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LAVENGRO
The Scholar—The Gypsy—The Priest

By
GEORGE BORROW

WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION
By F. HINDES GROOME

VOLUME I

WITH A PORTRAIT FROM A PAINTING
By H. W. PHILLIPS

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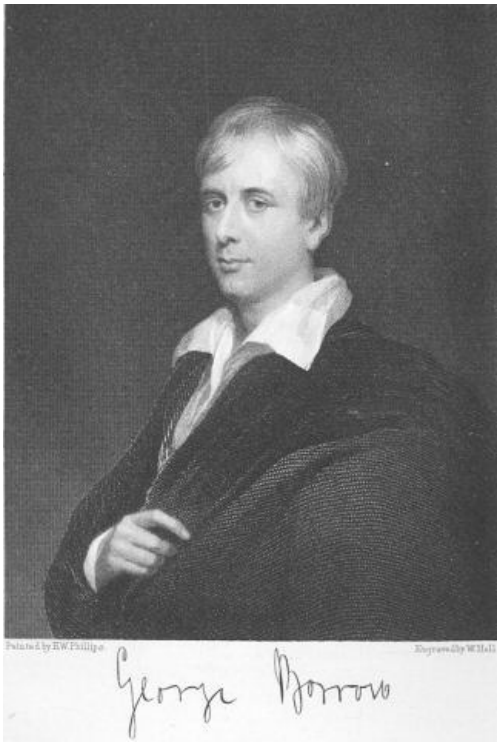

INTRODUCTION

There have been many Romany Ryes, or "Gypsy Gentlemen," as Gypsies designate those who, though not of their race, yet have loved that race, and have mastered the Romany tongue. The first is one of the oddest—Andrew Boorde (*c.* 1490-1549). Carthusian, traveller, physician, and, perhaps, the original Merry Andrew, he got into trouble over certain delinquencies, and died a prisoner in the Fleet gaol. In 1542 he was writing his *Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge*, and had come to "the xxxviii. chapiter," which "treateth of Egypt, and of theyr money and of theyr speche." He started bravely:—

> "Egipt is a countrey ioyned to Jury,
> The countrey is plentyfull of wine, corne and hony.
>
> "There be many great wyldernes, in the which be many great wylde beastes. In ye which wildernis liuid many holy fathers, as it apperith in vitas patrum. The people—"

But here, I fancy, he suddenly broke off; what did he know of the Egyptian people? Greece was the nearest he had ever been to Egypt. Going, however, for a stroll through his native county of Sussex, he presently lights on a band of "right Egyptians," belike in front of an alehouse. Egyptians! the very thing! Like any newspaper correspondent of to-day, he must straightway have whipped out his notebook, and jotted down the rest of his chapter:— p. xiv

> "The people of the country be swarte, and doth go disgisid in theyr apparel, contrary to other nacions. They be lyght fyngerd and vse pyking, they have litle maner and euyl loggyng, and yet they be pleasant daunsers. Ther be few or none of the Egypcions yt doth dwel in Egipt, for Egipt is repleted now with infydel alyons. Ther mony is brasse and golde. Yf there be any man yt wyl learne parte of theyr speche, Englyshe and Egipt speche foloweth."

And there duly follows a neat little Ollendorfian dialogue about meat and bread, wine and beer, and such-like, in which Dr. Furnivall, Boorde's editor, left it for Professor Zupitza to recognise excellent Romany. "Sit you downe and dryncke," "Drinke, drynke for God's sake," are two of the phrases. The interview was probably prolonged, perhaps renewed; Andrew Boorde would find good fellowship with Gypsies.

No. 2 is *the* Scholar-Gypsy, of whom, alas! we know all too little, neither name nor dates, but only just what Joseph Glanvill tells in his *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661):—

> "There was very lately a Lad in the *University* of *Oxford*, who being of very pregnant and ready parts, and yet wanting the encouragement of preferment, was by his poverty forc'd to leave his studies there, and to cast himself upon the wide world for a livelyhood. Now, his necessities growing dayly on him and wanting the help of friends to relieve him, he was at last forced to joyn himself to a company of *Vagabond Gypsies*, whom occasionly he met with, and to follow their Trade for a maintenance. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem, as that they discover'd to him their *Mystery*: in the practice of which, by the pregnancy of his wit and parts, he soon grew so good and proficient as to be able to out-do his Instructours. After he had been a pretty while well exercis'd in the Trade, there chanc'd to ride by a couple of *Scholars* who had formerly bin of his acquaintance. The *Scholars* had quickly spyed out their old friend among the *Gypsies*, and their amazement to see him among such society had well-nigh discover'd him: but by a sign he prevented their owning him before that Crew: and taking one of them aside privately, desired him with his friend to go to an *Inn*, not far distant thence, promising there to come to them. They accordingly went thither, and he follows: after their first salutations, his friends enquire how he came to lead so odd a life as that was, and to joyn himself with such a *cheating beggerly* company. The *Scholar-Gypsy* having given them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, told them that the people he went with were not such *Impostouirs* as they were taken for, but that they had a *traditional* kind of *learning* among them, and could do wonders by the power of *Imagination*, and that himself had learnt much of their Art, and improved it further then themselves could. And to evince the truth of what he told them, he said, he'd remove into another room, leaving them to discourse together, and upon his return tell them the sum of what they had talked of: which accordingly he perform'd, giving them a full account of what had passed between them in his absence. The *Scholars* being amaz'd at so unexpected a discovery, earnestly desir'd him to unriddle the *mystery*. In which he gave them satisfaction, by telling them, that what he did was by the power of *Imagination*, his Phancy *binding* theirs, and that himself had dictated to them the discourse they held together, while he was from them: That there were warrantable wayes of heightening the *Imagination* to that pitch as to bind anothers, and that when he had compass'd the whole *secret*, some parts of which he said he was yet ignorant of, he intended to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned." p. xv p. xvi

The third of our Romany Ryes is a Scottish peer and a Jacobite, George Seton, fifth Earl of

Wintoun (1679-1749). He as a young man quarrelled with his father, and, taking up with a band of Gypsies who frequented the Seton property, set off with them on their wanderings over Scotland, England, and the Continent. He seems to have been away from June 1700 until November 1707: and when, by his father's death in 1704, he succeeded to the earldom, "no man knew where to find him, till accident led to the discovery." The Rev. Robert Patten, the Judas and the historian of the '15, records how, on the rebels' march from Kelso to Preston, Lord Wintoun would tell "many pleasant Stories of his Travels and his living unknown and obscurely with a Blacksmith in France, whom he served some years as a Bellows-blower and Under-Servant. He p. xvii
was," Patten adds, "very curious in working in several Handicraft Matters, and had made good Proficiency in them, witness the nice way he had found to cut asunder one of the Iron Bars in his Window in the Tower, by some small Instrument, scarce perceivable." It was on 4th August 1716 that Lord Wintoun made his escape, but, like everything else in his life, it is wrapped in obscurity. For, according to the Diary of Mary Countess Cowper for 19th March 1716, the last day of his trial, "My Lord *Winton* had sawed an iron Bar with the Spring of his Watch very near in two, in order to make his Escape; but it was found out." So, possibly, there is something in the story told by the author of *Rab and his Friends*, that he was carried out of the Tower in a hamper, supposed to be full of family charters, by John Gunn, "the head of a band of roving gipsies." Anyhow, ever afterwards he lived at Rome, where in 1737 he was great master of the Lodge of Freemasonry. He died unmarried, though Lady Cowper alleges "he has eight Wives."

Charles Bosvile, the scion of a good old Yorkshire house, is another who must have known much about the Gypsies. He was buried at Rossington, near Doncaster, on 30th January 1709; and more than a hundred years later the Gypsies would visit the churchyard, and pour out a flagon of ale on his grave by the chancel door. Joseph Hunter, the historian of South Yorkshire, tells how p. xviii
he had

> "established a species of sovereignty among that singular people, the Gypsies, who before the enclosures frequented the moors round Rossington. His word with them was law, and his authority so great that he perfectly restrained the pilfering propensities for which the tribe is censured, and gained the entire good-will for himself and his subjects of the farmers and people around. He was a gentleman with an estate of about 200*l.* a year; and his contemporary, Abraham de la Pryme of Hatfield, describes him as 'a mad spark, mighty fine and brisk, keeping company with a great many gentlemen, knights, and esquires, yet running about the country.'"

Bamfylde Moore Carew (1693-? 1770), the son of the rector of Bickleigh, near Tiverton, is semi-mythical, though we know that a man of that name did really marry at Stoke Damerel, near Plymouth, one Mary Gray on 29th December 1733. Gray is an old Gypsy surname, but the Gypsies of his *Life and Adventures* are just as unreal as those of any melodrama or penny dreadful.

The poet-physician, John Armstrong (*c.* 1709-78), was at college at Edinburgh with Mr. Lawrie, who in 1767 was minister of Hawick; and "one year, during the vacation, they joined a band of gipsies, who in those days much infested the Borders." So says "Jupiter" Carlyle in his Autobiography; and he adds that "this expedition, which really took place, as Armstrong informed me in London, furnished Lawrie with a fine field for fiction and rhodomontade, so closely united p. xix
to the groundwork, which might be true, that it was impossible to discompound them."

The fourth Lord Coleraine, better known as Colonel George Hanger (*c.* 1751-1824), was a wild, harum-scarum Irishman. According to the Hon. Grantley Berkeley's *My Life and Recollections*, "in one of his early rambles he joined a gang of gipsies, fell in love with one of their dark-eyed beauties, and married her according to the rites of the tribe. He had entered the footguards in 1771, and used to introduce his brother-officers to his dusky bride, boasting his confidence in her fidelity. His married life went on pleasantly for about a fortnight, at the end of which his confidence and his bliss were destroyed together, on ascertaining to his intense disgust that his gipsy inamorata had eloped with a bandy-legged tinker."

Very unlike the Colonel was the mythologist, Jacob Bryant (1715-1804). We know the little man, with his thirteen spaniels, through Madame D'Arblay's Diaries; she often visited Cypenham, his house near Windsor. It must have been in his garden here that he collected his materials for the paper "On the Zingara or Gypsey Language," which he read to the Royal Society in 1785. For "*covascorook*, laurel," is intelligible only by supposing him to have pointed to a laurel, and asked, "What is this?" and by the Gypsy's answering in words that mean "This is a tree." There are a p. xx
number of similar slips in the vocabulary, as *sauvee*, an eagle (rightly, a needle), *porcherie*, brass (a halfpenny, a copper), *plastomingree*, couch (coach), and *baurobevalacochenos*, storm. This last word posed the etymological skill of even Prof. Pott in his great work on *Die Zigeuner*, but he hazards the conjecture that *cochenos* may be akin to the Greek χολη; really the whole may be dismembered into *baúro*, great, *bával*, wind, and the English "a-catching us." Still, Bryant's is not at all a bad vocabulary.

Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton (1803-73), tells in a fragment of autobiography how at twenty-one he met a pretty Gypsy girl at sunset, was guided by her to the tents, and "spent with these swarthy wanderers five or six very happy days." He committed his money, fourteen pounds in all, to the care of the Gypsy grandmother, the queen of the camp, who "was faithful to the customs of the primitive gipsies, and would eat nothing in the shape of animal food that had not died a natural death"! Mimy, the Gypsy girl, and he make passionate love, till at last she proposes "marriage for five years by breaking a piece of burnt earth." But the stars and the Gypsy

brethren forbid the banns, so they part eternally. It is all the silliest moonshine, the most impossible Gypsies: no, Bulwer Lytton deserves no place among the real Romany Ryes.

Of these a whole host remain. Francis Irvine, a lieutenant in the Bengal Native Infantry, on the outward-bound voyage (1805) to India on board the *Preston* East Indiaman, took down a vocabulary of one hundred and thirty Romany words from John Lee, a Gypsy recruit for the Company's European force. No other case is known to me of a Gypsy revisiting the land of his forefathers. John Hoyland (1750-1831), a Yorkshire Quaker, in 1814 began to study "the very destitute and abject condition" of the Midland Gypsies, and wrote *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits, and Present State of the Gypsies* (York, 1816). He is said to "have fallen in love with a black-eyed gipsy girl," but it does not appear that he married her. Which is a pity; a Gypsy Quakeress would be a charming fancy. That poor thing, John Clare, the Peasant-Poet (1793-1864), is said to have "joined some gipsies for a time" before 1817; and Richard Bright, M.D. (1789-1858), famous as the investigator of "Bright's disease," must have known much of Gypsies both abroad and at home, to be able to write his *Travels through Lower Hungary* (1818). James Crabb (1774-1851), Wesleyan minister at Southampton, and Samuel Roberts (1763-1848), Sheffield manufacturer, both wrote books on the Gypsies, but were Gypsy philanthropists rather than Romany Ryes. Still, Roberts had a very fair knowledge of the language, and at seventy-seven "longed to be a gypsy, and enter a house no more." Colonel John Staples Harriot during his "residence in North Hampshire in the years 1819-20 was led to pay considerable attention to a race of vagrant men, roaming about the high-roads and lanes in the vicinity of Whitchurch, Waltham, and Overton"; in December 1829 he read before the Royal Asiatic Society an excellent Romany vocabulary of over four hundred words.

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These were Borrow's chief predecessors, but the list could be largely extended by making it include such names as those of Sir John Popham (1531-1607), Lord Chief-Justice of England; Sir William Sinclair, Lord Justice-General of Scotland from 1559; Mr. William Sympsoune, a great Scottish doctor of medicine towards the close of the sixteenth century; the Countess of Cassillis (1643), who did *not* elope with Johnnie Faa; Richard Head (*c.* 1637-86), the author of *The English Rogue*; William Marsden (1754-1836), the Orientalist; John Wilson ("Christopher North," 1785-1854); the Rev. John Baird, minister of Yetholm 1829-61; G. P. R. James (1801-60), the novelist; and Sam Bough (1822-78), the landscape-painter. And after Borrow come many; the following are but a few of them:—John Phillip, R.A., Tom Taylor, the Rev. T. W. Norwood, George S. Phillips ("January Searle"), Charles Kingsley, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Mr. Charles Godfrey Leland ("Hans Breitmann"), Prof. Edward Henry Palmer, Sir Richard Burton, Bath C. Smart, M.D., of Manchester, Mr. H. T. Crofton, Major Whyte-Melville, Mr. Joseph Lucas, the Rev. R. N. Sanderson, Dr. D. Fearon Ranking, Mr. David MacRitchie, Mr. G. R. Sims, Mr. George Meredith, Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton, "F. W. Carew, M.D," and Mr. John Sampson.

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Thus, leaving aside all the foreign Romany Ryes, from the great engraver Jacques Callot to the present Polish novelist Sienkiewicz, we see that Borrow was not quite so *sui generis* as he claimed for himself, and as others have often claimed for him. The meagreness of his knowledge of the Anglo-Gypsy dialect came out in his *Word-Book of the Romany* (1874); there must have been over a dozen Englishmen who have known it far better than he. For his Spanish-Gypsy vocabulary in *The Zincali* he certainly drew largely either on Richard Bright's *Travels through Lower Hungary* or on Bright's Spanish authority, whatever that may have been. His knowledge of the strange history of the Gypsies was very elementary, of their manners almost more so, and of their folk-lore practically *nil*. And yet I would put George Borrow above every other writer on the Gypsies. In *Lavengro* and, to a less degree, in its sequel, *The Romany Rye*, he communicates a subtle insight into Gypsydom that is totally wanting in the works—mainly philological—of Pott, Liebich, Paspati, Miklosich, and their confrères. Take his first meeting with Gypsies in the green lane near Norman Cross. There are flaws in it: he never would have spoken of the Gypsy beldame as "my mother there," nor could he possibly have guessed that the Romany *sap* means "snake." Yet compare it with Maggie Tulliver's Gypsy adventure in *The Mill on the Floss*: how vivid and vigorous the one, how tame and commonplace the other. I am not going to dilate on the beauties of *Lavengro*; they seem to me sufficiently self-evident. But there is one point about the book that deserves some considering, its credibility as autobiography. Professor Knapp, Borrow's biographer, seems to place implicit confidence in *Lavengro*; I find myself unable to agree with him. Borrow may really have written the story of *Joseph Sell* for a collection of Christmas tales; he may really have camped for some weeks as a tinker near Willenhall; "Belle Berners" may really have had some prototype; and he may really have bought the splendid horse of the Willenhall tavern-keeper, and sold it afterwards at Horncastle. But is the "Man in Black," then, also a reality, and the "Reverend Mr. Platitude," who thanks God that he has left all his Church of England prejudices in Italy? in other words, did Tractarianism exist in 1825, eight years before it was engendered by Keble's sermon? David Haggart, again, the Scottish Jack Sheppard,—Borrow describes him as "a lad of some fifteen years," with "prodigious breadth of chest," and as defeating in single combat a full-grown baker's apprentice. Borrow well may have seen him, for in July 1813 he really enlisted as a drummer in Borrow's father's regiment, newly quartered in Edinburgh Castle; but he was not fifteen then, only twelve years old. And the Jew pedlar scene in the first chapter, and the old apple-woman's son in the sixty-second!

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One might take equal exception to Borrow's pretended visits to Iceland, Moultan, and Kiachta (he was never within three thousand miles of Kiachta); to his translation of St. Luke's Gospel into Basque, of which he had only the merest smattering; and to his statement to a Cornish clergyman in 1854 that his "horrors" were due to the effects of Mrs. Herne's poison—he had suffered from them seven years before his Gypsy wanderings. But the strongest proof of his lax adherence to

fact is adduced by Professor Knapp himself. In chapter xvi. of *Lavengro*, Borrow relates how in 1818, at Tombland Fair, Norwich, he doffed his hat to the great trotting stallion, Marshland Shales, "drew a deep *ah*! and repeated the words of the old fellows around, 'Such a horse as this we shall never see again; a pity that he is so old.'" Yes, but as Professor Knapp has found out, with his infinite painstaking, Marshland Shales (1802-35) was not thus paraded until 12th April 1827.

Lavengro [0a] was written in 1843-50, years after the events recorded there. Several of its petty slips are probably due to sheer forgetfulness; *e.g.*, as to the four "airts" of Edinburgh Castle, and the "lofty" town-walls of Berwick-upon-Tweed. And the rest, I imagine, were due partly to love of posing, but much more to an honest desire to produce an amusing and interesting book. Borrow was not writing a set autobiography, and it seems rather hard to imagine that he was, and then to come down on this or that inaccuracy. He did pose, though, all his life long, and in every one of his writings. He posed to poor old Esther Faa Blythe, the "queen" of the Yetholm Tinklers, when, on entering her little cottage, he "flung his arms up three times into the air, and in an exceedingly disagreeable voice exclaimed, '*Sossi your nav*?' etc." (*Word-Book*, p. 314). He posed shamefully to Lieut.-Col. Elers Napier (Knapp, i. 308-312); and he posed even to me, a mere lad, when I saw him thrice in 1872-73, at Ascot, at his house in Hereford Square, and at the Notting-hill Potteries (*Bookman*, Feb. 1893, pp. 147-48). Yet, what books he has given us, the very best of them *Lavengro*; its fight with the Flaming Tinman is the finest fight in all the world's literature. *Lavengro*, nevertheless, met with a very sorry reception. It was not genteel enough for the readers of Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton; and it is only since Borrow's death, on 26th July 1881, that it has won its due place of pre-eminence. "No man's writing," says Mr. Watts-Dunton, "can take you into the country as Borrow's can; it makes you feel the sunshine, smell the flowers, hear the lark sing and the grasshopper chirp." They who would know Borrow thoroughly should pass from his own works to Mr. Watts-Dunton's "Reminiscences of George Borrow" (*Athenæum*, Sept. 3, 10, 1881), to his "Notes upon George Borrow" (*Lavengro*, Ward, Lock, Bowden, & Co., 1893), to Mr. William A. Dutt's *George Borrow in East Anglia* (1896), to Unpublished Letters of George Borrow, first printed in the *Bible Society Reporter* from July 1899 onwards, and above all, to Professor William I. Knapp's *Life*, *Writings*, *and Correspondence of George Borrow* (2 vols. 1899).

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

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In the following pages I have endeavoured to describe a dream, partly of study, partly of adventure, in which will be found copious notices of books, and many descriptions of life and manners, some in a very unusual form.

The scenes of action lie in the British Islands;—pray be not displeased, gentle reader, if perchance thou hast imagined that I was about to conduct thee to distant lands, and didst promise thyself much instruction and entertainment from what I might tell thee of them. I do assure thee that thou hast no reason to be displeased, inasmuch as there are no countries in the world less known by the British than these selfsame British Islands, or where more strange things are every day occurring, whether in road or street, house or dingle.

The time embraces nearly the first quarter of the present century: this information again may, perhaps, be anything but agreeable to thee; it is a long time to revert to, but fret not thyself, many matters which at present much occupy the public mind originated in some degree towards the latter end of that period, and some of them will be treated of.

The principal actors in this dream, or drama, are, as you will have gathered from the title-page, a Scholar, a Gypsy, and a Priest. Should you imagine that these three form one, permit me to assure you that you are very much mistaken. Should there be something of the Gypsy manifest in the Scholar, there is certainly nothing of the Priest. With respect to the Gypsy—decidedly the most entertaining character of the three—there is certainly nothing of the Scholar or the Priest in him; and as for the Priest, though there may be something in him both of scholarship and gypsyism, neither the Scholar nor the Gypsy would feel at all flattered by being confounded with him.

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Many characters which may be called subordinate will be found, and it is probable that some of these characters will afford much more interest to the reader than those styled the principal. The favourites with the writer are a brave old soldier and his helpmate, an ancient gentlewoman who sold apples, and a strange kind of wandering man and his wife.

Amongst the many things attempted in this book is the encouragement of charity, and free and genial manners, and the exposure of humbug, of which there are various kinds, but of which the most perfidious, the most debasing, and the most cruel, is the humbug of the Priest.

Yet let no one think that irreligion is advocated in this book. With respect to religious tenets I wish to observe that I am a member of the Church of England, into whose communion I was baptized, and to which my forefathers belonged. Its being the religion in which I was baptized, and of my forefathers, would be a strong inducement to me to cling to it; for I do not happen to be one of those choice spirits "who turn from their banner when the battle bears strongly against it, and go over to the enemy," and who receive at first a hug and a "viva," and in the sequel

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contempt and spittle in the face; but my chief reason for belonging to it is, because, of all churches calling themselves Christian ones, I believe there is none so good, so well founded upon Scripture, or whose ministers are, upon the whole, so exemplary in their lives and conversation, so well read in the book from which they preach, or so versed in general learning, so useful in their immediate neighbourhoods, or so unwilling to persecute people of other denominations for matters of doctrine.

In the communion of this Church, and with the religious consolation of its ministers, I wish and hope to live and die, and in its and their defence will at all times be ready, if required, to speak, though humbly, and to fight, though feebly, against enemies, whether carnal or spiritual.

And is there no priestcraft in the Church of England? There is certainly, or rather there was, a modicum of priestcraft in the Church of England, but I have generally found that those who are most vehement against the Church of England are chiefly dissatisfied with her, because there is only a modicum of that article in her—were she stuffed to the very cupola with it, like a certain other Church, they would have much less to say against the Church of England.

By the other Church, I mean Rome. Its system was once prevalent in England, and, during the period that it prevailed there, was more prolific of debasement and crime than all other causes united. The people and the government at last becoming enlightened by means of the Scripture, spurned it from the island with disgust and horror, the land instantly after its disappearance becoming a fair field, in which arts, sciences, and all the amiable virtues flourished, instead of being a pestilent marsh where swine-like ignorance wallowed, and artful hypocrites, like so many Wills-o'-the-wisp, played antic gambols about, around, and above debased humanity. p. xxxii

But Popery still wished to play her old part, to regain her lost dominion, to reconvert the smiling land into the pestilential morass, where she could play again her old antics. From the period of the Reformation in England up to the present time, she has kept her emissaries here, individuals contemptible in intellect, it is true, but cat-like and gliding, who, at her bidding, have endeavoured as much as in their power has lain, to damp and stifle every genial, honest, loyal, and independent thought, and to reduce minds to such a state of dotage as would enable their old popish mother to do what she pleased with them.

And in every country, however enlightened, there are always minds inclined to grovelling superstition—minds fond of eating dust, and swallowing clay—minds never at rest, save when prostrate before some fellow in a surplice; and these popish emissaries found always some weak enough to bow down before them, astounded by their dreadful denunciations of eternal woe and damnation to any who should refuse to believe their Romania; but they played a poor game—the law protected the servants of Scripture, and the priest with his beads seldom ventured to approach any but the remnant of those of the eikonolatry—representatives of worm-eaten houses, their debased dependants, and a few poor crazy creatures amongst the middle classes—he played a poor game, and the labour was about to prove almost entirely in vain, when the English legislature, in compassion or contempt, or, yet more probably, influenced by that spirit of toleration and kindness which is so mixed up with Protestantism, removed almost entirely the disabilities under which Popery laboured, and enabled it to raise its head and to speak out almost without fear. p. xxxiii

And it did raise its head, and, though it spoke with some little fear at first, soon discarded every relic of it; went about the land uttering its damnation cry, gathering around it—and for doing so many thanks to it—the favourers of priestcraft who lurked within the walls of the Church of England; frightening with the loudness of its voice the weak, the timid, and the ailing; perpetrating, whenever it had an opportunity, that species of crime to which it has ever been most partial—*Deathbed robbery*; for as it is cruel, so is it dastardly. Yes, it went on enlisting, plundering, and uttering its terrible threats till . . . till it became, as it always does when left to itself, a fool, a very fool. Its plunderings might have been overlooked, and so might its insolence, had it been common insolence, but it . . ., and then the roar of indignation which arose from outraged England against the viper, the frozen viper which it had permitted to warm itself upon its bosom.

But thanks, Popery, you have done all that the friends of enlightenment and religious liberty could wish; but if ever there were a set of foolish ones to be found under Heaven, surely it is the priestly rabble who came over from Rome to direct the grand movement—so long in its getting up. p. xxxiv

But now again the damnation cry is withdrawn, there is a subdued meekness in your demeanour, you are now once more harmless as a lamb. Well, we shall see how the trick—"the old trick"—will serve you.

CHAPTER I

p. 1

Birth—My Father—Tamerlane—Ben Brain—French Protestants—East Anglia—Sorrow and Troubles—True Peace—A Beautiful Child—Foreign Grave—Mirrors—Alpine Country—Emblems—Slow of Speech—The Jew—Strange Gestures.

On an evening of July, in the year 18--, at East D---, a beautiful little town in a certain district of East Anglia, I first saw the light. [1a]

My father was a Cornish man, the youngest, as I have heard him say, of seven brothers. [1b] He sprang from a family of gentlemen, or, as some people would call them, gentillâtres, for they were not very wealthy; they had a coat of arms, however, and lived on their own property at a place called Tredinnock, [1c] which being interpreted means *the house on the hill*, which house and the neighbouring acres had been from time immemorial in their possession. I mention these particulars that the reader may see at once that I am not altogether of low and plebeian origin; p. 2
the present age is highly aristocratic, and I am convinced that the public will read my pages with more zest from being told that I am a gentillâtre by birth with Cornish blood [2] in my veins, of a family who lived on their own property at a place bearing a Celtic name signifying the house on the hill, or more strictly the house on the *hillock*.

My father was what is generally termed a posthumous child—in other words, the gentillâtre who begot him never had the satisfaction of invoking the blessing of the Father of All upon his head; having departed this life some months before the birth of his youngest son. The boy, therefore, never knew a father's care; he was, however, well tended by his mother, whose favourite he was; so much so, indeed, that his brethren, the youngest of whom was considerably older than himself, were rather jealous of him. I never heard, however, that they treated him with any marked unkindness; and it will be as well to observe here that I am by no means well acquainted with his early history, of which, indeed, as I am not writing his life, it is not necessary to say much. Shortly after his mother's death, which occurred when he was eighteen, he adopted the profession of arms, which he followed during the remainder of his life, and in which, had circumstances permitted, he would probably have shone amongst the best. By nature he was cool and collected, slow to anger, though perfectly fearless, patient of control, of great strength; and, to crown all, a proper man with his hands.

With far inferior qualifications many a man has become a field-marshal or general; similar ones p. 3
made Tamerlane, who was not a gentillâtre, but the son of a blacksmith, emperor of one-third of the world; but the race is not always for the swift, nor the battle for the strong, indeed I ought rather to say very seldom; certain it is, that my father, with all his high military qualifications, never became emperor, field-marshal, or even general: indeed, he had never an opportunity of distinguishing himself save in one battle, and that took place neither in Flanders, Egypt, nor on the banks of the Indus or Oxus, but in Hyde Park.

Smile not, gentle reader, many a battle has been fought in Hyde Park, in which as much skill, science, and bravery have been displayed as ever achieved a victory in Flanders or by the Indus. In such a combat as that to which I allude, I opine that even Wellington or Napoleon would have been heartily glad to cry for quarter ere the lapse of five minutes, and even the Blacksmith Tartar would, perhaps, have shrunk from the opponent with whom, after having had a dispute with him, my father engaged in single combat for one hour, at the end of which time the champions shook hands and retired, each having experienced quite enough of the other's prowess. The name of my father's antagonist was Brain.

What! still a smile? did you never hear that name before? I cannot help it! Honour to Brain, who four months after the event which I have now narrated was champion of England, having conquered the heroic Johnson. Honour to Brain, who, at the end of other four months, worn out by the dreadful blows which he had received in his manly combats, expired in the arms of my father, who read the Bible to him in his latter moments—Big Ben Brain. p. 4

You no longer smile, even *you* have heard of Big Ben.

I have already hinted that my father never rose to any very exalted rank in his profession, notwithstanding his prowess and other qualifications. After serving for many years in the line, he at last entered as captain in the militia regiment of the Earl of ---, [4a] at that period just raised, and to which he was sent by the Duke of York to instruct the young levies in military manœuvres and discipline; and in this mission I believe he perfectly succeeded, competent judges having assured me that the regiment in question soon came by his means to be considered as one of the most brilliant in the service, and inferior to no regiment of the line in appearance or discipline.

As the headquarters of this corps were at D---, [4b] the duties of my father not unfrequently carried him to that place, and it was on one of these occasions that he became acquainted with a young person of the neighbourhood, for whom he formed an attachment, which was returned; and this young person was my mother. [4c]

She was descended from a family of French Protestants, natives of Caen, who were obliged to leave their native country when old Louis, at the instigation of the Pope, thought fit to revoke the p. 5
Edict of Nantes: their name was Petrement, and I have reason for believing that they were people of some consideration; that they were noble hearts, and good Christians, they gave sufficient proof in scorning to bow the knee to the tyranny of Rome. So they left beautiful Normandy for their faith's sake, and with a few louis d'ors in their purse, a Bible in the vulgar tongue, and a couple of old swords, which, if report be true, had done service in the Huguenot wars, they crossed the sea to the isle of civil peace and religious liberty, and established themselves in East Anglia.

And many other Huguenot families bent their steps thither, and devoted themselves to

agriculture or the mechanical arts; and in the venerable old city, the capital of the province, in the northern shadow of the Castle of De Burgh, the exiles built for themselves a church where they praised God in the French tongue, and to which, at particular seasons of the year, they were in the habit of flocking from country and from town to sing—

"Thou hast provided for us a goodly earth; Thou waterest her furrows, Thou sendest rain into the little valleys thereof, Thou makest it soft with the drops of rain, and blessest the increase of it."

I have been told that in her younger days my mother was strikingly handsome; this I can easily believe: I never knew her in her youth, for though she was very young when she married my father (who was her senior by many years), she had attained the middle age before I was born, no children having been vouchsafed to my parents in the early stages of their union. Yet even at the present day, now that years threescore and ten have passed over her head, attended with sorrow p. 6
and troubles manifold, poorly chequered with scanty joys, can I look on that countenance and doubt that at one time beauty decked it as with a glorious garment? Hail to thee, my parent! as thou sittest there, in thy widow's weeds, in the dusky parlour in the house overgrown with the lustrous ivy of the sister isle, the solitary house at the end of the retired court shaded by lofty poplars. Hail to thee, dame of the oval face, olive complexion, and Grecian forehead! by thy table seated with the mighty volume of the good Bishop Hopkins spread out before thee; there is peace in thy countenance, my mother; it is not worldly peace, however, not the deceitful peace which lulls to bewitching slumbers, and from which, let us pray, humbly pray, that every sinner may be roused in time to implore mercy not in vain! Thine is the peace of the righteous, my mother, of those to whom no sin can be imputed, the score of whose misdeeds has been long since washed away by the blood of atonement, which imputeth righteousness to those who trust in it. It was not always thus, my mother; a time was, when the cares, pomps, and vanities of this world agitated thee too much; but that time is gone by, another and a better has succeeded; there is peace now on thy countenance, the true peace; peace around thee, too, in thy solitary dwelling, sounds of peace, the cheerful hum of the kettle and the purring of the immense angola, which stares up at thee from its settle with its almost human eyes.

No more earthly cares and affections now, my mother! Yes, one. Why dost thou suddenly raise p. 7
thy dark and still brilliant eye from the volume with a somewhat startled glance? What noise is that in the distant street? Merely the noise of a hoof; a sound common enough: it draws nearer, nearer, and now it stops before thy gate. Singular! And now there is a pause, a long pause. Ha! thou hearest something—a footstep; a swift but heavy footstep! thou risest, thou tremblest, there is a hand on the pin of the outer door, there is some one in the vestibule, and now the door of thy apartment opens, there is a reflection on the mirror behind thee, a travelling hat, a grey head and sunburnt face. My dearest Son! My darling Mother!

Yes, mother, thou didst recognise in the distant street the hoof-tramp of the wanderer's horse.

I was not the only child of my parents; I had a brother some three years older than myself. [7] He was a beautiful child; one of those occasionally seen in England, and in England alone; a rosy, angelic face, blue eyes, and light chestnut hair; it was not exactly an Anglo-Saxon countenance, in which, by the bye, there is generally a cast of loutishness and stupidity; it partook, to a certain extent, of the Celtic character, particularly in the fire and vivacity which illumined it; his face was the mirror of his mind; perhaps no disposition more amiable was ever found amongst the children of Adam, united, however, with no inconsiderable portion of high and dauntless spirit. So great was his beauty in infancy, that people, especially those of the poorer classes, would follow the p. 8
nurse who carried him about in order to look at and bless his lovely face. At the age of three months an attempt was made to snatch him from his mother's arms in the streets of London, at the moment she was about to enter a coach; indeed, his appearance seemed to operate so powerfully upon every person who beheld him, that my parents were under continual apprehension of losing him; his beauty, however, was perhaps surpassed by the quickness of his parts. He mastered his letters in a few hours, and in a day or two could decipher the names of people on the doors of houses and over the shop-windows.

As he grew up, his personal appearance became less prepossessing, his quickness and cleverness, however, rather increased; and I may say of him, that with respect to everything which he took in hand he did it better and more speedily than any other person. Perhaps it will be asked here, what became of him? Alas! alas! his was an early and a foreign grave. As I have said before, the race is not always for the swift, nor the battle for the strong.

And now, doubtless, after the above portrait of my brother, painted in the very best style of Rubens, the reader will conceive himself justified in expecting a full-length one of myself, as a child, for as to my present appearance, I suppose he will be tolerably content with that flitting glimpse in the mirror. But he must excuse me; I have no intention of drawing a portrait of myself in childhood; indeed it would be difficult, for at that time I never looked into mirrors. No attempts, however, were ever made to steal me in my infancy, and I never heard that my parents p. 9
entertained the slightest apprehension of losing me by the hands of kidnappers, though I remember perfectly well that people were in the habit of standing still to look at me, ay, more than at my brother; from which premises the reader may form any conclusion with respect to my appearance which seemeth good unto him and reasonable. Should he, being a good-natured person, and always inclined to adopt the charitable side in any doubtful point, be willing to suppose that I, too, was eminently endowed by nature with personal graces, I tell him frankly that I have no objection whatever to his entertaining that idea; moreover, that I heartily thank him, and shall at all times be disposed, under similar circumstances, to exercise the same species

of charity towards himself.

With respect to my mind and its qualities I shall be more explicit; for, were I to maintain much reserve on this point, many things which appear in these memoirs would be highly mysterious to the reader, indeed incomprehensible. Perhaps no two individuals were ever more unlike in mind and disposition than my brother and myself: as light is opposed to darkness, so was that happy, brilliant, cheerful child to the sad and melancholy being who sprang from the same stock as himself, and was nurtured by the same milk.

Once, when travelling in an Alpine country, I arrived at a considerable elevation; I saw in the distance, far below, a beautiful stream hastening to the ocean, its rapid waters here sparkling in the sunshine, and there tumbling merrily in cascades. On its banks were vineyards and cheerful villages; close to where I stood, in a granite basin, with steep and precipitous sides, slumbered a p. 10
deep, dark lagoon, shaded by black pines, cypresses, and yews. It was a wild, savage spot, strange and singular; ravens hovered above the pines, filling the air with their uncouth notes, pies chattered, and I heard the cry of an eagle from a neighbouring peak; there lay the lake, the dark, solitary, and almost inaccessible lake; gloomy shadows were upon it, which, strangely modified as gusts of wind agitated the surface, occasionally assumed the shape of monsters. So I stood on the Alpine elevation, and looked now on the gay distant river, and now at the dark granite-encircled lake close beside me in the lone solitude, and I thought of my brother and myself. I am no moraliser; but the gay and rapid river, and the dark and silent lake, were, of a verity, no bad emblems of us two.

So far from being quick and clever like my brother, and able to rival the literary feat which I have recorded of him, many years elapsed before I was able to understand the nature of letters, or to connect them. A lover of nooks and retired corners, I was as a child in the habit of fleeing from society, and of sitting for hours together with my head on my breast. What I was thinking about, it would be difficult to say at this distance of time; I remember perfectly well, however, being ever conscious of a peculiar heaviness within me, and at times of a strange sensation of fear, which occasionally amounted to horror, and for which I could assign no real cause whatever.

By nature slow of speech, I took no pleasure in conversation, nor in hearing the voices of my fellow-creatures. When people addressed me, I not unfrequently, especially if they were strangers, turned away my head from them, and if they persisted in their notice burst into tears, p. 11
which singularity of behaviour by no means tended to dispose people in my favour. I was as much disliked as my brother was deservedly beloved and admired. My parents, it is true, were always kind to me; and my brother, who was good-nature itself, was continually lavishing upon me every mark of affection.

There was, however, one individual who, in the days of my childhood, was disposed to form a favourable opinion of me. One day, a Jew—I have quite forgotten the circumstance, but I was long subsequently informed of it—one day a travelling Jew knocked at the door of a farmhouse in which we had taken apartments; I was near at hand, sitting in the bright sunshine, drawing strange lines on the dust with my fingers, an ape and dog were my companions; the Jew looked at me and asked me some questions, to which, though I was quite able to speak, I returned no answer. On the door being opened, the Jew, after a few words, probably relating to pedlary, demanded who the child was, sitting in the sun; the maid replied that I was her mistress's youngest son, a child weak *here*, pointing to her forehead. The Jew looked at me again, and then said, "'Pon my conscience, my dear, I believe that you must be troubled there yourself to tell me any such thing. It is not my habit to speak to children, inasmuch as I hate them, because they often follow me and fling stones after me; but I no sooner looked at that child than I was forced to speak to it—his not answering me shows his sense, for it has never been the custom of the wise to fling away their words in indifferent talk and conversation; the child is a sweet child, and has p. 12
all the look of one of our people's children. Fool, indeed! did I not see his eyes sparkle just now when the monkey seized the dog by the ear?—they shone like my own diamonds—does your good lady want any—real and fine? Were it not for what you tell me, I should say it was a prophet's child. Fool, indeed! he can write already, or I'll forfeit the box which I carry on my back, and for which I should be loth to take two hundred pounds!" He then leaned forward to inspect the lines which I had traced. All of a sudden he started back, and grew white as a sheet; then, taking off his hat, he made some strange gestures to me, cringing, chattering, and showing his teeth, and shortly departed, muttering something about "holy letters," and talking to himself in a strange tongue. The words of the Jew were in due course of time reported to my mother, who treasured them in her heart, and from that moment began to entertain brighter hopes of her youngest born than she had ever before ventured to foster.

CHAPTER II

p. 13

Barracks and Lodgings—A Camp—The Viper—A Delicate Child—Blackberry Time—Meum and Tuum—Hythe—The Golgotha—Daneman's Skull—Superhuman Stature—Stirring Times—The Sea-Board.

I have been a wanderer the greater part of my life; indeed I remember only two periods, and these by no means lengthy, when I was, strictly speaking, stationary. I was a soldier's son, and

as the means of my father were by no means sufficient to support two establishments, his family invariably attended him wherever he went, so that from my infancy I was accustomed to travelling and wandering, and looked upon a monthly change of scene and residence as a matter of course. Sometimes we lived in barracks, sometimes in lodgings, but generally in the former, always eschewing the latter from motives of economy, save when the barracks were inconvenient and uncomfortable; and they must have been highly so indeed, to have discouraged us from entering them; for though we were gentry (pray bear that in mind, gentle reader), gentry by birth, and incontestably so by my father's bearing the commission of good old George the Third, we were not *fine gentry*, but people who could put up with as much as any genteel Scotch family p. 14
who find it convenient to live on a third floor in London, or on a sixth at Edinburgh or Glasgow. It was not a little that could discourage us: we once lived within the canvas walls of a camp, at a place called Pett, in Sussex; and I believe it was at this place that occurred the first circumstance, or adventure, call it which you will, that I can remember in connection with myself: it was a strange one, and I will relate it.

It happened that my brother and myself were playing one evening in a sandy lane, in the neighbourhood of this Pett camp; our mother was at a slight distance. All of a sudden, a bright yellow, and, to my infantine eye, beautiful and glorious, object made its appearance at the top of the bank from between the thick quickset, and, gliding down, began to move across the lane to the other side, like a line of golden light. Uttering a cry of pleasure, I sprang forward, and seized it nearly by the middle. A strange sensation of numbing coldness seemed to pervade my whole arm, which surprised me the more, as the object to the eye appeared so warm and sunlike. I did not drop it, however, but, holding it up, looked at it intently, as its head dangled about a foot from my hand. It made no resistance; I felt not even the slightest struggle; but now my brother began to scream and shriek like one possessed. "O mother, mother!" said he, "the viper!—my brother has a viper in his hand!" He then, like one frantic, made an effort to snatch the creature away from me. The viper now hissed amain, and raised its head, in which were eyes like hot coals, menacing, not myself, but my brother. I dropped my captive, for I saw my mother running p. 15
towards me; and the reptile, after standing for a moment nearly erect, and still hissing furiously, made off, and disappeared. The whole scene is now before me, as vividly as if it occurred yesterday—the gorgeous viper, my poor dear frantic brother, my agitated parent, and a frightened hen clucking under the bushes—and yet I was not three years old!

It is my firm belief that certain individuals possess an inherent power, or fascination, over certain creatures, otherwise I should be unable to account for many feats which I have witnessed, and, indeed, borne a share in, connected with the taming of brutes and reptiles. I have known a savage and vicious mare, whose stall it was dangerous to approach, even when bearing provender, welcome, nevertheless, with every appearance of pleasure, an uncouth, wiry-headed man, with a frightfully seamed face, and an iron hook supplying the place of his right hand, one whom the animal had never seen before, playfully bite his hair, and cover his face with gentle and endearing kisses; and I have already stated how a viper would permit, without resentment, one child to take it up in his hand, whilst it showed its dislike to the approach of another by the fiercest hissings. Philosophy can explain many strange things, but there are some which are a far pitch above her, and this is one.

I should scarcely relate another circumstance which occurred about this time but for a singular effect which it produced upon my constitution. Up to this period I had been rather a delicate child; whereas almost immediately after the occurrence to which I allude I became both hale and vigorous, to the great astonishment of my parents, who naturally enough expected that it would p. 16
produce quite a contrary effect.

It happened that my brother and myself were disporting ourselves in certain fields near the good town of Canterbury. A female servant had attended us, in order to take care that we came to no mischief: she, however, it seems, had matters of her own to attend to, and, allowing us to go where we listed, remained in one corner of a field, in earnest conversation with a red-coated dragoon. Now it chanced to be blackberry time, and the two children wandered under the hedges, peering anxiously among them in quest of that trash so grateful to urchins of their degree. We did not find much of it, however, and were soon separated in the pursuit. All at once I stood still, and could scarcely believe my eyes. I had come to a spot where, almost covering the hedge, hung clusters of what seemed fruit—deliciously-tempting fruit—something resembling grapes of various colours, green, red, and purple. Dear me, thought I, how fortunate! yet have I a right to gather it? is it mine? for the observance of the law of *meum* and *tuum* had early been impressed upon my mind, and I entertained, even at that tender age, the utmost horror for theft; so I stood staring at the variegated clusters, in doubt as to what I should do. I know not how I argued the matter in my mind; the temptation, however, was at last too strong for me, so I stretched forth my hand and ate. I remember, perfectly well, that the taste of this strange fruit was by no means so pleasant as the appearance; but the idea of eating fruit was sufficient for a child, and, after all, the flavour was much superior to that of sour apples, so I ate voraciously. p. 17
How long I continued eating I scarcely know. One thing is certain, that I never left the field as I entered it, being carried home in the arms of the dragoon in strong convulsions, in which I continued for several hours. About midnight I awoke, as if from a troubled sleep, and beheld my parents bending over my couch, whilst the regimental surgeon, with a candle in his hand, stood nigh, the light feebly reflected on the whitewashed walls of the barrack-room.

Another circumstance connected with my infancy, and I have done. I need offer no apology for relating it, as it subsequently exercised considerable influence over my pursuits. We were, if I

remember right, in the vicinity of a place called Hythe, in Kent. One sweet evening, in the latter part of summer, our mother took her two little boys by the hand, for a wander about the fields. In the course of our stroll, we came to the village church; an old, grey-headed sexton stood in the porch, who, perceiving that we were strangers, invited us to enter. We were presently in the interior, wandering about the aisles, looking on the walls, and inspecting the monuments of the notable dead. I can scarcely state what we saw; how should I? I was a child not yet four years old, and yet I think I remember the evening sun streaming in through a stained window upon the dingy mahogany pulpit, and flinging a rich lustre upon the faded tints of an ancient banner. And now once more we were outside the building, where, against the wall, stood a low-eaved pent-house, into which we looked. It was half filled with substances of some kind, which at first looked like large grey stones. The greater part were lying in layers; some, however, were seen in p. 18 confused and mouldering heaps, and two or three, which had perhaps rolled down from the rest, lay separately on the floor. “Skulls, madam,” said the sexton; “skulls of the old Danes! Long ago they came pirating into these parts; and then there chanced a mighty shipwreck, for God was angry with them, and He sunk them; and their skulls, as they came ashore, were placed here as a memorial. There were many more when I was young, but now they are fast disappearing. Some of them must have belonged to strange fellows, madam. Only see that one; why, the two young gentry can scarcely lift it!” And, indeed, my brother and myself had entered the Golgotha, and commenced handling these grim relics of mortality. One enormous skull, lying in a corner, had fixed our attention, and we had drawn it forth. Spirit of eld, what a skull was yon!

I still seem to see it, the huge grim thing; many of the others were large, strikingly so, and appeared fully to justify the old man’s conclusion, that their owners must have been strange fellows; but compared with this mighty mass of bone they looked small and diminutive, like those of pigmies; it must have belonged to a giant, one of those red-haired warriors of whose strength and stature such wondrous tales are told in the ancient chronicles of the north, and whose grave-hills, when ransacked, occasionally reveal secrets which fill the minds of puny moderns with astonishment and awe. Reader, have you ever pored days and nights over the pages of Snorro?—p. 19 probably not, for he wrote in a language which few of the present day understand, and few would be tempted to read him tamed down by Latin dragomans. A brave old book is that of Snorro, containing the histories and adventures of old northern kings and champions, who seemed to have been quite different men, if we may judge from the feats which they performed, from those of these days. One of the best of his histories is that which describes the life of Harald Haardraade, who, after manifold adventures by land and sea, now a pirate, now a mercenary of the Greek emperor, became king of Norway, and eventually perished at the battle of Stamford Bridge, whilst engaged in a gallant onslaught upon England. Now, I have often thought that the old Kemp, whose mouldering skull in the Golgotha of Hythe my brother and myself could scarcely lift, must have resembled in one respect at least this Harald, whom Snorro describes as a great and wise ruler and a determined leader, dangerous in battle, of fair presence, and measuring in height *just five ells*, [19] neither more nor less.

I never forgot the Daneman’s skull; like the apparition of the viper in the sandy lane, it dwelt in the mind of the boy, affording copious food for the exercise of imagination. From that moment with the name of Dane were associated strange ideas of strength, daring, and superhuman stature; and an undefinable curiosity for all that is connected with the Danish race began to pervade me; and if, long after, when I became a student, I devoted myself with peculiar zest to Danish lore and the acquirement of the old Norse tongue and its dialects, I can only explain the matter by the early impression received at Hythe from the tale of the old sexton, beneath the p. 20 pent-house, and the sight of the Danish skull.

And thus we went on straying from place to place, at Hythe to-day, and perhaps within a week looking out from our hostel-window upon the streets of old Winchester, our motions ever in accordance with the “route” of the regiment, so habituated to change of scene that it had become almost necessary to our existence. Pleasant were these days of my early boyhood; and a melancholy pleasure steals over me as I recall them. Those were stirring times of which I am speaking, and there was much passing around me calculated to captivate the imagination. The dreadful struggle which so long convulsed Europe, and in which England bore so prominent a part, was then at its hottest; we were at war, and determination and enthusiasm shone in every face; man, woman, and child were eager to fight the Frank, the hereditary, but, thank God, never dreaded enemy of the Anglo-Saxon race. “Love your country and beat the French, and then never mind what happens,” was the cry of entire England. Oh, those were days of power, gallant days, bustling days, worth the bravest days of chivalry at least; tall battalions of native warriors were marching through the land; there was the glitter of the bayonet and the gleam of the sabre; the shrill squeak of the fife and loud rattling of the drum were heard in the streets of country towns, and the loyal shouts of the inhabitants greeted the soldiery on their arrival, or cheered them at their departure. And now let us leave the upland, and descend to the sea-board; there is a sight for you upon the billows! A dozen men-of-war are gliding majestically out of port, their p. 21 long buntings streaming from the top-gallant masts, calling on the skulking Frenchman to come forth from his bights and bays; and what looms upon us yonder from the fog-bank in the east? a gallant frigate towing behind her the long low hull of a crippled privateer, which but three short days ago had left Dieppe to skim the sea, and whose crew of ferocious hearts are now cursing their imprudence in an English hold. Stirring times those, which I love to recall, for they were days of gallantry and enthusiasm, and were moreover the days of my boyhood.

CHAPTER III

Pretty D---—The Venerable Church—The Stricken Heart—Dormant Energies—The Small Packet—Nerves—The Books—A Picture—Mountain-like Billows—The Footprint—Spirit of De Foe—Reasoning Powers—Terrors of God—Heads of the Dragons—High-Church Clerk—A Journey—The Drowned Country.

And when I was between six and seven years of age we were once more at D---, [22] the place of my birth, whither my father had been despatched on the recruiting service. I have already said that it was a beautiful little town—at least it was at the time of which I am speaking; what it is at present I know not, for thirty years and more have elapsed since I last trod its streets. It will scarcely have improved, for how could it be better than it then was? I love to think on thee, pretty quiet D---, thou pattern of an English country town, with thy clean but narrow streets branching out from thy modest market-place, with thine old-fashioned houses, with here and there a roof of venerable thatch, with thy one half-aristocratic mansion, where resided thy Lady Bountiful—she, the generous and kind, who loved to visit the sick, leaning on her gold-headed cane, whilst the sleek old footman walked at a respectful distance behind. Pretty quiet D---, with p. 23
thy venerable church, in which moulder the mortal remains of England's sweetest and most pious bard.

Yes, pretty D---, I could always love thee, were it but for the sake of him who sleeps beneath the marble slab in yonder quiet chancel. It was within thee that the long-oppressed bosom heaved its last sigh, and the crushed and gentle spirit escaped from a world in which it had known nought but sorrow. Sorrow! do I say? How faint a word to express the misery of that bruised reed; misery so dark that a blind worm like myself is occasionally tempted to exclaim, Better had the world never been created than that one so kind, so harmless, and so mild, should have undergone such intolerable woe! But it is over now, for, as there is an end of joy, so has affliction its termination. Doubtless the All-wise did not afflict him without a cause: who knows but within that unhappy frame lurked vicious seeds which the sunbeams of joy and prosperity might have called into life and vigour? Perhaps the withering blasts of misery nipped that which otherwise might have terminated in fruit noxious and lamentable. But peace to the unhappy one, he is gone to his rest; the deathlike face is no longer occasionally seen timidly and mournfully looking for a moment through the window-pane upon thy market-place, quiet and pretty D---; the hind in thy neighbourhood no longer at evening-fall views, and starts as he views, the dark lathy figure moving beneath the hazels and alders of shadowy lanes, or by the side of murmuring trout streams; and no longer at early dawn does the sexton of the old church reverently doff his hat, as, p. 24
supported by some kind friend, the death-stricken creature totters along the church-path to that mouldering edifice with the low roof, inclosing a spring of sanatory waters, built and devoted to some saint—if the legend over the door be true, by the daughter of an East Anglian king.

But to return to my own history. I had now attained the age of six: shall I state what intellectual progress I had been making up to this period? Alas! upon this point I have little to say calculated to afford either pleasure or edification. I had increased rapidly in size and in strength: the growth of the mind, however, had by no means corresponded with that of the body. It is true, I had acquired my letters, and was by this time able to read imperfectly; but this was all: and even this poor triumph over absolute ignorance would never have been effected but for the unremitting attention of my parents, who, sometimes by threats, sometimes by entreaties, endeavoured to rouse the dormant energies of my nature, and to bend my wishes to the acquisition of the rudiments of knowledge; but in influencing the wish lay the difficulty. Let but the will of a human being be turned to any particular object, and it is ten to one that sooner or later he achieves it. At this time I may safely say that I harboured neither wishes nor hopes; I had as yet seen no object calculated to call them forth, and yet I took pleasure in many things which perhaps unfortunately were all within my sphere of enjoyment. I loved to look upon the heavens, and to bask in the rays of the sun, or to sit beneath hedgerows and listen to the chirping of the birds, indulging the while in musing and meditation as far as my very limited circle of ideas p. 25
would permit; but, unlike my brother, who was at this time at school, and whose rapid progress in every branch of instruction astonished and delighted his preceptors, I took no pleasure in books, whose use, indeed, I could scarcely comprehend, and bade fair to be as arrant a dunce as ever brought the blush of shame into the cheeks of anxious and affectionate parents.

But the time was now at hand when the ice which had hitherto bound the mind of the child with its benumbing power was to be thawed, and a world of sensations and ideas awakened to which it had hitherto been an entire stranger. One day a young lady, an intimate acquaintance of our family, and godmother to my brother, drove up to the house in which we dwelt; she staid some time conversing with my mother, and on rising to depart she put down on the table a small packet, exclaiming, "I have brought a little present for each of the boys: the one is a History of England, which I intend for my godson when he returns from school, the other is . . ."—and here she said something which escaped my ear, as I sat at some distance, moping in a corner,—"I intend it for the youngster yonder," pointing to myself; she then departed, and, my mother going out shortly after, I was left alone.

I remember for some time sitting motionless in my corner, with my eyes bent upon the ground; at last I lifted my head and looked upon the packet as it lay on the table. All at once a strange sensation came over me, such as I had never experienced before—a singular blending of

curiosity, awe, and pleasure, the remembrance of which, even at this distance of time, produces a remarkable effect upon my nervous system. What strange things are the nerves—I mean those more secret and mysterious ones in which I have some notion that the mind or soul, call it which you will, has its habitation; how they occasionally tingle and vibrate before any coming event closely connected with the future weal or woe of the human being. Such a feeling was now within me, certainly independent of what the eye had seen or the ear had heard. A book of some description had been brought for me, a present by no means calculated to interest me; what cared I for books? I had already many into which I never looked but from compulsion; friends, moreover, had presented me with similar things before, which I had entirely disregarded, and what was there in this particular book, whose very title I did not know, calculated to attract me more than the rest? yet something within told me that my fate was connected with the book which had been last brought; so, after looking on the packet from my corner for a considerable time, I got up and went to the table. p. 26

The packet was lying where it had been left—I took it up; had the envelope, which consisted of whitish brown paper, been secured by a string or a seal, I should not have opened it, as I should have considered such an act almost in the light of a crime; the books, however, had been merely folded up, and I therefore considered that there could be no possible harm in inspecting them, more especially as I had received no injunction to the contrary. Perhaps there was something unsound in this reasoning, something sophistical; but a child is sometimes as ready as a grown-up person in finding excuses for doing that which he is inclined to. But whether the action was right or wrong, and I am afraid it was not altogether right, I undid the packet: it contained three books; two from their similarity seemed to be separate parts of one and the same work; they were handsomely bound, and to them I first turned my attention. I opened them successively, and endeavoured to make out their meaning; their contents, however, as far as I was able to understand them, were by no means interesting: whoever pleases may read these books for me, and keep them too, into the bargain, said I to myself. p. 27

I now took up the third book: it did not resemble the others, being longer and considerably thicker; the binding was of dingy calf-skin. I opened it, and as I did so another strange thrill of pleasure shot through my frame. The first object on which my eyes rested was a picture; it was exceedingly well executed, at least the scene which it represented made a vivid impression upon me, which would hardly have been the case had the artist not been faithful to nature. A wild scene it was—a heavy sea and rocky shore, with mountains in the background, above which the moon was peering. Not far from the shore, upon the water, was a boat with two figures in it, one of which stood at the bow, pointing with what I knew to be a gun at a dreadful shape in the water; fire was flashing from the muzzle of the gun, and the monster appeared to be transfixed. I almost thought I heard its cry. I remained motionless, gazing upon the picture, scarcely daring to draw my breath, lest the new and wondrous world should vanish of which I had now obtained a glimpse. “Who are those people, and what could have brought them into that strange situation?” I asked of myself; and now the seed of curiosity, which had so long lain dormant, began to expand, and I vowed to myself to become speedily acquainted with the whole history of the people in the boat. After looking on the picture till every mark and line in it were familiar to me, I turned over various leaves till I came to another engraving; a new source of wonder—a low sandy beach on which the furious sea was breaking in mountain-like billows; cloud and rack deformed the firmament, which wore a dull and leaden-like hue; gulls and other aquatic fowls were toppling upon the blast, or skimming over the tops of the maddening waves—“Mercy upon him! he must be drowned!” I exclaimed, as my eyes fell upon a poor wretch who appeared to be striving to reach the shore; he was upon his legs, but was evidently half smothered with the brine; high above his head curled a horrible billow, as if to engulf him for ever. “He must be drowned! he must be drowned!” I almost shrieked, and dropped the book. I soon snatched it up again, and now my eye lighted on a third picture: again a shore, but what a sweet and lovely one, and how I wished to be treading it! There were beautiful shells lying on the smooth white sand—some were empty like those I had occasionally seen on marble mantelpieces, but out of others peered the heads and bodies of wondrous crayfish; a wood of thick green trees skirted the beach and partly shaded it from the rays of the sun, which shone hot above, while blue waves slightly crested with foam were gently curling against it; there was a human figure upon the beach, wild and uncouth, clad in the skins of animals, with a huge cap on his head, a hatchet at his girdle, and in his hand a gun; his feet and legs were bare; he stood in an attitude of horror and surprise; his body was bent far back, and his eyes, which seemed starting out of his head, were fixed upon a mark on the sand—a large distinct mark—a human footprint. . . . p. 28 p. 29

Reader, is it necessary to name the book which now stood open in my hand, and whose very prints, feeble expounders of its wondrous lines, had produced within me emotions strange and novel? Scarcely—for it was a book which has exerted over the minds of Englishmen an influence certainly greater than any other of modern times—which has been in most people’s hands, and with the contents of which even those who cannot read are to a certain extent acquainted—a book from which the most luxuriant and fertile of our modern prose writers have drunk inspiration—a book, moreover, to which, from the hardy deeds which it narrates, and the spirit of strange and romantic enterprise which it tends to awaken, England owes many of her astonishing discoveries both by sea and land, and no inconsiderable part of her naval glory.

Hail to thee, spirit of De Foe! What does not my own poor self owe to thee? England has better bards than either Greece or Rome, yet I could spare them easier far than De Foe, “unabashed De Foe,” as the hunchbacked rhymer styled him.

The true chord had now been touched; a raging curiosity with respect to the contents of the volume, whose engravings had fascinated my eye, burned within me, and I never rested until I had fully satisfied it; weeks succeeded weeks, months followed months, and the wondrous volume p. 30
was my only study and principal source of amusement. For hours together I would sit poring over a page till I had become acquainted with the import of every line. My progress, slow enough at first, became by degrees more rapid, till at last, under "a shoulder of mutton sail," I found myself cantering before a steady breeze over an ocean of enchantment, so well pleased with my voyage that I cared not how long it might be ere it reached its termination.

And it was in this manner that I first took to the paths of knowledge.

About this time I began to be somewhat impressed with religious feelings. My parents were, to a certain extent, religious people; but, though they had done their best to afford me instruction on religious points, I had either paid no attention to what they endeavoured to communicate, or had listened with an ear far too obtuse to derive any benefit. But my mind had now become awakened from the drowsy torpor in which it had lain so long, and the reasoning powers which I possessed were no longer inactive. Hitherto I had entertained no conception whatever of the nature and properties of God, and with the most perfect indifference had heard the Divine name proceeding from the mouths of people—frequently, alas! on occasions when it ought not to be employed; but I now never heard it without a tremor, for I now knew that God was an awful and inscrutable being, the maker of all things; that we were His children, and that we, by our sins, had justly offended Him; that we were in very great peril from His anger, not so much in this life as in another and far stranger state of being yet to come; that we had a Saviour withal to whom it p. 31
was necessary to look for help: upon this point, however, I was yet very much in the dark, as, indeed, were most of those with whom I was connected. The power and terrors of God were uppermost in my thoughts; they fascinated though they astounded me. Twice every Sunday I was regularly taken to the church, where, from a corner of the large spacious pew, lined with black leather, I would fix my eyes on the dignified high-church rector, [31a] and the dignified high-church clerk, [31b] and watch the movement of their lips, from which, as they read their respective portions of the venerable liturgy, would roll many a portentous word descriptive of the wondrous works of the Most High.

Rector. "Thou didst divide the sea, through Thy power: Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters."

Philoh. "Thou smotest the heads of Leviathan in pieces: and gavest him to be meat for the people in the wilderness."

Rector. "Thou broughtest out fountains, and waters out of the hard rocks: Thou driedst up mighty waters."

Philoh. "The day is Thine, and the night is Thine: Thou hast prepared the light and the sun."

Peace to your memories, dignified rector, and yet more dignified clerk!—by this time ye are probably gone to your long homes, and your voices are no longer heard sounding down the aisles p. 32
of the venerable church—nay, doubtless, this has already long since been the fate of him of the sonorous "Amen!"—the one of the two who, with all due respect to the rector, principally engrossed my boyish admiration—he, at least, is scarcely now among the living! Living! why, I have heard say that he blew a fife—for he was a musical as well as a Christian professor—a bold fife, to cheer the Guards and the brave Marines as they marched with measured step, obeying an insane command, up Bunker's height, whilst the rifles of the sturdy Yankees were sending the leaden hail sharp and thick amidst the red-coated ranks; for Philoh had not always been a man of peace, nor an exhorter to turn the other cheek to the smiter, but had even arrived at the dignity of a halberd in his country's service before his six-foot form required rest, and the grey-haired veteran retired, after a long peregrination, to his native town, to enjoy ease and respectability on a pension of "eighteenpence a day"; and well did his fellow-townsmen act when, to increase that ease and respectability, and with a thoughtful regard for the dignity of the good Church service, they made him clerk and precentor—the man of the tall form and of the audible voice, which sounded loud and clear as his own Bunker fife. Well, peace to thee, thou fine old chap, despiser of dissenters, and hater of papists, as became a dignified and high-church clerk; if thou art in thy grave, the better for thee; thou wert fitted to adorn a bygone time, when loyalty was in vogue, and smiling content lay like a sunbeam upon the land, but thou wouldst be sadly out of place in these days of cold philosophic latitudinarian doctrine, universal tolerism, and half-concealed p. 33
rebellion—rare times, no doubt, for papists and dissenters, but which would assuredly have broken the heart of the loyal soldier of George the Third, and the dignified high-church clerk of pretty D---.

We passed many months at this place: nothing, however, occurred requiring any particular notice, relating to myself, beyond what I have already stated, and I am not writing the history of others. At length [33] my father was recalled to his regiment, which at that time was stationed at a place called Norman Cross, in Lincolnshire, or rather Huntingdonshire, at some distance from the old town of Peterborough. For this place he departed, leaving my mother and myself to follow in a few days. Our journey was a singular one. On the second day we reached a marshy and fenny country, which, owing to immense quantities of rain which had lately fallen, was completely submerged. At a large town we got on board a kind of passage-boat, crowded with people; it had neither sails nor oars, and those were not the days of steam-vessels; it was a treck-schuyt, and was drawn by horses.

Young as I was, there was much connected with this journey which highly surprised me, and which brought to my remembrance particular scenes described in the book which I now generally carried in my bosom. The country was, as I have already said, submerged—entirely drowned—no land was visible; the trees were growing bolt upright in the flood, whilst farmhouses and cottages were standing insulated; the horses which drew us were up to the knees in water, and, on coming p. 34
to blind pools and "greedy depths," were not unfrequently swimming, in which case the boys or urchins who mounted them sometimes stood, sometimes knelt, upon the saddle and pillions. No accident, however, occurred either to the quadrupeds or bipeds, who appeared respectively to be quite *au fait* in their business, and extricated themselves with the greatest ease from places in which Pharaoh and all his hosts would have gone to the bottom. Night-fall brought us to Peterborough, and from thence we were not slow in reaching the place of our destination.

CHAPTER IV p. 35

Norman Cross—Wide Expanse—Vive l'Empereur—Unpruned Woods—Man with the Bag—Froth and Conceit—I beg your Pardon—Growing Timid—About Three o'clock—Taking One's Ease—Cheek on the Ground—King of the Vipers—French King—Frenchmen and Water.

And a strange place it was, this Norman Cross, and, at the time of which I am speaking, a sad cross to many a Norman, being what was then styled a French prison, that is, a receptacle for captives made in the French war. It consisted, if I remember right, of some five or six casernes, very long, and immensely high; each standing isolated from the rest, upon a spot of ground which might average ten acres, and which was fenced round with lofty palisades, the whole being compassed about by a towering wall, beneath which, at intervals, on both sides, sentinels were stationed, whilst outside, upon the field, stood commodious wooden barracks, capable of containing two regiments of infantry, intended to serve as guards upon the captives. Such was the station or prison at Norman Cross, where some six thousand French and other foreigners, followers of the grand Corsican, were now immured.

What a strange appearance had those mighty casernes, with their blank blind walls, without p. 36
windows or grating, and their slanting roofs, out of which, through orifices where the tiles had been removed, would be protruded dozens of grim heads, feasting their prison-sick eyes on the wide expanse of country unfolded from that airy height. Ah! there was much misery in those casernes; and from those roofs, doubtless, many a wistful look was turned in the direction of lovely France. Much had the poor inmates to endure, and much to complain of, to the disgrace of England be it said—of England, in general so kind and bountiful. Rations of carrion meat, and bread from which I have seen the very hounds occasionally turn away, were unworthy entertainment even for the most ruffian enemy, when helpless and a captive; and such, alas! was the fare in those casernes. And then, those visits, or rather ruthless inroads, called in the slang of the place "strawplait-hunts," when in pursuit of a contraband article, which the prisoners, in order to procure themselves a few of the necessaries and comforts of existence, were in the habit of making, red-coated battalions were marched into the prisons, who, with the bayonet's point, carried havoc and ruin into every poor convenience which ingenious wretchedness had been endeavouring to raise around it; and then the triumphant exit with the miserable booty; and, worst of all, the accursed bonfire, on the barrack parade, of the plait contraband, beneath the view of the glaring eyeballs from those lofty roofs, amidst the hurrahs of the troops, frequently drowned in the curses poured down from above like a tempest-shower, or in the terrific war-whoop of "*Vive l'Empereur*!"

It was midsummer when we arrived at this place, and the weather, which had for a long time p. 37
been wet and gloomy, now became bright and glorious; I was subjected to but little control, and passed my time pleasantly enough, principally in wandering about the neighbouring country. It was flat and somewhat fenny, a district more of pasture than agriculture, and not very thickly inhabited. I soon became well acquainted with it. At the distance of two miles from the station was a large lake, styled in the dialect of the country "a mere," [37] about whose borders tall reeds were growing in abundance, this was a frequent haunt of mine; but my favourite place of resort was a wild sequestered spot at a somewhat greater distance. Here, surrounded with woods and thick groves, was the seat of some ancient family, deserted by the proprietor, and only inhabited by a rustic servant or two. A place more solitary and wild could scarcely be imagined; the garden and walks were overgrown with weeds and briars, and the unpruned woods were so tangled as to be almost impervious. About this domain I would wander till overtaken by fatigue, and then I would sit down with my back against some beech, elm, or stately alder tree, and, taking out my book, would pass hours in a state of unmixed enjoyment, my eyes now fixed on the wondrous pages, now glancing at the sylvan scene around; and sometimes I would drop the book and listen to the voice of the rooks and wild pigeons, and not unfrequently to the croaking of multitudes of frogs from the neighbouring swamps and fens.

In going to and from this place I frequently passed a tall elderly individual, dressed in rather a p. 38
quaint fashion, with a skin cap on his head and stout gaiters on his legs; on his shoulders hung a moderate sized leathern sack; he seemed fond of loitering near sunny banks, and of groping amidst furze and low scrubby bramble bushes, of which there were plenty in the neighbourhood of Norman Cross. Once I saw him standing in the middle of a dusty road, looking intently at a

large mark which seemed to have been drawn across it, as if by a walking-stick. “He must have been a large one,” the old man muttered half to himself, “or he would not have left such a trail; I wonder if he is near; he seems to have moved this way.” He then went behind some bushes which grew on the right side of the road, and appeared to be in quest of something, moving behind the bushes with his head downwards, and occasionally striking their roots with his foot: at length he exclaimed, “Here he is!” and forthwith I saw him dart amongst the bushes. There was a kind of scuffling noise, the rustling of branches, and the crackling of dry sticks. “I have him!” said the man at last; “I have got him!” and presently he made his appearance about twenty yards down the road, holding a large viper in his hand. “What do you think of that, my boy?” said he, as I went up to him—“what do you think of catching such a thing as that with the naked hand?” “What do I think?” said I. “Why, that I could do as much myself.” “You do,” said the man, “do you? Lord! how the young people in these days are given to conceit; it did not use to be so in my time: when I was a child, childer knew how to behave themselves; but the childer of these days p. 39 are full of conceit, full of froth, like the mouth of this viper;” and with his forefinger and thumb he squeezed a considerable quantity of foam from the jaws of the viper down upon the road. “The childer of these days are a generation of—God forgive me, what was I about to say?” said the old man; and opening his bag he thrust the reptile into it, which appeared far from empty. I passed on. As I was returning, towards the evening, I overtook the old man, who was wending in the same direction. “Good evening to you, sir,” said I, taking off a cap which I wore on my head. “Good evening,” said the old man; and then, looking at me, “How’s this?” said he, “you ar’n’t, sure, the child I met in the morning?” “Yes,” said I, “I am; what makes you doubt it?” “Why, you were then all froth and conceit,” said the old man, “and now you take off your cap to me.” “I beg your pardon,” said I, “if I was frothy and conceited; it ill becomes a child like me to be so.” “That’s true, dear,” said the old man; “well, as you have begged my pardon, I truly forgive you.” “Thank you,” said I; “have you caught any more of those things?” “Only four or five,” said the old man; “they are getting scarce, though this used to be a great neighbourhood for them.” “And what do you do with them?” said I; “do you carry them home and play with them?” “I sometimes play with one or two that I tame,” said the old man; “but I hunt them mostly for the fat which they contain, out of which I make unguents which are good for various sore troubles, especially for the rheumatism.” “And do you get your living by hunting these creatures?” I demanded. “Not altogether,” said the old man; “besides being a viper-hunter, I am what they call a herbalist, p. 40 one who knows the virtue of particular herbs; I gather them at the proper season, to make medicines with for the sick.” “And do you live in the neighbourhood?” I demanded. “You seem very fond of asking questions, child. No, I do not live in this neighbourhood in particular, I travel about; I have not been in this neighbourhood till lately for some years.”

From this time the old man and myself formed an acquaintance; I often accompanied him in his wanderings about the neighbourhood, and, on two or three occasions, assisted him in catching the reptiles which he hunted. He generally carried a viper with him which he had made quite tame, and from which he had extracted the poisonous fangs; it would dance and perform various kinds of tricks. He was fond of telling me anecdotes connected with his adventures with the reptile species. “But,” said he one day, sighing, “I must shortly give up this business; I am no longer the man I was; I am become timid, and when a person is timid in viper-hunting, he had better leave off, as it is quite clear his virtue is leaving him. I got a fright some years ago, which I am quite sure I shall never get the better of; my hand has been shaky more or less ever since.” “What frightened you?” said I. “I had better not tell you,” said the old man, “or you may be frightened too, lose your virtue, and be no longer good for the business.” “I don’t care,” said I; “I don’t intend to follow the business: I daresay I shall be an officer, like my father.” “Well,” said the old man, “I once saw the king of the vipers, and since then—” “The king of the vipers!” said I, p. 41 interrupting him; “have the vipers a king?” “As sure as we have,” said the old man—“as sure as we have King George to rule over us, have these reptiles a king to rule over them.” “And where did you see him?” said I. “I will tell you,” said the old man, “though I don’t like talking about the matter. It may be about seven years ago that I happened to be far down yonder to the west, on the other side of England, nearly two hundred miles from here, following my business. It was a very sultry day, I remember, and I had been out several hours catching creatures. It might be about three o’clock in the afternoon, when I found myself on some heathy land near the sea, on the ridge of a hill, the side of which, nearly as far down as the sea, was heath; but on the top there was arable ground, which had been planted, and from which the harvest had been gathered —oats or barley, I know not which—but I remember that the ground was covered with stubble. Well, about three o’clock, as I told you before, what with the heat of the day and from having walked about for hours in a lazy way, I felt very tired; so I determined to have a sleep, and I laid myself down, my head just on the ridge of the hill, towards the field, and my body over the side down amongst the heath; my bag, which was nearly filled with creatures, lay at a little distance from my face; the creatures were struggling in it, I remember, and I thought to myself, how much more comfortably off I was than they; I was taking my ease on the nice open hill, cooled with the breezes, whilst they were in the nasty close bag, coiling about one another, and breaking their very hearts, all to no purpose: and I felt quite comfortable and happy in the thought, and little by p. 42 little closed my eyes, and fell into the sweetest snooze that ever I was in in all my life; and there I lay over the hill’s side, with my head half in the field, I don’t know how long, all dead asleep. At last it seemed to me that I heard a noise in my sleep, something like a thing moving, very faint, however, far away; then it died, and then it came again upon my ear as I slept, and now it appeared almost as if I heard crackle, crackle; then it died again, or I became yet more dead asleep than before, I know not which, but I certainly lay some time without hearing it. All of a sudden I became awake, and there was I, on the ridge of the hill, with my cheek on the ground towards the stubble, with a noise in my ear like that of something moving towards me, amongst

the stubble of the field; well, I lay a moment or two listening to the noise, and then I became frightened, for I did not like the noise at all, it sounded so odd; so I rolled myself on my belly, and looked towards the stubble. Mercy upon us! there was a huge snake, or rather a dreadful viper, for it was all yellow and gold, moving towards me, bearing its head about a foot and a half above the ground, the dry stubble crackling beneath its outrageous belly. It might be about five yards off when I first saw it, making straight towards me, child, as if it would devour me. I lay quite still, for I was stupefied with horror, whilst the creature came still nearer; and now it was nearly upon me, when it suddenly drew back a little, and then—what do you think?—it lifted its head and chest high in the air, and high over my face as I looked up, flickering at me with its tongue as if it would fly at my face. Child, what I felt at that moment I can scarcely say, but it was a sufficient p. 43
punishment for all the sins I ever committed; and there we two were, I looking up at the viper, and the viper looking down upon me, flickering at me with its tongue. It was only the kindness of God that saved me: all at once there was a loud noise, the report of a gun, for a fowler was shooting at a covey of birds, a little way off in the stubble. Whereupon the viper sunk its head, and immediately made off over the ridge of the hill, down in the direction of the sea. As it passed by me, however,—and it passed close by me,—it hesitated a moment, as if it was doubtful whether it should not seize me; it did not, however, but made off down the hill. It has often struck me that he was angry with me, and came upon me unawares for presuming to meddle with his people, as I have always been in the habit of doing."

"But," said I, "how do you know that it was the king of the vipers?"

"How do I know!" said the old man; "who else should it be? There was as much difference between it and other reptiles as between King George and other people."

"Is King George, then, different from other people?" I demanded.

"Of course," said the old man; "I have never seen him myself, but I have heard people say that he is a ten times greater man than other folks; indeed, it stands to reason that he must be different from the rest, else people would not be so eager to see him. Do you think, child, that people would be fools enough to run a matter of twenty or thirty miles to see the king, provided King George—"

"Haven't the French a king?" I demanded.

"Yes," said the old man, "or something much the same, and a queer one he is; not quite so big as p. 44
King George, they say, but quite as terrible a fellow. What of him?"

"Suppose he should come to Norman Cross!"

"What should he do at Norman Cross, child?"

"Why, you were talking about the vipers in your bag breaking their hearts, and so on, and their king coming to help them. Now, suppose the French king should hear of his people being in trouble at Norman Cross, and—"

"He can't come, child," said the old man, rubbing his hands, "the water lies between. The French don't like the water; neither vipers nor Frenchmen take kindly to the water, child."

When the old man [44] left the country, which he did a few days after the conversation which I have just related, he left me the reptile which he had tamed and rendered quite harmless by removing the fangs. I was in the habit of feeding it with milk, and frequently carried it abroad with me in my walks.

CHAPTER V p. 45

The Tent—Man and Woman—Dark and Swarthy—Manner of Speaking—Bad Money—Transfixed—Faltering Tone—Little Basket—High Opinion—Plenty of Good—Keeping Guard—Tilted Cart—Rubricals—Jasper—The Right Sort—The Horseman of the Lane—John Newton—The Alarm—Gentle Brothers.

One day it happened that, being on my rambles, I entered a green lane which I had never seen before; at first it was rather narrow, but as I advanced it became considerably wider; in the middle was a drift-way with deep ruts, but right and left was a space carpeted with a sward of trefoil and clover; there was no lack of trees, chiefly ancient oaks, which, flinging out their arms from either side, nearly formed a canopy, and afforded a pleasing shelter from the rays of the sun, which was burning fiercely above. Suddenly a group of objects attracted my attention. Beneath one of the largest of the trees, upon the grass, was a kind of low tent or booth, from the top of which a thin smoke was curling; beside it stood a couple of light carts, whilst two or three lean horses or ponies were cropping the herbage which was growing nigh. Wondering to whom this odd tent could belong, I advanced till I was close before it, when I found that it consisted of p. 46
two tilts, like those of waggons, placed upon the ground and fronting each other, connected behind by a sail or large piece of canvas which was but partially drawn across the top; upon the ground, in the intervening space, was a fire, over which, supported by a kind of iron crowbar, hung a caldron; my advance had been so noiseless as not to alarm the inmates, who consisted of

a man and woman, who sat apart, one on each side of the fire; they were both busily employed—the man was carding plaited straw, whilst the woman seemed to be rubbing something with a white powder, some of which lay on a plate beside her; suddenly the man looked up, and, perceiving me, uttered a strange kind of cry, and the next moment both the woman and himself were on their feet and rushing out upon me.

I retreated a few steps, yet without turning to flee. I was not, however, without apprehension, which, indeed, the appearance of these two people was well calculated to inspire: the woman was a stout figure, seemingly between thirty and forty; she wore no cap, and her long hair fell on either side of her head like horse-tails half way down her waist; her skin was dark and swarthy, like that of a toad, and the expression of her countenance was particularly evil; her arms were bare, and her bosom was but half concealed by a slight bodice, below which she wore a coarse petticoat, her only other article of dress. The man was somewhat younger, but of a figure equally wild; his frame was long and lathy, but his arms were remarkably short, his neck was rather bent, he squinted slightly, and his mouth was much awry; his complexion was dark, but, unlike that of the woman, was more ruddy than livid; there was a deep scar on his cheek, something like the impression of a halfpenny. The dress was quite in keeping with the figure: in his hat, which was slightly peaked, was stuck a peacock's feather; over a waistcoat of hide, untanned and with the hair upon it, he wore a rough jerkin of russet hue; smallclothes of leather, which had probably once belonged to a soldier, but with which pipeclay did not seem to have come in contact for many a year, protected his lower man as far as the knee; his legs were cased in long stockings of blue worsted, and on his shoes he wore immense old-fashioned buckles.

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Such were the two beings who now came rushing upon me; the man was rather in advance, brandishing a ladle in his hand.

"So I have caught you at last," said he; "I'll teach ye, you young highwayman, to come skulking about my properties!"

Young as I was, I remarked that his manner of speaking was different from that of any people with whom I had been in the habit of associating. It was quite as strange as his appearance, and yet it nothing resembled the foreign English which I had been in the habit of hearing through the palisades of the prison; he could scarcely be a foreigner.

"Your properties!" said I; "I am in the King's Lane. Why did you put them there, if you did not wish them to be seen?"

"On the spy," said the woman, "hey? I'll drown him in the sludge in the toad-pond over the hedge."

"So we will," said the man, "drown him anon in the mud!"

"Drown me, will you?" said I; "I should like to see you! What's all this about? Was it because I saw you with your hands full of straw plait, and my mother there—"

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"Yes," said the woman; "what was I about?"

Myself. How should I know? Making bad money, perhaps!

And it will be as well here to observe, that at this time there was much bad money in circulation in the neighbourhood, generally supposed to be fabricated by the prisoners, so that this false coin and straw plait formed the standard subjects of conversation at Norman Cross.

"I'll strangle thee," said the beldame, dashing at me. "Bad money, is it?"

"Leave him to me, wifelkin," said the man, interposing; "you shall now see how I'll baste him down the lane."

Myself. I tell you what, my chap, you had better put down that thing of yours; my father lies concealed within my tepid breast, and if to me you offer any harm or wrong, I'll call him forth to help me with his forked tongue.

Man. What do you mean, ye Bengui's [48] bantling? I never heard such discourse in all my life: play man's speech or Frenchman's talk—which, I wonder? Your father! tell the mumping villain that if he comes near my fire I'll serve him out as I will you. Take that . . . Tiny Jesus! what have we got here? Oh, delicate Jesus! what is the matter with the child?

I had made a motion which the viper understood; and now, partly disengaging itself from my bosom, where it had lain perdu, it raised its head to a level with my face, and stared upon my enemy with its glittering eyes.

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The man stood like one transfixed, and the ladle, with which he had aimed a blow at me, now hung in the air like the hand which held it; his mouth was extended, and his cheeks became of a pale yellow, save alone that place which bore the mark which I have already described, and this shone now portentously, like fire. He stood in this manner for some time; at last the ladle fell from his hand, and its falling appeared to rouse him from his stupor.

"I say, wifelkin," said he, in a faltering tone, "did you ever see the like of this here?"

But the woman had retreated to the tent, from the entrance of which her loathly face was now thrust, with an expression partly of terror and partly of curiosity. After gazing some time longer

at the viper and myself, the man stooped down and took up the ladle; then, as if somewhat more assured, he moved to the tent, where he entered into conversation with the beldame in a low voice. Of their discourse, though I could hear the greater part of it, I understood not a single word; and I wondered what it could be, for I knew by the sound that it was not French. At last the man, in a somewhat louder tone, appeared to put a question to the woman, who nodded her head affirmatively, and in a moment or two produced a small stool, which she delivered to him. He placed it on the ground, close by the door of the tent, first rubbing it with his sleeve, as if for the purpose of polishing its surface.

Man. Now, my precious little gentleman, do sit down here by the poor people's tent; we wish to be civil in our slight way. Don't be angry, and say no; but look kindly upon us, and satisfied, my precious little God Almighty. p. 50

Woman. Yes, my gorgeous angel, sit down by the poor bodies' fire, and eat a sweetmeat. We want to ask you a question or two; only first put that serpent away.

Myself. I can sit down, and bid the serpent go to sleep, that's easy enough; but as for eating a sweetmeat, how can I do that? I have not got one, and where am I to get it?

Woman. Never fear, my tiny tawny, [50] we can give you one, such as you never ate, I daresay, however far you may have come from.

The serpent sunk into its usual resting-place, and I sat down on the stool. The woman opened a box, and took out a strange little basket or hamper, not much larger than a man's fist, and formed of a delicate kind of matting. It was sewed at the top; but, ripping it open with a knife, she held it to me, and I saw, to my surprise, that it contained candied fruits of a dark green hue, tempting enough to one of my age. "There, my tiny," said she; "taste, and tell me how you like them."

"Very much," said I; "where did you get them?"

The beldame leered upon me for a moment, then, nodding her head thrice, with a knowing look, said, "Who knows better than yourself, my tawny?"

Now, I knew nothing about the matter; but I saw that these strange people had conceived a very high opinion of the abilities of their visitor, which I was nothing loath to encourage. I therefore answered boldly, "Ah! who indeed!" p. 51

"Certainly," said the man; "who should know better than yourself, or so well? And now, my tiny one, let me ask you one thing—you didn't come to do us any harm?"

"No," said I, "I had no dislike to you; though, if you were to meddle with me—"

Man. Of course, my gorgeous, of course you would; and quite right too. Meddle with you!—what right have we? I should say, it would not be quite safe. I see how it is; you are one of them there;—and he bent his head towards his left shoulder.

Myself. Yes, I am one of them—for I thought he was alluding to the soldiers,—you had best mind what you are about, I can tell you.

Man. Don't doubt we will for our own sake; Lord bless you, wifelkin, only think that we should see one of them there when we least thought about it. Well, I have heard of such things, though I never thought to see one; however, seeing is believing. Well! now you are come, and are not going to do us any mischief, I hope you will stay; you can do us plenty of good if you will.

Myself. What good could I do you?

Man. What good? plenty! Would you not bring us luck? I have heard say, that one of them there always does, if it will but settle down. Stay with us; you shall have a tilted cart all to yourself if you like. We'll make you our little God Almighty, and say our prayers to you every morning!

Myself. That would be nice; and, if you were to give me plenty of these things, I should have no objection. But what would my father say? I think he would hardly let me. p. 52

Man. Why not? he would be with you; and kindly would we treat him. Indeed, without your father you would be nothing at all.

Myself. That's true; but I do not think he could be spared from his regiment. I have heard him say that they could do nothing without him.

Man. His regiment! What are you talking about?—what does the child mean?

Myself. What do I mean!—why, that my father is an officer-man at the barracks yonder, keeping guard over the French prisoners.

Man. Oh! then that sap [52] is not your father?

Myself. What, the snake? Why, no! Did you think he was?

Man. To be sure we did. Didn't you tell me so?

Myself. Why, yes; but who would have thought you would have believed it? It is a tame one. I hunt vipers, and tame them.

Man. O—h!

"O—h!" grunted the woman, "that's it, is it?"

The man and woman, who during this conversation had resumed their former positions within the tent, looked at each other with a queer look of surprise, as if somewhat disconcerted at what they now heard. They then entered into discourse with each other in the same strange tongue which had already puzzled me. At length the man looked me in the face, and said, somewhat hesitatingly, "So you are not one of them there after all?" p. 53

Myself. One of them there? I don't know what you mean.

Man. Why, we have been thinking you were a goblin—a devilkin! However, I see how it is: you are a sap-engro, a chap who catches snakes, and plays tricks with them! Well, it comes very nearly to the same thing; and if you please to list with us, and bear us pleasant company, we shall be glad of you. I'd take my oath upon it, that we might make a mort of money by you and that sap, and the tricks it could do; and, as you seem fly to everything, I shouldn't wonder if you would make a prime hand at telling fortunes.

"I shouldn't wonder," said I.

Man. Of course. And you might still be our God Almighty, or at any rate our clergyman, so you should live in a tilted cart by yourself, and say prayers to us night and morning—to wifelkin here, and all our family; there's plenty of us when we are all together: as I said before, you seem fly, I shouldn't wonder if you could read?

"Oh yes!" said I, "I can read;" and, eager to display my accomplishments, I took my book out of my pocket, and, opening it at random, proceeded to read how a certain man, whilst wandering about a certain solitary island, entered a cave, the mouth of which was overgrown with brushwood, and how he was nearly frightened to death in that cave by something which he saw.

"That will do," said the man; "that's the kind of prayers for me and my family, ar'n't they, wifelkin? I never heard more delicate prayers in all my life! Why, they beat the rubricals hollow! p. 54
—and here comes my son Jasper. I say, Jasper, here's a young sap-engro that can read, and is more fly than yourself. Shake hands with him; I wish ye to be two brothers."

With a swift but stealthy pace Jasper came towards us from the farther part of the lane; on reaching the tent he stood still, and looked fixedly upon me as I sat upon the stool; I looked fixedly upon him. A queer look had Jasper; he was a lad of some twelve or thirteen years, with long arms, unlike the singular being who called himself his father; his complexion was ruddy, but his face was seamed, though it did not bear the peculiar scar which disfigured the countenance of the other; nor, though roguish enough, a certain evil expression which that of the other bore, and which the face of the woman possessed in a yet more remarkable degree. For the rest, he wore drab breeches, with certain strings at the knee, a rather gay waistcoat, and tolerably white shirt; under his arm he bore a mighty whip of whalebone with a brass knob, and upon his head was a hat without either top or brim.

"There, Jasper! shake hands with the sap-engro."

"Can he box, father?" said Jasper, surveying me rather contemptuously. "I should think not, he looks so puny and small."

"Hold your peace, fool!" said the man; "he can do more than that—I tell you he's fly: he carries a sap about, which would sting a ninny like you to dead."

"What, a sap-engro!" said the boy, with a singular whine, and, stooping down, he leered curiously p. 55
in my face, kindly, however, and then patted me on the head. "A sap-engro!" he ejaculated; "lor!"

"Yes, and one of the right sort," said the man; "I am glad we have met with him; he is going to list with us, and be our clergyman and God Almighty, ar'n't you, my tawny?"

"I don't know," said I; "I must see what my father will say."

"Your father; bah! . . ." but here he stopped, for a sound was heard like the rapid galloping of a horse, not loud and distinct as on a road, but dull and heavy as if upon a grass sward; nearer and nearer it came, and the man, starting up, rushed out of the tent, and looked around anxiously. I arose from the stool upon which I had been seated, and just at that moment, amidst a crashing of boughs and sticks, a man on horseback bounded over the hedge into the lane at a few yards' distance from where we were: from the impetus of the leap the horse was nearly down on his knees; the rider, however, by dint of vigorous handling of the reins, prevented him from falling, and then rode up to the tent. "'Tis Nat," said the man; "what brings him here?" The new comer was a stout burly fellow, about the middle age; he had a savage determined look, and his face was nearly covered over with carbuncles; he wore a broad slouching hat, and was dressed in a grey coat, cut in a fashion which I afterwards learnt to be the genuine Newmarket cut, the skirts being exceedingly short; his waistcoat was of red plush, and he wore broad corduroy breeches and white top-boots. The steed which carried him was of iron grey, spirited and powerful, but covered with sweat and foam. The fellow glanced fiercely and suspiciously around, and said p. 56
something to the man of the tent in a harsh and rapid voice. A short and hurried conversation ensued in the strange tongue. I could not take my eyes off this new comer. Oh, that half-jockey, half-bruiser countenance, I never forgot it! More than fifteen years afterwards I found myself

amidst a crowd before Newgate; a gallows was erected, and beneath it stood a criminal, a notorious malefactor. I recognised him at once; the horseman of the lane is now beneath the fatal tree, but nothing altered; still the same man; jerking his head to the right and left with the same fierce and under glance, just as if the affairs of this world had the same kind of interest to the last; grey coat of Newmarket cut, plush waistcoat, corduroys, and boots, nothing altered; but the head, alas! is bare, and so is the neck. Oh, crime and virtue, virtue and crime!—it was old John Newton, I think, who, when he saw a man going to be hanged, said, "There goes John Newton, but for the grace of God!"

But the lane, the lane, all was now in confusion in the lane; the man and woman were employed in striking the tents and in making hurried preparations for departure; the boy Jasper was putting the harness upon the ponies and attaching them to the carts; and, to increase the singularity of the scene, two or three wild-looking women and girls, in red cloaks and immense black beaver bonnets, came from I know not what direction, and, after exchanging a few words with the others, commenced with fierce and agitated gestures to assist them in their occupation. The rider meanwhile sat upon his horse, but evidently in a state of great impatience; he muttered p. 57
curses between his teeth, spurred the animal furiously, and then reined it in, causing it to rear itself up nearly perpendicular. At last he said, "Curse ye, for Romans, how slow ye are! well, it is no business of mine, stay here all day if you like; I have given ye warning, I am off to the big north road. However, before I go, you had better give me all you have of that."

"Truly spoken, Nat, my pal," said the man; "give it him, mother. There it is; now be off as soon as you please, and rid us of evil company."

The woman had handed him two bags formed of stocking, half full of something heavy, which looked through them for all the world like money of some kind. The fellow, on receiving them, thrust them without ceremony into the pockets of his coat, and then, without a word of farewell salutation, departed at a tremendous rate, the hoofs of his horse thundering for a long time on the hard soil of the neighbouring road, till the sound finally died away in the distance. The strange people were not slow in completing their preparations, and then, flogging their animals terrifically, hurried away seemingly in the same direction.

The boy Jasper was last of the band. As he was following the rest, he stopped suddenly, and looked on the ground appearing to muse; then, turning round, he came up to me where I was standing, leered in my face, and then, thrusting out his hand, he said, "Good bye, Sap; I daresay we shall meet again; remember we are brothers; two gentle brothers."

Then whining forth, "What, a sap-engro, lor!" he gave me a parting leer, and hastened away. p. 58

I remained standing in the lane gazing after the retreating company. "A strange set of people," said I at last; "I wonder who they can be."

CHAPTER VI p. 59

Three Years—Lilly's Grammar—Proficiency—Ignorant of Figures—The School Bell—Order of Succession—Persecution—What are we to do?—Northward—A Goodly Scene—Haunted Ground—Feats of Chivalry—Rivers—Over the Brig.

Years passed on, even three years; during this period I had increased considerably in stature and in strength, and, let us hope, improved in mind; for I had entered on the study of the Latin language. The very first person to whose care I was entrusted for the acquisition of Latin was an old friend of my father's, a clergyman who kept a seminary at a town the very next we visited after our departure from "the Cross." Under his instruction, however, I continued only a few weeks, as we speedily left the place. "Captain," said this divine, when my father came to take leave of him on the eve of our departure, "I have a friendship for you, and therefore wish to give you a piece of advice concerning this son of yours. You are now removing him from my care; you do wrong, but we will let that pass. Listen to me: there is but one good school book in the world —the one I use in my seminary—Lilly's Latin Grammar, in which your son has already made some progress. If you are anxious for the success of your son in life, for the correctness of his conduct p. 60
and the soundness of his principles, keep him to Lilly's Grammar. If you can by any means, either fair or foul, induce him to get by heart Lilly's Latin Grammar, you may set your heart at rest with respect to him; I, myself, will be his warrant. I never yet knew a boy that was induced, either by fair means or foul, to learn Lilly's Latin Grammar by heart, who did not turn out a man, provided he lived long enough."

My father, who did not understand the classical languages, received with respect the advice of his old friend, and from that moment conceived the highest opinion of Lilly's Latin Grammar. During three years I studied Lilly's Latin Grammar under the tuition of various schoolmasters, for I travelled with the regiment, and in every town in which we were stationary I was invariably (God bless my father!) sent to the classical academy of the place. It chanced, by good fortune, that in the generality of these schools the grammar of Lilly was in use; when, however, that was not the case, it made no difference in my educational course, my father always stipulating with the masters that I should be daily examined in Lilly. At the end of the three years I had the whole by heart; you had only to repeat the first two or three words of any sentence in any part of the

book, and forthwith I would open cry, commencing without blundering and hesitation, and continue till you were glad to beg me to leave off, with many expressions of admiration at my proficiency in the Latin language. Sometimes, however, to convince you how well I merited these encomiums, I would follow you to the bottom of the stair, and even into the street, repeating in a p. 61
kind of sing-song measure the sonorous lines of the golden schoolmaster. If I am here asked whether I understood anything of what I had got by heart, I reply—"Never mind, I understand it all now, and believe that no one ever yet got Lilly's Latin Grammar by heart when young, who repented of the feat at a mature age."

And, when my father saw that I had accomplished my task, he opened his mouth, and said, "Truly, this is more than I expected. I did not think that there had been so much in you, either of application or capacity; you have now learnt all that is necessary, if my friend Dr. B---'s opinion was sterling, as I have no doubt it was. You are still a child, however, and must yet go to school, in order that you may be kept out of evil company. Perhaps you may still contrive, now you have exhausted the barn, to pick up a grain or two in the barn-yard. You are still ignorant of figures, I believe, not that I would mention figures in the same day with Lilly's Grammar."

These words were uttered in a place called ---, in the north, or in the road to the north, to which, for some time past, our corps had been slowly advancing. I was sent to the school of the place, which chanced to be a day school. It was a somewhat extraordinary one, and a somewhat extraordinary event occurred to me within its walls.

It occupied part of the farther end of a small plain, or square, at the outskirts of the town, close to some extensive bleaching fields. It was a long low building of one room, with no upper storey; on the top was a kind of wooden box, or sconce, which I at first mistook for a pigeon-house, but p. 62
which in reality contained a bell, to which was attached a rope, which, passing through the ceiling, hung dangling in the middle of the school-room. I am the more particular in mentioning this appurtenance, as I had soon occasion to scrape acquaintance with it in a manner not very agreeable to my feelings. The master was very proud of his bell, if I might judge from the fact of his eyes being frequently turned to that part of the ceiling from which the rope depended. Twice every day, namely, after the morning and evening tasks had been gone through, were the boys rung out of school by the monotonous jingle of this bell. This ringing out was rather a lengthy affair, for, as the master was a man of order and method, the boys were only permitted to go out of the room one by one; and as they were rather numerous, amounting, at least, to one hundred, and were taught to move at a pace of suitable decorum, at least a quarter of an hour elapsed from the commencement of the march before the last boy could make his exit. The office of bell-ringer was performed by every boy successively; and it so happened that, the very first day of my attendance at the school, the turn to ring the bell had, by order of succession, arrived at the place which had been allotted to me; for the master, as I have already observed, was a man of method and order, and every boy had a particular seat, to which he became a fixture as long as he continued at the school.

So, upon this day, when the tasks were done and completed, and the boys sat with their hats and caps in their hands, anxiously expecting the moment of dismissal, it was suddenly notified to me, by the urchins who sat nearest to me, that I must get up and ring the bell. Now, as this was the p. 63
first time that I had been at the school, I was totally unacquainted with the process, which I had never seen, and, indeed, had never heard of till that moment. I therefore sat still, not imagining it possible that any such duty could be required of me. But now, with not a little confusion, I perceived that the eyes of all the boys in the school were fixed upon me. Presently there were nods and winks in the direction of the bell-rope; and, as these produced no effect, uncouth visages were made, like those of monkeys when enraged; teeth were gnashed, tongues thrust out, and even fists were bent at me. The master, who stood at the end of the room, with a huge ferule under his arm, bent full upon me a look of stern appeal; and the ushers, of whom there were four, glared upon me, each from his own particular corner, as I vainly turned, in one direction and another, in search of one reassuring look.

But now, probably in obedience to a sign from the master, the boys in my immediate neighbourhood began to maltreat me. Some pinched me with their fingers, some buffeted me, whilst others pricked me with pins, or the points of compasses. These arguments were not without effect. I sprang from my seat, and endeavoured to escape along a double line of benches, thronged with boys of all ages, from the urchin of six or seven, to the nondescript of sixteen or seventeen. It was like running the gauntlet; every one, great or small, pinching, kicking, or otherwise maltreating me, as I passed by.

Goaded on in this manner, I at length reached the middle of the room, where dangled the bell-rope, the cause of all my sufferings. I should have passed it—for my confusion was so great, that p. 64
I was quite at a loss to comprehend what all this could mean, and almost believed myself under the influence of an ugly dream—but now the boys, who were seated in advance in the row, arose with one accord, and barred my farther progress; and one, doubtless more sensible than the rest, seizing the rope, thrust it into my hand. I now began to perceive that the dismissal of the school, and my own release from torment, depended upon this selfsame rope. I therefore, in a fit of desperation, pulled it once or twice, and then left off, naturally supposing that I had done quite enough. The boys who sat next the door, no sooner heard the bell, than rising from their seats, they moved out at the door. The bell, however, had no sooner ceased to jingle, than they stopped short, and, turning round, stared at the master, as much as to say, "What are we to do now?" This was too much for the patience of the man of method, which my previous stupidity had already nearly exhausted. Dashing forward into the middle of the room, he struck me violently

on the shoulders with his ferule, and, snatching the rope out of my hand, exclaimed, with a stentorian voice, and genuine Yorkshire accent, “Prodigy of ignorance! dost not even know how to ring a bell? Must I myself instruct thee?” He then commenced pulling at the bell with such violence, that long before half the school was dismissed the rope broke, and the rest of the boys had to depart without their accustomed music.

But I must not linger here, though I could say much about the school and the pedagogue highly amusing and diverting, which, however, I suppress, in order to make way for matters of yet greater interest. On we went, northward, northward! and, as we advanced, I saw that the country was becoming widely different from those parts of merry England in which we had previously travelled. It was wilder, and less cultivated, and more broken with hills and hillocks. The people, too, of those regions appeared to partake of something of the character of their country. They were coarsely dressed; tall and sturdy of frame; their voices were deep and guttural; and the half of the dialect which they spoke was unintelligible to my ears.

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I often wondered where we could be going, for I was at this time about as ignorant of geography as I was of most other things. However, I held my peace, asked no questions, and patiently awaited the issue.

Northward, northward, still! And it came to pass that, one morning, I found myself extended on the bank of a river. It was a beautiful morning of early spring; small white clouds were floating in the heaven, occasionally veiling the countenance of the sun, whose light, as they retired, would again burst forth, coursing like a race-horse over the scene—and a goodly scene it was! Before me, across the water, on an eminence, stood a white old city, [65] surrounded with lofty walls, above which rose the tops of tall houses, with here and there a church or steeple. To my right hand was a long and massive bridge, with many arches, and of antique architecture, which traversed the river. The river was a noble one; the broadest that I had hitherto seen. Its waters, of a greenish tinge, poured with impetuosity beneath the narrow arches to meet the sea, close at hand, as the boom of the billows breaking distinctly upon a beach declared. There were songs upon the river from the fisher-barks; and occasionally a chorus, plaintive and wild, such as I had never heard before, the words of which I did not understand, but which, at the present time, down the long avenue of years, seem in memory’s ear to sound like “Horam, coram, dago.” Several robust fellows were near me, some knee-deep in water, employed in hauling the seine upon the strand. Huge fish were struggling amidst the meshes—princely salmon—their brilliant mail of blue and silver flashing in the morning beam; so goodly and gay a scene, in truth, had never greeted my boyish eye.

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And, as I gazed upon the prospect, my bosom began to heave, and my tears to trickle. Was it the beauty of the scene which gave rise to these emotions? Possibly; for though a poor ignorant child —a half-wild creature—I was not insensible to the loveliness of nature, and took pleasure in the happiness and handiworks of my fellow-creatures. Yet, perhaps, in something more deep and mysterious the feelings which then pervaded me might originate. Who can lie down on Elvir Hill without experiencing something of the sorcery of the place? Flee from Elvir Hill, young swain, or the maids of Elle will have power over you, and you will go elf-wild!—so say the Danes. I had unconsciously laid myself down upon haunted ground; and I am willing to imagine that what I then experienced was rather connected with the world of spirits and dreams than with what I actually saw and heard around me. Surely the elves and genii of the place were conversing, by some inscrutable means, with the principle of intelligence lurking within the poor uncultivated clod! Perhaps to that ethereal principle the wonders of the past, as connected with that stream, the glories of the present, and even the history of the future, were at that moment being revealed! Of how many feats of chivalry had those old walls been witness, when hostile kings contended for their possession?—how many an army from the south and from the north had trod that old bridge?—what red and noble blood had crimsoned those rushing waters?—what strains had been sung, ay, were yet being sung, on its banks?—some soft as Doric reed; some fierce and sharp as those of Norwegian Skaldaglam; some as replete with wild and wizard force as Finland’s runes, singing of Kalevala’s moors, and the deeds of Woinomoinen! Honour to thee, thou island stream! Onward may thou ever roll, fresh and green, rejoicing in thy bright past, thy glorious present, and in vivid hope of a triumphant future! Flow on, beautiful one!—which of the world’s streams canst thou envy, with thy beauty and renown? Stately is the Danube, rolling in its might through lands romantic with the wild exploits of Turk, Polak, and Magyar! Lovely is the Rhine! on its shelvy banks grows the racy grape; and strange old keeps of robber-knights of yore are reflected in its waters, from picturesque crags and airy headlands!—yet neither the stately Danube, nor the beauteous Rhine, with all their fame, though abundant, needst thou envy, thou pure island stream!—and far less yon turbid river of old, not modern renown, gurgling beneath the walls of what was once proud Rome, towering Rome, Jupiter’s town, but now vile Rome, crumbling Rome, Batuscha’s town, far less needst thou envy the turbid Tiber of bygone fame, creeping sadly to the sea, surcharged with the abominations of modern Rome—how unlike to thee, thou pure island stream!

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And, as I lay on the bank and wept, there drew nigh to me a man in the habiliments of a fisher. He was bare-legged, of a weather-beaten countenance, and of stature approaching to the gigantic. “What is the callant greeting for?” said he, as he stopped and surveyed me. “Has onybody wrought ye ony harm?”

“Not that I know of,” I replied, rather guessing at than understanding his question; “I was crying because I could not help it! I say, old one, what is the name of this river?”

“Hout! I now see what you was greeting at—at your ain ignorance, nae doubt—’tis very great! Weel, I will na fash you with reproaches, but even enlighten ye, since you seem a decent man’s bairn, and you speir a civil question. Yon river is called the Tweed; and yonder, over the brig, is Scotland. Did ye never hear of the Tweed, my bonny man?”

“No,” said I, as I rose from the grass, and proceeded to cross the bridge to the town at which we had arrived the preceding night; “I never heard of it; but now I have seen it, I shall not soon forget it!”

CHAPTER VII

The Castle—A Father’s Inquiries—Scotch Language—A Determination—Bui hin Digri—Good Scotchman—Difference of Races—Ne’er a Haggis—Pugnacious People—Wha are Ye, Man?—The Nor Loch—Gestures Wild—The Bicker—New Town Champion—Wild-Looking Figure—Headlong.

It was not long before we found ourselves at Edinburgh, [69a] or rather in the Castle, into which the regiment marched with drums beating, colour-flying, and a long train of baggage-waggons behind. The Castle was, as I suppose it is now, a garrison for soldiers. Two other regiments were already there; the one an Irish, if I remember right, the other a small Highland corps.

It is hardly necessary to say much about this Castle, which everybody has seen; on which account, doubtless, nobody has ever yet thought fit to describe it—at least that I am aware. Be this as it may, I have no intention of describing it, and shall content myself with observing, that we took up our abode in that immense building, or caserne, of modern erection, which occupies the entire eastern [69b] side of the bold rock on which the Castle stands. A gallant caserne it was —the best and roomiest that I had hitherto seen—rather cold and windy, it is true, especially in p. 70 the winter, but commanding a noble prospect of a range of distant hills, which I was told were “the hieland hills,” and of a broad arm of the sea, which I heard somebody say was the Firth of Forth.

My brother, who, for some years past, had been receiving his education in a certain celebrated school in England, was now with us; and it came to pass, that one day my father, as he sat at table, looked steadfastly on my brother and myself, and then addressed my mother:—“During my journey down hither, I have lost no opportunity of making inquiries about these people, the Scotch, amongst whom we now are, and since I have been here I have observed them attentively. From what I have heard and seen, I should say that upon the whole they are a very decent set of people; they seem acute and intelligent, and I am told that their system of education is so excellent, that every person is learned—more or less acquainted with Greek and Latin. There is one thing, however, connected with them, which is a great drawback—the horrid jargon which they speak. However learned they may be in Greek and Latin, their English is execrable; and yet I’m told it is not so bad as it was. I was in company, the other day, with an Englishman who has resided here many years. We were talking about the country and the people. ‘I should like both very well,’ said I, ‘were it not for the language. I wish sincerely our Parliament, which is passing so many foolish Acts every year, would pass one to force these Scotch to speak English.’ ‘I wish so, too,’ said he. ‘The language is a disgrace to the British Government; but, if you had heard it twenty years ago, captain!—if you had heard it as it was spoken when I first p. 71 came to Edinburgh!’”

“Only custom,” said my mother. “I daresay the language is now what it was then.”

“I don’t know,” said my father; “though I daresay you are right; it could never have been worse than it is at present. But now to the point. Were it not for the language, which, if the boys were to pick it up, might ruin their prospects in life,—were it not for that, I should very much like to send them to a school there is in this place, which everybody talks about—the High School I think they call it. ’Tis said to be the best school in the whole island; but the idea of one’s children speaking Scotch—broad Scotch! I must think the matter over.”

And he did think the matter over; and the result of his deliberation was a determination to send us to the school. [71] Let me call thee up before my mind’s eye, High School, to which, every morning, the two English brothers took their way from the proud old Castle through the lofty streets of the Old Town. High School!—called so, I scarcely know why; neither lofty in thyself nor by position, being situated in a flat bottom; oblong structure of tawny stone, with many windows fenced with iron netting—with thy long hall below, and thy five chambers above, for the reception of the five classes, into which the eight hundred urchins, who styled thee instructress, were divided. Thy learned rector and his four subordinate dominies; thy strange old porter of the tall p. 72 form and grizzled hair, hight Boee, [72] and doubtless of Norse ancestry, as his name declares; perhaps of the blood of Bui hin Digri, the hero of northern song—the Jomsborg Viking who clove Thorsteinn Midlangr asunder in the dread sea battle of Horunga Vog, and who, when the fight was lost and his own two hands smitten off, seized two chests of gold with his bloody stumps, and, springing with them into the sea, cried to the scanty relics of his crew, “Overboard now, all Bui’s lads!” Yes, I remember all about thee, and how at eight of every morn we were all gathered together with one accord in the long hall, from which, after the litanies had been read (for so I will call them, being an Episcopalian), the five classes from the five sets of benches trotted off in

long files, one boy after the other, up the five spiral staircases of stone, each class to its destination; and well do I remember how we of the third sat hushed and still, watched by the eye of the dux, until the door opened, and in walked that model of a good Scotchman, the shrewd, intelligent, but warm-hearted and kind dominie, the respectable Carson.

And in this school I began to construe the Latin language, which I had never done before, notwithstanding my long and diligent study of Lilly, which illustrious grammar was not used at Edinburgh, nor indeed known. Greek was only taught in the fifth or highest class, in which my brother was; as for myself, I never got beyond the third during the two years that I remained at this seminary. I certainly acquired here a considerable insight in the Latin tongue; and, to the p. 73
scandal of my father and horror of my mother, a thorough proficiency in the Scotch, which, in less than two months, usurped the place of the English, and so obstinately maintained its ground, that I still can occasionally detect its lingering remains. I did not spend my time unpleasantly at this school, though, first of all, I had to pass through an ordeal.

“Scotland is a better country than England,” said an ugly, blear-eyed lad, about a head and shoulders taller than myself, the leader of a gang of varlets who surrounded me in the playground, on the first day, as soon as the morning lesson was over. “Scotland is a far better country than England, in every respect.”

“Is it?” said I. “Then you ought to be very thankful for not having been born in England.”

“That’s just what I am, ye loon; and every morning, when I say my prayers, I thank God for not being an Englishman. The Scotch are a much better and braver people than the English.”

“It may be so,” said I, “for what I know—indeed, till I came here, I never heard a word either about the Scotch or their country.”

“Are ye making fun of us, ye English puppy?” said the blear-eyed lad; “take that!” and I was presently beaten black and blue. And thus did I first become aware of the difference of races and their antipathy to each other.

“Bow to the storm, and it shall pass over you.” I held my peace, and silently submitted to the superiority of the Scotch—*in numbers*. This was enough; from an object of persecution I soon p. 74
became one of patronage, especially amongst the champions of the class. “The English,” said the blear-eyed lad, “though a wee bit behind the Scotch in strength and fortitude, are nae to be sneezed at, being far ahead of the Irish, to say nothing of the French, a pack of cowardly scoundrels. And with regard to the English country, it is na Scotland, it is true, but it has its gude properties; and, though there is ne’er a haggis in a’ the land, there’s an unco deal o’ gowd and siller. I respect England, for I have an auntie married there.”

The Scotch are certainly a most pugnacious people; their whole history proves it. Witness their incessant wars with the English in the olden time, and their internal feuds, highland and lowland, clan with clan, family with family, Saxon with Gael. In my time, the school-boys, for want, perhaps, of English urchins to contend with, were continually fighting with each other; every noon there was at least one pugilistic encounter, and sometimes three. In one month I witnessed more of these encounters than I had ever previously seen under similar circumstances in England. After all, there was not much harm done. Harm! what harm could result from short chopping blows, a hug, and a tumble? I was witness to many a sounding whack, some bloodshed, “a blue ee” now and then, but nothing more. In England, on the contrary, where the lads were comparatively mild, gentle, and pacific, I had been present at more than one death caused by blows in boyish combats, in which the oldest of the victors had scarcely reached thirteen years; p. 75
but these blows were in the jugular, given with the full force of the arm shot out horizontally from the shoulder.

But the Scotch—though by no means proficients in boxing (and how should they box, seeing that they have never had a teacher?)—are, I repeat, a most pugnacious people; at least they were in my time. Anything served them, that is, the urchins, as a pretence for a fray, or, Dorically speaking, a *bicker*; every street and close was at feud with its neighbour; the lads of the school were at feud with the young men of the college, whom they pelted in winter with snow, and in summer with stones; and then the feud between the Old and New Town!

One day I was standing on the ramparts of the Castle on the south-western [75] side which overhangs the green brae, where it slopes down into what was in those days the green swamp or morass, called by the natives of Auld Reekie the Nor Loch; it was a dark gloomy day, and a thin veil of mist was beginning to settle down upon the brae and the morass. I could perceive, however, that there was a skirmish taking place in the latter spot. I had an indistinct view of two parties—apparently of urchins—and I heard whoops and shrill cries: eager to know the cause of this disturbance, I left the Castle, and descending the brae reached the borders of the morass, where was a runnel of water and the remains of an old wall, on the other side of which a narrow path led across the swamp: upon this path at a little distance before me there was “a bicker.” I pushed forward, but had scarcely crossed the ruined wall and runnel, when the party nearest to p. 76
me gave way, and in great confusion came running in my direction. As they drew nigh, one of them shouted to me, “Wha are ye, man? are ye o’ the Auld Toon?” I made no answer. “Ha! ye are o’ the New Toon; De’il tak ye, we’ll moorder ye;” and the next moment a huge stone sung past my head. “Let me be, ye fule bodies,” said I, “I’m no of either of ye, I live yonder aboon in the Castle.” “Ah! ye live in the Castle; then ye’re an Auld Tooner. Come gie us your help, man, and dinna stand there staring like a dunnot; we want help sair eneugh. Here are stanes.”

For my own part I wished for nothing better, and, rushing forward, I placed myself at the head of my new associates, and commenced flinging stones fast and desperately. The other party now gave way in their turn, closely followed by ourselves; I was in the van, and about to stretch out my hand to seize the hindermost boy of the enemy, when, not being acquainted with the miry and difficult paths of the Nor Loch, and in my eagerness taking no heed of my footing, I plunged into a quagmire, into which I sank as far as my shoulders. Our adversaries no sooner perceived this disaster, than, setting up a shout, they wheeled round and attacked us most vehemently. Had my comrades now deserted me, my life had not been worth a straw's purchase, I should either have been smothered in the quag, or, what is more probable, had my brains beaten out with stones; but they behaved like true Scots, and fought stoutly around their comrade, until I was extricated, whereupon both parties retired, the night being near at hand. p. 77

"Ye are na a bad hand at flinging stanes," said the lad who first addressed me, as we now returned up the brae; "your aim is right dangerous, man; I saw how ye skelpit them; ye maun help us agin thae New Toon blackguards at our next bicker."

So to the next bicker I went, and to many more, which speedily followed as the summer advanced; the party to which I had given my help on the first occasion consisted merely of outlyers, posted about half way up the hill, for the purpose of overlooking the movements of the enemy.

Did the latter draw nigh in any considerable force, messengers were forthwith despatched to the "Auld Toon," especially to the filthy alleys and closes of the High Street, which forthwith would disgorge swarms of bare-headed and bare-footed "callants," who, with gestures wild and "eldrich screech and hollo," might frequently be seen pouring down the sides of the hill. I have seen upwards of a thousand engaged on either side in these frays, which I have no doubt were full as desperate as the fights described in the Iliad, and which were certainly much more bloody than the combats of modern Greece in the war of independence: the callants not only employed their hands in hurling stones, but not unfrequently slings; at the use of which they were very expert, and which occasionally dislodged teeth, shattered jaws, or knocked out an eye. Our opponents certainly laboured under considerable disadvantage, being compelled not only to wade across a deceitful bog, but likewise to clamber up part of a steep hill before they could attack us; nevertheless, their determination was such, and such their impetuosity, that we had sometimes p. 78 difficulty enough to maintain our own. I shall never forget one bicker, the last indeed which occurred at that time, as the authorities of the town, alarmed by the desperation of its character, stationed forthwith a body of police on the hillside, to prevent, in future, any such breaches of the peace.

It was a beautiful Sunday evening, the rays of the descending sun were reflected redly from the grey walls of the Castle, and from the black rocks on which it was founded. The bicker had long since commenced, stones from sling and hand were flying; but the callants of the New Town were now carrying everything before them.

A full-grown baker's apprentice was at their head; he was foaming with rage, and had taken the field, as I was told, in order to avenge his brother, whose eye had been knocked out in one of the late bickers. He was no slinger or flinger, but brandished in his right hand the spoke of a cart-wheel, like my countryman Tom Hickathrift of old in his encounter with the giant of the Lincolnshire fen. Protected by a piece of wicker-work attached to his left arm, he rushed on to the fray, disregarding the stones which were showered against him, and was ably seconded by his followers. Our own party was chased half way up the hill, where I was struck to the ground by the baker, after having been foiled in an attempt which I had made to fling a handful of earth into his eyes. All now appeared lost, the Auld Toon was in full retreat. I myself lay at the baker's feet, who had just raised his spoke, probably to give me the *coup de grâce*,—it was an awful moment. Just then I heard a shout and a rushing sound; a wild-looking figure is descending the p. 79 hill with terrible bounds; it is a lad of some fifteen years; he is bare-headed, and his red uncombed hair stands on end like hedgehogs' bristles; his frame is lithy, like that of an antelope, but he has prodigious breadth of chest; he wears a military undress, that of the regiment, even of a drummer, for it is wild Davy, [79] whom a month before I had seen enlisted on Leith Links to serve King George with drum and drumstick as long as his services might be required, and who, ere a week had elapsed, had smitten with his fist Drum-Major Elzigood, who, incensed at his inaptitude, had threatened him with his cane; he has been in confinement for weeks, this is the first day of his liberation, and he is now descending the hill with horrid bounds and shoutings; he is now about five yards distant, and the baker, who apprehends that something dangerous is at hand, prepares himself for the encounter; but what avails the strength of a baker, even full grown?—what avails the defence of a wicker shield?—what avails the wheel-spoke, should there be an opportunity of using it, against the impetus of an avalanche or a cannon ball?—for to either of these might that wild figure be compared, which, at the distance of five yards, sprang at once with head, hands, feet and body, all together, upon the champion of the New Town, tumbling him to the earth amain. And now it was the turn of the Old Town to triumph. Our late discomfited p. 80 host, returning on its steps, overwhelmed the fallen champion with blows of every kind, and then, led on by his vanquisher, who had assumed his arms, namely, the wheel-spoke and wicker shield, fairly cleared the brae of their adversaries, whom they drove down headlong into the morass.

CHAPTER VIII

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Expert Climbers—The Crags—Something Red—The Horrible Edge—David Haggart—Fine Materials—The Greatest Victory—Extraordinary Robber—The Ruling Passion.

Meanwhile I had become a daring cragsman, a character to which an English lad has seldom opportunities of aspiring; for in England there are neither crags nor mountains. Of these, however, as is well known, there is no lack in Scotland, and the habits of individuals are invariably in harmony with the country in which they dwell. The Scotch are expert climbers, and I was now a Scot in most things, particularly in language. The Castle in which I dwelt stood upon a rock, a bold and craggy one, which, at first sight, would seem to bid defiance to any feet save those of goats and chamois; but patience and perseverance generally enable mankind to overcome things which, at first sight, appear impossible. Indeed, what is there above man's exertions? Unwearied determination will enable him to run with the horse, to swim with the fish, and assuredly to compete with the chamois and the goat in agility and sureness of foot. To scale the rock was merely child's play for the Edinbro' callants. It was my own favourite diversion. I p. 82
soon found that the rock contained all manner of strange crypts, crannies, and recesses, where owls nestled, and the weasel brought forth her young; here and there were small natural platforms, overgrown with long grass and various kinds of plants, where the climber, if so disposed, could stretch himself, and either give his eyes to sleep or his mind to thought; for capital places were these same platforms either for repose or meditation. The boldest features of the rock are descried on the southern [82a] side, where, after shelving down gently from the wall for some distance, it terminates abruptly in a precipice, black and horrible, of some three hundred feet [82b] at least, as if the axe of nature had been here employed cutting sheer down, and leaving behind neither excrescence nor spur—a dizzy precipice it is, assimilating much to those so frequent in the flinty hills of Northern Africa, and exhibiting some distant resemblance to that of Gibraltar, towering in its horridness above the neutral ground.

It was now holiday time, and having nothing particular wherewith to occupy myself, I not unfrequently passed the greater part of the day upon the rocks. Once, after scaling the western crags, and creeping round a sharp angle of the wall, overhung by a kind of watch tower, I found myself on the southern side. Still keeping close to the wall, I was proceeding onward, for I was bent upon a long excursion which should embrace half the circuit of the Castle, when suddenly my eye was attracted by the appearance of something red, far below me; I stopped short, and, looking fixedly upon it, perceived that it was a human being in a kind of red jacket, seated on the p. 83
extreme verge of the precipice, which I have already made a faint attempt to describe. Wondering who it could be, I shouted; but it took not the slightest notice, remaining as immovable as the rock on which it sat. "I should never have thought of going near that edge," said I to myself; "however, as you have done it, why should not I? And I should like to know who you are." So I commenced the descent of the rock, but with great care, for I had as yet never been in a situation so dangerous; a slight moisture exuded from the palms of my hands, my nerves were tingling, and my brain was somewhat dizzy—and now I had arrived within a few yards of the figure, and had recognised it: it was the wild drummer who had turned the tide of battle in the bicker on the Castle Brae. A small stone which I dislodged now rolled down the rock, and tumbled into the abyss close beside him. He turned his head, and after looking at me for a moment somewhat vacantly, he resumed his former attitude. I drew yet nearer to the horrible edge; not close, however, for fear was on me.

"What are you thinking of, David?" said I, as I sat behind him and trembled, for I repeat that I was afraid.

David Haggart. I was thinking of Willie Wallace.

Myself. You had better be thinking of yourself, man. A strange place this to come to and think of William Wallace.

David Haggart. Why so? Is not his tower just beneath our feet?

Myself. You mean the auld ruin by the side of the Nor Loch—the ugly stane bulk, from the foot of p. 84
which flows the spring into the dyke, where the watercresses grow?

David Haggart. Just sae, Geordie.

Myself. And why were ye thinking of him? The English hanged him long since, as I have heard say.

David Haggart. I was thinking that I should wish to be like him.

Myself. Do ye mean that ye would wish to be hanged?

David Haggart. I wad na flinch from that, Geordie, if I might be a great man first.

Myself. And wha kens, Davie, how great you may be, even without hanging? Are ye not in the high road of preferment? Are ye not a bauld drummer already? Wha kens how high ye may rise? perhaps to be general, or drum-major.

David Haggart. I hae na wish to be drum-major; it were na great things to be like the doited carle, Else-than-gude, as they call him; and, troth, he has na his name for naething. But I should have nae objection to be a general, and to fight the French and Americans, and win myself a name and a fame like Willie Wallace, and do brave deeds, such as I have been reading about in his story book.

Myself. Ye are a fule, Davie; the story book is full of lies. Wallace, indeed! the wuddie rebel! I have heard my father say that the Duke of Cumberland was worth twenty of Willie Wallace.

David Haggart. Ye had better say naething agin Willie Wallace, Geordie, for, if ye do, De'il hae me, if I dinna tumble ye doon the craig.

* * * * *

Fine materials in that lad for a hero, you will say. Yes, indeed, for a hero, or for what he afterwards became. In other times, and under other circumstances, he might have made what is generally termed a great man, a patriot, or a conqueror. As it was, the very qualities which might then have pushed him on to fortune and renown were the cause of his ruin. The war over, he fell into evil courses; for his wild heart and ambitious spirit could not brook the sober and quiet pursuits of honest industry. p. 85

"Can an Arabian steed submit to be a vile drudge?" cries the fatalist. Nonsense! A man is not an irrational creature, but a reasoning being, and has something within him beyond mere brutal instinct. The greatest victory which a man can achieve is over himself, by which is meant those unruly passions which are not convenient to the time and place. David did not do this; he gave the reins to his wild heart, instead of curbing it, and became a robber, and, alas! alas! he shed blood—under peculiar circumstances, it is true, and without *malice prépense*—and for that blood he eventually died, and justly; for it was that of the warden of a prison from which he was escaping, and whom he slew with one blow of his stalwart arm.

Tamerlane and Haggart! Haggart and Tamerlane! Both these men were robbers, and of low birth, yet one perished on an ignoble scaffold, and the other died emperor of the world. Is this justice? The ends of the two men were widely dissimilar—yet what is the intrinsic difference between them? Very great, indeed; the one acted according to his lights and his country, not so the other. Tamerlane was a heathen, and acted according to his lights; he was a robber where all around were robbers, but he became the avenger of God—God's scourge on unjust kings, on the cruel Bajazet, who had plucked out his own brothers' eyes; he became to a certain extent the purifier of the East, its regenerator; his equal never was before, nor has it since been seen. Here the wild heart was profitably employed, the wild strength, the teeming brain. Onward, Lame one! Onward, Tamur—lank! Haggart. . . . p. 86

But peace to thee, poor David! why should a mortal worm be sitting in judgment over thee? The Mighty and Just One has already judged thee, and perhaps above thou hast received pardon for thy crimes, which could not be pardoned here below; and now that thy feverish existence has closed, and thy once active form become inanimate dust, thy very memory all but forgotten, I will say a few words about thee, a few words soon also to be forgotten. Thou wast the most extraordinary robber that ever lived within the belt of Britain; Scotland rang with thy exploits, and England, too, north of the Humber; strange deeds also didst thou achieve when, fleeing from justice, thou didst find thyself in the Sister Isle; busy wast thou there in town and on curragh, at fair and race-course, and also in the solitary place. Ireland thought thee her child, for who spoke her brogue better than thyself?—she felt proud of thee, and said, "Sure, O'Hanlon is come again." What might not have been thy fate in the far west in America, whither thou hadst turned thine eye, saying, "I will go there, and become an honest man!" But thou wast not to go there, David—the blood which thou hadst shed in Scotland was to be required of thee; the avenger was at hand, the avenger of blood. Seized, manacled, brought back to thy native land, condemned to die, thou wast left in thy narrow cell, and told to make the most of thy time, for it was short: and there, in thy narrow cell, and thy time so short, thou didst put the crowning stone to thy strange deeds, by that strange history of thyself, penned by thy own hand in the robber tongue. Thou mightest have been better employed, David!—but the ruling passion was strong with thee, even in the jaws of death. Thou mightest have been better employed!—but peace be with thee, I repeat, and the Almighty's grace and pardon. p. 87

CHAPTER IX p. 88

Napoleon—The Storm—The Cove—Up the Country—The Trembling Hand—Irish—Tough Battle—Tipperary Hills—Elegant Lodgings—A Speech—Fair Specimen—Orangemen.

Onward, onward! and after we had sojourned in Scotland nearly two years, [88] the long Continental war had been brought to an end, Napoleon was humbled for a time, and the Bourbons restored to a land which could well have dispensed with them; we returned to England, where the corps was disbanded, and my parents with their family retired to private life. I shall pass over in silence the events of a year, which offer little of interest as far as connected with me and mine. Suddenly, however, the sound of war was heard again, Napoleon had broken forth from Elba, and everything was in confusion. Vast military preparations were again made, our own corps was levied anew, and my brother became an officer in it; but the danger was soon over, Napoleon was once more quelled, and chained for ever, like Prometheus, to his rock. As the corps, however, though so recently levied, had already become a very fine one, thanks to my father's energetic drilling, the Government very properly determined to turn it to some account, and, as disturbances were apprehended in Ireland about this period, it occurred to them that p. 89

they could do no better than despatch it to that country.

In the autumn of the year 1815, we set sail from a port in Essex; [89a] we were some eight hundred strong, and were embarked in two ships, very large, but old and crazy; a storm overtook us when off Beachy Head, in which we had nearly foundered. I was awakened early in the morning by the howling of the wind, and the uproar on deck. I kept myself close, however, as is still my constant practice on similar occasions, and waited the result with that apathy and indifference which violent sea-sickness is sure to produce. We shipped several seas, and once the vessel missing stays—which, to do it justice, it generally did at every third or fourth tack—we escaped almost by a miracle from being dashed upon the foreland. On the eighth day of our voyage we were in sight of Ireland. The weather was now calm and serene, the sun shone brightly on the sea and on certain green hills in the distance, on which I descried what at first sight I believed to be two ladies gathering flowers, which, however, on our nearer approach, proved to be two tall white towers, doubtless built for some purpose or other, though I did not learn for what.

We entered a kind of bay, or cove, [89b] by a narrow inlet; it was a beautiful and romantic place this cove, very spacious, and, being nearly land-locked, was sheltered from every wind. A small island, every inch of which was covered with fortifications, appeared to swim upon the waters, p. 90
whose dark blue denoted their immense depth; tall green hills, which ascended gradually from the shore, formed the background to the west; they were carpeted to the top with turf of the most vivid green, and studded here and there with woods, seemingly of oak; there was a strange old castle half way up the ascent, a village on a crag—but the mists of morning were half veiling the scene when I surveyed it, and the mists of time are now hanging densely between it and my no longer youthful eye; I may not describe it;—nor will I try.

Leaving the ship in the cove, we passed up a wide river in boats till we came to a city, [90] where we disembarked. It was a large city, as large as Edinburgh to my eyes; there were plenty of fine houses, but little neatness; the streets were full of impurities; handsome equipages rolled along, but the greater part of the population were in rags; beggars abounded; there was no lack of merriment, however; boisterous shouts of laughter were heard on every side. It appeared a city of contradictions. After a few days' rest we marched from this place in two divisions. My father commanded the second, I walked by his side.

Our route lay up the country; the country at first offered no very remarkable feature, it was pretty, but tame. On the second day, however, its appearance had altered, it had become more wild; a range of distant mountains bounded the horizon. We passed through several villages, as I suppose I may term them, of low huts, the walls formed of rough stones without mortar, the roof of flags laid over wattles and wicker-work; they seemed to be inhabited solely by women and p. 91
children; the latter were naked, the former, in general, blear-eyed beldames, who sat beside the doors on low stools, spinning. We saw, however, both men and women working at a distance in the fields.

I was thirsty; and going up to an ancient crone, employed in the manner which I have described, I asked her for water; she looked me in the face, appeared to consider a moment, then tottering into her hut, presently reappeared with a small pipkin of milk, which she offered to me with a trembling hand. I drank the milk; it was sour, but I found it highly refreshing. I then took out a penny and offered it to her, whereupon she shook her head, smiled, and, patting my face with her skinny hand, murmured some words in a tongue which I had never heard before.

I walked on by my father's side, holding the stirrup-leather of his horse; presently several low uncouth cars passed by, drawn by starved cattle: the drivers were tall fellows, with dark features and athletic frames—they wore long loose blue cloaks with sleeves, which last, however, dangled unoccupied: these cloaks appeared in tolerably good condition, not so their under garments. On their heads were broad slouching hats: the generality of them were bare-footed. As they passed, the soldiers jested with them in the patois of East Anglia, whereupon the fellows laughed, and appeared to jest with the soldiers; but what they said who knows, it being in a rough guttural language, strange and wild. The soldiers stared at each other, and were silent.

"A strange language that!" said a young officer to my father, "I don't understand a word of it; p. 92
what can it be?"

"Irish!" said my father, with a loud voice, "and a bad language it is. I have known it of old, that is, I have often heard it spoken when I was a guardsman in London. There's one part of London where all the Irish live—at least all the worst of them—and there they hatch their villanies and speak this tongue; it is that which keeps them together and makes them dangerous: I was once sent there to seize a couple of deserters—Irish—who had taken refuge amongst their companions; we found them in what was in my time called a ken, that is a house where only thieves and desperadoes are to be found. Knowing on what kind of business I was bound, I had taken with me a sergeant's party; it was well I did so. We found the deserters in a large room, with at least thirty ruffians, horrid-looking fellows, seated about a long table, drinking, swearing, and talking Irish. Ah! we had a tough battle, I remember; the two fellows did nothing, but sat still, thinking it best to be quiet; but the rest, with an ubbubboo, like the blowing up of a powder-magazine, sprang up, brandishing their sticks; for these fellows always carry sticks with them even to bed, and not unfrequently spring up in their sleep, striking left and right."

"And did you take the deserters?" said the officer.

“Yes,” said my father; “for we formed at the end of the room, and charged with fixed bayonets, which compelled the others to yield notwithstanding their numbers; but the worst was when we got out into the street; the whole district had become alarmed, and hundreds came pouring down upon us—men, women, and children. Women, did I say!—they looked fiends, half naked, with p. 93
their hair hanging down over their bosoms; they tore up the very pavement to hurl at us, sticks rang about our ears, stones, and Irish—I liked the Irish worst of all, it sounded so horrid, especially as I did not understand it. It’s a bad language.”

“A queer tongue,” said I; “I wonder if I could learn it?”

“Learn it!” said my father; “what should you learn it for?—however, I am not afraid of that. It is not like Scotch; no person can learn it, save those who are born to it, and even in Ireland the respectable people do not speak it, only the wilder sort, like those we have passed.”

Within a day or two we had reached a tall range of mountains running north and south, which I was told were those of Tipperary; along the skirts of these we proceeded till we came to a town, [93] the principal one of these regions. It was on the bank of a beautiful river, which separated it from the mountains. It was rather an ancient place, and might contain some ten thousand inhabitants—I found that it was our destination; there were extensive barracks at the farther end, in which the corps took up its quarters; with respect to ourselves, we took lodgings in a house which stood in the principal street.

“You never saw more elegant lodgings than these, captain,” said the master of the house, a tall, handsome, and athletic man, who came up whilst our little family were seated at dinner late in the afternoon of the day of our arrival; “they beat anything in this town of Clonmel. I do not let them for the sake of interest, and to none but gentlemen in the army, in order that myself and my p. 94
wife, who is from Londonderry, may have the advantage of pleasant company, genteel company; ay, and Protestant company, captain. It did my heart good when I saw your honour ride in at the head of all those fine fellows, real Protestants, I’ll engage, not a Papist among them, they are too good-looking and honest-looking for that. So I no sooner saw your honour at the head of your army, with that handsome young gentleman holding by your stirrup, than I said to my wife, Mistress Hyne, who is from Londonderry, ‘God bless me,’ said I, ‘what a truly Protestant countenance, what a noble bearing, and what a sweet young gentleman. By the silver hairs of his honour—and sure enough I never saw hairs more regally silver than those of your honour—by his honour’s grey silver hairs, and by my own soul, which is not worthy to be mentioned in the same day with one of them—it would be no more than decent and civil to run out and welcome such a father and son coming in at the head of such a Protestant military.’ And then my wife, who is from Londonderry, Mistress Hyne, looking me in the face like a fairy as she is, ‘You may say that,’ says she. ‘It would be but decent and civil, honey.’ And your honour knows how I ran out of my own door and welcomed your honour riding in company with your son, who was walking; how I welcomed ye both at the head of your royal regiment, and how I shook your honour by the hand, saying, I am glad to see your honour, and your honour’s son, and your honour’s royal military Protestant regiment. And now I have you in the house, and right proud I am to have ye one and all; one, two, three, four, true Protestants every one, no Papists here; and I have made bold to p. 95
bring up a bottle of claret which is now waiting behind the door; and, when your honour and your family have dined, I will make bold too to bring up Mistress Hyne, from Londonderry, to introduce to your honour’s lady, and then we’ll drink to the health of King George, God bless him; to the ‘glorious and immortal’—to Boyne water—to your honour’s speedy promotion to be Lord Lieutenant, and to the speedy downfall of the Pope and Saint Anthony of Padua.”

Such was the speech of the Irish Protestant addressed to my father in the long lofty dining-room with three windows, looking upon the High Street of the good town of Clonmel, as he sat at meat with his family, after saying grace like a true-hearted respectable soldier as he was.

“A bigot and an Orangeman!” Oh yes! It is easier to apply epithets of opprobrium to people than to make yourself acquainted with their history and position. He was a specimen, and a fair specimen, of a most remarkable body of men, who during two centuries have fought a good fight in Ireland in the cause of civilisation and religious truth; they were sent as colonists, few in number, into a barbarous and unhappy country, where ever since, though surrounded with difficulties of every kind, they have maintained their ground; theirs has been no easy life, nor have their lines fallen upon very pleasant places; amidst darkness they have held up a lamp, and it would be well for Ireland were all her children like these her adopted ones. “But they are fierce and sanguinary,” it is said. Ay, ay! they have not unfrequently opposed the keen sword to p. 96
the savage pike. “But they are bigoted and narrow-minded.” Ay, ay! they do not like idolatry, and will not bow the knee before a stone! “But their language is frequently indecorous.” Go to, my dainty one, did ye ever listen to the voice of Papist cursing?

The Irish Protestants have faults, numerous ones; but the greater number of these may be traced to the peculiar circumstances of their position: but they have virtues, numerous ones; and their virtues are their own, their industry, their energy, and their undaunted resolution are their own. They have been vilified and traduced—but what would Ireland be without them? I repeat, that it would be well for her were all her sons no worse than these much calumniated children of her adoption.

CHAPTER X

p. 97

Protestant Young Gentlemen—The Greek Letters—Open Chimney—Murtagh—Paris and Salamanca—Nothing to do—To whit, to whoo!—The Pack of Cards—Before Christmas.

We continued at this place for some months, during which time the soldiers performed their duties, whatever they were; and I, having no duties to perform, was sent to school. I had been to English schools, and to the celebrated one of Edinburgh; but my education, at the present day, would not be what it is—perfect, had I never had the honour of being *alumnus* in an Irish seminary.

"Captain," said our kind host, "you would, no doubt, wish that the young gentleman should enjoy every advantage which the town may afford towards helping him on in the path of genteel learning. It's a great pity that he should waste his time in idleness—doing nothing else than what he says he has been doing for the last fortnight—fishing in the river for trouts which he never catches; and wandering up the glen in the mountain, in search of the hips that grow there. Now, we have a school here, where he can learn the most elegant Latin, and get an insight into the Greek letters, which is desirable; and where, moreover, he will have an opportunity of making p. 98
acquaintance with all the Protestant young gentlemen of the place, the handsome well-dressed young persons whom your honour sees in the church on the Sundays, when your honour goes there in the morning, with the rest of the Protestant military; for it is no Papist school, though there may be a Papist or two there—a few poor farmers' sons from the country, with whom there is no necessity for your honour's child to form any acquaintance at all, at all!"

And to the school I went, where I read the Latin tongue and the Greek letters, with a nice old clergyman, who sat behind a black oaken desk, with a huge Elzevir [98] Flaccus before him, in a long gloomy kind of hall, with a broken stone floor, the roof festooned with cobwebs, the walls considerably dilapidated, and covered over with strange figures and hieroglyphics, evidently produced by the application of burnt stick; and there I made acquaintance with the Protestant young gentlemen of the place, who, with whatever *éclat* they might appear at church on a Sunday, did assuredly not exhibit to much advantage in the school-room on the week days, either with respect to clothes or looks. And there I was in the habit of sitting on a large stone, before the roaring fire in the huge open chimney, and entertaining certain of the Protestant young gentlemen of my own age, seated on similar stones, with extraordinary accounts of my own adventures, and those of the corps, with an occasional anecdote extracted from the story-books of Hickathrift and Wight Wallace, pretending to be conning the lesson all the while.

And there I made acquaintance, notwithstanding the hint of the landlord, with the Papist p. 99
"gossoons," as they were called, the farmers' sons from the country; and of these gossoons, of which there were three, two might be reckoned as nothing at all; in the third, however, I soon discovered that there was something extraordinary.

He was about sixteen years old, and above six feet high, dressed in a grey suit; the coat, from its size, appeared to have been made for him some ten years before. He was remarkably narrow-chested and round-shouldered, owing perhaps as much to the tightness of his garment as to the hand of nature. His face was long, and his complexion swarthy, relieved, however, by certain freckles, with which the skin was plentifully studded. He had strange wandering eyes, grey, and somewhat unequal in size; they seldom rested on the book, but were generally wandering about the room, from one object to another. Sometimes he would fix them intently on the wall, and then suddenly starting, as if from a reverie, he would commence making certain mysterious movements with his thumbs and forefingers, as if he were shuffling something from him.

One morning, as he sat by himself on a bench, engaged in this manner, I went up to him, and said, "Good day, Murtagh; you do not seem to have much to do?"

"Faith, you may say that, Shorsha dear!—it is seldom much to do that I have."

"And what are you doing with your hands?"

"Faith, then, if I must tell you, I was e'en dealing with the cards."

"Do you play much at cards?"

"Sorra a game, Shorsha, have I played with the cards since my uncle Phelim, the thief! stole away p. 100
the ould pack, when he went to settle in the county Waterford!"

"But you have other things to do?"

"Sorra anything else has Murtagh to do that he cares about; and that makes me dread so going home at nights."

"I should like to know all about you; where do you live, joy?"

"Faith, then, ye shall know all about me, and where I live. It is at a place called the Wilderness that I live, and they call it so, because it is a fearful wild place, without any house near it but my father's own; and that's where I live when at home."

"And your father is a farmer, I suppose?"

"You may say that; and it is a farmer I should have been, like my brother Denis, had not my uncle Phelim, the thief! tould my father to send me to school, to learn Greek letters, that I might be made a saggart of, and sent to Paris and Salamanca."

“And you would rather be a farmer than a priest?”

“You may say that!—for, were I a farmer, like the rest, I should have something to do, like the rest—something that I cared for—and I should come home tired at night, and fall asleep, as the rest do, before the fire; but when I comes home at night I am not tired, for I have been doing nothing all day that I care for; and then I sits down and stares about me, and at the fire, till I become frighted; and then I shouts to my brother Denis, or to the gossoons, ‘Get up, I say, and let’s be doing something; tell us the tale of Finn-ma-Coul, and how he lay down in the Shannon’s bed, and let the river flow down his jaws!’ Arrah, Shorsha! I wish you would come and stay with us, and tell us some o’ your sweet stories of your ownself and the snake ye carried about wid ye. Faith, Shorsha dear! that snake bates anything about Finn-ma-Coul or Brian Boroo, the thieves two, bad luck to them!” p. 101

“And do they get up and tell you stories?”

“Sometimes they does, but oftenmost they curses me, and bids me be quiet! But I can’t be quiet, either before the fire or abed; so I runs out of the house, and stares at the rocks, at the trees, and sometimes at the clouds, as they run a race across the bright moon; and, the more I stares, the more frighted I grows, till I screeches and holloas. And last night I went into the barn, and hid my face in the straw; and there, as I lay and shivered in the straw, I heard a voice above my head singing out ‘To whit, to whoo!’ and then up I starts, and runs into the house, and falls over my brother Denis, as he lies at the fire. ‘What’s that for?’ says he. ‘Get up, you thief!’ says I, ‘and be helping me. I have been out into the barn, and an owl has crow’d at me!’”

“And what has this to do with playing cards?”

“Little enough, Shorsha dear!—If there were card-playing, I should not be frighted.”

“And why do you not play at cards?”

“Did I not tell you that the thief, my uncle Phelim, stole away the pack? If we had the pack, my brother Denis and the gossoons would be ready enough to get up from their sleep before the fire, and play cards with me for ha’pence, or eggs, or nothing at all; but the pack is gone—bad luck to the thief who took it!”

“And why don’t you buy another?” p. 102

“Is it of buying you are speaking? And where am I to get the money?”

“Ah! that’s another thing!”

“Faith it is, honey!—And now the Christmas holidays is coming, when I shall be at home by day as well as night, and then what am I to do? Since I have been a saggarting, I have been good for nothing at all—neither for work nor Greek—only to play cards! Faith, it’s going mad I will be!”

“I say, Murtagh!”

“Yes, Shorsha dear!”

“I have a pack of cards.”

“You don’t say so, Shorsha ma vourneen?—you don’t say that you have cards fifty-two?”

“I do, though; and they are quite new—never been once used.”

“And you’ll be lending them to me, I warrant?”

“Don’t think it!—But I’ll sell them to you, joy, if you like.”

“Hanam mon Dioul! am I not after telling you that I have no money at all?”

“But you have as good as money, to me, at least; and I’ll take it in exchange.”

“What’s that, Shorsha dear?”

“Irish!”

“Irish?”

“Yes, you speak Irish; I heard you talking it the other day to the cripple. You shall teach me Irish.”

“And is it a language-master you’d be making of me?”

“To be sure!—what better can you do?—it would help you to pass your time at school. You can’t learn Greek, so you must teach Irish!” p. 103

Before Christmas, Murtagh was playing at cards with his brother Denis, and I could speak a considerable quantity of broken Irish.

CHAPTER XI

p. 104

Templemore—Devil's Mountain—No Companion—Force of Circumstance—Way of the World—Ruined Castle—Grim and Desolate—The Donjon—Old Woman—My Own House.

When Christmas was over, and the new year commenced, we broke up our quarters, and marched away to Templemore. [104] This was a large military station, situated in a wild and thinly inhabited country. Extensive bogs were in the neighbourhood, connected with the huge bog of Allan, the Palus Mæotis of Ireland. Here and there was seen a ruined castle looming through the mists of winter; whilst, at the distance of seven miles, rose a singular mountain, exhibiting in its brow a chasm, or vacuum, just, for all the world, as if a piece had been bitten out; a feat which, according to the tradition of the country, had actually been performed by his Satanic majesty, who, after flying for some leagues with the morsel in his mouth, becoming weary, dropped it in the vicinity of Cashel, where it may now be seen in the shape of a bold bluff hill, crowned with the ruins of a stately edifice, probably built by some ancient Irish king.

We had been here only a few days, when my brother, who, as I have before observed, had p. 105
become one of His Majesty's officers, was sent on detachment to a village at about ten miles' distance. He was not sixteen, and, though three years older than myself, scarcely my equal in stature, for I had become tall and large-limbed for my age; but there was a spirit in him which would not have disgraced a general; and, nothing daunted at the considerable responsibility which he was about to incur, he marched sturdily out of the barrack-yard at the head of his party, consisting of twenty light infantry men, and a tall grenadier sergeant, selected expressly by my father, for the soldier-like qualities which he possessed, to accompany his son on this his first expedition. So out of the barrack-yard, with something of an air, marched my dear brother, his single drum and fife playing the inspiring old melody,

> "Marlbrouk is gone to the wars,
> He'll never return no more!"

I soon missed my brother, for I was now alone, with no being, at all assimilating in age, with whom I could exchange a word. Of late years, from being almost constantly at school, I had cast aside, in a great degree, my unsocial habits and natural reserve, but in the desolate region in which we now were there was no school; and I felt doubly the loss of my brother, whom, moreover, I tenderly loved for his own sake. Books I had none, at least such "as I cared about"; and with respect to the old volume, the wonders of which had first beguiled me into common reading, I had so frequently pored over its pages, that I had almost got its contents by heart. I p. 106
was therefore in danger of falling into the same predicament as Murtagh, becoming "frighted" from having nothing to do! Nay, I had not even his resources; I cared not for cards, even if I possessed them, and could find people disposed to play with them. However, I made the most of circumstances, and roamed about the desolate fields and bogs in the neighbourhood, sometimes entering the cabins of the peasantry, with a "God's blessing upon you, good people!" where I would take my seat on the "stranger's stone" at the corner of the hearth, and, looking them full in the face, would listen to the carles and carlines talking Irish.

Ah, that Irish! How frequently do circumstances, at first sight the most trivial and unimportant, exercise a mighty and permanent influence on our habits and pursuits!—how frequently is a stream turned aside from its natural course by some little rock or knoll, causing it to make an abrupt turn! On a wild road in Ireland I had heard Irish spoken for the first time; and I was seized with a desire to learn Irish, the acquisition of which, in my case, became the stepping-stone to other languages. I had previously learnt Latin, or rather Lilly; but neither Latin nor Lilly made me a philologist. I had frequently heard French and other languages, but had felt little desire to become acquainted with them; and what, it may be asked, was there connected with the Irish calculated to recommend it to my attention?

First of all, and principally, I believe, the strangeness and singularity of its tones; then there was something mysterious and uncommon associated with its use. It was not a school language, to acquire which was considered an imperative duty; no, no; nor was it a drawing-room language, p. 107
drawled out occasionally, in shreds and patches, by the ladies of generals and other great dignitaries, to the ineffable dismay of poor officers' wives. Nothing of the kind; but a speech spoken in out-of-the-way desolate places, and in cut-throat kens, where thirty ruffians, at the sight of the king's minions, would spring up with brandished sticks and an "ubbubboo, like the blowing up of a powder-magazine." Such were the points connected with the Irish, which first awakened in my mind the desire of acquiring it; and by acquiring it I became, as I have already said, enamoured of languages. Having learnt one by choice, I speedily, as the reader will perceive, learnt others, some of which were widely different from Irish.

Ah, that Irish! I am much indebted to it in more ways than one. But I am afraid I have followed the way of the world, which is very much wont to neglect original friends and benefactors. I frequently find myself, at present, turning up my nose at Irish when I hear it in the street; yet I have still a kind of regard for it, the fine old language:

> "A labhair Padruic n'insefail nan riogh."

One of the most peculiar features of this part of Ireland is the ruined castles, which are so thick and numerous that the face of the country appears studded with them, it being difficult to choose any situation from which one, at least, may not be descried. They are of various ages and styles of architecture, some of great antiquity, like the stately remains which crown the Crag of Cashel; others built by the early English conquerors; others, and probably the greater part, erections of p. 108

the times of Elizabeth and Cromwell. The whole speaking monuments of the troubled and insecure state of the country, from the most remote periods to a comparatively modern time.

From the windows of the room where I slept I had a view of one of these old places—an indistinct one, it is true, the distance being too great to permit me to distinguish more than the general outline. I had an anxious desire to explore it. It stood to the south-east; in which direction, however, a black bog intervened, which had more than once baffled all my attempts to cross it. One morning, however, when the sun shone brightly upon the old building, it appeared so near, that I felt ashamed at not being able to accomplish a feat seemingly so easy; I determined, therefore, upon another trial. I reached the bog, and was about to venture upon its black surface, and to pick my way amongst its innumerable holes, yawning horribly, and half filled with water black as soot, when it suddenly occurred to me that there was a road to the south, by following which I might find a more convenient route to the object of my wishes. The event justified my expectations, for, after following the road for some three miles, seemingly in the direction of the Devil's Mountain, I suddenly beheld the castle on my left.

I diverged from the road, and, crossing two or three fields, came to a small grassy plain, in the midst of which stood the castle. About a gun-shot to the south was a small village, which had, probably, in ancient days, sprung up beneath its protection. A kind of awe came over me as I approached the old building. The sun no longer shone upon it, and it looked so grim, so desolate p. 109 and solitary; and here was I, in that wild country, alone with that grim building before me. The village was within sight, it is true; but it might be a village of the dead for what I knew; no sound issued from it, no smoke was rising from its roofs, neither man nor beast was visible, no life, no motion—it looked as desolate as the castle itself. Yet I was bent on the adventure, and moved on towards the castle across the green plain, occasionally casting a startled glance around me; and now I was close to it.

It was surrounded by a quadrangular wall, about ten feet in height, with a square tower at each corner. At first I could discover no entrance; walking round, however, to the northern side, I found a wide and lofty gateway with a tower above it, similar to those at the angles of the wall; on this side the ground sloped gently down towards the bog, which was here skirted by an abundant growth of copsewood, and a few evergreen oaks. I passed through the gateway, and found myself within a square enclosure of about two acres. On one side rose a round and lofty keep, or donjon, with a conical roof, part of which had fallen down, strewing the square with its ruins. Close to the keep, on the other side, stood the remains of an oblong house, built something in the modern style, with various window-holes; nothing remained but the bare walls and a few projecting stumps of beams, which seemed to have been half burnt. The interior of the walls was blackened, as if by fire; fire also appeared at one time to have raged out of the window-holes, for the outside about them was black, portentously so. "I wonder what has been going on p. 110 here!" I exclaimed.

There were echoes among the walls as I walked about the court. I entered the keep by a low and frowning doorway: the lower floor consisted of a large dungeon-like room, with a vaulted roof; on the left hand was a winding staircase in the thickness of the wall; it looked anything but inviting; yet I stole softly up, my heart beating. On the top of the first flight of stairs was an arched doorway, to the left was a dark passage, to the right, stairs leading still higher. I stepped under the arch and found myself in an apartment somewhat similar to the one below, but higher. There was an object at the farther end.

An old woman, at least eighty, was seated on a stone, cowering over a few sticks burning feebly on what had once been a right noble and cheerful hearth; her side-glance was towards the doorway as I entered, for she had heard my footsteps. I stood suddenly still, and her haggard glance rested on my face.

"Is this your house, mother?" I at length demanded, in the language which I thought she would best understand.

"Yes, my house, my own house; the house of the broken-hearted."

"Any other person's house?" I demanded.

"My own house, the beggar's house—the accursed house of Cromwell!"

CHAPTER XII p. 111

A Visit—Figure of a Man—The Dog of Peace—The Raw Wound—The Guard-room—Boy Soldier—Person in Authority—Never Solitary—Clergyman and Family—Still-hunting—Fairy Man—Near Sunset—Bagg—Left-handed Hitter—.Irish and Supernatural—At Swanton Morley.

One morning I set out, designing to pay a visit to my brother, at the place where he was detached; the distance was rather considerable, yet I hoped to be back by evening-fall, for I was now a shrewd walker, thanks to constant practice. I set out early, and, directing my course towards the north, I had in less than two hours accomplished considerably more than half of the journey. The weather had at first been propitious: a slight frost had rendered the ground firm to the tread, and the skies were clear; but now a change came over the scene, the skies darkened,

and a heavy snowstorm came on; the road then lay straight through a bog, and was bounded by a deep trench on both sides; I was making the best of my way, keeping as nearly as I could in the middle of the road, lest, blinded by the snow which was frequently borne into my eyes by the wind, I might fall into the dyke, when all at once I heard a shout to windward, and turning my eyes I saw the figure of a man, and what appeared to be an animal of some kind, coming across p. 112
the bog with great speed, in the direction of myself; the nature of the ground seemed to offer but little impediment to these beings, both clearing the holes and abysses which lay in their way with surprising agility; the animal was, however, some slight way in advance, and, bounding over the dyke, appeared on the road just before me. It was a dog, of what species I cannot tell, never having seen the like before or since; the head was large and round; the ears so tiny as scarcely to be discernible; the eyes of a fiery red: in size it was rather small than large; and the coat, which was remarkably smooth, as white as the falling flakes. It placed itself directly in my path, and showing its teeth, and bristling its coat, appeared determined to prevent my progress. I had an ashen stick in my hand, with which I threatened it; this, however, only served to increase its fury; it rushed upon me, and I had the utmost difficulty to preserve myself from its fangs.

“What are you doing with the dog, the fairy dog?” said a man, who at this time likewise cleared the dyke at a bound.

He was a very tall man, rather well dressed as it should seem; his garments, however, were like my own, so covered with snow that I could scarcely discern their quality.

“What are ye doing with the dog of peace?”

“I wish he would show himself one,” said I; “I said nothing to him, but he placed himself in my road, and would not let me pass.”

“Of course he would not be letting you till he knew where ye were going.”

“He’s not much of a fairy,” said I, “or he would know that without asking; tell him that I am going p. 113
to see my brother.”

“And who is your brother, little Sas?”

“What my father is, a royal soldier.”

“Oh, ye are going then to the detachment at ---; by my shoul, I have a good mind to be spoiling your journey.”

“You are doing that already,” said I, “keeping me here talking about dogs and fairies; you had better go home and get some salve to cure that place over your eye; it’s catching cold you’ll be, in so much snow.”

On one side of the man’s forehead there was a raw and staring wound, as if from a recent and terrible blow.

“Faith, then I’ll be going, but it’s taking you wid me I will be.”

“And where will you take me?”

“Why, then, to Ryan’s Castle, little Sas.”

“You do not speak the language very correctly,” said I; “it is not Sas you should call me—’tis Sassanach,” and forthwith I accompanied the word with a speech full of flowers of Irish rhetoric.

The man looked upon me for a moment, fixedly, then, bending his head towards his breast, he appeared to be undergoing a kind of convulsion, which was accompanied by a sound something resembling laughter; presently he looked at me, and there was a broad grin on his features.

“By my shoul, it’s a thing of peace I’m thinking ye.”

But now with a whisking sound came running down the road a hare; it was nearly upon us before it perceived us; suddenly stopping short, however, it sprang into the bog on the right-hand side; p. 114
after it amain bounded the dog of peace, followed by the man, but not until he had nodded to me a farewell salutation. In a few moments I lost sight of him amidst the snowflakes.

The weather was again clear and fine before I reached the place of detachment. It was a little wooden barrack, surrounded by a wall of the same material; a sentinel stood at the gate, I passed by him, and, entering the building, found myself in a rude kind of guard-room; several soldiers were lying asleep on a wooden couch at one end, others lounged on benches by the side of a turf fire. The tall sergeant stood before the fire, holding a cooking utensil in his left hand; on seeing me, he made the military salutation.

“Is my brother here?” said I, rather timidly, dreading to hear that he was out, perhaps for the day.

“The ensign is in his room, sir,” said Bagg; “I am now preparing his meal, which will presently be ready; you will find the ensign above stairs,” and he pointed to a broken ladder which led to some place above.

And there I found him—the boy soldier—in a kind of upper loft, so low that I could touch with my hands the sooty rafters; the floor was of rough boards, through the joints of which you could see the gleam of the soldiers’ fire, and occasionally discern their figures as they moved about; in one

corner was a camp bedstead, by the side of which hung the child's sword, gorget, and sash; a deal table stood in the proximity of the rusty grate, where smoked and smouldered a pile of black turf from the bog,—a deal table without a piece of baize to cover it, yet fraught with things not devoid of interest: a Bible, given by a mother; the Odyssey, the Greek Odyssey; a flute, with broad silver keys; crayons, moreover, and water colours; and a sketch of a wild prospect near, which, though but half finished, afforded ample proof of the excellence and skill of the boyish hand now occupied upon it. p. 115

Ah! he was a sweet being, that boy soldier, a plant of early promise, bidding fair to become in after time all that is great, good, and admirable. I have read of a remarkable Welshman, of whom it was said, when the grave closed over him, that he could frame a harp, and play it; build a ship, and sail it; compose an ode, and set it to music. A brave fellow that son of Wales—but I had once a brother who could do more and better than this, but the grave has closed over him, as over the gallant Welshman of yore; there are now but two that remember him—the one who bore him, and the being who was nurtured at the same breast. He was taken, and I was left!—Truly, the ways of Providence are inscrutable.

"You seem to be very comfortable, John," said I, looking around the room and at the various objects which I have described above: "you have a good roof over your head, and have all your things about you."

"Yes, I am very comfortable, George, in many respects; I am, moreover, independent, and feel myself a man for the first time in my life—independent, did I say?—that's not the word, I am something much higher than that; here am I, not sixteen yet, a person in authority, like the centurion in the Book there, with twenty Englishmen under me, worth a whole legion of his men, and that fine fellow Bagg to wait upon me, and take my orders. Oh! these last six weeks have passed like hours of heaven." p. 116

"But your time must frequently hang heavy on your hands; this is a strange wild place, and you must be very solitary?"

"I am never solitary; I have, as you see, all my things about me, and there is plenty of company below stairs. Not that I mix with the soldiers; if I did, goodbye to my authority; but when I am alone I can hear all their discourse through the planks, and I often laugh to myself at the funny things they say."

"And have you any acquaintance here?"

"The very best; much better than the Colonel and the rest, at their grand Templemore; I had never so many in my whole life before. One has just left me, a gentleman who lives at a distance across the bog; he comes to talk with me about Greek, and the Odyssey, for he is a very learned man, and understands the old Irish, and various other strange languages. He has had a dispute with Bagg. On hearing his name, he called him to him, and, after looking at him for some time with great curiosity, said that he was sure he was a Dane. Bagg, however, took the compliment in dudgeon, and said that he was no more a Dane than himself, but a true-born Englishman, and a sergeant of six years' standing."

"And what other acquaintance have you?"

"All kinds; the whole neighbourhood can't make enough of me. Amongst others there's the clergyman of the parish and his family; such a venerable old man, such fine sons and daughters! I am treated by them like a son and a brother—I might be always with them if I pleased; there's one drawback, however, in going to see them; there's a horrible creature in the house, a kind of tutor, whom they keep more from charity than anything else; he is a Papist and, they say, a priest; you should see him scowl sometimes at my red coat, for he hates the king, and not unfrequently, when the king's health is drunk, curses him between his teeth. I once got up to strike him; but the youngest of the sisters, who is the handsomest, caught my arm and pointed to her forehead." p. 117

"And what does your duty consist of? Have you nothing else to do than pay visits and receive them?"

"We do what is required of us: we guard this edifice, perform our evolutions, and help the excise. I am frequently called up in the dead of night to go to some wild place or other in quest of an illicit still; this last part of our duty is poor mean work; I don't like it, nor more does Bagg; though without it, we should not see much active service, for the neighbourhood is quiet; save the poor creatures with their stills, not a soul is stirring. 'Tis true there's Jerry Grant."

"And who is Jerry Grant?"

"Did you never hear of him? that's strange; the whole country is talking about him; he is a kind of outlaw, rebel, or robber, all three I dare say; there's a hundred pounds offered for his head."

"And where does he live?"

"His proper home, they say, is in the Queen's County, where he has a band, but he is a strange fellow, fond of wandering about by himself amidst the bogs and mountains, and living in the old castles; occasionally he quarters himself in the peasants' houses, who let him do just what he pleases; he is free of his money, and often does them good turns, and can be good-humoured enough, so they don't dislike him. Then he is what they call a fairy man, a person in league with p. 118

fairies and spirits, and able to work much harm by supernatural means, on which account they hold him in great awe; he is, moreover, a mighty strong and tall fellow. Bagg has seen him."

"Has he?"

"Yes! and felt him; he too is a strange one. A few days ago he was told that Grant had been seen hovering about an old castle some two miles off in the bog; so one afternoon what does he do but, without saying a word to me—for which, by the bye, I ought to put him under arrest, though what I should do without Bagg I have no idea whatever—what does he do but walk off to the castle, intending, as I suppose, to pay a visit to Jerry. He had some difficulty in getting there on account of the turf-holes in the bog, which he was not accustomed to; however, thither at last he got and went in. It was a strange lonesome place, he says, and he did not much like the look of it; however, in he went, and searched about from the bottom to the top and down again, but could find no one; he shouted and hallooed, but nobody answered, save the rooks and choughs, which started up in great numbers. 'I have lost my trouble,' said Bagg, and left the castle. It was now late in the afternoon, near sunset, when about half way over the bog he met a man—"

"And that man was—"

"Jerry Grant! there's no doubt of it. Bagg says it was the most sudden thing in the world. He p. 119
was moving along, making the best of his way, thinking of nothing at all save a public-house at Swanton Morley, which he intends to take when he gets home, and the regiment is disbanded—though I hope that will not be for some time yet: he had just leaped a turf-hole, and was moving on, when, at the distance of about six yards before him, he saw a fellow coming straight towards him. Bagg says that he stopped short, as suddenly as if he had heard the word halt, when marching at double quick time. It was quite a surprise, he says, and he can't imagine how the fellow was so close upon him before he was aware. He was an immense tall fellow—Bagg thinks at least two inches taller than himself—very well dressed in a blue coat and buff breeches, for all the world like a squire when going out hunting. Bagg, however, saw at once that he had a roguish air, and he was on his guard in a moment. 'Good evening to ye, sodger,' says the fellow, stepping close up to Bagg, and staring him in the face. 'Good evening to you, sir! I hope you are well,' says Bagg. 'You are looking after some one?' says the fellow. 'Just so, sir,' says Bagg, and forthwith seized him by the collar; the man laughed, Bagg says it was such a strange awkward laugh. 'Do you know whom you have got hold of, sodger?' said he. 'I believe I do, sir,' said Bagg, 'and in that belief will hold you fast in the name of King George, and the quarter sessions;' the next moment he was sprawling with his heels in the air. Bagg says there was nothing remarkable in that; he was only flung by a kind of wrestling trick, which he could easily have baffled, had he
been aware of it. 'You will not do that again, sir,' said he, as he got up and put himself on his p. 120
guard. The fellow laughed again more strangely and awkwardly than before; then, bending his body and moving his head from one side to the other as a cat does before she springs, and crying out, 'Here's for ye, sodger!' he made a dart at Bagg, rushing in with his head foremost. 'That will do, sir,' says Bagg, and, drawing himself back, he put in a left-handed blow with all the force of his body and arm, just over the fellow's right eye. Bagg is a left-handed hitter, you must know, and it was a blow of that kind which won him his famous battle at Edinburgh with the big Highland sergeant. Bagg says that he was quite satisfied with the blow, more especially when he saw the fellow reel, fling out his arms, and fall to the ground. 'And now, sir,' said he, 'I'll make bold to hand you over to the quarter sessions, and, if there is a hundred pounds for taking you, who has more right to it than myself?' So he went forward, but ere he could lay hold of his man the other was again on his legs, and was prepared to renew the combat. They grappled each other—Bagg says he had not much fear of the result, as he now felt himself the best man, the other seeming half stunned with the blow—but just then there came on a blast, a horrible roaring wind bearing night upon its wings, snow, and sleet, and hail. Bagg says he had the fellow by the throat quite fast, as he thought, but suddenly he became bewildered, and knew not where he was; and the man seemed to melt away from his grasp, and the wind howled more and more, and
the night poured down darker and darker; the snow and the sleet thicker and more blinding. p. 121
'Lord have mercy upon us!' said Bagg."

Myself. A strange adventure that; it is well that Bagg got home alive.

John. He says that the fight was a fair fight, and that the fling he got was a fair fling, the result of a common enough wrestling trick. But with respect to the storm, which rose up just in time to save the fellow, he is of opinion that it was not fair, but something Irish and supernatural.

Myself. I dare say he's right. I have read of witchcraft in the Bible.

John. He wishes much to have one more encounter with the fellow; he says that on fair ground, and in fine weather, he has no doubt that he could master him, and hand him over to the quarter sessions. He says that a hundred pounds would be no bad thing to be disbanded upon; for he wishes to take an inn at Swanton Morley, keep a cock-pit, and live respectably.

Myself. He is quite right; and now kiss me, my darling brother, for I must go back through the bog to Templemore.

CHAPTER XIII

p. 122

Groom and Cob—Strength and Symmetry—Where's the Saddle?—The First Ride—No more Fatigue—Love for Horses—Pursuit of Words—Philologist and Pegasus—The Smith—What more, Agrah!—Sassanach Ten Pence.

And it came to pass that, as I was standing by the door of the barrack stable, one of the grooms came out to me, saying, "I say, young gentleman, I wish you would give the cob a breathing this fine morning."

"Why do you wish me to mount him?" said I; "you know he is dangerous. I saw him fling you off his back only a few days ago."

"Why, that's the very thing, master. I'd rather see anybody on his back than myself; he does not like me; but, to them he does, he can be as gentle as a lamb."

"But suppose," said I, "that he should not like me?"

"We shall soon see that, master," said the groom; "and, if so be he shows temper, I will be the first to tell you to get down. But there's no fear of that; you have never angered or insulted him, and to such as you, I say again, he'll be as gentle as a lamb."

"And how came you to insult him," said I, "knowing his temper as you do?" p. 123

"Merely through forgetfulness, master: I was riding him about a month ago, and having a stick in my hand, I struck him, thinking I was on another horse, or rather thinking of nothing at all. He has never forgiven me, though before that time he was the only friend I had in the world; I should like to see you on him, master."

"I should soon be off him; I can't ride."

"Then you are all right, master; there's no fear. Trust him for not hurting a young gentleman, an officer's son, who can't ride. If you were a blackguard dragoon, indeed, with long spurs, 'twere another thing; as it is, he'll treat you as if he were the elder brother that loves you. Ride! he'll soon teach you to ride if you leave the matter with him. He's the best riding master in all Ireland, and the gentlest."

The cob was led forth; what a tremendous creature! I had frequently seen him before, and wondered at him; he was barely fifteen hands, but he had the girth of a metropolitan dray-horse; his head was small in comparison with his immense neck, which curved down nobly to his wide back: his chest was broad and fine, and his shoulders models of symmetry and strength; he stood well and powerfully upon his legs, which were somewhat short. In a word, he was a gallant specimen of the genuine Irish cob, a species at one time not uncommon, but at the present day nearly extinct.

"There!" said the groom, as he looked at him, half admiringly, half sorrowfully, "with sixteen stone on his back, he'll trot fourteen miles in one hour; with your nine stone, some two and a half more; ay, and clear a six-foot wall at the end of it." p. 124

"I'm half afraid," said I; "I had rather you would ride him."

"I'd rather so, too, if he would let me; but he remembers the blow. Now, don't be afraid, young master, he's longing to go out himself. He's been trampling with his feet these three days, and I know what that means; he'll let anybody ride him but myself, and thank them; but to me he says, 'No! you struck me.'"

"But," said I, "where's the saddle?"

"Never mind the saddle; if you are ever to be a frank rider, you must begin without a saddle; besides, if he felt a saddle, he would think you don't trust him, and leave you to yourself. Now, before you mount, make his acquaintance—see there, how he kisses you and licks your face, and see how he lifts his foot, that's to shake hands. You may trust him—now you are on his back at last; mind how you hold the bridle—gently, gently! It's not four pair of hands like yours can hold him if he wishes to be off. Mind what I tell you—leave it all to him."

Off went the cob at a slow and gentle trot, too fast and rough, however, for so inexperienced a rider. I soon felt myself sliding off, the animal perceived it too, and instantly stood stone still till I had righted myself; and now the groom came up: "When you feel yourself going," said he, "don't lay hold of the mane, that's no use; mane never yet saved man from falling, no more than straw from drowning; it's his sides you must cling to with your calves and feet, till you learn to balance yourself. That's it, now abroad with you; I'll bet my comrade a pot of beer that you'll be a regular p. 125 rough rider by the time you come back."

And so it proved; I followed the directions of the groom, and the cob gave me every assistance. How easy is riding, after the first timidity is got over, to supple and youthful limbs; and there is no second fear. The creature soon found that the nerves of his rider were in proper tone. Turning his head half round, he made a kind of whining noise, flung out a little foam, and set off.

In less than two hours I had made the circuit of the Devil's Mountain, and was returning along the road, bathed with perspiration, but screaming with delight; the cob laughing in his equine way, scattering foam and pebbles to the left and right, and trotting at the rate of sixteen miles an hour.

Oh, that ride! that first ride!—most truly it was an epoch in my existence; and I still look back to

it with feelings of longing and regret. People may talk of first love—it is a very agreeable event, I dare say—but give me the flush, and triumph, and glorious sweat of a first ride, like mine on the mighty cob! My whole frame was shaken, it is true; and during one long week I could hardly move foot or hand; but what of that? By that one trial I had become free, as I may say, of the whole equine species. No more fatigue, no more stiffness of joints, after that first ride round the Devil's Hill on the cob.

Oh, that cob! that Irish cob!—may the sod lie lightly over the bones of the strongest, speediest, and most gallant of its kind! Oh! the days when, issuing from the barrack-gate of Templemore, we commenced our hurry-skurry just as inclination led—now across the fields—direct over stone p. 126
walls and running brooks—mere pastime for the cob!—sometimes along the road to Thurles and Holy Cross, even to distant Cahir!—what was distance to the cob?

It was thus that the passion for the equine race was first awakened within me—a passion which, up to the present time, has been rather on the increase than diminishing. It is no blind passion; the horse being a noble and generous creature, intended by the All-Wise to be the helper and friend of man, to whom he stands next in the order of creation. On many occasions of my life I have been much indebted to the horse, and have found in him a friend and coadjutor, when human help and sympathy were not to be obtained. It is therefore natural enough that I should love the horse; but the love which I entertain for him has always been blended with respect; for I soon perceived that, though disposed to be the friend and helper of man, he is by no means inclined to be his slave; in which respect he differs from the dog, who will crouch when beaten; whereas the horse spurns, for he is aware of his own worth, and that he carries death within the horn of his heel. If, therefore, I found it easy to love the horse, I found it equally natural to respect him.

I much question whether philology, or the passion for languages, requires so little of an apology as the love for horses. It has been said, I believe, that the more languages a man speaks, the more a man is he; which is very true, provided he acquires languages as a medium for becoming acquainted with the thoughts and feelings of the various sections into which the human race is divided; but, in that case, he should rather be termed a philosopher than a philologist—between p. 127
which two the difference is wide indeed! An individual may speak and read a dozen languages, and yet be an exceedingly poor creature, scarcely half a man; and the pursuit of tongues for their own sake, and the mere satisfaction of acquiring them, surely argues an intellect of a very low order; a mind disposed to be satisfied with mean and grovelling things; taking more pleasure in the trumpery casket than in the precious treasure which it contains; in the pursuit of words, than in the acquisition of ideas.

I cannot help thinking that it was fortunate for myself, who am, to a certain extent, a philologist, that with me the pursuit of languages has been always modified by the love of horses; for scarcely had I turned my mind to the former, when I also mounted the wild cob, and hurried forth in the direction of the Devil's Hill, scattering dust and flint-stones on every side; that ride, amongst other things, taught me that a lad with thews and sinews was intended by nature for something better than mere word-culling; and if I have accomplished anything in after life worthy of mentioning, I believe it may partly be attributed to the ideas which that ride, by setting my blood in a glow, infused into my brain. I might, otherwise, have become a mere philologist; one of those beings who toil night and day in culling useless words for some *opus magnum* which Murray will never publish, and nobody ever read; beings without enthusiasm, who, having never mounted a generous steed, cannot detect a good point in Pegasus himself; like a certain philologist, who, though acquainted with the exact value of every word in the Greek and Latin p. 128
languages, could observe no particular beauty in one of the most glorious of Homer's rhapsodies. What knew he of Pegasus? he had never mounted a generous steed; the merest jockey, had the strain been interpreted to him, would have called it a brave song!—I return to the brave cob.

On a certain day I had been out on an excursion. In a cross-road, at some distance from the Satanic hill, the animal which I rode cast a shoe. By good luck a small village was at hand, at the entrance of which was a large shed, from which proceeded a most furious noise of hammering. Leading the cob by the bridle, I entered boldly. "Shoe this horse, and do it quickly, a gough," said I to a wild grimy figure of a man, whom I found alone, fashioning a piece of iron.

"Arrigod yuit?" said the fellow, desisting from his work, and staring at me.

"Oh yes, I have money," said I, "and of the best;" and I pulled out an English shilling.

"Tabhair chugam?" said the smith, stretching out his grimy hand.

"No, I shan't," said I; "some people are glad to get their money when their work is done."

The fellow hammered a little longer, and then proceeded to shoe the cob, after having first surveyed it with attention. He performed his job rather roughly, and more than once appeared to give the animal unnecessary pain, frequently making use of loud and boisterous words. By the time the work was done, the creature was in a state of high excitement, and plunged and tore. The smith stood at a short distance, seeming to enjoy the irritation of the animal, and showing, in p. 129
a remarkable manner, a huge fang, which projected from the under jaw of a very wry mouth.

"You deserve better handling," said I, as I went up to the cob and fondled it; whereupon it whinnied, and attempted to touch my face with its nose.

"Are ye not afraid of that beast?" said the smith, showing his fang. "Arrah, it's vicious that he

looks!”

“It’s at you, then!—I don’t fear him;” and thereupon I passed under the horse, between its hind legs.

“And is that all you can do, agrah?” said the smith.

“No,” said I, “I can ride him.”

“Ye can ride him, and what else, agrah?”

“I can leap him over a six-foot wall,” said I.

“Over a wall, and what more, agrah?”

“Nothing more,” said I; “what more would you have?”

“Can you do this, agrah?” said the smith; and he uttered a word which I had never heard before, in a sharp pungent tone. The effect upon myself was somewhat extraordinary, a strange thrill ran through me; but with regard to the cob it was terrible; the animal forthwith became like one mad, and reared and kicked with the utmost desperation.

“Can you do that, agrah?” said the smith.

“What is it?” said I, retreating; “I never saw the horse so before.”

“Go between his legs, agrah,” said the smith, “his hinder legs;” and he again showed his fang.

“I dare not,” said I; “he would kill me.”

“He would kill ye! and how do ye know that, agrah?” p. 130

“I feel he would,” said I; “something tells me so.”

“And it tells ye truth, agrah; but it’s a fine beast, and it’s a pity to see him in such a state: Is agam an’t leigeas”—and here he uttered another word in a voice singularly modified, but sweet and almost plaintive; the effect of it was as instantaneous as that of the other, but how different!—the animal lost all its fury, and became at once calm and gentle. The smith went up to it, coaxed and patted it, making use of various sounds of equal endearment; then turning to me, and holding out once more the grimy hand, he said, “And now ye will be giving me the Sassanach ten pence, agrah?”

CHAPTER XIV

p. 131

A Fine Old City—Norman Master-Work—Lollards’ Hole—Good Blood—The Spaniard’s Sword—Old Retired Officer—Writing to a Duke—God help the Child—Nothing like Jacob—Irish Brigades—Old Sergeant Meredith—I Have Been Young—Idleness—Only Course Open—The Bookstall—A Portrait—A Banished Priest.

From the wild scenes which I have attempted to describe in the latter pages I must now transport the reader to others of a widely different character. He must suppose himself no longer in Ireland, but in the eastern corner of merry England. Bogs, ruins, and mountains have disappeared amidst the vapours of the west: I have nothing more to say of them; the region in which we are now is not famous for objects of that kind: perhaps it flatters itself that it can produce fairer and better things, of some of which let me speak; there is a fine old city before us, and first of that let me speak. [131]

A fine old city, truly, is that, view it from whatever side you will; but it shows best from the east, where the ground, bold and elevated, overlooks the fair and fertile valley in which it stands. Gazing from those heights, the eye beholds a scene which cannot fail to awaken, even in the least sensitive bosom, feelings of pleasure and admiration. At the foot of the heights flows a narrow p. 132 and deep river, with an antique bridge communicating with a long and narrow suburb, flanked on either side by rich meadows of the brightest green, beyond which spreads the city; the fine old city, perhaps the most curious specimen at present extant of the genuine old English town. Yes, there it spreads from north to south, with its venerable houses, its numerous gardens, its thrice twelve churches, its mighty mound, which, if tradition speaks true, was raised by human hands to serve as the grave heap of an old heathen king, who sits deep within it, with his sword in his hand, and his gold and silver treasures about him. There is a grey old castle [132a] upon the top of that mighty mound; and yonder, rising three hundred feet above the soil, from among those noble forest trees, behold that old Norman master-work, [132b] that cloud-encircled cathedral spire, around which a garrulous army of rooks and choughs continually wheel their flight. Now, who can wonder that the children of that fine old city are proud of her, and offer up prayers for her prosperity? I, myself, who was not born within her walls, offer up prayers for her prosperity, that want may never visit her cottages, vice her palaces, and that the abomination of idolatry may never pollute her temples. Ha, idolatry! the reign of idolatry has been over there for many a long year, never more, let us hope, to return; brave hearts in that old town have borne witness against p. 133 it, and sealed their testimony with their hearts’ blood—most precious to the Lord is the blood of

His saints! we are not far from hallowed ground. Observe ye not yon chalky precipice, to the right of the Norman bridge? [133] On this side of the stream, upon its brow, is a piece of ruined wall, the last relic of what was of old a stately pile, whilst at its foot is a place called the Lollards' Hole; and with good reason, for many a saint of God has breathed his last beneath that white precipice, bearing witness against popish idolatry, midst flame and pitch; many a grisly procession has advanced along that suburb, across the old bridge, towards the Lollards' Hole: furious priests in front, a calm pale martyr in the midst, a pitying multitude behind. It has had its martyrs, the venerable old town!

Ah! there is good blood in that old city, and in the whole circumjacent region of which it is the capital. The Angles possessed the land at an early period, which, however, they were eventually compelled to share with hordes of Danes and Northmen, who flocked thither across the sea to found hearthsteads on its fertile soil. The present race, a mixture of Angles and Danes, still preserve much which speaks strongly of their northern ancestry; amongst them ye will find the light brown hair of the north, the strong and burly forms of the north, many a wild superstition, ay, and many a wild name connected with the ancient history of the north and its sublime mythology; the warm heart, and the strong heart of the old Danes and Saxons still beats in those regions, and there ye will find, if anywhere, old northern hospitality and kindness of manner, p. 134
united with energy, perseverance, and dauntless intrepidity; better soldiers or mariners never bled in their country's battles than those nurtured in those regions, and within those old walls. It was yonder, to the west, that the great naval hero of Britain first saw the light; [134] he who annihilated the sea pride of Spain, and dragged the humbled banner of France in triumph at his stern. He was born yonder, towards the west, and of him there is a glorious relic in that old town; in its dark flint guildhouse, the roof of which you can just descry rising above that maze of buildings, in the upper hall of justice, is a species of glass shrine, in which the relic is to be seen: a sword of curious workmanship, the blade is of keen Toledan steel, the heft of ivory and mother-of-pearl. 'Tis the sword of Cordova, won in bloodiest fray off Saint Vincent's promontory, and presented by Nelson to the old capital of the much-loved land of his birth. Yes, the proud Spaniard's sword is to be seen in yonder guildhouse, in the glass case affixed to the wall: many other relics has the good old town, but none prouder than the Spaniard's sword.

Such was the place to which, when the war was over, my father retired: it was here that the old tired soldier set himself down with his little family. He had passed the greater part of his life in meritorious exertion, in the service of his country, and his chief wish now was to spend the remainder of his days in quiet and respectability; his means, it is true, were not very ample; fortunate it was that his desires corresponded with them: with a small fortune of his own, and p. 135
with his half-pay as a royal soldier, he had no fears for himself or for his faithful partner and helpmate; but then his children! how was he to provide for them? how launch them upon the wide ocean of the world? This was, perhaps, the only thought which gave him uneasiness, and I believe that many an old retired officer at that time, and under similar circumstances, experienced similar anxiety; had the war continued, their children would have been, of course, provided for in the army, but peace now reigned, and the military career was closed to all save the scions of the aristocracy, or those who were in some degree connected with that privileged order, an advantage which few of these old officers could boast of; they had slight influence with the great, who gave themselves very little trouble either about them or their families.

"I have been writing to the Duke," said my father one day to my excellent mother, after we had been at home somewhat better than a year. "I have been writing to the Duke of York about a commission for that eldest boy of ours. He, however, affords me no hopes; he says that his list is crammed with names, and that the greater number of the candidates have better claims than my son."

"I do not see how that can be," said my mother.

"Nor do I," replied my father. "I see the sons of bankers and merchants gazetted every month, and I do not see what claims they have to urge, unless they be golden ones. However, I have not served my king fifty years to turn grumbler at this time of life. I suppose that the people at the head of affairs know what is most proper and convenient; perhaps when the lad sees how difficult, nay, how impossible it is that he should enter the army, he will turn his mind to some p. 136
other profession; I wish he may!"

"I think he has already," said my mother; "you see how fond he is of the arts, of drawing and painting, and, as far as I can judge, what he has already done is very respectable; his mind seems quite turned that way, and I heard him say the other day that he would sooner be a Michael Angelo than a general officer. But you are always talking of him; what do you think of doing with the other child?"

"What, indeed!" said my father; "that is a consideration which gives me no little uneasiness. I am afraid it will be much more difficult to settle him in life than his brother. What is he fitted for, even were it in my power to provide for him? God help the child! I bear him no ill will, on the contrary, all love and affection; but I cannot shut my eyes; there is something so strange about him! How he behaved in Ireland! I sent him to school to learn Greek, and he picked up Irish!"

"And Greek as well," said my mother. "I heard him say the other day that he could read St. John in the original tongue."

"You will find excuses for him, I know," said my father. "You tell me I am always talking of my

first-born; I might retort by saying you are always thinking of the other; but it is the way of women always to side with the second-born. There's what's her name in the Bible, by whose wiles the old blind man was induced to give to his second son the blessing which was the birthright of the other. I wish I had been in his place! I should not have been so easily deceived! no disguise would ever have caused me to mistake an impostor for my first-born. Though I must p. 137
say for this boy that he is nothing like Jacob; he is neither smooth nor sleek, and, though my second-born, is already taller and larger than his brother."

"Just so," said my mother; "his brother would make a far better Jacob than he."

"I will hear nothing against my first-born," said my father, "even in the way of insinuation: he is my joy and pride; the very image of myself in my youthful days, long before I fought Big Ben; though perhaps not quite so tall or strong built. As for the other, God bless the child! I love him, I'm sure; but I must be blind not to see the difference between him and his brother. Why, he has neither my hair nor my eyes; and then his countenance! why, 'tis absolutely swarthy, God forgive me! I had almost said like that of a gypsy, but I have nothing to say against that; the boy is not to be blamed for the colour of his face, nor for his hair and eyes; but, then, his ways and manners!—I confess I do not like them, and that they give me no little uneasiness—I know that he kept very strange company when he was in Ireland; people of evil report, of whom terrible things were said—horse-witches and the like. I questioned him once or twice upon the matter, and even threatened him, but it was of no use; he put on a look as if he did not understand me, a regular Irish look, just such a one as those rascals assume when they wish to appear all innocence and simplicity, and they full of malice and deceit all the time. I don't like them; they are no friends to old England, or its old king, God bless him! They are not good subjects, and never were; always in league with foreign enemies. When I was in the Coldstream, long before the Revolution, I used p. 138
to hear enough about the Irish brigades kept by the French kings, to be a thorn in the side of the English whenever opportunity served. Old Sergeant Meredith once told me, that in the time of the Pretender there were always, in London alone, a dozen of fellows connected with these brigades, with the view of seducing the king's soldiers from their allegiance, and persuading them to desert to France to join the honest Irish, as they were called. One of these traitors once accosted him and proposed the matter to him, offering handfuls of gold if he could induce any of his comrades to go over. Meredith appeared to consent; but secretly gave information to his colonel; the fellow was seized, and certain traitorous papers found upon him; he was hanged before Newgate, and died exulting in his treason. His name was Michael Nowlan. That ever son of mine should have been intimate with the Papist Irish, and have learnt their language!"

"But he thinks of other things now," said my mother.

"Other languages, you mean," said my father. "It is strange that he has conceived such a zest for the study of languages; no sooner did he come home than he persuaded me to send him to that old priest to learn French and Italian, and, if I remember right, you abetted him; but, as I said before, it is in the nature of women invariably to take the part of the second-born. Well, there is no harm in learning French and Italian, perhaps much good in his case, as they may drive the other tongue out of his head. Irish! why he might go to the university but for that; but how would he look when, on being examined with respect to his attainments, it was discovered that he p. 139
understood Irish? How did you learn it? they would ask him; how did you become acquainted with the language of Papists and rebels? The boy would be sent away in disgrace."

"Be under no apprehension; I have no doubt that he has long since forgotten it."

"I am glad to hear it," said my father; "for, between ourselves, I love the poor child; ay, quite as well as my first-born. I trust they will do well, and that God will be their shield and guide; I have no doubt He will, for I have read something in the Bible to that effect. What is that text about the young ravens being fed?"

"I know a better than that," said my mother; "one of David's own words, 'I have been young and now am grown old, yet never have I seen the righteous man forsaken, or his seed begging their bread.'"

I have heard talk of the pleasures of idleness, yet it is my own firm belief that no one ever yet took pleasure in it. Mere idleness is the most disagreeable state of existence, and both mind and body are continually making efforts to escape from it. It has been said that idleness is the parent of mischief, which is very true; but mischief itself is merely an attempt to escape from the dreary vacuum of idleness. There are many tasks and occupations which a man is unwilling to perform, but let no one think that he is therefore in love with idleness; he turns to something which is more agreeable to his inclination, and doubtless more suited to his nature; but he is not in love with idleness. A boy may play the truant from school because he dislikes books and study; but, p. 140
depend upon it, he intends doing something the while—to go fishing, or perhaps to take a walk; and who knows but that from such excursions both his mind and body may derive more benefit than from books and school? Many people go to sleep to escape from idleness; the Spaniards do; and, according to the French account, John Bull, the squire, hangs himself in the month of November; but the French, who are a very sensible people, attribute the action, "*à une grande envie de se désennuyer*;" he wishes to be doing something, say they, and having nothing better to do, he has recourse to the cord.

It was for want of something better to do that, shortly after my return home, [140] I applied myself to the study of languages. By the acquisition of Irish, with the first elements of which I had become acquainted under the tuition of Murtagh, I had contracted a certain zest and inclination

for the pursuit. Yet it is probable, that had I been launched about this time into some agreeable career, that of arms, for example, for which, being the son of a soldier, I had, as was natural, a sort of penchant, I might have thought nothing more of the acquisition of tongues of any kind; but, having nothing to do, I followed the only course suited to my genius which appeared open to me.

So it came to pass that one day, whilst wandering listlessly about the streets of the old town, I came to a small bookstall, and stopping, commenced turning over the books; I took up at least a dozen, and almost instantly flung them down. What were they to me? At last, coming to a thick volume, I opened it, and after inspecting its contents for a few minutes, I paid for it what was demanded, and forthwith carried it home. p. 141

It was a tessara-glot grammar; a strange old book, printed somewhere in Holland, which pretended to be an easy guide to the acquirement of the French, Italian, Low Dutch, and English tongues, by means of which any one conversant in any one of these languages could make himself master of the other three. I turned my attention to the French and Italian. The old book was not of much value; I derived some benefit from it, however, and, conning it intensely, at the end of a few weeks obtained some insight into the structure of these two languages. At length I had learnt all that the book was capable of informing me, yet was still far from the goal to which it had promised to conduct me. "I wish I had a master!" I exclaimed; and the master was at hand. In an old court of the old town lived a certain elderly personage, perhaps sixty, or thereabouts; he was rather tall, and something of a robust make, with a countenance in which bluffness was singularly blended with vivacity and grimace; and with a complexion which would have been ruddy, but for a yellow hue which rather predominated. His dress consisted of a snuff-coloured coat and drab pantaloons, the former evidently seldom subjected to the annoyance of a brush, and the latter exhibiting here and there spots of something which, if not grease, bore a strong resemblance to it; add to these articles an immense frill, seldom of the purest white, but invariably of the finest French cambric, and you have some idea of his dress. He had rather a remarkable stoop, but his step was rapid and vigorous, and as he hurried along the streets, he would glance to the right and left with a pair of big eyes like plums, and on recognising any one would exalt a pair of grizzled eyebrows, and slightly kiss a tawny and ungloved hand. At certain hours of the day he might be seen entering the doors of female boarding-schools, generally with a book in his hand, and perhaps another just peering from the orifice of a capacious back pocket; and at a certain season of the year he might be seen, dressed in white, before the altar of a certain small popish chapel, chanting from the breviary in very intelligible Latin, or perhaps reading from the desk in utterly unintelligible English. Such was my preceptor in the French and Italian tongues. "Exul sacerdos; vone banished priest. I came into England twenty-five year ago, 'my dear.'" [142] p. 142

CHAPTER XV

p. 143

Monsieur Dante—Condemned Musket—Sporting—Sweet Rivulet—The Earl's Home—The Pool—The Sonorous Voice—What dost Thou Read?—Man of Peace—Zohar and Mishna—Money-changers.

So I studied French and Italian under the tuition of the banished priest, to whose house I went regularly every evening to receive instruction. I made considerable progress in the acquisition of the two languages. I found the French by far the most difficult, chiefly on account of the accent, which my master himself possessed in no great purity, being a Norman by birth. The Italian was my favourite.

"*Vous serez un jour un grand philologue, mon cher*," said the old man, on our arriving at the conclusion of Dante's Hell.

"I hope I shall be something better," said I, "before I die, or I shall have lived to little purpose."

"That's true, my dear! philologist—one small poor dog. What would you wish to be?"

"Many things sooner than that; for example, I would rather be like him who wrote this book."

"*Quoi, Monsieur Dante*? He was a vagabond, my dear, forced to fly from his country. No, my dear, if you would be like one poet, be like Monsieur Boileau; he is the poet." p. 144

"I don't think so."

"How, not think so? He wrote very respectable verses; lived and died much respected by everybody. T'other, one bad dog, forced to fly from his country—died with not enough to pay his undertaker."

"Were you not forced to flee from your country?"

"That very true; but there is much difference between me and this Dante. He fled from country because he had one bad tongue which he shook at his betters. I fly because benefice gone, and head going; not on account of the badness of my tongue."

"Well," said I, "you can return now; the Bourbons are restored."

“I find myself very well here; not bad country. *Il est vrai que la France sera toujours la France*; but all are dead there who knew me. I find myself very well here. Preach in popish chapel, teach schismatic, that is Protestant, child tongues and literature. I find myself very well; and why? Because I know how to govern my tongue; never call people hard names. *Ma foi, il y a beaucoup de différence entre moi et ce sacre de Dante*.”

Under this old man, who was well versed in the southern languages, besides studying French and Italian, I acquired some knowledge of Spanish. But I did not devote my time entirely to philology; I had other pursuits. I had not forgotten the roving life I had led in former days, nor its delights; neither was I formed by nature to be a pallid indoor student. No, no! I was fond of other and, I p. 145
say it boldly, better things than study. I had an attachment to the angle, ay, and to the gun likewise. In our house was a condemned musket, bearing somewhere on its lock, in rather antique characters, “Tower, 1746”; with this weapon I had already, in Ireland, performed some execution among the rooks and choughs, and it was now again destined to be a source of solace and amusement to me, in the winter season, especially on occasions of severe frost when birds abounded. Sallying forth with it at these times, far into the country, I seldom returned at night without a string of bullfinches, blackbirds, and linnets hanging in triumph round my neck. When I reflect on the immense quantity of powder and shot which I crammed down the muzzle of my uncouth fowling-piece, I am less surprised at the number of birds which I slaughtered, than that I never blew my hands, face, and old honey-combed gun, at one and the same time, to pieces.

But the winter, alas! (I speak as a fowler) seldom lasts in England more than three or four months; so, during the rest of the year, when not occupied with my philological studies, I had to seek for other diversions. I have already given a hint that I was also addicted to the angle. Of course there is no comparison between the two pursuits, the rod and line seeming but very poor trumpery to one who has had the honour of carrying a noble firelock. There is a time, however, for all things; and we return to any favourite amusement with the greater zest, from being compelled to relinquish it for a season. So, if I shot birds in winter with my firelock, I caught fish in summer, or attempted so to do, with my angle. I was not quite so successful, it is true, with p. 146
the latter as with the former; possibly because it afforded me less pleasure. It was, indeed, too much of a listless pastime to inspire me with any great interest. I not unfrequently fell into a doze, whilst sitting on the bank, and more than once let my rod drop from my hands into the water.

At some distance from the city, behind a range of hilly ground which rises towards the south-west, is a small river, the waters of which, after many meanderings, eventually enter the principal river of the district, [146] and assist to swell the tide which it rolls down to the ocean. It is a sweet rivulet, and pleasant is it to trace its course from its spring-head, high up in the remote regions of Eastern Anglia, till it arrives in the valley behind yon rising ground; and pleasant is that valley, truly a goodly spot, but most lovely where yonder bridge crosses the little stream. Beneath its arch the waters rush garrulously into a blue pool, and are there stilled, for a time, for the pool is deep, and they appear to have sunk to sleep. Farther on, however, you hear their voice again, where they ripple gaily over yon gravelly shallow. On the left, the hill slopes gently down to the margin of the stream. On the right is a green level, a smiling meadow, grass of the richest decks the side of the slope; mighty trees also adorn it, giant elms, the nearest of which, when the sun is nigh its meridian, fling a broad shadow upon the face of the pool; through yon vista you catch a glimpse of the ancient brick of an old English hall. It has a stately look, that old building, indistinctly seen, as it is, among those umbrageous trees; you might almost suppose it p. 147
an earl’s home; and such it was, or rather upon its site stood an earl’s home, in days of old, for there some old Kemp, some Sigurd, or Thorkild, roaming in quest of a hearth-stead, settled down in the grey old time, when Thor and Freya were yet gods, and Odin was a portentous name. Yon old hall is still called the Earl’s Home, [147] though the hearth of Sigurd is now no more, and the bones of the old Kemp, and of Sigrith his dame, have been mouldering for a thousand years in some neighbouring knoll; perhaps yonder, where those tall Norwegian pines shoot up so boldly into the air. It is said that the old earl’s galley was once moored where is now that blue pool, for the waters of that valley were not always sweet; yon valley was once an arm of the sea, a salt lagoon, to which the war-barks of “Sigurd, in search of a home,” found their way.

I was in the habit of spending many an hour on the banks of that rivulet, with my rod in my hand, and, when tired with angling, would stretch myself on the grass, and gaze upon the waters as they glided past, and not unfrequently, divesting myself of my dress, I would plunge into the deep pool which I have already mentioned, for I had long since learned to swim. And it came to pass, that on one hot summer’s day, after bathing in the pool, I passed along the meadow till I came to a shallow part, and, wading over to the opposite side, I adjusted my dress, and commenced fishing in another pool, beside which was a small clump of hazels.

And there I sat upon the bank, at the bottom of the hill which slopes down from “the Earl’s p. 148
home”; my float was on the waters, and my back was towards the old hall. I drew up many fish, small and great, which I took from off the hook mechanically, and flung upon the bank, for I was almost unconscious of what I was about, for my mind was not with my fish. I was thinking of my earlier years—of the Scottish crags and the heaths of Ireland—and sometimes my mind would dwell on my studies—on the sonorous stanzas of Dante, rising and falling like the waves of the sea—or would strive to remember a couplet or two of poor Monsieur Boileau.

“Canst thou answer to thy conscience for pulling all those fish out of the water, and leaving them to gasp in the sun?” said a voice, clear and sonorous as a bell.

I started, and looked round. Close behind me stood the tall figure of a man, dressed in raiment of quaint and singular fashion, but of goodly materials. He was in the prime and vigour of manhood; his features handsome and noble, but full of calmness and benevolence; at least I thought so, though they were somewhat shaded by a hat of finest beaver, with broad drooping eaves. [148]

“Surely that is a very cruel diversion in which thou indulgest, my young friend?” he continued.

“I am sorry for it, if it be, sir,” said I, rising; “but I do not think it cruel to fish.”

“What are thy reasons for not thinking so?”

“Fishing is mentioned frequently in Scripture. Simon Peter was a fisherman.” p. 149

“True; and Andrew and his brother. But thou forgettest: they did not follow fishing as a diversion, as I fear thou doest.—Thou readest the Scriptures?”

“Sometimes.”

“Sometimes?—not daily?—that is to be regretted. What profession dost thou make?—I mean to what religious denomination dost thou belong, my young friend?”

“Church.”

“It is a very good profession—there is much of Scripture contained in its liturgy. Dost thou read aught besides the Scriptures?”

“Sometimes.”

“What dost thou read besides?”

“Greek, and Dante.”

“Indeed! then thou hast the advantage over myself; I can only read the former. Well, I am rejoiced to find that thou hast other pursuits beside thy fishing. Dost thou know Hebrew?”

“No.”

“Thou shouldst study it. Why dost thou not undertake the study?”

“I have no books.”

“I will lend thee books, if thou wish to undertake the study. I live yonder at the hall, as perhaps thou knowest. I have a library there, in which are many curious books, both in Greek and Hebrew, which I will show to thee, whenever thou mayest find it convenient to come and see me. Farewell! I am glad to find that thou hast pursuits more satisfactory than thy cruel fishing.”

And the man of peace departed, and left me on the bank of the stream. Whether from the effect p. 150
of his words, or from want of inclination to the sport, I know not, but from that day I became less and less a practitioner of that “cruel fishing.” I rarely flung line and angle into the water, but I not unfrequently wandered by the banks of the pleasant rivulet. It seems singular to me, on reflection, that I never availed myself of his kind invitation. I say singular, for the extraordinary, under whatever form, had long had no slight interest for me; and I had discernment enough to perceive that yon was no common man. Yet I went not near him, certainly not from bashfulness, or timidity, feelings to which I had long been an entire stranger. Am I to regret this? perhaps, for I might have learned both wisdom and righteousness from those calm, quiet lips, and my after-course might have been widely different. As it was, I fell in with other guess companions, from whom I received widely different impressions than those I might have derived from him. When many years had rolled on, long after I had attained manhood, and had seen and suffered much, and when our first interview had long since been effaced from the mind of the man of peace, I visited him in his venerable hall, and partook of the hospitality of his hearth. And there I saw his gentle partner, and his fair children, and on the morrow he showed me the books of which he had spoken years before, by the side of the stream. In the low quiet chamber, whose one window, shaded by a gigantic elm, looks down the slope towards the pleasant stream, he took from the shelf his learned books, Zohar and Mishna, Toldoth Jesu and Abarbenel. “I am fond of these
studies,” said he, “which, perhaps, is not to be wondered at, seeing that our people have been p. 151
compared to the Jews. In one respect I confess we are similar to them; we are fond of getting money. I do not like this last author, this Abarbenel, the worse for having been a money-changer. I am a banker myself, as thou knowest.”

And would there were many like him, amidst the money-changers of princes! The hall of many an earl lacks the bounty, the palace of many a prelate the piety and learning, which adorn the quiet Quaker’s home!

CHAPTER XVI p. 152

Fair of Horses—Looks of Respect—The Fast Trotter—Pair of Eyes—Strange Men—Jasper, Your Pal—Force of Blood—Young Lady with Diamonds—Not Quite so Beautiful.

I was standing on the Castle Hill in the midst of a fair of horses.

I have already had occasion to mention this castle. It is the remains of what was once a Norman stronghold, and is perched upon a round mound or monticle, in the midst of the old city. Steep is this mound and scarped, evidently by the hand of man; a deep gorge, over which is flung a bridge, separates it, on the south, from a broad swell of open ground called “the hill”; of old the scene of many a tournament and feat of Norman chivalry, but now much used as a show-place for cattle, where those who buy and sell beeves and other beasts resort at stated periods.

So it came to pass that I stood upon this hill, observing a fair of horses. [152]

The reader is already aware that I had long since conceived a passion for the equine race; a passion in which circumstances had of late not permitted me to indulge. I had no horses to ride, p. 153
but I took pleasure in looking at them; and I had already attended more than one of these fairs: the present was lively enough, indeed horse fairs are seldom dull. There was shouting and whooping, neighing and braying; there was galloping and trotting; fellows with highlows and white stockings, and with many a string dangling from the knees of their tight breeches, were running desperately, holding horses by the halter, and in some cases dragging them along; there were long-tailed steeds, and dock-tailed steeds of every degree and breed; there were droves of wild ponies, and long rows of sober cart horses; there were donkeys, and even mules: the last rare things to be seen in damp, misty England, for the mule pines in mud and rain, and thrives best with a hot sun above and a burning sand below. There were—oh, the gallant creatures! I hear their neigh upon the wind; there were—goodliest sight of all—certain enormous quadrupeds only seen to perfection in our native isle, led about by dapper grooms, their manes ribanded and their tails curiously clubbed and balled. Ha! ha!—how distinctly do they say, ha! ha!

An old man draws nigh, he is mounted on a lean pony, and he leads by the bridle one of these animals; nothing very remarkable about that creature, unless in being smaller than the rest and gentle, which they are not; he is not of the sightliest look; he is almost dun, and over one eye a thick film has gathered. But stay! there *is* something remarkable about that horse, there is something in his action in which he differs from all the rest: as he advances, the clamour is hushed! all eyes are turned upon him—what looks of interest—of respect—and, what is this? p. 154
people are taking off their hats—surely not to that steed! Yes, verily! men, especially old men, are taking off their hats to that one-eyed steed, and I hear more than one deep-drawn ah!

“What horse is that?” said I to a very old fellow, the counterpart of the old man on the pony, save that the last wore a faded suit of velveteen, and this one was dressed in a white frock.

“The best in mother England,” said the very old man, taking a knobbed stick from his mouth, and looking me in the face, at first carelessly, but presently with something like interest; “he is old like myself, but can still trot his twenty miles an hour. You won’t live long, my swain; tall and overgrown ones like thee never does; yet, if you should chance to reach my years, you may boast to thy great grand boys, thou hast seen Marshland Shales.”

Amain I did for the horse what I would neither do for earl or baron, doffed my hat; yes! I doffed my hat to the wondrous horse, the fast trotter, the best in mother England; and I too drew a deep ah! and repeated the words of the old fellows around. “Such a horse as this we shall never see again; a pity that he is so old.” [154]

Now during all this time I had a kind of consciousness that I had been the object of some person’s observation; that eyes were fastened upon me from somewhere in the crowd. Sometimes I thought myself watched from before, sometimes from behind; and occasionally methought that, if I just turned my head to the right or left, I should meet a peering and inquiring glance; and p. 155
indeed once or twice I did turn, expecting to see somebody whom I knew, yet always without success; though it appeared to me that I was but a moment too late, and that some one had just slipped away from the direction to which I turned, like the figure in a magic lanthorn. Once I was quite sure that there were a pair of eyes glaring over my right shoulder; my attention, however, was so fully occupied with the objects which I have attempted to describe, that I thought very little of this coming and going, this flitting and dodging of I knew not whom or what. It was, after all, a matter of sheer indifference to me who was looking at me. I could only wish, whomsoever it might be, to be more profitably employed; so I continued enjoying what I saw; and now there was a change in the scene, the wondrous old horse departed with his aged guardian; other objects of interest are at hand; two or three men on horseback are hurrying through the crowd, they are widely different in their appearance from the other people of the fair; not so much in dress, for they are clad something after the fashion of rustic jockeys, but in their look—no light brown hair have they, no ruddy cheeks, no blue quiet glances belong to them; their features are dark, their locks long, black, and shining, and their eyes are wild; they are admirable horsemen, but they do not sit the saddle in the manner of common jockeys, they seem to float or hover upon it, like gulls upon the waves; two of them are mere striplings, but the third is a very tall man with a countenance heroically beautiful, but wild, wild, wild. As they rush along, the crowd give way on all sides, and now a kind of ring or circus is formed, within which the strange men exhibit their p. 156
horsemanship, rushing past each other, in and out, after the manner of a reel, the tall man occasionally balancing himself upon the saddle, and standing erect on one foot. He had just regained his seat after the latter feat, and was about to push his horse to a gallop, when a figure started forward close from beside me, and laying his hand on his neck, and pulling him gently downward, appeared to whisper something into his ear; presently the tall man raised his head, and, scanning the crowd for a moment in the direction in which I was standing, fixed his eyes full

upon me, and anon the countenance of the whisperer was turned, but only in part, and the side-glance of another pair of wild eyes was directed towards my face, but the entire visage of the big black man, half stooping as he was, was turned full upon mine.

But now, with a nod to the figure who had stopped him, and with another inquiring glance at myself, the big man once more put his steed into motion, and, after riding round the ring a few more times, darted through a lane in the crowd, and followed by his two companions disappeared, whereupon the figure who had whispered to him, and had subsequently remained in the middle of the space, came towards me, and, cracking a whip which he held in his hand so loudly that the report was nearly equal to that of a pocket pistol, he cried in a strange tone:

"What! the sap-engro? [156] Lor! the sap-engro upon the hill!"

"I remember that word," said I, "and I almost think I remember you. You can't be—"

"Jasper, your pal! Truth, and no lie, brother." p. 157

"It is strange that you should have known me," said I. "I am certain, but for the word you used, I should never have recognised you."

"Not so strange as you may think, brother; there is something in your face which would prevent people from forgetting you, even though they might wish it; and your face is not much altered since the time you wot of, though you are so much grown. I thought it was you, but to make sure I dodged about, inspecting you. I believe you felt me, though I never touched you; a sign, brother, that we are akin, that we are dui palor—two relations. Your blood beat when mine was near, as mine always does at the coming of a brother; and we became brothers in that lane."

"And where are you staying?" said I; "in this town?"

"Not in the town; the like of us don't find it exactly wholesome to stay in towns, we keep abroad. But I have little to do here—come with me, and I'll show you where we stay."

We descended the hill in the direction of the north, and passing along the suburb reached the old Norman bridge, which we crossed; the chalk precipice, with the ruin on its top, was now before us; but turning to the left we walked swiftly along, and presently came to some rising ground, which ascending, we found ourselves upon a wild moor or heath. [157]

"You are one of them," said I, "whom people call—"

"Just so," said Jasper; "but never mind what people call us."

"And that tall handsome man on the hill, whom you whispered? I suppose he's one of ye. What is p. 158
his name?"

"Tawno Chikno," [158] said Jasper, "which means the small one; we call him such because he is the biggest man of all our nation. You say he is handsome, that is not the word, brother; he's the beauty of the world. Women run wild at the sight of Tawno. An earl's daughter, near London—a fine young lady with diamonds round her neck—fell in love with Tawno. I have seen that lass on a heath, as this may be, kneel down to Tawno, clasp his feet, begging to be his wife—or anything else—if she might go with him. But Tawno would have nothing to do with her: 'I have a wife of my own,' said he, 'a lawful Rommany wife, whom I love better than the whole world, jealous though she sometimes be.'"

"And is she very beautiful?" said I.

"Why, you know, brother, beauty is frequently a matter of taste; however, as you ask my opinion, I should say not quite so beautiful as himself."

We had now arrived at a small valley between two hills, or downs, the sides of which were covered with furze; in the midst of this valley were various carts and low tents forming a rude kind of encampment; several dark children were playing about, who took no manner of notice of us. As we passed one of the tents, however, a canvas screen was lifted up, and a woman supported upon a crutch hobbled out. She was about the middle age, and, besides being lame, was bitterly ugly; she was very slovenly dressed, and on her swarthy features ill nature was most visibly stamped. She did not deign me a look, but, addressing Jasper in a tongue which I did not p. 159
understand, appeared to put some eager questions to him.

"He's coming," said Jasper, and passed on. "Poor fellow," said he to me, "he has scarcely been gone an hour, and she's jealous already. Well," he continued, "what do you think of her? you have seen her now, and can judge for yourself—that 'ere woman is Tawno Chikno's wife!"

CHAPTER XVII p. 160

The Tents—Pleasant Discourse—I am Pharaoh—Shifting for One's Self—Horse Shoes—This is Wonderful—Bless Your Wisdom—A Pretty Manœuvre—Ill Day to the Romans—My Name is Herne—Singular People—An Original Speech—Word Master—Speaking Romanly.

We went to the farthest of the tents, which stood at a slight distance from the rest, and which exactly resembled the one which I have described on a former occasion. We went in and sat down one on each side of a small fire, which was smouldering on the ground; there was no one else in the tent but a tall tawny woman of middle age, who was busily knitting. “Brother,” said Jasper, “I wish to hold some pleasant discourse with you.”

“As much as you please,” said I, “provided you can find anything pleasant to talk about.”

“Never fear,” said Jasper; “and first of all we will talk of yourself. Where have you been all this long time?”

“Here and there,” said I, “and far and near, going about with the soldiers; but there is no soldiering now, so we have sat down, father and family, in the town there.”

“And do you still hunt snakes?” said Jasper.

“No,” said I; “I have given up that long ago; I do better now: read books and learn languages.” p. 161

“Well, I am sorry you have given up your snake-hunting; many’s the strange talk I have had with our people about your snake and yourself, and how you frightened my father and mother in the lane.”

“And where are your father and mother?”

“Where I shall never see them, brother; at least, I hope so.”

“Not dead?”

“No, not dead; they are bitchadey pawdel.”

“What’s that?”

“Sent across—banished.”

“Ah! I understand; I am sorry for them. And so you are here alone?”

“Not quite alone, brother.”

“No, not alone; but with the rest—Tawno Chikno takes care of you.”

“Takes care of me, brother!”

“Yes, stands to you in the place of a father—keeps you out of harm’s way.”

“What do you take me for, brother?”

“For about three years older than myself.”

“Perhaps; but you are of the Gorgios, and I am a Rommany Chal. Tawno Chikno take care of Jasper Petulengro!” [161]

“Is that your name?”

“Don’t you like it?”

“Very much, I never heard a sweeter; it is something like what you call me.”

“The horse-shoe master and the snake-fellow, I am the first.” p. 162

“Who gave you that name?”

“Ask Pharaoh.”

“I would, if he were here, but I do not see him.”

“I am Pharaoh.”

“Then you are a king.”

“Chachipen Pal.” [162a]

“I do not understand you.”

“Where are your languages? You want two things, brother: mother sense, and gentle Rommany.”

“What makes you think that I want sense?”

“That, being so old, you can’t yet guide yourself!”

“I can read Dante, Jasper.”

“Anan, brother.”

“I can charm snakes, Jasper.”

“I know you can, brother.”

“Yes, and horses too; bring me the most vicious in the land, if I whisper he’ll be tame.”

“Then the more shame for you—a snake-fellow—a horse-witch—and a lil-reader[162b]—yet you can’t shift for yourself. I laugh at you, brother!”

“Then you can shift for yourself?”

“For myself and for others, brother.”

“And what does Chikno?”

“Sells me horses, when I bid him. Those horses on the chong [162c] were mine.”

“And has he none of his own?”

“Sometimes he has; but he is not so well off as myself. When my father and mother were bitchadey pawdel, which, to tell you the truth, they were, for chiving wafodo dloovu, [163a] they left me all they had, which was not a little, and I became the head of our family, which was not a small one. I was not older than you when that happened; yet our people said they had never a better krallis to contrive and plan for them, and to keep them in order. And this is so well known, that many Rommany Chals, [163b] not of our family, come and join themselves to us, living with us for a time, in order to better themselves, more especially those of the poorer sort, who have little of their own. Tawno is one of these.” p. 163

“Is that fine fellow poor?”

“One of the poorest, brother. Handsome as he is, he has not a horse of his own to ride on. Perhaps we may put it down to his wife, who cannot move about, being a cripple, as you saw.”

“And you are what is called a Gypsy King?”

“Ay, ay; a Rommany Kral.”

“Are there other kings?”

“Those who call themselves so; but the true Pharaoh is Petulengro.”

“Did Pharaoh make horse-shoes?”

“The first who ever did, brother.”

“Pharaoh lived in Egypt.”

“So did we once, brother.”

“And you left it?”

“My fathers did, brother.”

“And why did they come here?”

“They had their reasons, brother.”

“And you are not English?”

“We are not Gorgios.” [163c]

“And you have a language of your own?”

“Avali.” [164a] p. 164

“This is wonderful.”

“Ha, ha!” cried the woman, who had hitherto sat knitting, at the farther end of the tent, without saying a word, though not inattentive to our conversation, as I could perceive, by certain glances, which she occasionally cast upon us both. “Ha, ha!” she screamed, fixing upon me two eyes, which shone like burning coals, and which were filled with an expression both of scorn and malignity. “It is wonderful, is it, that we should have a language of our own? What, you grudge the poor people the speech they talk among themselves? That’s just like you Gorgios, you would have everybody stupid, single-tongued idiots, like yourselves. We are taken before the Poknees of the gav, [164b] myself and sister, to give an account of ourselves. So I says to my sister’s little boy, speaking Rommany, I says to the little boy who is with us, run to my son Jasper, and the rest, and tell them to be off, there are hawks abroad. So the Poknees questions us, and lets us go, not being able to make anything of us; but, as we are going, he calls us back. ‘Good woman,’ says the Poknees, ‘what was that I heard you say just now to the little boy?’ ‘I was telling him, your worship, to go and see the time of day, and, to save trouble, I said it in our language.’ ‘Where did you get that language?’ says the Poknees. ‘’Tis our own language, sir,’ I tells him, ‘we did not steal it.’ ‘Shall I tell you what it is, my good woman?’ says the Poknees. ‘I would thank you, sir,’ says I, ‘for ’tis often we are asked about it.’ ‘Well, then,’ says the Poknees, ‘it is no language at all, merely a made-up gibberish.’ ‘Oh, bless your wisdom,’ says I, with a curtsey, ‘you can tell us what our language is, without understanding it!’ Another time we meet a parson. ‘Good woman,’ says he, ‘what’s that you are talking? Is it broken language?’ ‘Of course, your reverence,’ says I, ‘we are broken people; give a shilling, your reverence, to the poor broken woman.’ Oh, these Gorgios! they grudge us our very language!” p. 165

“She called you her son, Jasper?”

“I am her son, brother.”

“I thought you said your parents were—”

“Bitchadey pawdel; you thought right, brother. This is my wife’s mother.”

“Then you are married, Jasper?”

“Ay, truly; I am husband and father. You will see wife and chabo [165a] anon.”

“Where are they now?”

“In the gav, penning dukkerin.” [165b]

“We were talking of language, Jasper.”

“True, brother.”

“Yours must be a rum one.”

“’Tis called Rommany.”

“I would gladly know it.”

“You need it sorely.”

“Would you teach it me?”

“None sooner.”

“Suppose we begin now?”

“Suppose we do, brother.”

“Not whilst I am here,” said the woman, flinging her knitting down, and starting upon her feet; “not whilst I am here shall this Gorgio learn Rommany. A pretty manœuvre, truly; and what would be the end of it? I goes to the farming ker [166a] with my sister, to tell a fortune, and earn a few sixpences for the chabes. I sees a jolly pig in the yard, and I says to my sister, speaking Rommany, ‘Do so and so,’ says I; which the farming man hearing, asks what we are talking about. ‘Nothing at all, master,’ says I; ‘something about the weather;’ when who should start up from behind a pale, where he has been listening, but this ugly Gorgio, crying out, ‘They are after poisoning your pigs, neighbour!’ so that we are glad to run, I and my sister, with perhaps the farm-engro shouting after us. Says my sister to me, when we have got fairly off, ‘How came that ugly one to know what you said to me?’ Whereupon I answers, ‘It all comes of my son Jasper, who brings the Gorgio to our fire, and must needs be teaching him.’ ‘Who was fool there?’ says my sister. ‘Who, indeed, but my son Jasper,’ I answers. And here should I be a greater fool to sit still and suffer it; which I will not do. I do not like the look of him; he looks over-gorgious. An ill day to the Romans when he masters Rommany; and, when I says that, I pens a true dukkerin.” p. 166

“What do you call God, Jasper?”

“You had better be jawing,” [166b] said the woman, raising her voice to a terrible scream; “you had better be moving off, my Gorgio; hang you for a keen one, sitting there by the fire, and stealing my language before my face. Do you know whom you have to deal with? Do you know that I am dangerous? My name is Herne, and I comes of the hairy ones!”

And a hairy one she looked! She wore her hair clubbed upon her head, fastened with many strings and ligatures; but now, tearing these off, her locks, originally jet black, but now partially grizzled with age, fell down on every side of her, covering her face and back as far down as her knees. No she-bear of Lapland ever looked more fierce and hairy than did that woman, as standing in the open part of the tent, with her head bent down, and her shoulders drawn up, seemingly about to precipitate herself upon me, she repeated, again and again,— p. 167

“My name is Herne, and I comes of the hairy ones!—”

“I call God Duvel, brother.”

“It sounds very like Devil.”

“It doth, brother, it doth.”

“And what do you call divine, I mean godly?”

“Oh! I call that duvelskoe.”

“I am thinking of something, Jasper.”

“What are you thinking of, brother?”

“Would it not be a rum thing if divine and devilish were originally one and the same word?”

“It would, brother, it would—”

* * * * *

From this time I had frequent interviews with Jasper, sometimes in his tent, sometimes on the heath, about which we would roam for hours, discoursing on various matters. Sometimes mounted on one of his horses, of which he had several, I would accompany him to various fairs and markets in the neighbourhood, to which he went on his own affairs, or those of his tribe. I soon found that I had become acquainted with a most singular people, whose habits and pursuits awakened within me the highest interest. Of all connected with them, however, their language was doubtless that which exercised the greatest influence over my imagination. I had at first some suspicion that it would prove a mere made-up gibberish; but I was soon undeceived. Broken, corrupted, and half in ruins as it was, it was not long before I found that it was an original speech, far more so, indeed, than one or two others of high name and celebrity, which, up to that time, I had been in the habit of regarding with respect and veneration. Indeed many obscure points connected with the vocabulary of these languages, and to which neither classic nor modern lore afforded any clue, I thought I could now clear up by means of this strange broken tongue, spoken by people who dwelt amongst thickets and furze bushes, in tents as tawny as their faces, and whom the generality of mankind designated, and with much semblance of justice, as thieves and vagabonds. But where did this speech come from, and who were they who spoke it? These were questions which I could not solve, and which Jasper himself, when pressed, confessed his inability to answer. "But, whoever we be, brother," said he, "we are an old people, and not what folks in general imagine, broken Gorgios; and, if we are not Egyptians, we are at any rate Rommany Chals!"

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"Rommany Chals! I should not wonder after all," said I, "that these people had something to do with the founding of Rome. Rome, it is said, was built by vagabonds; who knows but that some tribe of the kind settled down thereabouts, and called the town which they built after their name? but whence did they come originally? ah! there is the difficulty." [169a]

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But abandoning these questions, which at that time were far too profound for me, I went on studying the language, and at the same time the characters and manners of these strange people. My rapid progress in the former astonished, while it delighted, Jasper. "We'll no longer call you Sap-engro, brother," said he; "but rather Lav-engro, which in the language of the Gorgios meaneth Word Master." "Nay, brother," said Tawno Chikno, with whom I had become very intimate, "you had better call him Cooro-mengro. [169b] I have put on *the gloves* with him, and find him a pure fist master; I like him for that, for I am a Cooro-mengro myself, and was born at Brummagem."

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"I likes him for his modesty," said Mrs. Chikno; "I never hears any ill words come from his mouth, but, on the contrary, much sweet language. His talk is golden, and he has taught my eldest to say his prayers in Rommany, which my rover had never the grace to do." "He is the pal of my rom," [170a] said Mrs. Petulengro, who was a very handsome woman, "and therefore I likes him, and not the less for his being a rye; [170b] folks calls me high-minded, and perhaps I have reason to be so; before I married Pharaoh I had an offer from a lord. I likes the young rye, and, if he chooses to follow us, he shall have my sister. What say you, mother? should not the young rye have my sister Ursula?"

"I am going to my people," said Mrs. Herne, placing a bundle upon a donkey, which was her own peculiar property; "I am going to Yorkshire, for I can stand this no longer. You say you like him: in that we differs; I hates the Gorgio, and would like, speaking Romanly, to mix a little poison with his waters. And now go to Lundra, [170c] my children; I goes to Yorkshire. Take my blessing with ye, and a little bit of a gillie [170d] to cheer your hearts with when ye are weary. In all kinds of weather have we lived together; but now we are parted. I goes broken-hearted—I can't keep you company; ye are no longer Rommany. To gain a bad brother, ye have lost a good mother."

CHAPTER XVIII

p. 171

What Profession?—Not Fitted for a Churchman—Erratic Course—The Bitter Draught—Principle of Woe—Thou Wouldst be Joyous—What Ails You?—Poor Child of Clay.

So the Gypsies departed; Mrs. Herne to Yorkshire, and the rest to London: as for myself, I continued in the house of my parents, passing my time in much the same manner as I have already described, principally in philological pursuits; but I was now sixteen, and it was highly necessary that I should adopt some profession, unless I intended to fritter away my existence, and to be a useless burden to those who had given me birth; but what profession was I to choose? there being none in the wide world perhaps for which I was suited; nor was there any one for which I felt any decided inclination, though perhaps there existed within me a lurking penchant for the profession of arms, which was natural enough, as, from my earliest infancy, I had been accustomed to military sights and sounds; but this profession was then closed, as I have already hinted, and, as I believe, it has since continued, to those who, like myself, had no better claims to urge than the services of a father.

My father, who, for certain reasons of his own, had no very high opinion of the advantages resulting from this career, would have gladly seen me enter the Church. His desire was,

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however, considerably abated by one or two passages of my life, which occurred to his recollection. He particularly dwelt on the unheard-of manner in which I had picked up the Irish language, and drew from thence the conclusion that I was not fitted by nature to cut a respectable figure at an English university. "He will fly off in a tangent," said he, "and, when called upon to exhibit his skill in Greek, will be found proficient in Irish; I have observed the poor lad attentively, and really do not know what to make of him; but I am afraid he will never make a churchman!" And I have no doubt that my excellent father was right, both in his premises and the conclusion at which he arrived. I had undoubtedly, at one period of my life, forsaken Greek for Irish, and the instructions of a learned Protestant divine, for those of a Papist gossoon, the card-fancying Murtagh; and of late, though I kept it a strict secret, I had abandoned in a great measure the study of the beautiful Italian, and the recitation of the sonorous terzets of the Divine Comedy, in which at one time I took the greatest delight, in order to become acquainted with the broken speech, and yet more broken songs, of certain houseless wanderers whom I had met at a horse fair. Such an erratic course was certainly by no means in consonance with the sober and unvarying routine of college study. And my father, who was a man of excellent common sense, displayed it, in not pressing me to adopt a profession which required qualities of mind which he saw I did not possess. p. 173

Other professions were talked of, amongst which the law; but now an event occurred which had nearly stopped my career, and merged all minor points of solicitude in anxiety for my life. My strength and appetite suddenly deserted me, and I began to pine and droop. Some said that I had overgrown myself, and that these were the symptoms of a rapid decline; I grew worse and worse, and was soon stretched upon my bed, from which it seemed scarcely probable that I should ever more rise, the physicians themselves giving but slight hopes of my recovery: as for myself, I made up my mind to die, and felt quite resigned. I was sadly ignorant at that time, and, when I thought of death, it appeared to me little else than a pleasant sleep, and I wished for sleep, of which I got but little. It was well that I did not die that time, for I repeat that I was sadly ignorant of many important things. I did not die, for somebody coming gave me a strange, bitter draught; a decoction, I believe, of a bitter root which grows on commons and desolate places: and the person who gave it me was an ancient female, a kind of doctress, who had been my nurse in my infancy, and who, hearing of my state, had come to see me; so I drank the draught, and became a little better, and I continued taking draughts made from the bitter root till I manifested symptoms of convalescence.

But how much more quickly does strength desert the human frame than return to it! I had become convalescent, it is true, but my state of feebleness was truly pitiable. I believe it is in that state that the most remarkable feature of human physiology frequently exhibits itself. Oh, p. 174
how dare I mention the dark feeling of mysterious dread which comes over the mind, and which the lamp of reason, though burning bright the while, is unable to dispel! Art thou, as leeches say, the concomitant of disease—the result of shattered nerves? Nay, rather the principle of woe itself, the fountain-head of all sorrow co-existent with man, whose influence he feels when yet unborn, and whose workings he testifies with his earliest cries, when, "drowned in tears," he first beholds the light; for, as the sparks fly upward, so is man born to trouble, and woe doth he bring with him into the world, even thyself, dark one, terrible one, causeless, unbegotten, without a father. Oh, how unfrequently dost thou break down the barriers which divide thee from the poor soul of man, and overcast its sunshine with thy gloomy shadow. In the brightest days of prosperity—in the midst of health and wealth—how sentient is the poor human creature of thy neighbourhood! how instinctively aware that the flood-gates of horror may be cast open, and the dark stream engulf him for ever and ever! Then is it not lawful for man to exclaim, "Better that I had never been born!" Fool, for thyself thou wast not born, but to fulfil the inscrutable decrees of thy Creator; and how dost thou know that this dark principle is not, after all, thy best friend; that it is not that which tempers the whole mass of thy corruption? It may be, for what thou knowest, the mother of wisdom, and of great works: it is the dread of the horror of the night that makes the pilgrim hasten on his way. When thou feelest it nigh, let thy safety word be "Onward"; p. 175
if thou tarry, thou art overwhelmed. Courage! build great works—'tis urging thee—it is ever nearest the favourites of God—the fool knows little of it. Thou wouldst be joyous, wouldst thou? then be a fool. What great work was ever the result of joy, the puny one? Who have been the wise ones, the mighty ones, the conquering ones of this earth? the joyous? I believe not. The fool is happy, or comparatively so—certainly the least sorrowful, but he is still a fool: and whose notes are sweetest, those of the nightingale, or of the silly lark?

* * * * *

"What ails you, my child?" said a mother to her son, as he lay on a couch under the influence of the dreadful one; "what ails you? you seem afraid!"

Boy. And so I am; a dreadful fear is upon me.

Mother. But of what? there is no one can harm you; of what are you apprehensive?

Boy. Of nothing that I can express; I know not what I am afraid of, but afraid I am.

Mother. Perhaps you see sights and visions; I knew a lady once who was continually thinking that she saw an armed man threaten her, but it was only an imagination, a phantom of the brain.

Boy. No armed man threatens me; and 'tis not a thing like that would cause me any fear. Did an armed man threaten me, I would get up and fight him; weak as I am, I would wish for nothing better, for then, perhaps, I should lose this fear; mine is a dread of I know not what, and there

the horror lies.

Mother. Your forehead is cool, and your speech collected. Do you know where you are?

Boy. I know where I am, and I see things just as they are; you are beside me, and upon the table there is a book which was written by a Florentine; all this I see, and that there is no ground for being afraid. I am, moreover, quite cool, and feel no pain—but, but . . . p. 176

And then there was a burst of "gemiti, sospiri ed alti guai." Alas, alas, poor child of clay! as the sparks fly upward, so wast thou born to sorrow—Onward!

CHAPTER XIX p. 177

Agreeable Delusions—Youth—A Profession—Ab Gwilym—Glorious English Law—There They Pass—My Dear Old Master—The Deal Desk—Language of the Tents—Where is Morfydd?—Go to—Only Once.

It has been said by this or that writer, I scarcely know by whom, that, in proportion as we grow old, and our time becomes short, the swifter does it pass, until at last, as we approach the borders of the grave, it assumes all the speed and impetuosity of a river about to precipitate itself into an abyss; this is doubtless the case, provided we can carry to the grave those pleasant thoughts and delusions which alone render life agreeable, and to which even to the very last we would gladly cling; but what becomes of the swiftness of time, when the mind sees the vanity of human pursuits? which is sure to be the case when its fondest, dearest hopes have been blighted at the very moment when the harvest was deemed secure. What becomes from that moment, I repeat, of the shortness of time? I put not the question to those who have never known that trial,—they are satisfied with themselves and all around them, with what they have done, and yet hope to do; some carry their delusions with them to the borders of the grave, ay, to the very moment when they fall into it; a beautiful golden cloud surrounds them to the last, and such talk of the shortness of time: through the medium of that cloud the world has ever been a pleasant world to them; their only regret is that they are so soon to quit it; but oh, ye dear deluded hearts, it is not every one who is so fortunate! p. 178

To the generality of mankind there is no period like youth. The generality are far from fortunate; but the period of youth, even to the least so, offers moments of considerable happiness, for they are not only disposed, but able to enjoy most things within their reach. With what trifles at that period are we content; the things from which in after-life we should turn away in disdain please us then, for we are in the midst of a golden cloud, and everything seems decked with a golden hue. Never during any portion of my life did time flow on more speedily than during the two or three years immediately succeeding the period to which we arrived in the preceding chapter: since then it has flagged often enough; sometimes it has seemed to stand entirely still; and the reader may easily judge how it fares at the present, from the circumstance of my taking pen in hand, and endeavouring to write down the passages of my life—a last resource with most people. But at the period to which I allude I was just, as I may say, entering upon life; I had adopted a profession, and—to keep up my character, simultaneously with that profession—the study of a new language—I speedily became a proficient in the one, but ever remained a novice in the other: a novice in the law, but a perfect master in the Welsh tongue. [178]

Yes! very pleasant times were those, when within the womb of a lofty deal desk, behind which I sat for some eight hours every day, transcribing (when I imagined eyes were upon me) documents of every description in every possible hand, Blackstone kept company with Ab Gwilym—the polished English lawyer of the last century, who wrote long and prosy chapters on the rights of things—with a certain wild Welshman, who some four hundred years before that time indited immortal cowydds and odes to the wives of Cambrian chieftains—more particularly to one Morfydd, the wife of a certain hunchbacked dignitary called by the poet facetiously Bwa Bach—generally terminating with the modest request of a little private parlance beneath the green wood bough, with no other witness than the eos, or nightingale, a request which, if the poet himself may be believed, rather a doubtful point, was seldom, very seldom, denied. And by what strange chance had Ab Gwilym and Blackstone, two personages so exceedingly different, been thus brought together? From what the reader already knows of me, he may be quite prepared to find me reading the former; but what could have induced me to take up Blackstone, or rather the law? p. 179

I have ever loved to be as explicit as possible; on which account, perhaps, I never attained to any proficiency in the law, the essence of which is said to be ambiguity; most questions may be answered in a few words, and this among the rest, though connected with the law. My parents deemed it necessary that I should adopt some profession, they named the law; the law was as agreeable to me as any other profession within my reach, so I adopted the law, and the consequence was, that Blackstone, probably for the first time, found himself in company with Ab Gwilym. By adopting the law I had not ceased to be Lavengro. [180] p. 180

So I sat behind a desk many hours in the day, ostensibly engaged in transcribing documents of various kinds; the scene of my labours was a strange old house, occupying one side of a long and narrow court, into which, however, the greater number of the windows looked not, but into an

extensive garden, filled with fruit trees, in the rear of a large, handsome house, belonging to a highly respectable gentleman, who, *moyennant un douceur considérable*, had consented to instruct my father's youngest son in the mysteries of glorious English law. Ah! would that I could describe the good gentleman in the manner which he deserves; he has long since sunk to his place in a respectable vault, in the aisle of a very respectable church, whilst an exceedingly respectable marble slab against the neighbouring wall tells on a Sunday some eye wandering from its prayer-book that his dust lies below; to secure such respectabilities in death, he passed a most respectable life. Let no one sneer, he accomplished much; his life was peaceful, so was his death. Are these trifles? I wish I could describe him, for I loved the man, and with reason, for he was ever kind to me, to whom kindness has not always been shown; and he was, moreover, a choice specimen of a class which no longer exists—a gentleman lawyer of the old school. I would fain describe him, but figures with which he has nought to do press forward and keep him from p. 181
my mind's eye; there they pass, Spaniard and Moor, Gypsy, Turk, and livid Jew. But who is that? what that thick pursy man in the loose, snuff-coloured great-coat, with the white stockings, drab breeches, and silver buckles on his shoes; that man with the bull neck, and singular head, immense in the lower part, especially about the jaws, but tapering upward like a pear; the man with the bushy brows, small grey eyes, replete with cat-like expression, whose grizzled hair is cut close, and whose ear lobes are pierced with small golden rings? Oh! that is not my dear old master, but a widely different personage. *Bon jour*, *Monsieur Vidocq*! *expressions de ma part à Monsieur Le Baron Taylor*. But here he comes at last, my veritable old master!

A more respectable-looking individual was never seen; he really looked what he was, a gentleman of the law—there was nothing of the pettifogger about him: somewhat under the middle size, and somewhat rotund in person, he was always dressed in a full suit of black, never worn long enough to become threadbare. His face was rubicund, and not without keenness; but the most remarkable thing about him was the crown of his head, which was bald, and shone like polished ivory, nothing more white, smooth, and lustrous. Some people have said that he wore false calves, probably because his black silk stockings never exhibited a wrinkle; they might just as well have said that he waddled, because his shoes creaked; for these last, which were always without a speck, and polished as his crown, though of a different hue, did creak, as he walked rather slowly. I cannot say that I ever saw him walk fast.

He had a handsome practice, and might have died a very rich man, much richer than he did, had p. 182
he not been in the habit of giving rather expensive dinners to certain great people, who gave him nothing in return, except their company; I could never discover his reasons for doing so, as he always appeared to me a remarkably quiet man, by nature averse to noise and bustle; but in all dispositions there are anomalies: I have already said that he lived in a handsome house, and I may as well here add that he had a very handsome wife, who both dressed and talked exceedingly well.

So I sat behind the deal desk, engaged in copying documents of various kinds; and in the apartment in which I sat, and in the adjoining ones, there were others, some of whom likewise copied documents, while some were engaged in the yet more difficult task of drawing them up; and some of these, sons of nobody, were paid for the work they did, whilst others, like myself, sons of somebody, paid for being permitted to work, which, as our principal observed, was but reasonable, forasmuch as we not unfrequently utterly spoiled the greater part of the work entrusted to our hands.

There was one part of the day when I generally found myself quite alone, I mean at the hour when the rest went home to their principal meal; I, being the youngest, was left to take care of the premises, to answer the bell, and so forth, till relieved, which was seldom before the expiration of an hour and a half, when I myself went home; this period, however, was anything but disagreeable to me, for it was then that I did what best pleased me, and, leaving off copying the documents, I sometimes indulged in a fit of musing, my chin resting on both my hands, and p. 183
my elbows planted on the desk; or, opening the desk aforesaid, I would take out one of the books contained within it, and the book which I took out was almost invariably, not Blackstone, but Ab Gwilym.

Ah, that Ab Gwilym! I am much indebted to him, and it were ungrateful on my part not to devote a few lines to him and his songs in this my history. Start not, reader, I am not going to trouble you with a poetical dissertation; no, no! I know my duty too well to introduce anything of the kind; but I, who imagine I know several things, and amongst others the workings of your mind at this moment, have an idea that you are anxious to learn a little, a very little, more about Ab Gwilym than I have hitherto told you, the two or three words that I have dropped having awakened within you a languid kind of curiosity. I have no hesitation in saying that he makes one of the some half-dozen really great poets whose verses, in whatever language they wrote, exist at the present day, and are more or less known. It matters little how I first became acquainted with the writings of this man, and how the short thick volume, stuffed full with his immortal imaginings, first came into my hands. I was studying Welsh, and I fell in with Ab Gwilym by no very strange chance. But, before I say more about Ab Gwilym, I must be permitted—I really must—to say a word or two about the language in which he wrote, that same "Sweet Welsh." If I remember right, I found the language a difficult one; in mastering it, however, I derived unexpected assistance from what of Irish remained in my head, and I soon found that they were cognate dialects, springing from some old tongue which itself, perhaps, had sprung from one p. 184
much older. And here I cannot help observing cursorily that I every now and then, whilst studying this Welsh, generally supposed to be the original tongue of Britain, encountered words

which, according to the lexicographers, were venerable words highly expressive, showing the wonderful power and originality of the Welsh, in which, however, they were no longer used in common discourse, but were relics, precious relics, of the first speech of Britain, perhaps of the world; with which words, however, I was already well acquainted, and which I had picked up, not in learned books, classic books, and in tongues of old renown, but whilst listening to Mr. Petulengro and Tawno Chikno talking over their every-day affairs in the language of the tents; which circumstance did not fail to give rise to deep reflection in those moments when, planting my elbows on the deal desk, I rested my chin upon my hands. But it is probable that I should have abandoned the pursuit of the Welsh language, after obtaining a very superficial acquaintance with it, had it not been for Ab Gwilym.

A strange songster was that who, pretending to be captivated by every woman he saw, was, in reality, in love with nature alone—wild, beautiful, solitary nature—her mountains and cascades, her forests and streams, her birds, fishes, and wild animals. Go to, Ab Gwilym, with thy pseudo-amatory odes, to Morfydd, or this or that other lady, fair or ugly—little didst thou care for any of them; Dame Nature was thy love, however thou mayest seek to disguise the truth. Yes, yes, send thy love-message to Morfydd, the fair wanton. By whom dost thou send it, I would know? by the p. 185 salmon forsooth, which haunts the rushing stream! the glorious salmon which bounds and gambols in the flashing water, and whose ways and circumstances thou so well describest—see, there he hurries upwards through the flashing water. Halloo! what a glimpse of glory—but where is Morfydd the while? What, another message to the wife of Bwa Bach? Ay, truly; and by whom?—the wind! the swift wind, the rider of the world, whose course is not to be stayed; who gallops o'er the mountain, and, when he comes to broadest river, asks neither for boat nor ferry; who has described the wind so well—his speed and power? But where is Morfydd? And now thou art awaiting Morfydd, the wanton, the wife of the Bwa Bach; thou art awaiting her beneath the tall trees, amidst the underwood; but she comes not; no Morfydd is there. Quite right, Ab Gwilym; what wantest thou with Morfydd? But another form is nigh at hand, that of red Reynard, who, seated upon his chine at the mouth of his cave, looks very composedly at thee; thou startest, bendest thy bow, thy cross-bow, intending to hit Reynard with the bolt just about the jaw; but the bow breaks, Reynard barks and disappears into his cave, which by thine own account reaches hell—and then thou ravest at the misfortune of thy bow, and the non-appearance of Morfydd, and abusest Reynard. Go to, thou carest neither for thy bow nor for Morfydd, thou merely seekest an opportunity to speak of Reynard; and who has described him like thee? the brute with the sharp shrill cry, the black reverse of melody, whose face sometimes wears a smile like the devil's in the Evangile. But now thou art actually with Morfydd; yes, she has stolen from the dwelling of the p. 186 Bwa Bach and has met thee beneath those rocks—she is actually with thee, Ab Gwilym; but she is not long with thee, for a storm comes on, and thunder shatters the rocks—Morfydd flees! Quite right, Ab Gwilym; thou hadst no need of her, a better theme for song is the voice of the Lord—the rock shatterer—than the frail wife of the Bwa Bach. Go to, Ab Gwilym, thou wast a wiser and a better man than thou wouldst fain have had people believe.

But enough of thee and thy songs! Those times passed rapidly; with Ab Gwilym in my hand, I was in the midst of enchanted ground, in which I experienced sensations akin to those I had felt of yore whilst spelling my way through the wonderful book—the delight of my childhood. I say akin, for perhaps only once in our lives do we experience unmixed wonder and delight; and these I had already known.

CHAPTER XX p. 187

Silver Grey—Good Word for Everybody—A Remarkable Youth—Clients—Grades in Society—The Archdeacon—Reading the Bible.

"I am afraid that I have not acted very wisely in putting this boy of ours to the law," said my father to my mother, as they sat together one summer evening in their little garden, beneath the shade of some tall poplars.

Yes, there sat my father in the garden chair which leaned against the wall of his quiet home, the haven in which he had sought rest, and, praise be to God, found it, after many a year of poorly requited toil; there he sat, with locks of silver grey which set off so nobly his fine bold but benevolent face, his faithful consort at his side, and his trusty dog at his feet—an eccentric animal of the genuine regimental breed, who, born amongst red-coats, had not yet become reconciled to those of any other hue, barking and tearing at them when they drew near the door, but testifying his fond reminiscence of the former by hospitable waggings of the tail whenever a uniform made its appearance—at present a very unfrequent occurrence.

"I am afraid I have not done right in putting him to the law," said my father, resting his chin upon p. 188 his gold-headed bamboo cane.

"Why, what makes you think so?" said my mother.

"I have been taking my usual evening walk up the road, with the animal here," said my father; "and, as I walked along, I overtook the boy's master, Mr. S---. We shook hands, and, after walking a little way farther, we turned back together, talking about this and that; the state of the country, the weather, and the dog, which he greatly admired; for he is a good-natured man, and

has a good word for everybody, though the dog all but bit him when he attempted to coax his head; after the dog, we began talking about the boy; it was myself who introduced that subject: I thought it was a good opportunity to learn how he was getting on, so I asked what he thought of my son; he hesitated at first, seeming scarcely to know what to say; at length he came out with 'Oh, a very extraordinary youth, a most remarkable youth indeed, captain!' 'Indeed,' said I, 'I am glad to hear it, but I hope you find him steady?' 'Steady, steady,' said he, 'why, yes, he's steady, I cannot say that he is not steady.' 'Come, come,' said I, beginning to be rather uneasy, 'I see plainly that you are not altogether satisfied with him; I was afraid you would not be, for, though he is my own son, I am anything but blind to his imperfections: but do tell me what particular fault you have to find with him; and I will do my best to make him alter his conduct.' 'No fault to find with him, captain, I assure you, no fault whatever; the youth is a remarkable youth, an extraordinary youth, only . . .' As I told you before, Mr. S--- is the best natured man in the world, p. 189
and it was only with the greatest difficulty that I could get him to say a single word to the disadvantage of the boy, for whom he seems to entertain a very great regard. At last I forced the truth from him, and grieved I was to hear it; though I must confess that I was somewhat prepared for it. It appears that the lad has a total want of discrimination."

"I don't understand you," said my mother.

"You can understand nothing that would seem for a moment to impugn the conduct of that child. I am not, however, so blind; want of discrimination was the word, and it both sounds well, and is expressive. It appears that, since he has been placed where he is, he has been guilty of the grossest blunders; only the other day, Mr. S--- told me, as he was engaged in close conversation with one of his principal clients, the boy came to tell him that a person wanted particularly to speak with him; and, on going out, he found a lamentable figure with one eye, who came to ask for charity; whom, nevertheless, the lad had ushered into a private room, and installed in an arm-chair, like a justice of the peace, instead of telling him to go about his business—now what did that show, but a total want of discrimination?"

"I wish we may never have anything worse to reproach him with," said my mother.

"I don't know what worse we could reproach him with," said my father; "I mean of course as far as his profession is concerned; discrimination is the very key-stone; if he treated all people alike, he would soon become a beggar himself; there are grades in society as well as in the army; and according to those grades we should fashion our behaviour, else there would instantly be an end p. 190
of all order and discipline. I am afraid that the child is too condescending to his inferiors, whilst to his superiors he is apt to be unbending enough; I don't believe that would do in the world; I am sure it would not in the army. He told me another anecdote with respect to his behaviour, which shocked me more than the other had done. It appears that his wife, who, by the bye, is a very fine woman, and highly fashionable, gave him permission to ask the boy to tea one evening, for she is herself rather partial to the lad; there had been a great dinner party there that day, and there were a great many fashionable people, so the boy went and behaved very well and modestly for some time, and was rather noticed, till, unluckily, a very great gentleman, an archdeacon I think, put some questions to him, and, finding that he understood the languages, began talking to him about the classics. What do you think? the boy had the impertinence to say that the classics were much overvalued, and amongst other things that some horrid fellow or other, some Welshman I think (thank God it was not an Irishman), was a better poet than Ovid; the company were of course horrified; the archdeacon, who is seventy years of age, and has seven thousand a year, took snuff and turned away. Mrs. S--- turned up her eyes; Mr. S---, however, told me with his usual good-nature (I suppose to spare my feelings) that he rather enjoyed the thing, and thought it a capital joke."

"I think so too," said my mother.

"I do not," said my father; "that a boy of his years should entertain an opinion of his own—I mean one which militates against all established authority—is astounding; as well might a raw recruit p. 191
pretend to offer an unfavourable opinion on the manual and platoon exercise; the idea is preposterous; the lad is too independent by half. I never yet knew one of an independent spirit get on in the army,—the secret of success in the army is the spirit of subordination."

"Which is a poor spirit after all," said my mother; "but the child is not in the army."

"And it is well for him that he is not," said my father; "but you do not talk wisely; the world is a field of battle, and he who leaves the ranks, what can he expect but to be cut down? I call his present behaviour leaving the ranks, and going vapouring about without orders; his only chance lies in falling in again as quick as possible; does he think he can carry the day by himself? an opinion of his own at these years—I confess I am exceedingly uneasy about the lad."

"You make me uneasy too," said my mother; "but I really think you are too hard upon the child; he is not a bad child, after all, though not, perhaps, all you could wish him; he is always ready to read the Bible. Let us go in; he is in the room above us; at least he was two hours ago, I left him there bending over his books; I wonder what he has been doing all this time, it is now getting late; let us go in, and he shall read to us."

"I am getting old," said my father; "and I love to hear the Bible read to me, for my own sight is something dim; yet I do not wish the child to read to me this night, I cannot so soon forget what I have heard; but I hear my eldest son's voice, he is now entering the gate; he shall read the Bible to us this night. What say you?"

CHAPTER XXI

The Eldest Son—Saying of Wild Finland—The Critical Time—Vaunting Polls—One Thing Wanted —A Father's Blessing—Miracle of Art—The Pope's House—Young Enthusiast—Pictures of England—Persist and Wrestle—The Little Dark Man.

The eldest son! The regard and affection which my father entertained for his first-born were natural enough, and appeared to none more so than myself, who cherished the same feelings towards him. What he was as a boy the reader already knows, for the reader has seen him as a boy; fain would I describe him at the time of which I am now speaking, when he had attained the verge of manhood, but the pen fails me, and I attempt not the task; and yet it ought to be an easy one, for how frequently does his form visit my mind's eye in slumber and in wakefulness, in the light of day, and in the night watches; but last night I saw him in his beauty and his strength; he was about to speak, and my ear was on the stretch, when at once I awoke, and there was I alone, and the night storm was howling amidst the branches of the pines which surround my lonely dwelling: "Listen to the moaning of the pine, at whose root thy hut is fastened,"—a saying that, of wild Finland, in which there is wisdom; I listened and thought of life and death. . . . Of all human beings that I have ever known, that elder brother was the most frank and generous, ay, and the quickest and readiest, and the best adapted to do a great thing needful at the critical time, when the delay of a moment would be fatal. I have known him dash from a steep bank into a stream in his full dress, and pull out a man who was drowning; yet there were twenty others bathing in the water, who might have saved him by putting out a hand, without inconvenience to themselves, which, however, they did not do, but stared with stupid surprise at the drowning one's struggles. Yes, whilst some shouted from the bank to those in the water to save the drowning one, and those in the water did nothing, my brother neither shouted nor stood still, but dashed from the bank and did the one thing needful, which, under such circumstances, not one man in a million would have done. Now, who can wonder that a brave old man should love a son like this, and prefer him to any other?

"My boy, my own boy, you are the very image of myself, the day I took off my coat in the park to fight Big Ben," said my father, on meeting his son wet and dripping, immediately after his bold feat. And who cannot excuse the honest pride of the old man—the stout old man?

Ay, old man, that son was worthy of thee, and thou wast worthy of such a son; a noble specimen wast thou of those strong single-minded Englishmen, who, without making a parade either of religion or loyalty, feared God and honoured their king, and were not particularly friendly to the French, whose vaunting polls they occasionally broke, as at Minden and at Malplaquet, to the confusion vast of the eternal foes of the English land. I, who was so little like thee that thou understoodst me not, and in whom with justice thou didst feel so little pride, had yet perception enough to see all thy worth, and to feel it an honour to be able to call myself thy son; and if at some no distant time, when the foreign enemy ventures to insult our shore, I be permitted to break some vaunting poll, it will be a triumph to me to think that, if thou hadst lived, thou wouldst have hailed the deed, and mightest yet discover some distant resemblance to thyself, the day when thou didst all but vanquish the mighty Brain.

I have already spoken of my brother's taste for painting, and the progress he had made in that beautiful art. It is probable that, if circumstances had not eventually diverted his mind from the pursuit, he would have attained excellence, and left behind him some enduring monument of his powers, for he had an imagination to conceive, and that yet rarer endowment, a hand capable of giving life, body, and reality to the conceptions of his mind; perhaps he wanted one thing, the want of which is but too often fatal to the sons of genius, and without which genius is little more than a splendid toy in the hands of the possessor—perseverance, dogged perseverance, in his proper calling; otherwise, though the grave had closed over him, he might still be living in the admiration of his fellow-creatures. O ye gifted ones, follow your calling, for, however various your talents may be, ye can have but one calling capable of leading ye to eminence and renown; follow resolutely the one straight path before you, it is that of your good angel, let neither obstacles nor temptations induce ye to leave it; bound along if you can; if not, on hands and knees follow it, perish in it, if needful; but ye need not fear that; no one ever yet died in the true path of his calling before he had attained the pinnacle. Turn into other paths, and for a momentary advantage or gratification ye have sold your inheritance, your immortality. Ye will never be heard of after death.

"My father has given me a hundred and fifty pounds," said my brother to me one morning, "and something which is better—his blessing. I am going to leave you."

"And where are you going?"

"Where? to the great city; to London, to be sure."

"I should like to go with you."

"Pooh!" said my brother; "what should you do there? But don't be discouraged; I dare say a time will come when you too will go to London."

And, sure enough, so it did, and all but too soon.

"And what do you purpose doing there?" I demanded.

“Oh, I go to improve myself in art, to place myself under some master of high name, at least I hope to do so eventually. I have, however, a plan in my head, which I should wish first to execute; indeed, I do not think I can rest till I have done so; every one talks so much about Italy, and the wondrous artists which it has produced, and the wondrous pictures which are to be found there; now I wish to see Italy, or rather Rome, the great city, for I am told that in a certain room there is contained the grand miracle of art.”

“And what do you call it?”

“The Transfiguration, painted by one Rafael, and it is said to be the greatest work of the greatest painter which the world has ever known. I suppose it is because everybody says so, that I have such a strange desire to see it. I have already made myself well acquainted with its locality, and think that I could almost find my way to it blindfold. When I have crossed the Tiber, which, as you are aware, runs through Rome, I must presently turn to the right, up a rather shabby street, which communicates with a large square, the farther end of which is entirely occupied by the front of an immense church, with a dome, which ascends almost to the clouds, and this church they call St. Peter’s.” p. 196

“Ay, ay,” said I, “I have read about that in ‘Keysler’s Travels.’”

“Before the church, in the square, are two fountains, one on either side, casting up water in showers; between them, in the midst, is an obelisk, brought from Egypt, and covered with mysterious writing; on your right rises an edifice, not beautiful nor grand, but huge and bulky, where lives a strange kind of priest whom men call the Pope, a very horrible old individual, who would fain keep Christ in leading strings, calls the Virgin Mary the Queen of Heaven, and himself God’s Lieutenant-General upon earth.”

“Ay, ay,” said I, “I have read of him in ‘Fox’s Book of Martyrs.’”

“Well, I do not go straight forward up the flight of steps conducting into the church, but I turn to the right, and, passing under the piazza, find myself in a court of the huge bulky house; and then ascend various staircases, and pass along various corridors and galleries, all of which I could describe to you, though I have never seen them; at last a door is unlocked, and we enter a room rather high, but not particularly large, communicating with another room, into which, however, I do not go, though there are noble things in that second room—immortal things, by immortal artists; amongst others, a grand piece of Corregio; I do not enter it, for the grand picture of the world is not there; but I stand still immediately on entering the first room, and I look straight before me, neither to the right nor left, though there are noble things both on the right and left, for immediately before me at the farther end, hanging against the wall, is a picture which arrests me, and I can see nothing else, for that picture at the farther end hanging against the wall is the picture of the world . . .” p. 197

Yes, go thy way, young enthusiast, and, whether to London town or to old Rome, may success attend thee; yet strange fears assail me and misgivings on thy account. Thou canst not rest, thou sayest, till thou hast seen the picture in the chamber at old Rome hanging over against the wall; ay, and thus thou dost exemplify thy weakness—thy strength too, it may be—for the one idea, fantastic yet lovely, which now possesses thee, could only have originated in a genial and fervent brain. Well, go, if thou must go; yet it perhaps were better for thee to bide in thy native land, and there, with fear and trembling, with groanings, with straining eyeballs, toil, drudge, slave, till thou hast made excellence thine own; thou wilt scarcely acquire it by staring at the picture over against the door in the high chamber of old Rome. Seekest thou inspiration? thou needest it not, thou hast it already; and it was never yet found by crossing the sea. What hast thou to do with old Rome, and thou an Englishman? “Did thy blood never glow at the mention of thy native land?” as an artist merely? Yes, I trow, and with reason, for thy native land need not grudge old Rome her “pictures of the world”; she has pictures of her own, “pictures of England”; and is it a new thing to toss up caps and shout—England against the world? Yes, against the world in all, in all; in science and in arms, in minstrel strain, and not less in the art “which enables the hand to deceive the intoxicated soul by means of pictures.” [198] Seekest models? to Gainsborough and Hogarth turn, not names of the world, may be, but English names—and England against the world! A living master? why, there he comes! thou hast had him long, he has long guided thy young hand towards the excellence which is yet far from thee, but which thou canst attain if thou shouldst persist and wrestle, even as he has done, ’midst gloom and despondency—ay, and even contempt; he who now comes up the creaking stair to thy little studio in the second floor to inspect thy last effort before thou departest, the little stout man whose face is very dark, and whose eye is vivacious; that man has attained excellence, destined some day to be acknowledged, though not till he is cold, and his mortal part returned to its kindred clay. He has painted, not pictures of the world, but English pictures, such as Gainsborough himself might have done; beautiful rural pieces, with trees which might well tempt the wild birds to perch upon them: thou needest not run to Rome, brother, where lives the old Mariolater, after pictures of the world, whilst at home there are pictures of England; nor needest thou even go to London, the big city, in search of a master, for thou hast one at home in the old East Anglian town who can instruct thee whilst thou needest instruction: better stay at home, brother, at least for a season, and toil and strive ’midst groanings and despondency till thou hast attained excellence even as he has done—the little dark man with the brown coat and the top-boots, whose name will one day be considered the chief ornament of the old town, and whose works will at no distant period rank amongst the proudest pictures of England—and England against the world!—thy master, my brother, thy, at present, all too little considered master—Crome. [199] p. 198 p. 199

CHAPTER XXII

Desire for Novelty—Lives of the Lawless—Countenances—Old Yeoman and Dame—We Live near the Sea—Uncouth-looking Volume—The Other Condition—Draoitheac—A Dilemma—The Antinomian—Lodowick Muggleton—Almost Blind—Anders Vedel.

But to proceed with my own story; I now ceased all at once to take much pleasure in the pursuits which formerly interested me, I yawned over Ab Gwilym, even as I now in my mind's eye perceive the reader yawning over the present pages. What was the cause of this? Constitutional lassitude, or a desire for novelty? Both it is probable had some influence in the matter, but I rather think that the latter feeling was predominant. The parting words of my brother had sunk into my mind. He had talked of travelling in strange regions and seeing strange and wonderful objects, and my imagination fell to work and drew pictures of adventures wild and fantastic, and I thought what a fine thing it must be to travel, and I wished that my father would give me his blessing, and the same sum that he had given my brother, and bid me go forth into the world; always forgetting that I had neither talents nor energies at this period which would enable me to make any successful figure on its stage.

And then I again sought up the book which had so captivated me in my infancy, and I read it through; and I sought up others of a similar character, and in seeking for them I met books also of adventure, but by no means of a harmless description, lives of wicked and lawless men, Murray and Latroon—books of singular power, but of coarse and prurient imagination—books at one time highly in vogue; now deservedly forgotten, and most difficult to be found.

And when I had gone through these books, what was my state of mind? I had derived entertainment from their perusal, but they left me more listless and unsettled than before, and I really knew not what to do to pass my time. My philological studies had become distasteful, and I had never taken any pleasure in the duties of my profession. I sat behind my desk in a state of torpor, my mind almost as blank as the paper before me, on which I rarely traced a line. It was always a relief to hear the bell ring, as it afforded me an opportunity of doing something which I was yet capable of doing, to rise and open the door and stare in the countenances of the visitors. All of a sudden I fell to studying countenances, and soon flattered myself that I had made considerable progress in the science.

"There is no faith in countenances," said some Roman of old; "trust anything but a person's countenance." "Not trust a man's countenance?" say some moderns; "why, it is the only thing in many people that we can trust; on which account they keep it most assiduously out of the way. Trust not a man's words if you please, or you may come to very erroneous conclusions; but at all times place implicit confidence in a man's countenance, in which there is no deceit; and of necessity there can be none. If people would but look each other more in the face, we should have less cause to complain of the deception of the world; nothing so easy as physiognomy nor so useful." Somewhat in this latter strain I thought at the time of which I am speaking. I am now older, and, let us hope, less presumptuous. It is true that in the course of my life I have scarcely ever had occasion to repent placing confidence in individuals whose countenances have prepossessed me in their favour; though to how many I may have been unjust, from whose countenances I may have drawn unfavourable conclusions, is another matter.

But it had been decreed by that Fate which governs our every action, that I was soon to return to my old pursuits. It was written that I should not yet cease to be Lav-engro, though I had become, in my own opinion, a kind of Lavater. It is singular enough that my renewed ardour for philology seems to have been brought about indirectly by my physiognomical researches, in which had I not indulged, the event which I am about to relate, as far as connected with myself, might never have occurred. Amongst the various countenances which I admitted during the period of my answering the bell, there were two which particularly pleased me, and which belonged to an elderly yeoman and his wife, whom some little business had brought to our law sanctuary. I believe they experienced from me some kindness and attention, which won the old people's hearts. So, one day, when their little business had been brought to a conclusion, and they chanced to be alone with me, who was seated as usual behind the deal desk in the outer room, the old man with some confusion began to tell me how grateful himself and dame felt for the many attentions I had shown them, and how desirous they were to make me some remuneration. "Of course," said the old man, "we must be cautious what we offer to so fine a young gentleman as yourself; we have, however, something we think will just suit the occasion, a strange kind of thing which people say is a book, though no one that my dame or myself have shown it to can make anything out of it; so as we are told that you are a fine young gentleman, who can read all the tongues of the earth and stars, as the Bible says, we thought, I and my dame, that it would be just the thing you would like; and my dame has it now at the bottom of her basket."

"A book!" said I; "how did you come by it?"

"We live near the sea," said the old man; "so near that sometimes our thatch is wet with the spray; and it may now be a year ago that there was a fearful storm, and a ship was driven ashore during the night, and ere the morn was a complete wreck. When we got up at daylight, there were the poor shivering crew at our door; they were foreigners, red-haired men, whose speech we did not understand; but we took them in, and warmed them, and they remained with us three days; and when they went away they left behind them this thing, here it is, part of the contents of

a box which was washed ashore."

"And did you learn who they were?"

"Why, yes; they made us understand that they were Danes."

Danes! thought I, Danes! and instantaneously, huge and grizzly, appeared to rise up before my vision the skull of the old pirate Dane, even as I had seen it of yore in the pent-house of the ancient church to which, with my mother and my brother, I had wandered on the memorable summer eve. p. 204

And now the old man handed me the book; a strange and uncouth-looking volume enough. It was not very large, but instead of the usual covering was bound in wood, and was compressed with strong iron clasps. It was a printed book, but the pages were not of paper, but vellum, and the characters were black, and resembled those generally termed Gothic.

"It is certainly a curious book," said I, "and I should like to have it; but I can't think of taking it as a gift; I must give you an equivalent; I never take presents from anybody."

The old man whispered with his dame and chuckled, and then turned his face to me, and said, with another chuckle, "Well, we have agreed about the price, but, may be, you will not consent."

"I don't know," said I; "what do you demand?"

"Why, that you shake me by the hand, and hold out your cheek to my old dame,—she has taken an affection to you."

"I shall be very glad to shake you by the hand," said I, "but as for the other condition, it requires consideration."

"No consideration at all," said the old man, with something like a sigh; "she thinks you like her son, our only child, that was lost twenty years ago in the waves of the North Sea."

"Oh, that alters the case altogether," said I, "and of course I can have no objection." p. 205

And now at once I shook off my listlessness, to enable me to do which nothing could have happened more opportune than the above event. The Danes, the Danes! And was I at last to become acquainted, and in so singular a manner, with the speech of a people which had as far back as I could remember exercised the strongest influence over my imagination, as how should they not!—in infancy there was the summer-eve adventure, to which I often looked back, and always with a kind of strange interest, with respect to those to whom such gigantic and wondrous bones could belong as I had seen on that occasion; and, more than this, I had been in Ireland, and there, under peculiar circumstances, this same interest was increased tenfold. I had mingled much whilst there with the genuine Irish—a wild, but kind-hearted race, whose conversation was deeply imbued with traditionary lore, connected with the early history of their own romantic land, and from them I heard enough of the Danes, but nothing commonplace, for they never mentioned them but in terms which tallied well with my own preconceived ideas. For at an early period the Danes had invaded Ireland, and had subdued it, and, though eventually driven out, had left behind them an enduring remembrance in the minds of the people, who loved to speak of their strength and their stature, in evidence of which they would point to the ancient raths or mounds, where the old Danes were buried, and where bones of extraordinary size were occasionally exhumed. And as the Danes surpassed other people in strength, so, according to my narrators, they also excelled all others in wisdom, or rather in Draoitheac, or magic, for they were powerful sorcerers, they said, compared with whom the fairy men of the present day knew nothing at all, at all; and, amongst other wonderful things, they knew how to make strong beer from the heather that grows upon the bogs. Little wonder if the interest, the mysterious interest, which I had early felt about the Danes, was increased tenfold by my sojourn in Ireland. p. 206

And now I had in my possession a Danish book, which, from its appearance, might be supposed to have belonged to the very old Danes indeed; but how was I to turn it to any account? I had the book, it is true, but I did not understand the language, and how was I to overcome that difficulty? hardly by poring over the book; yet I did pore over the book, daily and nightly, till my eyes were dim, and it appeared to me that every now and then I encountered words which I understood—English words, though strangely disguised; and I said to myself, courage! English and Danish are cognate dialects, a time will come when I shall understand this Danish; and then I pored over the book again, but with all my poring I could not understand it; and then I became angry, and I bit my lips till the blood came; and I occasionally tore a handful from my hair, and flung it upon the floor, but that did not mend the matter, for still I did not understand the book, which, however, I began to see was written in rhyme—a circumstance rather difficult to discover at first, the arrangement of the lines not differing from that which is employed in prose; and its being written in rhyme made me only the more eager to understand it.

But I toiled in vain, for I had neither grammar nor dictionary of the language; and when I sought for them could procure neither; and I was much dispirited, till suddenly a bright thought came into my head, and I said, although I cannot obtain a dictionary or grammar, I can perhaps obtain a Bible in this language, and if I can procure a Bible, I can learn the language, for the Bible in every tongue contains the same thing, and I have only to compare the words of the Danish Bible with those of the English, and, if I persevere, I shall in time acquire the language of the Danes; and I was pleased with the thought, which I considered to be a bright one, and I no longer bit my lips, or tore my hair, but I took my hat, and, going forth, I flung my hat into the air. p. 207

And when my hat came down, I put it on my head and commenced running, directing my course to the house of the Antinomian preacher, who sold books, and whom I knew to have Bibles in various tongues amongst the number, and I arrived out of breath, and I found the Antinomian in his little library, dusting his books; and the Antinomian clergyman was a tall man of about seventy, who wore a hat with a broad brim and a shallow crown, and whose manner of speaking was exceedingly nasal; and when I saw him, I cried, out of breath, "Have you a Danish Bible?" and he replied, "What do you want it for, friend?" and I answered, "To learn Danish by;" "And may be to learn thy duty," replied the Antinomian preacher. "Truly, I have it not, but, as you are a customer of mine, I will endeavour to procure you one, and I will write to that laudable society which men call the Bible Society, an unworthy member of which I am, and I hope by next week to procure what you desire." p. 208

And when I heard these words of the old man, I was very glad, and my heart yearned towards him, and I would fain enter into conversation with him; and I said, "Why are you an Antinomian? For my part I would rather be a dog than belong to such a religion." "Nay, friend," said the Antinomian, "thou forejudgest us; know that those who call us Antinomians call us so despitefully; we do not acknowledge the designation." "Then you do not set all law at nought?" said I. "Far be it from us," said the old man; "we only hope that, being sanctified by the Spirit from above, we have no need of the law to keep us in order. Did you ever hear tell of Lodowick Muggleton?" [208] "Not I." "That is strange; know then that he was the founder of our poor society, and after him we are frequently, though opprobriously, termed Muggletonians, for we are Christians. Here is his book, which, perhaps, you can do no better than purchase; you are fond of rare books, and this is both curious and rare; I will sell it cheap. Thank you, and now be gone; I will do all I can to procure the Bible."

And in this manner I procured the Danish Bible, and I commenced my task; first of all, however, I locked up in a closet the volume which had excited my curiosity, saying, "Out of this closet thou comest not till I deem myself competent to read thee," and then I sat down in right earnest, comparing every line in the one version with the corresponding one in the other; and I passed entire nights in this manner, till I was almost blind, and the task was tedious enough at first, but I quailed not, and soon began to make progress: and at first I had a misgiving that the old book might not prove a Danish book, but was soon reassured by reading many words in the Bible which I remembered to have seen in the book; and then I went on right merrily, and I found that the language which I was studying was by no means a difficult one, and in less than a month I deemed myself able to read the book. p. 209

Anon, I took the book from the closet, and proceeded to make myself master of its contents; I had some difficulty, for the language of the book, though in the main the same as the language of the Bible, differed from it in some points, being apparently a more ancient dialect; by degrees, however, I overcame this difficulty, and I understood the contents of the book, and well did they correspond with all those ideas in which I had indulged connected with the Danes. For the book was a book of ballads, about the deeds of knights and champions, and men of huge stature; ballads which from time immemorial had been sung in the North, and which some two centuries before the time of which I am speaking had been collected by one Anders Vedel, who lived with a certain Tycho Brahe, and assisted him in making observations upon the heavenly bodies, at a place called Uranias Castle, on the little island of Hveen, in the Cattegat.

CHAPTER XXIII

p. 210

The Two Individuals—The Long Pipe—The Germans—Werther—The Female Quaker—Suicide—Gibbon—Jesus of Bethlehem—Fill Your Glass—Shakespeare—English at Minden—Melancholy Swayne Vonved—The Fifth Dinner—Strange Doctrines—Are You Happy?—Improve Yourself in German.

It might be some six months after the events last recorded, that two individuals were seated together in a certain room, in a certain street of the old town which I have so frequently had occasion to mention in the preceding pages; one of them was an elderly, and the other a very young man, and they sat on either side of a fireplace, beside a table, on which were fruit and wine; the room was a small one, and in its furniture exhibited nothing remarkable. Over the mantelpiece, however, hung a small picture with naked figures in the foreground, and with much foliage behind. It might not have struck every beholder, for it looked old and smoke-dried; but a connoisseur, on inspecting it closely, would have pronounced it to be a Judgment of Paris, and a masterpiece of the Flemish school.

The forehead of the elder individual was high, and perhaps appeared more so than it really was, from the hair being carefully brushed back, as if for the purpose of displaying to the best advantage that part of the cranium; his eyes were large and full, and of a light brown, and might have been called heavy and dull, had they not been occasionally lighted up by a sudden gleam—not so brilliant, however, as that which at every inhalation shone from the bowl of the long clay pipe which he was smoking, but which, from a certain sucking sound which about this time began to be heard from the bottom, appeared to be giving notice that it would soon require replenishment from a certain canister, which, together with a lighted taper, stood upon the table p. 211

beside him. [211]

“You do not smoke?” said he, at length, laying down his pipe, and directing his glance to his companion.

Now there was at least one thing singular connected with this last, namely, the colour of his hair, which, notwithstanding his extreme youth, appeared to be rapidly becoming grey. He had very long limbs, and was apparently tall of stature, in which he differed from his elderly companion, who must have been somewhat below the usual height.

“No, I can’t smoke,” said the youth, in reply to the observation of the other; “I have often tried, but could never succeed to my satisfaction.”

“Is it possible to become a good German without smoking?” said the senior, half speaking to himself.

“I dare say not,” said the youth; “but I shan’t break my heart on that account.” p. 212

“As for breaking your heart, of course you would never think of such a thing; he is a fool who breaks his heart on any account; but it is good to be a German, the Germans are the most philosophic people in the world, and the greatest smokers: now I trace their philosophy to their smoking.”

“I have heard say their philosophy is all smoke—is that your opinion?”

“Why, no; but smoking has a sedative effect upon the nerves, and enables a man to bear the sorrows of this life (of which every one has his share) not only decently, but dignifiedly. Suicide is not a national habit in Germany as it is in England.”

“But that poor creature, Werther, who committed suicide, was a German.”

“Werther is a fictitious character, and by no means a felicitous one; I am no admirer either of Werther or his author. But I should say that, if there ever was a Werther in Germany, he did not smoke. Werther, as you very justly observe, was a poor creature.”

“And a very sinful one; I have heard my parents say that suicide is a great crime.”

“Broadly, and without qualification, to say that suicide is a crime, is speaking somewhat unphilosophically. No doubt suicide, under many circumstances, is a crime, a very heinous one. When the father of a family, for example, to escape from certain difficulties, commits suicide, he commits a crime; there are those around him who look to him for support, by the law of nature, and he has no right to withdraw himself from those who have a claim upon his exertions; he is a p. 213 person who decamps with other people’s goods as well as his own. Indeed, there can be no crime which is not founded upon the depriving others of something which belongs to them. A man is hanged for setting fire to his house in a crowded city, for he burns at the same time or damages those of other people; but if a man who has a house on a heath sets fire to it, he is not hanged, for he has not damaged or endangered any other individual’s property, and the principle of revenge, upon which all punishment is founded, has not been aroused. Similar to such a case is that of the man who, without any family ties, commits suicide; for example, were I to do the thing this evening, who would have a right to call me to account? I am alone in the world, have no family to support, and, so far from damaging any one, should even benefit my heir by my accelerated death. However, I am no advocate for suicide under any circumstances; there is something undignified in it, unheroic, un-Germanic. But if you must commit suicide—and there is no knowing to what people may be brought—always contrive to do it as decorously as possible; the decencies, whether of life or of death, should never be lost sight of. I remember a female Quaker who committed suicide by cutting her throat, but she did it decorously and decently: kneeling down over a pail, so that not one drop fell upon the floor; thus exhibiting in her last act that nice sense of neatness for which Quakers are distinguished. I have always had a respect for that woman’s memory.” And here, filling his pipe from the canister, and lighting it at the taper, he p. 214 recommenced smoking calmly and sedately.

“But is not suicide forbidden in the Bible?” the youth demanded.

“Why, no; but what though it were!—the Bible is a respectable book, but I should hardly call it one whose philosophy is of the soundest. I have said that it is a respectable book; I mean respectable from its antiquity, and from containing, as Herder says, ‘the earliest records of the human race,’ though those records are far from being dispassionately written, on which account they are of less value than they otherwise might have been. There is too much passion in the Bible, too much violence; now, to come to all truth, especially historic truth, requires cool dispassionate investigation, for which the Jews do not appear to have ever been famous. We are ourselves not famous for it, for we are a passionate people; the Germans are not—they are not a passionate people—a people celebrated for their oaths; we are. The Germans have many excellent historic writers, we . . . ’tis true we have Gibbon . . . You have been reading Gibbon—what do you think of him?”

“I think him a very wonderful writer.”

“He is a wonderful writer—one *sui generis*—uniting the perspicuity of the English—for we are perspicuous—with the cool dispassionate reasoning of the Germans. Gibbon sought after the truth, found it, and made it clear.”

“Then you think Gibbon a truthful writer?”

“Why, yes; who shall convict Gibbon of falsehood? Many people have endeavoured to convict Gibbon of falsehood; they have followed him in his researches, and have never found him once p. 215
tripping. Oh, he is a wonderful writer! his power of condensation is admirable; the lore of the whole world is to be found in his pages. Sometimes in a single note, he has given us the result of the study of years; or, to speak metaphorically, ‘he has ransacked a thousand Gulistans, and has condensed all his fragrant booty into a single drop of otto.’”

“But was not Gibbon an enemy to the Christian faith?”

“Why, no; he was rather an enemy to priestcraft, so am I; and when I say the philosophy of the Bible is in many respects unsound, I always wish to make an exception in favour of that part of it which contains the life and sayings of Jesus of Bethlehem, to which I must always concede my unqualified admiration—of Jesus, mind you; for with his followers and their dogmas I have nothing to do. Of all historic characters Jesus is the most beautiful and the most heroic. I have always been a friend to hero-worship, it is the only rational one, and has always been in use amongst civilised people—the worship of spirits is synonymous with barbarism—it is mere fetish; the savages of West Africa are all spirit worshippers. But there is something philosophic in the worship of the heroes of the human race, and the true hero is the benefactor. Brahma, Jupiter, Bacchus, were all benefactors, and, therefore, entitled to the worship of their respective peoples. The Celts worshipped Hesus, who taught them to plough, a highly useful art. We, who have attained a much higher state of civilisation than the Celts ever did, worship Jesus, the first who endeavoured to teach men to behave decently and decorously under all circumstances; who was p. 216
the foe of vengeance, in which there is something highly indecorous; who had first the courage to lift his voice against that violent dogma, ‘an eye for an eye’; who shouted conquer, but conquer with kindness; who said put up the sword, a violent unphilosophic weapon; and who finally died calmly and decorously in defence of his philosophy. He must be a savage who denies worship to the hero of Golgotha.”

“But He was something more than a hero; He was the Son of God, wasn’t He?”

The elderly individual made no immediate answer; but, after a few more whiffs from his pipe, exclaimed, “Come, fill your glass! How do you advance with your translation of Tell?”

“It is nearly finished; but I do not think I shall proceed with it; I begin to think the original somewhat dull.”

“There you are wrong; it is the masterpiece of Schiller, the first of German poets.”

“It may be so,” said the youth. “But, pray excuse me, I do not think very highly of German poetry. I have lately been reading Shakespeare; and, when I turn from him to the Germans—even the best of them—they appear mere pigmies. You will pardon the liberty I perhaps take in saying so.”

“I like that every one should have an opinion of his own,” said the elderly individual; “and, what is more, declare it. Nothing displeases me more than to see people assenting to everything that they hear said; I at once come to the conclusion that they are either hypocrites, or there is nothing in them. But, with respect to Shakespeare, whom I have not read for thirty years, is he not rather given to bombast, ‘crackling bombast,’ as I think I have said in one of my essays?” p. 217

“I dare say he is,” said the youth; “but I can’t help thinking him the greatest of all poets, not even excepting Homer. I would sooner have written that series of plays, founded on the fortunes of the House of Lancaster, than the Iliad itself. The events described are as lofty as those sung by Homer in his great work, and the characters brought upon the stage still more interesting. I think Hotspur as much of a hero as Hector, and young Henry more of a man than Achilles; and then there is the fat knight, the quintessence of fun, wit, and rascality. Falstaff is a creation beyond the genius even of Homer.”

“You almost tempt me to read Shakespeare again—but the Germans?”

“I don’t admire the Germans,” said the youth, somewhat excited. “I don’t admire them in any point of view. I have heard my father say that, though good sharpshooters, they can’t be much depended upon as soldiers; and that old Sergeant Meredith told him that Minden would never have been won but for the two English regiments, who charged the French with fixed bayonets, and sent them to the right-about in double-quick time. With respect to poetry, setting Shakespeare and the English altogether aside, I think there is another Gothic nation, at least, entitled to dispute with them the palm. Indeed, to my mind, there is more genuine poetry contained in the old Danish book which I came so strangely by, than has been produced in Germany from the period of the Niebelungen lay to the present.”

“Ah, the Kœmpe Viser?” said the elderly individual, breathing forth an immense volume of smoke, p. 218
which he had been collecting during the declamation of his young companion. “There are singular things in that book, I must confess; and I thank you for showing it to me, or rather your attempt at translation. I was struck with that ballad of Orm Ungarswayne, who goes by night to the grave-hill of his father to seek for counsel. And then, again, that strange melancholy Swayne Vonved, who roams about the world propounding people riddles; slaying those who cannot answer, and rewarding those who can with golden bracelets. Were it not for the violence, I should say that ballad has a philosophic tendency. I thank you for making me acquainted with

the book, and I thank the Jew Mousha for making me acquainted with you."

"That Mousha was a strange customer," said the youth, collecting himself.

"He *was* a strange customer," said the elder individual, breathing forth a gentle cloud. "I love to exercise hospitality to wandering strangers, especially foreigners; and when he came to this place, pretending to teach German and Hebrew, I asked him to dinner. After the first dinner, he asked me to lend him five pounds; I *did* lend him five pounds. After the fifth dinner, he asked me to lend him fifty pounds; I did *not* lend him the fifty pounds."

"He was as ignorant of German as of Hebrew," said the youth; "on which account he was soon glad, I suppose, to transfer his pupil to some one else."

"He told me," said the elder individual, "that he intended to leave a town where he did not find sufficient encouragement; and, at the same time, expressed regret at being obliged to abandon a certain extraordinary pupil, for whom he had a particular regard. Now I, who have taught many people German from the love which I bear to it, and the desire which I feel that it should be generally diffused, instantly said, that I should be happy to take his pupil off his hands, and afford him what instruction I could in German, for, as to Hebrew, I have never taken much interest in it. Such was the origin of our acquaintance. You have been an apt scholar. Of late, however, I have seen little of you—what is the reason?" p. 219

The youth made no answer.

"You think, probably, that you have learned all I can teach you? Well, perhaps you are right."

"Not so, not so," said the young man, eagerly; "before I knew you I knew nothing, and am still very ignorant; but of late my father's health has been very much broken, and he requires attention; his spirits also have become low, which, to tell you the truth, he attributes to my misconduct. He says that I have imbibed all kinds of strange notions and doctrines, which will, in all probability, prove my ruin, both here and hereafter; which—which—"

"Ah! I understand," said the elder, with another calm whiff. "I have always had a kind of respect for your father, for there is something remarkable in his appearance, something heroic, and I would fain have cultivated his acquaintance; the feeling, however, has not been reciprocated. I met him, the other day, up the road, with his cane and dog, and saluted him; he did not return my salutation."

"He has certain opinions of his own," said the youth, "which are widely different from those which he has heard that you profess." p. 220

"I respect a man for entertaining an opinion of his own," said the elderly individual. "I hold certain opinions; but I should not respect an individual the more for adopting them. All I wish for is tolerance, which I myself endeavour to practise. I have always loved the truth, and sought it; if I have not found it, the greater my misfortune."

"Are you happy?" said the young man.

"Why, no! And, between ourselves, it is that which induces me to doubt sometimes the truth of my opinions. My life, upon the whole, I consider a failure; on which account, I would not counsel you, or any one, to follow my example too closely. It is getting late, and you had better be going, especially as your father, you say, is anxious about you. But, as we may never meet again, I think there are three things which I may safely venture to press upon you. The first is, that the decencies and gentlenesses should never be lost sight of, as the practice of the decencies and gentlenesses is at all times compatible with independence of thought and action. The second thing which I would wish to impress upon you, is, that there is always some eye upon us; and that it is impossible to keep anything we do from the world, as it will assuredly be divulged by somebody as soon as it is his interest to do so. The third thing which I would wish to press upon you—"

"Yes," said the youth, eagerly bending forward.

"Is"—and here the elderly individual laid down his pipe upon the table—"that it will be as well to go on improving yourself in German!"

CHAPTER XXIV p. 221

The Alehouse Keeper—Compassion for the Rich—Old English Gentleman—How is This?—Madeira—The Greek Parr—Twenty Languages—Whiter's Health—About the Fight—A Sporting Gentleman—The Flattened Nose—Lend us that Pightle—The Surly Nod.

"Holloa, master! can you tell us where the fight is likely to be?"

Such were the words shouted out to me by a short thick fellow, in brown top-boots, and bareheaded, who stood, with his hands in his pockets, at the door of a country alehouse as I was passing by.

Now, as I knew nothing about the fight, and as the appearance of the man did not tempt me greatly to enter into conversation with him, I merely answered in the negative, and continued my way.

It was a fine lovely morning in May, the sun shone bright above, and the birds were carolling in the hedge-rows. I was wont to be cheerful at such seasons, for, from my earliest recollection, sunshine and the song of birds have been dear to me; yet, about that period, I was not cheerful, my mind was not at rest; I was debating within myself, and the debate was dreary and unsatisfactory enough. I sighed, and turning my eyes upward, I ejaculated, "What is truth?" But suddenly, by a violent effort breaking away from my meditations, I hastened forward; one mile, two miles, three miles were speedily left behind; and now I came to a grove of birch and other trees, and opening a gate I passed up a kind of avenue, and soon arriving before a large brick house, of rather antique appearance, knocked at the door.

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In this house there lived a gentleman with whom I had business. He was said to be a genuine old English gentleman, and a man of considerable property; at this time, however, he wanted a thousand pounds, as gentlemen of considerable property every now and then do. I had brought him a thousand pounds in my pocket, for it is astonishing how many eager helpers the rich find, and with what compassion people look upon their distresses. He was said to have good wine in his cellar.

"Is your master at home?" said I, to a servant who appeared at the door.

"His worship is at home, young man," said the servant, as he looked at my shoes, which bore evidence that I had come walking. "I beg your pardon, sir," he added, as he looked me in the face.

"Ay, ay, servants," thought I, as I followed the man into the house, "always look people in the face when you open the door, and do so before you look at their shoes, or you may mistake the heir of a Prime Minister for a shopkeeper's son."

I found his worship a jolly, red-faced gentleman, of about fifty-five; he was dressed in a green coat, white corduroy breeches, and drab gaiters, and sat on an old-fashioned leather sofa, with two small, thorough-bred, black English terriers, one on each side of him. He had all the appearance of a genuine old English gentleman who kept good wine in his cellar.

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"Sir," said I, "I have brought you a thousand pounds;" and I said this after the servant had retired, and the two terriers had ceased the barking which is natural to all such dogs at the sight of a stranger.

And when the magistrate had received the money, and signed and returned a certain paper which I handed to him, he rubbed his hands, and looking very benignantly at me, exclaimed—

"And now, young gentleman, that our business is over, perhaps you can tell me where the fight is to take place?"

"I am sorry, sir," said I, "that I can't inform you, but everybody seems to be anxious about it;" and then I told him what had occurred to me on the road with the alehouse keeper.

"I know him," said his worship; "he's a tenant of mine, and a good fellow, somewhat too much in my debt though. But how is this, young gentleman? you look as if you had been walking; you did not come on foot?"

"Yes, sir, I came on foot."

"On foot! why, it is sixteen miles."

"I shan't be tired when I have walked back."

"You can't ride, I suppose?"

"Better than I can walk."

"Then why do you walk?"

"I have frequently to make journeys connected with my profession; sometimes I walk, sometimes I ride, just as the whim takes me."

"Will you take a glass of wine?"

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"Yes."

"That's right; what shall it be?"

"Madeira!"

The magistrate gave a violent slap on his knee. "I like your taste," said he; "I am fond of a glass of Madeira myself, and can give you such a one as you will not drink every day; sit down, young gentleman; you shall have a glass of Madeira, and the best I have."

Thereupon he got up, and, followed by his two terriers, walked slowly out of the room.

I looked round the room, and, seeing nothing which promised me much amusement, I sat down, and fell again into my former train of thought. "What is truth?" said I.

“Here it is,” said the magistrate, returning at the end of a quarter of an hour, followed by the servant, with a tray; “here’s the true thing, or I am no judge, far less a justice. It has been thirty years in my cellar last Christmas. There,” said he to the servant, “put it down, and leave my young friend and me to ourselves. Now, what do you think of it?”

“It is very good,” said I.

“Did you ever taste better Madeira?”

“I never before tasted Madeira.”

“Then you ask for a wine without knowing what it is?”

“I ask for it, sir, that I may know what it is.”

“Well, there is logic in that, as Parr would say; you have heard of Parr?”

“Old Parr?”

“Yes, old Parr, but not that Parr; you mean the English, I the Greek Parr, [225a] as people call him.” p. 225

“I don’t know him.”

“Perhaps not—rather too young for that, but were you of my age, you might have cause to know him, coming from where you do. He kept school there—I was his first scholar; he flogged Greek into me till I loved him—and he loved me: he came to see me last year, and sat in that chair; I honour Parr—he knows much, and is a sound man.”

“Does he know the truth?”

“Know the truth; he knows what’s good, from an oyster to an ostrich—he’s not only sound, but round.”

“Suppose we drink his health?”

“Thank you, boy: here’s Parr’s health, and Whiter’s.”

“Who is Whiter?”

“Don’t you know Whiter? I thought everybody knew Reverend Whiter the philologist, [225b] though I suppose you scarcely know what that means. A man fond of tongues and languages, quite out of your way—he understands some twenty; what do you say to that?”

“Is he a sound man?”

“Why, as to that, I scarcely know what to say: he has got queer notions in his head—wrote a book to prove that all words came originally from the earth—who knows? Words have roots, and roots live in the earth; but, upon the whole, I should not call him altogether a sound man, though he can talk Greek nearly as fast as Parr.”

“Is he a round man?”

“Ay, boy, rounder than Parr; I’ll sing you a song, if you like, which will let you into his character: —” p. 226

> ‘Give me the haunch of a buck to eat, and to drink Madeira old,
> And a gentle wife to rest with, and in my arms to fold,
> An Arabic book to study, a Norfolk cob to ride,
> And a house to live in shaded with trees, and near to a river side;
> With such good things around me, and blessed with good health withal,
> Though I should live for a hundred years, for death I would not call.’

Here’s to Whiter’s health—so you know nothing about the fight?”

“No, sir; the truth is, that of late I have been very much occupied with various matters, otherwise I should, perhaps, have been able to afford you some information—boxing is a noble art.”

“Can you box?”

“A little.”

“I tell you what, my boy; I honour you, and provided your education had been a little less limited, I should have been glad to see you here in company with Parr and Whiter; both can box. Boxing is, as you say, a noble art—a truly English art; may I never see the day when Englishmen shall feel ashamed of it, or blacklegs and blackguards bring it into disgrace. I am a magistrate, and, of course, cannot patronise the thing very openly, yet I sometimes see a prize fight: I saw the Game Chicken beat Gulley.”

“Did you ever see Big Ben?”

“No! why do you ask?” But here we heard a noise, like that of a gig driving up to the door, which was immediately succeeded by a violent knocking and ringing, and after a little time, the servant who had admitted me made his appearance in the room. “Sir,” said he, with a certain eagerness p. 227

of manner, “here are two gentlemen waiting to speak to you.”

“Gentlemen waiting to speak to me! who are they?”

“I don’t know, sir,” said the servant; “but they look like sporting gentlemen, and—and”—here he hesitated; “from a word or two they dropped, I almost think that they come about the fight.”

“About the fight!” said the magistrate. “No! that can hardly be; however, you had better show them in.”

Heavy steps were now heard ascending the stairs, and the servant ushered two men into the apartment. Again there was a barking, but louder than that which had been directed against myself, for here were two intruders; both of them were remarkable looking men, but to the foremost of them the most particular notice may well be accorded: he was a man somewhat under thirty, and nearly six feet in height. He was dressed in a blue coat, white corduroy breeches, fastened below the knee with small golden buttons; on his legs he wore white lamb’s-wool stockings, and on his feet shoes reaching to the ankles; round his neck was a handkerchief of the blue and bird’s eye pattern; he wore neither whiskers nor moustaches, and appeared not to delight in hair, that of his head, which was of a light brown, being closely cropped; the forehead was rather high, but somewhat narrow; the face neither broad nor sharp, perhaps rather sharp than broad; the nose was almost delicate; the eyes were grey, with an expression in which there was sternness blended with something approaching to feline; his complexion was exceedingly pale, relieved, however, by certain pock-marks, which here and there studded his countenance; his form was athletic, but lean; his arms long. In the whole appearance of the man there was a blending of the bluff and the sharp. You might have supposed him a bruiser; his dress was that of one in all its minutiæ; something was wanting, however, in his manner—the quietness of the professional man; he rather looked like one performing the part—well—very well—but still performing a part. His companion!—there, indeed, was the bruiser—no mistake about him: a tall massive man, with a broad countenance and a flattened nose; dressed like a bruiser, but not like a bruiser going into the ring; he wore white-topped boots, and a loose brown jockey coat.

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As the first advanced towards the table, behind which the magistrate sat, he doffed a white castor from his head, and made rather a genteel bow; looking at me, who sat somewhat on one side, he gave a kind of nod of recognition.

“May I request to know who you are, gentlemen?” said the magistrate.

“Sir,” said the man in a deep, but not unpleasant voice, “allow me to introduce to you my friend, Mr. ---, the celebrated pugilist;” and he motioned with his hand towards the massive man with the flattened nose.

“And your own name, sir?” said the magistrate.

“My name is no matter,” said the man; “were I to mention it to you, it would awaken within you no feeling of interest. It is neither Kean nor Belcher, and I have as yet done nothing to distinguish myself like either of those individuals, or even like my friend here. However, a time may come—we are not yet buried; and whensoever my hour arrives, I hope I shall prove myself equal to my destiny, however high—

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> ‘Like bird that’s bred amongst the Helicons.’”

And here a smile half theatrical passed over his features.

“In what can I oblige you, sir?” said the magistrate.

“Well, sir, the soul of wit is brevity; we want a place for an approaching combat between my friend here and a brave from town. Passing by your broad acres this fine morning we saw a pightle, which we deemed would suit. Lend us that pightle, and receive our thanks; ’twould be a favour, though not much to grant: we neither ask for Stonehenge nor for Tempe.”

My friend looked somewhat perplexed; after a moment, however, he said, with a firm but gentlemanly air, “Sir, I am sorry that I cannot comply with your request.”

“Not comply!” said the man, his brow becoming dark as midnight; and with a hoarse and savage tone, “Not comply! why not?”

“It is impossible, sir; utterly impossible!”

“Why so?”

“I am not compelled to give my reasons to you, sir, nor to any man.”

“Let me beg of you to alter your decision,” said the man, in a tone of profound respect.

“Utterly impossible, sir; I am a magistrate.”

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“Magistrate! then fare ye well, for a green-coated buffer and a Harmanbeck.”

“Sir!” said the magistrate, springing up with a face fiery with wrath.

But, with a surly nod to me, the man left the apartment; and in a moment more the heavy footsteps of himself and his companion were heard descending the staircase.

“Who is that man?” said my friend, turning towards me.

“A sporting gentleman, well known in the place from which I come.”

“He appeared to know you.”

“I have occasionally put on the gloves with him.”

“What is his name?” [230]

CHAPTER XXV

Doubts—Wise King of Jerusalem—Let Me See—A Thousand Years—Nothing New—The Crowd—The Hymn—Faith—Charles Wesley—There He Stood—Farewell, Brother—Death—Sun, Moon, and Stars—Wind on the Heath.

There was one question which I was continually asking myself at this period, and which has more than once met the eyes of the reader who has followed me through the last chapter. “What is truth?” I had involved myself imperceptibly in a dreary labyrinth of doubt, and, whichever way I turned, no reasonable prospect of extricating myself appeared. The means by which I had brought myself into this situation may be very briefly told; I had inquired into many matters, in order that I might become wise, and I had read and pondered over the words of the wise, so called, till I had made myself master of the sum of human wisdom; namely, that every thing is enigmatical and that man is an enigma to himself; thence the cry of “What is truth?” I had ceased to believe in the truth of that in which I had hitherto trusted, and yet could find nothing in which I could put any fixed or deliberate belief—I was, indeed, in a labyrinth! In what did I not doubt? With respect to crime and virtue I was in doubt; I doubted that the one was blamable and p. 232
the other praiseworthy. Are not all things subjected to the law of necessity? Assuredly; time and chance govern all things: yet how can this be? alas!

Then there was myself; for what was I born? Are not all things born to be forgotten? That’s incomprehensible: yet is it not so? Those butterflies fall and are forgotten. In what is man better than a butterfly? All then is born to be forgotten. Ah! that was a pang indeed; ’tis at such a moment that a man wishes to die. The wise king of Jerusalem, who sat in his shady arbours beside his sunny fish-pools, saying so many fine things, wished to die, when he saw that not only all was vanity, but that he himself was vanity. Will a time come when all will be forgotten that now is beneath the sun? If so, of what profit is life?

In truth it was a sore vexation of spirit to me when I saw, as the wise man saw of old, that whatever I could hope to perform must necessarily be of very temporary duration; and if so, why do it? I said to myself, whatever name I can acquire, will it endure for eternity? scarcely so. A thousand years? Let me see! what have I done already? I have learnt Welsh, and have translated the songs of Ab Gwilym, some ten thousand lines, into English rhyme; I have also learnt Danish, and have rendered the old book of ballads cast by the tempest upon the beach into corresponding English metre. Good! have I done enough already to secure myself a reputation of a thousand years? No, no! certainly not; I have not the slightest ground for hoping that my translations from the Welsh and Danish will be read at the end of a thousand years. Well, but I am only eighteen, p. 233
and I have not stated all that I have done; I have learnt many other tongues, and have acquired some knowledge even of Hebrew and Arabic. Should I go on in this way till I am forty, I must then be very learned; and perhaps, among other things, may have translated the Talmud, and some of the great works of the Arabians. Pooh! all this is mere learning and translation, and such will never secure immortality. Translation is at best an echo, and it must be a wonderful echo to be heard after the lapse of a thousand years. No! all I have already done, and all I may yet do in the same way, I may reckon as nothing—mere pastime; something else must be done. I must either write some grand original work, or conquer an empire; the one just as easy as the other. But am I competent to do either? Yes, I think I am, under favourable circumstances. Yes, I think I may promise myself a reputation of a thousand years, if I do but give myself the necessary trouble. Well! but what’s a thousand years after all, or twice a thousand years? Woe is me! I may just as well sit still.

“Would I had never been born!” I said to myself; and a thought would occasionally intrude. But was I ever born? Is not all that I see a lie—a deceitful phantom? Is there a world, and earth, and sky? Berkeley’s doctrine—Spinosa’s doctrine! Dear reader, I had at that time never read either Berkeley or Spinosa. [233] I have still never read them; who are they, men of yesterday? “All is a lie—all a deceitful phantom,” are old cries; they come naturally from the mouths of those who, p. 234
casting aside that choicest shield against madness, simplicity, would fain be wise as God, and can only know that they are naked. This doubting in the “universal all” is almost coeval with the human race: wisdom, so called, was early sought after. All is a lie—a deceitful phantom—was said when the world was yet young; its surface, save a scanty portion, yet untrodden by human foot, and when the great tortoise yet crawled about. All is a lie, was the doctrine of Buddh; and Buddh lived thirty centuries before the wise king of Jerusalem, who sat in his arbours, beside his sunny fish-pools, saying many fine things, and, amongst others, “There is nothing new under the sun!”

* * * * *

One day, whilst I bent my way to the heath of which I have spoken on a former occasion, at the foot of the hills which formed it I came to a place where a wagon was standing, but without horses, the shafts resting on the ground; there was a crowd about it, which extended half-way up the side of the neighbouring hill. The wagon was occupied by some half a dozen men—some sitting, others standing; they were dressed in sober-coloured habiliments of black or brown, cut in a plain and rather uncouth fashion, and partially white with dust; their hair was short, and seemed to have been smoothed down by the application of the hand; all were bareheaded—sitting or standing, all were bareheaded. One of them, a tall man, was speaking as I arrived; ere, however, I could distinguish what he was saying, he left off, and then there was a cry for a hymn "to the glory of God"—that was the word. It was a strange sounding hymn, as well it might be, p. 235
for everybody joined in it: there were voices of all kinds, of men, of women, and of children—of those who could sing and of those who could not—a thousand voices all joined, and all joined heartily; no voice of all the multitude was silent save mine. The crowd consisted entirely of the lower classes, labourers and mechanics, and their wives and children—dusty people, unwashed people, people of no account whatever, and yet they did not look a mob. And when that hymn was over—and here let me observe that, strange as it sounded, I have recalled that hymn to mind, and it has seemed to tingle in my ears on occasions when all that pomp and art could do to enhance religious solemnity was being done—in the Sistine Chapel, what time the papal band was in full play, and the choicest choristers of Italy poured forth their mellowest tones in presence of Batuschca and his cardinals—on the ice of the Neva, what time the long train of stately priests, with their noble beards and their flowing robes of crimson and gold, with their ebony and ivory staves, stalked along, chanting their Sclavonian litanies in advance of the mighty Emperor of the North and his Priberjensky guard of giants, towards the orifice through which the river, running below in its swiftness, is to receive the baptismal lymph:—when the hymn was over, another man in the wagon proceeded to address the people; he was a much younger man than the last speaker; somewhat square built and about the middle height; his face was rather broad, but expressive of much intelligence, and with a peculiar calm and serious look; the accent in which he spoke indicated that he was not of these parts, but from some distant district. The p. 236
subject of his address was faith, and how it could remove mountains. It was a plain address, without any attempt at ornament, and delivered in a tone which was neither loud nor vehement. The speaker was evidently not a practised one—once or twice he hesitated as if for words to express his meaning, but still he held on, talking of faith, and how it could remove mountains: "It is the only thing we want, brethren, in this world; if we have that, we are indeed rich, as it will enable us to do our duty under all circumstances, and to bear our lot, however hard it may be—and the lot of all mankind is hard—the lot of the poor is hard, brethren—and who knows more of the poor than I?—a poor man myself, and the son of a poor man: but are the rich better off? not so, brethren, for God is just. The rich have their trials too: I am not rich myself, but I have seen the rich with careworn countenances; I have also seen them in madhouses; from which you may learn, brethren, that the lot of all mankind is hard; that is, till we lay hold of faith, which makes us comfortable under all circumstances; whether we ride in gilded chariots or walk barefooted in quest of bread; whether we be ignorant, whether we be wise—for riches and poverty, ignorance and wisdom, brethren, each brings with it its peculiar temptations. Well, under all these troubles, the thing which I would recommend you to seek is one and the same—faith; faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who made us and allotted to each his station. Each has something to do, brethren. Do it, therefore, but always in faith; without faith we shall find ourselves sometimes at fault; but with faith never—for faith can remove the difficulty. It will teach us to love life, p. 237
brethren, when life is becoming bitter, and to prize the blessings around us; for as every man has his cares, brethren, so has each man his blessings. It will likewise teach us not to love life over much, seeing that we must one day part with it. It will teach us to face death with resignation, and will preserve us from sinking amidst the swelling of the river Jordan."

And when he had concluded his address, he said, "Let us sing a hymn, one composed by Master Charles Wesley—he was my countryman, brethren.

'Jesus, I cast my soul on Thee,
Mighty and merciful to save;
Thou shalt to death go down with me,
And lay me gently in the grave.
This body then shall rest in hope,
This body which the worms destroy;
For Thou shalt surely raise me up,
To glorious life and endless joy.'"

Farewell, preacher with the plain coat, and the calm serious look! I saw thee once again, and that was lately—only the other day. It was near a fishing hamlet, by the seaside, that I saw the preacher again. He stood on the top of a steep monticle, used by pilots as a look-out for vessels approaching that coast, a dangerous one, abounding in rocks and quicksands. There he stood on the monticle, preaching to weather-worn fishermen and mariners gathered below upon the sand. "Who is he?" said I to an old fisherman who stood beside me with a book of hymns in his hand; but the old man put his hand to his lips, and that was the only answer I received. Not a sound p. 238
was heard but the voice of the preacher and the roaring of the waves; but the voice was heard loud above the roaring of the sea, for the preacher now spoke with power, and his voice was not that of one who hesitates. There he stood—no longer a young man, for his black locks were become grey, even like my own; but there was the intelligent face, and the calm serious look

which had struck me of yore. There stood the preacher, one of those men—and, thank God, their number is not few—who, animated by the spirit of Christ, amidst much poverty, and, alas! much contempt, persist in carrying the light of the Gospel amidst the dark parishes of what, but for their instrumentality, would scarcely be Christian England. I would have waited till he had concluded, in order that I might speak to him, and endeavour to bring back the ancient scene to his recollection, but suddenly a man came hurrying towards the monticle, mounted on a speedy horse, and holding by the bridle one yet more speedy, and he whispered to me, “Why loiterest thou here?—knowest thou not all that is to be done before midnight?” and he flung me the bridle; and I mounted on the horse of great speed, and I followed the other, who had already galloped off. And as I departed, I waved my hand to him on the monticle, and I shouted, “Farewell, brother! the seed came up at last, after a long period!” and then I gave the speedy horse his way, and leaning over the shoulder of the galloping horse, I said, “Would that my life had been like his—even like that man’s!”

I now wandered along the heath, till I came to a place where, beside a thick furze, sat a man, his eyes fixed intently on the red ball of the setting sun. p. 239

“That’s not you, Jasper?”

“Indeed, brother!”

“I’ve not seen you for years.”

“How should you, brother?”

“What brings you here?”

“The fight, brother.”

“Where are the tents?”

“On the old spot, brother.”

“Any news since we parted?”

“Two deaths, brother.”

“Who are dead, Jasper?”

“Father and mother, brother.”

“Where did they die?”

“Where they were sent, brother.”

“And Mrs. Herne?”

“She’s alive, brother.”

“Where is she now?”

“In Yorkshire, brother.”

“What is your opinion of death, Mr. Petulengro?” said I, as I sat down beside him.

“My opinion of death, brother, is much the same as that in the old song of Pharaoh, which I have heard my grandam sing—

> ‘Cana marel o manus chivios andé puv,
> Ta rovel pa leste o chavo ta romi.’ [239]

When a man dies, he is cast into the earth, and his wife and child sorrow over him. If he has neither wife nor child, then his father and mother, I suppose; and if he is quite alone in the world, why, then, he is cast into the earth, and there is an end of the matter.” p. 240

“And do you think that is the end of a man?”

“There’s an end of him, brother, more’s the pity.”

“Why do you say so?”

“Life is sweet, brother.”

“Do you think so?”

“Think so!—There’s night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there’s likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?”

“I would wish to die—”

“You talk like a Gorgio—which is the same as talking like a fool—were you a Rommany Chal you would talk wiser. Wish to die, indeed!—A Rommany Chal would wish to live for ever!”

“In sickness, Jasper?”

“There’s the sun and stars, brother.”

“In blindness, Jasper?”

“There’s the wind on the heath, brother; if I could only feel that, I would gladly live for ever. Dosta, [240] we’ll now go to the tents and put on the gloves; and I’ll try to make you feel what a sweet thing it is to be alive, brother!”

CHAPTER XXVI

The Flower of the Grass—Days of Pugilism—The Rendezvous—Jews—Bruisers of England—Winter, Spring—Well-earned Bays—The Fight—Huge Black Cloud—Frame of Adamant—The Storm—Dukkeripens—The Barouche—The Rain Gushes.

How for everything there is a time and a season, and then how does the glory of a thing pass from it, even like the flower of the grass. This is a truism, but it is one of those which are continually forcing themselves upon the mind. Many years have not passed over my head, yet, during those which I can recall to remembrance, how many things have I seen flourish, pass away, and become forgotten, except by myself, who, in spite of all my endeavours, never can forget anything. I have known the time when a pugilistic encounter between two noted champions was almost considered in the light of a national affair; when tens of thousands of individuals, high and low, meditated and brooded upon it, the first thing in the morning and the last at night, until the great event was decided. But the time is past, and many people will say, thank God that it is; all I have to say is, that the French still live on the other side of the water, and are still casting their eyes hitherward—and that in the days of pugilism it was no vain boast to say, that one Englishman was a match for two of t’other race; at present it would be a vain boast to say so, for these are not the days of pugilism.

But those to which the course of my narrative has carried me were the days of pugilism; it was then at its height, and consequently near its decline, for corruption had crept into the ring; and how many things, states and sects among the rest, owe their decline to this cause! But what a bold and vigorous aspect pugilism wore at that time! and the great battle was just then coming off: the day had been decided upon, and the spot—a convenient distance from the old town; and to the old town were now flocking the bruisers of England, men of tremendous renown. Let no one sneer at the bruisers of England—what were the gladiators of Rome, or the bull-fighters of Spain, in its palmiest days, compared to England’s bruisers? Pity that ever corruption should have crept in amongst them—but of that I wish not to talk; let us still hope that a spark of the old religion, of which they were the priests, still lingers in the breasts of Englishmen. There they come, the bruisers, from far London, or from wherever else they might chance to be at the time, to the great rendezvous in the old city; some came one way, some another: some of tip-top reputation came with peers in their chariots, for glory and fame are such fair things, that even peers are proud to have those invested therewith by their sides; others came in their own gigs, driving their own bits of blood, and I heard one say: “I have driven through at a heat the whole hundred and eleven miles, and only stopped to bait twice.” Oh, the blood-horses of old England! but they, too, have had their day—for everything beneath the sun there is a season and a time. But the greater number come just as they can contrive; on the tops of coaches, for example; and amongst these there are fellows with dark sallow faces, and sharp shining eyes; and it is these that have planted rottenness in the core of pugilism, for they are Jews, and, true to their kind, have only base lucre in view.

It was fierce old Cobbett, I think, who first said that the Jews first introduced bad faith amongst pugilists. He did not always speak the truth, but at any rate he spoke it when he made that observation. Strange people the Jews—endowed with every gift but one, and that the highest, genius divine—genius which can alone make of men demigods, and elevate them above earth and what is earthy and grovelling; without which a clever nation—and who more clever than the Jews?—may have Rambams in plenty, but never a Fielding nor a Shakespeare. A Rothschild and a Mendoza, yes—but never a Kean nor a Belcher.

So the bruisers of England are come to be present at the grand fight speedily coming off; there they are met in the precincts of the old town, near the field of the chapel, planted with tender saplings at the restoration of sporting Charles, which are now become venerable elms, as high as many a steeple; there they are met at a fitting rendezvous, where a retired coachman, with one leg, keeps an hotel and a bowling-green. I think I now see them upon the bowling-green, the men of renown, amidst hundreds of people with no renown at all, who gaze upon them with timid wonder. Fame, after all, is a glorious thing, though it lasts only for a day. There’s Cribb, the champion of England, and perhaps the best man in England; there he is, with his huge massive figure, and face wonderfully like that of a lion. There is Belcher, the younger, not the mighty one, who is gone to his place, but the Teucer Belcher, the most scientific pugilist that ever entered a ring, only wanting strength to be, I won’t say what. He appears to walk before me now, as he did that evening, with his white hat, white great-coat, thin genteel figure, springy step, and keen, determined eye. Crosses him, what a contrast! grim, savage Shelton, who has a civil word for nobody, and a hard blow for anybody—hard! one blow, given with the proper play of his athletic arm, will unsense a giant. Yonder individual, who strolls about with his hands behind him,

supporting his brown coat lappets, under-sized, and who looks anything but what he is, is the king of the light weights, so called—Randall! the terrible Randall, who has Irish blood in his veins; not the better for that, nor the worse; and not far from him is his last antagonist, Ned Turner, who, though beaten by him, still thinks himself as good a man, in which he is, perhaps, right, for it was a near thing; and "a better shentleman," in which he is quite right, for he is a Welshman. But how shall I name them all? they were there by dozens, and all tremendous in their way. There was Bulldog Hudson, and fearless Scroggins, who beat the conqueror of Sam the Jew. There was Black Richmond—no, he was not there, but I knew him well; he was the most dangerous of blacks, even with a broken thigh. There was Purcell, who could never conquer till p. 245
all seemed over with him. There was—what! shall I name thee last? ay, why not? I believe that thou art the last of all that strong family still above the sod, where mayst thou long continue—true piece of English stuff, Tom of Bedford—sharp as Winter, kind as Spring.

Hail to thee, Tom of Bedford, or by whatever name it may please thee to be called, Spring or Winter. Hail to thee, six-foot Englishman of the brown eye, worthy to have carried a six-foot bow at Flodden, where England's yeomen triumphed over Scotland's king, his clans and chivalry. Hail to thee, last of England's bruisers, after all the many victories which thou hast achieved—true English victories, unbought by yellow gold; need I recount them? nay, nay! they are already well known to fame—sufficient to say that Bristol's Bull and Ireland's Champion were vanquished by thee, and one mightier still, gold itself, thou didst overcome; for gold itself strove in vain to deaden the power of thy arm; and thus thou didst proceed till men left off challenging thee, the unvanquishable, the incorruptible. 'Tis a treat to see thee, Tom of Bedford, in thy "public" in Holborn way, whither thou hast retired with thy well-earned bays. 'Tis Friday night, and nine by Holborn clock. There sits the yeoman at the end of his long room, surrounded by his friends; glasses are filled, and a song is the cry, and a song is sung well suited to the place; it finds an echo in every heart—fists are clenched, arms are waved, and the portraits of the mighty fighting men of yore, Broughton, and Slack, and Ben, which adorn the walls, appear to smile grim approbation, whilst many a manly voice joins in the bold chorus: p. 246

> "Here's a health to old honest John Bull,
> When he's gone we shan't find such another,
> And with hearts and with glasses brim full,
> We will drink to old England, his mother."

But the fight! with respect to the fight, what shall I say? Little can be said about it—it was soon over; some said that the brave from town, who was reputed the best man of the two, and whose form was a perfect model of athletic beauty, allowed himself, for lucre vile, to be vanquished by the massive champion with the flattened nose. One thing is certain, that the former was suddenly seen to sink to the earth before a blow of by no means extraordinary power. Time, time! was called; but there he lay upon the ground apparently senseless, and from thence he did not lift his head till several seconds after the umpires had declared his adversary victor.

There were shouts; indeed there's never a lack of shouts to celebrate a victory, however acquired; but there was also much grinding of teeth, especially amongst the fighting men from town. "Tom has sold us," said they, "sold us to the yokels; who would have thought it?" Then there was fresh grinding of teeth, and scowling brows were turned to the heaven; but what is this? is it possible, does the heaven scowl too? why, only a quarter of an hour ago . . . but what may not happen in a quarter of an hour? For many weeks the weather had been of the most glorious description, the eventful day, too, had dawned gloriously, and so it had continued till some two hours after noon; the fight was then over; and about that time I looked up—what a p. 247
glorious sky of deep blue, and what a big fierce sun swimming high above in the midst of that blue; not a cloud—there had not been one for weeks—not a cloud to be seen, only in the far west, just on the horizon, something like the extremity of a black wing; that was only a quarter of an hour ago, and now the whole northern side of the heaven is occupied by a huge black cloud, and the sun is only occasionally seen amidst masses of driving vapour; what a change! but another fight is at hand, and the pugilists are clearing the outer ring;—how their huge whips come crashing upon the heads of the yokels; blood flows, more blood than in the fight; those blows are given with right good-will, those are not sham blows, whether of whip or fist; it is with fist that grim Shelton strikes down the big yokel; he is always dangerous, grim Shelton, but now particularly so, for he has lost ten pounds betted on the brave who sold himself to the yokels; but the outer ring is cleared: and now the second fight commences; it is between two champions of less renown than the others, but is perhaps not the worse on that account. A tall thin boy is fighting in the ring with a man somewhat under the middle size, with a frame of adamant; that's a gallant boy! he's a yokel, but he comes from Brummagem, and he does credit to his extraction; but his adversary has a frame of adamant: in what a strange light they fight, but who can wonder, on looking at that frightful cloud usurping now one-half of heaven, and at the sun struggling with sulphurous vapour; the face of the boy, which is turned towards me, looks horrible in that light, but he is a brave boy, he strikes his foe on the forehead, and the report of the blow is like the p. 248
sound of a hammer against a rock; but there is a rush and a roar overhead, a wild commotion, the tempest is beginning to break loose; there's wind and dust, a crash, rain and hail; is it possible to fight amidst such a commotion? yes! the fight goes on; again the boy strikes the man full on the brow, but it is of no use striking that man, his frame is of adamant. "Boy, thy strength is beginning to give way, and thou art becoming confused;" the man now goes to work, amidst rain and hail. "Boy, thou wilt not hold out ten minutes longer against rain, hail, and the blows of such an antagonist."

And now the storm was at its height; the black thunder-cloud had broken into many, which assumed the wildest shapes and the strangest colours, some of them unspeakably glorious; the rain poured in a deluge, and more than one waterspout was seen at no great distance: an immense rabble is hurrying in one direction; a multitude of men of all ranks, peers and yokels, prize-fighters and Jews, and the last came to plunder, and are now plundering amidst that wild confusion of hail and rain, men and horses, carts and carriages. But all hurry in one direction, through mud and mire; there's a town only three miles distant, which is soon reached, and soon filled, it will not contain one-third of that mighty rabble; but there's another town farther on—the good old city is farther on, only twelve miles; what's that! who will stay here? onward to the old town.

Hurry-skurry, a mixed multitude of men and horses, carts and carriages, all in the direction of the old town; and, in the midst of all that mad throng, at a moment when the rain gushes were coming down with particular fury, and the artillery of the sky was pealing as I had never heard it peal before, I felt some one seize me by the arm—I turned round, and beheld Mr. Petulengro. p. 249

"I can't hear you, Mr. Petulengro," said I; for the thunder drowned the words which he appeared to be uttering.

"Dearginni," I heard Mr. Petulengro say, "it thundereth. I was asking, brother, whether you believe in dukkeripens?"

"I do not, Mr. Petulengro; but this is strange weather to be asking me whether I believe in fortunes."

"Grondinni," said Mr. Petulengro, "it haileth. I believe in dukkeripens, brother."

"And who has more right," said I, "seeing that you live by them? But this tempest is truly horrible."

"Dearginni, grondinni ta villaminni! [249] It thundereth, it haileth, and also flameth," said Mr. Petulengro. "Look up there, brother!"

I looked up. Connected with this tempest there was one feature to which I have already alluded —the wonderful colours of the clouds. Some were of vivid green; others of the brightest orange; others as black as pitch. The Gypsy's finger was pointed to a particular part of the sky.

"What do you see there, brother?"

"A strange kind of cloud."

"What does it look like, brother?"

"Something like a stream of blood."

"That cloud foreshoweth a bloody dukkeripen." p. 250

"A bloody fortune!" said I. "And whom may it betide?"

"Who knows!" said the Gypsy.

Down the way, dashing and splashing, and scattering man, horse, and cart to the left and right, came an open barouche, drawn by four smoking steeds, with postillions in scarlet jackets and leather skull-caps. Two forms were conspicuous in it; that of the successful bruiser, and of his friend and backer, the sporting gentleman of my acquaintance.

"His!" said the Gypsy, pointing to the latter, whose stern features wore a smile of triumph, as, probably recognising me in the crowd, he nodded in the direction of where I stood, as the barouche hurried by.

There went the barouche, dashing through the rain gushes, and in it one whose boast it was that he was equal to "either fortune." Many have heard of that man—many may be desirous of knowing yet more of him. I have nothing to do with that man's after life—he fulfilled his dukkeripen. "A bad, violent man!" Softly, friend; when thou wouldst speak harshly of the dead, remember that thou hast not yet fulfilled thy own dukkeripen!

CHAPTER XXVII p. 251

My Father—Premature Decay—The Easy Chair—A Few Questions—So You Told Me—A Difficult Language—They Call it Haik—Misused Opportunities—Saul—Want of Candour—Don't Weep—Heaven Forgive Me—Dated from Paris—I Wish He were Here—A Father's Reminiscences—Farewell to Vanities.

My father, as I have already informed the reader, had been endowed by nature with great corporeal strength; indeed, I have been assured that, at the period of his prime, his figure had denoted the possession of almost Herculean powers. The strongest forms, however, do not always endure the longest, the very excess of the noble and generous juices which they contain being the cause of their premature decay. But, be that as it may, the health of my father, some

few years after his retirement from the service to the quiet of domestic life, underwent a considerable change; his constitution appeared to be breaking up; and he was subject to severe attacks from various disorders, with which, till then, he had been utterly unacquainted. He was, however, wont to rally, more or less, after his illnesses, and might still occasionally be seen taking his walk, with his cane in his hand, and accompanied by his dog, who sympathised entirely with him, pining as he pined, improving as he improved, and never leaving the house save in his company; and in this manner matters went on for a considerable time, no very great apprehension with respect to my father's state being raised either in my mother's breast or my own. But, about six months after the period at which I have arrived in my last chapter, it came to pass that my father experienced a severer attack than on any previous occasion.

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He had the best medical advice; but it was easy to see, from the looks of his doctors, that they entertained but slight hopes of his recovery. His sufferings were great, yet he invariably bore them with unshaken fortitude. There was one thing remarkable connected with his illness; notwithstanding its severity, it never confined him to his bed. He was wont to sit in his little parlour, in his easy chair, dressed in a faded regimental coat, his dog at his feet, who would occasionally lift his head from the hearth-rug on which he lay, and look his master wistfully in the face. And thus my father spent the greater part of his time, sometimes in prayer, sometimes in meditation, and sometimes in reading the Scriptures. I frequently sat with him, though, as I entertained a great awe for my father, I used to feel rather ill at ease, when, as sometimes happened, I found myself alone with him.

"I wish to ask you a few questions," said he to me, one day, after my mother had left the room.

"I will answer anything you may please to ask me, my dear father."

"What have you been about lately?"

"I have been occupied as usual, attending at the office at the appointed hours."

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"And what do you there?"

"Whatever I am ordered."

"And nothing else?"

"Oh yes! sometimes I read a book."

"Connected with your profession?"

"Not always; I have been lately reading Armenian—"

"What's that?"

"The language of a people whose country is a region on the other side of Asia Minor."

"Well!"

"A region abounding with mountains."

"Well!"

"Amongst which is Mount Ararat."

"Well!"

"Upon which, as the Bible informs us, the ark rested."

"Well!"

"It is the language of the people of those regions."

"So you told me."

"And I have been reading the Bible in their language."

"Well!"

"Or rather, I should say, in the ancient language of these people; from which I am told the modern Armenian differs considerably."

"Well!"

"As much as the Italian from the Latin."

"Well!"

"So I have been reading the Bible in ancient Armenian."

"You told me so before."

"I found it a highly difficult language."

"Yes."

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"Differing widely from the languages in general with which I am acquainted."

“Yes.”

“Exhibiting, however, some features in common with them.”

“Yes.”

“And sometimes agreeing remarkably in words with a certain strange wild speech with which I became acquainted—”

“Irish?”

“No, father, not Irish—with which I became acquainted by the greatest chance in the world.”

“Yes.”

“But of which I need say nothing farther at present, and which I should not have mentioned but for that fact.”

“Well!”

“Which I consider remarkable.”

“Yes.”

“The Armenian is copious.”

“Is it?”

“With an alphabet of thirty-nine letters, but it is harsh and guttural.”

“Yes.”

“Like the language of most mountainous people—the Armenians call it Haik.”

“Do they?”

“And themselves, Haik, also; they are a remarkable people, and, though their original habitation is the Mountain of Ararat, they are to be found, like the Jews, all over the world.”

“Well!”

“Well, father, that’s all I can tell you about the Haiks, or Armenians.”

“And what does it all amount to?” p. 255

“Very little, father; indeed, there is very little known about the Armenians; their early history, in particular, is involved in considerable mystery.”

“And, if you knew all that it was possible to know about them, to what would it amount? to what earthly purpose could you turn it? have you acquired any knowledge of your profession?”

“Very little, father.”

“Very little! Have you acquired all in your power?”

“I can’t say that I have, father.”

“And yet it was your duty to have done so. But I see how it is, you have shamefully misused your opportunities; you are like one, who, sent into the field to labour, passes his time in flinging stones at the birds of heaven.”

“I would scorn to fling a stone at a bird, father.”

“You know what I mean, and all too well, and this attempt to evade deserved reproof by feigned simplicity is quite in character with your general behaviour. I have ever observed about you a want of frankness, which has distressed me; you never speak of what you are about, your hopes, or your projects, but cover yourself with mystery. I never knew till the present moment that you were acquainted with Armenian.”

“Because you never asked me, father; there’s nothing to conceal in the matter—I will tell you in a moment how I came to learn Armenian. A lady whom I met at one of Mrs. ---’s parties took a fancy to me, and has done me the honour to allow me to go and see her sometimes. She is the widow of a rich clergyman, and on her husband’s death came to this place to live, bringing her p. 256
husband’s library with her: I soon found my way to it, and examined every book. Her husband must have been a learned man, for amongst much Greek and Hebrew I found several volumes in Armenian, or relating to the language.”

“And why did you not tell me of this before?”

“Because you never questioned me; but I repeat, there is nothing to conceal in the matter. The lady took a fancy to me, and, being fond of the arts, drew my portrait; she said the expression of my countenance put her in mind of Alfieri’s Saul.”

“And do you still visit her?”

“No, she soon grew tired of me, and told people that she found me very stupid; she gave me the Armenian books, however.”

“Saul,” said my father, musingly, “Saul; I am afraid she was only too right there; he disobeyed the commands of his master, and brought down on his head the vengeance of Heaven—he became a maniac, prophesied, and flung weapons about him.”

“He was, indeed, an awful character—I hope I shan’t turn out like him.”

“God forbid!” said my father, solemnly; “but in many respects you are headstrong and disobedient like him. I placed you in a profession, and besought you to make yourself master of it, by giving it your undivided attention. This, however, you did not do; you know nothing of it, but tell me that you are acquainted with Armenian; but what I dislike most is your want of candour—you are my son, but I know little of your real history; you may know fifty things for what I am aware: you may know how to shoe a horse for what I am aware.”

“Not only to shoe a horse, father, but to make horse-shoes.” p. 257

“Perhaps so,” said my father; “and it only serves to prove what I was just saying, that I know little about you.”

“But you easily may, my dear father; I will tell you anything that you may wish to know—shall I inform you how I learnt to make horse-shoes?”

“No,” said my father; “as you kept it a secret so long, it may as well continue so still. Had you been a frank, open-hearted boy, like one I could name, you would have told me all about it of your own accord. But I now wish to ask you a serious question—what do you propose to do?”

“To do, father?”

“Yes! the time for which you were articled to your profession will soon be expired, and I shall be no more.”

“Do not talk so, my dear father; I have no doubt that you will soon be better.”

“Do not flatter yourself; I feel that my days are numbered; I am soon going to my rest, and I have need of rest, for I am weary. There, there, don’t weep! Tears will help me as little as they will you; you have not yet answered my question. Tell me what you intend to do.”

“I really do not know what I shall do.”

“The military pension which I enjoy will cease with my life. The property which I shall leave behind me will be barely sufficient for the maintenance of your mother respectably. I again ask you what you intend to do. Do you think you can support yourself by your Armenian or your other acquirements?”

“Alas! I think little at all about it; but I suppose I must push into the world, and make a good fight, as becomes the son of him who fought Big Ben; if I can’t succeed, and am driven to the worst, it is but dying—” p. 258

“What do you mean by dying?”

“Leaving the world; my loss would scarcely be felt. I have never held life in much value, and every one has a right to dispose as he thinks best of that which is his own.”

“Ah! now I understand you; and well I know how and where you imbibed that horrible doctrine, and many similar ones which I have heard from your mouth; but I wish not to reproach you—I view in your conduct a punishment for my own sins, and I bow to the will of God. Few and evil have been my days upon the earth; little have I done to which I can look back with satisfaction. It is true I have served my king fifty years, and I have fought with—Heaven forgive me, what was I about to say!—but you mentioned the man’s name, and our minds willingly recall our ancient follies. Few and evil have been my days upon earth, I may say with Jacob of old, though I do not mean to say that my case is so hard as his; he had many undutiful children, whilst I have only . . .; but I will not reproach you. I have also like him a son to whom I can look with hope, who may yet preserve my name when I am gone, so let me be thankful; perhaps, after all, I have not lived in vain. Boy, when I am gone, look up to your brother, and may God bless you both. There, don’t weep; but take the Bible, and read me something about the old man and his children.”

My brother had now been absent for the space of three years. At first his letters had been frequent, and from them it appeared that he was following his profession in London with industry; they then became rather rare, and my father did not always communicate their contents. His last letter, however, had filled him and our whole little family with joy; it was dated from Paris, and the writer was evidently in high spirits. After describing in eloquent terms the beauties and gaieties of the French capital, he informed us how he had plenty of money, having copied a celebrated picture of one of the Italian masters for a Hungarian nobleman, for which he had received a large sum. “He wishes me to go with him to Italy,” added he, “but I am fond of independence; and, if ever I visit old Rome, I will have no patrons near me to distract my attention.” But six months had now elapsed from the date of this letter, and we had heard no farther intelligence of my brother. My father’s complaint increased; the gout, his principal enemy, occasionally mounted high up in his system, and we had considerable difficulty in keeping it from the stomach, where it generally proves fatal. I now devoted almost the whole of my time to my father, on whom his faithful partner also lavished every attention and care. I read the Bible to him, which was his chief delight; and also occasionally such other books as I thought might prove entertaining to him. His spirits were generally rather depressed. The absence of my p. 259

brother appeared to prey upon his mind. “I wish he were here,” he would frequently exclaim; “I can’t imagine what can have become of him; I trust, however, he will arrive in time.” He still sometimes rallied, and I took advantage of those moments of comparative ease, to question him upon the events of his early life. My attentions to him had not passed unnoticed, and he was p. 260
kind, fatherly, and unreserved. I had never known my father so entertaining as at these moments, when his life was but too evidently drawing to a close. I had no idea that he knew and had seen so much; my respect for him increased, and I looked upon him almost with admiration. His anecdotes were in general highly curious; some of them related to people in the highest stations, and to men whose names were closely connected with some of the brightest glories of our native land. He had frequently conversed—almost on terms of familiarity—with good old George. He had known the conqueror of Tippoo Saib; and was the friend of Townshend, who, when Wolfe fell, led the British grenadiers against the shrinking regiments of Montcalm. “Pity,” he added, “that when old—old as I am now—he should have driven his own son mad by robbing him of his plighted bride; but so it was; he married his son’s bride. I saw him lead her to the altar; if ever there was an angelic countenance, it was that girl’s; she was almost too fair to be one of the daughters of women. Is there anything, boy, that you would wish to ask me? now is the time.”

“Yes, father; there is one about whom I would fain question you.”

“Who is it? shall I tell you about Elliot?”

“No, father, not about Elliot; but pray don’t be angry; I should like to know something about Big Ben.”

“You are a strange lad,” said my father; “and, though of late I have begun to entertain a more favourable opinion than heretofore, there is still much about you that I do not understand. Why p. 261
do you bring up that name? Don’t you know that it is one of my temptations? you wish to know something about him. Well! I will oblige you this once, and then farewell to such vanities—something about him. I will tell you—his skin, when he flung off his clothes—and he had a particular knack in doing so—his skin, when he bared his mighty chest and back for combat—and when he fought he stood so . . . if I remember right—his skin, I say, was brown and dusky as that of a toad. Oh me! I wish my elder son was here.”

CHAPTER XXVIII p. 262

My Brother’s Arrival—The Interview—Night—A Dying Father—Christ.

At last my brother arrived; he looked pale and unwell; I met him at the door. “You have been long absent,” said I.

“Yes,” said he, “perhaps too long; but how is my father?”

“Very poorly,” said I, “he has had a fresh attack; but where have you been of late?”

“Far and wide,” said my brother; “but I can’t tell you anything now, I must go to my father. It was only by chance that I heard of his illness.”

“Stay a moment,” said I. “Is the world such a fine place as you supposed it to be before you went away?”

“Not quite,” said my brother, “not quite; indeed I wish—but ask me no questions now, I must hasten to my father.”

There was another question on my tongue, but I forbore; for the eyes of the young man were full of tears. I pointed with my finger, and the young man hastened past me to the arms of his father.

I forbore to ask my brother whether he had been to old Rome.

What passed between my father and brother I do not know; the interview, no doubt, was tender p. 263
enough, for they tenderly loved each other; but my brother’s arrival did not produce the beneficial effect upon my father which I at first hoped it would; it did not even appear to have raised his spirits. He was composed enough, however: “I ought to be grateful,” said he; “I wished to see my son, and God has granted me my wish; what more have I to do now than to bless my little family and go?”

My father’s end was evidently at hand.

And did I shed no tears? did I breathe no sighs? did I never wring my hands at this period? the reader will perhaps be asking. Whatever I did and thought is best known to God and myself; but it will be as well to observe, that it is possible to feel deeply, and yet make no outward sign.

And now for the closing scene.

At the dead hour of night, it might be about two, I was awakened from sleep by a cry which sounded from the room immediately below that in which I slept. I knew the cry, it was the cry of my mother; and I also knew its import, yet I made no effort to rise, for I was for the moment

paralysed. Again the cry sounded, yet still I lay motionless—the stupidity of horror was upon me. A third time, and it was then that, by a violent effort, bursting the spell which appeared to bind me, I sprang from the bed and rushed downstairs. My mother was running wildly about the room; she had awoke, and found my father senseless in the bed by her side. I essayed to raise him, and after a few efforts supported him in the bed in a sitting posture. My brother now rushed in, and, snatching up a light that was burning, he held it to my father's face. "The surgeon, the surgeon!" he cried; then, dropping the light, he ran out of the room followed by my mother; I remained alone, supporting the senseless form of my father; the light had been extinguished by the fall, and an almost total darkness reigned in the room. The form pressed heavily against my bosom—at last methought it moved. Yes, I was right, there was a heaving of the breast, and then a gasping. Were those words which I heard? Yes, they were words, low and indistinct at first, and then audible. The mind of the dying man was reverting to former scenes. I heard him mention names which I had often heard him mention before. It was an awful moment; I felt stupefied, but I still contrived to support my dying father. There was a pause, again my father spoke: I heard him speak of Minden, [264] and of Meredith, the old Minden sergeant, and then he uttered another name, which at one period of his life was much in his lips, the name of . . . but this is a solemn moment! There was a deep gasp: I shook, and thought all was over; but I was mistaken—my father moved, and revived for a moment; he supported himself in bed without my assistance. I make no doubt that for a moment he was perfectly sensible, and it was then that, clasping his hands, he uttered another name clearly, distinctly—it was the name of Christ. With that name upon his lips, the brave old soldier sank back upon my bosom, and, with his hands still clasped, yielded up his soul.

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CHAPTER XXIX

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The Greeting—Queer Figure—Cheer Up—The Cheerful Fire—It Will Do—The Sally Forth—Trepidation—Let Him Come In.

"One-and-Ninepence, sir, or the things which you have brought with you will be taken away from you!"

Such were the first words which greeted my ears, one damp misty morning in March, [265] as I dismounted from the top of a coach in the yard of a London inn.

I turned round, for I felt that the words were addressed to myself. Plenty of people were in the yard—porters, passengers, coachmen, ostlers, and others, who appeared to be intent on anything but myself, with the exception of one individual, whose business appeared to lie with me, and who now confronted me at the distance of about two yards.

I looked hard at the man—and a queer kind of individual he was to look at—a rakish figure, about thirty, and of the middle size, dressed in a coat smartly cut, but threadbare, very tight pantaloons of blue stuff, tied at the ankles, dirty white stockings and thin shoes, like those of a dancing-master; his features were not ugly, but rather haggard, and he appeared to owe his complexion less to nature than carmine; in fact, in every respect, a very queer figure.

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"One-and-ninepence, sir, or your things will be taken away from you!" he said, in a kind of lisping tone, coming yet nearer to me.

I still remained staring fixedly at him, but never a word answered. Our eyes met; whereupon he suddenly lost the easy impudent air which he before wore. He glanced, for a moment, at my fist, which I had by this time clenched, and his features became yet more haggard; he faltered; a fresh "one-and-ninepence," which he was about to utter, died on his lips; he shrank back, disappeared behind a coach, and I saw no more of him.

"One-and-ninepence, or my things will be taken away from me!" said I to myself, musingly, as I followed the porter to whom I had delivered my scanty baggage; "am I to expect many of these greetings in the big world? Well, never mind! I think I know the counter-sign!" And I clenched my fist yet harder than before.

So I followed the porter, through the streets of London, to a lodging which had been prepared for me by an acquaintance. The morning, as I have before said, was gloomy, and the streets through which I passed were dank and filthy; the people, also, looked dank and filthy; and so, probably, did I, for the night had been rainy, and I had come upwards of a hundred miles on the top of a coach; my heart had sunk within me, by the time we reached a dark narrow street, in which was the lodging.

"Cheer up, young man," said the porter, "we shall have a fine afternoon!"

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And presently I found myself in the lodging which had been prepared for me. It consisted of a small room, up two pair of stairs, in which I was to sit, and another still smaller above it, in which I was to sleep. I remember that I sat down, and looked, disconsolate, about me—everything seemed so cold and dingy. Yet how little is required to make a situation—however cheerless at first sight—cheerful and comfortable. The people of the house, who looked kindly upon me, lighted a fire in the dingy grate; and, then, what a change!—the dingy room seemed dingy no

more! Oh, the luxury of a cheerful fire after a chill night's journey! I drew near to the blazing grate, rubbed my hands, and felt glad.

And, when I had warmed myself, I turned to the table, on which, by this time, the people of the house had placed my breakfast; and I ate and I drank; and, as I ate and drank, I mused within myself, and my eyes were frequently directed to a small green box, which constituted part of my luggage, and which, with the rest of my things, stood in one corner of the room, till at last, leaving my breakfast unfinished, I rose, and, going to the box, unlocked it, and took out two or three bundles of papers tied with red tape, and, placing them on the table, I resumed my seat and my breakfast, my eyes intently fixed upon the bundles of papers all the time.

And when I had drained the last cup of tea out of a dingy teapot, and ate the last slice of the dingy loaf, I untied one of the bundles, and proceeded to look over the papers, which were closely written over in a singular hand, and I read for some time, till at last I said to myself, "It will do." And then I looked at the other bundle for some time without untying it; and at last I said, "It will do also." And then I turned to the fire, and, putting my feet against the sides of the grate, I leaned back on my chair, and, with my eyes upon the fire, fell into deep thought. p. 268

And there I continued in thought before the fire, until my eyes closed, and I fell asleep; which was not to be wondered at, after the fatigue and cold which I had lately undergone on the coach-top; and, in my sleep, I imagined myself still there, amidst darkness and rain, hurrying now over wild heaths, and now along roads overhung with thick and umbrageous trees, and sometimes methought I heard the horn of the guard, and sometimes the voice of the coachman, now chiding, now encouraging his horses, as they toiled through the deep and miry ways. At length a tremendous crack of a whip saluted the tympanum of my ear, and I started up broad awake, nearly oversetting the chair on which I reclined—and, lo! I was in the dingy room before the fire, which was by this time half extinguished. In my dream I had confounded the noise of the street with those of my night-journey; the crack which had aroused me I soon found proceeded from the whip of a carter, who, with many oaths, was flogging his team below the window.

Looking at a clock which stood upon the mantelpiece, I perceived that it was past eleven; whereupon I said to myself, "I am wasting my time foolishly and unprofitably, forgetting that I am now in the big world, without anything to depend upon save my own exertions;" and then I adjusted my dress, and, locking up the bundle of papers which I had not read, I tied up the other, and, taking it under my arm, I went downstairs; and, after asking a question or two of the people of the house, I sallied forth into the street with a determined look, though at heart I felt somewhat timorous at the idea of venturing out alone into the mazes of the mighty city, of which I had heard much, but of which, of my own knowledge, I knew nothing. p. 269

I had, however, no great cause for anxiety in the present instance; I easily found my way to the place which I was in quest of—one of the many new squares on the northern side of the metropolis, and which was scarcely ten minutes' walk from the street in which I had taken up my abode. Arriving before the door of a tolerably large house which bore a certain number, I stood still for a moment in a kind of trepidation, looking anxiously at the door; I then slowly passed on till I came to the end of the square, where I stood still, and pondered for a while. Suddenly, however, like one who has formed a resolution, I clenched my right hand, flinging my hat somewhat on one side, and, turning back with haste to the door before which I had stopped, I sprang up the steps, and gave a loud rap, ringing at the same time the bell of the area. After the lapse of a minute the door was opened by a maid-servant of no very cleanly or prepossessing appearance, of whom I demanded, in a tone of some hauteur, whether the master of the house was at home. Glancing for a moment at the white paper bundle beneath my arm, the handmaid made no reply in words, but, with a kind of toss of her head, flung the door open, standing on one side as if to let me enter. I did enter; and the handmaid, having opened another door on the right hand, went in, and said something which I could not hear: after a considerable pause, however, I heard the voice of a man say, "Let him come in;" whereupon the handmaid, coming out, motioned me to enter, and, on my obeying, instantly closed the door behind me. p. 270

CHAPTER XXX

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The Sinister Glance—Excellent Correspondent—Quite Original—My System—A Losing Trade—Merit—Starting a Review—What Have You Got?—Stop!—Dairyman's Daughter—Oxford Principles—More Conversation—How is This?

There were two individuals in the room in which I now found myself; it was a small study, surrounded with bookcases, the window looking out upon the square. Of these individuals he who appeared to be the principal stood with his back to the fireplace. He was a tall stout man, about sixty, dressed in a loose morning gown. The expression of his countenance would have been bluff but for a certain sinister glance, and his complexion might have been called rubicund but for a considerable tinge of bilious yellow. He eyed me askance as I entered. The other, a pale, shrivelled-looking person, sat at a table apparently engaged with an account-book; he took no manner of notice of me, never once lifting his eyes from the page before him.

"Well, sir, what is your pleasure!" said the big man, [270] in a rough tone, as I stood there, looking p. 272

at him wistfully—as well I might—for upon that man, at the time of which I am speaking, my principal, I may say my only, hopes rested.

“Sir,” said I, “my name is so-and-so, and I am the bearer of a letter to you from Mr. so-and-so, an old friend and correspondent of yours.”

The countenance of the big man instantly lost the suspicious and lowering expression which it had hitherto exhibited; he strode forward, and, seizing me by the hand, gave me a violent squeeze.

“My dear sir,” said he, “I am rejoiced to see you in London. I have been long anxious for the pleasure—we are old friends, though we have never before met. Taggart,” said he to the man who sat at the desk, “this is our excellent correspondent, the friend and pupil of our other excellent correspondent.”

The pale, shrivelled-looking man slowly and deliberately raised his head from the account-book, and surveyed me for a moment or two; not the slightest emotion was observable in his countenance. It appeared to me, however, that I could detect a droll twinkle in his eye: his curiosity, if he had any, was soon gratified; he made me a kind of bow, pulled out a snuff-box, took a pinch of snuff, and again bent his head over the page.

“And now, my dear sir,” said the big man, “pray sit down, and tell me the cause of your visit. I hope you intend to remain here a day or two.”

“More than that,” said I, “I am come to take up my abode in London.”

“Glad to hear it; and what have you been about of late? got anything which will suit me? Sir, I admire your style of writing, and your manner of thinking; and I am much obliged to my good friend and correspondent for sending me some of your productions. I inserted them all, and wished there had been more of them—quite original, sir, quite: took with the public, especially the essay about the non-existence of anything. I don’t exactly agree with you though; I have my own peculiar ideas about matter—as you know, of course, from the book I have published. Nevertheless, a very pretty piece of speculative philosophy—no such thing as matter—impossible that there should be—*ex nihilo*—what is the Greek? I have forgot—very pretty indeed; very original.” p. 273

“I am afraid, sir, it was very wrong to write such trash, and yet more to allow it to be published.”

“Trash! not at all; a very pretty piece of speculative philosophy; of course you were wrong in saying there is no world. The world must exist, to have the shape of a pear; and that the world is shaped like a pear, and not like an apple, as the fools of Oxford say, I have satisfactorily proved in my book. Now, if there were no world, what would become of my system? But what do you propose to do in London?”

“Here is the letter, sir,” said I, “of our good friend, which I have not yet given to you; I believe it will explain to you the circumstances under which I come.”

He took the letter, and perused it with attention. “Hem!” said he, with a somewhat altered manner, “my friend tells me that you are come up to London with the view of turning your literary talents to account, and desires me to assist you in my capacity of publisher in bringing forth two or three works which you have prepared. My good friend is perhaps not aware that for some time past I have given up publishing—was obliged to do so—had many severe losses—do nothing at present in that line, save sending out the Magazine once a month; and, between ourselves, am thinking of disposing of that—wish to retire—high time at my age—so you see—” p. 274

“I am very sorry, sir, to hear that you cannot assist me” (and I remember that I felt very nervous); “I had hoped—”

“A losing trade, I assure you, sir; literature is a drug. Taggart, what o’clock is it?”

“Well, sir!” said I, rising, “as you cannot assist me, I will now take my leave; I thank you sincerely for your kind reception, and will trouble you no longer.”

“Oh, don’t go. I wish to have some farther conversation with you; and perhaps I may hit upon some plan to benefit you. I honour merit, and always make a point to encourage it when I can; but, . . . Taggart, go to the bank, and tell them to dishonour the bill twelve months after date for thirty pounds which becomes due to-morrow. I am dissatisfied with that fellow who wrote the fairy tales, and intend to give him all the trouble in my power. Make haste.”

Taggart did not appear to be in any particular haste. First of all, he took a pinch of snuff, then, rising from his chair, slowly and deliberately drew his wig, for he wore a wig of a brown colour, rather more over his forehead than it had previously been, buttoned his coat, and, taking his hat, and an umbrella which stood in a corner, made me a low bow, and quitted the room. p. 275

“Well, sir, where were we? Oh, I remember, we were talking about merit. Sir, I always wish to encourage merit, especially when it comes so highly recommended as in the present instance. Sir, my good friend and correspondent speaks of you in the highest terms. Sir, I honour my good friend, and have the highest respect for his opinion in all matters connected with literature—rather eccentric though. Sir, my good friend has done my periodical more good and more harm than all the rest of my correspondents. Sir, I shall never forget the sensation caused by the appearance of his article about a certain personage whom he proved—and I think satisfactorily—

to have been a legionary soldier—rather startling, was it not? The S--- of the world a common soldier, in a marching regiment—original, but startling; sir, I honour my good friend."

"So you have renounced publishing, sir," said I, "with the exception of the Magazine?"

"Why, yes; except now and then, under the rose; the old coachman, you know, likes to hear the whip. Indeed, at the present moment, I am thinking of starting a Review on an entirely new and original principle; and it just struck me that you might be of high utility in the undertaking—what do you think of the matter?"

"I should be happy, sir, to render you any assistance, but I am afraid the employment you propose requires other qualifications than I possess; however, I can make the essay. My chief intention in coming to London was to lay before the world what I had prepared; and I had hoped p. 276 by your assistance—"

"Ah! I see, ambition! Ambition is a very pretty thing; but, sir, we must walk before we run, according to the old saying—what is that you have got under your arm?"

"One of the works to which I was alluding; the one, indeed, which I am most anxious to lay before the world, as I hope to derive from it both profit and reputation."

"Indeed! what do you call it?"

"Ancient songs of Denmark, heroic and romantic, translated by myself; with notes philological, critical, and historical."

"Then, sir, I assure you that your time and labour have been entirely flung away; nobody would read your ballads, if you were to give them to the world to-morrow."

"I am sure, sir, that you would say otherwise if you would permit me to read one to you;" and, without waiting for the answer of the big man, nor indeed so much as looking at him, to see whether he was inclined or not to hear me, I undid my manuscript, and, with a voice trembling with eagerness, I read to the following effect:—

> 'Buckshank bold and Elfinstone,
> And more than I can mention here,
> They caused to be built so stout a ship,
> And unto Iceland they would steer.
>
> They launched the ship upon the main,
> Which bellowed like a wrathful bear;
> Down to the bottom the vessel sank,
> A laidly Trold has dragged it there.
>
> Down to the bottom sank young Roland, p. 277
> And round about he groped awhile;
> Until he found the path which led
> Unto the bower of Ellenlyle.'"

"Stop!" said the publisher; "very pretty indeed, and very original; beats Scott hollow, and Percy too: but, sir, the day for these things is gone by; nobody at present cares for Percy, nor for Scott, either, save as a novelist; sorry to discourage merit, sir, but what can I do! What else have you got?"

"The songs of Ab Gwilym, the Welsh bard, also translated by myself, with notes critical, philological, and historical."

"Pass on—what else?"

"Nothing else," said I, folding up my manuscript with a sigh, "unless it be a romance in the German style; on which, I confess, I set very little value."

"Wild?"

"Yes, sir, very wild."

"Like the 'Miller of the Black Valley'?"

"Yes, sir, very much like the 'Miller of the Black Valley.'"

"Well, that's better," said the publisher; "and yet, I don't know, I question whether any one at present cares for the miller himself. No, sir, the time for those things is also gone by; German, at present, is a drug; and, between ourselves, nobody has contributed to make it so more than my good friend and correspondent;—but, sir, I see you are a young gentleman of infinite merit, and I always wish to encourage merit. Don't you think you could write a series of evangelical tales?"

"Evangelical tales, sir?"

"Yes, sir, evangelical novels." p. 278

"Something in the style of Herder?"

"Herder is a drug, sir; nobody cares for Herder—thanks to my good friend. Sir, I have in yon

drawer a hundred pages about Herder, which I dare not insert in my periodical; it would sink it, sir. No, sir, something in the style of the 'Dairyman's Daughter.'" [278]

"I never heard of the work till the present moment."

"Then, sir, procure it by all means. Sir, I could afford as much as ten pounds for a well-written tale in the style of the 'Dairyman's Daughter'; that is the kind of literature, sir, that sells at the present day! It is not the Miller of the Black Valley—no, sir, nor Herder either, that will suit the present taste; the evangelical body is becoming very strong, sir; the canting scoundrels—"

"But, sir, surely you would not pander to a scoundrelly taste?"

"Then, sir, I must give up business altogether. Sir, I have a great respect for the goddess Reason—an infinite respect, sir; indeed, in my time, I have made a great many sacrifices for her; but, sir, I cannot altogether ruin myself for the goddess Reason. Sir, I am a friend to Liberty, as is well known; but I must also be a friend to my own family. It is with the view of providing for a son of mine that I am about to start the Review of which I was speaking. He has taken into his head to p. 279
marry, sir, and I must do something for him, for he can do but little for himself. Well, sir, I am a friend to Liberty, as I said before, and likewise a friend to Reason; but I tell you frankly that the Review which I intend to get up under the rose, and present him with when it is established, will be conducted on Oxford principles."

"Orthodox principles, I suppose you mean, sir?"

"I do, sir; I am no linguist, but I believe the words are synonymous."

Much more conversation passed between us, and it was agreed that I should become a contributor to the "Oxford Review." I stipulated, however, that, as I knew little of politics, and cared less, no other articles should be required from me than such as were connected with belles-lettres and philology; to this the big man readily assented. "Nothing will be required from you," said he, "but what you mention; and now and then, perhaps, a paper on metaphysics. You understand German, and perhaps it would be desirable that you should review Kant; and in a review of Kant, sir, you could introduce to advantage your peculiar notions about *ex nihilo*." He then reverted to the subject of the "Dairyman's Daughter," which I promised to take into consideration. As I was going away, he invited me to dine with him on the ensuing Sunday.

"That's a strange man!" said I to myself, after I had left the house; "he is evidently very clever; but I cannot say that I like him much, with his 'Oxford Reviews' and 'Dairyman's Daughters.' But what can I do? I am almost without a friend in the world. I wish I could find some one who p. 280
would publish my ballads, or my songs of Ab Gwilym. In spite of what the big man says, I am convinced that, once published, they would bring me much fame and profit. But how is this?—what a beautiful sun!—the porter was right in saying that the day would clear up—I will now go to my dingy lodging, lock up my manuscripts, and then take a stroll about the big city."

CHAPTER XXXI

p. 281

The Walk—London's Cheape—Street of the Lombards—Strange Bridge—Main Arch—The Roaring Gulf—The Boat—Clyfaking—A Comfort—The Book—The Blessed Woman—No Trap.

So I set out on my walk to see the wonders of the big city, and, as chance would have it, I directed my course to the east. The day, as I have already said, had become very fine, so that I saw the great city to advantage, and the wonders thereof: and much I admired all I saw; and, amongst other things, the huge cathedral, standing so proudly on the most commanding ground in the big city; and I looked up to the mighty dome, surmounted by a golden cross, and I said within myself, "That dome must needs be the finest in the world;" and I gazed upon it till my eyes reeled, and my brain became dizzy, and I thought that the dome would fall and crush me; and I shrank within myself, and struck yet deeper into the heart of the big city.

"O Cheapside! Cheapside!" said I, as I advanced up that mighty thoroughfare, "truly thou art a wonderful place for hurry, noise, and riches! Men talk of the bazaars of the East—I have never seen them—but I dare say that, compared with thee, they are poor places, silent places, p. 282
abounding with empty boxes, O thou pride of London's east!—mighty mart of old renown!—for thou art not a place of yesterday:—long before the Roses red and white battled in fair England, thou didst exist—a place of throng and bustle—a place of gold and silver, perfumes and fine linen. Centuries ago thou couldst extort the praises even of the fiercest foes of England. Fierce bards of Wales, sworn foes of England, sang thy praises centuries ago; and even the fiercest of them all, Red Julius himself, wild Glendower's bard, had a word of praise for London's 'Cheape,' for so the bards of Wales styled thee in their flowing odes. Then, if those who were not English, and hated England, and all connected therewith, had yet much to say in thy praise, when thou wast far inferior to what thou art now, why should true-born Englishmen, or those who call themselves so, turn up their noses at thee, and scoff thee at the present day, as I believe they do? But, let others do as they will, I, at least, who am not only an Englishman, but an East Englishman, will not turn up my nose at thee, but will praise and extol thee, calling thee mart of the world—a place of wonder and astonishment!—and, were it right and fitting to wish that

anything should endure for ever, I would say prosperity to Cheapside, throughout all ages—may it be the world's resort for merchandise, world without end."

And when I had passed through the Cheape I entered another street, which led up a kind of ascent, and which proved to be the street of the Lombards, called so from the name of its first founders; and I walked rapidly up the street of the Lombards, neither looking to the right nor left, p. 283
for it had no interest for me, though I had a kind of consciousness that mighty things were being transacted behind its walls; but it wanted the throng, bustle, and outward magnificence of the Cheape, and it had never been spoken of by "ruddy bards"! And, when I had got to the end of the street of the Lombards, I stood still for some time, deliberating within myself whether I should turn to the right or the left, or go straight forward, and at last I turned to the right, down a street of rapid descent, and presently found myself upon a bridge which traversed the river which runs by the big city.

A strange kind of bridge it was; huge and massive, and seemingly of great antiquity. It had an arched back, like that of a hog, a high balustrade, and at either side, at intervals, were stone bowers bulking over the river, but open on the other side, and furnished with a semicircular bench. Though the bridge was wide—very wide—it was all too narrow for the concourse upon it. Thousands of human beings were pouring over the bridge. But what chiefly struck my attention was a double row of carts and wagons, the generality drawn by horses as large as elephants, each row striving hard in a different direction, and not unfrequently brought to a standstill. Oh the cracking of whips, the shouts and oaths of the carters, and the grating of wheels upon the enormous stones that formed the pavement! In fact, there was a wild hurly-burly upon the bridge, which nearly deafened me. But, if upon the bridge there was a confusion, below it there was a confusion ten times confounded. The tide, which was fast ebbing, obstructed by the p. 284
immense piers of the old bridge, poured beneath the arches with a fall of several feet, forming in the river below as many whirlpools as there were arches. Truly tremendous was the roar of the descending waters, and the bellow of the tremendous gulfs, which swallowed them for a time, and then cast them forth, foaming and frothing from their horrid wombs. Slowly advancing along the bridge, I came to the highest point, and there I stood still, close beside one of the stone bowers, in which, beside a fruit-stall, sat an old woman, with a pan of charcoal at her feet, and a book in her hand, in which she appeared to be reading intently. There I stood, just above the principal arch, looking through the balustrade at the scene that presented itself—and such a scene! Towards the left bank of the river, a forest of masts, thick and close, as far as the eye could reach; spacious wharfs, surmounted with gigantic edifices; and, far away, Cæsar's Castle, with its White Tower. To the right, another forest of masts, and a maze of buildings, from which, here and there, shot up to the sky chimneys taller than Cleopatra's Needle, vomiting forth huge wreaths of that black smoke which forms the canopy—occasionally a gorgeous one—of the more than Babel city. Stretching before me, the troubled breast of the mighty river, and, immediately below, the main whirlpool of the Thames—the Maëlstrom of the bulwarks of the middle arch—a grisly pool, which, with its superabundance of horror, fascinated me. Who knows but I should have leapt into its depths?—I have heard of such things—but for a rather startling occurrence
which broke the spell. As I stood upon the bridge, gazing into the jaws of the pool, a small boat p. 285
shot suddenly through the arch beneath my feet. There were three persons in it; an oarsman in the middle, whilst a man and woman sat at the stern. I shall never forget the thrill of horror which went through me at this sudden apparition. What!—a boat—a small boat—passing beneath that arch into yonder roaring gulf! Yes, yes, down through that awful water-way, with more than the swiftness of an arrow, shot the boat, or skiff, right into the jaws of the pool. A monstrous breaker curls over the prow—there is no hope; the boat is swamped, and all drowned in that strangling vortex! No! the boat, which appeared to have the buoyancy of a feather, skipped over the threatening horror, and, the next moment, was out of danger, the boatman—a true boatman of Cockaigne that—elevating one of his sculls in sign of triumph, the man hallooing, and the woman, a true Englishwoman that—of a certain class—waving her shawl. Whether any one observed them save myself, or whether the feat was a common one, I know not; but nobody appeared to take any notice of them. As for myself, I was so excited, that I strove to clamber up the balustrade of the bridge, in order to obtain a better view of the daring adventurers. Before I could accomplish my design, however, I felt myself seized by the body, and, turning my head, perceived the old fruit-woman, who was clinging to me.

"Nay, dear! don't—don't!" said she. "Don't fling yourself over—perhaps you may have better luck next time!"

"I was not going to fling myself over," said I, dropping from the balustrade; "how came you to think of such a thing?"

"Why, seeing you clamber up so fiercely, I thought you might have had ill luck, and that you p. 286
wished to make away with yourself."

"Ill luck," said I, going into the stone bower, and sitting down. "What do you mean? ill luck in what?"

"Why, no great harm, dear! clyfaking perhaps."

"Are you coming over me with dialects," said I, "speaking unto me in fashions I wot nothing of?"

"Nay, dear! don't look so strange with those eyes of your'n, nor talk so strangely; I don't understand you."

“Nor I you; what do you mean by clyfaking?”

“Lor, dear! no harm; only taking a handkerchief now and then.”

“Do you take me for a thief?”

“Nay, dear! don’t make use of bad language; we never calls them thieves here, but prigs and fakers: to tell you the truth, dear, seeing you spring at that railing put me in mind of my own dear son, who is now at Bot’ny: when he had bad luck, he always used to talk of flinging himself over the bridge; and, sure enough, when the traps were after him, he did fling himself into the river, but that was off the bank; nevertheless, the traps pulled him out, and he is now suffering his sentence; so you see you may speak out, if you have done anything in the harmless line, for I am my son’s own mother, I assure you.”

“So you think there’s no harm in stealing?”

“No harm in the world, dear! Do you think my own child would have been transported for it, if there had been any harm in it? and, what’s more, would the blessed woman in the book here have written her life as she has done, and given it to the world, if there had been any harm in faking? She, too, was what they call a thief and a cut-purse; ay, and was transported for it, like my dear son; and do you think she would have told the world so, if there had been any harm in the thing? Oh, it is a comfort to me that the blessed woman was transported, and came back—for come back she did, and rich too—for it is an assurance to me that my dear son, who was transported too, will come back like her.” p. 287

“What was her name?”

“Her name, blessed Mary Flanders.”

“Will you let me look at the book?”

“Yes, dear, that I will, if you promise me not to run away with it.”

I took the book from her hand; a short thick volume, at least a century old, bound with greasy black leather. I turned the yellow and dog’s-eared pages, reading here and there a sentence. Yes, and no mistake! *His* pen, his style, his spirit might be observed in every line of the uncouth-looking old volume—the air, the style, the spirit of the writer of the book which first taught me to read. [287] I covered my face with my hand, and thought of my childhood . . .

“This is a singular book,” said I at last; “but it does not appear to have been written to prove that thieving is no harm, but rather to show the terrible consequences of crime: it contains a deep moral.”

“A deep what, dear?” p. 288

“A . . . but no matter; I will give you a crown for this volume.”

“No, dear, I will not sell the volume for a crown.”

“I am poor,” said I; “but I will give you two silver crowns for your volume.”

“No, dear, I will not sell my volume for two silver crowns; no, nor for the golden one in the king’s Tower down there; without my book I should mope and pine, and perhaps fling myself into the river; but I am glad you like it, which shows that I was right about you, after all; you are one of our party, and you have a flash about that eye of yours which puts me just in mind of my dear son. No, dear, I won’t sell you my book; but, if you like, you may have a peep into it whenever you come this way. I shall be glad to see you; you are one of the right sort, for, if you had been a common one, you would have run away with the thing; but you scorn such behaviour, and, as you are so flash of your money, though you say you are poor, you may give me a tanner to buy a little baccy with; I love baccy, dear, more by token that it comes from the plantations to which the blessed woman was sent.”

“What’s a tanner?” said I.

“Lor! don’t you know, dear? Why, a tanner is sixpence; and, as you were talking just now about crowns, it will be as well to tell you that those of our trade never calls them crowns, but bulls; but I am talking nonsense, just as if you did not know all that already, as well as myself; you are only shamming—I’m no trap, dear, nor more was the blessed woman in the book. Thank you, dear—thank you for the tanner; if I don’t spend it, I’ll keep it in remembrance of your sweet face. What, you are going?—well, first let me whisper a word to you. If you have any clies to sell at any time, I’ll buy them of you; all safe with me; I never ’peach, and scorns a trap; so now, dear, God bless you! and give you good luck. Thank you for your pleasant company, and thank you for the tanner.” p. 289

CHAPTER XXXII

p. 290

The Tanner—The Hotel—Drinking Claret—London Journal—New Field—Commonplaceness—The

"'Tanner!" said I, musingly, as I left the bridge; "Tanner! what can the man who cures raw skins by means of a preparation of oak bark and other materials have to do with the name which these fakers, as they call themselves, bestow on the smallest silver coin in these dominions? Tanner! I can't trace the connection between the man of bark and the silver coin, unless journeymen tanners are in the habit of working for sixpence a day. But I have it," I continued, flourishing my hat over my head, "tanner, in this instance, is not an English word." Is it not surprising that the language of Mr. Petulengro and of Tawno Chikno is continually coming to my assistance whenever I appear to be at a nonplus with respect to the derivation of crabbed words? I have made out crabbed words in Æschylus by means of the speech of Chikno and Petulengro, and even in my Biblical researches I have derived no slight assistance from it. It appears to be a kind of picklock, an open sesame, Tanner—Tawno! the one is but a modification of the other; they were p. 291
originally identical, and have still much the same signification. Tanner, in the language of the apple-woman, meaneth the smallest of English silver coins; and Tawno, in the language of the Petulengres, though bestowed upon the biggest of the Romans, according to strict interpretation, signifieth a little child.

So I left the bridge, retracing my steps for a considerable way, as I thought I had seen enough in the direction in which I had hitherto been wandering; I should say that I scarcely walked less than thirty miles about the big city on the day of my first arrival. Night came on, but still I was walking about, my eyes wide open, and admiring everything that presented itself to them. Everything was new to me, for everything is different in London from what it is elsewhere—the people, their language, the horses, the *tout ensemble*—even the stones of London are different from others—at least it appeared to me that I had never walked with the same ease and facility on the flagstones of a country town as on those of London; so I continued roving about till night came on, and then the splendour of some of the shops particularly struck me. "A regular Arabian Nights' entertainment!" said I, as I looked into one on Cornhill, gorgeous with precious merchandise, and lighted up with lustres, the rays of which were reflected from a hundred mirrors.

But, notwithstanding the excellence of the London pavement, I began about nine o'clock to feel myself thoroughly tired; painfully and slowly did I drag my feet along. I also felt very much in want of some refreshment, and I remembered that since breakfast I had taken nothing. I was p. 292
now in the Strand, and, glancing about, I perceived that I was close by an hotel, which bore over the door the somewhat remarkable name of Holy Lands. Without a moment's hesitation I entered a well-lighted passage, and, turning to the left, I found myself in a well-lighted coffee-room, with a well-dressed and frizzled waiter before me. "Bring me some claret," said I, for I was rather faint than hungry, and I felt ashamed to give a humbler order to so well-dressed an individual. The waiter looked at me for a moment; then, making a low bow, he bustled off, and I sat myself down in the box nearest to the window. Presently the waiter returned, bearing beneath his left arm a long bottle, and between the fingers of his right hand two large purple glasses; placing the latter on the table, he produced a cork-screw, drew the cork in a twinkling, set the bottle down before me with a bang, and then, standing still, appeared to watch my movements. You think I don't know how to drink a glass of claret, thought I to myself. I'll soon show you how we drink claret where I come from; and, filling one of the glasses to the brim, I flickered it for a moment between my eyes and the lustre, and then held it to my nose; having given that organ full time to test the bouquet of the wine, I applied the glass to my lips, taking a large mouthful of the wine, which I swallowed slowly and by degrees, that the palate might likewise have an opportunity of performing its functions. A second mouthful I disposed of more summarily; then, placing the empty glass upon the table, I fixed my eyes upon the bottle, and said—nothing; whereupon the waiter, who had been observing the whole process with considerable attention, made me a bow p. 293
yet more low than before, and, turning on his heel, retired with a smart chuck of his head, as much as to say, It is all right; the young man is used to claret.

And when the waiter had retired I took a second glass of the wine, which I found excellent; and, observing a newspaper lying near me, I took it up and began perusing it. It has been observed somewhere that people who are in the habit of reading newspapers every day are not unfrequently struck with the excellence of style and general talent which they display. Now, if that be the case, how must I have been surprised, who was reading a newspaper for the first time, and that one of the best of the London journals! Yes, strange as it may seem, it was nevertheless true that, up to the moment of which I am speaking, I had never read a newspaper of any description. [293] I of course had frequently seen journals, and even handled them; but, as for reading them, what were they to me?—I cared not for news. But here I was now with my claret before me, perusing, perhaps, the best of all the London journals—it was not the ----and I was astonished: an entirely new field of literature appeared to be opened to my view. It was a discovery, but I confess rather an unpleasant one; for I said to myself, if literary talent is so very common in London, that the journals, things which, as their very name denotes, are ephemeral, are written in a style like the article I have been perusing, how can I hope to distinguish myself in this big town, when, for the life of me, I don't think I could write anything half so clever as what I p. 294
have been reading. And then I laid down the paper, and fell into deep musing; rousing myself from which, I took a glass of wine, and, pouring out another, began musing again. What I have been reading, thought I, is certainly very clever and very talented; but talent and cleverness I think I have heard some one say are very commonplace things, only fitted for everyday occasions. I question whether the man who wrote the book I saw this day on the bridge was a clever man; but, after all, was he not something much better? I don't think he could have written

this article, but then he wrote the book which I saw on the bridge. Then, if he could not have written the article on which I now hold my forefinger—and I do not believe he could—why should I feel discouraged at the consciousness that I, too, could not write it? I certainly could no more have written the article than he could; but then, like him, though I would not compare myself to the man who wrote the book I saw upon the bridge, I think I could—and here I emptied the glass of claret—write something better.

Thereupon I resumed the newspaper; and, as I was before struck with the fluency of style and the general talent which it displayed, I was now equally so with its commonplaceness and want of originality on every subject; and it was evident to me that, whatever advantage these newspaper-writers might have over me in some points, they had never studied the Welsh bards, translated Kœmpe Viser, or been under the pupilage of Mr. Petulengro and Tawno Chikno.

And as I sat conning the newspaper three individuals entered the room, and seated themselves in p. 295
the box at the farther end of which I was. They were all three very well dressed; two of them elderly gentlemen, the third a young man about my own age, or perhaps a year or two older: they called for coffee; and, after two or three observations, the two eldest commenced a conversation in French, which, however, though they spoke it fluently enough, I perceived at once was not their native language; the young man, however, took no part in their conversation, and when they addressed a portion to him, which indeed was but rarely, merely replied by a monosyllable. I have never been a listener, and I paid but little heed to their discourse, nor indeed to themselves; as I occasionally looked up, however, I could perceive that the features of the young man, who chanced to be seated exactly opposite to me, wore an air of constraint and vexation. This circumstance caused me to observe him more particularly than I otherwise should have done: his features were handsome and prepossessing; he had dark brown hair and a high-arched forehead. After the lapse of half an hour, the two elder individuals, having finished their coffee, called for the waiter, and then rose as if to depart, the young man, however, still remaining seated in the box. The others, having reached the door, turned round, and, finding that the youth did not follow them, one of them called to him with a tone of some authority; whereupon the young man rose, and, pronouncing half audibly the word “botheration,” rose and followed them. I now observed that he was remarkably tall. All three left the house. In about ten minutes, finding nothing more worth reading in the newspaper, I laid it down, and though the claret was not yet exhausted, I was thinking of betaking myself to my lodgings, and was about to call the waiter, p. 296
when I heard a step in the passage, and in another moment the tall young man entered the room, advanced to the same box, and, sitting down nearly opposite to me, again pronounced to himself, but more audibly than before, the same word.

“A troublesome world this, sir,” said I, looking at him.

“Yes,” said the young man, looking fixedly at me; “but I am afraid we bring most of our troubles on our own heads—at least I can say so of myself,” he added, laughing. Then, after a pause, “I beg pardon,” he said, “but am I not addressing one of my own country?”

“Of what country are you?” said I.

“Ireland.”

“I am not of your country, sir; but I have an infinite veneration for your country, as Strap said to the French soldier. Will you take a glass of wine?”

“Ah, *de tout mon cœur*, as the parasite said to Gil Blas,” cried the young man, laughing. “Here’s to our better acquaintance!”

And better acquainted we soon became; and I found that, in making the acquaintance of the young man, I had, indeed, made a valuable acquisition; he was accomplished, highly connected, and bore the name of Francis Ardry. Frank and ardent he was, and in a very little time had told me much that related to himself, and in return I communicated a general outline of my own history; he listened with profound attention, but laughed heartily when I told him some particulars of my visit in the morning to the publisher, whom he had frequently heard of. p. 297

We left the house together.

“We shall soon see each other again,” said he, as we separated at the door of my lodging.

CHAPTER XXXIII p. 298

Dine with the Publisher—Religions—No Animal Food—Unprofitable Discussions—Principles of Criticism—The Book Market—Newgate Lives—Goethe a Drug—German Acquirements—Moral Dignity.

On the Sunday I was punctual to my appointment to dine with the publisher. As I hurried along the square in which his house stood, my thoughts were fixed so intently on the great man, that I passed by him without seeing him. He had observed me, however, and joined me just as I was about to knock at the door. “Let us take a turn in the square,” said he; “we shall not dine for half an hour.”

“Well,” said he, as we were walking in the square, “what have you been doing since I last saw you?”

“I have been looking about London,” said I, “and I have bought the ‘Dairyman’s Daughter’; here it is.”

“Pray put it up,” said the publisher; “I don’t want to look at such trash. Well, do you think you could write anything like it?”

“I do not,” said I.

“How is that?” said the publisher, looking at me.

“Because,” said I, “the man who wrote it seems to be perfectly well acquainted with his subject; and, moreover, to write from the heart.” p. 299

“By the subject you mean—”

“Religion.”

“And a’n’t you acquainted with religion?”

“Very little.”

“I am sorry for that,” said the publisher, seriously, “for he who sets up for an author ought to be acquainted not only with religion, but religions, and indeed with all subjects, like my good friend in the country. It is well that I have changed my mind about the ‘Dairyman’s Daughter,’ or I really don’t know whom I could apply to on the subject at the present moment, unless to himself; and after all I question whether his style is exactly suited for an evangelical novel.”

“Then you do not wish for an imitation of the ‘Dairyman’s Daughter’?”

“I do not, sir; I have changed my mind, as I told you before; I wish to employ you in another line, but will communicate to you my intentions after dinner.”

At dinner, beside the publisher and myself, were present his wife and son, with his newly married bride; the wife appeared a quiet respectable woman, and the young people looked very happy and good-natured; not so the publisher, who occasionally eyed both with contempt and dislike. Connected with this dinner there was one thing remarkable; the publisher took no animal food, but contented himself with feeding voraciously on rice and vegetables prepared in various ways.

“You eat no animal food, sir?” said I.

“I do not, sir,” said he; “I have forsworn it upwards of twenty years. In one respect, sir, I am a Brahmin. I abhor taking away life—the brutes have as much right to live as ourselves.” p. 300

“But,” said I, “if the brutes were not killed, there would be such a superabundance of them, that the land would be overrun with them.”

“I do not think so, sir; few are killed in India, and yet there is plenty of room.”

“But,” said I, “nature intended that they should be destroyed, and the brutes themselves prey upon one another, and it is well for themselves and the world that they do so. What would be the state of things if every insect, bird, and worm were left to perish of old age?”

“We will change the subject,” said the publisher; “I have never been a friend of unprofitable discussions.”

I looked at the publisher with some surprise, I had not been accustomed to be spoken to so magisterially; his countenance was dressed in a portentous frown, and his eye looked more sinister than ever; at that moment he put me in mind of some of those despots of whom I had read in the history of Morocco, whose word was law. He merely wants power, thought I to myself, to be a regular Muley Mehemet; and then I sighed, for I remembered how very much I was in the power of that man.

The dinner over, the publisher nodded to his wife, who departed, followed by her daughter-in-law. The son looked as if he would willingly have attended them; he, however, remained seated; and, a small decanter of wine being placed on the table, the publisher filled two glasses, one of which he handed to myself, and the other to his son; saying, “Suppose you two drink to the success of the Review. I would join you,” said he, addressing himself to me, “but I drink no wine; if I am a Brahmin with respect to meat, I am a Mahometan with respect to wine.” p. 301

So the son and I drank success to the Review, and then the young man asked me various questions; for example—How I liked London?—Whether I did not think it a very fine place?—Whether I was at the play the night before?—and Whether I was in the park that afternoon? He seemed preparing to ask me some more questions; but, receiving a furious look from his father, he became silent, filled himself a glass of wine, drank it off, looked at the table for about a minute, then got up, pushed back his chair, made me a bow, and left the room.

“Is that young gentleman, sir,” said I, “well versed in the principles of criticism?”

“He is not, sir,” said the publisher; “and, if I place him at the head of the Review ostensibly, I do it merely in the hope of procuring him a maintenance; of the principle of a thing he knows

nothing, except that the principle of bread is wheat, and that the principle of that wine is grape. Will you take another glass?”

I looked at the decanter; but, not feeling altogether so sure as the publisher’s son with respect to the principle of what it contained, I declined taking any more.

“No, sir,” said the publisher, adjusting himself in his chair, “he knows nothing about criticism, and will have nothing more to do with the reviewals than carrying about the books to those who have to review them; the real conductor of the Review will be a widely different person, to whom p. 302
I will, when convenient, introduce you. And now we will talk of the matter which we touched upon before dinner: I told you then that I had changed my mind with respect to you; I have been considering the state of the market, sir, the book market, and I have come to the conclusion that, though you might be profitably employed upon evangelical novels, you could earn more money for me, sir, and consequently for yourself, by a compilation of Newgate lives and trials.”

“Newgate lives and trials!”

“Yes, sir,” said the publisher, “Newgate lives and trials; and now, sir, I will briefly state to you the services which I expect you to perform, and the terms which I am willing to grant. I expect you, sir, to compile six volumes of Newgate lives and trials, each volume to contain by no manner of means less than one thousand pages; the remuneration which you will receive when the work is completed will be fifty pounds, which is likewise intended to cover any expenses you may incur in procuring books, papers, and manuscripts necessary for the compilation. Such will be one of your employments, sir,—such the terms. In the second place, you will be expected to make yourself useful in the Review—generally useful, sir—doing whatever is required of you; for it is not customary, at least with me, to permit writers, especially young writers, to choose their subjects. In these two departments, sir, namely, compilation and reviewing, I had yesterday, after due consideration, determined upon employing you. I had intended to employ you no farther, sir—at least for the present; but, sir, this morning I received a letter from my valued p. 303
friend in the country, in which he speaks in terms of strong admiration (I don’t overstate) of your German acquirements. Sir, he says that it would be a thousand pities if your knowledge of the German language should be lost to the world, or even permitted to sleep, and he entreats me to think of some plan by which it may be turned to account. Sir, I am at all times willing, if possible, to oblige my worthy friend, and likewise to encourage merit and talent; I have, therefore, determined to employ you in German.”

“Sir,” said I, rubbing my hands, “you are very kind, and so is our mutual friend; I shall be happy to make myself useful in German; and if you think a good translation from Goethe—his ‘Sorrows’ for example, or more particularly his ‘Faust’—”

“Sir,” said the publisher, “Goethe is a drug; his ‘Sorrows’ are a drug, so is his ‘Faustus,’ more especially the last, since that fool --- rendered him into English. No, sir, I do not want you to translate Goethe or anything belonging to him; nor do I want you to translate anything from the German; what I want you to do, is to translate into German. I am willing to encourage merit, sir; and, as my good friend in his last letter has spoken very highly of your German acquirements, I have determined that you shall translate my book of philosophy into German.”

“Your book of philosophy into German, sir?”

“Yes, sir; my book of philosophy into German. I am not a drug, sir, in Germany as Goethe is here, no more is my book. I intend to print the translation at Leipzig, sir; and if it turns out a profitable speculation, as I make no doubt it will, provided the translation be well executed, I will make you p. 304
some remuneration. Sir, your remuneration will be determined by the success of your translation.”

“But, sir—”

“Sir,” said the publisher, interrupting me, “you have heard my intentions; I consider that you ought to feel yourself highly gratified by my intentions towards you; it is not frequently that I deal with a writer, especially a young writer, as I have done with you. And now, sir, permit me to inform you that I wish to be alone. This is Sunday afternoon, sir; I never go to church, but I am in the habit of spending part of every Sunday afternoon alone—profitably I hope, sir—in musing on the magnificence of nature and the moral dignity of man.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

p. 305

The Two Volumes—A Young Author—Intended Editor—Quintilian—Loose Money.

“What can’t be cured must be endured,” and “it is hard to kick against the pricks.”

At the period to which I have brought my history, I bethought me of the proverbs with which I have headed this chapter, and determined to act up to their spirit. I determined not to fly in the face of the publisher, and to bear—what I could not cure—his arrogance and vanity. At present, at the conclusion of nearly a quarter of a century, I am glad that I came to that determination, which I did my best to carry into effect.

Two or three days after our last interview, the publisher made his appearance in my apartment; he bore two tattered volumes under his arm, which he placed on the table. “I have brought you two volumes of lives, sir,” said he, “which I yesterday found in my garret; you will find them of service for your compilation. As I always wish to behave liberally and encourage talent, especially youthful talent, I shall make no charge for them, though I should be justified in so doing, as you are aware that, by our agreement, you are to provide any books and materials which may be necessary. Have you been in quest of any?” p. 306

“No,” said I, “not yet.”

“Then, sir, I would advise you to lose no time in doing so; you must visit all the bookstalls, sir, especially those in the by-streets and blind alleys. It is in such places that you will find the description of literature you are in want of. You must be up and doing, sir; it will not do for an author, especially a young author, to be idle in this town. To-night you will receive my book of philosophy, and likewise books for the Review. And, by the bye, sir, it will be as well for you to review my book of philosophy for the Review; the other reviews not having noticed it. Sir, before translating it, I wish you to review my book of philosophy for the Review.”

“I shall be happy to do my best, sir.”

“Very good, sir; I should be unreasonable to expect anything beyond a person’s best. And now, sir, if you please, I will conduct you to the future editor of the Review. [306] As you are to co-operate, sir, I deem it right to make you acquainted.”

The intended editor was a little old man, who sat in a kind of wooden pavilion in a small garden behind a house in one of the purlieus of the city, composing tunes upon a piano. The walls of the pavilion were covered with fiddles of various sizes and appearances, and a considerable portion of the floor occupied by a pile of books all of one size. The publisher introduced him to me as a gentleman scarcely less eminent in literature than in music, and me to him as an aspirant critic—a young gentleman scarcely less eminent in philosophy than in philology. The conversation consisted entirely of compliments till just before we separated, when the future editor inquired of me whether I had ever read Quintilian; and, on my replying in the negative, expressed his surprise that any gentleman should aspire to become a critic who had never read Quintilian, with the comfortable information, however, that he could supply me with a Quintilian at half-price, that is, a translation made by himself some years previously, of which he had, pointing to the heap on the floor, still a few copies remaining unsold. For some reason or other, perhaps a poor one, I did not purchase the editor’s translation of Quintilian. p. 307

“Sir,” said the publisher, as we were returning from our visit to the editor, “you did right in not purchasing a drug. I am not prepared, sir, to say that Quintilian is a drug, never having seen him; but I am prepared to say that man’s translation is a drug, judging from the heap of rubbish on the floor; besides, sir, you will want any loose money you may have to purchase the description of literature which is required for your compilation.”

The publisher presently paused before the entrance of a very forlorn-looking street. “Sir,” said he, after looking down it with attention, “I should not wonder if in that street you find works connected with the description of literature which is required for your compilation. It is in streets of this description, sir, and blind alleys, where such works are to be found. You had better search that street, sir, whilst I continue my way.” p. 308

I searched the street to which the publisher had pointed, and, in the course of the three succeeding days, many others of a similar kind. I did not find the description of literature alluded to by the publisher to be a drug, but, on the contrary, both scarce and dear. I had expended much more than my loose money long before I could procure materials even for the first volume of my compilation.

CHAPTER XXXV p. 309

Francis Ardry—Certain Sharpers—Brave and Eloquent—Opposites—Flinging the Bones—Strange Places—Dog-Fighting—Learning and Letters—Batch of Dogs—Redoubled Application.

One evening I was visited by the tall young gentleman, Francis Ardry, whose acquaintance I had formed at the coffee-house. As it is necessary that the reader should know something more about this young man, who will frequently appear in the course of these pages, I will state in a few words who and what he was. He was born of an ancient Roman Catholic family in Ireland; his parents, whose only child he was, had long been dead. His father, who had survived his mother several years, had been a spendthrift, and at his death had left the family property considerably embarrassed. Happily, however, the son and the estate fell into the hands of careful guardians, near relations of the family, by whom the property was managed to the best advantage, and every means taken to educate the young man in a manner suitable to his expectations. At the age of sixteen he was taken from a celebrated school in England at which he had been placed, and sent to a small French university, in order that he might form an intimate and accurate acquaintance with the grand language of the Continent. There he continued three years, at the end of which he went under the care of a French abbé to Germany and Italy. It was in this latter country that p. 310

he first began to cause his guardians serious uneasiness. He was in the hey-day of youth when he visited Italy, and he entered wildly into the various delights of that fascinating region, and, what was worse, falling into the hands of certain sharpers, not Italian, but English, he was fleeced of considerable sums of money. The abbé, who, it seems, was an excellent individual of the old French school, remonstrated with his pupil on his dissipation and extravagance; but, finding his remonstrances vain, very properly informed the guardians of the manner of life of his charge. They were not slow in commanding Francis Ardry home; and, as he was entirely in their power, he was forced to comply. He had been about three months in London when I met him in the coffee-room, and the two elderly gentlemen in his company were his guardians. At this time they were very solicitous that he should choose for himself a profession, offering to his choice either the army or law—he was calculated to shine in either of these professions—for, like many others of his countrymen, he was brave and eloquent; but he did not wish to shackle himself with a profession. As, however, his minority did not terminate till he was three-and-twenty, of which age he wanted nearly two years, during which he would be entirely dependent on his guardians, he deemed it expedient to conceal, to a certain degree, his sentiments, temporising with the old gentlemen, with whom, notwithstanding his many irregularities, he was a great favourite, and at whose death he expected to come into a yet greater property than that which he inherited from his parents. p. 311

Such is a brief account of Francis Ardry—of my friend Francis Ardry; for the acquaintance, commenced in the singular manner with which the reader is acquainted, speedily ripened into a friendship which endured through many long years of separation, and which still endures certainly on my part, and on his—if he lives; but it is many years since I have heard from Francis Ardry.

And yet many people would have thought it impossible for our friendship to have lasted a week—for in many respects no two people could be more dissimilar. He was an Irishman—I, an Englishman;—he, fiery, enthusiastic, and open-hearted;—I, neither fiery, enthusiastic, nor open-hearted;—he, fond of pleasure and dissipation;—I, of study and reflection. Yet it is of such dissimilar elements that the most lasting friendships are formed: we do not like counterparts of ourselves. “Two great talkers will not travel far together,” is a Spanish saying; I will add, “Nor two silent people;” we naturally love our opposites.

So Francis Ardry came to see me, and right glad I was to see him, for I had just flung my books and papers aside, and was wishing for a little social converse; and when we had conversed for some little time together, Francis Ardry proposed that we should go to the play to see Kean; so we went to the play, and saw—not Kean, who at that time was ashamed to show himself, but—a man who was not ashamed to show himself, and who people said was a much better man than Kean—as I have no doubt he was—though whether he was a better actor I cannot say, for I never saw Kean. p. 312

Two or three evenings after Francis Ardry came to see me again, and again we went out together, and Francis Ardry took me to—shall I say?—why not?—a gaming house, where I saw people playing, and where I saw Francis Ardry play and lose five guineas, and where I lost nothing, because I did not play, though I felt somewhat inclined; for a man with a white hat and a sparkling eye held up a box which contained something which rattled, and asked me to fling the bones. “There is nothing like flinging the bones!” said he, and then I thought I should like to know what kind of thing flinging the bones was; I, however, restrained myself. “There is nothing like flinging the bones!” shouted the man, as my friend and myself left the room.

Long life and prosperity to Francis Ardry! but for him I should not have obtained knowledge which I did of the strange and eccentric places of London. Some of the places to which he took me were very strange places indeed; but, however strange the places were, I observed that the inhabitants thought there were no places like their several places, and no occupations like their several occupations; and among other strange places to which Francis Ardry conducted me, was a place not far from the abbey church of Westminster.

Before we entered this place our ears were greeted by a confused hubbub of human voices, squealing of rats, barking of dogs, and the cries of various other animals. Here we beheld a kind of cock-pit, around which a great many people, seeming of all ranks, but chiefly of the lower, were gathered, and in it we saw a dog destroy a great many rats in a very small period; and when the dog had destroyed the rats, we saw a fight between a dog and a bear, then a fight between two dogs, then . . . p. 313

After the diversions of the day were over, my friend introduced me to the genius of the place, a small man of about five feet high, with a very sharp countenance, and dressed in a brown jockey coat, and top-boots. “Joey,” said he, “this is a friend of mine.” Joey nodded to me with a patronising air. “Glad to see you, sir!—want a dog?”

“No,” said I.

“You have got one, then—want to match him?”

“We have a dog at home,” said I, “in the country; but I can’t say I should like to match him. Indeed, I do not like dog-fighting.”

“Not like dog-fighting!” said the man, staring.

“The truth is, Joe, that he is just come to town.”

“So I should think; he looks rather green—not like dog-fighting!”

“Nothing like it, is there, Joey?”

“I should think not; what is like it? A time will come, and that speedily, when folks will give up everything else, and follow dog-fighting.”

“Do you think so?” said I.

“Think so? Let me ask what there is that a man wouldn’t give up for it?”

“Why,” said I, modestly, “there’s religion.”

“Religion! How you talk! Why, there’s myself, bred and born an Independent, and intended to be a preacher, didn’t I give up religion for dog-fighting? Religion, indeed! If it were not for the rascally law, my pit would fill better on Sundays than any other time. Who would go to church when they could come to my pit? Religion! why, the parsons themselves come to my pit; and I have now a letter in my pocket from one of them, asking me to send him a dog.” p. 314

“Well, then, politics,” said I.

“Politics! Why the gemmen in the House would leave Pitt himself, if he were alive, to come to my pit. There were three of the best of them here to-night, all great horators.—Get on with you! what comes next?”

“Why, there’s learning and letters.”

“Pretty things, truly, to keep people from dog-fighting. Why, there’s the young gentlemen from the Abbey School comes here in shoals, leaving books, and letters, and masters too. To tell you the truth, I rather wish they would mind their letters, for a more precious set of young blackguards I never see’d. It was only the other day I was thinking of calling in a constable for my own protection, for I thought my pit would have been torn down by them.”

Scarcely knowing what to say, I made an observation at random. “You show, by your own conduct,” said I, “that there are other things worth following besides dog-fighting. You practise rat-catching and badger-baiting as well.”

The dog-fancier eyed me with supreme contempt.

“Your friend here,” said he, “might well call you a new one. When I talks of dog-fighting, I of course means rat-catching, and badger-baiting, ay, and bull-baiting too, just as when I speaks religiously, when I says one I means not one but three. And talking of religion puts me in mind that I have something else to do besides chaffing here, having a batch of dogs to send off by this night’s packet to the Pope of Rome.” p. 315

But at last I had seen enough of what London had to show, whether strange or commonplace, so at least I thought, and I ceased to accompany my friend in his rambles about town, and to partake of his adventures. Our friendship, however, still continued unabated, though I saw, in consequence, less of him. I reflected that time was passing on—that the little money I had brought to town was fast consuming, and that I had nothing to depend upon but my own exertions for a fresh supply; and I returned with redoubled application to my pursuits.

CHAPTER XXXVI

p. 316

Occupations—Traduttore Traditore—Ode to the Mist—Apple and Pear—Reviewing—Current Literature—Oxford-like Manner—A Plain Story—Ill-regulated Mind—Unsnuffed Candle—Strange Dreams.

I compiled the Chronicles of Newgate; [316a] I reviewed books for the Review [316b] established on an entirely new principle; and I occasionally tried my best to translate into German portions of the publisher’s philosophy. In this last task I experienced more than one difficulty. I was a tolerable German scholar, it is true, and I had long been able to translate from German into English with considerable facility; but to translate from a foreign language into your own, is a widely different thing from translating from your own into a foreign language; and, in my first attempt to render the publisher into German, I was conscious of making miserable failures, from pure ignorance of German grammar; however, by the assistance of grammars and dictionaries, and by extreme perseverance, I at length overcame all the difficulties connected with the German language. But, alas! another difficulty remained, far greater than any connected with German—a difficulty connected with the language of the publisher—the language which the great man employed in his writings was very hard to understand; I say in his writings—for his colloquial English was plain enough. Though not professing to be a scholar, he was much addicted, when writing, to the use of Greek and Latin terms, not as other people used them, but in a manner of his own, which set the authority of dictionaries at defiance; the consequence was, that I was sometimes utterly at a loss to understand the meaning of the publisher. Many a quarter of an hour did I pass at this period, staring at periods of the publisher, and wondering what he could mean, but in vain, till at last, with a shake of the head, I would snatch up the pen, and render the p. 317

publisher literally into German. Sometimes I was almost tempted to substitute something of my own for what the publisher had written, but my conscience interposed; the awful words, Traduttore traditore, commenced ringing in my ears, and I asked myself whether I should be acting honourably towards the publisher, who had committed to me the delicate task of translating him into German; should I be acting honourably towards him, in making him speak in German in a manner different from that in which he expressed himself in English? No, I could not reconcile such conduct with any principle of honour; by substituting something of my own in lieu of these mysterious passages of the publisher, I might be giving a fatal blow to his whole system of philosophy. Besides, when translating into English, had I treated foreign authors in this manner? Had I treated the minstrels of the Kœmpe Viser in this manner?—No. Had I p. 318
treated Ab Gwilym in this manner? Even when translating his Ode to the Mist, in which he is misty enough, had I attempted to make Ab Gwilym less misty? No; on referring to my translation, I found that Ab Gwilym in my hands was quite as misty as in his own. Then, seeing that I had not ventured to take liberties with people who had never put themselves into my hands for the purpose of being rendered, how could I venture to substitute my own thoughts and ideas for the publisher's, who had put himself into my hands for that purpose? Forbid it every proper feeling! —so I told the Germans in the publisher's own way, the publisher's tale of an apple and a pear.

I at first felt much inclined to be of the publisher's opinion with respect to the theory of the pear. After all, why should the earth be shaped like an apple, and not like a pear?—it would certainly gain in appearance by being shaped like a pear. A pear being a handsomer fruit than an apple, the publisher is probably right, thought I, and I will say that he is right on this point in the notice which I am about to write of his publication for the Review. And yet I don't know—said I, after a long fit of musing—I don't know but what there is more to be said for the Oxford theory. The world may be shaped like a pear, but I don't know that it is; but one thing I know, which is, that it does not taste like a pear; I have always liked pears, but I don't like the world. The world to me tastes much more like an apple, and I have never liked apples. I will uphold the Oxford theory—besides, I am writing in an "Oxford Review"—and am in duty bound to uphold the Oxford theory. So in my notice I asserted that the world was round; I quoted Scripture, and endeavoured to p. 319
prove that the world was typified by the apple in Scripture, both as to shape and properties. "An apple is round," said I, "and the world is round—the apple is a sour, disagreeable fruit; and who has tasted much of the world without having his teeth set on edge?" I, however, treated the publisher, upon the whole, in the most urbane and Oxford-like manner; complimenting him upon his style, acknowledging the general soundness of his views, and only differing with him in the affair of the apple and pear.

I did not like reviewing at all—it was not to my taste; it was not in my way; I liked it far less than translating the publisher's philosophy, for that was something in the line of one whom a competent judge had surnamed Lavengro. I never could understand why Reviews were instituted; works of merit do not require to be reviewed, they can speak for themselves, and require no praising; works of no merit at all will die of themselves, they require no killing. The Review to which I was attached was, as has been already intimated, established on an entirely new plan; it professed to review all new publications, which certainly no Review had ever professed to do before, other Reviews never pretending to review more than one-tenth of the current literature of the day. When I say it professed to review all new publications, I should add, which should be sent to it; for, of course, the Review would not acknowledge the existence of publications, the authors of which did not acknowledge the existence of the Review. I don't think, however, that the Review had much cause to complain of being neglected; I have reason to p. 320
believe that at least nine-tenths of the publications of the day were sent to the Review, and in due time reviewed. I had good opportunity of judging—I was connected with several departments of the Review, though more particularly with the poetical and philosophic ones. An English translation of Kant's philosophy made its appearance on my table the day before its publication. In my notice of this work, I said that the English shortly hoped to give the Germans a *quid pro quo*. I believe at that time authors were much in the habit of publishing at their own expense. All the poetry which I reviewed appeared to be published at the expense of the authors. If I am asked how I comported myself, under all circumstances, as a reviewer—I answer,—I did not forget that I was connected with a Review established on Oxford principles, the editor of which had translated Quintilian. All the publications which fell under my notice I treated in a gentlemanly and Oxford-like manner, no personalities—no vituperation—no shabby insinuations; decorum, decorum was the order of the day. Occasionally a word of admonition, but gently expressed, as an Oxford undergraduate might have expressed it, or master of arts. How the authors whose publications were consigned to my colleagues were treated by them I know not; I suppose they were treated in an urbane and Oxford-like manner, but I cannot say; I did not read the reviewals of my colleagues, I did not read my own after they were printed. I did not like reviewing.

Of all my occupations at this period I am free to confess I liked that of compiling the "Newgate Lives and Trials" the best; that is, after I had surmounted a kind of prejudice which I originally p. 321
entertained. The trials were entertaining enough; but the lives—how full were they of wild and racy adventures, and in what racy, genuine language were they told. What struck me most with respect to these lives was the art which the writers, whoever they were, possessed of telling a plain story. It is no easy thing to tell a story plainly and distinctly by mouth; but to tell one on paper is difficult indeed, so many snares lie in the way. People are afraid to put down what is common on paper; they seek to embellish their narratives, as they think, by philosophic speculations and reflections; they are anxious to shine, and people who are anxious to shine can never tell a plain story. "So I went with them to a music booth, where they made me almost

drunk with gin, and began to talk their flash language, which I did not understand," says, or is made to say, Henry Simms, executed at Tyburn some seventy years before the time of which I am speaking. I have always looked upon this sentence as a masterpiece of the narrative style, it is so concise and yet so very clear. As I gazed on passages like this, and there were many nearly as good in the Newgate Lives, I often sighed that it was not my fortune to have to render these lives into German rather than the publisher's philosophy—his tale of an apple and pear.

Mine was an ill-regulated mind at this period. As I read over the lives of these robbers and pickpockets, strange doubts began to arise in my mind about virtue and crime. Years before, when quite a boy, as in one of the early chapters I have hinted, I had been a necessitarian; I had even written an essay on crime (I have it now before me, penned in a round boyish hand), in p. 322
which I attempted to prove that there is no such thing as crime or virtue, all our actions being the result of circumstances or necessity. These doubts were now again reviving in my mind; I could not, for the life of me, imagine how, taking all circumstances into consideration, these highwaymen, these pickpockets, should have been anything else than highwaymen and pickpockets; any more than how, taking all circumstances into consideration, Bishop Latimer (the reader is aware that I had read "Fox's Book of Martyrs") should have been anything else than Bishop Latimer. I had a very ill-regulated mind at that period.

My own peculiar ideas with respect to everything being a lying dream began also to revive. Sometimes at midnight, after having toiled for hours at my occupations, I would fling myself back on my chair, look about the poor apartment, dimly lighted by an unsnuffed candle, or upon the heaps of books and papers before me, and exclaim,—"Do I exist? Do these things, which I think I see about me, exist, or do they not? Is not every thing a dream—a deceitful dream? Is not this apartment a dream—the furniture a dream? The publisher a dream—his philosophy a dream? Am I not myself a dream—dreaming about translating a dream? I can't see why all should not be a dream; what's the use of the reality?" And then I would pinch myself, and snuff the burdened smoky light. "I can't see, for the life of me, the use of all this; therefore why should I think that it exists? If there was a chance, a probability of all this tending to anything, I might believe; but . . . " and then I would stare and think, and after some time shake my head and return again to my p. 323
occupations for an hour or two; and then I would perhaps shake, and shiver, and yawn, and look wistfully in the direction of my sleeping apartment; and then, but not wistfully, at the papers and books before me; and sometimes I would return to my papers and books; but oftener I would arise, and, after another yawn and shiver, take my light, and proceed to my sleeping chamber.

They say that light fare begets light dreams; my fare at that time was light enough; but I had anything but light dreams, for at that period I had all kind of strange and extravagant dreams, and amongst other things I dreamt that the whole world had taken to dog-fighting; and that I, myself, had taken to dog-fighting, and that in a vast circus I backed an English bulldog against the bloodhound of the Pope of Rome.

CHAPTER XXXVII p. 324

My Brother—Fits of Crying—Mayor Elect—The Committee—The Norman Arch—A Word of Greek —Church and State—At My Own Expense—If You Please.

One morning [324] I arose somewhat later than usual, having been occupied during the greater part of the night with my literary toil. On descending from my chamber into the sitting-room I found a person seated by the fire, whose glance was directed sideways to the table, on which were the usual preparations for my morning's meal. Forthwith I gave a cry, and sprang forward to embrace the person; for the person by the fire, whose glance was directed to the table, was no one else than my brother.

"And how are things going on at home?" said I to my brother, after we had kissed and embraced. "How is my mother, and how is the dog?"

"My mother, thank God, is tolerably well," said my brother, "but very much given to fits of crying. As for the dog, he is not so well; but we will talk more of these matters anon," said my brother, again glancing at the breakfast things: "I am very hungry, as you may suppose, after p. 325
having travelled all night."

Thereupon I exerted myself to the best of my ability to perform the duties of hospitality, and I made my brother welcome—I may say more than welcome; and, when the rage of my brother's hunger was somewhat abated, we recommenced talking about the matters of our little family, and my brother told me much about my mother; he spoke of her fits of crying, but said that of late the said fits of crying had much diminished, and she appeared to be taking comfort; and, if I am not much mistaken, my brother told me that my mother had of late the Prayer-book frequently in her hand, and yet oftener the Bible.

We were silent for a time—at last I opened my mouth and mentioned the dog.

"The dog," said my brother, "is, I am afraid, in a very poor way; ever since the death he has done nothing but pine and take on. A few months ago, you remember, he was as plump and fine as any dog in the town; but at present he is little more than skin and bone. Once we lost him for two

days, and never expected to see him again, imagining that some mischance had befallen him; at length I found him—where do you think? Chancing to pass by the churchyard, I found him seated on the grave!"

"Very strange," said I; "but let us talk of something else. It was very kind of you to come and see me."

"Oh, as for that matter, I did not come up to see you, though of course I am very glad to see you, having been rather anxious about you, like my mother, who has received only one letter from you since your departure. No, I did not come up on purpose to see you; but on a quite different p. 326
account. You must know that the corporation of our town have lately elected a new mayor, a person of many qualifications—big and portly, with a voice like Boanerges; a religious man, the possessor of an immense pew; loyal, so much so that I once heard him say that he would at any time go three miles to hear any one sing 'God save the King'; moreover, a giver of excellent dinners. Such is our present mayor; [326] who, owing to his loyalty, his religion, and a little, perhaps, to his dinners, is a mighty favourite; so much so that the town is anxious to have his portrait painted in a superior style, so that remote posterity may know what kind of man he was, the colour of his hair, his air and gait. So a committee was formed some time ago, which is still sitting; that is, they dine with the mayor every day to talk over the subject. A few days since, to my great surprise, they made their appearance in my poor studio, and desired to be favoured with a sight of some of my paintings; well, I showed them some, and, after looking at them with great attention, they went aside and whispered. 'He'll do,' I heard one say; 'Yes, he'll do,' said another; and then they came to me, and one of them, a little man with a hump on his back, who is a watchmaker, assumed the office of spokesman, and made a long speech—(the old town has been always celebrated for orators)—in which he told me how much they had been pleased with my productions—(the old town has been always celebrated for its artistic taste)—and, what do you think? offered me the painting of the mayor's portrait, and a hundred pounds for my trouble. p. 327
Well, of course I was much surprised, and for a minute or two could scarcely speak; recovering myself, however, I made a speech, not so eloquent as that of the watchmaker of course, being not so accustomed to speaking; but not so bad either, taking everything into consideration, telling them how flattered I felt by the honour which they had conferred in proposing to me such an undertaking; expressing, however, my fears that I was not competent to the task, and concluding by saying what a pity it was that Crome was dead. 'Crome,' said the little man, 'Crome; yes, he was a clever man, a very clever man in his way; he was good at painting landscapes and farmhouses, but he would not do in the present instance were he alive. He had no conception of the heroic, sir. We want some person capable of representing our mayor striding under the Norman arch out of the cathedral.' At the mention of the heroic an idea came at once into my head. 'Oh,' said I, 'if you are in quest of the heroic, I am glad that you came to me; don't mistake me,' I continued, 'I do not mean to say that I could do justice to your subject, though I am fond of the heroic; but I can introduce you to a great master of the heroic, fully competent to do justice to your mayor. Not to me, therefore, be the painting of the picture given, but to a friend of mine, the great master of the heroic, to the best, the strongest, τω κρατιστω,' I added, for, being amongst orators, I thought a word of Greek would tell."

"Well," said I, "and what did the orators say?"

"They gazed dubiously at me and at one another," said my brother; "at last the watchmaker p. 328
asked me who this Mr. Christo was; adding, that he had never heard of such a person; that, from my recommendation of him, he had no doubt that he was a very clever man; but that they should like to know something more about him before giving the commission to him. That he had heard of Christie the great auctioneer, who was considered to be an excellent judge of pictures; but he supposed that I scarcely—Whereupon, interrupting the watchmaker, I told him that I alluded neither to Christo nor to Christie; but to the painter of Lazarus rising from the grave, a painter under whom I had myself studied during some months that I had spent in London, and to whom I was indebted for much connected with the heroic. [328]

"'I have heard of him,' said the watchmaker, 'and his paintings too; but I am afraid that he is not exactly the gentleman by whom our mayor would wish to be painted. I have heard say that he is not a very good friend to Church and State. Come, young man,' he added, 'it appears to me that you are too modest; I like your style of painting, so do we all, and—why should I mince the matter?—the money is to be collected in the town, why should it go into a stranger's pocket, and be spent in London?'

"Thereupon I made them a speech, in which I said that art had nothing to do with Church and State, at least with English Church and State, which had never encouraged it; and that, though Church and State were doubtless very fine things, a man might be a very good artist who cared p. 329
not a straw for either. I then made use of some more Greek words, and told them how painting was one of the Nine Muses, and one of the most independent creatures alive, inspiring whom she pleased, and asking leave of nobody; that I should be quite unworthy of the favours of the Muse if, on the present occasion, I did not recommend them a man whom I considered to be a much greater master of the heroic than myself; and that, with regard to the money being spent in the city, I had no doubt that they would not weigh for a moment such a consideration against the chance of getting a true heroic picture for the city. I never talked so well in my life, and said so many flattering things to the hunchback and his friends, that at last they said that I should have my own way; and that if I pleased to go up to London, and bring down the painter of Lazarus to paint the mayor, I might; so they then bade me farewell, and I have come up to London."

“To put a hundred pounds into the hands of—”

“A better man than myself,” said my brother, “of course.”

“And have you come up at your own expense?”

“Yes,” said my brother, “I have come up at my own expense.”

I made no answer, but looked in my brother’s face. We then returned to the former subjects of conversation, talking of the dead, my mother, and the dog.

After some time, my brother said, “I will now go to the painter, and communicate to him the business which has brought me to town; and, if you please, I will take you with me and introduce you to him.” Having expressed my willingness, we descended into the street. p. 330

CHAPTER XXXVIII p. 331

Painter of the Heroic—I’ll Go!—A Modest Peep—Who is This?—A Capital Pharaoh—Disproportionably Short—Imaginary Picture—English Figures.

The painter of the heroic resided a great way off, at the western end of the town. We had some difficulty in obtaining admission to him; a maid-servant, who opened the door, eyeing us somewhat suspiciously: it was not until my brother had said that he was a friend of the painter that we were permitted to pass the threshold. At length we were shown into the studio, where we found the painter, with an easel and brush, standing before a huge piece of canvas, on which he had lately commenced painting a heroic picture. The painter might be about thirty-five years old; he had a clever, intelligent countenance, with a sharp grey eye—his hair was dark brown, and cut à-la-Rafael, as I was subsequently told, that is, there was little before and much behind—he did not wear a neckcloth; but, in its stead, a black riband, so that his neck, which was rather fine, was somewhat exposed—he had a broad muscular breast, and I make no doubt that he would have been a very fine figure, but unfortunately his legs and thighs were somewhat short. He recognised my brother, and appeared glad to see him. p. 332

“What brings you to London?” said he.

Whereupon my brother gave him a brief account of his commission. At the mention of the hundred pounds, I observed the eyes of the painter glisten. “Really,” said he, when my brother had concluded, “it was very kind to think of me. I am not very fond of painting portraits; but a mayor is a mayor, and there is something grand in that idea of the Norman arch. I’ll go; moreover, I am just at this moment confoundedly in need of money, and when you knocked at the door, I don’t mind telling you, I thought it was some dun. I don’t know how it is, but in the capital they have no taste for the heroic, they will scarce look at a heroic picture; I am glad to hear that they have better taste in the provinces. I’ll go; when shall we set off?”

Thereupon it was arranged between the painter and my brother that they should depart the next day but one; they then began to talk of art. “I’ll stick to the heroic,” said the painter; “I now and then dabble in the comic, but what I do gives me no pleasure, the comic is so low; there is nothing like the heroic. I am engaged here on a heroic picture,” said he, pointing to the canvas; “the subject is ‘Pharaoh dismissing Moses from Egypt,’ after the last plague—the death of the first-born;—it is not far advanced—that finished figure is Moses:” they both looked at the canvas, and I, standing behind, took a modest peep. The picture, as the painter said, was not far advanced, the Pharaoh was merely in outline; my eye was, of course, attracted by the finished figure, or rather what the painter had called the finished figure; but, as I gazed upon it, it appeared to me that there was something defective—something unsatisfactory in the figure. I concluded, however, that the painter, notwithstanding what he had said, had omitted to give it the finishing touch. “I intend this to be my best picture,” said the painter; “what I want now is a face for Pharaoh; I have long been meditating on a face for Pharaoh.” Here, chancing to cast his eye upon my countenance, of whom he had scarcely taken any manner of notice, he remained with his mouth open for some time. “Who is this?” said he at last. “Oh, this is my brother; I forgot to introduce him . . .” p. 333

We presently afterwards departed; my brother talked much about the painter. “He is a noble fellow,” said my brother; “but, like many other noble fellows, has a great many enemies; he is hated by his brethren of the brush—all the land and waterscape painters hate him—but, above all, the race of portrait painters, who are ten times more numerous than the other two sorts, detest him for his heroic tendencies. It will be a kind of triumph to the last, I fear, when they hear he has condescended to paint a portrait; however, that Norman arch will enable him to escape from their malice—that is a capital idea of the watchmaker, that Norman arch.”

I spent a happy day with my brother. On the morrow he went again to the painter, with whom he dined; I did not go with him. On his return he said, “The painter has been asking a great many questions about you, and expressed a wish that you would sit to him as Pharaoh; he thinks you would make a capital Pharaoh.” “I have no wish to appear on canvas,” said I; “moreover he can find much better Pharaohs than myself; and, if he wants a real Pharaoh, there is a certain Mr. Petulengro.” “Petulengro?” said my brother; “a strange kind of fellow came up to me some time p. 334

ago in our town, and asked me about you; when I inquired his name, he told me Petulengro. No, he will not do, he is too short; by the bye, do you not think that figure of Moses is somewhat short?" And then it appeared to me that I had thought the figure of Moses somewhat short, and I told my brother so. "Ah!" said my brother.

On the morrow my brother departed with the painter for the old town, and there the painter painted the mayor. I did not see the picture for a great many years, when, chancing to be at the old town, I beheld it.

The original mayor was a mighty, portly man, with a bull's head, black hair, body like that of a dray horse, and legs and thighs corresponding; a man six foot high at the least. To his bull's head, black hair, and body the painter had done justice; there was one point, however, in which the portrait did not correspond with the original—the legs were disproportionably short, the painter having substituted his own legs for those of the mayor, which when I perceived I rejoiced that I had not consented to be painted as Pharaoh, for, if I had, the chances are that he would have served me in exactly a similar way as he had served Moses and the mayor.

Short legs in a heroic picture will never do; and, upon the whole, I think the painter's attempt at the heroic in painting the mayor of the old town a decided failure. If I am now asked whether the picture would have been a heroic one provided the painter had not substituted his own legs for p. 335 those of the mayor—I must say, I am afraid not. I have no idea of making heroic pictures out of English mayors, even with the assistance of Norman arches; yet I am sure that capital pictures might be made out of English mayors, not issuing from Norman arches, but rather from the door of the "Checquers" or the "Brewers Three." The painter in question had great comic power, which he scarcely ever cultivated; he would fain be a Rafael, which he never could be, when he might have been something quite as good—another Hogarth; the only comic piece which he ever presented to the world being something little inferior to the best of that illustrious master. I have often thought what a capital picture might have been made by my brother's friend, if, instead of making the mayor issue out of the Norman arch, he had painted him moving under the sign of the "Checquers," or the "Three Brewers," with mace—yes, with mace,—the mace appears in the picture issuing out of the Norman arch behind the mayor,—but likewise with Snap, and with whiffler, quart pot, and frying pan, Billy Blind, and Owlenglass, Mr. Petulengro, and Pakomovna; —then, had he clapped his own legs upon the mayor, or any one else in the concourse, what matter? But I repeat that I have no hope of making heroic pictures out of English mayors, or, indeed, out of English figures in general. England may be a land of heroic hearts, but it is not, properly, a land of heroic figures, or heroic posture-making.—Italy . . . what was I going to say about Italy? [335]

CHAPTER XXXIX

p. 336

No Authority Whatever—Interference—Wondrous Farrago—Brandt and Struensee—What a Life! —The Hearse—Mortal Relics—Great Poet—Fashion and Fame—What a Difference!—Oh, Beautiful!—Good for Nothing.

And now once more to my pursuits, to my Lives and Trials. However partial at first I might be to these Lives and Trials, it was not long before they became regular trials to me, owing to the whims and caprices of the publisher. I had not been long connected with him before I discovered that he was wonderfully fond of interfering with other people's business—at least with the business of those who were under his control. What a life did his unfortunate authors lead! He had many in his employ toiling at all kinds of subjects—I call them authors because there is something respectable in the term author, though they had little authorship in, and no authority whatever over, the works on which they were engaged. It is true the publisher interfered with some colour of reason, the plan of all and every of the works alluded to having originated with himself; and, be it observed, many of his plans were highly clever and promising, for, as I have already had occasion to say, the publisher in many points was a highly clever and sagacious p. 337 person; but he ought to have been contented with planning the works originally, and have left to other people the task of executing them, instead of which he marred everything by his rage for interference. If a book of fairy tales was being compiled, he was sure to introduce some of his philosophy, explaining the fairy tale by some theory of his own. Was a book of anecdotes on hand, it was sure to be half filled with sayings and doings of himself during the time that he was common councilman of the City of London. Now, however fond the public might be of fairy tales, it by no means relished them in conjunction with the publisher's philosophy; and however fond of anecdotes in general, or even of the publisher in particular—for indeed there were a great many anecdotes in circulation about him which the public both read and listened to very readily—it took no pleasure in such anecdotes as he was disposed to relate about himself. In the compilation of my Lives and Trials, I was exposed to incredible mortification, and ceaseless trouble, from this same rage for interference. It is true he could not introduce his philosophy into the work, nor was it possible for him to introduce anecdotes of himself, having never had the good or evil fortune to be tried at the bar; but he was continually introducing—what, under a less apathetic government than the one then being, would have infallibly subjected him, and perhaps myself, to a trial,—his politics; not his Oxford or pseudo politics, but the politics which he really entertained, and which were of the most republican and violent kind. But this was not all; when

about a moiety of the first volume had been printed, he materially altered the plan of the work; it p. 338
was no longer to be a collection of mere Newgate lives and trials, but of lives and trials of criminals in general, foreign as well as domestic. In a little time the work became a wondrous farrago, in which Königsmark the robber figured by the side of Sam Lynn, and the Marchioness de Brinvilliers was placed in contact with a Chinese outlaw. What gave me the most trouble and annoyance was the publisher's remembering some life or trial, foreign or domestic, which he wished to be inserted, and which I was forthwith to go in quest of and purchase at my own expense: some of those lives and trials were by no means easy to find. "Where is Brandt and Struensee?" cries the publisher; "I am sure I don't know," I replied; whereupon the publisher falls to squealing like one of Joey's rats. "Find me up Brandt and Struensee by next morning, or . . ." "Have you found Brandt and Struensee?" cried the publisher, on my appearing before him next morning. "No," I reply, "I can hear nothing about them;" whereupon the publisher falls to bellowing like Joey's bull. By dint of incredible diligence, I at length discover the dingy volume containing the lives and trials of the celebrated two who had brooded treason dangerous to the state of Denmark. I purchase the dingy volume, and bring it in triumph to the publisher, the perspiration running down my brow. The publisher takes the dingy volume in his hand, he examines it attentively, then puts it down; his countenance is calm for a moment, almost benign. Another moment and there is a gleam in the publisher's sinister eye; he snatches up the paper containing the names of the worthies which I have intended shall figure in the forthcoming p. 339
volumes—he glances rapidly over it, and his countenance once more assumes a terrific expression. "How is this?" he exclaims; "I can scarcely believe my eyes—the most important life and trial omitted to be found in the whole criminal record—what gross, what utter negligence! Where's the life of Farmer Patch? where's the trial of Yeoman Patch?"

"What a life! what a dog's life!" I would frequently exclaim, after escaping from the presence of the publisher.

One day, after a scene with the publisher similar to that which I have described above, I found myself about noon at the bottom of Oxford Street, where it forms a right angle with the road which leads or did lead to Tottenham Court. Happening to cast my eyes around, it suddenly occurred to me that something uncommon was expected; people were standing in groups on the pavement—the upstair windows of the houses were thronged with faces, especially those of women, and many of the shops were partly, and not a few entirely closed. What could be the reason of all this? All at once I bethought me that this street of Oxford was no other than the far-famed Tyburn way. Oh, oh, thought I, an execution; some handsome young robber is about to be executed at the farther end; just so, see how earnestly the women are peering; perhaps another Harry Symms—Gentleman Harry as they called him—is about to be carted along this street to Tyburn tree; but then I remembered that Tyburn tree had long since been cut down, and that criminals, whether young or old, good-looking or ugly, were executed before the big stone gaol, p. 340
which I had looked at with a kind of shudder during my short rambles in the city. What could be the matter? Just then I heard various voices cry "There it comes!" and all heads were turned up Oxford Street, down which a hearse was slowly coming: nearer and nearer it drew; presently it was just opposite the place where I was standing, when, turning to the left, it proceeded slowly along Tottenham Road; immediately behind the hearse were three or four mourning coaches, full of people, some of which, from the partial glimpse which I caught of them, appeared to be foreigners; behind these came a very long train of splendid carriages, all of which, without one exception, were empty.

"Whose body is in that hearse?" said I to a dapper-looking individual, seemingly a shopkeeper, who stood beside me on the pavement, looking at the procession.

"The mortal relics of Lord Byron," said the dapper-looking individual, mouthing his words and smirking—"the illustrious poet, which have been just brought from Greece, and are being conveyed to the family vault in ---shire." [340]

"An illustrious poet, was he?" said I.

"Beyond all criticism," said the dapper man; "all we of the rising generation are under incalculable obligation to Byron; I myself, in particular, have reason to say so; in all my correspondence my style is formed on the Byronic model."

I looked at the individual for a moment, who smiled and smirked to himself applause, and then I p. 341
turned my eyes upon the hearse proceeding slowly up the almost endless street. This man, this Byron, had for many years past been the demigod of England, and his verses the daily food of those who read, from the peer to the draper's assistant; all were admirers, or rather worshippers, of Byron, and all doated on his verses; and then I thought of those who, with genius as high as his, or higher, had lived and died neglected. I thought of Milton abandoned to poverty and blindness; of witty and ingenious Butler consigned to the tender mercies of bailiffs; and starving Otway: they had lived neglected and despised, and, when they died, a few poor mourners only had followed them to the grave; but this Byron had been made a half god of when living, and now that he was dead he was followed by worshipping crowds, and the very sun seemed to come out on purpose to grace his funeral. And, indeed, the sun, which for many days past had hidden its face in clouds, shone out that morn with wonderful brilliancy, flaming upon the black hearse and its tall ostrich plumes, the mourning coaches, and the long train of aristocratic carriages which followed behind.

"Great poet, sir," said the dapper-looking man, "great poet, but unhappy."

Unhappy? yes, I had heard that he had been unhappy; that he had roamed about a fevered, distempered man, taking pleasure in nothing—that I had heard; but was it true? was he really unhappy? was not this unhappiness assumed, with the view of increasing the interest which the world took in him? and yet who could say? He might be unhappy, and with reason. Was he a real poet after all? might he not doubt himself? might he not have a lurking consciousness that he was p. 342
undeserving of the homage which he was receiving? that it could not last? that he was rather at the top of fashion than of fame? He was a lordling, a glittering, gorgeous lordling: and he might have had a consciousness that he owed much of his celebrity to being so; he might have felt that he was rather at the top of fashion than of fame. Fashion soon changes, thought I, eagerly to myself—a time will come, and that speedily, when he will be no longer in the fashion; when this idiotic admirer of his, who is still grinning at my side, shall have ceased to mould his style on Byron's; and this aristocracy, squirearchy, and what not, who now send their empty carriages to pay respect to the fashionable corpse, shall have transferred their empty worship to some other animate or inanimate thing. Well, perhaps after all it was better to have been mighty Milton in his poverty and blindness—witty and ingenious Butler consigned to the tender mercies of bailiffs, and starving Otway; they might enjoy more real pleasure than this lordling; they must have been aware that the world would one day do them justice—fame after death is better than the top of fashion in life. They have left a fame behind them which shall never die, whilst this lordling—a time will come when he will be out of fashion and forgotten. And yet I don't know; didn't he write Childe Harold and that ode? Yes, he wrote Childe Harold and that ode. Then a time will scarcely come when he will be forgotten. Lords, squires, and cockneys may pass away, but a time will scarcely come when Childe Harold and that ode will be forgotten. He was a poet, after all, and p. 343
he must have known it; a real poet, equal to . . . to . . . what a destiny! Rank, beauty, fashion, immortality,—he could not be unhappy; what a difference in the fate of men! I wish I could think he was unhappy . . .

I turned away.

"Great poet, sir," said the dapper man, turning away too, "but unhappy—fate of genius, sir; I, too, am frequently unhappy."

Hurrying down a street to the right, I encountered Francis Ardry.

"What means the multitude yonder?" he demanded.

"They are looking after the hearse which is carrying the remains of Byron up Tottenham Road."

"I have seen the man," said my friend, as he turned back the way he had come, "so I can dispense with seeing the hearse—I saw the living man at Venice—ah, a great poet."

"Yes," said I, "a great poet, it must be so, everybody says so—what a destiny! What a difference in the fate of men! but 'tis said he was unhappy; you have seen him, how did he look?"

"Oh, beautiful!"

"But did he look happy?"

"Why, I can't say he looked very unhappy; I saw him with two . . . very fair ladies; but what is it to you whether the man was unhappy or not? Come, where shall we go—to Joey's? His hugest bear —"

"Oh, I have had enough of bears; I have just been worried by one."

"The publisher?"

"Yes."

"Then come to Joey's, three dogs are to be launched at his bear: as they pin him, imagine him to p. 344
be the publisher."

"No," said I, "I am good for nothing; I think I shall stroll to London Bridge."

"That's too far for me—farewell."

CHAPTER XL p. 345

London Bridge—Why Not?—Every Heart has its Bitters—Wicked Boys—Give me my Book—Such a Fright—Honour Bright.

So I went to London Bridge, and again took my station on the spot by the booth where I had stood on the former occasion. The booth, however, was empty; neither the apple-woman nor her stall was to be seen. I looked over the balustrade upon the river; the tide was now, as before, rolling beneath the arch with frightful impetuosity. As I gazed upon the eddies of the whirlpool, I thought within myself how soon human life would become extinct there; a plunge, a convulsive flounder, and all would be over. When I last stood over that abyss I had felt a kind of impulse—a fascination; I had resisted it—I did not plunge into it. At present I felt a kind of impulse to plunge; but the impulse was of a different kind; it proceeded from a loathing of life. I looked

wistfully at the eddies—what had I to live for?—what indeed! I thought of Brandt and Struensee, and Yeoman Patch—should I yield to the impulse—why not? My eyes were fixed on the eddies. All of a sudden I shuddered; I thought I saw heads in the pool; human bodies wallowing confusedly; eyes turned up to heaven with hopeless horror; was that water, or . . . Where was the impulse now? I raised my eyes from the pool, I looked no more upon it—I looked forward, far down the stream in the far distance. Ha! what is that? I thought I saw a kind of Fata Morgana, green meadows, waving groves, a rustic home; but in the far distance—I stared—I stared—a Fata Morgana—it was gone . . . p. 346

I left the balustrade and walked to the farther end of the bridge, where I stood for some time contemplating the crowd; I then passed over to the other side with an intention of returning home; just half way over the bridge, in a booth immediately opposite to the one in which I had formerly beheld her, sat my friend, the old apple-woman, huddled up behind her stall.

“Well, mother,” said I, “how are you?” The old woman lifted her head with a startled look.

“Don’t you know me?” said I.

“Yes, I think I do. Ah, yes,” said she, as her features beamed with recollection, “I know you, dear; you are the young lad that gave me the tanner. Well, child, got anything to sell?”

“Nothing at all,” said I.

“Bad luck?”

“Yes,” said I, “bad enough, and ill usage.”

“Ah, I suppose they caught ye; well, child, never mind, better luck next time; I am glad to see you.”

“Thank you,” said I, sitting down on the stone bench; “I thought you had left the bridge—why have you changed your side?”

The old woman shook.

“What is the matter with you,” said I; “are you ill?” p. 347

“No, child, no; only—”

“Only what? Any bad news of your son?”

“No, child, no; nothing about my son. Only low, child—every heart has its bitters.”

“That’s true,” said I; “well, I don’t want to know your sorrows; come, where’s the book?”

The apple-woman shook more violently than before, bent herself down, and drew her cloak more closely about her than before. “Book, child, what book?”

“Why, blessed Mary, to be sure.”

“Oh, that; I ha’n’t got it, child—I have lost it, have left it at home.”

“Lost it,” said I; “left it at home—what do you mean? Come, let me have it.”

“I ha’n’t got it, child.”

“I believe you have got it under your cloak.”

“Don’t tell any one, dear; don’t—don’t,” and the apple-woman burst into tears.

“What’s the matter with you?” said I, staring at her.

“You want to take my book from me?”

“Not I; I care nothing about it; keep it, if you like, only tell me what’s the matter?”

“Why, all about that book.”

“The book?”

“Yes, they wanted to take it from me.”

“Who did?”

“Why, some wicked boys. I’ll tell you all about it. Eight or ten days ago, I sat behind my stall, reading my book; all of a sudden I felt it snatched from my hand; up I started, and see three rascals of boys grinning at me; one of them held the book in his hand. ‘What book is this?’ said he, grinning at it. ‘What do you want with my book?’ said I, clutching at it over my stall; ‘give me my book.’ ‘What do you want a book for?’ said he, holding it back; ‘I have a good mind to fling it into the Thames.’ ‘Give me my book,’ I shrieked; and, snatching at it, I fell over my stall, and all my fruit was scattered about. Off ran the boys—off ran the rascal with my book. Oh dear, I thought I should have died; up I got, however, and ran after them as well as I could; I thought of my fruit, but I thought more of my book. I left my fruit and ran after my book. ‘My book! my book!’ I shrieked. ‘Murder! theft! robbery!’ I was near being crushed under the wheels of a cart; but I didn’t care—I followed the rascals. ‘Stop them! stop them!’ I ran nearly as fast as they—they couldn’t run very fast on account of the crowd. At last some one stopped the rascal, p. 348

whereupon he turned round, and flinging the book at me, it fell into the mud; well, I picked it up and kissed it, all muddy as it was. 'Has he robbed you?' said the man. 'Robbed me, indeed; why, he had got my book.' 'Oh, your book,' said the man, and laughed, and let the rascal go. Ah, he might laugh, but—"

"Well, go on."

"My heart beats so. Well, I went back to my booth and picked up my stall and my fruits, what I could find of them. I couldn't keep my stall for two days, I got such a fright; and when I got round I couldn't bide the booth where the thing had happened, so I came over to the other side. Oh, the rascals, if I could but see them hanged."

"For what?"

"Why, for stealing my book." p. 349

"I thought you didn't dislike stealing—that you were ready to buy things—there was your son, you know—"

"Yes, to be sure."

"He took things."

"To be sure he did."

"But you don't like a thing of yours to be taken."

"No, that's quite a different thing; what's stealing handkerchiefs, and that kind of thing, to do with taking my book! there's a wide difference—don't you see?"

"Yes, I see."

"Do you, dear? well, bless your heart, I'm glad you do. Would you like to look at the book?"

"Well, I think I should."

"Honour bright?" said the apple-woman, looking me in the eyes.

"Honour bright," said I, looking the apple-woman in the eyes.

"Well then, dear, here it is," said she, taking it from under her cloak; "read it as long as you like, only get a little farther into the booth . . . Don't sit so near the edge . . . you might . . ."

I went deep into the booth, and the apple-woman, bringing her chair round, almost confronted me. I commenced reading the book, and was soon engrossed by it; hours passed away; once or twice I lifted up my eyes, the apple-woman was still confronting me: at last my eyes began to ache, whereupon I returned the book to the apple-woman, and, giving her another tanner, walked away.

CHAPTER XLI p. 350

Decease of the Review—Homer Himself—Bread and Cheese—Finger and Thumb—Impossible to Find—Something Grand—Universal Mixture—Some Other Publisher.

Time passed away, and with it the Review, which, contrary to the publisher's expectation, did not prove a successful speculation. About four months after the period of its birth it expired, as all Reviews must for which there is no demand. Authors had ceased to send their publications to it, and, consequently, to purchase it; for I have already hinted that it was almost entirely supported by authors of a particular class, who expected to see their publications foredoomed to immortality in its pages. The behaviour of these authors towards this unfortunate publication I can attribute to no other cause than to a report which was industriously circulated, namely, that the Review was low, and that to be reviewed in it was an infallible sign that one was a low person, who could be reviewed nowhere else. So authors took fright; and no wonder, for it will never do for an author to be considered low. Homer himself has never yet entirely recovered from the injury he received by Lord Chesterfield's remark, that the speeches of his heroes were frequently exceedingly low. p. 351

So the Review ceased, and the reviewing corps no longer existed as such; they forthwith returned to their proper avocations—the editor to compose tunes on his piano, and to the task of disposing of the remaining copies of his Quintilian—the inferior members to working for the publisher, being to a man dependants of his; one, to composing fairy tales; another, to collecting miracles of Popish saints; and a third, "Newgate Lives and Trials." Owing to the bad success of the Review, the publisher became more furious than ever. My money was growing short, and I one day asked him to pay me for my labours in the deceased publication.

"Sir," said the publisher, "what do you want the money for?"

"Merely to live on," I replied; "it is very difficult to live in this town without money."

“How much money did you bring with you to town?” demanded the publisher.

“Some twenty or thirty pounds,” I replied.

“And you have spent it already?”

“No,” said I, “not entirely; but it is fast disappearing.”

“Sir,” said the publisher, “I believe you to be extravagant; yes, sir, extravagant!”

“On what grounds do you suppose me to be so?”

“Sir,” said the publisher, “you eat meat.”

“Yes,” said I, “I eat meat sometimes; what should I eat?”

“Bread, sir,” said the publisher; “bread and cheese.”

“So I do, sir, when I am disposed to indulge; but I cannot often afford it—it is very expensive to dine on bread and cheese, especially when one is fond of cheese, as I am. My last bread and cheese dinner cost me fourteenpence. There is drink, sir; with bread and cheese one must drink porter, sir.” p. 352

“Then, sir, eat bread—bread alone. As good men as yourself have eaten bread alone; they have been glad to get it, sir. If with bread and cheese you must drink porter, sir, with bread alone you can, perhaps, drink water, sir.”

However, I got paid at last for my writings in the Review, not, it is true, in the current coin of the realm, but in certain bills; there were two of them, one payable at twelve, and the other at eighteen months after date. It was a long time before I could turn these bills to any account; at last I found a person who, at a discount of only thirty per cent., consented to cash them; not, however, without sundry grimaces, and, what was still more galling, holding, more than once, the unfortunate papers high in air between his forefinger and thumb. So ill, indeed, did I like this last action, that I felt much inclined to snatch them away. I restrained myself, however, for I remembered that it was very difficult to live without money, and that, if the present person did not discount the bills, I should probably find no one else that would.

But if the treatment which I had experienced from the publisher, previous to making this demand upon him, was difficult to bear, that which I subsequently underwent was far more so; his great delight seemed to consist in causing me misery and mortification; if, on former occasions, he was continually sending me in quest of lives and trials difficult to find, he now was continually demanding lives and trials which it was impossible to find; the personages whom he mentioned never having lived, nor consequently been tried. Moreover, some of my best Lives and Trials which I had corrected and edited with particular care, and on which I prided myself no little, he caused to be cancelled after they had passed through the press. Amongst these was the life of “Gentleman Harry.” “They are drugs, sir,” said the publisher, “drugs; that life of Harry Simms has long been the greatest drug in the calendar—has it not, Taggart?” p. 353

Taggart made no answer save by taking a pinch of snuff. The reader has, I hope, not forgotten Taggart, whom I mentioned whilst giving an account of my first morning’s visit to the publisher. I beg Taggart’s pardon for having been so long silent about him; but he was a very silent man—yet there was much in Taggart—and Taggart had always been civil and kind to me in his peculiar way.

“Well, young gentleman,” said Taggart to me one morning, when we chanced to be alone a few days after the affair of the cancelling, “how do you like authorship?”

“I scarcely call authorship the drudgery I am engaged in,” said I.

“What do you call authorship?” said Taggart.

“I scarcely know,” said I; “that is, I can scarcely express what I think it.”

“Shall I help you out?” said Taggart, turning round his chair, and looking at me.

“If you like,” said I.

“To write something grand,” said Taggart, taking snuff; “to be stared at—lifted on people’s shoulders—” p. 354

“Well,” said I, “that is something like it.”

Taggart took snuff. “Well,” said he, “why don’t you write something grand?”

“I have,” said I.

“What?” said Taggart.

“Why,” said I, “there are those ballads.”

Taggart took snuff.

“And those wonderful versions from Ab Gwilym.”

Taggart took snuff again.

“You seem to be very fond of snuff,” said I, looking at him angrily.

Taggart tapped his box.

“Have you taken it long?”

“Three-and-twenty years.”

“What snuff do you take?”

“Universal mixture.”

“And you find it of use?”

Taggart tapped his box.

“In what respect?” said I.

“In many—there is nothing like it to get a man through; but for snuff I should scarcely be where I am now.”

“Have you been long here?”

“Three-and-twenty years.”

“Dear me,” said I; “and snuff brought you through? Give me a pinch—pah, I don’t like it,” and I sneezed.

“Take another pinch,” said Taggart.

“No,” said I, “I don’t like snuff.”

“Then you will never do for authorship; at least for this kind.”

“So I begin to think—what shall I do?” p. 355

Taggart took snuff.

“You were talking of a great work—what shall it be?”

Taggart took snuff.

“Do you think I could write one?”

Taggart uplifted his two forefingers as if to tap,—he did not, however.

“It would require time,” said I, with a half sigh.

Taggart tapped his box.

“A great deal of time; I really think that my ballads . . .”

Taggart took snuff.

“If published, would do me credit. I’ll make an effort, and offer them to some other publisher.”

Taggart took a double quantity of snuff.

CHAPTER XLII p. 356

Francis Ardry—That Won’t Do, Sir—Observe My Gestures—I Think You Improve—Better than Politics—Delightful Young Frenchwoman—A Burning Shame—Magnificent Impudence—Paunch—Voltaire—Lump of Sugar.

Occasionally I called on Francis Ardry. This young gentleman resided in handsome apartments in the neighbourhood of a fashionable square, kept a livery servant, and, upon the whole, lived in very good style. Going to see him one day, between one and two, I was informed by the servant that his master was engaged for the moment, but that, if I pleased to wait a few minutes, I should find him at liberty. Having told the man that I had no objection, he conducted me into a small apartment which served as antechamber to a drawing-room; the door of this last being half open, I could see Francis Ardry at the farther end, speechifying and gesticulating in a very impressive manner. The servant, in some confusion, was hastening to close the door; but, ere he could effect his purpose, Francis Ardry, who had caught a glimpse of me, exclaimed, “Come in—come in by all means;” and then proceeded, as before, speechifying and gesticulating. Filled with some surprise, I obeyed his summons.

On entering the room I perceived another individual, to whom Francis Ardry appeared to be addressing himself; this other was a short spare man of about sixty; his hair was of badger grey, and his face was covered with wrinkles—without vouchsafing me a look, he kept his eye, which was black and lustrous, fixed full on Francis Ardry, as if paying the deepest attention to his discourse. All of a sudden, however, he cried with a sharp, cracked voice, “That won’t do, sir; that won’t do—more vehemence—your argument is at present particularly weak; therefore, more p. 357

vehemence—you must confuse them, stun them, stultify them, sir;" and, at each of these injunctions, he struck the back of his right hand sharply against the palm of the left. "Good, sir—good!" he occasionally uttered, in the same sharp, cracked tone, as the voice of Francis Ardry became more and more vehement. "Infinitely good!" he exclaimed, as Francis Ardry raised his voice to the highest pitch; "and now, sir, abate; let the tempest of vehemence decline—gradually, sir; not too fast. Good, sir—very good!" as the voice of Francis Ardry declined gradually in vehemence. "And now a little pathos, sir—try them with a little pathos. That won't do, sir—that won't do,"—as Francis Ardry made an attempt to become pathetic,—"that will never pass for pathos—with tones and gesture of that description you will never redress the wrongs of your country. Now, sir, observe my gestures, and pay attention to the tone of my voice, sir."

Thereupon, making use of nearly the same terms which Francis Ardry had employed, the individual in black uttered several sentences in tones and with gestures which were intended to express a considerable degree of pathos, though it is possible that some people would have thought both the one and the other highly ludicrous. After a pause, Francis Ardry recommenced imitating the tones and the gesture of his monitor in the most admirable manner. Before he had proceeded far, however, he burst into a fit of laughter, in which I should, perhaps, have joined, provided it were ever my wont to laugh. "Ha, ha!" said the other, good-humouredly, "you are laughing at me. Well, well, I merely wished to give you a hint; but you saw very well what I meant; upon the whole I think you improve. But I must now go, having two other pupils to visit before four." p. 358

Then taking from the table a kind of three-cornered hat, and a cane headed with amber, he shook Francis Ardry by the hand; and, after glancing at me for a moment, made me a half bow, attended with a strange grimace, and departed.

"Who is that gentleman?" said I to Francis Ardry, as soon as we were alone.

"Oh, that is ---," said Frank, smiling, "the gentleman who gives me lessons in elocution."

"And what need have you of elocution?"

"Oh, I merely obey the commands of my guardians," said Francis, "who insist that I should, with the assistance of ---, qualify myself for Parliament; for which they do me the honour to suppose that I have some natural talent. I dare not disobey them; for, at the present moment, I have particular reasons for wishing to keep on good terms with them."

"But," said I, "you are a Roman Catholic; and I thought that persons of your religion were excluded from Parliament?" p. 359

"Why, upon that very thing the whole matter hinges; people of our religion are determined to be no longer excluded from Parliament, but to have a share in the government of the nation. Not that I care anything about the matter; I merely obey the will of my guardians; my thoughts are fixed on something better than politics."

"I understand you," said I; "dog-fighting—well, I can easily conceive that to some minds dog-fighting—"

"I was not thinking of dog-fighting," said Francis Ardry, interrupting me.

"Not thinking of dog-fighting!" I ejaculated.

"No," said Francis Ardry; "something higher and much more rational than dog-fighting at present occupies my thoughts."

"Dear me," said I, "I thought I had heard you say, that there was nothing like it!"

"Like what?" said Francis Ardry.

"Dog-fighting, to be sure," said I.

"Pooh," said Francis Ardry; "who but the gross and unrefined care anything for dog-fighting? That which at present engages my waking and sleeping thoughts is love—divine love—there is nothing like *that*. Listen to me, I have a secret to confide to you."

And then Francis Ardry proceeded to make me his confidant. It appeared that he had had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of the most delightful young Frenchwoman imaginable, Annette La Noire by name, who had just arrived from her native country with the intention of obtaining the situation of governess in some English family; a position which, on account of her many accomplishments, she was eminently qualified to fill. Francis Ardry had, however, persuaded her to relinquish her intention for the present, on the ground that, until she had become acclimated in England, her health would probably suffer from the confinement inseparable from the occupation in which she was desirous of engaging; he had, moreover—for it appeared that she was the most frank and confiding creature in the world—succeeded in persuading her to permit him to hire for her a very handsome first floor in his own neighbourhood, and to accept a few inconsiderable presents in money and jewellery. "I am looking out for a handsome gig and horse," said Francis Ardry, at the conclusion of his narration; "it were a burning shame that so divine a creature should have to go about a place like London on foot, or in a paltry hackney coach." p. 360

"But," said I, "will not the pursuit of politics prevent your devoting much time to this fair lady?"

“It will prevent me devoting all my time,” said Francis Ardry, “as I gladly would; but what can I do? My guardians wish me to qualify myself for a political orator, and I dare not offend them by a refusal. If I offend my guardians, I should find it impossible—unless I have recourse to Jews and money-lenders—to support Annette; present her with articles of dress and jewellery, and purchase a horse and cabriolet worthy of conveying her angelic person through the streets of London.”

After a pause, in which Francis Ardry appeared lost in thought, his mind being probably occupied with the subject of Annette, I broke silence by observing, “So your fellow-religionists are really going to make a serious attempt to procure their emancipation?” p. 361

“Yes,” said Francis Ardry, starting from his reverie; “everything has been arranged; even a leader has been chosen, at least for us of Ireland, upon the whole the most suitable man in the world for the occasion—a barrister of considerable talent, mighty voice, and magnificent impudence. With emancipation, liberty, and redress for the wrongs of Ireland in his mouth, he is to force his way into the British House of Commons, dragging myself and others behind him—he will succeed, and when he is in he will cut a figure; I have heard --- himself, who has heard --- him speak, say that he will cut a figure.”

“And is --- competent to judge?” I demanded.

“Who but he?” said Francis Ardry; “no one questions his judgment concerning what relates to elocution. His fame on that point is so well established, that the greatest orators do not disdain occasionally to consult him; C--- himself, as I have been told, when anxious to produce any particular effect in the House, is in the habit of calling in --- for a consultation.”

“As to matter, or manner?” said I.

“Chiefly the latter,” said Francis Ardry, “though he is competent to give advice as to both, for he has been an orator in his day, and a leader of the people; though he confessed to me that he was not exactly qualified to play the latter part—‘I want paunch,’ said he.”

“It is not always indispensable,” said I; “there is an orator in my town, a hunchback and watchmaker, without it, who not only leads the people, but the mayor too; perhaps he has a succedaneum in his hunch: but, tell me, is the leader of your movement in possession of that which --- wants?” p. 362

“No more deficient in it than in brass,” said Francis Ardry.

“Well,” said I, “whatever his qualifications may be, I wish him success in the cause which he has taken up—I love religious liberty.”

“We shall succeed,” said Francis Ardry; “John Bull upon the whole is rather indifferent on the subject, and then we are sure to be backed by the Radical party, who, to gratify their political prejudices, would join with Satan himself.”

“There is one thing,” said I, “connected with this matter which surprises me—your own luke-warmness. Yes, making every allowance for your natural predilection for dog-fighting, and your present enamoured state of mind, your apathy at the commencement of such a movement is to me unaccountable.”

“You would not have cause to complain of my indifference,” said Frank, “provided I thought my country would be benefited by this movement; but I happen to know the origin of it. The priests are the originators, ‘and what country was ever benefited by a movement which owed its origin to them?’ so says Voltaire, a page of whom I occasionally read. By the present move they hope to increase their influence, and to further certain designs which they entertain both with regard to this country and Ireland. I do not speak rashly or unadvisedly. A strange fellow—a half Italian, half English priest—who was recommended to me by my guardians, partly as a spiritual, partly as a temporal guide, has let me into a secret or two; he is fond of a glass of gin and water—and over p. 363 a glass of gin and water cold, with a lump of sugar in it, he has been more communicative, perhaps, than was altogether prudent. Were I my own master, I would kick him, politics, and religious movements, to a considerable distance. And now, if you are going away, do so quickly; I have an appointment with Annette, and must make myself fit to appear before her.”

CHAPTER XLIII

p. 364

Progress—Glorious John—Utterly Unintelligible—What a Difference!

By the month of October I had, in spite of all difficulties and obstacles, accomplished about two-thirds of the principal task which I had undertaken, the compiling of the Newgate Lives; I had also made some progress in translating the publisher’s philosophy into German. But about this time I began to see very clearly that it was impossible that our connection should prove of long duration; yet, in the event of my leaving the big man, what other resource had I—another publisher? But what had I to offer? There were my ballads, my Ab Gwilym, but then I thought of Taggart and his snuff, his pinch of snuff. However, I determined to see what could be done, so I took my ballads under my arm, and went to various publishers; some took snuff, others did not,

but none took my ballads or Ab Gwilym; they would not even look at them. One asked me if I had anything else—he was a snuff-taker—I said yes; and going home, returned with my translation of the German novel, to which I have before alluded. After keeping it for a fortnight, he returned it to me on my visiting him, and, taking a pinch of snuff, told me it would not do. There were marks of snuff on the outside of the manuscript, which was a roll of paper bound with red tape, but there were no marks of snuff on the interior of the manuscript, from which I concluded that he had never opened it. p. 365

I had often heard of one Glorious John, [365] who lived at the western end of the town; on consulting Taggart, he told me that it was possible that Glorious John would publish my ballads and Ab Gwilym, that is, said he, taking a pinch of snuff, provided you can see him; so I went to the house where Glorious John resided, and a glorious house it was, but I could not see Glorious John—I called a dozen times, but I never could see Glorious John. Twenty years after, by the greatest chance in the world, I saw Glorious John, and sure enough Glorious John published my books, but they were different books from the first; I never offered my ballads or Ab Gwilym to Glorious John. Glorious John was no snuff-taker. He asked me to dinner, and treated me with superb Rhenish wine. Glorious John is now gone to his rest, but I—what was I going to say?—the world will never forget Glorious John.

So I returned to my last resource for the time then being—to the publisher, persevering doggedly in my labour. One day, on visiting the publisher, I found him stamping with fury upon certain fragments of paper. “Sir,” said he, “you know nothing of German; I have shown your translation of the first chapter of my Philosophy to several Germans: it is utterly unintelligible to them.” “Did they see the Philosophy?” I replied. “They did, sir, but they did not profess to understand English.” “No more do I,” I replied, “if that Philosophy be English.” p. 366

The publisher was furious—I was silent. For want of a pinch of snuff, I had recourse to something which is no bad substitute for a pinch of snuff, to those who can’t take it, silent contempt; at first it made the publisher more furious, as perhaps a pinch of snuff would; it, however, eventually calmed him, and he ordered me back to my occupations, in other words, the compilation. To be brief, the compilation was completed, I got paid in the usual manner, and forthwith left him.

He was a clever man, but what a difference in clever men!

CHAPTER XLIV p. 367

The Old Spot—A Long History—Thou Shalt Not Steal—No Harm—Education—Necessity—Foam on Your Lip—Apples and Pears—What Will You Read?—Metaphor—The Fur Cap—I Don’t Know Him.

It was past mid-winter, and I sat on London Bridge, in company with the old apple-woman: she had just returned to the other side of the bridge, to her place in the booth where I had originally found her. This she had done after frequent conversations with me; “She liked the old place best,” she said, which she would never have left but for the terror which she experienced when the boys ran away with her book. So I sat with her at the old spot, one afternoon past midwinter, reading the book, of which I had by this time come to the last pages. I had observed that the old woman for some time past had shown much less anxiety about the book than she had been in the habit of doing. I was, however, not quite prepared for her offering to make me a present of it, which she did that afternoon; when, having finished it, I returned it to her, with many thanks for the pleasure and instruction I had derived from its perusal. “You may keep it, dear,” said the old woman, with a sigh; “you may carry it to your lodging, and keep it for your own.”

Looking at the old woman with surprise, I exclaimed, “Is it possible that you are willing to part with the book which has been your source of comfort so long?” p. 368

Whereupon the old woman entered into a long history, from which I gathered that the book had become distasteful to her; she hardly ever opened it of late, she said, or if she did, it was only to shut it again; also, that other things which she had been fond of, though of a widely different kind, were now distasteful to her. Porter and beef-steaks were no longer grateful to her palate, her present diet chiefly consisting of tea, and bread and butter.

“Ah,” said I, “you have been ill, and when people are ill, they seldom like the things which give them pleasure when they are in health.” I learned, moreover, that she slept little at night, and had all kinds of strange thoughts; that as she lay awake many things connected with her youth, which she had quite forgotten, came into her mind. There were certain words that came into her mind the night before the last, which were continually humming in her ears: I found that the words were, “Thou shalt not steal.”

On inquiring where she had first heard these words, I learned that she had read them at school, in a book called the primer; to this school she had been sent by her mother, who was a poor widow, and followed the trade of apple-selling in the very spot where her daughter followed it now. It seems that the mother was a very good kind of woman, but quite ignorant of letters, the benefit of which she was willing to procure for her child; and at the school the daughter learned

to read, and subsequently experienced the pleasure and benefit of letters, in being able to read the book which she found in an obscure closet of her mother's house, and which had been her principal companion and comfort for many years of her life. p. 369

But, as I have said before, she was now dissatisfied with the book, and with most other things in which she had taken pleasure; she dwelt much on the words, "Thou shalt not steal;" she had never stolen things herself, but then she had bought things which other people had stolen, and which she knew had been stolen; and her dear son had been a thief, which he perhaps would not have been but for the example which she set him in buying things from characters, as she called them, who associated with her.

On inquiring how she had become acquainted with these characters, I learned that times had gone hard with her; that she had married, but her husband had died after a long sickness, which had reduced them to great distress; that her fruit trade was not a profitable one, and that she had bought and sold things which had been stolen to support herself and her son. That for a long time she supposed there was no harm in doing so, as her book was full of entertaining tales of stealing; but she now thought that the book was a bad book, and that learning to read was a bad thing; her mother had never been able to read, but had died in peace, though poor.

So here was a woman who attributed the vices and follies of her life to being able to read; her mother, she said, who could not read, lived respectably, and died in peace; and what was the essential difference between the mother and daughter, save that the latter could read? But for her literature she might in all probability have lived respectably and honestly, like her mother, and might eventually have died in peace, which at present she could scarcely hope to do. Education had failed to produce any good in this poor woman; on the contrary, there could be little doubt that she had been injured by it. Then was education a bad thing? Rousseau was of opinion that it was; but Rousseau was a Frenchman, at least wrote in French, and I cared not the snap of my fingers for Rousseau. But education has certainly been of benefit in some instances; well, what did that prove, but that partiality existed in the management of the affairs of the world —if education was a benefit to some, why was it not a benefit to others? Could some avoid abusing it, any more than others could avoid turning it to a profitable account? I did not see how they could; this poor simple woman found a book in her mother's closet; a book, which was a capital book for those who could turn it to the account for which it was intended; a book, from the perusal of which I felt myself wiser and better, but which was by no means suited to the intellect of this poor simple woman, who thought that it was written in praise of thieving; yet she found it, she read it, and—and—I felt myself getting into a maze. What is right, thought I? what is wrong? Do I exist? Does the world exist? if it does, every action is bound up with necessity. p. 370

"Necessity!" I exclaimed, and cracked my finger joints.

"Ah, it is a bad thing," said the old woman.

"What is a bad thing?" said I.

"Why, to be poor, dear."

"You talk like a fool," said I; "riches and poverty are only different forms of necessity." p. 371

"You should not call me a fool, dear; you should not call your own mother a fool."

"You are not my mother," said I.

"Not your mother, dear?—no, no more I am; but your calling me fool put me in mind of my dear son, who often used to call me fool—and you just now looked as he sometimes did, with a blob of foam on your lip."

"After all, I don't know that you are not my mother."

"Don't you, dear? I'm glad of it; I wish you would make it out."

"How should I make it out? who can speak from his own knowledge as to the circumstances of his birth? Besides, before attempting to establish our relationship, it would be necessary to prove that such people exist."

"What people, dear?"

"You and I."

"Lord, child, you are mad; that book has made you so."

"Don't abuse it," said I; "the book is an excellent one, that is, provided it exists."

"I wish it did not," said the old woman; "but it shan't long; I'll burn it, or fling it into the river—the voices at night tell me to do so."

"Tell the voices," said I, "that they talk nonsense; the book, if it exists, is a good book, it contains a deep moral; have you read it all?"

"All the funny parts, dear; all about taking things, and the manner it was done; as for the rest, I could not exactly make it out."

"Then the book is not to blame; I repeat that the book is a good book, and contains deep morality, always supposing that there is such a thing as morality, which is the same thing as supposing p. 372

that there is anything at all."

"Anything at all! Why, a'n't we here on this bridge, in my booth, with my stall and my—"

"Apples and pears, baked hot, you would say—I don't know; all is a mystery, a deep question. It is a question, and probably always will be, whether there is a world, and consequently apples and pears; and, provided there be a world, whether that world be like an apple or a pear."

"Don't talk so, dear."

"I won't; we will suppose that we all exist—world, ourselves, apples, and pears: so you wish to get rid of the book?"

"Yes, dear, I wish you would take it."

"I have read it, and have no farther use for it; I do not need books: in a little time, perhaps, I shall not have a place wherein to deposit myself, far less books."

"Then I will fling it into the river."

"Don't do that; here, give it me. Now, what shall I do with it? you were so fond of it."

"I am so no longer."

"But how will you pass your time; what will you read?"

"I wish I had never learned to read, or, if I had, that I had only read the books I saw at school: the primer or the other."

"What was the other?"

"I think they called it the Bible: all about God, and Job, and Jesus."

"Ah, I know it."

"You have read it; is it a nice book—all true?" p. 373

"True, true—I don't know what to say; but if the world be true, and not all a lie, a fiction, I don't see why the Bible, as they call it, should not be true. By the bye, what do you call Bible in your tongue, or, indeed, book of any kind? as Bible merely means a book."

"What do I call the Bible in my language, dear?"

"Yes, the language of those who bring you things."

"The language of those who *did*, dear; they bring them now no longer. They call me fool, as you did, dear, just now; they call kissing the Bible, which means taking a false oath, smacking calfskin."

"That's metaphor," said I; "English, but metaphorical; what an odd language! So you would like to have a Bible,—shall I buy you one?"

"I am poor, dear—no money since I left off the other trade."

"Well, then, I'll buy you one."

"No, dear, no; you are poor, and may soon want the money; but if you can take me one conveniently on the sly, you know—I think you may, for, as it is a good book, I suppose there can be no harm in taking it."

"That will never do," said I, "more especially as I should be sure to be caught, not having made taking of things my trade; but I'll tell you what I'll do—try and exchange this book of yours for a Bible; who knows for what great things this same book of yours may serve?"

"Well, dear," said the old woman, "do as you please; I should like to see the—what do you call it? —Bible, and to read it, as you seem to think it true." p. 374

"Yes," said I, "seem; that is the way to express yourself in this maze of doubt—I seem to think—these apples and pears seem to be—and here seems to be a gentleman who wants to purchase either one or the other."

A person had stopped before the apple-woman's stall, and was glancing now at the fruit, now at the old woman and myself; he wore a blue mantle, and had a kind of fur cap on his head; he was somewhat above the middle stature; his features were keen, but rather hard; there was a slight obliquity in his vision. Selecting a small apple, he gave the old woman a penny; then, after looking at me scrutinisingly for a moment, he moved from the booth in the direction of Southwark.

"Do you know who that man is?" said I to the old woman.

"No," said she, "except that he is one of my best customers: he frequently stops, takes an apple, and gives me a penny; his is the only piece of money I have taken this blessed day. I don't know him, but he has once or twice sat down in the booth with two strange-looking men—Mulattos, or Lascars, I think they call them."

CHAPTER XLV

Bought and Exchanged—Quite Empty—A New Firm—Bibles—Countenance of a Lion—Clap of Thunder—A Truce with This—I Have Lost It—Clearly a Right—Goddess of the Mint.

In pursuance of my promise to the old woman, I set about procuring her a Bible with all convenient speed, placing the book which she had entrusted to me for the purpose of exchange in my pocket. I went to several shops, and asked if Bibles were to be had: I found that there were plenty. When, however, I informed the people that I came to barter, they looked blank, and declined treating with me; saying that they did not do business in that way. At last I went into a shop over the window of which I saw written, "Books bought and exchanged:" there was a smartish young fellow in the shop, with black hair and whiskers. "You exchange?" said I. "Yes," said he, "sometimes, but we prefer selling; what book do you want?" "A Bible," said I. "Ah," said he, "there's a great demand for Bibles just now; all kinds of people are become very pious of late," he added, grinning at me; "I am afraid I can't do business with you, more especially as the master is not at home. What book have you brought?" Taking the book out of my pocket, I p. 376 placed it on the counter: the young fellow opened the book, and inspecting the title-page, burst into a loud laugh. "What do you laugh for?" said I, angrily, and half clenching my fist. "Laugh!" said the young fellow; "laugh! who could help laughing?" "I could," said I; "I see nothing to laugh at; I want to exchange this book for a Bible." "You do?" said the young fellow; "well, I dare say there are plenty who would be willing to exchange, that is, if they dared. I wish master were at home; but that would never do, either. Master's a family man, the Bibles are not mine, and master being a family man, is sharp, and knows all his stock; I'd buy it of you, but, to tell you the truth, I am quite empty here," said he, pointing to his pocket, "so I am afraid we can't deal."

Whereupon, looking anxiously at the young man, "What am I to do?" said I; "I really want a Bible."

"Can't you buy one?" said the young man; "have you no money?"

"Yes," said I, "I have some, but I am merely the agent of another; I came to exchange, not to buy; what am I to do?"

"I don't know," said the young man, thoughtfully laying down the book on the counter; "I don't know what you can do; I think you will find some difficulty in this bartering job, the trade are rather precise." All at once he laughed louder than before; suddenly stopping, however, he put on a very grave look. "Take my advice," said he; "there is a firm established in this neighbourhood which scarcely sells any books but Bibles; they are very rich, and pride themselves on selling their books at the lowest possible price; apply to them, who knows but p. 377 what they will exchange with you?"

Thereupon I demanded with some eagerness of the young man the direction to the place where he thought it possible that I might effect the exchange—which direction the young fellow cheerfully gave me, and, as I turned away, had the civility to wish me success.

I had no difficulty in finding the house to which the young fellow directed me; it was a very large house, situated in a square; and upon the side of the house was written in large letters, "Bibles, and other religious books."

At the door of the house were two or three tumbrils, in the act of being loaded with chests, very much resembling tea-chests; one of the chests falling down, burst, and out flew, not tea, but various books, in a neat, small size, and in neat leather covers; Bibles, said I,—Bibles, doubtless. I was not quite right, nor quite wrong; picking up one of the books, I looked at it for a moment, and found it to be the New Testament. "Come, young lad," said a man who stood by, in the dress of a porter, "put that book down, it is none of yours; if you want a book, go in and deal for one."

Deal, thought I, deal,—the man seems to know what I am coming about,—and going in, I presently found myself in a very large room. Behind a counter two men stood with their backs to a splendid fire, warming themselves, for the weather was cold.

Of these men one was dressed in brown, and the other was dressed in black; both were tall men —he who was dressed in brown was thin, and had a particularly ill-natured countenance; the man p. 378 dressed in black was bulky, his features were noble, but they were those of a lion.

"What is your business, young man?" said the precise personage, as I stood staring at him and his companion.

"I want a Bible," said I.

"What price, what size?" said the precise-looking man.

"As to size," said I, "I should like to have a large one—that is, if you can afford me one—I do not come to buy."

"Oh, friend," said the precise-looking man, "if you come here expecting to have a Bible for nothing, you are mistaken—we—"

"I would scorn to have a Bible for nothing," said I, "or anything else; I came not to beg, but to

barter; there is no shame in that, especially in a country like this, where all folks barter."

"Oh, we don't barter," said the precise man, "at least Bibles; you had better depart."

"Stay, brother," said the man with the countenance of a lion, "let us ask a few questions; this may be a very important case; perhaps the young man has had convictions."

"Not I," I exclaimed; "I am convinced of nothing, and with regard to the Bible—I don't believe—"

"Hey!" said the man with the lion countenance, and there he stopped. But with that "Hey!" the walls of the house seemed to shake, the windows rattled, and the porter whom I had seen in front of the house came running up the steps, and looked into the apartment through the glass of the door. There was silence for about a minute—the same kind of silence which succeeds a clap of thunder. p. 379

At last the man with the lion countenance, who had kept his eyes fixed upon me, said calmly, "Were you about to say that you don't believe in the Bible, young man?"

"No more than in anything else," said I; "you were talking of convictions—I have no convictions. It is not easy to believe in the Bible till one is convinced that there is a Bible."

"He seems to be insane," said the prim-looking man; "we had better order the porter to turn him out."

"I am by no means certain," said I, "that the porter could turn me out; always provided there is a porter, and this system of ours be not a lie, and a dream."

"Come," said the lion-looking man, impatiently, "a truce with this nonsense. If the porter cannot turn you out, perhaps some other person can; but to the point—you want a Bible?"

"I do," said I, "but not for myself; I was sent by another person to offer something in exchange for one."

"And who is that person?"

"A poor old woman, who has had what you call convictions,—heard voices, or thought she heard them—I forgot to ask her whether they were loud ones."

"What has she sent to offer in exchange?" said the man, without taking any notice of the concluding part of my speech.

"A book," said I.

"Let me see it."

"Nay, brother," said the precise man, "this will never do; if we once adopt the system of barter, we shall have all the holders of useless rubbish in the town applying to us." p. 380

"I wish to see what he has brought," said the other; "perhaps Baxter, or Jewell's Apology, either of which would make a valuable addition to our collection. Well, young man, what's the matter with you?"

I stood like one petrified; I had put my hand into my pocket—the book was gone.

"What's the matter?" repeated the man with the lion countenance, in a voice very much resembling thunder.

"I have it not—I have lost it!"

"A pretty story, truly," said the precise-looking man; "lost it!"

"You had better retire," said the other.

"How shall I appear before the party who entrusted me with the book? She will certainly think that I have purloined it, notwithstanding all I can say; nor, indeed, can I blame her,—appearances are certainly against me."

"They are so—you had better retire."

I moved towards the door. "Stay, young man, one word more; there is only one way of proceeding which would induce me to believe that you are sincere."

"What is that?" said I, stopping and looking at him anxiously.

"The purchase of a Bible."

"Purchase!" said I, "purchase! I came not to purchase, but to barter; such was my instruction, and how can I barter if I have lost the book?"

The other made no answer, and turning away I made for the door; all of a sudden I started, and turning round, "Dear me," said I, "it has just come into my head, that if the book was lost by my negligence, as it must have been, I have clearly a right to make it good." p. 381

No answer.

"Yes," I repeated, "I have clearly a right to make it good; how glad I am! see the effect of a little

reflection. I will purchase a Bible instantly, that is, if I have not lost . . . ” and with considerable agitation I felt in my pocket.

The prim-looking man smiled: “I suppose,” said he, “that he has lost his money as well as book.”

“No,” said I, “I have not;” and pulling out my hand I displayed no less a sum than three half-crowns.

“O noble goddess of the Mint!” as Dame Charlotta Nordenflycht, the Swede, said a hundred and fifty years ago, “great is thy power; how energetically the possession of thee speaks in favour of man’s character!”

“Only half a crown for this Bible?” said I, putting down the money; “it is worth three;” and bowing to the man of the noble features, I departed with my purchase.

“Queer customer,” said the prim-looking man, as I was about to close the door—“don’t like him.”

“Why, as to that, I scarcely know what to say,” said he of the countenance of a lion.

CHAPTER XLVI

p. 382

The Pickpocket—Strange Rencounter—Drag Him Along—A Great Service—Things of Importance—Philological Matters—Mother of Languages—Zhats!

A few days after the occurrence of what is recorded in the last chapter, as I was wandering in the City, chance directed my footsteps to an alley leading from one narrow street to another in the neighbourhood of Cheapside. Just before I reached the mouth of the alley, a man in a great-coat, closely followed by another, passed it; and, at the moment in which they were passing, I observed the man behind snatch something from the pocket of the other; whereupon, darting into the street, I seized the hindermost man by the collar, crying at the same time to the other, “My good friend, this person has just picked your pocket.”

The individual whom I addressed, turning round with a start, glanced at me, and then at the person whom I held. London is the place for strange rencounters. It appeared to me that I recognised both individuals—the man whose pocket had been picked and the other; the latter now began to struggle violently; “I have picked no one’s pocket,” said he. “Rascal,” said the other, “you have got my pocket-book in your bosom.” “No, I have not,” said the other; and, struggling more violently than before, the pocket-book dropped from his bosom upon the ground. p. 383

The other was now about to lay hands upon the fellow, who was still struggling. “You had better take up your book,” said I; “I can hold him.” He followed my advice; and, taking up his pocket-book, surveyed my prisoner with a ferocious look, occasionally glaring at me. Yes, I had seen him before—it was the stranger whom I had observed on London Bridge, by the stall of the old apple-woman, with the cap and cloak; but, instead of these, he now wore a hat and great-coat. “Well,” said I, at last, “what am I to do with this gentleman of ours?” nodding to the prisoner, who had now left off struggling. “Shall I let him go?”

“Go!” said the other; “go! The knave—the rascal; let him go, indeed! Not so, he shall go before the Lord Mayor. Bring him along.”

“Oh, let me go,” said the other: “let me go; this is the first offence, I assure ye—the first time I ever thought to do anything wrong.”

“Hold your tongue,” said I, “or I shall be angry with you. If I am not very much mistaken, you once attempted to cheat me.”

“I never saw you before in all my life,” said the fellow, though his countenance seemed to belie his words.

“That is not true,” said I; “you are the man who attempted to cheat me of one-and-ninepence in the coach-yard, on the first morning of my arrival in London.”

“I don’t doubt it,” said the other; “a confirmed thief;” and here his tones became peculiarly sharp; “I would fain see him hanged—crucified. Drag him along.”

“I am no constable,” said I; “you have got your pocket-book,—I would rather you would bid me let him go.” p. 384

“Bid you let him go!” said the other almost furiously; “I command—stay, what was I going to say? I was forgetting myself,” he observed more gently; “but he stole my pocket-book;—if you did but know what it contained.”

“Well,” said I, “if it contains anything valuable, be the more thankful that you have recovered it; as for the man, I will help you to take him where you please; but I wish you would let him go.”

The stranger hesitated, and there was an extraordinary play of emotion in his features: he looked ferociously at the pickpocket, and, more than once, somewhat suspiciously at myself; at last his countenance cleared, and, with a good grace, he said, “Well, you have done me a great service,

and you have my consent to let him go; but the rascal shall not escape with impunity," he exclaimed suddenly, as I let the man go, and starting forward, before the fellow could escape, he struck him a violent blow on the face. The man staggered, and had nearly fallen; recovering himself, however, he said, "I tell you what, my fellow, if I ever meet you in this street in a dark night, and I have a knife about me, it shall be the worse for you; as for you, young man," said he to me; but, observing that the other was making towards him, he left whatever he was about to say unfinished, and, taking to his heels, was out of sight in a moment.

The stranger and myself walked in the direction of Cheapside, the way in which he had been originally proceeding; he was silent for a few moments, at length he said, "You have really done me a great service, and I should be ungrateful not to acknowledge it. I am a merchant; and a merchant's pocket-book, as you perhaps know, contains many things of importance; but, young man," he exclaimed, "I think I have seen you before; I thought so at first, but where I cannot exactly say: where was it?" I mentioned London Bridge and the old apple-woman. "Oh," said he, and smiled, and there was something peculiar in his smile, "I remember now. Do you frequently sit on London Bridge?" "Occasionally," said I; "that old woman is an old friend of mine." "Friend?" said the stranger; "I am glad of it, for I shall know where to find you. At present I am going to 'Change; time, you know, is precious to a merchant." We were by this time close to Cheapside. "Farewell," said he; "I shall not forget this service. I trust we shall soon meet again." He then shook me by the hand and went his way. p. 385

The next day, as I was seated beside the old woman in the booth, the stranger again made his appearance, and, after a word or two, sat down beside me; the old woman was sometimes reading the Bible, which she had already had two or three days in her possession, and sometimes discoursing with me. Our discourse rolled chiefly on philological matters.

"What do you call bread in your language?" said I.

"You mean the language of those who bring me things to buy, or who did; for, as I told you before, I shan't buy any more; it's no language of mine, dear—they call bread pannam in their language."

"Pannam!" said I, "pannam! evidently connected with, if not derived from, the Latin panis; even as the word tanner, which signifieth a sixpence, is connected with, if not derived from, the Latin tener, which is itself connected with, if not derived from, tawno or tawner, which, in the language of Mr. Petulengro, signifieth a sucking child. [386] Let me see, what is the term for bread in the language of Mr. Petulengro? Morro, or manro, as I have sometimes heard it called; is there not some connection between these words and panis? Yes, I think there is; and I should not wonder if morro, manro, and panis were connected, perhaps derived from the same root; but what is that root? I don't know—I wish I did; though, perhaps, I should not be the happier. Morro—manro! I rather think morro is the oldest form; it is easier to say morro than manro. Morro! Irish, aran; Welsh, bara; English, bread. I can see a resemblance between all the words, and pannam too; and I rather think that the Petulengrian word is the elder. How odd it would be if the language of Mr. Petulengro should eventually turn out to be the mother of all the languages in the world; yet it is certain that there are some languages in which the terms for bread have no connection with the word used by Mr. Petulengro, notwithstanding that those languages, in many other points, exhibit a close affinity to the language of the horse-shoe master: for example, bread, in Hebrew, is Laham, which assuredly exhibits little similitude to the word used by the aforesaid Petulengro. In Armenian it is—" p. 386

"Zhats!" said the stranger, starting up. "By the Patriarch and the Three Holy Churches, this is wonderful! How came you to know aught of Armenian?"

CHAPTER XLVII p. 387

New Acquaintance—Wired Cases—Bread and Wine—Armenian Colonies—Learning Without Money—What a Language—The Tide—Your Foible—Learning of the Haiks—Old Proverb—Pressing Invitation.

Just as I was about to reply to the interrogation of my new-formed acquaintance, a man, with a dusky countenance, probably one of the Lascars, or Mulattos, of whom the old woman had spoken, came up and whispered to him, and with this man he presently departed,—not, however, before he had told me the place of his abode, and requested me to visit him.

After the lapse of a few days, I called at the house, which he had indicated. It was situated in a dark and narrow street, in the heart of the city, at no great distance from the bank. I entered a counting-room, in which a solitary clerk, with a foreign look, was writing. The stranger was not at home; returning the next day, however, I met him at the door as he was about to enter; he shook me warmly by the hand. "I am glad to see you," said he; "follow me; I was just thinking of you." He led me through the counting-room, to an apartment up a flight of stairs; before ascending, however, he looked into the book in which the foreign-visaged clerk was writing, and, seemingly not satisfied with the manner in which he was executing his task, he gave him two or three cuffs, telling him at the same time that he deserved crucifixion. p. 388

The apartment above stairs, to which he led me, was large, with three windows, which opened upon the street. The walls were hung with wired cases, apparently containing books. There was a table and two or three chairs; but the principal article of furniture was a long sofa, extending, from the door by which we entered, to the farther end of the apartment. Seating himself upon the sofa, my new acquaintance motioned to me to sit beside him, and then, looking me full in the face, repeated his former inquiry. “In the name of all that is wonderful, how came you to know aught of my language?”

“There is nothing wonderful in that,” said I; “we are at the commencement of a philological age, every one studies languages: that is, every one who is fit for nothing else; philology being the last resource of dulness and ennui, I have got a little in advance of the throng, by mastering the Armenian alphabet; but I foresee the time when every unmarriageable miss, and desperate blockhead, will likewise have acquired the letters of Mesroub, and will know the term for bread, in Armenian, and perhaps that for wine.”

“Kini,” said my companion; and that and the other word put me in mind of the duties of hospitality. “Will you eat bread and drink wine with me?”

“Willingly,” said I. Whereupon my companion, unlocking a closet, produced, on a silver salver, a loaf of bread, with a silver-handled knife, and wine in a silver flask, with cups of the same metal. “I hope you like my fare,” said he, after we had both eaten and drunk. p. 389

“I like your bread,” said I, “for it is stale; I like not your wine; it is sweet, and I hate sweet wine.”

“It is wine of Cyprus,” said my entertainer; and, when I found that it was wine of Cyprus, I tasted it again, and the second taste pleased me much better than the first, notwithstanding that I still thought it somewhat sweet. “So,” said I, after a pause, looking at my companion, “you are an Armenian?”

“Yes,” said he, “an Armenian born in London, but not less an Armenian on that account. My father was a native of Ispahan, one of the celebrated Armenian colony which was established there shortly after the time of the dreadful hunger, which drove the children of Haik in swarms from their original country, and scattered them over most parts of the eastern and western world. In Ispahan he passed the greater portion of his life, following mercantile pursuits with considerable success. Certain enemies, however, having accused him to the despot of the place, of using seditious language, he was compelled to flee, leaving most of his property behind. Travelling in the direction of the west, he came at last to London, where he established himself, and where he eventually died, leaving behind a large property and myself, his only child, the fruit of a marriage with an Armenian English woman, who did not survive my birth more than three months.”

The Armenian then proceeded to tell me that he had carried on the business of his father, which seemed to embrace most matters, from buying silks of Lascars, to speculating in the funds, and that he had considerably increased the property which his father had left him. He candidly confessed that he was wonderfully fond of gold, and said there was nothing like it for giving a person respectability and consideration in the world: to which assertion I made no answer, being not exactly prepared to contradict it. p. 390

And, when he had related to me his history, he expressed a desire to know something more of myself, whereupon I gave him the outline of my history, concluding with saying, “I am now a poor author, or rather philologist, upon the streets of London, possessed of many tongues, which I find of no use in the world.”

“Learning without money is anything but desirable,” said the Armenian, “as it unfits a man for humble occupations. It is true that it may occasionally beget him friends; I confess to you that your understanding something of my language weighs more with me than the service you rendered me in rescuing my pocket-book the other day from the claws of that scoundrel whom I yet hope to see hanged, if not crucified, notwithstanding there were in that pocket-book papers and documents of considerable value. Yes, that circumstance makes my heart warm towards you, for I am proud of my language—as I indeed well may be—what a language, noble and energetic! quite original, differing from all others both in words and structure.”

“You are mistaken,” said I; “many languages resemble the Armenian both in structure and words.”

“For example?” said the Armenian. p. 391

“For example,” said I, “the English.”

“The English?” said the Armenian; “show me one word in which the English resembles the Armenian.”

“You walk on London Bridge,” said I.

“Yes,” said the Armenian.

“I saw you look over the balustrade the other morning.”

“True,” said the Armenian.

“Well, what did you see rushing up through the arches with noise and foam?”

“What was it?” said the Armenian. “What was it?—you don’t mean the *tide*?”

“Do I not?” said I.

“Well, what has the tide to do with the matter?”

“Much,” said I; “what is the tide?”

“The ebb and flow of the sea,” said the Armenian.

“The sea itself; what is the Haik word for sea?”

The Armenian gave a strong gasp; then, nodding his head thrice, “You are right,” said he; “the English word tide is the Armenian for sea; and now I begin to perceive that there are many English words which are Armenian; there is --- and ---, and there again in French there is --- and --- derived from the Armenian. How strange, how singular!—I thank you. It is a proud thing to see that the language of my race has had so much influence over the languages of the world.”

I saw that all that related to his race was the weak point of the Armenian. I did not flatter the Armenian with respect to his race or language. “An inconsiderable people,” said I, “shrewd and industrious, but still an inconsiderable people. A language bold and expressive, and of some antiquity, derived, though perhaps not immediately, from some much older tongue. I do not think that the Armenian has had any influence over the formation of the languages of the world. I am not much indebted to the Armenian for the solution of any doubts; whereas to the language of Mr. Petulengro—” p. 392

“I have heard you mention that name before,” said the Armenian; “who is Mr. Petulengro?”

And then I told the Armenian who Mr. Petulengro was. The Armenian spoke contemptuously of Mr. Petulengro and his race. “Don’t speak contemptuously of Mr. Petulengro,” said I, “nor of anything belonging to him. He is a dark mysterious personage; all connected with him is a mystery, especially his language; but I believe that his language is doomed to solve a great philological problem—Mr. Petulengro—”

“You appear agitated,” said the Armenian; “take another glass of wine; you possess a great deal of philological knowledge, but it appears to me that the language of this Petulengro is your foible: but let us change the subject; I feel much interested in you, and would fain be of service to you. Can you cast accounts?”

I shook my head.

“Keep books?”

“I have an idea that I could write books,” said I; “but, as to keeping them . . . ” and here again I shook my head.

The Armenian was silent some time; all at once, glancing at one of the wire cases, with which, as I have already said, the walls of the room were hung, he asked me if I was well acquainted with the learning of the Haiks. “The books in these cases,” said he, “contain the master-pieces of Haik learning.” p. 393

“No,” said I, “all I know of the learning of the Haiks is their translation of the Bible.”

“You have never read Z---?”

“No,” said I, “I have never read Z---.”

“I have a plan,” said the Armenian; “I think I can employ you agreeably and profitably; I should like to see Z--- in an English dress; you shall translate Z---. If you can read the Scriptures in Armenian, you can translate Z---. He is our Esop, the most acute and clever of all our moral writers—his philosophy—”

“I will have nothing to do with him,” said I.

“Wherefore?” said the Armenian.

“There is an old proverb,” said I, ‘“that a burnt child avoids the fire.’ I have burnt my hands sufficiently with attempting to translate philosophy, to make me cautious of venturing upon it again;” and then I told the Armenian how I had been persuaded by the publisher to translate his philosophy into German, and what sorry thanks I had received; “and who knows,” said I, “but the attempt to translate Armenian philosophy into English might be attended with yet more disagreeable consequences.”

The Armenian smiled. “You would find me very different from the publisher.”

“In many points I have no doubt I should,” I replied; “but at the present moment I feel like a bird which has escaped from a cage, and, though hungry, feels no disposition to return. Of what nation is the dark man below stairs, whom I saw writing at the desk?” p. 394

“He is a Moldave,” said the Armenian; “the dog [and here his eyes sparkled] deserves to be crucified; he is continually making mistakes.”

The Armenian again renewed his proposition about Z---, which I again refused, as I felt but little inclination to place myself beneath the jurisdiction of a person who was in the habit of cuffing

those whom he employed, when they made mistakes. I presently took my departure; not, however, before I had received from the Armenian a pressing invitation to call upon him whenever I should feel disposed.

CHAPTER XLVIII

What to Do—Strong Enough—Fame and Profit—Alliterative Euphony—Excellent Fellow—Listen to Me—A Plan—Bagnigge Wells.

Anxious thoughts frequently disturbed me at this time with respect to what I was to do, and how support myself in the great city. My future prospects were gloomy enough, and I looked forward and feared; sometimes I felt half disposed to accept the offer of the Armenian, and to commence forthwith, under his superintendence, the translation of the Haik Esop; but the remembrance of the cuffs which I had seen him bestow upon the Moldavian, when glancing over his shoulder into the ledger or whatever it was on which he was employed, immediately drove the inclination from my mind. I could not support the idea of the possibility of his staring over my shoulder upon my translation of the Haik Esop, and, dissatisfied with my attempts, treating me as he had treated the Moldavian clerk; placing myself in a position which exposed me to such treatment, would indeed be plunging into the fire after escaping from the frying-pan. The publisher, insolent and overbearing as he was, whatever he might have wished or thought, had never lifted his hand against me, or told me that I merited crucifixion.

What was I to do? turn porter? I was strong; but there was something besides strength required to ply the trade of a porter—a mind of a particularly phlegmatic temperament, which I did not possess. What should I do?—enlist as a soldier? I was tall enough; but something besides height is required to make a man play with credit the part of soldier, I mean a private one—a spirit, if spirit it can be called, which will not only enable a man to submit with patience to insolence and abuse, and even to cuffs and kicks, but occasionally to the lash. I felt that I was not qualified to be a soldier, at least a private one; far better be a drudge to the most ferocious of publishers, editing Newgate Lives, and writing in eighteenpenny Reviews—better to translate the Haik Esop, under the superintendence of ten Armenians, than be a private soldier in the English service; I did not decide rashly—I knew something of soldiering. What should I do? I thought that I would make a last and desperate attempt to dispose of the ballads and of Ab Gwilym.

I had still an idea that, provided I could persuade any spirited publisher to give these translations to the world, I should acquire both considerable fame and profit; not, perhaps, a world-embracing fame such as Byron's; but a fame not to be sneered at, which would last me a considerable time, and would keep my heart from breaking;—profit, not equal to that which Scott had made by his wondrous novels, but which would prevent me from starving, and enable me to achieve some other literary enterprise. I read and re-read my ballads, and the more I read them the more I was convinced that the public, in the event of their being published, would freely purchase, and hail them with the merited applause. Were not the deeds and adventures wonderful and heart-stirring, from which it is true I could claim no merit, being but the translator; but had I not rendered them into English, with all their original fire? Yes, I was confident I had; and I had no doubt that the public would say so. And then, with respect to Ab Gwilym, had I not done as much justice to him as to the Danish ballads; not only rendering faithfully his thoughts, imagery, and phraseology, but even preserving in my translation the alliterative euphony which constitutes one of the most remarkable features of Welsh prosody? Yes, I had accomplished all this; and I doubted not that the public would receive my translations from Ab Gwilym with quite as much eagerness as my version of the Danish ballads. But I found the publishers as untractable as ever, and to this day the public has never had an opportunity of doing justice to the glowing fire of my ballad versification, [397] and the alliterative euphony of my imitations of Ab Gwilym.

I had not seen Francis Ardry since the day I had seen him taking lessons in elocution. One afternoon as I was seated at my table, my head resting on my hands, he entered my apartment; sitting down, he inquired of me why I had not been to see him.

"I might ask the same question of you," I replied. "Wherefore have you not been to see me?" Whereupon Francis Ardry told me that he had been much engaged in his oratorical exercises, also in escorting the young Frenchwoman about to places of public amusement; he then again questioned me as to the reason of my not having been to see him.

I returned an evasive answer. The truth was, that for some time past my appearance, owing to the state of my finances, had been rather shabby; and I did not wish to expose a fashionable young man like Francis Ardry, who lived in a fashionable neighbourhood, to the imputation of having a shabby acquaintance. I was aware that Francis Ardry was an excellent fellow; but, on that very account, I felt, under existing circumstances, a delicacy in visiting him.

It is very possible that he had an inkling of how matters stood, as he presently began to talk of my affairs and prospects. I told him of my late ill success with the booksellers, and inveighed against their blindness to their own interest in refusing to publish my translations. "The last that I addressed myself to," said I, "told me not to trouble him again unless I could bring him a decent novel or a tale."

“Well,” said Frank, “and why did you not carry him a decent novel or a tale?”

“Because I have neither,” said I; “and to write them is, I believe, above my capacity. At present I feel divested of all energy—heartless, and almost hopeless.”

“I see how it is,” said Francis Ardry, “you have overworked yourself, and, worst of all, to no purpose. Take my advice; cast all care aside, and only think of diverting yourself for a month at least.”

“Divert myself,” said I; “and where am I to find the means?” p. 399

“Be that care on my shoulders,” said Francis Ardry. “Listen to me—my uncles have been so delighted with the favourable accounts which they have lately received from T--- of my progress in oratory, that, in the warmth of their hearts, they made me a present yesterday of two hundred pounds. This is more money than I want, at least for the present; do me the favour to take half of it as a loan—hear me,” said he, observing that I was about to interrupt him; “I have a plan in my head—one of the prettiest in the world. The sister of my charmer is just arrived from France; she cannot speak a word of English; and, as Annette and myself are much engaged in our own matters, we cannot pay her the attention which we should wish, and which she deserves, for she is a truly fascinating creature, although somewhat differing from my charmer, having blue eyes and flaxen hair; whilst Annette, on the contrary . . . But I hope you will shortly see Annette. Now, my plan is this—Take the money, dress yourself fashionably, and conduct Annette’s sister to Bagnigge Wells.”

“And what should we do at Bagnigge Wells?”

“Do!” said Francis Ardry. “Dance!”

“But,” said I, “I scarcely know anything of dancing.”

“Then here’s an excellent opportunity of improving yourself. Like most Frenchwomen, she dances divinely; however, if you object to Bagnigge Wells and dancing, go to Brighton, and remain there a month or two, at the end of which time you can return with your mind refreshed and invigorated, and materials, perhaps, for a tale or novel.” p. 400

“I never heard a more foolish plan,” said I, “or one less likely to terminate profitably or satisfactorily. I thank you, however, for your offer, which is, I dare say, well meant. If I am to escape from my cares and troubles, and find my mind refreshed and invigorated, I must adopt other means than conducting a French demoiselle to Brighton or Bagnigge Wells, defraying the expense by borrowing from a friend.”

Footnotes:

[0a] Pronounced *Lav’en-gro*, not *Lav-en’gro*, the two first syllables exactly like those of *lavender*. Borrow meant it to stand for “word-master, philologist,” but—*nomen omen*—already in Grellmann (1787) *latcho lavengro* stood for “a liar.”

[1a] On 5th July 1803, at East Dereham, Norfolk, 17 miles west-north-west of Norwich.

[1b] Captain Thomas Borrow (1758-1824), the youngest of a family of eight (three daughters and five sons).

[1c] Trethinnick, near St. Cleer.

[2] “In Cornwall are the best gentlemen.”—*Corn. Prov.* (B.)

[4a] Earl of Orford. Borrow’s father rose from private to sergeant in the Coldstream Guards, and, passing in 1792 to the West Norfolk Militia, was six years later promoted adjutant with the rank of captain (Knapp, i. 7-16).

[4b] Dereham.

[4c] Ann Perfrement (1772-1858). They married in 1793 (Knapp, i. 16-26).

[7] John Thomas Borrow (1800-1833), ensign and lieutenant in his father’s regiment, art student under Old Crome and Benjamin Haydon, and from 1826 a mining agent in Mexico.

[19] Norwegian ells—about eight feet. (B.)

[22] Dereham.

[31a] Charles Hyde Wollaston (1772-1850), vicar from 1806—my mother’s uncle.

[31b] James Philo (1745-1829), an old soldier, for fifty years parish clerk.

[33] In 1810.

[37] Whittlesea Mere. In 1786 it measured 3½ miles from east to west by 2½ miles, and it was drained in 1850-51.

[44] Much such a man, perhaps a descendant, travelled East Anglia about 1866. He used to visit schools to exhibit his snakes.

[48] Better *béngesko* or *beng's*, devil's.

[50] *Tiny tawny* is not Romany. *Tárno* means "small" or "young."

[52] *Sap*, snake; *sapengro*, snake-charmer.

[65] Berwick-upon-Tweed. Its walls are not lofty.

[69a] In 1813.

[69b] South-western.

[71] Borrow and his brother seem to have been at the High School in March 1814, probably only for the one winter session. James Pillans was rector, and the four under-masters were William Ritchie, Aglionby Ross Carson (Borrow's), George Irvine, James Gray.

[72] William Bowie; probably from Gaelic *buidhe*, yellow, and so not Norse at all.

[75] Northern.

[79] David Haggart (1801-21), thief, was born and hanged at Edinburgh. He enlisted as a drummer in July 1813, and killed a Dumfries turnkey in 1820. His curious *Autobiography* is written largely in thieves' cant.

[82a] Northern.

[82b] Perhaps two hundred feet.

[88] Fifteen months.

[89a] Harwich.

[89b] Cork Harbour.

[90] Cork.

[93] Clonmel.

[98] Elzevirs are not generally huge.

[104] In Tipperary county, twenty miles north of Clonmel. In 1816.

[131] Norwich.

[132a] Till 1886 a prison, and now a museum. A square Norman keep.

[132b] The tower is Norman, the spire Decorated, 215 feet high.

[133] The Bishop's Bridge (1295) over the Wensum.

[134] Horatio, Viscount Nelson (1758-1805), was born at Burnham-Thorpe Rectory, Norfolk, near Wells.

[140] Borrow clean omits his two years (1816-18) at Norwich Grammar School, under Edward Valpy (1764-1832), headmaster 1810-29. This was probably because, horsed on James Martineau's back, he was flogged for running away to turn smuggler or freebooter. Sir James Brooke was another schoolfellow.

[142] The Rev. Thomas D'Éterville, a Norman *émigré*.

[146] The Yare.

[147] Earlham Hall.

[148] Joseph John Gurney (1788-1847), Quaker banker of Norwich, and philanthropist, a brother of Mrs. Fry. See A. J. C. Hare's *The Gurneys of Earlham* (2 vols., 1895).

[152] Tombland Fair, on Norwich Castle Hill, the day before Good Friday.

[154] *Cf.* Introduction, p. xxv.

[156] Snake-charmer.

[157] Monschold (pron. *Muzzle*) Heath, near Norwich.

[158] Better *Tárno Tíkno*, little baby.

[161] *Petuléngro*, farrier, the esoteric Romany name of the Smith family. It is derived from the Modern Greek *pétalon*, horse-shoe, if that, indeed, is not borrowed from the Romany.

[162a] Truth, brother.

[162b] Book.

[162c] Hill.

[163a] Passing bad money.

[163b] Gypsies.

[163c] Better *gaújoes*, non-Gypsies or Gentiles.

[164a] Yes.

[164b] Magistrate of the town.

[165a] Child.

[165b] In the town, telling fortunes.

[166a] House.

[166b] Going.

[169a] In Vol. i. p. 320 of *Etymologicon Universale* (3 vols., 1822-25), by the Rev. Walter Whiter (1758-1832), from 1797 rector of Hardingham, near Wymondham, occurs this suggestion: "It will perhaps be discovered by some future inquirer that from a horde of vagrant *Gipseys* once issued that band of sturdy robbers, the companions of Romulus and of Remus, who laid the foundations of the *Eternal City* on the banks of the Tibur." This sounds truly Borrovian; and scattered through the amazing *Etymologicon* are twenty-six Romany words, very correctly spelt, which I used to think Whiter must have learnt from George Borrow. But there are words that Borrow does not seem to have known—*poshe*, near; *kam*, sun; *ria*, sir (vocative), and *petalles*, horse-shoe (accusative). Whiter appears to have known Romany better than Borrow. Borrow certainly meant to write a good deal about Whiter, for in a letter to John Murray of 1st December 1842 he sketches *Lavengro*: "Capital subject—early life; studies and adventures; some account of my father, William Taylor, Whiter, Big Ben, etc. etc." (Knapp, ii. 5). But he barely mentions Whiter in chap. xxiv. of *Lavengro*. In the *Gypsy Lore Journal* (i. 1888, pp. 102-4) I had an article on Whiter. That on Whiter by Mr. Courtney, in vol. lxi. of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1900), shows that he was writing on the Gypsy language in 1800 and 1811.

[169b] Fighter.

[170a] Husband.

[170b] Gentleman.

[170c] London.

[170d] Song.

[178] Borrow's *Wild Wales* gives a full account of his Welsh studies at this period.

[180] He was articled on 30th March 1819 to Messrs. Simpson & Rackham solicitors, for five years.

[198] Klopstock. (B.)

[199] John Crome, "Old Crome" (1768-1811), the great landscape-painter of the "Norwich School."

[208] Lodowick Muggleton (1609-98), a London Puritan tailor, founded his sect about 1651.

[211] William Taylor (1765-1836), "of Norwich," introduced German literature to English readers, and corresponded with Southey, Scott, Godwin, etc. He seems to have made an infidel of Borrow by 1824 (Knapp, ii. 261-2). See Life of Taylor by Robberds (1843).

[225a] Samuel Parr (1747-1825).

[225b] See note on p. 169.

[230] John Thurtell (*c.* 1791-1824), the son of a Norwich alderman, was hanged at Hertford for the brutal murder in Gill's Hill Lane of a fellow-swindler, William Weare. He figures also in Hazlitt's "Prize-fight," and Sir Walter Scott visited the scene of Weare's murder.

[233] Spinoza.

[239] Rather shaky Romany. *Chivios* and *rovel* should be *chído si* and *rovénna*.

[240] Enough.

[249] Absolutely meaningless to any English Gypsy that ever walked. Borrow seems to have fancied it was Hungarian Romany, but it isn't.

[264] Anglo-Hanoverian victory over the French, 1759.

[265] 2nd April 1824.

[270] Sir Richard Phillips (1767-1840), schoolmaster, hosier, stationer, publisher, author, Radical, vegetarian, etc., removed from Leicester to London in 1795, was knighted in 1808, and finally retired to Brighton.

[278] By the Rev. Legh Richmond (1772-1827). Elizabeth Wallbridge, the dairyman's daughter,

is buried at Arreton, in the Isle of Wight; and 2,000,000 copies of the tract, which was written in 1809, are said to have been sold in the author's lifetime.

[287] *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the famous Moll Flanders*, by Daniel Defoe, appeared on 27th January 1722.

[293] Quite incredible. Norwich had its own papers.

[306] By Prof. Knapp identified with William Gifford (1757-1826), translator of Juvenal, editor of the *Anti-Jacobin*, the *Quarterly Review*, etc.; but Mr. Leslie Stephen argues, in *Literature* (April 8, 1899, p. 375), that Gifford was then a rich bachelor with a sinecure of £1000 a year, and that a much likelier identification is with John Carey (1756-1826), the "*Gradus* Carey," who edited Quintilian in 1822, and did work for Sir Richard Phillips.

[316a] *Celebrated Trials* (6 vols., 1825).

[316b] *The Universal Review*, March 1824-Jan. 1825.

[324] 29th April 1824.

[326] The ex-mayor, Robert Hawkes.

[328] Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846), who shot himself in his studio.

[335] George Borrow about this time suffered much from the horrors, and meditated suicide (Knapp, i. 96-98).

[340] Byron's corpse, on its way from Missolonghi to Hucknall Church, near Newstead in Notts, was removed on Monday, 12th July 1814, from Sir Edward Knatchbull's house in Great George Street, Westminster, at 11 a.m.

[365] John Murray (1778-1843), publisher, the second of the name, the first of Albemarle Street.

[386] *Tárno* means simply "young" or "little."

[397] *Romantic Ballads*, *translated from the Danish*, *and Miscellaneous Pieces*, by George Borrow, did appear in Norwich in 1826.

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