







# LIBERTY HALL,

Oxon.

BY

W. WINWOOD READE.

"Yet may I of all the rest most condemn *Oxford* of unkindnesse, who seemed to weane me before she brought me forth, and to give me bones to gnaw, before I could get the teat to suck. Wherein she played the nice mother in sending me to the country to nurse, where I tyred at a dry breast three yeares, and was at the last enforced to weane myself. But it was destiny, for had I not been gathered from the tree in the bud, I should, being blowne, have proved a blast, and as good it is to be an addled egge, as an idle bird."—EUPHUES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# LIBERTY HALL.

## CHAPTER I.

### M I D N I G H T O I L.

“ALWAYS at work, Proser, always at work ; always poring over these weary books. When I come for a hasty moment while the morning bell is tolling, when I come to see you after our lectures are concluded; when I come at morn, when I come at eve, I find you still absorbed in the same task.

“And when I have put out my candle for the night, and am creeping to my bed, I look always through my window upon the quadrangle

below ; then all voices are silent, all windows are dark and closed, all brains and hearts are at rest, but yours ; for your light is ever to be seen, still, bright and unwavering, like your own indomitable purpose."

"And if it be so, Edward, do not I labour for fame, for honour?"

"You labour for fame? and how? By wasting your time, and your talents upon these corpses of learning, upon these empty, aimless wisdoms, upon these languages from which all the yolk has been blown out and only the poor shell is left, from which the warm flesh has rotted off long ago, and only the bare skeletons remain."

"Ah, my friend, can you not understand that it is not to me you should tell all this. The heads of a European University stand upon the pinnacle of the past and cry : Thus and thus only shall you receive our honours, thus and thus only shall you be crowned by our garlands. O, Edward, this great world is but a poor narrow prison, our jailers set us hard tasks which we must fulfil, and it is only through the narrow gratings

of our cells we catch glimpses of that blue heaven for which we languish, for which we die."

"And yet you live and struggle on."

"Yes, for the Almighty God sends us sun-beams from himself, sun-beams of mercy which glow into and cheer our flagging hearts. You see these bare boards, you see these shelves which hold those books alone that I require, those books torn, and dirty ; you see these clothes so mean and threadbare that I blush when I walk in the gay open streets and hasten by like a thing of shame ; you see this face pale and livid ; you see these eyes so weak that they swim in blood and shed tears unbid ; and feel my hand, it is hot and dry. You see that I shun those who are now so kind, but whose hearts are not with me—and you think me miserable, woe-stricken. But I tell you, Edward, that I am happier than you all ; for while you slumber upon remorse, or regrets, or hot bad hopes, or sour thoughts, I take with me to my bed a good conscience which smiles upon me as I sleep and gives me happy dreams. I work to give my mother bread, I work to

crown myself with glory ; each moment brings me nearer to my goal, each moment lifts me higher from the dirt of ignorance beneath me, and shortens the hours of my mother's want.

“ And now go, for God is shining upon me, and I am selfish, I must have Him fully to myself.”

In the little garret which he called his room, the fireplace jutted out almost to the centre, leaving a deep recess on one side. He had filled this with a table upon which was a crucifix, two wax candles and a missal, and a cushion to kneel on laid before it. The entrance he had covered with a dark red curtain.

The first star of evening, faint and pale glimmered in the western sky. He whispered to himself, it is now vesper time. He approached the mantel-piece upon which was a saucer of blue cut glass, and lighted a cotton wick which lay floating there in its little lake of oil ; then drawing the curtain aside he passed

into his oratory, and knelt on the cushion with hands clasped, and eyes dwelling with pious warmth upon the crucifix before him ; and, as he knelt, by the soft dusk light which streamed in upon his face, you might have seen a heaven-born smile stealing over his thin white lips.

He rose and returned to his fire, before which he stood with hands still folded, and the same peaceful smile remaining on his lips.

Presently the little oil-light faded into a spark. His vespers were over.

His tallow candle burning in front, his cup of strong tea by his elbow, he plunged into his books with fire sparkling from his azure eyes

On that night, too, Edward laboured ; for the days were shortening, the examination was drawing near, and time was gold.

And about midnight he heard a low knock



at his bolted door. He rose and opened. There entered a man who walked with care and labour, yet somewhat edge-ways. His face was blotched, red and purple, his eyes were bloodshot, he bore a large pewter tankard which trembled in his hands.

This man sat down in a chair fronting Saxon and close to the fire. He glared towards him with an air of impenetrable mystery, but did not speak; at length he heaved a deep grunt, and deposited his tankard upon the nearest corner of the table, having previously imbibed therefrom.

“ You are reading for smalls, ain’t you Saxon ?”

“ Yes I am.”

Lushington assumed a posture of serious admonition.

“ Take care they don’t pluck you.”

“ They shan’t if I can help it,” answered he good-humouredly.

Lushington sank his voice into the hoarse cracked whisper of a drunkard.

“ I have been in three times, and they—

the examiners I mean—plucked me every time.”

“Is it possible?” said Saxon, lifting his hands with an air of mingled sympathy and surprise.

Lushington assured him earnestly that he was speaking the truth. Then he drank some more beer, and passed it over to the other, who declined.

“I always carry my own tankard about,” continued he, but without wiping his mouth, “for one cannot depend upon other people having it by them, and it is bad to be without anything to drink.”

“Now, how do you manage at nights?” asked Edward with the tone of a person who is deeply interested in the subject, “even if you have beer from the buttery the last thing before it shuts, it must surely grow very stale and flat before you have finished it.”

Lushington, who was charmed with the turn which the conversation was taking, drank a little more and hugged his chair up to the fire.

“ To prevent my beer from growing flat when it’s in a glass or pewter, I always put a book on the top like a lid ; but I have a better plan than that, I’ve got a small barrel of old ale by my bed-side, and I keep my tooth-mug on the top of it ; so I have only to put my arms out of bed and help myself, in case I should feel thirsty in the night ”

“ That is an excellent plan, an excellent plan ! ”

“ Of course it is ; but the men here are not half up to that sort of thing. Now I am older than you, Saxon : and though I say it myself, I may have had a little more experience than you have had, so let me give you a piece of advice. Don’t drink tea, or you’ll be a monomaniac ; don’t drink water, that’s a good fellow, or you’ll get the gravel ; drink beer, and the more you drink of it the better ; drink tea or water, and you’ll be only a weak sloppy young man ; drink beer and you’ll have a fine broad chest and the constitution of an ostrich—look at me now.”

Lushington as he said this rose, and en-

deavoured to assume an imposing posture ; his legs annoying him, he reseated himself.

“ As for getting drunk that doesn’t matter in the least ; a basin of gruel before going to bed, and up with the lark, up with the lark ; try it my boy,” added he warmly, “ try it.”

“ Thank you,” said Edward rising, “ I shall have an opportunity of taking your advice one of these nights I dare say. Good night.”

“ Good night, good night, and remember the advice I’ve given you about ‘ smalls.’ ”

“ If my chance was no better than yours,” said he to himself.

It was past three o’clock when he shut up his books, and put them back into their shelves, while his eyes watered and his mouth yawned.

“ I’ve never been so late as this before,” thought he, “ there isn’t much doubt that to-night I am the last to retire from the classic field.”

But as he passed into his chamber, he saw through the window a light shining from a garret window as it had shone seven hours before.

## CHAPTER II.

## JOHN OF MAGDALEN.

“We silly soules are only plodders at *Ergo* whose witts are clapt up with our bookes, and so full of learning are wee at home, that wee scarce know good manners when wee come abroad. Cunning in nothing but in making small things great by figures, pulling on with the sweate of our studies a great shoe upon a little foote, burning out one candle in seeking for another, raw worldings in matters of substance, passing wranglers in matters of nought.”—JOHN LILLY.

“O, they are sad Brutes, your Fellows of Colleges are a Parcel of sad, muzzy, humdrum, lazy, ignorant old Caterpillars.”—HUMOURS OF OXFORD.

SAXON of Magdalen was christened Gilbert by the friends of his infancy, and ‘John’ by the acquaintances of his manhood.

I should have introduced him earlier, only cousin Edward, by ignoring him, has not

allowed me to do so. Like every hero in real life, and the pages of a truthful historian, he neglected his relatives till he wanted to make use of them.

Gilbert, oddly enough, gave his sanction to this course of proceeding: or indeed he made the first advances, for one bright morning as Saxon of Liberty Hall was raking his brains for a loop-hole by which he might creep into intimacy with his cousin, he received a note from that ill-used party, enclosing two orders for Magdalen College Chapel for the following Sunday, and an offer to 'coach' or tutor him, in what he chose, for as long as he chose.

They met, and took to each other: Edward read hard, John respected him: Edward had a talent for music, John revered him; they liked each other, nursed this like into love and finally from chilly enemies, (i. e. mere relations) became warm and loving friends.\*

It was a Thursday night. John Saxon was

\* A fact.

sitting by his fireside in a fine suite of rooms in the New Buildings.

These rooms he had furnished in a manner at once tasteful and eccentric—adjectives contrarious, but not incompatible.

As in this case they had not been disgraced by the upholsterer, and disfigured by the inmates. There were none of those incongruities, which usually preside in collegiate apartments. Wall-paper, curtains, and carpet were of the same warm crimson hue, relieved from sameness by a choice variety of surface patterns.

The furniture, of a dark tinted wood, had been made of old chapel-oak, carried off from the holy building by the current of repairs and latter day revivals, and nobly rescued by Saxon from the dirt and oblivion of the wheelwright's yard.

The walls were hung with portraits of those men who had shed glory upon Magdalen, from the Middle Ages to the present era. Besides these, there were a great many views of the college under its various aspects. Now you saw the long white edifice which beamed upon

the Park, and the splendid elms, and the green turf, and the spotted deer. Now you stood in the distant walk, catching one delicious little glimpse of the noble pile through the bowering leaves. Or now in the small dark quadrangle you were buried in the great deep shadows which fell from the black ominous buildings that encircled you.

The very bookstands, and mantel ornaments had been bought from the collection of the late President, and this lent them a charm in the eyes of the enthusiast who possessed them.

Now he sat over his fire thinking to himself. At the other end of the room it was quite dark; but here the struggling flames shed round him a soft and fitful twilight.

He started: the great clock from the tower was striking eight.

As the last stroke died, a tap like its faint echo sounded on the door, and Edward came in his gown hanging over his arm, and his boots muffled up inside.

“I am punctual, John.”

“You mean that you are remorseless.”



"You have been asleep?"

"No I have been dreaming with my eyes open."

"Ah," said Edward, putting down his books with an air of triumph; "I know what you were dreaming about?"

"Well, what was it?"

"Your poem on Pointed Architecture."

"You are a sorcerer: now try to predict your own fate for Tuesday fortnight."

At the first half of the sentence, Edward rubbed his hands gleefully; at the second he folded them into something which resembled doubt.

"I wish I could."

"If you work very very hard, perhaps I could turn prophet too."

"Must I work harder than I do now?"

Saxon looked earnestly at his young cousin's face; the fire just then having conquered a knob of coal, blazed up a little: by this light he saw that the cheeks were sallow, the eyes dead, and that the forehead was already wrinkled with care and midnight toil.

"I do not wish you to overdo it; only mind

this : when you are over your books work like a man : when you are not over them, play like a school-boy. How do you divide your day ?”

“ I get up at half past six, and take a good long walk before chapel : I am not obliged to go to any lectures : they are very good to me about that, so I can always do a large forenoon’s work, and an hour with Crammard besides. After two, Rauch who says he is determined to see after my health, though he never looked into a doctor’s book in his life, makes me go another long walk with him, and tells me stories all the while to keep me in good spirits. Then after dinner I read from four to seven hours, counting these with you.”

“ You never read before breakfast ?”

“ Never.”

“ That is right : it is the greatest mistake in the world, to feed the brain before you feed the stomach. And you should not sit up too late at night.” .

“ My great comfort is that Dryjaw makes sure of my success : he never lets a day go by without telling me that I ‘ shall be plucked,

miserably plucked, Mr. Saxon, take my word for it.' ”

“ That is good : and this is better. Enter the tea.”

A boy came in with a white apron on his person, and an earthenware tea-pot in his hand, also a dish with a pewter cover ; he placed these on the table, fetched two cups, saucers and plates from the cupboard, arranged them, sighed, and departed.

They each drank some tea : Edward lifted the cover from the pewter dish, and beheld a pile of buttered toast : he walked into this, his mouth full and silent, but his eyes speaking gratitude.

“ We will put the rest into the grate,” said he, “ and keep it warm. Now to work.”

“ Where did we leave off in the Eneid ? fourth book, 522nd line, wasn't it ? read a bit first, please.” Edward obeyed.

“ Nox erat, et placidum fessa soporem  
Corpora per terras, sylvæque et scæva quiêrant  
Æquora : cùm medio volvuntur sidera lapsu ;  
Cùm tacet omnis ager, pecudes, pictæque volucres,  
Quæque lacus latè liquidos, quæque aspera dumis

Rura lenent, somno positæ sub nocte silenti  
Lenibant curas, et corda oblita laborum.  
At non infelix animi Phænissa; neque unquam  
Solvitur in somnos, oculisse aut pectore noctem  
Accipit; ingeminant curæ rursusque resurgens  
Sævitur amor, magnoque irarum fluctuat æstu."

"Very well so far; no false quantities; now construe."

*"It was night; when throughout the earth the weary slept, the woods were silent, the wild waters were at rest; when the stars were rolling midway in their gliding course; when the flocks were crouched in their peaceful meads, and the gorgeous-plumed birds on the broad surface of the shining lake, in the deep recesses of the lowering shrubs, were sleeping, their cares allayed, and their toils nursed into sweet oblivion.*

*"All but the wretched Dido: ne'er through the long night doth sleep descend on her aching eyelids, on her tired heart: her cares redouble: love surging within rages wildly and whirls along like a torrent with its hot seething waves.—There!"*

"There! yes, it is, there! you'll be plucked,

young man," said John sternly, and shutting up the book.

Edward answered him with a frantic stare.

"If you construe like that in the schools, they'll say you have been and got it all out of a crib; you must do it literally word for word. That poetic style is very pretty in a blue stocking's album, or a penny weekly; but it won't pay in the schools."

"Virgil is poetry, isn't it?"

"Yes it is; but that's got nothing to do with it, I tell you; you must knead all this high flown Latin, into the dullest and soberest of English prose, if you have any anxiety about a Testamur. Now if I had been doing that piece, I should have read it this way.

*"It was night, and the wearied bodies through the earths were enjoying a calm sleep, and the woods, and the savage waters were quiet: when the stars roll in middle gliding: when every field is silent, the flocks and the painted birds which inhabit far and wide the liquid lakes, which (inhabit—understood, say) the (fields—understood, say) rough with bushes*

*lying under the silent night, were calming their cares with sleep, and hearts forgetful of labours. But not the Phœnician unhappy of mind: nor ever is she loosed in sleep, or receives the night to her eyes or breast; her cares redouble, and again rising anew love is stern, and rolls with a great tide of anger."*

"But that's not grammar."

"Mind your Latin grammar, show you understand the construction of the sentences, after which you are at liberty to make as many English blunders as you choose."

"Then I must screw up courage to murder poor Publius Virgilius?"

"Yes, or to commit suicide; one of you must perish Tuesday fortnight. Who's that at the door?—O the physician—you can't come in."

"The fact speaks the other way," said the new arrival warming himself before the fire.

"Rauch," said John Saxon, in mild but firm accents, "when somebody erected these rooms with many others in the year of Grace I don't know when: he made the door in the corner farthest from the east window; you will

find it just behind you, turn the handle, pull towards, pass, and the Lord be with you."

"Amen ; but speaking of architecture, reminds me that I have a few ideas by me, which you may find of use to you in your poem when you can spare time to hear them."

John looked at Edward ; Edward smiled.

"Ted I hand him over into your hands."

"And I hope he will hand the toast over into mine."

"I will turn the leaf down, and we will go on with our work presently."

"I don't like to see you working so hard for an Oxford examination," said Rauch, "it is not worth the stake, believe me. You are looking very pale and careworn ; and good God how thin he is ; John, look here ; you can feel his ribs as plain as can be."

"I always make a practice of counting them," said Edward, smiling, "when I am undressing, it is the last sum I do before I go to bed."

"John Saxon, you ought not to encourage him in this imprudence. Teddy, my dear fellow, you are killing yourself ; why in the name of

all patience should you work so hard as this ? you have plenty of time before you."

" My father has set his heart upon my passing before Christmas," said the boy simply, " and I wish to please him."

Rauch felt more than half inclined to observe that the father's wish was less wise than peremptory, and the son's conduct more filial than prudent ; however, he remembered that there was only one fortnight more, so changed the subject.

" This toast is not so bad," said he, taking another slice.

" It is only Magdalen toast," said John, " that is at all eatable when lukewarm, only Magdalen toast that can be called really delicious. College cooks know too little, and pastry cooks too much to equal us in this, and, indeed, in most other culinary points."

" Puffing up your own college as usual."

" So would you, my physician, if you belonged to it."

" Perhaps so ; every bird thinks its own nest beautiful : the farmer for his land, the sailor



for his ship, the soldier for his regiment, and the collegian for his college. Now, as I do not belong to Magdalen College, I look upon it in a full-fronted dispassionate light."

"Not being a member of this college, you do not enjoy its blessed privileges."

"What! have I not read novels in your groves, angled in your streams, played at bowls on your lawns, shot rooks in your park, dozed in your chapel, dined in your Hall, and (pass the plate, please) become almost a glutton on your buttered toast?"

"You told us the other day that the Hindoos have no word in their language for *gratitude*; ah, Rauch, the words of your mouth are English, but I fear that the language of your heart is only the language of those poor Indians. You have enjoyed all our bounties and you revile us."

"Yes, for I have sat in your Common rooms, and have drunk your bad wine till my palate has grown dead, and listened to your bad jokes till my ears have tingled to their inmost drums. Then as for the conversation—pah! it was music, music, music, till I sickened at the very

sound. First you hear everybody ask everybody: *How did you like the service this evening?* Having performed that important duty, everybody discusses the musical talent of everybody everybody knows. If he plays well, or sings well he is an angel, a gentlemanly fellow, a most desirable acquaintance. If he has no voice, or no talent for squalling and strumming, he is an idiot, a snob, a man with nothing in him, and with no resources of any kind whatever."

"If the only fault of Magdalen consists in their having a taste for music—" began Edward.

"A pursuit or pleasure, however innocent in itself, becomes a crime when it is carried to excess. I love music myself, I love it as the noblest, the sublimest of the fine arts; but in the first place I question very much whether it is music that these men worship, and in the second place they go to such absurd lengths. They are so full of music themselves, that they want to be sick over all their friends. Perhaps you will not believe me, Edward, when I tell you that Tuneful, the Secretary of the

Amateur Society and a Demi of this place, called upon a freshman and asked him to belong to the Amateur, and also to the College Glee Meetings. The freshman declined belonging or subscribing to either, alleging that he did not care a fig for music, and could not take the slightest interest in any matters connected with it. Tuneful then said that if he did not care for music, he oughtn't to have come to this college, and recommended him to leave it as soon as possible, as he would find himself in the very worst odour if he remained."

"I think Tuneful was quite justified in speaking as he did," said stubborn John, "Magdalen is known to be a musical college. When you walk in the cloisters you hear the faint notes of a hundred instruments murmuring to you through the walls; if you enter our rooms you are received by voices which chant a welcome they do not deign to speak. I have known a tutor stop in his lecture to listen to the chapel organ sounded by some stranger hand. I have known the wildest supper party hushed to the silence of the tomb on hearing

a hymn carolled forth in an adjoining room. From the aged president to the infant chorister we all love music here. It is music that cements us together, and fills up those chasms which in other colleges exist between Fellows and Undergraduates. The same heavenly, fire-like passion burns in all our bosoms, and we join our hearts in brotherly love as we mingle our voices in our songs to God."

Rauch was baffled but not defeated.

"Tell me whom you can boast of," he cried, "Undergraduates are swallows, butterflies, birds of passage, who perch for a few months, and then disappear; wretched insects who flutter in the sun for a few hours, then die, and are heard of no more; but name me one of your men who may be said to have raised himself above the miserable standard of the Oxford dons."

"I can name several. Elliot, one of the greatest botanists in England, D'Eye, an entomologist of no mean fame, and above all, James Walesby, whose researches in the mysteries of Gothic architecture, have thrown so much light

upon this interesting science, a light reflected into double brilliancy upon his own head, and upon the college which so proudly owns him."

"What men are these? Industrious ciphers, men who have ridden their hobbies a little longer and a little harder than the rest of the world; men who have always had time and money at their command, and fine libraries at their elbow bones. I give them credit for industry and perseverance, but I cannot reverence their motives; I cannot even allow them credit for the narrow reputations which they thus obtain. They have had few, if any rivals, to compete with, few if any difficulties to fight against. There are not many people who care about devoting their whole lives to find out the number of bones in a blue-bottle, or the exact age of a rotten wall, still fewer who care to publish the fruits of their valuable labours. These men are compilers, I cannot call them great: no, give me the man who places himself in some noble useful path, who struggles through a struggling throng, and rises above them all;

who earns an immortal reputation from the world as a great genius, as a good man. Such a one you have, though it is not likely you will recognise the portrait; giants do not stoop to crawl into kennels, so the kennels know them not; eagles will not mingle with house-top sparrows, and the sparrows have eyes which cannot reach to the clouds."

"You do not like the Oxford dons?" said Edward.

Rauch gulped down the rest of his tea, and set down the cup in the saucer, with a crash.

"If there is anything which I can at the same time hate and despise, it is an Oxford don; I despise him as a mean crawling worm compared with the rest of mankind; I hate him as a poisoned hissing serpent, in whose power so many destinies are thrown. Go to their Common rooms, and hear them talk after dinner, where they eat like swine; hear their vapid sentiments, their imbecile remarks; look at their faces, bloated and sensual, or see them in their Lecture rooms, ignorant, stupid, cowardly and brutal; put yourselves in their power, and pray to

their cold bare hearts for pity and forgiveness."

"Rauch, you exaggerate, why should they be so bad? why worse than other men?"

"I will tell you—it is *Power*. It was unlimited power that created tyrants in the days of ancient Rome. It is unlimited power that creates tyrants in this modern Babylon of our own. Two men are appointed every year to wear gowns with black velvet sleeves, and to suppress vice in the University of Oxford; these men hold our fates in their hands; for a slight peccadillo they can debar us from entering the professions, they can keep the bread from our mouths, and mar our prospects for our whole life-times. The powers of these men, I say again, are unlimited; from their decision there is no appeal. They can enter any house in this town at any hour, and search it from garret roof to cellar floor; they can bury any poor woman in a prison if they simply find her in the streets; they can discommons any shop-keeper

for any length of time they may think proper to appoint ; they can expel us, the sons of gentlemen, from the University, and so ruin and disgrace us for ever. From their judgment there is no appeal. And would you wish to persuade me that these men are never despots, unjust, tyrannical, and sometimes worse than that. I have heard stories since I have been here, and you must have heard them too, which have made my blood turn cold in my veins, and then boil with anger and with shame."

"I do not see how it can be remedied."

"But I can ; let there be a regular court held for the trial of University offences, let there be a bench of judges, or a sworn jury ; let the Proctors be the informers and the witnesses, not as they are now, at once the accusers, the judges, and the executioners."

"That sounds very pretty," answered John, "but as long as Proctors have private friends to be kind to, and private enemies to be revenged on, our systems will never be allowed to change."

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Edward left the room for a few moments, Rauch tapped Saxon on the shoulder.

“There are only two weeks more, is this fellow going to pass?”

“He has had a great deal to go over, for he has been idle at school, and has had to get all his Greek back, which has so monopolised his time that he hasn’t been able to give much attention to his Latin Prose; but he has great talents, great application, and better still, is not too self-confident, so taking him in the lump of all the men I know, he is just *the* most sure of his testamur.”

“Sure of it, is he?”

“Cock sure of it, unless you tell him so.”

## CHAPTER III.

## L I T T L E   G O .

“ Tables were here, tables were there,  
Tables were all around.  
The men that sat, those tables at,  
Seemed spectres in a swoond.

“ Paper, paper, everywhere  
And all our hearts did shrink,  
Paper, paper, everywhere,  
Paper, and pens, and ink.”

THE RIME OF THE OXFORD BACCALORE.

ON Tuesday, Messrs Lushington, Saxon, Pooley and Proser, repaired to the apartments of the Junior Proctor, displayed certificates, payed sovereigns, and saw their names inscribed in a large book.

On Thursday, long white sheets were pasted up in the Butteries of all the Colleges and Halls,

with the printed names of the candidates for trial.

And on the following Monday by nine o'clock, the quadrangle of the School Houses, usually so dreary and deserted, was crammed from wall to wall with the Little Go men and their friends, now only waiting for the examiners to arrive, and the doors to be thrown open.

Those that were in for examination were to be distinguished by their white ties and bands; most of them were surrounded by knots of acquaintances who showed their sympathy by accompanying them to the fatal porch; most of them were laughing and talking loudly, with a cheerfulness real or affected. But there were a few who did not attempt to disguise their anxiety, as they walked to and fro, thinking deeply to themselves, with drooped head and abstracted mien, or conversing earnestly with a single companion. These were men whose prospects in life depended upon their success in this examination; the idle scholar who if he should be plucked, would lose the fruit of his previous industry, the fellowship and living in

expectancy, or the wild young man who will be dismissed from his college, and scouted by his relations.

The four Liberty Hall men were leaning against the wall on the north side, (Proser a little apart from the rest) a semicircle of Liberty Hall and out-college men drawn round them.

They were discussing their respective probabilities of success; discussion among fast young Oxonians is equivalent to a gambling transaction. Pooley had his pocket-book out, and was making his bets as freely as if there was no examination coming on. He sucked his pencil every now and then, and made entries in a short hand of his own.

The betting was three to one on Saxon, and few takers, evens on Pooley, taken freely, and six to one against Lushinton. Proser was so safe a pass that the longest odds were refused.

Pooley had risen in the market owing to his assiduity of the last fortnight. Among other contrivances to keep himself in-doors, he had ordered a suit of red flannel which he wore whenever he

was reading. These spurts just before examination signally fail as a rule, but his backers who were chiefly made up of those who had lost money to him, hoped that his talents would this time be crowned with fruits pleasant to himself, lucrative to them.

Business over, Pooley occupied himself in pointing out to Saxon some of the celebrities of the University, and recognised with a fiendish glee many fellow unfortunates among the crowd.

“That gentleman-commoner over there, d’ye see the one I mean, that big-whiskered fellow talking to the tuft, I rather fancy he’s one ahead of me, but we both went in under the old system, I know. He’s the best whip in the University, and always gives a supper when he’s plucked, a philosophical idea which I shall also adopt if these examiners—”

“You have been in a great many times, haven’t you?”

“Seven, and a deal of money—it has cost me.”

“Cheer up,” said Rauch, “a drop will wear away a stone in time.”

“They ought to let a man off paying after the

third time plucked," said Lushington, who was going in for his fourth.

"Yes, and give him his money back when he scratches; bah! I've got the taste of one of Martin's wretched cigars in my mouth; I'll stick to Bacon in future; but I must wipe my mouth out; now, Lushington, what's it to be?"

"Port wine," he answered, producing a huge flask, "but don't take much please; I only thought of bringing enough for myself; port, by the bye, is the best thing to work on."

"I've got a bottle of cold tea in my pocket," said Saxon, "port wine sends one to sleep."

"And tea to the fidgets."

"Port wine heats the brain."

"And cold tea burns the stomach."

After these two rejoinders, the odds against Lushington visibly decreased, but those who were acquainted with his habits knew that by nine o'clock in the morning he was always in that stage of intoxication which brightens the dullest intellect for a short time, and endows

the subject with boundless powers of temporary repartee.

A great rustle ran through the crowd, and all standing still looked in one direction, while two middle-aged men in black gowns with red hoods, and with rolls of paper in their hands, passed through and entered in at a small door, followed by about half the white ties and bands.

"Here come our two men," cried Pooley, "Junior they say, isn't a bad lot; the other nobody seems to know anything about. Now we follow them."

Edward staid behind to have a few more cheering words from his cousin, whose hand he pressed as he hurried away.

This infringement of college etiquette did not pass unnoticed by a group of bystanders, who turned up their noses in disgust, and whispered to each other with scowls and frowns.

The Writing School was long, spacious, and dreary, its furniture plain, its windows barred.

At the upper end a daïs, upon this a table, with the inquisitorial chair plunged into a recess that was rounded off in the pale wainscot. Here sits, Doge-like, the Senior Examiner, till, tired of the posture, he joins his colleague in restless wanderings on the planked floor, sometimes prying over the shoulders of those whose quill-driving is fast enough to be suspicious.

In the middle was a large table covered with a dark blue cloth, two rows of well-bound books, and assortments of blue paper.

Down each side of the room a row of diminutive four-legged deal tables, a couple of quills, a few sheets of foolscap, one of red blotting paper, and a Windsor chair appertaining.

One table for one man only: to prevent copying.

All seated, the Junior Examiner, called over the list of names: and all answerd, *here*.

Then he distributed to each a printed paper. It was Euclid. .

Edward gazed on the paper without seeing it at first: his heart fluttered, and his hand shook a little, as he wrote down his name at



the top of his sheet : but this soon passed away, and he read all the questions over to himself. He smiled and rubbed his hands as he did so, for he saw in a moment that it was all right : he was certain that he knew nearly every one of the propositions.

The first hour of a first examination is charming, if all runs smoothly without hitches or perplexity ; the work, however, dull and mechanical in itself, is freshened into an actual excitement by the novelty of association, and the yearning for success.

So during the first hour, Saxon paid the greatest attention to the stiffness of his handwriting, and to the accurate proportions of his mathematical figures ; the second, the gilt beginning to wear off, he contented himself with legibility in handwriting, and great care in avoiding important mistakes.

Before the third hour had passed, he had worked himself into indifference and happiness at the same time : he had finished eight out of the twelve questions, and seven would have been sufficient to pass him : he had finished all

the foolscap they had given him : the Junior Examiner brought two sheets more, glancing with an eye of approbation on the close written blue. The Senior Examiner looked at him sternly from the dais, from beneath his black shaggy eye brows.

His hands ache a little, and so does his brain, and so do his eyes, but his heart is so light that he doesn't mind ; and he dips his pen into the ink before him, as gaily as if it was not for the hundreth time ; and in three quarters of an hour he collects his papers to give them to the examiners.

As he did this, he observed a young gownsman who, seated at a table near the door, was watching those papers with eyes in which envy and sorrow struggled turn by turn. Before him was a sheet of foolscap on which only a few lines were written : for three long hours he had sat over the empty paper thumbing his brain, racking it with tearful thoughts, but all, all in vain.

Edward had known him once, but had lately been compelled to give up his acquaintance : it was Cadman of Wadham.

He disliked the man, yet pitied him. He gave him this compassion in a look, for he might not speak.

Poor fellow, thought he, he sees himself condemned by the first witness which is called, he falls at the very out-set of his race, plucked and lost before the first forenoon is past.

As he went out, he saw him with his head bowed down, and his face buried in his arm.

Let us leave with Edward this great dreary room with its crowd of young faces, ardent or gay, callous or depressed, its crowd of young hearts, which now throb beneath the first trials of their lives.

Let us leave them all with their busy pens, and busy thoughts, with their paper ever writing, their heads ever stooped, and the stern black-robed men striding ever to and fro.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE OLD WOMAN IN THE RED CLOAK.

"For Mr. Flashman was a person in whom most truly was manifested a natural strength of head, whereon he was worthy of admiration beyond any other man of his college."

ART OF PLUCK.

WHEN a man wishes to reduce reflection to profundity, it is difficult to say what posture it is best for him to assume. Some invoke the grand idea as they stand, some sit over it, some lie upon it, and some try it walking.

Pooley, I must tell you, had puzzled himself into a shade, having first walked himself into a skeleton.

He walked up and down his wretched little pigeon loft with the air and emotions of a hyæna: he pivoted round and round the table like the revived genius of peripatetic philosophy: he

twined himself in and out, and between the crevices afforded him by his furniture with a skill which small room practice had exalted to perfection.

He sauntered in the walks which line the Cherwell and the Water Meadows : he crept under the warm Dead Man's Wall in company with those poor old wasted creatures, who find beneath it their lone little bit of winter sunshine.

He walked up the crowded street : he walked down the dusty road ; he walked all day waking, and even half the night while asleep.

But it still remained dark.

Then he thought, sitting. He relapsed into brown studies at dinner-time, till everybody laughed at him, and talked of sconcing. Often would the scout, when he came to clear away breakfast, surprise him in his arm-chair and his dressing gown, arms folded, lips pursed, eyes cast upwards to the whites, coffee cold, and commons untasted.

He thought much when he was reading, especially over the hated Medea, and when he

was smoking, he would sit for hours and hours enveloped in the blue atmosphere of his great German pipe, and his slippered feet planted against the opposite hobs.

After this, he stood while he thought. Sometimes propping himself against a wall, his eyes following his thoughts into the clouds above him ; sometimes gazing only on the bare trees and the fields flooded with winter rain. Sometimes blinking so earnestly upon certain windows that he was accused of carrying on eye-flirtations with damsels therein, and was compelled to protest his unhappy innocence. But most times of all standing before his own little fire which crackled so merrily in its own little grate, as if the coals were splitting their sides with laughter at him : his shoulders resting on the narrow edge of the mantel-piece, his coat-tails parted behind (like Maidlow's hair) and tucked softly under his arms : his hands immured into the warm depths of his breeches pockets. And thus, till his legs grew tired, or his trowsers as if frightened by the heat clung from it to his reddening flesh.

Still without the slightest reward ; ideas did not come, or else in such a fluttering, shadowy, will-o-the-wisp style that they only served to turn his Cimmerian obscurity into Egyptian darkness, and his tangled skein into a Gordian Knot.

Yet Pooley was no dunce ; men who have been very often plucked at college seldom are ; he had a head for mathematics, and a genius for figures which made itself known to his friends now and then with rather forcible applications ; his book on the Derby was sufficient to entitle him the Euclid of the Turf ; at short whist he could remember every card as it was played ; every gambling book he could lay hold of he thumbed into dirt and dog's ears, he knew Hoyle by heart, and had made gigantic progress in the Theory of Chances.

But thinking is very hard, and very disagreeable and very difficult work, when you have no materials to work with,

Pooley was trying to build a palace of bricks, but he hadn't yet found the straw ; afterwards to his genius all would be easy, but the straw

was indispensable, and the straw he couldn't find.

As these fits of thought had first attacked him (perceptibly at least) about a fortnight before his examination, people could not but ascribe it to Little Go anxiety, though his evident callousness on the subject, and his previous rebuffs soon rendered this supposition untenable.

So he continued to puzzle others as well as himself, till one cold bright morning when the third day's hard frost covered the panes with grotesque and silver traceries, and the chapel-bell recalled him from the dreamland of gold to the whity-brown realities and duties of college life.

He was rather disgusted, and in a spirit of sulky revenge determined to keep where he was. No revenge could be pleasanter ; the bed was warm, the chapel cold ; he thought of his frozen towel and clean shirt and toilette ; the bare idea freezed him to the marrow. When the scout hammered at the door, and said "Close



upon chapel, Sir," Pooley half rose through force of habit; but when the scout said "Hice his three hitches, Sir," nature prevailed, and he sank back with relief. His good spirit whispered about duty and propriety till he almost got up, but his bad flesh whispered about the icy boots that he would have to put on, and the blue fingers that would have to be blown over the big prayer-book, so he only relapsed into greater cosiness than before; once more he remembered the kind jobation of last term and he sighed and was actually about to spring; but as he sighed such a cloud of steam ascended from his mouth that he changed it into a yawn, and twined his legs under the soft counterpane which he pulled a little nearer his throat with a sense of treble-refined comfort.

While thus lying, his eyes blinking on the frost-images before him, his brain simmering, his thoughts flitting after the old chimera returned to him radiant, and, fired with the heavenly spark, *It came*, and he laid there still while the welcome embryo was merging into perfect form.

On the next morning the frost was stronger than ever, and Plumper oddly enough was carried off by the chapel fever too. But at Chistchurch they are more strict than at Liberty Hall. Plumper found himself obliged to tell a fashionable lie, and to make his scout write him down *æger* (Latin for sick) in the college books.

However this did not interrupt the daily flow of beefsteak and bitter beer entries in the kitchen and buttery accounts.

He got up at a luxurious hour, and breakfasted substantially; this was very pleasant; but his punishment soon came in its old shape—ennui.

He had just passed Moderations and could not bring himself to study; reading as a recreation was one of those things that he did not understand; his *æger* prevented him from going outside the gates, and it was of no use calling on his acquaintances at that hour, lectures and private coaches being in full swing. He had fired away all the ammunition of his

saloon pistols, and both his terriers were at the stables, or he might have taught them tricks.

He sat at the window with his pipe and his pewter ; he did not find the prospect cheerful ; the dark grey walls in front, and the stooped heads through the lecture room window, and the white snow on the ground ; he also discovered that beer and tobacco are companions which may enliven one at first but eventually tend to stupefaction.

“ Pooley will soon be here, that is one comfort,” he muttered, “ I told him yesterday I meant doing an *æger* and he said he would come and play cribbage at twelve, and he’s the last man in the world to break a sporting engagement. Only eleven ! ah ! I wish he was here now.”

With a sigh that could only have been heaved from the heart of a great man, Plumper looked out of window again, and as his eyes fell on the group of loungers clustered at all hours round Tom Gate ; he observed that they were observing something very intently, and he stretched himself back to the farther side of

the window to arrive at a more convenient angle of perspective.

Then he burst out laughing.

An old woman in a red cloak which had almost faded into brown, was hobbling slowly along towards the pond in the middle of the quadrangle:

The pond was ankle-deep in snow; the old woman advanced to its very centre, then producing a broom as stunted and withered as herself from under her cloak, began sweeping the snow away from right to left.

Plumper did not laugh now: he watched this lady of the lake with a singular curiosity, and buried his chin in his enormous hand.

“This is odd,” thought he, “the day before yesterday our Dean puts up a notice in Hall, ‘*no gentleman will be allowed to skate on the pond in the quadrangle,*’ and now a woman comes to sweep the snow off. Hang me if I understand it.”

Plumper’s uneasiness increased every moment till at last he could no longer restrain himself. Exchanging his dressing gown for a shooting

coat, and clapping his square cap on his head, he rushed down the stairs which creaked beneath his weight; down some stone steps, along a gravel walk on the pond and up close to the old woman.

“Who?” said he.

She continued sweeping.

He recollected that the eyes of the old, not their ears are to be questioned. He tapped her on the shoulder.

She stopped and looked round at him. A thick handkerchief was bandaged round the sides of her face covering her mouth, and tied almost stylishly under her chin, her eyes were sharp and bright, her nose a fine aquiline, her skin rather dirty but delicate beneath.

One would have thought her young to have seen her thus, were it not for her stooped shoulders, and a grey lock of hair which had straggled on to her forehead.

She chopped her eyes on the proffered half-crown, jerked herself round with an air of ferocity and contempt, and proceeded with her work.

He tapped her on the other shoulder ; ten shillings reposed in the palm of his hand. This time she scarcely noticed it, but gave her whole attention to an obstinate lump of snow which she was trying to hook out of a crevice in the ice.

Plumper paused : that very morning he had told a poor bookbinder on the point of bankruptcy that he could not pay his 17*s.* 6*d.*—pooh ! let him go to jail, and his seven motherless children to the workhouse or the kennel.

He held up a sovereign bright from the Mint before her eyes. “ Who is it *now* ? ”

“ Hoosh ! hoosh ! ” croaked the old jade in a whisper hoarse with cold and gin ; while she snatched the money and carried it to her pocket, displaying as she did so a ragged black petticoat almost to the strings—“ Who is it ? ” repeated he.

She still swept on, but jerked the end of the broom-handle towards the Dean’s house.

“ Not *him* ? ”

“ As sure as ye be born.”

“ When ? ”

“When ye’re all in yer beds, and asleep, ar coorse.”

He sprang back to his rooms, darting a look of triumph over his shoulder at the window of the lecture room.

She finished her task in ten minutes more with a speed that did credit to her years: though as scout Thomas whispered to porter Charles, “She didn’t handle her broom as should be.”

Just as she disappeared through the gate, thirty students poured out of the Dean’s door, released from lecture.

Twelve o’clock struck five minutes afterwards.

As the last stroke was tolling, Pooley in cap and gown entered Plumper’s rooms.

“You are looking very happy for a sick man,” said he.

“I was terribly in the blues five minutes ago: but sit down by the fire, you must be cold: here’s the board and the cards: I was almost afraid you wouldn’t come, do you know.”

“Why?”

“Can’t say, except that I particularly wished you to : and when I want anything very bad, I don’t generally get it.”

“O when there’s a chance of my winning any money, I’m certain.”

“Nothing certain in this world but death and taxes, old boy—and by the bye, I mean to have a haul on you—my fifteen to one.”

“What fifteen to one?”

“Why about your hoaxing Christchurch college or something : O here it is in my note book. *That Mr. Pooley do not hoax half Christchurch, and make the other half split their sides.*”

Pooley did not say anything, but dealt the cards a little quicker than before.

“Money’s due in three weeks,” added the other in a tone of malice.

Pooley banged the last card upon the table, flat beneath his hand. “I made that bet, Plumper, on the strength of my own beer : I never considered myself a fool up to the morning after I did it, but I did then, and though



I have been trying to get rid of the impression ever since, I find it difficult to do so."

"It was Rauch's fault : but never mind, with your long head, and light hand, you won't be long picking yourself up again. Suppose you should win though, my ! what a draw !"

"Im-poss-i-ble," drawled Pooley, making the syllables as long as his own woful face.

"I don't see how you can do it either : there, that's the second pound I've lost this morning. I must stop."

"The second ! who did you lose the other to ?"

"Ha ! ha ! you'd never guess ; but it was a very different antagonist from yourself, I will say so much. That reminds me ; you must come to supper with me to-night."

"I'm afraid I can't ; going to Dryjaw's tea, toast and turn out."

"You will lose a splendid entertainment I've got in store for you."

"Of course," said Pooley, with an air of resignation, "that is invariably the case ; I've never gone to a dinner with Robson, or a free-and-easy at the old Principal's, or to one

of these blessed missionary tea-fights, without losing the pleasantest party of the term."

"You would kill yourself with laughing."

"Then I'll stay at home and live; but what time is the affair to come off," added he, rather anxiously, "eleven?"

"Yes, I should think about eleven; but what made you guess eleven?"

"O, I don't know, except that's the usual hour for Christchurch larks to rise and sing, isn't it; now good bye; who can tell, I may be able to join you at eleven after all."

There was a very funny little smile on his lips as he said this.

\* \* \* \*

It was late at night, the moon was high in the cloudless heaven, the snow sparkled in its rays, the great lamp on Tom Gate threw a glare on the black steel-like ice, the quadrangle was still as a house of death; but under one side was a deep wide shadow.

The door of the Dean's house was opened softly, and a figure in square cap and gown hanging on his arm, stept silently across the

snow to the water's edge. There he took something from beneath the gown; the latter spreading on the ground he sat upon; the former he appended to his feet.

In five minutes he rose, staggered on to the pond, and glided two or three times round the ice, which creaked and murmured beneath him.

Suddenly a thunder-rattle of clapped hands, a rush of I do not know how many men, but half the college certainly, from the dark wall-shadow, and tumultuous cries of, "Well skated Mr. Dean, well skated Mr. Dean."

The phantom pulled up, like a human petrefaction upon skates; it tore a handkerchief from before its mouth, and shouted out in a stentorian voice, as unlike the shrill accents of the Dean as the hoarse tones of the old woman in the red cloak.

*"Hoaxed you all!"*

## CHAPTER V.

## B A T T L E - E V E .

“I WOULD not read hard to-night if I were you, Edward, it is a very bad plan ; besides, if you are not to have second papers in your mathematics, I do not see that it can do you any good ; it would be as well, perhaps, to have a look at the Greek Irregulars, and to skim a few phrases of Latin composition, but nothing more. You will want all your wits about you to-morrow, you will not only have to shew your knowledge remember, but to shew it quickly ; *vivâ voce* is different from anything you have yet experienced.”

“Lushington always gets drunk the night before going in,” said Rauch, “and Pooley pays

a carnal visit to Jericho, but as both have been always plucked, one would hardly recommend the plans they have adopted."

"Pooley has done badly, I hear," said John.

"Wretchedly; Lushington though has gone on capitally according to his own account."

"Yes, but Lushington's best is very bad."

"I saw poor Cadman in a dreadful way about his Euclid," said Edward.

"He scratched on the first day," answered his cousin; "didn't you hear about his petition? Cadman finding that he couldn't move on with his Geometry at any price, thought that if the figures were provided he could manage it better, so went up to Macpherson, the senior examiner, and asked him if he might have the pictures to the propositions; his application being refused, he left the schools crying, and scratched directly."

"Cadman ought to go into the army; he'd find more congenial spirits there—eh, Rauch?"

"In the army he'd find more knaves, in the University more fools. I make you a present

of that enunciation, work out the problem as you choose."

"But to return to yourself, Edward," said John, "tell me again about your work. Euclid, you say—"

"The Euclid paper I floored; the arithmetic I did quite well enough to escape a second paper; my grammar paper, which you know I feared most of all, I copied, and showed to Robson and Dryjaw, and they both assured me it was three times as good as they had expected."

"From what I can gather of University examinations," said Rauch, "it would appear to me that however well you may do your work, these fellows will give you second papers for the fun of the thing, and to fill up the spare time; then if you are careless, and thinking it of mere secondary importance—"

"Secondary evidence is always important."

"Don't happen to do it so well, they pluck you on the spot."

"Don't be silly, Rauch, you will frighten the poor boy; but your Latin Prose, Edward."

“Well, you know, I have had no time to work it properly, (and Latin Prose requires time) so I’m afraid it is scarcely Ciceronic, but still I think that I have avoided any glaring grammatical blunders. Is it of very much consequence?”

“O, no; they are strict about arithmetic, because after Smalls, you are supposed to say good bye to it for ever; but they have another touch at you in Moderations with the composition.”

“The only thing is, I understand that Macpherson has a crotchet on this point.”

“I never will believe this scandal of the schools, because I have heard it repeated five times every year. I cannot understand the relish of the human mind for bug-bears; here, sometimes it’s this, sometimes that; sometimes a new man very young and very strict; sometimes an old warped sour-kraut from the country, with starched hallucinations, about testamur indispensables; sometimes it’s a Draco on sums; sometimes a Lycurgus upon ethics, a school-master peremptory on grammar, or a clergyman

truculent on divinity. Be very careful, Ted, don't throw a chance away ; in your *vivá voce*, think over every word before you speak it ; when you are stumped, say so, never trust to guess-work ; that I call cutting your own throat after your enemies have knocked you down. Good night, my boy, and sleep as soundly as you can."

"This time to-morrow," said Edward, as he squeezed both their hands in his, "this time to-morrow."

He worked for an hour after they had gone, then he sat back in his chair before the fire. Presently he fell asleep.

His cheeks are very pale, and his eyes are bloodshot, and he has grown much thinner of late ; but now he sleeps ; sleep smooths the wrinkles on his white young brow, sleep stills the troubles in his stirred young heart, and a warm dream of triumph and success of home, and happy days, is rising on his lips in a peaceful smile.



## CHAPTER VI.

## LITTLE GO.

THE clouds were leaden in their leaden sky ; the wind blew cold from the north ; the day was bleak and raw.

There were twenty who waited shivering in the quadrangle.

The Examiners stalked past ; the doors were thrown open, the others following again entered.

The Examiners were sitting at the large table covered with its dark blue cloth ; they placed their caps before them, and drew closer round them their black gowns, and taking papers in their hands, scanned them over.

The examined sitting at the small deal

tables, with pale faces, and hands mottled with cold, wrote out their second papers.

“ Mr. Saxon.”

Edward laid down his pen, and walked up to the blue table.

The Senior Examiner watched him with his deep grey eye.

The Junior Examiner, glancing up at him for a moment, continued with his task.

“ In what Greek book, Sir, do you wish to be examined ?”

“ In the *Anabasis* of Xenophon.”

As he said this, the dark beetled eyebrows united into one; and ten Liberty Hall men poured in. These settled themselves upon chairs which are provided for spectators, in a space divided from the arena by a wooden railing.

The Examiner having handed him a book, and retained one for himself referred him to a passage. He turned over the leaves hurriedly, and found the place after a clumsy interval.

He was requested to sit down, and to commence reading. He read his passage slowly

through, and construed it literally, and with slight hesitation: the parsing questions he answered promptly and correctly.

When the parsing questions had begun, all the others stopped in their writing to listen. They hoped thereby to gain some clue to the style of interrogation they themselves might expect. Macpherson appeared dissatisfied, Edward relieved, and the Liberty Hall men enraptured.

The Junior Examiner also lifted his face up from his papers, and gave a bright smile of encouragement.

A Virgil was next taken up; he made two false quantities, and one grammatical error, still good enough to carry him through.

The Don waved his hand and Edward retired to his seat; as he walked down the room, his friends tried to catch his eye, and nodded at him triumphantly.

He had second papers in arithmetic, grammar, and prose composition. He did every sum in the arithmetic paper; and answered nearly all the grammar questions; neither were very

difficult, for both were the province of the Junior Examiner. As for his prose, he would not make any bad mistakes, but it did not matter much about that now, he had done all the rest so well.

He sat there writing, with his heart bounding, and leaping within him ; but now he *had* passed it did not seem so very much after all ; it was only Little Go, and there were Moderations to pass, and Great Go, and Second Schools, and Ordination if he went into the church ; no he would like the bar better, and then there would be plenty more examinations. But O, it was a great thing to have passed Little Go after only learning Greek for such a short time, to have done better than many men who had been brought up for college all their lives ; and he had passed his first examination ; only fancy, and it was like a dream ; how light all his hard work seemed now it was over ; good bye to Xenophon ; good bye to Euclid ; good bye to Virgil. But he wouldn't be idle ; this would only make him the more industrious, it would be such an encouragement. O, no, he would not

be idle any more summers, he would work hard all the next Long at Cicero and Alcestis.

Hurrah ! he'd soon be home now ; how pleased his father would be, and how proud Jane would be, and Lucy would praise him too ; he had told them to say nothing to *her* about it in case—but there he had never thought it was so easy.

He finished his papers and took them to his judges.

“ We will not detain you any longer, Sir.”

He bowed and walked composedly to the green baize door ; but when he was fairly outside he indulged his pent up feelings with a smile, and such a smile—it wasn't a smile at all, it was a silent laugh.

As he walked away, another white-tied student appeared from the opposite school ; he also was smiling, and dancing quickly along, and snapping his fingers.

When he passed under the windows of his Hall, he looked up and saw Rauch perched on his window-seat, smoking a hookah. He tossed his hand gaily up to him.

Rauch met him in the dark passage.

"You are out very soon; how have you done?"

"Capitally."

"Then let me congratulate you," said he, holding out his hand.

"Not now, it's a bad omen; wait till the testamurs are out."

"Pooh! I won't countenance such absurd superstition."

They shook hands warmly, and went up into his rooms. Saxon of Magdalen was there. He examined their faces.

"It's all right? stumped the Examiners?"

"I don't think they have stumped me," responded he modestly.

"How many second papers?"

"Three; two I smashed."

"And the other?"

"And the other will go into the same pot with the rest; I've brought a copy."

His cousin took it from him, and ran his eye over the pages, "I say, Teddy, this is not first chop by any means; the construction of the

sentences is bad ; and here, again, you'll never find this word in Ainsworth, it's not Latin."

"Humph !" emitted the other uneasily.

"It's quite possible that they may spin you for this ; I should not mind it so much, only Macpherson turns out to be so very particular about prose composition."

"I thought you said—"

"Yes, so I did ; but I had it this morning on the best authority, that the rumour was well grounded."

John Saxon did not believe in his own forebodings for a moment ; but he knew that a little damp on present elation gives a greater zest to the pleasure that succeeds. Then he invited Edward to a game at billiards ; he hated the game himself, but wished to distract his cousin from the anxiety his words had visibly occasioned. It is a common thing for men to build up impressions for other people in one moment, and to go out of their way to pull them down in the next.

Four o'clock came.

"You stop here and knock the balls about while I go to the schools, will you?"

Edward remained. As the minutes lingered by, a feeling of uneasiness crept over him, he thought that his cousin was never coming back.

About thirty men were pacing up and down the gravelled space we have had to mention so often. The schools were still open. In a few minutes a white tie issued forth at one door, and his three friends from the other.

"Not much chance for him, I should say," whispered John to Rauch, "he's been doing second paper work all day."

The Clerk of the Schools entered, closing the outer door behind him; this was a signal that the crisis approached, and those lounging in distant corners drew near.

The Examiners were probably consulting.

Five minutes more.



The Examiners were most likely signing the testamurs.

The few minutes that precede the distribution of the papers called testamurs are equivalent to an age of expectation, a century of impatience. The candidates themselves are very seldom there, it is difficult to say why ; but this is absolutely disallowed by undergraduate etiquette. The expectant deputed his nearest friend to go to the schools'-door, and to bring him first the tidings of joy, or to be the one to console him in disappointment and misfortune.

They drew closer and closer to the oak door, stray passers by, magnetized as we all are by a crowd, loitered in to swell the circle.

The lock was shaken from within, and the door swung forward ; all pressed up eagerly, but only to burst into a shout of laughter at the dingy menial who appeared with his broom and dust-pan.

The laugh was a short one ; faces returned to gravity ; they only spoke in whispers.

This time it must be, and it is ; again the crowd pressed forward, again recoiled, rolling

aside in two bodies like the waters of the Red Sea ; a lane was made ; fifty caps were raised ; and the dark gowns and red edges and pale faces flashed grimly by.

The Clerk of the Schools stood upon the threshold, holding some slips of blue paper in his hand ; they hailed him with a shout ; he remained imperturbable, being used to it. They yelled to him.

“ Read, read ! ”

He lifted the first slip to his eyes.

“ *Mr. Darlington of Balliol.* ”

“ *Here,* ” and the friend’s arm was stretched out with a shilling in its hand. They exchanged.

“ *Mr. Youens of Exeter.* ” Another arm and shilling.

“ *Sir William Behrings.* ” A shout from a group of tuft-toadies ; four arms and shillings ; the clerk confined himself to one with reluctant self-control.

“ *Mr Proser of Liberty Hall.* ”

A pause ; Proser had of course forgotten to provide a friend and a shilling.

“ *Mr. Shackle of Merton.* ”

A great cheer ; he was the stroke oar of the University crew, and as famed on land as water.

And that was all.

Several who had to go back empty handed, crowded round the Clerk of the School. "Are you sure those are all ? perhaps there are some left behind ? Who's is that ?" And they all by turns took the unclaimed paper in their hands, and then giving it back, turned mournfully away.

The Liberty Hall men looked blank into each other's faces ; their tongues being loosed, uttered words which expressed more astonishment than sympathy.

"I knew Pooley would be plucked, but . Saxon—"

"He did a deuced good *vivâ voce*."

"Only three second papers."

"It's just my damned luck ; lost thirty shillings over him."

"I'm glad of it—for my own sake of course—cleared £3, and might have had thirty ; why, I refused ten to one, three times over."

How sorry they all seemed,—those who had not lost their money !

“Will he mind it much, John?” asked Rauch, as they walked back slowly to the billiard room.

“Very much.”

They stopped outside the door for a moment, and looked at each other ; then they went in.

“Well,” said Edward, piercing their faces with his eyes. Then he squeezed the cue tightly in his hands, and he felt his bosom wet with a cold perspiration.

“Never mind it, old fellow—hang it, don’t look like that—we must all have it in our turns, I didn’t mind mine, you know.”

“You didn’t shut yourself up in your room for three days,” returned he, with a miserable smile.

“Did I ?” (good-humouredly).

John meant well, but was stupid ; he should have denied this, and decoyed his cousin into the distraction of an argument.

“Shall we go for a walk, or on the river, or for a short ride ?”

"I would rather be alone for a little while," he said, with a faint sigh.

"You will dine with me, won't you?"

He shook his head.

"Then come to my rooms in the course of the evening; you must promise me that before you go."

"Yes, I promise."

Rauch took up a cue, and clashed the balls savagely against each other.

He sighed again, and crept out of the room.

Then Rauch, who seldom spoke a bad word and never in cold blood, dashed the cue upon the ground, and stamped on it like a maniac; while his eyes flashed black lightning, and his breast swelled like a stormy wave, such a torrent of horrible words poured forth from his lips white with passion, that his companion almost fell into a chair, but still looking at him with eyes which he could not avert, and hearing him with ears which he could not close.

He still wore his cap, his gown, and his white tie—now a badge of dishonour and disgrace. He felt that he must move, it did not matter where—but onwards, onwards—he must not think, or must think but the thoughts of the chained and the mad—to be calm, to try to be calm would kill him. On I say, not down the crowded streets, but by the narrow winding lane and its grey high walls, and bare trees. They stopped and looked back at him as he passed; his face made them do it; his face was livid like the face of a dead man; and his eyes danced wildly like the stars of hell; they knew how it was—the white tie told them; ah! cursed Oxford! cursed books! but on I tell you, we must not stand.

Away, away—away from the sight of houses and windows, and the faces that pass, that sneer at him—away from the black high walls; look back, you can see them now—he looked back, and he clenched his sweated hands together, and stamped as he ran, and gnawed his pale lips blood-red.

We are in the green meadows now; it is

very cold this wintry day ; it is December—it is very cold ; but he cannot feel it now : what matters cold when such fires burn within.

He ran through those fields for miles and miles, he ran till his limbs were faint and feeble, and his legs tottered beneath him.

He had run with his eyes closed ; he found himself close to Oxford ; he stepped into a boat mechanically, and was rowed across ; he listened to the rippling of the waters, and smiled, for it pleased him.

He walked under the network of branches ; he laid down in the high dank grass by the side of the Cherwell's stream.

He laid there in a sort of stupor ; his brain was buried alive, and covered over with a moist clammy soil.

He watched a straw borne along by the eddying stream ; this led him to think of little things, which linking together by imperceptible degrees, wafted him to the memories of childhood, school days and home. As he thought of home, the consciousness of misfortune returned upon him ; he hid his head in the

grass, and bent his head upon the cold ground. Then he felt the weight on his brain uplifted, and soft streams trickled through to his eyes, and tear after tear rolled down his cheeks. He knew not why, there was something delicious in these tears. He sat looking upon the water with his hands folded in his lap, and his lips formed into what might have been a smile, had it not been so sad. He let his tears flow on, unrestrained; he would not wipe them away, for they did him good, they lightened the sorrow from his poor crushed heart.

He heard footsteps behind him; he turned round forgetting the pallor and tear-streams on his face.

It was an old man with long grey hair, and a beautiful lady.

When he had looked round, she had almost stopped, and had poured upon him a whole heaven of pity from her sad blue eyes.

The old man glanced at his white tie, as he passed, and whispered to her.

She bent her head, and murmured in a voice of the softest melody.



*Poor fellow !*

He heard her say this, and turned his head quickly. It is impossible for man to fence in his heart from that compassion which is real.

He sat there till it was almost night ; but he was not alone ; that look of pity, those words of pity were nestling in his breast, and soothed if they could not cure its wounds.

He returned to his own rooms, and changed his disordered dress, and bathed his face with cold water.

It was now quite dark ; he walked half way down the High Street ; he felt very sad.

Suddenly, loud glorious chimes burst from the grand tower of Magdalen. This affected him strangely ; he leant against the trunk of a tree, and listened to these voices which rang forth to him from the bosom of the night.

In half an hour they ceased ; the distant foot-falls, and the night-hum from the city might again be heard. But he was cheered, and a little comforted.

He went into his cousin's rooms ; all the young choristers were there.

They gave him a seat in a dusky corner of the room, he sat there and listened.

They were singing the chorus in the Messiah.

And the music flowed on, and the voices sang, till his heart slept, and his whole frame was encircled in a halo of dreamy forgetfulness.

When the chorus was finished, the pretty children came bringing him toast and coffee, and regarded him with mournful curiosity, for they had heard that he had been plucked.

The youngest came and sat on his knee, and babbled to him about his school and chapel, with the candid egotism of childhood. He kissed the little creature, asked him to sing; he obeyed with a melody, plaintive and almost sombre, the chords of his heart echoed the strain, again the tears passed into his eyes, and again the iron to his soul.

Eleven o'clock: he went away.

The night shadows hung over the towers of the city like a black canopy on a marble tomb.

He slept restless, and as he slept a hideous

form came squatting on his breast, and tittered in his face.

He tried to move, to shake it off, to shriek aloud, but he could not.

A flood of light now streamed upon the bed, and he saw something white gliding near; it was a beautiful creature, robed in white, and garlands of flowers in her hands.

And the black spectre, feeling the light and the Presence, howling disappeared.

Still she swept towards him with sparkling eyes and rosy smiles; he stretched out his arms, she drooped her eyes and melted towards him.

Shrouded in black, hair bound with cypress garlands, a phantom passed between; she stretched out her arm, and the bright form drew back, her face covered with her white robe.

Three times she pressed towards him, three times the arm outstretched, three times he clasped his burning hands together, three times the stern look replied, three times the weeping face withdrew.

But ere she flew, she blended on him a look

so tender, so compassionate, that he knew it was her whom that same day, he had seen through his tears.

With her the golden light faded, and only a grey, stern light remained; by his side stood the dark spirit, her look pale and mournful, her thin white arm uplifted to the sky of God.

## CHAPTER VII.

## N O I S E.

“Of all places wherever I have been, these scholars of Oxford are the rudest, most giddy and unruly rabble, and the most mischievous.”—LIFE OF THOMAS STORY.

WHEN he entered his sitting-room the next morning, there was a note lying on the table ; it was the writing of the Vice-Principal ; and on reading it, he found that it must have been delivered the evening before, as it contained a request to visit him at eight o'clock.

Having learnt from his scout that the Vice was up at his own house, he immediately put on his cap and gown, and walked up there.

The tutor's absence from Aristotle was ex-

plained by a foot swathed in bandages, and by a crosser face.

“ So you have been plucked, Sir ?” said the Doctor, in a loud coarse voice.

Edward all fire and anger within, answered him coldly :

“ I have, Sir.”

“ How was that, pray ?”

“ Latin Composition, I believe.”

The Vice-Principal opened his mouth to speak, closed it without uttering a word, and having looked searchingly into the face of the culprit before him, dropped away into abstraction.

A reverie is a boon from heaven to him who winces under gout, but it is only a dull brown study to the bystander ; so Edward woke him up.

“ I should have come last night, Sir, as you kindly invited me, but I was out till past the hour you named, and—”

“ Where did you go ?” asked he a little more gently.

“ I went—I went—to—I do not recollect—but my cousin at Magdalen—”

“ You don’t mind it much, do you, my poor

boy?" said the old man in a soft, sweet voice; and he laid his hand on his shoulder, and gazed kindly in his face.

Edward had not expected this; his eyes filled, his lips quivered.

"I worked so hard, Sir," he cried, sinking into a chair, "and I—I made so sure that I had passed, and then—and then—"

The Vice-Principal took the boy's thin little hand between his own, and pressed it like a father, like a friend.

"There don't cry any more, Saxon, your eyes are quite red enough already about such a little."

"And they will be so disappointed at home."

"But there is no disgrace to you, my child; you read hard and they ought to have let you passed—that fellow Macpherson—now tell me what I can do for you. Shall I write to your father? Yes, I think that will be the best; a pluck like yours is an honourable one, and I have as much respect for you, Saxon, as if you had passed twenty times over—Macpherson is a brute—and I will make them

think the same, (*sotto voce* though it won't be too easy either, they don't understand these things in the country, and they won't if they can help it), there, good bye my fine fellow—a—h! what a wrench! there it goes again! if you have your trials I have mine, haven't I? When you become a portly old squire, you'll be able to say which is the worse—good bye, good bye, God bless you."

This last twitch of the gout was a fictitious one; the good old soul had concocted his grimaces and ejaculations to make Saxon laugh if he could.

But when the door was closed, the red face became more cross and angry than ever the gout had made it, and he brought his huge fist upon the table before him with a bang:

"*Damn* that fellow Macpherson."

Saxon now began to contract many evil habits; he could not bear to return to those



dreadful books which he thought he had conquered for ever, so he became idle.

The idle undergraduate is a pilgrim who sleeps in the snow. It is death.

He never attended morning chapel; he never attended lectures; he never rose before noon; and even the day which began at noon was for him too long, too weary.

Soon he fell in with a few other spirits as bad and as badly treated as himself. All these men had been once hopeful, once industrious; all had been injudiciously, perhaps unjustly, plucked; their hopes soured, their efforts choked, they all by a revulsion of feeling by no means unnatural, by no means uncommon, had turned their backs upon their good intentions and their happier days.

Saxon plunged with these into a frightful gulf of dissipation and debauchery. He would not listen to the remonstrances of his cousin, of Rauch or of Pooley.

"I have worked like a slave," he would cry fiercely, "I have done my best, I have deserved to succeed, and they have repelled

me, driven me to this themselves. My blood will be on their heads, not upon my own."

They could not prevent him from squandering money madly and wickedly; they could not prevent him from playing billiards all day in rooms which reeked with smoke and with dirt, nor worse still from playing at cards till the winter day-light itself would stream in through the shutter chinks, and mingling with the yellow flames of the candles throw a ghastly horrible glare upon the corpse-like faces of the gamesters.

His luxurious apartments which once he had been so proud of, in which once he had loved so much, to pass his quiet days his peaceful nights, he now could not bear to rest in for a moment. Like the glutton, like the drunkard, like the gambler he craved constant ceaseless excitement. This would prevent him from thinking; it hurt him to speak to his own conscience, to his own heart, for they reminded him of what his past had been, and warned him of the future that must sooner or later come.

But at times he could not drive these thoughts away; they chased him in his dreams, or kept him awake as he writhed upon his restless bed.

He grew more wretched every day: when his cheeks did not glow with the costly poison of the cellar, when his eyes did not flash with the intoxication of the dice, those cheeks were sallow, those eyes were bleared.

When he woke in the morning, he often found his pillow wet with those tears which had fallen in his sleep.

He seemed to have grown five years older during one short week.

Pooley had been plucked too, the news had been brought to him at two o'clock by a friend, (one of his damned good-natured ones) who was acquainted with the Junior Examiner, and had intercepted him at lunch-time.

Pooley received the intelligence with that indifference to mundane misfortune, which distinguishes the true philosopher. On finding

himself alone, he took off his white tie and put it away with the rest of his week's dirty linen, so as to be clean for the next examination ; he also removed his collar, to be able to think at his ease.

He next proceeded to adopt his favourite position, feet on chimney-piece, back against stuffed morocco, pipe in the mouth, nose in the air, thoughts in the clouds.

Thus he remained, till a dismal sound warned him that afternoon chapel was at hand ; he knocked the ashes from his finished pipe, dropped his legs to the ground, and heaved a deep sigh.

“ What a book I should have had, if I had passed ? ”

However, he had been paid so well for the snow he had swept off the Christchurch pond, that his Little Go losings were no more than a bucket-full out of a deep well.

He washed his hands, put on a clean collar, arranged his cravat to a geometrical nicety, and lounged into his seat with more than ordinary insouciance.

Lushington had received his testamur !

When the slip of blue paper was handed over to him, he rolled his dull red eyes heavily upon it, and half crushed, half folded it in a hand that trembled with surprise and vinomania. He knew Pooley and Saxon had both been better up in their work than himself, and he could not but acknowledge they were at least his equals in intelligence ; yet he had surpassed them—and the papers the same too.

Yes, but the Examiners had been different ; Dons may be made in the same mould, but are not all made of the same metal.

Robson was a Don : he was strict, but with a heart which swam in the oil of human kindness. Macpherson was a Don, too ; he was savage, spiteful, bowel-less, and like all such men, unjust, a stooper to favouritism, to tuft-suction, and time-serving.

I must do Lushington the credit to assure you that he did not plague himself very much about these eccentricities of 'destiny ; like all wise men, effects being satisfactory, he left the causes to themselves.

Pooley, on hearing it, only lifted up his hands and said "it was passing strange;" so gaining applause for his wit, as well as for his equanimity

On the first blush of success, Lushington made two resolutions, the first, to give a large supper party; the second, to enter the church.

On the night after examination, he gave a 'wine,' which was small and quiet for such an occasion, and from such a man; but soon rumours of something better floated about, and soon the supper invitation cards were issued and distributed.

One Monday evening neither Lushington nor Rauch attended the chapel, the dinner, nor the quiet glass-of-wine-parties, which assemble in various rooms for the first hour after Hall.

Both might have been seen (but only through the key-hole, for the door was locked) in Lushington's apartments, with sleeves turned up, and foreheads moist, scrubbing lime-peel with loaf sugar, mingling proportions, and tasting conclusions out of a large spoon.

Lushington, ignorant of Hindostanee habits,

had supposed that they drank punch in India, and had sought out Rauch for advice and assistance.

Rauch, who could do most things, had learnt punch brewing under a fine old master in the East End, where they understand these things; Lushington was not a novice; and by uniting their joint experiences, results promised fairly, to say the least of it.

The last paring of lemon had been thrown in, the last lump of sugar had been pounded and dissolved; Rauch taking the huge spoon plunged it into the bowl and stirred it round several times; then he raised it dripping with the amber fluid to his lips: Lushington also swallowing it—with his eyes. For one whole second, big with the night's fate, for one whole second he waited breathlessly, and watched his companion's face with a soul of anxiety. That face gradually lightened, like a dark stream 'neath the rising moon; the eyes twinkled, the tongue rolled in its red cavern, and the lips closed with a propitious smack.

“It will do my boy.”

It was nine o'clock ; the doors of the kitchen and buttery were thrown wide open ; the Porter's gate clanged to with its harsh iron sound.

Shutting out time, but supper-time too ; the Porter may have rattled his keys in the lock, but the cook has brandished his huge sharp knife, the butler has stood, pen in hand, over the opened ledger.

The supper-room was ready ; the curtains warm and red, the carpet soft, where it was not charred ; the dark chairs glowing with the yellow flickering fitful light ; the punch bowls steaming at both ends ; the grey oysters roasting on the fire ; there they sat simmering, murmuring, singing their first last songs, like noble swans in the throes of death ; the bars lined with bursting chesnuts, the table loaded with the olla podrida of a cold supper ; the scouts standing ready.

In they poured, bawling, smoking, laughing, wringing the wet from their dripping gowns, for it was raining fast. Their coats the oldest, their caps the newest they could find ; it was to be a



jovial carousal ; a wet night within as well as without. But now to work.

Plates be filled, with lobster, with fowl, and ye glasses with the hot tingling punch ; while dishes clatter and knives and forks ring, while the wooden ladles move, dipping again and again into the bowl that is bottomless, while the scouts dart to and fro like Mercuries in white chokers, while the song is raised, and the brave chorus resounds, forget your cares, Edward, drink man ; drink drink, till the blood hisses in your veins, and your heart leaps almost from its socket.

The eating being past, the tables were cleared, disjointed, and piled against the wall ; a huge semicircle made in the fire front.

Lushington had asked no out-college men ; such would be obliged to leave the company before twelve ; this dropping off never failed to create additional hiatuses ; but by excluding these he might fairly count upon a much longer joviality ; nobody would think of going first, and thus nothing would occur to interrupt the flow of harmony and bad spirits.

It was very dull at first though, it must be owned; undergraduates require more pressing to sing than any amount of young ladies with sore throats. When sober, these school-boys are bashful and silly, when drunk they become impudent and noisy. It was not very long before the first crisis was past, their dear little soft heads soon yielded under the nectar à la Rauch, and their own real brutish natures peeped forth one after the other.

At twelve o'clock, every one was drunk; even Proser who had been persuaded to come, had succumbed to the general fate, and had just realed out of the room, announcing his intention of g—oing to read—the ruling passion strong in death.

It was half past twelve; somebody more depraved of taste than the rest, had proposed a Dutch chorus.

A Dutch chorus or Hollander's coal-box is conducted on these sublime methods. Every one sings a single verse of a song in rotation, all joining in one popular chorus appointed for the purpose such as "Chip chow cherry chow;"

those birds who don't sing or wont, drink off a bumper; after which the chorus is sung in manner aforesaid. After this has gone all round, every one sings a different verse, and all at the same time.

I hope the reader has understood me, an illustration would be painful.

It was two o'clock; they had drunk themselves mad; they dashed their fists through the window-panes, they seized hold of glasses and bottles, flung them against the walls; they raised chairs high in the air, and dashed them to pieces on the ground. It was a loathsome scene: the crashing of the furniture, the jingling sound of the broken glass, the loud coarse laughs, the beastly language, and the oaths, and murmurs or half-audible moans of those who lying on the ground were trampled upon without being able to rise.

As it often happens, there was a pause for a few moments; all were resting from their noble exertions, while their eyes inflamed and blood-shot moved, like those of wild beasts, after more materials for uproar and mischief.

At that moment a voice was heard (and whose voice that was could never be discovered.)

“ Let us drag Killjoy out of bed and fling him over the stairs.”

With one loud fierce shout, half a dozen men rushed from the room which was on the ground floor and sprang up stairs. Killjoy's room was at the very top of the Broad staircase.

Those that remained, staggered to the door, and listened; they heard long loud knocks at the door above; shouts to open, heavy strokes upon the lock from a hammer or coal-pecker; the fearful crash of the strong oak door broken in.

All was silent for a little while.

Then they heard a yell of laughter, which grew louder and plainer every moment till it was right above them; on looking up they could distinguish several dark forms on the edge of the banisters twenty feet up; there were oaths and hoarse shouts, and the same yell of horrible, almost ominous laughter; there were cries of “hold him fast, never mind his

kicking," a sound of struggling ; and a dark mass descending through the air fell with a dull lifeless thud almost at their very feet.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## FROM OXFORD TO BLAKEY'S.

“ As I came by a grene forest syde,  
I met with a forster yt badde me abyde  
Whey go bet, hey go bet, hey go, howe  
We shall have sport and game ynowe.”

A CAROLLE OF HUNTYNGE.

“ SHALL I pour it out for you, Sir?”

“ Yes do, John, ah ! that is very refreshing ;  
and how did you find Mr. Lushington this  
morning ?”

“ Wery bad, Sir, wery bad ; but his rooms  
was the wust of the two, I never seed nothing  
like it, not even in the old days which wer rioter,  
more riotous leastways than now—wuss luck  
for sarvints. I can't think what possessed the  
genelmen to go on as they did. Ain't Thomas

got his morning's work cut out for him up there—O no not at all. Why, Sir, there ain't a bit of whole glass left to the winders, nor the mirrors, nor the pictures, bottles, nor glasses, everythin' smashed into shivers and strewed upon the carpits. An' when I came this morning, there wer the turf outside kivered with bits of furniture and fowl bones, and genelmen a lying about without having the science to tell their heads from their feet. Didn't I larf? there wer Mr. Pooley walking round the quadrangle with a lighted candle in his hand a-wanting to the Wice Principle, wery partickilar indeed; and Mr. Maidlow a-trying to get on his cap with a shoe-horn. And lor, Sir, what an escape Mr. Killjoy must have had! a lot of gen'elmen wild and mad with drink, rushed up to his rooms and broke his door in, to draw him and chuck him over the stairs; but you see, Sir, they worn't in a right state to tell baggage from livin' creeturs so they ketched hold of a gret black carpit bag as wer lying on the bed and hoisted it, O so careful over the banisters, while Mr.

Killjoy he was crept in under the bed a shivering with cold and timidity, ho ! ho ! ho ! Shall I make you some tea, Sir ?”

“ Yes, and let me have it in bed, please.”

“ Wery good, Sir.”

“ I need not take out an *æger*, I suppose ?”

“ O dear no, Sir, term’s nearly over now ; collexions finishes to-day.”

A bottle of soda-water in the morning is a peg on which may be hung many moral remarks ; but such would be superfluous. The pains that come with it do more for sobriety than all the sermons in the world.

They had advised Edward to drown his blue devils ; he had done so ; and now suffered beneath their resurrection.

That morning, a long deep yearning for home fell upon him ; to return to the peaceful scenes of his youth, to kiss his parents once more, above all to see his dear sister again, to pour out to her all his sorrows, to taste the sweet compassion she would shed upon him, to mingle his tears with her’s, to fling



himself into her arms, and to hide his head in her bosom, his troubles in her heart.

In moments of sorrow and affliction we find out by instinct those who love us best.

He determined to pack up his clothes as soon as he was dressed, and to leave Oxford that same evening.

But something occurred which made him change his plans. At two o'clock he looked out of window and saw the Porter hanging about the entrance of his staircase. Surmising that there was a letter for himself, and being too good-hearted to summon the Porter up to his rooms, he descended. The letter was from his father ; and was dated Calais.

His father had to regret that circumstances required the family abroad for five weeks (the exact period of Edward's vacation) and that their arrangements would not admit of any addition to the party. But all the servants would remain at the Manor House, and he had given directions that everything should be done to secure him a pleasant Christmas. He had

received a letter from Doctor Robson with reference to the sad occurrence of a few weeks past, and although it had grieved him deeply that any one who bore the name of so distinguished a family as their own, should have been publicly plucked at the University, still he was glad to learn that there had been circumstances which in some measure extenuated the disgrace.

And he remained his affectionate father,

RICHARD SAXON.

The young man read this with a pale lip and a flashing eye.

My father sends me here at a sudden caprice ; he does not inquire whether my education at school has fitted me with those acquirements which they demand here, or whether I have been given a fair start with the multitude ; in the vacation he neither impedes nor encourages my efforts : when I was industrious I received no praise, when idle I received no blame ; he had never shown the faintest spark of interest in my studies till about two months since, when he wrote and said that he particularly wished

me to pass my Little Go by Christmas . . . . .  
I have done my best to please him. I worked hard; God alone knows how hard I worked, and now this man dares to reproach me with his cold-hearted sneers, to insult me. . . . .

He tore the letter into shreds, and flung it upon the hungry crackling flames.

But there was a little note from his sister, folded up within the other, like a bright jewel embedded in its filthy ore. He read this a great many times, and kissed it each time as he finished it.

"He postponed his return for a couple of days, resolving to invite Rauch and Pooley down to Blakey's for a little while. His cousin he knew would not come, as in a week's time he would have to go in for Ordination.

Pooley declined. "Three weeks black-cock and pheasant in North Wales," answered he, "and a fortnight in town. Book's made for this vac. thank you."

He met Rauch coming out of the Hall, in which the collections were being held.

(Collections are terminal examinations to which all, who have not been for University examinations that term, are subjected.)

“Ah, Ted, good morning: you’ve been drinking soda-water, you dog you. But I say, I’ve had such fun in there! Tims and I sat near each other, with Maidlow between. Tims was called up, and set an easy piece of Virgil, which he did very well, and was bowed off with a hope that he would have a pleasant vacation. I was given a few lines to translate, for Robson knows that I prefer it to *vivâ voce*. Paper does not turn red, nor stutter, and better still it is silent, and conceals that disgrace which the tongue spreads abroad. Well as I was writing, poor Maidlow (who, as you know, has been rather on the loose this term) was summoned before the judicial chair, and there presented with a really impregnable *morceau* of Sophocles. He staggered on for a little way, then reeled and fell like a hero as he is, sword in hand. You know the lines :

“ ‘ He that is down need fear no fall,  
He that is low no pride.’ ”

But our noble Vice hadn't done with him yet: he had got a speech as well as a *morceau* ready cooked before-hand, and now dished it up with plenty of his own sauce. 'He really could not permit himself to be surprised that Mr. Maidlow had shown himself so ill-prepared in his books, when he remembered Mr. Maidlow's repeated irregularities, and general want of application. He hoped that Mr. Maidlow's conduct during the Trinity Term would undergo a change, or he should feel himself compelled as the Vice-Principal of Liberty Hall to adopt severer measures towards him for the future.'

"What a system of terrible humbug it must be, Ted, which can degrade a naturally jolly warm-souled man, like Robson, if only for a few moments, into a false-tongued double-dealer, like that."

"If you are nearly tired of Oxford, come and spend a week with me in the country; I can give you a good bed and some fair shooting."

"Tired of Oxford! say sick of it at once! I'm disgusted with this place, and with all things herein. Why it was only yesterday that

Jackson of John's came up to me with a face that actually shone with pride, and said, 'I say, Rauch, what d'ye think? (then he sunk his voice into a whisper), Hill and I, an Smythe and one or two more came up to my rooms last night, and we talked——from nine till two; such fun!' ”

“Am I to infer that you accept?”

“And that I accept with gratitude.”

Edward forthwith despatched a letter to the residence of John Underwood, keeper, Christmas Common, near Haley on Thames, with directions manifold, yet not intricate.

Next morning they were breakfasting together in Rauch's rooms on slices of tongue, yesterday's commons, and coffee brewed in haste.

Uncomfortable and therefore sportsmanlike.

Each was apparelled in black velveteen, with trousers of shepherd's plaid gaitered to the knee.

Rauch carried an oblong case of black shining leather, and portentous aspect: the end of a strap peeped out from under the flap of Saxon's right hand pocket.

A knock at the door to say the buss was at the gate: the cupsfull of black sour coffee, the last fragment of tongue, and some indigestible morsels of stale bread were crammed down together: trunks and portmanteaus hoisted upon broad shoulders: hands shaken, ribs poked, jokes exchanged: the driver on the box blowing the young gentlemen's eyes, and his own frost nipped fingers, while the Commercial Traveller inside picked his teeth furiously with a straw.

All right at last, and in time for the train.

It was a raw bleak morning, and foggy too: a real Oxford fog, yellow, murky, and hanging heavily in the air: such a fog as elsewhere the flats of Holland, the banks of the Ganges or the Chinese marsh alone can produce.

They flew along, enclosed as it were in a

dark grey prison ; but in an hour's time the mist region was past, daylight appeared, chalk-hills crowned with dark woods rose on both sides of the iron road.

"We are close to Collingford, now," said Saxon. But they did not put out their pipes. The directors of the Great Western make rules, but the guards admit of exceptions. Philosophers declare that we have yet some remnants of the Silver Age.

Shrill whistle, speed subdued, one long shudder through the train, and the platform lay beneath them.

Outside the barrier of white palings stood John Underwood, keeper, and Robert Neats, sub. On seeing their young master's face peering through the glass, their mouths dilated into crescent grins.

Underwood even brandished the double barrel as much as to say, "You see I have not forgotten it." This was returned with a smile, at which the mouths became trenches, and the gun was flourished like an Indian spear.



"Grub at the railway tavern," said Saxon, "and then *en route*."

The breakfast was as might have been expected in a railway tavern: the bacon was rusty, the eggs bullets, milk sour, and the tea dripped out of the pot three drops at a time, as if it was ashamed of being so weak.

It was the best parlour: cold, smoky, with a slight smell of paint.

The menials had been ordered toasted cheese (at their own singular request) and beer; the cheese was lukewarm, and stringy; the beer flat and rather sour.

Saxon taking a round tin pot from his pocket, opened it, and covered his shooting-boots with the dingy-yellow contents; Rauch who was an old soldier called for Neats to fulfil the office.

"How are the birds, Underwood?"

"Very strong on the wing, Sir; fly from here to Christmas Common if they'd a mind to't: but there's enough, and to spare of 'em."

"Shall we have any sport?"

"I think there's a wind gitting up, Sir, and

that'll drive 'em into the Stoke Hedge, like enough, and then Frolic will rout 'em out. She's a wonderful deal better to what she oused to be: ain't half so wild, and skeery: an' I giv'd her a smartish run over the follers this morning."

"Did you see any coveys?"

"Two, Sir: an' that only walking down the ro-ad."

"Now are you ready, Rauch?"

"Right: shoulder arms, my boy, dou—ble."

"Which way first, Underwood?"

"Us must cross the railway, I suppose, Sir, it's a crinkum crankum place, but it's a long way round to the ferry."

They walked over the bridge by the side of the thin iron veins, with the Thames tearing along through the arches beneath, in all its winter strength.

"I niver," said Underwood, as they set foot on the green meadows beyond, "I niver feels straight as long as I be on the Barkshire side.

It don't seem right, nohow; I feel as well agin now I'm in my own country."

"Underwood," said Saxon, impressively, and thrusting his hand into his coat pocket, he pulled forth a bran new dog whip. At this sight the keeper brightened, but the dog cowered in the grass.

"He *is* a beauty and no mistake—and a whistle in the end, he'll crack too a good 'un: have a care Frolic, have a care."

Underwood having regarded the whip with affection, flapped it in the air, and looked menacing upon the fine black and tan setter, who at the sound of this instrument of torture had crept in very close to heel, with head downcast, and tail removed from public scrutiny.

Having climbed over a hedge which almost peeled their gaiters from their legs, they stood at the bottom of a sinfain field. Here they got into proper rank: Saxon on the left, Rauch on the right, and the beaters between them, and a few feet behind.

"We beat it up and down, Underwood."

"Had'nt us better beat it along and across Sir?"

"I think not: we shall be more likely to get near the birds, with the rise before us."

"Yes, Sir, we ought to beat it up and down, and then the dog 'ull have the wind: the old gentleman, your grand'pa, he war allers very partickiler about the dogs having the right wind."

"Very well then you can——"

"We can beat it along and across, Sir, if *you* please: but I don't think as it 'ud do so well."

"On we go," said Edward, laughing.

"Hold up, Frolic; hold up good dog."

The good dog bounded up against the keeper's pocket, for which reproved, trotted forward a little, and then from right to left.

After two minutes walk, Saxon cried "halt," and stooped to tie up his boot-lace. Underwood immediately bustled up: "he was great upon boot-laces: 'he 'oosed allers to tie up the old gentleman's boot-laces, that is your grand'pa as was." After this was done, Frolic who had

been perched on her haunches mutely observing them, tossed her head and swung her tail with vivacity, otherwise inexpressible. She had evidently been fearing that something had occurred which might mar the day's pleasure, and was proportionably relieved. Perhaps it was this that prevented her from being careful: a large covey rose at some distance without the dog pointing them.

The game-keeper clutched the new whip with an eager hand. "I'll christen it on your back," he muttered, and he shouted very loudly: "Down charge, Frolic, down charge." Frolic looked round half sulk, half surprise. The whip was cracked sharply in the air, and the dog dropped on her stomach. Roused by the noise, a single bird rose fifty yards off, in Rauch's line of march.

"What the deuce d'ye mean by making that infernal noise, Underwood? we should have got up to that bird."

At these words another got up: similar manner, similar cause.

Underwood said nothing till he had come up

to Frolic : he seized her by the ear, and having first exhorted her with the utmost powers of his voice, he applied the new whip to her writhing sides with the utmost powers of his arm. Both the sportsmen were standing close by, with guns under their arms, when a curious thing occurred. Just as the dog was released, a rabbit sprang up from the very spot upon which she had been yelling and pirouetting a second before.

After running about twenty yards, the rabbit pitched head over heels, the fur flying out from its skin like flour from a sack. As Saxon was putting his powder in, he saw Rauch blowing down his barrel, and as the latter was feeling for his flask, he was surprised to hear the clear ringing sound which a ramrod makes in a clean gun.

Each apologized, while Robert Neats examined wounds with inquisitive exultation, and Frolic snuffed the flake-covered ground in sobered hilarity.

Having thoroughly beaten the field, they leant in the top corner against the pale browned gate, and surveyed a fine expanse of land.

This expanse was parcelled out and di-sected into many patches, green, brown, and yellow. The green were turnips, british or swedes: the yellow, stubble; and the brown, ploughed land.

Their M. C. pointed out the likeliest slips, and hoped they'd be able to drive the birds into the thick growing swedes, or the high wheat-stubble.

He also showed them a fine grassy hedge, which extended from the river-willows, almost up to the hill-woods. This was the Stoke Hedge.

"We'd better take a drift along this low barley stubble, Sir." And on they went, marshalled as before.

But the birds were wild as blazes: nothing could be done with them: their very numbers only made it worse. A covey would be flushed, and as they flew along with their loud rushing wings, others startled would spring to join them, till the covey became a flock, which rendered wilder and wilder at each augmentation, would mount higher in the air till they

became thrushes, sparrows, and invisible, in turn.

The willows on the river's brink were now but branching shrubs, the great woods more near and more distinct: still nothing bagged except the rabbit: and nothing touched but one broken leg, and a few white under-feathers.

"Let us work these follers, now, Sir."

"The fallow will work us, Underwood:"

"We're more likely to find birds here than anywhere's, as I knows on, Master Eddard: and when it's damp and sticky we've more chance of getting near 'em: their feet gets cloggy and they can't run. Then we may drive 'em into the turnips in the walley: shall us send Robert to the top of the hill to mark?"

The sportsmen who were beginning to grow tired and disgusted, agreed to this proposition, as it gave them a little breathing time, while the boy toiled round.

When they walked about half way across the



field, the faint distant whirr was heard, and the keeper cried, " Mur—rk !"

Underwood was won't to give vent to this significant word, in tones and accents modified according as things went.

Having prophesied a covey in some particular spot, and prophecy being fulfilled, it was loud and triumphant.

Game rising within shot—sharp and eager.

Before unloaded guns—querulous and angry.

On this occasion, faint and despondent. The fractious spirit which confined the partridges to the open ground, the capricious behaviour of the quadruped, and the stolid incapacity of his youthful companion had clothed his soul in a melancholy, dark as the velveteen which encased his body. He trudged on heavily, flinging the whole weight of his body upon his left boot, which gave him the appearance of a limp : only stopping now and then to kick away the heavy clod of earth which accumulated on his

boots, and to watch them thus propelled with a grim satisfaction.

So he cried mur—rk despondently ; then suddenly remembering the boy on the hill, he shouted it forth with all his strength. •

As the birds rose, Rauch blazed at them out of sheer spite.

“Made the feathers fly, Sir,” said Underwood, (*sotto voce*) “carrying the flesh away.”

“I thought I touched the left one,” returned Rauch innocently ; “but it was too far to kill.”

Underwood gave the young squire a sort of side giggle, still keeping his eyes upon the partridges, who flew in a line for the boy, and soon disappeared over the brow ; beyond this brow were the turnips, so all three looked at each other nodding, as if to say, “we have them now.”

After a little while they came in sight of the marker, who was apparently paying every attention to the atmosphere, and to all things that might pass therein.

The character of Robert Neats was com-

posed of three ingredients, self-will, doltishness, and a talent for evasion, which, when pushed into a corner, fought itself into effrontery.

All these exhibited themselves by turns upon the countenance of our intelligent youth, in the course of the following conversation :

“ Where be um gone, Bob ? ”

“ Be what gone ? ”

“ Why the birds of corse. ”

“ Waal, there's no saying—don't seem many about, do un ? ”

“ I asks you what's gone of those are birds as we flushed ? ”

“ I aint seen no birds. ”

“ You aint seen 'em, when they came within two yards of 'ee ? ”

“ They didn't come anigh me. ”

“ You dalnation ape ! didn't I call ‘ murk ? ’ ”

“ Yes, you called ‘ murk. ’ ”

“ And didn't 'em come close up ? ”

“ No they didn't. ”

“ I tell 'ee they did then, and Master Eddard 'll tell 'ee the same ; you can't see nothing close to, you mole-eyed bat ; I know'd it was no use

a havin' you afore I asked you—you cussed beetle ! you ought to keep your little pig's eyes open."

"Ought stands for nothing," retorted Robert.

Underwood collapsed beneath the arithmetic, but only for a moment ; his mouth opened like a pike's, and from the first few phrases, the tirade promised to be figurative, when Saxon interposed.

"Never mind, Underwood, never mind ; now we're on the top of the hill, let us have our lunch under this thorn-bush ; here's a nice bit of grass."

At these words, the brow of the keeper lighted up, and even Neats displayed an altered mien.

"But where's Frolic?" asked Rauch.

Nobody could see her for a long time, till at length Edward discovered a small black patch in the turnip-field below.

"A point, by jingo—come along old fellow."

They almost ran at first, while the ground

was bare and smooth ; then with throbbing pulses and flushing cheeks, they stepped softly on, lifting their feet above the high thick turnip leaves.

They could tell by her nose that the game was close under it.

A single bird rose ; it was Rauch's side ; he killed it ; a second between them ; both missed it, and Saxon fired at an absurd distance with his second barrel.

As if to punish him, a third partridge sprung close to his feet, towered straight up, (as old cocks often do) swung above him like a sign-board, presenting a sitting shot in the air, and followed the others towards the Stoke Hedge.

They returned up the hill, Edward swearing at his usual bad luck, a phrase, I believe, stereotyped in the vocabulary of all sportsmen ; and Rauch, who could afford to be tranquil, doing consolation.

They found their lunch ready spread under the thorn-bush, which crowned the solitude of the chalk eminence. The game-bags served as ottomans, horn cups as goblets, sandwiches,

cheese, with bottled Bass, the nectar and ambrosia of their banquet *al fresco*.

"It is warm for the season, Underwood ; are we to have no more snow and ice ; help yourself, Rauch, and your friends will like you the better."

"Us 'ul have a little snow afore long, I dessay, Sir ; and a good job too ; these flabby muggy days aint harf so much to my mind as a clear black frost ; 'taint wholesum nother ; a green winter makes a fat churchyard ; ay, and the birds can't be got at this weather to any account ; 'lor, after a good long frost, and a sprinkle of snow may-be, if a bit of noon-day sun do come out, they get into the turnips, and crouch their stomachs to the ground, till they gets so comfortable, they'll lie like sto-ones, and has to be trod up pretty nigh."

"We shan't have enough beer," said Rauch, as the third bottle was being opened, "can we get any near here?"

"There's the 'Crooked Billet,' Sir ; you can see it from here, the further side of the Big Gravel Pit."

"Ah, yes," said Saxon, "Neats can run there ; here, Neats."

"Bob," cried the keeper snappishly.

The boy was sitting on a bank, out of conversational ear-shot, dangling his legs over a bank, and munching his bread and cheese.

"Neats run over to the 'Crooked Billet,' and get two quart bottles of pale ale—"

"They won't have none of that there, Sir, and a pot would be plenty."

"Very well, Neats, get a pot of the best beer, will you?"

"Yes, Sir."

"And be as quick as you can."

Neats complied by breaking into a stiff knock-kneed shamble, which did not escape the satire of William, who holloed after him—"dy'e call that running, tie-leg?"

"Now, Underwood, a song," said Rauch, waxing imperative under the influence of bottle fifth and last.

"Him as sings with his mouth-full, will cry with his heart-full."

"Under those circumstances, of course—"

"Dy'e ever hear about Swearing Webb, Sir?" said the keeper, addressing himself to his master, "no, you couldn't tho,' you being away at Oxford College."

"No, who is Swearing Webb?"

Underwood cut a hunch from the bread on his thumb knuckle; a piece of minor dimensions from the cheese which rested on his nail; he inserted them simultaneously between his teeth, chewed and swallowed them; and all with the air of a man who was collecting the fragments of ideas.

Edward and Rauch listened.

"Them as knows Swearing Webb, calls him Swearing Webb acos he's the blasphemiest, nastiest, foulest-tongued fellow anywheres round this country, and them as doesn't know him, calls him Swearing Webb 'acos other people do.

"He's got a wife, and when he isn't a'work, or aslip, he's allers swearing at her, and when he isn't swearing at her, it's acos he's bin beating her, and is out of breath. Now it worn't no more than three wiks ago, he'd bin



swaring at his lorful wife, just as I might sware at the bitch, Frolic there (down charge, dall-ee down charge) when she runned into the birds, and he'd bin wiping her—O orful—and then he wint off to the public. When he got in-doors he seed a candle (as he thort, however) alight in the tap-room, but when he got in at the door, out it wint, and he seed no more on't, only the wood fire a crackling and a spitting at 'im.

“ ‘Darn and darn ye,’ sais he, ‘ what for did ye blow the candle out, when ye herd me a coming ?’

“ ‘ We aint seen no candle,’ said they, ‘ and we didn’t heer ye a comin’.’

“ With that he sat down in a chair, all ’mazed, and stared about him like a puzzled hare. Then somethin’ like a bit of lead dropped out of the ceilin’ on to the floor foreight aggin’ him, and a loud voice came out of the black beam above, sayin’, ‘ Go home thoudrunkin beast.’

“ And he bein’ in licker, took it to mean him, and he cript out of the room in a cold shiver ; and he did wint home, and he sittled hisself

down in his arm-chair, and he aint been able to move hisself out of that het nother."

"He's in the arm-chair now, eh?"

William drank off his horn, and nodded dismally. \*

"Here comes the boy."

"Walks curious, don't he?" observed the keeper.

"Poor fellow—I'm afraid he's knocked up; he had the most walking of any, before this last trip."

"He's making a good many trips now, Sir; ho! ho! there he goes, pitched clean over; and sarve him well right; there he don't deserve no pity," sneered Underwood, "he couldn't see that big stone, I s'pose; he's as blind as a fly in October, and he couldn't see them birds—a gallus!"

"Come along, Neats," cried Rauch, "hang the dog, how happy he looks; his cheeks are puffed out, and there's a sparkle in his eye, which is scarcely natural after so long a walk. Blow the fellow—come on—I'm thirsty."

"So am I," said Saxon.

"So am I," said the keeper.

"Now, Robert."

Robert increased his pace; he walked oddly perhaps, but still with rapidity.

"You've\*got the beer?"

Robert paused, the first shadow of a doubt darkened on his mind.

"You don't seem sure about it now," said Underwood, "though Mother Church's quart pot allers made itself felt on my back."

"I don't think he's got it now," said Rauch.

"He'll get sommat else if he hasn't! Dal your blood, where's the beer?" roared the keeper, in a voice of thunder.

The lad trembled.

"I told you to get some beer, didn't I?" asked Edward angrily.

"Yes, Sir, and some bread and cheese."

As he spoke these words, urged by an impulse not unnatural, he raised the back of his hand to his lips.

The two young gentlemen rolled on the ground in tortuous merriment.

But Underwood did not laugh—he was too thirsty.

“I tell you what,” said Rauch, “that boy’s not so stupid as you want to make him out, when a word can be taken in two senses, he takes the best; who could do more?”

“Can’t we beat towards the ‘Crooked Billet,’ William?”

“O, yes, Sir; we ought to have a bearin’ up the Stoke Hedge, and when we’re there, it ain’t five minutes walk off Blakey’s Liberty.”

“Very well then.”

Underwood’s face relaxed; “If it wor a mistake, it worn’t worth while being shirty about it; no use crying over shod milk.”

A shade of astonishment, unmingled with regret, might have flitted over Robert’s face, but even that now relapsed into phlegm.

Edward shot an old jack hare in a bit of meadow land; next they drove a covey of six into the Stoke Hedge. Then the fun began in earnest: the dog crept backwards and forwards as the birds ran along the grass and briar-covered ditch, feet raised and cautiously put

down, like a cat stalking a mouse; presently staunch as marble, tail out stiff, fore-foot bent, nose turned hedge-ways. They killed two brace, and one the dog caught; the sixth, after affording them much excitement, which, I need not say, is the real cream of shooting, beat the dog after all, by declining to be flushed and shot at.

They walked to the "Crooked Billet" in so amiable a state of mind, that they failed to notice the powers of expansion which the keeper's five minutes had acquired.

Refusing to stain the best parlour floor with their dirty boots, they went into a room which had a large white No. 2 chalked upon the door.

Benches lined the walls, two wooden tables, structure homely, parallel to wall and to each other; two chairs flanking the fire, floor sanded, ceiling white-washed, and bisected by a huge beam, black with age.

Over the mantel-piece was a dark brown board in a black frame, and upon it this inscription, in yellow, smoke-dried letters:

“When first I come I some did trust  
And did my money lend  
But when I asked for the same  
They soon forsook their friend  
Now my care is no man's sorrow  
Pay to-day and trust to-morrow.”

“Two rum-and-waters, Mrs. Church. Always drink rum in these country public-houses, it is the only spirit which will not admit of adulteration. Order what you like, William.”

“A pint of fi'penny for me, missus.”

“Then adulteration is not a crime confined to towns?”

“Taste their beer when it comes in, but its dark muddy look is quite sufficient.”

“Doesn't it knock these men up of a morning after they've been drunk over night?”

“No; the worst beer does not hang about one like the spirituous liquors; but early rising is their real safeguard.”

Rauch glanced at Underwood, who, with the instinctive breeding of a gentleman, though unbred, had quartered himself and companion over the pint of fi'penny, as far off his superiors as possible. He scrutinized their weather-

beaten faces and their dingy clothes, from the battered wide-awakes on their heads, to the hob-nail boots weight  $4\frac{1}{2}$  lb. with which their feet were loaded ; he sighed, and said in a low tone :

“ I pity these poor devils from my heart !  
They get up at day-break, they work till dusk ;  
they have no prospects to look forward to ; it  
is work, work, work, from twilight to twilight ;  
their only luxuries, rank tobacco and the fil-  
thiest beer : they are ill-paid, and even this  
they cannot depend upon ; there may be a  
dearth of labour—

“ We pity those who have to work all day in  
the open air, because it would kill us who have  
been brought up to sedentary occupations ; but  
depend upon it, they pity us, who are pinned  
in-doors to our books, much more heartily.  
Compassion would appear to be sometimes mis-  
placed if we are to go by the verse of the old  
sea-song,

“ The wind it blew a hurricane,  
The waves were mountains rolling,  
When Burney Buntline turned his quid,  
And said to Billy Bowling,

' A strong nor' wester's blowing Bill,  
Sure don't you hear it roar now ?  
Lord bless 'em how I pities all  
Unhappy folks ashore now !' "

The winter's sky was darkening, the air filling with dusky shades ; the sportsmen, with guns resting in the hollows of their arms, and hands buried in their trowsers' pockets, were walking briskly towards the woods.

The gun-nipples were smoky, and damp with moist powder ; the dog was jaded, and slunk slowly on with head and tail lowered to the ground ; the boy toiled beneath the weight of two hares and three rabbits slung upon a stick over his shoulder ; but Underwood still strode sturdily along, the game-bag swinging to and fro upon his back.

The fingers of the gentlemen were stained black, their waistcoats bespattered with drops of blood ; their gaiters mud-splashed, their boots yellow-brown from the clayey soil.

Still on the field-road with its low hedges, and green plain on either side.



Now they entered the shadow of the first tree; it was a long steep hill, the road was sunk between two high banks, and on these banks grew a line of tall beeches.

At first they were silent, but as they passed the wide drear woods, or low underwoods dotted with oaks, or hanging brows darkened by green yew-trees, the gamekeeper recounted exploits of the past, and deeds all but flooded in oblivion by the waves of time.

The spirit of the old man kindled at these remembrances.

"I mind the day," said he, "when a genelman, and only a genelman, could shoot. In that day, Sir, there wás only your grandpa, and old Major Dawson, and Sir Thomas Toodey, as dared shoot anywheres round this country. Your little farmers wer humble enough then, ah, and your gret uns too! There was Mr. Samuel Todd, him as had the Stoke Farm, he com'd one day to your grandpa, his landlord, and asked un, with his hat tò the ground, if he'd mind his keeping one greyhound."

"And did he let him?"

"He thought on't over and over, farmer looking all the while as sly and oncomfortable as could be, and at last he said a might, only he must cut the tail off fust—he, he! One hound can't catch so very many hares, 'specially if he ain't got no tail to turn hisself with!

"Shoot, Sir! lor bless 'ee, in them days a squoire might shoot anywheres! Look here," and the keeper took them by the arms, and led them to the side of the road, whence they could see for miles and miles over the flat country, "look at them railway-lights, Sir, look at that line of trees, look at that hill to the right, and regard that imminence to the left.

"From north to south, and from east to west—this side of the Thames that is—from east to west, and from north to south, those three genelman did shoot whenever and wherever they chose, and the farmers always glad to see 'em too! They worn't so updunky then about a broken hedge-stick, or a bent blade of grass, but they pulled out the best in the house for 'em, and they didn't pass the sarvints over; many's the horn of old Pharoah ale have I

mopped up in their brick floor kitchens, I warrant 'ee! then if there wor a brace of birds left behind in the larder, well and good, but it wornt for that they did ut.

“ ‘Ah, William,’ sed the old genelman—your grandpa that is—to me one day, as we wer a-beating some fields three miles off our rightful boundary, ‘ah, Underwood,’ sed he, ‘it’s all over!’

“ ‘I hope not, Sir,’ sed I, ‘for the sake of the dear young masterses and missusses,’ though I couldn’t tell what a wer a-drawing at, no more than nothing. \*

“ ‘It’s all over,’ sed he agin, and jist then he killed a brace right and left, and looked as dismal as if he hadn’t wanted to.

“ ‘It’s all over with them, Sir,’ ses I.

“ ‘They’re going to bring out a new act,’ sed he, a-ramming down his wadding so vicious, that I thort he’d a-bust the bottom of the gun out, ‘a new act to close fields; our day’s past and gone, it’s all over now.’

“And you see, Sir, his words have come as true as Gospel; here’s Mr. Samuel Todd, and Mr. James Todd, and Mr. William Todd, and

Mr. Thomas Todd, they all has their licenses, and they all kills their birds ; nice work to pre-sarve with genelmen like that all round, not to mention others ; the hul country's be-Todded, as your father ses when he ain't well, and a bit out of his mind with things ; and if he means we're overrun, and smothered with dalnation varmunt, he ain't fur off wot's right, to my mind on't. Why now every farmer, with his five or six hundred acres, drives his dog-cart and blood-horse, and keeps his dogs, and his guns, and rides in a scarlet coat and wot not ; he takes it up in better style than the landlord, begging your pardon, Sir. But lurd ! I mind the day when any one of 'em would have pulled his tax-cart into the ditch, and scraped hisself into nothing, when he see'd the squire cum-min a mile off."

They were now passing a common covered with fern, a furze-bush peeping up here and there, like green rocks from a brown sea.

"This used to be a great place for rabbits, usen't it, Underwood?"

"In the old—in your grandpa's time? yes

Sir, what thousands of 'em there wer! your grandpa, he never took no rent for that great field opposite, and he took the hul of one farm what war swarmed with rabbots into his own hands, and a poor bisness he made on't; letting alone the rabbots, which eat up every mortal thing pritty nigh, he didn't order nobody to look after his men to see they did their wark properly, but he oos'd to drive up every day from Blakey's, a mile an' a arf you know, Sir, and when he'd come to Wegrove Gate, he'd blow his horn for somebody to come and open it; then one of the men would run there as hard as ever he could pelt, to make hisself sperspire, with his shirt all unbottoned and sleeves tucked up, just as if he'd been at work the hul morning, and when the—your grandpa, I means, drove up to the ga-et of the field, there they was all a-warking fit to fall into pieces, and niver looking up to see who 'twas. O no! how wer they to tell? A'ter he'd stopt a bit, and given his little orders, he'd drive hum agin, and a'ter this was done, the men 'ud botton up their shirts, and the wimen-folk 'ud let down their

gownds, and they'd all sit under the high hedge together, and go on as they'd bin a-going on afore."

"But why didn't somebody inform him of this?"

"*Sarvints niver tells, Sir,*" replied the keeper tersely.

There is a great deal of pith in this axiom, which most domestics learn by head and keep by heart. But he went on again:—

"How fond he wer of shooting, heart alive! but lack-a-day! old age must creep upon us all at last, and some on us finds it hard to beer. By and bye, I seed he didn't shoot so true as he oosed to, and he found of it too, and it made he so fretful, that he shot wuss and wuss ivery day; and thus it went on till his eyes grew dim, and his legs tottered, and his thin arms ached; and he had to lay by that gun you're carryin' now, not to use it agin, and to chain up those dogs which 'ud never hunt for him no more. Yet for all that he liked to see me, and he liked to stroke the dogs, and I've heerd say he'd cock and uncock the old dooble

there for hours and hours in the little room upstairs.

“ But when he grew feebler and feebler, and his sight weaker, and his poor temper more nervous, more grievousome, he couldn't come to the kennels to look at the dogs, and your grandma told me I wer never to venture into his sight, fur it made him mope and brood for days after seeing me; they likewise took the gun away, and when he spoke about me or the dogs, your grandma and the rest on 'em would never answer him, but allers talked about somethin' else.

“ I suppose it wer all for the best, yet it must have com'd cruel to him, so poor and sinking.

“ It seems only yesterday since then; ah! time slips away like butter a'most, 'specially with them as lives like me, one day the same as another, nought particilar to vex, nought to be glad of here below: week runs a'ter week, and month a'ter month. ' I see the buds a-springing forth, and the primroses smelling softly, and it's spring; afore I've done enjoying

of them the leaves are all out, and the young pheasants wants raring up, and the green leaves whispering, and the little birds singing, tell me it's summer; but 'ere I've time to turn, cherries grow black on the wild wood trees, and the men are 'fagging' in the yellow fields, and people are talking of our fine dry autumn. But the shooting season passes quickest of all, for then I am busiest and happiest—so quick, that the frost and the snow, and the fruit, and the harvest do all come together like.

“ Yes, it seems only yesterday since the hour when I seed the dear old squire for the last time. I mind it well: a raw cold December day, with the clouds down upon the fields, and earth and sky all one dull brown colour. I was at Cross-Lanes with the dogs out to exercise, when who should I see but him, a-walking up the road towards me all by hisself, and leaning on a stick as he cript along. I don't know what could a brought him out that bitter day, he who hadn't bin outside the house for so long. I stood still; he came nigh close upon



me afore he know'd I wer there. Then I took off my thick coat, and laid it on the bank, and he sat down on it trimbling; and all the dogs came up to him, and jumped on him, and pushed their noses into his lap; and he wer pleased, and he patted 'em all, and called 'em by their names, and he smiled a weak smile, such as they smile who have travell'd long, and are worn down to the grave.

“Then I lifted him up, and told him the dews wer falling, and the night-chill wer a-coming on, and he, who had allers been a little proud in his strong young days, wrung me by the hand as if I had been his brother, and he stood there looking into my face while his hull body shook, and his grey hair fluttered in the cold wind.

“And he bust into tears, and talked of the many happy days we had spent years afore, and his voice was faint, and he cried so, and—and—I'm sitch a dalnation fool—I could-n-nt help lumping too. Here, Frolic, Frolic, war-fence, you gallus; come to heel then, ya yelping hound!”

And Underwood flew into a violent rage with the dog.

“Did you see him again?” asked Rauch.

He did not answer.

Saxon whispered, “He died that same night.”

## CHAPTER IX.

## MEAT-TEA.

THEY came to the kitchen porch, and passed through into the interior of the house, the rosy maids smiling openly upon their young master, but only with furtive looks at the stranger gentleman of the bronzed face and raven moustache.

"Bring in the tea as soon as you can, Mary."

"Yes, Sir, d'rectly."

"This is our dining-room ; it is small, and, therefore, cheerful ; carpet's shabby, so we can wear our dirty boots at ease."

"I don't mean to wear mine long though ; what can you do for me ? my things won't be up yet, I fancy."

"I can give you a jug of hot water, a hair-brush, and a towel, and as your portmanteau hasn't come, perhaps that will suit your box."

"And my feet?"

"I will lend you a pair of clean socks ; and although you wouldn't like to stand in my shoes after Little Go, you won't mind sitting in my slippers, after a hard day's shooting."

"Not if they're large enough. Hullo ! here comes Mary, that was a most unfeminine directly upon my word."

Ten minutes afterwards (bachelors make quick toilets when they are hungry) they sat tête-à-tête over their plates of beefsteak pudding, and great cups of tea.

"If the Romans only knew what they lost by not subjugating China ; nothing refreshens one like tea, I must say."

"Women and tea," answered Rauch, "are the two most pernicious poisons we enjoy."

"Take each in moderation."

"But how few of us can do that; physical love is a draught which, when once sipped, must be tossed off to its bitter dregs."

"I deny it; let a man take friendship as an antidote."

"To those who have once tasted love, friendship is insipid."

"Friendship is the wine of life."

"And love the brandy-and-water of existence. And as it is with love, so it is with tea. The man who has habituated himself to tea, grows sleepy and restless upon a coffee, cocoa, or chocolate diet, and is compelled to continue this poisonous stimulant, which works beneath the surface, and slowly, but surely, steals away the health."

"I cannot believe that tea is a poison."

"See how many tea-drunkards become monomaniacs, Johnson, Hazlitt, and thousands we do not hear of."

"Most tea-drunkards, as you call them, are men who have great brains, and who work them; no wonder that these are victims to monomania. Don't you know the Latin proverb,

‘there is no genius without some tincture of madness.’”

“You do not believe there are poisonous properties in tea?”

“No.”

“If I tell you that when I was in China, they showed me several men whose hands were quite withered, through the mere sifting of the plant in its raw state. Now we take the poison, remember, distilled into an essence, and we apply it not to our outer skins, but to our inner stomachs.”

“In China! what an extraordinary man you are. It was only a week ago, that on discussing the virtues of Constantia wine, I found you had staid three weeks at the Cape; yesterday you slipped out that you had been into every country in Europe, except the Shetland Islands; and now you have been to China; I begin to believe that you have been everywhere.”

Rauch gave a short dry laugh, and did not answer.

Having finished their meal, they put out the candles, that they might sit in the chimney-

corner, and thoroughly enjoy the fire. It was there that Saxon announced a resolution of his own, which Rauch combated, but in vain.

"I think you take this pluck of yours, too much to heart, Ted ; we must all crack our hard nuts in turn, you know."

"I wish I could crack Macpherson's ; but it is no use your arguing ; I was better 'up' in my work than I shall ever be again, and yet they plucked me ; *ergo*, I shall be plucked till Doomsday ; *ergo*, I had better take my name off the books. So say no more about it."

He now rang the bell. "If Ann comes in," he said, "I will show you the stupidest girl in the stupidest parish in the United Kingdom ; to prove my words, I will subject her to a test which you will perhaps think absurd, but I do not think it will fail."

The servant came in.

"Ann, I want some more wood ; bring me two pieces, a long bit and a short bit ; now mind what I say, one bit longer than the other, and don't make any mistakes."

Ann retired evidently mistrustful of herself ;

they heard rattling about in the wood-basket outside the door; at last she re-entered.

"You stupid girl," he said, angrily, "I told you to bring me one bit longer than the other, and you have brought me one bit shorter than the other."

"I beg your pardon I'm sure, Sir," and she rushed deliriously from the room, changed the pieces and returned.

"That reminds me," said Rauch, laughing, "of my own mild Hindoo, who having to go a certain distance for my letters every morning, excused himself for being late on one occasion by alleging that in the hot weather he could do the journey in an hour, but not in the cold under an hour and a half, the days being so much shorter."

"Not bad, but you will allow my sample is the best."

"Your's surpasses anything, I could ever have conceived."

"Now, if you like," said Edward, in great good-humour, "I will shew you some curious memorials that we have up-stairs."



Rauch who still sat by the fire, feared it would be giving him too much trouble.

"Not at all," he answered gaily, as he lighted a bed-room candle, "come along, come along."

Rauch bestowing a glance of askant regret upon the glowing fire, issued shivering into a small bare pantry, with an old fashioned lattice-window. Edward held the candle close down to one of the panes: Rauch stooping deciphered with some difficulty,

*Miss Bringham*

*Miss Bringham*

*Mrs Bringham*

*She has no faults or I*

*no faults are find*

*Tho: Saxon. 1726*

Then he led him into the drawing-room, and taking down a small bible with the stout black binding of those days pointed out on the fly leaf, a scrawl of faint uneven writing.

*Bridget  
Saxon  
~~Bridget~~  
her Book  
1824*

They went up carpet-less stairs, the boards rotten and worm-eaten till they came to a small door at the very top; this they opened, but not without trouble, for only one hinge remained, and as they pushed, the bottom of the door scraped against the floor.

It was an attic with a black slanting ceiling, corners cobwebby, planks yielding : it was piled round with great heaps of lumber covered over

with damp, and mouldy matting. They squeezed a way up in front of the dingy window. After a long search Edward seemed to have found what he wanted; he scrubbed one of the panes industriously, with his pocket-handkerchief, till characters might be descried upon it as in the other, cut into the glass with a diamond : the words were these,

*She turns my fondness into nothing*

They looked at each other and smiled.

"These," said Rauch, "give us the outline of a married life; we should fail in respect to your ancestress, Teddy, if we tried to fill it up out of our own heads."

"Let us have a red fire," said Saxon, "wood is cheap, besides we can make our fortune out of the ashes."

Rauch glanced at the debris on the table.

"We have brought home few birds, but large

appetites," said he: "like Joe Sprat and his wife, we have licked the platter clean, haven't we?"

"I am afraid you have spent a slow day."

"Not at all; I cannot say that I care about standing up to my knees in blood and feathers, and blazing away like a regiment of recruits at rifle-practice. I like to see the dogs work and the birds fly, a sky above my head, a fine open country before my eyes, a zealous attendant, and a pleasant companion who doesn't mind shooting on the left-hand side; all this I had to-day, and as the metropolitan bard sings, 'I ask for nothing more.'"

"Do you call Neats zealous?"

"No, he is amusing; but I was thinking of Underwood, when I spoke. That man, Sir, is a wit, a poet and a philosopher. When you killed a brace of birds with one barrel, don't you remember his saying, that it was stopping two mouths with one morsel? I call that wit, don't you? Then he sang us some charming verses about the old genelman, your grandpa, and delivered some very sound remarks on the rising class of the day."

“The gentleman farmers?”

“The gentleman farmers.”

“Yes, they are passing us.”

“Of course they are; they will become the real squireage before very long; at least they will halve it with the City merchants. They will become the members of the Lower House, and then the Corn Laws will be paid full attention to, I promise you. At present they are only semi-civilized; they drink foreign wines instead of home-brewed ale, and they eat venison instead of fat bacon: but they think quite as much of their insides as ever they did; *gourmets* instead of *gourmands* that is all. Look into the hearts of our farmers, and the first great absorbing thought is—their dinner; when they succeed in cheating each other, what do they do—they dine; it is the manner in which they celebrate all their satisfactory results, simply because it is the greatest treat they can give themselves. But there is a young generation of farmers yet, my boy; look where you will, you will find them: already they have entered our public schools, already they have

matriculated at our Universities: they are studying chemistry in our laboratories, they are inventing machineries in our iron towns: when their fathers become pork they will bury them: they will give nature a new face, for they will dress her in a very different style. But, mind you, this won't stop human misery, it will increase it a thousand fold: while the land is torn by iron teeth, and corn ground by steel and water, human creatures will be torn by hunger, human creatures will be ground into despair. What matter! let us invent and become millionaires: God help the rich, let the poor starve."

"I notice this, Rauch: you have scarcely a good word for any one: and you never speak of any but of knaves and fools."

"It is difficult for those who have been in the world to speak of any others."

"Oh! I fear, Rauch, that you look too much into your own glass."

"Or as Underwood said to-day, 'fond of measuring other people's corn by my own peck.' No, Edward, I am often selfish enough to wish

that I resembled those people who can never see beyond the end of their own noses ; who cannot detect vice in others till it is crammed down their own throats, nor understand the misery which others endure till that misery itself descends and crushes them beneath its weight.

- They went out of doors, and walked up and down the gravel-path in the garden.

Now and then they stopped to gaze up at the black cloudless heaven, but they did not speak.

There is something about night, especially when all the stars are shining, which appals the brain, yet softens the heart, and prepares it to receive remarkable impressions, and to be subdued by sublime emotions.

So they did not speak through fear of dissolving their enchanted chains.

From the depths of the dark wood before them, sprang a little patch of flame ; it grew larger and larger till they saw it was a fire lighted by some sawyers at work there ; and

soon they perceived dark shadowy figures flitting round, and stooping as if to feed the blaze.

This sight, almost spectral as it was, served to heighten the strange fancies, which had begun to possess them: still they walked, still together, and still conversing only with their thoughts.

Edward spoke first :

“I have been looking for a long time at that beautiful yellow star: it is odd that I should never have noticed it before: it is larger and brighter than any of the others in the firmament above us. And foolish though it be, I cannot prevent myself from linking its existence with mine. Do you see, now, even as I speak, how it darts forth its beautiful rays as if to answer me with its silent but fiery tongues?”

“Where is this star?”

“There, at the corner, where a strip of wood juts out from the rest. Can you not see it? Look straight towards the fire: then raise your eyes to the sky just above the trees. I wonder



you have not observed it before : I have been watching it all this while, and dreaming to myself, and talking to it with my eyes."

"I cannot see it."

"You cannot see it!"

Rauch passed his hand across his brow, and whispered to himself, "then it must be true."

"What are you saying?"

"I did not say anything, did I? I was thinking of a foolish superstition they have among the Hindoos."

"Tell it me."

"It is not worth repeating."

"I should like to hear it well enough, as for believing it, you need not be afraid of that. I am a sad sceptic in all omens and ghost stories."

"I cleave to the common-place, and abjure the supernatural like yourself. However, I will give you the heathen prognostic if you want amusement. It is simply this: the Indians assert that before any great misfortune, a star (more or less large and powerful, in proportion to the extent of the affliction) appears to the

one who is to suffer, and to him alone ; that is all."

"It is a curious idea, but I have a reason for preserving my equanimity. If the augury be true, this star should have appeared to me before my examination ; that is as great a misfortune as is likely to happen to me in these peaceful times ; but Ra—"

"We may all die," said the other gravely, "at any hour and at any moment. But death is not always a misfortune. Can you see the star now?"

"Yes, but it is dull and faint."

"It is not red?"

"No, it is yellow."

"It is only yellow, you are sure of that."

"If I can trust my own eyes—yes."

"I think I see it now ; a large yellow star with a misty halo hanging round, a misty halo and flames shooting through."

"There is no halo, there are no flames, and I noticed that as you spoke the star died away, while now it is brighter than before. This is a singular illusion. But I wanted to ask you,

Rauch—just now I heard you say to yourself ‘then it must be true.’ What did you mean?”

“You must be mistaken.”

“I am certain that I heard you.”

“But I am certain I did not say it, my dear boy. Depend upon it the ghosts are deceiving your ears as well as your eyes to-night.”

Still Edward was not satisfied.

They spoke but few words, they avoided each other’s eyes, they parted early for the night, they knew not why.

Each as he entered his bed-room, walked to the window, and gazed upon the sky over the fire in the wood.

But a large dark cloud had risen, and hung before it like a veil.

Rauch wiped away the sweat which was streaming on his brow, and he muttered hoarsely, “It was not red, the other star—he told me it was red, that its beams were red, that it rolled in a lurid, fiery sea, shrouded in a grey mist. It is not the same star, it cannot be the same fate.”

And as Edward turned from the window, he

felt as if a spear of ice had been thrust through his breast : his breath gurgled to his throat, his blood froze in his veins.

And as he slept, he had a dream.

A dream of three spirits : a dream of horror, of passion, and of tears.

The third spirit stood before him in her black robe, her brow bound with cypress, her face of pity bent on his, and her thin white arm extended upwards.

*It was the second time !*

## CHAPTER X.

## MAN TRAPS SET HERE.

“Cloris was combing her hair in the sun with an ivory comb, and with a fair hand. The comb was not seen in her hand as the sun was obscured in her hair. She gathered together her tresses of gold, and they sent forth a second greater light before which the sun is a star, and Spain is the sphere of its radiance.”—GONGORA’S SONNETS.

As they were making their hostile preparations the next morning, Edward received a letter.

“This is an invitation to a ball at Haley ; I think I should like to go ; Ràuch, you will come with me of course ?”

“Very good.”

“ You will find it dull, but a dulness so full of absurdities, as to be enjoyable.”

“ I have no doubt it will be quite as lively as some of the affairs I have been subjected to abroad, or at home either, for that matter. But now, what is to be the order of the day ?”

“ A stroll through a copse after a stray hare or rabbit, to fill up the forenoon ; we will go down early, for it is market-day, and I can introduce you to one or two very nice men.”

They came back to the house at one o'clock, with a leash of hares, and hands bathed in blood.

As Rauch was changing his clothes, he was seized with a violent tooth-ache, which made him resolve to stay at home, preferring the dingle to the ball-room. He would not detain his friend who was already dressed ; the dog-cart was out too ; so without much altercation on the subject, he shook hands, took his whip from a corner in the hall, and rattled away from the stable-yard.

He had lost a companion for his long cold drive, and having experienced toothache, he pitied Rauch sincerely ; otherwise he was not so very sorry ; he asked himself the reason, and found that he could not answer ; he only knew that he did feel happier because he was going alone.

The sky was clear, except by the corner of the wood ; there a large cloud hovered descending almost to the tops of the trees. A stream of thin blue smoke curling through the leaves, showed that the fire was still alight, though its flame was extinguished by the broad glare of the sun. As he drove past, he could see the sawyers in their red caps and white shirts working upon the edge of the pit ; and long after he was out of ear-shot, the shrill screaming of the saw still rung, or seemed to ring within his brain.

Having left his carriage at the inn, he walked up the street to buy his pair of white kid gloves. He observed a young lady on horseback riding towards him ; it was Lucy. She soon recognized him, and pricking her horse with the spur which

she always wore, pranced him to the kerbstone.

"Ah, Teddy, dear, how do you do? I am very glad to see you for a thousand reasons. You have come down for Hickman's?"

"Yes, and you the same?"

"That's what I am going to tell you about—there, haven't you done shaking hands yet? you musn't be so affectionate in public, my dear child."

"To tell the truth, I was so enchanted that I forgot to leave go of your hand."

"I hope it felt comfortable : mine did."

She is going to ask me a favour, thought Saxon.

"Do you like me in this habit, Sir?"

"Of course I do ; it shows off your figure."

"How do you know I don't pad myself here with wadding, and pinch myself in here with double handed lace pulls?"

"I don't believe you do ; but you are one of the invited up here, I hope?"

"That reminds me again ; I have got a little sacrifice for you to make. I would rather put



myself under an obligation to you, than to any one else, and that's why I choose you."

"And I would rather oblige you than any one else, and that's why I ask you to tell me what it is."

She played with her horse's mane, turning the long hair round and round her fingers.

"You know, Teddy, that I have always been unpopular with these Haley creatures."

"All the more credit to you."

"And lately I have brought things to a climax rather."

"How?"

"I cannot explain the how to you: at all events I would rather not. But I have done something which has offended them terribly, and so they have determined to punish me."

"By asking you to one of their parties?"

"And by ill-treating me there."

"Oh, oh!"

"They intend cutting me, that is all: their daughters will not be permitted to speak, nor their sons to dance with me. Miss Cobb and some of her own tea-party clique have been

deputed, I understand, to console me in my solitude; if I am hungry to feed me with stones, and if I thirst to give me vinegar on a sponge: in short, these honest people have combined to employ the whole strength of their malice upon a poor girl, who happens to be a little wilder—”

“Prettier—”

“And more thoughtless than themselves.”

“And how did you find this out?”

“A diminutive creature—I forget his name, but he lives up the Fair Mile—has fallen in love with me, which is very absurd of him, as he is small, poor, and ugly; however, everything’s created for a purpose, and this little man was created to expose, and by exposing, to defeat the conspiracy.”

“Of course you find that you have a prior engagement, and don’t go; then they will have their trouble for nothing.”

“Not go! that would be to allow myself defeated before the battle had begun. No, I have a better plan than that. Fortunately, they were obliged to ask you and Mr. Walsh, though

they hate you both; now you two will dance with me the whole evening, do you see?"

"Ye-es, I see."

"Walsh, unfortunately, has to go to town by the late train at eleven, so you will have all the laurels to yourself most of the evening."

"But they will say we are engaged!"

"My good soul, they have been saying more than that about us for these three months past!"

"If you are determined—"

"Quite."

"And if you are sure it would not be better to disappoint them at the very last moment."

"Wouldn't do; I must have my dances and my victory."

"What time will you be there?"

"Half-past eight. Where do you bait?"

"Bull."

"I pick you up at 8.15.: ta, ta, I must be off home to dress for dinner."

She used her spur, and brought her whip down smartly on the flanks: the spirited ches-

nut half reared, and with arched neck, and foaming bit, plunged away at full speed.

He gazed after her till the houses shut her from his sight : he sighed, and walked down towards the Bull.

There, as expected, the old trio, Walsh, Hobbes, Betteridge. They received him with a roar, and commemorated his return by potations more ample than judicious. In course of time they were noisy, and Hobbes pelted the company with his sample bags. And it was only towards dusk, that he got away from the close atmosphere of the parlour, with its lettuce-smoke, the spirit-fume, and wheat-grains swimming in the spilt liquor on the floor.

The ball was held in the Town-hall : thus the most favourable impressions were created—before it began.

Mr. Hickman was the Mayor of Haley ; being a brewer as well, he was the most affluent member of the corporation ; this, invariably the case in small country towns, is a circumstance which scarcely tells well for the tastes of the

inhabitants, or for the honesty of those who adulterate to their partialities.

Mr. Hickman had a large family of ugly daughters, and one son who was vulgar, and who had succeeded in making himself conceited, on what grounds, Heaven knows, unless it was on the score of those he had left behind him in the bottom of his beer-casks.

Hickman gave this ball, to husband his daughters : he had given it at the Town-hall to husband his finances ; he had found that expenses gather at home one way and another ; but here the room cost him nothing, and he contracted for the refreshments, which were as moderate as the prices he had fixed for them.

Edward and Lucy, disembowelled from the murky interior of the old-fashioned vehicle, passed over the trottoir, between two rows of ragged but admiring spectators, tripped up a broadish staircase, deposited coat and cloak in the ante-room, and took their way down a passage with three doors at the end. Here they paused : fortunately music sounding from within signalled them to the right one.

It was the first dance: therefore all who have ever been to a dance in rural districts will know that it was a polka. Having shaken hands with the Hickmans, as much cordiality apparent on both sides, as hatred concealed, they clasped hands and began dancing.

The music was one piano; one piano to a room which was really spacious. Moreover, this unfortunate instrument was made the least of by being installed at the very end of the apartment; consequently in the middle, the notes were faint, and at the other end inaudible.

This fact forced itself upon the guests in its full unpleasantness, when a little afterwards a first set was formed in that remote locality. Quadrilles are never lively, but to walk through them without the accompaniment of music is something more than social treadmill, I can assure you.

This was not all; it was soon discovered that Mr. Hickman had not wasted any money upon cleanliness; the floor was unswept; the ladies' skirts performed this office rather to individual detriment, but not so thoroughly as to

prevent the once snowy gloves from assuming the tint of a dingy brown, nor the black suits of the gentlemen from a powder of white dust spots.

Walsh came in just as they sat down together, a little apart from the cattle.

He shook hands with them, and said,

“Here I am, Miss Leddiard.”

“Really; and is that all you have to tell me? Disagreeable facts speak for themselves.”

“Then I can tell you that you are looking very handsome.”

“I have got a small mirror in my fan, thank you; try again.”

“Thirdly, Miss Cobb is wearing that brimstone dress.”

“I might have known that without any one telling me. But isn’t it hideous?”

“What can be her object in choosing such a colour?”

“To match her complexion.”

“In age,” put in Edward, “as well as in hue.”

“I have known her complexion to be born

in the evening, and die by the next day. However, she sticks to the lovely original now!"

"She will never get tired of wearing that dress."

"Yes she will;" said Walsh, "though a monster she is still a woman; she must give it up soon."

"Never."

"I'll take long odds," said Lucy, ("long odds, mind, for it is all in your favour), that she will not appear in it more than once more."

"You will tell her it's not proper for her to go about in a low dress at her age."

"That would be likely to stop her, wouldn't it?"

"You will steal it then."

"Miss Cobb is a person who would not leave her attire where it could be fingered, much less stolen!"

"And very prudent," said Edward, "rub it hard and it would fall into pieces."

"I think it is almost a safe bet; what do you say, old fellow?"

He hesitated: Lucy squeezed his hand; "I



see no reason," he answered, "why she should give it up all at once, after having worn it so often."

"I'll make the bet then; but am I to be paid if I win?"

"No doubt she will pay you."

"She will pay when she's lost, not before."

"I will trust you; what is it to be—gloves?"

"Bah! tired of gloves!"

"Anything in the scent line?"

"No, I legged a poor fellow out of a whole window-full only the other day."

"What *do* you want then?"

She reflected for a little while.

"Well, what d'ye think of this? your grey mare—"

"My thorough-bred—yes, go on."

"Is she a thorough-bred? dear me; that bony animal I mean—"

"Exactly."

"Against my—my—"

"Against your—"

"Chesnut pony,"

"Ha! ha! ha! if you know a horse from a

mare, perhaps you will know that my ~~bone~~ animal is worth twenty of your sleek-skinned, grass-fed—”

“I thought you were to give long odds?”

“Very well—it is a bet—though hang me if I can make you out; you won’t give her a new gown?”

“Make your mind easy; I won’t do anything of the sort. Now the bet’s made, you may be my partner in this quadrille; the music must have begun; be quiet for a moment, I want to listen; all right; but remember our compact, both of you; to dance with nobody else but me.”

They again promised.

“Come along, partner; here, Teddy, take care of my reticule for me.”

“What’s your object in bringing a thing like this to dance with? why it’s a carpet-bag, not a reticule.”

“My pocket-handkerchief is not cambric.”

“I don’t see what that has to do with it.”

“Look here ; if a girl has a cambric handkerchief, she carries it in her hand all night, but if it's cotton, she puts it into her pocket. My dressmaker, knowing that I use cambric, did not think it worth while to make me a pocket at all ; so being out of the precious material, I am obliged to bring a reticule.”

“We shan't get a place, little magpie, if we don't make haste.

Mrs. Hickman bustled up, having first spoken to her eldest and ugliest.

“Will you allow me to introduce you to a partner for this set, Mr. Saxon ?”

“I am afraid you must excuse me this dance, Mrs. Hickman ; I am rather tired with my polka.”

“I don't half like it,” he said to himself, “this is the sort of thing I shall be subjected to all the evening ; dash the girl, why can't she keep on good terms with people ? While Walsh is here, I shall have to sit moping by myself through every other dance ; and when he is gone she will make me dance through thick and thin, and knock me up for a fortnight. The

worst of it is, there are one or two handsome girls here to-night; first and only time, of course; and here comes Miss Cobb herself, to drive me out of my seven senses, with her snivelling, twaddling tittle-tattle."

She sat down by him with a terrible rustling of her yellow gown; having asked separately after all the members of his family whom she knew; she began praising Miss Leddiard, in order to draw him out. But he was artful enough in his way, and managed her as easily as he had done the little milliner at Woodstock. He sneered at her, affected jealousy of Walsh; and drew from her several satirical *mots*, with which he afterwards regaled Lucy to that young lady's intense delight. But he did not tell her that he had learnt from Miss Cobb the reason of their outbreak against her.

After he had danced the Lancers with her, they had a few minutes uninterrupted conversation, Walsh having gone to watch operations in the whist-room.

"It is a long time since we have seen each other, Lucy."

"Yes, isn't it? quite an age. I think you're grown, by the bye."

"Older and wiser that is all."

"Not sadder, I hope?"

"Do I look very miserable?"

"I thought you looked unhappy, when I was dancing with Mr. Walsh."

"My being doleful then, is the reason that I am happy now."

"I don't know that either; your face wears a much sadder expression than it used to; something has happened since the summer to trouble you. Edward will tell me what it was, won't he?"

"Some other time I will, dear, if you wish it. But let us broach a merrier subject."

"If you want a ludicrous one, take the appearances of the ladies here; *what* a set of Gorgons and premature wall-flowers."

They discussed them all in turn; Lucy was not only effervescent, but saline. First she pulled their dresses to pieces, then tore up and devoured them, bodies and minds; and he helped her.

"I must confess though," said she, "that there are more good-looking girls to be seen to-night, than is usual for Haley."

"Pooh ! who is there ?"

"Miss Jackson has, I think, very nice features."

"Not so bad, certainly ; but I like a girl with some spirit ; she scarcely ever smiles, and as for a laugh she would as soon think of biting her own head off."

"You don't do the girl justice, Edward ; she is really the merriest girl in the world. I have known her quite scream with laughter, and for hours together ; no one I have ever met, possesses such a flow of animal spirits."

"Why doesn't she open her mouth in company then ?"

"Because she has bad teeth."

"Pah !"

"What is your opinion of Miss Clements ?"

"She looks well ; knows how to make the most of herself."

"She dresses to perfection, that girl ; I quite envy her the art."

"You don't need it : does she paint?"

"Never to my knowledge; but she does something better than that."

"What may that be?"

"Perhaps you will disbelieve me, and I should not like to be suspected of telling an untruth."

"I will believe it."

"And you will not repeat it?"

"Honour bright."

"She is troubled with pimples on her nose."

"I can't see them."

"And she puts her feet into boiling water every night to keep them away."

"Now I admire her all the more for that."

"And the pimples?"

"Say no more."

"I will say this; every one but yourself adores Miss Taylor."

"I can't adore a prude."

Lucy burst out laughing,

"If you knew her as I do."

"What do you call a girl who muffles herself up to the chin?"

"It isn't modesty though," said Lucy, depressing her tucker the least bit in the world; "watch her when she waltzes. Can't you understand what it is?"

"No; what is it?"

"I mustn't tell you; ah well, you will understand these things when you grow older."

"But you haven't named *the* belle."

"Haven't I?"

"No, of course you haven't; passed her by altogether."

"Dy'e mean the lioness?"

"Who's the lioness?"

"Miss Hickman senior; you look at her face closely, it is very like a lion's."

"'Pon my word the resemblance is wonderful; who found it out?"

"I did; but who is the beauty?"

"There she is, close to the piano."

"What, the blue lady? gracious me, how can you admire her? a low forehead—"

"And splendid hair."



"Pencilled eye-brows."

"And blue eyes—"

"They are grey; I am certain they are grey; and lor, my good child, she's as thin as a lath."

"She is a sweet little thing though."

"Oh yes! the nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat."

"Miss Leddiard," said Walsh, coming up, "the night is ours, and the battle's won; Hickman junior, approaches with a flag of truce in the shape of an offer for the next waltz. What is it to be, peace or war?"

"War to the knife."

"That will be silly," said Saxon, "you've shown them you are independent, don't show them you are obstinate."

"I won't accept a base compromise; guerre à la mort."

"That is plucky," said Walsh.

"Or mulish," muttered Edward.

"If either of you wish to break the compact, I yield directly."

"I wasn't thinking of myself," said he, "I

only thought it would be best for you ; you may depend on my sticking to my engagement."

"As for me," said Walsh, "I must soon go ; here comes the white banner ; I will ask it about supper at all events."

Young Hickman came up to Miss Leddiard, evidently swaggering under the impression that he was about to confer a great favour.

"Miss Leddiard, may I have the hon-nor of dancing this schottische, I believe, or—with you ?"

(*Icily*). "Thank you, I am engaged for the rest of the evening."

"I say, Hickman," said Walsh, fighting his laughter with some trouble into a giggle ; "when's supper ?"

"There isn't to be a regular supper," said Hickman, forgetting to "yorr," "but a place inside there, like a pastry-cook's ; you go in, feed and lush as much as you like, only you don't pay anything, ho ! ho !"

"I see."

"Much jollier than a sit down supper you

know, at least I think so, and so does the governor. In fact I was the one to recommend it."

"B— your eyes then," muttered Walsh.

"And he's gone to work on the ideer; fact is, I hate being squashed into a jelly when I'm eating one; ho! ho! not so bad, he! he!"

"Johnny, I want to speak to you a moment."

It was the lioness roaring; he went.

"Infernal fool," growled Walsh.

"Vulgar young cad," said Saxon.

"If there is anything I hate, it is a stand-up supper; all worry and jostling, labour endless, rest never. Reach for a thing over a man's shoulder, eat it behind a woman's back. At a proper supper you do get a chance of half-an-hour with the girl you love; besides, supper, say what you will, is the spirit of a ball. People dance a quadrille after supper, when they only boggled over a waltz before. No supper to-night, and you'll see what a dead-alive affair it'll be right on to the very end, which, thank Heaven, I shall not see. But here's the schot-

tische. I'll dance so much more, drink and eat what I can, and be off."

As Edward sat by himself, gazing moodily on the panorama of faces and dresses flitting by, he fancied that he heard something rustle close to him. He could not understand this. He looked again and again beneath his chair, on the seats near him, on the floor, on the wall, but could discover no cause for the sound. But he heard it several times more, sometimes louder than at others, and, on one occasion, accompanied by a strange small sound, half-whistle, half-squeak, which served to increase his bewilderment, it was so unlike anything he had ever heard before.

Dance over, Lucy took her reticule from a chair by his side.

Refreshments in a small side-room.

Four dishes of jelly, three blanc-mange, a few with oranges, raisins, and biscuits; plenty of hot water, lump sugar, and tea-spoons, and a few decanters of South African.

Enter Miss Cobb, hanging on the arm of a half-pay Colonel. She, simpering, murmurs

‘negus,’ the Colonel, ogling, runs, mixes, fills.

Close following, Miss Leddiard and her two beaux ; she sits down next to Miss Cobb ; she asks for tea with cream and sugar.

Walsh began to watch her uneasily, she was looking too demure by a great deal.

“How well you are looking to-night, my dear !” said Miss Lucy.

“It is very kind of you to say so ! And isn’t Mr. Walsh handsome ? Now if—dear me, my love, your dress is unhooked at top, shall I—”

“Thank you,” said Lucy, biting her lips, and doing it herself.

“I was going to say about Mr. Walsh—”

“Well, gentlemen, (raising her voice a little), I thought it was usual to attend to one’s partner at supper.”

“Do you call this a supper ?” whispered Walsh, as he gave her the tea.

“Look at those two,” said Edward to Walsh, “isn’t it delicious ? It reminds one of that happy land where the lion and the lamb—eh ?”

“You think her a lamb ; quarrel with her,

and she's a she-wolf; take care what you are about there, my boy. That girl—that woman, I mean—is as hard, ay, and as black as adamant !”

Meanwhile, the story of Little Red Riding Hood was being reversed by Mesdames Leddiard and Cobb.

“What an enormous reticule you have, my dear !”

“It is bulky, is it not ?”

“I never saw a larger reticule in my life—never !”

The Colonel, itching for whist, slipped quietly off; Walsh popped into his place.

“I am charmed by this propinquity, my dear Miss Cobb,” he whispered.

She smiled the smile of a hyena.

“And the more so, believe me, as I shall be debarred from that privilege hereafter.”

“Sir !”

“For Mr. Alfred Swedenborg, of whom I am a disciple, has asserted that the virgins will have a corner in Heaven to themselves.”

"You are pleased to be flippant, Sir," she answered, sidling towards Lucy with all the dignity of Juno—in a false front.

Miss Lucy had taken one, only one little sip of tea, but she wanted to wipe her mouth after it: so she slipped a key into the lock and turned it.

"I never saw a larger reticule in my life—never!" said Miss Cobb, peeping over.

She opened it wide, holding the cup in her other hand. A diminutive brown creature darted from the aperture.

Lucy gave a scream which echoed through the whole building, "*Mouse, mouse!*" she cried, and, in the first moment of confusion, emptied her tea into the very centre of Miss Cobb's lap.

Walsh had gone to catch his train, Miss Cobb had departed in her discoloured gown, a waltz had begun, and Edward and Lucy now stood up to dance.

She had made herself more beautiful than ever that night in order to give more *éclat* to her victory, and to squeeze more poignant pangs into the bosoms of her foes.

There she stood, her head thrown proudly back, her black hair streaming with dishevelled art over her neck and shoulders, a wreath of yellow flowers, half concealed by her tresses : and as he put his arm round her waist, she leant down towards him, and pressed his hand in hers.

As they whirled round, her eyes like black stars shone hotly upon him, her red juicy lips were pouted up towards him : he clasped her nearer to his breast.

Still they danced on, their bosoms resting on each other, soft low-whispers passing between them, and her hair caressing his forehead like a summer breeze.

But the music ceased, their hearts cooled, their dream was past. Passion is a poor spark which fades away with the wind that has formed it : but love like the phoenix rises into strength, when all around are ashes and con-



sumed ; love, like the holy vestal fires burns on for ages and never, never dies.

Edward began to grow tired of her : he had danced with her so many times : he had danced with no one else. True, she was handsomer than any other, wittier than any other, more agreeable than any other : but who can live without variety ?

He had observed too, that wherever he went, wherever he sat, a pair of grey but sweet lucid eyes were fixed upon him. When he returned that look, the eyes were not turned away, but encountered him boldly, as if to say, "You see, I love you, and I am not ashamed of it." When he talked gaily and laughed with Miss Leddiard, her look was sad and anxious, but when he was waltzing with her, and held her so closely in his arms, the colour fled from her cheeks and returned by fits and starts, and her eyes were even dimmed by tears.

O, he could not resist these mute appeals : he must at least speak to her.

He brought this wish rather lamely into

the middle of a sentence ; but Lucy stopped him, saying, " that it would not have mattered if Mr. Walsh had been there, but if he left her now she would be obliged to sit by herself without any one to speak to."

He dropped the subject, but the idea would not leave him : he thought of his promise, but that only referred to dancing. " It is too bad," thought he, " to shut me out from conversation as well. *Besides it is an insult to Mrs. Hickman.*" He made some pretext for crossing the room, took care to be waylaid by Hickman Junior, who, to his surprise, volunteered to introduce him to the young lady in the blue dress. As he was conducted towards her, he made a grimace towards the Leddiard, as if he was being taken willy nilly. However, he might have saved himself the trouble : she was a great deal too intelligent not to see matters in their real light.

He had no intention of dancing with her, mind, when he sat down on the seat next to her, but his vanity carried him away. She took very little pains to hide from him the

execution he had done ; now that he was close, she did not dare look at him in the face : a deep blush suffused her cheeks when he spoke to her ; yet she neither stammered, nor remained stupidly silent. She spoke in a gentle melodious voice, and in every sentence there was something which paid him a compliment without its appearing to be so intended ; besides this, she spoke her mind in a simple unvarnished way that quite charmed him.

And he did not know how it was, but when the next dance was announced, he asked for her hand. She hesitated a moment, and said, “ how stupid she was, that she had told so many people she was not going to dance any more that night, but—but she could not refuse him his first request.”

It was only a quadrille : Lucy couldn't mind that : so he stifled the voice of conscience, and without daring to look at her, took his place in the figure. During the dance, he was more captivated than ever : his partner walked her steps like a lady, while Lucy danced them, which is bad taste in a quadrille, so they tell me. Her

remarks too were of a very different nature : on the whole they were charitable, but with one or two exquisite touches of humour blended in : Miss Leddiard's, on the other hand, were strictures funny and clever, but also caustic and indiscriminate.

When this girl saw herself deserted, one flash shot from her powerful eyes, one shudder passed over her white shoulders, one gasp shook her frame. After this, which lasted but a second, an easy smile became incrustated on her lips, and a deep dark resolve germinated within.

Thus she sat solitary, though not unnoticed, her battle lost at the moment it was all but won, her goblet torn from her as she was pressing it to her lips.

He came to her directly after the dance, brimful of apologies, and was overwhelmed with the favourable reception she bestowed upon him. He danced the next three with her ; he found her more affable to himself, more sarcastic upon others than before ; he could not detect a single symptom of ill-humour ; when he requested her

to dance with him, she accepted readily, without coquetry, without sulkiness. This emboldened him to ask her after a little while, if she would mind his having one more with the blue demoiselle.

Her answer electrified him.

“By all means, Teddy ; and I must tell you now, that I feel very sorry for the weight I have put upon you all night ; it was very selfish of me ; I see it plain enough now ; nobody but yourself, I am sure, would have borne it half so long. Oh, yes, run away with you ; I give you free leave to do anything you like now ; break her heart, marry her, elope with her, or—there, never mind what besides. Be off with you, you Lovelace, you Lothario, you Don Juan, do.”

If he had been a wise young man he would have understood by this :

“Do what you like now ; you have broken your promise ; you have baffled me ; do what you like now ; but when my turn comes, do not ask me to spare you.”

He took her at her word, and danced a great

deal with his thin inamorato, whose name was Constance.

Lucy was soon surrounded by a legion of harpies, who assaulted her with honeyed words; she parried their thrusts as well as she could, but they were too many for her. She did say, "Yes, poor Edward, I promised him he should dance with me every time; but I have been obliged to stop, I'm so tired." But they did not believe her. Their memories were perfect; they knew that Lucy had never felt fatigue in a ball-room before; besides the eyes which old maids possess in common with lynxes, had caught her in that one moment of anger and spite; though after all they required neither eyes nor memories to inform them that their victim had fallen into the trap which they themselves had set.

Edward Saxon left the ball-room enchanted with his late companion. "Depend upon it," thought he, "simplicity is the best card in a woman's pack. We don't like a girl who is too clever; we like to teach, not to be taught by them; we like to work on that which is pure

white, and inartificial. I am sorry I deserted Lucy, but it was a great deal to ask of a man ; she wanted a pair of kid gloves and patent leather boots, to play her own selfish, revengeful game with, and she chose mine, simply because there was no choice in the matter. If she had had no opportunity of making the matter up, I'd have kept to my word ; but no, she would throw her chance away, and now she suffers for it ; she doesn't seem to care much for it, that's one comfort."

Lucy Leddiard preserved her smile till she had immured herself safely in the darkness of her carriage.

Then she untied, so to speak, the muscles of her face, and a tide of dark passions coursed upon it, and her eyes blazed like those of some wild creature, and a torrent of low, but fierce words hissed from between her white and parched lips.

All the guests had taken their leave, except the half-dozen elder conspirators, and the girl Constance.

The Hickmans had all adjourned to the refreshment room, to gorge upon the little that was left; the refreshments having been found by contract, it made no difference in the expense, and it seemed a pity that any should be wasted on the contractor.

The old women were standing in the middle of the room, jabbering to each other, and as they grinned, exposing their toothless gums.

"Constance," they cried, "come here, Constance, come here, my little de-ar."

She was sitting a little apart from the rest, smiling and humming to herself. On being called she jumped up; and lifting her dress from her ankles, sprang towards them. They surrounded her in a moment, and loaded her with loathsome caresses and endearing words.

There was something horrible in the sight of these withered hags, who were thus pawing her about with their long brown hands, and kissing



her with their slimy mouths ; it was almost like the infernal revels of the witches sabbath, when they welcomed a woman more young, more beautiful, and more wicked than themselves to the rites of their filthy community.

“ How did you manage it, love ? how did you ever succeed as you did ? ”

“ I told you that I would, and you see I have kept my word ; and now my bracelet.”

“ Here it is ; but how did you get him away from her ; she was looking so well to-night, and she talks so cleverly ? ”

“ I will tell you all about it. First, and before I said anything to you, I caught him talking to that creature about me (for they both glanced at me together when he first spoke), and I could see by the expression of her face, that he was praising me. This by itself was almost enough to convince me that the thing might be done ; but when I caught him stealing a look at me every now and then, I had no longer any doubts upon the matter. So I made a bargain with you, that if I could seduce him from her arms to mine, I was to have this jewellery ; and

by making use of my eyes, of that little cur Johnny when the right moment came, and afterwards of my tongue, I won the battle for you, and the bracelet for myself."

"How did you talk to him?"

"Oh, modestly, very modestly; I knew that Leddiard is unrivalled for equivoques, and double-entendres, and that I should be A. No. 2 in that line of business; so I gave him the force of contrast."

"But men don't like stiffness and prudery, do they?"

"Of course they don't. You will understand, my dear friends, that in making my moral remarks, I took care to make very strong ones; and that in sternly upholding propriety, I did that which is common enough, especially in the newspapers, (all I read them for by the bye), stepped considerably beyond it. Thus in criticizing the breadth of Miss Smith's tucker, I described her bosom, and in arguing against vice, I illustrated my points with the warmest anecdotes. And recollect I did all this with a grave and modest air, without a smile on my

lips, or a twinkle in my eye ; so he thought me guileless, unsophisticated, a very child of nature ; he wanted to know more of me, and he danced a quadrille. He staid away some time, but I knew he would return. He did return. The music struck up ; it was a waltz ; and then," murmured Constance, casting herself back with inexpressible abandon, " he came to my arms."

Again these hideous wretches embraced her, and clung to her with their long bony arms.

" And he was a nice partner, wasn't he ?"

" He held me very tight," she said, bringing her voice back into its old simple tones, which made them all laugh, " he made me very warm, so much so that I testified it in rather an imprudent manner ; he started and looked at me, but I had the presence of mind to make myself blush ; so he attributed it to accident."

" To make yourself blush—but how ?"

" Very easily ; like everything else it requires practice ; but after that, blushing can be reduced to the most simple, and perhaps the most

powerful of a woman's toilet tricks. I hold my breath very very long, and then let it go when I catch a man's eyes. It is an art all young ladies should acquire, and is not to be despised by a gentleman, either, when he is very young, and the lady is ripe."

## CHAPTER XI.

## S A C R I L E G E

HANDS shaken, eggs sliced, coffee gurgled down, fids of meat carved, salted, and devoured, breakfast finished, digestion counterchecked.

From red cannisters into open-mouthed powder flasks flow thin black streams: canvas bags weighty with No 5. are poised over leather shot-belts: gun-caps clink forth from their brown tin-boxes: waddings rattle down by scores.

Four caps snapped: their corpses plucked from the nipples, on which they have been impaled; miniature clouds of blue smoke spout up into the air.

Flasks click sharply from well-oiled springs : the wadding first with hollow sound, then with clear ring : the belts snap their charges into the barrels, the wadding this time rammed down with more care and additional vigour. In obedience to the old adage.

“ Light with the powder, tight with the lead.”

Hammers click as they return to half-cock : and the nipples are again clothed with bright copper.

The sun is out : there are only clouds in one quarter : they walk along joking and laughing, with pipes now held between their fingers, now clenched between their teeth.

Robert and Underwood, a few feet behind, the former leading or rather being led by two spaniel-terriers in a chain.

“ We musn’t kill too many hares to-day I suppose, Underwood ?”

“ We didn’t ought to go beyond a brace by good rights—you know what yr’ Pa sed, Sir.”

“What shall we get then?”

“Ther’ell be a smart sprank of rabbits, Sir, I don’t misdoubt, and I’ve got the ferrut in my pocket.”

As he said this, he shook himself: and from the depths of his great pocket came the twinkle of a brass bell, and the half moaning, half angry cry of a strange creature in a strange rest.

“We had better take a beat along the bottom of the wood, William, and kill our brace of hares.”

“We morn’t make no more, nor one drift on ut, Sir, you know what your ’Pa sed Sir, and if he finds on it, he’ll gie me the chapter of accidence just about; when he’s bin away, he’s allers so mighty newsy about what’s bin agoin’ on. However, thut won’t do much mischief just goin’ along the back-side of the wood, where there aint so much cover.”

“Now, Rauch, we begin here, beaters between us: mind, William, no hooting or beating your sticks against the trees; do your work as

quietly as possible, and keep the dogs into heel."

The wood was bare enough at bottom, but here and there came a patch of briars or long grass; these they all took care to walk carefully over. Underwood, in particular, having scrutinized such patches aforehand would trample on them violently, squeezing down with his hob-nail boots upon every bit of grass, large enough to hold a rat, far more a hare.

His master noticed this, and watched him narrowly.

A hare got up from the open out of shot, it cantered off leisurely.

"There is no occasion to holla out, 'mark hare,' like that, Underwood, when it's out of shot: just the way to put up everything in the wood."

The keeper produced a very large cotton pocket-handkerchief, (with a portrait of Sir Robert Peel on it), and laughed inside of this with such a secret impetuosity that it spread out and covered his whole face like a flag.



By and bye he came to a small brake of brambles almost hidden in its long thick grass ; this merely glancing at, he passed by.

“ Underwood.”

Keeper strode on.

“ Willum, Willum, Master Eddard’s a calling ’ee.”

Willum having scowled upon Robert, presented a face of passive innocence towards Master Eddard.

“ You have forgotten to beat that brake.”

“ He could not see the brake anywhere.”

“ I thought so,” said the shrewd young gentleman ; “ Rauch, draw up this way : you come behind here, Robert. Now are you ready : beat the stuff, William.”

William, with a sigh, rustled the grass gently with his stick : nothing appeared : but the dogs had become restless, and were straining at their chains with noses to the ground, and tails whisked, and yelps uttered under breath.

“ There is nothing here, Saxon.”

He crept on tip-toe to the edge of the patch and peeped over.

"*See-ho*," he cried, but not loudly, walked backwards to his former place about ten paces behind, with his finger on the trigger.

"Underwood has only been beating about the bush all this while, now he will beat into it: tread in, man, like you did with the others: or stop, pitch this big stone in, then your great carcase won't be in our light."

"If there is anything," said Rauch, "you shoot first, old boy, as it's your find: I'll stand by and wipe your eye."

"If you get the chance: but I'm a fairish ground shot. Now then, chuck that stone into the—"

As the hand was being raised, there was a rushing sound from within the thicket, and a brown mass bounded out.

At the first discharge, the hare only laid its ears back on its neck, and galloped along faster than before: in five seconds they saw her roll over, and after one feeble kick with the left hind-leg, die weltering in her own blood.

"As neat a wiper as ever I seed," said the keeper, "lor bless 'ee, Bob, the young squoier ain't made to touch this genelman at shooting, that's plain as day : his powder is onaccountable straight, that it be."

This was *piano* : the next *fortissimo* : "dead as a robin, and a good shot too : run and fetch 'un, Bob ; don't be afeard of letting the dogs smell the game : it won't do they no harm, and they won't do it no hurt."

"Underwood, you—"

"Hit him where the mischief lied, Sir," said the keeper, appealing to Rauch, and pointing to the hare's head from which long streams of blood still continued to flow.

"Listen to me, William : you found that hare sitting : I am certain of it. Now I meant only to shoot one brace, but I've more than half a mind to kill two before I leave this wood."

"Don't 'ee do that, Sir, don't 'ee do that, you know what your 'Pa sed, Sir, and how sadly put out he'll be."

"At all events I am determined to bag a

brace, so the sooner we do it, the less ground we shall disturb."

"Very good, Sir."

"Load away, Ted, load away: I'm nearly ready to start again, and you've not begun."

"I'm watching Rover snuffing and whining about something."

"What the God bless 'em's that?" shouted William.

"Yander goes, yander goes," yelled Robert.

It was a brown bird flapping tortuously away, with broad pointed wings and a long beak which swayed to and fro.

As it was topping the first tree, Saxon fired; it rolled up in the air like a cricket ball, and fell lifeless to the ground. •

"As cruel a nice shot as ever I seed—the fust cock as has bin killed this season hereabouts—a massey, oh! how plump he be, sure alive. Lurd love 'ee, Bob," whispered he, "Master Eddard can shoot when he's mind to't: this here furrin-looking genelman can't hold a candle to him."

"We're all right now, Rauch; a woodcock

is a day's sport, at least so we say hereabouts."

"I congratulate you."

They finished their beat without finding a head of game; Rauch killed a wood-pigeon flying straight over his head: it fell and hit him on the shoulder, to the amusement of his companions; Underwood, on examining it, found no less than fifteen acorns in its crop, and remarked, "he must be a good disjuster to disjust they."

Robert, at the request of his commander, trod on some rushes which lined a hollow in the ground, covered with dead leaves; the leaves afforded as little resistance to his weighty impress, as the black mud and green water they concealed; he was lucky enough to escape with the immersion of one leg. It was an old saw-pit, and so deep that they could not plumb to the bottom with their sticks.

"A leetle further to the right, Bob, and you wouldn't a wanted your day's wages, nor nothin' else in this 'ere world below."

But Robert's temper was soured; instead of

replying, he brooded, and brooded on revenge.

“Do you think we shall find any aground here?” said Saxon, as they stood before a green bank, which was actually riddled with rabbit-holes.

“It’s quite a casalty, Sir ! there’s no telling for sartin ; but there’s plenty of ’oosage, the ground’s quite underminded with holes ; drop-pings is black and slimy ; an’ here’s a bit of scratchin’ as wer done last night.”

“Put him in then.”

Underwood produced a nasty coloured-linen bag, and from within this they heard the moaning cry, and the rattle of the bell, more plainly than before. They could also see the bag tossed up and down by the creature, which was struggling for air and liberty.

The strings were untied, and the bag began to open of itself ; first a small black nose came to sight, then a round white head, with two eyes red as fire-sparks glittering forth ; lastly

the sinuous body with its low, firm legs, and thin short tail.

Underwood took it by the scuff of the neck, stroked it gently, and called it "Pug," in the softest tones his voice could command.

But Pug was restless ; and winding itself through his hand, curled over his wrist, and fell lightly to the ground.

As it was again taken up, it uttered a sharp peevish cry.

"I don't think you had better put it in that side," said Rauch ; "try it over this side where I am ; then we shall have the wind, and the rabbits will hear the bell, and will bolt better."

"Over the other side, Sir?"

"Yes."

"If we puts it over the other side, you know, Sir, when the rabbits do bolt, they run across the field, but if we lets it go in where I be, they'll be over the path an' into the ditch afore you've time to shoot anuse (almost)."

"Then try it here as I—"

"If you'd prefer it this side, Sir, I'm only a sarvint, and——"

"No, no."

"But I've bin rabboting about these many years, and I knows pretty well where every rabbot takes to when it bolts. The old——"

"That will do, William ; put it in where you like."

"His style of argument is peculiar," said Rauch.

"It is very clever ; for when he finds himself in the wrong, he takes your view of the question, and fights for it stoutly against yourself who originated it."

"Then he is not only a wit, a poet, and a philosopher ; but also a politician."

"And all of it lost to the world."

"Humph ! the world being so full of these men, perhaps the loss is a gain."

"Hoosh !" said the keeper ; "we morn be still now. In you go, Puggie. See un twiddle his tail ; keep them dogs back, will 'ee?"

They heard the bell tinkle from the interior of the burrow for a little while ; Underwood was



kneeling down, with his ear applied to the hole. Presently his face glowed, as he threw his arm up in the air ; and presently, even from where they stood, they could hear the thumping, rattling noise, made by rabbits galloping under ground.

At the same instant, but from different holes, two rabbits burst out. Saxon killed his, Rauch only broke a leg.

The ferret put her nose out at a hole, but immediately returned, a sign that more were within ; the dogs gave symptoms of barking, but were punched by Robert into silence. Neither dared load their empty barrels, for still hearing the rabbits beneath, they expected another bolt every moment.

But after a bit they heard no more ; the keeper crawled from hole to hole, listening at each, but obtaining no clue. Presently he laid as if riveted, lifted his head for a moment, but only to push back the hair from his ears. Two minutes having elapsed, he rose, and said deliberately, " Pug's a scratchin' un."

" Can't bolt, eh ?"

“No, Sir, got spouted, but we’ll move ’em afore dusk yet. Bob, cut me a bit of stick as’ll bend, will ’ee? and sharp it at the end. Thank ’ee.”

He pushed the stick into the hole, having bent it into a half-hoop, on account of the subterraneous corners; on bringing it out, he examined the pointed end, which was covered with brown hairs.

“I thort I’d sounded ’em right; now for a strong, stout stick; ought to have a mattock by good rights, but the sod ain’t so very hard, bein’ no frost.”

He drove the stick into the ground and worked it round and round; as he did this, it seemed to slip several inches lower all at once.

“That’s the hole, genelmen, we shan’t be over long now.”

“This is the deuce of ferreting, but it’s a good opportunity for lunch; what d’ye say?”

“Agreed; and hadn’t Robert better take the dogs after my wounded rabbit?”

“Yes, run along, my man, you saw where it went in.”

"Any pheasants hereabouts, Edward?"

"Yes, but not for us."

"I see; you knows what your 'Pa sed, eh! Ah! there's Dash giving tongue."

"And the rabbit's dying squeaks; yes, I thought so, here he comes, with the dogs jumping up to smell the corpse he carries in his hand. But how are you getting on, William? Have some beer."

"I won't touch nothing till I've touched this rabbot;" so saying, he thrust his arm again into the new hole he had made, and grubbed out handsfull of stone and dirt.

"No go," said Rauch, tersely.

"It's no how, and it ain't no how, and I can't make no how out nother—ain't it, though?" said he, "ain't it?"

"Got un, Willum?" asked the sub.

"I lives in hope for I can touch his hock," he cried, hurriedly, and his strainings were terrific, and his face purple.

"How he curls his legs under him, the sar-pint! but it ain't no yuse."

His arm came gradually into sight, the shirt

all wrinkled up, and covered with red dirt ; next a pair of brown hairy hind-legs, with a white scut above ; finally, the rabbit's head with the greedy ferret sucking out its brain's blood.

He tore the fierce creature from off its prey, but not without difficulty ; and even when flung upon the ground, it clambered round the man's gaiters with its sharp black claws.

" Put the poor brute out of its misery," said Rauch, who was watching the struggles of the rabbit with compassion and disgust.

The keeper hit it behind the ears once or twice with his fist ; then the head hung to one side, and the legs stiffened, and the frightened brown eyes were shaded with a thin grey film.

" What d'ye think of that, Robin Secrusha (Robinson Crusoe)," said Underwood, exhibiting the trophy to his assistant, and then throwing it on the ground ; " he be gone to his long ho-ome, bain't he ? an' us must folly after some time or 'nother, Robin ; there ain't no twisting out o' that bargain anyways."

Rauch turned the rabbit's head over with the butt of his gun, and looked at Edward.

"The skull of this rabbit has been half-eaten away, and yet it lived."

"I vote we give up ferreting."

"Yes," said Rauch, "let us content ourselves with simple murder. I do not like this mode of slaughtering by piecemeal."

"We could cope the ferret," said Underwood.

"That would be better: but then it would scratch all the skin off their backs. We can't muzzle the claws."

"We'll beat the Ten Acre Shaw after this then, there are plenty of rabbits, and we may get our hare, No. 2."

"How much better this be than old Mother Church's baint it, Bob?" said Underwood, drinking beer.

"Ah! this be as clear as a bell!"

"And hern as thick as a puddle."

"I suppose you've done a good bit of ferreting in your time, William?"

"Bless 'un, Master Eddard, there ain't a

earth in this here Liberty as I haven't had a hand in—he! he! But the rummiest start wer that along with Mr. Nat Hunter, 'crazy Hunter,' as they called un; he's in a 'silum now, I've heerd say. He, he! that wer a larfable ditty, that wer. However, to proceed. He run up agin me one day on the furder side of Yew Tree Brow, and 'Underwood,' sed he—Lord forgive me, genelman, I've bin telling you a wicked story all along! It worn't on the furder side of Yew Tree Brow at all, dal me if it wern't this side of Splashit's fir-grove, that's wer it wos, the near side of Splashit's fir-grove, and, 'Underwood,' sed he, 'I should like to see you kill sum rabbots.'

" 'So you shall, Sir,' sais I, 'I be a-going at ut to-morrow dōwn by the Three-cornered Common; there's a frightful kit o' rabbots there, and they runs over and gnaws Master Tomkins' wheat, and I shall be there at—waal say nine o'clock.'

" Mr. Hunter he comes up at nine o'clock on top of his brown chestnut mare, her I means with the white fetlock and the three splints on

the near fore-leg; an' a great baskit behind his back. I held his horse for 'un; and no sooner was he off, than he opins the baskit an' spreads everythin' out comfortable and sociable. Now I thort, ye know, it wer most an odd way of going to wark, eating lunch furst thin', but I wer afeerd of contradictin' him lest he should eat it all hisself; (tho' there worn't much in his head, there wer allers a good deal in his stomach, more belly than brains as the sayin' is) and besides that I wer pretty peckish, for I hadn't eat no breakfast as wer worth the namin', and bin on my rounds too iver since day-peep.

"An' a very nice lunch it wer: two gret bottils of beautiful beer, and a fine bit of stilton cheese. We eat and drank what there was, and then I put it back agin into the baskit, no, I don't mean that—what we had had we kipt to ourselves in corse, but the knives and cloth and bottles, I put aside out o' harm's way. Nixt I put nets over all the holes, corz we hadn't got no guns, and I shoved the ferret in."

“I knew there wer rabbots agroun’.

“It wer a frightful deep earth in them times, it ran right down the bank a long ways; and tho’ I heerd ’em rattling, I know’d anuse they wouldn’t bolt at fust.

“‘Damn, and damn, and damn ’em, why don’t ’em bolt,’ cries he, “and he called ’em all the frightfullest names as iver you could think of; and he takes gret pieces of chalk and earth and flings ’em at the nets till he’d cut ’em away from the holes—ivery one. And then,” continued the keeper in tones of retrospective regret, “they did bolt, and got away: and then Mr. Hunter, he upp’d with his baskit and flung it on his back, and rode off as fast as ever he could lay it on. And Jim Wells and the carter’s boy, they tell’d me that he came home with his poor mare (her as had the three splints on the near fore-leg, an’ the white fetlock) all of a muck of foam and sweat; an’ no sooner wor he com’d back than he pull’d the two bottils out of his baskit, and set ’em up on the gate-posts one on each side, and cut ’em down



agin with his fists—O, an' swore terrible—it's a wonder he hadn't a kill'd somebody, let alone hisself.

“ But, lor, he wer a silly genelman ; he'd go a potterin' about in the fields a singin', and a torkin' 'bout poultry and passhuns, and wantin' seffirs, an' wot not. In loave, or somethin' or t'other the matter wi' un.”

After lunch they beat a small piece of underwood where the dogs became useful : here there was a mighty deal of blazing, but small execution ; as the facetious namesake of this tract of land remarked, “ Like the battle of Waterloo, only not so much killed.”

In beating the Ten Acre Shaw, Robert was discovered up to his waist in cover, and that of a very thorny character.

“ Anything there, Bob ? ” enquired Underwood with an air of anxiety.

“ 'Ees, lots of briars.”

“ Nice, baint it, Robin ? ” continued the keeper.

“ Ah ! more than nice : halt—here be some-

thin': I herd un roosh ! coming to you, Master Eddard."

He saw something creeping close by him and fired on the first impulse, without reflecting on the distance, or rather on the want of it.

"He won't run fur if he's touched at all," said Bob.

Underwood coming up, put his hand into the bramble and produced a rabbit almost shot into two : the halves of the animal were only connected by a piece of skin : entrails, of course, nowhere.

Rauch was red with laughter, Edward with shame.

"A good rabbot spoilt, Bob," said the keeper, exhibiting the smoking remains.

The two gentlemen from red became purple : the causes remaining as before.

"It'll do for the ferrut well," said William, after a moment of reflection ; "and I shant have no trouble with paunching."

At the end of the Shaw, they put up a hare, but did not succeed in killing it.

"I ought to a found that hare squatted, but I

didn't : I don't know how it is, but hares don't squat like they yused to in your grandpa's time ; I yused niver to pass by one then : but now they spring up afore a body can take a sight on 'em : wa-al hares changes like everythin' else I sp'ose."

" It aint your eyes as is changin,' I dare say."  
This was Robert's revenge.

" What be you a torkin' on, now ?"

" I'm a torkin' on a pair of eyes, as is gittin' so old and ooseless, that they can't see nothin' and then sets it on the hares."

" Wot for do you want a slouching and sawneying like that ere, you lazy hound, I'm sick and s'ily of speaking to 'ee, that I be, it's heartless work, blow'd if it baint, why when I were your age"—

" And a plaguy while ago, that wer, I'll be bound for't."

" I wer as lissom as a squirrel in a fir tree, and as busy as a bee on a summer's day. Lurd ! if I were you, I 'oodn't be easy till I'd kill'd myself : a cumbering the ground : if *I'd* ever an idle piece of flesh about me, I'd cut it off."

"Cut a hole in his ear, and put his foot through it," said Rauch.

"Never mind, William, he'll mend."

"Ay as small beer do in summer, mend ! he won't mend till I've broke him of some of his dalnation bad habits. Shut that ga-et."

"There aint no call to be so old (cross) about nothin, you're old enuff as it is, I should say ; allers upsetting one about nothin : all whip and no corn from you that's what ut is."

"Shut that ga-et, you oudacious little radical, don't kip your mouth at half-cock like that : go and do as I bid 'ee."

"Little ! the biggest bull aint allers the best beef be ut ? as cross as piecrust, that's what you be, allers a setting up your back at everybody---a false old fellar."

"I'll give 'ee a salt eel for supper, if you don't watch ut : you try to put my nose out of jint, that's all. Set my back at ye ? Dal me if I don't set this new dog whip at ye afore I've done with 'ee : I'll make 'ee cry pen and ink ye warment : you try to cut my finger and I'll

bite your thumb. Make my hair (ire) rice will 'ee. Take that, and that, ye skunk."

Robert received half a dozen stripes with that stolidity, which is the chief characteristic of the jackass and of the true-born Englishman.

"It's no use hanging into him," said Underwood as the boy was lagging behind, at a sulky distance; "he took it easy just out of aggrivation to mar my feelings—the gallus—he can holla a good 'un when he wants to, but (got a bit of dust in your eye, Sir, squeeze the lid and blow your nose hard, then it'll come out), but when he gits into an orkard strain he's as rumbustious and hardy as a ground to-ad."

They had almost reached the house, when they observed a figure seated, or rather crouched on the road bank, with his face covered by his hands.

Edward walked up to him, and touched him on the shoulder.

"What is the matter? are you ill?"

The figure did not move.

"Kup, kup, Gaffer, don't 'ee know it's the

young squoire a speaking to 'ee: him as we saw rolling at crickuts in the summer."

The hands slowly withdrawn, exposed a face in which the pallor of old age had almost conquered the brown tints of sun and foul weather. The bleared vacant eyes stared upwards, and a silly smile flickered across the mouth.

"Eh! ye're a bonny lad! ye're young, ye're handsome, ye're happy, an' I'm old, and weary, and sad; ye've a long life of pleasure and riches afore ye, and I'm a poor sick Christian sinking slowly to the grave. Bend down lower, lower still; the sun is gone behind the trees, and the cold wintry sky is full o' clouds; lower still: hey! what is this? your eyes are dark, but they're red within; there's bin tears runnin', bitter tears runnin'; your cheeks are soft but they're pale as death; bend down closer, down closer, an' let me read your face as if it was a book, ay! an' a book that few can read; the book o' that which is to come: stand back, this is not for such as ye. Lower yet, Sir, I'm an old man, too old for life, and my poor eyes are sadly dim.

Ah ! there are years, long years of grief and trouble, and hot salt tears that must be wept, and sharp arrows that will pierce your heart. Pray to God before you sleep 'gainst the dead that wander. Pray to God when you wake 'gainst the living—Ha ! what is that black form behind you ? there, there—”

“This is my friend.”

“Let him stoop if he is your friend, let him stoop his face to my sight if he dares to look into an old man’s face ; and you, Sir, remove.”

For several minutes they conversed with each other in low whispers. The old man’s face was dark and frowning like the face of a prophet who denounces : once or twice Edward thought that Rauch turned pale. At last this strange colloquy was over and the old man beckoned to Edward, and he looked from face to face, muttering to himself ; and stretched his arm grimly towards Rauch. “He will cross your path—take care ; but I see he will not gain his will ; another an’ a greater will drive him from his prey.”

They still remained near him as if fascinated.

The features which had so lately glowed with a wonderful fire, now paled back into their old drivelling, faded expression; he chuckled to himself, and said, "Eighty-seven year old last Michaelmas; a good old age is eighty-seven, but I don't feel as if I had lived a great while; long life, an' short life, twenty year, an' eighty year, they all seem the same when they're past and gone; eighty-seven year last Michaelmas, and it haint seemed long nother; he! he! he! it haint seemed long nother."

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"What did he talk to you about all that while?" said the host, as he was shewing his friend round the premises.

"The silliest—that's a nice horse, Ted; if you only do keep one, that one is good, at all events—O, the old boy gave me a twist of the oddest gibberish I ever heard in my life; I chimed in with him, and drew him out."

"But what was it?"



"Too ridiculous to repeat ; you had a fair sample of it at the end : my eye ! these are fowls, if you like."

"Aint they beauties ? my mother prizes them as much as if they were made of gold ; and I believe they would almost fetch their weight in silver."

"My mouth actually waters ; they're as fat as lard."

"Sir, it is sacrilege even to think of the fire and dripping-pan in their presence. Now let's do a stroll and a cheroot along the walk in front of the house."

While so employed, they heard a peculiar sound from the edge of the wood, half chuckle, half crow.

"What noise is that, Squire ?"

"Cock pheasants going up to roost."

"Where do they roost ?"

"On the side branches of trees."

"By Jove, there goes another ; wonder we haven't fallen in with any of these gentlemen by daylight ; but we couldn't have shot 'em if we had, eh ?"

“Not before Underwood.”

“Precisely ; hang it all, that makes the third.”

“You may always hear them at this time.”

“And you brought me here on purpose—”

“I did.”

“To tantalize me ?”

“I don’t say that.”

“Then, Saxon ?”

“Hullo !”

“If not to tantalize—”

“Do you remember that jay which perched within shot of you, and I told you not to fire ?”

“Perfectly.”

“Your gun is therefore loaded ?”

“One barrel.”

“I have one, too ; now do you begin to understand ?”

“I almost think so.”

“When we have finished our meat-tea, the pheasants will be buried in a slumber—”

“ Soon to be followed by a deeper rest.”

At tea-time, Edward asked his friend whether there was good pheasant shooting in India.

“ No pheasants, but plenty of wild peacocks. I remember when I was a griffin, walking through a field of corn, and flushing the beggars one after the other. I missed some of them, too, though it seemed almost impossible. By the time I had bagged nine or ten, the whole village was down upon me, and I had to shell out two rupees on the score of damage. The maxim prescribed by the Company’s service, to beat the crops first, and the agriculturists afterwards, though superb in its way, occasionally becomes impracticable.”

“ Prepare for the wood, Sir, the sky is all clouds, but there’s a full moon behind them which will make it light enough for our purposes.”

They muffled themselves up to their throats and slunk out the back way trying to shield their guns with the folds of their great coats.

"Whereabouts do you think?" asked Rauch.

"Close by the great oak."

They stood in the garden, and carefully took the bearings of the tree, whose branches towered above all the rest.

On entering the precincts of the wood, they began to experience a few of those discomforts to which poachers are subjected. Rauch soon sighed for his gaiters; and Saxon for the great boots he had left to dry by the kitchen fire.

Brambles of a terrible length and tenacity entwined themselves round their legs and tore their ancles into scratches that were almost deep enough to be wounds.

At last they gained sight of the desired trunk, and were very glad to sit down on the damp knoll beneath it, and to wipe their faces with their pocket-handkerchiefs.

They had quite given up all thoughts of pheasants, and only desired to get safely home. A lively discussion ensued respecting the proper way to set about it, and which probably would never have had an end, if Edward had not dis-

covered the beginning of the blind path which led through the fir-grove to the out-houses. But a blind path is a path of thorns; the *lawyers*, as the rustics judiciously name them, stretched themselves right across, and the only way to manage was to lift their knee-bones on a level with their chins and to trample down on top of them. When they arrived beneath the shadows of the fir trees, the darkness became more dense, the brambles more luxuriant.

A horrible thought pounced upon Rauch like a vulture.

“Are there any saw-pits hereabouts?”

He received as answer a stern poke under the fifth rib, and an upward nod.

On the branch of a fir tree, extending outwards from the trunk, sat four masses, round, black, motionless.

Two gun-clicks.

“All hens,” whispered Saxon, “but never mind that, better eating; you take the one most to the right.”

The guns echoed as guns can only echo in fir groves and on still nights; two birds with

ruffled feathers and limp wings fell downwards, pitching from bough to bough.

The other two did not display any alarm, so the sportsmen grinning at each other began to load.

"Indifference to all things," says Horace, "is the delirium of wisdom," and the two roosters remaining, paid penalty for their philosophy.

As they sprang forward to pick up the game, they saw the house-lights through the trees.

"Why we're close to the house," said Edward, "and what the devil's this?"

"Sarve un well right," said a voice from behind a tree, "lor Master Eddard, Master Eddard if your 'pa know'd on this, there! and he 'ull too when he comes hum."

They walked home in silence, Rauch carrying the game. Before depositing it in the back kitchen he swung them on his finger.

"They are very heavy, Edward, and enormously fat, you really can't feel their breast bones: now they are dead I suppose?"

“Pon my word you take it coolly.”

“And how shall we take them?”

“Cold—for breakfast.”

## CHAPTER XII.

## AND IN AMBUSH LIETH.

"Catullus was deceived by Lesbia, Tibullus by Delia, Propertius by Cynthia, Naso by Corinna, Demetrius by Lamia, Timotheus by Phryne, Philip by a Greek maiden, Alexander by Thays, Hannibal by Campania, Cæsar by Cleopatra, Pompeius by Flora, Pericles by Aspaga, Psammiticus the King of Egypt by Phodope, Sampson by his Delilah, and Solomon by his concubines."

THE ground was powdered with a coating of snow by the next morning. Very little had fallen, but it being a frost, what little had fallen had remained.

Underwood had come early, and assaulted them with words of entreaty, anxiety, and advice.



“You might foller the rabbots anywheres in the snow, and tell in a minit if they wer agroun’, or where they wer ; and the birds, too, they’d be got under the edges, an’ ud lay like wax.”

Certain things, however, concatenated against immediate action upon these advices.

An old Indian had fished out Rauch’s quarters, and had sent him a hamper. They drank his health in glorious Maraschino ; and Rauch almost sighed as it wafted him back to the visions of the past, of merry companions, and first love. It ended in his waking at half past eight to a perfect realization of the present, racked into him by a thundering headache.

Saxon swore beneath the same malady ; the more so, being addicted to fiery expressions, and less hardened to the complaint.

They had sent a mile and a half for soda-water ; the hamper being unfinished, they thought it best to order a dozen at once.

They had made green tea so strong that it was almost black, and languished over chops and vials of red pepper.

To those that are late, obstacles multiply, and

a hundred small events conspired to make the sportsmen lose their temper and their time.

A fragment of tow was found to be stuck in one of the nipples ; they had to send to Underwood's cottage for a screw.

Something went wrong with the spring of a powder-flask, and having spilt their only remaining shot-bag on the floor, the pellets had to be separately and tediously collected.

Also, Rauch's boot-laces had become rotten with the wet, and a significant snap answered the tug which carried them through the last eye-hole, preparatory to departure. Therefore impromptu ones had to be made, which like other impromptus I have heard of, took a very long time indeed.

At last they got outside.

"We shall make tracks this morning, as the Americans say," observed Rauch, looking behind him at his footsteps in the snow.

"I hope we shall ; but I keep thinking we shall be interrupted ; five minutes more and we are safe—there, damnation, I knew how it would

be! come on, man, don't stand dawdling and gaping; we may do it now."

Rauch looked up, and saw a well appointed gig at the gate of the carriage drive; a fine grey horse which was stamping its forefoot on the ringing ground, and a handsome young lady in a dress, masculine above, petticoat below.

"Scarcely the sort of thing I should swear about," thought he.

"No use, she sees us fast enough: if you had only laid out those long legs of yours. Well, here's another day spoilt; run and hold that horse one of you: why the deuce don't you move?"

Having made over her conveyance to the charge of Mr. Neats, she walked quickly towards them, one hand lifting up her dress, the other caressing a great black retriever which bounded by her side.

"Well, Sir, and how are you? won't you shake hands? Bless me, there's a face! why what's the matter now? you must have got out the wrong side of your—hem! You see I am trying the grey; wanted to give her a long

spin, owed Blakey's a visit, thought so at least, and here I am."

"Miss Leddiard—Mr. Rauch. Ye-es, the horse looks well enough in harness. How does he go?"

"Splendidly : O, you should see her action"—here she imitated a horse's trotting with her arms—"it is something quite superb : and your'e such a good judge too, I must and will have your opinion."

"Rauch here is your man, if horse-flesh is the question : I know nothing of points—outside the turnip field."

"Do you fancy her looks, Sir?" said Lucy, with an inimitable transformation of face and tone.

They all walked up to the gate, where Rauch having looked into the mare's eyes, squeezed her throat, opened her mouth, and passed his hands down her legs, delivered himself of a veterinary oration in four sections.

"You will excuse us for a short time, Miss Leddiard : we are equipped for the sport, as you see, just going to beat the copse over there.

we shan't be long, and you will find Jane in-doors."

Rauch started, and Lucy smiled, as she fumbled for something in her pocket.

"They think of coming home in three weeks don't they? at least, so your sister said in her last letter—there, d'ye know the handwriting?"

She held it close up to his eyes: he only looked sulky, and scraped up a small lump of snow with his feet.

"If you don't mind coming back to the house, I will go with you: that is to say if that little Manton with the velvet on the stock, is still to be had."

"Yes, to be sure, but how—"

"Oh, Underwood knows all about that: here, come this way, you remember me, don't you?"

"Lor, yes Miss, in corse I do," touching his cap "you've remembered me a deal too many times for me to forget you in a hurry."

"And do you recollect my going out shooting with the little gun?"

"An' cutting over that hare in Wegrove Bottom: ah! didn't I feel as glad as if anybody had given me sixpence?"

"By his alluding to *that* hare, and *that* particular spot, Mr. Rauch, you won't be so ill-natured, I hope, as to conclude it was my only one. I was very young then: I must have been about sixteen, Underwood?"

"Let me reckon," muttered the keeper; counting on his fingers, 2 an' 3 is 5, an' 1 is 6—"

"Stop, you need not trouble yourself into arithmetic," she said rather hurriedly, "but you know, Edward, they put me into a path while they beat up towards me: Underwood stood by to save me from suicide, and to protect your father's brown spaniel, which I always did affirm, and do affirm to be next door to a hare: presently I saw one creeping past me through the shrubs very slowly—"

"Sleering through the flunder, steady-like," explained William.

"And I was fortunate enough to slaughter it on the spot."

“Miss wanted to carry it home afore she weighed it,” observed the keeper with a diabolical grin.

“Don’t tell tales, Underwood.”

“Odd I never heard of that, too,” mused Saxon.

“That happened when you were at school; oh! Underwood and I are very old friends; when I was ‘only twelve years old I used to ramble about the woods after birds’ nests, blackberries—”

“And immits’ eggs,” put in William, with great zeal, “but you ‘ouldn’t have no more on it after that nest on Christmas Common; we’d bin taking o’ eggs all day, Master Eddard, for the young pheasants, which is nourishing food to ‘em, better than any as is, an’ all went on straight an’ as should be till we come to one on the Common by the grut holly. ‘Miss,’ ses I, ‘hadn’t you better let me take this nest, it be very big an’ strong, and the immits they be unaccountable plentiful and woracious;’ no she ‘ouldn’t listen to ut, an’ afore she’d bin at ut long dal me if they

wern't all over her, and a massey O! how she shook herself an'—"

"Underwood, Underwood, be quiet!"

As they went in at the front door she turned round to the keeper, slipped some money into his hand, and said quickly:

"There, you had better go somewhere and drink my health."

"Yes, Miss, thankee, Miss; and what time shall I be back?"

"O, you needn't come back at all, the gentlemen won't care about shooting to day."

"Robin," said William sternly, as if expecting to be contradicted, "that's as nice a young lady as ever stepped; she aint a bit proud, and depind on ut she's never had a cross minit in her life; she's as mild and sweet as wind in May, an' if she were a real live geneleman she couldn't tip no better. We ain't to bide here though, and I'm mortal glad of it; it's getting bitter cold, and there's a nasty black cloud coming over the corner of the wood, an' there's somethin' in the



air makes me feel as giddy as a sheep. I'll just run over to the 'Horse and Jockey,' and ha' me half a pint o' Master Turner's strong beer, and a screw of bacca, if I lives and is well that is."

On entering the drawing-room which was the nearest apartment to the front door, Miss Leddiard found the gentlemen there, and her lover, who appeared to be seized with a sporting mania that morning, handling and examining a small gun, which was quite a bijou in its way.

She lounged into a sofa, and began untying her bonnet strings. "What are you messing that gun about for?"

"For you."

"For me to look at?"

"No, to shoot with."

"You are too kind," she said, divesting herself of her coatee.

"Do you mean to say that you are not going out shooting with us?"

"Do I look like it?"

"But you said you would go."

"Did I? then I've changed my mind, that's all."

"You'll find it very dull sitting here all by yourself."

"No I shall not find it dull."

"If you enjoy solitude—"

"I hate it."

"Then what will you enjoy?"

"The society of yourself and your friend."

"How can that be when we are going out shooting?"

"You are not going out shooting."

"I'll talk to Underwood about that presently."

"Underwood is gone to the nearest public to get intoxicated, he has taken the dogs and guns with him; by this time the dogs are chained up—and hark! somebody is just firing off the guns; the assistant hobbledehoy has left my gig and horse in the hands of your man-servant, and has most likely gone home; so don't be silly, take off those filthy boots and gaiters; make yourself scarce first, and agreeable afterwards."

"Do you intend to relinquish the sport for ever, Miss Leddiard?" asked Rauch.

"What made you say you would come if you didn't mean to?" said Edward roughly.

"Up to sixteen," said Lucy, "we young ladies consider ourselves at perfect liberty to scratch our hands, and arms, and legs, and brown our complexions as much as we please, and don't like being deterred from masculine sports, and hate being called out of the sun. But after sixteen (or perhaps a little earlier) we begin to understand the importance of an alabaster skin, and a face without spot or blemish. If a woman *does* patronize field sports, it is all with an eye to the main chance. If she follows the hounds, she is hunting the gentlemen not the fox; if she condescends to squat in a punt, she angles for the gudgeons in the boat, not those in the river; if she shoots, you may be sure that she aims at no feathered game; what she is after, she tries to bring down with her eyes, and her tongue, and her ancles. This sport has one advantage, you are sure of a find, though you don't always kill."

conical in form: a round table, a bottle of ink, a couple of steel pens, and two Windsor chairs—sacred to the scorers.

The umpires now advancing to the centre of the pale green patch, measured mysteriously with a long clanking chain, and erected six perpendicular pieces of polished wood, by threes, facing each other, and drew white lines on the turf by these, broadwise, and contemplated the result with admiration.

Meantime, farmers were griping hands, and exchanging the usual cricketing compliments—"Mean to lick us to-day, I 'spose? brought a strongish team with 'ee? see some fresh faces in your lot." "Ah, they be all homeley 'uns—lor bless 'ee, we ain't expecting to lick Blakey's twice running—orten't to, however."

One or two old stagers go, as they say, to 'have a squint at the wickuts,' and point out little declivities 'that'll make the balls shoot in like a bullet,' or small holes 'that'll bump 'em up nohow.'

"Shall us toss up, Squire Saxon?" said the Rowstoke Captain.

"If you like ; first time, of course."

"Sudden death," murmured Hobbes.

A crown piece whizzed upwards, twirling round and round with a merry hum as if it knew how it would be.

"'Ooman," shouted Rowstoke chivalrously.

"We've won, then," said Blakey's, "what shall we do, Brewer?"

Brewer advised scouting out, as the Blakey's were nervous.

"Then we'll put you in Donkins ; now, gentlemen, make ready for the field."

"I should like a hit in, fust, Sir, if there's time," said Hobbes, wiping a red face with a yellow pocket-handkerchief.

"O, you want to knock the ball about a bit to get the feel of it."

"Bless us, no, Sir," exclaimed he with horror, "plenty of that yet awhile I dessay ; no, I means a hit in at the bread-and-cheese, you know."

Hobbes' commissary arrangements consisted of four large meals per diem, with little 'hit-ins' to break the intervals.

The fieldsmen took their places in cat-like attitudes of attention and anxiety; the spectators breathless; the batsman took guard, and placed himself in the third position, a wasp stinging him on the nape of the neck as he did so: the umpire pompously called "play," and Brewer, first having measured out his run, and kicked a hole in the turf to mark where he should begin, advanced to the first white line with sharp equal strides, and the ball carefully poised between his fingers.

The first ball was a low, full pitch, rather to the leg-stump: batsman, rendered formidable by the wasp-sting, drove it furiously to long-field on for 3.

The next five all up to the bails, and all played steadily back to the bowler.

Six balls having been delivered, the umpire called "over;" the scouts changed their positions, the ball at the Captain's mandate was tossed to his son.

The man at the other end was evidently ill at ease when he heard that the bowling was round hand; but, when Edward declared

his intention of bowling over the wicket, he turned deadly pale, and the bat trembled in his hands.

The first ball, wildish, reassured him : the second, taking him on the knee-pan, revived his forebodings, and the third fulfilled them by carrying his bails into the long-stop's face.

A long interlude : no one wished to encounter this 'strange bowling ; at last there came one with pads and gloves upon legs and hands, evidently strangers to them : he was escorted half way to the wicket by seven friends who implored him to play steadily, and keep his bat straight.

None of the remaining balls were straight, but the new man preserved his bat in the same position like the carved club of Hercules, without attempting to stir it the fraction of an inch.

This promised to take the edge off the round hand bowling, and puzzled Master Edward for a long time, till at last, an off-stump ball took the shoulder of his bat, and cannoned into short-slip.

The next went in for a swipe, and made four roaring hits across wicket every time; but a middle stump shooter did for him.

After which the good bats dropped off, and the tail came in: the wickets went down like rotten cheese; Brewer bowled three out in one over. Rowstoke, first innings, total 45 runs.

There was still an hour and a half before dinner.

The in-side divided themselves into groups just large enough to fill up the shade under the great elms.

Mr. Saxon led his companions to the butt of a tree almost exactly behind the wickets; thus they could best observe the bowling and batting.

"What sort of bowling have we against us, Mr. Brewer?" asked Edward.

"The old country style, Sir, all daisy-cutters and sky-scrapers."

"What are they?"

"The sky-scraper," explained his father, "comes full at your head, rather quick: the daisy-cutter sneaks along the ground till it



touches your bat, then hops over your shoulder and floors your wicket—nine hops and a bound. But you will see presently what I mean.”

“There goes Hobbes,” said Brewer, “that field is a safe catch; my! what a way the man’s off—he’s quite out of the ground.”

They saw the ball towering high in the air, and whizzing towards the farthest corner of the field; a man standing close to the ditch took two steps forward, and caught it quietly.

“Domme,” said Hobbes, swaggering up, bat over shoulder, “domme, I thort he wer a keeping ship.”

“You must put off your spooning till dinner-time, old man,” said Brewer, as he prepared to go in.

“And I don’t mind how soon I has ’ut; tain’t till a’ter the end though; however, I’ll just have ’arf a crust of bread and a mossel of cheese.”

Brewer deliberately moistened the palms of his hands with spittle, and then rubbed them into the dust, in order to clench the bat firmly.

This bat he had christened Jehu because it was a good driver.

He blocked a daisy-cutter, and lifted a skyscraper clean out of the ground.

Brewer's partner was run out next over, and Edward went in.

What emotions thrill through a young man's breast as he gains the outer limit of the popping crease, and already stands within the enchanted ground. At that moment he envies everyone, and wishes to change places with them all; with the other bat, who has got his eye in, and who he hopes will have the ball; with point who is edging up towards him with keen wistful eyes, and fingers prone; with long-field who stands unconcernedly in the distance, as if knowing that no balls will come to him just yet; above all, with the bowler, who toys the ball in his hand with so easy an air—the ball fatal and death-spreading.

The umpires were both of the true old school, ignorant, prejudiced, conceited, and with grave faces, white ties, funny phraseology and a tender bias for their own men in a crisis.

“A *leetle* further down, Sir—no, Sir, that's

oop the hill—a leetle more in towards ye—that'll do waal."

"What is it?" asked Edward, still holding the bat rigidly.

"You've got it, Sir—play."

"Hold on, hold on: umpire, what guard have you given me?"

"I've given you the right guard, Sir—for sartin."

"Yes, but *what* guard? what stumps does my bat cover?"

"Dead on your middle, Sir; hides it like a tree."

"Well, I want two leg."

"Two leg," repeated the umpire in consternation.

"Allow me, Sir," said Donkins the bowler, stepping in front of the umpire, "a leetle more in, middle and leg."

"Play," said the umpire sternly.

He played a bailer into the slips: they ran two.

"Hold on," cried middle wicket, "I thinks Master Donkins, as I'd better go there; I don't

a pair of eyes always fixed on her, as if they had been driven in like nails.

"Yes, let them write what they like," he answered, "but you women are superior to us; you require a mind, we only ask for a surface; you will have wit, intelligence, and noble sentiments, before you will consent to fall in love, while we have only to set our eyes upon an oval patch of white and red flesh, with a couple of jewels shining, and a cavity lined with small white bones, and so many handfull of long silk on the scalp, and we are in love; don't sleep, don't eat, don't drink more than we can help, dream by day-light, go through tortures, buy the image, tie ourselves to it for life, and feel surprised and disgusted when it begins to decompose."

"The men must have us handsome," said Lucy, peeping into the glass, "it is all very nice to be clever and witty, a musician, an artist, an authoress; you get admired, but only in the abstract; adored, but avoided; talents joined to beauty are so many more arrows in the quiver, by themselves they are arrows—"

"Without the beau; but here comes our sweet-humoured youth."

His coat was powdered with white flakes; she began brushing these off with her soft hand; he shook himself away from her. She smiled appealingly at Rauch, who answered her with a look of sympathy.

Two or three hours passed, and not very quickly; when one person in three is determined to be disagreeable, and to shake water or cayenne upon all that is proposed, said, or effected, it is astonishing what a deal of mischief he can do. Lucy sang several songs, and played a march like a galop, and a waltz like a whirlwind. Rauch joined her in some duets; Edward wouldn't sing; going out into the snow, he said, had made him hoarse.

"I shouldn't wonder if you were to be 'snowed up.'"

"Gracious me! I hope not."

"What is being 'snowed up?'" asked Rauch.

"If it goes on like this much longer, the roads will be blocked up; this house will be my

dungeon. I may have to remain for weeks in a house with two gentlemen——”

“Pooh! *mens conscia recti*,” began Rauch.

“Don’t talk Latin, Sir, or I shall hate you—in a house with two gentlemen; the neighbourhood will be apprized, scandalized, and poor I victimized and immortalized. So I hope I shan’t be snowed up.”

“Dinner’s ready, Sir.”

“I’ll stop and have some dinner, then I’m off.”

Little was discussed at dinner either in the way of edibles, or conversation.

Afterwards, Lucy rang the bell for Mrs. Warmingpon, the housekeeper; said that she had resolved upon starting before the roads became impassable; she would borrow Master Edward’s Mackintosh, and a shepherd’s plaid, and would be able to get home in two hours and a half.

Mrs. Warmingpon, as she had expected, answered her by conducting her up to the best bed-room. The provident old lady had lighted a fire so early in the afternoon, that it had al-

ready warmed the great room through and through ; Miss Jane's things, "those which she couldn't make room for in her luggage, you know, Miss," were spread out upon the bed and toilette-table, with half an appearance of ostentation. She wouldn't have let the poorest man in the village drive out a night like this.

"How is it Miss Jane and the rest of the family are not at home?"

"La, Miss! didn't you know they've all gone to spend the winter in Caliss?"

"My sister is rather smaller than this girl, Rauch, so she'll take some time getting into one of her dresses; let us toddle over to the stables, and have a cheroot."

"You've been smoking, you filthy wretches," was the welcome they received on returning to the dining-room; "Mr. Rauch, I wonder at your leading innocence into the snares and pitfalls of vice? Sir, you ought to be ashamed of yourself; blush on the spot now, and I'll let you off."

Rauch opened his lips for a witticism, and closed them on a howl. He put his hand up to his right cheek, yelping.

Edward looked on grimly.

Lucy flew to the kitchen for flannel and carraway seeds.

It was that terrible back-tooth again ; how very foolish to go out into the damp stable.

She heated the flannel by the fire, passed it through the usual medicinal processes, and bound it round his face with her own light warm fingers ; then she insisted on his going to bed ; Mrs. Warmingpon seconded the motion with all the austerity of a sick nurse.

Rauch hesitated ; thought ; looked at Edward ; thought ; sighed ; and departed.

“ Now, Mrs. Warmingpon, dear, before it gets quite dark, you are going to show me all over the house ; that’s right, I was sure you would ; you are such an unselfish, kind hearted creature that you are.”

The old girl quite electrified Lucy ; she bustled about from room to room in a manner which rendered the wrinkles on her forehead



absolutely fabulous ; as for Lucy she romped ; flipped her companion's high cap over her aged eyes, flapped her apron up into her face, hauled her about in a diversity of directions by sudden caprices, and the tail of her cotton gown ; asked heaps of questions, callous as to answers, screamed into fits of laughter, which rang through the whole house, and which must have pleased both Rauch on his bed of tooth-ache, and Edward in his parlour solitude ; then sobering down, brought herself and housekeeper to a sit-still by the bed-room fire, and then told all her little (imaginative) secrets to Mrs. Warmingpon, receiving her own (realities) and perhaps some that were not her own in return.

“Now I must run down and talk to Master Edward, or he'll be so angry and cross.”

“The Lord bless you, Miss, you've done me a world of good already ; my old blood feels as warm as it did twenty years ago ; a world of good you've done me, to be sure ; and you a young lady, all life and fun, and a little mischief too, I dare say, if the truth was known. But, dear heart,” said the poor old woman, adjusting

her spectacles tighter on her nose, and glowering through them as if she thought that would help her ; “ dear heart, I can see well enough what you be ; as gay as a lark, as merry as a queen bee, ne’er had a bad thought, or a sad thought, or a cruel thought in your little head, or a sharp pang in your little heart. If there be anything innocent and lovely, ah, and happy too in this world, I see it all in Miss Lucy a standing afore me.”

“ Well, dame, if we don’t have good spirits now, when are we to have them ? ”

“ Ah sure, be sprightly and lively while ye may ; yer’e like the sweet meadow daisy in the early morning of its day, your leaves are folded, and ye have all your dew drops to your own bosom ; then the day warms on, and the scorching sun shines down, and your leaves open, and your dew is parched up, and your fragrance fades off, and only the bright shiny colours remain. Ah me ! ah me ! Tit, tit, tit, what am I talking about now ? putting all sorts of ideas into your soft innocent heart, I warrant me. Run down to the young master, my dear, and forget all the rubbish I’ve been

talking to you. Tit! tit! tit!" said she to herself, "we old women are always forgetting that every one doesn't know so much as ourselves; now she'll be puzzling herself to death to make out what I meant. I'm sure of it, I'm sure of it."

"It's you, is it? thought you had gone off home."

"You feel relieved?"

"No, disappointed."

"Thank heaven there are such things as agreeable disappointments. I have been with Mrs. Warmingpon, all over the house, my lovely satirist."

"Any company but mine, heartless one."

"You have made me quite afraid of you to-day; besides I am a little baby; I keep my nicest morsel for the last."

"And swallow it the quickest. It strikes me by the bye, that you didn't make so very much impression on Rauch, considering the pains you were at with him."

"You will allow that he is worth a little trouble."

"From you, a great deal."

"At any rate you may thank me for getting rid of that man: you saw how I urged the necessity of mild repose, and immediate departure."

"I prefer thanking myself: didn't I take him out into the cold and give him the toothache?"

"What your efforts commenced, mine completed: it was a division of labour."

Pause.

"Edward, you are not angry, are you?"

"About what?"

"About anything; about that brown monster up-stairs?"

"Oh no, I'm not angry."

"That is right: to be sure Mr. Rauch is not a man any one need be angry, or jealous, or uneasy about."

"He is very handsome."

"Handsome! he is not a monster, perhaps, but he is as plain as a man can well be."

"Most women think him handsome."

"Most women are fools then."

"He is very clever."

"Perhaps so, but that will only work against him with the sex. Women are afraid of clever men: the beautiful nonentity is their beau-ideal and nothing else: something they can look at, you know: but the geniuses are always sarcastic; we shrink from them for fear of having all our foibles discovered and exposed: such fellows know too much, and are dangerous: then the learned are either dummies with hands and feet (very awkward hands and feet they are too) but no tongues: or else they are so disgustingly talkative, that they won't let us put in a word."

"I understand."

"Come and sit closer to me: I want to speak to you, and you make me try my eyes by the fire-light, peering into the distance."

"Shall I ring for candles?"

"Candles no! what do you want candles for? dear me, how this dress pinches me: I had no idea I was so much broader across the chest than Jane is; excuse me, Ted, I must

relieve myself. There, now I can breathe a little ; you are not shocked I hope."

"No," (*yawning*).

"Then you ought to be—at least, I don't mean that—but there's no occasion to yawn. Now, look here, Teddy, we have had a sort of quarrel ; are we to be reconciled, or not ?"

"Of course we are."

"It is a bargain then ? very good : shake hands over it like a good boy."

For a lady and gentleman to shake hands at the beginning or end of an interview means nothing : in the middle a great deal.

"I know you don't care a bit for me," he said, "but I can't help loving you for all that."

She gave her head a toss : and her hair came tumbling down in great masses upon her shoulders. She still held his hand : she pressed it tighter every moment. He bent his face close down to hers.

There was a footstep outside the door : a knock : the handle began to turn.

He sprang from her, and darted up to the door : she whirled her hair backwards with one

sweep of her hand, and leant her chin in her hand, and her elbow on her knee to hide the disarrangement of her dress.

“Mr. Rauch wishes to speak to you Sir.”

She was alone ; she bounded backwards and forwards in the room with masculine strides.

Her face was purple with emotion ; her eyes shot beams of fire, she clenched her hands, she tore her lips with her teeth, or parted them in a frightful smile.

“The fool ! the fool ! to heap insult upon insult, to bait me with his biting words, and this after he had held me up to the derision of a hundred eyes, a hundred lips. I might have forgiven him that, but *now*—the fool ! to think that I would bear this like a fawn, like a lamb, like some tame meek creature ; to think that I am stone to be moved by nothing, steel to be hurt by nothing. Ay ! I will be a fawn when a fawn is a panther ;

a lamb when a lamb shall be a lioness. I will be stone but to fall on and to crush him, steel, yes steel to cut through to his heart and to drink its blood.

“He is in my power ; and how shall I murder him ? with poison, with blood-shed ? No, with love, with passion. I will encircle him with these arms, clasp him to this breast, pour hot whispers in his ears, caress him, embrace him, dote on him, ha ! ha ! dote on him.

“And when his brain turns, when his blood burns like fire, when he flings himself upon my heart, when he is MINE, I will stop, I will spurn him from me, laugh at him, ha ! ha ! ha !

“For I will be cold though I torture him, my eyes shall be fire, but my soul ice. My arms shall strain him, but my passions shall lie still, quenched in the bosom of a cold, calm sea, shackled by the chains of my own strong will.”



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE CHARIOT OF THE NIGHT.

MOUNT with me upon the chariot of the night ; the tree-tops are sighing, the cold wind is blowing, a black cloud sits on the house in the wood.

The winds howl round, but bear us swiftly on ; the damp clouds encompass us, the land lights gleaming beneath.

We are over the sea. Dark green waves rise like mountains towards us ; foaming at us as we pass, they sink slowly down.

On their bosoms are tossed three ships, mast-less, rudder-less. They are foundering—foundering far from land. Hark to the

shrieks of the sailors ! they look upon their open graves.

We are over the land—a wild bare country ; there are rocks but no mountains—there are crags which frown upon the surf, upon the surf and the breakers which roar, which gurggle from below.

The heavens are parting ; the moon shines greyly forth ; she rolls in misty clouds ; the wind is lulling, for it only moans.

Look above thee, look beneath thee, to thy right hand, to thy left hand, and tell me, mortal, what thine eyes can see.

It is dark, the moon is hidden : I see the white tips of the struggling waves, I see the land stretched forth, ridged, uneven, indistinct. And I see one small pale light, which shines like a star from heaven on the earth beneath.

I see that it burns within a house of grey stone, of grey roof, from the window of the room in the upper storey. There are no

shutters, no curtains ; I look through the glass to the room inside.

I see that there are flowers in vases on the table, and books in shelves against the wall. A lamp hangs from the ceiling, from this burns the flame which we have seen and followed.

I see a woman who is kneeling by the fire ; her dress is white, she must have risen from her bed ; her eyes are blue, and raised imploringly to God ; her arms are naked and extended upwards ; her lips seem to be forming words.

Listen.

She is speaking to God, she tells him of a dream that has woke her from her sleep, of a voice that has called her to rise and pray. She prays Him to forgive those who now are sinning, to forgive those who, as she prays, are transgressing the laws of Heaven, and the laws of man.

Her voice is silent, she dries her tears with her long golden hair, she glides away ; the light dies from the pendant lamp.

It is a storm of wind and of rain : a storm of lightning and of thunder.

The wind shrieks as it rushes by and tears down trees and houses in its path.

The rain heavy and relentless pours down upon the earth : it hides the ground with water : it swells the streams into fierce floods.

With blue and fierce light the lightning gleams from sky to sky, and turns the black night to the brightest day : men cower in their beds and try in vain to sleep.

And the thunder is booming from the bosom of the storm. Like a terrible sound of stones cast down, or a rebounding echo from the hollow mountains it rolls and crashes in the trembling clouds.

\* \* \* \*

While ships perish in the mountain waves, while houses are buried in the rushing floods, while men die blind and blackened by the fire of the clouds, two guilty souls shrink trembling from each other's breasts.

With glazed eyes and bloodless veins, they

sit apart and wait and shudder for the morning light.

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*

Mount with me upon the chariot of the night ; the tree-tops are sighing : a cold wind is blowing : a black cloud sits on the house in the wood.

## CHAPTER XIV..

## MORNING THOUGHTS.

EDWARD came down late: he was pale, languid, jaded.

Rauch seated at breakfast, was humming a tune and laughing to himself, and all out of pure happiness.

“ Good morning, Rauch, I hope you are better.”

“ Cured, Sir, cured, in spite of Mrs. Warmingpon.”

“ Did not she attend to you ?”

“ She did nothing else ; she overwhelmed me, my boy, changed my flannel without ceasing, and smoothed my pillow till she raised my bile :

and then just as I had dropped off to sleep, she woke me up, O very tenderly, and asked me if I felt any better, poor de-ar. But what is the matter, Teddy, ain't you well?"

"I feel very well, thank you."

His voice was faint, his face terribly pale, he staggered in all his limbs: sometimes he shivered too, and drew closer and closer to the fire.

"What a night it was, Edward! did you hear the wind through the wood, and how the branches crashed? there are plenty of trees down, I warrant! It was a perfect hurricane; I heard it scream about a quarter of a mile off: what we sailors call the eye of the hurricane—"

"You sailors?"

"Yes," said Rauch, biting his lips, "did I never tell you! I served in one of Green's ships as a middy many years ago: so I call myself a sailor, ha! ha! But you do not eat anything: come to the table at all events; why what is it? you are as white as a dead man, and your eyes are full of tears."

"It is nothing : I am sometimes taken with fits of dejection, monomania, madness if you will."

"How the rain poured down upon the house after the wind had dropped ; I heard it sluicing down the spouts like so many separate mill-streams. And how it lightened and thundered. I never remember such a storm, except once in the Straits of Malacca. And as if this was not enough, I must take it into my head that there were robbers in the house, above all things in the world."

"Why?" asked Edward, and looking at the speaker with uneasy eyes.

"I dare say that it was only a dream. Have you not often seen things or heard things by night, especially on dark stormy nights like the one now past, and have woke in the morning without being able to tell whether it was a reality or a vision, whether it did occur to you, or whether it came only in a dream?"

"I do not know. But what was this noise? this dream I mean that you had. What was it that you saw—or—that you—heard?"



“Steps up and down the Long Passage but only twice: voices whispering till the tempest prevented me from hearing; once I heard laughter—that was early in the night—and not long after, about an hour after, I heard—I fancied that I heard a woman’s scream—”

“You are deceived: it was in your sleep.”

“Do not be frightened, Edward, I am ready to admit that I am mistaken, and I will never mention this subject again. It was only a dream: and these we laugh or cry over the next morning and forget by the next evening—but there are dreams which will ever cling to us, dreams which we cannot banish from our minds, and oh, Edward, I shall never forget that scream. I have heard a mother scream when her child has been torn from her to slavery, to dishonour: I have heard a wife scream when her husband has expired in her arms: I have heard a young girl scream when the surgeon’s knife has passed into her breast, but a scream like this I never heard before—though it was only in a dream. It was low as if stifled, as if squeezed back upon the heart:

it was a cry of nature, it was a shriek of despair: but as a cry that must not be heard, a shriek that must be held back from the ears around. It was horrible, this cry, and yet—it was only in a dream. But, my poor boy, you eat no breakfast: I am frightening you with my foolish fancies; I ought to have known that when we are ill we can never laugh at these things. Why here is my nurse. Good morning, Mrs. Warmingpon.”

“Good morning, Sir: ay that steak may thank me for being eat as if it was real turtle-soup, instead of being left by itself on the plate without a soul caring for it: lurd! if I’d a been your mother I couldn’t a looked after you no better.”

“That you couldn’t,” answered he, with warmth, “you wouldn’t allow yourself to rest for a moment—(*aside*,) nor me either.”

“Eh! good sweet, it does me all the best to see your brown red face again as bright as days in June: and you with the flannel round ye only five hours ago—dear, dear, now I’m forgetting Miss Lucy.”

Rauch who had not taken his eyes from Edward since the first moment he had entered the room, observed that from pale he now became livid.

“A cup of tea, Sir, please, and I’ll give her a bit of toast to match : Ann says she isn’t getting up ; tired with her long drive, I don’t misdoubt.”

The old woman went up-stairs to Miss Leddiard’s bed-room : she staid there a long time.

She came down, crying bitterly.

A few minutes afterwards the postman arrived with the letter-bag. There was one for Edward : he read it, and passed it over to his companion —

“Magdalen Coll.

“Dear Ted,

“Have you any prejudice against leaving home at Christmas ? On my side of the house I have always been very glad to do so : the only difference made between Christmas-day and any other with our lot, consists simply in two

divine services, and a large early dinner off roast beef which I don't like, and plum-pudding which disagrees with me.

"If you concord with me in these domestic feelings, are tired of striding after wild partridges, and can no longer kill time by slaughtering rabbits, I invite you to come and spend a few days with me, I finding you bed and board within the gates. Write by return, or bring yourself as an answer : Rauch, too, if he is at Blakey's and is willing. The, Eve is *the* attraction, so if you must be back on the day, you can stop that night, and do it 'up in the morning early.'

"Yours truly,

"JOHN.

"P.S.—I suppose you have heard that I have passed, and put on the white tie."

"He's as bad as a woman with his post-script : however, I'm glad he's safe into his parson's gown."

"Shall we go, Rauch?"

“If you wish to, yes.”

Edward bent his head.

Up-stairs was the Indian pulling out obstinate drawers, slamming them back, folding shirts, socks, coats and trowsers, depositing them in layers within his trunk, and whistling and singing all the while to enliven his toil.

Edward clasping her cold damp hand between his own, kissing away the tears which streamed from her red eyes, and which furrowed her livid cheeks. But he was crying too, and thus wretched, sharing each other's sorrows, drinking up each other's tears, they sat till the hour came for them to go.

They parted neither as enemies nor as friends: but like those, whom some sudden woe has united with bonds, only to cut them with a bleeding knife: like those who having suffered by the same misfortune, part, looking sadly on their common wounds.

She folded her arms upon her breast as if to

drive back her thoughts, which were seething from within. She clasped her hands and flung them with her eyes towards the leaden vault above, as if trying to pierce to the presence of her God.

“I have lost a woman’s chief treasure, and I have lost it like a fool, I have lost it for nothing, I have lost it for itself. *Itself*, ha ! ha ! what a prize, for so great a stake—Ah, if we young girls knew . . . . but when we know, it is too late . . . all is lost, lost, lost !”

She drooped her head, and she thought. Then her eyes flashed : a proud smile curled upon her lips.

“Lost for others, not for me ! I have still a stern will, a strong brain : I have still resolution to conquer, and cunning to hide. I have been a child, I have fallen ; I will be a woman, and I will rise. But I must forget that I have a heart, that heart which has so nearly lost me all.”

## CHAPTER XV.

## F A R E W E L L.

“ Hoary and dim, and bare and shivering,  
Like a poor almsman comes the aged year  
With kind ‘ God save you all good gentlefolks ;’  
Heap on fresh fuel, make a blazing fire,  
Bring out the cup of kindness, spread the board,  
And gladden winter with our cheerfulness ;  
Wassail ! To you and yours and all !—All health !”

ANON.

“ Oh ! Oxford I leave thee, and can it be true ?  
I accept of a living ? I bid thee adieu ?  
Thou scene of my rapture in life’s early morn,  
Ere one pile of soft lambskin my back did adorn  
When sorrows came rarely, and pleasures came thick,  
And my utmost distress was a long standing tick.”

THE FRIAR’S LAMENT.

THEY found his reverence sitting on a

deal table in the buttery, gnawing away at a commons of bread and cheese, and drinking beer out of a great silver tankard.

They shook hands with him, and congratulated him warmly.

"I have 'floored the Bishop,' " said he, " what liquor will you men try your hand at ? "

" John, " said Rauch, " you musn't talk slang now, my dear fellow ; besides, that expression is so very irreverent to the Church Authorities : but it is just like a Magdalen man : he must have his puns if he dies for it. "

" Oxford slang, " retorted John, " is always broad, coarse, and irreverent, but possessed of two redeeming characters—terseness and application. It is like a good hammer in a good hand : drives the nail in up to its head, and that at the first blow—Now what will you take ?

" ' I pray thee bring thy hand to the buttery bar, and let it drink. ' "

" Ted, he has been quoting from a playwright, and him a parson ! John you must not countenance immorality. "



Saxon fingered his white tie in the manner peculiar to the newly ordained.

"Shakespeare was never immoral; he wrote with power, and therefore (in parts) with coarseness: so preached Latimer, Hooper, and every one worth his salt. How can a man convey strong impressions, if he breaks off in the middle of his path through fear of stepping through a puddle? How can a man expect to send his hearers to Heaven, if he stops to pick his words like eggs out of a London basket. The man, Sir, who wants to bring human minds into his lap must labour hard and get warm into his work: if he stops to receive the sprinkled water of the squeamish, he is done for: he must put his shoulder to the wheel, and never mind if a little mud splashes up when it begins to move."

"Those were happy days," sighed Rauch, "when there were no Ps and Qus to take care of."

"It is customary now," said John, "to pay more attention to words than to deeds, still, (speaking only of the former) you must not sup-

pose that our age is the less immoral, because is it the more refined. For as our ancestors were content to eat their plain joints, and to drink their malt liquors, while their descendants must have their dishes tricked up with sauces, and French wines spiced unto tastelessness ; so we, who are grown pampered and sated on the loose and evil, substitute *double-entendres* and *equivoques* served up à la *Parisienne* for the homely point-blank, unmistakeable expressions of our fore-fathers."

"I am conquered."

"And I ask you both again : what will you take to drink, small or college ale ? mild or bitter ?"

"*Ημερον μίχρα*, the sacred bitter for me," replied Edward : "it was a popular medicine among the Greeks for every kind of disorder."

"Your taste is pure and classical : and you Rauch ?"

Rauch sprang into a sitting posture on the table, which bent and crushed beneath his weight.

“ I will give you my answer in an old rhyme :

“ Come butler bring me a bowl of the best,  
I hope your soul in heaven may rest,  
But if you do bring me a bowl of the small,  
Then down fall butler, bowl and all.”

“ College ale, Sir ?”

“ College ale, butler, and don't make any mistakes, or you know the destiny that awaits you.”

“ Pour a libration on the floor, to bring me success in my clerical career.”

Rauch poured some beer (a very little) on the floor, and drank up the rest at a draught.

This eccentricity, suggested by Saxon, was viewed in an unamiable and modern light by the buttery boy, who was immediately down upon his knees with a napkin. The butler also was heard to regret that it *was* only a deal floor : if they had done it in their own rooms, they might have spoilt a carpet, and not wasted good liquor upon nothing.

“ You really must get rid of these wild classical ideas, John : there is no occasion to do as they do in Rome, till you go over there.

Another bowl of your best, butler : another quart of college ale."

"Have you been living on sand down at Blakey's, most holy physician?"

"No, I intend reading in the Bodleian, and I'm loading myself before going off, that is all."

"It is nearly time to dress for dinner, Ted, but come to my rooms and have a chat for a little while. I want to dissuade you from this sudden capr—determination if I can."

"It is of no use, Gilbert : I feel that I shall never do any good here : I should be an age taking my degree, and during that age my college expenses would be hampering, almost robbing my father. But I think I can obtain a commission in the East Indian service. I shall go out young, vigorous, if not hopeful, at least determined. I shall return feeble and decrepid, if I return at all. Better sick, while my conscience is pure and my heart sound, than healthy, when my health will cost

others so much : better die honoured and respected, than live to be pointed at as a burden upon those whom I ought to assist."

He left the room hastily : John though affected by the filial speech was disappointed by the abrupt departure. He sauntered out, and was fortunate enough to intercept Rauch in the cloisters.

"How did you get on at the Bodleian, old fellow? come into my rooms for half a moment."

Rauch would never have thought of coming in, as it was now more than time to dress for dinner ; but when Saxon mentioned the library, he coloured a little with retrospective spite, flung himself on a chair and launched into a savage tirade against librarians, curators, the young men, the catalogues, the noise, the disturbances, the inattention of the subordinates, and the incivility of the principals.

John Saxon who had brought this storm upon himself, sat through it with a patience almost dogged enough to be aggressive, and chipped off the final syllable of his last word

by asking him if he knew a place near Oxford called Repton?

"Yes, I have been there snipe-shooting."

"Have you indeed? I am going to preach there to-morrow. I wish I could get a chaplaincy here, or something of the sort, to give me an excuse for residing in Oxford, for I am certain that I could pick up £2 a week by 'hacking' alone."

"What do you call 'hacking'?"

"Being hired to do somebody else's duty, you get £2 a service, and your expenses. If a man knows plenty of people, he can pick up a very nice little income that way: however, I fear that I am destined to a country curacy."

"You are going to-morrow, are you?" asked Rauch, with a yawn, which he half concealed with his hand.

"Yes—bother it, here's my black carpet-bag kicking about as usual—"

John took it in his hand, and as if by accident let it fly open, disclosing a roll of linen neatly deposited within—

"There," cried he, in a tone of triumph, and holding it out to his companion.

Rauch did not understand this exultation, but thought it best to say something.

"Ah! you are going to sleep there, and have made sure of your clean night-gown: you are an old soldier, my boy."

"You great muff," said Saxon, sulkily, "can't you tell a surplice, when you see one?"

It was Christmas Eve: the dull vacation *élite* of Oxford were pouring beneath the carved archway, through the vaulted cloisters, and up the great stone-stairs to the Dining Hall. The ladies were escorted to the gallery. The area filled with collegians: the aged President with grey hair, and stooping gait, the Tutor with cold ashy face, and brow still damp from its midnight oil: the Proctor embarrassed by his black velvet sleeves, and distinguished by his sharp blue eye which kept wandering restlessly round, as if he was still in pursuit of his

human prey. The Bachelor of Arts, quiet but not shy, the Undergraduate, noisy, but only half at ease, the Freshman vacant, and quite abroad : the Bible-clerk who at Magdalen is half a professional, bustling about full to the brim with good spirits, and notes, and quavers, and musical flash phrases all corked up ready for pouring out at the right moment.

But the most remarkable feature of the scene was a good-looking visitor who, unacquainted with Oxford and the inhabitants thereof, was scanning the gallery for a pair of good eyes to ogle with, and a pretty mouth to catch smiles from. Alas ! thou knowest not that here they are born ugly, live ugly, die ugly that on this cold city the sun never shines : our vine-plants may be young, but they are withered, sickly, and deformed.

They were walking to and fro, and two sounds ascended from the mass ; these were the rustling of the hundred gowns, the murmuring of the hundred tongues.

Hush ! there was a signal ; voices stilled in a moment : one harsh roar from the



gowns as they all clashed together to their seats.

Then out from the centre of the crowd came the sweet notes of a grand piano in good tune: the instrument was only to be seen by a few, so the charm was heightened: these tones murmured on till voices also rose and joined then in the measure; the sound circled round the hall till it found Edward out, and then it seemed to stop with him, to rest on him like a halo of melody.

His brain swam; his eyes filled with tears; an inexpressible languor glided through his frame.

When it ceased, he felt as if he had been let down from heaven upon earth.

After two hours there was an armistice signed with Orpheus, and war waged against the grosser deities.

"Come, Ted," said Rauch, slapping him on the back, "you forget the oysters, and remind me of those mild ancients, who were so enchanted by the strains of the sirens as to listen on and on without feeding, till they finally

died in starvation. Do you want to be a victim to that last melancholy glee?"

"I confess that I was affected by the music; and when the heart speaks, the stomach is silent."

"Pooh, pooh! when the heart is full, the stomach ought to be full too—come along."

Two long tables covered with white cloths, oyster barrels, plates, napkins, and small knives with broad pointed blades like Roman daggers in miniature.

They were all very busy over their oysters; and the ladies were regaled also—with the sight.

The conversation went pretty much after the music—in snatches. I will try to give the cream of it, if there is any cream to skim milk.

*A Chorister.*—I say, pass the beer.

*Chaplain.*—(over the oysters), It is our opening day.

*Bible Clerk.*—Do you like Denison's execution.

*Chaplain.*—I think he splashes rather, you know.

*Bible Clerk.*—He can always correct himself of that if he chooses.

*Chaplain.*—Then he ought to do so, if only for the credit of his college.

*Bible Clerk.*—Now, which do you like best, Hopkins in F, or Dobbieson in G?

*Chaplain.*—Between ourselves I think very small beer of either; give me Sternhold in C, Sir, Sternhold in C.

*Bible Clerk.*—What do you think of our college library?

*Rauch.*—Dusty and pedantic: how hungry the ladies look.

*A Chorister.*—I say, pass the beer.

*Rauch.*—I don't understand why they sit up there looking at us like that, as if we were wild beasts at Wombwells, children at a school feast, or aldermen at a Guildhall dinner. I hate being stared at when I am eating.

*John.*—I cannot agree with you men about Cuddesdon: I will not say anything of the principles that are inculcated there, but the domestic arrangements are of the vilest description, and in themselves quite sufficient to sicken the student of theological life. I had to sleep there during the examination, and had actually to get up in the middle of the night, and put my coat and trousers on the top of the counterpane; owing to episcopal negligence I never slept in a colder bed in my life.

*A Chorister.*—I say, pass the beer.

*John.*—O don't talk to me in that way, Rauch, or you will make me sick. I suppose because a man is a parson he must leave off being human; why, if some of you had your way there would be nothing left to a clergyman but a pair of hands.

All rustled again to their places, and again the music and the voices began.

The choristers sang a quaint old carol to

a quaint old tune. It pleased Edward very much.

“ The first Nowel the Angel did say,  
Was to certain poor Shepherds in fields as they lay,  
In Fields as they lay keeping their Sheep  
On a cold Winter’s Night which was so deep.  
Nowel, Nowel, Nowel, Nowel,  
Born is the King of Israel.

“ They looked up and saw a star,  
Shining in the East beyond them far,  
And to the Earth it gave great Light,  
And so it continued both Day and Night.  
Nowel, Nowel, Nowel, Nowel,  
Born is the King of Israel.

“ And by the Light of that same Star,  
The Wise Men came from the Country far,  
To seek for a King was their Intent,  
And to follow the Star wherever it went.  
Nowel, Nowel, Nowel, Nowel,  
Born is the King of Israel.

“ The Star went on towards the West  
In Bethlehem it took its Rest.  
Then did they know assuredly  
That in that House the King did lie.  
Nowel, Nowel, Nowel, Nowel,  
Born is the King of Israel.”

An old man entered the hall: his hair was long and glossy white, his head was bent

upon his chest, he was so old. He whispered in the President's ear and crept slowly back.

All eyes turned upon the President: he raised his hand, all was hushed, all listened.

And they heard long solemn sounds penetrating to them through the carved roof, through the solid beams, through stone, through wood, and echoing away fainter and fainter in the distant cloisters.

The last stroke died; it was Christmas Day.

A roar of music, glorious and maddening, burst forth from the centre of the hall, and all voices were joined, all tones condensed into this mighty chorus.

*Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terrâ pax, hominibus bonæ voluntatis, pax—pax.*

It was Christmas Day.

The bells pealed merrily from the great college tower: they poured in at every window, they played round every door. Babies woke and crowed and prattled, happy by instinct: it was Christmas Day.

The young woke too, and slept again with smiles upon their lips: it was Christmas Day.

Even to the old, the worn out, the cheerless, one little spark of God's fire came with these chimes, it told them that if their strong days were past, their happy days were yet to come, it reminded them of salvation and of heaven: they shed those tears which to the aged are sweet and welcome, for they so seldom fall, and they also slumbered on the dawn of this Christmas Day.

With grace-cup in hand, the Vice President arose: he glanced with gallantry on the maidens above, with benignance on the students below. He raised the golden goblet to his lips.

With red faces and stuttering words the President and the Vice shook hands: and they wished each other a merry Christmas and a happy new year: and they all shook hands, and they all drank from the goblet; gaily went it round, its contents fast lessening to succeeding lips: so ran on the scene, till the mist of warm joy, and hot wine spread upwards to the

roof, then descending like a veil, wrapt itself before the eyes of all.

\* \* \* \*

It was Christmas morning. The Reverend Gilbert Saxon, who was of the true Oxford persuasion was celebrating its advent in a gincarousal with his friends.

He had had occasion to leave the room for a few moments. In the interim, Pritchard of Magdalen was called upon for a song. Pritchard was the man who had refused to subscribe to the Amateur in his freshman's term. Finding himself in Coventry, he had considered it his best policy to pay his fare back to society by handing over his purse to the glee societies. However, though they talked to him, and walked with him, he was still universally despised, although he was the most learned, and, perhaps, the most handsome undergraduate in the college. They used to revenge themselves upon this man, 'who did not care a fig for music,' by asking him to sing, knowing that he did not like it. On this occasion, he declined doing anything of the sort. He



was offered the usual alternatives, a story, a sentiment, or a glass of salt and water. He gave as a sentiment the health of the entertainer, which was drank with geniality and uproar.

"Let us turn his chair," said Rauch, "it is a way we had in India, when we toasted an absentee."

John on returning, found the back of his chair applied to the edge of his mahogany.

"You might leave a fellow's chair alone," grumbled the deacon, twisting it round again in a kind of pirouette.

The circumstances were explained to him. He rose.

"Gentlemen, unaccustomed, though perfectly adequate as I am to speak in public, I can hardly express to you all the surprise I feel that Mr. Pritchard, in proposing a sentiment, could find nothing more sentimental, than plain John Saxon. However, I must not delay to assure you that my heart rises as well as my person to thank you for the cordial manner in which I have no doubt you drank my health: at the same time it is no more than due to my-

self to assert that in so doing, you have done yourselves a great honour, and me no more than common justice."

This modest statement was received with laughter and cheers: after which they sang as only Magdalen men can sing, with throats of brass, with lungs of bulls, and with voices of nightingales and sky-larks.

The candle-light was growing yellow: the faces of the toppers pale and weary; the outlines of trees and houses through the shutterless windows might dimly be descried, when Rauch with a wine-glass filled to the brim, arose and spoke.

"Before we arrive at a sober dissolution, permit me to give you one more toast—the ladies—a toast in all other convivial meetings as sacred as the primary libation to Jove among the Romans, as sacred as the parting stirrup-cup among the Scottish cavaliers, and in Oxford parties a toast we never dare to propose. Our forefathers used at least to drink to their bed-makers, and their tailor's daughters: but in this generation of social apathy, Oxonians no longer honour

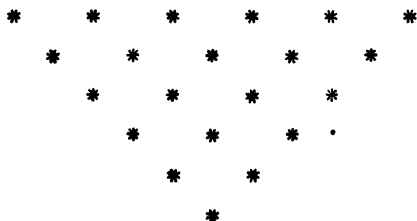
the only *genus* of the sex, which, at college, they have ever the fortune to behold.

“Now we have seen that ‘Our Ladie of Magdalene’ is hospitable: we have not only seen this fact, we have smelt it, we have tasted it, even now we feel it resting softly on our hearts. She has opened her deepest cellars, brought forth bottles cobwebby with the mantle of age, and turned on a tap of ‘the choicest and the strongest, a *proof* of her bounty which promises never to run dry. She has cut haunches from her noble deer, and cooked her own geese to perfection. But ah! gentlemen, ‘Our Ladie’ is not sinless, though a saint, if we dare call that a sin which is common to every woman—I mean jealousy.

“When the fair sex enter her precincts, she scowls upon them from her dark towers, from her gloomy walls: when they walk in her groves, she sighs deeply among the leaves: when they rest (on benches) by her streams, you may hear her voice rise from the water, and die around them in plaintive moans.

“Gentlemen, I detest anything in the shape of

ingratitude: but there is no help for it: fill up your glasses, drink them off at a gulp, and thus show that though ladies may seldom enter, that they are never forgotten in the cloisters of Magdalen."



Edward was undressing himself in his little college bed-room. Rauch was sitting upon the side of the bed.

"You have quite made up your mind, then?"

"I have even written to Dr. Robson, requesting him to take my name off the books."

"And you go to India?"

"If I can get a commission."

"And if not?"

"God only knows what will happen to me then."

"So drops the curtain on the first act of our drama. I leave Oxford too."

"You!"

"Yes, I am tired of Oxford; tired of Oxford habits, tired of Oxford sins, tired of Oxford souls. I do not know where I shall go: it will be perhaps to some country which is new to me."

The door slowly opened, and Gilbert Saxon came in.

"I have been trying to sleep," he said, "and I could not: I am so wretched. My friends in a few hours we must all three part."

#### EDWARD.

I to my country home, and thence to a distant and a solitary land. They will reproach me for this, but I have a sister who will always love me. She will teach me to forget the sad and foolish months I have trifled here: she will lighten a weight which lies heavy on my heart: she will reward me with her light smiles and encourage me with gentle words.

## RUDOLPH.

I, like a pilgrim who trudges in the hot wilderness of sand for many miles, without water, without air—I, like the pilgrim who has found a brief and transitory rest, must leave this sweet island, where I had forgotten, for a short time, the sins and troubles of the world. Edward, though you know it not, our lives have begun in the same sin, our feet are set in the same path; before long we shall meet again.

## GILBERT.

The Christchurch bell is solemnly tolling: the winter wind breathes sadly round: the morning light is rising above the houses, above the trees. And, behold, white clouds sailing swiftly through the heavens, beckon us away.

To-day, I leave the only home I ever had. To-day, I leave this beautiful college in which I have spent so many happy hours; and now I must go. My friends, forgive me if I weep. I weep for the lost companions of my youth, the lost

pleasures of my young and happy days. I am young still, but I shall see them no more. Farewell Magdalen, whose stones I have numbered, whose trees I have counted. Farewell holy chapel: farewell noble hall: farewell dear room in which I have spent so many nights of mingled pleasure and mingled toil: farewell to all that I have loved and cherished. Farewell ! Farewell !

“We go,” they said, “but do not let us forget each other.”

As the morning light, soft and grey, streamed in upon their faces and their breasts, they clasped their hands together and poured out a verse of the sweet Scotch song.

“Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to min’ ?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
And days o’ lang syne ?

“For auld lang syne, my dear,  
For auld lang syne.  
We’ll tak a thought o’ kindness yet,  
For auld lang syne.”

Their voices as they sung were half choked with sobs.

They left him silent to his rest.

Then his weary hand sank back upon the pillow; his eyes closed; his limbs relaxed; and he slept in Oxford for the last time.

END OF VOL. II.

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