Tales from Blackwood, Volume 7, by Various

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*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TALES FROM BLACKWOOD, VOLUME 7 ***
MY ENGLISH ACQUAINTANCE.

BY FREDERICK HARDMAN, ESQ.

[MAGA. FEBRUARY 1848.]

"I believe I have the pleasure of seeing Mr ----," said a voice in English, as I paused for a moment, my breakfast concluded, before the door of a Palais Royal coffee-house, planning the disposal of my day.

I looked at the person who thus addressed me; and, although I pique myself on rarely forgetting the face of an acquaintance, in this instance my memory was completely at fault. But for his knowledge of my name, I should have concluded my interlocutor mistaken as to my identity. I was at least as much surprised at the perfectly good English he spoke, as at having my acquaintance claimed by a person of his profession and rank. He was a young man of about five-and-twenty, attired in the handsome and well-fitting undress of a sergeant of French light dragoons. His brown hair curled short and crisp from under his smart green forage-cap, cavalierly placed upon one side of his head; his clear blue eyes contrasted with the tawny colour of his cheek, a tint for which it was evidently indebted to sun and weather; his face was clean shaven, save and except small well-trimmed mustaches and a chin-tuft. Altogether, he was as pretty a model of a light cavalryman as I remember to have seen: square in the shoulder, slender in the hip, well limbed, lithe and muscular. His carriage was soldierly, without the
exaggerated stiffness and swagger commonly found amongst non-commissioned officers of dragoons; and altogether he had a gentlemanly air which, I doubt not, would have made itself as visible under the coarse drugget of a private soldier, as beneath the garb of finer materials and more careful cut, which, in his capacity of maréchal des logis, or sergeant, it was permitted him to wear. But my admiration of this pretty model of a man-at-arms did not assist me to recognise him, although, whilst gazing at him, and especially when he slightly smiled at my visible embarrassment, his features seemed not totally unfamiliar to me. I looked, I have no doubt, considerably puzzled. The stranger came to my assistance.

"I see you do not remember me," he said. "Not above four years since we met, if so much; but four years, an African sun, and a French uniform, have made a change. I met you in Warwickshire, at George Clinton's. I have seen you once or twice since; but I think the last time we spoke was when cantering over Harleigh Downs. My name is Frank Oakley."

I immediately recollected my man. About four summers previously, whilst on a flying visit at a country house, I had formed a slight acquaintance with Mr Frank Oakley, who had then just come of age, and into possession--by the death of his father, which had occurred a twelvemonth previously--of a few thousand pounds. The interest of this sum, which would have been an agreeable and sufficient addition to a subaltern's pay or curate's stipend, or which would have enabled a struggling barrister to bide his briefs, was altogether insufficient to supply the wants and caprices of an idler, especially such an idler as Oakley. Master Francis was what young gentlemen fresh from school or at college, sucking ensigns, precocious templars, et id genus omne, are accustomed to call a "fast" man; the said fastness not referring, as Johnson's dictionary teaches us it might do, to any particular strength or firmness of character, but merely to the singular rapidity with which such persons get through their money and into debt. At the time I speak of, Oakley was going his fastest--that is to say, spending the utmost amount of coin, for the least possible value; indeed he could hardly have run madder riot with his moderate patrimony, had he cast his sovereigns into bullets and made pipe-lights of his bank-notes. But verily, he had his reward in the open-mouthed admiration of three or four younkers of his own standing, then assembled at Harleigh Hall, who looked up to him as something between a hero and an oracle; and in the encouraging familiarity and approval of one or two gentlemen of maturer age, who swore he was a fine fellow, and proved they thought so by winning bets of him at billiards, and by selling him horses that would have fetched "twice the money at Tattersall's," with other bargains of an equally advantageous description. Although we were four days in the same house, meeting each evening at dinner, and occasionally riding and walking in the same group, our acquaintance continued of the very slightest description, and I took my departure without anything approaching to intimacy having sprung up between us. Amongst the large party of visitors at the Hall, were not wanting persons of tastes more suited to my own than those of Oakley and his little knot of flatterers and admirers; and he, on his part, was far too much taken up with his newly-inherited fortune--which he evidently considered inexhaustible--with planning amusements, and inhaling adulatory incense, to pay attention to a man whom, as full fifteen years his senior, he doubtless set down as an old fellow, a "slow coach," and perhaps even as a member of that distinguished corporation known as the "Fogie Club." So that when we met in London, during the ensuing season, occasionally in the street and once or twice in a ballroom, a slight bow or word of recognition was all that passed between us. I could perceive, however, that Oakley still kept up the rapid pace at which he had started, and lived, with a few
hundreds a-year, as if he had possessed as many thousands. The proximity of my quiet club to the
fashionable and expensive one into which he had obtained admission, gave me many opportunities of
observing his proceedings, and those opportunities, in my capacity of a student of human nature, I did
not neglect. I had marked his career and ultimate fate in my mind, and was curious to see my
predictions verified, although I sincerely wished they might not be, for they were anything but
favourable to the welfare of Oakley, who, in spite of his follies, had generous and manly qualities. His
prodigality was not of that purely egotistical description most commonly found in spendthrifts of his
class. He would give a lavish alms to a whining beggar, as freely as he would throw away a handful of
gold on some folly of the moment or extravagant debauch; and I had heard an old one-armed soldier,
who sometimes held his horse at the club door, utter blessings, when he had ridden out of hearing, on
his kind heart and open hand. These and similar little traits that came under my notice, made me regret
to see him going post to perdition. That he was doing so, I could not for one moment doubt. His
extravagance knew no limit, and in six months he must have got through as many years' income.
Wherever pleasure was to be had, no matter at what price, Oakley was to be seen.--Upon a revenue
overrated at five hundred a-year, he kept half a dozen horses, a cab, and a strange nondescript vehicle,
made after an eccentric design of his own, and which everybody turned to look at, as he drove down
Piccadilly of an afternoon, on his way to the Park. He had his stall at the opera, of course, and an
elegant set of apartments in the most expensive street in London, where he gave suppers and dinners of
extravagant delicacy to thirsty friends and greedy danseuses. The former showed their gratitude for his
good cheer by winning his money at cards; the latter evinced their affection by carrying off the costly
nicknacks that strewed his rooms, and by taking his diamond shirt-pins to fasten their shawls. In short,
he regularly delivered himself over to the harpies. In addition to these minor drafts upon his exchequer,
came others of a more serious nature. He played high, and never refused a bet. Like many silly young
men (and some silly old ones), he had a blind veneration for rank, and held that a lord could do no
wrong. Even a baronetcy conferred a certain degree of infallibility in his eyes. No amount of
respectable affidavits would have convinced him that if Lord Rufus Slam, who not unfrequently
condescended to win a cool fifty of him at écarté, did not turn the king each time he dealt, it was only
because he despised so hackneyed a swindle, and had other ways of securing the game, equally
nefarious but less palpable. Neither would it have been possible to persuade him that Sir Tantivy
Martingale, "that prime fellow and thorough sportsman," as Frank admiringly and confidingly styled
him, was capable of taking his bet upon a horse which he, the aforesaid Sir Tantivy, had just made "safe
to lose." In short, poor Oakley, who, during his father's lifetime, had been little, if at all, in London,
thought himself excessively knowing and fully up to all the wiles and snares of the metropolis. In
reality he was exceedingly raw, was victimised accordingly, and, at the end of a few months in town,
found himself minus a sum that brought reflection, I suspect, even to his giddy head. I conjectured so,
at least, when, at the end of the season, I encountered him on a Boulogne steamer, looking fagged and
out of spirits. It was only a year since we had met at Harleigh Hall, but that year had told upon him.
Dissipation had driven the flush of health from his cheek, and his youthful brow was already
care-loaded. I spoke to him, and made an attempt to converse; but he seemed sulky and unwilling; and,
on reaching Boulogne, I lost sight of him. After a short tour, I went to winter at Paris, and there I
frequently saw him. He had forgotten, apparently, the annoyances that weighed on him when he left
London, and was again the gayest of the gay; living as if his purse were bottomless, and his Gibus the
wishing cap of Fortunatus. Nothing was too hot or too strong for him: rated a "fast man" in England, in
France he was held a *viveur enragé*. I did not much admire the society he selected. I saw him alternately with the most *roué* and dissolute young Frenchmen of fashion, and with an English set which, if it comprised men against whom nothing positively bad could be proved, also included others whose reputation was more than doubtful. At first he was chiefly with the French, whose language, from long residence in the country when a boy, he spoke as one of themselves; then he seemed to abandon them for the English clique, and then he suddenly disappeared. I no longer saw him pacing the Boulevard or riding in the Bois, or issuing at night from the Café Anglais, flushed with wine and bent on riotous debauch. All his former companions remained, pursuing their old amusements, frequenting the same haunts; but he was no more with them. I could not understand his leaving Paris just as the best season commenced, and at first I supposed him ill. But week after week slipped by, and, no Oakley appearing, I made up my mind he had departed, whither I knew not. I was rather vexed at this, for I had proposed watching him to the end of his career. Moreover, although we never spoke, and had almost left off bowing, my idle habit of observing his proceedings had given me a sort of interest in him. Once only, after his eclipse, did I fancy I caught a glimpse of him. I was fond of long rambles in the low and remote quarters of Paris, through those labyrinths of narrow streets, filthy courts, and rickety houses, where the character and peculiarities of the humbler classes of Parisians are best to be studied. Returning, after dark, from an expedition of this kind, I was surprised by a violent shower in a shabby street of the Faubourg St Antoine, and took refuge under a doorway. Immediately opposite to me was the wretched shop of a *traiteur*, in whose dingy window a cloudy white bowl of mashed spinach, a plate of bouilli, dry as a deal plank, and some triangular fragments of pear, stewed with cochineal and exposed in a saucer, served as indications of the luxurious fare to be obtained within. On one of the grimy shutters, whose scanty coat of green paint the weather had converted into a sickly blue, was the announcement, in yellow letters, that "Fricot, Traiteur, donne à Boire et à Manger;" whilst upon the other the hieroglyphical representation of a bottle and glass, flanked by the words "Bon Vin de Macon à 8 et à 10 S." hinted intelligibly at the well-provided state of Monsieur Fricot's cellar. It was one of those humble eating-houses, abounding in the French capital, where a very hungry man may stave off starvation for about the price of a tooth-pick at the Café or the Trois Frères, and where an exceedingly thirsty one may get intoxicated upon potato brandy and essence of logwood for a similar amount. It needs a three days' fast or a paviour's appetite to induce entrance into such a place. I was gazing with some curiosity at the windows of this poor tavern, through whose starred and patched panes, crowded with bottles, and backed by a curtain of dirty muslin, the waving of iron forks and spoons was dimly discernible by the light of two flickering candles, when the door suddenly opened, a man came out, heedless of the rain, which fell in torrents, and walked rapidly away. It was but a second, and he was lost in the darkness of the ill-lighted street, but in that second I thought I distinguished the gait and features of Frank Oakley. But my view of him was very indistinct, and I concluded myself misled by a resemblance. Since that day nothing had occurred to remind me of him, and for a long time I had entirely forgotten the good-hearted but reckless scamp, who for a brief period had attracted my attention.

Frank Oakley, then, it was, who now stood before me under the arcades of the Palais Royal. I held out my hand, with a word or two of apology for my slowness in remembering him.
"No excuse, I beg," was his reply. "Not one in twenty of my former acquaintances recognises the spendthrift dandy in the humble sergeant of dragoons, and in the few who do, I observe, upon my approach, a strong partiality for the opposite side of the street. They give themselves unnecessary trouble, for I have no wish to intrude upon them. I have been four months in Paris, and have constantly met former intimates, but have never spoken to one of them. And I cannot say what induced me to address you, with whom my acquaintance is so slight, except that I should be very glad to have a talk about dear old England, and if I am not mistaken you are a likely man to grant it me."

"With pleasure, Mr Oakley," said I. "I am glad to see you, although I confess myself surprised at your present profession. For an Englishman, I should have thought our own service preferable to a foreign one; and doubtless your friends would have got you a commission--that is--if--"

I hesitated, and paused, for I felt that I was upon delicate ground, getting run away with by my own foregone conclusions, and likely, unintentionally, to wound my interlocutor's feelings. Oakley observed my embarrassment, smiled, and completed my unfinished sentence.

"If I had not money left after my extravagance, to buy one for myself. Well, I had not; and moreover--but you shall hear all about it, if you care to learn the adventures of a scapegrace, now, I hope, reformed. And, in return, you shall tell me if London is still in the same place, and as wicked and pleasant as ever; and how it fares with old George Clinton, and all the jolly Warwickshire lads. Have you an hour to spare?"

"Half a dozen, if you like," I replied warmly, for I was greatly taken with the frank manly tone of the young man, whom I had last known as a conceited frivolous coxcomb. "Half a dozen. Shall we walk?"

"I will not tax your kindness so long," replied Oakley; "and as for walking," he added, glancing from the silver stripe upon his sleeve, indicative of his non-commissioned rank, to my suit of civilian broadcloth, "although I am by no means ashamed of my position, that is no reason for exposing you to the stare and wonder of your English acquaintances, by parading in your company the public promenade. So, if you have no objection, we will step up here. The place is respectable; but unfrequented, I dare say, by any you know."

And without giving me time to protest my utter indifference to the supercilious criticism referred to, he turned into a doorway, upon a pane of glass above which was painted a ship in full sail, with the words "Café Estaminet Hollandais." Ascending a flight or two of stairs, we entered a suite of spacious apartments, furnished with several billiard tables, with cue-racks, chairs, benches, and small tables for the use of drinkers. Several of the windows, which looked out upon the garden of the Palais Royal, were open, in the vain hope, perhaps, of purifying the place from the inveterate odour of tobacco remaining there from the previous night. Although it was not yet noon, the billiard balls rattled vigorously upon more than one of the tables, and a few early drinkers, chiefly foreigners, professional billiard players and non-commissioned officers of the Paris garrison, sipped their Strasbourg beer or morning dram of brandy. The further end of the long gallery, however, was unoccupied, and there Oakley drew a couple of chairs to a window, called for refreshment as a pretext for our presence, and
seating himself opposite to me, assailed me with a volley of questions concerning persons and things in England. To these I replied as satisfactorily as I was able, and allowed the stream of interrogation to run itself dry, before assuming, in my turn, the character of questioner. At last, having in some degree appeased Oakley's eager desire for information about the country whence he had been so long absent, I intimated a curiosity concerning his own adventures, and the circumstances that had made a soldier of him. He at once took the hint, and, perceiving that I listened with friendly attention and interest, gave me a detailed narrative of his life since I had first made his acquaintance. He told his story with a spirit and military conciseness that riveted my attention as much as the real pungency of the incidents. Its first portion, relating to his London career, informed me of little beyond what I already knew, or, at least, had conjectured. It was the everyday tale of a heedless, inexperienced youth, suddenly cast without guide or Mentor upon the ocean of life, and striking in turn against all the shoals that strew the perilous waters. He had been bubbled by gentlemanly swindlers--none of your low, seedy rascallions, but men of style and fashion, even of family, but especially of honour, who would have paraded and shot him, had he presumed to doubt their word, but made no scruple of genteelly picking his pocket. He had been duped by designing women, spunged upon by false friends, pillaged by unprincipled tradesmen. He never thought of making a calculation--except on a horse-race, and then he was generally wrong,--or of looking at an account, or keeping one; but, when he wanted money, and his banker wrote him word he had overdrawn, he just sent his autograph to his stockbroker, prefixing the words, "Sell five hundred, or a thousand," as the case might be. For some time these laconic mandates were obeyed without remark, but at last, towards the close of the London season, the broker, the highly respectable Mr Cashup, of Change Alley, called upon his young client, whose father he had known for many years, and ventured a gentle remonstrance on such an alarming consumption of capital. Frank affected to laugh at the old gentleman's caution, and told an excellent story that evening, after a roaring supper, about the square-toed cit, the wise man of the East, who made a pilgrimage to St James's, to preach a sermon on frugality. Nevertheless, the prodigal was startled by the statements of the man of business. He was unaware how deeply he had dipped into his principal, and felt something like alarm upon discovering that he had got through more than half his small fortune. This, in little more than a year! For a moment he felt inclined to reform, abandon dissipation, and apply to some profession. But the impulse was only momentary. How could he, the gay Frank Oakley, the flower of fashion, and admiration of the town (so at least he thought himself,) bend his proud spirit to pore over parchments in a barrister's chambers, or to smoke British Havanas, and spit over the bridge of a country town, as ensign in a marching regiment? Was he to read himself blind at college, to find himself a curate at thirty, with a hundred a-year, and a breeding wife? Or was he to go to India, to get shot by Sikhs, or carried off by a jungle fever? Forbid it, heaven! What would Slam and Martingale, and Mademoiselle Entrechat, and all his fast and fashionable acquaintances, male and female, say to such declension? The thought was overwhelming, and thereupon Oakley resolved to give up all idea of earning an honest living, to "drown care," "d-- the consequences," and act up to the maxim he had frequently professed, when the champagne corks were flying at his expense for the benefit of a circle of admiring friends, of "a short life and a merry one." So he stopped in London till the very close of the season, "keeping the game alive," as he expressed it, to the last, and then started for the Continent. An attempt to recruit his finances at Baden-Baden terminated, as might be expected, in their further reduction, and at last he found his way to Paris. Unfortunately for him, his ruinous career in England had been so short, and his self-conceit, and great opinion of his own knowingness, had made him so utterly reject the advice and
experience of the very few friends who cared a rush for his welfare, that he was still in the state of a six-day-old puppy, and as unable to take care of himself. More than half-ruined, he preserved his illusions; still believed in the sincerity of fashionable acquaintances, in the fidelity of histrionic mistresses, in the disinterestedness of mankind in general, or at least of that portion of it with which he habitually associated. The bird had left half its feathers with the fowler, but was as willing as ever to run again into the snare. And at Paris snares were plentiful, well-baited and carefully covered up.

"I can scarcely define the society into which I got at Paris," said Oakley, when he came to this part of his history. "It was of a motley sort, gathered from all quarters, and, upon the whole, rather pleasant than respectable. It consisted partly of persons I had known in England, either Englishmen or dashing young Frenchmen of fortune, whose acquaintance I had made during their visits to London a few months previously. I had also several letters of introduction, some of which gave me entrance into the best Parisian circles, but these I generally neglected, preferring the gay fellows for whom I bore commendatory scrawls from my London associates. But probably my best recommendation was my pocket, still tolerably garnished, and the recklessness with which I scattered my cash. I felt myself on the high road to ruin, but my down-hill course had given such impetus to my crazy vehicle, that I despaired of checking it, and shut my eyes to the inevitable smash awaiting me at the bottom.

"It was not long in coming. Although educated in France, and consequently speaking the language as a native, I always took more kindly to my own countrymen than to Frenchmen, and gradually I detached myself unconsciously from those with whom I had spent much of my time when first in Paris. I exchanged for the worse, in making my sole companions of a set of English scamps, who asked no better than to assist at the plucking of such a pigeon as myself. At first they treated me with tenderness, fearing to spoil their game by a measure of wholesale plunder. They made much of me, frequently favoured me with their company at dinner, occasionally forgot their purses and borrowed from mine, forgetting repayment, and got up card parties, at which, however, I was sometimes allowed to come off a winner. But my gains were units and my losses tens. An imprudent revelation accelerated the catastrophe. My chosen intimate was one Harry Darvel, a tall pale man, several years older than myself, who would have been good-looking, but for the unpleasant shifting expression of his grey eyes, and for a certain cold rigidity of feature, frequently seen in persons of the profession I afterwards found he exercised. I first made his acquaintance at Baden, met him by appointment at Paris, and he soon became my chief associate. I knew little of him, except that he had a large acquaintance, lived in good style, spent his money freely, and was one of the most amusing companions I had ever had. By this time I began to see through flattery, when it was not very adroitly administered, and to suspect the real designs of some of the vultures that flocked about me Darvel never flattered me; his manner was blunt, almost to roughness; he occasionally gave me advice, and affected sincere friendship and anxiety for my welfare. 'You are young in the world,' he would say to me, 'you know a good deal for the time you have been in it, but I am an old stager, and have been six seasons in Paris for your one. I don't want to dry-nurse you, nor are you the man to let me, but two heads are better than one, and you may sometimes be glad of a hint. This is a queer town, and there are an infernal lot of swindlers about.' I little dreamed that my kind adviser was one of the most expert of the class he denounced, but reposed full trust in him, and, by attending to his disinterested suggestions, gradually detached myself from my few really respectable associates, and delivered myself entirely into his hands, and those of his assistant
Philistines. Upon an unlucky day, when a letter of warning from my worthy old stockbroker had revived former anxieties in my mind, I made Darvel my confidant, and asked counsel of him to repair my broken fortunes. He heard me without betraying surprise, said he would think the matter over, and that something would assuredly turn up, talked vaguely of advantageous appointments which he had interest in England to procure, assured me of his sympathy and friendship, and bade me not despond, but keep my heart up, for that I had plenty of time to turn in, and meanwhile I must limit my expenses, and not be offended if he occasionally gave me a friendly check when he saw me 'outrunning the constable.' His tone and promises cheered me, and I again forgot my critical position. Little did I dream that my misplaced confidence had sealed my doom. If I had hitherto been spared, it was from no excess of mercy, but because my real circumstances were unknown, my fortune overrated, and a fear entertained of prematurely scaring the game by too rapid an attack. It was now ascertained that the goose might be slaughtered, without any sacrifice of golden eggs. Darvel now knew exactly what I was worth,—barely two thousand pounds. That gone, I should be a beggar. For two days he never lost sight of me, accompanied me everywhere and kept me in a whirl of dissipation, exerted to the utmost his amusing powers, which were very considerable, and did all he could to raise my spirits. The third morning he came to breakfast with me.

"Dine at my rooms, to-day,' said he, as he sat puffing a Turkish pipe, after making me laugh to exhaustion at a ridiculous adventure that had befallen him the night before. 'Bachelor fare, you know--brace of fowls and a gigot, a glass of that Chambertin you so highly approve, and a little chicken hazard afterwards. Quite quiet--shan't allow you to play high. We'll have a harmless, respectable evening. I will ask Lowther and the Bully. Dine at seven, to bed at twelve.'

'I readily accepted, and we strolled out to invite the other guests. A few minutes' walk brought us to the domicile of Thomas Ringwood, Esq., known amongst his intimates as the Bully, a sobriquet he owed to his gruff voice, blustering tone, and skill as a pugilist and cudgel-player. He was member of a well-known and highly respectable English family, who had done all in their power to keep him from disgracing their name by his disreputable propensities. In dress and manner he affected the plain bluff Englishman, wore a blue coat, beaver gloves (or none at all), and a hat broad in the brim, spoke of all foreigners with supreme contempt, and of himself as honest Tom Ringwood. This lip honesty and assumed bluntness were a standing joke with those who knew his real character, but passed muster as perfectly genuine with ingenious and newly imported youngsters like myself, who took him for a wealthy and respectable English gentleman, the champion of fair play, just as at a race, or fair, boobies take for a bona-fide farmer the portly individual in brown tops, who so loudly expresses his confidence in the chances of the thimble rig, and in the probity of the talented individual who manoeuvres the 'little pea.'

"Ringwood was at his rooms, having 'half a round' with the Oxford Chicken, a promising young bruiser who, having recently killed his man in a prize-fight, had come over to Paris for change of air. There was bottled English porter on the table, sand upon the floor to prevent slipping, and the walls were profusely adorned with portraits of well-known pugilists, sketches of steeple-chases, boxing-gloves, masks, and singlesticks. In the comfortable embraces of an arm-chair sat Archibald Lowther, honest Tom's particular ally, who, in every respect, was the very opposite of his Achates. Lowther affected the
foreigner and dandy as much as Ringwood assumed the bluff and rustic Briton; wore beard and mustaches, and brilliant waistcoats, owned shirt-studs by the score and rings by the gross, lisped out his words with the aid of a silver tooth-pick, and was never seen without a smile of supreme amiability upon his dark, handsome countenance. Fortunately, both these gentlemen were disengaged for the evening. The day passed in lounging and billiard-playing, varied by luncheon and a fair allowance of liquids, and at half-past seven we sat down to dinner. It did not occur to me at the time that, although Darvel's invitation had the appearance of an impromptu, he did not warn his servant of expected guests, or return home till within an hour of dinner-time. Nevertheless, all was in readiness; not the promised fowl and leg of mutton, but an exquisite repast, redolent of spices and truffles, with wines of every description. I was in high spirits, and drank freely, mixing my liquor without scruple, and towards ten o'clock I was much exhilarated, although not yet drunk, and still tolerably cognisant of my actions.

Then came coffee and liqueurs, and whilst Darvel searched in an adjoining room for some particularly fine cigars for my special smoking, Lowther cleared a table, and rummaged in the drawers for cards and dice, whilst Ringwood called for lemons and sugar, and compounded a fiery bowl of Kirschwasser punch. It was quite clear we were to have a night of it. Darvel's declaration that he would have no high play in his rooms, and would turn every one out at midnight, was replied to by me with a boisterous shout of laughter, in which I was vociferously joined by Lowther, who, to all appearance, was more than half tipsy. We sat down to play for moderate stakes; fortune favoured me at the expense of Ringwood and Lowther. The former looked sulky, the latter became peeviously noisy and excited, cursed his luck, and insisted on increasing the stakes. Darvel strongly objected; as winner, I held myself bound to oppose him, and the majority carried the day. The stakes were doubled, quadrupled, and at last became extravagantly high. Presently in came a couple more 'friends,' in full evening costume, white-waistcoated and gold-buttoned, patent leather, starch and buckram from heel to eyebrow. They were on their way to a rout at the Marchioness of Montepulciano's, but, seeing light through Darvel's windows, came up 'just to see what was going on.' With great difficulty they were prevailed upon to take a cigar and a hand at cards, and to disappoint the Marchioness. It was I who, inspired by deep potations and unbounded good fellowship, urged and insisted upon their stopping. My three friends did not seem nearly so cordial in their solicitations, and subsequently, when I came to think over the night's proceedings, I remembered a look of vexation exchanged between them, upon the entrance of the uninvited vultures who thus intruded for their share of the spoil. Doubtless, the worthy trio would rather have kept me to themselves. They suppressed their discontent, however; externally all was honeyed cordiality and good feeling; the Bully made perpetual bowls of punch, and I quaffed the blazing alcohol till I could scarcely distinguish the pips on the cards. But scenes like these have been too often described for their details to have much interest. Enough, that at six o'clock the following morning I threw myself upon my bed, fevered, frantic, and a beggar. I had given orders upon my London agent for the very last farthing I possessed.

"Lowther, to all appearance the least sober and worst player of the party, had been chief winner. Ringwood had won a little; Madame Montepulciano's friends did not make a bad night's work of it, although they declared their gains trifling, but as there had been a good deal of gold and some bank-notes upon the table, it was difficult to say exactly how the thing had gone. Darvel, who had frequently made attempts to stop the play--attempts frustrated by Lowther's drunken violence, Ringwood's dogged sullenness, and my own mad eagerness--was visibly a loser; but what mattered
that, when his confederates won? There is honour amongst thieves, and no doubt next day witnessed an equitable division of the spoils.

"It was the second day after the debauch before I again saw any of my kind friends. I spent the greater part of the intervening one in bed, exhausted and utterly desponding, revolving in my mind my desperate position. I had no heart to go out or see anybody. At last Darvel called upon me, affected great sorrow for my losses, deplored my obstinacy in playing high against his advice, and inveighed against Lowther for his drunken persistence. Anxiety and previous excess had rendered me really unwell; Darvel insisted on sending me his physician, and left me with many expressions of kindness, and a promise to call next day. All this feigned sympathy was not lavished without an object; the gang had discovered I might still be of use to them. In what way, I did not long remain ignorant. During a week or more that I remained in the house, suffering from a sort of low fever, Darvel came daily to sit with me, brought me newspapers, told me the gossip of the hour, and not unfrequently threw out hints of better times near at hand, when the blind goddess should again smile upon me. At last I learned in what way her smiles were to be purchased. I was convalescent; my doctor had paid his farewell visit, and pocketed my last napoleon, when Darvel entered my room. After the usual commonplace inquiries, he sat down by the fire, silent, and with a gloomy countenance. I could not help noticing this, for I was accustomed to see him cheerful and talkative upon his visits to me; and I presently inquired if any thing had gone wrong.

"Yes--no--nothing with me exactly, but for you. I am disappointed on your account.'

"On my account?"

"Yes. I wrote to England some days ago, urging friends of mine in high places to get you a snug berth, and to-day I have received answers.'

"Well?"

"No, ill--cold comfort enough. Lots of promises, but with an unmistakeable hint that many are to be served before me, and that we must wait several months--which with those people means several years--before there will be a chance of a good wind blowing your way. I am infernally sorry for it.'

"And I also,' I replied, mournfully. There was a short pause.

"How are you off for the sinews of war?' said Darvel.

"You may find some small change on the chimney-piece--my last money.'

"The devil! This won't do. We must fill your exchequer somehow. You must be taken care of, my boy.'

"Easy to say,' I answered, but how? Unless you win me a lottery prize, or show me a hidden treasure, my purse is likely to continue empty.'
"'Pshaw! hidden treasure indeed! There are always treasures to be found by clever seekers. Nothing without trouble.'

"'I should not grudge that.'

"'Perhaps not; but you young gentlemen are apt to be proud and squeamish.'

"'Pshaw!' said I in my turn, 'you know I can't afford to be that. Money I must have, no matter how.'

"I spoke thoughtlessly, and without weighing my words, but also without evil meaning. I merely meant to express my willingness to work for my living, in ways whose adoption I should have scoffed at a fortnight previously. Darvel doubtless understood me differently--thought dissipation and reckless extravagance had blunted my sense of honour and honesty, and that I was ripe for his purpose. After a minute or two's silence--

"'By the bye,' he said, 'are not you intimate with the young D----s, sons of that rich old baronet Sir Marmaduke D----?'

"'Barely acquainted,' I replied, 'I have seen them once or twice, but it is a long time back, and we should hardly speak if we met. They are poor silly fellows, brought up by a fool of a mother, and by a puritanical private tutor.'

"'They have broken loose from the apron-string then, for they arrived here yesterday on their way to Italy, Greece, and the Lord knows where. Why don't you call upon them. They are good to know. They have swinging letters of credit on Paris and half the towns in Europe.'

"'I see no use in calling on them, nor any that their letters of credit can be to me.'

"'Pshaw! who knows? They are to be a month here. It might lead to something.'

"'To what?' I inquired indifferently. A gesture of impatience escaped Darvel.

"'You certainly are dull to-day--slow of comprehension, as I may say. Recollect what some play-writing man has said about the world being an oyster for clever fellows to open. Now these D----s are just the sort of natives it is pleasant to pick at, because their shells are lined with pearls. Well, since you won't take a hint, I must speak plainly. Dine to-day at the table-d'hôte of the Hôtel W----. The D----s are staying there, and you are safe to fall in with them. Renew your acquaintance, or strike up a fresh one, whichever you please. You are a fellow of good address, and will have no difficulty in making friends with two such Johnny Newcomes. Ply them with Burgundy, bring them here or to my rooms, we will get Lowther and Ringwood, and it shall be a hundred pounds in your pocket.'

"I must have been a fool indeed, had I doubted for another instant the meaning and intentions of my respectable ally. As by touch of enchanter's wand, the scales fell from my eyes; illusions vanished, and
I saw myself and my associates in the right colours, myself as a miserable dupe, them as vile sharpers. So confounded was I by the suddenness of the illumination, that for a moment I stood speechless and motionless, gazing vacantly into the tempter's face. He took my silence for acquiescence, and opened his lips to continue his base hints and instructions. Roused into vehement action by the sound of his odious voice, I grasped his collar, and seizing a horsewhip that lay opportunely near, I lashed the miscreant round the room till my arm could strike no longer, and till the inmates of the house, alarmed by his outcries, assembled at the door of my apartment. Too infuriated to notice them, I kicked the fellow out and remained alone, to meditate at leisure upon my past folly and present embarrassments. The former was irreparable, the latter were speedily augmented. I know not what Darvel told the master of the house (I subsequently found he had had an interview with him after his ejection from my room), but two days later, the month being at an end, I received a heavy bill, with an intimation that my apartments were let to another tenant, and a request for my speedy departure. I was too proud to take notice of this insolence, and too poor, under any circumstances, to continue in so costly a lodging. Money I had none, and it took the sacrifice of my personal effects, including even much of my wardrobe, to satisfy my landlord's demand. I settled it, however, and removed, with a heavy heart, a light portmanteau, and a hundred francs in my pocket, to a wretched garret in a cheap faubourg.

"You will think, perhaps, that I acted rashly, and should have sought temporary assistance from friends before proceeding to such extremities. But the very few persons who might have been disposed to help me, I had long since neglected for the society of the well-dressed thieves by whom I had been so pitilessly fleeced. And had it been otherwise, I knew not how to beg or borrow. My practice had been in giving and lending. The first thing I did, when installed in my sixième at twenty francs a-month, was to write to my uncle in England, informing him, without entering into details, of the knavery of which I had been victim, expressing my penitence for past follies, and my desire to atone them by a life of industry. I craved his advice as to the course I should adopt, declared a preference for the military profession, and entreated, as the greatest of favours, and the only one I should ever ask of him, that he would procure me a commission, either in the British service or Indian army. I got an answer by return of post, and, before opening it, augured well from such promptitude. Its contents bitterly disappointed me. My uncle's agent informed me, by his employer's command, that Mr Oakley, of Oakley Manor, was not disposed to take any notice of a nephew who had disgraced him by extravagance and evil courses, and that any future letters from me would be totally disregarded. I felt that I deserved this; but yet I had hoped kinder words from my dead father's elder brother. The trifling assistance I asked would hardly have been missed out of his unencumbered income of ten thousand a-year. This was my first advertisement of the wide difference that sometimes exists between relatives and friends. Gradually I gathered experience, paid for, in advance, at a heavy rate.

"Of course, I did not dream of renewing an application thus cruelly repulsed, but resolved to rely on myself alone, and to find some occupation, however humble, sufficient for my subsistence. I had no idea, until I tried, of the immense difficulty of procuring such occupation. Master of no trade or handicraft, I knew not which way to turn, or what species of employment to seek. I was a good swordsman, and once I had a vague notion of teaching fencing; but even had I had the means to establish myself, the profession was already over-stocked; and not a regiment of the Paris garrison but could turn out a score of prêvôts to button me six times for my once. I could ride, which qualified me
for a postilion, and had sufficient knowledge of billiards to aspire to the honourable post of a marker; but even to such offices--could I have stooped to compete for them--I should have been held ineligible without certificates of character. And to whom was I to apply for these? To my gay acquaintances of the Café de Paris? To the obsequious banker to whom I had come handsomely accredited, and who had given me a sumptuous dinner in his hotel of the Rue Bergère? To the noble and fashionable families to whom I had brought letters of recommendation, and whom I had neglected after a single visit? To which of these should I apply for a character as groom? And how was I to exist without condescending to some such menial office? To aught better, gentleman though I was, I had no qualifications entitling me to aspire. It was a sharp but wholesome lesson to my vanity and pride, to find myself, so soon as deprived of my factitious advantage of inherited wealth, less able to provide for my commonest wants than the fustian-coated mechanic and hob-nailed labourer, whom I had been wont to splash with my carriage-wheel and despise as an inferior race of beings. Bitter were my reflections, great was my perplexity, during the month succeeding my sudden change of fortune. I passed whole days lying upon the bed in my melancholy lodging, or leaning out of the window, which looked over a dreary range of roofs, ruminating my forlorn position, and endeavouring, but in vain, to find a remedy. This was urgent; but no cudgelling of my brain suggested one, and at last I saw myself on the brink of destitution. A score of five-franc pieces had constituted my whole fortune after satisfying my former extortionate landlord. These were nearly gone, and I knew not how to obtain another shilling; for my kit was reduced to linen and the most indispensable necessaries. I now learned upon how little a man may live, and even thrive and be healthy. During that month, I contrived to keep my expenses of food and lodging within two francs a-day, making the whole month's expenditure considerably less than I had commonly thrown away on an epicurean breakfast or dinner. And I was all the better for the coarse regimen to which I thus suddenly found myself reduced. Harassed in mind though I was, my body felt the benefit of unusual abstinence from deep potations, late hours, and sustained dissipation. The large amount of foot-exercise I took during these few weeks, doubtless contributed also to restore tone and vigour to a constitution which my dissolute career, however mad and reckless, had not been long enough seriously to impair. When weary of my lonesome attic, I would start through the nearest barrier, avoiding the streets and districts where I might encounter former acquaintances, and take long walks in the environs of Paris, returning with an appetite that gave a relish even to the tough and unsavoury viands of a cheap traiteur.

"It chanced, upon a certain day, when striding along the road to Orleans, that I met a regiment of hussars changing their quarters from that town to Paris. The morning sun shone brightly on their accoutrements; the hoofs of their well-groomed horses rang upon the frosty road; the men, closely wrapped in their warm pelisses, looked cheerful, in good case, and in high spirits at the prospect of a sojourn in the capital. I seated myself upon a gate to see them pass, and could not avoid making a comparison between my position and that of a private dragoon, which resulted considerably to my disadvantage. I was not then so well aware as I have since become, of all the hardships and disagreeables of a soldier's life; and it appeared to me that these fellows, well clothed, well mounted, and with their daily wants provided for, were perfect kings compared to a useless, homeless, destitute being like myself. Their profession was an honourable one; their regiment was their home; they had comrades and friends; and their duty as soldiers properly done, none could reproach or oppress them. The column marched by, and was succeeded by the rear-guard, half-a-dozen smart, sunburned hussars,
with carbine on thigh; one of whom sang, in a mellow tenor voice, and with considerable taste, the well-known soldier's song out of *La Dame Blanche*. In their turn they disappeared behind a bend of the road; but the spirited burthen of the ditty still reached my ears after they were lost to my view--

'Ah, quel plaisir! ah, quel plaisir! Ah, quel plaisir d'être soldat!'

I repeated to myself, as the last notes died in the distance, and jumping off the gate, I turned my steps towards Paris, my mind strongly inclining to the sabre and worsted lace.

"My half-formed resolution gathered strength from reflection, and on reaching Paris I proceeded straight to the Champ de Mars. The spectacle that there met my eyes was of a nature to encourage my inclination to embrace a military career, even in the humble capacity of a private trooper. It was a cavalry field-day, and a number of squadrons manoeuvred in presence of several general officers and of a brilliant staff, whilst soldiers of various corps,--dragoons, lancers, cuirassiers and hussars, stood in groups watching the evolutions of their comrades. Veterans from the neighbouring Hôtel des Invalides--scarred and mutilated old warriors, who had shared the triumphs and reverses of the gallant French armies from Valmy to Waterloo--talked of their past campaigns and criticised the movements of their successors in the ranks. Several of these parties I approached within ear-shot, and overheard, with strong interest, many a stirring reminiscence of those warlike days when the Corsican firebrand set Europe in a flame, and spread his conquering legions from Moscow to Andalusia. At last I came to a group of younger soldiers, who discussed more recent if less glorious deeds of arms. The words *Bédouins*, *razzia*, *Algérie*, recurred frequently in their discourse. I started at the sounds. They reminded me of what I had previously forgotten, that there was still a battle-field in the world where danger might be encountered and distinction won. True, I might have wished more civilised foes than the tawny denizens of the desert, and a more humane system of warfare than that pursued by the French in Africa. But my circumstances forbade over-nicety, and that day I enlisted as volunteer in the light cavalry, merely stipulating that I should be placed in a corps then serving in Africa.

"Should you care to hear, I will give you at a future time some details of my military novitiate and African adventures. The former was by no means easy, the latter had little to distinguish them from those of thousands of my comrades. A foreign service is rarely an agreeable refuge, and that of France is undoubtedly the very worst an Englishman can enter. The old antipathy to England, weakened in the breasts of French civilians, still exists to a great extent amongst the military classes of the population. A traditionary feeling of hatred and humiliation has been handed down from the days of our Peninsular victories, and especially from that of the crowning triumph at Waterloo,--the battle won by treachery, as many Frenchmen affirm, and some positively believe. A French barrack-room, I can assure you, is anything but a bed of roses to a British volunteer. I was better off, however, than most of my compatriots. I would have been under similar circumstances. Speaking the language like a native--better, indeed, than the majority of those with whom I now found myself associated--I escaped the mockery and annoyances which an English accent would inevitably have perpetuated. My country was known, however; it was moreover discovered that in birth and education I was superior to those about me, and these circumstances were sufficient to draw upon me envy and insult. Of the former I took no heed, the latter I promptly and fiercely resented, feeling that to do so was the only means of avoiding a long
course of molestation. Two or three duels, whence my skill with the foils brought me out unscathed and with credit, made me respected in my regiment, and whilst thus establishing my reputation for courage, I did my best to conciliate the good-will of those amongst whom I was henceforward to live. To a great extent I was successful. My quality of an Englishman gradually ceased to give umbrage or invite aggression, and, if not forgotten, was rarely referred to.

"I was found an apt recruit, and after far less than the usual amount of drill I was dismissed to my duty in the ranks of my present regiment, with which I returned from Africa at the beginning of this winter, and am now in garrison at Paris. My steady attention to my duties, knowledge of writing and accounts, and conduct in one or two sharply-contested actions, obtained me promotion to the grades of corporal and fourrier. For my last advancement, to the highest non-commissioned rank, I am indebted to an affair that occurred a few weeks before we left Africa. A small division, consisting of three battalions and as many squadrons, including mine, moved from Oran and its neighbourhood, for the purpose of a reconnaissance. After marching for a whole day, we halted for the night near a lonely cistern of water. The only living creature we saw was a wretched little Arab boy, taking care of three lean oxen, who told us that, with the exception of his parents, the whole tribe inhabiting that district had fled on news of our approach, and were now far away. This sounded rather suspicious, and all precautions were taken to guard against surprise. Pickets and outposts were established, the bivouac fires blazed cheerily up, rations were cooked and eaten, and, wrapped in our cloaks, we sought repose after the day's fatigue. Tired though we were, sleep was hard to obtain, especially for us cavalry men, by reason of the uneasiness of our horses, which scarcely ceased for a moment to neigh and kick and fight with each other. Troopers always look upon this as a bad omen, and more than one old soldier, whilst caressing and calming his restless charger, muttered a prediction of danger at hand. For once, these military prophets were not mistaken. About two hours after midnight, the bivouac was sunk in slumber, the horses had become quieter, and the silence was rarely broken, save by the warning cry of 'Sentinelle, garde à vous!' when suddenly a few dropping shots were heard, the drum of a picket rattled a loud alarm, and a shout arose of 'Les Arabes!' In an instant, the encampment, so still before, swarmed like a hive of bees. Luckily we had all laid down fully accoutred, with our weapons beside us, so that, as we sprang to our feet, we found ourselves ready for action. The general, who alone had a small tent, rushed half-dressed from under his canvass. Our veteran colonel was on foot with the first, cool as on parade, and breathing defiance. 'Chasseurs, to your horses!' shouted he in stentorian tones, hoarse from the smoke of many battles. At the word we were in the saddle. On every side we heard wild and savage shouts, and volleys of small arms, and the pickets, overpowered by numbers, came scampering in, with heavy loss and in much confusion. There was no moon, but by the starlight we saw large bodies of white shadowy figures sweeping around and towards our encampment. Our infantry had lain down in order, by companies and battalions, according to a plan of defence previously formed, and now they stood in three compact squares, representing the three points of a triangle; whilst in the intervals the squadrons manoeuvred, and the artillerymen watched opportunities to send the contents of their light mountain-howitzers amongst the hostile masses. With whoop and wild hurrah, and loud invocations of Allah and the Prophet, the Bedouin hordes charged to the bayonet's point, but recoiled again before well-directed volleys, leaving the ground in front of the squares strewn with men and horses dead and dying. Then the artillery gave them a round, and we cavalry dashed after them, pursuing and sabring till compelled to retire before fresh and overwhelming masses. This was repeated several times. There were
many thousand Arabs collected around us, chiefly horsemen; and had their discipline equalled their
daring, our position would have been perilous indeed. Undismayed by their heavy loss, they returned
again and again to the attack. At last the general, impatient of the protracted combat, wheeled up the
wings of the squares, reserved the fire till the last moment, and received the assailants with so stunning
a discharge that they fled to return no more. The cavalry of course followed them up, and our colonel,
Monsieur de Bellechasse, an old soldier of Napoleon's, ever foremost where cut and thrust are passing,
headed the squadron to which I belong. Carried away by his impetuosity, and charging home the flying
Bedouins, he lost sight of prudence, and we soon found ourselves surrounded by a raging host, who,
perceiving how few we were, stood at bay, and in their turn assumed the offensive. Seen in the dim
starlight, with their tawny faces, gleaming eyes, white burnous, and furious gesticulations, the Arabs
seemed a legion of devils let loose for our destruction. Our ranks were disordered by the pursuit, and
we thus lost one of our chief advantages; for the Bedouins, unable to resist the charge in line of
disciplined cavalry, are no despicable opponents in a hand-to-hand mêlée. And this the combat soon
became. Greatly outnumbered, we fought for our lives, and of course fought our best. I found myself
near the colonel, who was assailed by two Arabs at one time. He defended himself like a lion, but his
opponents were strong and skilful, and years have impaired the activity and vigour which procured him,
a quarter of a century ago, the reputation of one of the most efficient dragoons in Buonaparte's armies.
There were none to aid him, for all had their hands full, and I myself was sharpset with a brawny
Bedouin, who made excellent use of his scimitar. At last I disabled him by a severe cut on the sword
arm; he gnashed his teeth with rage, turned his beautiful horse with lightning swiftness, and fled from
the fight before I had time to complete my work. I was glad to be quit of him at any price, as I was now
able to strike in by the colonel's side. The old warrior was hard put-to; a sabre cut had knocked off his
shako, and inflicted a wound on his high, bald forehead, slight indeed, but the blood from which,
trickling into his eyes, nearly blinded him, and he was fain to leave go his reins to dash it away with his
hand. The Arabs perceived their advantage, and pressed him hard, when I charged one of them in the
flank, bringing the breast of my horse against the shoulder of his, and cutting at the same time at his
head. Man and beast rolled upon the ground. M. de Bellechasse had scarcely time to observe from
whom the timely succour came, when I dashed in before him, and drew upon myself the fury of his
remaining foe. Just then, to my infinite relief, I heard at a short distance a steady regular fire of
musketry. It was the infantry, advancing to our support. The Arabs heard it also, and having had, for
one day, a sufficient taste of French lead, beat a precipitate retreat, scouring away like phantoms, and
disappearing in the gloom of the desert. I was triply recompensed for my share in this action, by
honourable mention in general orders, by promotion to the rank of maréchal des logis--equivalent to
troop sergeant-major in the English service--and by the personal thanks of my excellent old colonel,
who shook me heartily by the hand, and swore 'Mille millions de sabres!' that after successfully
guarding his head against Russian, Prussian, and Austrian, Englishman and Spaniard, he would have
been ignominiously cut to pieces by a brace of black-faced heathens, but for my timely interposition.
Since then he has shown me unvarying kindness, for which I am indebted chiefly to my preservation of
his life, but partly also to his high approval of the summary manner in which I upset, by a blow of my
sabre and bound of my horse, one of his swarthy antagonists, reminding him, as he always mentions
when telling the story, of a similar feat of his own when attacked on the Russian retreat by three
gigantic Tartars from the Ukraine. Since we have been in garrison here, he has frequently had me at his
house, nominally to assist in the arrangement of regimental accounts and orders, but in reality to take
opportunities of rendering me small kindesses; and latterly, I am inclined to think, a little for the pleasure of talking to me of his old campaigns. He soon discovered, what he previously had some inkling of, that my original position in the world was superior to my present one; and I am not without hopes, from hints he has let fall, that he will, at no very distant day, procure my promotion to a cornetcy. These hopes and alleviations enable me to support, with tolerable patience and cheerfulness, the dull ordeal of a garrison life, seldom so pleasantly varied as by my meeting with you. And now, that I have inflicted my whole history upon you," added Oakley, with a smile, "I must bid you good-by, for duty calls,—no longer, it is true, to action in the field, but to the monotonous routine of barrack ordinances."

Thanking Oakley for his interesting narrative, I gave him my address, and begged him to visit me. This he promised to do, and we parted. Three days later he called upon me; I kept him to dine with me at my lodgings, and had reason, during an evening of most agreeable conversation, to be more than ever pleased with the tone of his mind and tenor of his discourse. The unthinking rake of former days must have learned and reflected much during his period of adversity and soldiering, to convert himself into the intelligent, well-informed, and unaffected man he had now become. One thing that struck me in him, however, was an occasional absence of mind and proneness to reverie. If there was a short pause in the conversation, his thoughts seemed to wander far away; and at times an expression of perplexed uneasiness, if not of care, came over his countenance. I had only to address him, however, to dissipate these clouds, whencesoever they came, and to recall his usual animated readiness of manner.

A fortnight now elapsed without my again seeing him. I was to return to England in a couple of days, and was busy one evening writing letters and making preparations for departure, when the bell at the door of my apartment was hastily rung. I opened, and Oakley entered. At first I hardly recognised him, for he was in plain clothes, which had the effect of converting the smart sergeant into an exceedingly handsome and gentlemanlike civilian. It struck me he looked paler than usual, and grave, almost anxious. His first words were an apology for his intrusion at so late an hour, which I cut short by an assurance of my gladness to see him, and an inquiry if I could do anything for him in England.

"When do you go?" said he.

"The day after to-morrow."

"I want nothing there," was his reply; "but before you go you can render me a great service, if you will."

"If I can, be sure that I will."

"You may perhaps hesitate, when you hear what it is. I want you to be my second in a duel."

"In a duel!" I repeated, greatly astonished, and not over-pleased at the idea of being mixed up in some barrack-room quarrel. "In a duel! and with whom?"
"With an officer of my regiment."

"Of your own rank, I presume?" said I, a little surprised at the sort of assumption by which he called a sergeant an officer.

"In that case I need not have troubled you," he replied; "I could have found a dozen seconds. But my antagonist is a commissioned officer--a lieutenant of the same regiment with myself, although in a different squadron."

"The devil he is!" I exclaimed. "That becomes a case for court-martial."

"Undoubtedly," replied Oakley, "for me, but no harm can accrue to you. I am your countryman; I come to you in plain clothes and ask you to be my second in a duel. You consent; we go on the ground and meet another man, apparently a civilian, of whose military quality or grade you are in no way supposed cognisant. Duels occur daily in France, as you know, and no notice is taken of them, even when fatal. I assure you there is no danger for you."

"I was not thinking of myself. But if you escape unhurt from the encounter, you will be shot for attempting the life of your superior."

Oakley shrugged his shoulders, as if to say, "I know that, but must take my chance;" but made no other reply to my remark.

"I will tell you the circumstances," he said, "and you shall judge for yourself if I can avoid the duel. When talking to you of my kind old colonel, I did not tell you of his only daughter, Bertha de Bellechasse, the most beautiful and fascinating of her sex. On our return from Africa, the colonel, in his gratitude for the man who had saved his life, presented me to his wife and child, pronouncing at the same time an exaggerated encomium on my conduct. The ladies gave me their hands to kiss, and had I shed half my blood in saving that of the colonel, I should have been more than repaid by Bertha's gracious smile, and by her warm expression of thanks to her father's preserver. Madame de Bellechasse, I suspect, was about to give me her purse, but was checked by a sign from her husband, who doubtless told them, after my departure, as much as he knew of my history,--that I was a foreigner and a gentleman, whom circumstances had driven to don the coarse vest of the private dragoon. He may perhaps have added some of the romantic stories current in the regiment when I first joined. I had never been communicative concerning my past life, which I felt was nothing to boast of; and regimental gossips had drawn upon their invention for various strange tales about the Milord Anglais. When I became domesticated in the corps, and my country was almost forgotten, these fictitious histories ceased to be repeated, and fell into oblivion; but some of them were revived for the benefit of the colonel, when, after the action near Oran, he instituted inquiries concerning me amongst his officers. It was not till some weeks later that he asked and received from me a plain unvarnished account of my very commonplace career. It is possible that the sort of mystery previously attaching to me, combined with her father's glowing eulogiums and her own gratitude for his preservation, worked upon Bertha's ardent and susceptible imagination, prepossessing her in my favour. For my part, I had been struck to
the heart by the very first glance from the dark eyes that sparkled like diamonds beneath their lashes of sable silk; I had been captivated and fettered on the instant, by the smile of enchanting sweetness that played round her graceful lips. For a while I struggled steadfastly against the passionate impulse; its indulgence I felt would be madness, and could result but in misery. What folly for the penniless soldier, even though time and her father’s protection should convert him into an equally penniless officer, to raise his eyes to the rich, the beautiful, the brilliant daughter of the Count de Bellechasse! Rejection, ridicule, contempt, could be the sole recompense of such presumption. M. de Bellechasse, although an officer of Napoleon’s, is of old French nobility; his wealth is very great; and if he still continues to serve, it is solely from enthusiastic love of his profession. His daughter is a match for the first in the land. All these and many more such arguments did I again and again repeat to myself; but when had reason a chance against love? Repeatedly did I vow to forget the fair vision that had crossed my path and troubled my repose, or to think of her only as the phantom of a dream, unsubstantial and unattainable. But the resolution was scarcely formed, when I found myself dwelling on her perfections, recapitulating the few gentle words she had addressed to me, recalling her voice, her look, her gesture. One moment, in view of the precipice on whose brink I stood, I swore to shun her perilous presence, and to avert my eyes should I again find myself in it: not an hour afterwards I eagerly seized a pretext that led me to her father’s house, and afforded me the possibility of another glimpse of my idol. Such glimpses were not difficult to obtain. The colonel’s partiality to me daily increased, and when I went to him on regimental matters, and he was alone with his wife and daughter, he would receive me in the drawing-room in their presence, and waiving for the time the difference of grade, would converse with me as affably as with an equal, and make me repeat, for the amusement of the ladies, some of our African skirmishes and adventures. Doubtless I should have avoided these dangerous interviews, but how was it to be done without an appearance of ingratitude and discourtesy? Truth to tell, I taxed my invention but little for means of escaping them. I continued to see Bertha, and at each interview my passion gathered strength. She listened with marked attention to my anecdotes of our campaigns. These I always addressed to her father or mother; but without looking at her, I could feel her eyes fixed upon me with an expression of interest, and, I at last ventured to think, of a more tender feeling. About this time the colonel frequently kept me for hours together at his house, arranging regimental papers and accounts, in a room upon the ground floor, set apart for the purpose. Within this room is another, used as a library; and thus it happened that one day, when immersed in states and muster-rolls, I beheld the door open, and the fairy form of Bertha upon the threshold. She appeared confused at seeing me; I rose and bowed in silence as she passed through the apartment, but I was taken too much by surprise to have full command over myself, and doubtless my eyes said something of what my lips would gladly have spoken, for before Bertha reached the outer door, her cheeks were suffused with blushes. Again and again these meetings, sweet as transient, occurred. But I will not weary you by dwelling upon such passages.

“We abandoned ourselves to the charm of our attachment, sadly embittered by its hopelessness. Since then, I have had almost daily occupation at the colonel’s house, and Bertha has found means to afford me brief but frequent interviews. At these we discussed, but ever in vain, the possibility of breaking our secret to M. de Bellechasse. Frank and affable though he be, the colonel’s pride of birth is great, and we were well assured that the disclosure of our correspondence would produce a terrific explosion of fury, consign Bertha to the seclusion of a convent, and draw upon me his hatred and revenge. This morning
Bertha came into the room, upon the usual pretext of seeking a book from the library, and the painful and perplexing topic that has long and unceasingly occupied our thoughts was again resumed. For the first time, she had heard her father state his intention of recommending me in the strongest terms for a commission. This let in a ray of hope upon our despondency; and we resolved that, so soon as the epaulet was on my shoulder, I should hazard a confession to the colonel. The prospect of a termination to our cruel state of suspense, and the possibility, faint though it indeed was, of a result favourable to our wishes, brought a joyful gleam over Bertha's lovely features, which have lately grown pale with anxiety. On my part, I did my utmost to inspire her with hopes I myself scarce dared to entertain; when, as she stood beside me, her hand clasped in mine, a smile of affection upon her countenance, the door suddenly opened, and, before we had time to separate, Victor de Berg, a lieutenant in my regiment, and a suitor of Bertha's, made a step into the room. For an instant he stood like one thunderstruck, and then, without uttering a word, abruptly turned upon his heel and went out. The next minute the sound of his step in the court warned us that he had left the house.

"Overwhelmed with terror and confusion to an extent that precluded reflection, Bertha fled to her apartment, leaving me to deliberate on the best course to adopt. My mind was presently made up. The only plan was to seek Monsieur de Berg, inform him of our mutual attachment, and appeal to his honour and generosity to preserve inviolate the secret he had surprised. I hurried to his quarters, which were at no great distance. He had already arrived there, and was pacing his apartment in manifest agitation. Since our return from Africa, he had been a declared admirer of Bertha's; by family and fortune he was an eligible suitor, and her father favoured his pretensions, contingent, however, upon his daughter's consent. Dismissing the servant who ushered me in, he addressed me before I had time to enter upon the object of my visit.

"'It is unnecessary,' he said, in a voice choked with passionate emotion, as I was about to speak. 'I can guess all you would say. A single instant informed me of the state of affairs; the half hour that has elapsed since then, has sufficed to mark out my line of conduct. Mr Oakley, I know that by birth and breeding you are above your station. You have forgotten your present position; I will follow your example so far as to waive our difference of military rank. As the friend of Colonel de Bellechasse, I ought, perhaps, instantly to tell him what I have this day learned; as his daughter's suitor, and the son-in-law of his choice, I select another course. Your secret is safe with me. To-night you shall receive a leave of absence, entitling you to quit your uniform; and to-morrow we will meet in the wood of Vincennes, not as officer and sergeant, but as private gentlemen, with arms in our hands. The man whom Bertha de Bellechasse distinguishes by her preference, cannot be unworthy of the proposal I now make to you. Do you accept it?"

"I was astounded by the words. Accustomed to the iron rigidity of military discipline, and to the broad gulf placed between officer and soldier by the king's commission, the possibility of a duel between M. de Berg and myself, although it would have been no unnatural occurrence between rivals of equal rank, had never occurred to me. For a moment I could not comprehend the singular and unheard-of proposal; but a glance at my challenger's countenance, on which the passions agitating him were plainly legible, solved the mystery of his motives. He was a prey to jealous fury; and, moreover, the chivalrous generosity of his character, combined, perhaps, with the fear of irretrievably offending Bertha,
prevented his pursuing the course most persons, in his place, would have adopted, and revealing to Colonel de Bellechasse his daughter's predilection for an inferior. By a duel he hoped to rid himself of a favoured rival, whom he might replace in Bertha's heart. It was not necessary she should know by whose hand I had fallen. Such were the reasons that flashed across me, explaining his strange offer of a personal encounter. Doubtless, I defined them more clearly than he himself did. I believe he spoke and acted upon the first vague impulse of a passionate nature, racked by jealousy, and thirsting for revenge upon its cause. I saw at once, however, that by accepting the duel I virtually secured his silence; and overjoyed to preserve my secret, and shield Bertha from her father's wrath at so cheap a price as the exposure of my life, I eagerly accepted M. de Berg's proposal, thanking him warmly for his generosity in thus repudiating the stern prejudices of military rank.

"After fixing hour and weapons, I left him, and then only did the difficulty of finding a second occur to me. For obvious reasons I could not ask the assistance of a comrade; and out of my regiment I had not a single friend in Paris. In my difficulty I thought of you. Our brief acquaintance scarcely warrants my request; but the kindness you have already shown me encourages the hope that you will not refuse me this service. M. de Berg is a man of strict honour, and you may depend on your name and share in the affair remaining undivulged. Even were they known, you, as a foreigner and civilian, would in no way be compromised by the relative position of my opponent and myself, which renders me liable, should the affair get wind, to a court-martial and severe punishment."

Although opposed to duelling, except under circumstances of extraordinary aggravation, I had been more than once unavoidably mixed up in affairs of the kind; and the apprehension of unpleasant results from accession to Oakley's request did not for an instant weigh with me. I was greatly struck by the chivalrous conduct of M. de Berg, and felt strong sympathy with Oakley, in the painful and most peculiar position into which his early follies and unfortunate attachment had brought him. Very brief deliberation was necessary to decide me to act as his second. There was no time to lose, and I begged him to put me at once in possession of the details of the affair, and to tell me where I could find De Berg's second. I was not sorry to learn that it was unnecessary for me to see him, and that all preliminaries were in fact arranged. The duel not being one of those that the intervention of friends may prevent, and Oakley having already fixed time and place with his antagonist, my functions became limited to attending him on the ground. It grew late, and Oakley left me for the night. In order to preserve my incognito in the business—for I had no desire to figure in newspaper paragraphs, or to be arraigned before a criminal tribunal, even with certainty of acquittal—we agreed to meet at eight o'clock the next morning, at a certain coffee-house, a considerable distance from my lodgings, whence a cabriolet would convey us to the place of rendezvous.

It was a fresh and beautiful spring morning, when Oakley and myself descended from our hack vehicle, near the little village of St Mande, and struck into the Bois de Vincennes. There had been rain during the night, and the leaves and grass were heavy with water drops. The sky was bright blue, and the sun shone brilliantly; but over the ground and between the tree trunks floated a light mist, like the smoke of a skirmish, growing thinner as it ascended, and dissipated before it reached the topmost branches. At some distance within the wood, we turned into a secluded glade, seated ourselves upon a fallen tree, and waited. We had come faster than we expected, and were fully a quarter of an hour before our time;
but in less than five minutes we heard the sound of steps and voices, soon succeeded by the appearance of three gentlemen, one of whom, by his military gait and aspect, I conjectured to be the officer of Chasseurs. In one of his companions I recognised, after a brief puzzle of memory, a well-known and popular littérateur; doubtless M. de Berg, from motives of delicacy, had not chosen to ask the aid of a brother officer in his duel with a military inferior. The black coat and grave aspect of the third stranger sufficiently indicated the doctor, who, on reaching the ground, separated himself from his companions and retired a little to one side. The others bowed to Oakley and myself. M. de Berg's second stepped forward, and I advanced to meet him. I was particularly pleased with the appearance of Oakley's antagonist. He was a young man of six or seven and twenty, of very dark complexion, with flashing black eyes and a countenance expressive of daring resolution and a fiery temperament. I should have taken him for an Italian, and I afterwards learned that he was a native of Provence, born within a stone's-throw of Italy. I never saw an ardent and enthusiastic character more strongly indicated by physiognomy, than in the case of this young officer; and I began to understand and explain to myself the feelings that had impelled him to challenge the man preferred by the mistress of his choice, even although that man's position was such as, in the eyes of society, forbade the encounter.

More as a matter of duty than with expectation of success, I asked De Berg's second if there were no chance of this meeting terminating peaceably. He shook his head with a decided gesture.

"Impossible," he said. "I am ignorant of the cause of quarrel: I know not even your principal's name. My friend, who may possibly be equally unknown to you, has asked my assistance, pledging himself that the duel is a just and honourable one, which cannot be avoided, but whose motive he has reasons to conceal even from me. Satisfied with this assurance, reposing implicit confidence in his word, I inquire no further. Moreover, once upon the ground, it is difficult creditably to arrange an affair of this kind."

I bowed without replying. The ground was measured, the pistols loaded, the men placed. The toss-up of a five-franc piece gave the first fire to M. de Berg. His bullet grazed Oakley's cheek, but so slightly as scarcely to draw blood. Oakley fired in return. The officer staggered, turned half round, and fell to the ground, the bone of his right leg broken. His second, the doctor, and I, ran forward to his assistance. As we did so, three soldiers, who it afterwards appeared had witnessed, from their concealment amongst the trees, the whole of the proceedings, emerged from the shelter of the foliage, and walked across one end of the open space where the duel had taken place, casting curious and astonished glances in our direction. They had not yet disappeared, when De Berg, whom we had raised into a sitting posture, caught sight of them. He started, and uttered an exclamation of vexation, then looked at Oakley, who had left his ground and stood near to the wounded man.

"Do you see that?" said De Berg, hurriedly, wincing as he spoke, under the hands of the surgeon, who by this time had cut off boot and trousers, and was manipulating the damaged limb.

The soldiers were now again lost to view in the thick wood. It occurred to me that two of them wore dragoon uniforms.

Oakley bowed his head assenting.
"You had better be off, and instantly," said the lieutenant. "Go to England or Germany. You have leave for a week. I will procure you a prolongation; but be off at once, and get away from Paris. Those fellows have recognised us, and will not be prevented talking."

He spoke in broken sentences, and with visible effort, for the surgeon was all the while poking and probing at the leg in a most uncomfortable manner, and De Berg was pale from pain and loss of blood. Oakley looked on with an expression of regret, and showed no disposition to the hasty flight recommended him.

"Well, doctor," said the officer, with a painful smile, "my dancing is spoilt, eh?"

"Bagatelle!" replied the man of lancets. "Clean fracture, neat wound, well as ever in a month. Your blood's too hot, mon lieutenant; you'll be all the better for losing a little of it."

"There, there," said De Berg kindly to Oakley, "no harm done, you see--to me at least. I should be sorry that any ensued to you. Away with you at once. Take him away, sir," he added to me; "he risks his life by this delay."

I took Oakley's arm, and led him unresistingly away. He was deep in thought, and scarcely replied to one or two observations I addressed to him whilst walking out of the wood. Our cabriolet was waiting; we got in, and took the road to Paris. "I hope you intend following M. de Berg's advice," said I, "and leaving the country for a while, until you are certain this affair does not become known. He evidently fears its getting wind through those soldiers."

"And he is right," said Oakley. "Two of them are of my squadron, and of those two, one is a bad character whom I have frequently had to punish. He will assuredly not lose this opportunity of revenge."

"Then you must be off at once to England. My passport is already countersigned, and you can have it. There is not much similarity in our age and appearance, but that will never be noticed."

"A thousand thanks. But I think I shall remain in Paris."

"And be brought to a court-martial? To what punishment are you liable?"

"Death, according to the letter of the law. The French articles of war are none of the mildest. But, under the circumstances, I daresay I should get off with a few years' imprisonment, followed, perhaps, by serving in a condemned regiment."

"A pleasant alternative, indeed," said I.

"I am no way anxious to incur it," replied Oakley; "but, in fact, I am as safe in Paris as anywhere, at least for a day or two; and possibly M. de Berg may find means of securing the silence of the witnesses."
At any rate, it will be time enough to-morrow or the next day to make a run of it. I cannot go upon the instant. There is one person I must see or communicate with before I leave."

I guessed whom he meant, and saw, from his manner, he was resolved to remain, so used no farther arguments to dissuade him. Before entering Paris, we dismissed our vehicle and separated; he betook himself to a small retired lodging, where he had taken up his quarters since the previous evening, and I went home to resume my preparations for departure. I remained in-doors till after dinner, and then repaired to a well-known coffee-house, frequented chiefly by military men. As I had feared, the strange duel between Victor de Berg and a sergeant of his regiment was already the talk of the town. It had been immediately reported by the soldiers who had seen it; M. de Berg was under close arrest, and the police were diligently seeking his antagonist. I left the café, jumped into a cabriolet, and made all speed to Oakley's lodging. He was out. I went again, as late as eleven o'clock, but still he was absent; and I was obliged to content myself with leaving a note, containing a word of caution and advice, which I prudently abstained from signing. I then went home and to bed, not a little uneasy about him. The next morning I breakfasted at the coffee-house, in order to get the news; and the first thing I heard was intelligence of Oakley's capture. He had been taken the previous evening, in the neighbourhood of the colonel's house, around which he doubtless hovered in hopes to obtain sight or speech of Bertha.

Few courts-martial ever excited a stronger interest in the French military world than those held upon Lieutenant Victor de Berg and the maréchal des logis Francis Oakley. The case was one almost unparalleled in the annals of military offences. A duel between an officer and a sergeant was a thing previously unheard of; and the mystery in which its causes were enveloped aggravated the universal curiosity and excitement. The offenders resolutely refused to throw light upon the subject; it had been vainly endeavoured to ascertain their seconds; the surgeon who attended on the ground had been sought equally in vain; after placing the first dressings he had disappeared, and another had been summoned to the sufferer's bedside. The wound proved of little importance, and, with the assistance of crutches, De Berg was soon able to get out. Upon their trials, he and Oakley persisted in the same system of defence. When off duty, they said, they had met in society, and had had a dispute on a subject unconnected with the service; the result had been an agreement to settle their difference with pistols. Oakley refused to state from whom the challenge proceeded; but Lieutenant de Berg proclaimed himself the aggressor, and, aware that the sentence would weigh far more heavily on Oakley than on himself, generously assumed a large share of blame. As to the cause of quarrel, names of the seconds, and all other particulars, both culprits maintained a determined silence, which no endeavours of friends or judges could induce them to break. Colonel de Bellechasse and various other officers visited Oakley in his prison, and did their utmost to penetrate the mystery. Their high opinion both of him and De Berg, convinced them there was something very extraordinary and unusual at the bottom of the business, and that its disclosure would tell favourably for the prisoners. But nothing could be got out of the obstinate duellists, who called no witnesses, except to character. Of these a host attended, for both Oakley and De Berg; and nothing could be stronger than the laudatory testimonials given them by their superiors and comrades. These, doubtless, had weighed with the court, for its sentence was considered very lenient. Oakley was condemned to five years' imprisonment, for attempting the life of his officer; De Berg was reprimanded for his forgetfulness of discipline, in provoking or consenting to a personal encounter with a subordinate, was removed from his regiment and placed in non-activity, which, under
the circumstances, was equivalent to dismissal from the service, less the disgrace.

I remained in Paris till the sentence of the court was known. Although by no means desirous to be brought forward in the business, I was willing to waive my repugnance, if by so doing I could benefit Oakley. With some difficulty I obtained access to him, begged him to prescribe a course for my adoption, and frankly to tell me if my evidence could be of service. He assured me it could not; there was no question of the fairness of the duel, and the sole crime was in the breach of military discipline. This crime my testimony could in no way palliate. He requested me to see M. de Berg, and to tell him that, to avoid the possibility of the cause of the duel becoming known, he should refuse to answer questions, plead guilty to the charge, and state, as sole extenuation, that the quarrel occurred off duty, and had no connection with military matters. This commission I duly executed. Another which he intrusted to me I found greater difficulty in performing. It was to procure information concerning Bertha de Bellechasse. After some unsuccessful attempts, I at last ascertained that she had been for some days confined to her bed by indisposition. This was sad news for Oakley, and I was loth to convey them to him, but I had promised him the exact truth. Fortunately I was able to tell him at the same time that the young lady's illness was not of a dangerous character, although the species of nervous languor which had suddenly and unaccountably seized her, caused great alarm to her parents, and especially to the colonel, who idolised his only child. Oakley was sadly depressed on learning the effect upon Bertha of his imprisonment and dangerous position, and made me promise to keep him informed of the variations in her state of health. This I did, but the bulletins were not of a very satisfactory nature, and in Oakley's pale and haggard countenance upon the day of trial, attributed by the spectators to uneasiness about his own fate, I read the painful and wearing anxiety the illness of his mistress occasioned him.

The sentence was no sooner published, than every effort was made to procure Oakley's pardon, or, failing that, a commutation of his punishment. Colonel de Bellechasse used all the interest he could command; Monsieur de Berg set his friends to work; and I, on my part, did everything in my power to obtain mercy for the unfortunate young man. All our endeavours were fruitless. The minister of war refused to listen to the applications by which he was besieged. In a military view, the crime was flagrant, subversive of discipline, and especially dangerous as a precedent in an army where promotion from the ranks continually placed between men, originally from the same class of society and long comrades and equals, the purely conventional barrier of the epaulet. The court-martial, taking into consideration the peculiar character of the offence, had avoided the infliction of an ignominious punishment. Oakley was not sentenced to the boulet, or to be herded with common malefactors; his doom was to simple imprisonment. And that doom the authorities refused to mitigate.

Some days had elapsed since Oakley's condemnation. Returning weary and dispirited from a final attempt to interest an influential personage in his behalf, I was startled by a smart tap upon the shoulder, and looking round, beheld the shrewd, good-humoured countenance of Mr Anthony Scrivington, a worthy man and excellent lawyer, who had long had entire charge of my temporal affairs. Upon this occasion, however, I felt small gratification at sight of him, for I had a lawsuit pending, on account of which I well knew I ought to have been in England a month previously, and should have been but for this affair of Oakley's, which had interested and occupied me to the exclusion of my personal concerns.
My solicitor’s unexpected appearance made me apprehend serious detriment from my neglect. He read my alarm, upon my countenance.

"Ah!" said he, "conscience pricks you, I see. You know I have been expecting you these six weeks. No harm done, however; we shall win the day, not a doubt of it."

"Then you are not come about my business?"

"Not the least, although I shall take you back with me, now I have found you. A very different affair brings me over. By the by, you may perhaps help me. You know all Paris. I am come to look for an Englishman."

"You need not look long," said I, glancing at a party of unmistakable Britons, who stood talking broad Cockney on the Boulevard.

"Ay, but not any Englishman. I want one in particular, the heir to a pretty estate of eight or ten thousand a-year. He was last heard of in Paris three years ago, and since then all trace of him is lost. 'Tis an odd affair enough. No one could have expected his coming to the estate. A couple of years since, there were two young healthy men in his way. Both have died off,--and he is the owner of Oakley Manor."

"Of what?" I exclaimed, in a tone of voice that made Scrivington stagger back, and for a moment drew the eyes of the whole street upon us. "What did you say?"

"Oakley Manor," stammered the alarmed attorney, settling his well-brushed hat, which had almost fallen from his head with the start he had given. "Old Valentine Oakley died the other day, and his nephew Francis comes into the estate. But what on earth is the matter with you?"

For sole reply I grasped his arm, and dragged him into my house, close to which we had arrived. There, five minutes cleared up everything, and convinced Scrivington and myself that the man he sought now languished, a condemned criminal, in a French military prison.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon what all will conjecture; superfluous to detail the active steps that were at once taken in Oakley’s behalf, with very different success, now that the unknown sergeant had suddenly assumed the character of an English gentleman of honourable name and ample fortune. Persons of great influence and diplomatic weight, who before had refused to espouse the cause of an obscure adventurer in a foreign service, suffered themselves to be prevailed upon, and interceded efficaciously for the master of Oakley Manor. It was even said that a letter was written on the subject by an English general of high distinction to an old opponent in arms. Be that as it may, all difficulties were at length overcome, and Oakley received his free pardon and discharge from the French service. And that equal measure of clemency might be shown, De Berg, upon the same day, was allowed to resume his place in his regiment.
I would tell how the news of her lover's pardon proved more potent than all the efforts of the faculty to bring back joy to Bertha's heart and the roses to her cheek; how Colonel Count de Bellechasse, on being informed of the attachment between his daughter and Oakley, and of the real cause of the duel, at first stormed and was furious, but gradually allowed himself to be mollified, and finally gave his consent to their union; how De Berg exchanged into a regiment serving in Africa, and has since gained laurels and high rank. But I have no time to expatiate upon any of these interesting matters, for I leave town to-morrow morning for Oakley Manor, to pay my annual visit to MY ENGLISH ACQUAINTANCE.

THE MURDERER'S LAST NIGHT

BY THOMAS DOUBLEDAY, ESQ.

[MAGA. JUNE 1829.]

"Let him, to whom experience hath been allotted, think it a duty to impart it. We know not of how long a growth goodness is; nor how slow an approach even a protracted culture makes towards perfection. A life of holiness may end in an apostle. As the tree, that hath felt all the winds of heaven, strikes root in that direction whence they oftenest blow, so goodness must have known vicissitude, to know when to resist and when to bend. To know ourselves is to have endured much and long. We must trace and limn out the map of our whole nature to be sure where it is desert, and where it is fruitful--to know the 'stony ground,'--to discover which needeth the plough, and which doth not. That piety, which is built on ignorance, holds up the shield where the arrow comes not; and sleeps unmailed when the enemy is at the gate. It dismounts to pursue the Parthian; and would dig a deep trench around the tents of the Nomades. It is long ere we root out the weaknesses of our nature, or know the art to preserve the virtue we have attained. For goodness, by over earnestness, may unwittingly be changed from its own essence, as he who knoweth not the vintage shall make vinegar of wine. When we have stubbed up and consumed the first growth of our sinfulness, there ariseth a second crop from the ashes of that which was destroyed. Even as 'the flax and the barley were smitten; for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was baled: but the wheat and the rye were not smitten, for they were not grown up;' so will SELF-SATISFACTION arise, after worldly pride and vanity have been withered up. Let him who has found inward peace content himself that he is arrived at the Pillars of Hercules, beyond which there is no safe way. That self-integrity which deems itself immaculate is dangerous. Well hath it been said, 'Make no suppletories to thyself when thou art disgraced or slighted, by pleasing thyself with the supposition that thou didst deserve praise--neither do thou get thyself a private theatre and flatterers, in whose vain noises and fantastic praises thou mayst keep up thy good opinion of thyself.' Be the act never so good, yet if it be performed rather with reference to him who does than to that which is done, there is a taint in it for which Eve is hardly answerable. It is but as a fair tower which the builder has set on an unknown quicksand, and which the floods shall damage or carry away. Oh! whosoever thou art that readest this, forget not these words, but grave them as on marble, and in golden letters. 'While the altar sends up a holy flame, have a care thou dost not suffer the birds to come and carry away the sacrifice--and let not that which began well end in thine own praise or temporal satisfaction, or a sin!'"

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Until my twenty-seventh year I resided in the small cathedral town of C---r in which I was born. My parents--especially my mother--were of a serious cast. She had been educated as a Quaker, but following her own notions as to religion, she in the latter part of her life became attached to the tenets of that sect known by the name of Moravians, and last of all to those which, when held in connection with the ritual of the Church of England, are termed "Evangelical;" or, in dissent from it, "Methodistical."

She was warm and fanciful in her devotional practice; for which the belief as to the palpable and plenary influence of the Holy Spirit upon the human mind, in which she was bred, may help to account. Of these aspirations I, an ardent and sensitive boy, soon learned to partake. My mind was never naturally prone to vice; and my imagination, though forward, was pure. I was brought up by my excellent parents in the practice of virtue; and I loved it. With an outward conduct thus guaranteeing inward persuasions--with professions borne out by an unquestioned and pure, if not altogether unostentatious piety of behaviour, what wonder that I soon became a distinguished votary of the peculiar principles to which I had attached myself. It is difficult for a young man to know himself looked up to--be the cause what it may--without his feelings and his conduct being affected by such homage. Nature had endowed me, if not with eloquence, at least with considerable fluency of speech; and as my natural diffidence--which at first was great--wore away, whether by extempore prayer or seasonable exhortation, the effects I produced exceeded those, the fruits of zeal, of those about me. I became admired as one more than usually gifted, and was gradually exalted into a leader. The occasional tendency to gloom and nervous irritability to which my temperament inclined me, was yet only marked enough to throw no unbecoming seriousness and gravity into the features of so young an apostle. It was strange to see persons of all ages and both sexes admiring at the innate seriousness of so early a preacher, and owning the sometimes really fervid earnestness of my appeals, my warnings, or my denunciations. I began more and more to feel myself in a station above that of my fellows, and that I had now a character to sustain before the eyes of men. Young as I was, could it well have been otherwise? Let me, however, speak the truth. Spiritual pride at last crept upon me. Devotion by insensible degrees became tainted with self, and the image of God was, I fear, sometimes forgotten for that of His frail and unworthy creature. True it was, I still, without slackening, spoke comfort to the ear of suffering or repentant sin--I still exhorted the weak and strengthened the strong. I still warned the besotted in corruption that the fruits of vice, blossom as she will, are but like those of the shores of the Dead Sea, seeming gay, but only emptiness and bitter ashes. But alas! the bearer of the blessed message spoke as if the worm that bore, could add grace to the tidings he conveyed to his fellow-worm. I was got upon a precipice, but knew it not--that of self-worship and conceit--the worst creature-idolatry. It was bitterly revealed to me at last.

About the year 1790, at the Assizes for the county of which the town of C----r is the county town, was tried and convicted a wretch guilty of one of the most horrible murders upon record. He was a young man, probably (for he knew not his own years) of about twenty-two years of age--one of those wandering and unsettled creatures, who seem to be driven from place to place, they know not why. Without home, without name, without companion, without sympathy, without sense,--heartless, friendless, idealess, almost soulless! and so ignorant, as not even to seem to know whether he had ever heard of a Redeemer, or seen His written Word. It was on a stormy Christmas eve when he begged
shelter in the hut of an old man, whose office it was to regulate the transit of conveyances upon the road of a great mining establishment in the neighbourhood. The old man had received him, and shared with him his humble cheer and his humble bed; for on that night the wind blew, and the sleet drove, after a manner that would have made it a crime to have turned a stranger dog to the door. The next day the poor old creature was found dead in his hut--his brains beaten out with an old iron implement which he used, and his little furniture rifled and in confusion. The wretch had murdered him for the supposed hoard of a few shillings. The snow, from which he afforded his murderer shelter, had drifted in at the door, which the miscreant, when he fled, had left open, and was frozen red with the blood of his victim. But it betrayed a footstep hard frozen in the snow and blood; and the nails of the murderer's shoe were counted, even as his days were soon to be. He was taken a few days after with a handkerchief of the old man's upon his neck. So blind is blood-guiltiness.

Up to the hour of condemnation he remained reckless as the wind--unrepenting as the flint--venomous as the blind worm. With that deep and horrible cunning which is so often united to unprincipled ignorance, he had almost involved in his fate another vagrant with whom he had chanced to consort, and to whom he had disposed of some of the blood-bought spoils. The circumstantial evidence was so involved and interwoven, that the jury, after long and obvious hesitation as to the latter, found both guilty; and the terrible sentence of death, within forty-eight hours, was passed upon both. The culprit bore it without much outward emotion; but when taken from the dock, his companion, infuriated by despair and grief, found means to level a violent blow at the head of his miserable and selfish betrayer, which long deprived the wretch of sense and motion, and, for some time, was thought to have anticipated the executioner. Would it had done so! But let me do my duty as I ought--let me repress the horror which one scene of this dreadful drama never fails to throw over my spirit--that I may tell my story as a man--and my confession at least be clear. When the felon awoke out of the death-like trance into which this assault had thrown him, his hardihood was gone; and he was reconveyed to the cell, in which he was destined agonisingly to struggle out his last hideous and distorted hours, in a state of abject horror which cannot be described. He who felt nothing, knew nothing, had now his eyes opened with terrible clearness to one object--the livid phantasma of a strangling death. All the rest was convulsive despair and darkness. Thought shudders at it--but let me go on.

The worthy clergyman, whose particular duty it was to smooth and soften, and, if possible, illuminate the last dark hours of the dying wretch, was not unwilling to admit the voluntary aid of those whom religious predispositions and natural commiseration excited to share with him in the work of piety. The task was in truth a hard one. The poor wretch, for the sake of the excitement which such intercourse naturally afforded him, and which momentarily relieved his sick and fainting spirit, groaned out half-articulate expressions of acquiescence in the appeals that were made to him; but the relief was physical merely. The grasp of the friendly hand made waver for a moment the heavy shadow of death which hung upon him--and he grasped it. The voice breathing mercy and comfort in his ear, stilled for a second the horrid echo of doom--and he listened to it. It was as the drowning man gasps at the bubble of air which he draws down with him in sinking--or as a few drops of rain to him at the stake, around whom the fire is kindled and hot. This, alas! we saw not as we ought to have done; but when the sinking wretch, at the word "mercy," laid his head upon our shoulder and groaned, we, sanguine in enthusiasm, deemed it deep repentance. When his brow seemed smooth for a space at the sound of
eternal life, we thought him as "a brand snatched from the burning." In the forward pride (for pride it was) of human perfectibility, we took him--him the murderer--as it were under our tutelage and protection. We prayed with him, we read to him, we watched with him, we blessed his miserable sleeps, and met his more wretched awakings. In the presumption of our pity, we would cleanse that white, in the world's eye, which God had, for inscrutable purposes, ordained should seem to the last murky as hell. We would paint visibly upon him the outward and visible sign of sin washed away, and mercy found. That that intended triumph may not have helped to add or to retain one feather's weight in the balance against him, let me humbly hope and trust. That I was a cause, and a great one, of this unhappy delusion, let me not deny. God forgive me, if I thought sometimes less of the soul to be saved than of him who deemed he might be one of the humble instruments of grace. It is but too true that I fain would have danced, like David, before the ark. Within and without was I assailed by those snares which, made of pride, are seen in the disguise of charity. The aspirations of my friends, the eyes of mine enemies, the wishes of the good, and the sneers of the mistrustful, were about me, and upon me; and I undertook to pass with the murderer--HIS LAST NIGHT--such a last!--but let me compose myself.

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It was about the hour of ten, on a gusty and somewhat raw evening of September, that I was locked up alone with the murderer. It was the evening of the Sabbath. Some rain had fallen, and the sun had not been long set without doors; but for the last hour and a half the dungeon had been dark, and illuminated only by a single taper. The clergyman of the prison, and some of my religious friends, had sat with us until the hour of locking-up, when, at the suggestion of the gaoler, they departed. I must confess their "good-night," and the sound of the heavy door, which the gaoler locked after him when he went to accompany them to the outer gate of the gaol, sounded heavily on my heart. I felt a sudden shrink within me, as their steps quickly ceased to be heard upon the stone stairs; and when the distant prison-door was finally closed, I watched the last echo. I had for a moment forgotten my companion. When I turned round he was sitting on the side of his low pallet, towards the head of it, supporting his head by his elbow against the wall, apparently in a state of half stupor. He was motionless, excepting a sort of convulsive movement, between sprawling and clutching of the fingers of the right hand, which was extended on his knee. His shrunk cheeks exhibited a deadly ashen paleness, with a slight tinge of yellow, the effect of confinement. His eyes were glassy and sunken, and seemed in part to have lost the power of gazing. They were turned with an unmeaning and vacant stare upon the window, where the last red streak of day was faintly visible, which they seemed vainly endeavouring to watch. The sense of my own situation now recoiled strongly upon me; and the sight of the wretch sitting stiffened in quiet agony (for it was no better), affected me with a faint sickness. I felt that an effort was necessary, and, with some difficulty, addressed a few cheering and consolatory phrases to the miserable creature I had undertaken to support. My words might not,--but I fear my tone was too much in unison with his feelings, such as they were. His answer was a few inarticulate mutterings, between which the spasmodic twitching of his fingers became more apparent than before. A noise at the door seemed decidedly to rouse him; and as he turned his head with a sudden effort, I felt relieved to see the gaoler enter. He was used to such scenes; and with an air of commiseration, but in a tone which lacked none of the firmness with which he habitually spoke, he asked the unhappy man some question of his welfare, and seemed satisfied with the head-shake and inarticulately muttered replies of the again drooping
wretch, as if they were expected, and of course. Having directed the turnkey to place some wine and slight refreshments on the table, and to trim the light, he told me in a whisper that my friends would be at the prison, with the clergyman, at the hour of six; and bidding the miserable convict and myself, after a cheering word or two, "good-night," he departed--the door was closed--and the murderer and I were finally left together.

It was now past the hour of ten o'clock; and it became my solemn duty to take heed that the last few hours of the dying sinner passed not without such comfort to his struggling soul as human help might hold out. After reading to him some passages of the gospel, the most apposite to his trying state, and some desultory and unconnected conversation--for the poor creature at times seemed to be unable, under his load of horror, to keep his ideas connected further than as they dwelt upon his own nearing and unavoidable execution--I prevailed upon him to join in prayer. He at this time appeared to be either so much exhausted, or labouring under so much lassitude from fear and want of rest, that I found it necessary to take his arm and turn him upon his knees by the pallet-side. The hour was an awful one. No sound was heard save an occasional ejaculation between a sigh and a smothered groan from the wretched felon. The candle burned dimly; and as I turned I saw, though I scarcely noticed it at the moment, a dim insect of the moth species fluttering hurriedly round it, the sound of whose wings mournfully filled up the pauses of myself and my companion. When the nerves are strained to their utmost, by such trifling circumstances are we affected. Here (thought I) there has been no light, at such an hour, for many years; and yet here is one whose office it seems to be to watch it! My spirit felt the necessity of some exertion; and, with an energy for which a few minutes before I had hardly dared to hope, I poured out my soul in prayer. I besought mercy upon the blood-stained creature who was grovelling beside me; I asked that repentance and peace might be vouchsafed him; I begged, for our Redeemer's sake, that his last moments might know that untasted rapture of sin forgiven, and a cleansed soul, which faith alone can bring to fallen man; I conjured him to help and aid me to call upon the name of Christ; and I bade him put off life and forget it, and to trust in that name alone; I interceded that his latter agony might be soothed, and that the leave-taking of body and soul might be in quietness and peace. But he shook and shivered, and nature clung to the miserable straw of existence which yet floated upon the wide and dismal current of oblivion, and he groaned heavily and muttered, "No! no! no!" as if the very idea of death was unbearable, even for a moment; and "to die," even to him that must, were a thing impossible, and not to be thought of or named. And as I wrestled with the adversary that had dominion over him, he buried his shrunk and convulsed features in the covering of his miserable pallet; while his fingers twisted and writhed about, like so many scotched snakes, and his low sick moans made the very dungeon darker.

When I lifted him from his kneeling position, he obeyed my movement like a tired child, and again sat on the low pallet, in a state of motionless and unresisting torpor. The damp sweat stood on my own forehead, though not so cold as on his; and I poured myself out a small portion of wine, to ward off the exhaustion which I began to feel unusually strong upon me. I prevailed upon the poor wretch to swallow a little with me; and, as I broke a bit of bread, I thought, and spoke to him, of that last repast of Him who came to call sinners to repentance; and methought his eye grew lighter than it was. The sinking frame, exhausted and worn down by anxiety, confinement, and the poor allowance of a felon's gaol, drew a short respite from the cordial; and he listened to my words with something of
self-collectedness—albeit slight tremblings might still be seen to run along his nerves at intervals; and his features collapsed, ever and anon, into that momentary vacuity of wildness which the touch of despair never fails to give. I endeavoured to improve the occasion. I exhorted him, for his soul's sake, and the relief of that which needed it too much, to make a full and unreserved confession, not only to God, who needed it not, but to man, who did. I besought him, for the good of all, and as he valued his soul's health, to detail the particulars of his crime, but his eye fell. That dark enemy, who takes care to leave in the heart just hope enough to keep despair alive, tongue-tied him, and he would not—even now, at the eleventh hour—give up the vain imagination that the case of his companion might yet be confounded with his, to the escape of both—and vain it was. It had not been felt advisable so far to make him acquainted with the truth, that this had already been sifted and decided; and I judged this to be the time. Again and again I urged confession upon him. I put it to him that this act of justice might now be done for its own sake, and for that of the cleansing from spot of his stained spirit. I told him, finally, that it could no longer prejudice him in this world, where his fate was written and sealed, for that his companion was reprieved. I knew not what I did. Whether the tone of my voice, untutored in such business, had raised a momentary hope, I know not, but the revulsion was dreadful. He stared with a vacant look of sudden horror—a look which those who never saw cannot conceive, and which (the remembrance is enough) I hope never to see again—and twisting round, rolled upon his pallet with a stifled moan that seemed tearing him in pieces. As he lay, moaning and writhing backwards and forwards, the convulsions of his legs, the twisting of his fingers, and the shiverings that ran through his frame were terrible.

To attempt to rouse him seemed only to increase their violence, as if the very sound of the human voice was, under his dreadful circumstances, intolerable, as renewing the sense of reality to a reason already clouding, and upon the verge of temporary delirium. He was the picture of despair. As he turned his face to one side, I saw that a few, but very few hot tears had been forced from his glassy and blood-shot eyes; and in his writhings he had scratched one cheek against his iron bedstead, the red discoloration of which contrasted sadly with the deathly pallidness of hue which his visage now showed: during his struggles, one shoe had come off, and lay unheeded on the damp stone-floor. The demon was triumphant within him; and when he groaned, the sound seemed scarcely that of a human being, so much had horror changed it. I kneeled over him,—but in vain. He heard nothing—he felt nothing—he knew nothing, but that extremity of prostration to which a moment's respite would be Dives' drop of water, and yet, in such circumstances, anything but a mercy. He could not bear for a moment to think upon his own death—a moment's respite would only have added new strength to the agony: he might be dead, but could not "--die;" and in the storm of my agitation and pity, I prayed to the Almighty to relieve him at once from sufferings which seemed too horrible even to be contemplated.

How long this tempest of despair continued, I do not know. All that I can recall is, that after almost losing my own recollection under the agitation of the scene, I suddenly perceived that his moans were less loud and continuous, and that I ventured to look at him, which I had not done for some space. Nature had become exhausted, and he was sinking gradually into a stupor, which seemed something between sleep and fainting. This relief did not continue long—and as soon as I saw him begin to revive again to a sense of his situation, I made a strong effort, and lifting him up, seated him again on the pallet, and, pouring out a small quantity of wine, gave it him to drink, not without a forlorn hope that
even wine might be permitted to afford him some little strength to bear what remained of his misery, and collect his ideas for his last hour. After a long pause of returning recollection, the poor creature got down a little of the cordial, and as I sat by him and supported him, I began to hope that his spirits calmed. He held the glass and sipped occasionally, and appeared in some sort to listen, and to answer to the words of consolation I felt collected enough to offer. At this moment the low and distant sound of a clock was heard, distinctly striking one. The ear of despair is quick; and as he heard it, he shuddered, and in spite of a strong effort to suppress his emotion, the glass had nearly fallen from his hand. A severe nervous restlessness now rapidly grew upon him, and he eagerly drank up one or two small portions of wine, with which I supplied him. His fate was now evidently brought one degree nearer to him. He kept his gaze intently and unceasingly turned to the window of the dungeon. His muttered replies were incoherent or unintelligible, and his sunk and weakened eye strained painfully on the grated window, as if he momentarily expected to see the first streak of the dawn of that morning, which to him was to be night. His nervous agitation gradually became horrible, and his motions stronger. He seemed not to have resolution enough to rise from his seat and go to the window, and yet to have an overpowering wish or impulse to do so. The lowest sound startled him--but with this terrible irritation, his muscular power, before debilitated, seemed to revive, and his action, which was drooping and languid, became quick and angular. I began to be seized with an undefined sense of fear and alarm. In vain I combated it; it grew upon me; and I had almost risen from my seat to try to make myself heard, and obtain, if possible, assistance. The loneliness of the gaol, however, rendered this, even if attempted, almost desperate--the sense of duty, the dread of ridicule, came across me, and chained me to my seat by the miserable criminal, whose state was becoming every minute more dreadful and extraordinary.

Let us not scorn or distrust our obscurest misgivings, for we are strangely constituted; and though the evidence for such conclusions often be in a manner unknown to ourselves, they are not the less veritable and just. Exhausted by the wearing excitement and anxiety of my situation, I had for a moment sunk into that confused absence of mind with which those who have been in similar circumstances cannot be unacquainted, when my miserable companion, with a convulsive shudder, grasped my arm suddenly. I was for a few seconds unaware of the cause of this emotion and movement, when a low indistinct sound caught my ear. It was the rumbling of a cart, mingled with two or three suppressed voices; and the cart appeared to be leaving the gate of the dismal building in which we were. It rolled slowly and heavily as if cumbrously laden, under the paved gateway; and after a few minutes, all was silent. The agonised wretch understood its import better than I did. A gust of the wildest despair came suddenly over him. He clutched with his hands whatever met his grasp. His knees worked. His frame became agitated with one continued movement, swaying backwards and forwards, almost to falling, and his inarticulate complaints became terrific. I attempted to steady him by an exertion of strength; I spoke kindly to him, but he writhed in my grasp like an adder, and as an adder was deaf--grief and fear had horrible possession: myself almost in a state of desperation--for the sight was pitiful. I at last endeavoured to awe him into a momentary quiescence, and strongly bade him at last to die like a man; but the word "Death" had to him only the effect it may be supposed to have upon a mere animal nature and understanding: how could it have any other? He tried to bear it, and could not, and uttering a stifled noise, between a yell and a moan, he grasped his own neck: his face assumed a
dark-red colour, and he fell into a state of stifled convulsion.

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When despair had wrought with him, I lifted him with difficulty from the floor on which he had fallen. His relaxed features had the hue of death, and his parched lips, from a livid blue, became of an ashy whiteness. In appearance he was dying; and in the agitation of the moment I poured a considerable portion of the wine which had been left with us into a glass, and, after wetting his temples, held it to his lips. He made an effort to swallow, and again revived to consciousness; and holding the vessel firmly in his hands, got down with difficulty and at intervals the entire draught. When he found it totally exhausted, the glass fell from his hands; but he seized and held one of mine with a grasp so firm and iron-like that the contrast startled me. He seemed to be involved in a confused whirl of sensations. He stared round the cell with a wildness of purpose that was appalling; and after a time I began to see, with deep remorse, that the wine I had unguardedly given was, as is always the case, adding keenness to his agony and strength to his despair. He half rose once or twice and listened; all was silent--when, after the pause of a minute or two, a sudden fit of desperation seemed to seize upon him. He rushed to the window, and hurriedly surveying the grates, wrenched at them with a strength demoniac and superhuman, till the iron bars shook in their imbedments.

From this period my recollections are vague and indistinct. I remember strongly remonstrating with the poor creature, and being pushed away by hands which were now bleeding profusely with the intense efforts of his awful delirium. I remember attempting to stop him, and hanging upon him, until the insane wretch clutched me by the throat, and a struggle ensued, during which I suppose I must at length have fainted or become insensible; for the contest was long, and, while consciousness remained, terrible and appalling. My fainting, I presume, saved my life, for the felon was in that state of maniacal desperation which nothing but a perfect unresistingness could have evaded.

After this, the first sensation I can recall is that of awakening out of that state of stupor into which exhaustion and agitation had thrown me. Shall I ever forget it? The anxiety of some of my friends had brought them early to the gaol; and the unusual noises which had been heard by some of its miserable inmates occasioned, I believe, the door of the cell in which we were to be unlocked before the intended hour. Keenly do I recollect the struggling again into painful consciousness, the sudden sense of cheering daylight, the sound of friendly voices, the changed room, and the strange looks of all around me. The passage was terrible to me; but I had yet more to undergo. I was recovered just in time to witness the poor wretch, whose prop and consolation I had undertaken to be, carried, exhausted and in nerveless horror, to the ignominious tree--his head drooping on his breast, his eyes opening mechanically at intervals, and only kept from fainting and utter insensibility by the unused and fresh morning air, which breathed in his face as if in cruel mockery. I looked once, but looked no more.--Let me hasten to conclude. I was ill for many weeks, and after recovering from a nervous fever, was ordered by my physicians into the country. This was the first blessing and relief I experienced, for the idea of society was now terrible to me. I was secluded for many months. Time, however, who ameliorates all things, at length softened and wore away the sharper parts of these impressions, but to this hour I dare not dwell upon the events of that awful night. If I dream of them, although the horrors
fall far short of the appalling reality, yet for the next sun I am discomposed, and can only seek for rest
from that Almighty Power, who, in his inscrutable providence, thought fit I should read a lesson so
hideous, but—so salutary.—Reader, farewell.

NARRATION OF CERTAIN UNCOMMON THINGS THAT DID FORMERLY HAPPEN TO ME,
HERBERT WILLIS, B.D.

[MAGA. JUNE 1844.]

It had pleased Heaven in the year 1672, when I had finished my studies in Magdalen College, Oxford,
whereof I was a Demy, and had taken my degree of bachelor of arts in the preceding term, to visit me
with so severe an affliction of fever, which many took at first for the commencement of the small-pox,
that I was recommended by the physicians, when the malady had abated, to return to my father's house
and recover my strength by diet and exercise. This I was fain to do; and having hired a small horse of
Master John Nayler in the corn-market, to take me as far as to the mansion of a gentleman, an ancient
friend of my father's, who had a house near unto Reading in Berkshire, and in those troubled times,
when no man knew whereunto things might turn from day to day, did keep himself much retired,—I
bade adieu to the university with a light heart but a weakened habit of body, and turned my horse's head
to the south. I performed the journey without accident in one day; but the exertion thereof had so
exhausted my strength, that Mr Waller (which was the name of my father's friend, and of kin to the
famous poet, Edmund Waller, Esquire, who hath been ever in such favour with our governors and
kings), perceiving I was nigh discomfited, did press me to go to my chamber without delay. He was
otherwise very gracious in his reception of me, and professed great amity to me, as being the son of his
fast friend and companion; but yet I marked, as it were, a cloud that lay obscure behind his external
professions, as if he was uneasy in his mind, and was not altogether pleased with having a stranger
within his gates. Howbeit I thanked him very heartily for his hospitality, and betook myself to the
chamber that was assigned for my repose. It was a pretty, small room, whereof I greatly admired the
fashion; and the furnishing thereof was extreme gay, for the bed hangings were of bright crimson silk,
and on a table was placed a mirror of true Venetian glass. Also, there were chests of mahogany wood,
and other luxurious devices, which my weariness did not hinder me from observing; but finally I was
overcome by my weakness, and I threw myself on the bed without removing my apparel, and sustained,
as I believe, though I have no certain warranty thereof, an access of deliquium or fainting. When I did
recover my senses after this interval of suspended faculty (whether proceeding from sleep or the other
cause above designated), I lay for many minutes revolving various circumstances in my mind. I
resolved, if by any means my bodily powers were thereunto sufficient, to depart on the morrow, and
borrow one of Mr Waller's horses to convey me on my way, for I was uneasy to be thought an intruder;
but when I had settled upon this in my mind, a new incident occurred which altered the current of my
thoughts, for I perceived a slight noise at the door of my chamber as of one stealthily turning the
handle, and I lay, without making any motion, to watch whereunto this proceeding would tend. The
door was put gently open, and a figure did enter the room, so disguised with fantastical apparel that I
was much put to it to guess what the issue would be. It was of a woman, tall and majestical, with a red
turbaund round her head, and over her shoulders a shawl much bedizened with needlework. Her gown
was of green cloth, and I was made aware by the sound, as she passed along the floor, that the heels of
her shoes were more than commonly high. With this apparition, of which I took only a very rapid observation through my half-closed eyelids, I was greatly astonished; for she was an exact resemblance to those bold Egyptian queans who were at first called Bohemians, but are nothing better than thieves and vagabonds, if indeed they be not the chosen people of the prince of darkness himself. She looked carefully all round the room, and after opening one of the drawers of mahogany wood, and taking something therefrom which I could not discern, she approached to the side of my bed, and looked earnestly upon me as I lay. I could not keep up the delusion any longer, and opened my eyes. She continued gazing steadfastly upon me without alteration of her countenance or uttering any word, whether of apology or explanation; and I was so held in by the lustre of her large eyes, and the fixed rigidity of her features, that for some time I was unable to give utterance to my thoughts.

"Woman," I said at last, "what want you with me?"

"Your help, if you will be gracious to poor mourners such as we."

I interrogated her much and curiously as to what service she required at my hands; for I had a scrupulosity to promise anything to one whose external made me think her a disciple of Mahomet, as those gypsies are said to be. After much hesitating, she could not conceal from me that she was in this disguise for some special and extraordinary purpose; nevertheless, she condescended on no particulars of her state or condition; but when I finally promised to satisfy her demand, if it might be done by a Christian gentleman, and a poor candidate for the holy ministry, she cautioned me not to be startled by whatever I should see, and beckoned me to follow her--the which I did in no easy frame of mind. Opening a little door which I had not seen when I took observation of the apartment, she disappeared down two or three steps, where I pursued the slight sound of her footfall; for there was great darkness, so that I could see nothing. We went, as I conjectured, through several passages of some length, till finally she paused, and knocked very gently three times at a door. The door was speedily opened; and in answer to a question of my guide, whether godly Mr Lees was yet arrived, a voice answered that he was there, and expecting us with impatience. When I passed through the door, I found myself in a small chamber, dimly lighted by one small lamp, which was placed upon a table by the side of a bed; and when I looked more fixedly, I thought I perceived the figure of a person stretched on the bed, but lying so fixed and still that I marvelled whether it was alive or dead. At the foot of the bed stood a venerable old man, in the dress of a clergyman of our holy church, with a book open in his hand; and my strange guide led me up to where he was standing, and whispered to him, but so that I could hear her words, "This gentleman hath promised to assist us in this matter."

But hereupon I interposed with a few words to the same reverend divine. "Sir," I said, "I would be informed wherefore I am summoned hither, and in what my assistance is needful?"

"He hath not then been previously informed?" he said to the Egyptian; and receiving some sign of negation from her, he closed the book, and leading me apart into a corner of the apartment, discovered the matter in a very pious and edifying manner.
"It is to be godfather in the holy rite of baptism, to one whom it is our duty, as Christian men, to rescue from the dangerous condition of worse than unregenerate heathenism."

"The child of that Egyptian woman?" I asked; but he said, "No. She who is now disguised in that attire is no Egyptian, but a true Samaritan, who hath been the means of working much good in the evil times past, and is likely to be a useful instrument in the troubled times yet to come. If this dissolute court, and Popish heir-presumptive, do proceed in their attempts to overthrow our pure Reformed church, depend on it, young man, that that woman will not be found wanting in the hour of trial. But for the matter in hand, will you be godfather to the person now to be received into the ark?"

I told him I could not burden my conscience with so great and important duties, without some assurance that I should be able to fulfil them. Whereto he replied, that such scrupulosities, however praiseworthy in calmer times, ought now to yield to the paramount consideration of saving a soul alive.

A faint voice, proceeding from the bed, was here heard mournfully asking if the ceremony was now to begin, for death was near at hand.

I went up to the bed and saw the face of a pale dying woman, whose eyes, albeit they encountered mine, had no sense of sight in them, for the shadows of the Great King were already settled upon her countenance. "Begin then," I said to the clergyman; and on a motion from him, the woman who had conducted me went out, and shortly returned, leading by the hand a child of two, or haply three years of age, exceeding beautiful to look on, and dressed in the same style of outlandish apparel as her conductor. I had little time to look attentively at her, for her hand was put into mine, while the other was held by the Egyptian (as I still call her, notwithstanding I knew she was a devout woman), and another person, whom I guessed to be an attendant on the sick lady, stationed herself near; whereupon the clergyman commenced from our book of common prayer the form of baptism. The lady seemed to acquire strength at the sound of his low solemn voice, and half raised herself in the bed, and looked anxiously towards where we were; when the name was given, which was Lucy Hesseltine, she stretched herself back on her pillow with a faint smile. The ceremony was soon over, and the Egyptian took the new Christian to the side of the bed, and whispered in the lady's ear, "Jessica, the child is now one of the Christian flock; she prays your blessing." She waited for an answer, during which time the clergyman took me apart, and had again entered into discourse. But the Egyptian came to us. "Hush!" she said, "the ways of God are inscrutable; our friend is gone to her account." Hereupon she hurried me through the same passages by which we had come, and bidding me God-speed at the hidden door of my chamber, told me to keep what I had seen a secret from all men, yea, if possible, to forget it myself, as there might be danger in having it spread abroad.

Tormented with many thoughts, and uneasy at the great risk I ran of bringing guilt on my own soul by having made sponsorial promises which I could not execute, I rested but indifferently that night. The next day I pursued my journey home in the manner I had proposed, and was glad to avoid the chance of being interrogated by Mr Waller as to what had occurred. In a short time my good constitution and home restored me to my former strength, and the memory of that strange incident grew more faint as other things came to pass which made deeper impressions on my heart and mind. Among these is not to
be forgotten the death of my father, which happened on the 14th of June in the following year, videlicet 1673; and the goodness of the lord bishop of Oxford in giving me priests' orders on my college Demyship, whereby I was enabled to present myself to this living, and hold it, having at that time attained the canonical age. My courtship also and marriage, which befell in the year 1674, had great effect in obliterating past transactions. I was married on Thursday, the 24th day of June.

* * * * *

(Here several pages are omitted as irrelevant, containing family incidents for some years.)

Howbeit things did not prosper with us so much as we did expect; for the payers of tithes were a stiff-necked generation, as were the Jews of old, and withheld their offerings from the priest at the very time when Providence sent a plentiful supply of mouths to which the offerings would have been of use. Charles was our only son, and was now in his third year—the two girls, Henrietta and Sophia, were six and seven—my eldest girl was nine years past, and I had named her, in commemoration of my father's ancient friend, by the prenomen of Waller. It hath been remarked by many wise men of old, and also by our present good bishop, that industry and honesty are the two Herculeses that will push the heaviest waggon through the mire, and more particularly so, if the waggoner aids also by putting his shoulder to the wheel. And easy was it to see, that the wheel of the domestic plaustrum—wherein, after the manner of the ancient Parthians, I included all my family, from the full beauty of my excellent wife to the sun-lighted hair of my prattling little Charles (the which reminds me of those beautiful lines which are contained in a translation of the Iliad of Homer by Mr Hobbes, descriptive of the young Astyanax in his mother Andromache's arm—

"And like a star upon her bosom lay His beautiful and shining golden head")--

It was easy, I say, to see that, with such an additional number of passengers, the domestic plaustrum would sink deeper and deeper in the miry ways of the world. And consultations many and long did my excellent wife and I hold over the darkening prospect of our future life. At last she bethought her of going to take counsel of her near friend and most kind godfather, Mr William Snowton of Wilts, which was a managing man for many of the nobility, and much renowned for probity and skilful discernment. He was steward on many great estates, and gave plentiful satisfaction to his employers, without neglecting his own interest, which is a thing that does always go with the other, namely, a care for your master's affairs; for how shall a man pretend to devote his time and services to another man's estate, and take no heed for himself? The thing is contra the nature of man, and the assertion thereof is fit only for false patriots and other evil men. It was with much weariness of heart and anxious tribulation that I parted from that excellent woman, even for so short a period of time; but Master George Sprowles of this parish having it in mind to travel into the village where the said Mr William Snowton kept his abode, I availed myself of his friendly offer to conduct my wife thither upon a pillion; and thereupon having sent forward her luggage two days before by a heavy waggon which journeyeth through Sarum, I took leave of the excellent woman, commending her heartily unto the care of Providence and Master George, which (Providence I mean) will not let a sparrow fall to the ground, much less the mother of a family, which moreover was riding on a strong sure-footed horse, which also was bred in our parish,
and did sometimes pasture on the glebe. It was the first time we had been separated since our
wedding-day. I took little Charles into my room that night, and did carefully survey the other children
before I went to rest. They did all sleep soundly, and some indeed did wear a smile upon their innocent
faces as I looked upon them, and I thought it was, perhaps, the reflection of the prayers which their
mother, I well knew, was pouring out for them at that hour. That was on a Tuesday, and as the distance
was nearly sixty miles, I could not hear of her safe arrival till the return of Master George, which could
not be till the following Monday; for he was a devout man, and had imbibed his father's likings in his
youth, which was a champion for the late Man, and would rather have done a murder on a Thursday
than have travelled on the Sabbath-day. "Better break heads," he was used to say, "than break the
Sabbath." I did always find him--the father I mean--a sour hand at a bargain; and when he was used to
drive me hard upon his tithes and agistments, I could fancy he took me for one of the Amalekites, or
one of the Egyptians, whom he thought it a meritorious Christian deed to spoil. The Monday came at
last, and Master George Sprowles, before he rode to his own home, trotted his horse up our church
avenue, and delivered into my hands a packet of writing carefully sealed with a seal, whereof the device
was a true-love knot. Great was my delight and great my anxiety to read what was written therein, and
all that evening I pored over the manuscript, on which she had bestowed great pains, and crossed all the
'r's without missing one. But it is never an easy task to decipher a woman's meaning, particularly when
not addicted to penmanship; and although my excellent wife had attended a penman's instructions, and
had acquired the reputation, in her native place, of being an accomplished clerk, still, since her
marriage, she had applied her genius to the making of tarts and other confections, rather than to the
parts of scholarship, and it was difficult for me to make out the significance of her epistle in its whole
extent. Howbeit, it was a wonderful effort of calligraphy, considering she had only had two days
wherein to compose and write it, and she had been so little used to this manner of communication, and
it consisted of three whole sides of a large sheet of paper. She said therein that Mr Snowton was a
father unto her in his affection and urbanity, and that he highly approved the motion for us to make
provision of the meat that perishes, seeing it is indispensable for young children and also for adults; and
that he had already bethought him of a way wherein he might be serviceable to us--viz. in procuring for
me certain youth of the upper kinds, to be by me instructed in the learned tongues, and such other
branches as I had proficiency in; and, in addition thereto, he said, that peradventure he might obtain a
similar charge for my excellent wife in superintending the perfectionment of certain young ladies of his
acquaintance in samplers, and millinery, and cookery, and such other of the fine and useful arts as she
was known to excel in; and he subjoined thereto, that the charges for each pupil would be so large,
being only those of consideration which he recommended unto me, that a few years would be sufficient
wherein to consolidate portions for all my children. Such, with some misgivings touching my own
interpretation, did I make out to be the substance of my excellent wife's letter; and I rejoiced greatly
that such an opening was made for me, by the which I might attain to such eminence of estate that I
might place my Charles in the first ranks of the law, yea, might live to see him raised to the fullness of
temporal grandeur, and sitting, as Lord High Keeper, among the peers and princes of the land, with a
crown of pure gold upon his head. But there was no crown but a heavenly one, that fadeth not nor
groweth dim, that could have added a fresh beauty to the fair head of my Charles. But the sweetest part
of her missive was contained in the post scriptum. Therein she said, and in this I could not be wrong,
that Mr Snowton had undertaken to forward her in his light wheeled cart, by reason of the conveniency
it would be of to her in the transportation of herself and luggage, and also of Miss Alice Snowton, of
Mr Snowton's kindred, a young lady which he had adopted (being the only child of his only brother, Mr Richard Snowton, deceased), and advised my wife to accept the care of her as a beginning, and for the charges of the same he would be answerable for fifty golden Caroluses at Ladyday and Michaelmas. A hundred Caroluses each year! My heart bounded with joy. Great were my preparations for the reception of my new inmate, and busy were we all from my busy Waller down to Charles. He with much riotousness did superintend all, and rejoiced greatly at the noise caused by the hammering, and taking down and putting up of bed-hangings, and did in no slight measure add thereto by strange outbreaks of riotous mirth, such as whooping and screaming; causing confusion, at the same time, by various demonstrations of his enjoyments, such as throwing nails against the windows, beating on the floor with the poker, and occasionally interrupting our operations by tumbling down stairs, and causing us for a moment to believe him killed outright, or at least maimed for life. But there is a special providence over happy children; and save that he fell on one occasion into the bucket of soap and water, wherewith a domestic was scouring the chintz room floor, and suffered some inconvenience from the hotness thereof, he escaped in a manner truly miraculous from any accident affecting life or limb. When the time drew near in the which I expected the return of my excellent wife, I took all the children to the upper part of the church field which faces the high-road, upon which the large stones have recently been laid down in the manner of a causeway, but which, at that period, was left to the natural hardness, or rather softness, of the soil, and was, in consequence thereof, dangerous to travel on by reason of the ruts and hollows; to that portion, I say, of the church field I conveyed all my little ones, to give the gratulations necessary on such an occasion to their excellent mother. The spot whereon we were stationed commanded a view of the hill which superimposes our village, and we were therefore gratified to think that we should have an early view of the expected travellers; and many quarrels and soft reconciliations did take place between my younger ones, upon the point of who would be the first to see their approach. In the midst of these sweet contentions, whilst I was in the undignified and scarcely clerical act of carrying little Charles upon my shoulder, having decorated his head with my broad-brimmed hat, in order to enable him—vain imagination, which pleased the boy's heart—to see over and beyond the hill, there did pass, in all her wonted state and dignity, with two outriders in the Mallerden livery, two palfreniers at her side, and four mounted serving-men behind, the ancient Lady Mallerden, which was so famous an upholder of our venerated church in the evil days through which it so happily passed; and with no little perturbation of mind, and great confusion of face, did I see the look of astonishment, not to say disdain, with which she regarded my position; more particularly as little Charles, elevated, as I have said, upon my shoulders, with his legs on each side of my neck, did lift up the professional hat, which did entirely absorb his countenance, with great courtesy, and made a most grave and ceremonious obeisance unto the lofty lady. She pursued her path, returning the salutation with a kind of smile, and at the same easy ambling pace as was her wont, proceeded up the hill. Just as she reached the summit thereof our eyes were gladdened with the sight, so long desired, of the light equipage on two wheels of the kind Mr Snowton, containing my excellent wife and her young charge, and also various boxes of uncommon size, in which were laid great store of bodily adornment for both the ladies; as was more fully seen thereafter, on the opening of the boxes, by reason of Mr Snowton having privily conveyed into them various changes of apparel for the use of my excellent wife, as also for each of the three girls. To Charles he also sent the image of an ass, which, by touching a certain string, did open its mouth and wave its ears in a manner most curious to behold, wherewith the infant was infinitely delighted, as was I, without inquiring at that time into the exquisite mechanism
whereby the extraordinary demonstrations were produced. But in the course of little more than a month he was led, by his inquiring turn of mind, to pry into the mystery; and in the pursuit of knowledge--laudable surely in a person of his years, and demonstrative of astonishing sagacity and research--he did take the animal entirely to pieces, and saw the inward parts thereof. The great lady, with all the retinue, stopped short as she encountered with my excellent wife at the top of the hill, and did most courteously make tender inquiries of her state of health, and also of her plans--whereof she seemed some little instructed--and expressed her satisfaction therein, and did make many sweet speeches to her, and also to the pupil, and trusted that she would be good and dutiful, and an earnest and affectionate daughter of the Church of England. To all which my excellent wife replied in fitting terms, and Alice Snowton--so was she named--made promise so to do, God being her helper and I her teacher; and thereupon the great lady bended her head with smiles, and rode on. When they got down to where we stood in the church field, the flush of modesty, and perhaps of pride, at being spoken to in such friendly guise by the haughty Lady Mallerden, had not yet left the cheek of my excellent wife, upon which I impressed a kiss of true love, and held up little Charles as high as I could, to enable him to do likewise, which he did, with a pretty set speech which I had taught him, in gratulation of her return. Alice Snowton also did blush, and held out her cheek, whereon I pressed my lip, with fervent prayers for her advance in holiness and virtue, and also in useful learning, under my excellent wife's instructions. She was a short girl, not much taller than my Waller, though she seemed to be three or even four years more advanced in age. She was a sweet engaging child of thirteen, and I loved her as one of my flock from the moment I saw her, as in duty bound. My children were divided between joy at seeing their excellent mother, and wonder at the stranger. But a short period wore off both these sentiments of the human mind, or rather the outward manifestation of them; and I will venture to assert that the quietude of night, and the clearness of the starry heavens, fell on no happier household on that evening than the parsonage of Welding. And next day it was the same; and next, and next, and a great succession of happy, useful days. Alice was a dear girl, and we loved her as our own; and she loved Charles above all, and was his friend, his nurse, his playfellow. Their gambols were beautiful to behold; and, to complete the good work which was so well begun, good Mr Snowton did send to my care, at the same remuneration, two young gentlemen of tender years, Master Walter Mannerling and Master John Carey--the elder of them being eight and the other seven; and, as if fortune never tired of raining down on us her golden favours, the great Lady Mallerden herself did use her interest on my behalf, and obtained for me the charge of a relative of her noble house--the honourable Master Fitzoswald, of illustrious lineage in the north, of the age of nine years. But doubtless, as the philosopher has remarked, there is no sweet without its bitter, or, as the poet has said, "no rose without its thorn," or, better perhaps, as another great poet of antiquity has clothed the sentiment--

----"Medio de fonte leporum Surgit amari aliquid;"

for it was made an express stipulation of the latter office--namely, the charge of the honourable young gentleman, being the second son of the noble Earl Fitzoswald, in Yorkshire--that the great Lady Mallerden should have joint superintendence of his studies with me, and the direction of his conduct, and also his religious education. And this was a sore drawback to the pleasure I experienced, for I knew her to be proud and haughty beyond most women, or even men; and also that she was of so active and inquisitive a turn of mind, that she would endeavour to obtain all power and authority unto herself,
whereto I determined by no means to submit. Two hundred golden guineas was the honorarium per annum for his education; and my excellent wife, who was addicted, like the most of her sex, to dreams and omens, did very often have a vision in the night, of the Right Hon. the Earl Fitzoswald presenting me to a great office in the church—yea, even a seat among the right reverend the lord bishops of the Upper House of Parliament. Nor were portents and auguries wanting, such as this—which made an uncommon impression on my excellent wife's mind—videlicet, it chanced that Alice Snowton did make a hat of paper, to be placed on Charles's head when he was more than usually naughty, to be called the fool's-cap out of derision; but this same paper hat, which was of a fantastic shape, being conical and high, the boy with scissors did dexterously mutilate and nearly destroy, and, coming quietly behind me when I was meditating the future with my excellent wife, he placed it on my head; and, to all our eyes, there was no mistaking the shape into which, fortuitously, and with no view or knowledge of such emblems, he had cut the paper-cap. It was evidently a mitre, and nothing else! But this, and various other concurring incidents, I pass over, having frequently rebuked my excellent wife for thinking more highly of such matters than she ought to think.

The course pursued in our studies was the following, which I particularly write down, having had great experience in that sort, and considering it may be useful, if perchance this account should fall into the hands of any who follow the honourable and noble calling of educating the rising generation. The Colloquies of Corderius, as also the Fables of Æsopus, with those also of Phædrus his Roman continuator....

* * * * *

(Many pages are here omitted as irrelevant.)

... And my excellent wife, after much entreaty, consented thereto. Accordingly, on the very next Sunday, the great Lady Mallerden attended at my house after church, and did closely question, not only the young gentlemen on the principles of their faith, but also Alice Snowton, and did, above all, clearly and emphatically point out to them the iniquities of the great Popish delusion; and exhorted them, whatever might be their future fate or condition, to hold fast by the pure Reformed church. And so much did my eldest daughter, who was now a great tall girl of twelve years of age, win upon the heart of the great lady, that she invited her to come up for several days and reside with her at Mallerden Court, which was a great honour to my daughter, invitations not being extended to any to enter that noble mansion under the degree of nobility. Nor did her beneficence end here; for she did ask Alice Snowton, who was now a fine young woman of fifteen or thereby, to be her guest at the same time. Alice was not so stout in proportion to her years as my Waller; but there was a certain gracefulness about her when she moved, and a sweet smile when she spoke, which was very gainful on the affections, as Charles could testify; for he loved her, and made no secret thereof, better than any of his sisters, and also, I really and unfeignedly believe, better than that excellent woman his mother. And so great was the impression made on the great lady by my Waller's cleverness and excellent manner of conducting herself, that, on her return at the end of three days, a letter, in the noble lady's own hand, bore testimony to her satisfaction, and a request, or rather a command, was laid on me to send her, under charge, as she expressed it, of Alice Snowton, to the Court for a longer period the following
week. And such was the mutual happiness of the noble lady, and of that young girl (my Waller, I mean), who could now write a beautiful flowing hand, and spell with uncommon accuracy and expedition, that ere long it was an arranged thing, that three days in each week were spent by the two children at Mallerden Court; and a horse at last, on every Wednesday, was in waiting to convey them, on a double pillion, to the stately mansion.

I have not alluded to the state of public affairs, of which I was far from cognisant, saving that the writhings and strugglings which this tortured realm did make, shook also the little parsonage of Welding. We heard, at remote intervals of time, rumours of dangers and difficulties hanging over this church and nation; but were little alarmed thereat, putting faith in the bill of exclusion, and the honour of our most gracious and religious lord the king. Nor did I anticipate great harm even if the Duke of York, in the absence of lawful posterity of his brother, should get upon the throne, trusting in the truth of his royal word, and the manifold declarations of favour and amicableness to the church, which he from time to time put forth. But Æsopus hath it, when bulls fight in a marsh the frogs are crushed to death. It was on the tenth day of February, in the year of our Lord 1685, I was busy with my dear friends, the youths under my charge, in the Campus Martius (which was a level space of ground in one of the glebe fields by the side of the river, whereon we performed our exercises of running, jumping, wrestling, and other athletic exercitations), when we were startled by the hearing the sound of many horses galloping up the hill above the village; and looking over the hedge on to the road, we saw a cavalier going very fast on a fine black horse, which had fire in its eyes and nostrils, as the poet says, followed by a goodly train of serving-men, all well mounted, and proceeding at the same rate. We went on with our games for an hour or two, when all at once I was peremptorily sent for to go to my house without delay; and accordingly I hurried homewards, much marveling what the summons could portend. I went into my study, and sitting in my arm-chair I saw the great Lady Mallerden; but she was so deep in thought, that for some minutes she kept me standing, and waiting her commands. At last she started to herself, and ordered me to be seated, and in her rapid glancing manner began to speak--

"I have been visited by my son, who rode post haste from London to tell me the king was dead. He has been dead four days."

I was astonished and much saddened at the news.

"Sorry--yes--but there is no time for sorrow," said the noble lady; "we must be up and doing. We are betrayed."

"Did your son, the noble Viscount Mallerden, tell you this?"

"He is one of the betrayers--know you not what manner of man he is?--Then I will tell you." And here a strange light flashed from her eyes, and her lips became compressed till all the colour disappeared--"He is a viper that stung me once--and would sting me again if I took him to my bosom, and laid it open for his poisonous tooth. I tell you the Lord Mallerden is a godless, hopeless, faithless man--bound hand and foot to the footstool of the despotic, cruel monster--the Jesuit who has now his foot upon the English throne. He is a Papist, fiercer, bitterer, crueler, because he has no belief neither in priest nor pope--but
he is ambitious, reckless, base, a courtier. He prideth himself in his shame, and says he has openly
professed. It is to please the hypocritical master he serves. And he boasts that our late king--defender of
the faith--was shrived on his deathbed by a Popish friar."

"I cannot believe it, my lady."

"You are a good man--a good simple man, Master Willis," she said; and although the words of her
designation were above my deserts, seeing that simplicity and goodness are the great ornaments of the
Christian character, still the tone in which she spoke did not partake of the nature of a compliment, and
I bowed, but made no observation in reply.

"But it needs men of other minds in these awful times which I see approaching--men of firmness, men
of boldness--yea, who can shed blood and shudder not; for great things are at stake."

"I trust not, my lady--albeit the shedding of blood"----

"I know, is generally condemned; yet be there texts which make it imperative, and I think I foresee that
the occasion for giving them forth is at hand. All means in their power they will try; yes, though James
of York has been but four days a king, he had already made perquisition for such as may be useful to
him, not in settling the crown upon his head, but in carrying off this people and kingdom, a bound
sacrifice to the blind idol which he worshippeth at Rome. You know not the history of that man; no, nor
of my son. Alas! that a mother's lips should utter such words about her own flesh and blood! The one of
them I tell you is a bigot, a pursuer, a persecutor--the other a sensualist, a Gallio, a tool. For many years
he has never beheld his mother's face; he married in his youth; he injured, deserted, yea, he killed his
wife--not with his own hand or with the dagger, but by the surer weapons of hatred, neglect,
unkindness. And she died. He has but one child; that child was left in charge of my honoured and
loving daughter, the Lady Pevensye of Notts, and hath been brought up in a Christian manner; but now
he--this man of Belial--wishes to get this infant in his own hands; nay, he boldly has made a demand of
her custody both on me and Pevensye, my daughter. We will not surrender her; he is now great and
powerful. The king will back his efforts with all the weight of the crown; and we have considered, if we
could confide the persecuted dove to the hands of some assured friend--some true son of our holy
church--some steady, firm-hearted, strong-nerved man, who in such cause would set lord and king at
defiance"----

Here she paused, and looked upon me with her eyes dilated, and her nostrils panting with some great
thought which was within her; and I availed myself of the pause to say--

"Oh, my lady! if you did mean me for such charge, I confess my deficiency for such a lofty office; for I
do feel in me no stirrings of an ambitious spirit. Sufficient is it for me to take care of the innocent flock
committed to my care, in the performance of which charge I have the approbation of my own heart, and
also, I make bold to hope it, of your ladyship, seeing that I have instructed them in the true principles
both of faith and practice; and although there are shortcomings in them all, by reason the answers in the
Catechism are not adapted to the capacities of the younger ones, especially of Charles (who,
notwithstanding, has abilities and apprehensions above his years), yet are they all imbued with faithful
d Doctrine, from Alice Snowton, which is the most advanced in stature, to the honourable Master
Fitzoswald, which is somewhat deficient in growth, being only three inches taller than my little
Charles."

The great lady looked at me while I spoke, and made no answer for a long time. At last she said with a
sort of smile, which at the same time was not hilarious or jocular in its nature--

"Perhaps 'tis better as it is. There is a providence in all things, and our plans and proposals are all
overruled for the best--for which may God be praised! Therefore I will press you no more on the
subject of the guardianship of my grandchild. But Mallerden will move heaven and earth to get her into
his power--yes, though he has neglected her so long, never caring to see her since her childhood; yet
now, when he sees 'twill gain him the treasurership of the royal household to sell the greatest heiress
and noblest blood in England to the Papists, he will make traffic of his own child, and marry her to
some prayer-mumbler to a wooden doll. Let us save her, good sir--but I forgot. No--I will save her
myself. I, that have steered her through so many quicksands, will not let her make shipwreck at last. I
will guard her like the apple of my eye, and possess my soul in patience until this tyranny be overpast."
And so ended the interview, during which my heart was tossed to and fro with the utmost agitation, and
my whole frame so troubled that I various times lost all mastery of myself, and only saw before me a
great black gulf of ruin, into which some invisible power was pushing me and all my little ones. Great,
therefore, was my delight, and sweet the relief to my soul, when the great lady left me unconnected
with her quarrels. For, in the crash of such contending powers, there was no chance of escape for such a
weak instrument as I was; and fervent were my hopes, and deep my prayers, that the perils and evils
prognosticated by the religious fears of my great protectress might be turned aside, and all good
subjects and sincere churchmen left each under his own vine and his own fig-tree, with nobody to make
them afraid. But vain are the hopes of men. We read in no long time in all men's looks the fate we were
condemned to; for it seemed as if a great cloud, filled with God's wrath, was spread out over this realm
of England, and the faces of all men grew dark. We heard the name of Jeffreys whispered in corners,
and trembled as if it had been a witch's spell to make our blood into water. The great lady kept herself
much in solitude in the ancient Court, and saw not even her favourite companion, my daughter Waller,
for many months; but did ever write affectionate letters to her, and sent presents of rich fruits, and other
delectations in which the young take pleasure. There was much riding to and fro of couriers, but
whither, or whence, she did never tell, and it was not my province to enquire; but at last an order came
for me to send up my Waller and her friend to the mansion. And at evening they were conveyed on
horseback as before; but on this occasion their escort was not Master Wilkinson the under butler, but no
less a person than my lady's kinsman, the senior brother of my honourable pupil, the honourable Master
 Fitzoswald of Yorkshire, a stately young cavalier as could be seen, strong and tall, and his style and
title was the Lord Viscount Lessingham--being the eldest son and heir to that ancient earldom. He was
an amiable and pleasant gentleman, full of courtesies and kindness, and particularly pleased with the
newfangled fashion of a handsome cap which formed the headpiece of my excellent wife. He said also
many handsome things about the brightness of my Waller's eyes, and assured my excellent wife that he
saw so promising an out-sprout of talent in my Charles, that he doubted not to see him one of the judges
of the realm, if so be he applied his intellectuals to the bar. He was also extreme civil to Alice Snowton,
which answered his civilities in like manner; and seldom in so short a space as half an hour has any person made so favourable an impression as he did, particularly on his brother, by reason of his bestowing on him a large Spanish doubloon, and promising him a delicate-coloured maneged horse immediately on his return to Yorkshire. It is a pleasant sight to see (and reflected some credit on my ministration of the moralities in this particular instance) the disinterested love of brethren, one towards another; and I failed not to ascertain that the Lord Lessingham had been boarded in the house of an exemplary divine, to wit, Mr Savage of Corpus Christi College, Oxford--a fact which I think it proper to mention to the honour of that eloquent member of our church--inasmuch as any man might be proud of having had the training up in the way he should go, of so excellent and praiseworthy a youth.

It was many days before my young ones came back (I would be understood to include in this Alice Snowton, whom I looked upon with the tenderness of a father and the pride of a teacher all in one); and when they returned to me, I thought I perceived that they were both more sorrowful than of wont. Alice (and my Waller also) looked oppressed with some secret that weighed upon their hearts, and I was fearful the great lady had made them partakers of her cares in the matter of her son and her grandchild. Yet did I not think such a thing possible as that either of them should have been taken into her confidence on so high and momentous a concernment, by reason of my Waller being so young, though thoughtful and considerate, and also fuller grown than persons much more advanced in life; and Alice Snowton was of so playful and gentle a disposition, that she seemed unfitted for the depository of any secret, unless those more strictly appertaining to her youth and sex, and moreover was a stranger to this part of the country; being of a respectable family, as I have observed, in Wilts--namely, a brother of Mr Snowton, my kind patron and friend. I called them into my study, after my labours were over with the other pupils, and I said to them--

"Dear children, ill would it become me to pry into the secrets of my honoured lady, the Lady Mallerden; yet may there arise occasions wherein it is needful for one in my situation (parent to the one of you, and in loco parentis to the other), to make perquisition into matters of weight and importance to your well-being, even at the risk of appearing inquisitive into other peoples' affairs. Answer me, therefore, Alice, my dear child, has the Lady Mallerden instructed you in any portion of her family story?"

"She has in some degree, sir," said Alice Snowton, "but not deeply."

"You know of her disagreement on certain weighty points with her son, the Lord Viscount, and how that he is a wicked man, seeking to break into the pasture of the Lord, and tear down the hedges and destroy the boundaries thereof; and that in this view he is minded to get his daughter into his power, to use her as an instrument towards his temporal elevation?"

"Something of all this we have heard, but not much," said Alice Snowton.

"And furthermore, I must tell you that overtures were made to me to aid and assist in the resistance to be offered to this man of sin, and I did, for deep and wholesome reasons, refuse my assent thereto, and in this refusal I meant you, my children, to be included; therefore, whatever propositions may be made
to you, to hear, or know, or receive, or in any manner aid, in the concealment of the Lord Viscount's
daughter—which is at present in charge of an honourable lady in the north—I charge you, refuse them;
they may bring ruin on an unambitious and humble household, and in no case can do good. We must
fear God ever, and honour the king while he is intrusted with the sword of power; and family
arrangements we must leave to the strong hands and able head of the great Lady Mallerden herself. In
this caution I know I fulfil the intentions of my honoured friend, your esteemed uncle, Mr William
Snowton, which is concerned with too many noble families to desire to get into enmity with any--and
therefore be grateful for all the kindness you experience from my honoured lady; but if perchance she
brings her grandchild to the Court, and wishes to make you of her intimates, inform me thereof; and
greatly as it would be to be regretted, I would break off the custom of your visits to the noble house, for
even that honour may be too dearly purchased by the enmity of powerful and unscrupulous men--if
with sceptres in their hands, so much the more to be held in awe." And I ended with Æsopus his fable
of the frogs and bulls. This discourse (whereof I had prepared the heads in the course of the morning) I
delivered with the full force of my elocution, and afterwards I dismissed them, leaving to my excellent
wife the duty of enlarging on the same topic, and also of giving such advice to Alice, which was now a
full-grown young woman, and very fair to look on, in respect of the young cavaliers she might see at
the great house, particularly the noble lord, the Lord Lessingholm. Such advice I considered useless in
regard to my Waller, she being only about fourteen years of age, but in other respects a fair and
womanly creature to see; for her waist was nearly twice as large as Alice Snowton's, and her shoulders
also, and in weight she would have been greatly an overmatch; and certes, putting aside all parental
fondness, which we know to be such a beautifier of one's own kindred as to make the crow a more
lovely animal than the dove (in the eyes of the parent crow), I will confess that in my estimation, and
also in that of my excellent wife, there was no comparison between the two fair maidens, either in
respect of fulness of growth or redness of complexion—-the advantage being, in both these respects, on
the side of the junior. Some sentiment of this sort I saw at the time must have possessed the honourable
breast of the Viscount Lessingholm; for although he made much profession of visiting at the parsonage
for the sake of seeing his juvenile brother, still there were certain looks and tokens whereby I was
clearly persuaded that the magnet was of a different kind; and whereas it would have been vain and
ambitious in me to lift my eyes so high, in view of matrimonial proposals, as to nearly the topmost
branch in the peerage of England (the Earls Fitzoswald being known to have been barons of renown at
the period of the Norman Conquest); still it would ill have become me to prevent my daughter from
gathering golden apples if they fell at her feet, because they had grown on such a lofty bough of the
tree; and I will therefore confess, that it was with no little gratification I saw the unfoldings of a pure
and virtuous disposition in the honourable young nobleman. And I will further state, that it seemed as if
his presence when he came (and that was often, nay, sometimes twice in one day), did make holiday in
the whole house; and Charles was by no means backward in his friendship—receiving the fishing-rods
presented unto him by the right honourable with so winning an eagerness, and pressing Alice (his
constant friend) to go with him and the noble donor with so much zeal to the brook, therein to try the
virtues of the gift, that I found it impossible to refuse permission; and therefore did those three often
consume valuable hours (yet also I hope not altogether wasted)—videlicet, Alice and Charles, and the
honourable viscount—in endeavouring to catch the finny tribe, yet seldom with much success. But
whatever was the result of their industry—yea, though it was but a minnow—it was brought and
presented to my Waller by the honourable hands of the young man, with so loving an air, that it was
easy to behold how gladly he would have consented, if she had been the companion of their sports, if by any means Charles could have been persuaded to have exchanged Alice Snowton for her. But the very mention of such an idea did throw the child into such wrathful indignation, that the right honourable was fain to bestow on him whole handfuls of sugar-plums, and promise that Alice should not be left behind. So fared the time away; and at last I began to hope that the fears of the great lady were unfounded, and that nothing would occur to trouble her repose. The manner of living had been resumed again, with the difference that, on the days the young maidens did not visit the noble mansion, the honourable viscount was, as it were, domiciled in the parsonage; and I perceived that, by this arrangement, the great lady was highly pleased; perhaps because the presence of a kinsman, a courageous gentleman, gave her some security against the rudenesses she seemed to be afraid of on the part of her own son—a grievous state of human affairs when the fifth commandment is not held in honour, and reducing us below the level of puppy-dogs and kittens, to whom that commandment, along with the rest of the decalogue, is totally unknown. Sundry times I did observe symptoms of alarm; and care did write a sad story of mental suffering on the brow of the great lady, which was a person of the magnanimity of an ancient matron, and bore up in a manner surprising to behold in one who stood, as it were, with one hand upon her coffin, while her other stretched backward through the shadow of fourscore years to touch her cradle. And ever, from time to time, couriers came to the noble mansion, while others flew in various directions on swift horses at utmost speed; and looking up into that lofty atmosphere, we saw clouds and ominous signs of coming storms, before we could hear the voice of the thunder. And once a royal messenger (called a pursuivant-at-arms) came down in person, and carried the great lady to London, and there she staid many days, and was threatened with many things and great punishments, yea, even to be tried by the Lord Jeffreys for high treason, in resisting the king’s order to deliver up her grandchild to its natural guardian—which was its father the Viscount Mallerden, now created by royal favour Marquess of Danfield. But even this last danger she scorned; and after months of confinement near the royal court, her enemies gave up persecuting her for that season, and at last she came back to Mallerden Court. In the meanwhile, we went on in a quiet and comfortable manner in the parsonage—the Viscount Lessingholm frequently with us (almost as if he were a pupil of the house); and on one or two occasions we had a visit for an evening from my honoured friend, Mr William Snowton of Wilts. He was pleased to use great commendations, both of my excellent wife and me, for the mode in which we attended to the mind and manners of his niece, the culinary and other accomplishments, and the rational education wherein he saw her advanced. He never staid later than day-dawn on the following morning, and kept himself reserved, as one used to the intimacy of the great, and not liking to make his news patent to humble people such as we; and he would on no account open his mouth on the quarrels of our great lady and her son, the new Marquess of Danfield, but kept the conversation in equable channels of everyday matters, and expounded how my glebe-lands might be made to yield a greater store of provision by newer modes of cultivation—the which I considered, however, a tampering with Providence, which gives to every field its increase, and no more. But by this time my glebe was not the only land on which I could plant my foot and say, Lo, thou art mine! for I had so prospered in the five years during which I had held a ladder for my pupils to the tree of knowledge, that much golden fruit had fallen to my share (being kicked down, as it were, by their climbing among the branches); so that I had purchased the fee-simple of the estate of my friend, Master George Sprowles, who had taken some alarm at the state of public affairs, and gone away over the seas to the plantation called, I think, Massachusetts, in the great American continent.
It was in the beginning of October 1688, that another call was made on the great lady to make her appearance within a month from that time in the city of London, to give a final answer for her contumacy in refusing obedience to the King and the Lord High Treasurer. I felt in hopes the object of their search (namely, the young maiden his daughter, for it was bruited they rummaged to find her out in all directions) was safe with some foreign friends which the great lady possessed in the republic of Holland, where the Prince of Orange was then the chief magistrate; but of this I had no certain assurance. For some days no preparations were made at the noble mansion for so momentous a journey; but at length there were great signs of something being in prospect. First of all, the Viscount Lessingham rode up from Yorkshire, whither he had been gone three weeks, attended by near a score of fine dressed serving-men, and took up his abode at Mallerden Court; then came sundry others of the great lady's kinsfolk, attended also by their servants in stately liveries; and we did expect that the proud imperial-minded lady was to go up with such great escort as should impress the king with a just estimate of her power and dignity. With this expectation we kept ourselves ready to see the noble procession when it should start on its way; but far other things were in store for me, and an instrument called a pea-spitter, wherewith Charles had provided himself for the purpose of saluting various of the serving-men as they passed, was rendered useless. It was on the first day of November that the Lord Viscount Lessingham (who had conveyed the young maidens, *videlicet* Alice Snowton and my Waller, to the Court on the previous day) did ride post haste up to my door, making his large grey horse jump over the gate at the end of the walk, as if he had been Perseus flying on his winged steed to the rescue of Andromede (as the same is so elegantly described in the ancient poet), and did summon me to go that moment to the noble mansion on matter of the highest import. Much marvelling, and greatly out of breath, I followed the noble gentleman's motions as rapidly as was beseeming one in my responsible situation, in regard to the spiritual ministrations in the parish, while in sight of any of my flock; for nothing detracts more from the dignity of the apostolical character than rapid motions--such as running, or jumping, or an unordered style of apparel, without hatband or cassock. When out of the village street, I put (as the vulgar phrase expresses it) my best foot foremost, and enacted the part of a running serving-man in the track of my noble conductor; and finally I arrived, in such state as may be conceived, at the entrance-hall of the noble mansion. In the courtyard were numerous serving-men mounted in silent gravity, and ranged around the wall. Each man was wrapped up in a dark-coloured cloak; and underneath it I saw, depending from each, the clear polished extremity of a steel sword-sheath. They did bear their reins tightened, and their heels ornamented with spurs, as if ready to spring forth at a word, and great tribulation came over my soul. Howbeit I mounted the grand staircase, and following the western corridor, I opened the door of the green-damask withdrawing-room, and found myself in the middle of a large and silent company. There were, perhaps, a dozen persons there assembled--motionless in their chairs; and at the further end of the apartment sat the great lady in whispered conversation with a tall dark gentleman of mature years, say fifty or thereabouts, and with a wave of her hand, having instructed me to be seated, she pursued her colloquies in the same under-tones as before. When I had placed myself in a chair, and was in somewhat recovering my breath, which much hurrying and the surprising scene I saw had greatly impaired, a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and I turned round, and, sitting in the next chair to me, I beheld my honoured friend Mr William Snowton of Wilts.
"Good Master Willis," he said, "you little expected to see me here, I do well believe; but it was but lately I was summoned."

"And know you wherefore we are here assembled?" I inquired.

"Somewhat I know, but not all. The persons here be men of great power, some of them being those by whom I am employed in managing their worldly affairs, and shortly we shall hear what is determined on."

"On what subject do they mean to consult us? I shall be ready," said I, "to give what advice may be needed, if peradventure it suits with my sacred calling."

"I fear they will hardly consult a person of your holy profession," said Mr Snowton with a sober kind of smile. "It is of life or death we are now to take our choice."

A great fear fell upon me, as a great shadow falls upon the earth before a thunder-storm. "What mean ye?" I whispered. "There is no shedding of blood."

"There will be much shedding of blood, good Master Willis; yea, the rivers in England will run red with the same, unless some higher power interferes to deliver us."

"And wherefore am I summoned to such fearful conference? I am no man of blood. I meddle not with lofty matters. I----"

But here I was interrupted by Mr Snowton in a low grave tone. "Then you have not heard that the wicked man of sin, the false Papist, the Marquess of Danfield, hath discovered his child?"

"No, I have not been informed thereof. And hath he gained possession of her?"

"No, nor shall not!" and hereupon he frowned a great frown, and let his sword-sheath strike heavily upon the floor. All the company looked sharply round; but seeing it was by hazard, they took no notice of what occurred.

"And where, then, is the maiden bestowed?" I demanded.

"In this house; you shall see her soon."

"And what have I to do with these matters? They are above my concernment!" I exclaimed, in great anguish of mind.

"You have to unite her in the holy bands of wedlock."

"Nay, that is clearly impossible! Where, I pray thee, is the license?"
"All that has been cared for by means of a true bishop of our church. There can be no scruple on canonical grounds; and if there be hesitation in obeying the Lady Mallerden's orders (provided she finally makes up her mind to deliver the same), I would not answer for the recusant's life, no, not for an hour."

"But wherefore in such secrecy, with such haste?" I said, in dreadful sort.

"Because we know that the father slept at Oxford last night with store of troops, and that he will be here this night with a royal warrant to enforce his right to the bestowal of his child; and he hath already promised her to the leader of the malignant Papists."

"And are we here to resist the king's soldiers and the mandate of the king?"

"Yea, to the death!" he said, and sank into gloomy thoughts and said no more.

I looked around among the assembly, and recognised no other faces that I knew, and in a short space the great lady, having finished her colloquy with her next neighbour, rose up and said--"My lords, I believe ye be all of kin to this house, and the other gentlemen be its friends--a falling house, as represented by a feeble woman of fourscore years and five. Yet in the greatness of the cause, may we securely expect a gift of strength even to so frail an instrument as I am. I have consulted with you all, and finally I have taken counsel with my kind cousin and sweet friend, the Earl of Fitzoswald, now at my side, and he hath agreed to what I have proposed. It now, then, but remains to carry our project into effect; and for that purpose I have summoned hither a good man and excellent divine, Master Willis of this neighbourhood, to be efficacious in that behalf."

I started up, and said in great agitation--"Oh, my lady!"----but had not proceeded further when I was broken in upon by a voice of thunder--

"Silence, I say! What, is it for the frailness of a reed like you that such noble enterprise must perish? Make no remonstrance, sir, but do what is needed, or----"

Although the great lady did not finish her words, I felt an assurance steal like ice over my soul that my hours were numbered if I hesitated, and I bowed low, while Mr William Snowton did privily pull me down into my seat by the hinder parts of my cassock.

"You--you, Master Willis, of all men, should least oppose this godly step. For the noise thereof will sound unto the ends of the earth, and make the old Antichrist on his seven hills quake and tremble, and shake the pitiful spirit of the apostate of Whitehall. Say I not well, my lords?"

"You say well," ran round the room in a murmur of consent.

"And you--you, Master Willis," she went on, "least of all, should object to keep a lamb within the true fold--yea, a lamb which you did see with your own eyes introduced into the same. Remember you
nought of godly Master Waller's in Berkshire, or of the scene you saw in a certain chamber, where the baptismal waters were poured forth, and murmured like a pleasant fountain in the dying ears of a devout Christian woman?"

I was so held back with awe that I said not a word, and she went on--

"Oh, if good Master Lees had yet been spared, we should not have asked for the ministry of trembling and unwilling hands like yours! And now, my lords--and you, kind gentlemen, my plan as arranged with good Lord Fitzoswald is this:--I give my grandchild's hand where her heart has long been bestowed; I then go with her through lanes and byways, under good escort, to the city of Exeter, where ere long we shall cast in our lot with certain friends. The bridegroom shall see nought of his bride till happier days arrive, except at this altar; and you shall go directly to your respective stations, and be ready at the first blowing of the horns before which the walls of this Jericho are to fall. In the next chamber I have made preparation for the ceremony, and in a few minutes, when I have arranged me for the journey, I will summon you."

Something of this I heard--the sense namely forced its way into my brain; but I was confused and panic-stricken. The whole sad scene enacted so many years before, at the house of good Master Waller, on my way home from Oxford, came back upon my heart, and I marvelled at the method whereby the great lady had acquired a knowledge of the secret. I was deep sunk in these cogitations when the door of the inner library was at last thrown open, and such light flashed upon us from the multitude of candles, which were illuminated in all parts of the chamber, that my eyes were for some time dazzled. When I came to myself I looked, and at a table under the eastern window, on which was spread out a golden-clasped prayer-book, opened at the form of solemnisation of matrimony, I saw, along with two young men of about his own age (all girt with swords, and booted and spurred), the right honourable the Viscount Lessingham, which I at once concluded was acting as bridegroom's man to one of the other youths. The company, which had been assembled in the withdrawing-room, placed themselves gravely, as if some solemn matter was in hand, at the side of the table; and I took my place, by a motion from the Earl Fitzoswald, and laid my hand upon the prayer-book, as ready to begin. The door at the other end of the room, which leadeth to the outer staircase, was opened, and there came noiselessly in a tall woman, dressed in the same fantastical apparel, like the apparel of the Bohemians or gypsies, which I remembered so well on the fatal night of the christening; and, when she cast her eyes on me, I could not have thought an hour had passed since that time, and I recognised in her, with awe and wonderment, the features of the great lady, the Lady Mallerden herself. In each hand she led a young person, in her left my daughter Waller, and I will not deny that at the sight my heart leapt up with strange but not unpleasing emotion, as, remembering the habitudes of the noble Viscount Lessingham, I thought there was a possibility of a double wedding; and in her other hand, dressed as for a journey, with close-fitting riding-coat, and a round hat with sable feathers upon her head, she conducted Alice Snowton, the which looked uncommon lovely, though by no means so healthy or stout-looking as her other companion--videlicet, my Waller. They walked up to the place whereat we stood, and the Lord Viscount springing forward, did give his hand to Alice Snowton, and did not let it go for some time; but looked upon her with such soft endearing looks that she held down her head, and a red blush appeared upon her cheek, as if thereupon there had been reflected the shadow of a rose. For it was not of the deep
tinge which formed the ornament of the complexion of my Waller.

"This is no time for useless dalliance," said the great lady; "let us to work. By no other means can we root out for ever the hopes of our enemies."

"Where then, madam," I said, "is the bride?--and who, I pray you, is the bridegroom?"

"The bridegroom is the Viscount Lessingholm. This maiden is the bride."

"But Alice Snowton, my lady!--I did think it was your honourable grandchild who was to be united to this noble gentleman."

"And so it is--and so it is! She is Alice Snowton no longer. Our good friend, Master Snowton, the steward on my daughter Pevensey's Wiltshire manor, was good enough to adopt her as his niece; and for her better concealment we placed her in the charge of a person whose character for meekness and simplicity was too notorious to raise suspicion of his being concerned in such a plot. Even to herself, till lately, her parentage was unknown, as Master Snowton kept well the secret."

"And one other question," I said; "the child to whom I became bound as godfather?"

"'Tis the same. This is the poor Lucy Hesseltine, whose orphanship you witnessed in that lone and yet comfortable death."

The lady Lucy Hesseltine, or rather Alice Snowton, for by that name I loved her best, did throw her arms about my neck, and kissed my cheek, and said I had been a kind godfather to her, yea, had been a father to her, and my excellent wife a mother. At this my heart was much moved, and I saw tears come to the eyes of several of the bystanders, but no tear came to the eyes of the great lady herself.

"Let this be enough," she said. "Let us finish what we have yet to do."

And thereupon, all being ready and in their due places, I began; but when I came to the question--"Lucy Hesseltine, wilt thou have this man to be thy lawful husband?" a sudden noise in the courtyard under the window made me pause; but the great lady commanded me with a frown to go on, and I concluded the question, and received in reply a sweet but audible "yes." But the noise was again repeated, and the assistants sprang to their feet, for it was the sound of the sharp shooting off of pistols.

"Stir not for your lives till the ceremony is over!" cried the great lady; and I hurried with trembling lips over the remainder of the service. A loud voice in the yard was heard amid the trampling of much horse. "In the king's name, surrender!" the voice said. "We have a warrant here, and soldiers!"

"Forasmuch as Frederick Fitzoswald and Lucy Hesseltine" (I said as calmly as I could, though with my heart quaking within me), "have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company and thereto have given and pledged their troth either to other, and have
declared the same by giving and receiving of a ring, and by joining of hands--I pronounce that they be man and wife together!"

"Now then, my lords and gentlemen," cried the great lady, springing to her feet, "to the defence! We are witnesses of this marriage, and clashing swords must play the wedding peal. If need be, fear not in such quarrel to do your best; yea, to the shedding of blood! Though the blood were my son's, it were well shed in such a holy cause. Now then, Lucy, come! Guard the front entrance but an hour, and we shall be beyond pursuit."

And so saying she glided rapidly, with the nearly fainting bride, towards the hidden stairs, while Viscount Lessingholm rushed rapidly with drawn sword down the grand flight, and sprang on his grey horse. In the confusion my Waller had disappeared, and in great agonies of fear I slipped into the courtyard. Oh, what a sight met my eyes! There were several men lying dead, which had been shot or otherwise killed, and their horses were galloping hither and thither with loose reins and stirrups flapping; other men were groaning, and writhing in great pains, tearing the ground with bleeding hands, and dragging themselves, if such were possible, away from the mêlée. Meanwhile, horsemen drawn up on either side were doing battle with sword and pistol; and the trampling and noise of the shouting, the groans and deep executions, all resounding at once in that atmosphere of smoke and approaching night, were fearful to listen to, and I bethought me of some way of escape. I slipped within the piazza of the servants' court, and made my way towards the gate; but here the battle raged the fiercest, the noble Viscount Lessingholm being determined to keep it closed, and the furious marquess resolute to force it open, whereby an accession of men might come to him which were shut out on the other side--the warder of the door having only admitted the marquess himself, and about fifty of the king's dragoons. The retainers which I had seen on my entrance amounted to seventy or more; and seeing they had most of them been soldiers, yea, some which had grizzled locks, having been among the shouters at Dunbar, and on many fields besides, under the cruel eye of the ferocious Oliver himself, they did cry, "Ha, ha! at the spur of the rider, and smelt the battle afar off." The Marquess of Danfield did spur his black war-horse, with his sword poised high in air towards the noble Viscount of Lessingholm, and with fierce cries the noble viscount raised also his sword, and was in the act to strike the undefended head of his assailant. "Stop, Frederick!" cried a voice, which proceeded from the Earl Fitzoswald; "it is Danfield himself!" whereupon the young gentleman did ward off the blow aimed at him by the marquess, and passed on. All this I saw ere I gave up hopes of getting out by the gate; but seeing this was hopeless, I pursued my way back again, with intent to get out by one of the postern windows, and hurry homeward across the fields; and having opened a window near unto the buttery, I hung by my hands, and then shutting my eyes and commending my soul to Heaven, I let go, and dropt safely down upon the greensward. But ere I could recover myself sufficiently, I was set upon as if I had been an armed enemy, by a large number of mounted men, which were of the company of the marquess, whereby I saw that the house was surrounded, and feared the great lady and Alice (I would say the Viscountess Lessingholm) were intercepted in their retreat. Howbeit, I gave myself up prisoner, by reason of various blows with the flats of sabres, and sundry monitions to surrender or die. I was led in great fear to the front of the court, and brought before a proud, fierce-browed commander, which interrogated me "of all that was going on, and whether the Lady Lucy Mallerden was in the Court?" Whereto I answered, that I was so overcome with terror that I knew little of what I had seen; and, with
regard to the noble lady, I was persuaded she was not within the walls. "If you answer me," he said, 
"truly, and tell me what road she has taken, I will send you away in safety, and secure you his majesty's 
pardon for anything you may have done against his crown and dignity; but if you refuse, I will 
assuredly hang you on the courtyard-gate the moment we gain possession thereof. Now, say which way 
went they?" I was sore put to it, for it was like betraying innocent blood to tell these savage men the 
course my godchild pursued in her escape; and yet to tell an untruth was repugnant to my nature, and I 
said to the captain, "It is a hard matter for me to point out where my friends are fleeing unto."

"Then you'll be hung as high as Haman at daybreak; so you can take your choice," said he.

"If I direct you unto the place whereunto she is gone," I said, "it will be a hard matter to find her."

"That's our business, not yours. Tell us where it is."

"For, suppose she were in hiding in a city, a large busy place like Bristol, and waited for a conveyance 
to a foreign land----"

"In Bristol! Oho, say no more! Ensign Morley, take ten of the best mounted of the troop and scour the 
northern roads towards Bristol. You will overtake them ere they are far advanced."

"I pray you, captain," I said, "to observe--I have not told you she is gone towards Bristol."

"I know you haven't," he said smiling, "I will bear witness you have kept her secret well; but here we 
are about to enter the Court, for the firing is finished. The rebels will be on gibbets within twenty-four 
hours, every one."

But there was no sign of the gate being opened. Contrariwise there did appear, in the dimness of the 
evening-sky, certain dark caps above the outside wall, which I did recognise as being worn by the 
serving-men of the great lady's friends; and while we were yet talking, a flight of bullets passed close 
over our heads, and three or four of the troopers fell off dead men, leaving their saddles empty and their 
horses masterless.

"Draw close, my men," cried the captain, "right wheel;" and setting his men an example, he did gallop 
with what speed he might from the propinquity of the wall. As for myself, I was in some sort relieved 
by the knowledge that the noble mansion still continued in possession of the Viscount Lessingholm; 
and comforting myself with the assurance that no evil could befall my daughter Waller while under his 
protection, I did contrive to seize by the bridle one of the dragoons' horses (a stout black horse, which, 
being never claimed, did do my farming work for fifteen years), and climbing up into the saddle, betook 
me home to inform my excellent wife of all these dreadful events. All next day, and all the next--yea, 
for three whole days--I staid in my quiet home, receiving information quietly by means of a note 
brought to me by my servants, that the mansion still held out, that Waller was quite safe, and that, 
provided no artillery was brought to bear against them, they could hold out till the time came. What was 
the meaning of the latter phraseology, I did not know; but considering it desirable at that period to cut
down certain trees on my recently purchased estate, I proceeded with Thomas Hodge the carpenter, and various other artificers of my parishioners (all being friends and dependents of the great lady), and with saws and other instruments did level the whole row of very large oaks and elm trees which bordered the only high-road from Oxford; and by some strange accident, all the trees did fall exactly across the same, and made it utterly impossible to move thereupon with cart or waggon; so that it was much to be suspected that the guns, which we heard were ordered to come up from Wallingford, could by no means get over the obstruction. It is also to be observed that Master George Railsworth, the mason, who had contracted to repair the strong bridge over our stream, did take this opportunity of taking down two of the arches of the same, and could find no sufficient assistance to enable him to restore them, which made the road impassable for horse or man. On the following day, namely, the fifth day of November, we heard that all the king's soldiers were suddenly ordered from all parts up to London, and that the Marquess of Danfield had been left to his imprisonment in Mallerden Court. Whereupon I bethought me it would be safe to venture up once more, and bring my daughter Waller to the securer custody of my excellent wife. Next morning, at early dawn, I accordingly did go up, and was admitted, after a short parley, by the gatekeeper, which had a helmet on his head and a sword in his hand. Speedily I was in the arms of my daughter Waller, who looked as happy as if none of these scenes had been transacted before her eyes; and moreover did refuse, in very positive terms, to leave the Court till her dear friend Alice--I would say the Lady Lucy--returned. I reasoned with her, and reprimanded her, and showed her in what a fearful state of danger we all were, by reason of the rebellion we had been guilty of against his majesty the king. Whereupon the child did only laugh, and told me, "Here she would abide until the time came." And with this enigmatical expression I was fain to be content; for she would vouchsafe me no other. And, corroborative of all which, she said, she relied on the assurances made unto her to that effect by Sir Walter Ouseley, one of the young gentlemen which had acted as bridegroom's man to the noble Viscount Lessingham, and was now in the Court as his lieutenant in the defence of the same. A goodly young gentleman he was, and fair to look upon, and extraordinary kind to me, soothing my fears, and encouraging me to hope for better things than those my terrors made me anticipate. I inquired of the behavings of the Marquess of Danfield, and learned to my surprise that it was expected that before this day was over, if he did receive a courier, as was thought, from the Lord Churchill, one of the king's favourite officers, he would withdraw all his objections to the marriage, and rather be an encourager and advocate of the same. In these discourses the time passed away, and about three of the clock, after we had dined in the great hall, we were looking out from the battlements and saw a dust on the western road.

"It is Churchill's letter," said the noble Viscount Lessingham, "and he has kept his promise for once."

"There is too much dust for only one courier's heels--there be twenty in company at least," replied Sir Walter Ouseley, which had the arm of my Waller closely locked in his.

"There may be a surprise intended," cried the noble viscount. "Hoist the flag, man the walls, treble the watchers, and sound for the men into the yard."

We of the peaceful professions--videlicet, my daughter Waller and I--did descend from the bartisan, and betook ourselves to the great withdrawing-room, to wait for the result of the approach. We had not
waited long when the door opened, and no other than the great lady herself, and my loved and lovely godchild, the Viscountess Lessingholm, came into the apartment. The great lady was now appareled as became her rank, having discarded those Bohemian habiliments which were her disguise in times of danger. Oh! it was a great sight to behold, the meeting between the Lady Lucy and my daughter Waller; but when hurried steps sounded on the stairs, and the door opened, and the noble viscount rushed into her arms, it was impossible to keep from tears. My feeble pen can venture on no such lofty flights of description, and therefore I will not attempt it. Meanwhile, in the outer court, great shouting was heard. Sir Walter Ouseley came up to us, and announced that the Marquess of Danfield "presented his respects to his noble mother, and congratulated her on the glorious news."

"I knew how it would be," she said, "with base natures such as his and Churchill's. We accept their assistance, but despise the instrument. He will now be fierce against his benefactor (who, though a bad king, was tender to his friends), and bitterer against his faith than if he had never been either a courtier or a bigot. I receive his congratulations, Sir Walter Ouseley, but I decline an interview for some time to come."

"He desired me also, my lady," said Sir Walter, "to convey his blessing to the bride, and his tender love to his new son, the Viscount Lessingholm."

"Well, let them not reject it. The blessing even of such a father has its value. But we must now make preparation for the celebration of the happy nuptials, in a style fitting the rank of the parties. The prince is pleased with what we have done"----

The young man, Sir Walter Ouseley, who had been whispering in my ear, here broke in on the great lady's speech.

"If it would please you, madam, at the same time, to permit two others to be happy, I have obtained Master Willis's consent thereto, and also the consent of this fair maiden."

The viscountess took Waller in her arms, and kissed her cheek, and the great lady smiled.

"I knew not, Sir Walter Ouseley, that you were so perfect a soldier as to sustain an attack and lay siege at the same time; but since in both you have been successful, I give you my hearty good wishes. And so, dear friends and true supporters, let us be thankful for the great deliverance wrought for this land and nation, as well as for ourselves. Our defender, the noble William, landed three days ago at Torbay, and is now in Hampton Court. The king has taken flight, never to be restored. Therefore, God save the Prince of Orange and the Lady Mary, the props and ornaments of a true Protestant throne!"

THE WAGS.

[MAGA. OCT. 1840.]
In a town which we will call Middletown, because it was of the middle size, dwelt a worthy shopkeeper bearing the odd name of Jeremiah Wag. By dealing in all sorts of commodities, and steady attention to his business, he had managed to keep up his respectability, and doubtless would have considerably increased his store, but for the gradual increase of his family. For several years after his marriage a new little Wag was ushered annually into the world; and though there had latterly been somewhat less of regularity, as many as ten small heads might be counted every evening in his back parlour. Jerry, the eldest boy, was, however, almost fourteen years of age, and therefore began "to make himself useful," by carrying out small parcels and assisting behind the counter. All the rest were, to use their parent's phrase, "dead stock," and "were eating their heads off;" for, sooth to say, they were a jolly little set, and blessed with most excellent appetites. Such was the state of family matters at the time when our narrative commences.

Now, on the opposite side of the street, exactly facing the modest board on which Jeremiah's name was painted, with the usual announcement of certain commodities in which he dealt, was another board of a very different description. On it were emblazoned the arms of his Majesty, with the supporters, a lion and a unicorn, as the country folks said, "a-fighting for the crown."

The establishment indicated by this display, was upheld by a very different class of customers to that which patronised the shop. Two or three times in each day some private carriage or post-chaise would stop to change horses at the King's Arms, and occasionally "a family" took up their quarters there for the night; but the latter was a piece of good-luck not often to be expected, as there were no lions to be seen in Middletown save the red rampant guardian on the sign-board.

It was haymaking time, and business was very "slack" with the worthy Jeremiah; but he said that he didn't care much about it, as the country folks were earning money, part of which he trusted would find its way into his till in due course. So, after rummaging about among his stock to see if he was "out of anything," he took his stand at the door, just to breathe a mouthful of fresh air. Titus Twist, the landlord, made his appearance at the same moment, in his own gateway, apparently with the same salubrious intent, and immediately beckoned to his neighbour just to step across.

"Well, how are you, Master Wag?" said he, when they met. "Did you observe that green chariot that stands down in the yard there, and came in more than an hour ago?" Jeremiah answered in the negative. "Well," continued mine host, "it belongs to one of the oddest, rummest, little old gentlemen I ever clapped my eyes on. He's been asking me all sorts of questions, and seems mightily tickled with your name above all things. I think he's cracked. Howsoever, he's ordered dinner; but hush! here he comes."

The little gentleman in question seemed between sixty and seventy; but, excepting a certain sallowness of complexion, carried his years well, his motions being lively, and wearing a good-humoured smile, as though habitual, on his countenance. His dress was plain, but good, and altogether becoming his apparent rank.
"I shall be back in a quarter of an hour," said he to the landlord; "I'm only going over the way to the shop to buy something;" and away he went, and, of course, was followed by Jeremiah, who, immediately on entering his own house, skipped nimbly behind the counter to wait upon his new customer.

After trying on some gloves, and purchasing two pair, the little strange gentleman looked round the shop, as though examining its contents to find something he wanted.

"Anything else I can do for you, sir?" replied Jeremiah.--"You sell almost everything, I see, Mr Wag?" observed the old gentleman. "Mr Wag? Your name is Wag, I suppose?" --"Yes, sir," replied the shopkeeper drily.

"Wag, Wag, Wag!" repeated the stranger, briskly. "Funny name! eh?"--"It was my father's before me," observed Jeremiah, scarcely knowing what to think of the matter.

"Very good name!" continued the little gentleman, "Like it very much. Got any children? Any little Wags, eh? Like to see 'em. Fond of children--little Wags in particular--he, he, he!"

"Much obliged to ye for inquiring, sir," replied the senior Wag; "I've got just half-a-score, sorted sizes. That's the eldest!" and he pointed to young Jerry, whose lanky limbs were at the moment displayed, spread-eagle fashion, against the shelves, from the topmost of which he was reaching down some commodity for a customer.

"That's right. Bring 'em up to industry," said the little gentleman. "Well, I can't stay now, because my dinner's ready; but I see you sell Irish linen, and I want a piece for shirts; so, perhaps, you'll be so good as to look me out a good one and bring it over to me."

"You may rely," commenced Mr Wag; but his new customer cut him short by adding, "I know that well enough," as he briskly made his exit.

The industrious shopkeeper forthwith selected certain of his primest articles, folded them in a wrapper, and, at the appointed time, carried the whole across to the King's Arms.

He was immediately ushered into the presence of the eccentric elderly gentleman, who was seated alone behind a bottle of white and a bottle of red. "Suppose you've dined, Master Wag?" said he. "So, come! No ceremony, sit down and take a glass of wine."

"I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure, sir," replied Jeremiah; "but I have just brought over half-a-dozen pieces of Irish for you to look at and choose."

"Phoo, phoo!" quoth the small stranger, "I don't want to see them. I know nothing about 'em. Leave all to you. Only meant to have had a piece; but, as you have brought half-a-dozen, I may as well take 'em. 'Store's no sore,' they say. There's a fifty-pound note! Reckon 'em up, and see if there's any change."
Jeremiah stared at this unusual wholesale mode of dealing, stammered his thanks, and observed, that the goods would not amount to half the money.

"So much the worse," said the little gentleman. "Must see if I can't buy something else in your line presently; but, sit down now: that's a good fellow! I want to have some talk with you."

The bashful shopkeeper hereupon perched himself on the extreme front edge of a chair, at a respectful distance from the table; but was told to draw up closer by his hospitable entertainer. Then they took three or four glasses of wine together, and gradually Jeremiah found himself more at home, and scrupled not to reply to the odd stranger's questions respecting his family and occupations. And so they went on chatting till they appeared as two very old and intimate friends; for Mr Wag was of an open, unsuspecting disposition, and talked as though he had no objection that all the world should know all about his affairs.

"Well, but, my dear Wag," said the stranger, "can't you tell what part of the country your father came from?"

"No, sir, I can't," replied Jeremiah, "he died when I was about eight years old, and the London merchant to whom he was clerk put me to school, and after that apprenticed me to old Hicks, who lived over the way where I do now. Well, there I served my time, and then married his daughter, and so came in for the business when he died; but I've increased it a pretty deal; and if I'd more capital, could make a snug thing of it by going into the wholesale, and serving village shops with grocery, and so on."

"Why don't you try it?" asked the little gentleman.

"It won't do unless one has got the ready to go to market with," replied Jeremiah knowingly; "and then one must be able to give credit, and ought to keep one's own waggon to carry out goods. No, no, it won't do. Many a man has made bad worse by getting out of his depth; and, as it is, thank God, I can live. The only thing that puzzles me now and then is, what I shall do with all the children."

"Harkye, my worthy Wag," said the odd stranger, "I have not got any children; so, if you'll let me pick among the lot, I don't care if I take two or three off your hands."

"Sir!" exclaimed the astonished shopkeeper.

"I mean what I say," replied the old gentleman, demurely. "Take me with you. Introduce me to your wife and family, and let us all have a friendly cup of tea together in your back parlour. Don't stare, my good Wag; but fill your glass. I don't want to buy your little Wags, but I happen to have more of the ready, as you call it, than I want; so I'll put them to school or what you like. What say you?"

Jeremiah rubbed his eyes, as though doubtful if he were awake, and then uttered his thanks for such extraordinary kindness in the best way he was able; and about an hour after, the whimsical little old rich gentleman was sitting by the side of Mrs Wag, with a little curly-headed Wag on each knee, while the
rest were playing round, or gazing open-mouthed at the stranger with childish wonder.

By degrees all stiffness wore off; and, before the evening concluded, nothing could exceed the merriment of the whole party. The eccentric elderly gentleman had learned to call all the Wags by their names, and he played and frolicked, and rolled upon the floor with the little people, in a style that made the parents suspect, with the landlord, that he must be "cracked."

However, at parting, he became more serious, and invited Jeremiah to come and breakfast with him in the morning, and to bring with him a copy of the names and birthdays of his children, as entered in the Family Bible.

Mr and Mrs Wag of course lay awake for an hour that night, talking over the strange incidents of the day, and perhaps building a few castles in the air, after the style of affectionate parents for their children.

On the following morning Jeremiah dressed himself in his Sunday suit, and repaired to fulfil his engagement. His new old friend received him in the most cordial manner, and they breakfasted together, chatting over family concerns as on the preceding day. When their repast was ended, the little gentleman read over the list of the young Wags, and smilingly observed, "A jolly set of them! We must contrive to make them all good and happy Wags if we can, eh? Eldest, Jerry, almost fourteen--useful to you in business. That's right. Leave him there, eh? Next, Thomas, almost thirteen--fond of reading--told me so. A good school first, eh? Then three girls running, Mary, Anne, and Fanny. Pack them off to a good school too. Never mind. Then comes William, eight--and Stephen, seven. Think I know where to place them----Just the right age. Perhaps can't do it at once, though. Humph. That's all I can take at present. The other three, Sarah, Henry, and Philip, too young. Well, my worthy Wag, you will hear about what I mean to do with them before long, and a friend of mine will call upon you some day to consult about the best way of increasing your business. Settle all in time. No more to say now, but good-by--eh? Paid the landlord's bill before breakfast, 'cause don't like to be kept waiting. Didn't mean to have stopped longer than to change horses when I came yesterday. Glad I have, though. Hope you won't be sorry. Holla! waiter! is my carriage ready?" --"At the door, sir," shouted the landlord in reply. "That's right!" exclaimed the extraordinary elderly gentleman. "Good-by, my worthy Wag! Remember me to Mrs Wag, and give my love to all the little Wags. Ten besides yourselves! A dozen Wags in one family! Never expected to see such a sight as that! He, he, he! See it again, though, hope. Wag together, all of you, like a bundle of sticks, hope!" And, laughing and uttering similar incoherent sentences alternately, he walked briskly along the passage to his carriage, into which he forthwith jumped, and, having repeated his valediction to the astounded shopkeeper, ordered the postilion to drive on.

Thus Jeremiah was prevented from expressing his grateful feelings for such wonderful promises, and so stood gaping in silence till the carriage was out of sight.

"Why, you seem regularly 'mazed, neighbour!" exclaimed the landlord.
"Enough to make me," replied Mr Wag. "If one-half what I've heard this morning should come true, I shall be a lucky fellow, that's all!"

"The old fellow's cracked," observed Titus Twist. "He's a gentleman, however, every inch of him, that I will say for him. Didn't make a word about nothing. All right. Used to good living, no doubt. More's the pity, as he's cracked. He certainly ought not to be allowed to travel without a servant as he does."

"Well," observed Jeremiah. "I don't know what to say or what to think about it; but, if he is cracked--humph! I don't know. It may be so. However, there's no harm done yet."

"So he's been cramming you, eh!" said mine host. "Made you a present of the moon, perhaps? They do fancy strange things, and think themselves kings, and very rich in particular."

The truth of this latter assertion made an impression upon our worthy shopkeeper, who communicated it to his wife; but she had taken a great fancy to the odd old gentleman, and was not to be shaken in her conviction that he would really be "as good as his word."

"Well," observed her husband, "time will show; and, at all events, it was no bad thing to sell six pieces of fine linen at once. We don't have such customers every day. However, the best thing we can do is, to keep our own secret; for, if the neighbours were to hear of it, we should never hear the last of it."

Mrs Wag agreed in the propriety of her spouse's suggestion; but, nevertheless, was unable to refrain from dropping hints to sundry gossips concerning her anticipations of coming good fortune; and the vagueness and mysterious importance of her manner created a sensation, and caused many strange surmises. Some decided that the Wags had been so imprudent as to purchase a whole lottery ticket, and blamed them accordingly; while others shook their heads, and hinted that, with so large a family, it would be a very fortunate circumstance if Jeremiah could manage so as not to go back in the world; and, for their parts, they never liked to hear folks talk mysteriously about good luck: so, for some time, the stranger's visit appeared to have produced results somewhat the reverse of beneficial; but, at the end of a month, an elderly gentleman, dressed in black, entered the shop, and requested a private interview with Mr Wag; and as the back parlour was full of little Wags, then undergoing the ceremonies of ablution, combing, &c., he proposed that they should adjourn to the King's Arms.

When they were seated there, the stranger very deliberately proceeded to arrange a variety of papers upon the table in a business-like manner; and when his task was completed, apparently to his satisfaction, he smiled, rubbed his hands, and thus addressed the wondering shopkeeper,

"My name is Stephen Goodfellow. I am an attorney, living in London; and there" (handing a card) "is my address. You will probably guess who is my client, but my instructions are to conceal his name. Well, he has consulted with me as to the best mode of carrying your intention of increasing your business into effect, and I have, consequently, had interviews with certain commercial gentlemen, and, ahem! the result is, that as the thing must be done gradually, I have to present you, in the first place, with this order for a thousand pounds. You will then be so good as to sign this document, by reading
which you will perceive that you cannot be called upon for repayment before the expiration of three years. Ahem! don't interrupt me. That will do to begin with; but, after a little while, as you must give credit, and some of your commodities, particularly grocery, amount to considerable sums, you may want more, so--ahem!--yes, this is the paper. You are to put your usual signature here; and, mark me, in precisely six months from this day, an account will be opened in your name with the London bankers, whose check-book I now present you with. They will have assets in their hands, and instructions to honour your drafts for any sum or sums not exceeding four thousand pounds. You understand?"

"I hear what you say, sir," stammered Jeremiah; "but, really, I'm so astonished, that----"

"Well, well," observed Mr Goodfellow, smiling, "it certainly is not an everyday transaction; but my respected client is a little eccentric, and so we must allow him to do things in his own way. He has taken a fancy to you, that's clear; and when he takes anything in hand, he doesn't mind trifles."

"But so much!" exclaimed Mr Wag. "One thousand--four thousand--five thousand pounds! It is like a dream! Surely, sir," and he hesitated; "surely the gentleman can't be in--ahem!--in--his--right senses?"

"Sound as a bell," replied the lawyer. "I hope you may have as clear a head to carry on your new business. At present you are a little bewildered, that's plain enough; but no great marvel. However, my time is precious, so just let me have your signature, and I'm off."

He then placed the papers before Jeremiah, who, after a little more demur, and a great deal of trepidation, wrote his name twice, and received the money order and the banker's check-book. Mr Goodfellow then ordered a chaise, and chatted familiarly till it was ready, when he shook Mr Wag by the hand, wished him good luck, and departed.

"I told you so!" exclaimed Mrs Wag, when her spouse related the morning's adventure. "He seemed so fond of the children. I knew how it would be. But you should have asked his name. I wonder who he can be! Some great lord, no doubt. Well, bless him, I say! God bless him, whoever he is. Oh, Jerry! my dear Jerry Wag! I feel as if I was a-going to cry. How foolish! Well, I can't help it, and that's the truth;" and the good housewife wiped her eyes, and then threw her arms round the neck of her dearly beloved Wag, who, albeit that he was unused to the melting mood, found his eyes suddenly grow dim, and so they performed a weeping duet together.

It is pleasant to record that, at the termination of this natural paroxysm, they neglected not to return thanks to a higher Power for the wonderful change that had thus suddenly taken place in their prospects.

Their subsequent task was to take counsel together; but that was a work requiring more of calmness than they possessed for the first few days. However, by degrees, as time rolled on, the industrious couple made their arrangements, and, at the end of six months, Mr Wag had so increased his business, that it became advisable for him to have recourse to his London bankers. In the meanwhile, he had sent his son Tom and the three eldest girls to school, agreeably to the intimation of his unknown friend, which he considered as a command that he was in duty bound to comply with. Still it appeared very
extraordinary that the little elderly gentleman neither communicated with nor came to see them; but, as the whole affair was out of the common way, Jeremiah resolved industriously to avail himself of the advantages of his new position, as the best means of testifying his gratitude during his benefactor's absence.

Much marvelling, of course, there was in the town and neighbourhood at the steady increase in Mr Wag's "concern," in spite of his very plain statement that a kind friend had advanced him a considerable sum.

"Who could that friend be?" was the puzzling question which no one could answer; but his unremitting attention to business, the punctuality of his payments, and other evidences of his prosperity, sufficed to insure him general respect, though certain envious busybodies would venture now and then to hint significantly that "all is not gold that glistens."

So matters went on pleasantly with the Wags till winter, when Tom and his three sisters came home for the holidays, and the latter assisted their mother in preparing for the festivities of the season.

It was Christmas eve, and the whole of the family were congregated in the little back parlour, when young Jerry started up at the well-known sound of a customer at the shop-door, at which he arrived with a hop, step, and jump; and, jerking it open, beheld a little old gentleman wrapped in a large cloak.

"Please to walk in, sir," said Jerry Wag.

"Hush!" whispered the stranger, placing his forefinger on his mouth, "I want to surprise them. You're all together to-night, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jerry, smiling, for he thought he knew to whom he was speaking.

"That's right," said the odd elderly gentleman, advancing cautiously towards the darkest part of the shop, and throwing off his cloak. "Now for a Christmas frolic! Come here, you rogue! Why, you've grown taller than me. That's right! a thriving Wag! Now, mind, you go back as if nothing had happened, and give me hold of your coat-tail, so that I can't be seen. That'll do. No laughing, you young monkey. There, step along."

Jerry did as he was bid, save that, though he bit his lips unmercifully, his risible muscles would not remain inactive; and thus the oddly-joined pair made their way into the family apartment just as the eldest daughter had exclaimed, "Now, mamma, it's your turn to wish!"

They were sitting in a semicircle before the fire, and the stranger and his shield, of course, stood behind them.

"Heigho!" said Mrs Wag, "there's only one thing I wish for to-night, and that is the addition of one more to our party."
"Name! name! You must name your wish!" cried three or four juvenile voices, in full glee.

"I wish I could tell you his name," said Mrs Wag, "but your father knows who I mean. Don't you, my dear?"

"I can't mistake you, my love," replied Jeremiah, affectionately, "and I wish he could see how happy we are. It would do his heart good, I really think."

"Who can he be!" exclaimed the eldest daughter.

"Perhaps it's somebody like me!" cried the little odd gentleman, stepping briskly forward.

"It is! it is!" shrieked mamma, and up jumped the whole party, and down went Mrs Wag upon her knees, while, utterly unconscious of what she did, her arms were clasped round the neck of her benefactor, whose bodily frame, being unable to sustain her matronly weight, gave way, and so they rolled together on the floor.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the eccentric elderly gentleman, as soon as he recovered breath, but without attempting to rise. "This is a Christmas gambol, eh! Master Wag?--eh! my merry little Wags? Needn't ask you all how you are."

"My dear sir!" exclaimed Jeremiah, "allow me to assist you. I hope you are not hurt."

"Hurt!" cried the little gentleman, jumping up and offering his hand to Mrs Wag. "Hurt! Why, I feel myself twenty years younger than I did five minutes ago. Never mind, ma'am. Like Christmas gambols. Always did. Happen to have such a thing as a bunch of mistletoe, eh?"

"I am sure, sir," whimpered Mrs Wag--"I am sure I shall never forgive myself. To think of taking such a liberty; I--I--can't conceive how I could--"

"As often as ever you please, my good lady," said the eccentric, handing her to a chair; "but sit down and compose yourself, while I shake hands all round;" and, turning toward Jeremiah, he commenced the ceremony, which he went through with from the eldest to the youngest, calling them all by their names, as correctly as though he were a constant visitor.

A right merry Christmas eve was that. The young Wags were, ever and anon, obliged to hold their sides, as they laughed and screamed with delight at the funny stories told by the funny little old gentleman, who romped and played with them with as much glee as though he had been the youngest of the party. So the hours passed quickly away till the unwelcome sound of "bed-time" was whispered among the little circle; and then one after another departed, until Mr and Mrs Wag were left alone with their honoured guest.
The hearts of both were full, and they began to endeavour to express their feelings; but the singular old gentleman stopped them by saying--"Needn't tell me. Know it all. Shall run away if you go on so. Remember, I told you I had more of the 'ready' than I knew what to do with. Couldn't have done better with it, eh? Out at interest now. Best sort of interest, too. More pleasure this evening than receiving dividends, eh! Never was happier. So come, let us wind up for the night. I've a memorandum or two for you in my pocket-book," and he placed it on the table, and began to turn over divers papers, as he continued--"Hem! ha! Yes. Those two. You'd better take them, my good sir. They'll admit William and Stephen to Christ Church--what they call the Blue-Coat School. Capital school, eh?"

"My dear sir!" exclaimed Jeremiah.

"Don't interrupt me, that's a good fellow," said the old gentleman. "Hem! Do you ever smoke a pipe?"

"Very rarely," replied the wondering Mr Wag.

"Well," continued his guest, "take that paper to light your next with. Put it in your pocket, and don't look at it till I'm gone. Hem! Tom's master says he will make a good scholar; so, if you've no objection, I was thinking he might as well go to college in a year or two. Not in your way, perhaps? Never mind. I know some of the big-wigs. See all right, and enter his name. Should have one parson in a large family, eh?"

Here Mrs Wag could no longer refrain from giving vent to her overcharged feelings by certain incoherent ejaculations, which terminated in a flood of tears.

"Humph!" said the old gentleman, "my spectacles want wiping;" and he took the opportunity of rubbing them and blowing his nose, while Jeremiah was comforting the wife of his bosom, and telling her not to be so foolish, although he could scarcely avoid snivelling himself.

"Hem! ahem!" resumed their guest; "think I've got some of the mince-pie sticking in my throat. Stupid old fellow to eat so much, eh?"

"Better take another glass of wine, sir," said Jeremiah. "Give me leave, sir, to pour it out."

"No, no!" exclaimed Mrs Wag, starting up and smiling through her tears, "let me! Nobody else! God bless you, sir!"

"And you, too!" ejaculated the old gentleman gaily; "come, that's a challenge! Glasses round! and then we must say, good-night. Don't let us make a dull end of a merry evening."

Warm benedictions were forthwith uttered, and the "compliments of the season" were wished, with more than common sincerity, by all three, as their glasses met jingling together. Then, the whimsical guest tossed off his wine, jumped up, shook his hosts heartily by the hand, wished them good-night, and sallied into the shop to find his cloak. Mr and Mrs Wag followed, and expressed a hope that he would
honour their Christmas dinner by his presence on the following day; but all they could draw from him was—"Can't promise. Ate and drank a little too much to-night, perhaps. Getting shockingly old. See how I am in the morning. Enjoyed myself this evening. A jolly set of Wags altogether! Merry Wags all, eh?—young and old. Well, well, wag along happily, my dear Mr and Mrs Wag! Good-night!" And after once more shaking hands with them, he nimbly whisked himself out at the shop-door, and trotted across to the King's Arms.

No sooner were the worthy couple alone than curiosity led them to examine the piece of paper which their benefactor had presented to Jeremiah for the purpose of lighting his pipe, and it proved to be the promissory note which the latter had signed for the first thousand pounds. The donor's intention was plain enough, as it was regularly cancelled, so Mrs Wag was obliged to use her pocket-handkerchief once more; and her spouse, after striding three or four times rapidly across the room, felt himself also under the necessity of taking out his, and blowing his nose with unusual vehemence. Then they congratulated and comforted each other, and said their prayers, and offered up their thanks-givings with a fervour and sincerity that proved they were not unworthy of their good fortune. Then they retired to rest, though not immediately to sleep, for they were each beset by strange waking dreams, and beheld in their minds' eye a black clerical Wag, two long-coated little blue Wags, with yellow nether investments, and other Wags of sorted sizes, but all very happy.

On the following morning, being Christmas day, our fortunate shopkeeper equipped himself in his best apparel, and, before breakfast, stepped across the road, and found Mr Titus Twist rubbing his eyes in his own gateway. Mutual salutations, and "compliments of the season," were exchanged in good neighbourly style, and then mine host exclaimed, "There's a box here for you, Master Wag, left by that queer little old gentleman. I'm sure he's cracked! In he comes here yesterday, just after dark, posting in his own carriage. Well, he orders up anything as we happened to have ready, and I sets him down to as good a dinner as ever any gentleman need sit down to, though I say it, because why, you see, our larder's pretty considerably well stocked at this season. So down he sits, rubbing his hands, and seeming as pleased as Punch, and orders a bottle of wine; but, before he'd been ten minutes at table, up he jumps, claps on his cloak and hat, and runs smack out o' the house, and never comes back again till past eleven at night, when he pays his bill, and orders horses for six o'clock this morning."

"Is he gone, then?" exclaimed Jeremiah.

"Off, sure enough," replied Titus; "but he's left a great box for you, which I was just going to send over. So, I suppose you and he have some dealings together."

"Yes," said Mr Wag, "I shall have cause to bless and thank him the latest day I have to live; but I wish he had stopped here to-day. Well, God bless him, wherever he is gone. Hark ye, neighbour--you have often heard me speak of having a friend--well, that's him. I don't know why, but he's taken a fancy to me and my wife and family, and has done for us more than you'd believe, if I was to tell you. However, we can chat that over another day, as I can't stop now, as Mrs Wag and the children are waiting breakfast. But where's the box? I'll take it with me, if you please."
"If two of the strongest fellows in my yard can take it over, it's as much as they can," replied Titus. "However, they shall try; and I hope you'll come over this afternoon and crack a bottle of my best to drink the little queer old gentleman's health. But, mind me, he's cracked to a certainty, and you'll find it out some of these days."

The box was accordingly delivered, and, on being opened, was found to contain a dozen separate packages, each directed for one member of the Wag family, the largest for Jeremiah, the father, and the smallest for little Philip, a "rising three" year old Wag. Their contents were far too various for precise specification, but could not have been more judiciously appropriated nor more gratefully received, so that Christmas day was a day of rejoicing; and the only regret felt by one and all the Wags was, that their very kind friend had not stayed to spend it with them.

When the festive season was over, matters went on as usual with Jeremiah, save that perhaps there was more of cheerfulness in his manner while pursuing his course of steady industry. The fact was, that he never now felt perplexed about money affairs, which were wont formerly to occupy much of his time by day, and cause him many sleepless hours by night. Those who called for payment were as welcome as those who came to pay, and consequently his credit stood high; and the travellers and London houses strove, by tempting bargains and peculiar attention in "selecting the best articles, to complete his kind orders," to keep his name upon their books. So he went on and prospered in all his undertakings, and in the course thereof visited the metropolis to make purchases, and, when there, called upon Mr Goodfellow, who gave him a hearty welcome, but could not be persuaded to reveal the name of his eccentric client, though he scrupled not to say that he was in good health, adding, with a smile, "and in perfect possession of his intellects."

Jeremiah next endeavoured to worm the secret from his bankers, but with no better success. The partner who received him, assured him that the steady increase and respectability of his account had wrought such an impression in a quarter which he was not permitted to name, that their house would feel much pleasure in making advances whenever anything advantageous offered itself for purchase.

"It is wonderful!" exclaimed Jeremiah.

"A good character, my dear sir," observed the banker, "is everything in trade. We are dealers in money; and nothing pleases us more than placing it where we know it is safe, and have every reason to suppose it may be useful."

"But," observed Jeremiah, "you know nothing about me."

"I beg your pardon, Mr Wag," said the banker; "you are what we call a good man, and have got a back."

"A back!" exclaimed the bewildered shopkeeper.

"Yes," said the banker, smiling, "that is, a good friend to your back; and though he chooses to keep himself in the background, depend upon it he'll not forsake you so long as you go on as you have done."
Therefore, buy away for ready cash as largely as you please, and we'll honour your drafts."

On this hint Jeremiah subsequently acted, by making purchases which enabled him to serve his customers "on terms that defied all competition." Therefore, and by dint of strict attention and civility, his trade continued to increase, till he was obliged to add warehouses to his shop, and employ a regular clerk and collector, besides shopmen, porters, and waggoner.

In the meanwhile young Tom Wag studied Latin and Greek with a neighbouring curate; William and Stephen were, in due course, admitted into the Blue-Coat School, and the education of the other children went on precisely as had been recommended by their eccentric benefactor, whose advice Mr and Mrs Wag considered equivalent to commands. Still they were often uneasy about him, and more particularly after another Christmas eve had passed without his appearance. Poor Mrs Wag was sure he was ill, and would occasionally charge him with unkindness for not letting her know, that she might go and nurse him. But again months and months rolled away, and at last autumn arrived, and with it brought the grand dénouement of the mystery, as suddenly and unexpectedly as their former good-luck.

All the Wags who were at home were sitting round a tea-table, in the little garden at the back of the house, and Mrs Wag was sedately filling their cups, when one of the younger children exclaimed, "Who's that?"

Jeremiah looked round to where the child was gazing, and beheld his benefactor stealthily approaching from the back door, with an arch smile on his countenance, as though wishing to take them by surprise; but perceiving that he was discovered, he stepped nimbly forward, according to his usual custom, and holding out his hand, said, "Well, my dear Wag, how are you? How are you, my dear Mrs Wag?--and how are you, young Jerry Wag, Mary Wag, Sarah Wag, Henry Wag, and Philip Wag?"

All expressed their delight at his appearance, according to their different ages and abilities, but all were evidently delighted, and none more than the strange little gentleman himself, whose eyes sparkled with gratification as he took his seat, looked round at the joyous group, and begged to join their family party. Mrs Wag felt somewhat tremulous at first, and doubtless her visitor perceived it, as he turned his attention to the little Wags till she had finished her table arrangements and presented him with a cup of tea.

"Thank you, my good lady," said he, "that's as it should be. All merry Wags, together, eh?"

"We--we--thank God!" whimpered Mrs Wag, "we are--Yes! But it's all your doing, sir. I wish I could thank--thank you--as I ought."

Here Jeremiah, perceiving that his spouse was too nervous to make an excellent speech, "took up the cudgels" of gratitude; but, saving that there could be no doubt of his sincerity, displayed no great oratorical talents. Brief, however, as his speeches, or rather ejaculations, were, the funny old gentleman stopped him by the apparently funny observation,--
"So, my good Jeremiah Wag, you don't know where your father came from?"

"No, sir, indeed," replied the shopkeeper, marvelling at the oddity of the question.

"Well, then, I do," said his benefactor; "I was determined to find it out, because the name is so uncommon. Hard work I had, though. Merchant, to whom he was clerk, dead. Son in the West Indies. Wrote. No answer for some time--then not satisfactory. Obliged to wait till he came back. Long talk. No use. Well, well. Tell you all about it another day. Cut it short now. Found out a person at last who was intimate friend and fellow-clerk with your father. Made all right. Went down into the north. Got his register."

"Really, sir," stammered Jeremiah, "it was very kind of you, but I am sorry you should have given yourself so much trouble; but I'm sure, if I have any poor relations that I can be of service to in employing them, now that your bounty has put me in the way of doing well, I shall be very glad, though I never did hear talk of any."

"No, Master Jeremiah," said the eccentric old gentleman, "you have no poor relations now, nor ever had; but your father had a good-for-nothing elder brother, who left home at an early age, after your grandmother's death, and was enticed to go abroad by fair promises, which were not fulfilled. So, not having anything agreeable to write about, he didn't write at all, like a young scamp as he was, and when the time came that he had something pleasant to communicate, it was too late, as his father was no more, and his only brother (your father) was gone nobody knew where. Well, to make a short story of it, that chap, your uncle, was knocked about in the world, sometimes up and sometimes down, but at last found himself pretty strong upon his legs, and then made up his mind to come back to Old England, where he found nobody to care for him, and went wandering hither and thither, spending his time at watering-places, and so on, for several years."

"And pray, sir," inquired Jeremiah, as his respected guest paused, "have you any idea what became of him?"

"Yes, I have," replied the little gentleman, smiling significantly at his host and hostess. "One day he arrived in a smallish town, very like this, and terribly low-spirited he was, for he'd been ill some time before, and was fretting himself to think that he had been toiling to scrape money together, and was without children or kindred to leave it to. No very pleasant reflection that, my worthy Wags, let me tell you! Well, he ordered dinner, for form's sake, at the inn, and then went yawning about the room; and then he took his stand at the window, and, looking across the road, he saw the name of Wag over a shop-door, and then----You know all the rest! The fact is, I am a Wag, and, Jeremiah Wag, you are my nephew, and you, my dear Mrs Wag, are my niece, and so let us be merry Wags together."

Here we might lay down the pen, were it not for our dislike to strut in borrowed plumes; and that inclineth us to inform the gentle reader that no part of this simple story is of our invention, except the last disclosure of the senior Wag's relationship to his namesake, which we ventured to add, fearing that the truth might appear incredible. The other facts occurred precisely as we have stated. An elderly
gentleman, bearing a name more singular than Wag, returned home from India with a handsome fortune somewhat more than half a century back, and sought in vain for relatives; but one day, from the window of an inn, at which he had arrived in his own dark-green travelling-chariot, he espied the shop of a namesake, whose acquaintance he instantly made. His expressed hope was to discover that they were connected by some distant tie of consanguinity; but failing in that object, after most minute investigation, he never withdrew his patronage. For many years he watched over the rising fortunes of the family; and as the young people arrived at maturity, provided for them as though they were his own children, to the extent of many thousand pounds; and when he died, he left among them the whole of his property. Now, though the heart and conduct of this good man were truly benevolent, there can be no question respecting the motive of his actions, for he often avowed it. He was determined to keep up the respectability of his name; and with great pleasure we have to record that the few who now bear it, move in a much higher circle than would have been their lot but for him whose memory they hold in reverence, and consider as the founder of their family. Reader! imitate him, and "keep up" the respectability of your name.

THE WET WOOING.

A NARRATIVE OF NINETY-EIGHT.

[MAGA. APRIL 1832.]

It was in the autumn of 1798, when the North of Ireland had settled down into comparative tranquillity, that I took up my quarters at Knowehead, the grazing farm of a substantial relative, in the remote pastoral valley of Glen---- in Antrim.

The second morning of my stay I had fished a considerable distance up the river; but having broken my top in an unlucky leap, was sitting in impatient bustle, lapping the fracture, and lamenting my ill fortune, as ever and anon I would raise my eyes and see the fresh curl running past my feet; when I perceived by the sudden blackening of the water, and by an ominous but indescribable sensation of the air, that something unusual was brewing overhead. I looked up: there it was, a cloud, low-hung and lurid, and stretching across the whole northern side of the horizon. I had scarce time to gather my clews and bobbins into a hurried wisp, and take shelter under an overhanging bank hard by, when down it came, heavy, hissing, and pelting the whole surface of the river into spray. I drew myself close to the back of the hollow, where I lay in a congratulatory sort of reverie, watching the veins of muddy red, as they slowly at first, and then impetuously, flowed through and finally displaced the dark spring water--the efforts of the beaten rushes and waterflags, as they quivered and flapped about under the shower's battery--the gradual increase of swell and turbulence in the river opposite; and lower down, the war which was already tossing and raging at the conflux, where

"Tumbling brown, the burn came down, And roar'd frae bank to brae."

But why do I dilate upon an aspect thus wild and desolate, when I could so much more pleasantly employ my reader's and my own mind's eye with that which next presented itself? I confess, so pleasant
was the contrast then, that I still, in recalling that scene to memory, prepare myself, by the renewed vision of its dreariness and desolation, for the more grateful reception of an image than which earth contains none lovelier--it was a lovely girl. She fled thither for shelter: I did not see her until she was close by me; but never surely did man's eyes rest on a fairer apparition. I have, at this instant, every lineament of the startled beauty, as, drawing back with a suppressed cry and gesture of alarm, she shrank from the unexpected companion who stood by her side; for I had started from my reverie, and now presented myself, baring my head in the rain with involuntary respectfulness of gallantry, and half unconsciously leading her by the hand into my retreat. She yielded, blushing and confused, while I, apologising, imploring, and gazing with new admiration at every look, unstrapped my basket, placed it in the least exposed corner, spread over it my outside coat, and having thus arranged a seat (which, however, she did not yet accept), retired to the opposite side, and reluctantly ceasing to gaze, gave up my whole faculties to wonder--who could she be? Her rich dress--velvet habit, hat and feathers--her patrician elegance of beauty and manner, at once proclaimed her rank; but who could there be in Glen---- above the homely class to which my host belonged? And his daughter, Miss Janet, was certainly a brilliant of a very different water. But, heavens! how the water is running down from my companion's rich hair, and glistening upon her neck with what a breathing lustre!--"Oh, madam, let me entreat you, as you value your safety, use my handkerchief (and I pulled a muffler from my neck) to bind up and dry your hair. Wrap, I beseech you, your feet in my greatcoat; and withdraw farther from the wind and rain."

One by one, notwithstanding her gracious refusals, I carefully fulfilled my prescriptions; and now knelt before her, lapping the skirts and sleeves of my envied coat about the little feet and delicate ankles. Yet it seemed to me that she received my services rather with a grateful condescension, than, as I desired, with frank enjoyment of them. So, pausing a moment to account for such a manner, I recollected--and the recollection covered me with confusion--that I must have been, to say the least, as rough a comrade as any one need wish to meet with under a hedge; for, purposing to leave Ireland in another month for Germany, I had, during the last week, allowed my beard to grow all round--putting off from day to day the forming of the moustache, to which I meant to reduce it--and so had my face, at no time very smooth, now covered from ear to ear with a stubble, long, strong, and black as a shoe-brush. My broad-brimmed hat was battered and dinted into strangely uncouth cavities, and the leaf hung flapping over my brows like a broken umbrella; my jacket was tinselled indeed, but it was with the ancient scales of trout; my leathern overalls were black-glazed and greasy; and my whole equipment bore, I must confess, the evident signs of an unexceptionable rascal.

Indignant at my unworthy appearance, I put myself upon my mettle; and after drawing my fair companion from her intrenchments of shyness and hauteur, succeeded in engaging her in the fair field of a conversation the most animated and interesting, in which it was ever my good fortune and credit to bear a part. She had at first, indeed, when I began by running a parallel between our positions, explained the circumstances of her being driven thither alone, in a manner so general, and with such evident painfulness of hesitation, that I had hardly expected a few slow commonplaces at the most. Such wit, then, and vivacity, tempered with such dignified discretion, as she evinced, when I turned the conversation from what I perceived to be perplexing, were by their unexpectedness doubly delightful.
Time and the tempest swept on equally unheeded; topic induced topic, smile challenged smile, and when at last, in obedience to her wishes, I looked towards the north, to see whether the sky were clearing, I only prayed that it might rain on till sunset, when I might accompany her to her home, which, to my surprise, I learned was within a few miles, although I did not ascertain exactly where. My prayers were likely enough to be fulfilled; the sky was still one rush of rain--but, heaven and earth! the river had overflowed its banks above: a broad sheet of water was sailing down the hollow behind; and there we were, no human habitation within sight, in the midst of a tempest, between two rapid rivers, with no better shelter, during the continuance of a Lammas flood, than the hollow of a bank which might be ten feet under water in an hour.

I ran down the back of the hill to the edge of the interposing flood; a stunted tree was in the middle, the fork of which I knew was as high as my shoulder; a mass of weeds and briars was already gathered against it; the water had raised them within a foot of the first branch; then I might still ford a passage; no moment was to be lost; I ran back for the lady, but met her half-way in wild alarm, her head bare, her beautiful hair shaken out into the blast, her hands clasped, and her figure just sinking. I caught her in my arms, and bore her forward with all my speed; but before I again reached the sweeping inundation, insensibility had released her from the terrors of our passage.

I dashed in, holding her across my body, with her head resting on my shoulder; the first step took me to the knee. I raised my burden and plunged forward; the water rose to my haunches. I lifted her again across my breast, rushed on, and sank to the waist. I felt that I could not long support a dead weight in that position; so lowering her limbs into the water, I profited by that relief, and reached the tree.

The flood had now covered me to the breast, and the lady's neck and bosom were all that remained unimmersed. I leaned against the old trunk, and breathed myself. I raised her drooping head on my shoulder, and pressed my cheek to her forehead; but neither lip nor eyelid moved. I could not but gaze upon her face; it lay among the long floating tresses and turbulent eddies, fair as the water's own lily, and as unconscious. My heart warmed to the lovely being, and I bent over her, kissing her lips, and pressing her bosom to mine, with an affection so strangely strong, that I might have stood thus till escape had been impossible, but that the rustling of the rubbish, as it crept up the rugged stump with the rise of the waters, caught my ear. A thunderbolt smouldering at my feet could not have sounded so horrible. All my fresh affections rushed back to my heart in multiplied alarm for the safety of their new-found treasure. I started from my resting-place, and swinging back the long hair from my eyes, once more breasted the stream with clenched teeth and dripping brows. But still, as farther I advanced, the water grew deeper and deeper, and the current split upon my shoulder, and twisted through my legs, still stronger and stronger. Lumps of black moss, dried peats, and heavy sods, now struck me, and tumbled on; while wisps of yellow grass and long straws doubled across my body and entangled me. My limbs wavered at every step as I strained and writhed them through the current. I gave way--I was half lifted--the river and the burn met not a hundred yards below. Had I had the strength of ten men, I could not have supported her through that tumult. Every step swerved towards the conclusion of at least her existence; yet with love tenfold did I now press her to my heart, and with tenfold energy struggle to make good her rescue. Her eyes opened--I murmured prayers, comforts, and endearments--she saw the red torrent around, the tawny breakers before, the black storm overhead; but she saw love in my eye,
she heard it in my words; and there, within her probable deathbed, and in the embrace of her probable companion in death, she was wooed among the waters, and was won. Another effort--but the eddy swung me round, and I had given up all as lost, save my interest in that perishing girl; when suddenly I heard, through the dashing of waves and the hissing of rain, the hoarse cry of a man, "Courage--hold up, sir--this way, hallooo!" I turned, half thinking it imagination, but there I really saw a man up to the breast in the flood, supporting with arms and shoulders a powerful black horse, which he urged across the current. Another minute, and I stood firm behind the breakwater they formed at my side. My dear charge had again fainted; he assisted me to raise her to the saddle; but suddenly, as he looked at her, he uttered a wild cry of astonishment, and kissing and embracing her, exclaimed, "My Madeline, my daughter, my dear child!--Why, sir, how is this?"

"Oh, sir, the river is rising a foot a-minute--take the bridle, I beseech you, and let me support the lady and the horse's flank--I will explain all when she is out of danger." So saying, I laid my shoulder to the work and urged him on; we had an easier task, and in another minute succeeded in getting safe out of that perilous passage.

I now looked at our preserver; he was a handsome, tall, and vigorous man, about forty--evidently a soldier and gentleman. He lifted his daughter from the saddle; and while I recounted the particulars of her adventure, unclasped her habit and chafed her forehead; but all was of no avail. He looked distractedly, first at his daughter and then at me; and after a pause of contending emotions, rose, laid her across the pommel, placed his foot in the stirrup, and turning to me said, "I am embarrassed by many circumstances--take my blessings for this day's help--and forget us."

"I can never forget."

"Then take this trifling remembrance." He pulled a ring from his finger and handed it to me; threw himself into the saddle; placed his daughter across his body, and crying, ere I could say a word for sheer amazement, "Farewell, farewell!" and once more, with some emotion, "Farewell, sir, and may God bless you!" put spurs to his horse, and dashed off at full speed for a pass which leads into the wild country of the Misty Braes.

Till they disappeared among the hills, I stood watching them from the bank where they had left me, bare-headed, numbed, and indignant; with the rain still pelting on me, and the ring between my fingers. It was a costly diamond; I pitched it after him with a curse, and bent my weary way towards Knowehead, a distance of full five miles, in a maze of uncertainty and speculation. She had not told her name, and she seemed to desire a concealment of her residence; her father's conduct more plainly evinced the same motive; many of the heads of the rebellion were still lurking with their families among the mountains of Ulster; the only house in the direction they had taken, at all likely to be the retreat of respectable persons, was the old Grange of Moyabel; and it was the property of a gentleman then abroad, but connected with all the chief Catholic rebels in the North. All this made me naturally conclude that these were some of that unhappy party; and when I considered that both daughter and father had been riding from different quarters to the same destination--for, as well as I could surmise from her vague account of herself, she had left the servant, behind whom she had come so far, to wait
the arrival of her father, who had promised to join them there—I was able to satisfy myself of their being only on their way to Moyabel; and I therefore determined not to create suspicion by making useless inquiries as to the present family there, but to take the first opportunity of judging for myself of the new comers. But how, after such a dismissal, introduce myself? Here lay the difficulty, and beyond this I could fix on nothing; so with a heavy heart I climbed the hill before my kinsman's house, and presented myself at the wide door of the kitchen, just as the twilight was darkening down into night.

I found my host sitting as was his wont—his nightcap on his head, his long staff in his hand, and two greyhounds at his feet—behind the fire upon his oaken settle. "I'm thinkin', Willie," he began as he saw me enter—"I'm thinkin' ye hae catched a wet sark. Janet, lass, fetch your cusin a dram. Nane o' your piperly smellin' bottles," cried he, as she produced some cordials in an ancient liquor-stand—"Nane o' your auld wife's jaups for ane o' my name—fetch something purpose-like; for when my nevoy has changed himsell, we'll hae a stoup o' whisky, and a crack thegither." In a few minutes I was seated in dry clothes, before a bowl of punch and a blazing fire, beside the old gentleman on his oaken sofa. At any other time I would have enjoyed the scene with infinite satisfaction; for the national tipple, in my mind, drinks nowhere so pleasantly as on a bench behind the broad hearthstone of such a kitchen-hall as my friend's. Our smaller gentry had, it is true, long since betaken themselves to their parlours and their drawing-rooms; and the steams of whisky-punch had already risen with the odours of bohea, and the smoke of sea-borne coals, to the damask hangings and alabaster cornices of many high-ceiled and stately apartments. Yet there were still some of the old school, who, like my good friend, continued to make their headquarters, after the ancient fashion, among their own domestics, and behind their own hearthstone; for in all old houses the fire is six feet at least from the gable, and the space between is set apart for the homely owner.

It was strange then, that I, who hitherto had so intensely relished such a scene, should be so absent now that it was spread round me in its perfection. The peat and bog-fir fire before me, and the merry faces glistening through the white smoke beyond; the chimney overhead, like some great minster bell (the huge hanging pot for the clapper); the antlers, broadsword, and sporting tackle on the wall behind; the goodly show of fat flitches and briskets around me and above, and that merry and wise old fellow, glass in hand, with endless store of good stories, pithy sayings, and choice points of humour, by my side; yet with all I sat melancholy and ill at ease. In vain did the rare old man tell me his best marvels; how he once fought with Tom Hughes, a wild Welshman, whom he met in a perilous journey through the forests of Cheshire; how Tom would not let go his grip when he had him down ("whilk was a foul villany"); and how he had to roll into a running water before he could get loose ("whilk showed the savage natur of thae menseless barbarians"). In vain he told me that pleasant jest, how my grandfather "ance wiled the six excisemen into a lone house, and then gaed in himsell and pyed them through the windows, whilk cleared the country-side o' that vermin as lang as auld Redrigs was to the fore." In vain he told me how his old dog Stretcher hunted the black hare from Dunmoss to Skyboe. I left him in the subtest of the doubles, and in another minute was in the penthouse of clay, the river boiling at my feet, and the rain rushing round my head; but before me were the rich delighted eyes and quickening features of my unknown beauty. Again I bore her through the flood; again I bent over her, and pressed her to my breast, and once more I had felt the thrill of her returned embrace; once more I had kissed her lips, and once more we had vowed to live or die together, when I was startled from my reverie by a
question which the unsuspecting old man was now repeating for the third time. I stammered an excuse, and roused myself to the hearing of another excellent jest; but what it might have been I know not, for the entrance of a young labourer, an old acquaintance of my own, with whom he had business, cut it short. "Aleck," he said, "get ready to set out for the fair upon the morn's e'en; and, Aleck, my man, keep yoursel out o' drink and fechtin'--and, my bonny man, I'm saying, the neist time ye gang a-courtin' to the Grange (I pricked up my ears all at once), see that ye're no ta'en for ane o' thae rebel chiels, wha, they say, are burrowin' e'en noo about the auld wa's as thick as mice in a meal-ark."--"But Aleck," crooned old Mause from the corner, "whilk ane o' the lasses are you for?" This was enough. I watched my opportunity, slipped out to the stable, found Aleck, who had retreated thither in his confusion, and point-blank proposed that he should take me with him that very night, and introduce me to one of the girls at Moyabel, as I longed to have an hour's courting after the old fashion before I left the country. I concluded by offering him a handsome consideration, which, however, he refused; but, sitting down in the manger, began to consider my proposal, with such head-scratching and nail-biting, as confirmed me in my opinion that there was something mysterious about the family of the Grange. "Master William," said he at last, "I canna refuse ye, and you gaun awa', maybe never to see a lass o' your ain country again; but ye maun promise never to speak o' whatever ye may see strange aboot the hoose; for, atween oursells, there are anes expeckit there this verra night wha's names wadna cannily bear tellin'; and Jeanie trusts me, and I maun beguile her. But the waters are out, and we will hae a lang and cauld tramp through the bogs, sae get a drap o' somethin' for the road, and I'll hae Tam Herron's Sunday suit ready for you after bed-time. Saul! ye'll mak a braw weaver wi' the beard; and wi' a' your Englified discoorsin' ye can talk as like a Christian as ever when ye like. Nanny will think hersell fitted at last; but ye maunna be ower crouse wi' Nanny, Master William." I promised everything; waited impatiently till the family had gone to rest; found Aleck true to his engagement; put on the clothes he had prepared, and we stole out about midnight.

It was pitch dark, but fair and calm; so, with the hopes of getting to our journey's end not wet above the knee, we commenced stumbling and bolting along the great stones and ruts of the causeway; this we cleared without any accident, farther than my slipping once into the ditch, and now found ourselves upon the open hill-side, splashing freely over the soaked turf and slippery pathway. I was in high spirits, and though squirting the black puddle to my knees at every step, and seeing no more of the road I was to travel on than another one in advance, yet faced onward with great gaiety and good humour. After some time, however, Aleck began snuffing the air, and, with evident concern, announced the approach of a mist, which soon thickened into perceptibility to me also. Our path, which hitherto had swept across sheep-grazing uplands and grassy knolls, now began to thread deep rushy bottoms, with here and there a quaking spot of quagmire, or a mantled stream, which I knew by the cold water running sharp below, and by the thick, dull gathering of the weeds about my legs--for the mist made all so dark, that I can only give a blind man's description. The way now became more intricate and broken, but still I followed Aleck cheerily, pushing through all obstacles, and thinking only of the best measures to be taken when we should arrive at Moyabel, when I suddenly perceived that my footsteps were treading down the long wet grass and heavy sedge itself, and that any distinct pathway no longer remained to guide us. I began to doubt Aleck's knowledge of the road, which he still maintained to be unshaken; but the next two steps settled the matter, by bringing us both up to the middle in a running river. We scrambled out without saying a word, Aleck being silent from confusion, and I fearing to
increase it by reproaches. He began to grope about for the path we had come by; and finding what he thought our track, pursued it a few steps to the right. I thought I had it to the left, and began to explore in that direction. "Hallo! where are you now?" I cried, as I missed him from my side. He answered, "Here," from a considerable distance lower down. "Where?" I repeated. -- "Hereawa," he answered. -- "Hereawa, thereawa, wandering Willie," I hummed in bitter jollity, as I proceeded in the direction of the voice, "Hereawa, thereawa, hau'd your way hame," when--squash, crash, bolt, heels over head--plump I went over a brow into a very Devil's Punch-Bowl; for bottom I found none, though shot from the bank with the impetus of an arrow. Down I went, the water closing over me in strata and substrata, each one colder than the other, till I expected to find my head at last clashing against the young ice wedges of a preternatural frost below. I sank at least fifteen feet before I could collect my energies and turn. I thought I would never reach the top. To it at last I came, sputtering, blown, and fairly frightened. I never waited to consider my course, but striking desperately out, swam straight forward till I came bump against the bank. I clambered up, and listened. The first sound I could distinguish, after the bubbling and hissing left my ears, was Aleck's voice nearly before me, on the opposite side. He was singing out something between a howl and a halloo; for he also had got into the water, and could not find bottom anywhere but on the spot he occupied. He could not swim a stroke. There was nothing for it but to go back and rescue him. The unexpectedness alone of my first dip had caused my confusion. That was gone off, and I again plunged resolutely into the river, which I now could discern grey in the clearing mist. A few strokes brought me to where the poor fellow stood, with his arms extended upon the water, and his neck stretched to the utmost to keep it out of his mouth. I knew the danger of taking an alarmed man of greater weight and strength than myself upon my back; and therefore, comforting him with assurances of safety, I tried in all directions for bottom, which at last I found; and having sounded the bed of the river to the opposite side, returned, and with some difficulty succeeded in guiding and supporting him across.

The mist was now rapidly thinning away, and I could distinguish the high bank black against the sky. It was a joyful sight, and induced, by a natural association, the pleasant thought of the comforter in my pocket. I took a mighty dram; then feeling for Aleck's head (he had lain down, streaming like Father Nile in the pictures, among the rushes, at my feet), I directed the bottle's mouth to his. He had been making his moan in an under-whine ever since I first heard him lamenting his condition on the opposite side; but no sooner did his lips feel the smooth insinuator's presence, than (his tongue being put out of the way) they closed with instinctive affection, and went together when the long embrace was past, with a smack quite cheering. Then slowly rising, and fetching a deep sigh as he gathered himself together, "Lord, Lord," said he "I'm nane the waur o' that. But, Master William, to tell God's truth, I dinna ken whaur we are. That we hae crossed Glen---- water, or the Hill-head burn, or the Marcher's dyke, I'm positive sure; but whilk I'm no just equal to say--but there's somethin' black atween us and the lift; I judge it to be Dunmoss Cairn: let's hau'd on to it, and we maun soon come to biggit wa's." So saying, he led me forward in the direction of what seemed to me also a distant hill; but being occupied in placing my footsteps I had ceased to look at it, when all at once there was a crush of leaves about my head, and I found myself under a green tree. "When will this weary night of error have an end?" I mentally exclaimed; but was surprised by Aleck taking my hand, rubbing the palm along the rough stem, and asking in an elate tone what I felt? "A damnably rough bark," growled I; "what do you mean?" He cut a caper full three feet into the air. "Here is a pleasant occurrence now--this rascal is drunk--he will roll
into the next ditch and suffocate—I shall be the death of the poor fellow—I shall lose”—here he broke my agreeable meditations. "I'll tell you how it was, Master William; Jeanie and I were partners at the shearin' ("Evidently drunk," thought I), and I canna tell how it was ("I well believe you—you can not—but 'twas all my own folly," I muttered), but I found the maid in a sair fluster that e'en when we parted: ("You'll be in sorer fluster presently if I begin to you—you drunken idiot!" was my running commentary,) and sae just as I came by this auld thorn—"Then you do know where you are—do you?" I cried aloud.—"Sure enough," said he, "for didn't I carve my heart wi' Jeanie's heuk stuck out through it that very night; and isna it here to this minute?"—"Oh, ho, lead on then, in God's name; but tell me where we are, and how far we have to go."—"Why," said he, "the bridge is just a step overby that we ought to hae crossed; and troth, I wonner a dishfu' at myself for no kennin' the black moss and the dolochan's hole that we hae just come through; for I hae cut turf in the ane, and weshed in the ither, since I was the bouk o' a peat—but here we are at the end o' the causey that will take us to the Grange."

We entered on a raised and moated bank, which crossed a mossy flat to the old house; but ere we had advanced a dozen steps, there suddenly appeared a light moving about, and giving occasional glimpses of the white walls and thick trees at the further end; it then came steadily and swiftly towards us; I could presently distinguish the dull beat of hoofs on the greensward, and soon after, the figures of two mounted men.

The sides of the old moat were overgrown with furze and brambles, and we stole into this cover as they approached. The foremost bore the light, was armed at all points, and mounted on a fresh horse. I started with exultation where I lay—he was her father. His companion's black breeches and canting seat proclaimed a priest. They were conversing as they passed. "Another month, good father, and we will be behind the bastions of Belle Isle; were it not for my Madeline's sake, I would make it six; but this bloodhound having been slipped upon us."—The sounds were here lost in the trampling of their horses; I heard the man of masses mumble something in reply, and they wheeled out of hearing up the rugged pathway to the bridge. "Now, mind your promise, Master William," said Aleck, as we rose and proceeded to the house. We soon arrived there; and he led me to a low wing, repeating his cautions, and, in answer to my questions, denying all knowledge of the strangers. Placing me behind a low wall, he now stole forward and tapped at a window, and presently I heard the inmates moving and whispering. The door was soon opened, and a parley took place, in which I heard my assumed name made honourable mention of by my intruder. He led me forward, pushed me gently before him, and I found myself in a dark passage, soft hands welcoming me, and warm breath playing on my cheek.

The door was closed, and we were led into a wide rude apartment, dim in the low glow of a heap of embers. A splinter of bogwood was soon kindled, and by its light I saw that we had been conducted by two girls. One, whom from her attention to Aleck I concluded to be her of the reaping-hook, was a pretty interesting soft maiden. The other, however, had attractions of a very different class: fine-featured, dark-eyed, coal-black-haired and tall; as she stood—her right hand holding the rude torch over her head, while the left gathered the folds of a long cloak under her bosom, with her eyes of coy expectation and merry amazement—she seemed more the ideal of a robber's daughter in some old romance, than a menial in a moorland farm-house. I attempted to salute her, but she held me at bay with her hand. "Hech, lad! ye're no blate—'tis knowin' troots[A] ye think ye are? But, my stars, ye are as droukit as if ye had been through a' the pools o' the burn! Sit down, my jo, till we dry ye; and be qu'et
till I get a fire." Peats and bogwood were now heaped upon the hearth; and, kneeling down upon the broad stone, she began puffing away with her pretty puckered mouth; partly, I suppose, because there are no bellows in Glen----; and partly, I took it for granted, to afford me an opportunity of kneeling beside and preeing it. The smoke now rose before me in thick volumes, and for a while I lost sight of Aleck and his Jeanie. By and by, however, on raising my head, I started back at seeing a figure the most extraordinary standing at the further end of the apartment. A blanket covered the shoulders; the feet and legs were bare; a red handkerchief was tied about the head; and, strangest of all, although the hairy neck and whiskers argued him a man, yet was he from the waist to the knees clad in a petticoat!

[Footnote A: "Knieving trouts" (they call it tickling in England) is good sport. You go to a stony shallow at night, a companion bearing a torch; then, stripping to the thighs and shoulders, wade in; grope with your hands under the stones, sods, and other harbourage, till you find your game, then gripe him in your "knieve" and toss him ashore.

I remember, when a boy, carrying the splits for a servant of the family, called Sam Wham. Now Sam was an able young fellow, well-boned and willing; a hard-headed cudgel-player, and a marvellous tough wrestler, for he had a backbone like a sea-serpent; this gained him the name of the Twister and Twiner. He had got into the river, and with his back to me, was stooping over a broad stone, when something bolted from under the bank on which I stood, right through his legs. Sam fell with a great splash upon his face, but in falling jammed whatever it was against the stone. "Let go, Twister," shouted I, "tis an otter, he will nip a finger off you."-"Whisht," sputtered he, as he slid his hand under the water; "may I never read a text again, if he isna a sawmont wi' a shouther like a hog!"-"Grip him by the gills, Twister," cried I.---"Saul will I!" cried the Twiner; but just then there was a heave, a roll, a splash, a slap like a pistol-shot; down went Sam, and up went the salmon, spun like a shilling at pitch and toss, six feet into the air. I leaped in just as he came to the water; but my foot caught between two stones, and the more I pulled the firmer it stuck. The fish fell in a spot shallower than that from which he had leaped. Sam saw the chance, and tackled to again; while I, sitting down in the stream as best I might, held up my torch, and cried fair play, as shoulder to shoulder, throughout and about, up and down, roll and tumble, to it they went, Sam and the salmon. The Twister was never so twined before. Yet through crossbuttocks and capsizes innumerable, he still held on; now haled through a pool; now haling up a bank; now heels over head; now head over heels; now head and heels together; doubled up in a corner; but at last stretched fairly on his back, and foaming for rage and disappointment; while the victorious salmon, slapping the stones with his tail, and whirling the spray from his shoulders at every roll, came boring and snoring up the ford. I tugged and strained to no purpose; he flashed by me with a snort, and slid into the deep water. Sam now staggered forward with battered bones and peeled elbows, blowing like a grampus, and cursing like nothing but himself. He extricated me, and we limped home. Neither rose for a week; for I had a dislocated ankle, and the Twister was troubled with a broken rib. Poor Sam! he had his brains discovered at last by a poker in a row, and was worm's meat within three months; yet, ere he died, he had the satisfaction of feasting on his old antagonist, who was man's meat next morning. They caught him in a net. Sam knew him by the twist in his tail.]

I started to my feet, visions of sleepwalkers and lunatics thronging through my imagination, but was caught hold of by Nanny, who, shaking with suppressed laughter, whispered me, while the tears ran out
and danced upon her long lashes for very fun, that it was only precious Aleck, "wham Jeanie had cled in her bit wyliecoat, since she dauredna wake the house to look for aught else;" then, laying her hand upon my shoulder (and the wet oozed from between her fingers), she proposed, with a maidenly mixture of kindliness and hesitation, that I should go and do so likewise. Who knows how I might have stood the temptation, had she not in time perceived my error, and, blushing deeply, explained, that as Aleck had done--undressed himself alone--so should I. Under these stipulations, I declined parting with more than my coat, for which she substituted a curiously quilted coverlet; then bringing me warm water, insisted on my bathing my feet. I gladly consented; but hardly had I pulled off the coarse stockings, and washed the black soil from my hands, when there began a grievous coughing and grumbling in the room from which the girls had come.

"Lord haud a grip o' us!" cried Aleck; "it's auld Peg hoastin'--De'il wauken her, the cankered rush! she'll breed a bonny splore gin she finds me here."

"Whisht, whisht," whispered Nanny, "she's as keen as colly i' the lugs; and glegger than baudrons i' the dark."

The libelled Mistress Margaret gave no further time for calumniation; slamming open the door, she came down upon us, gaunt, grim, and unescapable--"Ye menseless tawpies! ye bauld cutties! ye wanton limmers! ye--wha's this?" She snatched the light from Nannie's hand, and poked it close to my face--"Wha's this? I say, wha's this?"

"Hoots, woman!" cried Nanny, spiritedly, yet with an air of conciliation, "I'se bail ye mony a boy has come over the moss to crack wi' yoursell when ye were a lassie."

"When I was a lassie!"

I thought she would have choked; but her indignation at last made its way up in thunder upon my devoted head.

"Wha are ye? what are ye? what fetches ye sornin' here? ye----"

Nanny again interposed. "He's just a weaver lad, I tell ye, that Aleck Lowther fetched frae the Langslap Moss to keep him company."

"A weaver lad!" (I had raised my foot to the rim of the tub, and sat with my chin upon my hand, and my elbow on my knee, laughing, to the great aggravation of her anger). "A weaver lad!--there's ne'er a webster o' the Langslap Moss wi' siccan a leg as that!--there's ne'er a ane o' a' the creeshy clan wha's shins arena bristled as red as a belly rasher!--there's ne'er a webster o' the Langslap Moss wi' the track o' a ring upon his wee finger!--there's ne'er a webster o' the Langslap Moss wi' aughteen hunner linen in his sark-frill!--Jamie, hoi! Jamie Steenson, here's a spy!"
So sudden and overpowering was her examination and judgment, and her voice had risen to such a pitch of clamour, that all my attempts at interruption and explanation were lost; while the screams which the girls could not control when they heard her call in assistance, prevented a reply. One after another, five ruffianly-looking fellows rushed in at her call; and ere I could free myself from the importunate exculpations of poor Nanny, they were crowding and cursing round me; while one, apparently their leader, held a lantern to my face, a pike to my throat, and demanded my name and business. That these were one unhappy remnant of the rebel party I could not doubt; if I declared my real name, I might expect all that exasperation could prompt and desperation execute against a disguised enemy in the camp (for the only one from whom I could expect protection was, as I had seen, beyond my appeal). Again, to give a fictitious name, and keep up the character of a country weaver, was revolting to my pride, and in all likelihood beyond my ability. Which horn of this dilemma I might have impaled myself on, I cannot tell; for a sudden interruption prevented my answer.

Aleck, who had with difficulty been hitherto restrained by the united exertions of the three women, here burst from their arms, tossed off his blanket, and leaped with a whoop into the middle of the floor;--except the short petticoat about his loins he was stark naked. "I'm twal stane wecht--my name's Aleck Lawther--I'll slap ony man o' ye for four-an'-twenty tens!" As he uttered this challenge, tossing his long arms about his head, bouncing upright, and cutting like a posture-master at the end of every clause, while the scanty kilt fluttered and flapped about his sinewy hams, the men fell back in a panic, as if from a spectre; but their astonishment soon gave place to indignation, and my questioner, clubbing his pike, stepped forward, and making the shaft rattle off the white array of ribs, which poor Aleck's flourish had left unprotected, reduced his proposals to practice in a trice. He, wisely making up for disparity of forces by superiority of weapon, started back, and adroitly unhooking the long iron chain and pot-hooks from the chimney, set them flying round his head like a slinger of old; and meeting his antagonist with a clash, shot him rocketwise into the corner: then giving another whirl to his stretcher, and leaping out with the full swing of his long body, he brought it to bear upon the next. There was another clattering crash, and the man went down; but pitching with his shoulder into the tub, upset it, and sent a flood of water into the fire. Smoke, steam, and white ashes, whirled up in clouds; the lantern was trampled out, and the battle became general: for one rascal, lifting his fallen comrade's pike (there was luckily but one among them), advanced upon me. I had just light to see the thrust and parry it. Another second, and we had closed in the midst of that strange atmosphere, striking and sneezing at each other across the pike shaft, as we each strove to wrest it to himself. My antagonist was a lusty fellow, and tugged me stoutly, while I kept him between me and the main fight, now raging through the water and the fire: this I could just distinguish among the vapour and smoke, dashed about in red showers of embers, as each new tramp and whirl of the combatants swept it from the hearthstone. How Aleck fought his two opponents I could not imagine; yet once, during a minute's relaxation on our parts, when, having got the pike jammed between a table and the wall, we were reduced to the by-play of kicking one another's shin-bones, I could hear, every now and again, above the medley of curses and screams (for the women were all busy) his lusty "Hah!" as he put in each successive blow; and then the bolt and thud of some one gone down, far away in the distance; or the rush of a capsize among the loose lumber at my feet. But I had no longer an opportunity of noting his prowess; for my antagonist, getting the weapon disentangled, hauled me after him into the open floor, and then began upon the swinging system. So away we went, sweeping down chairs and stools, and rolling fallen bodies over in our
course; till tired and dizzy, I suddenly planted myself, let go both holds, and dashing in right and left
together, sent him whirling like a comet, impetuous and hot, into the void beyond. But my own head
here fell heavily upon my breast; and the whole scene, smoke, fire, and shifting shapes, with all their
mingled hissing, and battering, oaths, shrieks, and imprecations, shut upon my senses.

A Babel of dull sound, chiming and sawing within my head, announced my returned consciousness.
This is no dream, thought I; I have been hurt, but I am afraid to ask myself where. If my skull should be
fractured now, and I should be an idiot all my life, or if my arm should be broken--farewell to the river!
But can I be still doubled up among those pots and pans which I crushed beneath me in my fall?
No,—dark as it is, I feel that I am laid straight and soft. I must be in bed, but where? where? It was some
time before I had courage to confirm my doubts of my head's condition: it was carefully bandaged, and
doubtless much shattered: I could feel that I was in a close-panelled bedstead, such as are usual in old
houses; but had too much discretion to attempt the hazardous experiment of rising without knowing
either my strength or situation. So I lay, fancying all sorts of means to account for my preservation:
need I say that the main agent in all was the fair Madeline?

My curiosity was at length relieved; a rude folding-door opened opposite, and showed a low dim
sitting-room beyond, from which there rose a few steps to the entrance of my chamber. On these
appeared, not, alas! the fancied visitant who was to flit about my bedside, and mix her bright presence
with my dreams, but stately and severe, with a pale cheek and compressed lip, her father--my aversion.

I lay silent, sick at the thoughts of my own meanness in his eyes; while he advanced, shading the light
of the candle from my face, and in a low cold tone, asked if I desired anything?

I shall never forget him as he stood, the light thrown full upon his strong features and broad chest, and
shining purple through the fingers of his large hand. "I asked, sir, did you require any assistance?" he
repeated. "Are you in pain?" he went on. I now replied that my chief pain was caused by my own
unworthy appearance; made a confused apology for my misconduct, and offered my acknowledgments
for the protection I had received. "You have saved the life of my child," he said, turning slightly from
me, "and protection is a debt which must be paid; for your follower, he must thank the same
circumstance for what little life his own mad conduct has left him." Without another word, he took a
phial from the table, and, pouring out a draught, handed it to me; I mechanically drunk it off; but ere I
had taken it from my lips, he was gone. I heard the doors close and the bolts shoot after him with
strange forebodings; and when the sound of his footsteps had died away in the long passage beyond,
fell back in a wild maze of apprehension and self-censure, till I again sank into a heavy sleep.

When I awoke, there was a yellow twilight in my little cabin, from the scattering of a red ray of the
sunset which streamed through a crevice in the door. I had therefore slept a whole day; my fever was
abated; the gnawing pain had left my head, and I longed to eat. I knocked upon the boards, and the door
was presently opened; but it was some time ere my eyes could endure the flood of light which then
burst in. The figure which at length became visible amid it, was little worthy so godly a birth. The
lank, slack, ill-hinged anatomy of Peg, with a bottle in one hand, and a long horn spoon in the other,
advanced, and in no gracious tone demanded what was my will. I turned and lay silent; for I never felt
an awkward situation so embarrassing as then. My gorge rose at the malignant cause of all my disasters; but interest and discretion told me to be civil if I spoke at all. I gave no answer; she was in no humour to suffer such trifling with her time. "Hear till him, Jamie!" she exclaimed to some one behind her, "hear till him, the fashious scunner! he dunts folk frae their wark as if he was the laird o' the Lang Marches himself, and then----" "Good Mistress Margaret----" "Mistress me nae mistresses! there's ne'er a wife i' the parish has a right to be mistressed, since she deet wha's wean ye wad betray! Deil hae me gin I can keep my knieves aff ye, ye ill-faured bluid-seller!"--"Ill-faured what?" shouted I. "No just ill-faured neither, blest be the Maker, and mair's the pity; ye're a clean boy eneugh, as I weel may say, who had the strippin' and streekin' o' ye; but I say that ye're just a bluid-seller, a reformer, a spy, gin ye like it better!" She backed down the steps, and holding a leaf of the door at each side, stretched in her neck, and went on, "Ay, spy, Willie Macdonnell, spy to your teeth.--Isna your name upon your sark breast? and arena the arms that ye disgrace upon your seal, and daur ye deny them? daur ye deny that ye're the swearer away o' the innocent bluid o' puir Hughy Morrison, whom ye hangit like a doug upon the lamp-posts o' Doonpatrick? Daur ye hae the face to deny that ye come here e'en noo to reform upon Square O'More and his bonny wean? Daur ye hae the impurence to deny it?" Here I was relieved by the entrance of Mr O'More himself. I addressed him in a tone as cool and conciliatory as I could command. "I am much relieved to find, sir, that any harshness I may have to complain of, has originated in a mistake. I am Mr Macdonnell of Redrigs. It was only last week that I returned from England. I have not been in this part of the country for many years; and can only say, that if any person bearing my name deserves the character you seem to impute to me, I detest him as cordially as you do." He eyed me with visibly increased disgust. "It will not pass, sir, it will not pass. I have had notice of your intentions. Mr Macdonnell of Redrigs is in Oxford."--"I tell you, sir, he is here!" I cried, starting up in bed. "Back, back!" he exclaimed to the servants who were pressing round; they fell back, and he came up to me. "Hark ye, sir, instead of assuming a name to which you have no right----" The passion which had been burning within me all along, blazed out in uncontrollable fury. I started with a sudden energy out into the floor; dashed backwards and forwards through the room, stamping with indignation, while I asserted my honour, and demanded satisfaction; but the fire which had for a minute animated me failed; my tongue became confused and feeble; the whole scene whirled and flickered round me, and I sank exhausted, and in a burning fever, on a seat.

Every one who has suffered fever knows what a fiery trance it is. How long mine had continued I could not guess; when the crisis came, it was favourable, and I awoke, cool and delighted, from a long sweet sleep. That scene I had already witnessed, of sunset through the room beyond, was again before me; the same grey and purple haze hung over the mountain, and the same rich sky from above lit up the river-reaches; the dim old room was warm in the mellow light; the folding-doors stood wide open, but on the steps where the marriner of the whole had stood before, lo! the radiance revelling through her hair; the rich light flushing warm through the outline of her face and neck; the sweet repose of satisfaction and conscious care beaming over her whole countenance; benign and beautiful stood Madeline O'More, her finger on her lips. "She, too, thinks me a spy," I muttered, in the bitterness of my heart, and hid my face upon the pillow. But who can describe my delight when I heard her well-remembered accents murmur beside me, "Oh no, believe me, indeed I do not!" I looked up. She was covered with blushes--I felt them reflected on my own cheek--there was a conscious pause. "Then you do believe that I am what I have told you?" I said at last. "O yes! but indeed you must forgive the error," she replied; and readily
did I admit its justifiableness, when she went on to tell me that a friend had ridden a long journey to warn them against a person bearing my name, and answering to my appearance—an apostate from their own cause, and a noted spy, who, upon some vague information of their retreat, had set out with the intention of discovering and betraying them; and that their friend (in whom I at once recognised the priest I had seen her father conduct from the house) had left them but a few minutes before I arrived.

It was now my turn to apologise and explain. She listened, with many pleas of palliation for the indignities I had endured, to my account of my business in Ireland, and the circumstances which had led me to Glen----; but when I came to account for my appearance at Moyabel, her confusion satisfied me that the motive was already known. I felt suddenly conscious of having been dreaming about her; and I knew that a fevered man's dream is his nurse's perquisite: dissimulation, after what I knew and suspected to have passed, would have been as impossible as repugnant. So then and there, among that mellow sunset in the sick chamber, I confessed to her how my whole thoughts had been haunted by her image, since the time when her father had hurried her from the scene of our meeting; how I could not rest while any scheme, how wild soever, promised me even a chance of again beholding her; how this had induced me to snatch at the first opportunity of discovering her, and had brought on that disastrous adventure which had ended in my wound; but that I still endured another, which I feared would prove incurable, if I might not live upon the hope (and I took her hand) of gaining her to be my heart's physician constantly.

Footsteps suddenly sounded in the passage. I released her hand, and she hid her confusion, in a hasty escape through a side-door, just before her father made his appearance at that of the hall. He advanced with a frank expression of pleasure and concern; took his seat by my bedside; congratulated me on the favourable issue of my illness, and repeated those apologies and explanations which his daughter had already made; adding that his first intention had been to detain me prisoner, so that I could have no opportunity of betraying them until their departure for France; but that the moment he had heard my undisguised ravings, he perceived the injustice of which he had been guilty; that Aleck's speech having returned soon after, (for the poor fellow was so beaten that he could not say a word for three days—but I have taken good care of him), another evidence, however unnecessary, was afforded by his declaration; and that, therefore, a messenger was immediately despatched to Knowehead, with private letters, explaining our situation and its causes, and resting on the honour of my friend for the security of all. The trust had been well reposed: Aleck, who was able to go home in a few days, had come the night before (although returned that morning) with the intelligence of the real spy having applied for information to the old gentleman; but that, loyal subject and zealous Protestant as he was, he had given him no more than a civil indication of his door. All this he told with a gratified and grateful air, and left me to a night of happy dreams.

Next morning, however, he came to me, and in a serious, nay severe manner, told me, that as I had divulged the motive which brought me thither in my ravings, he felt it a duty to himself and to me, now that I was established in my recovery, to inform me that, while he forgave my intrusion on a privacy he had already begged me not to break, he must desire that there should be no recurrence of attentions to his daughter, which might distract a heart destined either for the service of a free Catholic in regenerated Ireland, or for that of Heaven in a nunnery.
He had laid his hand upon the table, and it unconsciously rested upon the seals of my watch. "Look," said I, "at these trinkets; I shall tell you what they are, and let them be my answer. That rude silver seal, with the arms and initials, was dug from my father's orchard, along with the bones of his ancestor, who fell there beneath the knives of free Catholics in --41, a greyhaired man, among the seven bodies of his murdered wife and children. Look again at that curious ring; it was worn by his son, the sole survivor of all that ancient family who escaped, a maimed and famished spectre, out of Derry, after the same party had driven him to eat his sword-belt for hunger. Look once again at this more antique locket; it contains the hair of a maternal ancestor, who perished for the faith among the fagots of Smithfield; and look, here, at my own arm--that wound I received when a child, from the chief of a 'Heart of Steel' banditti, who, under the same banner, lighted our family's escape from rape and massacre, by the flames of their own burning roof-tree; and yet I--I, every drop of whose blood might well cry out for vengeance, when I see these remembrancers of my wrongs in the hands of my wrongs' defender, do yet take that hand, and long to call him father."

I was here interrupted by the sudden entrance of a splashed and wearied messenger: advancing with a military salute, he presented a letter to Mr O'More. "Pardon me," he said, hastily tearing it open, "this is on a matter of life and death." He read it in great agitation; led the messenger aside; gave some hurried orders; took down his arms from the mantelpiece; and drawing his belt, and fixing in his pistols while he spoke, addressed me:--"Notwithstanding what you have urged, my determination remains unaltered. I must leave Moyabel, for I cannot now say how long: you shall be taken care of in my absence: farewell, sir, farewell." He shook me by the hand, and hurried away. I heard confusion in the house, and thought I could distinguish the sweet voice of Madeline, broken by sobs at his departure. A considerable party seemed to leave the house; for there was a great trampling of horses in the courtyard, and two or three mounted men passed by the windows. At length they were out of hearing, and I determined not to lose another minute of the precious opportunity. My clothes had been brought from Knowehead, and I was so much recovered that I found myself able to rise, and set about dressing immediately. My continental visions of beard were more than realised; and if I failed to produce a shapely moustache, 'twas not for lack of material. With fluttering expectation, I selected the most graceful of the pantaloons; drew on my rings; arrayed myself in the purple velvet slippers, cap, and brocade dressing-gown; took one lingering last look at the little mirror, and descended into the parlour. I drew a writing-table to me, and penned a long letter to Knowehead, another to Redrigs, and had half-finished a sonnet to Madeline. The day was nearly past, and she had not yet made her appearance.

For the first time the thought struck me, and that with a pang which made me leap to my feet, that she had accompanied her father, and was gone! gone, perhaps, to a nunnery in France! gone, and lost to me for ever! "Hilloa, Peg!" and I thumped the floor with the poker, "Peg, I say! as you would not have me in another fever, come here!" She came to the door: the poor old creature's eyes were swollen and blood-shot; she made a frightened curtsy to me as I stood, the papers crumpled up in one hand, and the poker in the other.--"Peggy; oh, Peggy! where is your young mistress?"

"Save us, your honour! Ye are na weel; sall I fetch you a drap cordial?"

"Your mistress? your mistress? where is your young mistress?"
"Oh, sir, dear! take another posset, and gang to your bed."

"To the devil I pitch your posset! where is your young mistress? where is Madeline O'More?"

She turned to escape: I leaped forward, and caught her by the shoulder--"Since ye maun ken, then," she screamed, "by God's providence, she's on the saunt water wi' the Square, her father"--I sank back upon the sofa--"wha," she continued in a soothing strain, "has left me to take charge o' your honour's head till ye can gang your lane: A' the ithers are awa, but wee Jeanie and mysell; and ye wadna, surely your honour wadna gang to frichten twa lane weemen, by dwamin' awa that gait, and deein' amang their hands? But save us, if there's no auld Knowehead himsell, wi' that bauld sorner, Aleck Lawther, on a sheltie at his heels, trottin' doon the causey!--Jeanie, hoi, Jeanie, rin and open the yett."

I lay back--sick--sick--sick. The old man, booted and spurred, strode in--

"I'm thinkin', Willie, ye hae caught a cloured head?"

"If I do not catch a strait-waistcoat, sir, it will be the less matter."

"Willie, man," said he, without noticing my comment, "she's weel awa, and you are weel redd--but toss off thae wylie-coats and nightcaps, and lap yousell up in mensefu' braid-claith; for, donsie as you are, you maun come alang wi' me to Knowehead--there's a troop o' dragoons e'en now on Skyboe side, wi' your creditable namesake at their head, and they'll herry Moyabel frae hearthstane to riggin' before sax hours are gane--best keep frae under a lowin' king-post, and on the outside o' the four wa's o' a prevost.--You're no fit to ride, man; and you couldna thole the jolting o' a wheel-car--but never fear, we'll slip you hame upon a feather-bed.--Nae denial, Willie--here, draw on your coat: now, that's something purpose-like--cram thae flim-flams into a poke, my bonny Jean, and fetch me a handkerchief to tie about his head: Come, Willie, take my arm--come awa, come awa."

I was passive in his hands, for I felt as weak as an infant. They wrapped me up in greatcoats and blankets, and supported me to the courtyard. I had hardly strength to speak to Aleck, whom I now saw for the first time since the night of his disaster; the poor fellow's face still bore the livid marks of his punishment, but he was active and assiduous as ever. A slide car or slipe--a vehicle something like a Lapland sledge--was covered with bedding in the middle of the square: a cart was just being hurried off, full of loose furniture, with Peggy and Jenny in front. I was placed upon my hurdle, apparently as little for this world as if Tyburn had been its destination: Knowehead and Aleck mounted their horses, took the reins of that which drew me at either side, and hauled me off at a smart trot along the smooth turf of the grass-grown causeway. The motion was sliding and agreeable, except on one occasion, when we had to take a few perches of the highway in crossing the river; but when we struck off into the green horse-track again, and began to rise and sink upon the ridges of the broad lea, I could have compared my humble litter to the knight's horses, which felt like proud seas under them. From the sample I had had of that part of the country on the night of the flood, I had anticipated a "confused march forlorn, through bogs, caves, fens, lakes, dens, and shades of death," but was agreeably surprised to see the Longslap Moss a simple stripe along the water's edge, lying dark in the deepening twilight, a full
furlong from our path, which, instead of weltering through the soaked and spungy flats that I had expected, wound dry and mossy up the gentle slope of a smooth green hill; so that, although the night closed in upon us ere half our journey was completed, we arrived at Knowehead without farther accident (the beauty of slipping consists in the impossibility of breaks down), and so far from being the worse of my "sail," I felt actually stronger than on leaving the Grange; nevertheless I was put to bed, where I continued for a week.

Next day brought intelligence of the wrecking of Moyabel in the search for the rebel general and the sick Frenchman: our measures had been so well taken, however, that no suspicion attached itself to Knowehead. I learned from Peggy, so soon as her lamentations subsided, that Mr O'More was a south country gentleman, who had married his master's sister, and that Madeline was his only child; that this had been his first visit to the north since the death of his lady, which had taken place at her brother's house, but that Moyabel had long been the resort of his friends and emissaries. The old woman left Knowehead that night, and I learned no more; for Jenny (who remained with Miss Janet) had been so busy with her care of Aleck during his illness, and afterwards so unwell herself, that she knew nothing more than I.

Another week completely re-established me in my strength; but the craving that had never left me since the last sight of Madeline, kept me still restless and impatient. Meanwhile Aleck's courtship had ripened in the golden sun of matrimony, and the wedding took place on the next Monday morning. He was a favourite with all at Knowehead, and the event was celebrated by a dance of all the young neighbours.

After witnessing the leaping and flinging in the barn for half an hour, I retired to Miss Janet's parlour, where I was lolling away the evening on her high-backed sofa, along with the old gentleman, who, driven from his capitol in the kitchen by the bustle of the day, had installed himself in the unwonted state of an embroidered arm-chair beside me. We were projecting a grand coursing campaign before I should leave the country, and listening to the frequent bursts of merriment from the barn and kitchen, when little Davie came in to tell his master that "Paul Ingram was speerin' gain he wad need ony tey, or brendy, or prime pigtail, or Virginney leaf."

"I do not just approve of Paul's line of trade," observed the old man, turning to me; "for I'm thinking his commodities come oftener frae the smuggler's cave than the king's store; but he's a merry deevil, Paul, and has picked up a braw hantle o' mad ballads ae place and another; some frae Glen---- here, some frae Galloway, some frae the Isle o' Man, and some queer lingos he can sing, that he says he learned frae the Frenchmen."

A sudden thought struck me. "I will go out and get him to sing some to me, sir."--"Is Rab Halliday there, Davie?" inquired he.

"Oh aye, sir," said Davie; "it's rantin' Rab that ye hear roarin' e'en noo."

"Weel, tell him, Davie, that here's Mr William, wha has learned to speel Parnassus by a step-ladder, has come to hear the sang he made about my grandmither's woin'."
Accordingly Davie ushered me to the kitchen. I could distinguish through the reaming fumes of liquor and tobacco about half a dozen of carousers; they were chorusing at the full stretch of their lungs the song of a jolly fellow in one corner, who, nodding, winking, and flourishing his palms, in that state of perfect bliss "that good ale brings men to," was lilting up

"Till the house be rinnin' round about, It's time enough to flit; When we fell, we aye gat up again, And sae will we yet!"

This was ranting Rab Halliday--they all rose at my entrance; but being able to make myself at home in all companies, I had little difficulty in soon restoring them to their seats and jollity; while Davie signified what was to him intelligible of his master's wishes to the tuneful ranter. Rab, after praying law for any lack of skill that might be detected by my learning, sang with great humour the following verses, which he entitled

THE CANNY COURTSHIP.

Young Redrigs walks where the sunbeams fa'; He sees his shadow slant up the wa'-- Wi' shouthers sae braid, and wi' waist sae sma', Guid faith he's a proper man! He cocks his cap, and he streeks out his brest; And he steps a step like a lord at least; And he cries like the deevil to saddle his beast, And aff to court he's gaun.

The Laird o' Largy is far frae hame, But his dochter sits at the quiltin' frame, Kamin' her hair wi' a siller kame, In mony a gowden ban': Bauld Redrigs loups frae his blawin' horse, He prees her mou' wi' a freesome force-- "Come take me, Nelly, for better for worse, To be your ain guidman."

"I'll no be harried like bumbee's byke-- I'll no be handled unleddy like-- I winna hae ye, ye worryin' tyke, The road ye came gae 'lang!" He loupit on wi' an awsome snort, He bang'd the fire frae the flinty court; He's aff and awa' in a snorin' sturt, As hard as he can whang.

It's doon she sat when she saw him gae, And a' that she could do or say, Was--"O! and alack! and a well-a-day! I've lost the best guidman!" But if she was wae, it's he was wud; He garr'd them a' frae his road to scud; But Glowerin' Sam gied thud for thud, And then to the big house ran.

The Glowerer ran for the kitchen-door; Bauld Redrigs hard at his heels, be sure, He's wallop'd him roun' and roun' the floor, As wha but Redrigs can? Then Sam he loups to the dresser-shelf-- "I daur ye wallop my leddy's delf; I daur ye break but a single skelf Frae her cheeny bowl, my man!"

But Redrigs' bluid wi' his hand was up; He'd lay them neither for crock nor cup, He play'd awa' wi' his cuttin' whup, And doon the dishes dang; He clatter'd them doon, sir, raw by raw; The big anes foremost, and syne the sma'; He came to the cheeny cups last o' a'-- They glanced wi' goud sae thrang!

Then bonny Nelly came skirlin' butt; Her twa white arms roun' his neck she put-- "O Redrigs, dear, hae ye tint your wut? Are ye quite and clean gane wrang? O spare my teapot! O spare my jug! O spare, O
spare my posset-mug! And I'll let ye kiss, and I'll let ye hug, Dear Redrigs, a' day lang."

"Forgie, forgie me, my beauty bright Ye are my Nelly, my heart's delight; I'll kiss and I'll hug ye day and night, If alang wi' me you'll gang." "Fetch out my pillion, fetch out my cloak, You'll heal my heart if my bowl you broke." These words, whilk she to her bridegroom spok, Are the endin' o' my sang.

I got this copy of his song since, else I could not have recollected it from that hearing; for I was too impatient to put the plan into execution for which I had come out, to attend even to this immortalising of an ancestor.

I knew Ingram at once by his blue jacket, and the corkscrews which bobbed over each temple as he nodded and swayed his head to the flourishes of "the gaberlunzie man" (the measure which Halliday had chosen for his words); so when the song was finished, and I had drank a health to Robin's muse, I stepped across to where he sat, and said I wished to speak with him alone. He put down his jug of punch, and followed me into my own room. I closed the door and told him, that as I understood him to be in the Channel trade, I applied to know if he could put me on any expeditious conveyance to the coast of France. "Why, sir," said he, "I could give you a cast myself in our own tight thing, the Saucy Sally, as far as Douglas or the Calf; and for the rest of the trip, why there's our consort, the Little Sweep, that will be thereabouts this week, would run you up, if it would lie in your way, as far as Guernsey, or, if need be, to Belle Isle." "Belle Isle!" repeated I, with a start; for the words of O'More to the priest came suddenly upon my recollection, "Has any boat left this coast or that of Man for Belle Isle within the last fortnight?" "Not a keel, sir; there's ne'er a boat just now in the Channel that could do it but herself--they call her the Deil-sweep, sir, among the revenue sharks; for that's all that they could ever make of her. She is the only boat, sir, as I have said, and if so be you are a gentleman in distress, you will not be the only one that will have cause to trust to her--but, d--n it (he muttered), those women--well, what of that?--Mayn't I lend a hand to save a fine fellow for all that?--but harkye, brother, this is all in confidence."

"Your confidence shall not be abused," whispered I, hardly able to breathe for eager hope--the female passengers--the desire for exclusion--the only boat that fortnight, all confirmed me. "Mr O'More and I are friends; fear neither for him nor yourself; let me only get first on board, and I can rough it all night on deck, as many a time I've done before: his daughter and her woman can have your cabin to themselves." It was a bold guess, but all right; he gaped at me for a minute in dumb astonishment; then closing one hand upon the earnest which I here slipped into it, drew the other across his eyes, as if to satisfy himself that he was not dreaming, and in a respectful tone informed me that they intended sailing on the next night from Cairn Castle shore. "We take the squire up off Island Magee, sir; he has been lying to on the look-out for us there for the last ten days; so that if you want to bear a hand in getting the young lady aboard, it will be all arranged to your liking."

During this conversation, my whole being underwent a wonderful change; from the collapsing sickness of bereavement, I felt my heart and limbs expand themselves under the delightful enlargement of this new spring of hope: I shook Ingram by the hand, led him back to the kitchen, and returned turned to the old man with a step so elated, and with such a kindling of animation over my whole appearance, that he
exclaimed, in high glee, "Heard ye ever sic verses at Oxford, Willie? Odd! man, Rab Halliday is as good as a dozen o' Janet's possets for ye; I'll hae him here again to sing to ye the morn's e'en."

"He is a very pleasant fellow--a very pleasant fellow indeed, sir; but I fear I shall not be able to enjoy his company to-morrow night, as I purpose taking my passage for the Isle of Man in Ingram's boat."--"Nonsense, Willy, nonsense; ye wadna make yoursell 'hail, billy, weel met,' wi' gallows-birds and vagabonds--though, as for Paul himself"----"My dear sir, you know I have my passport, and need not care for the reputation of my hired servants; besides, sir, you know how fond I am of excitement of all sorts, and the rogue really sings so well"----

"That he does, Willy. Weel, weel--he that will to Cupar maun to Cupar!" and so saying, he lifted up his candle and marched off the field without another blow.

Ingram and I started next evening about four o'clock, attended by little Davie, who was to bring back the horse I rode next day; Ingram, whose occupation lay as much on land as sea, was quite at home on his rough sheltie, which carried also a couple of little panniers at either side of the pommel, well-primed with samples of his contraband commodities. We arrived a little after nightfall in Larne, where we left Davie with the horses, while Ingram, having disposed of his pony, joined me on foot, and we set off by the now bright light of the moon along the hills for Cairn Castle.

During the first three or four miles of our walk, he entertained me with abundance of songs echoed loud and long across the open mountain; but when we descended from it towards the sea, we both kept silence and a sharp look-out over the unequal and bleak country between. We now got among low clumpy hills and furry gullies, and had to pick our steps through loose scattered lumps of rock, which were lying all round us white in the clear moonshine, like flocks of sheep upon the hill-side. The wind was off the shore, and we did not hear the noise of the water till, at the end of one ravine, we turned the angular jut of a low promontory, and beheld the image of the moon swinging in its still swell at our feet.

Ingram whistled, and was answered from the shore a little farther on; he stepped out a few paces in advance, and led forward; presently I saw a light figure glide out of the shadow in front and approach us.

"Vell, mine Apostéle Paul, vat news of the Ephesiens?"

"All right, Munsher Martin, and here is another passenger."

He whispered something, and the little Frenchman touched his hat with an air, and expressed, in a compound of Norman-French, Manx, and English, the great pleasure he had in doing a service to the illustrious cavalier, the friend of liberty. Hearing a noise in front, I looked up and discerned the light spar of a mast peeping over an intervening barrier of rock; we wound round it, and on the other side found a cutter-rigged boat of about eighteen tons hauled close to the natural quay, with her mainsail set and flapping heavily in the night wind. Here we met another seaman. In ten minutes we were under
way; the smooth groundswell running free and silent from our quarter, and the boat laying herself out with an easy speed, as she caught the breeze freshening over the lower coast. The Saucy Sally was a half-decked cutter (built for a pleasure-boat in Guernsey), and a tight thing, as Ingram had said. I did not go into the cabin, which occupied all the forecastle, but wrapping myself in my cloak, lay down along the stern-sheets, and feigned to be asleep, for I was so excited by the prospect of meeting Madeline, that I could no longer join in the conversation of the crew. In about half an hour I heard them say that we were in sight of Island Magee, and rising, beheld it dark over our weather-bows. I went forward and continued on the forecastle in feverish impatience as we neared it. The breeze stiffened as we opened Larne Lough, and the Saucy Sally tossed two or three sprinklings of cold spray over my shoulders, but I shook the water from my cloak and resumed my look-out. At last we were within a quarter of a mile of the coast, and a light appeared right opposite; we showed another and lay to. With a fluttering heart I awaited the approach of a boat. Twice I fancied I saw it distinguish itself from the darkness of the coast, and twice I felt the blank recoil of disappointment. At last it did appear, dipping distinct from among the rocks, and full of people. They neared us; my heart leapt at every jog of their oars in the loose thewels; for I could now plainly discern two female figures, two boatmen, and a muffled man in the stern. All was now certain; they shot alongside, laid hold of the gunnel, and I heard O'More's voice call on Ingram to receive the lady. I could hardly conceal my agitation as she was lifted on deck, but had no power to advance; Nancy followed, and O'More himself leaped third on deck--the boat shoved off, the helmsman let the cutter's head away, the mainsail filled, and we stood out to sea.

Here I was then, and would be for four-and-twenty hours at the least, by the side of her whom a little time before I would have given years of my life to have been near but for a minute; yet, with an unaccountable irresolution, I still delayed, nay, shrunk from, the long-sought interview. It was not till her father had gone into the little cabin to arrange it for her reception, and had closed the door between us, that I ventured from my hiding-place behind the foresail, and approached her where she stood gazing mournfully over the boat's side at the fast passing shores of her country. I whispered her name; she knew my voice at the first syllable, and turned in amazed delight; but the flush of pleasure which lit up her beautiful features as I clasped her hand, had hardly dawned ere it was chased by the rising paleness of alarm. I comforted her by assurances of eternal love, and vowed to follow her to the ends of the earth in despite of every human power. We stood alone; for two sailors were with O'More and the girl in the cabin, and the third, having lashed the tiller to, was fixing something forward. We stood alone I cannot guess how long--time is short, but the joy of those moments has been everlasting. We exchanged vows of mutual affection and constancy, and I had sealed our blessed compact with a kiss, witnessed only by the moon and stars, when the cabin-door opened, and her father stood before me. I held out my hand, and accosted him with the free confidence of a joyful heart. The severe light of the moon sharpened his strong features into startling expression, as he regarded me for a second with mingled astonishment and vexation. He did not seem to notice my offered hand; but, saying something in a low cold tone about the unexpected pleasure, turned to the steersman, and demanded fiercely why he had not abided by his agreement? The sailor, quailing before the authoritative tone and aspect of his really noble-looking questioner, began an exculpatory account of my having been brought thither by Ingram, to whom he referred.
Bold Paul was beginning with "Lookee, Squire, I'm master of this same craft," when I interrupted him by requesting that he would take his messmates to the bows, and leave the helm with me, as I wished to explain the matter myself in private. He consigned his soul, in set terms, to the devil, if any other man than myself should be allowed to make a priest's palaver-box of the Saucy Sally, and sulkily retired, rolling his quid with indefatigable energy, and squirting jets of spittle half-mast high.

O'More almost pushed the reluctant Madeline into the cabin, closed the door, and addressed me.--"To what motive am I to attribute your presence here, Mr Macdonnell?"

"To one which I am proud to avow, the desire of being near the object of my sole affections--your lovely daughter; as well, sir, as from a hope that I may still be able to overcome those objections which you once expressed."

He pointed over the boat's side to the black piled precipices of the shore, as they stood like an iron wall looming along the weather-beam.--"Look there, sir; look at the Bloody Gobbins, and hear me--When a setting moon shall cease to fling the mourning of their shadows over the graves of my butchered ancestors, and when a rising sun shall cease to bare before abhorring Christendom"----

"Luff, sir, luff," cried Ingram, from the forecastle.

"Come aft yourself, Paul," I replied in despair and disgust.

O'More retired to the cabin bulkhead, and leaned against the door, without completing his broken vow. Ingram took the helm, and I sat down in silence. Paul saw our unpleasant situation, and ceasing to remember his own cause for ill-humour, strove to make us forget ours. He talked with a good deal of tact, but with little success, for the next half hour. O'More remained stern and black as the Gobbins themselves, now rapidly sinking astern, while the coast of Island Magee receded into the broad Lough of Belfast upon our quarter. The moon was still shining with unabated lustre, and we could plainly discern the bold outline of the hills beyond; while the coast of Down and the two Copelands lay glistening in grey obscure over our starboard bow. No sail was within sight; we had a stiff breeze with a swinging swell from the open bay; and as the cutter lay down and showed the glimmer of the water's edge above her gunnel, the glee of the glorying sailor burst out in song:--

Haul away, haul away, down helm, I say; Slacken sheets, let the good boat go.-- Give her room, give her room for a spanking boom; For the wind comes on to blow-- (Haul away!) For the wind comes on to blow, And the weather-beam is gathering gloom, And the scud flies high and low.

Lay her out, lay her out, till her timbers stout, Like a wrestler's ribs, reply To the glee, to the glee of the bending tree, And the crowded canvass high-- (Lay her out!) And the crowded canvass high; Contending, to the water's shout, With the champion of the sky.

Carry on, carry on; reef none, boy, none; Hang her out on a stretching sail: Gunnel in, gunnel in! for the race we'll win, While the land-lubbers so pale-- (Carry on!) While the land-lubbers so pale Are
fumbling at their points, my son, For fear of the coming gale!

All but O'More joined in the chorus of the last stanza, and the bold burst of harmony was swept across
the water like a defiance to the eastern gale. Our challenge was accepted. "Howsomever," said Ingram,
after a pause, and running his glistening eye along the horizon, "as we are not running a race, there will
be no harm in taking in a handful or two of our cloth this morning; for the wind is chopping round to
the north, and I wouldn't wonder to hear Sculmarten's breakers under our lee before sunrise."

"And a black spell we will have till then, for when the moon goes down you may stop your fingers in
your eyes for starlight," observed the other sailor, as he began to slacken down the peak halliards; while
they brought the boat up and took in one reef in the mainsail; but the word was still "helm a-larboard,"
and the boat's head had followed the wind round a whole quarter of the compass within the next ten
minutes. We went off before the breeze, but it continued veering round for the next hour; so that when
we got fairly into the Channel, the predictions of the seamen were completely fulfilled; for the moon
had set, the wind was from the east, and a hurrying drift had covered all the sky.

We stood for the north of Man; but the cross sea, produced by the shifting of the wind, which was fast
rising to a gale, buffeted us with such contrary shocks, that after beating through it almost till the break
day of day, we gave up the hope of making Nesshead, and, altering our course, took in another reef, and ran
for the Calf.

But the gale continued to increase; we pitched and plunged to no purpose; the boat was going bows in
at every dip, and the straining of her timbers as she stooped out to every stretch, told plainly that we
must either have started planks or an altered course again. The sailors, after some consultation, agreed
on putting about; and, for reasons best known to themselves, pitched upon Strangford Lough as their
harbour of refuge. Accordingly, we altered our course once more, and went off before the wind. Day
broke as we were still toiling ten miles from the coast of Down. The grey dawn showed a black pile of
clouds overhead, gathering bulk from rugged masses which were driving close and rapid from the east.
By degrees the coast became distinct from the lowering sky; and at last the sun rose lurid and large
above the weltering waters. It was ebb tide, and I represented that Strangford bar at such a time was
peculiarly dangerous in an eastern gale; nevertheless the old sailor who was now at the helm insisted on
standing for it. When we were yet a mile distant, I could distinguish the white horses running high
through the black trembling strait, and hear the tumult of the breakers over the dashing of our own
bows. Escape was impossible; we could never beat to sea in the teeth of such a gale; over the bar we
must go, or founder. We took in the last reef, hauled down our jib, and, with ominous faces, saw
ourselves in ten minutes more among the cross seas and breakers.

The waters of a wide estuary running six miles an hour, and meeting the long roll of the Channel, might
well have been expected to produce a dangerous swell; but a spring-tide, combining with a gale of
wind, had raised them at flood to an extraordinary height, and the violence of their discharge exceeded
our anticipations accordingly. We had hardly encountered the first two or three breakers, when Ingram
was staggered from the forecastle by the buffet of a counter sea, which struck us forward just as the
regular swell caught us astern; the boat heeled almost on her beam ends, and he fell over the cabin door
into the hold; the man at the helm was preparing for the tack as he saw his messmate's danger, and
started forward to save him: he was too late; the poor fellow pitched upon his head and shoulders
among the ballast; at the same instant the mainsail caught the wind, the boom swung across, and
striking the helmsman on the back of the neck, swept him half overboard, where he lay doubled across
the gunnel, with his arms and head dragging through the water, till I hauled him in. He was stunned and
nearly scalped by the blow. Ingram lay moaning and motionless; the boat was at the mercy of the
elements, while I stretched the poor fellows side by side at our feet. I had now to take the helm, for the
little Frenchman was totally ignorant of the coast; he continued to hand the main-sheet; and O'More,
who all night long had been sitting in silence against the cabin bulkhead, leaped manfully upon the
forecastle and stood by the tackle there. We had now to put the boat upon the other tack, for the tide
made it impossible to run before the wind. O'More belayed his sheet, and, as the cutter lay down again,
folded his arms and leaned back on the weather-bulwark, balancing himself with his feet against the
skylight.

The jabble around us was like the seething of a caldron; for the waves boiled up all at once, and ran in
disturbances, I was distracted by their universal assault, and did not observe the heaviest and most
formidable of all, till it was almost down upon our broadside. I put the helm hard down, and shouted
with all my might to O'More—"Stand by for a sea, sir--lay hold, lay hold." It was too late. I could just
prevent our being swamped by withdrawing our quarter from the shock, when it struck us on the
weather-bows, where he stood: it did not break. Our hull was too small an obstacle: it swept over the
forecastle as the stream leaps a pebble, stove in the bulwark, lifted him right up, and launched him on
his back, with his feet against the foresail. The foresail stood the shock a moment, and he grappled to it,
while we were swept on in the rush, like a sparrow in the clutches of a hawk; but the weight of water
bore all before it--the sheets were torn from the deck, the sail flapped up above the water, and I saw him
tossed from its edge over the lee-bow. The mainsail hid him for a moment; he reappeared, sweeping
astern at the rate of fifteen knots an hour. He was striking out, and crying for a rope; there was no rope
at hand, and all the loose spars had been stowed away. He could not be saved. I have said that the sun
had just risen: between us and the east his rays shone through the tops of the higher waves with a pale
and livid light; as O'More drifted into these, his whole agonised figure rose for a moment dusk in the
transparent water, then disappeared in the hollow beyond; but at our next plunge I saw him heaved up
again, struggling dim amid the green gloom of an overwhelming sea. An agonising cry behind me made
me turn my head. "O save him, save him! turn the boat, and save him! O William, as you love me, save
my father!" It was Madeline, frantic for grief, stumbling over, and unconsciously treading on the
wounded men, as she rushed from the cabin, and cast herself upon her knees before me. I raised my
eyes to heaven, praying for support; and though the clouds rolled, and the gale swept between, strength
was surely sent me from above; for what save heavenly help could have subdued that fierce despair,
which, at the first sight of the complicated agonies around, had prompted me to abandon hope,
blaspheme, and die? I raised her gently but firmly in my arms; drew her, still struggling and screaming
wild entreaties, to my breast, and not daring to trust myself with a single look at her imploring eyes,
fixed my own upon the course we had to run, and never swerved from my severe determination, till the
convulsive sobs had ceased to shake her breast upon mine, and I had felt the warm gush of her relieving
tears instead; then my stern purpose melted, and, bending over the desolate girl, I murmured, "Weep no
more, my Madeline, for, by the blessing of God, I will be a father and a brother to you yet!" Blessed be
he who heard my holy vow!--when I looked up again we were in the smooth water.

Drenched, numbed, and dripping all with the cold spray, one borne senseless and bloody in his messmate's arms, we climbed the quay of Strangford. The threatened tempest was bursting in rain and thunder; but our miserable plight had attracted a sympathising crowd. No question was asked of who? or whence? by a generous people, to wounded and wearied men and helpless women; till there pressed through the ring of bystanders a tall fellow, with a strong expression of debasement and desperate impudence upon his face, that seemed to say, "Infamy, you have done your worst." He demanded our names and passports, and arrested us all in the king's name, almost in the same breath. I struck him in the face with my fist, and kicked him into the kennel. No one attempted to lift him; but he scrambled to his feet, with denunciations of horrible revenge. He was hustled about by the crowd till he lost temper, and struck one of them. He had now rather too much work upon his hands to admit of a too close attention to us; three or four persons stepped forward and offered us protection.

Ingram and the other wounded sailor were taken off, along with the Frenchman, by some of their own associates; while a respectable and benevolent looking man addressed me, "I am a Protestant, sir, and an Orangeman; but put these ladies under my protection, and you will not repent your confidence; for, next to the Pope, I love to defeat an informer;" and he pointed with a smile to our arrester, who was just measuring his length upon the pavement.

"Is his name Macdonnell?" asked I.

"The same, sir," he replied; "but come away with me before he gets out of my Thomas's hands, and I will put your friends out of the reach of his."

I shall never be able to repay the obligation I owe to this good man, who received Miss O'More, with her attendant, into the bosom of his family, till I had arranged her journey to the house of a female relative, whence, after a decent period of mourning, our marriage permitted me to bear her to my own.

BEN-NA-GROICH.

[MAGA. MARCH 1839.]

A plain dark-coloured chariot, whose dusty wheels gave evidence of a journey, stopped to change horses at Fushie Bridge, on the 7th of August 1838. The travellers seemed listless and weary, and remained, each ensconced in a corner of the carriage. The elder was a lady of from forty to fifty years of age--thin, and somewhat prim in her expression, which was perhaps occasioned by a long upper lip, rigidly stretched over a chasm in her upper gum, caused by the want of a front tooth. Her companion had taken off her bonnet, and hung it to the cross strings of the roof. The heat and fatigue of the journey seemed to have almost overcome her, and she had placed her head against the side, and was either asleep or very nearly so. It is impossible to say what her appearance might be when her eyes were open; all that we can say under present circumstances is, that the rest of her features were beautifully regular--that what appeared of her form was unimpeachable--that her hair was disengaged from combs.
and other entanglement, and floated at its own sweet will over cheek, and neck, and shoulders. In the
rumble were seated two servants, who seemed to have a much better idea of the art of enjoying a
journey than the party within. A blue cloak, thrown loosely over the gentleman's shoulders, succeeded
(as was evidently his object) in concealing a certain ornamental strip of scarlet cloth that formed the
collar of his coat; but revealed, at the same time, in spite of all the efforts he could make to draw up the
apron, the upper portion of a pair of velvet integuments, which, according to Lord Byron's description
of them, were "deeply, darkly, beautifully blue." The lady, reclining on his arm, which was gallantly
extended, so as to save her from bumping against the iron, requires no particular description. She was
dressed in very gay-coloured clothes--had a vast quantity of different-hued ribbons floating like
meteors on the troubled air--from the top and both sides of her bonnet; while a glistening pink silk
cloak was in correct keeping with a pair of expansive cheeks, where the roses had very much the
upperhand of the lilies. While Mistress Wilson, the respectable landlady of the posting-house, was busy
giving orders about the horses, a carriage was heard coming down the hill at a prodigious rate, and,
with a sort of prophetic spirit, the old woman knew in an instant that four horses more would be
required; and then she recollected as instantaneously that there would only be one pair in the stable.
Under these circumstances, she went directly to the door of the plain chariot, whose inmates still
showed no signs of animation, and tried to set their minds at rest as to the further prosecution of their
journey--though, as they had no knowledge of the possibility of any difficulty arising, they had never
entertained any anxiety on the subject.

"Dinna be fleyed, my bonny burdy," she said, addressing the unbonneted young lady, who was still
apparently dozing in the corner. "Ye sal hae the twa best greys in Fussie stables; they'll trot ye in in
little mair than an hour; an' the ither folk maun just be doin' wi' a pair, as their betters hae dune afore
them."

The young lady started up in surprise, and looked on the shrewd intelligent features of the well-known
Meg Dods, without understanding a syllable of her address.

"Haena ye got a tongue i' yer head, for a' ye're sae bonny?" continued the rather uncomplimentary
landlady--"maybe the auld wife i' the corner'll hae mair sense. Hear ye what I said? ye sall hae the twa
greys--and Jock Brown to drive them; steady brutes a' the three, an' very quick on the road."

The elder lady gazed with lack-lustre eyes upon the announcer of these glad tidings.

"Greys, did you say?" she asked, catching at the only words she had understood in the address.

"Yes, did I. An' ye dinna seem over thankful for the same. I tell ye, if ye hadna a woman o' her word to
deal wi', ye wad likely hae nae horses ava'--for here comes an' o' the things thae English idewuts ca's a
dug-cart that they come doon wi', filled inside an' out wi' men, and dugs, an' guns--a' hurrin' aff to the
muirs, an' neither to haud nor bind if they haena four horses the minute they clap their hands. They'll
mak' a grand fecht, ye'll see, to get your twa greys; but bide a wee--the twa greys ye sall hae, if it was
the laird o' Dalhousie himself."
And in fact in a very few seconds after the venerable hostess had uttered these sybilline vaticinations, they received an exact fulfilment—

"Four horses on!" exclaimed a voice from the last arrived vehicle, which sorely puzzled the knowing ones of Fushie Brig to determine to what genus or species it belonged. It was a long high carriage, fitted for the conveyance both of men and luggage; and its capabilities in both these respects were, on this occasion, very severely tried. On the high driving-seat were perched two gentlemen, counterbalanced on the dicky-seat behind by two sporting-looking servants. Inside, four other gentlemen found ample room; while a sort of second body swinging below, seemed to carry as many packages, trunks, and portmanteaus, as the hold of a Leith smack. "Four horses on!" repeated the voice, which proceeded from one of the sporting-looking servants on the seat behind.

"Blaw awa', my man," murmured Mrs Wilson; "it'll be a gey while or the second pair comes out, for a' yer blawin'. Did ye want onything, sirs?" she inquired, going up to the equipage.

"To be sure," answered one of the gentlemen; "four horses immediately--we're pushed for time."

"Hech, sirs, so are we a’, but time'll hae the best o'it," replied the hostess. "Ye maun just hae patience, sirs, for ye canna get on this three hours."

"Three hours!" exclaimed the gentleman; "why, what's the matter? Why the deuce don't they get out the horses?"

"Just for the same raison the Hielanman couldna' get out the bawbee," replied the imperturbable Meg Dods; "the deil a plack was in his pouch, puir body--an' sae, ye see, ye maun just stay still."

"My lord," interposed one of the servants, touching his hat, "there's a pair of very natty greys just coming out of the stable, and a pair of bays with the harness on. I have seen them in stall"—

"Then let us have them, Charles, by all means," replied his lordship.

"Yes, my lord."

In a very short time high words were heard, from which it was evident that by no means a complimentary opinion was entertained of the gentlemanly conduct of the nobleman's dependant by the guard and ornament of the plain chariot.

"I say, my fine chap, you leave them there grey 'osses alone, will ye? they ain't none o' yourn."

"Quite a mistake, Johnny," replied the noble retainer, with a supercilious glance at our friend, who was still perched high in air.
"Oh! if ye come to go to be a-leaving off of names, old Timothy, you'll find I've a way of writing my
card with my five fingers here in a text hand as no gentleman can mistake."

While boasting of his literary acquirements, our Hector in livery slewed himself down from the side of
the red-cheeked Andromache, and presented an appearance which apparently induced the gentleman in
the cockade to believe that the mistake might possibly be on his own side.

"My lord is in a great hurry."

"So is my ladies."

"He must have four horses."

"They must have two."

"Lauds!" exclaimed the voice of the hostess, addressing three or four stable-men who had been gaping
spectators of this altercation, "bring yer grapes and pitchin' forks here, an' lift this birkie wi' the cockaud
in his head back till his seat again. Tell Jock Brown to get his boots on wi' a' his micht, and drive thir
ladies to Douglas's Hotel. An' I'm sayin', if ony o' thae English bit craturs, wi' their clippy tongues, lays
hand on bit or bridle o' ony o' my horses, dinna spare the pitchin' fork--pit it through them as ye wad a
lock strae; I'll hae nae rubbery in my stable-yaird--I'm braw freens wi' the Justice-Clerk."

As affairs now appeared to grow serious, the Noah's Ark disembogued the whole of its living contents,
and a minute inspection of the stables was commenced by the whole party. The ladies, in the mean
time, who had some confused idea that all was not right, were looking anxiously from the windows;
and if the elder lady had been an attentive observer of her companion's looks, she would have seen a
flush of surprise suffuse her whole countenance as her eyes for an instant rested on one of the
gentlemen, who stood apparently an uninterested spectator of the proceedings of his friends. A similar
feeling of amazement seemed to take possession of the champion of the ladies, as he recognised the
same individual. He left his antagonist in the very middle of a philippic that ought to have sunk that
gentleman in his own estimation for ever, and walking hurriedly up to the gentleman, who was still in
what is called a reverie, said--

"Mr Harry!--hope ye're quite well, sir?"

"What?--Copus?" replied the gentleman. "I'm delighted to see you again. Who are you with just now?"

"Family, sir--great family--equal to a duke, master says;--lady's-maid uncommon pleasant, and all
things quite agreeable."

"Do you mean you are with a duke, Copus?"
"Bless ye! no, sir, only equal to it. Master has bought a Scotch chiefship, and we're all a-going down to take possession. Master made all the tartans himself afore we left off trade."

"I don't understand you--what is he?"

"Smith, Hobbins, and Huxtable, they called us at Manchester,--great way of business--but master, old Smith, has retired, and bought this here Scotch estate, and makes us all call him Ben-na-Groich."

"And his family, Copus?"

"Only his old sister, and our young lady."

"Well,--her name?"

"Miss Jane. She's a niece, they say, of old Smith--Ben-na-Groich, I means; but I don't b'lieve it. She's a real lady, and no mistake; and, they say, will have a prodigious fortin. By dad, our old 'ooman takes prodigious care of her, and is always a snubbing."

"My dear Copus, say not a word of having seen me; you can be the greatest friend I ever had in my life--you'll help me?"

"Won't I?--that's all;--'clect all about Oriel, Mr Harry, and Brussels? Ah! them was glorious days!"

"We shall have better days yet, Copus, never fear."

After a few minutes' conversation, the face of affairs entirely changed. An apology was made by his lordship in person for the mistake of his servant; that individual was severely reprimanded, greatly to the satisfaction of Mr Copus; the two greys were peaceably yoked to the plain chariot, and Jock Brown cracked his whip and trotted off at a pace that set loose the tongues of all the dogs in the village.

"What a barbarous set of people these Lowlanders are!" exclaimed the senior lady--"so different from the brave and noble mountaineers. My brother, the chieftain, is lucky in having such a splendid set of retainers, and the tartan he invented is very becoming."

"Vell, only to think of picking up my old master in a inn-yard!" murmured Mr Copus, resuming his old position, and fixing his guarding arm once more inside of the rumble-rail; "after all the rum goes we had together at Oxford and Brussels. Nothing couldn't be luckier than meeting a old friend among them Scotch savages. Do ye know, Mariar, they haven't no breeches?"

"For shame, Mr Copus!"
CHAPTER II.

It must be evident to the most unpractised eye that the young gentleman recognised by his old servant, and the pretty young lady in the plain chariot, are the hero and heroine of this true story. And a very fitting hero and heroine they would have been for a tale of far higher pretensions than the plain unvarnished one which it is now our duty to deliver. At present, all we can afford to tell the reader is the fact of their being consumedly in love—that their love proved its truth by not running very smoothly—and that, at the moment at which we have brought them on the stage, they had had no communication for several months before. The delight, therefore, of Henry Raymond on recognising Jane Somers at Meg Dods's door, was equalled by his surprise. He formed one of a party going down for the twelfth of August to the moors of his friend, Lord Teysham; but the interview he had had with his former domestic, Bill Copus, who had attended him through his career at Oxford, and afterwards for a short time to the Continent, somewhat cooled his zeal as a sportsman, by adding to his hopes as a lover. The forced embargo laid on them by the hostess of Fushie Bridge—for she was resolute in refusing to take them on with a pair, and the cattle of the last stage were miserably tired—gave him time to lay so much of his plans before his friends as he saw fit; and, long before the second pair, which had been with a party to Leith, had been refreshed, and were ready to start, his companions had unanimously passed a resolution, "that it was incumbent on the members of this excursion, collectively and individually, to give all possible aid and assistance to Henry Raymond, in overthrowing the plans of all persons of the name of Smith, or of any other name or denomination whatever, and marrying a certain young lady of the name of Jane Somers."

But Lord Teysham, who united a great deal of good plain sense with his buoyancy of spirits, took him quietly aside, and asked him—

"Why, in heaven's name, if he liked the girl, he didn't propose for her in form?"

"I have, my dear fellow," replied Harry, "and been refused."

"By whom?"

"The uncle. He wrote me a letter, saying my favour of 3d ult. had come duly to hand, and he declined the offer as expressed therein,—and he remains, sir, for self and niece, my obedient servant, Thomas Smith."

"But had he a right to send you this letter?"

"As guardian and uncle, I suppose he has; but as empowered by Jane herself, none whatever."

"But what's his objection?"

"I've an elder brother."
"Well, but your governor is a close old boy. He has metal enough for a frigate besides his First-rate."

"Yes; but he has told me a hundred times that tit for tat is the only game he plays at--whatever fortune I bring he will pay me over the same; if I marry for love, I must live on it. I could give you a score or two more of his wise sayings."

"Oh! thank ye--I've a good stock of my own; but why, in the name of wonder, is he so distrustful? Can't he give you credit for being able to choose, without bribing you, as it were, to look out for a fortune?"

"My father won't give credit to any one, especially to me; besides, he has some little cause to be suspicious, for I've cleaned him out of a trifle once or twice, in a way that makes him slow to bite now. I have been on the point of marriage twice--once to old Crocky, and once to Stulz."

"How?"

"Why, you see, last year I was dipt a little to the fishmonger, and wrote a matrimonial letter home hinting at trousseaus and other expenses, but mentioning no names. Nothing could please the old gentleman so much, and it was on that occasion he sent me up the paper, properly signed and attested, binding himself to give me guinea for guinea whatever fortune I might get with my wife. A thousand he sent me to do the needful in the way of jewels and other presents, set me square with all the world."

"And your progenitor was indignant at the disappointment?"

"Oh! horribly; and unless it had been for a four-year bill of Stulz, I shouldn't have troubled him so soon. But, as I was aware that Walter knew of the obligation about my future fortune, I gave him to understand that I was devoted to Miss Coutts, and that I had no reason to despair. The very thought of such a thing was death both to the old Jack Daw and the young. The squire and his eldest hope would have been both in the poor-house if I had succeeded in carrying off the heiress, and had kept them to their bond. So, after a week or two, I let them off for their alarm, and a moderate tip. But all these things, my dear Teysham, are over now. I am resolved to marry Jane Somers, and cut both Stulz and Crocky."

"If you can get her; but this old monster, with the uncommon name, has her in his power. We must concert measures calmly, and we need not despair. Will she herself help us?"

"To be sure she will. Her new home must be misery to her. She is the daughter of a sister of this old Smith, who, by some chance or other, married a gentleman. She had a large fortune, which now belongs to this only child. Colonel Somers has long been dead; the widow died a few years ago. Jane was then educated in the house of another guardian, a cousin of Colonel Somers, who lived near Bath; and, on his lately being sent to India on a high command, she was claimed by this Manchester hobgoblin, and torn from all her old friends."

"Yourself among the rest?"
"Just so--and now you know the whole story."

In which respect, as we conclude, the reader is by this time on a par with Lord Teysham, we quit the conclave at Fushie Bridge, and proceed to the more splendid apartments in Douglas's Hotel.

In the little drawing-room that looks to St Andrew Square, the evening seemed to have passed stupidly enough. Aunt Alice, after yawning till tea time, and scolding the greater part of that excellent time-killer, had at last, at about nine o'clock, betaken herself to her bedroom, to bring down the *Scottish Chiefs*--a book of manners and statistics from which all her notions of the Scottish nation of an early period were derived. *Waverley*, and the other northern stories of the enchanter, supplied her with all her modern information; and not very bad sources they would have been, if Miss Alice had been able to understand the language in which they were written. But our noble vernacular was to her a more impenetrable mystery than any revealed at Eleusis, and it was, perhaps, on this account that she entertained so decided a preference for the performance of Miss Porter.

Jane Somers, whom we have hitherto represented as either listless or sleeping, was sitting busily engaged in the somewhat unusual occupation of thinking. And, as her thoughts were wandering about Lansdowne, and a vast apartment, nobly lighted and filled with the sounds of revelry by night, we need not be surprised if they occasionally made a detour to the stables of Fushie Bridge, and the sight that met her there. While musing deeply on these very interesting subjects, our friend Copus entered the room and said--

"Please, mum, one of the valets here knows all about them there places as master talks so much on; p'raps Miss Alice would like to hear about 'em?"

"I will tell my aunt, William," said the young lady, and returned to her former musings.

Copus retired and shut the door.

A low voice at her ear as she again rested her head upon the arm of the sofa, whispered "Jane!"

On looking up she saw a tall man dressed in the usual waiter's costume, with a large white cloth spread over his left arm.

"Harry Raymond!" she said, but by some unaccountable instinct speaking, even in the extremity of her surprise, in a tone of voice that scarcely reached beyond the person she addressed,--"In Heaven's name, what do you here?--in this disguise? Aunt Alice will detect you, and then my situation will be made doubly miserable."

"Then it *is* miserable, Jane? Why do you submit to it? Ah, Jane, you have forgotten, surely, the promises you gave me."
"Forgetfulness seems to have existed on more sides than one. I have been four months in Lancashire, and am indebted, at last, to a chance meeting in Scotland for being recalled to your recollection."

"Recollection!" echoed the young man, in the liveliness of his emotion flinging the white cloth upon the floor. "Good heavens! what can have put such a notion into your head? I have written letter upon letter, both to you and your guardian—that is, after I found out where you had gone to. My letters to you have not been answered; my letter to him was answered by a refusal."

"Harry, Harry, he never consulted me— I never"----but here she checked herself, as perhaps she considered that the vehemence of her denial might be construed into something very like an anxiety to retract it; and whether this was the construction put on it or not, all we have to say is, that on Miss Alice Smith slipping quietly into the room, with a volume of the Scottish Chiefs in her hand, she almost screamed, as she saw a stranger seated on the sofa beside her niece, and holding her very earnestly by the hand.

"How! what's all this?" exclaimed Miss Alice. "Them Scotch is the oddest people!"

"Young lady nearly fainted, ma'am, at some accounts I was giving her of the Highlands, ma'am. I'm waiter here, ma'am; and it's part of my business, ma'am, to give all sorts of information to the English families as they pass through the city, ma'am."

"And what were you a-telling of to this young lady?"

"Only a few incidents that occasionally happen in such wild scenes as Fash-na-Cairn or Ben-na-Groich. They say the new Ben-na-Groich is an English nobleman, with a very handsome sister;—I was merely telling this young lady here what would probably be the fate of the beautiful English-woman."

"Gracious me!" exclaimed Miss Alice: "no wonder she fainted, poor thing. What was it? for mercy's sake— what will they do to her?"

"Fash-na-Cairn and all his clan have been at war for hundreds of years with Ben-na-Groich. He will probably lead a foray upon the new chief and carry off his sister."

"Gracious! how old is this Fash-na-Cairn?"

"About five-and-twenty. He has buried his fifteenth wife. They seldom live more than three months."

"Oh, Jane! Jane! we're lost—ruined—murdered! Waiter, I'm the sister of Ben-na-Groich, the victim of Fash-na-Cairn!"

"Sorry, ma'am, I've alarmed you; but, perhaps, the friends of the clan may gather round Ben-na-Groich, and succeed in capturing Fash-na-Cairn."
"And what then?" inquired Miss Alice, with a glimpse of hope.

"Oh, then, it is the universal custom for the next in blood of the chieftain, if she be unmarried, to cut off a finger of the prisoner every day with an old hereditary hatchet kept for that purpose, till he relents, and offers to make her his bride. If he does so before he has lost the fingers of both hands, the feud is at an end."

Miss Alice shuddered at the thoughts of cutting off a young man's fingers.

"Oh, waiter, this is dreadful news! I'm certain my poor brother knew nothing of this when he purchased that horrible property. And what will they do to him if the furry succeeds?"

"Tie him up in a wolf's skin, and hunt him to death with bloodhounds."

"My poor brother, my poor brother! And he so fat, and subject to the gout! But it's quite true--it's exactly what they did to the Bohemian in *Quentin Durward*."

"The present Fash-na-Cairn is a descendant of Le Balafré."

"Oh, the monster! Have they no police at Ben-na-Groich, nor even special constables?--no justice of peace?"

"The only justice there is the dirk and claymore. But the young lady seems revived now. Do you take supper? I'll send the chambermaid directly, ma'am."

When the historical and veracious waiter left the room, the long and stately figure of Miss Alice sank slowly down upon the sofa. Jane Somers's face was buried in her hands, and, by the tremors that ran through her whole frame, and the redness of what was visible of her cheeks and neck, it was evident that she was nearly in convulsions with some powerfully suppressed feeling. The aunt, of course, considered it to be the result of terror, whatever sager guess the reader may make upon the subject, and gave way to a fit of dolorous lamentation, that did not much contribute to her niece's recovery.

"This comes of pride, and being one of the Scottish chiefs! To be eaten up by bloodhounds, and have his sister carried off by Fash-na-Cairn! Blue-Beard was a joke to him; fifteen wives, and only five-and-twenty!--more than three per annum since he came of age! I will put my brother on his guard the moment we arrive. This is truly a barbarous country, and inhabited by nobody but murderers and cannibals. Hobbins and Huxtable will be amazed to hear of their partner's fate--and my brother never was partial to dogs!"
CHAPTER III.

The castle of Ben-na-Groich was an old square building, situated in a wild ravine of the North Highlands. It consisted of little more than a high tower, of the rough stone of the country, at one corner of a low mass of building, in many parts fallen into decay, and presenting an appearance of strength and massiveness, on which any attempt at beauty would have been thrown away. One side of the square had something more of a habitable look than the remaining portions, from the circumstance of its chimneys being newly rebuilt and tastefully whitewashed; the roof also was repaired, and the windows fitted with glass—a luxury which was considered useless by the inhabitants of the remaining three sides—the said inhabitants consisting of two or three cows, half a score of dogs, and one or two old representatives of Fingal, who clung to their ancient habitation with a local attachment that would have done honour to a cat.

On the evening of the 10th of August, the parlour (for it was nothing more, though bearing the nobler designation of the hall) was occupied by a solitary gentleman of somewhat solid dimensions, who cheered his loneliness by an occasional stir of the fire, and a frequent sip at a tumbler of whisky-toddy. From time to time he went to the window and listened. The cataract that rushed down the ravine would have drowned any other external sound, even if such had existed; and with an expression of increased ill humour after every visit to the window, the gentleman renewed his former occupation of sipping the toddy and stirring the fire.

"Some folly or other of sister Alice," at last he grunted, "putting off her time in Edinburgh. They ought to have been here by two o'clock, and here it is eight, and not a sound of their wheels. That cursed rivulet, to be sure, drowns everything else; 'tis worse than our hundred-horse engine. I wish they were here, for being a Highland chieftain is lonely work after all—no coffee-house—no club—no newspaper. Hobbins was right enough in saying, 'I should soon tire;' but tire or not, I am too proud to go back—no! Young Charles Hobbins shall marry Jane Somers. I will settle them here for three or four months in the summer, and we can all go back to his house for the rest of the year. A real chieftain will be something to look at there, though, in this cursed country, it does not seem to create much admiration. What can be keeping sister Alice?"

The gentleman walked to the window once more, and, opening it a little way, shouted "Angus Mohr! Angus Mohr!" A feeble voice in a short time answered from the dilapidated end of the building.

"Her's comin'—fat ta teil does ta fat havril want?" Uncertain steps not long after sounded along the creaking passage; the door was opened, and presented to the impatient glance of the new proprietor the visage of the grumbling Gael. He was an old decrepit man, with bright ferocious eyes gleaming through his elf-locks. If he had succeeded in making a "swap" of his habiliments with any scarecrow south of the Tay, he would have had by far the best of the bargain, for his whole toilet consisted in a coarse blue kilt or petticoat (for it had none of the checkers that give a showy appearance to the kilt); his stocking—for he only rejoiced in one—was wrinkled down almost over his shoe; his coat was tattered and torn in every variety of raggedness; and the filth, which was almost thick enough to cover the glaring redness of his fortnight's beard, showed that Angus Mohr took very little interest in the great
question about the soap duties. "Fat d'ye want, auld man?" inquired the visitor--"bringin' a poddy a' this way to hear yer havers."

"I merely wish to know, Angus, if there is any lad here you can send to the side of the hill to see if a carriage is coming this way."

"Tere's a laud oot in the byre," replied Angus; "but he's four score year auld, an' has been teaf and blind since they took him to Inferness jail for dirking the packman--teil tak their sowls for pittin an honest man in ony such places--ye can pid him gang, if ye like."

"Why, if he's deaf and blind, Angus, he will be no great help."

"Ten gang yersell; petter that than sitting filling yer pig wame wi' whisky."

"You shall have a glass, Angus, when I have tea brought in."

"An' little thanks for it too. It's a small reward for comin' a' this way through the cauld."

"You may go now," said our fat friend, who was now more anxious to get quit of his visitor than he had been for his appearance.

"Teil a pit, teil a pit; no without the glass ye promised."

"Be off, sir--be more respectful to your superiors. I am chief of this clan."

"He's ta chief!" cried old Angus, with a laugh that shot a chill into the gallant chieftain's heart--"he's ta chief, is he? Hu! hu! hu!"

"For goodness' sake, old man, go back to your own room. You shall have a whole bottle; I'll send it to you directly."

"Mak it a gallon, an' I'll gang. Mak it a gallon--it will do for twa days."

"Well, well, you shall have a gallon--only go," urged the now alarmed proprietor; for Angus, perceiving his advantage, went on increasing in his demands, and the self-elected chief began to perceive that his subjects were not so obedient as he had expected; and vague ideas of dirks and drownings occurred hurriedly to his mind.

Angus, however, seemed for this time satisfied with his prize, and resumed his way to the lower regions, muttering and growling as he went, as if he had been a highly injured individual, and leaving the fat gentleman in a very uncomfortable frame of mind.
"Savages!" he murmured to himself; "by dad, we shall all be murdered to a certainty. However, when all my own servants arrive, we shall turn Angus and the blind old man out of the castle, and have things a little better managed than this. But it certainly is very strange my sister does not come! Our new man, Copus, is a stout fellow, and would keep this old rascal Angus in order."

"Fat, in the teil's name, are ye skirlin' there for?" said the sharp voice of that uncourteous seneschal, as he put his shaggy head out of the glassless orifice that served as a window; "are we a' teaf, think ye?"

"Hallo, old feller!" shouted the voice of Copus in reply, "leave off your hinfernial jabber, and open the door, will ye?"

"Open't yersell, and be t--d till ye," screamed the old man; "her's no servant o' your's, I'm thinking."

"William, isn't there never a bell?" inquired Miss Alice.

"Bell!" re-echoed Mr Copus; "no, nor nothing else that a gentleman is acquainted with; so here I thinks, ma'am, we must stay all night, for that 'ere waterfall wont let nobody hear, and the old lunatic, as peeps out of the hole in the wall, don't seem inclined to be civil."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, William, try again--shout as loud as you are able."

"Hillo! hillo! hillo!"

"What's the matter?" exclaimed the voice of the new proprietor himself, at the same moment that his head appeared at the window.

"Here we are, sir," replied Copus, "half-dead with fear and hunger, and yet can't get into our own house for love or money."

"I'll open the door myself," said the chieftain, and putting for the nonce his newly acquired dignity into his pocket, he waddled through the blustering passages, and turned the key with his own hand.

"And this, then, is Ben-na-Groich Castle," sighed Miss Alice, as at length she entered the parlour, leaning on the arm of her niece, and looking round with a dolorous expression that would have furnished a study for a picture of despair.

"Even so," replied her brother, with an attempt at a joyous chuckle that died off into a groan.

"Oh, brother Ben--since Ben-na-Groich you insist on being called--oh, brother Ben, what tempted you to buy such a place as this?--in such a country?--among such hideous people?"

"Partly a bad debt that the late owner was on our books--partly a desire to be a regular chief, and astonish the Huxtables; but cheer up, sister, things will be better in a day or two. We shall all put on our
"Ah, brother!" interposed Miss Alice, "that would have been all very well a short time ago, and it would have been delightful to see you with your henchman, and jellies, and downy-whistles--but 'tis too late now. Oh, brother! we are doomed to destruction. Copus will tell you what he has seen this very day."

"Why, what has he seen?--a ghost? they are very superstitious, and believe in the second sight."

"Oh, first sight is quite enough for us. I saw them myself, though they were at such a distance, I confess, I took them for a flock of sheep."

"Who?--what was it you saw?--speak, Copus." Thus adjured, our travelled friend, with a face from which the expression of alarm had not yet entirely subsided, commenced his narrative.

"This morning, sir, when we first changed 'osses, I gets off the rumble, sir, and leaves Mariar by herself. I goes into the small house while the cattle was a-coming--a lonely place, sir, in the midst of a moor, sir--and says I to the landlady, says I, 'here's a fine day,' says I."

"'Make the most of it,' says she, 'you bid fair never to see another.'"

"'You're wery purlite,' says I; 'I don't think I'm in a dying condition.'"

"'You carry your death-sentence at your breast,' says she, in a hollow voice, like a drum with a hoarseness."

"'What do you elude to,' says I?--and looking at my breast, sir, I seed nothing in life but this here watch-ribbon as you gived me, of your own tartan, you know, sir."

"'Why wear ye the badge of the doomed Ben-na-Groich?' says she; 'know you not that his web is spun?'"

"'There you're misinformed,' says I, 'ma'am; they're all done by machinery.'"

"'Fool,' says she, quite in a passion, 'you've put yourself under a ruined wall, and will be crushed to the dust by the tumble.'"

"'Wrong again,' says I, 'for master has had the whole building repaired.'"

"'Blind mole, you will take no warning; perhaps because you don't believe--see there!' And when I looked in to where she pointed, sure enough I sees ten or a dozen stout chaps all a-sharpening of their swords upon great grinding-stones, at the other end of the house.
"'What's all them fellows arter?' says I.

"'Blood,' says she.

"'Blood and wounds!' says I, 'I never heared such a woman. 'Clect, at Oxford, hearing of an old Roman Catholic lady they called the Civil, as spoke in that 'ere fashion, and was a dealer in books and stationery, but, cuss me, if you doesn't beat her hollow. Whose blood do you mean, ma'am?'

"'His who calls himself Ben-na-Groich.'"

"Oh, brother Thomas, did you ever hear of the like?" shuddered Miss Alice.

"A witch," said the gentleman thus appealed to, with a very unsuccessful effort to appear disdainful. "What more, Copus?--did she say anything else?"

"Lots more, but I've nearly forgotten it."

"How long did this detain you?"

"Oh, he kept us waiting three or four hours," interposed Miss Alice; "and when he came out, he couldn't have been more unsteady if he had been a-drinking."

"Yes, indeed, sir," added Maria, "his manners has been verry extraordinary ever since; he has been either singing songs or sleeping the whole way here."

"The interview was a very strange one. Did any one else see the ten or twelve men?" inquired the chief.

"I seed one of them, sir," replied Maria--"a tall, handsome gentleman, in a green frock coat. He went towards a horse that was tied near a stack of fuel, just at the moment Copus came out."

"Indeed? Did you see him, Copus?"

"Oh yes. I saw a figure something as she describes it. He is the surest sign, the wild woman said, of something awful; they calls him Kickan-drubb."

"How strange!" repeated the chieftain, for the hundredth time--"a regular conspiracy, and nobody here to defend us. The old tiger down-stairs, Angus Mohr, would be the first to kill us if he could, and what is to become of us, Heaven only knows."

"Better let the horses stay at the door, sir; the carriage may be useful," suggested Copus.

"There's no time to be lost, indeed," replied the master; "but yet what would be the use of flying? We are safer here than on the road."
"No, no; let us go, brother Ben--brother Thomas, I mean--for do you know that Fash-na-Cairn has vowed he'll have your life?"

"Who the devil is Fash-na-Cairn? I never did him any harm."

"But his clan has been opposed to Ben-na-Groich for hundreds of years. He'll murder you--and me!--oh dear! oh dear! he'll force me to be Mrs Fash-na-Cairn!" Here Miss Alice, overcome by her horrible imaginings, covered her face with her hands; but whether she wept or not history does not record.

"Will ye no let a poddy sleep, and be d--d till ye?" again screamed the shrill voice of Angus Mohr; "hoo mony mair o' ye southron prutes is coming yammering to the door?"

No answer, apparently, was given to this inquiry, for it was renewed with bitterer tones than before.

"Fat's a' this o't?--wi' swords and targets, an' the Stuart stripe in yer plaids. Are ye come to harry ta auld fat man? huigh! hurra! Cot, an Angus had a dirk himsell, he'd pit it up to the handle in ta fat cairl's wame."

While these words of encouragement or inquiry were issuing from the wrathful native, a hurry of steps was heard upon the stairs--the clank of steel, as if of the crossing of swords, sounded in the passage, and with a shout, Fash-na-Cairn! Fash-na-Cairn! the parlour door was burst open, and six wild figures in the full Highland costume rushed in upon the deliberations of the new chieftain and his household. One of the party seized the arm of Aunt Alice; another, with a flat-sided blow of his claymore, laid our heroic friend Copus quietly on the floor; a third took Jane Somers by the hand as she sat retired in a corner of the room, and kept guard over her during the whole of the scene; while the others placed themselves opposite the astonished Ben-na-Groich himself, and pointed their weapons at his throat without saying a word.

"What do you want, gentlemen?" said that individual, with a tremor in his voice that revealed the conflict within. "I'll give you a cheque for as much as you require--fix your own price! What shall it be?"

"Revenge!" said a hollow voice, proceeding from the chief of the party. "I have you now in my power--the first time after a search of eight hundred years."

"What have I done? I never did you a mischief; if I did, I'm willing to pay damages, assessed by your own surveyor."

"Your ancestor, Fin of the crooked finger, stabbed my ancestor, Kenneth of the flat nose, as he dined with him in this hall in the reign of Fergus the First--give me back his blood."

"Can't, indeed--haven't a drop of it, or any one else's blood; but I will pay the worth of it--only spare my life."
"Fash-na-Cairn may spare, but on one condition--you have a sister."

"Oh no, indeed he hasn't, sir," said Miss Alice, "she died when she was quite a baby."

"Speak, dog," said the ruthless Fash-na-Cairn, kicking Copus as he lay on the carpet; "who is the sister of Ben-na-Groich?"

"That 'ere middle-aged lady with the red nose. That's our Miss Alice."

"She must be Fash-na-Cairn's bride, or the wolf's skin must cover Ben-na-Groich."

"Oh dear, oh dear," sighed the disconsolate lady, "will nothing do but that?"

"Even that won't save him--I see another maiden."

"Oh, I'm sure you are quite welcome to Jane Somers," said Miss Alice; "my brother will give his consent directly--won't you, Thomas?"

"Say the word, and I give you the hand of friendship."

"What word?" asked the sorely puzzled Ben-na-Groich; "I will say whatever is needful."

"Does the maiden herself consent?--Bring hither the fair one of the hill."

Jane Somers was brought forward by her guard.

"Now, Jane," began the Chieftain, "this here gentleman, Mr Fash-na-Cairn, is anxious to marry some one of my family--are you disposed to save me from murder and robbery by giving him your hand?"

"To save you, my dear uncle, from anything unpleasant, there is no sacrifice I would not make."

"There's a dear, good girl," cried the Chieftain, delighted. "Take her; you are very welcome; and when I get home, which will be in three days from this time, I will send you some marriage presents. If you have any fancy for this estate, you shall have it a bargain; in the mean time let the rest of us get into the carriage, and be off as fast as we can. Come, Copus, get up, you lazy hound--we must be off."

"Off or not off, sir, I doesn't budge a foot. I stays with my young missus."

"Very well, only let us out of the house." While preparations were making for a rapid retreat, one of the brigands went up to Jane Somers and whispered, "my carriage is waiting on the bridge. Lady Teysham, and the other ladies at my shooting-box, expect us every moment; so be under no alarm."
Jane bowed her head and yielded to her destiny, and since that time has been as happy a specimen of
the married life as is often to be met with. Ben-na-Groich, on finding out the hoax, was too much afraid
of the ridicule of his friends to make it public; and to this hour, Aunt Alice tells the most wondrous
tales of the lawlessness of the Highlands, and the blood-thirstiness and revenge characteristic of a
Scottish Chieftain. "Only to think of people cherishing a resentment for nearly a thousand years, and
only satisfying it at last by marriage or murder. Oh, Mrs Hobbins, never believe what people says when
they talk to you about the foodle system--the starvation system would be a much better name for it, for
the whole country is made of nothing but heath, and the gentlemen's clothes is no covering from the
cold; and besides all that, they are indelicate to a degree!"----

* * * * *

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