

## NARRATIVE OF HIS BEARD

1

He and the others arrived in Valença at nine, where they stopped for breakfast and where nearly all the town's inhabitants collected to comment upon them. It so happened that he was the principal object of curiosity, with this unlooked for distinction arising from two circumstances. First, his wearing of a long

BEARD

and secondly, his blindness. These peculiarities produced numberless exclamations—such as, how could he travel, why did he travel, why did he wear such a

BEARD

and so forth—until they became so pressing that he was glad to get within closed doors.

2

He could well understand that a simple people—whose experience was limited to their own habits and who had never had an opportunity of intermixing with other nations—might indeed be startled by the novelty of a

BEARD

although their astonishment at the sight of a

BEARD

was not greater than his on discovering that they were destitute of such a dignified appendage, which in the torrid zone was at once an article of comfort and utility.

3

After a day's long journey, the luxury of immersing his face in cold water and leaving the

BEARD

half dry was most refreshing, the evaporation producing a reviving and agreeable effect.

4

Alone in Doctor Dickson's carriage, he was greatly surprised at the noise and confusion caused by fire-works in the street, crackers as loud as blunderbusses, and rockets so close to the carriage that he began to be alarmed for his

BEARD

only afterwards learning, upon inquiry, that this was the third and last day of a religious festival at one of the principal churches in Rio.

5

It was understandable, he thought, that in the absence of her husband, the lady would be alarmed at the uncommon if not barbarous appearance of his

BEARD

which gave him a very ferocious and brigand aspect.

6

He was not at all satisfied with the state of his head, while his denuded nose and lacerated lip were rendered very painful by the

contact of the night air, and he was therefore most sincerely thankful when the barking of dogs gave signal that he and the slave boy were approaching the environs of Cape Town. He spread alarm and consternation through the household, however, when he presented himself without a hat and with a silk handkerchief bound round his forehead, and with his clothes, face and

BEARD

covered in blood, and the little black boy trembling by his side, fearing punishment for his disasters.

7

And yet he could not forbear smiling at the curious picture their party must have presented to European eyes: Don Bastian, with his black face, attired in a sort of demi-British fashion, his head uncovered, his long black hair plaited and turned up like a woman's with a comb, while a servant held a huge umbrella over his head; and he on Don Bastian's arm, dressed in a short drab jacket, brown moleskin pantaloons, blue waistcoat, white boots, a broad brimmed straw hat and a long

BEARD

the tout ensemble well powdered with dust.

8

He was next seen at the consul's house preparing to depart, sitting on his mule with the guide he had hired alongside him, his strong frame, his manly English face, his sightless eyeballs and his grey

BEARD

giving him a noble appearance in the crowd of wondering Sicilians.

9

As they left the table d'hôte, a ministering garçon informed them that a blind gentleman had caught English accents at a distance and wished for the pleasure of speaking with fellow countrymen. They went to him and found a venerable man with a long

BEARD

who introduced himself as Mr. Holman, the blind traveller, on his way to Egypt. He averred that in the vicissitudes of the atmosphere and the feelings suggested by unseen objects, he perceived all the varieties of nature and art that could be detected with the eyes.

10

Knowing both men familiarly, Mr. Jerden took an opportunity to introduce them to each other, and as the one was blind and the other could not see, he advised the cultivating of a further intimacy by the mutual stroking of

BEARDS

a ceremony they performed with hearty laughter, and to the no small amusement of a little circle of admiring spectators.