smart tired having come such a long journey and he guessed a good snack and a rest would pearten 'em up a heap.“

Mr. Crockett was much worried because they did not bring the children along as he wanted to have the whole family with him, but Cousin Jim explained that he disliked to impose on good nature and he had left the boys—he had only two children, and they were both boys—at home with friends.

The Pearsons reappeared the next day at the Methodist Church with Mr. Crockett and were subjected to a minute examination by the whole population of Wilkesburg. It was decided after services that their clothes were of very advanced type and were the acme of fashion. Young Mr. Haselrigg himself was convinced of that, for he noted with great care every detail of Mr. Pearson's attire. The verdict upon their manners was reserved for further acquaintance, as that was not a matter upon which Wilkesburg would pass lightly and without mature knowledge. There were many who thought that the Pearsons would be „stuck up,“ but if the evidence indicated to the contrary they were quite willing to change their opinions.

Mr. Crockett was over at the store on Monday morning, and he told the half dozen people who were gossiping there that Cousin Jim and his wife were all right. They had New York ways, it was true, but he guessed they couldn't help that, as Cousin Jim had lived in the big city twenty years and Mrs. Pearson had lived there all her life. „But they were taking right kindly to Wilkesburg and weren't tryin' to behave toploftical.“ This announcement created a distinct feeling in favor of the Pearsons, for Mr. Crockett was a man of substance and standing in Wilkesburg and what he said was to be received with respect and belief.

The Pearsons themselves in their own proper persons soon became better known to Wilkesburg and were received with considerable favor. They were rather fond of talking about the greatness of New York, and Cousin Jim showed how he had expanded, but Wilkesburg folks didn't mind that. Cousin Jim was one of them, and they were glad to hear of his achievements in the metropolis. He was admitted to the Saturday afternoon circle in the store on terms of amity and equality. It was soon discovered there that he had very little knowledge of politics, and the least expert among them could „corner him in an argyfication.“ But as they knew he had been engrossed for more than twenty years in important business affairs they did not lay this up against him. In fact, they were rather glad of it, for while they were willing to confess that Mr. Pearson had beaten them badly in the race for wealth, there was consolation in knowing that they were better politicians than he, for in Wilkesburg religion alone takes precedence of politics, and every man is a red-hot partisan.

After Wilkesburg had decided that the Pearsons were not „stuck up“ despite their worldly prosperity and the fashionable cut of their clothes, the people saw that the visitors had a good time, in so far as the resources of the village went. Mr Crockett, of course, was especially careful to administer to the wants and pleasures of his guests. He always remembered that Cousin Jim was Kentucky-born and would overlook in Wilkesburg the absence of the luxuries and splendors to which he was accustomed in New York. When the time came for them to return to New York he was sincerely sorry, but he knew the busy season was coming on and Jim's presence in the great store there was necessary. So he reluctantly assisted them in the preparations for their departure, urging them many times to come and see him and Wilkesburg again.

„We want you to visit us in New York,“ said Cousin Jim: „but I don't suppose you'll ever be travelling that far. To you it would look like going to the end of the world, wouldn't it?“

„I reckon it would,“ said Mr. Crockett. „New York's been gettin' along without me for a long time, an' I guess it'll have to keep on doin' it.“

Mr. Pearson laughed. Then they shook hands with Mr. Crockett and his friends and were off to New York, leaving Wilkesburg to discuss their sayings and doings for many months. Mr. Crockett was proud of the impression that Mr. Pearson and his wife had made.

There was an unexpected and heavy advance the following autumn in the price of White Hurley tobacco on the Louisville market. Mr. Crockett was an expert raiser of White Harley, and that season it had been his luck to put in an unusually large crop. When winter came and his tobacco was sold he found that he had a pretty sum of money to his credit in the bank. It was so much that he felt rich and able to take a holiday. There would be very little work to do until spring about the farm, which was in trim and tidy fix, and when he gave the matter further thought he was unable to see any good reason why he should not indulge his inclination.

Although he soon decided the first point Mr. Crockett was in a state of perplexity for some time over other points equally important. Where and how should he take his holiday? Such a thing as a set holiday had no part in the life of the five hundred people who constituted the population of Wilkesburg, and the only organized amusement ever known in the village was the debating society which met every Friday in the cold season, in the schoolhouse, and tried very earnestly to decide whether the Indian had suffered more wrongs than the Negro, or whether war or whiskey had done the greater injury to man. He might go hunting, but there was no novelty in that, and, besides, the game was becoming very scarce in the region around Wilkesburg.

The right idea came to him one evening when he was locking the barn door after two days of doubt and indecision. He would go to New York and see the Pearsons. Such a thing as going to New York had never occurred to him before. New York was so far away, and although it must be real he had never persuaded himself that it was.

Yet now that he thought of it there seemed to be nothing impossible in the idea. He had plenty of money in the bank and no kin to look reproachfully at if he should spend it. There was no reason why he should not take the trip.

There was much surprise in Wilkesburg when it became known that Mr. Crockett was going to New York, It had never been expected of him, and most of the people doubted his prudence. They argued that Mr. and Mrs. Pearson in Wilkesburg would come down to the Wilkesburg level, but in New York they would stay on the New York level, to which Mr. Crockett could not aspire. Consequently his feelings would get hurt. They gave him much good advice. But, although he trembled a little at his own audacity in going so far, Mr. Crockett refused to change his mind. In order to provide against any possible interference he wrote immediately to Cousin Jim that he was coming, and the next day followed the letter.

As he boarded the train the friendly station agent advised him to hold his chin mighty high or he would make his New York kinfolks ashamed of him and Wilkesburg. But Mr. Crockett told him not to be scared, that Cousin Jim was not stuck up and „would take his Kentucky ways kinder easy.“

The journey to Louisville was a trifling matter. Mr. Crockett had made it more than once before, and he knew what to do. But when he changed cars there and took a through train for New York, he began to lose some of the high confidence, with which he had left Wilkesburg. This was the first time he had seen the interior of a sleeping car, and when the porter prepared his berth he approached it with fear and hesitation. At home he was considered a tall man in a tall community, and when sleep found him long after midnight, he lay with his knees against the top of his berth.

Mr. Crockett triumphed over all the difficulties for the journey, but when he left the train at Jersey City and found Cousin Jim waiting for him, his New York relative was as welcome as the sight of water in a thirsty land.

„I just received your letter this morning,“ said Cousin Jim. „It was a big surprise. I never thought you'd come this far. I would have telegraphed you, but it was too late, as I knew you were already on the way. So I told Mary to make ready for you while I came over to meet you.“

„Oh, 'twasn't worth while to spend money on the telegraph company. I managed the trip all right,“ said Mr. Crockett heartily. „I knew you'd be powerful glad to see me, 'cause I recollect how pressin' you was for me to pay back that visit you made me. How's Mary and the boys?“

„Oh, they're very well,“ said Cousin Jim.

„You 'pear to be a little peaked yourself,“ said Mr. Crockett, looking critically at his companion. Cousin Jim was a thin and rather small man with nervous and uncertain manners. There was no color in his cheeks and his flesh looked flabby. Mr Crockett could have crushed him in one hand. But he was all brain, Mr. Crockett had explained on the occasion of his visit to Wilkesburg. It was these thin, nervous little men who did great things. Jay Gould had been a thin, little man. Mr. Pearson wore black clothes somewhat faded.

„I'm glad to see you're not puttin' on style an' takin' the shine out of me,“ said Mr. Crockett.

„Oh, no,“ said Cousin Jim, with a little smile; „I'm not much of a follower of the fashions here in New York. I like to be plain, and I stick to my working clothes here.“

„You do credit to your Kentucky raisin‘, Cousin Jim,“ said Mr. Crockett, „and, besides, people in big business don‘t have much time to bother with fashions, I guess, ‘less they‘re on a holiday.“

Mr. Crockett’s train had arrived in the night, and the trip on the ferry over the river was one of interest and delight. Before him sparkling with many lights lay the great city, long and narrow like a gleaming sword blade thrust out into the sea. Mr. Crockett was glad that he had come to New York.

„I hope Cousin Mary hasn‘t put herself out for me.“ he said. „Tain‘t worth while to make and fuss and hustle over me. Just let a servant fix a bed for me to-night, and to-morrow when I‘ve played around on the grass awhile with the children I‘ll go down to the store and see how you boss things.“

„We have no yard,“ said Cousin Jim with some haste. „This is New York, you know. It’s not like Kentucky. Even the Vanderbilts and Astors don‘t have yards.“

Mr. Crockett was taken aback somewhat. Land must be mighty dear in New York, he said. When they reached the New York side they walked to the elevated road and entered a train that carried them several miles uptown.

Leaving the train they turned into a street which Mr. Crockett thought the great city of New York ought to light better.

„You mustn‘t expect much of us,“ said Cousin Jim, deprecatingly. „We don‘t go in for any great style. You know I‘m only a plain man from Kentucky and Mary looks at things just as I do.“

„That’s right! That’s right!“ said Mr. Crockett, with great heartiness. „A man oughtn‘t to be better‘n his raisin‘. No matter how well he gets along. New York hasn‘t spoiled you, Cousin Jim, an‘ I‘m mighty glad to see that it hasn‘t.“

They came to a large building with a plain brick front. Some ill-kept children were playing in the street and one of them raised the cry: „Country! Country!“ when the long-legged Kentuckian towering more than a head above Cousin Jim stalked up. But Mr. Crockett did not know that the cry was aimed at him, and his peace of mind was not disturbed.

Mr. Pearson stepped into the doorway. There were rows of tin tubes on either side of the narrow entrance. He pressed something fixed in a brass plate under one of the tubes. Mr. Crockett watched him with great curiosity, but the experience he had acquired on his journey, added to his native shrewdness, made him too cautious to ask questions. Nevertheless he was surprised when the door flew open, and he came very near to making some comment. But he restrained himself and followed Cousin Jim inside.

Mr. Pearson led the way up a narrow staircase. There was no carpet on the steps, and a close heavy odor as of air that had been breathed more than once filled the hall. A lamp glimmered feebly at the turning in the staircase.

„Cousin Jim is a little more saving‘ than I reckoned he was,“ thought Mr. Crockett, „but it’s just as well. I‘m a keerful man myself.“

They climbed up and up, and it seemed to Mr. Crockett that they would never come to the end of those steps. He was a muscular man and could have thrown Cousin Jim over his shoulder and carried him a quarter of a mile without feeling any overwhelming exhaustion, but he was not accustomed to climbing steps.

„You live pretty high up, ‘pears to me, Cousin Jim.“ he risked at last.

„Yes,“ said Mr. Pearson, with a faint smile; „It’s healthier, you know. The higher you go the better the air.“

Mr. Crockett had not thought of that. But the end of those steps came at last, and they knocked at a door five flights from the ground. They were welcomed by Mrs. Pearson, a small woman who was pallid and flabby like her husband.

Mr. Crockett was a gallant man and he did not forget the ties of kinship. He opened his arms and gave Mrs. Pearson a hearty embrace. Then he kissed her on the cheek. A little color came into her pale face.

„Powerful glad to see you, Cousin Mary,“ said Mr. Crockett, „and it perked me up mightily to see Cousin Jim, too, standin’ there on the platform when the train came up. I’d ahad a pesky hard time findin’ you all by myself in this great city. Now don’t you tucker yourself out foolin’ with my valise and overcoat. Just let your servant take ‘em and throw ‘em into the corner anywheres.“

„The fact is,“ said Mr. Pearson, „our servants left us yesterday and we haven’t been able to get others that suited us yet. Haven’t you read in the papers about the troubles we have in the cities with servants? Always dissatisfied, always striking. There’s no getting along with them. I really believe it’s easier sometimes to let them go entirely and do one’s own work.“

„That’s so! That’s so!” asserted Mr. Crockett cheerfully. „I wouldn’t have no slouchin’ servants foolin’ around me. I like doing my own work, but it might be different with Cousin Mary. She don’t ‘pear to be real strong.“

„Oh, yes, I am strong,“ said Cousin Mary. „My looks deceive you.“

In proof of her words she snatched up the valise and overcoat and disappeared with them down a dark and pinched little hall. Mr. Crockett was taken presently into the front room, where he struck twice against chairs and once against the wall. An oil lamp stood on the dresser and Cousin Jim apologized for the dimness of the light.

„It’s bad, I know,“ he said, „but the gas company is such a robber. Every month they’ll send in a bill for two or three times the amount of gas you really use. It’s not so much the money we mind, but it’s the principle of the thing. That’s the reason we had our meter taken out. It’s the only way you can fight these grasping corporations. Lots of millionaires on Fifth Avenue have done the same thing.“

Mr. Crockett admired Cousin Jim’s stand for principle. He had a great horror of all corporations, which he was convinced were ruining the country, and he was heart and soul with Cousin Jim in his fight against the gas company. But this did not drive away the sense of physical uneasiness which had seized him when he entered the room. He did not know where to put himself. The chairs seemed too small for his bulky frame, and he was afraid that if he stretched out his legs they would reach from one wall to the other. Mr. Crockett was accustomed to wide areas, and he felt suffocated.

Mrs. Pearson spread a white cloth on a small table and brought in some coffee and cold meat and bread and butter. Mr. Crockett was hungry, hungrier than he liked to say, and he pulled up the chair with alacrity when Cousin Jim invited him to attack the food. But he was surprised to see that Mr. and Mrs. Pearson took no hand at the knife and fork. He asked them to join him. He said he didn’t think it was manners for him to eat alone. But Cousin Jim shook his head.

„We ate dinner,“ he said, with the same faint little smile, „before I went down to the train to meet you. We ate so heartily that we really have no appetite now for anything more.“

Mrs. Pearson nodded assent.

Mr. Crockett turned to the meat and coffee again with a relieved conscience. He was surprised to find how extremely hungry he was. He was a very large man and required plenty of food. Slice after slice of meat and the bread and butter disappeared, and Mr. Crockett became conscious, presently, that Cousin Mary was watching him with keen, appreciative eyes. He reached the last slice of meat and wondered why Cousin Mary did not bring more. But she made no movement. Mr. Crockett was sorely tempted to eat that one remaining slice, but he had been taught in Kentucky that it was not good manners to take the last piece of food from the plate, and so, after a struggle, he let it alone. When he pushed his chair back, and while Cousin Mary was hurriedly taking the things away, he inquired about the boys.

„They’re asleep now,“ said Cousin Jim. „They have to rise always very early in the morning, and I make them go to bed soon after dark.“

„School must take up powerful early here,“ said Mr. Crockett, „if boys have to tumble out of bed that way. They must be mighty smart boys livin’ here in New York all their lives. Know Greek and Latin and all them things, don’t they?“

„I’ve taken them away from school,“ said Cousin Jim, exchanging glances with his wife. „I’m a practical man, you know. This is a workaday age. Boys can study books so much that they become unfit for real life; so I have put mine to work: I want to give them a training that will make them keen, hard-headed business men.“

There was sense in that, Mr. Crockett said, and nobody ought to know better than Cousin Jim. Still, it seemed a pity to make boys fend for themselves when so young. But as Cousin Jim stood up stoutly for his theory, and Cousin Mary supported him in it, he did not press the point. He said he was sorry he couldn’t see the boys until morning, but he reckoned he oughtn’t to disturb them. As it was late, and he was tired, he hinted that he would like to go to bed also.

Cousin Jim took him to his bedroom, and, setting a lamp on the little dresser, left him. Mr. Crockett looked at the room and the bed, and then cogitated deeply.

„When I lie down shall I stick my head or my feet out of the window,“ was the question. While giving it time to turn itself over in his mind he looked out at the interminable roofs and concluded once again that land must be mighty dear in New York.

Mr. Crockett was awakened early in the morning by a rasping of ropes and jangling of bells. He thought at first it was a fire, and leaped from the bed in alarm, striking his head against a projecting corner of the wall. But he soon decided that it was no fire. He could hear voices as if some one were shouting up a chimney. The voices were distinct enough for him to understand many of the words that were said. There was a threat about never sending up any more meat unless the last month’s bill was settled, and then a different voice was heard in expostulation and entreaty. Mr. Crockett did not catch the end of the discussion.

Mr. Crockett did not sleep any more, and was called to breakfast an hour later. The boys were there, small and sharp-faced like their parents. Mr. Crockett

greeted them with affection, for he was a warm-hearted man, but he could not say that he took to them very much. They seemed too old for their years. Jim ought to have let them stay at school longer. There was such a thing as crowding a boy too much.

The breakfast consisted of coffee, bread and butter, and some thin slices of bacon.

„We’ve grown out of that old Kentucky way of eating a big meal at breakfast,“ said Cousin Jim. „It’s a very bad habit. Awful on the digestion. The Europeans, who know much more about the art of eating than we do, have only bread and butter and coffee or tea at breakfast. You country people suffer terribly from dyspepsia, and it’s all caused by overeating.“

Mr. Crockett admitted that Cousin Jim might be right. Nevertheless, he was very hungry when the breakfast was over. The boys slid away so quietly that he did not notice their absence until they had been gone several minutes.

„I s’pose you have ‘em in the business with you, so they can take charge of it when you feel like retiring,“ hazarded Mr. Crockett.

Cousin Jim did not deny the correctness of the supposition. The breakfast being finished, it was suggested that Mr. Crockett go down to Central Park and spend the morning there. His host and hostess were sorry they could not go with him, but one was compelled to look after the business and the latter, owing to the temporary lack of servants, could not neglect her household duties. But Mr. Crockett demurred. Central Park could wait. He believed he would go down with Cousin Jim and see how a big dry goods store was run.

Cousin Jim, with rather more vigor than he had shown at any time before, sought to get this notion out of Mr. Crockett’s head. Business was such a commonplace thing, he said, that a mere looker-on was bound to be bored. But Mr. Crockett did not think so. He could see grass and trees every day in Kentucky as good as any they had in Central Park, and the dry goods store would interest him much more. He was not to be dissuaded.

They went down together on the elevated road and entered the big dry goods store in the heart of the shopping district, just as the clerks were gathering for their work. Back in the rear of the great room Mr. Crockett could see the high brass railing that surrounded the offices. But Cousin Jim did not go back there. He hung his hat in a niche and stationed himself like a soldier beside a table that stood in front of shelves loaded with rolls of cloth.

„Don’t you go back every mornin’ to see the other partners?“ asked Mr. Crockett.

„No,“ said Cousin Jim, a flush coming into his sallow cheeks. „We’ve had some trouble with salesmen at this counter and I’m looking after it myself to-day. I think you had better walk around the store and see the things.“

Mr. Crockett took his advice and strolled up and down the aisles, wondering if New York had enough people to buy all the goods in that big building. There were many girls behind the counters, and Mr. Crockett spoke gallantly to one of them, saying that he hoped Cousin Jim treated her well in the store.

„Cousin Jim,“ she asked, in surprise. „Who is that?“

„Why, Mr. Pearson; don’t you see him over there?“

„Oh, yes, he treats me all right,“ said the girl dryly. „We clerks don't complain of him.“

By and by a large man, almost as large as Mr. Crockett, but much more pompous, approached him. He displayed so much expanse of shirt bosom and carried himself with so much haughtiness, that Mr. Crockett concluded this must be the senior partner at least.

The large man tapped him on the shoulder and asked him if he wanted to buy anything. Mr. Crockett explained that he was a relative of Mr. Pearson, and had come down to see how he managed the establishment. „Oh!“ said the man, giving a rising inflection to the word. But he walked on, and presently when he passed Cousin Jim he said something to him that made his face flush again.

The store soon filled with customers, and there was such a great hurly burly that it made Mr. Crockett's head swim. He became tangled up two or three times in crowds of customers and clerks, and it seemed to him that he got in the way of everybody. He wanted fresh air, but he would not leave the store for the sight was interesting to him. Shrill-voiced little boys and girls shrieked „Cash! Cash!“ until his ears rang, and as one of the boys dashed past him he caught a glimpse of the face of Cousin Jim's eldest son.

After a while he wandered back towards the counter at which he had left Cousin Jim and found him still there. But Cousin Jim was so busy that Mr. Crockett would not disturb him just then. A woman was sitting on the stool in front of the counter and Cousin Jim was showing her the rolls of cloth. He had almost covered the counter with them, but she insisted on seeing more. He dragged them down from the shelves for her until the heap rose so high that only his head showed behind it. But still she was not satisfied, and she spoke very sharply to Cousin Jim, decrying the quality of his goods, and asking him why he showed her such stuff. Mr. Crockett wondered how Cousin Jim stood it so patiently, and was rather proud of his forbearance.

The woman looked at the goods some time longer, but she took nothing, and, expressing her dissatisfaction in blunt terms, rose up and left. Mr. Crockett was about to ask Cousin Jim if all the women in New York were like that, but he saw the large man with expansive shirt bosom approaching and he held back.

„Why did you not sell her some goods?“ asked the large man, angrily, of Cousin Jim. „You should never let anyone who comes to your counter go away without making a purchase.“

„But we did not have anything that she wanted,“ said Cousin Jim, deprecatingly.

„Then you should have sold her something that she didn't want,“ said the man, with increasing temper.

He said other things in a lower tone that Mr. Crockett didn't catch, and when he turned away Cousin Jim's countenance was very downcast. Mr. Crockett watched him for a moment or two and then drew near.

„I heard what that man said to you,“ he said. „Down in my part of Kentucky if a man talked to me that way I'd draw a gun on him.“

And Mr. Crockett's hand fell significantly on his hip pocket.

„But this is New York,“ said Cousin Jim, sadly, „and you can't shoot everybody who treats you badly.“

Mr. Crockett made no further remark. He left the store presently and spent the remainder of the day strolling along Broadway. He had intended to make a week's visit, but he stayed only two days. Cousin Jim feebly asked him to remain longer with him, but he wouldn't be persuaded.

When his train was well beyond the limits of Jersey City Mr. Crockett raised the car window and took a long, deep breath of the crisp, fresh air.

