

**MR. BILLY DOWNS
AND HIS LIKES**

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Mr. Billy Downs and his likes by Richard Malcolm Johnston

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"Proceeding thence to one of the trees near the gate, he alighted, hitched his beast, and, opening the gate, advanced modestly up the walk."—Page 53.

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AND HIS LIKES

BY
RICHARD MALCOLM JOHNSTON

New York
CHARLES L. WEBSTER & CO.
1892

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EDITOR'S NOTE
TO THE
TENTH VOLUME OF THE SERIES

Courteous Reader.—In our ramble along what might be called the literary lane of this Series, your cicerone may justly claim that his efforts at entertainment have been fairly successful. Starting with a merry "God-speed" from the prince of humorists, we soon found ourselves in the lively company of the prince of canoeists and his energetic young Kaiser. Mr. Bigelow's championship of a sovereign little understood in this country has proved effective, while his enthusiastic description of his romantic journey *Down the Danube* lightened many an hour of our way. Did not we also take part in those inspiring Hungarian dances, and foregather with the noble Lajos—or was it merely the listeners' fancy which made it seem so? Yet we were not allowed to forget that all this joyous living is but a peace in war, likely to be invaded at any moment by the hoarse growling of the Russian bear.

From such scenes of life and action it was restful to turn aside for an interval to the rock tomb of Walt

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Whitman. There we read to each other, not "sad stories of the death of kings," but the old bard's rhythmic self-personifications of Nature and Mankind, and his triumphant chantings of the future of These States. Then with lowered voices we follow him through many a hospital ward, the while he ministered to the spiritual and temporal wants of a nation's heroes.

Anon we resumed our walk, this time among a group of sunny-hearted Calabrian peasants. Strange, was it not, that we should understand their speech, while they seemingly chattered away in "that soft bastard Latin?" But the magic touch of their creator gave us the illusion as well as that too brief vision of iridescent Princess Humming-Bird.

Who is the quiet-looking fellow who joins us as the Italian voices die away in the distance; and how should we suspect that *he* would thrill us with that weird story of Rayel, the mind-reader? And further to pique our curiosity, he will not tell us whether it lies in the domain of fact, or in that of fancy.

Very plainly in the domain of fact is the discourse of our next companion, the man of scholarly brow and cheerful manner. Out of his wide store of learning he tells us of a Genoese, the Christ Bearer—whose high purpose has been so fruitlessly questioned of late—and points his story with the words of the Genoese himself, convincing us by their steadfast sincerity.