

**THE KING'S YARD;
A STORY OF OLD
PORTSMOUTH**

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The King's yard; a story of old Portsmouth by Walter Jeffery

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WALTER JEFFERY

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A STORY OF OLD
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THE KING'S YARD

& Story of Old Portsmouth

BY

WALTER JEFFERY

AUTHOR OF "A CENTURY OF OUR SEA STORY," ETC., ETC.

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CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. MRS. MILDWATER LETS HER ROOM	7
II. HOW AN AMERICAN WAS WELCOMED TO PORTS- MOUTH	19
III. AT PORTCHESTER	29
IV. MR. HILL IS INTRODUCED TO THE KING'S DOCKYARD	40
V. SURGEON BRAND	52
VI. MR. WARNER MAKES THE MOST OF HIS PRIVILEGES	64
VII. A PEDLAR AT PORTCHESTER	79
VIII. REMARKABLE BEHAVIOUR OF JOHN HILL	94
IX. BAD MATCHES	103
X. WHAT HAPPENED TO DOLLY	112
XI. WHAT HAPPENED ON THE LONDON ROAD	124
XII. WHAT THE PORT ADMIRAL THOUGHT OF IT	135
XIII. FLIGHT	149
XIV. FIRE	165
XV. "TAKEN OUT OF ORDINARY"	179
XVI. DR. BRAND SETS TO WORK	192
XVII. DR. BRAND SOLVES THE MYSTERY	209

1662018

CHAP.	PAGE
XVIII. DR. BRAND INTERVIEWS A GREAT MAN - -	222
XIX. WHAT CAME OF THE INTERVIEW - - -	234
XX. SCARS . - - - - -	244
XXI. THE TRIAL OF JACK THE PAINTER - -	256
XXII. TWO ENDINGS - - - - -	274

THE KING'S YARD

CHAPTER I

MRS. MILDWATER LETS HER ROOM

THE landlord of the "Help the Lame Dog over the Stile, by George Powditch," leant against the doorpost of the little tavern, which in those days stood at the corner of Havant Street, on Portsmouth Common. The oil lamp on the counter and the four dips in the windows made quite a brave show of light, and the tavern was the only place of public entertainment anywhere near the Dockyard gate; but, notwithstanding these attractions, the bar was empty. All the Dockyard men were gone home to their suppers, and the inn lay not in the way of chance customers.

Mr. Powditch, lost in thought, calculating the amount of his brewer's bill, suddenly pricked up his ears, for the sound of footsteps on the cobble stones told him that someone was walking fast along the

Portsmouth Road. Anyone coming this road so late must either have important business in the Yard, or else must be one of the officers living there; such persons were generally ready to gossip, and gossiping is dry work unless moistened with pots of ale.

Presently the owner of the footsteps, guided by the lights, steered a course straight for the inn, and stopped in front of its door.

"Good evening," said the landlord, making way for the stranger to enter, who took no notice of the movement, and only half turned towards Powditch as he answered :

"Good evening. Can you tell me where I can get a lodging hereabouts?"

"I can let you a bed."

"No doubt; but I want a room somewhere in a private house. Perhaps one or other of the Dockyard men would be glad of a respectable lodger."

Mr. Powditch looked at the man for a moment in some doubt as to his rank in life, for his dress and appearance were curiously contradictory. The stranger's long, snuff-coloured cloak of fine cloth, coming down almost to his ankles, was a garment such as the humbler classes seldom possessed. But then he carried no sword and wore a shocking bad hat. The soft black felt drooped over his eyes and half concealed his face, while a bundle hung over