

SIR THEODORE BROUGHTON;

OR,

LAUREL WATER.

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PREFACE.

THOUGH I am not in general fond of prefaces, yet a few words of explanation must necessarily be prefixed to this work, in order to guard against any misconception. The name which it has received will naturally lead the mind of the reader to conclude that the tale is founded upon the too-celebrated tragedy of "Lawford Hall," and such is certainly in some degree the case; but it must not be supposed that I have attempted to give anything like a history of that lamentable transaction, or have even adhered closely to the facts. On the contrary, I have, in the course of the work, done everything I could to mark that such was not my intention, upon the following considerations, and in the circumstances I am about to state.

I had long known the general facts connected with the death of Sir Theodosius Boughton, and had dwelt upon them with much interest; but the minute details were more difficult to be obtained; and I was prepossessed with an idea, very generally entertained, that Captain Donellan, who was executed for the murder of the young baronet, was his guardian as well as his brother-in-law. In such circumstances, the relative position of the two parties seemed to me to open a fine field for the display of strong and dangerous passions, and no bad opportunity of drawing instructive lessons from their results. The work was about one-third finished when, after considerable difficulty, I obtained a copy of the trial of Captain Donellan, as reported from Gurney's short-hand notes, and an impression of a very painful nature was produced upon my mind. I became convinced that Captain Donellan had been convicted upon insufficient evidence. I do not by any means intend to imply that I felt at all confident of his innocence, but merely that there was not sufficient proof to justify his conviction.

Some doubts I had, indeed, previously entertained from traditions preserved at Rugby and its neighbourhood; but when I read the evidence of the famous John Hunter, those doubts were changed into a strong and abiding impression that Donellan was condemned without fair legal proof.

It must be remarked that the father of Sir Theodosius, when by no means an old man, died as suddenly as his son; and, although the evidence of John Hunter was given very cautiously, yet in the following portion of his examination he states a clear and decided opinion, which ought to have greatly damaged the case for the prosecution in the minds of the jury. I may premise that it had been attempted to prove, first, that the body of the young baronet displayed evident traces of poison; and, secondly, that the symptoms which immediately preceded his death could proceed from nothing but the effects of one particular poison, called laurel water. John Hunter was then asked, after hearing the whole details, exactly as the other medical witnesses had heard them, what inference he would draw from the appearances presented by the corpse. He answered, "The whole appearances upon the dissection explain nothing but putrefaction;" and again, in reply to the question, "Are those appearances you have heard described such, in your judgment, as are results of putrefaction in dead subjects?" he said "Entirely."

The examination then proceeds thus:—

COUNSEL.—"Are the symptoms that appeared after the medicine was given such as necessarily conclude that the person had taken poison?"

HUNTER.—"Certainly not."

COUNSEL.—"If an apoplexy had come on, would not the symptoms have been nearly or somewhat similar?"

HUNTER.—"Very much the same."

The last reply in his examination in chief is also very important. The counsel observed, "Then, in your judgment upon the appearances the gentlemen have described, no inference can be drawn from thence that Sir Theodosius Boughton died of poison?"

He answered, "Certainly not. It does not give the least suspicion."

Now the judge, in summing up, remarks thus upon the evidence of John Hunter, such as I have stated it to have been: "I can hardly say what his opinion is, for he does not seem to have formed any opinion at all upon the matter."

It appears to me, on the contrary, that he had formed the most decided opinion that no inference of poison was to be drawn either from the symptoms that preceded death or the appearance of the body after death, both main points in the case for the prosecution. Add to this, that no distillation of laurel leaves was traced to Captain Donellan; that it was never shown that he had ever possessed a laurel leaf; that he was never proved to have had access to the room in which the bottle stood, the contents of which were supposed to be poison; and you reduce the case to this: that Sir Theodosius Boughton died very suddenly, after having indulged for a considerable period in great excesses, and being at the time somewhat in bad health; and that the conduct of Captain Donellan after his death was extraordinary and somewhat suspicious.

It is to be remarked, however, that all the most suspicious circumstances rested upon the evidence of Lady Boughton, the mother of the dead man, who with her own hands gave him the liquid, as a medicine, which was afterwards supposed to have been the poison, and whom Donellan indirectly charged with having poisoned her son. The suspicious circumstance of his having rinsed out the bottle, even before the young man was dead, was stated by Lady Boughton to have taken place at a time when two maids must have been in the room, as she mentions the occupation of "one of the maids." But one was dead at the time of the trial, and the other was not even asked if she had remarked the fact, or seen Captain Donellan do anything with the bottles. It is, moreover, worthy of notice, that Lady Boughton contradicted herself, as to whether Sir Theodosius spoke to her after taking the medicine; that she varied in her testimony before the coroner and at the trial, adding some circumstances on the latter occasion; and that, from the testimony of the coachman, it appears she very soon endeavoured to cast suspicion upon Donellan, which would account for some of the efforts made by him to prove his innocence before he was directly accused.

The counsel for prisoners charged with felony not being permitted in those days to address the jury in behalf of their client, none of these points were brought prominently forward at the trial; for the judge in this case certainly *did not act as counsel for the prisoner*. Doubtless, had he been permitted, Mr. Newnham, who cross-examined the witnesses on behalf of Donellan, with very great skill and acumen, would have called attention to the various facts I have mentioned; and would

also have pointed out, that if the conduct of Captain Donellan, upon the death of Sir Theodosius Boughton, was extraordinary, so was that of Lady Boughton, who, while her son was yet living, though terribly convulsed, does not seem to have made the slightest effort to restore him. She sent a servant on horseback, it is true, for a medical man; but in that Captain Donellan joined, giving up his own horse for the purpose, as the swiftest. But she seems to have applied no restoratives, to have used no means whatever for her son's recovery—not even such as would have been applied in the case of a person in a common fainting-fit; but left a servant to wipe the froth from her son's lips, disputing with Donellan about the bottles and the dirty clothes, and walking away into the other room. The conduct of both was certainly extraordinary, and no great affection or attention seems to have been shown by either to the unhappy young man.

It may also be noticed, that on a previous occasion, as appears from the evidence of Samuel Frost, a draught, sent by the same apothecary who furnished the medicine which Sir Theodosius was to have taken, or did take, on the day of his death, made him exceedingly ill, and produced vomiting; and also that he was in the habit of keeping large quantities of arsenic in his room, using it with very little caution to poison fish.

One more point of importance, as taken in connection with other facts, was strongly urged against the prisoner at the trial, but which, separated from the other facts, would be of very little value. A correspondence was produced between Donellan and Sir William Wheeler, the young baronet's guardian, from which the counsel for the prosecution and the judge inferred, that the former had studiously laboured to prevent the body from being opened; but I confess that this is not made clear to me; for not only did Donellan, in his second letter, cheerfully assent to the examination, but he pointedly requested Sir William to be at Lawford Hall when the autopsy took place, which would effectually have prevented the possibility of deferring or omitting the investigation. The distance from Sir William Wheeler's house to Lawford Hall was only eight or ten miles, and therefore there was every probability that he would accede to this request; but, from some inconceivable point of delicacy, he did not choose to go, thinking fit to suppose that Donellan requested him to be present at the dissection, although his words would not bear that interpretation.

for a moment—merely desiring his presence at Lawford Hall. The physicians and surgeon who attended to open the body declined to do it, from the state of putrefaction in which it appeared; and because Captain Donellan informed them that an examination was desired for the satisfaction of the family, without mentioning that a suspicion of poison was entertained, the inference was drawn that he wished the examination not to take place. It is clear, however, that he sent for them, that he requested them to open the body, that he invited Sir William Wheeler to be at the Hall at the time; and, moreover, that he was so careless upon the whole matter, that the very letter from Sir William Wheeler, in which he desired the body to be opened, "not to satisfy his curiosity, but the public," fell into the hands of Mr. Powell, the apothecary, and was read by him by some extraordinary mistake.* I cannot see that any presumption of guilt can be fairly established from this part of Donellan's conduct, for there is quite as much on the one side as the other; and it was perfectly natural that a man in his situation should, in the whole transactions connected with this event, be somewhat agitated and confused, when he knew that suspicions were entertained of his having committed a great crime, and had reason to believe that the steps employed were directed to obtain evidence against him.

I do not wish it to be supposed for one moment, that I entertain the slightest suspicion of Lady Boughton having been criminally accessory to the death of her son, for I entertain none; but it is clear to me that she was strongly prejudiced against Donellan, and that her evidence was seriously and unjustifiably affected by her prejudices. Nor do I mean to say that I am by any means convinced that Donellan was innocent, for the case was one of doubt. But I must contend that three things are plain, from the evidence taken at the trial: first, there was no sufficient proof that Sir Theodosius Boughton died by poison at all: secondly, that if he did die of poison, there is no proof that it was laurel water: thirdly, that if he did die by poison, and that poison was laurel water, there was not sufficient evidence to show that Captain Donellan administered it, or put it in his way for the purpose of procuring his death.

Such a conviction having been produced in my mind by a careful perusal of the evidence, and it not suiting me to change

* See examination of Dr. Rattray, answer 16.

the whole plan of my story, I have made such alterations in the work as I trust will prevent any reader from supposing that I wish, in this book, to give even my own impressions and opinions regarding the painful tragedy of Lawford Hall. I have changed the scene to a completely different part of Warwickshire; I have omitted the character of Lady Boughton altogether; I have represented the counterpart of Captain Donellan in my tale as a single man, and as the guardian of the young baronet; and I have made the counterpart of Sir Theodosius succeed his grandfather, and not his father. I have indeed retained in the one the loose and unprincipled character which Donellan is admitted to have possessed, and in the other the traits of wilfulness and weakness which were very apparent in Sir Theodosius Boughton.

Donellan's early history exhibits so many points of unprincipled depravity, especially during his residence in the East Indies, that perhaps there might be no need of being very scrupulous in attributing to him a crime of which a jury of his countrymen pronounced him guilty; but I look upon the reputation of the dead as the most sacred of possessions, because it is the only one they can retain on earth after earthly life has ceased, and because it is without any defence but the conscience and good faith of posterity. I would, therefore, never on light grounds consent to load the memory of any one departed with the imputation of crimes which might be doubtful, nor even add a word from my feeble pen to the burdens which may have been unjustly cast upon them.

SIR THEODORE BROUGHTON.

CHAPTER I.

THERE was an old man sitting in an arm-chair—a very old man, and a very ugly one. It is an exceedingly unpleasant thing to be old and ugly; but, as the one is brought about by time, and the other by fate, there is no use in resisting, and still less use in being cross about it. The remark is not impertinent, whatever the reader may think; for the old gentleman I have been speaking of had been cross all his life because he was ugly, and was still more cross now because he was old. He had laboured hard at one period to cure the former defect by all the appliances which art can provide, and he had laboured still harder, at a later period, to hide the traces of the latter state by somewhat similar means. But within the last three years he had given up the attempt as hopeless; for inexorable Time, creeping on with that stealthy pace which, sometimes so slow and sometimes so fast, catches us all at last, had got his claws so tight upon him that he could only move from his bed to his chair, and from his chair to his bed; and then he thought it of no use to employ *maréchal* powder any more, or to lace up stays which would no longer support his shattered frame. He became a sloven where he had been a beau; and there he sat in his arm-chair, his eyes bleared, his mouth fallen in, his knees, supported on a stool, nearly up to his chin, and his legs swathed in flannel.

There was a little table on his right hand with a parchment upon it, by the side of which stood an inkstand; and on the opposite side of the fire sat a man of about five-and-thirty years of age, gentlemanly in appearance, rather good-looking than otherwise, tall and stout, and plainly dressed, although his garments had a sort of military cut about them. His feet were stretched out towards the fire—not too near the toes of the old gentleman, for he would not for the world have ventured a shoe within the limits of their territory; and he was skimming lightly over one of those little sheets of intelligence which were called newspapers in that day. From time to time, indeed, his eyes stole over the top of the paper towards the old man's face, with a peculiar, inquiring, furtive expression, which was not very prepossessing.

"Can't you say something, Donovan?" said the old man at length in a querulous tone. "I am surely dull enough without your sitting there and making me duller by reading the newspaper all the while."

"I was in hopes, Sir Walter, you were going to take a nap," replied the person whom he called Donovan, "and so I would not disturb you."

"Disturb me!" echoed the other: "there is sometimes more disturbance in solemn silence than in loud-tongued loquacity. I could fall asleep, perhaps, while you were talking, but I cannot while you are sitting before my eyes like a great dark spectre, or rather like the stone-hewn Memnon, emitting no sounds except about the break of morning."

"My dear Sir Walter," answered the other, in a most placable tone, though the sarcasm couched in his companion's speech was not lost upon him, "I can talk as glibly as most people when it is required; but your evening rest seemed of more importance to me than my idle conversation. I was reading matters of no great interest, I can assure you—only the details of that little, disgusting affair of the Countess of Champarty, who has poisoned her husband and half-a-dozen other people."

"Ah!" cried the old man, "let me hear about that. So she poisoned her husband, did she? That's just like them all. All the mischief that takes place in the world is sure to begin with a woman: I never knew it otherwise in all my life. If a man games, it is for the sake of a woman; if a man robs, it is for a woman; if a man murders, it is for a woman; if a man betrays his friend, cheats the revenue, defrauds his neighbour, or ruins his estate, it is all for the sake of a woman; and the worst of it is, men think it an

excuse for everything they do, as if woman, woman, woman, were the end and aim of man's existence."

"Well, thank God," said Donovan, "I have no such end and aim! I can live within my means, however small they may be; I covet no man's wealth, however great it may be; I have not a debt in the world, thank heaven! and know not a woman that I care two straws about."

"And do you mean really to say," demanded the old gentleman, "that you live upon your pay and thirty pounds a-year, Captain Donovan, and that you have not a debt in the world?" And there was a certain sort of roguish twinkle in his bleared eyes, that might not altogether have satisfied Captain Donovan had he been looking at him at that moment; but while the baronet had been speaking, Donovan's eyes had been fixed upon the fire, which was flickering and flashing rather in its decline, and he kept them there till Sir Walter had done.

The moment, however, the other had finished, he replied boldly, "True, I can assure you, Sir Walter. I was early brought up by my dear mother, your niece, to know how much I had to depend upon, and to limit my expenses accordingly. You may, when you like, ask any man in the regiment, and you will find that Tom Donovan does not owe a penny in the world."

"Why should I ask?" demanded the old man cynically, for he knew right well what was the latent meaning of his worthy cousin's protestations; but the next moment he added with a suppressed chuckle, "Well, Tom, well: the man who can so well manage a little is worthy of managing much, and some day or another you may have the opportunity of doing so. That I promise you, upon my honour."

Perhaps Captain Thomas Donovan had arrived at the exact point which he wished to arrive at, but he exclaimed warmly—not exactly "*Nolo episcopari*," but what was pronounced with as much sincerity—"Nay, nay, my dear Sir Walter; I know you are generous and liberal, but you must not quite overwhelm me. You know there is your grandson Theodore, although he is a silly, wild boy, wayward and somewhat weak, and not easily instructed; yet——"

"Never you mind, Donovan; never you mind," said the old baronet. "He shall be taken care of—he shall have as much as is right and proper; but, whatever you may say, this will shall be signed to-night, if that fellow Mullins comes, as he ought to have done three hours ago. This shall be signed to-night; for I feel I am failing, Tom—I am failing very fast," and he laid his hand upon the parchment by his side.

"Oh, don't say such a thing, my dear Sir Walter," answered Captain Donovan. "There's no need of such haste. I trust I may drink your health these ten years yet. Why, you are much better and stronger to-day."

"It shall be signed to-night, Tom," repeated the old man; "ay, that it shall. I'll take care of the boy, never you fear. He's a sad scapegrace, and weak—very weak; but he shall have enough, and it shall come back strictly, too. He shan't have the power to squander it; no, that he shan't. Whatever I leave him shall be tied up—tied up as tight as my fist;" and he clenched his thick and gouty fingers fast, as if he had got a purse within them.

As he spoke, a large bell rang in the house, echoing through many a solitary and long-disused suite of apartments, and giving notice that some unwonted visiter was at the gates; for Sir Walter Broughton had of late seen very little company, and it was seldom that any other person visited the house but his relation, Captain Donovan, or the village doctor; and both preferred, from some peculiar idiosyncrasy, the back door to the front.

"That's Mullins," said the baronet; "that's Mullins, I am sure. Nobody else rings the front bell. He's an impudent fellow, Mullins. Now run away, Tom: you must not be a witness, you know. Go and talk to the boy, and see if you can do something with him. We must try and mend him. Why, he shot half-a-score of fowls the other day with a bow and arrow. He laughed when I told him I would disinherit him."

Captain Donovan shook his head, as if the case were quite hopeless; and a servant in rich livery, with a powdered head and black silk stockings, opened the door, saying, "Mr. Mullins, sir, is in the library."

"Show him in—show him in," said the baronet. "Away with you, Tom, or he'll think you have been persuading me."

With a bland smile Captain Donovan withdrew, passed through a different door from that by which Mr. Mullins was about to enter, and then paused for a moment in the ill-lighted passage, saying to himself, "He is mightily good-humoured this evening. I wonder what the deuce is the meaning of it; yet it did not seem affected either. However, I will have a chat with Mullins before he goes, and see what I can get out of him. He's an odd beast; but manner often tells as much as words."

In the mean time Sir Walter Broughton sat in his chair, with a degree of nervous irritability upon him which made him shuffle his legs about upon the stool till the attorney

entered; and as soon as he heard his step he exclaimed, without turning round his head, for he knew that he could not see over the chair, "You have been exceedingly long in coming down, Mr. Mullins. You might have been here three hours ago."

"If I had nobody's business to attend to but yours," answered Mr. Mullins, snappishly; and then advanced to the table, displaying a person and a look the most opposite in the world to that of Captain Donovan. He was a tall, thin man, about fifty years of age, with a long aquiline nose, exceedingly white hair (where his head could boast any), eyebrows as black as jet, and large, fine, dark eyes. There was every characteristic of decision about the mouth and jaw, and the broad expansive forehead spoke no lack of intellect to guide his determinations aright.

"Good evening. Sir Walter," he said, as if what had passed before had been but a prologue to their conversation. "What do you want with me that you sent for me in such a hurry?"

"I want to sign this," said Sir Walter, pointing to the parchment. "It may do very well, but I want a little codicil."

"If you only wanted to sign it," said the lawyer, "you were a fool for bringing me down here. You could have signed it just as well without me; and, as to the codicil, I think you are a greater fool still. When a man has made up his mind what to do with his property, he should not go on fiddling and altering. But it is the age of fiddling; there is nothing left as it is once settled, and we never leave anything alone when it is well."

It is strange what an influence force of character will have over the great mass of mankind, and especially over the capricious. Nobody on earth but Mr. Mullins could have said what had just been uttered to Sir Walter Broughton, without producing a ringing of the bell and an order to the servants to turn the speaker out. But with Mr. Mullins Sir Walter was as calm and patient as a lamb; for, although in their interviews he would occasionally indulge his acerbity for the first two or three minutes, yet the strong spirit of the lawyer always cowed him before they had exchanged half-a-dozen sentences.

"You are cross, Mullins; you are cross," said the baronet: "I have made you get up from your dinner. You are a great gastronome, I know. What was it I made you lose, Mullins?—a *mayennoise à la soubise*, or a *pigeon en crapaudine*? But come now; be reasonable, and you shall have as delicious a little *petit souper* with Donovan as my

man Jerome Augier can produce, and you know he's a *cordon bleu*."

"Donovan!" repeated Mullins; "have you got him in the house again? Then he has made you alter the will—that's clear enough. How old men will be such fools as to let a parcel of interested, mercenary toad-eaters get about them towards the close of their life, I cannot conceive. However, my business is to draw the codicil, if you want it. What am I to write?" and drawing the parchment towards him, he threw over his thumb, one after the other the several skins of which it was composed, and seemed to examine the clauses rapidly, murmuring, "Devil take him! he might have been contented with what he's got here. The Ballinasloe estate and two farms in Dorsetshire, besides the funded property—why, it makes at least one-half of the whole. You showed him the will, I suppose, and he was not contented."

"You are pleased to be very sarcastic, Mr. Mullins, but you are quite wrong," was the baronet's reply, as he saw that he had got a little advantage over the lawyer, and plucked up spirit accordingly. "I did not show him the will, and the codicil I have to propose is intended to revoke all those bequests. I shall leave the whole, with the exception of a few legacies to the servants, and two hundred a-year for Tom, charged upon the Irish property, to my grandson Theodore. The estates must be strictly tied up, with remainder to Donovan if the boy should die without children; for I won't have my money squandered away after my death, and estates which have been so long in the family brought to the hammer. Tie it up tightly, I say."

"That's of very little use," answered the lawyer. "If Donovan is to have it in remainder, he'll squander it as soon or sooner than the other. You can't keep stuff of this kind from getting musty, Sir Walter, do what you will. Somebody will come to spend it at last; and, unless you put two or three dozen into the entail, the worms will scarcely have made their way into your coffin before the auctioneer will be knocking down your estate."

"But Donovan tells me he is no spendthrift," said the baronet, looking slyly up in the lawyer's face. "He lives upon his pay and thirty pounds a-year."

"Pooh, pooh!" answered Mr. Mullins: "you know better, baronet; he was trying to cheat you."

"For which very reason," replied Sir Walter, "I am determined to make the change. I will leave him the boy's guardian and trustee, however, for then he will take care of

the property on his own account; and, to prevent his spending it himself, I'll have another in the entail. Who shall it be, I wonder?"

"Your ploughboy," said Mullins, with a cynical smile. "I suppose any one will do."

"Ye-es," replied the old man, drawing out the word doubtfully; "ye-es, but not the ploughboy. I must have a gentleman."

"What do you say to Sir Charles Chevenix? He is as nearly related to you as Donovan."

"No, no, the scoundrel!" answered the old man with a look of bitter malice: "not a penny shall he ever have. I remember him—I remember him—and what he said of me one day."

"Oh! ay, ay; I forgot," answered the lawyer with a bitter smile. "He called you a vain old fool, I remember, when you were going to marry Miss Birch. Well, you know, Sir Walter, I have no great love or respect for him, seeing that he grossly insulted my nephew when Reginald entered the same regiment as a mere cornet, and the boy was forced to sell out immediately."

"What for? what for?" demanded Sir Walter: "why should he sell out because he was insulted?"

"Because Sir Charles was captain of his troop, and Reginald thought fit to call him out, which he could not do till he had left the regiment."

Sir Walter Broughton chuckled, rubbed his hands, then coughed violently, and laughed again; and when all this cachinnation was over, he demanded in a quiet tone, "What's your nephew's name, Mullins?"

"Reginald," answered the solicitor; "Reginald Lisle. What has that to do with the matter?"

"Put him in as heir-of-entail," said the baronet: "put him in the entail;" and again he laughed, and coughed, and laughed. "So he called out our friend? Put him in the entail. He'll do better than the ploughboy, Mullins;" and after a moment or two of thought, he added, "I wish he had shot him!"

"He did," replied Mr. Mullins; "for, though only seventeen, the boy had a stout heart and a steady hand, and he wounded him in the hip, but not mortally. He still limps a little, however, I believe, though it is nine months ago."

"Put him in the entail, then," once more repeated the baronet, who seemed quite pleased with the idea, "and set about it quick, Mullins. Let there be no delay."

"Why, it will nearly need a new will," rejoined the

looked over it more accurately than before. "No; these first four sheets will do," he said, "and another will be enough for the rest. Where can one get a skin of parchment, I wonder?"

"Paper will do—paper will do quite well," said the old man: "why trouble yourself about parchment?"

"Well, well, we will see," said Mr. Mullins. "I shall sleep here, of course, Sir Walter, and will sit up for an hour or two to do it. But I'll tell you what: I won't have that damp, cold room in which you put me last time."

"Mr. Donovan's there," said the baronet, with one of his chuckles; "Donovan's there. Bless you, Mullins! he does not care where he sleeps, provided he is near me, dear young man!" and his ugly features assumed quite a diabolical look of triumph at having fathomed the character of his relation. "But get on with it as fast as you can: I long to have it signed. Can't you go into the library and get it ready at once?"

The lawyer said he would do as much as he could, but that it would take some hours. Sir Walter, however, said he would sit up till it was done, and as a bribe to make haste, he added, "Ring the bell, and I will tell Jerome to get the little supper ready for you when it is complete. But, mind—not a word to Tom, nor to Theodore either, if you meet with them. The boy keeps out of my way because I was angry with him yesterday morning. Not a word to either of them;" and promising obedience to the injunction, Mr. Mullins withdrew.

CHAPTER II.

It is a curious thing to mark, amongst all the varieties in nature, and all the infinite combinations which are continually taking place, the different effects that external objects produce upon the minds of different men. To many a one, brought up even in the hardening practice of the law, a visit to an old man on the very verge of the grave—feeble, decrepit, decayed, and yet with many of the worst passions and weaknesses of our human nature escorting him as it were to the tomb—and then a walk through a somewhat long and gloomy passage, but dimly lighted, with a row of pointed arched windows on one side, and some stone tracery and curious grotesque figures on the other, to a library

filled with old books, those tombstones of the mind, would have suggested some grave and even melancholy reflections. But Mr. Mullins was a man of the world, who very seldom gave himself the trouble to moralize, and whose calls upon imagination were very few. He dealt with all things out of his own family sharply, acutely, decisively; bringing to bear upon them the powers of a strong intellect, acting amongst them with vigorous character and firm purpose, and judging of men very justly both by natural tact and long experience. He had a high sense of honour, and was by no means a cold-hearted or an unfeeling man; but intellect was always predominant. He in fact judged everything he saw as he went through life as if his bosom were a court, and he were the presiding magistrate. I do not mean to say that his decisions were always accurate. Whose are? But they were always well weighed, though the constant habit of judging rendered his decisions very rapid. He walked through that long passage, then, with no other feelings in the world than that he had just seen a disagreeable old man, whom he had known from his own boyhood, and understood from his own manhood; that the old man intended to make a whimsical but not altogether an unjust will; that he had commissioned him to put it into proper form; and that he should find pen, ink, and paper in a large, old-fashioned, gloomy room called the library, where there were some ten or fifteen thousand very big books, the greater part of which were not worth reading. He gave not one moment's thought to the lamentable spectacle of vanity, malice, revenge, and hatred carried to the brink of the grave; he looked not at the curious chiselling of the Gothic windows on the one hand, nor to the grinning faces and long, straight, stony limbs on the other; he thought not of the world of labour, research, imagination, genius, industry, hope, expectation, disappointment, and distress of which each of those books in the room before him might be a memento. He looked at the absolute, the tangible, the direct, and suffered not his mind to stray, even for an instant, to anything collateral or remote.

On entering the library he found it tenanted by two persons, different in age, appearance, and character. The one, Captain Donovan, needs no further description; the other, young Theodore Broughton, the grandson of the old baronet, requires but little. He was a good-looking boy of thirteen or fourteen years of age, well-made and gentlemanly in appearance, with a pleasing face and good features, but a somewhat weak and restless expression. The boy was seated at one end of the room, with some ten or

twelve volumes of old-fashioned romances piled up round about him, which he was devouring eagerly, but changing often. At the other end of the room sat Captain Donovan, his feet on a chair, and a large book in his hand, apparently enriched with plates, which he was studying intently, but yet from time to time raising his eyes and giving a grave glance towards the boy, his fellow-tenant of the library. The door by which Mr. Mullins entered was almost directly behind Captain Donovan's chair; and he was, to say the truth, not a little surprised to see that the object of that gentleman's study was a large work upon botany.

"Nothing has so many caprices as idleness," thought Mr. Mullins. "If I had found him reading Mrs. Behn's novels or Mrs. Centlivre's plays, it wouldn't have surprised me. Botany!—what has he to do with botany?"

"Ah, Mullins!" said Captain Donovan, turning round, "is that you? I turned out of the little dining-room to let you have your confab with Sir Walter in private. Has he settled all his affairs?"

"He has arranged them all," replied Mr. Mullins, very well comprehending that the light and easy tone in which Captain Donovan spoke was not natural. "I have a paper to draw up, and then all will be done."

"Well, it is no great matter to me," said Captain Donovan in a low tone, modulated to avoid the ears of the boy. "I have no great wishes for wealth, and still less expectations of it."

"That's lucky," said Mr. Mullins, drily.

Donovan gave a start that was almost too perceptible. "What do you mean?" he said.

"Oh! I only mean," replied Mr. Mullins, "that it is always lucky to have no expectations, for I have always remarked that those who have the least are the nearest success."

"Indeed!" said Captain Donovan, looking up with a smile. "He said something, it is true, just as I was quitting the room to-night, about my one day having the command of large property, but I did not believe anything of it."

There was a spice of that sort of generous malice at the bottom of Mr. Mullins's heart which honest men feel when witnessing the playing of a roguish game, and seeing the wiles of the trickster defeated; and, shaking his head gravely, he replied, "You might have believed him implicitly, captain. Sir Walter is not a man to say such a thing without meaning it; but, upon my life, I must sit down and finish the paper, for the old gentleman says he will remain

up till it is done, and it will take two good hours at least. Ah, Master Theodore! how do you do?" he continued, as if he had not seen the boy before, and he held out his hand towards him in a kindly manner. Then, observing the eyes of Captain Donovan fixed upon him, he added with a sigh—perfectly natural, whatever the reader may think—and in a low voice, "Ah! poor fellow!"

"He dislikes me, that Mullins," said Donovan to himself. "I'll turn him off when I come into the property. Well, I'll leave you, Mullins," he continued aloud. "Theodore, my dear fellow, you had better come with me;" and the boy, after having timidly shaken hands with the lawyer, followed his cousin out of the room.

For about an hour and three-quarters Mr. Mullins continued to labour at what to him was an unusual task, that of copying with his own hand, upon a large sheet of paper, the words which had been previously written upon the parchment. He was a solicitor in London, of large practice, and consequently, upon all ordinary occasions, had plenty of clerks about him to do the drudgery; and, although at present there were several alterations to make as he went on, yet that did not relieve the dulness of the task so much as to prevent him from getting a little cross about it. As he was a very good lawyer, however, his crossness only seemed to make him the more scrupulously accurate; and Sir Walter, having told him to tie the property up tightly, most tightly did he tie it up.

In the end, he paused for a minute or two in thought. "I don't half like putting Reginald's name in," he said, "and yet I have no business to keep it out. It's the old man's own doing, and as there's very little chance of his ever coming in for this good thing, here goes;" and he wrote down the words which entailed the property upon his nephew, failing the issue, lawfully begotten, of Theodore Broughton and Thomas Donovan. This done, he reperused the will carefully, and seeing nothing therein that could be taken hold of by the most critical special pleader, he walked away with the paper to the small dining-room where he had left Sir Walter.

The baronet was dozing in the same position, and Captain Donovan, who had talked him to sleep, was sitting gazing at him with the newspaper on his knee, his mind full of acres, roods, and perches, together with sundry considerations of three and five per cents. Without the slightest ceremony Mr. Mullins awoke the baronet, who, after a minute or two of that confusion of head which in old people often follows a short sleep, resumed his faculties as briskly

as ever, and then, with a sly smile and a nod of the head, sent Captain Donovan once more out of the room, bidding him send in two or three of the inferior servants. In their presence, with spectacles on nose, and every now and then asking a question of the lawyer, he read over the will, and then with a shaking hand signed it, calling upon those present to witness his act and deed. He did it all with a gay and a jocular air, seeming right well pleased that it was accomplished; and when all was concluded, he bade one of the witnesses tell Lloyd to serve the supper there.

"I have sat up so long," he said, "that I must have a bit of something before I go to bed, and a glass of wine. There's no use talking of it, Mullins. My old doctor, Starvington, says I should not taste anything but bread or a cup of gruel after five o'clock; but I get quite exhausted, and so to-night —"

"You shall have a bit of the salmi," said Mullins, laughing.

"Ay, and a glass of that excellent Verzenay which you one day pronounced, Mullins, to be something between nectar and champagne."

Mr. Mullins did not at all object to the Verzenay; and when Captain Donovan was called in, the will having been previously sealed up in a clean sheet of paper, and docketed by the baronet as "my last will and testament," with his signature added, the worthy captain, radiant in face, and full of quiet, inoffensive spirits, joined in the delicate little meal with a good zest, and then gave his arm to his uncle, as the old gentleman slowly moved towards his bed-chamber.

Sir Walter had not done amiss, considering the state of his health and the opinion of his physicians. He had dabbled with one or two little trifles very pleasantly, and the glass of Verzenay had deviated into five. But if he had done well, Mr. Mullins did better; for he remained at the table while Captain Donovan was absent, and passed the time as best he might with the things before him. When the captain returned, it was with the spirit of conviviality upon him. He was very gay; and as he sipped his first glass at the *tête-à-tête*, he said, "Well, he's a capital old fellow, after all."

"I am glad you think so," said Mr. Mullins.

"I do indeed," rejoined Donovan, on whom the wine had some effect, at least in opening the lips and untying the tongue. "He's a capital old fellow; here's to him!"

"Health and long life to him!" said Mr. Mullins, rather

and he swallowed the toast without hesitation. Indeed, it seemed as if he were inclined to make a night of it, and to carry his potations to the full extent of sobriety; but Mr. Mullins was rigid, though not abstemious. He drank a certain quantity of wine every day, but no more. He had drunk none that day, having abandoned his dinner to attend Sir Walter's summons; and consequently he took glass after glass till the number was complete, and then refused to taste another drop, in spite of all persuasion. Moreover, when he had rested himself for a little after this exercise, he rose, took a candle from the sideboard, and retired to rest.

How long Captain Donovan pursued the engagement of the table Mr. Mullins did not know. As for himself, being a simple man in his habits, he produced from one pocket a nightcap, a razor, and a tooth-brush, and from the other a clean shirt, which he spread out upon the back of a chair. He then took off his wig, put on his nightcap, cleaned his teeth, and retired to bed.

A first sleep is certainly a very pleasant thing when a man has no great cares to fill his mind with the thoughts of this world, and no great imagination to trouble him with the dreams of any other. Comfortably, quietly, and well did Mr. Mullins sleep for some two hours. Not a vision crossed the wide, dull plain of slumber. He was not even sufficiently awake to feel he was asleep, but suddenly something startled him, and sitting bolt upright in bed he listened. A bell rang furiously, and then came a sound of hurrying feet, then a tap at a door not very far distant, and voices speaking, and then more hurrying to and fro, and then Mr. Mullins, getting up, sought for various portions of his habiliments, induced, as maiden authors would call it, his breeches, scrambled into his coat without his waistcoat, tied a towel round his neck because he could not find his cravat, and unlocking his door, looked out. There was a man with a light moving along at the other end of the corridor, and Mr. Mullins exclaimed, "Lloyd, Lloyd! what's the matter?"

"Ah, Mr. Mullins! Sir Walter is very ill," said the butler. "His gentleman and the captain are with him, and Grub the helper is gone for Dr. Starvington. You had better go in and see him, sir, though I don't think he is much in the way to make a will."

"That is made, thank God!" said Mullins, and then he muttered in a low tone, "I may as well be in at the death," and walked away to the baronet's room.

The attorney found Sir Walter Broughton lying in his

heavy sleep. But yet there was a something, not to be described, that was not natural. He snored very loud, but there was a sort of gasp withal; and Mr. Mullins did not at all deceive himself, especially when he found that Sir Walter had awoke ill, rung his bell twice violently, and, after he had been joined by both Captain Donovan and the valet, had fallen into that heavy slumber.

"He'll not wake again," said Mr. Mullins to Captain Donovan in a loud whisper. "How lucky the will was signed!"

"Very lucky indeed," said Captain Donovan, in a lower tone. "I hope the doctor won't be long."

"Very little use in his coming," rejoined Mullins.

"Better have him—better have him," answered Donovan, with a significant nod; and then added, in the lowest possible whisper, "The will is all right I suppose, Mullins?"

"Oh, quite right!" answered Mr. Mullins, with great internal satisfaction.

As he spoke, the baronet lifted his hand, which was lying on the bed-clothes—let it fall again, opened his eyes, and shut them.

"He is gone," said Mullins: and so it was.

The aspect of mourning spread over the house. Captain Donovan was very grave and sad. The servants all looked deplorable: the French cook alone maintained his constitutional and national cheerfulness, and laughed over his stew-pans while preparing dinner the next day for Mr. Mullins, Captain Donovan, and young Sir Theodore Broughton. Amongst them all, perhaps the only one who felt anything like real sorrow was the boy whom we have seen reading romances in the library. His grandfather, it is true, had been cross and wayward with him, exacting, and at times severe; but at other times he had been kind, and he was the only one who ever had been kind. The boy mourned, therefore, naturally and unaffectedly, with more of the reality and less of the semblance than others. Mr. Mullins did not affect to mourn: he was grave, indeed; for, though not a very impressible man, yet there is something in death, especially in the death of one with whom we have long been on habits of intimacy, which had its effect even upon him. He shook it off soon, however; for, though in reality a good-tempered man, yet the best natured of us feel, I believe, a little silent, secret satisfaction when we see the wily and the artful taken in their own net. Now, the thought of reading the will in the presence of Captain Donovan was a very great comfort to the solicitor.

The day at length came for that operation. A good

number of the distant relations of Sir Walter Broughton were assembled to hear the last disposition the deceased had made of his property; and in the old library, where the will had been drawn up, the party was received by Captain Donovan with an air of master of the house; while the young baronet, who seemed either to expect very little, to care very little, or to understand very little, sat at a table in the window, his head leaning on his hand, speaking to nobody. When all had assembled who were expected, Mr. Mullins produced the will, the servants were called in—for such was the custom in those days—and the seals were broken.

In a loud, clear, dry manner, Mr. Mullins proceeded; but every now and then, with a malicious twinkle of the eyes, he looked over the top of the paper at the worthy captain's face, as he sat just opposite to him, expecting, beyond all doubt, some outbreak of wrath; for he knew the man's expectations and his disappointment.

The first glance of his eye, however, had been a warning to the object of his attention. It produced doubt, confusion, anxiety for a moment; but then Donovan exerted the whole powers of his mind, and they were not small, to subdue the passions within him, so far at least as to deprive them of all external expression.

The will was read out, conveying the whole property of the deceased, real and personal, to his grandson, entailing the estates strictly in the course I have previously stated; appointing Mr. Mullins and Captain Donovan executors of the will, and naming the latter as guardian of the young heir. Much to Mr. Mullin's surprise, not a muscle of Captain Donovan's face moved, though his cheek was somewhat paler than usual; and when the more distant relatives gathered round the young baronet to wish him joy of the large fortune he inherited, the captain was one of the first to offer his congratulations.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was a little blue-bell growing at the edge of the road, by the side of a wild common; and a lad of about nineteen years of age, who was walking slowly along, with the bridle of a horse over his arm, stopped to gather it. Few young men of nineteen ever think of stopping to gather

blue-bells—at least vegetable ones. They are past that stage; they have the dawn of passion in them, the seed of their first ambitions, the aspiration after things permitted and things forbidden. 'Ay, after both; for in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, when the eyes of the youth of nineteen have been opened to the grand panorama of life, his bosom is one mass of aspirations, chaotic, vague, undefined, but still containing the germs of all the desires that animate and pervade the rest of his existence. He is burning to possess and to enjoy; and where is the youth who now-a-days would stop to pluck a blue-bell, with all the mighty world of untasted enjoyment open before him?

But that youth was peculiarly situated and of a peculiar mind. His habits of thought, both from natural character—I am a believer in natural character—and from education, were different from those of most men, and he was still at that period of progress when the fresh heart can admire and enjoy the humblest flower that blossoms in the fields. His horse, though now following so calmly behind him, was covered with foam and sweat, and seemed quite exhausted with hard riding; but the youth was cool and quiet in demeanour, as if there had been no struggle and no exertion; and, as I have said, he walked on with a calm, deliberate, meditative step, looking thoughtfully upon the ground, till his eye fell upon the flower, and then he stooped to gather it. But suddenly he drew his hand back, saying aloud, "Nay, bloom on; why should I condemn you to wither before your time? It will come soon enough;" and sitting down upon the little bank where the flower grew, he leaned his head upon his hand and meditated deeply. He had no passion for the flower. Happy had it been for him had he so acted when passion moved him.

As he was there sitting, a young man, some five or six years older, with a portfolio under his arm, plainly dressed, and with eyes cast over the prospect around at every step he took, crossed the common towards him, and when at about sixty yards' distance, seated himself on a little piece of bank, and deliberately set to work to sketch the youth and his horse. Horses, like cows, have a consciousness of having their portraits painted, and, less vain than man, are not pleased with the commemoration. Dear reader, if you ever attempted to sketch a cow, you will know that though her back be turned towards you, she will find out what you are about in a moment, and rise and walk away. The horse, tired as he was, began to fret and fidget within one minute after the stranger commenced his sketch, and as he tugged at the bridle over his master's arm, he naturally attracted

the youth's attention to the artist. There is such a thing as being bold to dangers and timid to the merest trifles. The young man, who had ridden that fierce and fiery horse straight across a difficult and dangerous country, priding himself in subduing his spirit and tiring out his vigorous strength, felt timid at the sight of a stranger sketching him. He felt a desire to go up and ask to see the portrait, and yet he could not summon courage to do it, neither did he like to sit still and undergo the process of being drawn. Perhaps there might be a little vanity in all this, and it is certain that he never imagined the horse was being sketched, and not himself; but when he at length got up to go away, the stranger raised his voice, saying, "If you would have the goodness to wait one moment, you would greatly oblige me. I want a horse for my foreground."

The animal, however, had moved a good deal, and it was necessary to put him right again. This led to a few words passing between the two young men; and when the sketch had been finished, looked at, and admired, they walked on together over the common, talking in a strain almost friendly.

Perhaps it is no wonder that they did so, for two reasons. In the first place, young Sir Theodore Broughton had hardly an acquaintance in the world, and the young sketcher was frank and easy in his manners, as well as perfectly gentlemanly and unassuming. No one could doubt that he had mixed in good society—that he had been habituated to it, in fact, all his life. Everything was done with ease, and it seemed as if he could not comprehend that there was such a thing as a feeling of awkwardness; but yet, what is strange, with his total want of morbid susceptibility, his conversation was full of fancy—occasionally, perhaps, a little too wild and volatile, but with a depth of thought pouring through the whole, like the deeper tones of a fine instrument, and harmonizing well with some of the characteristic traits of Theodore Broughton's mind.

"It must be a great pleasure to draw as you do," said the latter, as they walked on together. "Pray, may I ask is it your profession?"

"Not exactly," replied the stranger. "There is, indeed, a great pleasure in being able to draw, even imperfectly as I do, and that pleasure has a thousand branches, each bearing fruit. Often when I sit alone I turn back to the sketches I made some years ago; and as I look at them, not only the scene rises again before me with all the soft aerial perspective of memory, but the persons I have seen therein, the faces that smiled upon me, the voices that made my heart glad, come back as if time were annihilated, the fiat of fate

revoked, and the grave gave up its dead. Then, again, if I wish to aid imagination in framing, with the pencil or the brush, one of the gay day-dreams that we all indulge in, I can sit down and paint the scene of happiness I fancy, people it with beings that I love to look upon, and, better than all, can feel sure that they will neither deceive nor betray, malign nor destroy—that they are all truth—the truth of imagination, which I am often inclined to think is the only truth we find on earth."

His young companion thought for a moment or two. He had no great habit of expressing his feelings and ideas; and, whether he possessed the power or not, he was timid even in trying to use it. At length he answered, "These seem to me more the pleasures of association than those of the act itself. I meant to say, I cannot help thinking that it must be very delightful to be able to sit down and draw any beautiful thing we see."

"Oh! I understand," said the stranger: "to analyse the beauty that charms us, to see and mark its elements, and admire and wonder at the means by which the Almighty, out of a few tints, a few lines, and a few gradations and contrasts of light and shade, has produced such marvellous loveliness and effects so magnificent; and then to think of how infinitely beneficent it was to ordain such harmony between the soul of man and the wide creation, that every sight touches us with some different emotion, as if the whole were some grand instrument of music raising a hymn of praise unto the sky."

Theodore Broughton turned round and gazed at him with some surprise. He had never heard such words before, but they were a lesson to him: they taught him that from things plain, and of no apparent depth, were to be extracted thoughts and feelings high and profound. It gave him the first knowledge that there is a spirit in all things to be evoked by the earnest and the strong, and compelled to bring forth treasures from the rock. Happy had it been for him had he learned the lesson better; but as it was, it had its effect.

The stranger remarked his sudden look round and the silence that followed, and he said, laughing, "You think I am an enthusiast, but it is not so. I only seek to derive the greatest amount of pleasure from all things; and I know that, if we look only at the surface, we lose the most precious of the gifts of heaven. The gold lies deep down in the mine; the diamond veils its well of light till it is cut; and the mind of man, if it would discover the richness or the brightness of anything throughout

dig deep and labour hard. But this lesson I was taught by an insect. I was one day watching and admiring a quantity of wild flowers on a bank, when I saw a bee flying from blossom to blossom, pausing a moment upon each, diving down into the cup or into the bell, and flying onward with its load; and I said to myself, 'All flowers have their honey, but he must search who would find it.' "

The young baronet broke away from the subject somewhat abruptly, asking, "Do you stay long in this part of the country?" and his companion replied, "No, not long. I have been a great wanderer, hurrying from place to place; and as soon as I get the least tired of any spot, I willingly quit it. Now, perhaps, I shall have to be more steady both to one pursuit and to one position, for my wanderings have not hitherto been altogether voluntary; and when I go back to town, which will be in a few days, I suppose it will be to stay for some months."

"I should like very much to see London," said the young man, thoughtfully. "Are you usually resident there?"

"I shall be for some time," answered the other, a slight shade coming over his face, which might or might not be from imagining that an invitation would be expected. "But have you never seen London?" he added good-humouredly. "Oh! you should see it by all means. How strange that there should be any on this side of the Atlantic who has never seen the capital of the whole world! Had you been one of my good friends, the Mohawks, I might have understood it; but, for a young gentleman of your figure, I cannot conceive how it has happened."

"That is easily explained," said the young man, almost sadly. "My guardian does not choose it. He says it will be soon enough some time hence; that it is a vicious, corrupt place."

"Who is your guardian?" was the abrupt question of his companion—adding the moment after, as if to soften the apparent rudeness, "He must be a very strange man!"

"Why so?" demanded Sir Theodore.

The other paused for an instant, and then replied with a smile, "I will tell you why I think so, as you ask. Here he sets you upon a fiery devil of a chestnut horse, as likely to break your neck and his own back as possible, when there can be no possible need of your ever mounting such an animal again, or of your being obliged to break the spirit of such animals at the risk of your life, unless you be destined—which I don't suppose you are—for a riding-master or a horse-breaker; and yet he will not let you go to London, where the risks to your mind are small in comparison, if he

has given you a good education, and when they only imply lessons in life which you must one day receive. That was what made me say he must be a strange man, and ask his name."

"His name," answered the young man, "is Donovan—Captain Donovan."

A very grave, almost stern look came over his companion's countenance as that name was pronounced, and he was silent for several moments; but at length he replied, "You are Sir Theodore Broughton, then?"

"The same," replied the young man. "Do you know Captain Donovan?"

"I have seen him," said the stranger. "I have seen him, and may say that I have his acquaintance. I think he is absent from England now—is he not?"

"Yes," answered Sir Theodore: "he spends several months each year abroad. But now that you know my name, perhaps there will be no impropriety in my asking yours."

The stranger smiled good-humouredly, and then replied, half-laughing, "Certainly no impropriety; and yet, for particular reasons of my own, I will consider for a time before I give it to you. Will you come down to the little inn in the village, called the 'Hen and Chickens,' and dine with me to-day, and then I will tell you more? I think I need not add," he continued with a somewhat proud look, "that I am a gentleman by birth, education, and habits; and I do not think, from what you have seen of me, that you will suppose I am one of those men-about-town, of whose corrupting communication your guardian is so much afraid."

"Oh! I will come with all my heart," replied the young man cheerfully. "My tutor is away, so that I am quite my own master. What shall be the hour?"

"At four o'clock," replied the other, "I shall expect you. Good-bye for the present;" and while Sir Theodore put his foot in the stirrup to mount his horse, the other turned along a path to the right. The next moment, however, he heard the young baronet's voice exclaiming, "By what name shall I ask for you?"

"Oh! 'The Captain;' they call me 'The Captain,' and know me by no other name," was the reply; and the two parted, I may say mutually pleased with each other.

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE Theodore Broughton pursued his way to the hall, the gentleman with whom he had made a casual acquaintance returned, with a quick, elastic pace, to the little village, which, it must be remarked, was an old-fashioned country village, such as was seen in England three-score years ago. Sadly, sadly are changed the villages of once-merry England. There are paintings enough of them remaining to show us what they were, and I will not pause to describe this one, for the contrast between what it was and what it is might be somewhat melancholy.

Past the church, which, with its churchyard, and its elms, and its iron railings, and its grave-stones, and its monuments of old and high families, now long passed away, formed one side of an irregular green of perhaps a couple of acres in extent, the young stranger walked on, with his sketch-book under his arm, amongst several merry groups of children, not in their holiday attire, but clothed comfortably and decently, and having that ruddy hue of health, and that jocund sprightliness of aspect, which, from our rarely seeing any of them now, lead us to believe that the pictures of those times, either with pencil or with pen, savour of romance. Gaily and cheerfully the young gentleman went on, patted one curly urchin on the head, pinched another's cheek, said a kind word to a third; and with curtsies and nods, and sometimes a blush, and sometimes a smile, and sometimes a shy look of fun, was greeted by almost all, as if they knew him and liked him, and felt that he was a friend rather than a stranger in the place; yet he had not been there above four or five days in the whole course of his life.

At the farther end of the green, where, gradually narrowing itself, it was degraded into a road—a good broad road, however, with a row of green trees and a foot-path on each side—stood the little inn of the “Hen and Chickens,” with a not ill-painted sign of the tender plumed parent and her young brood. Whether the earth had arisen around the house—for it might be an axiom in natural philosophy, as well as in ethics, that dirt has a tendency to rise, although contrary to generally received opinions—or whether the

original founder of the house was a man of a lowly mind, certain it is that you approached the nest of the "Hen and Chickens" by two steps down from the footpath. There was nothing cheerless, damp-looking, or unwholesome, however, about this sunken story. The windows were not large, it is true, and the panes were very small; for few windows were large, and all panes were small, in England at that time. But still the sun contrived to shine cheerfully in, the floors were as clean as a new-mangled table-cloth, and the sand in the passage was as yellow as gold. The landlady, too (for landlord the inn had none), was, to use the terms of those days, "as clean and as neat as a carrot new-scraped," with an apron of snowy whiteness, a cap that vied with the apron, and a face that looked like a last year's rosy apple, tolerably well preserved, out of one's great-grandmother's linen press. To her the young stranger first applied himself; but the good landlady, who had all an innkeeper's sagacity about her, having discovered one at least of her guest's favourite pursuits, and perceived that he was a little proud of his drawings, began upon him at once, without suffering him to order the dinner that he meditated, saying, "Ah, captain! you have been out sketching again. I dare say you have made some beautiful pictures of our poor place. Pray let me look at them."

"Presently, presently, my good dame," said the stranger. "Just let me talk to you for one minute, and you shall see the drawings afterwards. I have something for you to do, and you won't have much time to spare. I expect a gentleman to dine with me here to-day, and you must have as nice a little dinner for us as you can get, about four o'clock."

"Oh, dear, yes! captain," said the landlady. "Bless you! I am quite ready. I knew quite well you would ask him to dinner. It's not more than half-an-hour since he left the door, and a comical-looking gentleman he is."

"Whom in heaven's name do you mean, Mrs. Gillespie?" asked her guest. "You surely do not call Sir Theodore Broughton a comical-looking gentleman."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried the landlady, holding her well-lined sides. "Well, that is good, captain! Sir Theodore Broughton! Oh, dear, no! I mean the tall, thin-sided gentleman, with a nose like a crow's beak, two small eyes, and a patch of hair on his chin. He was asking after you this morning, and all about you, and where you had gone, and then he said 'he'd take a stroll, and call back in the afternoon.'"

A look of some mortification came into the young gentle-

man's face, and he muttered, "That is unfortunate. The very last man I should like this youth to meet, for he is the last whom he would comprehend. How was he dressed, Mrs. Gillespie?"

"Oh! very funny indeed," answered Mrs. Gillespie. "He had got on a long blue waisted frock, with a silver lace, and silvery froggels on the pockets, and an embroidered waistcoat that was not half long enough to cover his stomach, and below that a pair of buckskins and jack-boots, just as much too large as the waistcoat was too short. But the oddest thing of all was, he had two great holes in his ears, and then he wore his hair in a club as thick as my arm."

"It might have been worse," said the young gentleman, drily; "it might have been worse."

"Worse! Lord have mercy, captain!" exclaimed Mrs. Gillespie, as if the assertion far surpassed her faith. "What! worse than such funny clothes as that!"

"When I first saw him," replied her guest, "he had no clothes on at all."

"Oh dear, sir!—fie for shame!" cried Mrs. Gillespie. "You don't mean to say he was naked, sir?"

"Indeed I do," replied the young gentleman, "unless you call having a bunch of feathers in his head being dressed, or think two human bones, in those holes in his ears, articles of wearing apparel."

"Goodness gracious!" cried the good dame, holding up her hands. "Why, the man must be stark staring mad! I thought so, I do declare."

"No, no!" said the young gentleman, who was very much amused at the astonishment of his hostess, but did not wish to injure the reputation of his friend's brains. He is not and was not mad; but he was amongst the savages, Mrs. Gillespie."

"Ah! that may be, then," said the good woman: "and a very ugly savage he'd make; but I hope you won't have him here, captain, with any of his savage tricks. I should be afraid of his eating the little children."

"No fear of that, my good lady," was the answer. "He is as kind-hearted a man as ever lived; and moreover, if he comes before Sir Theodore and I have done dinner, you must keep him down here, and make much of him, Mrs. Gillespie. Tell him I am engaged with a gentleman upstairs, give him plenty of good punch, and a nice dinner, and he will tell you of all sorts of strange things that he has seen in foreign countries. That gentleman once saved my life."

With this hint and a significant nod, he turned away to-

wards his own room, saying to himself, with a somewhat rueful smile, "And he has often made me pay for it by his oddities since. Upon my life! I must take the Ravenous Crow back to Canada, or the Sandwich Isles, or somewhere."

"The Ravenous Crow!" exclaimed Mrs. Gillespie, who was following him unperceived, and overheard the last words; "Lord have mercy, sir! do you call him a ravenous crow?"

"No, no, no!" cried the young gentleman, laughing. "That was his name among the Cherokee Indians. They generally take themselves, and bestow upon their friends, the names of birds, and beasts, and other objects in nature. His real name is Major Brandrum, a very gallant, honourable, excellent person, as you'll find when you chat with him a little."

"Well, sir, I will do anything to please you," replied Mrs. Gillespie, "for I am sure you have always behaved very genteel in my house; but you are sure he is not carnivorous?"

Her young guest quieted her in regard to the propensities which he very well understood she was inclined to attribute to his friend by the term carnivorous; and to his great relief two hours passed away, and four o'clock came, without the appearance of Major Brandrum.

Sir Theodore Broughton was punctual to his time, and entered the little sitting-room of the traveller with that sort of depressed expression in his young face which is so painful to see in a countenance where time has left no wrinkles, and the only furrows are those of care. He had been thinking, ever since they parted, of the words of the stranger. They had opened to him new sources of thought, new questions to ask his own heart and his own spirit; and he longed, as the other had pointed out, to interrogate the vast universe, and gain replies which would raise up mightier questions still. He came prepared to follow the same strain of conversation, but for some reason the mood of his companion was changed; he would no longer rest upon deep things, but spoke lightly and gaily of what men are accustomed to call "the world," though neither altogether frivolously nor unimportantly.

Mrs. Gillespie and Mrs. Gillespie's cook had done their best to send up to one of the favourite guests of the house as nice a little dinner as the place would afford, and very successful had been their labours. The wine, too, was good; and let a man be as intellectually constituted as he may, the spirits will rise, the heart will feel lightened, under the in-

fluence of the good things of this life, so long as matter is united to mind and health cements the union. Sir Theodore Broughton soon shook off his grave and thoughtful air, talked and laughed joyously with his companion, and listened with keen zest to many a tale, and many an anecdote of London life, with which the other enriched his conversation. It must not be denied that his host watched him, marked the effect his words produced, saw the changes of countenance, which betrayed an eager spirit within when pleasures and pastimes were described, and in the end he said to himself, "Perhaps, after all, the guardian is right. Without some very safe companion, all that is good and noble in this youth might be lost amongst the fascinations of the metropolis."

In the mean time the question of his name had been quite forgotten. In the charms of his society, Sir Theodore cared little what his name was; and, with a facility too frequent and too fatal, bent his thoughts to those of the companion of the hour, remembering nothing of his former ideas and feelings. Theameleon mind, which takes its colour from that which is next to it, unlike the skin of the animal, is a peril, not a protection. Something, indeed, might be allowed for the fact, that this was the first society deserving of the name which the young man had ever known. His guardian, often absent, was, when with him, grave and stern—indulging him, it is true, in many dangerous sports and over-fatiguing exercises, but repelling all confidence, and treating him as a mere boy. His tutor we shall see more of hereafter, and it will then be apparent that he was not fitted to be a friend or companion. All the rest of those admitted to him were persons upon business, a few masters of different sciences and arts, the parson of the parish—an old-fashioned parson, more frequently in the hunting-saddle than the pulpit—and servants. What a relief—what an enjoyment—when the imprisoned thoughts have long been shut up within the close cell of our own bosom, and every one who approaches seems but a jailer to force them back if they try to escape, to meet with a kindred spirit which gives them leave to wander, and encourages them to come forth, even if it be for but one short hour! No wonder the young man gave way to it.

In the midst of the most pleasant conversation which Sir Theodore Broughton had ever enjoyed, he was suddenly startled by sounds very different from those which he and his companion were uttering. First came a loud "whoop," which seemed to shake the floor under their feet, and then something which seemed intended for music; but the words

of the song, whatever they were, though several articulate sounds rose up through the thin compartments, were quite unintelligible to Sir Theodore Broughton. His companion at first looked a little annoyed, but then smiled; and upon the principle of taking the bull by the horns, he said, "That is a friend and fellow soldier of mine, Sir Theodore—a most eccentric personage, but a highly worthy one in many respects, notwithstanding a few faults both real and apparent. He once saved my life in Canada; and, as often happens with men of warm hearts, he seems to think that act has bound him by a duty to look for occasion to serve me ever since."

"But why is he not dining with us?" asked the young baronet; "it would have given me great pleasure to have met such a person."

"He only called to inquire for me this morning," replied the other; "and, moreover, you would hardly have understood him in one short interview, and might, perhaps, have felt a good deal of surprise and little pleasure in the society and conversation of one who requires to be well known to be esteemed. But, hark! I think he is coming up the stairs."

As he spoke, the tramp of a heavy foot was heard, which from the sounds might well be incased in such boots as Mrs. G'espie had described; but when the door opened, a very different personage appeared from him whom Sir Theodore's entertainer expected to see: no other, in short, than Captain Donovan himself. A considerable change had taken place in that gentleman since last I presented him to the reader. The mortification which he had experienced in regard to Sir Walter Broughton's will, though deprived of all external expression, had not been without effect internally. He had become somewhat morose and stern in demeanour, in all things where his young ward was concerned. He could be as gay, as dashing, and as light as ever in general society; but the very sight of Sir Theodore Broughton seemed to excite a sullen and a bad feeling, to which he gave way a little too much, perhaps, considering that he wished to establish a hold upon the young man's mind. His dress also was more rich and costly than it had formerly been; and, whether from the accessories of costume, or from any of those accidental causes which occasionally work changes in the human frame, independent of those wrought by the great destroyer Time, he looked altogether a younger man than at the period of his relation's death. On the present occasion his brow, which was generally clouded when he was in that part of the country, was knit into a heavier

frown than ever, and his eye fixed instantly upon the young baronet, who seemed to cower beneath its influence.

"Well, Theodore," he said, "this is a strange vagary. I did not know, sir, you were in the habit of dining out during my absence. Who is your entertainer? Oh! Captain Lisle!" he continued, after he had gazed upon Sir Theodore's companion for an instant: "sir, I am your most obedient humble servant. I did not know you at first. I feel particularly obliged by your kind attention to Sir Theodore Broughton; you will pardon me for saying, that I think it would be more prudent of him, when I am absent, to confine himself to acquaintances of my selecting; and, on your part——"

"Stop for a moment, Captain Donovan," said Reginald Lisle, calmly, but yet with a very meaning tone: "comment on the conduct of Sir Theodore Broughton if you please. That you may be entitled to do; but do not comment upon mine without thinking twice of what you are going to say, for you seem somewhat heated just now, and though I am not, I may not bear any unpleasant observations calmly."

Captain Donovan bit his lip, and paused for an instant ere he replied. He answered, however, at length, in a cold and somewhat sarcastic tone, "Do not suppose, sir, that I was going to say anything which could excite your pugnacious propensities. You have had a good deal more fighting lately, of one kind and another, than I have had or ever shall have again. For this young gentleman's sake, I have turned my sword into a ploughshare, and have no particular inclination to bend it to another form again. The observation I was about to make was simply this, that on your part you will greatly oblige me if you will not attempt to thwart my views with regard to this young gentleman's education; for, although you are mentioned, by some extraordinary accident, in Sir Walter Broughton's will, yet you are not appointed his guardian."

"I am well aware of that fact, sir," answered Reginald Lisle, "and shall certainly not attempt to interfere with his education. But do not let us dispute, Captain Donovan," he continued, good-humouredly. "May I beg you to sit down and take some dinner, as you seem from your appearance to have ridden far and hard?"

Captain Donovan seemed to hesitate for a moment, and then, with a mollified look, seated himself, saying, "Well, I have ridden far; for, as soon as I heard that Dr. Gamble had thought fit to go away and leave you alone, I set off to see what was the cause of such conduct."

His words were addressed to Theodore, although th.

invitation had come from Captain Lisle. The latter, however, rang the bell, and ordered a plate and knife and fork for Captain Donovan; but, though he remained, partook of the good cheer, and drank more than one glass of wine, his manner was still cold and stiff, and he seemed dissatisfied and ill at ease. There was a sort of absent, meditative air about him; and from time to time he fixed his eyes upon Reginald Lisle, as if that gentleman in some degree formed one of the elements of his calculations. "We see very little of you in London, Captain Donovan," said the entertainer, at length—"though, to say truth, I can hardly know whether you are much there or not, for I have been so frequently absent. I wonder you do not bring Sir Theodore to London, to let him see a little of the capital."

A heavy frown gathered upon Captain Donovan's brows, and the young baronet seemed frightened at the probable effect which this hint might have upon his guardian. But, whatever was the reply which sprang to the worthy officer's lips, it was interrupted by a renewal of the sounds from below, which now seemed coming up the stairs:—

Joliette, ma Joliette !
 Qu'elle est belle en chénillette !
 Je monterai ma charrette,
 J'ai voir ma Joliette.

Such were the doggrel lines which, to a tune then common amongst the *habitans* of Canada, were sung by a rich, full, but somewhat over-loud voice, upon the stairs of the little inn, the moment after Reginald Lisle's suggestion had passed his lips. Nobody could express wonder or make any inquiry before the strange figure, which Mrs. Gillespie had very accurately described, entered the room, and, in an attitude half theatrical, half military, with one leg advanced, and his hand, the palm turned outwards, raised to his forehead, gazed round the company.

"Ah, Reginald, my boy!" he exclaimed, "found you at last! That charming old woman below, together with a capon and a bowl of punch, engaged me in deep conversation; nor did she admit that you were in the house till I heard your well-known voice raised somewhat high just now.—I always know a voice, sir," he continued, looking round to Captain Donovan: "the slightest tone of it is sufficient for me. Whether he be roaring through a speaking-trumpet or whispering soft nonsense in a lady's ear, I know my man in a moment, if ever I heard his tongue before."

Lisle?" asked Donovan, with a slight degree of sarcastic bitterness in his tone.

"Yes," replied Reginald, who had been leaning back in his chair, a little mortified and a little amused. "Yes, this is my friend, Captain Donovan; and a very good friend, too. Let me introduce him to you. Major Brandum—Captain Donovan; Sir Theodore Broughton—Major Brandum;" and, shaking the major warmly by the hand, he placed a chair for him at the table.

"Ah, Captain Donovan!" said the worthy gentleman, taking his seat, and stretching his enormously long legs under the table till he kicked Theodore's shins on the other side; "that's not the name I am the best known by since the year '72, nor the name I am most proud of, either."

"Have you got an *alias* then, sir?" asked Captain Donovan, drily. The major nodded his head, and Donovan proceeded:—"May I ask what it is?"

"Assuredly," replied Major Brandum. "In this barbarous and corrupt country—not the less barbarous for being corrupt, nor the less corrupt for being barbarous—I am called, as my friend Lisle has stated, Major Brandum; but amongst the more civilized nations in North America, I am known by the name of 'The Ravenous Crow.'"

"No doubt, justly," said Captain Donovan.

"Of that you can tell nothing," said the major, "till you hear how I came by the appellation. You will then see that it is both significant and glorious; not the less glorious because it is significant, nor the less significant because it is glorious. You must know that, when I was in command of a party of my tribe, the Cherokee Indians, we had gathered together some sixty baskets of maize. In whose fields it grew, far be it from me to say, but it was ours by right of war; when one day, while we were upon a hunting expedition, a party of Mohawks fell upon our wigwam, and carried off our maize and three young squaws, one of whom was my own especial property. On my return, I set off with twenty warriors of the tribe, and followed the marauders like a slot-hound. Not a twig they had broken, not a blade of grass their footsteps had bent, but was marked as we went, and we discovered by the trail that there were full fifty men of them. However, we watched our opportunity, fell upon them unawares, and after a desperate conflict, in which I slew and scalped three of their most famous warriors—the Centipede, the Old Buzzard, and the Grisly Bear—we recovered our maize and our squaws, and marched off in triumph. We well knew that the Mohawks would

soon retaliate, and so we sent far and wide to all the families of the tribe, and all our allies; but everything kept still for seven days, when one morning, as I was lying in wait for a moose in a cedar-swamp, I saw an old gentleman painted like a Cherokee go creeping along through some sugar maples above. I knew what he was about the moment I beheld him; but I was blind to him, and a minute or two after he came creeping down till we stood face to face. Then he said 'Hum!' and I answered 'Hum!' So then, after five minutes more, we sat down together, resting our elbows on our knees, and he said to me, 'Brother, I am the Wappiti with the long horns, a friend of the Great Bison.' I knew he was lying all the time, and that he was the Rattlesnake. So I replied to him, 'Brother, I am the Bald Eagle. What does the Wappiti with the long horns want with the Bald Eagle?' Upon that he told me that he heard we had broken the stick with the Mohawks about sixty basketfuls of maize, and that if I would lead him to the wigwam, and give him three baskets, the Wappiti with the long horns and all his people would come down to fight with us against the Mohawks. Then I said, 'Brother, I can give no maize, for the Bald Eagle has devoured it all. He has no maize to give.' To which he replied, 'Then, brother, thou art no Bald Eagle, but a Ravenous Crow;' and thereupon he sprang upon his feet, brandished his tomahawk, and set up the war-whoop. But I was upon my legs as soon as he was, and to it we set, whirling round like the foaming of a waterfall, springing at each other like panthers, aiming here and aiming there; and all the time he kept shouting his war-whoop, till I cried, 'Is not the Rattlesnake known by his rattle?' and scarcely were the words out of my mouth when down came ten or twelve men of his tribe, and I was overpowered and tied in a minute. I shall never forget the time when they got me to the wigwam, and were about to put me to the torture. The dry brushwood was all piled round about me in the shape of a crow's nest, and they began singing a song of how they had caught the Ravenous Crow, and were going to pluck his feathers out. I answered by singing my war-song and laughing them to scorn; but still what they were about was not pleasant, and a glad sound it was to me to hear the war-whoop suddenly in all the woods round about, and see my own people—all beautifully painted—come rushing through the trees just at the nick of time. I was soon a free man again, with a tomahawk in my hand, and I taught them that day that the Ravenous Crow could peck."

He had spoken hitherto in rather an exaggerated and pompous tone, but now he dropped his voice, and in an ordinary manner added, "They had burnt off the calf of my left leg, but that mattered little; I did just as well without."

The reader must not suppose that this long story had proceeded uninterrupted, for Reginald Lisle had filled his comrade's glass more than once with wine, and Captain Donovan had sometimes asked a question in a peculiarly courteous tone. When the tale was finished, he assured Major Brandrum that he fully concurred in the appropriateness of his appellation of "The Ravenous Crow;" and then, turning to Captain Lisle, he said, "You were speaking of my going to London, and taking my young ward with me. Do you not think it is somewhat early for him to make acquaintance with the great metropolis?"

He spoke in so altered a tone that Reginald remarked it with surprise, and even suspicion; for he could not conceive that there was anything in the entrance or conversation of "The Ravenous Crow" that could have so greatly modified Captain Donovan's feelings; but, before he could reply, Major Brandrum answered, "Too early! Not a bit. It can never be too early for a young man to be made acquainted with life. Life is a curious and exciting thing, Captain Donovan; not the less curious because it is exciting, nor the less exciting because it is curious. A man should gain a knowledge of it betimes. Then he sows his wild oats at a period when they are not likely to produce too large a harvest. Why, I started in the world at fourteen, with ten pounds in my pocket, three shirts, and two pair of breeches, and I have never regretted it. Oh! take the young gentleman to London by all means. Here's Reginald will soon make him acquainted with all the pretty squaws—ladies, I mean; heaven bless 'em! and I will show him every hole and corner in the old city, from the lowest blind alley at the back of the Tower, to Whitehall and St. James's: though, to say truth, I dare say it is greatly changed; for I did not see a tile of it for ten years, from the time I sailed away in the 'Little Mary,' of Boston, till about two months ago, when I walked along in my blanket and feathers, with all the women of Wapping following me, after my return from Canada."

"That must have been somewhat annoying," said Captain Donovan, laughing. "Could you not contrive to get a coat and a pair of breeches on board the vessel?"

"No, sir, no," replied Major Brandrum. "I was resolved to make my triumphal entrance as 'The Ravenous Crow:'

and when the excellent brandy-faced ladies of the metropolis kept asking me impertinent questions as to the warmth of my naked legs, I replied to them in Cherokee, at which they set up a shout, just like a war-whoop. Oh! let him come to London by all means. We'll show him a little of life."

"Well, we shall see—we shall see," replied Captain Donovan, good-humouredly. "I suppose, gentlemen, you are not going to leave this neighbourhood just yet, and I trust that we shall have the pleasure of seeing you at dinner to-morrow at the Hall." Thus saying, he rose. The invitation was accepted, the hour arranged, and guardian and ward took their departure, leaving Reginald Lisle in a brown study, and the Ravenous Crow humming "Joliette."

CHAPTER V.

"WHY, what's the matter, Reginald?" exclaimed his friend Major Brandrum, when, after finishing his song, he perceived that his young companion still continued in meditation. "You are as deep in thought as a white bear in the winter time."

"I'm puzzled, Crow," replied Reginald Lisle; "very much puzzled, and scarcely know how to explain myself even to you."

"That is strange," answered the major; but come—tell me what's the matter. I'll follow the trail, depend upon it, let it be ever so intricate. Is it the young man that puzzles you, or the old one? for with them is the mystery, I see."

"It is the old one," answered Reginald. "I do not know what to make of him. A moment before you entered, I was fully convinced that nothing could be so disagreeable to him as any intimate acquaintance between Sir Theodore Broughton and myself, and that, if anything on earth could render that acquaintance more to be avoided in his opinion, it would be to know that I was intimate with such a wild, harum-scarum fellow as yourself. He was as sulky as a bear with a sore head at Sir Theodore's having accepted my invitation to dinner, and was decidedly averse to his having even a sight of the capital—speaking like a Puritan on the subject, though every one knows he is quite the reverse of a Puritan in his morals; and yet, the moment you enter,

with your wild ways and wild stories, he changes all at once, invites us to dinner, half yields in regard to London, and is as civil as he possibly can be."

"I suppose," replied Major Brandrum, laughing, "he thought you were too good and too prudent, Reginald; and when he saw your friend, he was convinced that he had mistaken you."

"Upon my word, it looks something like it," replied Captain Lisle; "and yet what good it can do him I cannot imagine."

"Well, let us reconnoitre the ground a little more before we come to any conclusion," answered the major; "and in the first place, tell me what is the connection between you and this young baronet. I never heard of him before."

"No connection whatever that I know of," answered Reginald Lisle, "except my having fought his cousin, Sir Charles Chevenix, and having been put into the entail of the estate for that very cause, I believe, by his grandfather, Sir Walter Broughton. At least so my worthy uncle, Mullins, always said."

"Upon my life," cried the major, "that's an exceedingly philosophical plan! I wish it would get into vogue. I have more than once been tempted to shoot my own cousins, but I suppose that would not do as well. No man would put me into an entail for doing that."

"I am afraid not," answered Lisle; "nor would it be any great satisfaction if he did. Here in this instance there is just as much chance of my ever succeeding to the property as of your doing so."

"Why so? why so?" said his friend; "the lad might die without children."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Lisle. "He seems as amiable and fine a fellow as ever lived, if they do not break his spirit by a bad education. But, even if he were to die, there's still Donovan himself to come in."

"Oh, ho!" cried the Ravenous Crow. "So he is the next heir—is he?—and the guardian too? What! the lamb left under the kind protection of the wolf! Come, come, Lisle; you give me a new insight into the matter. Master Donovan may have his own views as to selecting the acquaintances of his ward. It might be no bad thing for him if I were to seduce the young man to go and join my friends the Cherokees, or undertake any other mad-headed expedition, which may suit very well with

A soldier who lives on his pay,
And spends half-a-crown out of sixpence a-day;

but would never suit a wealthy young baronet—unless his guardian were heir to his property."

"I wish you would not put such things in my head, Brandrum," said Lisle. "Do you know any harm of this man Donovan? If not, why should you think so?"

"Because he is not Reginald Lisle," replied the major; "nor, for that matter, Jack Brandrum either. I declare I wouldn't hurt a hair of the head of a boy like that for all the estates in England—bating fair and open warfare, where a man may be called upon to scalp his enemy as a matter of course. But I'll tell you what, Reginald: we must look after this matter, my dear boy. It will become you, being the heir-presumptive, as men call it, to see that the succession to the crown is not endangered. If I know you right, you'll be quite as willing to look after this lad for a year or two as if he were your own brother. Now, let you and I set about it, and the devil a Donovan of them all will be a match for us."

"I cannot endure suspicion, Brandrum," answered the young officer: "we have really no cause for it on the present occasion. I almost feel ashamed of the thoughts that have come into my head; but yet it is very strange, Brandrum, that one so affectedly careful of the morals and character of his ward should be so careless in regard to his life. The first thing I saw this morning, when I was sketching upon the common, was this young man riding a brute which the best horseman in Europe might have found trouble to sit. It was rearing, and plunging, and hogging its back, so that, although I am no very timid horseman, as you know——"

"You'd ride the devil red-hot!" interrupted Brandrum.

"I would not have mounted that beast for anything less than to save another man's life, or to obey orders," continued Reginald.

"Pooh! pooh!" answered the Ravenous Crow. "Never talk to me of not being fond of suspicion! Where the devil should a man feel suspicion except in this world? It is the only place where it is likely to be useful. After the two sets of people are separated at the day of judgment, we shall all understand each other, and there will be no use of suspicion any more; but as long as we are all here, mingled together higgledy-piggledy, each man concealing what he is, follow the Indian plan, and suspect everybody."

Reginald Lisle gazed at him for a moment, and then burst into a fit of laughter. "That is good!" he exclaimed at length; "that is excellent, my friend the Crow!—you, who suspect nobody, except when you have got a blanket on and

a belt of wampum! Was it not only the other day, when I was in London, that you accepted two bills of exchange for a man whom I believe to be a great rascal, and I told you ——"

"There, there! don't talk of that!" exclaimed Major Brandrum: "that's a sore subject just now, Regy. You know, of course, that the villain didn't furnish the money as he promised. It's that which brings me down here just now. I found there was a writ out, and I didn't know where to go, so I came down here, knowing that I should find fun with you, if I found nothing else."

Captain Lisle's face became very grave. "Upon my life, Brandrum," he replied, "I have nothing else to give you. Why, this is a matter of four or five hundred pounds, and I have not got as much at my command in the world."

"There!—don't talk of that," cried Major Brandrum. "Do you think I would take it if you had, lad? No, no: I'll keep out of the Fleet as long as I can; but when the time comes, I must go. It doesn't much matter where my old bones lie; but I'll give the bailiffs and their bums a run before they catch me. There!—don't let us talk any more of it. It will be bad enough to think of on the day I am taken, but till then I'll not think of it at all."

Nor could his young friend get him to speak upon the subject any more. With that light and happy humour which, like a cork, floats over the waves of circumstance that overwhelm heavier and more solid things, he seemed rather raised than depressed by the difficulties of his situation, and gaily and cheerfully chatted of everything else, although Reginald Lisle remained grave and thoughtful, and ended the evening by saying, "I must talk to my uncle about this, Brandrum;" evidently showing that the position in which his friend had placed himself had remained in his thoughts throughout their whole conversation.

On the following day, at the usual hour of dinner in those times, Reginald Lisle and Major Brandrum presented themselves in the large drawing-room at the Hall, and were received with the greatest marks of kindness by Captain Donovan. His brow no longer wore a frown; his manner was no longer cold and distant; and not only to Captain Lisle, but to Sir Theodore Broughton, also, he seemed a totally different man. The young baronet listened in silent surprise while he laughed and joked with Major Brandrum, and talked cheerfully with Captain Lisle; and in the end, after the bottle had circulated very freely, and the major had shown that he was competent and willing to drink any given quantity of wine, Captain Donovan turned gaily to

his ward, saying, "Well, Theodore, what do you say to a trip to London? Would you like it?"

The young baronet did not affect to deny that it would be very agreeable to him; and Captain Donovan seemed to fall into a fit of thought, at the end of which time he said, "I cannot go myself for some time; but I feel quite sure I could trust your inexperience of London to the guidance of Captain Lisle, whose own character and reputation are the strongest of guarantees."

From particular circumstances connected with his own situation, Reginald coloured a little at this speech, and perhaps the more so because he saw Donovan's eye fixed upon him. It cannot be doubted that the captain perceived the deepening tint; but it seemed to make no difference as to his views, for he added immediately, "What say you, Lisle? Will you undertake the task of showing our young friend here the lions of London for a day or two, till I can come up and join you?"

"I shall be most happy," replied Captain Lisle; "and am only sorry that I cannot invite him to my house—not having one," he added, with a laugh, "to invite him to. I lodge at an inn, as you are probably aware."

"No, indeed," replied Captain Donovan. "I thought your mother was in town."

"No; I am sorry to say she is not," replied Lisle. "She went to live at a short distance from London while I was absent in America, and I am too poor to keep a house myself."

"Oh, that will make no difference!" said Captain Donovan. "I could not have thought of burdening your mother's house with an uninvited guest, even had she been in town; but Theodore can easily take up his abode at a hotel, with his servant, if you will be with him as much as possible."

"With pleasure! with pleasure!" replied Reginald Lisle, his face brightening. "When do you propose that he should come?"

"Oh, whenever you go yourself," replied Donovan. "When a thing is once decided, the sooner it is done the better: to-morrow, if you like."

"I am very willing," answered Reginald. "Will you come, Brandrum?"

"Part of the way," replied the Ravenous Crow, nodding his head significantly. "I have business which will detain me some distance from London for a short time; but I'll go part of the way with you."

Captain Donovan's face grew somewhat cloudy. Whether

he thought that the society of the eccentric major was absolutely necessary to the well-being of his ward in London or not, I cannot divine; but he asked in a very insinuating tone, "Is this a business that cannot be put off, my dear major?"

"I wish it could," said Major Brandrum, with a sly smile; "but it is an important and troublesome affair, and not the less troublesome because it is important, nor the less important because it is troublesome."

"Well, it cannot be helped," answered Captain Donovan; "and the only thing that now remains is to settle our plans."

A discussion then ensued, with which it may be unnecessary to trouble my readers, as it principally referred to modes of conveyance long disused, even before the flaming engine and the clattering rail whirled travellers through Europe at the rate of forty miles an hour. At one time it was proposed that the young baronet should go in the coach-and-four; at another, that he and his companions should take the stage-coach at Ludlow; but ultimately it was determined that, as both Major Brandrum and Reginald Lisle had come thither on horseback, the whole party should return towards town in the same manner, and if they found the journey tedious, should have recourse to post-chaises after they had proceeded a certain way on the road. An early hour was appointed for starting the next morning, and the party separated in great good humour with each other. As they were going down the steps, however, Captain Donovan followed the two guests, exclaiming, "Major Brandrum, allow me to speak with you for a moment;" and while the major paused at this summons, Reginald walked slowly on into the park.

"Thank you, my dear captain! thank you! I never borrow money. It is always unpleasant to borrow, and often inconvenient to pay; and not the less inconvenient because it is unpleasant, nor the less unpleasant because it is inconvenient."

Such were the words which, spoken in Major Brandrum's voice, reached the ears of Reginald as he walked on. A moment or two after, he was joined by his friend, the Ravenous Crow, who said, laughing, "Hang the fellow! he wanted to lend me money. He is a quick guesser, that fellow! He seems to have found out in a minute what my important business was."

"Why did not you take it?" demanded Reginald. "I dare say he could very well afford to lend it to you."

"Because, my dear Lisle," replied Brandrum, laying his

and you will remember that you are to be useful to him in any way that he may require; but, at the same time, you will inform me, from time to time, either here or when I join you there, of everything that has taken place, even to the most minute particular; for, in case he gets into any of the little scrapes or errors of youth, it will, of course, be my task to get him out of them again as easily as possible."

"I see, sir," answered Zachary Hargrave, with a low bow.

"That he will get into some of these adventures I do not pretend to doubt," continued Captain Donovan. "It is natural to youth, and he must, in some degree, buy his experience, like other young men. You will easily understand, therefore, that anything you may tell me of him will not make me angry, so you need have no apprehension on the subject of any little escapades of his; only you must be perfectly frank and straightforward with me. If you are not, I shall discharge you; if you are, you may reckon upon my favour and protection through life. Now go away and prepare; there's a five-pound note for you."

The man expressed his gratitude, bowed low, and withdrew—murmuring, when he reached the back of the door, "What does he mean by escapades?" and then, after thinking deeply upon the subject, and traversing the whole of the long passage that led to the servants' hall, he muttered again, "Yes, he must mean that."

CHAPTER VI.

THERE are few counties in England which contain more beautiful spots than the county of Warwick; few that are more thoroughly English in scenery; few that possess so much of those landscape features which, without offering to the eye anything peculiarly grand or striking, satisfy without tiring the mind. It was in the county of Warwick, then, that, about six o'clock in the evening of a spring day, three gentlemen on horseback might have been seen riding along, with two servants behind them, one of whom led a strong, heavy horse, quite sufficiently loaded with portmantaux and saddle-bags.

The era of travelling on horseback was rapidly passing away. People had become fond of post-chaises; and, to say sooth, I know few pleasanter modes of travelling when one

has but a single trunk, and no companion. There is a free-and-easy, rattling independence about "the old yellow," as I believe it is technically called, which has something very delightful in it. The stage-coach has its fixed destination; on the rail you are bound in fetters of iron; if you travel in your own neat post-chariot, you have a world of cares upon your head—almost as many as if you had a wife and a small family of young children with you; but in the comfortable, old, careless post-chaise, you may cast away every heavy thought of where you are going, what you are doing, what the roads are like which you pass over, what the horses are that draw you. You cannot hurt or offend it. It will go through everything, and over everything, and anywhere you please; and if sometimes it lies quietly down upon its side, you have nothing to do but to get out and help the post-boy to put it right again, and on you go, as friendly as before.

But this is a digression, and yet it is pardonable. It is like taking leave of an old friend for the last time. The old post-chaise will soon be defunct, and we shall never see it more.

To return. The era of travelling on horseback was rapidly passing away, like all other mundane things; but yet it was not actually gone, and a man who came with his saddle-bags behind him, if he had the aspect and manners of a gentleman, would still be received at the inn-door with almost as much deference as if he came in a carriage-and-four.

The inn-door, however, seemed somewhat far distant to our travellers; for at the little village of Byton they had inquired how far it was to Dunchurch, and had been told, as is very usual in Warwickshire, that the distance was five miles, when in reality it was nearly seven. The evening, however, was beautiful; and as they skirted Dunsmoor, the scenery had all that picturesque beauty which is derived less from the forms than the colouring. The face of the country is now terribly changed; for, although much has been done for man's convenience, every act that tends to smooth the ways of life takes away from some of its enjoyments, even while it adds to its ease. Although Braunston Hill, with its steep descent, no longer makes the traveller fancy his neck in jeopardy, and though half the valley has been filled up to form a causeway for the high-road, the beautiful view which used to extend from the brow of the steep, as the country lay beneath the eye in long lines of purple and gold, at dawn or at sunset, is now lost to the wayfarer, and he jogs on unconscious of half the beauty that is near. At the time I speak of, however, the road from Birmingham

ful cry ran towards the new-comer, as if feeling certain at once that he brought deliverance.

"Be so good as to pick it up and give it to me, ma'am," exclaimed the deep voice of the man who had stopped them; and then, instantly turning the mouth of his pistol towards Reginald Lisle, he exclaimed, "Hold back, my man, or I'll shoot you, as sure as you live!"

The reply of the young officer was a pistol-shot, and the man's hat flew off his head and rolled along the road.

"A devilish neat shot!" cried the latter, snatching from the lady's hand the purse which she had picked up. "Keep off! keep off!" and as he saw the young gentleman still spurring on, he fired, not at him, but at the horse, and the poor beast, struck in the chest, instantly went down, crushing his rider's leg and thigh beneath him. A dying effort which the animal made to rise freed the young officer from his weight; and, regardless of the pain he suffered, Lisle started on his feet, snatched his second pistol from the holster, and ran forward. But at the same moment, with a graceful bow and a wave of the hand, the highwayman wheeled his horse again, saying, "Good morning, ladies, with many thanks," and cantered lightly across the heath.

"Oh, sir! I hope you are not hurt," cried the lady who was nearest to Reginald. "He has killed your poor horse, I am afraid."

"He has, indeed," said Reginald, gazing on the animal as it lay, with its feet beating the air faintly and convulsively; "he has, indeed!" and he pressed his lips together with a look of much grief. Then turning round abruptly, he continued:—"I hope the scoundrel has not frightened you much. That lady—your mother, I suppose—seems very greatly agitated;" and so it was, indeed, for she was now supporting herself by a tree, with one hand clasped over her eyes.

"He is gone! dearest mother, he is gone!" cried the younger lady, running up to her, and laying her hand upon her arm.

"But he may come back again, Mary," cried the other. "How can we tell that he may not return?"

"Oh, no!" said Reginald Lisle, approaching; "there is no fear of that. And if he did, he would only return to be taken; for I have two friends, not half-a-mile behind, with a couple of servants. I wish they were here: he should not escape so easily. But he has killed my poor horse, so that I can neither follow him nor ride on my way."

"I am extremely grieved to hear you have met such loss in our service, sir," replied the elder lady, "and thank you

a thousand times. If you are in haste, however, and vexed at being delayed, as I judge by your face, we can easily send you forward. There are plenty of very good horses in the stable, and I need not say they are quite at your disposal."

"Many thanks, madam!" replied Captain Lisle. "I cannot help grieving for my poor beast, for he has carried me through more than one bloody day without ever getting a wound. To say the truth, however, I fear I must decline your offer, for he has so crushed my knee in falling that I do not think I could bear the saddle."

Regret and sympathy were expressed by both the ladies when they heard this announcement; and while Reginald limped forward, and took up the hat which his ball had knocked off the highwayman's head, in the hope that it might lead to his conviction, a hurried consultation seemed to go on between his two fair companions, the daughter seeming to urge something upon the mother, in regard to which the elder lady hesitated.

"But, my dear Mary, we are alone in the house," she said, "and we do not know this gentleman at all. I am afraid your father will think it strange."

"Not he, indeed, mamma," replied the other. "would he not do so directly, himself? Well, then, ask Doctor Haviland to come up, if you hesitate only because we are alone. He is evidently a gentleman, and it would be cruel to let him go on when he is suffering so much. I am sure papa would not like it at all."

This last argument seemed successful; for, when Reginald turned back slowly with the hat in his hand, the elder lady in courteous terms begged that he would accompany them to the house, and send for the surgeon from Dunchurch. Reginald Lisle now hesitated, although he felt that he was hardly fit to pursue his journey; and, to tell the truth, perhaps he might have persisted in trying to go on, had not the younger lady said, with her deep blue eyes fixed earnestly upon him, and a very persuasive smile upon her lips, "Indeed, sir, you must not think of proceeding without some advice; and, as my mother will be frightened all the way home, you cannot, in courtesy, refuse to escort us."

If Lisle could have resisted the words, he certainly could not resist the manner in which they were uttered, and the only difficulty that remained was, how to inform his two friends of what had occurred and whither he had gone. That, however, was removed the moment after, while he was consulting with his fair companions as to what was to

be done; for, spurring slowly along upon a jaded horse, came Master Zachary Hargrave, bringing intelligence that Sir Theodore's chestnut had come down in descending the hill, and broken both its knees. "The major therefore thinks, captain," continued the servant, "that it will be better to go back to the 'Black Dog,' at Stratton. If you will return, we can get a chaise there or at Ryton, and go on to-morrow."

"Look there!" said Lisle in return, pointing to his dead horse. "Tell them I have had a little affair with a high-wayman here, and he has shot my poor bay. If they will go back to Stratton, however, I will join them to-night or to-morrow morning ——"

"If he is able," added the younger lady, who saw that Reginald's face was very pale. "The horse fell upon him and hurt him, and we must send to Dunchurch for a surgeon."

"Very well, miss; I will say so," replied Hargrave; and, turning his bridle, he rode back, while Reginald, putting the pistol in his breast, accompanied the ladies at a very slow and limping pace along the same sandy road. The younger, with the light and happy courage of youth, seemed to have forgotten all fear, and even talked gaily of their adventure; but her mother, holding fast by her arm, seemed by no means so easily reassured, spoke but little, and continued to gaze from time to time over the heath, as if she expected every moment to see the figure of the high-wayman come cantering back again.

"Thank God," she at length exclaimed, "we are at the park-gates! It is really terrible, such a state of society, that one cannot walk half-a-mile from one's own house without being exposed to robbery!"

"Well, dearest mother," said the young lady, "as far as we are concerned, it might have been worse; for I am sure you will admit that nobody could be more civil than he was, although he did take your purse; and indeed I believe there was very little in it."

"There were seven guineas," replied the lady; "but that I should care nothing about. It is the terror in which he put me that I mind. You know, my dear Mary, I shall not recover it for many weeks. Civil! I am sure I thought he was as brutal as he could be, frightful creature!"

"No, no! he was very handsome," said the young lady, laughing: "he made a thousand apologies for the trouble he gave in obliging you to hand out your purse. If one always met with such polite people, it would rather be a pleasure to be robbed than otherwise."

She spoke gaily and playfully, evidently with the intention of effacing from her mother's mind the impression left by terror; but the attempt was not successful; and, although Reginald, understanding her object, endeavoured as far as he could to treat the matter lightly also, the elder lady remained in a state of nervous agitation all the way, declaring that she had never heard any of the civil speeches of the highwayman; that she thought him the most frightful man she had ever seen; and that she was quite sure he would have murdered them both, if their gallant companion had not come up to their rescue.

Although Reginald did his best to be cheerful, it cannot be denied that he suffered great pain at every step he took; and at length, after having passed through the gates, and walked some way through a very beautiful and apparently extensive park, he stopped, just as they got a view of an old Elizabethan mansion at the distance of about a quarter of a mile—saying, in a tone from which he could not banish the expression of suffering, "I am afraid I cannot go any farther. You can meet with no danger between this and the house, and I must, at all events, rest a little here, as I find it impossible to proceed."

Taken up with her own terrors, the elder lady had not perceived the pain which he endured, nor his efforts to master it; but neither one nor the other had escaped the eye of the daughter. "I saw how he was suffering," she said, in a tone of deep feeling; "but here is a nice mossy bank: if you will sit here for a few minutes, we will send up a carriage for you before it is quite dark."

No other plan could be proposed, and, with a faint smile at his own weakness, Reginald seated himself while the two ladies went on. It was nearly half-an-hour, and quite dark, before the sound of carriage wheels met his ears; for servants are not always as charitably active as their masters, and the young lady's injunctions to make haste were not attended to with all the precision that she could have desired. At length, however, the carriage appeared, a servant walking by the side, seeking for the spot where Reginald had been left; and in five minutes from that time he was stretched upon a sofa in a large and handsome drawing-room the two ladies by his side, making eager inquiries as to how he felt after his removal.

Everything looked cheerful around him: the room was well lighted; there was a cheerful fire blazing in the wide open grate; the furniture was rich and costly, and as beautiful a face as ever was seen was hanging over him, with that sweet look of interest which is the greatest of all con-

solers. Reginald Lisle thought that the compensation was fully equal to the pain, and almost hoped that the surgeon's opinion might pin him to that sofa for many a day to come. The arrival of the man of healing was not long delayed; the servant sent for him rode fast to Dunchurch, and he himself rode faster; for a patient at the great house was not an every-day occurrence, and was well worthy of a gallop. His first injunctions, however, were by no means agreeable to Reginald Lisle; for they implied that he was to be immediately removed to bed, and there, as he was well aware, according to the ways of society, the beautiful face would be seen no more. However, he had no choice but to submit; and for half-an-hour or more he was kept under the torture of examination, fomentation, and all the other *ations* with which skilful surgeons make the process of cure as miserable as possible. The man of art had hardly taken his leave, promising an early visit on the following day, when a heavy military tread was heard along the corridor, and the next moment the tall, gaunt figure and hawk-like face of his friend the Ravenous Crow, appeared at Reginald's bedside. "Well, my lad, he exclaimed, "so you have got into a very curious and uncomfortable mess; not the less curious because it is uncomfortable, nor the less uncomfortable because it is curious."

"Certainly not, Brandrum," replied Reginald Lisle; and after having given him a more circumstantial account of all that had taken place, he explained to him how impossible it was for him to move, perhaps for more than one day to come—a conviction which had forced itself upon him, in despite of an eager and enthusiastic temperament and a spirit not easily cowed.

"Well, then, we will wait for a day or two," said the good major. "The young, spoiled child of fortune will not be at all the worse for a short drilling of a poor inn, and for my own part, as London may be a little too hot to hold me just now, I shall do quite well in the country. I shall not go in to pay my compliments to the gay party below; for I came off in dusty garments as soon as I had housed Sir Theodore."

Thus saying, he took his leave, and left Reginald to seek such repose as aching bones would grant.

CHAPTER VII.

LET the reader transport himself to the "Black Dog." What an extraordinary verb that verb "to transport" is! It is a verb passive in most of its senses, and yet it implies the excess of human joy and the extreme of human suffering. "I am transported"—it may be a great lie or a simple truth—means that a man is carried out of himself; that his spirit is borne away from its natural, placid home of even, every-day life to a state of joy indescribable. "He was transported" means that the man himself was carried from his native land, his kinsmen, his friends, the domestic hearth, the ties of dear affection, the long-accustomed objects of attachment, the scenes and things which had grown into his soul and mingled with his spirit, to a new world of pain and punishment, and worse than death—to degradation here, to long days of anguish, and labour, and privation, to the chain-gang and the oppressor's rod, to the contagion of example, to the corrupting influence of an atmosphere of vice, to crimes unheard of, and to moral death, where every feeling and principle of action, and thought, and habit, and sight, and sound, is all putrefaction, and horror, and decay. It is a strange thing, the English language, and stranger still to find that, in almost every tongue under the sun, the terms which imply the highest imply also the lowest; the words which signify perfect happiness signify also extreme misery.

Let the reader transport himself to the "Black Dog," and remember that an inn—a small country inn—in the years 1775-6-7, was a very different place from an inn in 1845-6-7. In general, in these small country inns, at the period of which I speak, there was one public room appropriated to the reception of company. At Harrogate, at Bath, at the Hot Well at Clifton, and at one or two other watering-places, each suite of bed-rooms might have a sitting-room attached, for there persons came for a specific purpose, which implied a probable residence for some time; but in the country inn—the small country inn—a traveller might stop for a night; a family might stop for a night; a bagman might stop for two or three nights; and in the former or the latter case—as men in those days had not such a shuddering horror of the proximity of strangers as they have at

present—the one public room was sufficient for all the purposes of the road. If there were two gentlemen, with straight-cut coats and long pigtails, talking of the price of leather, or the worth of calico, or the call for broadcloth, at one corner, there might be two gentlemen in buckskin, talking of policy, or horse-racing, or agriculture, at the other, without interrupting each other in the least. Sometimes, indeed, an observation at one table or in one group, made in an over-loud tone, would produce a cross-fire from the other; and such events were known as bottles, or decanters, or pewter pots, flying across the intervening space, as hostile messages to an opposite party; and swords would be drawn, and scuffles ensue, till the landlord and the constable interfered, and the landlord's wife, with shrill voice and excited countenance, scolded all round, with lungs peculiar to the fair part of the Licensed Victuallers' Company.

But these things were of rare occurrence, and a man might say, "I will take mine ease at mine inn," with less chance of disappointment than in almost any other human aspiration. There was a certain sort of code of politeness, too, which regulated in a great degree the intercourse of these places of public resort. It was supposed that a civil speech would produce a civil reply; that there was a certain sort of freemasonry about the place, which made all men to a certain extent brothers while they remained therein, without implying the slightest intimacy, or even acquaintance, from the moment that the foot passed to the outer side of the threshold, unless both parties, by mutual signs and indications, gave notice that they wished for closer and more permanent communication.

This premised, it will hardly be necessary to say, that the small inn called the "Black Dog," at Stratton-upon-Dunsmoor—I believe the sign has descended to the present day—contained but one room which deserved the name of a sitting-room, and that was open to all comers. If a family arrived and staid for the night, and wished to be very exclusive, they were under the necessity of converting a bed-room into a dining-room or drawing-room; but that was a case which very rarely occurred.

In that one sitting-room—it was upon the ground-floor, the windows looking out upon the high-road, not over-large, and somewhat low in the roof—sat Sir Theodore Broughton and Major Brandrum, partaking of a very comfortable supper, which greatly refreshed the young baronet, who, though capable of violent but not long-continued exertion, had been somewhat tired, as had also been his horse

by riding the whole day long. The major had visited the bar before they had sat down to supper, and had, with nice discrimination, tasted the more ordinary wines, which, as was then not unfrequent, the landlord drew from the barrel for the benefit of his customers.

Now, to ask for claret in such an inn as that, in our own degenerate times, would be something worse than vain. You might insult the landlord, and get vinegar and water for your pains, but no claret; but the case was very different in those days; and the pure juice of the Bordeaux grape was as frequently to be found in a small roadside inn of England as on the banks of the Garonne or the Dordogne. The Madeira did not please the major; the port was somewhat worse; but at the claret he raised his eyebrows with the air of a connoisseur, and ordered a magnum, informing Sir Theodore, in a whisper, that it was the most delicate and highly-flavoured wine he had ever drunk; not the less delicate because it was high-flavoured, nor the less high-flavoured because it was delicate.

The young baronet was much of the same opinion, although his own cellar—thanks to Captain Donovan's taste and discrimination—contained some of the choicest vintages of Guyenne; and there they sat with the remains of the supper before them, slowly sipping their wine, the bouquet of which perfumed the whole room. Sir Theodore, who, during the greater part of his life—as is too often the case with happy youth under the rule of severe age—had lived in a state of awe, and had been suffered to indulge but little (which perhaps would be better for all men) in that consoling juice of the grape, which was undoubtedly given for the comfort and support of declining years, grew cheerful and familiar under the influence of the claret. He conversed with his military friend, not without considerable powers of mind and stores of knowledge, but evidently rather anxious to gain from him some acquaintance with the wide world, in which, and in its wildest and most remote scenes, his companion had been so busy an actor, than to display his own information, limited to the stores of classic lore. Major Brandrum was inexhaustible; and, were this an episodic work, I might relate three or four very curious tales and anecdotes which he told during the evening, before the little party of two, which at first tenanted the chamber, was increased by the presence of a third. As it is my object, however, to tell one tale, and not many, I must leave the account of his adventures in North America, South America, the Falkland Islands, the Low Countries, Russia, Spain, and Germany, for another

opportunity; and merely say that, as he was closing one of his narratives, the door of the room opened, and gave admission to a very well-dressed and good-looking man, of from thirty to five-and-thirty years of age. He was habited with great taste and neatness, and seemed to have a respect for the company he was about to join; for his dress, in which men were more particular at that time than at present, was perfectly well fitted for an evening party in London—perhaps more so than for a country inn. He wore a claret-coloured coat with cut steel buttons, silk breeches, and white silk stockings; and, although the buckles in his shoes were small, they were of the very latest device, and exceedingly brilliant. The ruffles at his wrists were of the finest and most beautiful lacc, and his hand, which was small and delicate, was ornamented with several very handsome rings. His countenance was frank and pleasing, though the under jaw was perhaps too large and massy; and his figure, though indicating great strength, was light and graceful. His whole bearing and appearance, in short, was that of a very distinguished personage; and there was that slightest possible touch of superciliousness in the curl of his lip which is often to be found in the lowest mental rank of the worldly great.

With a slow and deliberate step the new-comer took his way to the fireplace, glancing his eye for a moment at the two preoccupants of the room, and then leaning his elbows on the mantel-piece, and falling into a fit of meditation. The moment after, he rang the bell; for bells were common, even in England, at that time, though I can remember the day when they were unknown in many parts of Germany, except in church steeples; and when the landlord appeared, he asked if his supper were ready.

"In a minute, colonel—in a minute," replied the host; "it isn't quite your hour yet."

"Past, by five minutes," said the stranger, taking out a very handsome watch, with the numerous appendages which it was at that time customary to attach to the curious little contrivance by which man marks the passing of the hours he misuses. "Past, by five minutes," he repeated, after he had examined the dial. "You know I like to be punctual, Harrison."

"I know you do, colonel," replied the other. "Our clock must be behind."

"A bad habit for the clock," replied the stranger, drily. "Correct it, Master Harrison, or some day it will be brought to a stand."

"It will only share the fate, then, of many a good neigh-

hour of mine," replied the landlord, laughing. "Have you heard, colonel, that Lady Chevenix and the young lady have been stopped, just under their own park paling, and robbed of their watch, and money, and all sorts of things?"

"Good heaven!" exclaimed the stranger, "this is too bad! Upon my life, if the gentlemen in London do not look after these things, it will be unsafe to travel without an escort. When did this happen?"

"Oh! three or four hours ago," answered the landlord. "Those gentlemen brought the news, for a friend of theirs came up just as the highwayman was taking the ladies' purses, and got his horse shot for his pains, and himself very much hurt."

"Hurt!" exclaimed the colonel again. "Did the villain shoot him?"

"Not exactly," replied Major Brandrum, chiming in, this conversation having gone on in a loud tone; "but he shot his horse, and the horse fell, as horses will do when they are shot, and in falling rolled upon our young friend, which was both painful and detrimental; and not the less detrimental because it was painful, nor the less painful because it was detrimental."

"A very just distinction," said the stranger, sententiously; "for it sometimes occurs that things which are painful to us are rather beneficial than detrimental."

"True, O king!" replied Major Brandrum. "In this case, however, it was the reverse, and our young friend is suffering severely."

"I regret it deeply," said the stranger, approaching the table, and presenting his snuff-box to Major Brandrum, who immediately took a pinch, and began to discuss the various kinds and qualities of snuffs. Thence he deviated to tobacco; described the cultivation of the weed in almost every country under the sun, and the differences between the leaf produced in different climates; and displayed an extent of information, not only upon that topic, but upon a hundred collateral subjects, which equally surprised Sir Theodore Broughton and the stranger.

"You seem to have been a very great traveller, sir," observed the last comer.

"I have had the honour of serving wherever the British arms have been carried during the last five-and-twenty years," replied Major Brandrum, "and in some other countries besides. I have been in Canada, North America, South America, the West Indies, the East Indies, the Falkland Islands, Germany, Hungary, and Transylvania, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, France, and the Low Countries; to say

nothing of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Russia, with a short stay in Egypt and Nubia, and flying visits to Borneo, Sumatra, and Madagascar."

"May I ask, my dear sir," said the stranger, with the slightest possible smile, "if I have the honour of speaking to Captain Cook, Lord Anson, or Captain Dampier?"

"No, sir," answered Major Brandrum, laughing, and not at all offended by the jest. "I am called the Ravenous Crow, much at your service. May I ask your name in return?"

"My name is Colonel Lutwich," replied the stranger; and thus commenced a conversation which lasted for some hours, and in which jest and merriment soon predominated over the stiffer and more formal courtesies of early acquaintance. The colonel's supper was placed upon a table near that of the two other gentlemen, and during his meal he continued amusing himself with a strain of fine raillery, directed against our worthy friend, Major Brandrum, but in which he did not altogether get the better, for the major had all his wits about him, and was occasionally rather fond of that moderate approximation to the very vulgar kind of fun termed a hoax, which has been termed mystification. To say the truth, too, from particular circumstances, he was less scrupulous perhaps with the colonel than he might have been with other men, and he was soon in full tilt amongst his friends the Cherokees, relating exploits both of himself and others, which, though in the main perfectly true, sounded incredible from the manner in which he told them.

"Very formidable weapons, I have no doubt, those tomahawks," said the colonel; "but I should think a pass or two with a good small sword would soon settle the affair with the most dexterous Mohawk of them all."

"Not at all, colonel," replied Major Brandrum. "I would undertake now, old as I am, to disarm you in five minutes, though I have no doubt you are a perfect master of fence. What will you bet and stake down? Will you say a guinea? There is one now, the best miniature picture of King George that I am acquainted with."

"A wager we cannot decide upon the spot," said Colonel Lutwich, who had by this time finished a considerable portion of claret likewise, "otherwise I should be very happy. We shall have to send to North America, or to some museum of curiosities, for the tomahawk."

"Ah! a good workman never fails for want of tools," said the major; "we'll soon find what will do as well. There must be a hatchet in the house. Come stake down, colonel;"

"Mr. Harrison," he said, as soon as the landlord appeared, "will you have the kindness to bring me a pair of slippers and a hatchet?"

Mr. Harrison stared. "I am going to perform for the amusement of the company," proceeded Major Brandrum, in explanation, "in what may be called my *native* character of the Ravenous Crow. It will all be in good humour, and therefore if you have any women in the house who would like to see the true Cherokee mode of defence against a European soldier, they may come and share in the entertainment. Now, colonel, stake down."

"Ah! with all my heart," answered the other, drawing an exceedingly delicate purse from his pocket, of blue silk embroidered with gold, from which he produced a guinea, and laid it on the table, colouring a good deal as he did so under Major Brandrum's eye.

In the mean time the landlord had quitted the room to obey the orders he had received. Strange things were enacted in those days in the inns and taverns of England, and Mr. Harrison went upon the excellent rule of supplying everything that his house could produce to those who demanded it, and could pay for it, and asking no questions as to the employment thereof. He accordingly returned in a minute or two with a pair of slippers, into which the major's feet, being unbooted, were speedily introduced, and a hatchet, which that gallant officer first poised in his hand, declaring that the handle was rather heavy, and then whirled round his head in a manner that startled, frightened, and delighted a small bevy of women, who, on Mr. Harrison's notification, had crowded to the door.

"Come in, ladies, come in," cried Major Brandrum; "I will scalp nobody, I promise you; and although this tool is not so manageable as a real tomahawk, it will do I've no doubt. You will excuse my taking off my coat and waistcoat, for the air is somewhat sultry;" and divesting himself of his upper garments, with the hatchet in his hand he stood forth in the midst, tall, lean, and sinewy, and certainly most portentously ugly and somewhat frightful; for he had contrived, by running his fingers through it, to make the long narrow stripe of grizzled black hair upon the top of his skull to stand up like the crest of some strange bird. "Now, colonel," he said, "place yourself where you please, and we will begin the monomachia."

With easy grace and a light confident smile, his adversary took his position at the other end of the room, drew his sword, and placed himself in the attitude of attack. It was evident, from the very first movements, that he was a master

of his weapon; but while the landlady and her maidens exclaimed, "Why surely they are not going to fight really?" and Sir Theodore Broughton ventured to remonstrate, in a low tone, against such dangerous pastime, Major Brandrum coolly placed his watch upon the table, saying, "Five minutes, you know, colonel. Now begin. Mark the watch, Sir Theodore."

Thus dared, Colonel Lutwich advanced cautiously upon his adversary, made a feint and then a lunge, but his blade was instantly met by the hatchet, and parried successfully. A little mortified, and a little puzzled, for he did not apparently wish to hurt his opponent, the younger gentleman lunged again, and then again, but still the hatchet met him; till at length, both becoming more eager, their movements grew rapid; the hatchet and the sword flashed about in every direction; and spinning round upon his heel, like a dancer in a ballet, while his weapon whirled round and round him, dazzling the eyes that attempted to follow it, the Ravenous Crow seemed not alone animated with the spirit of the Cherokee, but actually to have eyes in the back of his head, for wherever he lunges, now become fierce and rapid, seemed likely to strike him, there the invariable hatchet met them, and turned them aside.

The landlord laughed, the women screamed, and Sir Theodore Broughton sat in wonder and terror, till at length, with a fiend-like whoop, the Indian sprang upon his adversary, seized his right hand, and both rolled over upon the floor together; but the sword was in Major Brandrum's grasp, and with another yell that shook the whole house, he waved the hatchet over his opponent's head.

The worthy major, however, cast off his Indian character more rapidly than might have been expected perhaps, relaxed his fell gripe of the colonel, and retiring to the other side of the room, laid the sword and the hatchet upon the table, and resumed his coat, his waistcoat, and his ordinary air.

The defeated swordsman rose from the ground confounded and ashamed. The colour was very high in his cheek, and it was evident that a good deal of heat and anger followed his defeat; but his adversary, the moment he was dressed or redressed, advanced towards him with a frank and good-humoured air, and presented him his sword, saying, "Upon my life, colonel, I never met a better fencer. I thought you would have pinked me several times, though I never yet saw a sword that could compete with a Cherokee tomahawk, rightly played. The French are very skilful at their weapons, but the best rapier of them all is no match for a

tomahawk. It is scarcely fair to take your stake, for I knew that the game was unequal, and you did not."

"Oh, no! it is yours, it is yours, fairly enough," cried the other gentleman, recovering his good-humour immediately; "I had no idea that a hatchet was such a manageable weapon. I think I must take some lessons."

"I will give you some with all my heart," replied Major Brandrum; "and as you are twice as young and as active as I am, you will soon excel me far. I will come and call upon you some day with a real tomahawk, and show you how to use it."

"Do you know where to find me?" asked the colonel in a civil tone.

"Oh, yes," answered the Ravenous Crow; "I can always find my friends when I want them," and at the same time he nodded his head significantly.

Colonel Lutwich seated himself at his table and fell into a fit of thought; and in a few minutes after Sir Theodore Broughton, who had taken, to say the truth, more exercise, wine, and excitement, than were altogether good for him, rose and retired to rest. Major Brandrum remained to finish what claret was left in the magnum, and for a few minutes a dead silence prevailed between him and his late opponent. "Come, come, colonel," he said at length; "I am sure you are too gallant a man to bear ill-will. Let us drink a cheerful toast together."

"With all my heart!" cried the other, extending his hand frankly; "I was not thinking of our late bout at all, major. I was only trying to recollect where you and I could have met before."

The Ravenous Crow bent forward his head till his beak almost touched his companion's temple, and then whispered a word or two in his ear. The colonel started, turned a little pale, and gazed at Major Brandrum steadfastly.

"Upon honour?" he said in a very peculiar tone.

"Upon honour!" replied the major, "although, perhaps, I might be justified in saying no; but come, let us have our toast. Here's success to all ways of life, and the honestest the better!"

"With all my heart!" said Colonel Lutwich, draining his glass; "but what brings you so far from London, Major Brandrum? I should have thought you were looking out for fresh service."

"Why, my dear fellow," answered the major, "you see I am in rather an awkward position. There's a man who was half-drowned with me once, half-burned with me once, of the name of Wilkinson—as great a rogue as ever lived;

ten times as bad as a fellow who takes a purse on the highway. He got me to put my name to a couple of bills for him, swearing and vowing that, though he had cheated half Europe before, he would never cheat an old friend and fellow-sufferer, but would have the money ready to a moment. I lent him a hundred guineas into the bargain, which he was to pay at the same time, but he has done neither the one nor the other, which is dishonourable and unfriendly; and not the less dishonourable because it is unfriendly, nor the less unfriendly because it is dishonourable. So there are now two writs out against me, information of which inspired me with a desire to travel. They shall be backed by all the sheriffs in England and Wales before they are served upon me; and, in the mean time, I may catch Master Wilkinson, and take part payment with a tough ash-stick."

"He is a great villain," answered the colonel; "for, to my certain knowledge, if the debt is not a very heavy one, he can pay it. I know the fellow well: he won two thousand pounds of Joe Benson the other day. When do you go?"

The question was rather abruptly put, and Major Brandrum found it not easy to answer. "Why, I don't exactly know," he replied. "My poor friend Lisle is a good deal hurt, and when he will be able to go on I don't know. I certainly shan't go on without him. When a man's knee is crushed by a horse falling, you know, colonel, there is no certainty of how far the mischief may go."

"Why, what Lisle is that?" asked the other; "not the Lisle who distinguished himself so much at Bunker's Hill?"

The major nodded his head, and Colonel Lutwich continued in a tone of much sympathy, "I am very sorry for that, indeed; but which way do you go, major, when you do go?"

"Oh! straight on," answered Major Brandrum, "by Daventry and Stony-Stratford, and either there or at Dunstable I shall leave them, for it might not be quite safe to get much nearer the great Maelstrom—which is a whirlpool or vortex in the sea, off the coast of Norway, colonel, as perhaps you know, and the best image of London I ever saw."

"Well, I shall go on before you," said Colonel Lutwich, thoughtfully; "and perhaps may be coming back again about the time you are on the road. If so, we shall have further talk about your affairs."

"Take care what you are about, colonel," replied the Ravenous Crow, laughing; "remember there are highway-men about."

have got my horses down here, but I think I shall post. Let us have another magnum, major."

"A bottle will do," replied Major Brandrum; and after discussing that quantity, they shook hands with a deal of warmth, and each retired to bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE are a cold nation; there can be no doubt of the fact. In general it takes a great deal to warm us, and then the fire is not very hot. We even wonder at the fiercer passions of more ardent nations, and we have to remember that the scene was Italy or Egypt, ere the burning words of Juliet, or the rapt self-abandonment of Anthony, cease to excite surprise. Except in Shakspeare, who could conceive all things, and once in Herrick, there is hardly a piece of passionate love-poetry in the language.

Nevertheless, there are exceptions; and sometimes it happens that the eager love at first sight which made Juliet exclaim—

Go, ask his name. If he be married,
My grave is like to be my wedding bed—

is found even in English men and women. Perhaps, too—as the hardest and the coldest fuel, when once lighted, burns with the most durable and warmest fire—the hearts that are least easily kindled by passion retain it longest and brightest when it is aroused. It is a curious fact, too—but no less a fact—that the warm, eager, impetuous love I have described is seldom without return, if it be excited by one with a free heart. It may startle, surprise, alarm even, at first; but, like a torrent, it carries all before it when the first resistance is vanquished.

Reginald Lisle thought all night of the deep blue eyes, and their jetty fringes, and the bright face full of soul and heart; and he remembered each look as the page of a student's book, which, when rightly translated, was replete with poetry.

The reader unlearned in untutored nature—the reader who has been bound in the conventional habits of a rigid society—will ask, "What! after one brief interview?" or perhaps he may fancy that Reginald Lisle's was one of those very volcanic hearts which are always in eruption.

No such thing. He had never loved before, for his short life had been a very active one; but its course had been so shaped by circumstances, that love had never lain in its way. He had met many beautiful girls, it is true, and many very amiable girls, doubtless; but his was a peculiar mind, which sought something more than mere beauty, or mere gentleness, and he had never found or fancied he had found it.

Take a sphere, reader, and try to put it in a hollow cube containing the same measure, or even something more. You cannot do it, do what you will. In short, it does not fit. No other shape will do but a hollow sphere; and thus it is with human sympathies, more especially when they have place in a firm and steadfast heart.

I have said that Reginald Lisle thought of those sweet eyes all night, and from time to time throughout the night he certainly did so. Nor is it at all improbable that the very nature of his thoughts helped greatly to keep him waking, and to make him think at all. But still it must be admitted that pain had something to do with his watchfulness. For four or five hours all the applications of the surgeon seemed to have produced no effect, at least in mitigating the aching of his knee, and whenever weariness made him drop off into sleep, a new pang awoke him again. At length, however, the pain diminished, and just as the first grey streaks were in the sky, slumber more calm and quiet than any he had yet known during the night fell upon him. It lasted not long, indeed; but when he woke again the broad daylight stole into the room through the curtain chinks, and Reginald Lisle, forgetting the surgeon's injunctions, and saying, "I feel quite well—I will get up," rose from his bed, and proceeded to dress himself as well as he could, deprived as he was of all the usual appliances but mere soap and water.

It would have been difficult, however, to spoil his appearance, for there was the gentleman in every feature and every line; and, though somewhat pale, at the end of his hasty toilet, his face was still one that woman's eyes might look upon well pleased.

Perhaps Lisle felt, as he was dressing, that he was doing an imprudent thing, and that it would have been better to follow counsel and lie still; nevertheless he went on dressing himself to the end, although he experienced much pain in doing so; and I am afraid the beautiful eyes had somewhat to do with his obstinacy. When he was dressed, he sat down for a moment or two to rest, but soon started up again, and, opening his room-door, went out. A voyage of discovery in a strange house is not always an uninteresting

the dwelling, that one might almost learn the natural history of the inhabitants by the various objects which a house presents.

Reginald found himself at once in a long and large corridor, terminating in a staircase, and lighted by a window at each end. On the wide landing at the head of the stairs were two rich china vases of the size, and probably of the shape, of the oil-jars of Ali Baba's friend the robber; and from thence proceeded an odour common in the houses of our grandmothers, and proceeding from what I believe was called *pot-pourri*: not a very savoury name, but yet the odour was extremely fragrant. The walls of the landing-place were hung with small pictures, some of them exceedingly good, and these the young officer paused to examine with an artist's eye. On a large ebony pedestal, too, there was a marble bust, very beautifully chiselled, and pure as snow. It was that of a gentleman of five or six and thirty years of age, and the features seemed familiar to the eye of Reginald Lisle; but the sculptor—whether in good taste or not, let those judge who are competent—had chosen to dress an English gentleman of the last century in the garb of an old Roman, and consequently the likeness, if not lost, was without any accessory help.

Descending the stairs, Reginald came to a hall decorated with more pictures, not so good as those above, and a great number of little objects of curiosity and art. He thought he knew the drawing-room door by a large and handsome japan cabinet which stood near it; and he accordingly applied his hand to the lock and went in. Fortune favoured him. The sun was not shining directly on the windows, but its light poured free over the grassy lawn beyond; and there, at the open casement, stood the same light and graceful form which had occupied so much of his thoughts within the last eight hours, with the right arm resting upon the side of the window, and supporting the whole figure—one small foot crossed lightly over the other, and the head bent slightly to the side. The grace of the whole was perfect, and Reginald paused for an instant to gaze, while she seemed lost in meditation.

Two steps more, and the sound of his footfall caught her ear, making her start and suddenly look round. An expression, varying from surprise to pleasure, and then to grave apprehension, came over her face; but that which Reginald Lisle most marked, and which pleased him most, was the warm blush which fluttered over her cheek when she first saw him.

he did not ask himself, for he was not vain—but which the reader perhaps may ask, and which, if he do, I will not take upon myself to answer. Certain it is that her demeanour corresponded with the changes of her looks; for she first paused as if in doubt how to act, then stretched out her hand to him, and then began to scold him kindly for rising. It was exceedingly imprudent, she said, and very wrong; but he assured her that he was much better, and that it would do him no harm.

Then began a conversation which could only take place between two people, one of whom at the least, intended to fall in love with the other—wild, wandering, dreamy, roaming from the smallest things to the greatest, with the name of love never mentioned, but with the latent passion warming the ground, like the subterraneous fire near the crater of a volcano.

The reader has already had a specimen of Reginald Lisle's conversation, so that it would be unnecessary and indiscreet to repeat all that was said at present; for, though there was a great difference in the subjects and in the words from that which he had held with Sir Theodore Broughton, yet there was the same general character. It was, in short, full of imagination, but imagination always directed aright, ruled and guided by a fine mind and high principles of thought as well as action. There is many a man who will think a wrong thing but will not do it. He only is happy who does neither the one nor the other. Thoughts are the mind's deeds, and if mind be immortal, these are recorded for immortality.

I have said that his conversation on the present occasion was, in several respects, very different from that which he had first held with Sir Theodore Broughton; but such was the case, naturally enough. His present companion was a young and beautiful girl. The age as well as the sex made a difference: not that she was older in years than the young baronet, for such, perhaps, was not the case, but she was older in mind—in feelings. All women are older than their male contemporaries. Her intellect was more expanded, more free, more active; perhaps it was naturally of a firmer character than the youth's; and she now followed Reginald on all the paths where he chose to lead her with a free, light step, and a face sometimes grave, sometimes smiling, but always intelligent, and always pleased. Sometimes, too, when she had nearly lost him in one of his wild flights, and he came back within sight again, a timid, mantling blush of pleasure would spread over her bright face, and make it look a thousand-fold more lovely than ever. Her heart

was free, her spirit unsoiled by the world; and when, at the end of three-quarters of an hour, her mother opened the drawing-room door, she thought the minutes she had passed there the very pleasantest she had ever spent in life. That was going a great way, reader; but it is true she went quite as far as that—and she was not wrong.

The elder lady reproached her daughter very gently for not having made breakfast, and reproved her guest for not having obeyed orders. The young lady coloured, and excused herself as best she might, and Reginald repeated his assurance that he was much better; but the lady of the house still shook her head gravely, and led the way to the breakfast-table, with a moral reflection upon the restless impatience of young men.

She was no great talker: a somewhat timid and retiring person, with strong feelings and strong affections, hidden under a good deal of reserve; but there was something so winning in Reginald's manner—so buoyant, so irresistible (I must use a word I hate) in his conversation—that even she was carried away by it, and enjoyed his society nearly as much as her daughter. Nearly—not quite, reader; for there was a difference of four-and-twenty years between them.

Before breakfast was over, the surgeon was announced; and his air of consternation, on perceiving his patient seated at table, made Reginald smile. He suffered himself to be carried off, however; and for nearly half-an-hour mother and daughter waited to hear the report.

At the end of that time, the surgeon returned alone.

"Well, where is your patient, and how is he?" asked the elder lady, while her daughter sat silent, with some degree of apprehension at his non-appearance.

"He is in bed, your ladyship," was the reply, "and very much worse for having risen. There is a considerable degree of inflammation about the knee, which must absolutely be brought down. He must have on twelve leeches, and then, if he will but keep perfectly quiet, he may perhaps proceed on his journey the day after to-morrow. If he had obeyed my directions, he would have saved himself a whole day's confinement; and I must request your ladyship to enforce obedience at present, otherwise I will not be answerable for the consequences. The inflammation might affect the cartilages, and leave him with a stiff joint for life, or even require amputation."

"Good heaven! how horrible!" cried the younger lady. "If he comes down again, I will drive him back myself."

"Pray, do," replied the surgeon; and then, turning to

her mother, he inquired, "Does your ladyship know who the young gentleman is? He seems a person of distinction."

"I should certainly judge so," replied the mistress of the house; "and I must say, he is one of the most agreeable young men I ever met with; but I have no idea of his name. According to the old rules of hospitality, we have never asked his name."

"I fished a little for it," rejoined the surgeon, "but was not successful; and I thought your ladyship must know. But I will find out—I will find out. I hear there are two gentlemen—friends of his—waiting for him at the 'Black Dog,' with a number of horses and servants. I will just drop in upon them as I go back, give them a report of the case, and then I can inquire his name."

Neither of the ladies said, "Pray, do;" but they did not tell him not; and the surgeon cantered away upon his errand.

He was disappointed, however, for he found at the inn that Reginald's two companions had ridden out to see some sight, at ten or twelve miles' distance, and all he learned was that one was called Major Brandrum, and the other Sir Theodore Broughton. That was something, however, and at night he rode back to pay his evening visit, with that degree of increased importance which attaches to the possession of information. His first visit was, of course, to the two ladies; and to them he immediately communicated the fact, that their guest must certainly be a gentleman of consequence, inasmuch as he was travelling with Major Brandrum and Sir Theodore Broughton.

The first name did not at all possess the ladies with an opinion that his conclusion was correct; for in those days commissions in the army were given away with very little discrimination, and the fact of being a major, or even a colonel, did not at all prove that the individual was not a *valet-de-chambre* or an infant. The name of Sir Theodore Broughton, however, brought up a look of surprise in the face of the elder lady, and she exclaimed, "Sir Theodore is forbidden, I suppose, to visit us; but, at all events, this intelligence gives us an assurance of the station and character of our guest."

"He cannot be that horrid Captain Donovan, I am sure," answered the younger lady.

"Oh, no, my dear child!" replied her mother. "Captain Donovan is twenty years older, and a very different man in appearance. I have seen him. As to this young gentleman, I am quite satisfied. He is all that one would wish in manners and behaviour, and he must be a man of honour."

and respectability, or Captain Donovan would never admit him into Sir Theodore's society. To do the man but justice, he is only too strict and severe as to his ward's companions."

"Oh, I will find out the young gentleman's name, my lady, depend upon it," answered the surgeon. "I know how to pump it out of him without seeming to do so."

"I beg you will not, on any account," replied the elder lady, in a somewhat cold tone. "We shall doubtless have his own name from his own lips before he goes; and, in the mean time, I think pumping at all, as you call it, sir, is quite unnecessary, and would be improper."

Not well pleased with the rebuke, the worthy surgeon took his leave, and proceeded to visit his patient, whom he found decidedly better; and, notwithstanding the warning he had received, he went on, for his own satisfaction, to angle for the young gentleman's name, resolving that the lady of the house should not have the advantage of any information he might obtain.

"I am happy I shall be able to give your friends at the inn so good an account," he said. "I think you may get down-stairs to-morrow evening, and may travel, in a *chaise*, a day or two after. I dare say, Sir Theodore and the major are very anxious about you."

"Oh, no, my dear sir," replied Reginald. "Sir Theodore is too young to attribute much importance to such accidents, and Major Brandrum has seen too many severe injuries produce no bad results to feel any alarm regarding this."

"Pray, can I give them any message for you, sir?" inquired the man of healing again. "I pass by the door, and shall just look in upon them."

"None, I thank you," replied Captain Lisle; "unless it were that I should be obliged to Brandrum if he would send over my small black portmanteau which was upon the brown horse. I am very much in want of my razors and other dressing-things."

"But whose portmanteau am I to say, my dear sir?" asked the surgeon, with a peculiar air. "You must remember, that, though I belong to a learned profession, I am amongst the ignorant as to your name—and so is Lady Chevenix, I find."

"Lady Chevenix!" said Reginald Lisle, in a thoughtful tone—"is the lady I had the pleasure of assisting Lady Chevenix?"

"Yes, yes; the wife of Colonel Sir Charles Chevenix," replied the surgeon. "A charming person she is, and so is Sir Charles, too—one of the gayest, most light-hearted, friendly gentlemen I ever knew. He is, unfortunately,

absent just now. But, as I was saying, Lady Chevenix is as ignorant of your name as your humble servant."

Reginald started as from a fit of profound thought. "I will have the honour of informing her myself to-morrow," he replied. "In the mean time I will write a note to Major Brandrum, if you will be good enough to present it. Could you give me those writing materials?"

The surgeon did as he was asked, and Reginald Lisle, sitting up in bed, wrote the following few lines:—

"MY DEAR CROW,—This will be given you by the surgeon who is attending me—a talkative fellow, full of curiosity, who is anxious to know my name. Do not give it to him, and prevent Sir Theodore from so doing. You may guess some of my reasons when I tell you I have just discovered that I am in the house of Sir Charles Chevenix. I shall certainly rejoin you the day after to-morrow. In the mean time, send me over, by some of the people of the inn, the small black portmanteau which was upon the brown horse.—Yours ever,

"REGINALD LISLE."

This written, he sealed and addressed his letter, and gave it into the hands of the surgeon, who retired, fully satisfied that, though frustrated at present, he should obtain the information he desired before the night was over.

Reginald Lisle, as soon as he was alone, plunged into thought again, and meditated bitterly.

CHAPTER IX.

It wanted about twenty minutes to the dinner hour, on the following day, when Reginald Lisle appeared in the drawing-room. It was still untenanted, and he gazed around with a very sad and pensive air, marking the different objects which it contained with the degree of interest that we feel in even small and insignificant things which have connected themselves with any of the strong emotions of the heart. He was only left about five minutes alone, however, ere Mary Chevenix appeared, and greeted him with a joyful

congratulation upon his recovery. But Reginald answered in so grave a tone that she could not help remarking it, and said, "You are suffering still, I am afraid, and I am foolishly taking it for granted that you are quite well, because old Doctor Haviland allows you to come down."

"Oh, no; I am much better," replied Reginald; "and if I am suffering, it is not from the late accident, Miss Chevenix."

"Then you are suffering," she said. "I was sure of it; for, yesterday, when the surgeon gave so grave an account of you, you were quite cheerful, and now you seem quite sad."

"There are sufferings of the mind as well as of the body," answered the young officer; "and I know none greater than unavailing regret for any act that we ourselves have done."

She gazed at him for a moment with a look of surprise and inquiry, and then replied, "I do not clearly understand you. I cannot think that you are one to do anything that you could bitterly regret."

"Oh, yes!" answered Reginald. "Once, in my mere youth, I did what I have regretted ever since, and now more than ever. I will not speak of it more at present, however, for my secret will be all explained to-morrow before I leave you."

"And do you really go to-morrow?" inquired Miss Chevenix. "Oh! are you fit?"

"Fit or not fit, I must go if it be possible," replied Reginald Lisle. "I must not stay longer in this house."

"Why? why?" demanded his beautiful companion, with her deep blue eyes raised eagerly to his face. "If travelling is likely to injure you, why should you not stay?"

Reginald Lisle took her hand for a single instant, saying, "Thank you, thank you for your kind interest; but it would be far more dangerous to my peace to stay than to my health to go."

The warm blood came up into her face, then fled from it again, and left it pale as a moonlight night. Reginald saw that he was understood, and there was a struggle in his breast as to whether he should say more; but resolution triumphed, and while Mary Chevenix turned and walked with an uncertain step to the window, he remained silently gazing on the ground. After she had reached the window, however, and had seemed to gaze out for an instant, she suddenly turned, and with glowing cheek said in a low tone, "I wish you would stay. I am sure you are not fit to travel. I see no cause why you should go; and my father, who will

be home in three days, will be most happy to thank you for the service you rendered my mother and myself."

"He will only think I have staid too long already," replied Reginald, "and so perhaps will you, and regret even your kind words and feelings towards me."

"No," she answered, firmly. "No, never! There seems to be some secret, but I shall never regret that I have been grateful, or that I have felt—" She paused, hesitating; for something rose up in her bosom to tell her that she hardly knew as yet what were the feelings she was about to speak of; and before she could finish the sentence, Lady Chevenix entered the room.

She had greatly warmed towards her young guest. The very habit of thinking about a person familiarizes us to him. We become intimate with him in thought; and Lady Chevenix had been thinking a great deal about Reginald Lisle. She had been somewhat uneasy as to what might be her husband's opinion of her conduct in asking him to the house; but upon that subject her mind had been relieved, not half-an-hour before, by a letter from Sir Charles. She had also thought of his gallant interposition in the rencontre with the highwayman, and of the injury he had sustained thereby, and the suffering he had undergone since, and of the loss of his horse, and of his graceful manners and pleasant conversation. In short, by the time she entered that drawing-room, she was quite friends with him in her own mind. She now congratulated him kindly upon his recovery; and her attention was so far engaged by her own words and his reply, that she did not observe his grave and somewhat embarrassed manner, nor her daughter's glowing cheek, which, as cheeks will do, had become more crimson than ever, just because she made an effort to banish all trace of emotion.

At dinner, however, Lady Chevenix remarked that her guest's demeanour was very different; that it had lost its light elasticity; that his conversation, though still striking and full of fancy, always sought grave subjects; that the images were all sad. He described several beautiful and strange scenes which he had beheld in the different parts of the world where he had served; but his descriptions now were like the landscapes of some painters, very true to nature, very powerful even, but one felt a want of sunshine. She, too, like her daughter, imagined he must be suffering, and questioned him upon it; nor need I tell the reader that his answer was very different to her.

I never knew in my life a man answer mother and daughter in the same way. He made an effort for cheerfulness, however, and so far succeeded as to cause Lady Chevenix

to smile more than once, and sometimes even to laugh. Mary tried to be gay, and happy too; but still, beneath all ran a train of thought of which Reginald Lisle was the theme; and perhaps, had he artfully contrived a scheme to win a heart, he could not have fallen upon a better one than that of his changeful demeanour. The first step in love is to interest, and that he contrived to do most completely. But, as the Eleusinian mysteries were not more secret than are the feelings of a lady's heart when she is first in love—often even to herself—I must not go on, lest I profane the temple. And a very beautiful temple it was; for that pure, warm, kind, snowy bosom was a fit place for a noble spirit to raise its prayers to heaven.

Under the influence of her eyes, the effort by which Reginald had at first sought to shake off his gloom was gradually relaxed, and he became naturally cheerful. He felt it impossible to be long sad in her company, perhaps; or, what is still more likely, she engrossed his thoughts so much that they would not rest upon any other thing—no, not even upon separation. The hour of retiring came sooner than Reginald had expected. He had not as yet named to Lady Chevenix his approaching departure; and, as they all three stood together, about to part for the night, an anxious and grave expression in Mary's eyes first brought the subject back to his mind. His manner instantly changed; and, taking the elder lady's hand, as she extended it to him when bidding him good night, he said, in a tone of much feeling, "I have many thanks to offer you, Lady Chevenix, for all your kind care and hospitality."

"No, indeed," she answered; "it is we who have to thank you, and I know not how to compensate for the injury you have sustained in our service, and the fine creature you have lost."

"Nay, nay," replied Reginald, "that is more than compensated, my dear madam; but I will not detain you now to say more than to assure you that I feel deeply grateful. To-morrow I shall still trespass upon your hospitality at breakfast, and soon after I must take my departure, having ordered a chaise over from Stratton. Before I go, I will trouble you with a word or two about myself; for I have reason to believe that you do not yet know who I am, or anything about me."

"Not even your name," replied the lady, with a smile; "but, though very much of a recluse, I have not the curiosity of one, though good Doctor Haviland has, I can assure you."

"So I perceived," answered Reginald, "and I would not

gratify it. To-morrow, however, I will tell you all about myself; and though the tale in the abstract may have nothing very amusing in it, yet you may and will feel a personal interest of some kind in it."

"Oh! I certainly shall, in the history of one who came so gallantly to our rescue," replied the lady. "It is indeed somewhat tyrannical of you to keep us in suspense till to-morrow; and I dare say Mary will lose her sleep all night in trying to divine the mystery. As you have so arranged it, however, it must be, for we have already sat up somewhat late. Good night, then, for the present."

Lady Chevenix prophesied rightly as to her daughter's sleepless night, and Mary Chevenix was down very early on the ensuing morning. The words of Reginald Lisle were still sounding in her ears, his looks were still before her eyes, and she tried hard to read the book thus opened to her. She had thought but little of love before that night, and she dare hardly think of it then; but the heart still prompted the mind, and the mind asked strange questions. It was vain for her to tell herself that it was all nonsense; that what he had said was nothing more than a few words of overstrained gallantry; that he would soon forget her, and she him. She could not persuade herself of the fact. She felt sure, in short, that he loved her, and not very sure that it was unpleasant to her to be so beloved. That there was some mystery, and that it was a sad one—one, perhaps, which would render it difficult, if not impossible, for him to pursue his suit—she clearly perceived; and with the eager, anxious yearning of a young heart, she strove, as I have said, to imagine what it could be that threw such gloom over a lover's hopes.

Perhaps he might be poor, she thought, and know that she was wealthy; perhaps lowly born; but then his appearance, his manners, and some of his words, contradicted the supposition. Besides, he had spoken of some act committed in very early youth which had cast regret upon his after life, and especially upon his acquaintance with her. With a start, she asked herself, Could he be already married? and the feeling that passed through her heart like a pang first taught how far that heart had yielded. The next moment, however, she cast away the idea with indignation. "No, no!" she said; "either all his words and looks belie him, or such is not the case, and all other difficulties may be removed."

Ah, Mary Chevenix! Mary Chevenix! I am afraid the matter was very nearly settled with that little heart of yours. "He will soon be down," she thought, after she

had gazed out upon a vista in the trees for a few minutes, "and I must not let him find me meditating in this way."

"Alas! what a hard world it is that makes woman strive ever to veil some of the dearest emotions of the heart! If there were no robbers, what would be the use of locks and keys? but as there are plunderers, who spoil the weak and the confiding of all sorts of treasures, it is but too needful to hide the wealth that we are not able to defend.

Mary sat down to a table and took up some work, but it was soon laid down again, and her beautiful eyes were fixed sightless upon air. She had better have remained at the window, for the next instant a shadow darkened the casement near her, and turning her head she saw Reginald Lisle looking in. The next window served the purpose of a door upon the lawn, and in a moment he was by her side. She was blushing a good deal, for she had been detected, she felt, in a deep reverie; and there was so much agitation in her manner, that Reginald Lisle was agitated too. In haste, or passion, or agitation, people do not know well what they are doing. It is a truism of the utmost platitude, but yet we very seldom take it into consideration in judging of the conduct of others. Now, heaven knows what Reginald Lisle or Mary Chevenix said or did—I do not, and I much doubt whether they did themselves—but they were near an hour together quite alone; and when Lady Chevenix was heard speaking to one of the servants on the stairs, her daughter escaped out of the drawing-room by a side door. Reginald, with more agitation than he liked, stood his ground. The lady was delayed some minutes, however, before she appeared, and though her young guest was very pale when she entered, that was the only remaining trace of emotion.

"I suppose Mary is making breakfast," said Lady Chevenix, after the first salutation. "Let us come and see." But breakfast was unmade; and when the young lady did appear, she was again gently reproved for her neglect. Lucky, perhaps, it was so; for the variation of her cheek had then an apparent cause. But it mattered little, for Lady Chevenix was one of those women who cannot conceive it possible to fall in love in three days.

The breakfast was put all in order, the butler had left the room, and there seemed no earthly reason why everybody should not be cheerful and conversible; but all were silent, abstracted, thoughtful. Every one tried to talk, indeed, just at the moment when nobody else was in a case to help; and as conversation is an undertaking which cannot at all be carried on by private enterprise, it very soon fell to the ground.

At length, when Reginald had more than three-quarters finished his breakfast, he heard the sound of wheels rolling up to the other side of the house, and a moment after a footman came in to inform him that the chaise was there.

"Very well," he said, in an exceedingly grave tone; "put in my portmanteau, if you please: I will come in a few minutes. I promised, Lady Chevenix," he continued, as the man closed the door, "to tell you my short story, and I secure you against its being a long one, by beginning when the chaise is at the door." He dared not give a glance to Mary, for he feared that even one look might deprive him of the courage which he had summoned up. "My father," he continued, "was of a very good family, being the third son of a peer. His portion, too, was good for a peer's younger son, and he early entered the army, and served with some distinction. Having found it necessary to cane a man of high rank, and not being on the best terms with his elder brother, who might have given him protection,* he was prosecuted for an assault, and saved from serious consequences by the skill and zeal of the lawyer he employed. He became intimate with him, and finally married his daughter, who brought him a moderate fortune. He died on the field some ten or twelve years ago, leaving two children, myself and my sister. My inheritance was not very large, but it was sufficient; and at the age of seventeen, or a little before, indeed, I entered the army in a dragoon regiment. I had not, perhaps, misspent the years of youth, for I had acquired much which those with whom I was now called upon to associate were without. But that fact was in some degree unfortunate, for it taught me to look down upon the understanding of my companions, while they looked down upon me for want of knowledge of the world, and acquired a habit of calling me 'the bookworm.' I was irritated by their conduct; but, while it kept within certain limits, I contrived to master my anger, and to conceal it, till one day, the person for whom in the whole corps I felt inclined to entertain the most friendly feeling—a frank, gay, high-spirited man, and my superior officer—rallied me, perhaps a little too severely, at the mess-table. I retorted—petulantly, I am sure. He had drunk wine enough to heat but not to intoxicate him, and he answered—I think rashly. In short, words were spoken which are difficult to bear, and in an evil hour I threw up my commission and called out my superior officer. I had no sooner taken the irretrievable

* Protection against the power of the law may seem strange to our ears, but there were cases in those days in which such shelter was found.

step than I regretted, but regrets were in vain. We met, and I am sorry to say I wounded him severely. He behaved to me with the utmost generosity; but at the time when his life was despaired of, by the advice of my friends I embarked for America, entered an infantry regiment, and have risen by degrees in the service, without discredit. The unfortunate affair, however, with which my career commenced has always left bitter sorrow behind. I need not tell you, Lady Chevenix," he continued, rising, "how much that regret is increased now, when I inform you that I am Reginald Lisle."

Lady Chevenix turned very pale, and started up from her chair, exclaiming, "Sir—sir—this is——"

She did not finish the sentence, and Reginald turned one imploring look to the face of Mary Chevenix. At first the blood fled from her cheek, too; but the next instant it returned, and a smile—faint, indeed, but certainly a smile—met Reginald Lisle's sight.

He could not account for it; but it seemed to his eyes the smile of reviving hope; and, turning to Lady Chevenix, he took up the sentence which she had left unfinished, saying, "This is—what, my dear madam? You cannot suppose that, had I known who you were, I would have ever intruded myself into a house where each member of the family must remember that I once raised my hand against a husband's or a father's life. I only became aware of the facts the night before last, and instantly resolved to relieve you of my presence as soon as it was possible to do so. Nevertheless, I must, ere I depart, call to your recollection that Sir Charles Chevenix himself declared publicly that I had conducted myself as a man of honour and a gentleman, and was pleased to take upon himself even a greater share of the fault than was his due."

"He does you justice still, Captain Lisle," said Mary, warmly; "and I am sure, were he here, he would be the first to hold out his hand, and thank you for the assistance you lately rendered us, and for all you have suffered from so doing."

"Be silent, Mary!" said Lady Chevenix; "you do not understand these matters. Your father speaks, as becomes his character, of an adversary who did nothing dishonourable or actually wrong towards him; but he does not, and cannot, forget that Captain Lisle is an adversary, nor I that he shed my husband's blood. I thank you sincerely, sir, for the assistance you rendered to my daughter and myself. It was given as a gallant gentleman, such as we all know

had been rendered by another hand, and probably you could yourself desire that it had been afforded to other persons."

"Far from it, madam," replied Reginald, raising his head high with a look of bitter mortification. "If anything could add to the pleasure of being of service to two ladies, it would be the fact that they are the wife and daughter of Sir Charles Chevenix. It gives me an honourable opportunity of assuring him that I bitterly regret, and have ever bitterly regretted, the results of my boyish impetuosity, and that I am well aware I merited more blame in the affair than he was pleased to assign to me. Pray, let that assurance be conveyed to him; and now, with many thanks for the hospitality I have received, I take my leave."

Lady Chevenix made him a formal inclination of the head; but her daughter exclaimed, "Oh, mother! this is unkind! Do not let him go thinking us ungrateful."

"Ungrateful!" replied the elder lady, in a sharp tone, "for raising his hand against your father's life, and bringing him to the jaws of death!" and, passing her daughter, she quitted the room. Mary tarried for a moment, and held out her hand to Reginald Lisle. "Farewell!" she said, "farewell! Do not carry away the belief that either my father or myself feels thus. It is her love for him that makes my mother so unjust; and, although I do not love him less than she does, it is from himself I have learned to judge of your conduct more fairly. I am sure you will hear from him soon. Let that console you till ——"

"Mary, Mary!" cried the voice of Lady Chevenix from the next room; "I want you, my dear."

Reginald Lisle pressed his lips upon her hand, murmuring, "Thank you! thank you! dear, beautiful girl!" and in two minutes more was in the chaise, rolling away towards Stratton.

CHAPTER X.

IN former times there was an inn at Dunstable: I hope none of my readers recollect it, for their sake and my own, because it was seventy-two years ago, and I am going to describe it. The reader may say that perhaps it lasted long after that, so that men of moderate years may remember it without shame. If he will wait a little, I will show him that could not be.

However, in former times there was an inn at Dunstable, such as good old English inns frequently were. Now Dunstable, in those days, stood on the high-road to Holyhead and Birmingham. It has removed since by railroad; but, such being the case at the time I speak of, and the little town, which then did not contain above eleven hundred inhabitants, being at the distance of a good day's ride from London, on the way to the above-named places, it required, as the reader may imagine—at a time when many people travelled on horseback, and others in carriages drawn by their own horses—a good large inn to receive those who chose to stop there on their first day's journey out of, or their last day's journey into London. A good large inn it had, too, as well as three smaller ones, which swept up the crumbs that were left by their more voracious neighbour.

In those smaller inns put up pedlars, and stray carriers, and men with pack-horses; but the regular wagons, with their tilt and team, went to the great inn, a part of which was peculiarly appropriated to their conveniences. It was a large building, in the form of a parallelogram, built round a large court-yard, and having two wide arched entrances on the main road, one exactly similar on the little road that crossed the highway, and two passages through the back part of the building into a garden, which supplied the cook with cabbages for her beef-broth, a favourite dish with the drivers of and passengers by wagons.

The front of the inn was gloomy-looking enough; the windows were exceedingly small, according to our present notions, and the archways enormously large. Over one was a painting, representing something very like a deformed black cow with golden horns: that was the wagon-entrance which lay beneath the picture. Over the other arch, or

rather projecting from the top of it into the street, was a carved image of the animal which the painting was really intended to depict; but, so much greater was the skill of the sculptor, than that of the painter, that no one could have had any difficulty in discovering that the image was meant for a black bull. Lest any one should mistake, however, on a large board in gigantic letters was written along the front of the house, "The Black Bull—Matthew Spinner," with a list of all sorts of things which Matthew Spinner could and would supply, upon a consideration. The house was of four stories in height. The windows were not exactly above each other; but, either for convenience or from whim, those on the first floor had been placed over the piers of the ground-floor, and those on the second floor over the piers of the first, and so on. Thus, if it had not been for those two great, gaping archways, the front of the house would have looked just like a great chess-board.

So much for the external face; but now—although the description is somewhat long already—I must say a word of the internal or court-yard face of the building. It also showed four stories, but not by the windows; for it was only on the upper and the lower stories of all that anything of the kind was visible. Between were two long wooden galleries, running all round, supported by stout, squat pillars, and defended by a balustrade.

I cannot say that the court was very clean or very well paved; for, although the boots and the ostler seemed to be eternally sweeping it out with everlasting birch-brooms, nevertheless it was continually covered with wet straw; which, perhaps, may be accounted for by the fact that, besides the chaise-horses, the wagon-horses, and the riding-horses, which were constantly going in and out, a whole herd of pigs had from time immemorial possessed a right of road through it.

On the left-hand side, as you entered from the street, was the portion of the yard appropriated to the wagons; and that flanking part of the building which overlooked them as they stood ranged in order below was very judiciously assigned to the wagoners, and the guests whom they brought to the "Black Bull" under their tilt, who in those days were not few; for people who had not much important business to transact, and but little money in their pockets, could be content to travel at the rate of two miles and a half an hour. Now they grumble at twenty. The *corps-de-logis*, or principal façade, was occupied by a large dining-hall on the ground-floor, where an ordinary was served at one and at three o'clock; the host's own private apartments, including

all kinds of offices and a small hall for private parties; various sitting-rooms and one or two bed-rooms for "the quality" on the first floor; and the same over that again—only here were more bed-rooms and fewer sitting-rooms; while on the fourth story were rooms for servants. The whole right-hand building was devoted to bed-rooms, generally assigned to single travellers, except indeed the ground-floor, which disposed itself into kitchens, pantries, larders, sculleries, wash-houses, and an inconceivable number of unnamed and unnameable holes and corners.

"Upon my life! here are four or five pages devoted to a description of a very common, old-fashioned country inn!"

"Was there ever such a tiresome fellow in the world?"

"That is the worst of JAMES's books: he is so fond of long descriptions!"

"I always skip the descriptions in your books, papa."

"I always skip the love."

Very well, dear reader; very well, dear critic; very well, dear children. Whoever skips anything omits that which was not written without an object, loses an emotion or a fact, and will in the end perhaps be obliged to turn back, because he does not find out the story which he has been running after so eagerly. Oh, railroad, railroad! you have got even into romances, and one must hurry on at forty-five miles an hour. No: I will not. I will stop for a night at Vantini's—or at the "Black Bull" at Dunstable, which will do quite as well, and be cheaper.

I hope the reader has remarked every particular of the description which has been lately given. If so, let him look into the inn-yard, in the fine spring evening, with the yellow light of the sinking sun streaming into it, and making the whole, from the garret windows to the old, ill-painted wooden pillars—nay, even the stray straws on the pavement—look cheerful. He will see that, at one and the same moment, each archway is pouring into that court-yard a stream of living creatures. One gives admission to three gentlemen, two servants, and six horses. The other affords entrance to a wagoner on foot, and six horses, drawing after them a long, heavy, clumsy, broad-wheeled wagon, covered with a new tilt, inscribed in large letters with the owner's name, and the vehicle's starting-place and destination.

The mounted gentlemen were received by mine host Matthew Spinner, the head waiter, and the head ostler, with assistants. The wagon had its own particular attendants; but the first-named party were encountered with bowings and scrapings, and the wagoner at least, if not the wagon,

with shaking of hands. The golden calf has ever been the idol of the best repute: Baal, and Dagon, and Ashtaroth, and other gentlemen and ladies of stone, and brass, and wood, and ivory, have had their vogue; but the golden calf is the only perennial deity, and even Mammon's simular will bend the knees of men to worship, though the real demon be very far from present. Horses and servants, fine coats, and the mere appearance of wealth, with half the world, are the great claims to reverence. No wonder, then, that the aristocracy of the "Black Bull," the priests and senators of the temple of mercenary hospitality, were busy in doing honour to gentlemen who came well attended.

In the mean while, the democracy of the inn, consisting of an ostler of inferior grade, a horse-keeper, a boy, and two fat, greasy girls, were busy about the wagon. The end of the tilt was thrown back, and two or three words from the wagoner instantly brought forth a wooden chair, which was placed at the end of the vehicle farthest from the horses.

"Now, ma'am," said the driver, "step on this here. It will help you down easy. I hope the gentleman is none the worse."

"He says he is better," replied a very sweet female voice from within; and the moment after, a young girl, with bended head and somewhat doubtful steps, picked her way to the end of the wagon, and with the wagoner's assistance descended, putting first one foot and then the other upon the chair, and then springing lightly upon the stones, as if the very first breath of the fresh air revived her. There was no room for any great display of grace, but yet he was very graceful. She seemed hardly sixteen years of age, and there was a childlike way about her which made her appear younger than she really was; and yet there was womanly thought in her fair face, mingling with that youthful look somewhat strangely. I am not fond of any exaggeration—not even of an exaggerated simile. Many I could find—half-a-dozen at least—to illustrate that mingling of expression. But so it was, just as I have plainly said—a grave, thoughtful cast upon a very young and happy face. The look became almost sad as she turned again towards the wagon after she had alighted, and held out her hand to some one within, saying, "Here, my dear father! It seems a very nice inn."

With a slow and feeble step, and a frame bent and emaciated by illness, a man of the middle age approached the end of the vehicle, and with the aid of the wagoner and the girl, together with some stray assistance from the ostler, descended and looked about him with a wearied and anxious

look. He then spoke a few words to one of the chambermaids, and retired from sight, leaning on his daughter's arm.

In the mean while, the three gentlemen had dismounted much more rapidly from their horses, though one of them seemed a little lame; and, though the landlord, with obtrusive civility, repeated more than once, "This way, gentlemen," the eyes of all three were turned to the little scene which was taking place at the farther side of the yard. Sir Theodore Broughton gazed somewhat eagerly at the young girl; and it was evident to Reginald Lisle that he was in one of those dreams which seize upon the young fancy when a fair face crosses our path, and, disappearing before we have had any time for observations, seems lovelier than any that we ever beheld, often remaining so impressed upon memory for long years.

Reginald himself gazed with very different feelings, and with a higher, a brighter interest. His imagination was not less rapid and eager, but it was less selfish in its course; and the daughter's manner towards her father, the stretched-forth hand, the anxious, thoughtful look at his face, and a something of high breeding in the air of both, conjured up a story in his fancy, which was only not a romance because it was too near the truth. Major Brandrum seemed, or was, the most moved of the whole party. He looked steadfastly at the pair for a moment, and then his lips moved, muttering sounds which were only distinct to himself; but the next instant, with a cloudy brow and thoughtful look, he turned upon his heel, saying, "Come, Lisle—come, Sir Theodore," and followed the landlord towards the part of the building containing the dining-halls, his spurs jingling over the pavement of the court even more than was their wont.

"The ordinary is over, gentlemen, I am sorry to say," quoth the landlord. "Have you dined? or will you please to order any dinner?" As he spoke, he took a new survey of his guests, and more especially of Major Brandrum, whose strange costume seemed to strike him a good deal. But the major was absorbed in thought, and Reginald Lisle took upon him to order dinner, while Sir Theodore walked to the window, and beat time upon his boot with his riding-whip.

"Lisle, lend me ten guineas," said the major, approaching his young friend, as soon as the landlord was out of the room, and speaking in a low voice.

"Certainly," replied Reginald, without the slightest hesitation, taking out his purse.

"I will pay you on the seventeenth of next month," said

the major, taking the money, and hurrying out of the room. Reginald Lisle would not follow, though he murmured to himself, "Some good deed to be done, I am sure: perhaps that poor fellow we saw get out of the wagon."

The next moment the door opened, and Zachary Hargrave, Sir Theodore's servant, entered with his demure look. "Please you, sir," he said, addressing his young master, "I wish you would just come to the stable and look at Roland's back. The saddle has galled him a bit."

"How is the horse I bought at Stratton-upon-Dunsmoor, Hargrave?" asked Reginald Lisle.

"Oh, he is quite well and fresh, captain," answered the man; "he's an impudent beast."

Lisle did not seem to notice this imputation upon his horse's modesty, but turned musing to the window, and Sir Theodore followed the man out of the room.

"Why did you call Captain Lisle's horse an impudent beast, Zachary?" asked the young baronet, as they walked along.

"Because they say, 'As impudent as a highwayman's horse,' Sir Theodore," replied the man, with a grin; "and I've a great notion that this here horse has been upon the road in more ways than one."

"Pooh! nonsense!" exclaimed the young baronet: it is Colonel Lutwich's horse."

"No matter for that," answered Zachary, drily. "Howsomdever, it's a fine piece of flesh and blood—that it is; but I can show you a finer, I think, Sir Theodore."

"Indeed!" exclaimed his master. "I should like to see it."

"This way, then, sir," said Hargrave; and instead of leading the young baronet to the stables at the back, he kept to the left, passed round behind the wagon which had last come in, and entered that wing of the house. First came a door, which was open, and a passage, at the mouth of which three or four men were talking together, amongst whom was the wagoner; and then on the right was a swing door, which Hargrave pushed open, ushering Sir Theodore into a large, dingy room, furnished with two or three tables, several wooden benches, and four or five chairs of the same material. There was some fire in the grate, and a large tea-kettle hissing upon the embers.

Only three persons tenanted the room. The one nearest the door by which the young gentleman entered was the beautiful girl whom he had watched descending from the wagon. She was busily making tea at a table some distance from the fire: and now that her cloak and hat were thrown

off, with her slight, budding figure displayed by neat and well-made, though very plain apparel, she looked, to the eyes of Sir Theodore Broughton, far more beautiful and graceful than ever. Near the fire, and seated on a chair at one side of the chimney, was her father, with his pale and emaciated countenance lighted up with a bright and cheerful look, while just opposite to him sat Major Brandrum—his body inclined to an angle of forty-five, in order to talk low to the other traveller, and his long legs, in their heavy riding-boots, stretched out till they passed his companion's feet on the opposite side.

"Kate, my dear, come hither," said the sick man, raising his voice, which was peculiarly sweet in tone. "This is Major Brandrum, an old fellow-officer of mine, who remembers me well at the taking of Quebec, he says."

The girl put down the cup, and, advancing towards Major Brandrum, held out her hand to him frankly, saying, "I am very happy, sir, my father has met with a friend. He needs one."

"Have I not you, my child?" asked her father, "and have I not God?—a friend on earth, and, I trust, a friend in heaven. It is enough for any man; but still I am most grateful for finding another, when I imagined that all the friends I had were confined to those."

None of those who were now speaking seemed to notice Sir Theodore in the least, though the young lady had given him a casual glance as he entered. They were occupied with their own feelings, and those feelings were too profound to let the idle thoughts go wandering at the first call of the eye. After pausing an instant, the young baronet was drawing back towards the same door by which he had entered; but Zachary Hargrave led him to another at the opposite side of the room, which opened into the cross-road. When the door had swung to behind them, the man said, in a low tone, "It was better to come away—it would not do now."

"What would not do?" demanded Sir Theodore, in a tone of surprise.

"Oh, nothing particular, sir," replied the man. "I only thought you might like to have a talk with the young lady alone, for she is one of the prettiest girls I ever set eyes on, to my thinking."

"Talk to her alone!" exclaimed Sir Theodore. "Why, what should I say to her?"

"Why, Lord bless you, sir! you'd say plenty of things to her soon enough, I dare say," replied Hargrave; "and I do not think there would be any great difficulty in the matter,

for the wagoner says they are as poor as Job. It is not to be expected that you should do different from other young gentlemen just at present. If it be a sin, nobody can expect grace without sin, otherwise grace is unprofitable, which can't be, sir; and I do not know many young gentlemen of your years who would let such a prize as that escape."

Accursed be they who plant the first seeds of evil in the hotbed of the youthful mind! When Sir Theodore Broughton first gazed upon that beautiful young girl, no taint of coarser passion sullied his thoughts. She was to him, as I have said before, as a fair vision; and he never even dreamed of the possibility of wronging her; but, the voice of the tempter once heard—the corrupting influence of example brought to act upon his mind—thenceforth his thoughts hung round the idea placed before them; fluttering away—returning—hovering about it and above it; now scared and timid—now bolder and bolder—urged on by passion and the boiling blood of youth.

The tempter was still with him; and they walked on slowly towards the stables; but the man well understood his trade, and he left what he had said to work a while, before he added more.

Sir Theodore wished him to speak, but yet he was silent; and at length the young baronet asked, in a sharp tone, "Well, where is this marvellous horse that you were to show me?"

"Why, bless you, Sir Theodore!" replied the man, "it was no horse at all, but the girl we have just seen. I said I'd show you the finest piece of flesh and blood I ever saw; and so she is, upon my honour! I can see how it is, sir. You think that the captain would be angry, and make a great piece of work; but he knows better. He's been a young man himself, and knows—God help us!—that we are all poor frail creatures, who must be tried in the fire, as it were. He has often said, for I've heard him, that young men must prove everything. That is the reason why he let you ride such wild horses even from a boy; and, now he sees that you are growing a man, he has sent you out to Lunnun without going with you, just to let you have your swing. He told me himself that I was not to try and stop any of your little *escapades*, as he called it, which I take to mean such affairs as those that are happening to young gentlemen every day."

"Did he say that?" asked the young baronet, musing; and after the man had reiterated his assurances more than once, without seeming to receive much attention. Sir Theo-

into the stable;" and going in, he looked through every stall to see there was nobody to overhear. Even then, he and the man spoke in a whisper, though occasionally a louder word was heard.

But I have no wish to listen to the lesson of iniquity. Suffice it that never was a better instructor known; and though the words of hypocritical cant which mingled in his discourse at first disgusted, Sir Theodore soon found that they might be useful in the deceit which he, like all men plunging into vice, was glad to put upon himself.

Let us return to purer things. Major Brandrum sat with the invalid and his daughter for more than half-an-hour; and the poor officer's heart opened to the frank old soldier. But Brandrum was a good tactician, too; and he was resolved to make himself master of all the defences before he opened his fire upon the place. He talked of scenes which were familiar to them both, and events in which they both had had a share; and he told his own story briefly as encouragement, and listened to that of his companion at large. He even took a cup of tea from Kate, because she offered it, although he had not dined; and, putting his arm familiarly through hers, as she stood beside him, he said, "And so you have been his companion and his consolation in all these troubles, my dear? That's a good girl! Never you leave him; for the thought of what you have done for your father will be the best comfort to you when you are older, perhaps, and sicker than he is."

"It is so now," answered the girl simply, and with a smile.

"Well, well," continued Brandrum. "And so, my good friend, you have been badly treated by the powers that be. Because you were sick, and not wounded, they would not allow you any pension, and now order you to join when you have neither strength nor money? That seems hard of them, and stingy; and not the less stingy because it is hard, nor the less hard because it is stingy. But I'll tell you how it is: these fellows are very shrewd, and they wish to keep up a good feeling in the service."

"That is what they say," replied the sick man; but I do not see how their conduct tends to that. Here I became sick in their service, and for the service. During my short leave I have spent a fortune upon doctors, and ——"

"Oh! it is not that at all," said Major Brandrum. "You see it is a rule, my dear friend, that every officer should help another. Now, if government were to do everything, we should always look to government to do everything, and we

our purses and our means almost in common, as it ought to be with all old comrades. I recollect quite well, when I was wounded in the shoulder and had a pike-hole in my hip, under Lord George Sackville, in Germany, they were obliged to leave me behind; and my baggage having been taken, I had not a sixpence nor a clean shirt, and was likely to die of dirt and starvation; but, just as I was giving up spirit, old Honeywood came into the village with his dragoons—you recollect the old 'Chopping-block,' as we called him, I dare say?"

"Very well, very well," said the sick officer, with a sigh; "a braver officer or a better hearted man never lived."

"Never!" repeated Brandrum, warmly; "but, as I was saying, as soon as I saw him in the market-place, I went up to him, and told him how I was left; and he swore at me very hard, as was his custom, and cried out, 'We can't give you a horse, for we have got none to spare—nor a dinner, for we have not enough for ourselves; but there is something that will get you both; and he thrust a large roll of rix-dollars into my hand, which I paid him back again as soon as I could, and that was seven years after.'"

"It was very kind of him," said the sick man, feebly and sadly.

"Pooh! not a bit!" answered Major Brandrum. "I'd have done the same for him; but now let us talk of other things. So you are going to Holyhead—are you? I can tell you what: you must not travel in the wagon. It is both slow and rumbling; and not the less rumbling because it is slow, nor the less slow because it is rumbling. All very well for a lift on a march, but not for a sickish man going to join."

The officer shook his head. "I have no other means," he said.

"But I tell you, you shall not," cried Major Brandrum, looking fierce; "I'll be —— if you shall!" and he added an unnecessary oath. "There's a diligence goes down the greater part of the way, and you and your darling Kate here shall go in that, and you shall post the rest, or my name is not Jack Brandrum. There—no more about it," he continued, pulling out his purse. "I'm the senior officer, and I take the command. Kate, attention! Ground your teacup, and hold out your hand—as pretty a little hand as ever I saw, except that of my dear departed squaw, who was called the Sugar Maple; but it was blackish.

the first thing, and you are not to let him want comforts, but to take him safe and sound to Ireland, and then write me word how he is. There's a good girl!—you understand me, my dear, I see."

"Oh, yes! I understand you quite well," replied Kate, with the tears in her eyes; but her father interfered, saying, "Indeed, major, I cannot. I never borrowed money of any one in my life, and it would be burdensome to me to think I was in debt."

"That is insulting," said Major Brandrum. "Do you not think, my friend, that it must be equally burdensome to me to be in debt? Now, if you refuse to take that, you leave me so."

"How can that be?" exclaimed the sick officer; "you owe me nothing."

"I owe everything to the manly spirit and kind feeling of the service to which I belong," replied Major Brandrum, gravely. "I owe it a thousand acts of kindness of this and many other kinds; and I am under a bond to pay this debt to any comrade I meet in sickness, sorrow, or distress. Now, sir, refuse me if you have the heart to do me such great wrong."

"Well, I will not—I will not," cried the other, wringing his hand hard; and Kate turned away her head and sobbed.

Major Brandrum seized the moment to rise and retire; but before he did so, he took the beautiful girl by the arm, saying, "Pooh! pooh! my dear child, do not be silly. Your father will be a general yet, never fear; and only remember, if ever you want help or protection, your friend, the Ravenous Crow, is ready to give it to the utmost of his power."

"The what?" exclaimed Kate, looking at him through her tears, in some surprise.

"Oh! that's an old story," said Major Brandrum. "I'll tell you how I got that name some other time. I shall see you in the morning before you go. Hark you, Malcolm!" and he turned back, saying in a whisper to the invalid, "I have seen my young friend, Sir Theodore's servant, Zachary Hargrave, put his head in twice during the last five minutes. He's a great blackguard, that fellow, and a hypocrite. Have an eye upon him;" and with this caution he left the room, and returned to Reginald Lisle.

CHAPTER XI.

REGINALD LISLE was leaning his head upon his hand in thought, and he had remained in thought ever since his friend had left him. Such had not been his custom; but Reginald Lisle was very much changed. He had always been a thinker; but he had been a rapid thinker, and not a meditative one. Now, it is always passion of some kind which makes a meditative thinker.

The reader will instantly deny the proposition, and vow that he has seen a dozen or more meditative thinkers, whose greatest error was having no passion—no, not even an object. But that is a mistake: they were dreamers, not meditative thinkers. There is another marked distinction, too, to be kept in mind: meditative thinkers are very different from calculating thinkers. The latter have seldom any passion.

Reginald, however, had become very meditative. He was not dreamy, but he was really very thoughtful. He gave both memory and judgment way, as well as imagination. He thought of Mary Chevenix, and of the position in which fate and his own words had placed him in regard to her; and when love looked to hope and to reason, and asked, in the mariner's tongue, "What cheer?" the reply of the first was faint and low, and the second said aloud, "Breakers ahead!"

Such was his frame of mind, and such the subject of his thoughts, when Major Brandrum rejoined him, with his heart running over with satisfaction. The table had been laid without Reginald knowing it, and supper, or dinner—he it called whichever any one will—was nearly ready; but Sir Theodore had not yet appeared, and, to say the truth, the young officer had not much noticed his absence.

"Well, my dear Crow," he said, raising his eyes, with an effort to look not *absent*, "what have you been about?"

"Nothing of much importance, Lisle," replied the major. "I fell in with an old brother-officer, who fancies he is beginning one journey, when he is far on upon another, I fear. But it was some satisfaction to be able to give him a little comfort, poor fellow."

"Which you did not fail to do," said Reginald, "I am sure."

"To be sure," answered Major Brandrum. "I am still anxious about the poor girl, however;" and so he truly was; for Major Brandrum, otherwise Jack Brandrum, otherwise the Ravenous Crow, was almost always anxious about somebody, though never about himself. He had a tender, affectionate, benevolent heart, which was full of very refined sensibilities. All this, pray recollect, dear reader, without the slightest touch of sentimentality. He could feel with the young, he could feel with the old, he could feel with the poor, he could feel with the sick; and, though he was always ready to relieve, to comfort, to console, where he saw real need, or pain, or sorrow, yet he never tried to make miseries to grieve over, either in others or himself. He was at times a little ashamed of his sympathies; and in early days, being of a very gay, cheerful, dashing disposition, had endeavoured to cover over-kind actions and kind feelings with a rattling, thoughtless manner; but two or three people detected him, and his cue was now to persuade himself and others, that what he did was only done because it was right and proper, and what every man ought to do, and most men would do.

"I am still anxious about the poor girl, however," said Major Brandrum; and Reginald Lisle asked, "Why?" not in an indifferent manner, but in a tone which his friend well understood to imply a desire of hearing the circumstances which caused his anxiety.

"It will be bad enough, you see, Lisle," replied the major, "to lose her father, whenever it happens. It is always a blow; but under ordinary circumstances men feel that it is in the course of nature, and religion, philosophy, and time dry the eyes which torn affection have moistened; but this girl, I can see, has devoted herself to her parent with that absorbing attention which concentrates all the feelings upon one object. It will be bad enough at any time and in any place for her to lose him; but what will it be to lose him perhaps on this very journey, or even after he has joined a regiment where he is unknown? Then, she is very beautiful, very poor, and quite defenceless."

"But surely she has some friends," said Reginald, becoming much interested.

"They did not appear to support her father in his career, to comfort him in his sickness, or to help him in his need," was the sad reply. "What they have not done for the father, will they do for the child? Even if they do, will

it not be too late, when she is left alone amidst strangers, and perhaps prodigates?"

The door opened while he was speaking, and the young baronet entered. His cheek turned somewhat red as he heard the last few words that Major Brandrum uttered; but sitting down without speaking, he began playing with the knives and forks.

"If I can help in any way, you know you can command me," replied Reginald, warmly.

"I know it, my dear fellow—I know it well," answered his friend; "but you are far too young, and I not quite old enough, to act as the protector of a girl of sixteen or seventeen, without calling forth insinuations unfounded but injurious; and not the less injurious because they are unfounded, nor the less unfounded because they are injurious. However, I will think about it till to-morrow, and then we can talk it over. If your dear good mother would countenance and protect her, indeed we might do something."

"I was just about to say," answered Reginald Lisle—but at that moment the landlord appeared carrying the first dish, which he set down with all care and gravity, and then turning to the gentlemen present, before he took the cover off, he said, "May I inquire if one of you gentlemen is Major Brandrum?"

"I am, sir," replied the major; "what are your commands with me?"

"There is a person in the court wishes to speak with you, sir," answered the host; and the officer, putting down his head to Lisle's ear—the latter having already taken his seat—said in a whisper, "I suspect I shall not sup with you to-night. This is a bailiff, depend upon it. What sort of a person is he, my good friend?" he continued aloud.

"Why, an odd-looking sort of man, sir," answered the other: "he looks like a beggarman with a patch over his eye."

"Is there only one?" asked Lisle.

"Only one, sir," said the landlord.

"Send him in, then, send him in," cried the major; adding, in a low tone, "we can deal with one; and, moreover, it is after sundown."

His host, upon the injunction he had received, opened the small dining-room door, beckoning to some one without, and immediately, with a slow step and limping gait, a very poor-looking object entered.

He was dressed in a large, dirty brown coat, worn to the threads, various parts of which showed the marks where the

lace which had once decorated it had been picked off. The hat which he doffed as he came in was dented in every part, so as to leave no trace of its original shape; and the wig which was underneath, of the peculiar cut called *scratch*, had probably been picked out of some gutter into which it had been cast, when judged by a third or fourth wearer to be incapable of further service. It was much too large for his head also, but the danger of its falling off was remedied by a large black ribbon nearly worn to shreds, which, passing over the apex of the head in a diagonal line, bound the patch mentioned by the landlord, over his eye.

"My name is Brandrum, sir," said the major, after this unprepossessing personage had made sundry bows: "what do you want with me?"

"Why, sir, I have got something for you," replied the man, "and a message from your friend Colonel Lutwich, if you will just step a little aside."

The major eyed him very intently for a moment, and then with a smile walked towards the farther side of the room, at which stood another table. The visitor hobbled after, and they were soon in eager conversation, which, however, was for some time carried on in so low a tone that nothing transpired. At length, however, Brandrum exclaimed aloud, "What! the whole?—the hundred guineas too!"

"Every penny," answered the man; "with such scurvy fellows as that, depend upon it a neat pistol well crammed is more efficacious in making them pay their debts of honour than a dozen writs of *ca. sa.* He had the impudence to say, that if you had won it at hazard he would have paid; but because you had only lent one part, and become bound for the other, he would not; and so, then, the colonel took to the *ultima ratio* with him. He knew his man too well to hesitate, and here is the money; but you must give a receipt in the specified form. Here it is drawn up."

"With all my heart," cried Brandrum, rubbing his hands joyfully. "Here, landlord, pen and ink."

"Directly, sir—directly," said mine host, who was skilled in reading prosperity on men's faces, and was always deferential in proportion. The writing materials were soon produced, and a paper was placed before the worthy major, which, after reading carefully over, he signed with a flourish, saying, "There! Give my best compliments and thanks to Colonel Lutwich, who is, I suppose, your master, though his livery is somewhat out of the common run."

"Oh, sir, that is policy," replied the man, producing a small bag and a little paper parcel not much bigger than a letter; "having such a sum as this about me, it was better

to look as if I had nothing, for fear of highwaymen, you know. So I put off the clothes I usually wear."

"You did wisely," replied Major Brandrum, taking the bag, and counting a considerable number of guineas which it contained, and then running over the bank notes with his finger and thumb. "Five hundred and thirty-two guineas, good tale," he cried; "well, I never knew such a rascal pay such a sum before—when he could help it."

"Ay, but he could not," replied the man, pocketing the receipt; and then, putting his lips close to the ear of the Ravenous Crow, he added in a whisper, "Take care of your money: you have counted it before the landlord and the waiter, and it is a prize which might tempt some one to your bed-room door. I had better send the bailiffs to you: they are both in the house at this moment, following you down to Warwickshire. Pay them in the gold, major, and keep the notes. They are easily carried, and not worth any one's risk to take. Good-bye, sir," he continued, aloud: "I hope you'll remember the porter."

Major Brandrum took a crown out of his purse—it was well-nigh the last it contained—and gave it to the other, who with an awkward bow to the rest of the company, quitted the room, thanking his honour a thousand times.

Major Brandrum then apologised to his two friends for keeping their meal so long waiting; and, sitting down to table with them, prepared to enjoy himself as was his wont. He had more business, however, to transact before he could satisfy himself with the "cates divine," or quaff the foaming bowl.

"Upon my life! here are roast fowls and ham once more," cried Reginald Lisle. "We have had them at every inn where we have stopped."

"Those two dishes are patent in England," replied the major; "they are just as much a staple commodity as roast beef. I remember being seated at dinner, two years ago, beside a Frenchman; and when after grace, which was very long, the covers were removed and the contents of the dishes displayed, I saw my neighbour's face work lamentably, and he murmured to himself, but loud enough for half-a-dozen people to hear, 'Begar! dere be cock and bacon once again!' Sir Theodore, shall I send you a wing?"

The young baronet, laughing, had just answered in the affirmative, when two very suspicious-looking men entered the room; and, to the waiter's demand of what they wanted, and intimation that they had made a mistake, one of them replied, "We knows what we are wanting: no mistake in life. That's the gentleman, Bob."

"Pray, who are you, and what do you want?" demanded Major Brandrum, in a stern tone, very well understanding the nature of the intruders' calling.

"I am an officer of the Sheriff of Middlesex," replied the man, boldly, touching the shoulder of the Ravenous Crow with his finger; "and I arrest you, John Brandrum, at the suit of Simon Cox and Hezekiah Skeingelt. You must come along with me, major."

"Show me the writ," said Major Brandrum, coolly.

"Oh! here it is," replied the officer, producing a slip of parchment, which Major Brandrum examined very carefully. "It's of no use, major: you must either come or pay."

"Now, if I served you as you deserve," replied the officer, bending his brows upon the man sternly, "I should take you by the neck and back, and throw you out of the window, while my friends did the same by your follower. In the first place, you know that you are executing this writ at an illegal hour; and, in the next place, that it is not backed by the Sheriff of Bedfordshire."

The bailiff winked his eye to his companion, remarking, in a loud *aside*, "They told us he was a new 'un; but he's up to snuff, Bob. I beg your pardon, sir," he continued, in a more civil tone; "but the truth is, one Colonel Lutwich sent us word that you had got the money from Mr. Wilkinson, as drew the bills, and we had nothing to do but ask for it."

"Then why did you not ask for it civilly?" demanded Major Brandrum. "I have a very great mind not to pay you one farthing, and to drub you for half-an-hour: first, because as you know quite well, that these Cox and Skeingelt are two Jew usurers, who never gave half the money to the wretched vagabond who drew the bills; and next, because I hate all bailiffs and men who live by the miseries of their fellow-creatures."

"Lord bless you, major! you'll get accustomed to us in time," replied the man; "that is to say, if you go on accepting bills for other people that you can't pay yourself."

The look of anger passed away from Major Brandrum's face in a moment, and he hung his head, with an expression of shame and mortification. "You are quite right," he said, at length, "you are quite right; and I acted not only foolishly, but wrongly. I will never do it again."

"Ay, sir, that's what many a boy says when he is being whipped," replied the bailiff.

"True again," replied the Ravenous Crow. "You are a philosopher, my good friend; but let us have as little of

your company as possible. Draw out a receipt, and I will pay you the money."

The rest of the affair was soon settled, and at length the worthy major was permitted to go on in peace with his supper.

"Pray, Major Brandrum," inquired Sir Theodore Broughton, in his usual timid and diffident tone, when the meal was nearly done, "who is Colonel Lutwich that the man mentioned?"

"The same whom we saw at Stratton-upon-Dunsmore," replied the major, drily, going on with his meal.

"But who is he?—of what family?" persisted the young baronet.

"Oh! there is a large family of them," answered the major. "I really do not know how to describe this gentleman more particularly. I saw him once in a very crowded assembly in London, where he played for very high stakes, and won the game. I never saw him afterwards till we met at Stratton; but there, after you were gone to bed, we chatted over our last meeting, and I happened to tell him of this man Wilkinson's roguery. It seems that he generously found means to force the fellow to pay me, not only the amount of the bills, but a hundred pounds I had lent him likewise; for which I am very much obliged to the good colonel. That is all I know of him."

Perhaps the young baronet might have asked further questions; but at that moment the man Hargrave put his head into the room, saying, in a quick tone, "I want to speak a word to you, Sir Theodore, if you please;" and springing up from the table, the youth left his two companions.

Major Brandrum gazed at Reginald Lisle, and shook his head gravely.

"That lad is going wrong," he said; "we shall have to look after him. Donovan has placed a scoundrel with him, if ever I saw one; and the result will be perhaps what he expects."

"Going wrong?" exclaimed Reginald, starting. "In heaven's name! what makes you think so? Surely you must mistake: his very timidity and shyness must have kept him from all temptation up to the present time at least. It will be lost but too soon, doubtless; but it will prove a safeguard at present, I do hope."

"Those shy and timid lads, who seem frightened at the very first step in our evil world," replied Major Brandrum, "always make the greatest start when the first step is taken; and as to his wanting temptation, he will never want

that while Master Hargrave is with him. The scoundrel brought the lad into the room where my poor friend Malcolm was sitting with me and his daughter, and I remarked how the boy's eyes kindled at her beauty while we were dismounting. Twice after that the groom's ugly face was thrust in; but if I find he is prompting his young master to insult her, I will break every bone in his body."

"He shall not insult her, if I can prevent it," said Reginald Lisle, rising. "She is very beautiful, and I too remarked how much young Broughton's admiration was excited. But he is under my charge, and I will interfere to prevent him from doing anything disgraceful to himself or injurious to her. I will go and see. You stay where you are, my dear Crow. You are too much excited: you would peck his eyes out." And thus saying, he left the room.

CHAPTER XII.

"Sir, you insult me," said a very sweet voice, as Reginald Lisle, after seeking through several places, was walking along one of the many intricate passages of the inn; "let me pass, I insist, or I will soon bring those who will punish you. Your conduct is base and ungenerous; you think me unprotected and friendless; and I am sure that man has directed me wrong on purpose."

"Nay, I do not insult you," said the tongue of Sir Theodore Broughton; "surely it is no insult to tell you how lovely I think you, and to——"

"Yes, sir, it is an insult from a mere stranger," answered the girl's voice; "and I insist upon your letting me pass."

Reginald Lisle hurried forward in the darkness, which was but faintly softened by a light in a cross passage which shed some stray beams upon the opposite wall. But Catherine Malcolm's voice was raised very loud; and just when the young officer reached the end of the cross passage, which was a very long one, some other ear seemed to have caught the sound; for a door was suddenly opened between the spot which Reginald had reached and that where the young baronet stood, and a good-looking and fashionably-dressed man issued forth, exclaiming, "What is the matter?

Why, my young friend, Sir Theodore, what is all this? Fie, fie! Let the young lady pass. This is not a barmaid, to hear vows in an inn passage. Madam, this is a mistake: the gentleman is very young and romantic. Come in here with me, Sir Theodore; you will have the whole inn upon you. Sir, there is some one coming already;" and without ceremony he took the young baronet's arm, and hurried him into the room from which he had himself just issued forth, so suddenly that the latter did not see the advancing figure of Reginald Lisle.

The door was instantly shut, but the young officer continued his course up the passage, drawing to the side to allow Catherine Malcolm to pass. With a trembling step the poor girl came forward, with the light she carried shining upon her beautiful countenance, and showing how pale she had become with agitation. She looked somewhat wildly round her, too, as if not well knowing where she was; and, judging from the words he had overheard, as well as her look, that she had been directed wrong, Reginald bowed gravely, saying, "You have lost your way; will you allow me to show you? Nay," he added, as she drew somewhat back, with a look of alarm, "you are quite safe with me, Miss Malcolm. I am the friend and fellow-soldier of your father's friend, Major Brandrum; and I will lead you to your parent's room at once. I inquired where it is just now."

"My father is in bed, and I trust asleep, sir," replied the poor girl. "I staid with him till he was drowsy, and then went back to the hall for something I had left there. As I returned, a man I met on the stairs told me I was going wrong, and directed me here. One passage is so like another, I really do not know ——"

"Well, I will show you," said Reginald; "but just let me look at the number on this door;" and, advancing a step, he gazed up, repeating "Twenty-three. Now, Miss Malcolm, I will attend you. The best plan will be to ring for the chamber-maid. There is a bell in that next passage. She will go with you wherever you like. I know you have met with some annoyance just now, and was coming to your assistance. The young offender shall not go unproved; but, as he is a mere boy, you must forget it."

"It was very wrong," replied Kate Malcolm, colouring; "I did nothing to deserve such treatment, I am sure."

"I am quite certain you did not," replied the young officer. "But here is the bell;" and he rang it sharply.

The girl who appeared in answer to this summons was a saucy English chambermaid; and when Reginald informed

her that the young lady had lost her way, and directed her to accompany Miss Malcolm to her room, which was next that of her father, and numbered a hundred and three, she tossed her head, replying, that was not her floor—she had nothing to do with the wagon folks.

"You will be so good as to do as I direct you, whether it is your floor or not," replied Reginald Lisle, sternly. "This young lady, whose father is a fellow-officer of mine, has been already misdirected and insulted by some persons in this house, and I am now going to complain to your master of their conduct. Take care that I have not to add yours to my report. See this young lady safely to her room, and do not leave her till she is there."

The girl gazed at him for a moment with an air of surprise and sauciness, which had well-nigh made him laugh; but she was overawed, and, with a look of flippant submission, she said, "Very well! Come along. This way, madam."

"Good night," said Reginald in a kindly tone. "Tell your good father when he rises that Captain Lisle and Major Brandrum will both come to see him before you start to-morrow."

The tears rose in Kate Malcolm's eyes again, and though she murmured "Good night, sir," it was all she could utter.

As she retired with the chambermaid, Reginald found his way down to the bar of the inn; and on second thoughts, judging it better to say nothing of what had occurred, merely asked in an ordinary tone, Who was in number twenty-three?

"Colonel Lutwich, sir—the Honourable Colonel Lutwich," replied the landlord, consequentially. "We have a great deal of fashionable company in the house to-night. John! William! Thomas! Peter! Harry!" he continued at the top of his voice, screaming to half-a-dozen waiters and getting none of them, and then putting his mouth to the end of a long tube, which ran up to the story above, he shouted something which sounded like the gurgling in the long neck of a wine-bottle when it is turned upside down, and the liquid contained has some difficulty in getting out.

Reginald Lisle walked slowly away, and found Major Brandrum finishing his wine, without a certain quantity of which, in default of active exertion, he had great difficulty in believing that any day was actually ended.

"What news, Lisle?" the major asked as the other entered. "Have you found the lad? How was he demeaning himself?"

"Not very well," replied the young officer; "but yet

not so badly as perhaps he might have done. Nevertheless, I fear for the future. Let him alone, however, my dear Brandrum: I will give him a sort of lecture when he returns."

"But where is he?" demanded the major. "What is he doing now?"

"He is in your friend Colonel Lutwich's room," replied Lisle. "That gentleman came upon him in the midst of his impertinence to the poor girl, and really behaved very well, representing to him the impropriety of his conduct, and dragging him into his room, to put a stop to what was likely to become a very painful and disgraceful scene."

"The stupid young fool!" exclaimed Brandrum. "But it is all that knave Hargrave's doing; and, please heaven, I will beat him to a jelly before I part with him. Lutwich is a fine fellow, with all his faults, and I am sure would not see an innocent girl ill-treated."

"It is very strange," said Reginald, musing: "I feel certain I have seen his face somewhere before."

"That is very possible, my dear lad," replied Major Brandrum, drily; "but if you will take my advice, Lisle, you will not ask him where. He is a man of good family, good education, and many good feelings, as he has shown in my case, but he has his oddities, of which the less said the better."

A look of sudden intelligence broke over Reginald's face. "I understand it all now," he exclaimed: "it is the same countenance, I do believe; and yet there seems a difference, too, so that I certainly could not swear to him."

"I hope you never will, Lisle," said the major, gravely: "a wig makes a great difference, and Lutwich has many, as you might see, when he brought the money here this evening."

"Good heaven! was that the same man?" exclaimed Reginald; "then it would certainly be as difficult to swear to him as to bind Proteus. But be assured, on your account, I never would, even if I could."

"The first time I ever saw him," said Brandrum, "he was, as I told this silly youth, playing for a great stake—for neither more nor less, in short, than his life. It was at the Old Bailey, but he got off, for he cross-examined the principal witness against him himself; and though the man was much inclined to swear to his person, he asked him, in a stern tone, whether the highwayman had not a very black beard? 'So he had,' exclaimed the person who had been robbed; 'I did not think of that;' upon which the lawyer for the prosecution turned crossly round to Lutwich, saying,

'How came you to know that?' 'Because the same man, tried to rob me at the very same spot,' replied Lutwich, 'only I would not let him. He had a black beard, as you have, Counsellor Barrett; and, in fact, was very like you indeed. I could almost fancy you were the same man.' This set the whole court laughing, and the jury acquitted the prisoner without leaving the box. This little scene did not lose him his place in society; and though he frequents a great number of gay and dangerous places, and associates with a good number of fashionable blackguards, he has never lost the reputation of a gentleman and a man of honour, wherever his means may come from."

"Perhaps he is not the best companion for Sir Theodore," replied Lisle; but the major instantly replied, "There might be worse; there might be worse;" and the conversation taking another turn, Reginald raised the gall of his gallant friend by detailing minutely all that had occurred between the young baronet and Catherine Malcolm as far as he knew it himself.

An hour passed by without the return of Sir Theodore; and at the end of that time Reginald Lisle rose, saying, "I will to bed, Brandrum, for I am tired, and my knee is somewhat painful."

"So will I," rejoined the major, taking up his heavy riding-whip; and having procured lights, they issued forth.

Reginald Lisle mounted the stairs first, while his friend paused for a moment to gaze out into the court of the inn, where the moonlight was sleeping quietly; and the younger officer had reached the middle of the long open gallery which led to his bedroom, when he heard the voice of the Ravenous Crow exclaiming, in violent tones, "Why did you tread upon my toe, sir?"

"I did not intend it, major," said another voice.

"You did, sir; you intend everything that is bad—I'll teach you to behave better;" and instantly followed a sound like that which is often heard at watering-places, produced by the repeated application of a cudgel to the tough, hairy skin and hollow sides of an unfortunate donkey. The report of these echoing blows was mingled with cries and almost screams and shouts for mercy, which soon brought a dozen people and a dozen lights into the court-yard; and Reginald, looking over the wooden balustrade, beheld his friend holding Master Zachary Hargrave by the collar with a tight grasp, and laying on repeated blows of his horsewhip upon his legs, shoulders, and back, with a force and vigour which had well nigh flayed the unfortunate patient. Seeing people hurrying up to interfere, the major ceased for a moment,

without letting go his hold, however ; and, turning a fierce glance round, demanded, " Does any one want the same ? "

No one seemed inclined to demand the privilege : and then, swinging his victim round so as nearly to throttle him, the major raised his foot and applied it to Hargrave with a force and unction which sent him through the crowd almost to the other side of the court. Then stooping down, Brandrum raised his candlestick from the ground, and in a calm and somewhat jocular voice—for he was well satisfied with what he had done—addressed the mistress of the house, saying, " Will you allow me to light my wick at yours, madam ? for candles will go out when people are engaged in interesting occupations. "

Every one gazed at the other while the worthy officer obtained a light, but no one ventured to say a word ; and bowing round with mock courtesy, much amused at the consternation upon all faces, Major Brandrum walked quietly away and sought his bedroom.

CHAPTER XIII.

" PRAY be seated, Sir Theodore," said Colonel Lutwich, when he had drawn the young baronet into his room, and shut the door. " We must let the gentlemen and ladies, whom your somewhat too warm admiration of a very pretty girl may have collected in the passage, satisfy their curiosity, and go back to their supper and their beds, before the provider of this treat for their appetite for the marvellous makes his appearance again. "

He spoke somewhat sarcastically ; and perhaps no better tone could be taken to impress an inexperienced and shy lad with a sense of the impropriety of his conduct.

Pray let it be remarked, I say only, the impropriety ; for Colonel Lutwich did not pretend to go farther. He might feel, and probably he did feel, for his after conversation was a proof thereof, that there was much beyond mere impropriety to be censured in the young baronet's late behaviour ; but there are men who systematically act wrong themselves, and yet are so conscious and internally ashamed of their own misdeeds, that they do not venture boldly to condemn the misdeeds of others, though the faults and follies they see are not exactly in the course which they follow them-

selves. These are persons in whom the moral sense is not yet either quite depraved by habit or naturally obtuse; for in both those cases the vices that we do not cherish are the objects of our censure or our ridicule.

Sir Theodore Broughton cast himself down into a chair, overwhelmed with confusion and mortification. He knew not what to reply, or which way to look. His pride, his vanity, his desires were all disappointed or wounded. His first step in the career of passion and vicious indulgence had ended in rebuke and ridicule; and, for the time, he cursed Hargrave, and himself, and all concerned.

Colonel Lutwich saw how bitterly he was mortified, and being in reality a good-natured man, was sorry for him and hastened to his relief.

"Come, come, sir Theodore," he said, "do not let this affect you so much. In all probability the young lady is not aware of who you are, and will think little more about it. Few women are very seriously averse to be the object of admiration, though it may hurry the admirer into somewhat rash actions. I do not, indeed, know the circumstances of the case, but I think you must have made a great mistake in the character of the person you addressed, and it is very necessary to learn to discriminate. Doubtless you have no experience in these affairs, and ——"

"None, none!" replied the young baronet, encouraged by his tone. "Doubtless I have been very wrong; but it is all the doing of that fool Hargrave, my servant. I never saw so beautiful a creature in my life; and he told me——Why do you laugh?"

"Not at you, my young friend," replied his companion; "but because a servant—a low-minded, vulgar fellow like that—is not fit in any way to give you counsel or information. You must learn, as I was saying, to discriminate for yourself. This young lady is very beautiful—very beautiful, indeed. That was evident, even at the casual glance I obtained of her; but still that casual glance was enough to show any man of the world that she is not accessible to the sort of means you seemed to be employing. There are some forts which cannot be carried by storm, Sir Theodore; against which nothing will succeed but long and incessant siege, and not even then without bringing up the heavy artillery of matrimony. Even that will not always carry the place; and that man makes the greatest mistake in the world who thinks that with the heart of all women, rank, station, wealth, even accomplishments, *must* be successful. Women have their fancies as well as men; and the most captivating youth in the whole world will often meet with a bitter mortifica-

tion if he thinks that his suit will prove equally acceptable to all."

"But do you think I have offended her beyond forgiveness?" asked the young baronet, in so dolorous a tone as to make his companion laugh again.

"No, no," said Lutwich: "as a first principle, no woman is offended at being loved—so far from it, that nine out of ten will forgive any errors that proceed from that love; and you seem somewhat deep in the mire, my dear baronet, considering that you have only known the young lady—at least so I imagine—a few hours."

"That matters not," said Sir Theodore, growing bolder as he went on; "sometimes a few hours are as much as a lifetime. I have never seen—I am sure I never shall see—anything half so lovely; and were I master of my own fortune, I would give one-half—nay, the whole—to call her mine."

"Nay, that is a very serious affair," replied the other. "Do you mean to say that you would marry her?"

The young baronet paused and hesitated; and Lutwich resumed more seriously, but in a contemplative, disquisitional manner, which took all appearance of rebuke from his observations:—"It is indeed a very serious affair to think of marrying a girl one has only known a few hours. It is not only fortune and comfort that we stake upon our die, but often the happiness, the success, even the honour and conduct, of a whole life. Marriage blends with our being the being of another, which mingles a certain dissimilar stream with the whole current of our existence, modifying not only our fortunes and our fate, but our thoughts, our feelings, our character. The person we wed may seem to possess no influence over us, may obtain no power of controlling our actions, or directing our course in anything; but still, whether leading or opposing, going with us or against us, there will be constantly-recurring effects produced upon our minds and our deeds, by that inseparable union with another, which will affect us in all our mortal life—nay, perhaps in eternity."

He paused long between the former and the latter words, and the last were uttered with an effort, as if in despite of himself. The next moment he resumed in a less serious tone:—"Doubtless you did not think of marriage, my young friend; and now let us consider for one instant what you were about. In this world there are many women who, loose and vicious by habit, are ready to sell, give, grant, favour and encouragement to all who seek them; there are some, too, who by temperament, vanity, idleness, want of character or principle, though not actually fallen, are only

waiting upon inclination, opportunity, or temptation. But there are others—and if I judge rightly this girl is one—who in purity of heart and feeling, though not without affections, which become passions when strongly excited, devote themselves to high and holy duties in the strength of innocence and truth. I can feel that it is so," he added sadly, "though I am not, never have been, of them. I will not blame the man who, in the hot blood of youth, sports with the wanton or the libertine, provided he debases not his own mind to the level of theirs. I have no right to blame him, alas! I will not even venture to censure the man who meets passion with passion, and rolls the falling pebble down the bank. These things are wrong, all very wrong; but it is not for me to condemn. But what must that man think of himself, who, for an idle fancy or a short-lived passion, would deliberately seek to sully a pure heart; to withdraw from a course of noble innocence and high devotion a being whose corporeal beauty is but an image, a type, a sign of the beautiful spirit within? No, no, Sir Theodore, as Shakspeare says—'We have willing dames enough.' We may be sinful, we may be foolish to make them our companions, or to give them even an idle hour. A man may be tempted of the evil spirit, who is ever too near us all, to fall into wrong and wickedness himself, unwilling slave to his own passions; but to tempt others who are pure and innocent is the first great attribute of the evil spirit himself."

He paused, but Sir Theodore remained silent, with his head leaning on his hands and his eyes averted; and Lutwich gazed on him with a keen and contemplative look, as if revolving several things in his mind, and striving to draw conclusions from them. The fine, delicate features of the young baronet, his look of extreme youth, and expression of almost melancholy thoughtfulness, joined with no indications, either to the physiognomist or the phrenologist, of strength and firmness of character, might perhaps have some share in the conclusion at which he seemed to arrive. "Come, Sir Theodore: to speak the truth," he said, "did not some one, to use our London slang, put you up to this? I am sure your own heart would not lead you to such a step."

It is a natural impulse of feeble minds, easily led by stronger ones, to throw the blame of all miscarriages upon others. Sir Theodore Broughton, although he had alluded slightly to the participation of his servant Hargrave in the fault he had committed, had not told the whole; but since his conduct had been placed in so unfavourable a light by

a man of the world, and evidently a man of pleasure, indignation at having been misled, and disappointed too, had been gradually rising up in his breast, and he replied aloud, "Yes, you are right. It was that scoundrel of mine, Zachary Hargrave. He saw how much I was struck with her, and led me to suppose that she might very easily be won. He would fain have had me believe, too," continued the young baronet, following the common course of endeavouring to create a prejudice against the person he accused—"He would fain have had me believe, too, that you are a common highwayman, Colonel Lutwich."

His companion smiled sarcastically. "If he had said an uncommon one, he might have been more correct," Lutwich replied. "I certainly do travel the highways a good deal; as much as, or more than, any other gentleman in my position of life. I could almost say with the great Earl of Peterborough, that I have seen more kings and more postillions than any man in Europe. But this is all trash and nonsense, Sir Theodore. The man must be a fool as well as a knave, to try to make you believe such idle stuff. I am glad, however, to hear that it is such a low blackguard on whom the blame of misleading you lies. I felt sure that neither Major Brandrum nor Captain Lisle would have any share in such things. This man is not a fit counsellor for you, my young friend. Lisle may be too high-flown in his notions—at least so I have heard—and Brandrum is too old to be a fit companion for youth; but all I can say is, if my advice and assistance can at any time be of service to you, you may command them. Before we part, I will give you an address where you will always find or hear of me. I will write it down now, and after that we will have a bottle of our landlord's Burgundy, of which, by-the-way, he has some of the best in England, and then to bed, and sleep, and forgetfulness."

From a small but very handsome writing-desk, Lutwich took out a quire of perfumed paper, and wrote down a few lines, which he handed to his young companion, who on his part put them in his pocket without further thought. The bell was then rung, and the landlord himself appeared, with a look of the most deferential respect.

"Bring a bottle of Burgundy, Master Spinner," said Colonel Lutwich; "a bottle of that same wine which Lord St. Jermyu and I had here, last Saturday twelve-month."

"Lord, colonel! how well your honour recollects things!" said the landlord, fawning.

"I shall recollect the taste of the wine, too, Master

Spinner," replied the other; "so, be sure that it is the same; and, do you hear? uncork it below, and see that it be not ropy."

"Certainly, sir; certainly," replied the landlord; and in five or ten minutes the wine was brought, and proved worthy of its reputation. However, whether it was that Sir Theodore had drunk more than ordinary at supper, or that his brain was in an excitable state from all that had lately passed, his eyes soon began to assume a vacant and unsteady look, and his utterance to become less clear, though more voluble. Still, however, he continued to sip slowly, glass after glass; though, to do Colonel Lutwich no more than justice, he did not press the bottle upon him, notwithstanding the custom of the times. Those were days of deep drinking, when no man was considered worthy of society who did not occasionally, if not frequently, make himself unfit for it. But still the young baronet's companion was unwilling to lead him to expose himself more on the same night than he had done already. By the time the bottle was finished, the elasticity had strangely gone out of Sir Theodore's knees, and he at length rose, saying, "I must go, colonel, and hunt out Lisle and the major. They won't know what has become of me;" but, as he spoke, the sort of oscillating motion of his body indicated sufficiently that he was in no very proper condition for hunting out any one.

"You had better go to bed, Sir Theodore," replied his companion; but knowing well that there is not so great an offence to a drunken man as to perceive his condition, he added, "You and Lisle might quarrel; for, though you do not seem to be aware of it, he was the person who was hurrying up so fiercely to the young lady's rescue, just now."

"I do not care," replied the young man; "he has no right to meddle with me, and I'll go and tell him so."

"No, no; let him sleep over it," said the other, "and you do the same. Come, I will show you the way, for I dare say you do not know whereabouts you are. I am acquainted with all the turnings and windings of the place from times of old;" and having ascertained the number of the young baronet's room, and obtained a light, he good-humouredly conducted him thither, and persuaded him to go to bed at once.

This accomplished, Lutwich returned to his own chamber, and sat down to meditate. "A pretty fellow I am," he thought, "to lecture others upon their conduct! But still, if he knew all, he might well think his behaviour bad

enough, when I condemn it. And Master Hargrave, too—I must settle accounts with him. Where can he have seen me? He must be silenced one way or another;" and putting his hand in his pocket, he drew out a very beautifully fashioned pistol, mounted with silver, examined the priming, and thrust the ramrod down once or twice into the barrel. "Now for Master Hargrave!" he said aloud, after about half-an-hour's further meditation, and rang the bell.

"Send up a man named Hargrave to me—Sir Theodore Broughton's servant," were his words to the waiter who appeared.

"Why, your honour, he is hardly in a condition to come yet," replied the waiter. "He has had as good a horse-whipping as e'er I see a fellow in my life, and so he is just now unstonaching himself to the people in the wagon-room, over a glass of brandy-punch, upon free grace and predestination."

"Then he's just in the fit state of mind. Send him up," said Colonel Lutwich. "Who horsewhipped him?"

"Why, one Major Brandrum, they say, sir," answered the other; "but I hope you will not say I told you."

"Shall I say the house-bell will not ring when any one pulls the handle?" demanded Lutwich. "See that the man comes up directly, for I am going to bed."

Ten minutes elapsed—nay, perhaps a quarter of an hour; for it required some persuasion to induce Zachary Hargrave to trust himself within reach of anything like an arm accustomed to wield a horsewhip; but the waiter assured him that the colonel was all honey and water, and that Sir Theodore had just left him, so that there was nothing to fear, and in the end the worthy head-groom, or groom and valet, as he now termed himself, was coaxed into mounting the stairs, and entering No. 23, after knocking respectfully. After having been told to come in, he presented himself in the glare of two wax candles, but took care to keep the means of egress close behind him, standing with his hat in one hand, while he smoothed down the short flat hair on the top of his head with the other.

Without speaking a word, Colonel Lutwich eyed him from head to foot with a thoughtful look, which is peculiarly unpleasant and discourteous in the eyes of small and rascally men. In the first place, they feel, from the very manner of the glance, that they are looked upon merely as things—a very disagreeable mode or state of objectiveness; and in the next place, they are always more or less afraid of having something or other discovered under such a scrutiny.

"So your name is Hargrave?" said Lutwich, neither very warmly nor very coldly, but with the most indifferent tone in the world; "and you are Sir Theodore Broughton's servant? Look here; I have something I wish you to see."

The man took a couple of steps forward towards the table, not perceiving what it was the gentleman had in his hand, when, with a rapid movement, Lutwich placed himself between him and the door, which had been left partly open, closed it, and turned the key.

"Now march on, Master Zachary Hargrave!" he said, in a stern tone. "There—place yourself there; and neither stir hand nor foot, as you value your life!" At the same time he displayed the very elegant little pistol which he had taken from his pocket a few minutes before, and coolly seated himself in such a position as to command both the door and the bell.

"Now, answer me a few questions, Master Hargrave," he continued, in a contemptuous tone. "I find you have done two things, of which you must give me some account. In the first place, you have been leading your young master into mischief. What made you fix upon the young lady he was speaking to an hour or two ago in the passage, as the object of the honourable attentions you suggested?"

"Lord, sir! I did not know that you had anything to do with her," replied the man.

"No evasion!" rejoined Lutwich, frowning. "What made you fix upon her, I say?"

"Because she was very poor, I heard, and her father was too sick to meddle," he replied.

"Scoundrel!" said Lutwich; "who set you on to such tricks?"

"No one, sir—not exactly," replied Hargrave, with his knees shaking. "The captain—that is, Captain Donovan—did say he did not care about Sir Theodore having a few escapades, and so I thought that was a hint to—to——"

"To pander," added Lutwich, finishing the sentence for him; "well, perhaps it was. I shall remember. Now for the second question. I find that you were wise enough to tell Sir Theodore that I was merely a highwayman. Now, what induced you to venture on such an assertion? Out with it; for depend upon it you do not quit this room alive till you have spoken."

"No, sir, no; I did not say so, indeed," whispered the man: "I only said the horse your servant sold to Captain Lisle was an impudent beast, and when my master asked me why I called him so, I said, because it was a proverb—'as impudent as a highwayman's horse.'"

Colonel Lutwich laughed aloud; but the instant after, his fine and almost delicate features assumed a look which no one who saw them in their milder expression could have conceived them capable of putting on. Indeed, it was a peculiarity often noticed in that remarkable man, that his face, though the lines were all soft, and almost feminine, could, according to his will, display every kind of different expression, and indeed undergo so complete a change that, without even an alteration of dress, he could deceive any one not well acquainted with him as to his identity. On the present occasion, after that gay and almost joyous laugh, the broad, clear brow became suddenly furrowed by deep wrinkles; a perpendicular line, in which one could have laid a finger, appeared between the eyebrows, which were drawn down together, and depressed over the eyes; the nostrils were expanded wide; the corners of the mouth were drawn down; the muscles of the cheeks seemed to stand out, as if working under strong passion; and the countenance, so lately all radiant and soft, was changed to that of a menacing demon.

"Mark me, Zachary Hargrave!" he said, in a low, stern tone, speaking through his brilliant white teeth: "you see this pistol. In it there is a single ball. I will keep that ball for you; and if ever, in the whole course of your life, you venture to breathe such a word as that which you uttered to your master—be it to man, woman, or child—within twenty-four hours after, that bullet shall lie in the middle of your brains. You understand me. You may know me, or you may not; but those who do know me are sufficiently aware that no one ever offended me and lived. You are warned—Begone!"

The man, who, like all of his kind, was an infinite coward, made his way to the door with knees knocking together; and so great was his terror, that for nearly a minute he could not contrive to turn the key the right way in the lock.

As soon as he was gone, Lutwich laid the pistol on the table, and casting himself back in his chair, gave way to thought. Once more the expression of his countenance changed; the fierce and vengeful look passed away; a cloud of deep—may I say tender?—melancholy spread over his face. At the end of about half-an-hour he retired to bed, and, notwithstanding all that had passed, slept profoundly for some hours.

At length he seemed oppressed in his slumber—turned, and tossed, and breathed with difficulty; then murmured a few words.—"Why, Hal, you have dropped the candle into

the chest—don't you see the flame?—the smoke! the smoke!" and suddenly starting up, he gazed round him, exclaiming, "By heaven, it is no dream! The room is full of smoke—some one has set the inn on fire!"

CHAPTER XIV

"**THERE**, that's your room, miss," said the chambermaid, pointing to a door on the second story of the wing of the hotel, appropriated to inferior travellers. "I am sure you need not have missed it, for it is as plain as a pikestaff, just next to the old gentleman's."

"I should not have missed it," answered Kate Malcolm, "if a person I met below had not misled me, by telling me I had taken the wrong stairs."

"Pooh, pooh!" said the chambermaid, with a saucy air; "young ladies should not be so easily misled;" and away she whisked.

Kate Malcolm entered the poor chamber assigned to her, which had no advantage on earth, either in furniture or situation, except that it possessed a door at the side, and that door communicated with her father's room. She approached it and listened. All was still within; and then she sat down by the little oaken table, and wept. The grief—smothered all the day from her father's eyes, because they were too kind; from the world's, because they were too cold—broke forth in the solitude of her own chamber, and her evening hymn was tears.

But she was weary as well as sorrowful; she had gone through much labour and fatigue during the day—fatigue of mind as well as body—and she knew that the same was to recommence very early on the day that followed. So, after having let the drops roll down her fair cheeks for a few moments, to clear away the sense of indignity, and sorrow, and hopelessness from the brain, she rose, wiped her eyes, went through the simple task of her nightly toilet; and, only partly undressing, lest her father should call, and tying up in a corner of her handkerchief the money which Major Brandrum had so kindly bestowed, she lay down to rest. She would not let her mind dwell upon miseries, and slept. In the mean time, the chambermaid went tripping along

the passage, and pushed open a door which communicated with the other parts of the house. As she did so, she met the head waiter, with a decanter half emptied in one hand, and a candle in the other; and they stopped in that snug corner to talk. I will not trouble myself or the reader with their conversation. Suffice it that it was sufficient to show that a very intimate friendship existed between the two parties; for the waiter liberally offered the decanter to the lips of the fair, declaring it of the very best vintage in the cellar; and she, after having quaffed an inconvenient draught, snuffed the waiter's candle for him with the scissors which hung by her side, and threw the charred wick upon the ground. A step and a loud call from the landlord's own voice caused them to part suddenly; and the swing-door banged to after Betty, while John took another way down.

I will pause behind that door, however, for a moment; and as no one passed it for many hours after, I shall not be disturbed while watching a small spot upon the floor, just on the left hand, within six inches of the skirting-board. It was just where the sides of two of the planks ought to have met; but the house was old, and they had shrunk away from each other, leaving a crevice between of half a finger's breadth in width. At first, after the chambermaid and waiter had separated and departed, nothing at all was to be seen, though a light from the court-yard found its way through the windows: a faint, feeble, lantern-light, indeed, it was, for gas was not dreamed of. Steam, too, was in its infancy; and nobody was aware that one day we should gain the brightest light and the swiftest motion from the vapours which were blown up our chimneys or hissed out of our tea-kettles.

Presently the feeble ray gleamed up upon something, curling gracefully and slowly upwards from that spot, like the spirit of the Arabian tale out of his copper vessel. It seemed too small in volume, indeed, ever to grow into a giant; but it did so, nevertheless, before it was done. For the time it was only a pale, bluish, spiral column, writhing itself up into the rays that came through the windows, and only growing visible when it reached their light. Then it sank away again, and was not seen for some minutes; and then rose somewhat thicker, while a faint smell of charred wood was perceptible near the spot.

Nobody took any notice, however, for the odour penetrated no farther, and the light curling smoke was not perceived. Everybody was very busy, too, till everybody went to bed, and then chance conducted them all the other way. The wagoners and their parties had all gone to rest, before

the people appointed to attend upon them took their road to their several dormitories by the court-yard and the stable; the guests from the better part of the house had no business in that passage, and their servants found their way to their rooms by the open galleries.

Before one o'clock all was quiet in the inn. At half-past two a stage-coach stopped on its road to London, and the coachman, guard, and passengers supped there. A solitary, sleepy-headed youth was usually left by the kitchen fire, to attend upon the passing guests on their arrival; and at about a quarter past two the horse-keeper woke him on his way to open the great gates. The youth walked along the passage which led just under the swing-door I have mentioned, and, as he went out to the hall where the coach supper was laid, he left an outer door open behind him, through which the night wind swept cold. There was, by this time, a good deal of smoke in the upper passage; but it is wonderful how it increased after that door was opened. Nevertheless, not a speck of fire was visible; and the coach arrived, the passengers supped, the fresh horses were put to, and on it went, leaving the weary ostler and sleepy waiter to seek their mews, without remarking either smell or smoke.

Half-an-hour elapsed, which brought the night to half-past three; and then a faint, red, ill-defined glow might be seen upon the flooring, in extent not much bigger than a man's hand, and the smoke became thick, the smell overpowering towards that end of the passage. But there was no one sleeping in the rooms adjacent, and the wind blew the other way towards the swing-door, underneath which, however, the smothering vapour was now creeping fast. The red patch extended slowly—more slowly and quietly than can be conceived; and about four o'clock, a faint, glimmering flash rose through the dense cloud and passed away; but the moment after, a red line began to creep along the skirting-board, at first very slowly, then more quickly, but it was stopped by the frame-work of a door leading to an empty room. It crept round the moulding, spotting it with patches of fire, and a crackling sound was heard. Another blaze then broke through the smoke, and, like one of the sudden illuminations which succeed a display of artificial fireworks, the whole wainscot and part of the floor displayed lines of flame. A roaring sound might now be heard; but every one was sound asleep, and the progress of the fire in the passage was more tardy than might have been supposed. The smoke seemed to choke it; for there was a door at either end, and the supply of air was not sufficient

to hurry it on rapidly. At length, however, the swing-door was burned completely through, about half-past four; and then the advance of the conflagration was rapid indeed.

Three minutes after, a door was suddenly thrown open, and Colonel Lutwich rushed out, shouting loudly, "Fire! fire!" while he made his way to a large bell-rope which he had seen hanging at the head of the stairs. The next instant the alarm was sounded loud and rapidly, and careless of his own safety, Lutwich hurried along, knocking violently at different doors, and still shouting "Fire!"

First one appeared, and then another; the cry was taken up by fresh voices; men and women, in every state of dress and undress, appeared in the court-yard, without any one knowing how—nay, not even themselves. All the pranks of terror and confusion of mind were played which such scenes usually display. Some were overpowered with fear, and did nothing; some were more actively terrified, and did all the most absurd things in the world. A waiter was seen throwing up pump-water at the windows out of a slop-basin; a woman-servant was running back into the flames to fetch her garters; the landlord sat himself down on the shafts of a wagon, saying, "Well, there goes everything I have in the world!" and the landlady ordered the bar-maid to throw the best china out of the window to save it from being cracked with the heat.

There were two or three, however, who did not lose their presence of mind at all, and several more who retained sufficient of that very useful commodity to do what the others told them. Amongst the first were a middle-aged man, of very distinguished appearance and a somewhat jovial countenance, Colonel Lutwich, Major Brandrum, and Reginald Lisle. The first at once ordered the great gates to be opened, and the court to be cleared of the women; and he himself led a middle-aged lady, and a younger one who had come down with him, into the street, but returned immediately. At the moment of his reappearance, Lutwich was bringing forth from the stables, aided by two or three men, a long ladder; and Major Brandrum was exclaiming, "They will be too late!"

No sooner were the words spoken than, darting through a little knot of stupified servants, the major rushed up to a door on the left, and disappeared. The open gallery on that side of the house was on fire at both ends; but the instant after, Brandrum was seen at the angle, hurrying forward. He paused one instant as the fire met him. It needed a heart of steel, but he had one. Without setting foot on the burning beams, he sprang across, and darted down a

passage near that in which the fire had first begun. At the same moment Reginald caught hold of the ladder which Colonel Lutwich was bringing forward, and aided to raise it. They seemed to understand each other without a word, for not one was spoken; but they joined their efforts to rear it, and place it against the gallery; and while the end was still vibrating, Lisle was upon it, and half-way up.

"Gallantly done!" cried the middle-aged gentleman I have mentioned; "but there may be more to be saved than one. Some of you men come with me! Stevens, follow quick! Let us ascertain, as far as possible, that all the rooms are clear before the fire reaches the main body of the building."

"Yes, Sir Charles, I'm coming!" cried a man in livery breeches, but without any coat.

But at that moment a sight was seen which made his master and himself both pause. Major Brandrum appeared at the end of the passage, bearing a young girl in his arms, only half clad, and hurried towards the ladder. Reginald was nearly at the top, and with a spring he reached it, and leaped over into the gallery. "Down, down, Brandrum! I will see to him," and instantly disappeared.

Major Brandrum strode on, reached the top of the ladder in safety, and descended cautiously, holding the girl in his long arms as one would hold an infant. It was somewhat perilous, that descent, for he could not relax his hold of the gentle burden he bore, to steady his steps with his hand; and the people below watched him with breathless anxiety. But the habit of every kind of exercise gave him great advantages; and, as he came near the bottom, Lutwich and another approached on either side to support him.

"All safe! all safe!" said the old officer, with a smile of conscious skill and power; and, taking the last three or four rounds more rapidly, he reached the court, and set down his fair burden on her feet.

Kate Malcolm's eyes had been closed; but now she opened them, and gazed with a terrified and bewildered look around. One glance was given to the burning building, and then her eyes ran over every face in the court. The next instant she put her hands to her head, with an expression almost of distraction on her face, and exclaiming, "My father! my father!" rushed towards the ladder. Lutwich, however, caught her arm ere she could ascend, and stopped her, exclaiming, "Captain Lisle has gone for him! Stay—I will go too. Major, take care of her—do not let her follow!" Thus saying, he began the ascent, and soon reached the gallery.

"Oh, let me go!" cried the girl; "he will come with me. Perhaps they will not find him."

"Yes, yes, they will," replied Major Brandrum, detaining her kindly. "Lisle knows it is the next room to yours. There, there—don't you see they are bringing him in their arms? Now, be calm, my dear child. Turn away your head while they descend."

But Kate could not refrain; and, though motionless as a statue, she continued with eager eyes and parted lips to gaze, while, Lutwich supporting the feet and Reginald the shoulders, of her father, they bore him to the top of the ladder; then, one above and the other below, carried him safely down.

Springing forward, Kate cast her arms round the sick man's neck and wept. Captain Malcolm turned a faint glance upon her, and murmured, with a voice broken by gasps for breath, "Thank God, she is safe! Oh, my child! a dying father's blessing be upon you!"

"Come, cheer up, Malcolm! cheer up!" cried Major Brandrum; "all will go well. Let us carry him to some place of shelter," he added in a whisper to Reginald; "he is going, poor fellow! In heaven's name, where is Sir Theodore? Seek for him—seek for him. I will attend to Malcolm."

"He is safe," said Colonel Lutwich. "I saw him cross the end of the gallery just now, and reach the top of the stone stairs. His blackguard, Hargrave, was with him."

Placing the sick officer on one of the shutters of the hall, Major Brandrum, Lisle, Lutwich, and one of the men, carried him across to the house of an apothecary on the opposite side of the street, where a number of the women had already taken refuge: and, in the mean time, the middle-aged gentleman whom I have mentioned mounted the stairs, and searched through every room he could find, often venturing farther into the fire than was safe or prudent. The servant to whom he had spoken in the court, and several other men, accompanied him; and after ensuring, as far as possible, that no living being was left in any of the rooms, he and the rest applied themselves to save some of the property that was most easily carried.

As may be supposed, the scene was one of terrible confusion: many people had rushed in from the town; all the hangers-on of the inn, who were not stupified by personal fear, busied themselves either with saving or appropriating; a fire-engine and manifold buckets were procured at length; and though the flames could not be stopped, their progress was delayed. With the greatest possible difficulty, a num-

ber of valuable horses were forced out of the stables at the moment the fire reached that part of the building. A pile of trunks, portmanteaus, and saddle-bags, was raised up in the middle of the road, and a man stationed, with a pistol in his hand, to guard them from the over-fondness of those who might be partial to their neighbours' goods and chattels. The landlord was roused to some exertion, and the landlady made aware that porcelain will break when thrown out of a window; and in the end a good deal of property was collected and placed in safety.

Much was lost, much was stolen, much was consumed indeed; and still the obstinate element ran from room to room and passage to passage, on both sides of the spot where it first broke out. The gallery on the left soon fell; the large wooden columns caught fire; and though, as I have before shown, the court was very wide and extensive, the heat and smoke within its area became intolerable. The fire-engine, badly constructed and worked by ignorant men, was of very little service, and it was soon evident that nothing could be hoped beyond the preservation of the adjacent buildings. To that object all attention was at length turned; and though some other houses suffered a little, yet the conflagration may be said to have been confined to that in which it first broke out.

Gradually every one had been driven out of the court; and at a little distance many small knots of men and women appeared watching the progress of the flames which they despaired of suppressing. The red light glared through the windows; a dense cloud of smoke rose high into the air; the clouds above were tinged with the reflection of the fire, which burned in the court as in a vast furnace; and gradually the lambent flames burst forth from the casements, catching the frames, and licking the thick walls. At length the roof of the main building fell in with a tremendous crash. It seemed for an instant to deader, the conflagration, and nothing was seen but a thick mass of heavy smoke; the moment after the fire regained its ascendancy, and a tall column of flame rose like a burning steeple into the sky. The large board before the house, with its long inscription, caught the fire, and was soon in a blaze; and the iron crane on which swung the great sign became red-hot. The woodwork below took light, and the broad sheet of painted canvass, bearing the black bull as large as life on both sides, crackled, shrivelled, burst into a flame, and fell thundering into the road, scattering a group of urchins who had collected somewhat too near.

"There goes the black bully!" cried one boy aloud, with

all the delight that young and unchastised human nature takes in mischief of any kind.

"There goes the black bull, indeed!" said the melancholy landlord, in a very different tone; "and there will never be another 'Black Bull' here as long as Dunstable is Dunstable."

Whether his vaticination was wrong or right, I leave the reader who has travelled that way to decide; and I only need add, that if there has been another inn of the same name in Dunstable since, or if there be one there now, it certainly is not the same "Black Bull" which I have described in the tenth chapter of this true history; for ere the light of morning had shone for more than one hour upon the sad though busy scene presented by the streets of the little town, nothing remained of that building but a part of the four external walls, with the blackened and vacant windows gaping like the mouths of dead men upon a field of battle. It was for this reason, and inasmuch as nothing in this book is written without a reason, that I averred no one could remember the "Black Bull" inn which I was describing, unless he had lived, and memory had lived with him, some seventy-two years; and now I will turn to show what were the consequences of the events of that night to the various characters, for whom I trust I have created some degree of interest.

